

"There's no answer, Nora," said Mrs. Chattaway: and she turned on her way homewards, not unlike one in a dream. Who *was* that man before her? What was his name? where did he come from? Why should he bear this strange likeness to her dead father? Ah, why, indeed! The truth never for one moment penetrated to the mind of Mrs. Chattaway.

He went on: he, the stranger. When he came to the lawn before the house, he stepped on to it and halted. He looked to this side, he looked to that; he gazed up at the house, into every window, just as one loves to look on returning to a beloved home after an absence of years. He stood with his head thrown back; his right hand stretched out, the stick it grasped planted firm and upright on the ground. How many times had the old Squire Trevlyn stood in the selfsame attitude on that same lawn!

There appeared to be no eyes about; the windows were empty; no one saw him, save Mrs. Chattaway, who hid herself amidst the trees, and furtively watched him. She would not have passed him for the world, and she waited until he should be gone. She was unable to divest her mind of a sensation that was akin to the supernatural, as she shrank from this man who bore so wonderful a resemblance in all ways to her father. He, the stranger, did not detect her behind him, and presently he walked across the lawn, ascended the steps, and tried the door.

But the door was fast. The servants would sometimes slip the bolt as a protection against tramps, and they had probably done so to-day. Seizing the bell-handle, the visitor rang such a peal that Sam Atkins, Cris Chattaway's groom, who happened to be in the house and near the door, flew with all speed to open it. Sam had never known Squire Trevlyn; but in this stranger now before him, he could not fail to remark a great general resemblance to the Trevlyn family.

"Is James Chattaway at home?"

To hear the master of the Hold inquired for in that uncere-
monious manner, rather took Sam back; but he answered that he was at home. He had no need to invite the visitor to walk in, for the visitor had walked in of his own accord. "What name, sir?" demanded Sam, preparing to usher the stranger across the hall.

"Squire Trevlyn."

This concluded Sam Atkins's astonishment. "*What* name, sir, did you say?"

"Squire Trevlyn. Are you deaf, man? Squire Trevlyn, of Trevlyn Hold."

And the haughty motion of the head, the firm pressure of the lips, might have put a spectator all too unpleasantly in mind of the veritable old Squire Trevlyn, had one who had known him been there to see.

CHAPTER LV.

THE DREAD COME HOME TO MR. CHATTAWAY.

NOTHING could well exceed Mr. Chattaway's astonishment at hearing that George Ryle wished to make Maude Trevlyn his wife. And nothing could exceed his displeasure. Not that Mr. Chattaway had higher views for Maude, or deemed it an undesirable match for her in a pecuniary point of view, as Miss Diana Trevlyn had felt inclined to deem it. Had Maude chosen to marry without any prospect at all, that would not have troubled Mr. Chattaway. But what did trouble Mr. Chattaway was this—that a sister of Rupert Trevlyn should become connected with George Ryle. In Mr. Chattaway's foolish and utterly groundless prejudices, he had suspected, as you may remember, that George Ryle and Rupert had been ever ready to hatch mischief against him; and he dreaded for his own sake any bond of union that might bring them closer together.

There was something else. By some intuitive perception Mr. Chattaway had detected that misplaced liking of his daughter's for George Ryle: and *this* union would not have been unpalatable to Mr. Chattaway. Whatever may have been his ambitious views for his daughter's settlement in life; whatever may have been his dislike to George Ryle, he was willing to forego it all for his own sake. Every consideration was lost sight of in that one which had always reigned paramount with Mr. Chattaway—self-interest. You have not waited until now to learn that James Chattaway was one of the most selfish men on the face of the earth. Some men like, as far as they can, to do their duty to God and to their fellow-creatures; the master of Trevlyn Hold liked to do it only to himself. It had been his motive-spring through life. And what sort of a

garner for the Great Day do you suppose he had been laying up for himself? He was soon to experience a little check here, but that was little, in comparison. The ills that our evil conduct entails upon ourselves here, are as nothing to the dread reckoning that we must render up hereafter.

Mr. Chattaway would have leased the Upland Farm to George Ryle with all the pleasure in life, provided he could have leased his daughter with it. Were George Ryle his veritable son-in-law, then he would not fear any plotting machinations against himself. Somehow, he did fear George Ryle. It was not that Mr. Chattaway feared George as one fears a bad man; no one could fear George Ryle in that way; but Mr. Chattaway feared him as a good one; as a brave, upright, honourable man, who might be tempted to make common cause with the oppressed against the oppressor. It may be, also, that Miss Chattaway did not render herself so universally agreeable in her home as she might have done, for her temper, naturally a bad one, did not improve with years; and for this cause Mr. Chattaway was not sorry that the Hold should be rid of her. Altogether, he contemplated with satisfaction, rather than the contrary, the faint vista presented to his view, of the connection of George Ryle with his family. A vista that hitherto had been of the slightest possible dimensions; one which Mr. Chattaway had not been sure whether he saw or not; but he could not be quite blind to certain predilections shown by Octave, though no hint of it, no allusion to it, had ever been spoken on either side.

