

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAST LOOK BACK.

MR. ROSCORLA may be recommended to ladies generally, and to married men who are haunted by certain vague and vain regrets, as an excellent example of the evils and vanity of club-life. He was now a man approaching fifty, careful in dress and manner, methodical in habit, and grave of aspect, living out a not over-enjoyable life in a solitary little cottage, and content to go for his society to the good folks of the village inn. But five-and-twenty years before he had been a gay young fellow about town, a pretty general favourite, clever in his way, free with his money, and possessed of excellent spirits. He was not very wealthy, to be sure; his father had left him certain shares in some plantations in Jamaica; and the returns periodically forwarded to him by his agents were sufficient for his immediate wants. He had few cares, and he seemed on the whole to have a pleasant time of it. On disengaged evenings he lounged about his club, and dined with one or other of the men he knew, and then he played billiards till bed-time. Or he would have nice little dinner-parties at his rooms; followed by a few games at whist, and perhaps finishing up with a little spurt of unlimited loo. In the season he went to balls, and dinners, and parties of all sorts, singling out a few families with pretty daughters for his special attentions, but careful never to commit himself. When every one went from town he went too; and in the autumn and winter months he had a fair amount of shooting and hunting, guns and horses alike and willingly furnished him by his friends.

Once, indeed, he had taken a fancy that he ought to do something, and he went and read law a bit, and ate some dinners, and got called to the Bar. He even went the length of going on Circuit; but either he travelled by coach, or fraternized with a solicitor, or did something objectionable; at all events his circuit mess fined him; he refused to pay the fine; threw the whole thing up; and returned to his club, and its carefully-ordered dinners, and its friendly game of sixpenny and eighteen-penny pool.

Of course he dressed, and acted, and spoke just as his fellows did, and gradually from the common talk of smoking-rooms imbibed a vast amount of nonsense. He knew that such and such a statesman professed particular opinions only to keep in place and enjoy the loaves and fishes. He could tell you to a penny the bribe given to the editor of the *Times* by a foreign Government for a certain series of articles. As for the stories he heard and repeated of all manner of noble families, they were many of them doubtless true, and they were nearly all unpleasant; but then the tale that would have been regarded with indifference if told about an ordinary person, grew lambent with interest when it was told about a commonplace woman possessed of a shire and a gaby crowned with a coronet. There was no malice in these stories; only the young men were supposed to know everything about the private affairs of a certain number of families no more nearly related to them than their landlady.

He was unfortunate, too, in a few personal experiences. He was a fairly well-intentioned young man, and, going home one night, was moved to pity by the sobbing and exclamations of a little girl of twelve, whose mother was drunk and tumbling about the pavement. The child could not get her mother to go home, and it was now past midnight. Richard Roscorla thought he would interfere, and went over the way and helped the woman to her feet. He had scarcely done so when the virago turned on him, shouted for help, accused him of assaulting her, and finally hit him straight between the eyes, nearly blinding him, and causing him to keep his chambers for three weeks. After that he gave up the lower classes.

Then a gentleman who had been his bosom friend at Eton, and who had carried away with him so little of the atmosphere of that institution that he by-and-by abandoned himself to trade, renewed his acquaintance with Mr. Roscorla, and besought him to join him in a little business transaction. He only wanted a few thousand pounds to secure the success of a venture that would make both their fortunes. Young Roscorla hesitated. But his friend sent his wife, an exceedingly pretty woman; and she pleaded with such sweetness and pathos that she actually carried away a

cheque for the amount in her beautiful little purse. A couple of days afterwards Mr. Roscorla discovered that his friend had suddenly left the country; that he had induced a good many people to lend him money to start his new enterprise; and that the beautiful lady whom he had sent to plead his cause was a wife certainly, but not his wife. She was, in fact, the wife of one of the swindled creditors, who bore her loss with greater equanimity than he showed in speaking of his departed money. Young Roscorla laughed, and said to himself that a man who wished to have any knowledge of the world must be prepared to pay for it.

