

panions, in silence, and with a great apprehension filling their hearts, saw and recognized the story she had told.

"Mr. Trelyon," said Mrs. Rosewarne, "you must not remain here."

Mechanically he obeyed her. The gentleman who had been riding along the road had dismounted, and, fearing some accident had occurred, had come forward to offer his assistance. When he was told how matters stood, he at once gave Trelyon his horse to ride in to Penzance; and then the carriage was driven off also, at a considerably less rapid pace.

That evening Trelyon, having got into warm clothes and dined, went along to ask how Wenna was. His heart beat hurriedly as he knocked at the door. He had intended merely making the inquiry, and coming away again; but the servant said that Mrs. Rosewarne wished to see him.

He went upstairs, and found Mrs. Rosewarne alone. These two looked at each other; that single glance told everything. They were both aware of the secret that had been revealed.

For an instant there was dead silence between them; and then Mrs. Rosewarne, with a great sadness in her voice, despite its studied calmness, said—

"Mr. Trelyon, we need say nothing of what has occurred. There are some things that are best not spoken of. But I can trust to you not to seek to see Wenna before you leave here. She is quite recovered—only a little nervous, you know, and frightened. To-morrow she will be quite well again."

"You will bid her good-bye for me," he said.

But for the tight clasp of the hand between these two, it was an ordinary parting. He put on his hat and went out. Perhaps it was the cold sea air that had made his face so pale.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## MABYN DREAMS.

"YES, mother," said Mabyn, bursting into the room, "here I am; and Jennifer's downstairs, with my box; and I am to stay with you here for another week or a fortnight; and Wenna's to go back at once, for the whole world is convulsed because of Mr. Trelyon's coming of age; and Mrs. Trelyon has sent and taken all our spare rooms; and father says Wenna must come back directly, for it's always 'Wenna, do this,' and 'Wenna, do that;' and if Wenna isn't there, of course the sky will tumble down on the earth—mother, what's the matter, and where's Wenna!"

Mabyn was suddenly brought up in the middle of her voluble speech by the strange expression on her mother's face.

"Oh, Mabyn, something dreadful has happened to our Wenna?"

Mabyn turned deadly white.

"Is she ill?" she said, almost in a whisper.

"No, not ill; but a great trouble has fallen on her."

Then the mother, in a low voice, apparently fearful that any one should overhear, began to tell her younger daughter of all she had learnt within the past day or two—how young Trelyon had been bold enough to tell Wenna that he loved her; how Wenna had dallied with her conscience and been loth to part with him; how at length she had as good as revealed to him that she loved him in return; and how she was now overwhelmed and crushed beneath a sense of her own faithlessness and the impossibility of making reparation to her betrothed.

"Only to think, Mabyn," said the mother, in accents of despair, "that all this distress should have come about in such a quiet and unexpected way! Who could have foreseen it? Why, of all people in the world, you would have thought our Wenna was the least likely to have any misery of this sort; and many a time, don't you remember, I used to say it was so wise of her getting engaged to a prudent and elderly man, who would save her from the plagues and trials that young girls often suffer at the hands of their

lovers. I thought she was so comfortably settled. Everything promised her a quiet and gentle life. And now this sudden shock has come upon her, she seems to think she is not fit to live, and she goes on in such a wild way——”

“Where is she?” Mabyn said, abruptly.

“No, no, no,” the mother said, anxiously. “You must not speak a word to her, Mabyn. You must not let her know I have told you anything about it. Leave her to herself for a while at least; if you spoke to her, she would take it you meant to accuse her; for she says you warned her, and she would pay no heed. Leave her to herself, Mabyn.”

“Then where is Mr. Trelyon?” said Mabyn, with some touch of indignation in her voice. “What is he doing? Is he leaving her to herself too?”

“I don’t know what you mean, Mabyn,” her mother said, timidly.

