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DEEP DOWN, A TALE OF THE CORNISH MINES

Robert Michael Ballantyne

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Содержание

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Chapter One.
Begins the Story with a Peculiar Meeting

Necessity is the mother of invention. This is undoubtedly true, but it is equally true that invention is not the only member of necessity's large family. Change of scene and circumstance are also among her children. It was necessity that gave birth to the resolve to travel to the end of the earth—of English earth at all events—in search of fortune, which swelled the bosom of yonder tall, well-favoured youth, who, seated uncomfortably on the top of that clumsy public conveyance, drives up Market-Jew Street in the ancient town of Penzance. Yes, necessity—stern necessity, as she is sometimes called—drove that youth into Cornwall, and thus was the originating cause of that wonderful series of events which ultimately led to his attaining—but hold! Let us begin at the beginning.

It was a beautiful morning in June, in that period of the world's history which is ambiguously styled "Once-upon-a-time," when the "Kittereen"—the clumsy vehicle above referred to—rumbled up to the Star Inn and stopped there. The tall, well-favoured youth leapt at once to the ground, and entered the inn with the air of a man who owned at least the half of the county, although his much-worn grey shooting costume and single unpretentious portmanteau did not indicate either unusual wealth or exalted station.

In an off-hand hearty way, he announced to landlord, waiters, chambermaids, and hangers-on, to all, indeed, who might choose to listen, that the weather was glorious, that coaches of all kinds, especially Kittereens, were detestable machines of torture, and that he meant to perform the remainder of his journey on foot.

He inquired the way to the town of St. Just, ordered his luggage to be forwarded by coach or cart, and, with nothing but a stout oaken cudgel to encumber him, set out on his walk of about seven miles, with the determination of compensating himself for previous hours of forced inaction and constraint by ignoring roads and crossing the country like an Irish fox-hunter.

Acting on the presumptuous belief that he could find his way to any part of the world with the smallest amount of direction, he naturally missed the right road at the outset, and instead of taking the road to St. Just, pursued that which leads to the Land's End.

The youth, as we have observed, was well-favoured. Tall, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, and athletic, with an active step, erect gait, and clear laughing eye, he was one whom a recruiting-sergeant in the Guards would have looked upon with a covetous sigh. Smooth fair cheeks and chin told that boyhood was scarce out of sight behind, and an undeniable *some thing* on the upper lip declared that manhood was not far in advance.

Like most people in what may be termed an uncertain stage of existence, our hero exhibited a variety of apparent contradictions. His great size and muscular strength and deep bass voice were those of a man, while the smooth skin, the soft curling hair, and the rollicking gladsome look were all indicative of the boy. His countenance, too, might have perplexed a fortune-teller. Sometimes it was grave almost to sternness, at other times it sparkled with delight, exhibiting now an expression that would have befitted a sage on whose decisions hung the fate of kingdoms, and anon displaying a dash of mischief worthy of the wildest boy in a village school.

Some of the youth's varied, not to say extravagant, actions and expressions, were perhaps due to the exhilarating brilliancy of the morning, or to the appearance of those splendid castles which his mind was actively engaged in building in the air.

The country through which he travelled was at first varied with trees and bushes clothed in rich foliage; but soon its aspect changed, and ere long he pursued a path which led over a wide extent of wild moorland covered with purple heath and gorse in golden-yellow bloom. The ground, too, became so rough that the youth was fain to confine himself to the highroad; but being of an explorative disposition, he quickly diverged into the lanes, which in that part of Cornwall were, and still are, sufficiently serpentine and intricate to mislead a more experienced traveller. It soon began to dawn upon the youth's mind that he was wandering in a wrong direction, and when he suddenly discovered a solitary cottage on the right hand, which he had previously observed on the left, he made up his mind to sacrifice his independence and condescend to ask for guidance.

Lightly leaping a wall with this intent, he crossed two fields, and stooped as he looked in at the low doorway of the cottage, from the interior of which there issued the loud cries of a child either in great pain or passion.

A sturdy little boy seated on a stool, and roaring like a young bull, while an elderly woman tried to comfort him, was the sight which met his gaze.

"Can you show me the road to St. Just?" inquired our adventurer.

"St. Just, sur?" said the woman, stepping out in front of the door, "why, you're on the way to St. Buryan, sure. Ef you do keep on the right of the hill over theere, you'll see the St. Just road."

A yell of unparalleled ferocity issued at this moment from the cottage, and it was found that the noisy urchin within, overcome by curiosity, had risen to ascertain who the stranger outside could be, and had been arrested by a pang of agony.

"Aw dear, aw dear, my poor booy," exclaimed the woman, endeavouring gently to press the boy down again on the stool, amid furious roaring.

"What's wrong with him?" asked our traveller, entering the apartment.

"He's tumbled off the wall, dear booy, an' semen to me he's scat un shoulder very bad."

"Let me have a look at him," said the youth, sitting down on the edge of a bed which stood at one end of the room, and drawing the child between his knees. "Come, little man, don't shout so loud; I'll put it all right for you. Let me feel your shoulder."

To judge from the immediate result, the young man seemed to put it all wrong instead of "all right," for his somewhat rough manipulation of the boy's shoulder produced such a torrent of screams that the pitying woman had much ado to restrain herself from rushing to the rescue.

"Ah!" exclaimed the youth in grey, releasing his victim; "I thought so; he has broken his collar-bone, my good woman; not a serious matter, by any means, but it will worry him for some time to come. Have you got anything to make a bandage of?"

"Sur?" said the woman.

"Have you a bit of rag—an old shirt or apron?—anything will do."

The woman promptly produced a cotton shirt, which the youth tore up into long strips. Making a pad of one of these, he placed it under the boy's arm-pit despite of sobs and resistance. This pad acted as a fulcrum on which the arm rested as a lever. Pressing the elbow close to the boy's side he thus forced the shoulder outwards, and, with his left hand, set the bone with its two broken ends together. To secure it in this position he bound the arm pretty firmly to the boy's body, so that he could not move a muscle of the left arm or shoulder.

"There," said the youth, assisting his patient to put on his shirt, "that will keep all straight. You must not on any account remove the bandage for some weeks."

"How long, sur?" exclaimed the woman in surprise.

"For some weeks; but that will depend on how the little fellow gets on. He may go about and use his right arm as he pleases, but no more climbing on walls for some time to come. Do you hear, little man?"

The urchin, whose pain was somewhat relieved, and who had moderated down to an occasional deep sob, said "Iss."

"You're a doctor, sur, I think?" said the woman.

"Yes, I am; and I'll come to see you again, so be careful to attend to my directions. Good-morning."

"Good mornin', sur, an' thank 'ee!" exclaimed the grateful dame as the youth left the house, and, leaping the low enclosure in front of it, sped over the moor in the direction which had been pointed out to him.

His resolution to ignore roads cost our traveller more trouble than he had anticipated, for the moor was very rugged, the brambles vexatious, and the spines of the gorse uncommonly sharp. Impediments of every kind were more numerous than he had been accustomed to meet with even on the heath-clad hills of Scotland, with which—although "the land of the mountain and the flood" was not that of his birth—he had from childhood been familiar.

After a good deal of vigorous leaping and resolute scrambling, he reached one of those peculiar Cornish lanes which are so deeply sunk in the ground, and edged with such high solid walls, that the wayfarer cannot in many places see the nature of the country through which he is passing. The point at which he reached the lane was so overgrown with gorse and brambles that it was necessary to search for a passage through them. This not being readily found, he gave way to the impetuosity of his disposition, stepped back a few paces, cleared the obstacles with a light bound, and alighted on the edge of the bank, which gave way under his weight, and he descended into the lane in a shower of stones and dust, landing on his feet more by chance than by dexterity.

A shout of indignation greeted the traveller, and, turning abruptly round, he beheld a stout old gentleman stamping with rage, covered from head to foot with dust, and sputtering out epithets of opprobrium on the hapless wight who had thus unintentionally bespattered him.

"Ugh! hah! you young jackanapes—you blind dumbledory—ugh! What mean you by galloping over the country thus like a wild ass—eh?"

A fit of coughing here interrupted the choleric old gentleman, in the midst of which our hero, with much humility of demeanour, many apologies, and protestations of innocence of intention to injure, picked up the old gentleman's hat, assisted him to brush his clothes with a bunch of ferns, and in various other ways sought to pacify him.

The old man grumbled a good deal at first, but was finally so far mollified as to say less testily, while he put on his hat, "I warrant me, young man, you are come on some wild-goose chase to this out-o'-the-way region of the land in search of the picturesque—eh?—a dauber on canvas?"

"No, sir," replied the youth, "I profess not to wield the pencil or brush, although I admit to having made feeble efforts as an amateur. The scalpel is more to my taste, and my object in coming here is to visit a relative. I am on my way to St. Just; but, having wandered somewhat out of my road, have been obliged to strike into bypaths, as you see."

"As I *see*, young man!—yes, and as I *feel*," replied the old gentleman, with some remains of asperity.

"I have already expressed regret for the mischance that has befallen you," said the youth in grey somewhat sternly, for his impulsive spirit fired a little at the continued ill-humour of the old gentleman. "Perhaps you will return good for evil by pointing out the way to St. Just. May I venture to ask this favour of you?"

"You may venture, and you *have* ventured; and it is my belief, young man, that you'll venture many a thing before this world has done with you; however, as you are a stranger in these parts, and have expressed due penitence for your misdeed, though I more than half doubt your sincerity, I can

do no less than point out the road to St. Just, whither I will accompany you at least part of the way; and, young sir, as you have taken pretty free liberty with *me* this morning, may I take the liberty of asking *you* the name of your relative in St. Just? I am well acquainted with most of the inhabitants of that town."

"Certainly," replied the youth. "The gentleman whom I am going to visit is my uncle. His name is Donnithorne."

"What! Tom Donnithorne?" exclaimed the old gentleman, in a tone of surprise, as he darted a keen glance from under his bushy eyebrows at his companion. "Hah! then from that fact I gather that you are Oliver Trembath, the young doctor whom he has been expecting the last day or two. H'm—so old Tom Donnithorne is your uncle, is he?"

The youth in grey did not relish the free and easy, not to say patronising, tone of his companion, and felt inclined to give a sharp answer, but he restrained his feelings and replied,—"He is, and you are correct in your supposition regarding myself. Do you happen to know my uncle personally?"

"Know him personally!" cried the old gentleman with a sardonic laugh; "Oh yes, I know him intimately—intimately; some people say he's a very good fellow."

"I am glad to hear that, for to say truth—"

He paused abruptly.

"Ha! I suppose you were going to say that you have heard a different account of him—eh?"

"Well, I *was* going to observe," replied Oliver, with a laugh, "that my uncle is rather a wild man for his years—addicted to smuggling, I am told, and somewhat given to the bottle; but it is well known that tattlers give false reports, and I am delighted to hear that the old boy is not such a bad fellow after all."

"Humph!" ejaculated the other. "Then you have never seen him, I suppose?"

"No, never; although I am a Cornishman I have seen little of my native county, having left it when a little boy—before my uncle came to live in this part of the country."

"H'm—well, young man, I would advise you to beware of that same uncle of yours."

"How!" exclaimed the youth in surprise; "did you not tell me just now that he is a very good fellow?"

"No, sir, I did not. I told you that *some* people say he is a very good fellow, but for myself I think him an uncommonly bad man, a man who has done me great injury in his day—"

"It grieves me to hear you say so," interrupted Oliver, whose ire was again roused by the tone and manner of his companion.

"A decidedly bad man," continued the old gentleman, not noticing the interruption, "a thorough rascal, a smuggler, and a drunkard, and—"

"Hold, sir!" cried the youth sternly, as he stopped and faced the old gentleman, "remember that you speak of my relative. Had you been a younger man, sir—"

Again the youth paused abruptly.

"Go on, sir," said the old gentleman ironically, "you would have pommelled me to a jelly with your cudgel, I suppose; is that it?—acting somewhat in the spirit of your kinsman, that same smuggling and tippling old scoundrel, who—"

"Enough, sir," interrupted the young man angrily; "we part company here."

So saying, he vaulted over the wall that separated the road from the moor, and hurried away.

"Take the first turn to the left, and keep straight on, else you'll lose yourself aga-a-a-in," roared the old gentleman, "and my compliments to the rascally old smugg–le–e–r–r!"

"The old scoundrel!" muttered the youth as he hurried away.

"The young puppy!" growled the old gentleman as he jogged along. "Given to smuggling and the bottle indeed—humph! the excitable jackanapes! But I've given him a turn in the wrong direction that will cool his blood somewhat, and give me leisure to cool mine too, before we meet again."

Here the old gentleman's red countenance relaxed into a broad grin, and he chuckled a good deal, in the midst of a running commentary on the conduct and appearance of his late companion, from the disjointed sentences of which it might have been gathered that although his introduction to the young doctor had been unfortunate, and the succeeding intercourse stormy, his opinion of him was not altogether unfavourable.

