A PIXY IN PETTICOATS

JOHN TREVENA

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A PIXY IN PETTICOATS.

CHAPTER I.
HOW BURROUGH PLAYED ROBINSON CRUSOE.

THE first thing John Burrough saw, when he had crossed the bog, was a crumpled newspaper lying upon the turf beside the river. He paused to regard it with a frown. Crusoe himself could not have been much more surprised at beholding the footprint upon the sand in his desert island.

By the presence of that piece of paper Burrough knew that his secret nook had been discovered. Someone shared his secret. Someone had found a way through the bog to the bend in the river, and had dared thus to desecrate the spot. The secret was out. Burrough sighed when he reflected that a crowd of holiday-makers might invade his solitude at any moment.

The river was the East Okement upon Dartmoor. It came sliding down a bed of stone, which was here and there as smooth as a billiard-table, tumbled over a succession of ledges, and finally swept round a bend to enter the little patch of unexplored territory which Burrough had made his own.

At the foot of a descent, so steep as to be generally avoided, stretched an immense bog always choked with water, even in summer, because it was fed by springs—the largest could be seen bubbling like a miniature fountain not very far from that obnoxious piece of paper. Apparently there was no pathway through this bog. Beyond was a towering fortification, composed of blocks of granite covered with black and grey lichens, and piled one upon the other in a wild confusion which was yet suggestive of method.

On the opposite side of the tiny river sloped a precipice almost sheer in places, everywhere covered with trees, oak, ash, and beech, plentifully besprinkled with hornbeam, hazel, and mountain-ash. That precipice was a

wall of mud and saturated mosses. No wonder the foliage was so green and bright. Red streamlets trickled into the river after filtration through the bog forest. At the summit pink-coned larches could be seen nodding against the intense blue of the sky; lower, the wine-coloured plumes of a copper-beech; still lower the silvery bark of birches. A rowan covered with creamy blooms dipped to the river as though admiring its beauty in the broken water. Beneath its branches appeared pink spikes of rose-bay, and raspberry canes covered with unripe fruit.

Draping the boggy wall were ferns in tropical luxuriance. The royal osmunda could be seen in clumps and thickets; fronds, ten feet in length, bending to touch the shining water, or towering towards the oak-leaves. Beside the river was a natural arm-chair of granite, comfortably upholstered with golden mosses. There Burrough lolled day after day reading or writing. Below was a pool free from rocks and bedded with yellow sand. Black trout were always waiting for what the river might bring down to them, and very little in awe of the man in the granite chair. Probably they regarded him as the very latest kind of Dartmoor pony. Burrough seated himself, lighted a cigarette, and tried to forget that crumpled sheet of paper. He looked at the tender ivy trailing across the blocks of granite, at a brown lizard flashing by, and a viper basking on a warm shelf. Butterflies flitted past, bees were working in and out of their nests, flycatchers flirted their tails upon the rocks, and to the music of the birds was added the sleepy symphony of the river singing about the big stones.

"Bother that newspaper," said Burrough.

He rose and went about his tiny kingdom, to search for other traces of the unwarrantable intrusion. Just below the pool a tiny island divided the river. The main current swept beneath a tangle of boughs, caused by the trees of the eyot and those of the bog forest hanging over and meeting, compelling the stickles to descend through perpetual twilight. The smaller channel separated the eyot from the great quaking bog. There the water, slightly tinged with sulphate of iron, could be seen bubbling restlessly amid the brilliant mosses. The edge of the bog appeared to have broken out into a scarlet rash, into numerous red blotches rather suggestive of tiny scraps of raw meat. These were carnivorous sundews, hard at work catching and eating flies. Beyond the sundew shambles were the olive-green leaves and tender grey flowers of the bog violet; and all along the "coast-line" of the eyot were big clumps of bog asphodel.

Burrough breathed a sigh of relief. The affairs of his kingdom appeared to be in perfect order. There were no tins nor bottles, nor any sign of the past pleasures of a picnicking party. He decided to burn the offending paper and then forget all about it; but before doing so he thought it advisable to go through the eyot, which was not, strictly speaking, a part of his kingdom, but merely a dependant state.

The young man reached the eyot by means of the great stones which during the winter were submerged. Once there he had to imagine himself a tailed being. Progress could only be made by resorting to Simian methods, on account of the huge boulders, the hidden pools, and the tropical luxuriance of the undergrowth. The water-birds, which had their nests among the sedges, were not unduly alarmed by his presence. Sometimes, while feeling for a safe spot to rest upon, his foot crushed the shells of eggs which had lately given forth young birds. The river was just visible as it tumbled from one shelf of rock to another. At the other end of the eyot the channels united to plunge away between two steep and shining walls of stone. There tall thickets of osmunda lifted their flowering plumes where the rough winds could not reach, and every rock was covered with asphodel, and the banks of the bog were lurid with mosses of every tint. Burrough balanced himself upon a giant's pebble and looked upward. He saw a dense wavering screen composed of oak foliage and that of rowan, mingled with long fern fronds, and for background the river falling and flashing in lines of silver. It was as though the river was forcing itself between the boughs and leaves and fronds; that it was the weight of the water, not the motion of the breeze, which caused them to sway and dance. Burrough gazed upon the scene with the selfish joy of knowing he had the place to himself. No one saw the beauties of that hidden nook except himself. He began to assure himself that the crumpled newspaper had been carried over the precipice by a wind, and had not been dropped by any invader.

Then his eyes fell upon a dry sand-spit at the foot of a rock, beneath the thicket of osmunda. Right in the centre appeared the impression of a single footprint.

There was no mistake. It was a woman's footprint, in spite of its ridiculous smallness. There was the deep imprint made by the heel—a half-crown would have covered it. There was the dainty point. Burrough

wondered how five pink feminine toes could possibly be compressed within so slight a compass.

In fancy Burrough saw the hand which had dropped that piece of paper. He could guess what it was like after looking at that footprint. Give a distinguished palæontologist the fossil bone of some extinct species, and he will proceed to construct and describe the creature by that one bone. In like manner Burrough built up the perfect image of the unknown damsel, who had penetrated into the interior of his little kingdom, and had dared to desecrate it by throwing paper about, by that single tiny footprint in the sand.

She was young. That was certain, because none but an agile girl could have fought her way across the eyot. She was small. That was evident by the ridiculous footprint. The young man decided she was dark, with bright colour, eyes of deep blue, rather thick eyebrows, and laughing mouth. He arrived at this conclusion because he knew such a face would look exceedingly well against the thicket of osmunda and the falling water. He decided she would be dressed in grey, and he added a ribbon at her waist. He was not sure of the colour of that ribbon. It was a tan shoe that had made the imprint. He was sure of that. It suited the grey skirt exactly.

The young man drew a tape-measure from his pocket. He carried it about with him for the purpose of measuring the stone remains upon the moor. He was finding out all he could about these remains, because he intended to write a book on the subject. The sort of book a few people might buy, to adorn a table or shelf, but nobody would ever read.

This was much better than measuring hoary antiquities of the stone age. Already he was far more interested in that footprint than in all the remains of prehistoric man. From heel to toe six inches and a fraction. He did not record the measurement in his note-book. Somehow he felt sure he would remember it; and, as a matter of fact, his memory justified the confidence he placed in it.

The crumpled sheet of newspaper was not nearly so objectionable an object as it had been. Indeed, it was with quite friendly eyes that Burrough regarded it when he returned from the eyot. Had a man dropped it there, or some picnicking matron, or even any ordinary young person, the act would have remained unpardonable. But the girl with the dainty footprint might surely do as she pleased. She was quite justified in leaving it there, for how could she be expected to carry it about with her if she did not require it?

Really it was not an eyesore at all. It looked rather well lying crumpled upon the turf beside a clump of whortleberries. That secluded nook had needed a civilising touch, and now it had been supplied by the kindly thought and gracious presence of the fair invader. Something was gleaming beside the newspaper. It was a hairpin—not a common, unsightly, black object, but a slender golden hairpin, delicately shaped and deliciously fragrant.

So the unknown was a fair girl, and not dark, as he had supposed. She would not secure dark tresses with a golden hairpin. Burrough constructed her over again. The face was much the same—rather less colour, perhaps—and the eyes were grey. The figure was a trifle fuller, and the frock was of some dark material. He did not remove the tan shoes, but he added brown silk stockings to match.

Burrough slipped the hairpin into his pocket. He thought it would come in handy for cleaning his pipe. Then he picked up the piece of paper. It was damp, and so he knew it must have been dropped the day before. It would have been in the evening, for he had been there till four o'clock on the previous afternoon. He opened the paper and shook it out, then dropped it with a shudder. It seemed to him that the folds were smeared with stains like blood.

He had forgotten those horrible things which are the lot of human beings—sickness, sorrowing, suffering, and death. But when he looked up he saw upon a patch of ground, which made the centre of a small amphitheatre of rocks, the carcase of a horned mountain sheep, every bit of flesh well cleaned from its ribs and skull. Around were evidences of a struggle. The greater portion of the fleece was twisted into a shapeless mass, but scraps of wool were held upon every bramble and gorse-bush, and here and there were wisps torn from the poor hunted creature by its ravenous pursuers. That sheep had been hunted, dragged down, and destroyed by starving dogs. Burrough knew that another carcase—that of a pony—was lying in a hole just beyond the wall of rocks. Those bones, too, were white and well-cleaned by the busy ants. The hide had been gnawed by dogs, and nest-making birds had found the mane and tail very useful. That pony had been bitten by a viper. Burrough remembered it when he saw the red stains upon the piece of paper.

The next minute he was laughing. He had spread out the paper, and other marks became at once visible.

“My lady is an aristocrat,” he said; “she has blue blood.”

After all, the paper had only been used for cleaning paint-brushes. Probably the Lady of the Footprint had been trying to put the sunset upon canvas—it was just the sort of impossible task a pretty young girl would attempt—and the blood-red stains represented the fiery clouds, and the blue smears were the sky above. Burrough pushed the paper into a gorse-bush and burnt it, bush and all. After all, he was sorry he had discovered it. He was glad he had found the golden hairpin and the footprint. But the piece of paper remained an unsightly object. He could not forget how it had reminded him, if only for a moment, of the destroying dogs and the malevolent viper.

CHAPTER II.
HOW BURROUGH HAD THE VISION.

Burrough was thirty-five, at which age most men have closed the romantic chapter of their lives. Most men also go forth as knight-errants to seek their adventures; Burrough had waited for his to come to him. He did not look his age. He was a handsome giant, slightly over six feet in height, and broad in proportion; his face was clean-shaven; his hair was fair; his eyes were blue. He was also clever—too clever for the work-a-day world. He had taken classical honours; only a second-class because his health broke down. For some years he managed to maintain himself by contributing essays and reviews to various periodicals, until the atmosphere of Fleet Street became too much for his lungs, and, on the advice of an eminent specialist, he removed to Dartmoor, where he built a tiny cottage beside a gorge, in a dreary solitude upon the moor near the village of Lew.

He became well and strong in the bracing air, but with the return of health came also the sense of his loneliness. His cottage was quite apart from the village. It was surrounded by great boulders of granite, heather, gorse, bracken and whortleberries. He could not afford a housekeeper. A woman came out from the village twice a week to put the place in order. For the rest he was alone. He mended his own clothes and prepared his own meals.

Being clever with his hands, Burrough had assisted in the building of his cottage. He had done all the painting and made a good deal of the furniture. The interior was really comfortable. The cottage was not beautiful externally; it was built of granite and roofed with corrugated iron. Creepers would not grow up it on account of the winds. Gorse and heather were thick beside the walls. The windows overlooked a gorge. In winter the water in this gorge would rise and roar so loudly as to make conversation difficult. Not much conversation took place in the cottage. Burrough had only his cat to argue with.

Within, the change was startling. To cross the threshold was literally to step from dreariness into comfort. One step led from the barren moor into a

room of refinement: one second it was granite, bog, and heath; the next green curtains, shaded lamps, old books, and pictures. Burrough was proud of his little home. Every morning he swept and dusted it while he waited for the kettle to boil. He never allowed his fire to go out. It was easy to smother it with a couple of turves before going to bed, and these turves were always warm and glowing in the morning.

Burrough felt that a change had come over him as he walked back from the secret nook, with the hairpin in his pocket, and the measurement of the tiny footprint in his brain. A change had come over the weather too; black clouds were racing across the High Willhays range, and the rain began before the ugly tin roof of the cottage beside the gorge appeared beneath the tors. Burrough liked to feel the wind and rain. The storm suited his mood. How foolish he had been to try and banish the thoughts of love! He thought he had not needed it. He thought he could live and work without it. He had kept his inclinations subdued for years, but some force had been secretly at work undermining his resolution all the time. He had always been a shy man in the presence of women. He had envied the ease with which young fellows would address girls, while he would withdraw to a corner and look on, feeling somehow that such pleasures were not for him. He did not know how to address young women of his own class. He had nothing to offer them. He believed that a woman would not look at a man if he could not give her fine clothes, jewellery, a mansion, position in society, and as much money to spend as she wanted. That had always been his wrong-headed idea of love. It was what the world had taught him. Love was a thing to be bought easily, and won with difficulty.

Burrough neglected his work that evening. Outside the wind howled, and the water in the gorge roared. He sat in his easy-chair, smoking more than was good for him, worrying over his poverty, and thinking all the time of the golden hairpin in his pocket and the dainty footprint in the sand. His big black cat was seated on the rug, blinking at the flames, and purring a short stave whenever he felt the touch of his master's foot.

"Advise me, King o' the Cats," said Burrough at length. He was accustomed thus to address his sole companion. "Don't you think it's folly and madness for a man to live alone? If there are more women than men in the world, surely there must be one for me. I'm in love at the present moment, King o' the Cats, hopelessly in love, over head and ears in love, you blinking, purring, many-wived Solomon. No man has ever been more

in love, though I don't know who she is. Attend to me—rake, *roué*, *blasé* old bigamist! Why should I keep you in affluence and much matrimony, and myself in poverty and singleness of life? Tell me that, King o' the Cats. I have as much right to my one wife as you to your dozen."

Peter yawned, and made preparations for slumber.

"She wouldn't come here though," Burrough went on. "She wouldn't come to the doll's house, to my granite ark with its roof of tin. It would be coming down too low, King o' the Cats. She couldn't do it. Fancy her trailing silks and laces, and all the fluffy wonders women wear, across the bog, through the heather and gorse, and over the granite. She would have to array her sweet self in canvas, sackcloth, tarpaulins. She would not give up her world of fashion, and the world of shops, for miserable me. Turn hermit in the wilderness for a wretched man, a fool of a man, a beast of a penniless man. What a mad idea it is, old King Peter! No wonder you yawn. I make you tired. Sit up, my beauty, sit up in your majesty, and purr to me truly whether there be in this rolling sphere, between the poles thereof, maid or widow, not younger than twenty, nor yet older than thirty, who would take John Burrough by the hand, and say, 'I will'? Is there one who would say, 'I will come under your tin roof for better or for worse?'"

Peter scratched his right ear vigorously. Burrough went across the room, and returned to his chair with an armful of classics.

"What do the poets say? Leave your ear alone, King o' the Cats. I will make it smart and tingle before I have done. Goddess of the golden hairpin, goddess of the small brown shoe, what do the wise men say of you? 'Not any man shall escape, not even the gods. Love, thou triumphest even over gold.' No, no, Sophocles. It won't do. Every man has his price, and even Cupid is corruptible. A millionaire will buy up the boy's whole stock. 'Take away the pleasures of love from life, and there is nothing left but to die.' That's the opinion of Marcus Aurelius, most excellent ear-scratcher. I observe you wink sympathetically. 'A woman is a great evil,' says Euripides. 'Faithless is the female race.' Out upon you, swarthy Greek. What do the gallant Romans say? 'Love and wisdom are incompatible.' Do you hear that, King o' the Cats? We must give up our wise ways. 'Love is full of bitterness,' declares Plautus, and Terence quite agrees with him; but Plautus is man and brother enough to admit there is honey with the gall. Ovid states that the disease is incurable, the which I doubt. It is easily conveyed. True! It may be communicated by a hairpin, for instance. Now

let me try the Sortes Virgilianæ. ‘Love conquers all things, and we must yield to love.’ That is the conclusion of the whole matter.”

Burrough pushed the books from his knee, and sat frowning at the fire.

“Eh, my pussy,” he said sadly, stroking his favourite’s head. “We are a pair of puir fules. Watch me go forth to-morrow to my sunny hollow beyond the bog. You shall see me with my hose ungartered, my bonnet unbanded, my sleeve unbuttoned, my shoe untied, and everything about me demonstrating a careless desolation. That might have been all very well in the days of chivalry, eh, *Chat Noir*? In this present unpoetic age I should be dubbed a male slut, even if I could unbutton my sleeve or unband my bonnet.”

Burrough indulged in a good deal of such vicious rhetoric before going to bed. The next morning it was raining. He went down to the secret nook beside the river, although he could not have expected to find anything of surpassing interest. The ferns were drooping, the river had risen, the blooms of the rowan and rose-bays looked draggled and tawdry; they were like the artificial flowers on some Italian altar. There was an odour of mud in the wind. Burrough climbed back to the moorland track, and took the way which led into the village.

The vicar was standing at his garden door. The vicarage was nothing more than a long cottage thatched with rushes. Mr. Yeoland was an old man, weak, childish, and entirely incapable of performing his slight duties. He clung somehow to life and office, the former a burden because of his weakness, the latter a sinecure since all the villagers went to chapel. The old man lived alone with a housekeeper, who scolded him, and sometimes pushed him about roughly when she was the worse for liquor. The old man spent most of his time in the house sitting in a state of lethargy. Two or three times a day he would shuffle to his garden door, which was overshadowed by a large sycamore, and ogle the girls as they passed.

Mr. Yeoland was not alone. A girl stood beneath the sycamore talking to him. She was of medium height, neither slender nor plump. She had gathered up her skirts boldly, possibly on account of the mud, possibly because a pretty ankle was not made to be hidden. A tiny tan shoe nestled in the mud, and above was the brown silk stocking of Burrough’s fancy. It fulfilled its purpose in a shapely manner, until it disappeared, melted away into, or became blended with, a summer cloud of diaphanous wonders. Her back was towards Burrough, but he could see that her hair was dark brown,

and that it was studded with little gleaming points like fireflies. She wore a white tam-o'-shanter. Secured to it on the left side was a jewelled butterfly with wings outspread.

Burrough came to a stand beside the wall opposite, where he could both see and hear. The Vicar did not appear to notice him. The old man was chuckling in his senile way, delighted at having caught the young lady as she passed. His speech was affected. He spoke out of the corner of his mouth, and every word was accompanied by a grimace.

"Go along with you," Burrough heard him say with a sly chuckle.

The young lady laughed. It was not a particularly pleasing laugh, Burrough thought. Yet he was singularly anxious to hear it again. He saw her put up a bare hand to brush the hair back from her forehead.

"I'll pull it," said the amorous old man, putting out his trembling hand. "I will. I'll pull it."

"You will not," said the young lady, rather coldly Burrough thought, as she stepped back from the uninviting caress.

"If I was forty years younger," mumbled the Vicar out of the corner of his mouth, "I'd take off my white tie, and we'd go on the spree."

"Are you so sure I would come with you?" said she.

A gust of wind passed through the sycamore and brought down a shower of big drops. The young lady moved and cried, "What have you in the garden—anything? May I go in and pick some flowers for my room?"

"Nothing but weeds," mumbled the Vicar. "The garden's like me—rough and ready."

"But I can see some syringa," said she, raising herself on tip-toe.

"There are snakes in that long grass," the Vicar warned her, as she was about to enter.

"I'm not afraid of them. I like them," came the answer.

"Afraid of mice?" he chuckled.

"Love them," she declared.

"And men?" he went on.

"Silly apes," she laughed.

They went into the garden. Burrough crossed the road, whipped the tape-measure from his pocket, and measured the tiny imprint in the mud.

"It is she," he murmured.

He waited about beside the wall. From time to time he heard a merry laugh, and the mumbling of old Yeoland, who was probably trying to steal a

kiss among the syringa. Burrough could not believe she would permit that dirty and unpleasant old man to approach her. While he waited the rain ceased and a flash of sunlight pierced the clouds. It struck upon the garden, and he heard the exclamation, “The sun! I must go.”

A moment later the girl stood in the doorway, and Burrough saw her face at last.

She was like a bride with orange-blossoms. She held a quantity of syringa covered with pearly rain-drops. The rain was in her dark-brown hair too, and upon her face, and it was sprinkled upon her tam-o’-shanter where the jewelled butterfly quivered in the sunshine. She was not pretty. She had not a single good feature. Her skin was brown. Her nose was not straight. It was a maddening face. No one who fell in love with that face could ever love another.

When she saw Burrough she swished round, and said to the Vicar, who was hobbling amorously in her wake, “Thanks very much for the syringa, but I don’t know what I shall do with it now I’ve got it. The scent is too heady for a room.”

“Have it beside your bed. Then you’ll dream of me,” the old man muttered.

“I should wake with a headache, and pitch it out of the window.”

“As Gerard did,” said Burrough as the Vicar appeared, addressing himself to the old man. “Good morning, Mr. Yeoland.”

“Good morning,” said the Vicar, somewhat gruffly, as he did not like to have such little affairs interrupted.

“Good morning,” murmured the young lady. “As Mr. Yeoland does not introduce me. As a matter of fact I’ve never been introduced to him. One doesn’t stand upon ceremony much in a mountain village.”

Her eyes said plainly enough, “You spoke to me first.” Which was true.

“Gerard. Who’s he?” mumbled the Vicar.

“The sixteenth-century herbalist,” Burrough replied.

“Bookworm, pedant, scholar, idiot,” was what he thought the girl’s eyes were saying to him then.

“I must go and take my auntie for a stroll,” was what her tongue said, as she moved away a step, shaking the rain from her dainty skirts. “She’s like a butterfly. Comes out when the sun shines. Goes in when it doesn’t. It sounds giddy.”

“Go along! Naughty girl!” chuckled the Vicar.

“I see you are out in all weathers,” Burrough ventured, yet without looking at her.

“Morning, noon, and night,” she laughed. “Up with the lark, out all day, and in with the—what are the things that fly about at night, Mr. Yeoland?”

“Bats,” croaked the Vicar.

“Beast!” she cried.

“Owls,” he chuckled, his face distorted with mirth.

“My eyes are not big and round, and I do not shriek at nights.”

“I think you mean moths,” Burrough said nervously.

“Moths. Yes, the stupid things fly into our lamp and roast themselves. Auntie says, ‘poor dears,’ and tries to rescue them. I say, let the idiots grill if it gives them such enjoyment. They ought to have the sense to keep in the dark. Directly they come into the light they lose their heads.”

“And their lives,” Burrough added.

“But I like the beetles,” the girl rattled on. “They are such jolly old boys. I believe they are always on the spree, and they never know what they’re doing. Last night I was out and I heard one coming—boom! He came crack upon my nose, nearly splitting it, and it’s crooked enough already, then he fell on the road, and cussed. Presently a lot of clockwork or something went whirr inside him. He got up, fell back again, said he was all right, then tried again. He got off that time, boomed hard for a dozen yards, then charged a wall—bang! I left him lying on his back in the road, kicking and swearing. Really he wanted someone to look after him.”

“Like me,” mumbled the Vicar.

“I must run,” said the girl. “Good-bye.”

She nodded, laughed, and was off at full speed.

CHAPTER III.
HOW BURROUGH WALKED WITH BEATRICE.

TOWARDS evening Burrough had the vision again. In the interval he had made inquiries. Her name was Beatrice Pentreath; her home was in Cornwall; and she lived with a maiden aunt of uncertain age. They came upon Dartmoor every summer. The woman who cleaned Burrough's cottage had a poor opinion of the young lady, because it was her custom to ride astride like a man, she was shamelessly plainspoken, and had a disgusting habit of using tobacco in the form of cigarettes.

"And she's been seen on the moor, naked—naked, sir," went on the matron in a tragic manner.

Further questioning elicited the statement that Miss Beatrice went up Taw Marsh sometimes to bathe in one of the river pools; and after bathing she would run about to dry herself. There was nothing very shocking about that, the region being exceedingly lonely, and the chances of the young lady being detected in her Garden of Eden gambols therefore exceedingly slight.

"Who saw her?" Burrough asked.

"Don't matter who saw her," said the matron severely. "She was seen from Oke Tor. Not even a towel round her, sir."

"Oke Tor is a long way from the river," Burrough said, and added impatiently, "Why shouldn't she bathe? I have been up there to bathe too."

"You're a gentleman, sir," the good woman reminded him.

Burrough was not listening. He was thinking how well that tinted skin would look against the pink heather and grey granite. He thought too of the little pool of black trout at the secret nook, where he had discovered the footprint and the piece of paper, and he wondered if she had ever bathed there.

It was in the village Burrough met her. She was alone. At first he thought he would turn back, as the sight of her made him nervous; but he reflected she had probably seen him, and his flight would look ridiculous. He decided to pass her, and bow if she chose to acknowledge his presence.

"Good evening," she said, as they drew together.

His first impression had been correct. That face was maddening. He stopped, feeling as though he had just swallowed something strong and burning. He looked down, and saw a tiny tan shoe nestling in the dust beside his big boot. He looked up, and caught her eyes. He did not know how she was dressed; but he was aware she was bare-headed, and that her hair was dark-brown. He could smell syringa, and he supposed she was wearing some of that which she had obtained from the Vicar during the rain-storm.

"Are you going for a walk?" he asked.

"Yes, I'm off duty. My auntie is as sleepy as a dormouse, and is hugged over the fire. The room was too hot for me, so I came out among the moths and beetles—and—it's lonely dull in the evenings."

The scented languorous atmosphere of early summer was about them, that atmosphere so dangerous to youth and innocence. Burrough felt the charm working upon him with every breath of that warm air. There was too much fragrance. In winter there was not enough. In his cottage there was the odour of stale tobacco and the musty smell of books. It was "lonely dull" in the evenings there.

"Have you ever seen the aftermath from the top of the village?" he asked her timidly.

"Let me think," said she, laughing, but a trifle puzzled.

"I mean the glow in the sky above High Willhays," he explained.

"I've seen it," she replied; then added, "And I should like to see it again."

Side by side they began to ascend the hill. Burrough had only once before been a maiden's squire. While living in London he went one night to a music hall, and found himself sitting next to a girl who was unaccompanied. A remark led up to a conversation. After the entertainment he had the politeness to escort her as far as her door-step. The following Sunday he met her by appointment and they walked in the Park. She was a good-looking girl, and he thought he would improve her mind. The girl, however, did not want her mind improved. After she had met the young man a few times, and found that he had not the sense or inclination to respond to the hints she gave him, she transferred her affections to someone more demonstrative.

Of course the shop-girl of the London days was not to be thought of in comparison with the young lady at his side. He thought of Beatrice's bathing exploits, and the drying process found favour in his eyes. It showed

virtue, naturalness, freedom of soul, and purity of mind. No prude would do such a thing as expose herself to Nature, because it is a commonplace that a prude is at heart a rake.

"You live in a little crooked house?" Beatrice said suddenly.

"Cottage," he amended. "Quite a shell. I feel that I ought to carry it about with me like a snail."

"And you walk a crooked mile to get to it, and you have a crooked cat," she went on, with a gasp of laughter, humming the old nursery rhyme. "You must take care you don't become a crooked man," she added.

"How do you know about me or my cat?" he asked her.

"You live in a Dartmoor village, and ask me that question. Don't you know that your down-sittings and up-risings are known long before? The villagers have nothing to do but gossip. Whenever I want to know how I am getting on, I go and ask one of them. If you cannot remember how you have spent your time, they will enlighten you, and add side-lights upon your character which are both instructive and interesting. Old Ann Cobbledick, our landlady, has told me your history; and if you are interested in the future she will tell you that too. You are a source of great vexation to Ann."

"Why?" asked Burrough.

"She wants you to have a housekeeper, so that she may have a new scandal to discuss and circulate. Of course, there is plenty of scandal about you, but there does not appear to be anything very solid to build upon. I may tell you that Ann is quite prepared to sacrifice a niece of hers for the benefit of herself and of the village in general. Do you think you will be public-spirited enough to accept the girl's services, and make the poor people happy?"

Burrough laughed, and ventured to glance at the distracting profile of this plain-spoken young lady. Really, it was quite easy to chat with her. With the shop-girl there had been innumerable difficulties. Her conversation had consisted chiefly of monosyllables, with such phrases as, "Go on," "Well, I never," and "That's all right." The shop-girl and the doddering old Vicar would have suited each other admirably. Burrough could not resist the conclusion that Beatrice and he were equally well matched.

"I have a bone to pick with you," he said in a deferential manner.

"With me! Why, before this morning you had never——" She stopped, as if mindful of the informality of their introduction, then rattled on merrily, "What sort of a bone?"

“People who go painting should not spoil the beauties of Nature by dropping waste-paper,” Burrough went on.

“They should not,” Beatrice agreed. “But they do. It’s beastly of them.”

“Pieces of paper smeared with paint,” said Burrough.

“Torn into pieces, and scattered all over the place,” she added tragically.

“No, rolled into a ball, and dropped beside the river,” he concluded.

“Oh, my dear little life! It’s the ghost! The very pisky itself! To be regardless of grammar, it’s him!” laughed Beatrice.

Burrough sought to learn why she made merry at his expense. Thereupon the young lady drew herself up, glanced at him wickedly, and imitating his voice and manner, said like a saucy parrot:

“People who go smoking should not absolutely ruin the beauties of Nature by dropping matches and cigarette-ends about.”

“They were not conspicuous,” Burrough urged somewhat lamely.

“Cigarette-ends stained with tobacco juice, and half-burnt wax-matches,” she went on ruthlessly.

“I thought they were hidden by the bracken,” he pleaded.

“They are scattered all over the grass beside the river,” she said.

“I am guilty,” he confessed.

“I could not think who the man was who had discovered my hiding-place,” Beatrice rattled on. “I discovered it during my childhood, in those happy days when I would rush about the moor with nothing on but a rag of a frock, a jersey, and pair of sandals. I wish I might do it now! I thought nobody knew of that place except myself, until I saw the cigarette-ends. I sighed, and said, ‘*le jeu est fait*.’ How did you know I was the trespasser?”

“By the piece of paper,” Burrough answered foolishly.

“I haven’t the slightest remembrance of writing my name upon it,” she said.

“You left the marks of your paint-brushes, red marks and blue marks,” he rambled on.

“You looked at them, and you said, said you, ‘Sure, and ’tis Beatrice Pentreath entirely!’ That was cleverer than telling fortunes by coffee-grounds.”

Driven to desperation Burrough divulged a portion of the truth. He would not own how he had measured the footprint.

“I saw your footprints at the edge of the bog—ninety-nines,” she murmured. “You ought to have taken an impress, and gone to a cobbler, and

got him to make you a slipper. Then you should have collected all the girls in the neighbourhood, and tried the slipper on each one until you found Cinderella. I shouldn't have let you try it on me, for I think I have got a big hole in my stocking. I can't understand how you recognised me by my footprint. It's the same as any other girl's."

"Isn't it smaller?" he suggested.

"Do you think so? There!" she exclaimed, putting out a tiny shoe, and twisting the foot about. "It's not very large, is it?"

Burrough felt something ringing in his ears. An almost irresistible longing swept over him, urging him to kneel and press his lips upon that thinly-covered ankle. It was curious, because the shop-girl of his London days had not affected him in the least. He had been perfectly cool and level-headed in her presence.

"No, it's not large," Beatrice said, answering her own question with perfect truth and innocence. "I shall have to cover my tracks in future, or else wherever you go you will see them, and say, 'There's that girl of the paint-pot.'"

"What do you paint?" Burrough asked, thankful to find a question.

"Anything," she laughed. "I painted a most lovely sunset, and when I showed it to my auntie she pointed to one of my pink clouds, and said, 'Oh, my dear, how prettily you have painted the heather!' Then she mistook the setting sun for a lump of granite, and a beam of light for the river, so I made the discovery that my sunset was after all quite a nice picture of moorland scenery. I can never do the right thing. Last year I made a study of a sheep's face—just the face and nothing else—and showed it to old Y. That's the vicar. He was so pleased. Before I could explain anything he declared it was the best likeness of himself he had ever seen, and wanted to know how I had done it without his knowledge. For the future I shall label my works of art. Every picture wants labelling. A big painter showed me a picture he had just done once, and I made him so angry because I said I couldn't see any stockings. I thought it was meant for Christmas Eve, and the father was bringing in presents for the kiddies; and it was really the murder of the two young princes in the Tower."

Beatrice rattled on in this lively strain for some time, while her companion listened intently and laughed in a subdued fashion. Somehow he could not rid himself of the idea that Miss Pentreath, the girl's Aunt, might

not approve of this *tête-à-tête*. In the meantime it had grown dark. White moths fluttered here and there, and the beetles boomed.

"I thought we were going up on the moor to see the afterglow. Here we are in the lane which has no turning and goes nowhere," Beatrice exclaimed. "And the dew is falling. My hair is quite wet." She passed her hand across the brown curls, and caressed them into their proper place. Then she turned to him with a smile. In that voluptuous gloom her face was more distracting than ever.

"You have told me nothing about the little crooked house," she said.

Burrough winced. Her remark suggested everything that was sacred and tender and purely passionate. He imagined her there. Already he loved her in his quiet self-restrained fashion. Only to have her there, to worship, to care for, protect and adore; to kiss that tiny foot; and aspire at last to those ruby-red lips and that maddening little nose. But it was not to be thought of. Dainty Beatrice, in her silks and laces, beneath the tin roof of his wild moorland cottage home. It would be asking the princess to become Cinderella. He caught a glimpse of her lace-trimmed petticoat as she walked, and he thought of the bog near his cottage, and of the gorse and granite beside its door.

"And they all lived together in a little crooked house," she hummed thoughtlessly.

"Well," said she, "you must describe it to me another time."

"Are you going to the secret nook to-morrow?" he asked eagerly.

"Perhaps," she said. "To paddle."

"Then I must not be there."

"I might postpone the paddling," she went on. "Let me see. To-morrow: In the morning I shall take Auntie for a toddle, if she's good. In the afternoon I shall put her into a chair, and give her a sermon to read, and a heap of stockings to mend. Then 'Ho and away for the riverside!'"

"If I brought a kettle…" began Burrough timidly.

"I might provide a basket of buttered splits," the girl said delightedly.

Never had the cottage on the moor appeared so dreary to its owner as it was that summer's night. He went in, lit his lamp, and sat for some time motionless, with his hands upon his knees, while the big moths passed through the open window to bombard the lamp-shade. Presently he felt something against his legs, and looking down he beheld Peter with a rat in

his mouth. It was a gift for the master, and the cat put it down upon the carpet and purred in noisy triumph.

"What have you done, King o' the Cats?" said Burrough sorrowfully. "Wilfully and with malice doing murder on this peaceful night, and presenting your ghastly victim at my feet. Shame on you, Lord of Darkness! This rat may have been a king's daughter, a brown-haired princess, metamorphosed by some vile magician. What, my green-eyed monster, did you imagine I should come home weary and hungry, and did you decide therefore to serve me up savoury meat? Eat it yourself, my Pete, for I have no appetite. And, tell me truly, do you not think Beatrice is the sweetest and most adorable name between the lowest earth and the highest heaven?"

CHAPTER IV.
HOW BURROUGH VISITED BEDLAM.

LIKE everybody else Burrough was affected by the weather, but unlike most he appreciated wind and rain. When in London he revelled in a fog. Upon Dartmoor he felt himself exhilarated by a thick mountain mist. Sunshine he delighted in, of course, but the enjoyment was usually alloyed with sadness, because on those bright days, when Nature was at her best, he felt outside all the happiness. He knew that he ought to be having what is called a good time. He had neither means nor opportunities so to do. When it rained, or there was a close pall of mist over the high moor, he had the idea that he was as happy as most people.

It was a glorious morning, and as a consequence Burrough was somewhat low-spirited. He was almost sorry Beatrice had come into his life. His love was only a dream, which would pass away and never come again. He would be left to his loneliness with the memory of her. She would go; and he be left. The winter would return.

He prepared his breakfast, swept out the sitting-room, tidied the kitchen while he smoked a pipe, then looked out over the moor. A few rough ponies were the only living creatures in sight. Peter finished his milk, and emerged, licking his lips like a toper leaving an alehouse. He said plainly enough that he didn't know what his master intended doing that morning; but so far as he was concerned there was a comfortable shelf of granite a little higher up on the moor where he contemplated basking all day. He shook his paw and marched off, treading gingerly because of the gorse-prickles.

"Leave the lizards alone, Pete," his master called.

The cat looked round, and appeared to wink. "You mind your own business," he seemed to say. "Sit down and work, will ye, and keep a warm roof over us. As for the lizards, it's no use catching them, because you never will eat them."

"You can bring me a young rabbit, son of Anak," shouted Burrough.

Peter swished his tail, which was his way of terminating an interview, and continued his delicate career towards the warm rocks.

Burrough went into his study, forced himself into a chair, seized a pen, and addressed himself thus: “Now, my friend, you shall sit here until noon, whether you are idle or industrious. Therefore I should advise you to be industrious.”

Palæolithic Remains! An admirable subject on a sensuous summer’s morning for a man in love. He had reached the chapter entitled Hut Circles. For some minutes he remained engrossed, presumably upon his opening sentence, then he said gently, “I wonder why she uses those bright hairpins.”

He applied himself seriously to that problem. Had he brought the same amount of intelligence to bear upon the subject of Hut Circles he might possibly have evolved a new theory. Precisely this idea occurred, and he struggled to turn his thoughts into the palæolithic channel. He was so far successful that he soon found himself considering that the stone, which stood at the edge of the river in the secret nook and which he believed was a tolmen, would do very nicely for boiling the kettle on that afternoon.

“Perhaps she won’t come,” he muttered dolefully.

The distracting vision of Beatrice remained in the foreground, although Burrough firmly persuaded himself he was working. That work, could he have presented it to an honest critic, would have received the kind of verdict which Miss Pentreath had passed upon her niece’s picture of the setting sun. “Stone remains! Hut Circles! Why, my dear fellow, there is nothing here but a girl.”

“This won’t do,” Burrough cried, bringing his hand down upon the table. “In the words of Samuel Johnson, this won’t do at all. I have done nothing for the last three days. Idleness and infatuation will lure me into the mad-house, or the poor-house, or the charnel-house, or some other horrible kind of house. I must practise concentration. I will not allow my mind to wander. I will not let her face come between me and my work again. Now where was I?.… ‘This stone was probably used by the occupant of the hut to stand upon during his morning devotions to the sun, and… it was here’”… But the association of feet with stones suggested nothing that was neolithic. He saw tiny tan shoes, brown silk stockings, and lace-trimmed petticoat; and it was Beatrice who stood upon the stone, not a hairy and uninteresting prehistoric man.

So he began to wonder what she was doing just then. Probably escorting her maiden Aunt from one fixed point to another. He felt he was wasting his

time, as indeed he was; but what he meant was that he might have been out watching her from a respectful distance, instead of sitting in that chair thinking of her. He wondered how she was dressed. Was there any analogy between the foam of the sea, out of which Venus rose at her birth, and the foam of underclothing worn by twentieth-century maidens? What was the use of the Church denouncing a general laxity in the moral tone, while the law permitted girls to walk abroad clad as it were in foam o' the sea, and had nothing to say against pictorial advertisements of the same sea foam appearing week by week in fashion papers? He wondered whether Turkish breeches and yashmak would depress the matrimonial mart. But what had these matters of life, love, and passion to do with cold, grey, lichen-covered granite?

It was no use. Burrough felt that his brain was on fire. He was raving mad. He had been bitten by the tarantula. He might write a love-story, but not a sermon upon stones. The eyes of Beatrice had done his business. For life or for death he was hers.

Decidedly she was no prim maid; no Jane-Austen virgin, prone to excessive bouts of weeping or fainting-fits. Did she, he wondered, incline just a little towards the opposite scale? Was she, in short, a flirt? Was she a mere incendiary, who would kindle a fire, and then run away, not daring to look at the consequences? She had been free and easy with him, but then he had almost forced himself upon her in the first instance. Besides, she had known who he was. She knew him to be a gentleman. The affair with Mr. Yeoland was nothing. Most of the girls allowed that amorous old personage a certain amount of licence. He remembered Beatrice would not even permit the dotard to pull her hair. Why shouldn't she be free and friendly with himself? Burrough pulled himself upright, and regarded his face in the glass of the over-mantel. He was not a bad-looking fellow, and he was in the prime of life.

All this had nothing to do with stone-remains; but the young man was just then past praying for.

What passionate pilgrim will confess honestly to every foolish action before his sacred fire has been quenched by marriage? Probably the country bumpkin is the only really sensible lover. He has a good resounding kiss, and goes back to his plough, and thinks no more of Polly until he sees her again. Burrough was a scholar, and therefore a fool in love. The greater a man's knowledge the fiercer his passion. A young woman with her first

baby is bad enough; but a scholar with his sweetheart is worse. How many would confess to the initials they had carved on beech-trees? To the nonsense they had scrawled upon the sands? To the doggerel they had penned, or the mad phrases they had mouthed? Every wise man is a Bedlamite for a few hours of his life.

Burrough took up his pen, and began to scratch on the sheet, which by that time of day should have been covered with hieroglyphics concerning the stone age. He wrote the one word "Beatrice." This was not only foolish but unnecessary, as he was in no danger of forgetting it. Besides, it rendered the paper unfit for literary purposes. He added the monosyllable "John." Then he enclosed the two words within a bracket, and made noises of gratification like a baby nuzzling its bottle.

Burrough had often seen a servant-girl and her swain embracing upon a bench, and engaged with each other's lips like bees on clover. He had questioned the propriety of these aphrodisiac courtships; yet he had admitted there was something pretty and poetic about such a couple, wandering down a lane clasped together. It suggested the indissoluble bond of love as nothing else could suggest it. Merely the desire to be together; with nothing to talk about; but to step together, think together, cling together. The man who buys love ready-made would have no sympathy with that poetry of motion, where hands and waists are clasped, and the feet move in harmony with the heart-beats. It must have been very early in time that some cave-dweller—and this distinctly referred to Burrough's work on stone-remains—discovered that it was a sweet and pleasant thing to have his arm around the probably undraped waist of some other cave-dweller's daughter. No doubt it was a great deal later when some fair damsel—it would have been a feminine discovery—found a fearful joy in bestowing shy and tender bites upon the loved one. Naturally he would have been impelled by gallantry to return the salutation, and so love-bites came into fashion; until the time arrived when some warrior, who had lost his teeth in a brawl, was compelled to use his lips, thus inaugurating a new fashion in the best hut-circle society. Finally some tender creature of the *bon ton* conceived the idea of thus biting the lips which had bitten her, and in this manner created the kiss of modern society. There was something delightfully sweet and tender, Burrough thought, about primitive courtship. What could be more tender—and more idiotic—than a dove billing and cooing to its mate? It was delightful just because it was idiotic. There was

something enthralling about the illiterate cooing of lovers, about the nonsense-verses, the baby-talk, the mispronounced and misspelt words—the first fruits of the intoxicating madness of pubescence.

The scholar ceased his thinking, and proceeded to action. In a bold round hand he wrote upon the paper, "My dere letele angel."

This was pretty good for a man who had taken honours. Had he been a clodhopper he would have scratched his head and aspired to the grandiose. Being a scholar he found it a delight to coo the part of the idiotic dove.

The door was wide open. In stalked Peter, bearing a ridiculous rabbit, not so large as the rat he had captured the previous night. He went through his usual performance of presenting the offering and purring his own triumph; while Burrough blushed, actually blushed, to be caught at such egregious folly by his cat, and to discover that the animal had made better use of the morning than he had. He caught up the sheet, tore it into fragments, and tried to be sane again.

"Another small soul despatched into limbo," he said lightly, bending to stroke the cat. "What a rapacious beast you are! You bring lizards and rats to grace my table, and when I refuse to have my palate thus tickled, and charge you to bring me instead young rabbits, you proceed to tear an innocent babe from its mother's breast. In a few short hours, my Herod, you have made some poor rat a widow, broken up a previously happy lizard home, and left some poor Rachel of a rabbit weeping for her children."

Peter went forth, with his tail at the perpendicular, and his mind set upon more slaughter.

It was noon at last. Still too early to cook the mid-day chop; and much too early to get ready the kettle, the packet of tea, and flask of milk. What was Beatrice doing? What a fool he had been to fret away the morning when he might have gone out, seen her, perhaps spoken, touched her hand, felt her eyes, and above all, been thrilled by the momentary flicker of her frock against his legs!

"I must read," he cried, springing towards his books. "Read hard for an hour, since I cannot work. The solitude is getting on my brain."

He chose the Andromache of Euripides. It was no use reading English while in that mood. It was necessary to have something which would compel him to concentrate his thoughts; and he chose the Andromache because it was the tragedy of that particular dramatist with which he was least familiar. For a time he read with resolution. He had banished Beatrice

more or less into the background. It was not for long. The Greek poet had a message for him. The voice from the remote past was soon ringing into his ears the two tremendous lines:—

> "If he be passionate, he shall meet with passion,
> And receive deeds for deeds."

CHAPTER V.
HOW BEATRICE CULTIVATED LOCAL TALENT.

WHEN Beatrice came out to offer her morning devotions to the sun the first sight which greeted her eyes was Ann Cobbledick, her landlady. The good soul was seated upon a stool, milking her cow in the centre of the road. There was not much traffic through the moorland village; but what there was had to make room for Ann and her cow. Her geese waddled and cackled around her, and her son Willum leaned against the wall of the linhay, blinking complacently and catlike.

"'Tis a fine marning this marning," greeted the widow.

"Why do you always milk your cow in the middle of the road?" Beatrice asked.

"Mother milked 'en here, so did her mother, so did hers, and I be going to long as I lives. They laugh at I," Ann went on, referring indirectly to the villagers. "Let 'en laugh. They can't make butter same as me. I wouldn't grease my boots wi' the butter they makes. Bide still wi' that tail, Artful, will ye? Them flies be that worriting," she muttered.

"You should let Willum do the milking," said Beatrice.

"Willum!" cried the fond mother. "Willum mun't du nothing. Willum be dying o' decline."

Willum shuffled his feet into the dust, and muttered a hoarse acknowledgment of this fiction.

"Poor Willum!" said Beatrice sweetly.

"Willum wun't die whiles he has his old mother to look arter he," Ann went on. "I makes 'en eat and drink plenty. I wun't let 'en work. Work would kill Willum. He be a scholar. There b'ain't many as knows what Willum du. Willum says 'isself work would kill 'en."

"I'm sure it would," said Beatrice.

"Willum walks about the village all day," continued Ann, warming to her subject. "He takes it easy, and that be good for 'en. And he smokes a lot. Smoking does Willum good. And he drinks a lot o' beer. Beer be fattening,

Willum says, and he knows ’cause he be a scholar. Willum would like to work, he says, but knows he mun’t. Make ’en decline faster, he says.”

“I shoots rabbuts,” muttered Willum, in self-defence.

“He shoots rabbuts,” echoed the proud mother. “Hear ’en? Shoots a lot, Willum du. That be good for ’en, and he trains dogs, and he brings the goosies home.”

“He mustn’t do too much,” said ironical Beatrice.

“That’s what I tell ’en,” cried Ann. “Mun’t du too much and strain yeself, Willum, I says. They boys be that daring! Willum thinks nothing o’ walking five mile wi’ his gun. Makes I worrit often, he du.”

“How will he manage when he hasn’t got you to look after him?” asked Beatrice.

“I’ll be finding a maiden for ’en soon,” said Ann. “A lusty maiden, what can work, and keep Willum same as I du.”

Willum smiled complacently. Mrs. Cobbledick’s plans for his future received his entire approval.

“That will be nice for him,” Beatrice murmured. “But she might want him to work.”

“She wun’t,” declared Ann. “Willum have promised me he wun’t work as long as it pleases God to spare ’en. Ain’t ye, Willum?”

“Iss,” said her son, in no uncertain fashion. “I wun’t work.”

“Hear ’en?” said the widow again. “Allus does what I tell ’en. Ain’t many sons like my old dear. And he be a scholar too.”

Exactly what Willum’s attainments were nobody knew except the fond mother. Somebody had given him a decrepit violin, and he would scrape upon it with terrifying results. Somebody else had given him an old camera, with which he pretended to operate, although without visible results. His library consisted of two books, a “Crockford’s Clerical Directory,” ten years out of date, and a “Guide to Devon.” Over these volumes he would pore during winter evenings, watched in silent admiration by his mother who could neither read nor write. At such moments Willum was studying, and was not to be disturbed by trivial matters. Whenever a clergyman came to the village, Willum would dive into his Crockford and enlighten his fellow-villagers as to the cleric’s “pedigree,” as he called it. From the guide-book he would cull much information regarding his native moor for the benefit of visitors. He would inform them for instance, “The church be Perp,” and evade further questioning by simply repeating the statement. When some

enlightened visitor enquired whether he meant perpendicular, he would reply in the negative, and repeat his assertion that the church was perp., the word being thus abbreviated in his guide-book.

Anything more ludicrous than Ann Cobbledick's belief that her son was dying of consumption could hardly be imagined. A stronger-lunged creature than Willum did not exist. Since a good many people came to the little mountain village to undergo the open-air treatment, it had become the fashion among the villagers to pretend they were similarly affected; just in the same way as certain people of lowly birth in times past would try to persuade themselves they had contracted the aristocratic gout. Mrs. Cobbledick's logic was curious. She saw the patients roaming about the moor. They were unmistakably gentlemen. Willum was, in her estimation, a complete gentleman. Therefore he too must be in a decline. Willum hastened to agree; and nobly submitted to a life of laziness and vice to please his mother and gratify himself.

Willum spent most of his time leaning up against something. So long as he had a support for his back he was happy. When he saw a wall he would make for it instinctively, and set his back against it. He was a human buttress. While Beatrice talked to his mother he looked at her with the eyes of a brute, thinking no doubt what a dainty morsel she was.

"Have you got your tombstone yet?" Beatrice asked the widow, with mischief in her eyes.

"I ain't got 'en," Ann replied, with a sign of anger. "It be up to Eastaway's, and he can't sell 'en cause my name's on't. It be a gurt stoane, and a good 'un. If Willum could work I'd get he to go up there one night when 'twas dark and fetch 'en away. There be room for 'en in the linny. But Eastaway be that left-handed he'd call it stealing. I be a widow, and Willum be an orphan, so they be agin we. They be agin I cause o' my butter," she went on shrilly. "They knows theirs ain't fit for waggon-grease. They knows the secret o' butter-making will die wi' me. And they hates Willum 'cause he be book-learned. Ain't ye a scholar, old dear?"

