RIDING OUT THE GALE.

A Novel.

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

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RIDING OUT THE GALE.

CHAPTER I.

"Well caught, well caught, Haidee! Now then, throw it back."

The voice might have passed for a woman's, it was so low and sweet; but the speaker was a boy, and he "called to his sister in glee," though the glee was of a restrained and somewhat timid cast.

The child obeyed, but throwing the ball with more zeal than forethought, she contrived to fling it into the basin of a huge fountain which occupied the centre of the stately terrace where she and her brother were playing.

"There now, you've been and done it again," the boy exclaimed in a tone of remonstrance.

She replied by a laugh so carelessly happy that it was delightful to listen to.
"Fish it out, Singie; don't let us lose our playtime. You can't reach it from the edge; you must go in again."

"For the fourth time to-day, Miss Trelawney. If I don't turn into a merman, or get eaten by the gold-fish, it is not your fault. Here goes, however."

The speaker pulled off his shoes and stockings, tucked up his trousers, and went to the rescue of the ball, which was floating about serenely near the centre of the great basin.

"You are horribly wet, Singie," said his sister, when he was again on dry land.

"Horribly! no, don't exaggerate, miss; only a little, and I don't mind it; the day is so hot. Holloa, Haidee! here's John. I suppose Sir Lionel has come home too—let's be off."

"I suppose so," she replied, with a sudden change in voice and manner. "Make haste, Singie; sit down here and get on your shoes quickly."

All their childish glee and merriment had vanished utterly, which, considering that Sir Lionel was their father, told a tale concerning him.

The new comer, John Trelawney, who had come out of the house by a side-door, stood at some distance with his hands in the pockets of his shooting-jacket.

Before I go any further I must give you
some necessary information concerning these three young Trelawneys. Singleton and his sister were the children of Sir Lionel Trelawney, of Trelawney Abbey, near Plymouth; John, the son of a distant relative, was Sir Lionel's ward. Any stranger, seeing the three together, would have concluded at once that Haidee and John were the brother and sister, and Singleton the distant cousin: a superficial observer would have pronounced that these two were very much alike. There was the same transparently fair complexion which the fiercest sun never seemed to darken; the same grey-blue eyes, with dark-brown lashes, the same golden hair, curling naturally, the same uncommon height. And yet with all these points of resemblance there was a marvellous unlikeness. The little girl's face was of an almost perfect beauty, even now at twelve years old; her broad, white forehead and eyes bright with intelligence redeemed it from the charge of insipidity, to which such perfect regularity of feature is sometimes open. Her cousin's eyes, less clear and bright than hers, were also set a little too closely together; his forehead was higher and narrower than hers, and his expression lacked her sunny sweetness. Still, they
were like each other, and like the family; while Singleton, the heir, resembled no Trelawney whom any one could remember; he did not even look like an Englishman. He was fourteen—only a few months younger than John, of whose height, however, he wanted at least four inches. Dark with a most un-English darkness, slight, and delicate; with features neither regular nor beautiful, with the exception of the oversensitive, pathetic mouth, and eyes so lovely that you forgot all the rest in marvelling at them. Eyes so dark and shaded by lashes so black and heavy that the colour was a matter of conjecture, and it seemed difficult for the boy to raise his glance fairly to your face; but when he did so raise it, the effect was magical. These splendid dark blue eyes were so wondrously expressive, so unspeakably sad, unless, indeed, you caught the sudden, rare smile which seemed to transform his face, making it for one moment bright and joyous. But the smile was seldom seen; too often, alas! the most remarkable change to be observed in his expression was from its usual sad quiet to the most furious anger. Then the dark, delicate face would glow as if it were transparent, and showed a white light from within; then every trace of the lovely dark blue would fade from the eyes,
leaving them flashing grey and cold, like polished steel. He had a most passionate temper, this poor boy; and so far in his life he had no more idea that he ought to control it than a madman might have had.

I have said enough now by way of introduction, and shall let the three young people speak for themselves.

John Trelawney drew near to his cousins, with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and a contemptuous smile upon his face.

"Here you are, Darkey!" he began, stopping beside Singleton, who, seated on the stone border of the fountain, was hurriedly pulling on his shoes and stockings. "Here's my Darkey, as usual, playing with its little sister and its innocent ball! Are you ever going to leave off being a baby?"

To this insulting question Singleton made no answer, except by the involuntary quivering of his sensitive lips; but Haidee answered angrily:

"He's no more a baby than you are, you John!"

"Let him talk, Haidee; never mind him. I'll be even with him one day."

"Even with him," she answered, with infinite contempt. "Never, Singleton! that would be lowering yourself indeed."
"Lowering himself, Haidee!" exclaimed John sharply. "And pray in what am I lower than he is?"

"In everything," was the prompt reply, given with a flash of the girl's blue eyes.

"Indeed! Well, I don't seem to see it; and I don't expect you'll find many agree with you. Why, look at him! playing ball with a girl instead of coming out shooting with Sir Lionel."

"You know very well how it happens that he does not go out shooting; and as to playing ball, he did that to please me. It will be a long time before you do anything to please any one but yourself. If to be disobligerig and disagreeable makes people grand, you're very grand indeed, John. Are you ready, Singleton?"

"I'm ready, let us go," Singleton answered shortly.

Haidee knew the tone, and caught the flash of his eyes through the thick lashes: she laid her hand upon his arm and drew him gently away.

"That's right, my hero," shouted John; "run away—that's your sort. Here! the babies have left their precious toy—take it with you."

They had left their ball on the grass, and John now flung it after them. It hit Haidee rather sharply, and John laughed loudly, there-
by making it doubtful that the blow had been accidental. Singleton turned back, walked up to his cousin and inquired sharply:

"Do you see what you have done?"
"To be sure I do," laughed John.
"Beg her pardon then, at once," cried Singleton, standing before him.
"At once! no, nor at last either! Beg her pardon, indeed; that's a likely story. Be off with you, Singleton, and don't make a fool of yourself."
"You're no gentleman," said Singleton slowly. "Any gentleman would——"
"No gentleman! Well now, upon my word that comes well from you, Darkey. I fancy I am at least as much of a gentleman as you can be."
"Look here, John."
"Oh, I'm looking, my dear fellow; there's no need to call attention to it; it's written pretty plainly on your face."
"What is written on my face? — speak plainly."
"Your illustrious descent, of course. Haidee escaped better; not so much trace of the tarbrush there."
Singleton turned pale, but it was with rage, not with fear.
"John Trelawney," he said in the most deliberate voice, "I’ve made up my mind that if ever you say a word like that again I’ll thrash you within an inch of your life. So now, remember, you’re warned."

John looked at him, half startled, half angry.

"You’ll thrash me!" he exclaimed; "why you’re mad, Singleton; I’ve thrashed you often enough, but——"

"But you won’t do it again so easily. You have beaten me always because you are bigger and heavier than I am, and neither of us knew anything about fighting; but I’ve been learning from Will Somers, who was a prize-fighter long ago, and you’ll find me more than a match for you, I think."

Now John Trelawney was by no means gifted with a superabundance of pluck; still, when he glanced at the slight figure before him, and remembered the many unmerciful beatings he had given to his challenger, he felt quite confident that he could give him one more now. So he replied with unabated insolence:

"Will Somers, the groom, is it? Sir Lionel will be delighted to hear what choice company his heir keeps. Comes natural to be among the servants, eh, Singleton? but I should have expected a natural preference for black James."
“You will have it, then? Come, John, take off your jacket and I’ll give you your first lesson in boxing and good manners.”

“Not here, Singleton,” put in Haidee, who had listened with keen interest to this altercation. “Sir Lionel will be coming out.”

“Will you come into the Chase, John?” inquired Singleton, pausing in the act of taking off his jacket.

“No, I shan’t,” John said insolently.

“Then fight me here. Never mind, Haidee, you run if any one comes out; but whatever is the end of it, I’ll teach this bullying coward to be civil for the future.”

“You will, will you?” roared John furiously. “Do you think I’m going to lower myself by fighting you, you fool?—a fellow who on the other side of the Atlantic would be a slave!”

“No, I should not,” Singleton answered, voice and manner becoming quieter every moment, and only the steel-like flash of his eyes betraying his fury. “That’s a lie, and you know it.”

“Take that for your impudence,” cried John, suddenly giving him a sounding box on the ear, “and be off with you; Sir Lionel’s coming.”

“That shan’t save you,” Singleton answered in the same soft, low voice. “You’re a coward,
John. You're afraid to fight me, though you're twice my size. For the last time, will you, or will you not take off your jacket and fight me?"

"I will not; be off, you——"

"Then fight with it on, or stand still and be thrashed. I don't care which you do," replied Singleton, coolly walking up to him; and in a moment, much to his own surprise, Master John Trelawney found himself lying prone upon the soft green grass, with a most brilliant illumination dancing before his sight, and a peculiar and unpleasant sensation in his left eye, as if it were damaged in some mysterious manner.

Too much startled and confused at once to realise his situation, he lay quiet where he had fallen.

"Get up, John. That may serve to show you that I'm in earnest. Get up now and fight it out."

John, however, did not get up, nor even reply to this appeal; but just at this moment Haidee, who had been performing a dance of delight round the prostrate foe, became aware that the scene had other spectators. She seized her brother's arm, whispering:

"Let us run, Single, here's Sir Lionel."

"No," he said, "run away you, Haidee. I shan't stir."
Indeed it was too late to escape, even had he wished it; for Sir Lionel, a strange gentleman, and Mr. Phelps, the boys' tutor, were close behind him. The stranger, Captain Hamilton, was a man of about five-and-thirty, an unmistakable sailor, and joint guardian with Sir Lionel of the hopeful John.

"What's all this?" inquired Sir Lionel sternly, his fair, handsome face flushing slightly. "What is the meaning of this, Singleton?"

The boy looked nervously round, picked up his jacket and put it on, and then answered in a low voice:

"I—I knocked him down, Sir Lionel."

The sailor's cheery laugh rang out pleasantly.

"By Jove! you did, youngster; there's no doubt whatever on that head. Down he went like shot. I never saw anything more neatly done in my life. So this is John Trelawney? Get up, Master Jack, you're not killed, you know. Here, get up."

He stooped over the fallen hero, and with a vigorous pull, placed him on his feet in the middle of the circle.

"Holloa," he continued, "there's an eye for you! blackening already. You had better go and clap a piece of raw meat to it, or you'll carry
your cousin's sign manual for many a day to come."

John, still only half understanding what had happened, stood blinking and gasping, cutting altogether rather a poor figure.

"Before he withdraws, Captain Hamilton, I must know what gave rise to this—this thoroughly disgraceful scene. Haidee, go into the house, at once."

Haidee went, slowly and reluctantly, casting many a lingering look at her brother. Sir Lionel stood silent until the door closed upon her.

"Now, sir—now, Singleton, what have you to plead in extenuation of your ungentlemanlike conduct?"

"Ungentlemanlike!" repeated Captain Hamilton, staring at him. "Not a bit of it, not a bit of it. Commonest thing in the world—you're not as well used to youngsters as I am. Take my advice, Trelawney, and let the matter rest."

"Excuse me, I prefer to know what has happened," said Sir Lionel coldly. "Singleton, I await your reply."

"John struck me, Sir Lionel."

"That wasn't the first of it," muttered John, who was beginning to recover from the shock—
to see fewer stars and hear fewer bees buzzing about him.

"I will hear you presently, John. Singleton, you are equivocating, as usual. What was the beginning of this quarrel?"

The cold hard voice always seemed to poor Singleton to drive away his senses; however, he made a great effort to reply steadily.

"The first beginning of it was, that John threw a ball—this hard one—at Haidee, and hit her on the head with it. Then I said he must beg her pardon, and he said he wouldn't. Then I said I would make him, and he said——"

The boy stopped short, and crimsoned all over his dark earnest face. He was shrewd enough to know that by repeating what John had said, he would probably divert Sir Lionel's wrath from himself to the real offender; but even to do this, how could he repeat the insult to the memory of his sweet gentle mother. whose lovely heart-broken face was the one memory of his childhood that was dear to him? He hesitated, and John was quick to see his advantage.

"Then I said, Sir Lionel, that of course I had not meant to hit her, but he said he had been learning boxing from Will Somers—Gipsy Will, you know—on purpose to lick me, because
I've never learned; not but that I could lick him, but he ran at me like a wild thing before I was ready, and knocked me down."

"That's not true, John! you know I did nothing of the kind. I tried all I knew to stir you up to take off your jacket and fight it out, and you wouldn't. Haidee can tell you, Sir Lionel; she was here all the time."

"Haidee 'll say anything you want her to, we all know that!" said John sullenly.

"Look here, John," put in the irrepressible sailor, "if you were taken by surprise then—it didn't look to me as if you were, however—you are certainly prepared now. Here, stand here; come to this side, little fellow. Now, at it again you two; let us see the result."

Sir Lionel frowned heavily, but he was not quick of speech, and before he had found words in which to forbid the duel, it had begun—and ended, I may almost say. Singleton was eager for the fray, John ashamed to retreat.

"Are you ready, John?"

"Yes," grunted John savagely, making a powerful but awkward blow at his enemy, who parried it with his left hand, hit out straight with his right, and lo! another flight of falling stars, another swarm of buzzing bees, a very remarkable feeling of weight in the region of the
nose; and John was again stretched upon the grass.

"Where am I?" exclaimed the unlucky warrior, struggling into a sitting posture.

"Oh, you're safe enough," answered Captain Hamilton, with a touch of contempt in his voice.

"You had better go and get some raw meat, as I said before. Don't go for sympathy to your pretty cousin, for she's laughing at you in the window up there."

Singleton hearing this, turned round, and looked up at his sister; such a look of perfect sympathy and love passed between brother and sister, that the kind-hearted sailor smiled to see it.

Mr. Phelps led off the discomfited John, and Singleton promptly vanished.

"Your boy is no milksop, Sir Lionel! Plenty of pluck—plenty."

Sir Lionel, far from displaying any fatherly pleasure on hearing this favourable verdict upon his son, frowned, bit his lip, and replied:

"He has the temper of a fiend. There was something more—something concealed, which I doubt not would have caused you to change your opinion. I have watched them both for years, and you may believe me that John is a remarkably fine lad."
Captain Hamilton glanced at the frowning face of his companion, and privately thought that if Singleton had the temper of a fiend, he probably had an hereditary right to it; but he only replied:

"Well, you may be right, but from the little I've seen of them, I prefer your son infinitely. However, my business here concerns John alone. I was anxious to see him, for however kind and partial to him you may be, it does not absolve me from my duty as joint guardian; and I have a great prejudice against educating a boy altogether at home, even when, like your son, he is heir to wealth and station. Now this youngster will be absolutely poor: when Fair Forest is sold, and the liabilities cleared off, Selwyn tells me he won't have three hundred a year. So it's a matter of plain duty to bring him up to some profession."

They were walking up and down the terrace, bathed in the last red glow of the August sun. Sir Lionel marched in silence, his colour raised, his manner embarrassed and pompous, such a contrast to that of the frank genial sailor, speaking so simply and straightforwardly. Presently he roused himself, looked at his watch, and said:

"Captain Hamilton, will you stay here this
evening—dine with me, and sleep here to-night? I have a good deal to say to you.”

The sailor looked surprised; for during the many years that Sir Lionel had lived at Trelawney Abbey, it was said that no stranger had ever been asked to stay there even for a meal. The invitation was explained with a sort of stately awkwardness.

“I—you have taken me by surprise. I wish to arrange matters on a permanent footing. After dinner I can unfold to you my intentions.”

“Well, you must excuse my dress—thanks, I’ll stay to dinner then, but I must get back before night. Lynwood wouldn’t know what to think if I deserted him.”

“Lynwood! your servant? Shall I send into Plymouth for him?”

“My servant? no, not exactly! My first lieutenant.”

“Ah—yes; I forgot to inquire to what I am indebted for the pleasure of this visit. You are professionally employed again, I presume.”

“Just so; afloat again,” replied the sailor (mentally adding, “confound your long words!”).

“To tell you the truth, I thought it might be a good opening for John. I have the right to nominate a youngster, and he is just the right
age if he can pass the examination, which I suppose there is no doubt about.”

“None whatever. But oblige me by deferring the consideration of this point, among others, until after dinner,” was the reply of Sir Lionel. “It is time to dress now. This way, Captain Hamilton.”
CHAPTER II.

When the two gentlemen, ready for dinner, repaired to the library (which, with the exception of Sir Lionel's private apartments, was the only fully-furnished room on the ground-floor of Trelawney Abbey), they found Singleton and his sister awaiting them.

Captain Hamilton began to chat to the young people in a pleasant and off-hand way, while Sir Lionel either stood by with a heavy frown, or paced uneasily up and down like a caged animal.

A magnificently handsome man was Sir Lionel Trelawney. Six feet two in height, perfectly well made, fair and erect, with curling golden brown hair and whiskers; straight, regular features, and large, rather cold-looking blue eyes; he was really worth looking at. The fault of his face was the absence of expression; in repose it was rather vacant, and when roused it
was more frequently to a sullen frown than to a smile.

Haidee chatted away gaily with her new friend, and her merry laugh rang softly out; but the boy was nervous and silent, and though evidently amused and interested, was content to play the part of a listener. Once, indeed, he hazarded a remark in a low tone, and Sir Lionel said:

"Speak up, Singleton; there is no secret in what you are saying, I presume?"

Singleton blushed, and relapsed into hopeless silence.

Presently Mr. Phelps made his appearance, and soon afterwards dinner was announced.

"Pierce, where is Master John?" inquired the master of the house.

"He desired me to say that he has a headache, Sir Lionel, and will not come down to dinner."

Sir Lionel glanced sternly at his son, as if to see if any triumph were visible in his countenance. The boy looked quiet enough; but it was as well that he did not carry his glance a little further, for Haidee was delighted, and showed it plainly.

Captain Hamilton, who entirely sympathised with her, laughingly offered her his arm, and
they all went to the handsome half-furnished dining-room.

The gallant sailor was wont to declare afterwards that he would rather face a ship's broadside than endure another such dinner.

Sir Lionel seemed to have no idea that it was incumbent upon him to talk to his guest; he never spoke, except to find fault with the cookery, or to desire his son "to sit upright it he would be so good." Haidee's attempts at continuing her merry chatter were harshly silenced, and Mr. Phelps, who also ventured on a remark or two, got such a ferocious look that he subsided hastily.

As soon as the tedious meal was over, Sir Lionel looked at his children.

"You may go," he said briefly. "Phelps, tell John that I shall want him here presently."

At this broad hint Mr. Phelps departed with the children. Sir Lionel pushed the claret-jug to his guest, cleared his throat, and began formally:

"Captain Hamilton, your proposal to remove our ward from my house, and to take him to sea with you, does not commend itself favourably to me; and before you make it known to the boy himself, I should like to inform you what my plans for him have been, and may still be;
as I trust you will agree with me that he should hear them fairly stated and be permitted to decide for himself."

"Of course I agree; nothing can be fairer than that. What do you think of making of him? Have his studies been directed towards any profession?"

"No, they have not. In fact, Captain Hamilton, until very lately I have seen no reason to doubt that John would be my heir. Failing my son, he, though a distant cousin, is my next-of-kin."

"But, bless me, Trelawney, that fine little fellow of yours is not going to die; not a bit of it.—Heaven forgive you," added the sailor under his breath; "I believe you'd be glad if he did."

"He has become more healthy lately. I merely mention this to account for my conduct concerning John."

"But even if your son died, you're a young man, Sir Lionel, younger than I am by some years; and I mean to get married one of these days. Perhaps you—"

"No," interrupted Sir Lionel, with one of his heaviest frowns. "I shall commit no folly of that kind. Now, to proceed with our business. My present plan for John is as follows:—He
may select a profession, if you think it best for him to do so; the Church, the Bar, or the Army, whichever he prefers. I charge myself with all expenses; and when my daughter attains a proper age she shall become his wife. I shall give her half her—her mother's very considerable fortune at once, and something more at my death; so, even if Singleton lives, John may be a wealthy man; and it seems to me that Fair Forest need not be sold."

"But, good heavens, Trelawney, don't talk of your pretty little girl as if she were a slave! perhaps she—"

The words died away upon Captain Hamilton's lips, and though by no means a nervous man, he paused in actual alarm at the fury expressed in the handsome face opposite to him. Sir Lionel sprang to his feet, hurried round the table, laid his hand heavily upon his guest's shoulder, and thundered out:

"How dare you! How dare you say that! Do you mean to insult me, Captain Hamilton?"

The sailor looked steadily into his face, as one looks at an angry dog to enforce obedience, answering quietly:

"Certainly I do not. I give you my honour that I have no idea how I have offended you. I merely meant that your daughter may have a
will of her own about marrying your ward, and so far she seems to dislike him heartily."

Trelawney looked irresolute for a moment and then turned away, saying:

"I perceive I was mistaken. Excuse what has passed, Captain Hamilton; I beg to apologise."

"Never mind," replied the mystified sailor; "but look here—if you want those young people to like each other by-and-by, you had much better separate them now; let the boy come with me, and I'll lick him into shape."

"Phelps, who is a very shrewd fellow, advises me, on the contrary, to let them grow up together."

"Phelps! who is he?"

"The boys' tutor; you saw him at dinner. He has a brother in the navy, I remember."

"Oh! has he so? Then he's the brother of my old messmate, Harry Phelps, and I think it only fair to tell you he's an abandoned scamp. A clergyman, isn't he? and can't you see, Trelawney, that a fellow like that, having a good berth here, and knowing that the chances are that with his character he won't get another in a hurry, is giving you this advice for his own ends? Of course he does not wish the boys sent to school."
Sir Lionel was silent for a minute, to allow this idea to insinuate itself into his somewhat slow mind.

"There may be something in what you say," he remarked presently. "I shall think it over; but now, shall I send for John, and let him hear what you wish to say to him? I think he ought to be permitted to make the decision for himself."

"By all means. I think I hear the youngsters out in the hall; I'll just call him in."

Sir Lionel paused with his hand on the bell, while the sailor opened the door of the great half-lighted room, and called out:

"Hollop, youngster! You there; where's your cousin John?"

"Just outside the porch, sir; shall I call him in?" replied Singleton, who was standing alone by the hall window, watching the bats flitting about.

"Do so; bring him in here."

Singleton obeyed, and having been told to "bring him in," and being very literal-minded, thought that he also was wanted, and accordingly followed John into the dining-room, where he sat quietly down near the door, and no one observed him.

"Come here, John," began Sir Lionel, as John drew near the lamp, displaying a face of the
most marvellous colouring, and a nose of twice the ordinary size.

"You are aware," continued Sir Lionel, "that this gentleman—Captain Hamilton—occupies the same position with regard to you that I do."

John looked over the table at Captain Hamilton, and asked gruffly, "What's that?"

"He, as well as I, is your guardian," replied the Baronet. "And he has come here to-day to propose to you a plan, which I shall now leave him to unfold to you. When he has done so, do not answer until you have heard what I have to say concerning it."

These ceremonious proceedings sorely embarrassed Captain Hamilton, who was used to plainer and less long-winded discourses. However, he seized the opportunity thus afforded him and began:

"Well, John, you see you're fourteen or thereabouts, and it is high time that you should take soundings and see where you are. I don't suppose you know much about your own circumstances, do you?"

"No, not much. I know that my father left great debts, and that nothing can be settled till I'm of age—that's all."

"Ay! well, there is not much more to be
known. Unless something unexpected turns up, you will have to sell Fair Forest, and there’ll be about three hundred a year left out of the wreck. So you see you are no Croesus, but must go into some profession, and I think you can’t begin too soon. It’s very pleasant for you here, and Sir Lionel has been very kind, but as you must begin to rough it some day, you’d better begin young. Every day spent in idleness and luxury is a dead loss—don’t you see?"

"Yes," answered John doubtfully.

"Well, then, here’s my proposal. I commissioned the Sultana—one of the new frigates, two days ago, for the Halifax station. I have an appointment to give away, and if you like, and can pass, I’ll give it to you—take you with me, and do what I can to make a man and a sailor of you. And it’s the finest profession in the world," added the Captain, with an air of quiet conviction which was really imposing.

"A nephew of my own, Reginald Hamilton, is going with me. He’s about a year older than you, a very fine lad. Now then, what do you say, my boy?"

John, whose manners did not strike his second guardian as prepossessing, made no reply beyond a sulky grunt: and then Sir Lionel came gallantly to the front.
"It is now my turn, Captain Hamilton. John, I also have a proposal to make to you. If you do not feel yourself inclined to the naval profession—and I confess that, in your place, I should not be so inclined—you have only to say so. If you remain with me, I will charge myself with your future career. Until very lately I have regarded you as my probable heir; and there is still sufficient probability that you may eventually be so, to make me dislike parting with you so completely as I must do if you decide upon accompanying Captain Hamilton. I should leave the choice of a profession to yourself. The Bar, the Army, or the Church. I propose to consider you as my son, and should it prove hereafter that you must hold the place of a younger son, I have a plan for your establishment in a suitable position, into which I shall not enter at present."

Captain Hamilton drew a breath of relief; he had really thought for a moment that his magnificent fellow guardian was about to lay down the law concerning Haidee's fate then and there. John had forgotten Singleton's presence, and the others were not aware of it; but it may easily be imagined how pleasant it was for him to hear his father contemplate his early death as a probable and indeed rather desirable event.
The poor child covered his face with his hands, and for a moment wished that he had indeed died in the sickly infancy which had given rise to these unnatural speculations. But before anyone broke the silence after Sir Lionel had concluded his speech, Singleton rose and came forward.

"Sir Lionel, I thought you wanted me, but I suppose you did not know I was in the room."

Sir Lionel looked at him coldly. "No, I did not perceive you. Leave the room."

"In a moment I will," answered Singleton. "But I have something to say first. Look here, now, I'm not going to die! It's not that you make my life any pleasure to me, but I mean to live and take care of Haidee. I know what your plan for John is; I have guessed it long ago. Well, it shall never be. I would kill him first, I would rather kill Haidee herself, and be all alone for ever, than let John marry her, and murder her with his unkindness; he's a sneak and a coward, and he shall never be your heir, or marry Haidee either."

The boy stood erect, his eyes flashing bright defiance, his voice soft, clear, and steady, as he uttered his boyish challenge. Sir Lionel gave him an angry glance, and springing up, rang the
bell furiously. When he rang in that peculiar way, no one ventured to answer the bell but his black servant—the only creature who ever seemed to care for him. Black James, as he was called, soon appeared in the doorway—a tall, powerful-looking negro, speaking English perfectly.

"James, take Master Trelawney to his own room, lock him in and keep the key for me."

Captain Hamilton, seeing how deadly pale the boy had turned, and marking the cold, unrelenting anger in his father's manner, hurriedly endeavoured to intercede for him.

"I brook no interference," was the reply. "The boy has been insolent beyond bearing, and I shall punish him to-morrow morning."

Singleton raised his great mournful eyes, and gave the sailor a look of such mute misery and gratitude, that it went straight to his kind warm heart.

"God help you, boy—I cannot," he muttered, as Black James carried off his prisoner. When the door closed upon them, he turned sharply to John.

"Now, John; you have had time to think. Do you come with me or do you stay on here, a dependent upon—Sir Lionel? Speak out, and let me leave this place."
“I shall stay,” said John ungraciously.

“Mind, I can do nothing for you if you let this slip. And I offer you independence, freedom, and the companionship of your equals. You remain here to be a kind of favourite, who may forfeit his position at any moment, and to be dependent for years, if not always. Excuse my plain speaking, Sir Lionel, it is my duty to make sure that he does it with his eyes open.”

“I mean to stay,” repeated John, with a shake of his entire person, curiously like a sulky dog.

“Stay, then, and make the best of it. I wash my hands of the business. I give him up to you, Sir Lionel; you undertake to provide for him. Allow me to ring for my carriage.”

He rang and gave his orders; John went away without going through the ceremony of saying either thank you or farewell.

Very impatient was the sailor to get away, for his heart sickened at the glimpse he had had of tyranny and injustice on one side, and of a generous nature being ruined on the other. He felt that he could do no good by interfering, and so sat in almost unbroken silence, which Sir Lionel made one or two embarrassed efforts to dispel. This pleasant state of things lasted for some time, for the driver of the chaise, concluding
that his fare was disposed of until quite late, had gone out of the way, and had to be found and brought back. Thus it happened that it was quite half-past ten before the chaise was ready, and with a very cold and formal farewell, Captain Hamilton took his departure.
CHAPTER III.

Circumstances which sorely try the patience of one person, may prove extremely convenient to others; and so it happened that the delay which chafed Captain Hamilton so much was very welcome to some beneath the same roof.

On leaving the dining-room, Black James strictly obeyed his master's commands. He took the boy upstairs to his own room, and locked him in, taking the key away with him. No sooner, however, had the negro's retreating footsteps died away, than Singleton ran to the window, threw it open, and looked eagerly all round. There was no one in sight; and after a careful survey, the boy stepped cautiously out of the window. It was rather darker than he expected, but he had performed the hazardous feat too often to hesitate long on that account. A stone course ran along a little below the window, and on this he set his feet, and with the most
marvellous and cat-like activity, crept along the projection past one window, stopping at the next. He sat down, quite spent with the exertion, to rest himself and listen—for this was Haidee's room, and he knew that she was there; but he must make sure that she was alone. No; Anne Benson was with her, and the boy, in an agony of impatience, was obliged to wait. After some time, which seemed horribly long, he ventured upon a little warning tap on the glass. In less than two minutes the light was extinguished, and Anne went away, wondering what had put her little mistress into such a wonderful hurry to be in bed. She was not long in it, however; very soon she was creeping to the window.

"Oh, Singleton! is it really you? I was afraid I heard you. Oh, dear, how could you venture in the dark? wait till I open it more."

He sprang in, and they relighted the candle.

"Singleton, it was too great a risk."

"I'm going to run a greater, Haidee, and I have not one moment to lose, so shut the window and listen to me. Haidee, look here. Captain Hamilton opened the dining-room door and told me to bring John to him there, and I thought he wanted me too, so I went in; but they had not meant me to be there, and I sup-
pose they did not see me. I heard Captain Hamilton offer to take John with him and make a sailor of him."

"Oh, how nice! will he go, do you think?"

"Not he; he'll stay with Sir Lionel and watch to see if I would be kind enough to die. Sir Lionel asked him to stay, and said he thought he might yet be his heir."

"Oh, Singleton!"

"Don't stop me, there's no time to lose I tell you. Then he said that suppose I lived, he had another plan for him. And Haidee, I know that plan is that he's to marry you!"

"John! Ah, he won't find that so easy, perhaps," said Haidee, giving her head a little toss.

"Well, I wasn't going to stand that; so I got up, told my father I knew all about it, and gave him a piece of my mind about John. I told him he is a coward and a sneak, and that sooner than see you married to him, I'd kill him—or you, even."

"Oh, Singie, did you really say that?" inquired Haidee, divided between admiration for his heroism and terror of the consequences.

"I just did! and then he rang the bell for Black James, and bid him lock me up."
Haldee turned pale, and shivered—not with cold, for the night was oppressively warm.

"Did he say nothing more?"

"No. Captain Hamilton was there, you know, and tried to help me, but it was no go. He'll give me an awful licking to-morrow, if I stay here."

"If you stay here, in this room, do you mean?"

"No; I mean here at the Abbey. I mean to run away, Haidee—to escape if I can—to get some education if I can—to get a chance of living to take care of you as my mother bid me, instead of staying here to be murdered among them. I mean to get under Captain Hamilton's carriage, you know how long I can stick on; and then I'll speak out to him, he looks kind—I shall beg him for Heaven's sake to save us both. If he would take me instead of John! and then I think Sir Lionel would send you to school, and you'd have a chance too."

"But oh, Single! if you are brought back?"

"Matters can't be worse than they are. He can't do more than half kill me, and he'll do that to-morrow as it is. Captain Hamilton seems so kind, Haidee, it's worth trying."

"It is," she answered suddenly, dashing away her tears and hastily beginning to put on
some clothes. "I will help you—oh, my dear, dear Singie—it's hard to let you go, and yet I must—I do think that kind man will help you. I will run now and see that the way to the hall is clear."

