THE HAUNTED LOOKING-GLASS



BY

GRATIANA DARRELL

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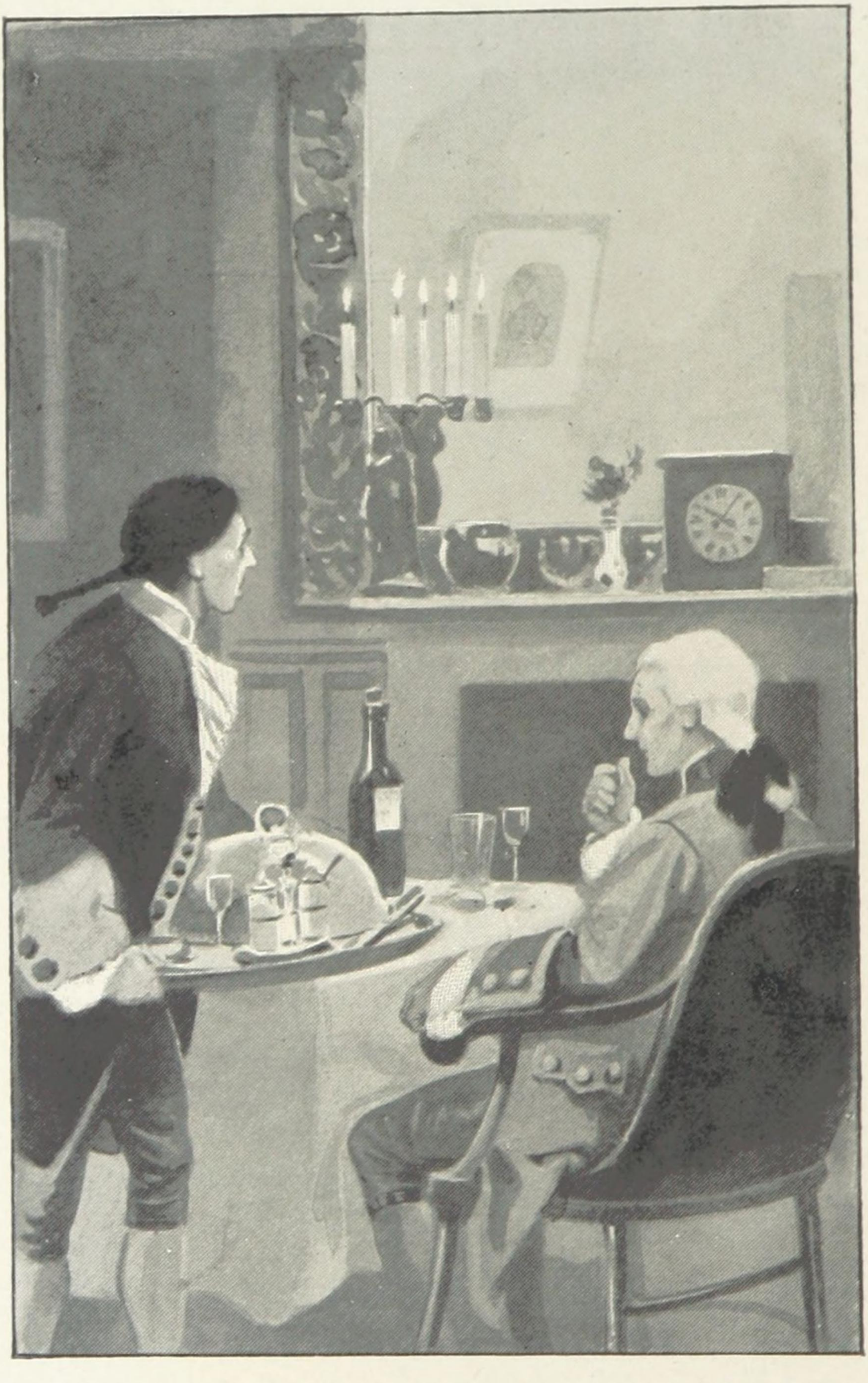

'THAT'S A FINE GLASS, CAN YOU TELL ME ANYTHING ABOUT IT.'?

Frontispiece.

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CHAPTER I.

What I am about to relate took place in quite the early days of the present century; the exact date is of no consequence, although, as you may judge if you take the trouble to read this paper, it is deeply engraven on my memory. I have often thought of writing of what befell me at that time, as it altered the whole aspect of my life, and will also satisfy the curiosity of my numerous grandchildren, which I have never yet done, although the entreaty of "Grandfather, do tell us about the ghost," came round as regularly on Christmas Eve as the feast itself.

My name in 18— was Joscelin Drew, and I sat day by day on a high stool in an attorney's office until my heart felt sick, and my limbs felt as if they belonged to someone else. When I saw the old clerk grown grey at his desk, and thought to myself that once he also had had a youthful heart, thick hair on his head, and supple limbs like mine, and that in all probability I should also sit on and on in that office until I became like him, not caring for anything more in life than rows of figures, and going every evening to a stuffy little house he called home, my heart died within me,—for I had not always been a town mouse, but had lived a free country life, and loved everything belonging to it, from the little brook that ran down from the moor at the back of our village, full of lively speckled trout, which I fear I often tickled and poached in many unorthodox ways, when I thought the dreaded keeper of the squire was well in another direction, even to the village school where I first learned to read, and also to add up the figures I came to detest so afterwards.

My dear mother came to the little moorland village when I was about four years old, her husband, my father, having been lost at sea two years before. He was the only son of his mother, and at her death, which took place when he was only sixteen —the small annuity on which she lived having died with her—he followed his bent, and went to sea in a merchant vessel, which was ultimately lost with all hands on a voyage from China. My mother never held up her head again, although she never complained, and struggled on for my sake until I was eighteen, and then, catching a chill on Christmas-day, when the snow was on the ground, and our church even colder and damper than usual, she quietly departed this life to my great grief and despair.

Our only friends at this time were the vicar of our parish, who had been our greatest stand-by, and taught me all I knew after leaving the village school, and I may say in all humility all *he* knew, which, however, was no small amount, as he had taken honours at Oxford in his day; and Mr. Dawkins, a lawyer, son of the lawyer who

paid my grandmother her annuity. I always thought that he and my mother knew something of the previous history of my grandmother which they carefully withheld from me, and I never took the trouble to enquire, as she being dead and her annuity stopped, I did not see the good of asking questions that might be unpleasant if answered. My mother had a small fortune from her father, who was the captain of the ship in which my father sailed, so that when she was wrecked my mother lost not only her husband, but also her father and only relation as well. On my mother's death Mr. Dawkins offered me a clerkship in his office, and no other opening being likely, by the advice of our vicar I accepted it, against every feeling of my nature.

CHAPTER II.

THE tenth of June! Six years had passed since the death of my mother, and I was twenty-four, and still on that high and hated stool. How well I remember that day. It was very hot, the first really hot day of the year, and I was giving myself a little relaxation by staring through the dusty window at the blue, cloudless sky, and could see in my mind's eye a deep, cool pool in the dearly-loved brook of my old home, and the longing to see it all again was strong upon me.

Mr. Dawkins and old Jackson, the head clerk, were very kind to me; the latter often omitted to call me to order, as he might have done when I idled, as I was at present doing.

I was recalled by the door of Mr. Dawkins' private room opening, and his coming

into the office with an open letter in his hand, looking rather put out.

"Here is a letter from Mr. Dynevor, Jackson," said he, "requesting me to go down to Heronmere at once; it is quite impossible for me to go, as you know, on account of the Langdon law-suit. I am the more provoked as it is the first time for years that Mr. Dynevor has wanted to see me—what am I to do? I can't spare you."

"It 's time Mr. Joscelin was made useful," said old Jackson, with a dry look at me, as much as to say, "He has done little enough for the last hour."

"Josce!" said Mr. Dawkins, "I never thought of him; but he really might do, as I fancy it is more to take some instructions than on a matter of law, that Mr. Dynevor requires me. At any rate, he can go and see if he will do, as I really can't go myself, and he has not had a run in the country for some time."

How my pulses bounded when I heard this speech you may imagine, as my only "runs in the country" for the last six years

consisted of a walk on Hampstead Heath on Sundays, and once or twice a boat on the river as a great treat — however, I thought it more compatible with my dignity not to appear too delighted before Jackson, so merely said—

"I am ready to go anywhere you please, sir, and will, at any rate, try to do my best, whatever Jackson may think."

"Yes, boy," said Mr. Dawkins, "I am sure you will do that; but I fear you will never take kindly to our work—it's the old saying, 'a round peg in a square hole.' However," he added, "you had better be off at once, and book a place on the Tally-ho for to-morrow morning; it is a two days' journey to Craigford, the nearest town to Heronmere. After you have taken your place, come to me this evening for instructions."

As I was changing my office coat for another in a little inside room, I heard Mr. Dawkins say, "I don't like sending him there, but still it is so long ago it can't matter."

"No," said Jackson, "it can't matter now;

but it's odd how things come out in folks; *I* never minded the office and the figures, but then father did the same before me, and my boy Sam will do the same after me, I hope."

CHAPTER III.