The loss of the money, though it pressed him hardly for a few years, and gave a fright to his father's executors, did not trouble him much; for, in company with a good many of the young fellows about, he had given himself up to one of the most pleasing delusions which even club-life has fostered. It was the belief of those young men that in England there are a vast number of young ladies of fortune who are so exceedingly anxious to get married, that any decent young fellow of fair appearance and good manners has only to bide his time in order to be amply provided for. Accordingly Mr. Roscorla and others of his particular set were in no hurry to take a wife. They waited to see who would bid most for them. They were not in want; they could have maintained a wife in a certain fashion; but that was not the fashion in which they hoped to spend the rest of their days, when they consented to relinquish the joys and freedom of bachelorhood. Most of them, indeed, had so thoroughly settled in their own mind the sort of existence to which they were entitled—the house, and horses, and shooting necessary to them—that it was impossible for them to consider any lesser offer; and so they waited from year to year, guarding themselves against temptation, cultivating an excellent taste in various sorts of luxuries, and reserving themselves for the *grand coup* which was to make their fortune. In many cases they looked upon themselves as the victims of the world. They had been deceived by this or the other woman; but now they had done with the fatal passion of love, its dangerous perplexities, and insincere romance; and were resolved to

take a sound commonsense view of life. So they waited carelessly, and enjoyed their time, growing in wisdom of a certain sort. They were gentlemanly young fellows enough; they would not have done a dishonourable action for the world; they were well-bred, and would have said no discourteous thing to the woman they married, even though they hated her; they had their cold bath every morning; they lived soberly, if not very righteously; and would not have asked for or accepted ten points at billiards if they fairly thought they could have played you even. The only thing was that they had changed their sex. They were not Perseus, but Andromeda; and while this poor masculine Andromeda remained chained to the rock of an imaginary poverty, the feminine Perseus who was to come in a blaze of jewels and gold to the rescue, still remained afar off, until Andromeda got a little tired.

And so it was with Mr. Richard Roscorla. He lounged about his club, and had nice little dinners; he went to other people's houses, and dined there; with his crush-hat under his arm he went to many a dance, and made such acquaintances as he might; but somehow that one supreme chance invariably missed. He did not notice it, any more than his fellows. If you had asked any of them, they would still have given you those devil-may-care opinions about women, and those shrewd estimates of what was worth living for in the world. They did not seem to be aware that year after year was going by; and that a new race of younger men were coming to the front, eager for all sorts of pastimes, ready to dance till daybreak, and defying with their splendid constitutions the worst champagne a confectioner ever brewed. A man who takes good care of himself is slow to believe that he is growing middle-aged. If the sitting up all night to play loo does him an injury such as he would not have experienced a few years before, he lays the blame of it on the brandy-and-soda. When two or three hours over wet turnips make his knees feel queer, he vows that he is in bad condition, but that a few days' exercise will set him right. It was a long time before Mr. Richard Roscorla would admit to himself that his hair was growing grey. By this time many of his old friends and associates had left the club. Some had died; some had made the best of a bad

bargain, and married a plain country cousin; none, to tell the truth, had been rescued by the beautiful heiress for whom they had all been previously waiting. And while these men went away, and while new men came into the club—young fellows with fresh complexions, abundant spirits, a lavish disregard of money, and an amazing enjoyment in drinking any sort of wine—another set of circumstances came into play which rendered it more and more necessary for Mr. Roscorla to change his ways of life.

He was now over forty; his hair was grey; his companions were mostly older men than himself: and he began to be rather pressed for money. The merchants in London who sold for his agents in Jamaica those consignments of sugar and rum, sent him every few months statements which showed that either the estates were yielding less, or the markets had fallen, or labour had risen—whatever it might be, his annual income was very seriously impaired. He could no longer afford to play half-crown points at whist: even sixpenny pool was dangerous; and those boxes and stalls which it was once his privilege to take for dowagers gifted with daughters, were altogether out of the question. The rent of his rooms in Jermyn Street was a serious matter; all his little economies at the club were of little avail; at last he resolved to leave London. And then it was that he bethought him of living permanently at this cottage at Eglosilyan, which had belonged to his grandfather, and which he had visited from time to time during the summer months. He would continue his club-subscription; he would still correspond with certain of his friends; he would occasionally pay a flying visit to London; and down here by the Cornish coast he would live a healthy, economical, contented life.

