great pity that he has been led to think of it. He might have shown himself more ready to settle down steadily had he never become possessed of the notion that he might some time supersede Cris Chattaway."

"He *shall* supersede him——"

The door opened to admit a visitor, and Mrs. Ryle could not conclude her sentence. For he who entered was Rupert Trevlyn. Ignore his dormant claims as she would, Mrs. Ryle felt that it would be scarcely seemly to discuss before him Treve's chance of succession to Trevlyn Hold. She had in truth completely put out of her mind all thought of the claims of Rupert. He had been deprived of his right by Squire Trevlyn's will, and there was an end to it. Mrs. Ryle rather liked Rupert; or, it may be better to say, she did not *dis*like him; really to like any one except Treve, was not in her nature. She liked Rupert in a cold, negative sort of a way; but she would not have helped him to his inheritance by lifting a finger. In the event of her possessing no son to be jealous for, she might have taken up the wrongs of Rupert. There is no saying—just to thwart Chattaway.

"Why, Rupert," said George, rising, and cordially taking his hand, "I heard you were ill again. Maude told me so to-day."

"I am better to-night, George. Aunt Ryle, they said you were in bed."

"I am better, too, Rupert," she answered. "What has been the matter with you?"

"Oh, it was my chest again," said Rupert, pushing the waving hair from his bright and delicate face. "I could hardly breathe this morning."

"Ought you to have come out to-night?"

"I don't think it matters," carelessly answered Rupert. "For all I see, I am as well when I go out as when I don't. There's not much to stay in for, there."

He edged himself closer to the hearth with a slight shiver. He was painfully susceptible to cold. George took the poker and stirred the fire, and the blaze went flashing up, playing on the familiar objects of the handsome room, lighting up the slender figure, the well-formed features, the large blue eyes of Rupert, and bringing out all the suspicious signs of constitutional delicacy. The transparent fairness of complexion and the rich bloom of the cheeks, might alike have whispered a warning.

"Octave thought you were going up there to-night, George."

"Did she?"

"The two Beecroft girls are there, and they turned me out of the drawing-room. Octave told me 'I wasn't wanted.' Will you play at chess to-night, George?"

"If you like; when I have had my supper."

"I must be home by half-past ten, you know. I was a minute over the half-hour the other night, and one of the servants opened the door for me. Chattaway pretty nearly rose the roof off, he was so angry; but he could not decently turn me out again."

"Chattaway is master for the time being of Trevlyn Hold," remarked Mrs. Ryle. "Not Squire; never Squire"—she broke off, straying abruptly from her subject, and as abruptly resuming it. "You will do well to obey him, Rupert. When I make a rule in this house, I *never permit it to be broken.*"

A valuable hint, if Rupert had only taken it for his guidance. He meant well: he never meant, for all his light and careless speaking, to be disobedient to Mr. Chattaway's mandate as to the time of returning. And yet the disobedience happened that very night!

The chess-board was attractive, and the time slipped on to half-past ten. Rupert said a hasty good night, snatched up his hat, tore through the entrance-room at a pace to frighten Nora, and made the best speed his lungs allowed him to Trevlyn Hold. His heart was beating, his breath panting as he gained it, and he rang that peal at the bell which had sent its echoes through the house; through the trembling frame, the weak heart of Mrs. Chattaway.

He rang—and rang. There came back no sign that the ring was heard. A light shone in Mrs. Chattaway's dressing-room; and Rupert took up some gravel, and gently threw it against the window. No response was accorded in answer to it; he saw not so much as the form of a hand on the blind: the house, in its utter stillness, might have been taken for the house of the dead. Rupert threw up some more gravel as silently as he could.

He had not to wait very long this time. Cautiously, slowly, as though the very movement feared being heard, the blind was drawn aside, and the face of Mrs. Chattaway, wet with tears, appeared, looking down at him. He could see that she had not begun to undress. She shook her head; she raised her hands and clasped them with a gesture of despair; and

her lips formed themselves into the words, "I may not let you in."

He could not hear the words; but he read the expression of the whole all too clearly—that Chattaway would not suffer him to be admitted. Mrs. Chattaway, dreading possibly that her husband might cast his eyes inside her dressing-room, quietly let the blind fall again, and removed her shadow from the window.

Now what was Rupert to do? Lie down on the grass that skirted the avenue, and take his night's rest under the trees, the cold air freezing him, and the night dews wetting him? A strong frame, revelling in superfluous health, might risk that; but not Rupert Trevlyn.

He walked round the house, and tried its back entrance. It was quite fast. He knocked, but no answer came. He looked up at the windows; lights shone in one or two of the upper rooms; but there came no sign that any one meant to let him in.

A momentary thought came over him that he would go back to Trevlyn Farm, and crave a night's shelter there. He would have done so, but for the recollection of Mrs. Ryle's stern voice and sterner face when she remarked to him that, as he knew the rule made for his going in, he must not break it. Rupert had never got on too cordially with Mrs. Ryle. He remembered shrinking from her haughty face when he was a child; and somehow he shrank from it still. No; he would not knock them up at Trevlyn Farm.

