

anything so pathetic. When she sang "Meet me by moonlight alone," he was delighted with the spirit and half-humorous, half-tender grace of the composition. As she sang "When other lips and other hearts," it seemed to him that there were no songs like the old-fashioned songs, and that the people who wrote those ballads were more frank, and simple, and touching in their speech than writers now-a-days. Somehow, he began to think of the drawing-rooms of a former generation; and of the pictures of herself his grandmother had drawn for him many a time. Had she a high waist to that white silk dress in which she ran away to Gretna; and did she have ostrich feathers on her head? Anyhow, he entirely believed what she had told him of the men of that generation. They were capable of doing daring things for the sake of a sweetheart. Of course his grandfather had done boldly and well in whirling the girl off to the Scottish borders; for who could tell what might have befallen her among ill-natured relatives and persecuted suitors?

Wenna Rosewarne was singing "We met; 'twas in a crowd; and I thought he would shun me." It is the song of a girl (must one explain so much in these later days?) who is in love with one man, and has been induced to marry another: she meets the former, and her heart is filled with shame, and anguish, and remorse. As Wenna sang the song, it seemed to this young man that there was an unusual pathos in her voice; and he was so carried away by the earnestness of her singing, that his heart swelled and rose up within him, and he felt himself ready to declare that such should not be her fate. This man who was coming back to marry her—was there no one ready to meet him and challenge his atrocious claim? Then the song ended; and, with a sudden disappointment, Trelyon recollected that he at least had no business to interfere. What right had he to think of saving her?

He had been idly turning over some volumes on the table. At last he came to a Prayer-book, of considerable size and elegance of binding. Carelessly looking at the fly-leaf, he saw that it was a present to Wenna Rosewarne, "with the very dearest love of her sister Mabyn." He passed his hand over the leaves, not noticing what he was

doing: suddenly he saw something which did effectually startle him into attention.

It was a sheet of paper with two slits cut into it at top and bottom. In these a carefully-pressed piece of None-so-pretty had been placed, and just underneath the flower was written in pencil "From H. T. to W. R., May 2nd, 18—." He shut the book quickly, as if his fingers had been burned; and then he sate quite silent, with his heart beating fast.

So she had kept the flower he had put in the basket of primroses. It had carried its message; and she still remained his friend.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## THE CUT DIRECT.

"WELL, mother," Miss Wenna said deliberately, after he had gone, "I never did see you so thoroughly enjoy a whole day."

"I was thinking the same about you, Wenna," the mother answered, with an amused look.

"That is true enough, mother," the girl confessed, in her simple way. "He is so good-natured, so full of spirits, and careless, that one gets quite as careless and happy as himself. It is a great comfort, mother, to be with anybody who doesn't watch the meaning of every word you say—don't you think so? And I hope I wasn't rude—do you think I was rude?"

"Why, child, I don't think you could be rude to a fox that was eating your chickens. You would ask him to take a chair and not hurry himself."

"Well, I must write to Mabyn now," Wenna said, with a business-like air, "and thank her for posting me this Prayer-book. I suppose she didn't know I had my small one with me."

She took up the book, for she was sitting on the chair that Harry Trelyon had just vacated. She had no sooner done so than she caught sight of the sheet of paper with the dried flower and the inscription in Mabyn's handwriting. She stared, with something of a look of fear on her face.

"Mother," she said, in quite an altered voice, "did you notice if Mr. Trelyon was looking at this Prayer-book?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," Mrs. Rosewarne said. "I should think he went over every book on the table."

The girl said nothing; but she took the book in her hand and carried it up to her own room. She stood for a moment irresolute; then she took the sheet of paper with the flowers on it, and tore it in a hundred pieces, and threw them into the empty grate. Then she cried a little—as a girl must; and finally went down again and wrote a letter to Mabyn, which rather astonished that young lady.