"I be intellectual," Willum admitted.

"Hear 'en," said Ann. "There bain't many like Willum. Gets things out o' books, Willum du. Everyone knows Willum. They comes here to shake hands wi' 'en."

The tombstone, to which Beatrice had referred, was Ann's special grievance. Some time after her husband's death it had been pointed out to

the widow that she might show suitable respect to his memory by erecting a stone above his resting-place. She had discussed the matter with Willum, and had arrived at the conclusion that a stone would cost money. Further she did not see why her husband should have a stone all to himself. She went to Eastaway, the granite-merchant, and opened her mind to him. He suggested that a small portion of the proposed tombstone should be occupied by the name of the late Cobbledick, while the greater part should receive inscriptions relative to the virtues of Ann; and that the stone should not be erected until her bones were mingled with those of her husband. This proposal was eminently satisfactory. One Sunday evening Ann went with Eastaway upon the moor, and after much rambling among bracken, heather, and whortleberries a slab of granite was perceived which met with the widow's approbation. Eastaway marked it, and the next day sent a waggon and a couple of stone-crackers to secure it.

So far things had gone nicely, but so soon as the granite had been hewn into orthodox shape troubles began. It was over the wording of the inscription that the quarrel arose. "Under this stone lies the body of William Cobbledick," was a sufficient opening; but a difficulty occurred over the spelling. Eastaway declared stone should be spelt stune. Willum, whose opinion on such matters was usually final, amended it to stoane. While the man who had hewn it took his oath the word should be spelt starne. A search in the churchyard brought no enlightenment, as all the memorials there commenced with the words "Sacred to the memory of." Willum appealed to his guide-book, and finally announced that, although stoane was undoubtedly the usual form, there was sufficient authority to justify the use of the older and practically obsolete rendering, stone. He recommended its adoption in this instance as being shorter and thus cheaper.

The next stumbling-block was the word William. Eastaway was for spelling it in the orthodox form, but when this was explained to Ann her wrath was great.

"He warn't Willyam," she cried at the stone-merchant. "He wur Willum. He wur born Willum, and he died Willum, and he be Willum in heaven. His father's name wur Willum, and my son be Willum, and his son'll be Willum. If I'd called my man Willyam he wouldn't have answered."

Willum the scholar corroborated, and Eastaway had to give way.

The worthy Cobbledick having been curtly dismissed, the monosyllable Ann was cut large and deep upon the stone, for the admiration of posterity

in general and the living lady in particular. At this point Eastaway was given an idea by meeting a brother stone-merchant who made a speciality of head-stones. This man suggested that the line following should run, "Relict of the above." Eastaway communicated the idea to the party interested; and Mrs. Cobbledick went at once in search of Willum.

"I be a relic o' father, old dear," she announced.

"So be I," said Willum, seeing that he was expected to say something, and speaking more truly than he was aware of.

"What du it mean?" asked the widow.

The scholar looked profound. He was leaning as usual against a wall, smoking industriously.

"I'll tell ye presently. It wants thinking over," he said.

The widow went to milk her cow, and Willum sauntered to the Vicarage. He interviewed "old Y." with satisfactory results, and in due course returned to his angle in the wall.

"It be a thing kept in a box," he began vaguely, when his mother reminded him of his promise.

"What sort of thing?" Ann demanded.

"Something holy kept in a box, and worshipped by folk what believe in idols," Willum went on, struggling to recall detached fragments of the Vicar's halting phrases. "Kept in a golden box sometimes, and they call it a bit of an apostle," he said eloquently. "They don't know really if it be or bain't, but they worships it all the same. They kneels down and worships it."

A little more conversation convinced mother and son that Eastaway had been trying to make game of them; so they went off and told him what they thought of his conduct. It was useless for the poor man to protest his innocence. Ann declared he was "agin her 'cause o' the butter," and stated that the village would never have been discovered by visitors had it not been for the intellectual attainments of her son.

After this a deadlock was reached. Eastaway flatly declined to record Ann's fame as a butter-maker upon the stone, and the widow in return refused to pay for work done. As a matter of fact it had never been her intention to pay for it. She argued it was absurd to pay for anything which could be of no use to her during her lifetime. She thought it quite probable that Willum would be too poor to pay for it after her decease; but, seeing

that it had been spoilt for any other purpose, she reckoned upon Eastaway making her a present of it when she was upon her deathbed.

The tombstone controversy was then in its fourth year. The granite-merchant would not part with it, and Ann resolutely refused to pay for it. Had it been possible to purloin the slab Ann would have done so long ago. As matters were she was content to say, “Let ’en bide.”

“I want my breakfast,” cried Beatrice. “I feel perfectly hollow. What’s the time, Mrs. Cobbledick?”

“Willum knows,” said the widow, who was quite unable to read clock or watch for herself.

Before the scholar could collect his wits sufficiently to answer, the postman rode up with the letters. There were none for Beatrice. She received those for her aunt, and ran indoors with them.

“Willum,” said the widow, directly the girl had disappeared. “She wur with Mr. Burrough last night.”

“I knows. I saw ’en,” said the scholar.

“They wur walking in the lane, and ’twas dark,” the old gossip went on. “And she hadn’t got no hat on.”

This partial nudity on Beatrice’s part caused them to shake their heads violently.

“She came back alone,” Ann went on. “She wur out o’ breath and hurrying. Why didn’t he come back wi’ her, if all was honest? Did ye hear anything, old dear?”

“I heard ’en laugh,” said the scholar gloomily.

“Did ye hear any kissing?” Ann whispered. “But there! Ye be such an old innocent ye wouldn’t know if ye did hear any.”

“I wouldn’t say what I heard,” said Willum darkly.

That was what Ann wanted. The scandal was established. Burrough had stumbled at last, and the widow felt she would be perfectly justified in assuring the villagers that Beatrice had passed the evening alone with him in his cottage. She decided there would be just time to run down, and tell the post-mistress, before getting the breakfast ready.

CHAPTER VI.
HOW THEY BOILED A KETTLE IN THE DEVIL'S KITCHEN.

BURROUGH reached the secret nook early. He proceeded in his methodical manner to make the place tidy, just as he would have tidied a room. He hid the sheep's carcase beneath the bracken; he dusted the granite arm-chair; he cleared away the cigarette-ends and half-burnt matches. Then he made a little causeway of stones along the edge of the bog. This was for Beatrice to walk upon. He could not bear the idea of those little shoes being made muddy.

His next move was to the kitchen, a heap of rocks which no doubt had been once upon a time the abode of some Dartmoor freeholder. The original hearth had disappeared; but four stones made an excellent substitute. In the space thus enclosed Burrough placed some dry gorse, a few sticks, and some scraps of peat. His spirits rose as he worked. There was a wild charm in this outdoor life. He began to whistle; and finally burst into song—

"O, she is dead and gone!
She's dead and gone!
And at her head a green grass turf,
And at her heels a stone."

This was a pill to purge melancholy; for there is a joy in feigning sadness when one is happy. Burrough flung another piece of peat on the hearthstone, and went on singing—

"And will she ne'er come again?
Will she ne'er come again?
Ah, no, she's dead, and laid in her grave,
For ever to remain."

"Not she," laughed a voice.

Burrough started from his knees. There was Beatrice on the top of an ivy-clad boulder, with a little basket upon her arm.

"Here's the stone at my heels," she cried, dancing lightly upon it. "But I'm still uppermost."

"How did you come?" asked Burrough.

"On these," said Beatrice, drawing back her short skirts and showing him the tiniest feet in the west country.

"But how did you cross the bog? I never saw you—never heard you. Have you dropped out of heaven?"

"Out of the sun, I do assure you," she laughed. "Why, I came my usual way, and whistling all the time; but you were so busy chanting dirges you did not hear."

"Your shoes are quite clean."

"So are my hands. Look."

"But there's no way here except through the bog."

"There is. Come and see. First of all put my basket in the larder."

Beatrice jumped down and led the way beside the river. At the bend she dived into a hole among the rocks, and pointed out to Burrough a strip of firm ground, which, she declared, wound away among the furze-bushes to a line of rocks, by means of which the bog could be circumvented dry-shod.

"It's a roundabout way, and nobody knows it except me," she said. "I found it out when I was about two feet high. I came here with my sister—she's in heaven now, poor dear!—and we were looking for the osmunda. We found thickets. I think there were more then than there are now. We used to dig up the little ones, but the roots of the big ones go down to New Zealand. We used to take them home and sell them to friends at one shilling each, and have a spree with the money. We were only kids, you know. How did you get to know of the place?"

"I found it by chance," Burrough said. "I waded up the river one afternoon, trying to get a maidenhair fern which I saw growing in a cleft. When I landed I found myself here."

"How did you escape?"

"I crossed the rocks and found some stones at the narrowest part of the bog. Beyond are some tussocks, which are firm, though they don't look it. The rest of the bog will bear my weight to the foot of the hill."

"That's a dirty way," cried Beatrice. "Never mind; show it me. I've shown you mine. We must name these crossings," she rattled on, as they

worked their way to the other end of the secret nook. “I shall call mine—what?”

“Queensway,” Burrough suggested, flushing a little.

“And yours Kingsway? Too high-flown. Let’s have something ridiculous. Go on; you’ve got brains.”

Burrough’s brains were fully occupied just then. They were entangled in the web of Beatrice’s dark-brown hair. Humbly he prayed her to be sponsor of their kingdom by the river. Immediately she was filled with suggestions and strange words.

“Then I shall call my path the Apron String,” she said. “It’s not my own invention, as there’s a neck of stones near Kynance Cove called that. The path is like a string, and it connects this corner with the apron, which is the firm ground beyond the bog. And your path—but where is it?”

“There,” said Burrough, pointing to a couple of partly submerged stones at the edge of the vivid-green bog. “Those are the grass tussocks, and that bed of scarlet moss will bear, though it quakes horribly.”

“My shoes and stockings!” Beatrice exclaimed; “what a slushy way! I should have nigger feet after going through that.”

“It’s not nearly so bad as it looks,” said Burrough, encouragingly.

“I won’t try it,” said Beatrice, decidedly. “I won’t make casts of my feet in mud-of-Dartmoor. But what shall we call this? It must be some slippery-slushing-sliding-soozling sort of name. I know! We’ll call it Skelywidden.”

“Now for the hut circle, the devil’s kitchen, and tea!” said Burrough.

“There’s this lovely little place,” she murmured, “known only to you and me. It’s ours—entirely ours.”

“Yours by right of discovery,” Burrough reminded her.

“Yours by annexation,” she said. “The Prince of Wales would claim it as Duke of Cornwall if he knew of it; but he shan’t have it, not if he comes with twenty thousand men. We’d know the reason why! I would hold the Apron String, and you would stand at bay upon Skelywidden. We would die for our country, wouldn’t we?”

She laughed merrily at her nonsense, and Burrough lost his reserve and laughed too.

“Well, it must have a name,” Beatrice declared. “A really nice name; something that would look pretty upon a map. It’s your turn to suggest something.”

“New Paradise,” Burrough suggested, somewhat lamely; and, in reply to her wondering glance, added boldly, “the vision of Danté—Beatrice.”

“Danté went to hell,” replied the girl. “I’m not a ghostly Beatrice, and I won’t have the place called Paradise, new or old. You can’t talk about Paradise without thinking of purgatory and getting shivers. Also, it’s too personal. Likewise, as you ought to know, Paradise is only used as a name for the very slummiest of slums. Now what do you say to Half-and-half Corner? Yours and mine, you know.”

“Too long,” he objected. “What do you say to Ourland?”

“Nuffin’,” lisped Beatrice, “except that it would be another injustice to poor old Oireland.”

“Then I have done,” said Burrough.

“I haven’t,” she cried. “You’re not a bit of good as a godfather. There’s a place in my native country called Blisland. It was once Blastland, which sounds sweary. I think Blisland is rather a pretty name.”

“With one ‘s’?” he asked.

“Only one there,” she said.

“We will have two here.”

“Now let’s go into the hut circle and be prehistoric people,” laughed Beatrice.

They scrambled over the rocks, and Beatrice, diving into the kitchen, began to arrange the fire, chatting frivolously all the time.

“Gugh! it’s clamp and dammy down here, and this is a silly little half-bred fireplace. Have you forgotten the matches? My s’ars—if you have! What did they do for matches when they were prehistoric? Never let the fire go out, of course. But what a business! Fancy getting up in the middle of the night! ‘My dear, you must, or the fire will go out.’ And they couldn’t go away for a week-end because of their precious fire. Where are the devil’s kettle and pans? Mr. Burrough, there’s no water in the devil’s kettle.”

“I believe it is my kettle,” said the young man gravely.

“Not now,” cried Beatrice. “This is the devil’s kitchen. People are so fond of the dear old devil. They name everything after him. They say God made the country, but they make the devil its patron. I expect they think it’s just as well to propitiate him. I wish I had the devil’s bellows, as this fire won’t burn. Oh, Tregony and Tregolls!”

“Anything the matter?” called Burrough, peering through the smoke.

“I’ve cremated myself,” wailed Beatrice. “Get an urn quick, and put me in. I shall soon be a pinch of dust, and you can use me for snuff or plate-powder. However did they live here in the days of Adam—he, she, baby, and fireplace? She would not have been bothered with frock and frills—lucky girl.”

Burrough had stooped to enter the hut circle, but dared not. He would have been too close to Beatrice, and he knew he could not trust himself. If they had bent together over the fire, their hands touching, that maddening little face close to his—it might become the devil’s kitchen indeed.”

“I believe I’m out of danger,” she sang out. “But half-a-yard of lace has gone to heaven. I hope I didn’t startle you. When I swear I always use Cornish names. They sound nicer than the usual swear-words, and you can make them mean just the same. This is a rotten fire-place. I think you had better come and be prehistoric instead of me.”

With that she came forth, sucking a scorched finger in a distracting manner, so that Burrough very wisely diverted his eyes, and began to collect bits of dry gorse. Then he descended to the hearthstone, while Beatrice lolled in the granite arm-chair and made frivolous remarks.

“They will think we are swaling,” she cried cheerily, when Burrough’s labours became rewarded by smoke and flame. “We shall be dragged before the Stannary Court upon Crockern Tor, for burning the moor in summer, and thrown into Lydford dungeon. Why did they throw people into prison? They might just as well have put them in gently. This is our own territory, so we can do what we like. Are you listening there below? If so, what is your name?”

“John,” replied a nervous voice out of the smoke.

“King John! Then we must have a Magna Charta. You must go upon the island and sign it. There is to be no tyranny in Blissland. If you try it I will appeal to the Pope. By the way, how do you write to the Pope? I should begin, ‘My dear Pope, I hope you are well. How are your gardens looking? I should love to see them, but I suppose if I come I should have to kneel and kiss your big toe, and really I couldn’t do that. What an idea!’ she rattled on; ‘expecting a girl to kiss an old man’s big toe.’ Don’t you think we ought to build a palace? I am sure we could do it. Firstly, we should dig a hole; secondly put a stone in, then another on top, and another on top of that; thirdly, make two holes, one for door, and another for window; and to conclude put the roof on. It would be quite easy.”

“The theory of palace-building is simplicity itself,” Burrough agreed. “The decoration of the interior, and the furnishing of the same, present difficulties.”

“Which appear insurmountable,” added Beatrice precisely. “Now we are two dictionaries. As for decoration we should stick ferns about, and cover the floor with bracken. As for furniture that is a needless luxury. I could furnish the place quite nicely with a few slabs of granite and some bundles of heather.”

“Slabs of granite,” repeated Burrough wonderingly. “For beds?” he asked innocently.

“No,” she said crossly. “Chairs and tables, of course. Then we should have slaves. It’s no use having a kingdom if you don’t keep slaves. When anything went wrong we should cut their heads off. The kettle is spitting! Quick! And I haven’t put out the devil’s cups and saucers. And where, oh, where, is the devil’s teapot?”

Burrough rushed to the kitchen, and brought out the kettle, bubbling and seething.

“We don’t want a teapot,” he explained. “We just shovel the tea into the kettle.”

“Gugh! how messy!” said Beatrice. “What a mad tea-party. I think,” she went on sweetly, “one pound of tea would be quite enough.”

“I have put in rather a lot,” said Burrough. “I like it strong.”

“It would appear so. I will prescribe for myself, thank you. One part essence of tea to twenty parts water. Add milk and sugar, and stir thoroughly. The mixture to be served hot.”

“I have forgotten the sugar,” said Burrough penitently. “I do not take it myself. I am exceedingly sorry.”

“I must curse you,” said Beatrice. “It is very sad, but I must. You shall have a nightmare, and be beaten with sugar-canes, and suffocated beneath a mountain of brown Demerara. Now don’t say sugar is unnecessary in my case. I can see you are going to; but it is very necessary. I feel a wild longing to have my system impregnated with it. I want to lie down and roll in it.”

Burrough persuaded her to taste the tea, and see how much nicer it was without sugar. She did so, and made a wry face; declared it was like medicine; that she would as soon drink vinegar; that it set her teeth on edge

and made her miserable. Then she forgot her troubles, and turned out the contents of her basket.

"If I were a dishonest person I would say I made this saffron cake," she rattled on. "Being as clear as the noon-day, I will own that Auntie was the architect. Auntie is very Cornish. Her pasties are works of art and her saffron cakes are symphonies. Her dutiful niece does not take after her much. When she tries to make saffron cake it's as likely as not that a Christmas plum-pudding is the result."

The sun had worked its way round the precipice of bog, and as the girl finished speaking a long ray flashed into Blissland and made a glory of her dark-brown head.

"How long are you staying here?" Burrough asked suddenly.

"Until I have eaten some more bread-and-butter, two pixy cakes, and smoked one cigarette," said she.

"I mean in the village—in Lew," he went on, with an earnestness he could not conceal.

"Ages I expect. Until the bracken turns golden. We shall go with the swallows. When you see Auntie and me on the wall beside Mrs. Cobbledick's, twittering and arranging our feathers, you will know we are about to fly away. Don't you find it dreary here in the winter?"

"It is," he said, with more emphasis than he intended.

"Mud and mist?" she suggested.

"Silence and desolation," he continued.

"Why do you…?" she asked, with a slight hesitation, regarding him for the first time with some seriousness.

"Because I must," he answered, looking down. "I cannot keep in good health anywhere else."

"Never mind," said Beatrice sweetly. "If you live here a little longer you will get strong enough to live anywhere. The villagers here would live as long as they liked if they didn't drink so. How do you pass the evenings in winter?"

"Thinking, smoking, dreaming," he answered with a smile.

"Always alone?"

"With Peter, my cat."

"And you talk to Peter?"

"I tell him everything."

Beatrice hummed softly. Then she settled herself snugly in the granite chair, and begged a cigarette. When it was lighted, she said, in child-like tones, “Please tell me a story.”

Burrough hesitated. He felt he was approaching dangerous ground.

“Go on,” she said impatiently. “A fairy-story.”

“You know them all,” he said. “You are a Cornish girl.”

“Tell me something new, pretty, and a wee bit sentimental, while I’m serious,” she commanded.

Thus adjured Burrough commenced—

“Once upon a time there was a princess, who was so beautiful that it was considered there was no man in the world worthy to be her husband——”

“Did she think so herself?”

“I do not know,” he answered. “She was a Cornish princess, and therefore she could not help being beautiful.”

“Skip all that, and come to her best boy,” said Beatrice, with signs of returning frivolity.

“She had three lovers, all kings, of course,” Burrough went on. “There was the king of Biggletubben, who was very rich; the king of Amalebria, who was very learned; and the king of Trevalyor, who was neither rich nor powerful, and his kingdom was very small and very poor.”

“So she told him to run away home, and promised to send him a picture post-card at Christmas,” said irreverent Beatrice.

“She couldn’t do that. He might have declared war upon her,” Burrough went on. Trevalyor was not a Cornish prince. His kingdom was in Devonshire, and it was poor, because it consisted of rocks and bogs.”

Beatrice hummed again. “I must be careful what I say about the king of Trevalyor,” she thought.

“The king of Biggletubben promised the princess all the finest jewels in the world, and everything else that her heart could desire. The king of Amalebria promised to make posterity remember her by writing a poem upon her beauty. But the king of Trevalyor could do nothing, except love her passionately.”

“Didn’t the others love her?”

“Yes, in their way. But one was so wrapped up in his wealth, and the other in his learning, that it was impossible for them to love her whole-heartedly, as the king of Trevalyor did. He could think of nothing else but

the princess, and his only desire was to devote himself and his whole life to her and to her happiness."

"Well," said Beatrice, with a fine colour. "Which of them did she take?"

"The princess could not make up her mind. She thought she would like the king of Biggletubben's wealth, but she did not like him, because he was fat and ugly. The king of Amalebria was pale and serious, and there were deep lines of thought beneath his eyes. As for the king of Trevalyor, his kingdom was a poor and miserable one, and his palace was not much better than a hovel, and it stood right in the middle of a bog."

"She ought to have chucked the lot and advertised," commented the flippant voice.

"She went to see a white witch, and the witch told her if she would go to Cranmere pool and drink a little of the water, saying aloud three times the name of the king she desired to marry, she would find herself at once in love with that king, even if he were fat and ugly, like the king of Biggletubben."

"I don't see why the witch should have sent her to Dartmoor," Beatrice objected, "and to Cranmere. What a beast of a witch!"

"She went," Burrough continued. "And on the way she stopped to visit the king of Trevalyor. His kingdom was quite near Cranmere, and she had tea with him."

"And he forgot the sugar," murmured Beatrice to herself.

"He was the last of the three kings that she saw, and she went on to Cranmere thinking of him, and remembering the love in his eyes. She reached the pool, and gathered up some of the water in her hand."

"I know it: Dirty slimy stuff, full of wriggling black things."

"There she stood, making up her mind. She had only to say three times the name of King Biggletubben to be in love with him—ugliness, obesity, little pig's eyes, and all."

"Did she?" cried Beatrice eagerly. "Did she go in for the diamonds?"

"Unfortunately the end of the story has not come down to us," Burrough answered. "You see it was written upon a calf-skin during the reign of King Arthur. One day the king wanted a strip of hide to fasten the Virginian creeper against the wall of his palace, so he cut off the bottom of the calf-skin. It was the part which contained the end of the story. After that nobody knew how it ended, or whether the Cornish princess chose the king of Biggletubben."

“I ’spect she did,” Beatrice murmured. “You see, she would have been in love with him after drinking the water of Cranmere, and though I dare say the king of Trevalyor was very nice, he had only a rotten little kingdom. After a year with him she would have grown very tired of canvas petticoats and hob-nailed boots. Biggletubben would have given her silks and laces, muslins, and purple, and fine linen, and she needn’t have broken it off altogether with Trevalyor. She could have dropped him a line now and again, ‘Meet me in the middle of your kingdom, and we’ll have tea again.’ Just a platonic tea-party, of course.”

“That would not have suited Trevalyor,” Burrough said.

“Of course not. He would have wanted to live happily with her ever afterwards. But he would have to be thankful for small mercies. Do you know what I should have said to Trevalyor? I should have said, make war upon Biggletubben and Amalebria. If you can conquer them, you will have their kingdoms, and then you will be rich and powerful. If they conquer you, well—you haven’t much to lose.”

“There was no chance,” said Burrough gloomily. “Trevalyor had no means and no influence. He could not even restore his palace, and there was nothing to be had out of his boggy kingdom.”

“Then he didn’t marry no Cornish princesses,” said Beatrice. “He had to put up with Molly, the milkmaid. She wouldn’t have objected to canvas petticoats and hob-nailed boots.”

“Perhaps they didn’t wear boots,” Burrough suggested.

“My s’ars!” cried Beatrice. “No tan shoes? What horny tootsies the poor girls must have had! No use tickling their soles. They would never have felt it. And how their feet must have spread! What an age to live in: Fancy cutting a hole in the bottom of a sack, popping your head through, and saying, ‘Now I’m dressed for dinner!’”

“Perhaps the end of the story will be discovered some day,” Burrough went on. “The strip of hide, which Arthur used to nail up the Virginian creeper, may be found in the ruins of Tintagel, and then we shall know. It is quite possible that the princess did become the queen of Trevalyor after all.”

Beatrice had no reply to this; but the rose-colour came into her cheek again.

“Don’t you think it was possible?” he urged.

“Trewidden, Trewinnard, Trewint!” Beatrice hooted saucily.

It was time to go. A shadow was creeping across Blissland, and the clouds were beginning to blush above Yes Tor. The girl packed every little bit of paper into her basket, with a wicked glance at her companion, as though she would say, “Who is the sinner now?” Burrough extinguished the glowing peat in the devil’s kitchen. He plucked a handful of asphodel, and spread it over the loose paper in the basket. Beatrice smiled and nodded. Then his heart bounded. She had taken a sprig and fastened it to her waist. As they walked on Burrough felt something upon his left side, clawing and struggling, like a bird trying to escape. How much more lovely she was, he thought, wearing the river asphodel than the pale and sickly syringa.

Yet she was not lovely, not even pretty, as beauty goes. Only distracting. Mere beauty Burrough would have gazed at delightedly. It was torment to gaze upon Beatrice, and not touch her. Beauty appeals to the eye. Beatrice appealed to the five senses. He followed her, placing his feet where her tiny shoes had pressed. Once she slipped back upon him. She recovered first, and hurried on. They returned by way of the Apron String.

“We never visited the island,” she said, as they came up the hill.

“We will—the next time,” Burrough replied. “When will that be? I won’t forget the sugar.”

“I shall bring a pocketful. The next time: Oh, I shall be there next Furry-day.”

“Friday?” he queried.

“No, the eighth day of the week—Furry-day.”

“I know,” he said. “That is the Cornish *feur*—the Floralia, the survival of the Roman occupation. Don’t they dance hand-in-hand through the streets, carrying branches and flowers?”

“Yes. I’ve danced too, and I can sing the Furry-tune,” Beatrice gasped; for the hill was very steep.

“But it may be any day,” he said appealingly.

“It may,” she replied pitilessly, “any day of the week between Sunday and Saturday. Furry-day must be a fine day.”

“Then if it rains to-morrow…?” he began.

“There will be no Furry-tune.”

“If it is fine,” he went on.

“The sun will shine,” she laughed.

They parted upon the high moor at the top of the village.

“I think,” said Beatrice charmingly, as she held out her little hand, “we have enjoyed our poor lives this afternoon.”

CHAPTER VII.
HOW BURROUGH CHATTED WITH A FELLOW-SCHOLAR.

Burrough thought he knew what Beatrice meant when she mentioned the advice she would have given to the king of Trevalyor. Cast everything aside, and work. That was her advice. She had thrown back his allegory in his teeth. He had Biggletubben the world, and Amalebria the flesh, to fight.

Very early the next morning Burrough went out upon the moor. Peter stretched himself, yawned, and followed. Both had a somewhat dissipated appearance. The man was unshaven and only half-dressed; the cat had spent the night within the kitchen hearth. Burrough sat upon a rock. Peter took up his position hard by and blinked at the sun.

"King o' the Cats," said Burrough moodily. "I wish I was not a classical scholar. I wish I was a successful lady novelist."

Peter glanced at his master, as though he would say, "That's two wishes. You have only one more."

"There are three ways of making money with the pen," Burrough proceeded. "The first is to write a successful play; the second to produce a novel which everyone reads; and the third to tickle the palate of the public with highly-seasoned serials in halfpenny journals. Number one catches society; number two the middle-class; and number three the 'mostly fools' mentioned by Carlyle. Now, Father Confessor, I can write neither play, novel, nor slush, as I believe the spicy serial is called. I can read Greek, and make Latin verses with a pitiful facility, but these accomplishments are not marketable. I can write good English, but there's no money in that. Most editors seem to prefer 'that's him' to 'that's he.' Can't you give me an idea for a novel? Isn't there something left to write about, some new passion, some fresh phase? I feel alive this morning, King Peter; full of new life and old ideas. This is just the time a new idea ought to come—if there's one left. I could sit down and write a sonnet. I could throw off an essay; but sonnets and essays are things of the past. You could not sell a dozen sonnets now for the price of two fresh herrings. Your countenance grows animated, my dear

cat. Shall we write a play together? Act One, the moor. Scene, a hovel. Enter the king of Trevalyor and his cat!"

Burrough would spend hours talking such nonsense as this to his dumb companion.

He drew himself higher up the rock, embraced his knees, and smiled unhappily at the rugged prospect. Just then he was trying to forget Beatrice. It was the last time he made the attempt. Her vision was before him, as she stood short-skirted on the mass of granite, surrounded by the gorse, heather and bracken of their tiny territory of Blissland.

"You and I are not wanted, King Peter, and that's a fact," Burrough went on. "If I were to hang you, and shoot myself, nobody would benefit. We shouldn't make room for anyone. I don't fill any position. I'm not even the village reprobate. The simple life, my dear cat, is excellent in theory, but in practice it is abominably unpleasant. It is an existence of clods and dirt, of gritty food, and black-rimmed finger-nails. It is a life of peat-smoke and mountain mist. I wade through bogs; I bark my shins against spurs of granite; I fall into a crevasse, and cover my skin with gorse-prickles. That is the simple life. Inside I listen to the wind; I play with my shadow; I watch the lamp-light for some hours nightly. This is to be in touch with Nature. From the artistic point of view it is no doubt an ideal state. From the mental and moral standpoint it is a colossal failure. I would give all these grey tors, every gorse-bush, the heath, the bracken, and throw in the view and the cloudscape, for a nice little row of jerry-built stucco villas along the edge of the gorge."

There came a magpie sailing down the cleave, and then another. After them appeared a short figure, walking at its ease, armed with a gun, accoutred with a canvas bag, and accompanied by two spaniels.

"Let us consider these omens," observed Burrough. "Two magot-pies. That's for mirth. Afterwards cometh Willum, head of the house of Cobbledick. He has begun his loafing early. He will be exhausted by noon, and have to lean against a wall till sunset. Let him trot by. But soft! he carries letters, he brings good tidings. Glorious news, my dear Peter! The Essayists are victorious—the armies of the foul rebel Slush have been defeated. The public has become enlightened, editors are marrying poetesses, essayists are allying themselves to publishers' daughters. That's the message of the magpies. I shall be produced in fair parchment covers, tied with green ribbons like prize beef, and beauteous ladies will dim my

pages with their tears. And as for you, King o' the Cats, you shall have the choicest cut from a Derby-winner for your supper."

Peter paused in his ablutions, and with paw uplifted regarded the approaching shapes. Evidently his impressions were unfavourable; so he stepped forward, ready to curse and smite the first of the careless spaniels which should venture within range.

William Cobbledick sometimes assisted the local postman by carrying letters to the outlying parts. His reward was a pot of beer. Other benefits accruing to him were a sense of dignity in being as it were an official of state, and the right to call upon Burrough and a few others upon Boxing Day to wish them the compliments of the season. There was also the right to read postcards; and the privilege of publishing any information thus acquired, after thorough and unscrupulous editing by Ann.

"Marning, sir," said Willum, as he handed Burrough a newspaper and one letter. "I've got five puppies, sir," he went on, like an eager schoolboy. "Born last night."

"Really," said Burrough. "I hope you and the puppies are doing well."

Willum looked puzzled, his sense of humour not being keen.

"Yes, sir, this warm weather suits me wonderful. They pups be out of a prize bitch—least she would have taken a prize if I'd shown her. Fifteen shillun each, sir. Will ye take one? I warrant 'en for a good nose."

"Being neither sportsman nor poacher," Burrough answered, "I have no use for fifteen-shilling spaniels with highly developed organs of smell. What sort of nose will you guarantee—bottle, Roman, or pug?"

"Well, sir," said the scholar, completely mystified, "I reckon 'twould be a bit of each. There's surprising blood in they pups. There be the father, sir."

At that moment a wild howl uprose, and the proud father could be seen scurrying for shelter, with one eye picturesquely closed; while Peter, who in vulgar parlance had dowsed his glim, licked his chops and tried very hard to grin.

"I warrant the Cheshire Pet for a good claw," said Burrough. "Here is a little arithmetical problem for you. If five puppies collectively are worth three pound, fifteen, what is the value of a cat which has defeated the father of said puppies?"

"Cats be vermin," said Willum bitterly.

Burrough laughed, and tore open his letter. A glance at it, and his face clouded. Most distinctly it was not a letter to glaze and hang in a frame. It

did not announce that the day of sonneteer and essayist had returned. It was not an invitation from a publisher to submit great thoughts, which might be bound within parchment covers and tied with green ribbon, for the delectation of ladies with pink and white complexions. It was simply, "a remittance by return will greatly oblige."

"As we are on the subject of problems, here is another—a domestic problem," went on the cynic. "How does a man live, when money goes out faster than it comes in?"

"On credit," said Willum. He knew the answer to that well enough.

"Now we have a social problem," the young man went on. "Here is a radical newspaper, which addresses me 'John Burrough, Esquire.' And here an obsequious conservative tradesman, who bids me be content with plain Mr. Burrough. What do you make of that?"

"It don't mean nuthing," replied the scholar contemptuously. "When I writes to a gentleman I puts Mister on one side and Squire on t'other. When I writes to a parson I puts Revellent as well. They likes that."

"I should be inclined to doubt it," muttered Burrough. "But on the main question you are right. It means nothing. If I write to a Government department to announce my inflexible will is to pay no more taxes, I receive in return a threatening letter which concludes, 'I am, Sir, your most obedient, humble servant.' How do you finish off your letters, Willum?"

"Always the same—yours truly," replied Willum.

"That's the safest way. But how many e's are there in truly?"

"You don't catch me," said the scholar grinning. "There's only one."

"Your education seems complete," said the cynic.

"I larnt myself. 'Tis what you call natural gift. I be just a man of born intellect," said Willum modestly. "If I hadn't been consumptuous," he went on, tapping his brawny chest, "I'd a been a preacher. Sometimes I preach to mother at home. Makes her cry, I du."

"I sympathise with Mrs. Cobbledick," Burrough replied.

"I mun shoot a rabbut for dinner," went on Willum shifting his antiquated gun. "If I shoots a couple, will ye take one?"

"With pleasure," came the answer. "If it be young, tender, and gratuitous."

"I don't shoot 'em when they be gratuitous," said the scholar, making a bold and bad guess at the meaning of the word. "Some du, but I don't. I only shoots the buck rabbuts this time o' year."

“I don’t think I’ll trouble you to shoot me a buck rabbut. My cat supplies me, and makes no charge. And now I must cook my morning rasher and settle down to work. Have you ever written anything?”

“Nuthing,” replied the loafer.

“What! You, a scholar! you, who lean against walls thinking, and roam the moor dreaming—you have written nothing.”

“I be an artist mostly,” said Willum in self-defence. “I takes photographs.”

“And anything you can lay your hands on,” the other muttered. “Do you read much, Willum?”

“Winter evenings I reads the Bible to mother. Makes her cry, it du.”

“Mrs. Cobbledick appears to be a somewhat lachrymose personage. What makes her cry?”

“’Tis my voice. It ain’t so much what I reads, as the way I reads it.”

“The explanation is entirely satisfactory,” observed the cynic.

“Then I reads to mother out of the Black Book,” Willum went on.

“Crockford’s Clerical Directory, I believe?” said Burrough, who knew all about this local celebrity’s two-volumed library. “Does that make mother cry?”

“No, she don’t cry over that. I reads it more spirited like. When any parson comes here I allus looks ’en up in the Black Book to find out his pedigree. Sometimes he’s there. Sometimes he ain’t. If he ain’t in, us don’t trust ’en. Mother says, ‘Look ’en up in the Black Book, Willum.’ If he ain’t there she wun’t let ’en have cream and butter wi’out the money down.”

Rather hard on the younger clergy, thought Burrough, knowing as he did that the directory in question was quite a decade out of date.

“You should study, Willum,” he said impressively. “You should read, and improve your mind, that mind which has been lying fallow for so long. You should pore over histories, and acquire languages. A little learning—you know the old saw, Willum? It’s a dangerous thing.”

“True, sir, me and you knows that. There be Mrs. Cann to the Post Office. Her don’t know much, but her thinks she du, and her tongue goes like the old saw you was talking about. They ain’t no scholars here. Just me and you, and Mr. Yeoland—he knew a lot ’fore he got dafty.”

“Come inside and look at my books,” Burrough said, as he slipped off the rock. His fellow-scholar followed, looking somewhat unhappy. They passed

in, and Burrough ushered the many-sided genius into the study, and nodded towards the long rows of books. Willum's spirit grew faint within him.

"Here," said Burrough wickedly, as he pulled out a handsomely-bound Thucydides, "we have the most famous example of vicious rhetoric——"

"I knows 'en," muttered Willum, his pale-blue eyes staring frightfully. "Vicious ain't hardly the word. Ain't fit for wimmin. I couldn't read 'en to mother."

"I believe you," came the guileless answer. "This is more your line—the tragedies of Sophocles."

"I knows 'en," said Willum again. "So does Mr. Yeoland. Talked of 'en many a time us has. Mr. Yeoland buried Sophocles down to Cornwall, Porthleven way." He pronounced the poet's name so that it might have rhymed with cockles.

"Really that is most interesting," said the tormentor. "Evidently you have been given access to information of which I have been unable to avail myself. Herodotus of course you know?" he added carelessly.

"Him what cut off John Baptist's head?" Willum suggested, feeling that here at least he was on safe ground.

"His younger brother," replied Burrough, with utmost gravity.

"That's him," exclaimed the scholar. "They calls 'en Herod Antifat in the Bible."

"Because he was a very thin man, I suppose?"

"That's it, sir, that's it," cried Willum, in high delight. "Me and you gets on fine!"

"I am going to make a slight addition to your library," Burrough said, as he picked out a couple of unwanted books—a cheap Greek testament and a small Sanskrit dictionary—and held them out to the local celebrity. "They will be a source of interest to you during winter evenings to come. I will not insult you by describing them. The dictionary is fairly ample in spite of its smallness. When in doubt of a word you can look it up here—and I hope you will find it," he concluded heartily.

The scholar's gratitude, if partly simulated, was expressed so ardently that Burrough nearly felt ashamed of himself. There was no doubt a spice of cruelty in his nature, that inborn cruelty common to all living things in Nature—to the sundew which sucked the flies, and to King Peter who played with a baby rabbit. Burrough felt a certain spiteful enjoyment in thus playing with Willum, because he had an idea that at least upon one occasion

during the day preceding Beatrice had been, not wilfully cruel perhaps, but a little bit lacking in proper sympathy for the king of Trevalyor.

Beatrice could not be like Peter, who tormented the baby rabbit out of sheer wickedness. That was impossible, because Beatrice was divine. Two days before she had been a girl, only a girl with tiny feet. Already she was a goddess. Promotion was never more rapid. But, Burrough pondered, the sundew did not catch and suck the fly out of wilful cruelty. It destroyed the fly simply because it was its nature so to do.

Then Burrough went off to cook the rasher for his long-postponed breakfast; while Willum, after shooting a rabbit, loafed home to astonish his doting mother by exhibiting his new literary treasures, which he explained as “A Chinese Bible, and a book to show how ’twas done.”

CHAPTER VIII.
HOW THEY WENT SWALING.

"AUNTIE," said Beatrice, moodily, "I've got the blooming hump. I am going for a walk on the blasted moor."

"My dear, you should not," Miss Pentreath quavered gently. "You must not use such language."

"Is it naughty?" her niece enquired. "Shall she suck her finger and look penitent? Well, she ain't a going to. She's afflicted with the blues, on account of the vagaries of this Dartmoor climate. She has a melancholy, splenetic, and acrimonious humour. She's got the megrims. She's dumpish, mumpish, and sulkish, on account of the rain. There, auntie! see the possibilities of the Anglo-American language, and choose the expression you like best."

"I can't think where you pick it up," Miss Pentreath protested.

"The educational value of the present-day novel is great," said Beatrice.

"You read the most improper books."

"You read them too, my dear, or you wouldn't know," the girl replied.

"But I've not been married, never engaged even," complained Miss Pentreath. "I am entitled to a little mild excitement."

Beatrice shrieked with laughter. "What a wicked little old woman it was," she cried. "Never mind, Auntie. We are all wicked, so why be humbugs?"

"I am not wicked," objected Miss Pentreath. "I have had no chance. I go to church on Sundays, and I read a sermon every evening. If only they would write interesting sermons I would read more of them."

"You paint—you're a rouge dragon," cried lively Beatrice.

"Art is beautiful, age is not," sighed Miss Pentreath.

"False teeth, false hair, false complexion, and—naughtiest of all—false bosom," Beatrice indicted.

"Do leave me alone," sighed Miss Pentreath. "You'll be like it yourself some day."

"Anyhow I'll have grandchildren to tease me, not nieces. It's stopped raining, and I'm going out—to the blasted moor aforesaid. Now I'll tuck

you up, give you lollies to suck, and you can read a sermon while you make nice cobwebby point lace to deck my garments withal."

Miss Pentreath was a harmlessly wanton little lady. She dressed in the style of a young girl, with flowers and ribbons, saucy frocks, laced petticoats, baby hats, and other allurements which it was her weakness to exhibit when crossing a muddy road. Her face was decidedly not her own: her soft tresses and fringe were equally exotic. Her efforts to secure a husband would have been of some humour had they not been pathetic. A few years before she had made her last stake, and been within sight of the goal. An elderly and short-sighted clergyman became entangled. On an evil day he escorted Miss Pentreath to a circus and travelling menagerie. There was a cageful of monkeys, and the coquettish lady stood before it, and poked playfully at the progenitors of her species with a beribboned parasol. Suddenly an ape seized the ferrule, and drew her close to the cage. Instantly a dozen paws shot forth, hat and hair vanished, while a general disrobing process went on below. The short-sighted clergyman became very properly aghast at the appearance of the lay-figure, which continued to undergo the throes of transformation—a sort of rough rehearsal of what he might expect the night after "The voice that breathed o'er Eden," had been sung for his benefit. Modesty and dismay impelled him to retire. Miss Pentreath's hat and hair were rent to shreds; while her gloves and handkerchief were with some difficulty recovered from the cheek-pouch of a baboon.

The bachelor-lady, as she was fond of styling herself—having a not unreasonable hatred for the ugly word spinster—was the slave of her niece. Beatrice was quite independent. She was of age, and possessed means of her own. She was the only surviving child of a defunct Cornish vicar who had been Miss Pentreath's favourite brother. The little painted lady was terribly afraid lest her niece should run away, and leave her to old-maidish loneliness which her soul abhorred. So she pandered to the girl's tastes, refrained from crossing her wishes, and behaved generally just as that wayward young person desired. She did not want Beatrice to marry, having a very shrewd idea that no future nephew-by-marriage would permit such a very draggled and washed-out butterfly as herself to flit about his house.

Evading Mrs. Cobbledick, who would have detained her with fine rambling phrases concerning butter and tombstones and the gradual wasting-away of Willum, Beatrice emerged into the village street, hatless and charming. She had made up her mind which direction to take while she

was putting her shoes on. She had said something about “a little crooked house” while she laced them. And she had laughed to herself, “Good-morrow, Jack! poor Jack!” while she tied them.

The early promise of the day had not been fulfilled. Rain had followed sunshine, and Beatrice knew that Blissland would be “clamp and dammy,” as she expressed it. Twilight was threatening, as she left the rush-thatched cottage where successive generations of Cobbledicks had sinned, and faced the moor where a fresh breeze was drying the heather and bracken. There was hardly a sign of the recent summer rain upon the rough track; and the peaty moorland was dry already. It was one of those evenings when the atmosphere seems to tickle young folk, making them long to laugh and jump and scream.

“I’ll do it,” said Beatrice. “It’s shocking, but I’m not going to be lonesome.”

She jumped over a gorse-bush, and pricked her ankles, which made her squeal. A couple of moormen, whom she had not perceived, stopped and stared in the hope she would jump again. She did not, but proceeded quite demurely, until she reached the little cottage with the tin roof at the end of the gorge. There was nobody in sight. She did not see Peter lying on his favourite rock, replete with young rabbit; but Peter saw her, and drew his own conclusions.

Beatrice knocked at the door. She heard a sound within, as of a pile of books falling heavily. She pushed the door open, and called saucily, “Please, I’m the boy from the grocer. I’ve brought the sugar.”

The next instant Burrough stood before her, lacking coat and collar, his face flushed, his manner nervous, as shy as a child. Willum at that moment was mightily avenged. It was a different Burrough from the superior creature who had persecuted the scholar. He could hardly believe his eyes. Beatrice alone upon his humble threshold!

“Is this ‘the Rising Sun,’ ‘the Setting Moon,’ ‘the Twinkling Star,’ or anything beery of that sort?” Beatrice rattled away at once. “Because I’ve brought a little thirst with me; quite a young one, but it’s growing fast.”

“Will you come in?” Burrough invited nervously.

“Not to-day, thank you. It wouldn’t do to be found upon unlicensed premises. Will you give me a glass of milk?”

“Do come in,” he went on, in a somewhat dazed fashion.

“I wun’t,” she said. “If you refuse me a drink I must go on to the next house.”

At that he hurried away, and brought her a glass of milk. She accepted delicately, then suggested that he might go and “dress himself” while she drank. When he returned he discovered that Beatrice had employed her leisure by inscribing upon his door with a chalky stone the two doggerel lines—

> “John Burrough lives here,
> He sells brandy and beer.”

The twilight had come. He thought her face looked more distracting than ever.

“What was’t ye’ doing man?” she inquired playfully, in the dialect of the moor.

“I was working,” he answered her gravely. “Trying to, rather.”

“Come on out! Let’s go swaling,” said Beatrice.

“It’s too late in the year.”

“We shall get off under the First Offenders’ Act,” Beatrice reminded him. “Go and get two boxes of matches.”

Burrough obeyed. It was delightful to be ordered about his own premises by the maid of the tiny feet. When he appeared with the matches, Beatrice pointed to a deep cleft on the side of the moor across the river, and remarked, “That’s a good place. We’ll start there.”

“There are vipers in that gorge,” warned Burrough.

“We’ll burn ’em out,” cried vicious Beatrice.

They hurried down, through the gathering gloom and the mist which was rolling up the cleave. A herd of ponies stampeded before them, and Beatrice shouted to make them run faster. She jumped from rock to rock, bounded over tufts of heather, furrowed her way through bracken, jumped the gorse-patches. It was as good as a dance. Her blood was fired by that mad scamper through the evening air and the shadows. She was intoxicated with the freedom of the wild moor. She bounded into a bog, and screamed, “I’m a-stugged!” She was out again, with brown shoes blacked, and stockings stained. Burrough was panting after her, short of breath already. The girl went so fast. They reached the edge of the foaming river, and searched for a crossing.

“Come on,” cried the maid of the mist. “Here be a gurt stoane! One-tew-dree.” She jumped, reached the stone with a light toe, and turned laughing. “Here’s anudder.” She jumped again, shrieking with mirth when she heard a splash behind. Burrough had missed the stone, and was in over his knees. Beatrice went across like a water-wagtail, and Burrough came floundering after.

“More bogs,” cried an excited voice. “Gugh! ain’t it messy? Lucky I’ve got old clo’ on—if anyone does pick up a garter in the mud they may think just what they like,” she murmured to herself. “I know I’ve lost it, and the mud is pulling my stocking down, and on the whole it’s as well that the shades of night are falling fast.”

“Are you all right?” sang out her companion.

“Bog-trotting nicely thanks. Where’s the gorge?”

“More to the left. I can hear the water rushing down it.”

“My feet are like coal-barges. They’m mucky twoads. Oh Tregony! Here’s a pincushion. I’ve walked right into it. Matches—quick before the mist swallows us. I’m in the middle of the gorse.”

“Let me,” cried Burrough, groping up over the slippery stones. “You will prick your hands.”

“They *are* pricked,” gasped Beatrice, excitedly. “Like fretful porcupines. Come on! Stick it in here.”

She was on her knees, making a hole in the bleached tangle of grass, below the furze where the rain had not penetrated. Burrough lighted several matches with shaking, awkward fingers. The wind blew them out. Beatrice swore softly in Cornish. At last the flame touched the grass. It spluttered, a gentle hissing began, the dry gorse-prickles caught. A moment later a furious crackling commenced, and then a wide yellow sheet of flame darted up, waving like a revolutionary flag.

“Now it will go like blue blazes,” cried Beatrice. “Hear it whine! There it goes again.”

The burning gorse gave forth a sharp, plaintive sound, something between a whistle and a moan, which lasted for some seconds before dying away in a shrill staccato gasp.

“I can’t help it. I must scream too,” cried Beatrice. “Oh, there’s nothing so good as swaling. Let’s light both sides of the gorge. There it rips! Heather, gorse, and grass, in an everlasting bonfire. Isn’t the smell delicious?”

They lighted the gorse in a dozen different places. They worked like stokers. The gorge became a glowing furnace. The flames roared below; the wind howled above. The foaming river beneath was blood-red. Showers of sparks rained in, and went out hissing.

"Lucky there's been rain to-day," gasped Burrough, as he stumbled by with a burning brand.

"Lucky? It's a pity," protested Beatrice. "We'd have burnt the moor to Cranmere."

An equally excited neighing went up on either side of the gorge; and out of the smoke came the shaggy heads and flowing manes of a score of ponies, drawn thither by the fragrance of burning gorse. Normally wild and frightened when near human beings, their shyness became forgotten when there was a prospect of a warm and comforting supper upon charred green gorse. Soon they came up in numbers, almost stepping into the flames in their eagerness to secure the blackened shoots.

"Keep it up," Beatrice shouted, when her companion showed signs of flagging.

"I expect we are destroying nests of young birds," he answered.

"Poor dears!" she panted. "Never mind. They won't suffer much. It will be soon over. One whiff of flame, and they'll be grilled. And the parents will be so pleased. They won't have to bring them worms and things."

The reason Burrough had stayed his destroying hand was that he might watch Beatrice. She had never appeared so fascinating. Her hair was tumbling upon her shoulders, partly singed, entirely crumpled. Her heated face was smudged distractingly. Her hands were blackened, scratched, and bleeding. She was like a lovely witch in that fierce light. Beneath her short skirt, and over her muddy shoe, he could perceive from time to time a loose roll of brown silk. All around her roared the flames of the swaling-fires. The ponies poked their hungry muzzles in between.

"The gorse is full of blossom here," a voice observed, with a tinge of regret, "bunches of golden bloom, shrivelling, going brown, and black. We've done enough," Beatrice exclaimed. "My matches are finished, and I'm tired."

