"I wished to ask you about the book you promised to get me," she said. "Have you procured it?"

"No; and I am sorry to say that I cannot meet with it," replied George. "I thought of it at Oxford, and went into every bookseller's shop in the place, unsuccessfully. I told you it was difficult to be had. I must get them to write to London for it from Barmester."

"It is an insignificant book. It costs only three-and-sixpence."

"True. Its insignificance may explain its scarcity. Good afternoon, Octave."

"Will you come to the Hold this evening?" she asked, as he was riding away.

"Thank you. I am not sure that I can. My day or two's absence has made me busy."

Octave Chattaway drew back under cover of the trees, and there halted. She did not retreat until every trace of that fine young horseman she was gazing after had faded from her sight.

CHAPTER XII.

A NIGHT BELL UNANSWERED.

It is singular to observe how lightly the marks of Time sometimes pass over the human form and face. An instance of this might be seen in Mrs. Chattaway. It was strange that it should be so in her case. Her health was not good, and she certainly was not a happy woman. Illness was frequently her portion; care seemed ever to follow her; and it is upon these sufferers of mind and body that Time is fond of leaving his traces. He had not left them on Mrs. Chattaway; her face was fair and fresh as it had been eight years ago; her hair fell in its mass of curls; her eyes were still blue, and clear, and bright.

And yet anxiety was her constant companion. It may be said that remorse never left her. She would sit at the window of her room upstairs—Madam's room—for hours, apparently contemplating the outer world; in reality seeing nothing.

As she was sitting now. The glories of the bright day had faded into twilight; the sun no longer lit up the many hues of the autumn foliage; all the familiar points in the charming landscape had faded to indistinctness; old Canham's

chimneys at the lodge were becoming obscure, and the red light thrown up from the mines and works was beginning to show out on the right in the extreme distance. Mrs. Chattaway leaned her elbow on the old-fashioned armchair as she sat in it, and rested her cheek upon her hand. Had you looked at her eyes, gazing out so pertinaciously upon the fading landscape, you might have seen that they had no speculation in them. They were deep in the world of thought.

That constitutional timidity of hers had been nothing but a blight to her throughout her life. Reticence in a woman is good; but not that timorous reticence which is the result of fear; which dare not speak up for itself, even to oppose a wrong. Every wrong inflicted upon Rupert Trevlyn—every unkindness shown to him—every pang of sickness, whether of mind or body, which happier circumstances might have spared to him, was avenged over and over again in the person of Mrs. Chattaway. It may be said that she lived only in pain; her life was one never-ending sorrow—sorrow for Rupert.

In the old days, when her husband had chosen to deceive Squire Trevlyn as to the existence of Rupert, she had not dared to avow the truth, and say to her father, "There is an heir born." She dared not fly in the face of her husband, and say it; and, it may be, that she was too willingly silent for her husband's sake. It would seem strange, but that we know what fantastic tricks our passions play us, that pretty, gentle Edith Trevlyn should have *loved* that essentially disagreeable man, James Chattaway. But so it was. And, while deploring the fact of the wrong dealt out to Rupert—it may almost be said *expiating* it—Mrs. Chattaway never visited that wrong upon her husband, even in thought, as it ought to have been visited. None could realize more intensely its consequences than she realized them in her secret heart. Expiate it? Ay, she expiated it again and again, if her sufferings could only have been reckoned as atonement.

But they could not. *They* were enjoying Trevlyn Hold and its benefits, and Rupert was little better than an outcast on the face of the earth. Every dinner that was put upon their table, every article of attire bought for their children, every mark of honour or substantial comfort which their position brought to them, seemed to rise up reproachfully before the face of Mrs. Chattaway, and say, "The money to procure all this is not yours and your husband's; it is wrenched from Rupert." And

she could do nothing to remedy it; she could only wage ever-continued battle with the knowledge, and with the sting it brought. No remedy existed. They had not come into the inheritance by legal fraud or wrong: they succeeded to it fairly and openly, according to the legally-made will of Squire Trevlyn. If the whole world ranged itself on Rupert's side, pressing that the property should be resigned to him, Mr. Chattaway had only to point with his finger to the will, and say, "You cannot act against that."

It may be that this very fact brought remorse with greater force home to Mrs. Chattaway. It may be that her incessantly dwelling upon it caused a morbid state of feeling, which of itself served to increase the malady. Certain it is, that by night and by day the wrongs of Rupert were ever pressing painfully on her mind. She loved him with that strange intensity which brings an aching to the heart. When the baby orphan was brought home to her from its foreign birthplace, with its rosy cheeks and its golden curls—when it put out its little arms to her, and gazed at her with its loving blue eyes, her heart went out to it there and then, and she caught it to her with a love more passionate than any ever given to her own children. The irredeemable wrong inflicted on the unconscious child, fixed itself on her conscience in that hour, never to be lifted from it.

