him once again. I did not see him for a whole week before he died. The last time I ever saw him was one day in the copse, and he got down some hazel-nuts for me. I never thanked him," she added, the tears in her eyes; "I was in a hurry to get home, and I never stayed to thank him. I shall always be sorry for it. I must see him, George."

Nora was already in the room with the candle. Maude advanced on tip-toe, her heart beating, her breath held with awe. She halted at the foot of the table, looked eagerly upwards, and saw—— What was it that she saw?

A white, ghastly face, cold and still, with its white bands tied up round it, and its closed eyes. Maude Trevlyn had never seen the dead, and her heart gave a bound of terror, and she fell back with a convulsive shriek. Before Nora knew well what had occurred, George had her in the other room, his arms wound about her with a sense of protection. Nora came out and closed the door, vexed with herself for having allowed her to enter.

"You should have told me you had never seen anybody dead before, Miss Maude," cried she, testily. "How was I to know? And you ought to have come right up to the top before you turned your eyes on it. Of course, glancing up from the foot, they looked bad."

Maude was clinging tremblingly to George, sobbing hysterically. "Don't be angry with me," she whispered. "I did not think he would look like that."

"Oh, Maude, dear, I am not angry; I am only sorry," he said soothingly. "There's nothing really to be frightened at. Papa loved you very much; almost as much as he loved me."

"I will take you back, Maude," said George, when she was ready to go.

"Yes, please," she eagerly answered. "I should not dare to go alone now. I should be fancying I saw—you know. That it was looking out at me from the hedges."

Nora folded her shawl well over her again, and George drew her closer to him that she might feel his presence as well as see it. Nora watched them down the path, right over the hole which the restless dog had favoured the house with a night or two before.

They went up the road. An involuntary shudder shook George's frame as he passed the turning which led to the fatal field. He seemed to see his father in the unequal conflict. Maude felt the movement.

"It is never going to be out again, George," she whispered.

"What?" he asked, his thoughts buried deeply just then.

"The bull. I heard Aunt Diana talking to Mr. Chattaway. She said it must not be set at liberty again, or we might have the law down upon Trevlyn Hold."

"Yes; that's all Miss Trevlyn and he care for—the law," returned George, in a tone of pain. "What do they care for the death of my father?"

"George, he is better off," said she, in a dreamy manner, her face turned towards the stars. "I am very sorry; I have cried a great deal to-day over it; and I wish it had never happened; I wish he was back with us; but still he is better off; Aunt Edith says so. You don't know how she has cried."

"Yes," answered George, his heart very full.

"Mamma and papa are better off," continued Maude. "Your own mamma is better off. The next world is a happier one than this."

George made no rejoinder. Favourite though Maude was with George Ryle, those were heavy moments for him. They proceeded in silence until they turned in at the great gate by the lodge. The lodge was a round building, containing two rooms upstairs and two down. Its walls were not very substantial, and the sound of voices could be heard from inside the window. Maude stopped in consternation.

"George! that is Rupert talking!"

"Rupert! You told me he was in bed."

"He was sent to bed. He must have got out of the window again. I am sure it is his voice. Oh, what will be done if it is found out?"

George Ryle swung himself on to the very narrow ledge which ran underneath the window, contriving to hold on by his hands and toes. The inside shutter ascended only three parts up the window, and George thus obtained a view of the room.

"Yes, it is Rupert," said he, as he jumped down. "He is sitting there, talking to old Canham."

But the same slightness of structure which allowed inside noises to be heard without the lodge, allowed outside noises to be heard within. Ann Canham had come hastening to the door, opened it a few inches, and stood peeping out. Maude took the opportunity to slip past her into the room.

But no trace of her brother was there. Mark Canham was sitting in his usual invalid seat by the fire, smoking a pipe, his back towards the door.

"Where is he gone?" cried Maude.

"Where's who gone?" roughly spoke old Canham, without turning his head. "There ain't nobody here."