She stood for a moment, watching the waving line of fire, her hands upon her hips, then sank upon a moss-covered boulder, and mopped her face with a small handkerchief. Gradually she slipped from the rock, which afforded a poor resting place, and dived feet first into the thick heather. She stretched

herself out luxuriously, as upon a fragrant yielding bed, lowered her head languorously with little squirms of pleasure, and half closed her eyes against the fierce light of the fires. As he approached Burrough could perceive her tightly-fitting grey jersey rising and falling with her quick breath.

"I'm tired, heavenly tired," she murmured. "This is reaction. Oh!" she cried, with sudden nervousness. "Don't let the ponies trample on me."

"There are no ponies here," her companion said. He too was panting, and his body was at fever heat, and the thrilling reaction was over him too. He seated himself on the edge of her springy bed, and dared to lean slightly over so that he could look down upon her face. In the meantime the wind carried the swaling fires onward and away. The weird light still flickered around the heather bed.

"It's getting late," Beatrice said sleepily. "Auntie will be waiting supper for me. It's like a dream. I can feel the wind rocking the heather. How warm and red the fire is! This is the seventh heaven. There!" She gave a big gasp. "Now my breath has come back."

"You are sweet, Beatrice; you are sweet," thought Burrough; and he compressed his lips to keep the words from issuing.

"Was that the fire, or the wind? Or did you speak?" asked she.

"You look lovely lying there," he said, after a pause, in a hard voice.

"I can't help it," she replied, with a little smile. "And I'm too tired to care."

"Oh, very lovely," he said, more calmly and precisely.

"Trewidden, Trewinnard, Trewint!" murmured Beatrice.

Burrough was by nature a shy man, and a modest. He turned his head away. Had he not done so, he would have fallen beside her and kissed her on the neck.

"What a funny idea!" half whispered Beatrice, as though confiding to herself. "A girl with a little crooked nose, also a little crooked mouth, likewise two little crooked eyes, not forgetting various black smudges, singes, and burns, distributed about the small features hereinbefore mentioned, and described as aforesaid,—lovely! My stars!"

"Your face is not burnt," muttered Burrough, in a sudden passion of love.

"My hand be—burnt horrid."

Instantly he seized the hand, which was resting on a tuft of heather and swaying with the breeze. But Beatrice began to whimper like a fretful child.

“You hurt. Doan’t ye be cruel! Doan’t ye, now!”

He released the hand from pressure at once, and let it lie resting upon his, just as it had rested a moment before upon the heather.

“It’s a pincushion,” she explained, “cram-jam wi’ prickles from the gorse. You squeezed the prickles in. You can’t see them. They’re too wee.”

“But they hurt you?” he said, in a voice unmistakably tender.

“Cruel! There’s one in the top of my little finger, and it’s a beast of a prickle.”

“Let me take it out.”

“I won’t be hurt,” she declared.

“There’s only one way of getting out these gorse prickles.”

“Well?” said Beatrice resignedly.

He lifted her hand, found the tiny speck on the top of the little finger by the light of the fires, and proceeded to extract it with his teeth. Beatrice laughed a little, protested, murmured, then sighed, and finally composed herself with half-closed eyes and quivering mouth. The prickle was taken out, but there were others, and one particularly in the soft pink palm which it was very difficult to get at. The little hand was hot and grimy. It was scented with smoke and the wild fragrance of the moor. It trembled like an imprisoned bird. Some of the scratches had bled.

The fires began to die down. They had reached bogs higher up, and the night settled gradually upon the bed of heather where Beatrice reposed, sighing, and sometimes giving little moans and wriggles, when the process of extraction hurt her nerves. She did not speak until the fires within had burnt out, as those above were doing, and she began to feel that the wind was chilly and her bed damp. Then she shivered and sat up.

“My feet are so cold,” she said. “I had forgotten they were wet.”

Looking down, she suddenly became ashamed. “I didn’t know it was like that,” she murmured. “I’m a wild, careless little devil, and I lost a garter in that bog. Why shouldn’t I say so? I’m a sensible Cornish girl. I’m not a prude.” Then she looked up at Burrough winningly, but there was not much fun left in her. “Aren’t you drefful tired and stiff? I am.”

“I will take you back to the village,” Burrough replied. “I know this bit of moor, and I can steer you clear of bogs. I am so sorry about—what you have lost, and if I can help you——”

“You see, this skirt is so short. And people say such beastly things.”

Burrough was wearing knickerbockers and stout woollen stockings. He bent as he spoke, and a moment later held out a strap taken from his own leg, saying, “If this is of any use to you——”

Beatrice glanced up delightedly, with the old mischief on her face.

“Thank you very much, Sir John Burrough, K.G. Now will you please go away, mutter a Paternoster, and then come back to take me home?”

CHAPTER IX.
HOW THEY PLAYED AT HIDE-AND-SEEK.

THE next morning a letter reached Burrough containing an offer to take his cottage for the next two months at a weekly rental of three guineas. The letter came from an agent in Exeter. A few weeks back he would have jumped at the offer; but since discovering the footprint in the sand his desires had changed. He knew he could not go away.

He argued with himself concerning the offer, although he knew he should end by refusing it. The money meant much to him. Idleness was playing havoc with his prospects. Since that first meeting with Beatrice he had done nothing except to write a few sonnets which in the inevitable order of things would find a last resting-place in some waste-paper basket. His work upon the stone remains of Dartmoor had come to a standstill. The Queen of Blissland had put a stop to that, as to all other serious undertakings. Burrough was dancing the dance of fools, and living in their paradise.

"I wish I had a friend," he muttered, "someone to talk over things with, who would kick me when I am foolish, and prop me up when I can't stand alone. I love the girl, and she knows it; but I can't tell her. I know I shall never tell her. If I could only get rid of my pride! It might be well for me if I could lose my self-restraint for a few moments. I nearly did last night. My boy, you should have some courage. Write and accept this offer, run into Cornwall and hide until the summer is over, then return with the mud and mists, and crawl back into your shell to work and forget."

Down he went at his table, seized pen and paper, and began to scribble.

"It's sheer madness to suppose she would come here," he went on. "A girl who is her own mistress, who is fascinating enough to bring anyone to her feet here! As well expect to find sunshine at the bottom of a mine. Beatrice making her clothes here! Beatrice walking on a stone floor beneath a tin roof! Beatrice cooking, bed-making, washing up! She gave me her answer when I told her about the three kings. It should have been plain. The highest bidder wins. Well, I've made up my mind. I'll go away."

Another thought occurred to him, and he leaned back to bring his mind to bear upon it.

"She wouldn't object to this place in the summer," he said. "Girls like roughing it in summer-time. They will live anywhere then, and pretend to enjoy this simple life, which is so unutterably drab and dirty in reality. It's the winter she wouldn't stand. What girl would live on top of Dartmoor during winter? I'll get me away far off. I will never see Beatrice again. The King of Trevalyor must put up with Molly the milkmaid."

He scratched away at the letter, and pushed it quickly into an envelope, because he was too ashamed to read it. Various circumstances, he explained, had caused him to alter his mind, and he did not intend to let his cottage that summer.

Obviously, the next thing was to get as close to Beatrice as possible; and with that end in view Burrough set forth in the direction of Blissland. It was a very fine morning, too hot for climbing and tumbling. Even the rivers were listless. The highest tor had no cap of cloud. It would be wicked, Burrough thought, to waste such glorious hours. It was an ideal Furry-day —the eighth day of the week, the day which could not be wasted by idle, amorous mortals, simply because it was an extra bit of life, an added slice of time, a sort of thirty-first of June, a little bonus paid by summer to those who would observe Floralia. It was a day to carry flowers and branches, and to dance hand-in-hand.

It was a considerable distance from the edge of the gorge to the nook at the bend of the river; but Burrough accomplished it within half-an-hour, which, it may be surmised, meant a certain amount of running. He was not perceptibly troubled by the heat.

He entered the secret nook by the way across the bog which Beatrice had named Skelywidden. There was no sign of her ladyship. Burrough began to be sorry he had come. Peering over the rocks, he saw nothing that was interesting; but as he made his moody way towards the river, along the path which his own feet had worn, he saw a cleft stick set upright in the peat, supporting a scrap of paper, which he pounced upon, opened, and read, "To all whom it may concern. Please go to the Apron String."

Burrough chuckled. Beatrice had guessed he would come, and that he would arrive by Skelywidden. She was, no doubt, taking her ease at the other end of the bend.

But when he got there he saw only another piece of paper. It was impaled upon a gorse-bush, and upon it was written, “You are requested not to burn the gorse. If you will be so good as to follow the thread, you will arrive at the summit of Be Lovely Beacon. N.B.—There is a fine view.”

“The mad girl!” exclaimed Burrough.

A glance at the gorse-bush showed him a piece of red thread tied to a bunch of prickles. Picking it up, Burrough was guided to the pile of rocks at the edge of the bog. He looked up, but there was no Beatrice. The thread went up from rock to rock, so he followed until he stood upon the highest point. He did not stop to look at the view, because the first thing he saw was another piece of paper, lying upon the summit, with a stone upon it to keep it in place. Evidently Beatrice was in rare Furry-day humour; but, better than that, she had expected him, and was waiting for him, and had most ingeniously hidden herself away from him. Upon this piece of paper she had written, “This is Be Lovely Beacon. So sorry to trouble you, but, now that you have marched up the hill, you had better march down again. I wonder if you will be able to find the Menacuddle. That is your next stopping-place. N.B.—*Do* admire the view.”

There was no particular view to admire, as the bog precipice rose on the other side of the river, and the trees upon the eyot blotted out the prospect in front. For the rest, there was nothing but the bog of sundews. Burrough shrewdly guessed that the invitation to admire the view was a key to the next discovery. He was right, for directly he looked out from the top of the Beacon his eye was attracted by something white in the seat of the granite chair beside the river. It did not take him long to get down and across. This piece of paper was crumpled into a ball, and there was something inside it. As he pulled it open his garter fell out, and on smoothing the paper he read —

> “For this relief much thanks. This is the place which is called Menacuddle. Your wanderings are now over. Do sit down! Sorry not to see you before my departure. I have gone to Cumberland. Good-bye.”

The day became dark, and the sunshine was so much chilly moonlight that instant. Beatrice had gone away! And to the other end of England! She had taken her fascinations to the dark and distant north, and her dainty feet

would leave their small, unseen impressions upon the sand and gravel of a Cumberland fell. And he was left to wander alone in Blissland, and to be pixy-led upon the "deysarts of Dertymore." The eclipse was total.

Burrough lowered himself into the granite chair which the fanciful girl had dignified with the title of Menacuddle and tried to think. Beatrice had been with him until late—it was disgracefully late—the preceding evening, and she had then said nothing about going away. It was obvious she had been to the secret nook that morning. She could not have spared two hours just to play him this trick if she had been making preparations for a journey which would necessitate her departure by the earliest train. He decided she was at her pranks again. Probably she had seen him coming along the sky-line. She would have been given ample time to make these arrangements for his mystification.

Good heaven! another piece of paper! It was lying near his feet beside a clump of bracken. It was a tiny scrap, and the writing upon it was microscopic. Burrough held the missive close to his eyes, and presently mastered the directions.

> "Mixed bathing is not allowed along the Cumberland coast. They are unco' reeleegious bodies there. It will be time enough for you to gang north when the owls begin to toot. Mind the mountains in the Lake District. They are slithery with dew. And don't—please don't—tread upon London, or there will be a revolutionary upheaval, and you'll get bitten.—I am, Sir, your most disobedient servant,
>
> "THE ZAWN PYG."

This was mere midsummer madness, and Burrough could make nothing of it except the one thing which was of supreme importance—Beatrice was near. Probably she was in hiding quite near, enjoying his perplexity. The thought that she might be watching him with mischievous eyes stirred his self-respect into activity. He would show her he did not care; that he would not have missed her had she really gone to Cumberland. So he lolled back in the Menacuddle, permitting himself thoughts of what that name suggested, lighted a cigarette, and tried to look indolent and unconcerned. Still he could not refrain from glancing now to the right, now to the left, in

the hope of sighting his tormentor, who was also queen and goddess of the place.

The cigarette was nearly consumed before an amateurish owl hooted, “Trewoofe!”

Burrough returned an answering cry, and the unfeathered fowl obligingly rehooted in Cornish.

The puzzle was to find the bird. At length the ornithologist determined it must be perched somewhere within the eyot. He set forth in that direction, and was nearing the water’s edge, when he perceived a miniature signpost, consisting of a short stick with a slip of paper fastened into a cleft and pointing towards the eyot. It bore the information, “To Cumberland.”

Burrough scrambled over the rocks and squirmed through the dense undergrowth between the two noisy currents. He was soon at the other end of the eyot, upon the open space near the thicket of osmunda, where he had discovered the tiny footprint in the sand. There were duplicates of that footprint everywhere, but the girl who had caused them was invisible. A line of red thread was fastened to a couple of rowans, and upon the thread two handkerchiefs were drying. Yet another piece of paper was fastened round the thread and secured by a hairpin.

“She is carrying the joke too far,” Burrough said, moodily. “It’s not fair to lead me this dance just because she knows all the ins and outs of this place so thoroughly. Why, I declare she must have been bathing!”

Fortified by the assurance that Beatrice was near and would be with him presently, if for no other reason than to secure her “towels,” he unfastened the half-sheet of notepaper and read—

> “Well, here you are again. I was ordered a change of air, and had to leave Cumberland at once. There wasn’t even time to wait for my washing to be sent home. My address until one o’clock will be ‘Top of Cleave Tor, Under the Second Gorse-bush where you turn to the right from the Whortleberry Clump, which lies beneath the Shadow of the Rock, where the Iceland Moss grows.’ Got that? I hope you’ll call if you’re passing; and, if it’s not troubling you too much, would you bring my washing? So sorry to have missed you, but I heard the piper and had to dance. I’m one of the Merry Maidens, so at noon I must dance on and away.”

“Cleave Tor is a mile from here,” Burrough muttered, not entering in the least into the spirit of the game.

He guessed how Beatrice had evaded him. She must have crossed the river, jumping from one crag to another, and escaped by some way known to her through the bog forest. It was no use trying to find her while in that mad holiday humour, since she knew every foot of that secret nook, and if pursued could hide from him with ease. There was nothing for it but to cross the bog of sundews and climb to the summit of Cleave Tor.

Burrough was disgusted with himself. Here was a fine morning utterly wasted. He would have been much better employed at his writing-table. Even if he had failed to turn out anything he would have felt he had done his best. He made up his mind to return at once and make a profitable use of what remained of the morning; but this was merely a roundabout way of determining to hurry up Cleave Tor as hard as he could, still hopeful of catching the Merry Maiden before she danced home to lunch.

The thought occurred that Beatrice might be avoiding him on account of his action the evening before when the swaling fires were burning. That fear did not distress him for long. She had not been displeased then. Neither was she offended with him now. Her gay messages proclaimed as much. She was merely amusing herself. Had it not been for that “crooked little nose” Burrough might have given up the pursuit and gone home to work. As things were, because that nose was crooked, Burrough would have followed his tormentor across every bog and tor upon Dartmoor. Tenderly he removed the wet handkerchiefs, examined them carefully, gloated over the “B” worked in white silk upon each, felt them, pressed them, and quite possibly kissed them, then folded them neatly, and consigned them tenderly to the breast-pocket of his coat, which was already a sort of museum of consecrated relics: half-sheets of notepaper scribbled on by Beatrice, pieces of red thread that must have belonged to Beatrice, bits of stick which Beatrice had handled and cut, and hairpins still fragrant of Beatrice’s dark brown hair.

There was very little wind upon the moor that day, and Burrough felt the want of it as he clambered up the steep hill from the bog. Progress was necessarily slow because the gorse grew thickly there and rocks were everywhere. At length he reached a point where the flat summit of Cleave Tor could be seen outlined against the intense blue of the sky. There was no gracious figure standing there, as he had hoped. There was no waving

handkerchief. But he knew Beatrice was there, and that she had seen him; for while he stood to regain breath a light cloud of smoke uprose from the top of the tor and circled lazily in the sluggish air. Beatrice was evidently burning a small gorse-bush as a signal to him, just as Cornishmen of old—and Cornishwomen too—would light fires on stormy nights to attract ships beating for harbour; but that was an unfortunate comparison, because they were wreckers, and the Merry Maiden was no descendant of theirs. All the same Burrough was wrecked upon that occasion. Breathless and perspiring, he gained the summit, to discover the fire a mass of warm grey dust, and the inevitable scrap of paper which denoted that Beatrice had gone again.

> "It was the most unfortunate thing," he read. "I had just settled myself when a pixy jumped out of the heather, and shouted, 'Ho and away for lunch!' You know when a pixy says that you have to go. It was no use my saying I expected the man with my washing. This afternoon I am thinking of taking my tea to the blacksmith's, only I can't carry a kettle. Can you suggest any solution of that difficulty? If you can I should be prepared to discuss the matter seriously. Can't stop. Blue Peter is hoisted. I must dance back to my circle, and be turned into stone; for I am, now as ever, yours most terpsichorally,
>
> "One of the Nine Maidens."

CHAPTER X.
HOW THEY SAT UPON THE PIXIES' BOWLING-GREEN.

BURROUGH was not going to be made a fool of again. Upon that point his mind was perfectly clear. He did not intend to pursue the elusive vision of Beatrice across the moor and be made the butt of her holiday humour. What was the good, he argued, of going to the blacksmith's? Probably she would not be there. He might only be making himself more ridiculous than ever. His course was clear—he must go for a walk in the opposite direction. This conclusion having been arrived at, he cleaned his little kettle, packed it into a basket, and went with quite unnecessary haste towards the blacksmith's.

The spot selected by Beatrice was hardly as civilised as its name suggested. It was nothing but a stone ruin beside the river Taw, encircled by solitude and clatters of moss-covered granite. According to tradition, a blacksmith had lived there once amid the silent shadows of the grey rocks, but it was not known what employment had come to him in that moorland fastness so far from the haunts of men. He could have had neither horse to shoe nor implement to forge. Perhaps he was an elfin blacksmith, enjoying the royal patronage of the king of the pixies, who, as every wise man's son knew well, held court upon Cranmere. There was a delightfully smooth stretch of turf in front of the ruin. His Majesty played bowls with his favourite courtiers there "under the cold and chaste light of the moon." His playthings were big spheres of granite. No doubt the blacksmith made them, breaking the rough blocks off the tors with his iron bar, and shaping them in his forge with chisel and hammer.

Beatrice was there! She was sitting beside the river near the bowling-green, looking very proper and demure. She was dressed in white from head to toe, wearing a hat to shield her from the sun. It was a big hat, somewhat suggestive of a lamp shade, and composed of many delicate articles such as infants are swathed in. Her little shoes were white, and so were her stockings. Burrough had come prepared to be dignified and a trifle cold, that she might perceive he was annoyed at her late treatment of him; but one glance caused him to forget all that. He felt he would struggle gladly

through all the bogs of Dartmoor, if at the end of the journey he might be allowed to kiss one of those maddening little ankles.

"Where's my washing?" was Beatrice's first remark.

Burrough dived into his pocket and produced the handkerchiefs. He had dried them at his kitchen fire. He had been tempted to retain one, and to suggest that it had been mislaid, but his courage failed him, as it did always when the pinch came. So he had folded them neatly, and tied them up in tissue paper with a piece of pink tape.

"You were bathing," he said, as he gave her the little packet.

"Sort of bathing," she admitted. "The water was rather cold, and now I'm hoarse. Perhaps the owl overhooted."

"Did you see me?"

"Lots of times," she laughed. "I saw you coming across the moor. I wondered why you were running. I saw you wandering from place to place, collecting my written injunctions. You nearly caught me on the desert island. I had to rush and leave my towels behind. And I saw you from the top of Cleave Tor. I hope you have profited by your lesson in geography. Do you know where Cumberland is now?"

"Do explain," he pleaded.

This was not the reproof which he had prepared; but just then he was in no mood either to argue or to scold. He only wanted to hear her talk, to sit still and listen, and to watch the movements of her dainty body in its soft and silky whiteness.

"Have you lived and walked in Blissland all this time without discovering that the eyot is a perfect model of England?" she went on. "Why, I saw that when I was a small kid. Every part of England and gallant little Wales is reproduced in miniature. My sister and I added a few details which were wanting. We stuck a few mountains about, and we burnt out a patch for the Black Country—it's green again now—and we dug out some bays and made some rivers. We learnt all our geography that way. You entered the island this morning somewhere about Falmouth. The first step landed you on Exmoor; the second took you across the Bristol Channel; and then you came north through Shropshire and Cheese-and-catshire; and I believe you slipped into the Mersey, though you didn't know it, but I thought I heard you blowing bubbles, also making remarks about the mountains in the Lake District which should have been instantly suppressed—the remarks, I mean, not the mountains. I warned you they were slithery.

And then you were in Cumberland; while I had jumped upon the Isle of Man, and across to old Ireland, where the bogs come from. Then I got stugged again. My washing-bill this week will be enormous."

"You told me not to tread upon London, or I might get bitten," Burrough said.

"I did get bitten," Beatrice rattled on. "I went by the East End, and two horrid little Socialists nipped me on the ankle. I've done nothing but scratch and embrocate ever since. Didn't you see that big ant-hill near the mouth of the Thames? That's London."

Then the girl became active. She opened her little basket and tumbled out a tea-cloth, various cakes, and sundry packets. She ordered Burrough to prepare a fire, and demanded to know what he had brought, "because," she said, "I have eatables, tea and sugar," with the accent upon the sugar, "a bottle of milk, and three cups."

"Why three cups?"

"Auntie said she might come. I don't expect she will, but she may, if she can finish her painting in time."

"I did not know Miss Pentreath painted," said Burrough politely.

"We're both artists," said Beatrice. "I paint landscapes, and Auntie paints portraits."

He could tell by the mischief in her eyes that she was quizzing him; but not having to his knowledge seen Miss Pentreath, he did not know how to take her.

"She paints for pleasure, I suppose?" he remarked.

"It used to be for profit," said Beatrice, who had no delicacy of feeling regarding her aunt's obvious weakness. "I think now it has become a duty. Like most painters, Auntie sets an ideal before her, and aims at it with a steadfastness of purpose which in one of her age is truly remarkable," she went on wickedly. "It has always been her object to achieve a real work of art, and her failure to do so has cast a gloom upon her life."

"I know you are chaffing me," said Burrough, looking with boldness into her laughing eyes. "I suppose the truth is, your aunt does not take her painting seriously."

"It's about the only thing she does take seriously," Beatrice cried delightedly. "She has hitherto failed to paint a really good portrait, because she is short-sighted, and therefore she exaggerates. What could look worse than a blob of scarlet where nature intended a soft and interesting pink?"

“Evidently I am fated to say the wrong thing,” observed Burrough. “As your aunt is a portrait-painter, I presume she uses oils?”

“Ask her,” cried Beatrice, with a little shriek of laughter. “I know they come from a place in Bond Street in a fancy box, but they don’t smell oily.”

“I can’t think of anything else to say except, does she exhibit?”

“Frequently when the weather is fine and dry,” the girl replied. “She objects to rain and mist, because moisture is so injurious to the delicate work which she particularly affects. She always did prefer to exhibit in a half-light, and to keep the picture with its back towards the window.”

Then she made the elfin blacksmith’s shop ring with laughter, in which Burrough for the first time joined.

“You must have thought me very dense,” he said. “I have lived so much out of the world lately. I had forgotten how ladies repair the ravages made by smoky towns with the appliances of art.”

“That’s enough of Auntie,” said Beatrice. “If she comes presently she is sure to bring her latest masterpiece. Only don’t criticise unless she invites you.” She went on severely, “How do you suppose we are going to have tea, when the kettle is empty and the fire is not made? Give me the kettle,” she commanded. “I will fill it while you get some sticks and stuff for the fire.”

She took the kettle, and drawing the white skirts round her, went and stood upon a stone, leaning gracefully towards the foaming river. Burrough tried to collect sticks and watch her at the same time, with the result that he fell over a rock. She laughed, and he felt angry, because he did not like to appear clumsy in her eyes. There was plenty of dry gorse which had been burnt the previous spring. He gathered an armful and returned to the pixies’ bowling-green, where Beatrice was regarding ruefully her tiny white shoes, over which she had been careless enough to spill some water. She was also scolding herself sharply.

“You’m a mucky twoad! That’s what you be. What’s the use of giving you nice things to wear, if you can’t keep out of mud and water? Yesterday evening you went swaling, and you tore all that pretty lace your poor auntie made for you, and you turned a nice little pair of tan shoes into pulp, and you muddied your stockings to your knees. Then this morning you scrambled through that boggy wood and spoilt another lot of nice things. And now, when you have dressed yourself rather sweetly, you must go and slop a dirty kettle all over yourself—you little beast!—just like a silly kid

when nurse isn't looking. You ought to be dressed in sackcloth or linoleum or tarpaulin, which would scrape and scratch you. You'm a twoad! You be!"

"Aren't you rather hard upon her?" said Burrough, looking up from his fire-making.

"Not a bit. She's a perfect little horror with her clothes. She was always like it. When she was a toddler she was always in the mud, and got smacked for it, but it made her no better. When she was a schoolgirl she was never happy unless she was tearing something. And now she's an old maid, she always pulls her things off anyhow when she undresses and chucks them all about the floor. What is amusing you now?"

"The definition of yourself," he answered.

"Old maid? Well, I celebrated my fifth birthday two years ago. By the time I am ten I shall be old and grey-headed. At fifteen I shall become a portrait-painter, and at twenty I shall fade peacefully away. I was born, you see, on the twenty-ninth of February. Now I'll tell you something more interesting. You see that pile of rocks which you are smothering with your smoke? Well, that's a grave, a kistvaen. There was a very old woman who was alive here when I was a kid, and she was a witch. Are you listening?"

"Yes," said Burrough, poking his head out of the smoke. "There was an old woman, and she was a witch."

"She was over ninety," Beatrice went on. "And she remembered looking in that grave and seeing the skellington, as she called it. A real dead Gubbins was buried there. There were savages, you know, who if they caught anyone on the moor would skin 'em alive-oh. The bones have gone long ago. This old woman taught me some spells, and I was qualifying rapidly for my witch's degree when the stupid old thing died."

"So you never became a witch after all?"

"I never became a full-blown black witch."

"Was she a black witch?" he asked rather sharply.

"Well, yes, she was a black witch," said Beatrice, with some hesitation. "She didn't ride on a broomstick, though," she added with a laugh. "Why, I thought you would be amused at what I am telling you."

"Witchcraft is not an amusing subject," said Burrough quietly. "When I lived in London I might have laughed at it, but not now, not after living alone upon the moor."

"Oh well," said Beatrice, "let's talk about something else, and forget the nonsense I have been saying."

It was not likely that Burrough would forget. He had never before seen Beatrice really grave, and the change was so great that he could hardly recognise her. He knew she did not think she had been talking nonsense, and the knowledge made him uncomfortable. It was not pleasant to consider that she might have been corrupted in the age of innocence by some horrible old woman who simply lived to hate her species. There were a few such remaining, he knew, in mid-Devon and about Cornwall, and death by drowning was not too bad for them.

"Do ye boil, kettle," pleaded Beatrice, in her usual lively mood, as she poked a stick into the fire. "Last time we had tea together we were devils," she prattled. "We used the devils' kitchen. And now we're pixies. This is one of the pixies' meeting places. They dance here in the moonlight, and on a windy night you can hear the blacksmith whanging away with his hammer. We're getting on, aren't we? We'll soon be angels. Come along with the tea! The pixy-kettle is bubbling and spitting; and, by all that is lovely and sacred in art, here comes my pixy aunt!"

Burrough looked up. He saw a slight girlish figure picking its way among the rocks, and advancing towards them with mincing steps. At that distance Miss Pentreath might have been Beatrice's younger sister; but as she approached the faults of the picture were exposed pitilessly by the sunlight and clear moorland air. The little made-up lady looked entirely out of place amid that wild scenery. Surrounded by the granite and gorse, the heather and bracken, of Dartmoor, she presented as incongruous an appearance, with her paint and girlish ribbons, as a fisherman clad in oilskins would have done in a West End drawing-room.

"Well trotted, Auntie," cried Beatrice. "I was afraid the journey might be too great for you. This is Mr. Burrough, about whom you have heard from Ann. He's the man who writes very big works in a very small house where the stormy winds do blow."

Miss Pentreath made a fluttering bow, then seated herself upon a flat stone, and combed her chestnut locks with carefully manicured fingers. She could not see Burrough distinctly, owing to her steadfast refusal to wear glasses; but she was aware of a well-built figure and a fresh clean-shaven countenance which gave her a favourable impression.

"I am most pleased to meet you," she said, in her little complaining voice. She had been unconsciously querulous ever since that unfortunate incident of the monkey-cage. "My niece tells me you have escorted her

about the moor, and have pointed out to her many objects of interest which she would not have discovered by herself."

"Quite true," remarked a voice.

"I was not aware of it," muttered Burrough, wishing with all his heart that the painted lady was at the bottom of Plymouth Sound.

"Yes," said a mischievous voice—"Skelywidden, King Trevalyor's country, and Swaling Night."

"The air is so soft, so beautiful," complained Miss Pentreath. "I really think I may venture to remove my hat."

"I wouldn't, Auntie," warned Beatrice. "It might come on to rain."

"Don't say that. I don't see any black clouds about. Do you, Mr. Burrough?"

"Oh, lots," said Beatrice, with a sly look. "They are black as ink above Steeperton."

"My niece is such a tease," said Miss Pentreath when Burrough had assured her there was no immediate danger of a storm. "I hate rain," she went on, smiling as archly as her enamel would permit. "It ruins one's clothes entirely."

"Not so much as bogs," said irrepressible Beatrice.

"Well, my dear, I am a little older than you, and I prefer to keep myself neat. I do not believe in wading through bogs and gorse-bushes, and jumping about rocks."

"Which is a nasty dig at me," said Miss Beatrice. "But, you see, Auntie, I was born in Leap Year."

"Don't make atrocious puns," said Miss Pentreath severely. "They are silly and unfashionable."

"My stars! This propriety is for your benefit, Mr. Burrough. If you weren't here Auntie would want to pull off her stockings and paddle."

"I do not deny that my niece and I have paddled in this river," said Miss Pentreath, stirring the cup of tea which Burrough had just handed her. "But I am not strong like she is. She would pull me about, and push me, until my paddle became something like a bathe. I am too small and weak to play with such a strong girl. Then the great disadvantage of paddling is the subsequent drying of one's feet, for which a lady's handkerchief is not particularly well adapted."

"I love paddling," said Beatrice. "I like to feel the soft sand tickling my feet and squeezing in between my toes."

“Do be quiet, Beatrice,” said her aunt. “Ladies’ toes are not included among the subjects which may be discussed at a tea-party where a gentleman is present.”

“Why not, if they’re nice toes? Anyhow I wasn’t talking about them. I was only saying how jolly it is to walk with bare feet. But if that’s naughty we’ll change the subject. Tell us whom you met on your way here.”

“Only a few visitors, whose faces were not known to me,” replied Miss Pentreath. “Mr. Yeoland was standing as usual at his gate, and tried to get me to stop and talk. The poor old gentleman wants looking after sadly. Then I passed a few of the villagers——”

“I’ll give you a list of them,” Beatrice broke in: “Willum, who won’t work, and Dufty, who can’t look straight; Griffey, who preaches, and Veale, who boozes; Muzzlewhite, who can’t read, and Kentisbeer, who can’t write; Kellaway, with the wall-eye, and Wollacott, with the game leg; old Ruddle, who’s never been in a train, and old Wannell, who’s never been in a bath. Auntie talks to everyone and everything,” she went on, addressing Burrough, who had become unusually silent. “She speaks to every dog and cat in the place. One day I heard her talking to a pony about the weather.”

“Never mind my weaknesses,” said Miss Pentreath, as she produced her cigarette case. “Mr. Burrough, are you certain it is not going to rain? I am a very long way from shelter.”

“There’s the blacksmith’s chimney,” Beatrice reminded her.

“It is quite clear towards Cranmere—where the storms come from,” Burrough answered.

“Have you ever been to Cranmere?” asked a voice.

“I started one morning, but lost my way, and gave it up,” he said.

“I know the way.”

“Beatrice knows Cranmere well,” her aunt remarked. “She has been there every summer since she was a child.”

“Next time you go will you let me accompany you?” Burrough asked, avoiding her eyes, and feeling his heart beating rapidly.

“You would have to start early,” he heard Miss Pentreath saying, “some day when the artillery are not firing.”

So far Beatrice had not given her consent. She was lying upon the pixies’ bowling-green, her chin propped upon her hand, and her eyes fixed upon the foaming river. An expedition to Cranmere was a very different matter from an afternoon’s ramble in Blissland. He and she would be alone

together for the day. Nothing but a vast solitude would surround them from morning till night. And Cranmere Pool was the centre of witchcraft and pixy pranks.

Suddenly Beatrice turned her head.

“We shall want lots of grub,” she said in her merry way. “And you must bring plenty to drink, for I won’t follow the example of the Cornish Princess in your fairy story and swallow mud and slime. The guns won’t be firing next Monday. Shall we go then?”

CHAPTER XI.
HOW THE SCHOLAR FAILED IN ORIENTAL LANGUAGES.

It was high noon, and the day was the first of the week. Willum Cobbledick walked out of the church and into the "Plume of Feathers." He was wearing an old cassock, short in front and dragging behind, like a maid-of-all-work's frock; and upon his bristling hair rested at a military angle a distinctly clerical hat. Willum always exchanged church for alehouse at the earliest opportunity, not so much because sawdust and beer-barrels were preferable to harmonium and lectern as because in the "Plume of Feathers" he could feel himself an instructor of the villagers who were wont to foregather there as often as the law allowed. Willum was a churchwarden. He was also organist, bell-ringer in moderation, and sexton. He collected the offertory and read the lessons. He intoned the psalms and sang the hymns. He was in effect the spiritual pastor and master of the village, as the vicar was too infirm and witless to perform his duty, and had almost lost the faculty of intelligent speech. Everybody who came to Lew went to hear Willum read the lessons. He rendered them in broad dialect, disregarding stops, gasping for breath in the middle of a word, sometimes turning over two pages and reading on unconscious of his error; while Mrs. Cobbledick listened with tearful pride and would have applauded had she dared. Service over, Willum would hurry to the "Plume of Feathers" for his well-earned beer. His fellow-villagers patronised the local Zion, which offered no attraction in the morning, nor indeed at any time when the house of good cheer was open. They recognised Willum as a superior. He was the local representative of learning. When an election was impending it was Willum who controlled the votes. When the rural dean made his visitation it was Willum who appeared armed with registers and misstatements. "Willum be the sinecure of all eyes," Mrs. Cobbledick frequently explained to newly-arrived visitors.

Griffey, the preacher, sat on a bench, clutching a blue and white mug. Upon the table by his side sat his favourite disciple, Wollacott of the game leg, who was too miserly to buy refreshments for himself, and so far had

not been offered any. Other worthies lounged in picturesque attitudes about the room. They were listening to Griffey, who had been discoursing upon the uncertainty of life, and the necessity of doing good to one's neighbours. As the preacher confined his attentions to his neighbours by removing the boundary stone of one and diverting the water supply of another, his remarks were not received with that attention which the subject deserved.

"Us be like sparrows," Griffey shouted as Willum entered.

"Like what?" asked old Wannell, who had never been in a bath, and was, on that account perhaps, somewhat hard of hearing.

"Like sparrows," Griffey repeated.

"Us be," agreed old Wannell, looking round to see if anyone was prepared to deny it, "like sparrows that sitteth alone on the house-top, and withereth afore they be plucked up."

"That ain't it at all," broke in the amateur divine. "'Tis grass what withers. Sparrows fall to the ground."

"And the Lord careth for 'en," said the preacher, as he lowered his head reverently over his mug.

"Beautiful the beer smells," said Wollacott of the game leg.

"It's a wonder to me where you gets the learning from," said Kellaway the wall-eyed.

"Ah!" said Willum profoundly, as he produced two books and a pipe from the pocket of his cassock.

"You don't get it from your father," observed old Ruddle, who had never been in a train.

"I never got it from he," Willum agreed.

"You can't account for learning," said Dufty, who couldn't look straight.

"It grows," said Eastaway, the publican. "It's just like warts; some have 'em, some don't."

"It don't grow unless you helps it a lot," said Willum modestly.

"I says reading's a waste o' time; that's what I says," commented Muzzlewhite, who had failed to master the accomplishment.

"So be writing," added Kentisbeer, whose talent in that direction was equally undeveloped.

"Them be half-dafty notions," said Willum.

Griffey, the preacher, opened his mouth to agree; but remembering suddenly that it was against his principles to agree with anyone, closed it again.

At this point Veale, the village toper, who had for some time felt sleep approaching, composed himself for a quiet nap beneath the trestle-table.

"What be they books, Willum? Full o' learning, I reckon?" said the publican.

This was the moment for which the scholar had been waiting. He had held the books ostentatiously, confident that such a question would be asked before long. As a matter of fact, it was the publican that he desired particularly to impress. Eastaway was the financial magnate of Lew. He was the village banker. He was also keeper of the Cobbledick tombstone. Eastaway was practically the only employer of labour in the neighbourhood apart from the mines, where work was precarious, and received poor pay. By a stroke of genius worthy of a higher intellect, he had combined the business of granite merchant with that of beer-seller. He held the only licence in the village. His stoneyard was not a dozen yards away from the door which had painted upon it the laconic announcement "Bar." While the men worked in the hot sun they could see the seductive interior, and smell the aroma of malt and hops, which, as old Veale had pathetically observed, made the place "so homelike." Eastaway paid his men each Saturday at noon. During the week the greater part of his money came back to him through that process, which might have been described as an effect of machinery upon wages.

Willum opened the Greek Testament tenderly, and after gazing at the pages with a rapt expression, passed the book upside down into the rough and beery hands of the publican. The scholar's face shone with idiocy, which the spectators mistook for wisdom, as he laconically and lyingly remarked, "Fifteen pounds!"

"Be a lot of money for a book; such a little 'un, too," remarked the gentleman of the game leg.

"Mun have cost a lot to print 'en," said Eastaway. "Do all they little things mean English words, Willum?" he went on incredulously.

"You turns 'em into English words—us do as knows how," the scholar answered.

"What be 'en?" the preacher demanded.

"Chinese," said Willum. "Chinese Bible."

"Show us the bit about the sparrows," said the preacher.

Catching a familiar word, the village toper beneath the table began to murmur a little ditty concerning a bird of that species, which sat upon a

spout while a thunderstorm was impending.

"There be nought about sparrows here. They don't have none in China," Willum explained.

Old Veale proceeded to show how the storm broke, and forcibly expelled the sparrow from its coign of vantage.

"Then it bain't a Bible," said Griffey triumphantly.

"You gurt fool," cried Willum, in anger at such stupidity. "Didn't I tell ye 'twas Chinese?"

"What they chaps read as be slaves in Africa, where my cousin Bill Conybeare died o' fever fighting wi' the Boers," explained Kellaway, the wall-eyed.

"They bain't slaves," shouted Willum, hotly. "It be a wicked lie. They works for their living same as us."

"Order, please," shouted Eastaway. "No politics here. What be t'other book, Willum?"

The scholar resumed his bland smile, as he handed over the torn and shabby Sanskrit dictionary, upon which he commented thus: "Only two others like it. One of 'em in the British Museum to Oxford, Mr. Burrough told me, and t'other be lost somewhere."

"Be it Chinese too?" asked the gentleman who couldn't read.

Willum replied in the affirmative, while Veale beneath the table murmured his joyous conviction that Chinamen never would be slaves. Probably he meant Britons, but the conversation had confused him.

"One of these books tells ye about t'other," the scholar announced.

"Which tells ye about what?" asked Eastaway, blankly.

This question muddled Willum. After some hesitation he explained that when in doubt as to a word in the dictionary it was necessary to turn to the Testament for enlightenment. The publican, who was a practical man, requested Willum to translate a passage into fluent English. It was then the scholar discovered he had floundered; but a little sleight of hand, which resulted in a sort of reshuffling of the books, glossed over his error. Then relying upon memory and impudence, he pointed to a passage, and quoted a sentence which had occurred in the first lesson that morning.

"Ain't nothing like that in our Bible," said Eastaway decidedly.

"Well, I dunno," said Griffey the preacher. "Seems somehow familiar."

Willum considered that his scholarly reputation would be enhanced by remaining silent.

“Where did ye get they books from?” asked the publican.

Willum became at once mysterious. Under pressure he told a rambling tale of an old house in Cornwall, which had been long deserted and was gradually falling into decay. At length it was decided to pull it down, and the books were discovered in a box bricked up in a chimney. The gentleman into whose hands they came had sent them to him, Willum, for his opinion.

“How did ye know they was Chinese?” interrupted wall-eyed Kellaway, who mistrusted Willum.

“What’s the use of being a scholar if ye can’t find out things?” retorted Willum.

“That bain’t no answer,” replied the wall-eyed gentleman. “What be the signs and tokens?”

“What be the signs and tokens that the sun be shining?” shouted Willum.

“I can see ’en,” replied Kellaway.

“I can see them books be Chinese,” came the answer, which everybody present considered decidedly crushing.

“’Tis easy to see you be no scholar, Joe,” said Muzzlewhite, who was himself no better.

“What I wants to know is how he got they books,” went on Kellaway. “If they were worth a lot of money how did the gentleman come to part wi’ ’em?”

“I bought ’em,” said Willum. “The gentleman didn’t know how valuable they was, and I wasn’t fool enough to tell ’en. I offered ’en a fair price, and he took it, and I kept the books.”

“Same way as I sold they sick ponies,” muttered the preacher thoughtfully.

Wall-eyed Kellaway gave way grumbling. To ask how Willum came by the money was too delicate a question. It was common knowledge that his efforts to obtain control over the offertory had failed. The vicar might be a dotard, but he had sense enough to retain the bag. Willum was fond of referring to sums which he lavished upon various articles; and somehow or other the villagers had fallen into the habit of believing him.

“Seems to me you might pay for that tombstone next time you has a few shilluns handy,” Eastaway remarked blandly.

“That be mother’s business, not mine,” Willum retorted. He had the feeling that he was being baited, and he did not like it. “Mother ordered ’en,

and mother must pay for ’en. ’Tis to go above she and father, and it can bide till she be dead.”

“Be ye going to drink that beer?” said Wollacott suggestively.

“I be,” replied the scholar, hastily guarding his mug with two huge hands.

“It bain’t right to let your father lie wi’out a stoane at his head,” said old Ruddle, whose travelling had been confined to horse-drawn vehicles. “He was a good man. Hit I on the face one ’lection time. Us was proud o’ he.”

“He warn’t a scholar same as Willum,” said Eastaway, who was hoping to get an offer for the tombstone.

“Could use his hands,” said Ruddle.

“Willum uses his brains,” said the publican.

“Us don’t want brains. Us can live wi’out ’em,” said wall-eyed Kellaway, returning to the attack. “You can’t cut peat and crack stones wi’ brains. ’Tis only men what don’t work as wants brains to tell ’em how to pass the time. Us knows what to du for a living, and us don’t want to be bothered wi’ brains.”

This was a distinct challenge to Willum. He could not disregard it without a distinct loss of reputation. He drained his mug, wiped his sandy moustache, and with a look of malevolence in his foxy eyes advanced to the centre of the room, faced his opponent, and was just about to commence a denunciation when an interruption occurred. The door opened noisily, and a couple of artillery officers entered.

The villagers became as silent as mice. Military visitations from the artillery camp on the moor were frequent: but it was not often that officers deigned to enter the little alehouse. As they walked to the counter, after a curt “good-morning” to the men, a few well-aimed kicks in the ribs fully aroused old Veale, who becoming conscious of uniforms shambled from beneath the table and, bespattered with sawdust, lurched for the door. Tumbling down the steps, he cuffed the urchins who were holding the officers’ horses, and drove them off blubbering with disappointment. Horse-holding for officers was a salaried position held for life by the toper. It was a monopoly enjoyed by him. The salary came from tips. No gentleman in uniform ever gave less than sixpence. Old Veale managed to pass the curb-reins round his arm, then supporting himself between the horses resumed the blameless slumbers which had been so rudely interrupted.

While the publican was producing the bottled ale, which he assured his aristocratic visitors was stocked especially for their benefit, the officers

could not fail to perceive the books, left incautiously by Willum, lying open upon the counter. The younger of the two exclaimed at once—

"I say! Here's a thing to pitch upon in a Dartmoor pub! Look here! this will remind you of your time in India."

"A Sanskrit dictionary, by Jove!" said the other. "And what's this? A Greek Testament. Landlord! is this the sort of reading you indulge in?"

"Well, Captain, us don't read 'em," replied Eastaway. "But Willum does. He be a scholar. There be Willum." He nodded blandly towards the object in the clerical hat and disreputable cassock, while the officers exchanged smiles.

"So, my man, you read Greek and Sanskrit?" said the senior officer.

"Beg pardon, Captain," broke in Kellaway, with an exultant grin. "Willum says they be Chinese Bibles."

At that moment Willum, who still occupied the centre of the floor, looked as though he were experiencing that sensation in the palate and throat which is a premonitory symptom of nausea.

"I dare say it's Chinese to him," said the officer, with a good-humoured smile. "This book is the New Testament in Greek. And this is a Sanskrit dictionary. Sanskrit, as Willum may have told you, is the early language of India."

"Willum never told us that," said Kellaway.

"What would they books be worth, sir?" added the wall-eyed one, as Eastaway with a most deferential manner and obsequious smile set two foam-topped glasses before his patrons.

Willum made a remark about mother waiting dinner for him.

"What do you mean?" asked the officer as he lifted his glass.

"The chap has been fooling them," the other muttered with a soft laugh.

"What would they be worth to buy? A lot of money, I s'pose, sir?"

"Lord no! They are old second-hand affairs. I suppose you picked them up at some bookstall for a few coppers?" said the officer, turning to the scholar.

"I bought them of a gentleman, Captain," said Willum brazenly.

"And he had you!"

The two officers burst out laughing, and the one who had last spoken picked up the books and handed them to Willum, who was already preparing an indictment upon the ignorance of army-officers in general, and these two in particular, to be delivered as soon as they had departed.

Kellaway had still another question; and he lost no time in putting it.

“Would one o’ they books, sir, help ye to read the other?”

“Of course not,” came the answer. “They are two different languages.”

“Willum,” said the younger officer solemnly, “go home, my lad, and stick to halfpenny newspapers in the future.”

They laughed again, then paid their reckoning, and clattered outside to find fresh amusement in the somnolent horse-holder; but so soon as they had ridden away Willum lifted up his voice in denunciation and exclaimed, “They be nice men to be officers in the British Army. They don’t know Chinese when they sees it.”

The villagers laughed somewhat in scorn, and wall-eyed Kellaway laughed louder than the others. The majority were unwilling to believe that Willum was a fraud and a delusion. Willum was in his way an institution; someone they could be proud of, whom they could point out to visitors. But their faith in his wisdom had been seriously disturbed by the words of the officers.

“They be gurt fools and gurt liars,” thundered Willum.

“Why didn’t ye tell ’em so?” sneered Kellaway.

CHAPTER XII.
HOW THEY STARTED FOR THE MOTHER OF RIVERS.

Beatrice had promised to meet Burrough at the moor gate on Monday morning, that they might start for Cranmere. The weather was gloriously fine. There was scarcely any breeze. A better morning could not have fallen to their lot. Burrough felt curiously elate while he made his preparations for wandering into the wilderness. He talked all the time to the lineal descendant of the great Grimalkin, who occupies the same position among the feline race of the West Country as is held by King Arthur in the minds of men.

"This is a great day, King o' the Cats. A day to be noted by red letters and marked with a white stone. I'm going a roaming across rivers and rocks, through bogs and quags; and she is coming too. The Queen of Trevalyor is coming, Peterkin. She likes me a little—she must, or she wouldn't be alone with me all day. I'm not too old after all. What's thirty-five when you feel strong and well, and look it too? I'm young, my brindled monarch. I'm still a boy. No wrinkles yet, no grey hairs. I am not yet old enough to make my own living. If that is not a sign of infancy, what is? Out of the way, or I shall tread upon your royal tail. It pleases us to be merry to-day, for we have issued our decree commanding our loving subjects to make holiday. Don't you hear the pixies scampering up and down the gorge? They are crying as loud as they can, 'Ho and away for Cranmere Pool.'"

Peter jerked his tail and stalked outside, perhaps considering that, if there were any basis of truth for this statement, a plump pixy would make a pleasant change of diet. Burrough stuffed his knapsack with provisions for the journey, and hurried outside to find his ashplant which was to serve him for alpenstock.

Burrough's private idea was that the great plateau, which Beatrice and he proposed reaching that day, was not strictly speaking in England at all, because Dartmoor had neither been conquered nor legally annexed. The inhabitants had a perfect right to raise the flag of a republic and proclaim Dartmoor as a sort of English San Marino. Dartmoor was still Little Britain.

Although it was attacked often by the Saxons it remained impregnable. The Celtic inhabitants of the moor retained their language until near the dawn of modern England, until long after the county which surrounded it had been incorporated within the western realm. As an independent and unconquered state it passed into the jurisdiction of the Duchy of Cornwall, although the Duchy obtained no legal title to it. Legally Dartmoor was not in Devonshire; politically it was not in England. If an adventurer were to seize the moor, and proclaim himself First Emperor, none except the commoners would have a legal right to evict him.

Once upon a time Dartmoor was an immense mountain of granite. The ladies and gentlemen of that period probably wore hair and tails, and had not progressed far enough to talk scandal or to be troubled by politics. That mountain is now ruined. Nothing but the stump remains. It has been worn away by the winds and rain of ages. It may have taken a hundred years to wear away a few grains of that tough granite which still cannot be cut by any tool. Frost, storm, and showers wore that huge mountain away. The softer portions went first, and the rivers following the line of least resistance cut and scraped and hollowed as they ran unceasingly, until the defiles, cleaves, and gorges were made, to be a delight to quite a new race of beings, who had abandoned the fashion of wearing tails, and instead of hair cumbered their bodies with a vast amount of superfluous clothing. The harder portions naturally resisted the action of the elements longer, and they appear now as the hills and ranges of the moor, capped each one by unusually tough masses of granite which are called tors. Some of these masses look as if they had been built by some Permian or Damnonian corvée; others take upon themselves the shapes of giants or monstrous beasts; others in pure playfulness will log or rock upon persuasion.

Where one would expect to find hills there is only a plateau. The big hills are upon the borders of the moor; the central part is a more or less flat-topped surface, broken by small hillocks having each its distinctive tor, named usually after the form it is supposed to represent. Between stretch the peat bogs, springy in summer, spongy in winter. The peat when cut in its dry state is as soft and lovely a brown as a woman's hair. Here the shaggy cattle wander, the wild ponies frisk, and the horned sheep browse. The wildness is extreme, the solitude intense. There are no trees upon the moor, nothing but the stone clatters, the bogs and rivers, the heather, whortleberry, and gorse. The greater gorse blooms during winter and spring; the smaller

species flowers in summer and autumn; thus all the year round the fairies' gold is lying upon the moor.