“Why doesn’t he come forward like a man, and marry her?” said Mabyn, boldly. “Yes, that is what I would do, if I were a man. She has sent him away? Yes, of course. That is right and proper. And Wenna will go on doing what is right and proper, if you allow her, to the very end, and the end will be a lifetime of misery, that’s all. No, my notion is that she should do something that is not right and is quite improper, if only it makes her happy; and you’ll see if I don’t get her to do it. Why, mother, haven’t you had eyes to see that these two have been in love for years? Nobody in the world had ever the least control over him but her; he would do anything for Wenna; and she—why she always came back singing after she had met and spoken to him. And then you talk about a prudent and sensible husband! I don’t want Wenna to marry a watchful, mean, old, stocking-darning cripple, who will creep about the house all day, and peer into cupboards, and give her fourpence-halfpenny a week to live on. I want her to marry a man, one that is strong enough to protect her; and I tell you, mother—I’ve said it before and I say it again—she *shall not* marry Mr. Roscorla!”

“Mabyn!” said her mother, “you are getting madder than ever. Your dislike to Mr. Roscorla is most unreasonable. A cripple!—why——”

“Oh, mother!” Mabyn cried, with a bright light on her

face, “only think of our Wenna being married to Mr. Trelyon, and how happy, and pleased, and pretty she would look as they went walking together! And then how proud he would be to have so nice a wife: and he would joke about her, and be very impertinent, but he would simply worship her all the same and do everything he could to please her. And he would take her away and show her all the beautiful places abroad; and he would have a yacht, too; and he would give her a fine house in London; and don’t you think our Wenna would fascinate everybody with her mouse-like ways, and her nice, small steps? And if they did have any trouble, wouldn’t she be better to have somebody with her, not timid, and anxious, and pettifogging, but somebody who wouldn’t be cast down, but make her as brave as himself?”

Miss Mabyn was a shrewd young woman, and she saw that her mother’s quick, imaginative, sympathetic nature was being captivated by this picture. She determined to have her as an ally.

“And don’t you see, mother, how it all lies within her reach? Harry Trelyon is in love with her—there was no need for him to say so—I knew it long before he did. And she—why, she has told him now that she cares for him; and if I were he, I know what I’d do in his place. What is there in the way? Why, a—a sort of understanding——”

“A promise, Mabyn,” said the mother.

“Well, a promise,” said the girl, desperately, and colouring somewhat. “But it was a promise given in ignorance—she didn’t know—how could she know? Everybody knows that such promises are constantly broken. If you are in love with somebody else, what’s the good of your keeping the promise? Now, mother, won’t you argue with her? See here. If she keeps her promise, there’s three people miserable. If she breaks it, there’s only one—and I doubt whether he’s got the capacity to be miserable. That’s two to one, or three to one, is it? Now will you argue with her, mother?”

“Mabyn, Mabyn,” the mother said, with a shake of the head, but evidently pleased with the voice of the tempter, “your fancy has run away with you. Why, Mr. Trelyon has never proposed to marry her.”

"I know he wants to," said Mabyn, confidently.

"How can you know?"

"I'll ask him and prove it to you."

"Indeed," said the mother, sadly, "it is no thought of marriage that is in Wenna's head just now. The poor girl is full of remorse and apprehension. I think she would like to start at once for Jamaica, and fling herself at Mr. Roscorla's feet, and confess her fault. I am glad she has to go back to Eglosilyan; that may distract her mind in a measure; at present she is suffering more than she shows."

"Where is she?"

"In her own room, tired out and fast asleep. I looked in a few minutes ago."

Mabyn went upstairs, after having seen that Jennifer had properly bestowed her box. Wenna had just risen from the sofa, and was standing in the middle of the room. Her younger and taller sister went blithely forward to her, kissed her as usual, took no notice of the sudden flush of red that sprang into her face, and proceeded to state, in a business-like fashion, all the arrangements that had to be made.

"Have you been enjoying yourself, Wenna?" Mabyn said, with a fine air of indifference.

"Oh, yes," Wenna answered; adding hastily, "don't you think mother is greatly improved?"

"Wonderfully. I almost forgot she was an invalid. How lucky you are to be going back to see all the fine doings at the Hall; of course they will ask you up."

"They will do nothing of the kind," Wenna said, with some asperity, and with her face turned aside.

"Lord and Lady Amersham have already come to the Hall."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes; they said some time ago that there was a good chance of Mr. Trelyon marrying the daughter—the tall girl with yellow hair, you remember?"

"And the stooping shoulders? yes. I should think they would be glad to get her married to anybody. She's thirty."