THE next morning six o'clock a.m. found me on the box-seat of the Tally-ho coach. I had received instructions from Mr. Dawkins the previous night; they simply consisted in making his apologies to Mr. Dynevor for being unable to obey his commands, and to see if I could in any way take his place, or take any instructions he might have to give. I did not care much what I might be called upon to do, as I felt if it was within my power I could do it (being no fool, let me tell my grandchildren), and if not, I should only have to return and tell Mr. Dawkins so. It was quite sufficient for me that I had secured the box-seat behind a well-bred, galloping team, and that every moment was taking me further and further from the dust and glare of London.

To what county I was going does not signify to outsiders, and you for whom this paper is written know as well as I do. It suffices to say that it took me nearly two days to reach Craigford, a small posting town, within ten miles of a larger one, so that although the Golden Eagle was a changing house, but few travellers dismounted there for the night, as a rule preferring to go on to the larger town, and better accommodation than was offered by the Golden Eagle.

I stood aside in the little straggling street by my portmanteau, with my little rough terrier, Rogue, in my arms, until the bustle attendant on the changing of the horses and speeding the parting coach was over.

After watching the red wheels disappear in a cloud of dust, I turned to see what sort of place I had arrived at; a straggling street, with houses of all heights and sizes, and most of them of some age, standing far back from the roadway, with worn grass between it and them, on which children were playing games and rolling about

before their finally being captured for the night, and making the noises usual to children under the circumstances. It was past eight o'clock, and the sun had just set, and the delicious cool freshness of a pure evening was falling on all. Everything looked very peaceful and quiet after London, but I am bound to confess what gave me more pleasure than anything at that moment was the anticipation of supper and a night's rest after my journey.

I turned to look at the inn; it was a rambling and moderate-sized building, built round a courtyard, with the door of the bar on one side of the archway, and a sitting-room and staircase on the other—the opposite archway leading into the stable-yard beyond. The sign of the Golden Eagle hung on a pole standing on the grass in front of the inn—quite a work of art in itself, as it stood on a golden world with extended wings, a sort of guardian angel of the place.

As I turned to enter the bar to inquire if I could have a room for the night and something to eat, I found the ostler standing at my elbow—a small man, clothed in drab

corduroy from his gaiters to his cap, in fact he gave the idea of being entirely made of drab corduroy, as his face and hair had all taken the same tint, excepting that his nose and eyes shaded off into red.

"Take in your luggage, sir?" said he, with a touch of his cap.

"Yes, if I can have a room," I replied.

"No fear of that, sir, 't is few folks we have now. M—— has grown such a big place no one hardly stops here."

We entered the house together, and he pointed to a little room with a glass partition, which divided it from the passage, and an open window in it, through which a fresh-looking young woman could be seen drawing beer for the tap-room, and taking orders.

As soon as she caught sight of me she came to the window with a smile, and asked what she could do for me.

"I want a room and some supper, if you please, as soon as possible," I replied.

"Yes, sir, I will show you one at once. Joe, bring the gentleman's portmanteau to No. 16, and then tell John to get a table

ready for supper at once in No. 15; they open into each other, sir, which is handy."

We went up some stairs facing the door and down a longish passage, Joe carrying my luggage, and I carrying Rogue under my arm. There was the usual indescribable smell which attaches to old inns, no matter how clean they really may be, of mingled dust, stale smoke, and cocoanut matting in the passage, and which was strongly added to, on the door of No. 15 being opened, by a smell of dry rot and want of fresh air, known in some counties as a "pindy smell."

The sitting-room was a low, fair-sized room with the window facing you as you entered, the fireplace on the left hand, and directly opposite a large door that opened in the middle, and folded back if required, leading into a small bedroom, in which was an old four-post bed facing the fireplace of the sitting-room through the doorway.

"Thank you, that will do very nicely," I said; "if you will send me some hot water, and let me have my supper as soon as possible, I shall be much obliged."

"If eggs and bacon will do, sir, you can have some in a quarter of an hour; but if you want chops, or a joint, it will take much longer."

"Eggs and bacon by all means," said I; "and some beer if you can recommend it."

"That I certainly can," said she, rather offended; "it is home-brewed, and the best in the country," with which she left the room.

Joe, in the meantime, had taken my portmanteau into the bedroom, and I saw him looking behind him in rather a curious way as he came back through the sitting-room; however, he said nothing, nor did I.

By the time I had washed and brushed off the dust of the road and returned to the sitting-room, I found the cloth laid, and almost immediately the waiter brought in the eggs and bacon. He was a depressed looking man of middle age, dressed in the orthodox black clothes and white tie; but the black was rusty, and the tie might have been whiter with advantage. He removed the cover, saw that I had all that I required, and silently left the room.

As I was finishing my frugal supper, the pangs of hunger being satisfied, I began to take stock of my apartment. It was furnished with the usual black horse-hair sofa and chairs common to a room of that description, a few prints on the walls, and red moreen curtains, in fact the only thing that struck me as being out of place was a large looking-glass, much too large and important to belong to a room of that sort. It was over the fireplace, and heavily framed in deep carved oak, not very high, but so long that it projected on each side of the mantelpiece. It was so out of keeping with the rest of the room, that when the waiter came in to remove the supper-things I said to him, "That's a fine glass; can you tell me anything about it, and how it came to be in this room, as I am sure it could not always have been here?"

John turned and rested the tray of supper-things on the table in front of him, and looked at the glass until I thought he did not intend to answer me; at last he said, "No, sir, it was not always here, and by rights it ought not to be here now."

"What do you mean?" I said; "why should it not be here?"

"Well, I've heard master say how he got it, and he thinks it a good joke, but there, I don't"——

(I thought to myself I could not fancy his thinking anything a joke.)

"This is how it was, as I understand it. This glass was at Heronmere when master was footman there twenty years agone, and Mr. Dynevor was just come into the property. One morning he comes down looking like a corpse, and says to master, 'Tell Mason (he was butler there then) the large glass in the library is to be taken down to-day and broken, and the frame and all to be thrown together into the mere.' Well, sir, master thought Mr. Dynevor looked very queer, but having received his orders went at once to tell Mason what he was to do. Mason, I must tell you, had just then bought this business, and was going to set up for himself; and master, who was going to marry his daughter by-and-bye, was going to step into his shoes as butler at Heronmere. Between them they settled it

would be a sad pity to destroy so fine a bit of furniture as the old glass, so managed to hide it and bring it here one night, and here it has been ever since; for when Mason died master left Heronmere, and set up here with his wife, Mason's only daughter; the young lady what showed you your room is master's daughter, and manages most things now her mother is dead, and master rather too fond of lifting his elbow."

When once set off I thought John, like many habitually silent people, would never stop, and he evidently had not yet had all his say. I remarked that it would have been a pity to have destroyed the glass, although no doubt they ought to have done so.

"So it would, sir," said he; "and yet I don't think it's brought luck. I wouldn't sleep in that room, give me what you like," nodding at my sleeping apartment.

"Why not?" said I, startled for a moment.

"Last year, about now, I think, there was a poor fellow found dead in there, and once before a young woman went out of her mind

in this same room; so you see it hasn't brought luck," he repeated. "Anything more I can do for you, sir?" said he, taking up the tray.

"No, thank you," I said; "but call me at seven o'clock, if you please. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir," he said, and left the room.

I would rather he had not told me of the poor man who died, and the young woman who lost her reason in these rooms; but still, if we knew what had happened in all the rooms we sleep in at an inn, I thought to myself, we should never feel comfortable.

CHAPTER IV.

It was about eleven o'clock, and a hot, dark night, looking and feeling as if thunder was not far off, I, being rather tired, prepared for bed. Rogue had already settled himself in a corner of the sofa, and was snoring gently. I locked both the doors that led into the passage—one in the sitting-room, and one in the bedroom; the door between the rooms I left wide open on account of the heat, to give more air in the bedroom. I was soon heaving the sigh of comfort that a tired person gives on getting into a comfortable bed, and must have gone to sleep as soon as my head was on the pillow. I knew nothing more until I was awoke by Rogue darting on my bed and flinging himself into my arms, whining and trembling violently. I could not have been asleep more than an hour, as it was still dark. My

first feeling was one of anger with Rogue for thus rudely disturbing me, but as I became more fully awake, I saw what I first thought was the reflection of candle-light in the mirror, which faced the bed through the open door. I got quietly out of bed, covering up poor shivering little Rogue in the bedclothes as I did so, and advanced noiselessly into the sitting-room. To my surprise, and I may say dismay, I discovered that the light, instead of being reflected, came from the glass itself. A feeling of horror was creeping over me as I approached nearer and nearer the glass, and found that instead of seeing myself and the room I was in reflected, I saw a perfect picture of another room; in fact, it was as if I were looking through the glass into a room beyond, and in it moved the figures of other men in deadly earnest. I will try to describe what I saw.

A large room with two deep mullioned windows. I could see everything perfectly as in a large coloured picture — the old furniture, a large cabinet between the windows, and a writing-table, at which was

seated a young man with some papers in front of him, which he had evidently been writing.

Behind him was walking up and down with clenched fists, and face distorted by passion, another young man, about the same age, and very like the one seated at the table: both were dressed in the long-waisted coats and waistcoats of the middle of the last century, and had their hair powdered; the difference being that the one at the table wore a richer suit, with white silk knee breeches and stockings, and the other was evidently dressed for a journey, as he had on a dark suit, and long riding-boots.

