

Author: Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (1863-1944)

Text type: Prose

Date of composition: 1896

Editions: 1895, 1896, 2008

Source text:

Quiller-Couch, Sir Arthur. 1896. *Ia*. London: Cassell and Company.

e-text

Access and transcription: March 2011

Number of words: 28,935

Dialect represented: Cornwall

Produced by Andrea Calvo Monedero

Revised by Maria F. Garcia-Bermejo Giner

Copyright © 2011- DING, The Salamanca Corpus, Universidad de Salamanca

IA

BY
Q

*"Though it be songe
Of old and yonge
That I sholde be to blame;
Theyrs be the charge
That speke so large
In hurtyng of my name;
For I wyll prove
That faythfulle love
It is devoyd of shame."*

LONDON
CASSELL AND COMPANY
LIMITED
1896

[NP]

To J.M. BARRIE.

THE responsibility for this little book is a very little matter. Still, a part of it belongs to you; for it was you who, having seen a fragment of Ia's story, persuaded me to write out the whole. I have done so as briefly and carefully as I can, and now send my girl to you with this note of introduction.

She comes from "behind the hills," of a race not always understood. She goes out of the warm circle of the lamp, here, to stand (I know) in the outer court and penumbra of most readers' affections. To you, the creator of Jess and Leeby, Margaret and Babbie, she dares to appeal less on her own deserving than in the name of a seven-year-old friendship, which began, on my side, in admiration of your genius, and has grown on both sides, I hope, for better reasons.

Q.

*The Haven, Fowey,
New Year's Day, 1896.*

[NP]

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"A TONGUE OF PALE BLUE FLAME SHIVERED ON THE TRUCK OF THE MAST"...Frontispiece

"HER HAND SHOOK. HALF A PINT OF DUFFLIN'-CIDER POURED OVER THE YOUNG PREACHER'S SLEEVE"...27

"IA LOOKED UP. TWO MEN WERE COMING ALONG THE BEACH"...37

"SHE FLUNG BOTH ARMS OUT TOWARDS HIM, AND BROKE INTO A SUBDUED CHANT"...61

"THE RING NOW GIVEN INTO PAUL'S HAND WAS A BAND OF PALE YELLOW GOLD"...97

"IA WAS ALONE IN THE ROOM WITH THE OLD BOAT-BUILDER"...135

"JOEL PAUSED IN THE OPEN DOORWAY AND LOOKED IN"...183

"...HOLDING HER BOY'S HAND, WONDERING"...213

[1]

IA

*"Though it be songe
Of old and yonge
That I sholde be to blame;
Theyrs be the charge
That speke so large*

*In hurtynge of my name;
For I wyll prove
That faythfulle love
It is devoyd of shame."*

PROLOGUE

THE ROUND-HOUSE AT REVYER

AT the western end of the bay a peninsula of slate-rock, covered with short turf, pushes out N.N.E. into the Atlantic. The people of Ardevora,* who dry their nets along its

*Stressed on second syllable—Ardévora. It may be well to mention here that the first letter in "Ia" is long, and should be sounded in English fashion, as if it were written "Eia."

[2]

chine, call this The Island; but a low ridge of sand and gravel connects it with the mainland. From the shelter of this ridge Ardevora Town looks across the bay to the whitewashed lighthouse on Gulland Point—four miles as the crow flies, six if you follow the deep curve of the foreshore.

The beach all the way is sandy—the sand a vivid yellow; and on bright days the sea takes from this underlying sand a sapphire clearness. Blue sea, white breakers, yellow shore—in summer this bit of the coast is full of colour. It has its own flowers, too; on the Island the vernal squills, white and pink as well as blue; gentians afterwards, sea-lavender and succory, and the scarce balm-leaved figwort; wall-mustard, fennel, and valerian everywhere.

Around the bay, at the back of its yellow beaches, the Towans stretch. In the beginning these were sand-hills piled by the

[3]

wind and continually shifting. But first the sea-rush took root and stopped the drift, and by degrees this encouraged the turf to grow; and then the spleenwort came, and the gentians and columbines and broad-leaved centaury; and now the Towans are green and pleasant to walk on.

But behind them, and behind Ardevora, rises a country that is sombre and desolate, winter and summer; a land of moors and granite cairns and things silently gone out of mind, and other things handed down and whispered between a smile and a shudder (as a man will tell his wife in the morning some absurd and evil dream that he has had); where to be born, or to live for long, is supposed to confer strange powers.

From this forsaken land a small river—it has no name—runs down and breaks over a sandy bar into the arc of the bay, about two miles and a half from Ardevora Town. Within the river mouth, among the Towans

[4]

on the left bank, and half a mile from the bar, stands the hamlet of Revyer.

Revyer consists of a cottage, a boat-builder's yard, and a round meeting-house. That is all. Nevertheless, Revyer is the metropolis of a religious sect which, not twenty years ago, numbered its followers by thousands, dispersed in every quarter of the globe. The history of the Second Advent Saints begins with this meeting-house among the sand-hills: and the history of the meeting-house begins with the Vision of Mary Penno in the year 1773.

In that year, as everybody knows, the Wesleyan movement was divided by a controversy between its leaders — between the Calvinist Methodists on the one hand and the Arminian Methodists on the other. It was Charles Wesley who had first planted Methodism in Ardevora, and John Wesley who confirmed it in 1743. During the next thirty years John paid the town no less than

[5]

sixteen visits, and in August, 1770, was able to write: "Here God has made all our enemies to be at peace with us." Notwithstanding, when the Wesleys declared against Predestination, a certain number in Ardevora adhered to the Calvinist creed; among them Mary Penno, a maiden lady owning some small properties in the neighbourhood. The account of what befell this good woman on Lady Day, 1773, I take verbatim from a deposition sworn and attested in the presence of Charles Pendarves, Esq., Magistrate of the County: —

"March 30th, 1773. Came before me Mary Penno, spinster, ætat. 38, Susannah Hocken, James Hocken (her husband), Onesimus Heathcote, Walter Chellew, William John Trewhella, Nahum Sprigge, and others. This Mary Penno deposes that on the twenty-fifth of this month, she having rent to receive from James Hocken of Revyer for a cottage occupied by him and his wife Susannah, did walk over from Ardevora to

[6]

receive this rent, after her custom: That she did reach Revyer about three o'clock of the afternoon (the light being then good), and was passing the pallace, or store, where formerly they cured pilchards (but now it is disused and the roof gone), about a furlong above James Hocken's cottage, and on the right of the road, handy by the river; when she was astonished by a brightness, as of candles burning, within the store: That, stooping and looking in by an open window, she saw the form of a man lying upon the earthen floor and writing thereon with his finger, his head supported by the other hand. Deponent says the face of the Apparition was turned from her; but a great light proceeded from his side (she supposes about where the heart would be) by which she was able to see the writing, and that it was, 'SURELY, I COME QUICKLY.' She then hastened to the Hockens' cottage, where she found the said Susannah Hocken in the garden, amending the beeskeps (the husband being away at his work), and the

[7]

two women went back to the store together. The Apparition was still there, and in the same posture, but shadowy, and the light coming much fainter from his side. While they looked, it faded away. Deponent, who looks to be in fair health, adds that in all her life before no vision has ever come to her; and, further, that this did affect her deeply, but pleurably, and not (as might be supposed) with any great fear.

"Susannah Hocken confirms the above, touching the visit paid by the two women together to the store. The Apparition did seem to her not so much a living person, but as it were a form impressed upon the ground. The form was a man's. The writing she saw clearly; but could not interpret it, being unable to read. The light was like a glow-worm's, only much brighter. The writing disappeared with the rest of the vision. She looked afterwards (it being broad day), and could find none of it, nor sign that the earth had been disturbed. This witness also

[8]

confirms Mary Penno touching the pleasurable nature of the vision.

"James Hocken (husband of the preceding witness) affirms that on the evening of March 25th he returned home between the lights, when his wife told him at once of the Apparition. He went with her to the store, taking a lantern, and did examine the place carefully, and especially the ground whereabout the writing had been, but found no sign of any disturbance.

"Onesimus Heathcote (formerly a Preacher in Ardevora; but he has cast it V, and now keeps a small shop where he sells gingerbread) deposes that between seven and eight o'clock on the evening of the twenty-fifth, while he and a few friends were holding prayer in his house, came in Mary Penno, greatly perturbed and exalted in spirit, with the story of a Vision that had appeared to her at Revyer. Witness questioned her upon it, and walked over to Revyer next morning and questioned Susannah Hocken separately. The

[9]

accounts of the two women agreed, or confirmed, each other. He afterwards visited the store, but found nothing unusual. He has known Mary Penno for several years, and considers her a woman of judgment, in matters of business well able to take care of herself.

This witness adds (but it is notorious) that the affair has caused a great excitation of feeling in the town, where many have daily been expecting Our Lord's Second Coming..."

Here follow some unimportant depositions, and after them the marks and signatures.

The excitement wore away its edge in two or three weeks, but not before it had cut an entirely new channel for religious feeling in Ardevora.

The Rev. Onesimus Heathcote had come in 1761, from Wednesbury in Staffordshire, to preach the Word in Ardevora. He had

[10]

gathered a large flock about him, and had then suffered the loss of nine-tenths of it rather than follow Wesley into Arminianism.

Within three months of the date of the Apparition he married Mary Penno. She had £300 a year of her own. It is easy to say that the minister saw and seized his opportunity. It concerns us only that he and his wife founded the sect of Second Advent Saints.

They built their temple, not in Ardevora, but upon the very spot where Mary Penno, now Heathcote, had seen the Apparition. The ruined pilchard store, with its site, cost but

twelve pounds; and here they raised the Round-house among the sand-hills—a slag-stone building, with a conical roof of thatch and four windows facing north, south, east and west—since no one knew from what quarter the Lord would direct His Second Coming. A circular pulpit in the centre of the floor gave the preacher a view from each of these windows, which were of clear glass.

[11]

The one ornament of the interior was a painted frieze, running around the wall under the spring of the roof, with the inscription: "HE THAT TESTIFIETH THESE THINGS SAITH SURELY I COME QUICKLY AMEN EVEN SO COME LORD JESUS." It formed a circle as continuous as the Egyptian hieroglyphic of the snake that swallows its own tail; so that little children in the congregation cricked their necks trying to find out where the text began and ended.

The distance of their meeting-house did not daunt these Advent Saints in Ardevora, who walked their four-and-a-half miles (there and back) twice every Sunday without grumbling. The government of the sect rested on five Elders—who might be male or female—elected for life. These Elders chose the Preacher, and could dismiss him, if need were.

Heathcote and his wife drew up the Articles of Faith and Discipline. All converts bound themselves by oath to accept the

[12]

discipline as laid down and administered by the Five Ruling Elders. As for the faith, to be short, it was a kind of mystical Calvinism—a faith, as it were, with two faces; the one turned back upon the savage inland heaths, the other lurid in the near glow of Apocalypse. You might imagine a child inventing such a faith, to terrify himself in bed. When, four years later, Mary Heathcote died in childbed, the Second Advent Saints in Ardevora and the neighbourhood numbered close on eight hundred.

She left a child—a weakly boy with the baptismal name of Stephen. The widowed Onesimus lived on at Ardevora for another five years, and then migrated with his son to London, where, in Brixton, he founded the first colony, or "Affiliated Branch," of the Saints.

But the faith had already begun to cross the seas. The seed crossed in emigrant ships; it was jolted in white-roofed waggons

[13]

across the plains of great continents; it descended into Antipodean mines. And it took root. At the close of the century the Elect could number two score of foreign branches—plants, rather, from the parent stock; for each was self-supporting, and each obeyed its own government of Five Elders. But wherever a colony took root it raised a round meeting-house with four windows, after the pattern of that by Revyer, and in their prayers the exiles returned always to this obscure chapel in the sand-hills, as Daniel knelt with his lattice open towards Zion.

Onesimus Heathcote left Ardevora in the beginning of 1783. Our story opens there, just seventy-seven years later.

[15]

THE STORY

CHAPTER I.

THE new Preacher was young, and had a smile that seemed younger still. His hair was yellow, with a ripple in it; his eyes were of a bright blue; his eyebrows and lashes quite dark. Elder Carbines took to him at once.

"You'm welcome as flowers in May," said he, and shook hands. "Ia, dust a chair for the Preacher."

Ia, the dark-browed serving-maid, dusted a chair and set it in the bow-window that looked on the quay. She had not taken her eyes off the young man since she opened the door to him. He thanked her and sat down. Though the month was February, his boots had gathered dust in

[16]

his walk across the Towans. The girl knelt down and wiped it away.

"Please don't trouble," he said, frowning slightly because he felt shy. But she persisted, answering—it was hardly more than a murmur—"Kindly welcome, Preacher."

Elder Carbines had taken his visitor's card and was arranging it with care in the frame of the mirror over the fireplace, where it looked very well. "The Rev. Paul Heathcote" — he read it out with approval and turned towards the window.

"You must make up your mind to these little attentions. You'm a great man here in Ardevora, I assure 'ee. Never too soon to begin knowing your flock. The girl's name is Ia—Ia Rosemundy. She's one of our probationary members; means to take the vow next Lady Day Feast—eh, lass? I dessay she'd like you to give her a kiss."

Paul Heathcote flushed, between awkwardness and anger. The girl's head was

[17]

bowed over his boots; but he felt her hand slacken on the duster, and, looking down, saw the red blush surge up and across her neck.

"Tut, now!" the Elder pursued; "it's the' custom here. You'll find the middle-aged ones won't let you off." (*Chuckle.*) "Old Preacher Ward never missed. He used to say that, takin' one with another, a man found hisself about as well off as he started. Ia, put-up your face."

The girl lifted a burning face, dropped her eyes, and knelt shamefast and submissive. The Preacher frowned. He was very young, and hated to look foolish; but it would never do to start by taking offence at the Chief Elder. Still frowning, he bent forward and put his lips to the girl's forehead.

Her colour had all gone now. Without speaking or lifting her eyes, she rose and escaped swiftly from the room.

The Elder chuckled again, filled a long

[18]

clay pipe, and dropped into a high elbow-chair facing the young man. Just outside the bulging window the masts of many fishing-luggers rocked easily by Ardevora quay.

"Dinner 'll be ready in half an hour. Where's your box or portmante? You must excuse a widow-man's housekeeping. My daughter Bitha, she's away to boardin'-school over to

Penzance. She's comin' home on Saturday, though—o' purpose to attend your 'first service. She's being what you call finished' over there. "Talks like a book. She'll have the house shipshape when she comes, if she has to turn it out o' windows."

"It is very kind of you, Elder, but I have already taken lodgings."

Mr. Carbines set down his pipe, frowned, and rubbed his chin.

"I take it ill," he said slowly—" I take it ill that you should knock at any door in Ardevora before mine. I am Chief Elder

[19]

and richest man in the town; and I meant well by you, young sir."

Paul answered: "Yours was the first door I sought in Ardevora. But could I, that am the great-grandson of Mary Penno, pass Revyer Towans without turning aside?"

The Elder picked up his pipe again sucked hard at it, and nodded.

"There by the Meeting-house I found an old couple living, both of them of the Elect—"

"That will be boat-builder Baragwanath and his wife."

"The same. They guessed at once who I was, and—I am ashamed to tell it—they fell on their knees and gave God thanks for me. While the old man went for the key of the Meeting-house, the woman took me into her cottage and fed me on new milk and saffron cake."

"And it was put into your mind to ask for lodging with them?"

[20]

"There, by the spot where my great-grandmother saw the Angel. You understand? The old man took his barrow at once and wheeled it off to the, cross-roads for my box. You are not offended?"

Paul certainly had a winning voice, and his eyes were brighter than ever as he told his story.

Mr. Carbines regarded him for a moment, then stared out of the window at the rocking masts. The door opened, and the girl *Ia* reentered and began to lay the table. She did not look towards the two men.

After a minute's silence the Elder spoke—

"I doubt this is the Lord's doin'. That there cottage of the Baragwanaths is where Susannah Hocken lived, she that saw the Vision along wi' your great-grandmother. Nothin' new but the roof. Bitha will be disapp'inted."

He eyed the bowl of his pipe, and pressed the ashes down with his little finger.

[21]

"We shall all be disapp'inted. We looked to lodge you here in Ardevora and make much o' you. You'm our little ewe lamb, in a way o' speakin'."

[The Elder spoke it " ee-wee." This was his literary pronunciation. When in ordinary life he had occasion to speak of ewes, he called them "yaws."]

"Our little ee-wee lamb, the last seed o' the early Saints, and the child of our petitions. *Ia*, girl, run fore an' open the door; I see 'Tholomew Nance and his wife comin' along the quay. Iss," he resumed as the girl went out, " many a poor widda-woman in Ardevora—an' the fishing makes many here—hath a-given her penny that you might get learnin', an' be a Preacher fit to hold your own wi' the college-bred Pa'sons; an' hath

prayed to live to see the day. You must be tender with us, lad. We rejoiced exceedin' when the Elect in Brixton lent you to us for a while. 'Tisn' for long. You must be about your Father's business. But

[22]

here the first seed was sown, and shall us not look 'pon the harvest?'"

Paul's eyes were moist; but before he could answer, the parlour door opened and the company filed in.

They were Mr. Carbines' four fellow-Elders, whom he had invited to eat meat with the new Preacher. He introduced them as Mr. and Mrs. Nance, Huer Lot, and Eli Tregenza. Mrs. Nance wore a black alpaca gown with a white cashmere turn-over. Black poppies adorned her cap. As she curtsied to Paul, the poppies nodded. The three men wore blue jerseys and white moleskin trousers, very clean.

