

by indisputable proof; but Mr. Chattaway felt that there was no proof necessary to establish it. What, then, would be the use of his holding out? And yet! to quit this fine possession, to sink into poverty and obscurity in the face and eyes of the local world—that world which had been ready enough, as it was, to cast its contempt on the master of Trevlyn Hold—would be as the very bitterest fate that ever fell upon man. In that cruel moment, when it was pressing upon his imagination with fearfully vivid colours, it seemed that death would be as a boon in comparison.

While he was thus standing, torn with contending emotions, Cris ran up in excitement from the direction of the stables. He had been leaving his horse there on his return from Blackstone, and some vague and confused version of the affair had been told to him. "What's this, father?" he asked, in demonstrative anger. "They are saying that Rupert Trevlyn has come boldly back, and is laying claim to the Hold. Have you given him into custody?"

Mr. Chattaway raised his dull eyes. The question only added to his misery. "Yes, Rupert Trevlyn has come back," he said; "but——"

"Is he in custody?" impatiently interrupted Cris. "Are the police here?"

"It is another Rupert Trevlyn, Cris; not that one."

Something in his father's manner, more than the words, struck unpleasantly on the senses of Cris Chattaway, subduing him considerably. "Another Rupert Trevlyn!" he repeated, in a hesitating tone. "What are you saying?"

"The Rupert Trevlyn of old; the Squire's runagate son; the heir," said Mr. Chattaway, as if it were a comfort to tell out all the bitter truth. "He has come back to claim his own, Cris—Trevlyn Hold."

And Mr. Cris fell against the wall, side by side with his father, and stared in dismayed consternation. "Come back to claim his own!" he mechanically repeated. "Come back to claim Trevlyn Hold!"

## CHAPTER LVII.

## A VISIT TO RUPERT.

AND what were the emotions of Mrs. Chattaway? They were of a mixed nature. In spite of the slight comfort which possession of the Hold had brought herself individually; in spite of the feeling of usurpation, of *wrong*, which had ever rested unpleasantly upon her; she would have been superior to frail human nature, had not a sense of dismay struck upon her at its being thus suddenly wrested from them. She knew not what her husband's means might be; whether he had anything or nothing, by saving or otherwise, that he could call his own, apart from the revenues of the Hold: but she did know enough to be sure that it could not be a tithe enough to keep them; and where were they to go with their helpless daughters? That these unpleasant considerations floated through her mind in a vague, confused vision was true; but far above them came a rush of thought, of care, closer to the present hour. Her brother had said—and there was a determination not to be mistaken in his tone—that unless Mr. Chattaway produced Rupert Trevlyn, he should publicly charge him with the murder. Nothing but the strongest control exercised upon herself could have restrained Mrs. Chattaway from starting forward and avowing all, when she heard this. Mr. Chattaway was a man not held in the world's favour, but he was her husband; and in her eyes his faults and failings had ever appeared in a venial light. She would have given much to stand out and say, "You are accusing my husband wrongfully; Rupert is alive, and I am concealing him."

But she did not dare to do this. That very husband would have replied, "Then I order Rupert into custody—how dared you conceal him?" She took an opportunity of whispering a question to George Ryle of the meaning of the warning he had despatched to her by Nora. George himself could not explain it. He had met Bowen accidentally, and the officer had told him in confidence that they had received a mysterious hint that Rupert Trevlyn was not far off—hence George's warning to Mrs. Chattaway. It was to turn out that the *other* Rupert Trevlyn had been spoken of; but neither Bowen nor George knew this.



"That, and more," she softly whispered.

"And I suppose you love him? Would it quite break your heart, now, were I to issue my edict that you should never have him; to say you must turn him over to Octave Chattaway?"

It was only a random word. Maude took it differently, and she lifted for a moment her glowing face. "But he does not like Octave! It is Octave who likes——"

She had spoken in impulse, and now that recollection came to her she faltered. Squire Trevlyn, undignified as it was, broke into a subdued, prolonged whistle.

"I see, young lady. And so, Mr. George has had the taste to like some one better than Octave. Well, perhaps I should do so, in his place."

"But about Rupert?" she pleaded.

"Ah, about Rupert. I must go at once and see him. Mark Canham stared at me as I came through the gate just now, as one scared out of his wits. He must have been puzzled by the likeness."

Squire Trevlyn went down to the hall, and was putting on his hat when they came flocking around, asking whether he was going out, offering to accompany him, Diana requesting him to wait whilst she put on her bonnet. But he waved them off: he would prefer to stroll out alone, he said; he might look in and have a talk with some of his father's old dependants—if any of them were left.

George Ryle was standing outside, deliberating upon how he should convey the communication, little thinking that it had already been done. Squire Trevlyn came up, and passed his arm within his.

"I am going to the lodge," he remarked. "You may know why, and whom I want to see there?"

"You have heard, then!" exclaimed George.

"Yes. From Maude. By-the-by, Mr. George, what secret understanding is there between you and that young lady?"

George looked surprised; but he was not one to lose his equanimity. "It is no longer a secret, sir. I have confided it to Miss Diana. If Mr. Chattaway will grant me the lease of a farm that I want, I shall speak to him."

