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BOND AND FREE

JEAN CONNOR



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BY

JEAN CONNOR

Author of "So As By Fire"



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BOND AND FREE

CHAPTER I

THE MASTER OF TREVLYN

THE first touch of the frost was on Trevlyn Towers. The maples had flamed into royal scarlet, oak and elm and chestnut donned their autumn splendors; the soft breath of the late roses was lost in the spicy fragrance of the gay, flaunting flowers that bedecked the aging year.

The new master, pacing the long stretch of the terrace, noted with darkening eyes that the Virginia creeper veiling the southern gable had blazed blood-red in a single night.

“What has happened?” he asked, turning to old Bryan the gardener, busy with his chrysanthemums. “Does it always turn like this?”

“Is it the vines, sir?” said Bryan, lifting his dim eyes to the wall above him.

“It do be suddint this year, indade, yer honor. But there was a killing frost last night. It’s well I had most of the tindher things under cover. It’s a quare thing, the frost, so aisy and quiet, but a bloody murtherer for all that—a murtherer that

ye can niver jail or hang," added the old man with a chuckle at his grim wit.

There was no answering smile in Hugh Trevlyn's face—the face that was the wonder of all who had known the gay, high-spirited youth who had spent his vacation days at Trevlyn Towers half a dozen years ago. One would have said the burden of his new fortune lay heavy upon him, so grave and quiet and strangely old had he grown since the death of his uncle four years before had made him master of the stately home that, with its parks and lawns and gardens, rose on a crest of the mountain ridge that stretched far to the southward, gashed with shafts and fissures, smoking with forge and furnace, peopled with grimy toilers who, like the fabled gnomes, drew treasures uncounted from the depths of the earth at their master's will. A princely heritage and a most unexpected one, for the young grandson, who would have been old Harvey Trevlyn's heir had been killed suddenly by a fall from his horse, and his grandfather had only survived the shock a few days, leaving the struggling young mining engineer seeking his fortune in the wilds of the West, master of all, and more than he could ever have hoped to win, either by brain or brawn.

Some said it was the shadow of this tragedy that had so sobered the gay, reckless Hugh Trevlyn who, in his brief visits to his uncle, had been the light of the mountain ridge. Others declared it

was the fickleness of Helena Carrington, who had flung away his boyish love to marry old Reuben Marr and his millions, that had darkened the young man's life. Though surely there was chance of recoup here, for old Reuben was dead, and Helena, as only the rich "brewer's widow," incomputably below the social level of Trevlyn Towers, to which rumor whispered she was already lifting eager and ambitious eyes.

But there seemed no response in Trevlyn's shadowed gaze. His thoughts and care were all now for the dainty, frail little mother whom he had throned as queen in the Towers, and who, French-born as she was, had brought to this tardy triumph a life and spirit undimmed by her fifty dull, prosaic years.

It was her light tap at the long window that roused her son from his morning reverie. He nodded in reply to her summons, and hurried into the breakfast-room, where she was awaiting him, a pretty, if faded, picture still, in her graceful Parisian *negligée* of lace and lavender, her silvering hair puffed high on a head that had kept through all the humdrum struggle of life the proud poise of the old *régime*.

"My dear Hugh, good morning! What were you dreaming of there upon the terrace, that has cast such a shadow upon your brow?"

"Not dreaming at all, little mama," he answered with forced lightness, as he took his seat

opposite her; "merely contemplating the touch of the frost. It stole upon us last night unaware. Our summer is gone. Let us shut up this grim old mountain fortress and follow her to Mentone, the Riviera, anywhere you please."

"Shut up the Towers!" echoed the lady in dismay. "My dear boy, when I have just made ready to open it, after the years of mourning for your uncle Harvey and Vance? When the drawing-room is just done up in silver brocade and that lovely set of Dresden not unpacked? When everybody within twenty miles is looking to us for the gayest winter Trevlyn Heights has ever known? Is it that you are ill, dear, and feel the need of the change?" There was quick alarm in the mother's tone.

"Ill? Not at all," Hugh answered. "I only thought that it might be bleak for you here in the winter. You went to Paris last year, you know."

"But we were in mourning then, Hugh; we had to mourn three years at least. And, besides, I wanted to catch the Paris air, the *dernier cri*, after all my sober years. It would never do to come a stupid, dowdy old woman, to Trevlyn Towers. Ah! if I only had youth and strength—if I were a dozen years younger—you would see, Hugh, you would see!" And Madam Trevlyn's faded cheek flushed, her eyes sparkled. "As it is," the lady shrugged her still graceful shoulders, "I must have help, Hugh."

"Help? All you wish, of course. Double your domestic corps, if necessary," he answered.

"It is not that—not domestic force I need, not hands; we have more than enough of them. It is head I want, Hugh, wit, brains, brightness—the *esprit* I have lost. These you must buy for me, Hugh."

"Buy for you?" he repeated in amazement.

"Yes. In these days one can buy all things," she laughed.

"Not all things, little mama," he answered.

She flashed a quick look at his grave face, and then repeated gaily:

"All things, as you will find when you try. I have tried—and succeeded. Look here!" She held up some half-dozen letters that had been left beside her plate. "Answers to my advertisement for a companion and secretary, Hugh."

"Companion and secretary!" he echoed.

"Yes. Do you understand now, stupid boy? A companion and secretary—one who can read, write, think, plan, live for me—one who will sell her wit, her strength, her youth, to my failing years. And I have her—I have her here, Hugh." She held up an unfolded letter. "The rest do not count," and the little madam swept them away with a quick gesture. "They are all dull, stupid, *bourgeoisie*, in every line. But this is all I ask. Read it, Hugh, and see."

He took the letter she held out to him. Perhaps

it was only the somewhat unpleasant surprise of his mother's announcement, but he was conscious, as he glanced over the written page, of an odd thrill of prescience, warning—he knew not what.

"DEAR MADAM," he read :

"I write in reply to your advertisement in the *Daily Herald* of the 19th for a secretary and companion. I am twenty years of age. I graduated from the Convent of Le Bon Secours, Mont Lorette, Canada. I speak and read French fluently, have some knowledge of German, am a fair musician, and sufficiently familiar with domestic and social duties to be of intelligent assistance to you. I am a Catholic, which I trust will not be objectionable. For references kindly address Mère Mathilde, Superior of Notre Dame de Bon Secours, Mont Lorette, with whom I spent six happy years, my mother and father, who was Dr. Richard Burton Deane, of Toronto, having died in my early childhood. I will only add that I will be very grateful for the pleasant home your advertisement offers, and remain, dear madam,

"Very truly yours,

"WINIFRED LAVALLE DEANE."

"Winifred!" repeated Trevlyn, as he read the signature. "Rather an odd name. Winifred Lavalle Deane. Sort of an Anglo-Franco combination."

"That is most promising, Hugh," interrupted the

little madam eagerly. "The others—oh! all the others are so different. Prosy and whiny and middle-aged, Hugh. But this is so fresh and breezy and to the point. And the pretty French names sound so familiar. I can never quite forget we ought to be Catholics, you and I, with all our old French Catholic blood; and Winifred will not find that any objection at all. So I may write to her, Hugh, and offer her—what shall I offer her for salary?"

"What you please, dear mama. You are queen and mistress here. Only don't be niggardly. She needs money, evidently, or she would not come. Now, I must go. Danvers wants me for something this morning."

He rose and laid his hand for a moment on her chair.

"I must go," he repeated dully.

"Why?" she asked. "You look pale and tired, Hugh. Let us order the carriage and take a drive. I thought Danvers relieved you of all care? That was your bargain with him—that you should be free, perfectly free."

"Free!" he echoed with a harsh laugh. "Free! Ah, poor little mama—free!"

"It was the agreement, Hugh," she persisted. "He was to manage everything for you."

"And he does," was the grim answer; "as everybody can tell you, mama, he does. Oh, he keeps his bargain to the letter."

"He should. I am sure you pay him well for it," answered his mother. Trevlyn's hand on her chair tightened its hold as if it were clinched in sudden pain.

"I pay him well. Yes, one must pay well for freedom, you know, mama. And, as you say, my bargain with Danvers gives me that. Still there are times when I can not be altogether dull and blind to the responsibilities that should be mine if I were not—not—" He hesitated, and then added in a low, passionate tone: "the weakling and good-for-naught I am, little mama."

"Hugh, no, no! You shall not say that!" His mother leaned back in her chair and looked up at the dark, handsome face bending over her. "Why should you be troubled or worried now? There is no need, dear boy, no need. With your income you should not have a care. Let us be happy in our good fortune. Please let us be happy, Hugh."

"Dear little mama, by all means." He bent to kiss the worn, faded face that was uplifted with such wistful pleading. "Be just as happy as you can. Fill the house with gay guests, and get all the pretty companions you want. And for a beginning secure—what is her name? Miss Mildred—no, Winifred. Secure this Miss Winifred, who seems to please you, at any cost."

"At any cost!" Long afterward the lightly-spoken words came back to him, sternly echoed by the Fate they challenged: At any cost!

"I will," said the lady eagerly. "She shall have an answer at once. I think six hundred a year will be a fair salary to offer her, Hugh."

"What! For all those perfections you cited to me just now, mama? Make it a thousand, at least," he said lightly.

"No, I won't; I really won't. Six hundred is most liberal, you dear, good boy. I don't think there ever was such a son, Hugh, so generous, so considerate. And that reminds me. I had almost forgotten. There is another Tyssowski baby dead, Hugh. The mother came to the house this morning before I was up, begging for help. Carleton managed to get her off, somehow, but I heard her through the window. It really unnerved me, Hugh, to think of these wretched, ignorant creatures being mothers at all. The idea of her letting *two* babies die in a week!"

"It was remiss, I must confess," answered Trevlyn dryly.

"Remiss!" echoed his mother; "that is no name for it. It is positively criminal. These women do not understand the first duties of motherhood. I suppose their poor babies are half-clothed and half-fed."

"Most likely," answered her son. "Still, that may not be altogether the unlucky mother's fault."

"Don't tell me that, Hugh. It is such a stupid, man's outlook. There is a natural instinct in every woman that teaches her how to take care of her

child. I am sure I learned at once, without any lessons at all. Every little frock you had was hand-made, and the embroidery on your christening dress three inches deep. If it is not a mother's fault when her babies are fairly killed by neglect, pray. whose fault can it be?"

"It does not vaguely occur to you, little mama, that it may be mine?"

"Yours!" exclaimed his mother in amazement. "Your fault? My dear Hugh, what *can* you mean?"

"Simply that the Tyssowski cabin stands in a pool of stagnant water that brings fever and death," answered Trevlyn.

"Then it ought to be drained," said the lady quickly.

"It ought to be drained, yes," was the grave answer, "but Danvers won't drain it."

"Danvers!" exclaimed his mother sharply. "But *you*, not Danvers, are master here, Hugh."

"Not at all. I am simply owner, mama—the owner whom, as you said just now, should be free. All responsibility rests upon Danvers. To quote a certain grim precedent: 'It was so nominated in the bond.' And Danvers—well, Danvers is the sort to hold to a bond closely as Shakespeare's Jew. But don't worry. Though I can not drain the Slashes I can drop a twenty-dollar note in the Tyssowski cabin, which may help matters a little."

"I wish you would, Hugh; that poor, shiftless

mother's cry haunts me. But don't go near the place yourself, dear. You might take the fever."

"Which would be a just judgment, my critics might say. Still, I will take your advice, mama. I really can not meet that desolate mother's eye—I, the Herod of her innocents," he added in a tone that shook with sudden passion.

"My dear Hugh, what a dreadful thing to say," protested his mother sharply. "You are so—so perplexing sometimes; so—so—strange, Hugh. And you were such a frank, open boy! I feel as if I can not altogether understand you these latter years, Hugh."

"Don't try, little mama," he said, with a short, forced laugh. "I am not worth the worry of it. Just be happy and comfortable, and don't try." He laid a tender, caressing hand on her faded cheek for a moment, and then turned abruptly away, brushing aside the quaint India draperies that veiled the doorway, and passing with a quick, nervous step into the wide oak-ribbed hall, where already Madam Trevlyn's touch had fallen, lightening and softening the heavy stiffness of the late masculine *régime*, for "Uncle Harvey" had been a widower for years.

Gay cushions heaped the carved "settles" on either side of the great stone fireplace; a vase of roses bloomed on the claw-footed table; Persian rugs of softest, richest weave covered the polished floor. Everywhere were touches of the warmth and

color which the little madam's fading years craved, and which Trevlyn, feeling how slight and passing, perhaps, was her hold on this new fortune, had given her *carte blanche* to purchase where and how she willed. Her latest vagary had been the transformation of the great oriel window that had lighted the first landing of the wide staircase and flooded the hall with the morning sunshine that the late sturdy old Squire Harvey Trevlyn had loved.

It was ablaze with greater splendor now, for the little madam, who could proudly trace her own family line far back into a historic past, had brought out the old crest that, whether wrought on silver, broidered on linen, traced on parchment, had been guarded jealously by this last branch of the Beaumonts as almost a sacred trust.

Of the old family tree that had gone down, like so many others in the Reign of Terror, little Madam Cecile Beaumont Trevlyn and, consequently, her son Hugh, were the last living shoots. Surely, then, as the lady thought, it was fitting their old crest should stand forth, in all its proud significance in this new and lordly home.

And so it was that, as Trevlyn turned into the wide hall this morning, he was faced by the splendors of rose and violet and saffron streaming through the oriel window where, surrounded by many a quaint heraldic device, the white shield of the Beaumonts shone in silvery radiance, bearing

the red cross of the crusader ancestor and his proud motto: *Sans peur, et sans tâche.*

“Little mama,” Trevlyn whispered, and as if the blaze of the red cross struck his dazzled eyes, he turned away his head. “Poor, proud little mama and her white shield! If she knew—if she knew!”

And he flung open the wide door and went out to meet—Danvers.

CHAPTER II

DANVERS

THROUGH garden, lawn and grove, where the first light fetters of the frost were dissolving in the morning sun, Trevlyn took his quick, nervous way.

There was a bracing nip in the air that once would have made his veins tingle. Five years ago on a morning like this he would have been off for a ten-mile gallop before breakfast. But now the dawn-flushed heights had lost their charm, the new day had neither purpose nor hope. When he rode it was usually in some fierce, reckless mood akin to that of his black Arab Zadoc, whom his groom saddled in fear and no one but himself dared mount.

Yet there was an Old World calm about Trevlyn Towers that all save its master felt. "Uncle Harvey" had been the typical country squire—a vanishing memory in these strenuous days of change. Even when his stretch of wild mountain-land had revealed its hidden wealth, he had barred his gates to the touch of Midas, and no prospector, however seductive his whisper, could reach the ridge on which stood the old man's "home." That, indeed,

he lifted and widened into the stately proportions that became his growing fortune, but the soft, sloping lawns, the whispering gloom of its cedars, the dappling shadows of its oaks, even the little "run," glinting under its rustic bridge, were dearer to him than any wealth to be found in the sunless caverns below.

Then sorrows had fallen heavily upon the old man, chilling his hopes, numbing his energy. His wife died, their one son had been carried off by swift and sudden disease in the very flower of manhood, leaving only twelve-year-old "Vance," whose tragic end had been his grandfather's death-blow.

It was little wonder that when Trevlyn, summoned from his own fortune-seeking in the far West, came to take possession of his heritage, he had found there was sore need of efficient administration. He took hold of his affairs with vigor and energy. There were plans for new machinery, modern sanitation, safer methods, when suddenly Danvers appeared and all was changed.

Trevlyn resigned the management entirely into his hands and went abroad with his mother.

Since then Danvers had held complete control, and Trevlyn, drifting on in the easy ways of a man of fortune, seemed careless of his interest, indifferent to his responsibilities, a mere figurehead in the great business that bore his name.

He strode out of the stone gateway this morning

and into the carriage road beyond, that wound lazily up the heights from the little village of Sudworth, half-a-dozen miles below. A comfortable old country road it was, curving accommodatingly wherever it was needed, circling the meeting-house, widening at the blacksmith's shop, forking at the store, going on the pleasant, leisurely way it had held for more than half a century until, about a mile beyond Trevlyn Towers, it struck the Works and became a thing of slag and cinder, gully and rut, gashed and riven and blackened as it clambered up the jagged steeps of the rocks.

Trevlyn's step slowed almost unconsciously. It was always with an effort that he took the turn to the "Works."

And as he loitered there came a sound of light wheels along the old road, and a dainty little pony carriage dashed around the bend, its only occupant a woman whose fair face, shaded by a big hat, had still the delicate bloom of the early twenties, and whose blue eyes met his merrily as she drew up beside him and frankly extended a greeting hand.

"The 'top of the morning' to the lord of the manor," she said gaily. "You are abroad early, Mr. Trevlyn."

"An old habit of mine, as perhaps you remember, Mrs. Marr."

"I do, indeed!" There was the least perceptible droop of eye and tone. "We have had many a morning gallop over these hills together."

"Yes," he answered, "when we were young and foolish enough to begin our days with the sun."

"Which is a mistake, you find?" she asked.

"Undoubtedly there are hours enough left to kill without taking in the rosy delusions of dawn. What has set you on the warpath so early?"

"I wonder if I dare tell you?" Neither wifehood nor widowhood had been able to dim the coquettish flash in Helena Marr's beautiful eyes. "Perhaps, as you are a mere man, I can. I am out on a still-hunt after a marvel of a maid, Mr. Trevlyn, a wonderful creature who will make my morning chocolate, mend my lace, re-make my gowns; incidentally, she must save my soul, which has been imperilled, I am sure, by my murderous feelings against a succession of incompetents."

"Is it so tragic as that?" he asked.

"Tragic!" she echoed. "Look at this," and she ran her hand through her hair, showing a short fluff of baby gold ringlets. "Burnt off by a dreadful creature who didn't know how to heat a curling iron! Don't you call that tragedy? It is only the mercy of Providence that I was not branded for life. And that woman brought me testimonials, as she called them, from an English duchess."

"Perhaps the duchess wore a wig," suggested Trevlyn, and there was only a man's amused admiration in the glance he cast at the golden tresses that had once enmeshed his boyish heart. Yet,

with the Works and Danvers beyond the turn of the road he found it vaguely pleasant to loiter here by the wayside, idly striking at the wild asters with his cane, while Helena brought her olden batteries to bear upon him—the frankness, the gaiety, the coquetry, all the undimmed beauty and charm to which he had surrendered unconditionally half a dozen years before.

“Perhaps,” answered Mrs. Marr, and there was something a little forced in her laugh, as she felt, with a woman’s intuition, how all things had changed for that captive of old. “But I must secure my prize, or she will be lost to me. That is why I am out betimes. It seems she was beguiled to this Land of Promise by a lover—who was to marry her on her arrival; they had been betrothed for several years.”

“And she found him false?” asked Trevlyn with wakened interest.

“Not at all. She found him dead, Mr. Trevlyn. He was the young Italian—I really can not remember the name—accidentally killed two weeks ago at your mine.”

“Carlo Repetti?” exclaimed Trevlyn in a startled tone. “She came out to marry him? Poor girl, poor girl! I—we must do something for her.”

The blue eyes of Helena Marr flashed a look at the speaker—a new look, clear, level, searching.

“Too late, Mr. Trevlyn,” she said quietly. “Mr.

Danvers has already disposed of the matter in your name."

"Disposed of the matter! In my name!" echoed Trevlyn.

"Yes. Refused to recognize the girl's claim upon the dead man, doubted, ridiculed, insulted her simple faith and love. At least such was the story brought to me," Mrs. Marr added hastily, as she noted the look that darkened Trevlyn's face, the spark that flashed into his eye. "Don't fire up about it, Hugh"—the old name seemed to drop from her lips unaware—"let me act for you in this matter. The girl will accept no help from you now. She is bitter and broken-hearted. They have told her, well—that the accident was needless."

"As doubtless it was," burst from Trevlyn fiercely.

Again Mrs. Marr flashed that cool, searching glance upon him, the look of the analyst, who detects a poison drop in waters once limpid and clear.

"Most accidents are," she answered, tossing lightly aside all serious view of the question. "Though when a woman travels three thousand miles to find a lover, she naturally resents the method of his taking off. But she has agreed to come to me, and I will do all I can to make her forget her loss."

"I trust you will succeed," Trevlyn answered,

deaf, as Mrs. Marr angrily noted, to the subtle intimation of her last words, that were meant to touch on their own past. "And if there is any possible way in which I can atone—I mean, be of service—call on me freely."

"I will remember," answered the lady, as, with her graceful nod, her glittering smile, she drove away, wondering as she always wondered now, what had so changed the Hugh Trevlyn of old—deadened, numbed, paralyzed all the energy of his manhood.

Not the loss of love. She would have been glad to believe that flattering whisper, but her woman's intuition told her there was wreckage here beyond her making, beyond her saving, beyond her sight and reach. And with the feline instinct that underlay all her grace and charm, Helena Marr resolved to watch and to know.

* * * *

Trevlyn stood still for a moment, looking after the little pony carriage as it dashed up the road, and then rousing as if from unpleasant thought, kept on his way to the turn, where it struck the clearings, and all green life and growth had been swept ruthlessly away, where the mountain ridge stretched bare, black, gashed into cuts and shafts, covered with great coal heaps, echoing with the harsh dissonance of wheel and windlass and engine, alive with grimy toilers, a strangely hideous Hades to its master's eye. Mismanaged as

they had been for years, the Trevlyn Works still gave employment to hundreds of wretched beings, whose cabins dotted the rocks, the slopes, the cut, that cleft the mountain below. A little apart from the rest was a long, low frame building, bearing the inscription: "Trevlyn Mine Works. Office of H. Clyde Danvers, General Superintendent."

The door stood ajar, and pushing it open, Trevlyn entered the room, where a man of about forty was writing at a flat-topped desk covered with papers.

A slender, dapper man, rather handsome at first sight, until one noted how steely gray were the eyes under the veiling lashes, how the light beard hid the contour of an iron jaw, and the long, gleaming teeth of the beasts that prey.

"Good morning!" was his cordial greeting, as he rose to meet his visitor. "You are early. I did not expect you so soon."

"No?" said Trevlyn, as he sank into an arm-chair beside the desk. "This happens to be one of the days when I don't shirk. What is it, Danvers? Something unpleasant, I am sure, so let us have it done and over."

"Unpleasant? Not at all," answered the other with a forced laugh. "Simply a matter of form with which I had to trouble you against my will."

"No doubt," said Trevlyn grimly. "The pre-

amble is quite unnecessary. Where and what am I to sign?"

"Beckerstoff's lease. It must have the proprietor's signature."

"Beckerstoff's lease!" Trevlyn's face suddenly kindled into light. "The scoundrel's time is up, you mean? Then kick him off the ridge without further parley. He shall never get foothold here again."

"He has held the lease for seven years," said Danvers quietly.

"I don't care if he has held it for seventy," declared Trevlyn hotly. "He stole in under false pretenses when Uncle Harvey was too broken down in health and mind to see his purpose. The men spend two-thirds of their money at his place drinking and gambling. And it's growing worse every year. I would have had him off long ago but for his lease."

"I am sorry you feel this way about it," said Danvers slowly, as he balanced the pen he held carefully in his slim fingers.

"How can any one feel otherwise?" was the quick rejoinder. "You know as well as I do that Beckerstoff and his Rusthaus are the curse of the place."

"That is as we look at curses," said Danvers. "There are those who feel that a few hours' befudgment is a blessed escape from an intolerable lot."

"Drunkenness — demoralization — blessed!" exclaimed Trevlyn.

"It is only the point of view, of course," continued Danvers, in his low, deliberate voice, "and points of view change with our years, as we all know. There was a time, I think, when a mining saloon, to you, was not the altogether—well, shall we say, inadmissible consideration it is now."

"And for that very reason I hate and abhor and would demolish it," said Trevlyn fiercely.

"The men will go elsewhere," was the calm rejoinder.

"Let them go. I at least will not be responsible for their destruction."

"Responsible!" repeated Danvers with a low laugh. "Ah, it is the old moral outlook, then! I thought we had outgrown the moral outlook. But what of poor Beckerstoff, from whom you would take his living? What," Danvers paused for a moment, and the half-veiled eyes flashed a look at Trevlyn, that was like the baring of a sword blade—"what of—me?"

"You!" exclaimed Trevlyn with a start. "You!"

"Yes, I. I who hold a two-third interest in the Rusthaus, and am the promoter of the rapid growth—which you have observed."

"You!" a half-suppressed oath burst from Trevlyn's lips. "I might have guessed it."

"Truly you might!" Danvers' laugh showed

his long white teeth most unpleasantly. "It is a principle, or perhaps I should say, a practice, with me, to seize every good thing within my reach. And the Rusthaus is a good thing financially, altogether too good to let slip. It adds considerably to an income which, under present conditions, I feel is most precarious. Therefore I follow the old adage, and make hay while the sun shines. I have promised Beckerstoff that you would renew his lease, and—"

"And I say to you that I will not!" Trevlyn started to his feet white with rage.

"I will not set that harpy up to prey upon these wretched, blinded creatures; I will not have either he or you taking the bread out of their children's mouths, tempting them to destruction, to ruin. I will not renew the lease!"

"I regret there has been such misapprehension of my position, then," said Danvers, and his voice was cold and sibilant in its courtesy. "I understood that our agreement was, though not set down in exact legal form—that I was to have, during my term of office here, complete control. On these terms I accepted my position. On any other terms I must resign it. I go back to my newspaper work," the white teeth glittered under the silken mustache—"the work which you found it to your interest, I think, to interrupt several years ago, by an offer so generous that I was tempted to suppress a story which I still hold written up in vivid

detail—the story of another saloon, and *what happened there!*"

He paused. Trevlyn had clenched the back of the chair by which he stood with rigid fingers, and was looking at him with eyes dilated with some strange horror, hate, fear.

"I understand," he said hoarsely. "I understand your threat. And if it were not for the frail, tender little woman in yonder house, whom it might kill, I would say, do your worst, Danvers, devil that you are, do your worst! As it is, as it is—give me the lease. I will sign."

CHAPTER III

THE ROUND TOWER

THE late roses were abloom in Miss Warburton's window, her canary was singing its sweetest song. The westering sun had struck the little round tower of her apartment, and flooded it with golden light—a typical light, for to most mortals at fourscore, life has an ashen gray outlook, whereas to the mistress of that little round tower it still was radiant with sunset glow. As Miss Warburton said in the thin, sweet old voice that was like the chirp of a belated bird, "It had been foretold of her that she would die young, and she intended to make the prophecy good."

Miss Warburton had taught all her life, and though almost a captive now in her little round tower, was teaching sweet lessons of hope and cheer and beautiful, living Faith still. On a bit of a legacy left her by an old pupil and the proceeds of dainty lace work that had been a pastime in her busier days, she and her canary lived, free alike from want and care.

True, Katrina, stolid and round-eyed, came for active and necessary service twice a day. Mrs. Admiral Sanderson (whom Miss Warburton had governessed, chaperoned, and steered into happy mar-

riage) positively insisted on this, but Katrina was an intrusion in the round tower, as every one could see, suggesting, as she did, mere corporeal needs, which the frail woman, her fine old face almost transparent under its nimbus of silver hair, seemed to have outgrown.

As she sat this afternoon in her round tower, that, with a tiny bedroom and kitchenette constituted her apartment, she made a beautiful picture of serene old age still in friendly touch with life. Her favorite books, their number swelled continuously by gifts and loans of the "latest and best," filled the low shelves on the wall; her basket with its dainty work stood on the wicker table; pictures of her children and grandchildren, as she called them, told of the three generations that kept tender thought of their old teacher, while above the mantel was Miss Warburton's one art treasure—a painting picked up from the wreckage of a Venetian palace on one of her chaperoning trips with a rich pupil fifty years before.

"The Magnificat" it was called, and all the rapture of divine motherhood seemed to breathe from the fair young half-veiled face of the humble Virgin facing St. Elizabeth, the wondrous pean of triumph that has echoed down the centuries upon her lips. "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed!"

"That picture converted me," Miss Warburton always declared. "Of course other convincing rea-

sons followed, but I was first struck by the startling fact that there was but one Church where that prophecy is fulfilled—where all generations call Mary 'blessed.' "

It was close to five o'clock, and Katrina was in the kitchenette, busy with the little kettle and gas stove. Breakfast and dinner were negligible considerations to Miss Warburton, but afternoon tea was a daily domestic rite never to be slighted or ignored. It was seldom that some visitor did not find his or her way up the elevator to the little round tower for a cup of the cheering beverage that was the old lady's delight and pride—sent to her as it was from friends abroad, the silvered wrapping stamped with royal approval, and always measured and steeped in the quaint little Canton teapot by her own hand.

Lesser duties might be trusted to Dutch Katrina, but tea-making, never.

"Fresh water in the kettle, Katrina, it is nearly five o'clock. Get the tray ready and the little jar of marmalade Mrs. Sanderson sent me yesterday, and those delicious English biscuit in the tin box. Some brown bread cut very thin, and the little cream cheese. It is such a pleasant afternoon that some one will drop in on us, I know. There, I thought so," as the outer bell sounded, and Katrina shuffled into the tiny entrance hall to open the door, while Miss Warburton straightened the bit of rare old lace she wore upon her silver tresses,

and shook down the ruffles over her still dainty hands.

There was no preliminary parley with Katrina at the door. With a swift rush the visitor swept into the little parlor, and falling on her knees before Miss Warburton's chair, clasped the amazed old lady in her arms.

“Madrina, dear! dear, dear madrina!” There were only two “children” in the world who gave the old teacher the sweet Spanish name for “godmother.”

“Winifred! Winifred Deane!” gasped Miss Warburton, as soon as she could recover her breath. “My dear, dear child! When—how—what does this mean? I thought you were abroad with your guardian?”

“Madrina, no; oh, no—no! I thought to write you, to tell you all—but I could not; I dared not. It seemed to me I could only whisper it here in your arms, on your heart—your dear, faithful, loving heart.”

“My child, my dear, dear child!”—the thin old voice quavered a little, but sixty years of teaching had made Miss Warburton wise and watchful both in storm and calm. “You are shaking like a leaf, Winifred. You must not say another word, dear child, now. Sit down here and rest. Give me your hat and lean back on this cushion. Katrina, the kettle and tray at once. No talking, my dear child, until you have a cup of tea.” And as Kat-

rina, well-trained in this one serious duty of the day, rolled out the little table with its dainty service, Miss Warburton drew her quaint caddy from the cabinet at her side and proceeded to brew a draught fit indeed for a queen. The girl, leaning back restfully in the big chair, as she had been bidden, watched the old lady with shining eyes.

"What a dear of a fairy godmother I have," she said with a tremulous laugh. "And what a lovely little place! I believe you could make a home out of a packing-box, madrina."

"Drink your tea now and don't talk," commanded Miss Warburton. "No cream yet, child—just a bit of lemon until you stop that trembling. Winifred, you are all unstrung."

"Oh, it is only joy—joy at seeing you, madrina, at knowing that I have one dear, true friend left! Can you tuck me into some corner of this delicious nest? May I stay with you to-night?"

"To-night and forever if you wish, child," was the quick answer.

"Dear madrina, you would share your last crust with me, I know, but I can stay only for a night. To-morrow I must go."

"Where?" asked Miss Warburton.

"To earn my own crusts," was the low answer.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the old lady, startled out of her resolute calm. "Has it come to that, Winifred?"

"It has come to that," was the low reply.

"But how, where, when?" it was Miss Warburton's turn to be agitated now. "Your guardian seemed so careful, so conscientious, so even rigid in his principles."

"He was," answered the girl. "He *is*, madrina. But I was of age—eighteen—two years ago."

"Don't—don't tell me you lost your money yourself," cried the old lady sharply.

"No;" the girl paused and glanced at the little kitchenette where Katrina stood, staring and open-eared.

"You can go, Katrina," said Miss Warburton. "I will not need you again this evening. Put the little 'not at home' card on my door, for this dear girl is tired out and must rest."

Then as Katrina, who had never lost the sabot gait of her childhood, shuffled out of sight and hearing, Miss Warburton pushed aside, for once, her neglected tea and asked tragically:

"Now tell me, in God's name, what has happened, child? Your fortune gone—the little fortune which your grandmother so carefully, so prudently secured to you? Who has robbed and beggared you, Winifred?"

The girl winced at the words.

"Can you not guess, madrina?" she asked in a low voice.

"Dick!" exclaimed the old lady, as if she had read the quivering lips, "don't, don't tell me it was

Dick, child? Surely you knew better than to trust that wretched, wretched boy! You knew how reckless, how dissolute, how unprincipled he was."

"Oh, madrina, yes, yes!" the young voice trembled piteously. "I knew all this. But, but—oh, how can I tell you the shame, the sorrow?" The speaker leaned back in her chair and hiding her face in her hands burst into a passion of tears.

"There, there, my poor child," soothed Miss Warburton remorsefully. "I should not have let you talk just yet. But I was an old fool, an anxious, startled old fool! Your grandmother was like a sister to me, child. I loved your mother almost as if she were my own, and you, my dear little godchild, to see you like this— But if it hurts you, Winifred, if it hurts so much, don't say another word."

"Oh, madrina, yes, you have the right—the right of a dear old friend to know all. And I came here to tell you, madrina. Dick," she drew a long, quivering breath, "Dick forged, defaulted, madrina. To save him from state's prison I gave up all."

"Winifred!" cried the old lady sharply. "And your guardian, Mr. Ledyard, allowed this?"

"He could not prevent it. I was of age."

"You mad, quixotic child!" continued Miss Warburton in a shaking voice. "And yet—yet—"

“You would have done the same thing, in my place, madrina. Think, it was my brother—the brother who bears my dead father’s honest name, my mother’s idol, madrina. And I could save him from lifelong shame, from eternal ruin, perhaps. Oh, I would do it again and again, and so would you. I know, dear madrina, so would you!”

“I suppose I would, child; I suppose I would, for I am a weak old fool of a woman. But you should have had a man, with a man’s sense of justice and right to hold you back. To think of that wretched boy being allowed to blight your beautiful young life. And it took—”

“Everything,” answered the girl wearily. “If it saves him it is well gone. But, oh, madrina, that I do not know—I do not know.”

“Nor I,” answered Miss Warburton grimly. “A man that would rob and beggar his orphan sister seems past saving, Winifred.”

“Oh, madrina, don’t say—don’t say the cruel, hopeless things my guardian hurled at me in his anger! He said I should let Dick go; that I should leave him to his just fate; that if I stood by him he was done with us both forever. And so I am out in the world to seek my fortune, madrina.”

“You shall seek no further,” said the old lady impetuously. “Stay here with me, Winifred; share the little I have, be a daughter to my lonely, crippled old age.”

"Madrina, dearest, no. Not that it would not be a blessed haven for me, but I am young and strong and could not be a burden to you. I did not come to cry out to you for help. I have found work, madrina."

"My poor, dear child, where?"

"Here," she said, taking a letter from her little bag, and handing it to Miss Warburton. "Read it, madrina, and tell me what you think."

And Miss Warburton read eagerly:

TREVLYN TOWERS, Oct. 18.

"MY DEAR MISS DEANE:

"Your letter of the 12th, in answer to my advertisement, was received, and pleased me very much. In reply to it I will state that I am a widow of about fifty years of age, living with my only son on his estate, Trevlyn Towers, Blank County, Pennsylvania. With my advancing years and somewhat frail health, I feel the need of such assistance in my social and domestic duties as I think you, with your advantages of youth, birth, and education, can give me.

"As my companion and private secretary your position will be that of a social equal, which I trust will grow into warmer and more friendly relations, as we know more of each other. The salary will be six hundred a year, payable monthly if desirable. Your religion will not be in any way objectionable and though the Catholic church

is some six miles distant, a carriage will be at your disposal whenever you wish to attend service. Should you decide to accept the position I offer, I shall be glad to have you enter on your duties here at once. Kindly telegraph to Trevlyn, Blank Co., Pa., at what day and by what train you will arrive, and you will be met at the station. Trusting that you will find these arrangements satisfactory, I am,

“Truly yours,

“CECILE BEAUMONT TREVLYN.”