If ever a woman lived a dual life, that woman was Mrs. Chattaway. Her true aspect—that in which she saw herself as she really was—was as different from the one presented to the world as is light from darkness. Do not blame her. It was difficult to help it. The world and her own family saw in Mrs. Chattaway a weak, gentle, apathetic woman, who could not, or might not—at any rate, who did not—take upon herself even the ordinary authority of the head of a household. They little thought that that weak woman, remarkable for nothing but indifference, passed her days in distress, in care, in thought. The inherent timidity (it had existed in her mother) which had been her bane in former days, was her bane still. She had not dared to rise up against her husband when the injustice was inflicted upon Rupert Trevlyn; she did not dare openly to rise up now against the petty wrongs daily dealt out to him. There may have been a latent consciousness in her mind that if she did so rise up it would not alter things for the better, and it might make them worse for Rupert. Probably it would have been found so; and that the non-interference was for the best.

There were many things she could have wished done for Rupert, and she went so far as to hint at some of them to Mr. Chattaway. She wished he could be relieved altogether from going to Blackstone; she wished greater indulgences for him at home; she wished he might be transported to a warmer climate. A bare suggestion of one or other of these things she dropped, once in a way, to Mr. Chattaway. They fell unheeded on his ear, as must be supposed by their not being answered. He replied to one of them—the hint of the warmer climate—with a prolonged stare and a demand as to what romantic absurdity she could be thinking of. Mrs. Chattaway had never mentioned it again. In these cases of constitutional timidity, a rebuff, let it be ever so slight, is sufficient to close the lips for ever. Poor lady! she would have sacrificed her own comfort to give peace and comfort to the unhappy Rupert. He was miserably put upon, he was treated with less consideration than were the servants, he was made to feel his dependent state daily and hourly by petty annoyances; and yet she could not interfere openly to help him!

Even now, as she sat watching the deepening shades of night, she was dwelling on this; resenting it in her heart, for his sake. It was the evening of the day when the young ladies had met George Ryle in the lane. She could hear the sounds of merriment downstairs from her children and their visitors, and she felt sure that Rupert did not make one amongst them. It had long been the pleasure of Cris and Octave to exclude Rupert from the general society, the evening gatherings of the family, as far as they could do so; and if, through the presence of herself or of Miss Diana, they could not absolutely deny his entrance, they took care to treat him with cavalier indifference. She sat on, revolving these bitter thoughts in the gloom, until roused by the entrance of an intruder.

It was Rupert himself. He approached Mrs. Chattaway, and she fondly threw her arm round him, and drew him down to a chair by her side. Only when they were alone could she show him these marks of affection, or prove to him that he did not stand in the world entirely isolated from all ties of love.

"Do you feel better to-night, Rupert?"

"Oh, I am a great deal better. I feel quite well. Why are you sitting alone in the dark, Aunt Edith?"

"It is not quite dark yet. What are they doing below, Rupert? I hear plenty of laughter."

"They are playing at some game, I think."

"At what?"

"I don't know. I was taking a place with them, when Octave, as usual, said they were enough without me; so I came away."

Mrs. Chattaway made no reply. She never spoke a reproachful word of her children to Rupert, whatever she might feel; she never, by so much as a breathing, cast a reproach on her husband to living mortal. Rupert leaned his head on her shoulder, as if he were weary. Sufficient light was left to show how delicate were his features, how attractive was his face. The lovely countenance of his boyhood characterized him still—the suspiciously bright cheeks and the silken hair. Of middle height, his frame slender and fragile, he scarcely looked his twenty years. There was a resemblance in his face to Mrs. Chattaway's: and it was not surprising, for Joe Trevlyn and his sister Edith had been remarkably alike when they were young.

"Is Cris come in?" asked Mrs. Chattaway.

"Not yet."

Rupert rose as he spoke, and stretched himself. The verb *s'ennuyer* was one he often felt himself obliged to conjugate, in his evenings at Trevlyn Hold.

"I think I shall go down for an hour to Trevlyn Farm."

Mrs. Chattaway started. She, as it seemed, shrank from the words. "Not to-night, Rupert!"

"It is so dull at home, Aunt Edith."

"They are merry enough downstairs."

"*They* are. But Octave takes care that I shall not be merry with them."

What could she answer?

"Well, then, Rupert, you will *be sure* to be home," she said, after a while. And the pained emphasis with which she spoke the words "be sure," no pen could express. Some meaning, understood by Rupert, was evidently conveyed by them.

"Yes," was all he answered; the tones of his voice telling of undisguised resentment.

Mrs. Chattaway caught him to her, and hid her face upon his shoulder. "For my sake, Rupert, darling! for my sake!"

"Yes, yes, dear Aunt Edith: I'll be sure to be in time," he reiterated. "I'll not forget the hour, as I did the other night."

She stood at the window, and watched him away from the house and down the avenue, praying that he might *not* forget the hour. It had pleased Mr. Chattaway lately to forbid Rupert's entrance to the house, unless he returned to it by half-past ten. That this motive was entirely that of ill-naturedly crossing Rupert, there could be little doubt. Driven by unkindness from the Hold, Rupert had taken to spending his evenings with George Ryle; sometimes at the houses of other friends; now and then he would invade old Canham's. Rupert's hour for coming in from these visits was about eleven; he generally had managed to be in by the time the clock struck; but the master of Trevlyn Hold suddenly issued a mandate that he must be in by half-past ten; failing strict obedience as to time, he was not to be let in at all. Rupert resented it, and one or two unpleasant scenes had ensued. A similar rule was not applied to Cris, who might come in any hour he pleased.