"Mr. Chattaway! The farms don't belong to him now, but to me."

George laughed. "Yes, I forgot. I must come to you for it, sir. I want to take the Upland."

"And you would like to take Maude with it?"

"Oh yes! I must take her with it."

"Softly, sir. Maude belongs to me, just as the farms do: and I can tell you for your consolation, and you must make the best of it, that I cannot spare her from the Hold. There; that's enough. I have not come home to have my will disputed: I am a true Trevlyn."

A somewhat uncomfortable silence ensued, and lasted until they reached the lodge. Squire Trevlyn entered it without ceremony. Old Mark, who was sitting before the hearth apparently in deep thought, turned his head, saw who was coming in, rose as quickly as his rheumatism allowed him, and stared as if he saw an apparition.

"Do you know me, Mark?"

"To my dazed eyes it looks like the Squire," was Mark's answer, slowly shaking his head, after the manner of one thunderstruck. "But I know that it canna be. I stood at these gates as he was carried out to his last home i' the churchyard at Barbrook. The Squire was older, too."

"The Squire left a son, Mark."

"No!" burst forth the old man, after a pause, as the light flashed upon him. "Sir—sir! You can surely never be the young heir, Mr. Rupert, that we have all mourned for as dead?"

"Do you remember the young heir's features, Mark?"

"Ay, I have never forgot 'em, sir."

"Then look at mine."

There was doubt no longer; and Mark Canham, in his enthusiastic joy, attempted to kneel, forgetting his rheumatism. He brought himself up with a groan. "I be fit for nothing now but to nurse my rheumatiz, sir. And you be the true Rupert Trevlyn! You'll be the Squire from henceforth? Oh, sir, say it!"

"I am the Squire, Mark," was the answer. "But I came here to see another Rupert Trevlyn—he who will be the Squire after me."

Old Mark shook his head. He glanced towards the staircase as he spoke, and dropped his voice to a whisper, as if fearing that it might penetrate to one who was lying there.

"If he don't get better soon, sir, he'll never live to be the Squire. He's very ill. Circumstances have been agin' him, it can't be denied; but maybe it was in his constitution from the first to go off, as his father, poor Mr. Joe, went off afore him."

"Nonsense," said the Squire. "We'll get him well again!"



"And what of Chattaway?" asked old Canham. "He'll never forego his vengeance, sir. I have been in mortal fear ever since Master Rupert have been lying here. The fear had some at o' selfishness in it, maybe," he added, ingenuously; "for Chattaway, he'd turn me right off, without a minute's warning, happen he come to know of it. He have never liked my being at the lodge at all, sir; he'd ha' sent me away times and again but for Miss Diana."

"Ah," said the Squire. "Well, it does not rest with him now. What has he allowed you, Mark?"

"Half-a-crown a week, sir."

"Half-a-crown a week?" repeated Squire Trevlyn, his mouth curling with displeasure. "How have you lived?"

"It haven't been but a poor live at best, sir," was the simple answer. "Ann, she works hard, at home or out, but she don't earn much. Her eyes be bad, sir; happen you may call to mind as they was always weak and ailing. The Squire he fixed my pay here at five shillings a week, and Chattaway changed it when he come into power. Miss Diana's good to us; but for her and the bit o' money Ann can earn, I don't see as we could ha' got along at all."

"Would you like the half-crown changed back again to five shillings, Mark?"

"I should think it was fortin come to me right off, Squire."

"Then you may reckon that it has come from this day."

He moved to the staircase as he spoke, leaving the old man in an ecstasy of delight. Ann Canham, who had shrunk away into hiding, came forward. Her father turned to her triumphantly.

"Didn't I tell ye it was the Squire? And you to go on at me, saying I was gone clean off my wits to think it! I know'd it was no other."

"But you said it was the dead Squire, father," was poor Ann's meek response.

"It's all the same," cried old Canham. "There'll be a Trevlyn at the Hold again; and our five shillings a week is to come back to us. Bless the Trevlyns! they was always open-handed."

"Father, what a dreadful come-down for Chattaway! What will he do? He'll have to turn out."

"Serve him right!" shouted Mark. "How many homes have he made empty in his time! Ann, girl, I have kep' my eyes a bit open through life, in spite of having the limbs

cramped with rheumatiz, and I never failed to notice one thing—they who are fond o' making others' homes desolate, generally finds their own desolate afore they die. Law me! Folks talk o' 'venging themselves agin the oppressor! Let 'em leave their cause in God's hands. He won't forget. Chattaway'll get a taste now of what he have been so fond o' dealing out to others—hardship. I hope the bells 'll ring the day he turns out o' the Hold!"

"But Madam will have to turn out with him!" meekly suggested Ann Canham.

It took Mark back. He liked Madam as much as he disliked her husband. "Happen something 'll be thought of for Madam," said he. "Maybe the new Squire 'll keep her with him at the Hold."