So he came to Eglosilyan, and took up his abode in the plain white cottage placed amid birch trees on the side of the hill, and set about providing himself with amusement. He had a good many books, and he read at night over his final pipe; he made friends with the fishermen, and often went out with them; he took a little interest in wild plants; and he rode a sturdy little pony by way of exercise. He was known to the Trelyons, to the clergymen of the neighbourhood, and to one or two families living farther

off; but he did not dine out much, for he could not well invite his host to dinner in return. His chief friends, indeed, were the Rosewarne; and scarcely a day passed that he did not call at the inn and have a chat with George Rosewarne, or with his wife and daughters. For the rest, Mr. Roscorla was a small man, sparely built, with somewhat fresh complexion, close-cropped grey hair and iron-grey whiskers. He dressed very neatly and methodically; he was fairly light and active in his walk; and he had a serious good-natured smile. He was much improved in constitution, indeed, since he came to Eglosilyan; for that was not a place to let any one die of languor, or to encourage complexions of the colour of apple-pudding. Mr. Roscorla, indeed, had the appearance of a pleasant little country lawyer, somewhat finical in dress and grave in manner, and occasionally just a trifle supercilious and cutting in his speech.

He had received Wenna Rosewarne's brief and hurriedly-written note; and if accident had not thrown her in his way, he would doubtless have granted her that time for reflection which she demanded. But happening to be out, he saw her go down towards the rocks beyond the harbour. She had a pretty figure, and she walked gracefully; when he saw her at a distance some little flutter of anxiety disturbed his heart. That glimpse of her—the possibility of securing as his constant companion a girl who walked so daintily and dressed so neatly—added some little warmth of feeling to the wish he had carefully reasoned out and expressed. For the offer he had sent to Miss Wenna was the result of much calculation. He was half aware that he had let his youth slip by and idled away his opportunities; there was now no chance of his engaging in any profession or pursuit; there was little chance of his bettering his condition by a rich marriage. What could he now offer to a beautiful young creature possessed of fortune, such as he had often looked out for, in return for herself and her money? Not his grey hairs, his asthmatic evenings in winter, and the fixed, and narrow, and oftentimes selfish habits and opinions begotten of a solitary life. Here, on the other hand, was a young lady of pleasing manners and honest nature, and of humble wishes as became her station,

whom he might induce to marry him. She had scarcely ever moved out of the small circle around her; and in it were no possible lovers for her. If he did not marry her, she might drift into as hopeless a position as his own. If she consented to marry him, would they not be able to live in a friendly way together, gradually winning each other's sympathy, and making the world a little more sociable and comfortable for both? There was no chance of his going back to the brilliant society in which he had once moved; for there was no one whom he could expect to die and leave him any money. When he went up to town and spent an evening or two at his club, he found himself almost wholly among strangers; and he could not get that satisfaction out of a solitary dinner that once was his. He returned to his cottage at Eglosilyan with some degree of resignation; and fancied he could live well enough there if Wenna Rosewarne would only come to relieve him from its frightful loneliness.

He blushed when he went forward to her on these rocks, was exceedingly embarrassed, and could scarcely look her in the face as he begged her pardon for intruding on her, and hoped she would resume her seat. She was a little pale, and would have liked to get away, but was probably so frightened that she did not know how to take the step. Without a word she sat down again, her heart beating as if it would suffocate her. Then there was a terrible pause.

