

"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,

lest some one should run away with you," the old clergyman said, taking down his top coat.

"Oh no, you must not—you must not, indeed, Mr. Trewhella!" Mabyn said, anxiously. "Wenna and I always go about by ourselves—and far later than this too. It is a beautiful, clear night! Why——"

Her impetuosity made her sister smile.

"You talk as if you would rather like to be run away with, Mabyn," she said. "But indeed, Mr. Trewhella, you must not think of coming with us. It is quite true what Mabyn says."

And so they went out into the clear darkness together; and the door was shut; and they found themselves in the silent world of the night-time, with the white stars throbbing overhead. Far away in the distance they could hear the murmur of the sea.

"Are you cold, Mabyn, that you tremble so?" said the elder sister.

"No—only a sort of shiver in coming out into the night air."

Whatever it was it was soon over. Mabyn seemed to be unusually cheerful.

"Wenna," she said, "you're afraid of ghosts!"

"No, I'm not."

"I know you are."

"I'm not half as much afraid of ghosts as you are, that's quite certain."

"I'll bet you you won't walk down through the wood."

"Just now?"

"Yes."

"Why, I'll not only go down through the wood, but I'll undertake to be home before you, though you've a broad road to guide you."

"But I did not mean you to go alone."

"Oh," said Wenna, "you propose to come with me? Then it is you who are afraid to go down by yourself? Oh, Mabyn!"

"Never mind, Wenna,—let's go down through the wood just for fun."

So the two sisters set out, arm-in-arm; and through some spirit of mischief Wenna would not speak a word.

Mabyn was gradually overawed by the silence, the night, the loneliness of the road, and the solemn presence of the great living vault above them. Moreover, before getting into the wood, they had to skirt a curious little dingle, in the hollow of which are both a church and churchyard. Many a time the sisters had come up to this romantic dell in the spring-time, to gather splendid primroses, sweet violets, the yellow celandine, and other wild flowers that grow luxuriantly on its steep banks; and very pretty the old church looked then, with the clear sunshine of April streaming down through the scantily-leaved trees into this sequestered spot. Now the deep hole was black as night; and they could only make out a bit of the spire of the church as it appeared against the dark sky. Nay, was there not a sound among the fallen leaves and underwood down there, in the direction of the unseen graves?

"Some cow has strayed in there, I believe," said Mabyn, in a somewhat low voice, and she walked rather quickly until they got past the place and out on to the hill over the wooded valley.

"Now," said Wenna, cheerfully, not wishing to have Mabyn put in a real fright, "as we go down I am going to tell you something, Mabyn. How would you like to have to prepare for a wedding in a fortnight?"

"Not at all!" said Mabyn promptly, even fiercely.

"Not if it was your own?"

"No—why, the insult of such a request!"

According to Mabyn's way of thinking it was an insult to ask a girl to marry you in a fortnight, but none to insist on her marrying you the day after to-morrow.

"You think that a girl could fairly plead that as an excuse—the mere time to get one's dresses and things ready?"

"Certainly!"

"Oh, Mabyn," said Wenna, far more seriously, "it is not of dresses I am thinking at all; but I shudder to think of getting married just now. I could not do it. I have not had enough time to forget what is past—and until that is done, how could I marry any man?"

"Wenna, I do love you when you talk like that!" her sister cried. "You can be so wise and reasonable when you

choose! Of course you are quite right, dear. But you don't mean to say he wants you to get married before he goes to Jamaica, and then to leave you alone?"

"Oh, no. He wants me to go with him to Jamaica."

Mabyn uttered a short cry of alarm.

"To Jamaica! To take you away from the whole of us—why—oh, Wenna, I do hate being a girl so—for you're not allowed to swear—if I were a man now! To Jamaica! Why don't you know that there are hundreds of people always being killed there by the most frightful hurricanes, and earthquakes, and large serpents in the woods? To Jamaica!—no, you are not going to Jamaica just yet! I don't think you are going to Jamaica just yet!"