“Cecile Beaumont?” repeated Miss Warburton. “I knew a Cecile Beaumont—years and years ago. It is a fine old name, my dear, a noble name in France. These are good people, I am sure.”

“You like the letter, then, madrina?”

“I like it, child, yes.” Miss Warburton was scanning the delicate, old-fashioned handwriting closely with her failing eyes. “I like it very much.”

“I am glad,” said the girl with a sigh of relief. “I feared perhaps I had been too hasty, madrina. For I have telegraphed that I will be at Trevlyn by the 5:20 train to-morrow evening. Now, that is all settled. Let us put everything unpleasant behind us, and enjoy our little time together. Come, sit down here on the sofa beside me. Let me nestle you in these nice soft cushions, and tell me all about yourself, what you do and see in this lovely little watch tower, that seems right at heav-

en's gate," and the speaker looked out of the window at the western sky that was now all arched and pillared with rosy clouds.

"One thing more before we are done with this cruel subject—where is your brother now, Winifred?"

"I do not know," was the low answer. "It was about two years ago that he came back, madrina. He had been out West in the mining regions—had struck it rich three or four times, he said, but had lost everything—at the gaming table, I am sure. He would say very little about his life, but that he had never disgraced his name. He always borrowed another—which means he led a reckless life, of course. But he had come back, he said, to settle down. And my guardian helped him, got him a place in a bank and—and—they found him—doing everything wrong. He took money not his own, he—forged, madrina—notes that came to ten thousand dollars, and they discovered it. But they sent word to Colonel Ledyard they would let him go if the money was made good. And so I—I—gave up all. He went away in bitter shame and remorse, madrina."

"I don't believe it," said Miss Warburton testily. "How or why it is, God only knows, for he had the beauty of an angel, but that wretched boy is rotten to the core. Let us forget him for this evening. Come, talk of pleasanter things. Let me have a good look at you," and as her visitor

sat down beside her, Miss Warburton put her finger under the girl's chin, and lifted the young face to her own.

A beautiful young face it was, despite the lingering traces of grief that shadowed the violet eyes, and quivered still about the firm, sweet mouth. A strange contrast the girl's fresh bloom was to Miss Warburton's withered age, as the old lady bent and softly kissed the uplifted brow.

"You are like your grandmother, child. I can almost fancy it is the Elise Lavalle of sixty years ago, and I am the gay girl Betty Warburton again."

And the two sat there together in the waning light, talking tenderly and trustfully, as if the wide gulf of the years had been bridged, and they were young together.

Indeed, as the soft twilight shadows gathered in the little round tower, Winifred noted more than once that madrina drifted on dreamily into the far-off past, as the very old will, and for a sweet, confused moment they were "Elise and Betty" to her again.

CHAPTER IV

A BEGINNING

THE five o'clock train was late next evening. The sunset fires were burning low on the mountain gap, when Miss Deane alighted at the station and looked around, startled at a scene so different from all that she had expected.

A rude shed, stretching over the long platform beside the road, was the only shelter for waiting travelers. All around was a wilderness of tracks and sidings and switches black with slag and cinders, while beyond, above, reaching into barren wastes, devoid of tree or grass, or shrub or any green growing life, were the great "Trevlyn Mine Works," gashing the mountain ridge with pit and shaft and level, lifting the grim strength of their hoists and boiler chimneys like gaunt giant arms against the sunset sky.

The girl who had been speeding for long hours over wondrous heights aflame with autumn splendor, felt a chill of disappointment akin to dismay. But she had nerved herself to meet this new life and all it might bring with good-humored philosophy; so seating herself on the rude wooden bench of the station, she waited the conveyance that was to take her to Trevlyn Towers.

Would her new home be amid sights and sounds like these, she wondered a little drearily, as the harsh sound of a steam whistle made her start in alarm, and a dozen hand cars, loaded with coal, and guided by grimy, half-clad men, came down the siding. It was six o'clock, and their day was done. As they pushed by they gazed at the dainty little figure curiously. One muttered something, and there was a laugh that made the girl's cheeks burn.

"Hould yer gab, ye devil of a dago!" said a hearty voice, and the speaker, a grimy giant of six feet, with a mop of soot-strewn yellow curls topping his blackened face, sprang out of his car as it passed the young lady.

"You do be looking for some one, miss?" he said, with a pull at his ragged cap.

"Yes," she answered eagerly. "Some one from Trevlyn Towers. They promised that they would meet me here, but it is growing late."

"Sure it is!" The speaker scratched his head in perplexity, "and it's no place for a leddy like you. Mebbe it's the wrong station you're at, miss. None of the quality ever gets off here."

"Oh, isn't this Trevlyn Station?" asked the young lady.

"It's Trevlyn Works, miss, but the trains only stop here at signals. The station is five miles further on."

"Five miles!" repeated the young lady in dismay. "Oh, what shall I do? They will never think of looking for me here."

"I am afraid they won't, miss. It's not often the five o'clock train stops here, but there was some freight to put on this evening. Mebbe you seen it, miss—a carpe."

"A corpse," repeated Winifred, recalling vaguely a long box being pushed on a freight car as she had alighted.

"Yes, leddy. One of the dagoes choked in the old cut yesterday. He hadn't the sinse to know that a whiff of the air down there manes death. He has a cousin or some one in the hills that will see him berried dacint—beyond reach of the doctors," added the speaker significantly.

"Oh, poor man!" murmured the young lady, the discomfort of her position in no way lessened by this grisly narration.

"I made a great mistake in getting off at this dreadful place."

"Ye did, miss. It's the divil's own dump, sure," was the consoling reply.

"Can I get a conveyance? A carriage, or wagon, anything to take me to Trevlyn Towers?" asked the lady anxiously.

"Ye might, miss," was the doubtful answer, "but they do be black, dhrity things not fit for a leddy's riding. And if it's Trevlyn Towers ye're going to, it's not much of a walk."

"I thought you said it was five miles—"

"To the station, miss, yis, but the Towers, the great house, isn't more than a mile, if it's that. And Patsy here can show ye the way."

Winifred had been too absorbed in her perplexity to be observant, but now she noted for the first time the queer little elfish figure that had crept up to the grimy giant's side. He was a boy of twelve or thirteen, with a shock of fair hair falling about a sharp, peaked face, and big blue eyes that stared up at Winifred in dull wonder.

"You can show the leddy the way to Trevlyn Towers, can't you, buddy?" The boy nodded assent. "He is my partner, is Patsy," and the speaker's huge hand softly ruffled the boy's fair hair. "No one dares touch Patsy when Big Barney is to the fore. Sure it's one of his dull times now, miss; they come on him, the wimmen folks say, with the full of the moon, ever since the big derrick fell on him a couple of years back. There wasn't a brighter or sharper boy on all the ridge afore that."

"Poor little fellow! Is he yours?" asked Winifred.

"Mine, miss? Lord, no." Big Barney laughed loud at the question. "It's neither wife nor child Barney Regan axes in a place like this. Patsy's mother is dead, and his father is married again, and they're none too good to him in his throuble. So I keep an eye on him, miss, all I can. There's

not a path on the mountains that he can't travel by night or day, so he'll take ye to Trevlyn Towers straight as a die. Off wid ye, now, buddy. Show the leddy the way. She will give ye a bright new nickel for it."

"Half a dozen of them," said Winifred eagerly, but Big Barney stopped this offer with a shake of his head.

"Only one, miss; like as not he'll throw it away. Whin these slow spells is on him, money counts no more to him than pebblestones. Off wid ye, Patsy, and there'll be a pot of tay and some fine white bread and butter waiting for ye at Barney's shack when ye get back, me boy."

This last argument seemed a weighty one, for Patsy bounded off in a way that took him half down a rough, steep path that led from the track to a hard beaten road below.

"Aisy, now, ye young omadhaun," shouted Barney, as he helped the young lady down the rude descent. "It's a fine, smooth road whin ye git round the turn, miss, but this place isn't made for the quality, as you see."

"I will be all right, now, I am sure," said Winifred, as her guide stood waiting at Barney's call. "Thank you very much for helping me. Patsy will do all the rest, I am sure."

And they started off together, Patsy shuffling along at a slow gait now, that seemed to belong to his dull face, his meaningless stare.

"I ain't skeert," he said at last. "I ain't skeert a bit. Are you?"

"Why, no," said Winifred, startled somewhat unpleasantly by this declaration, we must confess. "There is nothing to scare us on this pretty road." For they had reached the turn and the old road wound before them now, its leafy arches flushed with the last hues of sunset. The gables of a farmhouse rose on the right, the tinkle of cow-bells came from the slopes below; an old colored woman with a bundle of fagots on her head nodded good evening as she passed. They had turned from the black, rude heights into ways of sweetness and peace.

"I ain't skeered of no curse," continued Patsy, forceful if ungrammatical. "Barney, he ain't skeered of it, nuther. But you best look out it won't catch you."

"What might catch me?" asked Winifred smiling pitifully into the young face that seemed troubled with some vague, half-formed fancy.

"The curse," answered Patsy slowly.

"Barney says it won't hurt him or me, and Barney knows. But it's there, he says, where you're going—Trevlyn Towers—it's there, sure."

"Oh, Patsy no!" and though she laughed lightly Winifred was conscious of a strange chill at the poor idiot's words.

"Yes, it is," declared Patsy positively. "Gran Devlin, she says so, too. Gran Devlin has got a

black witch cat that spits fire. That 'ere witch cat knows."

"Poor Patsy! You must not believe such stories. Doesn't Barney—does no one tell you better things? About heaven and the good God who lives there, Patsy? The Father who loves and cares for poor little boys?"

"Our Father, who art in heaven," said Patsy glibly. "I larned that once."

"And don't you know the rest?" asked Winifred.

"No," answered the boy, the sudden light that had flashed into his eyes going out, "that's all."

"Would you like to learn the rest, Patsy?"

"No," said the boy dully, "that's enough, Barney says. But I kin sing. Kin you sing?"

"A little," said Winifred softly.

"Kin you sing about the last beam is shining?" asked Patsy.

"Oh, Patsy, yes—can you?"

"Yes," said Patsy, and then Winifred fairly held her breath—so sweet, so pure, so clear was the strain that came from the boy's parted lips:

"Fading, still fading—
The last beam is shining:
Ave Maria,
The day is declining—"

The hymn stopped abruptly, as if some hand had been laid upon the quivering chords of an angel's harp. "Go on, Patsy," said the young lady. "That is beautiful. Go on."

"I can't," answered the boy. "It always stops there."

"Oh, no, no! It goes on like this," and Winifred took up the strain in a sweet, low voice:

"Safety and innocence
Fly with the light;
Temptation and danger
Walk forth in the night.
Ave Maria, audi nos."

Patsy listened breathlessly, his eyes fixed on the singer's face. And there was another listener, all unseen. The carriage had been sent to the station for Miss Deane, and Hugh Trevlyn, shrinking, he scarcely knew why, from his first meeting with the young lady, whom he felt would be somewhat of an intruder upon his domestic privacy, had started out for a walk.

Striding restlessly along in the shadow of the trees that bordered the old road, he heard the singer and paused, startled, at the sweetness of the voice that was one of Winifred Deane's fairy gifts.

And standing there in the shadow he saw her coming down the old road, in the fading light, guided by poor, mad Patsy, and singing softly as she came, a fair, new figure, into his darkened life.

"That's fine," said Patsy, with a long-drawn breath. "Sing some more, leddy."

"Oh, not now, Patsy, but some other time we will sing it together. For I am going to stay here at Trevlyn Towers."

"Oh, leddy, don't," the boy's blank face suddenly clouded with terror. "Don't stay there. That curse'll get you, sure. It gets every one that stays there, Gran Devlin says.

"I ain't a going to take you there, if you mean to stay," and Patsy backed up against a tree in stolid resolve. "I ain't a going to take you one step more."

"Oh, but you must, Patsy," said the young lady in genuine alarm. "See how late it is growing. We must get to Trevlyn Towers before dark."

"Pardon me for intruding on this discussion," said a deep voice, and a gentleman stepped out of the shadows at Winifred's side, "but I happen to be the master of Trevlyn Towers, and therefore at your service, if, as I presume, you are Miss Deane."

"Mr. Trevlyn! Oh, how glad I am to meet you!" said Winifred in frank relief. "Unfortunately, I misunderstood my directions, and got off at the wrong station, where Patsy was recommended to me as a most reliable guide. But he is failing me, as you see."

"I see," answered the gentleman. "There is nothing quite so stubborn as a fool, as a wider experience of life will teach you, Miss Deane. There is a quarter, Patsy," and the speaker flung a coin at the boy's feet. "Take it or leave it, as you please, and get away."

But heedless of the money, Patsy sprang forward and caught Winifred's gown.

"Don't ye go, leddy, don't ye go with him. The curse hez got him, Gran Devlin says. It's got him and it will get you."

"Off with you!" thundered Trevlyn fiercely, raising his cane. "Off with you, you confounded young crack-brain. This way, Miss Deane," as Patsy shrank whimpering away. "My grounds begin at this gate, though the main entrance is further on. I am truly sorry that you should have had this awkward experience. The carriage was sent more than two hours ago to meet you at our station. My mother is anxious about you, I am sure—she has been looking forward to your arrival most eagerly. She is not very strong, this little mama, but full of life, of verve, still. Though she has come late to her queendom—we have only been at Trevlyn for three years—she means to make her reign a joyous one, so you must be prepared for all sorts of frivolities."

The light words, the tone, seemed strangely forced to Winifred. Patsy's low, whimpering cry came faintly through the shadows, deepening every moment on their path that now led through stately grounds laid out in park and pleasure and velvety lawn, to a great stone house, towered and turreted to deserve its name. Lights gleamed cheerfully from its open windows, the spicy breath of late flowers came from its terraces. It rose against the dim twilight sky like some Old World picture, in such striking contrast to the scene upon

which she had entered two hours ago, that Winifred exclaimed involuntarily:

“What a lovely, lovely place! Shall I confess, Mr. Trevlyn, that I was a little disheartened by my first glimpse of your domains?”

“The Works, you mean?” he answered briefly. “It will, if you so choose, be your first and last glimpse of them, Miss Deane. We try to forget them at Trevlyn Towers.”

“Forget them? Is that possible?” she asked in wonder.

“Well, not altogether,” he answered dryly, “but we do our best.”

And again the harsh, dissonant note in his voice struck painfully upon Winifred’s ear. But in an instant it was soft again.

“There is little mama watching for you, as I foretold.” He guided the girl to the terraced steps, where, wrapped in her long white cloak, Madam Trevlyn stood peering out anxiously into the darkness. “Here is the wanderer, mama. I found her astray in mad Patsy’s keeping, and have brought her home.”

CHAPTER V

A NEW HOME

“MISS DEANE—Winifred, my dear child!” It was not the greeting Madam Trevlyn had prepared for her “companion,” but the sudden appearance of the graceful, girlish figure at her son’s side startled the good lady out of all formality. “What does it mean? I sent the carriage fully two hours ago.”

“It means we were stupid enough to allow Miss Deane to be dropped at the Works,” answered Trevlyn. “Rather a disconcerting introduction, you must confess, mama. Some one was good enough to offer her mad Patsy as a guide, and I found her making her way up the old road with his cheerful jabber in her ear.”

“How perfectly dreadful!” said the little old lady. “My dear, I wonder that you did not turn back and fly from us forever. The Works are bad enough, but that wretched little idiot fairly chills my blood. He seems scarcely human.”

And again Winifred was conscious of a harsh note jarring through the warmth of her welcome.

“You must have a cup of tea at once,” continued Madam Trevlyn. “The table is waiting—or

perhaps you would rather go to your own room, and I will send my maid?"

"Oh, thank you, no—don't let me give any trouble. I will have my tea with you, if I may," was the bright answer, as Winifred followed Madam Trevlyn into the great hall, where a swinging lamp flung soft jeweled radiance, and the armored knight at the staircase held aloft a waxen torch, dimly showing the crest of the oriel window, dull now in the gathering darkness. A log fire blazed cheerily in the sitting-room, where "we always sup *en famille*, my dear," Madam Trevlyn said, and the pretty tea table was abloom with La France roses.

Winifred could find no fault with her reception in her new home. Even in this first "breaking of bread" there was a gracious charm that took away all sense of intrusion. And when the cup of tea had been duly enjoyed, a rosy, white-capped maid conducted the newcomer to a room spacious and beautiful enough for a daughter of the house. Wide windows looked out into the starlit sky, dainty touches of drapery and lingerie freshened the old-fashioned furniture; bookcase, work-table, even—to Winifred's wonder—a little *prie dieu* made the pretty maiden sanctum all complete.

"I am Dawson, miss," said the maid. "If you wish, I will help you to unpack your trunk. It has come with the carriage. And if there is anything else I can do, I am at your service, miss."

“Thank you, no. There is nothing to-night, Dawson. I have all that I need in my handbag. To-morrow, perhaps, I may call on you, but to-night I shall just say my prayers and go to sleep.”

“That’s a good word, miss, and I’m glad to hear it. There’s few prayers that are said in this house, God knows!”

“Then what is this for?” asked Winifred, smiling, as she touched the *prie dieu*.

“I don’t know, miss,” said Dawson. “It was sent from town with the new desk and rocking-chair for you.”

“That was very kind in Madam Trevlyn,” said Winifred warmly.

“Yes, miss,” replied Dawson mechanically. “There is nothing else I can do for you, miss?”

“Nothing else, thank you, Dawson. Good night.”

“Good night, miss,” answered Dawson, and, like the well-trained importation she was, disappeared, leaving Winifred to sink back into a great chintz-cushioned chair by the window and think.

Pleasant thoughts they should have been, surely, for her welcome to this new home, which she entered as an alien, a dependant, had been all that she could ask, more than she had hoped for. The sweet graciousness of the mother, the courtly friendliness of the son, the luxury, the service such as would be accorded to an honored guest, were beyond her expectations, and yet—yet—what was the note that seemed jarring through the mu-

sic? Why did her heart chill so unreasonably as she recalled poor mad Patsy's jabber?

"The curse is there—the curse is there, and it will get you sure."

Winifred's training had been too sensible, too spiritual, to permit indulgence in such superstitious fancies. She banished them resolutely, with the decision that she was tired and nervous, and kneeling down by the wide window that looked out upon a far-reaching sky, lighted with the starry splendor of worlds beyond man's ken, she thanked God with a grateful heart for the comfort, the shelter of this new and beautiful home opened to her orphaned need.

Down in the pretty sitting-room she had left, Miss Deane was the theme of animated discussion.

"Oh, Hugh, is she not charming?" Madam Trevlyn asked enthusiastically.

"As far as an hour's acquaintance justifies the pronouncement, very charming, mama."

"What a half-hearted answer," said the lady, a little pettishly. "Surely it does not take an hour's inspection to see that she is beautiful, Hugh?"

"There are so many standards of beauty, you know, mama, that I don't pretend to be a judge. But, after all, that does not count very much in this case—in fact, under some conditions it might be a handicap."

"Not at all," was the quick reply; "I like to

have beautiful faces around me. Some women don't, I know. I picked out Dawson for her healthy English bloom, though she is deadly slow in word and wit. Madame la Vache, Fifine calls her, and she considers the title quite a courtesy."

"I don't like your Fifine, mama. There is a snap in her black eyes I distrust."

"Oh, she is a treacherous creature, I haven't a doubt," answered the lady lightly. "All clever French maids are. But she is a treasure in her way, and she is faithful after a fashion. Madam Marr, she assures me, offered her forty francs more a month to go to her, but nothing could induce her to leave one of the old *noblesse* for a *parvenue Americaine*. But to return to *ma chere* Winifred, I am sure she is just what I need. I was afraid she might be—well, too clever for us, Hugh."

"And your fears on that score are at rest?" he asked, with a half laugh.

"She does not look too clever," replied his mother thoughtfully.

"Ah, one can not trust altogether to looks," was the reply. "It struck me, though as I say, I don't pretend to judge, that it was a very clear-seeing pair of eyes that faced me this evening, mama."

"They don't wear glasses at all events, and clever women always wear glasses, as you know, Hugh. I never saw one that didn't. Oh, she will suit me exactly, I am sure, and it will be such a relief to feel that there is somebody with a head

in the house besides myself—for you don't give a thought to social duties, Hugh, you must confess. With your advantages you could do anything. As Mrs. Dallas was saying to me the other day, it is such a pity you don't go in for politics. You used to be so full of energy and ambition. Don't you remember when you went out to that dreadful Grisly Gulch to make a fortune for me? All the wonderful things you were going to do when you came back! Gold was only the means, you said—you wanted name and power and place. And now, now that all are within your grasp, Hugh, you do not care."

He had risen and was standing before the fire, his arm resting on the mantel, his dark, strong face illumined by the ruddy glow of the fire dying into embers at his feet.

"Do you know what I heard that wretched little Patsy tell Miss Deane this evening?" he said, in a low voice. "That there was a curse upon Trevlyn Towers. That it had got me and would get her—if she came here to stay. So perhaps that is a solution of the problem that puzzles every one, mama. A curse has come upon me with my heritage, a curse of weakness and inaction from which I can not escape. Perhaps Patsy and his chum the witch cat know."

"Hugh!" exclaimed his mother sharply. "How can you say such dreadful things? As for that wretched little Patsy, I wonder you allow him to

run loose in the place. He will do some frightful mischief yet."

"It would only even up matters if he did, for frightful mischief has been done to him, poor child. A rotten derrick that ought to have been chopped into firewood was allowed to crush out his brain and wit. He gave Miss Deane a gruesome welcome to Trevlyn Towers, I must confess, but she ignored it so gaily and graciously that I trust it had no effect. And now I am going out on the terrace for a smoke, mama. Don't worry about your worthless son. There is one being that he cares for, as you know, lovingly, tenderly, devotedly, as of old." He came up behind her chair and laying a hand lightly on each faded cheek, bent down and kissed her silvery hair.

"My boy, my boy," she caught the caressing hands with sudden passion and lifted her eyes to his face—"oh, Hugh, I know, I know—but it breaks my heart to feel that my love is no longer sufficient for you—that you are not happy with me, Hugh. Is it—oh, my dear boy!—is it Helena Marr that is still shadowing your life?"

"Helena Marr!" he repeated with a short laugh. "No, dear little mama—you need not have a jealous thought of her. It is not Helena Marr. Neither she nor any woman casts a shadow upon my life—nor ever shall," he added after a pause.

"Oh, I do not ask that, Hugh. I am not so selfish as to expect your undivided love, dear boy.

'And Helena is free—and if—if you think she would make you happy—" the mother's voice sank feebly. She was evidently speaking sorely against her will.

"She could not make me happy," was the decided answer. "That was all a boyish dream, mama. Mrs. Marr seems—well, like my early tops and marbles—quite outgrown." And with another light kiss on his mother's uplifted face, Trevlyn went out on the terrace for his evening smoke.

As he paced up and down the long, shadowy stretch, the dream of which he had spoken to his mother came back to him. He thought of Helena Marr in the full bloom of her womanly beauty, and wondered at the cold calm of his heart, that had once leaped in such wild response to her glance and smile. Ah, his heart was dead too, with his will, energy, ambition—all the rest. Mad Patsy was right. There was a curse upon him, which he could not escape. And with the thought there came a picture of the meeting on the old road this evening, the soft-voiced singer coming down from the light into his darkness. What clear-seeing, fearless eyes the girl had! What a pure, delicate face! How frankly she had met him—without any shyness or coquetry in her surprise!

Since he must have an intruder in his narrow domestic circle it was a relief to find one devoid of all those feminine allurements in which Mrs. Marr was so strong, who would permit him to go

his wonted way in peace. Yes, he was glad his mother's choice had fallen on Miss Deane.

And this opinion was confirmed next morning, when Winifred appeared on the terrace before breakfast a bright, smiling presence in the gloomy outlook with which the master of Trevlyn usually regarded the new day. She was in white, and the simple girlish gown made her seem even younger and fresher than at their first meeting.

"Am I late or early?" she asked after they had exchanged greetings. "Does your mother expect me to breakfast with her? You see as yet my duties are quite undefined."

"I do not think you will find them either very difficult or defined," he answered smiling. "Mama—I keep the pet name of my boyhood, you see, for the dearest of little women—usually breakfasts with me about nine; we dine at six. Beyond these *points d'appui* all is vague indecision. As for duties, banish the word! It has no place at Trevlyn Towers."

"Then why am I here?" she asked.

"For your pleasure as well as my mother's, I hope," he replied kindly. "You will be of the greatest assistance to her, I am sure. She has had rather a dull, prosy life, poor little mama, and now that fortune has changed for her she craves all that has been so long denied. She wants your help to be young and gay."

"My help to be young and gay!" the girl repeated wonderingly. "And is that all?"

"No," he said, after a slight pause, during which he cast a quick glance around him. "There is one care which I trust will not lay heavy upon you, which, as she will not impose or demand, I must. My mother has been in precarious health for years, Miss Deane. How precarious she herself does not realize. Any shock or alarm, even any very great or sudden excitement, might be instantaneously fatal or produce a hopeless paralysis even worse than death. For years it has been my care, my duty, as you would word it, to shield her from this danger, and I ask now that it shall also be yours. The physician has spoken to me plainly and decisively on the matter—but she does not know her own condition. She must not know it. I would not have the few years that remain to her darkened by the shadow of an ever-impending death."

The girl's clear gaze met his gravely.

"I understand," she answered. "But under these circumstances is this gay life she seeks the best thing for her, Mr. Trevlyn?"

"I do not know. Since she fancies it there is no choice. At least it will distract her from thought, fear, all the horrors of passive invalidism. So we must let her have her butterfly flight—only with a care, an ever-present care, Miss Deane—of sudden wind or storm. So here is a duty for you if you are looking for one," and the speaker's strong, dark

face brightened with a smile both winning and rare.

But there was no answering smile on the girl's thoughtful face, as she answered:

"You can trust me, Mr. Trevlyn. I will guard and shield her all I can."

There was a light tap at the window behind them, and Madam Trevlyn stood between the parted curtains calling them in to breakfast.

CHAPTER VI

A MORNING AT TREVLYN

“DR. DALLAS,” said Madam Trevlyn, reflectively. “We must have the dear old doctor, of course, even at the risk of feeling like a rabbit under vivisection, and Colonel Raynn and his wife, and Helena Marr. But there must be another man to make up the *parti carre*. Who shall it be, Hugh, Clyde Danvers?”

It was two weeks after Winifred’s arrival at Trevlyn Towers, and she was in the morning room writing dinner invitations at the little madam’s dictation. Trevlyn had lounged in, as he often did after breakfast, with a vague, half-conscious interest in the plans for the day, which had become somewhat systematized since the new secretary’s arrival. Dinners, drives, luncheons, shopping expeditions, hitherto gaily uncertain as a kaleidoscope, now fell into rainbow lines steadyng even to butterfly flight.

“Danvers!” repeated Trevlyn, and Winifred, busy with the crested notepaper at her pretty desk, caught the harsh note in his voice that always jarred upon her sensitive ear. “Ask him, of course, if you wish, mama. But I thought you did not like him.”

"I don't," answered the lady frankly. "But it is an altogether unreasonable prejudice, Hugh, which I am willing to set aside for your sake."

"Don't consider me in the matter at all, I beg," said the gentleman dryly.

"I must," said the little madam, "I really must consider one who is so faithful and devoted to your interests, Hugh, and who relieves you of all the unpleasant responsibilities of those horrid Works. He is paid for it, of course, but there are some things which no money can buy—and your absolute freedom from business cares is one of them. Why, Winifred, dear, we spent eight months in Europe last year, leaving everything in his hands.

"When accidents happen, as of course in such places they must, he smoothes everything over so cleverly and kindly. As he once told me, Hugh is too generous and impulsive to govern such a horde of semi-savages as the hands at the Works, and he tries to save him all unpleasantness. Really, we ought to show our appreciation by inviting him here as a social equal, once in the season at least. I have a sort of prejudice against him, I confess. It's his teeth, I think, they are so white and sharp. But the poor *man* really can't help having sharp teeth. So we will just invite him and have it over. An invitation to Mr. H. Clyde Danvers then, Winifred, and our dinner party is complete."

"What is next on the programme?" asked Trev-

lyn, as Winifred gathered up the dainty notes in a pile for mailing.

"For your mother I think a luncheon at Mrs. Keith Gordon's," she answered.

"And for you?" he continued.

"Oh, half a dozen things," she answered evasively. "I am just beginning to find use for my spare hours."

"I am sorry to hear that. I had an unkind hope that some of them dragged heavily, and I could lighten them. There is a safe saddle horse in the stable if you would like a canter over these autumn heights."

The fair young face flushed and kindled.

"Oh, I would like it very much," she answered.

"Be ready in an hour, then."

"Not this morning. I have promised—that is, I have an engagement I can not break. To-morrow, perhaps, or next day, I shall be delighted to go. I love to ride," she added simply, as she took up her mail and left the room with the quiet grace that neither forbade nor allured approach.

"I wonder what use she has found for her spare hours?" he thought irritably. "Stitching silk violets to rounds of linen, or making pink wool slippers, I suppose. Even that is better than empty days like mine. And once—once leisure, power, and wealth seemed all man would ask. Now I would change places willingly with the grimiest wretch delving in the blackest depths. I long to be free,

to shake off the cursed shackles that are on me and be free—free— Great God in heaven,” the cry was almost a prayer, “to be free!”

* * * * *

“And she is very sick, you say, Dawson?”

“She is dying, miss,” was the stolid answer. “The last baby’s burying was too much for her—two of them in a week—and it turned on her lungs, miss. I wouldn’t have known anything about it, miss, the house folks not mixing with the hands, but the butcher boy, him that serves the meat—most respectable, miss, and on his way to making his three guineas a week—was telling me when I was ordering the rib-roast yesterday at the lower door. It will be the third death in the Tyssowski’s family in a month, miss, and he says that’s murder, or close kin to it.”

“Murder!” repeated Winifred, who had just come into her own room, while Dawson, full of weighty information, was changing bureau and table covers.

“Yes, miss. It’s the green poison from the water below the house that’s done it all. But what’s poor creatures working in black grime from morning until night to do about that? They have to live as they can, die when they can’t, as every one knows. Eli, he is the butcher’s boy, miss, stopped on his rounds to leave her a scrap of soup meat, and he was telling how she had a bit of a brass

cross, with a tallow dip burning before it, and was 'idolizing in heathen darkness to the last.' "

"Oh, not 'idolizing,' Dawson," said the young lady, gently. "I have a crucifix on my mantel, as you see."

"Yes, I see, miss," replied Dawson. "That's what made me think of telling you, miss. Not that it's the same, of course," added Dawson hastily.

"It is, Dawson. The faith we hold is just the same," was the answer that rather startled the stolid listener. "Poor, poor woman! Does she live very far from here?"

"A good bit, miss. Down on the Slashes, they call them, below the Works. It's a dirty, deadly place, miss, not fit to stable a decent beast, Eli says."

"Does—does Mr. Trevlyn know how bad it is?"

The blank look of the well-trained importation immediately masked Dawson's fresh English face.

"I can't say, indeed, miss," she answered rather briefly.

"He should know at once," said Winifred decidedly. "He would not permit such conditions, I am sure."

"I hope you won't mention me, miss," said Dawson anxiously. "It is not my place to meddle. And as Mrs. Jimson the housekeeper says, it's not like the old country. When I was at Hurston Hall,

miss, the ladies knew the wants and woes of every poor creature for ten miles round. Many is the time I have gone with Lady Cicely to carry hot possets and warm flannel to the dying and new-born, miss. And it's she that would rate a drunken husband or a lazy jade of a wife, miss, until they shook in their shoes. But, as Mrs. Jimson says, this is a free country, where the quality don't meddle, miss, and you can live or die as you please."

"Oh, Dawson, no, no! That is not our American way at all," was the earnest answer.

"It's the way over there, miss," said Dawson with a nod toward the Works. "Eli, who has a bold, free tongue and is asking no favor of master or man, says the boss ain't got no more innards than a stone."

"Mr. Trevlyn!" exclaimed the young lady in dismay.

"The Lord love you, no, miss. Mr. Danvers, the manager. Mr. Trevlyn don't bother no more about the Works than you or me—but here I'm talking and all my work to be done yet! It was the bit of a cross on your mantel that set me off—a thinking of the poor creature a dying in heathen darkness without any gospel light to guide or save." And Dawson, who was a devout Dissenter, gathered up her lace-trimmed linens and went her way, having wrought deeper than she knew—voicing, as her words did, the troubled stirrings in Winifred's ~~soul~~ doubts, fears, dismay. Vaguely, dimly, it

was growing upon her that there was neither heart nor soul vivifying this stately home; that it was like some pagan temple raised to gods of wood and stone, where no Christian faith or hope or love had place.

As she stood looking out of her wide window at the soft velvety slope of the lawn, the long stretch of the shaded avenue, the kingly oaks crowned by the touch of the frost, all lapped in the golden calm of the autumn day, she recalled Dawson's picture of the wretched cabin over the poison water, where one would not stable a beast, and a horror came over her at the pitiless selfishness that could shut out all sight and sound of the misery within reach of ear and eye.

Surely the master of Trevlyn knew of the wretchedness, the misery at his doors! Yet he kept on his listless, luxurious way without thought or care. And even as she looked she saw him striding from under the golden arches of the trees, his gun upon his shoulder, his dogs leaping at his heels, off for a day's hunting in the mountains—a splendid, virile figure, instinct with power and strength.

She turned from the sight impatiently, and prepared to keep her own engagement. It was one of which Mrs. Trevlyn would most likely have disapproved, but that good lady was under Fifine's artful hands now, making ready for the Keith Gordon luncheon, and the secretary's time was her own.

She slipped on her pretty hat, took up her hand-

bag, hurried down the wide stairs and out of the side door that opened on the terrace, and took the road leading to the lower gate, through which Trevlyn had first led her to the Towers. Here, safe as yet from the touch of the landscape gardener, the grounds ran into a sweet bosky tangle, through which the little stream, after taking its well-ordered way under the rustic bridge, rippled in rustic freedom as it danced into the neighboring meadow. Even the stone wall of Trevlyn was a low-lying barrier here, overgrown with weeds and vines.

And there, with his two puny arms resting upon the stones and supporting his eager little pathetic face, Patsy was waiting for the pretty "leddy" whose sweet voice had won his heart.

Two days before, Winifred, taking a walk by the brook, found him there, peering over into the forbidden precincts with wistful eyes. He "drove Granny Devlin's cow over to pasture in Farmer Jones' meadow," he explained, "and he'd been watching for her every day."

"Why didn't you come to the house, Patsy?" she asked.

"I dussent," he answered. "They'd beat me away."

"Oh, Patsy, no, they wouldn't!" said Winifred pityingly. And then she recalled Madam Trevlyn's speech about the "half human little wretch" and felt perhaps there was some foundation for Patsy's fears. It had been but a brief interview, for the

little madam was waiting for Winifred to drive with her, but the dull, yearning look in the boy's eyes had touched Winifred's heart.

"I'll come again, Patsy," she said brightly, "and I'll bring you a picture book to look at while you are minding the cow."

Yesterday she had been busy, but to-day she was free to keep her tryst with the pale little watcher by the brookside, whose dull eyes brightened at sight of her.

"You did come, sure nuff," said Patsy with a queer little smile that seemed astray on the wan white face, the feeble flicker of a light that might have been but for the rotten derrick's fall.

"Yes, I've come, Patsy." Winifred seated herself on the low stone wall. "And I've got the book here in my bag. We'll look at it after a while. First, perch up here beside me and let us have a little picnic." She brought out a big orange and a pretty box of bonbons she had bought on her yesterday's drive to Sudworth. Patsy, who had gained his perch with a quick scramble, stared blankly at fruit and sweets that had never come within his bewildered reach before.

"Don't you want them?" asked Winifred.

Slow wonder dawned upon the dull face.

"They ain't for *me*?" said the boy breathlessly.

"For you, of course. Try how good they are," and she took a bonbon in her dainty fingers and held it out to him. He tasted it timorously—the

first luscious sweet of life that had come to his lips.

"Gee, them's nice things!" he said, the smile flickering again in the dull face.

"Take another, Patsy, take them all. I bought them just for you, and the orange, too. You like oranges, I know."