Chapter Two.
Shows what Astonishing Results may follow from taking the Wrong Road

Before Oliver Trembath had advanced half a mile on his path, he had cooled sufficiently to experience some regret at having been so quick to take offence at one who, being evidently an eccentric character, should not, he thought, have been broken with so summarily. Regrets, however, had come too late, so he endeavoured to shake off the disagreeable feelings that depressed him, and, the more effectually to accomplish this, burst forth into a bravura song with so much emphasis as utterly to drown, and no doubt to confound, two larks, which, up to that time, had been pouring their melodious souls out of their little bodies in the bright blue sky above.

Presently he came to a part of the moor where two roads diverged—one to the right and the other to the left. Recalling the shout of advice which the old gentleman had given him in parting, he took that which led to the left, and was gratified, on gaining an eminence a short distance in advance, to see in the far distance a square turret, which he concluded was that of the church of St. Just.

Keeping this turret in view, the youth stepped out so vigorously that he soon reached the small town that clustered round the church, and going up to the first man he met, said, “This is the town of St. Just, I suppose, is it not?”

“No, et is’n; thee’s come the wrang road, sur,” replied the rustic. “This es Sennen church-town. St. Just es up over th’ hill theere.”

Oliver Trembath’s first feeling was one of surprise; this was followed by annoyance, which quickly degenerated into anger as it flashed into his mind that the old gentleman might possibly have led him wrong on purpose.

“How far is it to St. Just?” he inquired.

“’Bout six miles, sur.”

“Then I suppose I am not far from the Land’s End?” said Oliver after a pause.

“No, not fur,” replied the man. “Et do lie straight before ’ee.”

Thanking the man, Oliver started off at a smart pace, resolving, before proceeding to St. Just, to visit this extreme western point of England—a visit to which he had often looked forward with pleasant anticipation.

During the last hour of his walk the sun had been obscured by clouds, but, just as he approached the cliffs, the clouds separated, and a golden flood rushed over the broad Atlantic, which now lay spread out before him in all its wide majesty as far as the eye could see.

“A good omen!” cried the youth with a shout, as he hurried towards the shore, intending to fling off his garments and bathe in the mighty ocean, which, from the place where he first beheld it, appeared to be smooth and still as a mill-pond. But Oliver was compelled to restrain his ardour, for on nearing the sea he found that he stood on the summit of high cliffs, beyond which the Land’s End stretched in a succession of broken masses of granite, so chafed and shattered by the action of the sea, and so curiously split, as to resemble basaltic columns. To reach the outermost of those weather-worn sentinels of Old England, required some caution on the part of our traveller, even although well used to scaling the rocky heights of Scottish mountains, and when he did at last plant his foot on the veritable Land’s End, he found that it was a precipice apparently sixty feet high, which descended perpendicularly into deep water. His meditated bathe was therefore an impossibility, for those glassy undulations, which appeared so harmless at a distance, gathered slow and gradual height as they approached the land, and at last, assuming the form of majestic waves, flung themselves with a grand roar on the stern cliffs which they have battered so long in vain, and round which—always repulsed but never conquered—they seethed in milky foam.

With glistening eye, and heaving breast, and mantling colour, the young doctor stood long and motionless on this extreme point of land—absorbed in admiration of the glorious scene before him. Often had he beheld the sea in the firths and estuaries of the North, but never till now had he conceived the grandeur of the great Atlantic. It seemed to him as if the waves of those inland seas, when tossed by wild storms, were but rough miniature copies of the huge billows which arose before him, without apparent cause, and, advancing without rush or agitation, fell successively with solemn roar at his feet, awakening irresistibly within him deep and new thoughts of the Almighty Creator of earth and sea.

For many minutes he stood entranced, his mind wandering in a species of calm delight over the grand scene, but incapable of fixing itself definitely on any special feature—now sweeping out to where the Scilly Isles could be seen resting on the liquid horizon, anon following the flight of circling seagulls, or busy counting the innumerable ships and boats that rested on the sea, but ever and anon recurring, as if under the influence of fascination, to that rich turmoil of foam which boiled, leaped, and churned, around, beneath, and above the mighty breakers.

Awaking at last from his trance, Oliver tore himself from the spot, and hastened away to seek the nearest strip of sand where he might throw off his clothes and plunge into the boiling surf.

He proceeded in a southerly direction, impatiently expecting at every step to discover some spot suitable for his purpose, but he had taken a long and rapid walk before he found a break in those wild cliffs which afforded him the opportunity of descending to the water's edge. Here, on a narrow strip of sand, he undressed and leaped into the waves.

Well was it for Oliver that day that he had been trained in all manly exercises, that his "wind" was good, that his muscles were hard, his nerves well strung, and, above all, that in earliest youth he had learned to swim.

Misjudging, in his ignorance, the tremendous power of the surf into which he sprang, and daring to recklessness in the conscious possession of unusual strength and courage, he did not pause to look or consider, but at once struck out to sea. He was soon beyond the influence of the breaking waves, and for some time sported in the full enjoyment of the briny Atlantic waters. Then turning towards the shore he swam in and was speedily tossing among the breakers. As he neared the sandy beach and felt the full power of the water on his partially exhausted frame, he experienced a slight feeling of anxiety, for the thunder of each wave as it fell and rushed up before him in seething foam, seemed to indicate a degree of force which he had not realised in his first vigorous plunge into the sea. A moment more and a wave caught him in its curling crest, and swept him onwards. For the first time in his life, Oliver Trembath's massive strength was of no avail to him. He felt like a helpless infant. In another instant the breaker fell and swept him with irresistible violence up the beach amid a turmoil of hissing foam. No sooner did he touch the ground than he sprang to his feet, and staggered forward a few paces but the returning rush of water swept sand and stones from beneath his feet, carried his legs from under him, and hurled him back into the hollow of the succeeding wave, which again rolled him on the sand.

Although somewhat stunned, Oliver did not lose consciousness or self-possession. He now fully realised the extreme danger of his position, and the thought flashed through his brain that, at the farthest, his fate must be decided in two or three minutes. Acting on a brave spirit, this thought nerved him to desperate effort. The instant he could plant his feet firmly he bounded forwards, and then, before the backward rush of water had gathered strength, fell on his knees, and dug his fingers and toes deep into the sand. Had the grasp been on something firm he could easily have held on, but the treacherous sand crumbled out of his grasp, and a second time he was carried back into the sea.

The next time he was cast on the beach he felt that his strength was failing; he staggered forward as soon as he touched bottom, with all the energy of one who avails himself of his last chance, but the angry water was too strong for him. Feeling that he was being overpowered, he cast his arms up in the air, and gave utterance to a loud cry. It was not like a cry of despair, but sounded more like what one might suppose would be the shout of a brave soldier when compelled to give way—fighting—

before the might of overwhelming force. At that moment a hand caught the young man's wrist, and held it for a few seconds in a powerful grasp. The wave retreated, a staggering effort followed, and the next moment Oliver stood panting on the beach grasping the rough hand of his deliverer.

"Semen to me you was pretty nigh gone, sur," said the man, who had come thus opportunely to the rescue, as he wrung the sea-water from his garments.

He was a man of middle height, but of extremely powerful frame, and was habited in the garb of a fisherman.

"Truly I had been gone altogether but for your timely assistance; may God reward you for it!" said Oliver earnestly.

"Well, I don't think you would be so ready to thank me if you did knaw I had half made up my mind to lev 'ee go."

Oliver looked at the man in some surprise, for he spoke gruffly, almost angrily, and was evidently in earnest.

"You are jesting," said he incredulously.

"Jestin'; no I ain't, maister. Do 'ee see the boat out over?" he said, pointing to a small craft full of men which was being rowed swiftly round a point not more than half a mile distant; "the villains are after me. They might as well have tried to kitch a cunger by the tail as nab Jim Cuttance in one of his dens, if he hadn't bin forced by the softness of his 'art to pull a young fool out o' the say. You'll have to help me to fight, lad, as I've saved your life. Come, follow me to the cave."

"But—my clothes—" said Oliver, glancing round him in search of his garments.

"They're all safe up here; come along, sur, an' look sharp."

At any other time, and in other circumstances, Oliver Trembath's fiery spirit would have resented the tone and manner of this man's address, but the feeling that he owed his life to him, and that in some way he appeared to be the innocent cause of bringing misfortune on him, induced him to restrain his feelings and obey without question the mandate of his rescuer. Jim Cuttance led the way to a cave in the rugged cliffs, the low entrance to which was concealed by a huge mass of granite. The moment they entered several voices burst forth in abuse of the fisherman for his folly in exposing himself; but the latter only replied with a sarcastic laugh, and advised his comrades to get ready for action, for he had been seen by the enemy, who would be down on them directly. At the same time he pointed to Oliver's clothes, which lay in a recess in the side of the cavern.

The youth dressed himself rapidly, and, while thus engaged, observed that there were five men in the cavern, besides his guide, with whom they retired into the farthest recess of the place, and entered into animated and apparently angry, though low-toned, conversation. At length their leader, for such he evidently was, swung away from them, exclaiming, with a laugh, "Well, well, he's a good recruit, and if he should peach on we—us can—"

He concluded the sentence with a significant grunt.

"Now, sur," he said, advancing with his comrade towards Oliver, who was completing his toilet, "they'll be here in ten minutes, an' it is expected that you will lend we a hand. Here's a weapon for you."

So saying, he handed a large pistol to Oliver, who received it with some hesitation.

"I trust that your cause is a good one," he said. "You cannot expect me to fight for you, even though I am indebted to you for my life, without knowing against whom I fight, and why."

At this a tall thick-set man suddenly cocked his pistol, and uttering a fierce oath swore that if the stranger would not fight, he'd shoot him through the head.

"Silence, Joe Tonkin!" cried Jim Cuttance, in a tone that at once subdued the man.

Oliver, whose eyes had flashed like those of a tiger, drew himself up, and said— "Look at me, lads; I have no desire to boast of what I can or will do, but I assure you it would be as easy to turn back the rising tide as to force me to fight against my will—except, indeed, with yourselves. As I have said,

I owe my life to your leader, and apparently have been the innocent means of drawing his enemies upon him. Gratitude tells me to help him if I can, and help him will if the cause be not a bad one."

"Well spoken, sur," said the leader, with an approving nod; "see to the weapons, Maggot, and I'll explain it all to the gentleman."

So saying, he too Oliver aside, told him hurriedly that the men who ere expected to attack them were fishermen belonging to a neighbouring cove, whose mackerel nets had been accidentally cut by his boat some weeks ago, and who were bent on revenge, not believing that the thing had been done by accident.

"But surely you don't mean to use fire-arms against them in such a quarrel?" said Oliver.

A sort of humorous smile crossed the swarthy countenance of the man as he replied—

"They will use pistols against we."

"Be that as it may," said Oliver; "I will never consent to risk taking the life of a countryman in such a cause."

"But you can't fight without a weapon," said the man; "and sure, if 'ee don't shut them they'll shut you."

"No matter, I'll take my chance," said Oliver; "my good cudgel would have served me well enough, but it seems to have been swept away by the sea. Here, however, is a weapon that will suit me admirably," he added, picking up a heavy piece of driftwood that lay at his feet.

"Well, if you scat their heads with that, they won't want powder and lead," observed the other with a grin, as he rose and returned to the entrance of the cave, where he warned his comrades to keep as quiet as mice.

The boat which had caused so much angry discussion among the men of the cave had by this time neared the beach, and one of the crew stood up in the bow to guide her into the narrow cove, which formed but a slight protection, even in calm weather, against the violence of that surf which never ceases to grind at the hard rocks of West Cornwall. At length they effected a landing, and the crew, consisting of nine men armed with pistols and cutlasses, hurried up to the cliffs and searched for the entrance to the cavern.

While the events which have been related were taking place, the shades of evening had been gradually creeping over land and sea, and the light was at that time scarcely sufficient to permit of things being distinguished clearly beyond a few yards. The men in the cavern hid themselves in the dark recesses on each side of the entrance, ready for the approaching struggle.

Oliver crouched beside his rescuer with the piece of driftwood by his side. Turning suddenly to his companion, he said, in an almost inaudible whisper—

"Friend, it did not occur to me before, but the men we are about to fight with will recognise me again if we should ever chance to meet; could I not manage to disguise myself in some way?"

"If you get shut," replied his companion in the same low tone, "it won't matter much; but see here—shut your eyes."

Without further remark the man took a handful of wet earth and smeared it over Oliver's face, then, clapping his own "sou'-wester" on his head, he said, with a soft chuckle, "There, your own mother wouldn't knaw 'ee!"

Just then footsteps were heard approaching, and the shadow of a man was seen to rest for a moment on the gravel without. The mouth of the cave was so well hidden, however, that he failed to observe it, and passed on, followed by several of his comrades. Suddenly one of them stopped and said—

"Hold on, lads, it can't be far off, I'm sartin' sure; I seed 'em disappear hereabouts."