It is the rivers which are the pride and glory of the little republic of Dartmoor. Broadly it may be said that all have their origin upon the most inaccessible, the loneliest, most solemn and dreary, and the highest of all Dartmoor plateaus—the Mother of Rivers, Cranmere. Dart and Teign are the fairest rivers in the world. To walk by the Teign in the bluebell season is to be in fairyland. To trace the windings of the Dart is to become the central figure of a dream. There is also the Okement, river of ferns—it was this which flowed through Beatrice's Blissland—and the noisy river Taw; and many another, with rattling brooks innumerable, all streaming from the breasts of Mother Cranmere to irrigate the green valleys of Devon, which was once a part of heaven, but broke off one day and fell to earth.

These rivers of Dartmoor have a beauty and romance all their own, as they dash their cold, sweet water to the western towns, where England's commercial prosperity was built up, and whence her sailors pushed away to conquer Spain. There is one beauty of the Alps, and another of English hills; one beauty of the Rhine, and another of the Dart. Nothing is big, and nothing little, when referred to its proper scale. Cramping smallness is usually more lovely, if less sublime, than oppressive largeness. The crystal rivers of the moor run down between brown banks of peat decked with ferns and asphodel. Here they flow into wizard pools; there they thrill from one rocky ledge to another in a succession of sparkling stickles or little falls. They are always bright, always laughing, and possess a wondrous freshness. Sometimes these rivers forget they have risen upon Cranmere, and are destined to flow through merely terrestrial scenes. They revert sometimes to their former state, when Devon was a part of the heavenly country; or they lose their way, as it were, to find themselves, somewhere about the month of May, passing through some land that never was. Thus one reach of the Tavy passes through Arcady; one reach of the Teign through fairyland; one reach of the Dart through dreamland. And the dreams of that land are good!

Not many legends of the wild Cymric imagination remain. Arthurian legend has become forgotten. Board-schools have killed the pixies. Only the more vulgar fancies remain. One of them is connected with the Dart, which was originally not so much a river bringing water to the people as a god

who demanded tribute from them. That tribute was a human heart each year—one year the heart of a maid, the next that of a man, and so on for ever.

In the vast and wild solitude of the moor it is curious to consider that here was once the Birmingham of England. Beside the rivers appear grass-grown mounds which betray the former working places of the tin-streamers. Here and there may be seen the ruins of their huts and homes. Their bridges across the rivers—huge slabs of granite known as clappers—are in use to-day probably in very much the same condition as they were a thousand years ago. During the Bronze Age the demand for tin was about equal to the present demand for steel, and the tin of "Dertymore" was famous before the Roman empire had declined. Upon Crockern Tor, an equal distance from the Stannary Towns, the Tinners' Parliament was held in the open air. Offenders against its laws were sentenced to death and torture in its horrible dungeon of Lydford, more foul a prison than any devised by the intelligence and cruelty of the Spanish Inquisitors.

Cranmere is the practical summing-up of all that is wild and weird upon Dartmoor, and of all that is lonely and drear. It is a great watershed up among the clouds, the roof, as it were, of the moor. The so-called Pool in its centre may be reached by any active pedestrian during the summer months on those days when the gunners of the British artillery are not sending their shells across its boggy surface. In winter it is practically inaccessible alike to man and beast. There is danger then. Wool-like mists may encircle the wanderer suddenly, or the driving snowstorm spring up.

In every part the peaty soil has been rent into fissures. These crevasses present the most striking feature of the region. They are innumerable, and some are deep, while all are treacherous. The traveller jumps one to find himself balancing insecurely upon the brink of another in every respect identical with that he has just crossed. Their angular crookedness is amazing. They curve and zigzag into all manner of snaky shapes. Their crumbling edges are often hidden by tufts of bleached grass or knotted heather, and a false step may mean a sudden descent into slime and mud. One would imagine that the entire region had been tortured by earthquake, or that some Titan had fallen in frenzy upon the plateau and rent it with his hands and teeth.

Each of these crevasses is, in its humble way, a water-course. Each is a vein which does its part in the great act of river-making. During the summer months the mud with which they are choked is of a glue-like consistency.

As autumn approaches the mass loosens and becomes oil-like, until in winter the mud vanishes and water begins to flow. Rivers have humble origins; they are not born great, but they have greatness thrust upon them. The source of any particular river can hardly be discovered. It is merely a muddy crevasse amid a hundred others. But the hundred are destined finally to feed the one, until the river casts its slough and appears fresh.

While the maze is penetrated, by means of jumps and scrambles, there are pools—small ragged patches of black and sullen water fringed by cotton-grass and bleached sedges. The water is so thick that the wind hardly ruffles it. Probably these pools are crowded with invisible insect life, but to the eye they might be poison-pits, so dead are they and so black. One cannot wonder if the Celtic moormen should have peopled this desolate region of crevasse and tarn with the souls of sinners. Here was once the site of purgatory. There was a time when the West-Welsh inhabitants of Dartmoor feared to climb upon the great plateau because of the piteous cries issuing from the crevasses. Nothing could be more suggestive of souls in agony than the groaning of the wind across Cranmere. With the sun "sinking in its roaring home," with the wind sounding like grated doors heavily creaking, and the dripping clouds of mist around; with the fissures and the tarns below, the desolate peat-wastes, the deep black sheets of mud; with the solitude and lifelessness on every side, the imaginative Celt might well have hastened to find an easier way by which to escape from that haunted region to his home.

In the centre of this saturated waste was once a pool of some size. There are moormen who remember the sedge-choked sheet of black water. It was surrounded by beds of rushes. The rushes have gone, and the pool which nurtured them has gone too, drained by the turve-cutters. The finest peat in the world is cut upon the edge of Cranmere. What was the Pool is now an almost oval depression in the surface. The spongy bank of peat slopes gradually, and a cairn appears made of turves and marble-like stones, and topped by a sad post, to which from time to time a flag has been fastened, only to be torn to fragments and utterly demolished by the furious winter gales. Two tin boxes are pushed into a hole at the side of the cairn. The one contains a book to receive names and addresses of visitors who succeed in conquering Cranmere: the other is a post-box. They who reach the Pool leave letters and postcards to various friends and relations. The next arrival takes these missives, and upon returning to civilisation posts them without

delay. Letters posted at Cranmere do not often miscarry, even though they may not reach their destination until many months later.

There is little to be seen upon Cranmere. Nature is naked and unrelieved. She is cold, hard and fierce. She is there not the Nature which smiles and is kind. She is the Nature which is exceedingly cruel. All the epithets usually applied to tragedy may be applied to Cranmere. Yet peace, and not sorrow, is the dominant note. On a calm day—and there are few perfectly calm at so great an altitude—the stillness is weird. It is unnatural. Perhaps there is not a region in all the world more silent than Cranmere. There is no life; all around there is death. But by one of Nature's little ironies, Cranmere is the centre of life and the source of it. For she is the mother of nearly all the rivers in Devon.

Burrough had not long to wait beside the moor gate, for Beatrice was punctual. He went forward to meet her as she tripped along, fresh and sparkling like a part of the morning. She was attired like the practical Cornish girl she could be when she liked. She wore a short grey skirt which did not reach her ankles, and a tight-fitting jersey of white wool, over which was slung a little satchel, which she declared contained everything that could possibly be required for the expedition from a packet of pins to a white elephant. Her little feet were shod with two absurd miniatures of men's Dartmoor boots—thick-soled and hob-nailed. Her head was uncovered, and so were her hands.

"Since it's necessary to commence with the weather," she cried, "what a day!"

"Ready to start?" asked Burrough.

"Ay, ready," cried Beatrice.

The moor gate banged behind, and they were off.

"It's up, everlasting up," she said. "It's drag, climb, and jump, henceforth and for ever, and we mustn't talk too much. I'll tell you why," she rattled on, anxious to ignore her own advice. "Once I made this trip alone. I hope you're impressed. I went to Cranmere alone, and I wondered why I was so little tired when I got back. It was because I had no talking or laughing to do. Talking and laughing are very exhausting."

"We cannot walk like mutes," he objected.

"The thing is difficult, but not impossible. We might make signs. Point, gesticulate, raise our eyebrows, shrug our shoulders. Do you know the deaf and dumb alphabet? But that wouldn't do. It's eyes on your feet hereabouts,

or great is the fall. Now this is a breathless bit. We won't talk for ten minutes."

She compressed her lips firmly and looked down. They began to ascend, winding among the big blocks of granite. Beatrice kept glancing up with a smile, and a saucy gesture *apropos* of nothing. Presently she pointed at the sun, then patted her hair. Burrough nodded, and wiped his forehead, tacitly acknowledging the heat. Beatrice with difficulty restrained a titter. Then Burrough held up one finger and shook his head sadly. Beatrice nodded with equal gravity, and Burrough held up two fingers, looking pleased and happy. The girl nodded again, although she was entirely bewildered, and immediately held up three pink fingers, which looked almost transparent in that clear light. Burrough shook his head quite savagely.

"I must speak, or I shall burst," cried Beatrice. "What ever do you mean?"

"When I held up one finger, I meant to signify that during my previous walks here I have been alone," he answered. "Then I held up two, to show how glad I was to have you for a companion; and when you held up three, I took it that you meant there should be someone else with us."

"That was much too deep for me," said Beatrice. "I put up three fingers just to beat your two. I couldn't imagine what you were driving at. So you thought I meant you ought to have a chaperon?"

He laughed at her wilful perversion, while she with a quick glance went on, "We open-air Cornish girls can look after ourselves. We are not hot-house plants by any manner of means. You're an open-air person, aren't you?"

"Altogether," Burrough answered, "through necessity, not from choice."

"But you are all right now?" Beatrice suggested quickly.

"Quite well, so long as I am here," he said.

"I've been always awfully strong," Beatrice went on. "At home my bedroom looks out upon the sea. I have the window open winter and summer, in storm and fine weather, and my bed is close beside it. I won't have blind or curtains. I like to feel the salt breeze on my face. I can lie and watch the moon rising out of the sea, or the lightning flashing upon it, and I can watch the fishing boats sailing by. Sometimes I get my pillows soaked with rain, or the spray which dashes over the cliff. And after a stormy night my bed is in such a mess. Dry leaves and dust, and bits of stick, and my hair is simply filled with wreckage. Beetles and moths and bats come to visit

me, and more than once a bird has been flung in by the wind. I get up in the morning feeling that I must dance and sing."

"It's the way to keep young and live long," said Burrough, in his pedantic manner.

"Of course it is. These commoners of Dartmoor could live as long as they liked if they were not such fools. They sleep four or five in one small room with every chink sealed up even in summer. They pass the night undoing the good that the day has done. Nearly everyone on the moor goes off between seventy and eighty. They break up suddenly and go off, worn out by want of night air. Our fisher-folk in Cornwall are just the same. It's no good talking to them. I've tried lots of times. 'Sleep with my window open! Why, 'twould kill me,' is what they say. One old woman sang quite a different song when I tackled her on the subject. 'Us don't want to bide over a hundred years,' she said. 'Us can't afford it. Us bides too long as 'tis.' You can't argue against that," finished Beatrice with a laugh.

“We’re on our way back to wigwams and hut circles,” suggested Burrough.

“Yes,” she laughed. “The house agent’s advertisement in the future will be something like this: ‘A charming modern residence for sale. Contains four large stones, carefully propped up and leaning securely against one another; an admirable hearthstone, and roofed most artistically with rushes. A perpetual current of cold east wind guaranteed. Pretty but inexpensive.’ And here’s another from the same list: ‘A few hurdles and a piece of sailcloth to be had cheap. Could be converted into a nice suburban villa.’”

“How were you brought up?” Burrough asked.

“Why, in the most sensible manner possible. Just as if I’d been a chicken. My father put up a ring-fence on the lawn, and I was dropped inside to crawl about and roll as I pleased. There was a sort of kennel for me to go to when it rained, but I think on the whole I preferred the wet grass. And this is the result,” concluded Beatrice, with a kind of shyness that was new to her.

Before Burrough could make the complimentary reply which he intended, she anticipated him by an exclamation of pleasure and the cry—

“Away to the right, or we’ll be in the marsh!”

Burrough looked up and saw Steeperton standing beyond like Chrephren’s pyramid, its grey peak pricking the soft blue sky, and the silvery ribbon of Taw River winding round its base. He realised suddenly how entirely alone they were.

“There’s a sort of pony-track this way—beneath the Tor,” said Beatrice the guide.

CHAPTER XIII.
HOW THEY STOOD UPON CRANMERE.

"Now we're getting into the land of pixies," quoth Beatrice, as she tried to lift a big shell which was lying sideways against a clump of heather. "This is the sixth. It must be from one of the new guns. My s'ars! it is heavy. I wonder what sort of a charge it takes to hurl a thing like this four or five miles?"

They had reached the side of Steeperton Cleave. There was not a living thing in sight. All around the peaty soil had been torn into pits and jagged fissures by projectiles. It was impossible to walk more than a few paces without seeing one of the ugly iron cylinders. A spectral figure stood near in the pose of a scarecrow. It was a dummy man. A well-aimed shell had pierced its wooden chest.

"One summer a man came along here, and he saw a nice bright shell," said Beatrice, who had become frivolous again. "Men like nice bright things as much as children—at least this man did. He thought to himself, 'This is a very pretty thing: I'll take it home and play with it.' But when he picked it up and saw that it was all alive-o, he was so drefful startled that he dropped it on his big toe."

She made as though she would kick another shell, but changing her mind, jumped over it instead.

"Well, what happened?" said Burrough.

"I left it to your imagination. He dropped the shell, and went to—heaven. To drop a live shell is a good way of obliterating oneself. It's warranted to leave no mark. Now you see me! Now you don't! That's the sort of thing. Look down there."

Burrough followed her pointing finger, and saw, on a grassy ledge some way below, a crumbling ruin just above the river. Evidently it had been a dwelling-house once. Part of the walls still stood, and even at that distance a big fireplace was visible.

"That's the domiciliary edifice erected by John," said Beatrice, roguishly.

"Shall we go down and look at it?" he suggested.

“We shall not,” she replied. “We have quite enough in front of us. Besides, we will come back that way, following the river. It’s a jolly sentimental sort of a ruin. I should like to paint it, only if I did try it would be sure to come out a cathedral or a town hall.”

“It must have been built by the Tinners,” said Burrough.

“Oh, no,” she declared. “Nothing of the kind whatever. It was built by the pixies, with the kind assistance of the Cranmere witches. The style of architecture is distinctly Pre-Adamite, as you will observe if you examine it closely. It was formerly the palace of the king. The last king of the pixies was Tom-tit-tot the Sixth, and he allowed the place to fall out of repair. He knew the pixies were going to become extinct, so he didn’t bother. And now we must keep right on the top of the hill, or we shall be stugged in the mire.”

They tramped on resolutely, with the sun almost straight above their heads. Presently Beatrice went upon her knees, and began to eat whortleberries. “They’m lovely whorts up here,” she explained, “big, blue, and juicy. Come and have some. Gugh! Bluggy thing,” she exclaimed, as an over-ripe berry broke between her fingers and stained them scarlet. “I suppose you didn’t bring a toothbrush with you? It’s wanted after eating these squashy things.”

“I thought you had brought everything you could possibly require,” he said.

“Everything except a toothbrush, I think I said. I forgot it at the last moment. Do have some more whorts.”

“There are none,” said Burrough. “These are not ripe.”

“Sour things are nice when you’re thirsty,” said Beatrice. “But we must go on. Away and away! To the decayed peat-waste of a past age, silent, dreary, lifeless, without bird or animal, and to the pool where Bingie lives.”

“Where did you get that from?” he asked.

“Part guide-book, part my own invention. What stupid people write guide-books—sort of Willums in high life, I should think! And how wild they are upon churches—I mean sacred edifices. Wherever you go there’s sure to be a sacred edifice which isn’t a bit like any other sacred edifice all the world over, though if you do go and see it you don’t see anything at all different from any other sacred edifice. There’s one or two mouldy monuments, of course, but who ever wants to look at them? Another thing they’re wild upon is stones. Any old heap of stones is good enough for

them. They always call them Druidical remains, though I expect they were only put there for mending the road. It's rather disappointing to read in a guide-book about precipices, cascades, and gorges; and when you get to the place to find only a rock, and a stickle, and a crack in a mud-bank."

"Guide-books are intended to be advertisements," reminded her companion.

"Like the advertisement of a patent medicine, which cures everything from old-age to a broken leg," chattered Beatrice. "Oh, but seaside places! They are the worst. They knock out the guide-book, and leave the patent-pill cold and stiff. Every seaside place suits invalids much better than any other place. It has a warmer temperature than any other, and publishes figures to prove it. Every seaside place is the only one which never has fog or snow. It has more sunshine than any other place. It has flowers which absolutely refuse to bloom anywhere else. Lord! what liars we are."

"We can't help that," said Burrough philosophically. "Lying has become quite a venial sin. Society demands lies from us. A few generations hence no one will be able to narrate a bare fact without perversion or distortion. It has become almost impossible now."

"Here is something the guide-book would not mention," cried Beatrice, pointing to what might have been a piece of white marble, wrinkled with black veins, and lodged in a mud-cleft. "There are a lot of those stones about. When I become a millionairess I shall have them collected and a house built with them. I know! I'll restore Tom-tit-tot's palace with them, and live there all summer."

"And a shell would fall and blow it to pieces," added Burrough.

"Bother the shells! I should buy some big guns and fire back. Yes, I would raise an army, and proclaim myself Empress of Dartmoor."

"Would you include me among your ministers?"

"Why, yes! I would give you a cocked hat, and make you Field Marshal."

"I think I should prefer a post of equal honour and less danger."

"Wouldn't you like to fall like a hero?" she cried, reproachfully.

"I would rather live like a gentleman," he said.

"Since you are not romantic, you shall be First Lord of the Treasury."

"That will suit me very well. May I kiss hands on my appointment?"

"Certainly not," she laughed. "How do you buy guns? Suppose I went into the stores, and said, 'I want some artillery, please,' what would they say?"

“They would regret exceedingly that they were quite out of the article, and then detain you until a doctor from the nearest asylum could arrive.”

“But not if I told them I was a real Empress?”

“Then they would send for two doctors.”

“What a vile world!” said she. “But I wouldn’t be an Empress unless I could do as I liked. For instance, if Mrs. Cobbledick were to be late in bringing up my morning cup of tea, I should want to ring the bell for a soldier, and say, ‘Take her away, and cut off her head, please.’ I should hate it, if he replied, ‘Beg pard’n, mum. You’ll have to get an Act of Parliament for thikky little job.’”

Beatrice was still laughing over her autocratic longings, when her laugh became a scream, and she vanished promptly from sight. A patch of heather had given way beneath her, and a crevasse had swallowed her up.

“It’s all right,” came a smothered voice. “I’m not lost, but gone before. I’ve fallen into lovely soft mud, so nothing is broken. I’m jammed! You’ll have to extract me with a corkscrew.”

Burrough parted the heather, and immediately a somewhat grimy little hand was extended. He seized it and tugged, and up came Beatrice on her knees. “Just as good as ever, reasonable wear and tear excepted,” she gasped. “Serves me right for not poking that clump of heather with my six-foot pole.”

“There are any number of fissures ahead,” cried Burrough, who was standing upon an elevation just above.

“We are on the borders of Cranmere,” she said. “And I’m dirty already. If there was only one crevasse upon Cranmere, and one bog upon Dartmoor, I should be dead certain to tumble into the one, and get stugged in the other. Oh, boots! boots!” she wailed tragically, “you were lovely and pleasant when I started, and now you’m mucky twoads.”

The serious part of the journey commenced with their arrival upon the broken ground. Burrough negotiated the crevasses by sliding down one side, crossing by means of the tussocks, and scrambling up the muddy walls opposite. Beatrice took little runs and jumped them. Presently they got upon the plateau, and felt the keen breeze, and saw the stagnant pools. At every step the water oozed up and covered their boots.

“We’re atop!” cried Beatrice. “It’s only one o’clock. There is Fur Tor in the midst of wild nature in her remotest fastness. That’s guide-book again.

Now for the Pool. We must keep to the left. You are also requested to keep to the path."

The last remark was for the benefit of her companion, who had floundered into a patch of deceptive mud and was sinking rapidly to his knees.

"Wallop!" mimicked Beatrice, as one boot came out with a sound like a pop-gun. "Your boots are worse than mine now."

"You can jump!" Burrough exclaimed admiringly, as he watched the girl leaping from one tussock to another.

"I've been jumping all my life," she said. "My primitive ancestor must have been a frog, instead of an ape. With short skirts I can jump a hurdle."

"How do you know which way to go?" he asked. "When I came here before I simply wandered in circles and became hopelessly lost. I couldn't even find the way back until it was nearly dark."

"I've been here so often that I can go straight to the Pool," she answered. "There isn't a guide on Dartmoor who can get there more quickly than I," she went on proudly. "Why, I put a guide right one day. He was 'pixy-led summat fearful' he told me, and the people with him were looking 'summat fearful' too. I led them to the Pool, made my best bow, and vanished. I expect they thought I was a wandering spirit—Bingie's wife perhaps, or the White Witch of Cranmere—because it was a windy day and my hair had blown down, and I had fastened it round my waist. That is the only time I have ever met people up here."

They went on jumping, wading, and scrambling across the desolate plateau, until Beatrice cried out in triumph, and pointed out to her companion the top of a post just visible against the dark background of saturated peat. A minute later progress became easier, a slight descent began, and almost immediately they saw the bed of the dried-up Pool, and the rough cairn of turves and stones, and the almost level stretch of deep-brown peat upon which the water had once spread and the rushes had flourished. There was not a sound. Even the breeze which shook the bleached sedges failed to disturb the silence.

However, Beatrice very soon broke it. With a cry of, "We're in the middle of Cranmere, and I'm the only perfectly dry thing upon it," she went down upon the edge of the Pool and began to unpack her knapsack. While she was thus engaged Burrough made for the cairn and extracted the two tin

boxes. He came back with the visitors' book and several postcards, the sight of which caused Beatrice to exclaim, "Any letters for me, postman?"

"Nothing to-day, miss," he replied.

"Well then, we'll lunch," she cried. "We can attend to our correspondence afterwards. Here is a girl with two packets of sandwiches and a bottle of milk. She's willing to swop one packet for any particular dainty in the satchel of the man, all muddy and damp, who lives on the moor, at the edge of a gorge, in the little tin house that Jack built."

"You won't covet my home-made dainties when you see them," said Burrough grimly, as he drew out a bulky parcel and exhibited a shapeless mass of bread.

"What's that?" she screamed delightedly.

"A poor thing, but my own make," said Burrough humbly. "'Tis yclept a sandwich."

"S'ars o' mine! A sandwich! B'est going to yet en?"

"Ah, I be," replied Burrough, in the same dialect.

"Well, I be wholly bate! What a nice new idea! Receipt for *Sandwitche à la célibataire*—take a pound of beefsteak and the largest loaf obtainable. That's the raw material. Divide the loaf into two equal portions, add a tin of mustard and two pounds of butter, place the steak into position, then jam the loaf together, and secure with seccotine or iron rivets according to taste. Pack the finished article in a sack, and serve when starving."

"There's another in the bag," said Burrough, giving her a glimpse at a second bulky parcel.

"What's that for? In case the first doesn't prove effectual? Like the man who was determined to kill himself, so first took poison and then shot himself. But this is sheer frivolity, and we're at Cranmere Pool, which, in the words of the guide-book——"

"No more guide-book," he implored. "Let me have your own opinion."

"Ain't got none," said Beatrice. "I only know we ought to be solemn and sad. We ought to think of our sins, and of the shortness of this our mortal life. We ought to make a resolution to live more soberly, and to put the past behind us, and to keep the future in front of us, and to let the present stop just where it is. Ah, dearly-beloved, what a great and wonderful thought this is. It is not yesterday, nor yet to-morrow, but it is, my friends, it is to-day. We know that spring is over. We realise—how I cannot tell you—that this is summer. By some marvellous process we believe that autumn will come

again. Let this thought sink into your hearts, as our nice clean boots sink into the bogs of Cranmere. There! That's a specimen of old Y.'s pulpit oratory."

"Much too lucid and well-connected for him," laughed Burrough.

"Don't you say anything against old Y," Beatrice went on. "He can boast of having preached the shortest sermon on record. It was on a Sunday evening. He toddled into the pulpit, mumbled a text which nobody heard, and said, 'Be good. Hymn number sixteen.' Then he toddled down again. I see that sandwich is fading away gradually. I've eaten about a dozen. Now I must write my postcards. How many are you going to post?"

"I have no one to write to," said Burrough. "I have brought one stamped envelope, but I don't know what address to put upon it."

"Well, you may put mine if you like," said Beatrice, kindly.

"And will you address one to me?" he asked eagerly.

"All right. I'll put some nonsense inside. Nonsense-talking is my strong point, as you may have observed. Then we must stand up and wish, observing at that moment a terrible solemnity and a grim silence. The witch allows us three wishes, and they are sure to be granted if we're good."

"What are you going to wish for?" he said.

"But I mustn't say," cried Beatrice. "Bingie would be angry, and my wishes would go scat."

"I think I know. The first, health. The second, happiness——"

"And the third, three wishes more, if you don't mind," she laughed. "You're all wrong. I shouldn't wish for health, because I have it; nor for happiness, because I'm fairly middling that way already. Everyone wishes for wealth as a matter of course. Some people say if you wish long enough, it's sure to come. You must mutter 'money' by day, and murmur 'money' by night. They call that concentration. Auntie used to believe in that. She concentrated upon beauty, but as it didn't come she exchanged concentration for art, which was more successful. I must warn you that Bingie is not quite infallible," she added confidentially. "Last time I was here one of my wishes was for a nice tender undercut of sirloin for supper. The reality was a shoulder of mutton as tough as indiarubber."

"It was too trivial a wish," Burrough suggested.

"Tender beef is not a trivial matter at all. It is one of the seven joys of life."

"Are you writing to me? May I see?" he asked eagerly.

“‘Trewidden, Trewinnard, Trewint!’” cooed Beatrice softly.

Their correspondence being completed, they turned their attention to the visitors’ book, which was nearly half full. Beatrice whipped the pages over until she found her entry the previous summer. She indicated her scrawl with a pink finger, and the remark, “It’s like my painting—wants a Daniel to interpret it. There’s my unoriginal remark, ‘Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink.’ I did once though,” she chattered. “It was a blazing hot day, and my throat felt full of sand. I made a kind of bubbly noise every time I breathed. So I laid me down and sucked up saturated peat, green slime, and all manner of creeping things. Who was here last? Why the Reverend Mr. Legge. He’s got more than two. He brought a lot of little Legges—like a spider. Here’s some more over the page. Why the man’s a centipede! And Daddy Longlegs has written, ‘This is to be alone; this, this is solitude.’ Oh dearly-beloved! And he goes on, ‘We owe great thanks to our excellent guide.’ I expect he owed the poor man his half-guinea as well. Here’s a silly man who pretends he can’t write, and has made his mark. What a pity there isn’t a tree or a bench here, so that he might have cut his initials. Here’s one who wants to know why they don’t drain Cranmere, and another who offers to exchange his private fortune for a bottle of pale-ale. Here’s a party of three jolly Irishmen—Patherick of Dublin, bedad—and one’s a bit of an artist, for he’s drawn a barometer and signed his name opposite ‘dry.’ One of his friends has signed opposite ‘very dry,’ and the other opposite ‘great drought.’ In fact,” criticised Beatrice severely, “this book is a striking instance of the hold which liquor has obtained over the minds of men.”

Burrough was sitting on a tussock which was more or less dry, smoking his pipe, and watching the girl with ardent eyes as she chattered her nonsense. He was not in the least inclined to talk. It was much pleasanter listening to her; and her store of remarks was apparently inexhaustible.

“It’s getting chilly,” cried Beatrice suddenly. “The sun has gone, and I felt something that might have been a spot of rain. Gugh! ‘this, this is solitude,’ as the parson says. Why, I declare there’s a mist!”

Burrough removed his gaze from her, and looked in the direction she indicated. He saw white fleecy clouds rolling slowly down the plateau.

“It’s only a passing cloud,” he said reassuringly. “When it has gone the sun will come out again. The weather changes up here every few minutes.”

“It’s not very nice,” said Beatrice. “There! Did you hear that? I heard a sort of a humming, kind o’. It’s going to rain and blow like blue blazes. Here! take the pencil and write quickly.”

The wind began to sob and groan, and the wool-like mist thickened. Rain began to fall smartly. Every crevasse and tarn about them seemed to be suddenly occupied by invisible beings and creeping sounds.

“The morning was much too fine,” said Beatrice, shivering a little. “Well, we must face it. There’s no shelter nearer than Tom-tit-tot’s palace, and I expect the bad weather will have passed away before we can get there. Let’s get off Cranmere as soon as we can. It will be a little bit more sheltered at Taw Head.”

Burrough fastened up the two boxes and restored them to the hole in the side of the cairn. Then he called, “I’m going to wish.”

“For goodness sake wish for fine weather,” cried Beatrice, as she slung on her satchel. “Throw a little water over your left shoulder and wish hard for favourable signs and tokens in the heavens. My poor little life!” she murmured. “It’s going to rain and blow, and you’ve got a man under your guidance; and it seems to me you will never see your dear old home to-night.”

CHAPTER XIV.
HOW THEY TOOK SHELTER IN TOM-TIT-TOT'S PALACE.

An hour later two storm-tossed beings were fighting their way step by step beside the Taw river, which was there little more than a meandering crack in the peat. They were completely enveloped in whirling mist, which looked and felt like masses of damp wool. The wind was in their teeth and was steadily increasing. It threatened to become a gale. There was not much rain, but it could hardly be distinguished from the wet mists.

"Now I know what a fly feels like when it's strolling along a ceiling," shouted irrepressible Beatrice, as she balanced her shapely body between bog and river.

The girl had never looked so entirely fresh and charming. Her face was as red as a rose beneath the buffetings of the wind. Her hair, which had long ago discarded all pins and fastenings, streamed about her, and she had twisted the ends about her waist, and walked holding it. The wind stretched her scanty clothing tightly upon her and revealed every line from waist to ankle. She looked the very spirit of health and strength. She suggested the pixy queen or the white witch of Cranmere. She appeared to make headway without effort. It was different with Burrough, who was nearing the end of his tether. His breathing was becoming difficult and he was very weary. He had not spoken for some time, partly that he might save his breath, partly because he did not know what to say. He knew it would be impossible for them to reach the village, unless there was a sudden change in the weather, but he did not venture to put his conviction into words. Beatrice had arrived at precisely the same conclusion, and felt exactly the same unwillingness to mention the subject. They were both thinking of the ruin in Steeperton Cleave.

The crack in the peat which represented the river made the most astonishing curves. It was a marvel of crookedness, so that in following it they sometimes had the wind on their backs and appeared to be returning to Cranmere. Bogs were everywhere. They were continually jumping the river to evade them, and when the crack widened and boulders appeared this

became a matter of difficulty and some danger. In the meantime the mists increased, it became gloomy, and the wind whistled like weird instruments of music.

"What were that you was a saying of?" cried Beatrice when her companion at last called to her.

"We shall never get anywhere at this rate," he said. "Can't we get away from the river? We seem to be walking in circles."

"Leave the river!" cried Beatrice. "Why, it's our only hope of salvation. If we got away from it we should be lost hopelessly. We should walk in circles then if you like. It would be Tregeagle's very own job to strike a course over the moor without the river to guide us."

"Are you tired?" was his next question.

"I shall be presently. I am putting on weight very fast. These woollen garments are soaking in the wet, and I could squeeze a jugful of water out of my hair. By the time we get into the Cleave I shall be a perambulating Cranmere. Bog!" At that monosyllable they jumped, and went on twisting and doubling as if they were trying to throw the bewildering spirits of the mist off their track.

"Have you any idea where we are?" Burrough asked.

"Well I've got a rough, a very rough idea," she replied.

"If it were clear we should see Steeperton, or rather the spur of it, on our right, and Oke Tor on our left. The widening of the river tells me that, and the stickles are beginning. We shall get into a frightful part presently—all bogs and boulders."

At the end of another hour the wind and the mist had increased and there was a great rain. Two very tired persons scrambled over the streaming rock-clatters, and one of them shouted in triumph when she perceived a dilapidated clapper bridge. The granite slabs had been broken, and the entire structure badly wrecked, by the Artillery. A huge shell was visible among the shattered rocks. A thick wire passed across the river and went up the steep bank through the heather. To this wire Beatrice pointed with the remark,—

"Tom-tit-tot's palace is just above. This wire runs beside it. We might take shelter there until the storm passes?" she suggested.

They crawled up the steep bank beside the wire of the military field telegraph. Presently they reached a smooth stretch of turf which looked as though it had been mown and swept by fairy gardeners. A moment later a

grey mass loomed out of the mist. They passed through what had been once a doorway, and the force of the wind became immediately broken. The mist was making strange shapes within. It was writhing and twisting along the walls, and passing like smoke up a huge chimney. But at least there was shelter. A portion of roof remained and beneath it was a huge antique fireplace, green with ferns and mosses, and there were blocks of granite for chairs and tables.

"The first thing to do," said Burrough, rousing himself, "is to make a fire."

Beatrice said nothing. She seated herself in a corner, to wring the water out of her hair, and watched her companion with shy eyes. She thought it exceedingly probable she would have to spend the night there with him.

"Can you find anything dry enough to burn?" she said demurely.

"I'll look under the sheltered side of the ruin," he said, and disappeared, while Beatrice smiled nervously at the mists and played with her wet fingers.

Burrough was soon back to announce his discovery of a peat-stack close to the wire of the field telegraph. It had been cut and placed there by the soldiers. The sergeant and his party, who had the duty of exploding the live shells that might be about the moor, had evidently made use of the ruin as a shelter in time of bad weather. Burrough brought as much peat as he could carry. There were gorse-bushes and dry bracken within the old walls. Beatrice produced paper from her satchel. After various efforts the fire was started. Soon the peat began to glow and warm scented smoke took the place of the mist.

"This is quite an adventure," said Burrough, cheerily.

"Oh, it often happens upon the moor," said Beatrice, indifferently. "I've been weatherbound like this before."

Silence fell again. Burrough gave his attention to the fire, while the girl combed her wet hair with her cold fingers. Suddenly a gorse-stick became ignited and sent a warm light across the damp walls and the two eager young faces. Before the flame died down they had looked at one another, and Beatrice felt angry, knowing that she had flushed.

"How noisy the wind is!" she said, hurriedly.

"Do you think it's going to clear?" Burrough asked, boldly. "You know this moorland weather better than I do. How long do you think this will last?"

Beatrice laughed and plucked up her spirits.

"I won't prophesy," she said. "It may clear in another hour or so; it may go on half the night."

"I am thinking of you," he explained, awkwardly.

"Well, I don't mind. Auntie won't be nervous—at least, not very. She knows I'm a moormaid, and can look after myself quite well. How goes the time?"

"Nearly four," said Burrough.

"Gugh! it might be October," she said. "Did you notice how dark it was last night? There's no moon. This fiery chimney will be the only light upon the moor. If I could have three wishes now, I know what the first would be."

"What?" he asked.

"For a great cup of the hottest tea that was ever brewed."

"You shall have it," he said.

"That's wicked," cried Beatrice; "wicked to tempt a poor girl. Unless," she added, "you also are among the magicians."

Already Burrough had produced various articles from his knapsack. He set them out upon the hearthstone, and the girl bent forward to examine them by the glow of the peat. She saw a metal flask, a collapsible cup, a canvas bag, which she smelt and declared to be tea, and a tiny packet, which she pinched and decided was sugar.

"I thought you might want a cup of tea," he said. "I can boil the water in this flask."

"This is entirely, utterly, too inexpressibly——" Beatrice began, then broke off and gazed, mischievous, witch-like, towards him between the dark-brown curtains of her hair. "And I suppose," she went on in the naughtiest fashion imaginable, "if I express a desire presently for a little dinner, just a simple meal, you know—clear soup, a piece of sole, the wing of a chicken, and a relish—you will pull a lot of wee-winikin things out of that bag and serve it up hot."

Burrough had sufficient self-restraint not to look at her. He knew, by the mere sound of her voice, what her face had looked like when she said "wee-winikin."

"I'll go down to the river and get some water," he said.

"I'll come too—I must," she cried. "I'm not going to risk losing my tea."

"Don't get yourself wet again," he pleaded. "I'll follow the wire."

“If you promise not to let go of it I won’t come,” she said. “I know it sounds absurd, but in a mist like this one is absolutely helpless. You might be within a few yards of the place and never find it. I’ll give you ten minutes, and if you aren’t back by then I shall come down with a torch and yelling like the whist hounds.”

Burrough gave the required promise and went out into the whirling clouds. While he was absent Beatrice sat gazing into the fire, with her hands clasped round her knees and little smiles chasing one another across her mouth.

“That’s nice and thoughtful of him,” she murmured; “but, my child, you must behave yourself. You must not talk nonsense, and you must leave off squeaking as if you were talking to a kitten, and you mustn’t use west-country words and phrases. Can’t you see that sort of thing makes him uncomfortable? You must be prim, and stiff, and old-maidish; only I’m afraid you can’t. You will keep on doing those things that you ought not to do. My dear little girl, really I love you very much, and I’m only telling you this for your good, because I’m afraid someone else loves you too, and if you are silly you will have to put up with the consequences. It’s no use saying you’re as strong as a little prizefighter, because you’re also a human being and a girl—a nice one, but still a girl—and when a girl’s feeling tired and slack, and has a good-looking young man with her, it somehow doesn’t occur to her to be sensible. ‘And that’s the end on’t,’ as someone used to say.”

Burrough came back safely, and in a very short time the water was boiling. He dropped the bag of tea into the cup, poured the water upon it, fished out the bag, added sugar and milk, of which Beatrice had a little left, and handed her the cup with the warning, “Take it by the top, or it will collapse.”

Beatrice thought it wiser to make no remark beyond a prim, “Thank you,” though a number of ridiculous things occurred to her. She sipped the tea with little gasps of delight. Presently she held out the half-empty cup and said prettily, “You finish it.”

He did so, although disliking the sugared tea; but that which was in the cup had touched her lips. They shared another cup and ate a few sandwiches. The weather remained as bad as ever. Burrough went for a fresh supply of peat, and Beatrice showed him how to build it so as to insure a hot fire. She piled a lofty pyramid, making below numbers of

cunning air-holes, with passages above to convey the draught into the apex. She was a practical moormaiden. While she was thus engaged Burrough went to the sheltered parts of the ruin and cut a quantity of bushy heather, which he spread in the nook beside the fireplace. This was a bed for Beatrice. The girl watched him, but did not say anything. All the remarks which suggested themselves were instantly dismissed as being too frivolous. She wondered how long she would be able to keep it up.

"It's getting quite homelike," she said at last, and immediately observed under her breath that it was a stupid thing to say.

"Tell me if it's comfortable," he invited.

She tried the bed, and was graciously pleased with it. She declared it was as comfortable as a spring mattress, and then scolded herself again for saying such a thing. She went on to ask for a cigarette, and after a few soothing puffs she forgot most of her good resolutions.

"Do you mind me having my hair down?" she asked; "because I can't help it. I've lost all the hairpins, and it's too wet to twist up."

"I think you ought to have it down always," he replied; and after a moment he added, "What lovely hair it is!"

Beatrice ignored this remark, although the end of her cigarette glowed fiercely for a second.

"I wonder if we are the only two fellows weatherbound upon the moor," said Beatrice slowly and distinctly, thus giving him to understand that she expected to be treated as if she had been a male comrade; but almost immediately she became feminine and fretful. "My feet are most uncomfortable," she said. "Would you mind if I took my boots off?"

"Let me do it for you," said Burrough.

He went on his knees and began to unfasten the boot which was the first to be extended.

"They're horrid soppy and mucky," she murmured.

"They will soon dry by the fire."

"We'll sit and tell ghost stories," she went on. "If the pixies come here presently how astonished they will be. I hope they won't be maliceful. Is my stocking wet?"

"Not very," he replied; while she screamed, "Don't! It tickles."

A sudden gust forced its way into their shelter and beat upon the peat, making it appear like red-hot iron.

“That’s to tell us the king is on his way here,” she cried. “King Tom-tit-tot with all his lords and ladies. He’ll say, ‘What are yew a-here for?’ And you must bow and say, ‘What’s that to yew?’” Oh, dear, she thought, I’m talking nonsense again.

“Go on,” said Burrough, who was struggling with a tightly-knotted lace. “What would he say then?”

“A—what?” she mused. “Oh, he’ll say, ‘Ef yew ain’t out o’ my palace in less than no time, off’ll go yar hid.’”

“And then I shall put my foot upon his majesty and squash him,” said Burrough.

“You wouldn’t,” said Beatrice. “You would be too frightened. Tom-tit-tot is the funniest little black impet yew iver set eyes on. And when he’s angry he twirls his tail horrid. Now shall I tell you a story?” she said, as she extended a little stockinged foot towards the glowing peat.

“Tell me the story of Tregeagle,” he said.

“But every child in Cornwall knows that by heart,” she objected. “Wouldn’t you rather hear about the Lord of Pengerswick and his Saracen bride, and the witch of Fraddam who floats about in her coffin off Kynance Cove?”

“I would rather hear about Tregeagle,” he replied.

“Very well, then,” she said. “You shall have the true Cornish version. I wish some of our old women could tell you the story. They would make you laugh with their quaint words and tragic faces. I’m no good at telling a serious story. But I’ll do my best.”

“May I sit beside you?” he asked.

CHAPTER XV.
HOW BEATRICE TOLD THE STORY OF TREGEAGLE.

CHARMINGLY she made room for him upon the bed of heather. She placed herself snugly between the wall and his shoulder, with her feet toasting upon the hearthstone, and merely gave a sigh of gratitude when he leaned forward to place his knapsack between the rough stone and her heels. Then she began:—

"Once upon a time there lived a man whose name was Tregeagle. Nothing is known about his early life, because none of the Cornish villages will own him, which is rather stupid, because after all a great criminal is just as famous in his way as an equally great saint—you may expect to hear comments like that. Remember they are mine, and don't belong to the story. Well, this man became at last the steward of Lord Robartes at Lanhydrock. If ever you go there ask to see Tregeagle's room. Mention me, and they will be delighted to show it you.

"Tregeagle was the wickedest man who ever lived. It's much easier to say that than to give a list of his crimes. He was rotten all through like a medlar. As steward he gave the poor tenants an awful time, and it wasn't long before he had screwed enough out of them to buy Trevorder, which is a nice estate in St. Breock. He went on amassing wealth and inventing new crimes until at last the sun refused to shine upon him and the grass withered where he trod upon it. You are not bound to believe that unless you like, but I think you'd better, as it may make it easier for you to believe what is coming.

"Tregeagle became a magistrate, and a churchwarden, and Chairman of the Board of Guardians, and all the rest of it. You see he was awfully rich, and men could be as wicked as they liked then as long as they spent money. Tregeagle lived hundreds of years ago, you must remember. But at last he got very ill, and knew that he was going to die. He didn't like the idea at all, because there was a long line of devils standing in his bedroom waiting to grab his soul directly it left his body. So he called for his secretary and dictated letters to the abbots and priors of the district, asking after their

health and begging them to pray for his, and telling them all about the devils who were waiting for him, and wondering whether the cheques enclosed would be of any use to their right reverences. Apparently they were, for the abbots and priors came as fast as they could, with bells, books, candles, and gallons of holy water, and drove away the devils in less than no time. Then they thanked Tregeagle for past favours, and assured him that any other esteemed order would receive their immediate attention. So the dying man told them he would divide his wealth among them if they would save his soul. They agreed of course, delighted that it was nothing more difficult. Tregeagle died, and they buried him with great pomp in St. Breock Church. They chanted and prayed and sang for weeks, so that they might cheat the devil out of Tregeagle's soul. That ends the first chapter," quoth Beatrice.

"Now we go upon the moor," Burrough suggested. "Thunder and lightning. Enter Satan as the clock strikes twelve."

"You're going ahead much too fast," said Beatrice. "It's easy to see you never had a Cornish nurse. The Court of Justice scene comes next. It used to frighten me horribly when I was a kid. My nurse told me the story. My nurse was a fisherman, and his wife would always say, 'Dids 'en, dids 'en frighten my child? It shan't be frightened den. It shan't hear Daddy Tregeagle howl.'

"The Judge is upon the bench," Beatrice went on, in a hushed voice. "The jurymen are in their places, and counsel rises. The most celebrated case in the whole history of law is being tried. The plaintiff, as heir of Tregeagle, claims a large estate, which has since become part of the town of Bodmin. All that counsel for defendant can say is, that the dead man destroyed all the deeds connected with the property, and drew up forgeries in their place; but he cannot produce any witnesses in support of this statement. It appeared to be a clear case for the plaintiff. The judge was about to sum up, when the defendant came into court and asked permission to call a witness. The judge consented. A cold wind seemed to pass through the hall, and everyone was frozen with terror, though they could not tell why. Then Tregeagle stepped into the witness-box.

"In the midst of a terrible silence, the counsel for defendant rose and questioned the evil spirit. The truth was soon out, and the jury gave a verdict at once in favour of the defendant. Then the Judge ordered the victor to remove his witness, but the man said, 'It has been enough for me to bring

him from his grave. I leave him to the care of the Church of St. Breock which loves him so well.'

"The Judge sent a special messenger to the Abbot and his monks," went on Beatrice, with a return to her flippant manner. "The first thing the holy men saw, when they came into court, was Tregeagle standing in the witness-box. They did not like that at all, for they were afraid that little affair of the cheques might be mentioned. The lawyers talked at the clergy, and the clergy talked at the lawyers, and the Judge said it was a disgraceful affair altogether, and quite contrary to precedent, and went on to suggest that the best thing the Abbot could do would be to hand over Tregeagle to the Devil, who was waiting like a policeman by his side; and the Abbot coughed behind his hand and said, 'Really, me lud, as a churchman, I can't possibly hand over a soul that might—er possibly be saved by—er repentance to the evil one.'

"It would have been a shabby trick," commented Beatrice, "considering that he was living upon the nice fat fortune Tregeagle had given him."

When the girl had been describing the introduction of the spectre witness, her right hand had fallen somehow upon Burrough's left. His fingers closed over it, but she did not attempt to withdraw the hand. She prattled on with her story, very much like a little sister entertaining her smaller brother.

"Presently one of the monks got up, and said he had found a way out of the difficulty. They must give Tregeagle a task which would take him a long time to accomplish. While he worked, the devil should not be able to touch him, but if he stopped, even for a moment, he would be doomed. While he worked he would have plenty of time to consider what a wicked person he had been, and thus his soul might gradually be softened, and in time he might repent and be saved. This seemed a good idea, and, on being put to the vote, it was carried unanimously. The next thing was to find a really lengthy job. One of the lawyers very soon had a suggestion. He thought it would be a good plan to send Tregeagle to bale out Dozmare Pool. One of the monks objected that this would be too easy; but another thought that if a wee-winikin limpet-shell with a hole in it should be given Tregeagle as an instrument of baling, it might be difficult enough. A nice kind of thing for a parson to say, wasn't it? Of course, the Judge interposed with the question, 'What is Dozmare Pool?' although he knew perfectly well; and the lawyer had to explain it was a black sheet of water below the tin-streamers' village on the side of Bron Gilly, surrounded by bare hills, dark and lonely. It was

into this lake that Sir Belvidere flung Excalibur. The lawyer went on to say that he knew a man who had once spoken to another, who in his childhood had heard his grandfather say that *he* knew someone who had been related to a man, whose father had seen someone who had dropped a thorn-bush into Dozmare Pool, and the appearance of that thorn-bush—or another rather like it—in Falmouth Harbour a year or so later, proved what had always been suspected, namely, that the pool was bottomless. So the Judge was quite satisfied, and said to the Abbot, 'I think we can leave this matter in your hands, Reverend Sir. Will you be good enough to recite the necessary incantations?' The Abbot said he should be delighted, so he sent for bells, books and candles, and gallons of holy water, as before, and muttered the spells which protected the spirit of Tregeagle from the devil, and removed it to Dozmare Pool to bale out the water with a limpet-shell. And that ends the second chapter," said Beatrice.

Burrough still sat beside her, clasping the small hand. Once she had withdrawn it to throw back a tress of hair, but she slipped it back into his in the most confiding manner possible, and went on with her child-like narrative. She had squeezed his fingers more than once out of pure excitement. She was a Cornish girl, and she was telling the most popular story of Cornish folk lore; and it stirred her blood, as the wandering minstrel of old must have felt his blood stirred when he sang of Arthur and his tragedy in a Saxon camp.

"Now for the moor," she cried. "The moor as it is to-night, wild wind, white mists and cold rain. The wind is the howling of Tregeagle, the mist is his breath, and the rain the sweat that drips from him as he works. Years passed away, which is what years will do whether you want them to or not, and all the year round there was Tregeagle baling with the wee-winikin shell."

She broke off with a sudden gasp. Her companion had flung his arm about her.

"Your head was against that cold wet wall," he murmured passionately.

"He baled and baled with the winikin shell," Beatrice went on more dreamily, closing her eyes for a moment; then fixing them upon the tiny feet which played together like two kittens beside the hot peat. "But of course the pool remained just the same. The devil was near all the time trying to catch him. He knew that if Tregeagle stopped baling for a moment he was

his; so he kept on bringing winds and storms. But Tregeagle only screamed louder and went on baling.

"At last the devil called all the powers of darkness to his aid, and raised a storm such as had never been known upon the earth before. There was lightning and thunder, fire-balls fell like rain into the lake. There was an earthquake. The winds smashed the tors. Tregeagle gave way at last, and rushed over the moor with a host of devils at his heels. He ran in circles, as people do when they are lost upon the moor; and every time he returned to the lake he tried to dip the shell. But the devils would not let him. Finally he made a great leap, and was carried by the wind right across the pool. He flew away over the moor and left the devils behind. They had to fly round, because devils cannot cross water.

"Away went Tregeagle, shrieking with terror, and the devils were still after him. They had nearly caught him when he saw the hermit's cell upon Roche Rocks, and the chapel of St. Michael, near the wishing well, where the girls go on Maundy Thursday to throw in pins and pebbles, and tell their fortune by the way the bubbles sparkle and burst. He flew over the rocks, and as the devils were about to seize him, he dashed his head through the east window of the chapel. He was safe because his head was inside the church. Nobody upon the Cornish moors had any sleep that night.

