Mr. Chattaway stood transfixed. He had fully believed Rupert to be in bed, and the silent bed, unpressed, seemed to mock him. A strangely wild fear came over him that Rupert's pretence of going to bed had been but a *ruse*—that he had gone out to meet that dangerous stranger.

He flew down the stairs as one possessed; he dashed into rooms, shouting "Rupert! Rupert!" The household stole forth to look at him, and the walls echoed the name, "Rupert! Rupert!" But from Rupert himself there came no answer. He was not in the Hold.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A MEETING AT MARK CANHAM'S.

RUPERT'S leaving the Hold, however, had been a very innocent matter. The evening sun was setting gloriously, and he thought he would stroll out for a few minutes before going to his chamber. When he reached the lodge he went in and flung himself on the settle, opposite old Canham and his pipe.

"How's Madam?" asked the old man. "What an accident it might have been!"

"So it might," assented Rupert. "Madam will be better after a night's rest. Cris might have killed her. I wonder how he'd have felt then?"

When Rupert came to an anchor, no matter where, he was somewhat unwilling to move from it. The settle was not a comfortable seat; rather the contrary; but Rupert kept to it, talking and laughing with old Canham. Ann was at the window, catching what remained of the fading light for her sewing.

"Here's that strange gentleman again, father!" she suddenly exclaimed in a whisper.

Old Canham turned his head, and Rupert turned his. The gentleman with the beard was going by in the direction of Trevlyn Hold, as if about to make a call there.

"Ay, that's him," cried old Canham.

"What a queer-looking chap!" exclaimed Rupert. "Who is he?"

"I can't make out," was old Canham's reply. "Me and Ann have been a-talking of him. He came strolling inside the

gates this afternoon with a red umberellar, a-looking here and a-looking there, and at last he see us, and come up and asked what place this was; and when I told him it was Trevelyn Hold, he said Trevlyn Hold was what he had been seeking for, and he stood there talking, a matter o' twenty minutes, leaning his arms on the winder-sill. He thought you was the Squire, Master Rupert. He had a red umberellar," repeated old Canham, as if the fact were remarkable.

Rupert glanced up in surprise. "Thought I was the Squire?"

"He came into this neighbourhood, he said, believing nothing less but that you were the rightful Squire, and he couldn't make out yet why you were not: he had been away from England a many years, he said, and had been believing it all the while. He said you *were* the true Squire, and you should be helped to your rights."

"Why! who can he be?" exclaimed Rupert, in excitement.

"Ah, that's it—who can he be," returned old Canham. "Me and Ann have been a-marvelling. He said—leastways, he as good as said—that he used to be a friend of the dead heir, Mr. Joe. Master Rupert, who knows but he may be somebody come to place you in the Hold?"

Rupert was leaning forward on the settle, his elbow on his knee, his eyes fixed on old Canham.

"How could he do that?" he asked after a pause. "How could any one do it?"

"It's not for us to say how, Master Rupert. If anybody in these parts could have said how it could be done, maybe you'd have been in it long afore this. That there stranger is a 'cute 'un, I know. White beards always is a sign of wisdom."

Rupert laughed. "I suppose you are thinking of the patriarchs; and we are apt to attribute wisdom to them. That man, now gone by, struck me as not a bad representation of our ideas of a patriarch. Only——"

"He ain't broad enough," interrupted old Canham; and Rupert laughed again at the earnest tone. "Look at them patriarchs on the east winder at church, Master Rupert; what fine broad men they be! This one's a lawyer, as it strikes me, and if he *is* come to help you to your rights, we shall all bless him for 't."

"Look here, Mark. It is no good going over that ground again. I have heard about my 'rights' until I am tired. The

subject vexes me; it makes me cross from its very hopelessness. I wish I had been born without rights."

"But you weren't born without 'em," contended old Canham. "Your grandfather was the Squire of Trevlyn Hold; and Mr. Joe, he was the heir—after the first heir, Mr. Rupert, died—and you be Mr. Joe's son. You *weren't* born without rights."

"Old ground, old ground, Mark," cried Rupert impatiently. "I wish you would not go over it. It's all true enough; I know it as well as you: my grandfather was Squire of Trevlyn Hold, and my father was his heir, and I am my father's son. But there the rights end. The rights are Chattaway's: and they never can be mine."

"This stranger, when he called you the heir of Trevlyn Hold, and I told him you were not the heir, he said I was right; you were not the heir, but the owner," persisted old Canham.

"Then he knew nothing about it," returned Rupert. "It's *impossible* that Chattaway can be put out of Trevlyn Hold."

"Master Rupert, there has always been a feeling upon me that he will be put out of it," resumed old Canham. "He came to it by wrongs, and wrongs never lasts out to the end without being righted. Who knows that the same feeling ain't on Chattaway? He turned the colour o' my Sunday smock-frock when I telled him o' this stranger's having been here and what he'd said."