Salutations over, the guests took off their boots and shoes and stowed them in the corner by the tall clock. Then they stood awkwardly while *Ia* brought in the first dish. 'Tholomew Nance and Eli Tregenza shot shy admiring glances at the new Preacher. Mrs. Nance stared hard at Huer Lot's left

[23]

big toe, which protruded from his blue knitted stocking. Huer Lot (a bachelor) balanced himself on one leg, and tried to cover his left foot with his right.

"That will be conger-pie," said Elder Carbines cheerfully, sniffing and nodding at the dish. "Shall us settle to table?"

He arranged them: Mrs. Nance on his right, Paul on his left, 'Tholomew Nance by Paul, Tregenza by Mrs. Nance, Huer Lot at the foot of the table. The table being a long one, Huer Lot sat at an uncomfortable distance from the rest. The Chief Elder looked at Paul.

"Will you ask a blessing?"

Paul looked down on his plate. "For what we are about to receive may the Lord make us truly thankful, Amen," he said. All the company repeated "Amen" loudly, and sat down.

"The wind will be getting into the south at last," said Mr. Carbines pleasantly.

Eli Tregenza answered him. Eli was a long man with iron-grey whiskers and sloping

[24]

shoulders. He sat very high at table. "It shifted with the tide," he said. "The Almighty has given us a hard winter."

"Have you much distress here in winter?" Paul asked.

"A little dufflin'-cider, Sister Nance?" and "The Lord watches over His Elect," began the Chief Elder and Mr. Nance together. Mr. Carbines gave way. "The Lord watches over His Elect," Mr. Nance repeated, "and will by no means leave them without a sign. My son Cornelius—he will be about your age, sir, an' has a boat of his own—my son Cornelius was up fishing by Lundy, back in November, an' brought word that he found great numbers o' conger up there was floating 'pon top o' the water, bellies uppermost—or stomachs, that is to say. When he told me that, then I knew that anything might happen."

"But we'd got the cold weather long before that," Mr. Carbines objected. "'Twas the cold killed the conger; the conger didn't

[25]

foretell the cold. 'Anything might happen'—Iss, fay, the sky might fall; then all poor souls'd have larks." The Chief Elder thought rather too freely, and let his tongue run away with him at times. But he was a fish merchant and prosperous; so his guests (who were fisher-folk merely) kept silence.

"Anyhow," he went on, "this here conger wasn't taken that way."

"I could tell 'n for a sand-conger by the piece o' skin on my plate," said Eli.

"Iss, 'a was light-coloured. Ia took 'n at low water yesterday. She was dabblin' on the Clean Sand at low water, felt my gentleman wriggle under her toes, an' dug 'n up. Forty-seven pound weight and nigh two feet in girth, an' the rest of 'n's gone to Penzance market."

Ia removed the plates and the remains of the conger-pie, and brought in a second pie, which Mr. Carbines announced to be a "squab."

"Nothing but honest mutton and hoardin'

[26]

apples chopped small, an' a dozen limpets an' an onion or two, to give it a flavour. Ia, go round with the cider."

"When I was a girl," began Mrs. Nance, frowning to her husband to brush off a crumb of pastry that had lodged in a fold of his jersey. "When I was a girl 'twas quite a trade here to make the congers—the little-sized ones—into conger-doust.* You cut 'em down lengthy-ways, spread 'em abroad, sewed half a dozen by their edges, an' dried 'em on a' frame, like a sheet. Vessels used to take 'em aboard regular from Penzance, for the Pope of Rome and his followers to grate into their heathen soups. There was fairmaids,§ too. Nowadays 'tics naught but balking and pickling; but there was a time when half the pilchards sent out of Ardevora was fumed wi' smoke. Why, in that very store, Mr. Heathcote, sir, where your blessed great grandmother saw the Angelic Vision, I've heard tell For nation's sake, girl!"

* Conger-douce, or sweet conger. §Fumadoes.

[29]

But it was too late. Ia had bent over, with a jug, to refill Mr. Nance's glass. Her wrist brushed Paul's shoulder. Her hand shook. Half a pint of dufflin'-cider poured over the young Preacher's sleeve.

He pulled out a handkerchief and began to mop, protesting that no harm was done. The girl set down the jug and ran out. Nobody spoke for a while. Then Mrs Nance said—

"It will be best West of England cloth; and fifteen shillin' an ell, if a penny-piece."

The Chief Elder broke out: "Ad beagle the girl! An' I promised her sixpence, too, for tending the table. Well, 'tis a mercy my daughter wasn't here to see!"

"A bad haveage," * said Mrs. Nance. "The girl's father—John Rosemundy—married a cunning woman from behind the hills, an' the maid favours her. They'm none of Ardevora. The man came for the seaning from t'other side of the Duchy, an' settled

* Parentage.

[30]

here. A good fisherman; but there!" She tapped her forehead significantly. The men nodded.

"Rigs his boat cutter-fashion," muttered Eli Tregenza. At that time the only rig used in Ardevora was the standing lug.

Paul was about to ask a question, when Huer Lot rose to his feet. Hitherto the Huer had sat at the foot of the table without opening his mouth, except to eat and drink. But now the spirit came upon him suddenly, and shone in his mild sloe-black eyes.

"Fellow-Elect," he began, and the others rose at the word; "let us gi'e glory to God together, that hath granted His Saints at last to sit at meat wi' the young man, the comely child of our long striving. Lord, we beseech Thee to bless 'n, that his net may search in deep waters an' gather men an' women to Thy kingdom. And if it please Thee, Lord, still to turn us to his use—to tie us of old faith as buoys upon his head-line—well. But if not, yet may we bless Thee, saying, *Lord,*

[31]

now lettest Thou Thy servants depart in peace, for their eyes have seen Thy salvation. Amen."

All said "Amen," and sat down again.

"The next dish," Elder Carbines announced, "is a lamb-tail pie."

He rapped on the table with his knifehandle—signal for *Ia* to bring in the new dish.

But when the door opened, there appeared, not *Ia*, but an elderly woman, very red in the face.

"If you please, measter, her's tossed off cap an' aipernt* an' runned to door."

*Apron.

[33]

CHAPTER II.

IA lay face downward on the sands, her hands clasped behind her head. Thirty yards down the beach the hollow green breakers roared at her. Behind, the Towans hid her from sight of all living creatures but the gulls, and even from their sight she wished to be covered. She had spoilt the young Preacher's fine new coat.

She lay with her head bare, and her shoes, and stockings tossed aside a little distance. Her toes dug restlessly into the sand. Otherwise, she lay quite still.

On the Towans the young grasses were pushing under the first warm sunshine of the year. All the flowers in the turf stirred in their winter sleep, and began to dream of spring. Shame lay on *Ia* for her clumsiness and the spoiling of the Preacher's coat, but in the root of

[34]

her heart something more than shame was moving.

Until her twelfth year—when her mother died—*Ia*'s parents had lived "behind the hills," where their only near neighbour was an old Irishwoman, who smoked a black pipe upside-down and told the most wonderful stories. When John Rosemundy—who did not like her—was away at the, drift-fishing, this old woman would come at night to keep his wife company and drink with her. Often and often *Ia* had been beaten for stealing out of bed to listen to their tales.

Part of one came into her head now, and she began to say it over to herself—

"One day Deirdre and her maidens took their needlework out into the sunshine to the hillside behind the house. As they sat, three men came journeying round the foot of the knoll. Deirdre looked at them, and began to wonder. When they came near, she said: 'These must be the three sons of Uisnech; and the midmost is Naois, for he is the tallest and most beautiful.'

[35]

The three men went by without so much as a glance at the maidens. But in that moment love of Naois entered the heart of Deirdre, and she rose and caught up her skirt, and left her maidens, and went dozen the hill. She went after the men that went past the foot of the hill, and they were hastening, for the dusk was coming on. Then she stretched out her arms and cried: 'Naois; Naois, son of Uisnech, will you leave me?'"

Ia looked up. Two men were coming along the beach towards her and towards the town. They came on the soft sand in the din of the surf, and were within fifty yards of her before she saw them. One was a little man, and rode on a white ass: He carried a small mahogany box slung before him—a medicine-chest. The white ass and the medicine-chest made the famous Dr. Hammer of Laregan recognisable at any distance.

Beside him walked a strapping young fisherman with a handsome but rather too serious face, which lit up at sight of Ia. She

[36]

had risen from the sand, and was dropping a curtsey to the Doctor.

"Fine day, Ia; I thought you was tendin' on the new Preacher?"

"Fine day, Joel; I thought you was fishin'?"

The Doctor drew rein, and fixed Ia with his fierce grey eyes—terrifying eyes under bushy grey brows.

"H'm" said he, a "comely girl. 'The new Preacher,' hey? And what does the new Preacher say? Has he told you yet that you're a comely 'girl?'"

"No, sir."

"He might have said worse. Did he send you forth to roll here in the sand and promise to send out every man and woman in Ardevora to do the same? Has he prophesied pestilence for Ardevora this year? And is he now cleansing its drains?"

"No, sir."

"Then he is a fool. And you say it is good weather, and you are a fool. For it is

[39]

a dry February, and this is already the third case of French croup that I am going to. Bide but a few days on the beach here, and you will see my white jackass coming again; and after that again and again. I bring him this way because the salt sand"—he nodded at Ia's bare ankles—"is good for the feet of jackasses."

He rode forward. The young fisherman, Joel Spargo, lingered a moment.

"The widow Toms' little girl was took at eight o'clock this mornin', "he explained.

"You must have jailed* along fast to fetch 'n so quick?"

"I thought, when we came 'pon you first, the poor mite must be gone around land.§ You looked to ha' been cryin'."

Ia liked Joel Spargo. She and her father were looked upon askance in Ardevora, as strangers from "behind the hills"; and, except in seaning times, managed their fishing alone. This young man was one of the very

* Hurried. §Dead.

[40]

few who gave them friendly word or helping hand. To be sure, he would- do a kindness for anybody.

But she turned from him now in sudden unreasoning anger, and walked off towards the Towans without a word. Joel Spargo stared after her for a while; then turned sharp on his heel, and rejoined the Doctor.

That same night Ia's little sister Jenifer stretched an arm in her sleep and awoke, finding no one beside her in the bed. Ia stood by the window in her night-shift. She had pinned a shawl across the pane, and stood there muttering to herself.

Jenifer saw all this by the light of a candle burning on the window-sill. As her eyes grew accustomed to it she saw also that the candle had got two skewers stuck through it crosswise.

"What are you doing, Ia?" the child asked sleepily.

[41]

Ia turned sharply. Her elbow caught one of the skewers and knocked the candle over on the floor, dashing out the light. In two seconds she was back in bed, hugging Jenifer in her arms and sobbing and laughing together.

"Let me go, Ia—you are hurting me."

"Very well, honey; but I must have my arms round you. Widow Toms has lost her little 'Liza to-night. Joel Spargo knocked wi' the news just as father was makin' home* the door.

Then Jenifer cried a little for the dead child, and the two sisters dropped asleep in each other's arms.

*Shutting fast.

[43]

CHAPTER III.

"THERE'S the kitchen," said old Mrs. Baragwanath two days after, as Paul knelt and unpacked his books in the cottage at Revyer; "that's for us. There's the parlour here that's for you, sir. An' there's two bedrooms, one lookin' over the road, an' t'other looking out to sea—we've a-put you into that. But if you'd rather overlook the road, you shall."

"If I'm not turning you out," said Paul, "I'd rather have the room facing the sea."

Well, now, I'm glad o' that. No, we don't look out to sea more than we'm obliged, my man an' me. You see, we had two sons once, an' it swallowed the pair. But I'm main glad you like the sea-room. From the window here you can see the light quite plain on Ardevora quay; an' a back door outside at the end o' the passage. You've only to

[44]

slip a bolt and you'm out in the yard—out to your boat, if you choose to keep one. But the yard is a tidy little place to walk up an' down in an' make up your sermons, with none to overlook you but Samuel, and he hammerin' away at his boat-buildin', too silly to take any notice."

She crossed her hands in front of her waist and stood, looking very shrewd and benign in her short-skirted grey gown and mob cap. Though over seventy, she had a bright black eye and the complexion of a girl.

"Samuel gets a bit totelin'*; but we mustn't complain after all these years. We was born within a week of each other, an' I've heard my mother tell how it vexed her that his mother should have a man-child and she a maid. The two women wasn' cordial for years after; but God, you see, sets all things to rights in the end. Oh, yes, Samuel is happy enough, tiddling about his work-

*Foolish with age,

[45]

shop; and now and then, maybe, he gets a ship to charm, and picks up a few shillin's that way.

"A ship to charm?"

"Ay, he takes witchcraft off the vessels; he's very good at that. It's gettin' rare now, but I've knowed him sent for twice in a week, to step over to Penzance to charm a ship. Why, two or three owners used to club together and pay him so much a year—quite a tidy little sum—"

"But this is heathenish!" Paul cried; and he gave her a sound rating then and there. The old woman took it very humbly. She did not tell Paul that many shillings of this ill-gotten money had found their way to London, to pay for his education. But she told her husband that night, with glee and pride, of the chastening rebuke she had got from the Preacher, all to herself.

Paul resolved to take an early occasion of preaching against the belief in witchcraft. But for his first sermon he had fixed on the

[46]

theme of Original Sin, after consulting with the Chief Elder, who agreed that a good beginning was half the battle. The first demand of the Saints was for *ex tempore* preaching; but in dread of the first Sunday service Paul wrote this sermon out on paper and committed it to memory. He wrote throughout Friday night and Saturday morning. On Saturday afternoon he took a brisk walk among the Towans, reciting the salient passages aloud to himself and the gulls. In the evening he made a few corrections and repeated the whole from memory, watch in hand.

By ten o'clock his work was done. Mr. and Mrs. Baragwanath had long since gone to bed, and the cottage was quiet. Paul opened the casement of his small parlour, and looked out. The moon, still crescent, but within three days of full, had just mounted to her meridian in a clear sky flashing full with stars. A faint south-west wind murmured on the roof and broke the river

[47]

into ripples for the moon to shine upon. Paul heard the tide sucking by the quay-ladder across the yard, and the tumble of the breakers on distant beaches. His gaze wandered forth beyond the jumbled timbers and black shadows in the yard to the misty sea and misty coastline; to the red light steady on Ardevora quay; thence upward to the moon. The wine of his own eloquence danced in his blood; and as he watched the moon, his thoughts and ambitions soared with her.

A slight sound drew his eyes down to the quay-door across the yard—a door with two flaps, which stood open, breaking the straight shadow of the wall with a square of moonlight.

In this square of moonlight Paul now saw the upper part of a human figure, framed as in a picture.

It sent a sharp chill down his spine. He leaned forward out of the window and challenged—bating his voice in the darkness.

[48]

"Who are you? What is your business?"

There was no reply for a moment, though he felt sure his voice must have carried to the quay-door. The figure paused for a second or two, then unbarred the lower flap of the door and advanced beyond the wall's shadow to the centre of a moonlit patch before the window. It was the figure of a young woman. Her head was bare, and her sleeves were turned up to the elbows. She wore no cloak or wrap to cover her froth the night air, and her close-fitting bodice was open at the throat. As she turned up her face to the window, the moonlight fell full on it, and Paul recognised *Ia Rosemundy*.

"Preacher, Preacher!" she whispered.

"What is it?"

"I've come to fetch you. Old Missus Slade's a-dying to-night—over yonder"—she nodded in the direction of Ardevora—"an' you'm wanted there, quick as possible."

"She wants me?"

[49]

"She's one of the Elect. I reckon she've got something 'pon her mind. She can't die easy till you've seen her, an' I was to fetch you over quick as I could."

The tall clock in the room behind him struck the half-hour. Paul looked at his watch.

"Very Well," he said, "I'll come. I suppose it will take the best part of an hour to walk round?"

"No need to walk, and no need to wake up anybody in the house. I've brought father's boat to the ladder below, and with this wind we'll get across in half the time it would take to walk. I'll bring you back again all right. You've only to step out here by the back-door. And wrap yourself up, for 'tis a brave distance."

"I suppose it's serious?"

"Mortal. I'm glad you'll come," she said simply.

Paul nodded; and, going back into the room, slipped on his overcoat, picked up his

[50]

hat, and carefully turned the lamp down. Then he groped his way to the back door, unbarred and opened it. *Ia* was waiting for him, still in the bright patch of moonlight.

"I'm glad you've come," she repeated. As she pulled to the door softly, she led the way among the planks and heaps of sawdust and scraps of rusty iron that strewed the yard. From the quay-door a ladder ran down to the water. At low water one, had to descend some eighteen feet; but now the tide was drawing towards full flood, and left but four rungs uncovered. At Paul's feet rocked a small cutter-rigged fishing-boat, made fast to the ladder by a short painter. The girl stepped lightly down, and held up a hand.

"Thank you," said Paul with dignity; I don't want help."

Ia made no answer to this; but as he

[51]

followed, moved forward and cast off the painter. Then she pushed gently away from the ladder, hoisted the small foresail, and, returning aft, stood beside Paul for a moment, with her hand on the tiller.

"Haul in the foresheet, and belay!" she said suddenly.

The young man looked at her helplessly. It was just to make sure of his ignorance that she had spoken.

"Never mind," she said; "I'll do it myself."

