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THE MOON ROCK

ARTHUR · J · REES

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BY ARTHUR J. REES

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THE MOON ROCK

BY

ARTHUR J. REES

"There is no help for all these things are so,
And all the world is bitter as a tear,
And how these things are, though ye strove to show,
She would not know."

—SWINBURNE

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1922

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THE MOON ROCK

CHAPTER I

THE voice of the clergyman intoned the last sad hope of humanity, the final prayer was said, and the mourners turned away, leaving Mrs. Turold to take her rest in a bleak Cornish churchyard among strangers, far from the place of her birth and kindred.

The fact would not have troubled her if she had known. In life she had been a nonentity; in death she was not less. At least she could now mix with her betters without reproach, free (in the all-enveloping silence) from the fear of betraying her humble origin. Debrett's Peerage was unimportant in the grave; breaches of social etiquette passed unnoticed there; the wagging of malicious tongues was stopped by dust.

Her husband lingered at the grave-side after the others had departed. As he stood staring into the open grave, regardless of a lurking grave-digger waiting to fill it, he looked like a man whose part in the drama of life was Care. There was no hint of happiness in his long narrow face, dull sunken eyes, and bloodless compressed lips. His expression was not that of one unable to tear himself away from the last glimpse of a loved wife fallen from his arms into the clutch of Death. It was the gaze of one immersed in anxious thought.

The mourners, who had just left the churchyard, awaited him by a rude stone cross near the entrance to the church. There were six—four men, a woman,

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and a girl. In the road close by stood the motor-car which had brought them to the churchyard in the wake of the hearse, glistening incongruously in the grey Cornish setting of moorland and sea.

The girl stood a little apart from the others. She was the daughter of the dead woman, but her head was turned away from the churchyard, and her sorrowful glance dwelt on the distant sea. The contour of her small face was perfect as a flower or gem, and colourless except for vivid scarlet lips and dark eyes gleaming beneath delicate dark brows. She was very young—not more than twenty—but in the soft lines of her beauty there was a suggestion of character beyond her years. Her face was dreamy and wayward, and almost gipsy in type. There was something rather disconcerting in the contrast between her air of inexperienced youth and the sombre intensity of her dark eyes, which seemed mature and disillusioned, like those of an older person. The slim lines of her figure had the lissome development of a girl who spent her days out of doors.

She stood there motionless, apparently lost in meditation, indifferent to the bitter wind which was driving across the moors with insistent force.

"Put this on, Sisily."

Sisily turned with a start. Her aunt, a large stout woman muffled in heavy furs, was standing behind her, holding a wrap in her hand.

"You'll catch your death of cold, child, standing here in this thin dress," the elder lady continued. "Why didn't you wear your coat? You'd be warmer sitting in the car. It's really very selfish of Robert, keeping us all waiting in this dreadful wind!" She shivered, and drew her furs closer. "Why doesn't he come away? As if it could do any good!"

As she spoke the tall form of Robert Turold was seen approaching through the rank grass and mouldering

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tombstones with a quick stride. He emerged from the church-yard gate with a stern and moody face.

"Let us get home," he said, and his words were more of a command than request.

He walked across the road to the car with his sister and daughter. The men by the cross followed. They were his brother, his brother's son, his sister's husband, and the local doctor, whose name was Ravenshaw. With a clang and a hoot the car started on the return journey. The winding cobbled street of the churchtown was soon left behind for a road which struck across the lonely moors to the sea. Through the moors and stony hills the car sped until it drew near a solitary house perched on the edge of the dark cliffs high above the tumbling waters of the yeasty sea which foamed at their base.

The car stopped by the gate where the moor road ended. The mourners alighted and entered the gate. Their approach was observed from within, for as they neared the house the front door was opened by an elderly man-servant with a brown and hawk-beaked face.

Walking rapidly ahead Robert Turold led the way into a front sitting-room lighted by a window overlooking the sea. There was an air of purpose in his movements, but an appearance of strain in his careworn face and twitching lips. He glanced at the others in a preoccupied way, but started perceptibly as his eye fell upon his daughter.

"There is no need for you to remain, Sisily," he said in a harsh dry voice.

Sisily turned away without speaking. Her cousin Charles jumped up to open the door, and the two exchanged a glance as she went out. The young man then returned to his seat near the window. Robert Turold was speaking emphatically to Dr. Ravenshaw, answering some objection which the doctor had raised.

"... No, no, Ravenshaw—I want you to be present.

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You will oblige me by remaining. I will go upstairs and get the documents. I shall not keep you long. Thalassa, serve refreshments."

He left the room quickly, as though to avoid further argument. The elderly serving-man busied himself by setting out decanters and glasses, then went out like one who considered his duty done, leaving the company to wait on themselves.

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CHAPTER II

THE group in the room sat in silence with an air of stiff expectation. The members of the family knew they were not assembled to pay respect to the memory of the woman who had just been buried. Her husband had regarded her as a drag upon him, and did not consider her removal an occasion for the display of hypocritical grief. Rather was it to be regarded as an act of timely intervention on the part of Death, who for once had not acted as marplot in human affairs.