"You're right," cried Jim Cuttance, with a fierce roar, as he rushed from the cavern and fired full at the man who had spoken. The others followed, and a volley of shots succeeded, while shouts of defiance and anger burst forth on all sides. Oliver sprang out at the same moment with the leader, and rushed on one of the boat's crew with such violence that his foot slipped on a piece of seaweed

and precipitated him to the ground at the man's feet; the other, having sprung forward to meet him was unable to check himself, tripped over his shoulders, and fell on the top of him. The man named Maggot, having been in full career close behind Oliver, tumbled over both, followed by another man named John Cock. The others, observing them down, rushed with a shout to the rescue, just as Oliver, making a superhuman effort, flung the two men off his back and leaped to his feet. Maggot and the boatman also sprang up, and the latter turned and made for the boat at full speed, seeing that his comrades, overcome by the suddenness of the onset, were in retreat, fighting as they went.

All of them succeeded in getting into the boat unharmed, and were in the act of pushing off, when Jim Cuttance, burning with indignation, leaped into the water, grasped the bow of the boat, and was about to plunge his cutlass into the back of the man nearest him, when he was seized by a strong hand from behind and held back. Next moment the boat was beyond his reach.

Turning round fiercely, the man saw that it was Oliver Trembath who had interfered. He uttered a terrible oath, and sprang on him like a tiger; Oliver stood firm, parried with the piece of driftwood the savage cut which was made at his head, and with his clenched left hand hit his opponent such a blow on the chest as laid him flat on the sand. The man sprang up in an instant, but instead of renewing the attack, to Oliver's surprise he came forward and held out his hand, which the youth was not unwilling to grasp.

"Thank 'ee, sur," he said, somewhat sternly, "you've done me a sarvice; you've prevented me committin' two murders, an' taught me a lesson I never knaw'd afore—that Jim Cuttance an't invulnerable. I don't mind the blow, sur—not I. It wor gov'n in feer fight, an' I was wrang."

"I'm glad to find that you view the matter in that light," said Oliver with a smile, "and, truly, the blow was given in self-defence by one who will never forget that he owes you his life."

A groan here turned the attention of the party to one of their number who had seated himself on a rock during the foregoing dialogue.

"What! not hurt, are 'ee, Dan?" said his leader, going towards him.

To this Dan replied with another groan, and placed his hand on his hip.

His comrades crowded round him, and, finding that he was wounded and suffering great pain, raised him in their arms and bore him into the cavern, where they laid him on the ground, and, lighting a candle, proceeded to examine him.

"You had better let me look at him, lads," said Oliver, pushing the men gently aside, "I am a surgeon."

They gave place at once, and Oliver soon found that the man had received a pistol-ball in his thigh. Fortunately it had been turned aside in its course, and lay only a little way beneath the skin, so that it was easily extracted by means of a penknife.

"Now, friends," said Oliver, after completing the dressing of the wound, "before I met with you I had missed my way while travelling to St. Just. Will one of you direct me to the right road, and I shall bid you good-night, as I think you have no further need of my services."

The men looked at their leader, whom they evidently expected to be their spokesman.

"Well, sur, you have rendered we some help this hevenin', both in the way o' pickin' out the ball an' helpin' to break skulls as well as preventin' worse, so we can do no less than show 'ee the road; but hark 'ee, sur," here the man became very impressive, "ef you do chance to come across any of us in your travels, you had better not knaw us, 'xcept in an or'nary way, d'ye understand? an' us will do the same by thee."

"Of course I will act as you wish," said Oliver with a smile, "although I do not see why we should be ashamed of this affair, seeing that we were the party attacked. There is only one person to whom I would wish to explain the reason of my not appearing sooner, because he will probably know of the arrival in Penzance this morning of the conveyance that brought me to Cornwall."

"And who may that be?" demanded Jim Cuttance.

"My uncle, Thomas Donnithorne of St. Just," said Oliver.

"Whew!" whistled the fisherman in surprise, while all the others burst into a hearty fit of laughter.

"Why do you laugh?" asked Oliver.

"Oh, never mind, sur, it's all right," said the man with a chuckle. "Iss, you may tell Thomas Donnithorne; there won't be no harm in tellin' he—oh, dear no!"

Again the men laughed loud and long, and Oliver felt his powers of forbearance giving way, when Cuttance said to him: "An' you may tell all his friends too, for they're the right sort. Come now, Maggot here will show 'ee the way up to St. Just."

So saying, the stout fisherman conducted the young surgeon to the mouth of the cavern, and shaking hands with him left him to the guidance of the man named Maggot, who led him through several lanes, until he reached the highroad between Sennen church-town and St. Just. Here he paused; told his companion to proceed straight on for about four miles or so, when he would reach the town, and bade him good-night.

"And mind 'ee, don't go off the road, sur," shouted Maggot, a few seconds after the young man had left him, "if 'ee don't want to fall down a shaft and scat your skull."

Oliver, not having any desire to scat his skull, whatever that might be, assured the man that he would keep to the road carefully.

The moon shone clear in a cloudless sky, covering the wide moor and the broad Atlantic with a flood of silver light, and rendering the road quite distinct, so that our traveller experienced no further difficulty in pursuing his way. He hurried forward at a rapid pace, yet could not resist the temptation to pause frequently and gaze in admiration on the scene of desolate grandeur around him. On such occasions he found it difficult to believe that the stirring events of the last few hours were real. Indeed, if it had not been that there were certain uneasy portions of his frame—the result of his recent encounter on the beach—which afforded constant and convincing evidence that he was awake, he would have been tempted to believe that the adventures of that day were nothing more than a vivid dream.

Chapter Three.
Introduces a few more Characters and Homely Incidents

It was late when our hero entered the little town of St. Just, and inquired for the residence of his uncle, Thomas Donnithorne. He was directed to one of the most respectable of the group of old houses that stood close to the venerable parish church from which St. Just derives its title of "Church-town."

He tapped at the door, which was opened by an elderly female.

"Does Mr Thomas Donnithorne live here?" asked Oliver.

"Iss, sur, he do," answered the woman; "walk in, sur."

She ushered him into a small parlour, in which was seated a pretty, little, dark-eyed, rosy-cheeked girl, still in, or only just out of, her teens. Oliver was so taken aback by the unexpected sight that he stood gazing for a moment or two in rather stupid silence.

"Your name is Oliver Trembath, I presume," said the girl, rising and laying down the piece of needlework with which she was occupied.

"It is," replied Oliver, in some surprise, as he blundered out an apology for his rudeness.

"Pray sit down, sir," said the girl; "we have been expecting you for some time, and my uncle told me to act the part of hostess till his return."

"Your uncle!" exclaimed Oliver, whose self-possession, not to say impudence, returned immediately; "if Thomas Donnithorne be indeed your uncle, then, fair maid, you and I must needs be cousins, the which, I confess, fills me with satisfaction and also with somewhat of surprise, for up to this hour I have been ignorant of my good fortune in being related to so—so—"

"I made a mistake, sir," said the girl, interrupting a speech which was evidently verging towards impropriety, "in calling Mr Donnithorne uncle to you, who are not aware, it seems, that I am only an adopted niece."

"Not aware of it! Of course not," said Oliver, throwing himself into a large armchair, while his fair companion busied herself in spreading the board for a substantial meal. "I could not be aware of much that has occurred in this distant part of the kingdom, seeing that my worthy uncle has vouchsafed to write me only two letters in the course of my life; once, many years ago, to condole with me—in about ten lines, address and signature included—on the death of my dear mother; and once again to tell me he had procured an appointment for me as assistant-surgeon in the mining district of St. Just. He must have been equally uncommunicative to my mother, for she never mentioned your existence. However, since I have now made the agreeable discovery, I trust that you will dispense with ceremony, and allow me at once to call you cousin. By the way, you have not yet told me your name."

The maiden, who was charmingly unsophisticated, replied that her name was Rose Ellis, and that she had no objection whatever to being called cousin without delay.

"Well, cousin Rose," said Oliver, "if it be not prying into secrets, I should like to know how long it is since my uncle adopted you."

"About nineteen years ago," replied Rose.

"Oh!" said Oliver remonstratively, "before you were born? impossible!"

Rose laughed—a short, clear, little laugh which she nipped in the bud abruptly, and replied—

"Well, it was only a short time after I was born. I was wrecked on this coast"—the expressive face here became very grave—"and all on board our ship perished except myself."

Oliver saw at once that he had touched on a tender subject, and hastened to change it by asking a number of questions about his uncle, from which he gradually diverged to the recent events in his own history, which he began to relate with much animation. His companion was greatly interested and amused. She laughed often and heartily in a melodious undertone, and Oliver liked her laugh, for it

was peculiar, and had the effect of displaying a double row of pretty little teeth, and of almost entirely shutting up her eyes. She seemed to enjoy a laugh so much that he exerted all his powers to tickle her risible faculties, and dwelt long and graphically on his meeting with the irascible old gentleman in the lane. He was still busy with this part of the discourse when a heavy step was heard outside.

"There's my uncle," exclaimed Rose, springing up.

A moment after the door opened, and in walked the identical irascible old gentleman himself!

If a petrified impersonation of astonishment had been a possibility, Oliver Trembath would, on that occasion, have presented the phenomenon. He sat, or rather lay, extended for at least half a minute with his eyes wide and his mouth partly open, bereft alike of the powers of speech and motion.

"Heyday, young man!" exclaimed the old gentleman, planting his sturdy frame in the middle of the floor as if he meant then and there to demand and exact an ample apology, or to inflict condign and terrible chastisement, for past misdeeds; "you appear to be making yourself quite at home—eh?"

"My *dear* sir!" exclaimed Oliver, leaping up with a look of dismay; "how can I express my—my—but is it, *can* it be possible that you are Mr Donnithorne—m–my—uncle?"

Oliver's expression, and the look of amazement on the countenance of Rose Ellis, who could not account for such a strange reception of her newly-found cousin, proved almost too much for the old gentleman, whose eyes had already begun to twinkle.

"Ay, young man, I am Tom Donnithorne, your uncle, the vile, old, smuggling, brandy-loving rascal, who met his respectful nephew on the road to St. Just"—at this point Rose suddenly pressed her hand over her mouth, darted to her own apartment in a distant corner of the house, and there, seated on her little bed, went into what is not inaptly styled fits of laughter—"and who now," continued the old gentleman, relaxing into a genial smile, and grasping his nephew's hand, "welcomes Oliver Trembath to his house, with all his heart and soul; there, who will say after that, that old Donnithorne does not know how to return good for evil?"

"But, my dear uncle," began Oliver, "allow me to explain—"

"Now, now, look at that—kept me hours too late for supper already, and he's going to take up more time with explanations," cried the old gentleman, flinging himself on the chair from which Oliver had risen, and wiping his bald pate with a red silk handkerchief. "What can you explain, boy, except that you met an angry old fellow in a lane who called your uncle such hard names that you couldn't help giving him a bit of your mind—there, there, sit down, sit down.—Hallo!" he shouted, starting up impulsively and thrusting his head into the passage, "Rose, Rose, I say, where are you? —hallo!"

"Coming, uncle—I'm here."

The words came back like an echo, and in another minute Rose appeared with a much-flushed countenance.

"Come along, lass, let's have supper without delay. Where is aunty? Rout her out, and tell that jade of a cook that if she don't dish up in five minutes I'll—I'll—. Well, Oliver, talking of explanations, how comes it that you are so late?"

"Because I took the wrong road after leaving you in the lane," replied the youth, with a significant glance at his uncle, whose eyes were at the moment fixed gravely on the ground.

"The wrong road—eh?" said Mr Donnithorne, looking up with a sly glance, and then laughing. "Well, well, it was only *quid pro quo*, boy; you put a good deal of unnecessary earth and stones over my head, so I thought it was but fair that I should put a good deal more of the same under your feet, besides giving you the advantage of seeing the Land's End, which, of course, every youth of intelligence must take a deep interest in beholding. But, sure, a walk thither, and thence to St. Just, could not have detained you so long?"

"Truly no," replied Oliver; "I had a rencontre—a sort of adventure with fishermen, which—"

"Fishermen!" exclaimed Mr Donnithorne in surprise; "are ye sure they were not smugglers—eh?"

"They said they were fishermen, and they looked like such," replied Oliver; "but my adventure with them, whatever they were, was the cause of my detention, and I can only express my grief that the circumstance has incommoded your household, but, you see, it took some time to beat off the boat's crew, and then I had to examine a wound and extract—"

"What say you, boy!" exclaimed Mr Donnithorne, frowning, "beat off a boat's crew—examine a wound! Why, Rose, Molly, come hither. Here we have a young gallant who hath begun life in the far west in good style; but hold, here comes my excellent friend Captain Dan, who is no friend to the smugglers; he is to sup with us to-night; so we will repress our curiosity till after supper. Let me introduce you, Oliver to my wife, your Aunt Molly, or, if you choose to be respectful, Aunt Mary."

As he spoke, a fat, fair, motherly-looking lady of about five-and-forty entered the room, greeting her husband with a rebuke, and her nephew with a smile.

