

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

who is being driven to bay. "Of course he would have succeeded. But he was dead, and Squire Trevlyn chose to make his will in my favour, and appoint me his successor."

"Beguiled to it by treachery. He was suffered to go to his grave never knowing that a grandson, a direct heir, was born to him. James Chattaway, were I guilty of the like treachery, I could not rest in my bed. I should dread that the anger of God would be ever coming down upon me."

"The Squire did well," growled Mr. Chattaway. "What would an infant have done with Trevlyn Hold?"

"Granted for a single moment, for the sake of argument, that it had been inexpedient to leave Trevlyn Hold to an infant, it was not to you it should have been left. If Squire Trevlyn must have bequeathed it to a son-in-law, it should have been to him who was the husband of his eldest daughter, Thomas Ryle."

"Thomas Ryle!" contemptuously ejaculated Mr. Chattaway. "A poor, hard-working farmer——"

"Don't attempt to disparage Thomas Ryle to me, sir," thundered the Squire; and the voice, the look, the rising anger were so like the old Squire of the days gone by, that Mr. Chattaway positively recoiled. "Thomas Ryle was a good and honourable man, respected by all; he was a gentleman by birth and breeding; he was a gentleman in mind and manners—and that could never be said of you, James Chattaway. Work! To be sure he worked; and so did his father. They had to work to live. Their farm was a poor one; and extra labour had to be bestowed on it to compensate for the money which ought to have been spent upon it, but which they had not got to spend, for their patrimony had dwindled away. They might have taken a more productive farm; but they preferred to remain upon that one because it was their own, descended to them from their forefathers. It had to be sold at last, but they still remained on it, and they worked, always hoping to make it prosper. You used the word 'work' as a term of reproach! Let me tell you, James Chattaway, that if the fact of working is to take the gentle blood out of a man, there will not be much gentle blood left for the next generation. This is a working age, sir; the world has grown wise, and we most of us work with the hands or with the head. Thomas Ryle's son is a gentleman, if I ever saw one—and I am mistaken if his looks belie his mind—and he works. Do not disparage Thomas Ryle again to me. I think there must lie on your mind a sense of the injury you did him, which induces you to do it."

"What injury did I do Thomas Ryle?"

"To usurp Trevlyn Hold over him was an injury. It was Rupert's; neither yours nor his; but had it come to one of you, it should have been to him; *you* had no manner of right to it. And what about the two thousand pounds bond?"

Squire Trevlyn asked the last question in an altered and very significant tone. Mr. Chattaway's green face grew greener.

"I held the bond, and I enforced its payment in justice to my wife and children. I could do no less."

"In justice to your wife and children!" retorted Squire Trevlyn. "James Chattaway, did a thought ever cross you of God's justice? I believe from my very heart that my father did cancel that bond upon his dying bed, that he died believing Thomas Ryle released from it; and that you, in your grasping, covetous nature, kept the bond with an eye to your own profit. Did you forget that the eye of the Great Ruler of all things was upon you, when you pretended to destroy that bond? The eye of your earthly master, Squire Trevlyn, was soon to be closed in death, and you believed yourself safe from consequences; did you forget that there was another eye, that of your heavenly Master, which could not be closed? Did you suppose that eye was turned away, averted, when you usurped Trevlyn Hold to the prejudice of Rupert? Did you think you would be allowed to enjoy it in security to the end? It may look to you, James Chattaway, as it would to any superficial observer, that there has been wondrous favour shown to you in this long delay of justice. I regard it differently. It seems to me that retribution has overtaken you at the worst time: not the worst for you, possibly, but for your children. By that inscrutable law which we learn in childhood, with the Commandments, a man's ill-doings are visited on his children: I fear the result of your ill-doing will be felt by yours. Had you been deposed from Trevlyn Hold at the time you usurped it, or had you not usurped it, your children must have been brought up to play their parts in the busy walks of life; to earn their own living. As it is, they have been reared to idleness and luxury, and will feel their fall in proportion. Your son has lorded it as the heir of Trevlyn Hold, as the future owner of the works at Blackstone, and lorded it, as I hear, in a very offensive manner. He will not like to sink down to a state of dependency; but he will have to do it."

