

world to guess what had happened, and they both hurried home in silence.

And so Eustace Leigh played his move, and lost it.

Poor little Rose, having run nearly to Chapel, stopped for very shame, and walked quietly by the cottages which stood opposite the gate, and then turned up the lane towards Moorwinstow village, whither she was bound. But on second thoughts, she felt herself so "red and flustered," that she was afraid of going into the village, for fear (as she said to herself) of making people talk, and so, turning into a by-path, struck away toward the cliffs, to cool her blushes in the sea-breeze. And there finding a quiet grassy nook beneath the crest of the rocks, she sat down on the turf, and fell into a great meditation.

Rose Salterne was a thorough specimen of a West-coast maiden, full of passionate impulsive affections, and wild dreamy imaginations, a fit subject, as the North-Devon women are still, for all romantic and gentle superstitions. Left early without a mother's care, she had fed her fancy upon the legends and ballads of her native land, till she believed—what did she not believe?—of mermaids and pixies, charms and witches, dreams and omens, and all that world of magic in which most of the countrywomen, and countrymen too, believed firmly enough but twenty years ago. Then her father's house was seldom without some merchant, or sea-captain from foreign parts, who, like Othello, had his tales of—

"Antres vast, and deserts idle,
Of rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads reach heaven."

And,—

"And of the cannibals that each other eat,
The anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders."

All which tales, she, like Desdemona, devoured with greedy ears, whenever she could "the house affairs with haste despatch." And when these failed, there was still boundless store of wonders open to her in old romances which were then to be found in every English house of the better class. The Legend of King Arthur, Florice and Blanchefleur, Sir Ysumbras, Sir Guy of Warwick, Palamon and Arcite, and the Romaunt of the Rose were with her text-books and canonical authorities. And lucky it was, perhaps for her, that Sidney's Arcadia was still in

petto, or Mr. Frank (who had already seen the first book or two in manuscript, and extolled it above all books past, present, or to come) would have surely brought a copy down for Rose, and thereby have turned her poor little flighty brains upside down forever. And with her head full of these, it was no wonder if she had likened herself of late more than once to some of those peerless princesses of old, for whose fair hand paladins and kaisers thundered against each other in tilted field; and perhaps she would not have been sorry (provided, of course, no one was killed) if duels and passages of arms in honor of her, as her father reasonably dreaded, had actually taken place.

For Rose was not only well aware that she was wooed, but found the said wooing (and little shame to her) a very pleasant process. Not that she had any wish to break hearts: she did not break her heart for any of her admirers, and why should they break theirs for her? They were all very charming, each in his way (the gentlemen, at least; for she had long since learnt to turn up her nose at merchants and burghers); but one of them was not so very much better than the other.

Of course, Mr. Frank Leigh was the most charming; but then, as a courtier and squire of dames, he had never given her a sign of real love, nothing but sonnets and compliments, and there was no trusting such things from a gallant, who was said (though, by the by, most scandalously) to have a lady love at Milan, and another at Vienna, and half-a-dozen in the Court, and half-a-dozen more in the city.

And very charming was Mr. William Cary, with his quips and his jests, and his galliards and lavoltas; over and above his rich inheritance; but then, charming also Mr. Coffin of Portledge, though he were a little proud and stately; but which of the two should she choose? It would be very pleasant to be mistress of Clovelly Court; but just as pleasant to find herself lady of Portledge, where the Coffins had lived ever since Noah's flood (if, indeed, they had not merely returned thither after that temporary displacement), and to bring her wealth into a family which was as proud of its antiquity as any nobleman in Devon, and might have made a fourth to that famous trio of Devonshire C's, of which it is written,—

"Crocker, Cruwys, and Copplestone,
When the Conqueror came were all at home."