George Ryle had gone upstairs, and prepared the wondering Rupert for the appearance of his uncle. As the latter entered, his tall head bowing, his portly form making the stairs creak, he halted in dismay. Nay, in a variety of feelings; but dismay was perhaps the most prominent. In the fair face bent towards him from the bed, the large blue eyes, the bright, falling hair, he believed for the moment he saw the beloved brother Joe of his youth. But in the hollow cheeks with their hectic, the drawn face, the parched and fevered lips, the ghastly hands, the attenuated frame, he read too surely the marks of the disease which had taken off that brother, the death Mark Canham had hinted at; and a conviction seated itself in the Squire's mind that he must look elsewhere for the heir to Trevlyn.

"My poor boy! Joe's boy! It is this place that is killing you!"

"No, Uncle Rupert, it is not that at all. It is the fear."

Squire Trevlyn could not breathe. He looked up to the one pane, and pushed it open with his stick. The cold air came in, and he seemed relieved, drawing a long breath. But the same current that was grateful to him, found its way to the lungs of Rupert, and he began to cough violently. "It is the draught," panted the poor invalid.

George Ryle closed the pane again, and the Squire bent over the bed. "We must have you to the Hold at once, Rupert."

The hectic faded on Rupert's face. "It is not possible," he answered. "Mr. Chattaway would denounce me."

"Denounce you!" hotly repeated Squire Trevlyn. "De-



nounce my nephew and my brother Joe's son! He had better let me see him attempt it."

In the impulse, characteristic of the Trevlyns, the Squire turned to descend the stairs. He was going to have Rupert brought home at once. George Ryle followed him, and arrested him in the avenue.

"Pardon me, Squire Trevlyn. You must first of all make sure of Chattaway—that he will be harmless. I am not clear also but you must make sure of the police."

"What do you mean?"

"The police have the matter in hand. *Can* they relinquish it, even for you?"

They stood gazing at each other in doubt and discomfort. It was an unpleasant phase of the affair; and one which had certainly not until that moment presented itself to Squire Trevlyn's view.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

### A CONVERSATION WITH MR. CHATTAWAY.

THEY stood together, deep in dispute—Squire Trevlyn of the Hold, and he who had so long reigned at the Hold, its usurper. In that very rick-yard which had recently played so prominent a part in the career of the unhappy Rupert, stood they: the Squire—bold, towering, haughty; Chattaway—cowardly, shrinking, indecisive.

It was of that very Rupert they were talking. Squire Trevlyn hastened home from the lodge, and found Chattaway in the rick-yard: he urged upon him the claims of Rupert for forgiveness, for immunity from the consequences of his crime; he urged upon him its *necessity*; for a Trevlyn, he said, must not be disgraced. And Mr. Chattaway appeared to be turning obstinate; to say that he never would forgive him or release him from its consequences. He pointed to the blackened spots, scarcely yet cleared of their *débris*. "Is a crime like that to be pardoned?" he asked.

"What caused the crime? Who drove him to it?" And Mr. Chattaway had no plausible answer at hand.

"When you married into the Trevlyn family, you (as may be said) married into its faults," resumed the Squire. "At any

rate, you became fully acquainted with them. You knew as much of that failing, the Trevlyn temper, as we ourselves know. I ask you, then, how could you be so unwise—to put the question moderately—as to provoke it in Rupert?"

"Evil tempers can be subdued," returned Mr. Chattaway. "And ought to be."

"Just so. They can be, and they ought to be. But unfortunately we don't all of us do as we can and ought. Do you? I have heard say in the old days that James Chattaway's spirit was a sullen one: have you subdued its sullenness?"

"I wish you'd not wander from the point, Mr. Trevlyn."

"I am keeping pretty near to the point. But I can go nearer to it, if you please. How could you, James Chattaway, dare to horsewhip a Trevlyn? Your wife's nephew, and her brother's son! Whatever might be the provocation—but, so far as I can learn, there was no just provocation—how came you so far to forget yourself and your temper as to strike him? One, possessing the tamest spirit ever put into man, might be expected to turn at the cruel insult you inflicted on Rupert. Did you do it with the intention of calling up the Trevlyn temper?"

"Nonsense," said Mr. Chattaway.

"It will not do to say nonsense to me. The setting on fire of the rick was your fault, not his; the crime was led to by you; and I, the actual owner of those ricks, shall hold you responsible for it. Yes, James Chattaway, those ricks were mine; you need not disclaim what I say; the ricks were mine then, as they are now. They have been mine, in point of fact, ever since my father's death. You may rely upon one thing—that had I known the injustice that was being enacted, I should have returned long ago."

"Injustice!" cried Mr. Chattaway. "What injustice?"

"What injustice! Heart alive, man, has there been anything *but* injustice? When my father's breath went out of his body, his legitimate successor (in my absence and supposed death) was his grandson Rupert; this very Rupert whom you have been goading on to ill, perhaps to death. Had my brother Joe lived, would you have allowed *him* to succeed, pray?"

"But your brother Joe did not live; he was dead."

"You evade the question."

"It is a question that will answer no end if replied to," cried Mr. Chattaway, biting his thin lips, and feeling very like a man