She ran away, and in a few minutes returned breathless.

"John has gone to bed, and Captain Hamilton has ordered the carriage; there is not a moment to spare. Good-bye, dear Singie—kiss me—good-bye. Oh, Singleton, do you think it would be any good if I said my prayers all night for you? I feel as if I should like it."

"Oh, go to bed, my darling, and sleep; that will be much better than pattering over the same words again and again. I never say mine now; I don't see any use in them."

"You had better go now, Singleton, dear."

"Well, good-bye, Haidee; you'll hear soon enough how I get on. It's a poor chance I'm afraid, but it's the only one we have."

Haidee drove back her tears by a resolute effort, and even managed to smile; but she could not speak. They clung to each other for a moment, then she let him go, and he left the room softly. He was about half way downstairs when she suddenly appeared beside him, put a little purse containing all her treasure into
his hand, smiled again to encourage him, and vanished.

The hall door was fortunately open, he met no one, and was just in time, for he heard the chaise coming up as he crept out into the friendly darkness.

Trelawney Abbey is only four miles from Plymouth and Devonport, so in about an hour from the time of starting, Captain Hamilton was driven up to the door of the George Hotel, Fore Street.

Glad to escape from his meditations upon the scenes he had witnessed, he jumped out, and asked the waiter if any one had called on him while he was absent.

"Only Mr. Lynwood, sir; he will come round again to-morrow morning. Oh! look here, sir! who's this young gent? is he to come in?"

"This young gent" was my poor Singleton, hatless, breathless, and dusty; pale, too, and faint from the tremendous exertion of holding on under the chaise, in a very cramped and unnatural attitude. On the whole, I think the waiter deserved great credit for perceiving that he was "a young gent," for he looked very much more like a young vagrant.

"Good heavens, boy!" exclaimed Captain Hamilton, "how did you come here?"
“I was there—underneath.”

“And what induced you to play so mad a prank?” asked the Captain, looking at him in astonishment.

“I thought,” began Singleton vaguely, his eyes wandering about as if in search of something, “I thought perhaps—oh, what’s this?” he cried wildly, and fell flat upon the pitiless stone steps in a dead faint. The sailor stooped and picked him up as if he had been a baby, and followed closely by the much-astonished waiter, carried him off to his own sitting-room.

In a few minutes Singleton was experiencing the manifold miseries of struggling back into consciousness. It is rather a curious question why it should be so easy and almost pleasant to lose one’s hold upon life, and so difficult and disagreeable to regain it. After many groans and convulsive struggles, he sat up on the red velvet couch, on which he had been laid (and on which he had left a small impression of his person taken off in dust), pushed the wavy masses of dark hair off his forehead, felt his saturated dress—for the zealous waiter had deluged him with cold water—and finally said:

“Where am I? what has happened?”

“There’s a fine fellow,” cried Captain Hamil-
ton heartily. "Here, my boy, drink this; and we'll have you as right as a trivet in no time."

The boy took the offered glass of sherry, but merely tasted it, making a wry face as he did so.

"I don't like it, sir."

"Never mind that, child—down with it."

He looked frightened, but persisted.

"It will make me quite drunk, sir; it will indeed! I've no head at all. Please let me have a glass of water."

"Well, if you think it better, here's some water. You may go now, waiter; he is all right again, thank you."

As the man left the room Singleton slipped off the couch, standing beside it with his great pleading eyes fixed upon the sailor's face, with an intensity of expression which, thank Heaven, we rarely meet with in faces which have seen but fourteen years.

"Captain Hamilton, will you help me? You looked so kind, and you whispered to Sir Lionel to get me off. I thought perhaps you would."

"My poor child, how can I help you?"

"You saw it to-night, didn't you? You saw that he would be glad that I was dead. He hates me, and makes me so miserable that I can't bear it any longer."
"How does he make you miserable?"

"Oh, did you not see enough to-day?" the boy asked, with a pathetic gesture of appeal.

"I am always wrong, always punished; John is always right. I am never believed; he is believed, whatever he may say. And then I cannot learn with Mr. Phelps, I cannot indeed; and so they say I am stupid, and neglect me, and I'm learning nothing at all. And it wouldn't matter, you know, if I was really going to die; but I am not. I am just as likely to live as John is, now that I have got so strong; and what am I to do? The end of it will be that I shall do something terrible in a passion—I know I shall—and then—then there is Haidee. I should not mind so much but for her; she hasn't a friend in the world but me!"

Captain Hamilton was pacing up and down the room, but when the broken voice died away in a smothered sob, he gave the boy a quick look of sympathy and kindness, but said nothing for some time. At last he sat down and drew Singleton near him.

"Now, listen to me, my boy. Very likely I am doing a very foolish thing, and, indeed, I am by no means clear that I can do you any good; but I can't help it. I saw enough to-day to make me help you if I can; for you've
the makings of a man in you, you dusty little object; and you've got no chance as matters stand now. So I'm going to ask you a few questions, just to get a general idea of the case, and then we'll see what can be done.”

“Oh, thank you—thank you, sir!” began Singleton impetuously.

“Hush, hush! you have nothing to thank me for yet. Now, tell me. Have matters always been as they are now between you and your father, or is it a recent thing his being so hard upon you?”

“It has been so always. He hates me because——”

“Ay, ay—speak out, boy. Because——?”

Singleton was crimson now, but suddenly became pale.

“Look here, Captain Hamilton. I will tell you all I know, though I never spoke of it, even to Haidee. I think it is because of my mother.”

“Because of your mother! Why, what of her?”

“I don't quite know. She died, you know, when I was very little—when Haidee was born; but John says——”

“Go on, my boy, go on,” said Captain Hamilton, laying his hand kindly upon the downcast head. “What does John say?”
“He does not say it out quite plain, but he is always hinting that my mother was an American slave once. It was for saying that that I knocked him down to-day.”

Captain Hamilton mused. He had been at sea himself when the last baronet died, and only knew in a general way that there had been some difficulty in finding the heir, who was one of a branch of the family which had long been settled in America. It had been proved beyond a doubt that the American Trelawney was the heir, and it had been a terrible blow to the English Trelawney, John’s father, with whom Captain Hamilton was distantly connected by marriage. Moreover, he had a vague idea of some story about the present Sir Lionel—that he had come over alone and passed for an unmarried man, whereas it afterwards appeared that he had a wife and son; but this kind of scandal being quite out of the gallant sailor’s line, he had paid no particular attention to it, and could not now recall it to his mind distinctly.

He looked at the boy; he was certainly dark, but it was a Spanish rather than a negro darkness. His features were straight and delicate, and his fine, soft hair just waved upon his forehead without the smallest tendency to the woolly curls of a negro.
“Your mother can’t have been anything of the kind, Singleton. You don’t look at all like it, and as to your sister, the idea is absurd. Do you remember your mother? What was she like?”

“Oh, I remember her face well,” said the boy earnestly. “I have a picture besides, a little one, and I think it was painted when she was a child. I remember her—she was small, I think, and very pale, and dark like me; but I remember her eyes the best, they were dark, dark brown, and they seemed to love me so! and her hair, she had such beautiful hair—that length!” stretching his arms wide, “she could sit down upon it—she used to shake it out over herself and me, and it was so thick that I was hid in it.”

“Have you the picture there?” asked Captain Hamilton, seeing him feeling in the bosom of his little wet jacket.

“Yes, I always wear it, for she tied it round my neck herself; and then she showed me the baby and bid me love her, for that no one else would. That was when she was dying, though I did not know it then. Here it is, sir.”

It was a small round miniature, plainly set as a locket in an old-fashioned gold frame of foreign workmanship. On the back was engraved
the name, "Dolores Haidee Silva." Captain Hamilton examined it closely; a lovely, childish face, with beautiful dark loving eyes, and sweet sensitive mouth. Singleton was like it, though he was rather a plain boy, and this little head was like an angel.

"Your mother was no more an American slave than I am!" he cried, giving the boy back his treasure. "The name is Spanish. I knew an old Don Juan Silva in the West Indies once. If there's any black blood, it's very remote. You did quite right to knock the rascal down."

He took another walk up and down the room, returning presently to his seat.

"Well, now tell me, what mad notion had you in your small pate when you followed me here? What did you think I could do for you?"

"I'm half ashamed to tell you, it seems so bold; but I heard what you said to John. I know he won't go, he'll stay with Sir Lionel, they're very well matched. But will you take me instead? Oh, if you only would! and if that is too much, I thought that anyhow, you'd keep my secret, and not betray me to Sir Lionel. I will go to sea as a cabin-boy; some ship must want a cabin-boy, don't you think? or a drummer in the barracks. I know my way to them. But I do want to go with you; I would take
such pains, sir—and then I should come home a man, and able to take care of Haidee."

"But, my boy, however willing I might be—no, hang it all, I'll speak out. I am more than willing to take you if you can pass; but as to running away with you without your father's knowledge and consent, it would be impossible even if it were right to try. You must come with his consent, or not at all."

Singleton rose wearily to his feet with a sigh.

"Then where's my hat? Oh, I lost it on the road: never mind, I don't care about it. Don't tell him that you saw me, and I shall find something else to do. You've been very kind, Captain Hamilton"—he tried hard to steady his voice and speak out bravely—"and I am sure you would help me if you could."

He held out a little dusty brown paw as he spoke; the Captain took it and held him fast.

"Child," he said gently, "I must not let you go. Stay with me, Singleton, and I shall see your father the first thing to-morrow, and it is not impossible he may be glad to let me have you: if not, I may at least be able to get you sent to school. Trust me, boy: I'll do the best I can for you."

Singleton drew back, and shook his head doubtfully.
“Oh, sir, you don’t know Sir Lionel! Nothing that you can say will make him let me go. He loves to bully and tyrannise, and he has only me and Black James, and—”

“Hush, Singleton, my poor little fellow, you’ve had no one to teach you better, and I’m not blaming you; but don’t speak in that way of your father. He is your father, after all; and we are to ‘honour our father and mother.’”

“Honour! he doesn’t know the meaning of the word, or he would find out what a sneak John is,” cried Singleton contemptuously. The boy had not caught the meaning of the sentence, nor did he know whence it came.

“Why, surely you know what I mean, Singleton! You know the commandments, don’t you?”

“The commandments! what commandments?” he asked, looking puzzled. “No, sir, I don’t think I do.”

“My stars!” exclaimed Captain Hamilton, “isn’t that Phelps a clergyman?”

Singleton considered the question for a moment.

“Yes, I believe he is; at least, I once heard Sir Lionel say he was the only clergyman he ever knew who had no nonsense about him.”

The sailor whistled softly, rather dismayed at
this new glimpse into the secrets of the boy’s prison-house.

“But you’ve heard the commandments read in church, haven’t you?”

“Oh, we don’t go to church. Some of the servants do.”

“Good heavens! And where do you go?”

“I don’t quite understand, sir—nowhere, I believe.”

“Nowhere! And what do you do on Sunday?”

“Why, what should we do, sir? there’s nothing particular to be done, is there? we just go on as usual.”

Now Captain Hamilton was no more of a Sabbatarian than most sailors, which I think is as much as to say that he was not a Sabbatarian at all; but for all that, he found it a little startling that an English boy, heir to an ancient name and a large estate, had reached the age of fourteen without having heard of Sunday except as one of the days of the week.

“The man can have no sense of religion whatever,” he exclaimed incautiously.

“Who? Sir Lionel? Oh no, I’ve heard him say he hasn’t; he said he’s a—an Alien, I think it was.”

“Atheist, perhaps.”
“Yes, that’s it: an Atheist. I heard him say so to a gentleman dressed all in black, with tight stockings and a queer hat, who came to the Abbey one day, I believe to speak about Haidee and me. But Sir Lionel sent him away.”

“Sent him away, did he?”

“Yes, and he met Haidee and me, and John, as he was getting into his carriage, and spoke very kindly to us, and gave Haidee and me a little book he had in his pocket, such a pretty little book with a red cross on the cover. And John told Sir Lionel, and he took it away and burnt it.”

He might have added, “and boxed my ears for being sorry,” but being on the whole of an uncomplaining turn of mind, he had forgotten that particular grievance. Captain Hamilton fell into deep meditation, and resumed his measured tread up and down the room; but he was recalled to the present difficulty by Singleton, who had waited very impatiently for nearly ten minutes.

“Hadn’t I better go now, Captain Hamilton?”

“Go away, do you mean? No, my boy. Go to bed, and have a good night’s rest, and to-morrow morning we’ll consult a friend of mine, and see what can be done. I think it can be
managed; I think you'll go to sea with me, Master Singleton."

"But look here, sir. If he won't let me go, nor even send me to school, what is to become of me? He had locked me up, you know, and I should have caught it tremendously to-morrow. You've no idea, sir, what lickings he gives me. Besides, he does not know that I can get out of my room; now, he will make me tell him how I got out, and he will bar the windows, and altogether I shall be worse off than ever, and no chance of escape."

"There's only too much truth in what you say, Singleton; and yet for all that you must be brave, and run the risk. Now listen quietly, and I'll tell you why. You have no education, you are not very strong, and you have no money. If I let you run away as you propose, you would probably have to go home, half starved and dead beat in a month or so. Or if you did not go home," as a little resolute look seemed to assert, "you would most likely get ill and die; and then what's to become of Miss Goldy-locks? Now, on the other hand, I have a very good hope that your father will let me have you; why, hang it all, I've only to threaten him with exposure, and I will, too, as sure as my name's Francis Hamilton!"
“Exposure? What do you mean?”

“Never mind, my boy. Don’t ask me any questions, but trust the matter to me, and I really believe I shall carry you off safely. At all events, at this moment there’s nothing for you to do but to go to bed—you’re fit for nothing else. You’re shivering as if you had a touch of ague, and you’re as white as a ghost.”

He rang the bell, and the waiter appeared.

“Waiter, this young gentleman—Mr. Singleton Trelawney, Sir Lionel Trelawney’s son—will stay with me to-night. Bring us some supper, and have a bed ready for him. Could you make him up a bed on that sofa affair in my room?” inquired the Captain, rather wishing to keep an eye upon his guest.

The waiter saw no objection to this arrangement, and departed to give the necessary orders. Singleton was too weary and unnerved to eat, but he had scarcely laid his head upon his pillow before he sank into a deep and dreamless sleep.

And so ended the adventures of that most momentous day.
CHAPTER IV.

The next morning dawned bright and fair upon Trelawney Abbey, as the old place was still generally called, though, alas! every trace of the beautiful old monastic buildings, save one small chapel, had disappeared during the reign of the present baronet. "Burnt down, of course," I think I hear you say. No, my friend. Pulled down; the stones sold and carted away, and the present handsome and convenient mansion of red brick erected on its site. It had been almost the first exercise of Sir Lionel's power, and no one had been able to dissuade him.

"I want a house to live in, not a ruin to look at," quoth the American heir; "and besides, the whole thing is simply hideous and dangerous."

So down came Trelawney Abbey amid general lamentations; and the new house was pushed
on with such zeal that it was finished in time for Haidee to be born, and her mother to die, beneath its roof. I believe that by the time of which I write, Sir Lionel was rather ashamed of his barbarous act, but he never acknowledged it.

The morning dawned, as I have said; and for the first time for many years, the sun did not shine upon the two neglected children, making the most of the quiet early hours when their oppressors were safe in bed. It had seemed a long night to poor little Haidee, who had counted the weary hours until the grey dawn crept into her room. Then she cried herself to sleep and never woke until nearly nine o’clock.

“Oh, Anne! how late is it? Is Sir Lionel up yet?”

“I don’t know, Miss Haidee,” Anne replied, not a little surprised at the question; “but he won’t mind you’re being late, if you are in time for breakfast. You were so sound asleep when I came in first that it seemed a pity to wake you—and poor Master Trelawney is locked up in his room, so I thought you were better in bed.”

Haidee made no answer and asked no questions. She was unusually silent while
dressing, keeping her quick ears on the alert for the first sign that Singleton's escape was discovered.

Nothing happened, however; so she finished dressing, and ran downstairs to the dining-room, where they generally breakfasted. Here she found John, in a temper decidedly not better than was his wont, owing probably to the fact that his eye and nose were in a very uncomfortable and unbecoming state.

"Ha! Miss Haidee! a fine warming Singleton will get after breakfast."

"What do you know about it?"

"Never mind what I know, or what I don't know. My eyes! he'll catch it this time and no mistake. Why, he cheeked Sir Lionel last night before Captain Hamilton, and Sir Lionel had him locked up at once; and after breakfast he's going to send for him here—and I would not be in his skin, I promise you."

Haidee was in such a nervous state of suspense that tears were very ready; she began to cry, and at the same moment her father came into the room followed by Mr. Phelps.

"What is the matter now, Haidee?"

"John says you are angry with Singleton, Sir Lionel."

"Singleton behaved in the most extraordi-
nary manner last night, and he must be taught to conduct himself with something like respect in my presence. Haidee, cease this childish exhibition, or leave the room.”

Haidee smothered her sobs as best she could, and they sat down to breakfast. Sir Lionel and Mr. Phelps conversed a little; John devoured everything he could get upon his plate, and made faces at Haidee. She, poor child, could not eat. Terror for Singleton was mingled now with terror for herself. What would be her fate if Sir Lionel discovered her share in the boy’s flight? Poor little untaught Haidee! she vowed in her heart that she would utterly deny all knowledge of her brother’s movements, and waited with feverish anxiety for the awful moment.

It came at last. Sir Lionel looked up from his newspaper, and said, “Ring the bell, John.” Then to the butler: “Pierce, desire Black James to bring Master Trelawney here. Haidee, you may go.”

Haidee crept away into the hall. She heard Black James come up from the lower gallery; he passed through the hall, glancing his great rolling black eyes upon her as she crouched in a corner; then she heard him pass along the gallery and go upstairs. Presently he ran
down hurriedly, and went into the dining-room by the door which opened from the gallery. Haidee crept in by the door into the hall which she had left open.

"Sir Lionel, Master Singleton not there."

James spoke English remarkably well, for a negro—only missing a few of the shorter words.

"Not there! Not in his room!"

"No, Sir Lionel. He gone."

"Gone, you black idiot! nonsense; he's hiding somewhere behind the bed, or the wardrobe. Have you left the door open?"

"No, Sir Lionel; here is the key. But he certainly is not in the room, and the window is open."

"You're a fool!" was all the reply Sir Lionel made in words. He sprang to his feet, knocked the negro down, and strode out into the gallery and up the broad oak stairs at a tremendous pace, followed closely by Mr. Phelps and John, and at a more cautious distance by Haidee.

Black James gathered himself up with a look of dogged submission which was habitual to him, and said to her as she passed him:

"You know all about it, little missy."

"No, oh no, James, I don't indeed. Please—please don't say that to Sir Lionel."

She was rather afraid of her father's servant
—his foster-brother, too, Black James said; he was a strange, silent being, and the children had always held him for their enemy, though they had no particular reason for so thinking. He only grinned and rolled his eyes in reply to her request, and Haidee hurried from him and ran up to Singleton's room.

Sir Lionel stood in the middle of the room, looking both angry and startled.

"Haidee, come here! Where is your brother?"

"Is he not here?" she said, looking round. "You locked him in; what have you done with him? Oh, Singleton—my poor Singie, where are you?"

She ran to the window and looked out.

"He must have got out here," said she.

"Impossible! the height is too great," Sir Lionel answered, looking out too; but the new stone bore no trace, as a moss-covered wall would have done, of the boy's steps.

Haidee hid her face in her hands and sobbed—her emotion was perfectly real, for she was terribly frightened.

"Haidee, did you see your brother last night after he was locked up here?"

"No! how should I see him? I had gone to my own room to bed."
"Have you any idea how he left the room?"
"No."
"And can you give me no clue as to the best place to seek for him? Haidee, attend to me! Where do you suppose he is?"

Thus urged, Haidee suddenly let her hands fall by her side, and looked up into her father's hard, handsome face with bright eyes that seemed to dare him to do his worst.

"I think, perhaps, he has drowned himself," she said deliberately, "in one of the ponds in the Chase. He often said he would, if you were too hard upon him. Go there and look for him."

The girl was quite unprepared for the effect of this audacious fiction. Sir Lionel staggered back with a pale face of utter horror.

"Drowned himself! Good heavens! I—Haidee, he has not drowned himself."

"I think he very likely has," insisted Haidee, much pleased at having terrified him. "And if he has, so shall I, too, the very first day I can get away; then you'll be rid of us, and you and John can do as you like."

She fully expected to be ordered to her room for this speech, in fact it was to secure her retreat that she thus spoke; but to her intense surprise her father took no notice of it. He
went quickly out of the room without speaking, and still looking pale and scared; she heard him shouting to the servants, and was aware of a great running to and fro for some time, both in the house and about the place. But she did not know that while this search through the house and gardens was going on, Sir Lionel himself, attended only by Black James, was visiting, one by one, the five or six small lakes or ponds in the Chase, with a face which only lost that ghastly look of horror when the last of them had been examined. He was returning from this expedition when Pierce made his appearance.

"Sir Lionel, Captain Hamilton is in the library, and he has brought news of Master Trelawney."

The relief from the awful idea Haidee had suggested was so great, that Sir Lionel hurried into the library with a most unusual lack of ceremony, and was so eager to hear what his visitor had to say that he never perceived that Haidee made a hasty retreat by another door as he entered.

Haidee had, indeed, rushed downstairs from some post of observation when she saw Captain Hamilton passing through the gallery. She rushed into the library, caught his hand, and exclaimed:
"You're not going to give him up! Oh, I did think you would be kind to him."

"And I will be kind, my dear child, if I can; but, as you will see when you are older, I could not possibly run away with him without Sir Lionel's consent. Why, it would be against the laws of the land! But never fear, my pretty one, don't you spoil your eyes with crying till you have something to cry for. I have a very good hope that your father will let him go."

"You don't know my father! Oh, if you would only not tell him—here he is, I must go. Oh, Captain Hamilton! save poor Singleton, do save him."

She gave him a most beseeching look as she vanished, and Sir Lionel came in.

"Hamilton, they tell me you bring news of my son."

"I do. He's safe enough—in bed at the George, in Devonport, with Lynwood looking after him. He was so knocked up and feverish that I made him stay quiet."

Sir Lionel threw himself into an easy-chair with a kind of sob of intense relief. Captain Hamilton stood before the empty fireplace, watching him.

Presently he asked, without looking up:

"How did he get to Devonport?"
"Hanging on under my carriage. I can't imagine how he contrived to stick on so long."

"And why?—what reason does he give? I cannot understand—I don't know—" stammered Sir Lionel.

"Now, Sir Lionel, let us understand one another. I'm a plain, somewhat rough sailor, and if I speak too bluntly, you must excuse me. I have no wish to offend you, but I mean to make you understand me. You know as well as I do why the boy has run away; there's no need for me to tell you. He wants to go to sea with me—to take the berth I offered John. I'll take him if you like. I fancy the boy, and if you will let him go, I will take him."

"But, Captain Hamilton, I am scarcely prepared—to permit my only son to—engage in a profession so hazardous, and which removes him so completely—"

Sir Lionel was making a gallant effort to recover himself, as might be perceived in the reappearance of his long words; but just at this moment he caught Captain Hamilton's keen glance fixed upon him, and stopped in some confusion.

"Before you say anything more, Trelawney, just listen to me. I don't want to make myself unpleasant, if I can help it; but if you don't
consent either to let Singleton come with me, or to send him to a good school, and to send that pretty little Haidee to school too, I give you my honour that I shall take measures to make what has come under my notice concerning them thoroughly well known. Lynwood says you'll prosecute me for a libel—very good; that will ensure publicity, at all events, and public feeling will go with me even if the letter of the law is against me. And by one means or another, I swear to you that every newspaper in the country shall ring with your treatment of those unlucky children. Your reason for disliking them—for I suppose you have a reason—you, perhaps, wish to keep to yourself. Well, if you force me to speak out, I shall make no secret of the reason the boy gives me."

Sir Lionel was actually foaming at the mouth with passion by this time; but at the last words he started and said hoarsely:

"What reason does he give? He knows nothing!"

"Very likely not. But he says that John, our precious ward, who seems likely to be a credit to us, has given him to understand that his mother either was once a slave herself, or was descended from slaves, in America; and
the boy believes that this is your reason for disliking him and his sister."

Sir Lionel was silent for a time, looking down upon the carpet moodily. Captain Hamilton waited patiently until he spoke again.

"John told the boy this, did you say?"

"So he says. It was for saying something of this kind that Singleton fought him yesterday."

"Ah! I wonder how he—how it came to his knowledge. But I owe it to myself to tell you now, plainly, the real facts of the case; Lady Trelawney never was a slave, nor was she the child of a slave mother. She was of Spanish descent."

"Then the whole story was a fabrication of John's?"

"Not altogether," said Sir Lionel, flushing crimson. "There were circumstances connected with the Silva family, which, if only partially known, might mislead—but I have said enough."

"More than enough. It's no business of mine, and I beg your pardon for asking the question; I was thinking of John's part in the matter. But since you have mentioned it, let me just say that if there is anything you don't want generally known, you had better change
your conduct towards your innocent children; it's enough to set people talking without my help. Now here's a good opening. Let the little fellow have his own way and go to sea with me. I shall be away four or five years—let the girl spend them at school, and by the end of that time they will have forgotten a good deal, and you will find it easy to get on. And you know he need not go to sea again unless both you and he wish it."

Sir Lionel rose from his chair and walked to the window, where he stood for some time staring vacantly at the bright leaping fountain; trying to persuade both himself and his companion that he was considering the subject. But in very truth, he felt that he had no choice; and though exceedingly angry at the way in which it had been brought about, I am not sure that he was not rather glad that a change was inevitable. For though a violent tempered and tyrannical man, he was not altogether a bad man. He had some faint sense of justice, and a lurking suspicion that he had been hard upon his children, and he felt moreover, that if they remained at home, he would probably continue to be hard upon them. So he presently said ungraciously enough:

"As the boy has set his heart upon going
with you, and you are good enough to undertake the charge, I suppose it is my best course to let him go. He will probably soon get over his folly and be glad to remain at home. There is an examination to be passed, is there not?"

"There is. Lynwood tried him this morning and says he can pass easily. It comes off tomorrow. Suppose he stays with me till he has passed, and I have put him in the way to get his outfit. Then he can come home until we sail. You will have to make him an allowance, you know."

"Of course. What is the usual allowance?"

"Well, sixty or seventy. But as Singleton will be a rich man, let us say a hundred to begin with, and a hundred and fifty after the first two years. There's nothing gained by keeping a lad tight when he knows it must come to him sooner or later."

"It shall be as you wish."

"And—forgive me, Trelawney—but you will send Haidee to school?"

"Really, Captain Hamilton, you are—perhaps unconsciously—entering upon questions with which you have nothing to do. But I have no objection to satisfy your curiosity; I shall pro-

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bably go abroad for a time, and in that case both John and Haidee must be sent to school; John of course to Eton; about Haidee I must make inquiries."

"Eton's too swell for a lad with no better prospects than John's. As to the other, I can help you there. My brother's children are at a school near London, and it seems to answer with them. They are nice girls. I could get the address from Mrs. Hamilton, if you like."

"Thank you," said Sir Lionel, who was one of the laziest of men. "It will greatly oblige me."

He left his post by the window, and rang the bell.

"Pierce, is luncheon ready?"

"We were just going to ring, Sir Lionel."

"Desire them to put up some of Master Trelawney's clothes; he will remain in Devonport for a day or so. And send Miss Trelawney here."

He turned to Captain Hamilton.

"Will you not have some luncheon before you go?"

"No, thanks; I must get back as soon as I can."

Haidee could not have been very far off, for she made her appearance at this moment,
looking anxious and frightened; her father looked at her as she slowly drew near.

"Haidee, Singleton is with Captain Hamilton, in Devonport. He will remain there until he has passed an examination for the naval service, and procured his outfit. Were you aware of his desire to become a sailor?"

"Yes, papa."

"Did you know of his intention to—to leave home last night?"

"No, Sir Lionel. I did not."

As she uttered these words she raised her eyes to Captain Hamilton's face. He was watching her with an expression of the deepest pity. Haidee started, looked away, then looked again at the kind, weather-beaten, pitying face. Her own crimsoned, her chest heaved, and she suddenly burst into tears—into such a wild passion of crying that she could not speak for some time. When she could, she sobbed out:

"That was a lie, Sir Lionel! I did know, and I helped him to go. Now do whatever you like to me, I don't care. Captain Hamilton, I will never tell a lie again as long as I live."

"That's right, my little one," said the Captain kindly. "It's a dirty trick. Now run
away, my dear, and make them get Singleton's things quickly, for I am in a hurry."

She ran away, only too glad to escape.

"You see?" said Sir Lionel coldly. "You perceive the dispositions I have to deal with? And the boy is worse. Remember, I have warned you. He is quite as untruthful as Haidee, and has, besides, a temper which borders on insanity. There is something about them both which——"

"Which simply proves that they have been neglected and unkindly treated," broke in the sailor bluntly. "Thank you, but I'll take my chance with the boy. Why, Trelawney, are you blind? don't you see that terror both for her brother and herself actually forced that poor child into a falsehood, and yet she could not persevere in it?"

"But allow me to tell you that I had questioned her before, when she not only denied all knowledge of her brother's proceedings, but endeavoured to alarm, at least to put me on a false scent, by declaring that he had threatened to destroy himself."

"Poor little girl," said the sailor gravely. "Send her to school, Trelawney, and pray that there your work may be undone. Heaven for-
give you, you’ve done your best to ruin both your children!”

“Really, Captain Hamilton, this is language which I am not accustomed to hear.”

“I dare say not. It would be better for you if you were; for it is simply the plain truth. However, I don’t want to have words with you, you must excuse my rudeness. The sooner I’m off the better for all parties.”

Sir Lionel bowed, and did not repeat his invitation to luncheon: and, as Pierce now appeared with a carpet-bag containing Singleton’s wardrobe, Captain Hamilton took his leave at once.

In the hall Haidee ran to him.

“Oh, Captain Hamilton! you are good! I shall love you all my life. But please tell me, shall I not see him before you go quite away?”

“Certainly you shall, my dear. I shall send him home for a day or two, to show you his new uniform—oh ho! you like that idea, don’t you?”

“Oh yes; and indeed, indeed, Captain Hamilton, I never will tell a lie again! never.”

“Mind you don’t, Haidee. But you’ll soon go where you’ll be better cared for. Good-bye, curly locks, good-bye!”
CHAPTER V.

It was a bitter moment for John Trelawney when his hitherto despised and maltreated cousin came back from Devonport in all the glory of his uniform, gold-laced cap, dirk, and white gloves; in fact, with all things befitting an officer in her Majesty's navy.

Even Sir Lionel felt the silent influence of the change in the boy's appearance, and though not kind, was at least not actively unkind during his brief stay.

The brother and sister had a thoroughly happy time of it, and Sir Lionel was not a little surprised to find all his tenants coming to the Abbey to say good-bye, all with affection, and some of the women with tears, to the son he valued so little.

Sir Lionel might have gone to Kamschatka with a vow never to return, and no one would have greatly cared, whereas every one was sorry
to part with Singleton, and Black James had to be knocked down twice, for "whining about that confounded boy," in spite of the children's idea that he hated them.

Then the *Sultana* sailed for Halifax; and in less than a month Sir Lionel had sent John to Eton, Haidee to the school recommended by Mrs. Hamilton, and was himself in Italy.

It is unnecessary to do more than sketch the next few years; and I begin with John, because I have but little to say of him. He was universally disliked at Eton, no one could say exactly why; for after a few terrible scrapes, he had the good sense to conceal his bullying propensities, and a wholesome remembrance of the contempt in Captain Hamilton's face taught him not to display any marked dislike to a fight, if it were actually necessary. He remained at Eton until old enough for Sandhurst, whither he then went, as he had determined to be a soldier; his vacations were spent on the Continent with his guardian.

