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

the previous day, when Molly placed the meal before him, he almost forgot to eat. And yet Mr. Daw, in spite of his assurance to Molly that he considered a crust of bread and a cup of milk was a meal for a prince, or some assertion equivalent to it, did know how to appreciate good things. In plainer words, he was partial to them. Idle men who have no occupation for their days and years sometimes grow to be so.

"You are sparing the eggs," said Mrs. Freeman, a good-natured woman with a large nose, thin cheeks, and prominent teeth. "I wish you would eat more, Mr. Daw. We will get you some ham to-morrow morning."

Mr. Daw replied by taking another egg from the stand and chopping off its top. But there it remained. He was enlarging on the injustice dealt out to Rupert Trevlyn.

"It ought to be remedied, you know, Freeman. It must be remedied. It is a crying shame in the sight of God and man."

The curate—for Mr. Freeman was nothing more, for all his many years' services—smiled good-humouredly. He never used hard words. He preferred to let wrongs, which were no business of his, right themselves, or remain wrongs. He liked to take life as it came, easily and pleasantly.

"We can't alter it," he said. "We have no power to interfere with Chattaway. He has enjoyed Trevlyn Hold these twenty years, and he must enjoy it still."

"I don't know about that," returned Mr. Daw. "I don't know that he must enjoy it still. At any rate, he ought not to do so. Had I lived in this neighbourhood as you have, Freeman, I should have tried to get him out of it before this."

The parson raised his eyes. "He holds it by Squire Trevlyn's will."

"But there's such a thing as shaming people out of injustice," returned Mr. Daw. "Has any one represented to Chattaway the fearful injustice he is guilty of in his conduct towards Rupert Trevlyn?"

"I can't say," equably answered the parson. "I have not."

"Will you go with me and do it to-day?"

"Well—no; I think I'd rather not, Daw. If any good could come of it, perhaps I might do so; but there's not. And I find it answers best not to meddle with the affairs of other folk."

"But the wrongs dealt out to him are so great," persisted Mr. Daw, in his championship. "Not content with having

wrested Trevlyn Hold from the boy, Chattaway converts him into a common labourer in some coal office of his, making him walk to and fro night and morning. You know him?"

"Know him?" repeated Mr. Freeman. "I have known him well since he first came here, a child in arms." In truth, it was a superfluous question.

"Did you know his father?

"No; I never saw his father. It was after his father went abroad that I came to Barbrook."

"I was going to ask, if you had known him, whether you did not remark the extraordinary resemblance the young man bears to his father. The likeness is great; the form of the features, the voice, the general resemblance; but I alluded more immediately to the suspicious delicacy of the face. I should fear that the boy will go-off as his father did, and——"

"I have said a long while that he ought to live upon cod-liver oil," interposed Mrs. Freeman, who was doctor in ordinary to her husband's parish, and very decided in her opinion and remedies.

"Well, ma'am, that boy must die—if he is to die—Squire of Trevlyn Hold. I shall use all my means while I am here to bring this Chattaway to a sense of his injustice—to induce him to resign his possessions to the rightful owner. The boy seems to me to have had no friend in the world to take up his cause. What this Miss Diana can have been about, to stand tamely by and not interfere with him, I cannot conceive. She is the sister of his father."

"Better let it alone, Daw," said the parson. "Rely upon it, you will make no impression on Chattaway. It—it—you must excuse me for saying it, but it's quite foolish to think that you will. All Chattaway has in the world is Trevlyn Hold: he is not likely to throw himself out of it."

"I could not let it alone now," impulsively answered Mr. Daw. "The boy seems to have no friend, I say; and I consider that I have a right to constitute myself his friend. I'll say more than that—I should not be worthy the name of a man were I not to do it. I intended to stop with you only two nights; you'll give me house-room a little longer, won't you?"

"We'll give it you for two months, and gladly, if you can put up with our primitive mode of living," was the hospitable answer of the curate.