"Oh, Wenna!"

"Mr. Trelyon told me so," said Wenna, sharply.

"And they are a little surprised," continued Mabyn, in the same indifferent way, but watching her sister all the while, "that Mr. Trelyon has remained absent until so near the time. But I suppose he means to take Miss Penaluna with him. She lives here, doesn't she? They used to say there was a chance of a marriage there, too."

"Mabyn, what do you mean?" Wenna said, suddenly and angrily. "What do I care about Mr. Trelyon's marriage? What is it you mean?"

But the firmness of her lips began to yield; there was an ominous trembling about them; and at the same moment her younger sister caught her to her bosom, and hid her face there, and hushed her wild sobbing. She would hear no confession. She knew enough. Nothing would convince her that Wenna had done anything wrong; so there was no use speaking about it.

"Wenna," she said, in a low voice, "have you sent him any message?"

"Oh, no, no," the girl said, trembling. "I fear even to think of him; and when you mentioned his name, Mabyn, it seemed to choke me. And now I have to go back to Eglosilyan; and oh! if you only knew how I dread that, Mabyn!"

Mabyn's conscience was struck. She it was who had done this thing. She had persuaded her father that her mother needed another week or fortnight at Penzance; she had frightened him by telling him what bother he would suffer if Wenna were not back at the inn during the festivities at Trelyon Hall: and then she had offered to go and take her sister's post. George Rosewarne was heartily glad to exchange the one daughter for the other. Mabyn was too independent. She thwarted him; sometimes she insisted on his bestirring himself. Wenna, on the other hand, went about the place like some invisible spirit of order, making everything comfortable for him, without noise or worry. He was easily led to issue the necessary orders; and so it was that Mabyn thought she was doing her sister a friendly turn by sending her back to Eglosilyan in order to join in congratulating Harry Trelyon on his entrance into man's estate. Now Mabyn found that she had only plunged her sister into deeper trouble.

What could be done to save her ?

"Wenna," said Mabyn, rather timidly, "do you think he has left Penzance?"

Wenna turned to her with a sudden look of entreaty in her face.

"I cannot bear to speak of him, Mabyn. I have no right to—I hope you will not ask me. Just now I—I am going to write a letter—to Jamaica. I shall tell the whole truth. It is for him to say what must happen now. I have done him a great injury. I did not intend it; I had no thought of it; but my own folly and thoughtlessness brought it about, and I have to bear the penalty. I don't think he need be anxious about punishing me."

She turned away with a tired look on her face, and began to get out her writing materials. Mabyn watched her for a moment or two in silence; then she left and went to her own room, saying to herself, "Punishment? whoever talks of punishment will have to address himself to me."

When she got to her own room, she wrote these words on a piece of paper—in her firm, bold, free hand—"A friend would like to see you for a minute in front of the Post Office in the middle of the town." She put that in an envelope, and addressed the envelope to Harry Trelyon, Esq. Still keeping her bonnet on, she went downstairs, and had a little general conversation with her mother, in the course of which she quite casually asked the name of the hotel at which Mr. Trelyon had been staying. Then, just as if she were going out to the parade to have a look at the sea, she carelessly left the house.

The dusk of the evening was growing to dark. A white mist lay over the sea. The solitary lamps were being lit along the parade—each golden star shining sharply in the pale purple twilight; but a more confused glow of orange showed where the little town was busy in its narrow thoroughfares. She got hold of a small boy, gave him the letter, sixpence, and his instructions. He was to ask if the gentleman were in the hotel. If not, had he left Penzance, or would he return that night? In any case the boy was not to leave the letter unless Mr. Trelyon was there.

The small boy returned in a couple of minutes. The gentleman was there, and had taken the letter. So Mabyn

at once set out for the centre of the town, and soon found herself in among a mass of huddled houses, bright shops, and thoroughfares pretty well filled with strolling sailors, women getting home from market, and townspeople come out to gossip. She had accurately judged that she would be less observed in this busy little place than out on the parade; and as it was the first appointment she had ever made to meet a young gentleman alone, she was just a little nervous.