As I watched them, a feeling of deadly dread and cold stole over me, although the night was sultry in the extreme. I saw the one who was walking to and fro getting more and more excited. At last, as he passed behind the other, he snatched a pistol from his belt, and holding it by the barrel he struck the other on the head with all the force of his rage. I could hardly restrain a cry of horror as I saw the seated figure

fall forward on the table an inert mass, without life or motion.

I soon saw that the man who had struck the blow was as full of horror as myself, as he dropped the pistol, felt the other's heart and pulse, and when he could not revive him, and it was evident that he was dead, he knelt by his side, apparently distracted with grief.

After a few seconds he got up, pressed his hand to his brow to collect himself, and then, gathering all the papers on the table hastily together, he turned to the old cabinet, which he unlocked, and, after removing what appeared to be a solid part of the interior, he flung in the pistol, thrusting in the papers as well, and readjusted and closed the cabinet, leaving the key in the lock. After taking one look at the dead man, he took his hat and riding-coat from a chair, opened one of the windows, and slid out of my view into the dark night. As he disappeared the light in the glass began to fade also, and in a second I was in darkness.

All this takes long to write, but in reality

I do not suppose it was more than five or six minutes between my leaving my bed to my creeping back into it, feeling cold, shivering, and utterly wretched. I gathered little Rogue in my arms, and was thankful to see the dawn breaking through the unshuttered window. As the day broke I sank into a deep sleep, which lasted until I was aroused by John's knock on the door at seven o'clock.

CHAPTER V.

My first feeling on being roused was that something had happened, and as I became more fully awake I felt relieved to see that it was bright daylight, and that it was John's knock that woke me, and not any of the visions of the past night.

As I dressed myself, having ordered my breakfast at eight o'clock, I was almost persuaded that what I had seen was a bad dream, although in my inner consciousness I knew quite well that it was no dream; that I had stood in front of that glass last night and seen that which I should never forget as long as I lived.

"How far is it to Heronmere?" I questioned John, when he brought in my breakfast.

"A matter of sixteen miles, sir, and not a first-rate road all the way, either."

"How can I get there to-day? Can I have a conveyance?"

"Better ask Joe, sir. He knows the road and more about conveyances than I do. Shall I send him up?"

"Yes, do," I replied.

In a few minutes Joe appeared at the door, holding his drab cap in his hand, and pulling his forelock.

"What is the best way for me to get to Heronmere, Joe?"

"Well, you can have the dog-cart, sir, but you can go quicker on horseback; there's a bridle-road that cuts off three or four miles—that's to say if you can ride," looking me over in rather a doubting manner.

Now if there was anything I loved more than another, and rather thought I excelled in, it was riding. I had ridden anything I could sit on in my old home, from the donkeys on the common to the squire's young ones just taken up; the mere idea of riding to Heronmere filled me with joy.

"Yes, I can ride," said I. "What have you in the way of a hack?"

"There's the old colt," said he, considering, "and there's the young one; one's a little bit old, and the other a bit skittish. Think you had better have the old one, sir."

I felt inclined to say I would have the young one, but as I had not been on anything for seven years, I thought discretion the better part of valour, and closed with the offer of the steady mount.

After finishing my breakfast, and as I was waiting to be told the horse was ready, I stood in front of the looking-glass. It looked commonplace enough, and instead of the scene of dread of the previous night I saw reflected a tall, slight young fellow in a brown travelling coat with short cape, buckskin breeches, and long boots, his slightly-powdered hair contrasting well with his dark eyebrows and eyelashes, and a rather deep-set pair of grey eyes.

I mounted in the yard, and all the maids of the establishment seemed to have work that brought them to the windows and door looking out in that direction.

"Stirrups too short, sir; well, you are uncommon long in the leg," said Joe.

I rode out of the yard into the straggling street with little Rogue flying before me, barking at everything and nothing. I had taken particular directions as to the spot where the bridle-road turned off, and had no fear of not finding my way. My horse was a raw-boned, woodeny-looking animal, of a mealy-bay colour, but sound and quiet to all appearance.

I turned to the right, and jogged quietly on until clear of the town, and then the beauty of the day, the fresh air after a slight shower in the night, and the feeling of being in the country again, and on a horse moreover, filled me with such joy and delight that I could hardly refrain from shouting for joy as I sent my hack along for a quarter of a mile on the grass by the side of the road.

The country through which I rode was of that description that I always think the most charming to be found in England—the border of moorland, in which the cultivated ground seems to be trying to climb up the base of the hills towards the old grey tors, but constantly being beaten back, and

returning to its native wildness the moment it is left to itself, as the ferns and gorse springing up, and the tumble-down condition of the old grey moor walls of the would-be enclosures show.

At first I could think of nothing but the loveliness of everything; the dew on the grass, the bluebells or wild hyacinths carpeting the ground between the old grey granite boulders, the bracken slowly unfolding its green head among them, and the larks filling the air with their song overhead. However, after the first five miles I began to think the sun was getting very hot on my back; and certainly this was the roughest horse I ever was on, every step like falling downstairs; and then the saddle—it must be made of wood, without any stuffing.

At last I had to allow to myself that I was thoroughly out of condition, and by the time I had gone eight miles, that I was getting quite tired, not to say stiff; and at the end of ten, I was thankful to see a park paling and gates, with a lodge on one side of the entrance.

The gates were opened by a cheerful-

looking old woman, and I entered Heron-mere Park for the first time. The wonderful beauty of the view struck me. The lodge stood at the head of a combe which sloped down rather abruptly, winding as it went, until crossed at the end by a valley through which ran a river with high moor hills on its further side: a stream ran down the combe, and when it joined the river widened out into a small lake or mere, from which the place took its name.

The entrance-drive kept on the right-hand side of the combe, and sank the hill but very slightly; the ground on the left of the wood sloped steeply away to the brook, which could be seen here and there through trees which dotted the hillside; on the right the ground rose at first gradually and then more steeply, until it merged into moorland, crowned at the top by a rugged tor.

The road wound along the side of the combe for about a mile, and then, turning to the right, you suddenly came in sight of the house. It was a fine irregular building of grey granite, and covered here and there

with ivy and creepers; the windows were long and low, with granite mullions.

The situation was perfect; the high tor sheltered the back from the north-east; the front door faced up the combe, looking south-east; the other two sides faced one across the gorge, the other looking north-west over the valley, with its winding river, to the line of hills on the other side.

I dismounted and walked up the stone steps leading to the entrance-door, and pulled a chain that was hanging on one side; a bell clanged at what seemed some distance off, but I was not kept very long waiting, as the door was soon opened by an elderly man-servant in black.

"I have come to see Mr. Dynevor. Is he at home?"

"Yes, sir, will you walk in? I will send your horse round to the stables."

He pulled the bell twice; it was quickly answered by a groom, who came from the back of the house, and led away the horse, promising also to take care of Rogue.

We entered a large hall panelled with oak, portraits hung on the walls, and also

stags' heads, and all manner of old spears and weapons; the staircase was at the further end, also of old oak.

The servant opened a door on the left, and showed me into a moderate-sized room with two windows, one looking out the same way as the front door, the other over the wide terrace, that ran round two sides of the house, to the gorge beyond.

The servant having asked me my name and fidgeted with a blind for a moment, left the room to look for his master, to tell him of my arrival. I threw myself into the depths of a green leather chair, luxuriating in the darkness, and coolness, and comfort, in exchange for the heat and glare of the sun and ten miles on the roughest of rough mounts.

A bumble-bee came in at the open window, and boomed drowsily round the room; the music was too much for me, and I am afraid I closed my eyes and lost myself for a few moments; in other words, dropped asleep.

It cannot have been for long, I am sure; but it is the only way I can account for

the state of bewilderment in which I was shortly plunged, as I will tell you.

On opening my eyes with a start, I saw framed in a doorway a vision that I can now recall as it appeared to me then, and will appear as long as there is life in this old frame of mine.

A girlish figure, tall and slight, clad in white, with blue sash and folded kerchief, carrying on her arm a large hat filled with roses. An oval face, with brown hair touched with gold clustering on her forehead, a small, slightly aquiline nose, and large grey eyes, with brows and lashes a shade darker than her hair—but why describe what you all know so well from the picture of your grandmother, by Sir Joshua—not that it ever did her justice, to my mind.

Ah! June was June in those days, and ever since then the scent of roses, mingled with the freshly-cut hay, that was wafted through the open windows, brings back to my mind that lovely vision!

She gave a half-startled, half-laughing glance at me as I sprang to my feet, and

made her the best bow my fast-stiffening back would allow.

"Forgive me for disturbing you," she said, casting a laughing glance at me through her dark lashes, as she curtseyed in return. "I thought my father was here, and was not aware anyone had arrived."

"I have not yet seen Mr. Dynevor, madam," I replied. "I have ridden from Craigford to wait on him on business."

At that moment the door by which I had entered opened, and a man of unusually tall stature, though somewhat reduced by a stoop, came forward. His face was handsome, and most remarkable from its expression of confirmed melancholy. He was dressed in a plain brown suit, with cut-away coat and cut steel buttons, brown knee-breeches, and black stockings; his grey hair was slightly powdered, and tied with black ribbon at the back.