As to Haidee, she was fortunate in her school, and yet more so in the friends she made during her school-days. Captain Hamilton had written a long account of his adventures at the Abbey to his sister-in-law, whose kind motherly heart was touched by his description of the
beautiful, neglected, motherless child. Thus it happened that when her daughters wrote to say that Haidee was to spend her holidays at school as long as Sir Lionel remained abroad, she invited her to come home with her own girls at Christmas. Sir Lionel's consent was obtained by Captain Hamilton, and was conveyed to his sister-in-law in a letter written the night before the Sultana sailed. The Hamiltons were at breakfast when the letters arrived; there were the usual number of unpleasant-looking blue-covered epistles for the Squire, as a few old-fashioned tenants still called the master of Heronhurst.

"Henry, Francis says that Sir Lionel has no objection to the child's coming here. Not a very gracious consent, is it? but I'm glad for the little girl's sake."

"So am I," replied Mr. Hamilton, shuffling his letters together, and preparing for a chat with his wife, which he much preferred to reading business letters.

Mrs. Hamilton was a sensible-looking, careworn woman, in appearance older than her husband, though really his junior. It was her anxious, saddened expression which made her look old, and her hair was already turning grey. Mr. Hamilton, on the contrary, looked as if care and anxiety were unknown to him; a hand-
some, upright, portly, prosperous-looking gentleman. All their surroundings, too, looked bright and pleasant; spacious rooms, handsome old furniture, fine pictures, pretty gardens. Few people were aware of the strict economy maintained in-doors by the mistress, and out-of-doors by the master; far less did any guess down what an abyss of possible ruin and misery those anxious eyes were always looking, or perhaps Mrs. Hamilton’s anxiety would have been more easily accounted for than her husband’s careless demeanour. The truth was, that he seldom looked beyond the present: while she, more keen-sighted, was troubled with terrible forebodings.

“The child is about the same age as little Hester, isn’t she?” Mr. Hamilton said.

“A little older. I hope the girls will like her, or it will spoil their holidays having her here.”

“I wonder at Sir Lionel’s letting her come,” remarked Mr. Hamilton, stirring his tea meditatively.

“So do I. I really hardly expected it.”

“And yet, after all, is it more wonderful than his consulting you about a school for her?”

“No, indeed: that surprised me too. I begin to think he has forgotten all about it, or has
forgotten my name; we never met, you know. I tried to find out from Francis, but he seems to know nothing, and I did not wish to tell him."

"Frank was at sea when it all happened—he did not return until Arthur was gone to Halifax."

"What were your letters, Henry?"

"Here they are—one from Philip; he wants thirty pounds."

Philip was the eldest son; and his father's half-sigh, together with the expression of his mother's face as she took possession of his letter, did not speak well for him.

"It is very soon to begin again," she said in a low voice. "Here, Henry, read Regie's line, it is only a line, but he seems to like the Trelawney boy."

"Ah, my dear Regie! God bless him. I wish he took more kindly to his profession, but perhaps he may find it plesanter than he expects."

But I must not linger over this part of my story. Haidee came to Heronhurst, and won all hearts completely. From that time it became as much her home as it was Arabel's and Hester's. It may easily be imagined what new life this was to the neglected girl, and how, in
spite of Singleton’s absence, she was happier than she ever had been before. Every one was kind to her, her lessons were a delight, her companions worshipped her, her letters from Singleton proved that he too was well and prosperous, and altogether her happiness was unclouded.

And unclouded it continued to be for four or five years; but then a blow fell upon the Hamilton family which could not be concealed, even from “the children,” as Haidee and Hester were still called, though the one was sixteen and the other fifteen years of age. Arabel had left school, and ceased to be reckoned among the children.

The two girls came home in high spirits for the Christmas holidays; if any indication of what awaited them had been given in their letters, they had not understood it; but the first glance of home faces told them that there was something very wrong. They arrived late at night, and nothing was said until the next morning, when the two frightened girls questioned Arabel, who tried to hint at the truth but broke down in the attempt and cried bitterly. She went to her mother.

“Mamma, you may as well tell the girls at once. They know there is something wrong,
and Hester will cry herself sick if you don’t speak to her.”

“Send them here, my dear. I meant to send for them soon.”

She was in the cozy morning-room known as “the mistress’s parlour” by many a generation of Hamiltons. The two girls came presently, looking pale and frightened.

“My dear children, come here,” she said, and they silently obeyed; Hester perching herself on the arm of her mother’s chair, Haidee on the ground at her feet.

“I think you have seen that there is something wrong,” she began.

“Yes, mamma.”

Haidee always called her so.

“And we asked Arabel, but we could not understand.”

“I can make you understand easily enough, my dear.”

But she remained silent, absently patting Hester’s little cold hand.

“I think Arabel said that papa had lost a great deal of money,” Hester said presently, as if to help her.

“Ah, child! if that were all, it would be soon told and easily borne. You will find this hard to bear—all the harder, because you are quite
unprepared for it. I have kept these things from you, in a vain hope that you need never know them, but you must know them now."

She covered her face with her hands, and was silent for a moment. Hester silently kissed the poor hand which pressed the aching brow—not to keep back tears, but to still the weary pain which no tears could relieve.

"My little Hester!" murmured the poor mother. Then aloud—"I had better begin at the beginning, girls, and tell you once for all, as much as you can understand and must know. When your father inherited this estate, I dare say you know that it was from his eldest brother. Your uncle Philip had been very extravagant, and left enormous debts to his heir. However, we set to work hopefully, and should have cleared the estate by this time—years ago in fact, but for circumstances. First, your father's seat in Parliament entailed a great deal of expense. It was a matter of course, almost, that Hamilton of Heronhurst should be the Conservative member for the—Riding, but we have often regretted that we did not refuse from the first. My dears, I am saying more than is actually necessary, because I cannot bear to run the risk of your thinking, when you are older,
that your dear father was reckless, or—or in any way to blame."

"But we should never think anything of the kind, mamma."

"No one can think it who knows the truth. As soon as he saw that it would lengthen out our difficulties, he gave up his seat in Parliament, sold his town house, and placed everything here on a different footing. He gave up the hounds, and reduced the stable establishment considerably. Then all went well, and we were rapidly paying off the encumbrances; but a sad blow fell upon us. Philip got into debt during his first year at college, to such an amount that—that I have never been able to understand how he managed it. To make it possible for your father to pay without further retrenchments, or by using the sums set apart for you girls, in case your parents were taken from you, Reginald gave up what was intended for him, and went to sea."

"Is that why Regie went to sea?" Hester asked, raising her head from her mother's shoulder. "I always wondered, because he did not seem to like it."

"He did not like it, but Francis could help him in that way, and in no other. But I must finish my story. We have been paying these
college debts by degrees, and in time all would have been well. But the end has come now."

"Mamma, what has happened?" Haidee cried out, when she paused.

About a month ago, Philip wrote to us from Paris. He had resigned his appointment in consequence, he said, of debt, which he entreated his father to pay, or he would be ruined. Alas, no payment could prevent ruin—well for us if we can prevent disgrace."

"Disgrace!" the two girls echoed.

"Yes, disgrace; but for that, your father would have refused to pay. But we had no choice; things would have come out which we must keep secret at any cost. It is ruin, children: utter ruin. But ruin *can* be borne; disgrace *cannot*.

She looked nervously round and whispered, "Philip has—"

Haidee sprang up from the ground:

"Hush, mamma! that is enough. Hester and I are only 'the children,' you know—you need not tell us everything. We know quite enough now. We know—what we did not need to be told—that whoever is to blame it is not you, nor my dear, dear Mr. Hamilton. Don't tell us what Philip did, perhaps we need
never know. It hurts you to tell us—we will not hear any more."

Mrs. Hamilton kissed the eager face tenderly, then said to Hester:

"And you, little one? Are you content to hear no more?"

"Yes, mamma. Poor, poor Philip! how unhappy he must be!"

A look of agony passed over Mrs. Hamilton's face; those childish words had touched the deepest wound in her heart. For Philip, selfish and reckless, seemed to care right little for the suffering he had brought upon his family. His letters were filled with lamentations over his own hard lot, forced to fly his country, a marked man, when a month more of impunity would have saved him, by enabling him _if_—what an if!—if Fairstar won the St. Leger, &c. He had only borrowed the money. The law, unfortunately, has another name for the act of borrowing money in this fashion; and when the borrower is a public servant, and the money public money, discovery may be tardy, and much time may be lost in finding out the actual defaulter; but once discovered, even prompt repayment does not avail to save him. Mr. Hamilton had no sooner become aware of the real facts of the case, than he repaid every
farthing of the sum his worthless heir had borrowed, paying his private debts as well, in hopes of silencing malicious tongues. But the appeal to him had not been made in time, and Philip Hamilton could never resume his position in English society.

"Well then, dear children," Mrs. Hamilton went on after a pause, "I shall say no more at present. But you must prepare for much that will bitterly grieve you both. Haidee, my dear, you see I forgot that you are not my very own."

"You forgot that long ago, mamma. And indeed if it can make me your very own to be—"

Here Haidee, to her own great disgust, broke down suddenly, crying and sobbing with wonderful heartiness for a few minutes. Then she left off quite as suddenly as she had begun, remarking cheerfully that she was "making a perfect idiot of herself."

"But now, mamma, tell us what it is that will grieve us so much."

"We must leave Heronhurst, my dear. Everything is to be sold; horses, furniture, pictures—the dear old place itself—and we must live on what we can save out of the wreck."

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“Sell Heronhurst, mamma! I did not know you could do that. I thought it was entailed.”

“So it was. But your father made Philip join him in breaking the entail. I do not understand exactly, but it seems they could do it.”

Yes, they could do it—and the good-tempered, easy-going Squire had taken every one by surprise, insisting that Philip should consent to it before he would allow him a shilling. And he was now selling the property, though some of his advisers thought it might have been avoided.

“No,” he said, “Heronhurst had passed through many hands—some of them spendthrift enough. But disgrace never sat by the old hearth yet, and never shall if I can help it. I would pull the house down with my own hands, before Philip should be Hamilton of Heronhurst.”

“But Reginald?” his wife had suggested.

“No, there would be some legal quibble—I will make the matter sure.”

And his friends found that on this point they could not move the man whom until now they had fancied the most pliable of beings.

“Now I have told you all, children, except
one thing, which I fear will touch you more nearly than the rest. Hester cannot go back to school."

Hester slipped quietly off the arm of the chair, and stood for a moment as if the last blow had quite stunned her; then she crept out of the room, and Haidee, after kissing Mrs. Hamilton in silence, ran after her. They were seen no more that morning.

Let nobody fancy, however, that Haidee Trelawney spent her time in idle tears and lamentations. During that long day, while nursing Hester through one of her agonising headaches—the girl was delicate, and suffered much from these attacks—Haidee thought the situation over; and in the evening wrote a long letter to her father. It was some months since she had begun (quite of herself) to write to him occasionally; and he sometimes answered her letters, though briefly.

"Heronhurst,
"Dec. 24, 18—.

"My dear Papa,
"Please read every word of this letter, because it is of great consequence to me. My dear kind friends are in dreadful trouble. Philip, Mr. Hamilton's eldest son, whom I never could
like as I do the others, has done something very wrong about money. I do not know what it is, but they are quite ruined. They must sell even Heronhurst, and there have been Hamiltons here longer than even Trelawneys at the Abbey. And Hester must leave school. Arabel, you know, left it two years ago.

"Now, papa, I want you to think a little about me, please. I am sixteen; a year older than Hester; and I am dreadfully tall for a school-girl. I look quite grown up. Do you not think I ought to leave school too? I shall be wretched there without Hester. And you know Singleton will soon be coming home, and if I am at school, how am I to see him? So I think my plan is the best for all of us. Please let me have a governess, and let us live at the Abbey; I and Hester. I should be so happy; and you would like me to be happy, would you not? it cannot be any more trouble to you than when I am at school. Hester and I should be broken-hearted to part, and if you will do this we should be so happy.

"I heard from Singleton last week; he is quite well, and has grown much taller, but he thinks he will never be as tall as Reginald Hamilton. But as Reginald is six feet three,
I think Singleton may be tall enough for all that. Captain Hamilton says in his letter—he sometimes writes to me—that Singleton is one of the best officers of his years that he knows, and loves his profession very much.

"Please write soon and say if I may ask Mrs. Hamilton to get a governess for me and Hester, for there is no time to lose.

"I remain

"Your affectionate daughter,

"HAIDEE D. TRELAWNEY.

"P.S.—Please answer this soon; and please say yes."
CHAPTER VII.

It so happened that Haidee's letter reached her father at a fortunate moment for her wishes. Sir Lionel was utterly weary of his solitary wanderings; indeed it would be hard to imagine any one less fitted to enjoy the life he had led since he left Trelawney Abbey. He was so ignorant that the name of famous men and places awoke neither ideas, memories, nor associations in his mind. He was so devoid of taste, natural or acquired, that all the marvels of nature and all the works of art which came before his eyes were but so many things to be looked at—and he looked, and forgot them. Never once, in after years, was he known to speak of what he had seen during his travels. It was dull work. He knew no language but his own, and a few sentences of Spanish; and his ridiculous pride made him keep aloof from such countrymen of his own as he encountered
from time to time. Altogether, it is not wonderful that he longed for a change.

And now Haidee's letter seemed to open a way of escape. He pondered long over the girl's innocent, straightforward appeal, and at last saw how to make the most of his opportunity. Sir Lionel had been very angry as well as very much frightened at some remarks of Captain Hamilton's when he carried off Singleton, but in thinking the matter over during these weary years of exile, he had come to understand that matters might well have been worse; in fact that he had narrowly escaped a public exposure. Never again, he determined, would he run such a risk. His children should henceforth have no just cause to complain of him; love them he could not—they were "her children;" but he would give them no right to say that he hated them. He would be a just and not unkind father, and the past should be forgotten; all he wanted was a fresh beginning, and now that was easily managed. So, to the immense surprise of every one concerned, Sir Lionel made his appearance in person at Heronhurst, in answer to the letter written by his daughter.

Mrs. Hamilton alone was at home when he arrived. Haidee and the girls were out walking,
and Mr. Hamilton was in London. A servant brought her Sir Lionel’s card.

“A gentleman, ma’am.”

“Giles, I told you not to let any one in, except on business.”

“Yes, ma’am, but this gentleman asked for Miss Trelawney, and when he heard she was out he said he would wait; and then he desired me to let you know he was here, as perhaps you would see him.”

Mrs. Hamilton took the card.

“Sir Lionel Trelawney!” she said. “How very extraordinary!”

Then after a moment she added:

“Tell Sir Lionel I shall be with him immediately. Where is he?”

“In the library, ma’am.”

Mrs. Hamilton did not seem in any hurry to join her visitor; she sat turning the card about in her hand, and evidently felt puzzled and disturbed.

“I cannot understand his coming here,” she muttered. “It is really very awkward; however, if he makes no allusion to the past, neither shall I.”

Having made up her mind, she went to the library. Sir Lionel rose and came to meet her, she fancied, with embarrassment, but afterwards she perceived that it was his usual manner. As
I have said before, he was a remarkably handsome man, and had rather a grand air: it was not at once that strangers perceived what a blockhead he really was. He bowed in a Grandisonian style.

"Have I the honour of seeing Mrs. Hamilton, my daughter's kind friend?"

"Oh," thought she, "I am to be considered only as Haidee's friend; very good." So she replied courteously, "I am Mrs. Hamilton, Sir Lionel."

"I have to thank you for your unfailing kindness to my daughter, madam."

"She is a very dear child, we feel as if she were our own. Indeed, we often forget that she is not actually one of us. She will very soon be here now, for it is near luncheon-time."

Sir Lionel cleared his throat twice, and began to speak with so much the air of one about to make an oration or preach a sermon, that sad as Mrs. Hamilton was, she had nearly laughed.

"I rejoice, madam, that Miss Trelawney's absence gives me an opportunity of addressing myself to you in private before I see her. I have recently received a letter from her, in which she states that, for family reasons, you are about to withdraw your daughter from the school which you so kindly recommended to me. Is it not so, may I inquire?"
"It is. I don't know what Haidee may have told you, but it is no secret that we are—leaving Heronhurst—and that——"

Her voice shook, and she left her sentence unfinished. Sir Lionel waited for a moment, and then resumed the stately flow of his eloquence:

"My daughter informs me that she would prefer not returning to school, under these altered circumstances. I think myself that she has reached an age when a continued residence at a school is perhaps undesirable. I am about to engage a governess for her, and shall take her to reside at Trelawney Abbey. If you will permit your youngest daughter, Hester I think she calls her, to share her studies, I—you will confer an obligation upon me, for which I shall be grateful. I wish much to return to the Abbey myself, and intend my daughter to reside there until her marriage; but it seems to me undesirable that she should be quite alone."

Poor Mrs. Hamilton! Sir Lionel was, perhaps, the last man in the world to whom she would willingly be obliged. But the plan was very tempting. Her delicate, sensitive Hester would be spared so much suffering, so many privations. She would be happy with Haidee, and perhaps gain strength and vigour in the
warm south, whereas London had always rather tried her, and in London the Hamiltons must now live all the year round, as Mr. Hamilton had accepted a small Government appointment, the duties of which would require his presence in town.

"You are very kind," she said doubtfully. "I'm anxious about Hester, she is not strong, and is growing so fast. I rather dread London for her."

"Then I may consider the matter as definitely arranged, madam. You oblige me more than I can express; you add a hundredfold to your previous favours."

Mrs. Hamilton gasped; she had not meant to be understood as actually consenting—what would her husband say? At the same time she was not very sorry to be thus committed, as it were, for it would make it harder for him to refuse his consent. Sir Lionel had forgotten that any consent save hers was necessary.

"If you will allow me to have a voice in selecting your governess," she said, "I think I may be able to let Hester go."

"I was about to request you to undertake this task. I should like an elderly person, who would also supervise my establishment until my daughter is of an age to assume her place
as mistress of the house. That will be in about two years."

"I think I can procure you an excellent person—Miss Warner. She was my daughter's governess for some years, and since they went to school she has had a situation much like what you offer. Shall I give you her address, or write to her myself, Sir Lionel?"

"I shall be only too glad to leave it to you, madam. Whatever you arrange as to salary, &c., I shall be perfectly satisfied. I have no experience in such matters."

There was a sound of fresh young voices in the hall, and Mrs. Hamilton rose.

"I hear the girls coming in. I shall send Haidee to you, Sir Lionel; we shall meet again at luncheon."

She met the three girls in the hall.

"Haidee, my dear, your father has come to see you. He is in the library, and you are to go to him at once."

She looked at the beautiful, animated face, and thought that a father must be indeed hard to please who would not rejoice in the possession of such a daughter.

But all poor Haidee's brightness vanished as she seized Mrs. Hamilton's hand with a look of alarm.
“Sir Lionel here! oh, mamma, must I go to him alone?”

“Why, yes, dear; it will be better so. You must be a wise girl now, Haidee, and forget old grievances. He is full of really kind plans for you, and you ought to meet him half way. Run quickly in, my dear, and remember only that your own and your brother’s happiness may depend upon your conduct now. Now, my darling, go, don’t stop to think.”

While giving the startled girl this good advice she had led her towards the door, which she now opened, and gently pushed her in. As she then shut the door behind her, Haidee found herself in her father’s presence, with her retreat cut off, before she had at all collected her scattered senses.

Sir Lionel, seeing a tall young lady, rose from his chair and bowed. If he had not been the dullest of men, her likeness to the Trelawney family must have told him who she was; but he was the dullest of men, and remembering her only as a child, this tall maiden puzzled him. He bowed a second time, magnificently, as she advanced.

“Sir Lionel, don’t you know me? I am Haidee.”

“Haidee!” he exclaimed, and stared at
her. Then her wonderful beauty struck him, and he actually smiled upon her. She could scarcely believe it, for it was the first smile she had ever, to the best of her belief, seen upon her father’s face. But Sir Lionel was experiencing a novel and pleasant sensation; this lovely, golden-haired, bright-eyed creature was his daughter, his property. This was not so much "her child" as "his daughter."

"You are so grown," he said slowly, "that you must not wonder that I did not recognise you; but I see that you are very like—my father. You are a true Trelawney," he added hastily, as he drew her to him and kissed her smooth forehead.

Yes, she was very like his father; but she was much more like one—the only one—who had ever really warmed Sir Lionel’s cold heart. The surprise over, Sir Lionel was himself again, and exhorted her "not to be agitated."

"I trust, Haidee, that we shall understand each other for the future. Mrs. Hamilton gives me a very pleasing account of you, and I have arranged with her that you and your friend, Miss Hester Hamilton, are to reside for the future at the Abbey, under the care of a governess."

He must have been made of stone if he could
have been unmoved at her delight. Her face lighted up, the brilliant colour flushed her cheeks as she threw her arms impulsively round him, crying:

"Oh, papa, I shall love you so! How good and kind of you to do this! You have made me the very happiest girl in the world."

She was always the very happiest or the very most miserable of girls, by her own account.

"I am rejoiced that you are pleased," said Sir Lionel, warmly for him. It was pleasant enough to be so warmly thanked; nay, he began to think that it would be pleasant to have this bright creature always at hand, and his imagination even went so far as to suggest to him that John would be a lucky fellow. A bell rang, and Haidee exclaimed:

"There's luncheon, and I have not taken off my hat. Will you wait here, papa, and I will come back and show you the way?"

"Very well; but let me request you to make no unnecessary delay. Mrs. Hamilton may think me wanting in courtesy if I detain her."

Haidee ran away, and I regret to say that she laughed as she ran.

"He speaks like a book, this father of mine. I had forgotten; but I believe he always did.
Mr. Hamilton would have said, 'Run away, lassie, and look sharp.' Oh, Hester, were you waiting for me?"

"Yes, I knew you would come up to take off your hat; and I thought you would forget to smooth your hair," said tidy Hester, "and then your father would think you were——"

But Haidee brought her remarks to an untimely end by catching her in her arms and kissing her vehemently.

"My dear, darling, precise Hester! I'm very nearly too happy to live. Sir Lionel is a darling—a perfect jewel of a father, and I mean to love him with all my heart, if he will only be as good to Singleton as he is to me."

"Why, what has he done?" asked Hester, much surprised, for she had frequently heard remarks of a widely different tendency from this excited young lady.

"I haven't time to tell you half the delightful truth; besides, Mrs. Hamilton may think us wanting in courtesy if we detain her," quoted Haidee, audaciously mimicking her father.

"I think you are a little mad," said Hester.

"I am! and for once, you'll be as mad as I am. Hester, we are not to be parted—you and I; we are going to the Abbey—my own beautiful Abbey—to live together always. And
we shall pay them visits in London, and when Singleton comes home he shall marry you, and I'll marry Reginald; and we'll all be as happy as the wonderful girl out of whose mouth came rubies and roses. Much happier, for I always think it must have been uncomfortable. I'm sure" she stammered—"don't you think so? Now, don't stand staring like a dear little gosling, as you are! My hair is all right—come along and be introduced to my father."

"Haidee, please don't hurry me so. I don't understand a word you have said."

But she might as well have reasoned with the west wind when inclined for a frolic! She was whisked downstairs and into the library before she had time to think.

"Papa, this is Hester, my friend. She's out of breath just now, but she'll be all right presently. Shall we go to luncheon?"

"Allow me first to assure Miss Hamilton of the sincere pleasure with which I hope to welcome her to the Abbey," said Sir Lionel, with a bow so truly magnificent that poor frightened Hester felt called upon to respond by a regular dancing-school courtesy. This suited Sir Lionel admirably. He decided that if this little girl had not the brilliant beauty of the other, she was a gentle, well-mannered creature;
so he completed her dismay by offering his arm to lead her to the dining-room, whither they repaired, preceded by Haidee, whose face was brimming over with glee and mischievous amusement.
CHAPTER VIII.

Sir Lionel Trelawney left Heronhurst that evening to prepare for the reception of his daughter and her friend at the Abbey.

When Mr. Hamilton came home, he had a long private conference with his wife, after which he announced that he consented to the arrangement she had made during his absence; but he had not consented very willingly, and Sir Lionel would have been considerably astonished if he could have heard what he said on this occasion.

"Let it be as you wish, my dear. I'm very fond of Haidee—as fond as if she were my own; and if she must be with her father, perhaps she will be the better for having Hester there too. And it will, as you say, be better for Hester; and I don't for a moment suppose that Sir Lionel will again venture on actual oppression. But the plain truth is, the man's a scoundrel, and I don't like being obliged to him."

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“My dear Henry, the obligation will not be all on our side by any means. Haidee would be very miserable without any companion.”

“Did the fellow refer in any way to all that about poor Marian?”

“Not once. Is it not odd?”

“It is simply impossible, I suppose, that he does not know that you are Arthur Vane’s sister?”

“Oh, quite impossible! You don’t suppose he would have let Haidee be always here without finding out all about us?” (which was exactly what Sir Lionel had done). “But, indeed, Henry, it is not quite right to go back to that now. It was always a very mysterious affair, and it is quite possible that he was not as much to blame as poor Arthur thought him. Marian, herself, was a sweet creature; but her brother did not improve upon acquaintance, and I always fancied that he had made a dead set at Sir Lionel. Very likely it was a good deal his fault; in fact, there must have been some palliation of Sir Lionel’s conduct, for you know Mr. Trelawney left his son to his guardianship.”

“I know he did; and I also know that I always thought him a sneak for doing it. It was only because at that time it seemed likely
that his son would be the heir-at-law, and he wanted to make sure that he got all he could."

"Still, he must have known something that told in Sir Lionel's favour, or nothing would have made him do such a thing; of that I feel sure."

"Have it your own way, my dear. Wash the blackamoor white by all means, if you can. He may have arrived at a very decent shade of grey by this time, but you may take my word for it, he was very black once upon a time."

"But Hester may go?"

"Oh yes. I never interfere about the girls. Make her understand that she shall come home at a moment's notice if she is not happy, that's all."

In due time, therefore, these plans were carried out. Haidee and Hester were sent to the Abbey with Miss Warner, and the Hamiltons settled themselves in Russell Square, in a house which belonged to Mrs. Hamilton's eldest brother, Reginald Vane.
CHAPTER IX.

All the time that Haidee had been so lovingly sheltered by the Hamiltons, Singleton had been very happy under the kind rule of "his Captain," between whom and Reginald Hamilton, the boy's admiration was pretty equally divided. Young Hamilton was a year or so the elder in years, and very much the elder in education and character. Singleton learned more from him than even from the naval instructor, and fortunately Reginald's faults were not of a nature to injure his devoted admirer. What those faults were this story will disclose; doubtless they were latent in his character from the first, but they were latent. To those about him he appeared almost faultless—to Singleton perfectly so. It was a pity indeed that he was not as ardently attached to his profession as could be wished, but that was rather his misfortune than his fault. Poor Singleton, when smarting under
reproof for some wild frolic, or embarrassed by the results of some outbreak of his passionate temper, often wished that he could exchange his own enthusiasm for his friend's steady attention to his duties. He kept as close to Reginald's side as he could, for with him he felt safe; but they were sometimes parted, and it really seemed as if an evil spirit took possession of Singleton when thus left to his own devices. As to the pranks played when he and a certain Irish midshipman, whose real name was John, but who was better known to his friends as Pat, or Paddy O'Hara, happened to be companions, they were too numerous and too extraordinary to be related here. The number of hours spent by these two, while still small boys, on the "bad eminence" of the mast-head was something wonderful.

But if Singleton loved his Captain and his friend, he worshipped another person, of whom I must now give you some idea.

Mrs. Hamilton's brother, Arthur Vane, held a civil appointment in Halifax, and lived in a pretty little place about a mile from the town. His wife, as you are aware, had been a Miss Trelawney, sister to John Trelawney's very worthless father. She had only lived long enough to leave him one little girl, who had
been ever since her father's idol. He always meant to send her home to his sister "next year" to be carefully educated; but next year never came. He could not bear to part with her, and as in his eyes she was simply perfect, he never perceived that it would have been much better if he had kept to his wise resolve. So he educated her himself, with the help of such masters as Halifax furnished. A scholar and a gentleman was Arthur Vane, but somewhat weak withal; blind to the faults of any one he loved, and willing to be blind to them. Marian was a strange being, to be the child of such parents. The most careful and judicious training would probably have failed to improve her, for she was one of those unhappy specimens of our race, fortunately rare, whose nature appears to have got an extra twist—a kind of moral squint, which renders them unable to tell right from wrong, crooked from straight. That she was wilful and selfish was not wonderful; the wonderful thing about her was, that without the least temptation to deceit, she was thoroughly deceitful. Crooked ways were natural to her; to get her own way while pretending to follow yours, was her delight. There was no accounting for it; her father had never said her nay in her life, and Singleton, who was
the other principal victim of her wiles, had been her bond slave from the first. His only companion until he left home having been his little sister, he never was happier than when playing with Marian; and although at first Mr. Vane had appeared unwilling to have him much at Westgrove, he gave way to his child's wishes, as usual. Reginald, unlike Singleton, preferred his uncle's society; he was a great reader, and Mr. Vane gladly directed his studies, and delighted in his conversation. Neither of them were aware how much Singleton and Marian were left to themselves, nor how completely the boy was the girl's slave. Time passed, and they ceased to be boy and girl, but the old state of things remained unaltered, at least outwardly.

It was the week before Christmas, two years having passed since that which saw the end of the Hamiltons' reign at Heronhurst.

The Sultana had just cast anchor at her familiar moorings off Halifax Dock Yard. Having run in during the night, the work of mooring her was over early, and such officers as had leave for the day were preparing to go ashore. Captain Hamilton was not on deck, but his "First Luff," Mr. Lynwood, was leaning over the taffrail looking silently down into the clear cold blue of the water; while round him arose
a buzz and Babel which would have deafened any ears unused to it, but which Mr. Lynwood never heard. Conspicuous among the rest by his height, his handsome face, and a certain air of unconscious dignity, was Reginald Hamilton. Six feet three, fair, though burnt to a healthy brown, with bright hazel eyes, waving chestnut hair, and clear-cut features which gave an idea of unbending will, young as he was, Reginald was a picture of manly beauty. Singleton, who stood beside him, is very much the same Singleton that we parted with, though he has grown a few inches in height—not many, for he is barely five feet nine. Dark, pale, and slight, the only remarkable thing about him is the beauty of his eyes; though his mouth is perfect, and his smile a thing to be remembered, if it was only because it seems to express half a dozen feelings at once. Pat O'Hara was there too, and as usual he was talking, for it must be confessed that the mellow voice with just a touch of his native brogue was rarely silent.

"Now isn't it just my luck?" he inquired dramatically. "To be on duty all this blessed day, and perfectly pining to go ashore and see—"

"Miss Hall," put in Singleton slyly.

"No, sir! not a bit of it. The beauties of
nature, I was going to say—after three weeks of blue water. Not that I mean to deny that if I found myself in the neighbourhood of her abode, I might call upon the young lady you have so indiscreetly named. I believe you think no one may visit a young lady but yourself! a *vain* thought, Singleton."

"All right, Paddy," Singleton answered, blushing crimson, "we won't fight about it."

"No, we won't then. Boys, there's nothing like carrying the war into the enemy's country. So Julius Cæsar always said—at least, I've been told he did, and if you doubt that he was right, I can prove it by an instance which has recently come under my own notice."

"Be quiet, Paddy."

"I'm as quiet as a lamb, my Singleton what's the row with you?"

"Mr. Lynwood," inquired Reginald, "is the Captain going on shore?"

"Yes, in half an hour."

"I suppose, sir, we can go with him."

"Who are we?" asked Lynwood, without looking round.

"Trelawney and myself, sir."

"Oh yes, I am sure he will take you."

"Come below, Trelawney, and help me to make up my parcel of books before we go."
Presently Captain Hamilton came on deck and inquired of the injured O'Hara, who was pacing disconsolately up and down, "if any officers wished to go ashore in the gig?"

"Yes, sir," replied the Irishman promptly; "at least I can answer for one, and that's me."

The Captain liked Mr. O'Hara, and therefore smiled upon this small joke.

"You're on duty, I suppose. Never mind, O'Hara. My friend Vane writes me word that he is going to give a ball on Christmas Eve, and he invites us all. I'll see that you're not on duty that night."

"Thank you, Captain Hamilton," cried O'Hara gleefully. "Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Trelawney are going ashore, sir, and Mr. Lynwood thought perhaps you'd take them."