She made fast the rope. The mainsheet ran out on its block, and the sail began to draw as they glided out from under the wall upon the breast of the moonlit river. The soft breeze blew behind their beam and carried them swiftly down on the slack water. At first the Towans rose steeply on either hand, casting black shadows through which the boat cut an arrowy phosphorescent line. But by-and-by the shores grew flat, and it became hard to tell where sand and river

[52]

met. And now Paul saw the curving ranks of the breakers and a broad oily black passage dividing them. Down the passage the boat fled with a lazy lift of her bows, and shot over the river bar into the large waters of the bay.

Ia hauled in the mainsheet a foot or so, and the water began to hiss before them. For a mile or more the two kept silence. The red light on the quay-end shone steadily ahead, a point or two off the weather-bow. One by one they opened the riding lights of a few traders at anchor beyond; and then the white walls of the coastguard station came in sight and the house roofs of Ardevora glistening.

Paul knew nothing of the management of a boat, but it struck him that Ia was steering rather wide of the town.

"I thought you told me," he said at length, "that Mrs.—that the woman who sent for me—lived in Ardevora town?"

Ia shook her head.

[53]

"Not in Ardevora town—Ardevora parish. We'll have to go round the Point."

She looked away as she spoke—looked out under the sail towards the north-east, where the light flashed on Gulland Point, now well on their starboard beam.

The boat was one of a class rare in Ardevora, but common enough on the south coast, where they serve for the hook-and-line as well the drift-net fishing; clinker-built, about twenty-seven feet in the keel and nine in the beam; rigged with large mainsail, gaff-

topsail (Ia had not hoisted this to-night), and foresail setting on a forestay, fastened to an iron bumkin on the stem. It had no deck beyond a small cuddy forward, on the top of which a heavy dew was gathering as they moved.

"Do you often handle this boat alone?" Paul asked.

"Father and I work here together, most days. Joel Spargo helps us when we take the net, an' sometimes we get a small boy to

[54]

come wi' us for a penny or twopence. It's a four-man job, by rights. But Joel and father are both very strong men."

"And you?"

She let go the tiller for a moment, took his hand by the wrist and laid it on her bare right arm. It was round and smooth, but firm as a man's. Paul withdrew his hand, without finding anything to say. She took the tiller again and leaned back, with her eyes fixed straight ahead upon the misty stretch of sea beyond the Point.

In a minute or two they were passing outside the land, almost in the cliff's shadow. The wind fluked for a few seconds and then blew steady again off shore. Ia began to flatten the sails, and asked Paul to bear a hand with the sheets as she luffed a little and brought the boat's nose round to the westward. Heeling gently over the dark water, they began to skirt the dim shore with the breeze on their left cheeks.

[55]

"How much farther?" asked Paul. He wondered if his duty would often take him on such journeys as this, and felt thankful that the sea was smooth.

"A little tighter on the fore-sheet," said Ia, nodding towards it.

He bent down to haul on it. As he did so he felt a hand laid on his shoulder, and the girl stooped and kissed him on the tip of the ear.

For the moment it took away his breath.

"How dare you?" he stammered. "Set me ashore! Where is this house you're, taking me to?"

Ia drew herself up and looked him straight in the eyes.

"There's no such place."

"What!"

"There's no such place. There's nobody ill at all. I told you a lie."

"You told me a lie? Then why in the world are we here?"

"Because—ah, Preacher, can't you tell?"

[56]

—because I'm sick o' love for you, an' want 'ee to marry me."

"Are you mad? "

"A h, but consider, consider! Look at me"—and her figure seemed to dilate and grow taller, as she stood there resting a hand on the tiller. Shame blazed in her face, and went and came again; but still she looked at him straight, with serious eyes. "Be I not strong? Be I not comely?" With a sweep of her left hand she loosened the knot of her hair and shook splendid black tresses down over her shoulders. "Tomorrow they'll all be after

thee, an' this is my only chance; for my father's a very poor man. But there's none stronger to work for thee, nor that'll love thee so dear!"

Paul stamped his foot. "Set me ashore at once!" he commanded.

"Nay; that I will not, till thou promise. Lad, when I spilled the cider over thee, t'other day, 'twas my hand that brushed agen the little curls behind thy neck, an' shook

[57]

for love o' thee. An' I have spells"—she spread' her tresses wide in the moonlight and let them drop back upon her shoulder—"for my mother was a cunning woman, and I have touched Zennor stone at midnight. I have spells for thee, lad. Consent, consent—an' the sorrow be on me only!"

"I never heard of such awful impropriety in my life! Turn back! I order you to steer back to Ardevora at once!"

She shook her head. "Nay, lad; I will not. An' what's more, you don't know how to handle a boat, an' couldn' get back by yoursel'—not in a month."

"This is madness. You—you abandoned girl! how long do you mean to keep me here?"

"Till thou give in an' say 'yes' to me, We'm goin' straight out to sea, an' turn back I will not."

"Girl, do you know that if I'm not back by daybreak I'm a ruined man?"

"And oh, man! Can't 'ee see that I'm

[58]

ruined, too, if I turn back without your word? How shall I show my face in Ardevora streets again, tell me?"

Under this sudden transference of responsibility the young man fairly staggered. "You should have thought of that before," he muttered feebly.

"O' course I thought of it. But for love o' you I risked all. An' now there's no goin' back." She paused a moment, and then added simply: "Why, lad, doesn't that prove I love thee uncommon?"

"I prefer not to consider it. Once more—will you go back?"

"I can't."

He bit his lips and moved forward to the cuddy, on the roof of which he seated himself sulkily. Ia tossed him an end of rope.

"Dear, better coil that up an' sit 'pon it. The dew 'll strike a chill into thee."

She took up her old attitude by the tiller and looked steadily ahead, her gaze

[59]

passing just over Paul's hat. When he glanced up he saw the dew and moonlight mingling in her dark hair; saw the starshine in her dark eyes. Around them the firmament blazed with constellations up to its coping. Due west upon the forestay Orion hung, with the Twins above, and Sirius sparkling on the brink of the sea to the southward. Due south, high over the land, Regulus led the eye up to the Great Bear swinging right overhead. Procyon on the weather-bow; Hydra a little before the beam; Arcturus almost astern—as Paul's gaze travelled round on the windward side it encountered these three famous constellations and all at about the same altitude; while low down in the north-east, white Vega peeped under the boom-end. Forward the dusky

canvas now hid and now revealed Aldebaran and' the Pleiades. Never had Paul seen stars so multitudinous or so resplendent. Never before had they seemed so alive to him. He could almost

[60]

hear them breathe. And beneath it all the little boat raced westward.

Neither spoke. On the cuddy-top Paul sat and nursed a dumb rage. The whole affair was ludicrous, but it meant the sudden ruin of his good name and of the hopes of the Elect. It must be past midnight, and this was the day of initiation—the day of his First Sermon! Whenever it pleased this mad Amazon to set him ashore, he must pack his box hastily and flee—but whither? To what colony of the Saints would the tale not pursue him? No; this ended his calling, his education, his ambitions—once and for all. It was hard.

A star shot down from the Milky Way and disappeared in darkness behind the girl's shoulder. His eyes following it, encountered hers. She left the tiller, and came slowly forward.

In five minutes the coast turns to south'ard, an' we leave land behind. Ay, dear, look at me: that's what I've wanted

[63]

'ee to do all along. Look at me, for I perish wi' love!'

She flung both arms out towards him, and broke into a subdued chant—a love-song of the women of her mysterious race—crooning it in her throat as a dove croons to his mate—

*"Long before day I left my father's cottage,
I went by the tamarisks upon the hedges by the sea,
Seeking my lovely one, my comforter, before the morning.*

*"My brothers three lie drowned by Dolor Ogo:
They call in the night, 'Little sister, when is- the wedding?
It is cold waiting, and thou a drudge in our father's cottage.'*

*"Now must I go and whisper them 'Not yet,'
Not yet; but the thyme of the hedge kisses my naked foot—
So will he kiss me soon, and comfort me, my pretty lover.*

*"Then will I kneel by him, and he shall bandage The wounds of the brambles, and I,
kneeling beside him,*

Sweetly, my arm holding his waist, will kiss him— ah, when?"

[64]

She held out her hands. Hardly knowing what he did, the young man took them; then in a moment let them go—but too late. The boat—its helm neglected—ran into the wind, and fetched up with a shiver and sudden lurch. Paul staggered; before he could recover his balance Ia's arms were about his neck.

He saw her parted lips, and felt her breath warm upon his own. With that he accepted his fate for good or ill. He drew back no longer, but bent forward, and their lips met.

At once Ia's arms relaxed. Taking his two hands in hers, she held him for a moment at arm's length, searching his face; then dropped his hands, walked aft, and put up the helm.

"Cast off the foresheet, there, an' duck your head. I'm goin' to gybe her."

So they headed for home.

At the river mouth Ia hauled down the

[65]

sails and got out the sweeps; and together they pulled in silence over the bar, where already the ebb-tide ran unevenly. He was clumsy at this work, and she instructed him in whispers. After ten minutes of this, she stood up and tried the depth of the water.

"Better slip off your shoes an' stockings, dear, an' wade to shore. Else the tide 'll catch the boat here. You won't take cold, not if you run."

She knelt and untied his boot-laces—bending as but two days before she had bent over his dusty boots in Mr. Carbines' parlour. But now he saw with surprise that she trembled violently.

"What is the matter?"

"I'll—I'll let you off, if you want to be let off."

"You seem to take me for a child." He might, even at this late hour, have altered both their fates; either by accepting her offer or by rejecting it with fuller surrender. But he was thinking of his own dignity. "I am

[66]

not a child," he said positively; and tucking up his trousers, and taking boots and stockings in hand, slipped over the gunwale and waded, knee-deep, to the sandy bank. Here he called "Good-night" once, and set off at a run towards Revyer.

"Good-night, dear." She turned the boat once more towards open sea.

[67]

CHAPTER IV.

DING, DING, DING, DING! went the bell above the conical roof of the Round-house. But the Saints were all gathered inside. The four male Elders wore broadcloth, and each had a chimney-pot hat stowed under his seat. Under other seats rested the dinner-baskets of Saints who had tramped from a distance. The men, as a rule, came in their moleskins and best Guernsey smocks. The women in Ardevora are fond of bright kerchiefs and turnovers—yellow, scarlet, and violet—anything but green, which is the piskies' colour. If you half-closed your eyes, these kerchiefs gave the effect of gay parterres of tulips radiating from the foot of the circular pulpit. Breaths of the salt sea entered by the window open towards the north, and mingled with odours of peppermint and bear's grease.

[68]

Ia sat between her father and Jenifer, on one of the back benches against the wall. She wore an orange-coloured kerchief over her head, and a violet one over her shoulders, to hide the scantiness of her grey stuff bodice. The bodice this morning almost suffocated her, it was so tight.

Jenifer shuffled her feet, uneasy in Sunday boots; and Ia laid a hand on her knee.

"Why is your hand shakin' like that?" the child whispered.

DING, DING, DING! The young Preacher entered, and climbed the pulpit stairs. He had a Bible in his left hand, and a roll of paper. His face was as white as the paper. His eyes shone feverishly as he spread out the roll, opened his Bible, and looked around. The bell ceased. "Will he break down? 'Tis a terrible trial, the First Sermon; an' he feels it, poor dear!" said the congregation in their hearts.

[69]

But *Ia*'s heart cried, "Be brave, dear, or we are broken together!" For the first time in her life this maid tasted woman's anguish, and sat sensitive but helpless, her happiness staked on a man's courage and skill.

But Paul was not going to break down. Feverishness and want of sleep had not driven the sermon out of his head, but had worked his nerves up to a white courage. His wits were unnaturally clear, and his voice never shook as he gave out the first verse of the hymn. When the hymn ended, and he knelt and spoke the first few sentences of prayer, the Saints forgot to tremble, and began to wonder.

Here was not eloquence, as they understood it. Here was no sound and fury and passion strained to breaking-point; but a natural voice pleading like a child's—simple, direct, infinitely persuasive. It took God's goodness for granted, and His Fatherly concern in human aspirations and sorrows.

[70]

It touched the parental instinct in these men and women, whose bowels already yearned over the lad; and more than one woman wiped her eyes.

Ia sat, faint at first, as the danger passed, then elate. Then she began to wonder, too. By-and-by, during the sermon, her wonder grew to something like terror.

Vaguely it dawned on her that she had been bolder even than she knew; that Paul had gifts which confer distinction in spheres far larger than *Ardevora*; that she, an ignorant girl, had thrust herself into the future of one who might become a very great man indeed.

But there was something else. The sermon, though it affected the congregation, was not particularly good in substance; not at all good in comparison with the prayer. The thought was bookish, undigested, boyish; and Paul had over-elaborated the style. True, he had scarcely given out the text before he swept the manuscript

[71]

with his elbow on to the pulpit floor, and there let it lie. But he remembered it all too well.

"The woman whom Thou gayest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

When he reached this point in the story of the Fall, how feeble his comment, and commonplace, after what had happened! And yet how sincere the delivery! A fine passion shook his voice; just shook it, and no more.

Ia gazed up at his earnest face, gazed with a sudden sense of desolation—a sudden feeling that she did not understand him. And yet she must love him all her life!

But the Saints were mightily pleased. The sermon moved them, yet not so deeply that they failed to count Paul's thumps upon the desk, or to note his one reference to "the

original Greek." As he came down the pulpit stair, Huer Lot tarried to shake him by the hand. "Mine eyes have seen," he said; "mine eyes have seen." And the

[72]

Chief Elder waited outside to convey Paul off to dinner. It was his rule; roasted beef in the winter months, and roasted duck in the summer.

Ia, too, stood among the small bevy of fisher-girls on the green outside, but Paul did not look towards her.

"This here is my daughter," said the Chief Elder; and Bitha Carbines bowed and shook hands with Paul. She was tall and fair and pretty, with a complexion of cream and roses, and hair upon which (people said) she could sit if she were so minded. The three moved away up the road—Mr. Carbines in the middle; Bitha on his right, with her face turned a little aside towards the sea.

"That's to show 'n the big plait," remarked one of the girls on the green. "He can't turn his head her way but it stares 'n in the face."

"An' her features look best from the left side, as everybody knows."

[73]

"I reckon Bitha Carbines will have 'n," said a lanky girl who was to be married in three weeks' time to a young tinsmith. "Well, it's no odds to me."

"I wish 'twas me, then," laughed the first speaker. "I'm more the colour for 'n. Bitha is fair-haired, an' so is he; and yellow's mate is black, they say."

"Iss, if you had the yellow in your pocket, Lizzie!"

"Ad-rat it—there you be! I've no money, so I reckon I'll have to marry pilchards, after all; but I'm fair in love wi' the Preacher, an' that's flat."

Ia heard. Her heart sang "He is mine —mine—mine!" She took little Jenifer by the hand, and hurried after her father and Joel Spargo, who were far up the road by this time, trudging homeward side by side, and talking—which was not their custom.

"I dunno what made me speak It, just now," Joel was saying. "Maybe 'twas

[74]

the sermon made me feel I wanted to. When a matter like this is on your mind—"

"Oh, ay," answered John Rosemundy. "I reckoned I'd speak to you first."

The two tall slow men walked in silence for a while.

"Oh, ay," John Rosemundy repeated. "Sure-ly." After another pause: "I'd no idee. Lad, ye musn' think but what I'm pleased. If Ia says ' iss ' to 'ee, I'll not say nay.' But she must decide."

"O' course."

"O' course, o' course—havin' no mother. Ye won't come an' take a bit o' dinner 'long wi' us?"

"Thank 'ee, not to-day. I'd be bashful, an' might choke. Maybe I'll step round once for the afternoon—"

But here Ia caught them up, and the two men were dumb.

[75]

CHAPTER V.

JOEL did step round to the Rosemundys' cottage after dinner. He had even taken heart to tie his neck-cloth into a "courting-bow." But he did not find Ia.

High up on one of the hills behind Ardevora, Ia lay at full length in the brown bracken and watched the undulating moorland between her and the town. A granite cromlech flung its shadows over her this was the landmark to guide her lover. Right underneath, the rains had cut a narrow gully down the side of the tor—a gully that widened when it reached the lower slope, and became but a green hollow.

On one of the spurs beside the green hollow a black figure came into view, climbing the hillside. It was Paul. Ia stood up and waved to him to come up by way

[76]

of the gully. He saw, understood, and turned aside into it. At first it was easy walking on good turf; but by-and by the slope became abrupt, the turf gave place to naked granite with dry fern between, and at last he had to use his hands and scramble up by a stairway of heaped boulders. He heard Ia's laugh above him. But when he struggled out, and stood panting, on the grass at the foot of the cromlech, she was nowhere to be seen. He stared up at the great mass of granite. Another laugh seemed to come from the very heart of it. Above the first tall slab of rock he spied a cleft, about a foot wide, with daylight shining through. The granite gave good hand-hold. He pulled himself up, squeezed through the crevice, and found himself in a natural bower, shaped somewhat like the hollow of a crown, ringed about with tall rocks and open to the sky. Leaning against the rock furthest from the entrance Ia faced him.

[77]

She was laughing no longer; but came towards him meekly, and shyly touched his hand. "It was splendid!"

"What was splendid?"

"The service. Dear, you'm a great preacher." She blushed. "I wish you'd say that."

"Say what? I'm afraid I'm tired and stupid."

"Say 'dear'—'Ia dear.'"

"Ia—dear."

He sat down with his back against a boulder, and took her hand.

"I'm glad, you know. I was afraid you wouldn't come, an' then I'd ha' gone an' drowned mysel', I think."