"MY DEAR MABYN"—so the letter ran—"I am exceedingly angry with you. I did not think you were capable of such folly—I might call it by a worse name if I thought you really meant what you seem to mean. I have just torn up the worthless scrap of flower you so carefully preserved for me into a thousand pieces; but you will be glad to know that in all probability Mr. Trelyon saw it on the paper, and the initials, too, which you put there. I cannot tell you how pained and angry I am. If he did place that flower intentionally among the primroses, it was most impertinent of him; but he is often impertinent in joking. What must he think of me that I should seem to have taken this seriously, and treasured up that miserable and horrid piece of weed, and put his initials below it, and the important date? You put thoughts into my head that cover me with shame. I should not be fit to live if I were what you take me to be. If I thought there was another human being in the world who could imagine or suspect what you apparently desire, I would resolve this moment never to see Mr. Trelyon again; and much harm that would do either him or me! But I am too proud to think that anyone could imagine such a thing. Nor did I expect that to come from my own sister, who ought to know what my true relations are with regard to Mr. Trelyon. I like him very much, as I told him to his face two days before we left Eglosilyan, *and that will show you what our relations are.* I think he is a very frank, generous, and good young man, and a clever and cheerful companion; and my mother has to-day to thank him for about the pleasantest little trip she has ever enjoyed. But as for your wishing me to

preserve a flower that he sent, or that you think he sent to me, why, I feel my face burning at the thought of what you suggest. And what can I say to him now, supposing he has seen it? Can I tell him that my own sister thought such things of me? Perhaps, after all, the simplest way to set matters right will be for me to break off the acquaintance altogether; and that will show him whether I was likely to have treasured up a scrap of London-pride in my Prayer-book. I am, your loving sister,

"WENNA ROSEWARNE."

Meanwhile, Harry Trelyon was walking up and down the almost empty thoroughfare by the side of the sea; the stars overhead shining clearly in the dark night, the dimly-seen waves falling monotonously on the shelving beach.

"To keep a flower that is nothing," he was saying to himself. "All girls do that, no matter who gives it to them. I suppose she has lots more, all with the proper initials and date attached."

It was not an agreeable reflection; he returned to other matters.

"If she were to care for me a little bit, would it be mean of me to try to carry her off from that man? Is it possible that he has the same regard for her that I have? In that case it would be mean. Now, when I think of her, the whole world seems filled with her presence somehow, and everything is changed. When I hear the sea in the morning, I think of her, and wonder where she is; when I see a fine day, I hope she is enjoying it somewhere; the whole of Penzance has become magical. It is no longer the same town. I used to come to it, and never see it, in the old days, when one was busy about stables, and the pilchard-fishing, and the reports of the mines. Now the whole of Penzance has got a sort of charm in it, since Wenna Rosewarne has come to it. I look at the houses, and wonder if the people inside know anybody fit to compare with her; and one becomes grateful to the good weather for shining round about her and making her happy. I suppose the weather knows what she deserves."

Then he began to argue the question as to whether it

would be fair and honourable to seek to take away from another man the woman who had pledged herself to marry him ; and of course an easy and definite decision is sure to be arrived at when counsel on both sides, and jury, and judges sitting *in banco*, are all one person, who conducts and closes the case as it suits himself.

He began by assuming such facts as suited his arguments, and ended by selecting and confirming such arguments as suited himself. Wenna Rosewarne cared nothing for Mr. Roscorla. She would be miserable if she married him ; her own sister was continually hinting as much. Mr. Roscorla cared nothing for her except in so far as she might prove a pretty housewife for him. The selfishness that would sacrifice for its own purposes a girl's happiness was of a peculiarly despicable sort which ought to be combated, and deserved no mercy. Therefore, and because of all these things, Harry Trelyon was justified in trying to win Wenna Rosewarne's love.

One by one the people who had been strolling up and down the dark thoroughfare left it ; he was almost alone now. He walked along to the house in which the Rosewarne's were. There was no light in any of the windows. But might she not be sitting up there by herself, looking out on the starlit heavens, and listening to the waves ? He wished to be able to say good-night to her once more.