And Mr. Hugh Fortescue, too—people said that he was certain to become a great soldier—perhaps as great as his brother Arthur—and that would be pleasant enough, too, though he was but the younger son of an innumerable family; but then, so was Amyas Leigh. Ah, poor Amyas! Her girl's fancy for him had vanished, or rather, perhaps, it was very much what it always had been, only that four or five more girl's fancies beside it had entered in and kept it in due subjection. But still, she could not help thinking a good deal about him, and his voyage, and the reports of his great strength, and beauty, and valor, which had already reached her in that out-of-the-way corner; and though she was not in the least in love with him, she could not help hoping that he had at least (to put her pretty little thought in the mildest shape) not altogether forgotten her; and was hungering, too, with all her fancy, to give him no peace till he had told her all the wonderful things which he had seen and done in this ever-memorable voyage. So that altogether, it was no wonder, if in her last night's dream the figure of Amyas had been even more forward and troublesome than that of Frank or the rest.

But moreover, another figure had been forward and troublesome enough in last night's sleep-world; and forward and troublesome enough, too, now in today's waking-world, namely, Eustace, the rejected. How strange that she should have dreamt of him the night before! and dreamt, too, of his fighting with Mr. Frank and Mr. Amyas! It must be a warning—see, she had met him the very next day in this strange way; so the first half of her dream had come true; and after what had past, she only had to breathe a whisper, and the second part of the dream would come true also. If she wished for a passage of arms in her own honor, she could easily enough compass one; not that she would do it for worlds! And after all, though Mr. Eustace had been very rude and naughty, yet still it was not his own fault; he could not help being in love with her. And—and, in short, the poor little maid felt herself one of the most important personages on earth, with all the cares (or hearts) of the country in her keeping, and as much perplexed with matters of weight as ever was any Cleophila, or Dianeme, Fiordispina or Flourdeluce, in verse run tame, or prose run mad.

Poor little Rose! Had she but had a mother! But she was to learn her lesson, such as it was, in another school.

She was too shy (too proud perhaps) to tell her aunt her mighty troubles; but a counsellor she must have; and after sitting with her head in her hands, for half-an-hour or more, she arose suddenly, and started off along the cliffs towards Marsland. She would go and see Lucy Passmore, the white witch; Lucy knew everything; Lucy would tell her what to do; perhaps even whom to marry.

Lucy was a fat, jolly woman of fifty, with little pig-eyes, which twinkled like sparks of fire, and eyebrows which sloped upwards and outwards, like those of a satyr, as if she had been (as indeed she had) all her life looking out of the corners of her eyes. Her qualifications as white witch were boundless cunning, equally boundless good nature, considerable knowledge of human weakness, some mesmeric powers, some skill in "yarbs," as she called her simples, a firm faith in the virtue of her own incantations, and the faculty of holding her tongue. By dint of these she contrived to gain a fair share of money, and also (which she liked even better) of power, among the simple folk for many miles round. If a child was scalded, a tooth ached, a piece of silver was stolen, a heifer shrew-struck, a pig bewitched, a young damsel crost in love, Lucy was called in, and Lucy found a remedy, especially for the latter complaint. Now and then she found herself on ticklish ground, for the kind-heartedness which compelled her to help all distressed damsels out of a scrape, sometimes compelled her also to help them into one; whereon enraged fathers called Lucy ugly names, and threatened to send her into Exeter jail for a witch, and she smiled quietly, and hinted that if she were "like some that were ready to return evil for evil, such talk as that would bring no blessing on them that spoke it;" which being translated into plain English, meant, "If you trouble me, I will overlook (*i. e.* fascinate) you, and then your pigs will die, your horses stray, your cream turn sour, your barns be fired, your son have St. Vitus' dance, your daughter fits, and so on, woe on woe, till you are very probably starved to death in a ditch by virtue of this terrible little eye of mine, at which, in spite of all your swearing and bullying, you know you are now shaking in your shoes for fear." So you had much better hold your tongue, give me a drink of cider, and leave ill alone, lest you make it worse."