"Did you tell him?" quickly cried Rupert.

"I telled him. I didn't mean to, but it come out of me uncautious-like. I called you the young heir to his face, and I excused myself by saying that the stranger had been a-calling you so, and I spoke out the same without thought. Then, in course, he wanted to know what stranger, and all about him. It was when Madam was resting here after the accident. Chattaway rode by and saw her, and got off his horse: it was the first he knew of the accident. If what I said didn't frighten him, I never had a day's rheumatiz in my life. His face went as white as Madam's."

"Chattaway go white!" scoffed Rupert. "What next? I tell you what it is, Mark; you fancy things. Aunt Edith may have been white; she often is; but not he. Chattaway knows that Trevlyn Hold is his, safe and sure. Nothing can take it from him—unless Squire Trevlyn came to life again, and made a fresh will. He's not likely to do that, Mark."

"No; he's not likely to do that," assented the old man.

"Once we be out of this world, Master Rupert, we don't come back again. The injustice that we have left behind us—and some of us do leave injustice—can't be repaired in that way."

Rupert rose. He went to the window, opened it, and leaned out, whistling. He was tired of the subject of "injustice" as touching himself; he had long believed it to be an unprofitable theme. He whistled through a whole piece of music that Maude was in the habit of playing, and was recommencing it when the tall man with the white beard came back again down the avenue.

Mr. Daw, for he it was, had the red umbrella in his hand. He turned his head to the window as he passed it, looked steadily at Rupert, paused, went close up, and put his hand on Rupert's arm.

"You are Rupert Trevlyn!"

"That is my name," replied Rupert.

"I should have known you anywhere from your resemblance to your father; I should have known you had I met you in the crowded streets of London. You are wonderfully like him."

"Where did you know my father?" inquired Rupert.

In place of answer the stranger opened the house-door and stepped into the room. Ann curtseyed; old Canham rose and stood with his hat in his hand—that white beard seemed to demand respect. He—the stranger—took Rupert's hand in his.

"I have been up to the house to inquire for you: but they told me you were not well, and had gone to rest."

"Did they?" said Rupert. "I had intended to lie down, but the evening was so pleasant that I came out instead. You spoke of my father: did you know him?"

"I knew him very well," said the stranger, taking the seat which Ann Canham had been dusting before offering; a ceremony, the dusting, which she apparently considered as a mark of respect. "Though my acquaintance with him was short, it was close. Do you know who baptized you?"

"No," replied Rupert, rather astonished at the question.

"I did. I christened your sister Maude; I baptized you. You were to be christened in England, your mother said, but she wished you baptized ere the journey commenced, and I did it when you were only a day old. Ah, poor thing! she thought to make the journey with you when she should be strong enough; but another journey claimed her—that of death! Before you were two days old she died. It was I who

wrote to announce your birth to Squire Trevlyn; it was I who, by the next post, announced your mother's death. It was I—my young friend, it was I—who buried your father and your mother."

"You are a clergyman, then?" said Rupert, somewhat dubious about the beard, and the very unclerical cut of the stranger altogether.

It may be that Mr. Daw saw the doubtful glances, and he entered upon an explanation. How he, when a working curate, had married a young lady of fortune, but of delicate health, and had then gone abroad with her, throwing up for the time his clerical preferment. The doctors had said that a warm climate was essential to her; as they had said, if you remember, in the case of Joe Trevlyn. It happened that both parties sought the same place—the curate and his wife, Joe and Mrs. Trevlyn—and a close friendship sprang up between them. A short while and Joe Trevlyn died; a shorter time still, and his wife died. There was no English clergyman near the spot, and Mr. Daw gave his services. He baptized the children; he buried the parents. His own fate was a happier one, for his wife lived. She lived, but she did not get well. It may be said—you have surely heard of such cases—that she only existed from day to day. She had so existed all through those long years, from that time until within a few months of this. "If you attempt to take her back to England, she will not live a month," the local medical men had said; and perhaps they were right. He remained on in the place, never quitting it. He had gone to it for a few months' sojourn, and he never left it for over twenty years. It reads like a romance. His wife's fortune had enabled him to live comfortably, and in a pecuniary point of view there was no need for him to seek preferment or to exercise his calling. He would never seek it now. Habit and use, as we read, are second nature, and the Reverend Mr. Daw had learnt to be an idle man. He had learnt to love the country of his adoption, his home in the Pyrenees; he had grown to believe that its genial climate was necessary to *himself*. His business in England concluded (it was connected with his late wife's will), he was hastening back to it. Had preferment been offered to him, he would have doubted his ability to fulfil its duties after so many years of disuse. The money that was his wife's was his now; would be his for the remainder of his days; so on that score he was at rest. In short, the Reverend William Daw had degenerated into an idle, useless man; one to whom