How soon would she be up and out on the morrow ? Early in the morning, when the young day was rising over the grey sea and the sea-winds coming freshly in as if they were returning from the cold night ? If he could but see her at daybreak, with all the world asleep around them, and with only themselves to watch the growing wonders of the dawn, might not he say something to her then that she would not be vexed to hear, and persuade her that a new sort of life lay before her if she would only enter it along with him ? That was the notion that he continually dwelt on for self-justification, when he happened to take the trouble to justify himself. The crisis of this girl's life was approaching. Other errors might be retrieved ; that one, once committed, never. If he could only see her now, this is what he would say :—“ *We can only live but once, Wenna ;*

*and this for us two would be life—our only chance of it. Whatever else may happen, that is no matter ; let us make sure of this one chance, and face the future together, you full of sweetness and trust, I having plenty of courage for both. We will treat objectors and objections as they may arise—afterwards : perhaps they will be prudent and keep out of our way.”* And, indeed, he convinced himself that this was Wenna Rosewarne's one chance of securing happiness for her life, assuming, in a way, that he had love, as well as courage, sufficient for both.

He was early up next morning, and down on the promenade ; but the day was not likely to tempt Wenna to come out just then. A grey fog hung over land and sea ; the sea itself being a dull, leaden plain. Trelyon walked about, however, talking to everybody, as was his custom ; and everybody said the fog would clear and a fine day follow. This, in fact, happened ; and still Wenna did not make her appearance. The fog over the sea seemed to separate itself into clouds ; there was a dim, yellow light in the breaks. These breaks widened ; there was a glimmer of blue. Then, on the leaden plain, a glare of white light fell, twinkling in innumerable stars on the water. Everything promised a clear, bright day.

As a last resource, he thought he would go and get Juliott Penaluna, and persuade that young lady to come and be introduced to the Rosewarne's. At first Miss Penaluna refused point-blank. She asked him how he could expect her to do such a thing. But then her Cousin Harry happened to be civil, and indeed kind in his manner to her ; and when he was in one of those moods there was nothing she could refuse him. She went and got ready with an air of resignation on her comely face.

“ Mind, Harry, I am not responsible,” she said, when she came back. “ I am afraid I shall get into awful trouble about it.”

“ And who will interfere ? ” said the young man, just as if he were looking about for some one anxious to be thrown from the top of the tower on St. Michael's Mount.

“ I shall be accused of conniving, you know ; and I think I am very good-natured to do so much for you, Harry.”

“ I think you are, Jue ; you are a thoroughly good sort

of girl when you like to be—that's a fact. And now you will see whether what I have said about Miss Rosewarne is all gammon or not."

"My poor boy, I wouldn't say a word against her for the world. Do I want my head wrenched off? But if any one says anything to me about what I may do to-day, I shall have to tell the truth; and do you know what that is, Harry? I do really believe you are in love with that girl, past all argument; and there never was one of your family who would listen to reason. I know quite well what you will do. If she cares ever so little for you, you will marry her in spite of everybody, and probably against her own wish; if she doesn't care for you, you will revenge yourself on the happy man of her choice, and probably murder him. Well, it isn't my fault. I know what your mother will say——"

"Ah, you don't know, Jue, what my mother thinks of her," he said confidently.

"Oh yes; mothers think very well of a girl until they discover that she is going to marry their son."

"Oh, stuff! why, the inconsistency——"

"It is the privilege of women to be inconsistent, Harry. Your mother will detest that girl if you try to marry her."

"I don't care."

"Of course not. No man of your family cares for anything that interferes with his own wishes. I suppose there's no use in my trying to show you what a fearful amount of annoyance and trouble you are preparing for yourself?"

"None; I'll take it as it comes—I'm not afraid."

They got down to the promenade; the forenoon was now bright and cheerful: a good many folks had come out to enjoy the sunlight and the cool sea-breeze. Miss Juliott was not at all disinclined to walk there with her handsome cousin, though he had forgotten his gloves, and was clearly not paying her very special attention.

"Jue," he said, suddenly, "I can see Miss Rosewarne—right at the end of this road—can't you?"