"Never mind him, Oliver," said the good lady; "he is a vile old creature. I have heard all about your meeting with him this forenoon, and only wish I had been there to see it."

"Listen to that now, Captain Dan," cried Mr Donnithorne, as the individual addressed entered the room; "my wife calls me—me, a staid, sober man of fifty-five—calls me a vile old creature. Is it not too bad? really one gets no credit nowadays for devoting oneself entirely to one's better half; but I forget: allow me to introduce you to my nephew, Oliver Trembath, just come from one of the Northern Universities to fight the smugglers of St. Just—of which more anon. Oliver, Captain Hoskin of Botallack, better known as Captain Dan. Now, sit down and let's have a bit of supper."

With hospitable urgency Mr Donnithorne and his good dame pressed their guests to do justice to the fare set before them, and, during the course of the meal, the former kept up a running fire of question, comment, and reply on every conceivable subject, so that his auditors required to do little more than eat and listen. After supper, however, and when tumblers and glasses were being put down, he gave the others an opportunity of leading the conversation.

"Now, Oliver," he said, "fill your glass and let us hear your adventures. What will you have—brandy, gin, or rum? My friend, Captain Dan here, is one of those remarkable men who don't drink anything stronger than ginger-beer. Of course you won't join *him*."

"Thank you," said Oliver. "If you will allow me, I will join your good lady in a glass of wine. Permit me, Aunt Mary, to fill—"

"No, I thank you, Oliver," said Mrs Donnithorne good-humouredly but firmly, "I side with Captain Dan; but I'll be glad to see you fill your own."

"Ha!" exclaimed Mr Donnithorne, "Molly's sure to side with the opponent of her lawful lord, no matter who or what he be. Fill your own glass, boy, with what you like—cold water, an it please you—and let us drink the good old Cornish toast, 'Fish, tin, and copper,' our three staples, Oliver—the bone, muscle, and fat of the county."

"Fish, tin, and copper," echoed Captain Dan.

"In good sooth," continued Mr Donnithorne, "I have often thought of turning teetotaller myself, but feared to do so lest my wife should take to drinking, just out of opposition. However, let that pass—and now, Oliver, open thy mouth, lad, and relate those surprising adventures of which you have given me a hint."

"Indeed, uncle, I do not say they are very surprising, although, doubtless, somewhat new to one who has been bred, if not born, in comparatively quiet regions of the earth."

Here Oliver related circumstantially to his wondering auditors the events which befell him after the time when he left his uncle in the lane—being interrupted only with an occasional exclamation—until he reached the part when he knocked down the man who had rescued him from the waves, when Mr Donnithorne interrupted him with an uncontrollable burst.

"Ha!" shouted the old gentleman; "what! knocked down the man who saved your life, nephew? Fie, fie! But you have not told us his name yet. What was it?"

"His comrades called him Jim, as I have said; and I think that he once referred to himself as Jim Cuttance, or something like that."

"What say you, boy?" exclaimed Mr Donnithorne, pushing back his chair and gazing at his nephew in amazement. "Hast fought side by side with Jim Cuttance, and then knocked him down?"

"Indeed I have," said Oliver, not quite sure whether his uncle regarded him as a hero or a fool.

The roar of laughter which his answer drew from Captain Dan and his uncle did not tend to enlighten him much.

"Oh! Oliver, Oliver," said the old gentleman, on recovering some degree of composure, "you should have lived in the days of good King Arthur, and been one of the Knights of the Round Table. Knocked down Jim Cuttance! What think'ee, Captain Dan?"

"I think," said the captain, still chuckling quietly, "that the less our friend says about the matter the better for himself."

"Why so?" inquired Oliver quickly.

"Because," replied his uncle, with some return of gravity, "you have assisted one of the most notorious smugglers that ever lived, to fight his Majesty's coastguard—that's all. What say you, Molly—shall we convict Oliver on his own confession?"

The good lady thus appealed to admitted that it was a serious matter, but urged that as Oliver did the thing in ignorance and out of gratitude, he ought to be forgiven.

"*I* think he ought to be forgiven for having knocked down Jim Cuttance," said Captain Dan.

"Is he then so notorious?" asked Oliver.

"Why, he is the most daring smuggler on the coast," replied Captain Dan, "and has given the preventive men more trouble than all the others put together. In fact, he is a man who deserves to be hanged, and will probably come to his proper end ere long, if not shot in a brawl beforehand."

"I fear he stands some chance of it now," said Mr Donnithorne, with a sigh, "for he has been talking of erecting a battery near his den at Prussia Cove, and openly defying the Government men."

"You seem to differ from Captain Dan, uncle, in reference to this man," said Oliver, with a smile.

"Truly, I do, for although I condemn smuggling,—ahem!" (the old gentleman cast a peculiar glance at the captain), "I don't like to see a sturdy man hanged or shot—and Jim Cuttance is a stout fellow. I question much whether you could find his match, Captain Dan, amongst all your men?"

"That I could, easily," said the captain with a quiet smile.

"Pardon me, captain," said Oliver, "my uncle has not yet informed me on the point. May I ask what corps you belong to?"

"To a sturdy corps of tough lads," answered the captain, with another of his quiet smiles—"men who have smelt powder, most of 'em, since they were little boys—live on the battlefield, I may say, almost night and day—spring more mines in a year than all the soldiers in the world put together—and shorten their lives by the stern labour they undergo; but they burn powder to raise, not to waste, metal. Their uniform is red, too, though not quite so red, nor yet so elegant, as that of the men in his Majesty's service. I am one of the underground captains, sir, of Botallack mine."

Captain Dan's colour heightened a very little, and the tones of his voice became a little more powerful as he concluded this reply; but there was no other indication that the enthusiastic soul of one of the "captains" of the most celebrated mine in Cornwall was moved. Oliver felt, however, the contact with a kindred spirit, and, expressing much interest in the mines, proceeded to ask many questions of the captain, who, nothing loath, answered all his queries, and explained to him that he was one of the "captains," or "agents," whose duty it was to superintend the men and the works below the surface—hence the title of "underground;" while those who super-intended the works above ground were styled "grass, or surface captains." He also made an appointment to conduct the young doctor underground, and go over the mine with him at an early date.

While the party in old Mr Donnithorne's dwelling were thus enjoying themselves, a great storm was gathering, and two events, very different from each other in character, were taking place—the one quiet, and apparently unimportant, the other tremendous and fatal—both bearing on and seriously influencing the subjects of our tale.

Chapter Four.
At Work under the Sea

Chip, chip, chip—down in the dusky mine! Oh, but the rock at which the miner chipped was hard, and the bit of rock on which he sat was hard, and the muscles with which he toiled were hard from prolonged labour; and the lot of the man seemed hard, as he sat there in the hot, heavy atmosphere, hour after hour, from morn till eve, with the sweat pouring down his brow and over his naked shoulders, toiling and moiling with hammer and chisel.

But stout David Trevarrow did not think his lot peculiarly hard. His workshop was a low narrow tunnel deep down under the surface of the earth—ay, and deep under the bottom of the sea! His daily sun was a tallow candle, which rose regularly at seven in the morning and set at three in the afternoon. His atmosphere was sadly deficient in life-giving oxygen, and much vitiated by gunpowder smoke. His working costume consisted only of a pair of linen trousers; his colour from top to toe was red as brick-dust, owing to the iron ore around him; his food was a slice of bread, with, perchance, when he was unusually luxurious, the addition of a Cornish pasty; and his drink was water. To an inexperienced eye the man's work would have appeared not only hard but hopeless, for although his hammer was heavy, his arm strong, and his chisel sharp and tempered well, each blow produced an apparently insignificant effect on the flinty rock. Frequently a spark of fire was all that resulted from a blow, and seldom did more than a series of little chips fly off, although the man was of herculean mould, and worked "with a will," as was evident from the kind of gasp or stern expulsion of the breath with which each blow was accompanied. Unaided human strength he knew could not achieve much in such a process, so he directed his energies chiefly to the boring of blast-holes, and left it to the mighty power of gunpowder to do the hard work of rending the rich ore from the bowels of the unwilling earth. Yes, the work was very hard, probably the hardest that human muscles are ever called on to perform in this toiling world; but again we say that David Trevarrow did not think so, for he had been born to the work and bred to it, and was blissfully ignorant of work of a lighter kind, so that, although his brows frowned at the obstinate rock, his compressed lips smiled, for his thoughts were pleasant and far away. The unfettered mind was above ground roaming in fields of light, basking in sunshine, and holding converse with the birds, as he sat there chip, chip, chipping, down in the dusky mine.

Stopping at last, the miner wiped his brow, and, rising, stood for a few moments silently regarding the result of his day's work.

"Now, David," said he to himself, "the question is, what shall us do—shall us keep on, or shall us knack?"

He paused, as if unable to answer the question. After a time he muttered, "Keep on; it don't look promisin', sure 'nuff, an' it's poor pay; but it won't do to give in yet."

Poor pay it was indeed, for the man's earnings during the past month had been barely ten shillings. But David Trevarrow had neither wife, child, nor mother to support, so he could afford to toil for poor pay, and, being of a remarkably hopeful and cheery disposition, he returned home that afternoon resolved to persevere in his unproductive toil, in the hope that at last he should discover a good "bunch of copper," or a "keenly lode of tin."

David was what his friends and the world styled unfortunate. In early manhood he had been a somewhat wild and reckless fellow—a noted wrestler, and an adept in all manly sports and games. But a disappointment in love had taught him very bitterly that life is not all sunshine; and this, coupled with a physical injury which was the result of his own folly, crushed his spirit so much that his comrades believed him to be a "lost man."

The injury referred to was the bursting of a blood-vessel in the lungs. It was, and still is, the custom of the youthful miners of Cornwall to test their strength by racing up the almost interminable

ladders by which the mines are reached. This tremendous exertion after a day of severe toil affected them of course very severely, and in some cases seriously. Many an able-bodied man has by this means brought himself to a premature end. Among others, David Trevarrow excelled and suffered. No one could beat him in running up the ladders; but one day, on reaching the surface, blood issued from his mouth, and thenceforth his racing and wrestling days were ended, and his spirit was broken. A long illness succeeded. Then he began to mend. Slowly and by degrees his strength returned, but not his joyous spirit. Still it was some comfort to feel able for work again, and he "went underground" with some degree of his old vigour, though not with the light heart or light step of former days; but bad fortune seemed to follow him everywhere. When others among his comrades were fortunate in finding copper or tin, David was most unaccountably unsuccessful. Accidents, too, from falls and explosions, laid him up more than once, and he not only acquired the character of an unlucky man from his friends, but despite a naturally sanguine temperament, he began himself to believe that he was one of the unluckiest fellows in the world.

About this time the followers of that noble Christian, John Wesley, began to make an impression on Cornwall, and to exert an influence which created a mighty change in the hearts and manners of the people, and the blessed effects of which are abundantly evident at the present day—to the rejoicing of every Christian soul. One of those ministers of our Lord happened to meet with David Trevarrow, and was the means of opening his eyes to many great and previously unknown truths. Among others, he convinced him that "God's ways are not as man's ways;" that He often, though not always, leads His people by thorny paths that they know not of, but does it in love and with His own glory in their happiness as the end in view; that the Lord Jesus Christ must be to a man "the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely," else He is to him nothing at all, and that he could be convinced of all these truths only by the Holy Spirit.

It were vain to attempt to tell all that this good man said to the unhappy miner, but certain it is that from that time forth David became himself again—and yet not himself. The desire to wrestle and fight and race returned in a new form. He began to wrestle with principalities and powers, to fight the good fight of faith, and to run the race set before him in the gospel. The old hearty smile and laugh and cheery disposition also returned, and the hopeful spirit, and so much of the old robust health and strength, that it seemed as if none of the evil effects of the ruptured blood-vessel remained. So David Trevarrow went, as of old, daily to the mine. It is true that riches did not flow in upon him any faster than before, but he did not mind that much, for he had discovered another mine, in which he toiled at nights after the day's toil was over, and whence he extracted treasure of greater value than copper or tin, or even gold—treasure which he scattered in a Sabbath school with liberal hand, and found himself all the richer for his prodigality.

Occasionally, after prolonged labour in confined and bad air, a faint trace of the old complaint showed itself when he reached the top of the ladders, but he was not now depressed by that circumstance as he used to be. He was past his prime at the period of which we write, and a confirmed bachelor.

To return from this digression: David Trevarrow made up his mind, as we have said, to "go on," and, being a man of resolute purpose, he went on; seized his hammer and chisel, and continued perseveringly to smite the flinty rock, surrounded by thick darkness, which was not dispelled but only rendered visible by the feeble light of the tallow candle that flared at his side.

Over his head rolled the billows of the Atlantic; the whistling wind howled among the wild cliffs of the Cornish coast, but they did not break the deep silence of the miner's place of midnight toil. Heaven's artillery was rending the sky, and causing the hearts of men to beat slow with awe. The great boulders ground the pebbles into sand as they crashed to and fro above him, but he heard them not—or if he did, the sound reached him as a deep-toned mysterious murmur, for, being in one of the low levels, with many fathoms of solid rock between him and the bottom of the superincumbent sea, he was beyond the reach of such disturbing influences, tremendous though they were.

