

cramming for the Civil Service examinations for first commissions?"

"And what the devil made the War Office go to those civilians?" muttered the General.

"And if I pull through, I shall want all your influence to get me gazetted to a good regiment. Don't they often shunt you on to the First or Second West Indians?"

"And you've enough money to back you too," said the General. "I tell you what it is, gentlemen, if they abolish the purchase of commissions in the army—and they're always talking about it—they don't know what they'll bring about. They'll have two sets of officers in the army—men with money, who like a good mess, and live far beyond their pay, and men with no money at all, who've got to live on their pay, and how can they afford the regimental mess out of that? But Parliament won't stand it you'll see. The War Minister 'll be beaten if he brings it on—take my word for that."

The old General had probably never heard of a royal warrant and its mighty powers.

"So you're going to be one of us?" he said to Trelyon. "Well, you've a smart figure for a uniform. You're the first of your side of the family to go into the army, eh? You had some naval men among you, eh?"

"I think you'd better ask my grandmother," said young Trelyon, with a laugh; "she'll tell you stories about 'em by the hour together."

"She's a wonderful woman that—a wonderful old creature," said the General, just as if he were a sprightly young fellow talking of the oldest inhabitant of the district. "She's not one of them that are half buried; she's wide enough awake, I'll be bound. Gad, what a handsome woman she was when I saw her first. Well, lads, let's join the ladies; I'm none of your steady-going old toppers. Enough's as good's a feast—that's my motto. And I can't write my name on a slate with my knuckles, either."

And so they went into the large, dimly-lit, red chamber, where the women were having tea round the blazing fire. The men took various chairs about; the conversation became general; old Lady Weekes feebly endeavoured to keep

up her eyelids. In about half-an-hour or so Mrs. Trelyon happened to glance round the room.

"Where's Harry?" said she.

No one apparently had noticed that Master Harry had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A DARK CONSPIRACY.

Now, when Harry Trelyon drove up to the Hall, after leaving Wenna Rosewarne in the road, he could not tell why he was vexed with her. He imagined somehow that she should not have allowed Mr. Roscorla to come home—and to come home just at this moment, when he, Trelyon, had stolen down for a couple of days to have a shy look at the sweetheart who was so far out of his reach. She ought to have been alone. Then she ought not to have looked so calm and complacent on going away to meet Mr. Roscorla; she ought to have been afraid. She ought to have—in short everything was wrong, and Wenna was largely to blame.

"Well, grandmother," said he, as they drove through the avenue, "don't you expect every minute to flush a covey of parsons?"

He was angry with Wenna; and so he broke out once more in his old vein.

"There are worse men than the parsons, Harry," the old lady said.

"I'll bet you a sovereign there are two on the doorstep."

He would have lost. There was not a clergyman of any sort in or about the house.

"Isn't Mr. Barnes here?" said he to his mother.

Mrs. Trelyon flushed slightly, as she said—

"No, Harry, Mr. Barnes is not here. Nor is he likely to visit here again."

Now Mr. Roscorla would at once have perceived what a strange little story lay behind that simple speech; but Mr. Harry, paying no attention to it, merely said he was heartily glad to hear of it, and showed his gratitude by being unusually polite to his mother during the rest of his stay.

"And so Mr. Roscorla has come back," his mother said. "General Weekes was asking about him only yesterday. We must see if he will come to dinner the night after to-morrow—and Miss Rosewarne also."

"You may ask her—you ought to ask her—but she won't come," said he.

"How do you know?" Mrs. Trelyon said, with a gentle wonder. "She has been here very often of late."

"Have you let her walk up?"

"No, I have generally driven down for her when I wanted to see her; and the way she has been working for these people is extraordinary—never tired, always cheerful, ready to be bothered by anybody, and patient with their suspicions and simplicity, beyond belief. I am sure Mr. Roscorla will have an excellent wife."

"I am not at all sure that he will," said her son, goaded past endurance.

"Why, Harry," said his mother, with her eyes wide open, "I thought you had a great respect for Miss Rosewarne."

"I have," he said, abruptly,—“far too great a respect to like the notion of her marrying that old fool.”

