these things, especially when they may be looked upon as somewhat misplaced; but I know of few histories in which they can be quite avoided, if the whole truth is adhered to, for many and evil are the passions assailing the undisciplined human heart.

"Good-bye!" George whispered to Maude as he left her. "This night begins a new era in our lives."

The Hold was busy when they entered it. Mrs. Chattaway and her sister had just returned from Barmester, and were greeted by Mr. Chattaway. They had expected him for so many days past, and been disappointed, that his appearance now brought surprise with it. He answered the questions evasively put to him by Mrs. Chattaway and Diana, as to where he had been. Business had kept him, was all they could obtain.

"I cannot think what you have done for clothes, James," said Mrs. Chattaway.

"I have done very well," he retorted. "I bought what I wanted."

But it was not upon the score of his wardrobe, or what had kept him so long, that Miss Diana Trevlyn required speech of Chattaway. She had been waiting all that time, since the first morning of his absence, for information on a certain point, and she now demanded it in a peremptory manner.

"Chattaway," she began, when the rest had dispersed, and she waited with him, "I have had a strange communication made to me. In that past time—carry your thoughts back to it, if you please—when there came to this house the news of Rupert Trevlyn's birth and his mother's death—do you remember it?"

"Yes, I do," said Mr. Chattaway. "What should hinder me?"

"The tidings were conveyed by letter. Two letters came, the second a day after the first."

"Well?" returned Mr. Chattaway, believing the theme, in some shape or other, was to haunt him for ever. "What of the letters?"

"In that last letter, which must have been a heavy one, there was a communication enclosed for me."

"I don't remember it," said Mr. Chattaway.

"It was no doubt there. A document written at the request of Mrs. Trevlyn; constituting me guardian to the two children. What did you do with it?"

"I?" returned Chattaway, and he spoke with apparent surprise, and looked full at Miss Diana with an unmoved face. "I did nothing with it. I don't know anything about it."

"You must have taken it out and suppressed it," observed Miss Diana.

"I never saw it or heard of it," obstinately persisted Chattaway. "Why should I? You might have been their appointed guardian, and welcome, for me: you have chiefly acted as guardian. I tell you, Diana, I neither saw it nor heard of it: you need not look so suspiciously at me."

"Is he telling the truth?" thought Miss Diana, and her keen eyes were not lifted from Mr. Chattaway's face. But that gentleman was remarkably inscrutable, and never appeared more so than at this moment.

"If he did *not* do anything with it," continued Miss Diana in her train of thought, "what could have become of the thing? Where can it be?"

CHAPTER XXX.

MR. CHATTAWAY COME TO GRIEF.

A FEW days passed on, and strange rumours began to be rife in the neighbourhood. Various rumours, vague at the best; but all tending to one point—that the true heir was coming to his own again. They penetrated even to the ears of Mr. Chattaway, throwing that gentleman into a state not to be described. Some said a later will of the Squire's had been found; some said a will of Joe Trevlyn's; some that it was now discovered the estate could only descend in the direct male line, and that consequently it had been Rupert's all along. Chattaway was in a raging fever; it preyed upon him, and turned his days to darkness. He seemed to look upon Rupert with the most intense suspicion, as if it were from him alone—from his plotting and working, you understand—that the evil would come. He feared to trust him out of his sight; to leave him alone for a single instant. When he went to Blackstone he took Rupert with him; he hovered about there all day, keeping Rupert in sight, and he brought him back in the evening. Miss Diana had not yet bought the pony she spoke of for Rupert's use, and Chattaway either mounted him

on an old horse that was good for little now, and rode by his side, or else drove him over. Rupert was intensely puzzled at this new consideration for him, and could not make it out.

One morning Mr. Chattaway so far sacrificed his own ease as to contemplate walking over. The horses were wanted that day, and he told Rupert they would walk. "Very well," Rupert answered, in his half-careless, half-obedient fashion, "it was all the same to him." And so they started. But as they were going down the avenue a gentleman was discerned coming up it. Mr. Chattaway knitted his brows and peered at him; his sight for a distance was not quite so good as it had been.