"I haven't got the eyes of a hawk, you stupid boy," his cousin said.

"Oh, but I can recognize her dress a dozen times as far away. These are her pet colours at present—a soft cream-

colour and black, with bits of dark red—can you see now?"

"I never before saw you pay the least attention to a lady's dress."

"Because you don't know how *she* dresses," he said, proudly.

She was coming along the parade, all alone.

"Well, it *is* a pretty dress," Miss Juliott said, "and I like the look of her face, Harry. You can't expect one girl to say any more than that of another girl, can you?"

"This is a very nice way of being able to introduce you," he said. "I suppose you will be able to chaperon each other afterwards, when her mother can't go out?"

Wenna was coming quietly along, apparently rather pre-occupied. Sometimes she looked out, with her dark, earnest, and yet wistful eyes, at the great plain of water quivering in the sunshine; she paid little heed to the people who went by. When, at length, she did see Harry Trelyon, she was quite near him, and she had just time to glance for a moment at his companion. The next moment—he could not tell how it all happened—she passed him with a slight bow of recognition, courteous enough, but nothing more. There was no especial look of friendliness in her eyes.

He stood there, rather bewildered.

"That is about as good as the cut direct, Harry," his cousin said. "Come along—don't stand there."

"Oh, but there's some mistake, Jue," he said.

"A girl never does a thing of that sort by mistake. Either she is vexed with you for walking with me—and that is improbable, for I doubt whether she saw me—or she thinks the ardour of your acquaintance should be moderated, and there I should agree with her. You don't seem so vexed as one might have expected, Harry."

"Vexed!" he said. "Why, can't you tell by that girl's face that she could do nothing capricious or unkind? Of course she has a reason; and I will find it out."

## CHAPTER XXV.

## NOT THE LAST WORD.

AS soon as he could decently leave his cousin at home, he did ; and then he walked hastily down to the house in which Mrs. Rosewarne had taken rooms. Miss Rosewarne was not at home, the small maid-servant said. Was Mrs. Rosewarne ? Yes ; so he would see her.

He went upstairs, never thinking how his deep trouble about so insignificant an incident would strike a third person.

"Mrs. Rosewarne," he said, right out, "I want you to tell me if Wenna wishes our acquaintance to end. Has she been speaking to you ? Just now, she passed me in the street as if she did not wish to see me again."

"Probably," replied Mrs. Rosewarne, amused as well as surprised by the young man's impetuosity, "she did not see you then. Wenna often passes people so. Most likely she was thinking about other things ; for she had another letter from Jamaica just before she went out."

"Oh, she has had another letter from Jamaica this morning !" Trelyon said, with an angry light appearing in his eyes. "That is it, is it ?"

"I don't understand you," Mrs. Rosewarne was saying, when both of them heard Wenna enter below.

"Mrs. Rosewarne," he said, with a sudden entreaty in his voice, "would you mind letting me see Wenna alone for a couple of minutes ? I want to ask her if she is offended with me—you won't mind, will you ?"

"Not in the least," she said, good-naturedly ; and then she added at the door, "Mind, Mr. Trelyon, Wenna is easily hurt. You must speak gently to her."

About a minute afterwards, Wenna, having laid her hat and shawl aside, came into the room. When she found Trelyon there, alone, she almost shrank back, and her face paled somewhat ; then she forced herself to go forward and shake hands with him, though her face still wore a frightened and constrained look.

"Wenna," he said, "don't go away. I want to speak to

you for a minute. You are offended with me about something, and I want you to tell me why. If you wish our friendship to cease, say so, and I will obey you ; but you must tell me why first."

"I am not offended with you, Mr. Trelyon," she said, in a low and nervous voice. "Do not think that. But—but I think it will be better if you will let our friendship cease, as you say."

For a second he stared : then something of firmness came about his mouth.

"Oh, no," he said, "I will not, in this fashion. You've got to tell me what is the matter first. Now remember this. Not very long ago you chose to quarrel with me about nothing—absolutely about nothing. You know quite well that I meant no harm to you by lending Mr. Roscorla that money ; yet you must needs flare up and give it me as hot as you could, all for nothing. What could I do ? Why, only wait until you saw what a mistake you had made."