"Father, it's Miss Maude," interposed Ann Canham, closing the outer door, after allowing George to enter. "Who be you taking her for?"

The old man, partly disabled by rheumatism, put down his pipe, and contrived to turn in his chair. "Eh, Miss Maude! Why, who'd ever have thought of seeing you to-night?"

"Where is Rupert gone?" asked Maude.

"Rupert?" composedly returned old Canham. "Is it Master Rupert you're asking after? How should we know where he is, Miss Maude?"

"We saw him here," interposed George Ryle. "He was sitting on that bench, talking to you. We both heard his voice, and I saw him."

"Very odd!" said the old man. "Fancy goes a great way. Folks is ofttimes deluded by it."

"Mark Canham, I tell you, we——"

"Wait a minute, George," interrupted Maude. She opened the door which led into the outer room, and stood with it in her hand, looking into the darkness. "Rupert!" she called out, "it is only I and George Ryle. You need not hide yourself."

It brought forth Rupert; that lovely boy, with his large blue eyes and his auburn curls. There was a great likeness between him and Maude; but Maude's hair was lighter.

"I thought it was Cris," he said. "He is learning to be as sly as a fox: though I don't know that he was ever anything else. When I am ordered to bed before my time, he has taken to dodge into the room every ten minutes to see that I am safe in it. Have they missed me, Maude?"

"I don't know," she answered. "I came away, too, without their knowing it. I have been down to Aunt Ryle's, and George has brought me back again."

"Will you be pleased to sit down, Miss Maude?" asked Ann Canham, dusting a chair.

"Eh, but that's a pretty picture!" cried old Canham, gazing at Maude, who had slipped off her heavy shawl, and stood warming her hands at the fire.

Mark Canham was right. A very pretty picture. He extended the hand that was not helpless, and laid it on her wrist.

"Miss Maude, I mind me seeing your mother looking just as you look now. The Squire was out, and the young ladies at the Hold thought they'd give a dance, and Parson Dean and Miss Emily were invited to it. I don't know that they'd have been asked if the Squire had been at home, matters not being smooth between him and the parson. She was older than you be; but she was dressed just as you be now; and I could fancy, as I look at you, that it was her over again. I was in the rooms, helping to wait, handing round the negus and things. It doesn't seem so long ago! Miss Emily was the sweetest-looking of 'em all present; and the young heir seemed to think so. He opened the ball with Miss Emily in spite of his sisters; they wanted him to choose somebody grander. Ah, me! and both of 'em lying low so soon after, leaving you two behind 'em!"

"Mark!" cried Rupert, casting his eyes on the old man—eyes sparkling with excitement—"if they had lived, my papa and mamma, I should not have been sent to bed to-night because there's another party at Trevlyn Hold."

Mark's only answer was to put up his hands with an indignant gesture. Ann Canham was still offering the chair to Maude. Maude declined it.

"I cannot stop, Ann. They will miss me if I don't return. Rupert, you will come?"

"To be boxed up in my bedroom, whilst the rest of you are enjoying yourselves," cried Rupert. "They would like to take the spirit out of me; they have been trying at it a long time."

Maude wound her arm within his. "Do come, Rupert!" she whispered coaxingly. "Think of the disturbance if Cris should find you here and tell!"

"And tell!" repeated Rupert, in mocking tones. "*Not* to tell would be impossible to Cris Chattaway. It's what he'd delight in more than in gold. I'd not be the sneak Cris Chattaway is for the world."

But Rupert appeared to think it well to depart with his sister. As they were going out, old Canham spoke to George.

"And Miss Trevlyn, sir—how does she bear it? Forgive me, I'm always a-forgetting myself and going back to the old days. 'Twas but a week a-gone I called Madam 'Miss Edith' to her face. I should ha' said 'Mrs. Ryle,' sir."

"She bears it very well, Mark," answered George.

Something, George himself could not have told what, caused

him not to bear it well just then. The tears rushed to his eyes unbidden. The old man marked them.