And on that first day when George Ryle, after speaking to Mr. Chattaway about the lease of the Upland Farm, said a joking word or two to Miss Diana of his marriage that was to supervene upon it, Octave had overheard. You saw her with her scarlet face of excitement looking over her aunt's shoulder: a face which seemed to frighten George, and caused him to take his leave somewhat abruptly.

Poor Octave Chattaway! George's words, that his coveted wife was a gentlewoman born and bred, and must live as such, had imparted to her a meaning that George himself never gave them. She caught up the notion that *she* was the gentlewoman to whom he alluded—but the notion, as you are aware, was erroneous.

Ere the scarlet had faded from her cheeks, her father had entered the room. Octave bent over the table drawing a pattern. Mr. Chattaway stood at the window, his hands in his

pockets, a habit of his when in thought, and watched George Ryle walking away in the distance.

"He wants the Upland Farm, Octave," Mr. Chattaway presently remarked, without turning round. "He thinks he can get on at it."

Miss Chattaway carried her pencil to the end of the line, and bent her face lower. "I should let it him, papa."

"The Upland Farm will take money, both to stock it and carry it on; no slight sum," remarked Mr. Chattaway.

"Yes. Did he say how he should manage to get it?"

"From Apperley. He will have his work cut out if he is to begin farming on borrowed money; as his father had before him. It is only this very day that he has paid off that debt, contracted so many years ago."

"And no wonder, on the small and poor Trevlyn Farm. The Upland is different. A man would grow rich on the one, and starve on the other."

"The Upland is an extensive farm—the land good. But to take the best farm in the world on borrowed money, would entail uphill work for him. George Ryle will have to work hard; and so must his wife, should he marry one."

Octave paused for a moment, apparently mastering some intricacies in her pattern. "Not his wife; I do not see that. My aunt Maude is a case in point; she has never worked on Trevlyn Farm."

"She has had her cares, though," returned Mr. Chattaway. "And she would have had to work—but for Nora Dickson."

"The Upland Farm could afford a housekeeper if necessary," was Octave's answer.

Not another word was spoken. Mr. Chattaway's suspicions were confirmed, and he determined when George Ryle again asked for the farm lease and for Octave, to accord both with rather more graciousness than he was accustomed to accord anything.

Things did not turn out, however, quite in accordance with his expectations. The best of us are disappointed sometimes, you know. George Ryle pressed very greatly for the farm, but he did not press for Octave. In point of fact, he never mentioned her name, or so much as hinted at any interest he might feel in her; and Mr. Chattaway, rather puzzled and very cross, abstained from promising the farm. He put off the question, very much to George's inconvenience, who set it down to caprice.

But the time came for Mr. Chattaway's eyes to be opened, and he awoke to the cross-purposes which had been at work. On the afternoon of the day mentioned in the last chapter, during the stolen visit of Mrs. Chattaway to Rupert, Mr. Chattaway was undeceived. He had been at home all day, busy over accounts and other business in the steward's room; and Miss Diana, mindful of her promise to George Ryle, to speak a word in his favour relative to the Upland Farm, penetrated to that room for the purpose, deeming it a good opportunity. Mr. Chattaway had been so upset since the receipt of the second letter from Connell and Connell, that she had abstained hitherto from mentioning the subject. Mr. Chattaway was seated at his desk, and he looked up with a start as she abruptly entered: the start of a man who lives in some fear.

"Have you decided about the Upland Farm—whether George Ryle is to have it?" she asked, plunging into the subject without circumlocution, as it was the habit of Miss Diana Trevlyn to do.

"No, not precisely. I shall see in a day or two."

"But you promised him an answer long before this."

"Ah," slightly spoke Mr. Chattaway. "It's not always convenient to keep one's promises."

"Why are you holding off?"

"Well, for one thing, I thought of retaining that farm in my own hands, and keeping a bailiff to look after it."

"Then you'll burn your fingers, James Chattaway. Those who manage the Upland Farm should live at the Upland Farm. You can't properly manage both places, that and Trevlyn Hold; and you live at Trevlyn Hold. I don't see why you should not let it to George Ryle."

Mr. Chattaway sat biting the end of his pen. Miss Diana waited; but he did not speak, and she resumed.

"I believe he will do well on it. One who has done so much with that small place, Trevlyn Farm, and its not very good land, will not fail to do well on the Upland. Let him have it, Chattaway."

"You speak as if you were interested in his having it," remarked Mr. Chattaway, resentfully.

"I am not sure but I am," equably answered Miss Diana.

"I see no reason why you should not let him the farm; for there's no doubt that he will prove a good tenant. He has spoken to me about its involving something more, should he obtain it," she continued, after a pause.

"Ah," said Mr. Chattaway, without surprise. "Well?"

"He wants us to give him Maude."

Mr. Chattaway let fall his pen, and it made a dreadful blot on his account-book, as he turned his head sharply on Miss Diana.

"Maude! You mean Octave."

"Pooh!" cried Miss Diana. "Octave has been spending her years looking after a mare's nest: people who do such foolish things must of necessity encounter disappointment. George Ryle has never cared for her, never cast a thought to her."