all exertion had become a trouble. He honestly confessed to it now, as he sat before Rupert Trevlyn; he told him that he had been content to live wholly for the country of his adoption, almost completely ignoring his own. He had kept up no correspondence with it. Of friends he could, as a young curate, boast but few, and he had been at no pains to keep them. At first he had believed that six or twelve months would be the limit of his absence from England, and he was content to leave the renewal of all friendships until his return. But he did not return; he stayed on; and the infrequent letter writing, once entered upon, was too pleasant to his indolent tastes not to be retained. He told all this quietly now to Rupert Trevlyn, and said that to it he owed his ignorance of the deposition of Rupert from Trevlyn Hold. Mr. Freeman was one of his few old college friends, and he might have heard all about it years ago had he only written to him.

"I cannot understand how it is that Mr. Chattaway should have succeeded," he cried, bending his dark eyes upon Rupert. "I can scarcely believe the fact now; it has amazed me, as one may say. Had there been no direct male heir; had your father left only Maude, for instance, I could have understood its being left away from her, although it would have been unjust."

"The Trevlyn property is not entailed," said Rupert.

"I am aware of that. During the last few months of your father's life, we were like brothers, and I knew all particulars as well as he did. He had married in disobedience to his father's will, but he never for a moment glanced at the contingency of himself or his children being disinherited. I cannot understand why Squire Trevlyn should have willed the estate from his son's children."

"He only knew of Maude—as they say."

"Still less can I understand how Mr. Chattaway can keep it. Were an estate willed to me, away from those who had a greater right to it, I should never retain it. I could not reconcile it to my conscience to do so. How can Mr. Chattaway?"

Rupert laughed—he believed that conscience and Mr. Chattaway had not a great deal to do with each other. "It is not much of his own interests that Mr. Chattaway will give up voluntarily," he observed. "Were my grandfather the Squire alive, Chattaway would not give up Trevlyn Hold to him, unless forced to it."

Old Canham could contain himself no longer. The conver-

sation did not appear to be coming to the point. "Be you a going to help young Master Rupert to regain his rights, sir?" he eagerly asked.

"I would—if I knew how to do it," said Mr. Daw. "I shall certainly represent to Mr. Chattaway the injustice—the wicked injustice—of the present state of things. When I wrote to the Squire on the occasion of your birth and Mrs. Trevlyn's death," he added, looking at Rupert, "the answers to me were signed 'J. Chattaway,'—the writer being no doubt the same Mr. Chattaway. He wrote again to me later, after Squire Trevlyn's death, requesting me to despatch the nurse and children to England."

"Oh yes," said Rupert carelessly, "it was safe enough for us to come then. Squire Trevlyn dead, and the estate willed to Chattaway, there was no longer danger from me. If my grandfather had got to know that I was in existence, there would have been good-bye to Chattaway's ambition. At least, people say so; *I* don't know."

The indifference of the tone forcibly struck Mr. Daw. "Don't *you* feel the injustice?" he asked. "Don't you care that Trevlyn Hold should be yours?"

"As to the injustice, I have grown up seeing the estate Chattaway's, and I suppose I don't feel it as I ought to. Of course, I should like it to be mine, but in the absence of all probability that it will be mine, it is as well not to think about it. Have you heard of the Trevlyn temper?" he continued, a merry smile dancing in his eyes as he threw them on the stranger.

"I have."

"They tell me I have inherited it, as I suppose a true Trevlyn ought to do. Were I to think too much of the injustice, I might arouse the temper: and it would answer no end, you know."

"Yes, I have heard of the Trevlyn temper," repeated the stranger. "I have heard what it did for the first heir, Rupert Trevlyn."

"But it did not do it for him," passionately burst forth Rupert. "I never heard—I never heard until the other day—not so many hours ago—of the slur that was cast upon his name. It was not he who shot the man; he had no hand in it: it was proved so later. Ask old Canham."

"Well, well," said the stranger, "it's all past and done with. Poor Joe reposed every confidence in me; treating me as a

brother. It was a singular coincidence that the Squire's sons should both die abroad. I hope," he added, looking kindly at Rupert, "that yours will be a long life. Are you—are you very strong?"

He put the question hesitatingly. He had heard from Nora that Rupert was not strong; and now that he saw him he was painfully struck with his delicate appearance. Rupert answered bravely.

"I should be very well if it were not for that confounded Blackstone walk night and morning. It's that that knocks me up."

"Chattaway had no call to put him to it, sir," interrupted Mark Canham again. "It's not work for a Trevlyn."

"Not for the heir of Trevlyn Hold," acquiesced the stranger. "But I must be going. I have not seen my friend Freeman yet, and I should like to be at the railway station when he arrives. What time shall I see you in the morning?" he added, to Rupert. "And what time can I see Mr. Chattaway?"