Mr. Roscorla discovered at this moment—and the shock almost bewildered him—that he would have to play the part of a lover. He had left that out of the question. He had found it easy to dissociate love from marriage in writing a letter; in fact he had written it mainly to get over the necessity of shamming sentiment; but here was a young and sensitive girl, probably with a good deal of romantic nonsense in her head, and he was going to ask her to marry him. And just at this moment, also, an alarming recollection flashed in on his mind of Wenna Rosewarne's liking for humour, and of the merry light he had often seen in her eyes, however demure her manner might be; and then it occurred to him that if he did play the lover, she would know that he knew he was making a fool of himself; and would laugh at him in the safe concealment of her own room.

"Of course," he said, making a sudden plunge, followed by a gasp or two—"Of course—Miss Wenna—of course you were surprised to get my letter—a letter containing an offer of marriage, and almost nothing about affection in it. Well, there are some things one can neither write nor say—they have so often been made the subject of good-natured ridicule that, that—"

"I think one forgets that," Wenna said timidly, "if one is in earnest about anything."

"Miss Wenna," he said, "you know I find it very difficult to say what I should like to say. That letter did not tell you half—probably you thought it too dry and business-like. But at all events you were not offended?"

"Oh no," she said, wondering how she could get away, and whether a precipitate plunge into the sea below her would not be the simplest plan. Her head, she felt, was growing giddy; and she began to hear snatches of "Wapping Old Stairs" in the roar of the waves around her.

But he continued to talk to her, insisting on much he had said in his letter, and that with a perfect faith in its truth. So far as his own experience went, the hot-headed romanticism of youth had only led to mischief. Then the mere fact that she allowed him to talk was everything; a point was gained in that she had not straightway sent him off.

Incidentally he spoke of her charitable labours among the poorer folk of Eglosilyan; and here he speedily saw he had got an opening, which he made use of dexterously. For Miss Wenna's weak side was a great distrust of herself, and a longing to be assured that she was cared for by anybody, and of some little account in the world. To tell her that the people of Eglosilyan were without exception fond of her, and ready at all moments to say kind things of her, was the sweetest flattery to her ears. Mr. Roscorla easily perceived this, and made excellent use of his discovery. If she did not quite believe all that she heard, she was secretly delighted to hear it. It hinted at the possible realisation of all her dreams, even though she could never be beautiful, rich, and of noble presence. Wenna's heart rather inclined to her companion just then. He seemed to her to be a

connecting link between her and her manifold friends in Eglosilyan; for how had he heard those things, which she had not heard, if he were not in general communication with them? He seemed to her, too, a friendly counsellor on whom she could rely; he was the very first, indeed, who had ever offered to help her in her work.

"It is far more a matter of intention than of temper," he continued, speaking in a roundabout way of marriage. "When once two people find out the good qualities in each other, they should fix their faith on those, and let the others be overlooked as much as possible. But I don't think there is much to be feared from your temper, Miss Wenna; and as for mine—I suppose I get vexed sometimes, like other people, but I don't think I am bad-tempered, and I am sure I should never be bad-tempered to you. I don't think I should readily forget what I owe you for taking pity on a solitary old fellow like myself, if I can only persuade you to do that, and for being content to live a humdrum life up in that small cottage. By the way, do you like riding, Wenna? Has your father got a lady's saddle?"

The question startled her so that the blood rushed to her face in a moment, and she could not answer. Was it not that very morning that she had been asked almost the same question by Harry Trelyon? And while she was dreamily looking at an imaginative picture of her future life, calm and placid and commonplace, the sudden introduction into it of Harry Trelyon almost frightened her. The mere recalling of his name, indeed, shattered that magic-lantern slide, and took her back to their recent parting, when he had left her in something of an angry fashion; or rather it took her still further back—to one bright summer morning on which she had met young Trelyon riding over the downs to St. Gennis. We all of us know how apt the mind is to retain one particular impression of a friend's appearance, sometimes even in the matter of dress and occupation. When we recall such and such a person, we think of a particular smile, a particular look; perhaps one particular incident of his or her life. Whenever Wenna Rosewarne thought of Mr. Trelyon, she thought of him as she saw him on that one morning. She was coming along the rough