"Would you rather not have him to dinner?"

"Oh, I should like to have him to dinner."

For one evening, at least, this young man considered, these two would be separated. He was pretty sure that Roscorla would come to meet General Weekes; he was positive that Wenna would not come to the house while he himself was in it.

But the notion that, except during this one evening, his rival would have free access to the inn, and would spend pleasant hours there, and would take Wenna with him for walks along the coast, maddened him. He dared not go down to the village, for fear of seeing these two together. He walked about the grounds, or went away over to the cliffs, torturing his heart with imagining Roscorla's opportunities. And once or twice he was on the point of going straight down to Eglosilyan, and calling on Wenna, before Roscorla's face, to be true to her own heart, and declare herself free from this old and hateful entanglement.

In these circumstances, his grandmother was not a good companion for him. In her continual glorification of the

self-will of the Trelyons, and her stories of the wild deeds she had done, she was unconsciously driving him to some desperate thing, against his better judgment.

"Why, grandmother," he said, one day, "you hint that I am a nincompoop because I don't go and carry off that girl and marry her against her will. Is that what you mean by telling me of what the men did in former days? Well, I can tell you this, that it would be a deal easier for me to try that than not to try it. The difficulty is in holding your hand. But what good would you do, after all? The time has gone by for that sort of thing. I shouldn't like to have on my hands a woman sulking because she was married by force—besides, you can't do these mad freaks now—there are too many police-courts about."

"By force? No!" the old lady said. "The girls I speak of were as glad to run away as the men, I can tell you, and they did it, too, when their relations were against the match."

"Of course, if both he and she are agreed, the way is as smooth now as it was then; you don't need to care much for relations."

"But Harry, you don't know what a girl thinks," this dangerous old lady said. "She has her notions of duty, and her respect for her parents, and all that; and if the man only went and reasoned with her, he would never carry the day; but just as she comes out of a ball-room some night, when she is all aglow with fun and pleasure, and ready to become romantic with the stars, you see, and the darkness, then just show her a carriage, a pair of horses, a marriage license, and her own maid to accompany her, and see what will happen! Why, she'll hop into the carriage like a dicky bird; then she'll have a bit of a cry; and then she'll recover, and be mad with the delight of escaping from those behind her. That's how to win a girl, man! The sweethearts of these days think too much, that's about it: it's all done by argument between them."

"You're a wicked old woman, grandmother," said Trelyon, with a laugh. "You oughtn't to put such notions into the head of a well-conducted young man like me."

"Well, you're not such a booby as you used to be, Harry," the old lady admitted. "Your manners are con-

siderably improved, and there was much room for improvement. You're growing a good deal like your grandfather."

"But there's no Gretna Green now-a-days," said Trelyon, as he went outside, "so you can't expect me to be perfect, grandmother."

On the first night of his arrival at Eglosilyan he stole away in the darkness, down to the inn. There were no lamps in the steep road which was rendered all the darker by the high rocky bank with its rough masses of foliage; he feared that by accident some one might be out and meet him. But in the absolute silence, under the stars, he made his way down until he was near the inn; and there in the black shadow of the road, he stood and looked at the lighted windows. Roscorla was doubtless within—lying in an easy-chair, probably, by the fire, while Wenna sang her old-fashioned songs to him. He would assume the air of being one of the family now—only holding himself a little above the family. Perhaps he was talking of the house he meant to take when he and Wenna were married.

That was no wholesome food for reflection on which this young man's mind was now feeding. He stood there in the darkness, himself white as a ghost, while all the vague imaginings of what might be going on within the house seemed to be eating at his heart. This, then, was the comfort he had found, by secretly stealing away from London for a day or two; he had arrived just in time to find his rival triumphant.

The private door of the inn was at this moment opened; a warm glow of yellow streamed out into the darkness.

"Good-night," said some one: was it Wenna?

"Good-night," was the answer; and then the figure of a man passed down the road.

Trelyon breathed more freely; at last his rival was out of the house. Wenna was now alone; would she go up into her own room, and think over all the events of the day? And would she remember that he had come to Eglosilyan; and that she could, if any such feeling arose in her heart, summon him at need?