They were there to listen to the story of the triumph of the head of the family, Robert Turold. Most families have some common source of interest and pride. It may be a famous son, a renowned ancestor, a faded heirloom, even a musical daughter. The pride of the Turold family rested on the belief that they were of noble blood—the lineal inheritors of a great English title which had fallen into abeyance hundreds of years before.

Robert Turold had not been content to boast of his nobility and die a commoner like his father and grandfather before him. His intense pride demanded more than that. As a boy he had pored over the crabbed parchments in the family deed-box which indicated but did not record the family descent, and he had vowed to devote his life to prove the descent and restore the ancient title of Turrald of Missenden to the Turolds of which he was the head.

There was not much to go upon when he commenced the labour of thirty years—merely a few old documents, a family tradition, and the similarity of name. And

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the Turolds were poor. Money, and a great deal of it, was needed for the search, in the first instance, of the unbroken line of descent, and for the maintenance of the title afterwards if the claim was completely established. But Robert Turold was not to be deterred by obstacles, however great. He was a man with a single idea, and such men are hard to baulk in the long run.

He left England in early manhood and remained away for some years. His family understood that he had gone to seek a fortune in the wilds of the earth. He reappeared—a saturnine silent man—as suddenly as he had gone away. In his wanderings he had gained a fortune but partly lost the use of one eye. The partial loss of an eye did not matter much in a country like England, where most people have two eyes and very little money, and therefore pay more respect to wealth than vision.

Robert Turold invested his money, and then set to work upon his great ambition with the fierce restlessness which characterized all his proceedings in life. He married shortly after his return. He soon came to the conclusion that his marriage was a great mistake—the greatest mistake of his life. His wife had borne him two girls. The first died in infancy, and some years later Sisily was born. His regrets increased with the birth of a second daughter. He wanted a son to succeed him in the title—when he gained it. Time passed, and he became enraged. His anger crushed the timid woman who shared his strange lot. His dominating temperament and moody pride were too much for her gentle soul. She became desperately afraid of him and his stern ways, of that monomania which kept them wandering through the country searching for links in a pedigree which had to be traced back for hundreds of years before Robert Turold could grasp his heart's desire.

When she died in the house on the cliffs where they

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had come six months before, Robert Turold had accomplished the task to which his life had been devoted. Some weeks before he had summoned his brother from London to disclose his future plans. The brothers had not met for many years, but Austin was quick to obey when he learnt that a fortune and a title were at stake. The sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Pendleton, had reached Cornwall two days before the funeral. They were to take Sisily back to London with them. It was Robert Turold's intention to part with his daughter and place her in his sister's charge. For a reason he had not yet divulged, Sisily was to have no place in his brilliant future. He disliked his daughter. Her sex was a fatal bar to his regard. He had heaped so many reproaches on her mother for bringing another girl into the world that the poor woman had descended to the grave with a confused idea that she was to blame.

Sisily had a strange nature, reticent, yet tender. She had loved her mother passionately, and feared and hated her father because he had treated his wife so harshly. She had been the witness of it all—from her earliest childhood to the moment when the unhappy woman had died with her eyes fixed on her husband's implacable face, but holding fast to her daughter's hand, as though she wanted to carry the pressure of those loving fingers into the grave.

A clock on the mantel-piece ticked loudly. But it was the only sound which disturbed the quietness of the room. The representatives of the family eyed one another with guarded indifference. Circumstances had kept them apart for many years, and they now met almost as strangers.

Mrs. Pendleton sat on a sofa with her husband. She was a notable outline of a woman, large and massive, with a shrewd capable face and a middle-class mind. She lived, when at home, in the rarefied atmosphere of Golders Green, in a red house with a red-tiled roof, one

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of a streetful similarly afflicted, where she kept two maids and had a weekly reception day. She was childless, but she disdained to carry a pet dog as compensation for barrenness. Her husband was a meagre shrimp of a stockbroker under his wife's control, who golfed on Sundays and played auction bridge at his club twice a week with cyclic regularity. He and his wife had little in common except the habit of living together, which had made them acquainted with each other's ways.

Mrs. Pendleton had not seen either of her brothers for a long time. Robert had been too engrossed in digging into the past for the skeletons of his ancestors to do more than write intermittent letters to the living members of his family, acquainting them with the progress of his search. Austin Turold, Robert's younger brother, had spent a portion of his life in India and had but recently returned. He had gone there more than twenty years before to fill a Government post, taking with him his young wife, but leaving his son at school in England for some years. His wife had languished and died beneath an Indian sun, but her husband had become acclimatized, and remained until his time was up and he was free to return to England with a pension. His sister and he met on the previous day for the first time since he had left England for India, and Mrs. Pendleton had some difficulty in identifying the elderly and testy Anglo-Indian with the handsome young brother who had bade her farewell so many years before. And, she had even more difficulty in recognizing the fair-haired little boy of that time in the good-looking but rather moody-faced young man who at the present moment was seated near the window, staring out of it.

The fifth member of the party was Dr. Ravenshaw, who practised in the churchtown where Mrs. Turold had been buried, and had attended her in her illness..

