

EVERETT-GREEN EVELYN

**THE LOST TREASURE
OF TREVLYN: A STORY
OF THE DAYS OF THE
GUNPOWDER PLOT**

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http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=25202079

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Chapter 1: The Inmates Of The Old Gate House

"Dost defy me to my face, sirrah?"

"I have no desire to defy you, father, but-"

"But me no 'buts,' and father me no 'fathers,'" stormed the angry old man, probably quite unconscious of the Shakespearian smack of his phrase; "I am no father to heretic spawn-a plague and a curse be on all such! Go to, thou wicked and deceitful boy; thou wilt one day bitterly rue thy evil practices. Thinkest thou that I will harbour beneath my roof one who sets me at open defiance; one who is a traitor to his house and to his faith?"

A dark flush had risen in the face of the tall, slight youth, with the thoughtful brow and resolute mouth, as his father's first words fell upon his ears, and throwing back his head with a haughty gesture, he said: "I am not deceitful. You have no call to taunt me with that vice which I despise above all others. I have never

used deceit towards you. How could you have known I had this day attended the service of the Established Church had I not told you so myself?"

The veins on the old man's forehead stood out with anger; he brought his fist heavily down on the table, with a bang that caused every vessel thereon to ring. A dark-eyed girl, who was listening in mute terror to the stormy scene, shrank yet more into herself at this, and cast an imploring look upon the tall stripling whose face her own so much resembled; but his fiery eyes were on his father's face, and he neither saw nor heeded the look.

"And have I not forbid-ay, and that under the heaviest penalties-any child of mine from so much as putting the head inside one of those vile heretic buildings? Would God they were every one of them destroyed! Heaven send some speedy judgment upon those who build and those who dare to worship therein! What wonder that a son turns in defiance upon his father, when he stuffs his ears with the pestilent heresies with which the wicked are making vile this earth!"

Nicholas Trevlyn's anger became so great at this point as well nigh to choke him. He paused, not from lack of words, but from inability to utter them; and his son, boldly taking advantage of the pause, struck in once more in his own defence.

"Father, you talk of pestilent heresies, but what know you of the doctrines taught within walls you never enter? Is it a pestilent heresy that Christ died to save the world; that He rose again for our justification; that He sent the Holy Spirit into the world to

sanctify and gather together a Church called after His name? That is the doctrine I heard preached today, and methinks it were hard to fall foul of it. If you had heard it yourself from one of our priests, sure you would have found it nothing amiss."

"Silence, boy!" thundered the old man, his fury suddenly changing to a white heat of passion, which was more terrible than the bluster that had gone before. "Silence, lest I strike thee to the ground where thou standest, and plunge this dagger in thine heart sooner than hear thee blaspheme the Holy Church in which thou wast reared! How darest thou talk thus to me? as though yon accursed heretic of a Protestant was a member of the Church of Christ. Thou knowest that there is but one fold under one shepherd, and he the Pope of Rome. A plague upon those accursed ones who have perverted the true faith and led a whole nation astray! But they shall not lead my son after them; Nicholas Trevlyn will look well to that!"

Father and son stood with the table between them, gazing fixedly at one another like combatants who, having tested somewhat the strength each of the other, feel a certain doubt as to the termination of the contest, but are both ready and almost eager for the final struggle which shall leave the victory unequivocally on one side or the other.

"I had thought that the Shepherd was Christ," said Cuthbert, in a low, firm tone, "and that the fold was wide enough to embrace all those baptized into His name."

"Then thou only thinkest what is one more of those damnable

heresies which are ruining this land and corrupting the whole world," cried Nicholas between his shut teeth. "Thou hast learned none such vile doctrine from me."

"I have learned no doctrine from you save that the Pope is lord of all-of things temporal and things spiritual-and that all who deny this are in peril of hell fire," answered the young man, with no small bitterness and scorn. "And here, in this realm, those who hold this to be so are in danger of prison and death. Truly this is a happy state of things for one such as I. At home a father who rails upon me night and day for a heretic-albeit I vow I hold not one single doctrine which I cannot stand to and prove from the Word of God."

"Which thou hast no call to have in thine hands!" shouted his father; "a book which, if given to the people, stirs up everywhere the vilest heresies and most loathsome errors. The Bible is God's gift to the Church. It is not of private interpretation. It is for the priests to give of its treasures to the people as they are able to bear them."

"Ay, verily, and what are the people to do when the priests deny them their rightful food?" cried Cuthbert, as hotly as his father. "Listen to me, sir. Yes, this once I wilt speak! In years gone by, when, however quietly, secretly, and privately, we were visited by a priest and heard the mass, and received at his hands the Blessed Sacrament, did I revolt against your wish in matters spiritual? Was I not ever willing to please you? Did I not love the Church? Was not I approved of the Father, and taught many

things by him, including those arts of reading and penmanship which many in my condition of life never attain unto? Did I ever anger you by disobedience or revolt?"

"What of that, since you are doing so now?" questioned Nicholas in a quieter tone, yet one full of suspicion and resentment. "What use to talk of what is past and gone? Thou knowest well of late years how thou hast been hankering after every vile and villainous heresy that has come in thy way. It is thy mother's blood within thee belike. I did grievous wrong ever to wed with one reared a Protestant, however she might abjure the errors in which she was brought up. False son of a false mother-"

"Hold, sir! You shall not miscall my mother! No son will stand by and hear that!"

"I will say what I will in mine own house, thou evil, malapert boy!" roared the old man. "I tell thee that thy mother was a false woman, that she deceived me bitterly. After solemnly abjuring the errors in which she had been reared, and being received into the true fold, she, as years went by, lapsed more and more into her foul heretical ways of thought and speech; and though she went to her last reckoning (unshriven and unassoiled, for she would have no priest at her dying bed) before ye twain were old enough to have been corrupted by her precept and example, ye must have sucked in heresy with your mother's milk, else how could son of mine act in the vile fashion that thou art acting?"

"I am acting in no vile fashion. I am no heretic. I am a true son of the true Church."

Cuthbert spoke with a forced calmness which gave his words weight, and for a moment even the angry man paused to listen to them, eying the youth keenly all the while, as though measuring his own strength against him. Physically he was far more than a match for the slightly-built stripling of one-and-twenty, being a man of great height and muscular power-power that had in no wise diminished with advancing years, though time had turned his black locks to iron gray, and seamed his face with a multitude of wrinkles. Pride, passion, gloomy defiance, and bitter hatred of his kind seemed written on that face, which in its youth must have been handsome enough. Nicholas Trevlyn was a disappointed, embittered man, who added to all other faults of temperament that of a hopeless bigot of the worst kind. He was the sort of man of whom Inquisitors must surely have been made-without pity, without remorse, without any kind of natural feeling when once their religious convictions were at stake.

As a young man he had watched heretics burning in Smithfield with a fierce joy and delight; and when with the accession of Elizabeth the tide had turned, he had submitted without a murmur to the fines which had ruined him and driven him, a poverty-stricken dependent, to the old Gate House. He would have died a martyr with the grim constancy that he had seen in others, and never lamented what he suffered for conscience' sake. But he had grown to be a thoroughly soured and embittered man, and had spent the past twenty or more years of his life in a ceaseless savage brooding which had made his abode anything

but a happy place for his two children, the offspring of a late and rather peculiar marriage with a woman by birth considerably his inferior.

The firmness without the bitterness of his father's face was reflected in that of the son as Cuthbert fearlessly finished his speech.

"I am a true son of the Church. I am no outcast-no heretic. But I will not suffer my soul to be starved. It is the law of this land that whatever creed men hold in their hearts-whether the tenets of Rome or those of the Puritans of Scotland-that they shall outwardly conform themselves to the forms prescribed by the Establishment, and shall attend the churches of the land; and you know as well as I do that there be many priests of our faith who bid their flocks obey this law, and submit themselves to the powers that be. And yet even with all this I would have restrained myself from such attendance, knowing that it is an abhorrence unto you, had there been any other way open to me of hearing the Word of God or receiving the Blessed Sacrament. But since King James has come to the throne, the penal laws have been more stringently enforced against our priests than in the latter days of the Queen. What has been the result for us? Verily that the priest who did from time to time minister to us is fled. We are left without help, without guidance, without teaching, and this when the clouds of peril and trouble are like to darken more and more about our path."

"And what of that, rash boy? Would you think to lessen the

peril by tampering with the things of the Evil One; by casting aside those rules and doctrines in which you both have been reared, and consorting with the subverters of the true faith?"

"But I cannot see that they are subverters of the faith," answered the youth hotly. "That is where the kernel of the matter lies. I have heard their preachings. I have talked with my cousins at the Chase, who know what their doctrine is."

But at these words the old man fairly gnashed his teeth in fury; he made a rush at his son and took him by the collar of his doublet, shaking him in a frenzy of rage.

"So!" he cried, "so! Now we get at the whole heart of the matter. You have been learning heresy from those false Trevlyns at the Chase-those renegade, treacherous, time-serving Trevlyns, who are a disgrace to their name and their station! Wretched boy! have I not warned you times and again to have no dealings with those evil relatives? Kinsmen they may be, but kinsmen who have disgraced the name they bear. I would I had Richard Trevlyn here beneath my hand now, that I might stuff his false doctrine down his false throat to choke him withal! And to think that he has corrupted my son, as if the rearing of his own heretic brood was not enough!"

Cuthbert was unable to speak; his father's hand pressed too tightly on his throat. He did not struggle or resist. Those were days when sons-ay, and daughters too-were used to receiving severe chastisement from the parental hand without murmur: and Nicholas Trevlyn had not been one to spare the rod where his son

had been concerned. His wrath seemed to rise as he felt the slight form of the lad sway beneath his strong grasp. Surely that slim stripling could be reduced to obedience; but the lesson must be a sharp one, for plainly the poison was working, and had already produced disastrous results.

"Miserable boy!" cried Nicholas, his eyes blazing in their cavernous hollows, "the time has come when this matter must be settled betwixt us twain. Swear that thou wilt go no more to the churches of the Protestant faction, be the laws what they may; swear that thou wilt hold no more converse on matters of religion with thy cousins at the Chase—swear these things with a solemn and binding oath, and all may yet be well. Refuse, and thou shalt yet learn, as thou hast not learned before, what the wrath of a wronged and outraged father can be!"

Petronella, the dark-eyed girl, who had all this while been crouching back in her high-backed chair in an attitude of shrinking terror, now sprang suddenly towards her brother, crying: "O Cuthbert, Cuthbert! prithee do not anger him more!

"Father, O dear sir, let but him go this once! He does not willingly anger you; he does but—"

"Peace, foolish girl, and begone! This is no time for woman's whining. Thy brother and I can settle this business betwixt us twain. But stay, go thou to my room and fetch thence the strong whip wherewith I chastise the unruly hounds. Those who disobey like dogs must be beaten like dogs.

"But, an thou wilt swear to do my bidding in the future,

and avoid all pestilent controversy with those false scions of thy house, thy chastisement shall be light. Defy me, and thou shalt feel the full weight of my arm as thou hast never felt it before."

Petronella had never seen her father so angry in all her life before. True, he had always been a harsh, stern man, an unloving father, a captious tyrant in his own house. But there had been limits to his anger. It had taken more generally the form of sullen brooding than of wild wrath, and the irritation and passion which had lately been increasing visibly in him was something comparatively new.

Of late, however, there had been growing friction between Cuthbert and his father. The youth, who had remained longer a boy in his secluded life than he would have done had his lot been cast in a wider sphere, was awakening at last to the stirrings of manhood within him, and was chafing against the fetters, both physical and spiritual, laid upon him by the life he was forced to lead through the tyrannical will of his father. He was beginning, in a semi-conscious fashion, to pant for freedom, and to rebel against the harsh paternal yoke.

When a struggle of wills commences, the friction continues a long while before the spark is produced; but when some unwonted contest has ignited this, the flame often bursts out in wonderful fury, and the whole scene is thence forward changed.

If the old man's blood was up today, Cuthbert's was no less so. He shook himself free for a moment from his father's grasp and stood before him, tall, upright, indignant, no fear in his face,

but a deep anger and pain; and his words were spoken with great emphasis and deliberation.

"I will swear nothing of all that. I claim for myself the right of a man to judge for myself and act for myself. I am a boy no longer; I have reached man's estate. I will be threatened and intimidated no longer by any man, even though he be my father. I am ready and willing to leave your house this very day. I am weary of the life here. I would fain carve out fortune for myself. It is plain that we cannot be agreed; wherefore it plainly behoves us to part. Let me then go, but let me go in peace. It may be when I return to these doors you may have learned to think more kindly of me."

But the very calmness of these words only stung Nicholas to greater fury. He had in full force that inherent belief, so deeply rooted in the minds of many of the sons of Rome, that conviction as well as submission could be compelled—could be driven into the minds and consciences of recalcitrant sons and daughters by sheer force and might. Gnashing his teeth in fury, he sprang once more upon his son, winding his strong arms about him, and fairly lifting him from the ground in his paroxysm of fury.

"Go! ay, we will see about that. Go, and carry your false stories and false thoughts out into the world, and pollute others as you yourself have been polluted! we will think of that anon. Here thou art safe in thy father's care, and it will be well to think further ere we let so rabid a heretic stray from these walls. Wretched boy! the devil himself must sure have entered into thee. But

fiends have been exorcised before now. It shall not be the fault of Nicholas Trevlyn if this one be not quickly forced to take flight!"

All this while the infuriated man had been partly dragging, partly carrying his son to a dreary empty room in the rear of the dilapidated old house inhabited by Nicholas and his children. It was a vault-like apartment, and the roof was upheld in the centre by a stout pillar such as one sees in the crypts of churches, and suspended round this pillar were a pair of manacles and a leather belt. Cuthbert had many times been tied up to this pillar before, his hands secured above his head in the manacles, and his body firmly fastened to the pillar by the leather thong. Sometimes he had been left many hours thus secured, till he had been ready to drop with exhaustion. Sometimes he had been cruelly beaten by his stern sire in punishment for some boyish prank or act of disobedience. Even the gentle and timid Petronella had more than once been fastened to the pillar for a time of penance, though the manacles and the whip had been spared to her. The place was even now full of terrors for her—a gruesome spot, always dim and dark, always full of lurking horrors. Her eyes dilated with agony and fear as she beheld her brother fastened up—not before his stout doublet had been removed—and her knees almost gave way beneath her as her father turned sharply upon her and said: "Where is the whip, girl?"

It was seldom that the maiden had the courage to resist her, stern father; but today, love for her brother overcoming every other feeling, she suddenly sank on her knees before him,

clasping her hands in piteous supplication, as she cried, with tears streaming down her face: "O father, sweet father, spare him this time! for the love of heaven visit not his misdoings upon him! Let me but talk to him; let me but persuade him! Oh, do not treat him so harshly! Indeed he may better be won by love than driven by blows!"

But Nicholas roughly repulsed the girl, so that she almost fell as he brushed past her.

"Tush, girl! thou knowest not what thou sayest. Disobedience must be flogged out of the heretic spawn. I will have no son of mine sell himself to the devil unchecked. A truce to such tears and vain words! I will none of them. And take heed that thine own turn comes not next. I will spare neither son nor daughter that I find tampering with the pestilent doctrines of heretics!"

So saying, the angry man strode away himself in search of the weapon of chastisement, and whilst Petronella sobbed aloud in her agony of pity, Cuthbert looked round with a strange smile to say: "Do not weep so bitterly, my sister; it will soon be over, and it is the last beating I will ever receive at his hands. This settles it-this decides me. I leave this house this very night, and I return no more until I have won my right to be treated no longer as a slave and a dog."

"Alas, my brother! wilt thou really go?"

"Ay, that will I, and this very night to boot."

"This night! But I fear me he will lock thee in this chamber here."

"I trust he may; so may I the better effect my purpose. Listen, sister, for he will return right soon, and I must be brief. I have been shut up here before, and dreaming of some such day as this, I have worked my way through one of yon stout bars to the window; and it will fall out now with a touch. Night falls early in these dark November days. When the great clock in the tower of the Chase tolls eight strokes, then steal thou from the house bearing some victuals in a wallet, and my good sword and dagger and belt. Meet me by the ruined chantry where we have sat so oft. I will then tell thee all that is in my heart-for which time lacks me to speak now.

"Hist! there is his returning step. Leave me now, and weep not. I care naught for hard blows; I have received too many in my time. But these shall be the last!"

Petronella, trembling in every limb, shrank silently away in the shadows as her father approached, the sight of his grim, stern face and the cruel-looking weapon in his hands bringing quick thrills of pain and pity to her gentle heart. Petronella was a very tender floweret to have been reared amidst so much hardness and sorrow. It was wonderful that she had lived through the helpless years of infancy (her mother had died ere she had completed her second year) with such a father over her, or that having so lived she had preserved the sweetness and clinging softness of temperament which gave to her such a strange charm-at least in the opinion of one. Doubtless she owed much of her well being to the kindly care of an old deaf and dumb woman, the only servant

in that lonely old house, who had entered it to nurse the children's mother through her last illness, and had stayed on almost as a matter of course, receiving no wage for her untiring service, but only the coarse victuals that all shared alike, and such scanty clothing as was absolutely indispensable.

To this old crone Petronella fled with white face and tearful eyes, as the sound of those terrible blows smote upon her ears with the whistling noise that well betrayed the force with which they were dealt. She quickly made the faithful old creature aware of what was going on, and her sympathy was readily aroused on behalf of the sufferer. The dumb request for food was also understood and complied with. No doubt there had been times before when the girl had crept with bread and meat in her apron to the solitary captive, who was shut up alone without food till he should come to a better mind.

Of Cuthbert's intended flight she made no attempted revelation. She must act now, and explain later, if she could ever make the old woman understand, that her brother had fled, and had not been done to death by his hard-hearted father.

Supper was over. It had been at the close of that meal that the explosion had taken place. She would not be called upon to meet her father again that day. Fleeing up the broken stone staircase just as his feet were heard returning from the vaulted room, she heard him bang to the door of the living room before she dared to steal into the little bare chamber where her brother slept, and where all his worldly possessions were stored.

The old Gate House was a strange habitation. Formerly merely the gateway to the Castle, which had once reared its proud head upon the crest of the hill to the westward, it had but scant accommodation for a family—one living room below, flanked on one side by the kitchen, and on the other by the vaulted chamber, once possibly a guardroom, but so bitterly cold and damp now that it was never used save for such purposes as had been witnessed there that evening. A winding, broken stone stairway led upwards to a few very narrow chambers above of irregular shape, and all lighted by loophole windows deeply splayed. The lowest of these was the place where Nicholas slept, and there was a slight attempt at furniture and comfort; but the upper chambers, where Petronella and Cuthbert retired out of the way of their father's sullen and morose temper, were bare of all but actual necessities, and lacked many things which would be numbered amongst essentials in later days. The stone floors had not even a carpeting of rushes, the pallet beds lay on the hard stone floor, and only the girl possessed a basin and ewer for washing. Cuthbert was supposed to perform his ablutions in the water of the moat without, or at the pump in the yard.

But Petronella had small notion of the hardness of her life. She had known no other, and only of late had she begun to realize that other girls were more gently reared and tended. Since the family had come to live at the Chase—which had only happened within the past year—her ideas had begun to enlarge; but so far this had not taught her discontent with her surroundings.