"When the hermit of St. Roche came to the altar in the early morning, there was the awful head of Tregeagle looking down upon him. While the priest prayed the demons yelled. Swarms of devils hovered about the Roche Rocks, ready to seize Tregeagle directly he withdrew his head. He remained there for years. The services had to be abandoned. The chapel became deserted. The hermit was nearly dead with terror. At length he collected a crowd of holy men, and they decided to procure two saints who should take Tregeagle out of the window and remove him to Laffenack—it's called Padstow now—and condemn him to remain on the beach until he should have made a truss of sand and a rope of sand to bind it. The difficulty was to find the saints. I don't know how they managed it. Very likely they advertised: 'Wanted, two saints. Must know spells and incantations, and thoroughly understand how to exorcise demons.' Anyhow, the saints turned up. They pulled Tregeagle out of the window and off the Roche Rocks, and took him to Padstow to make his truss of sand. And that ends another chapter," said Beatrice.

She stirred a little, but without looking at her companion, and removing her hand, pushed the still damp hair from her forehead. She lifted her head; it had been pressing more against his shoulder than the wall—and stared into the ruddy mists where big stones and jagged outlines were faintly visible. It seemed to her that the wind was less violent, but the rain had increased, and the clouds were as dense as ever. The gloom which was gathering was not that of the storm, but that of evening. She settled herself again. She knew that her hair was caressing his cheek, but she had not intended that it should. He could move away if he did not like it. His arm was still round her, and it was pleasant, she thought, and decidedly more restful than leaning against the wall.

"Ho, and away for Laffenack Strand!" she continued blithely. "Tregeagle found the rope-making worse than the baling. He didn't make any headway at all. So soon as he got a ball of sand together it would break, or a wave of the sea would knock it into pieces. He yelled and screamed worse than ever, so that the poor people of Padstow had no rest by day and no sleep by night. They agreed that Tregeagle was a regular public nuisance. As the demon's rage increased, his screams became so frightful that not a creature could stop in the town. A meeting of the council was called upon the plain, and it was decided that a holy man should be requisitioned to remove the nuisance. Now Padstow was better off than most places. It did not have to look about for saints. It had one ready made, and his name was St. Petrock. It was proposed by the grocer, and seconded by the butcher, that a committee, headed by the mayor, who was a shoemaker, should call upon the saint and request him to act in a public-spirited manner on behalf of his native town. So the mayor put on his robes and his chain, and went off, headed by the town band, to interview the Reverend Mr. St. Petrock. The saint was at home. He listened to what the mayor had to say, remarked that demons were certainly unpleasant things, and promised finally to remove Tregeagle from Padstow. He set to work at once, and forged a chain with which he bound the evil spirit, and then took him across the county to Helston, which was then called Ella's Town. The saint set Tregeagle down at the estuary of the Loe, and condemned him to carry the sand from Barreppa across the estuary to Porthleven, and not to stop working until there was no sand left upon the beach. They're kind, charitable saints in this story, I do think," said Beatrice.

“The people of Helston woke up to hear Tregeagle yelling and screaming as he shovelled up the sand, and they wondered whatever it could be. They were not left long in doubt, and after that there was no rest for them. Tregeagle screamed worse than ever, and no wonder, for as fast as he carried the sand across the estuary and emptied it at Porthleven, the sweep of the tide round Trewavas Head carried it back again. St. Petrock was an artful person. You won’t find any churches dedicated to him round Helston. They rather prefer the devil in that part of the country. The devil did try all he could to get Tregeagle away, but Mr. St. Petrock ruined the place. I’ll tell you how. Helston in those days was one of the principal ports in England. It was the harbour of the tin-streamers, and ships from all over the world sailed up the estuary of the Loe to load with tin from Huel Vor.

“Now Tregeagle was staggering along the mouth of the estuary one day, with a huge sackful of sand upon his shoulders, when the little devil who was watching him thought he would have a lark. He put out his foot and tripped Tregeagle. The spirit fell on its face, the sack burst open, and its contents streamed out right across the estuary of the Loe, making a sand-bar which completely cut the town off from the sea. It’s there to this day, to prove that I’m telling you the truth, and what was the harbour is now called Loe Pool. Sometimes they cut a trench in the sand-bar and the waters in the pool sweep out and carry the sand away; but the next tide brings it back, because it’s the accursed sand which fell out of Tregeagle’s sack when the maliceful little devil tripped him up; and the tide from Trewavas Head throws it back just as St. Petrock saw that it would. One of the morals of this story is that a saint can be quite as great a nuisance as a sinner,” said Beatrice.

She sat up suddenly and cried, “You are not listening. I believe you are half-asleep.”

“I have heard every word,” Burrough said. “But I can look at you at the same time.”

“It’s getting dark and gloomy. The fire’s dying down and I’m not dry yet. Don’t you hear Tregeagle screaming as he sweeps the sand? For he is sweeping now. The poor people of Helston were in an awful state when they found their harbour had been destroyed. They collected all the bishops, priests, and deacons they could lay their hands on and rushed them down to Loe bar. Tregeagle was bound by spells once more, and this time it was decided to place him where he couldn’t destroy commerce or frighten

people. So they carried him off to Land's End, and sentenced him to sweep all the sand and shells out of Porthcurnow, round Tol Pedn Penwith, into the Valley of the Bosom, which is also called Nankissal. And he's doing that still. You can hear him always. In summer he sighs and sobs; in autumn he wails; and in winter he screams. The fishermen know when a storm is coming by the sound of his wailing, and they don't put their boats across the bar when they hear him roar. And that, my child, is the true story of Tregeagle," she murmured. "Now put all your toys away tidily into the cupboard, then ring the bell for nurse, because it's past your usual bed-time, and I'm sure you're tired."

Beatrice did not draw away, but stretched herself with a little yawn. He felt her strong body tighten and relax against him, and saw her eyes flicker and close.

"Do wake up," she said sleepily. "There are all sorts of wild beasties about the ruin—ferocious sheep, ravening ponies, and mad March rabbits. I've seen big eyes and little eyes staring out of the mist. It would be fearful to be trampled underfoot by a rabbit, or torn to pieces by a sheep."

"I am wide awake," he said.

"We must make the fire up and have supper. It's lucky you've got another giant's sandwich. Then if the weather clears, and we can find a guiding star, we must be going home."

"There isn't going to be any star," said Burrough.

"Yes, presently. Do you think I could stop all night in this haunted ruin? I should be pinched to death by pixies. All sorts of little people will be here by midnight—quite a mixed crowd. They would be dreadfully annoyed to find me here."

"They will find you here," said Burrough boldly. "Because you know it's impossible for you to get away from here to-night." Then he went on hurriedly, "This has been a very happy day."

"I'm sure it hasn't," she said flippantly. "It began nicely, but it turned out a perfect beast. Do let me get up. I want to see the fire."

"Beatrice," he murmured.

"I'm here," she whispered saucily. "You needn't shout. Will you please see if my boots are dry yet?"

"In a minute," he said.

"Now you must be good," she went on, with her sleepy laugh. "I told you a story to keep you quiet, and then I told you to run away. You're very

disobedient, and in the Sunday School books you will find that disobedient children are invariably devoured by lions."

"Never mind the Sunday School books."

"But you must. S'ars o' mine! Don't you know that the good child becomes Lord Mayor of London, and the bad child goes to the gallows?"

"Yes, but Beatrice——"

"Hush-a-den! It shall be a Lor' Mayor itself sometime or other, and ride in its own coach."

"Bother the Lord Mayor," said Burrough, with his cheeks flushed and eyes eager, bending over her.

"Won't it be a Lor' Mayor?" she laughed. "It shan't be a Lor' Mayor. Dod a bless it! It shall be a Bishop. O! de blessing of it!"

At that instant he kissed her saucy mouth. He had already kissed her soft hair a hundred times, and she had been quite conscious of it.

"Thee'rt a tiresome brat!" she sighed.

CHAPTER XVI.
HOW BURROUGH BECAME A DUMMY MAN.

It was early morning when Burrough awoke. He had never intended going to sleep, but drowsiness had come, and he had succumbed to it. He blinked his eyes when the clear light met them, and wondered what was the meaning of the grey ruin which surrounded him. Then he remembered, and hastily pulled himself round. The bed of heather was empty. The little boots had disappeared from the broken hearthstone where turves still smoked and smouldered; and the satchel too was gone. Burrough looked about the ruin through the rents in its walls. A couple of horned sheep scampered away when they saw him; a shaggy pony stared with wild eyes. There was not a trace of Beatrice.

For a moment Burrough felt resentful. She might have waited for him, or at least have aroused him to say she was going, and that she preferred to depart alone. She was not the sort of girl who would care what the villagers said about her; yet for the sake of peace she would prefer they should not know how she had passed the night with him in the ruin of Steeperton Cleave. That no doubt was why she had wished to steal alone into the village before anyone would be astir. She had not disturbed him out of pity for his weariness. She had acted quite wisely. It was not her fault they had been stormbound; but the evil-thinking minds and slandering tongues of the villagers might very well determine that it had been his.

The "fulness," as a Dartmoor dame would have called the mist, had vanished. It was difficult to imagine it in the clear sunshine of the early morning. The rain had dried off the whortleberries, and the wind was nothing but a murmur. The only distinct sound came from the river tumbling through the ruin of its bridge below.

Burrough was too lazy to think. The sensuous waves of warm gorse-scented air lulled him into a feeling of perfect peace. He tumbled upon the springy heather, and tried to imagine the future—a future with Beatrice—but did not think for long. His eyes closed and he was soon again in the land of dreams.

He woke with a muffled cry, and raised his hand to his head as though to avert a blow. It seemed to him that the pixy blacksmith had come beside him with a huge hammer and intent to murder. The phantom had indeed aimed a blow at his head, but he had dragged himself away in time, and the hammer had fallen upon the rock hard by and shivered it with a noise like thunder. The echoes were still ringing upon the moor. Before Burrough could fully awaken the noise came again. There was a furious hissing, followed by a deafening shock. The ruin trembled. Dust came down like rain, and after it a lump of peat fell upon Burrough's chest. He was up at once, muttering, "A thunderstorm! Good Heaven! When is the weather going to be fine again?"

The next moment he was laughing, because he perceived that it was as fine a summer's morning as the heart could desire. So Beatrice had not gone after all. She was upon the other side of the wall, and had amused herself by throwing peat over it, as a hint it was time for him to get up. As for the noise, it had probably been caused by her rolling stones down the steep descent to the river. He picked up a piece of peat and threw it over the wall. No reply came, although he persuaded himself he heard a muffled laugh. He rushed outside. Nobody was there.

In an instant Burrough was back in the ruin, as though he had been Tregeagle with the devils at his heels. What was it that had made the mysterious building a ruin and destroyed the old clapper bridge below? What had aroused him and flung that turf upon his chest? Those ugly iron cylinders scattered all over the surrounding moor gave the answer. What a fool he had been to forget the artillery. He was upon the range. A shell might fall at any moment and blow him into fragments.

"On this day of all days in my life!" he muttered with shivering lips. During the next few moments his mind worked rapidly. Was it because of the danger that Beatrice had hurried away in the first dimness of the morning? That could not be, because if the idea had occurred to her she would not have left him sleeping at the mercy of the gunners. Was it a chance shell which had fallen near the ruin? He knew the firing was sometimes erratic, and he remembered the sheep and the pony he had seen upon looking out earlier. These thoughts did not bring much consolation, because he knew the cleave was upon the Cranmere range. He had slept five hours since seeing those animals, and since then the moormen would

have rounded them up and driven them off. Naturally they had not searched inside the ruin. They could not have expected to find a man sleeping there.

While Burrough's mind was at work his hands were busy methodically packing his knapsack. He did not lose his head, as he had lately done with Beatrice, and he managed to retain his self-restraint. He knew it was no good running wildly about the moor, like a hunted rabbit looking for a hole to dive into. He was aware that the particular part upon which the ruin stood was not visible from the firing point because of the steep slope of the cleave. It would be madness to run up the hill, stand upon the sky-line and signal. He might be mistaken for one of the dummy-men. He had been told by an artillery sergeant that at a great distance the rippling currents of air rising from the moor frequently gave an appearance of motion to the dummies and perplexed the gunners in their aim. Then he thought of the field telegraph and of the possibility of the firing being stopped if he were to cut the wire. A patrol might be sent out to discover why communication had been put a stop to. But he had no instrument except a pocket-knife, and the wire could not be cut with that. The only course open was to find a shell-proof shelter where he could hide himself until the mid-day interval.

These thoughts passed rapidly through Burrough's brain. He slung on his knapsack. He was a practical man in some respects, and had no idea of leaving his property behind. He passed out of the ruin, and as he did so the hissing began again; he cowered like a frightened animal, and a shell burst far above, flinging masses of peat into the air. Another followed almost immediately, and then a couple passed overhead screaming like the whist hounds. He heard them burst far ahead and breathed more freely as he scrambled down.

Fear returned, however, before he reached the old bridge. He looked back and discovered a spectral dummy upon the crest of the hill. While he was looking the wooden man vanished, to the accompaniment of another terrific explosion, and the storm of stones and divots was renewed.

"Hot work," muttered Burrough, trying to smile. "Very hot work."

His first thought was naturally the selfish one of self-preservation. His second was gratification that Beatrice had slipped away in the early morning. It would have been terrible if she had been there, exposed to instant death or mutilation in some horrible form. The strong beautiful body of Beatrice scarred and crippled! The very thought made him shudder as his own danger had not done.

There was no shelter to be found upon the treeless moor. Reaching the river in safety Burrough rushed over the rocks like a frightened water-vole, looking for a hole to creep into. Near the old bridge he hesitated. There was a shelf of rock jutting out from the side of the cleave and overhanging the river. The bombardment continued like a tremendous thunderstorm. Burrough scrambled down, dragged himself beneath the ledge, and crouched among the ferns, with the water splashing below, and the noise of war above.

Not more than a few minutes had passed when an earthquake came. The ground shook, the great shelf which pressed upon him like the roof of a vault trembled, and some small rocks rattled overhead and plunged into the river. When peace became restored Burrough reconsidered his position by the light of a few fresh discoveries. As he dug his hands into the bracken they came in contact with something hard and round. It was a shell. As he looked down he noticed that huge masses of the river's bank had been broken off. Some portions had not been cut away completely, but were hanging forward over the water; other parts had been blown into the stream. Burrough quickly concluded that his present position was as bad a one as he could have chosen. He noticed that the shells were falling either some way above the ruin or some way below, that is to say, across the high moor where the dummies had been stationed early that morning while he was asleep, and along the river. He remembered that the gunners were instructed to respect the stone antiquities of the moor as far as they could. They were not permitted to bombard the picturesque tors, or to drop their shells where stone avenues and kistvaens were known to exist. The ruin was therefore the safest place. It was between two fires, which was better on the whole than being in the direct line of one.

Burrough lost no time in returning to the place which had sheltered Beatrice and himself from the storm. It was a very different and far more terrible storm which was raging then. He went up the steep ascent at an astonishing speed, and tumbled into the ruin sweating and breathless. As he made for the old fireplace a small pony stampeded in a panic from the corner. Evidently the shaggy little beast had become separated from its companions, and had been overlooked by the range-clearers. Burrough called to the animal in vain. All men were its enemies. It made off to the open moor, calling for its comrades, mane and tail streaming in the breeze. Quite possibly it had been left deliberately on the range by the moorman

who owned it. If it were destroyed the compensation money might amount to the value of many ponies.

Soon Burrough became positively elated. Hidden away in the chimney he felt that the odds were very much in his favour. It had stood through many a summer's war; and though no doubt it was only a question of time before a badly-aimed shell fell and demolished it, there was no good reason why such a disaster should occur upon that particular day. Burrough tried to forget that portions of the old stone building had been shattered by misdirected efforts. Broken blocks were close to his feet; there was an ugly rent in the jagged wall opposite; through that hole he perceived a shallow pit which could not have been made by anything except one of those huge new projectiles—but it was foolish to think of such things. He turned to other matters. He wondered whether the pony would escape and rejoin its herd that evening, with a tale of its wonderful adventures, including the stupid frightened man who had driven it out of its shelter—or whether it would be lying dead or horribly wounded upon the high moor between the dummies. That was another unpleasant thought, and others followed. Burrough remembered the tales that were current concerning the recklessness of the artillerymen. How they had been known to take aim at pedestrians wandering upon the moor, and to attribute any fatal consequence to accident. Well, that need not trouble him, because he was completely hidden. What was much more disquieting was the fear lest some raw beginner might be firing presently. Such a one was as likely to drop a projectile upon the ruin as upon Cranmere.

From his position in the chimney upon the remains of last night's fire Burrough could look upon the corner where he and Beatrice had spent those happy hours. He could see her bed of heather. The pony had trampled upon it and defiled it, but it was still the place where she had rested. He could see the exact spot where her head had been. He thought of the wild evening—the whirling mists, the savage wind, the pitiless rain; of Beatrice sitting upon the heather, toasting her damp feet, full of her west-country folk-lore; of himself full of his passion for her. He saw her saucy face, her mocking eyes, her wilfully lisping lips, sometimes quivering over the woes of Tregeagle, sometimes laughing at them. He thought of his own words, "You witch-girl! You gipsy!" Of his kisses not refused. Of his wild promises apparently accepted. Of her sweet murmurs which might have meant

everything, or little, or nothing—just her everyday nonsense, but softer, sweeter, sillier than ever before.

Folk-lore and passion in the white mists and weird wind of Dartmoor had given place to sheer commonplace day with the horrible reality of its war-game.

"If I were to be killed here, what a haunted ruin this would be!" said Burrough. "Every night a poor lonely ghost, bending over an imaginary fire, kneeling to take off imaginary boots—but very real to the ghost—listening to a fairy-tale, then rushing out with yells. The gunners would be requested to sweep the place off the face of the moor."

Burrough had neglected to wind his watch the preceding evening, and the next time he looked at it he found it was not going; but by the position of the sun he guessed it was not far off noon. The firing would therefore not continue much longer, and before it would be renewed he could easily place himself in a position of perfect safety. As the shells were bursting at a considerable distance he left the chimney, and sitting upon a rock watched the whirling clouds and the fountain of peat and stones flung upward. Then he heard a weird hissing, and rushed back to his place of shelter. A shell exploded beside the river, just above the old bridge, and some stones fell on the very spot where Burrough had been standing. The ruin trembled, and dust rained down the chimney.

After that there was peace. Burrough sat huddled upon the hearthstone, not venturing to stir outside for close upon half-an-hour, but not another shot was fired. At length he came out and waited several minutes in the open. Then he shouted at the top of his voice, and ran out of the ruin, like a boy released from school with a half-holiday to spend.

His shortest way back was along the range, across the field of battle where the dummy corpses were lying grievously wounded. One at least had survived. Burrough saw the grey shape leaning upon the crest of the hill as he came up. He walked straight towards it; and he was about two hundred yards away, and still some little distance below, when that catastrophe occurred which shivered the dummy soldier into fragments. It was the last shot and a well-aimed one. The wooden splinters were hurled in all directions; and where the dummy had stood appeared a dark hole in the peat.

One of the splinters caught Burrough just above the right eye. He staggered, spun round, then fell upon his back and lay still upon the heather.

CHAPTER XVII.
HOW TONGUES WENT WAGGING IN THE VILLAGE.

When Miss Pentreath came down to breakfast she beheld her niece sitting in the open window, stroking Floss Cobbledick, the cottage cat. Beatrice looked as fresh as if she had been in bed and asleep all night. She had washed and done her hair becomingly, and had changed her clothes; she was clad in white and fine laces; and she appeared satisfied with the world and her saucy self.

"Have you enjoyed yourself, dear?" asked her Aunt, peering anxiously into the mantle-glass to assure herself she was artistic.

"Very well, Auntie," came the answer. "I got back about two hours ago. We ran into the mists, and had to put up in a ruin on the moor. We made fires, and told ghost stories, and played games."

"I ought to be shocked," Miss Pentreath sighed. "In fact I am shocked. I wish it were myself I had to be shocked at. You do enjoy yourself, Beatrice. You are so attractive, and you have a lovely complexion, and you have pretty ways—and you're a little beast!" she snapped smilingly. "I have tried so hard to be attractive. I must have spent years trying. I used to go out into the rain, and sleep with my head hanging out of the window. It was no use. I went on getting uglier. You have no idea how jealous I am of you, wretched child. Many a time I could have bitten your nose off just to make you ugly. I suppose if I had it would only have grown again, and probably prettier than ever, just to spite me."

"That will do," said Beatrice. "Say your grace like a good little lady, and soople up your breakfus'."

"I am not going to say a grace," snapped Miss Pentreath like a peevish child. "I have nothing whatever to be thankful for, and I won't be."

Beatrice was accustomed to these tantrums. She rather enjoyed them, although she was sincerely sorry for her made-up raddled relative, to whom nature had been unreasonably unkind. Miss Pentreath had often said, "I was born to be wicked, and I have to be good." To all outward appearance she was a most devout lady with a weakness for false complexions. She was the

lady bountiful of her village, with a special kindness and sympathy for young women "near their time," whether married or single. She supported her clergyman and the church. She had a kindly heart, but there was a wanton spot upon it. Had she been born into the labouring class she would very soon have acquired an equivocal reputation. She had the maternal instinct strongly developed, but had been denied the woman's primitive right and *raison d'être* of existence, and she had never been able to get over it. She made a kind of potpourri of religion, inclination, and intention. She read an old-fashioned sermon every evening, but followed it up as likely as not with a selected tale from Boccaccio. She had three shelves to her library; one for classical works, another for religion—and a top-shelf. She was often explosive after one of Miss Beatrice's escapades.

"Now I'm off," said the girl, directly she had finished her breakfast. "I'm going down to the river to pick asphodel."

"I can't think what you're made of," said her Aunt complainingly. "Jumping and climbing all yesterday, up during the night, and now off again. There's one consolation—you'll get bony and tanned and old-looking; and then I shall like you much better."

"Toad!" laughed Beatrice. "I've soaked my complexion so thoroughly in air and sunshine that it can stand anything, and as for my bones they're beautiful. I've been walking, running, jumping, ever since I got off my hands and knees. I've never been long away from moor and sea, and when I do I choke and gasp till I'm back. Now don't call me names. I'm a little beast of course, but I'm a healthy beast——"

"Go away, you horrid thing," cried Miss Pentreath.

"I'se going," said Beatrice. "We'll go for a stroll after lunch, and then prattle till tea-time."

The girl went away by herself upon the moor, not to the river to pick asphodel, but to a favourite seat looking down into the cleave, and upon the river roaring gently over its granite. Having settled herself among the lichens and stonecrop she began to think. She wondered if she would be happy as a poor man's wife, or indeed as the wife of any man. Marriage did not mean much to her. She was a strong healthy young animal, and she had no desire to find herself in a cage gilded or otherwise. There was nothing of the wanton about Beatrice. She had her passionate periods, and while these lasted she was prepared to love, not wisely nor moderately; but they passed and left her cold. In that state she really loved only the moor and the sea.

She knew she would marry some day, “to find out what it was like.” She knew also that the moor and the sea would call her always. She could not leave her open-air. She must have her gorse, heather and bracken, and the salt breezes of her wild Cornish coast. Love and marriage she regarded as interludes between the acts. Her husband would be the hero of only a few scenes in her life. During those scenes she would take a passionate interest in him and his work; and she would be as sentimental as any man could desire. But the chief things in life would be her splendid health and strength, and her love for moor and sea.

At home she would pretend to mine for tin and copper, and to make water-works in the wild Cornish combes. She had played at such things as a child, and she had not yet put her toys away. She would search out places on the moor, name and annex them, and consider how she would build stone huts, and make tiny settlements, and occupy them with people of her own selection, who would wear costumes that she had designed, and obey laws which she had made. She had always been filled with such fantastic notions. Whenever she saw an old-fashioned village between the moor and the sea she longed to possess it, to encircle it with a wall, and establish a little kingdom of her own. She would have men attired as knights and children as pixies; and have lived in an atmosphere of romance and legend.

“I should make an agreement with my husband before marrying him,” she said softly, with her eyes fixed upon the sunlight rippling in the cleave. “And if he departed from it I should pack up and go. There would be no fuss and no nonsense. I should just leave him. I should make a good wife and a nice companion, if my wishes were respected. I would not be a junior partner and I would not be a slave. I should make allowances for any kink in my husband’s character, and should expect him to make allowances for any kink in mine—and there is one, I admit. The idea of husband and wife being one is very pretty, and equally impossible while human nature remains as it is. One and one make two, however you like to argue. There would be so much more happiness in the world if people would only agree to differ.

“I wonder how much happiness has been spoilt by convention,” she murmured. “I suppose the time will never come when it will not be considered positively indecent for a girl to tell a man she would like to marry him. A girl with money for instance—the man she wants is just the sort who would be too shy and proud to ask her. So she marries a rascal,

who spends her money and goes off with another woman. I should not be afraid to ask," Beatrice went on, flicking her handkerchief at a passing butterfly. "But whatever happens I must be free. To be in a town, in a street, in a house staring at other houses—that would make me mad. I must have my wild life, my heather and bracken, and my window open upon the sea.

"Last night," she murmured softly. "It seems a long time ago. I promised nothing after all."

When Beatrice got back to the village she heard a feeble voice calling, and, on looking round, perceived Mr. Yeoland grinning and beckoning over his garden gate. She went up to the poor old vicar, whose time of sense and sensibility was spent—she had liked him in those days—and the vicar seized her arm, pinched it with amorous and quivering fingers, and chuckled delightedly, "You've been at it again. You naughty girl! You stay out all night, you wicked girl, you!"

"I have not been out all night," said Beatrice, crossly.

"Yes, you have," he chuckled. "What time did you get in this morning?"

"Oh, well," she said, resignedly. "I'll plead guilty. Who saw me come home?"

"Willum," said the vicar, expelling the word from the corner of his mouth with a wink of sheer delight.

Beatrice muttered something concerning Willum which would not have pleased the worthy scholar.

"Tell me all about it," said the vicar.

"I won't," she laughed. "The beastly people! I suppose they are talking themselves hoarse about me. And you're as bad as any of them," she concluded.

"I like a bit of fun. Tell me about it. Go on."

"We made a fire, and sat by it, and told stories," said Beatrice.

"We?" chuckled old Y. "You didn't want me there?"

"We did not," she said.

"You told stories. I know them," he muttered. "Funny stories."

"The sort that will be told of you some day," said Beatrice. "You will be like the wicked old clergyman who lived here more than a hundred years ago. For years afterwards he used to toddle about the place and make himself a nuisance."

"He's gone now. They laid his ghost in a beer-barrel," said old Y.

“It was an empty bottle of Hollands,” Beatrice laughed. “And the bottle is bricked up in the wall of your study. You will find the account of it in that oak-chest in your dining-room. I know it’s there, because I saw it years ago, but I suppose you’ve forgotten all about it. The ghost was laid by a moorman named Yeo. He was sent for on purpose because he was a famous ghost-layer. He locked himself into the study and drank Hollands till midnight, and then the reverend ghost appeared. ‘Well, Yeo, how b’est ye?’ said the old vicar. ‘Wonderful well, thank ye,’ said Yeo. ‘And how’s yeself, sir?’ ‘I’m very well indeed,’ said the ghost. ‘I never heard ye come in. How did’st manage, sir?’ asked Yeo. ‘Through the keyhole,’ said the ghost. ‘Now, sir, that won’t du,’ the moorman said. ‘You can’t make me believe that a gurt big gentleman like you came through thikky keyhole.’ ‘Won’t ye believe it? Well, I did. I got through easy as easy,’ the vicar declared. ‘Well, then, sir,’ said Yeo, uncorking the bottle, ‘if you can come through the keyhole you can get into this bottle. But I knows you can’t.’ ‘Lawks!’ said the vicar. ‘I could do it easy.’ ‘That’s talking, sir. I don’t believe ye,’ said Yeo. ‘Then I’ll do it,’ said the ghost. ‘Here goes. There’s many worse places than a gin bottle.’ Into the Hollands he went, and Yeo corked him up. That’s the sort of thing that will happen to you some day,” cried Beatrice.

“I wouldn’t be such a fool. I wouldn’t go in,” the vicar chuckled. “You weren’t telling that sort of story last night.”

“Yes, I was. And if you say anything nasty about me I’ll knock down the wall in your study, and find the bottle, and let his reverence out.”

“Come in and do it,” chuckled old Y. “You’d look nice sitting in my arm-chair.”

“No, thanks. I look quite nice enough standing out here,” replied Beatrice.

“If I were forty years younger you’d come in fast enough,” he ogled. “Girls are all the same when it comes to a nice young man.”

“Which you are not, and never were,” she said. “Perhaps I’ll send Auntie to sit in your arm-chair. How would you like that?”

“Let her come,” said old Y. “My heart is as big as my arm-chair. There’s a place in it for the young, and a place for the middle-aged, and a place for the old.”

“I’d rather be in the gin bottle,” said Beatrice rudely. Then she left the old man, shaking with foolish laughter at what he considered a choice specimen of humour, and hurried home to luncheon.

Miss Pentreath was in a very querulous mood. She had been strolling along the moor road and had seen various young people, to say nothing of those somewhat past that state, engaged in what she regarded as the very laudable practice of love-making. They may have been mere summer flirtations, but at a distance it looked like the real thing. Miss Pentreath felt not merely that she was out of the running, but that she had never been in it, which was far more galling. People had no right to lock hands and link arms in public—and as for that connection between a male arm and a maid's waist it was sufficient to shock the mind or make the mouth water, according to the inclination of the watcher. They would even embrace on the bold naked side of the moor. The little lady was quite positive she had seen a young couple kissing, with the aid of a powerful pair of field-glasses. It was her own fault entirely. She had taken out the glasses and swept the high moor with them for no other purpose.

"No, my dear, I am not," she replied, in answer to Beatrice's question whether she wanted to go out again. "I felt this morning like that poor man in the old story—what was his name? Not Dives. What was that thing called your dear father used to keep his whisky in?"

"Tantalus," said Beatrice.

"That's the man. He had nice things brought to him, and when he tried to take them they were snatched away."

"But he was in hell," said Beatrice.

"Well, so am I—sometimes," declared Miss Pentreath.

This made Beatrice shriek with laughter, in which the little lady joined feebly.

"You little cat," she called at her niece. "It's easy for you to laugh, because you're pretty, and fresh, and attractive."

"Auntie," broke in Beatrice, "I'm not pretty."

"Well, then, the kind of ugliness that makes everyone want to bite you. I expect that poor lonely Mr. Burrough would walk across Dartmoor to kiss your foot."

"He's done it—both feet," murmured Beatrice.

"That's the sort of ugliness I want," continued Miss Pentreath, without hearing her. "Who would walk across the room to kiss my foot?"

"Old Y. might toddle down here to do it," Beatrice suggested. "I really think, Auntie, if you're agreeable I might make a match for you there."

It was Miss Pentreath's turn to laugh, and she did so as fully as her complexion would allow.

"I have my self-respect left," she said. "I want a husband, and I've always wanted one, but I should certainly decline to clasp in my arms an old man who is distinctly unpleasant in his ways, and has one foot in the grave and the other in the lunatic asylum."

"Auntie!" exclaimed frivolous Beatrice. "Have you ever been kissed?"

"Once," Miss Pentreath replied. "I was a girl then. I gave the boy sixpence," she added.

"Oh, bribery!" the girl exclaimed. "You don't know what it's really like. Where did he kiss you?"

"On the mouth. I bargained for that."

"Kissing is an over-rated pleasure," Beatrice went on. "I like it best either on the back of my neck or on the sole of my foot. It's a kiss and a tickle at the same time."

"Be quiet," said Miss Pentreath. "Mrs. Cobbledick may be at the keyhole."

"She has already invested me with the order of the black sheep. She knows I was kept out last night—only she wouldn't put it that way," Beatrice replied.

"Are you going to tell me what happened last night?" her Aunt inquired rather wistfully.

"There's nothing much to tell," laughed Beatrice. "It's the old story."

"But you're not going to? You didn't promise? You won't leave me, darling?"

"Darling might," said the girl. "Darling didn't promise, but she likes him rather."

"How nice to be able to pick and choose," sighed Miss Pentreath. "It's a wicked world that won't give a poor woman a husband. The women will rise one day like those people in history. Who were they? Not the Samaritans?"

"The Sabines. You're muddled, Auntie," replied Beatrice. "It was the Romans who raped the Sabine women."

"The next time history repeats itself in that connection the women will run off with the men," declared Miss Pentreath. "There was a country, I believe, which once made a law that prisoners should be released to marry the women who could not otherwise obtain husbands."

“They preferred to stop in prison,” Beatrice murmured.

“Seriously though, you’re not thinking of marrying?” said Miss Pentreath appealingly.

“Isn’t a girl always thinking of marrying, whatever she may say or think to the contrary, unless she’s been and done it? When a girl gets her chance she thinks she’ll try it anyhow. The worse of it is she must go on trying it to the end of the story. Most girls don’t worry themselves about that, but I do. I’d take Mr. Burrough on a five years lease if the law allowed; but marriage as it is—it finishes off one’s life so.”

“Then don’t do it,” cried Miss Pentreath cheerfully. “You and I, Trixie, can enjoy ourselves as two jolly bachelors.”

“That would be all right if I had to,” said the girl. “There are lots of little fishes in my pool,” she laughed.

“Even when you were in short frocks, and had your hair down, they wanted to nibble,” said Miss Pentreath. “There was a silly young curate, who used to bicycle ten miles every day that he might watch you over the hedge.”

“St. Anthony, as I called him, because he was so unlike that gentleman,” cried Beatrice. “But he was keen. He used to beg me to untie my shoe-laces so that he might tie them up. And when I allowed him one day to take my shoe off, and put it on again after a pontifical kiss, I am sure he felt as if he had been appointed to a bishopric. When I told him he was neglecting his duty, he replied that love was the first duty of a minister; and when I asked him what it had to do with tying a girl’s shoe-laces, he said that was the practical side of love which was necessary as a stimulus to the spiritual part. That curate could quote scripture to his purpose.”

“Never mind the flames that have gone out. What about the one that is burning now?” besought Miss Pentreath.

“He would make a nice summer husband,” mused Beatrice. “He’s boyish, clever, and nice-looking. He’s like me in a good many ways. We were both quite mad when we went swaling. We should pull together all right for the summer, but in the winter I should want my long vacation. I can’t stop out of Cornwall for the dead months. I should pine to death for Zennor and Carbis Bay, and dear old fishy St. Ives.”

“If you leave me, Beatrice, I shall pine away too,” stated Miss Pentreath.

Before the girl could reply to this there sounded the alarums of Mrs. Cobbledick’s voice, accompanied by the excursions of Willum’s boots.

These tempestuous noises increased, the door was opened without ceremony, and the lady of the house became revealed, with the sandy-haired scholar behind; the one overcome by the burden of her tongue, the other oppressed by a sense of his dignity and weighty matters of the moment.

"The gentleman what lives alone on Dartmoor—him what went wi' ye to Cranmere yesterday—he'm all to pieces, and there ain't nuthing of 'en left," gasped Ann, with the pride and delight of one who was in the position to harrow the feelings of others.

"Shut thee noise, woman," exclaimed her son, with much excitement, forcing his mother into the background, and turning to address the ladies. "Us have heard Mr. Burrough have been shot," he went on, not without a certain amount of that relish he had lately deprecated.

"Don't ye talk to I, Willum," screamed Ann. "He be all to bits. Charlie what drives Eastaway's granite cart said he saw the bits. Head as 't might be here, and a boot as 't might be there, and an arm as 't might be under the chair where Miss Pentreath be sitting——"

"Be quiet, Mrs. Cobbledick," interrupted Miss Pentreath sharply. "Darling, give me my snuff-box."

Beatrice passed her Aunt the silver article which contained the fragrant dust, found by the little lady more refreshing and stimulating than the more modern vinaigrette. While she was making the connection between finger and nostrils, Willum again suppressed his mother, and commenced to give details.

"He were on the range, and a shell dropped on 'en and killed 'en instantedly. He went over dead like a shot rabbut. There was a balloon over the camp, and the officer in it sent down a message that a pony had been shot. They sent out a sergeant and two men, and they found Mr. Burrough. They picked 'en up and carried 'en away."

"He were all in bits," repeated the irrepressible Mrs. Cobbledick.

"He warn't," retorted Willum. "'Twas just his head taken off; that was all. The body warn't touched."

"Us'll never hear the truth of it. They won't tell us," grumbled Ann. "They'll bury 'en quiet, and say 'twas an accident, and nobody won't know."

Beatrice had been standing perfectly still while the birds of ill omen were croaking. Whatever her feelings might have been, she was quite able to suppress them. Having with some difficulty removed the Cobbledicks, she

closed the door, and going to her aunt's side, took the little lady by the hand and murmured—

"Auntie, I'm sorry. It was my fault."

Miss Pentreath dipped two nervous fingers into her snuff-box and adorned her nose with a brown smudge.

"I think I'll run over to Mr. Burrough's cottage," the girl went on hastily. "There might be someone about who can talk sensibly, or I might come across one of the artillerymen. I won't be gone long."

Just as she was Beatrice hurried through the village, collecting information as she went. From illiterate Kentisbeer she learnt that the Cobbledicks' report had been slightly exaggerated. Burrough had not been blown to pieces, although it was true he had been killed, as Willum had endeavoured to explain, instantaneously. Later she met cross-eyed Dufty, who informed her that Burrough had not been dead when the soldiers picked him up, but he had passed away as they carried him home. A few minutes later she encountered the unwashed Wannell, who professed to have the latest information upon the subject. It appeared that Burrough was still actually breathing, although entirely unconscious, and it was impossible for him to live through the night.

Finally Beatrice reached the cottage, and learnt from an orderly, who was awaiting instructions from the army surgeon who was inside, that Burrough was not in the slightest danger of losing his life.

CHAPTER XVIII.
HOW BEATRICE FORGOT TO BE FRIVOLOUS.

It was two weeks after Burrough and the dummy had been bowled over by the same projectile. The remains of the wooden man had gone to feed camp fires; those of the other were receiving the attentions of the War Office. An army doctor attended Burrough daily, and an army nurse permanently. And Beatrice came to visit him very often. She would hold his hand, and prattle her nonsense, and frisk about the bed like a kitten at play.

A splinter from the dummy had struck Burrough just above the right eye, but had luckily glanced off without penetrating. To what extent the eye itself was injured he did not know, and the surgeon had not told him. "Just a nasty scratch! You'll soon be about again," said that cheery optimist. In the meantime much correspondence took place between the secretary of the colonel commanding the artillery camp and the War Office concerning the effect of a certain class of projectile upon a wooden dummy and a human being, thereinafter called "B.," situate in a straight line some two hundred yards in its rear.

It was Sunday evening. The nurse had gone out, and Beatrice was in charge. Burrough was sitting up quite in a cheerful mood, because the doctor had informed him that morning he was going on very well indeed and would not require professional attendance much longer. The couple were discussing a matter of great importance, the question whether Burrough should, or should not, apply for compensation.

"It seems rather mean after all they have done for me," Burrough said.

"You can't be mean to a Government," Beatrice declared. "Nobody wants to cheat a private individual, but if one can travel first-class upon a third-class ticket one does."

"I had no right to be on that part of the moor at all," he said.

"You couldn't help it. The range-clearers ought to have found you. They are employed to see that all living creatures are off the moor before firing begins. A master is responsible for any injury arising from the negligence of his servants."

“Who told you that?”

“There’s a lawyer stopping opposite Mother Ann’s. He said he was sure you were entitled to compensation. Of course you are,” she rattled on. “Can’t you imagine yourself as a pensioner? You will tell people you were gloriously wounded in the service of your country while performing an act of heroism without parallel in the annals of war. That’s a sentence I picked up the other day in a life of someone. You will describe how your comrade —that’s the dummy—was blown to pieces, but you survived to receive the reward of an admiring and grateful country, and then you will show your scars, and they will pass the hat round for you, and say what a gallant hero you are, and how they’ll never see your like again.”

“Has the doctor told you I shall be scarred?” asked Burrough anxiously. “That is what is bothering me,” he added.

“Really you mustn’t expect to stop shells with your head without getting beauty spots,” she laughed. “Now you must strike while the iron is hot, and before the incident has ceased to be regrettable. Shall I write a nice letter for you to the War Office, like this—let me consider deeply—‘Dear Mr. Secretary of State for War,—I dare say you are aware that some of your chaps are playing at soldiers on Dartmoor, and t’other day some of ’em shot a shell plump into my right eye’?”

“That won’t do,” exclaimed the patient.

“If they can’t appreciate frivolity in a Government office, where is it to be appreciated?” cried Beatrice. “Well, we’ll try another style, the whining won’t-work and won’t-wash mendicant style: ‘Excuse me, your honour, but can you help a poor fellow who’s out of work owing to an unfortunate collision with a projectile fired by one of your gunners?’ Won’t that do, either? Then I’ll try the heavy style.” Springing up, she ran across the room, and returning with the Life of Johnson, whipped over its pages until she came to what she wanted. “Listen,” she cried. “This is what you want: ‘To interrupt your Lordship with my petty difficulties is improper and unseasonable; but your knowledge of the world has long since taught you that every man’s affairs, however little, are important to himself. Every man hopes that he shall escape neglect; and with reason may every man, whose vices do not preclude his claim, expect favour from your beneficence, which I trust, my Lord, will be extended to your Lordship’s most obliged and most humble servant, John Burrough.’ That’s the sort of thing,” said merry Beatrice.

“I shall not apply,” said Burrough with determination. “If they like to pension me they can, and I hope they will. But I won’t ask for it.”

“Then you won’t get anything,” said Beatrice.

“There’s something I’ve been wanting to ask you,” Burrough went on. “I was thinking about it when that dummy was crumpled up, and I with it.”

“Double-dummy,” she whispered.

“It is this,” said Burrough. “Why did you go away that morning without me?”

“Well,” said Beatrice, flushing a little, “there were reasons, all good ones. When I make up my mind to leave a place I go. That’s one. Then I hadn’t the heart to interrupt your innocent slumbers. That’s two.”

“Both bad ones.”

“A pixy called me to the river,” she continued. “When I got there, another called me along the cleave, and another to the marsh, and so on until I found I was nearly home. Now let’s talk about something else.”

On account of his bandages, Burrough could not see her very clearly, but he perceived she was withholding the actual reason for her flight. The truth was, Beatrice had been afraid on awaking in the light of day and finding herself alone with him. The dawn had stirred her blood. She had been enervated by the soft influence of the early morning; and, like the first woman in the garden, she was ashamed, so went and hid herself.

“Do you believe in the pixies?” he asked her, rather to hear what she had to say than as a serious question.

“There’s a question to ask a Cornish girl!” she cried. “Believe in the wee-winikin people? I have a bed of tulips at home, and the pixies put their babies to bed in the flowers every evening and sing them to sleep. I hear the little lullabies as I lie in bed by my open window. And at dawn they come back, and I can hear them kissing their kiddies. Then on the side of the moor above the sea I can hear them dancing hand-in-hand round and round the furze-reek before it has been carried away.”

“What is the furze-reek?” Burrough asked.

“Don’t you know that? And you living on Dartmoor and going swaling! Even Willum could tell you that. It’s the furze after it has been burnt. It’s the firewood of poor Cornish folk, and they collect it in the autumn. Most of the places in Cornwall are named after pixies. And here’s another story. Somewhere beside the Tavy a herb grows, and it will cure any wound. Only it must be gathered at night, and by a pixy.”

“Couldn’t you get a pixy-trap and catch me one?” he asked.

“The tiny people are vindictive,” she said. “If you were to catch one, his screams would bring all his relations up, and they would pinch you purple. I like to get the old women of Zennor to tell me tales about the pixies of Trendreen Hill, and I like to believe in them. Oh, and you should see Trendreen Hill in swaling time! They can see the flames in Scilly. The furze-reek there is big and fine. The boys used to get off many a flogging after swaling in summer—it’s not allowed then—by saying that the pixies had done it. But that excuse is no good now. I wish I had lived a hundred years ago. There were lots of pixies then. Now, am I tiring you?”

“You could never do that,” he answered, pressing the hand which he had annexed and was holding between his.

“I’ve just remembered a story which will appeal to you,” she went on. “One day three men were blasting at the copper mine near Botallack, and, the charge going off prematurely, one of the men was blown to pieces. The other two were not much damaged. One of them stooped over all that remained of his comrade and called, ‘Dear old Jim! Thee bain’t hurt, aw ’ee?’”

Beatrice told her story with ridiculous gravity, then went off suddenly into a shriek. When she had recovered she continued: “I can tell you something else now I am in a remembering mood. It’s not funny, not even very remarkable, but still it sounds queer. When I was a kid I used to go and see a very old man who lived in Zennor. It was he who gave me the true version of the story of Tregeagle, and I never forgot it. Well, this old man’s grandfather was one of those who welcomed home Bishop Trelawny after his acquittal in 1688.”

“That’s impossible, surely,” cried Burrough.

“It’s quite true. I read the dates in the most curious old Bible you ever saw. The grandfather married for the third time very late in life, and had a son who was the father of my old man. Not one of the three old men ever went out of Cornwall. There, I think I’ve told you enough funny stories for one evening. I must go now, for I see your grim and awful nurse stalking across the moor with slow and stately stalks. Good-night and good-bye. I’ll come to-morrow.”

She pressed his fingers lightly. He kissed hers. And she went away laughing.

The next day was wet. Beatrice appeared in a mackintosh and her nailed boots, with a woollen wrapper about her head and a letter in her hand. “It’s come,” she cried directly she entered the invalid’s room, “your letter from Cranmere, post-marked Lydford.”

“And I’ve got yours,” he answered.

“I came round early to save it from your clutches if it were possible,” she admitted. “I would have torn it up. I couldn’t know you’d get it when you were lying blown up. Give it me.”

“No,” he said firmly. “It is my first letter from you.” Then he read aloud: “There’s an oak on the Dart which will drop the acorn that will grow the wood to make the cradle to rock the child who’ll become the man to marry me.”

“It refers to my next incarnation,” said Beatrice. “But if mine is folly, what is yours? Yours is mere midsummer-mad poetry.” Then she read aloud in her turn—

> “Upon my trouth, I sey yow feithfully
> That ye ben of my liffe and deth the quene,
> For with my deth the trouth shal be sene.
> Your two eyn.”

“It’s wild and primitive and plaintive. It suits Cranmere somehow,” she commented.

“I couldn’t think of anything else,” he pleaded. “Those lines were running in my head. They are from the only known ballad of Chaucer. He knew Dertymore and the Dart, and very likely stood upon Cranmere.”

“You have given me a new exclamation,” Beatrice cried. “Instead of saying, ‘my stars!’ I shall say, ‘my two eyn!’”

“Beatrice,” exclaimed the invalid, suddenly passionate, “will you marry me?”

“My two eyn! It comes in useful at once,” she laughed. “That was just as sudden and frightful as the shell which played skittles with dummy and you. Why, the acorn hasn’t dropped from the tree yet——”

“Be serious for one minute, five seconds, and say yes,” he pleaded.

“I will be serious,” she said. She went down upon a stool and took his hand. “I thought something was going to happen,” she went on, “because I had a dream last night, and it was the most remarkable and unpleasant

dream that has ever come to me. I thought I had done something wicked or foolish—I don't know what it was—and after doing it I walked out on the side of the moor beside our house, and there I saw something growing among the furze-reek. I can't tell you what it was or what it was like, because I do not know, but it frightened me. I knew it was the consequence of what I had done. That evening I went out again, and the thing had grown larger. All that night I could see it in the moonlight from my window, growing and growing. It became more and more dreadful, and I felt that a time would come when I should not even be able to look at it. That time, I thought, did come, and I awoke in a fright."

"It was nothing but a new version of an old nightmare," he said softly.

"Suppose we made a mistake, and some horrible thing did grow between us, like that thing among the furze-reek?"

"What could come between us? I should always love you. Mine would not be an ordinary love," he urged.

She hung down her head and said nothing. He went on pressing her.

"Suppose," she whispered, "suppose that thing has begun to grow already!"

"So there is something," said Burrough miserably. "What is it, Beatrice?"

"I can't tell you," she said. "It's horrid of me, but I can't help it. Shall I go away and write it?"

"No; tell me."

"You would let me have my own way?" she went on; "you would let me be as free as ever?"

He gave the promise at once, then went on urging her.

"Well, then, I must," she said. "I know how you feel towards me," she added quickly; "but I don't feel like that towards you—except, perhaps, just for a minute or two occasionally."

"How could you?" he replied. "I thought I should never dare to ask you until that night in the ruin when you were telling me the story of Tregeagle. Then I began to understand that love and loneliness conquer everything, even poverty and pride. The little god of love himself is poor, Beatrice. He has nothing but his arrows, and can only pay his debts with kisses."

"I like you," she said. "Ever since we were together in our little kingdom by the river I have liked you. I have never known a nicer companion than you. We should be happy, I think, on the moor together. You don't understand the moor as I do; it doesn't call to you, and you don't see under

the furze and the griglans like I do, because you haven't got my Cymrian blood. You would not be always my companion. You can come swaling with me, but you can't come with me to see the little people. I know they don't exist, yet I can find them when the wind comes moaning through the mist, just as all the West Welsh people have found them always."

"Is that your difficulty—only that?" said Burrough eagerly.

"No, it is that accident," she answered boldly. "Can't you guess?"

"You are afraid I shall be disfigured?" he said, in a low voice.

"I am so fond of beauty," she went on resolutely, "and disfigurement in any form is a horror to me. A fisherman with a wooden leg used to live near us when I was a child, and whenever I saw him I would scream and run away. It's constitutional, I suppose, just as some people can't bear to see a spider or come near a cat. I cannot help it. There! I have told you," she cried, as merrily as she dared, but without looking at him.

"The doctor will be coming presently; I will ask him," said Burrough, rather shakily.

"It may be all right," Beatrice went on.

"It will not be all right," he answered sadly. "There must be a scar."

"I wouldn't mind that—not an honest scar—if the eye was all right. But a dreadful blank eye like the one Kellaway has——"

She broke off, and he felt her shudder.

"I wish the doctor would come," was all that Burrough could say.

"What do you think of me now?" said Beatrice wistfully.

"The same as ever," he replied. "Beatrice, you will answer, will you not? Perhaps I shall not be so very dreadful to you when the bandages come off. If I don't frighten you then, if you think you can bear with me, if I am not likely to grow into the horrible thing of your dream, will you?"

"Oh, in that case," laughed she, "I really think I might be inclined to give the matter my serious consideration."