"All right. Let them know that I'm ready."

So the side was piped, Reginald and Singleton rushed up laden with books, and in a few minutes they were landed at the dockyard jetty.

"You are going to Westgrove, I suppose," said the Captain. "Tell Vane I shall come to lunch and answer his note in person."

Westgrove lay sufficiently high above the town to make the Sultana's anchorage visible
from the windows, and Marian Vane had seen her at a very early hour, and had made her father send off a note to Captain Hamilton to secure the officers of the ship for her ball.

She had succeeded, after weeks of manœuvring, in persuading her father that he wished to give this ball to introduce her properly to the world of Halifax, she being now seventeen years old, and she had been getting very anxious for the return of the Sultana. Not that dancing men were scarce in Halifax, but she wished her handsome cousin to see her triumph, and Singleton would be so useful that she wanted him too.

Breakfast over, Marian retired to her room, and gave herself up to the mysteries of dressing herself with even more than her usual care. She was quite right to dress carefully, for with all her beauty, she was not one of those who look well in any dress. Let Haidee Trelawney wear anything from black bombazine to white satin (both included, and either of them is trying), and she was still herself, bright, beautiful Haidee Trelawney still. But whether Marian varied her humour with her dress, or suited her dress to her humour, I know not, but she was quite a different being in different attire; and Paddy O’Hara, a shrewd observer,
was known to declare that he knew what kind of temper she was in by looking at her "get-up."

Satisfied at last, as well she might be, Marian established herself in her pretty drawing-room, with her embroidery. She was certainly very pretty; as fair in complexion as Haidee herself, with pink cheeks that looked as if they were painted, hair which needed only a touch of sunshine to be golden, and light blue eyes, with a timid way of falling before yours, which Singleton found bewitching.

She was fond of needlework, as it gave her time to weave her flimsy little plots for getting what she might have had without any plotting at all. But that would not have suited Marian; to her, indeed, "stolen waters were sweet, and bread eaten in secret was pleasant." Just then she had a good deal to think of. Singleton had been "very troublesome" when she last saw him; matters were coming to a climax there, she fancied. She thought this "rather a bore." The present state of things suited her admirably. She did not care much for Singleton, who worshipped her; if she had a preference, it was for Reginald, who barely noticed her, thereby much piquing her vanity. But her cool little liking for her handsome cousin was
not likely to stand in the way of what she considered for her advantage. He was more like other people, and therefore more to her taste than Singleton; but he was poor, and Marian, who had never known what it was to be refused anything she wanted, was at heart utterly discontented with her lot, and filled with longings for the gay world she read about in her monthly consignment of novels from England. She longed with all the strength of her weakness to be rich—to be the fashion—to be "My lady." Singleton Trelawney could give her all this, and she would therefore marry him. But if Reginald had been equally well off, and equally in love with her, she would not have plotted to delay his proposal. It was too soon to give up her liberty—somehow or other her lover must be kept quiet, or, if that was impossible, could she devise no plan for keeping the engagement secret for a while? Yes, it might be done—she saw a hope of it—and was working out the whole campaign when her father came in.

"Marian, I see those two lads coming up to the house. What a pretty dress, my darling! Are you going to the Rink to-day?"

"Yes, papa; I thought the boys might like to go. Here they come, book-laden as usual."

Unsuspicous Mr. Vane welcomed them both
with equal warmth; he had long since forgotten his objection to Singleton's visits. The first greetings over, Reginald turned to the books he had brought back.

"I have kept one or two that I have not quite done with, Uncle Arthur; but not enough to last me through our next cruise."

"Your next cruise will be your voyage home, I suspect. However, come to the study, and let us see what you want."

"Hamilton, you're forgetting the Captain's message."

"So I was. Uncle Arthur, the Captain will be here to luncheon, and will then answer your note in person. That's all, Singleton, I think."

"Yes," answered Singleton, who was gazing at Marian with his soul in his eyes, hardly able to speak above his breath, so profound was the awe with which he was inspired by this arrant young flirt.

When these two were left alone, Marian said, returning to her needlework:

"Won't you sit down, Singleton? You must be tired if you walked up from the dockyard."

"Yes—no; I mean I am not tired, though we did walk. Marian, every time I see you, I
think you more beautiful than the time before."

"So you say with praiseworthy regularity every time we meet! Could you not find something new to say to me, sir?" said Marian, laughing.

"What shall I say?—that I love you better than ever, if possible?"

"Now I ask you, on your honour as a gentleman, is that remark a bit newer than the other?"

"No," he answered, looking earnestly at her; "but though it is the old, old story, Marian, you may give it quite a new ending. For you have always laughed and put me aside hitherto. Now, give me your hand, so, and say, 'Singleton, I love you a little,' and then, oh, then, I shall soon find something new to say to you."

"Not until then?" she said, drawing away her hand. "Singleton, I want you and Reginald to go with me to the Rink after luncheon."

"Certainly, with pleasure. But, Marian—"

"No, no! I don't want to hear those new remarks—yet. I find the old ones enough. Besides that, do you know, Singleton, I must not let you run on in that wild way any longer. Since you went away last, I have become quite a woman—I am seventeen! and papa is going to give a ball to introduce me properly; it's to
be on Christmas Eve, and if you are very well-behaved, I will dance with you, perhaps. How old are you, by the way?"

"Twenty last birthday. Marian, you must promise me the first dance."

"I cannot promise; remember, I shall be the lady of the house. Twenty! why, you are quite a man! and as I have just announced that I am quite a woman, it follows that these boy and girl follies must cease forthwith. I must leave off calling you and Reginald 'the boys;' in fact, perhaps I ought to call you Mr. Trelawney for the future."

"You will not be so unkind. Oh, Marian, you know that with me, at least, this is no boyish fancy, but true, real, heartfelt love. Marian—dear Marian—"

"Don't you hear the bell?" interrupted dear Marian, with great composure. "Come, Mr. Trelawney! I hear the others in the dining-room."

She passed him quickly, and had reached the door, leaving him sorely cast down; but at the door she turned her head, and gave him a glance and a smile which sent him up to the seventh heaven of delight. It was really a sorrowful spectacle, to see by what hackneyed, commonplace arts the girl was playing with the poor
fellow's warm heart, one beat of which she was unworthy of.

Captain Hamilton had just arrived, and was ready to promise all that could be reasonably required of him for the eventful night. Lynwood, being a married man, did not care for balls, and would remain on board. All the others, with the exception of one midshipman, should have leave; furthermore, the midshipman detained by the stern exigencies of the service should be a very young one, lately joined, and whose presence could be of no consequence, except to himself.

I regret to say that the young gentleman in question, Mr. Langley, on hearing his sad fate, retired to a dark and private corner, and there wept and bemoaned himself; which was childish of that officer. He afterwards found a slight amount of consolation in saying that "Old Lynwood and I" were to be on duty that night.

Singleton had no further private conversation with Marian that day. They went to the Rink, and Marian was obliged to confess to herself that Singleton was the more efficient assistant of the two to a somewhat timid skater. Indeed, in any exercise in which activity rather than strength is required, he always excelled. It was quite beautiful to see the light, graceful figure
swaying easily with a kind of rhythmical movement as he swept by, performing the most complicated evolutions with the most perfect ease.

They returned to Westgrove for dinner, but Marian avoided being alone with him, and sent him on board in a rather desponding state of mind. In fact, it was so plain that there was something wrong with him that Reginald Hamilton remarked it, and his attention—being once awake, he soon perceived how matters stood with his friend.
It was the morning of Christmas Eve. Reginald Hamilton had just stretched himself at ease upon one of the lockers, or whatever they are called, in the gun-room, surrounded by books, and intending to have a good long morning of study; when Singleton rushed in headlong.

"Regie, I do so want to go ashore! and I'm on duty. Are you very busy?"

"Why? Do you want me to take your place?"

Singleton hesitated.

"It's hardly fair to interrupt you. I can ask O'Hara."

"He's gone ashore. And besides, of course I can do it for you—how often have you done the same for me? But why do you want to go ashore this morning, when you are to be at Westgrove to-night?"

"Well, you see, Marian told me she could
not get flowers enough, and I spoke to the fellow at the shop about getting me some, and I have just got a message to say that he has them ready. Now I can't well send them up without going myself, for she'll have no one to help her arrange them, you know."

"I see; and you want me to go there with them, is that it? Of course I can! not that I am a very good hand at arranging flowers," said Reginald maliciously.

"No, you wretch! I want you to take my duty, and let me go to Westgrove. Don't humbug, Regie—you know what I mean very well."

"I do; and I wish—never mind, Singleton. Go to Mr. Lynwood, and if he is content, so am I."

Singleton went in search of Lynwood, leaving Reginald to gather up his books, muttering as he did so—"I wish I had seen it before. I wonder if it would do any good to warn him. Poor dear Singleton! I don't believe she cares a farthing for him; at least, if she does, I must be a vainer donkey than I think myself.—Well, Singleton, all right I suppose?"

"All right of course, and thank you a thousand times. You don't know how much you've obliged me."
“I wish I did not, I was much easier in my mind when I was blind to what’s going on. Singleton, I don’t often take liberties, but bear with a word now. I’m afraid you are preparing a terrible disappointment for yourself.”

Singleton turned pale, and looked anxiously at him.

“What do you mean? Speak plainly.”

“I think I perceive that you admire Marian Vane, and I don’t think she cares for you. I only want to warn you, knowing how you go in heart and soul for a thing; and it certainly seems to me that she does not care for you.”

“I think you are mistaken,” said Singleton slowly.

“Perhaps I am; but take care, Singleton, for she may be only flirting with you.”

He expected a burst of anger, but Singleton only looked grave, and answered:

“Thank you, at all events, for warning me. I will know the truth, and that soon. Well, I’m off now, old fellow, so good-bye, and take care of yourself.”

In due time Singleton appeared at Westgrove, armed with a huge basket of hot-house flowers, for which he had paid a fabulous price. Marian, not expecting her troublesome lover,
was alone in the room that had been cleared for dancing, when he walked in. Though taken by surprise, she still hoped to keep him quiet by judicious management.

"Oh, Singleton, such flowers! How very very kind of you! What beauties they are!" she exclaimed at once. "They are more than welcome, for I have not half enough to make the supper-table and the rooms look pretty. Let me look at them. Why, you extravagant boy, these are too good for the supper-table, I must have some of them for my hair and dress; they are a great deal prettier than those I was going to use. If I only knew how to arrange them!"

"I think I could make a wreath of these," Singleton answered, holding up one or two lovely sprays of jasmine.

"Sit down, and we will pick out what I want and then arrange the rest for the table," she replied.

Poor Singleton! he had come there determined to speak at once, and to know the best, or the worst, that fate had in store for him, and yet there he was now, seated beside the basket of flowers, busied in choosing and arranging, utterly unable to get in a word on any other subject. However, he was determined to have
it out with her before he left the house; so he worked away with right good will, and the basket was cleared long before she expected. Nor could she find fault with what he had done, for he had such wonderful taste and instinctive skill that his wreaths and flower-knots were actual works of art.

"It is perfect—quite perfect!" she exclaimed, as he put the last touches to his handiwork.

"You ought to be an artist, Singleton. You are quite thrown away in the Navy."

"She hoped that her words would bring on a long discussion on the glories of a sailor's career, but the trap failed. Singleton put the last wreath tenderly in its place, and then turned his pleading eyes upon her.

"It is for you," he said simply. "If it were for any one else, very likely I should not have done it half so well. Marian, don't look vexed! I must speak to you."

"Not to-day, Singleton, please not to-day. Remember what a tiring night I have before me. I cannot listen to you now."

But Singleton felt that even to have made her seriously refuse to listen, instead of laughing at him, was a step gained, indeed Marian herself knew that she had made a mistake the moment she had spoken.
"You must listen, Marian. I cannot afford to lose this opportunity, you are so hard to catch, you see. And, indeed, if you knew how anxious and restless I am, and how happy one word from you could make me, I know you would not ask me to wait. Marian! I love you; when you are cold to me, the world seems to have neither light nor life in it, and when you are kind, in a moment everything is different. It won't take you long to answer me," he went on gently. "I sometimes fancy you are afraid of me, because I am hasty and passionate, but you know well I have never been so to you. I never could be anything but gentle with you, Marian, for I think I would rather die than see you turn away from me."

His soft low voice gave double eloquence to his simple pleading; Marian was a horrid deceitful little flirt, as I have said before, and moreover, she really did not care for him. But it was not possible for any girl to hear him now and remain unmoved. She reddened, hesitated, looked at him. Some good angel whispered in her ear, "He is in earnest, tell him the truth." And the truth was on her very lips; another moment, and a few plain words would have been spoken, and Singleton undeceived, when (luckily as she presently thought) her father tapped at the window.
“Yes, papa; I will open it. You see, Singleton, I can’t answer you now.”

“I will wait till after luncheon,” he whispered hastily, as he helped her to open the window and admit Mr. Vane.

“You here, Singleton! I didn’t know you had come.”

“Look what he brought us, papa! did you ever see such lovely flowers? and what do you think of the table now?”

She was only seventeen; she improved very much in a few years in what she called self-command, but just now there was a sort of hurry in her manner that made her father look quickly from her face to Singleton’s, who, having no wish to conceal his feelings, looked quite himself, and the half-formed suspicion died away.

“I must run upstairs and wash my hands, they are as dirty as if I had been gardening. So are yours, Singleton; so you had better go to papa’s dressing-room, and then we will have luncheon.”

So saying, Marian made her escape to her room, where she sat down to think for a moment.

“It was lucky papa came just then,” she thought. “I was mad, I think. I shall never
have such another chance. Yet I don't like him much, and it is so hard to tie myself down at my age, and to one who, I suspect, would be both jealous and exacting. I must do the best I can, get him to wait for the consent of his own father, before he asks mine. I dare say I can manage that. Oh dear! I wish Reginald had been the rich man instead of Singleton."
CHAPTER XI.

It was nearly time for Singleton to leave Westgrove before he succeeded in getting his answer from the slippery young mistress of the house. Even then, it was much against her will that it was done, but fortunately for him, Mr. Vane was called away on business.

"Now, Marian, I must soon leave you; won't you answer me? Say to me in one word whether I am to be happy or miserable. You have my heart in your hand, you must know whether you love me or not. Just one word, Marian!"

Marian drew a long breath before she spoke. Her mind was made up; she would be (in some future day) Lady Trelawney, she would escape from Halifax and shine as a bright particular star in England—in London. I don't know exactly what the girl expected London to be like, but something very delightful. So she
meant to marry him, but to have a little more liberty first, if possible.

"Singleton, one word will not do. There are things you know nothing of that I must tell you."

"What things? I know of nothing that I greatly care to hear, except that you love me, Marian."

"Ah, but I do, and there is not time now."

"There is time, plenty of time, just to say 'yes,' and then I must speak to Mr. Vane."

This was exactly what she wanted to avoid, or at least to postpone.

"If you were to go to my father now and ask his consent, I think it more than likely he would refuse it."

"I cannot think so. He has always been kindness itself to me, and you know how he loves you. He will never make you unhappy. In fact, it all comes to this, Marian: do you love me? Answer me that question yourself, from you only could I take my answer. Oh, Marian, am I dreaming, or do you mean to say yes?"

He had taken her hand, and she did not withdraw it. He was silent for some time, and then said in a low voice:

"I did not know, till now, how happy I could be."
She looked into his dreamy, love-filled eyes, and felt half angry with him for being so easily deceived.

"I must see Mr. Vane now, my darling."

"No, no," she exclaimed, drawing her hand away. "You must say nothing to any one until you have seen me again. To-morrow I will tell you why."

"But how can I conceal——"

"You must, Singleton. Papa is not strong, and this party is enough to tire him to death, without any agitation such as this would be. He has not a suspicion of it, and I know he will not like it."

"Not like it? but why? I know you don't think of it in that way, Marian; but there is no reason why your father should refuse his consent. I think most men would be rather pleased."

"Papa won't be pleased; I will tell you why to-morrow. There really is not time now, and papa may come in any moment; besides, I have so much to do."

"Marian, you are very cold. I don't believe you care for me, after all."

"I do care for you," she said half petulantly. "If I did not, should I not have told you so at once?"
"Then you do really love me? Oh, Marian, my darling, I will do whatever you wish, only put your dear little hand in mine, so; now look me in the face and say, 'Singleton, I love you.'"

"Singleton, I love you," she repeated softly; but as to looking him in the face, she did not do that, owing, as he thought, to her modesty.

"Thank you, my own Marian. I shall go now. I'm too happy. Marian, I will not come to your dance, I could not behave as if nothing had happened, so, as you don't want your father to find me out to-night, I'll stay on board."

The tender Marian jumped at this proposal, which exactly suited her.

"We should have no comfort, should we, with so many people here? Come at twelve to-morrow, and I shall meet you at the gate and tell you all I know. Good-bye, until then."

So, with many farewells, Singleton departed, and made his way on board the Sultana. It was almost dark, and Reginald Hamilton was walking up and down the deck, waiting for him. Reginald thought that a glance would tell him how matters stood, but Singleton was a strange being; you never could be certain how anything would affect him. And the joy that now filled his heart had almost frightened him, he was
pale, and shrank from Hamilton's inquiring looks as if they pained him. He did not want to disclose what had passed, that was plain; and Reginald not unnaturally concluded that he had been refused. He felt certain of it when Singleton said to little Langley, whom they encountered presently, looking very dismal:

"I say, youngster, should you like to go to Westgrove to-night instead of me? for I don't mean to go."

"Oh, Trelawney!" gasped the boy, "are you in earnest? Do you really mean that I may go instead of you?"

He had caught Singleton by the arm, and was looking up at him with his innocent red and white face beaming with delight; but being a thorough Englishman, albeit a small one, he was more surprised than gratified when Singleton bent down and kissed him lightly on the forehead.

"Yes, I'm in earnest. I'll settle it with Mr. Lynwood," he said, and passed on; leaving Langley crimson between delight and shame-facedness. Reginald followed, rather provoked.

"Why on earth did you do that, Singleton?"

"I don't mean to go, so the boy may as well have the fun."

"I don't mean that. I understand that well.
enough, I suppose; but why will you do such out-of-the-way, un-English things as that just now? you left Tom Langley gaping with amazement, and the sentry grinning from ear to ear."

"At me! why, what did I do?"

"Kissed him," replied Reginald in a tone of great disgust.

"Kissed the sentry! did I really? Pure absence of mind, Regie."

"Not quite so bad as that—Langley."

"Well, it didn't hurt him, did it? And he looked so jolly innocent and round-eyed, just like a little fat puff of a cherub I once saw in a picture, or a rosy-cheeked apple, if you like the less poetical simile better."

"I don't see why you need kiss him because he looked like either cherub or apple."

"Now I call this hard," remarked Singleton in a meditative manner. "The other day, Dick Sullivan, being in a bad temper, kicked little Langley en passant; and who threatened to horse-whip the said Sullivan if he ever did it again, but yourself, friend Hamilton? Is Langley a kind of sacred animal, neither to be kissed nor kicked? Don't look so disgusted, my dear fellow; there's no harm done, even if the sentry did grin. Who cares for the grins of a red herring? I don't, for one."
"I know you don't: I wish to Heaven you did. This is just the kind of thing that sets people talking about you."

"Ay, and what do they say?"

"Upon my word I think I shall tell you; if anything would cure you of your strange ways, this would."

Singleton slipped his arm under Reginald's, and looked up at him with an expression so made up of fun, mischief, and mock penitence, that it was rather difficult to maintain the proper degree of severity.

"Now then, Regie, I'm ready. Lay on, Macduff; spare the rod and spoil the child, you know. Hit hard, old fellow—what do they say of me?"

"Singleton, you are incorrigible."

"Ah, don't say that of me until you've tried. Why don't you tell me the worst at once? Never mind, I'll tell you as you won't tell me. They say I am—un-English, with a capital E. And having said this, in your eyes they have done their worst."

"I dare say they do say that; it would not surprise me in the least."

"Nor me, seeing I am half Spanish, and t'other half Yankee—no, not Yankee—Southerner."
"But they say worse than that."
"Worse than un-English with a big E?—that can hardly be; but come, Reginald, don't keep a fellow in suspense. What do they say, and who in this case are they?"
"Russell of the Hannibal—"
"Is such a cannibal," put in Singleton softly.
"Singleton! do you want to hear what I have to say, or do you not?"
"I'll be good. I'll be as grave as—a sexton. Out with it, Regie."
"Well, Russell asked me seriously if it were true that you are—mad."
"Mad!" exclaimed Singleton, starting. "What the devil does he mean by that?"
"He had been told that it was so by several people here in Halifax. I denied it indignantly, and asked if he had heard any reason given for such an assertion; and he repeated several stories, but particularly an account of your pranks the last time you and O'Hara were on shore before we sailed—that time that you ended in a quarrel. It was only slightly exaggerated, and yet you have no idea how mad it sounded. I do wish so much, Trelawney, that you would think a little more of what people may say of you."
"Mad—eh? That is worse than un-English,
even with the capital. Why, it's a lock-up-able offence, isn't it? Whereas I never heard of any one condemned to solitary confinement on the other count. Now then, youngster!—Reginald, look at this ingenuous youth, Mr. Thomas Langley, R.N., drinking in our words with infantile avidity, and quite ready to repeat them with infantile inaccuracy. Little boy! what have we been saying?"

He had captured the young monkey, and now frowned darkly upon him; but it was a remarkable fact that, in spite of his temper, the small boys were never afraid of Singleton. This creature smiled saucily at him.

"I think Mr. Hamilton said you were mad because you kissed me."

"There, Regie! you see how things get themselves said. Little boy, attend. Do you believe that assertion of Mr. Hamilton's? In your youthful but perhaps not thoughtless mind, do you set me down as insane, or as merely un-English, judging by that act alone?"

Langley only laughed in reply. Singleton drew down his black eyebrows until his eyes were nearly lost in their shade, and slightly shaking his captive, he said:

"Answer me, Flibbertigibbet, or I may go to the ball after all."
“Oh, you wouldn’t do that!” Langley cried in a great hurry. “Only un-English, Trelawney.”

“Mr. Langley, you’re a time-serving sycophant, and make me blush for my species. Get thee behind me—depart. Regie, my dear old fellow, never mind what people say of me. I am what nature made me, and if I were ever to begin as you would have me, to think much about people’s opinion of me, it wouldn’t make me a bit more like—you, for instance. I should only be constrained and miserable, instead of easy and comfortable. And they can’t lock me up because Russell says some one else says I’m mad. By the way, did he ask if O’Hara was mad too? for if I remember right, he was mad that day, at least in the Irish sense of the word.”

The party at Westgrove was like most other parties, and needs no particular description. Reginald was to sleep there, and it was five o’clock in the morning before he or any other inmate of the house went to bed, and it was nearly twelve before he came downstairs to see if there were any breakfast to be had. He found Mr. Vane at breakfast all alone.

“Marian, I suppose, is too tired to appear,” he said presently.

“Oh, she’s been about some time—had her
breakfast before I was down. She has a slight headache, and I advised her to go out for a turn, to get rid of it."

This fictional headache Marian had assumed for her father's benefit; and I do not think the poor man was to blame for being deceived. How should he suspect that his daughter was at that moment meeting her lover by appointment at the gate—that lover being the son of a man whom Mr. Vane thoroughly disliked? Most men with the same reason would have hated Sir Lionel Trelawney; but Arthur Vane, dreamy and absent, had only arrived at disliking him.

No one will be surprised to hear that Singleton had been at the gate long before the appointed hour. He paced up and down under the leafless trees to keep himself from freezing; and was looking at his watch for perhaps the hundredth time when Marian appeared, wrapped in furs and looking as fresh as a rose, in spite of late hours and headaches.

"My darling!" he cried, rushing to meet her, "I was beginning to think something had prevented your coming."

"I'm not late, Singleton. Oh, we had a most delightful evening, and your flowers looked lovely."
“And made you think a little of me, I hope.”

“I could not well help thinking of you, for everybody was wondering why you did not come. I think it would have been better if you had, you know; but we have no time to lose, Singleton, for papa is at breakfast, and he may come to look for me very soon.”

“We have no time to lose, indeed; for Captain Hamilton got our sailing orders this morning, and, as we were expecting them, we are all ready, and shall sail before night. So I shall not even eat my Christmas dinner with you, Marian. Why,” he suddenly exclaimed, “you look glad! Marian, why are you glad that I am going away?”

“But I’m not glad—only surprised,” protested Marian, inwardly hoping that he was not always so inconveniently penetrating; “but now let me tell you my reasons for not letting you speak to papa yesterday. Singleton, do you know that he and your father are—enemies? that they hate each other? and that when you first came here papa refused to let you come to us with Reginald; and you would never have been at Westgrove but that I met you out walking and brought you home with me.”
"Enemies—hate each other—why, to the best of my belief they have never met!"

"Oh, I assure you they have. And I suspect their quarrel was about my mother; she was a Miss Trelawney, you know."

"Yes, aunt to John—my dear cousin. Oh yes, I know that; and I hate to think that he is more closely related to you than I am. But I think you are mistaken, Marian. Look here, now. My father never was in England until he inherited the Abbey, and I was then a year old. My mother lived for more than two years after she came to England, and you and Haidee are about the same age, I think. So you see your mother could have nothing to say to any quarrel."

"I know nothing clearly, I only guessed that it was about my mother; but I know for certain that your father and mine are enemies."

"Marian, I like the tragic way you say that. It gives me a thrill of romance—a deadly feud between the noble houses of Vane and Trelawney, you know. Now, I don't deny that Sir Lionel has an excellent capacity for hatred and enmity, but your dear gentle pater could hardly get up a real fine enduring hate to save his life. At all events the best plan, it seems to me, is to ask him plainly—he's sure to be kind."
Now Marian had been considering within herself that she might contrive to keep her engagement secret for some little time, as her impetuous lover was to sail for England that very day, so she replied:

"Oh no, Singleton; don't do that. You know how good and gentle he is, but your father is very different."

"Rather, I must confess."

"Then can you not see that the real opposition, if there is to be any, will come from him? If there is an obstacle to our marriage, which cannot be got over, it will be of his making, you may be sure. Now I want you to speak to him before you tell papa a word about it; as you are going home at once I think this is what we ought to do."

"But it is treating Mr. Vane very badly, Marian; and, besides, I really don't see any good reason for doing it. If Sir Lionel objected ever so much I don't know that I should greatly care."

"But I wish you to do it, Singleton; is that no good reason in your eyes? But I have other reasons which even you will say are good ones. Papa is not strong; I have been quite uneasy about him lately, and you don't know how the least anxiety injures him—he cannot
sleep, and quite loses his appetite. Why tell him now, when you don’t know what your father may say about it? I will not have him kept miserable by a long expectation and waiting—no Singleton; when you have got your father’s consent, write to me, or better still, come to me. I will answer for papa’s.”

“And if he really has some reason for refusing, and does refuse his consent, am I to give up all hope, Marian?” he asked passionately.

“Try,” said the girl, looking softly up into his face. “It must, in some degree, depend upon what the objection is. You will do as I wish, Singleton?”

“I will, but I confess I do it unwillingly. I cannot help thinking that it is not being above-board with Mr. Vane; and I couldn’t do it, I know, but that I am going away. Oh, Marian, believe me that it is all a mistake. I shall come back to you as quick as steam can bring me; perhaps Haidee will come with me to see her sister. What friends you and she will be. And then, Marian, then——”

“Then,” she answered, with another soft glance, “you will take me to England, and show me—the beautiful old Abbey I have so often heard of.”

Her lover’s face darkened with one of those
sudden changes which she half feared, half despised, and his voice lost its tender tone as he said:

"I cannot do that, Marian. I shall take you to England and show you many things, but not Trelawney Abbey."

"What do you mean?"

"You'll find it hard to believe that any man in these days could be such an ignorant Vandal! but Sir Lionel's very first act, on coming into the property, was to pull down the beautiful old building, and run up a red brick atrocity on its site, with all the modern improvements."

"Then the old Abbey is gone," said Marian, rather at a loss for a safe remark.

"Gone—yes, every trace of it except one small chapel. I don't believe he had a legal right to do it, you know," he went on excitedly.

"The estate is strictly entailed, and I believe his act was as illegal as it was barbarous."

"Oh, Singleton, what a shame!" exclaimed Marian, who in her heart sympathised rather with Sir Lionel's deed than with his son's wrath. She was half-amused, half-bored by his excitement, and time was running on—her father would be coming in search of her.

"Singleton, papa will be out soon; I must go home, and I should so much like to say
good-bye to you here, by ourselves—and not in the house with every one by."

Not knowing her private reasons, this struck Singleton as a proof of the delicacy of her affection.

"Yes," he said, turning to her suddenly with his bright, half-sad smile—"Yes, let us part here, where we met for the first time six years ago. It was just here—don't you remember it? You and your maid coming down the hill, Regie and I skylarking in that tree. Marian, I think I have loved you from that hour; and you have grown lovelier with every year that has passed."

"At that rate I'm afraid I shall soon be too beautiful to live, like the Miss Kenwigs. There's the Sultana," she added, as a turn in the road made the ship visible.

"With the blue Peter flying! I must go on board, for I promised to go back soon. Lynwood wanted not to let me go, but I said I had business to settle. Good-bye, my Marian! You shall hear from me soon. Believe me, all will be well. And now, good-bye, for a little time."

He kissed her once, reverently and tenderly; then ran down the rest of the hill, and was soon out of sight.
“Oh dear me! I’m glad that’s over,” murmured Miss Vane as she turned towards home. “I wonder shall I ever get used to his queer ways? what a passion he worked himself into, all about nothing.”

She had just reached the gate of Westgrove when she heard the sound of some one running after her; it proved to be a ship’s boy with *Sultana* in gold letters round his shiny hat. He was considerably out of breath.

“Mr. Trelawney give me this, mum, and which I was to give it to you if so be as I over-hauled you, and if not I was to go on to the house with it. He bid me say he quite forgot it like,” added the boy with a grin, handing her a letter addressed to Reginald Hamilton, which Singleton had brought on shore for him.

Marian took it, muttering impatiently, “How like him!” Then to the boy, “Thank you. I can take it on to the house; I’m very sorry, but I have not my purse with me.”

“IT don’t matter, mum. Mr. Trelawney give me a half a suffering, so he did,” grinned the sea urchin. “Good-mornin’, mum.”

Back to the house went Marian, and found her father and Reginald in the study.

“May I come in, papa? Here’s a letter for Reginald.”
"For me? how did it come? Thank you, I see it is from my mother."

"A boy from the ship gave it to me."

"Then the mail has come in," remarked Mr. Vane, "and I must be off to the office."

"I will walk down with you, papa, to see if there are any for me. Reginald, I saw the Sultana from the top of the hill, and she has the blue Peter flying."

"You don't say so, then we have got our orders, I suppose."

He spoke absently, folding up his letter slowly.

"No bad news, Regie, I hope?" she asked gently.

"Not very bad, I trust. My father was not well; he has got a bad cold and cannot shake it off. He has got a holiday from his office, and they are all going away for a change of air. Uncle Arthur, my mother says that Uncle Vane has sent her a present which enables them to do this. I thought he never noticed any of his people now."

"He never notices me, I know. He never forgave me for accepting a Government appointment, nor your father for being a Conservative. But though he is a strange being, and an awful Radical, he is a kind-hearted creature in his own
way. I dare say he has forgiven Hester since she was in misfortune."

"Very condescending of him. Well, Uncle Arthur, I must go on board, but I hope to come again to say good-bye."

In this hope he was doomed to disappointment, as he could not get ashore again, and the *Sultana* sailed that evening. While she was weighing anchor, a shore boat came alongside with a letter for Mr. Trelawney. A note, rather, for it contained only these few words, which gave him quite enough to think about.

"**Dear Singleton,**

"The mail has brought us wonderful news. I shall be in England very soon; do not speak to your father until you hear from me again; this news may make a difference. I have not time for another word now, but will write as soon as we arrive.

"Yours,

"M. F. V."
CHAPTER XII.