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But he had not been asked to share in the family council on that account. His presence was due to his intimacy with Robert Turold, which had commenced soon after the latter's arrival in Cornwall. The claimant for a title had found in the churchtown doctor an antiquarian after his own heart, whose wide knowledge of Cornish antiquities had assisted in the discovery of the last piece of evidence necessary to establish his claim.

Dr. Ravenshaw sat a little apart from the other, a thickset grey figure of a man, with eyes reddened as though by excessive reading, and usually protected by glasses, which just then he had removed in order to polish them with his handkerchief. In age he was sixty or more. His thick grey beard was mingled with white, and the heavy moustache which drooped over his mouth was quite white. He presented a common-place figure in his rough worn tweeds and heavy boots, but he was a man of intelligence in spite of his unassuming exterior. He lived alone, cared for by a single servant, and he covered on foot a scattered practice among the fishing population of that part of the coast. His knowledge of Cornish antiquities and heraldic lore had won him the confidence of Robert Turold, and his kindness to Mrs. Turold in her illness had gained him the gratitude of her daughter Sisily.

It was Austin Turold who caused a diversion in this group of lay figures by walking to the table and helping himself to a whisky-and-soda. Austin bore very little resemblance to his grim and dominant elder brother. He had a slight frail figure, very carefully dressed, and one of those thin-lipped faces which seem to wear a perpetual sneer of superiority over commoner humanity. The movements of his white hands, the inflection of his voice, the double eyeglass which dangled from his vest by a ribbon of black silk, revealed the type of human being which considers itself something

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rarer and finer than its fellows. The thin face, narrow white forehead, and high-bridged nose might have belonged to an Oxford don or fashionable preacher, but, apart from these features, Austin Turold had nothing in common with such earnest souls. By temperament he was a dilettante and cynic, who affected not to take life seriously. His axiom of faith was that a good liver was the one thing in life worth having, and a far more potent factor in human affairs than conscience. He had at one time regarded his brother Robert as a fool and visionary, but had seen fit to change that opinion latterly.

He paused in the act of raising his glass to his lips, and looked over the silent company as though seeking a convivial companion. His son was still staring out of the window. The little stockbroker, seated on the sofa beside his large wife, made a deprecating movement of his eyebrows, as though entreating not to be asked. Austin's cold glance roved to Dr. Ravenshaw.

"Doctor," he said, "let me give you a whisky-and-soda."

Doctor Ravenshaw shook his head. "I have a patient to visit before dark," he said, "a lady. I do not care to carry the smell of spirits into a sick-room."

"But this is a special occasion, Ravenshaw," persisted the other. "We do not restore a title every day."

"Austin!" The voice of Mrs. Pendleton sounded from the sofa in shocked protest.

"What's the matter?" said Austin, pausing in the act of pouring some whisky into a glass.

"It would be exceedingly improper to drink a toast at such a moment."

"What's the matter with the moment?"

"The day, then. Just when we have buried poor Alice." Mrs. Pendleton had not seen her brother's wife for ten years before her death, but she had no difficulty

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in bringing tears to her eyes at the recollection of her. She dried her eyes with her handkerchief, and added in a different tone: "I fancy Robert is coming."

A heavy step was heard descending the stairs. Austin drained his glass, and Dr. Ravenshaw adjusted his spectacles as Robert Turold entered the room.

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CHAPTER III

WITH parchments and papers deep on the table before him, Robert Turold plunged into the history of his life's task. The long hand of the mantelpiece clock slipped with a stealthy movement past the twelve as he commenced, as though determined not to be taken by surprise, but to keep abreast of him.

An hour passed, but Robert Turold kept steadily on. His hearers displayed symptoms of boredom like people detained in church beyond the usual time. Humanity is interested in achievement, but not in the manner of its accomplishment. And Robert's brother and sister knew much of his story by heart. It had formed the sole theme of his letters to them for many years past. Mrs. Pendleton's thoughts wandered to afternoon tea. Her husband nodded with closed eyes, and recovered himself with convulsive starts. Austin Turold fixed his glance on the ceiling, where a solitary fly was cleaning its wings with its legs. From the window Charles Turold presented an immobile profile. Only Dr. Ravenshaw seemed to listen with an interest which never flagged.

Yet it was a story well worth hearing, that record of indomitable pertinacity which had refused to be baulked by years or rebuffs. Men have acquired titles more easily. That was apparent as Robert Turold related the history of his long and patient investigation; of scents which had led nowhere; of threads which had broken in his hand; of fruitless burrowings into the graves of past generations. These disappointments had lengthened the search, but they had never baffled the searcher nor broken his faith.

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The story began in the fourteenth century, when the second Edward had summoned his trusty retainer Robert Turrald from his quiet home in leafy Buckinghamshire to sit in Parliament as a baron, and by that act of kingly grace ennobled him and his heirs forever. Successive holders of the title were summoned to Parliament in their turn until the reign of the seventh Henry, when one succeeded whose wife brought him three daughters, but no sons. At his death the title went into abeyance among this plurality of girls. In peerage law they were his coheirs, and the inheritance could not descend because not one of them had an exclusive right to it. The daughters entered a convent and followed their parents to the grave within a few years, the Crown resumed the estate, and the title had remained in abeyance ever since.