Patsy took the fruit as if it were the golden fruit of the Hesperides suddenly placed in his feeble grasp.

"Barney brung me two when I was sick Christmas. Micky and Dan stole 'em while I was asleep. But they warn't ez big ez this, not nigh ez big ez this."

"Eat it right now, Patsy, so no one can steal it from you," said Winifred, feeling as if she were feeding some poor starveling bird.

And when Patsy's bewildering feast was done, his "leddy" brought out another wonder, the gay little Christmas booklet that madrina had sent her last year. It was the Holy Night—its brief printed page bordered by rows of shining figures singing to lutes and viols and golden harps.

"They've got wings," said Patsy, his slow fancy caught by the glittering pictures. "I never seen wimmen with wings."

"But these are not women—they are angels," said Winifred softly. "Did you never hear of angels, Patsy?"

Patsy paused, staring at the pictured vision, and

evidently struggling to grasp some dim, elusive thought.

“Stan Tyssowski says their babies have turned into angels, but he lied. I saw them shoveled down into the ground. And they’ll shovel his mother pretty soon. The dog howled all last night under her window, and Gran Devlin says that’s a sign for sure. And Stan says his mother is crying for a priest to wash away her sins, and his father hez joined the lodge and won’t let him come.”

“Oh, Patsy, how cruel! She must be the poor woman Dawson was telling me of this morning. And they won’t let her have a priest! Oh, I will have to see about it. I must help that poor, despairing mother to die in peace. Come, Patsy,” and the young lady started impulsively to her feet. “You must take me to her.”

“To Stan Tyssowski’s—at the Slashes?” said Patsy in amazement. “You ain’t ever a going there, leddy. It’s all slag and cinder and grime—and you’re so pretty and white—”

“Never mind, never mind—you must take me, Patsy,” and his “leddy” laid her white hand on Patsy’s ragged shoulder. “Take me to that poor dying woman right away—”

“Come on then, leddy,” said Patsy, whom that soft touch would have urged to any height or depth within his ken. “Old Suke kin browse till I get back. I’ll take ye, leddy. Come ‘long.”

CHAPTER VII

OVER THE TRAIL

MISS DEANE forgot she was Madam Trevlyn's secretary, forgot the new home whose laws and spirit she was no doubt defying. She had heard the call of her own, the cry from the dark valley where a sister in the Faith lay praying for help and comfort, and she could not close her ears and heart to the piteous appeal.

"Is it very far, Patsy? Do we have to go by the Works?" she asked, as, led by this willing guide, she took her way down the old road.

Patsy reflected, eyeing the white dress that fluttered unspotted along the grass-grown path.

"You wouldn't get nigh so grimed on the Trail," he said slowly. "There ain't no slag or cinders or black. And it goes down to the Slashes, too. Kin you follow the Trail?"

"Oh, I think I can, Patsy, especially if it doesn't go through the Works. Where is the Trail?"

"Up thar," said Patsy, with a vague gesture to the west. "Thar's wild grapes thar, and poke berries, and sumach, and witch yarbs. Gran Devlin gets them to make witch tea. If you drink witch tea there ain't no curse or conjure kin tetch

you ever. Gee, I 'most forgot!" Patsy stopped suddenly on his way, and plunged his claw of a hand into his ragged pocket. "I brung ye this, leddy," he said, producing a bit of folded paper.

"What is it, Patsy?" asked Winifred opening the mysterious offering.

"Look out thar, don't let it blow away!" said Patsy anxiously. "It's three hairs from the witch cat's tail, leddy. Gee, but she scratched and fought when I pulled them out for you! But if you wear them round your neck, they'll keep that Trevlyn curse off you, sure."

"Oh, Patsy!" Winifred had not the heart to fling away the hard-earned amulet. "You must not believe such foolish stories. I am going to teach you better things, Patsy, beautiful things, about white angels like those in the picture that watch over little boys and keep them from all harm."

"They couldn't keep white down to the Works," said Patsy stolidly; "nothing can keep white thar, not even the snow. Reckon we'd best take the Trail, if it is longer," and Winifred's guide paused by the roadside and lifting a rail from the fence disclosed a narrow, beaten path, winding far into forest gloom. For a moment the young lady hesitated. Then, recalling Barney's assertion that Patsy knew every mountain path for ten miles around, she decided to trust to a leader whose devotion at least she could not doubt.

For a while her confidence seemed rewarded. Patsy led her by beautiful ways golden with mid-day sunlight, gorgeous with autumn splendors of crimsoning leaf and scarlet berry and purpling grape. Higher and higher wound the Trail, circling huge rocks draped with mosses and lichens, piercing the soft feathery gloom of pine thickets, climbing granite ridges swept bare by wintry storm and snow.

Here and there in these openings Winifred caught wide-reaching visions of purple peak and misty valley and shining river, nearer ones of the mountain side, gashed and tortured, so it seemed to her, by the Works, blackening the ridge below. This path over the height skirted their noise and toil and darkness all unseen. Patsy was a wise guide after all, Winifred thought, smiling pitifully at the ragged little figure hopping and leaping before her, Patsy's gait being, like his whole, poor puny mechanism, jarred and jolted out of time. The wiry little body seemed to move on broken springs. Then suddenly, while she was wondering whether wealth or skill could have averted this piteous wreck, Patsy vanished utterly around a projecting rock that rose before her, apparently blocking her way.

"Patsy!" she cried sharply. "Patsy, where are you?"

"Come on, leddy," he called, and stepping forward toward the great rock, she recoiled with a cry

of dismay. Beyond the Trail a mere footpath took a dizzy curve about the mountain side that went down in a sheer precipice to the gorge fully two hundred feet below. Patsy was leading on, blissfully unconscious of danger or fear.

"Patsy!" the young lady cried, "where are you going? Come back, come back."

"What for?" asked Patsy, calmly pausing in his dizzy way.

"Oh, I—I—can't go there," said Winifred desperately.

"You said you could follow the Trail. This here is the Trail," said Patsy with brief, conclusive logic.

"Come back, come back!" cried the young lady. "You must take me some other way."

"Thar ain't no other way," said Patsy stolidly. "And nothing ain't going to hurt you, leddy. Ef you want to go to the Slashes, this here's the road. 'Tain't far now."

Winifred hesitated. It was but a brief passage-way of peril around these beetling rocks, as she now could see. Beyond, the path widened under a bosky shelter of pines, and all was safe. She thought of the poor little cabin, with the bit of a candle burning before the cross, of the dying woman in her sore need of help and comfort, and took courage. Patsy had already cleared the perilous stretch fearlessly, and was calling from the pines beyond.

“Ain’t you a coming, leddy?”

Resolutely steadyng her shrinking nerves, Winifred took the path. It was but a short ten yards at the most, and she trod the first few steps steadily enough. Then a stone, loosened from the rocky ledge by her foot, rolled over the brink into the depths below. Winifred’s glance unconsciously followed it and she grew dizzy. An awful horror of fear came upon her and she felt she could not move a step further, or she would reel helplessly as that stone into the rocky gorge above which she hung, faint, sick, chill, with a deadly terror that numbed every limb. A withered vine clung to the rock behind her. She clutched it with icy hand.

“Help!” she essayed to cry, but it seemed to her as if no sound passed her lips. “Oh, God of mercy, help—help—”

“Come on, leddy, come on!” Only the idiot’s mocking jabber, the awful sigh of the wind in the depths below answered her. She felt her hold slipping. All things began to grow misty, an icy grasp seemed to tighten on heart and brain. She tried to whisper a prayer, but even her soul was dumb.

“Steady, there, steady!” A clear, commanding voice suddenly filled the death pause. “Hold fast and don’t start. I am coming to you—coming—coming—” and with the last word repeated cheerily two strong arms braced the girl’s shrinking form. “Don’t look up or down, close your eyes,

and step along quietly. You can not fall. I am holding, guiding you."

Like one in a dream, Winifred obeyed. With those strong arms steadyng her, that clear voice sounding in her ears, her eyes closed to all above or below her, she trod the perilous way with a blind trust that was unquestioning. It seemed to her she had never heard such music as that voice, so rich, so deep, so soothing in its strength and calm!

"Only a few steps more—you are perfectly safe with me. Keep your eyes closed—so—now there. We are all right. Sit down and rest, Miss Deane."

Winifred sank back at the words on a carpet of pine needles, and, looking up, recognized her preserver. Hugh Trevlyn stood over her, white as death and wiping great drops of sweat from his brow.

"That was a close call," he said, and the music was all gone from the voice that was curt and harsh now. "You had better take a drink, Miss Deane," and he handed her a silver pocket flask. "No?" as she motioned it away. "Then I will," and he put it to his lips and drained its contents at a draught.

"Ain't you a coming, leddy?" called Patsy.

Trevlyn turned on him with an oath that made Winifred shrink.

"Get out of my reach, you—you—idiot! I will pitch you over the cliff."

But Patsy stood unmoved by the dire threat.

"She wants to go to the Slashes," he said. "She told me she could follow the Trail."

"I did, I did!" broke in Winifred tremulously. "Don't blame poor Patsy for my folly, Mr. Trevlyn. I should not have ventured on that dizzy path, but I have done mountain-climbing before and thought I could pass in safety. But—but—I can not think of it—speak of it—yet—not even to thank you for—for saving me—"

"Don't try," he said tersely. "I—well—I had a bad five minutes about you, I must confess. Dead Man's Ledge, as we call it, gives scant room for courtesy. Only fools like Patsy and myself venture there recklessly. When you try mountain-climbing again I will provide you with a safer guide."

"Patsy was taking me to a poor dying woman," was the young lady's answer. "I heard of her need this morning and think perhaps I can be of some help and comfort to her. This is what brought me out mountain-climbing to-day, Mr. Trevlyn."

"Could not the help and comfort have been sent in some other way?" Trevlyn asked dryly. "A little money—you can always count on me for your charities, Miss Deane—would do all that is needful."

"Not in this case," she answered in a low voice. "There are needs which money can not reach. I do not know that you will understand the claim this poor woman has upon me, but she is as I am,

a Catholic, and is dying without the help, the ministrations of her Church. It seems so cruel, so barbarous, to refuse her this last comfort, this last blessing. Her heart is broken already—she has lost two of her children within the last month—and now to die in desolation, perhaps in despair—”

“Two children! Then it is that poor Tyssowski woman!” exclaimed Trevlyn in a startled tone. “And she is dying, you say, dying of a broken heart! Good God! Poor, poor woman! Go to her, as you so kindly propose, Miss Deane, do all you can! I will ride over to Woodmont and get the priest myself.”

“Oh, if you can, if you will, Mr. Trevlyn!” said Winifred eagerly. “You do not know all that it means to a dying Catholic. And you have authority, influence, where I could have none.”

“Authority! Influence!” he repeated. “Surely your priests, as I know them, never think of that!”

“Our priests! Oh, no, no!” answered the girl quickly. “But her husband—the poor woman’s husband will—He is a Mason and says no priest shall enter his house.”

“A Mason—that fool of a Tyssowski a Mason!” For a moment Trevlyn’s dark eyes flashed scornful fire. “Ah, I see—I see,” he added drawing a long breath between his set teeth. “The new lodge, that Danvers has started at the Works to break the Romish shackles, as he calls them—this

is the new lodge business—I *see!*” The light had died out of his eyes, the ring had gone from his voice. He stood looking at Winifred doubtfully, hesitatingly. “And I am afraid that settles it, Miss Deane,” he continued with a forced laugh. “If Tyssowski’s new Masonic principles forbid a priest, no priest can come.”

“Oh, Mr. Trevlyn, don’t say that!” cried Winifred in dismay. “Your word, your request will be all powerful, I am sure. If you, the master, bring the priest to the poor woman—”

“I tell you I can not,” he said in a low tone. “I—I dare not, Miss Deane. There are limits—to—to my authority, which I can not pass.”

“Your influence, then. It is all powerful, I am sure. A word from you will bring this poor creature comfort and peace. Say it, I beg of you, Mr. Trevlyn. Oh, I learned a few minutes ago, clinging to that dizzy ledge, something of the terrors of death. The icy chill, the helpless horror, the slipping away of all hold, the blank depths around, below—”

She had risen and was standing beside him looking up into his face with dilating eyes that seemed to see again the perils she had escaped.

“There, there—don’t talk about that, don’t think of it,” he said briskly. “It’s all over. Thank God I got to you on time.”

“Yes, thank God,” she said tremulously. “Oh, I will never forget that sudden help. The strong

arm upholding me, the fearless voice in my ear, the steady guidance along depths into which I dared not look. That poor, dying mother! Mr. Trevlyn, you can give her strength, help, hope, guidance, far, far beyond all you gave me, as heaven is beyond earth. Go get the priest as you said you would. The poor fool of a husband will not dare defy you, I know—”

“I can not,” he answered almost harshly. “My interference would be misunderstood, resented, Miss Deane. Every man has the right to rule his own household.”

“And to misrule it, Mr. Trevlyn?” she asked quietly, though there was a flash in the violet eyes. “But we can not understand each other in this matter, I see,” and her voice trembled a little. “I will go on with Patsy, and do what I can alone. There are no more ledges, I hope, to pass?”

“No,” Trevlyn answered. “The path leads down the mountain safely enough. But the Slashes is no fit place for you, Miss Deane. I know that slumming is a fad with the modern young woman, but—but I do not approve of it.”

“Nor I—as a fad,” she answered in a low voice. “But as I said, Mr. Trevlyn, on this point we can not understand each other. So since you tell me the path is safe, I will go on. Patsy will bring me back by the Works. You may be sure I will not try the Trail again. Come, Patsy,” she laid her hand on the boy’s ragged shoulder, “let us go on.”

Trevlyn stood aside to let her pass, angered, whether at himself or at her he could not tell. There had been only the gentlest courtesy in her words, and yet he felt he had been rebuked, defied, dismissed.

"This is the New Woman, I suppose," he thought, as he watched the white robe fluttering down the mountain path. "I did not think the convents produced that type. And yet—yet—how earnestly, how winsomely she pleaded with me, until I turned boor and coward, and quiet dignity was her only escape."

And as the master of Trevlyn recalled the recent interview his anger at himself deepened. The girl had been right, right! That poor, suffering, dying woman whom he—he and his agents had robbed of her young, had a claim upon his strength, his power in her sore need.

Tyssowski was a dull-witted fellow under the sway of a stronger will, he knew. And that stronger will—Trevlyn's face darkened and hardened as he thought of it—that stronger will whose steely grip he felt at every turn—that stronger will—he, the master of Trevlyn, would defy for that dying mother's sake! And striding up over the rocky heights where he had been taking a hunter's careless way all morning, Trevlyn whistled to his dogs and hurriedly returning to the Towers, ordered black Zadoc saddled at once.

CHAPTER VIII

AT GOOD ST. ANNE'S

CLOAKED in rich growth of ivy, guarded by sentinel pines, the little chapel of St. Anne lifted its cross-crowned spire like a beacon on the mountain side.

St. Anne's, built by the devout mistress of the great estate of Woodmont, was a memorial of an only and well-beloved daughter who had borne the good saint's name. But mother as well as daughter had been dead for many years, the great estate had changed hands, and been divided and subdivided—the little chapel, long ago deeded to the Bishop, still held its holy ground, under the heavy mantel of its ivy, the deeper shadow of its circling pines, a lonely outpost of the Church militant, garrisoned occasionally for brief service by passing soldiers of the cross on their way to busier fields, but for long months at a time silent and deserted. But of late years there had come great change. The opening of mines had brought an influx of new life into the mountains, there was need of a watcher on the heights where the wild children of the Church were flocking, bewildered by the new lights, laws, and liberty of this strange land.

So Father Philip, war-worn in God's service, but shrewd and sturdy and wise with the saintly wisdom gained in half a century of priesthood, had come two years ago to St. Anne's. The lamp burned night and day before the little altar. Father Philip gathered the lambs of his flock safely around him, and scoured rocks and heights in search of lost and straying sheep. It was a wide parish, old Father Philip's—just where it began and ended he scarcely knew, but though he had made the sunny mountain slopes around good St. Anne's all his own, there were heights and depths beyond that defied his call and care.

Of these, Trevlyn Ridge, with its five hundred souls, caused the old priest most anxious thought. True, the Works were seven miles distant, but many a sturdy Christian tramped that distance cheerfully to the Sunday Mass. He had asked the privilege of the Hall—a long frame building used for various meetings—for a monthly service, and had been curtly refused. There were dances and other amusements, he was told, that were prolonged late on Saturday nights.

"And it's the devil's own dance, it is," said Sergeant Dan grimly, as, poised on his ladder, he pruned the ivy that was overgrowing the chapel windows.

Sergeant Dan O'Rourke—he always insisted upon his military honors—had been the faithful guardian of St. Anne's for nearly forty years.

He had lost a leg during the Civil War, and the foundress of the little memorial chapel had added a small sum to the pension of a grateful country, and established Sergeant Dan for life as caretaker of the mountain shrine.

During all the years of its darkness, Sergeant Dan had been faithful to her trust. The birds nestled in the ivy untroubled by boyish hunters, the quaint old chancel window, with its pictured panes, stood intact. Now that the light burned again in the little sanctuary, Sergeant Dan was sexton, sacristan, and general adviser to Father Philip, while his withered little old woman in the cottage nearby kept sharp and loving watch over both.

"It's the devil's own dance," repeated Sergeant Dan, "and ye're well quit of the place and ivery one in it, your riverince."

"I am not so sure of that," said Father Philip, who was pacing slowly up and down his little garden path in the autumn sunshine.

"Sure they're a scurvy lot," said Sergeant Dan contemptuously. "Yellow-skinned dagoes wid-out a dhrop of good red blood in them, save perhaps big Barney and a few honest Irishmen, that can't be druv like pigs to a poke, as the boss well knows. It's a lodge he has started now, Barney tells me, with signs and seals and saycrets. He wanted Barney to join—promised to make him grand masther or Mason or something great. It

was a fine talk Mr. Danvers gave him, Barney said—how the lodge would do wonderful things for the ridge. He couldn't remimber them all—but it was to dhrive away the old country superstitions and—sure what was the wurrud now?" Sergeant Dan stopped to reflect—"devil—devil up—that was it—devil up the true spirit of American citizens! Barney answered plainly that he wanted nothing to do with the devil, either up or down, and he would let no sign or saycret stand between him and his Church—and that ended the lodge for him. But the others—bad cess to them!" Sergeant Dan struck at the ivy quite savagely. "They're flocking to be devil-uped like rotten sheep."

"And driven from their Church and their God," said Father Philip. "We must put a stop to it, Sergeant Dan, or we are not the old soldiers we ought to be after a fifty years' fight against the devil and all his works."

"Faix and if it's a fight ye want, I'm ready, your riverince," said Sergeant Dan, his eyes kindling. "I'm saying naught about a poor peg-legged fellow like myself, but I can get five and twenty stout pairs of legs behind me that will break up that lodge next meeting night."

"No, no, my dear Sergeant, *no!*" interrupted Father Philip hastily. "You must not think of such a thing. It must be another kind of fight entirely—one for which our good St.

Anne will arm and strengthen us, I hope and believe."

"Maybe, your riverince," assented the old soldier reluctantly. "Though I'm thinking the crack of a good shillaleh will rache thim dagoes' heads quicker than preaching or praying. Sure, Trevlyn is the bloody haythen place high or low, masther and man. It fairly tuk my breath to see their coach rolling to the church door last Sunday, and the young leddy stepping out. And a purty young leddy she is, and pious as well. She is stopping at the Towers, so Jim the coachman told me, and he has orders to bring her to Mass."

"Good!" said Father Philip, smiling. "Perhaps we have an ally in the enemy's camp, Sergeant Dan," and then he paused.

The Sergeant had stopped pruning and was staring from his ladder out into the road.

"Sure me breath's tuk again, Father," he said with a low laugh. "There's Squire Trevlyn himself on his black divil Zadoc turning into the gate." And even as he spoke, there was a sharp clatter of hoofs behind him, and Hugh Trevlyn drew up his horse, quivering and foam-flecked, under the chapel wall.

"Father Philip, I believe?" he said, baring his head courteously to the old priest. "You will pardon me if I do not dismount, but my horse is restive when I leave the saddle. I have come to ask the services of your Church for a poor woman

who is dying some miles from here, just below the Trevlyn Works. Her name is Tyssowski."

"Marie Tyssowski? Ah, yes!" said Father Philip gravely. "She is dying, you say? I do not wonder, poor woman. She has had the heartbreak that kills. Thank you for notifying me, Mr. Trevlyn. I will come at once. Saddle old Dobbin for me, Sergeant Dan."

Sergeant Dan descended as quickly as his peg leg would permit from his ladder and made a military salute. "Your riverince, your honor," he said anxiously, "if it's to that dhrity little dago of a Nick Tyssowski's place your riverince is thinking of going, it's no place for you alone. I've nothing to say agin the poor woman, God help her, but they're a bad lot down in the Slashes. The new lodge, whatever it may be, has got grip and sign on them, and that mangy little cur of a Tyssowski is snarling that no priest shall ever cross his door. You're an ould man, your riverince."

"Have no fears, my good fellow," interrupted Trevlyn quietly. "I have heard of these threats, and am here to see that Father Philip is respected and protected in the exercise of his duty. I will go with him to the sick woman myself."

"God bless your honor for that same," said Sergeant Dan, "fur shure if ye didn't, me and me ould six-shooter must—"

"Is this necessary, Mr. Trevlyn?" asked the priest with a smile.

"It is prudent, at least, sir," was the brief reply.

"Perhaps you are right—though I have braved many worse dangers alone," said Father Philip. "But I accept your courtesy in the spirit in which it is given, Mr. Trevlyn, and will make ready to go at once."

"And I will have Dobbin at the door in a pig's whistle, your riverince," said Sergeant Dan swinging off on his peg leg to the stable as Father Philip turned into the little church.

The restless Zadoc shook his head and snorted impatiently. His master drew him back further under the pines and stroked his silken ears with a soothing touch.

"Easy, old boy, easy—these are queer quarters, I confess, both for you and me—queer quarters and a queer errand, Zadoc." Pausing then in the shelter of the pines he looked round him, feeling as if he were, indeed, a strange, restless, discordant note in its quiet harmony. A light breeze was whispering in the trees, softly stirring the mantling ivy. The door of the rectory, two small rooms adjoining the little chapel, stood open, and Trevlyn could see the austere simplicity within, where, save for one book-lined wall, all was bare as the tent of a soldier on the march. For what did it stand, this little mountain shrine nestling under its mantle of ivy? What mighty power dwelt in this tiny sanctuary, that held men like

this old priest to a ministry without recognition or reward? For, like all those of her blood and race who drift away from the faith of their fathers, Madam Trevlyn held to no particular belief, and had transmitted none to her son.

He had the broad views that, without bounds or limits, melt into the haze of agnosticism. He was at St. Anne's to-day from the humanitarian motive, to ease a suffering creature's death hour, very much as he would ease it, if needful, by a hypodermic syringe, and though this motive had been stimulated, we must confess, by the pleading glance of a pair of violet eyes, he had absolutely no comprehension of Winifred's viewpoint.

Yet, seated on his restless Zadoc under the shadow of the pines, as he waited for Father Philip the little chapel rose before him with a new significance. He wondered and questioned as worldlings will wonder and question, almost despite themselves, what a vital thing it was, this Faith, burning in poor Marie Tyssowski's dying breast, kindling Winifred's girlish heart into passionate sympathy, holding this old priest to lonely ways of peril and poverty and pain. He had read, studied enough to know of its triumphant course down the ages, undaunted by the fire and sword of persecution, unwavering in its claim upon the fealty of its children, be they philosophers or peasants, crowned monarchs or shackled serfs. But he

had never been brought in touch with this living faith before, had never felt its strong heart-throb or seen its fadeless life.

The sound of old Dobbin's hoofbeats aroused Trevlyn from his reverie. Father Philip was waiting for his rusty old sorrel at the door. He mounted with an ease that belied his years, drew his shabby old horseman's cloak closer around him, and was ready for his journey across the mountains.

"This is truly kind of you, Mr. Trevlyn," he said, as they rode off side by side. "I did not know the poor woman was in danger of death or I would have gone to her before, at any risk. But your presence, your influence, may, as you say, avert any trouble, disturbance, and our ministry is one of peace."

"Tyssowski is a blustering fool," said Trevlyn briefly. "But it is just such stubborn fools that make mobs riot without cause. With such a horde of fierce, restless savages as we have at the Works, there are always wild passions smoldering that even a fool's word may set aflame."

"That is true—very true," said Father Philip gravely. "All except the 'savages,' Mr. Trevlyn. These poor people of yours are Christians—Catholic Christians many of them. And I have found, in a long life of missionary work, that a good Catholic, whether in forge or farm, market or mine, makes a good citizen. That you should have

bad, faithless Catholics in your employ is your misfortune."

"Or perhaps my fault," added Trevlyn.

"In the face of your errand of to-day I can not say that," was the quiet answer. "But that there is some influence antagonistic to their faith at work among your men I can not deny. And it is unfortunate for you as well as for them. To these simple, ignorant exiles, in a land whose laws and liberties they are apt to confuse, the old mother Church is the best guide and friend. They have been her children for generations, and she speaks to them with an authority they understand. And so your poor people at Trevlyn have caused me deep anxiety, I must confess."

"Anxiety?" repeated Trevlyn lightly. "Are such weak-headed fools worth anxiety? From what I know of them, which is really not very much, for my manager deals entirely with my hands, your Church is well-rid of such a set of rascals."

"Rascals!" echoed Father Philip. "Ah, my dear sir, it is the rascals we want, it is the rascals we must save! You have a mother, I think, my friend," and the shrewd, kindly old eyes were fixed on Trevlyn's face.

"The dearest and best of mothers," answered the young man warmly.

"Good, good! That is the way to talk," said Father Philip heartily. "And knowing this dear mother-love as you do, can you imagine any ras-

cality, and sin, any crime, even, of which man can be guilty that would harden that mother's heart against her son?"

There was a moment's pause, then Trevlyn answered in a low tone. "No—I—I can not."

"No, you can not," repeated Father Philip and the old man's voice now was almost musical in its cadence. "Because mother-love, my friend, is a shadow, an echo, nay, rather, a faint breath of the divine. And the Church is the great Mother, who can not close her eyes or ears or heart against her children—who must watch and warn and guard, must pity and pardon, must save the poor, blind, and weak—the sinners—the *rascals*, for the good God has given them all to her mother's care."

Something in the old man's simple, earnest words touched Trevlyn strangely. This was no professional cant, he knew. Mother-love! Unconsciously Father Philip had touched the one note that rang clear and pure among the "sweet bells jangled out of tune" of Hugh Trevlyn's life.

"You have given me a new view of your Church," he said thoughtfully. "I must bring little mama over to your pretty chapel, and let you reclaim her, Father. She is of French birth and, of course, Catholic ancestry, but her parents died young and so—"

"Ah, recreant, recreant!" interrupted Father Philip, shaking his head with a kindly smile. "You should belong to us too, then."

"I—oh, no!" the young man's voice grew suddenly cold, almost harsh. "To me your belief, your practice would be quite impossible."

"Then bring the little lady mother to good St. Anne," said Father Philip cheerfully, "and let her reclaim her heritage. Ah, what is it, my friend?" for Trevlyn had suddenly laid his hand on old Dobbin's rein.

"Hold back, sir, I beg of you," said the young man, whose keener gaze had caught sight of an approaching figure. "Let me go first and—and settle matters. Here comes Tyssowski, rushing like a madman up the mountain side. He has heard of your coming, I suppose, and means to make trouble. Hold back, if you please, and let me deal with him."

And with a danger spark flashing in his eyes, Trevlyn pressed old Dobbin backward and dashed down the mountain path.

CHAPTER IX

“THE SLASHES”

“STOP—stop right there, Tyssowski! I want a word with you.”

The wiry little Pole speeding breathlessly up the mountain stumbled out of the way in terror as Trevlyn reined up the quivering Zadoc in his path.

“Where are you going?”

In the blaze of the master’s questioning eyes Tyssowski felt his weak soul shrink.

“The priest!” he gasped tremblingly. “Meester Trevlyn, I go for the priest.”

“Lay a rough hand on him if you dare, you puling little coward!” said Trevlyn fiercely. “For shame, Tyssowski! Are you a man or a brute? To deny your dying wife, the mother of your dead children, the last comfort she asks in death.”

“I swore at the lodge,” continued the shaking Tyssowski—“ah, Meester Trevlyn, I swore at the lodge, I know—but—but now—”

The fierce oath that Trevlyn hurled at the lodge and its makers died upon his lips, and he could only stare in bewilderment, for with a hoarse, sobbing cry, Tyssowski had suddenly dropped upon his knees, his shaking hands uplifted as Father Philip

on his old sorrel ambled around the bend of the road.

"It is the holy Virgin, it is the angels who have sent him! Oh, Father, good Father, pity, pardon. Come, good Father, it is not too late. The sweet lady is praying, and it is not too late—"

"Thank God," said Father Philip briefly. "Get up off your knees, Tyssowski, it is no time to pray now. Take me to your poor dying wife."

"This may be some kind of a devilish trick, Father," began Trevlyn in bewilderment, as, with Tyssowski hurrying on in advance, they kept on their way to the Slashes—a stretch of low, marshy ground hollowed, perhaps ages ago, by some Titanic upheaval in the mountains.

"Tut, tut, no trick at all!" said Father Philip reassuringly. "The faith is there with these poor children, always there in the depths of their hearts, my friend. Clouded, perhaps darkened, but never dead. A touch, a word, and it kindles into light. I have had no fear from the first."

"Nevertheless, I must see you safe from such a fickle fool," said Trevlyn resolutely, as they turned toward the cluster of wretched little cabins to which the sheltered greenery of this little ravine had invited occupants. Coarse grass grew in the Slashes, the drainage from the ridge above widened into pools and gullies. Pigs were nosing in the black mud, geese were quacking in the slimy waterways, a goat was chewing comfortably at the

ragged wash drying on a broken fence. Tyssowski paused at an open gate on which two little elfish children were swinging, and the riders drew rein.

"Thank you, again, my dear sir," said Father Philip warmly. "There is no need for further kindness. All is right, as you see." And the old priest dismounted, flung the patient Dobbin's rein across the gate-post, paused to pat the little black heads of the staring children, and followed their father into the wretched cabin.

But though their needless mission seemed done, black Zadoc and his master lingered. Trevlyn felt extremely doubtful of Tyssowski and his sudden change of heart, and was loath to leave this trusting old man unprotected in such a place. It was the first time the landlord of the Slashes had taken close and critical view of this portion of his possessions, and as Zadoc's dainty feet splashed the stagnant water before the Tyssowski gate, his master looked around him with darkening brow. What a foul, fetid hole it was, with disease and death in every breath! But Danvers had scoffed at the suggestion of drainage. These poor wretches knew nothing better, he said. They were used to foul air and foul water.

"What is it to us how they live?" he had said lightly. "Such cattle! Let them have burrow or den where they please, as long as they work."

And though these words had aroused no protest six months ago they stirred some slumbering fire in

Trevlyn's breast to-day, and he guided the reluctant Zadoc around the wretched hovels to see for himself what could be done to make them fit dwellings for men.

As he picked his way through mire and pool, debris and refuse of every sort, that defied all the laws of hygiene, Trevlyn's eye fell upon a familiar figure perched upon a broken fence-rail behind the Tyssowski hovel. It was Patsy studying a picture book with dull, bewildered gaze. The forlorn little idiot seemed a fitting climax to the wretchedness around him, and remembering his late rough threats, Trevlyn flung him a kindly word.

"Learning to read, Patsy?"

The boy looked up at the speaker, unstartled. The broken mechanism of his brain worked too slowly for such brisk emotions as surprise or alarm.

"It's angels," he answered. "Did you ever see an angel, Mr. Trevlyn?"

"No, Patsy, I can not say that I ever did," answered the gentleman, as he reined up Zadoc to survey a very death-trap of an open well below.

"They're wimmin folk with wings," continued Patsy instructively. It was one of poor Patsy's compensations that his blurred vision knew no distinction of rank or wealth. Big Barney in his working togs, the master of Trevlyn on his black Arab, were quite in the same plane. "And they kin sing. Look at them," and Patsy held up his book for the rider's gaze.

Trevlyn looked in some surprise. It was an artistic picture for the poor little idiot's grasp, the group of white-winged spirits with lutes and viols bending from a starry midnight sky.

"Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will!" ran the golden-lettered scroll beneath—words almost as meaningless to the master of Trevlyn Towers as to the poor little idiot who looked at them with uncomprehending eyes.

"Very nice indeed, Patsy! Who gave you such a pretty book?"

"Her in there," answered the boy with a nod at the Tyssowski cabin. "Your white leddy," he added.

"My white lady!" exclaimed Trevlyn, and then as Patsy's meaning flashed upon him, the door of the cabin opened, and the white lady came out to them. Tearful and tremulous, indeed, but with a strange rapt look on her fair young face, as one who had been close to the unseen.

"Mr. Trevlyn!" she exclaimed in surprise. "I did not know you were still here. Father Philip told me that you went for him, after all. Oh, it was so good of you—for—for though I succeeded in persuading the poor, foolish husband to go, it would have been too late—far too late! Now, thank God, by your help the poor woman will die in peace."

"And you have been in this—this pest hole—

ever since I saw you three hours ago!" said Trevlyn in horror.

"Has it been that long?" she asked. "I did not know. But your mother has no need of me this afternoon, and there was sore need here in every way. It seems the neighbors were frightened—there had been so many deaths. The poor husband, so blinded, bewildered by new teachings, and the little children crying in terror of they knew not what—some one was needed with a head or at least a heart."

"You will come home now—at once," said the gentleman. "I will have the carriage at the road above in fifteen minutes. There is no room for it down here."

"Really it is not necessary," she said. "Patsy can take me home. And I would like to stay a little longer."

"How much longer?" he asked tersely. "Do you know that this gully is a plague spot, dangerous to health, to life? I would not have my mother spend ten minutes here for a fortune, Miss Deane, and yet you—you—"

He paused. Somehow the girl standing there, white-robed and spotless amid all this foulness, seemed upborne above its touch, its peril, as if by angel wings.

"Just one-half hour more, and then if you insist on the carriage, Mr. Trevlyn— There, Father Philip is calling me now. I must go." And she

flitted back to the little cabin to give reverent aid to the last solemn rites beside the dying woman's bed, while Zadoc and his rider took their way up the ridge through the long stretch of the Works—black, wearying, and hideous to the master's eye. Tunnel and shaft and lift, the groan and creak of chains and pulleys, the pant of engines on the tramways, the hoarse shouts and calls and signals—all the usual sights and sounds of the busy scene had a new horror for him to-day. He felt weighted, oppressed, crushed by the burden of toil and pain and misery, a burden that he could not shift. And with this fierce sense of revolt upon him his eye fell upon Danvers standing in the open door of his office, cool, calm, debonair.

Trevlyn drew rein with a jerk that made Zadoc rear and prance perilously.

"Great George!" said Danvers with a low laugh. "You can't pull in a black devil like that. Zadoc will do for you yet."

"No danger—we understand each other," answered Trevlyn as he stroked the quivering animal into quiet. "I have only time for a word with you this afternoon. I have just come up from the Slashes. Tyssowski's wife is dying there, the third death in that wretched hovel of his within the month. The place is a pest hole—a very gutter drain for the whole ridge. Something must be done about it at once."

"Off on that tangent again? I thought we had

settled the Slashes six months ago. The hollow is a natural drain, as you say. But the grassy, low-lying ground, the shelter of the rocks above—well, pest hole as it is, the beggars like it."

"At what cost could the hollow be made inhabitable?" asked Trevlyn briefly.

"Really, I never thought it worth while to inquire," replied Danvers with an unpleasant laugh. "To reclaim the Slashes would seem to be the height or perhaps I should say the very depth of folly. To tamper with them in any way may flood the mines."

"Then those cabins must be razed to the ground at once," said Trevlyn, and there was a new tone in his voice that made Danvers start.

"And leave their tenants homeless?" he said slowly. "We have not housing for our hands and their families now."

"Then we must build," replied Trevlyn. "We furnish stables and kennels for our beasts, Danvers, and should not begrudge decent shelter to our fellow-men."