"No, indeed, I am not," said Wenna, with a quiet decision. "Nor could I think of getting married in any case at present. But then—don't you see, Mabyn—Mr. Roscorla is just a little peculiar in some ways—"

"Yes, certainly!"

"—and he likes to have a definite reason for what you do. If I were to tell him of the repugnance I have to the notion of getting married just now, he would call it mere sentiment, and try to argue me out of it—then we should have a quarrel. But if, as you say, a girl may fairly refuse in point of time—"

"Now, I'll tell you," said Mabyn, plainly; "no girl can get married properly, who hasn't six months to get ready in. She might manage in three or four months, for a man she was particularly fond of; but if it is a mere stranger—and a disagreeable person—and one who ought not to marry her at all—then six months is the very shortest time. Just you send Mr. Roscorla to me, and I'll tell him all about it."

Wenna laughed.

"Yes, I've no doubt you would. I think he's more afraid of you than of all the serpents and snakes in Jamaica."

"Yes, and he'll have more cause to be before he's much older," said Mabyn, confidently.

They could not continue their conversation just then, for they were going down the side of the hill, between short trees and bushes; and the path was broad enough only for one, while there were many dark places demanding caution.

"Seen any ghosts yet?" Wenna called out to Mabyn, who was behind her.

"Ghosts, sir? Ay, ay, sir! Heave away on the larboard beam! I say, Wenna, isn't it uncommon dark?"

"It is uncommonly dark."

"Gentlemen always say uncommon; and all the grammars are written by gentlemen. Oh, Wenna, wait a bit; I've lost my brooch!"

It was no *ruse*, for a wonder; the brooch had, indeed, dropped out of her shawl. She felt all over the dark ground for it, but her search was in vain.

"Well, here's a nice thing! Upon my—"

"Mabyn!"

"Upon my—trotting pony; that was all I was going to say. Wenna, will you stay here for a minute; and I'll run down to the foot of the hill, and get a match?"

"How can you get a match at the foot of the hill? You'll have to go on to the inn. No, tie your handkerchief round the foot of one of the trees, and come up early in the morning to look."

"Early in the morning?" said Mabyn. "I hope to be in—I mean asleep then."

Twice she had nearly blurted out the secret; and, it is highly probable that her refusal to adopt Wenna's suggestion would have led her sister to suspect something, had not Wenna herself, by accident, kicked against the missing brooch. As it was, the time lost by this misadventure was grievous to Mabyn, who now insisted on leading the way, and went along through the bushes at a rattling pace. Here and there the belated wanderers startled a blackbird, that went shrieking its fright over to the other side of the valley; but Mabyn was now too much preoccupied to be unnerved.

"Keeping a look out ahead?" Wenna called.

"Ay, ay, sir! No ghosts on the weather quarter! Ship drawing twenty fathoms, and the mate fast asleep. Oh, Wenna, my hat!"

It had been twitched off her head by one of the branches of the young trees through which she was passing, and the pliant bit of wood, being released from the strain, had thrown it down into the dark bushes and briars.

"Well I'm—no, I'm not!" said Mabyn, as she picked out the hat from among the thorns, and straightened the twisted feather. Then she set out again, impatient over these delays; and yet determined not to let her courage sink.

"Land ahead yet?" called out Wenna.

"Ay, ay, sir; and the Lizard on our lea! Wind S.S.W., and the cargo shifting a point to the east. Hurrah!"

"Mabyn, they'll hear you a mile off!"

It was certainly Mabyn's intention that she should be heard at least a quarter of a mile off, for now they had got down to the open, and they could hear the stream some way ahead of them, which they would have to cross. At this point Mabyn paused for a second to let her sister overtake her; then they went on arm-in-arm.

"Oh, Wenna," she said, "do you remember '*young Lochinvar*'?"

"Of course!"

"Didn't you fall in love with him when you read about him? Now, there *was* somebody to fall in love with! Don't you remember when he came into Netherby Hall, that

The bride-maidens whispered, "Twere better by far
To have matched our fair cousin with young Lochinvar!"

