"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, wonderingly. 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 shrunken, 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."

"You'll live fast enough now," interposed the Squire in his tone of authority. "If King does not bring you round in no time, he and I shall quarrel."

"Good-bye, Ann," said Rupert. "I owe you more than I can ever repay. She has waited on me night and day, Uncle Rupert; she has lain on that hard settle at night, and had no other bed since I have been here. She has offended all her places of work, to stop at home to attend on me."

Poor Ann Canham's tears were falling at the words of kindness. "I shall get my places back, sir, I dare say. All I hope is, that you'll soon be about again, Master Rupert—and that you'll be pleased to excuse the ill accommodation father and me have been obliged to give you."

Squire Trevlyn stood and looked at her. "Don't let it break your heart if the places do not come back to you, Ann Canham. What did you earn by them?—ten shillings per week?"

"Oh no, sir! Poor folks like us couldn't earn such a sum as that."

"Mr. Rupert will settle that upon you from to-day. Don't be overcome, woman. It is only fair, you know, that if he has put your living in peril, he should make it good to you."

She was too much oppressed to answer; she sat down on the settle and sobbed, and the Squire stepped out with Rupert and found himself in the midst of a crowd. The almost incredible news of his return had spread far and wide, and people of all grades and degrees were flocking to the Hold to see him with their own eyes, and to welcome him home. Old men, friends of the late Squire Trevlyn; middle-aged men, who had been hot-headed youths when he, Rupert, went away to exile and supposed death; younger ones, who had been children then and could not remember him, all were there. The chairman of the magistrates' bench himself—grave now in the eyes of the world as became his position, but with a suggestive conscience that could not wholly ignore certain youthful escapades in which he had been a sharer with the very man now resuscitated as it were from death—helped Rupert into the carriage. These magistrates were not likely to be harsh upon the younger Rupert. Magistrates are but men; and those of Barmester had their private likings and dislikings. They would a great deal rather have seen Chattaway transported than Rupert Trevlyn; and they could not help themselves, for there was no prosecutor.

The chairman helped Rupert into the carriage, and shook hands twenty times with the Squire, and entwined his arm within that gentleman's to accompany him to the Hold. The carriage went at a foot-pace, Mr. King inside it with Rupert. "Go slowly; he must not be shaken," were the surgeon's orders to the coachman.

The spectators looked on at the young heir as he leaned his head back on the soft lining of the carriage, which had been thrown open to the fine day. The air seemed to revive Rupert greatly. The warm sun played on his face; lighting up its emaciation, its suspicious hectic, the dead look of the golden curls that surrounded it as a halo; and though some of them started at first at the change, they failed to detect the ominous nature of the signs. That the face, always a beautiful one, had never looked more beautiful than it looked now, was indisputable; and beauty is a great covering to the ravages of disease

They watched him as he talked with George Ryle, who walked with his arm on the carriage door; they shouted out "Long live Trevlyn's heir!" they pressed round to get a word with him. Rupert, emancipated from the close confinement, from the terrible *dread* that had been upon him, felt as a bird released from its cage—felt as we can imagine we might feel were wings bestowed upon us, and we took our flight to those blissful regions to which we all of us hope some time to attain; and his spirits went up to fever-heat.

He held out his hands to one and to another; he laughingly told them that in a week's time he should be in a condition to run a race with the best of them; he accepted half-a-dozen invitations on the spot. "But you needn't expect him," put in Mr. King, by way of warning. "By the time he is well enough to go out gallivanting, I shall order him off to a warmer climate."

"Why not order him at once, doctor?" cried one.

The surgeon coughed before he replied. "Not just yet. He must get a little stronger first."

As Rupert stepped out of the carriage, he saw, amongst the sea of faces pressing round, one face that struck upon his notice above all others, in its yearning eagerness, its earnest sympathy, and he held out his hand impulsively. It was that of Jim Sanders, and as the boy sprang forward in answer, he burst into tears.