"There's one comfort for ye, Master George," he said, in low tones: "that he has took all his neighbours' sorrow with him. And as much couldn't be said if every gentleman round about here was cut off by death."

The significant tone was not needed to tell George that the words "every gentleman" was meant for Mr. Chattaway. The master of Trevlyn Hold was, in fact, no greater favourite with old Canham than he was with George Ryle.

"Mind how you get in, Master Rupert, so that they don't fall upon you," whispered Ann Canham, as she held open the lodge door.

"I'll mind, Ann Canham," was the boy's answer. "Not that I should care much if they did," he added. "I am getting tired of it."

She stood and watched them up the dark walk until a turn in the road hid them from view, and then closed the door. "If they don't take to treat him kinder, I misdoubt me but he'll be doing something desperate, as the dead-and-gone heir, Rupert, did," she remarked, sitting down by her father.

"Like enough," was the old man's reply, taking up his pipe again. "He have the true Trevlyn temper, have young Rupert."

"I say, Maude," began Rupert, as they wound their way up the dark avenue, "don't they know you came out?"

"They would not have let me come if they had known it," replied Maude. "I have been wanting to go down all day, but Aunt Diana and Octave kept me in. I cried to go down last night when Bill Webb brought the news; and they were angry with me."

"Do you know what I should have done in Chattaway's place, George?" cried the boy, impulsively. "I should have loaded my gun the minute I heard of it, and shot the beast between the eyes. Chattaway would, if he were half a man."

"It is of no use talking of it, Rupert," answered George, in a sadly subdued tone. "It would not mend the evil."

"Only fancy their having this rout to-night, while Mr. Ryle is lying dead!" indignantly resumed Rupert. "Aunt Edith ought to have interfered for once, and stopped it."

"Aunt Edith did interfere," spoke up Maude. "She said it must be put off. But Octave would not hear of it, and Miss Diana said Mr Ryle was no blood rela——"

Maude dropped her voice. They were now in view of the house and its lighted windows; and some one, probably hearing their footsteps, came bearing down upon them with a fleet step. It was Cris Chattaway. Rupert stole into the trees, and disappeared: Maude, holding George's arm, bore bravely on, and met him.

"Where have you been, Maude? The house has been searched for you. What brings *you* here?" he roughly added to George.

"I came because I chose to come," was George's answer.

"None of that insolence," returned Cris. "We don't want you here to-night. Just be off from this."

Was Cris Chattaway's motive a good one, under his rudeness? Did he feel ashamed of the gaiety going on, while Mr. Ryle, his uncle by marriage, was lying dead, under circumstances so unhappy? Was he anxious to conceal the unseemly proceeding from George? Perhaps so.

"I shall go back when I have taken Maude to the hall-door," said George. "Not before."

Anything that might have been said further by Cris, was interrupted by the appearance of Miss Trevlyn. She was standing on the steps.

"Where have you been, Maude?"

"To Trevlyn Farm, Aunt Diana," was Maude's truthful answer. "You would not let me go in the day, so I have been now. It seemed to me that I must see him before he was put underground."

"See *him!*" cried Miss Trevlyn.

"Yes. It was all I went for. I did not see my aunt. Thank you, George, for bringing me home," she continued, stepping in. "Good night. I would have given all I have for it never to have happened."

She burst into a passionate flood of tears as she spoke—the result, no doubt, of her previous fright and excitement, as well as of her sorrow for Mr. Ryle's unhappy fate. George wrung her hand, and lifted his hat to Miss Trevlyn as he turned away.

But ere he had well plunged into the dark avenue, there came swift and stealthy steps behind him. A soft hand was laid upon him, and a soft voice spoke, broken by its tears:

"Oh, George, I am so sorry! I have felt all day as if it would almost be my death. I think I could have given my own life to save his."

"I know, I know," he answered. "I know how *you* will feel it." And George, utterly unmanned, burst into tears also.