"Where have you been gathering your account of things?" interposed Mr. Chattaway

"Never mind. I have gathered it, and that is sufficient. And now—to go back to Rupert Trevlyn. Will you give me a guarantee that he shall be held harmless?"

"No," growled Mr. Chattaway.

"Then it will be war to the knife between you and me. Mind you—I do not know that there's any necessity to ask you this: as the ricks were not yours, but mine, at the time of the occurrence, you could not, as I believe, become the prosecutor. But I prefer to be on the safe side. On the return of Rupert, if you attempt to prosecute him, the first thing that I shall do will be to insist that he prosecutes you for the assault, the horsewhipping, and I shall prosecute you for the usurpation of Trevlyn Hold. So it will be prosecution and counter-prosecution, you see. Mark you, James Chattaway, I promise you to do this, and you know I am a man of my word. I think we had better let bygones be bygones. What are you going to do about the revenues of the Hold?"

"The revenues of the Hold!" stammered Mr. Chattaway, wiping his hot face, for he did not like the question.

"The past rents up to now. The mesne profits, which you have received and appropriated since Squire Trevlyn's death. Those profits are mine."

"In law," possibly, was the answer. "Not in justice."

"Well, we'll go by law," complacently returned the Squire, a spice of mischief in his eye. "Which have you gone by all these years? Law, or justice? The law would make you refund them to me."

"The law would be cunning to do it," was the answer. "If I have received the revenues, I have spent them in keeping up Trevlyn Hold."

"You have not spent them all, I suspect: and it would be productive of great trouble and annoyance to you were I to come upon you for them. But now, look you, James Chattaway: I will be more merciful than you have been to others, and say nothing about them, for my sister Edith's sake. In the full sense of the word, I will let bygones be bygones."

The ex-master of Trevlyn Hold gazed out from the depths of his dull grey eyes. In point of fact, he was only gazing on vacancy, for every sense he possessed was mentally buried. It might be well to make a friend of the Squire. On the one hand was the long-cherished revenge against his rival Rupert; on the other was his own self-interest. Should he gratify revenge, or should he study himself? Ah, you need not ask:

revenge may be very sweet, but with Mr. Chattaway his own self-interest was sweeter. The scales were not equally balanced, and the one came down with a thump.

He saw that Squire Trevlyn's heart was set on the pardon of Rupert; he knew that with him the less he beat about the bush the better; and he spoke at once. "I'll forgive him," he said. "Rupert Trevlyn behaved infamously, but——"

"Stop, James Chattaway. Pardon him, or don't pardon him, as you please; but we will have no ill names over it. Rupert Trevlyn shall have none cast at him in my presence."

"It is of no consequence. He did what he did in the face and eyes of the neighbourhood, and they don't need to be reminded of what he is."

"And how have the neighbourhood judged?" sternly asked Squire Trevlyn. "Which side have they espoused—yours, or his? Don't talk to me James Chattaway; I have heard more than you suppose. I know what shame the neighbours have been casting on you for years on the score of Rupert; the double shame they have cast on you since these ricks were fired. Will you pardon him?"

"I have said so," was the sullen reply of Mr. Chattaway.

"Then come and ratify it in writing," rejoined the Squire, turning towards the Hold.

"You are ready to doubt my word," resentfully spoke Mr. Chattaway, feeling himself considerably aggrieved.

Squire Trevlyn threw back his head, Trevlyn fashion. It spoke as plainly as ever motion spoke that he did doubt it. As he strode on to the house, Mr. Chattaway in his wake, they came across Cris. Unhappy Cris! His sun of authority and assumption had set. No longer was he the son of the master of Trevlyn Hold, or the heir of Trevlyn Hold: henceforth Mr. Cris must set his wits to work, and take his share in the active labour of life. He stood leaning over the palings, biting a bit of straw as he gazed at Squire Trevlyn; but he did not say a word to the Squire or the Squire to him.