It was very late that night before Trelyon returned—he had gone all round by the harbour, and the cliffs, and the high-lying church on the hill. All in the house had gone

to bed; but there was a fire burning in his study; and there were biscuits and wine on the table. A box of cigars stood on the mantelpiece.

Apparently he was in no mood for the indolent comfort thus suggested. He stood for a minute or two before the fire, staring into it, and seeing other things than the flaming coals there; then he moved about the room, in an impatient and excited fashion; finally, with his hand trembling a little bit, he sat down and wrote this note:—

"DEAR MOTHER,—The horses and carriage will be at Launceston station by the first train on Saturday morning. Will you please send Jakes over for them? And bid him take the horses up to Mr. ——'s stables, and have them fed, watered, and properly rested before he drives them over. Your affectionate son,

"HARRY TRELYON."

Next morning, as Mabyn Rosewarne was coming briskly upon the Trevenna road, carrying in her arms a pretty big parcel, she was startled by the appearance of a young man, who suddenly showed himself overhead, and then scrambled down the rocky bank until he stood beside her.

"I've been watching for you all the morning, Mabyn," said Trelyon. "I—I want to speak to you. Where are you going?"

"Up to Mr. Trewhella's. You know his granddaughter is very nearly quite well again; and there is to be a great gathering of children there to-night to celebrate her recovery. This is a cake I am carrying that Wenna has made herself."

"Is Wenna to be there?" Trelyon said, eagerly.

"Why, of course," said Mabyn, petulantly. "What do you think the children could do without her?"

"Look here, Mabyn," he said. "I want to speak to you very particularly. Couldn't you just as well go round by the farm road? Let me carry your cake for you."

Mabyn guessed what he wanted to speak about, and willingly made the circuit by a more private road leading by one of the upland farms. At a certain point they came to a stile; and here they rested. So far Trelyon had said nothing of consequence.

"Oh, do you know, Mr. Trelyon," Mabyn remarked, quite innocently, "I have been reading such a nice book—all about Jamaica."

"So you're interested about Jamaica, too?" said he, rather bitterly.

"Yes, much. Do you know that it is the most fearful place for storms in the whole world—the most awful hurricanes that come smashing down everything and killing people. You can't escape if you're in the way of the hurricane. It whirls the roofs off the houses, and twists out the plantain trees just like straws. The rivers wash away whole acres of canes and swamp the farms. Sometimes the sea rages so that boats are carried right up into the streets of Kingston. There!"

"But why does that please you?"

"Why," she said, with proud indignation, "the notion of people talking as if they could go out to Jamaica and live for ever, and come back just when they please—it is too ridiculous! Many accidents may happen. And isn't November a very bad time for storms? Ships often get wrecked going out to the West Indies, don't they?"

At another time Trelyon would have laughed at this blood-thirsty young woman; at this moment he was too serious.

"Mabyn," said he, "I can't bear this any longer—standing by like a fool and looking on while another man is doing his best to marry Wenna: I can't go on like this any longer. Mabyn, when did you say she would leave Mr. Trewhella's house to-night?"

"I did not say anything about it. I suppose we shall leave about ten; the young ones leave at nine."

"You will be there?"

"Yes, Wenna and I are to keep order."

"Nobody else with you?"

"No."

He looked at her rather hesitatingly.

"And supposing, Mabyn," he said slowly, "supposing you and Wenna were to leave at ten, and that it is a beautiful clear night, you might walk down by the wood instead of by the road; and then, supposing that you came out on the road down at the foot, and you found there a carriage and pair of horses——"

Mabyn began to look alarmed.

"And if I was there," he continued, more rapidly, "and I said to Wenna suddenly, 'Now Wenna, think nothing, but come and save yourself from this marriage! Here is your sister will come with you—and I will drive you to Plymouth——'"

"Oh, Mr. Trelyon!" Mabyn cried, with a sudden joy in her face, "she would do it! She would do it!"

"And you, would you come too?" he demanded.

"Yes!" the girl cried, full of excitement. "And then, Mr. Trelyon, and then?"