He bowed stiffly to me in answer to my profound business bow, that I tried to make as like Mr. Dawkins' as possible.

"To what am I indebted for the honour of this visit, Mr.—Drew?" said he, glancing

at the card which I had sent him by the servant on my arrival.

"I have brought you a letter from Mr. Dawkins, sir, which will explain my intrusion: and he also begged me to say how grieved he was to be unable to wait on you himself." As I spoke I handed him my credentials from Mr. Dawkins.

"Pray be seated whilst I read Mr. Dawkins' letter; and Molly, my child, you had better arrange your roses before they fade," he said, with a look that seemed to say, "you had better leave me to talk business with this young man, and I do not understand how you came to be here at all."

She evidently thought a slight reproof was intended, as her colour rose slightly, and she said, "I was not aware anyone had arrived, sir, and I was only passing through from the terrace to the hall." With that she bent her head slightly and left the room, and I thought half the brightness of the day went with her.

As Mr. Dynevor finished reading and folded up Mr. Dawkins' letter, he looked steadily at me, a slight smile just touching

his face, like a glint of sun striking for a moment on one of his own moorland tors on a cloudy day.

"I cannot but acknowledge, Mr. Drew," he said, "that my first feeling, on hearing that Mr. Dawkins was unable to come himself, was one of disappointment, but he gives you such a good character for business, and other things, that I am sure we shall understand each other; and if you will excuse my saying so, I like your face."

I could but bow low to hide both my astonishment at the character for business given me by Mr. Dawkins and the pleasure I felt that he had at any rate taken no dislike to me, and expressed my hope of giving satisfaction in as few words as possible.

"I conclude you have brought some luggage with you," he continued, ringing the bell, "and will order it to be taken to your room, and then no doubt you will like to rest after your hot ride. I hope you will join my daughter and myself at dinner at five o'clock."

I replied that I had brought a few things

in saddle-bags in case I should be required to remain. The servant, entering at that moment and receiving his instructions, conducted me through the hall and up the shallow stairs of the old oak staircase into a comfortable room, to which I found my humble luggage had already been taken, and left me to rest and cool, and make what changes in my apparel I thought necessary before again joining my host and hostess.

CHAPTER VI.

The afternoon crept on, and I sat by the open window overlooking the mere, enjoying the rest and lovely view, and also reviewing my position. I felt that, although but few days had elapsed since taking my place on the coach, I was not quite the same thoughtless boy I was when I left London. The experience of the previous night had left its mark, for reason with myself as I might, I could not bring myself to believe that what I had seen was a dream, but felt that it was more—a sort of warning, sent to prepare me for some future scene in which I myself might be an actor.

Also, though people may laugh at love at first sight, I only know that as I sat in that bay-window on that sultry afternoon I felt that an image of that sweet face, though

only seen for a few moments, was imprinted on my heart, mind, soul, or whatever it is we feel with, which would never be effaced, and I longed for, yet dreaded, the moment when I should rejoin her and Mr. Dynevor at five o'clock.

At length the moment arrived, and the dinner-hour was announced by the clanging of the large bell, hanging somewhere in the rear of the house. I left my room and descended into the hall, where I was met by the butler, who showed me into the same room I had been taken into on my arrival.

Mr. Dynevor and his daughter were already in the room, and also a kindly-looking, middle-aged lady, whom Mr. Dynevor introduced as Mistress Thompson, and who I soon discovered had been instructress to Miss Dynevor, and was remaining on for a time as guest. Mr. Dynevor offered his arm to Mistress Thompson, and I had the felicity of handing Miss Molly into the dining-room.

The dining-room was a large room, oak-panelled like the rest of the house, and

opening out of the sitting-room. The wide open fireplace was at the end of the room nearest the door by which we entered, and Mr. Dynevor placed himself with his back to it; Mistress Thompson, from old custom, sat opposite to him, leaving Miss Dynevor to sit on her father's left hand, with her back to the window, and I naturally sat opposite her. Mr. Dynevor, after making some polite inquiries for Mr. Dawkins, relapsed into the dreamy silence that seemed natural to him, leaving Mistress Thompson to keep up the conversation by talking about the heat of the weather, my journey, etc., in which she was slightly aided by Miss Molly. I am not naturally shy, I think, but I must say I felt at a disadvantage from several reasons—for one thing, I had lost my heart to Miss Molly, and should have liked to have been at my best; but as dinner proceeded I felt more and more awkward, and unable to play my part with the ease I should have wished; also, what annoyed me was that the principal cause of my discomfort arose from my ideal not behaving exactly as I

should have expected. At the commencement of dinner she was evidently shy, only raising her eyes from under their drooping lashes occasionally, though anxious to join in the conversation; but after a time she lapsed into silence, and what was more remarkable, whenever I looked at her, her eyes were either fixed on me or on the wall just over my head. Now, is it odd that I felt at a disadvantage? I was facing the windows, through which the evening sun was shining, and I felt every change in my countenance was visible to her, whereas hers, being against the light, was a closed book to me.

It was almost with a feeling of relief that I saw Miss Thompson give the signal for the ladies to leave the room. As Miss Molly rose from her chair she touched her father's arm, and, pointing over my head, she whispered—"Look, sir, did you ever see anything so extraordinary?"

Mr. Dynevor started, and, following her glance, looked first at the same point over my head and then at me. His face changed, and he became a shade paler.

"There certainly is a wonderful likeness," he answered, with a sort of studied carelessness, and a look at Miss Dynevor, as if he did not wish the conversation to be pursued. Mistress Thompson, observing his glance, left the room, followed by Miss Molly.

As I returned to my place at table from opening the door for the departing ladies, my natural curiosity led me to cast a glance at the wall behind the chair in which I had been sitting. My eye fell on a large picture representing two young men in the prime of life, and I may say beauty, as they were both strikingly handsome and extraordinarily alike, only that one was of very much darker colouring than the other, and had a different expression on his face.

As I looked at them a weird feeling of having seen and known them before came over me, which increased as it flashed over me that they were the actors of the terrible tragedy I had seen represented last night. The likeness even extended to the dresses, as the fairer of the two was dressed in the velvet suit and silk stockings of a courtier of the time, and the other in the riding-dress

as if betokening a country life. I suppose Mr. Dynevor must have seen the startled expression of my face as I resumed my chair, for he said, "You also seem struck by the likeness my daughter observed, and you certainly do very much resemble one of those gentlemen in the picture—the one in the velvet coat.

"Indeed, sir," I replied, "it was not the likeness that startled me—if there be one—but that the picture reminded me of a circumstance that I would as soon forget."

"That picture seems fated to bring unpleasant memories to mind," he rejoined, and the habitual melancholy of his face seemed to deepen.

"Is there then a history attaching to that picture?" I ventured to ask, after a long pause.

"The picture represents my father and his twin brother, Joscelin," he replied shortly.

"How very odd, *my* name is Joscelin," cried I; "I was named after my father."

"A curious coincidence," he remarked, with the air of one wishing to conclude the subject.

After a silence of some minutes he broke it abruptly by saying—

"I may as well talk to you, Mr. Drew, on the subject of my letter to Mr. Dawkins, now as well as at any other time. I tell you fairly, Mr. Drew, that you cannot take Mr. Dawkins' place in giving me the advice and information that I required, but on another point you may be able to help me much."

I bowed, and expressed myself willing to do all in my power.

"It is my intention," continued Mr. Dynevor, "to dismantle the library of this house, and dispose of the furniture and books. There is a very large and valuable collection of books, and I intended asking Mr. Dawkins if he could recommend me a young man whom he could trust to make a full catalogue for me: I now ask you if you feel competent to do so, and if you feel inclined to undertake the task."

I hesitated for a moment, for, although I really thought I should be capable, having had a great deal to do with books, my old vicar being a great lover of them, and

having the run of our squire's library, a very good one, I was not sure if Mr. Dawkins would like to spare me for any length of time. However, knowing that my wishes inclined me to accept Mr. Dynevor's proposition, and having a humiliating idea that Mr. Dawkins might be able to get on without my assistance, I replied by saying that "I should be much pleased to oblige Mr. Dynevor, and would undertake the job if Mr. Dawkins had no objection, and would at any rate commence and work at it until I heard from him."

"That being the case," said Mr. Dynevor, "I may as well show you the scene of your future labours at once." On that he rose from the table and walked across the room to a door opposite the one by which we had entered. He led me into a small ante-room, through which we passed, and he opened another door on the other side. As we entered, why was I struck with that weird feeling of having seen and known the room before? I gazed round me as if in a dream, and at once it flashed upon me with a chill feeling of terror, that here was the

room in which the drama of my last night's vision had been enacted.

Yes! there were the two large bay-windows, through one of which the dark man had slid out into the night; there was the large table in the middle of the room by which the murdered man had sat; but I missed from between the windows the large cabinet into which I had seen the papers thrust, and glancing at the high oak mantel-piece, I was startled by the discovery of evident signs of something having been removed from there—the splintered and dis-coloured wood seeming to indicate that a large frame had once been fixed over it—and the conviction came upon me like a blow, that here had stood the old oak mirror in which I had gazed on my gruesome mid-night vision.

