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.

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## 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

had brought a clear head and calm intelligence; and time had contributed judgment and experience. Mrs. Ryle knew that she could not have been better served than she had been by George, and she gradually grew to feel his value. Had they been really mother and son, they could not have been better friends. In the beginning she was inclined to discountenance sundry ways and habits which George favoured. He did not turn himself into a *working* farmer, as his father had done, and as Mrs. Ryle deemed he ought to do. George objected. A man who worked on his own farm must necessarily give to it less of general supervision, he urged: were his hands engaged on one place, his eyes could not be using themselves to advantage a mile or two off; and after all, it was only the cost of an additional day-labourer. His argument carried reason with it; and that keen and active man, Farmer Apperley, who deemed idleness the greatest sin (next, perhaps, to going out hunting) that a young farmer could be guilty of, nodded his approval. George did not put aside his books; his classics, and his studies in general literature; quite the contrary. In short, George Ryle appeared to be going in for a gentleman—as Cris Chattaway chose to term it—a great deal more than Mrs. Ryle considered would be profitable for him or for her. But George had held on his course, in a quiet, undemonstrative way; and Mrs. Ryle had at length fallen in with it. Perhaps she now saw its wisdom. That he was essentially a gentleman, in person as in manners, in mind as in conduct, she could but acknowledge, and she felt a pride in him which she had never thought to feel in any one, save Treve.

Could she feel pride in Treve? Not much, with all her partiality. Trevlyn Ryle was not turning out quite so satisfactorily as was desirable. There was nothing very objectionable to be urged against him; but Mrs. Ryle was accustomed to measure by a high standard of excellence; and of that Treve fell uncommonly short. She had not deemed it well that George Ryle should be too much of a gentleman, but she had determined to make Trevlyn into one. Upon the completion of his school life, he was sent to Oxford. The cost of this might have been imprudently heavy for Mrs. Ryle's pocket, had she borne it unassisted; but Trevlyn had gained a valuable scholarship at the Barmester Grammar School where he had been educated, and this had rendered the additional cost a light one. Treve, once at Oxford, did not get on quite so fast as he might have done. Treve spent; Treve seemed to have



plenty of wild-oats to sow; Treve thought he should like a life of idleness better than one of farming. His mother had foolishly whispered to him the fond hope that he might some time be Squire of Trevlyn Hold, and Treve reckoned upon its fulfilment more confidently than was good for him. Meanwhile, until the lucky chance arrived which should give him the inheritance (though by what miracle the chance should fall was at present hidden in the womb of mystery), Treve, upon the completion of his studies at college, was to assume the mastership of Trevlyn Farm, in accordance with the plan originally fixed upon by Mrs. Ryle. He would not be altogether unqualified for this: he had been out and about the farm since he was a child, and had seen how it should be worked. Whether he would give sufficient personal attention to it, was another matter.

Mrs. Ryle expressed herself as not being too confident of him—whether of his industry or his qualifications she did not state. George had given one or two hints that when Treve came home for good, he must look out for something else; but Mrs. Ryle had waived away the hints as if they were unpleasant to her. Treve must prove yet what metal he was made of, before assuming the full management, she briefly said. And George suffered the subject to drop.

Treve had now but one more term to keep at the university. At the conclusion of the previous term he had not returned home: he remained on a visit to a friend, who had an appointment in one of the colleges. But Treve's demand for money had become somewhat inconvenient to Mrs. Ryle, and she had begged George to pay Oxford a few days' visit, that he might see how Treve was really going on. George complied, and proceeded to Oxford, where he found Treve absent—as you heard him, in the last chapter, say to Maude Trevlyn.

Mrs. Trevlyn sat by the drawing-room fire, enveloped in her shawl, and leaning on her pillows. The thought of these things was bringing a severe look to her proud face. She had scarcely seen George since his return; had not exchanged more than ten words with him. But those ten words had not been of a cheering nature; and she feared things were not going on satisfactorily with Treve. With that severely hard look on her features, how wonderfully her face resembled that of her dead father!