path that crosses the bare uplands by the sea; he was riding by another path some little distance off, and did not notice her. The boy was riding hard; the sunlight was on his face; he was singing aloud some song about the Cavaliers and King Charles. Two or three years had come and gone since then. She had seen Master Harry in many a mood, and not unfrequently ill-tempered; but whenever she thought of him suddenly, her memory presented her with that picture; and it was the picture of a handsome English lad riding by on a summer morning, singing a brave song, and with all the light of youth, and hope, and courage shining on his face.

She rose quickly, and with a sigh, as if she had been dreaming for a time, and forgetting for a moment the cares of the world.

"Oh, you asked about a saddle," she said in a matter-of-fact way. "Yes, I think my father has one. I think I must be going home now, Mr. Roscorla."

"No, not yet," he said in a pleading way. "Give me a few more minutes. I mayn't have another chance before you make up your mind; and then, when that is done, I suppose it is all over, so far as persuasion goes. What I am most anxious about is that you should believe there is more affection in my offer than I have actually conveyed in words. Don't imagine it is merely a commonplace bargain I want you to enter into. I hope, indeed, that in time I shall win from you something warmer than affection, if only you give me the chance. Now, Wenna, won't you give me some word of assurance—some hint that it may come all right?"

She stood before him, with her eyes cast down, and remained silent for what seemed to him a strangely long time. Was she bidding good-bye to all the romantic dreams of her youth—to that craving in a girl's heart for some firm and sure ideal of manly love, and courage, and devotion to which she can cling through good report and bad report? Was she reconciling herself to the plain and common ways of the married life placed before her? She said at length, in a low voice:

"You won't ask me to leave Eglosilyan?"

"Certainly not," he said, eagerly. "And you will see

how I will try to join you in all your work there, and how much easier and pleasanter it will be for you, and how much more satisfactory for all the people around you."

She put out her hand timidly, her eyes still cast down.

"You will be my wife, Wenna?"

"Yes," she said.

Mr. Roscorla was conscious that he ought at this high moment in a man's life to experience an ecstatic thrill of happiness. He almost waited for it; but he felt instead a very distinct sense of embarrassment in not knowing what to do or say next. He supposed that he ought to kiss her, but he dared not. As he himself had said, Wenna Rosewarne was so fine and shy that he shrank from wounding her extreme sensitiveness; and to step forward and kiss this quiet and gentle creature, who stood there with her pale face faintly flushed and her eyes averted—why, it was impossible. He had heard of girls, in wild moments of doubt and persuasion, suddenly raising their tear-filled eyes to their lover's face, and signing away their whole existence with one full, passionate, and yearning kiss. But to steal a kiss from this calm little girl? He felt he should be acting the part of a jocular ploughboy.

"Wenna," he said at length, "you have made me very happy. I am sure you will never repent your decision; at least I shall do my best to make you think you have done right. And, Wenna, I have to dine with the Trelyons on Friday evening; would you allow me to tell them something of what has happened?"

"The Trelyons!" she repeated, looking up in a startled way.

It was of evil omen for this man's happiness that the mere mention of that word turned this girl, who had just been yielding up her life to him, into a woman as obdurate and unimpressionable as a piece of marble.

"Mr. Roscorla," she said, with a certain hard decision of voice, "I must ask you to give me back the promise I made. I forgot; it was too hurried; why would you not wait?"

He was fairly stupefied.

"Mr. Roscorla," she said, with something almost of petulant impatience in her voice, "you must let me go now;

I am quite tired out. I will write to you to-morrow or next day, as I promised."

She passed him and went on, leaving him unable to utter a word of protest. But she had only gone a few steps when she returned, and held out her hand and said—

"I hope I have not offended you? it seems that I must offend everybody now; but I am a little tired, Mr. Roscorla."