Not that Lucy ever proceeded to any such fearful extremities. On the contrary, her boast, and her belief

too was, that she was sent into the world to make poor souls as happy as she could, by lawful means, of course, if possible, but if not—why unlawful ones were better than none; for she “couldn’t abear to see the poor creatures taking on; she was too, too, tender-hearted.” And so she was, to every one but her husband, a tall, simple-hearted, rabbit-faced man, a good deal older than herself. Fully agreeing with Sir Richard Grenville’s great axiom, that he who cannot obey cannot rule, Lucy had been for the last five-and-twenty years training him pretty smartly to obey her, with the intention, it is to be charitably hoped, of letting him rule her in turn when his lesson was perfected. He bore his honors, however, meekly enough, having a boundless respect for his wife’s wisdom, and a firm belief in her supernatural powers, and let her go her own way and earn her own money, while he got a little more in a truly pastoral method (not extinct yet along those lonely cliffs), by feeding a herd of some dozen donkeys and twenty goats. The donkeys fetched, at each low-tide, white shell-sand which was to be sold for manure to the neighboring farmers; the goats furnished milk and “kiddy-pies;” and when there was neither milking nor sand-carrying to be done, old Will Passmore just sat under a sunny rock and watched the buck-goats rattle their horns together, thinking about nothing at all, and taking very good care all the while neither to inquire nor to see who came in and out of his little cottage in the glen.

The Prophetess, when Rose approached her oracular cave, was seated on a tripod in front of the fire, distilling strong waters out of pennyroyal. But no sooner did her distinguished visitor appear at the hatch, than the still was left to take care of itself, and a clean apron and mutch having been slipt on, Lucy welcomed Rose with endless courtesies, and—“Bless my dear soul alive, who ever would have thought to see the Rose of Torridge to my poor little place!”

Rose sat down; and then? How to begin was more than she knew, and she stayed silent a full five minutes, looking earnestly at the point of her shoe, till Lucy, who was an adept in such cases, thought it best to proceed to business at once, and save Rose the delicate operation of opening the ball herself; and so, in her own way, half fawning, half familiar—

“Well, my dear young lady, and what is it I can do for ye? For I guess you want a bit of old Lucy’s help, eh? Though I’m most mazed to see ye here, surely. I should have supposed that pretty face could manage they sort of matters for itself. Eh?”

Rose, thus bluntly charged, confessed at once, and with many blushes and hesitations, made her soon understand that what she wanted was, “To have her fortune told.”

“Eh? Oh! I see. The pretty face has managed it a bit too well already, eh? Tu many o’mun, pure fellows? Well, tain’t every mayden has her pick and choose, like some I know of, as be blest in love by stars above. So you h’aint made up your mind, then?”

Rose shook her head.

“Ah—well,” she went on, in a half bantering tone. “Not so asy, is it, then? One’s gude for one thing, and one for another, eh? One has the blood, and another the money.”

And so the “cunning woman” (as she truly was), talking half to herself, ran over all the names which she thought likely, peering at Rose all the while out of the corners of her foxy bright eyes, while Rose stirred the peat ashes steadfastly with the point of her little shoe, half angry, half ashamed, half frightened, to find that “the cunning woman” had guessed so well both her suitors and her thoughts about them, and tried to look unconcerned at each name as it came out.

“Well, well,” said Lucy, who took nothing by her move, simply because there was nothing to take; “think over it,—think over it, my dear life; and if you did set your mind on any one—why, then—then maybe I might help you to a sight of him.”

“A sight of him?”

“His sperrit, dear life, his sperrit, only, I mane. I ’udn’t have no keeping company in my house, no, not for gowld untowld, I ’udn’t; but the sperrit of mun—to see whether mun would be true or not, you’d like to know that, now, ’udn’t you, my darling?”

Rose sighed, and stirred the ashes about vehemently.

“I must first know who it is to be. If you could show me that—now—”

“Oh, I can show ye that, tu, I can. Ben there’s a way to ’t, a sure way; but ’tis mortal cold for the time o’ year, you zee.”