But the last Lord Turrald had a brother Simon, a roystering blade and lawless adventurer, who disappeared some years before his elder brother's death. Little was known of him except that he was supposed to have closed a brawling career on the field of Bosworth, when Richard the Crookback was killed and the short-lived dynasty of York ended.

The Turolds' family deed-box told a different story. There was a manuscript in monkish hand, setting forth, "in the name of God, Amen," the secret history of Simon, as divulged by him on his deathbed for the information of his two sons. In this confession he claimed kinship with the last Lord Turrald of Great Missenden. But he had not dared to claim the title and rich estates on his brother's death, because he was a proscribed man. He had been a Yorkist, and had fought for Richard. That might have been forgiven him if he had not unhorsed his future king at Bosworth and almost succeeded in slaughtering him with his own reckless hands. So he had fled, and had remained in obscurity and a safe hiding-place after his brother's death, pre-

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ferring his head without a title to a title without a head.

On this document, unsigned and undated, with nothing to indicate the place of its origin, the Turold family based its claim of descent from the baronial Turralds of Great Missenden. But the Turold history was a chequered one. Their branch was nomadic, without territorial ties or wealth, without continuance of chronology. They could not trace their own genealogy back for two hundred years. There was a great gap of missing generations which had never been filled in. It was not even known how the document had come into their possession. Simon's two sons and their descendants had vanished into unknown graves, leaving no trace. But the family clung fast to their belief that they were the lineal descendants of the Turralds of Buckinghamshire.

It had remained for Robert Turold to prove it. His father and grandfather had bragged of it, had fabricated family trees over their cups, and glowed with pride over their noble blood, but had let it go at that. Robert was a man of different mould. In his hands, the slender supposition had been turned into certainty. By immense labour and research he built a bridge from the first Turold of whom any record existed, backwards across the dark gap of the past. He traced the wanderings of his ancestors through different generations and different counties to Robert Turold, who established himself in Suffolk forty years after the last Lord Turrald was laid to rest in his family vault in the village church of Great Missenden.

The construction of this portion of his family tree occupied Robert Turold for ten years. There were scattered records to be collected, forgotten wills to be sought in county offices, parochial registers to be searched for births and deaths. A nomadic family has no traditions; Robert Turold had to trace his back to the darkness of the Middle Ages. It was a notable feat

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to trace the wanderings of an obscure family back so far as he did, but even then he seemed as far away from the attainment of his desire as ever. There remained a gap of forty years. To establish his claim to the title he had to prove that the Turolds sprang from the younger brother of the last Lord Turrald, who had allowed the title to lapse for fear of losing his head if he came forward to claim it.

It did not seem a great gap to bridge after following a wandering scent through four centuries, but the paltry forty years almost beat Robert Turold, and cost him five years additional search. It was a lucky chance, no more, which finally led him to Cornwall, but it was the hand of Providence (he said so) which directed his footsteps to the churchtown in which Dr. Ravenshaw lived. It was there he discovered the connecting link in the signature of a single witness on a noble charter which granted to the monks of St. Nicholas "all wreck of sea which might happen in the Scilly Isles except whales." To the eye of Robert Turold's faith the illegible scrawl on this faded scroll formed the magic name of Simon Turrald.

For once, faith was justified by its works. The signature was indeed Simon Turrald's; not the younger brother of the last Lord Turrald, but Simon's son.

Bit by bit, Robert Turold succeeded in fitting together the last pieces of the puzzle which had eluded him for so long. Simon Turrald, the brother, had fled to Cornwall, where he had married a Cornishwoman who had brought him two sons. The elder, Simon, had taken religious vows, and established a priory at St. Fair, a branch of the great priory of St. Germain. The holy fathers of the order had long since vanished from this earth to reap the reward of their goodness (it is to be hoped) in another world, but the remains of the priory still stood on a barren headland near Cape Cornwall. And there was a tomb in St. Fair church,

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behind the altar, marked by a blue slab, with an indent formerly filled by a recumbent figure. On the blue slab was a partly obliterated inscription in monkish Latin, which yielded its secret to him, and divulged that the remains beneath were those of Father Simon of St. Fair.

With this important discovery to help him, Robert Turold had very little difficulty in completing the particulars of the family genealogy. Further search of the churchtown records brought to light that Simon's other son, Robert, left Cornwall as a young man, and after some years of wandering had settled in Suffolk. Father Simon, of course, died without family, but Robert married, the family name came to be spelt "Turold," and thus was founded that branch of the family of which the last Robert Turold was now the head. The family tree was complete.

Such was the substance of Robert Turold's life quest, and the story had occupied two hours in telling.

"I have petitioned the King's most excellent majesty to terminate the abeyance in my favour and declare that I am entitled to the peerage," he concluded. "I have no doubt that my claim will be admitted. I have set out the facts with great care, and in considerable detail. I have traced a clear line of descent back to Simon Turrald, younger brother of the last baron, and there are no coheirs in existence. Ours is the last surviving branch, or it would, perhaps, be better if I said that Austin and myself, and Austin's son, are the only male members of the family. It is a difficult matter to give effectual proof of a long pedigree, but my lawyer has not the least doubt that the House of Lords will admit the validity of my claim, and will terminate the abeyance in my favour. The Attorney General has inspected my proofs, and I am to appear before the Committee for Privileges next week. In a

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few weeks at the outside, allowing for the worst of law's delays, I shall be Lord Turrald."