Presently George came in. Mrs. Ryle looked eagerly up at his entrance.

"Are you better?" he asked, advancing to her, and bending down with a kindly smile. "It is long since you had a cold such as this."

"I shall be all right in a day or two," she answered. "Yesterday I thought I was going to have a long illness, my chest was so sore and painful. Sit down, George. What about Treve?"

"Treve was not at Oxford. He had gone to London."

"You told me so. What had he gone to London for?"

"A little change, Ferrars said. He had been gone a week."

"A little change? In plain English, a little pleasure, I suppose. Call it what you will, it costs money, George."

George had seated himself opposite to her, his arm resting on the centre table, and the red blaze lighting up his frank and pleasant face. In figure he was tall, slight, gentlemanly; his father, at his age, had been so before him.

"Why did you not follow him to London, George?" resumed Mrs. Ryle. "It would have been but a two hours' journey from Oxford. Not so much as that."

George turned his large dark eyes upon her, some surprise in them. "How was I to know where to look for him, if I had gone?"

"Could Mr. Ferrars not give you his address?"

"No. I asked him. Treve had not told him where he should put up. In fact, Ferrars did not think Treve knew where himself. Under those circumstances, my going to town might have been only a waste of time and money."

"I *wish* you could have seen Treve!"

"So do I. But I might look for him a whole week without finding him, in a place like London. And the harvest was not all in at home, you know, mother."

"It is of no use your keeping things from me, George," resumed Mrs. Ryle, after a pause. "Has Treve contracted fresh debts at Oxford?"

"I fancy he has. A few."

"A 'few!'—and you 'fancy!' George, tell me the truth. That you know he has, and that they are not a few."

"That he has, I believe to be true: I gathered so much from Ferrars. But I do not think they are many; I do not indeed."

"Why did you not inquire? I would have gone to every shop in the town, in order to ascertain. If he is contracting more debts, who is to pay them, George?"



George was silent.

"When shall we be clear of Chattaway?" she abruptly resumed. "When will the last payment be due?"

"In a month or two's time. Principal and interest will all be paid off then."

"It will take all your exertions to get the sum up."

"It will be got up, mother. It shall be."

"Yes; I don't doubt it. But it will not be got up, George, if a portion is to be taken from it for Treve."

George knitted his brow. He was falling into thought.

"I *must* get rid of Chattaway," she resumed. "He has been weighing us down all these years like an incubus; and now that emancipation has nearly come, were anything to frustrate it, I should—I should—George, I think I should go mad."

"I hope and trust nothing will frustrate it," answered George. "I am more anxious to get rid of Chattaway than, I think, even you can be. As to Treve, his debts must wait."

"But it would be more desirable that he should not contract them," observed Mrs. Ryle.

"Of course. But how are we to prevent his contracting them?"

"He ought to prevent it himself. *You* did not contract these miserable debts, George."

"I!" he rejoined, in surprise. "I had no opportunity of doing so. Work and responsibility were thrown upon me before I was old enough to think of pleasure: and they served to keep me steady."

"You were not naturally inclined to spend, George."

"There's no knowing what I might have acquired, had I been sent out into the world, as Treve has," he rejoined.

"It was necessary that Treve should go to the university," said Mrs. Ryle, quite sharply.

"I am not saying that it was not," George answered, quietly. "It was right that he should go, as you wished it."

"George, I shall live—I hope I shall live—I pray that I may live—to see Trevlyn the lawful possessor of Trevlyn Hold. A gentleman's education was therefore essential to him: hence I sent him to Oxford."

George made no reply. Mrs. Ryle felt vexed at it. She knew that George did not approve her policy in regard to Trevlyn. She charged him with it now, and George would not deny it.

"What I think unwise," he said, "is your having led Treve to build hopes upon succeeding to Trevlyn Hold."

"Why?" she haughtily asked. "He will come into it."