Trelyon was there. He had recognized the handwriting in a moment. He had no time to ridicule or even to think of Mabyn's school-girl affectation of secrecy; he had at once rushed off to the place of appointment, and that by a short cut of which she had no knowledge.

"Mabyn, what's the matter? Is Wenna ill?" he said—forgetting in his anxiety even to shake hands with her.

"Oh no, she isn't," said Mabyn, rather coldly and defiantly. If he was in love with her sister, it was for him to make advances.

"Oh no, she's pretty well, thank you," continued Mabyn, indifferently. "But she never could stand much worry. I wanted to see you about that. She is going back to Eglosilyan to-morrow; and you must promise not to have her asked up to the Hall while these grand doings are going on—you must not try to see her and persuade her—if you could keep out of her way altogether—"

"You know all about it, then, Mabyn?" he said, suddenly; and even in the dusky light of the street, she could see the rapid look of gladness that filled his face. "And you are not going to be vexed, eh? You'll remain friends with me, Mabyn—you will tell me how she is from time to time. Don't you see I must go away—and, by Jove, Mabyn, I've got such a lot to tell you!"

She looked round.

"I can't talk to you here. Won't you walk back by the other road behind the town?" he said.

Yes, she would go willingly with him now. The anxiety of his face, the almost wild way in which he seemed to beg for her help and friendship, the mere impatience of his manner pleased and satisfied her. This was as it should be.

Here was no sweetheart by line and rule, demonstrating his affection by argument, acting at all times with a studied propriety; but a real, true lover, full of passionate hope and as passionate fear, ready to do anything, and yet not knowing what to do. Above all he was "brave and handsome, like a prince!" and therefore a fit lover for her gentle sister.

"Oh, Mr. Trelyon," she said, with a great burst of confidence, "I did so fear that you might be indifferent!"

"Indifferent!" said he, with some bitterness. "Perhaps that is the best thing that could happen; only it isn't very likely to happen. Did you ever see anybody placed as I am placed, Mabyn? Nothing but stumbling-blocks every way I look. Our family have always been hot-headed and hot-tempered; if I told my grandmother at this minute how I am situated, I believe she would say, 'Why don't you go like a man, and run off with the girl?'—"

"Yes!" said Mabyn, quite delighted.

"But suppose you've bothered and worried the girl until you feel ashamed of yourself, and she begs of you to leave her, aren't you bound in fair manliness to go?"

"I don't know," said Mabyn, doubtfully.

"Well, I do. It would be very mean to pester her. I'm off as soon as these people leave the Hall. But then there are other things. There is your sister engaged to this fellow out in Jamaica—"

"Isn't he a horrid wretch?" said Mabyn, between her teeth.

"Oh, I quite agree with you. If I could have it out with him now—but after all, what harm has the man done? Is it any wonder he wanted to get Wenna for a wife?"

"Oh, but he cheated her," said Mabyn, warmly. "He persuaded her, and reasoned with her, and argued her into marrying him. And what business had he to tell her that love between young people is all bitterness and trial; and that a girl is only safe when she marries a prudent and elderly man who will look after her? Why, it is to look after him that he wants her. Wenna is going to him as a housekeeper and a nurse. Only—only, Mr. Trelyon, *she hasn't gone to him just yet!*"

"Oh, I don't think he did anything unfair," the young man said, gloomily. "It doesn't matter anyhow. What I was going to say is that my grandmother's notion of what one of our family ought to do in such a case can't be carried out: whatever you may think of a man, you can't go and try to rob him of his sweetheart behind his back. Even supposing she was willing to break with him, which she is not, you've at least got to wait to give the fellow a chance."

"There I quite disagree with you, Mr. Trelyon," Mabyn said, warmly. "Wait to give him a chance to make our Wenna miserable? Is she to be made the prize of a sort of fight? If I were a man, I'd pay less attention to my own scruples and try what I could do for her. . . . Oh, Mr. Trelyon—I—I beg your pardon."

Mabyn suddenly stopped on the road, overwhelmed with confusion. She had been so warmly thinking of her sister's welfare that she had been hurried into something worse than an indiscretion.

"What, then, Mabyn?" said he, profoundly surprised.