"But the risk!"

"No risk at all. The way you came is hid from Ardevora side; an' man or woman, boy or maid, none comes nigher the Witch's Crown than they can help. If they do—see here!"

[78]

She jumped up and ran towards an opening in the rocky parapet that gave a glimpse of distant hills with white clouds floating and shining above them. She stepped through the opening, threw a glance back at Paul, and dropped over out of sight. With a cry, he sprang up and ran to the parapet. Ia, still glancing backwards and upwards, was running along a narrow ledge six feet below. She passed round the cromlech, and disappeared. Almost before he could draw breath, he heard her laugh again right above him: and there she sat, high on a flat-topped stone that jutted sheer over the verge.

"Come down!" he called.

Instead of answering, she began to sway her body to and fro upon the stone; and to his horror the stone began to rock. He covered his eyes.

In a second or two she had slipped down from the rock and stood safe at his side.

[79]

"That there's a logan, dear; no fear of it toppin' over. If you want to be a witch, you've got to come up here at midnight an' climb on to the stone nine times without loggin' it. My mother did it when she was a girl, an' I did it at seven years old. Mother came with me."

Ia was showing off in her own fashion. She added—

"Bitha Carbines couldn' do that. Be you in love wi' Bitha Carbines already?"

"Don't talk nonsense. And look here, Ia—"

"Ia dear."

"Look here, Ia dear, if you care for me, as you say you do, we must be married some day; and then you'll be a Preacher's wife."

"An' sit in a pew just beneath you, an' hear your beautiful voice runnin' on overhead, an' feel that proud."

"Yes; but a Preacher's wife mustn't have these foolish notions about witchcraft

[80]

and the like. Her heart must be full of the fear of God, and she must be educated; and then some day——"

Ia sighed; she did not understand, but felt that he was thinking of her not at all, or a very little indeed.

"Yes, some day," she echoed. "You shall teach me, an' I will learn all these things. An' you really love God like that?" Paul's cheeks grew red at once, and his eyes bright.

"Very well, dear, then I'll love Him, too. But rest 'ee here, for now your cheeks be pale agen an' tired. Shall I sing to 'ee now? I've a very pretty voice."

Paul sat down again, with his back to the boulder; and Ia, beside him, holding his hand, began to sing. But again the singing was not like other singing known to Paul, but low and almost monotonous, the voice hesitating here and there over-irregular rhythms as a brook runs over pebbles—

[81]

"Bend your ear to the earth;

Bend your ear to my heart;

The earth dreams of harvest,

The heart thinks its thoughts.

"The barley reaches

The farmer's arm-pit,

And bends and listens.

The rabbits listen—

Was that the whetstone

Or only the corn-crake calling?

"But my thoughts grow on

Day and night, fearing nothing.

Under their branches

Is my face hot?

It is hot, but not freckled—

Hot, for you plague me.

What have I done that you trouble me—trouble me?"

The shadow of a homing rook swept over the hiding-place. Paul opened his eyes. Ia still sat there, holding his hand.

"I must have dropped asleep," he said. "What time can it be?"

"You've been sleepin' this hour and more."

[82]

She rose, stepped to the parapet, and looked towards the north-east. A light column of smoke was rising from the hollow where Revyer lay. This meant that old Mrs. Baragwanath had begun to boil the kettle for such of the Elect as came from a distance and spent the whole Sabbath in or about the Round-house

"It will be half-past four o'clock," said Ia; "an' just an hour to Prayer Meetin'. Time for you to go, dear. Keep straight on towards the smoke, an' you'll be there in five-an'-twenty minutes."

He had turned to pass out through the crevice, but halted, came back very shyly and kissed her for the first time that day.

Ia laughed happily.

"One kiss I begged of 'ee last night. 'Hast given me the second o' thy own free will. Not even in thy sleep just now did I steal one."

She stood by the parapet looking after him as he walked over the moor. Half a

[83]

mile from Revyer Valley a granite-paved road descended seaward from the hills. Paul had crossed it but two minutes before a rider hove in sight on the ridge above and came ambling down the road. Even at that distance Ia knew him. It was Dr. Hammer of Laregan on his white ass.

[85]

CHAPTER VI.

FROM that day, as the Doctor had foretold, his white ass came often along the sands to Ardevora. No rain fell in February; very little in March; next to nothing in April; and again none in May. "A hot May makes a fat church-hay." By the middle of the month diphtheria had settled to its work in the lower part of the town; among the alleys that the folk called "Down-along"; and killed, and went on killing.

The folk were slow in taking fright. It was May-morning that first woke them up to the truth. On that day the children dress up garlands of flowers, looping them with strings of painted birds'-eggs; and carry them from door to door and beg for pennies. There were very few garlands this year. One or two people wondered why, and asked.

Still for some time they, attended the

[86]

Round-house as usual—those, at least, who had no children sick at home. But before the end of May these families made not much more than half the congregation. And then there began to be much talk of infection.

One day the Doctor came down the middle of the street, leading his ass and looking serious; and happened on Joel Spargo sitting on a doorstep in Down-along, with Widow Toms' fifth child—a four-year-old maid—on his knee. The little one was crying, and Joel doing his best to soothe her. No longer ago than Christmas there had been two sisters and two brothers to invent games for her; and now only Tryphena, the eldest, was left. 'Liza had gone in February, and Caffy (Calvin) in the first week of May, and Billy they had buried that very afternoon. Her mother was crying for him upstairs. Small Bathsheba wept bitterly on Joel's knee.

"Poor mite!" said the doctor, halting in the middle of the street.

"But what do 'ee think her's crying for?"

[87]

answered Joel. "Why, because there was no saffron cake to-day, same as when Lizzie and Caffy was buried; and her says Billy's funeral wasn't no proper one at all!"

"H'm!" Dr. Hammer pulled out a penny, and told the child to run and buy a saffron bun.

"So Widow Toms has no money to buy saffron?" He stood silent for a moment, frowning in his heavy way. "I want a word with you, Spargo. You're a bachelor, with a house of your own?"

"That's it, Doctor. A three-room cottage—right atop o' the hill."

"You keep house alone?"

Joel nodded. "Ever since mother died. She an' father lived in it all their lives. 'Tis too big for me; but 'tis my own, an' so I live there."

"I'm going to share it with you for a few weeks. Things are serious here."

"Kindly welcome, Doctor."

"Run up, then, and heat the kettle for me, while I step down to the General Wolfe

[88]

and stall the jackass. To-morrow you shall take him over to Laregan and fetch some medicines."

By the time Dr. Hammer found his way to the cottage, Joel had the kettle boiling and a cup of tea prepared. But the Doctor carried off all that was left in the kettle to the inner room, and spent some time in washing his hands, so that the tea was overdrawn when he sat down to it.

"Is the French croup worse, Doctor?"

"It is; and yet the French croup is not the worst."

"I don't know what you mean, sir."

"You have heard that John Trehwella was taken worse last night, down in Street-an-Pol?"

"I heard some talk of it, on the quay this mornin'. He's been ailin' for days."

"I'd come straight from him when I spoke to you just now. I called in again on my way up here. I'd used up all the water in their kettle, the first time, and they hadn't

[89]

refilled it. I think water and fuel are both getting scarce with them."

"I know they're short of water, down there."

"How are the wells holding out, here on the hill?"

"Pretty fair, considerin' the long dryth. But what is it down at Trehella's, sir? Is it infectious?"

"It is typhus."

Joel had never seen a case of typhus. But he had heard it talked about by men who had travelled and seen it; and it's name, falling from the Doctor's lips, scared him to an extent that we, perhaps, can hardly realise. Happily, typhus is rare now, and grows rarer. In those days it was all too common, especially in the sea-port towns.

"What is the fishing like, just now?" Dr. Hammer asked, lighting his pipe and seeming to change the subject.

"Very slight, sir. It's been slight all the

[90]

year. Most o' the boats are coming back empty from the herrin's; and home here the trawls be doin' naught—naught but a few flounders. As for the mackerel, there's not been a real catch this spring."

"The people are in want, I take it?"

"A good few, sir. They want the mackerel badly, to tide 'em over to July an' the pilchards. Even hake be as scarce as nuggets."

"H'm!" The Doctor smoked on for a minute or two, and then asked: "Do you know of any woman or maid in Ardevora who could help me, these next few weeks, with the nursing? Mind, I don't want one who thinks she knows all about it; but one that's strong and handy, and that'll ask no questions, but stand on her head if I tell her to do so."

"There's Aun' Mary Johns, the wise-woman."

"The wise fiddle-stick!"

"Selina Jago—"

[91]

"A dolt!"

Mary Maria Bunney—"

"A cake!"

"Peter Medlicot's wife—"

"A lump of a Woman! Try the maids."

"There's Minnie Polsue."

"Strong enough, but no head."

"Bias Hendra's daughter."

"Doesn't know B from a bull's foot! I want one that can read the labels on my physic, if only to give it a chance. What about that girl of Rosemundy's? She looks to be capable. Can she read?"

"Ia? But typhus, Doctor! You wouldn't set a girl like that—"

"Dear me!" said Dr. Hammer, taking the pipe from his lips and regarding Joel with lively interest. "But as it happens, 'tis with the diphtherite cases I want help, while I look after the typhus myself."

[93]

CHAPTER VII.

"So you'm Asenath's daughter—well-a-well"!—fine I can mind her. Eighty-odd year I be, my dears—eighty-two or eighty-three; you've only to step over to Wendron parish, an' the register 'll tell 'ee whether 'tis eighty-two or eighty-three. Why, your mother Asenath— Asenath Cara—brought her man over here, same as you'm bringin' yours. They gave the word to each other here over the Noon Water, an' I joined mun wi' this very ring. They went down to Ardevora to live, an' there, I suppose,' were made man an' wife by Holy Church. Packman Oliver passed this way the day before yestiddy, an' he told me there was a lot of sickness down to Ardevora."

"'Tis the French croup, Aunt."*

*Elderly people in the West are familiarly addressed as "Uncle" or "Aunt."

[94]

"That's bad then; there's no charm agen that, not that ever I heard tell."

Paul and Ia stood barefoot on the reedy turf beside Noon Water; a tributary of the river that ran, nine miles away, by Revyer Round-house, the river on which the two had embarked together that night in February.

They stood in the heart of a moorland—desolate, hedgeless, dotted only with peat-ricks and a few unroofed sheep-cotes or bougees. It rolled, apparently, right away to the sea that rimmed it on three sides; but, as a matter of fact, under the rim of the moorland, and unseen from its centre, lay busy fishing towns and havens.

Behind them, on the fourth side—which was the eastern—a high and barren hill rose between them and that civilisation which is England. On its round summit a few hummocks stood clear against the blue sky. There were the remains of a Roman camp. In a one-roomed hut, half-way down the side of this hill, whence Roman sentinels had

[95]

once kept look-out for sails bound from the Cassiterides, lived Aunt Else, and meditated spells older than the Caesars. The spring that welled out of the hill, a stone's throw below her cottage, was older yet. And the errand on which. Paul and Ia had come was oldest of all.

Paul wore a sailor's cap, a blue jersey, and trousers of shabby blue sea-cloth tucked up in three folds above his white ankles. The garments belonged to Joel Spargo—poor Joel!—and were, in fact, his foul-weather suit, left on board the Rosemundys' boat. Ia had borrowed them without asking, and Paul had donned them, three hours ago, inside the Witch's Crown.

"White hands an' white ankles; an' what might your trade be, my dear? But there, "the old woman went on, "tisin' mine to ax questions. Whoever you be, Holy Church can't take away the girl's right to 'ee once you gi'e her the word over Noon Water. Asenath's daughter knows that, though the

[96]

new race o' maidens be forgettin' it. Step across, young man. You don't happen to have a chaw o' baccy in your pocket? Well, never mind; but I dearly loves a chaw o' baccy. Step across an' stand wi' your feet in th' water—so. Now, my dear, you stand 'pon thicky

side, an' gi'e 'n your left hand—your left in his right—that's it; now take the ring here an' hand it across to 'n—that's right."

The ring now given into Paul's hand was a band of pale yellow gold, rough on the outside and crusted with dirt, and a little broader than an ordinary wedding ring.

Saracen's gold, honey, an' dug by Sheba's men out o' these very hills. The floods o' Deva b'aint older'n that there ring. Now say after me—but tell thy name first."

"Paul Heathcote."

"Say 'I Paul Heathcote, over this water' "—

"I, Paul Heathcote, over this water"—

"'Take'—say her name"—

[99]

"Take Ia Rosemundy"—

"'Over this Water, to be mine an' mine only'"—

"Over this water, to be mine and mine only"—

"'To have no other, and to follow no other, so long as this water shall run.'"—

"To have no other, and to follow no other, long as this water shall run."

"Now 'tis the maid's turn." In her turn Ia gave the word. "Slip the ring on her finger, an' say 'Amen.' That's all; an' now you can come out o' the water. But hand me back the ring, an' don't drop it, else you'll be unlucky. Tell me some more about the sickness down to Ardevora."

But Paul had taken Ia's hand again, and was examining the ring on her finger.

"What will you take for it?" he asked.

"Money won't buy it," said Aunt Also. "'Tis older than the floods o' Deva, that there ring."

[100]

But finally she parted with it for three pounds, which Paul counted out.

"I'm an old body, an' few sweethearts come now to Noon Water. Hundreds have worn the ring, first an' last; but you can have it, an' may it bring 'ee luck! I wonder, now, you chose May month to come here—

"Marry
Rue for aye!"

in

May,

"Oh, dear!" cried Ia dolefully, pausing as she laced her shoes. "An' I clean forgot!"

But Paul had his fill of superstitions for the time. He led Ia away towards Ardevora. The old woman stood and looked after them, and then at the gold in her palm.

"None o' my business," she said to herself. "Packman Oliver told me his name, day before yestiddy. Laws! I do hope nobody 'il come an' murder me for all thicky gold."

[101]

She climbed up to the hut and shut her door with a terror she had never yet known.

Paul and Ia walked for a mile, neither speaking a word. Ia was the shy one now; and Paul—she had taught Paul's heart to beat fast in her presence, or he had never come with her to Noon Water. They had plans. Paul would go for a holiday to Bristol, and live in lodgings there for the time sufficient to get a marriage license. And one day, while Ardevora supposed them to be away at the fishery, Ia and her father would sail up

Bristol river. At a fitting season their marriage would be made public. But just now it would injure his prospects, perhaps destroy them. Elder Carbines, for instance, would be furious. And the Elder had a great plan in his head; a plan so magnificent that he had as yet hardly gone beyond whispering it, even to Paul.

In the shelter of the next ridge the lovers sat down by Noon Water and ate the pasties

[102]

that *Ia* had brought with her in a white napkin. They had no cup; but Paul, kneeling by the brink, took up water in the hollow of his hands, and held it out to *Ia*. And she bent her head and drank, blushing beautifully.

[103]

CHAPTER VIII.

"So it's, Dearest dry your tears

And banish all your fears,

Sure as man and wife we be,

You shall hear the drums and the trumpets sound in
High German-y!"

IA came along the road from the Towans, that evening, in the glory of the sunset, singing to herself. Over on Gulland Point the lighthouse stood up like a pillar of burnished gold. A fish-jowter overtook and passed her, driving home his empty cart at a gallop; the dust he flung up was a halo of gold. Ardevora lay in the purple shadow of the peninsula, a fairy town on a fairy shore: O blithe new and most wonderful world! Her heart sang like a bird within her as she kissed the ring on her finger—

"You shall hear the drums an' the trumpets sound in High Germany!"

[104]

She kissed the ring again, slipped it off her finger and into her pocket.

On a triangle of dusty turf at the entrance of the town a handful of children were playing Three Dukes a-riding. *Ia* halted and watched them, she hardly knew why. Scores of times she had played the game as a child; but now she seemed to see into the heart of each child playing. O world, most new and wonderful!

"Come back, come back! you Spanish Knight,

An' clean your spurs, they be not bright."

*"My spurs are bright as rickety rock,**

And in this town they were not bought,

And in this town they shan't be sold

Neither for silver, copper, nor gold,

So fare' ee well, any lady gay..."

A small six-year-old girl stood on the far edge of the green, with flushed face and heavy eyes. She watched the play, but took no part in it. The Dukes chanted—

* = "and richly wrought."

[105]

"We've brought your daughter safe and sound,

An' in her pocket a thousand pound,

An' on her finger a gay gold ring,

So don't refuse to rake her in..."

"Ia! Ia Rosemundy!" One of the elder girls ran up. "Come an' look at Susie Treleaven. Us dunno what's wrong wi' her. Her face is all queer, an' she can't answer us!" She hurried across the green. The little one stood there with a pitiful, bewildered look, her breath coming shortly and painfully. Ia caught her up in her arms and began to run towards the town.

As she ran, a cold shiver took her and scattered her happy visions. She heard the children pattering after her. She saw the steep, narrow street, the rickety houses, the buckets of refuse festering in the causeway. She smelt the familiar odours of fish-offal and rotting sea-weed. But another odour was there—an evil, sickly odour; and a pale fear met her on the causeway and

[106]

filled the side-streets like a mist. So real, so tangible, it seemed, that twice she had almost unclasped an arm from her burden to ward the foul thing off.

At the upper end of Down-along she ran against Dr. Hammer, who was mounting the hill slowly, with his hands, behind his back, and talking with Joel Spargo.