Robert Turold's whole bearing was transfigured as he made this announcement. His sound eye gleamed, his shrunken form seemed to expand and fill, and his harsh sallow features took on an expression which was almost ecstatic. It was his great moment, the moment for which he had lived for twenty years, and it compensated him for all his worry, delayed expectation, fruitless labour, and the bitter taste of the waters of despair.

"I shall be Turrald of Great Missenden," he said, and again the expression of his face showed what the words meant to him.

"Bob! So you've actually succeeded after all!" Mrs. Pendleton stepped quickly across to her brother as he sat regarding his audience from behind his pile of documents. It was like a sister, at that moment, to slip back to the juvenile name and kiss his elderly face with tears in her eyes. Robert Turold received the caress unmoved, and she went back to the sofa.

"Lord Turrald! It sounds well," murmured her husband, whose ideas were sufficiently democratic to give him a sneaking admiration for a title. He gazed at his brother-in-law with a new respect, discerning unsuspected indications of noble blood in his grim visage.

"How do you account for the two forms of spelling your family name?" observed Dr. Ravenshaw. "The House of Lords will require proof on that point, will they not?"

"I shall be able to satisfy them," returned Robert Turold. "The first Robert Turold reverted to the Norman spelling when he settled in Suffolk. Turrald is the corrupted form, doubtless due to early Saxon difficulties with Norman names. The Saxons were never

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very glib at Norman-French, and there was no standardized spelling of family names at that period."

"It would be interesting to know how the name of Simon came to be bestowed upon the Simon Turrald who fled to Cornwall after Bosworth. The name is Biblical—not Norman. The Normans were pagan, worshipping Woden and Thor, though supposed to be Christianized after Charles the Simple ceded Neustria to Rollo."

"Simon was a good mediaeval name in France and was fairly common in England from the twelfth century until after the Reformation. It was Norman, as being that of an apostle, and was never popular among the Puritans."

"It seems a pity that you cannot claim the Turrald estates," put in Austin. "They must have been immensely wealthy."

"It is quite out of the question," replied Robert decisively. "They have been alienated for centuries. But it has been part of my life's work to provide for the upkeep of the title when I gained it. I shall be able to ensure my heirs an income of nearly eight thousand pounds a year.

It was Mrs. Pendleton's first intimation of the amount of the fortune her brother had gained abroad. "Eight thousand a year!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Robert, it is wealth."

"One could live very comfortably on eight thousand a year," remarked her husband, "very comfortably indeed."

"It's not much to support a title, after the tax-gatherers have taken their pound of flesh in income tax and super-tax," said Austin. "Robert, with his iron frame, will probably outlive a weakling like myself, but if he doesn't I'm sure I shall find it difficult to keep up the title on the money."

"One word!" said Dr. Ravenshaw, with a quick glance

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at Robert Turold. "This is a barony by writ that you are claiming. Does not your daughter succeed you if you gain it, and not your brother?"

"No," replied Robert Turold. "The next holder of the title, after me, will be my brother, and his son will succeed him."

Little Mr. Pendleton looked questioningly at his brother-in-law.

"A similar question was on my lips," he said hesitatingly. "I know very little of such matters, but in view of our family's probable entry into the ranks of the old nobility I have deemed it my duty to make myself acquainted, to some extent, with the history of the Turrald title and peerage law. It seems a very complicated business—peerage law, I mean—in the case of baronies by writ, but I certainly gathered the impression that a sole daughter can succeed, although several daughters are regarded as coheirs."

"My daughter cannot succeed to the Turrald title," rejoined Robert Turold. The words seemed to be wrung out of him reluctantly.

"It is not for me to question your knowledge—your great knowledge—of English peerage law, Robert," pursued Mr. Pendleton with a kind of timid persistence. "But I brought a book down with me in the train in which I remember reading that the right of a single daughter to succeed to a barony by writ had been well established by the Clifton case and several others. I am not precisely aware what the Clifton case is, but I've no doubt that you are well versed in the particulars of it. As you have no son your daughter has priority of claim over your brother and his son. From what you say I can see that I must be quite wrong, but I'd be glad if you would explain to me."

"You have stated the law accurately enough," said Robert Turold, "but my daughter does not succeed to the title."

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"Why not?"

Embarrassment, perceptible as a cloud, deepened on Robert Turold's face. He regained his self-control with an effort.

"There was an informality in my marriage," said he at last. "My daughter's birth was irregular."

"Do you mean that she is illegitimate?" asked Dr. Ravenshaw.

Robert Turold inclined his head. "Yes," he said.

At this admission his sister bounced from the sofa with a startled cry. "So that was why there was no name plate on the coffin," she exclaimed. "Oh, Robert, what a terrible thing—what a disgrace!"