And then you know, Wenna—

One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,
When they reached the hall-door, and the charger stood near;
So light to the croupe the fair lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprung!
'She is won! we are gone—over bank, bush, and scur!
They'll have fleet steeds that follow,' quoth young Lochinvar.

That *was* a lover now!"

"I think he was a most impertinent young man," said Wenna.

"I rather like a young man to be impertinent," said Mabyn, boldly.

"Then there won't be any difficulty about fitting you with a husband," said Wenna with a light laugh.

Here Mabyn once more went on ahead, picking her steps

through the damp grass as she made her way down to the stream. Wenna was still in the highest of spirits.

"Walking the plank yet, boatswain?" she called out.

"Not yet, sir," Mabyn called in return. "Ship wearing round on the leeward tack, and the waves running mountains high. Don't you hear 'em, captain?"

"Look out for the breakers, boatswain!"

"Ay, ay, sir. All hands on deck to man the captain's gig! Belay away there! Avast! Mind, Wenna; here's the bridge!"

Crossing over that single plank, in the dead of the night, was a sufficiently dangerous experiment; but both these young ladies had had plenty of experience in keeping their wits about them in more perilous places.

"Why are you in such a hurry, Mabyn?" Wenna said, when they had crossed.

Mabyn did not know what to answer, she was very much excited; and inclined to talk at random merely to cover her anxiety. She was now very late for the appointment, and who could tell what unfortunate misadventure Harry Trelyon might have met with?

"Oh, I don't know," she said. "Why don't you admire young Lochinvar? Wenna, you're like the Lacedæmons."

"Like the what?"

"Like the Lacedæmons, that were neither cold nor hot. Why don't you admire young Lochinvar?"

"Because he was interfering with another man's property."

"That man had no right to her," said Mabyn, talking rather wildly, and looking on ahead, to the point at which the path through the meadows went up the road, "he was a wretched animal, I know; I believe he was a sugar-broker, and had just come home from Jamaica."

"I believe," said Wenna, "I believe that young Lochinvar——"

She stopped.

"What's that!" she said. "What are those two lights up there?"

"They're not ghosts: come along, Wenna!" said Mabyn, hurriedly.

Let us go up to this road, where Harry Trelyon, tortured

with anxiety and impatience, is waiting. He had slipped away from the house, pretty nearly as soon as the gentlemen had gone into the drawing-room after dinner; and on some excuse or other had got the horses put to a light and yet roomy Stanhope phaeton. From the stable-yard he drove by a back way into the main road without passing in front of the Hall; then he quietly walked the horses down the steep hill, and round the foot of the valley to the point at which Mabyn was to make her appearance.

But he dared not stop there; for now and again some passer-by came along the road; and even in the darkness Mrs. Trelyon's grey horses would be recognised by any of the inhabitants of Eglosilyan, who would naturally wonder what Master Harry was waiting for. He walked them a few hundred yards one way, then a few hundred yards the other; and ever, as it seemed to him, the danger was growing greater of some one from the inn or from the Hall suddenly appearing and spoiling the whole plan.

Half-past ten arrived; and nothing could be heard of the girls. Then a horrible thought struck him that Roscorla might by this time have left the Hall; and would he not be coming down to this very road on his way up to Basset Cottage? This was no idle fear; it was almost a matter of certainty.

The minutes rolled themselves out into ages; he kept looking at his watch every few seconds; yet he could hear nothing from the wood or the valley of Mabyn's approach. Then he got down into the road, walked a few yards this way and that apparently to stamp the nervousness out of his system, patted the horses, and, finally, occupied himself in lighting the lamps. He was driven by the delay into a sort of desperation. Even if Wenna and Mabyn did appear now, and if he was successful in his prayer, there was every chance of their being interrupted by Roscorla, who had without doubt left the Hall some time before.