"Doctor, Doctor—"

"Hullo! I see, I see. Hold the child so, a moment—head a bit farther back—"

He drew a small flat silver instrument from his waistcoat pocket, slipped it between the little one's jaws, and pressed down the tongue. The tonsils were swollen, and one had a grey patch on it.

"Take her to her mother's as fast as you can, and put her straight to bed. I'll be there in less than five minutes. And don't leave the house till I come, for I have something to say to you."

[107]

CHAPTER IX.

AN hour later, Dr. Hammer knocked at the Rosemundys' door. Their cottage stood in the same street as Joel's, a stone's throw down the hill. Little Jenifer opened to him.

"Your sister wants you to make up one or two bits of clothes in a bundle. "He held a scrap of paper in his hand, and read out the short list. "I'll take it to her. Tell your father, when he comes home that she's down nursing the sick, an' maybe you won't see her for a week or two. And he's to keep you indoors as much as possible—mind that; and if you go out, it's to be up the hill and alone; never down into the town, on any account. You understand?"

The next few weeks were dull for Jenifer. She sat at the window mostly. The Doctor and Joel passed up and down

[108]

often, and Joel never missed to give her a nod and a smile. And sometimes—perhaps twice or thrice a day—a woman would run by the window, on her way to Joel's cottage, with head bare, clutching a child to her breast. Jenifer knew most of the children—had played with most of them—and longed to know what the Doctor said, and if he cured them. But her father, when she asked, never seemed to know for certain. Ia was different: Ia would have told her.

The epidemic reached its height in the last week of June; and after that the women ran by the window more rarely. Some still ran. But Jenifer decided that the worst was over, and that *Ia* would soon be home again. She began to want *Ia* sorely. For one thing, there was never as much to eat now as there had used to be. Her father was always forgetting to bring home proper food. *Ia* had never forgotten.

One night a glare on the window woke

[109]

her up in bed. Somebody had lit a bonfire in the Lower Town. While she watched, another glare started up a little to the right of the first. At first Jenifer thought these must be the usual Midsummer fires. But then she remembered that Midsummer was past. She could not see the flames, but the glare lasted till dawn. After this, scarcely a night passed without one fire or more in the Lower Town.

For as the diphtheria dwindled, the more horrible typhus grew and spread. July dragged itself out, and still no rain fell, or but two small thunder-showers. The wells were dry, and the people starving. News of the town's condition had spread far and wide towards the end of June, and the country people came no more to market. The trading-ketch from Penzance put in no more on Tuesdays and Saturdays. But, indeed, the people lacked money to buy food. Day after day they climbed the heights and scanned the sea for the

[110]

pilchards, now long overdue; but no pilchards came. In those days nine families out of ten in Ardevora had much ado to make both ends of the year meet. February found little in the cupboard. The mackerel brought relief with the spring; but their harvest arrived late in June, or early in July, with the pilchards:

"Meat, money, and light, All in one night"

—and a store to carry them through the winter.

So day after day through July Ardevora watched the sea for pilchards, and the sky for rain. Half a dozen times it woke to find the sun muffled in soft grey clouds, and the people said: "Rain at last!" But always before ten in the morning a beam broke through, and the grey turned to a milky-white and vanished, and the hard blue stretched overhead once more. Or a violet thunder-cloud rose on the sea's horizon, and,

[111]

coming up against the wind, passed over the town to break elsewhere. Or white cumuli piled themselves on the inland hills and tumbled about their summits all day, and then lazily withdrew. All this while every weathercock in the town stuck in the southeast; but no wind blew, except a faint off-shore draught towards evening, when the people sat in their doorways and drew long breaths. At nightfall in one garden or another would begin the burning of infected linen and household stuff. These were the fires that Jenifer saw from her window.

In the first week of July, five; in the second, twelve; in the third, twenty-three; thus the death-rate mounted, and these were deaths from typhus alone. On the fourth Sunday morning the doors of the church remained locked. The Vicar was an old man—a

pluralist, who lived six miles from Ardevora, in a parish which protested against his bringing home infection.

[112]

Ardevora was left to bury its dead, and came to Paul to perform the last rites.

For Paul stuck to his post. "He has courage, that young man," said the Doctor, who had lately made his acquaintance; "and he has self-esteem and brains. I wonder how he reconciles them with that crack-skulled faith of his."

The services in Revyer Round-house had ceased; but visits to the sick and burials gave Paul plenty of work. There was talk that in a short while the dead would have to be buried in a common pit.

Over at Revyer, old Baragwanath the boat-builder heard of this, and at once set about making a coffin for his wife. She was in good health as yet; but as he told Paul, "This kind of work bein' new to me, costs me some time. If aught should happen to the old woman, I won't risk dependin' on a carpenter, who may be between boards hissel', for all we can foresee."

The services had ceased in Revyer

[113]

Round-house; but one Saturday Paul asked the Doctor if there would be any danger in his assembling the Saints under the open air and addressing them.

"If you speak sense and comfort, you will do more good than harm. Remember their bodies and spirits are brought low enough. What would you say if I attended and gave them a few words of temporal advice at the same time?"

[115]

CHAPTER X.

WORD went round. Next day, at about three in the afternoon, a company of three hundred and more assembled on the Island. There they seated themselves on the brown grass-slope, "parterre by parterre," like the multitude in the Gospel; the women's kerchiefs gay as ever, and the whole effect more than ever suggestive of raying tulip-beds; for these children of tradition instinctively, reproduced the familiar arrangement of Revyer Round-house, and formed a rough circle round the hummock on which Paul stood with the Doctor at his elbow. A few held up umbrellas against the sun. Below them the air quivered over Ardevora; beyond, the waters of the bay glanced and sparkled. Only in strained faces and sunken eyes could you read that these men and women and children stood in direr need of loaves and fishes than did the

[116]

crowd by the Sea of Galilee. When all were seated, Paul gave out the first verse of the Old Hundredth, and they sang it together.

Then the Doctor spoke to them. His manner was curt and sharp. "My friends, you are in a mess. You have to accept that, and behave with sense and courage. It has come upon you chiefly through your own folly. I will tell you how. Then I hope to draw a lesson or two for present and future use."

He told them first of the diphtheria ("diphtherite " or " French croup" he called it); how for three years, from 1855 to 1857, it had ravaged France; and how it had crossed the Channel. "I am talking of the seed of disease. It is you who prepared a midden-heap for it to sprout on." He spoke of spendthrift landlords, careless civic life, unsavoury housekeeping; of overcrowded courts, polluted wells, filth on the quay, in the streets, and at home. He spoke particularly, giving names. He took the typhus, and traced it from house to house, from alley to alley; in

[117]

each place pointing out some predisposing cause, how it started in Street-an-Pol, why it spread to Jane Mellin's house in Harmony Rents, why it raged in Chypons. From the pestilence he passed to the famine. He touched on the fishermen's earnings and short-sighted expenditure. He then wound up a few words of severely practical advice with this peroration—

"You are a dolt-headed people; but your hearts are better than your heads. I have wintered you and summered you. I was looking over my books last Christmas, and find I have helped an amazing number of you into the world. Since I can't help liking you, I wish to go on and help you through it. There is an old woman's tale that in the cradle of every third man-child born in Ardevora you will find a sea-shell, showing the death that waits for him soon or late. That is foolishness, of course. But the sea takes heavy toll of you. Many times when I have heard women screaming on the quay-end for their drowned husbands, I

[118]

have wondered why, since the sea is so hard, you men should not get a compensating amount of happiness out of the part of life you spend ashore. I- have heard that people call me a woman-hating Doctor. I will tell more about that when you show me a clean and brightly-kept home in Ardevora."

When the Doctor ceased, Paul opened his Bible and read aloud—

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge an I my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust.

"Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence..."

"Now where did he get that voice?" the Doctor asked himself.

"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

"Nor for the pestilence that walketh in

[119]

darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

"A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.

"Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he haft known My name.

"He shall call upon Ale, and I will answer him..."

Paul closed the book and knelt on the hillock for a space, praying in silence, surrounded by silence. Then he rose, and gave out his text: "Isaiah, thirty-two, second verse—'*And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a thy place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*' "

"Come, that's not so bad," thought the Doctor; "I was afraid he would play on their terrors"; and, after a minute, "But, hulloa!—why, this is genius!" He scanned

[120]

the people's faces. This was the first time he had heard Paul preach. The Saints had this advantage, that they recognised the note—a note of confidence in God's Fatherly goodness, as childlike now and unshaken in the midst of pestilence and famine as it had been on that first fresh Sabbath morning in Revyer Round-house. Having tested its constancy, they had more reason to trust it.

"Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of God." Paul turned the doctrine of Election to his hearers' comfort. He spoke as one who had never questioned that doctrine for a moment. "We are the Elect. But evil has crept in amongst us. God is purging us, and will stay His hand in His good time." Once more: " 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' A shadow for the true Elect! The shadow of a great rock in a weary land!" And the Doctor, scanning their faces,

[121]

saw the conviction work. For the moment, on the glittering, harvestless sea their eyes beheld the shadow of God's goodness projected; saw it coming as plainly as if it had been that purplish moving tint by which the huers descry a pilchard-school. They broke out into sobs and cries of "Amen."

On the other edge of the crowd Ia sat and heard. Since that day spent by Noon Water she had not spoken with Paul, except once or twice beside a sick-bed. In this while she had begun to pass through the greatest change that women undergo; diming days of overwork and long night-watches; always in the presence of suffering and terror.

Today she had no longer that uneasy puzzled feeling which had vexed her, months before, in Revyer Round-house. God had suddenly become- real. And Paul, too, had become real and quite comprehensible. When he spoke of God she saw God clearly. Without knowing why, she felt her whole body hot and aglow with happiness.

[122]

But the Doctor was puzzled. After the service, as he walked down to Ardevora, he muttered to himself—

"Great-grandmother was Cornish. Queer things that mixture of blood does produce, to be sure. Capable; but queer—always queer. Seemed to believe all the rubbish he talked—a prig—lacks feeling, somehow. Yet what fervour! And, bless my soul, what a talent!"

An hour or two later Paul happened to pass through Down-along. The Widow Toms was sitting in her doorway for the sake of the evening breeze.

"How is little Bathsheba to-night?" he asked.

The woman stared at him for a second or two before collecting her thoughts.

"Doctor says she's better. Took it milder 'n the others. Ia Rosemundy's up stairs 'tendin' her."

"May I see the child?"

[123]

"Eh? Aw, of course—of course! Step up, sir, an' welcome."

Paul climbed the stair ladder. In the twilight room above, Ia came, towards him.

"Hush! She's just dropped asleep. Listen to her breathin'!"

"She will recover. The one plague, at any rate, is lightening."

"Dear," she whispered, "you spoke beautiful to-day. Do 'ee really believe it? — that if the folks had faith, 'twould be stayed?"

"I believe it, for the Bible says so. If one in Ardevora had faith but as a grain of mustard seed, this plague would be stayed."

"Then I'll ha' that faith, dear. See here." She put a hand in her bosom and drew, out a paper, tied round her neck with a string. She broke the string, and handed the paper to Paul.

He took it to the window, unfolded it, and read—

[124]

"JEHOVAH

JAH ELOHIM

SHADDAY

ADONAY

HAVE MERCY ON MEE A WOMAN."

"I've a-worn it all through the infection. Now, don't 'ee be angry. Tear it up. I'll do without it. I will, though I shan't feel safe first along. But I'll ha' faith. I will ha' faith!"

The head of the Widow Toms appeared above the stairs. She was followed by the Doctor.

"H'm! sleeping; that's good." The Doctor glanced at Ia, who turned and bent over the bed. Something in her manner made him look sharply towards the window, where Paul stood crushing the torn paper in his fingers.

The Doctor touched the child's pulse, listened to her breathing, and whispered a few instructions to Ia.

[125]

"Too many of us here," he said. "She will pull through now, if she has sleep and fresh air. He walked to the door, and, at a sign, Paul went with him downstairs.

"I have to thank you, young man."

"Me, Doctor?"

Their voices came up through the ill-fitted planching. As she smoothed Bathsheba's pillow, Ia heard them distinctly.

"For your sermon to-day. You gave the people just what they needed; and you gave me, sir, an intellectual treat. Almost you persuade me to become a Second Advent Saint. But you won't be long in Ardevora. Man, with care you've a great future. As a beginning, here's Carbines coming down the street to ask you to supper."

"If he does, I'm afraid I cannot stay. On Sundays I eat supper at home with the Baragwanaths. Indeed, I'm late already."

Ia heard the Elder's greeting, heard the invitation given and declined, the goodnights said, and Paul's footsteps pass away

[126]

up the street. The other two lingered by the door.

"That's a fine Preacher of yours, Elder. He's too valuable to be staying here."

"As I've a-told 'n, over and over. 'Look here,' I says, 'I packed my Bitha off 'pon the first news o' the typhus; an' it's just as silly for you to be exposin' yourself.' You see, Doctor, he's a kind of investment to us Elect. 'Twould never do for 'n to take an' die now, after what we've a-spent on 'n. But 'tis a delicate matter to put to the young man."

There's other infection besides typhus."

"True, tho' I dunno what you mean, unless it's the French croup; an' that, you tell me, is dyin' down."

"Well, he might be falling in love. That wouldn't suit you, hey?"

In the upper room Ia held her breath. Then she stood up and walked across the creaking planks, to prevent the voices striking on the ear of Widow Toms. But

[127]

Widow Toms sat on a stool beside her child's bed, staring stupidly.

"No, no; but there's no chance. There's no maid here of his station, unless 'tis Bitha. An' Bitha's away to Penzance. Not that there was any sign o' that sort o' thing. As the girl's father—aw dear, yes, a man must look after his own. But I be Chief Elder, an' there's my duty to the whole body o' the Elect—pussonal feelin's to one side I'll tell 'ee something, Doctor: for 'twon't be a secret much longer"—he lowered his voice, and Ia caught a word or two only, here and there—" a big building... up there... money can be raised."

They'd better send it down here to fill hungry bellies."

Ia could not hear the Elder's answer.

"Well," the Doctor went on "get them to send the call quick, and take him out of harm's way. But, Elder, we must feed these people somehow. I'm coming to you to head a subscription list —"

[128]

"To be sure: some day—some day." Mr. Carbines shook hands and hurried down the street. Dr. Hammer looked after him from the doorway with an ironical smile.

Somebody touched his elbow. It was Ia.

"Doctor," she demanded, " the croup is lessening, isn't it?"

"It is, girl. Please God, we've seen the worst of that."

"Then I want you to let me nurse the typhus cases."

"You don't know what you're asking, my dear. 'Tis more contagious than' the other among grown people: and—h'm! well, even Joel Spargo tells me that sometimes—'tis as much as he can do—"

"Try me, please."

"H'm I'll see about it."

"So...she heard," said the Doctor afterwards, to himself. "Well, I meant her to. That sort of thing would never do...with his talents...Oh, decidedly I did well."

[129]

CHAPTER XI.

BY the second week in August the typhus had slain a hundred and thirty. Still no pilchards came. One poor catch had been made by a few drift-boats that had pushed out some eight leagues into the open: but the boats were undermanned, and the famine-weakened crews had to pull all the way home under a burning sun and against faint' head-winds that dropped now and then to absolute calm. Two men died on the Way: from heat-stroke or exhaustion, or both. As for the coast, the fish had clean deserted it. It had come to this. Famine had the people in a corner now, and was closing for the last sharp tussle. Doctor Hammer, grimly chewing a straw, had leant against a post on the quay and seen a crowd beleaguer the

[130]

Chief Elder's house, demanding bread: and the trembling Chief Elder had tossed them money in handfuls—all the money in the house—while the Doctor thought of the Subscription List, and grinned, and murmured "Bis dal qui cite dal." He had bled his own estate at Laregan to the last drop to help the people, and could do no more till after harvest.

The people were in a corner, and must break out or perish like sheep. Up on the hill farms the farmers kept their shotguns loaded. But the Doctor and Paul had still enough influence with the townsfolk to prevent a general march-out and attack on the countryside: though even this was debated.

On the first Sunday in the month a wildfire panic ran through the town. Nobody knew who started it: but the cry was, "The boats! Take to the boats!" All that day the lower streets were crowded with folk carrying down their household stuff to

[131]

the quay, and the anchorage with boats hurrying to and fro like bees. That night thirty families lay aboard the fishing-vessels at anchor.

Next day the exodus continued, and the day after. But the disease followed and struck them in the crowded boats as it had struck them in the narrow streets.

It reached as far as Revyer. One evening, Boat-builder Baragwanath finished the coffin, called his wife out to the workshop to admire it, and, having received her congratulations, went to bed with an easy conscience. Next morning he woke with a headache and an "all-overish" feeling, as he called it, which increased until the afternoon, when his wife sent him back to bed. Three days after, the typhus rash had developed. Dr. Hammer had been called in on the second day. Paul came for him.

"Stay here till I return," said the Doctor; and when he returned, it was with Paul's box and portmanteau. "Joel Spargo

[132]

will give you a bed here," he said. "You are not to go back." Then he went down to Widow Toms' cottage for *Ia*.

"Girl, I am going to accept your offer, though I feel myself a brute. The case is a bad one, and too far away to be under my eye. And the old woman is weak and tottering. It's not pleasant, you understand..."

Ia thanked him. She was quite ready.

Dr. Hammer went down to the General Wolfe and saddled his white jackass.

"Will you ride?—that is, if you can keep your balance?"

He had not shown so much politeness to a woman for many years. She declined, and they set off along the sands together, the Doctor astride of Ernest William (for such was the beast's absurd name), and Ia running beside, with the salt wind in her nostrils and her whole body tingling with pure physical joy.