"You and I must be better friends than ever, Jim. Cheer up. What's the matter?"

"It's to see you looking like this, sir. Mr. Rupert, you'll get well, won't you?"

"Oh yes, I feel all right now, Jim. A little tired, perhaps. You come up and see me to-morrow, and I'll tell my uncle who you are and all about you."

Standing at the door of the drawing-room, in an uncertain sort of attitude, was Mr. Chattaway. He was evidently undecided whether to receive the offending Rupert with a welcome, to burst forth into a reproach for the past, by way of relief to his feelings, or to run away altogether and hide himself. Rupert decided it by walking direct up to him, and holding out his hand.

"Let us be friends, Mr. Chattaway. I have heartily repented of the mad passion in which I suppose I set fire to the rick, and I do thank you for absolving me from the consequences. Perhaps you are sorry on your side for the treatment that drove me to it. We will be good friends, if you like."

But Mr. Chattaway did not respond to the generous feeling or touch the offered hand. He muttered something about its having been Rupert's fault, not his, and disappeared. Somehow he could not stand the keen eye of Squire Trevlyn that was fixed upon him.

In truth it was a terrible time for Chattaway, and the man was living out his punishment. All his worst dread had come upon him without warning; a dread which at the best he had perhaps looked upon as dreams of phantasy, emanating but from his own wild imagination. That dread in its worst extent had overtaken him, and he could not rebel against it. There might be no attempt to dispute the claims of Squire Trevlyn; no standing out for his keeping possession of the Hold; Mr. Chattaway was as completely deposed as though he had never held it.

Rupert was installed in his large and luxurious room, everything being pressed into it that could in the least contribute to his ease and comfort. Rupert Trevlyn (speaking of the Squire now) had been tenderly attached to his brother Joe when they were boys together. He so robust, so manly; Joe so delicate. It may be, that the want of strength in the younger only rendered him dearer to the elder brother. As it is in the nature of weakness to cling to strength, so it is in the nature of strength to protect and love the weak; of all our children we love the frailest and weakest the best; the one least physically capable to go through and contend with the battle

of life. Perhaps it was only the old affection for Joe transferred now to the son; certain it was, that the Squire's love had already grown for Rupert, and all care was lavished on him.

But as the days went on it became evident to all that Rupert had only gone home to die. The removal over, the excitement of those wonderful changes toned down, the sad fact that he was certainly fading grew on Squire Trevlyn. Some one suggested that a warmer climate should be tried; but Mr. King, on being appealed to, answered as he had answered in the carriage—that Rupert must get stronger first; and the tone of his voice was as significant now as it had been then.

Squire Trevlyn noticed it. Later, when he had the surgeon to himself, he spoke to him. "King, you are concealing the danger? Can't we move him?"

"I would have told you before, Squire, had you asked me. As to moving him to a warmer place—certainly he could be moved, but he would only go there to die; and the very fatigue of the journey would shorten his life."

"I don't believe it," retorted the Squire, awaking out of his dismay. "You are a croaker, King. I'll call in a doctor from Barmester."

"Call in all the doctors you like, Squire, if it will give you satisfaction. When they understand his case, they will tell you as I do."

"Do you mean to say that he must die?"

"I fear he must; and speedily. The day before you came home I tried his lungs, and from that moment I have known there was no hope. The disease must have been upon him for some time; I suppose he inherits it from his father."

The same night Squire Trevlyn sent for a physician: an eminent man. But he only confirmed the opinion of Mr. King. All that remained now was to break the tidings to Rupert; and to lighten, so far as might be, his passage to the grave.

But a word must be spoken of the departure of Mr. Chattaway and his family from the Hold. That they must inevitably leave it had been unpleasantly clear to Mr. Chattaway from the very hour of Squire Trevlyn's arrival. He gave a day or two to digesting the dreadful necessity, and then he began to turn his thoughts practically to the future.