Suddenly he stopped in his excited walking up and down. Was that a faint "Hurrah!" that he heard in the distance? He went down to the stile at the junction of the path and the road; and listened attentively. Yes, he could hear at least one voice, as yet a long way off; but now he had no more doubt. He walked quickly back to the carriage.

"Ho, ho, my hearties!" he said, stroking the heads of the horses, "you'll have a Dick Turpin's ride to-night."

All the nervousness had gone from him now; he was full of a strange sort of exultation—the joy of a man who feels that the crisis in his life has come, and that he has the power and courage to face it.

He heard them come up through the meadow to the stile; it was Wenna who was talking; Mabyn was quite silent. They came along the road.

"What is this carriage doing here?" Wenna said.

They drew still nearer.

"They are Mrs. Trelyon's horses—and there is no driver—"

At this moment Harry Trelyon came quickly forward and stood in the road before her; while Mabyn as quickly went on and disappeared. The girl was startled, bewildered, but not frightened; for in a second he had taken her by the hand, and then she heard him say to her in an anxious, low, imploring voice:—

"Wenna, my darling, don't be alarmed! See here, I have got everything ready to take you away—and Mabyn is coming with us—and you know I love you so that I can't bear the notion of your falling into that man's hands. Now, Wenna, don't think about it! Come with me! We shall be married in London—Mabyn is coming with you—"

For one brief second or two she seemed stunned and alarmed; then, looking at the carriage, and the earnest suppliant before her, the whole truth appeared to flash in upon her. She looked wildly round.

"Mabyn——" she was about to say, when he guessed the meaning of her rapid look.

"Mabyn is here. She is quite close by—she is coming with us. My darling, won't you let me save you! This, indeed, is our last chance. Wenna——"

She was trembling so that he thought she would fall; and he would have put his arms round her, but that she drew back, and in so doing, she got into light, and then he saw the immeasurable pity and sadness of her eyes.

"Oh, my love," she said, with tears running down her face, "I love you! I will tell you that now, when we speak

for the last time. See, I will kiss you—and then you will go away——”

“I will not go away—not without you—this night. Wenna, dearest, you have let your heart speak at last—now let it tell you what to do!”

“Oh, must I go? Must I go?” she said; and then she looked wildly round again.

“Mabyn!” called out Trelyon, half mad with joy and triumph, “Mabyn, come along! Look sharp, jump in! This way, my darling!”

And he took the trembling girl, and half lifted her into the carriage.

“Oh, my love, what am I doing for you this night?” she said to him, with her eyes swimming in tears.

But what was the matter with Mabyn? She was just putting her foot on the iron step when a rapidly approaching figure caused her to utter a cry of alarm, and she stumbled back into the road again. The very accident that Trelyon had been anticipating had occurred; here was Mr. Roscorla, bewildered at first, and then blind with rage when he saw what was happening before his eyes. In his desperation and anger he was about to lay hold of Mabyn by the arm when he was sent staggering backwards half-a-dozen yards.

“Don’t interfere with me now, or by God I will kill you!” Trelyon said, between his teeth; and then he hurried Mabyn into the carriage.

What was the sound then that the still woods heard, under the throbbing stars, through the darkness that lay over the land? Only the sound of horses’ feet, monotonous and regular, and not a word of joy or sorrow uttered by any one of the party thus hurrying on through the night.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

INTO CAPTIVITY.

TOWARDS eleven o’clock that night, Mrs. Rosewarne became a little anxious about her girls, and asked her husband to go and meet them, or to fetch them away if they were still at Mr. Trewhella’s house,

“Can’t they look after themselves?” said George Rosewarne. “I’ll be bound Mabyn can, any way. Let her alone to come back when she pleases.”

Then his wife began to fret; and, as this made him uncomfortable, he said he would walk up the road and meet them. He had no intention of doing so, of course; but it was a good excuse for getting away from a fidgety wife. He went outside into the clear starlight, and lounged down to the small bridge beside the mill, contentedly smoking his pipe.