"Why," he cried boldly, "up to London at once—twenty-four hours' start of everybody—and in London we are safe! Then, you know, Mabyn——"

"Yes, yes, Mr. Trelyon!"

"Don't you think now that we two could persuade her to a quick marriage—with a special license, you know—you could persuade her, I am sure, Mabyn——"

In the gladness of her heart Mabyn felt herself at this moment ready to fall on the young man's neck and kiss him. But she was a properly conducted young person; and so she rose from the big block of slate on which she had been sitting and managed to suppress any great intimation of her abounding joy. But she was very proud, all the same, and there was a great firmness about her lips as she said:—

"We will do it, Mr. Trelyon; we will do it. Do you know why Wenna submits to this engagement? Because she reasons with her conscience, and persuades herself that it is right. When you meet her like that, she will have no time to consider——"

"That is precisely what my grandmother says," Trelyon said, with a triumphant laugh.

"Yes, she was a girl once," Mabyn replied, sagely. "Well, well, tell me all about it! What arrangements have you made? You haven't got the special license?"

"No," said he, "I didn't make up my mind to try this on till last night. But the difference of a day is nothing, when you are with her. We shall be able to hide ourselves away pretty well in London, don't you think?"

"Of course!" cried Mabyn confidently. "But tell me

more, Mr. Trelyon! What have you arranged? What have you done?"

"What could I do until I knew whether you'd help me?"

"You must bring a fearful amount of wraps with you."

"Certainly—more than you'll want, I know. And I shan't light the lamps until I hear you coming along; for they would attract attention down in the valley. I should like to wait for you elsewhere; but if I did that you couldn't get Wenna to come with you. Do you think you will even then?"

"Oh, yes," said Mabyn cheerfully. "Nothing easier! I shall tell her she's afraid; and then she would walk down the face of Black Cliff. By the way, Mr. Trelyon, I must bring something to eat with me, and some wine—she will be so nervous—and the long journey will tire her."

"You will be at Mr. Trehella's, Mabyn; you can't go carrying things about with you!"

"I could bring a bit of cake in my pocket," Mabyn suggested; but this seemed even to her so ludicrous that she blushed and laughed and agreed that Mr. Trelyon should bring the necessary provisions for the wild night-ride to Plymouth.

"Oh, it does so please me to think of it!" she said with a curious anxious excitement as well as gladness in her face; "I hope I have not forgotten to arrange anything. Let me see—we start at ten; then down through the wood to the road in the hollow—oh, I hope there will be nobody coming along just then!—then you light the lamps—then you come forward to persuade Wenna—by the way, Mr. Trelyon, where must I go? Shall I not be dreadfully in the way?"

"You? You must stand by the horses' heads! I shan't have my man with me. And yet they're not very fiery animals—they'll be less fiery, the unfortunate wretches, when they get to Plymouth."

"At what time?"

"About half-past three in the morning, if we go straight on," said he.

"Do you know a good hotel there?" said the practical Mabyn.

"The best one is by the station; but if you sleep in the front of the house, you have the whistling of engines all night long, and if you sleep in the back, you overlook a barracks, and the confounded trumpeting begins about four o'clock, I believe."

"Wenna and I won't mind that—we shall be too tired," Mabyn said. "Do you think they could give us a little hot coffee when we arrive?"

"Oh yes! I'll give the night-porter a sovereign a cup—then he'll offer to bring it to you in buckets. Now don't you think the whole thing is beautifully arranged, Mabyn?"

"It is quite lovely!" the girl said joyously, "for we shall be off with the morning train to London, while Mr. Roscorla is pottering about Launceston station at mid-day! Then we must send a telegram from Plymouth, a fine dramatic telegram; and my father, he will swear a little, but be quite content, and my mother—do you know, Mr. Trelyon, I believe my mother will be as glad as anybody! What shall we say?—'To Mr. Rosewarne, Eglosilyan. We have fled. Not the least good pursuing us. May as well make up your mind to the inevitable. Will write to-morrow.' Is that more than the twenty words for a shilling?"