"Why this sudden outburst of—shall I call it Socialism or philanthropy?" asked Danvers in a light, mocking tone that stung the hearer like the cut of a whip.

"Because I have just seen what death-traps we have set for innocent women and children," answered Trevlyn hotly, "and I feel like a murderer!"

"Ah!" and Danvers lifted his eyes, that had the glitter of unsheathed steel, to the speaker's face, and laughed a low cruel laugh that showed his pointed teeth. "And that is an altogether new sensation for you?"

"Danvers, you are a devil," burst from Trevlyn's whitening lips, "a mocking devil sent to torture me—"

"So I think you have said before," laughed Danvers again, "so I must agree. A devil indeed—a poor devil of a friend sent not to torment but to serve you. For I have served you well in sore need, as you know. And I will serve you still." The laughing face suddenly hardened. "But it must be in my own way—even as I served and saved you almost against your own will four years ago. If your poor devil of a friend had not kept a cool head, a strong heart, where would you have been now?"

"Out of your cursed clutch, at least," said Trevlyn, and he gave Zadoc a touch and swept away over the blackened ridge like one demon-driven indeed.

Danvers looked after him with a curious gleam in his eyes. "Rousing," he said to himself slowly. "He is rousing. I wonder what it is—or who—"

An hour later Winifred, on alighting from the carriage at the great door of Trevlyn Towers found a note awaiting her in the hall.

"MY DEAR MISS DEANE:

"I have gone South on a hunting trip. Take care of the little mama, and do what you can for the poor Tyssowskis. Father Philip and you will know what is best. The enclosure may assist your efforts.

H. T."

The enclosure was a check for one hundred dollars signed by Hugh Trevlyn in a hasty blotted scrawl.

"Such a strange, hurried way to leave," moaned Madam Trevlyn when, on her return from the luncheon, Winifred handed her the missive. "But Hugh does such strange things now. He is not like his old self at all. He was such a gay, bright, high-spirited lad—so full of energy and ambition. And that poor Tyssowski woman is dead, you say, Winifred?" continued the good lady, as if this fact were another personal grievance. "Dear me, how perfectly dreadful! Something ought to be done to those cabins, as I told Hugh. I haven't the nerve or strength to look into these things myself."

"Let me look into them for you," said Winifred eagerly. "Dear Madam Trevlyn, there is so much that could be done. Father Philip, before he left this afternoon, showed Tyssowski how he could drain all that foul stagnant water from his place. And this money your son has left—"

"A hundred dollars!" interrupted the lady. "My dear child, what will a hundred dollars do in such a hole? It will take it all to bury the poor woman

and put some decent clothes on her children. How many has she left? Three! Dreadful! Three poor little motherless beggars! It would really be a mercy if they died, too. Don't let us talk about them any more—it is too—too nerve-racking, especially after that Gordon luncheon. Why people will have six courses to a luncheon, I never could see. I feel quite worn out with it all."

The deepened lines of the faded face warned Winifred that it was wise to suggest nothing more. Madam Trevlyn was nervous and a trifle peevish all evening, and her young companion realized for the first time that this good lady, kind-hearted and gracious as she had seemed to her, was in many ways a fifty-year-old child, light-minded, capricious, incapable of serious thought or earnest effort, undeveloped in all things save the love for her son that had been the ruling passion of her life.

And finding all efforts at amusing or entertaining futile, Winifred skillfully turned the conversation to this topic, and the little Madam kindled at once into life and interest. Hugh's babyhood and boyhood, his pranks and perils, were recounted in delighted detail, his joyous youth and early manhood pictured in the colors of the rose. His father had died when the boy was scarce fifteen, and since then he had been her comfort, her joy, her pride.

There had been no thought of any inheritance, for Uncle Harvey had intended that everything

should go to his grandson. So Hugh had studied and worked, and finally gone out West to make a fortune for his "little mama." It was while he was there that Uncle Harvey and Vance died, and all things changed. And Hugh had never seemed quite the same since he had come back.

"Not that he is less loving, less tender, my dear," said the little Madam, "for he is all a mother's heart could ask in that way, as you can see. But there seems a sort of shadow upon his old brightness that all the glitter of this new sunshine can not lift."

A shadow upon him! Standing by her wide window that night, when the weary evening was over, and Madam Trevlyn safe in her own luxurious room, Winifred recalled the words. What was the shadow on that fine, strong, manly face that she had seen, that she had felt?

It had been a weary evening, a troubled day. She was weak, shaken with its pain, its struggles. The chill of poor Marie Tyssowski's dying hand-clasp seemed in her young blood yet.

What was the shadow that lay on Hugh Trevlyn's face and home and life? And then, as if in hopeful answer, came back Father Philip's cheery words as they parted at Tyssowski's cabin.

"That good man who came for me—thank him again, in my name, my child. A kind, true, though perhaps a darkened soul. We must pray for him that he may find the Light."

CHAPTER X

A LITTLE DINNER

DESPITE the absence of the master of the house, Madam Trevlyn's little dinner was a charming success. From the soft, shaded lights that flung a delicate rosy glow on the flower-decked table, to the noiseless footfall of the waiters, every detail was perfect, while the wild duck and terrapin sent by special messenger from the Chesapeake shore more than atoned, as Colonel Raynn cheerily declared, for their Nimrod host's desertion. Though Miss Deane found her first social function in her new character something of an ordeal, she bore it bravely, and to all the guests—but especially perhaps to Helena Marr, glittering in the magnificent jetted toilet still demanded by her two years of widowhood—the fair, girlish figure, gowned simply and daintily in soft white crêpe, was an object of curious interest. But not until the dinner party broke up into pairs and groups in the wide hall, where a wood fire, leaping and blazing in the chimney, invited them to linger, and coffee with the true aroma of the East was served in egg-shell cups, did Mrs. Marr venture to voice the question gleaming in her half-veiled eyes.

“So that is the companion, in that dream of a

Paris gown? Mr. Danvers, since I suppose you know all things, where did they get her?"

Clyde Danvers smiled over his demi tasse, as he answered, "You exaggerate my powers, Mrs. Marr. They are limited to the dusky darkness of the mines, where such fair visions as that before us have no place. But I believe the young lady came from a convent. She is a Romanist, I know," and the speaker's face darkened for a moment.

"So I have heard," said the lady. "But I have been in New York for the last three weeks, and have never seen her until to-night."

"And you find her a little startling?" There was a light mockery in his glance and tone that Helena Marr was quick to catch and understand.

"Oh, scarcely that," she answered. "Only one expects a companion to be something different—a little nearer to an employer's years and tastes. This girl might be Mrs. Trevlyn's daughter."

"Very true. Perhaps it is a daughter that Mrs. Trevlyn desires. If so, Miss Deane seems quite fitted for the post."

Again Helena Marr felt that the speaker was reading and mocking her secret hopes.

"Perhaps," she replied with a shrug of her handsome shoulders. "Every one to her taste. The girl is pretty, I confess, and her gown is perfect—wonderfully so for a young lady who feels the necessity of being a companion."

"Really?" asked Danvers. "Of course I know

nothing about matters feminine, but Miss Deane's toilet to-night seems simplicity itself."

"It is," replied Mrs. Marr. "French simplicity. It has the touch of the Parisian in every line. It is evident that genteel poverty is not this lady companion's rôle."

"How you pretty women love one another!" said Danvers with a laugh that showed the gleam of his long white teeth. "Though for a companion, Miss Deane is unusual, I must say," and his eyes steeled, his smile hardened. "She is playing the Lady Bountiful among our hands in a lavish way, that to my cold business sense, is rather demoralizing."

"Playing Lady Bountiful!" echoed Mrs. Marr in a startled tone. "How, Mr. Danvers? With what?"

"Sympathy, advice, assistance, backed by a generous modicum of hard cash," he answered. "The usual methods of the young lady in the high-class English novel, who reforms and marries the lord of the manor. But it doesn't work on this side of the Atlantic—it is demoralizing, as I say. There's too much fizz in the air now. It's all we can do to keep the beggars down without setting up a ferment of sickly sentimentality about their hard conditions. But there! I see Miss Deane is going to sing for us. Another development, Mrs. Marr! A David in Parisian toilet to soothe perhaps our restless—Saul."

Both speakers turned their eyes to the archway

leading into the music-room, where, unconscious of unfriendly word or glance, Winifred had taken her seat at the piano, and was softly playing the prelude to the old ballad Colonel Raynn had asked for. In a moment her rich young voice, clear and full, held her listeners charmed with "Robin Adair." Even Clyde Danvers, cold and soulless, was swayed for a brief moment by its wonderful spell. Only Helena Marr heard unmoved, unsoftened, her half-veiled eyes fixed upon the white-robed singer in a hard hostile gaze that the watchful Danvers saw, and seeing rejoiced, as such evil spirits will. For this Lady Bountiful, this sweet-voiced "David," was not to his taste. Though it had only been a week since Marie Tyssowski's sore need had called Miss Deane to the Slashes, a new spirit was already working there. The good woman's funeral had been an impressive one, the young lady from the Towers had been the presiding angel of the solemn scene. Crucifix, candles, holy water, the tender touch of old Mother Church, had been visible everywhere. Father Philip had come over the seven miles of mountain and taken the opportunity to tell some plain, fatherly truths. Standing among the little motherless children, Miss Deane had sung, and at the sound of the old, unforgotten hymns, women, and men, too, had sobbed aloud. And now there was a digging of rude drains and gullies at the old priest's suggestion, the pools and quagmires were vanishing noise-

lessly, and paths and dooryards were being raked clean. It was all good, wise work, to which no manager could reasonably object—yet Danvers as he heard of it raged inwardly. For he felt that slowly, quietly but surely, this new interest, widening and growing under his cold, keen eye, would undermine his own.

All unconscious of the two enemies already armed against her, Winifred sang one favorite ballad after the other at the old Colonel's request. When she turned at last from the piano she found Danvers at her side.

"Something a little less archaic before you stop, Miss Deane," he pleaded. "You have some modern gems in your repertoire, I am sure."

"I am afraid I can not sing any more to-night," she said reluctantly. "My throat warns me. I have a little cold. I am not yet used to the sudden changes in these mountains, where it is summer at noon and winter at night."

"Our temperature is changeable. I trust you are not risking that magnificent voice of yours by any exposure," he said earnestly. "Such a gift of the gods is beyond all price. And to think of its being buried here!"

"Oh, not buried!" she answered gayly. "I can find use for it, I assure you. Madam Trevlyn loves music, there is our little chapel at Woodmont, and I could surely ask for no more appreciative audience than I have had to-night."

"It is another piece of Trevlyn's marvelous good luck to have such a songbird on his hearth. How do you like our mountain tops, Miss Deane?"

"Very much—for myself," she answered. "The air, the sunshine, the glory of height and space everywhere—it is all like a draught of new wine. But, oh, the dregs of misery below!" she added in another tone.

"Why stir them up?" he added lightly. "It is so much wiser to let them lie untouched. Then, at least, some one has life's cup sparkling to the brim, and that, as perhaps you have noticed, is the policy up here. It is my business to keep the dregs out of sight."

"And can you?" asked Winifred, her eyes lifting in gentle wonder. "Surely Mr. Trevlyn must know and see for himself?"

"Perhaps. But for all that, he wants his wine cup clear—and it is my business to keep it so. My agreement with him is that he shall be free." Winifred found the smile that accompanied the word strangely repellent. "Free to live according to the philosophy of the Persian poet:

"Come fill the cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter garment of Repentance fling.
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter, and the Bird is on the wing."

"Do not quote that heathen poem to me, I beg," said Winifred quickly. "It voices blindness, darkness, despair, not freedom."

"Perhaps, again," said Danvers with a shrug.

“Still Mrs. Marr would corroborate my opinion, I am sure, having been the ‘thou’ of our Omar’s garden in the past, and, it is suspected, his ‘heart’s desire’ still.”

But if the speaker expected to startle Miss Deane into curiosity or perhaps jealousy, he was disappointed.

“I am here as Mrs. Trevlyn’s companion—not as her son’s critic,” she answered quietly, and though a pleasant smile accompanied the words, Danvers felt their rebuke. And then Dr. Dallas came up to the piano to talk music, and Winifred delighted him with the sonatas and nocturnes seldom heard, as he declared, in these “ragtime” days.

“A lovely girl,” old Colonel Raynn was assuring Mrs. Trevlyn. “You are to be congratulated on such a charming acquisition to your household. You must let Mrs. Raynn steal her away now and then to give us a glimpse of our lost spring.”

“My dear young lady,” said Dr. Dallas as he shook hands with Winifred at parting, “I have to thank you for a rare pleasure. It has been long since I heard music like yours—music that seems, even to an old worldling, to drift through heaven’s open door. And a word of advice at parting, my dear child—keep away from those pest holes in the mountain hollows. Dr. Slater is the physician in charge, and I don’t pretend to meddle with another man’s business, but I don’t want you to don angel wings before your time.”

"I am so glad to have met you, Miss Deane," purred Helena Marr. "I trust this is only the first of many pleasant evenings together, for Kenwood is scarcely four miles away, and the Trevlyns are such old and dear friends."

And Clyde Danvers having made his adieux with the deprecating courtesy that befitted the mere manager of the great Trevlyn Works, walked back to his bachelor den, smoking the strong black cigar that he favored in moments of reflection.

"So that is what has roused Trevlyn," he said, an ugly look deepening on his thin, keen face. "Well, I don't wonder! Deane! Deane! Deane! It's not an uncommon name, and there couldn't, simply couldn't, be any connection—but Deane! It's a little curious, to say the least."

* * * * *

Alone again in her room, Winifred stood looking at the stars, a sad sense of wonder and disappointment, in which there was no thought of self, weighing on her gentle heart. Was this brilliant beauty, on whom the woe of widowhood sat so lightly, really the "heart's desire" of Hugh Trevlyn? It seemed so strange, so unfitting! But there was so much strange and discordant in this new world in which she found herself, that perhaps Helena Marr was only a part with the rest.

And, despite the friendliness of this world's greetings to her, Winifred was conscious of a new loneliness to-night—a vague sense of loss. To

banish the depression she took up the letter that had come this morning, and turning up the light above her toilette table, sat down to reread madrina's cramped but cheery lines:

"**MA CHERIE:**

"How charming in you to write this old woman at such a length! Will it be a reward to get this scrawl from my rheumatic hands that must send something of the love and hope for you that is in my heart? I am so pleased with all you tell me of your new home—its comfort, its luxury—for these things to us, who are not altogether behind the convent grille, are like the little flowers that the good God makes bloom about Duty's way. We may enjoy them for what they are worth.

"And this delightful old *mondaine*, Madam Trevlyn, who is making all things so pleasant for you—ah, she is of a type I know and love. True, she holds to her dolls, stuffed with sawdust though they may be, like a fifty-year-old child, but what would you have? In her day women were not taught to weigh and measure the stars as they are now. And the grave dark-eyed son, and good Father Philip, and his little church and the poor Poles and Italians in the terrible mines! I was glad to hear of them all. There is a field for you, my little missionary, I see. Keep your pocket filled with the good seed and scatter it as you can. Do you hear anything of our poor boy, Dick?

"My old friend, Sister Euphrasia, who has been for ten years in charge of the Indian missions at C_____, dropped in to me last week. She is in P____ for a short visit after experiences in that wild region that would fill a dozen books. And to look at her you would suppose that she had been

meditating before the altar instead of grappling with sin and sorrow in every form.

"Your picture with its autograph stands on my table, and the sight of it recalled a strange incident in her busy life. She told me that four or five years ago a young man staggered to the mission doors, half conscious from a murderous blow, and she nursed him back to life. He would give no account of himself when he could speak, not even his name, but she found a little French prayer-book in his breast pocket bearing the name of Winifred Deane. Could it have been poor Dick on one of his mad escapades? Sister Euphrasia could not tell. She said so many drifted in and out of her care and would give no sign, and in her broad, tender charity she asked no questions, feeling that in many cases it would not be well to know.

"Ah well, *ma chérie*, my poor hand is giving out, so I must say adieu. Adieu, indeed. To God and His tender mercy I commit you, feeling that in some way He will bless and accept your sacrifice. Again good-night and good-by. With all my heart's love. ELIZABETH LEE WARBURTON."

Winifred pressed the tremulous old signature to her lips with a tender little sigh. Dear wise, faithful, loving old madrina! And Dick, poor prodigal Dick! Sister Euphrasia's nameless wanderer was doubtless he, for he had shown her the little prayer-book that had been her first girlish gift to him when they last parted. But of that past peril of death from which the good nun had saved him, he had never spoken. It was some mad, disgraceful episode, perhaps, of which he dared not speak.

Poor, wayward, reckless Dick ! Would the sacrifice she had made for him, the sacrifice of home, friends, fortune, the sacrifice that had brought her a dependent into this alien world, be indeed of any avail ?

The question—the cruel doubt—struck a sharp pang into her heart. She dropped on her knees again by the wide window and prayed through blinding tears that her exile might not be in vain. And while she prayed there came the quick clatter of hoofs along the avenue, and the dogs burst into baying welcome. The master of Trevlyn had come home.

CHAPTER XI

A MORNING MEETING

THE master of Trevlyn had not returned alone. A party of jovial sportsmen from the shores of the Chesapeake, allured by promise of sport in these ruder heights, accompanied him.

The Towers woke into unusual life. Though the Nimrods camped out most of the time in Trevlyn's log cabin on the mountain-top, their coming stirred the neighborhood into sympathetic cheer. There were meets that drew hound and horn from far and near. Old sports forgot the weight of years, and risked their growing avoirdupois in the saddle. Colonel Raynn defied the rheumatism and donned his faded pinks. Dr. Dallas was beguiled from the laboratory, where he was engaged in some epoch-making experiments, while Mrs. Marr, on her gray hunter Goblin, was a vision of beauty that brought all the gallant Marylanders metaphorically to their knees.

But Winifred took no part in this merrymaking. Madam Trevlyn was not strong enough for outdoor amusement of any kind, and perhaps a little peevish at her limitations. So it became her companion to share and lighten them. A fine saddle horse had been placed at Winifred's disposal, but

although her healthy young nerves sometimes tingled at the thought of a brisk canter over these breezy heights, she evaded all such opportunities with a graceful tact that charmed, even while it irritated, the master of Trevlyn.

It was with some surprise one crisp autumn morning as he was returning alone to the Towers from the camp on the mountain-top where the sportsmen were still sleeping off the effects of a gay revel the previous night, that he descried Miss Deane mounted on Bayard, taking an early canter over the ridge. She wore a simple dark-blue habit, and her soft brown hair, somewhat loosened by the autumn breeze, fell in light waves about the fresh young face. After ten days with that dashing huntress, Helena Marr, this quiet rider seemed very graceful and girlish.

"Good morning," he greeted, drawing rein. "So you do break loose sometimes?"

"This is my first equestrian escapade," she laughed. "Since you were good enough to offer me Bayard, I thought it would save every one trouble if I could ride instead of driving to Woodmont."

"Are you not early?" he asked. "I trust that with half a dozen maids at mama's call, you do not feel it necessary to take your pleasure at such an uncomfortable hour."

"Uncomfortable! Not at all," she replied. "I was just thinking what a lovely hour it is to be out. I am going to early Mass at St. Anne's."

"It is Sunday," he said, "true enough. I had forgotten. What pagans we must seem to you, Miss Deane?"

"In the face of your old Crusader's crest, yes," she answered frankly. "It seems a pity the shield and cross should have slipped so completely from your grasp—with all they signify," she added in a lower tone. "I was translating some of the old family records with your mother yesterday. The saints and sages that figure there surely left a heritage to all of their blood and name."

"Which we have squandered, I suppose," he said with a shrug. "It seems to me little mama is making undue demands on your good nature, when she sets you to deciphering medieval manuscripts."

"Oh, I found them most interesting," said Winifred quickly. "The old legends were so especially quaint and charming. You remember that of *La Tache Rouge*?"

"The Red Stain, is it not? No, I never heard of it," he replied. "I am not very much of a linguist, you know, and mama's old manuscripts are beyond me."

"Oh, what a Philistine!" she said, shaking her head gayly. "You don't deserve to have such delightful ancestors, Mr. Trevlyn. Especially the brave knight of *La Tache Rouge*, who, sinner though he was, quite won my heart."

"How did he distinguish himself?" asked Trevlyn. He had turned his horse when he had first

met her, and they were both taking their way leisurely over the mountain road that just here wound deviously upward through a heavy growth of pines. Elsewhere the woods had been swept bare by the November wind, the dead vines clung drearily to the rocks, the sumach berries were blackened, the wild grapes withered by the blight of the frost. But in these dim arcades, the horses' feet fell noiselessly on the pine needles, the morning sunbeams shimmered through perennial foliage, the spicy air was still the breath of growth, of life. The valley below was a sea of silvery mist, and a pale wraith of a moon lingered in the blue sky above them.

After the clamorous days, the festive nights of the past weeks, these morning heights seemed to Trevlyn filled with a strange, cloistral peace. Or was it the girl, whose presence from the first had been like the touch of a calming hand on the fevered pulse of his life? Whose clear eyes seemed to reach beyond the shadows and the darkness to a light he could not see?

“This sturdy old ancestor of yours was a sinner, as I said,” continued Winifred, “but one of those hot-headed sinners whom we pity and forgive. A hot head seems so much more pardonable than a cold heart. But I have written out his story as told in the old manuscript, and will give it to you to read at your leisure, for there is the bell warning me to make haste,” and she touched Bayard into

a canter as a musical peal echoed from the ridge below.

“May I go on with you?” asked Trevlyn, “or are pagans excluded from these early rites?”

“No one is excluded—on the contrary, Father Philip grieves sorely over his empty benches. But we are doing better this morning. Barney Regan is bringing over a wagon-load from the Works by the lower road. It is strange how blessings come in darkest disguise. Poor Marie Tyssowski’s holy death made such a deep impression on her careless, thoughtless neighbors, that many of them are turning back to God. We have been thinking, Father Philip and I, that since you were so good in her case, you would encourage, or at least approve, of a little Sunday-school at the Works. The children are growing up in such appalling ignorance. Barney tells me that there is a wagon-shed on the railroad that he could make fairly comfortable for the purpose.”

“Barney?” repeated Trevlyn grimly. “The honest fellow can not sign his name—and he proposes to teach?”

“Oh, not at all, Mr. Trevlyn. I propose to teach myself.”

“You!” he exclaimed. “You! Teach a crowd of dirty little beggars in a wagon-shed? You! I will never consent or approve, Miss Deane.”

“Why not?” she asked, startled at the sudden anger in his tone.

"Because it is no fit work for you, no fit place. It would be folly, madness, for you to undertake anything so unnecessary—so repellent—"

"Neither unnecessary nor repellent from my point of view," she answered quietly. "But we see differently, as I know. I would have been very glad of your assistance in this matter, but since you refuse, Mr. Trevlyn—"

"I do, most decidedly," he said brusquely.

"Then we must do the best we can without you," she answered, and the violet eyes met his with a defiant little flash.

"I object," he continued, his face darkening.

"I am very sorry," she answered quietly. "Still I claim my Sunday freedom, and the right to employ it as I please. And if I please to give a portion of it to these poor little ones who are growing up in ignorance of all that they should know, all that will make them Christians instead of criminals, I can not see why or how you can object."

"To spare you," he said hurriedly. "To spare you sights, sounds, experiences, knowledge, which can only bring you pain. The Works are Hades to me as well as to you, so I avoid them as far as possible. I had hoped to make your stay at Trevlyn pleasant, Miss Deane."

"I am sure of that," she said quickly. "You have shown it in every way. And it is not your fault if under the shadow of that cross," she pointed to St. Anne's little spire, now visible

through the trees, "I learn duties and responsibilities which you can not see. And as that of choir leader is among them, I must hurry and take my place at the organ. You are coming in, too?"

"No," answered Trevlyn abruptly, as he caught sight of the clumsy vehicle driven by Barney Regan, that was depositing its freight of unwonted worshipers at the chapel door. "I would be as out of place there as you in the wagon-shed."

"Good-by, then," she said, with a smiling nod, and Trevlyn drew rein under the shadow of the pines while Winifred kept on to the church, where a dozen humble cavaliers were ready to assist her from the saddle and care for Bayard. Barney, Patsy, Tyssowski and his little girls, old Tom Devlin and some ten others were there from the Trevlyn Works, for the rumor had gone forth that the lady from the Towers, who had been so good to Marie Tyssowski, was to play the long-closed organ, and lead the sweet, old, familiar hymns.

And a little later Trevlyn, making his slow way homeward, paused to listen to the strain of solemn music that rose like a new call over the mountains. The old organ was a trifle wheezy, perhaps, the singers untrained, but clear and full above them all was a girlish voice, whose thrilling sweetness seemed to pierce some hidden depths in the listener's heart with a stab that was half joy and half pain.

"Sure and it was like the angels at hiven's gate,"

said Sergeant Dan as he hobbled around that morning, serving Father Philip's late breakfast. "Where she got that last hymn I don't know, but she had them murdering dagoes crying like children."

"That poor Tyssowski woman left an old Polish hymn-book which Miss Deane is using, evidently to good advantage," said Father Philip. "And she has a wonderful voice and touch."

"The old organ never let out a screech," said Sergeant Dan proudly. "It has been broken-winded this twenty years—it's she that knows how to handle the keys wid them soft white fingers. And she is the beauty out and out, from top to toe! Faix, and if she gets the hould at Trevlyn Towers there will be a change indeed," chuckled the speaker. "It would be short work with the lodge and the dance, and all the divilment then. Ay, and with Mr. Danvers himself, I'm thinking, for things are getting worse and worse, Barney says. If it wasn't for kaping an eye on poor little motherless Patsy, he wouldn't stop another day, though he gets good pay, for there's no one, as Danvers well knows, wid the head and hand to take big Barney's place. And now he has had to move into Tysowski's cabin to kape that poor little dago from harm, for betwixt letters and skull and crossbones, and knives stuck into his door and windows he is in dread of his life, since he left the lodge and went back on his divil's oath."

"It's a shame," said Father Philip indignantly. "Mr. Trevlyn should know of this. He is a just man, I am sure, and would put a stop to such lawless terrorism."

"Faix, and I'm not so sure of that," said Sergeant Dan with a grim nod. "It's tarred wi the same brush they are, to my thinking—masther and man—masther and man."

Father Philip was silent. The rumors that had reached him of Trevlyn's indolence and indifference left him no defense. This man who shirked all responsibility, evaded all duties, was blind, deaf, dull, to the wants and woes and sins of his dependents, could have no claim on his sympathy, scarcely on his tolerance.

And yet—and yet as he recalled that ride over the heights, and the picture of the grave, strong, shadowed face rose before his memory, a strange pity woke in his heart for this child of fortune to whom nothing that the world could give had been denied. And with the intuition that comes to those who have read the secrets of human souls for half a century, Father Philip thought, pitifully:

"Something deeper, darker, heavier than men see lies weighing upon that noble soul, that generous heart."

CHAPTER XII

THE MISTRESS OF KENWOOD

FOUR miles beyond Trevlyn Towers, where the mountain ridge sloped down in a succession of grassy terraces to valley and river, the rich brewer Reuben Marr had, some dozen years before, built his ponderous and palatial home, an architectural monstrosity so conspicuous in its pretence that the "Brewer's Vat," as it was laughingly called, had been one of the landmarks pointed out to travelers through the valley.

But when the brewer's millions had won, or perhaps bought, the beauty of the county, a softening touch was laid upon the "Vat's" glittering splendor. Burnished cupola and gilded weathervane ceased to dazzle critical eyes, the flying buttresses were masked in shrubbery, towers and pillars and porticoes veiled in ivy and roses. Though it was quite impossible even for the wand of gold wielded by its new queen to subdue the flamboyant "Vat" into the dignity of Trevlyn Towers, still it was tempered into a show of taste that silenced the scoffing traveler, and became Kenwood.

There had been rumors that the sturdy old brewer himself had been brought under the changing touch, and that the new life, with its style and

repression, had caused the stroke of paralysis that had killed him. It is certain that whatever her married life to the rubicund old sexagenarian had been, Helena Marr at twenty-six did not bemoan her widowhood. And when, three years before, the lover of her girlhood came back as the master of Trevlyn Towers, she felt, with an exultant thrill, that the fates had been propitious indeed, despite the Parthian shaft that old Reuben had sped almost with his last breath, when he had added a codicil to his will, leaving his whole fortune to an "Old Man's Home" in case his widow remarried.

With Hugh Trevlyn within her reach even this last arrow lost its sting. She had been so sure of her power over him, of the charm of her undimmed beauty, of his own empty heart and life, that she had waited with smiling hope for the old love to waken and find voice. But she had waited in vain. There had been no one else, she knew. He had told her so with the grim frankness that was one of the features of their new intercourse. But it was without a touch of sentiment, of regret, of even soft recall. It was as if he stirred dead ashes, in which there was no longer a living spark. And as, day by day, this knowledge grew upon her, all the petty passions of her shallow nature woke into torturing life. Pride, jealousy, ambition, greed—for Hugh Trevlyn had wealth that could replace any sacrifice of her own. And last, but not

least, she had learned the worth of the heart she had cast aside. Love—love stung into new strength by these ignobler things, aroused and mastered her.

She was seated this evening in her satin-lined boudoir, the Italian maid whom she had found at Trevlyn Works dressing her beautiful hair. The girl's slender olive fingers threaded the golden locks with deft, skilful touch, but her thoughts seemed far away. Mrs. Marr caught the absent look in the dark eyes that met hers in the mirror, and grew sharply impatient, as ladies who claim heart and soul as well as hand service sometimes will.

"For heaven's sake, Lucia, wake up," she said irritably. "It makes me nervous to have you working on my hair half asleep."

"Signora, no, I do not sleep," the girl answered sadly. "In my own country, yes—but now, ah, Santa Maria, never, never now!"

"Never sleep? What nonsense!" was the sharp rejoinder. "You are getting those puffs too high, Lucia. I've told you a dozen times I don't want my hair mounted up like that. It makes me look five years older, at least."

"The signora has been a wife," said Lucia, in her soft, musical voice. "So it is I would make a crown of her beautiful hair." She twisted the golden locks for a moment into a coronet that gave its wearer a new and stately grace, indeed.

"Older, perhaps yes—but why not, if the Signora looks a queen?"

"I tell you I will not have it," said her mistress angrily. "I must look young, young, you fool! Don't prate to me about your queens. I would give all that I am worth to be a girl again to-night—the girl of half a dozen years ago."

Lucia's soft black eyes opened wonderingly, but she took her cue. She knotted the wealth of golden hair low upon the snowy neck, she let it ripple in delicate tendrils above brow and cheek. But her mistress, following her deft touch in the Venetian mirror with dissatisfied eyes, still found peevish fault. And when at last the toilet was completed, though it was a radiant vision that faced Mrs. Marr in the tall cheval glass, it was not the girl of long ago, she knew. She had hardened, chilled. She could see, vague and intangible as it was, that there had been a change no art could conceal. If she would win now, it must be by woman's wiles, not girlish charm.

She was to give a parting supper to Trevlyn's sportsmen guests to-night. She had seen much of them the last three weeks, and it seemed a fitting close to their autumn season together. And she had seen much of Hugh Trevlyn as well—too much, perhaps, for her peace of mind. Meet and camp-fire and *al fresco* lunch, long gallops after the hounds over field and meadow, daring races up rock and steep, where she alone of the women,

mounted on her gray Goblin, would venture, had thrown them into a friendly *camaraderie* akin to that of their early spring.

And the golden haze of the Indian summer enwrapped the mountain heights, the air was filled with a spicy sweetness in which faint, fleeting memories of lost bloom seemed embalmed, the sunshine had the warmth and glow of early June. It was the dream hour of the year—and Helena Marr had dreamed away at Hugh Trevlyn's side.

To-night he was coming as a guest to her home, and for him, more than all the rest, she had prepared splendid welcome. The great house blazed with lights; wafts of evasive perfume stole through the stately rooms from the half hidden conservatories that had been old Reuben's pride; in the big baronial hall a huge log fire artistically cast the too pretentious outlines into friendly shadow. The hostess, in white lace with violets, befitting her widowhood, on her breast, and in the girlish fall of her golden hair, was a beauty to whom the gallant Southerners surrendered unconditionally. The supper—a hunt supper—with its rich, substantial viands prepared by a French chef, its flow of wine and wit, was the evening's crowning success. And Trevlyn had been the soul of it. It was one of those brief feverish periods, when he flung memory to the winds and strove to forget. The reckoning would come, he knew; the shadow would fall deeper and blacker on the morrow, but for to-night, with

these cheery, whole-hearted friends, and the glow and gladness of this festive hour, he would forget. For it had been a trying day. Winifred had come to him with an indignant account of the cowardly persecution of poor Tyssowski, that had stirred his blood and sent him in a hot fury to Danvers for explanation and redress. And there had been the usual scene of fierce protest and cool defiance. "It has been *my* understanding that you left all such affairs in my hands, Trevlyn, and I never interfere in these petty disagreements. The men must settle their difficulties themselves."

"But this is tyranny, brutal, cowardly tyranny! The poor devil is in fear of his life," said Trevlyn hotly.

"Perhaps," answered Danvers with a shrug. "But he has brought it on himself, and that does not concern you or me. We must wink at a great deal in places like these, Trevlyn. We have winked at worse things, as you know."

And the master of Trevlyn winced at the words, barbed as they were with mocking glance and smile, and Danvers had scored victory again as he always did when he and his chief clashed. But this bitterness of weak defeat had been heavy on Trevlyn all day, so heavy that it brought a feverish rebound. It was little wonder that Helena Marr, her woman's wit blurred perhaps by the flattering incense ascending around her to-night, misunderstood Trevlyn's seeming return to his lost youth.

It had come, she felt exultantly, and she must seize, hold, make it her own. She led him into the conservatory to see her orchids, and while he looked at the rare, fantastic blooms, she stood near one of the vine-wreathed pillars, a beautiful picture indeed against the dusky background of fern and palm that stretched into shadowy distance behind her. Colored lights twinkled through the tropic foliage, the soft splash of a fountain near made music, the air was heavy with perfumes.

"You don't like orchids," the lady said, with a low laugh. "Confess it without fear. Neither do I. But they are a part of all the rest—the gawd, the glitter that dazzled a foolish girl five years ago. Now I have learned its worth, its cost. You have your revenge."

"My revenge!" he echoed. "I have never sought or wished for any. Surely you do not think me so poor a cad as that?"

"No," she answered. "It has been the hardest part of my punishment that I can only think of you as noble, generous, honorable—all that a man should be—and of myself—" she paused for a moment before she added in a low, trembling voice, "of myself as a blind, insensate fool."

"Not at all," he said quietly. "I am a grim, gloomy fellow that you valued at his true worth when you cast him off. I don't blame you at all."

She caught her breath sharply. It was like an icy douche, that answering tone.

"It is good of you to say so," she continued, "but you were always good and generous and tender. And what foolish, happy times we had together. Those morning rides over the mountain, the dances, the drives! What a reckless fellow you were! Do you remember how you nearly broke your neck getting me a laurel bloom on Dead Man's Ledge?"

Dead Man's Ledge! It brought back another picture to the listener to-night—the slender, white-robed girl whom he had guided over its perils a few weeks ago, on her mission of mercy. Somehow the thought of that new presence on the mountain made those memories lose their charm.

"I have that pressed flower yet," continued the speaker softly. "It meant more than all these orchids then. And those summer evenings on Aunt Martha's old wide porch, with the moonlight shining through the rose vines. Have you given up your banjo completely in these latter days?"

"It has not had a string for years," he answered lightly. "Did I inflict my banjo on you with all the rest? What a callow cub I must have been! And how far away it seems!" he added in a graver tone.

Far away indeed, so far that into the shadow-darkened present the old boyish love could fling no gleam of reflected light. It had died utterly in the blackness that engulfed the speaker's life. It would need some ray—higher, clearer, purer, to pierce the gloom now.

Mrs. Marr bit her red lip angrily at the aloofness of his words, of his tone.

"Don't make me quite an octogenarian, Mr. Trevlyn," she said with a forced laugh. "It was only six years ago!"