But after the first half-mile her breath

[133]

came short and fast, and her heart began to thump in a very unusual manner. The Doctor pulled up.

"Indoor life has put you out of condition," he said.

They walked the rest of the way.

"Rosemundy's gal...that's right...keep her there...lock the door, lock the door, I say!...she's after the Preacher...lock the door, wife, and put the shutter up...she's after 'n...don't let her look out o' window...quick, there, quick!..."

Ia was alone in the room with the old boat-builder, when he lifted himself in bed and screeched this out in his delirium. She was diluting some salts of potash for a febrifuge: but set down glass and bottle sharply and recoiled against the wall.

The patient sank back and began to mutter.

She stepped to the bed and shook him gently by the shoulder.

[134]

"Boat-builder—boat-builder!"

"Oh, ay"—he began to mutter again.

"Boat-builder"—she spoke sharply—"do you know me?"

"Oh, ay—Rosemundy's gal...let 'n be now, co'!..." After this, more muttering.

Ia sat down beside the bed, and thought.

The old man's ravings never came round to this subject again. Indeed, they ceased on the second day of her nursing, and were merged in a continual low muttering. This went on for four days, and then it, too, ceased, and the old man lay on his back, half-comatose, his eyes half-open, his body (it seemed to, Ia) constantly slipping towards the bottom of the bed. He died on the eleventh day after the typhus took him.

His old wife helped Ia to wash and lay him out. She was very shaky, but bright-eyed and practical as ever.

"Fifty-two year' he was husband to me,

[137]

my dear. The Lord brings all things to an end. A bit foolish towards the last o' his days, but always very thoughtful for me. He shall have the coffin he made for me—he's a slight man, and failed terrible these few days. We both thought to live to see the Lord's Comin'. Well-a-well! I'll step down an' make 'a dish o' tea."

While the two women sat at tea in the kitchen, a horn sounded up the road. Ia looked out and saw the travelling postman coming. He called "Good-evening " to her, and held up a letter.

She told him to set it down on a stone by the garden-gate.

"How's the old man?" he asked.

"He's gone."

"Dear now, I'm sorry to hear it."

The postman climbed the hill again. Ia stepped out and brought the letter into the kitchen. It was addressed to "The Reverend Paul Heathcote, Revyer, near Ardevora, Cornwall." She read this out.

[138]

"Better take it to 'n this evening. It may be important," said Mrs. Baragwanath. Ia looked up and caught her eye.

On a sudden impulse, the girl stretched out both her hands.

"Mother, mother! I've been good to 'ee! Tell me what you know!"

"I was dusting his room one day," the old woman began unsteadily, "an' I saw a letter. 'Twas written' to you—leastway, 'twas only begun. I couldn' help lookin'. But I've never told a soul—only my man. Honey, you won't hold 'n to it? You'll let 'n go? He's the pride o' the Elect. It'll make so much difference to 'n. An' a man's love idn' worth so much after all—not what maids expect. I've been two-an'-fifty year' married—'tis so much trouble as joy. You'll give 'n up, deary?"

"I can't, I dunno. Swear to me you'll never tell another soul."

"It'll make so much difference to 'n!"

"Swear to me! I've been good to 'ee.

[139]

I've nursed your man. Swear to me!" She caught the old woman by the shoulder.

"Don't hurt me, honey. I'll promise—on the Book, if you like."

Ia picked up the letter again, caught a crust of bread off the table, ran out of doors, and across the work-yard. She cast off the Baragwanaths' boat from the landing, leapt down into it and began to pull—down in the dusk towards the river bar.

Curiously, her brain was not occupied with Paul. A sudden terror possessed her that some evil had befallen her sister Jenifer. It worked in her mind and half-crazed her.

Night came down on her as she crossed the river bar. The boats off Ardevora hung out their riding-lights, and she pulled across the bay as though a life depended on her pulling. When she turned her head the lights loomed at her out of a hot haze. Her breath came short and fast again, and again that palpitation of the heart began.

"Star a' Bethlehem, ahoy!" She eased

[140]

under the stern of the nearest lugger, and hailed.

"Ahoy, there!" A dark figure leaned over the taffrail.

"Is John Rosemundy in his boat?"

"No, I reckon. He'll be up at home. Hulloo—'tis Rosemundy's gal. How's the boat-builder?"

"He's gone. Is father all right, do 'ee know?—an' Jenifer?"

"Iss, I b'lieve. Ha'n't heard no other. So the boat-builder's gone? Well, I'm sorry to hear it."

Ia pulled next for the quay, made her boat fast, and ran through the moonlit streets and up hill to her father's. The windows were dark and the blinds drawn.

She scraped a handful of dust and gravel from the causeway, and threw it. In about half a minute her father's window opened.

"Hulloa there! What is it?"

"Hush—'tis me—Ia. How's Jenifer?"

[141]

"Middlin', I b'lieve. Leastways, she was complainin' a bit afore bed-time."

"Nothin' like the croup?"

"Bless 'ee no. She've been goin' along capital. You can't come in, I s'pose?"

"No: I've come from Revyer. Boat-builder died this afternoon."

"You didn' bring along a crust o' bread, hey?"

"Iss, I did. But there's the infection."

"I ha'n't ate nothin' for twelve hours— Jenifer had her supper all right. Toss it up I'll risk it."

Ia tossed up the crust, wished her father good-night, and walked rapidly up hill, past Joel Spargo's cottage, towards the western cliffs. She wanted to think...to think it all out...

Shortly after daybreak Paul opened the door of Joel's cottage and stepped into the street. He had a towel in his hand and was setting out for a bathe,

[142]

Across the causeway, in the yellow sunlight, he saw Ia standing.

"A letter for you," she said. "It came to Revyer last night. Better fetch some sulphur."

"Never mind the infection." He took the letter out of her hand and broke the seal.

"It is coming," she said to herself.

Paul stood in the causeway and read the letter through: folded it up: frowned: opened and read it again. "Can you walk a little way with me? I have something to tell you."

"It is coming," she said again to herself.

[143]

CHAPTER XII.

THEY walked, side by side along the ridge above the town, and out towards the furthest point of the Island. A ruined sea-mark stood there; a hollow column, broken short by some long-past gale to the height of twenty feet, with a tumble-down spiral stairway inside, and over the door a defaced inscription—"To the Glory of God and for the Protection of Commerce and Safety of Mariners...by the Corporation of the Trinity House of Deptford Strond...MDCC..." The rest of the date had perished.

On the north-west side of the column, in the shade, and out of sight of any strollers on the Island, Paul chose a seat and drew the letter from his pocket. Ia sat down also, at a little distance.

"You will not guess what this says."

[144]

She nodded her head slowly. "Maybe I do."

"It's a call. Carbines told me something about it, a week since. They are building a great place for me up in London—I ought to say they talk of building—and they want me up there at once to discuss it. Carbines has been writing about me."

"You will go," she said. "Soon?"

As she asked, she remembered the Doctor's words, "Get them to send him a call quick, and take him out of harm's way."

"To-day, I expect. But I must have a talk with Carbines. I might get the van from the General Wolfe to take me over to Four Lanes this evening, and pick up the coach SO soon! She bent her head and plucked at the wild thyme in the turf.

It is a great chance—the chance of a lifetime. How good they are to me, these people!" His blue eyes glistened. "Ia dear, are you sorry?"

[145]

"I am sorry. But I wouldn't have it other."

"As soon as ever this is settled, I will write. We will arrange to meet and be married at Bristol, as we planned." She was looking at him steadily now. It will be easy for me," he went on, "to slip down there from London; and less chance of anybody guessing than if we both started from the same place. Then, when the time comes—

"No."

"I was saying, when the time comes—

"No."

"Dear, I don't understand."

"Ah, no! But I have thought—thought for many days—and now I know, sweetheart, I have done wrong. But you shan't suffer by-it; 'tisn't too late to stop *that*. Go, an' God's love an' thine go with 'ee. But thy ways be not my ways, an' my place is here wi' my people."

"But Ia after all that has happened!

[146]

And I can't do without you!" He tried to draw her closer.

"The good of you to say it! The happy to hear!" She threw her head back and searched his face. A word yet to speak and he was hers—bound to her for ever. She would not speak it. But would he guess? Would God send the miracle?

God sent no miracle for her. Very slowly she loosened Paul's hand from her wrist. "But it isn't true. 'Twouldn' be true, not if you came back in ten years' time an' said it. I be no fit wife for 'ee, an' you know it but a woman to marry on the sly, too ignorant to help, an' a burden to 'ee all your days! Dear, I've got my pride as well as you. I've a-loved 'ee, these months, straight brow an' joyful heart. I'll never love thee other, and you will do me shame to wish it."

She stood up and leaned an arm against the wall of the watch-tower. Paul stood up also. His eyes were bent on the ground.

[147]

"We have done wickedly, he said slowly.

"Have we?" Her voice came wearily. The struggle was over, but it had been sharp, and she was tired.

"Ah, not wickedly!" she cried, after a moment. "Come!"—She stepped in through the ruined doorway, and he followed. The plastered walls inside were pencilled over with lovers' names and initials. "Janie Sobey courting Sam Hendra," "Minnie Polsue walking with Matthew Henry Goad," "Bessie Bennetts courting Dick Tregay." In that Celtic land the maids did the wooing!

Ia dropped on her knees, scraped away some rubbish at the foot of the wall, and pointed out a shy inscription in the smallest of handwriting—"Ia Rosemundy courting the Reverent Paul Heathcote, May, 1860."

I wrote it there where nobody could see it: an' I piled the rubbish agen' it, to make sure. Forgi'e me.

[148]

"I will come again, Ia."

He took her two hands and kissed her. Her lips twitched, but they were cold. She looked all scared and helpless. With a hand she motioned him to the doorway, and he went.

[149]

CHAPTER XIII.

AT four o'clock that afternoon, a yellow van stood ready outside the General Wolfe, with a grey horse between the shafts and the Preacher's boxes strapped on top. A small crowd hung about the tail of the van, waiting for the Preacher; and a line of women and children sat along the causeway opposite in the cool—all sick and listless and starving.

Paul came down the street, talking with Dr. Hammer, Elder Carbines, and Elder Nance.

"God be with you, Preacher?" said a voice in the crowd.

"God be with you, people, and help you!" Paul lifted his hat.

A woman who sat and suckled a child in an orrel facing the General Wolfe, rose up, snapped her fingers and cried:

[150]

"That for God! Will He send us pilchards, or won't He?"

"Yes, He will," Paul answered, halting and looking up.

"When?"

"This night, if there's one soul in Ardevora that has faith."

He shook the many hands held, out to him, and stepped into the van. The driver called "Cl'k!" to the grey horse, and off they jolted up the hill. One or two flung a blessing after him. Others stared only, and a deeper shadow fell on their faces. The crowd broke up into small groups, talked for a while, and dispersed—some to their homes, others towards the quay; but all moved listlessly.

Ia, at the back of the crowd, shut her eyes as the van reached the top of the street: for it is unlucky to watch a ship or carriage out of sight. When she looked again, it had disappeared.

"He has left them," she murmured:

[151]

"He cannot help any of us. My people, my people!"

Strangely or not, having renounced her own joy, she found her whole heart yearning over these people. To them, at least, she belonged. With a great price she would have purchased happiness for them... a little comfort... food and drink...

"If there's- one soul in Ardevora that has faith!"

The words sang sudden in her ears. She stood still. Then she began to run, up the street—past the green where the children had played at *Three Dukes*—along the high-road to the verge of the moorland. Here she caught sight of the van, now three-quarters of a mile ahead and jogging smartly over a high ridge of the downs. Its window-panes flashed against the westering sun, so that it moved in a blaze, like a fiery chariot. In a minute it would be beyond the ridge.

[152]

She could run no farther, her heart was palpitating so fast and hot. She fell on her knees in the middle of the road, and cried, stretching out her hands after the blazing van:

"My lover, my lover—the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!"

The van dropped out of sight in the yellow haze. By degrees her heart beat less violently. She rose from her knees and walked swiftly homeward. The road ran downhill now, and was easy. At the green, instead of taking the road down into the town, she held on by the higher path that led along the chine above Ardevora and out to the end of the Island.

Here, by the cliff's edge, she found Huer Lot sitting on the look-out, with his cowhorn and bushes* beside him.

*Hoops, fixed on short wooden handles and covered with white linen bags.

[153]

"Any signs of the fish?"

Huer Lot shook his head. "None, my dear."

"They're coming," said Ia; "go higher, up by Goon Glaze, and look out. In five minutes call to me. Take the horn along with 'ee."

Perhaps he thought the girl had seen something, for up he went.

"I see none," he called down at last.

In the shelter of the rock Ia was down on her knees.

"Go higher," she cried, "and wait another five minutes!" She felt the fish coming as surely as gulls forestall the wind. She began to count—one hundred—two hundred—

"A gannet! A gannet!"

"Heva! Heva! Heva!"

She leapt up and ran towards him. He had his horn to his lips and was blowing like mad. With his left hand he pointed out towards the west. Ia shaded her eyes and

[154]

looked. Yes, there in the west a dim smear lay on the sea, in colour between blood-red and purple. It was no shadow, no ruffle of wind: it was fish! A solitary bird—a gannet—was busy above it.

"How long before dark?"

"Two hours an' a little over. I'm jealous there'll be no time. Run, child!"
"Heva!" She caught up her skirt and raced along the ridge, and down past Joel's cottage.
"Heva! Heva!"

John Rosemundy was sitting on his doorstep, with little Jenifer on his knee. Hearing Ia's shout, he rose, set the child down on the threshold, and took a dozen steps down the hill; but turned and came back heavily, like a man in a dream.

"God forgive me!" he said, and took Jenifer on his knee again. Ia heard the breath rattle in the little one's throat.

"When was she took like this?"

"Last night: maybe two hour' after you

[155]

left. The Doctor 've been twice. Leave her to me, an' go cry the news."

Joel Spargo came running down the street. "Doctor's coming this minute," he said; then nodding towards Rosemundy, "He's jairy wi' hunger; not fit to lift an oar. Be it true, sure 'null? Can 'ee come wi' us, Ia? They be wantin' you sore."

So the price was not all paid, even yet.

"I'll come." She kissed the child's hot face, and went.

"Heva! Heva! the fish is come!"

At the first blast of Lot's cowhorn the town pricked up its ears. Men and women ran out of doors and down to the quay.

"Is it fish?"

"Lanes o' fish—balks of 'm!"

"Praise God, the fish at last!"

"Where be 'm to? Tell me, that's a dear."

"Just round the Island. See the Huer, up there, 'pon the point!"

"There he goes for 'Weigh anchor '—

[156]

arms across an' hold up the bushes—Who've got the first stem?""*

"Eli Tregenza."

" 'A's sick an' a-bed. Carbines' two come next. But who's to work mun all? An' not two hour' to dark!"

Indeed this was no time for disputing over stations. The whole town wanted fish to eat, not to sell. All the boats were shorthanded. Some had no crews left: some had no masters: some had no owners, and lay high on the beach, with seams gaping after weeks of sunshine. A few of these were hauled a little way down and then abandoned, for the men were weak as rats. The knees of all shook; more than one man laid his hands upon a gunwale, gave a feeble push in place of a lift, and fell. The work was left to the boats that lay ready launched.

Ia and Joel -took command of Elder Carbines' No. I sean, of which John Rosemundy was properly master. Three boats

*Station.

[157]

belonged to it; each flat and carvel-built. Joel leaped into the largest—called the *sean-boat*, for it held the great net, 220 fathoms long and 12 fathoms deep, buoyed with corks along the head-rope and weighted with lead at the foot. The boat measured 40 feet in length by 10 in the beam, and should have carried a crew of seven, four to row and three to shoot the sean.

The second boat, the *follyer*,* carried the thwart net and waited on the sean-boat.

Ia took her station in a third, a much smaller boat, the *lurker*; and pulled ahead of the others to discover what she could of the size of the school§ and the direction it was taking.

The pilchards came abreast of the Island, leaping and stoiting. A dozen numskull fellows had taken Tregenza's boats—which had first position—and were making a mess of it. Worse than this, they were making a noise and alarming the fish. The white

* Follower. §Shoal of fish.

[158]

bushes on the cliff waved to Ia that the school had changed its course and was heading off from shore. She signalled to Joel, and the great sean-boat came along with a rush, the *follyer* close astern. Ia pulled ahead for a couple of minutes, and signalled again. Passing a warp of the big sean to the *follyer*, and signing to hold taut, Joel gave the word to shoot. The four rowers in his boat bent to their oars; he and the other man in the stern cast the great net overboard, hand over hand, each hand moving like lightning. Round the school the boat flew, the head-line bellying out astern—at first in a wide curve, then, as they rounded, in a long loop with a narrowing entrance—the sean-boat at one end of the loop, the *follyer* still holding taut on the other. So mightily had Joel worked that the whole mass of net, cork, rope, and lead was cast within five minutes. Then, as these two larger boats drew their two, warps together, Ia brought her

[159]

small *lurker* opposite the entrance, and, splashing with her paddle, drove the pilchards back from the one opening by which they might escape.

The warps came together. Ia looked at Joel, and saw that he was white in the face and panting hard. "Leave the thwart-net to me!" she called; and clambering from her own boat into the *follyer*—the crew, of which were weak and not to be trusted—with her own hands she dropped the thwart-net across the opening. All escape from the sean was now closed, and they had only to raise it cautiously, lace the ends together, and guess the size of their haul.