"Spare me your protests until you have heard the explanation," Robert coldly rejoined. "She"—he pointed a hand in the direction of the churchyard—"was married before she met me. She kept the fact from me. It was apparently a secret passage in her life. During our long association together she gave no hint of it. She confessed the truth on her death-bed. In justice to her memory let me say that she believed her husband dead."

Robert Turold told this with unmoved face in barest outline—etched in dry-point, as it were—leaving his hearers to fill in the picture of the unhappy woman who had gone through life tormented by the twin demons of conscience and fear, which had overtaken her and brought her down before she could reach the safe shelter of the grave.

Mrs. Pendleton, whose robust mind had scant patience with the policy of cowardice which dictates death-bed confessions, regretted that Alice, having remained silent so long, had not kept silence altogether.

"You do not intend to make this scandal public, Robert?" she said anxiously.

"I am compelled to do so," was the gloomy response.

"Is it necessary?" she pleaded. "Cannot the story

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be kept quiet—if not for Alice's sake, at least for Sisily's? You must consider her above all things. She is your daughter, your only child."

"I agree with Aunt," said Charles Turold. He rose from the window-seat and approached the table. "Sisily must be your first consideration," he said, looking at Robert Turold.

"This has nothing to do with you, Charles," interposed Austin hastily.

"I think it has," said his son. "You told me nothing about this, you know."

"I was not aware of it myself," replied his father.

"Now that I know, I shall have nothing further to do with this," continued the young man. "I'm not going to help you wrong Sisily."

"I hardly expected such lofty moral sentiments from you," said Austin, with a dark glance.

His son flushed as though there was a hidden sting behind the jibe. He appeared to be about to say something more, but checked himself, and went back to his seat by the window.

"Is there no way of keeping this matter quiet, Robert?" said his sister imploringly.

"I see none," was the rejoinder. "It is a very painful disclosure, but I think it is inevitable. Do you not agree with me, Austin?"

"Do not ask my opinion," his brother coldly replied. "It is for you to decide."

Robert Turold paused irresolutely. "What do you say, Ravenshaw?" he said, glancing round at the silent figure of the doctor. "I asked you to be present this afternoon to have the benefit of your advice. I owe much to you, so I beg you to speak freely."

"Since you have asked my advice," said Dr. Ravenshaw gravely, "I say that I entirely agree with Mrs. Pendleton. Your first duty is to Sisily. She should outweigh all other considerations. If you make her ille-

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gitimacy public you may live to be sorry for having done so."

Mrs. Pendleton cast a moist, grateful glance at the speaker, but Austin Turold turned on him a look of cold hostility.

Robert Turold sat brooding for a few moments in silence. He had asked advice, but his own mind was made up. The humane views of his sister and Dr. Ravenshaw were powerless to affect his decision. The monstrous growth of his single purpose had long since strangled such transient plants as human affection and feeling in his heart and mind.

"The facts must be made public," he said inexorably. "The honour of a noble family is in my hands, and I must do my duty. It would be an insult to my Sovereign and my peers, and a grievous wrong to our family, if I concealed any portion of the truth. I shall make adequate provision for Sisily. You will not refuse to take charge of her, Constance, because of this disclosure?"

"You ought to know me better than that, Robert. She'll need somebody to take care of her, poor child! But who is to tell her the truth? For I suppose she must be told?"

"I want you to tell her," said Robert Turold. "Choose your time. There is no immediate hurry, but she must be in no false hopes about the future. She had better be told before the Investigations Committee meets."

"Bother the Investigations Committee!" exclaimed Mrs. Pendleton. "Really, Robert——"

Mrs. Pendleton broke off abruptly, in something like dismay. She had a fleeting impression of a pair of eyes encountering her own through a crack in the doorway, and as swiftly withdrawn. She walked quickly to the door and flung it open. There was nobody outside, and the passage was empty.

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"We have been talking family secrets with the door open," she said, returning to her seat. "I thought I saw one of the servants eavesdropping."

"My servants would not listen at doors," said Robert Turold coldly. "You must have imagined it."

Mrs. Pendleton made no rejoinder. She had a strong belief that some one had been watching and listening, but she could not be sure.

"We must really be going," she announced, with a glance at the clock. "Joseph"—such was her husband's name—"you had better go and see if the car is ready, and I will go for Sisily. Is she upstairs in her room, Robert?"

"I believe so," said Robert Turold, bending abstractedly over his papers. "But you had better ask Thalassa. He'll tell you. Thalassa will know."

Mrs. Pendleton looked angrily at him, but was wise enough to forbear from further speech. She instinctively realized that her brother was beyond argument or reproof.

She went upstairs to look for her niece, but she was not in her room. She came downstairs again and proceeded to the kitchen. Through the half-open door she saw the elderly male servant, and she entered briskly.

"Can you tell me where Miss Sisily is, Thalassa?" she asked.

"Miss Sisily is out on the cliffs." Thalassa, busy chopping suet with a knife, made answer without looking up. There was something absurdly incongruous between the mild domestic occupation and the grim warrior face bent over it.

"When did she go out?" asked Mrs. Pendleton, struck by a sudden thought.

Thalassa threw a swift sidelong glance at her. "It might be an hour ago," he said.

"Do you know where I am likely to find her?"