There was just the least quiver about her lips; and as all this was a profound mystery to him, he fancied he must have tired her out, and he inwardly called himself a brute.

"My dear Wenna," he said, "you have not offended me—you have not really. It is I who must apologize to you. I am so sorry I should have worried you; it was very inconsiderate. Pray take your own time about the letter."

So she went away, and passed round to the other side of the rocks, and came in view of the small winding harbour, and the mill, and the inn. Far away up there, over the cliffs, were the downs on which she had met Harry Trelyon that summer morning, as he rode by, singing in the mere joyousness of youth, and happy and pleased with all the world. She could hear the song he was singing then; she could see the sunlight that was shining on his face. It appeared to her to be long ago. This girl was but eighteen years of age; and yet, as she walked down towards Eglosilyan, there was a weight on her heart that seemed to tell her she was growing old.

And now the western sky was red with the sunset, and the rich light burned along the crests of the hills, on the golden furze, the purple heather, and the deep-coloured rocks. The world seemed all ablaze up there; but down here, as she went by the harbour and crossed over the bridge by the mill, Eglosilyan lay pale and grey in the hollow; and even the great black wheel was silent.

CHAPTER V.

THROWING A FLY.

HARRY TRELYON had a cousin named Juliott Penaluna, who lived at Penzance with her father, an irascible old clergyman, who, while yet a poor curate, had the good fortune to marry Mrs. Trelyon's sister. Miss Juliott was a handsome, healthy, English-looking girl, with blue eyes and brown hair, frank enough in her ways, fairly well-read, fond of riding and driving, and very specially fond of her cousin. There had never been any concealment about that. Master Harry, too, liked his cousin in a way, as he showed by his rudeness to her; but he used plainly to tell her that he would not marry her; whereupon she would be angry with him for his impertinence, and end by begging him to be good friends again.

At last she went, as her mother had done before her, and encouraged the attentions of a fair, blue-eyed, pensive young curate, one who was full of beautiful enthusiasms and idealisms, in which he sought to interest the mind of this exceedingly practical young woman, who liked cliff-hunting, and had taught herself to swim in the sea. Just before she pledged away her future, she wrote to Harry Trelyon, plainly warning him of what was going to happen. In a fashion she asked for his advice. It was a timid letter for her to write, and she even showed some sentiment in it. The reply, written in a coarse, sprawling, schoolboy hand, was as follows:—

“TRELYON HALL, Monday Afternoon.

“DEAR JUE,—All right. You're a fool to marry a parson. What would you like for a wedding present? Affectionately yours,

“HARRY TRELYON.”

Posts don't go very fast in Cornwall; but just as soon as a letter from Penzance could reach him, Master Harry had his answer. And it was this:—

“THE HOLLIES, PENZANCE, Wednesday.

“DEAR HARRY,—I am glad to receive a letter from you in which there is no ill-spelling. There is plenty of ill-temper, however, as usual. You may send your wedding presents to those who care for them: I don't.

“JULIOTT PENALUNA.”

Master Harry burst into a roar of laughter when he received that letter; but, all the same, he could not get his cousin to write him a line for months thereafter. Now, however, she had come to visit some friends at Wadebridge; and she agreed to drive over and join Mrs. Trelyon's little dinner-party, to which Mr. Roscorla had also been invited. Accordingly, in the afternoon, when Harry Trelyon was seated on the stone steps outside the Hall door, engaged in making artificial flies, Miss Penaluna drove up in a tiny chariot drawn by a beautiful little pair of ponies; and when the boy had jumped down and gone to the ponies' heads, and when she had descended from the carriage, Master Harry thought it was time for him to lay aside his silk, rosin, feathers, and what not, and go forward to meet her.

“How are you, Jue?” he said, offering to kiss her, as was his custom. “And where's your young man?”

She drew back, offended; and then she looked at him, and shrugged her shoulders, and gave him her cheek to kiss. He was only a boy, after all.