There he encountered a farmer who was riding home a cob he had bought that day at Launceston; and the farmer and he began to have a chat about horses, suggested by that circumstance. Oddly enough, their random talk came round to young Trelyon.

“Your thoroughbreds won’t do for this county,” George Rosewarne was saying, “to go flying a stone wall and breaking your neck. No sir! I’ll tell you what sort of hunter I should like to have for these parts. I’d have him half-bred, short in the leg, short in the pastern, short in the back, a good sloping shoulder, broad in the chest and forehead, long in the belly, and just the least bit over fifteen hands—eh! Mr. Thomas? I don’t think beauty’s of much consequence when your neck’s in question. Let him be as angular and ragged in the hips as you like, so long’s his ribs are well up to the hip-bone. Have you seen that black horse that young Trelyon rides!”

“Tis a noble beast, sir—a noble beast,” the farmer said; and he would probably have gone on to state what ideal animal had been constructed by his lavish imagination, had not a man come running up at this moment, breathless and almost speechless.

“Rosewarne,” stammered Mr. Roscorla, “a—a word with you! I want to say——”

The farmer, seeing he was in the way, called out a careless good-night, and rode on.

“Well, what’s the matter?” said George Rosewarne a little snappishly: he did not like being worried by excitable people.

“Your daughters!” gasped Mr. Roscorla. “They’ve both run away—both of them—this minute with Trelyon!”

you'll have to ride after them. They're straight away along the high road."

"Both of them? the infernal young fools!" said Rosewarne. "Why the devil didn't you stop them yourself?"

"How could I?" Roscorla said, amazed that the father took the flight of his daughters with apparent equanimity.

"You must make haste, Mr. Rosewarne, or you'll never catch them."

"I've a good mind to let 'em go," said he sulkily, as he walked over to the stables of the inn. "The notion of a man having to set out on a wild-goose chase at this time o' night! Run away, have they; and what in all the world have they run away for?"

It occurred to him, however, that the sooner he got a horse saddled and set out, the less distance he would have to go in pursuit; and that consideration quickened his movements.

"What's it all about?" said he to Roscorla, who had followed him into the stable.

"I suppose they mean a runaway match," said Mr. Roscorla, helping to saddle George Rosewarne's cob, a famous trotter.

"It's that young devil's limb, Mabyn, I'll be bound," said the father. "I wish to heaven somebody would marry her—I don't care who. She's always up to some confounded mischief."

"No, no, no!" Roscorla said; "it's Wenna he means to marry."

"Why, you were to have married Wenna——"

"Yes, but——"

"Then why didn't you? So she's run away, has she?"

George Rosewarne grinned: he saw how the matter lay.

"This is Mabyn's work, I know," said he, as he put his foot in the stirrup, and sprang into the saddle. "You'd better go home, Roscorla. Don't you say a word to anybody. You don't want the girl made a fool of all through the place."

So George Rosewarne set out to bring back his daughters; not galloping as an anxious parent might, but going ahead with a long, steady-going trot, which he knew would soon tell on Mrs. Trelyon's over-fed and under-exercised horses.

"If they mean Plymouth," he was thinking, "as is most

likely from their taking the high road, he'll give it them gently at first. And so that young man wants to marry our Wenna. 'Twould be a fine match for her; and yet she's worth all the money he's got—she's worth it every farthing. I'd give him the other one cheap enough."

Pounding along a dark road, with the consciousness that the further you go the further you've got to get back, and that the distance still to be done is an indeterminate quantity, is agreeable to no one; but it was especially vexatious to George Rosewarne, who liked to take things quietly, and could not understand what all the fuss was about. Why should he be sent on this mad chase at midnight? If anybody wanted to marry either of the girls, why didn't he do so, and say no more about it? Rosewarne had been merely impatient and annoyed when he set out; but the longer he rode, and the more he communed with himself, the deeper grew his sense of the personal injury that had been done him by this act of folly.

It was a very lonely ride indeed. There was not a human being abroad at that hour. When he passed a few cottages from time to time, the windows were dark. Then they had just been putting down a lot of loose stones at several parts of the road, which caused Mr. Rosewarne to swear.