"Who's this?" asked he of Rupert.

"It is Mr. Peterby," replied Rupert.

"Mr. Peterby!" ejaculated Chattaway. "What Peterby?"

"Peterby of Barmester, the lawyer," explained Rupert, wondering that there was any need to ask.

For only one gentleman of the name of Peterby was known to Trevlyn Hold, and Mr. Chattaway was, so to say, familiar with him. He had been solicitor to Squire Trevlyn, and though Mr. Chattaway had not continued him in that post when he succeeded to the estate, preferring to employ Mr. Flood, he yet knew him well. His ejaculation, "What Peterby?" had not escaped him so much in doubt as to the man, but as to what he could want with him. But Mr. Peterby was solicitor for some of his tenants, and he supposed some business might be arising touching the renewal of leases.

They met. Mr. Peterby was an active little man of more than sixty years, with a healthy colour in his face, and the remains of auburn hair. He had walked all the way from Barmester, and enjoyed the walk as much as a schoolboy. "Good morning, Mr. Chattaway," he said, holding out his hand, "I am fortunate to meet you. I came early, to catch you before you went to Blackstone. Can you give me half-an-hour's interview?"

Mr. Chattaway thought he should not like to give the interview. He was in a bad temper, in no mood for business, and he really wanted to be at Blackstone. Besides all that, he had no love for Mr. Peterby. "I am pressed for time this morning," he replied, "am much later than I ought to have been. Is it anything particular that you want me for?"

"Yes, it is; very particular," was the answer, delivered in

an uncompromising tone. "I must request you to accord me the interview, Mr. Chattaway."

Mr. Chattaway turned back to the house with his visitor. He marshalled him into the drawing-room, and Rupert remained whistling at the hall-door.

"I have come upon a curious errand, Mr. Chattaway, and no doubt an unwelcome one; though, from what I hear, it may not be altogether unexpected," began the gentleman, as they took seats opposite each other. "A question has been arising of late, whether Rupert Trevlyn may not possess some right to the Hold. I am here to demand of you if you will give it up to him."

Was the world coming to an end? Chattaway thought it must be. He sat and stared at the speaker as if he were in a dream. Was *every one* turning against him? Was the awful thing coming publicly upon him, without disguise? He rubbed his handkerchief over his hot face, and imperiously demanded of Mr. Peterby what on earth he meant, and where he could have picked up his insolence.

"I am not about to wrest the estate from you, Mr. Chattaway, or to threaten to do so," was the answer. "You need not fear that. But—you must be aware that you have for the last twenty years enjoyed a position that ought in strict justice to belong to the grandson of Squire Trevlyn."

"I am not aware of anything of the sort," groaned Chattaway. "What do you mean by 'wresting the estate?'"

"Softly, my good sir; there's no need to put yourself out with me. I am come on a straightforward, peaceable errand; not one of war. A friendly errand, if you will allow me so to express myself."

The master of Trevelyn Hold could only marvel at the speech. A friendly errand! requiring him to give up his possessions!

Mr. Peterby proceeded to explain; and as there is no time to give the interview in detail, the explanation shall be condensed. It appeared that the Reverend Mr. Daw had in his zeal sought out the solicitors of the late Squire Trevlyn. He had succeeded in impressing upon them a sense of the great injustice dealt out to Rupert; had avowed his intention of endeavouring, by any means in his power, to remedy this injustice; but at this point he had been somewhat obscure, and had, in fact, caused (perhaps inadvertently) the lawyers to imagine that this power was something real and tangible.