“Well, Harry, I am not going to quarrel with you,” she said, with a good-natured smile; “although I suppose I shall have plenty of cause before I go. Are you as rude as ever? Do you talk as much slang as ever?”

“I like to hear you talk of slang!” he said. “Who calls her ponies Brandy and Soda? Weren't you wild, Jue, when Captain Tulliver came up and said, ‘Miss Penaluna, how are your dear Almonds and Raisins?’”

“If I had given him a cut with my whip, I should have made him dance,” said Miss Juliott, frankly; “then he would have forgotten to turn out his toes. Harry, go and see if that boy has taken in my things.”

“I won't. There's plenty of time; and I want to talk to you. I say, Jue, what made you go and get engaged down

in Penzance? Why didn't you cast your eye in this direction?"

"Well, of all the impertinent things that I ever heard!" said Miss Juliott, very much inclined to box his ears. "Do you think I ever thought of marrying *you*?"

"Yes I do," he answered, coolly. "And you would throw over that parson in a minute, if I asked you—you know you would, Jue. But I'm not good enough for you."

"Indeed, you are not," she said, with a toss of the head. "I would take you for a gamekeeper, but not for a husband."

"Much need you'll have of a gamekeeper when you become Mrs. Tressider!" said he, with a rude laugh. "But I didn't mean myself, Jue. I meant that if you were going to marry a parson, you might have come here and had a choice. We can show you all sorts at this house—fat and lean, steeples and beer-barrels, bandy-legged and knock-kneed, whichever you like—you'll always find an ample assortment on these elegant premises. The stock is rather low just now,—I think we've only two or three; but you're supplied already, ain't you, Jue? Well, I never expected it of you. You were a good sort of chap at one time; but I suppose you can't climb trees any more now. There, I'll let you go into the house; all the servants are waiting for you. If you see my grandmother, tell her she must sit next me at dinner—if a parson sits next me, I'll kill him."

Just as Miss Juliott passed into the Hall, a tall, fair-haired, gentle-faced woman, dressed wholly in white, and stepping very softly and silently, came down the staircase, so that, in the twilight, she almost appeared to be some angel descending from heaven. She came forward to her visitor with a smile on the pale and wistful face, and took her hand and kissed her on the forehead; after which, and a few words of inquiry, Miss Penaluna was handed over to the charge of a maid. The tall, fair woman passed noiselessly on and went into a chamber at the further end of the hall and shut the door; and presently, the low, soft tones of a harmonium were heard, appearing to come from some considerable distance, and yet filling the house with a melancholy and slumberous music.

Surely it could not be this gentle music which brought to Master Harry's face a most un-Christian scowl? What harm could there be in a solitary widow wrapping herself up in her imaginative sorrow, and saturating the whole of her feeble, impressionable, and withal kindly, nature with a half-religious, half-poetic sentiment? What although those days which she devoted to services in memory of her relatives who were dead—and, most of all, in memory of her husband whom she had really loved—resembled, in some respects, the periods in which an opium-eater resolves to give himself up to the strange and indescribable sensations, beyond which he can imagine no form of happiness? Mrs. Trelyon was nothing of a zealot or devotee. She held no particular doctrines; she did not even countenance High Church usages, except in so far as music and painting and dim religious lights aided her endeavours to produce a species of exalted intoxication. She did not believe herself to be a wicked sinner; and she could not understand the earnest convictions and pronounced theology of the Dissenters around her. But she drank of religious emotion as other persons drink in beautiful music; and all the aids she could bring to bear in producing this feeling of blind ecstasy she had collected together in the private chapel attached to Trelyon Hall. At this very moment she was seated there alone. The last rays of the sun shone through narrow windows of painted glass, and carried dim colours with them into the dusk of the curiously-furnished little building. She herself sate before a large harmonium; and there was a stain of rose-colour and of violet on the white silk costume that she wore. It was one of her fancies that, though black might well represent the grief immediately following the funeral of one's friends, pure white was the more appropriate mourning when one had become accustomed to their loss, and had turned one's eyes to the shining realms which they inhabit. Mrs. Trelyon never went out of mourning for her husband, who had been dead over a dozen years; but the mourning was of pure white; so that she wandered through the large and empty rooms of Trelyon Hall, or about the grounds outside, like a ghost; and, like a ghost, she was ordinarily silent, and shy, and light-footed. She was not much of a companion for the rude, impetuous, self-willed

boy whose education she had handed over to grooms and gamekeepers, and to his own very pronounced instincts.