"I'll bet a sovereign," said he to himself, "that old Job kept them a quarter of an hour before he opened Paddock's Gate. I believe the old fool goes to bed. Well, they've waked him up for me any way."

There was some consolation in this surmise, which was well founded. When Rosewarne reached the toll-bar, there was at least a light in the small house. He struck on the door with the handle of his riding-whip, and called out—

"Hi, hi! Job! Come out, you old fool!"

An old man, with very bandy legs, came hobbling out of the toll-house, and went to open the gate, talking and muttering to himself—

"Ay, ay! so yü be agwoin' after the young uns, Maister Rosewarne? Ay, ay! yü'll go üp many a lane, and by many a fuzzy 'ill, and across a bridge or two afore yü come up wi' 'en, Maister Rosewarne."

"Look sharp, Job!" said Rosewarne. "Carriage been through here lately?"

"Ay, ay, Maister Rosewarne! 'tis a good half-hour agone."

"A half-hour, you idiot?" said Rosewarne, now in a thoroughly bad temper. "You've been asleep and dreaming. Here, take your confounded money!"

So he rode on again, not believing, of course, old Job's malicious fabrication, but being rendered all the same a little uncomfortable by it. Fortunately, the cob had not been out before that day.

More deep lanes, more high, open, windy spaces, more silent cottages, more rough stones; and always the measured fall of the cob's feet and the continued shining and throbbing of the stars overhead. At last, far away ahead, on the top of a high incline, he caught sight of a solitary point of ruddy fire, which presently disappeared. That, he concluded, was the carriage he was pursuing going round a corner, and showing only the one lamp as it turned. They were not so far in front of him as he had supposed.

But how to overtake them? So soon as they heard the sound of his horse would they dash onward at all risks, and have a race for it all through the night? In that case, George Rosewarne inwardly resolved that they might go to Plymouth, or into the deep sea beyond, before he would injure his favourite cob.

On the other hand, he could not bring them to a standstill by threatening to shoot at his own daughters, even if he had anything with him that would look like a pistol. Should he have to rely then on the moral terrors of a parent's authority? George Rosewarne was inclined to laugh when he thought of his overawing in this fashion the high spirit of his younger daughter.

By slow and sure degrees he gained on the fugitives; and as he could now catch some sound of the rattling of the carriage-wheels, they must also hear his horse's footfall. Were they trying to get away from him? On the contrary, the carriage stopped altogether.

That was Harry Trelyon's decision. For some time back he had been listening attentively. At length he said—

"Don't you hear some one riding back there?"

"Yes, I do!" said Wenna, beginning to tremble.

"I suppose it is Mr. Roscorla coming after us," the

young man said coolly. "Now I think it would be a shame to drag the old gentleman halfway down to Plymouth. He must have had a good spell already. Shall I stop, and persuade him to go back home to bed?"

"Oh, no!" said Maby, who was all for getting on at any risk.

"Oh, no!" Wenna said, fearing the result of an encounter between the two men.

"I must stop," Trelyon said. "It's such precious hard lines on him. I shall easily persuade him that he would be better at home."

So he pulled up the horses, and quietly waited by the roadside for a few minutes. The unknown rider drew nearer and more near.

"That isn't Roscorla's pony," said Trelyon, listening. "That's more like your father's cob."

"My father!" said Wenna in a low voice.

"My darling, you needn't be afraid, whoever it is," Trelyon said.

"Certainly not," added Maby, who was far more uncomfortable than she chose to appear. "Who can prevent us going on? They don't lock you up in convents now-a-days. If it is Mr. Roscorla, you just let me talk to him."

Their doubt on that head was soon at rest. White Charley, with his long swinging trot, soon brought George Rosewarne up to the side of the phaeton, and the girls, long ere he had arrived, had recognised in the gloom the tall figure of their father. Even Maby was a trifle nervous.