Mr. Daw shook his head. "Two months I could not remain; two weeks I might. I cannot go away leaving things in this most unsatisfactory state; I should have it on my conscience. The first thing I shall do this morning will be to go to the Hold, and seek an interview with Chattaway."

But Mr. Daw did not succeed in obtaining the interview with Chattaway. When he arrived at Trevlyn Hold, he was told the Squire was out. It was correct; Chattaway had ridden out immediately after breakfast. The stranger next asked for Miss Diana, and to her he was admitted.

Chattaway had said to Miss Diana in private, before starting, "Don't receive him should he come here; don't speak to him; don't let his foot pass over the door-sill." Very unwise advice, as Miss Diana judged; and she did not take it. Miss Diana had the sense to remember that an unknown evil is more to be feared than a known one. So long as we can see our enemies' tactics, we may meet and grapple with them; but who can fight in the dark? The stranger was ushered into the drawing-room by order of Miss Diana, and she came to him.

It was not a satisfactory interview, since nothing came of it; but it was a decently civil one. Miss Diana was cold, reserved, and somewhat haughty, but courteous; Mr. Daw was pressing, urgent, but respectful and gentlemanly. Rupert Trevlyn was the indisputable owner by right of Trevlyn Hold, was the substance of the points urged by the one; Squire Trevlyn was his own master, and made his own will, and it was not for his children and dependents to interfere against it, still less for a stranger, was the persistent answer of the other.

"Madam," said Mr. Daw, "did the enormity of the injustice never strike you?"

"Will you be so good as to tell me by what right you interfere?" returned Miss Diana. "I cannot conceive what business it can be of yours."

"I think the redressing of injustice should be made the business of every one."

"What a great deal every one would have to do!" exclaimed Miss Diana.

"As with regard to my right of interference, Miss Trevlyn, the law might not give me any; but I assume it by the bond of friendship. I was with his father when he died; I was with his mother. Poor thing! it was only within the last six or seven hours of her life that danger was apprehended. They

both died in the belief that their children would inherit Trevlyn Hold. Madam," he added, quite a blaze of light flashing from his dark eyes, "I have lived all the years since, believing that they were in the enjoyment of it."

"You believed rightly," equably rejoined Miss Diana. "They have been in the enjoyment of it. It has been their home."

"As it may be called the home of any of your servants," returned Mr. Daw; and Miss Diana did not like the comparison.

"May I ask," she continued, "if you came into this neighbourhood for the express purpose of putting this 'injustice' to rights?"

"No, madam, I did not. But there's no necessity for you to be sarcastic with me. I wish to urge the matter upon you in a friendly spirit, rather than in an adverse one. Business connected with my own affairs brought me to London some ten days ago, from the place where I had lived so long. As I was so near, I thought I would come down and see my former friend Freeman, before starting for home again; for I dare say I shall never more return to England. I knew Barbrook Parsonage and Trevlyn Hold were not very far apart, and I anticipated also the pleasure of meeting Joe Trevlyn's children, whom I had known as infants. I never supposed but that Rupert was in possession of Trevlyn Hold—that he had been so ever since his grandfather's death. You may judge what my surprise was when I arrived yesterday and heard the true state of the case. It is very probable that it struck upon me even more forcibly than the facts deserved, from my being so entirely unprepared for it."

"You have a covert motive in this," suddenly exclaimed Miss Diana, in a voice that had turned to sharpness.

"Covert motive?" he repeated, looking at her.

"Yes. Had you been, as you state, so interested in the welfare of Rupert Trevlyn and his sister, does it stand to reason that you would never have inquired after them through all these long years?"

"I beg your pardon, Miss Trevlyn: the facts are precisely as I have stated them. Strange as it may seem, I never did once write to inquire after them, and the neglect strikes forcibly upon me now. But I am, I believe, naturally inert, and all correspondence with my own country had gradually ceased. I did often think of the little Trevlyns, but it was always to sup-

pose them as being at their own home, Trevlyn Hold, sheltered by their appointed guardian."