A bright cold January day; cold even in Devonshire. The red brick edifice which vexed poor Singleton's soul (and let me confess in passing, that it was a very handsome house, and far more convenient to live in than the old Abbey had been, or could have been made) shone and glowed cheerfully in the light of the sun; and Haidee Trelawney and Hester Hamilton ran about its spacious apartments in a state of the utmost excitement. They could not settle down to any employment, they could not even remain long in the same place. In and out of the long bay-windowed drawing-room, and the conservatory into which it opened, they wandered together, chattering like a pair of magpies. Then into the gallery, which looked to the front, to watch for a few moments for the approach of expected travellers. For it was the promised arrival of their sailor brothers which
had put them into such a flutter of spirits, and kept them wandering here and there—and everywhere, I was going to say, but I should have been wrong; for they did not venture to invade the library, where Sir Lionel was sitting in solitary dignity.

I must explain how Hester came to be at the Abbey. Miss Warner had left them at the end of the two years she was engaged for. Haidee had been very anxious to ask her to remain, but Sir Lionel did not like her, and refused his consent. Then Hester had gone home; but Haidee was lonely without her, and she was ill in London, which did not agree with her; and so it came about that she was much more at the Abbey than at home. Just now the rest of her family were abroad, and Reginald was coming home with Singleton for a few days, until their time for returning was known. Sir Lionel had asked him, which he certainly would not have done if he had realised the fact that his son and his son's friend were no longer boys; but that idea never came into his head.

The Sultana had arrived in Plymouth some days ago, but the young men had begged their sisters not to come to them; they were kept very busy, and felt that it would be altogether
more pleasant to meet them at home, and not in the hurry and confusion of paying off. And they were to come this very day! and hence the excitement of the two girls.

"I declare, Hester, it's a real comfort to me to see you as idle and restless as I am myself, for once in your life. If dear, good, precise Miss Warner were here she would take to her bed, overcome by surprise and disappointment. You used to be her stay and comfort, but she would not find you a comfort to-day. I shall write and tell her that on this blissful occasion you were as bad as myself, if not worse."

"Tell her, at the same time, that I should have been more than content to sit here and watch the gate, but that you would not let me alone. Not one moment have you left me in peace and quiet."

"Peace and quiet! who wants peace and quiet when two brothers are coming home after six years in 'furrin parts?' My dear, to hear you talk one would think that brothers came home once a week at least. No! it's a great event, and I mean to get all the excitement I can out of it."

"I have no doubt of that, dear," said Hester quietly.

"Horrid sneering animal, throwing cold water
on my innocent happiness. Hester, let us play a game of billiards; we can watch the gate very well from the table."

"It won't bring them any sooner, Haidee. Reginald says three o'clock, and it is only a quarter past two now."

"And we cannot even console ourselves by having luncheon, for I put it off for them. Now is it not a pity we cannot smoke? I'm sure a cigar would be very composing. Hester, I shall end in being a smoker, I know."

"You will be nothing so horrid; come, now, I'm ready, but if you keep one eye on the window I shall beat you."

The game began, but it received a very divided attention, every sound being supposed to be the squeak of the gate. And yet, after all, they were taken by surprise. Haidee, who, as usual, played rather wildly, but sometimes made wonderful strokes, had just made one which surprised even herself, and they were busy in admiring and discussing, when the muffled rattle of horses' feet upon the wooden pavement of the porch made them fling down their cues, and with one glance out of the window they flew down the gallery.

The young men had just got out of the carriage, and in a moment more Haidee's arms
were round her brother's neck, while Hester disappeared from view under Reginald's cloak, which he had not had time to throw off. It would be hard for the most faithful narrator to tell what was said for the next five minutes; they all talked and no one listened. The first distinct utterance was in Singleton's voice:

"Haidee, I knew you'd be a beauty, and, by Jove! so you are. And yet, somehow, you're my own dear old Haidee still."

To which she replied by bursting into tears and sobbing out:

"But you are not my old Singie! you are not the little brother I helped to run away."

"My dear girl, that's a blessing to be devoutly thankful for. Why, I should be fit for nothing but a caravan if I had not contrived to knock a few inches out of myself by this time. Haidee, you goose, stop crying, or I shall run away again, stay another six years, and come home a giant like Hamilton here, who is wondering how I made myself so unpleasant in old times that you must needs salute me with tears and lamentations. Good gracious! I return to the halls of my fathers and my only sister howls because I'm not a dwarf!"

"Your fathers!" echoed Haidee, drying her eyes and cheering up with her usual rapidity,
"that puts me in mind! oh, Singie, he's in the library—go to him at once."

"I dare say he's in no hurry; and I haven't introduced Hamilton."

Haidee held out her hand with the air of a young princess welcoming a visitor to her court.

"We don't want to be introduced, do we, Mr. Hamilton? at least, Hester's brother cannot be a stranger to me."

"Well done, Haidee!" muttered Singleton; while Reginald, looking at her for the first time, felt actually dazzled. There was something wonderfully bright and vivid in the beauty of this graceful, gracious maiden, whose smile seemed to light up the hall, even while the tears were hanging still upon her curved eyelashes.

"Hester, you can take your brother to his room; go up the stone stairs, it is so much shorter. Luncheon will be ready in a few minutes. Singleton, come to Sir Lionel."

Singleton still lingered.

"You have forgotten," said he, "that I never saw Miss Hamilton before."

"I did forget it, indeed. It seems so very strange that she and I should be like sisters, while you, and she have never met. But now I'll do my duty—Miss Hester Hamilton, may
I have the honour of presenting to you my brother, Mr. Trelawney? Curtsey, Hester, that's a good child, that always does as she's told. Now, Singleton—your very best bow!—bless me, how like papa!"

"What is like him?" inquired Singleton.

"Why, you, my dear. You looked so oddly like him when you bowed."

"Then I forswear bowing. You've received my very last bow, Miss Hamilton. I shall only nod for the future. Come, Haidee, let us go and get it over at once."

They walked side by side up the gallery.

"Dear Sing! you should not have said that before people," Haidee whispered, with a re- buking look.

"Can't see it, little sister! If it is true it may be said; if it may be said no matter who hears it. And Hamilton knows all about it as well as I do myself, and so I suppose does Hester—Miss Hamilton I ought to say. Here we are; now for a cold bath."

Sir Lionel was sitting by the fire in an easy-chair; on a book-stand beside him lay an imposing-looking volume, bound in crimson morocco and gilding (I am particular to mention the outside of Sir Lionel's book, the inside being of little importance), but he was not read-
ing—in fact, his children’s entrance roused him from a nap.

“Who is there?” he exclaimed, starting up. “Oh! Haidee—and—and can it be Singleton?”

“It is Singleton, papa.”

Yes, it was Singleton, there was no mistaking him. It was “her son”—it was the boy who had defied and defeated him six years ago. Sir Lionel stood and looked at him.

“It is I myself, Sir Lionel, and no changeling. Hamilton and I arrived five minutes ago.”

“Ah! yes, to be sure,” said Sir Lionel, trying to recover his composure. “And where is Mr. Hamilton?”

“Gone to his room, he will come down to luncheon in a minute. I suppose he thought the presence of a stranger might prove a restraint upon our feelings. Are you not going to shake hands with me, Sir Lionel? just for form’s sake, you know.”

“Certainly; you took me by surprise just now. You are welcome home, Singleton; and I trust that we shall be able to make it pleasant to you and your friend. I think I hear the bell, I shall join you in the dining-room presently.”

He dropped his son’s hand and left the room by a door which led to his own apartments.
"Singleton, how could you be so foolish? Do forgive me for beginning to lecture you so soon, but indeed you are wrong to do this. He does not mean to be unkind, and if you will only forget the past, and——"

"Ay, but suppose I cannot forget the past? I am not good at forgetting. But there, Haidee, don't look so unhappy; I'm a beast to vex you the moment I come home. But the truth is that when I came into this accursed room, I remembered so many things, how he used to send for me here and browbeat and illuse me, when I was a poor little sickly trembling creature that might have roused pity in a savage—it all came back in a flash. But I won't think of it if I can help it, Haidee. I'll try to do better."

"Do so, I beseech you, Singleton. He has been very kind to me; he will be the same to you if you will only meet him half way. His coldness of manner, his half shyness——"

"Shyness! nonsense, my dear. A man of his age shy!" cried Singleton, who never having experienced the feeling himself, was by no means disposed to admit of this excuse for his father. "No, Haidee, he will never be the same to me as to you; and if you ask why, these pictures will answer you," pointing to the
pictures of defunct Trelawneys which adorned the walls. "You are a Trelawney—and look here," pulling out his little miniature of their mother, "I am 'her son,' as I heard him mutter just now! I say, Haidee, do you know I'm awfully hungry?"

Haidee fairly started at the sudden change in voice and manner, so full of sorrowful bitterness one moment, quite careless and easy the next.

"You queer boy! come along then, we can go through the drawing-room. You never saw it since we furnished it, by the way."

"Holloa! here's a change. I remember when we used to play here, and get awful falls on the polished floor. It's a beautiful room, I must confess. And a conservatory, that's new too; but there's the dear old fountain playing away as merry as ever. How often I've dreamt of that blessed old fountain, and our ball bobbing about in the middle. Upon my word this is very pretty."

"Is it not? Such fun we had, Hester and I, buying the furniture. We went up to town and Mrs. Hamilton took us to the shops, and Sir Lionel said he would pay for anything I ordered. And he built that conservatory for us too. Oh, Singie, he really means to be kind;
he does kind things, though he does not know how to do them graciously. There's a door here—come this way."

"Here—into the dining-room? I had forgotten that door; I thought we had to go out into the gallery. Well, I can't deny that it is a very convenient house; but then neither can I forget the pulling down of the old Abbey."

"Oh, Singleton, that's such an old story!"

"I told you that I'm not good at forgetting. Here you are, Hamilton; how jolly the table looks! I'm as hungry as a shark—are you, Regie?"

"Starving. What a lovely view you have from these windows."

"Ay, did I over-praise it? Hamilton, let me introduce you to my father. Sir Lionel, this is my friend, Reginald Hamilton."

Sir Lionel bowed in his stateliest manner, and Reginald had to conceal a smile, for it was absurd to see how alike in some movements this very dissimilar father and son were.

"You are welcome to the Abbey, Mr. Hamilton, and I trust we shall be able to make your stay here pleasant to you."

Sir Lionel, not being a man of many ideas, made the same remark do duty more than once.

"Haidee, where is your cousin?"
"I don't know, papa. I have not seen him since breakfast."

"Pierce, bid them call Mr. John; he is probably in his own room."

"Do you mean to say that John is here?" exclaimed Singleton. "Am I so soon to behold again the dear companion of my blissful childhood?"

Sir Lionel frowned; but the days when his frown terrified his son were gone by. To his surprise, Singleton did not seem to notice it.

"John Trelawney is here," he said coldly. "He spends much of his time here, of course."

"He's in the —th Dragoons, isn't he? And here the conquering hero comes," Singleton went on, springing up to shake hands with John Trelawney, who now came in with that peculiar swinging kind of walk, which our "Heavies" love to assume.

"Ah, Singleton, this you?" he said, in a tone of voice best described as "moustachy." It does not quite amount to a lisp. "Ah—glad to see you, don't you know? Cold day for your drive—ah!"

"It was cold," answered Singleton, walking round and round his cousin gravely. "What a splendid creature you've become, John. It's quite a providence that you're in plain clothes,
for if you had burst upon me all at one go in full uniform, I should have been a lost man; burnt up like that unlucky little party who insisted upon seeing Jupiter in his go-to-meeting hat. What was her name, Regie? I’ve forgotten it. Let me introduce you. Mr. Hamilton, Mr. John Trelawney. Pierce, I’ll have some more chicken, please.”

John Trelawney sat down, not quite sure whether he ought to look dignified or amused. He was very like Sir Lionel, though scarcely as regularly handsome; but in spite of his drawling manner he was a cleverer—or at least, a more cunning man than his late guardian.

“What shall we do now?” said Haidee as they rose from table.

“Well, I must see the servants, you know. Mrs. Thompson will expect a visit, and I’ve not seen Black James yet. How is the poor old buffer? Then we might go out, if Hamilton likes.”

“A walk by all means,” Hamilton said. “I am longing to get out; this place seems quite beautiful.”

“It is considered so,” said Sir Lionel.

Singleton walked to the window, saying:

“It was one of the sights of our West country twenty years or so ago, but the glory
has departed. However, it is a pretty modern place now, and let us make the best of it. Do you see the arch out there? more to the left. That's the only bit of the Abbey left standing. It was the Lady Chapel—it shall be restored yet. Well, I shall be ready in half an hour, so you may as well wait for me—in fact, I make no doubt that you two ladies will take that time to get ready.”

“Come, Hester, let us go and get ready. What do you think of my brother?” inquired Haidee, as they went upstairs. “I saw you looking very earnestly at him once or twice.”

Hester blushed.

“Did I? I thought he did not see that he was vexing Sir Lionel.”

“I'm afraid he didn't care, my dear. He used to be afraid to open his lips before him, but that time is gone by, apparently.”

“Of course it has; he is not a child now to be frightened, but still he might just as well not vex him, don't you think?”

“I do think so, and have already lectured him—with what good consequences you have seen. But you have not answered my question—how do you like him?”

“I like him very much. I like his face, it
changes so when he speaks, and his smile is so pleasant. Do you like Regie?"

"I do—and how handsome he is—and not thinking of his good looks a bit. Such a relief after John. Make haste now, Hester; sailors are always impatient, I have been told, so don't let us keep ours waiting."

When they came back to the gallery they found the two sailors ready.

"Where are the others, Singie?"

"Sir Lionel felt obliged to continue the abstruse study from which my arrival roused him; he has retired to his entrenchments. John—'ah—wather—thought it was too cold, don't you know? for walking—ah!'" and Singleton stroked his smooth upper lip and lounged down the gallery so precisely in John's best heavy dragoon style, that none of them could help laughing; though Reginald said nervously:

"Take care, Singleton, these open galleries are very treacherous."

"He would be flattered. Imitation, you know, is the sincerest flattery. Come to the Lady Chapel, will you? I want to see if any more of it has been pulled down."

"No, but it will be soon, if you are as imprudent as you were to-day," observed Haidee.
Singleton pretended not to hear this remark. They examined the beautiful fragment, for it was nothing more: and then strolled about the grounds, presently separating, Haidee and Singleton visiting old haunts, the other pair walking up and down the terrace, deep in conversation.

"Why, you are quite a woman, little Hester! I am like Miss Trelawney, half sorry to see a change. But are you not in mourning, Hester? I never perceived it until now."

"Of course I am; is it possible that you don't know?"

"I do not indeed—who is it?—and yet I had a letter from my mother the very day we sailed."

"But she wrote before it happened, because she would be in France before the right post day came. I heard of it in time to have written, but as they said the lawyers were writing to Uncle Arthur, I did not think of it. Uncle Reginald, mamma's elder brother, is dead. He died quite suddenly a day or two after mamma and all of them left England."

"Dead! I'm afraid my mother will be knocked up, for she was very fond of him in spite of his odd ways. Uncle Arthur was, I know. By the way, I suppose the quarrel was
made up, as she told me he had sent her a present."

"It was not the first. He used to send money without any letter, or any clue to the sender, but mamma knew it must be from him, and she wrote to him. I don't know what she said, but he said in reply that he could not forget that she was his sister, and that he begged Hamilton's pardon for having been rude to him, but would keep away, as otherwise they would quarrel again."

"Uncle Arthur is the heir, I suppose?"

"Yes, but he left my mother a thousand a year. So now dear mamma need not slave and pinch any more; it is such a comfort."

"That it is. I suppose Uncle Arthur will come home?"

"He is coming by the next packet boat. What kind of girl is Marian, Regie? I somehow do not like her letters."

"She is very pretty: a little like Miss Tre- lawney; but not to be compared to her, either in face or figure. Still she is pretty—a quiet, ladylike little girl, not much in her—a little bit of a flirt, I think. Hester, I want to know, have you heard from Philip lately?"

There was something in his voice which made
the little sensitive plant beside him shrink away as she answered:

"No, not for a long time. He used to write long complaints of the misery he had to suffer, but never a word of sorrow for my father's sufferings. And at last mamma wrote to him, trying to open his eyes; he never answered her, and all letters since then have been returned. So he has gone away, not meaning to be traced."

"So let him go," said Reginald shortly. "I hope I shall never see his face again. Is my father very ill, Hester? It is so new to hear of his complaining."

"Oh, Regie dear! you must be prepared to see a sad, sad change in him," Hester said, drawing close to his side again, and looking up at him with her clear dark eyes; they were filling fast with tears, but were none the less lovely for that. "When I remember papa at home, Regie! so cheery, so upright and handsome, with his kind smile and pleasant word always ready—and now, he is grey, quite grey—bent, and quiet, and gentle—but oh, his heart is breaking, Regie. I think the disgrace and the fear that he may at any moment hear something terrible of Philip, will kill him."

Reginald muttered something under his
breath, which happily for her peace of mind, gentle Hester did not hear.

"When did you see him last?"

"Papa? In October. I thought him looking worse then, but Arabel said no. He will not fret so much now, perhaps, when he knows that mamma has something of her own. I wanted so much to stay, but those tiresome headaches came back, and they sent me home. Here, I mean."

"But surely you are happy here? That lovely face must tell a true story—no one could be sad long near Miss Trelawney."

"Indeed you are quite right! only you cannot know half her goodness. She's even sweeter than she looks—she's just the loveliest, dearest, most lovable darling in the world, and—"

"Now, that's me, Hester!" exclaimed a merry voice, which made them both start and turn round, thereby coming face to face with Haidee and Singleton. "Oh, Hester! what a red face!"

What a pair of red faces, she might have said; for Reginald, remembering his last words, was blushing like a girl. However, Haidee had heard only Hester's remark.

"As if any one could swallow all that, Hester!"
Mr. Hamilton, your sister has a habit of making little saints and saintesses of her friends, and I hope you don't believe a word she has been saying of me; if so, you'll be disappointed.”

“Was it of Haidee you were speaking, Miss Hamilton?” inquired Singleton in a tone of surprise. “How little observation you must have! Lovely and lovable, that painted figure-head of a girl, with such a temper that she has given me, her own and only brother, two awful lectures in the course of as many hours. But I dare say you were not speaking of her at all; you have a sister, and were describing her to Reginald. Haidee, my poor dear, your vanity has misled you into appropriating to yourself a description meant for Miss Arabel Hamilton! I hope it may be a lesson to you.”

“Singleton, you are beneath my notice. I am going in to tea; who will have some?”

“Tea at this hour? why, we haven't dined.”

“Oh, Singie, don't betray the Halifax ladies, if they are so much behind the age that you have never heard of five o'clock tea. In all civilised countries, sir, ladies invariably, and gentlemen when invited, solace themselves with a cup of tea at this hour.”

“Very good: but the Halifax ladies were
civilised enough for me. Where does the ceremony come off?"

"We can have it in the gallery if the fires are good. Come in this way, through Sir Lionel's porch."

What a merry time that was; in spite of Sir Lionel's oppressive presence, and in spite of the fact that not one of the four young people but had a little private anxiety or vexation, what a merry, happy, careless time that was! It so happened, fortunately for them, that John's leave expired the day after his cousin's return, and he was obliged to go, though greatly disgusted at leaving Reginald Hamilton in possession of the field. For John was aware of Sir Lionel's intention concerning him and Haidee, and though by no means in love with her, he was too prudent a youth to consider that of any consequence. However, he said nothing to Sir Lionel, partly because he knew that his clumsy interference would do more harm than good, and partly because Reginald and Hester were to join their parents in London in a few days. But the Hamiltons were delayed on their journey home, and the dangerous rival remained at the Abbey. And John's prophetic soul was vexed within him.
CHAPTER XIII.

Time passed quickly at Trelawney Abbey. Never had the house witnessed such doings, nor echoed such fresh voices and merry laughter. They amused themselves well, those four young people, and as far as they were concerned the Hamitons' visit might have been indefinitely lengthened, for they were exceedingly happy together. The only person who wished for a change was Sir Lionel, for the stir of life and gaiety in the house annoyed him, although good care was taken to leave him undisturbed possession of the library, and his own rooms were so separated from the rest of the house that he might almost have forgotten the existence of the young people, if that were his fancy. But no; he sat apart in gloomy silence, and if an opening door let in a sound of voice or laugh, he frowned heavily and felt aggrieved. But whether he was annoyed because they did not
seek him out in his retirement, or because he disapproved of laughter and amusement in themselves, I do not know; if the latter, it must have gratified him to find that his presence generally put an end to such levity. Generally, but not always, for when Singleton was in one of his wild humours, Sir Lionel's frowns seemed to the frightened girls to increase his volubility and add zest to his impertinence.

"I can't help it," he declared when they spoke seriously to him—"I can't indeed; and besides, it's good for him. You all of you treat him as if he were a mysterious and marvellous being, the poor old boy will be fancying himself a demi-god presently. I do it for his good. If he would only go about a little, he'd get over his high notions of himself, but he won't, you see, so I'm bound to chaff him a little."

However, the visit came to an end at last, but not before Reginald Hamilton had lost his heart. One morning Pierce brought the post-bag; as usual, to the breakfast table, and Sir Lionel distributed the contents. Reginald opened one from his mother.

"They have come, Hester; and they hope we shall be with them as soon as we can."

"Now, I knew that was coming!" cried Haidee, "the moment I saw that nasty letter.
Well, I suppose you must go. But, Reginald, what about Friday?"

"I must stay for that, of course; I will write and explain matters."

Here Singleton looked up from a letter in which he had been perfectly absorbed, and said absently:

"I must go to London."

"Go to London, Singie! and why?"

"I have had a letter which obliges me to go. I must be off at once. Where's a Bradshaw?"

Sir Lionel laid down his letters and stared at his son in amazed displeasure.

"Am I to understand that you contemplate going to London this evening, Singleton?"

"Sooner, if I can. Is there a Bradshaw in the house?"

Sir Lionel gasped. Accustomed to govern his household in autocratic fashion, Singleton's way of announcing his intentions without any reference to him was very distasteful to him; and the worst of it was, that he seemed powerless to make the delinquent aware of his displeasure.

"But, Singleton, remember Friday; you forget your examination."

For it had been arranged that the two sailors should attend an examination in Plymouth on that day, to qualify for lieutenancies.
“Oh, I must go, examination or no examination; I dare say I can get back in time, and if not, it can’t be helped.”

He rang the bell.

“Pierce, have you a Bradshaw handy? bring it to me, please.”

“But what takes you to London in such a hurry, Singie?”

“The Queen has sent for me, my dear. She means to make a change in the Ministry, and being divided in her royal mind whether to make me First Lord of the Admiralty or Chancellor of the Exchequer, she very naturally wishes to talk it over. But she won’t talk me over, bless her innocence. I know my value, and if I’m not to be Prime Minister, I shan’t give her my support at all. So I’m in a hurry to see her, as you may think.”

“My brother, there is one place about court, and it is vacant too, which it seems to me you would fill to admiration—quite eclipse your most renowned predecessors in fact.”

“That of court-jester, I presume? I’ll consider it, Haidee; it’s not a bad idea. It must be awfully jolly to be actually invited to say everything that comes into your head; my tongue is an unruly member, and I should simply have to leave off ruling it.”
"When did you begin?" inquired Reginald.

"I don't remember; but you'll know when I leave off. Is this the Bradshaw? Thank you, Pierce. Now, no one is to speak to me; I'm going in for abstruse science."

Sir Lionel rose and retired to the library. No one but Hester had remarked his displeasure, but she whispered her discovery to Haidee before she went off to write to her mother. Haidee waited until her brother emerged from his Bradshaw, with his hair all standing on end from the severity of the mental exercise, and exclaimed triumphantly:

"I can just do it! but I must start at once. Haidee, order a trap to be ready for me in no time, and I shall be ready for it. I shall run down on Friday morning, and reach Plymouth in time for the exam. Regie can meet me there."

"But what are you going for, Singie?"

"To see some one. I cannot tell you more now; in fact, I haven't time. Don't be curious, Miss Trelawney."

"Well, I will not tease you; but, Singie, Hester says that papa was annoyed—at least he looked so."

"And when does he look otherwise, pray?"

"Hester thinks," she went on, wisely deaf,
"that he did not like you to say you were going without—"

"Asking leave, do you mean? Why, my dear, this is midsummer madness."

"Not exactly asking leave—explaining, mentioning it first to him. And surely, Singleton, that is not much to be asked to do."

"But what childish nonsense! Does he really expect me at this time of day to ask his leave to run up to town for a few hours? And as I have not the smallest intention of delaying, if he should happen to say no, which he most likely would, it strikes me that it would be foolish to ask."

"He will not refuse."

"No, for I shan't give him the chance."

"Nor do I want you to ask leave, but I do wish you would go to him—he is in the library—and just say that you are obliged to go, and that you'll be home on Friday evening. Do, Singie, to please me."

"Well, to please you; but remember, I think it a mistake, Haidee; and if you persist in making everything bow to his absurd notions, he'll ride rough shod over you one of these days. Go to my room when you've ordered the trap, and help me to put up my things."

"Sir Lionel, may I come in?"
"Certainly—the library is open to all."
"But I should be sorry to interrupt you if you were busy. I'm going to run up to town to meet a friend—can I do anything for you? I shall be in Plymouth in time for the exam., and hope to come home in the evening."
"You wish to go to London?"
"I am going to London—yes."
"To meet a friend: who is this friend?"
"That I cannot tell you now, but I shall when I come home, I hope."
"Your conduct is very extraordinary, Singleton. You are my son, living in my house, and yet you seem to forget—"
"Believe me, father, I forget nothing. When I look round this room, on the contrary, I remember a great deal which I would gladly forget if I could."

Sir Lionel walked to the window with rather a heightened colour. He stood looking out, and doubtless preparing a crushing oration, but when he looked round to deliver it his son was gone.
"Defied again," he muttered. "But let him go—let him go."

Which was a prudent resolution, seeing that he could not stop him.

Singleton found his sister waiting for him in
his room, and with her help he soon packed a small valise.

"Ram it home! that's the way to pack this kind of thing," he said, as he worked away, much in the style of loading a gun. "Did you order the conveyance?"

"Yes, it will be round at once. Was papa vexed, Singie?"

"Don't know—never do know. He was unpleasant, but not more so than usual. I hope to astonish his weak mind when I come back."

"How, Singleton? do tell me."

Singleton laughed, lifted his valise from the floor, looked out of the window and saw the dog-cart coming round. He suddenly caught Haidee in his arms and hugged her—hugging the little valise too, perforce—kissed her, and whispered:

"What will you say to a sister-in-law, Haidee?"

"A what!" shrieked Haidee, much amazed. "Oh, Singie, stop—don't run away; tell me what you mean."

But he did run away laughing, and she heard the door at the head of the stairs bang.

"Oh, dear me, what does the madcap mean? and I did hope he would like—""

Suddenly as he had vanished, Singleton rushed in.
"Mind! not a word to any one. I promised not to speak of it yet, and you must keep my secret."

Again he fled, but this time she had recovered her senses and ran after him. He dashed into the drawing-room.

"Good-bye for the present, Hamilton. I shall meet you at the George on Friday. Good-bye, Hester; don't think me rude for running off so abruptly."

"Not rude, but I am sorry you must go. I shall hardly see you again, for you know I go with Regie on Friday."

"I know; he and I will meet you at the station, so I can say good-bye then."

"Do so, Singie, and I will drive her in, and you and I can come home together."

"All right; take care of yourselves, good people. Good-bye."

In a moment more the dog-cart started at a headlong pace.

"Singleton's driving; and I can only hope he won't break his own neck or the horse's knees," remarked Haidee; "but one would say he meant to try."

However, the cart came back in the afternoon, so it was evident no harm had befallen Singleton on his way to Plymouth.
CHAPTER XIV.

The letter which had caused Singleton's flight to London was from Marian Vane, and it was both short and cool; not containing one expression of anxiety to see him, though it gave him her address in town.

But the reason of this coldness was not far to seek. Marian's circumstances had undergone a change, and her views and wishes had changed too. Instead of looking to a marriage with Singleton as her best chance of escaping from Halifax and shining in the gay world, she now saw her escape accomplished, and made no doubt that the shining would follow in good time. She was now an heiress, and regretted her engagement very much, as she frankly admitted to herself. She had half a mind not to write to him; but felt that her difficulty would not be lessened by that omission—perhaps she could get rid of him quietly by quarrel-
ling with him when they met; but whatever she did she must contrive that the whole affair should be kept secret—it would be better to marry him than to have such a story told of her. "Dear me," she sighed, "what a bother it all is! I wish I had never seen his face."

The Vanes were staying at an hotel, and thither Singleton went when he reached London; but they were out, and not expected back until late at night. So he passed a dull and depressing evening, reading over Marian's note, and wondering why she had gone out just when she must have expected him. He went to bed feeling very dismal, but a good night's sleep brightened his views of things wonderfully. The note was cold, but it was written in haste; and she had gone out, but then she could not know that he would arrive so soon. So he sent in his name to Mr. Vane, who was at breakfast with his daughter.

"Why, here is Singleton Trelawney come to see us, Marian! How do you do, Singleton?—come in. You did not expect to see us so soon again when we parted, did you? How did you find us out?" asked the unsuspecting man.

"I came here last night. Hamilton told me of your good fortune, Mr. Vane."

"Reginald was staying with you, I think?"
“He is there still; he and I are to pass our exams. on Friday in Plymouth; so you see my stay in town must be so short that I hope you’ll excuse me for coming so early.”

“No excuse needed—you are always welcome. Have you breakfasted? Give him a cup of coffee, Marian. I cannot say much for the tea, but the coffee is not bad.”

“Am I welcome, Marian?” whispered Singleton, as he took the cup from her hand; but she pretended not to hear him, and her greeting had been anything but warm.

Breakfast over, Mr. Vane rose, saying—

“My poor brother’s solicitor is coming to see me this morning, but I don’t suppose he will keep me long. Shall I find you here when I come back, Singleton?”

“Unless Marian turns me out,” he answered, with rather a forced attempt at a smile.

Mr. Vane left them, and Singleton lost no time.

“Marian, dear Marian, have I offended you? did you not expect me?”

“Not until Saturday. Aunt Hester told me of the examination.”

“I must go back this evening. But may I not speak to your father before I go?”

“Have you spoken to Sir Lionel?”
“No! why, you wrote to tell me not to do so until I heard from you again. And until I know what Mr. Vane will say to me, what is the use of speaking to Sir Lionel?”

“How very provoking!” she exclaimed.

“What is provoking?”

“Everything! I do so hate a fuss, and I know there will be a fuss about it. Papa will be vexed that we did not tell him at once.”

Singleton was too generous to say that the concealment had been her own doing; he only said:

“ The sooner we tell him now, the better.”

She kept her head bent over some needlework she had taken up, so that he could not see her face, but her manner chilled him.

“Marian,” he said slowly, “if you are tired of me, tell me so, and let me go.”

“Don’t be so childish,” she answered pettishly—“always taking offence. I am only——”

“Only what?”

“Frightened, I think.”

“Frightened? but at what?”

“Sir Lionel, I think.”

His face brightened, and his smile made it beautiful for the moment, as he took her hand in his, and said:

“My poor little Marian—my little timid bird,
you have no need to be afraid of him. If he makes himself unpleasant, you shall never be asked to see him—never, I promise it. To think how miserable you made me for a few minutes, and all because you were afraid of Sir Lionel."

Marian gave herself a very impatient little shake, and said nothing.

"Marian, look here. This concealment is worrying you to death; you are not a bit like yourself. I’m going to take the law into my own hands, and see your father at once."

He rose and went towards the door, saying:

"I dare say the lawyer has left him by this time."

This was not at all what Marian wanted; she wished above all things to be the first to tell her story to her father. She exclaimed eagerly:

"Oh no—stop, Singleton—let me speak to papa instead of you; I will tell him this evening."

"My dear girl, what an idea! I could not allow that, Marian, even to please you. Mr. Vane would send me about my business in half a minute, and serve me right, getting you into a scrape and then leaving you to bear the blame all by yourself. No; I must see him myself,
and I must do it now. Wait here for me, Marian."