The miner was making a final effort at his unproductive piece of rock, and had prolonged his toil far into the night.

Hour after hour he wrought almost without a moment's respite, save for the purpose, now and then, of trimming his candle. When his right arm grew tired, he passed the hammer swiftly to his left hand, and, turning the borer with his right, continued to work with renewed vigour.

At last he paused, and looking over his shoulder called out— "Zackey, booy."

The sound died away in a hollow echo through the retiring galleries of the mine, but there was no reply.

"Zackey, booy, are 'ee slaipin'?" he repeated.

A small reddish-coloured bundle, which lay in a recess close at hand, uncoiled itself like a hedgehog, and, yawning vociferously, sat up, revealing the fact that the bundle was a boy.

"Ded 'ee call, uncle?" asked the boy in a sleepy tone.

"Iss did I," said the man; "fetch me the powder an' fuse, my son."

The lad rose, and, fetching out of a dark corner the articles required, assisted in charging the hole which his uncle had just finished boring. This was the last hole which the man intended to blast that night. For weeks past he had laboured day after day—sometimes, as on the present occasion, at night—and had removed many tons of rock, without procuring either tin or copper sufficient to repay him for his toil, so that he resolved to give it up and remove to a more hopeful part of the mine, or betake himself to another mine altogether. He had now bored his last hole, and was about to blast it. Applying his candle to the end of the fuse, he hastened along the level to a sufficient distance to afford security, warning his nephew as he passed.

Zackey leaped up, and, scrambling over the débris with which the bottom of the level was covered, made good his retreat. About a minute they waited in expectancy. Suddenly there was a bright blinding flash, which lit up the rugged sides of the mine, and revealed its cavernous ramifications and black depths. This was accompanied by a dull smothered report and a crash of falling rock, together with a shower of débris. Instantly the whole place was in profound darkness.

"Aw, booy," exclaimed the miner; "we was too near. It have knacked us in the dark."

"So't have, uncle; I'll go an' search for the box."

"Do, my son," said David.

In those days lucifer matches had not been invented, and light had to be struck by means of flint, steel, and tinder. The process was tedious compared with the rapid action of congreves and vestas in the present day. The man chipped away for full three minutes before he succeeded in relighting his candle. This done, the rock was examined.

"Bad still, Uncle David?" inquired the boy.

"Iss, Zackey Maggot, so we'll knack'n, and try the higher mine to-morrow." Having come to this conclusion Uncle David threw down the mass of rock which he held in his brawny hands, and, picking up his implements, said, "Get the tools, booy, and lev us go to grass."

Zackey, who had been in the mine all day, and was tired, tied his tools at each end of a rope, so that they might be slung over his shoulder and leave his hands free. Trevarrow treated his in the same way, and, removing his candle from the wall, fixed it on the front of his hat by the simple process of sticking thereto the lump of clay to which it was attached. Zackey having fixed his candle in the same manner, both of them put on their red-stained flannel shirts and linen coats, and traversed the level until they reached the bottom of the ladder-shaft. Here they paused for a few moments before commencing the long wearisome ascent of almost perpendicular ladders by which the miners descended to their work or returned "to grass," as they termed the act of returning to the surface.

It cost them more than half an hour of steady climbing before they reached the upper part of the shaft and became aware that a storm was raging in the regions above. On emerging from the mouth of the shaft or "ladder road," man and boy were in a profuse perspiration, and the sharp gale warned them to hasten to the moor-house at full speed.

Moor-houses were little buildings in which miners were wont to change their wet underground garments for dry clothes. Some of these used to be at a considerable distance from the shafts, and the men were often injured while going to them from the mine, by being exposed in an overheated state to cutting winds. Many a stout able-bodied miner has had a chill given him in this way which has resulted in premature death. Moor-houses have now been replaced by large drying-houses, near the mouths of shafts, where every convenience is provided for the men drying their wet garments and washing their persons on coming to the surface.

Having changed their clothes, uncle and nephew hastened to St. Just, where they dwelt in the cottage of Maggot, the blacksmith. This man, who has already been introduced to the reader, was brother-in-law to David, and father to Zackey.

When David Trevarrow entered his brother-in-law's cottage, and told him of his bad fortune, and of his resolution to try his luck next day in the higher mine, little did he imagine that his change of purpose was to be the first step in a succession of causes which were destined to result, at no very distant period, in great changes of fortune to some of his friends in St. Just, as well as to many others in the county.

Chapter Five.
Describes a Wreck and some of its Consequences

While the miner had been pursuing his toilsome work in the solitude and silence of the level under the sea, as already described, a noble ship was leaping over the Atlantic waves—homeward bound—to Old England.

She was an East-Indiaman, under close-reefed sails, and although she bent low before the gale so that the waves almost curled over her lee bulwarks, she rose buoyantly like a seagull, for she was a good ship, stout of plank and sound of timber, with sails and cordage to match.

Naturally, in such a storm, those on board were anxious, for they knew that they were drawing near to land, and that "dear Old England" had an ugly seaboard in these parts—a coast not to be too closely hugged in what the captain styled "dirty weather, with a whole gale from the west'ard," so a good lookout was kept. Sharp eyes were in the foretop looking out for the guiding rays of the Longships lighthouse, which illumine that part of our rocky shores to warn the mariner of danger and direct him to a safe harbour. The captain stood on the "foge's'l" with stern gaze and compressed lip. The chart had been consulted, the bearings correctly noted, calculations made, and leeway allowed for. Everything in fact that could be done by a commander who knew his duty had been done for the safety of the ship—so would the captain have said probably, had he lived to be questioned as to the management of his vessel. But everything had *not* been done. The lead, strange to say, had not been hove. It was ready to heave, but the order was delayed. Unaccountable fatality! The only safe guide that remained to the good ship on that wild night was held in abeyance. It was deemed unnecessary to heave it yet, or it was troublesome, and they would wait till nearer the land. No one now can tell the reasons that influenced the captain, but *the lead was not used*. Owing to similar delay or neglect, hundreds upon hundreds of ships have been lost, and thousands of human lives have been sacrificed!

The ship passed like a dark phantom over the very head of the miner who was at work many fathoms below the bottom of the sea.

"Land, ho!" came suddenly in a fierce, quick shout from the mast-head.

"Starboard! starboard—hard!" cried the captain, as the roar of breakers ahead rose above the yelling of the storm.

Before the order was obeyed or another word spoken the ship struck, and a shriek of human terror followed, as the foremast went by the board with a fearful crash. The waves burst over the stern, sweeping the decks fore and aft. Wave after wave lifted the great ship as though it had been a child's toy, and dashed her down upon the rocks. Her bottom was stove in, her planks and timbers were riven like matchwood. Far down below man was destroying the flinty rock, while overhead the rock was destroying the handiwork of man! But the destruction in the one case was slow, in the other swift. A desperate but futile effort was made by the crew to get out the boats, and the passengers, many of whom were women and children, rushed frantically from the cabin to the deck, and clung to anything they could lay hold of, until strength failed, and the waves tore them away.

One man there was in the midst of all the terror-stricken crew who retained his self-possession in that dread hour. He was a tall, stern old man with silver locks—an Indian merchant, one who had spent his youth and manhood in the wealthy land collecting gold—"making a fortune," he was wont to say—and who was returning to his fatherland to spend it. He was a thinking and calculating man, and in the anticipation of some such catastrophe as had actually overtaken him, he had secured some of his most costly jewels in a linen belt. This belt, while others were rushing to the boats, the old man secured round his waist, and then sprang on deck, to be swept, with a dozen of his fellow-passengers, into the sea by the next wave that struck the doomed vessel. There was no one on that rugged coast to lend a helping hand. Lifeboats did not then, as now, nestle in little nooks on every part of our

dangerous coasts. No eye was there to see nor ear to hear, when, twenty minutes after she struck, the East-Indiaman went to pieces, and those of her crew and passengers who had retained their hold of her uttered their last despairing cry, and their souls returned to God who gave them.

It is a solemn thought that man may with such awful suddenness, and so unexpectedly, be summoned into the presence of his Maker. Thrice happy they who, when their hearts grow chill and their grasps relax as the last plank is rending, can say, "Neither death, nor life, nor any other creature, is able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The scene we have described was soon over, and the rich cargo of the East-Indiaman was cast upon the sea and strewn upon the shore, affording much work for many days to the coastguard, and greatly exciting the people of the district—most of whom appeared to entertain an earnest belief in the doctrine that everything cast by storms upon their coast ought to be considered public property. Portions of the wreck had the name "Trident" painted on them, and letters found in several chests which were washed ashore proved that the ship had sailed from Calcutta, and was bound for the port of London. One little boy alone escaped the waves. He was found in a crevice of the cliffs the following day, with just enough vitality left to give a few details of the wreck. Although all possible care was bestowed on him, he died before night.

Thus sudden and complete was the end of as fine a ship as ever spread her canvas to the breeze. At night she had been full of life—full of wealth; in the morning she was gone—only a few bales and casks and broken spars to represent the wealth, and stiffened corpses to tell of the life departed. So she came and went, and in a short time all remnants of her were carried away.

One morning, a few weeks after the night of the storm, Maggot the smith turned himself in his bed at an early hour, and, feeling disinclined to slumber, got up to look at the state of the weather. The sun was just rising, and there was an inviting look about the morning which induced the man to dress hastily and go out.

Maggot was a powerfully-built man, rough in his outer aspect as well as in his inner man, but by no means what is usually termed a bad man, although, morally speaking, he could not claim to be considered a good one. In fact, he was a hearty, jolly, reckless fisherman, with warm feelings, enthusiastic temperament, and no principle; a man who, though very ready to do a kind act, had no particular objection to do one that was decidedly objectionable when it suited his purpose or served his present interest. He was regarded by his comrades as one of the greatest madcaps in the district. Old Maggot was, as we have said, a blacksmith to trade, but he had also been bred a miner, and was something of a fisherman as well, besides being (like most of his companions) an inveterate smuggler. He could turn his hand to almost anything, and was "everything by turns, but nothing long."

Sauntering down to Priests Cove, on the south of Cape Cornwall, with his hands in his pockets and his sou'-wester stuck carelessly on his shaggy head, he fell in with a comrade, whom he hailed by the name of John Cock. This man was also a fisherman, *et cetera*, and the bosom friend and admirer of Maggot.

"Where bound to this mornin', Jack?" inquired Maggot.

"To fish," replied John.

"I go with 'ee, booy," said Maggot.

This was the extent of the conversation at that time. They were not communicative, but walked side by side in silence to the beach, where they launched their little boat and rowed out to sea.

Presently John Cock looked over his shoulder and exclaimed— "Maggot, I see summat."

"Do 'ee?"

"Iss do I."

"What do un look like?"

"Like a dead corp."

"Aw, my dear," said Maggot, "lev us keep away. It can do no good to we."

Acting on this opinion the men rowed past the object that was floating on the sea, and soon after began to fish; but they had not fished long when the dead body, drifted probably by some cross-current, appeared close to them again. Seeing this they changed their position, but ere long the body again appeared.

"P'raps," observed Maggot, "there's somethin' in its pockets."

As the same idea had occurred to John Cock, the men resolved to examine the body, so they rowed up to it and found it to be that of an elderly man, much decomposed, and nearly naked. A very short examination sufficed to show that the pockets of such garments as were still upon it were empty, and the men were about to let it go again, when Maggot exclaimed—

"Hold fast, Jack, I see somethin' tied round the waist of he; a sort o' belt it do seem."

The belt was quickly removed and the body released, when it sank with a heavy plunge, but ere long reappeared on the surface. The fishermen rowed a considerable distance away from it, and then shipped their oars and examined the belt, which was made of linen. Maggot sliced it up as he would have ripped up a fish, and laid bare, to the astonished gaze of himself and his friend, a number of glittering gems of various colours, neatly and firmly embedded in cotton, besides a variety of rings and small brooches set with precious stones.

"Now, I tell 'ee," said Maggot, "'tis like as this here will make our fortin', or else git we into trouble."

"Why, whatever shud we git into trouble 'bout it for?" said John Cock. "'Tis like as not they ain't real—only painted glass, scarce wuth the trouble o' car'in' ashore."

"Hould thy tongue, thee g'eat chucklehead," replied Maggot; "a man wouldn't go for to tie such stuff round his waist to drown hisself with, I do know, if they worn't real. Lev us car' 'em to Maister Donnithorne."

John Cock replied with a nod, and the two men, packing up the jewels, pulled in-shore as fast as possible. Hauling their boat beyond the reach of the surf, they hastened to St. Just, and requested a private audience of Mr Donnithorne.[1]

That excellent gentleman was not unaccustomed to give private audiences to fishermen, and, as has been already hinted at the beginning of this tale, was reported to have private dealings with them also—of a very questionable nature. He received the two men, however, with the hearty air of a man who knows that the suspicions entertained of him by the calumnious world are false.