"You can see me at any time," replied Rupert. "But I can't answer for him. He breakfasts early, and generally goes out afterwards."

Had the Reverend Mr. Daw been able to see through a few trunks of trees, he might have seen Mr. Chattaway then. For there, hidden amidst the trees of the avenue, only a few paces from the lodge, was he.

Mr. Chattaway was pretty nearly beside himself that night. When he found that Rupert Trevlyn was not in the house, vague fears, to which he did not wait to give a more tangible name, rushed over his imagination. Had Rupert stolen from the house to meet this dangerous stranger clandestinely? He—Chattaway—scarcely knowing what he did, seized his hat and followed the stranger down the avenue, when he left the Hold after his useless visit.

Not to follow him with bold steps; to come up to him openly and say, "What is your business with Rupert Trevlyn?" No, no: cords would not have dragged Mr. Chattaway into that dreaded presence until he was sure of his ground.

He stole down, with a fleet, soft foot, on the well-trimmed grass beside the avenue, and close upon the lodge he overtook the stranger. Mr. Chattaway glided into the trees.

Peeping out from his hiding-place, he saw the stranger pause before the lodge window: he heard him accost Rupert Trevlyn; he watched him enter. And there he had been

since—his ears straining, his pulses beating, altogether in an agony both of body and mind.

Do as he would, he could not hear their conversation. The sound of the voices came upon him through the open window, but not the words spoken: and nearer he dared not go, for the trees near the lodge would not hide him. He might have gone round to the back and been sheltered, but he would have seen and heard nothing.

Hark! they were coming out. Chattaway's eyes glared and his teeth were set, as he cautiously looked round the trees. The man's ugly red umbrella was in one hand; the other was laid on Rupert's shoulder. "Will you walk with me a little way?" he heard the stranger say.

"No, not this evening," was Rupert's reply. "I must go back to the Hold."

But he, Rupert, turned to walk with him to the gate, and Mr. Chattaway took the opportunity to hasten back toward the Hold. When Rupert, after shaking hands with the stranger and calling out a good evening to the inmates of the lodge as he passed it, went up the avenue, he met the master of Trevlyn Hold pacing leisurely down it, as if he had come out for a stroll.

"Halloa!" he cried, with something of theatrical amazement. "I thought you were in bed!"

"I came out instead," replied Rupert. "The evening was so fine."

"Who was that queer-looking man just gone out at the gates?" asked Mr. Chattaway, with well-assumed indifference.

Rupert answered readily. His disposition was naturally open to a fault, and he saw no reason for concealing what he knew of the stranger. He was not aware that Chattaway had ever seen him until this moment.

"It is some one who has come on a visit to the parsonage. He is a clergyman himself. "It's a curious name, though—Daw."

"Daw? Daw?" repeated Mr. Chattaway, biting his lips to keep some colour in them. "Where have I heard that name—in connection with a clergyman?"

"He said he had some correspondence with you years ago. At the time when my mother died, and I was born. He knew my father and mother well. He has been telling me this in at old Canham's."

All that past time, its events, its correspondence, flashed over Mr. Chattaway's memory—flashed over it with a strange dread. "What has he come here for?" he asked quickly.

"I don't know," replied Rupert. "He—— Whatever's this?"

It was a tremendous noise and shouting from many people, who appeared, dragging something along behind them. Both turned simultaneously—the master of Trevlyn Hold in awful fear. Could it be the stranger coming back with a flock of constables at his heels, to wrest the Hold from him? And if you deem these fears exaggerated, my reader, you know very little of this kind of terror.

It was nothing but a procession of those eager idlers, whom you saw in the road. They were dragging home the dilapidated, unlucky dog-cart: Mr. Cris at their head.

CHAPTER XXV.

NEWS FOR MISS DIANA.

In that pleasant room at the parsonage, with its sweet-scented mignonette boxes throwing in their perfume, and its vases of freshly-cut autumn flowers, sat the Reverend Mr. Freeman at breakfast, his wife, and their visitor. It was a simple meal. All meals were simple at Barbrook Parsonage: as they generally are where means are limited. And you have not yet to learn, I dare say, that comfort and simplicity frequently go together: while comfort and grandeur more rarely do. There was no lack of comfort at Mr. Freeman's: there was no lack of plenty in moderation. Coffee and rich milk: home-made bread and the freshest of butter, new-laid eggs and autumn watercress. It was by no means starvation.

Mr. Daw, however, paid less attention to the meal than he might have done had his mind been less preoccupied. The previous evening, when he and Mr. Freeman had first met, after an absence from each other of more than twenty years, their conversation had naturally run on their own personal interests: past events had to be related. But this morning they could go to other subjects, and Mr. Daw was not slow to do so. They were talking—you may have guessed it—of the Trevlyns.

Mr. Daw grew warm upon the subject. As he had done