He left the room, and Miss Vane nearly cried with vexation.

"Now he will go blundering to papa, making him fancy that my heart is set upon marrying him! How shall I ever manage? Oh, dear me, what a fool I have been! Well, there! I suppose he is my fate, but—let me see—I must think it well over."

"Mr. Vane, are you at leisure? Can you spare me a few minutes?"

"Surely I can; sit down," Arthur Vane replied, looking at the flushed and animated face with some misgiving. "I hope it is not that," he muttered to himself.

But it was that, as Singleton's first words proved.

"Mr. Vane, I don't know whether you have perceived it, but I have loved Marian for a very long time."

Mr. Vane almost smiled, even though he was vexed.

"A very long time!" he repeated. "Why, how old are you, Singleton?"

"That makes no difference," Singleton answered eagerly; "I have loved her from the very first."
"And does she know this?"
"Yes. She has known it always."

"But surely you had not spoken to her; there was no understanding between you when you came here to-day?" said Vane anxiously.

"I had spoken to her before, in Halifax. When I did so, I had some reason to think that she did not care for me; and then of course, I should have troubled neither you nor her any more. But then I found she did care."

"You should have spoken to me then, if not before," Mr. Vane said in a tone of keen mortification. "You should not have taught my little girl to deceive me—to have secrets from her father."

Poor Singleton! the teaching had been none of his, but he felt as much ashamed of himself as if the accusation were true.

"Don't be annoyed, Mr. Vane. I acknowledge that I ought to have gone to you at once, but I can easily show you that we meant no harm. I did not see you again, for one thing, and Marian only desired me to wait until I had my father's consent, because if he refused, she would not have you annoyed by her unhappiness; for indeed, sir, she loves me. She said you were not strong; and—indeed it was only her
loving consideration for you that made her de-
cide thus."

"But do you mean to say that your father
has consented?" exclaimed Mr. Vane, much
surprised.

"I have not asked him yet. Before we
sailed, Marian wrote a note desiring me to wait
until she came to England, and as I wanted
very much to speak to you first, I waited."

"I understand. Then Sir Lionel has never
heard of it yet."

"No; but I know of no reason why he should
object, except that he likes to make himself un-
pleasant. Marian tells me that you and he are
not on good terms, but I know nothing of that.
He'll be ungracious enough, no doubt, but I
should think he would consent."

"Who told you that I am not on good terms
with your father?"

"Marian told me. I don't know who told
her; but to be candid with you, I was in hopes
it was only a fancy of her own. I'm afraid from
your manner now, that there is some truth
in it."

"Oh yes! there is some truth in it," Mr.
Vane said absently. "I don't remember telling
the child, though. But let me think a little,
Singleton, and give me time to see Marian."
Will you leave us now without seeing her again, and come back later?"

"Of course I shall do as you wish. But, Mr. Vane, you'll remember that I love her with all my heart, and that she loves me. Don't make us miserable for—"

"I have no wish to make you miserable, my dear boy. And as to Marian, you know what she is to me. Come back at three, and you shall have my answer."

"I must go down by the five train, you know. Good-bye, Mr. Vane, don't—"

"Be a brute! not if I can help it," interrupted Mr. Vane, laughing. "I promise that much; now go."

Having got rid of Singleton, Arthur Vane sat alone for a considerable time. He was the kindest, the most tender-hearted of men; never since her birth had he said an angry word to his daughter, and it was very bitter to him to find that she could have thoughts, feelings, and plans, which were not shared with him. But he very soon began to make excuses for her, and had before long convinced himself that Singleton was right. She had concealed her semi-engagement only out of tenderness for him. In this frame of mind he went to her, and found her in a very excited state, much alarmed by Single-
ton's non-appearance. Her agitation he of course attributed to love and anxiety, and he hastened to assure her that no obstacle should be placed in the way of her happiness by him. He was exceedingly kind and tender to her, but if he had been the sternest of stern parents, he could not have failed more utterly than he did in finding out the true state of her mind. The truth was that when he assumed that she was very much in love, she was ashamed to declare that she desired nothing more than to get rid of her lover; and before she could collect her scattered senses, Singleton returned to know his fate. Marian ran away when she heard of his arrival, so he found Mr. Vane alone.

"Well, Singleton, I suppose you have come back to hear what I have to say to this matter, so I shall not keep you in suspense. I'm sure you know that, personally, I like you very much; so you won't think I mean any unkindness when I confess that I wish this had not happened. Still, I feel that I have only myself to thank for it. I was a fool to let you be so much with Marian when I objected to your falling in love with her."

"Just so, sir," poor Singleton replied in his excitement; then colouring, "I mean, you know, that I was sure to do it! and besides, I
did not know that there was any objection to it."

"And if you had known, I don't suppose it would have stopped you."

"But now, Mr. Vane, what is the objection?"

"Singleton, I have made up my mind to make none. Marian is my only child, and I have no wish but to make her happy. You have my consent, now get Sir Lionel's."

"Oh, Mr. Vane! how can I thank you enough? But I can see that you think that my father will object."

"I fear it."

"But tell me why you think so."

"No, my dear boy, I will not. I feel convinced that you will have a better chance with him if you can say that you know nothing of the circumstances of his quarrel with me."

"But I may tell him that you consent heartily, and will let bygones be bygones?"

"I'm afraid that is more than I can promise sincerely. I could not meet your father, nor would he wish it."

"But, if he does refuse, what will you say to me?"

"Can he disinherit you?"

"No. I know that he cannot do that; and I have a dim memory of being told long ago that
half my mother's money would come to me when I came of age."

"Indeed! that would be a very considerable sum. Who told you so?"

"Well, I suppose it must have been Black James, my father's man. I have no very distinct remembrance of it. Then, I may hope that you would not think my father's refusal of his consent a fatal barrier?"

"No, I confess, under the circumstances, I should not; but it depends more upon Marian than on me."

"Oh, sir, I'm sure she won't care about that—now that we are sure of you. May I see her for a moment, for I must soon go?"

"Certainly; I'll send her to you; but don't lose your train, Singleton; and don't miss your examination. I can't let my daughter marry a middy! You must get your commission."

It was fortunate for Singleton's peace of mind that he was so hurried, for Marian was by no means in a pleasant humour. However, he only saw her for a minute, and set off in high spirits for Plymouth.

The two young men went through the examination—Reginald creditably, and Singleton brilliantly, a distinction which filled the latter with astonishment. "There must be
some mistake!” he protested; but there was no mistake, and Hamilton only laughed at him. At the appointed hour they met the two girls at the railway station.

“Oh, Singie, I’m so glad to see you! I had such a horrid presentiment that you’d be late for a train, or something; and miss your exam! Of course you’ve passed, both of you?”

“Oh, we’ve passed,” Singleton answered, “passed splendiferously. So did Paddy O’Hara and Jemmy Smith, and all the rest of the Captain’s youngsters, so I hope the dear old boy will be pleased. O’Hara made a near shave of it, though.”

“Is that all you intend to tell of the day’s proceedings, Singleton? for if so I shall give Haidee additional particulars. One only of all who were passed was complimented on his proficiency, and that one was Singleton.”

The bright eyes thanked him, even while they filled with tears of pride and pleasure.

“Oh, I am so glad. What was it it for, Singie?”

“Seamanship,” Singleton answered, blushing. “Come along, now—I hear the bell going.”

In a few moments the London express ran out of the station, and the last words the Hamiltons heard were from Haidee:
“Hester, remember I only lend you to them for a time! Tell mamma that you belong to me.”

“Now that we are out of the noise, Singie, let us have a good chat.”

“The dear old word,” Singleton answered, with a smile. “How often I’ve heard it in dreams, both sleeping and waking—‘Sit down here, Singie, and let us have a chat;’ and what wonderful chats we used to have! Do you remember the fairy tales I used to spin for your benefit? and indeed for my own, for I enjoyed them as much as you did.”

“Remember them? I should think I did. The Fairy Set’emtorights was my special favourite—a kind of guardian fairy. Then the hero and the heroine always had a cross father and a wicked cousin, and Set’emtorights used to inflict such awful punishments on them. Poor papa! I often wonder why he was so hard upon us then: he has been kind to me lately.”

“I wonder what he will say to—something I have to tell him.”

“What is it? anything about—what you said that morning before you left us?”

Singleton nodded. “Oh, Singie, won’t you
tell me all about it now? I have thought of nothing else ever since."

"You said nothing to either of the Hamiltons, I hope."

"Of course not. But did you really say 'sister-in-law,' Singleton? I have been persuading myself that I made a mistake."

"Not at all, my child. You heard correctly: them was my remarkable words."

"Well, then tell me all now."

"Do you think Sam can hear us?" inquired Singleton, half turning to look at the stolid face of the groom.

"Not he! he is probably asleep. I generally have to wake him from a nap if I want him. We are quite alone, and though I don't want to torment you, dear Singleton, I am anxious."

"Ah, wait until you know her; you will be so delighted with each other, you two. But have you no idea who it is, Haidee? I'm sure I mentioned her often enough in my letters."

Now this was rather a mistake on Singleton's part, for of late, since his attachment to Marian had become more serious, he had but rarely named her.

"Can't you guess, Haidee? Why, all my time in Halifax was spent with them."

"With them?"
"With her and her father."

"Oh, then I guess—it is Marian Vane, the Hamiltons' cousin."

"It is. Oh, Haidee, there's no use in talking of her, for you've never seen her; but you will soon, I hope; and I know you'll love her. She is a little like you—smaller, and more fragile-looking, but still like you. You know she is our cousin, too—her mother was a Miss Trelawney, and thereby hangs a tale."

"What tale? I never heard of this Miss Trelawney."

"No; and there are reasons, you see, for doubting that Sir Lionel will be pleased. Mr. Vane and he have met and are not friends—in fact, I suspect they had no end of a shindy, but of the cause I know nothing. Mr. Vane thought I might get on better with my father if I knew nothing more than I've told you, so he kept it to himself; but he won't meet Sir Lionel, though he consents to our engagement."

"What can it be? Oh, Single, I hope papa will be kind to you—do you mean to speak to him to-night?"

"No, not until to-morrow morning. I'm too utterly done up between travelling and the exam. to tackle him to-night. Here, Sam! wake up and open the gate. I can't say
how glad I shall be to get some food; I'm starving."

Haidee went off to her room, meditating on the overthrow of her cherished scheme about Hester. "It's too provoking! and however nice Marian may be, she cannot be half as nice as Hester. And Hester gets on with papa, too. Oh dear, it does seem as if things never turn out as one wishes."
CHAPTER XV.

"Are you at leisure, Sir Lionel?"

"Perfectly so. Come in, Singleton."

"I have something to tell you—something to ask you for, and I hope you will be pleased; at least most people would think me very lucky."

"Is it that you have heard from Captain Hamilton, offering you another appointment?"

"No—he won't get a ship again for some little time. What I have to tell you is that—I want your consent to my marriage."

Sir Lionel laid down his newspaper, and stared at his son.

"Do I understand you to speak of your own marriage?"

"Yes, I did."

"You are not yet of age, I think—rather young to marry. But we need not discuss that until you have furnished me with some informa-
tion concerning the lady; her birth, position, etc."

"In all those respects she is my equal."

"To what am I to attribute your silence on the subject until to-day?"

"Until yesterday, though I knew that Marian loved me, I had not asked her father's consent, but I saw him in London."

"And he consents, of course. The heir of Trelawney Abbey is not likely to be rejected. Where did you meet these people?"

"In Halifax. They have been very kind to me, I've been like one of the family ever since I went out there. Now they've come into a large property and she is an heiress."

"Indeed! I am glad to hear it, for I am still a young man, and there are John and Haidee to be provided for. I do not think you have yet mentioned her name."

"Her name is Marian Vane. Her mother was a Miss Trelawney, an aunt of John's."

There was no answer, though Sir Lionel must have started violently, for he threw down his bookstand; but he then remained perfectly still, and Singleton, too, sat as still as he could for some time. But then, almost against his will, he raised his eyes, and looked at his father. Such a glance of actual hatred as he surprised..."
upon Sir Lionel's face! he was perfectly livid, and his eyes had a glare that was scarcely sane. Singleton was fascinated by it, and sat silently staring at him until Sir Lionel himself broke the breathless silence.

"You miserable hound," he said hoarsely, "do you mean to insult me?"

"No, Sir Lionel, I certainly do not. I hope you don't mean to insult me."

But Sir Lionel took no notice of this remonstrance, being indeed quite beyond knowing what he was saying.

"Do you know what you have done? You have asked my leave to marry the daughter of my bitterest enemy; the daughter of Arthur Vane, whom, if I saw him there before me — I——"

He gasped and pulled at his necktie, looking so very much as if he would end in having a fit that his son got frightened, and ran out into the gallery for a glass of water.

"Here, Sir Lionel, drink this. I am afraid you're ill."

The fresh cold water revived him, and he soon looked a little less death-like. Singleton took the glass from his hand and placed it on the table; then, speaking very gently and quietly, he said:
“I hope you will think this matter over before we say any more about it. I don’t know anything about the cause of your quarrel with Mr. Vane, but if he can consent, why cannot you do the same? Let me go now; you are—agitated, and may say more than you mean. By-and-by—"

“No!” thundered Sir Lionel. “You need not leave me. I have but little to say, but it is final. I refuse my consent to this marriage.”

“Sir Lionel, listen—"

“Not a word. You may now leave me.”

“Father, I beseech you, think the matter over quietly. Consider how unreasonable your refusal is. Whatever your quarrel with Mr. Vane may have been, he consents—and why cannot you do the same? It is absurd to think that Marian and I are to be separated and made miserable because of something which probably happened before either of us was born, and ought to be forgotten by this time.”

“It will never be forgotten by me.”

“Well, at least consider your own dignity a little. I ask for your consent as I am bound to do; if you give it, all right; but I don’t promise not to do without it if you refuse. Frankly, Sir Lionel, you have not been such a father to me that I feel bound to obey you; and as you
very well know, you have no power to punish me if I don't. I can't help hoping that you'll take a little time to think, and that you'll give your consent."

There was a short silence, owing to the fact that Sir Lionel found himself unable to articulate. At last he rose from his seat, and inquired:

"Have you said all that you wish to say? If not, say it now—and then I shall speak."

"There is no use in my saying anything more, if what I have said does not move you."

"You are right: there is no use in saying anything more. Now hear me. I never will consent to this marriage. That I swear to you. I don't believe that Arthur Vane would allow the marriage to take place! he knew I should refuse, and like the sneak that he is, he left it to come from me."

"I think you'll find that you're mistaken."

"Don't interrupt me, sir! let me finish what I have to say, and then get out of my sight before I——"

"Look here, Sir Lionel. That tone worked well when I was a sickly, unhappy child, utterly in your power; it won't do now. I don't fear it any more than the piping of the wind in the rigging, and I strongly advise you neither to
threaten nor to attempt violence. Keep all that for Black James," he added, with a bitter laugh; "there isn’t enough of the slave in me to make me submit to it."

Sir Lionel sprang towards him with a terrible oath, but he stopped suddenly: Singleton had caught up a heavy ruler from the writing-table, and his eyes were flashing cold and steady, like steel.

What the next moment might have seen done, who can say? But during this furious pause the door between the library and the drawing-room was pushed open, and Haidee silently came in. Singleton’s back was turned towards her, but Sir Lionel saw her, and fell back a little. She came up to her brother, put her hand upon his shoulder and said slowly:

"Singleton! what are you going to do?"

"Nothing," he answered in a voice more than commonly soft and low, and yet somehow it seemed to express more concentrated anger than any sound she had ever heard before. "Nothing, Haidee. Ask your question of Sir Lionel, not of me. I shall defend myself, nothing more."

"Put this down," she said, taking the ruler from his hand. "Papa, let this question rest for to-day. Do as Singleton has asked you—"
think it over quietly. It was well that I was so near,” she added with a shudder; “one moment more!—"

“Did you hear all that passed?” demanded Sir Lionel hoarsely, flinging himself into an easy-chair.

“Yes, all. I feared something, and was determined to be near.”

“Then you may hear the end of the matter. Singleton, you have my answer; the only possible answer. You will find that it is what Arthur Vane expects. If you are wise, write and say that this marriage cannot be. If you do this, I will forget what has passed. If you refuse, leave my house instantly, and never enter it again while I live. You say that I have no power to punish you; I have no power to disinherit you, but I am a young man still, and I have the power to keep you without a farthing until my death. And I will do it, too. Now take your choice.”

“Does not some of my mother’s money come to me when I’m of age?” inquired Singleton.

“Ah! were you counting on that? No; your mother inherited that money after her marriage, and there were no settlements of any kind. It is quite in my power to do as I like with it. You can leave me now; but remember, I swear by all
I hold sacred, that if this marriage takes place, you shall have nothing that I can keep from you except my hearty curse."

Singleton laughed insolently.

"Listen to him, Haidee! isn't it refreshing to hear him forgetting to round his sentences for once in his life? Well, Sir Lionel, I don't suppose you expect an answer to your paternal oration, except the one I'm going to give you. If Marian will have me, and her father don't object, I shall certainly marry her. And I shall value your curse as little as I should your blessing."

Sir Lionel sprang to his feet; Haidee placed herself between him and her brother.

"You need not alarm yourself, Haidee. I am merely going to speak to him. Singleton, leave the house within the hour. Not a word, Haidee. I will not hear a word. Go now, while I have still some command over myself."

Again Singleton laughed.

"I'm glad to hear you have any of that precious commodity at any time; I confess I should never have found it out for myself. Come, Haidee—I don't suppose you'll be turned out of doors for seeing me off."

He walked out of the room as he spoke, and after a moment's hesitation, Haidee followed.
He rang the bell, and stood looking moodily into the fire.

"Are you really going, Singie?"

"Of course I am! do you want me to wait until he sends Black James and a couple of footmen to kick me out? Hush—here's George. George, tell the coachman that I want the dog-cart at once, to go into Plymouth."

"No, Singleton—order the pony-carriage, George, and Sam must go. I shall drive you to the station, Singie."

"Will he not be angry?" whispered Singleton. "Not that I care, but you've got to come back, remember."

"He will never ask—and I must see what I can of you. Oh Singie, Singie! six years separated, and only this little time together," cried poor Haidee, bursting into tears.

"My dear, dear Haidee! good heavens, what a selfish beast I am to forget how hard this is on you! But what can I do, dear? I cannot give Marian up—you would not wish that, I know."

"No; but if you will really do what I ask, Singie—I do so wish you would wait a little. I don't mean stay here now, for I know you will be better away; but don't be in a hurry; give me time to see if I can persuade papa to be a little more reasonable."
"I will wait—surely it is not much to promise. But I have no hope that you will succeed. Suppose he desires you to drop my acquaintance, Haidee?"

"I don't think he will do that, and if he does I must tell him I cannot obey him. But oh, Singleton, how could you speak as you did—and above all, how could you laugh in that insulting way?"

"Laugh! did I laugh? I never was less amused in my life, I assure you. I thought he was going to strike me. Well—he might have found that times were changed—that was a heavy ruler, Haidee. A pat on the head with that little affair would be no joke, let me tell you. Come—get ready now like a good girl. I shall take only my valise, and you can send my chest when I write for it. Get me a glass of water, Haidee," he added suddenly, "I am shaking all over as if I had the palsy."

"Take care, Singie—you'll fall—sit down here. I will get you a glass of wine. Don't stir until I come back."

She ran to the dining-room, where the table was laid for luncheon, and pouring out a glass of wine, she seized also a plate of biscuits, and brought them to Singleton.

"I wish you would have some luncheon, Singie, but at all events eat some of these."
"I could not—they'd choke me. Give me that beastly stuff—ugh! I hate it, but we'll consider it in the light of medicine."

"Do you never take wine?"

"Never—I hate it, and I've no head, you know. Now—I'm ready for the road whenever you are."

"I shall not keep you waiting. Oh, Singleton! is this to be the end of your stay at home? and I have longed so for it."

"Never fear, my dear girl. We'll have pleasant days together yet, though perhaps not here. Just wait till you know Marian!"
CHAPTER XVI.

The Vanes were out, the waiter said, when Singleton arrived that evening at the hotel; so he was obliged to wait until the Sunday morning to see them. Marian had desired her maid to let her know when Mr. Trelawney came back, and hearing that he was in the house, she did not make her appearance at the breakfast table; Singleton found her father alone.

"Back so soon, Singleton! I did not expect you till to-morrow. Have you breakfasted? What will you have?"

"A cup of coffee—thank you—I hope there's nothing the matter with Marian?"

"Nothing, nothing," Arthur Vane answered hastily. He had a singularly embarrassed air, and was not in the least like himself. "Have you any news for me?" he went on.

"Yes, but not good news. Sir Lionel says that if you had not known that he would refuse,
you would have put an end to the matter yourself. He refused his consent, and turned me out of doors because I refused to write to you, giving up the engagement. But before I go any further, I must tell you that he declares that my mother's money is entirely in his hands, and that if I marry Marian, I shall never have a penny that he can deprive me of. Now, I assure you, Mr. Vane, I honestly believed that half of it would be mine when I come of age. I don't know who put it into my head."

"I don't care about that," said Mr. Vane. "I should not give a second thought to the money question. Marian and I have plenty, and you must inherit the estates if you outlive your father."

"Yes, he cannot prevent that," Singleton answered. Then he got up and walked over to the window, where he stood looking out, while he said slowly:

"I am so unworthy of her in every way; and now that I have nothing but myself to offer her, I'm ashamed to speak; but if you only knew how I love her."

Mr. Vane looked at him with a half-pitying, half-puzzled air.

"I do know it, my dear boy. I am sure you love her, Singleton."
He actually started at the sudden brightness of the face that flashed round on him.

"You won't send me away, then!" exclaimed Singleton.

Still Mr. Vane looked distressed.

"I have been speaking to Marian," he said, hesitating. "I told her I expected this reply from your father, knowing him of old."

"What did she say?"

"Singleton, I must be frank with you. I don't understand her at all. Are you quite sure, my dear boy, that she—that this engagement was willingly made on her side? or is it not possible that you were very urgent, and persuaded her against her will?"

Singleton flushed crimson.

"Oh no, sir, no! I am quite sure I did not. I told her that a word would get rid of me—that I would never torment her again. You fancied she did not care, I suppose? but it is her fear of agitating you; and, besides, she is shy—she seldom speaks of her feelings. But indeed she said she loved me. I cannot be mistaken about that."

"I don't understand her—that's all I can say. I will go to her now and tell her that you are here; and believe me, Singleton, I shall not use my influence against you. I wish to see her
well married; and though I certainly wish you were not Sir Lionel Trelawney's son, I like you, my dear boy, and it would be hard to punish you for his sins."

"You are very kind, Mr. Vane. I cannot say what I feel—but you know. But stay one moment—What did Sir Lionel do? He did not give me the least idea."

"It is best forgotten. If you are to be my son, let us never mention it—or him. I suppose there is no chance that he may relent?"

"I think not. Here's a letter I had from my sister this morning, which contains a message from him. May I read it to you?"

"My dear Singleton,

"I have but half an hour to write, so excuse haste. Fancy my feelings when I found Sir Lionel waiting for me at the gate! He desired me to get out and walk to the house with him. Of course I thought he was angry because I had gone with you, but he said nothing about that. I am going to write down exactly what passed as far as I can. He asked if you had gone back to London, and I said yes. He said, 'He will soon be made aware of his mistake; he will be rejected, of that I have no doubt. I have come to the conclusion that as
he is very young, it is possible to me to overlook what he said during our interview this morning. Write to him, that if he returns here and gives me to understand that the marriage is definitely broken off, I shall consign all that passed on the subject to oblivion.'"

Singleton looked up with a laugh. "Fine sounding phrases, don't you think, Mr. Vane? Sir Lionel was himself again then; in his fury he forgot his eloquence and swore like a boatswain."

"I said, 'Singleton loves Miss Vane dearly; but when I said the name he actually ground his teeth with rage and stopped me with an awful look. 'Haidee, do not misunderstand me. I mean no more than I say. If he returns rejected, well. If he does not return, from this hour his name never passes my lips. I shall live as if he had never existed.' I said boldly, 'Papa, you have never been a kind father to Singleton, and I am not going to humiliate him by pleading for him. But I must say, once for all, that I will not give him up. I give you fair notice that I shall see him whenever I can, and that we shall write to each other.' Dear Sing, though I spoke boldly, I was in a horrid fright all the same; but he only said
'You, at least, are frank. You need not have defied me until I had given you cause to do so. Of course I could wish that you would consider my decision as binding on you; but I know your sex too well, Haidee, to believe that you will do so from obedience to me. You must do as you will; but you will remember that to me he is dead. But this is folly,' he said suddenly; 'he will return rejected, and glad to know that I shall forget the whole affair. Write at once, and send a groom to Plymouth with your letter, that he may have it before he sees these people again.'

"So I am writing in hot haste, dearest Singie, and I only hope you may be able to read my scrawl. And now, my dear and only brother, one word more. I ask a favour of you, by the memory of our mother, and of our childish love, and of the days when that love was our only comfort. If my father is right, and that you are rejected, do not let your pride keep you from coming home. I will comfort you, Singie. Think of the old times when we were all the world to each other, and come home to your loving sister,

"Haidee Trelawney."

"Is she not a darling, Mr. Vane? and she
will be so glad to know that I am not rejected."

Again Mr. Vane looked at him sadly.
"I'm glad you have your sister to care for you," he said hastily. "I am going to Marian now."
"Don't think me ungrateful, Mr. Vane; but if I might see her myself."
"You shall see her presently. Wait here until I come back. You don't look well, Singleton; your eyes are heavy, and there's a languid look about you which is new to me. Do you feel ill?"
"Only tired—not ill in the least. Remember how I've been knocking about between this and Plymouth, and the exam., and above all, Sir Lionel! I shall be all right when I've seen Marian."

Arthur Vane sighed, and left the room. If he had known that the half-finished cup of coffee which he had given him that morning was the first food Singleton had tasted since he left the Abbey, he would have ceased to wonder that his eyes were heavy and his face pale.

Mr. Vane was absent for more than an hour, but it did not seem long to Singleton, who lay back in an easy-chair, half-dreaming, half-wondering what ailed him. In fact, he was faint from fatigue and want of food. However, when Mr.
Vane returned, up sprang Singleton, fully ex-pecting to see Marian too. But Mr. Vane was alone, and he looked—or so Singleton fancied—ashamed and embarrassed. He cleared his throat several times, glanced nervously at the young man’s eager face, and at last began:

“Singleton—my dear boy—Singleton—”

“Mr. Vane—is she ill?”

“No, she’s quite well; but, Singleton, there is no use in trying to break it to you; I am so vexed and—discomposed that I hardly know what I’m saying.”

“Never mind breaking it to me—say it out plainly, at once. I know what it is—Marian thinks that she ought not to marry me against my father’s will.”

“You are right,” said Arthur Vane slowly. “That is what Marian wishes you to be told.”

“But let me see her! let me make her understand the kind of man Sir Lionel is. Surely you, Mr. Vane, knowing what he is, and what he has always been to me—you don’t think that we are bound to be miserable because he won’t consent?”

“I do not, indeed; but stay, Singleton—have one moment’s patience. If Marian’s happiness depended on this marriage, I should not care much for Sir Lionel’s refusal.”
"And her happiness does depend upon it, sir. Oh, believe me, she loves me!—she told me so. It is only that she's afraid of doing wrong; let me see her, I beseech you, and I will convince her that she is mistaken."

"I have no objection to your seeing her; it is her own doing. She would rather not see you, and she bid me tell you so."

"She would rather not see me! Mr. Vane, I don't understand it at all."

"Heaven help me—neither do I. She bids me say, that having had time to think the matter over, she has become aware that she does not love you except as she might love a brother; and that although if everything had gone smoothly, she would have—would not have broken her word; yet if your father objects, she—In short, Singleton, I throw myself on your generosity. Marian is but a child—she was flattered, I suppose, and liked the romance of the affair; but it is quite plain that—that she does not wish to be bound by her promise."

Poor Arthur Vane! with all his weakness, the most chivalrously upright of men! no wonder he found his task a hard one. It would be hard to say which of the two men was the most agitated. Singleton staggered a
few paces back, and sank upon a chair; Vane stood with bent head, the picture of humiliation. There was a long silence: at last Singleton said hurriedly:

"You know there must be a mistake about this matter. Marian has known all along that I loved her. It was no sudden thing that could have taken her by surprise, she knew it always, and always seemed pleased to know it. I believe, still, that she is concealing her real feelings not to give you pain. Beg of her to see me—say she must see me, for I will not and cannot believe that she does not love me unless she tells me so herself."

Mr. Vane sighed deeply.

"Perhaps you are right!" he said. "I don't know what to think; but you have a right to see her, and I will bring her here to you."

He went to the room where he had left his daughter.

"Well, papa! is he gone?"

"No; and he insists on seeing you, Marian. He still thinks that you are influenced by some scruple of conscience concerning his father's refusal, though I have told him that you deny it. But—is it so, my child? if it is, tell me so now."

The pretty face reddened a little, but Marian answered promptly:
"Papa, the truth is, that ever since I promised to marry him I have been sorry for it. I am a little afraid of him, and always feel that I don't half understand him. I am not sorry to have a good excuse to put an end to it."

"If you do not love him, it is certainly better to put an end to it, but what I cannot understand is, why you ever gave him any hope, if you did not care for him. He says you have known all along that he loved you."

"Oh, papa! as if I thought seriously about it! of course I knew it, in a kind of a way, but I did not understand what it really meant."

"But when he asked you to marry him, you must have known that he, at least, was in earnest, and if you were not, you should have told him so then."

"Yes—but—you see, he was going home, and I thought it would be some time before I should have to decide."

"Marian, I cannot understand your conduct. It really looks as if you had never meant to act fairly by him; and yet I am unwilling to think this of my little daughter."

Half angry, half frightened, Marian took refuge in tears.

"I did not mean to do wrong! I only thought he would make such a fuss, and then he always
frightens me. Oh, send him away, papa, and let us forget all about him. I shall end in hating him, if you are going to be angry with me about him.”

“Nay, my dear, I am not angry, but I am very sorry, and a little surprised. But don’t cry, my child; the truth is, that you are only a child, and have no idea of the pain you have inflicted. You must see him, Marian, and tell him the truth yourself; it will be painful, but a lesson to you for the future.”

“If I must see him, I shall see him alone,” said Marian sullenly.

“I have no objection; go to him at once, and I will follow presently.”

Singleton, restless and miserable, did not hear her foot upon the stairs, but when the door opened, he came quickly forward to meet her.

“Marian,” he said tenderly, “tell me how this has happened. Your father has frightened me almost out of my senses, but I know there is some mistake.”

He had taken her hand, but she pulled it away petulantly, and drew back from him.

“Papa made no mistake,” she said sharply. “It was I who made a mistake, and I am very sorry for it.”

“A mistake, Marian? How? when?”
"When I said I would marry you, Singleton."

"A mistake!" he repeated. "You call it a mistake; but you said—oh, Marian, why did you say you loved me? I never asked you to marry me unless you loved me: I begged of you to tell me the truth, and that I would never trouble you any more. And you assured me you did love me, and now you say it was a mistake."

"Yes, I do; yes, it was indeed," Marian stammered out; her task was proving harder than she had expected. It was hard to look into those clear, searching eyes, and confess that she had played with and deceived him.

"I'm very young," she went on, "and I thought that in time I should like you well enough; but I was wrong."

He said nothing, but stood gazing at her. Cold as she was, her heart was touched by the mute despairing astonishment written on his face, and after a pause she spoke again.

"Singleton, I will tell you the truth, you won't like it at first, but it will be better for you in the end to know it. Only you must promise not to tell papa, or any one. I was sick of Halifax. I wanted to get to England, to see the world, and be rich and—fashionable. And I thought if you gave me all this I should like
you well enough in time. But now you see I have got away from Halifax, and it is quite plain that your father won't receive me, and so—"

She faltered and became silent. Singleton was still standing before her, and over his expressive face there swept so fierce a scorn as her meaning dawned upon him, that she could not go on. It seemed to her as if he would never withdraw his eyes, no longer full of love and sorrow, but bright, cold, and piercing, from her face, and his gaze seemed actually to hurt her. She shivered, and put her hands before her face. At last he spoke again, in a voice that she could scarcely believe was his; cold and incisive, it seemed to cut like a razor.