"Well, Maggot," said Mr Donnithorne, "what is your business with me? You are not wont to be astir so early, if all be true that is reported of 'ee."

"Plaise, sur," said Maggot, with a glance at Rose Ellis, who sat sewing near the window, "I'm come to talk 'bout private matters—if—"

"Leave us, Rose dear, for a little," said the old gentleman.

As soon as she was out of the room Maggot locked the door, a proceeding which surprised Mr Donnithorne not a little, but his surprise was much greater when the man drew a small parcel from the breast of his rough coat, and, unrolling it, displayed the glittering jewels of which he had so unexpectedly become possessed.

"Where got you these?" inquired Mr Donnithorne, turning them over carefully.

"Got 'em in the say—catched 'em, sure 'nough," said Maggot.

"Not with a baited hook, I warrant," said the old gentleman. "Come, my son, let's hear all about it."

Maggot explained how he had obtained the jewels, and then asked what they were worth.

"I can't tell that," said Mr Donnithorne, shaking his head gravely. "Some of them are undoubtedly of value; the others, for all I know, may not be worth much."

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[1] It may be well here to inform the reader that the finding of the jewels as here described, and the consequences which followed, are founded on fact.

"Come now, sur," said Maggot, with a confidential leer, "it's not the fust time we have done a bit o' business. I 'spose I cud claim salvage on 'em?"

"I don't know that," said the old gentleman; "you cannot tell whom they belonged to, and I suspect Government would claim them, if— But, by the way, I suppose you found no letters—nothing in the shape of writing on the body?"

"Nothin' whatsomever."

"Well, then, I fear that—"

"Come now, sur," said Maggot boldly; "'spose you gives John and me ten pounds apaice an' kape 'em to yourself to make what 'ee can of 'em?"

Mr Donnithorne shook his head and hesitated. Often before had he defrauded the revenue by knowingly purchasing smuggled brandy and tobacco, and by providing the funds to enable others to smuggle them; but then the morality of that day in regard to smuggling was very lax, and there were men who, although in all other matters truly honest and upright, could not be convinced of the sinfulness of smuggling, and smiled when they were charged with the practice, but who, nevertheless, would have scorned to steal or tell a downright lie. This, however, was a very different matter from smuggling. The old gentleman shrank from it at first, and could not meet the gaze of the smuggler with his usual bold frank look. But the temptation was great. The jewels he suspected were of immense value, and his heart readily replied to the objections raised by his conscience, that after all there was no one left to claim them, and he had a much better right to them, in equity if not in law, than Government; and as to the fellows who found them—why, the sum they asked would be a great and rich windfall to them, besides freeing them from all further trouble, as well as transferring any risk that might accrue from their shoulders to his own.

While the old gentleman was reasoning thus with himself, Maggot stood anxiously watching his countenance and twisting the cloth that had enclosed the jewellery into a tight rope, as he shifted his position uneasily. At length old Mr Donnithorne said—

"Leave the jewels with me, and call again in an hour from this time. You shall then have my answer."

Maggot and his friend consented to this delay, and left the room.

No sooner were they gone than the old gentleman called his wife, who naturally exclaimed in great surprise on beholding the table covered with such costly trinkets—

"Where *ever* did you get these, Tom?"

Mr Donnithorne explained, and then asked what she thought of Maggot's proposal.

"Refuse it," said she firmly.

"But, my dear—"

"Don't 'but' about it, Tom. Whenever a man begins to 'but' with sin, it is sure to butt him over on his back. Have nothing to do with it, *I* say."

"But, my dear, it is not dishonest—"

"I don't know that," interrupted Mrs Donnithorne vigorously; "you think that smuggling is not dishonest, but I do, and so does the minister."

"What care *I* for the minister?" cried the old gentleman, losing his temper; "who made *him a* judge of my doings?"

"He is an expounder of God's Word," said Mrs Donnithorne firmly, "and holds that 'Thou shalt not steal' is one of the Ten Commandments."

"Well, well, he and I don't agree, that's all; besides, has he never expounded to you that obedience to your husband is a virtue? a commandment, I may say, which you are—"

"Mr Donnithorne," said the lady with dignity, "I am here at your request, and am now complying with your wishes in giving my opinion."

"There, there, Molly," said the subdued husband, giving his better half a kiss, "don't be so sharp. You ought to have been a lawyer with your powerful reasoning capacity. However, let me tell you that you don't understand these matters—"

"Then why ask my advice, Tom?"

"Why, woman, because an inexplicable fatality leads me to consult you, although I know well enough what the upshot will be. But I'm resolved to close with Maggot."

"I knew you would," said Mrs Donnithorne quietly.

The last remark was the turning-point. Had the good lady condescended to be *earnest* in her entreaties that the bargain should not be concluded, it is highly probable her husband would have given in; but her last observation nettled him so much that he immediately hoisted a flag of defiance, nailed it to the mast, and went out in great indignation to search for Maggot. That individual was not far off. The bargain was completed, the jewels were locked up in one of the old gentleman's secret repositories, and the fishermen, with ten pounds apiece in their pockets, returned home.

Chapter Six.
Treats of the Miner's Cottage, Work, and Costume

Maggot's home was a disordered one when he reached it, for his youngest baby, a fat little boy, had been seized with convulsions, and his wife and little daughter Grace, and son Zackey, and brother-in-law David Trevarrow, besides his next neighbour Mrs Penrose, with her sixteen children, were all in the room, doing their best by means of useless or hurtful applications, equally useless advice, and intolerable noise and confusion, to cure, if not to kill, the baby.

Maggot's cottage was a poor one, his furniture was mean, and there was not much of it; nevertheless its inmates were proud of it, for they lived in comparative comfort there. Mrs Maggot was a kind-hearted, active woman, and her husband—despite his smuggling propensities—was an affectionate father. Usually the cottage was kept in a most orderly condition; but on the present occasion it was, as we have said, in a state of great confusion.

"Fetch me a bit of rag, Grace," cried Mrs Maggot, just as her husband entered.

"Here's a bit, old 'ooman," said Maggot, handing her the linen cloth in which the jewels had been wrapped up, and which he had unconsciously retained in his hands on quitting Mr Donnithorne — "Run, my dear man," he added, turning to John Cock, "an' fetch the noo doctor."

John darted away, and in a quarter of an hour returned with Oliver Trembath, who found that the baby had weathered the storm by the force of its own constitution, despite the adverse influences that were around it. He therefore contented himself with clearing the place of intruders, and prescribing some simple medicine.

"Are you going to work?" inquired Oliver of David Trevarrow, observing that the man was about to quit the cottage.

"Iss, sur—to Botallack."

"Then I will accompany you. Captain Dan is going to show me over part of the mine to-day. Good-morning, Mrs Maggot, and remember my directions if this should happen to the little fellow again."

Leaving the cottage the two proceeded through the town to the north end of it, accompanied by Maggot, who said he was going to the forge to do a bit of work, and who parted from them at the outskirts of the town.

"Times are bad with you at the mines just now, I find," said Oliver as they walked along.

"Iss sur, they are," replied Trevarrow, in the quiet tone that was peculiar to him; "but, thank God, we do manage to live, though there are some of us with a lot o' child'n as finds it hard work. The Bal (The mine) ain't so good as she once was."

"I suppose that you have frequent changes of fortune?" said Oliver.

The miner admitted that this was the case, for that sometimes a man worked underground for several weeks without getting enough to keep his family, while at other times he might come on a bunch of copper or tin which would enable him to clear 50 pounds or more in a month.

"If report says truly," observed Oliver, "you have hit upon a 'keenly lode,' as you call it, not many days ago."

"A do look very well now, sur," replied the miner, "but wan can never tell. I did work for weeks in the level under the say without success, so I guv it up an went to Wheal Hazard, and on the back o' the fifty-fathom level I did strike 'pon a small lode of tin 'bout so thick as my finger. It may get better, or it may take the bit in its teeth and disappear; we cannot tell."

"Well, I wish you good luck," said Oliver; "and here comes Captain Dan, so I'll bid you good-morning."

"Good-morning, sur," said the stout-limbed and stout-hearted man, with a smile and a nod, as he turned off towards the moor-house to put on his mining garments.

Towards this house a number of men had been converging while Oliver and his companion approached it, and the former observed, that whatever colour the men might be on entering it, they invariably came out light red, like lobsters emerging from a boiling pot.

In Botallack mine a large quantity of iron is mingled with the tin ore. This colours everything in and around the mine, including men's clothes, hands, and faces, with a light rusty-red. The streams, of course, are also coloured with it, and the various pits and ponds for collecting the fluid mud of tin ore seem as if filled with that nauseous compound known by the name of "Gregory's Mixture."

In the moor-house there were rows of pegs with red garments hung thereon to dry, and there were numerous broad-shouldered men dressing and undressing—in every stage of the process; while in a corner two or three were washing their bodies in a tank of water. These last were men who had been at work all night, and were cleansing themselves before putting on what we may term their home-going clothes.

The mining dress is a very simple, and often a very ragged affair. It consists of a flannel shirt, a pair of linen trousers, a short coat of the same, and a hat in the form of a stiff wide-awake, but made so thick as to serve the purpose of a helmet to guard the head from the rocks, etcetera. Clumsy ankle-boots complete the costume. As each man issued from the house, he went to a group of wooden chests which lay scattered about outside, and, opening his own, took from it a bag of powder, some blasting fuse, several iron tools, which he tied to a rope so as to be slung over his shoulder, a small wooden canteen of water, and a bunch of tallow candles. These last he fastened to a button on his breast, having previously affixed one of them to the front of his hat.

Thus accoutred, they proceeded to a small platform close at hand, with a square hole in it, out of which protruded the head of a ladder. This was the "ladder road." Through the hole these red men descended one by one, chatting and laughing as they went, and disappeared, leaving the moor-house and all around it a place of solitude.

Captain Dan now prepared to descend this ladder road with Oliver Trembath.

Chapter Seven.
Tells of the Great Mine and of a Royal Dive under the Sea

Botallack, to the dark depths of which we are now about to descend, is the most celebrated mine in the great mining county of Cornwall. It stands on the sea coast, a little more than a mile to the north of St. Just. The region around it is somewhat bleak and almost destitute of trees. In approaching it, the eyes of the traveller are presented with a view of engine-houses, and piles of stones and rubbish, in the midst of which stand a number of uncouth yet picturesque objects, composed of boards and timber, wheels, ropes, pulleys, chains, and suchlike gear. These last are the winding erections of the shafts which lead to the various mines, for the whole region is undermined, and Botallack is only one of several in St. Just parish. Wherever the eye turns, there, in the midst of green fields, where rocks and rocky fences abound, may be seen, rising prominently, the labouring arms, or "bobs," of the pump and skip engines, and the other machinery required in mining operations; while the ear is assailed by the perpetual clatter of the "stamps," or ore-crushing machines, which never cease their din, day or night, except on Sundays.

Botallack, like all the other mines, has several "shafts" or entrances to the works below, such as Boscawen Shaft, Wheal Button, Wheal Hazard, Chicornish Shaft, Davis Shaft, Wheal Cock, etcetera, the most interesting of which are situated among the steep rugged cliffs that front and bid defiance to the utmost fury of the Atlantic Ocean.

From whatever point viewed, the aspect of Botallack mine is grand in the extreme. On the rocky point that stretches out into the sea, engines with all their fantastic machinery and buildings have been erected. On the very summit of the cliff is seen a complication of timbers, wheels, and chains sharply defined against the sky, with apparently scarce any hold of the cliff, while down below, on rocky ledges and in black chasms, are other engines and beams and rods and wheels and chains, fastened and perched in fantastic forms in dangerous-looking places.

Here, amid the most savage gorges of the sea and riven rocks—half clinging to the land, half suspended over the water—is perched the machinery of, and entrance to, the most singular shaft of the mine, named the "Boscawen Diagonal Shaft." This shaft descends under the sea at a steep incline. It is traversed, on rails, by an iron carriage called the "gig," which is lowered and drawn up by steam power. Starting as it does from an elevated position in the rocks that are close to the edge of the sea, and slanting down through the cape, *outward* or seaward, this vehicle descends only a few fathoms when it is *under the ocean's bed*, and then its further course is far out and deep down—about two-thirds of a mile out, and full 245 fathoms down! The gig conveys the men to and from their work—the ore being drawn up by another iron carriage. There is (or rather there was, before the self-acting brake was added) danger attending the descent of this shaft, for the rope, although good and strong, is not immaculate, as was proved terribly in the year 1864—when it broke, and the gig flew down to the bottom like lightning, dashing itself to pieces, and instantly killing the nine unfortunate men who were descending at the time.

Nevertheless, the Prince and Princess of Wales did not shrink from descending this deep burrow under the sea in the year 1865.