"But what is it then?" said Rose, who had in her heart been longing for something of that very kind, and had half made up her mind to ask for a charm.

"Why, you're not afraid to go into the say by night for a minute, are you? And tomorrow night would serve too; 'twill be just low tide to midnight."

"If you would come with me perhaps——"

"I'll come, I'll come, and stand within call, to be sure. Only do ye mind this, dear soul alive, not to go tellin a crumb about mun, noo, not for the world, or ye'll see nought at all, indeed, now. And beside, there's a noxious business grow'd up against me up to Chapel there; and I hear tell how Mr. Leigh saith I shall to Exeter jail for a witch—did ye ever hear the likes?—because his groom Jan saith I overlooked mun—the Papist dog! And now never he nor th' owld Father Francis goo by me without a spetting, and saying of their Aves and Malificas—I do know what their Rooman Latin do mane, zo well as ever they, I du!—and a making o' their charms and incantations to their saints and idols! They be mortal feared of witches, they Papists, and mortal hard on 'em, even on a pure body like me, that doth a bit in the white way; 'case why you see, dear life," said she, with one of her humorous twinkles, "tu to a trade do never agree. Do ye try my bit of a charm, now; do ye!"

Rose could not resist the temptation; and between them both the charm was agreed on, and the next night was fixed for its trial, on the payment of certain current coins of the realm (for Lucy, of course, must live by her trade); and slipping a tester into the dame's hand as earnest, Rose went away home, and got there in safety.

But in the meanwhile, at the very hour that Eustace had been prosecuting his suit in the lane at Moorwinstow, a very different scene was being enacted in Mrs. Leigh's room at Burrough.

For the night before, Amyas, as he was going to bed, heard his brother Frank in the next room tune his lute, and then begin to sing. And both their windows being open, and only a thin partition between the chambers, Amyas' admiring ears came in for every word of the following canzonet, sung in that delicate and mellow tenor voice for which Frank was famed among all fair ladies:—

"Ah, tyrant Love, Megæra's serpents bearing,
Why thus requite my sighs with venom'd smart?"

Ah, ruthless dove, the vulture's talons wearing,
Why flesh them, traitress, in this faithful heart?
Is this my meed? Must dragons' teeth alone
In Venus' lawns by lovers' hands be sown?

"Nay, gentlest Cupid; 'twas my pride undid me
Nay, guiltless dove; by mine own wound I fell.
To worship, not to wed, Celestials bid me;
I dreamt to mate in heaven, and wake in hell;
For ever doom'd, Ixion-like, to reel
On mine own passions' ever-burning wheel."

At which the simple sailor sighed, and longed that he could write such neat verses, and sing them so sweetly. How he would besiege the ear of Rose Salterne with amorous ditties! But still, he could not be everything; and if he had the bone and muscle of the family, it was but fair that Frank should have the brains and voice; and after all, he was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, and it was just the same as if he himself could do all the fine things which Frank could do; for as long as one of the family won honor, what matter which of them it was? Whereon he shouted through the wall, "Good-night, old song-thrush; I suppose I need not pay the musicians."

"What, awake?" answered Frank. "Come in here. and lull me to sleep with a sea-song."

So Amyas went in, and found Frank laid on the outside of his bed not yet undrest.

"I am a bad sleeper," said he; "I spend more time, I fear, in burning the midnight oil than prudent men should. Come and be my jongleur, my minne-singer, and tell me about Andes, and cannibals, and the ice-regions, and the fire-regions, and the paradises of the West."

So Amyas sat down, and told: but somehow, every story which he tried to tell came round, by crooked paths, yet sure, to none other point than Rose Salterne, and how he thought of her here and thought of her there, and how he wondered what she would say if she had seen him in this adventure, and how he longed to have had her with him to show her that glorious sight till Frank let him have his own way, and then out came the whole story of the simple fellow's daily and hourly devotion to her, through those three long years of world-wide wanderings.