With the aid of pen and ink Mr. Chattaway gave a sort of ungracious promise to pardon Rupert. Of course it had nothing formal in it, but the Squire was satisfied, and put it in his pocket.

"Which is Rupert's chamber here?" he asked. "It had better be got ready. Is it an airy one?"

"For what purpose is it to be got ready?" returned Mr. Chattaway.

"For him. In case we find him, you know."

"You would bring him home? Here? to my house?"

"No; I bring him home to mine."

Mr. Chattaway's face went quite dark with its pain. In good truth it was Squire Trevlyn's house; no longer his; and he may be pardoned for momentarily forgetting the fact. There are brief intervals even in the darkest misery when we lose sight of the present in a gleam of forgetfulness.

Cris came in. "Dumps the policeman is outside," he said. "Some tale has been carried to the police-station that Rupert Trevlyn has returned, and Dumps has come up to see about it. The felon Rupert!" pointedly exclaimed Cris.

"Don't call names, sir," said Squire Trevlyn to him as he went out. "Look here, Mr. Christopher Chattaway," he stopped to add. "You may find it to your advantage possibly to be in my good books; but that is not the way to get into them; abuse of my nephew and heir, Rupert Trevlyn, will not recommend you to my favour."

The police-station had certainly heard a confused story of the return of Rupert Trevlyn, but before Dumps reached the Hold he learnt the wondrous fact that it was another Rupert; the one so long supposed to be dead; the real Squire Trevlyn. He had learnt that Mr. Chattaway was no longer master of the Hold, but had gone down to a very humble individual indeed. The moment the Squire appeared he knew who he must be, and snatched his hat off. Mr. Dumps was not particularly gifted with the perceptive faculties, but the thought did strike him that it might be to the interest of the neighbourhood generally, including himself and the station, to be on friendly terms with Squire Trevlyn.

"Did you want me?" asked the Squire.

"I beg pardon, sir. It was the other Mr. Rupert Trevlyn that I come up about. He have been so unfortunate as to get into a bit of trouble, sir," added Dumps, who may have deemed that Squire Trevlyn had not yet heard of it.

"Oh, that's nothing," said the Squire. "Mr. Chattaway withdraws from the prosecution. In point of fact, if any one prosecuted it must be myself, since the ricks were mine. But I decline to do so. It is not my intention to prosecute my nephew and heir. Mr. Rupert will be the Squire of Trevlyn Hold when I am gone."

"Will he though, sir?" said Mr. Dumps, humbly.

"He will. You may tell your people at the station that I

put up with the loss of the ricks. What do you say—the magistrates? The present magistrates and I were boys together, Mr. Policeman; companions; and they'll be glad to see me home again: you need not trouble your head about the magistrates. You are all new at the police-station, I expect, since I left the country—in fact, I forget whether there was such a thing as a police-station then—but you may tell your superiors there that it is not the custom of the Squires of Trevlyn to proclaim what they cannot carry out. The prosecution of Rupert Trevlyn is at an end, and it never ought to have been instituted."

"Please, sir, I didn't have nothing to do with instituting of it."

"Of course not. I am sure the police have not been in the least to blame. I shall walk down to-night, or to-morrow morning, to the station, and put things on a right footing. Your name is Dumps, I think?"

"Yes, it is, sir—at your service."

"Well, Dumps, that's for yourself: hush! not a word. It's not given to you as a policeman, but as an honest man to whom I wish to offer an earnest of my future favour. And now you come into the Hold, and take something to eat and drink."

The gratified Dumps, hardly knowing whether he stood on his head or his heels, and inwardly vowing eternal allegiance to the new Squire from henceforth, stepped into the Hold, and was consigned to the hospitality of the lower regions. Mr. Chattaway groaned in agony when he heard the kindly orders of the Squire echoing through the hall—to put before Mr. Dumps everything that was good in the house to eat and drink. That is, he would have groaned, but for the negative comfort of recollecting that the Hold and its contents belonged to another, and not to him.