"What appointed guardian?" cried Miss Diana.

"Yourself."

"I! I was not the appointed guardian of the Trevlyns."

"Indeed, Miss Trevlyn, you were. You were appointed by their mother. The letter—the deed, I may say, for I believe it to have been worded in all legal form—was written when she was dying."

Miss Trevlyn had never heard of anything of the sort; of any deed. "Who wrote it?" she asked, after a pause.

"I did. When dangerous symptoms set in, and she was told that she might not live, Mrs. Trevlyn sent for me. She had her little baby baptized Rupert, for it had been her husband's wish that the child, if a boy, should be so named, and then I sat down by her bedside at her request, and wrote the document. She entreated Miss Diana Trevlyn—you, madam—to reside at Trevlyn Hold as its mistress, when it should lapse to Rupert, and be the guardian and protector of her children, until Rupert should be of age. She besought you to love them, and be kind to them for their father's sake; for her sake; for the sake, also, of the friendship which had once existed between you and her. This will prove to you, Miss Trevlyn," he added in a different tone, "that poor Mrs. Trevlyn, at least, never supposed there was a likelihood of any other successor to the estate."

"I never heard of it," exclaimed Miss Diana, waking up as from a reverie. "Was the document sent to me?"

"It was enclosed in the despatch which acquainted Squire Trevlyn with Mrs. Trevlyn's death. I wrote them both, and I enclosed them together, and sent them."

"Directed to whom?"

"To Squire Trevlyn."

Miss Diana cast her thoughts back. It was Chattaway who had received that despatch. Could he—*could he* have dared to suppress any communication intended for her? Her haughty brow grew crimson at the thought; but she suppressed all signs of annoyance.

"Will you allow me to renew my acquaintance with little Maude?" resumed Mr. Daw. "Little Maude then, and a lovely child; a beautiful young lady, as I hear, now."

Miss Diana hesitated—a very uncommon thing for her to do. It is strange what trifles turn the current of feelings: and this

last item of intelligence had wonderfully softened her towards this stranger. But she remembered the interests at stake, and thought it best to be prudent.

"You must pardon the refusal," she said. "I quite appreciate your wish to serve Rupert Trevlyn, but it can only fail, and further intercourse will not be agreeable to either party. You will allow me to wish you good morning, and to thank you."

She rang the bell, and bowed him out, with all the grand courtesy belonging to the Trevlyns. As he passed through the hall, he caught a glimpse of a lovely girl, with a delicate bloom on her cheeks and large blue eyes. Instinct told him it was Maude; and he likewise thought he traced some resemblance to her mother. He took a step forward involuntarily, to accost her, but recollected himself, and drew back again.

It was scarcely the thing to do: in defiance of the recent direct refusal of Miss Diana Trevlyn.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN IMPROMPTU JOURNEY.

THE dew had been wet upon the grass in the autumn morning as the Squire of Trevlyn Hold rode from his door. He had hurried over his breakfast, his horse waiting for him, and he spurred him impatiently along the avenue. Ann Canham had not yet opened the gate. Upon hearing a horse's hoofs, she ran out to do so; and stood aside holding it back, and dropped her humble curtsey as Mr. Chattaway rode past. He vouchsafed not the slightest notice of her: neither by glance nor nod did he appear conscious of her presence. It was his usual way.

"He's off to Blackstone early," thought Ann Canham, as she fastened back the gate.

But Mr. Chattaway did not turn towards Blackstone. He turned in the opposite direction—to the left—and urged his horse to a gallop. Ann Canham looked after him.

"He have business at Barmester, maybe," was the conclusion to which she came.

Nothing more sure. Mr. Chattaway *had* business at Barmester. He rode briskly to the town, and pulled up his horse