"And oh, Frank, I could hardly think of anything but her in the church the other day, God forgive me! and it did seem so hard for her to be the only face which I did not see—and have not seen her yet, either."

"So I thought, dear lad," said Frank, with one of his sweetest smiles; "and tried to get her father to let her impersonate the nymph of Torridge."

"Did you, you dear kind fellow? That would have been too delicious."

"Just so, too delicious; wherefore, I suppose, it was ordained not to be, that which was being delicious enough."

"And is she as pretty as ever?"

"Ten times as pretty, dear lad, as half the young fellows round have discovered. If you mean to win her and wear her (and God grant you may fare no worse!) you will have rivals enough to get rid of."

"Humph!" said Amyas, "I hope I shall not have to make short work with some of them."

"I hope not," said Frank, laughing. "Now go to bed, and tomorrow morning give your sword to mother to keep, lest you should be tempted to draw it on any of her Majesty's lieges."

"No fear of that, Frank; I am no swash-buckler, thank God; but if any one gets in my way, I'll serve him as the mastiff did the terrier, and just drop him over the quay into the river, to cool himself, or my name's not Amyas."

And the giant swung himself laughing out of the room, and slept all night like a seal, not without dreams, of course, of Rose Salterne.

The next morning, according to his wont, he went into his mother's room, whom he was sure to find up and at her prayers; for he liked to say his prayers, too, by her side, as he used to do when he was a little boy. It seemed so homelike, he said, after three years' knocking up and down in no-man's land. But coming gently to the door, for fear of disturbing her, and entering unperceived, beheld a sight which stopped him short.

Mrs. Leigh was sitting in her chair, with her face bowed fondly down upon the head of his brother Frank, who knelt before her, his face buried in her lap. Amyas could see that his whole form was quivering with stifled emotion. Their mother was just finishing the last words of a well-known text—"for my sake, and the Gospel's, shall receive a hundredfold in this present life, fathers, and mothers, and brothers, and sisters."

"But not a wife!" interrupted Frank, with a voice stifled with sobs; "that was too precious a gift for even Him to promise to those who gave up a first love for His sake!"

"And yet," said he, after a moment's silence, "has He not heaped me with blessings enough already, that I must repine and rage at His refusing me one more, even though that one be—no, mother! I am your son, and God's; and you shall know it, even though Amyas never does!" And he looked up with his clear blue eyes and white forehead; and his face was as the face of an angel.

Both of them saw that Amyas was present, and started and blushed. His mother motioned him away with her eyes, and he went quietly out, as one stunned. Why had his name been mentioned?

Love, cunning love, told him all at once. This was the meaning of last night's canzonet! This was why its words had seemed to fit his own heart so well! His brother was his rival. And he had been telling him all his love last night. What a stupid brute he was! How it must have made poor Frank wince! And then Frank had listened so kindly; even bid him God speed in his suit. What a gentleman old Frank was, to be sure! No wonder the Queen was so fond of him, and all the Court ladies!—Why, if it came to that, what wonder if Rose Salterne should be fond of him too? Hey-day? "That would be a pretty fish to find in my net when I come to haul it!" quoth Amyas to himself, as he paced the garden; and clutching desperately hold of his locks with both hands, as if to hold his poor confused head on his shoulders, he strode and tramped up and down the shell-paved garden walks for a full half hour, till Frank's voice (as cheerful as ever, though he more than suspected all) called him.

"Come in to breakfast lad; and stop grinding and creaking upon those miserable limpets, before thou hast set every tooth in my head on edge!"

Amyas, whether by dint of holding his head straight, or by higher means, had got the thoughts of the said head straight enough by this time; and in he came, and fell to upon the broiled fish and strong ale, with a sort of fury, as if determined to do his duty to the utmost in all matters that day; and therefore, of course, in that most important matter of bodily sustenance; while his mother and Frank looked at him, not without anxiety and even terror, doubting what turn his fancy might have taken in so new a case; at last:—"My dear Amyas, you will really heat your blood with all that strong ale! Remember, those who drink beer, think beer."