What must he do? Should he walk about until morning? Suddenly a thought came to him—were the Canhams in bed? If not, he could go there, and lie on their settle. The Canhams never went to bed very early. Ann Canham sat up to lock the great gate—it was Chattaway's pleasure that it should not be done until after ten o'clock; and old Canham liked to sit up, smoking his pipe.

With a brisk step, now that he had decided on his course, Rupert walked down the avenue. At the first turning he ran against Cris Chattaway, who was coming leisurely up it.

"Oh, Cris! I am so glad! You'll let me in. They have shut me out to-night."

"Let you in!" repeated Cris. "I can't."

Rupert's blue eyes opened in the starlight. "Have you not your latch-key?"

"What should hinder me?" responded Cris. "*I'm* going in; but I can't let you go in."

"Why not?" hotly asked Rupert.

"I don't choose to fly in the face of the Squire's orders. He has commanded you to be in before half-past ten, or not to come in at all. It has gone half-past ten long ago: is hard upon eleven."

"If you can go in after half-past ten, why can't I go in?" cried Rupert.

"It's not my affair," said Cris, with a yawn. "Don't bother. Now look here, Rupert! It's of no use following me to the door, for I shall not let you in."

"Yes you will, Cris."

"*I will not*," responded Cris, speaking emphatically, but with the same plausible suavity that he had spoken throughout. Rupert's temper was getting up.

"Cris, I wouldn't show myself such a hang-dog sneak as you to be made king of England. If every one had their rights, Trevlyn Hold would be mine, to shut you out of it if I pleased. But I wouldn't please. If but a dog were turned out of his kennel at night, I would let him come into the Hold for shelter."

Cris put his latch-key in the lock. "*I* don't turn you out. You must battle that question with the Squire. Keep off, Ru. If he says you may be let in at eleven o'clock, all well and good; but I'm not going to encourage you in disobeying his orders."

He opened the door a few inches, wound himself in, and shut it in Rupert's face. He made a great noise in putting up the bar, which noise was not in the least necessary. Rupert had given him his true appellation—that of sneak. He was one: a false-hearted, plausible, cowardly sneak. As he stood at a table in the hall, and struck a match to light his candle, his puny face and his dull light eyes betrayed the most complaisant enjoyment.

He went upstairs smiling. He had to pass the angle of the corridor where his mother's rooms were situated. She glided silently out as he was going by. Her dress was off, and she had apparently thrown a shawl over her shoulders to come out to Cris. It was an old-fashioned spun-silk shawl, with a grey border and a white centre: not so white, however, as the face of Mrs. Chattaway.

"Cris!" she said, laying her hand upon his arm, and speaking

in the faintest, most timid of whispers, "why did you not let him in?"

"I thought we had been ordered not to let him in," returned he of the deceitful nature. "*I* have been ordered. I know that."

"You might have done it just for once, Cris," his mother answered. "I know not what will become of him, out of doors on this sharp night."

Cris disengaged his arm, and continued his way up to his room. He slept on the upper floor. Maude was standing at the door of her chamber when he passed—as Mrs. Chattaway had been.

"Cris—wait a minute," she said, for he was hastening by. "I want to speak a word to you. Have you seen Rupert?"

"Seen him and heard him too," boldly avowed Cris. "He wanted me to let him in."

"Which, of course, you would not do?" answered Maude, bitterly. "I wonder if you ever performed a good-natured action in your life?"

"Can't remember," mockingly retorted Cris.

"Where is Rupert? What is he going to do?"

"You know where he is as well as I do: I suppose you could hear him. As to what he is going to do, I didn't ask him. Roost in a tree, perhaps, with the birds."

Maude retreated into her room and closed the door. She flung herself into a chair, and burst into a flood of passionate tears. Her heart ached for her brother with pain that amounted to agony: she could have forced down her proud spirit and knelt to Mr. Chattaway to beg clemency for him: she could almost have sacrificed her own life if it might bring comfort to Rupert, whom she loved so well.

He—Rupert—stamped off from the door when it was closed against him by Cris Chattaway, feeling as if he would like to stamp upon Cris himself. Arrived in front of the lodge, he stood and whistled, and presently Ann Canham, who was undressing in the dark to save candle, looked from the upper casement in her nightcap.

"Why, it's never you, Master Rupert!" she exclaimed, in intense surprise.

"They have locked me out, Ann. Can you manage to come down and open the door to me without disturbing your father? If you can, I'll lie on the settle for to-night."

Once inside, there ensued a contest. In her humble way, begging pardon for the presumption, Ann Canham proposed that Master Rupert should go up to her bed, and she'd make herself contented with the settle. It was only a flock, and very small, she said; but it would be rather better than the settle. Rupert would not hear of it. He threw himself on the hard narrow bench that they called the settle, and protested that if Ann Canham said another word about giving up her bed, he would go out and spend the night in the avenue. So she was fain to go back to it herself.

A dreary night for him, that wearying bench; and the morning found him with a cold frame and stiffened limbs. He was stamping one foot on the floor to stamp the cramp out of it, when old Canham entered, leaning on a crutch. Ann had told him the news, and the old man was up before his time.