Squire Trevlyn had promised not to take from him anything

he might have put by of his ill-gotten gains. These gains, though a fair sum, were not sufficient to enable him to live and keep his family, and Mr. Chattaway knew that he must do something to eke them out. His thoughts turned, not unnaturally, upon the Upland Farm, and he asked Squire Trevlyn to let him have the lease of it.

"I'll let you have it upon one condition," said the Squire. "I should not choose for my sister Edith to sink down into obscurity, but she may live upon the Upland Farm without losing caste; it is a fine place both as to its land and its residence. Therefore, I'll let it you, I say, upon one condition."

Maude Trevlyn happened to be present at the conversation. She started forward in the moment's impulse.

"Oh, Uncle Rupert! you promised—you promised——"

"Well, Miss Maude?" he cried, coming to the relief of her hesitation, and fixing his eyes on her glowing face. Maude timidly continued.

"I thought you promised some one else the Upland Farm."

"That favourite of yours and of Rupert's, George Ryle? But I am not going to let him have it. Well, Mr. Chattaway?"

"What is the condition?" inquired Mr. Chattaway.

"That you use the land well. I shall have a clause inserted in the lease by which you may cease to be my tenant at any time by my giving you a twelvemonth's notice; and if I find you carry your parsimonious nature into the management of the Upland Farm, as you have on this land, I shall surely take it from you."

"What's the matter with this land?" asked Mr. Chattaway.

"The matter is, that I find the land impoverished. You have spared money upon it in your mistaken policy, and the inevitable result has supervened. You have been penny wise and pound foolish, Chattaway; as you were when you suffered the rick-yard to remain uninsured."

Mr. Chattaway's face darkened, but he made no reply to the allusion. "I'll undertake to do the farm justice, Squire Trevlyn, if you will lease it to me."

"Very well, I will. Let me, however, candidly assure you that, but for Edith's sake, I'd see you starve before you should have had a homestead on this land. It is my habit to be plain: I must be especially so with you. I suffer from you in all ways, James Chattaway. I suffer always in my nephew Rupert. When I think of the treatment dealt out to him from you, I can scarcely refrain from treating you to a taste of the punishment you inflicted upon him. It is possible, too, that had the boy been more tenderly cared for, he might have had strength to resist this disease which has crept upon him. About that I cannot speak; it must lie between you and God; his father, with every comfort, could not escape it, it seems; and possibly Rupert might not have done so."

Mr. Chattaway made no reply. The Squire, after a pause, during which he had been plunged in thought, continued. "I suffer also in the matter of the two-thousand-pound debt of Thomas Ryle's, and I have a great mind—do you hear me, James Chattaway?—I have a great mind that the refunding it should come out of your pocket instead of mine; even though I had to get it from you by suing you for so much of the mesne profits."

"Refunding the debt?" repeated Mr. Chattaway, looking as if he would never understand anything again. "Refunding it to whom?"

"To the Ryles, of course. That money was as surely given by my father to them on his death-bed, as that I am here, talking to you. I feel, I know, that it was. I know that Thomas Ryle, ever a man of veracity, spoke the truth when he asserted it. Do you think I can do less than refund it? I don't, if you do."

"George Ryle does not want it; he is capable of working for his living," was the only answer Mr. Chattaway in his anger could give.

"I do not suppose he will want it," was the quiet remark of Squire Trevlyn; "I dare say he'll manage to do without it. It is to Mrs. Ryle that I shall refund it, sir. Between you all, I find that she was cut off with a shilling at my father's death."

Mr. Chattaway liked the conversation less and less. He deemed it might be as agreeable to leave details to another opportunity, and withdrew. Squire Trevlyn looked round for Maude. He discerned her at the very end of the room, her head bent in sorrow. The Squire suddenly raised it, and found the face pale and weary.

"What's this for, young lady? Because I don't let Mr. George Ryle the Upland Farm? You great goose! I have reserved a better one for him."

The tone was very peculiar, and she raised her timid eyelids. "A better one?" she stammered.