Could there be (they asked themselves afterwards) any late will of Squire Trevlyn's which would supersede the old one? It was the only hinge on which the matter could turn; and Mr. Daw's mysterious hints certainly encouraged the thought. But he, Mr. Daw, had said, "Perhaps Chattaway will give up amicably, if you urge it upon him," and Mr. Peterby had now come for that purpose.

"But what you say is utterly absurd," urged Chattaway; the long explanation, which Mr. Peterby had given in an open and candid manner, having afforded him time to recover somewhat of his fears and his temper. "I can take upon myself most positively to assert that there was no will or codicil made, or attempted to be made, by Squire Trevlyn, subsequent to the one on which I inherit. Your house drew that up."

"I know we did," replied the lawyer. "But that does not prove that none was drawn up after it."

"But I tell you that there was not any. I am certain upon the point."

"Well, it was the only conclusion we could come to," rejoined Mr. Peterby. "This Mr. Daw must have some grounds for urging the thing on; he wouldn't be so stupid as to do so if he had none."

"He has none," said Chattaway.

"Ah, but I am sure he has. But for being convinced of this, do you suppose I should have come to you now, asking you to give up an estate which you have so long enjoyed? I assure you I came as much in your interests as in his. If there is anything a-gate by which you can be disturbed, it is only fair that you should know of it."

Fair! In Mr. Chattaway's frame of mind, he could scarcely tell what was fair and what was not fair. The interview was prolonged, but it brought forth no satisfactory conclusion. Perhaps one could not be expected from it. Mr. Peterby took his departure, fully impressed with the conviction that the present owner of Trevlyn Hold would retain possession to the end, would contest it inch by inch; and as he walked down the avenue he asked himself whether he had not been induced to enter upon a foolish errand, in coming to suggest that it should be voluntarily resigned.

The master of Trevlyn Hold watched him away, and then opened the breakfast-room door. "Where's Rupert?" he inquired, not seeing Rupert there.

"Rupert?" answered Mrs. Chattaway, looking up. "I think he has gone to Blackstone. He wished me good morning; and I saw him walk down the avenue."

All things seemed to be against Mr. Chattaway. Here was Rupert out of sight now; it was hard to say where he might have gone, or what mischief he might be in. As he turned from the door, Cris Chattaway's horse—the unlucky new one which had damaged the dog-cart—was brought up, and Cris appeared, prepared to mount him.

"Where are you going, Cris?"

"Nowhere in particular this morning," answered Cris. "I have a nasty headache, and a canter may take it away."

"Then I'll ride your horse to Blackstone, if you don't want him," returned Mr. Chattaway. "Alter the stirrups, Sam."

"Why, where's your own horse?" cried Cris, with a very blank look.

"In the stable," shortly returned Mr. Chattaway.

He mounted the horse and rode away, his many cares perplexing him. A hideous wall separating him from all good fortune seemed to be rising up round about him; and the catastrophe he so dreaded—a contest between himself and Rupert Trevlyn for possession of the Hold—appeared to be drawing within the range of probability. In the gloomy prospect before him, only one loophole of escape presented itself to his imagination—the death of Rupert.

But you must not think worse of Mr. Chattaway than he deserves. He did not deliberately contemplate any such calamity; he did not set himself to hope for it. The imagination is rebelliously evil, often uncontrollable; and the thought rose up unbidden and unwished for. Mr. Chattaway could not help it; he could not at first drive it away again; the somewhat dangerous argument, "Were Rupert dead I should be safe, and it is the only means by which I can feel assured of safety," did linger with him longer than was expedient: but he never for one moment contemplated the possibility as likely to take place; most certainly it never occurred to him that he could be accessory to it. Though not a good man, especially in the way of temper and covetousness, Mr. Chattaway would have started with horror from himself had he supposed he could ever be so bad as that.

He rode swiftly along in the charming autumn morning, urging his horse to a hard gallop. Was his haste merely caused by his anxiety to be at Blackstone, or that he would escape from his own thoughts? He rode directly to the coal

mine, up to the mouth of the pit. Two or three men, looking like blackamoors, were standing about there.