I was recalled to myself by the look of surprise on Mr. Dynevor's face, and found that I was staring about me in a way that no doubt astonished him. I tried to excuse myself by saying that the size of the room struck me, and also that it reminded me of a room I had seen before.

"Indeed," he remarked drily; "as I said before, this place seems fated to bring you unpleasant reminiscences"; and then, resuming his usual voice and manner, he said, "Well, this is the library, and these the books I wish to have catalogued," pointing to the rows of books extending from the floor to within three feet of the ceiling on two sides of the room.

"As you see," he continued, "there is a large number of books, and some of them of great value," placing his hand lovingly on the back of some old leather-bound edition.

"Is it not a pity?"—I could not help saying—"they and the room suit each other so well."

"It would seem so," he replied; "but I have made up my mind at last, quite—quite," he repeated, as if to himself; "not one thing remains in this room, and it is a question if I pull it down or turn it into a chapel."

I felt it would be an impertinence to say more on the subject, and held my peace.

"Now, if you undertake the task, Mr. Drew," he went on, "you can make a

commencement as soon as you feel inclined. I feel sure Mr. Dawkins will have no objection to your remaining, particularly if I also write to him on the subject, as I will do to-morrow."

I said I should be happy to begin to-morrow morning, as I concluded all the ledgers, etc., necessary were ready for the cataloguing.

"All ready," replied Mr. Dynevor, "as I once thought of undertaking it myself, but my health was not equal to the task. And now, having settled our business matters," he continued, "we will, if you please, rejoin my daughter and her friend."

CHAPTER VII.

We left the room by a door leading into a passage that, on turning to the right, ran at the back of the ante- and dining-room, and on to the hall. My host opened the door of the room into which I had been shown on my arrival—in reality only a few hours ago, but to me it seemed like half a lifetime, so many new sensations having been brought into play.

The last rays of the evening sun streaming in at the window overlooking the terrace fell on Miss Molly as she sat at her spinet, on which she was playing a few chords from time to time in a dreamy fashion, and gazing out at the dying glory of the sunset.

I thought she looked like an angel in her white dress in the glory of the rosy light; and it was almost a shock when, as

I approached her gently and with diffidence, she stopped playing and made a simple remark in her low sweet voice.

"How long you and my father have been away! He usually walks with me on the terrace at this time of the evening."

This was said with the little injured air and pout of a spoiled child, that in my eyes only added to her charm.

"Mr. Dynevor was telling me his wishes, and what would be required of me if I undertook to make a catalogue of the books," I hastened to inform her.

"The books!" she repeated, with a look of concern; "then my father is really going to part with them, and spoil my favourite room in all the house. I cannot understand his reason; but if he is determined, I can say no more."

"I quite agree with you that it is a charming room, and a thousand pities," I said; "but I feel sure that Mr. Dynevor has made up his mind."

"Anything that will interest him, and lessen his sadness, I shall rejoice in," she said, casting a glance out of the window,

through which we could see Mr. Dynevor pacing slowly up and down the terrace.

Never will that evening fade from my mind! I begged her to sing, and sat at a little distance, gazing at my idol's face as she sang one simple melody after another, while the light faded in the west and the room darkened, until her white dress was the only spot of light in the dusk.

Suddenly Mrs. Thompson, who had been lost in thought, otherwise dozing, in one of the arm-chairs, awoke and broke in upon my dream; and finding herself almost in the dark, rose as quickly as she could and lighted the two candles standing on the table, one on each side of the snuffer-tray, remarking, as she did so, that she always liked to sit and think for a little while between dinner and supper. She then rang the bell, and the supper-tray was brought in, after which the ladies retired for the night, and I was not sorry to follow their examples.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHY should I try to describe the next four months of my life? On looking back on them through a long vista of years, I see bright morns, long afternoons, and dewy evenings, all mingled in a tangle of delight, and surrounded with the rosy hues of a first love!

My mornings I spent in the library at my congenial work, often assisted by Mr. Dynevor; and at times Miss Molly would bring her work, and sit working or reading in one of the bay-windows. I cannot say my work proceeded quite as fast on these occasions, as my eyes were often drawn in that direction.

At first, if by chance our eyes met, she returned my glance with friendly, smiling eyes; but as the time went on I

noticed that the long lashes quickly fell over the lovely grey eyes, and that the chance meeting glances became more and more rare.

The afternoons were passed in long delightful rambles over moor and dale with Rogue for my only companion, and many a rabbit did we run to ground and brood of partridges scatter in our walks; he, poor little London dog, rejoicing in the freedom as much as his master.

The evenings! How I can live them over again in memory—the strolls on the terrace in the fading light with Miss Molly and her father; and often he would step inside the open window to read or think, and leave us pacing on and on into fairy-land.

So time went on and the shortening days of autumn closed in, and there were no more strolls; but I am not sure that the evenings when we sang together at the old spinet are not as dear to my memory.

I never spoke of love; and God knows I thought of her as one so far above me, that the idea of her regarding me with

warmer feelings than friendship did not enter my brain; and, but for an accident, I think I should have had strength to bury my secret in my breast.

CHAPTER IX.

It was now towards the end of November—a still, grey, and altogether charming day, such as one so often has in that month in the West of England. I was starting for my afternoon walk, which was all I allowed myself now that darkness set in so early. As I passed the bowling-green, which was surrounded by a tall yew hedge, my step making no sound on the soft turf, I heard a voice on the other side of the hedge, and paused a moment to assure myself who was there. The yew growing less thickly at that spot, I could see Miss Molly seated on an old stone seat, and in her arms my little Rogue. It made such a picture that I could not take my eyes from it for a few moments, and as I stood there she spoke again.

"Oh, darling Rogue! why are you not

with your master? Why have you come away when you could be with him? You do not know how happy you are—soon you will both be gone, and then what shall I do? Dear Rogue, why did you come to cause me this heartache? I was so happy before I knew you—and now!"

The voice ceased, and I heard a smothered sob as she buried her face in Rogue's rough coat. My heart beat as if it would burst, and it required all my strength of will to resist the impulse to force my way through the hedge and cast myself at her feet. Yet I felt I should be behaving like a coward if I let her know I had heard the innocent avowal she made, thinking she was alone. Also I felt that it was due to Mr. Dynevor not to take advantage of the confidence he placed in me when he admitted me to his house.

I stole quietly from the spot until out of hearing distance, and then flew rather than walked, until I had reached the moor above the house, when I flung myself on the heather to recover my breath, and also to try to calm the turmoil of my mind.

The first point that came clearly to me was the determination not to sail under false colours; in other words, to go straight to Mr. Dynevor and tell him of my love for Molly. That he would desire me to leave the house I had little doubt; but after what I had heard I would give up life rather than hope, and so I would tell him.

The short day was over before I descended the hill, and I had to grope my way to the side door near the library, where I was pretty sure of finding Mr. Dynevor at that hour.

I opened the library door, and, as I expected, Mr. Dynevor was there seated by the side of the fire, with its large smouldering logs resting half-burnt through on the iron dogs. Two candles were on the table in readiness for me to continue my writing, but as yet unlighted. I walked up the long room out of the darkness into the circle of dim red light thrown out by the logs, and stood there looking at Mr. Dynevor, hardly knowing if he were sleeping or only pondering as usual. As I did so a feeling of desperate impatience seized me—

that he should go on day after day so wrapped in self that he had not even noticed what must have been evident to the commonest observer, that my heart had passed from my own keeping, and that the happiness of his only child was at stake.

He took no notice of me beyond raising his eyes, and then letting them fall on the glowing embers again; but I, raising my foot, dealt such a kick to the log nearest me that the sparks flew up the chimney, and the fire, which was all ready to blaze, burst into bright flame. He started in his chair and stared at such unusual conduct on my part, saying in a cold, annoyed tone—

"Is anything wrong, Mr. Drew?"

I was at any rate glad to have made him speak and to have roused him, as it seemed to make it easier for me than to begin my say out of complete silence.

"I have to make a confession to you, sir," I began, feeling my pulses begin to throb again. "I can no longer conceal from you that I love your daughter better than life

itself. I thought I should be able to keep my love in my own heart while under your roof, but it is too strong for me, and I can no longer keep silent."

Mr. Dynevor straightened himself in his chair, and I could see that his hands grasped the arms on either side convulsively; his face darkened as he looked up into mine, and expressed surprise as well as anger.

"I ought to have foreseen this, I suppose," he said, after a minute's pause, in which we looked each other straight in the face; "but I never thought you would have dared to lift your eyes so high," he continued, with a touch of contempt in his voice which stung me to the quick. "Do you know Miss Dynevor is my only child, and heir to all my property both here and in Italy, and I look to her marrying someone at least her equal by birth, if not in wealth? What have you to offer that you can dare to say, 'I love your daughter'?"

"I have not much that you may consider worthy of consideration, sir," I replied, as calmly as I could, "but still what is not worthless in God's sight, and not valueless

to a good and noble girl—a true, first and only love, and one that will never waver, as it never has since my eyes fell on Miss Dynevor for the first time."

His frown relaxed slightly as I spoke, and he leant back in his chair.

"But you know what all the world would say, that you were a fortune-hunter, and marrying for money, and how am I to know you are not?" he inquired sharply.