She knew that her father had fled to the Gate House as a place of retirement in the hour of his danger and need, and that nobody had denied his right to remain there, though the whole property was in the possession of Sir Richard Trevlyn, the nephew of her morose parent. Nicholas, however, as may have been already gathered, bore no goodwill towards his nephew, and would fain have hindered his children from so much as exchanging a word with their kinsfolks. But blood is thicker than water, and the young naturally consort together. Nicholas had married so late in life that his children were much about the same age as those of his nephew—indeed the Trevlyns of the Chase were all older than Petronella. Sir Richard had striven to establish friendly relations with his uncle when he had first brought his family to the Chase, and had only given up the attempt after many rebuffs. He encouraged his children to show kindness to their cousins, as they called each other, and since that day a ray of sunshine had stolen into Petronella's life, though she was almost afraid to cherish it, lest it should only be withdrawn again.

As she hurried to the tryst that evening, this fear was only second to the bitter thought of parting with Cuthbert. Yet she did not wish him to stay. Her father's wrath and suspicion once fully aroused, no peace could be hoped for or looked for. Terribly as she would miss him, anything was better than such scenes as the one of today. Cuthbert was no longer a child; he was beginning to think and reason and act for himself. It was better he should fly before worse had happened; only the girl could not

but wonder what her own life would be like if, after his departing, her stern father should absolutely forbid her seeing or speaking to her cousins again.

She knew he would gladly do it; knew that he hated and grudged the few meetings and greetings that did pass between them from time to time. Any excuse would gladly be caught at as a pretext for an absolute prohibition of such small overtures, and what would life be like, she wondered with a little sob, if she were to lose Cuthbert, and never to see Philip?

Her brother was at the trysting place first. She could not see his face, but could distinguish the slight figure seated upon the crumbling fragment of the wall. He was very still and quiet, and she paused as she drew near, wondering if he had not heard her light footfall upon the fallen leaves.

"Is that thou, my sister?" asked a familiar voice, though feeble and hollow in its tones. The girl sprang quickly to his side.

"Yes, Cuthbert, it is I; and I have brought all thou biddest me, and as much beside as I could make shift to carry. Alack, Cuthbert are you sorely hurt? I heard that cruel whip!"

"Think no more of that! I will think no more myself once the smart be past. Think of the freedom thy brother will enjoy; would that thou couldst share it, sweet sister! I like not faring thus forth and leaving thee, but for the nonce there be no other way.

"Petronella, I know thou wouldst ask whither I go and what I do. And that I scarce know myself as yet. But sitting here in the dark there has come a new purpose, a new thought to my mind.

What if I were to set myself to the discovery of the lost treasure of Trevlyn Chase?"

The girl started in the darkness, and laid her hand on her brother's arm.

"Ah, Cuthbert, that lost treasure! Would that thou couldst find it! But how canst thou hope to do so when so many besides have failed?"

"That is not the fashion in which men think when they mean to triumph, my sister," said Cuthbert, and she knew by his voice that he was smiling. "How this thing may be done I know not. Where the long-lost treasure be hid I know not, nor that I may ever be the one to light on it. But this I do know, that it is somewhere; that some hand buried it; that even now some living soul may know the secret of the hiding place. Petronella, hast thou ever thought of it? Hast thou ever wondered if our father may know aught of it?"

"Our father! nay, Cuthbert; but he would be the first to show the place and claim his share of spoil."

"I know not that. He hates Sir Richard. Methinks he loved not his own brother, the good knight's father. He was in the house what time the treasure vanished. Might he not have had some hand in the mystery?"

The girl shook her head again doubtfully.

"Nay, how can I say? Yet methinks our father, who sorely laments his poverty and dependence for a home upon Sir Richard's kindness, would no longer live at the old Gate House

had he riches hidden away upon which he might lay his hand. Nay, Cuthbert, methinks thou art not on the right track in thinking of him. But I do not rightly know the story of that lost treasure."

"Marry, nor I neither. I have heard our father rave of it. I have heard a word here, a whisper there, but never a full account of the matter. But that there is some great treasure lost or made away with all men who know aught of the Trevlyns know well. And if, as all affirm, this same treasure is but buried in some hiding place, the clue to which none possesses, why should not I find it? Why should not I be the man at last to track and to discover it?"

Why not indeed? Petronella, full of ardent youthful imaginings, fired instantly with the thought. Why should not her brother do this thing? Why not indeed? She looked at him with eyes that shone in the gloom like stars.

"Yes, Cuthbert, be it thine to do what none else has been able. Be it thine to discover this lost treasure. Would that I could help thee in that quest! But I can give thee just this one morsel of counsel. Start not till thou hast been to the Chase and heard all the story from our cousins there. They will tell thee what there is to know, and he is twice armed who has this knowledge."

"I will follow thy good counsel, my sister, and commend thee to their kindly care. And now, let us say farewell, and be brief; for such moments do but wring the heart and take the manliness from one. Farewell, and farewell, my sweetest sister. Heaven be thy guide and protector; and be sure of one thing, that if I live I

will see thee soon again, and that if I have success in my search thou and I will rejoice in it together."

Chapter 2: The Inmates Of Trevlyn Chase

Trevlyn Chase was a fine Tudor structure, standing on the site of the more ancient castle that had been destroyed during the tumultuous days of the Wars of the Roses. Instead of the grim pile of gray masonry that had once adorned the crest of the wooded hill, its narrow loopholes and castellated battlements telling of matters offensive and defensive, a fair and home-like mansion of red brick overlooked the peaceful landscape, adorned with innumerable oriel windows, whose latticed casements shone brilliantly in the south sunlight as it fell upon the handsome frontage of the stately house. Great timbers deeply carved adorned the outer walls, and the whole building was rich in those embellishments which grace the buildings of that period. A fine terrace ran the whole length of the south front, and was bounded at either side by a thick hedge of yew. Stone steps led down into a terraced garden upon which much care had been bestowed, and which in summer was bright with all the flowers then known and cultivated in this country. Even in gloomy winter there was more of order and trimness than was often found in such places, and the pleasaunces and shrubberies and gardens of Trevlyn Chase, with the wide fish ponds and terraced paths, formed a pleasant place of resort almost at any season, and were greatly delighted

in by the children of the present owner, who had only recently made acquaintance with their ancient family home.

The setting sun was shining brightly now upon the windows of the house which faced the south, with half a point of west, so that in winter the sunlight shone to the very time of its setting into the lofty and decorated chambers. The glow from blazing fires within likewise shone and twinkled hospitably through the clear glass, and one long window of one of the rooms stood open to the still evening air, and a little group was gathered together just outside.

A tall young man of some five-and-twenty summers, with the regular Trevlyn features and a pair of honest gray eyes, was standing out on the terrace with his face towards the red sky, a couple of sporting dogs frisking joyously about him, as if hoping he was bent upon a stroll in the woods. By his side stood a tall slim maiden, bright faced and laughing eyed, straight as a dart, alert and graceful in her movements, with an expression of courage and resolution on her fair face that stamped it at once with a strong individuality of its own. She was dressed simply, though in soft and rich textures, as became her station, and she held her hood in her hands, leaving her ruffled curly hair to be the sport of the light night breeze. She had very delicate features and an oval face, and from the likeness that existed between them the pair were plainly brother and sister.

Just within the open window were two more girls, dressed in the same fashion as the first, and plainly her sisters, though

they were more blonde in type, and whilst very pretty, lacked the piquant originality that was the great characteristic of the dark girl's beauty. They were not quite so tall, and the elder of the blonde pair was not nearly so slim, but had something of womanly deliberation and dignity about her. She was plainly the eldest of the three sisters, as the little maid beside her was the youngest. All three were engrossed in some sort of talk that appeared full of interest for them.

"I wish he would not do it," said Philip, turning his eyes in an easterly direction, towards a hollow in the falling ground, where the ruins of the ancient wall could still be dimly traced. The old Gate House itself could not be seen from this side of the house, but it was plain that the thoughts of all had turned in that direction. "It is brave of him to obey his conscience rather than his father; but yon man is such a veritable tiger, that I fear me there will be dark work there betwixt them if the lad provoke him too far. Nicholas Trevlyn is not one to be defied with impunity. I would that Cuthbert had as much prudence as he has courage."

"So do not I," answered Kate quickly, turning her flashing eyes full upon her brother. "I hate prudence—the prudence of cowardice! I am right glad that Cuthbert thinks first of his conscience and second of his father's wrath. What man who ever lived to do good in the world was deterred from the right by craven fears? I honour him for his single mindedness. He is a bold youth, and I would fain help him an I could see the way."

"We would all gladly do that," answered Philip; "the hard thing

being to find the way."

"We shall find it anon, I doubt not," answered Kate. "Things cannot go on ever as they are now."

"No; methinks one day we may chance to hear that the old Papist has done his son to death in a fit of blind fury. Then perhaps, my sister, thou wilt join with me in wishing that the lad had shown more regard for his stern sire's word."

"Nay, Philip, sure thou fearest too much," spoke Cecilia from her station beside the window. "Nicholas Trevlyn may be a dark and sour man, but he scarce would lift a hand against his own flesh and blood! I cannot believe it of any father."

"Fathers of his type have done as bad ere now," answered Philip, with gravity, "and there is no bigot like the Papist bigot, who is soured and embittered by persecution himself. Cuthbert has told me things ere this which show what an iron soul his father's is. He believes that he would wring the neck of little Petronella sooner than see her turn out of the path of unreasoning Papistry in which he has brought her up," and Philip's face darkened suddenly as he turned it towards his sisters.

"But sure the King would protect them if he knew," said Bessie, the youngest of the sisters. "Why, the law bids all loyal subjects go to church, and punishes those who stay away. The King would be sorely angry, would he not, were he to hear that any man dared use force to hinder his children from going."

Kate's delicate lips curved into a smile of derision, and Philip shrugged his broad shoulders.

"The King, my dear Bessie, is naught but a miserable pedant, who loves nothing so well as hearing himself talk, and prating by the hour together on matters of law and religion, and on the divine right of kings. He is not the King such as England has been wont to know—a King to whom his subjects might gain access to plead his protection and ask his aid. I trow none but a fool would strive to win a smile from the Scottish James. He is scarce a man, by all we hear, let alone a King. I sometimes think scorn of us as a nation that we so gladly and peaceably put our necks beneath the sceptre of such an atomy. Sure had the Lady Arabella but been a man, we should scarce have welcomed so gladly this son of Mary Stuart as our monarch."

"Have a care, my children, and talk not rank treason in such open fashion," said a deep voice behind them, and the daughters started to see the tall form of their father in the room behind them. "We Trevlyns are none too safe from suspicion that we need endanger ourselves wilfully. Whatever else James Stuart may be, he has shown that he means to be a monarch as absolute as any who have gone before him. Wherefore it behoves us to be cautious even in the sanctuary of this peaceful home."

"What is the matter, Kate, that thou art thus scornful towards his majesty? In what has he offended thee, my saucy princess?"

As Kate stepped within the room, followed by her brother, it was plain from the lighting of her father's eyes that she was the favourite daughter with him. He laid his hand lightly on her shoulder, and she stood up close beside him, her bright face

upraised, a saucy gleam in her eyes, and both her attitude and bearing bespoke an affectionate confidence between father and child less common in those ceremonious days than it has since become.

"Father, we were talking of Cuthbert. Did you see him at church today? He was there both in the morning and the afternoon."

"I thought I saw him. I was not sure. I am glad his father has had the sense to relent thus far with him."

"But he has not relented," answered Kate quickly. "Cuthbert comes in defiance of his commands; and Philip says he misdoubts if his father may not do him some grievous bodily harm in his rage and fury. Bessie did ask if the King would not interfere to save him;" and then Kate broke off with her rippling, saucy laugh. "I was just answering that question when you came. But sure, father, something might be done for him. It is a cruel thing for a boy to be treated as he is treated, and all for striving to obey the law of the land."

Sir Richard Trevlyn stood in silent thought awhile. He was a fine-looking man, with a thoughtful, benevolent countenance, and eyes that Kate had inherited. He had known something of peril and trouble himself in his day, and could feel for the troubles of others. But he also knew the difficulties of dealing with such a man as his kinsman Nicholas; and without bringing him to the notice of the authorities as a concealed Papist—an idea repugnant to him where one of his own name and blood was concerned—it

was difficult to see what could be done for the protection of the hapless Cuthbert and his sister.

Sir Richard Trevlyn did not wish to draw public attention upon himself. It was his desire to live as quietly and privately as possible. The Trevlyns had been for many generations a family stanch to the doctrines and traditions of the Church of Rome, and they had won for themselves that kind of reputation which clings tenaciously to certain families even when it has ceased to be a fact. The present Sir Richard's father had broken through the traditions of his race in marrying a lady of the Reformed faith. It was a love match, and all other considerations went to the winds. The lady was no theologian, and though believing all she had been taught, had no horror of Popery or of her husband's creed. They had lived happily together in spite of their respective opinions; but either through the influence of his wife, or through other causes less well understood, Sir Richard the elder in his later life became gradually weaned from the old faith, and embraced that of his wife. Some said this was done from motives of policy, since Elizabeth was on the throne, and the edicts against Papists, though only rigidly enforced by fits and starts, were always in existence, and had been the ruin of many ancient families. However that may have been, the only son of this union had been trained up a Protestant, and had brought up his own children as members of the Established Church of the land.

But still the old tradition remained that all Trevlyns must of

necessity be rank Papists, and Nicholas had certainly done all he could to encourage this idea, and had ruined himself by his contumacious resistance to the laws. Both his brother and his nephew had suffered through their close relationship to such an unruly subject, and there had been dark days enough for the family during the Armada scare, when every Papist became a mark for popular hatred, and professions of loyalty and good faith were regarded with distrust.

Now, however, the family seemed to have lived through its darkest days. Peace had been made with men in high places. Sir Richard had done good service to the State on more than one occasion; and latterly he had felt sufficiently safe to retire from the neighbourhood of the Court, where he had been holding some small office, and settle down with his wife and family in his ancestral home. His marriage with Lady Frances de Grey, the daughter of the Earl of Andover, had given him excellent connections; for the Andovers were staunch supporters of the Reformed faith, and had been for several generations, so that they were high in favour, and able to further the fortunes of their less lucky kinsman. It had taken many years to work matters to a safe and happy conclusion, but at the present moment there seemed to be no clouds in the sky.

The new King had been as gracious as it was in his nature to be to Sir Richard, and did not appear to regard him with any suspicion. The knight breathed freely again after a long period of anxiety, for the tenacious memory and uncertain temper of the

late Queen had kept him in a constant ferment.

It had been a kindly and courageous thing for Sir Richard to permit his contumacious and inimical kinsman to retain the possession of the old Gate House. Nicholas had no manner of right to it, though he was fond of putting forward a pretended claim; and the close proximity of a rank and bitter Papist of his own name and race was anything but a pleasant thing. But the sense of family feeling, so strongly implanted in the English race, had proved stronger than prudential scruple, and Nicholas had not been ejected, his nephew even striving at the first to establish some kind of friendly relations with the old man, hoping perhaps to draw him out of his morose ways, and lead him to conformity and obedience to the existing law.

Nicholas had refused all overtures; but his lonely son and daughter had been only too thankful for notice, and the whole family at the Chase became keenly interested in them. It was plain from the first that their father's bitterness and rigid rule had done anything but endear his own views to his children. Petronella accepted the creeds and dogmas instilled into her mind with a childlike faith, and dreamed her own devotional dreams over her breviary and her book of saints—the only two volumes she possessed. She was content, in the same fashion that a little child is content, with just so much as was given her. But Cuthbert's mind was of a different stamp, and he had long been panting to break the bonds that held both body and soul in thrall, and find out for himself the meaning of those questions

and controversies that were convulsing the nation and the world.

Intercourse with his kinsfolk had given him his first real insight into the burning questions of the hour, and his attendance from time to time at the parish church had caused him fresh access of wonder at what his father could object to in the doctrines there set forth. They might not embody everything a popish priest would bid him believe, but at least they appeared to the boy to contain all the integral truths of Christianity. He began dimly to understand that the Papists were not half so much concerned in the matter of cardinal doctrines of the faith as in asserting and upholding the temporal as well as the spiritual power of the Pope; and that this should be made the matter of the chiefest moment filled the boy's soul with a loathing and disgust which were strong enough to make him half a Protestant at once.

Sir Richard had seen almost as much, and was greatly interested in the lad; but it was difficult to know how to help him in days when parental authority was so absolute and so rigidly exercised.

"We must do what we can," said Sir Richard, waking from his reverie and shaking his head. "But we must have patience too; and it will not be well for the boy to irritate his father too greatly. Tomorrow I will go to the Gate House and see my uncle, and speak for the boy. He ought to have the liberty of the law, and the law bids all men attend the services of the Established Church. But it is ill work reasoning with a Papist of his type; and short of reporting the case to the authorities, meaning more persecution

for my unlucky kinsman, I know not what may be done."

"We must strive so to win upon him by gentle means that he permits his children free intercourse with ours," said gentle Lady Frances from her seat by the glowing hearth. "It seems to me that that is all we may hope to achieve in the present. Perchance as days and weeks pass by we may find a way to that hard and flinty heart."

"And whilst we wait it may well be that Cuthbert will be goaded to desperation, or be done to death by his remorseless sire," answered impetuous Kate, who loved not counsels of prudence. "Methinks that waiting is an ill game. I would never wait were I a man. I would always aet-ay, even in the teeth of deadly peril. Sure the greatest deeds have been achieved by men of action, not by men of counsel and prudence."

Sir Richard smiled, as he stroked her hair, and told her she should have lived a hundred or so years back, when it was the fashion to do and dare regardless of consequences. And gradually the talk drifted away from the inmates of the old Gate House, though Philip was quite resolved to pay an early visit there on the morrow, and learn how it had fared with his cousin.

Supper followed in due course, and was a somewhat lengthy meal. Then the ladies retired to the stately apartment they had been in before, and the mother read a homily to her daughters, which was listened to with dutiful attention. But Kate's bright eyes were often bent upon the casement of one window, the curtain of which she had drawn back with her own hand before

sitting down; and as the moon rose brighter and brighter in the sky and bathed the world without in its clear white beams, she seemed to grow a little restless, and tapped the floor with the point of her dainty shoe.

Kate Trevlyn was a veritable sprite for her love of the open air, by night as well as day, in winter cold as well as summer heat. "The night bird" was one of her father's playful names for her, and if ever she was able to slip away on a fine night, nothing delighted her more than to wander about in the park and the woods, listening to the cries of the owls and night jars, watching the erratic flight of the bats, and admiring the grand beauty of the sleeping world as it lay beneath the rays of the peaceful moon.

As the reading ceased, a step on the terrace without told Kate that Philip was out for an evening stroll. Gliding from the room with her swift undulating motion, and quickly donning cloak and clogs, she slipped after him and joined him before he had got many yards from the house.

"Take me with thee, Philip," she said. "It is a lovely night for a stroll. I should love to visit the chantry; it looks most witching at this hour of the night."