The frown that came over the lad's handsome face as he sat on the door-step, resuming his task of making trout-flies, was caused by the appearance of a clergyman, who came walking forward from one of the hidden paths in the garden. There was nothing really distressing or repulsive about the look of this gentleman; although, on the other hand, there was nothing very attractive. He was of middle age and middle height; he wore a rough brown beard, and moustache; his face was grey and full of lines; his forehead was rather narrow; and his eyes were shrewd and watchful. But for that occasional glance of the eyes, you would have taken him for a very ordinary, respectable, commonplace person, not deserving of notice, except for the length of his coat. When Master Harry saw him approach, however, a diabolical notion leapt into the young gentleman's head. He had been practising the throwing of flies against the wind; and on the lawn were the several pieces of paper, at different distances, at which he had aimed, while the slender trout-rod, with a bit of line and a fly at the end of it still dangling, was close by his hand. Instantaneously he put the rod against the wall, so that the hook was floating in front of the door just about the height of a man's head. Would the Rev. Mr. Barnes glance at the door-steps, rather than in front of him, in passing into the house, and so find an artificial fly fastened in his nose? Mr. Barnes was no such fool.

"It is a pleasant afternoon, Mr. Trelyon," he said, in grave and measured accents, as he came up.

Harry Trelyon nodded, as he smoothed out a bit of red-silk thread. Then Mr. Barnes went forward, carefully put aside the dangling fly, and went into the house.

"The fish won't rise to-night," said Master Harry to himself, with a grin on his face. "But parsons don't take the fly readily; you've got to catch them with bait; and the bait they like best is a widow's mite. And now, I suppose, I must go and dress for dinner; and don't I wish I was going down to Mrs. Rosewarne's parlour instead!"

But another had secured a better right to go into Mrs. Rosewarne's parlour.

CHAPTER VI.

THE — AMONG THE TAILORS.

THIS other gentleman was also dressing for Mrs. Trelyon's dinner-party, and he was in a pleased frame of mind. Never before, indeed, had Mr. Roscorla been so distinctly and consciously happy. That morning, when his anxiety had become almost painful—partly because he honestly liked Wenna Rosewarne and wanted to marry her, and partly because he feared the mortification of a refusal—her letter had come; and, as he read the trembling, ingenuous, and not-very-well-composed lines and sentences, a great feeling of satisfaction stole over him, and he thanked her a thousand times, in his heart, for having given him this relief. And he was the more pleased that it was so easy to deal with a written consent. He was under no embarrassment as to how he should express his gratitude, or as to whether he ought to kiss her. He could manage correspondence better than a personal interview. He sat down and wrote her a very kind and even affectionate letter, telling her that he would not intrude himself too soon upon her, especially as he had to go up to Trelyon Hall that evening; and saying, too, that, in any case, he could never expect to tell her how thankful he was to her. That she would discover from his conduct to her during their married life.

But, to his great surprise, Mr. Roscorla found that the writing and sending off of that letter did not allay the extraordinary nervous excitement that had laid hold of him. He could not rest. He called in his housekeeper, and rather astonished that elderly person by saying he was much pleased with her services, and thereupon he presented her with a sovereign to buy a gown. Then he went into the garden, and meant to occupy himself with his flowers; but he found himself staring at them without seeing them. Then he went back to his parlour and took a glass of sherry to steady his nerves—but in vain. Then he thought he would go down to the inn, and ask to see Wenna; but again he changed his mind, for how was he to meet the rest