Mrs. Chattaway descended to the drawing-room. Two young ladies, the daughters of neighbours, were spending the evening there, and they were playing at proverbs with intense relish: Maude Trevlyn, the guests, and the Miss Chattaways. Octave alone joined in it listlessly, as if her thoughts were far away. Her restless glances towards the door seemed to say that she was watching for the entrance of one who did not come.

By-and-by Mr. Chattaway came home, and they sat down to supper. Afterwards, the young ladies departed, and the younger children went to bed. Ten o'clock struck, and the time went on again.

"Where's Rupert?" Mr. Chattaway suddenly asked of his wife.

"He went down to Trevlyn Farm, James," she said, unable, had it been to save her life, to speak without deprecation.

He gave no answer by word or look to his wife; but he rang the bell, and ordered the household to bed. Miss Diana Trevlyn was out upon a visit.

"Cris and Rupert are not in, papa," observed Octave, as she lighted her mamma's candle and her own.

Mr. Chattaway took out his watch. "Twenty-five minutes past ten," he said, in his hard, impassive manner—a manner which imparted the idea that he was utterly destitute of sympathy for the whole human race. "Mr. Rupert must be quick

if he intends to come inside to-night. Give your mamma her bed-candle."

It may appear almost incredible that Mrs. Chattaway should meekly take her candle and follow her daughter upstairs without remonstrance, when she would have given the world to sit up longer. She was becoming quite feverish on Rupert's account, and she would have wished to wait in that room until his ring was heard. But to set up her own will against her husband's was a thing she had never yet done; in small things as in great, she had bowed to his mandates without making the faintest shadow of resistance.

Octave wished her mamma good night, went into her room, and closed the door. Mrs. Chattaway was turning into hers when she saw Maude creeping down the upper stairs. She came noiselessly along the corridor, her face pale with agitation, and her heart beating.

"Oh, Aunt Edith, what will be done?" she murmured. "It is half-past ten, and he is not home."

"Maude, my poor child, you can do nothing," was the whispered answer, the tone as full of pain as Maude's. "Go back to your room, dear; your uncle may be coming up."

The great clock in the hall struck the half-hour, its sound falling as a knell. Hot tears were dropping from the eyes of Maude.

"What will become of him, Aunt Edith? Where will he sleep?"

"Hush, Maude! Run back."

It was time to run; and Mrs. Chattaway spoke the words in startled tones. The heavy foot of the master of Trevlyn Hold was heard crossing the hall to ascend the stairs. Maude stole back, and Mrs. Chattaway passed into her dressing-room.

She sat down on a chair, and pressed her hands upon her bosom to still its beating. Her suspense and agitation were terrible. A sensitive nature, such as Mrs. Chattaway's, feels emotion in a most painful degree. Every sense was strung to its utmost tension. She listened for Rupert's footfall outside; she waited with a sort of horror for the ringing of the house-bell that should announce his arrival, her whole frame sick and faint.

At last, one came running up the avenue at a fleet pace, and the echoes of the bell were heard resounding through the house.

Not daring to defy her husband by going down to let him

in, she passed into the bedroom, where Mr. Chattaway was undressing.

"Shall I go down and open the door, James?"

"No."

"It is only five minutes over the half-hour.'

"Five minutes are the same in effect as five hours," answered Mr. Chattaway, taking off his waistcoat. "Unless he can be in before the half-hour, *he does not come in at all.*"

"It may be Cris," she resumed.

"Nonsense! You know it is not Cris. Cris has his latch-key."

Another alarming peal.

"He can see the light in my dressing-room," she urged, with parched lips. "Oh, James, let me go down."

"I tell you—No."

There was no appeal against it. She knew there might be none. But she clasped her hands in agony, and gave utterance to the distress at her heart.

"Where will he sleep? Where can he go, if we deny him entrance?"

"Where he chooses. He does not come in here."

And Mrs. Chattaway went back to her dressing-room, and listened in despair to the continued appeals from the bell. Appeals which she might not answer.

CHAPTER XIII.

OPINIONS DIFFER.

The nights were chilly in the early autumn, and a blazing fire burnt in the drawing-room grate at Trevlyn Farm. On a comfortable sofa, drawn close to it, sat Mrs. Ryle, a warm shawl thrown over her black silk gown—warm eider-down cushions heaped around her. A violent cold had made an invalid of her for some days past, but she was getting better. Her face was softened by a white cap of delicate lace; but its lines had grown haughtier and firmer with her years. She wore well, and was handsome still.

Trevlyn Farm had prospered. It was a lucky day for Mrs. Ryle when she decided upon her step-son's remaining on it. He had brought energy and goodwill to bear on his work; he