It was Mrs. Chattaway.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ROMANCE OF TREVLYN HOLD.

It is impossible to go on without a word of retrospect. The Ryles, gentlemen by descent, had once been rich men, but they were openhanded and heedless, and in the time of George's grandfather, the farm (not called the farm then) passed into the possession of the Trevlyns of the Hold, who had a mortgage on it. They named it Trevlyn Farm, and Mr. Ryle and his son remained on it as tenants; as tenants where they had once been owners.

After old Mr. Ryle's death, his son married the daughter of the curate of Barbrook, the Reverend George Berkeley, familiarly known as Parson Berkeley. In point of fact, the parish knew no other pastor, for its Rector was an absentee. Mary Berkeley was an only child. She had been petted, and physicked, and nursed, after the manner of only children, and grew up sickly as a matter of course. A delicate, beautiful girl in appearance, but not strong. People (who are always fond, you know, of settling everybody else's business for them) deemed that she made a poor match in marrying Thomas Ryle. It was whispered, however, that he himself might have made a greater match, had he chosen—no other than Squire Trevlyn's eldest daughter. There was not so handsome, so attractive a man in all the country round as Thomas Ryle.

Soon after the marriage, Parson Berkeley died—to the intense grief of his daughter, Mrs. Ryle. He was succeeded in the curacy and parsonage by a young clergyman just in priest's orders, the Reverend Shafto Dean. A well-meaning man, but opinionated and self-sufficient in the highest degree, and before he had been one month at the parsonage, he and Squire Trevlyn were at issue. Mr. Dean wished to introduce certain new fashions and customs into the church and parish; Squire Trevlyn held to the old. Proud, haughty, overbearing, but honourable and generous, Squire Trevlyn had known no master, no

opposer; *he* was lord of the neighbourhood, and was bowed down to accordingly. Mr. Dean would not give way, the Squire would not give way; and the little seed of dissension grew and spread. Obstinacy begets obstinacy. That which a slight yielding on either side, a little mutual good-feeling, might have removed at first, became at length a terrible breach, the talk of a county.

Meanwhile Thomas Ryle's fair young wife died, leaving an infant boy—George. In spite of her husband's loving care, in spite of having been shielded from all work and management, so necessary on a farm, she died. Nora Dickson, a humble relative of the Ryle family, who had been partially brought up on the farm, was housekeeper and manager. She saved all trouble to young Mrs. Ryle: but she could not save her life.

The past history of Trevlyn Hold was a romance in itself. Squire Trevlyn had five children: Rupert, Maude, Joseph, Edith, and Diana. Rupert, Maude, and Diana were imperious as their father; Joseph and Edith were mild, yielding, and gentle, as had been their mother. Rupert was of course regarded as the heir, intended to be so: but the property was not entailed. An ancestor of Squire Trevlyn's coming from some distant part—it was said Cornwall—bought it and settled down upon it. There was not a great deal of grass land on the estate, but the coal-mines in the distance made it valuable. Of all his children, Rupert, the eldest, was the Squire's favourite: but poor Rupert did not live to come into the estate. He had inherited the fits of passion characteristic of the Trevlyn's; he was of a thoughtless, impetuous nature; and he fell into trouble and ran away from his country. He embarked for a distant port, which he did not live to reach. And Joseph became the heir.

Very different, he, from his brother Rupert. Gentle and yielding, like his sister Edith, the Squire half despised him. The Squire would have preferred him passionate, haughty, and overbearing—a true Trevlyn. But the Squire had no intention of superseding him in the succession of Trevlyn Hold. Provided Joseph lived, none other would be its inheritor. *Provided.* Joseph—always called Joe—appeared to have inherited his mother's constitution; and she had died early, of decline.

Yielding, however, as Joe Trevlyn was naturally, on one point he did not prove himself so—that of his marriage. He chose Emily Dean; the pretty and lovable sister of Squire Trevlyn's *bête noire,* the obstinate parson. "I would rather