"I beg your pardon. I have been so thoughtless. I had no right to assume that you wished—that you wished for the—*for the opportunity—*"

"Of marrying Wenna?" said he, with a great stare. "But what else have we been speaking about? Or rather, I suppose we did assume it. Well, the more I think of it, Mabyn, the more I am maddened by all these obstacles, and by the notion of all the things that may happen. That's the bad part of my going away. How can I tell what may happen? He might come back, and insist on her marrying him right off."

"Mr. Trelyon," said Mabyn, speaking very clearly, "there's one thing you may be sure of. If you let me know where you are, nothing will happen to Wenna that you don't hear of."

He took her hand, and pressed it in mute thankfulness. He was not insensible to the value of having so warm an advocate, so faithful an ally, always at Wenna's side.

"How long do letters take in going to Jamaica?" Mabyn asked.

"I don't know."

"I could fetch him back for you directly," said she, "if you would like that."

"How?"

"By writing and telling him that you and Wenna were going to get married. Wouldn't that fetch him back pretty quickly?"

"I doubt it. He wouldn't believe it of Wenna. Then he is a sensible sort of fellow, and would say to himself that, if the news was true, he would have his journey for nothing. Besides, Barnes says that things are looking well with him in Jamaica—better than anybody expected. He might not be anxious to leave."

They had now got back to the parade, and Mabyn stopped.

"I must leave you now, Mr. Trelyon. Mind not to go near Wenna when you get to Eglosilyan——"

"She shan't even see me. I shall be there only a couple of days or so; then I am going to London. I am going to have a try at the Civil Service examinations—for first commissions, you know. I shall only come back to Eglosilyan for a day now and again at long intervals. You have promised to write to me, Mabyn—well, I'll send you my address."

She looked at him keenly as she offered him her hand.

"I wouldn't be down-hearted if I were you," she said.

"Very odd things sometimes happen."

"Oh, I shan't be very down-hearted," said he, "so long as I hear that she is all right, and not vexing herself about anything."

"Good-bye, Mr. Trelyon. I am sorry I can't take any message for you."

"To her? No, that is impossible. Good-bye, Mabyn; I think you are the best friend I have in the world."

"We'll see about that," she said, as she walked rapidly off.

Her mother had been sufficiently astonished by her long absence; she was now equally surprised by the excitement and pleasure visible in her face.

"Oh, mammy, do you know who I've seen? Mr. Trelyon!"

"Mabyn!"

"Yes. We've walked right round Penzance—all by ourselves. And it's all settled, mother."

"What is all settled?"

"The understanding between him and me. An offensive and defensive alliance. Let tyrants beware!"

She took off her bonnet, and came and sat down on the floor by the side of the sofa.

"Oh, mammy, I see such beautiful things in the future—you wouldn't believe it if I told you all I see! Everybody else seems determined to forecast such gloomy events—there's Wenna crying and writing letters of contrition, and expecting all sorts of anger and scolding; there's Mr. Trelyon, haunted by the notion that Mr. Roscorla will suddenly come home and marry Wenna right off; and as for him out there in Jamaica, I expect he'll be in a nice state when he hears of all this. But far on ahead of all that I see such a beautiful picture——"

"It is a dream of yours, Mabyn," her mother said; but there was an imaginative light in her fine eyes, too.

"No, it is not a dream, mother; for there are so many people all wishing now that it should come about, in spite of these gloomy fancies. What is there to prevent it, when we are all agreed? Mr. Trelyon and I heading the list with our important alliance; and you, mother, would be so proud to see Wenna happy; and Mrs. Trelyon pets her as if she were a daughter already, and everybody—every man, woman, and child in Eglosilyan would rather see that come about than get a guinea apiece. Oh, mother, if you could see the picture that I see just now——"

"It is a pretty picture, Mabyn," her mother said, shaking her head. "But when you think of everybody being agreed, you forget one, and that is Wenna herself. Whatever she thinks fit and right to do, that she is certain to do; and all your alliances and friendly wishes won't alter her decision, even if it should break her heart. And, indeed, I hope the poor child won't sink under the terrible strain that is on her: what do you think of her looks, Mabyn?"

"They want mending; yes, they want mending," Mabyn admitted, apparently with some compunction; but then she added, boldly, "and you know as well as I do, mother, that there is but the one way of mending them!"