But George Rosewarne—perhaps because he was a little pacified by their having stopped—did not rage and fume as a father is expected to do whose daughter has run away from him. As soon as he had pulled up his horse, he called out in a petulant tone—

"Well! what the devil is all this about?"

"I'll tell you, sir," said Trelyon, quite respectfully and quite firmly. "I wished to marry you daughter Wenna—"

"And why couldn't you do that in Eglosilyan, instead of making a fool of everybody all around?" Rosewarne said, still talking in an angry and vexed way, as of one who had been personally injured.

"Oh, dada!" Mabyn cried, "you don't know how it happened; but they couldn't have got married there. There's that horrid old wretch, Mr. Roscorla—and Wenna was quite a slave to him, and afraid of him—and the only way was to carry her away from him—and so——"

"Hold your tongue, Mabyn!" her father said. "You'd drive a windmill with your talk!"

"But what she says is true enough," Trelyon said. "Roscorla has a claim on her—this was my only chance, and I took it. Now look here, Mr. Rosewarne; you've a right to be angry and all that—perhaps you are; but what good will it do you to see Wenna left to marry Roscorla?"

"What good will it do me?" said George Rosewarne pettishly. "I don't care which of you she marries——"

"Then you'll let us go on, dada?" Mabyn cried. "Will you come with us? Oh, do come with us! We're only going to Plymouth."

Even the angry father could not withstand the absurdity of this appeal. He burst into a roar of ill-tempered laughter.

"I like that!" he cried. "Asking a man to help his daughter to run away from his own house! It's my impression, my young mistress, that you're at the bottom of all this nonsense. Come, come! enough of it, Trelyon! be a sensible fellow, and turn your horses round—why, the notion of going to Plymouth at this time o' night!"

Trelyon looked at his companion. She put her hand on his arm, and said, in a trembling whisper—

"Oh, yes! pray let us go back."

"You know what you are going to, then?" said he coldly.

She trembled still more.

"Come, come!" said her father, "you mustn't stop here all night. You may thank me for preventing your becoming the talk of the whole country."

"I shouldn't have minded that much," Mabyn said ruefully, and very like to cry, indeed, as the horses set out on their journey back to Eglosilyan.

It was not a pleasant journey for any of them—least of all for Wenna Rosewarne, who, having been bewildered by one glimpse of liberty, felt with terror and infinite sadness

and despair the old manacles closing round her life again. And what although the neighbours might remain in ignorance of what she had done? She herself knew, and that was enough.

"You think no one will know?" Mabyn called out spitefully to her father. "Do you think old Job at the gate has lost either his tongue or his nasty temper?"

"Leave Job to me," the father replied.

When they got to Paddock's Gate the old man had again to be roused, and he came out grumbling.

"Well, you discontented old sinner!" Rosewarne called to him, "don't you like having to earn a living?"

"A fine livin' to wait on folks that don't know their own mind, and keep comin' and goin' along the road o' nights like a weaver's shuttle. Hm!"

"Well Job, you shan't suffer for it this time," Rosewarne said. "I've won my bet. If you made fifty pounds by riding a few miles out, what would you give the gate-keeper?"

Even that suggestion failed to inveigle Job into a better humour.

"Here's a sovereign for you, Job. Now go to bed. Good-night!"

How long the distance seemed to be ere they saw the lights of Eglosilyan again! There were only one or two small points of red fire, indeed, where the inn stood. The rest of the village was buried in darkness.

"Oh! what will mother say?" Wenna said in a low voice to her sister.

"She will be very sorry we did not get away altogether," Mabyn answered. "And of course it was Mr. Roscorla who spoiled it. Nobody knew anything about it but himself. He must have run on to the inn and told some one. Wasn't it mean, Wenna? Couldn't he see that he wasn't wanted?"

"Are you talking of Mr. Roscorla?" Trelyon said—George Rosewarne was a bit ahead at this moment. "I wish to goodness I had gagged him and slung him below the phaeton. I knew he would be coming down there. I expected him every moment. Why were you so late, Mabyn?"