Thalassa pointed vaguely through an open window.

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"Somewhere along there," he said. "Miss Sisily is fond of the cliffs. If you're going to look for her you'd best not go round by the back of the house, or you'll fall over, like as not. It's a savage spot, only fit for savages—or madmen." He turned his back and bent over his chopping board again.

Mrs. Pendleton turned away in perplexity, and walked up the passage to the front door. There her eye fell on the figure of Charles Turold, lounging moodily over the gate, smoking a cigarette.

She walked down the flinty path and touched his arm. "Would you mind going and looking for Sisily?" she said. "She is out on the cliffs, Thalassa says." She pointed a hand in the direction she supposed the girl to be.

The young man's moodiness vanished in eager alacrity. "Certainly," he replied. "I'll go with pleasure." He tossed away his cigarette and disappeared around the side of the house.

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CHAPTER IV

SISILY first opened her eyes on a grey day by a grim coast, and life had always been grim and grey to her. Her memory was a blurred record of wanderings from place to place in pursuit of something which was never to be found. Her earliest recollection was of a bleak eastern coast, where Robert Turold had spent long years in a losing game of patience with the sea. He had gone there in the belief that some of his ancestors were buried in a forgotten churchyard on the cliffs, and he spent his time attempting to decipher inscriptions which had been obliterated almost as effectually as the dead whose remains they extolled.

The old churchyard had been called "The Garden of Rest" by some sentimental versifier, but there was no rest for the dead who tried to sleep within its broken walls. The sea kept undermining the crumbling cliffs upon which it stood, carrying away earth, and tombstones, and bones. Nor was it a garden. Nothing grew in the dank air but crawling things which were horrible to the eye. There were great rank growths of toadstools, yellow, blue, livid white, or spotted like adders, which squirmed and squelched underfoot to send up a sickly odour of decay. The only green thing was some ivy, a parasitic vampire which drew its lifeblood from the mouldering corpse of an old church.

It was in this desolate place that the girl conceived her first impression of her father as a stern and silent man who burrowed among old graves like a mole. Robert Turold had fought a stout battle for the secret contained in those forgotten graves on a bleak headland,

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but the sea had beaten him in the long run, carrying off the stones piecemeal until only one remained, a sturdy pillar of granite which marked the bones of one who, some hundred and fifty years before had been "An English Gentleman and a Christian"—so much of the epitaph remained. Robert Turold hoped that it was an ancestor, but he was not destined to know. One night the stone was carried off with a great splash which was heard far, and left a ragged gap in the cliffside, like a tooth plucked from a giant's mouth.

When Sisily first saw the cliffs of Cornwall she was reminded of those early days, with the difference that the Cornish granite rocks stood firm, as though saying to the sea, "Here rises England."

The house Robert Turold had taken looked down on the sea from the summit. It was a strange place to build a house, on the brink of a broken Cornish cliff-line, above the grey surges of the Atlantic, among a wilderness of dark rocks, facing black moors which rolled away from the cliffs as lonely and desolate as eternity. The place had been built by a London artist, long since dead, who had lived there and painted seascapes from an upstairs studio which overlooked the sea.

The house had remained empty for years until Robert Turold had taken it six months before. It was too isolated and lonely to gain a permanent tenant, and it stood in the teeth of Atlantic gales. The few scattered houses and farms of the moors cringed from the wind in sheltered depressions, but Flint House faced its everlasting fury on the top of the cliffs, a rugged edifice of grey stone, a landmark visible for many miles.

The house suited Robert Turold well enough, because it was near the churchtown in which he was conducting his final investigations. It never occurred to him to consider whether it suited his wife and daughter. It was a house, and it was furnished; what more was

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necessary? It was nothing to him if his wife and daughter were unhappy. It was nothing to him if the sea roared and the house shook as he sat poring at nights over his parchments in the dead artist's studio. He had other things to occupy his mind than Nature's brutality or the feelings of womanhood.

Sisily had climbed down to the foot of the rocks. She was sitting in her favourite spot, a spur of rock overhanging a green nook in the broken ugliness of the cliffs, sheltered from the sea by an encircling arm of rock, and reached by a steep path down the cliff. Around her towered an amphitheatre of vast cliffs in which the sea sang loud music to the spirit of solitude. In the moaning waters in front of the cove a jagged rock rose from the incomparable green, tilted backward and fantastically shaped, like a great grave face watching the house on the summit of the cliff.

The rock had fascinated the girl from the first moment she had seen it. In the summer months, tourists came from afar to gaze on its fancied resemblance to one of the illustrious dead. But to Sisily there was a secret brooding consciousness in the dark mask. It seemed to her to be watching and waiting for something. For what? Its glance seemed to follow her like the eyes of a picture. And it conveyed a menace by its mere proximity, even when she could not see it. When she looked out of her window at night, and saw only the shadow of the rock with the face veiled in darkness, she seemed to hear the whisper of its words: "I am here. Do not think to escape. I will have you yet."