"Thanks for your frankness, complete if somewhat tardy. I begin to understand you now. I was a tolerable match in Halifax, for one without much fortune. Now the tables are turned: you are an heiress, I, a beggar. I perceive how unreasonable I was to expect you to keep your promise under these altered circumstances. May I ask if you have explained this to your father?"

"No, not quite," faltered Marian. "I have been more frank with you, because—"

"Because I was hard to get rid of. Yes, I was
very dull. This solution of the mystery never came into my head. But you are rid of me now. I shall trouble you no further, save with one piece of advice; do not be quite so charmingly frank with your father as you have been with me."

"Why do you speak so unkindly?"

"Unkindly! certainly, I could not mean to be unkind, could I? But you know what an affectionate daughter you are; so careful to shield him from the least annoyance, and, do you know, looking back now upon my conversation with him. I begin to fancy that even the limited amount of confidence you have placed in him has proved a shock to him. Good-morning, Miss Vane. I have now only to apologise for my mistake and thank you for your—frankness."

"One word, Singleton! You will not tell any one—the Hamiltons, or any one else, what has passed between us?"

"I believe you are not aware that your question is an insult. I shall tell no one but my sister, who knows so much that she must know the rest."

"But, Singleton, I entreat—oh, here is papa," as a knock was heard at the door.

Singleton opened it, and admitted Mr. Vane.
“I was just going in search of you, Mr. Vane, to tell you that the troublesome question is finally settled. I withdraw my pretensions, convinced that it has been a ‘mistake’ from beginning to end. So I have only to thank you, sir, and I do thank you with all my heart, for your kindness to me always, and so, good-bye.”

He was gone before Arthur Vane could speak.

“Marian, what have you done to change him so?”

“He is always changing. I only told him the truth. Thank goodness he is gone. I declare he frightened me at first; I never saw such bright fierce eyes. But he will think better of it, and we shall be very good friends again by-and-by, and he has promised to tell no one, so my folly may be forgotten.”

“Ah, Marian! I wish I could forget it,” said her father sadly.

Marian first pouted, then brightened up and kissed him.

“Don’t worry yourself about it, my darling old dad!” she said coaxingly. “I’ve been a sad goose, a naughty girl, but there’s no great harm done, and I shall be wiser for the future.”

So ended Singleton Trelawney’s first love.
CHAPTER XVII.

Pride and anger had befriended Singleton Trelawney, and carried him through this trying interview; but Pride and Anger are not friends to be depended on. This first great trial was likely to make wild work with one so passionate by nature, so untamed and untaught by experience as was Singleton, who, though full of good and noble impulses, was almost without principles. He had no fixed ideas of right and wrong, no rule of conduct, no standard of perfection, no criterion by which to judge himself. Excitable, regardless of consequences, ardent in his love, vehement in his hate, and scarcely knowing any feeling between these two; variable in temperament, easily uplifted, easily depressed: with all that pathetic yearning for happiness, that keen dread of suffering, which characterises most oversensitive people; he surely required some guide,
some help, even when all was well with him, and how much more now, when in a moment the idol he had set up and worshipped was shivered before his eyes? That guide, that help, Singleton had yet to seek, and by many a bitter lesson was he to learn that in principle, not impulse, must the guide be sought, and that no human hand can supply the needed help.

On leaving the Vanes, he went to the bedroom he had occupied the night before, and sat down in a large arm-chair before the fire. It was then not quite twelve o’clock, and it was nearly five when a chamber-maid came into the room to see to the fire, which was out. Singleton rose to his feet and stared at her vacantly.

“What do you want?” he said.

The girl started.

“Oh, sir! I didn’t know you was here. I beg your pardon, sir.”

She began rekindling the fire.

“What o’clock is it?” Singleton asked, sinking back into the chair. “It is getting dark, isn’t it?”

“Laws, sir, it’s been nearly dark this long time. It’s five o’clock. I came to light the gas.”

Which she now proceeded to do, and then stole a look at the motionless figure by the fire.
It was a bitter cold day, and he had been sitting there in the dark, and without a fire, and now that she had provided him with light and warmth, he did not seem to notice the difference. The girl was frightened, and after a little fussing about the room and many anxious glances at him, she felt certain that he was ill. He had ceased to take any notice of her, and although she purposely let all the fire-irons fall clattering upon the fender, he never looked up. Convinced by this last test that there was something wrong, she ran along the passage in search of a friendly waiter.

"Joseph, there's a young gentleman in No. 8 that I think is ill. I wish you'd go and speak to him."

"Ill; what makes you think he's ill?" inquired Joseph, pausing on his way downstairs.

"I found him settin' there in the dark without a fire; and, oh, Joe! he do look hawful! and speaks like as if he was asleep; and never noticed not by so much as to swear, when I actually let the fire-irons fall a purpose. I declare I'm sure he's ill, Joe—he gave me such a turn."

"Most likely he's screwed," quoth the cynical Joseph hastily. "However, I'll go and see after him; so make your mind heasy, my dear."
Accordingly, Singleton was again roused by a loud knock at his door. He said “Come in,” but neither moved nor spoke when the waiter entered.

Joseph looked at him and felt that the chamber-maid had not overstated the case—he did look awful.

“Did you ring, sir?” he inquired, by way of beginning the conversation in a natural and easy manner.

“No,” replied Singleton, without looking at him; but in a moment more he started and seemed to awake as from a trance all of a sudden.

“Were you speaking to me, my man?”

“Yes, sir. I was afraid you were not well,” replied the waiter, still far from reassured upon that subject.

“Oh yes; quite well. There’s nothing the matter with me; it’s a cold day, that’s all. Didn’t you say it was five o’clock? I want to go down to Plymouth by the evening train. Just find out about it for me and let me know; I ought to remember, but I don’t.”

The man returned in a few moments.

“Next train at seven, sir. You have plenty of time to spare. Better have some dinner before you start, sir.”
“Dinner! no, I don't want any.”

“You'd a deal better, sir. You don't look at all strong, sir, if you'll excuse me.”

“Well, I don't care. Order some dinner for me—anything; I don't care what—and call me when it's ready.”

When the man came back to announce dinner he found that Singleton had put all his scattered property into his valise, and had also refreshed himself by dipping his head into a basin of water, so that his hair was dripping, and his coat, about the neck and shoulders, much in the same condition.

“Why, sir, you're all wet; let me dry your coat for you. You'll have your death of cold, for certain, at this rate.”

“Oh no! cold water never hurt a sailor. I shall do very well, and I don't think I have any other coat with me.”

Mr. Joseph began to perceive that the sooner this eccentric young man left the hotel, the better, in which opinion he was confirmed by seeing that he hardly eat anything, and drank glass after glass of iced water. After dinner, feeling sick and weak, Singleton drank two or three glasses of wine, and considering that he had literally eaten nothing, it was wonderful that it did not go to his head.
"Are you going home, sir?" inquired the waiter rather anxiously, as he put him into a cab at about a quarter to seven.

"Oh yes, I suppose so. It's all right—and thank you. I'm going home."

Indeed, to get back to Haidee was the one clear idea in his head, and that there was even that one was owing to the concluding words in her letter; but for these, he would either have remained where he was, or wandered away, leaving no clue by which to trace him; for in very truth he scarcely knew what he was doing. And by the time the train reached Plymouth, he scarcely knew where he was.

Taking his valise with him, he walked slowly down the station stairs; at that early hour there were very few people about, and no one observed him. By some happy chance he got into the road which led to the Abbey, but what he did with himself for the next few hours he never knew; the only certain thing is, that he did not reach the Abbey until nine o'clock.

Haidee had just left her room when glancing through a window, she saw her brother coming up to the porch, dragging himself along like one nearly spent. It needed but that one glance to tell her why he was there; she flew down into the hall to meet him. He had admitted him-
self, and was standing before the blazing fire, gazing round him somewhat vacantly. Haidee involuntarily checked her first eager impulse, and came softly to his side.

"Singleton! my own dear boy—have you come back to me?"

"Yes; didn't he say I might?"

"He did, but I was so afraid you would not."

"Where else should I go?" he said quietly.

"There's nothing left now, but you."

She put her arms round him and kissed him tenderly; he neither repelled nor returned the caress, and his cheek was so cold that it startled her.

"And oh, Singie, your coat is wet! wringing wet. No wonder you are so cold."

"Wet? no, it cannot be wet. I think it was fine. I walked from Plymouth, but I don't think it rained."

"For all that your coat is soaked through and through. I shall ring for Pierce to get you some dry things. Pierce, go with Mr. Trelawney to his room and find his things for him; he is very wet and very tired. And tell them to send breakfast up at once. Come down as soon as ever you can, Singie—breakfast is in the gallery to-day."

Singleton walked upstairs, catching by the
banisters occasionally for support, and when he reached the corridor, he stopped and said:

"Which is my room?"

"Why this, sir! There's no fire, I'm afraid: that's because we didn't expect you, sir."

"No—you didn't expect me," repeated Singleton, dropping into a chair and staring out of the window: until Pierce, having got together a change of clothes for him, came and touched him on the shoulder to rouse him.

"Mr. Trelawney! Master Singleton! will you not change these wet clothes, sir, and come down to breakfast? You're quite wore out, sir, with travelling all night, I suppose, and I dare say not eating nothing before you left Plymouth."

Singleton started up.

"Upon my word, Pierce, I dare say you are right, and it is hunger that makes me feel so strange and creepy. When did I eat last? I could not eat at dinner, I know; had I any luncheon? no, I had not—and—why I declare I haven't eaten since I left home. It's lucky you thought of it, for I really was beginning to think I was ill. Fill my bath, like a good fellow, and I'll dress and be down in five minutes. I shall be all right when I've had my breakfast."
Pierce descended to the gallery, and took the liberty of informing his young mistress "that it was no wonder Mr. Singleton looked poorly, for he hadn't eaten since he left the Abbey."

"Impossible, Pierce! why he went the day before yesterday."

"It is what he says himself, ma'am; and I must say he looks like it. He could hardly crawl upstairs, ma'am."

"Why, it's enough to kill him," exclaimed Haidee. "I wish he would make haste."

He came soon, but his appearance alarmed her even more: he was too spent to be refreshed by his bath, and consequently it had chilled him to the very bone; he was blue and shivering, and miserable-looking in the extreme. The first thing to do was to get him to eat; and if Haidee had been left to take care of him, according to her womanly instincts, he might even yet have shaken off the fever that was creeping through his veins. But before he had well seated himself, Sir Lionel walked down the gallery, and halted at the sight of his son.

"Singleton!—so you have returned. Then I presume I am to conclude that——"

"Papa," interrupted Haidee, "please wait until after breakfast. Singleton is tired and hungry, faint with weariness; pray wait."
“Most certainly I shall not wait. Two or three words will suffice; but if, as your wish for delay gives me reason to suspect, he is here in defiance of my authority, I insist upon knowing it at once. Answer me, Singleton. Is your engagement at an end?”

“IT is,” replied Singleton, looking up at him.

“Ah! it is as I expected then. Vane withdrew his consent!”

“No, it is not as you expected at all. Mr. Vane did not withdraw his consent. But I suppose I ought to thank you—had you consented I suppose she would have married me—or rather let us say, she’d have married Tre-lawney Abbey, and a fine position, and plenty of money. Me, personally, with only my love and my pay to offer her, she declined; told me it was all a mistake. Do you hear that, Haidee? only a mistake—she only just broke my heart by mistake. And I ought to be obliged to Sir Lionel—and so no doubt I am. He promised me his hearty curse if I disobeyed him: well, I’m going to obey him now, and if my hearty curse is any comfort to him, it is quite at his service; for I could not hate him worse if instead of doing me a service he had destroyed every hope I had in the world and left me shivering in the cold. Curse him!"
why shouldn't I curse him? but for him I might be happy in my fool's paradise still."

"Singleton, darling, be quiet," whispered Haidee, terrified at his vehemence; but her voice was lost in her father's.

"Upon my word, Singleton, I believe that you are mad! If I at all understand your very incoherent remarks, you appear to have had a most fortunate escape."

"I have! I know it; and if it's a sign of madness not to be grateful for it, I am certainly mad. You're not the first person who has thought so. No, I can't eat, Haidee. Give me some more tea, I'm awfully thirsty."

"Then I may understand that this engagement is definitely broken off?" persevered Sir Lionel.

Singleton sprang to his feet.

"Yes," he shouted. "You will drive me mad yet! Yes, a hundred times yes, and may all the fiends in hell——"

"Singleton, be silent!" Haidee said quickly. "You don't know what you are saying."

Instead of replying, Singleton put his hands to his head.

"Haidee," he said, "she never loved me; never. It was a mistake, she said, and I think—— Haidee, catch me, what's the matter with me?"
He fell, and lay white and motionless. Haidee knelt beside him.

"Ring the bell, Sir Lionel, I hope you are satisfied now. Pierce, call Anne here—bring water, and help me to raise his head."

Help was soon at hand, but in spite of all they could do, the insensibility lasted long enough to frighten them all thoroughly. Even Sir Lionel was relieved when his son sat up and spoke, although his remark was not much to the purpose.

"Did the boat capsize?" said he. "Where's little Langley."

"Drink a little of this, Singleton."

"No, no, my head aches already. What brings all the servants here?—who's this at my back? Black James? Thank you, James, I'm all right now. I'm only over-tired, you know, nothing more."

He rose to his feet as he spoke, and in doing so, caught sight of his father's face.

"I've scared Sir Lionel, that's one good thing," he whispered to Haidee. "He does not know whether he is frightened or angry. Hallo! Black James has put his foot in it as usual."

For the luckless negro, in following the other servants out of the gallery, happened to stumble
over an unevenness in the carpet, caused by Singleton's fall; and Sir Lionel, who badly wanted an outlet for his excitement, fell upon him at once. I need not repeat his words, they were of a kind to which Black James was apparently accustomed, but Haidee put her hands to her ears, and Singleton laughed.

"Well," said he, "the navy has the credit of being able to do a little swearing; but I confess I never heard anything to equal my revered governor! Tell you what, Haidee, old James looks dangerous; he don't seem to me to take it as meekly as he used in the good old times."

"Oh, he does not mind! he's used to it unfortunately. Oh dear! that really is too bad"—as Sir Lionel concluded by kicking the Black through the door, and shutting it in his face when he turned to speak.

"Haidee, come with me," said Singleton very distinctly. "This is no place for a lady," and he quietly took her by the arm and led her into the drawing-room.

"Is he often as bad as that?"

"Not before me. I suspect poor James has a hard life often; I hear a tremendous noise sometimes, you know my rooms are over papa's; but I never ask any questions and I never let Anne chatter. I can do no good."
Why on earth does the fellow stay? He deserves to be kicked for putting up with it. Do you suppose he likes it? Queer taste, eh?"

"I rather suppose that the idea of life apart from Sir Lionel never enters his head. I really believe he loves him."

"Don't feel as sure of that as I used; there was an ugly roll in his eye just now. Moreover, he looked groggy, don't you think?"

"Groggy—do you mean drunk?"

"Well not drunk exactly, but flying light. Haidee, my head aches awfully. I think I'll just lie down here on the sofa for a while, till it gets better."

"Do, my darling. You are all shaking and shivering too. I must get a warm shawl and put it over you. But indeed, Singleton, you won't feel better till you have eaten."

"And I can't eat until I feel better—so how is that to be worked? However, my own idea is that I shall be all right when I've had a good sleep."

"Then suppose you come upstairs and lie on your bed? for indeed, Singleton, there is no use in trying to make Sir Lionel mind, and he may walk in at any moment. In fact I wonder he has not come already, for I am sure he is very angry at what you said just now."
"Angry? I hope he is thoroughly ashamed of himself, he ought to be. He's coming! I hear his step—how I used to quake at the sound. Bang goes the library door—but he's coming on. Now for it. Run away, Haidee, for I mean to give him a piece of my fine mind, if he attacks me."

"Dear Singie, please don't—" began Haidee in an imploring voice, but as her father stalked into the room she turned to him. "Papa, Singleton is not at all well—he has a dreadful headache and is going to lie down until luncheon."

Sir Lionel passed her by, and took no notice of her remark,—he was very pale and magnificent.

"Singleton, I can scarcely imagine that you are not aware of the extreme insolence of your remark just now."

"What remark, Sir Lionel?"

"Papa, he was hardly himself—he did not mean to annoy you."

"I beg leave to decline your interference, Haidee. If Singleton is to remain under my roof, matters must be put upon a proper footing."

"To what remark of mine do you refer, Sir Lionel."

"You said," he answered crimsoning furiously,
that the gallery was not a fit place for a lady. What did you mean by that?"

"In order to assist you in placing matters on a proper footing, as you say yourself, I'll explain. I meant what I said; neither more nor less. I by no means dispute your right to use strong language, though there are limits beyond which you might as well not go, even in private; but I object to my sister hearing it. Nor do I venture to question the propriety of your kicking your servant—and foster-brother—knowing that he belongs to the inferior race which was created by Providence to be kicked—that is the proper footing, if you'll excuse the pun. But I would respectfully suggest that this privilege should be exercised in your own apartments only. In short, I would ask you to remember, that although Haidee is your daughter, she is a lady."

All this, delivered in that peculiarly soft and even tone which Singleton's always gentle voice assumed when he was excited, was said with such apparent deliberation that it sounded even more insolent than it really was—if that were possible. Haidee had made one or two futile efforts to stop him, and now stood, almost paralyzed with fear. Singleton, lying back in an easy-chair, looked his father full in the face, and
waited. Sir Lionel was absolutely speechless: there was a breathless pause. In the course of her short life, Haidee had never felt a greater sense of relief, than when the door opened and three young men came into the room—John Trelawney and two brother-officers. She knew they were coming that day, though she had quite forgotten them in the excitement of the morning. The drawing-room at the Abbey is a long room, with two entrances, and as the newly-arrived guests had come in through the lower door, they had some way to walk before they joined the group at the upper end. Moreover, the blinds were down, and the room somewhat dark, and so it happened that the two strangers had no idea that they had interrupted so stormy an interview. John, knowing his relatives' faces better, suspected that all had not been quite peaceful. Haidee drew a long breath and murmured, "Thank Heaven!" Sir Lionel growled an oath between his teeth, and there might have been a very awkward moment, but for Singleton, on whose cheeks two burning spots were beginning to appear, and who was just in that feverish state when nothing surprises one. He stood up and shook hands with his cousin.

"How do you do, John? I did not know
you were expected to-day—but I only came home myself this morning."

By this time Sir Lionel had recovered himself, and was not much more embarrassed and pompous than was his wont: and so the crisis passed over. The three soldiers had come to enjoy a little hunting, but their stay was cut short, for before evening Singleton was sufficiently ill to cause a doctor to be summoned from Plymouth; and on the third day, the said doctor declared that he would like to have further advice. As he could not say with certainty that the fever was not of an infectious type, the gallant dragoons departed, to Haidee's great relief.

For many days it seemed not improbable that Singleton's first sorrow was to be his last: and if he had died Haidee would always have believed that he died of grief, whereas I suspect the thorough chilling and starving he had inflicted on himself had a good deal to do with his illness. Sir Lionel was not ill-pleased at the turn matters had taken. It was now open to him to assert to Haidee, who did not contradict him, that Singleton's insolence had been such that it could not be passed over, except in the belief that he had not been quite himself. Privately he had a dim consciousness that it was
well he had been prevented from turning his only son out of doors on the eve of a severe illness: and for some days he was not without a hope that his troubles concerning his unloved heir were over. However, with his usual perversity, Singleton recovered, though a three weeks' fever left him as weak as a baby, and even more shattered in nerves than in strength.
CHAPTER XVIII.

Sir Lionel Trelawney being a great man in his own neighbourhood, a paragraph concerning his son's dangerous illness appeared in a Plymouth paper, and thence found its way into a London one, in which Marian Vane saw it. By this time, Marian had become tolerably intimate with her cousin Arabel, for whom indeed she professed a vehement liking, and to enjoy whose society she was much at the Hamiltons' house. I am not sure that Arabel responded with equal warmth, but she was a good-natured girl, and not given to analyzing her neighbours motives—a reprehensible practice to which quiet, gentle Hester was much addicted, though sorely against her will. No one ever strove harder to see through people than Hester strove to be blind; and all in vain: and in this case her private opinion was that Arabel would have seen less of her new cousin if Reginald had not
been at home; and she further thought that if Marian knew how different Reginald’s manner to Haidee Trelawney was, from the quiet courtesy he displayed to her, she would have considered her friendship with Arabel a waste of time. Of these speculations Hester was very much ashamed, and would not have spoken of them for the world.

Now, of course, Marian had heard from the Hamiltons of Singleton’s illness, and had expressed just the proper amount of sorrow and anxiety—at least she thought so herself, but Hester fancied there was a constraint in her manner. But when she saw his illness mentioned in the paper, she began to think it must be serious indeed. With her usual single-minded selfishness, she began to think also, “what will be the consequences of his death to me?” and the result of her meditations was that she wrote a letter to Haidee: a very remarkable letter too, for a girl of eighteen writing about a man to whom she had been engaged so recently. It reached Haidee while her brother was at the worst, and she, stung by the heartless tone of it, answered it by return of post. I give both letters.

“January 30, 18—

“MY DEAR MISS TRELAWNEY,

“I am sure you will easily imagine my feelings on hearing of your brother’s illness.
I thought him looking very ill when I saw him last. It was a painful interview, as you know; for I know that he conceals nothing from you. I fear you must think that I behaved very foolishly, but surely when I found that I did not care for him as I thought I did, it was better to tell him the truth at once; and you do not know what trouble I have gone through about it.

"You will wonder why I write to you at such a time, for of course I hear all about poor Singleton from the Hamiltons, but I have a request to make to you. I do not know whether he had time before his illness to tell you all that passed between us, so I hope you will not blame me for telling you that he promised me that no one, particularly my cousins the Hamiltons, should ever hear of my engagement to him, either from him or you. I trust you will remember this, for I am sure he would be very sorry that I should be injured or annoyed by his means.

"I remain,

"Dear Miss Trelawney,

"Ever yours sincerely,

"MARIAN F. VANE."

To which Haidee replied, there was no address
given, but she knew that the Vanes were still at the hotel where Singleton had seen them.

"Trelawney Abbey,

"February 1st.

"Miss Trelawney begs to acknowledge the receipt of Miss Vane's letter, and to assure her that her secret is quite safe. Miss Trelawney is certainly not likely to annoy friends for whom she has a warm affection, by telling them of the heartless and unwomanly conduct of a near relation."

Poor Haidee! she was destined to be reminded of this foolish letter. Marian quite understood the scorn which was not more expressed by what was said than by what was left unsaid: and she remembered it well. She folded up the letter and put it carefully away, and hated her cousin Haidee from that hour.

Very slowly did Singleton Trelawney struggle back to something like health. He had never been very strong, and it seemed now to his anxious nurse that body and mind had suffered alike from the lingering fever which had brought him so low. He got on pretty well up to a certain stage, and there he seemed to stop. He was so nervous and excitable, that comparing

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him as he was now with what he had been before his illness, it appeared as if he had been the most equable of mortals. His nerves were utterly unhinged, every sound made him start, every slight annoyance either depressed him to such a degree that it was painful to witness, or roused him to fits of anger, followed always by terrible headache and sleeplessness. With all her love, Haidee was not quite the best nurse for him in this stage of his recovery: there is no denying that she was too easily carried away by the impulse of the moment, too sudden in her movements, graceful as they were—in fact, too excitable herself to be the best companion for Singleton. Moreover, she was too anxious about him: never having been ill herself, nor seen any one seriously ill till now, she was terrified at the state he was in, and frequently made matters worse by proposing half a dozen remedies, when to shut her ears and take no notice of his excitement would have been much the wiser course. She was nearly in despair when one day Captain Hamilton made his appearance at the Abbey. He had heard from the Hamiltons that Singleton was not recovering quickly, and having been called to Plymouth on business (or at least so he said, but I suspect it was a little fiction) he came to see "his young-
ster and Miss Goldylocks." His visit did his youngster a great deal of good, and Haidee's delight in seeing her first friend, whose kind strong hand had been so readily held out to help her and her brother when they sorely needed help—was very great. The few days he remained with them passed all too quickly to all concerned except Sir Lionel, who never forgot how Captain Hamilton had interfered about his children. In spite of his coldness and want of courtesy, the uninvited guest stayed for about ten days; but then he suddenly told Haidee that "he could not bear it any longer," and must go.

"Is it because of papa?" she asked. "Oh, Captain Hamilton, don't mind him! He is never—that is, he is naturally rather stiff, you know. And you have done Singleton so much good: you don't know how much better he is since you have been here."

The sailor looked at her thoughtfully.

"Haidee," said he (he had left off calling her Goldylocks), "I'm very fond of that youngster; but I cannot quite offer myself up as a burnt sacrifice for his sake."

"A burnt sacrifice! Papa is much more likely to freeze you, I should have thought. What do you mean, Captain Hamilton? I don't in the least understand you."
“Very likely you don’t. Nor is it necessary that you should: but I must go, that’s the long and the short of it. Singleton will do well now: get some of the young Hamiltons to come to you—keep him amused and don’t let Sir Lionel vex him. He is excitable always—and being weak now, he’s more excitable of course, but he will be the better of a little variety.”

“You manage him so beautifully—I do wish you could stay.”

“Don’t ask me, Haidee. You might get your own way and be sorry for it presently. Get Reginald to come to him—he’s young—he won’t be the worse of either the burning or the freezing.”

So the Captain took his departure, and after a few days Haidee wrote to Mrs. Hamilton.

“My dearest Mamma,

“I am going to make such a bold request, but you must grant it if you possibly can. I am quite unhappy about Singleton. He was better while dear Captain Hamilton was here, but now he is as low as he can be again, and I am afraid I do not manage him well. Besides (do not think me very wicked, please) you have no idea how papa worries him. He never was ill in his life, and does not understand how
weak and nervous Singleton is. And I want you to let Reginald and Hester come to us for a while; papa really likes Hester's gentle ways and is always pleasanter when she is here, and Reginald would cheer my poor boy a little and help him to pass the days. Sir Lionel joins in begging for them. He is talking again of going to town for a month or so this year, and I shall like it, I think, if Singleton is better.

"I am so sure that you will have pity upon me that I am having their rooms got ready; give everybody my love, and don't say 'no' for the first time to your spoilt child,

"Haidee Trelawney."

The answer to this letter arrived at breakfast time, and Haidee uttered an exclamation of delight.

"What's up?" inquired Singleton, who had already finished his meal, and who was the merest shadow of the spirited, bright-looking Singleton who had so lately come home.

"They are coming! they will be here this evening!"

"Who? John and his two friends?"

"Now do you think I should be so pleased to hear of John's coming? No—Hester and Reginald—are you not glad, Singie?"
"Reginald! That's good news. It seems an age since I saw his good-looking phiz. I tell you what, Haidee, we'll drive into Plymouth to meet them."

"It would be too much for you, dear; you would be overtired and lie awake all night. But I am so glad you like to have them."

"By the way, Haidee," Singleton said after a few minutes thought, "I don't know whether I said this before or not, but I must say it now. You must not tell any of the Hamiltons that I was—that there was ever any engagement between me and their cousin."

"I know that. Of course I shall not speak of her."

There was a tone in her voice which made him look at her quickly.

"What is it? Do they know it already?"

"Not from me: and I am sure not from her. Don't alarm yourself about her, she is quite able to take care of her own interests. She wrote to me while you were ill about it."

"She wrote to you? Have you the letter still? Show it to me."

"After breakfast—here's Sir Lionel. I had better ring for more coffee, for this is cold. You are late to-day, papa."

"Am I? Good morning, Haidee. Good
morning, Singleton. I trust you have slept well and are well to-day?"

"All right, thank you," answered Singleton shortly; his father's condescending inquiries always irritated him.

"Sir Lionel, Hester is coming back to us: and Reginald will bring her and remain for some days."

"I rejoice to hear it. They are welcome," said Sir Lionel, deep in a letter he had opened.

"John writes that he cannot get leave just now, but trusts to join us for a visit of some duration while we are in town."

Haidee imprudently gave her brother an expressive look, to signify that she could have lived without this promise, and to her horror, he replied to it in words.

"Better there than here."

Sir Lionel looked up. "May I enquire the meaning of that remark?" said he.

"I mean that if John is coming, I am glad it will be while we are in London," answered Singleton carelessly.

"I fail to see what difference that can make to you, Singleton."

"Oh, it does though. It will be easier to keep out of his way there than here, and John
and I shall never pull together. He's such an awful heavy swell."

"I do not precisely know what you mean by the phrase, 'a heavy swell,'" remarked Sir Lionel severely.

"Oh, just John, don't you know? Haidee, I'm going to the drawing-room, will you come there when you are ready?"

He sauntered away, and Haidee found him in about half-an-hour, wandering restlessly about the conservatory, with a crimson spot on one cheek, and eyes much brighter than she cared to see them.

"Where's the letter, Haidee?"

"The letter—oh, I forget it. I will run to my room for it, if you like; but indeed, Singleton, I'm sorry I mentioned it to you. It would be much better for you if you did not read it now."

"Nonsense!" he answered sharply. "If you thought so, why did you speak of it at all? Of course I want to see it."

She went and brought it to him, and he walked off into the conservatory with it. As he did not return, she followed him after a time; he was sitting on an iron seat at the far end with the letter open on his knees, so she sat down beside him and put her hand on his.
"Haidee, speak frankly now. What is your opinion of the writer of that letter?"

"I think she is perfect, Singleton."

"Ay? explain if you please."

"I think she is 'one entire and perfect chrysolite' of selfishness! Utterly heartless, not worth one thought of my dear old Singie's warm heart."

"I'm not worth much," he said slowly. "But I loved her; and believed in her no end. That day in London it was as if she suddenly took off a beautiful mask and showed me her real face for the first time. And now, looking back, I am ashamed to have been so taken in, for I might have seen long ago that she cares for no one but herself. If I had any remaining delusion that letter would cure me—she don't even pretend to care whether I live or die. I'm glad you showed it to me—nasty medicine, but very wholesome."

"Then I am glad too, only you must not excite yourself, dear."

"Oh, bother! don't tell a fellow not to excite himself, child, it would have excited Job himself. Here, burn this precious epistle, and let us forget that I ever was such a zany. I'll get you to choose a wife for me when I want one, Haidee; I shall never trust my own judg-
ment again. Run away now, I'm going to smoke."

As she had learned that this meant "I want to be alone," she departed, and saw him no more till luncheon time, when he made his appearance, but had such a headache that he could not eat, and submitted to her sentence of banishment to his own room until the Hamiltons arrived. Even this did not quite remove the traces of the morning's agitation, and Reginald was quite shocked at the change in him.

However, with the Hamiltons' visit a better state of things began. Their presence imposed a check upon Sir Lionel's constant fault-finding, and insensibly put an end to the state of thraldom in which Haidee, with the best intentions, had held her brother since his illness. They had been invited, that Hester might be with Haidee, and that Reginald might cheer Singleton, but as it fell out, matters were arranged rather differently. Hester had not been very well while in town, and was not up to long rides and drives, and what is more to the purpose, she was born to be the consoler of every one who seemed sorrowful, and the support of everyone who seemed weak. She very soon acquired a curious influence over Singleton, who was never so happy as when left to her
care. So by degrees, it came to be accepted as the usual thing that Reginald rode, drove or walked with Haidee, while Singleton and Hester made a shorter excursion, and amused themselves afterwards as best they could until the others returned: and it is a fact that neither party ever complained that the time seemed long. But I wonder what Mrs. Hamilton would have said.

So March passed away; on one lovely mild day (in Devonshire, March is sometimes as mild as the Poet's May, and much milder than the cold blustry May of actual experience) Haidee and Reginald started early on an expedition they had long been talking of, leaving the others to take a quiet drive if they felt inclined. Hester went into the hall to see them off, and then returned to the drawing-room, where she had left Singleton, extended his lazy length on a sofa.