Elsewhere matters were not going well. The incapables in Tregenza's boats had scared the fish and headed them off to sea. Ia and Joel had run into the nick of opportunity. The two next seans enclosed little; and one of these fouled its foot-rope across a fourth, and let out all it contained. Bushes waved frantically for a while; cow-

[160]

horns blared; boats spun to and fro across the bay. Then on a sudden all this activity ceased, and the people stared ruefully after the retreating school, now heading northward for the Irish coast.

Still, thanks to Joel and Ia, there was broiling of pilchards that night in every street of Ardevora; and the children might go about singing—

*"As I was a-going, a-going, a-going on Green Down
I heard, I heard, I heard
The feet, the feet, the feet of fishes walking..."*

[161]

CHAPTER XIV.

THE great net was drawn carefully towards shore and into shallow water; and then the "tucking" began. The men took a third net, less than half the length of the sean, and having a hollow or bunt in the middle; and passing it within the enclosure, laid it round the inner side of the big net. They then drew this tuck-net together, contracting the pilchards and lifting them gradually from the bottom. The fish began to leap wildly. The whole enclosure became one sheet of silver, glancing and flashing in the twilight. The boats drew round, the men leaning in pairs over the gunwales, each pair with a flasket ready to dip out the pilchards as they were raised to the surface in the bunt of the tuck-net. Two or three men stood by the opening of the tuck-net, with minnies,*

*Heavy stones fastened to ropes.

[162]

which they kept plunging into the water to frighten back any, that tried to escape out of the tuck into the, big sean. The voices of the workers were lost in the noise of the fish as they beat on the surface of the water. On the edge of the shore the spectators leaped and laughed and cried together. People on the cliff-side farms across the bay heard the shouting and hubbub, and brought out their glasses. "The fish has come: us may sleep sound at last."

Ia took no part in this tucking. She stood with hair loose and clothes dripping brine, and stared northward over the sea in the direction taken by the retreating school.

"Joel, why don't the drift-boats put out?"

"Scarce a boat has put out this fortni't. The men be too weak to pull, an' the wind's too slight for sailin'."

"But the fish—there's millions yet!"

"Iss; but who can overtake 'em?"

"They'll turn east agen—I know they will."

[163]

"An' 'tis full moon, too. Naw, 'tish' any use."

"Come along shore an' help me persuade the men. There's fish, an' I can get 'm."

"'Tish' any use, I tell 'ee!" But she caught his arm and began to run. "Ha' faith—ha' faith!" she panted. "You'm daft," he muttered: but he ran nevertheless.

By-and-by he caught some share of her exaltation: and found himself, much to his surprise, doing his very best to persuade the men.

At first they jeered. They had much rather stay and watch the tucking. Sundown was past: the sea was like a pond: the full moon would be up in an hour: the pilchards would be half-way to Ireland by the time they put out: and so on, and so on.

Most of what they had urged was true and reasonable. But Ia persisted. "Tell me who brought 'ee word o' the fish? Who spied 'em first? Who took 'em while you was blunderin'? Aw, people, people—

[164]

trust me this wance more, an' you shall ha' millions!"

The end was that five boats put forth from the outer harbour—the inner being almost dry by this time. Joel's boat led, with Ia steering. It was the hour after sundown when all grows flat and misty to the eye, and a mile of water looks the same as two. They hoisted the brown lug-sails and stole out on the tide, the faintest breath of wind helping. A few people on the cliff shouted after them, pointing north. But Ia disregarded them. She laid the boat's nose E.N.E. and steered a steady course: and the others followed.

By degrees the coast became a shadow; the hubbub of the tuckers dropped into a confused murmur; the white houses faded. The moon pushed over the south eastern Towans and swam up, white and round, into a serene sky; but a faint halo dulled its edge. "The rain is coming," said Ia. The light on Gulland Point, too, shone whiter than it had

[165]

shone for months. She ordered the sweeps to be put out. There were three men aboard besides Joel: and the four took turns at pulling, pair and pair about. The other boats dropped behind into the shadow. They had brought no lights, oil being too scarce in the town.

Joel's boat measured thirty feet in the keel and carried twenty nets, each net twenty fathoms in length and seven fathoms deep. The three men began to curse as they pulled. Joel struck one across the ear and ordered him to be quiet. Then another began to whistle out of recklessness—for to whistle at the fishing is to invite ill luck—and stopped for sheer faintness. Joel had lifted his hand again. "Let 'n be," said Ia; "God 'll take no count o' his defiance."

She took the sweep from the man and gave him the tiller. On the dark side of the boat her blade stirred up a pool of gold and blue briming* at every stroke. So the boat

*Phosphorescence.

[166]

held on E.N.E. for close on three weary leagues. Ia looked astern for the other boats, but their crews had lost heart and put back.

The tide had turned and was beginning to set strongly up channel. Ia felt it, and drew in the sweep. She stood up and scanned the black water. Then, without giving a word of reason, she ordered Joel to down sail and shoot the nets. He felt sure by this time that she must be daft: for, as every child in Ardevora could tell, drift-nets should only be shot at sundown or just before dawn, when the pilchards are most active and enter the nets best. But he humoured her, and the others obeyed. A thick, mist had gathered round the moon by this time; and as the nets were heaved over and spread, the briming outlined every mesh in fire, and the head-line ran out in a row of dotted sparks.

The three men swore at her again and flung themselves down to sleep under the

[167]

thwarts. Joel, after slaking his thirst from the water-breaker, sat himself down to rest, with his back against the cuddy. But *Ia* went forward to the bows, where the rope was fastened, and waited.

The moon climbed over the mast. The mist spread and hung over the heaving water like a coverlet on a sleeper's breast. In that hour *Ia* read, or thought she read, the secret of her people's obscure toil, the might and permanence of it, the purpose it fulfilled, and her own share in it. "O people, my people, wicked was I to dream of leavin' 'ee! Cast up my shame to me, but never cast me out!"

She drew the ring from her pocket and slipped it on the third finger of her left hand. Then she pulled on the rope gently, until the boat's nose touched the net. Leaning over, she thrust the finger through one of the gleaming meshes. The ring slid down and through the mesh and into the sea. A few golden bubbles shot up and were extinguished.

[168]

The cord around her finger was now her only marriage-ring, and with it she took the sea to be her husband.

But suddenly she dropped the net and -drew back, upright upon her knees, clasping her hands together below her bosom. Something fluttered beneath them; soft as a bird's wing. Her lips parted.

"The rain is comin'."

It was Joel's voice, and he stood at her shoulder.

She turned and looked straight above her, following his eyes. A tongue of pale blue flame shivered on the truck of the mast, ran down a foot or so, and died out. It was a comosant.

"Jenifer is dead," she said quietly; "let us haul the net."

She unfastened the rope and passed it to Joel, who carried it to the boat's quarter. As they began to haul, the first drops of rain fell.

[169]

CHAPTER XV.

AT daybreak the early watchers on the cliff spied them, through sheets of rain. They had hoisted a small flag in the rigging, and two boats put out to help; for they were too weak to lift the net, let alone to shake the fish on board.

As the leading boat drew near, *Ia* saw that her father stood in the bows, and tried to hail him. Her voice died in her throat. But Joel, who held a glass to his eye, set it clown, and sang out—

"Ahoy, John Rosemundy!"

"Ahoy, there!" His voice came cheerfully over the hissing water, and *Ia* lifted her head.

"How's the little maid?"

"Better, thank the Lord! Doctor's just left, an' Missus Nance is a-tendin' her." Then *Ia* leaned her forehead on the gun-

[170]

wale and sobbed: until Joel took her by the shoulder and led her forward to the cuddy.

"Lie there an' sleep," he commanded, pointing to a heap of tarpaulins.

She lay down as obediently as a child. For forty-eight hours she had not closed an eye. When she awoke and looked through the cuddy-door, the boat was heaped high with pilchards. Joel stood at the tiller, his guernsey coated with fish-scales and twinkling through the rain like a suit of armour. He nodded and smiled.

"There's a whole pack o' folks waitin' for 'ee."

She stepped out, and looked around. They were rounding the quay under short sail, and the quay was lined with people. These put up a cheer as Joel jammed the helm down, and the boat ran up in the wind and fell alongside.

In a single haul they had taken 40,000 pilchards; and, the fish being in very good condition, this meant about sixteen hogsheads,

[171]

and from eight to nine gallons of oil per hogshead. The sean, of course, had taken enormously more—probably 700 hogsheads, or a million and three-quarters of fish. To be sure, none of these could be exported from the infected town; and later, as the rain came down, flushed drains and gutters, and washed their offscourings along the beach and around the sean and the, fish that still waited to be tacked, it was wisely determined to destroy them. The farmers bought them, mixed them with sand, and carted them up the hills for manure.

But the famine was stayed before this.

As *Ia* passed through the crowd on the quay, a small child caught her by the skirt.

"If you please, *Ia* Rosemundy, you'm wanted up to Missis Tregay's. The Doctor sent me down to say you was to come so soon as iver you landed."

Wondering a little, she followed the child to a cottage half-way up the Chypons. Dr. Hammer met her in the doorway.

[172]

"There's a baby born here," he said to her, as he led the way into a darkened room to the left of the passage. She entered, and an old woman advanced to meet her, holding a bundle. It was Aunt Mary Johns, the midwife.

"The mother says it must be held in a maid's arms before 'tis dressed—for luck. If she wasn't so weak, I'd have called her a fool. As it is, I told her she ought to choose the best maid in the town; and I sent for you."

Ia stretched out her arms for the child, but withdrew them sharply, and covered her face with her hands. With a low cry, she turned and ran out of the house and up the hill.

Twenty minutes later Dr. Hammer entered the Rosemundys' cottage, and found *Ia* there alone beside her sister's bed. The child was asleep. Mrs. Nance had given up her charge, received *Ia*'s thanks and gone home to break-

[173]

fast. John Rosemundy was down on the quay, landing and weighing the pilchards.

The Doctor halted in the doorway. *Ia* had risen, and stood with her face to the wall.

"My girl—"

She felt his sharp grey eyes upon her. They pierced like gimlets. But she neither answered nor turned.

"My girl, I believe I have done you a great wrong."

She faced him now, her arms hanging limp before her, her hands clasped, and her eyes interrogating him.

"I sent him away," he said.

"No, Doctor."

"Child, I am an idiot past forgiving. I sent him away."

"No, Doctor, I sent him away."

"You heard what I said to Carbines that day?"

"Yes."

"The worst of it is, I meant you to hear it."

[174]

"I know. But 'twas true; wasn't it, Doctor?"

"God knows, my dear."

"Oh, yes; 'twas true. 'T would ha' spoilt his prospects. I made him see that."

Doctor Hammer stepped forward, laid a hand on her shoulder, and looked into her eyes.

"You —made —him—see —that?" he echoed.

"He didn't know—"

The sentence came to a halt, and she looked at him piteously.

"And you never told him?"

She shook her head. He made for the door, but she caught at his arm.

"You mustn' tell him, Doctor: you mustn' tell nobody. He wanted to marry me—gave me his word over Noon Water. 'Twas I that said 'No'. You judge 'n wrong. When a body thinks o' religion afore anything—"

"—'tis the others that suffer. You needn't tell me *that*, Ia."

[175]

They stood in the doorway, and looked down together upon the bay. The washings of the town had turned the water inshore to a turbid yellow; and as the rain fell and fell, this yellow water spread into a long arc and pushed slowly out towards the blue-green Atlantic.

[177]

CHAPTER XVI.

THE great army of fish held on its way, and was lost in the north-east. A few unimportant hauls were made by the drift-boats among the stragglers, and so the summer fishery ended. Some of the Ardevora boats hoisted sail for the herrings on the east coast; but most of the men contented themselves with overhauling for the autumn mackerel fishery, which turned out better than anyone expected, and decidedly above the average. Meanwhile the typhus steadily diminished. The breaking up of the weather seemed to put a period to its rage. Fresh south-westerly breezes blew through the rest of August and the whole of September, and brought a plenty of rain. The bills of mortality dropped week by week, thus—14, 8, 3, 2, 0. The last

[178]

death occurred on September 23rd, and when, a fortnight later, the equinoctial winds had blown themselves out, it was found that the pestilence had gone with them.

Early in October the pilchards began to collect again and draw southward out of the cold seas towards the Atlantic. And in the third 'week of that month the returning legions swept back along the shore by Ardevora, so, compactly moving that thousands were pushed ashore by the pressure of the rear-guard. In three days the fishermen took up fifteen millions of fish.

Seven weeks later, a dozen women were sifting pilchards in a store belonging to Elder Carbines, at the north end of the town. The fish (a part of the first day's catch) had stood in balk ever since their removal from the tuck-net: that is, after a rubbing of bay-salt they had been piled in layers against the wall of the store, with salt between each layer, and yet more salt in all the interstices. In this

[179]

state they had been allowed to remain for a month, the oil and brine draining out of them into pits dug for the purpose.

The women were now employed in sifting and packing. Some rubbed the dry salt off the fish. Others washed them in sieves. Then others laid them regularly in great fifty-gallon casks. The casks had wide crevices between the staves; and, when one was heaped full, the women would lift a large granite pressing-stone on to the top. Under this the fish sank lower in the cask, and the oil ran out through the crevices. When a cask had been pressed down and refilled once every day for nine days, it would weigh about 476 pounds; and was then headed up, branded with Mr. Carbines' name, the date, the letters B.F. (for "British Fish"), and the number 3,000 (the supposed contents of a hogshead); and stood ready for exportation.

The women chattered as they worked.

"Long life to the Pope, an' death to thousands!" said one, breaking off work and

[180]

producing a tea-pot, from the cracked spout of which she took a long pull. Wiping her lips, she added, "Well, 'tis a pretty good season with the nor' coasters,* after all we've a-gone through."

"Praise the Lord for all His mercies! Soon as iver we put these in balk I heard mun crying for more."§

"Whiddles!"

" 'Tisn' whiddles. You'll be tellin' me next that 'tisn' a sign o' fish when the press-stones begin shiftin'! Why, the very day that Joel Spargo and Ia Rosemundy took that big lot with Carbines' sean, back in August month, I was passing this very door, thinkin' o' nothin' so little as fish, when I heard a skimmage an' a slidin'—"

"Talk o' the devil—there's Joel. Spargo passin' the door this minute. Hi! Joel, lad!"

*The winter pilchards.

§Squeaking. The noise (often a loud one) is made by the bursting of the pilchards' air-bladders under pressure of the balk.

[181]

"What's the clatter?" Joel paused in the open doorway and looked in.

"Step in an' gi'e us a kiss, my dear."

"Can't. Winter's comin' on, an' the days be short. Better you clacked less an' worked more.

"Joel's very partikler in sharin' his kisses," said a girl. "Here, Prudence Oliver, help me lift this here stone, since *he* don't offer."

"I can't, my dear: feared o' strainin' myself."

"I reckon your husband won't let 'ee."

"Well, 'tis summat to have a man that's not ashamed to own childer."

"What's all this about?" Joel asked: for she threw a meaning look at the women as she spoke.

"Better ask Ia Rosemundy."

A chorus of laughter followed him as he turned on his heel. He did not understand. But the women had long been accustomed to rally him on his devotion to Ia—a devotion apparent enough to everyone in the town.

[182]

And he always took to his heels as soon as her name was uttered.

But it happened two evenings later that he overtook Ia at the foot of Down-along on his way home from the fishing. The two had been out all day with the hook-and-line, but on different sides of the bay. Joel had taken two particularly fine cod on the long-line, besides ling and smaller fish, and must describe their weight, condition, and the rest. He always talked to Ia as to a man comrade.

"Wait for me a moment," she said, "while I run in and ask after Bathsheba Toms."

The child had suffered from deafness for some time after her recovery, but this was passing off.

Joel waited for a couple of minutes by the door. Then he heard the Widow Toms' voice inside:

"I'll not deny," she was saying, "you was very good to Bathsheba, an' I don't forget it. Iss, an' the poor child's took a great fancy for 'ee. But, all the same, I wish you wouldn'

[185]

come. Bein' a respectable woman mysel', that has always brought up my childer to be partickler, till it pleased God to take mun—"

"Oh, hush, Widow, hush! Joel Spargo's outside. I won't come again if you don't wish it."

But the widow came towards the door, lifting her voice yet higher:

"An', if 'tis he, the sooner he hears the better. For there's a lot o' good in 'ee, Ia Rosemundy, an' you'd make en a good wife, and he's no call to put this disgrace on you; an' so I'd tell 'n to his face."

"Widow, Widow—'t isn' Joel!" Ia entreated her breathlessly.

Joel stalked into the room and took her by the wrist. "Come away, girl," he commanded: and she found herself in the street. They walked up the street side by side in silence: and up the hill to her father's door, but Joel did not pause there. He went past his own door, too: and she followed him,

[186]

still in silence. It must come—the sooner now, the better. They walked out along the ridge to the ruin on the headland, and here, almost on the spot where she had dismissed Paul, Joel faced about on her.

"Is it true?"

She dropped her arms helplessly before her: but lifted her head in a moment, and looked straight at him.

"Iss, 'tis true."

He turned his face away towards the sea. "When—when 'll it be?"

"About the end o' February, I reckon."

He faced her. "Was it that Preacher fellow?"

"No." But the lie failed on her lips. "Joel, you won't tell..."

(How did he know? He had never even seen them together: and was a slow-witted man, too.)

" 'Tisn' too late, You'll let me go fetch 'n—"

"Listen to me, Joel. I sent 'n goin'..."