"Beatrice," he pleaded, "no frivolity! If I am not disfigured, what will you say?"

She looked up then, full of laughter and nonsense, and called, "Oh, yes, and that's one time; oh, yes, and that's two times; oh, yes, and that's the third and last time."

She was kneeling beside him, and he held her firmly in his arms.

"You see," he cried exultingly, "I am not mutilated; there's no weakness."

Then, holding her, he bent low and murmured into her ear some of the nonsense she had taught him.

CHAPTER XIX.
HOW BURROUGH SPOKE FOOLISHLY.

It was late when the doctor came riding over the moor. Burrough had been employing the time in trying to extract information from his nurse, but that austere person remained as uncommunicative and mysterious as Peter himself, who had fallen under the ban of his master's displeasure by glancing up with a disdainful expression and licking his paws in reply to questions. Directly the surgeon came in, with a brisk step and cheery remark, the invalid attacked him with the query which had been on and off his tongue since Beatrice's departure.

"What is the extent of your injuries?" hummed and hawed the surgeon, who was a typical army man, kind and easy-going. "My dear chap, don't worry yourself; you're doing fine. I'm going to turn you out for a walk to-morrow, and send the nurse away, and knock you off the sick-list."

"I know all about that. What I want you to tell me is, how am I going to look when these bandages are off?" Burrough interrupted, with more excitement than was good for him.

"How do you want to look, you young angel," replied the surgeon, standing in front of the glass and arranging his moustache—"like Narcissus—pink cheeks, snowy forehead, hyacinthine locks, and all that sort of thing? Anyone would think you were a society beauty or a chorus-girl. Here you go stumbling into an exploding shell, which would have killed you if it had been made properly, and, instead of being grateful because you aren't in your grave, you bother me about your complexion."

"Look here, doctor, I'm going to know the truth," said Burrough earnestly. "If you won't tell me, I shall take these bandages off when you're gone and look at myself in the glass."

"That's going to be your next move, is it?" said the other, with a short laugh. "Well, my lad, let's have it over. I may as well tell you to-day as next week. That was a confounded nasty smack you had in the eye, and it's a bit of luck for you that the splinter didn't penetrate, as in nine cases out of ten it would have done. The whole affair was unlucky, of course; but, seeing

that it did happen, you have more to put on the credit side than on the other. You're going to retain your health and strength, and if you're not thankful for that you ought to be strapped up and horsewhipped."

"Thanks for breaking it gently," said Burrough grimly.

"Well, the right temple is pretty badly knocked about; and as for the eye, plenty of good fellows have managed with one, from Polyphemus to Dr. Johnson. Now don't worry yourself. You must fascinate the girls in future by your brilliance instead of with your beauty. You'll do it with practice."

"I shall look perfectly repulsive, then?" Burrough faltered, after a short silence.

"Yes, people will scream and take to their heels when they see you," said the other sarcastically. "My dear chap, you must have been prepared for this. Not many men who get in the way of an exploding shell escape at all. You won't look much worse than that wall-eyed fellow in the village who helps to clear the ranges, and who ought, by the way, to have cleared you off that morning."

"Not much worse!" muttered Burrough, sarcastic in his turn.

"Lord bless you," said the cheery surgeon, "this little business may be as useful to you as the death of a maiden aunt. The War Office ought to come down handsome, as it's a clear case of negligence on the part of its servants. Most of the Tommies would ask to be planed and pruned if it meant a few shillings a week pension for them. Cheer up, my lad! It's a stroke of good luck, if you will look at it in the right way."

For all these words of consolation, Burrough felt himself clinging as it were to the edge of the world, and longing to release his grip and drop into space. When the surgeon had gone he sat beside the open window and watched the sunshine on the moor.

Only a few hours before he had kissed Beatrice's warm fingers. Her mouth he could not ask to kiss with his head swathed in bandages. Had that kiss been the last? An engraving of the Bathos by Hogarth was hanging beside his chair. It was the end of all things: dead Time, with his broken scythe and shivered hour-glass; the broom worn to the stump, the cracked bell, the unstrung bow, and the wrecked ship; the sun dead and the moon on the wane; the withered tree, the empty purse, the clock run down; and the painter's palette broken. The horror of the last was upon Burrough then.

"King of Cats, come and talk to me," he said, extending a hand towards his wholly unsympathetic companion. "My day is over and the night has

come, the night of bats and owls and everything that loves the dark. I'm a creature of the night now, a monster, an abnormity, a one-eyed abortion. If I were to present myself at the court of King Love I should be cast out headlong. The fairy-tale is over, King Peter. I thought I was the Prince, and I'm only the Ogre. I am the evil knight who has tried to carry off the Princess, and my eye has been poked out for my pains."

He could understand Beatrice's horror of any permanent physical blemish, such as a lost limb or an empty eye-socket. She was herself so perfect in health and strength; her mind looked for perfection in the things about her. The environment of folk-lore, with which she was fond of surrounding herself, contributed to this love of what was beautiful and complete.

Burrough remembered that the doctor had given him permission to go out. He decided to walk in the direction of the village, thinking he might meet Beatrice, who would be anxious to hear the sentence that had been passed upon him. So he crawled out of the cottage for the first time since his accident, and walked slowly upon the moor, while Peter trotted beside him with tail erect.

It was a beautiful evening and the moor was at its best, but Burrough was in no mood to enjoy peace and beauty then. He would almost have preferred a storm; thunder crashing upon the tors, lightning blasting them, and wind to make them reel. He would have liked the clouds to fall and a mist to cover him. If only the old stories were true, and there was a herb which would restore his battered features! How diligently he would search the moor, inch by inch, until he had found it. It was too easy to dwell in the atmosphere of romance; too difficult to face the realities of life.

Burrough had seated himself upon a rock hardly more than a stone's throw from his cottage, feeling already tired out; while Peter was following the scent of a young rabbit in blissful anticipation of savoury meat. Burrough tried to comfort himself with the assurance that he could see as well as ever. He looked across the gorge of the river, and followed the heaving sky-line of the moor opposite. He could see the sparkling bog-water upon the slopes, and the vivid green patches of grass which decked the dangerous spots. He could detect also the lurid brilliancy of the flowering mosses, the crimson golden and grey sponges, which grew upon the bogs. He tried to persuade himself his single eye could actually make out the sundews and bog-violets lying upon the quaking surfaces beyond

the gorge. Then he allowed his eye to wander along the sky-line, until it reached a rounded hill the sight of which sent a shiver through him. That hill was one of the frontiers of Cranmere, the high and barren region of river-heads which had been the indirect cause of all his suffering.

Although evening was drawing on, the guns of the artillery were still thundering. Burrough could hear the furious hissing and sullen explosions of shells across the desolate waste, and he could see wisps of smoke floating or whirling between the tors. The sides of these tors were covered with white scars made by sundered granite, and some of Eastaway's men, as small as dolls, were working there getting the last load of granite for the day, their crowbars ringing upon the blocks and striking wild mountain music. A fine sweet breeze was coming up the gorge of the river chasing a few low-lying clouds through the sunlight.

There were hut circles upon the slopes opposite. Burrough knew where to look for them, as he had been there often, examining, measuring, and forming unsatisfactory theories regarding the race of beings who had occupied them. He knew as much about these savages as most people; and that was nothing. But he fell thinking, as he had often done, about them and their dwelling-places upon the treeless waste. What made them live upon the barren moor, exposed to storm and wind, when the fertile valleys were so near? Perhaps it was because they regarded the moor as a god and believed themselves to be his children. A primitive people would naturally consider that the god of the hills was more powerful than the god of the valleys. Yet how did they live? The moor gave them nothing but stones for their rude homes and peat for their hearths. It gave them no corn. It caught their cattle in its bogs. They did not leave the moor; they were born upon it; they were buried on it. They were horrible in their lives, these moorland savages, but magnificent in their funerals. They had tombstones of royal granite and the entire breadth of Dartmoor for burying-place. That was all the moor ever did for them. It starved them during their lifetime, but protected them when they were dead.

"Which is exactly what the world does to us now," muttered Burrough cynically.

Hearing the clicking of horse-shoes he rose with the intention of returning to his cottage, because he was afraid to be seen by anyone. He had only made a few steps when the rider appeared, and he perceived it was a girl. He also perceived it was the only girl that the world possessed. It was

Beatrice astride a grey horse, bare-headed and ungloved as usual, and laughing delightfully.

"Don't run, poor wounded soldier," she called. "I saw you a long way off, and I shouted, but you took no heed. Did you think I was a moorman rounding up cattle?"

"I wasn't looking that way," Burrough replied.

His voice and manner told her there was something wrong.

"I've always ridden man-fashion," she went on lightly, as she reined in close beside him. "It's so much more natural and comfortable. And over this rough country it's safer. I'm not going to get off, because it's rather a nuisance mounting in this divided habit, and I can talk to you just as well up here. Now I want to hear all the news. Has the doctor been? And has he been saying nice kind things and making you purr?"

Burrough could not answer her with the truth. He had been ready with the confession before she came; but to look at her then with hair ruffled and loosening, her face flushed with the breeze, her eyes sparkling, and the distracting mouth half-open, questioning and eager, was to be unmanned at once. He could not lose her. Impelled by love and the thought of his loneliness, and careless of the consequence, he said, "There will be a mark."

"Little or big?" said she.

"He doesn't know yet how it will heal," Burrough floundered on.

"But the eye? How will that be? Will it be dotted?" she laughed.

"Not badly. I am sure there won't be much of a mark—just a scar, a small scar, and even that may wear away as time goes on. You see the splinter struck above the eye, never really touching it at all, and glanced off without making a deep wound. I'm not so badly knocked about as you think. When the bandages come off you won't see any very great difference. I am certain you won't. Just a red line across my forehead, and that's all."

Burrough spoke quickly, almost incoherently, and stammered more than once. He was on his trial, pleading for his happiness at the Court of Love. He forgot how foolishly he was speaking, how that the time would come for him to remove the bandage, and reveal his battered features. Words would not avail him then. A glance would tell her he had been lying. Her affection for him, and even her sympathy, might well be alienated by his deceit.

His one idea was to keep her, to have her with him, to enjoy the right of holding her hand and kissing her fingers. If he could only keep her for

another week he felt he would not have lied in vain. She would be his until the bandages were taken off, and then it would be time enough to think of going to the end of the world and dropping off into space.

"Because I laugh you musn't think I don't care," Beatrice said. "It's no use being tragic over things, and I'm sure you're serious enough for two. I'm really dreadful sorry. I just wandered away that morning because I wanted to be alone on the moor. I was sure you would wake up and follow me. But you lay a-thinking, and a-dreaming, and a-playing at targets. As I was your guardian I shouldn't have left you. It was partly my fault you were damaged, and I'm sorry, and to show you I'm sorry I promise I won't mind that scar."

"You mean it, Beatrice?" he whispered eagerly, clasping the little foot which was resting in the stirrup nearest him. "You are not laughing now?"

"I have promised," said the girl seriously. "No, don't—don't kiss my boot. It's horrid, and people may see. You are silly this evening. That splinter must have gone into your brain after all. What are you doing? Please don't eat the lace off my petticoat. Well, if you must kiss something here's my hand, only let me have it back again."

Burrough had lost his senses just then and was behaving unwisely. The little god of Hope, who had departed with the surgeon, came back with a great fluttering of wings and settled once more upon the roof of the cottage.

There was a chance after all, if he could accustom Beatrice gradually to the change in him. She was prepared to tolerate a certain amount of disfigurement. She was ready to meet him half-way. She had admitted she was partly to blame for the catastrophe. He would not have admitted it, but was very glad she had done so. Leaning against the horse, with her foot in one hand, and her fingers in the other, he could only murmur again and again those words he had so often inwardly expressed—"You are sweet, Beatrice. You are sweet."

"When I was a child, such as you are now, I used to be told it was bad manners to speak with my mouth full," said the girl. "If you would take my hand out of your mouth…"

"That night we were in the ruin…" he began; but she resisted feebly.

"My hand is not a relic, neither is my foot. They are not necessary as incentives to devotion."

"I have a reliquary in my bedroom," he said with unrestrained boyish ardour. "It contains hairpins, buttons, withered flowers, cigarette-ends."

“And folly and madness,” she finished. “Do you want my precious toes too for your reliquary? You shall not have them.”

“But they are mine, all the perfect ten of them.”

“Nine,” she murmured with a gasp of mirth. “I’ve had an accident with one—don’t pinch! Not on that foot.”

“That’s a disfigurement,” he said exultingly. “It is, Beatrice.”

“No, it’s only the nail, and that’s growing again. It will soon be perfect, and nicer than ever—brand new. There is not a mark upon me, not even a freckle. I’m a lamb without blemish. There! let me ride on.”

“Not yet,” he prayed. “What was I going to say? I forget when I look at you.”

“With its one poor eye,” said she.

“But the other is there,” he cried painfully. “It’s only hidden. Wait until it heals, and you will say I am no worse. Beatrice! don’t go. I hate to see you go. You might not come back.”

“And then there would be the dull thud of a falling body in the gorge and a notice, ‘Cottage to let.’ Certainly I must go, and as certainly I will return. I swear it by all the little saints of Cornwall, St. Piran, St. Issey, and St. Ive, though I don’t suppose they were much better than you and I. I will come to-morrow, sun, mist or mud. It’s all the same to me. It’s only a question of boots or shoes.”

“I know what I was going to say. That night in the ruin, when you were telling me about Tregeagle.”

“And you were wondering what my ear was made of.”

“I found a key—the key of Paradise.”

“How nice for you. May I come too?”

“To-day I felt it slip out of my hand. I lost it,” he went on, in the same excited voice. “I thought it was gone for ever. And then you came along, and picked it up, and gave it back to me.”

“Take care of it, my child,” said she. “Hang it on your watch-chain.”

“It is safe in my heart,” he whispered.

“You’re hopeless quite.”

“I can’t lose it now.”

“There is going to be a moon to-night, a great round white moon,” said Beatrice. “I charge you not to go walking in its light. Else you may stumble over the granite, and fall on your face, and instead of being one-eye you will be no-eye; and then it will be no use my coming to-morrow as you

wouldn't see me. And now, having spoken out of our wisdom and loving-kindness we will depart."

"To-morrow we will go down to Blissland," he said, with the warmth and eagerness which had not been allowed time to die down. "We will sit in the granite chair which you called the Menacuddle. Why did you call it Menacuddle?"

"On the same principle that my parents followed when they decided to call me Beatrice. They thought it would suit me. You couldn't imagine me by any other name?"

"Not by any under heaven except Beatrice," he replied fervently.

"Menacuddle is really the name of a well near St. Austell, and it means the hawk's stone. It was your wicked mind which added the sentiment."

"And yours which named it," he said triumphantly.

"Don't you see I'm going? My horse is moving. Good-night."

"To-morrow we go to Blissland. I'm quite strong. I can easily walk there. And then we can have a long rest."

"Let go! Good-night again. There! Now let me have my poor foot. Not Blissland to-morrow. It's too soon. Not until the bandages come off."

He let her go then, and she trotted off gaily waving a farewell. Burrough turned towards his cottage with the sound which was to become haunting in his ears, the sound of horse-shoes clicking upon granite. And as he entered the door the little god of Hope, who had been perched upon the roof, shook himself, and spread his wings, and flew away in the direction of the clicking horse-shoes.

CHAPTER XX.
HOW THEY SEARCHED FOR WHITE HEATHER.

THE first beauty of the moor is young bracken, gorse is the second, and the third and best is heather. It was out at last, the pink heather, making the slopes rosy; so Beatrice proposed an expedition. They would climb up the great wet mountain called Cawsand, and search for white heather.

Burrough was quite strong again. He could walk any distance. He was no longer an invalid; the nurse had gone, and the doctor's visits were few and far between. But he still wore the bandage, not because it was necessary, but because he did not dare to remove it. He had looked into the glass and seen the extent of his disfigurement, and straightway the last hope had gone. What would Beatrice say, Beatrice who had fled in terror from the fisherman with the wooden leg? And yet he could not tell her. He must keep her as long as he could. He continued his deceit, telling her the bandage was still necessary, promising it should come off soon, assuring her that the injury was only slight. He declared that his eye was not yet strong enough to bear the light.

"It's no use keeping your head wrapped up," the surgeon had said. "You want to get the sun and air upon your face, but I suppose it's no good talking. You're too jolly conceited to go about and show yourself. Talk about the vanity of women! Why, I believe some of our chaps spend half their time before the looking-glass, and I know from experience what a business there is if one gets a scratch on the face. They'll take a body wound gladly, and ask for more—but a scar on the face, even if you want a magnifying glass to see it, knocks 'em over at once. They think they are spoilt for the girls, though they wouldn't admit it under torture. We don't confess our weaknesses to one another; but the truth of the matter is we're always thinking of the girls, and they're always thinking of us, and that's the way of the world and always will be."

Burrough had a good many troubles just then. His pen had been idle since his first meeting with Beatrice, and his bank account was dwindling at an unpleasant speed. He was not in a position to afford a summer of

idleness. His love affair had not stimulated his brain, nor had it stirred his mind. On the contrary, it had acted as a drug. It had sent him into a blissful slumber, which had been rudely dispelled by the explosion of the shell and the destruction of his personal attractions.

Beatrice did not appear to be in a very good humour when they started upon their tramp. She was becoming suspicious, although he did not know it. She wanted him to bring his face from its state of partial eclipse that she might behold the full light of his countenance. His unwillingness to do so, even for a moment, was not satisfactory. Her aunt had instilled a certain amount of distrust into her mind. There was also a good deal of gossip in the village concerning Burrough. The drift of it was that the unfortunate gentleman could not be expected to uncover his face, as it was certain a considerable portion had been shot away. How did they know? It was common talk among the artillerymen. The sergeants had told them, and the officers had told the sergeants, and the doctor had told the officers. Miss Pentreath was not Burrough's ally. She would have married him herself gladly, but she did not want Beatrice to do so. He was not good enough for Beatrice, who could pick and choose; and she had a horror of the girl going away and leaving her to wither into the last stage of discontent. Beatrice liked her aunt, and to a certain extent was influenced by her. She knew no reliance could be placed upon the utterances of Mrs. Cobbledick and Son; and yet their talk made an impression upon her. It was insistent, and any rumour which is repeated constantly without being satisfactorily disproved comes at last to bear a decided impress of truth.

They went down the gorge and crossed the river by means of the boulders in its bed, and began to climb over the masses of rock beyond. The heather covered the slopes above them with a soft pink mantle, the nap of which was ruffled by the breeze.

"You are unusually silent," Burrough said presently, as they worked their way round a bog.

"I am thinking," said Beatrice. "I am thinking and climbing, and I can't do more than two things at the same time."

"I like to hear you talk and laugh," he replied, in the somewhat dull voice which he had adopted lately.

"Well, then, I will. I'll tell you something, and stop thinking. We are going away in two weeks. This day fortnight we shall be packed and

making for home, for my Cornish cliffs and cleaves, and Dartmoor will see us no more for another year."

Burrough did not like her tone. There was a suggestion of detachment from himself, a sort of hint that she was free to come and go as she pleased, and that his claim upon her was a matter of slight importance. He braced himself to reply.

"You will let me come—before long?"

Beatrice picked up a stone, flung it into the mossy bog, and watched it slowly disappear. Then she turned, seated herself upon a block of granite, and looked up.

"We've had a jolly time together," she said. "You entered so thoroughly into my moods from the first, though you may have thought them stupid and childish, and I liked you for it. Somehow I never thought you were going to fall in love with me. I wanted you to treat me as a boy. But you wouldn't. You would remember I am a girl. And I got to like it—I do like it. We've been like lovers, and really I haven't been flirting—worse than usual," she added, with the old laugh. "I like you better than any man I have ever known."

"Beatrice, why are you telling me this? You are preparing me for something?" he said moodily.

"Yes, I don't want things to go too far. I am disappointed," she hurried on. "You have promised me day after day to take off that ugly bandage, and you don't do it. That is not fair upon me. I'm going to keep to my word. I don't disbelieve you, of course I don't, but still you cannot know what affects me, and though the mark upon your face may not be very much, as you say it isn't, it may be more than I can bear. Just one glance would tell me, I expect, whether I could get used to it or not. Now, don't think me very horrid. I could not get over my repugnance for anything really ugly and unpleasant. Even that bandage worries me more than you can think. You remember that dream of mine? The ugly thing that kept on growing and growing until I couldn't bear to look at it. Now, then, let's run on and find the white heather," she said, with a complete change of tone and manner. "That's sermon enough, only remember you mustn't say 'to-morrow' any more."

She jumped off the rock, and from that moment was her bright, frivolous self again. Burrough followed without speaking. The quest of the white heather had lost its charm. For a moment he contemplated removing the

bandage and finishing the story; but he could not. Not in that strong pitiless sunshine which would exaggerate every detail. He must choose a subdued light. While Beatrice was still with him he could not give up hope. She had not begun to pity him yet. When she had been given time to realise the loneliness of his life and his love for her she might find herself able to contemplate that disfigurement for which she was to a certain extent responsible.

"The best white heather grows on the far side of the Artillery Range," said Beatrice, "where we can't go. There used to be some along the side of this shoulder."

They tramped and climbed, with their eyes fixed upon the dwarf gorse and the endless beds of pink, but they found no white heather, and somehow this seemed to Burrough the culminating stroke of ill-fortune. At length Beatrice gave a cry. She was kneeling among the heather and had parted a thick tuft. She pointed in triumph to something that was within.

"Won't that do?" she called.

Burrough came up. He looked into the hole that her hands had made, and perceived a somewhat pale and ghastly sprig of bloom, which was certainly white, but a ghostly and unnatural white.

"It will not do," he said.

"Why not? It's the right colour. I'm going to pick it anyhow, and wear it, and fancy it's the real thing."

"You can't wear it," Burrough said, a trifle bitterly. "It's a little freak, an abortion—just the very thing you hate."

"It's pretty," she declared.

"It's a fraud and a delusion," Burrough went on, mentally comparing himself to the unhealthy looking sprig. "It's pink heather really. It has become bleached by being shut in so that the light couldn't reach it. If you pick it you will see it gradually becoming pink in the sunshine—blushing with shame at its deceit."

"I'll leave it," said Beatrice. "It shan't blush for me. Do things turn white when they are always in the dark?"

"Flowers do," he replied. "It is the sun which colours them, and the stronger the sun the richer the colour. In winter the flowers are white. In early spring they are pale yellow or pale blue. Then the sun becomes powerful and we get the high colours."

“And yet people believe they can live out of the sunshine,” Beatrice cried. “They think it healthy to be bleached like this poor little sprig of heather. I’ll trample the bush down so that it will get some sunshine. Why can’t people be sensible and learn they want sun and rain and wind upon them, day and night, just as the flowers want them? Just think of all the people working now in slums and shops and offices, out of the air and sunshine, getting white and sickly like this poor little bit of heather, which ought to have been pink but couldn’t be, because it was smothered. I should like to take them all, and drop them here upon the moor, and say, ‘Get pink, you idiots! Get pink’!”

“Don’t call them idiots,” said Burrough gently. “Many cannot help themselves.”

“They can,” she cried. “They prefer the smokes and smuts to the wind and sunshine. I dare say this bit of heather has been chuckling to itself, because it was inside the bush. It didn’t care about the dark. It didn’t care about being pale and sickly. It was better than being cut to pieces by the wind. That’s what it says, the idiot. I think I’ll pull it to pieces. Yes, people are idiots,” she went on, having worked herself into quite a pretty state of indignation. “Our villagers go away because they want to get bleached in a nice dark slum. They leave the cliffs and moors because they hate them—idiots: they hate the granite, the gorse, the bracken, the wind, and sun, and sea; and they pine for the smokes and smuts, the fog, the stench, the filth of a dark room, in a warm court, up an airless slum, in a sunless town.”

Beatrice had dropped upon the heather and was lying in a bath of pink foam supporting herself upon her elbow. She did not look at her companion much, because she could not help thinking him rather an eyesore with that ugly bandage twisted about his head, and covering the upper part of his face leaving only the left eye visible. She disliked herself for the thought, but there was no resisting it. Decidedly he was ugly and somewhat out of place upon that heather-strewn slope of moor.

“Are we going any further?” asked Burrough, when he saw she did not seem inclined to move.

“We shan’t find the white heather. It’s too early in the year. Let’s sit here and bathe in flowers and sunshine. I think the air upon Dartmoor is the finest in the world—even better than that upon Trendreen Hill. There the air is rather too salt. Here it’s sweet with heather and gorse, with just a suspicion of the sea. I should like to die like this, up near the clouds, upon a

bed of heather in full bloom, with the sun beating full upon me. I should feel that I was going to join the pixies."

"I believe your Kingdom of Heaven is the Cornish coast," Burrough remarked, with a rather dreary smile.

"I don't ask for anything better," she said. "But I'm going to see the world change before I become a pixy. I have made up my mind to live until I'm well over a hundred. I think I shall do it. It's nonsense people saying they don't want to live to a great age. They go on saying it until they reach their last illness, and then it's everything they possess for just one more day in this lovely world. I come of a long-lived family. I'm a descendant of Dolly Pentreath, who was the last to speak the Cornish language. My father died young, but that was owing to a fall from his horse. He was a parson, you know," she went on, admitting her companion for the first time into family secrets. "There wasn't a finer sportsman in Cornwall, and he kept a curate to do the work."

Burrough had settled himself beside her, but he was not so near as he might have been. He had an uncomfortable feeling that she was making conversation to entertain him. She was being kind because she was sorry for him. She was not finding any actual pleasure in his society. He could not venture upon any of those overt acts of love, the sight of which disturbed Miss Pentreath so greatly. He was in an equivocal position. He remembered how she had recently exposed the sprig of disfigured heather to the light, and then had destroyed it as being unfitted to survive. He knew he was about to expose his features to the light before her, and he wondered whether she would use him as she had used the heather.

"You are not attending to my words," Beatrice said, lifting her head indolently. "I am wasting them upon the moorland air. I will speak no more."

"Then it's my turn," Burrough said, rousing himself from thought, and trying to imagine that the little god of Hope was on his way back. "If you will sit up a little and lean forward——"

"I won't sit up, neither will I lean forward," said she.

"Just for a minute," he pleaded.

"No, nor yet for a second, nor for any vulgar fraction of the same."

"You are idle," he reproved her. "You ought to be ashamed——"

"I am. I blush for my idleness. But I'd rather blush and be ashamed than sit up."

“Then I must describe what I want you to look at. What can you see from there?”

“The firmament, two larks, and a big feather-bed cloud,” said she.

“If you were to turn over,” he suggested.

“Well, then! Now I behold ponies, as big as toy terriers, upon the side of Cawsand. I hear the river dashing below in its everlasting hurry. And I feel a bit of heather tickling my nose.”

“If you were to sit up——”

“Which is declined.”

“You would see round the curve of the shoulder,” he went on. “You would see into the cleave, and up the gorge, and at the end of all things my little stone cot.”

“Like a star at the end of a telescope,” she said. “I can imagine it. Someone said you ought to be sent to prison for six months as a punishment for building such a thing to the eternal detriment of the landscape.”

“Could you imagine yourself there?” he asked.

“Not in the least,” she laughed. “It’s much too small for a person of my expanding spirits.”

“I have tried to make it nice,” he said somewhat plaintively. “I painted the interior myself, and I chose white and green for the sitting-room, because nothing looks better, and I thought it might please somebody else one day. The big bedroom is in white and blue, and I painted bunches of forget-me-nots upon the door-panels. You haven’t seen that room. It’s never been occupied yet. I was keeping it——”

“I have seen it,” said Beatrice quickly. “I roamed about the place when you were blown up.”

“Did you like it?”

“Yes, it’s pretty, and such a contrast stepping off the moor into a snuggery.”

“Then I planted bushes and creepers, but they don’t get much chance owing to the winds. Still, I’ve got some honeysuckles in flower, and the ivy is creeping up the walls. It’s so lonely there. In winter it’s too wild, and in summer too quiet. In November the wind is always rushing across the moor, and the water roaring down the gorge beneath my windows. Then the rains come, and bring down cart-loads of sand and gravel; and the woodwork swells until not a door or window will shut, and they flap and bang day and night. And Peter and I sit and listen, and wonder what is coming next.”

“Don’t you have any romances?” said Beatrice, who was feeling uncomfortable. “Don’t you ever hear knocks and noises?”

“Plenty. The wind cries and calls, and the ponies come down to find shelter and kick at my door.”

“They’re not all ponies,” said the girl blithely. “The little people are sorry for you, and they come round sometimes to invite you to one of their parties. You should go with them, and if you are nice, they might show you where to find the crocks of gold.”

“Sometimes during the long winter evenings, I feel as though I could imagine anything,” he said.

“Do let’s be cheerful,” cried Beatrice, as she began to rise from her bed of heather in unpleasant apprehension of what might be coming. “We are hooting at each other like a pair of owls. ‘Tu-whit’ says you, ‘Tu-whoo’ says I. We haven’t found any white heather, but we haven’t looked very furiously.”

Her voice died away into a gasp, and Burrough looking round saw that her face was pale. Her eyes were strained upon him, and there was fear in them, and something which was rather more unpleasant than fear; her lips were tight together, and her chin quivered. Then she withdrew her gaze from him, and he fancied she did so with a shudder.

“Why! what’s the matter?” he exclaimed.

“Ough! the beastly thing,” said Beatrice rather unsteadily. “It must have been a viper. It glided just by my hand.”

As she spoke Burrough felt the wind blowing upon his face, and it seemed to him cold. In a moment he realised that the sensation was caused by the breeze touching his face upon that part of it which had been covered. He put up his hand. The bandage had slipped down.

Beatrice began to talk some wild nonsense, but her tongue soon flagged. Then she declared she could see her aunt walking beside the leat which conveyed water to the village, and she thought she would like to run across and join the lonely lady.

“Our paths lie in opposite directions,” she said somewhat significantly. “I can just catch auntie if I run. Good-bye. I’m sorry we haven’t found any white heather.”

Burrough said nothing until she turned to go. He had readjusted the bandage as well as he could. He was glad that she had discovered the truth.

But when he saw she was about to leave him the horror of the past came upon him again, and he dreaded lest she might be leaving him for ever.

"May I see you this evening?" he faltered. "After dark. And then…."

He broke off, not knowing how to finish.

"It will be light," Beatrice said. "There's still a moon. Yes, walk towards the village about nine. I'll meet you upon Brynamoor."

CHAPTER XXI.
HOW THEY WENT INTO THE COPSE.

WHEN Burrough came into his lonely cottage the first thing that struck him was the silence. Usually the wind was sighing and moaning; the water was roaring down the gorge beneath his windows. Inside two clocks were ticking and chattering like a pair of magpies; and Peter Grimalkin, Crown Prince of Cats, was purring upon the lounge. But there was not a sound that evening. There was not even a breeze upon the moor, not enough to make a moan. There was scarcely any water coming down the gorge, certainly far too little to raise a roar. The clocks had stopped, which was only natural, as Burrough had forgotten to wind them. Peter, generally over-punctual to meals, was absent, having left the impression of his body upon a cushion as a sort of hint he would return anon. The silence and loneliness were together more than Burrough could endure. He went out, leaned against his favourite rock, and presently began to offer serious advice to that portion of his personality which was inclined to break out into revolt. "Now, look here, old chap," he said, addressing the top of his boot. "You've been making a fool of yourself lately, and you've been knocked out. No more weakness. Sit up straight and take your punishment like a little man. Beatrice is not for you. She's been very kind and nice—I won't say she hasn't flirted a bit, but that's her way—and she's given you more happiness than you deserved; and now—well, now she's going away, and you've got to stop here and make a living. I warned you right along you had no chance. There's all the difference in the world between a gentleman on granite and a gentleman on clover. You're on the granite, and always will be, and she's on the clover. If you hadn't been broken up by that shell it would have been just the same. You were a miserable creature to try and deceive her, and of course she's angry, and would naturally hate you, even if you weren't more than twice as ugly as wall-eyed Kellaway. You'll get over this all right, and settle down the same as ever. It's only a weak fool who permits his life to be spoilt by a love affair. You must remember that love, matrimony,

companionship, are merely incidents of life. What a man does, his work, his actions, his influence—those make up his life."

This was very sound philosophy, and suited Burrough's case admirably. He went on to assure himself that if Beatrice were to become his they would soon grow tired of one another; they might even quarrel, and separate in mutual disgust. Of course he wanted her, but that was not so much because he loved her, as because she was beyond him. He was so convinced that Beatrice had not been intended for him in any case, that he searched for Peter to impart the information to that indifferent creature. Peter, however, was in none of his usual haunts.

Burrough decided he might feel lonely presently. There was always his work, which he had neglected for so long. He would devote himself in earnest to that, now that he had burst all the bubbles of pleasure within reach. He had finished the frivolous chapter of his life. The next chapter was to be solid work. There is nothing a man cannot accomplish by hard work. To-morrow—*Avanti!* Stones and sermons. The granite of Dartmoor should yield gold. The primitive structures of the moor should be dealt with as they had never been before. He would run up the gamut of stone-age architecture from menhir and dolmen to the beehive hut. And the answer of a gratified public would be the answer of the commoner, who was accused of destroying a cromlech to make the wall of his new-take. "What's the good of 'en? The Almighty put they stoanes there for use. So I cracked 'en up and used 'en." That commoner was a member of the public. He had no reverence for cromlech or hut circle. He had the practical side of life to attend to, so he "cracked 'en up and used 'en." The public in general have a sentimental side, but stone-memorials do not enter into it. They would say of Burrough's book, more elegantly, perhaps, but none the less shrewdly, "What's the good of 'en?"

Burrough felt proud of himself. He was displaying courage, self-restraint, and determination. He had made up his mind to forget Beatrice, and had no doubt he would succeed. Still he felt lonely; so he walked about the furze-bushes and stone-clatters, calling for Peter; and receiving no answer he went indoors, lighted his stove, wound up his clocks, and reflected that "making happy" was the literal meaning of the name Beatrice.

Evening came at last, warm and cloudy. A silvery light above the tors hinted at the presence of the moon behind the canopy. The heather ceased to blush, and the bloom of the gorse became misty. A nightjar down the gorge

appeared to imagine itself a blacksmith, and made horrible noises accordingly. The last cartload of peat had jolted in from bogland. The stone-yard was silent, and the workers were gathered together in Eastaway's bar-room to sing ballads with the moormen. Burrough heard them singing as he made his way towards Brynamoor.

There was pure white mountain mist hanging along the cleave. The lonely watcher could see the undulating lines of the high moor on one side, and on the other portions of the tors like mediæval castles lying in ruins. It was hard to believe that misty fabric was composed of immense granite blocks piled one above the other. Those blocks were faint pencillings upon the sky. The upper part of the moor was a cloud, a creation of moist air—but a breeze passed, the mist was shaken out like the folds of a robe, then settled into a filmy sheet, blending substance with shadow, melting the granite masses into ghost-clouds. As Burrough walked on, another change occurred. The moon appeared, and in a moment nothing that was indefinite remained. The village sycamores cast lace-like shadows. The lines became sharp, the rugged outlines of ruined tors were clear-cut. There was no sense of mystery. The mist had been poetical, the silvery glow sentimental; but there was something cold and pitiless about the moonlight.

Two figures wandered upon Brynamoor. Beatrice had brought her aunt, for which kindly act the little lady was grateful. She enjoyed being with her niece. It made her feel young; also it made her feel wicked. "I shall have to bail you out of the police-court some day," Beatrice had said to her relative, during an evening's diversion in London, when the little lady, conscious that no one knew her, had announced her intention "to persevere in dissipation for the rest of the night."

Beatrice was pale, frightened, unhappy, when she saw Burrough approaching. She had already forgiven his deceit, which was in a manner complimentary to her. She admired his courage when she perceived that he had at last removed his bandage. But one glance at his terribly disfigured features was sufficient. It was worse even than she had feared. He made a terrifying spectacle in the moonlight. That light which idealised her own bizarre face added deformity to his. She felt the same kind of shrinking dread which the one-legged fisherman had inspired her with as a child.

"That Mr. Burrough! How shocking!" Miss Pentreath whispered.

Burrough came up and joined them. He saw Beatrice shrink slightly, and avert her eyes when she greeted him, so he turned the brim of his hat to

conceal his damages, and placed himself at her right hand; while Miss Pentreath simpered something about the moonlight, and said she wished very much she could recall some poetry she had learnt in her—at least a year or so ago.

"Shall we go into the copse?" Beatrice suggested, nodding in the direction of a gate set within the stone hedge.

"Certainly not. There are snakes, and things that creep, jump, and bite," cried Miss Pentreath. "Besides, it's muddy, and I have on my thin shoes and lace stockings."

"I want to go and pick flowers. I like picking them by moonlight," the girl went on. "They are all alike by this light; you can only distinguish them by smell. Don't you like the smell of wild flowers?" she asked Burrough, but without looking up at him.

"They smell of the open air," she cried when he had answered in the affirmative. "I hate the smell of cultivated flowers; they smell of disinfectants and hospitals."

"This girl runs wild when she finds the first primrose," said Miss Pentreath.

"It's the first sign of spring," Beatrice explained. "Every winter I have a horrible dread lest by some terrible accident there should be no spring or summer. When I see the first primrose I know we're all right; so I pounce upon it and eat it."

"Why do you eat it?" asked Burrough in his grave, low voice.

"Primitive instinct, I suppose. It's my way of expressing supreme satisfaction. If you will wait here five minutes," Beatrice went on, pinching her aunt's arm slily, "Mr. Burrough and I will go into the copse, as I must and will have a handful of the white orchids, which, if gathered by moonlight, are a sure protection against evil-eye, convulsions, change of weather, and a host of other things—a sort of pixy patent-medicine, in fact. Sit you here, auntie, and think of your sins, while I go to secure the means of rendering myself proof against the spells and enchantments of all the black witches between Tamar and Sennen Cove."

"But I don't like stopping here by myself," protested the little lady.

"Bogey won't run away with you," laughed Beatrice. "I shan't be gone more than five minutes—which may mean a quarter of an hour. If you see or hear anything frightful, light the furze. When I see the glow I will run."

"Suppose I'm bitten by a viper?"

“Bite him back, dear,” cried Beatrice, and ran to join Burrough, who was pacing moodily towards the hedge with its mantle of ferns and stonecrop.

He swung open the gate. Beatrice slipped through, and, lifting her short skirts, hurried across the rough ground as though she desired to escape from him. When he turned from the gate she was a dozen yards in front. He hurried after her, and, with a laugh, she began to run. She jumped a water-course and sped on, and was actually gaining upon him, when she stopped short, made some strange movements, and then began to hop with one foot off the ground.

“I’m beaten,” she called. “What chance have we who run in skirts? I’ve been and kicked my foot through the flounce of my petticoat.”

There was a gnarled oak close by, so she hopped thrice, and, leaning against it, disengaged her foot. Some inches of flimsy white material fluttered about the grass, and she tried to tear it off, but failed; so, looking up with a laughing face, she begged for a knife.

As Burrough approached she put out her hands suddenly.

“I must say it at once—I’m sorry, so sorry,” she said, softly. “I know why you didn’t tell me now. You thought it might turn out better than it has done. I am so sorry. I can’t think of anything else to say. But we shouldn’t have blended, perhaps. Here, lend me your knife, please. It’s all right, isn’t it? I’m not Beatrice—I was only Beatrice for a little—the evening we went swaling and that night in the ruin. The rest of the time I was Bill. I wanted to be Bill always, only you wouldn’t let me. I am Bill now, and you are Jack. We were at school together, you know. Don’t you remember how we used to cheek the masters?”

Burrough’s single eye was fixed upon the torn flounce. He did not dare to look at her lest he should see her shiver again when she saw his disfigurement. He drew the brim of his hat still more down.

“What are you doing?” cried she. “No, you must not cut it off; you might forget I am just Bill—your old pal, Billy P. Please let me do it; you forget. It’s just a silly trick of mine, this masquerading in frills and flounces. I’m really—yes, a horrid, beery fisherman, and I chew tobacco, and I swear and beat my wife, and I’ve got a little fishing-smack at St. Sennen—the ‘Stormy Petrel,’ by Bill Pentreath—and they call me ‘cap’n’ down there. I wonder you know such people.”

“It’s all right, Bill; I don’t forget,” said Burrough bravely.

“Gi’e us yer knife then, Jack. I wants to trim these ’ere duds o’ mine,” said Beatrice delightedly.

“She doesn’t care,” he thought. “It is nothing to her.”

“Let me do it, Bill,” he pleaded.

“Ah, well,” said she, with a distinctly feminine sigh.

But when Burrough was upon his knees at those tiny feet, the fragrant petticoat in his hands, his knuckles against the warm, strong ankle, he lost, not all, but a part of his self-restraint; and this fact was communicated to him less through his senses than by means of Beatrice’s voice saying reproachfully, although more softly than she had intended—

“Jack, thee’rt a gurt fool!”

“It’s done—it’s off!” he cried, somewhat hoarsely, perhaps, but still strongly, holding the pretty scented trifle out.

“I’ll get the missis to sew it on,” laughed she; but there were tears in her eyes had he known it. She admired his courage and his strength the more; his courage in that he had not been yet weaker, his strength in conquering what weakness there was. Those kisses were warm upon her pretty ankle.

“Jack, we mustn’t stop,” she hurried on. “There’s auntie waiting, and she’s nervous by herself. I thought it would be wise to bring her, and then—well, you know. You’ve been a good boy, Jack, very good; and Bill’s proud of you. Now look—look down into the copse!”

Burrough turned slowly and stupidly. He saw hundreds of white spikes springing from the lush grass below. They were orchid blooms nodding sleepily in the enchanted moonlight.

“I must have some,” she said, and went down into the lush grass, which reached her knees, regardless of wet feet and damaged lace; for she was careless of her pretty clothes, and perhaps she wanted to cool that burning ankle in the swamp.

“Come and help,” she called. “We must hurry; there are clouds coming up over the moon, and if it’s dark on Brynamoor auntie will scream.”

Burrough went down and helped, keeping some distance from her. He was thankful when a gauzy veil was drawn across the moon, making Beatrice a ghostly figure and concealing his deformity from her. He could hardly see the white spikes of the orchids; they were confused with the cotton sedge.

In the meantime the girl was chattering:

“Shine, bright moon, or you’ll break the spell. There are drunkards here. They ought to have done flowering by now. They are very late drunkards.” She was referring to a few marsh-marigolds which displayed their yellow cups at the edge of the swamp. “It is a shame to call them drunkards, even if they are always drinking. They only drink water, but perhaps bog-water is rather rich and heady. And here! Are these ghastly little things forget-me-nots? Yes, they are.”

As she spoke a glow of red light came across the copse. Light clouds drifted overhead, there was a noisy crackling, and the air became full of sparks.

“Auntie has fired Brynamoor,” cried Beatrice. “There she sits upon her rock, singing as she watches the world burning. She thinks the five minutes are up.”

They came up from the copse. Burrough tried to hang back, because he felt there was much he would like to say, if he could find the words, and the courage to utter them; but Beatrice pressed on towards the gate, obviously anxious to bring the scene to a close.

“Peter has gone,” he exclaimed at last. “I am alone now.”

“Gone!” said Beatrice. “Hoisted Blue Peter? Weighed his little anchor? Walked his own chalks, without a last paw-shake, or a valedictory mew?”

“I have not seen him all day. He never came in this evening. He has always been punctual to his meals.”

“I knew how it would be,” said Beatrice. “A messenger came last night to tell him that the old king his father had passed away, and that he was king of all the cats. Of course he would have to go at once, or some pretender might have seized the crown. He won’t forget you. He’ll send you the Crown Prince to bring up. Some morning you’ll find a fine black kitten lost among the heather by your door. You can take him in and call him Moses.”

“Peter was my only companion,” he went on sadly.

“He will come back,” said Beatrice. “Of course he will. Cats are fearful profligates. They go away for sprees of a week, then sneak home like prodigal sons to be fed up and pampered.”

They were at the gate. The stone hedge concealed them from Miss Pentreath, who was strutting nervously beside the glowing furze. Burrough stopped with his hand upon the catch, and turned suddenly to face the girl with a fond whisper of her name.

“Your bad memory,” she laughed. “Not Beatrice, but Bill. Remember me as Bill. Write to me as Bill—and like me as Bill.”

After that he could do nothing. There was no doubt that was her final answer. The moon was out again, and he stood revealed; and Miss Pentreath had sighted her niece and was coming towards them with quite unreasonable haste.

When Burrough returned to his cottage beside the gorge Peter had not returned. He went almost immediately to bed, reminding himself again that love and matrimony, and even the disappearance of a favourite cat, were merely incidents of life. He consoled himself with the thought that he would see Beatrice for another two weeks, listen to her chatter, visit with her their little kingdom by the river, and feel the enchantment of her presence. During the fourteen days much might happen. She liked him, and therefore she might accustom herself to his disfigurement. She might cease to be Bill of the copse, and become again Beatrice of Blissland, Beatrice of the tiny footprint and the golden hairpin.

The next morning Willum came up the cleave with gun and dogs and the letter-bag. He was very late, and his temper was bad. He explained these facts by informing Burrough, whom he met among the rocks searching for Peter, that the two ladies had cut short their visit, and had upset his mother by ordering an early breakfast, and annoyed himself by sending him out still earlier to order the carriage so that they might catch the first west-bound train.

CHAPTER XXII.
HOW WILLUM WENT ROUND WITH A PAPER.

It was not often that Mrs. Cobbledick had an idea, but when one did come she made the most of it. The idea of her life was butter, not that made by others—she had repeatedly refused to grease her boots with that—but her own. It would be impossible to lay too much emphasis upon the butter. The produce of her churn was in Mrs. Cobbledick's eyes the final triumph of art. It was not butter as other people, fools mostly, understood by the word. On Saturdays she drove her pony to great-market or little-market, as the case might be, with a basket of her precious butter. Sometimes she brought it back untouched. She said the townsfolk were not worthy of her butter. They did not understand it. They had not been educated up to it. Therefore she had refused to sell any to them. She had chosen rather to give it away to the suffering poor. It was not always that the suffering poor would accept the gift. They said it was bad butter.

Enthusiasm hardly entered into Willum's unemployed existence. Profound meditation with his back against a wall, the rise or fall in price of liquors containing alcohol, the breeding of spaniels, the courting of various young women, assorted ecclesiastical duties, an inquiry into the study of the Chinese language, the shooting of rabbits—such were the occupations which filled the scholar's days. Yet even Willum felt pride in his mother's butter, believing it was all that she claimed for it. The glory of that butter was reflected upon him as the son of its creator. When escorting visitors through the village he would dismiss Norman architecture and Saxon pounds with a few ill-chosen inaccuracies in order that he might indicate the linhay, which Mrs. Cobbledick used for her dairy, with the impressive statement, "Mother makes her butter there."

Even single-minded persons have secondary ideas, which may appear uppermost when the main idea is quiescent. And if butter was the pride of Ann's life—apart from her son, who, however near and dear to her, was necessarily a thing somewhat outside and a non-essential to the oleaginous destiny for which she had been selected—the secondary idea was

undoubtedly her tombstone. When she found herself lodgerless the tombstone, which was hidden away at the back of Eastaway's shed, became a reproach to her. It was her desire by day and her oppression by night. Gradually the idea entered into her—started by an evil dream, induced possibly by partaking too heartily of butter which could not otherwise be disposed of—that she would die one day. There was nothing very original in that, but it suggested a double grave ungraced by any memorial. Regarding Willum senior that mattered little, because he had no niche in the local temple of fame, although there was a rumour that he had once drunk eighteen pints of ale at a sitting and had sung a different song over each pint. Such a distinction, however, had been claimed by others. This dread lest the tombstone might not be erected preyed upon Ann. Even the graves of the mighty are liable to be forgotten in the absence of any suitable memorial. The connection between main and secondary ideas was spontaneous. The descent from butter to tombstone was sudden and inevitable. Without a record in stone future generations might search in vain for the resting-place of Ann Cobbledick, the last of the butter-makers.

Remote as it may appear from the main idea, the lingering disease with which fancy and fondness on her part, and inclination and laziness on his, had attached to Willum was the direct cause of Ann taking action towards the acquisition of the tombstone for which Eastaway quite properly demanded cash. Obviously Willum was failing rapidly. He leaned against the wall for longer intervals; his hands were in his pockets more frequently than ever; he went less upon the moor; and listlessness had become with him a distressing feature. Mrs. Cobbledick considered that if Willum preceded her no attention would be given to the already weedy corner of the churchyard which she hoped in due time to occupy. The tombstone would probably be broken up and used for building purposes; and the record, with which she proposed to dazzle the eyes of dairymaids and housewives yet unborn, would never be published.

Things came to a crisis when the resident doctor, who maintained a small sanatorium just outside the village, stopped Mrs. Cobbledick and informed her in a friendly way that Willum was a man of unusually robust constitution, and went on to suggest that he should be made to devote himself to something more profitable than loafing. Ann was furious at the suggestion. She knew perfectly well what had prompted it. Everybody was against her, owing to the fame of her butter, to say nothing of her cream and

cheeses; and as for Willum, they hated him because he was "scholardly." And now the doctor wanted to make her believe Willum was strong and well out of mere malice and hatred. It was a trick to deprive her of fame, to cheat her out of the tombstone. He wanted to delude her into the belief that Willum would outlive her and do justice to her memory, while the truth was, Willum was withering day by day, and could not last much longer, and when he was gone she would be left with no one to fight her battles; and the tombstone would slip out of her grasp at the last moment.

"Willum! Come here. I want ye," she called from the linhay.

The scholar was leaning against the wall in an ungraceful attitude of self-abandonment. The most prominent and equally distasteful idea suggested by his mother's shrill command was one which implied motion.

"Do ye be careful," called Ann. "Poor Willum! He be that feeble," she informed her churn. "Shall I come and give ye an arm, old dear?"

Willum was awake by this time. He informed his mother that he was still able to walk unaided, and proceeded to gratify and obey her by shuffling carefully across the road.

"Willum, you've been working. You be all nohow," said Ann.

Her son denied the first statement with some warmth. The latter, he admitted, was substantially correct. Mrs. Cobbledick at once issued her revised version of the doctor's indictment, and Willum listened with some dismay. He knew he was perfectly strong and well; and he lived in constant dread of Ann's discovery of that fact. He interpolated a fit of coughing between his mother's questions, and was immediately reassured that Ann at least would steadfastly refuse to countenance any undertaking which might have for its object his own initiation into the first principles of manual labour.

"Do ye sit down," cried Ann, indicating the peat-stack. "And look ye, Willum, you mun bide in the village. I wun't have ye trampesing Dartmoor and coming home carpsy-like. You mun bide quiet. Take a spuneful o' cream, old dear. 'Twill ease the cough a bitty."