"I am sure you *do* know it, sir; and as to what others may say and think, I care no more than I do for the buzzing of a fly. Nor do I hold that, with a love like mine, it is any degradation to be beholden to the object of one's devotion for this world's goods: would you think so if the wealth were on my side? Therefore, why should such dross stand between us? If I doubted my own heart, and felt that increase of fortune weighed with me, then should I hesitate to proclaim my love."

Mr. Dynevor still gazed at the fire.

At last he said, more calmly than I expected—

"Am I then to understand that you have

so far forgotten yourself as to have already spoken to my daughter?"

"No, sir! no word of love has ever yet passed between us."

"Then have you any grounds for thinking that your feeling is returned?" he said.

"Nothing that Miss Dynevor has said to me encourages me to think so," I replied, evading the question.

"Then I must beg you to keep your secret to yourself. I shall shortly be going abroad, and before my return you will have finished your work here, and, I hope, will have forgotten your youthful folly."

"I am sorry I cannot obey you, sir, for even if you were to desire me to leave your house to-night, yet would I speak to Miss Molly. Surely, sir, you must see that if my love is not returned no harm is done in speaking; and if it is, why then she would be less unhappy in knowing she is beloved, than in thinking she had given her heart unsought."

"You presume too much, sir," he replied haughtily; "my daughter is not in the least likely to give her love unsought. How-

ever," he continued, rising to his feet, "what you tell me only hastens my departure; instead of remaining here until after the New Year, as was my intention, I shall immediately give orders to prepare for leaving next week."

"And for me, sir," I broke in, as he turned to leave the room, "is it your wish that I should leave the house at once?"

"After what you have told me of your determination to speak to Miss Dynevor, with or without my sanction, your remaining a few days longer in her society can make but little difference; but it will be my business to see that no more meetings take place when once you have parted, and it will be many years in all probability before we return to this place; at any rate, not until her fancy for you has died out—if she have one, as you seem to imagine, but in which I think you will find yourself mistaken. Therefore, if you still choose to undertake the finishing of your nearly-completed task, you are at liberty to remain on here; indeed," he continued, with a little return to his

natural manner, "I shall be glad to have it done and all settled before you leave."

"I will stay as you wish it, sir," I replied, after a short hesitation; "but you will remember what I said—I do not feel myself in any way bound not to speak to Miss Dynevor."

"You can please yourself; I think I can vouch for her answer," he said, and turned and left the room.

CHAPTER X.

I NOW pass over a week of my history, for why should I unveil the sweetest, most sacred, and yet saddest days of my life to grandchildren, who no doubt think in their heart of hearts that no old folks' love-story can compare with those they are experiencing or looking forward to themselves. Well, so be it! Every dog has his day, and it is well we all think so in turn.

But to return to my story. In that week I had spoken and told my sweetest all that was in my heart, and found that my love was returned in the fullest measure.

On the eve of their departure we spoke of the future, and Molly vowed, with tears of joy and sadness, "that although she would never marry any other, yet she could not marry me without her father's consent"; so the joy of knowing herself

beloved was dashed by the hopelessness of the future.

"My father is much fonder of his home in Italy than of this place," she said, "so it may be years before I see it again, if indeed I ever do! And you, Joscelin?"

"I will work, and I will come for you, if I live," I said, registering a vow that it should be so; "and when I come he will surely give his consent."

She shook her head sadly, but tried to smile.

"Maybe, but I fear he may not; he does not change easily, and I know he has other views for me. Nevertheless, we will trust each other and hope on, will we not, dear Josce?"

I could but kiss her tears away, and vow we would not long be parted.

CHAPTER XI.

WELL, all the bustle attendant on the departure of a large household was over, and I was left alone in the house with only the old butler and his wife as care-takers, and to look after me as long as I remained.

All the house was shut up except the library, in which I worked, sat, and had my meals, and the little ante-chamber between the library and now disused dining-room, where for greater convenience they had put a bed for me, so I only occupied those two rooms. Old Mr. and Mrs. Garland lived far away in the—to me—unknown back part of the house.

The quiet that fell upon the place almost appalled me, and I set to my work with all the vigour of which I was capable, to enable me to leave as soon as possible the house

in which I had spent so many happy hours, and now felt so lonely and miserable.

The days passed on, and at length it was Christmas Eve. It was a dull, still, lowering day, that oppressed you with a feeling of coming ill. I took Rogue and started up the hill, and far and fast did we tramp that day. I felt as if I must try to escape from myself and the feeling of foreboding that was descending on me like a cloud. I walked on and on, wrapped in my thoughts, until I was quite out of my reckoning, and in a part of the country I had not explored before. I had come through the wood, and moorland stretched before me; on the border of the wild ground stood a small thatched cottage, with smoke stealing out of the low chimney. A feeling of curiosity, mingled with a wish to rest a moment, made me walk towards it. The door was open, and an old man in a smock-frock was sitting by the fire blowing some damp-looking wood into a blaze. He looked up surprised at seeing me in the doorway, but civilly said, "Good-day, sir; won't you please to come in?"

"I have had a long walk," I said, "and, if you don't mind, I shall be glad to sit down a moment."

"Please to take a chair, sir; you'm a stranger in these parts, I sim," said he.

"I am staying at Heronmere," I replied, "and I have never walked in this direction before."

"No, they don't come this way much now—this squire don't," he said with a chuckle. "They used to come pretty often in old days, I've heard father say."

"Who used to come?" I asked.

"The young squires; there was two of them in those days, the same age, only one was a little older than t'other."

My curiosity was at once excited, as I knew he must mean the originals of the picture of the twins in the dining-room at Heronmere.

"What used they to come for?" I asked. "Have you heard your father talk of them?"

"Scores of times," he answered. "Father was under-keeper, and knew 'um well. They was as like as two peas when they was boys,

I heard tell, you couldn't tell t' other from which; but they went different ways when they got older, and then they wasn't so much alike."

"Do you mind telling me about them?" I asked.

"Dear no, sir; I likes a bit of a chat now I can't get out about for the rheumatiz.

"Well, Mr. Joscelin and Mr. Jasper were what you call twins, only Mr. Joscelin was the oldest and the heir; their father and mother died when they were about twenty, and then they took their own lines. Mr. Joscelin, he was all for seeing life, and went off to London, and I did hear he was a great favourite at the Court. Mr. Jasper, he was all for quiet life, and living at Heronmere and looking after things; and his brother was glad he should, as he did steward for naught, as you might say, and made the money for Mr. Joscelin to spend; and spend he did, too, more than a bit, I've heard. Well, time went on. Mr. Joscelin did not come to Heronmere above once a year, and then not for above a fortnight or

so at a time. Mr. Jasper did not see much company at Heronmere, but father noticed that two or three times a week at least he came riding by this house, and found he went and put up his horse at Hazel Farm, not two miles on.

"'Courting, I 'spects,' says father, and sure enough he was—Dorothy Drew, the prettiest, nicest lass in the country, but not a match for the likes of he; and her father should never have allowed it—no good was like to come of it. Well, as I said, time went on, and I believe 't was seven years after I was born, Mr. Jasper he had to go away abroad on some business that was likely to take time, so he begs Mr. Joscelin to come to Heronmere to take charge while he was away. As it was winter time, and plenty of woodcock and wild duck in, Mr. Joscelin makes no objection for once, and he comes and stays—stays too long for some people's peace, I reckon! The first time he comes by he stops and asks father the way to Hazel Farm; gets to know it well enough after that, I 'spects; not that he always went to the farm, but there was meetings in the

wood, and here and there, not all above board like Mr. Jasper. But then, 't is the fine feathers makes all the difference to some folk, and his clothes—London made—were very different to Mr. Jasper's plain suits. But she was a good girl, and father wouldn't hear no harm of her, not till his dying day. How it was no one knows, but 't is a sad story—that fine young gentleman!"

Here he stopped and shook his head.

I was worked up to such a pitch of interest, that I was almost afraid to ask a question for fear of breaking in on his narrative.

At last I ventured to say—

"And did harm come of it? What happened?"

"That no one knows, or ever will know this side of the grave," he said solemnly, "unless the dead could rise up and speak. 'T is seventy-two years ago this very day; yes, this very day—'t was Christmas Eve, and I be seventy-nine now, and was seven then."

He seemed lost in the past for a moment, and then said—

"What happened, sir, was that Mr. Joscelin was found dead in his chair in the library at Heronmere, seventy-two years agone, with a wound in his head; and from that day to this no one knows who did it."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed. "Could they not find out? Was no one suspected? What did Mr. Jasper do?"

"Mr. Jasper was in foreign parts, and never heard of it for months; then it was too late, and he never came back at all. Poor lad, his twin-brother! no wonder that it broke him down—that, and hearing that Dorothy Drew had gone to London on a visit and died there."

"And did he *never* live at Heronmere again?"

"No; he never came nigh the place. After a bit he married a foreign lady, present squire's mother, and she liked her own outlandish country best, and so it seems did he too. They do say Mr. Joscelin walks," he said, with a sly side-look at me; but added, "you need not be scared, as he only shows, they say, to one of the family; none of the servants never saw nothing, or they

would not stay, you may take your Dick!" he continued with a laugh.

I rose from my chair, and thanking him very much for his hospitality and story, I gave him a coin and left him.

CHAPTER XII.