"But who shut you out, Master Rupert?" he asked.

"Chattaway."

"Ann says that Mr. Cris went in pretty late last night. After she had locked the big gate."

"Cris came up whilst I was ringing to be let in. He went in himself, but would not let me enter."

"He's a reptile," said old Canham in his anger. "Eh me!" he added, sitting down with difficulty in his armchair, and extending the crutch before him, "what a mercy it would have been if Mr. Joe had lived! Chattaway would never have been stuck up in authority then. Better that the Squire had left Trevlyn Hold to Miss Diana."

"They say he would not leave it to a woman."

"That's true, Master Rupert. And of his children there were but his daughters left. The two sons had gone. The heir Rupert first: he died on the high seas; and Mr. Joe, he went next."

"I say, Mark, why did the heir, Rupert, go on the seas?"

Old Canham shook his head. "Ah, it was a bad business, Master Rupert. It's as well not to talk of it."

"But *why* did he go?" persisted Rupert.

"It was a bad business, I say. He, the heir, had fallen into wild ways, had got to like bad company, and that. He went out one night with some poachers—just for the fun of it. It wasn't on these lands. He meant no harm, but he was young and random, and he went out and put a gauze over his face as they did,—just, I say, for the fun of it. Master Rupert, that night they killed a gamekeeper."

A shiver passed through Rupert's frame. "*He* killed him, do you mean?—my uncle, Rupert Trevlyn?"

"No, it wasn't he that killed him—as was proved a long while afterwards. But you see at the time it wasn't known exactly who had done it: they were all in league together, as may be said; all in the mess. Any way, the young heir, whether in fear or shame, perhaps both, went off in secret, and before many months had gone over, the bells here were tolling for him. He had died far away."

"But people never could have believed that he, a Trevlyn, killed a man?" said Rupert, indignantly.

Old Canham paused. "You have heard of the Trevlyn temper, Master Rupert?"

"Who hasn't?" returned Rupert. "They say I have a touch of it."

"Well, those that believed it laid it to that temper, you see. They thought the heir had been overtook by a fit of passion that wasn't to be governed, and might have done the mischief in it. In those fits of passion a man is mad."

"Is he," abstractedly remarked Rupert, falling into a reverie. He had never before heard this episode in the history of the uncle whose name he bore—Rupert Trevlyn.

CHAPTER XIV.

NO BREAKFAST FOR RUPERT.

Old Canham stood at the door of his lodge, his bald head stretched out. He was gazing after one who was winding through the avenue, in the direction of Trevlyn Hold, one whom it was old Canham's delight to patronize and make much of in his humble way; whom he encouraged in all sorts of vain and delusive notions—Rupert Trevlyn. Could Mr. Chattaway have divined that bitter treason was talked against himself nearly every time Rupert dropped into the lodge, he might have tried hard to turn old Canham out of it. Harmless treason, however; consisting of rebellious words only. There was neither plotting nor hatching; old Canham and Rupert never glanced at that; both were perfectly aware that Chattaway held his place by a sure tenure, which could not be disturbed.

Many years ago, before Squire Trevlyn died, Mark Canham had grown ill in his service. In his service he had caught the violent cold which ended in an incurable rheumatic affection. The Squire settled him in the lodge, then just vacant, and allowed him five shillings a week. When the Squire died, Chattaway would have undone this. He wished to turn the old man out again (but it must be observed in a parenthesis that, though universally styled old Canham, the man was not so old in years as in appearance), and to place some one else in the lodge. I think, when there is no love lost between people, as the saying runs, each side is conscious of it. Chattaway disliked Mark Canham, and he had a shrewd suspicion that Mark returned the feeling with interest. But he found that he could not dismiss him from the lodge, for Miss Trevlyn put her veto upon it. She openly declared that Squire Trevlyn's act in placing his old servant there should be reverenced; she promised Mark that he should not be turned out of it as long as he lived. Chattaway had no resource but to bow to it; he might not cross Diana Trevlyn; but he did succeed in reducing the weekly allowance by just half. Half-a-crown per week was all the regular money enjoyed by the lodge since the time of Squire Trevlyn. Miss Diana sometimes gave a trifle from her private purse; and the gardener was allowed to make an occasional present of vegetables that were in danger of spoiling: at the beginning of winter, too, a load of wood would be stacked in the shed behind the lodge, through the forethought of Miss Diana. But it was not much altogether to keep two people upon; and Ann Canham was glad to accept a day's hard work offered her at any of the neighbouring houses, or to do a little plain sewing at home. Very fine sewing she could not do, for she suffered from her eyes, which were generally more or less inflamed.

Old Canham watched Rupert until the turnings of the avenue hid him from view, and then drew back into the room. Ann was busy with the breakfast. A loaf of oaten bread was on the bare table, and a basin of skim milk, which she had just made hot, was placed before her father. A smaller cup of it served for her own share: and that constituted their breakfast. Three mornings a week Ann Canham had the privilege of fetching a quart of skim milk from the dairy at the Hold. Chattaway growled at the extravagance of the gift, but he did no more, for it was Miss Diana's pleasure that it should be supplied.