It was a great day for St. Just and Botallack that 24th of July on which the royal visit was paid. Great were the expectation and preparation on all hands to give a hearty welcome to the royal pair. The ladies arrayed themselves in their best to do fitting honour to the Princess; the balmaidens donned their holiday-attire, and Johnny Fortnight[2] took care, by supplying the poor mine-girls with the latest fashions, that their appearance should be, if we may be allowed the word, *splendiferous*!

[2] The packmen are so styled because of their visits being paid fortnightly.

The volunteers, too, turned out in force, and no one, looking at their trim, soldierly aspect, could have believed them to be the same miners who were wont to emerge each evening through a hole in the earth, red as lobsters, wet, ragged, and befouled—in a word, surrounded by a halo of dishevelment, indicative of their rugged toils in the regions below.

Everywhere the people turned out to line the roads, and worthily receive the expected visitors, and great was the cheering when they arrived, accompanied by the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, the Earl of Mount Edgecumbe, Lady de Grey, Lord and Lady Vivian, General Knollys, and others, but louder still was the cheer when the Princess rode down the steep descent to the cliffs in a donkey-carriage.

The Botallack cliffs themselves, however, were the central point, not only of the interest, but of the grandeur of the scene, for here were presented such a view and combination as are not often witnessed—nature in one of her wildest aspects, combined with innumerable multitudes of human beings swayed by one feeling of enthusiastic loyalty. Above, on every attainable point, projection, and eminence, men and women clustered like gay flies on the giant cliffs, leaving immense gaps here and there, where no foot might venture save that of a bird. Midway, on the face of the precipice, clung the great beams and supports of the Boscawen Diagonal Shaft, with the little gig perched on them and the royal party seated therein, facing the entrance to the black abyss—the Princess arrayed in a white flannel cloak trimmed with blue, and a straw hat with a blue ribbon round it, and the Prince clad in miner's costume. Underneath, a dizzy depth to gaze down, lay the rugged boulders of the shore, with the spray of the Atlantic springing over them.

Deafening was the cheer when the gig at last entered the shaft and disappeared, and intense the anxiety of the vast multitude as they watched the descent—in imagination, of course, for nothing could be seen but the tight wire-rope uncoiling its endless length, and disappearing like a thin snake down the jaws of some awful sea-monster that had climbed so far up the cliffs to meet and devour it! Now they are at the shore; now passing under the sea; fairly under it by this time; a few minutes more and they have reached the spot where yonder seagull is now wheeling above the waves, wondering what new species of bird has taken possession of its native cliffs. Five minutes are passed—yet still descending rapidly! They must be half a mile out from the land now—half of a mile out on the first part of a submarine tunnel to America! "Old England is on the lee," but they are very much the reverse of afloat; solid rock is above, on either side and below—so close to them that the elbows must not be allowed to protrude over the edge of their car, nor the head be held too high. Here even royalty must stoop—not that we would be understood to imply that royalty cannot stoop elsewhere. Those who dwell in Highland cottages could contradict us if we did! Presently the rope "slows"—the lower depths are reached, and now for some time there is patient waiting, for it is understood that they are examining the "levels," where the stout men of Cornwall tear out the solid rock in quest of copper and tin.

After a time the thin snake begins to ascend; they are coming up now, but not so fast as they went down. It is about ten minutes before the gig emerges from that black hole and bears the Prince and Princess once more into the light of day.

Yes, it was a great day for Botallack, and it will dwell long in the memories of those who witnessed it—especially of that fortunate captain of the mine who had the honour of conducting the Princess on the occasion, and of whose enthusiasm in recalling the event, and in commenting on her intelligence and condescension, we can speak from personal observation.

But, reader, you will say, What has all this to do with our story?

Nothing—we admit it frankly—nothing whatever in a direct way; nevertheless, indirectly, the narrative may possibly arouse in you greater interest in the mine down which we are about to conduct you—not by the same route as that taken by the Prince and Princess (for the Boscawen Shaft did not exist at the period of our tale), but by one much more difficult and dangerous, as you shall see.

Before we go, however, permit us to add to the offence of digression, by wandering still further out of our direct road. There are a few facts regarding Botallack and mining operations, without a knowledge of which you will be apt at times to misunderstand your position.

Let us suppose that a mine has been already opened; that a "lode"—that is, a vein of quartz with metal in it—has been discovered cropping out of the earth, and that it has been dug down upon from above, and dug in upon from the sea-cliffs. A shaft has been sunk—in other words, a hole excavated—let us say, two or three hundred yards inland, to a depth of some forty or fifty fathoms, —near the sea-level. This shaft is perhaps nine feet by six wide. The lode, being a layer of quartz, sometimes slopes one way, sometimes another, and is occasionally perpendicular. It also varies in its run or direction a little here and there, like a wildish horse, being sometimes met by other lodes, which, like bad companions, divert it from the straight course. Unlike bad companions, however, they increase its value at the point of meeting by thickening it. Whatever course the lode takes, the miner conscientiously follows suit. His shaft slopes much, little, or not at all, according to the "lie of the lode."

It is an ancient truism that water must find its level. Owing to this law, much water accumulates in the shaft, obliging the miner to erect an engine-house and provide a powerful pumping-engine with all its gear, at immense cost, to keep the works dry as he proceeds. He then goes to the shore, and there, in the face of the perpendicular cliff, a little above the sea-level, he cuts a horizontal tunnel about six feet high by three broad, and continues to chisel and blast away the solid rock until he "drives" his tunnel a quarter of a mile inland, which he will do at a rate varying from two to six feet per week, according to the hardness of the rock, until he reaches the shaft and thus provides an easy and inexpensive passage for the water without pumping. This tunnel or level he calls the "Adit level." But his pumping-engine is by no means rendered useless, for it has much to do in hauling ore to the surface, etcetera. In process of time, the miner works away all the lode down to the sea-level, and must sink the shaft deeper—perhaps ten or twenty fathoms—where new levels are driven horizontally "on the lode," and water accumulates which must be pumped up to the Adit level, whence it escapes to the sea.

Thus down, down, he goes, sinking his shaft and driving his levels on—that is, always following the lode *ad infinitum*. Of course he must stop before reaching the other side of the world! At the present time Botallack has progressed in that direction to a depth of 245 fathoms. To those who find a difficulty in realising what depth that really is, we would observe that it is equal to more than three and a half times the height of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, nearly four times the height of St. Rollox chimney in Glasgow, and considerably more than twice the height, from the plain, of Arthur's Seat, near Edinburgh.

When the levels have been driven a considerable distance from the shaft, the air naturally becomes bad from want of circulation. To remedy this evil, holes, or short shafts, called "winzes," are sunk at intervals from the upper to the lower levels. These winzes are dangerous traps for the unwary or careless, extending frequently to a depth of ten or fifteen fathoms, and being bridged across by one or two loose planks. Ladders are fixed in many of them to facilitate progress through the mine. When a miner drives the end of his level so far that the air will not circulate, a new winze is usually sunk down to him from the level above. The circulation is thus extended, and the levels progress further and further right and left until they occupy miles of ground. The levels and shafts of Botallack, if put together, would extend to not less than forty miles, and the superficial space of ground, on and beneath which the mine lies, is above 260 acres.

When the lode is rich, and extends upwards or downwards, it is cut away from between levels, in a regular systematic manner, strong beams being placed to support temporary platforms, on which the miners may stand and work as they ascend. When they have cut all the lode away up to the level above them, a false timber bottom is made to replace the rocky bottom of the level which is being removed. Thus, in traversing the old workings of a mine one suddenly comes to great caverns,

very narrow, but of such immense height above and depth below that the rays of your candle cannot penetrate the darkness. In such places the thick short beams that were used by the old miners are seen extending from side to side of the empty space, disappearing in dim perspective. Woe betide the man who stumbles off his narrow plank, or sets his foot on an insecure beam in such places! Where such workings are in progress, the positions of the miners appear singularly wild and insecure. The men stand in the narrow chasm between the granite walls above each others' heads, slight temporary platforms alone preserving them from certain death, and the candles of those highest above you twinkling like stars in a black sky.

In these underground regions of Botallack, above three hundred men and boys are employed, some of whom work occasionally by night as well as by day. On the surface about two hundred men, women, and boys are employed "dressing" the ore, etcetera.

Other mines there are in the great mining centres of Cornwall—Redruth, St. Just, St. Austell, and Helston, which are well worthy of note—some of them a little deeper, and some richer than Botallack. But we profess not to treat of all the Cornish mines; our object is to describe one as a type of many, if not all, and as this one runs farthest out beneath the sea, is deeper than most of the others, and richer than many, besides having interesting associations, and being of venerable antiquity, we hold it to be the one most worthy of selection.

With a few briefly stated facts we shall take final leave of statistics.

As we have said, the Boscawen shaft measures 245 fathoms. The ladder-way by which the men ascend and descend daily extends to 205 fathoms. It takes a man half an hour to reach the bottom, and fully an hour to climb to the surface. There are three pumping and seven winding engines at work —the largest being of 70 horse-power. The tin raised is from 33 to 35 tons a month. The price of tin has varied from 55 pounds to 90 pounds per ton. In time past, when Botallack was more of a copper than a tin-mine, a fathom has been known to yield 100 pounds worth of ore, and a miner has sometimes broken out as much as 300 pounds worth in one month.

The mine has been worked from time immemorial. It is known to have been wrought a hundred years before it was taken by the present company, who have had it between thirty and forty years, and, under the able direction of the present manager and purser, Mr Stephen Harvey James, it has paid the shareholders more than 100,000 pounds. The profit in the year 1844 was 24,000 pounds. At the termination of one period of working it left a profit of 300,000 pounds. It has experienced many vicissitudes of fortune. Formerly it was worked for tin, and at one period (1841) was doing so badly that it was about to be abandoned, when an unlooked for discovery of copper was made, and a period of great prosperity again set in, during which many shareholders and miners made their fortunes out of Botallack.

Thus much, with a humble apology, we present to the reader, and now resume the thread of our narrative.

Chapter Eight.
Down, Down, Down

Before descending the mine Captain Dan led Oliver to the counting-house, where he bade him undress and put on miner's clothing.

"I'll need a biggish suit," observed Oliver.

"True," said Captain Dan; "we are obliged usually to give visitors our smallest suits. You are an exception to the rule. Indeed, I'm not sure that I have a pair of trousers big enough for—ah yes, by the way, here is a pair belonging to one of our captains who is unusually stout and tall; I dare say you'll be able to squeeze into 'em."

"All right," said Oliver, laughing, as he pulled on the red garments; "they are wide enough round the waist, at all events. Now for a hat."

"There," said the captain, handing him a white cotton skull-cap, "put that on."

"Why, what's this for?" said Oliver.

"To keep *that* from dirtying your head," replied the other, as he handed his companion a thick felt hat, which was extremely dirty, on the front especially, where the candle was wont to be fixed with wet clay. "Now, then, attach these two candles to that button in your breast, and you are complete.—Not a bad miner to look at," said Captain Dan with a smile of approval.

The captain was already equipped in underground costume, and the dirty disreputable appearance he presented was, thought Oliver, a wonderful contrast to his sober and gentlemanly aspect on the evening of their first meeting at his uncle's table.

"I'll strike a light after we get down a bit—so come along," said Captain Dan, leaving the office and leading the way.

On reaching the entrance to the shaft, Oliver Trembath looked down and observed a small speck of bright light in the black depths.

"A man coming up—wait a bit," said the captain in explanation.

Presently a faint sound of slow footsteps was heard; they grew gradually more distinct, and ere long the head and shoulders of a man emerged from the hole. Perspiration was trickling down his face, and painting him, streakily, with iron rust and mud. All his garments were soaking. He sighed heavily on reaching the surface, and appeared to inhale the fresh air with great satisfaction.

"Any more coming?"

"No, Captain Dan," replied the man, glancing with some curiosity at the tall stranger.

"Now, sir, we shall descend," said the captain, entering the shaft.

Oliver followed, and at once plunged out of bright sunshine into subdued light. A descent of a few fathoms brought them to the bottom of the first ladder. It was a short one; most of the others, the captain told him, were long ones. The width of the shaft was about six feet by nine. It was nearly perpendicular, and the slope of the ladders corresponded with its width—the head of each resting against one side of it, and the foot against the other, thus forming a zigzag of ladders all the way down.

At the foot of the first ladder the light was that of deep twilight. Here was a wooden platform, and a hole cut through it, out of which protruded the head of the second ladder. The Captain struck a light, and, applying it to one of the candles, affixed the same to the front of Oliver's hat. Arranging his own hat in a similar way, he continued the descent, and, in a few minutes, both were beyond the region of daylight. When they had got a short way down, probably the distance of an ordinary church-steeple's height below the surface, Oliver looked up and saw the little opening far above him, shining brightly like a star. A few steps more and it vanished from view; he felt that he had for the first time in his life reached the regions of eternal night.

The shaft varied in width here and there; in most places it was very narrow—about six feet wide—but, what with cross-beams to support the sides, and prevent soft parts from falling in, and other obstructions, the space available for descent was often not more than enough to permit of a man squeezing past.