"It was very wrong of me," she said. "I ask your forgiveness. But now it is quite different. I am not angry with you at all. I should like to remain your friend ; and yet I think it better not. I—I cannot explain to you, Mr. Trelyon ; and I am sure you won't ask me, when I say so."

He looked at her for a moment, and then he said, gently and yet firmly—

"Look here, Wenna. You think I am only a boy. That may or may not be ; but I am going to talk reasonably to you for once. Come over to this chair by the window, and sit down."

She followed him in passive obedience. She took the one chair, he the other.

"Perhaps I am only a boy," he said ; "but I have knocked about a good deal, and I have kept my eyes as wide open as most folks. I suppose ill-natured people might say that, as I had nothing to do at Eglosilyan, I wanted to have a flirtation with the only girl who was handy. I know better. Year after year I saw more and more of you, bit by bit ; and that after I had been abroad or living in other places in England from time to time. I got to believe that I had never seen anywhere any girl or woman who was so honest as you are, and good in a dozen

secret ways that needed a deal of discovering. I found out far more about you than you imagined. I heard of you in cottages that you never knew I was in; and everything I heard made me respect you more and more. Mind this too, I had no sort of personal liking for the sort of thing you were doing. I don't admire muggy little rooms, and poverty, and sick people, as appealing to a fine sentiment. There never was anything of the parson or of the benevolent old lady about me. I would rather give half-a-crown to an impertinent little schoolboy who had just whopped another boy bigger than himself, than give a halfpenny tract to a sickly infant in its mother's arms; that's original sin in me, I suppose. But all that squalid sort of work you were in only made the jewel shine the more. I used to think I should like to marry a very grand woman, who could be presented at Court without a tremor, who would come into a drawing-room as if she was conferring a favour on the world at large; and I certainly never thought I should find the best woman I had ever seen in back-kitchens sewing pinafores for children. And then, when I found her there, wasn't it natural I should put some store by her friendship? I suppose you didn't know what I thought of you, Wenna, because I kept chaffing you and Mabyn? I have told you something of it now; and now I want you to say whether you have a right to shunt me off like this without a word of explanation."

She sate quite still, silent and nervous. The rude and impetuous eloquence of his speech, broken by many a hesitating stammer, had touched her. There was more thoughtfulness and tenderness in this wild lad than she had supposed.

"How can I explain?" she burst out, suddenly, "I should cover myself with shame!"

"And what have you to be ashamed of?" he said, with a stare.

The distress she was obviously suffering was so great that he had almost a mind to take her at her word, and leave the house without further ado. Just at this moment, when he was considering what would be the most generous thing to do, she seemed to nerve herself to speak to him, and in a low and measured voice she said—

"Yes, I will tell you. I have had a letter this morning from Mr. Roscorla. He asks me if it is true that you are paying me such attention that people notice it; and he asks me if that is how I keep my promise to him."

Something like a quiver of rage passed through the young man at this moment, but his teeth were kept firmly together. She did not look up to his face.

"That is not all. I must tell you that I was deeply shocked and grieved by this letter; but on looking back over the past six weeks I think a suspicious person might have been justified in complaining to Mr. Roscorla. And—and—and, Mr. Trelyon, did you see that dried flower in my Prayer-book last night?"

Her resolution was fast ebbing away; he could see that her hands were clasped piteously together.

"Yes, I did," he said, boldly.

"And oh! what could you have thought of me!" she cried, in her distress. "Indeed, Mr. Trelyon, it was all a mistake. I did not keep the flower—I did not, indeed. And when I thought you had seen it, I could have died for shame."

"And why?" he said, in a way that made her lift up her startled eyes to his face. There was a strange look there, as of a man who had suddenly resolved to dare his fate. "For you have been frank with me, and so will I be with you. Why should you not have kept that flower? Yes, I sent it to you; and with all the purpose that such a thing could carry. Yes, you may be as angry as you please; only listen, Wenna. You don't love that man whom you are engaged to marry; you know in your heart that you do not believe in his love for you; and are you surprised that people should wish to have you break off an engagement that will only bring you misery?"