"We shan't grudge the other shilling if it is," the young man said. "Now you must go on with your cake, Mabyn! I am off to see after the horses' shoes. Mind, as soon after ten as you can—just where the path from the wood comes into the main road."

Then she hesitated, and for a second or two she remained thoughtful and silent; while he was inwardly hoping that she was not going to draw back. Suddenly she looked up at him, with earnest and anxious eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Trelyon," she said, "this is a very serious thing. You—you will be kind to our Wenna after she is married to you!"

"You will see, Mabyn," he answered gently.

"You don't know how sensitive she is," she continued, apparently thinking over all the possibilities of the future in a much graver fashion than she had done. "If you were unkind to her, it would kill her. Are you quite sure you won't regret it?"

"Yes, I am quite sure of that," said he, "as sure as a man may be. I don't think you need fear my being unkind to Wenna. Why, what has put such thoughts into your head?"

"If you were to be cruel to her or indifferent," she said, slowly and absently, "I know that would kill her. But I know more than that. *I would kill you.*"

"Mabyn," he said, quite startled, "whatever has put such thoughts into your head?"

"Why," she said, passionately, "haven't I seen already how a man can treat her? Haven't I read the insolent letters he has sent her? Haven't I seen her throw herself on her bed, beside herself with grief? And—and—these are things I don't forget, Mr. Trelyon. No, I have got a word to say to Mr. Roscorla yet for his treatment of my sister—and I will say it. And then——"

The proud lips were beginning to quiver.

"Come, come, Mabyn," said Trelyon, gently, "don't imagine all men are the same. And perhaps Roscorla will have been paid out quite sufficiently when he hears of to-night's work. I shan't bear him any malice after that, I know. Already, I confess, I feel a good deal of compunction as regards him."

"I don't at all—I don't a bit," said Mabyn, who very quickly recovered herself whenever Mr. Roscorla's name was mentioned. "If you only can get her to go away with you, Mr. Trelyon, it will serve him just right. Indeed, it is on his account that I hope you will be successful. I—I don't quite like Wenna running away with you, to tell you the truth—I would rather have her left to a quiet decision, and to a marriage with everybody approving. But there is no chance of that. This is the only thing that will save her."

"That is precisely what I said to you," Trelyon said, eagerly, for he was afraid of losing so invaluable an ally.

"And you will be very, *very* kind to her?"

"I'm not good at fine words, Mabyn. You'll see."

She held out her hand to him, and pressed his warmly.

"I believe you will be a good husband to her; and I know you will get the best wife in the whole world!"

She was going away when he suddenly said—

"Mabyn!"

She turned.

"Do you know," said he rather shamefacedly, "how much I am grateful to you for all your frank straightforward kindness—and your help—and your courage——"

"No, no!" said the young girl, good-humouredly. "You make Wenna happy, and don't consider me!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

UNDER THE WHITE STARS.

DURING the whole glad evening Wenna had been Queen of the Feast, and her subjects had obeyed her with a joyous submission. They did not take quite so kindly to Mabyn, for she was sharp of tongue and imperious in her ways; but they knew that they could tease her elder sister with impunity—always up to the well-understood line at which her authority began. That was never questioned.

Then, at nine o'clock, the servants came, some on foot and some on dog-carts; and presently there was a bundling up of tiny figures in rugs and wraps and Wenna stood at the door to kiss each of them and say good-bye. It was half-past nine when that performance was over.

"Now, my dear Miss Wenna," said the old clergyman, "you must be quite tired out with your labours. Come into the study—I believe the tray has been taken in there."

"Do you know, Mr. Trehella," said Mabyn boldly, "that Wenna hadn't time to eat a single bit when all those children were gobbling up cake. Couldn't you let her have a little bit—a little bit of cold meat now——"

"Dear, dear me!" said the kind old gentleman, in the deepest distress, "that I should not have remembered!"

There was no use in Wenna protesting. In the snug little study she was made to eat some supper; and if she got off with drinking one glass of sherry it was not through the intervention of her sister, who apparently would have had her drink a tumbler-full.

It was not until a quarter past ten that the girls could get away.

"Now I must see you young ladies down to the village,