"Then they think right good thoughts, mother. And in the meanwhile, those who drink water, think water. Eh, old Frank? and here's your health."

"And clouds are water," said his mother, somewhat reassured by his genuine good-humor; "and so are rainbows; and clouds are angels' thrones, and rainbows the sign of God's peace on earth."

"Amyas understood the hint, and laughed. "Then I'll pledge Frank out of the next ditch, if it please you and him. But first—I say—he must hearken to a parable; a manner mystery, miracle play, I have got in my head, like what they have at Easter, to the town-hall. Now then, hearken, madam, and I and Frank will act." And up rose Amyas, and shoved back his chair and put on a solemn face.

Mrs. Leigh looked up, trembling; and Frank, he scarce knew why, rose.

"No; you pitch again. You are King David, and sit still upon your throne. David was a great singer, you know, and a player on the viols; and ruddy, too, and of a fair countenance; so that will fit. Now, then, mother don't look so frightened. I am not going to play Goliath, for all my cubits; I am to present Nathan the prophet. Now, David, hearken, for I have a message unto thee, O King!

"There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor: and the rich man had many flocks and herds, and all the fine ladies in Whitehall to court if he liked; and the poor man had nothing but——"

And in spite of his broad, honest smile, Amyas' deep voice began to tremble and choke.

Frank sprang up, and burst into tears:—"Oh, Amyas, my brother, my brother! stop! I cannot endure this. Oh, God! was it not enough to have entangled myself in this fatal fancy, but over and above, I must meet the shame of my brother's discovering it?"

"What shame, then, I'd like to know?" said Amyas, recovering himself. "Look here, brother Frank! I've thought it all over in the garden; and I was an ass and a braggart for talking to you as I did last night. Of course you love her! Everybody must, and I was a fool for not recollecting that; and if you love her, your taste and mine agree, and what can be better? I think you are a sensible fellow for loving her, and you think me one.

And as for who has her, why, you're the eldest; and first come first served is the rule, and best to keep to it. Besides, brother Frank, though I'm no scholar, yet I'm not so blind but that I tell the difference between you and me; and of course your chance against mine, for a hundred to one; and I am not going to be fool enough to row against wind and tide too. I'm good enough for her, I hope; but if I am, you are better, and the good dog may run, but it's the best that takes the hare; and so I have nothing more to do with the matter at all; and if you marry her, why, it will set the old house on its legs again, and that's the first thing to be thought of, and you may just as well do it as I, and better too. Not but that it's a plague, a horrible plague!" went on Amyas, with a ludicrously doleful visage; "but so are other things too, by the dozen; it's all in the day's work, as the huntsman said when the lion ate him. One would never get through the furze-croft if one stopped to pull out the prickles. The pig didn't scramble out of the ditch by squeaking; and the less said the sooner mended; nobody was sent into the world only to suck honey-pots. What must be must, man is but dust; if you can't get crumb, you must fain eat crust. So I'll go and join the army in Ireland, and get it out of my head, for cannon balls fright away love as well as poverty does; and that's all I've got to say." Where-with Amyas sat down, and returned to the beer; while Mrs. Leigh wept tears of joy.

"Amyas! Amyas!" said Frank; "you must not throw away the hopes of years, and for me, too! Oh, how just was your parable! Ah! mother mine! to what use is all my scholarship and my philosophy, when this dear simple sailor-lad outdoes me at the first trial of courtesy!"

"My children, my children, which of you shall I love best? Which of you is the more noble? I thanked God this morning for having given me one such son; but to have found that I possess two!" And Mrs. Leigh laid her head on the table, and buried her face in her hands, while the generous battle went on.

"But, dearest Amyas——"

"But, Frank! if you don't hold your tongue, I must go forth. It was quite trouble enough to make up one's mind without having you afterwards trying to unmake it again."

"Amyas! if you give her up to me, God do so to me, and more also, if I do not hereby give her up to you!"