They took the path that led thither. The great clock in the tower had boomed the hour of eight some time since. The moon had shaken itself free from the veil of cloud, and was sailing majestically in the sky. As they descended the path, Kate suddenly laid her hand on her brother's arm, and whispered:

"Hist! Methinks I hear the sound of steps. Surely there is some

one approaching us from below!"

Philip paused and listened. Yes, Kate's quick ears had not deceived her. There was the sound of a footstep advancing towards them along the lonely tangled path. Philip instinctively felt for the pistol he always carried in his belt, for there were often doubtful and sometimes desperate men in hiding in woods and lonely places; but before he had time to do more than feel if the weapon were safe, Kate had darted suddenly from his side, and was speeding down the path.

"Marry but it is Cuthbert!" she called back to him as he bid her stop, and Philip himself started forward to meet and greet the newcomer.

"We have been talking of you and wondering how it fared with you," he said, as they reached the side of the youth "I am right glad to see you here tonight."

Cuthbert did not answer for a moment. He seemed to pant for breath. A ray of moonlight striking down upon his face showed it to be deadly white. His attitude bespoke the extreme of fatigue and weakness.

"Why, there is something amiss with you!" cried Philip, taking his cousin by the arm. "Some evil hap has befallen you."

"His father has half killed him, I trow!" cried Kate, with sudden energy. "He could not else have received injury in these few hours. Speak, Cuthbert; tell us! is it not so?"

"I have been something rough handled," answered the lad in a low voice; "but I did not feel it greatly till I began to climb the hill.

"I thank you, good Philip. I will be glad of your arm. But I am better already."

"You look like a veritable ghost," said Kate, still brimming over with pity and indignation. "What did that miserable man do to you?"

"Why, naught that he has not done a score of times before-tied me to the pillar and flogged me like a dog. Only he laid his blows on something more fiercely than is his wont, and doubled the number of them. Perchance he had some sort of inkling that it was his last chance, and used it accordingly."

The bare trees did not screen the beams of the moon, and both Philip and Kate could see the expression on Cuthbert's face. What they read there caused Kate to ask suddenly and eagerly:

"What meanest thou by that, Cuthbert? What plan hast thou in thine head?"

"Why, a mighty simple one-so simple that I marvel I have not carried it out before. I could not live worse were I to beg my bread from door to door, and I should at least have my liberty; and if whipped for a vagabond, should scarce be so badly used as my father uses me. Moreover, I have a pair of strong arms and some book learning; and I trow I need never sink to beggary. I mind not what I do. I will dig the fields sooner than be worse treated than a dog. My mind is made up. I have left my father's house never to return. I am going forth into the world to see what may befall me there, certain that nothing can be worse than what I have left behind."

"Thou hast run away from thy cruel father? Marry, that is good hearing!" cried Kate, with sparkling eyes. "I marvel we had none of us thought of that plan ourselves; it is excellent."

"It seemed the one thing left-the only thing possible. I could not endure such thralldom longer," answered Cuthbert, speaking wearily, for he was in truth well nigh worn out with the tumult of his own feelings and the savage treatment he had received. "But I know not if I shall accomplish it even now. My father may discover my flight, pursue and bring me back. This very day I asked to leave his house, and he refused to let me go. If he overtakes me I shall be shut up in strait confinement; I shall be punished sorely for this night's work. I must make shift to put as many miles as may be betwixt myself and the Gate House tonight."

"Nay, thou shalt do no such thing!" answered Kate, quickly and warmly. "I have a better plan than that. Thou shalt come home with us. My good father will gladly give thee shelter and protection. Thou shalt remain in hiding with us till the hue and cry (if there be any) shall be over past, and till thy wounds be healed and thou hast regained thy strength and spirit; and then thou shalt start forth reasonably equipped to seek thy fortune in the world; and if thou wilt go to merry London, as I would were I a man with mine own fortune to carve out, methinks I can give thee a letter to one there that will secure thee all that thou needest in the present, and may lead to advancement and good luck."

Kate's thoughts always worked like magic. No sooner was

an idea formed in her busy brain than she saw the whole story unwinding itself in glowing colours; and to hear her bright chatter as the three pursued their way to the house, one would have thought her cousin's fortune already made. A soft red glow had stolen into her cheeks as she had spoken of the missive she could furnish, and Philip gave her a quick glance, a smile crossing his face.

Cuthbert was too faint and bewildered to take in all the sense of Kate's words, but he understood that for the moment he was to be cared for and concealed, and that was enough. Philip echoed his sister's invitation to his father's house as his first stage on his journey, and all that the lad remembered of the next few hours was the dancing of lights before his dazzled eyes, the sound of friendly voices in his ears, and the gentle ministrations of kindly hands, as he was helped to bed and cosseted up, and speedily made so comfortable that he fell off almost immediately into a calm refreshing sleep that was like to be the best medicine he could have.

When Sir Richard rejoined his family, it was with a stern expression on his face.

"The boy has been grossly maltreated," he said. "It is no mere paternal chastisement he has received this day, but such a flogging as none but the lowest vagabond would receive at the hands of the law. The very bone is in one place laid bare, and there be many traces of savage handling before this. Were he not mine own uncle, bearing mine own name, I would not let so gross

an outrage pass. But at least we can do this much—shelter the lad and send him forth, when he is fit for the saddle, in such sort that he may reach London in easy fashion, as becomes one of his race. The lad has brains and many excellent qualities. There is no reason why he should not make his way in life."

"If he can be cured of his Papist beliefs," said Lady Frances; "but no man holding them gets on in these days, and Cuthbert has been bred up in the very worst of such tenets."

"So bad that he is half disgusted with them before he can rightly say why," answered Sir Richard with a smile. "There is too much hatred and bitterness in Nicholas Trevlyn's religion to endear it to his children. The boy has had the wit to see that the Established Church of the land uses the same creeds and holds the same cardinal doctrines as he has been bred up in. For the Pope he cares no whit; his British blood causes him to think scorn of any foreign potentate, temporal or spiritual. He has the making of a good churchman in him. He only wants training and teaching. Methinks it were no bad thing to send him to his mother's kindred for that. They are as staunch to the one party as old Nicholas to the other. The lad will learn all he needs there of argument and controversy, and will be able to weigh the new notions against the old."

"Verily, the more I think of it the better I like the plan. He is scarce fit for a battle with the world on his own account. Food and shelter and a home of some sort will be welcome to him whilst he tries the strength of his wings and fits them for a wider flight."

"His mother's kindred," repeated Kate quickly, and with a shade of hauteur in her manner. "Why, father, I have ever thought that on their mother's side our cousins had little cause to be proud of their parentage. Was not their mother-"

"The daughter of a wool stapler, one Martin Holt, foster brother to my venerated father, the third Earl of Andover," said Lady Frances, quietly. "Truly, my daughter, these good folks are not in birth our equal, and would be the first to say so; nevertheless they are worthy and honest people, and I can remember that Bridget, my mother's maid, who astonished us and deeply offended her relations by a sudden and ill-judged marriage with Nicholas Trevlyn, was a wonderfully well-looking woman. How and why such a marriage was made none may rightly know now. I can remember that the dark-browed Nicholas, who was but little loved at our house, took some heed to this girl, greatly younger than himself, though herself of ripening age when she let herself be persuaded into that loveless wedlock. It was whispered that he had made a convert of her; the Jesuits and seminary priests were hard at work, striving to win back their lost power by increasing the number of their flock and recruiting from all classes of the people. Nicholas was then a blind tool in the hands of these men, and I always suspected that this was one of his chief motives for so ill judged a step. At any rate, Bridget pronounced herself a Romanist, and was married by a priest of that Church according to its laws. Her family cast her off, and Nicholas would let us have no dealings with her. Poor

Bridget! I trow she lived to rue the day; and the change of her faith was but a passing thing, for I know she returned to her old beliefs when time had allowed her to see things more clearly.

"But to return to the beginning. If Bridget's brother, Martin Holt, yet lives and carries on his father's business, as is most like, on London Bridge, his house would be no bad shelter for this poor lad, who will scarce have means or breeding as yet to take his place with those of higher quality."

"That is very true," said Sir Richard. "The lad is a right honest lad, and his gentle blood shows in a thousand little ways; but his upbringing has not fitted him for mingling with the high ones of the world, and it would be well for him to rub off something of his rustic shyness and awkwardness ere he tries to cut a fine figure. I doubt not that Martin Holt would receive his sister's son."

"A wool stapler!" muttered Kate, with a slight pout of her pretty lips. "I was going to have sent him to Culverhouse with a letter, to see what he would do for my cousin."

"Lord Culverhouse could not do much," answered her father, with a smile. "He is but a stripling himself, and has his own way yet to make. And remember too, dear Lady Disdain, that in these times of change and upheaval it boots not to speak thus scornfully of honest city folks, be they wool staplers or what you will, who gain their wealth by trading on the high seas and with foreign lands. Bethink you that even the King himself, despite his fine phrases on divine right, has to sue something humbly to his good citizens of London and his lowlier subjects for those very

supplies that insure his kingly pomp. So, saucy girl, put not into young Cuthbert's head notions that ill befit one who has naught to call his own save the clothes upon his back. If he goes to these kinsfolk, as I believe it will be well for him to do, it will behove him to go right humbly and reverently. Remember this in talking with him. It were an ill thing to do to teach him to despise the home where his mother first saw light, and the kinsfolks who are called by her name."

Kate's sound sense and good feeling showed her the truth of her father's words, and she dutifully promised not to transgress; but she did not altogether relish the thought of the prospect in store for her cousin, and as she went upstairs with Bessie to the comfortable bed chamber they shared together, she whispered, with a mischievous light dancing in her eyes:

"Ah, it is one thing for the grave and reverend elders to plan, but it is another for the young to obey. Methinks Cuthbert will need no hint from me to despise the home of the honest wool stapler. He has been bred in woods and forests. He has the blood of the Trevlyns in his veins. I trow the shop on London Bridge will have small charms for him. Were it me, I would sooner-tenfold sooner-join myself to one of those bands of freebooters who ravage the roads, and fatten upon sleek and well-fed travellers, than content myself with the pottering life of a trader! Ah, we shall see, we shall see! I will keep my word to my father. But for all that I scarce think that when Cuthbert starts forth again it will be for London Bridge that he will be bound!"

Chapter 3: The Lost Treasure

"And so it is to London thou wilt go-to the worthy wool stapler on the Bridge?" and Kate, mindful of her promise to her parents, strove to suppress the little grimace with which she was disposed to accompany her words-"at least so my father saith."

"Yes: he has been giving me good counsel, and methinks that were a good beginning. I would gladly see London. Men talk of its wonders, and I can but sit and gape. I am weary of the life of the forest-the dreary life of the Gate House. In London I shall see men-books-all the things my heart yearns after. And my mother's kindred will scarce deny me a home with them till I can find somewhat to do; albeit I barely know so much as their name, and my father has held no manner of communication with them these many years."

"Perchance they will not receive thee," suggested Kate, with a laughing look in her eyes. "Then, good Cuthbert, thou wilt be forced to trust to thine own mother wit for a livelihood. Then perchance thou wilt not despise my poor little letter to my good cousin Lord Culverhouse."

"Despise aught of yours, sweet Kate! Who has dared to say such a thing?" asked Cuthbert hotly. "Any missive delivered to my keeping by your hands shall be doubly precious. I will deliver it without fail, be it to mine own advancement or no."

"Belike I shall claim your good offices yet, Master Letter

Carrier," answered Kate, with a laugh and a blush; "and I trow my cousin will like you none the less for being bearer of my epistle. But I am not to commend you to his good graces, as once I meant. It is to your relatives you are first to look for help. It is like rubbing the bloom off a ripe peach—all the romance is gone in a moment! I had hoped that a career of adventure and glory lay before you, and behold the goal is a home beneath a wool stapler's roof!"

But there Kate caught herself up and blushed, bethinking what her parents would say could they hear her words.

But Cuthbert did not read the underlying scorn in merry Kate's tones. He was a very simple-minded youth, and his life and training had not been such as to teach him much about the various grades in the world, or how greatly these grades differed one from the other. He was looking at his cousin's bright face with thoughtful, questioning eyes, so much so that the girl asked him of what he was thinking.

"Marry of thee, Mistress Kate," he answered; for though encouraged to speak on terms of equality with his kinsfolk, he found some difficulty in remembering to do so, and they certainly appeared to him in the light of beings from another and a higher sphere than his own. "I was longing to ask of thee a question."

"Ask on, good Master Cuthbert," was the ready reply; "I will answer to the best of my humble ability."

"I have heard of this Lord Culverhouse from many beneath this roof since I have been here. I would fain know who he is."

"That is easy told. He is the eldest son of mine uncle, my mother's brother, the fourth Earl of Andover. His eldest son bears the title of Viscount Culverhouse, and he is, of course, our cousin. When we were in London we saw much of these relatives of ours, and were grieved to part from them when we left. Now, is it understood?"

"Yes, verily. And tell me this one thing more, fair cousin, if it be not a malapert question. Is it not true that thou art to wed with this Lord Culverhouse one day?"

Kate's face was dyed by a most becoming blush. Her eyes sparkled in a charming fashion. Her expression, half arch, half grave, was bewitching to see, but she laid her fingers on her lips as she whispered:

"Hush, hush! who told thee that, good Cuthbert? Methinks thou hast over-sharp eyes and ears."

"I prithee pardon me if I have seen and heard too much," answered Cuthbert; "but I had a fancy-"

He stopped, stammering, blushing, and Kate took pity on his confusion.

"I am not vexed," she said, smiling; "and in very sooth thou hast divined what is in part the truth. But we do not dare talk of it yet. There be so many weighty matters against us."

Cuthbert looked keenly interested. He was very fond of this sprightly cousin of his, who was so amusing, so kindly, and so sisterly in her ways. She had more ease of manner, as well as brightness of temperament, than her sisters, and her company

had been a source of great pleasure to him. The girl saw the look of sympathetic curiosity upon his face, and she drew her chair a little nearer to that which he occupied, stirring up the logs upon the glowing hearth into a brighter blaze.

"T' faith, Cuthbert, I will gladly tell thee all there is to know, it is not much; and I like thee well, and trust thee to boot. Nor is it such a mighty secret that Culverhouse would fain make me his bride, and that I would give myself to him tomorrow an I might. I am not ashamed of loving him," cried the girl, her dark eyes flashing as she threw back her dainty head with a gesture of pride and womanly dignity, "for he is a right noble gentleman, and worthy of any maiden's love; but whether we shall ever be united in wedlock-ah, that is a vastly different matter!" and she heaved a quick little sigh.

"But wherefore not?" asked Cuthbert quickly. "Where could he find a more beautiful or worthy wife?"

Kate gave him a little bow of acknowledgment for his compliment, but her face was slightly more grave as she made answer:

"It is not, alack! a question of dislike to me. Were that all, I might hope to win the favour of stern hearts, and bring the matter to a happy conclusion. But no; mine uncle of Andover likes me well. He openly says as much, and he has been a kind friend to us. And yet I may not wed his son; and his kindness makes it the harder for Culverhouse to do aught to vex or defy him."

"But why may you not?" asked Cuthbert quickly.

"There be more reasons than one, but I will tell you all in brief. My own father mislikes the thought of the match, for that we are cousins of the first degree; and though we Trevlyns of the older branch no longer call ourselves the servants and followers of Rome, yet old traditions linger long in the blood, and my father has always set his face against a marriage betwixt cousins nearest akin."

Cuthbert looked thoughtful. That certainly was a difficulty hard to be got over. He made no comment, but merely asked:

"And my Lord of Andover-is that the objection with him?"

"Not near so much. He would easily overlook that. There are no such strict rules with Protestants, and his family have been for many generations of the Reformed faith. But there is just as weighty an argument on his side-namely, that my father can give me but a scanty dower, and it is a very needful thing for Culverhouse to wed with one who will fill his coffers with broad gold pieces. The Trevlyns, as thou doubtless knowest, have been sorely impoverished ever since the loss of the treasure. My father can give no rich dower with his daughters; wherefore they be no match for the nobles of the land. Oh, why was that treasure lost? Why could no man be wise enough to trace and find it, when sure there must have been many in the secret? Now that a generation has gone by, what hope is there left? But for that loss my Lord of Andover would have welcomed me gladly. The lost treasure of Trevlyn has much to answer for."

Kate spoke half laughingly, half impatiently, and tapped the

rush-strewn floor with the point of her shoe. Into Cuthbert's eyes a sudden light had sprung, and leaning forward in the firelight, he laid his hand upon his cousin's.

"Kate," he said, in a low voice, "I have said naught of it before-I feared it would sound but an idle boast, an idle dream; but I am pledged to the search after the lost treasure. If it yet lies hid, as men say it does, Cuthbert Trevlyn will find it."

Kate gazed at him with wide-open eyes; but there was no trace of mockery in them, rather an eager delight and excitement that was in itself encouragement and stimulus.

"Cuthbert, what meanest thou?"

"Verily no more and no less than I say. Listen, Kate. I too am a like sufferer with others of the race of Trevlyn. I have nor wealth, nor hope, nor future, save what I may carve out for myself; and my heritage, as well as yours, lies buried somewhere in these great woods, no man may say where. It came upon me as I sat in pain and darkness, the last hour I passed beneath my father's roof, that this might be the work given to me to do-to restore to the house of Trevlyn the treasure whose loss has been so sore a blow. I said as much to my sister when we bid each other adieu in the moonlit chantry; and she bid me, ere I started on the quest, come hither to you and ask the story of that loss. We know but little ourselves; our father tells us naught, and it is but a word here and a word there we have gathered. But you know-"

"We know well. We have been told the story by our mother from the days of our childhood. I trow we know all there is to

know. Why hast thou not asked before, Cuthbert?"

The lad blushed a little at the question.

"Methought it would sound but folly in your ears," he said. "It was easier to speak to Petronella in the dark chantry. Kate, wilt thou tell me all thou knowest of this lost treasure? How and wherefore was it lost, and why has no man since been able to find it?"

"Ay, wherefore? that is what we all ask," answered Kate, with eyes that flashed and glowed. "When we were children and stayed once a few months here, we spent days together scouring the woods and digging after it. We were sure we should succeed where others had failed; but the forest yet keeps its secret, and the treasure has never seen the light. Again and yet again have I said to Philip that were I a man I would never rest till it was found. But he shakes his wise head and says that our grandfather and father and many another have wasted time and expended large sums of money on the work of discovery, and without success. All of our name begin to give credence to the story that the concealed treasure was found and spirited away by the gipsy folks, who hated our house, and that it has long since been carried beyond the seas and melted into coin there. Father and Philip alike believe that the Trevlyns will see it again no more."

"Dost thou believe that, too?"

"Nay, not I. I believe it will yet come back to us, albeit not without due search and travail and labour. O Cuthbert, thy words rejoice me. Would I were a man, to fare forth with thee on the

quest! What wilt thou do? How wilt thou begin? And how canst thou search for the lost treasure an thou goest to thine uncle's house in London?"

"I must fain do that for a while," answered Cuthbert; "I dare not linger so close to my father's home at this time. Moreover, the winter is fast coming upon us, when the ground will be deep in snow, and no man not bred to it could make shift to live in the forest. To London must I go first. I trow the time will not be wasted; for I will earn money in honest fashion, that I may have the wherewithal to live when I go to seek this lost treasure.