Willum swallowed the cream, and declared himself so much relieved that Mrs. Cobbledick heaped the spoon again to repeat the process. Then the scholar settled himself comfortably upon the peat-stack, lighted his pipe, and gave every indication of passing into a state of somnolence until such time as a meal might be awaiting him; while Ann delivered herself of opinions regarding the cream and butter made by other people, which, as

she averred many times each day, being a woman to whom one figure of speech was enough for a lifetime, she would not use to grease the axles of her pony-cart. Her remarks suggested naturally butter as a fine art, and her mind became uplifted to the primary idea, upon which she dilated until Willum's breathing suggested unconsciousness. Therefore Ann's mind became depressed to the secondary idea. The unfinished and unpaid-for tombstone loomed large, to the momentary exclusion of dairy produce. She roused Willum and enlightened him as to the state of her mind regarding Eastaway, and went on to inform him that desire for the tombstone spoilt and embittered her entire existence. A man of Willum's learning might, she considered, suggest means by which the tombstone could be acquired without the degradation of paying for it.

Willum's instincts were primitive. The only plan that suggested itself to him was to enter the shed, remove the memorial, and place it in the churchyard. Once in consecrated ground, it would be safe. He declared that a special Act of Parliament would be required before it could be removed; and as churchwarden he should oppose any such arbitrary proceeding. However, the objections to purloining the tombstone were many. It could not be done secretly; it would require a horse and cart, together with a gang of conspirators, armed with crowbars, and fortified with beer.

"It mun be paid for," decided the scholar. "Eastaway be cruel hard on folk. Wanted me to work for 'en. Said if I worked for three weeks he'd give us the tombstone. Knew a day's work would kill me."

"The doctor put 'en up to it. 'Twas a plot to get ye out of the way," said Ann bitterly. "They hates I for the butter. They reckons they could du what they likes wi' you dead and gone, and me a lone woman. Willum, I be going to have the tombstone, and I be going to get the butter put on 'en, but I b'ain't going to pay for 'en."

"I mun go round wi' a paper," said Willum.

The scholar had said nothing wiser in his life. It was in fact an inspiration, and Ann was so enraptured that she bounded across the linhay, and seizing her son's sandy head between her buttery hands, kneaded it in her joy. But the question was at once suggested: who would head the paper?

"Mr. Yeoland—he'll head 'en wi' two shillun. I'll make 'en," said Willum.

"Ain't there no one wi' a title?" Ann suggested.

“There’s a ‘sir’ up to Tor Down, wi’ two ugly maidens his darters. They don’t think much of ’en, ’cause he gets his money out o’ soap. If it had been beer, now, or pigs, us might have got ’en to head the paper.”

Mrs. Cobbledick agreed that the unpopularity of the saponaceous knight rendered him ineligible to head the subscription list. Other names were mentioned, only to be dismissed. No allusion was made to Burrough. Men who live in tiny cottages with tin roofs are obviously not to be honoured with the first place upon lists of any sort. His name would appear somewhere about the bottom. It was decided that Mr. Yeoland should be awarded the privilege of starting the paper.

That afternoon Willum went the round, having first stipulated with his mother that any surplus money collected by his endeavours should be retained by him and disposed of as he should think fit. He went first to the vicarage, entered without ceremony, and discovered old Y. seated in his dining-room, which was about the only apartment proof against wind and rain, chuckling over a cheap illustrated newspaper.

“Wait a moment,” the old fellow mumbled, when his lay-reader entered. “There’s no hurry. I’ll come in a minute. I’d forgotten it was Sunday.”

“It ain’t Sunday, sir. I’ve come to ask ye for a piece of paper,” said Willum, “and pen and ink. Shall I take ’em, sir?”

“Yes, take them,” muttered old Y., profoundly thankful that he was not to be disturbed, and blissfully ignorant that he was supplying implements for his own torment.

Willum helped himself to what was necessary, scribbled painfully for some minutes, then approached the arm-chair, and handed the vicar a sheet of paper upon the top of which he had inscribed in his sprawling caligraphy, “Substraction List for Widdow Cobbledick’s Toomstune.”

“Eh, what’s this?” muttered the old man.

Willum explained, and added, “Shall I put down five shillun, sir?”

“No!” cried the vicar. “I’ve no money. I’ll give nothing. Yes, I will. I’ll give threepence.”

“Three shillun you mean, sir. Mother mun have it. She frets for ’en fearful.”

“I’ve got no money,” old Y. repeated. “I’ll give sixpence. You’ve spelt the words wrong. Substraction—it ought to be substriction. No, no! I’m getting old and forgetful. Subscription—that’s it. And you’ve spelt ‘widow’ wrong. You’ve put two ‘d’ ’s.”

“I’ll put ’en right, sir,” said Willum, taking the paper and proceeding carefully to add a third “d.”

The vicar did not notice the alteration when he held the paper again to his eyes.

“What does she want a trombone for?” he mumbled.

“Tombstune,” shouted Willum.

“Eh, tombstone. That’s a silly thing to worry about.”

Finally the vicar parted with half-a-crown, and Willum departed in triumph across the road in search of Eastaway. He saw no reason why the stonebreaker-publican should not subscribe. However, that worthy thought otherwise. While they were arguing the matter, a sergeant of artillery entered and called for refreshment, and Eastaway submitted the question to him. The soldier suggested a portion of the purchase money might be remitted, and in the same breath asked Willum what he drank.

“I drinks beer, sir,” replied the scholar thirstily.

“Let him drink it,” said the sergeant.

“I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll knock off ten shillun,” said Eastaway generously, as he drew the beer. “I’m tired of seeing the stone. It’s no use to me. Took a man half a week to crack ’en, and been lying in the shed ever since. Give me a pound and take it. I’ve got to lose, whether you take it or whether you leave it.”

“That’s a fair offer,” said the sergeant.

Willum drained his mug and turned it upside down either as a proof of its emptiness, or, what was more probable, as a hint for more. Then he produced the paper, and passed it to the stonebreaker with instructions to sign, “Under Mr. Yeoland, Robert Eastaway, ten shillun.”

“More trouble than the stone’s worth,” the publican grumbled, as he bent his fingers for the unwelcome task of writing.

“You’re starting well,” said the sergeant. “Have some more beer?”

“I’ll try, sir,” said Willum genially.

“Let him try,” said the soldier.

Willum succeeded with some facility. He took the paper, glanced at the spidery characters which the stonebreaker had inscribed, and chuckled.

“Ten and ten be twenty,” he said. “Twenty shillun make one pound. Ain’t that right, sir?”

“Used to be when I was at school.”

“What are ye talking about? I’ve put down ten shillun,” said Eastaway gruffly.

“Ten shillun knocked off, ten shillun put down—that be twenty.”

“You’m a liar,” cried Eastaway excitedly. “Ain’t he a liar, sir?”

“Well,” muttered the sergeant, “if you don’t cheat him, he’ll cheat you. You can call that business.”

“I’ll show him business,” shouted the publican, who frequently lost his temper over money matters. “I’ll have that paper, and tear ’en up, and get even wi’ ’en.”

But Willum was already outside, flushed with success and two pints of beer. He did not go far. After visiting the stone-crackers in the yard, and collecting nothing from them, he returned to the door of the inn, accosted the sergeant, and cajoled a shilling out of him for the good cause.

Then Willum devoted himself to a careful canvass of the district. He visited the lodging-houses. He tracked unsuspecting persons upon the moor, and pushed the paper, which issued from his pocket dirtier and more crumpled each time, into their hands. Nobody was safe from him. Money accumulated in his pocket. Willum decided privately he would go round again next week for his own benefit. He could declare he had lost his geese and didn’t know where to find them, or he could say one of his ponies had been stugged in a bog. He did not possess any ponies, but the visitors would not know that. This going round with a paper suggested endless possibilities. An honest man might make a living that way.

Willum had amassed a sum of nineteen shillings by sheer audacity, when he met little Georgie Eastaway, known familiarly as “Cap and Breeches” on account of the undue prominence of these sartorial necessities, which had been handed down from father to son. The scholar charged the child with a message for his father. “Tell ’en I only wants one shilling more, and I be going to get it from Mr. Burrough. I’ll pay ’en the lot when I comes back.” Cap and Breeches promised to obey, and trotted off; while Willum marched stolidly over the moor to the cottage beside the gorge.

Burrough opened the door to him. Had Willum been less occupied with his own affairs, he might have noticed that the young man looked ill. With his best smile the scholar extended the crumpled sheet, and said, with the simplicity which had so far proved effectual, “For Mother’s tombstone.”

Burrough glanced hurriedly over the sheet, and muttered something under his breath which was not complimentary to the house of Cobbledick.

Willum saw his lips move and had enough sense to perceive that the ejaculation was dental. His mouth made an ugly smile under his sandy moustache. He had no affection for Burrough, whom he regarded as a social inferior; neither had he forgotten that little affair of the "Chinese Bible." Ignorance prevented him from saying anything on the subject, but he had an idea that Burrough had played him a trick.

"This is nothing whatever to do with me," Burrough said impatiently.

"Mother mun have the stune," replied Willum. "She wun't give me no peace, and I thought I'd best come round wi' a paper. 'Tis under the patronage of Mr. Yeoland."

"It may be his affair, but it's not mine. I can't give you anything. There's no end to these things. A boy came yesterday for a subscription to the Wesleyan Mission, another for the chapel tea. And now this tombstone. I should have thought your mother would have preferred to pay for such a thing herself. I notice none of the villagers have subscribed."

"Mother be poor," said Willum defiantly.

"Then you ought to work and support her," Burrough replied warmly. "Of course it's no affair of mine whether you work or not; but when you come and ask me to subscribe to your family memorial, I can only tell you plainly that the money ought to come out of your own pocket."

Willum's little foxy eyes became very malicious, and he reddened angrily. He had not expected this kind of treatment.

"I've never worked, and I ain't a-going to," he cried huskily.

"That's your own look-out," replied Burrough; and without another word he shut the door in the scholar's face.

Willum delivered himself of various ugly noises when he found himself alone. Then he raised the knocker and rapped gently. There was no response, so he opened the door and pushed his head in. Burrough was seated at his writing-table amid books and papers.

"I was going to tell ye there was a note left," he said smoothly. "The young lady left 'en, but Mother's lost 'en. Mother'll look for 'en again, and if 'tis found I'll bring 'en in the morning."

"Oh, very well," said Burrough carelessly, without turning.

"You wun't put your name on the paper?" Willum suggested.

"No, thank you."

"All right, sir. Good-evening."

With that Willum tramped away a very angry man.

When the scholar drew near his home he saw his mother looking out, and she hurried towards him in a state of much excitement to announce that the tombstone had been delivered. There it was, leaning against the side of the cottage, its unfinished inscription informing passers-by that beneath it reposed all that was mortal of the very person who was then gloating over it with garrulous delight.

"There be plenty of room for the butter. Look ye, Willum, the butter'll go nice along here," cried Ann. "How much did ye pay Eastaway for 'en?" she went on.

"Ain't paid 'en nothing," said the astonished Willum. "Only promised 'en."

"Paid 'en nothing!" screamed Ann. "What made 'en send it, then? What made 'en send it? Dear life! Let's get 'en into the parlour afore he sends for 'en back."

It was lucky it was the cool of the evening. Had the incident occurred during the heat of the day, Mrs. Cobbledick might have been seized with apoplexy. To have secured the tombstone for nothing, to have defeated the vile avarice of the stonebreaker, to have paid him only with promises—this was indeed a triumph! And the victory had been won by the inimitable wisdom of Willum, her son.

The scholar admitted as much, although he was mystified; and he took care not to mention the nineteen shillings in his pocket. While his mother went for assistance to roll the tombstone into the parlour, he trudged off to the stone-yard, and meeting Charlie Eastaway's waggoner, gathered from him some information, which was supplemented by the remarks of little Cap and Breeches, who was industriously cracking a whip hard by. Charlie, it appeared, had misunderstood the stonebreaker's orders, which were that he should have the tombstone placed in the waggon when he had unloaded the granite brought down from the moor, and should hold himself in readiness to deliver the stone at Mrs. Cobbledick's so soon as Willum should appear with the money, instead of which Charlie had set off at once with the tombstone and a couple of men to unload the same. Eastaway had just discovered what had been done, and was—so Charlie averred—still talking about it.

"Go in and pay 'en now. He's in the bar. Go on, and I'll stand a pint," the waggoner pleaded.

“Not me,” said Willum, with no idea of dissipating the nineteen shillings so foolishly.

“He’ll take ye into court if ye don’t pay.”

“He wun’t. Not Eastaway. The law be expensive, and us be poor folk. He can’t get nothing out of we. He’s made a bad bargain, and Mother have made a good one. And so have I,” Willum concluded, working his fingers among the shillings and florins which lined his pocket.

CHAPTER XXIII.
HOW BURROUGH LONGED TO ENTER LYONESSE.

More than a month passed before Burrough heard anything of Beatrice. During that time he worked as hard as he could. His days were singularly monotonous. The morning he occupied at his writing-table, trying to project himself into the stone age. He walked in the afternoon upon the moor, or to little Blissland, or through the copse where the flowers were beginning to fail. Beside the river the pink seed-pods of the asphodels announced autumn, and the red sundews were sinking in the bogs. The early evening he spent with prehistoric men in their hut circles; and then he sat by a peat fire, pipe in mouth, and thinking hard.

Peter had never come back. He had been seen returning, weak and thin, from a hunting expedition by Willum; and the scholar, recognising Burrough's only companion, had put up his gun with a malicious twinkle in his foxy eyes and destroyed poor Peter. Burrough saw nobody except the moorman's wife, who came in twice a week to clean up; and he was thinking seriously of disposing of her upon economic grounds. He had interviewed the doctor with a view to ascertaining whether his state of health would justify a return to London life, and the answer had been discouraging. For another two years at least it would be advisable for him to remain and harden upon the moor.

The note left by Beatrice with Mrs. Cobbledick had not been forwarded. Willum took care of that, and Burrough felt that he would only be making himself ridiculous by going to demand it with threats. The retort that it had been lost was unanswerable. He knew also it would be useless to apply to Ann for Beatrice's address. Burrough had made a mistake in refusing to subscribe towards the tombstone, although he knew that the money collected by Willum had not been devoted to settling Eastaway's claim, but had been expended by the rascally scholar in a trip to Plymouth. The only other person likely to be of use was Old Y. Burrough called upon the poor old man, to find him half-insane with dread at the thought of the

approaching winter. The Vicar knew that Beatrice lived in Cornwall, near the Land's End, he thought, but that was all the information he could give.

"Fine girl," he mumbled. "Nice girl. Wish I was a young man. Find out where she lives. Go down there. I'll come too."

Then he collapsed into his chair and sobbed pitifully. He had not walked more than a hundred yards from his gate that summer, and he could not remember how long it was since he had been a railway journey.

"Don't ye find it dull out there?" said Mrs. Eastaway, who was standing at her door as the young man passed on his way back to the gorge.

"Yes, very dull," he replied; adding quickly with a touch of pride, "but it's good for my health."

"You should get another gentleman to come and live with you," the woman went on. "My husband often says when he comes down with the granite it must be cruel lonely for you up there on Dartmoor among the winds and mists."

"No one would stop with me," said Burrough with a smile. "It's too dull. People live in towns now, or within reach of them. They must have their pleasures every day."

Mrs. Eastaway could not follow him there, as she had lived all her life upon the heights of the moor. The doctrine of perpetual pleasure was therefore beyond her understanding. Her next remark was one that any woman would have made.

"You ought to get married, sir. Is it true you are engaged to young Miss Pentreath? They say so in the village."

Burrough shook his head, and raised a hand suggestively to his face while making a step forward, because that question made him anxious to get away into the mist which he could see coming up the cleave.

"Why, that's nothing," cried Mrs. Eastaway after him. "No young lady, as is a young lady, would notice that. Besides, sir, it's getting better every time I see you. You'll be looking the same as ever before long. Many a young man would change faces with you, I tell ye, sir."

Burrough walked away rapidly. Reaching his cottage he hurried into his bedroom, and gazed intently into the glass. Certainly he was improving. The pure air and sunshine had done wonders for him: the forehead had practically healed, and the scar, if somewhat conspicuous, was at least not repulsive. But the eye-socket was. If the eye had only been spared everything might have been well with him.

As the Artillery Camp had not yet been disbanded, Burrough tramped across the moor upon the following day, and asked to see the surgeon. He was referred to the mess-house, and going there found the man he was seeking, an altogether different type from the doctor who had attended him after the accident. He was fussy, verbose, and optimistic. He knew all about Burrough's case, of course, but gave him no chance to speak when he had once obtained a hint as to the object of his visit. A false eye? Certainly, it was the simplest thing in the world. And it was very effective, almost as good as the real thing. He might say quite as good. In some cases really an improvement upon Nature. Surgical art could repair ravages caused by time or accident in a marvellous manner. One got quite a poor opinion of Nature after a long course of operations. Science and art in combination were able to accomplish marvels, positive marvels. Such a little matter as teeth now—where was Nature? Nowhere in comparison with art. He strongly advised everyone to have their teeth out, the wretched teeth with which Nature had provided them, and an excellent set substituted by art. But in this case it was an eye—a new eye for an old. It would match the other? Yes, that was quite practicable, quite easy. He couldn't wink at the girls, otherwise the false eye would look positively better than the other. Couldn't see with it, of course. That was a pity, but art hadn't quite attained to that pitch of excellence. He would see to it—delighted. The War Office would pay the expense, no doubt. Wouldn't he sit down and have a brandy and soda, and *talk* about it? As a result of the subsequent monologue, for it could hardly have been called a conversation, Burrough received definite assurance that his personal appearance could be in some measure restored. The chatty surgeon was interested in the case, and said so at great length. Burrough went away in better spirits than he had enjoyed for weeks.

Then, at last, a note came from Beatrice. It was not a letter, merely a dozen lines on a small sheet of notepaper, inquiring after his health, hoping that his work was progressing, commenting upon the weather, but telling him nothing about herself. Everything connected with the note was a disappointment. It was badly written; the girl's handwriting was neither tidy nor pretty; it was entirely unsympathetic, although she subscribed herself "your old pal, Bill." It was just the sort of communication that might have been sent by one schoolboy to another.

No address was given. That was the unkindest cut. Perhaps she had forgotten. More probably she desired to conceal it. Possibly she had given it

in the note left with the Cobbledicks, and was a little cold with “Jack” because he had not acknowledged that note. During their walks she had mentioned half the villages in Western Cornwall, but Burrough had never discovered which was the actual village where she lived.

The envelope was postmarked Sennen, which, as Burrough knew, was the usual abbreviation for St. Sennen Church-Town, the last village in England. He felt sure Beatrice did not live there. She was probably upon a visit with her wayward aunt. The thought at once occurred that he might go down there. He put it away from him, but it recurred with added force; and when that evening he was sitting alone in the lamplight, the wind upon the moor and the water in the gorge seemed to him to be singing in unison, and calling, “Go down!” He rose and shut the window, then drew the curtains close; but the wind and the water went on calling, “Go down!”

“I have not been away for more than a year,” he reflected. “A short trip would do me a lot of good. A sentimental journey into Cornwall would freshen me up and might furnish me with new ideas. And it may be my only chance of seeing Beatrice. If she gave me her address in the note she left behind, she must be thinking I have made up my mind not to correspond. She has written to me twice and I have not been able to answer. It is hardly likely she will write again.” It was then about nine o’clock. Burrough looked out and discovered a perfect night, although the wind was rushing down the cleave with its customary sad music. It was fairly light upon the moor; the stars were very bright; and he could just see the white water foaming in the gorge. It was too good a night to sleep through, he thought.

Then the vulgar nightjar lifted up his voice, and said in his coarse way that, if he wanted to be in St. Sennen Church-Town, he wouldn’t tuck his head under his wing, but he would just flap there right away, blow him tight if he wouldn’t. Burrough appreciated the statement. Why go to bed and dream unpleasantly? Why not go upon the open moor and flap his way towards the Land’s End? The westbound mail stopped at Okehampton before midnight. He could tumble a few things into a bag and walk across the moor, cross the river at Culliver’s Steps, strike up into the military road, which would be showing clearly in the starlight, pass over the Blackabrook by the military bridge, skirt the artillery camp, and so down to the station just in time to catch the mail.

Half-an-hour later the cottage was locked up and deserted. The wind and the water roared down the gorge, and the nightjar in the cleave continued

his coarse observations upon things in general, much to the disturbance of decent birds trying to get some sleep. There was plenty of company for the nightjar: owls drifted about the tors; the gorge was filled with flying beetles: and the cleave was white with ghost-moths.

Burrough caught the mail and passed rapidly from the north of Dartmoor, through its Stannary Town on the Tavy, and down to its western boundary of Plymouth. The journey into Cornwall could not commence until some hours later; so he tramped through the silent streets, and coming out upon the starlit Hoe settled himself upon a seat which was not already occupied by waifs and strays. He felt singularly self-satisfied now that he had reached the west country London, where he could fancy himself a citizen of the world again. It was delightful to be away for a time from the moorland heights; to find himself surrounded by apparently endless streets of houses and yet to breathe sea air; to see the lights and hear the subdued noises, and at the same time to discern dimly the outline of rocks and the hulls of battleships. It was a pleasant change from the eternal gorse, heather, and bracken of his desolate home.

Altogether that was a happy and eventful night. Shortly before five o'clock the express drew out of North Road station, and crossing the Hamoaze at Saltash, conveyed the sentimental traveller for the first time in his life into Cornwall, and so to Liskeard in chilly lamplight and damp morning mist.

The sun was rising as the train drew into Truro, and the City of the Three Streets was bathed in a rosy light, which softened the granite buildings exactly as the mist had softened the granite tors when Burrough had set out to Brynamoor to find Beatrice that last time.

At Truro the garden-of-England scenery came to an end. Up to that point the country was richly wooded, and there was luxuriance in the ferns and hedgerows. There were orchards crowded with apple-trees. There should have been vineyards as in the old days. The green valleys of Lostwithiel, the smiling hills of St. Austell, were unlike anything else in the west country. England was left at Truro. Even the people were not English. The fishermen had the faces and the courtly manners of King Arthur's knights, and the heavy yokel of English districts did not exist.

When the traveller saw the sun shining on the treeless district of the mines at Chacewater, he realised that it had been dark during his journey through the beautiful country. He had missed it all. And now it was light, so

that he could see once more the rough heather and granite, the great bare stretches of country with its unworked tin-mines and patches of stunted pine. It looked very bare and desolate. The occasional cottages were squalid, and the stained granite churches seemed to be weary of withstanding the heavy storms which battered them so often. The scene grew wilder as the train swept on; trees and hedges were left behind; there were no more cornfields, nor cottages with bright flower gardens; the end was approaching, the Land's End; and soon there would be nothing, except the granite and stunted gorse, and the foaming waste of sea. It was like a beautiful woman growing old; South Devon her youth; Eastern Cornwall her early married life; then at Truro middle age; and so on into the desolation and decay of old age. Burrough wondered whether he too had left behind the trees and flowers; whether he too had passed through the flowering woods and the luxuriant lanes; whether he might be coming, in more senses than one, to the untrodden wastes; to end at length among the cruel rocks and the stormy sea.

It was a waste which was not all a waste. Upon the magnesian soil grew the flesh-coloured Cornish heather, which no art short of witchcraft could induce to grow east of Truro. In the villages down below, accustomed to the roar of the sea, were semi-tropical plants; and the hydrangeas were bushes and the fuschias were trees. The wide sweeps of treeless land were still beautiful, and so was the air. It was the air after all that was the best. It was fresh and pure, and so soft that to breathe it into tender lungs made all the wide difference between pleasure and pain.

Respectable people had not breakfasted when Burrough reached Penzance. He found it difficult to believe that when the hands of the clock had last stood at half-past seven he had been in his cottage by the gorge, and had no idea of setting out upon a pilgrimage. But the shrine was still some miles away. He had no money to waste upon conveyances, so he struck into the good main road, and walked the eight miles to St. Sennen Church-Town with hardly a stop by the wayside.

It was not until reaching the village that he felt he had done foolishly. Nervous at the best of times, he felt doubly so when he walked in the crooked street, glancing half-defiantly at the villagers, and feeling extremely helpless and unwilling to accost any of them. There were a few visitors about the place. He saw an artist with a huge white umbrella; a mild-looking clergyman attempting to add the leaven of respectability to a

rather noisy party; an elderly over-dresssd lady with a young and obviously persecuted companion; two youths with cheap cigars and ready-made clothes; and a regiment of very well-drilled children, officered by a nurse with the figure of a Falstaff and the face of a dragoon, including even the moustache. These and other curious objects of the Land's End presented themselves to Burrough's vision; but he saw nobody resembling Beatrice and her aunt.

The post-office being the information bureau of all villages, the traveller went thither. The woman in charge looked with suspicion at the nervous young man, who was wearing a rather unsightly patch over his right eye, but she answered his questions readily enough. "Yes, she knew Miss Beatrice Pentreath. Everyone in Western Cornwall knew her. No, she was not at Sennen, and had not been there all the year."

"But I had a letter from her yesterday with the Sennen postmark," said Burrough.

"I know you did," said the woman. "Poltesco posted it. He were Miss Pentreath's nurse, and he'm a fisherman and lives here," she explained.

Seeing the wonder on his face, she went on, "Miss Pentreath warn't like other young ladies, and her warn't brought up like 'em. Her wouldn't have a woman nurse, and as her were always out of doors they got Poltesco to nurse she. Her's very fond of Poltesco, and he'd do anything for she."

"Could I see him?" Burrough asked.

"He went out wi' the fishing boats last night," the woman answered.

"Well, then, if you don't mind," said Burrough awkwardly, "perhaps you would tell me where Miss Pentreath lives."

This the woman refused to do in simple apologetic language, and Burrough could only admit that she was in the right. Evidently Beatrice did not want him to know where she lived. She was afraid he would come down and worry her, and she too was in the right, for that was exactly what he was trying to do then.

Suddenly a thought occurred to him. He was certain that the woman would tell Poltesco of his visit so soon as the fisherman returned, and would, moreover, describe his appearance, and record every word that he had said. He might communicate with Beatrice after all, and might, moreover, have the very message conveyed that he had come to deliver in person.

“You are quite right,” he said to the woman, making a step aside and pretending to adjust the patch. “Poltesco might not like it if you gave me Miss Pentreath’s address. You see I have had an accident. I have had the misfortune to lose an eye.”

“Dear life! There’s a cruel pity!” exclaimed the woman.

“It is nothing like so serious as was feared at first,” Burrough went on, still arranging the patch as an excuse for his remarks. “The wound has healed almost entirely, and I am about to have a false eye fitted. When that has been done, my appearance will be very much as it was before the accident. At least, so I am assured by the surgeon who is to perform the operation.”

Upon leaving the post-office Burrough felt his journey had not been made in vain. “Those gossiping tongues will convey the message for me,” he said. “And as it is only because of my appearance that Beatrice has cut me off from her, there is still a chance she may consent to see me again. Now for the Land’s End, some lunch, and a soliloquy upon the rocks. Then for Penzance and a train home again.”

At the little hostelry above the sea, where the land narrows into a mass of rocks and sea-foam, Burrough obtained food and drink. Afterwards he roamed to the end of Penwith and saw its wonders, from the natural tunnel and the amazing sea-scape, to the Armed Knight and Dr. Johnson’s Head enveloped in a whimsical wig.

As he stood there alone Burrough felt that he ought to say many fine things. None, however, occurred to him. He felt much confused and somewhat drowsy. Nothing suggests the end of the world, and the end of all things, quite so distinctly as the fag end of Cornwall when the outline of Scilly is not apparent. All the headland is of granite, but shattered and splintered, and bristling like a crocodile's jaws. There are plenty of black and grey lichens, and sometimes little sprigs of heather pushing hopefully from sheltered nooks; and there is always the roar of the sea, which never stops. It is not deep; would that it were for the sake of ships. A country with palaces and fair gardens, and one hundred and forty churches, lies just beneath the surface. It is the lost land of Lyonesse, submerged with all its cities and towers and its dreams of fair women; and yonder, in the vague cloud mists which never shift, is the island valley of Avillion where Arthur lies with his three queens, being healed of his grievous wound.

The sea and the wind were calm that day, but there was nevertheless a roaring as of imprisoned lions beneath the cliff. Each blackened rock rising out of the water had a ring of white foam at its base; and the waves went leaping up, embracing the crags, streaming back unwillingly in streaks as of molten silver; or like the white arms of a loving wife withdrawn reluctantly from her husband's neck. The sea-mews soared screaming, and cormorants skimmed over the waves. It was peaceful there, but with all its quietness haunted by ghosts and tales of shipwreck. Here vessels had been cast away by those wasteful waters before the Romans came tin hunting; and bodies in thousands had been hurled landwards with the contemptuous, "Earth, take thine earth," of the wind-tossed waves; from a stern bearded Phœnician to a beautiful pale girl in her frilled nightdress with a string of pearls about her neck.

It was the romantic thought of the lost land—for the actual end was certainly in Scilly once—which was the charm of the place to Burrough, who, with all his faults, and perhaps because of them, had a powerful imagination. He rested upon a sun-warmed slab of granite and looked out upon Lethowsow, the sea which flows across Lyonesse. As the sound of the roaring came up from below he imagined the land rising in all its glory out of the sea. There were castles embattled with huge archways and dark towers glistening in the sun. Warders paced the turrets, and the old Seneschal stood with keys beside the gate. Beyond was a garden of green arbours of red roses and white lilies; and there a noble dame was teaching

her damsels to make silken work and cloth of gold; and there were long-haired knights playing bowls in the cool alleys. There were meats and wines prepared for them in a rich pavilion; and some were feasting, and some lying upon the grass amid the flowers, listening to the birds; and some whispering to mistresses, bright as blossoms on the whitethorn, a tale that was old even in that young world.

Then an old man came forth, and all forsook their tasks or pleasures to flock about him. He was clad in a deep yellow robe, his white beard swept his chest, a chaplet was upon his head, and his harp gleamed before him. He was the minstrel king, the schoolmaster and historian of the time, and he sang the history of his country and of the deeds of its heroes.

Outside the royal palace a herdsman had gathered a crowd to tell them of some notable adventure which had befallen him in the enchanted forest; and while he was speaking a lovely lady rode past, her robe gathered close that she might display her wondrous figure; a jewel in her hair worth a Saxon Kingdom; her white palfrey ambling proudly; her falcon upon her wrist, and two white greyhounds running at her side. She paused to listen to the herdsman's story, not doubting it, because the world was enchanted then, and she had spoken with Lancelot, the maiden knight who had seen the Holy Grail covered with red samite, in that wonderful night when he had arrived "afore a castle on the backe side, which was rich and faire, and there was a posterne that opened toward the sea, and was open without any keeping, save two lions kept the entrie, and the moone shined cleare."

A glorious land was that old Lyonesse of romance. Every story was sure to end happily there. It was a land where women were always beautiful, and good as beautiful, and the knights, however tried and persecuted, were saints, half poets and half priests. Nothing is left of that kingdom now, except love. The poetry and chivalry of that lost land have gone. Even the dreams of it, say hard-headed men, are dangerous. They are but flashes of lightning out of a cloud, beautiful always, rarely harmful. Every time a true-hearted man kisses a virtuous maid in pure love they enter together, though it may be only for a moment, the sweet lost land of Lyonesse.

Burrough stirred from his rocky seat. He thought he had heard a distant murmur of voices. Time was pressing and he had far to go that day. It was a ridiculous descent from the land of romance to the railway timetable; but it was necessary that he should catch the early evening train from Penzance. He moved a step forward, looked over the edge into the dip of the cliff, and

saw, not stunted gorse, nor wind-blown heather, nor even ragged granite—but a boy and girl clasped together in the first frenzy of love.

And they had found Lyonesse. They did not discover Burrough. They clung together, breast to breast and mouth to mouth; and the only sound they made was a passionate sigh as they inhaled each other's breath. Every romance was dry as dust compared to that. Their young faces were seaward. Their features were bathed in the warm red sunshine—to them it was sunrise, such as had never been before, such as would never come again.

CHAPTER XXIV.
HOW BURROUGH RECEIVED VISITORS.

To Burrough's surprise and delight, another little note came in Beatrice's quaint handwriting—each word was like a long-legged spider—the envelope postmarked Sennen, as before. Certainly the girl was not a complete letter-writer. Her fun, daintiness, and nonsense seemed to desert her directly she took a pen into her hand. It was a most precise note, telling him she had just spent a night lance-spearing in the sands, though she did not mention the name of the sands. Her aunt was not at all well, and was grumbling a great deal. She was having some photographs printed of herself in fisher-girl's costume—long boots, oilskins, and jersey—and would send him one if he cared to have it. And she remained "his old pal, Bill." It was a most unfeminine epistle, not even containing a postscript; but it convinced Burrough that he was remembered.

The omens for his success had been lately more favourable. The slight operation had been performed with considerable success, the false eye had been fitted, he had become accustomed to the new sensation which it caused and the new expression which it gave, and he was able to agree with the enthusiastic surgeon that the result was a triumph of surgical art. His appearance was altered very strikingly for the better now that the principal cause of disfigurement had been removed. He was no longer unpleasant to gaze upon. The false eye certainly changed his expression. It made him look alert and businesslike, and it also added a suggestion of cunning to his face which he did not like.

Acting on a friendly suggestion made to him privately at the camp, Burrough wrote to the War Office withdrawing his claim. He was assured that by so doing he would prevent much unpleasantness, on the one side of giving, and on the other of receiving, an unfavourable reply. It was pointed out that a great deal had been done for him, that he was in very much the same position then as before the accident, with health and powers of working practically unaffected, and that he was to blame for having exposed himself to danger, being a commoner perfectly well acquainted

with the ranges used by the artillery and the times of firing, and not an ignorant visitor who had strayed upon that part of the moor by chance. So Burrough climbed down gracefully, and expressed himself well satisfied with the care and attention which had been bestowed upon him. The camp broke up, and the moor was abandoned to its winter solitude and dreariness. And the owner of the cottage by the gorge, conscious that he would have to rely upon his own efforts entirely, settled earnestly to work, his pipe his sole companion, now that poor Peter had passed away for ever.

At last he wrote to Beatrice, unable to bear the sense of separation any longer. Merely a few lines reminding her she had not sent him her address, begging her to do so, and promising he would not come down without her permission, and that he would be obedient in all things. He commenced the letter, "My dear Bill," and concluded it, "Yours always, Jack"; and he enclosed it, carefully sealed, in an envelope addressed to the post-mistress of Sennen, and containing a polite request that she would give the enclosed to Poltesco, the fisherman, if she did not wish to add Beatrice's address herself.

A few days later there came an answer in quite a different style—

> "So you went to Sennen, and you made kind inquiries about me, and you moralised at the Land's End, did you? I heard all about the poor old soldier who had lost his eye in the wars. But why did you? In the note I left for you with the Cobbledicks I charged you not to search diligently for me. I was afraid you might want to forget that my name is Bill, the fisherman of the hamlet of Blank, in the parish of Blank, in the kingdom of West Wales. You might have written every day and run to and fro. I judged you quite accurately. Well, now, as Bill, I should like to see you; but as Beatrice I ought not to. That is why I don't give geographical particulars concerning my hut circle. Of course I shall see you again, and as two wild boys we'll ramble in Blissland, and go swaling, and walk to Cranmere. We'll do it all over again next summer. By that time we shall have become more settled in our minds. Apart altogether from the results of that horrid accident—though I do hear they have patched you up and made a first-rate job—I'm not the sort of fisherman to meet a girl on Monday, want her to say 'Yes' on Tuesday, and to wear a

wedding-ring on Wednesday. You know what I mean. I'll give you Poltesco's address, and you may write to me through him once a month. Just 'Dear Bill.' You understand. No endearments and no diminutives. Do you want a successor to King Peter? If so, I'll send you one in a basket. He's a little prince, but not royal, and he laps milk like a cherub. He's doing his little traedjawg—worse than gorse-prickles—on my knee as I write. I'm working hard on my native moor. I'm actually doing a little independent tin-streaming. You may write when you get this.

"Your old pal,
"BILL.

"P.S.—I'm certain I am right in keeping you in the dark about my address. After a little you will think me a perfect toad."

It was a red-letter day for Burrough. Beatrice was herself again. That was very different from the two precise notes he had already received. She could put her fun and nonsense upon paper after all, and the mere fact that she had done so on this occasion convinced him that his cause was not hopeless. His message had reached her and had done its work. Evidently she did consider it possible that she might bear with his false eye and scar now that the really unpleasant details had been removed. She was right not to commit herself. She was right to withhold her address. He knew how weak he was, and how his loneliness affected him. Had she given him her address he would have gone to her during one of his irresistible outbursts of feeling—such as that which had taken him to Sennen—in spite of all the promises he might make. She knew that too, and had taken the wiser course of keeping him from her until, as she had said, they should become more settled in their minds.

The literary business that engrossed Burrough for that day, and much of the ensuing night, was a letter of ten thousand words. He had never written at such length or so readily before. When about to write professionally he had to take himself by the shoulders, as it were, force himself into his chair, and condemn himself to be seated for a fixed period. No such tyrannical methods were required that day. He did not revise the lengthy screed, but packed it up in a long envelope and sent it off to the faithful Poltesco.

Soon he received the formal announcement—

"Dear Sir,—Your manuscript has reached us safely. We will write you our opinion regarding it as soon as possible.

"We are, yours faithfully,

"Bill & Co.

"At the sign of the 'Stormy Petrel,' n'Importe Ou."

No opinion came, and the days drifted on, making a week, a second, and a third, until Burrough grew restless and impatient. At length there came a break in the monotony.

It was the first day of winter—the weather of winter, if not yet the season. A thick haze was hanging upon the moor, blotting out tor and cleave, and there came continually a stinging shower of sleet, slanted by the wind into the faces of those who were unfortunate enough to be abroad. Mrs. Cobbledick's meteorological statement, that it was "a full day with a tremenjus frisk," was admirably descriptive of the prevailing conditions.

Burrough worked steadily through the morning. During the afternoon a knock came upon his door. He hurried to open it and discovered a shivering Frenchman, bearing a pole on which were slung long strings of onions. He was one of the Bretons who cross twice each year to Plymouth, and from that point wander through the west to hawk the produce of their fields. High Dartmoor was a savage place to that quaking man after his smiling Brittany.

Burrough invited him in, and gave him a stool beside the glowing peat. The onion-seller accepted gratefully, and his eyes shone when he heard himself addressed in his native tongue. As for Burrough, he was glad of any sort of companion just then. He would have welcomed an escaped convict. So he pressed the man to stay and talk for an hour or so in his lonely hut. He gave the Breton tobacco and tea. He bought the longest of his strings of onions. He talked of the wild moors and of smiling Brittany, and compared them unpatriotically. He made a great fire, as though he had determined to have the man broiled and garnished with his own onions. And the Breton cooked his toes, and thawed his cheeks, and worshipped the Englishman in a devout manner.

Burrough looked at the man's thin face and sallow skin tanned by climate and sea air, his small restless eyes, thin lips, and slight wisp of black moustache. Here was a man who worked much harder than he and was not so well off. A newspaper column written off in a couple of hours was of more value than all those strings of onions. Was the man married? But yes,

m'sieur. And children? Three, m'sieur. How did he manage? How in the name of the age of miracles did he manage? Ah, that was where Our Lady and the blessed saints came in. Burrough, neither more nor less sceptical than most scholars, smiled cynically.

Then the man rose. He had far to go. He had shelter to seek, and the "tremenjus frisk" was still beating outside. He was only an incident, and yet Burrough was sorry to lose him; and when he had departed after more worshipping the lonely man was half inclined to call him back. He wanted to find a solution of the social problem—how could a man maintain a home, wife, and three children by crossing the channel and selling a few strings of onions? And if it were possible what was the equivalent for the strings of onions which would enable the educated man of gentle birth to obtain such luxuries?

Burrough was unsettled. He had received a visitor. Such a thing had not happened since Beatrice's departure. He had seen a fellow-creature; had spoken well-nigh forgotten French; had entertained a man at his fireside—a fact to be recorded and remembered.

The short day closed in, and Burrough longed intensely for the divine pleasures of matrimonial tea. He imagined the lamps lighted, himself on the hearthrug beside the glowing fire, "the curtains drawn and flickering gently," Beatrice tea-making, while the "tremenjus frisk" was beating upon the windows and the water thundered down the gorge. And he thought again of the Breton out upon the wild moor with the strings of onions, and envied the man because he had solved the social problem and remained respectable.

Presently the showers of sleet ceased and there was a calm. The sky cleared a little, and a few stormy-looking stars peeped out between the wet clouds. Burrough had not been outside all day. He determined to go for a walk towards the village. He might see some more men and hear the human voice again. The visit of the onion-seller had been a dissipation, and he wanted more of it. He resolved to persevere in it for the rest of the evening.

It was dark and gloomy when he looked out, regular Dartmoor weather, and there were groups of ponies huddled for shelter under the side of the moor beside his cottage with their tails towards the wind. The baffling mist lent strange shapes to the ragged gorse, and the breezes were laden with vapour. The physical conditions of Dartmoor would not be endurable until the four gloomy months ahead had come and gone, and the sunshine of

spring had converted the bleak and uncomfortable surroundings into a garden of ferns and flower.

Not a single specimen of the biped *homo vulgaris* was sighted by Burrough as he tramped towards the village, nor was there a genial vision of anyone in petticoats—something in dark serge, with a suspicion of red flannel underneath, and a suggestion of Beatrice about the ankles would have done his heart good. Even some moorman's wife—called wickedly by Beatrice moorhens—would have cheered his lonely spirits, although there was practically nothing feminine about them, apart from anatomy and clothing. Men and women were as extinct as dodos and great auks so far as the rough moorland track was concerned. Even the village at a slight distance resembled a sort of disinterred Pompeii without light, sound, or motion.

The illusion was disturbed when Burrough came into the centre of things. He heard a scream suggestive rather of insanity, but nevertheless a human sound, and on that account not unwelcome. He saw a light through the mist, a sort of jack o' lanthorn jerking from side to side, moving very gradually beside the high wall surrounding the Vicarage garden. He associated the scream with the presence of that light. Within the dark tumbledown vicarage the housekeeper was indulging in those revelries observed by all devout worshippers of Bacchus. The lantern bearer without the wall was old Yeoland. He had been driven out by the woman and did not dare to return. He would walk up and down, mumbling and trembling, until the bottle-imp inside had ceased to trouble the evening air with her exclamations. The screams were intermittent, and every time one came the lantern perceptibly wobbled. In the sycamores by the church a pair of owls were hooting in B flat. On the whole it was somewhat weird.

Burrough had some genuine sympathy for old Yeoland. He distrusted common report which declared that the Vicar was a moral, as well as an intellectual, failure; that he was not so much under the thumb of his riotous housekeeper as was supposed; that he was in short bound to her by a tie which for his own peace of mind and his reputation he did not dare to break. This was the sort of talk dear to Mrs. Cobbledick, and much indulged in even by those who were opposed to her in the matter of butter-making. Solitude had played havoc with old Yeoland. That, and the keen mountain air, had created in him the desire for tippling, and he had not drawn the line until it was too late. He was absolutely alone in the world. He had bought

the living as a young man. It brought him in a miserable pittance, and he could not give it up, although unable to perform the duties connected with it. To do so would have meant exchanging the damp half-ruined thatched cottage which constituted the vicarage for the comparative comfort of the workhouse. During the summer evenings he basked at his gate, ogling the girls as they passed. The winter evenings he spent in his arm-chair, half asleep, or sobbing like a frightened child, afraid of the solitude, except on those occasions when he had to wander through mist and mud with his lantern, listening to the owls in the sycamores and the screaming in the house.

Burrough went up and greeted the old man. With his big stable lantern in one hand, a thick stick in the other, he shuffled along very slowly, rather like a toad dragging itself over a gravel path. He was delighted to see Burrough, although as a rule he avoided him, because solitude and the partial loss of his five wits had made him shrink from every man.

"Don't talk about the weather," mumbled old Yeoland directly he recognised Burrough.

"I won't," said the young man, "I wasn't going to."

"Don't talk of noises," the Vicar went on. "The owls are screaming all round, all over Dartmoor."

"In your house and garden," added Burrough.

"Never mind. They'll stop presently. Make a joke. Go on! Say something to make me laugh."

"I'm afraid I can't joke to order. Why are you out so late?"

"To get the air," said old Yeoland. "I come out all weathers—when it pours with rain. I get soaked through, wet to the skin—does me good, makes me young again. Were you at the university? Are you a scholar?"

"I took classical honours," said Burrough.

"Well done," said the Vicar, shuffling back as though the announcement frightened him. "Have you got a paper for me? Can't you give me a funny paper with pictures?"

"I might have one at home," Burrough answered, "but my cottage is a long way off upon the moor."

"I'm coming to see you some day. Get the paper. Go on! Winter's coming. I want something to make me laugh."

"All right. I'll go and get it."

With that Burrough turned and left him. Old Y.'s conversation was not the sort of dissipation he had come out to find; and he felt a sudden desire to return and work. He knew that the old man would forget all about him and the "funny paper" in less than ten minutes. He hurried back over the wild moor, whistling loudly, and trying to imagine he was in sympathy with the lonely life of wind and vapour that had fallen to his lot.

Beside his cottage he was troubled with an uncomfortable sensation. He seemed to feel the near presence of a human being. He thought he had seen a figure swaying through the mist, and he made a few steps up the moor to satisfy himself that the motion was caused by a big gorse-bush troubled by the wind. The ponies stamped and squealed beside the door. Burrough stampeded them, then as he turned the handle he hesitated. Suppose he should find someone inside, some abortion, a creature of the moors, or a murderous convict escaped from Princetown. Even while he hesitated the gorse-bush in the mist shook again like a swaying human figure, and somehow he could not turn his back upon it. He smiled at his folly. The meeting with old Y. had unhinged him. Of course there could be no one there. The people of the village would be going to bed. Pixies were extinct —besides that figure of his imagination was no little person, but a giant, a Corineus. And as for convicts the only ones to escape rifle-shot had been accounted for by the bogs. No convict could make that dreaded "crossing" in winter without a guide.

The next minute Burrough was inside, searching for matches by the glow of peat upon the hearthstone. The lamp lighted, and its beams streaming across the moor from the uncurtained window—that window was called the lighthouse by the villagers—he felt easier in his mind, and wondered what had made him such a fool. Unable to work or read, or indeed to do anything but dream, he flung himself upon the lounge, watching the smoke drifting, listening to the ponies stamping outside. Only a wall of granite blocks separated him from the sheltering animals and the swaying gorse-bushes. When a shaggy pony bumped or scratched itself upon the rough wall he became aware of it; and he thought he could hear the prickles of the gorse scraping against the stones.

Then the onion-seller became an enemy. It was the visit of that Breton which had upset Burrough in the first instance, and his going away had left him hopelessly unsettled. Through his means Burrough was transported into smiling scenery. He left Dartmoor winds and vapours, to roam in warm

valleys, amid white flowers, between blue hills covered with grape-vines. A face began to reveal itself and a figure clad in oilskins, a fisher-girl going down to the boats with a stable lantern in her hand and strings of onions upon her shoulder. It seemed to Burrough he was gazing out from his window and the scene was in Brittany, although surrounded by Cornish cliffs. And near him upon a boulder the fisher-girl was sitting, and he looked, and it was Beatrice with Breton onions, Cornish oil-skins, and old Y.'s stable lantern. Then Dartmoor vapours rolled down, the sunshine disappeared, the wind howled, the water roared for a moment in the gorge—and then he fancied himself walking with Beatrice hand in hand, just as he had walked with her a few months before along the Apron String, and into their fanciful little kingdom of Blissland by the river of ferns.

This picturesque dream was interrupted by what would have been prosaic enough in most places, but there was romantic, even terrifying, and causing in Burrough a reflex of feeling that swallowed up imagination and left him, not so much in amazement, as a state of terror. He was aroused by a knock upon the door.

At last he went to receive the ghostly visitor. He dragged the door open desperately, prepared to see the outline of a Brittany onion-seller, or a Devonshire pixy, or a Cornish giant. It appeared to be the latter. A tall upright figure stood there, and a pleasant musical voice apologised for troubling the gentleman, but would he direct him towards the nearest station. The mists had caught him upon the moor and he had lost his way.

In wild places every human habitation is an inn. During his wanderings Burrough had frequently received the invitation, "Do ye come in and pitch." In English more classical he repeated the customary formula, and the stranger at once bent his head and entered.

"Good heaven! Another Frenchman." Such was Burrough's mental exclamation. First a Breton onion-seller, and now a Norman fisherman. Were the western moors overrun by the French peasantry? Had they conquered and seized West Wales as Beatrice fondly called her dear land, and was this white-haired Barbarossa quartered upon him as a punishment for his sins? Certainly the stranger's face was Norman; but as assuredly his speech was Cornish. Burrough remembered that the types are similar. But a second visitor—that was the amazing incident—a second visitor that day!

A finer specimen of a man he had never seen. Tall, upright, and somewhat thin; his face would have been attractive anywhere, and have

arrested the attention of anyone given to ethnological inquiry—it was weather beaten, sharp-lined, and wonderfully free from wrinkles, although the man must have been more than sixty; that fact was proclaimed by the crisp white hair. It was a beautiful face, a Sir Galahad type of face, and its smile was gentle, maternal rather than masculine, and even sweet if such an epithet could be applied to the smile of any man. He was in fisherman's costume; long boots well above the knees, corded breeches, thick ribbed jersey half concealed by a rough jacket, and around his neck was a snowy muffler, and upon his head was an oilskin hat shaped exactly like the barber's basin sported by the knight of La Mancha as the helmet of Mambrino.

"This is different from your Cornish weather," said Burrough, when he had persuaded the man to be seated.

"It's cold there too," said the fisherman. "And windy, sir, beside the sea."

"I know you are from Cornwall. Your speech betrays you. So does your face. I am wondering what brings you upon Dartmoor," Burrough went on, while he stirred the peat and put on some sticks to make a blaze.

"Yes, sir, us Cornish folk don't travel much. I'm up to see a friend to Chagford. Walking across the moor I lost my bearings."

"You are perfectly right. You are making straight for the station," said Burrough. "But if you crossed from Chagford you have done a wonderful thing. I couldn't do it this time of year and I know the moor. I see by your boots you escaped the bogs. How did you manage it?"

"I came a bit round, sir," explained the fisherman, with his singularly pleasant smile.