A damp smell pervaded the air, and there was a strange sense of contraction and confinement, so to speak, which had at first an unpleasant effect on Oliver. The silence, when both men paused at a ladder-foot to trim candles or to rest a minute, was most profound, and there came over the young doctor a sensation of being buried alive, and of having bid a final farewell to the upper earth, the free air, and the sunshine, as they went down, down, down to the depths below.

At last they reached a "level" or gallery, by which the ladder-shaft communicated with the pump-shaft.

Here Captain Dan paused and trimmed Oliver's candle, which he had thrust inadvertently against a beam, and broken in two.

"You have to mind your head here, sir," said the captain, with a quiet smile; "'tis a good place to learn humility."

Oliver could scarce help laughing aloud as he gazed at his guide, for, standing as he did with the candle close to his face, his cheeks, nose, chin, forehead, and part of the brim of his hat and shoulders were brought into brilliant light, while the rest of him was lost in the profound darkness of the level behind, and the flame of his candle rested above his head like the diadem of some aristocratic gnome.

"How far down have we come?" inquired Oliver.

"About eighty fathoms," said the captain; "we shall now go along this level and get into the pump-shaft, by which we can descend to the bottom. Take care of your feet and head as you go, for you'll be apt to run against the rocks that hang down, and the winzes are dangerous."

"And pray what are winzes?" asked Oliver as he stumbled along in the footsteps of his guide, over uneven ground covered with débris.—"Ah! hallo! stop!"

"What's wrong?" said the captain, looking back, and holding up his candle to Oliver's face.

"Candle gone again, captain; I've run my head on that rock. Lucky for me that your mining hats are so thick and hard, for I gave it a butt that might have done credit to an ox."

"I told you to mind your head," said Captain Dan, relighting the candle; "you had better carry it in your hand in the levels, it will light your path better. Look out now—here is a winze."

The captain pointed to a black yawning hole, about six or seven feet in diameter, which was bridged across by a single plank.

"How deep does it go?" asked the youth, holding up his candle and peering in; "I can't see the bottom."

"I dare say not," said the captain, "for the bottom is ten fathoms down, at the next level."

"And are all the winzes bridged with a single plank in this way?"

"Why, no, some of 'em have two or three planks, but they're quite safe if you go steady."

"And, pray, how many such winzes are there in the mine?" asked Oliver.

"Couldn't say exactly, without thinkin' a bit," replied the captain; "but there are a great number of 'em—little short of a hundred, I should say—for we have a good many miles of levels in Botallack, which possesses an underground geography as carefully measured and mapped out as that of the surface."

"And what would happen," asked Oliver, with an expression of half-simulated anxiety, "if you were to fall down a winze and break your neck, and my candle were to get knocked or blown out, leaving me to find my way out of a labyrinth of levels pierced with holes sixty feet deep?"

"Well, it's hard to say," replied Captain Dan with much simplicity.

"Go on," said Oliver, pursing his lips with a grim smile, as he followed his leader across the narrow bridge.

Captain Dan continued his progress until he reached the pump-shaft, the proximity of which was audibly announced by the slow ascent and descent of a great wooden beam, which was styled the "pump-rod." Alongside, and almost touching it, for space was valuable there, and had to be economised, was the iron pipe—nearly a foot in diameter—which conveyed the water from the mine to the "Adit level."

The slow-heaving plunge, of about ten feet in extent, and the sough or sigh of the great beam, with the accompanying gurgle of water in the huge pipe, were sounds that seemed horribly appropriate to the subterranean scene. One could have imagined the mine to be a living giant in the last throes of death by drowning. But these were only one half of the peculiarities of the place. On the other side of the shaft an arrangement of beams and partially broken boards formed the traversing "ways" or tube, up which were drawn the kibbles—these last being large iron buckets used for lifting ore to the surface.

In the present day, machinery being more perfect, the ancient kibble has been to some extent supplanted by skips, or small trucks with wheels (in some cases iron boxes with guiding-rods), which are drawn up smoothly, and without much tear and wear; but in the rough times of which we write, the sturdy kibble used to go rattling up the shaft with deafening noise, dinting its thick sides, and travelling with a jovial free-and-easy swing that must have added considerably to the debit side of the account of working expenses. Between the pump-rod and the kibble-way there was just room for the ladders upon which Captain Dan, followed by Oliver, now stepped. This shaft was very wet, water dropped and spirted about in fine spray everywhere, and the rounds of the ladders were wet and greasy with much-squeezed slime.

It would seem as though the kibbles had known that a stranger was about to descend and had waited for him, for no sooner did Oliver get on the ladder than they began to move—the one to ascend full, and the other to descend empty.

"What's that?" exclaimed Oliver.

"It's only the kibbles," replied Captain Dan.

Before the captain could explain what kibbles were, these reckless buckets met, with a bang, close to Oliver's cheek, and rebounded on the beams that protected him from their fury. Naturally the young man shrank a little from a noise so loud and so near. He was at once scraped down on the other side by the pump-rod! Drawing himself together as much as possible, and feeling for once the disadvantage of being a large man, he followed his leader down, down, ever down, into the profounder depths below.

All this time they had not met with a miner, or with any sign of human life—unless the pump and kibbles could be regarded as such—for they had been hitherto traversing the old levels and workings of the mine, but at last, during one of their pauses, they heard the faint sound of chip, chip, chip, in the far distance.

"Miners?" inquired Oliver.

Captain Dan nodded, and said they would now leave the shaft and go to where the men were at work. He cautioned his companion again to have regard to his head, and to mind his feet. As they proceeded, he stopped ever and anon to point out some object of peculiar interest.

"There's a considerable space above and below you here, sir," said the captain, stopping suddenly in a level which was not more than three feet wide.

Oliver had been so intent on his feet, and mindful of the winzes, that he had failed to observe the immense black opening overhead. It extended so high above him, and so far forward and backward in the direction of the level, that its boundaries were lost in an immensity of profoundly dark space. The rocky path was also lost to view, both before and behind them, so that the glare of their lights on the metallic walls rendered the spot on which they stood a point of brilliancy in the midst of darkness. Only part of a great beam was visible here and there above them, as if suspended in the gloom to render its profundity more apparent.

This, Captain Dan explained, was the space that had once been occupied by a rich lode of ore, all of which had been removed years ago, to the great commercial advantage of a past generation.

Soon after passing this the captain paused at a deep cutting in the rock, and, looking sadly at it for a few minutes, said,—"It was here that poor Trevool lost his life. He was a good lad, but careless, and used to go rattling along the levels with his light in his hat and his thoughts among the stars, instead of carrying the light in his hand and looking to his feet. He fell down that winze and broke his back. When we got him up to grass he was alive, but he never spoke another word, and died the same night."

"Poor fellow!" said Oliver; "I suppose your men have narrow escapes sometimes."

"They have, sir, but it's most always owin' to carelessness. There was a cousin of that very lad Trevool who was buried with a comrade by the falling in of a shaft and came out alive. I was there at the time and helped to dig him out."

Captain Dan here stopped, and, sticking his candle against the wet wall of the mine, sat down on a piece of rock, while our hero stood beside him. "You see," said he, "we were sinking a shaft, or rather reopening an old one, at the time, and Harvey, that was the man's name, was down working with a comrade. They came to a soft bit o' ground, an' as they cut through it they boarded it up with timbers across to prevent it slipping, but they did the work hastily. After they had cut down some fathoms below it, the boarding gave way, and down the whole thing went, boards, timbers, stones, and rubbish, on their heads. We made sure they were dead, but set to, nevertheless, to dig them out as fast as possible—turning as many hands to the work as could get at it. At last we came on them, and both were alive, and not very much hurt! The timbers and planks had fallen over them in such a way as to keep the stones and rubbish off. I had a talk with old Harvey the other day on this very subject. He told me that he was squeezed flat against the side of the shaft by the rubbish which buried him, and that he did not lose consciousness for a moment. A large stone had stuck right above his head, and this probably saved him. He heard us digging down to him, he said, and when we got close he sang out to hold on, as the shovel was touching him. Sure enough this was the case, for the next shovelful of rubbish that was lifted revealed the top of his head! We cleared the way to his mouth as carefully as we could, and then gave him a drop of brandy before going on with the work of excavation. His comrade was found in a stooping position, and was more severely bruised than old Harvey, but both of them lived to tell the tale of their burial, and to thank God for their deliverance. Yes," continued the captain, detaching his candle from the wall and resuming his walk, "we have narrow escapes sometimes.—Look here, doctor, did you ever see a rock like that?"

Captain Dan pointed to a place in the side of the rocky wall which was grooved and cut as if with a huge gouge or chisel, and highly polished. "It was never cut by man in that fashion; we found it as you see it, and there's many of 'em in the mine. We call 'em slinking slides."

"The marks must have been caused when the rocks were in a state of partial fusion," observed Oliver, examining the place with much curiosity.

"I don't know as to that, sir," said the captain, moving on, "but there they are, and some of 'em polished to that extent you could almost see your face in 'em."

On turning the corner of a jutting rock a light suddenly appeared, revealing a pair of large eyes and a double row of teeth, as it were gleaming out of the darkness. On drawing nearer, this was discovered to be a miner, whose candle was at some little distance, and only shone on him partially.

"Well, Jack, what's doing?" asked the captain.

The man cast a disconsolate look on a large mass of rock which lay in the middle of the path at his feet. He had been only too successful in his last blasting, and had detached a mass so large that he could not move it.

"It's too hard for to break, Captain Dan."

"Better get it into the truck," said the captain.

"Can't lift it, sur," said the man, who grudged to go through the tedious process of boring it for a second blast.

"You must get it out o' that, Jack, at all events. It won't do to let it lie there," said the captain, passing on, and leaving the miner to get out of his difficulty as best he might.

A few minutes more and they came on a "pare" of men (in other words, a band of two or more men working together) who were "stopeing-in the back of the level," as they termed the process of cutting upwards into the roof.

"There's a fellow in a curious place!" said Oliver, peering up through an irregular hole, in which a man was seen at work standing on a plank supported by a ladder. He was chiselling with great vigour at the rock over his head, and immediately beyond him another man stood on a plank supported by a beam of timber, and busily engaged in a similar occupation. Both men were stripped to the waist, and panted at their toil. The little chamber or cavern in which they worked was brilliantly illuminated by their two candles, and their athletic figures stood out, dark and picturesque, against the light glistering walls.

"A curious place, and a singular man!" observed the captain; "that fellow's family is not a small one.—Hallo! James Martin."

"Hallo! Captain Dan," replied the miner, looking down.

"How many children have you had?"

"How many child'n say 'ee?"

"Ay, how many?"

"I've had nineteen, sur, an' there's eight of 'em alive. Seven of 'em came in three year an six months, sur—three doubles an' a single, but them uns are all gone dead, sur."

"How old are you, Jim?"

"Forty-seven, sur."

"Your brother Tom is at work here, isn't he?"

"Iss, in the south level, drivin' the end."

"How many children has Tom had, Jim?"

"Seventeen, sur, an' seven of 'em's alive; but Tom's only thirty-eight years old, sur."[3]

"Good-morning, Jim."

"Good-morning, Captain Dan," replied the sturdy miner, resuming his work.

"Good specimens of men these," said the captain, with a quiet smile, to Oliver. "Of course I don't mean to say that all the miners hereabouts are possessed of such large families—nevertheless there are, as I dare say you have observed, a good many children in and about St. Just!"

Proceeding onward they diverged into a branch level, where a number of men were working overhead; boring holes into the roof and burrowing upwards. They all drove onwards through flinty rock by the same slow and toilsome process that has already been described—namely, by chipping with the pick, driving holes with the borer, and blasting with gunpowder.

As the Captain and Oliver traversed this part of the mine they had occasionally to squeeze past small iron trucks which stood below holes in the sides of the level, down which ever and anon masses of ore and débris came from the workings above with a hard crashing noise. The ore was rich with tin, but the metal was invisible to any but trained eyes. To Oliver Trembath the whole stuff appeared like wet rubbish.

Suddenly a low muffled report echoed through the cavernous place. It was followed by five or six similar reports in succession.

"They are blasting," said Captain Dan.

[3] Reader, allow us to remark that this is a fact. Indeed, we may say here, once for all, that all the *important* statements and incidents in this tale are facts, or founded on facts, with considerable modification, but without intentional exaggeration.

As he spoke, the thick muddy shoes and brick-dust legs of a man appeared coming down the hole that had previously discharged ore. The man himself followed his legs, and, alighting thereon, saluted Captain Dan with a free-and-easy “Good-morning.” Another man followed him; from a different part of the surrounding darkness a third made his appearance, and others came trooping in, until upwards of a dozen of them were collected in the narrow tunnel, each with his tallow candle in his hand or hat, so that the place was lighted brilliantly. They were all clad in loose, patched, and ragged clothes. All were of a uniform rusty-red colour, each with his broad bosom bared, and perspiration trickling down his besmeared countenance.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.