"I do not see how," quietly remarked George.

"He has far more right to it than he who is looked upon as its successor—Cris Chattaway," she said, with flashing eyes. "You know that."

George could have answered that neither of them had a right to it, in justice, whilst Rupert Trevlyn lived; but Rupert and his claims had been so completely ignored by Mrs. Ryle, as by others, that his urging them would have been waived away as idle talk. Mrs. Ryle resumed, her voice unsteady in its tones. It was most rare that she suffered herself to speak of these past grievances; but when she did, her vehemence amounted to agitation.

"When my boy was born, the news that Joe Trevlyn's health was failing had come home to us. I knew the Squire would never leave the property to Maude, a girl, and I expected then that my son would inherit. Was it not natural that I should do so?—was it not his right?—I was the Squire's eldest daughter. I had him named Trevlyn; I wrote a note to my father, saying that he would not now be at fault for a male heir, in the event of poor Joe's not leaving one——"

"He did leave one," interrupted George, probably speaking impulsively.

"Be still. Rupert was not born then, and his succession was afterwards barred by my father's will. Through deceit practised on him, I grant you: but I had no hand in that deceit. I named my boy Trevlyn; I regarded him as the heir; and when the Squire died and his will was opened, it was found that he had bequeathed all to Chattaway. If you think I have ever once faltered in my hope—my *resolve*—to see Trevlyn some time displace the Chattaways, George, you do not know much of human nature."

"I grant what you say," replied George, "that, of the two, Trevlyn has more just right to it than Cris Chattaway. But has it ever occurred to you to ask, *how* Cris is to be displaced?"

Mrs. Ryle did not answer. She sat beating her foot upon the ottoman, as one whose mind is not at ease. George continued—

"It appears to me to be the wildest possible fallacy, the bare idea of Trevlyn's being able to displace Cris Chattaway in the succession. If we lived in the barbarous ages, when inheritances were wrested from their possessors by force of arms, when the turn of a battle decided the ownership of a castle, then



there might be a chance of Trevlyn Hold being taken from Cris Chattaway. As it is, there is none. There is not the faintest shadow of a chance that it can go to any one beside Cris. Failing his death—and he is strong and healthy—he *must* succeed. Why, even were Rupert—forgive my alluding to him again—to urge *his* claims, there would be no hope for him. Mr. Chattaway holds the estate by right of law; he has willed it to his son; and that son cannot be displaced in the succession by any extraneous efforts of others."

Her foot beat the velvet more impatiently; a heavier line settled on her brow. Often and often had the very arguments now put into words by her step-son, brought their weight to her aching brain. George spoke again.

"And therefore, the very improbability—I may almost say the impossibility—of Treve's ever succeeding to Trevlyn Hold, renders it unwise that he should have been taught to build upon it. Far better, mother, that the contingency had never been so much as whispered to him."

"Why do you look at it in this unfavourable light?" she burst forth.

"Because it is the correct light," answered George. "The property is Mr. Chattaway's—legally his, and it cannot be taken from him. It will be Cris's after him."

"Cris may die," said Mrs. Ryle; her sharpness of tone proving that she was vexed at having no better argument to urge.

"And if he were to die? If Cris died to-morrow, Treve would be no nearer succession. Chattaway has daughters, and he would will it to each of them in turn, rather than to Treve. He can will it away as he pleases. It was left to him absolutely."

Mrs. Ryle lifted her hands. "My father was mad when he made such a will in favour of Chattaway! He could have been nothing less. I have thought so many times."

"But it was made, and it cannot now be altered. Will you pardon me for saying that it would have been better had you accepted the state of affairs, and endeavoured to reconcile yourself to them?"

"It would have been *better?*"

"Yes. To rebel against what cannot be remedied brings nothing but dissatisfaction. I would a great deal rather see Treve succeed to Trevlyn Hold than Cris Chattaway: but I know that Treve never will succeed: and, therefore, it is a