"Yes. Trevlyn Hold."

Maude looked aghast. "What do you mean, Uncle Rupert?"

"My dear, but for this unhappy fiat which appears to have gone forth for your brother Rupert, perhaps I might have let the Upland Farm to George. As it is, I cannot part with both of you. If poor Rupert is to be taken from me, you must remain."

She looked at him, her lips apart, utterly unable to understand him.

"And as you appear not to be inclined to part with Mr. George, all that can be done in the matter, so far as I see, is that we must have him at the Hold."

"Oh, Uncle Rupert!" And Maude's head and her joyous tears were hidden in the loving arms that were held out to shelter her.

"Child, child! Did you think I had come home to make my dead brother's children unhappy? You will know me better soon, Maude."

CHAPTER LX

A BETTER HEIRSHIP.

A SHORT time, and people had settled down into their places. Squire Trevlyn was alone at the Hold with Maude and Rupert, the Chattaways were at the Upland Farm, and Miss Diana Trevlyn had taken up her abode in a pretty house that belonged to herself. Circumstances had favoured the removal of Mr. Chattaway from the Hold almost immediately after the arrival of Squire Trevlyn; otherwise it is hard to say how he would have made up his mind to leave it; and the Squire would scarcely have liked to turn him out summarily, out of consideration to his sister Edith. The occupant of the Upland Farm, who only remained in it because his time was not up until spring, was glad to find it would be an accommodation if he quitted it earlier; he did so, and by Christmas the Chattaways were installed in it.

Mr. Chattaway had set to work in earnest. Things were changed with him. At the Hold, whether he was up and doing, or whether he lay in bed in idleness, his revenues came in to him. At the Upland Farm he must be up early and in bed late, for the eye of a master was always necessary, if the land was to yield its increase; and by that increase he and his family had now to live. There was a serious battle with Cris. It was deemed advisable for the interest of both parties—that is, for Mr. Cris and his father—that the younger gentleman should enter upon some occupation of his own; but Cris resolutely refused. He could find plenty to do on the Upland Farm, he urged, and he wouldn't be turned out of his home. In fact, Mr. Cris had lived so long without work, that it was difficult, now he was leaving his youth behind him, to begin it. Better, as Squire Trevlyn said, that this change had been made years ago. It *was* hard for Cris; let us acknowledge it. He had been reared to the expectation of Trevlyn Hold and its revenues; he had lorded it as the future master. When he rose in the morning, early or late, as his inclination prompted him, he had nothing more formidable before him than to take a ride on his handsome horse, his groom in attendance behind him. He had indulged in outdoor sports, hunting, shooting, fishing, at will; no care upon him, except how he could most agreeably get through the day, or be home for dinner. He had been addicted to riding or driving into Barmester, and showing himself off in the streets, lounging up and down on foot for the benefit of all admiring spectators, or taking a turn in the billiard-rooms. All that was over now; Mr. Cris's leisure and his greatness had come to an end; his groom would take service elsewhere, his fine horse must be used for other purposes than pleasure. In short, poor Cris Chattaway had fallen from his high estate, as many another has fallen before him, and must henceforth earn his bread before he ate it. "There's room for us both on the Upland Farm, and a good living for both," Cris urged upon his father; and though Mr. Chattaway demurred, he gave way, and allowed Cris to stop there. With all his severity to others, he had lost his authority over his children, especially over Cris and Octave, and perhaps he scarcely dared to maintain his own will against that of Cris, or tell him he should go if he chose to remain. Cris had no more relish for work than any one else has who is reared to idleness; and Cris knew quite well that the easiest life he could now enter upon would be that of staying at home and pretending to be busy upon the farm. When the dispute was at its height between himself and his father, as to what the future arrangements should be, Cris so far bestirred himself as to ask Squire Trevlyn to give him the post of manager at Blackstone. But the Squire had heard quite enough of the past doings there, and told Cris, with the plainness that was