"And now, my cousin, tell me all the tale. I know not rightly how the treasure was lost, and I have never heard of the gipsy folks or their hatred to our house. It behoves me to know all ere I embark on the quest."

"Yea, verily; and I will tell thee all I know. Thou knowest well that of old the Trevlyns were stanch sons to the Church of Rome, and that in the days of Bloody Mary, as men call her now (and well she merits the name), the Trevlyns helped might and main in hunting down wretched Protestants and sending them to prison and the stake?"

"I have heard my father speak of these things," answered Cuthbert, with a light shudder, calling to mind his father's fierce and terrible descriptions of the scenes he had witnessed and taken part in during those short but fearful years of Mary's reign, "but I knew not it had aught to do with the loss of the treasure."

"It had this much to do," answered Kate, "that my grandfather

and your father, who of course were brothers, were so vehemently hated by the Protestant families, many of whose members had been betrayed to death by their means-your father in particular was relentless in his efforts to hunt down and spy out miserable victims-that when the Queen was known to be dead, and her successor and Protestant sister had been proclaimed in London, the Trevlyns felt that they had cause to tremble for their own safety. They had stirred up relentless enmity by their own relentless conduct, and the sudden turn in fortune's wheel had given these enemies the upper hand."

"Ah!" breathed Cuthbert, "I begin to see."

"The Trevlyns had not served the Bloody Queen and her minions without reward," continued Kate, with flashing eyes; "they had heaped together no small treasure whilst this traffic in treachery had been going on, and in many cases the valuables of the victims they had betrayed to death had passed into the keeping of the betrayer."

"Oh, it is a detestable thing to think of!" cried the girl, stamping her foot. "No wonder the judgment of God fell upon that unhallowed treasure, and that it was taken from its possessors! No wonder it was doomed to lie hidden away till those who had gotten it had passed to their last account, and could never enjoy the ill-gotten gain. And they were punished too-ay, they were well punished. They were fined terrible sums; they had to give back sums equal to the spoil they had filched from others. Thy father, as thou knowest, was ruined; and we still

feel that pinch of poverty that will be slow to depart altogether from our house. Yet it serves us right-it serves us right! It is meet that the children should suffer for the sins of their parents. I have not complained, and I will not complain;" and Kate threw back her head, whilst her eyes flashed with the stress of her feeling.

"But the treasure?" questioned Cuthbert, eager to know more; "I have not yet heard how it was lost."

Thus recalled to her subject, Kate took up her narrative again.

"You doubtless know that Queen Mary died in November of the year of grace fifteen hundred and fifty-eight. In that year, some months earlier, my father was born, and at the time of the proclamation of the new Queen he was a tender infant. My grandfather was in London about the Court, and his wife and child were here in this house-the sumptuous mansion he and his father had built-not dreaming of harm or ill. They had not heard of the death of one Queen or the proclamation of the other till one dark winter's night when, just as the household were about to retire to bed, my grandfather and your father, Cuthbert, arrived at the house, their faces pale with anxiety and apprehension, their clothes stained with travel; the state of both riders and horses showing the speed with which they had travelled, and betraying plainly that something urgent had happened. The news was quickly told. Queen Mary was dead. Bonfires in London streets were blazing in honour of Elizabeth. The Protestants were everywhere in a transport of joy and triumph. The Papists were trembling for their lives and for their fortunes. No one knew

the policy of the new Queen. All felt that it was like enough she would inflict bloody chastisement on those who had been the enemies of herself and of her Protestant subjects. Even as the Trevlyn brothers had passed through the streets of the city on their way out, they had been hissed and hooted and even pelted by the crowd, some amongst which knew well the part they had played in the recent persecutions. They had been not a little alarmed by threats and menaces hurled at them even in the precincts of St. James's, and it had become very plain to them that they would speedily become the objects of private if not of public vengeance. That being so, my grandfather was eager and anxious to return to the Chase, to place his wife and child in some place of safety; whilst your father's fear was all for the treasure in gold and plate and valuables stored up in the house, which might well fall an easy prey to the rapacious hands of spoilers, should such (as was but too likely) swoop down upon the house to strive to recover the jewels and gold taken from them when they were helpless to oppose or resent such spoliation."

"Then it was all laid by at the Chase—all the money and precious things taken from others?"

"Yes, and a vast quantity of silver and gold plate which had come into the possession of former Trevlyns ever since the rise of the family in the early days of the Tudors. The seventh Henry and the eighth alike enriched our forefathers, and I know not what wealth was stored up in the treasure room of this house now so drearily void. But I mind well the story our grandam told us when

we were little children, standing at her knee in the ruddy firelight, of that night when all this treasure was packed up in great chests and boxes, and carried at dead of night by trusty servants into the heart of the forest, and buried beneath a certain giant oak many times pointed out to us, and well-nigh killed in after years by the diggings around it in search of the missing hoard. To secure this treasure, and bury it out of the reach of rapacious and covetous hands, was the aim and object of that hurried journey taken on the evening of the Queen's decease. None were in the secret save three old servants, whose faithful loyalty to the family had been tested in a thousand different ways. Those three, together with my grandfather and your father, packed and transported with their own hands this great treasure into the wood, and there entombed it. None else knew of that night's work. No other eye saw what was done. They worked the whole night through, and by the tardy dawn all was done, and even the soil of the forest so cleverly arranged that none could guess at the existence of that deep grave. And who would guess the secret of that tangled forest? Even were it thought that the gold and silver had been hid, who would have such skill as to guess the spot, and go and filch it thence? And yet it must have been carried away full soon. For Nicholas Trevlyn, in his anxious greed, visited the spot not many weeks later-visited it by stealth, for he and his brother were alike in hiding, waiting for the first burst of vengeful fury to be over-and he found it gone! He thought on the first survey that all was well; but on more closely examining the ground his heart misgave

him, for it appeared to him as if the soil had been moved. With anxious haste he began to dig, and soon his spade struck the lid of one of the chests. For a moment he breathed again; but he was impelled to carry his search farther. He uncovered the chest and raised the lid-it was empty! In a wild fear and fury he dug again and again, and with the same result. Every chest or box was in its place, but every one was empty! The treasure had been spirited away by some spoiler's hand; the treasure of Trevlyn was lost from that night forward!"

Cuthbert was leaning forward drinking all in with eager curiosity.

"My father discovered the loss-my father?"

Kate nodded her head, and seemed to divine the thought in his mind, for she answered as if he had spoken it aloud.

"We have all thought of that. I know it is sometimes in my father's mind as he looks at his kinsman's grim face; but our grand sire never suspected him for a moment-nay, he vowed he was certain he had had no part nor lot in the matter. For there was nothing but accord between the brothers; they shared good and evil hap alike. It was with his son, my father, who abjured the old faith and became a Protestant, that your father picked a quarrel. He hated his brother's wife, it is true; but he never appeared to hate his brother. And he suffered more than any in the years that followed. He lost his all, and has been a ruined man since. If he had a secret hoard, sure he would scarce live the life he does now."

"I know not. It seems scarce like; and yet I can never answer for my father's moods, they are so wild and strange. But there is yet one thing more I would ask. You spoke awhile ago of gipsies-of a hatred they bore to our house. Tell me of that, I pray. Might it have somewhat to do with the stealing of the treasure?"

"That is what some have thought, though with what truth none can say. The story of that is soon told. Many long years ago now, the Trevlyn whose portrait hangs below in the hall-our great grandfather-gave sentence upon an old gipsy woman that she should be burnt as a witch. Men said of her that she had overlooked their children and their cattle: that the former had become sick or silly, and that the latter had incontinently died of diseases none had heard of before. There was such a hue and cry about her, and so many witnesses to testify the harm she had done, that all men held the case proven, and she was burnt in the sight of all the village out upon the common yonder by order of our forefather, whose office it was to see the law enforced. There were then many of these gipsy folk scattered about the common and forest, and this old witch belonged to them. They mustered strong upon the heath, and it was said that if the villagers had not been too strong for them they would have rescued the witch as she was led out to die. But the Trevlyns, when a thing has to be done, are wont to carry it through; and your grandfather, Cuthbert, was prepared against any such attempt, and the thing was done as had been decreed. The old woman went bravely to her death, but she turned as she passed Sir Richard and cursed him with a

terrible curse. Later on some rude verses were found fastened to the wall of the church, and it was said by those who had heard the curse that these verses contained the same words. The paper was burnt by the haughty knight; but my grandam remembered some of the lines-she had got a sight of the paper-and used to tell them to us. I cannot recall them to memory now, but there was something about loss of gold and coming woe, years of strife and vengeful foe. And when years after the Trevlyn treasure was lost, there were many who vowed that it had been the work of the gipsy tribe, who had never forgotten or forgiven, and who had been waiting their turn to take vengeance upon the descendants of their old enemy."

"It seems not unlike," said Cuthbert, thoughtfully; "and if that be so, the treasure will most like be dissipated to the four winds by now. It would be divided amongst the tribe, and never be seen within the walls of Trevlyn again."

"That I know not," answered Kate, and she drew a little nearer to her cousin. "Cuthbert, dost thou believe in old saws? Dost thou believe those predictions which run in old families, and which men say work themselves out sometimes-in after generations?"

"I scarce know," answered Cuthbert, "I hear so little and see so little. I know not why they should not be true. Men of old used to look into the future, and why not now? But why speakest thou thus, sweet cousin?"

"Marry that will I tell thee, Cuthbert; but my mother chides me for such talk, and says it befits not a discreet and godly

maiden. Yet I had it from mine own grandam, my father's mother, and she was a godly woman, too."

"And what did she tell thee?"

"My grandam was a Wyvern," said Kate, "as perchance thou knowest, since the match pleased not thy father. And she was not the first Wyvern who had married a Trevlyn. It was Isabel Wyvern, her aunt, who had wedded with the redoubtable Sir Richard who had burnt the old witch, and I trow had he been married when the old beldam was brought before him he would have dealt more mercifully with her; for the Wyverns ever protected and helped the gipsy folk, and thought better of them than the rest of the world. Well, be that as it may, my grandam had many stories about them and their strange ways, their fashion of fortune telling and divining, and the wonderful things they could foretell. Many a time had a Wyvern been saved from danger and perhaps from death by a timely warning from one of the gipsy folk; and from a child she went fearlessly amongst them, though all men else shunned and hated them."

"But the prediction-the prediction?" demanded Cuthbert eagerly.

"I am coming to that," answered Kate. "It is a prediction about the descendants of the Wyverns. My grandam knew it by heart-she had a wondrous memory-but my mother would never let me write down such things. She loved them not, and said they had better be forgotten. But though I cannot recall the words, the meaning stays still with me. It was that though death might thin

the ranks of the Wyverns, and their name even die out amongst men, yet in the future they should bring good hap to those who wed with them, and that some great treasure trove should come to the descendants in another generation. Now, Cuthbert, though the name of Wyvern has died out-for the sons went to the Spanish main, and were killed fighting for the honour of England and the Queen in the days of Elizabeth; and the daughters are married, and have lost their title to the old name-yet thou and I have their blood in our veins. Your grandam and mine were alike of the house of Wyvern. Wherefore it seems to me that if this treasure is to be the treasure trove of the old saw, it behoves some of us to find it, and why not thou as well as another? Philip is like to our mother, who loves not and believes not such saws. Our father says that if stolen the treasure must long since have been scattered and lost. Of all our house methinks I am the only one who believes it will yet be found, as I know my grandam did. And so I say to thee, 'Go forth, and good hap attend thee.' Thou art as much a Wyvern as I, and we will have faith that all will be yet restored."

Cuthbert rose to his feet and shook back his hair. His dark eyes flashed with the fixity of his purpose.

"I will never despair till the treasure is found. Prithee, good cousin, show me the spot where it was buried first."

Cuthbert never stirred outside the house till after dark. He was still in hiding from his father, who knew not his whereabouts, and was still on the watch for the truant, believing him to be lurking about in the forest around his home. Philip had once contrived

to see Petronella and soothe her fears, telling her that her brother was safe, and would be sent forth to their kinsfolk in London so soon as he was fit for the long ride. But many evening rambles had been taken by the youth, who panted for the freedom of the forest, to which he was so well used; and Kate delighted in any excuse for a moonlight stroll.

The place was soon found. Kate had visited it so often that the tangled path which led thither was as familiar to her as if it had been a well-beaten road. It lay right away in the very heart of the forest, and save for the majestic size of the oak beneath which the chests had been buried, had nothing to mark the spot. Now there were traces of much digging. The ground all around had been disturbed again and yet again by eager searchers, each hopeful to come upon some clue missed by all the rest. But nothing, save the remains of a few iron-bound chests, served to show that anything had once been secreted there; and the moonlight shone steadily and peacefully down upon the scene of so many heart-burnings and grievous disappointments, as though such things did not and could not exist in such a still and lovely place.

"Ah, if she would but tell us all she has seen!" said Kate, looking up towards the silver Queen of Night. But the moon kept her own secret, and presently the pair turned away.

"Shall we go back by the chantry?" asked Cuthbert, with some hesitation; "I should like to see it once again."

"Let us," answered Kate; "we are not like to meet thy father. He has given up by now his watch around the house. Moreover,

I have eyes and ears like a wildcat. None can approach unawares upon us. I can feel a human presence ere I see it."

Cuthbert did not lack courage, and was quite willing to chance the small risk there was of an encounter with his father. He felt that he could slip away unseen were that stern man to be on the watch. Each day that had passed beneath his uncle's roof had helped him to realize more of the freedom of the subject; and very soon he would be beyond the reach of pursuit, and on his way to London.

As they approached the chantry Kate laid a hand upon his arm.

"Hist!" she said softly. "Pause a moment; I hear voices!"

He stopped instantly; and making a sign of caution to him, Kate glided a few steps onward. Then she paused again, and made a sign to him to come.

"It is all well--there is no fear. It is Philip and Petronella."

"Petronella, my sister! Nay, but this is a happy chance!" cried Cuthbert, springing eagerly forward; and the next moment Petronella, with a little cry of mingled joy and fear, had flung herself into her brother's arms.

"Cuthbert, dear Cuthbert! How I have longed to see thee once again! Hast thou come to say farewell?"

"In truth, methinks it must be farewell," answered Cuthbert, holding her tenderly to him, whilst he caressed her hair and her soft cheek with his hand. "I may not linger too long in my kind uncle's house, lest the matter should come to my father's ears, and a worse breach be made that might cause thee to suffer more,

sweet sister. And now, since I may be faring forth tomorrow, tell me of thyself. How go matters at the Gate House? What said our father to my flight?"

"He is right furious thereat, and raged for two days like a madman, so that I durst not venture near him."

"He laid no hand on thee?" asked Cuthbert quickly clinching his hand in the darkness.

"Nay, he did but threaten; but as I told him all I knew, he could do no more. I said that thou hadst fled-that thou couldst brook such a life no longer, and had told him so many times thyself. I did not know myself where thou hadst gone when first he spoke, and he has asked me no question since. Tell me not too much, lest I have to tell it to him."

"Nay, once in London and I fear him not," answered Cuthbert. "There the law would protect me, since my father's only complaint against me is that I conform to that. I go first to our mother's relatives, sweet sister, They will give me food and shelter and a home, I trow, during the inclement months of the winter now before us. Later on " – he bent his head and whispered in her ear-"later on, if kind fortune befriend me, I shall return to these parts and commence that search of which we have spoken before now. My sister, if thou canst glean anything from our father anent the treasure, when his less gloomy moods be upon him, store up in thine heart every word, for some think even yet that he knows more than others. I am sad at heart to leave thee in such a home! I would fain take thee with me."

"Nay, that may not be. I should be but a stay and a burden; and I can help thee better here at home by my prayers. I will pray each hour of the day that the Holy Virgin will watch over thee and bless thee, and give us a happy meeting in the days to come."

"And I will charge myself to watch over Petronella," said Philip, stepping forward out of the shadow. "I will be a protector-a brother-to her whilst thou art away. She shall not feel too heavily her harsh father's rule. Amongst us we will find a way to ease her of a part of that burden."

The glance turned upon Philip by those big shadowy eyes told a tale of trustful confidence that set the young man's heart beating in glad response. He took in his the little hand trustingly held out, and drew Petronella towards him.

"You will trust her to me, good Cuthbert?"

"Gladly, thankfully, confidently!" answered the lad, with great earnestness; and he thought within himself that if he had the whole of the Trevlyn treasure to lay at the feet of these kinsmen, it could hardly be enough to express his gratitude to them for their timely and generous help in his hour of sore need.

"I will win it back-I will, I will!" he said in his heart, as he walked up the hill with Kate tripping lightly beside him, Philip having lingered to watch Petronella safely within the shelter of the gloomy walls of the Gate House. "She shall have her dower, that she may wed this gay Lord Culverhouse. My sweet sister shall be dowered, too, and in no danger of spending all her youth and sweetness shut up between those gloomy walls."

Fortune will smile once more upon all those who have the blood of the Trevlyns and Wyverns in their veins. I believe in the old prediction. I believe that the treasure trove will come, and that it will prove to be the lost treasure of the house of Trevlyn!"

Chapter 4: A Night On Hammerton Heath

"Farewell, Cuthbert, farewell, farewell! Heaven speed you on your way! We shall look for tidings of you some day. And when the long summer days come upon the green world, perchance you may even make shift to ride or walk the twenty miles that separates us from London to tell of your own well being and ask of ours."

These and many like words were showered on Cuthbert as he sat his steed at the door of Trevlyn Chase, as the dusk was beginning to gather, and his uncle and cousins stood clustered together on the steps to see him ride forth to seek his fortune, as Kate insisted on calling it, though her father spoke of it rather as a visit to his mother's kinsfolks.

Cuthbert had been very loath to go. He had found himself happier beneath his uncle's roof than ever he had been before (Sir Richard was in point of fact his cousin, but the lad had given him the title of uncle out of respect, and now never thought of him as anything else), but he knew that to linger long would be neither safe nor possible.

Only his strange and savage life had prevented the news of his son's present quarters from coming to the knowledge of the angry Nicholas, and all were feeling it better for the young man to

take his departure. Now the moment of parting had really come, and already the hope of a flying visit to the Chase in the summer next to follow was the brightest thought to lighten the regrets of the present.

"Ay, that will I gladly do!" cried the lad, with kindling eyes. "Why, twenty miles is naught of a journey when one can rise with the midsummer sun. I trow I shall pine after the forest tracks again. I shall have had enough and to spare of houses and cities by the time the summer solstice is upon us."

"We shall look for you, we shall wait for you!" cried Kate, waving her hand; and as it was fast growing dark, Sir Richard made a sign of dismissal and farewell, and Cuthbert moved slowly along the dark avenue, Philip walking beside his bridle rein for a few last words.