"Why are you not down at work?" angrily demanded Mr. Chattaway. "What do you do idling here!"

They had been waiting for Pennet, the men replied. But word had just been brought that Pennet was not coming.

"Where is he?" asked Mr. Chattaway. "Skulking again?"

"I dunna think he be skulking, sir," was the reply of one. "He be bad a-bed."

An angry frown darkened Mr. Chattaway's countenance. Truth to say, this man, Pennet, though a valuable workman from his great strength, his perseverance when in the pit, did occasionally absent himself from it, to the wrath of his overseers; and Mr. Chattaway knew that the words "bad a-bed" might be only an excuse for taking a holiday in the drinking shop.

"I'll soon see that," he cried. "Bring that horse back. If Pennet is skulking, I'll discharge him this very day."

He had despatched his horse round to the stable by a man; but he now mounted him again, and was riding away, after ordering the men down to their work, when he stopped to ask a question respecting one of his overseers.

"Is Bean down the shaft?"

No; the men thought not. They believed he was round at the office.

Mr. Chattaway turned his horse's head towards the office, and galloped off, reining in at the door. The clerk Ford and Rupert Trevlyn both came out.

"Oh, so you have got here!" ungraciously grunted Mr. Chattaway to Rupert. "I want Bean."

"Bean's in the pit, sir," replied Ford.

"The man told me he was not in the pit," returned Mr. Chattaway. "They said he was here."

"Then they knew nothing about it," observed Ford. "Bean has been down in the pit all the morning."

Mr. Chattaway turned to Rupert. "You go down the shaft and tell Bean to come up. I want him."

He rode off as he spoke, and Rupert departed for the pit. The man Pennet lived in a hovel, one of many, about a mile and a half away. Chattaway, between haste and temper, was in a heat when he arrived. A masculine-looking woman with tangled hair came out to salute him.

"Where's Pennet?"

"He's right bad, master."

Mr. Chattaway's lip curled. "Bad from drink?"

"No," replied the woman, defiantly; for the owner of the mine was held in no favour, and this woman was of too independent a nature to conceal her sentiments when provoked. "Bad from rheumatiz."

He got off his horse, rudely pushed her aside, and went in. Pennet was dressed, but was lying on a wooden settle, as the benches were called in that district.

"I be too bad for the pit to-day, sir; I be, indeed. This rheumatiz have been a-flying about me for weeks; and now it's a-settled in my loins, and I can't stir."

"Let's see you walk," responded Mr. Chattaway.

Pennet got off the bench, it seemed with difficulty, and walked across the brick floor slowly, his arms behind him.

"I thought so," said Mr. Chattaway. "I knew you were skulking. You are as well able to walk as I am. Be off to the pit."

The man lifted his face. "If you was in the pain I be, master, you wouldn't say so. I mote drag myself down to 'im, but I couldn't work."

"We will see that," said Mr. Chattaway, in his determined manner. "You'll work to-day, my man, or you'll never work again for me: so you may take your choice."

There was a pause. Pennet looked irresolute, the woman bitter. Perhaps what these people hated most of all in Chattaway was his personal interference, his petty tyranny. What he was doing now—looking up the hands—was the work of an overseer; not of the owner.

"Come," he authoritatively repeated. "I shall see you start before me. We are too busy for half of you to be basking in idleness. Are you going, Pennet? You work to-day, or you leave the pit, just which you please."

The man glanced at his children—a ragged little group, cowering in silence in a corner, awed by the presence of the master; took his cap without a word, and limped slowly away, though apparently scarcely able to drag one foot before the other.

"Where be your bowels of compassion?" cried the woman, in her audacity, placing herself before Mr. Chattaway.

"I know where my whip will be if you don't get out of my way and change your tone," was his answer. "What do you mean, woman, by speaking so to me?"