Burrough knew that the man was not telling him the truth. Making for the Cornish line from Chagford he would certainly pass that way, if he struck across the moor. That he had not done so was obvious by the state of his boots, which ought to have been plastered with bog-mud, but were perfectly clean. Several thoughts occurred to Burrough, all strange ones. He noticed whenever he looked up that the fisherman withdrew his gaze hurriedly. He noticed also the woollen wrapper round the man's neck. That had not been made by his wife or daughter; and he would scarcely have bought anything so dainty. The last time he had seen such a wrapper was when Beatrice was walking in the rain; and the wrapper was lying upon her dark brown hair. He smiled to himself with a kind of triumph.

“I must be getting on, sir. Thank’ye kindly,” said the old man with simple dignity.

“Fill your pipe before you go,” said Burrough, handing over his tobacco jar. “What would you like to drink—a glass of beer?”

“Thank’ye kindly,” said the fisherman again, with the smile which seemed to convey a blessing with it.

Burrough brought the beer and the fisherman accepted it with a courteous gesture. The young man for reasons of his own made it his business to keep as much as possible away from the light. He tried to appear at his best before the old fisherman. He talked brightly and laughed continually, and did all else that was possible to make a favourable impression. The gentle old fellow laughed too, and was obviously well pleased at his reception, and quite satisfied with his host; but for all that he declared he must be getting on his way.

“You cannot get home to-night,” said Burrough.

“I’m going to Plymouth, sir. I have friends to Torpoint. Is it far to the station, sir?”

“I’ll show you the shortest way if you wait until I put on my boots.”

Burrough was soon back ready to start, but first he had a question for the old fisherman. He asked him what he thought of Chagford. The visitor replied he didn’t think much of the place, which was right and proper, as he was a Cornishman, and therefore possessed of hereditary hatred for everything that appertained unto Devonshire.

“But a very fine town,” argued Burrough. “Splendid buildings. Of course you saw the town-hall? Didn’t you admire that?”

“Yes, sir, a very fine building,” admitted the fisherman.

“And the big park with the pavilion and bandstand. You’ve nothing like that in Cornwall.”

“Yes, sir, a very fine park,” agreed the fisherman.

“And the theatre. As big as anything in Plymouth,” continued Burrough relentlessly.

“Yes, sir, a very fine theatre,” came the monotonous reply.

Burrough turned to lower the lamp, and the knightly old fisherman walked towards the door. The young man was greatly excited. So this visit was Beatrice’s answer to his long letter. And this man, who had probably never been out of Cornwall before; who professed to have walked over the moor from Chagford without getting mud on his boots; who knew so much

about the moorland village as to agree when he heard it described as a town with parks, fine buildings, and theatres; who asked moreover to be directed to the station from whence he had only recently proceeded for the express purpose of subjecting Burrough to a close scrutiny—who was this man, if he were not Poltesco, the faithful fisherman of St. Sennen Church-Town?

CHAPTER XXV.
HOW BEATRICE SAT IN THE DIMPSY.

[* Dimpsy = Twilight.]

THE cold wind and showers of sleet which had visited Dartmoor were the results of a storm upon the Atlantic. There had been high seas upon North Cornwall, seas which tossed the biggest ships as though they had been cockle-shells, and broke up the small ones like a lion crunching a bone. From Cape Cornwall to Trebarwith Strand the coast had been strewn with the pathetic rubbish of wreckage. An empty bottle of Hollands and a baby's coral were lying side by side in Porthmeer Cove quaint partners of tragedy. And at Porth Zennor a man was cast up by the sea.

It was Beatrice who discovered the body. She was out the morning after the storm, clad in oilskins, searching for curiosities to add to her museum—for the sea brought her treasures from China to Peru—and she perceived the white face bobbing beside the rocks. Like a cat the cruel sea had captured its victim and was now playing with it, patting it up to the land, and drawing it back before it could get too far. The girl scrambled down and secured the body and dragged it upon the rocks. The sight had no terror for her. She was not in the least afraid to touch it, although she had been once frightened out of her wits by the one-legged fisherman, and had been more repelled than she would own by the sight of Burrough's disfigurement. That body was not mutilated; only bruised, and its poor hands were chafed terribly. The man was a French fisherman come to beg a little earth from England, and the right to stop there. He was a young man and married; for there was a ring upon his little finger, a worthless ring, but made precious by the dark hair worked around it.

After rescuing the body from the sea, Beatrice sat down and sobbed. Here was half-a-century of useful life wasted by a sudden passion of wind. The joy of life was strong within her. She loved every day of the year, sunshine or storm; her prayer was for long life—nothing else—sorrow, sickness, poverty, were more endurable than the thought of losing her

beautiful body. With her, as with her Aunt, it was body first, the rest nowhere. So she cried for the poor Frenchman because he had lost his body. She would not have shed a tear for the widow. Why should she? The widow could go on enjoying the use of her body.

"Poor man," said Beatrice softly. "I am sure you were nice and you worked hard for your wife. Perhaps you worked too hard, and didn't think enough of yourself." Then she frowned, and shook her head at the sea. "Why will you spoil my home?" said she. "These rocks were not put here for you to wreck ships upon. You have given us another funeral, and I hate you for it." She lowered her voice. "It is not the fault of the sea, after all. It's the wind, and I don't know what's to blame for that."

She got up, shook the tears from her lashes, and the spray from her eyebrows, and hurried up the cliffs to make her discovery known.

The old gabled house, which was Beatrice's own property and had been in her family for hard upon two centuries, was very near the sea. It was protected against the worst gales by a furze-covered hill which, report declared, was the original Tom Tiddler's ground where the misguided mortal had stuffed his pockets with furze-blooms for gold. It stood in a slight hollow planted with great fuschias, hydrangeas, and escallonias. Beatrice had uprooted the rhododendrons, which were flourishing in great abundance when she came of age, because she considered they looked mournful in winter and in summer neither bird nor insect would dwell within them. In their place she had induced heather and bracken to grow, thus bringing the moorland characteristics to the very door of her home.

Beatrice was in a restless mood during those days which followed the storm. She felt that a great change threatened her life, the greatest change that can occur either to man or maid, and the thought of it unsettled her. It was necessary; that point she yielded. But it meant a breaking up of existing conditions, a certain amount of self-surrender, and probably a slight curtailment of her strange pleasures. She paid a flying visit to Sennen and came back thoughtful. She began letters and tore them up. She consulted her oracles, only to disregard the omens that they gave. She visited old wives at Porth Zennor and asked them their opinions upon various matters which interested her then. She tackled the fishermen and sought to hear what they thought of life and its environment. The answers she obtained were not encouraging. They threw her back after all upon her own feelings. The old wives seemed to be slightly cynical. They told her it was the duty

of every maid to secure a man for herself and to keep him if she could. They assured her it was as well to extend the period of courtship, by which they meant no doubt the "walking out," as much as possible, because that—and there the cynicism cropped up—was the best part of married life. It amused Beatrice to think that the joys of matrimony should be over before they had legally commenced; but that was the way of the world with a class which did not seek the ceremony until local sentiment and public morality demanded it. As for the fishermen they evaded the main issue and harped principally upon the habitation clause. They were afraid Beatrice might be leaving the country, so they assured her that anyone who had lived upon the Cornish coast could not settle or die in peace elsewhere. "You may travel over the world, east or west," said one. "And when you've done it all, you'll find there's only Cornwall and you'll come back." Beatrice declared there was no danger of her departure. She could not live out of her native air; and she laughed her agreement with the fisherman, when he declared, with racial antipathies to the West Saxons, that England east of Exeter was a wilderness.

The body of the young Frenchman was lying in the church which stood upon a hill. Beatrice walked there towards evening. Her love for that wild rocky coast was fully developed then, and she doubted whether she could love any living creature as much as she loved her life and her home. She did not find it dull. Her day was fully occupied; she had friends in all directions; she knew everyone in the district, from the youngest child to the oldest greybeard. Her complete independence satisfied her. She knew she could do what she liked; that she could depart any day; and with that knowledge she was content.

"I'll go and sit in the porch. I'll make up my mind there," said she.

First she raised herself on tiptoe beside a window, and looked inside the church. In the faint gloom she could just see the dim outline of the drowned fisherman, whose name and dwelling place were unknown, stretched upon the bier. Something was moving upon the uneven tiles beneath. Beatrice rubbed the glass with her finger, strained her eyes, and made out a mouse gliding smoothly to and fro. She shivered a little, because her stored up folk-lore suggested the tales where the human soul had been seen escaping in the form of a mouse. It seemed to her that the soul of the French fisherman was roving about the deserted church. The wind from the sea

made the pane moist again. Beatrice stepped down and passed into the porch.

The church had been built of Cornish granite perhaps a thousand years before. Surrounding it were monuments of still greater antiquity, dating from the Age of Bronze, before the coming of the Celts when broad-headed savages occupied the neighbouring moorland before Romulus and Remus had been suckled. It was not surprising that romance should die slowly in such an old-world place. Not so very long ago a famous ghost-layer had there wrestled with the powers of darkness. In the field adjoining the churchyard he had subdued the unquiet spirit of a poor ruined girl. Beatrice knew the spot where the good man had marked his pentacle in the midst of a circle, and at the intersection of the five angles had set up his crutch of rowan. She accepted such stories as these, and never asked herself seriously whether she believed in them. She herself knew all the spells necessary to lay a ghost; and had there occurred within the church that "soft and rippling sound," which denoted the approach of an unquiet spirit, she would have been up at once, taking her station south, on the true line of the meridian, and facing due north, as her witch instructress had taught her.

But the poor young Frenchman inside the church was peaceful. He made no soft and rippling sound. He was lying in the cobwebby gloom; and staring down upon him were monstrous mediæval frescoes and horrible faces in stone, more suggestive of an evil dream than religious symbolism. The mouse and the spiders and the dead man made no noise. Outside there was the wind. It was always windy there, and the murmur or the roaring of the sea came with it. As Beatrice sat in the porch dry leaves darted in strange fashion across the tiles, and scraps of heather and dried fronds of bracken scraped and tumbled about her little boots.

She was her normal self; quite warm and happy; and although slightly troubled in her mind she still refused to take things very seriously. It was her rule not to think unpleasantly, and thus she was able to sit in that gloomy porch, with the darkness coming up, and the memorials of departed Cornish folk around, and the wind drifting the wreckage of autumn up and down, without feeling the least qualm of dread. She looked at the roof of the porch and at the ancient church door, covered with half-rotten clamps, thinking and wondering. She thought about the man in the cottage by the gorge. She wondered if, about the time of the first primrose, she would pass that door and across that porch, in "faire white samite," with a crown of

spring blossoms, and a ring of gold upon the finger where, according to the Decretal, is a certain vein which reaches to the heart. Beatrice had seen the old book still kept in chains within the church, containing among offices and divers benedictions the pre-reformation order of matrimony. She had read the words with which many a maid then lying long forgotten in the surrounding acre had blushingly committed herself; she had written them in her prayer-book; she had them by heart; and she murmured them as she sat in the windy porch:—

"I Beatrice take the John to be my wedded housbonder, to have and to holde fro this day forwarde, for better for wors, for richere for poorer, in sykenesse and in hele, to be bonere and buxum in bedde and at the borde, tyll dethe us departe, if holy chyrche it woll ordeyne, and thereto I plight the my trouthe."

"It rests with myself. My destiny is in my own hands," said she.

There were sycamore leaves drifting past the porch. Beatrice had been watching them, and in an idle way counting them up to a dozen or so, then forgetting the exact number and starting afresh. Suddenly she drew out her watch. There was just light enough for her to see the hands upon the dial and the dry leaves passing outside.

"If twelve leaves, or more than twelve, pass completely across in two minutes I will marry in the spring."

She sat on in silence, and the leaves drifted by one by one. The issue was never in doubt; for at the end of the first minute there came a wintry gust which sent more than a score of black-spotted leaves rustling past. Beatrice put away her watch with a little smile; but as she rose to depart a cross-current caught the big leaves that had gone by and whisked them back again.

"You can't undo it," said she, frowning and addressing the heedless wind. "You may blow the leaves wherever you like now, but you shan't blow me back again. I have made up my mind; it's fixed due east, and blow out your cheeks as you like it's not going to point in any other direction. Blow into the church, if you must blow, and into the lungs of the poor French fisherman and give him his life again."

Beatrice was in ill-humour with the windy brethren. One of them had raised the storm which had been the cause of bringing the body into her own particular cove; another had turned back the flight of her augural leaves. If she could have captured those two windy brothers she would have

put them into the devil's frying-pan at Cadgewith there to seethe and bubble till they burst.

Little Miss Pentreath was in bed, unpainted, unapparelled, unadorned; as dreary a sight as a dismantled theatre. She was suffering from an attack of bronchitis, which prostrated her every autumn, and that season had been more severe than usual. A bed had been made up for her downstairs amid the cheerful surroundings which prevailed on the ground floor, as she did not like to be ill in a bedroom. Beatrice sympathised with her. Had she been ill she would have gone out to lie on the heather; and that was precisely the remedy which she had prescribed for her Aunt.

"Darling, I'm so glad you're back. I went to sleep and had a horrible dream, and woke with screams and shivers," was Miss Pentreath's greeting, as the girl came in. "Come and shake my pillows, and let me feel you, warm, glowing, healthy, lovely thing. Oh, that colour on your cheeks! I never could copy it, though I hunted through London and Paris. I never could make my cheeks like yours, could I, Trixy?"

"No, dear. They were rather Dutch-dolly. But it served you right. Going to England for what only Cornwall could give."

"I hoped you would contradict me. You are so downright in your negatives," sighed Miss Pentreath. "Whenever I asked you how I looked you always had a knock-me-down answer."

"I'm going to knock-you-down again," laughed Beatrice. "I'm going to tell you something which will either kill or cure. How will you have it—in two words, or a speech? All together, or broken gently? Gilded, or bitter? Plain, or varnished?"

"I won't have it at all," cried the invalid. "Don't worry me just as I am getting better. I am much better this evening, Trixy. I am not going to listen to horrors, wrecked ships, drowned sailors, bogged moormen—let's have tea and be snug, and see if we can't find something nice to talk about."

"I'm not going to spare you, Auntie. You have got to listen, and you may scream if you are moved so to do. You may also call me a toad, or compare me to any other of the reptilian creation which it may appear to you I particularly resemble."

"Go on, you bully," grumbled the little lady. "I'm entirely in your power. You will give me insomnia, and you won't even be sorry."

"Do you think, Auntie," Beatrice went on, seating herself upon the bed and speaking rather quickly, "that if a man were very fond of me he could

exist without me?”

“Why, of course he could. What a horribly conceited thing to say,” gasped Miss Pentreath. “I’ve been very fond of some men in my time, but I’m still alive, and I intend to remain so.”

“But if he were lonely and sad, and very fond of me?” Beatrice persisted.

“I always thought you were more likely to black a man’s eye than break his heart,” said Miss Pentreath, evading the question.

“Don’t be frivolous, else I’ll call you an old woman, which is the truth, though you don’t like to hear it.”

“You’re a toad, Beatrice. I don’t care—you are. A big bloated toad, clammy and horrible. Go away.”

“And you’re a very Methuselah of an old woman.”

“I can’t keep it up. I’m too weak,” laughed Miss Pentreath. “Anyhow, you always win in a slanging match.”

“I’ve broken off a nice big bit of the news,” the girl went on. “I’ve given you the broadest of hints. Now then, dear—what was your head given you for?”

“You are going to marry him?” gasped Miss Pentreath; and she rolled over in the bed and groaned.

“I’ve made up my mind at last. I am going to marry him,” said Beatrice.

“Where are you going to live?” asked the invalid, after a silent interval which Beatrice occupied by attending to the fire.

“Here nine months of the year. The other three on Dartmoor. Cheer up, Auntie. You shall keep house. I can’t.”

“You’re not going to desert me? You’re not going to turn me out?” cried Miss Pentreath. “Then I don’t care. You shall marry with my blessing, Trixy. You’re not a toad at all. You’re a darling, and if I could get out of bed I’d come and bite you.”

“I’ll draw near to be bitten,” said the girl.

After this ritual act had been accomplished Beatrice rang the bell and the maid brought in lamps and tea. Curtains were drawn, peat and wood in equal quantities were piled upon the fire, and it was all very snug. Miss Pentreath actually had a little natural colouring upon her cheeks. She sat up in bed, laughed over her tea, and was very happy now that she knew Beatrice was not intending to desert her. When the maid left them Miss Pentreath put a dozen questions in one breath, and with the next respiration

signified her willingness to make up for the part of bridesmaid. This called down upon her the reproof,—

"You will wear a bonnet and black silk dress, trimmed with your best lace, and you'll carry a huge prayer-book and look proper."

"I won't," cried Miss Pentreath. "Take care, Beatrice, or you'll revert to the reptilian state. I shall wear white *mousseline-de-soie*, with pink baby-ribbon and picture hat, satin shoes, lace stockings."

"Shut up," laughed Beatrice. "I don't want to know what clothes you are going to wear or what complexion you intend to put on. You're not my fairy godmother. You're my aunt, and you've got to be my best-woman. I'm going to be married early in the spring," she went on. "My marriage day will depend on the wild primroses. The Wednesday following the opening of the first primrose I shall give up my Cornish name."

"What a whimsical creature it was," murmured Miss Pentreath. "Really darling," she added, "you have wrapped yourself up in witchcraft, stupid superstition, and pixy-tales until I believe you've forgotten you are living in a hard-hearted and practical age."

"That doesn't matter. We are out of the hard-hearted age here. Anyhow, I am contemplating a practical act," said Beatrice.

"But, tell me, what you have been doing lately. What has made you alter your mind? You said you couldn't bear to look at the poor dear man—"

"Neither could I. But he's all right now, not quite as he was, of course, still good enough for me. I liked him very much from the beginning, and when I got to know him better I liked him much more. Then I was a good deal to blame for that horrible accident. I shall never find a man more devoted to me than he is. He's clever, too, and I appreciate cleverness. He's a writer, and I want to tell him all my experiences upon the moor, and my thoughts, and my little bits of folk stories; and he can write them out for me. We shall get on very well together. I shall be as free as I am now. I wouldn't marry except on that condition. We shall work in the morning, he and I—putting down all the folk-lore in the West. In the afternoon we shall be upon the moor."

"All this 'we,' this great 'we,'" interrupted Miss Pentreath with piteous scorn. "What about me?"

"You shall stop at home and make the puddings, dear."

"I quite perceive I am to play gooseberry-fool," sighed the invalid. "Well, I must bear it. Custom has made it a something of easiness. Is Mr. Burrough

here?" she asked. "Are you going to produce him suddenly?"

"And you most modestly abed! Well, he wouldn't recognise you off the stage so to speak. I haven't seen him since that evening when we gathered pixy-flowers in the copse, and you lighted the furze upon Brynamoor."

"Then how do you know about his restoration?" cried Miss Pentreath, wonderingly.

"I sent my child. He has reported most favourably," Beatrice explained, my child being her usual name for Poltesco. "He was immensely taken with poor Jack, and he has signified his entire approval of my choice."

"Fantastic person!" murmured the invalid.

"Fantastic, am I?" laughed Beatrice, rolling her cat over upon the rug. "That's nothing to what I'm going to do. I'm going to write to him this very night, post the letter to-morrow care of Bingie & Co., and perhaps it won't be delivered till goodness knows when."

"How fond you are of these stupid mysteries. Who is Bingie?" complained her aunt.

"The guardian of the bogs, my dear. The little person who rules the pools and wishing-wells. The letter may be delivered before winter sets in. If it isn't I must write and explain; for when the wild weather comes the post-office will be closed, and won't open for business until all the spring primroses have faded."

"As for those primroses," said a rebellious voice from the bed. "At the end of January I shall instruct the children to look out for the first flowers; and I shall offer sixpence for every one destroyed."

CHAPTER XXVI.
HOW IT WAS DREARY BESIDE THE GORGE.

EVEN on Dartmoor the hours after noon on Saturday may not be violated by work. It is a time of beer-drinking, debt-renewing, and ballad-singing; when the heads of families are gathered together into one place—the village inn; and the wives assemble in the market town to lay up provision for the coming week.

It was a Saturday in November, and the little village of Lew-upon-the-Moor appeared deserted. Ballads were being sung hoarsely and incoherently in Eastaway's inn, where that worthy soul was rattling into the till the wages he had just paid out; but the long street was empty, except for geese and dogs and the inevitable plague of fowls. Not even the witless face of old Y. was to be seen looking over his gate. The last summer visitor had left a month ago, and the parlour in every cottage had been set in order and closed for six long months. The reign of the winds had commenced.

Looking down the village one might have observed a quaint object in the middle of the road. It was a three-legged milking-stool. It was also a symbol of independence and a defiance to the parish. If a cart had come that way the driver would have dismounted to remove the stool, so that his horse should not stumble over it, and would then have replaced it prudently rather than with reverence. Even the animals avoided that stool. Every living creature had learnt to respect the tongue of its owner. Mrs. Cobbledick had always milked her cows in the middle of the road, and she intended to persevere in that practice so long as she might live.

In due time Ann appeared with a milking-pail, which had an indifferent claim to newness and cleanliness, leading Artful Twoad, her favourite cow, by a piece of rope, twisted about the animal's neck, and so rotten that a single tug would have snapped it. Having placed the cow precisely in the centre of the road, with many a "Do ye get up," "Do ye get back," and "Do ye bide still," for it had never yet occurred to her that it would be easier to shift the stool than to place the cow beside it, she wiped her hands upon her apron, which by its appearance might have been used for cleansing the

interior of a grate, and devoted herself to professional duties, calling out occasionally to Willum who was loafing beside the kitchen fire before going to loaf in the village inn.

Soon there came a mighty gust of wind which threatened to remove Mrs. Cobbledick, milking-stool, and Artful Twoad from the face of the moor. Both ladies objected, one of them by whisking her tail, and the other by screaming "Christmas!" her customary expletive, which had the merit of being not merely harmless but actually tinged with a suggestion of sanctity.

"Come out," she called. "There be a frisky wind. Do ye good, old dear."

After a little more admonition Willum appeared, hands in his pockets and apparently rooted there. He considered the time had come for him to exchange the fireside for the inn, that he might relieve his distressing malady by copious draughts of ale. Not that he expected any foaming gifts from Eastaway. A distinct coldness had sprung up between the stonebreaker and the house of Cobbledick, since Willum had acquired the tombstone by such unscrupulous methods. The scholar never entered the bar-room until he had first satisfied himself, either that Eastaway was absent or that several villagers were present with him. Possession being in that community the entire ten points of the law, Eastaway had come to regard the thirty shillings due to him for the stone as a bad debt; but he had not yet come to regard the mean old widow and her crafty son as brother and sister, although Griffey the preacher made a point of insisting that he should do so. As, however, Griffey regarded his brothers and sisters in practice very much as a man who is digging regards worms, the publican did not feel compelled to conform to his pulpit teachings.

"Don't ye take her head. Her won't hurt I," cried the widow when Willum, under a sudden fit of energy, made as though he would hold the rotten rope, and thereby run the risk of straining himself. "You be getting thin, Willum. You be wasting cruel. You mun eat more butter."

Willum raised objections. He explained that liquid foods were assimilated with greater ease and possessed far superior flesh-forming qualities. In his opinion the food most admirably adapted to his case was the exhilarating beverage prepared from farinaceous grain by a process of fermentation. "I mun drink more beer," was his summing up of the matter; and that he might put this laudable design into immediate practice he extorted sixpence from the widow by means of a few churchyard coughs.

“It be getting rough on the moor,” said Ann, butting her grey head into Artful Twoad’s side to make that patient animal more mindful of its duties.

“Wannell were going after his bullocks, but he’s let ’em bide,” replied Willum. “Says ’tis as much as his life is worth to go up on Dartmoor wi’ the frisk blowing.”

“So ’tis. Don’t ye go up, Willum. You’d be pixy-led sure enough and get stugged. ’Tis the first year the Dart have took no one,” she went on, screwing her head round to contemplate the ruddy features of her son.

“Year ain’t over yet,” the scholar reminded her.

“Dart don’t take ’en in winter. Takes ’en in summer. One year a man, next year a maid. ’Tis how it used to be, but the old ways have changed. Took that lady last year, Dart did. Her went in after the little maid that Dart were taking, and Dart took she instead. Her warn’t a maid, ’cause her were married. Bide still, Artful. The old ways have changed. Cows don’t give milk like they used to when I was a maid.”

Seeing that Willum was anxious to join the ballad-singers and fatten upon malted liquors, the mischief-making dame changed her subject, that she might detain her son until the milking was finished, and hinted darkly that the note, which Beatrice had left in her charge for the owner of the cottage by the gorge, might be “discovered” and forwarded to the person who had the most right to it.

“I tore ’en up,” Willum replied, with a malicious grin. “Tore ’en up the day after I shot his old cat. He wouldn’t pay for ’en. Told I to go and work. Let ’en work hisself.”

“Told ye to work,” cried the widow shrilly. “The mucky twoad! Her called ’en ‘dear Jack,’ in the letter,” she went on, relapsing into pure scandal. “Called herself ‘Bill.’ What du it mean, Willum?”

“It ain’t for me to say,” replied the scholar mysteriously. “Her was bad, and he’m bad, sure enough. Her wouldn’t call herself by a man’s name if her warn’t bad.”

“You never caught ’em together,” muttered the strictly moral old woman sorrowfully.

“They got away from I,” her son explained. “I never could find ’em. They went too quick for I. Got into lew places on Dartmoor where I couldn’t find ’em.”

“They was ashamed to be seen,” commented Mrs. Cobbledick, as she rose from her stool. “Honest folk like we stops in the village. Us don’t go

on Dartmoor to talk. I milks Artful in the middle of the road, ’cause I ain’t ashamed to be seen. I’m proud of it, Willum. Honest folk be always proud to be seen. They don’t hide themselves on Dartmoor. And when a maid calls herself Bill—well, I wouldn’t let she stop wi’ me if her didn’t pay us well.”

With these virtuous sentiments her son entirely agreed. As he moved away, to spend the evening in the vitiated atmosphere of the bar-room, he summed up the situation with the remark, “Her won’t marry ’en. Her be a lady, and he be only half a gentleman, though he reckons he’m a whole one; and he bain’t a scholar, though he reckons he be; and he’ve only one eye, though he reckons us don’t know it.”

“Her b’ain’t no lady,” cried Mrs. Cobbledick, harsh naturally upon her own sex. “Her be no better than an actress.” This was the unkindest thing the unkindly soul could think of. “Artful be more of a lady than she. Get over, Artful! Come back early, Willum,” she called after the slouching figure. “I’ll have a nice supper for ye, old dear.”

Five minutes later the village street was once more silent and deserted—given over to the geese and fowls—and the three-legged stool occupied the centre of the road until dusk.

That same afternoon Burrough was lying upon his bed. He was not well. He had a feverish headache, and his temperature was slightly above normal. For the last two days he had not been out; he was depressed by the wild and wintry weather, by the knowledge that he could do no work, by the overwhelming sense of his loneliness, and by the fact that he had heard nothing of Beatrice since the fisherman’s visit. Ill in body and worried in mind as he was, he began to wonder whether the experiences of that day had actually occurred. He had been dreaming a great deal lately owing to the disturbed condition of his brain; and sometimes he doubted whether he had been visited by the onion-seller in the first instance, and then by Poltesco, and whether he had walked out that evening and talked with old Y. under the Vicarage wall. His dreams had become a confused mixture of Breton valleys, Cornish cliffs and moors, pilchards and onions, old men with lanterns, screaming women and owls, and behind everything the vision of Beatrice, not quite as he had known her, but a graver, wiser Beatrice, sitting alone in fields of blue-flowered flax—that was the influence of the Breton—her hands clasped before her, and her distracting face always turned slightly away from him. He awoke with struggles, but the dream-

picture accompanied his waking hours, until he found it no easy matter to sift the grain of fact from the chaff of imagination.

From his position upon the bed he could command the moorland track, which heaved in the form of an arc right in front of his window. He could see everything that passed; the big horned sheep, the bullocks, and shaggy ponies. He looked continually along that rough bend of narrow road, wishing it was summer, longing to see some familiar creature of his own species start suddenly into view. Nobody had come that way during the two days of his illness—which was mental rather than physical—except the postman bringing him daily newspapers, but no letters, no small envelope bearing the Sennen postmark. He felt sure that Poltesco's report had been unfavourable. Three weeks had passed since the fisherman's strange visit, and Beatrice had not spoken. It could only be because she did not like to tell him that his artificial eye would repel her, as the artificial leg of the old fisherman had repelled her years before.

It began to grow dusk. Burrough stretched himself back upon the bed and closed his eyes. No one would come along the moorland track that day. Presently he roused himself to take his temperature. It had gone up slightly.

He went on dreaming. Again the Breton became a prominent figure, almost an obsession. Burrough imagined him planting his onions, harvesting them, stringing them, crossing to Plymouth that he might hawk them in desolate places, and returning with a few shillings' profit in his pocket to commence the trivial round again. He thought of the man's wife and children, wondered how they managed to live, where their clothes came from, how often they had a meal; and he envied the simple faith which made the success of the onion crop dependent upon the good-will of their blessed saints. Then he opened his eyes, dreading to fall again into the troubling realm of dreamland. Darkness was coming rapidly across the moor; the track was almost obscured; but his imagination had become so heightened, and the thought of the onion-seller possessed his mind so completely, that he actually saw the Breton, swinging along towards the gorge, with the pole upon his shoulder, and a string of bronzed onions hanging at each end.

"This won't do at all," he muttered, turning aside with a shudder.

He looked again. The darkness seemed to have increased marvellously in those few seconds, and it was not at first easy to distinguish the dull grey track between the black gorse-bushes. The apparition had vanished. Then a

pony dashed across, its mane and tail streaming wildly, and Burrough heard others in front of his cottage apparently stampeding. There was a moment of silence, and then came a gentle rap-rap upon the door.

Burrough sprang up, his head aching violently, but somehow not at all surprised. He was dressed, so he passed quickly downstairs, wrenched the door open, for the recent rains had caused the woodwork to swell, and was greeted at once with the shy smile and soft "good day" of the Breton, who was not an apparition at all, but the same man who had visited the cottage three weeks before, an hour or so before the coming of Poltesco, and had for some unaccountable reason remained an obsession ever since.

"You were kind to me the last time," said the man in his own language. "So I have come back to tell you something you may like to know."

"I am very glad to see you," Burrough replied heartily. "I am very lonely, and I am not well. Come in and talk to me, and spend the night here if you like."

"No, no," said the Breton. "I must walk a long way to-night. I am going home."

He lowered the pole from his shoulder, and pointed at the two remaining strings of bulbs. "Those are all I have left. I shall sell them as I go to Plymouth."

"You will leave them here. I will buy them," said Burrough.

"Thank you," the Breton replied simply, and he gave a little sigh which was more eloquent than words. He could go back to his wife with money in his pockets, and tell her he had sold all his onions, and had moreover sold them well.

Burrough felt restored. He was tingling with expectation of good news as he brought the Frenchman to his fireside, and the headache left him as though by enchantment. Here was a second mysterious visit. Had the Breton gone through Cornwall in the course of his wanderings; met Beatrice there; told her the story of the lonely seigneur, who had shown him kindness in the tiny chateau upon Dartmoor; received a message for him from her, one of those cryptic messages in which Beatrice so delighted? Had he beneath that rough jersey, very much like the one Poltesco had worn, something from the Cornish princess for the unfortunate and unhappy King of Trevalyor? That fairy-tale, which was not all a fairy-tale, came back vividly to Burrough's mind. How long ago it seemed! And how different their little kingdom by the river had been then!

“Tell me. Have you been in Cornwall?” he asked.

He was disappointed when the man smiled and shook his head. He had not been west of Plymouth. He had been in the mid-Devon villages, in the low, deeply-wooded swamp land, among the still almost primitive people of Zeal Monachorum and Bow, and the ancient hamlets along the northerly fringe of the moor. That morning he had been in Chagford, and had sold onions to the best known of the Dartmoor guides.

“Have you come from Chagford? Can you swear you come from there?” said Burrough excitedly, mindful of Poltesco’s deceitful story, of which this promised to be a repetition.

The Breton swore by the blessed saints, who had brought him a plentiful harvest of onions, and had enabled him to sell them at excellent profit, and had, moreover, taken his wife and children beneath their protection during his long absence, that he was speaking nothing but the truth. To satisfy Burrough he described the village, and when he had done so with complete accuracy, the young man expressed himself satisfied, and begged him to proceed.

“The guide is a good man. He, too, was kind to me,” said the Breton, puffing at the cigarette which his host had given him. “He told me he had been a great journey to a wild place, to the grande marais which he called Cranmere. He had done a service for a young lady.”

“Yes,” said Burrough, when the man paused. “Go on.”

“The young lady sent him a letter, and told him to take it to Cranmere. There is a box——”

“I understand all that,” the other interrupted. “I know all about the postal system of Cranmere. Give me names. Who sent the letter?”

“I do not know. The guide did not say. But the letter was for you.”

Burrough leaned forward. He placed a hand upon the Breton’s knee, and asked earnestly, “How do you know that?”

“Because the guide told me who that letter was for. He asked me if I had heard of you. I told him I had seen you——”

“How did you know my name?”

“That evening after I left you I went into the village, and I asked for your name. You had been very good to me. I came here cold and unhappy. I had tramped a long way and sold no onions. You brought me in. You gave me tea and tobacco, and let me sit by your fire. When I left you I was happy and warm. I sold my onions well. You had brought me good fortune. You

were my patron. So I asked for your name that I might remember it in my prayers."

Burrough was deeply touched. He took the Breton's hand and shook it warmly, murmuring a few words of gratitude, not so much for the pious remembrance as for the information he had brought. He was grateful to discover that there were men eager to go out of their way to perform a kindly service in return for a very little kindness. He knew that not a single commoner would have made a dozen steps to bring him the information which this poor alien had brought gladly. He thanked the Breton again and again.

"It is nothing," said the man simply. "I have not come out of my way. I could see that the guide did not wish you to know about the letter, but he did not ask me to keep silence. I would not interfere between you and the lady. But if I have helped you, and if I have made you happy, I am glad. There is one thing which makes a man happy, whether he is a gentleman or a poor onion-seller, and that is love. Is it not so?"

"You have done for me more than you know," Burrough told him. "You have made me very happy."

"Then I am happy too," said the Breton.

"You came to me before cold and unhappy, and you say I sent you away warm and satisfied. I was miserable and ill when you came just now, and you have made me happy. You have made me well."

The Breton's honest eyes gleamed with pleasure, and he laughed as innocently as a child.

"It was the blessed St. Francis," he said. "I wondered whether you would wish me to come and tell you, or whether you would not desire to know. There were magpies on the moor, and I prayed to St. Francis and said, 'If one magpie flies across the road I will not go. If two fly across I will.' And the holy St. Francis heard my prayer and sent two."

CHAPTER XXVII.
HOW BURROUGH WENT TO DART HEAD.

It was very dark upon the moor that night. There was a cold mist, and through it came from time to time stinging snow showers which could hardly be faced, because of the bitterness of the wind which brought them across the bare hills and bog land from the great plateau, which was the centre of Burrough's thoughts from the hour the Breton left him. Hidden away in the tin box, which in its turn was safely enclosed within the soaked masses of peat forming the cairn in the centre of the land of desolation, was Beatrice's letter, waiting for the next traveller upon Cranmere. Standing at his door, Burrough listened to the wind, felt the cold sting of the driven sleet, and thought of the region which separated him from the letter.

The whimsical act was typical of Beatrice. She would be delighted to think that her message for him was at the *poste restante* of the pixies. He knew that she secretly regarded Cranmere as the only place left where the little people existed. It was to Cranmere that he had sent the Cornish princess of his fairy-tale, that she might make her choice between the three kings. And now it was to Cranmere that she would send him to receive her final answer.

That the letter in the cairn did contain her last word, he felt sure. Had it been otherwise, she would have written to him direct. The fact that she had chosen this method of communicating with him was convincing as to the importance of that letter. In the ordinary course of events he could not have known that she had written to him at Cranmere, and Beatrice would be well aware of it. She would be wondering every day whether any moorman had been upon the plateau where the rivers are born, or whether the pool had been rendered inaccessible by winter. She would know that her letter would be taken from the cairn almost at once, or that it must remain there until early summer. No doubt she had made up her mind to accept the conditions which the weather might be pleased to impose. That also was typical of Beatrice. If it were to remain fine, Burrough should learn his fate at once; if the winter were to appear suddenly, he would have to wait. She had sent her

letter to Bingie's post-office, and the issue remained in the hands of the pixies.

Directly the Breton went away, Burrough commenced his preparations. It was Beatrice's wish that he should receive his final answer at Cranmere, and to Cranmere he must go. They had stood together there. He had wished for her there. It was on the way back that she had learnt how greatly he loved her. It was on the way back he had met with the accident which had raised a barrier between them. The dreary wilderness of Cranmere was the temple where their vows were to be exchanged. The cairn was the altar where the barrier was to be broken down.

"I wish I had Peter," said Burrough. "Upon my soul, I would take him with me for company. I should have to carry the little man, but at least I should have someone to speak to."

For a moment, when he heard the sleet driven against the window and the water roaring more loudly than usual, his resolution weakened, and prudence dictated a policy of waiting. Why not write again to Poltesco, enclosing a letter for Beatrice, telling her he had become acquainted with her whimsical act? But it would require four days to receive her answer, and in the meantime that letter would be lying in the cairn only seven miles away. And Beatrice would have a poor opinion of him if she thought it was fear that had prevented him from going to Cranmere. Burrough then considered whether he might not pay someone to get the letter for him. There was wall-eyed Kellaway, who was said to know the moor thoroughly, and where to cross the bogs, however dense and white the mists. That idea he scouted also. In the first place, he could trust no one on such a mission. Besides, how could he confess to Beatrice that when he knew she was waiting for him on the moor he had not gone? He had also an idea, which he dismissed as promptly, that wall-eyed Kellaway would decline to go.

It seemed prosaic to be boiling eggs and cutting sandwiches while occupied with such thoughts; but Burrough intended to start as soon as it was light, and there was a very practical side to this sentimental business of calling at the pixies' post office. When his arrangements were complete, he sat down and wrote the following note:—

> "My dear Bill,—Here I am at Cranmere Pool for the second time, and not alone, for I have just taken your letter from the box. I have not read it yet. In fact, this is written in anticipation, as I

> may have no time, or I may be too cold, or it may be too dark and boisterous to write there. Anyhow, this letter goes into the post-office in place of yours. The dramatic unities of place, time, and action have to be disregarded in this letter. I am writing on Saturday night in my cottage without news of you. And I must imagine it is Sunday afternoon, and I am standing beside Cranmere Pool with your letter in my hand and mine just posted. And now to read your letter, standing just where you stood, and seeing you—how can you stand on such tiny feet in this wild wind? Why were those eyes, that nose, mouth, and hair made? They must have been treasured up for ages by the Creator, and one day He thought He would use them, and gave them all to you. However short the time is—and you know what a journey I must go before it is dark—however cold I am, however gloomy and boisterous the weather, I must learn your letter by heart before I move from this place, which is just where you stood that summer's day. I love you, dearest little Bill the fisherman—wildly when I am alone. But I love you always. I think of your eyes always.—Yours ever and ever, JACK."

This letter was enclosed within an envelope, addressed to Poltesco, at Sennen, stamped and rigorously sealed.

There was nothing else to do but sleep. No dreams came until near the dawn, and the dream then concerned the past. The Breton had ceased to trouble. The scene was neither in Brittany, nor upon Dartmoor, nor in Cornwall. Burrough became a schoolboy again. It was the last night of term, and he was tossing uneasily in his bed, too happy to rest because he would be up at the dawn, down to breakfast, get his journey money, then off to the station as hard as he could go, and into the train for home. The boys beside him in the dormitory were just as restless as he. They were sighing impatiently in their sleep, and sometimes laughing for sheer happiness. The Christmas holidays would begin in a few hours, the happiest time of youth; and the prospect of unlimited dainties, of pantomimes and parties, of dances, and little girls to kiss under the mistletoe, was sufficient to make the most stolid youth laugh in his sleep. What a striking of matches there was, what a clinking of watch-chains! Would the night never go? Then the bell rang, a manservant hurried in to light the gas, a shower of pillows reached

him, and a joyous shout went up, as Burrough awoke with a struggle to hear the water roaring down the gorge.

After that, the night was soon over. It was a fine morning, dangerously fine, with plenty of sunshine and a squally wind which swept the clouds rapidly across the sky. Burrough was up as soon as it was light, feeling somewhat nervous, and with the knowledge that his temperature was higher than it should have been. He attributed it to excitement, refusing to remember that he had been unwell for some days. A long walk would do him good, he thought, and after all he could always turn back if he should discover that the journey was too much for him. The idea of postponing the expedition never even occurred. Beatrice, the whimsical maid of the moors and the sea-cliffs, was calling him out, beckoning him to the plateau of river-heads, waiting to welcome him at Cranmere.

During his climb from the edge of the gorge up to the high moor Burrough was thinking of Beatrice. How he had seen her standing with old Y., beneath the sycamore, after he had fallen in love with her footprint; how they had boiled the kettle in the devil's kitchen, in the centre of their little Arcadia by the river of ferns; and how they had gone swaling. Above all, how they had come back together from Cranmere, and the night of enchantment in Tom-tit-tot's palace. He thought of her running over the broken ground, jumping from one rock to another, springing across the crevasses. He thought of her fearlessly cantering her horse over the clatters of granite. And then he thought of her shudder when she first saw his disfigured face that day they had searched in vain for the white heather. Well, he had put all that right. Poltesco had reported favourably, he felt sure, and Beatrice would not shrink from him again.

The morning continued fine, but there was a bitter wind as Burrough came up into the mountainous region of dark heath and splintered granite. His course took him beside the river, which was swollen into a white torrent by the recent heavy rains. The masses of water descended with the speed of a racehorse, and with the noise of a hurricane. The ground on either side appeared to tremble, and when Burrough placed his hand upon a boulder to preserve his balance, he could feel the vibration caused by the torrent. The huge stones in the river's bed were submerged. The action of the water had worn them as smooth as chiselled marble. The boiling masses made his head ache. He felt dizzy when he looked up and saw them thundering down

towards him. So he left the river, and made towards Oke Tor, which he ascended slowly. Beneath were the bogs gleaming sullenly in the sunlight.

Long before he reached Steeperton Cleave, and sighted the ruin where Beatrice and he had spent the night, the sun had disappeared and the clouds had settled in a uniform dark mantle across the sky. That was only to be expected, considering the time of year. There had been already more sunshine than was usual.

Already Burrough was tired. He was beginning to stumble, and a troublesome cough made him breathless. The solitude seemed to him more depressing than ever. He had apparently left the world of living creatures. Men he had not expected to see, but there were no black cattle, no shaggy ponies, not a bird even. Every living creature had gone into shelter. Perhaps they had scented snow in the air. The only sign of man and his works was an unpleasant one—the shells protruding from the sodden peat.

The great pyramid of Steeperton became a regular obsession. Would he never get past it? He tramped on and on without appearing to make any progress, for the mountain was there just in the same place every time he glanced to the left. It reminded him of the enchanted mountain of the Arabian story which would not permit ships to sail past it.

The river became narrower and less tumultuous; presently it was nothing more than a crack meandering through an ocean of bogs. Even on the high moor the surface was treacherous, and patches of vivid green moss had to be avoided. There was still plenty of light; but it was colder, very much colder; and there were little scraps of what appeared to be cotton sedge fluttering around. It was snowing, although Burrough refused to recognise the fact. He was nearly upon the plateau; not more than a mile from Cranmere Pool; snow, sleet, and wind, he would face them all for Beatrice's letter.

Then he passed a few carcases: first a bullock, then a fox, and then a pony—destroyed by the fierce weather.

It was when he entered the region of crevasses that he dimly realised he was making a foolhardy venture. The wind was bitter. It was as noisy as a stormy sea; and he could not be oblivious of the fact that it was behind him. Once he turned, but he had to put up his hands to protect his face.

Within one of the deep fissures Burrough crouched upon glue-like peat, listening to the wind, and watching the snowflakes rushing overhead, whiter and more rapid than the torrent of the river. He was fairly warm and

comfortable in that shelter. Sentiment still encouraged him to go on to Cranmere. Sense advised him to make the best of his way home. He was feeling very weak and ill, but he cheered himself with the thought of Beatrice. How pleased she would be when she knew what an effort he had made to get his letter from the pixies' post-office. She would think very much more of him. She would know he was no mere summer's day lover.

It became darker, and when Burrough dragged himself out of the crevasse he saw that the worst had happened. A greater enemy than the wind and snow had sprung up. It was the mist. He knew then the only thing to be done was to escape from the upland. It was impossible to return as he had come. The only course open was to go with the wind, strike some water-way, and follow it down. He might be brought out at Lydford; but he remembered being told that the region in that direction was practically impassable in bad weather on account of the bogs.

Burrough continued to ascend, not from choice, but from necessity. By the nature of the surface, and the fury of the weather, he knew that he was upon Cranmere. It was not easy to see more than a few yards on either side, and to look back was impossible—one attempt almost flayed his face. The tumult was terrific; from every crevasse issued yells and moans. The black mud was nearly liquid. Even the big tussocks gave way, or quivered, beneath his tread. Burrough could not stand for any length of time, for immediately he halted he felt himself sinking into depths of mire. Had it not been for the wind behind him he could not have progressed at all.

Lower down upon the moor, around the cottage by the gorge, there was probably nothing more than a slight wind and a flurry of snowflakes. Still lower it would be calm and cold. The terrific wind, the freezing missiles of snow, heavy mist, liquid mud, and interminable bog, were the normal condition of Cranmere in winter.

The sides of the crevasses crumbled away like bride-cake, and Burrough went down often into the slime. The stunted heather came away by the roots in a clot of mud when he grasped at it. The only safe places were the tussocks, and these afforded no sort of shelter. Burrough's one and only idea was to get away from that horrible place, to get down in any direction, anywhere to be away from the full fury of that wind and the sting of the snow. But enveloped in mist as he was he could do nothing, except proceed wind-blown and hopeful of feeling the descent commence. One lake of mud led to a fissure which landed him into another lake of mud, and so on into

an interminable maze of crevasses filled with slime, choked with mud, and gurgling horribly with wind and water.

Possibly another hour's strength remained. If he were not off the plateau by then—but he reproved himself for the thought, which he dared not express, and struggled on with his head down. How interested and sympathetic Beatrice would be when he told her of that day's experiences. She might scold him for having exposed himself to danger. How delightful that would be. But was there danger? The high moor at the time of mist and snow—there he was again with his morbid thoughts! How comfortable he would find his cottage when he got back! He thought of the shelves of books, the glowing fire, the warm green curtains, the cosy lounge and easy-chair, the soft lamp-light, and old Peter—no, poor Peter was among the missing. He had gone out upon the moor and had never come back. What an intelligent cat he was! He remembered that Peter had taken to Beatrice. He had regarded her as his future mistress. So she would have been if Peter had lived.

Burrough was utterly exhausted. His legs felt numbed, but it was not from the cold. He could not stop to take any refreshment. There was no place where he could do so, and the pitiless wind bore him on. He was becoming drowsy and stupid. He wanted to get home and write to Beatrice, and tell her what Cranmere was like in winter.

A big crevasse presented itself. The edge was fairly solid, and through the mist Burrough perceived a stream of black water gurgling sullenly. He wondered if it were a river-head, and if so what river. It was more important to learn that the ridge of peat was able to support his weight. His gloves were sodden and his hands were numbed, but he managed to open his coat and drag out his watch. There was mud all over him; even the watch-chain was clotted with it, so he understood he must somewhere have sunk up to his waist. He had no recollection of it, although he knew he had been wading and floundering and sinking for hours. The time was close upon half-past two. Then it seemed that the watch was dragged out of his hands. The liquid slime sucked it down, and Burrough followed, toppled over by the wind. Somehow he worked his way out with spasmodic struggles, and crossed that crevasse, as he had crossed a hundred others, still wondering stupidly if it were the river of Tavy or the river of Dart. Had he known it was the river of West Okement, and the very centre of Cranmere, he might have abandoned the struggle, and given way to his drowsiness in its mud.

He was not cold any longer. He was quite warm and comfortable. The snow appeared to burn his face and neck. The howling wind made pleasant music. He thought he was on the shifting sands of the Cornish coast being carried seaward; and the mists were the sunset clouds which rested upon the queen's gardens and the king's palaces of Lyonesse.

Wherever he was he could rest a little, for his body found support against a heap of turves and white stones. There was an aperture, and within something that resembled a box. Above his head was a wooden post streaming with moisture. He thought he had been there before. His hands pulled at the almost invisible object which looked like a box. He opened it, just as if it had been a box, and inside was something that resembled a letter; and the handwriting was a wonderfully good imitation of Beatrice's. It seemed quite natural to go through a pantomime of taking out that letter and putting the one he had brought with him in its place; of closing the box, and restoring it to the hole in the side of the cairn. The next thing was to read the letter. It was really just as though he had arrived at Cranmere Pool by accident. Indeed if he had not been so drowsy he might have been sure of it.

It was exactly the letter that he would have desired Beatrice to write. She told him he might come to her at Porth Zennor as soon as he liked after reading it. So he rose to go. But the mist was all round him, and the snow rushed on, and the wind was rather more furious than it had been.…

It was not known until five months later why Burrough had left the cottage beside the gorge. Then Beatrice received a letter, bearing the Lydford postmark, and endorsed "from Cranmere": and a few days later she appeared in the little village of Lew, and everyone noticed that she had not so much colour as formerly. She herself went, with wall-eyed Kellaway and a few others, upon the plateau of river-heads, although, as Ann Cobbledick quite sensibly remarked, it was merely a waste of time and energy, for the bogs of Cranmere preserve their secrets even more surely than the sea—and "'twas the Dart took 'en," said Ann.

THE END.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES

John Trevena was a pseudonym used by Ernest George Henham.

Minor spelling inconsistencies (e.g. folk-lore/folk lore, tiptoe/tip-toe, etc.) have been preserved.

Alterations to the text:

Punctuation: correct some quotation mark pairings/nestings, and missing periods and commas.

Place the footnote at the beginning of Chapter XXV inline with the text.

[Chapter V]

Change "and his *son 'll* be Willum" to *son'll*.

[Chapter XII]

(Why, *twould* kill me,' is what they say) to *'twould*.

[Chapter XV]

("*Its* easy to see you never had a Cornish nurse) to *It's*.

[Chapter XIX]

("Nine," she *mumured* with a gasp of mirth) *murmured*.

[Chapter XXIII]

"There were castles embattled with *hugh* archways" to *huge*.

[End of text]

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A PIXY IN PETTICOATS ***

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