Cuthbert would have liked his sister to have seen him go forth, but that was not thought advisable. He wore an old riding suit of Philip's, which had fitted the latter before his shoulders had grown so broad and his figure assumed its present manly proportions. It suited Cuthbert well, and in spite of its having seen some service from its former owner, was a far better and handsomer dress than anything he had ever worn before. His own meagre wardrobe and few possessions were packed in the saddlebag across the saddle. His uncle had made no attempt to send him out equipped as a relative of the house of Trevlyn, and Cuthbert was glad that there should be no false seeming as to his condition when he appeared at Martin Holt's door. Sir Richard

had given him at parting a small purse containing a couple of gold pieces and a few silver crowns, and had told him that he might in London sell the nag he bestrode and keep the price himself. He was not an animal of any value, and had already seen his best days, but he would carry Cuthbert soberly and safely to London town; and as the lad was still somewhat weak from his father's savage treatment, he was not sorry to be spared the long tramp over the deep mud of winter roads.

"I would not have you travel far tonight," said Philip, as he paced beside the sure-footed beast, who leisurely picked his way along the familiar road. "The moon will be up, to be sure, ere long; but it is ill travelling in the night. It is well to get clear of this neighbourhood in the dark, for fear your father might chance to espy you and make your going difficult. Yet I would have you ask shelter for your steed and yourself tonight at the little hostelry you will find just this side Hammerton Heath. The heath is an ill place for travellers, as you doubtless know. If you should lose the road, as is like enough, it being as evil and rough a track as well may be, you will like enough plunge into some bog or morass from which you may think yourself lucky to escape with life. And if you do contrive to keep to the track, the light-heeled gentlemen of the road may swoop down upon you like birds of prey, and rob you of the little worldly wealth that you possess. Wherefore I counsel you to pause ere you reach that ill-omened waste, and pass the night at the hostel there. The beds may be something poor, but they will be better than the wet bog, and you

will be less like to be robbed there than on the road."

"I will take your good counsel, cousin," said Cuthbert. "I have not much to lose, but that little is my all. I will stop at the place you bid me, and only journey forth across the heath when the morrow's sun be up."

"You will do well. And now farewell, for I must return. I will do all that in me lies to watch over and guard Petronella. She shall be to me as a sister, and I will act a brother's part by her, until I may have won a right to call her something more. Have no fears for her. I will die sooner than she shall suffer. Her father shall not visit on her his wrath at your escape."

The cousins parted on excellent terms, and Cuthbert turned, with a strange smile on his brave young face, for a last look at the old Gate House, the gray masonry of which gleamed out between the dark masses of the leafless trees, a single light flickering faintly in an upper casement.

"Petronella's light!" murmured Cuthbert to himself. "I trow well she is thinking of me and praying for me before the little shrine in the turret. May the Holy Saints and Blessed Virgin watch over and protect her! I trust the day may come ere long when I may have power to rescue her from that evil home, and give to her a dower that shall make her not unworthy of being Philip's wife."

By which it may be seen that Cuthbert's thoughts were still running on the lost treasure, and that he had by no means relinquished his dream of discovery through hearing how others

had sought and failed.

"If I may but win a little gold in these winter days when the forest is too inhospitable to be scoured and searched, I can give the whole of the summer to the quest. I will find these gipsies or their descendants and live amongst them as one of them. I will learn their ways, win their trust, and gradually discover all that they themselves know. Who dare say that I may not yet be the one to bring back the lost luck to the house of Trevlyn? Has it always been the prosperous and rich that have won the greatest prize? A humble youth such as I may do far more in the wild forest than those who have been bred to ease and luxury, and have to keep state and dignity."

Thus musing, Cuthbert rode slowly along in the light of the rising moon, his thoughts less occupied with the things he was leaving behind than with thoughts of the future and what it was to bring forth. The lad had all the pride of his house latent within him, and it delighted him to picture the day when he might return all Sir Richard's benefits a thousandfold by coming to him with the news of the lost treasure, and bidding him take the elder brother's share before ever his own father even knew that it had been found at last. His heart beat high as he pictured that day, and thought how he should watch the light coming into Kate's bright eyes, as the obstacle to her nuptials should be thus removed. Sure she could coax her father to remove his veto and overlook the cousinship if she had dower to satisfy Lord Andover. And if the Trevlyn treasure were but half what men believed, there would

be ample to dower all three daughters and fill the family coffers, too.

"In truth it is a thing well worth living for!" cried the eager lad, as he pushed his way out of the wood and upon the highroad, where for a time travelling was somewhat better. "And why should I not succeed even though others have failed? My proud kinsmen have never lived in the forest themselves, learning its every secret winding track, making friends of its wild sons and daughters, learning the strange lore that only the children of the forest gather. What chance had they of learning secrets which but few may know? I trow none. I will not believe that great treasure has been cast away to the four winds. I verily believe it is still hidden away beneath the earth in some strange resting place known but to a few living souls. What do these wild gipsy folks want with gold and silver and jewels? They have all they need with the heavens above them and the earth beneath. They may love to have a buried hoard; they may love to feel that they have treasure at command if they desire it; but I can better believe they would keep it safe hidden in their forest or moorland home than that they would scatter it abroad by dividing it amongst their tribe. Moreover, any such sudden wealth would draw upon them suspicion and contumely. They would be hunted down and persecuted like the Jews in old days. No: they may well have stolen it out of revenge, but I believe they have hidden it away as they took it. It shall be my part to learn where it lies; and may the Holy Saints aid and bless me in the search!"

Cuthbert crossed himself as he invoked the Saints, for at heart he was a Romanist still, albeit he had had the wit to see that the same cardinal doctrines were taught by the Established Church of the land, whose services he had several times attended. And even as he made the gesture he became suddenly aware that he was not alone on the road. A solitary traveller mounted on a strong horse was standing beneath the shadow of a tree hard by, and regarding his approach with some curiosity, though the lad had not been aware of his close proximity until his horse paused and snorted.

"Good even, young man," said this traveller, in a pleasant voice that bespoke gentle birth. "I was waiting to see if I had an enemy to deal with in the shape of one of those rogues of the road, cutpurses or highwaymen, of whom one bears so many a long tale. But these travel in companies, and it behoves wise travellers to do likewise. How comes it that a stripling like you are out alone in this lone place? Is it a hardy courage or stern necessity?"

"I know not that it is one or the other," answered Cuthbert. "But I have not far to go this night, and I have not much to lose, though as that little is my all I shall make a fight ere I part with it. But by what I hear there is little danger of molestation till one reaches Hammerton Heath. And I propose to halt on the edge of that place, and sleep at the hostelry there."

"If you follow my counsel, my young friend," said the stranger as he paced along beside Cuthbert, "you will not adventure yourself in that den of thieves. Not long ago it was a safe place for

a traveller, but now it is more perilous to enter those doors than to spend the darkest night upon the road. The new landlord is in league with the worst of the rogues and foot pads who frequent the heath, and no traveller who dares to ask a night's shelter there is allowed to depart without suffering injury either in person or pocket. Whither are you bound, my young friend, if I may ask the question?"

"For London, sir. I have an uncle there whom I am about to seek. But the way is something strange to me when the heath be passed, and I know not if I can find it in the dark."

"I also am bound for London," answered the stranger, "and in these days it is better to travel two than one, and four than two. But being no more than two, we must e'en hope for the best if we fall not in with other belated travellers. My business brooked not delay; wherefore I came alone. I mislike the fetter of a retinue of servants, and I have had wonderful good hap on the roads; but there be others who tell a different tale, and I often join company when I find a traveller to my liking going my way."

Cuthbert was glad enough to have a companion. This man was many years his senior, so that he was somewhat flattered by the proposition of riding in his company; moreover, he was plainly a gentleman of some condition, whose fancy it was (not his necessity) to travel thus unattended. Also he was speedily conscious of a strange sense of fascination which this stranger exercised upon him, for which he could not in the least account; and he quickly found himself answering the questions carelessly

addressed to him with a freedom that surprised himself; for why should there be such pleasure in talking of himself and his prospects to one whose name he did not even know?

When first he had pronounced his name, he observed that the stranger gave him a quick, keen glance; and after they had been some time in conversation, he spoke with a sudden gravity and earnestness that was decidedly impressive.

"Young man, I trust that you are loyal and true to the faith of those forefathers of yours who have been one of England's brightest ornaments. In these latter days there has been a falling away. Men have let slip the ancient truths. Love of the world has been stronger within them than love of the truth. They have let themselves be corrupted by heresy; they have lost their first love. I trust it is not so with you. I trust you are one of the faithful who are yet looking for brighter days for England, when she shall be gathered again to the arms of the true Church. But a few minutes ago I saw you make the holy sign, and my heart went out to you as to a brother. These Protestants deny and contemn that symbol, as they despise and contemn in their wantonness the ordinances of God and the authority of His Vicar. I trust you have not fallen into like error; I trust that you are a true son of the old stock of Trevlyn?"

"I know little of such disputed matters," answered Cuthbert, made a little nervous by the ardent glance bent upon him from the bright eyes of the speaker. He had a dark, narrow face, pale and eager, a small, pointed beard trimmed after the fashion of the

times, and the wide-brimmed sugar-loaf hat drawn down upon his brows cast a deep shadow over his features. But his voice was peculiarly melodious and persuasive, and there was a nameless attraction about him that Cuthbert was quick to feel. Others in the days to follow felt it to their own undoing, but of that the lad knew nothing. He only wished to retain the good opinion this stranger seemed to have formed of him.

"I have led but a hermit's life, as I have told you. I have been bred up in the faith of my forefathers, and that faith I believe. What perplexes me is that those who hold the Established or Reformed faith, as men term it, have the same creeds, the same doctrines as we ourselves. I have from time to time conformed to the law, and gone to the services, and I have not heard aught spoken within their walls that our good priest in old days used not to tell me was sound doctrine. There be things he taught me that these men say naught about; but no man may in one discourse touch upon every point of doctrine. I freely own that I have been sorely perplexed to know whence comes all this strife, all these heart burnings."

"Thou wilt know and understand full soon, when once thou hast seen the life of the great city and the strife of faction there," answered his companion, lapsing into the familiar "thou" as he spoke with increased earnestness. "In thy hermit's life thou hast had no knowledge of the robbery, the desecration, the pollution which our Holy Mother Church has undergone from these pestilent heretics, who have thought to denude her of her

beauty and her glory, whilst striving to retain such things as jump with their crabbed humours, and may be pared down to please their poisoned and vicious minds. Ah! it makes the blood boil in the veins of the true sons of the Church, as thou wilt find, my youthful friend, when thou gettest amongst them. But it will not always last. The day of reckoning will come-nay, is already coming when men shall find that the Blessed and Holy Church may not be defiled and downtrodden with impunity for ever. Ah yes! the day will come-it is even at the door-when God shall arise and his enemies be scattered. Scattered-scattered! verily that is the word. And the sons of the true faith throughout the length and breadth of the land shall arise and rejoice, and the heretics shall stand amazed and confounded!"

As he spoke these words his figure seemed to expand, and he raised his right hand to heaven with a peculiar gesture of mingled menace and appeal. Cuthbert was silent and amazed. He did not understand in the least the tenor of these wild words, but he was awed and impressed, and felt at once that the strife and stress of the great world into which he was faring was something very different from anything he had conceived of before.

By this time the travellers had reached the dreary waste called by the inhabitants Hammerton Heath. At some seasons of the year it was golden with gorse or purple with ling, but in this drear winter season it was bare and colourless, and utterly desolate. The outline of dark forests could be seen all around on the horizon; but the road led over the exposed ground, where not a tree broke

the monotony of the way. Cuthbert was glad enough to have a companion to ride by his side over the lonely waste, which looked its loneliest in the cold radiance of the moon. He did not reply to the strange words he had just heard, and his companion, after a brief pause, resumed his discourse in a different tone, telling the lad more about London and the life there than ever he had heard in his life before. But the moral of his discourse was always the sufferings, the wrongs, the troubles of the Roman Catholics, who had looked for better times under Mary Stuart's son; and gradually raising within the breast of the youth a feeling of warm sympathy with those of his own faith, and a distrust and abhorrence of the laws that made life well nigh impossible for the true sons of the Church.

"Ruined in estate, too often injured in body, hated, despised, hunted to death like beasts of the earth, what is left for us but some great struggle after our lives and liberties?" concluded the speaker, in his half melancholy, half ardent way. "Verily, when things be so bad that they cannot well be worse, then truly men begin to think that the hour of action is at hand. Be the night never so long, the dawn comes at last. And so will our day dawn for us-though it may dawn in clouds of smoke and vapour, and with a terrible sound of destruction."

But these last words were hardly heard by Cuthbert, whose attention had been attracted by the regular beat of horse hoofs upon the road behind. Although the track was but a sandy path full of ruts and holes, the sound travelled clearly through the still

night air. Whoever these new travellers were, they were coming along at a brisk pace, and Cuthbert drew rein to look behind him.

"There be horsemen coming this way!" he said.

"Ay, verily there be; and moreover I mislike their looks. Honest folks do not gallop over these bad roads in yon headlong fashion. I doubt not they be robbers, eager to overtake and despoil us. We must make shift to press on at the top of our speed. This is an ill place to be overtaken. We have no chance against such numbers. Luckily our steeds are not way worn; they have but jogged comfortably along these many miles. Push your beast to a gallop, my lad; there is no time to lose."

Cuthbert essayed to do this; but honest old Dobbin had no notion of a pace faster than a leisurely amble. Most of his work had been done in the plough, and he had no liking for the rapid gallop demanded by his rider.

The lad soon saw how it stood with him, and called out to his well-mounted companion not to tarry for him, but to leave him to chance and kind fortune.

"I have so little to lose that they may not think me worth the robbing, belike. But you, sir, must not linger. Your good steed is equal to theirs, I doubt not, and will carry you safe across the heath."

"Ay, verily he will. I purchased him for that same speed, and it has never failed me yet. I fear not pursuit. My only peril lies in the chance of meeting a second band watching the road farther on. I like not thus to leave you, boy; but I have no choice. I may

not risk being robbed of my papers. There be more in them than must be suffered to be scanned by any eyes for which they were not meant. My gold might go, and welcome, but I must save my papers. And if thou hast any small valuables about thee, I will charge myself with the care of them, and thou canst call at my lodging in London when thou gettest there to claim thine own again. 'Twill be the better chance than leaving yon gentlemen to rid thee of them."

The smile with which the stranger uttered these words was so winning and frank, that Cuthbert placed his purse in the outstretched hand without a qualm.

"When thou wantest thine own again, go to the Cat and Fiddle in the thoroughfare of Holborn, and ask news there of Master Robert Catesby. It is an eating house and tavern where I am constantly to be met with. If I be not lodging there at that very time, thou wilt have news of me there. Farewell; and keep up a brave heart. These fellows are less harsh with poor travellers than rich. Let them see you have small fear, and it will be the better for all."

These last words were faintly borne back to Cuthbert on the wings of the wind, as his companion galloped with long easy strides across the heath. A little dip in the ground hid for a moment their pursuers from sight, and before they emerged upon the crest of the undulation, Master Robert Catesby was practically out of sight; for a cloud had obscured the brightness of the moon, and only a short distance off objects became invisible.

Cuthbert rode slowly on his way, trying to compose himself to the state of coolness and courage that he would like to show in the hour of danger. He felt the beatings of his heart, but they were due as much to excitement as to fear. In truth he was more excited than afraid; for he had absolutely nothing to lose save a suit of old clothes and his horse, and both of these were in sorry enough plight to be little tempting to those hardy ruffians, who were accustomed to have travellers to rob of a far superior stamp.

Nearer and nearer came the galloping horse hoofs, and a loud, rough voice ordered him to stop.

Cuthbert obeyed, and wheeled round on his placid steed, who showed no sign of disquietude or excitement, but at once commenced to nibble the short grass that grew beside the sandy track.

"And what do you want of me, gentlemen?" asked Cuthbert, as he found himself confronted by half-a-dozen stalwart fellows, with swarthy faces and vigorous frames. They were all armed and well mounted, and would have been formidable enough to a wealthy traveller with his stuff or valuables about him.

"Your money-or your life!" was the concise reply and Cuthbert was able to smile as he replied:

"Marry then, it must be my life, for money I have none. I have naught but an old suit of clothes and a breviary in yon bag. You are welcome to both an ye will condescend to wear such habiliments; but I trow ye would find them sorry garments after those ye now display."

"Tut, tut! we will see to that. There be many cunning fashions of hiding money, and we are used to such tales as yours. Where is your companion, young man?"

"Nay, I have no companion," answered Cuthbert, who was sufficiently imbued with the spirit of his father's creed not to hesitate for a moment to utter an untruth in a good cause, and think no shame of it; "I am journeying forth to London alone, to seek a relative there, who methinks will help me to earn an honest livelihood. I would I were the rich man you take me for. But even the dress I wear is mine through the charity of a kinsman, as is also the nag I ride. And I misdoubt me if you would find him of much use to you in your occupation."

One or two of the men laughed. They looked at Dobbin and then at his rider, and seemed to give credence to this tale. Cuthbert's boyish face and fearless manner seemed to work in his favour, and one of the band remarked that he was a bold young blade, and if in search of a fortune, might do worse than cast in his lot with them.

"Yet I verily thought there had been two," grumbled another of the band; "I wonder if he speaks sooth."

"I warrant me he does, else where should the other be? It was a trick of the moonlight; it often deceives us so.

"Come now, my young cockerel; you can crow lustily, it seems, and keep a bold face where others shrink and tremble and flee. How say you? will you follow us to our lodging place for the night? And if we find no money concealed about you, and if

your story of your poverty be true, you can think well whether you will choose to cast in your lot with us. Many a poor man has done so and become rich, and the life is a better one than many."

All this was spoken in a careless, mocking way, and Cuthbert did not know if the proposal were made in good faith or no. But it was plain that no harm was meant to his life or person, and as he was in no fear from any search of his clothes and bag, he was ready and willing to accept the invitation offered, and by no means sorry to think he should be relieved from spending the night in the saddle.

"I will gladly go with you," he answered. "I have spoken naught but sooth, and I have no fear. My person and my goods are in your hands. Do as you will with them; I have too little to lose to make a moan were you to rob me of all."

"We rob not the poor; we only rob the rich—those arrogant, purse-proud rogues who batten and fatten on what they wring from the poor," answered, in quick, scornful accents, the man who appeared to be the leader of this little band. "On them we have scant pity. They have but stolen, in cunning though lawful fashion, what we wrest from them, lawlessly it may be, yet with as good a right in the sight of the free heavens as any they practise. But we filch not gold nor goods from the poor, the thrifty, the sons of toil; nay, there be times when we restore to these what has been drained from them by injustice and tyranny. We be not the common freebooters of the road, who set on all alike, and take human life for pure love of killing. We have our own laws,

our own ways, our own code of right and wrong; and we recruit our ranks from bold lads like you, upon whom fortune has not smiled, and who come to us to see if we can help them to better things."

Cuthbert was greatly interested in this adventure. He looked into the dark, handsome face of the man who rode beside him, and wondered if some gipsy blood might not run in his veins. The gipsy people of whom Kate had spoken were well known in all this region, and despite the roving life they led, appeared to be rooted to a certain extent to this wild and wooded tract. He had seen dark faces like this before in the woods; he had often heard stories of the doings of the gipsies around. Before, he had not thought much of this; but now, his interest was keenly excited, and he was delighted to have this opportunity of studying them at close quarters.