Mr. Chattaway's face was turning its disagreeable colour, green; and his lips were drawn as he glared on Miss Trevlyn. "He has been always coming here."

"Yes. For Maude—as it turns out. I confess I never thought of it."

"How do you know this?"

"He has asked for Maude, I tell you. His hopes for years have been fixed upon her."

"He shall never have her," said Mr. Chattaway, emphatically.

"He shall never have the Upland Farm."

"It was the decision—with regard to Maude—that crossed me in the first moment. I like *him*; quite well enough to give him Maude, or to give him Octave, had she been the one sought; but I do not consider his position suitable——"

"Suitable! Why, he's a beggar," interrupted Mr. Chattaway, completely losing sight of his own intentions with regard to his daughter. "George Ryle shall smart for this. Give him Maude, indeed!"

"But if Maude's happiness shall be involved in it, what then?" quietly asked Miss Diana.

"Don't be an idiot," was the retort of Mr. Chattaway.

"I never was one yet," said Miss Diana, equably. "But I have nearly made up my mind to give him Maude."

"You cannot do it without my consent. She is under my roof and guardianship, and I tell you that she shall never leave it for that of George Ryle."

"You should bring a little reason to your aid before you speak," returned Miss Diana, with that calm assumption of intellectual superiority which so vexed Mr. Chattaway whenever it peeped out. "What are the true facts? Why, that no living being, neither you nor any one else, can legally prevent Maude from marrying whom she will. You have no power to

prevent it. She and Rupert have never had a legally-appointed guardian, remember. But for the loss of that letter, written at the instance of their mother when she was dying, and which appears to have vanished in so mysterious a manner, I should have been their guardian," pointedly concluded Miss Diana. "And might have married Maude as I pleased."

Mr. Chattaway made no reply, except that he nervously bit his lips. If Diana Trevlyn turned against him, all seemed lost. That letter was upon his conscience, then, as he sat; for he it was who had suppressed it.

"And therefore, as in point of fact we have no power whatever vested in us, as Maude might marry whom she chose without consulting us, and as I like George Ryle on his own account, and *she* likes him better than the whole world, I consider that we had better give a willing consent. It will be making a merit of necessity, you see, Chattaway."

Mr. Chattaway saw nothing of the sort; but he dared not too openly defy Miss Trevlyn. "You would marry her to a beggar!" he cried. "To a man who does not possess a shilling! You must have a great regard for her!"

"Maude has no money, you know."

"I do know it. And that is all the more reason why her husband should possess some."

"They will get along, Chattaway, at the Upland Farm."

"I dare say they will—when they get it. I shall not lease the Upland Farm to a man who has to borrow money to go into it."

"I might be brought to obviate that difficulty," rejoined Miss Diana, in her coldest and hardest manner, as she gazed full at Mr. Chattaway. "Since I learnt that their mother left the children to me, I have felt a sort of proprietary right in them, and shall perhaps hand over to Maude, when she leaves us, sufficient money to stock the Upland Farm. The half at least of what I possess will some time be hers."

Was *this* the result of his having suppressed that dying mother's letter? Be you very sure, Mr. Chattaway, that such dealings can never prosper! So long as there is a just and good God above us, they can but bring their proper recompense.

Mr. Chattaway did not trust himself to reply. He drew a sheet of paper towards him, and dashed off a few lines upon it. It was a peremptory refusal to lease the Upland Farm to George Ryle. Folding it, he placed it in an envelope directed it. and rang the bell.

"What's that?" asked Miss Diana.

"My reply to Ryle. He shall never rent the Upland Farm."

In Mr. Chattaway's impatience, he did not give time for the bell to be answered, but opened the door and shouted. It was no one's business in particular to answer that bell; and Sam Atkins, who was in the kitchen, waiting for orders from Cris, ran forward at the sound of Mr. Chattaway's call.

"Take this letter down to Trevlyn Farm instantly," was the command of Mr. Chattaway. "Instantly, do you hear?"

But in the very act of the groom's taking it from Mr. Chattaway's hand, there came that violent ring at the hall-door of which you have heard. Sam Atkins, thinking possibly the Hold might be on fire, as the ricks had been not so long ago, flew to open it, though it was not his place to do so.

And Mr. Chattaway, disturbed by the loud and imperative ring, stood where he was, and looked and listened. He saw the entrance of the stranger, and heard the colloquy; heard the announcement of the name: "Squire Trevlyn, of Trevlyn Hold."

Miss Diana Trevlyn heard it, and came forth, and they stood like two living petrifications, gazing at the apparition. Miss Diana, strong-minded woman that she was, did think for the moment that she saw her father. But her senses came to her, and she walked slowly forward to meet him.

"You must be my brother, Rupert Trevlyn!—risen from the dead."

"I am; but not risen from the dead," he answered, taking the hands she held out. "Which of them are you? Maude?"

"No; Diana. Oh, Rupert! I thought it was my father."

It was indeed him whom they had for so many years believed to be dead; the runaway, Rupert Trevlyn. He had come home to claim his own; come home in his true character: Squire Trevlyn, of Trevlyn Hold.

But Mr. Chattaway, in his worse and wildest dreams, had never bargained for this!