"Them as have no compassion for their men, but treads 'em down like so many beasts o' burden, may come, perhaps, to be treaded down themselves," was the woman's retort, as she withdrew out of Mr. Chattaway's vicinity.

He made no answer, except that he lifted his whip significantly. As he rode off, he saw Pennet pursuing his way to the mine by the nearest path—one inaccessible to horses. When he was parallel with the man, he lifted his whip as significantly at him as he had done at the wife, and then urged his horse to a gallop. It was a busy day with them, both in the office and in the mine; and Chattaway, taking as you perceive a somewhat practical part in his affairs, had wished to be present some two hours before. Consequently, these delays had not improved his temper.

About midway between the Pennets' hut and the mine, were the decaying walls of what had once been a shed. Part of the wall was still standing, about breast high. It lay right in Mr. Chattaway's way: one single minute given to turning either to the right or the left, and he would have avoided it. But he saw no reason for avoiding it: he had leaped it often: it was not likely that he would in his hurry turn from it now.

He urged his horse to it, and the animal was in the very act of taking the leap, when a sudden obstacle interposed. A beggar man, who had been quietly ensconced on the other side, basking in the sun and eating his dinner, heard the movement, and not wishing to be run over or leaped upon, started up to fly from danger. The movement, so close and sudden, startled the horse, causing him to strike the wall instead of clearing it: he fell, and his master with him.

The horse was not hurt, and soon found its legs. If the animal had misbehaved himself a few days previously, under the hands of Mr. Cris, he appeared determined to redeem his character now. He stood patient and silent, turning his head to Mr. Chattaway, as if waiting for him to get up.

Which that gentleman strove to do. But he found he could not. Something was the matter with one of his ankles, and he was in a towering passion. The offending beggar scuttered off, frightened at his unbounded rage, his threats of vengeance.

The intemperate words of passion did him no good; you may be very sure of that; they never do any one good. For more than an hour Mr. Chattaway lay there, his horse patiently standing by him, and no one coming to his aid. It would have seemed to him that he lay three times as long, but that he had his watch, and could consult it as often as he pleased. It was an unfrequented by-road, leading nowhere in particular, except to the hovels; and Mr. Chattaway had therefore full benefit of the solitude.

The first person to come up was no other than Mrs. Pennet—Mogg Pennet, as she was familiarly called. Her tall, gaunt form came striding along, and her large eyes grew larger as she saw who was lying there.

"Ah, master! what's it your turn a'ready! Have you been there ever sin'? Can't you get up?"

"Find assistance," he cried in a curt tone of authority. "Mount my horse sideways, and you'll go the quicker."

"Na, na; I mount na horse. The brute might be a-flinging me, as it seems he ha' flinged you. Women and horses be best apart. Shall I help you up?"

His haughty, ill-conditioned spirit would have prompted him to say "No;" his helplessness and impatience obliged him to say "Yes." The powerful woman took him by the shoulders and raised him. So far, so good. But his ankle gave him intense pain; was, in short, almost useless; and a cry escaped him. In his agony, he flung her rudely from him with his elbow. "Go and get assistance, woman."

"Be that'n the thanks I get? Ah! it be coming home to ye, be it! Ye sent my man off to work in pain; he couldn't hardly crawl, he couldn't: how d'you like pain yerself? If the leg's broke, Squire, you'll ha' time to lie and think on't."

She strode on, Mr. Chattaway sending an ugly word after her, and soon came in sight of the mine—which appeared to be in an unusual bustle. A crowd was collected round the mouth of the pit, and people were running to it from all quarters. Loud talking, gesticulating, confusion prevailed: what could be the cause of it?

"Happen they be looking for him as is lying yonder!" quoth she. But scarcely were the words out of her mouth when a group of women running, frantically throwing their arms up, filling the air with their cries and lamentations, came in sight. Her coarse face grew white and her heart turned sick as the fatal truth burst upon her conviction. There had been an accident in the mine!