How strange it all was at the Hold—how unsettled! it may be said, how uncomfortable; for there was the discomfort which arises from strangeness. The young ladies stood peeping and listening: Octave came out as Dumps descended, and stared stealthily—it *was* strange to hear the tones of authority from other than her father or Miss Diana. As the Squire was turning round, he encountered Diana.

"I have been inquiring after my nephew's chamber. Is it an airy one?"

"Your nephew's?" repeated Miss Diana, not understanding.

"Do you mean Christopher's?"

"I mean Rupert's. Let me see it."

He stepped up the stairs as he spoke, with the air of a man who was not born to contradiction. Miss Diana followed, wondering. The room she showed him was high up, and very small. The Squire threw his head back.

"*This* his room? I see! it has been all of a piece. This room was a servant's in my time. I am surprised at *you*, Diana."

"It is a sufficiently comfortable room," she answered: "and I used occasionally to indulge him with a fire in it. Rupert never complained."

"No, poor fellow! complaint would be of little use from him, and that he knew. Is there a large chamber in the house unoccupied? one that would do for an invalid."

"The only large spare rooms in the house are the two given to you," replied Miss Diana. "They are the best, as you know, and have been kept vacant for visitors. The dressing-room may be used as a sitting-room."

"I don't want it as a sitting-room, or a dressing-room either," was the reply of the Squire. "I like to dress in my bedroom, and there are enough sitting-rooms downstairs for me. Let this bed of Rupert's be carried down to that room at once."

"Who for?"

"For one who ought to have occupied the best rooms from the first—Rupert. Had he been treated as he ought to be, Diana, he would not have brought this disgrace upon himself."

Miss Diana was wondering whether her ears deceived her. "For Rupert!" she repeated. "Where is Rupert? Is he found?"

"He has never been lost," was the curt rejoinder. "He has been all the time literally within a stone's throw—sheltered by Mark Canham, whom I shall not forget."

She could not speak from perplexity; scarcely knowing whether to believe the words or not.

"Your sister Edith—and James Chattaway may thank fortune that she is his wife, or I should visit the past in a very different manner upon him—and little Maude, and that handsome son of Tom Ryle's, have been privy to the secret; have been visiting him in private; have been stealthily doing for him what they could do: but the fear and responsibility have well-nigh driven Edith and Maude to sickness. That's where

Rupert has been, Diana: where he is. I have not long come from him."

Anger blazed forth from the eyes of Miss Diana Trevlyn. "And why could not Edith have communicated the fact to me?" she cried. "I could have done for him better than they."

"Perhaps not," significantly replied the Squire: "considering that Chattaway was the ruler of Trevlyn Hold, and that you have been throughout an upholder of his policy. But Trevlyn has another ruler now, and Rupert a protector."

Miss Diana made no reply. She was too vexed to make one. Turning away, she flung a shawl over her shoulders, and marched onwards to the lodge, to pay a visit to the unhappy Rupert.

CHAPTER LIX.

NEWS FOR MAUDE.

You should have seen the procession going up the avenue. Not that first night, the night of the return of Squire Trevlyn; but in the broad glare of the noon-day following. How Squire Trevlyn contrived to make things straight with the superintendent, Bowen, he best knew, but they *were* made straight. Poor misguided Rupert was a free man again, and Policeman Dumps was the busiest of all in helping to move him.

The easiest carriage that the Hold afforded was driven to the lodge for Rupert. A shrunk, emaciated object he looked as he tottered down the ladder of a staircase, Squire Trevlyn with his powerful frame standing below to catch him if he should make a false step. George Ryle was ready with his protecting arm, and Mr. King, talkative as ever, followed close behind. Old Canham stood leaning on his stick, and Ann, shrinking into herself in her humble fashion, curtsied behind the door.

"It is the proudest day of my life, Master Rupert, to see you come to your rights, recognized as the heir to Trevlyn," cried old Mark, stepping forward.

"Thank you for all, Mark!" cried Rupert, impulsively, as he held out his hand. "If I live, you shall see that I can be grateful."