"Where are we going, Tyrrel?" asked one of the followers. "It is a bitter cold night, now the wind has shifted, and we are far enough away from Dead Man's Hole."

"I am not bound for Dead Man's Hole. We will to the ruined mill, and ask Miriam to give us shelter for the night. We have ridden far, and our steeds are weary. I trow she will give us a welcome."

This proposition seemed to give general satisfaction. The men plodded on after their leader, who kept Cuthbert close beside him, and they all moved across the heath in an irregular fashion, following some path known only to themselves, until

they reached the wooded track to the left, and plunged into the brushwood again, picking their way carefully as they went, and all the while descending lower and lower into the hollow, till the rush of water became more and more distinctly audible, and Cuthbert knew by the sound that they must be approaching a waterfall of some kind.

One of the men had ridden forward to give notice of their approach, and soon in the flickering moonlight the gray walls of an ancient mill, now greatly fallen to decay, became visible to the travellers' eyes. From the open door streamed out a flood of ruddy light, cheering indeed to cold and weary men; whilst framed in this ruddy glow was a tall and picturesque figure—the figure of an old woman, a scarlet kerchief tied over her white hair, whilst her dress displayed that picturesque medley of colours that has always been the prevailing characteristic of the gipsy race.

"You are welcome, son Tyrrel," quoth the mistress of this lone dwelling, as the little cavalcade drew up at the door. "It is long since you favoured old Miriam with a visit. Yet you come at no ill time, since Red Ronald brought us in a fat buck but yesternight, and I have made oaten cakes today, and pies of the best. But who is that with you! I like not new faces in my dwelling place. It were well you should remember this ere you bring a stranger with you."

The old woman's face suddenly darkened as she spoke these last words, and her wonderful eyes, so large and dark as to

resemble rather those of a deer than a human being, flashed fiercely, whilst she seemed about to close the door in Tyrrel's face. But he pushed in with a light laugh, leading Cuthbert with him, and saying as he did so:

"Nay, nay, mother, be not so fierce. He is an honest lad enough, I trow; if not, 'twill be the worse for him anon. We have brought him hither to search him if he carries gold concealed. If not, and he proves to have spoken sooth, he may go his way or join with us, whichever likes him best. We could do with a few more bold lads, since death has been something busy of late; and he seems to have the grit in him one looks for in those who join with us. Moreover, he has the dark eyes, and would soon have the swarth skin, that distinguish our merry men all.

"How now, mother! Thou hast eyes for none but the lad! Why lookst thou at him so?"

Cuthbert, too, gazed wonderingly at the handsome old gipsy, who continued to keep her eyes fixed upon him, as if by a species of fascination. He could no more withdraw his gaze than can the bird whom the snake is luring to destruction.

"Boy, what is thy name?" she asked, in a quick, harsh whisper.

"Cuthbert Trevlyn," he answered, without hesitation, and at the name a wild laugh rang out through the vaulted room, illumined by the glow of a huge fire of logs, whilst all present started and looked at one another.

"I knew it-I knew it!" cried the old woman, with a wild gesture of her withered arms, which were bare to the elbow, as though

she had been engaged in culinary tasks. "I knew it-I knew it! I knew it the moment the light fell upon his face. Trevlyn-Trevlyn! one of that accursed brood! Heaven be praised, the hour of vengeance has come! We will do unto one of them even as they did unto us;" and she waved her arms again in the air, and glanced towards the glowing fire on the hearth with a look in her wild eyes that for a moment caused Cuthbert's heart to stand still. For he remembered the story of the witch burned by his grand sire's mandate, and he felt he was not mistaken in the interpretation he had put upon the old woman's words.

But Tyrrel roughly interposed.

"No more of that, mother," he said. "We have wiped out that old score long ago. The lad is a bold lad, Trevlyn or no. Let us to supper now, and forget those accursed beldam's tales. Where is Long Robin, and what is he doing? and where is Joanna tonight?"

"Here," answered a clear, full voice from the shadows of the inglenook, and forth there stepped a very queenly-looking woman, in the prime of life, when youth's bloom has not been altogether left behind, and yet all the grace of womanhood, with its dignity and ease, has come to give an added charm. One glance from the old woman's face to that of the young one showed them to be mother and daughter, and it did not take a sharp eye to see that Tyrrel, as he was always called, was deeply enamoured of the beautiful Joanna, though treated by her with scant notice, and as though he were yet a boy, scarce worthy of being looked at or spoken to.

She stood in the glow of the fire, a tall, graceful presence, to the full as picturesque as her gipsy mother, and far more attractive. Cuthbert's eyes turned upon her with an unconscious appeal in them; for it suddenly dawned upon him that for a Trevlyn to adventure himself amongst these wild gipsy folks was like putting the head into a lion's mouth.

It almost seemed as though Joanna read this doubt and this fear; for a flashing smile crossed her dark face, and she held out a shapely hand to lead the guest to the table.

"Thou art welcome to our board, Cuthbert Trevlyn," she said, "as is any hapless stranger in these wilds, be he Trevlyn or no. Thou shalt eat our salt this night, and then woe betide the man who dares to lay hand on thee;" and such a glance was flashed around from her magnificent dark eyes as caused each one that met it to resolve to take good heed to his ways. "Thou shalt come and go unmolested; Joanna the Gipsy Queen has so decreed it!"

Every one present, the old woman included, bent the head at these words, and Cuthbert felt by some instinct that his life was now safe.

Chapter 5: The House On The Bridge

"Keren Happuch."

"Yes, aunt."

The reply came only after a brief pause, as though the rosy-cheeked maiden at the casement would fain have declined to answer to that abhorred name had she dared—which was indeed pretty much the case; for though it was undeniably her own, and she could not gainsay the unpalatable fact, nobody in the world but Aunt Susan ever aggrieved her by using it. Even her grave father had adopted the "Cherry" that was universal alike with relatives and friends, and the girl never heard the clumsy and odious appellation without a natural longing to box the offender's ears.

"What art doing, child?" questioned the voice from below.

Now Cherry was undeniably idling away the morning hours by looking out of her window at the lively scene below; and perhaps it was scarce wonderful that the sights and sounds without attracted her. It was a sunny November morning, and the sun was shining quite hotly; for the soft wind from the south was blowing—it had suddenly veered round in the night—and all nature seemed to be rejoicing in the change. The river ran sparkling on its way to the sea; the barges and wherries, and larger craft that anchored in the stream or plied their way up and down, gave animation and brightness to the great water

way; whilst the old bridge, with its quaint-timbered houses with their projecting upper stories, its shops with their swinging signs, and noisy apprentices crying their masters' wares or playing or quarrelling in the open street, and its throngs of passers by, from the blind beggar to the gay court gallant, provided a shifting and endless panorama of entertainment to the onlooker, which pretty Mistress Cherry certainly appreciated, if no one else in that grave Puritan household did the like. But possibly she thought that her aunt's question must not be too literally answered, for she hastily skipped across the panelled chamber, seized her distaff, and answered meekly;

"I am about to spin, aunt."

"Humph!" the answer sounded more like a grunt than anything else, and warned Cherry that Mistress Susan, her father's sister, who had ruled his household for the past ten years, since the death of his wife, was in no very amiable temper.

"I know what that means. Thy spinning is a fine excuse for idling away thy time in the parlour, when thou mightest be learning housewifery below. Much flax thou spinnest when I am not by to watch! It is a pity thou wert not a fine lady born!"

Cherry certainly was decidedly of this opinion herself, albeit she would not have dared to say as much. She liked soft raiment, bright colours, dainty ways, and pretty speeches. Looking down from her window upon the passers by, it was her favourite pastime to fancy herself one of the hooped and powdered and gorgeously-apparelled ladies, with their monstrous

farthingales, their stiff petticoats, their fans, their patches, and their saucy, coquettish ways to the gentlemen in their train. All this bedizenment, which had by no means died out with the death of a Queen who had loved and encouraged it, was dear to the eyes of the little maiden, whose own sad-coloured garments and severe simplicity of attire was a constant source of annoyance to her. Not that she wished to ape the fine dames in her small person. She knew her place better than that. She was a tradesman's daughter, and it would ill have beseemed her to attire herself in silk and velvet, even though the sumptuary laws had been repealed. But she did not see why she might not have a scarlet under-petticoat like Rachel Dyson, her own cousin, or a gay bird's wing to adorn her hat on holiday occasions. The utmost she had ever achieved for herself was a fine soft coverchief for her head, instead of the close unyielding coif which all her relatives wore, which quite concealed their hair, and gave a quaint severity to their square and homely faces. Cherry's face was not square, but a little pointed, piquant countenance, from which a pair of long-lashed gray eyes looked forth with saucy, mischievous brightness. Her skin was very fair, with a peach-like bloom upon it, and her pretty hair hung round it in a mass of red gold curls.

Cherry, it must be confessed, would have liked to leave her hair uncovered, but this was altogether against the traditions of her family. But she had contrived to assume the softly-flowing coverchief, more like a veil than a cap, which was infinitely

becoming to the sweet childish face, and allowed the pretty curls to be seen flowing down on either side till they reached the shoulders. For the rest, her dress was severely plain in its simplicity: the snow-white kerchief, crossed in front and made fast behind; the under-petticoat of gray homespun, just showing the black hose and buckled shoes beneath; and the over-dress of sombre black or dark brown, puffed out a little over the hips in the pannier fashion, but without any pretence at following the extravagances of the day. The sleeves buttoned tightly to the lower arm, though wider at the cuff, and rose high upon the shoulder with something of a puff. It was a simple and by no means an unbecoming style of costume; but Cherry secretly repined at the monotony of always dressing in precisely the same fashion. Other friends of her own standing had plenty of pretty things suited to their station, and why not she? If she asked the question of any, the answer she always got was that her father followed the Puritan fashions of dressing and thinking and speaking, and that he held fine clothes in abhorrence. Cherry would pout a little, and think it a hard thing that she had been born a Puritan's daughter; but on the whole she was happy and contented enough, only she did reckon the rule of Aunt Susan in her father's house as something of a hardship.

But it did not do to offend that worthy dame, who was the very model of all housewives, and whose careful management and excellent cookery caused Martin Holt's house to be something of a proverb and a pattern to other folks' wives. So now the girl

replied submissively:

"I need not spin, an it please thee not, aunt. Hast thou aught for me to do below?"

"Ay, plenty, child, if thou canst give thy mind to work. Abraham Dyson and Anthony Cole sup with us tonight, and I am making a herring pie."

A herring pie was a serious undertaking in the domestic economy of the house on the bridge, and Mistress Susan prided herself on her skill in the concoction of this delicate dish above almost any other achievement. She had a mysterious receipt of her own for it, into the secret of which she would let no other living soul, not even the dutiful nieces who assisted at the manufacture of the component parts. Cherry heaved a sigh when she heard what was in prospect, but laid aside her distaff and proceeded to don a great coarse apron, and to unbutton and turn back her sleeves, leaving her pretty round white arms bare for her culinary task. But there was a little pucker of perplexity and vexation on her forehead, which was not caused by any distaste of cookery.

"If Uncle Abraham comes, sure he will bring Jacob with him; he always does. If it were Rachel I would not mind; but I cannot abear Jacob, with his great hairy hands and fat cheeks. And if I be pert to him, my father chides; and if I be kind, he makes me past all patience with his rolling eyes and foolish ways and words. I know what they all think; but I'll none of him! He had better try for Kezzie, who would jump down his throat as soon

as look at him. She fair rails on me for not treating him well. Let her take him herself, the loutish loon!"

And tossing her head so that her coverchief required readjusting, Cherry slipped down the narrow wooden staircase into the rooms that lay below.

Kitchen and dining parlour occupied the whole of this floor, which was not the ground floor of the house. That was taken up by the shop, in which Martin Holt's samples of wools and stuffs were exposed. He was more (to borrow a modern expression) in the wholesale than the retail line of business, and his shop was nothing very great to look at, and did not at all indicate the scope of his real trade and substance; but it was a convenient place for customers to come to, to examine samples and talk over their orders. Martin Holt sat all day long in a parlour behind the shop, pretty well filled with bales and sacks and other impedimenta of his trade, and received those who came to him in the way of business. He had warehouses, too, along the wharves of Thames Street, and visited them regularly; but he preferred to transact business in his own house, and this dull-looking shop was quite a small centre for wool merchants, wool manufacturers, and even for the farmers who grew the wool on the backs of the sheep they bred in the green pastures. No more upright and fair-dealing man than Martin Holt was to be found in all London town; and though he had not made haste to be rich, like some, nor had his father before him, having a wholesome horror of those tricks and shifts which have grown more and more common as the world

has grown older, yet honest dealing and equitable trading had had its own substantial reward, and wealth was now steadily flowing into Martin's coffers, albeit he remained just the same simple, unassuming man of business as he had ever been when the golden stream of prosperity had not reached his doors.

But the ground floor of the bridge house being occupied in business purposes, the first floor had of necessity been given up to cookery and feeding. The front room was the eating parlour, and was only furnished by a long table and benches, with one high-backed armchair at either end. It overlooked the street and the river, like the living parlour above; and behind lay the kitchen, with a back kitchen or scullery beyond. From the windows of either of these back rooms the busy cooks could fling their refuse into the river, and exceedingly handy did they find this, as did likewise their neighbours. Nor did the fact that the river water was drunk by themselves and a large number of the inhabitants of the city in any way interfere with their satisfaction at the convenience of these domestic arrangements. The beat, beat of the great water wheel was always in their ears to remind them; but no misgivings had yet assailed our forefathers as to the desirability of drinking water polluted by sewage and other abominations. True, the plague was constantly desolating the city, and had been raging so violently but a single year back that the King's coronation had well nigh had to be postponed, and he dared not adventure himself into London itself, nor summon his Parliament to meet him there. But it was for another generation to

put together cause and effect, and wonder how far tainted water was responsible for the spread of the fatal malady.

As Cherry entered the eating parlour, her two sisters looked up from their tasks, as if with a smile of welcome. Jemima was busy with the almond paste, which was an important ingredient of the herring pie; Keziah was stoning the dates, grating the manchet, and preparing the numerous other ingredients-currants, gooseberries, barberries-which, being preserved in bottles in the spring and summer, were always ready to hand in Mistress Susan's cookery. From the open door of the kitchen proceeded a villainous smell of herrings, which caused Cherry to turn up her pretty nose in a grimace that set Keziah laughing. Both these elder damsels, who were neither blooming nor pretty nor graceful, like their youngest sister, though they bid fair to be excellent housewives and docile and tractable spouses, delighted in the beauty and wit and freshness of Cherry. They had never envied her her pretty ways and charming face, but had taken the same pleasure in both that a mother or affectionate aunt might do. They spoke of her and thought of her as "the child," and if any hard or disagreeable piece of work had to be done, they both vied with each other in contriving that it should not fall to Cherry's lot.

Cherry, although she dearly loved her homely sisters, as well she might, never could quite realize that they were her sisters, and not her aunts. Although Keziah was only six years her senior, it seemed more like ten, and Jemima had three years' start of

Keziah. They treated her with an indulgence rare between sisters, and from the fact of their being so staid and grave for their years, Cherry could scarcely be blamed for feeling as though she was the only young thing in the house. Her father talked of grave matters with her aunt and sisters, whilst she sat gaping in weariness or got a book in which to lose herself. They understood those mysterious theological and political discussions which were a constant source of perplexity and irritation to Cherry.

"As if it mattered one way or another," she would say to herself. "I can't see that one way is a bit better than another! I wonder folks can care to make such a coil about it."

"Hast come to help us with the pie, Cherry?" asked Jemima kindly. "There, then, take my place with the paste; 'tis almost ready, but would do with a trifle more beating. And there be fowls to draw and get ready for the oven, and I know thou lovest not such a task."

Cherry shuddered at the thought, and gladly took Jemima's place, tasting the almond with an air of relish, and going about her tasks with a dainty air that would have angered Aunt Susan, but which honest Keziah regarded with admiration.

"How many be coming to supper tonight?" asked Cherry. "Is it to be a gathering?"

"Nay, I scarce know. I have only heard what aunt said to thee. Father spoke of guests without saying the number, and she said our uncle would be there, and Master Anthony Cole and his son. Whether there be any others I know not; belike Rachel and Jacob

may come too."

"Now I am sore puzzled anent this Anthony Cole," said Cherry, as she beat her paste and leaned towards Keziah, so that her voice might not carry as far as the kitchen.

"And wherefore art thou puzzled, child?"

"Marry, because it was but a short while ago that we were forbid even to speak with him or any in his house, neighbours though we be; and now he comes oft, and father gives him good welcome, and bids him to sup with us. It fairly perplexes me to know why."

Keziah also lowered her voice as she replied:

"We were forbid his house because that he and his household be all Papists."

"Ay, verily, that I know. But they be none the less Papists now, and yet we give them good day when we meet, and sit at the same board with them in all amity. Are they turning Protestant then, or what?"

Keziah shook her head.

"It is not that," she said.

Nay, then, what is it?"

"Marry, methinks it is that we are companions in distress, and that a common trouble draws us the closer together. Thou must have heard-

"Oh, I hear words, words, words! but I heed them not. It is like eating dust and ashes."

"Nay, thou art but a child, and these things are not for

children," answered Keziah, indulgently. "And, indeed, they are hard to be understood, save by the wise and learned. But this much I gather: When the King came to the throne, all men hoped for better days—liberty to think each according to his conscience, liberty each to follow his own priest or pastor, and join without fear in his own form of worship. The Papists believed that the son of Mary Stuart would scarce show severity to them. The Puritans were assured that one bred up by the Presbyterians of Scotland would surely incline to their ways of worship and thought. But the King has disappointed both, and has allied himself heart and soul with the Episcopal faction and the Church of the Establishment; and, not content with that, is striving to enforce the penal statutes against all who do not conform as they were never enforced in the Queen's time. Wherefore, as thou mayest understand, the Papists and the Puritans alike suffer, and so suffering are something drawn together as friends, albeit in doctrine they are wide asunder—wider than we from the Establishment or they from it. But trouble drives even foes to make common cause sometimes."

Cherry sighed impatiently.

"I would that men would e'en forget all these vexed doctrines and dry dogmas, and learn to enjoy life as it might be enjoyed. Why are we for ever lamenting evils which none may put right? What does it matter whether we pray to God in a fine church or a homely room? I would fain go to church with the fine folk, since the King will have it so, and strive to find God there as well as in

the bare barn where Master Baker holds his meeting. They bid us read our Bibles, but they will not let us obey the commands laid down-

"Nay, hush, Cherry! hush, hush! What and if Aunt Susan heard?"

"Let her hear!" cried the defiant Cherry, though she lowered her voice instinctively at the warning; "I am saying naught to be ashamed of. I know naught about these matters of disputing; I only know that the Bible bids folks submit themselves to the powers that be, whether they be kings, or rulers, or magistrates, because the powers that be are of God. So that I see not why we go not to church as the King bids us. And again I read that wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there will He be in the midst of them. So why we cannot go peacefully to church, since He will be there with us, I for one cannot see. I trow even the boldest Papist or Puritan would not dare deny that He was as much in the midst of those congregations as in ours. If they do they be worse than Pagans, for every one that goes to church goes to pray to God and to Jesus Christ."