"Are they off, Hester?"

"Yes, and Regie was nearly off in more senses than one, for his horse was very fresh and jumped about in a wonderful way; however he stuck on somehow."

"Of course he did, trust a sailor for sticking on—like grim death to a back stay, as the saying is."
"Well, but you know that is not what people generally say of a sailor's riding."

"That's a popular delusion. Now look here did you ever hear of a sailor killed out hunting?"

"No, I don't think I ever did."

"Or riding a steeple chase?"

"No, I think not."

"Very well, neither have I. But soldiers and civilians are always getting killed either hunting or racing. Therefore, Miss Hamilton, let me never again hear you giving countenance to that preposterous calumny about a sailor on horseback."

Hester laughed; she had a soft low laugh like a child's, and he liked to hear it.

"I promise!" she said. "And I won't even inquire whether sailors ride races and hunt as much as soldiers and civilians do."

"No—don't inquire: that's a resolution that shews your sense. Much the best chance we have of believing in things is, not to know too much about them."

"That being settled, may I inquire what your highness wishes to do to-day?" asked Hester, coming up to the back of the sofa, and by a dexterous pull arranging his pillow more comfortably.

"Thank you—my neck would have been
broken in five minutes more, and I was too lazy to move—oh, anything you like, Hester; you must not fancy yourself bound to take care of me. If you have anything better to do, don't mind me, I can moon about and amuse myself."

"But am I in your way?" she said with a blush; "should you prefer to be alone this morning?"

Singleton sat up to look at her.

"Prefer to be alone? No, very decidedly not. But I'm afraid of being a bother; you stayed with me all yesterday and the day before, and I was thinking this morning that you must be very tired of me."

"And you are sure that it is not that you are tired of me?" she asked, with such utter simplicity and earnestness, that he laughed a little as he threw himself back on his pillow.

"You may feel quite certain of that. Why, Hester, you must see how much good you do me. There is something so quieting and soothing in the very sound of your voice, and the touch of your hand. I'm quite happy as long as I have you, but you must not let me be selfish and make a slave of you."

The girl's quiet brown eyes deepened and glowed, and a lovely pink crept into her cheeks.
"No, I won't let you be selfish," she said smiling, "and I won't be a slave, only a friend."

"A friend! ah, I want a friend if any one ever did. Do you know, Hester, I sometimes think I shall never be fit for anything again?"

"But you will," she answered earnestly. "You are only weak and—and not happy. Don't think me very impertinent, but I could not help seeing that."

"Seeing what?" he said, turning as he lay, so that he could see her where she sat, with her work in her hand.

"That you have been unhappy. I hope you won't be annoyed that I see it, but I can't help it. I know you have had a great grief."

"Hester, has Haidee told you anything?"

"No. I asked her, and she said she could tell me nothing. And please, Singleton, don't think that I am going to ask questions, but I wanted to shew you that you will be all right again, it is only that you are weak and unhappy."

"And Haidee told you nothing?"

"Nothing. And we won't talk any more about it, Singleton, if you please," she added hastily; "for I never can help guessing things, and if you don't want your secret known, we had better not talk about it."
“Guessing things—what do you mean? tell me, Hester.”

“Oh, just that I seem to know things sometimes without being told, and things that I was not meant to know. If I am fond of any one, or sorry for them, I seem to know about them almost as if I had somehow got into them: and I sometimes know a thing quite well that people fancy no one knows, and I don’t know how I come to know it. And I really don’t think I am curious.”

“That I am sure you are not. It’s a very extraordinary faculty, you know: tell me more about it. Tell me of something you have known in this way.”

“Well, let me see: you know all about our misfortunes, don’t you? about Heronhurst and my brother Philip?”

“Yes. Reginald told me.”

“When the crash came, it took Arabel and Haidee quite by surprise; but when I came to think, I found that I had known that there was something wrong, and that Philip was concerned in it. And I know two or three things about Regie now that he has never spoken of at home—perhaps he has to you.”

“Ay—what are they?”

“I think he hates being a sailor—though he
has taken great pains to conceal it, and Mamma has no suspicion of it."

“I’m afraid you are right there. He does hate it: and only sticks to it because he does not see how to do anything else without burthening his father. What more, Hester? you said two or three things.”

“I think he has a great desire to get back Heronhurst—and if he were the eldest son he would do it, you would see.”

“That could make no difference now that the entail has been broken.”

“It would make a difference in the feeling, I think.”

“He has never spoken of it to me. What’s the third thing, Hester?”

“Oh, the third thing I shan’t tell you. You must find it out for yourself.”

“Too lazy—tell me?”

“No, I really shall not. Don’t be curious, Singleton.”

“It’s very wrong of you—you are aware of that! In my weak state, excitement of any kind is simply poison!—Do you know, Hester, I’m beginning to think you are a little bit of a witch. Now tell me honestly, what do you know, or think about me?”

She looked at him, and blushed a little; but
seeing that he was quite serious in his wish to know, she answered with a simple frankness which he could not help contrasting mentally with Marian's coquettish manner.

"I will tell you, but you must promise not to think me curious and prying, Singleton. I assure you, I never try to know things—I really cannot help it."

"I promise! no one could look in your face and think that of you, Hester. Go ahead—I am curious if you like—burning with curiosity."

"Well, before you went to London, when we were here in January, I thought you were often thinking of something that no one else knew, not even Regie?"

"Quite right so far. Go on."

"But you will certainly fancy that I watched you: and I did not. You watched for a letter from Canada—and nothing came. The letter that called you away came from London, and you went, and—got ill."

"That's not all you know, Hester. I really wish—I do, indeed, that you would speak quite plainly. Tell me all you have guessed."

"I could not help it, Singleton! they came just at that very time, and you had been so much with them in Halifax—and she was so careful as to what she said about you, and Uncle..."
Arthur so sorry and anxious when you were ill. I could not but guess—but I never said a word to any one.”

Singleton was silent until poor Hester asked in great distress:

“Are you vexed, Singleton? you asked me, or I should never have spoken of it.”

“I am not vexed in the least. Believe me I am not. What I am thinking of is this—I promised to keep this matter secret from all of you, and I am trying to decide if this promise binds me not to talk of it to you, though you know it without my help. You will not mention it to any one else, I know.”

“I promise that willingly. I have no right to repeat it and I never will, unless something happens to make me think I ought. You would not wish me to be silent if harm might come of it.”

“What harm, you sybil?”

“If I saw that Regie was being taken in. But there is no danger of that at present.”

“He is better employed, eh? Oh, Miss Hester, you fancy no one sees that but yourself, do you? My child, it does not need a sybil to perceive that. Why my father does not interfere in the interests of his beloved John I cannot conceive—only he never sees anything, you
know. It will save me the trouble of shooting John, that's one good thing."

"Singleton, it frightens me, do you know? what will Sir Lionel say?"

"A good deal—and probably in good strong language too. It's a ticklish business—and yet I'm very glad."

"Sir Lionel does not wish to be unkind."

"Not to Haidee certainly. In fact he has a kind of stony liking for her. But there'll be a dreadful row about it, unless we can hit upon some way of extinguishing John—then very likely the governor would not care who got her, you know. Now look here, Hester, as you know so much of my story, I am going to tell you the rest—for I want you to see that though I was an awful idiot, I have nothing to be ashamed of—and that I—have made up my mind, you know."

Without giving her time to speak, he ran rapidly through the story of his love, merely sketching it.

"Now," said he in conclusion, "I loved her very truly, Hester; but I declare to you, that when she got me to understand and believe that she was telling me the truth at last—that she had never loved me—that she was only using me to get away from Halifax, and was glad to
get rid of me when she could do that without my help—that moment my love died. The shock was very great, and bowled me over, you know. But I could no more care for her still than I could love a snake.”

“No. What a heartless creature she is!”

“Yes—but my heart, you see, is my own again, only as I don’t feel equal to taking care of it, I think I shall—not lose it—but give it away soon, if I have not done so already. What do you advise, Hester?”

“Oh, I don’t know, I couldn’t say. Singleton, shall I order the pony-carriage? it is a lovely day, and we really ought to go out at once.”

She rose as she spoke and rang the bell before he could reach it; then she walked quickly to the door, saying:

“Do you order it; I will go and get ready,” and left him much amazed at her abrupt departure.

“Haidee herself could not have beaten that!” muttered the aggrieved youth. “What a darling she is! so gentle and sympathising—just like a west wind on a hot day. She does me no end of good, that’s certain. Well, Pierce, what is it?”

“You rang, sir.”
“No, I did not—yes, I did. Tell them to send round the pony-carriage at once—no one need go with it, I can manage the gates.”

“Yes, sir,” said Pierce respectfully; but when his back was turned to his young master, he relieved his feelings by a solemn wink.

While this was passing at the Abbey, Reginald and Haidee were riding slowly along the Devonshire lanes. It was not the best time of the year to see the lanes, the wealth of wild flowers had not yet appeared, and there is seldom much to be seen over the high banks; but under the circumstances they did very well; and I believe these two young people would have been content to ride on side by side for ever, with nothing to look at but each other, and with no one else to talk to. They had left home early, with the intention of visiting some show-place in the neighbourhood—it matters not what place, as they never reached it. Haidee knew the lanes perfectly, and never could understand how it happened, but it is quite certain that she lost her way. One Devonshire lane is certainly very like all the others, but she prided herself upon her knowledge of them, and so it was a humiliating confession. It is probable that the conversation was engrossing; but whatever was the
cause, the consequence was that she was brought to a sense of the situation by coming out unexpectedly upon the high-road—and finding that it was a road she did not know.

"Why, Reginald!" she exclaimed, her face crimsoning as she looked around. "I don't know where we are. This is not the right road. I don't think I have been here, not often at all events."

"Those lanes are enough to puzzle any one," replied Reginald, his face reflecting the crimson of hers. "I think I see a turnpike in the hollow, let us ride on and find out where we are."

"But look at the sun, he is farther west than he ought to be!"

Reginald looked at his watch.

"Half past three!" he exclaimed in an awe-struck voice. "What have I been about? You must be starving, Haidee; I have been very careless."

"So have I," she answered, laughing. "Much worse than you, for you are not expected to know your way, and I ought. Come along, we must make the best of our way home; Singleton and Hester will have a laugh at us."
“Let those laugh who win,” Reginald answered quickly, and Haidee blushed again.

They rode up to the toll-gate, and discovered that they were within two miles of Plymouth, having described the most extraordinary circle since they left the Abbey in the morning.

“Why, Plymouth must lie between us and home, Reginald! We must have ridden miles and miles; the horses look wonderful—I suppose because we have gone slowish. Let us ride into Plymouth and then home by the high-road, for really I could not undertake to find my way back as we came.

No more time was lost, and no more words passed until they were within a mile of the Abbey. Then Haidee drew rein and said:

“Let us walk a little, the horses are so hot. It must be very late, it is so dark.”

“I cannot see my watch.”

“I only hope Singleton and Hester are not frightened. But, Reginald, I have something to say to you—about what you said this morning. You know we agreed to say nothing to papa until John has spoken and I have got rid of him. I am sure papa means to bring that on while we are in London, and I know it will be wiser to wait, for if papa is certain that I won’t marry John, it will be easier to
deal with him. But I want to say, don't bring Singleton into it. Poor Singleton! Papa is so hard upon him, and he has so much to bear. I think it would be a pity to mix him up in this."

"I will do exactly as you wish. Indeed I am ashamed of my presumption, Haidee; and you must remember that you are not bound. If you find by-and-by that you like some one else better, you must not think of me."

"I promise that," she answered, turning her earnest eyes upon him. "If! but that is a wonderful if. No, Reginald. I am bound, and I like to be, and you are bound, and I am glad to know it, but no one else need know it yet. At least, I shall tell Hester, because I may as well have the comfort of telling her, as she is sure to find it out. Only let us keep poor Singie out of the scrape—goodness knows what wild thing he would do to get rid of John: and I can do that for myself I hope. Here's the gate, is it open? How Singleton will laugh at us!"

"I see them in the gallery."

"I hope they have not been nervous," Haidee answered as they rode into the porch. Out came the two watchers at the sound.

"Here you are, you nice pair! Mr. Hamil-
ton, I shall require an explanation of your conduct: carrying off my sister, and disappearing for an entire day. Sir Lionel has sent all the available men and horses in the establishment in different directions, and has likewise telegraphed to several towns to have you stopped."

"Oh, Singie, help me down instead of talking such nonsense. I'm so tired that I can hardly move."

"Did you admire——" inquired Singleton, as she dismounted, naming the place they had gone to inspect.

"We never got there. We lost our way, and came out of the lanes somewhere on the other side of Plymouth. We have had to ride hard to get home."

"Do you mean to say that you've been in the saddle all this time? Stiff you'll be to-morrow, my children."

"Singleton, will you not send word to Sir Lionel that we have returned?" said Reginald, as they entered the gallery together.

"Bless your refreshing innocence, my son!" was the paternal reply; "did you believe that little fiction of mine touching Sir Lionel? Haidee knew better. I don't suppose he knows you were away at all."
"And how did you lose your way, Haidee?" inquired Hester. Then after a glance at Miss Trelawney's exquisite colour, she added—"you are not so very tired, either. Come to the drawing-room, we waited tea for you, and there is a good fire. Then you must lie down until dinner-time, Haidee."

She put her arms around her friend and kissed her tenderly. Now Hester was not of a gushing temperament, and a kiss from her meant something. But Haidee did not ask what it meant; she only coloured beautifully and walked on into the drawing-room.

Fortunately perhaps for the keeping of the secret, Reginald was summoned to London the very next day, by a telegraphic message from his father, which merely said that he was wanted at home, where they were all well. From London he wrote to explain, that a letter had been received from Philip, who was ill, and that Mr. Hamilton, not being fit to travel, wished him to go to him.

And Reginald went, but he never saw his brother alive. The wretched, wasted, useless life had closed before he reached the small German town to which Philip had withdrawn when he fell ill in Paris. His death could cause but little grief, except perhaps to his
mother, who, mother-like, forgot the misery of
later years, and remembered only her pride in
her first-born son. But practically, he had
died even to her, three years before his actual
death; and her sorrow now was not capable
of adding much to the burden he had laid upon
her.

It certainly appeared as if there was a fate
against Marian Vane; at least so she thought.
She was looking forward with infinite delight
to a gay season in town, and instead of that,
she found herself obliged to go into mourning
for her cousin, and to become an inmate of the
Hamiltons' house for a while. Mr. Vane was
forced to go back to Halifax, where it had been
found impossible to wind up his private affairs
without his presence; and he left his daughter
under his sister's care. No balls, no concerts,
no theatre! and the pleasant home circle had no
charm for Marian. So she was not in a very
amiable mood, and Arabel began to suspect
that her new friend had not quite the delightful
temper she had credited her with. It mattered
little to Arabel, who had set up a lover of her
own in the most unexpected way, "only a
curate," as Marian took occasion to remark.
But in Arabel's eyes he was better than a
bishop. He was fortunately not "only a
curate" in the matter of funds, as he had a few hundreds a year of his own; and the marriage would have taken place at once but for Philip Hamilton's death.

So matters stood when the Trelawneys came up to their great house in Grosvenor Square, and Hester returned to her home for a time.
CHAPTER XIX.

Haidee Trelawney began her London life with a heart full of bright anticipations, of which the brightest was that she would see a great deal of Reginald. In this hope she was doomed to meet with disappointment. The morning after her arrival she received a note from Mrs. Hamilton, asking her to come early to Russell Square, as she wanted to see her. Seeing her look puzzled, Singleton inquired:

"What is it, Haidee, my diamond?"

"Why do you call me a diamond?" she asked, not feeling quite ready to answer his question.

"I have a private way of calling my female friends by the names of precious stones, which, to my poor fancy, they may chance to resemble. Now you are very like a diamond—bright, flashing, changeful, yet not changed. Hester is
like a pearl, shining with a soft, mild light, pure and tender."

"What pretty compliments! I'm getting as vain as any peacock. May I repeat that simile to Hester?"

"If you think it worth while. Who is your note from?"

"Mrs. Hamilton."

"And what can that best of women have to say, to make you pucker up your dear little nose, with the very little pucker I remember of old?"

"I didn't know I was puckering my nose," she replied, smoothing the feature in question with one finger. It's a bad habit: I shall be quite wrinkled before my time. Singie, I am puzzled, and there is no use in denying it."

"Let us be accurate," remarked Singleton, holding out his cup for some more tea—they were breakfasting together in great comfort, Sir Lionel having sent word that he did not mean to appear—"Let us be accurate. You did not deny—you only shirked 'fessing up to it.' The two acts are alike, yet not identical. 'Fess up' now, will you?"

"I will. Mrs. Hamilton wants me to go there this morning early, and to bring you. She wants so much to make your acquaintance,
because she has heard so much about you that she fancies she knows you already."

"Is the dear lady of Irish extraction?"

"No—she was a Vane, you know; but why do you ask?"

"Because her reason is so like one of O'Hara's—she wants to make my acquaintance because she knows me already."

"Impertinent boy! The Irishism, if there is one, is mine, not hers. I shall read you her note:—

"'My dear Haidee,

'Come to me as early as you can this morning, for I have much to say to you, and we are leaving London for a few weeks. I want to introduce you to my sister-in-law, Mrs. Seymour, who has kindly promised to matronise you for a time; did you know that Sir Lionel had written to me on that subject? Bring Singleton if he is able to be out so early. I am longing to see him, feeling quite as if he were an old friend instead of a new one. Come quite early, Mrs. Seymour comes to luncheon, and I must have a private talk with you before that.

"'Your affectionate friend,

"'Hester Hamilton.'"
‘Well, my dear? I have listened attentively, and yet I don’t quite see why you puckered your nose. The private interview you may have private reasons—ahem!—for wishing to avoid; you may be called to account for certain doings—you may he asked awkward questions concerning that long ride in the Devonshire lanes when you lost your way so strangely; but still I think the puckered nose denoted a strength of feeling not to be accounted for on these grounds. Eh, Haidee?’

She blushed and laughed, but made no attempt to pretend that she did not understand him.

‘You are very witty, my dear; but I am sure you know why I don’t tell you the little there is to tell.’

‘You don’t want to get me into a scrape with the Grand Turk? Yes—Hester said it was that.’

‘Hester knew nothing about my reasons.’

‘Oh, didn’t she? My dear, those mild short-sighted eyes of hers see a great deal more than you would imagine; and seeing me puzzled and inclined to feel ill-used, she told me that in her opinion that was your reason, and that you were right. She thought, too, that you wanted your refusal of John to be
entirely your own act, and not prompted, as the Grand Turk would think, by me.”

“Now, how on earth did Hester know all that? I never spoke to her about it.”

“She ‘feels it in her bones,’ I expect. She’s a bit of a witch, you know. Dear little Hester, I wish we had her here this moment.”

Haidee smiled, thinking to herself, “It is all coming right, and my dear boy will be happy in spite of that cat of a Marian.” Then she said aloud: “But we have wandered from our subject—you have not yet found out why I puckered my nose. And I must tell you, though I would rather not.”

“Why so?”

“Because you bid me never mention her name to you! and she is there at the Hamiltons.”

“She! Marian, you mean? Why is she there?”

“Mr. Vane has been obliged to go back to Canada for a month or so, and he left her with his sister.”

“Then that was Hester’s reason for saying that she did not expect to see me at her own house very often.

“What! does Hester know about that, too? Mind, I never told her.”

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“No, nor I, until she knew it. She ‘evolved it out of her inner consciousness,’ don’t you know? Fine sentence that. I got it in a book. She can’t help it—her inner consciousness is one too many for her. However, to return to the puckered nose. Never pucker it on that account again, my dear. Marian Vane is nothing to me. I would prefer not to meet her, because I am not very strong, and I don’t wish her to fancy I care about her, whereas it would be only nervousness! but I must meet her if she is there, and the sooner the better.”

“If you are sure it won’t hurt you, dear Singie.”

“I’ll endeavour to survive it, my diamond. Go and get ready, and let us set forth upon our way.”

“Ring, then, and order the carriage. I shall be ready in about half an hour.”

In the large, comfortable, though plainly-furnished drawing-room of the house in Russell Square, in which the Hamiltions lived, a good many people were assembled. Beside the fire, in an easy-chair, sat Mr. Hamilton; sadly changed from the ruddy, handsome squire of Heronhurst. His failing health had obliged him to resign his appointment, which had been a great grief to him. Arabel and her lover
stood apart in the farthest of the three windows, exchanging a few words before he went off to his work: he called every morning on some excuse or other, although his evenings were always spent there. To-day he had come to inquire if Hester had recovered from the fatigue of her journey. He was a small, spare, singularly youthful-looking man, dressed in the most strictly clerical garb, and seldom seen except in a hurry, owing to the fact that he was wont, at this time of his life to undertake more work than any one man could reasonably hope to get through. Hester, Reginald, and Mrs. Hamilton were sitting near the centre table, the two ladies working, Reginald with a book in his hand; and Marian Vane, on the opposite side of the fireplace from her uncle, lay back in a great easy-chair with a screen concealing her face, from behind which she watched the whole party, and not a word that was said in the room escaped her, not even the whispers of the pair in the far window.

Presently she heard Arabel say: "Do stay, William; you may not have another opportunity for some time, and Haidee is so beautiful—I want you to see her."

Marian pricked up her ears; she had gone to bed early the evening before, she said with a
headache—in real truth, bored to death by the rejoicings over Hester's return. For some reason, best known to herself, she disliked Hester intensely.

Having thus lost a good deal of the evening, she had not heard Mrs. Hamilton say that she intended to ask the Trelawneys to come to Russell Square next day. She did not gather much further information from the Rev. William's reply, which referred principally to the transitory nature of beauty, and to the fact that he admired a pretty woman rather than an actual beauty. Arabel's reply, however, enlightened her.

"I wonder," she said, "if her brother is like her; we have never seen him before."

This was awkward. Suppose that ridiculous boy made a scene? he was quite silly enough. She meditated declaring that her head was again tormenting her, and escaping to her room. As they were leaving town next day, the same awkwardness, would not recur; but while she meditated the opportunity was lost; Arabel came away from the window, saying "Here they are," and in a moment Haidee was in the room, crying out "Where's mamma?" And having found her way into Mrs. Hamilton's arms, she did not seem in any hurry to re-
appear. Singleton, who had followed after a short interval, was greeted by Reginald and Hester, and introduced to Arabel, and also to Mr. Hastings. This gave Marian a moment in which to recover her self-possession: she came forward smiling sweetly and holding out her hand.

"I don't think you saw me, Singleton."

Singleton was no actor—he started, coloured, and took her hand in silence; and there might have been an awkward moment, but that Haidee came to her brother's assistance.

"Mamma, won't you introduce me to Miss Vane? This is Miss Vane, I am sure."

"It is; but you ought to need no introduction, you know, for you are cousins, though rather distant. And you are really a little like each other! that's very odd, for I don't think Marian like her mother; still there is certainly a family likeness."

Marian looked at the tall, and for that passing moment, rather stern-looking girl who stood beside her; and then unconsciously turned towards the pier-glass between the windows, where their figures were reflected as they stood side by side. For the first time she saw her rival, as she mentally called her: the girl who had written that contemptuous note; the girl
who knew all about her conduct to Singleton; the girl whom Reginald loved; and it was a very bitter moment, for even she could not help seeing that Haidee's brilliant beauty eclipsed hers. Beside that glory of golden hair, hers looked pale and colourless; beside those clear, speaking, dark grey eyes, hers looked washed out and unmeaning, and in feature and complexion there was just enough likeness to make hers look like a dim reflection of Haidee's. How she hated her! She glanced at the rest of the party—yes, Reginald was gazing at her enemy with eyes in which it was easy to read his admiration; Arabel was whispering to her lover, and he, surprised out of his dislike to regular beauties, replied honestly, "The most beautiful face I ever saw;" while to add to her disgust, she caught Hester's eye for a moment and knew that she perceived her mortification. It all passed in a moment—Haidee moved away, and Marian said with tolerable carelessness,

"My cousin is much taller than I am."

"Yes," replied Haidee, "you are not a true Trelawney," with the slightest possible emphasis on the word true. "Mamma, I never introduced Singleton to you! I am always forgetting that you don't know him."
"I introduced myself, and so did Mr. Hamilton, as you seemed to have forgotten him."

"She always forgets me!" said Singleton gravely. "She flew upstairs like a steam engine the moment the door was opened, leaving me either to rush after her or face the astonished servant."

"Poor fellow! did I leave him lamenting? Hester, I'm going with mamma. I leave this tender creature to your care; look after him till I return."

In the general move which took place Marian glided from the room, and was seen no more until luncheon-time.
CHAPTER XX.

Mrs. Hamilton led the way to her dressing-room.

"Now, my dear Haidee, we have only an hour before us, and I want to talk seriously to you."

"Mamma! you are not annoyed, are you?"

"No, my dear girl. The hope that you will one day be the wife of my dear Reginald, and my own daughter, is very pleasant to me and to my husband."

"Then you don't approve of the concealment of our—love for each other," Haidee replied, kneeling down before her friend and looking lovingly up in her face. "Did not Reginald tell you my reasons?"

"He did. But, my dear, your father cannot force you to marry your cousin, however much he may wish it. And perhaps the fact that you have formed another attachment might——"
"Oh no! you don't know papa. But, mamma, the truth is that I have a reason which I could not give to Reginald, and which makes concealment quite necessary. I shall tell you, but only in a general way, for I have promised not to tell any one all about it; so you must not ask me any questions."

"I will not. You know of old I am a safe person."

"The very safest, best, and kindest friend that ever a poor motherless girl had the good fortune to possess. Mamma, I may as well confess to you that I want to—marry Regie, to be your daughter, you know."

She nodded her head saucily.

"Of course! I believe that implicitly. But, dear child, don't lose time. My sister-in-law will be here presently, and I am very anxious about this, for many reasons. You see, you will be an heiress, dear Haidee, and Reginald has little or nothing: and we cannot run any risk of having it said that we entrapped you into an engagement. It would kill Henry."

"Now then for my private reason, about which perhaps you know more than I do. Mamma, something which happened lately showed us that my father has a perfectly insane hatred of your brother, Mr. Vane. He did not
know until then that the friends Singleton made in Halifax were related to us—that Mr. Vane was the person who married Miss Trelawney, and when something made Singleton mention it, he was in the most dreadful state. He forbid us ever to mention the name again. As to the cause of his hatred I know nothing, and I don't wish to know. I don't want to make it harder to keep the fifth commandment than it is."

"But is it possible that he did not know who Arthur Vane was when your brother mentioned him in his letters?"

"Ah, mamma, every word you say only shows how unnatural the state of things among us is. Singleton never wrote to papa in his life! and papa never asked a question about his letters to me. Why, to this moment, he does not know that Mr. Vane is your brother!"

"Is it possible? would not my elder brother's death and Arthur's succession have caught his eye in the papers?"

"He reads the papers—-at least he looks at them—and I saw your name in one, I remember. But I am quite sure he does not know it. Now, if while his anger with Singleton is still fresh in his mind, he were to hear that I would never marry John, and that I loved Regie, and
at the same time find out that Reginald is the nephew of the man he hates so potently, dear mamma! you don’t know what he is capable of. Do you know that I was only just in time to prevent him from knocking Singleton down the other day? and what would have happened if I had not been there, I tremble to think.”

“ But why do you think that delay will do any good? It seems to me as if your father would feel just the same six months hence as he does now.”

“No, I must be very saucy, mamma, and say that I know him better than you do. In the first place, he is going to spend some time here, where he won’t be such an autocrat as he is at home; he will hear things talked of, and people will say what they think without minding him. He has been so long without mixing with the world, and if he can only be got to see that he would make himself ridiculous, he would do anything sooner than be laughed at. Then, too, I shall be rid of John: and you know, if we spoke to papa now, the very best we could hope would be that he would say that I must see more of the world before I promised anything. Now, if this time in London were over, he could not say that. I should just tell him that I had seen hundreds of people, and not one
like Reginald. Believe me, mamma, it is better to wait."

"There is a good deal in what you say—and yet——"

"But there is one other reason, which I forgot. I hope that during this time he may find out that you are Mr. Vane's sister, so that he may not have to be told that when Reginald speaks to him. And though you will hardly believe it, that would make a difference: if he had got used to the idea he would not mind it half so much. He is fond, too, of having Hester at the Abbey, so he would try to forget that she was Mr. Vane's niece."

"You are a good special pleader, Haidee. Let me go now to Mr. Hamilton, he was to go to his own room to meet me. I will tell him all your reasons, and his opinion must decide the question."

Haidee was left alone for some time, but just as she was beginning to get impatient Reginald came in.

"I thought my mother was here," he said.

"She is gone to Mr. Hamilton. Reginald, I do hope they will not insist on speaking to papa just now. I know it will add tenfold to our trouble with him."

"I think you have the best right to decide—
that is my view of the question: but I cannot bear to vex my father. Ah, Haidee, perhaps I ought to have held my tongue."

"I am glad you did not, though. Here they come, I hear them in the passage."

"Oh ho, Mr. Reginald! so you found your way up here to see how the wind blows in these latitudes. You see, Haidee, I'm getting quite nautical in my discourse since I've had my sailor at home."

"You did not learn it from him, I am sure. I should never know him for a sailor by his way of speaking. Singleton does it sometimes."

"And I am always pulling him up for it," remarked Reginald, as he made his father comfortable in an easy-chair. "No one ought to talk shop."

"Well, my Sunbeam! so you and this tall boy of mine want to make geese of yourselves."

"No, sir! we want your leave to be very wise and uncommonly prudent."

"Mrs. Hamilton has told me all you say, my dear. And we agree that you are wise to put off speaking to your father. But then, I think there must be no engagement."

"I think you are quite right, sir," said Reginald. "I feel that myself."

Haidee looked up at him with startled eyes.
"Why do you think so, Reginald? Are you sorry that you—spoke to me?"

"No, Haidee, I cannot regret that. I am glad you know that I love you. But you are very young; you have lived such a lonely life, seeing no man but your cousin John, and now you will meet every day, people far superior to me in position—in everything except their love—and perhaps loving you well too, for no one could help that, I think. It is not fair to bind you: and my father is quite right."

"And so, Miss Haidee, I play the part of the tyrant father! and decree that you and Reginald may remain silent as to what has passed, but only on condition you don't meet, nor write to each other, until your visit to London is over. Then we shall see how it will be."

"I shall not change, Reginald. And I'm sure you won't. It is better, I believe. It would not do to have to tell papa that we were engaged so long. But—Regie, you won't forget me?" she said with a quiver in her sweet voice, and her eyes shining with gathering tears.

"Forget you, my Sunbeam? If he does I'll—shoot him! Come away, Hester: let them have a few minutes to themselves," said good-natured Mr. Hamilton, preparing to leave the
room. "It will only be good-bye for a time, child, don't cry over it."

When the door closed, Reginald took her hand in his, saying:

"You will trust me, Haidee?"

"And you me. It will be but a little time, you know."

"I ask but one promise, Haidee. If you ever find that you mistook—as my mother says many a girl does—an innocent girlish liking for true love, you'll write at once and tell me so."

Haidee's eyes flashed through her tears.

"Yes! I will write at once, when that day comes."

"Now, you are angry! forgive me, Haidee."

"I do forgive you, but don't say that kind of thing again—it hurts me. I might, with much better reason, beg of you to write to me if you transfer your affections to my pretty cousin, Marian."

"Marian! why, I've known her for years! And, besides, to love her one must never have seen you. You make her look like a bad copy of a fine picture."

It was not in human nature not to be pleased at this, though all she said was:

"Still she is very pretty, and she will be
always there and I away! But I don't really fear her a bit, Regie."

"You have no need. I hear my mother calling me: we must go down. Do you go to her, dear, and I will come presently with my father; he wants an arm going down stairs. Say good-bye to me now, Haidee, for we shall not be alone again."

"It is not for long," she said again. "Oh Regie! you may trust me. So long as I know you to be what you are, I could not cease to love you if I tried."

A few more last words, and they parted: to go their different ways for the next three or four months. The Hamiltns left London for Dawlish next morning, having committed Haidee to the care of Mrs. Seymour.

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