[187]

he doesn' know...Not if you was to bring en an' he was go 'pon his knees here, would I marry en."

"Is that truth?"

"It is truth, as I stand here."

"An' will be always?"

"An' will be always."

"You know what they'll call 'ee? You heard what that woman said?"

"About—about you?" Her face was red as fire. "Joel, Joel—here I be with all my shame before 'ee—but I never thought—Joel!"

"Hush 'ee now!" He paused and took her hand. "What odds about me? An'—what was I goin' to say?—you'll hear me for a minute?—seems like takin' advantage, but 'tisn' that. Year upon year I've loved 'ee, an' for months now I've knawed 'twas no good—"

"What use—"

"Aw now, hear me out! I know 'tis no use: but that don't make no differ. When

[188]

you told me jus' now, I thought—but it don't seem to make no differ at all. If you was near hell itself; I must go on thinkin' all the world of 'ee. Aw, girl—I ask no more of 'ee—let me gi'e the cheeld my name..."

So, it had happened! Here, where four months ago she had watched her lover's face, if imply against her prayers God might send a miracle; here the miracle had befallen, from the lips of another man. Here was love to match her love—and she could not take it!

"Stop, Joel. Do 'ee really think so bad of me as that?"

"I think all the world of 'ee."

"Do 'ee think I be a woman that would do this thing? " She saw the puzzlement creep over Joel's face; and laid a hand on his arm.

He stammered, "I meant no ill."

"I believe you never meant ill in your life. Ali, Joel—ah, friend, with all my heart

[189]

I thank 'ee! You an' me'll never have all we want in life: but I shall come to 'ee sometimes for help, because you was born to help and think good thoughts."

She tapped his arm gently, and sped away. Then the twilight received and hid her.

Next day, Mrs. Nance called at the Rosemundys' cottage, with a sweet cake for Jenifer.

"But that's not my only reason for comin'," she told Ia; "though I take an interest in the child. I see your probation ran out last Lady Day, an' you've been free to present yourself for admission to the Elect, any time since then."

"I ain't a-goin' to present myself."

"Well, now, I'm glad o' that. You see, the others would likely ha' left it to me to decide about your admission, bein' the only female Elder: an' the scandal—I couldn' very well—not that I wish 'ee harm, you

[190]

understand, but there's young maidens i' the congregation, an' the example!"

"I've thought o' that. But I may come an' listen, Sundays? You won't refuse me that?"

"Dear, no! The Lord forbid we should deny 'ee the means o' grace in your terrible position. Who knows but some day you may repent an' be at heart like any decent woman?"

Shortly after Christmas the Doctor brought Ia a message from Revyer, from Mrs. Baragwanath.

"The old woman sends her love and respects—those were her words—and if you will go over and lodge with her till the child is born, she will do her best to make you comfortable."

Ia shook her head. "But thank her for thinkin' o' me; an' tell her she advised me right, though she didn' think o' me at the time, or very little."

[191]

"Well, shall I send up to Truro and get you a lodging there, and a good nurse?"

"Thank you, Doctor, but I'll stay home here in Ardevora. When I told father, I said to myself, 'If he beats me, I'll go away.' But he didn', though he lifted his hand; an' he's spoke kind enough, about it since, an' I'm to stay."

So in her father's cottage, on Valentine's Day, 1861, Ia's child was born—a healthy, blue-eyed boy. A week later he was baptised, and given the name of John. Only four people in the world knew what his surname should have been.

[193]

CHAPTER XVII.

FOR the next four years Ia lived on in her father's cottage, and worked at the fishing as before. Few folks had ever made friends with her. In the former times she and her father had been eyed askance as people "from behind the hills." During those weeks of pestilence she had fairly earned the love and gratitude of many. But the debt was never paid. Her fault cancelled it. Women whose children she had nursed nodded as she passed their doors, but did not invite her to step in and causey. Her heart turned back and accepted its old isolation.

She was not unhappy. She had her boy to love.

He grew a straight and handsome child, with curly yellow hair, and blue eyes so like his father's that *Ia* trembled sometimes. But nobody guessed her secret, though many

[194]

people speculated about it. And not even to *Jenifer* would she tell it.

One thing was certain, as the public admitted. The child was none of *Joel's*: every feature of him gave the lie to that suspicion. Besides, everyone knew that *Ia* had only to lift a finger and *Joel* would marry her to-morrow.

But it seemed the child was enough for her, without a husband. No fatal shell* had made its appearance in *Johnny's* cradle: and therefore a fisherman he might be without fear. At the dignified age of six weeks he made his first appearance in that line of business; and thenceforward accompanied his mother regularly whenever the weather allowed—at first a long inert bundle in the stern-sheets; then a shorter and more vivacious bundle; and at length, lo! one of the sterner sex, breeched in authority, giving opinions.

Ia "spoilt" him, of course: and as

*Hear *Dr. Hammer*, *ante*, p. 117.

[195]

Johnny had at least as much spirit as most boys, there were tussles at times. One evening, for no particular reason, he refused to say his prayers. *Dr. Hammer* happened to call, and found *Ia* holding the boy's hands and matters at a deadlock.

"Let him alone," he said. "Would you, of all women, have him glib with his prayers?"

She flushed hotly. "You've no, right to say that! Besides, tisn' true."

The Doctor turned to *Johnny*.

"*Johnny*," he said, "I happen to know that your mother is the best and loveliest woman in the world."

"Is she a lady?" asked *Johnny*, who had been dazzled, six months before, by the wife of a Parliamentary candidate for the Western Division of Cornwall; and had toddled round a dozen streets after her, gaping, while she prosecuted her canvass.

"One of these days you will wake up and find her a princess. In the meanwhile it is

[196]

your business, instead of giving her pain, to protect her."

Johnny had never thought of his mother in this light: and the Doctor's words did him good.

Cramming the poor child's head wi' such gammut!" exclaimed *Ia*: but she was pleased, all the same.

And, indeed, year by year after the boy's birth she had grown goodlier to look on, and was now, at the age of twenty-four, an exceedingly beautiful woman. The Doctor thought so, at any rate. He and *Joel* were the only two who knew her secret now (for *Mrs. Baragwanath* began to fail rapidly after her husband's death, and was buried before twelve months were out). Nothing delighted the Doctor more than to call and discuss plans with *Ia*. For he had bought several pieces of property in the lower slums of the town, and was busy pulling down the old hovels and putting up decent and well-drained cottages in their room. The people grumbled:

[197]

but he enjoyed opposition. He also set to work to bully the Town Council into improving the town estates, and became for -a while the best-hated man in the neighbourhood: for, finding himself at first in a minority of one, he judged it necessary to be very offensive indeed.

So three days out of the seven found him in Ardevora. And as he made great show of valuing *Ia's* opinion (though he never adopted it by any chance), there was not a new plan drawn up, nor a single alteration made, but *Ia* must come with him and view the place and criticise. And had you noted his demeanour at such times, and the air with which he gave her his hand to cross a plank or mount a few steps, you would have supposed him to be escorting a duchess at the very least.

In this way *Ia* lived for four years and a little over: and then a great change of fortune befell her. For Dr. Hammer, riding

[198]

home late one evening to Laregan, took a violent inflammation of the lungs. He sent at once for *Ia*, and she went. But the case was hopeless, and her good friend told her so, and took leave of her with fortitude and serenity.

"And you must give me a kiss, my dear, if you please. I suppose I may ask for one now without setting every foolish tongue to wag that I'm making up to you?"

At his request she stayed at Laregan and made all arrangements for the funeral; and superintended the burial feast. And when it was all over, and she in the kitchen washing up the dishes, the Penzance lawyer walked in, and told her that, save for a small annuity to Peter (his old stableman and factotum), and another for the maintenance of Ernest William, the jackass, Dr. Hammer had left her all that belonged to him in the world.

This was entirely surprising to her, and gave her almost as much concern as pleasure.

For her own part, she had been content

[199]

with her lot in Ardevora. But there was Johnny to think of. In thinking of Johnny's future, her great regret had always been that he would never be able to take as good a position in life as his father. She thought of this without any resentment. She accepted her own inferiority as natural and right. But she did sigh sometimes that *his* son must be a common fisherman. And yet she would have died rather than accept help from Paul.

Now she could realise her dream. And if ever this great-hearted woman appeared in an unamiable light (which I do not admit), it was now, in her handling of the Doctor's money. To be sure, she religiously carried out his schemes for the drainage, ventilation, and general improvement of the cottage property in Ardevora; though she grudged every penny spent. After deducting these and other expenses, she found herself possessed of a trifle under £300 a year. Out of this a small weekly sum went to compensate her father and Jenifer for the services she

[200]

withdrew from the household: but she made no attempt to raise them above their condition of hard work and plain living, unless we count occasional gifts, such as a new

net or a Sunday frock. She took Johnny off to Laregan, and there lived with one very little and not very well-paid handmaiden; and practised stinginess. She was saving for Johnny.

But she dressed as became her new station, and she arrayed the child in velvet and fine cambric. She debated much with herself on the steps to be taken to educate him when the time should come, and even practised herself in reading, though she hated it. A newspaper she could tolerate, however: and she subscribed to one at Plymouth, and also to that new monthly periodical, *The Cornhill Magazine*. On Sundays she and Johnny walked over to Revyer, and sat in a pew apart. And by degrees tongues ceased to wag against the mistress of Laregan; and she grew to be a person almost of importance.

[201]

Her fault was not forgotten; but people applied to her confidently for a reasonable subscription towards any charitable or religious undertaking; and some talked of inviting her to present herself for admission among the Elect. But somehow this was never done.

In all this while she never heard from Paul. But she heard a great deal about him, for the Saints watched every step in his career, and often talked of it. And by-and-by his name began to find its way into the newspapers. The great hall had been built in the district between Brixton and Camberwell, and he had preached in it for two years now, and was a success. Fashionable people drove on Sundays down to the south-east of London to hear him. The Saints in Ardevora began to talk of his visiting them before long. The debt on the great building was almost paid. Still, two or three hundred pounds remained to be wiped off. Much might be done by a preaching tour in the

[202]

provinces. Ia heard all this, and prepared her heart.

One Sunday in early spring she heard that Paul was coming in a month's time. Johnny had just passed his sixth birthday. As he walked homeward beside her, he asked:

"Mummy, why are you squeezing my hand?"

[203]

CHAPTER XVIII.

SIX years had not strained that beautiful voice, nor dulled a single gesture. He spoke of his first coming to Revyer, "little home of the faith"; of the early days of his ministry; of the summer of pestilence. The same light of inspiration shone in his face.

"He has not aged a day," thought Ia, stealing a look up at him from the pew where she sat with Johnny beside her; "and I am old—old!"

If cultivation had given restraint to his eloquence, this was not felt as a fault; for, his discourse being personal, simple words suited it best. On this ground the hearts of his hearers went out half-way to meet him. They had lost husbands, sisters, children; and they remembered it all, and wept.

[204]

"But how much does he really feel?" she asked herself.

"I have sat at your tables"—the silver voice spoke above her as though it answered her—"I have sat by your sick-beds. Hands that welcomed me in February I have crossed before August upon- dead breasts. I have I not borne these things in mind during these years? Have I not prayed, kneeling towards Revyer?—little Revyer in the Towans—place of Hannah's vision, of my own trial and adoption; poor, yet a mother-city; barren, yet raised a beacon of belief!"

Two years ago—one year ago—she might have asked: "And what of me?" But now she said, "Alas, alas! But I have strength"; and caught Johnny sharply by the arm. The boy looked up at her. She smiled, and brushed back a yellow curl that had fallen across his shoulder. The old terror clutched at her heart. Surely when people saw the two together—

[205]

But nobody guessed.

The sermon ended, and the collecting-plate came round. Johnny put in a sovereign, and she a five-pound note. She could not forego this little slap of triumph.

A tea-drinking followed the service; for this was a week-day gathering—a Tuesday, to be precise. Paul's tour had come to an end, and he must be back to preach in London on the following Sunday.

They had laid out the tables under an awning in the boat-builder's yard—now disused and falling into worse decay. *Ia* had contributed one of the tables and presided over it, pouring tea and dispensing saffron cake, heavy cake, potato cake, and thunder and lightning.* She moved about, a queen among the women there, in a gown of black silk, rich if severe, with a kerchief of lace—real Honiton—drawn forward across her shoulders, and fastened at her bosom with a plain brooch of gold. It is probable that on

*Bread and cream and treacle.

[206]

this particular evening she touched the height of her beauty. For suppressed excitement coloured her cheeks and lit her eyes; and her figure now and always was magnificent. Her age, remember, was barely twenty-five.

Paul, as in duty bound, at first took his seat at the Chief Elder's table, where *Bitha* Carbines presided. But after a while he rose and threaded his way among the tables, shaking hands here and there, and pausing to speak a word or two with some old acquaintance. And by-and-by he found himself beside *Ia*.

"May I have a cup?"

"That's right, Preacher dear," said a connoisseur who sat handy by the head of the table; "Laregan tea's the best i' the whole tent."

Ia filled a cup to the brim, and handed it without spilling a drop. Their eyes did not meet.

"Is this the end?" she thought. Apparently it was; for being hailed by an

[207]

old woman at the foot of the table, Paul went off and drank his tea beside her. Nor did he come back.

"That was the best that could happen," *Ia* told herself as she walked homeward to Laregan. Johnny being tired, she put him to bed at once, kissed him, pulled down his blind, told him to be a good boy and love God, and left him in the twilight to find his way into dreamland.

She went downstairs to the parlour and took up a book. There was light enough to read by if she sat in the window seat. So she sat there with a book, and stared out of window.

"It was the best that could happen."

But a dark figure came across the home field against the sunset, and the garden gate clicked, and she rose and met him at the door.

"Ian"

"Yes, Paul?"

[208]

For a while he found nothing more to say.

"Won't you come in?"

In the parlour he turned on her—

"I heard it this afternoon—after the service. Carbines told me: I never knew—"

"You weren't meant to."

"I have done wickedly. Is it too late?"

"What do you mean?" she asked simply; and comprehending, answered at once—"Oh, yes; far too late. I have not been so unhappy as you think."

"Then you did not care for me, after all—not as you used to tell me you cared?"

Ia recognised the old note and smiled, not bitterly.

"Oh, yes, Paul, I have always cared."

"But *Ia*—I love you here and now. I have never loved another woman. There are no obstacles now

"No obstacles now?" she echoed.

"None."

[209]

Her smile was not a whit more bitter than before.

"Yes—one," she said.

"What is it, dear? Tell me, and it shall be smoothed away."

"Myself."

He started, drew near and looked at her closely in the fading light.

"You send me away?"

"Yes, Paul; I love you—are you not the father of my boy?—and I send you away. Once I sent you for your own good, and you went: now I send you for my good, and again you will go."

"The boy...to give him an honest name...self-respect."

She drew herself up. "He will carry his mother's name. And forgi'e me if I think for a moment of my own pride. There, dear, don't let us quarrel. I've a-thought o' Johnny, too. Listen: I'm goin' to sell the most o' my belongin's here, and we'm goin' to America, Johnny and me. The

[210]

folks have been kind; but there he'll start 'pon his own feet, when the time comes."

"You told me once," he urged (and again she recognised the note)— "you told me once that your place was with your people."

"But they'm not his people. We shall start after Midsummer."

"May I see him?"

She lit a candle and led him upstairs to the child's bedroom. At the door she handed the candle to him.

"Step softly," she said. "He's a sound Sleeper, but the planching creaks."

She let him pass into the room alone, and went back to the parlour and waited. Twenty minutes passed before he came down to her.

"You didn't wake him?"

"No...my own son. And I shall love no other woman."

"Well, it does me good to hear you say it. For I loved 'ee, Paul, an' love 'ee still; an' I swore to 'ee over Noon Water. *Thee* it needn't bind."

[211]

"It shall bind."

"Then wherever I go I'll love thee; and wherever thou goes, my heart go with 'ee. May the face of God shine upon 'ee. Goodbye!"

He touched her hand, and went from her.

[215]

CHAPTER XIX.

JOEL SPARGO'S boat was moored two furlongs from Ardevora quay, and Joel was sitting there in the glow of a June sunset, with his back to the quay, whittling at a thole-pin, when *Ia* came alongside.

"You made me jump," he said, dropping his thole-pin and brushing the chips off the thwart. "Is all well with 'ee, mistress? Well or ill, the sight of 'ee is welcome as May blossoms."

"Ouf! the dear old smell!" She caught up an end of tarry net and held it close to her face.

"Joel, I want 'ee to do me a great kindness. I'm a-leavin' for America this very day week."

"So it's true, what they tell me?"

"Will you see us as far as Liverpool, Johnny and me? 'Tis a long way we'm goin', an' I'm a terrible coward to start. If

[216]

you could bring Jenifer as far as Liverpool, an' bring her home—"

Had she bidden him follow her round the world, he would have done it blithely. Since she commanded this harder thing, he was ready.

A fortnight later, on a muddy pier at Liverpool, and in a drizzling rain, they said good-bye.

To Jenifer *Ia* said, "Look after father; an' if ever you love a man, though I say it, let your heart tell 'ee what's right."

She pressed Joel's hand. These two parted without words. Their passions purified, they went their ways: he back to the railway station, and so home to the familiar toil; she out



The Salamanca Corpus: *Ia* (1896)

through the yellow fogs of Mersey, looking forward to a new life, holding her boy's hand, wondering.

Printed by CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED, LA BELLE SAUVAGE, LONDON, E.C.