Keziah looked flustered and scared. Cherry's words, though spoken in some temper and despite, contained certain elements of shrewd insight and sound common sense, which she had doubtless inherited from her father. She had something of the boldness and independence of mind that a spoiled child not unfrequently acquires, and she was not accustomed to mince her

words when speaking with her sisters.

Hush! oh hush, child! Father would not list to hear such words from a daughter of his. It is for women to learn, and not to teach; to listen, but not to speak."

"Oh yes, well do I know that. Have I not listened, and listened, and listened, till I have well nigh fallen asleep; and what sense is there in all the wranglings and disputations? Why cannot men think as they like, and let other folks alone? What harm does it do any that another should have a different opinion of his own?"

"I trow that is what father really thinks," said Keziah, thoughtfully; "but all men declare that it is needful for there to be outward uniformity of worship. And I trow that father would be willing to conform if they would but let our preachers and teachers alone to hold private meetings in peace. But so long as they badger and persecute and imprison them, he will have naught to do with the bishops and clergy who set them on, nor will he attend their churches, be the law what it may. He says it is like turning back in the hour of peril: that is not his way."

"I like that feeling," answered Cherry, with kindling eyes. "If that be so, I mind it less. Father is a good man, and full of courage; but I grow full weary of these never-ending talks. Kezzie, thinkest thou that he will be put in prison for keeping from church with his whole house? Some men have been sent to prison for less."

"I know not how that may be," answered Keziah, gravely. "He is a useful citizen, and a man of substance; and by what I

hear, such as these are left alone so long as they abide quiet and peaceable. Just now the Papists are being worse treated than we. Methinks that is why father is so sorry for them."

"Too much talk! too much talk!" cried Aunt Susan's voice from the adjoining kitchen. "Hands lag when tongues wag, wherefore do your work in silence. Is that almond paste ready, Keren Happuch? Then bring it quickly hither; and your manchet and sugar, Keziah, for the skins are ready to be stuffed."

And as the girls obediently brought the required ingredients, they found themselves in a long, low room, at the end of which a huge fire burned in a somewhat primitive stove, whilst a tall, angular, and powerful-looking dame, with her long upper robe well tucked up, and her gray hair pushed tightly away beneath a severe-looking coif, was superintending a number of culinary tasks, Jemima and a serving wench obeying the glance of her eye and the turn of her hand with the precision of long practice.

Certainly it was plain that Martin Holt's guests would not starve that night. The herring pie was only the crowning delicacy of the board, which was to groan beneath a variety of appetizing dishes. The Puritans were a temperate race, and the baneful habit of sack drinking at all hours, of perpetual pledgings and toastings, and the large consumption of fiery liquors, was at a discount in their houses; but they nevertheless liked a good table as well as the rest of their kind, and saw no hurt in sitting down to a generously supplied board, whilst they made up for their abstemiousness in the matter of liquor by the healthy and

voracious appetite which speedily caused the good cheer to melt away.

Mistress Susan was so intent on her preparations that she scarcely let her nieces pause to eat their frugal midday dinner. Martin himself was out on business, and would dine abroad that day, and nothing better pleased the careful housewife than to dispense with any formal dinner when there was a company supper to be cooked, and thus save the attendant labour of washing up as well as the time wasted in the consumption of the meal.

Jemima and Keziah never dreamed of disputing their aunt's will; but Cherry pouted and complained that it was hard to work all day without even the dinner hour as a relief. Mistress Susan gave her a sharp rebuke that silenced without subduing her; and she kept throwing wistful glances out of the window, watching the play of sunshine on the water, and longing to be out in the fresh air—for such a day as this was too good to be wasted indoors. Tomorrow belike the sun would not shine, and the wind would be cold and nipping.

Jemima and Keziah saw the wistful glances, and longed to interpose on behalf of their favourite; but Mistress Susan was not one it was well to interfere with, and Cherry was not in favour that day. But an inspiration came over Jemima at last, and she suddenly exclaimed:

"Sure, but how badly we need some fresh rushes for the parlour floor! There be not enough to cover it, and they all brown

and old. There has been scarce any frost as yet. I trow the river rushes will be yet green, and at least they will be fresh. Could not the child be spared to run out to try and get some? She is a better hand at that than at her cooking. I will finish her pastry if thou wilt spare her to get the reeds. I love not a floor like you, and methinks father will chide an he sees."

Mistress Susan cast a quick glance at the rush-strewn floor, and could not but agree with her niece. She had all the true housewife's instinct of neatness and cleanliness in every detail. The filthy habit of letting rushes rot on the floor, and only piling fresh ones on the top as occasion demanded, found no favour in this house. It was part of Cherry's work and delight to cut them fresh as often as there was need, but a spell of wet weather had hindered her from her river-side rambles of late, with the consequence that the supply was unwontedly low.

"Oh, any one can do Keren Happuch's work and feel nothing added to her toil," was the sharp response. "Small use are her hands in any kitchen. We had better make up our minds to wed her to a fine gentleman, who wants naught of his wife but to dress up in grand gowns, and smirk and simper over her fan; for no useful work will he get out of her. If rushes are wanted, she had better go quickly and cut them-

"And mind, do not stray too far along the banks, child; and watch the sky, and be in before the sun is down. The evenings draw in so quick now; and I would not have you abroad after nightfall for all the gold of Ophir."

Cherry had no desire for such a thing to happen either. London in the darkness of the night was a terrible place. Out from all the dens of Whitefriars and other like places swarmed the ruffian and criminal population that by day slunk away like evil beasts of night into hiding. The streets were made absolutely perilous by the bands of cutthroats and cutpurses who prowled about, setting upon belated pedestrians or unwary travellers, and robbing, insulting, and maltreating them-not unfrequently leaving the wretched victim dead or dying, to be found later by the cowardly watchman, who generally took good care not to be near the spot at the time of the affray. Ladies of quality never went abroad unattended even by day; but Cherry was no fine lady, and Martin Holt had no notion of encouraging the child's native vanity by making any difference betwixt her and her sisters. Jemima and Keziah had been always accustomed to go about in the neighbourhood of their home unmolested, and thought nothing of it; and though Cherry's rosy cheeks, slim, graceful figure, and bright, laughing eyes might chance to take the fancy of some bold roisterer or dandy, and lead to an address which might frighten or annoy the maid, her father considered this the less danger than bringing her up to think herself too captivating to go about unguarded; and up till now she had met with no unwelcome admiration or annoyance of any kind in her limited roving.

So she set forth blithely this afternoon, her cloak and hood muffling well both face and figure, her clogs on her feet, since

the river bank would be muddy and treacherous at this time of year, and a long, open basket on her arm, thinking of nothing but the delights of escaping from the weary monotony of pastry making and herb shredding, and from the overpowering odour of that mysterious herring pie. Cherry liked well enough to eat of it when it was placed upon the board, but she always wished she had not known anything of the process; she thought she should enjoy it so much the more.

Crossing the bridge, and exchanging many greetings as she tripped along, for every neighbour was in some sort a friend, and bright-eyed Cherry was a favourite with all—she turned to the right as she quitted the bridge, and walked in a westerly direction along the river bank, towards the great beds of reeds and rushes that stretched away in endless succession so soon as the few houses and gardens springing up on this side the river had been passed by.

Certainly there was no lack of green rushes. The autumn had been mild, and though the past few days had been chill and biting, it had not told to any great extent upon the rushes yet. Cherry plunged eagerly amongst them, selecting and cutting with a precision and rapidity that told of long practice. She was resolved to take home as many as ever she could carry, and these all of the best, since the supply would soon cease, and she knew the difference in the lasting power of the full, thick rushes and the little flimsy ones.

But it was later than she had known when she left home. The

brightness of the sunshine had deceived her, and she had been detained a few minutes upon the bridge, first by one and then by another, all asking kindly questions of her. Then her fastidious selection of her rushes caused her to wander further and further along the banks in search of prizes; and when at last her big basket was quite full, and correspondingly heavy, she looked round her with a start almost of dismay; for the gray twilight was already settling down over the dark river, and she was full a mile away from home, with a heavy load to carry.

Cherry's heart fluttered a little, but it was rather in fear of her aunt's displeasure than of any mischance likely to happen to herself. She had been often to these osier beds, and had never encountered a living soul there, and she would soon reach the region of walls and gardens that adjoined the southern end of the bridge. So taking her basket on her arm, she pushed her way upwards from the river to the path along which lay her road, and turning her face homeward, made all the haste she could to get back.

But how dark it looked to the eastward! Did ever evening close in so fast? And how black and cold the river looked! She never remembered to have seen it quite so cheerless and gloomy before. A thick white fog was rising from the marshy lands, and she could not see the friendly twinkling lights upon the bridge. Despite her exertions, which were great, she felt chill and shivery; and when at last she heard the sound of a lusty shout behind her, her heart seemed to stand still with terror, and she stopped short and gazed

wildly back, to see whence the noise came.

What she saw by no means reassured her. Some fifty yards behind, but mounted on fine horses, were two young gentlemen, plainly in a state of tipsy merriment, and by no means disposed to allow any prey, in the shape of a woman old or young, to escape them without some sort of pleasantry on their part. Cherry heard their laughter and their coarse words without understanding what it all meant; but a great terror took hold of her, and leaving her basket in the middle of the path, in the vain hope of tripping up the tipsy riders, she fled wildly along in the direction of home. Her hood falling back, disclosed her pretty floating curls beneath, and so gave greater zest to the pursuit. Fleet of foot she might be, but what availed that against the speed of the two fine horses? She heard their galloping hoofs closer and closer behind her. She knew that they were almost up with her now. Even the osier beds would afford her no protection from horsemen, and she feared to trust herself to the slippery ooze when the daylight had fled. With a short, sharp cry she sank upon the ground, exhausted and half dead with terror, and she heard the brutal shout of triumph with which the roisterers hailed this sight.

In another moment they would be upon her. She heard them shouting to their horses as they pulled them up. But was there not another sound, too? What was the meaning of that fierce demand in a very different voice? She lifted her head to see a third rider spurring up at a hand gallop, and before she had time to make up her mind whether or not this was a third foe, or a defender

suddenly arisen as it were from the very heart of the earth, she felt herself covered as by some protecting presence, and heard a firm voice above her saying:

"The first man who dares attempt to touch her I shoot dead!"

There was a great deal of blustering and swearing and hectoring. Cherry, still crouched upon the ground, shivered at the hideous imprecations levelled at her protector, and feared every moment to see him struck to the ground. But he held his position unflinchingly, and the tipsy gallants contented themselves with vituperation and hard words. Perhaps they thought the game not worth the candle. Perhaps they deemed a simple city maid not worth the trouble of an encounter. Perhaps they were too unsteady on their legs to desire to provoke the hostile overtures of this tall, dark-faced stripling, who appeared ready to do battle with the pair of them, and that without the least fear. At any rate, after much hard swearing, the estimable comrades mounted their horses again, and rode on in the gathering darkness; whilst Cherry felt herself lifted up with all courtesy and reverence, and a pleasant voice asked in bashful accents, very unlike the firm, defiant tones addressed to her persecutors, whether she were hurt.

"Not hurt, only frightened, fair sir," answered Cherry, beginning to recover her breath and her self possession, as she divined that her protector was now more embarrassed at the situation than she was herself. "How can I thank you for your timely help? I was well nigh dead with terror till I heard your

voice holding them at bay. Right bold it was of you to come to my assistance when you had two foes against you."

"Nay, fair lady, I were less than a man had I stayed for twenty."

"I like you none the less for your brave words, sir, and I believe that you have courage to face an army. But I may not linger here even to speak my thanks. I shall be in sore disgrace at home for tarrying out thus long in the dark."

"But you will grant to me to see you safe to your door, lady?"

"Ay, truly will I, an you will," answered Cherry, as much from real nervous fear as from the coquetry which made such companionship pleasant. "But I would fain go back a few paces for my poor reeds, that I go not home empty handed. And you must catch your steed, Sir Knight; he seems disposed to wander away at his own will."

"My steed will come at a call. He is a faithful beast, and not addicted to errant moods. Let us fetch your basket, lady, and then to your home.

"Is this it? Prithee, let me carry it; its weight is too much for you. See, I will place it so on Dobbin's broad back, and then we can jog along easily together."

Cherry, her fears allayed, and her imaginative fancy pleased by the termination to this adventure, chatted gaily to her tall companion; and as they neared the bridge with its many twinkling lights, she pointed out one of the houses in the middle, and told her companion that she dwelt there. His face turned eagerly upon her at hearing that.

"I am right glad to hear it, for perchance you can then direct me to the dwelling of Master Martin Holt, the wool stapler, if he yet plies his trade there as his father did before him."

"Martin Holt!" cried Cherry, eagerly interrupting. "Why, good sir, Martin Holt is my father."

The young man stopped short in amaze, and then said slowly, "Verily, this is a wondrous hap, for Martin Holt is mine own uncle. I am Cuthbert Trevlyn, the son of his sister Bridget."

Chapter 6: Martin Holt's Supper Party

Six o'clock was the almost universal hour for supper amongst the well-to-do classes, both gentle and simple, and Martin Holt's family sat down to the well-spread board punctually to the minute every day of their lives. But though there was no eating before that hour, the invited guests who were intimate at the house generally arrived about dusk, and were served with hot ginger wine with lumps of butter floating in it, or some similar concoction accounted a delicacy in those days of coarse feeding, and indulged in discussion and conversation which was the preliminary to the serious business of supper.

At four o'clock, then, Mistress Susan's table was set, the homespun cloth of excellent texture and whiteness spread upon the board, which was further adorned by plates and tankards, knives and even forks, though these last-named articles were quite a novelty, and rather lightly esteemed by Mistress Susan, who was a rigid conservative in all domestic matters. All the cold provisions had been laid upon the table. The serving woman in the kitchen had received full instruction as to those that remained in or about the stove. The ladies had doffed their big aprons, and had donned their Sunday coifs and kerchiefs and better gowns, and were now assembled in the upper parlour, where the spinning wheels stood, ready to receive the guests when they should come.

Cherry's absence had not yet excited any uneasiness, although

her aunt had made one or two severe remarks as to her love for junketing abroad, and frivolity in general. Her sisters had laid out her dress in readiness for her, and had taken her part with their accustomed warmth and goodwill. They were not at all afraid of her not turning up safe and sound. Cherry had many friends, and it was just as likely as not that she would stop and gossip all along the bridge as she came home. She took something of the privilege of a spoiled child, despite her aunt's rigid training. She knew her sisters never looked askance at her; that her father found it hard to scold severely, however grave he might try to look to please Aunt Susan; and it was perfectly well known in the house that she had no liking for those grave debates that formed the prelude to the supper downstairs. It was like enough she would linger without as long as she dared, and then spend as much time as possible strewing her rushes and dressing herself, so that she should not have long to listen to the talk of the elders.

Jemima and Keziah had long since trained themselves to that perfect stillness and decorous silence that was deemed fitting for women, and especially young women, in presence of their elders. They had even begun to take a certain interest in the questions discussed. But to Cherry it was simple penance to have to sit for one hour or more, her tongue and her active limbs alike chained, and her sisters were quite prepared for the absence of the younger girl when the guests dropped in one by one.

Their uncle, Abraham Dyson, was the first arrival, and behind him followed his son and daughter, Jacob and Rachel. Rachel

was a buxom young woman of five-and-twenty, shortly to be advanced to the dignity of a wedded wife. She would have been married before but for the feeble health of her mother; but the ceremony was not to be postponed much longer on that account, for fear the bridegroom, a silk mercer in thriving way of business, should grow weary of delay, and seek another partner for his hand and home. But Abraham Dyson saw another way of getting his sick wife properly looked to, and had whispered his notion in the ear of his brother-in-law. The Dysons and the Holts had had intimate business dealing with each other for generations, and there had been many matrimonial connections between them in times past. Martin himself had married Abraham's sister, and he listened with equanimity and pleasure to the proposal to ally one of his daughters with the solid and stolid Jacob.

Jacob was not much to look at, but he would be a man of considerable substance in time, and he had a shrewd head enough for business. As it had not pleased Providence to bless Martin Holt with sons, the best he could do was to find suitable husbands for his daughters, and seek amongst his sons-in-law for one into whose hands his business might worthily be intrusted. Daughters were still, and for many generations later, looked upon very much in the light of chattels to be disposed of at will by their parents and guardians, and it had not entered honest Martin's head that his wilful little Cherry would dare to set up her will in opposition to his.

Jacob, who had been taken into the confidence of his elders,

had expressed his preference for the youngest of his three cousins; and though not a word had been spoken to the girl upon the subject as yet, Martin looked upon the matter as settled.

Scarcely had the bustle of the first arrivals died down before the remaining two guests arrived—a tall, bent man with the face of a student and book lover, followed by his son, also a man of rather distinguished appearance for his station in life. The two Coles, father and son, were amongst those many Roman Catholic sufferers who had been ruined on account of their religion during the last reign; and now they gained a somewhat scanty livelihood by keeping a second-hand book shop on the bridge, selling paper and parchment and such like goods, and acting as scriveners to any who should desire to avail themselves of their skill in penmanship.

They were both reputed to be men of considerable learning, and as they had fallen from a different position, they were looked up to with a certain amount of respect. Some were disposed to sneer at and flout them, but they were on the whole well liked amongst their neighbours. They were very quiet people, and never spoke one word of the matters which came to their knowledge through the letters they were from time to time called upon to write. Almost every surrounding family had in some sort or another intrusted them with some family secret or testamentary deposition, and would on this account alone have been averse to quarrelling with them, for fear they might let out the secret.

Martin found his neighbour Anthony by far the most interesting of his acquaintances, and the fact of this common disappointment in the new King, and the common persecution instituted against both Romanists and Puritans, had drawn them more together of late than ever before. Both were men of considerable enlightenment of mind; both desired to see toleration extended to all (though each might have regarded with more complacency an act of uniformity that strove to bring all men to his own particular way of thinking and worship), and both agreed in a hearty contempt for the mean and paltry King, who had made such lavish promises in the days of his adversity, only to cancel them the moment he had the power, and fling himself blindly into the arms of the dominant faction of the Episcopacy.

All the guests were cordially welcomed by the family of Martin Holt. The three elder men sat round the fire, and plunged into animated discussion almost at once. Jacob Dyson got into a chair somehow beside Keziah, and stared uneasily round the room; whilst Walter Cole took up his position beside Jemima, and strove to entertain her by the account of some tilting and artillery practice (as archery was still called) that he had been witnessing in Spital Fields. He spoke of the courage and prowess of the young Prince of Wales, and how great a contrast he presented to his father. The contempt that was beginning to manifest itself towards the luckless James in his English subjects was no more plainly manifested than in the London citizens. Elizabeth, with all her follies and her faults, had been the idol of

London, as her father before her. Now a reaction had set in, and no scorn could be too great for her undignified and presumptuous successor. This contempt was well shown by the dry reply of the Lord Mayor some few years later, when the King, in a rage at being refused a loan he desired of the citizens, threatened to remove his Court and all records and jewels from the Tower and Westminster Hall to another place, as a mark of his displeasure. The Lord Mayor listened calmly to this terrible threat, and then made submissive answer.