"Mr. Trelyon!"

"Wenna, one minute—you must hear me. Do with my offer what you like—only here it is: give me the power to break off this engagement, and I will. Give me the right to do that! Don't mind me in the matter. It is true I love you—there, I will say it again: there is nothing I think of from morning till night but my love for you; and if you would say that some time I might ask you to be my

wife, you would give me more happiness than you could dream of. But I don't wish that now. I will remain your friend, if you like, Wenna; only let me do this thing for you; and when you are free, you can then say Yes or No."

She rose, not proud and indignant, but weeping bitterly.

"I have deserved this," she said, apparently overwhelmed with mortification and self-reproach. "I have earned this shame, and I must bear it. I do not blame you, Mr. Trelyon—it is I who have done this. How many weeks is it since the man left England to whom I promised to be faithful? and already—but this I can do, Mr. Trelyon: I will bid you good-bye now, and I will never see you again."

Her face was quite pale. She held out her hand.

"No," he said firmly. "We do not part like that, Wenna. First, let me say that you have nothing to accuse yourself of. You have done nothing, and said nothing, of which any man, however mean and suspicious, could complain. Perhaps I was too hasty in speaking of my love for you. In that case, I've got to pay for my folly."

"And it is folly, Mr. Trelyon!" she said, passionately, and yet with nothing but tenderness in her face. "How could you have thought of marrying me? Why, the future that ought to lie before you is far more than you can imagine yet; and you would go and hamper it by marrying an innkeeper's daughter! It is folly, indeed; and you will see that very soon. But—but I am very sorry all this has occurred; it is another grief to me that I have troubled you. I think I was born to bring grief to all my friends."

He was anxiously debating what he should do; and he needed all his wits at that moment, for his own feelings were strong within him, and clamouring for expression. Would he insist? Would he bear down all opposition? Happily, quieter counsels prevailed; for there was no mistaking the absolute truthfulness of what the girl had said.

"Well, Wenna," he said, "I will do anything you like, only to remain your friend. Is that possible? Will you forgive all that I have said if I make you a promise not to repeat it, and never again to mention your engagement to Mr. Roscorla?"

"No, we must part now altogether," she said slowly.

Then, by haphazard, she glanced up at his face for a moment, and there was a great sadness in her eyes. "It is a hard thing to part. Perhaps it will not be necessary that you should never come to see me. But we must not be friends as we have been; for I have my duty to do towards him."

"Then I may come to see you sometimes?"

She hesitated.

"You may come to see my mother sometimes. And I will always think of you as a dear friend, whether I see you or not."

He went outside, and drew a long breath.

"I had to keep a tight grip on the reins that time," he was thinking to himself; "a precious tight grip; but I did it."

He thought of the look there was in her eyes when she finally bid him good-bye. His face grew the happier as he thought of it. He was clearly not at all down-hearted about his rejection; on the contrary, he went and told his Cousin Juliott that the little affair of the morning had been quite satisfactorily arranged; that Miss Wenna and he were very good friends again; and that it was quite a mistake to imagine that she was already married to Mr. Roscorla.

"Harry," said his Cousin, "I strictly forbid you to mention that gentleman's name."

"Why, Jue?" he said.

"Because I will not listen to the bad language you invariably use whenever you speak of him; and you ought to remember that you are in a clergyman's house. I wonder Miss Rosewarne is not ashamed to have your acquaintance; but I dare say you amend your ways when you are in her presence. She'll have plenty to reform if ever she takes you for a husband."

"That's true enough, Jue," the young man said, penitently. "I believe I'm a bad lot; but then, look at the brilliant contrast which the future will present. You know that my old grandmother is always saying to me, 'Harry, you were born with as many manners as most folks; and you've used none; so you'll have a rare stock to come and go on when you begin.'"