"We can not count time always by the years, nor by hours either," he added with a smile; "as I am sure poor Tom Beverly can bear witness, for I feel he is swearing all sorts of hot southern oaths at me now. You have turned the poor boy's head completely. Do take pity on him, and give him a friendly word before he goes to-night. He has been raving about you even in his sleep for the past two weeks. And Worden and Payton are just about as bad. They are ready to cut my throat this minute, I know, for carrying you off like this. They leave to-morrow, so we can afford to be merciful to-night."

"Merciful!" as she repeated the word a strange hardness came over the beautiful face. "I don't think I am in a merciful mood, Mr. Trevlyn, but since you ask it I will be at least mock-merciful."

They turned away from the orchids to rejoin the other guests, and so gay and radiant was Mrs. Marr all evening that Hugh Trevlyn never guessed that he had unconsciously roused that worst of all furies —a woman scorned.

Not until she was back in her own room that night did the storm burst, and wide-eyed little Lucia bore its brunt, as, tearing off jewel and

flower and trinket in angry haste, she ruthlessly flung herself face down upon her couch, crushing all the dainty splendors of her beautiful dress, while she burst into a passion of sobs and tears which the soft-voiced little maid vainly tried to soothe.

"Signora, Signora, you must be ill, indeed. I will call the doctor that he may cure you."

"No," interposed her mistress sharply. "I want no one, girl, no one. I want to die—to die—Fool that I was! Weak, dreaming fool!"

And the November wind shrilling around the casement without seemed to echo her cry, so maddening to the woman to whom earth, with its love and pride and hopes, is all.

It was far into another day before the patient Lucia could get her mistress disrobed and at rest. Then, as she was about to leave the room, she paused and spoke hesitatingly.

"The Signora will sleep late in the morning, I am sure. She will not care if, before she wakens, I go a while across the great hill to church. I have found there is Mass there, and I would pray for poor Carlo before God's altar. And the music takes the pain from my heart, Signora. It would take the pain from the Signora's if she could hear it, I know."

"What music are you talking about, you foolish girl?" asked Mrs. Marr fretfully.

"The young lady from the great house comes

and sings like an angel, Signora, the beautiful young lady. The men from the Works come to hear her—even the master on his black horse listens with the rest."

The master on his black horse! Mrs. Marr suddenly started up on her pillow.

"Are you talking about Mr. Trevlyn?"

"Yes, Signora."

"He comes to your church, you say? I never heard of such a thing. To your Romish church?"

"Only under the trees, Signora, to hear the beautiful lady sing. Soon perhaps he will come farther, Signora, if God is good. For the men say," Lucia paused in her innocent gossip, startled by the fierce questioning of her listener's eyes.

"The men say what?" asked her mistress breathlessly.

"That it would be God's blessing indeed if the master marries her, Signora—if he marries the sweet lady who sings."

"Maries her!" Mrs. Marr burst into a harsh, strange laugh as she fell back on her pillow.
"Maries her!"

And Lucia, reassured by the change in her mistress's tone, left her, unconscious that she had roused a demon in the Signora's breast that her simple ministry could not still. All night the mistress of Kenwood lay wakeful, listening to the

fierce November wind that was sweeping the last leaves from the autumn trees, tearing down the lingering beauty of flaming blossom and golden vine. The Indian summer, with its dream, had passed, leaving the rock of Helena Marr's nature vengeful and bare.

CHAPTER XIII

LA TACHE ROUGE

THE first snow had fallen, a light snow that lay like a bridal veil upon the vines of the Virginia creeper, and wreathed the hedgerows and shrubbery with mimic bloom of spring.

“Just enough winter to prison us,” Madam Trevlyn murmured, a little fretfully. “I was going to drive over to Kenwood to call. Helena has guests this week from New York. One is a palmist and tells wonderful things—past, present, and to come.”

“It does not require very much skill to tell the past or present,” said Winifred, with a laugh, “but the to come——”

“Why, of course,” said the little Madam quickly, “every one is interested in the future, my dear. Wouldn’t you like to know yours?”

“No,” was the quiet answer; “I would not read it if I could.”

“My dear Winifred, what a very strange girl you are,” said Madam wonderingly.

They were seated in the morning-room, where a bright log fire blazed on the hearth, and Winifred was busy with the embroidery she had learned to do so skilfully at Mont Lorette. Her *pièce de résistance*

ance just now was a bit of tapestry for the window seat in the hall—the old Beaumont arms on a background of dull blues.

“Why strange?” she asked, as she threaded her needle with white silk for the Crusader’s cross.

“To be so—so indifferent to fate. Why, my dear, at your age I was fairly breathless with hopes and anticipations. I was looking for revelations and prophecies at every step. And even after I was married I had Hugh’s horoscope cast by an astrologer, who charged me ten dollars for telling me the most horrible things. I tore the wretched paper into bits and cried all night. It foretold all sorts of dreadful things for my poor baby. Crime and bloodshed, and bondage to evil powers for years. And Hugh has had nothing but good fortune. So there is no truth in horoscopes, I know.”

“There is no truth in any of those things,” said the girl quickly. “Or if there is it is truth distorted by malignant spirits. The future is hidden from us in mercy, dear Madam, and we have no right to lift the veil.”

“Miss Deane is dead right there, little mother.” Trevlyn stepped out from behind the double portières, where he had been a listener unobserved. “I hope you will not meddle with Mrs. Marr’s palmist—she will only upset your nerves. Isn’t your present satisfactory enough?” he asked, as standing behind her, he laid his hands in his usual caress upon her silvery hair. He was at his best

at such moments, but Winifred, looking up in friendly approval, was shocked by the ashen pallor of his face, the rigid lines about his firm, set lips. He was ill, she thought, with a strange, sudden leap of the heart, ill, and did not wish to startle his mother.

He met the soft, questioning sympathy of the uplifted eyes, and the rigid lines relaxed, the color ebbed back into his cheek. He sank into the chair beside the little Madam with the long-drawn breath of one whose heart has for a moment stood still.

“Satisfactory,” echoed his mother, happily unconscious of this passing mood. “My dear Hugh, you know my present is most satisfactory. But, of course, changes must come, and one feels naturally curious to know what they will be.”

“Why must change come?” he asked. “I am quite content to drift in this way forever—with a slight protest against so much unnecessary industry on the part of Miss Deane. Medieval embroidery to-day! A little while ago it was medieval manuscript. By the by, was I not promised a lesson or a legend or something in that line?”

“Yes,” said Winifred. She had caught the effort at lightness in his voice and manner, and proceeded to sustain it with kindly gayety. “It is waiting for you there on my desk, Mr. Trevlyn, when you are ready properly to appreciate it.”

“I am ready now and here,” he said. “Suppose,

since little mama is, I know, an enthusiast in family lore, you lay aside that blinding criss-cross work and read the legend to me. I am in a mood to be instructed and improved this morning."

Ah, he was ill, shaken in some way, Winifred could see. The light tone could not deceive her, there was a note in it false and sharp with some hidden pain. She must bridge over this trying hour for him as best she could. So turning to her desk in the corner, she drew from it some closely written sheets of manuscript tied with a scarlet ribbon.

"Family records," she said gayly, "to be bound later in ooze leather, Mr. Trevlyn, and embossed with the Beaumont arms. And if the style seems primitive and didactic, remember we are back in medieval days, when good knights signed their names with a cross mark, and the little perplexities of grammar and orthography were unknown. So with these premises, son of a saintly, knightly race," she bowed to him archly, "your scribe will read the legend of your noble ancestor, known in family history as Le Sieur Bertrand de la Tache Rouge."

"It really is most interesting, Hugh," interposed his mother, "but Winifred and I have gone over it half a dozen times together, and Fifine is waiting for directions about the alteration in my black lace gown, so I must leave you to learn about La Tache Rouge without me. He always laughed at my

musty old family papers, Winifred. Do rouse him to some interest, if you can."

"I am already roused," answered her son, as the little Madam vanished through the Indian portières. "Just now family legend seems the one vital thing on earth."

He clasped his hands over his head, and leaned back in the great carved chair with a mock gayety of resignation that did not deceive Winifred. The lines on the handsome face still told of some pain she had no right to question—some self-struggle, perhaps, that she had no right to see.

But the pretty morning-room was warm and cosy, the fire flickered cheerily at their feet; without the long, curtained window the snow was falling noiselessly. She would divert him if she could, and in the low sweet voice that held such music even in its speaking tones, she began to read the old legend that she felt might while away a dreary hour for a world-weary man.

"It was in the days when the great King Philip le Dieu Donne reigned over France, that Le Sieur Bertrand de Beaumont ruled with strong hand the lands and castle of his fathers, holding the waterways and the valleys far up to the mountains and the sea, yielding fealty only to holy Church and King and true, loving loyalty, as became a Christian knight, to the lady of his troth, for, plighted from childhood as befitted their noble birth, he had given no thought to any other maiden than Fédore of

Auxelles. Féodore the fair, so was she called for the milky whiteness of her skin, on which neither sun nor moon could cast spot, and the light in her eyes which was akin to that of the star that leads the traveler when all else is black with night and storm."

"Not bad that, for medieval metaphor," commented Winifred's listener. "I begin to feel some remote tenderness of consanguinity for Féodore the fair. But I beg your pardon, go on."

The reader went on.

"Ill doth it beseem a clerk of Saint Ouen to give thought or word to female beauty, wile or snare of the evil one as it so often is, leading men to destruction and perdition."

"Forceful, even in the translation," murmured Trevlyn. The weary lines of the mouth were relaxing, there was a humorous gleam in the dark eyes. The old legend was doing its kindly work.

"But," continued the soft-voiced reader, "these lines are written that the beauty and virtue of Féodore the fair may be known to all, and there may be no doubt that she had the charm to rule the fickle heart of man, which virtue alone, by reason of his fallen nature, has not always the power to hold."

"I do not know which to approve most," commented Miss Deane's listener, "the narrator's wisdom or the translator's lucid rendition thereof. I trust my ancestor of the fickle heart and fallen na-

ture did not prove unworthy of the fair and virtuous Fédore."

"But it was a time," continued the old legend, "when the Christian world was rising in arms at the voice of the saintly Bernard of Clairvaux, to free the holy places from the Turks, who had again laid sacrilegious hands upon them. Having the weal of her lover's soul at heart the pious damosel Fédore bade her betrothed go with the mighty host that, countless as the leaves in the forest, was gathering under the banner of the cross. And binding her white scarf as favor on his helmet, she vowed that unless he, her true lover, came back to claim her troth, she would live a widowed maid forever.

"A bold brave knight was Le Sieur Bertrand, and to tell of all his ventures in the Holy War would take time which a clerk of St. Ouen may not give to a worldly narrative. It is of the one venture unlike all others in its perils, that in warning to all those who come after him these lines are writ.

"For not only by force of arms and might of battle did the evil one in these days rage against the hosts of the cross. By sickness and blight, by treacherous misguidings on strange and unknown shores, by enemies in hiding in mountain and valley, were the Crusaders harried, until not a fourth of the great army reached the Holy Land.

"And even there greater evil befell, for the gay young queen who had come with her lord soon wearied of saintly purpose, and declaring the

King was like unto a monk in gravity, turned to lighter things, to feasting and revelings, the song of troubadours, to gaming and dicing, and all that could make the dreary hours pass joyously. Ay, even deadlier evils found their way into the Christian ranks, jugglers and mountebanks with powers of darkness and teachers of forbidden knowledge, men who could read the skies and stars for things unknown, venders of strange charms and amulets, for by all these unholy acts did the devil strive against the army who were to do battle for God and holy Church.

“And being young and bold and gallant, the Sieur Bertrand de Beaumont, like many others, followed the leading of the gay and gracious queen, and forgetting prayer and holy teaching, fell into the snare of the evil one, of which these lines tell. Being heavy with wine and dull with roystering one night, he played recklessly and lost all that he had, purse and gold and armor and battle axe, even to the horse he rode and the signet ring of his fathers, without which no Beaumont could sign or seal parchment or deed or marriage line.

“‘That I must win back,’ said the knight, his dull wits kindling. It was one of the dark-eyed strangers from the hills that had played against him, and le Sieur Beaumont was wroth to lose his father’s ring to one like him. ‘As the noble knight pleases,’ was the answer, and there was evil light

in the stranger's eye. 'I will play for the cross on his breast.'

"They tossed the dice, and again the stranger won, and le Sieur Beaumont tore the Crusader's cross from his doublet in fury. 'Again, sir knight. Fortune may change,' scoffed the dark-eyed stranger. 'For the white scarf of your lady.' And then, for all the grace of God had left him, le Sieur Beaumont played again, and lost the white favor of the fair Fédore.

"'Now, indeed, there is naught left worth the living,' burst forth the knight. 'Then your life, noble lord,' said the stranger. 'If you wish so you can stake even your life.' And again the dice fell and le Sieur Beaumont lost even his life.

"'Cursed son of Satan, take your winnings!' he cried, 'for I have naught else in life or death!'

"'Ay, one thing more, noble lord, one thing more for which I can give you back life and fortune and knightly fame, the love of your lady—all that you have staked and lost. It is your soul, le Sieur Bertrand—your soul!'

"And then, but that he had flung away the cross and felt himself accursed, the knight would have cried to heaven in his terror, for he saw that it was the tempter himself who was before him.

"'Your soul, sir knight,' he went on. "Three-score years of life and all that life holds, I give back to you for your soul. Else I claim my winnings now and here,' and he stretched out his long

hands—sharp-taloned as those of a bird of prey—to clutch the knight's throat.

"And then feeling, as it truly seemed, that he was already lost, le Sieur Beaumont cried out with an oath that he would make the pact, and for the stakes he had lost he would give his soul.

"'My sign and seal thereon,' said the evil one in triumph and he laid two fingers upon the knight's brow, leaving there a mark that blazed as if made by a fiery brand. 'While that sign holds, you are mine!'"

"And it held, of course," commented Winifred's listener, with a half laugh. "The devil's grip always does, both in the old and new time. And all for the luckless toss of the dice! My poor ancestor was hard driven, you must confess, fair scribe."

"Yes, he has had my sympathy from the first, as I told you," said Winifred. "But the charm of the old legend is in its ending, which you must hear." And she went on in her soft low voice, soothing as the ripple of a flowing stream to the desert wanderer at her side.

"With that burning mark upon his brow, le Sieur Beaumont felt himself lost indeed. For never with the demon's own signet upon him could he claim God's mercy or man's friendship or woman's love. And neither running water, nor blazing sun, nor snow, nor storm could change the blood-red sign. And so it was that he became known as La Tache Rouge. Many were his deeds of valor and high

emprise done in that name. And as the years went by the mark grew only deeper because of despair, which is the evil one's strong hold upon man's heart. Until at last after long years of wandering and battling, there came a craving upon him such as even the strongest feel, to look once more upon his own land, and taking the palmer's hat and staff, he journeyed back to his home, thinking to find his lands wasted, and his vassals scattered, and the fair Féodore long wedded to some happier knight.

"But drawing near all unknown, he saw his own standard still waving from his castle towers, and the fields around green with plenty, and questioning a sturdy vassal who was going by the roadside, the man told him that lands and towers belonged still to the great Sieur de Beaumont, and were held in his name by the Lady Féodore. And even as the man spoke there came a cavalcade going forward to the Abbey church, for it was Easter day. Old men and young, and mothers and maids, and little children. And last of all, so wrapped in heavy sable garments that she seemed like a star in a black cloud, came the fair Féodore, wearing a widow's coif and veil.

"It is a palmer from the Holy Land," she said to her maids. "Let us ask his blessing. Your prayers, dear Father, for the true, brave knight, le Sieur Bertrand de Beaumont, for whom in maiden widowhood I mourn."

"And as she bent before him in her faith and

love and beauty, the pang of death itself seemed to shoot through the unhappy heart of La Tache Rouge, and he fell smitten with woe and weakness at her feet. And kneeling down in her pity to aid him, she saw his face, from which the palmer's hat had fallen, and her white scarf unspotted, about his throat, and the red stain on his forehead.

“It is my lord and love, whom God has given back to me!” she cried. And rousing he found himself in the heaven of her arms, while the tears of her pure love and pity falling upon the red stain on his forehead washed it white as the winter snow. For against love so strong and true as the fair Fédore's no power of hell or darkness can hold.”

CHAPTER XIV

OVER THE EMBERS

THERE was a moment's pause as the legend ended. Without the long windows the snow was falling silently, seeming to draw a veil betwixt the firelit room and all the world beyond. To Trevlyn, moved strangely by the quaint old story's close, the hush seemed filled with thought unutterable.

"Do you believe that?" he asked at length, his voice sounding harsh and brusque in the stillness. "I mean that final diction of your medieval scribe, that love can forgive—blot out all things?"

"Surely poor La Tache Rouge deserved love's healing after all his years of suffering," she answered. "Men do not sin and sorrow in that primitive fashion nowadays."

"You are wrong there," he said slowly. "They do—I've known men to sell themselves to the devil as surely as if the bond were signed and sealed. I have one in mind now. Would you like to hear his story?"

"Yes," she said, turning her fair face to him with interest. But he did not look at her. With his hands clasped over his head, thus half concealing his profile, he leaned back in his great arm-chair, his eyes fixed upon the fire.

The great hickory log had burned into a cavernous hollow, little tongues of flame forked and leaped about the ashen bark, and the quaintly wrought andirons seemed to catch and mock their light. Over the mantle was the picture dearest to Madam Trevlyn's heart. She had had it copied by a famous artist from a photograph taken of her son when he was twenty-one. The handsome young face, so gay, so unclouded, seemed to look down and listen as the master of Trevlyn spoke.

"This man of my story was what I suppose is called a good fellow, which means that he was nothing very great or fine or strong; one of those who without any gifts of fate or fortune, still find the world rather a pleasant place, and enjoy all that it has to give. He played at hearts with a pretty girl, who went back on him for a richer man, as pretty girls who know their market value will. I don't blame them, it's all in the game, and women are handicapped at the best. But I suppose being young and soft, this knocked him out a bit, and a chance being offered to him just then he pulled up stakes and went out West. And there he met the devil—several of them, in fact—for those wild lands are happy hunting grounds for them in these modern days, even as the Eastern deserts were of old. And just such reckless young fools as this new *Tache Rouge* are their fair prey."

"Poor boy!" commented the listener, thinking of that other reckless boy whose sins and follies

had brought her here. And the pitying tenderness of the tone stirred the narrator's heart.

"He went the pace the devil usually leads, both in modern and ancient days," he continued, his voice dull and dry. "There is no use in going into details. Suffice to say that at the end he found himself with a murderous weapon in his hand and a dead man at his feet."

"Oh, poor, poor boy!" the soft tones were tremulous with pity and horror. "But it was not—wilful—not—not—murder?"

"I don't think he stopped to consider what it was. Perhaps it would have been wiser if he had. The sharpest frontier justice might have proved true mercy. The devil at his side urged him to fly, and with the first horror of his deed upon him, he did. He escaped. Then fortune having done her worst, like the fickle jade she is, befriended him. He struck it rich, as men say, got a new grip on life, started fair again to make amends for that short, hideous stretch, and run a good honest race—with all odds in his favor, when the devil's clutch fell upon him again. The one witness of his crime had followed him and fixed a vampire hold on him, sucking all the hope and purpose out of heart and brain. He turned into a weakling—into a coward, a slave—to which *La Tache Rouge* of your story seems a king."

"He should have broken loose at any cost," she

said, "at any cost. Better ruin, death, disgrace—anything than such degrading bondage."

"I quite agree with you there, and perhaps, having some spark of manhood left in him he would have agreed, too. But there was another factor in his case—a woman whom he loved better than his own life—and who loved him. To have broken loose—with all that breaking the devil's grip meant, might have killed her."

"Ah, that was hard indeed—cruelly hard," said Winifred pitifully. "And how did it all end?"

"That I can not say," he answered. "When I knew him it had not ended. The devil's grip was on him still, and he showed it, body and mind. He had grown weak, worthless, aimless—altogether too despicable, poor wretch."

"Are you not a little harsh in your judgment?" asked Winifred gently. "It seems to me there was heroism in such endurance for love's sake. But oh, it is a pitiful story—it has such a note of despair."

"It rather struck me that way, too," was the reply. "But despair is not an uncommon note in our latter-day music. I hear it on every side, don't you?"

"No," she said thoughtfully. "I do not. I hear pain and sorrow and protest, but not despair. From my outlook there is no despair this side of the grave. But then," a smile like a sunbeam brightened the sweet gravity of her face, "we both

see and hear differently, as you know. And that reminds me of a difference over which I hope we will not quarrel. I am going to open the Sunday-school at the Works, Mr. Trevlyn."

"I disapprove of it, as you know," he said bluntly.

"So you told me two weeks ago," she answered, and there was a half-mischievous gleam in the downcast eyes, "but as all your mother's maids have their Sundays free——"

"Don't—don't put it that way, even in jest," he said. "There is no question of your freedom to go when and where you please. But there is question of other things."

"What?" she asked quietly.

"Of your being annoyed, molested, perhaps insulted," he answered. "The Works are no place for a refined woman at the best—and of late there is an ugly spirit among the hands against your Church and its teachings."

"I know," she said, with a little nod. "And it is that spirit I am going to meet and fight. Don't be alarmed," she continued, with a laugh. "I am not at all bellicose in my methods, as you will see. But I can not have these poor little children growing up in blindness and darkness—the darkness that leads to ways of crime. Oh, you don't know the dreadful things I have been told by the little Tysowski children, Mr. Trevlyn. The lies that have been poured into baby ears, the lessons they

are learning in evil, the mocking of all things holy! You don't understand how I feel about it, you can't, but it is as if these children were starving around me and I had bread and would not give. So," she continued in a brighter tone, "since we couldn't have the wagon shed, I have found a nice little old log cabin beyond the Slashes, where there is a fireplace for cold days, and Barney has got me some benches and——"

"You don't mean that cursed hole of the Harley's?" interrupted Trevlyn. "That fool of a Barney is not going to take you there? Doesn't he know that it has a black name all over the ridge? That no one will live there rent free?"

"Oh, there is some foolish story about it being haunted, I know," said Winifred lightly. "But ghosts don't walk in the daytime, and besides, they are among the things we are going to fight."

"You won't get a child to cross that threshold," said Trevlyn with a grim nod.

"Oh, won't I?" cooed Winifred, with her low laugh. "I have sent pink cards of invitation all over the ridge. There is a bait, of course. I don't expect to lure juvenile feet into new and unknown ways without one. May I venture to present you with an invitation, Mr. Trevlyn?"

She took a little pink card from her work basket and handed it to him.

There was something so arch and charming in her defiance of his protests that Trevlyn would,

doubtless, have been disarmed in any case. But he felt besides that under this gay seeming lay a strength of purpose grave and sweet and unselfish that he must honor even though he could not understand. He took the little card she held toward him and read with softening gaze:

SUNDAY SINGING SCHOOL
MISS WINIFRED DEANE
At Ivy Cottage (Harley's)
To children under twelve
Opening November 25th.
ICE CREAM AND CAKE.

"I take back my decision," he said. "This will be a drawing-card, Miss Deane."

"So I thought," she answered. "Barney suggested peanuts and popcorn, but I felt we must rise somewhat beyond the usual range. And Ivy Cottage—the old cabin is really overgrown with ivy, is not at all a bad-looking place. We have had it all scrubbed up and put white curtains at the window."

"And who is bearing the expense of this venture?" asked Trevlyn still grimly.

"Oh, the expense!" she laughed. "Well, let me see. All the labor is love, of course. Barney and old Gran Devlin and the Tyssowskis and a dozen others. The cabin we have taken without asking any questions. The curtains, well, if you must know our secrets, the curtains are an old dotted Swiss commencement dress of my convent days,

Mr. Trevlyn. The pink cards are of home manufacture, as you see. There only remain the ice cream and cake, which reduces my investment to terms at which you can not cavil. Seriously, though," she added, in a graver tone. "I am glad you are not very vexed with me. Some men would have been, I know, for I am under your roof and should regard your prejudices in this matter. But your mother did not object. She has a sort of hereditary leaning to the old Church, you know, and so I took courage to—to—"

"Fight it out with me!" he laughed, and it was a pleasant laugh now that it gladdened her heart to hear. "I throw down my arms, Miss Deane. It is a case of unconditional surrender. And I will see," his face hardened for a moment, "that you are not annoyed by any of those rough brutes who think freedom means the privilege of yelping at all things high and holy."

"Oh, there will be no trouble, I am sure," she said earnestly. "Why should there be—unless Mr. Danvers," she paused for a moment, as if not knowing how to frame her thoughts, "antagonizes my little school. And he may."

"What has he to do with it?" burst forth Trevlyn fiercely. "I beg your pardon," he added, controlling himself. "I mean that Danvers, as my business manager, has no right to interfere with you in the least. And whatever his own bigotry may be he knows his limitations."

“Does he know them?” she asked in a low, earnest voice. “To me he seems to rule everything at the Works, even the poor creatures’ minds and souls. And that lodge he has established to Americanize the hands, as he says—the saloon that he encourages—are these within his limitations as your business manager? Oh, I am saying too much, I know,” she paused, with a little troubled laugh.

“Not at all,” he answered, “go on. Say all that you think.”

“No,” she shook her head, and gathering up her work into her basket, arose. “I will say nothing more. I have talked too much already. You see I know *my* limitations, Mr. Trevlyn. And your mother is waiting for me, I am sure, to say a decisive word about the cut of her lace dress, for Fifine and she never agree. So leaving you my pink ticket, I will go.”

And with a gay little nod she vanished, leaving Trevlyn seated moodily by the hearth. The great hickory log had crumbled into ashes, and the air seemed suddenly to have grown sharp and cold where a few moments ago all had been ruddy warmth and glow. And all the light that Winifred had called into the grave stern face had left it. Trevlyn stared into the dull embers with eyes in which there was no light or hope.

CHAPTER XV

THE QUEEN'S FEAST

THE winter sun was shining in Miss Warburton's round tower, her geraniums were in vivid scarlet bloom, in a delusive bower of trailing ivy the canary was singing a song of spring. A breath of roses came from the little oratory in the corner, where a silver novena lamp was burning. Miss Warburton's pupils kept tender memories of their old teacher's pet devotions.

For it was the eighth of December and she was keeping fête in honor of her Queen. She had been to early Mass, and had come home a little worn and breathless, for at fourscore the fires of life burn low, and the wintry morning had been sharp with frost. But she had had her coffee now and a little rest on the soft cushioned couch in the sunshine, and her deathless spirit rose.

"Little *Chéri*, how you can sing!" she said, putting a lump of sugar in the canary's cage. "I can almost hear the *Magnificat* in those full, sweet tones of yours this morning. Fifty years ago I could sing even like you, *Chéri*, but now, now—what can a poor old woman do who has neither voice nor strength nor gold, *Chéri*? Pray, you would say, wise *Chéri*," she continued, stroking

the pretty feathered head that bent to her fingers. "Pray, old Betty Warburton, pray, for your time on earth is short, and this may be the last fête you may keep for your Queen. Ah, so it may, *Chéri*, so it may. Then let us keep it joyfully—why not, *Chéri*? Why not? It will only be the cage door opened for me, *Chéri*, the old, old cage that is rusty and worn. And then flight. Have you forgotten the gladness of flight, poor little prisoner? Of swift, strong flight to heaven—to God?" She stood silent for a moment, the worn, transparent old face almost transfigured as she looked far out into the sunlit sky, while the bird broke into rapturous song.

Stolid Katrina had to speak twice before her mistress heard. "Letters for Madam," she said, holding out the morning mail.

"Ah, good, Katrina, good!" said the old lady, taking them joyfully, and sinking back among her cushions again. "From my girl, my brave little girl. Did I not say it would be a happy day?" And breaking open the first envelope, that bore the postmark of Trevlyn, she read the closely written pages eagerly. Winifred had sent madrina a weekly letter ever since her new life began. Its arrival was one of the old lady's keenest pleasures, for the writer poured out her young heart to this one, faithful, long-tried friend, and told madrina all.

To-day's letter was no exception to the rule—

nay, it seemed more bright and charming than the rest. It told of Ivy Cottage and its successful opening, of the thirty little scholars that, lured by the pink tickets and Patsy's persuasion, had assembled in the once dreaded Harley's and been regaled with ice cream and frosted cake—"that, I am sure," as Winifred declared, "was a revelation of joys unknown. Then we sang and talked together. I showed them pictures of our Blessed Lord and the Blessed Mother, and the angels. And oh, the questions they asked, madrina, the dreadful pagan questions, stirred the depths of my heart. Surely it would be a crime for any one bearing the name of Christian and Catholic not to try and cast a glimmer of light into these poor little darkened minds and souls. That there is bitter feeling against the Church on the ridge I can see. Barney, my big Irish giant, kept watchful guard outside, and would not come in, and poor little Patsy, my faithful henchman, came with every ragged pocket stuffed with stones—to hurl them, like another David, if need be, in my defense. But everything passed off beautifully, and Ivy Cottage is opened. How much of it is due to Mr. Trevlyn's influence I can not say. Though he seemed violently opposed to it at first, he came around most graciously and reasonably when he found I was bent on having my own way. And you know I can be stubborn when there is need of it, as my poor dear guardian found when I stood up against him. I

dared the Master of Trevlyn with a defiance equally as reckless. It was a clear case of bearding the lion in his den, the Douglas in his hall. But he took it most good-naturedly. Though he has no creed or even faith, I felt he understood somehow. He is a strange man, as I told you before. With everything the world has to give, he seems so restless, troubled, aimless, unhappy—a harp all out of tune. And yet, heaven knows, there is enough for him to do here, at his very hand. But he leaves everything to the careless management of others. And, madrina, the conditions are dreadful at the Works. Oh, I came very near doing some plain talking to Mr. Trevlyn the other day. You know I always did talk out of a full heart. But luckily I remembered—what I sometimes forget—that I am only a paid companion here, and so kept my tongue still. And it is not a bad place, madrina. Every one is very good to me and I am happy, quite happy, so possess your dear tender soul in peace."

Madrina's worn old face brightened shrewdly as she read. Before grace touched Miss Warburton's soul she had been the most worldly wise of chaperones, steering her young charges with unerring eye into matrimonial harbors both sunny and safe.

"It's coming," she said to the canary, as she folded the girlish letter. "Yes, it's coming, *Chéri*, as we thought. And it would be a brilliant thing for our little friendless, fatherless girl. But whether it would be a good thing—ah, that's an-

other question. We must pray, little *Chéri*, we must pray that God will guide all aright."

And Miss Warburton tore open her other letter. It was very short and to the point.

"ST. VINCENT'S HOSPITAL.

"MY DEAR OLD FRIEND:

"Can you come to St. Vincent's for an hour or two? I want your judgment in a matter that perplexes me. Do not overtax your strength, for, if necessary, I can come to you, but I would much prefer consulting you here. We will have a cup of tea together in my own little sanctum, and our chapel is beautiful to-day, as you know.

"Sincerely yours in Christ,

"SISTER M. EUPHRASIA."

"There," said Miss Warburton, cheerily. "I felt that our Blessed Mother would send me something to do for her on this blessed day. But what can dear Euphrasia, with all her heaven-sent wisdom, want of me? A battered, half-blind old creature that ought to have been dead a dozen years ago! Overtax my strength indeed—with the cars going right by the door," continued the old lady, bridling. "I'll show her that Betty Warburton is not altogether dead yet. Katrina, my cloak and bonnet—I am going out."

"Ach, Himmel," said Katrina, staring. "Not again, with the day so cold as this."

"I am going out," repeated Miss Warburton firmly.

"It will make you shake," continued Katrina in stolid disapproval.

"Never mind the shaking. Help me to get ready, and you shall have holiday until evening and your week's wages to spend or save as your soul desires, Katrina. Come, my bonnet and cloak, and fur pelerine, overshoes, everything warm you can find. Then you can put me on the car and be off."

"Mrs. Sanderson say to me, Katrina, take care of my dear old teacher for my sake. And if I go off and the cold strike into your heart, Miss Warburton, what will be Mrs. Sanderson's grief?"

"The cold will not strike into my heart, I promise you, Katrina. Come, don't try my patience on this blessed day. Wrap me up like the old mummy I am and let us be off."

And even the stolid Katrina realized that against that resolute decision there was no appeal. In a few minutes the quaint old figure, that, in its ample cloak and rich soft furs, and big velvet bonnet had an elegance of its own, despite its defiance to modern style, was safely ensconced in the car on the way to St. Vincent's Hospital at the other end of the city.

There was but a brief wait in the simple, spacious reception room before Sister Euphrasia, a sweet, strong-faced woman of fifty, appeared.

"Dear Miss Betty," she said, affectionately embracing her visitor, "how good of you to come so soon!"

"Good of me! Not at all!" was the bright answer. "My dear, that letter of yours telling me that

a woman like you needed me was like a draught of new wine. I was just considering what a useless bit of driftwood I had become."

"You useless?" remonstrated Sister Euphrasia tenderly. "My dear, you are a lesson of hope and cheer to angels and men. I do want your advice, perhaps your assistance, greatly. But I am not going to say another word until you have rested and had a cup of my St. Vincent tea. It is almost as good as your best."

And putting her arm affectionately about her guest, Sister Euphrasia led her through the wide-tiled hall, and up the polished stairs to a little room, conventional indeed in its simplicity, but with a certain home-like air which some women unconsciously give to the plainest surroundings. There were growing plants in the wide window, an open fire on the hearth, and before it a cushioned chair that seemed to invite the weary and heart-sick to confidence and repose. The outbursts of sin and sorrow this little sanctum had witnessed only God and Sister Euphrasia knew, for St. Vincent's charity was as wide as heaven itself. It questioned neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free—but gave its help, its pity, its tenderness to all.

Enseconcing her friend in the big chair, Sister Euphrasia took off the old lady's cloak and bonnet with loving hands, and then touching her bell, a rosy-cheeked little Sister appeared with a tea tray.

"Now don't be too good to me," protested Miss

Warburton, "or I'll insist upon staying here and dying upon your hands. And I am altogether too young and gay for that yet."

"Altogether," laughed Sister Euphrasia, as she pushed a cushion to the old lady's feet, "though we would love to have you, wouldn't we, Sister Honora?"

"Sure we would," answered the little Irish Sister warmly, "but may God keep her long to her own, Sister dear."

"I suppose I should say Amen to that," said Miss Warburton, "but when my own is reduced to a little yellow canary bird, I wonder if the prayer is worth while. Still there's many a friendly knock at my door yet. Look at those furs, Euphrasia. Lena Van Doren sent them to me last year. Of course, your consecrated eyes can't see that they are Russian sable and cost more than I like to think. But that child is foolish enough to say she owes me all her fortune in life. I chaperoned her her first season abroad. And Polly Marsden—Mrs. Admiral Sanderson that is now—keeps a spy at my hearthstone. A round-eyed little Dutch girl who insists I must be waited on and watched, lest I escape from my earthly bonds. They have all combined to hold me here, these dear children, though it is time I was gone, as you know."

"Not at all," said Sister Euphrasia. "We all expect you to round out your century, dear. Have another cup of tea—it will do you good."

"No more, my dear, no more. It is not my time for drinking tea, but yours is delightful, I must confess. Now since our rosy little Hebe is gone, out with your business, Euphrasia. It is something serious, I know."

"All our business here at St. Vincent's is," answered the Sister with her sweet, grave smile. "I want to consult you about a patient who is causing me great anxiety. You see in the West we have to take risks and responsibilities that I do not feel I can venture here. And yet—and yet, poor fellow—well, I will tell you about him. He was picked up fainting from weakness, perhaps want of food, and brought here by a good Irish night watchman who sometimes works for us.

"He had two hemorrhages the first night. Sorely wasted, changed as he was, Miss Betty, I recognized him. He is the poor fellow I nursed back to life five years ago in Montana."

"Oh, oh! Not—not Dick Deane?" gasped Miss Warburton tremulously.