"Your Majesty hath power to do what you please," he said, "and your city of London will obey accordingly; but she humbly desires that when your Majesty shall remove your Courts, you would graciously please to leave the Thames behind you."

But to return to the house on the bridge and the occupants of Martin Holt's parlour. Whilst Jemima and Keziah listened eagerly to the stories of the student's son, with the delight natural to Puritan maidens denied any participation in such scenes of merriment, Jacob was looking rather dismally round the room, and presently broke in with the question:

"But where, all this time, is Cherry?"

"Strewing rushes in the eating parlour, I doubt not," answered Keziah. "She went out a while back to cut them. She loveth not dry disputings and learned talk. Belike she will linger below till nigh on the supper hour an Aunt Susan call her not."

"I love not such disputings neither," said Jacob, with unwonted energy. "Good Kezzie, let us twain slip below to help Cherry over

her task."

Keziah gave a quick glance at the face of her stern aunt, who loved not this sort of slipping away during times of ceremony; but she had her back to them and to the door, and was engrossed in the talk as well as in the stocking fabric upon her needles. Jemima and Walter were still talking unrebuked in a low key. Perchance this flitting could be accomplished without drawing down either notice or remark. To please Jacob, Keziah would have done much, even to running the risk of a scolding from her aunt. She had none of saucy Cherry's scorn of the big boorish fellow with the red face and hairy hands. She looked below the surface, and knew that a kindly heart beat beneath the ungainly habit; and being but plain herself, Keziah would have taken shame to herself for thinking scorn of another for a like defect.

Putting her finger on her lip in token of caution, she effected a quiet retreat, and the next moment the two cousins stood flushed but elated in the eating parlour below. But though it was now past five o'clock, there was no sign of Cherry or her rushes, and Keziah looked both surprised and uneasy.

"Belike she came in with dirty clogs and skirt, and has gone up to her bed chamber to change them, for fear of Aunt Susan telling her she was cluttering up the parlour," said the sister, anxiously. "I will run and see. Sure she can never have lingered so late beside the river! The sun has been long down, and the fog is rising."

Keziah tripped upstairs lightly enough, but speedily came down with a grave face.

"She is not there," was her answer to Jacob's glance of inquiry. "What must we do? If we make a coil about it, and she comes in, having only gossiped awhile with the neighbours along the bridge, aunt will surely chide her sharply, and send her to bed supperless. But if she should have met some mischance-" and Keziah broke off, looking frightened enough, for it was no light matter to meet mischance alone and unprotected in the dark.

"I will go forth to seek her," cried Jacob, with unwonted animation. "It boots not for a man to be abroad after dark, but for a maid it is an ill tidings indeed. Which way went she? to the osier beds! Sure I must find her ere long. Were it not well for me to go, good Kezzie?"

"I would that some would go, but I trow thou hadst better not adventure thyself alone. Belike Master Walter would be thy companion. If there be peril abroad, it is better there should be twain than one. And you will want lanterns and stout staffs, too."

"Run thou and light the lanterns, good coz, and I will to Walter and ask his company. It grows thicker and darker every moment. If Cherry be not within, it behoves us to make search for her."

Keziah's face was pale with terror as she flew to do Jacob's bidding. She had a terrible fear of London streets, at night, as well she might, and the open country beyond was even worse to her excited imagination. And Cherry was so pretty, so simple, so credulous, and withal so utterly defenceless should there be any sort of attack made upon her. Keziah's hands shook as she lighted the lantern; and as minutes were fast slipping away and still there

was no sign of the truant, she was rather relieved than terrified to hear the sharp accents of her aunt's voice mingling with her father's deeper tones as the whole party came tramping down the stairs. It was plain that Jacob had let the secret ooze out, and that all the company had become alarmed. Cherry's name was on all lips, and Martin was asking his sister somewhat sternly why she had overlooked the non-return of the girl at dusk.

Miss Susan was sharply defending herself on the score of her manifold duties and Cherry's well-known gadding propensities. She never looked to see her home before dusk, as she was certain to stay out as long as she dared, and since then she had taken it for granted that the little hussy had come in, and was doing over the floor with her rushes.

Martin paid small heed to this shrill torrent of words, but with anxious face was pulling on his long outer hoots, and selecting the stoutest oaken staff of the number stacked in the corner, inviting his guests to arm themselves in like fashion.

Jemima and Keziah, feeling as though some blame attached to them, looked on with pale faces, whilst Rachel chattered volubly of the horrors she had often heard of as being perpetrated in the streets. Her brother turned upon her roughly at last, and bid her cease her ill-omened croaking; whereat she tossed her head and muttered a good many scornful interjections, and "could not see why she need be called to task like that."

The whole party descended to the door when the preparations for the start were complete. It was striking half after five on many

of the city clocks as Martin threw open his door. But he had scarcely stepped across the threshold before he heard a familiar little shriek; there was a rush of steps from somewhere in the darkness without, and Cherry, with an abandon very foreign to the times and her training, and indicative of much agitation and emotion, flung herself upon his breast, and threw her arms about his neck.

"Here I am, father; there has no hurt befallen me!" she cried in broken gasps. "But I know not what fearful thing was like to have happened had it not been for the help of this gallant gentleman, who came in the very nick of time to drive off my assailants and bring me safe home. And oh, my father, such a wonderful thing! I can scarce believe it myself! This gentleman is no stranger; leastways he may not so be treated, for he is our very own flesh and blood-my cousin, thy nephew. He is Cuthbert Trevlyn, son to that sister Bridget of thine of whom we have sometimes heard thee speak!"

A strange dead silence fell on the group clustered in the doorway with lanterns and staffs. All looked out into the darkness in a mist of perplexity and doubt, to see, as their eyes grew used to the obscurity, the tall figure of a slim, dark-faced youth standing beside a tired-looking horse, and steadying upon the saddle a large basket of rushes.

Martin Holt, after one minute of utter silence, released the clinging arms from about his neck, pushed Cherry not ungently towards her sisters, and stepped forward towards her preserver.

"This is a strange thing my daughter tells me, young sir," he said, as he scanned the horseman's face narrowly by the light of his lantern. "I find it hard to credit my senses. Art sure that she has understood thee aright? Is Cuthbert Trevlyn truly thy name?"

"Ay, truly it is; and my mother's was Bridget Holt, and she left her home long years ago as waiting maid to my Lady Adelaide de Grey, and led a happy life till some evil hap threw her across the path of Nicholas Trevlyn, who made her his wife. I trow she many a time rued the day when she was thus persuaded; but repentance came too late, and death soon relieved her of her load of misery. That she bequeathed to her children; and here am I this day a wanderer from my father's house, constrained to seek shelter from her kindred, since flesh and blood can no longer endure the misery of dwelling beneath his roof."

"Jacob," said Martin Holt, "take yon steed to the stables of Master Miller, and ask him for fodder and tendance for the beast for this night."

"Young sir, thou hast a strange story to tell, and I would hear it anon. If thou hadst not succoured my daughter in her hour of need, I must have bid thee welcome to my house and my table. Since thou hast done this also, I do it the more readily. I scarce knew that my misguided sister had borne a son. Whether he lived or died I had no means of knowing. But if thou art he, come in, and be welcome. I will hear thy tale anon. Meantime stand no longer without in the cold."

If this welcome were something coldly given, Cuthbert was

not aware of it. Used as he was to his father's fierce sullenness and taciturnity, any other manner seemed warm and pleasant. He followed this new uncle up the dark staircase without any misgiving, and found himself quickly in the well-warmed and well-lighted eating parlour, where Mistress Susan was already bustling about in a very noisy fashion, getting the viands ready for serving. A dark frown was on her face, and her whole aspect was thundery.

The sisters and Rachel had all vanished upstairs to hear Cherry's story as they got her ready for the supper table, excitement in this new arrival of an unknown kinsman having saved the girl from any chiding or questioning from father or aunt. The Coles, father and son, had returned to the upper parlour with the discretion and refinement of feeling natural to them; so that only Abraham Dyson witnessed the next scene in the little domestic drama, for Jacob had obediently gone off with the horse.

Martin Holt pushed his nephew before him into the lighted room, and looked him well over from head to foot.

"There is little of thy mother about thee, boy," he said, with some stern bitterness of tone. "I fear me thou art all thy father's son."

"My father says not so," answered Cuthbert, facing his uncle fearlessly. "He has flung it again and yet again in my teeth that I am the heretic son of my heretic mother."

Martin Holt uttered an inarticulate exclamation and came a

step nearer.

"Say that again, boy-say that again! Can it be true that thy unhappy and deluded mother repented of her Popish errors ere she died, and turned back to the pure faith of her childhood? If that be so, it is like a mill stone rolled from off my heart. I have wept for her all these years as for one of the lost."

"I was too young when she died to remember aught of her teaching, but I have seen those who tell me she was fearfully unhappy with my father, and abjured his faith ere she died. I know that he reviles her memory, and he forbids even her children to speak of her. He would scarce have branded her with the hateful name of heretic had she adhered to his faith till her death."

"Susan, dost hear that?" cried Martin Holt, turning exultantly to his sister. "It was as our mother fondly said. She was not lost for ever; she returned to her former faith. Nay, I doubt not that in some sort she died for it-died through the harshness and sternness of her husband. Susan, dost hear-dost understand?"

But Susan only turned a sour face towards her brother.

"I hear," she answered ungraciously. "But the boy has doubtless been bred a Papist. Who can believe a word he says? Doubtless he has been sent here to corrupt your daughters, as Bridget was corrupted by his father. I would liefer put my hand in the maw of a mad dog than my faith in the word of a Papist."

Cuthbert did not wince beneath this harsh speech, he was too well inured to such; he only looked at his aunt with grave curiosity

as he answered thoughtfully:

"Methinks it is something hard to believe them, always. Yet I have known them speak sooth as well as other men. But I myself would sooner put confidence in the word of one of the other faith. They hold not with falsehood in a good cause as our father confessors do. Wherefore, if it were for that alone, I would sooner be a heretic, albeit there be many things about my father's faith that I love and cling to."

This answer caused Martin to look more closely at his nephew, discerning in him something of the fearless Puritan spirit, as well as that instinctive desire to weigh and judge for himself that was one of his own characteristics. Papist the lad might be by training and inheritance, but it was plain that at present he was no bigot. He would not strive to corrupt his cousins; rather were they likely to influence and draw him.

Susan flounced back to the kitchen without another word, only muttering to herself prognostications of evil if such a popinjay were admitted into the household. Not that Cuthbert's sober riding suit merited such a criticism, for there was nothing fine about it at all; yet it had been fashionably cut in its day, and still had the nameless air that always clings to a thoroughly well-made garment, even when it has seen its best days; and the Puritans were already beginning to show, by their plain and severe dress, their contempt for frivolity and extravagance, though the difference between their clothes and those of other men was not so marked as it became in the next reign.

However, there was not much more time for conversation on private themes. Jacob returned from stabling the horse; the girls from above descended, full of curiosity about this new cousin. The Coles, father and son, joined the party assembled round the table, and were introduced to Cuthbert, whom, as a Trevlyn, they regarded with considerable interest, and then the guests and the family were all placed—Miss Susan and the two elder nieces only seating themselves at the last, when they had finished putting all the savoury dishes on the table. Cuthbert's eyes grew round with amaze at the sight of all the good cheer before him. Even at Trevlyn Chase he had never seen quite such an array of dishes and meats; and as he was the greatest stranger and a traveller to boot, he was helped with the greatest liberality, and pressed to partake of every dish.

Cherry was called upon for an account of her adventures, and was chidden sharply by her aunt for her folly and carelessness after being warned not to be overtaken by the darkness. But her father was too thankful to have her safe home to say much; and Rachel, who sat on Cuthbert's other side, plied him with questions about his own share in the adventure, and praised him in warm terms for his heroism, till the lad grew shamefaced and abashed, and was glad when the talk drifted away from private to public matters, and he could listen without being called upon to speak.

Moreover, he was all eagerness to hear what he could of such topics. He knew so little what was stirring in the country, and

was eager to learn more. He kept hearing the words "Bye" and "Main" bandied about amongst the speakers, and at last he asked his neighbour in a whisper what was meant by the terms.

"Marry, two villainous Popish plots," answered Rachel, who was glib enough with her tongue. "And many heads have fallen already, and perhaps more will yet fall; for Sir Walter Raleigh is still in the Tower, and my Lord Grey, too. Confusion to all traitors and plotters, say I! Why cannot men live pleasantly and easily? They might well do so, an they would cease from their evil practices, and from making such a coil about what hurts none. If they would but go to church like sensible Christians, nobody would have a word against them; but they are like mules and pigs, and they can neither be led nor driven straight. I go to church every Sunday of my life, and what there is to fall foul of I never can guess. But men be such blind, obstinate fools, they must always be putting a rope round their necks. They say London is seething now with plots, and no man can feel safe for a day nor an hour."

Cuthbert gave one swift backward thought to his companion of the road and the strange words he had uttered; and he asked with increasing interest of his lively neighbour:

"But what do men think to gain by such plots? What is the object of them?"

"Beshrew me if I know or care! My father says they be all mad together, the moonstruck knaves! They say that the 'Bye' was an attempt to make prisoner of the King's Majesty, and to

keep him in captivity till he had sworn to change his laws and his ministers-as they say was done once in Scotland, when he was trying to rule his turbulent subjects there. As for the 'Main,' that was worse; nothing better than the murder of the King and Royal family, so that the Lady Arabella might be Queen in his stead. But neither came to good; it seemeth to me that these villainous plots never do, And all that results from them is that the laws are made harsher and harsher, and men groan and writhe under them, and curse the King and his ministers, when they had better be cursing their own folly and wickedness in trying to overthrow the government of their lawful rulers."

"That is one side of the question, Mistress Rachel," said Walter Cole, in his quiet voice; "but if none had ever revolted against tyranny, we had all been slaves this day instead of a free nation of subjects, imposing our just will upon a sovereign in return for the privileges he grants us. There be limits to endurance. There be times when those limits are over past, and to submit becomes weakness and coward folly. Thou speakest as one swimming easily with the stream. Thou knowest little of the perils of the shoals and quicksands."

Rachel tossed her head, but was too wary to be drawn into an argument with the man of books. She could air her father's opinions second hand with an assumption of great assurance, but she was no hand at argument or fence, and had no desire for an encounter of wits.

But Cuthbert stepped eagerly into the breach, and the two men

became engrossed in talk. Cuthbert heard of acts of tyranny and oppression, cruel punishments and ruinous fines imposed upon hapless Romanists, guiltless of any other offence than of growing up in the faith of their forefathers. He heard, on the other hand, of Puritan preachers deprived of their cures and hunted about like criminals, though nothing save the crime of unlicensed preaching could be adduced against them. Cuthbert's blood was young and hot, and easily stirred within him. He began to understand how it was that the nation and this great city were never at rest. It seemed to him as though he had stepped down out of a region of snow and ice into the very crater of some smouldering volcano which might at any moment burst out into flames. The sensation was strange and a little intoxicating. He marvelled how he had been content so long to know so little of the great world in which he lived.

The party broke up all too soon for him; but after the guests had gone he had yet another interview to go through with his uncle, after the womenkind had been dismissed to bed.

Firstly, Martin questioned the boy closely as to the circumstances of his past life-his relations with his father, his training, intellectual and religious, and his final resolve to escape, carried out by the help of Sir Richard and his family. Next, he went on to ask the youth of his wishes concerning his future; and finding these as vague as might be expected from his vast inexperience, he smiled, and said that question could stand over for the present. There was no difficulty about employing talent

and energy in this city of London; and if his nephew developed capacity in any direction, it could doubtless be turned to good account. Meantime he had better dwell beneath this roof, and accustom himself to new ways and new sights, after which they would talk of his future again.

Nothing could be more to Cuthbert's mind than such a decision; but when he tried to express his gratitude, he was speedily silenced.

"Not a word, boy; not a word! Thou art a near kinsman. Thou hast had a hard life with thy father, and having claimed the protection of thy mother's brother, shalt have it, and welcome. But now to another matter. How art thou off for money? I trow by what thou sayest of thy father that he had little to give or spend."

"He never gave me aught in his life save the poor clothes and food that were needful. My uncle gave me a few gold pieces ere I left-I mean my good cousin, Sir Richard."

"Ay, boy, ay. But I trow that thine own uncle can do better by thee than that. Didst ever know that thy mother once looked to have a fortune of her own, albeit a modest one?"

Cuthbert shook his head, and Martin rose from his seat and disappeared from the room for a few minutes. When he came back he had a coffer in his hands that seemed to be heavy. He placed it on the table, and went on with his speech as though he had not been interrupted.

"Yes. Our father was a man of substance, and he had but three children-myself, Susan, and Bridget. To me he willed his house,

his business, and all the money locked up in that. To Susan and Bridget he divided the savings of his lifetime that had not been used in enlarging the business. There was two thousand pounds apiece for them when he died."

Cuthbert's eyes dilated with astonishment, but he said nothing, and his uncle continued speaking.

"You doubtless marvel why you have received none of this before. I will tell you why. When Bridget married a Papist, our father was in a great rage, and vowed she should never have a penny of his money. He scratched her name out of his will, and bid us never speak her name again. But as he lay a-dying, other thoughts came into his mind, and he was unhappy in this thing. He bid me get together the two thousand pounds that had once been Bridget's portion, and when I did so-with some trouble at a short notice-he counted it all over, and with his own hands locked it away in this chest " – laying his hand on the weighty iron-bound box. "Then he turned to me and said, 'Martin, I verily believe that thy sister is dead. Something tells me that I shall see her before I see any of you. The dead are ever forgiven. Take this coffer and keep it for thy sister's children, if she have had the misfortune to bring children into this world of sorrow. Keep it for them till they be grown. Let not their evil father know aught of it. And even then be cautious. Prove and see if they be worthy of wealth-if they will make good use of it. It is thine in trust for them. Keep or withhold as thou thinkest right; but be honest and be true, so shall my blessing follow thee even after death.' Those

were amongst the last words he spoke. I took the chest, and I have kept it until now. I have thought often of it; but no word reached me of my sister, and time has failed me to seek her abroad. I knew her children, if any lived, could but just have reached man or woman's estate, and I have waited to see what would chance.

"Cuthbert Trevlyn, this chest and all it contains may one day be thine. I give it not yet into thy keeping, for I must prove thee first; but I tell thee what is within it and what was thy grand sire's charge, that thou mayest know I have no desire save to do what is right by thee and thy sister, and that I trust and hope the day may come when I may deliver the chest to thee, to divide with her the portion bequeathed to your hapless mother."

Cuthbert's astonishment was so great he hardly knew what to say. For himself he cared but little. He was a man, and could fight his own way in the world. But those golden coins would make a dowry for his sister that many a high-born dame might envy. A flush came into his cheek as he thought of Philip's eager words overheard by him. If Petronella was the mistress of a fair fortune, why should any forbid them to be wed?

Martin liked the lad none the less that his first thought was for his sister. But for the present Petronella was beneath her father's roof, and could not be benefited thereby. Still, it would be something for Cuthbert to know, and to look forward to in the future, and therein he rejoiced.

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