I HURRIED home through the gathering darkness, determined not to think, for, as you may suppose, what I had heard raised a storm in my mind not easily quelled.

The day had changed; the rising wind sounded like the swell of the sea as it sighed in the fir trees, through which the path led for some distance. Large snow-clouds hurried along as if chasing each other, glimpses of the cold bright moon breaking through every now and again. It was almost dark as I groped my way to the side door near the library. I was tired and glad to find a good fire, and signs that Garland had not forgotten my existence, as the table was spread in readiness for my supper.

I rang the bell, which, some time after,

was answered by the old man, bringing the dishes on a tray.

"I guessed it was your supper you rang for, sir, so I waited to bring it, for 't is most a day's journey from here to the kitchen, and my legs are not so young as they were."

I was glad of something, as I had not eaten anything since my breakfast; and so was Rogue, who finished what I left. The old servant came at his own time to remove the supper-things, and stood a few moments poking at, and to my mind spoiling, the fire, as is the custom of his class.

"Wild night, sir," said he; "snow before morning, I think."

"Very likely," I replied shortly, as I did not feel inclined for conversation.

"Well, sir, if you want nothing more I will wish you good-night; but it is a lonesome Christmas Eve you are having, sir—shut up, miles from everyone."

"I don't mind," I said; "I feel more inclined for solitude than company to-night."

"I am glad to hear that, sir," he said, "as me and my wife has been asked to a

party in the village, and to stay the night, if you have no objection. We will come back before daylight to-morrow."

"I have no objection whatever," I replied.

"Thank you, sir"; and again wishing me good-night, he left the room.

I heard the footsteps getting more and more distant, and then a door shut in the far-off back passage of the house, and I knew that I was alone in the old house.

I flung myself into Mr. Dynevor's arm-chair by the fire, and for the first time tried to piece the story together that I had heard that afternoon. For the first time it came over me like a thunder-clap, that I, I myself, was mixed up in this old mystery, though only in a remote degree. The names—Mr. Joscelin, Dorothy Drew! my name Joscelin Drew! Was I then the grandson of that unfortunate man and woman? Was my father base-born, and was that the mystery that had always surrounded my grandmother? How then, if this were so, could I ever hope to win my Molly?—my grandfather betraying her grandfather's love, and

he in return murdering my grandfather in this very room.

I looked round me with horror, and the depression I had been fighting all day came down on me like thick darkness.

How the wind was raging among the old trees in the valley, and how it tore along the terrace, hurling the dead leaves against the windows! It even seemed to have got inside the house, and like ghostly footsteps flew up the passage and past the door, and away into the unused parts of the house. Everything in the room seemed to my excited imagination to have eyes looking at me—from the old portraits on the walls to the arm-chair on the other side of the fire-place, and faces peered out of the gloom from the end of the long room. I seized my little Rogue in my arms to guard me from myself and from my thoughts, and held him tight against my breast, he making little sighing, contented noises at the unexpected attention.

So I sat in the fire-light, listening to the weird sounds of the storm, and trying my best to find a ray of light in my horizon; but

it was a dark hour for me, and turn which way I would, I could find no bright spot on which to fix my mind.

About ten o'clock, feeling tired out and chilly, the fire having burnt low, I retired to the ante-room, in one corner of which my bed had been placed. I made up a good fire of logs, settled Rogue in front of it, and was glad to lay my head on the pillow.

CHAPTER XIII.

I MUST have fallen asleep at once, as I remember nothing more until I awoke to find myself starting up in bed with a feeling of apprehension, fully and suddenly awake, with every nerve on the stretch. The fire was still glowing, although the logs had burnt down. As I sat up listening, I heard a sound of voices from the next room, and a step moving to and fro; there seemed to be two voices, one expostulating and pleading, the other making short, mocking answers. Why did the sweat break out on my forehead? I knew I was not a coward, but I had never felt before as I did then. I dragged myself from my bed, and drew on a wadded dressing-gown that was close at hand; then I saw that Rogue, instead of barking, was cowering down, his eyes fixed on the door of the library. As I slowly

advanced towards the door, I heard the pleading voice raised in anger, which seemed to be answered by a laugh, and then a thud and fall. I forced myself to open the door. Good heavens! What did I see? And how was it that all the time I knew what terrible, what ghostly deed was being enacted close to me? I had seen it all before in that haunted glass, and the horror had never really left me, although weakened by time. Yes! there lay, face downwards on the table, the inert form of the murdered man; and as I looked, the dark face of the other disappeared through the window. I remained rooted to the spot, my starting eyes fixed on the motionless figure at the table, my joints trembling under me; and as I stared, imagine my horror at seeing it—"the thing" —I felt it was not a living being—rise and walk towards me. In one second I recovered the use of my limbs, and to close the door, holding the handle in my hands, with my shoulder firmly pressed against it with all my force, was the work of an instant.

It was coming! I heard slow, soft footsteps approaching nearer and nearer from the whole length of the long room. My hold on the door became agonizing, and if I had had time I should have fled, although the dread of "it" at my back was almost more than facing it. Now it was at the other side! In one moment I was swept away by a steady, invisible force as if I were not there, and using all my strength to keep the door. I tottered backwards into the corner of the room, my hair rising on my scalp, and a cold sweat bursting from every pore, whilst a freezing cold seemed to fill the room.

Standing inside the door was a tall, handsome man, dressed in green velvet coat, white knee-breeches, and long waistcoat. I could see him plainly in the red firelight, and, to my horror, from his forehead were oozing heavy drops of blood, which trickled slowly down his face, staining his white waistcoat, and falling on the floor in great dark gouts. That it was the original of the picture darted through my mind, and, oddly enough, a feeling of deepest pity partly

drowned my terror. He looked at me sadly, with a hopeless appeal in his eyes that touched me to the heart.

"Can I help you?" I said, my voice sounding strange in my ears. He bowed his head slightly, and, pointing to the door in the passage, moved towards it, looking back at me as he did so. I seized a candle from the table, thrusting it into the fire to light it, and then, wrapping my dressing-gown around me, followed him from the room.

Once in the passage he turned to the left, away from the hall and the part of the house I knew, through a door, and down a passage that ran behind the library. It led apparently to a disused part of the house, as it had a damp, mildewed smell, and dust and cobwebs hung thick on the walls. On he went with those soft soundless foot-steps, and I shuddered as I saw that as he went on into the darkness his form shed a faint, phosphoric light, that reflected on the walls on either side.

I, shading my candle with my hand from the air, followed on through the biting cold:

happen what might, I felt I would see it through now. We came to the foot of a staircase, up which he led the way, looking back at the first turn, then on again until the top was reached. Turning to the right, we proceeded a little way down a narrow passage, in which was a door: it seemed to sweep open before him, and we entered a room. As far as I could judge from the light of one candle it was a large attic, with the rafters of the slanting roof exposed to view, and from its position I thought must be over the library. The floor was partly covered with old broken bits of furniture—old chairs, tables, sofas, etc.; in fact, it was the disused lumber-room of an old house. My awesome guide, advancing to the end of the room, stopped and pointed. I raised my candle, and there in front of me stood the old oak cabinet I had missed when I first saw the room below, and in which I had seen the dark man thrust the papers in the vision of the haunted glass.

The figure waved its hand towards it, and looked me in the face. Never shall I forget the entreating, commanding expression in

those melancholy eyes: it haunts me now at times.

"I will search, I swear it," I exclaimed, as I laid my hand on the cabinet. The face seemed to grow less sad; in fact, I almost thought it smiled, but as I looked it faded, the whole figure became indistinct, the last thing seen being the greenish phosphorescent light that had surrounded it. The terror that had been held so long at bay overcame me, and I turned to rush from that awful place. I forgot everything in my wish for flight. In my haste the candle gave one flicker and went out; how I found my way back and down the stairs, I shall never clearly know. I have a vague remembrance of waiting in shivering misery and terror for the moon to shine out, as the clouds swept over it, and with its help at last reaching my room, where I threw myself on my bed, and fell into the deep sleep of utter exhaustion.

CHAPTER XIV.

I DID not wake until broad daylight filled the room, and found I must have slept through Garland's entrance, as the shutters were open, and my jug of hot water standing on the floor. I rose, and hurried through my dressing, as it was Christmas morn, and I felt that if ever I required the calming influence of the well-known service of our Church it was at this crisis in my life.

I made a hurried meal, and as I stepped through the side door, on my way to church, the joy-bells rang out. The long-threatened snow had fallen, and the storm had sunk; a deep calm and stillness settled on all the face of the earth.

I took the little path through the wood that led to the church in the valley. The

snow clung in thick folds on branch and limb, falling softly as the rising sun touched and melted it here and there or a robin shook it from a holly bough as he hopped from twig to twig, after singing his little cheery winter song.

A great calm also seemed to fall on my spirit as I sat in the old church, and gazed on the tombs of departed Dynevors.

On the wall above the square pew of the Dynevor family was a heavy tablet, bearing the inscription:

JOSCELYN DYNEVOR,

AGED TWENTY-FOUR YEARS;

Foully Murdered, 1728.

ALSO JASPER DYNEVOR

(TWIN-BROTHER OF THE ABOVE),

AGED SIXTY-FOUR YEARS.

"Would I had died for thee, O my brother."