"That I do not know," said Sister Euphrasia. "He does not recognize me, will say nothing about himself, except to give the name James Johnson, which I feel is not his own. For he is in trouble, in terrible apprehension, I can see. He raved all the first night about being hunted down. What he has done or suffered, how sinned, it is not my place to ask. But he has only a little time to live, and I

thought, Miss Betty, that if you knew the poor man or his family——”

“I would try to save and spare them and him,” concluded Miss Warburton eagerly. “Euphrasia, you are an angel of wisdom and mercy. Let me see him, and—and if it be Dick—we must get him out of sight, Euphrasia. We must save him, shield him, if we can. God only knows what shame and sorrow he may bring upon my poor, proud, noble girl, nor how his disgrace may wreck her sweet young life.”

“I thought you would feel like this, dear old friend,” said Sister Euphrasia softly. “Come, then, and see. It is not far.” And supporting the old lady tenderly with her strong arms, Sister Euphrasia led Miss Warburton through the spotless tiled corridor that stretched from her own little *sanctum* door into sunlit vistas, where St. Michael stood on guard, and St. Joseph watched over the children’s ward, and the red lamp of the Sacred Heart glowed like a beacon of hope to eyes growing dim and fearful in the Valley of the Shadow. White-robed nurses flitted to and fro noiselessly, doctors passed in and out of rooms whence came faint moans and cries of pain. Sister Euphrasia opened a door, and Miss Warburton found herself in a room filled with snowy cots, each holding some suffering waif of poor humanity. Young men smitten down in their strength, old men struggling against age and weakness, the dull, the despairing,

the reckless, the brutal—all the wrecks of life's stormy sea found common harbor here, for this was the charity ward of the great hospital, where the Mother of Mercy throned above the novena lights burning in honor of her feast held tender welcome for all.

Was this the service to which her Queen had called her on this joyous day? thought Miss Warburton, as with her old heart beating strangely, she followed Sister Euphrasia down the long room to a cot where a white screen had been placed to shield the restless sufferer from curious gaze.

Stepping behind it Miss Warburton looked down on a face that still bore traces of early beauty, but so haggard, so ghastly, so rigid were the delicate features that it seemed a face of the dead. Light, soft hair fell unkempt about the marble brow, the blue-veined lids were closed, the weak lips set in lines of pain and despair.

But Miss Warburton knew the boy of long ago. "Dick!" she cried sharply, dropping on her knees beside the little cot. "Oh, Dick, Dick!" The closed eyes flew open at the call, the whole face changed, hardened, aged, in their furtive light. It was a man old in sin and suffering that gasped fearfully:

"Madrina! Don't, for God's sake, give me up!"

And then all the wisdom, prudence, justice that madrina thought she had learned in her fourscore years was swept away in a flood of womanly pity and tenderness.

"My boy, my poor boy, do not fear. I am here to help you—to save you, Dick, my dear, dear boy."

"Hide me somewhere, then," he whispered, with panting breath, "any—any hole will do. For they're—they're after me, madrina. I went wrong again and they're after me—they'll track me here. Hide me somewhere—it won't be long—to die. My game's up, madrina, I know. But Winnie—Winnie that stood by me—that gave up all she had to save me—I'd like to spare Winnie, if I can."

"You can and you shall," said madrina, and into his dim eyes there flashed the fire and spirit of the Betty Warburton of old.

Winnie! All the denied motherhood of madrina's heart weakened at the word, all the worldly wisdom of the chaperone of long ago roused, keen-witted, eagle-eyed. Winnie! At the turn of her woman's way—with the Master of Trevlyn almost at her feet, with wealth and power and proud position in her reach, with her young heart already fluttering to love's call! Winnie must be spared shame and disgrace at any cost. The blighting shadow of this ruined life must not fall upon her new sunshine. Winifred must be spared at any cost.

CHAPTER XVI

AWAKENINGS

IT had been a gay week at Trevlyn. Though the little Madam was far from strong, the first hoarse blasts of winter seemed to rouse her into defiant spirit. The season must be the brilliant success she had hoped and planned.

"There were so many long dull, prosy years when I could do nothing—have nothing," she said to Winifred, "that now, my dear, now we must make up for lost time."

And so there were dinners and bridge parties that sometimes reached far into the night, though the little Madam's cheek often flushed so feverishly that there was no need of Fifine's rouge, and the slender jeweled hands trembled as she held the cards.

Now she was planning a house party for Christmas, a brilliant gathering of old friends and new, that should fill the Towers with holiday spirit and life. To Winifred, there seemed something infinitely pathetic in this childish reaching for joys that at fifty years should be outgrown. But it was not her place to criticize, though she sometimes ventured gently to warn.

"Oh, I am so afraid you are doing too much,"

she said, as she bathed the lady's aching head one morning after a protracted seance of bridge the previous night.

"Now, my dear, don't—don't croak!" was the petulant answer. "I picked you out because I thought you would be glad and gay with me—for me, Winifred. I am living for the first time in all my life—living, *living!* Think of all the dead, dull, dreary years I have lost."

"Lost!" echoed the girl softly. "Are busy, useful mother years lost?"

"Yes, lost, lost!" was the sharp answer. "What has my motherhood done for Hugh but given him life? A life that has no worth, no joy for him. Don't grow dull and sad like Hugh, child. There, my head is better now. Tell Fifine to bring my rose-colored peignoir and I will get up. We dine at the Raynns' to-morrow, you know, and you must see that Duchesne sends home my gown. My dear, it's a dream. The last fitting made it perfect, and with the old point lace that has been in the family for four generations!—ah, it will make Helena Marr's eyes open, I know. Then, Winifred, if you will write to Traymore's about the filigree candle shades we selected from his catalogue yesterday—those with the gold fringe. I want a dozen sent up at once. They throw such a lovely, softening light. That hideous glare from above makes me look like a witch. And the lace doilies from Grayson's. Those with the initial. Dear,

dear, there are so many things to think of that I get bewildered!"

"I have the list you gave me yesterday, and I will attend to all," said the young secretary soothingly.

"A list! True enough, I had forgotten you had taken a list. My dear, you certainly are a comfort. I don't know what I would do without you, as I tell Hugh every day."

"How tired he must be of hearing it," laughed Winifred, but a soft flush mantled her cheek, and there was a glad spring in her step as she hurried away down the stairs to attend to the manifold orders. Despite all the inconsistencies, the follies, the empty worldliness of Trevlyn Towers, she was conscious of a new happiness in her life here, a happiness growing and deepening day by day, something as intangible as the first faint flush of dawn, or the low whisper of spring that wakens the sleeping flowers. They were all so good to her—he was so good, so generous, so great-hearted; even when she had boldly defied his wishes, his will, he had understood her motives and upheld her.

Already a new spirit had wakened on the ridge. The young lady from the Towers was making her presence felt, the children were flocking to Ivy Cottage every Sunday. There were whispers of a Mother's Meeting during the week—the battle between light and darkness was on. But Clyde Danvers, watching the field with cold, keen eyes, was

armed for it—how cruelly armed, Winifred, in her new hope and gladness, little guessed. As she came down the wide staircase this morning, the great front door swung open under the master's touch, and Trevlyn strode into the hall. His dark eyes were aflame, his face white with passion.

Accustomed as Winifred was to his changing moods, she felt, with a thrill of alarm, that she had never seen him like this. At sight of her he stopped short, and the rigid lines about his lips quivered, though at first he did not speak. She stepped forward to meet him.

“What has happened?” she asked, with a little catch in her breath.

“You have not heard, then?” he asked.

“No, no. Quick, please, you frighten me. What is it?” she said tremulously.

“Frighten you!” he echoed, his voice softening. “I do not wonder. Sometimes when the devil in me wakens, I frighten myself. I—I was just going to shut myself up—in my own room—and and—”

“No, don't—don't,” she said, with a sudden fear for him. “Sit down here, Mr. Trevlyn, and fight the devil off.” And she sat down on the low window seat at the foot of the stairs, where the jeweled splendor of the painted window made a glory about her slender form, and smiled up bravely into his face.

“I am coward enough to shrink from telling

you," he said, "but you may as well know at once. Ivy Cottage was wrecked last night."

"Ivy Cottage wrecked!" she repeated, in a startled voice. "How—by whom?"

"Those devils from Danvers' lodge, I am sure," he answered fiercely. "Though I can get no proof. Some one put a charge of mining powder under the walls. Harley's is in ruins. I knew there was danger, but I did not think they would dare anything like this."

"Was any one hurt?" she asked, her face blanching at his story.

"No. It was done, like all such dastardly work, in the dark, in the night. It seems—or so Danvers says, we have had a hot discussion on the matter, I assure you—that there was some idiotic rumor about the place being haunted—that the children would be harmed there, that, in short, the cottage was under a curse that it would be destruction to defy. I take all this folly for what it is worth. But it woke all the devil in me, I confess, to think of all your gentle, gracious, tender work——"

"Do not think of it at all," she said quickly. "Oh, I am so grateful that it is no worse, that no one has been harmed! Big Barney might have been hurt, or Patsy. I was rash to undertake it, I see, Mr. Trevlyn. I should have listened to you. It was wrong, all wrong."

"No, you were right—you are always right," he answered. He had taken the seat beside her now,

and the white light of the Crusader's Cross seemed to kindle his dark, shadowed face. "It is I who am wrong—weak, sluggish, worthless, Miss Deane. Fool, trifler, coward—or this would not have occurred."

"Oh, no—do not say that, do not think it," she pleaded. "Only—with your power, your influence, your authority—I—I can not understand."

"No, you can not," he interrupted her sharply. "Do not try. Let it suffice that in my blind way, dimly, dully, I understand you. And this wretched business hurts, discourages you, I know."

"Oh, it does—it does," she answered. "The poor little children, so ignorant, so neglected! I thought I could do something for them."

"And you shall—we will," he said resolutely. "I will build a schoolhouse in the ridge at once."

"Can you prevent its being wrecked in the darkness?" she asked sorrowfully. "No, you can not—that is the trouble. There is some spirit breathing over the ridge that is strong for evil, something that is blighting, poisoning the air, something that is hidden, secret, dark. Oh, what is it? What is it? That seems to hold you, even *you* in its deadly grasp? What is it that I have felt from the first? This dark, baleful influence that no one can shape or name?"

"The curse, perhaps, of which Patsy warned you," he answered, with an effort at lightness.

"But I thought you had defied it. I hoped that it had not repelled you."

"Repelled me—oh, no," she said quickly. "I was not thinking, speaking of myself. I have found only kindness, consideration, friendliness on every side. You and your dear mother have been so good to me that I can not be grateful enough for the beautiful home opened to me in my need. But I am something of a busybody, as perhaps you have seen," she added with a smile like a sunbeam breaking over her troubled face.

"Yes, I have seen," he answered, in a low voice. "If there were more such blessed busybodies, this dark world would be a different place, Miss Deane. I would like to make you supreme 'busybody' of the ridge for a month or two."

"I would change things," she said, with a bright little glance and nod.

"I am sure of it," he replied.

"First," she lifted an arch but earnest glance to his face, "I would dismiss all other managers, and put you there in the master's place. I would weigh you down with work and worry until you cried for mercy. You would cry, I suppose," she added. "The spoiled child always does."

"Not always," he answered. "It depends upon what has spoiled him—Fortune or Fate."

"Both false goddesses that tottered to their fall two thousand years ago, Mr. Trevlyn."

"I am not so sure of that," he replied, with the

smile that her half gay, half serious challenge always brought to his lips. Her frank *camaraderie* was so impersonal, yet so charming in its feminine grace. He felt as if he were fencing against a sunbeam that flashed into all the dark places of his soul, kindling them for a moment into light.

"Ah! But you are not sure of anything," she said. "I am. We are not the puppets of the old mythology. Free will to make or mar our lives is the noblest gift of God to man."

"Perhaps," he answered, "and yet—yet who is altogether free? Don't defy the fates, Miss Deane. Here comes one of their messengers maybe, now," he added lightly, as he stretched out his hand for the yellow envelope which Carleton had just brought to him on his silver salver. "A telegram for you," he said, a shade of anxiety in his voice.

She tore open the envelope quickly and the few words within made her cheek pale.

"Our dear Miss Warburton very ill, and asking anxiously for you. Come at once.

"MARY MARSDEN SANDERSON."

Mrs. Admiral Sanderson! Madrina's old pupil and loving friend. Oh, she must be ill indeed for a message like this—madrina, dear, faithful, tender old madrina!

"Not bad news, I hope," said Trevlyn, as he watched the paling, quivering young face.

"Oh, yes, yes it is," she answered, with an effort.

"My dearest, best friend—my old godmother is very ill, and—and has sent for me."

"Go, by all means, at once," he said kindly. "What train do you wish to take? I will order the carriage for you."

"But your mother," said Winifred, thinking of a myriad of petty duties; "your mother is not well, and needs me."

"Do not think of that for a moment. I will take care of her in your place. You must go at once. Is it to P——? A train leaves at 2.40. Can you be ready?"

"Yes, yes. Poor madrina, she is so old and feeble—that this—this is the end, I know," the sweet voice broke pitifully.

"Perhaps not," he answered gently. "Old people have wonderful vitality. Don't give up hope—you are a little shocked, naturally. Here, Carleton, bring a glass of wine to Miss Deane, and touch the bell there for Dawson to help her to pack up—she wishes to leave by the next train."

And shaken as she was with sudden grief and fear, Winifred was conscious of a strange joy beneath it all, as she felt herself steadied, supported by a manly strength and sympathy very new and sweet to her.

With quiet, unobtrusive courtesy Trevlyn so managed everything that in less than an hour her suitcase had been packed by the deft-fingered Daw-

son, Madam Trevlyn roused into affectionate and self-forgetful sympathy, and she was ready for her hurried departure.

"You will come back to us soon, I hope," said the master, as he assisted her into the carriage. "And if—if I can be of any service in this trouble, pray call upon me, by letter or telegram. I would like you to feel that Trevlyn Towers is indeed your home and all it holds at your command."

"You are very good," she said, and again at his voice that strange wave of joy seemed to surge over her troubled heart. "I do feel that this is home, for you have made it such for me."

And as she was borne away through the gray chill of a gathering storm Trevlyn turned back into the hall. It seemed to have grown suddenly black and silent as a sepulcher, that all the splendor of the oriel window could not light into life or glow. How he would miss her! Great heavens, how he missed her already! The very soul of this great house had gone, and left it an empty shell.

Strange that she should be so shaken with grief for a godmother! But she had no one else, poor child, he remembered, and a certain selfish satisfaction filled his heart at the thought—no one else! She had maintained a quiet reserve about her personal affairs somewhat unusual in so young a girl and he knew little beyond what she had told in her first letter. An orphan and in need of a

home! In need of a home! As he passed through its halls to-day that home seemed to cry out for her sweet presence to fill its soulless splendor, and its master knew by the sharp, bitter pang in his heart that it was the one presence that could fill and bless his life.

And he would claim it, he resolved, fiercely, desperately—he would thrust all things, past, present, future aside, and claim it for his own.

CHAPTER XVII

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

THROUGH the white swirl of a driving snow-storm Winifred was borne away from Trevlyn. The train sweeping on through blinding feathery clouds seemed to typify the fate she had defied. It was scarcely nightfall when she reached the great city, but already the storm had enwrapped it in gray, bewildering gloom.

Lights burned hazily, streets were muffled and pathless, the snow still fell chilly and silently, like the touch of age, that, howe'er it lingers, must numb and still the bravest, warmest heart at last. Calling a cab, Winifred was soon at the house where madrina's round tower, so flooded with sunshine at her goddaughter's last visit, now only showed the pale gleam of a night light through driving snow. Her young heart sick and cold with suspense, Winifred took the elevator to madrina's floor. But a breath of summer touched her as she reached it. The little hall was filled with bloom and fragrance. So many had been the floral offerings sent to the sick room, that they had been crowded out of its narrow confines. The warm, sweet world that madrina had brightened and blessed was encircling her to the last.

Even as Winifred reached the door, it opened, and a handsome, gray-haired woman, her eyes dim with tears, paused for a moment's whisper to the Bon Secours Sister who had followed her to the threshold.

"I will be back early in the morning. In the meantime if there is any change, telephone me at once. And oh, Sister, pray, pray she may be spared us a little longer, just a little longer yet."

"You have come to ask for Miss Warburton?" the lady added, as she caught sight of Winifred.

"To see her, she sent for me," was the quick, anxious answer. "I am Winifred Deane."

"My dear, dear child!" It was Mrs. Sanderson's old, impulsive self that clasped Winifred's hand in both her own. "Oh, I am so glad you have come. She has been asking for you day and night. There is something she must tell you, she says—and no one else. There, there, don't tremble so, my dear. We must all try to keep up for her sake, and make her last hours peaceful and sweet."

"Is there no—no hope?" faltered the girl.

"None—I fear none," answered the lady brokenly. "How could there be at her age? And yet she has been wonderfully well this last week Katrina tells me, and has been out for hours every day, and seemed strangely bright and strong. I understand she spent the eighth—her favorite feast, you know—at St. Vincent's, with Sister

Euphrasia, who has unfortunately been called to New York. That was just ten days ago. And then suddenly last evening, about nine o'clock, there came the stroke, the shock. Happily, Katrina was still with her and called for me. Only natural, the doctors say—only natural at her age, but heart-breaking for all that. Now you must go in, my dear. Be brave and strong, for any excitement will be bad for her—and we must keep her as quiet as we can. I'd love to stay, but I have a houseful of guests waiting for me, and the Admiral gets crotchety when dinner is late, so I must go. But I will be back the first thing to-morrow and Sister Félicie is a very angel of help and comfort, as you will find." And with another sympathetic hand pressure, the Admiral's warm-hearted wife was gone.

Winifred softly pushed open the door, which had been left ajar, and entered madrina's tiny home. There was no chill of winter here. The round tower was a very bower of hothouse bloom, and *Chéri* was asleep amid summer fragrance, his head tucked beneath his wing. A softly shaded lamp burned on the tea-table, and on the face of the little Sister who met Winifred was that look of sweet radiance not learned in nurses' schools.

"You are the 'Winifred' for whom she is calling?" was her smiling greeting. "Ah, I am so glad! Come to her at once." And she led the way through the half-drawn portière, into the little

sleeping chamber where madrina lay rigid and helpless, her delicate, worn hands clasped upon her breast. The little oratory drawn close to her bedside told that the last solemn rites had been administered. So holy and beautiful was the peace before her, that Winifred dropped on her knees, feeling the lingering presence of Him who had conquered death.

“Madrina,” she whispered, “I have come.”

The darkened, sunken eyes opened into wide, startled brightness. Never in all her remembrance had Winifred seen them so strangely clear.

“Winnie,” came the murmured answer, “dear, dear child! Thank God, thank God. I was so afraid—you would—be too late—too late.”

“Oh, madrina, dear madrina, no—no,” sobbed the girl, raining kisses upon the hand which madrina, with a painful effort, extended to her. “Don’t, don’t give up—don’t leave us yet.”

“I—I must, Winnie. I must. It’s time—God’s time. And I am ready, dear child. I’m glad to go—it’s all peace and happiness, Winnie, but—but for you—and—and—” she paused, and the words came with a gasp—“that poor, poor boy, Dick.”

“Oh, madrina, dear, faithful, loving madrina—don’t trouble about us now.”

“I must, Winnie—I must. There, draw the curtains a little more—though that dear saint is not listening, I am sure. I must tell you what I meant to hide—to keep from you, child. I thought—poor,

old, weak woman that I was—that I could bear it—settle it—all myself. I said to myself—she need never know—she need never know. She must have her youth, her happiness, her love, perhaps. For there was a breath of new sweetness in your letters—I thought, Winnie—”

“Oh, madrina, madrina—you are talking—you are thinking of me too much,” sobbed the girl. “It will hurt you, madrina.”

“Tut, tut, not at all—not at all. Since I’ve got to die, what does it matter, child? I’ve been living, praying to live for just this—this—to tell you what you must—must know, child. It’s about Dick. Poor, weak, wretched, sinful Dick, Winnie! He has gone wrong again. Oh, it’s hard, I know, child,” as a low, sharp cry burst involuntarily from the girl’s white lips. “I thought to save you, Winnie—but I was too old, child, too weak and old. I found him at the hospital, helpless, hunted, wild with fear and shame—thinking every moment he would be tracked down. He begged me to hide him, Winnie—to let him die without disgracing you—for he is dying, poor boy, and I—I,” the speaker paused, panting for breath: “That—that glass there,” she gasped feebly. With trembling hand Winifred lifted it, but little Sister Félicie glided to her side and deftly administered the elixir.

“I have made her worse!” said Winifred desperately. “I must go—I must go.”

"No, no," said madrina, rallying. "I am strong again, now—strong enough to have my talk out. And I must, Sister, I *must!*"

"Ah, well, then, talk on in God's name," said the little Sister, as with a wise nod to Winifred she turned away, for to Sister Félicie's training the poor body was not all. The soul had its needs, its anguish, its outcry, that must be heard.

"So I—I hid him, child," continued madrina, her eyes bright with the old, deathless spirit, "hid him with humble, faithful friends I could trust. I had helped them through a sore trouble of their own, and they were grateful for it forever. So I took him out there in a carriage last Saturday. It's Mary Blake's, Winnie—she has a little place back from the street on Maple Hill, No. 2 Evans Court—is the number. No. 2 Evans Court, remember? Dick is there. I left them ten dollars to care for him, and was going to take them more—there are plenty of my old children I can call on for just such needs, but now—now it's all over with me, child. I can do no more. I will have to leave him to you, Winnie. I will have to leave him to *you!*"

"Oh, madrina, dearest madrina, yes, yes," sobbed the broken-hearted girl. "Do not think of him now—do not think of me."

"I must—I must—just—just a minute more, Winnie. I wanted to save you all this—to save your mother's child—Elise's granddaughter—I

wanted to do what Elise would have done for you in my place. I wanted to keep all the shame, the sorrow of it from your young life—your young love, Winnie. It was my old worldly pride, I suppose, and it has come to naught, as you see. And—now—for my poor legacy to you, Winnie—put your hand under my pillow—there's a package there. I made Sister Félicie put it there for you. It's yours, my dear, yours. I have nothing worth making a will about, but I've kept these old jewels for many a year—thinking I'd give them to you for a wedding gift. My opals, Winnie—queer and old like myself. Take them—they're yours now. I suppose every woman has her glimpse of motherhood, and you've been mine. Take the jewels, child—I told Sister Félicie they were for you, so she knows. There, don't cry any more—it's all right. Remember—2 Evans Court. He is there as Richard Lavalle. I gave him his poor mother's name. At 2 Evans Court. And oh, child, I am a worldly minded sinner, and it ought—ought to make no difference at this hour, but—but I'll die in perfect peace, Winnie dear, if you promise to keep the poor boy's secret, if you can—keep it as I was trying to keep it—for your sake—your mother's—Elise Lavalle's. Don't let his name be known, child—don't let the world know the shame and disgrace."

The feeble voice broke.

"Oh, I promise, I promise," sobbed Winifred.

"I promise anything you ask, madrina." I will shield him. I will care for him. Don't trouble about him any more, dear madrina. Leave him to me and be at peace."

"I will, then, I will," whispered madrina, and the bright old eyes closed wearily. "2 Evans Court. Don't forget, Winnie, and keep—keep his secret—his father's name from disgrace—if you can, Winnie—if you can."

"Ah, it is enough now," said little Sister Félicie, gliding to the bedside and laying her hand gently on her patient's brow. "We must remember the doctor said quiet and rest."

There was no answer. Madrina, her feeble strength exhausted, lay with closed eyes, her spirit straying on to the dim borderland that lies between life and death—a borderland peopled, for souls like hers, with beautiful memories, shadows tender and merciful and sweet.

Outside the storm raged fiercely, the snow swirled in white gusts against the little round tower. Winter and night held all things for their own, but within there was summer fragrance, twilight peace. Poor Katrina moved noiselessly in stocking feet in the kitchen, *Chéri* slept with his head beneath his wing, little Sister Félicie, watching beside the bed, whispered now and then an aspiration of hope and love between the decades of her Rosary. Winifred, numb and dazed as she was with the new burden that had

fallen upon her, knelt by madrina's pillow, soothed by its solemn, beautiful peace even while the anguish of the parting rent her heart. For the moment, seen through the valley of the shadow, life with all its joy and sorrow, its passion and pain, seemed such a brief, fleeting thing, gone almost as soon as grasped. Holding madrina's icy hand, she felt, with an awe that had no chill of fear, the closeness of that other world, whose radiant dawn seemed already touching the shadows, where the dying woman wandered lightly, with beautiful hope. For madrina was far from earth now; the low, broken murmurs on her lips were not its language—they were the tender, trusting words of one being led by guiding angels home.

It was long past midnight when there came a change that sent little Sister Félicie softly out to the telephone in the hall. Madrina was breathing heavier, like one in the last steeps of a climb. Katrina, roused from her doze in the kitchen, came sobbing to the foot of the bed, Sister Félicie lighted the blessed candle and softly began the prayers for the dying. Quicker and shorter came the panting breath. Madrina was almost home. But even at the blessed gates the living spirit turned for a backward word.

"Winnie," she cried out clearly, "Winnie, don't forget—it's 2 Evans Court."

"Madrina, dear, yes, yes, I understand."

"Winnie!" the groping hand found the girl's

bending head. "God bless you, Winnie. God bless you—both."

There was a faint, sobbing sigh, a little shudder.

"Into Thy hands, dear Lord, we commend her spirit," came the sweet, faltering tones of little Sister Félicie, while poor Katrina broke into loud wailing. Winifred knelt dumb and stricken. And *Chéri*—*Chéri* started from his perch and broke into rapturous song. The worn old cage was broken, the glad, strong spirit gone.

* * * * *

There was no lack of love and help in madrina's death chamber. Mrs. Admiral Sanderson was there at break of day. Other old children followed, all tenderly eager to show their affection and veneration for the dear friend who had gone. Winifred found that madrina had made all arrangements for this sad hour years ago. Her burial expenses had been provided, all things foreseen with the calm, bright good sense that had guided her through life.

With willing, eager hands, able and ready for every service to the beloved dead, Winnie found herself a stranger in the little round tower that had been the one warm, sweet spot on earth, a guiding light amid all its change and gloom. For with the cold, gray dawn of the wintry day, life took on its sharp, real outlines again. The burden that madrina had so lovingly tried to spare her showed in all its grim weight and shame. She

must take it up and bear it as best she could, bear it though it crushed her heart, her hopes. For there was no one else, no one in all the world to whom she could call for help, no one, now that madrina had gone. Trevlyn's parting words echoed on her ears with cruel mockery. "If I can be of any service in this trouble, call on me." Call on him, on him! Oh, last of all, she thought with bitter anguish, last of all.

He with his proud, ancient records, his old, honored name! Her face burned at the very thought of making any claim of friendship on him now. She must bear her burden alone, pitifully alone.

"Madrina, oh, madrina!" her young heart cried out in its anguish, as turning from the little room where she no longer held a daughter's place, the hapless girl made some needless excuse for her absence, and set out through the chill wintry gloom to find 2 Evans Court.

CHAPTER XVIII

EVANS COURT

THE storm had ceased, but the clouds still hung low and leaden gray as Winifred went out on her quest through a world that seemed suddenly smitten with age and death. Was it only yesterday that her pulses had thrilled, her heart had leaped with life and joy? Only yesterday that life had seemed all youth and spring?

Now, though the busy tread of traffic had beaten ways of mire and slush through the streets, all around was veiled, mantled, shrouded in the white ceremonials of the grave. There was no light in heaven or earth. All was chill, dreary, desolate gloom.

Consulting a directory, she found that Maple Hill was at the farther end of the city, and taking a street car she was borne through strange and cheerless ways to her goal, a melancholy neighborhood out of grade and out of date, out of all credit. Only a defective title over which rival heirs were warring had saved Maple Hill from disintegration long ago. Two neighboring factories were waiting the drop of legal barriers to seize and absorb it in their own whirling work, but the law is slow, and Maple Hill lived on, its tottering houses staring

down, through broken, blear-eyed windows, at a world in which it had no part.

Winifred climbed with some difficulty the dozen or so of steps, for Maple Hill had been a terrace in the days of its pride, and inquired of two small boys who were preparing to make a perilous descent on a broken sled, for Evans Court.

"Show her, Jim," said the proprietor of the sled, to his more diminutive hanger-on.

"I—I dussent," answered Jim. "Old Terry is a-laying for me now. I stoned his cat and—"

"Pooh! for old Terry and his cat—they couldn't scare me," said the other loftily. "You see that alley-way, lady?" and he pointed with a grimy finger. "Evans Court is in there."

Winifred looked at the alley-way, and her heart sank, as a sudden doubt assailed her. Could madrina have been dreaming, delirious? Was it perhaps only a dying fantasy that had sent her here?

"Wait a moment," she said to the eager coasters, holding out a persuasive nickel. "Tell me who lives in there."

"Old Terry," was Jim's prompt answer.

"Ye ought to say Mr. Blake," corrected his leader, with a diplomatic regard for Terry's possible visitor.

"Naw I won't," answered Jim. "It's just old Terry Blake. You don't call folks mister that hev been twenty years in prison."

"In prison!" exclaimed Winifred, paling.

"You fool blather mouth," muttered the older boy, in fierce reproof. "Don't ye scare 'bout that, miss," he added encouragingly. "He is all right now, and Miss Blake says it was all lies told on him anyhow, fur she waited for him and married him when he come out, and my mother says there ain't a 'spectabler woman in all the town. And they live in there, miss, No. 2. And there's a sick gentleman that belongs to some of Miss Blake's folks staying there to be nussed. Miss Blake, she ain'tafeared to nuss anything. She came in when my sister died of diphtheria and laid her out. But she says this gentleman's cough is catching, and she don't want to risk folks coming in much while he is there. But if you've got pertikler business—"

"Oh, yes, I have, I have," said Winifred, all her doubts swept away by a sickening wave of surety at this recitation. "I will go right in. Thank you both," and doubling her fee, to the delight of her small informers, she kept on to the alley-way indicated, confident now that madrina's last guidance had been, like every deed and word of her long, loving life, wise and right.

The alley was a dark and narrow passage between two houses, but it opened, to Winifred's surprise, on what in other days must have been a wide, high-walled garden, in the rear of which ran a low one-story building with a pillared porch. Narrow paths on either side led to two doorways. There

were shrubs and box bushes, visible even under the snow, and one window was gay with potted plants, while the walls everywhere were wreathed heavily with ivy that must have been of fully half a century's growth. Bewildered at this strange little oasis in the desolation of Maple Hill, Winifred approached the nearest door and knocked. It was opened by an elderly woman with gray hair, banded simply around one of the strongest, kindest faces the visitor had ever seen.

"Is this No. 2 Evans Court?" Winifred asked.

"Yes," was the brief answer.

"I was sent here by a dear, dear friend, Miss Warburton, who—who died last night," faltered Winifred.

"Died!" repeated the woman, in a low, startled voice. "Died, did you say? Miss Betty? Miss Betty dead! Oh, dear lady, come in, come in, and tell me all!" And laying her hand gently on Winifred's, she drew her into a low-roofed room, that, poor as it was, had a cheery air of home. There was a bright fire in the well-polished stove, a braided rug on the floor, a center-table with a lamp and some books, a cushioned chair into which the visitor sank trembling and sobbing, for now that the strain of her mission had relaxed she felt she could sob and tremble, now and here.

"There, my dear, there; don't tell me anything just yet," it was such a strong, soothing voice in Winifred's ear. "We who love her ought not to

grieve, for if ever a sweet, great soul went home to God, it was that same Miss Betty's. And she died last night!" The speaker's voice broke, and burying her face in her hands, she wept softly, silently, like one used to quiet tears and grief that makes no outcry. "I loved her," she said simply. "I have known and loved her for thirty years, my dear Miss Betty. And she did more for me and mine than words could tell. There, there, my dear, I had to have my little cry out, now it's time to think of you. For she sent you—to see *him*, I know."

"Oh, yes, yes," sobbed Winifred, won to absolute confidence, "he is my——"

"There, don't say it, my dear," interrupted her hostess gently, "don't say anything that you needn't, even to me. Miss Warburton left poor Mr. Lavalle to your care and to mine, and that is all I know and ask. And we will care for him together for her dear sake, care for him to the end. It's a poor place, my dear, but it's quiet and safe, and he has a wide window that looks far out to the river—the chapel window."

"The chapel?" exclaimed Winifred, in bewilderment.

"Yes; you didn't know this was a convent fifty years ago? There were bitter, wicked feelings against Catholics, and the mobs were burning churches and convents, so when the Sisters came, some great friends of Miss Warburton's who owned

the two big houses in front let them live there, and put up this little place in the garden for their chapel and school. That was fifty years since, and the place has seen sore changes since, as you can guess. The good Sisters that came here first are dead and gone, and them that followed have one of the finest convents in the land. And there's been carpenter shops and tin shops and all kinds of things in the court here, and they would have made it into stables if it hadn't been too shut in to reach. And at last it got so choked with weeds and rubbish it wouldn't rent at all. It was then that I saw it, while nursing a poor woman in one of the houses in front. I saw it, and I felt it was just the place for Terry and me. Maybe you know our story, miss, being such a friend of Miss Betty's, but it's no secret, anyhow, and I'm not ashamed to tell it. Terry was twenty years in prison, under a lying charge, until I went to live with Miss Betty as maid to the young ladies she had in care, and she heard about him, and how we had sweet-hearted all our lives, and I was ready to wait for him until death. So she stirred up some great friends of hers to look into his case, and he was pardoned.

"Then we got married—it was nigh to ten years ago—and came to live here. It was quiet, you see, miss, and Terry don't like to be gaped at, and talked about. Then there was the bit of old garden, and he is a master hand at flowers in the

summer. Then, too, miss, the thought of it being an old chapel drew me. It seemed, after all the dark, sorrowing years I had waited, that God's blessing had come to us at last. That's our story, miss, Terry's and mine, and that's why, when dear Miss Betty wanted safe shelter for that poor boy, she brought him here."

"Oh, it was, it was," said Winifred, in a broken voice. "Oh, let me trust you as she trusted you. It was to spare me she brought him here—to save me all the pain, all the shame."

"There, there," the strong hand closed tenderly over Winifred's, "don't talk that way, my dear. We'll spare and save him, until the end comes, as dear Miss Betty wished and prayed. And it is not far off, my dear," the kind voice grew grave. "He can't last very long, as you will see for yourself. Will you come in to him now?"

"Yes." Winifred drew a long, quivering breath, as if nerving herself for an ordeal, and Mrs. Blake led the way through a tiny hall to another room, wider and lighter even than the little parlor, and with the same air of homely comfort. An iron cot had been drawn up to an arched window, and at sight of the wan, wasted figure lying there, Winifred's chilled heart leaped again into love and life.

"Oh, Dick, Dick!" she cried, falling on her knees, and putting her arms about his neck.

"Winnie," he gasped. "Great heavens, Winnie!

Madrina sent you, then? She told you, after all—”

“Oh, yes, yes,” the girl sobbed, clinging to him. “Dick, poor, poor Dick! Oh, how can I tell you? Madrina died last night!”

“Died!” the fierce oath that broke from his lips told Winifred how far apart they were. “Died! Madrina! Then it’s all up with me—I am done for, here.”

“Oh, no, no, Dick, no. I have come to care for you in her place. She sent for me. You and I were her last thought on earth—her last, loving, pitying thought.”

“Dead! Madrina dead!” the sick man repeated. “I can’t believe it. It was only Thursday she was here—and now dead! But she was old, stupendously old, wasn’t she, Winnie?”

“Yes, she was very old, Dick.”

“And I’m young,” he said feverishly. “I’m only twenty-eight, Winnie. There’s always a chance for the young, Winnie. A fighting chance, isn’t there, for the young?”

She looked wistfully at the wan face, the sharpened features, the glittering eyes, and burst into tears. “Oh, Dick, dear,” she sobbed, “I don’t know—I don’t know.”

“And you don’t care, I guess,” he said, with a short, hard laugh. “I’d be well out of your way, I know. There, there, don’t kiss me, or you’ll get this cough yourself. Lord, how it racked me last

night. I'll never get well in this hole, never, Winnie. I've got to get out somehow. I've got to get out."