The awful terror of the past night seemed to pass from me, and a fixed resolve to solve the secret as far as in me lay took possession of me, and I vowed not to let

another night pass without beginning the search.

That a poor, restless spirit required my aid I could not doubt as that piteous face rose again before me.

CHAPTER XV.

THE service over, the last carol sung with more fervour than melody by all the musical talent of the village, headed by the blacksmith, Christmas greetings and good wishes exchanged as I passed through the churchyard, I again mounted alone the little path to the house. I entered as usual by the side door, and seeing Garland in the library, told him to put some cold meat on the table, as I had some work to do, and did not wish to be disturbed till the evening.

I waited with outward patience, but inward fretting, while he made his arrangements—laid the cloth, brought cold meat, bread, cheese, and beer. It was now nearly one o'clock, and I knew the short winter's evening would soon begin to close in, and I wanted all the daylight I could save to

face that gloomy room again, and also I was in a fever to begin my search.

At length he departed, finding he could not get me to enter into conversation, as was my wont with the old man.

I waited until I heard the passage door shut, and then, taking a large carving-knife from the table, I started on my quest. I did not take the knife to defend myself, as may appear, but in case I had to force open locks or drawers. I started in the same direction as the previous night, turning to the left outside the library door, finding the door of the passage locked, but the key in it. I turned it without much difficulty, and entered the disused part of the house. I was met by the same mouldy smell, and the cobwebs waved round my face as I advanced; the daylight came in dimly from a dusty and web-covered window at the end of the passage. I would not stop to think; a weird feeling, as if the vision of last night were pursuing me, made me dart to the end of the passage and up the stairs, two steps at a time. I had no difficulty in finding the attic room, the door standing open, as I had

left it the previous night in my flight after the candle had gone out.

I went straight to the oak cabinet, as I knew that in it lay the only chance of solving the secret and giving peace to that poor soul. I pulled out drawer after drawer and ranged them on the floor—all empty, not even a scrap of paper in any one of them.

Someone has been here before, I thought to myself, and on the same business, or it would not be quite void of all signs of use. I stood baffled, and gazed at it; it seemed to return my stare and grin at me, with all the vacant spaces of the drawers gaping open.

I went at it again, and dug in my knife to find any hollow spaces or any secret drawers, but all to no purpose, and at last I stopped again to consider the next step. I sat down on the edge of an old bedstead, and covered my eyes with my hands to help thought, and as I did so, of a sudden there rose before me as in a dream the old inn-room, the looking-glass, and with my mind's eye I again saw the whole scene re-enacted

—the quarrel, the blow, the hurried gathering together of the papers, and the thrusting of them into the cabinet. "The cabinet!" I sprang forward, expecting to see the same open drawer as in the vision; but no. "It was high up, level with his head," I cried aloud. Here it was, solid with oak-carved cupids. To dash at it, and seize and twist the inane smiling little figures with my whole force, was the work of a moment. They were strong and held out. I seized up the leg of a broken table and struck at them. The second blow shivered one poor little boy, and he flew off; the other sprang headless aside, and as he did so a drawer moved out. My violence had done its work, and the well-concealed secret drawer was at length disclosed.

With shaking hand I took the drawer from the cabinet and placed it on the bed. Now that the moment had arrived my excitement seemed to calm down, and I even hesitated to lift the yellow sheets with which the drawer was filled. Whose hand had placed them there? What would they disclose? Should I be happier, or a

more miserable man in a few minutes' time? or were they only papers of no import, overlooked by the last owner of the secret drawer?

I felt they were not that, although as I lifted and smoothed one faded and crumpled sheet after another, and found they were only bills, lists of gambling debts and gains, and things of little interest, I grew impatient, thrusting my hand to the bottom of the drawer.

"Ha! at last," I muttered to myself, as my hand grasped a cold, hard substance, and I drew forth a pistol.

I did not feel surprised: I knew it would be there. I took it to the window and stared at it with horror-struck eyes. Yes, there it was, the token of a crime committed. No hand had touched or eye seen it since that evening many years ago, when the dark man had thrown it into its hiding-place. As I held it by its rusted barrel my eye fell on a dark, rough stain on the butt end, to which still clung a few long hairs—hairs of the murdered man.

Was this all, then? I stared blankly at the pistol in my hand. Was that poor restless spirit allowed to return to earth solely to betray his brother's secret? I could not believe it.

I turned from the window, and walked again towards the cabinet in the gathering dusk of the short winter's day, rapidly drawing to its close.

A feeling of blank disappointment came over me. I knew that I had expected more, and I realized, for the first time, that I had been buoyed up by the hope of finding something relating to myself.

At length I turned to go, but at that moment a last ray of the setting sun burst through the clouds, and striking full on the face of the cabinet, lit up its inmost recesses.

What is that behind the space left by the secret narrow drawer? An end of ribbon; I catch it, and pull it eagerly; another tiny drawer behind the other, and in it a lock of hair tied with a faded blue ribbon, a few dead buds, and a scrap of paper.

CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE.

Joscelin Dynevor, of the Parish of Heronmere, and Dorothy Drew, of the Parish of Hazelburn,
were married in this Church of St. ———,
County Middlesex, by License, this 20th day of November, one thousand seven hundred and twenty-eight, by me,

Thomas Crop,
Clerke in Holy Orders.

This marriage was solemnized between us,

Joscelin Dynevor.
Dorothy Drew.

In the presence of

John Taylor.
Charles Bell.

CHAPTER XVI.

My tale is nearly told. What need to tell of my headlong ride to London—wheels were too slow to keep pace with my impatience. To see and question Mr. Dawkins was my desire.

On the second day from my leaving Heronmere I burst, travel-stained and weary, into the office, to the surprise, and I fear annoyance, of my placid old friend and his clerk.

I told my oft-interrupted tale as calmly as I could, and at the end showed the marriage lines of Joscelin Dynevor and Dorothy Drew, begging to be told all that was known of their history.

The old man was agitated, and broke in on my story with eager questions and ejaculations.

At the end he sat a few moments silent, and then said—

"It was the hand of Providence which took you there. Yes, my boy, your father was the son of poor Dorothy, who, not being able to obtain proofs of her marriage, was led to believe that the ceremony she had been through was a mock one, and left her home to hide her shame. She consented, for her son's sake, to take a small yearly sum from Jasper Dynevor, on condition that he never inquired into her place of abode; and my father paid it until his death. This paper, my dear boy," said Mr. Dawkins, holding the marriage lines in his hand, "makes you heir to Heronmere."

"Heir to Heronmere!" Should I then be robbing my darling of her inheritance? Ah, no! A feeling of joy darted through me as I thought that now all obstacles would be cleared away, and we should share it together.

To start for Italy as soon as might be was my great anxiety, and within three days I was on my way, taking with me

Mr. Dawkins, as I felt I should require his assistance to make all clear to Mr. Dynevor.

The journey, and the joy and surprise of my love at my unexpected arrival, I will leave to the imagination of those for whom this history is written.

For the rest, I found Mr. Dynevor only too glad to resign Heronmere to me. His associations with the place had not been happy, and he loved his Italian home far better. He admitted me to his confidence. I learnt that he, too, had seen the vision of the mirror, and in it, to his horror, had recognised his father as the murderer of his brother. That was his reason for ordering the glass to be destroyed; nor was he aware, until told by me, that his order had been disobeyed. He, too, had searched the cabinet, but had been unable to find the secret drawer, and had had it removed to the attic. He had also seen the figure of the murdered Joscelin more than once—always on Christmas Eve—as he sat in the library. Hence his determination to dismantle the room and turn it into a chapel.

This also accounted for his gloom and melancholy, which I was thankful to see lightened from the hour he heard my story of the discovery of the certificate.

You know the rest. Heronmere, from the day your grandmother and I returned to it as bride and bridegroom, has been a happy home; the glass, restored to its old position over the fireplace, reflects happy faces and childish forms—now to the second generation—as this tale is told for the information of you, my importunate grandchildren.

The apparitions have never since been seen, and I trust their poor spirits have found rest and peace at last, and both brothers forgiveness.

Your grandmother is smiling at me as I write this, as she used in the old, old days; and to my eyes she is as lovely and fair as then. For nearly fifty years she has been my guiding star; and may we, when the time comes for setting, sink, as we have lived, *together*.

JOSCELIN DYNEVOR.

I must add a few lines to the foregoing statement written by my father, as they may interest those in years to come who wish to know the bygone history of their family.

My father and mother lived beyond the usual space allotted to man, and the wish expressed in the last lines of the above was granted to him.

It was an evening in June, and they were sitting side by side on the terrace facing the west, as they were wont to do. They loved to watch the sun sink, and talk together of old days.

I was pacing up and down with my wife, whilst the children played at the further end. I thought my father had dropped asleep, and paused a moment, telling my mother not to let him sleep, as the dews were falling.

She placed her hand on his to wake him, as she thought. I heard her say, "How cold your hand is, my love," and then a cry.

We did all we could to restore him, but his star was set, and his noble spirit fled.

My mother lived a month—quiet and gentle to all. I think she even smiled sometimes. Then she, too, faded away; and we laid her in her grave beside her husband.

Signed,

JOSCELIN DYNEVOR,
Junior.

THE END.

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