"Oh, Dick, no, no. Madrina knew what was best when she brought you here. It is safe, Dick, and they are good, kind people who will be true to you. And you are ill, Dick, very ill and weak, and—" her voice broke pitifully. The glittering gaze that met hers was so hard, so fierce in its despair.

"I tell you I must get out," he gasped. "I had to dodge and double for a while, but now they're off my track."

"Oh, Dick, what did you do—what did you do?" Winifred asked, with a choked sob.

"Got tired of picayune and struck out for something bigger," he answered. "Got in with a couple of chaps out there in the Big Lakes that were shoving the queer—making money without Uncle Sam's permit."

"Not counterfeiters, Dick?" faltered his sister.

"Well, yes—counterfeiters. There's money made in worse ways every day. But my cursed luck followed me. One of our men got nipped and gave us away. I had to bolt the town as best I could, with officers watching every train. I thought if I got here I could ship for the other side, but—but I gave out. Not used to the hobo business—and it was too much for me. Everything whirled round me one night, and I dropped in my

tracks. They took me to a hospital and there was a nun there that had nursed me once before out West. Whether she knew me or not, I can't tell—but madrina came and brought me here to die in this cursed rat-hole."

"You could be in no safer, better place. They are such kind, good people."

"Kind, good!" he repeated. "Why, the man is an old jail-bird, with the prison dry rot in his body and soul. And the woman maddens me with her pity, her prayers. I'll die here, Winnie. But if I could get out—away—I could live, I know."

"Where could you go?" she asked sadly.

"Off to some other land, where there is warmth and sunshine and flowers, where no one would know me, where I could breathe and live again. Men do live—when they are young—young like I am. They shake off the grip of death, disease, and live, live—And it would be another life this time, I swear it, Winnie. I'd be another man. I've learned my lesson at last. I've done with crooked ways. After this I'll be straight as you would have me—straight—straight as a string."

His cheek had flushed with the eagerness of his speech, his eye kindled, the hard outlines had softened.

It was Winifred's boy brother pleading with her, a look of their dead mother in his wistful face. And meeting that look, the girl forgot all the false promises of the past, all the ingratitude

that had repaid her sacrifice for him, forgot, too, the mocking strength and hope that are features of his treacherous disease.

"Dick, dear, dearest brother," she faltered. "Oh, if I could help you to live, Dick!"

"You can, you can, Winnie. Look there," he raised himself on his elbow, and sweeping aside the muslin curtain pointed to the gray stretch of river visible from his window. "Right down there is a vessel that sails for South America next week. The captain will take me and ask no questions—Blake here knows him. He will take me off to where I can breathe, where I can shake off this cursed cough that is killing me. Where I can start life fresh and new and right. He will take me, but he will have to be paid for it, and he asks two hundred dollars down!"

"Two hundred dollars!" echoed Winifred. "Oh, I haven't it, Dick. I have scarcely half that sum."

"Can't you get it?" he asked feverishly. "Can't you borrow it somewhere, Winnie? Only two hundred dollars for my life—my life—and I'll never trouble you again. I'll—I'll be out of your way forever. You'll have to bury me if I stay here."

"Don't put it like that," she cried brokenly. "There is no one I can ask for help, no one, now madrina is gone. And I have nothing! Oh, I forgot, I forgot!" Her tearful face suddenly brightened. "The opals! Madrina's opals. She

gave them to me last night—maybe it was in thought of this. Dear madrina's opals! I can sell them—they are worth more than two hundred dollars, I am sure, and you can go, Dick, you can go."

"Winnie, Winnie, you are a brick," he gasped, catching her hand and pressing it to his lips. "There was never a sister like you, Winnie. I've been a mean, shabby cur, I know, but I'll never forget this. I'll work to pay it all back, Winnie, all, all—you'll see. I'll give you diamonds some day in place of the opals, diamonds fit for a queen. So sell them, sell them quick, Winnie, and let me get off before—before—" A fierce paroxysm of coughing choked his speech. Winnie could only look on in agonized terror while he gasped, strangled, and struggled for breath.

Mrs. Blake hurried to the sufferer's bedside, with skilled touch, soothing voice, and helpful tenderness. But it was to Winifred the startled eyes appealed, it was her hand the clammy, icy fingers touched in despair, it was her ear that caught the choking whisper. "Don't, don't leave me, Winnie; you can help save me yet."

"Oh, I will, I will," she sobbed, in an agony of sympathy. "Oh, Dick, Dick, dear, dear brother! I will save you at any cost, at any cost."

CHAPTER XIX

A SETTLEMENT

IT HAD been five days since Winifred had left Trevlyn Towers. A brief note had informed Madam Trevlyn of her godmother's death and that matters of serious importance would delay her return for a fortnight or perhaps longer. So unsatisfactory an explanation, coming in the midst of her holiday preparations, was too much of a grievance for the little Madam's philosophy, and she lamented over it somewhat peevishly to her son. "Really, I can not see why she should be detained so long. Only a godmother, and there can be no money matters involved, for Winifred assured me Miss Warburton had no means at all."

"My dear little mother, we must remember that we can not buy a woman's body and soul for six hundred dollars a year. It has struck me more than once that you are a little exacting with Miss Deane. Give her a breathing spell after what may have been a crushing blow. Of course, I know you miss her. Isn't there somebody I can get to take her place for these few days?"

"No one," answered the lady sharply. "That is so like men, Hugh—they never can see a woman's difficulties."

"Never," echoed a laughing voice at the door, and Mrs. Marr, fur-wrapped and plume-crowned, peeped in through the parted portière. "No eavesdropping intended, dear Madam Trevlyn," she continued, as she slipped into the morning-room and clasped the lady's outstretched hand, "but Carleton had just ushered me in when I caught that last sentence and felt naturally obliged to affirm it. No man ever saw a woman's difficulties or ever will. What is the especial difficulty just now?"

"Everything, my dear," answered the elder lady plaintively. "Winifred has been called away, at the most inopportune time."

"Called away?" echoed Mrs. Marr, while a light flashed into her eyes. "Then, then—perhaps I was not dreaming when I saw her in P—— yesterday."

"Not dreaming at all," said the little Madam. "Her godmother died, and of course she had to go. Just when my house party was coming off, and I was depending on her for a thousand things!"

"Too bad," said the visitor sympathetically. "Can not I throw myself into the breach somehow, and act as secretary and companion for the day? I have absolutely nothing to do at home and I finished all my Christmas shopping yesterday. Which accounts for my singular meeting with Miss Deane," added Mrs. Marr, with a malicious little laugh. "But it is not a secretary's business

to gossip, so, dear Madam Trevlyn, just tell me when and how to begin my new work."

She had tossed aside her hat and furs, and was drawing off the gloves from her white, jeweled hands. The little morning-room that had been Winifred's sanctum seemed to be filled oppressively with an alien, and what Trevlyn felt to be an antagonistic presence. He had been accustomed to linger there after breakfast, while his mother and her young secretary took up the day's work, and Winifred's tranquil methods had seemed to soothe his own restlessness, filling the void hours with something akin to calm.

But to-day he was glad to escape, to mount Zadoc, who was restive as his master from two days of inaction, and to dash over the snow-clad heights in a wild gallop that seemed the sole fierce throb of life in the frozen stillness. Even the whisper of the pines was hushed. They stood rigid in icy armor, mute, breathless. Yet as he swept over these blank, white wastes to-day Trevlyn's memory colored them with light and life. He was startled to find how one gentle presence seemed to haunt the heights with a warmth and sweetness which the icy touch of death could not chill. The dizzy ledge over which he had guided Winifred, the little cabins in the Slashes, which she had brightened and blessed, the black dreary stretches of the Works, over which she had vainly striven to fling her sweet influence, the little ivy-

covered church to which she had lured back some of Father Philip's lost sheep—everywhere he turned there rose some fair picture of this gentle girl's struggle to lighten, to uplift, where he, the master, had stood supine, weak, cowardly, in the murky gloom.

But he would stand thus no longer. For weeks a new spirit had been growing slowly but surely within him, gaining steady mastery over every power of mind and heart and soul. He had fought against it in vain. As well might these white, frozen heights about him steel themselves against the coming touch of the spring. Dull, inert, helpless, dead as he had been to all that makes life noble and worthy, every fiber of his being was conscious of an awakening thrill.

In the blank desolation of the last few days, he had realized the truth—that he loved with a love to which the light flame of his boyish passion for Helena Marr was like the gleam of a firefly in the glorious radiance of a perfect day.

For Winifred had reached his soul, that, blinded, dulled, prisoned in its bonds of clay, was beating its wings for freedom. Ay, he would win her, despite every fetter and shackle of the cursed past. Nothing should hold him from this girl who would be his salvation, this beautiful mate soaring and singing in the upward blue, this pure, white-winged spirit, who would take him with her to the stars. So he swore to himself, as, with Zadoc's swift

hoof-beats under him he took his way over the wintry heights, scarcely heeding in his absorption whither he went, until a sudden turn in the road made him rein up with a fiercely muttered oath. The way was blocked with debris of stone and timber—the blackened ruins of Ivy Cottage rose, as if in mocking menace, in his path. A part of the walls and roof was still intact, but the whole interior was bared to the wintry day. The white muslin curtain still fluttered from one window, the gay pictures still held their place on the remaining wall, the table in a sheltered corner was piled with Winifred's books. There was even the vase of withered flowers she had brought from the conservatory that last Sunday to brighten the wintry lessons. But all around was ruin, wreckage, the work of fierce hate roused against her gentle efforts, of lawless savagery, defiant and triumphant in its malevolence.

And standing before the blackened, ruined hearthstone, like the fitting genius of the ill-omened scene, was Clyde Danvers, as usual, cool, calm, and debonair.

"Ah, good morning, my captain," he greeted cheerfully. "I thought I recognized the thunder of those hoof-beats. You have come, too, I suppose, to view the scene of disaster. The chaps, whoever they were, made a pretty clean sweep of things. There's not much of our fair friend's Sunday-school left!" The speaker's glance roved over the

gaily pictured walls, the desk, the curtains, with a light mockery that made the blood rush in a fierce fury to Trevlyn's brain. For that Danvers and his cursed lodge were at the bottom of this he knew as surely as if he had seen the hand that lighted the fuse. But the very strength of his passion steadied him. He felt the time had come for supreme effort—he must break this man's power over him here and now.

Dismounting from Zadoc, who was panting after his wintry gallop, he flung the bridle rein over a snow-laden bough, and patting the quivering Arab reassuringly, he turned from him into the ruined cottage. The two men faced each other over the black gap of the fallen chimney, and as their glances met both felt it was to be battle at last. And there was a new look in Trevlyn's eyes that warned Danvers he would need his keenest steel.

"I suppose it is useless to ask if you have any clue to the perpetrator of this outrage?" began Trevlyn ominously.

"Quite useless, my captain," was the quiet answer. "In fact, a stick of dynamite under an old bad-luck shack like this seemed scarcely a matter worth investigating. There has been a prejudice against the place for years, and when the men found their children were being bribed to come here, with the best intentions, of course—"

Trevlyn interrupted him. "We will not discuss that phase of the subject. Under any conditions

the wreckage was a piece of lawlessness which I propose to investigate and punish as it deserves."

"You will bring a hornet's nest about your ears," said Danvers, with an unpleasant laugh. "Investigations are not the best policy. It is far better to let sleeping dogs lie." The old steely flash was in his eye, but Trevlyn met it to-day with stern gravity.

"That is your viewpoint, I know," he answered quietly, "and it has heretofore been mine. But of late my outlook has somewhat changed."

"Ah, indeed," said Danvers. "I had begun to suspect as much from our recent discussions. And this new outlook of yours is, I judge, broader and bolder than that of the past?"

"It is clearer, at least," answered Trevlyn. "The condition of affairs at the Works, as proved by this last act of lawless savagery, is intolerable. Things have reached a point for which I, as owner and presumptive master, can no longer hold myself responsible."

"Responsible?" repeated Danvers slowly. "Your outlook *has* widened. Heretofore it only included your very comfortable dividends."

"Hang the dividends!" burst forth Trevlyn in sudden fury. "You have doubled them, I know, to secure your own per cent., but at what a cursed cost. Rottenness everywhere. In the mines, machine methods—one-third of those new passage-ways we have opened are death-traps, masked by a

mere show of security. And morality is worse, as you know. Beckershoff's saloon and dance hall, this new lodge, with its crack-brained rantings—all are helping on the hellish work of drunkenness and demoralization. The sole, sane, pure, gentle effort at bettering things was made here!" Trevlyn paused for a moment as if to master himself as he glanced around at the blackened walls, "and wrecked by a malice worthy of the devils that inspired it."

"You are forcible on that point," said Danvers with his cool, maddening laugh. "It seems that our fair Sunday-school teacher has extended her lessons to pupils of riper years. Well, you and she are doubtless right. Things are not exactly as they should be from a Sunday-school standpoint at Trevlyn Ridge." Danvers leaned back against the ruins of the chimney-place, and surveyed his companion with a cool, insolent gaze. "What do you propose to do about it?"

"I propose to change things," answered Trevlyn, meeting the challenge of those insolent eyes fearlessly. "I propose, on the first of the year, to begin a thorough reform of all these crying evils—to install new machinery, institute safe and modern methods, put down drunkenness and disorder, if necessary with the strong hand of the law. I propose to replace the wretched cabins that disgrace the ridge with new and sanitary cottages, to build a schoolhouse and hall, where the people

can find decent and instructive entertainment, to put the store, with its fraudulent and ruinous system of credit, on an honest, co-operative basis. I propose to do all this with your assistance if I can—without it if I must."

"In other words I am kicked out like a dog unless I choose to lick my master's feet," said Danvers, and a fiery spark glowed in his cold eye now. "But the dog has his fangs still."

"I quite understand that," said Trevlyn in an unmoved tone. "And I am prepared to muzzle them. What are your terms, Danvers?"

The red spark glowed brighter in Danvers' eye and his slender, shapely hand clenched itself until the nails bit into the flesh. "We will talk of terms later," he said in a low, clear voice. "First let us recall the relations of the last five years—look back over our accounts—before we come to a final settlement. Shall I turn the sealed pages, or will you?"

"As you will," answered Trevlyn. "You can show me nothing that is not branded on heart and brain."

"Perhaps not," answered Danvers, and a curious smile flickered over his face a moment and was gone. "Still, when it comes to a final settlement, one must review old accounts. Ours was opened I think about five years ago—to be thoroughly accurate in November, 18—, when we found ourselves together at the little mining town of Las

Cruces. You were very young then, younger even than your years, and the world was new to you, and you had three thousand dollars in your pocket to pay for a new pumping outfit in the Mercedes mine. We played a friendly game or two beneath the Mexican stars, with no great harm to either."

"No harm!" burst forth Trevlyn. "It was you that led me on, callow young fool that I was. You have been my evil genius from first to last, Danvers, flattering my boyish self-conceit with your pretended friendship, mocking at honor, at conscience, at truth!"

"I found you amusing, I must say," and the wolfish smile showed under the tawny lines of the speaker's mustache. "I was a little worn out with life's game myself, and you were so astonishingly fresh. It seemed positively friendly to show you a move or two. And so—so we were shaking things up a bit lively when we met Sandy Dick. Lord, what a young reprobate he was, with his blue eyes and his angel face, and when he heard of the load you were carrying, how he stuck. There was no shaking him off. Then, then at last came the climax, you remember it, my captain? That night in old Pedro's saloon, with the storm raging without, and the old lamp flaming and smoking on the table, and Sandy Dick's low, pleasant voice as he raised the bets. Three times I tried to get you from the table, three different times, but the fiery Spanish liquor was burning in your veins, and

Sandy Dick was playing you like a trout on the hook. At three o'clock in the morning he had your last dollar, and as he swept his winnings from the table—”

“The card dropped from his sleeve that showed him to be a thief and liar,” said Trevlyn hoarsely, “and I caught the iron lamp from the table and struck him down—down dead at my feet. There is the story—the story of a mad, drunken, deluded boy’s one desperate deed. Give it to the world if you will, and let men judge it as they should and would have judged long ago if you had not been there to urge me, to force me, almost, to flight.”

“And save you,” said Danvers. “Old Pedro had already rushed off in terror to give the alarm—”

“To save me for what?” said Trevlyn. “That you might fix yourself upon me thereafter, bind me in fetters worse than death, hold me the slave of your word and will! But it is over—it is over. Name your own terms, and for my poor mother’s sake I will pay for your silence. But it is on condition that you stand out of my life, for there has come that into it which you shall not darken and blight and curse.”

The red spark flamed ominously in Danvers’ eye. “A woman again, I judge.”

“A woman, yes—a woman to whom I intend to go and tell this whole story of weakness, madness, crime if you will. A woman to whom I will sub-

mit my past, present, future, and abide by the sentence she pronounces—the woman who henceforth, either for joy or sorrow, shall rule my heart, my life. And I tell you this, Danvers, that you may know that your power is broken, that all the terrors of earth or hell will hold me no longer to the coward, accursed ways I have trodden at your bidding. I would buy your silence, as I said, just as I would avert any pain or shadow from my mother's age and weakness—but I will buy it with money only, Danvers, not with the weak debasement of all that commands man's respect or woman's love."

"And if I refuse to sell my silence?" said Danvers slowly.

"Then do your worst," burst forth Trevlyn impetuously. "Better any fate than the cursed bondage in which you have held me. Do your worst."

"My worst," echoed Danvers, and his whole face seemed to flame with fiendish triumph. "That is a bold challenge. So then, if you must have it, I must open the last sealed page of your account—one that I do not think you will submit to your fair lady's judgment.

"For two months ago I learned—you have not guessed it, I am sure—you saw no faint resemblance in the fair face, the angel smile. Ah, no, for your eyes were blinded. But I, keener, cooler, inquired, investigated. I learned something strange and startling even to me. I learned the true name

of the young reprobate that you brained with the iron lamp five years ago—that Sandy Dick was the fair Miss Winifred's wild, wayward brother—Richard Barton Deane."

CHAPTER XX

THE TURN OF THE WAY

"IT IS a lie, a foul, devilish lie!" burst from Trevlyn's ashen lips.

"It is the truth," answered Danvers coolly. "I have the documents to prove it. I met Sandy Dick before I met you. He was on the down grade to the devil then. The sheriff was on his track, and he had to make a quick jump from a roadhouse, where we were bunking together, leaving a lot of old togs behind him. I levied on them, for I was down and out and he owed me a round fifty. But I found nothing worth the seizing. There was the usual young fool collection in the pocket, some girl's photos and love letters, as I fancied them, written in French, which I could not read and directed to Richard B. Deane—but not a peso. I thought I might as well hold on to the things as security for my fifty, if I ever met my young 'angel face' again. So I dumped the whole business in a bag and left it in safe keeping until called for, as I was traveling light weight myself just then, and didn't care to be bothered with any doubtful encumbrances.

"Afterward," the speaker's face hardened piti-

lessly, "when you and I had agreed to let 'sleeping dogs lie,' there seemed no especial use in raking up the dead man's past—since it had become to my interest to keep it buried. But Miss Deane came to Trevlyn. The name is not an uncommon one, and at first—really, at first all association between the two seemed impossible. But I spent an evening with her, and something, I can not tell what—glance, voice, smile, aroused, shall I say my suspicion? It occurred to me that with a young lady of such compelling charm domesticated in your home there might be an element of tragedy in the situation which—"

"Say no more," muttered Trevlyn hoarsely. "Give me your proof—the letters—the—the French letters—you have them, I know, for you are devil, not man, in your power, your cunning! Give—me—the—letters!" He held out a hand that all the strength of his manhood could not steady. It shook with the palsy of feeble age.

"They are here," said Danvers, drawing a packet from his inner pocket. "I sent for them, have kept them in anticipation of this—settlement. I leave you to consider them at your leisure. I will only add that I am prepared to open our account on the old basis."

"Never," thundered Trevlyn, and the white passion of his face, the blaze in his eye, made even Clyde Danvers shrink for a moment. "Not if it were to open heaven for me—if it were to

close the hell which gapes at my feet. Stand out of my life—you have done your worst!"

And then Danvers and all things else seemed to vanish from Trevlyn's mind, as sinking down in *her* rude chair under the blackened walls, with the white stillness of death closing around him, he read the letters, her letters, written in the clear, graceful hand he knew so well—tender, loving letters from a sister to the brother of whose wild wandering she was happily unconscious.

They were from Mont Lorette, her convent home, and they told of all simple school-girl happenings, they touched tenderly on childish memories of the past, glad hopes for the future, while through all there breathed something higher, sweeter, purer, the music that he felt was the keynote of her beautiful young life.

"Dearest Dick, we came out of retreat yesterday. It was a lovely retreat and good old Father Bourget, who gave it, told us how happy we were to be sheltered in God's house, under His care—that we must pray every day for those who were not so blessed, who had to meet the dangers, the trials, the temptations of the wicked world. And I thought of my own dear brother, and prayed with all my heart that he might be saved from danger, harm, that God would guide and protect you, and bring you back in safety to your little sister's love and care."

Trevlyn crushed the letter in his icy hand, the

hand that had killed, the hand that he had madly hoped to outstretch for that "little sister's" loving, trusting clasp, forgetting it was cursed with the guilt of Cain.

It was her brother, the brother she had loved, whom he had struck dead at his feet, the brother whose ghastly corpse would lie foul and hideous between them forever. Her brother!

And an hour ago he had dreamed of life, of hope, of love! An hour ago he had believed he had strength enough to cast off every shackle, break every bond, defy fate. And now—her brother, it was her brother, whose death had been brooding like a black shadow over his life all these blighted years—it was her brother he had killed! For he could not doubt. Knowing Danvers even as he did, he felt he had made the whole case out in clear, deadly detail, before he had spoken. And he remembered now, with a cold sickening of his heart, that he, too, had caught little tricks of glance, gesture, that vaguely recalled some memory too elusive to shape or name. Her brother! The woman he loved—the man he had killed.

This was the thought he had to face through the coming years, this the hideous whisper that was to breathe through all his after life. How could he bear it? Why should he bear it? Life had been a dull burden before now—now it would be torture in its triple weight.

An impatient whinnying came from the restless

Zadoc, but his master did not hear. The chill of the dead world without was creeping over heart and brain. He stared dully at the letter clasped in his numbing hand. She had prayed, poor child, for his guidance, his safety—prayed, and there had been none—none but this dark, mocking fate that had ruled his life, to hear! Colder and deadlier grew the stillness, as the icy clutch of despair closed tighter about Treviyn's heart and soul. Why struggle against it longer—why drift worthless and useless through void, torturing years, why live a life that in its dearth, its despair, its desolation, would be maddening?

Why, when there was escape—quick escape! The numb hand that had clasped Winifred's letter relaxed its hold, crept slowly into his pocket, and met a colder touch. Ay, it was there, the tiny Derringer that he always carried on his lonely, reckless rides over the mountain, it was there, and his fingers tightened upon it with resolute grip. He drew out the shining, deadly thing, and was looking at it with a fierce glitter in his hopeless eyes, a stern triumph on his white lips, when there came the crackling sound of footsteps on the crisp snow, and wrapped in his old horseman's cloak, Father Philip appeared on the blackened, ruined threshold.

“Ah, it is you, my good friend, as I guessed,” he said cheerily. “I saw that fine black horse without, and I said it is Mr. Trevlyn who is here,

I am sure, and I can venture in. Ah! the rascals, the cowards!" Father Philip's old face kindled with honest indignation as he looked around him. "This was a scoundrelly piece of work—a shame, a shame, a burning shame!" The old priest sank down on one of the benches as he spoke. His keen eyes had caught sight of the Derringer that had dropped from Trevlyn's hand at his coming, but he made no sign, though the tense lines of the white face, the burning light of the eyes, said everything. Father Philip had not been a physician of souls for fifty years without learning to read these mute danger signals at a glance! It was time for the softening touch, the soothing word, he knew.

"Poor little girl," he said gently, "she was so brave, so earnest, so strong in her young faith and hope. Ah, well, the good God will bless her for trying to do His work among His little ones. He will bless her, I am sure."

"You think so?" Trevlyn's tone was dry and harsh. "It seems to me a little difficult to believe in the rewards of virtue now—and here."

"Not at all, not at all," said Father Philip, smiling. "You see after the fashion of the world, my friend. God's ways are not the ways of men. Often I have found, in my fifty years of ministry, that from the blackened darkness there breaks saving light, that from deeds like these comes reaction against the evil that wrought them—repulsion,

reform. Perhaps already it has stirred, roused you?"

The kind old eyes were lifted in friendly question to Trevlyn's face—the kind old voice was gentle and grave in its quiet reproof.

"I need rousing, you think?" said Trevlyn, with a hard laugh.

"I do," answered Father Philip simply. "If I had the right to speak to you, my son—"

"You have," said Trevlyn quickly, his heart stirred strangely by the word that had dropped unconsciously from the old priest's lips—"speak to me as to a son."

"I will then, frankly, fearlessly," said the old priest, and in the fatherly tone there was a new note that fell clear and calming over the wild chaos in Trevlyn's soul. "For this wreckage and ruin," he pointed to the blackened walls about him, "for the far worse wreckage of mind and soul of which this tells, you are responsible to your God—to your fellow-man. High and holy duties have been laid upon you, which either blindly or wilfully you have evaded."

"Neither blindly nor wilfully," was the hoarse, shaken answer. "I have been driven—driven by a merciless fate."

"There is no fate, my son," was the steady answer. "There is only God and His eternal, unchanging laws, which we must obey at any cost—pain, denial, self-sacrifice. This is the simple,

primal truth without which all creation would be chaos. This divine law is upon you and upon me. We may not defy or evade it and escape the divine justice."

"Another name for—Nemesis?" said Trevlyn harshly.

"No, no, no," was the earnest answer. "Let us have done with these pagan fancies. I do not know, I do not ask what it is that has darkened, embittered your past, but neither sorrow nor suffering, not even sin, should have power to blight and deaden a life like yours, a life that should be so rich in blessings to all around you. And it will be yet, I am sure," continued Father Philip more cheerily, as he rose to his feet. "This little girl here," he pointed to Winifred's desk and chair, "has worked even more wisely than she guessed. Ivy Cottage will be an awakening. I trust not a stormy one, but there are rumblings through the mountains I do not altogether like," the speaker continued. "These poor, simple people, with their blending of racial and religious antagonisms, are so easily aroused. Mad Patsy led some sort of a childish crusade against the lodge last night. But I suppose you have heard of it?"

"Nothing," said Trevlyn quickly; "what happened?"

"He was struck on the head and badly hurt. It was to see him, poor child, as well as on a general mission of peace and good will that I came out on

old Dobbin this morning. And, seeing your black horse standing here, I stopped, thinking it might not be amiss to give the master of Trevlyn a word of warning. I trust there will be no trouble, but it is as well to be on your guard. Patsy's father, a drunken, worthless fellow, who scarcely gave the boy a thought in life, in swearing that if the child dies he will have vengeance. Even big Barney Regan is sitting by Patsy's bedside with a dangerous fire in his honest Irish eyes."

"I do not wonder," said Trevlyn in a low voice. "I had heard nothing of all this. If the storm bursts we can not complain, we have invoked all things dark and evil. But I thank you for your friendly warning, Father; I thank you for this meeting. You found me reeling under a shock I had not strength to bear. Again I thank you."

He held out his hand to the old priest, and their eyes met in a glance that revealed soul to soul.

"We will fling this evil thing away," said Father Philip, and stooping, he picked up the Derringer, and cast it far over the snowy heights. "It might tempt you again, my son, in a moment of weakness, when God's help will not be so near. We are but a pleasant ride from Woodmont, and Sergeant Dan has been hunting in the mountain. There is some cold game in my larder—will you come home with me to luncheon?"

CHAPTER XXI

THE HEALING TOUCH

LIKE one led by a firm hand over dizzy, darkened ways, Trevlyn followed Father Philip. That kind old voice seemed the one living note in a world of death and despair.

They mounted their horses and rode over the frozen wastes, the old priest chatting lightly and cheerily of his mountain flock. "It is the simple life indeed, without money and without care. My good people bring me their little weekly offerings, butter, cheese, eggs, honey, far more than an old man needs. Sergeant Dan has two turkeys fattening for a Christmas feast, there is fuel in plenty at no cost—he gathers the wood from the forest and the waste from the mines. Twice a year we have a collection, not oftener—it might keep my people away from church."

"You mean there is no fixed salary for its master?" exclaimed Trevlyn in amazement.

"Salary!" Father Philip laughed softly. "Well, perhaps a hundred dollars, all told. Enough—quite enough—more than my Master had, my friend. You remember, perhaps, His story. They had to 'show Him the coin of the tribute.' He did not know its face. Enough, quite enough to give you

warm welcome, as you will see." For the little church showed now through the snow-wreathed pines, and Sergeant Dan came limping out to meet Father Philip and his unexpected guest.

"I have brought Mr. Trevlyn home to luncheon, Sergeant," said the old priest. "Do your best for us—a pot of your good coffee will go well after our cold ride. Take the horses."

"Sure I'm a bold man in me own way, but I daren't touch that black devil, your reverence," said Sergeant Dan, recoiling from Zadoc's fiery eyes.

"You are right," said Trevlyn quietly. "I will see to him myself, my good man." And he led Zadoc back into the little stable, soothing him with the master's touch and voice that could alone quiet his fierce restlessness. His wild Arab, that knew him, loved him—some pulse in his dead heart leaped at the thought! In softer mood he turned back to the little rectory, where the "mine waste" glowed in ruddy welcome in the open grate, and Father Philip had already drawn up his one comfortable armchair for his guest's occupancy.

"Sit down, sit down," he said, as his guest would have refused it. "You're used to the cushioned side of life, my friend, and I am not. That chair would send me off into a noonday nap when I want to keep awake. It is not often I have so welcome a guest." And never had the master of Trevlyn found a host so simple, so friendly and cordial. The luncheon, with its clear, hot coffee,

its brown bread, baked by a good German hausfrau near by, its cold venison, might, at any other time have tempted even the sated appetite of Father Philip's guest, but to-day he could not eat, he only toyed lightly with the viands in compliment to his host. If the old priest had hoped to win Trevlyn's confidence, to draw forth some saving outburst of passion or remorse, he hoped in vain. He could only put forth all his kindly powers to soothe and ease the wound he might not probe or heal. But all the while a blessed influence was falling that even Father Philip, wise physician as he was, could not see. The bare room, the scant fare, the loveless life, the wageless service, were whispering lessons of a world in which self was forgotten, of strange, calm ways beyond earth's despair and defeat.

Leaning back in his chair smoking—he had taken out his cigar case and proffered his host the unwonted luxury of a fine Havana—Trevlyn caught Sergeant Dan's anxious question as he cleared the table.

“And did poor Patsy know ye, Father?”

“I fear not,” answered Father Philip sadly. “It will be a mercy, doubtless, if the poor afflicted child is taken and yet—”

“A mercy!” echoed Sergeant Dan grimly. “It will mean fire and murdher and vengeance, for the boys has their blood up. And the poor lad being an innocent, ye see, your honor—” the speaker be-

came suddenly aware that the master of the ridge was within hearing, and turned to Trevlyn apologetically.

"Who hurt him?" asked the gentleman slowly.

"Sure that's more than I can say, sir," answered Sergeant Dan. "It was a blundhering story the boy's brother brought over this morning, but as well as I could make out it was like this: It seems the young lady, Miss Deane, had been wonderfully tender and good to Patsy from the first, and with her sweet voice, and her pretty face, and her kind ways, it was like an angel from the skies had bent down to the poor lad, and all his quare, bewildhered heart wint out to her, sir. And when the little school-house was wrecked, and he heard she was gone, some fancy got in his cracked brain, that she had been hurt or driven away. And there was bad, bitther feeling, anyway, for the mothers and the children liked the little school wid the pictures and the singing, and there was a dale of crying and fretting and scolding against the blackguard of the lodge. And poor Patsy's cracked brain got fired at it all, and last night he gathered a lot of boys and wint up wid sticks and stones to break up the lodge. Sure it was only a boy's prank wid the most of them, and they scattered like hares when the men came out agin them. But poor Patsy in his bewilderment stood his ground until some big, bloody scoundrel knocked him down wid a murdhering blow.

"Faix, there was no need for it—a poor wisp of a lad, that you could grip with the turn of a hand, and an innocent as well. There was no need to kill him, sir."

"No need indeed," said Trevlyn sternly. "It was brutal, cowardly, devilish, like all the rest—"

"Sure it was that," said Sergeant Dan, much encouraged by this unexpected sympathy. "Wid an intelligent, beautiful young lady like Miss Deane thrying only to coax the children into decent ways. Ah, but she was the sweet, lovely angel," continued the speaker warming up into tender remembrance. "To hear her at the old organ! How she got such music out of it none could tell, and learning them quare foreign hymns as if she was a born dago herself, sure, and kneeling there wid the little beggars around her, and the light of heaven on her face. And the kind, friendly way she had wid young and old. Sure, and it's small wonder that poor cracked-brained Patsy went mad entirely at losing her," concluded Sergeant Dan, as he stumped off with the dishes, leaving the master of Trevlyn stern and white-faced under the torture of his words.

Winifred, Winifred! Here, there, everywhere, her beautiful image followed him as it would follow through the hopeless darkness of the years into which he dared not look. How could he dare meet her sweet, unconscious gaze, clasp her gentle hand again? For no ignorance, no bought silence, no

evaded justice, no pitying forgiveness of God or man, could bridge the awful gulf that yawned between them now. The blood of her brother called out against him in the stillness of his own guilty heart—the blood of her brother, and it must be heard! And as Father Phil watched the rigid lines deepen again on his guest's face he felt there was pain there beyond his kindly reach—that all his friendly efforts to soothe and divert had been in vain.

"You have never been in our little church," he said, as Trevlyn rose to go. "I would like you to see its memorial window. Madam Grosvenor, the foundress of St. Anne's, expended her daughter's dowry upon it, so I have heard, and it is considered quite a work of art. We have so few visitors who can appreciate its beauty that I will take pleasure in showing it to you."

"Thank you," said Trevlyn. "I will be pleased to see it. I find the exterior of your little church most picturesque, but I had no idea it could boast any works of art."

"Ah, I catch a skeptic tone in your words," laughed Father Phil pleasantly. "Come and see, then—come and see."

He led the way through the short passage that separated the church from its tiny rectory. Though the long years had dealt rudely with St. Anne's, though there were traces of leakage in the roof

and mildew on the walls, its simple beauty of arch and lines could not be marred.

Trevlyn found himself in a quaint little Gothic chapel, where a small silver lamp gleamed like a star before the simple altar, and Father Philip, regardless of any further duty as *cicerone*, bared his head and bent his knee, leaving his guest to study the memorial window that flooded the little *sanctuary* with rainbow light. It was an artist's work indeed, as Trevlyn saw at first glance, a triptych, on each side of which stood the Blessed Virgin and the good St. Anne, in all the beauty and rapture of their holy motherhood, while between them was a picture that caught the spectator's gaze and held him awestruck by its pathos and power.

In striking contrast to the crowning glory of motherhood depicted in the radiant figures on either side, this central panel showed the shadows of Gethsemane falling around a form divine, crushed with mortal anguish. There was no mystic chalice, no bending angel, only the clasped hands of the Man-God uplifted in pleading, the agonized face, its white brow beaded with the sweat of blood, raised to the darkened sky. While below ran the words that have echoed down the ages:

“Father, not My will, but Thine be done!”

And as Trevlyn stood there, looking up at the picture, there came a strange stir in his dull, half-

wakened soul, a stir like the soft welling up of clear waters from some choked and hidden depth. Was it the prayer of the old man kneeling under the silver lamp before the altar or perhaps another prayer breathed from a pure, breaking heart far away? Was it an unknown Presence, that touched him with the healing power that went out of old to those who stood blinded and darkened in His way? For as Father Philip rose from his knees a hand was laid upon his arm, and a low, shaking voice said:

“Father, you listen to stories of sin, of suffering, of despair, I know. Will you listen to mine?”

* * * * *

The early winter twilight was falling on the mountain when Trevlyn mounted Zadoc again at the rectory door. He and Father Philip had talked together for two hours, and there had been tears in the old priest's eyes as he heard the story that seemed beyond all human comfort, all earthly hope. He could only speak of courage, strength, endurance, could only point to stern heroic paths that lead beyond life's joys to calm and peace.

But it was a wise, tender, skilful touch that fell upon the wounded soul that Trevlyn bared to Father Philip, and he rode home through the gathering dusk soothed, strengthened for the dark, doubtful ways that lay before him. He had sinned. Stripped of all human palliation, that mad, passionate, murderous blow of the past had

been a crime against the law of God, the law of man. He had sinned and must suffer—there was no escape. But the wild, fierce rebellion of the morning was over. Dark, loveless, as his path must be, there were stars in the night.

He had thought to make Love the watchword of a new life, to sweep away all the misery and scandal and sorrow from the ridge in Winifred's name and for her sweet sake. And now that she was lost to him forever, now that even if she were willing to put her gentle hand in his, he dared not clasp it, now that an awful gulf no love could bridge yawned between them; there was only duty left. Duty! A new word!

He recalled the first morning of her coming to Trevlyn Towers, when she had asked him of her duties, and he had laughed the stern, strange name away. Duty! Ah, she, gentle girl as she was, knew its meaning. That old man, living his poor, lonely, unpaid life on these bare mountains, had learned its deepest lessons. That bowed form pictured in St. Anne's window—Trevlyn paused, awed by unfathomable depths of anguish and acceptance he could not reach.

He turned from the mountain road that passed Ivy Cottage, and took the way that led to the Slashes. He would stop and ask after Patsy, see that the boy had all the attention he needed; some higher surgical skill than the ridge could afford might save him yet—this poor, mad boy, who had

loved Winifred, who had risked his weak life for her sake. Poor, mad Patsy! And with a new softening of his heart for the long-scorned little cracked-brain, the master of Trevlyn guided Zadoc's unwilling steps down the rough, steep way that led to the group of cabins in the hollow, buried deep now in the winter snow. A group of children that scattered, frightened at his approach, guided him to the present point of breathless interest in the wretched neighborhood. As he drew rein at the broken gate, the remembrance of that previous visit to the Slashes pierced him like the turn of a sword in an open wound. He seemed to see the graceful, white-robed form flitting like an angel of mercy through the shadow of death, blessing, brightening its darkness. She and the old priest in his eyrie on the mountain had shown him the way, and feebly, slowly, like one groping over unaccustomed steeps, he must strive now to follow it.

Fearing to leave Zadoc he tapped with his riding crop at the gate. The cabin door half opened, and he could hear a medley of voices within—then, apparently wresting himself from a detaining hand, big Barney Regan stalked out in the deepening dusk to Trevlyn's side.

“I stopped to ask after poor little Patsy,” began the gentleman.

“Shure an’ ye’re late about it, Mr. Trevlyn,” the answer came back with a short, hard laugh, “but if ye want to know, he is dying, sir.”

"Dying!" echoed Trevlyn. "Oh, I hope not! What does the doctor say?"

"That he can do naught for him, naught," answered Barney hoarsely. "I knew it from the first, when I caught him in me arms, murthered, murthered, poor innocint, before God and man! Murthered, him that had no more harm in him than a year-old babe!"

"Poor boy! Poor boy!" said Trevlyn quietly. "I will leave my horse up at the Towers and then come back and see him. There may be a chance for him yet. Another doctor, perhaps, could do something. We will have a surgeon from P——. I will telegraph at once."

"It's no good, no good, sir," was the answer, rough and fierce in its hopeless pain. "The death sweat is on him now. But," a sudden thought seemed to strike the speaker, "if ye want to see him, I'll hould the horse and ye can go in now."

Trevlyn was conscious of a sudden recoil, a shrinking in every fiber from the painful scene that Barney pictured. But it was the first step in the new way, and he took it bravely.

"Hold Zadoc, then," he said, springing lightly from the saddle, "and I will go in." And he passed up the narrow walk to the cabin door.

CHAPTER XXII

THE BURST OF THE STORM

IT OPENED at his coming, for the master of Trevlyn and his black horse had already been recognized. There were some half-dozen watchers in the little room which the visitor entered, just from their work with grimy faces and hands, old Granny Devlin, Patsy's stepmother, slatternly and important, his father wild-eyed with drink and excitement. A smoking lamp flung its dull light upon the wretched scene. The air was heavy with stifling odors, but the boy lying on a narrow cot in the corner seemed apart from it all, beyond touch or reach or breath of the foulness around him. The fair hair tossed softly about his brow half hid its bloody bandages, the pale young face had lost its blank, bewildered look, the blue eyes were strangely calm and bright. Trevlyn spoke a few kind words to the father, which seemed to fall unheard upon his ears.

"We will have the best surgeon in P—— here to-morrow morning. I will telegraph for him to-night. Patsy," he laid his hand on the boy's fair hair, "do you know me, Patsy?"

Patsy looked up. The speaker's voice touched

the one chord that had made music in his broken young life.

"Will you bring her back?" he whispered. "Ye can, ye can—tell her I axed ye. Mr. Trevlyn, tell her I axed ye."

"The Lord have mercy!" muttered old Granny Devlin; "ye're the first livin' craythur he's known, sir. Not even the priest himself could get a wurrud of sense out of him. It's only of singing angels he'll talk and croon to hisself like that."

And even as she spoke Patsy's blue eyes lost all earthly vision again, and from his parted lips there came a low, sweet, wordless strain. The evening hymn Trevlyn had often heard Winifred singing to his mother in the wintry twilight, when the little Madam's fretted nerves needed soothing and rest! Strong man that he was, Trevlyn felt that his lips were trembling and his eyes dim as he turned away, and promising to return on the morrow with the new surgeon left the house, old Granny Devlin following him, curtseying to the door. But all the rest stood around in a grim, ungracious silence. He slipped a banknote in the old woman's hand when they reached the broken step without.

"Get everything the boy needs or fancies," he said.

"Sure I will, I will, yer honor," she answered in a cautious whisper, "though I daren't say where I got it, for it's boilin' wid bad blood is ivery craythur widin. And shure, sir," the old lady

stepped out a little further in the darkness, "in God's name don't lave yer own foine house agin this night. Ye can do no more good here, sir, an' ye might come to some harm. Don't lave yer house, sir, agin, in God's name."

"Well, sir," said big Barney as he relinquished Zadoc to his master, "ye found it thtrue as I said."

"I am afraid it is," replied Trevlyn gravely, "still we must do all we can. I will telegraph for Doctor B—— to-night."

"He'll be gone afore the morning," said Barney huskily, "and thin, thin," he lifted a clenched, shaking fist in the air; then suddenly, as if recollecting himself, mastered voice and gesture.

"Anyhow, sir, ye've done no harm in coming to-night," he said. "It was the frindly thing, an' the boys will know it. So good night to you, Mr. Trevlyn, good night, sir."

And unconscious of the new significance Big Barney threw into the words, Trevlyn rode back to the Towers, his thoughts busy with all the happenings of this momentous day, his heart still thrilling with poor Patsy's death-cry. "Will ye bring her back? Ye can, ye can. Tell her I axed ye, Mr. Trevlyn, I axed ye."

Mrs. Marr, her duties as secretary done, had gone home, and the late dinner was waiting for Trevlyn, his little mother happy and interested in the pleasant business of the day which her visitor had so charmingly brightened.

"Helena is so delightfully worldly," said the little Madam as, Carleton dismissed, they sat over their coffee together. "Really, sometimes I can't help regretting her, Hugh. She would liven you up, I am sure. We have not had a dull moment to-day. We drove to Sudworth together, and gave all our orders, and stopped at Colonel Raynn's for lunch. Wasn't it dreadful of those little wretches to make such a disturbance at the Works last night? Carleton tells me that little mad Patsy was hurt. It certainly would be a mercy if he were taken out of his miseries, as I told Winifred. And oh, Hugh, that reminds me! Helena told me the strangest thing about Winifred. I don't know what to think of it. Helena saw her yesterday pawning her jewels, Hugh."

"Pawning her jewels!" echoed Trevlyn. "Mrs. Marr must have been dreaming, mama."

"Not at all. Helena is not the dreaming kind. It was not an ordinary pawnbroker, of course, but a man who lends money on real valuables—jewels, silverware, and such things. And as many of them are not reclaimed, one can find great bargains there. Helena, who with all her money has a keen eye for saving, goes there every now and then, and was there yesterday. The man has a little office back of his store where he does his pawnbroking, and as Helena stood looking at something in the shop Winifred passed out of this place. She was in deep mourning and

dropped her veil immediately, but Helena felt sure she recognized her.

"And besides, of course, it was not exactly right, but Helena is a good customer, and the man was so struck with their beauty, that he showed her the jewels, the most beautiful opals she ever saw, every one of them with a heart of flame. The dealer had lent two hundred dollars on them, but they were worth more than twice that, he knew. And they were marked—the lender said he always required that for his protection—Miss W. L. Deane, No. 2 Evan's Court, Maple Hill."

"Evan's Court!" Trevlyn exclaimed. "Evan's Court and Maple Hill! My dear little mama, Mrs. Marr has been entertaining you with wild imaginings. I know Evan's Court and Maple Hill. In fact, I own property there, though it has been in litigation for years. It is a wretched neighborhood, and Evan's Court is really scarcely respectable. The whole thing is impossible," concluded the gentleman irritably.

"Impossible!" echoed his mother. "Why impossible? It is very curious, I admit, Hugh, but after all we know very little about Winifred's past, excepting what her letter told us. We never made inquiry."

"And for God's sake make none," he said with sudden passion. "I forbid it, do you understand, mother? I forbid it. It would be insulting to

the purest, loveliest woman I have ever met, it would be cruel, malicious—”

“My dear boy, don’t, don’t get so excited over the subject,” said his mother anxiously. “Really I am almost afraid to tell you any more, Hugh.”

“There is more then,” he said: “let me hear all, mother. Mrs. Marr deals in subtle poison, as I know.”

“Not at all—you do Helena great injustice, Hugh. She simply told me the truth; she loves beautiful jewels, as you know, and went quite wild over the opals. The dealer could not sell them, of course, but said the owner seemed in great need of money, and might be induced to part with them for something near their value. Helena offered four hundred dollars for them and he agreed to negotiate. He enclosed the note he received in regard to the matter to Helena to-day. We got it in the post-office at Sudworth. It said briefly: ‘The owner of the opals requests a week to consider the offer.’ And, Hugh, it was Winifred’s writing, I can swear. It is all very strange and perplexing, and has set me to thinking, I must confess. Why is Winifred in such need of money? Why should she sacrifice in such reckless haste her godmother’s legacy, for such, doubtless, the jewels were? Dorrenberg, the dealer, said the setting was seventy years old, at least. Why should she not have brought the jewels to me in-

stead of him? I should have given her a decent price for them. What does it all mean?" concluded the lady impatiently.

"It means mischief on the part of your friend, Mrs. Marr," answered Trevlyn, with a short, harsh laugh. "She is unduly bent on prejudicing you against a friendless, helpless girl. Miss Deane may have needs, troubles of which we do not know, into which we have no right to inquire. Or the whole thing may be, and likely is, some charity or kindness on her part to one in need of help. Really, dear little mama, it does not seem to be our business in the least." And Trevlyn rose from his seat, and without pausing to give his mother the usual caress, lighted a cigar and strode out onto the terrace to smoke. The night was dark and heavy with coming storm, but Trevlyn paced the long sheltered stretch heedless of gloom or cold, puffing fiercely at the strong Havana whose fumes seemed to be an outlet for the turmoil of his heart and brain. For the subtle poison of Mrs. Marr's words was working in him, despite himself. He could not doubt, but he feared. Hitherto he had only thought of Winifred as one living, moving in some pure, tranquil realm that no storm could reach. Now his fancy saw her helpless, shaken, tempest-tossed, driven perhaps by want or woe that he could not guess, into the strange straits of which Helena Marr had told. He must know what it was, he must help her if there was need of help,

he could be her friend, silent, strong, watchful, though he could never be her lover.

But what claim had he upon her confidence, what right to intrude upon her reserve? Thus tortured by new fears and perplexities the unhappy man paced the dark stretch of the terrace, every step taking him further into those strange paths to which Father Philip had pointed, hard, stern paths where self shudders and faints, but men's souls grow strong.

How long he walked the darkness he did not know. The time passed unheeded, the murky gloom deepened around him, the wind swept in fierce, fitful gusts over the snow-shrouded heights, bearing new sounds that in his absorption Trevlyn did not hear. Even the strange cries and tumult in the great hall of the house escaped him. The thick ivy-veiled walls of the Towers made the terrace almost clostral in its calm. Suddenly a sharp cry from his mother roused him. She flung open one of the long French windows of the dining-room, and strode, white and distraught, into the burst of light from within.

“Hugh! Hugh” she cried. “Where are you? My God, he has gone! My boy, my boy! Gone to his death!”

“My dear little mother, no, no,” he said, stepping forward. “I am here, well and safe. What has frightened you, poor little mama?”

“Oh, come in, Hugh, come in. Lock the doors.

You must not move from the house. Patsy is dead, and the whole ridge has broken out in mad riot. They are fighting like demons, Hugh. And they've got Mr. Danvers and are swearing vengeance on him. Oh, my boy, my boy, thank God you are here safe!" and the little Madam flung her arms about her son's neck and burst into hysterical tears.

And then for the first time Trevlyn caught and recognized the sound borne on the shriek of the wind. It was the roar of the human beast—of the maddened mob.

CHAPTER XXIII

MASTER AND MAN

AND the beast had turned to rend! Danvers, the pitiless, the merciless, was at that mob's mercy. Danvers! For one moment Trevlyn's soul seemed to leap from his new hold into fierce, revengeful triumph. Danvers, the cold, the cruel, who had held him for years in bonds degrading and dishonoring! Danvers who, when he in the might of love would have broken free, had struck that love itself dead in despair at his feet! Danvers, who still held power to blacken his name, blight with further malice his ruined life. Danvers, from first to last his deadly enemy!

Trevlyn pressed his white lips to his clinging mother's brow and then put her gently from him.

"Who brought this news from the ridge?" he asked of the excited group huddled at the doorway.

"This boy here. Stan Tyssowski, sir. Speak up to the master, ye fool!" and a black-haired, wild-eyed boy was pushed forward into the dining-room whimpering with terror.

"It was Barney made me come," he faltered. "He swore on the cross ye would not harm me."

"And I won't. No one shall hurt a hair of your

head," said Trevlyn reassuringly. "What did Barney say?"

"He—he said I—I was to give ye this," said the boy, unclasping a grimy hand, and showing the bit of paper he had held tight and unseen until now. Trevlyn unfolded it and read the scrawled and blackened lines:

"Stand back, Master Trevlyn, and take no hand. Ye can't do no good, for all the wires are cut and ye can not get help to-night, try as ye may. The boys will do you and yours no harm, but if ye take up the fight it will go hard with ye.

"BARNEY."

As Trevlyn read his eyes flashed and the vengeful triumph of his soul flamed into something higher, nobler.

"This must be true," he said slowly, "for Barney Regan would not lie. He says the wires are down and we can give no alarm. Darby, Jennings," he turned to two big stable-grooms who had come in at the alarm, "you are men and not cowards. Saddle horses and ride until you find a wire, be it ten or twenty miles away. Take pistols and shoot down any man that tries to stop you. Call to any and every police station that you can reach that there is a riot at Trevlyn Ridge, and we want help."

"We'll do it, sir. We're your men," were the quick answers.

"It will be three hundred dollars apiece for you

if help comes in time," said their master warmly. "And, Kelly, you saddle black Zadoc and bring him to the door at once. I am going to the ridge."

"Hugh!" shrieked his mother. "Oh, no, no, you must not, you shall not! For God's sake, for my sake, Hugh!"

"Oh, master, no, no," went up in sobbing chorus from the trembling women.

"They will keel you, Monsieur," cried Fifine, from her mistress's side, "they will keel you."

"Begging your pardon, sir," said Carleton anxiously, "it will be taking your life in your hands, Mr. Trevlyn."

"You can not, you must not go. Oh, Hugh, it would be madness, madness," his mother cried desperately.

"Mother, I must," he answered firmly. "I am the master of Trevlyn Ridge. For all that has been done there—hard, cruel, evil, I am responsible."

"Hugh, you took no responsibilities. You have none now."

"I have all," he said steadily. "I gave Danvers his power—I must save him or share his fate. The horse, Kelly, the horse, quick!" as the roar came louder through the darkness.

"Hugh, Hugh, this will kill me," sobbed his mother, clinging to him.

"Tut, tut, no! Where is your old Beaumont blood, little mama? Would you have your son shirk at a time like this? These fellows only

want some one to face them boldly, speak to them fairly. I'll come back safe and sound, do not fear. Here, Dawson, here, Fifine, look to your mistress," he said tenderly, lifting his half-fainting mother to a nearby couch, as Zadoc's sharp hoof-beats sounded on the frozen driveway. "Carleton, I leave you in charge of the house. Take care of it."

"I will, sir, with my life," answered Carleton briefly.

"So then—I'm off!" said Trevlyn, cheerily making for the door where Zadoc stood champing in the darkness. His master leaped into the saddle. "All right, Kelly," he said to the groom.

But the man had vaulted to the back of another horse he had in waiting.

"I'm with you, sir, if you'll take me—through good or bad."

"No," said Trevlyn sharply. "Go back, Kelly. This is not child's play we are facing to-night, my man. I will risk no life but my own. Go back." It was the master's tone, that all knew at Trevlyn Towers and obeyed, and Kelly reluctantly turned to the stable, while Zadoc, fierce at this untimely rousing, galloped off madly into the night.

Down the white frozen stretch of the avenue, out into the old road that lay still and dead under the winter snow swept the fiery black Arab, while the hoarse roar on the ridge grew louder and nearer, and Trevlyn's tense nerves tautened as he felt that the battle was on, the battle that he must

fight single-handed for the man who had blasted and cursed his life. Rigid as some bronze statue he sat in the saddle, while Zadoc turned at his touch and plunged up the snow-masked, rocky steeps that led to the ridge. In another moment he had reined his quivering horse back upon its haunches at the edge of a shrieking, cursing, maddened crowd that had gathered around the manager's office. Women were there, ay, and children, yelling like furies.

"Look at him, look at him," shrilled a gaunt Hecate, lifting a shaking hand. "It was him that let your father go to his death under the broken timbering."

"Ay, and my man, too. I dare say no word when he was brought up to me dead, with the pizen coal damp that had killed him like a dog."

"That's what we are to him, woman," said a hoarser voice. "Dogs, no more than dogs." And then came a fierce chorus of oaths, curses, invectives, amid which Patsy's name and "Murder! it was murder, murder!" sounded in deep sullen note, like the boom of the rising sea that naught can withstand.

Then suddenly a fearless, commanding tone rang out over all.

"Make way, my men, make way. I don't want my horse to hurt any of you. I have come to see what all this outcry means."

"Trevlyn! Trevlyn! Master Trevlyn! On his

devil of a horse! But ye can't pass here to-night, sir, ye can't pass." There was menace in the rising murmur that stirred the blood in Trevlyn's veins. "Back, Mr. Trevlyn, back!"

"Make way, I say!" repeated Zadoc's rider, still reining in the quivering Arab. "I tell you I've come to see what sort of—" the master of Trevlyn did not spare rude, strong speech, "out-break this is. Why you are howling like madmen in the dead of the night."

"Madmen or not, sir, we hold the ridge," answered a voice from the crowd. "We've got no fight against you, Mr. Trevlyn, but we'll stand no mastering, sir, now. Ye're taking yer life in yer hands, I warn ye, if ye meddle."

"I take it in my hands then," was the ringing reply. "Make way there, I say, you fools, make way, or I'll ride you down." And the crowd that was in a mood to dare steel or bullet parted before black Zadoc. Horse and rider dashed forward through a shrieking, scattering throng to the office door, where they met sterner stuff. Big Barney stepped forward and caught Zadoc's bridle.

"Ye would do it, sir," he said in a choked voice. "Now I can do naught for ye! Ye'll have to take your chance."

Trevlyn cast a swift glance around him, and saw it was a chance indeed. Through the broken doors and windows that testified to a fierce struggle, the light from the dismantled office flared out into the

night and showed a sullen band of victors on guard, a score or more men lying wounded and bleeding in the disordered ruin within, while gagged and bound tight and fast with leathern thongs, Clyde Danvers stood in the little entrance porch, his thin face death-white, the long wolfish teeth showing under his drawn lips, a very madness of terror in his glittering eyes.

"Since ye will have it, Mr. Trevlyn, we must hould ye, too," the barrels of two revolvers gave point to this brief demand. "Get off your horse. We're all on the same footing to-night, Mr. Trevlyn, master and man!"

Trevlyn sprang from his horse to Danvers' side. "See that Zadoc is not hurt, Regan," he said in a tone that had lost none of its fearless command. "I am here as you see, my men, alone and unarmed. I have come to disperse this lawless gathering on my premises—to bid you all go back to your homes without further disturbance of the peace."

"And ye'll bid in vain, Mr. Trevlyn," said the grizzled old miner who seemed the spokesman. "It's not law or peace we're thinking of to-night. It's the vengeance that neither law nor peace will give us. So we mean to take it, sir—vengeance on that murderer there. It was him that struck the poor innocent, that now lies cold in death, it was him that struck the dirty coward's blow." A chorus of hoots and yells greeted the speaker's words, and

stones, sticks, and bits of slag and coal came hurling against the office porch.

"Men, men!" cried Trevlyn, but his voice was unheard in the hideous clamor.

"Off wid him, off, off, with the murdering villain! Down to the wild shaft wid him, boys, where the water lies black and still. It's many a brave lad he has sent to his death under the rotten timbers. Many is the widow crying curses on him this night! Off wid the murdering thief!" And another shower of stones and slag came rattling through the darkness.

A sharp, sudden pain in his temple, a trickle of hot blinding drops told Trevlyn he had been struck, but he was too wrought up now to feel wound or hurt. Stepping in front of the cowering, shrinking victim, heedless of the shrieking mob, the peltting stones, the deadly weapons turned upon him from every side, he stood calm, strong, fearless, breasting the wild sweep of the storm, a kingly presence that awed and mastered the wild passions seething around him.

"You shall not touch this man," he cried, and the wild uproar died into sullen hushed murmurs at his words, "until you kill me. Not until you kill me," he repeated. "For I am the master here. For all that has been done—cruel, wicked, unjust, I am responsible, for I gave this man his power and place. We have all done wrong, great wrong, you and he and I. I the greatest wrong of all,

for I have stood back in selfish weakness, and let Trevlyn Ridge go to all the devils who are loosened upon it to-night."

"Not until we've done wid him, sir, not until we've done wid him!" The sullen murmurs swelled forth angrily again, but as the master's voice rose, they broke and died against the rock of his fearless strength.

"We will start fresh and do right. Henceforth I, and I alone am master of Trevlyn Ridge. No one shall stand between me and my people. All that my money, my care, my thought can do to make your lives easier shall be done. I will deal with you fairly, justly, honorably, as man with man. This I swear to you as we stand here, before the God of justice. Go back to your homes, my men, and this mad outburst will be forgiven and forgotten. If you do not, I warn you that if I live through this night, any and every man who lifts his hand against Mr. Danvers shall be punished to the full extent of the law. What right have you to take vengeance? What right have you to say it was a murderous blow that fell on that poor boy's diseased brain? One of your own hardy, healthy youngsters would not have been harmed by it. Would poor mad Patsy, free to-night with his singing angels, ask any such wake as this?"

"Sure he wouldn't, he wouldn't," it was big Barney's broken voice that rose in answer. "The master is right, boys, he is right. It's devil's

wurruk we are doing, for wan that is singing with God's angels this night. And Master Trevlyn is the man to kape his wurrud with us, I know. If he'll put Danvers out and take his own right place at the ridge—”

“Put him out—put him out!” the new cry was caught up from big Barney's lips by the fickle, half-comprehending crowd. “Put Danvers out of this and take your own place as master. It's the brave, bold gentleman he is. And the tears in his eyes, as he stood over poor Patsy's bed to-night. Look at the blow on his forehead that he got standing like a man by that dirty dog.”

“He'll kape his wurrud, as Barney says. He'll kape his wurrud to us, boys, if we listen.”

The tide had turned. In a moment it was ebbing back, sullenly, fitfully, but submissively at the master's word. For it was the master indeed, brave, strong, dauntless, who had taken his rightful place to-night, the master whose voice rang out in clear command through the breaking storm, whose firm, yet friendly, tones guided, calmed, controlled, until the crowd scattered, guns and clubs were dropped at Barney's bidding, and the wild fury of unreasoning passion was quelled into peace. It was the master's hand that cut the bonds of the almost fainting Danvers, and let him shrink into the sheltering darkness safe and free. And when the help Trevlyn's sturdy messengers had found means to summon came at last, and a troop of grim-faced,

mounted constabulary galloped up to the Works, it was to find the strong arm of the law was needless, that the ridge lay calm and quiet under the master's rule.

"Sorry to have troubled you, captain," said Trevlyn, who with a blood-stained bandage about his head was directing the removal of the wounded from the improvised hospital. "We have had a little scrimmage as you see, but it's all over. Nothing serious, just a few cut heads and broken noses. We've settled things for ourselves and don't need your help."

* * * * *

The gray, cold light of another day was breaking over the ridge when Trevlyn, faint with exhaustion, a fierce throbbing pain in his wounded head, galloped back to the Towers. There was no sense of triumph, of exaltation, in the thought of the past night, no glad consciousness of heroic duty nobly done—only the dull weariness that so often succeeds supreme effort, the sinking of soul that follows strong-winged flight.

The gray dawn breaking over the wintry heights seemed to typify the life opening before him, the life he had solemnly pledged himself must be henceforward burdened with cares, duties, responsibilities, that he must bear through a long, loveless, lonely future, barren of all beauty as these frozen wastes.

The story of the night had gone home before

him, and the Towers was all a thrill with anxiety and excitement. His mother, pale and trembling, flung herself into his arms at the door.

"Oh, my boy! My brave, noble boy! Are you hurt?"

"Only a scratch, little mama, nothing to worry about, only my head aches tremendously, and I'd like to lie down somewhere and rest."

"Oh, Hugh, yes. You must go to bed at once, only first, Hugh, first— He dare not stay here, he says, or there may be another outbreak, and I—I am afraid to keep him after last night."

"Who?" said Trevlyn, lifting dull, sunken eyes to his mother's face.

"Danvers!" she answered hurriedly. "He came here for safety, hiding, Hugh. He must speak to you before he goes."

"Danvers!" he repeated, and all the galling bitterness for which that name stood seemed to surge over Trevlyn's sinking spirit. "Let him go—I can not see him now. I will not!"

"Oh, Hugh—for one moment. He must leave here at once. I dare not keep him. Give the poor man one moment, Hugh. He must speak to you, he says, a last word."

Trevlyn sprang up, grinding out, from between set teeth, a curse that frightened his mother.

"Where is he?" he asked.

"In the morning room. Oh, Hugh, dear boy, I am so sorry."

But he did not hear her. Like some creature goaded in its hour of weakness and pain, he strode forward and flung aside the portières of the little room that had seemed love's sweetest sanctuary. A figure cowering before the fire started up at his entrance. It was the wan, shaking ghost of the Danvers of old. The horror of the night was on him still, his eyes were wild, his lips worked nervously over his long wolfish teeth, the hand he laid upon the chair from which he had arisen trembled like that of an old, feeble man.

"You wish to see me," began Trevlyn abruptly. "We have no time to waste words. All further business can be done by letter, for it is not safe for you to remain here."

"I know," was the quick, nervous answer. "I know and I am going, going at once. You—I—" he paused, as if seeking words. "Well, you stood by me last night in a way I—I didn't look for and," he made a painful attempt at the old lightness, "and though it isn't worth much, I have to thank you for my life."

"You need not," said Trevlyn briefly. "I would have done as much for any one in your place."

"No doubt!" The old, mocking smile flickered for a moment over the speaker's face. "I could scarcely claim especial consideration, I know. Nevertheless, the debt stands on my side of the book now, and since we part this morning forever—"

"Wire me your terms, your hush money, whatever you call it," burst forth Trevlyn passionately, "I will pay half of what I am worth to be rid of you forever—forever."

"You can not," again the ghost of the old smile trembled about the speaker's pale lips. "You can not—I must always be a power, even in your strong life—a power for evil or for good. Yesterday—was it only yesterday?—we balanced our books as I thought—and the account seemed to favor me. But last night when you stood by me against that howling mob I saw things in a different light. Luck had been hard with me until I met you. I had been the underdog always, and I saw my chance with you and took it, and held it."

"What is the need of all this?" cried Trevlyn. "I will pay your price, as I told you, and be done with you forever. Take the life that you say I saved and begone with it, out of my sight, my reach, for you have been my curse from first to last."

"And yet you saved me to curse you further," said Danvers slowly. "To curse you, hold you, bind you, bleed you, to blacken your life, your love. But I am not all dog. Somewhere in me there is a spark of man. And it is the man Danvers who tells you now, without asking payment or price, what you would give your fortune, your life, almost your soul itself to know. I have lied to you all these years. Sandy Dick did not die by your blow.

He dragged himself from old Pedro's hut and lived. How and where the fair Miss Winifred, mayhap, can tell, if you ask her of her brother, Richard Barton Deane. She can tell you I am sure.

"There, there," as Trevlyn, reeling back into a chair behind him, looked up at the speaker with that in his eyes that reached all that Clyde Danvers had of heart. "Do not doubt. It is God's truth I tell you now. Sandy Dick lived. Your bonds are broken—you are free."

CHAPTER XXIV

BROKEN BONDS

FREE! Free! Free! How long he sat where Danvers had left him, with that word echoing and re-echoing in his ear, his brain, Trevlyn never knew. Free! Free! Danvers had said it. Danvers, who had held him in slavish bonds all these hideous years. He was free! Sandy Dick had lived. Sandy Dick, who was her brother —the brother she had loved. He could not believe it, he could not believe it. The bonds had so eaten into his soul that Danvers' word could not strike them off.

“Free! Free! Free!” through the thunderous clamor, beating upon his ear and heart and brain, he caught his mother's anxious voice calling him. He struggled to his feet as she entered the doorway, he tried to stagger forward, but a blood-red mist gathered over his vision and he fell, like one struck dead, at her feet.

* * * * *

For long, long weeks the shadow of death brooded over Trevlyn Towers. For long weeks the Works went on in new peace and order under big Barney's rule, for the peril of the master—the brave, noble master—was the one touch needed to

soften and subdue the wild passions of the ridge. Doctors came and went, visitors paused at the closed gates with sympathetic inquiry, the little Madam, roused into womanly strength, watched and prayed beside her boy.

More than once the battle seemed lost, for all the weight of the anguished years seemed to have fallen upon Trevlyn's weakness, and yet the dim border-land through which he wandered was filled with phantoms of the past, armed against life and hope.

Now he was arguing passionately with Danvers against abuses, neglect, disorder, now reproaching himself fiercely as coward and weakling, now whispering anxiously of fears for the mother he loved better than his own life. Or again he would be back in old Pedro's saloon, with all its memoried horrors, or again fleeing over the Mexican border to save honor and life, while over and over, with piteous incoherence, he would enact the scene at Ivy Cottage, when Danvers had struck down love and hope with so cruel, so deadly a blow.

Then sometimes, when soothing draught or pellet was doing its kindly work, there would come gentler dreams. The little morning room, the ride under the pines, St. Anne's, with its pictured window, faint gleams of the Light that had trembled into the darkness of his life. But through all the gloom, the fear, the horror, the dim twilight of the dreamland in which Trevlyn wandered, one name was ever trembling on his lips in tender appeal.

“Winifred, Winifred! Oh, my love, my love, are you lost to me?”

The crisis came one moonlight night. The new year was five weeks old, and over the white frozen heights was stealing a whisper of the coming spring. Trevlyn roused from a dreamy half-consciousness, in which a breath of roses seemed to be wafted from some far off gardens he could not see, gardens by which he was drifting on a sunless stream, lost in volcanic depths of gloom.

Roses! Was it the breath of roses or a soft fragrant whisper that reached his dulled senses?

“Oh, my God, save him, spare him to me, spare this, my beloved. Yet not my will, Father, but Thine be done.”

“Winifred,” the cry came in a new tone from the parted lips. “Winifred—you are here—”

“Yes, yes—here at your side. Oh, he sees, he knows, at last, at last!”

“Winifred, beloved,” and the last thought, the last doubt, the last questioning fear of his mind before it went down into the mists of unconsciousness started up into thrilling life at her voice.

“Your brother, your brother, Winifred!”

“He died in my arms a month ago,” was the low, clear answer. “Only a month ago. Oh, Hugh, beloved—died—but through no fault, no sin of yours. Do you understand, do you understand?”

Through breaking mists he seemed to see her

bending white-robed, radiant above him—woman or angel, which?

“Tell him all,” said a deeper voice in the shadow, “tell him all and hold him to life.”

“Hugh, dearest love, listen. I came at your call, the cry of your heart. There is no barrier between us, no blood guilt. Hugh, do you understand?”

“Yes, my beloved, yes. I—I understand.”

“He told me, my poor Dick, my brother, he told me before he died of that dreadful night when you quarreled. It was his fault, all his fault and Danvers’. Then I knew—I understood the story you once told me was your own. Oh, it is all over, beloved, the fear, the agony, the cruel bondage. Live for me as I will live for you, my own, my own *Tache Rouge*.”

And as her hands caught his, and her kiss, her tears fell like a benediction upon his brow, the light broke upon Trevlyn’s darkness and he turned in rapture to life and love.

* * * * *

There are peace and joy and prosperity in Trevlyn Ridge, for its master has kept his pledge—ay, more than kept it. A spirit higher, sweeter, purer than that of worldly wisdom has breathed over the heights, transforming all things. The sanitary cottages are homes of love and harmony. In the Hall that has replaced the Lodge, lessons and lectures are given to head and heart, as well as hand. A new built tramway over the mountains

leads to St. Anne's enlarged and renovated by the master of Trevlyn, for the reverent worshipers who come every Sunday now to fill its aisles and pews, and hearken to the old shepherd's weakening voice, to the old hymns still led by the sweet lady from the Towers, who reigns with undisputed sway over the heights and depths that once seemed so far beyond her gentle reach.

The little Madam is not discrowned, but in those dark days of watching and waiting, in the shadow of death, she gained broader outlook, deeper insight, and Winifred is second only to Hugh in her heart, the beloved daughter on whom she leans for guidance and strength through the higher ways she is learning to tread in her declining years. New and great joy is hers, for her boy has come back to her. The dark, gloomy, hopeless man she could not understand has gone forever. The master of Trevlyn, with his joyous smile, his cheery voice, his springing step, is again the light of her life as he is the light and strength, the friend and guide of all the weaker life around him, with a strange, deep sympathy for all its sorrow and suffering and its sin—unusual in one who seems to know only fortune's brightest smile.

And Winifred, who has brought him the triple heritage of faith, hope, and love, is as busy as she is blessed. The new Ivy Cottage needs no pink ticket to lure; its school, its club, its mothers' meetings are known all over the mountain. Trevlyn

Towers is gayer even than of yore, and its beautiful mistress dispenses a gracious hospitality that is only outdone by her sweet charity. It is the gentle, dark-eyed Lucia who deftly crowns her sweet new lady for dinner or fête with madrina's opals, for Mrs. Marr could not face the triumph of the lovely lady of Trevlyn, and betook herself and her millions abroad, leaving Kenwood closed indefinitely.

Madrina, dear madrina is not forgotten. Her name sounds in sweet new music through Winifred's home and life. A tiny Betty Warburton laughs in the glow of the oriel window, as she tries to catch the broken sunbeams from the Crusader's crest and its proud motto falls in undimmed radiance upon her baby brow: "*Sans peur et sans tache.*" While far beyond the long stretch of the terrace, in the bosky shadows where the little river leaps swift and free to the meadow there rises a white shaft, crowned with a singing angel, a shaft that big-hearted, faithful Barney keeps wreathed with flowers through all the bloom of summer and spring. It is Winifred's tender memorial to the sinless victim of the dark days gone forever, for under the veiling bloom is wrought the simple name of the innocent sleeping beneath:

“PATSY.”

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