Among the fisher-folk of that part of the coast it was known as the Moon Rock. The old Cornish women had a tradition that when a fishing-boat failed to return to that bay of storms, the spirit of the drowned man would rise to the surface and answer his wife if she hailed him from the shore. It was a rite and solemn ceremony, now fallen into decay. There was a story of

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one young wife who, getting no answer, left her desolate cottage at midnight and swam out to the Moon Rock at high tide. She had scrambled up its slippery sides and called her husband from the summit. She had called and called his name until he came. In the morning they were found—the wife, and the husband who had been called from the depth of the sea, floating together in one of the sea caverns at the base of the Moon Rock, their white faces tangled in the red seaweed which streaked the green surging water like blood.

Sisily knew this story, and believed it to be true. Sometimes, when the moon lingered on the black glistening surface of the Moon Rock, she fancied she could see a misty fluttering figure on the rock, and hear it calling . . . calling. She would sit motionless at her window, straining her ears for the reply. After a time the response would come faintly from the sea, at first far out, then sounding louder and clearer as the spirit of the husband guided his drowned body back to his wife's arms. When it sounded close to the rock the evanescent figure on the summit would vanish to join the spirit of her husband in the churning waters at the base. Then the face of the Moon Rock seemed to smile, and the smile was so cruel that Sisily would turn from the window with a shudder, covering her face with her hands.

Her strange upbringing may have contributed to such morbid fancies. In his monstrous preoccupation with a single idea Robert Turold had neglected his duty to his daughter. She counted for nothing in his scheme of life, and there were periods when he seemed to be unconscious of her existence. She had been allowed to grow up with very little education or training. She had passed her childhood and girlhood in remote parts of England, without companions, and nobody to talk to except her mother and Thalassa, who accompanied the family everywhere. She loved her mother, but her love

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was embittered by her helplessness to mitigate her mother's unhappy lot. Thalassa was a savage old pagan whose habitual watchful secretiveness relaxed into roaring melody in his occasional cups; in neither aspect could he be considered a suitable companion for the budding mind of a girl, but he loomed in her thoughts as a figure of greater import than her father or mother. Her father was a gloomy recluse, her mother was crushed and broken in spirit. Thalassa had been the practical head of the house ever since Sisily could remember anything, an autocrat who managed the domestic economy of their strange household in his own way, and brooked no interference. "Ask Thalassa—Thalassa will know," was Robert Turold's unvarying formula when anybody attempted to fix upon him his responsibility as head of the house. Sometimes Sisily was under the impression that her father for some reason or other, feared Thalassa. She could recall a chance collision, witnessed unseen, through a half-open door. There had been loud voices, and she had seen a fiery threatening eye—Thalassa's—and her father's moody averted face.

From a child she had developed in her own way, as wild and wayward as the gulls which swooped around the rocks where she was sitting. Nature revealed her heart to her in long solitary walks by sea and fen. But of the world of men and women Sisily knew nothing whatever. The secrets of the huddle of civilization are not to be gathered from books or solitude. Sisily was completely unsophisticated in the ways of the world, and her deep passionate temperament was full of latent capacity for good or evil, for her soul's salvation or shipwreck. Because of her upbringing and temperament she was not the girl to count the cost in anything she did. She was a being of impulse who had never learnt restraint, who would act first and think afterwards.

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Her dislike of her father was instinctive, almost impersonal, being based, indeed, on his treatment of her mother rather than on any resentment of his neglect of herself. But Robert Turold had never been able to intimidate his daughter or tame her fearless spirit. She had inherited too much of his own nature for that.

At that moment she was sitting motionless, immersed in thought, her chin on her hand, looking across the water to the horizon, where the Scilly Islands shimmered and disappeared in a grey, melting mist. She did not hear the sound of Charles Turold's footsteps, descending the cliff path in search of her.

The young man stood still for a moment admiring her exquisite features in their soft contour and delicate colouring. He pictured her to himself as a white wildflower in a grey wilderness. He could not see himself as an exotic growth in that rugged setting—a rather dandified young man in a well-cut suit, with an expression at once restless and bored on his good-looking face.

He scrambled down the last few slippery yards of the path and had almost reached her side before she saw him.

"I have been sent for you," he explained. "I knew I should find you here."

She got up immediately from the rock where she had been sitting, and they stood for a moment in silence. She thought by his look that he had something to say to her, but as he did not speak she commenced the ascent of the stiff cliff path. He started after her, but the climb took all his attention, and she was soon far ahead. When he reached the top she was standing near the edge looking around her.

"This is my last look," she said as he reached her side. Her hand indicated the line of savage cliffs, the

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tossing sea, the screaming birds, the moors beyond the rocks.

"Perhaps you will come back here again some day," he replied.

She made no answer. He drew closer, so close that she shrank back and turned away.

"I must go now," she hurriedly said.

"Stay, Sisily," he said. "I want to speak to you. It may be the final opportunity—the last time we shall be alone together here."

She hesitated, walking with slower steps and then stopping. As he did not speak she broke the silence in a low tone—

"What do you wish to say to me?"

"Are you sorry you are leaving Cornwall?" he hesitatingly began.

She made a slight indifferent gesture. "Yes, but it does not matter. Mother is dead, and my father does not care for me." She flushed a deep red and hastily added, "No one will miss me. I am so alone."

"You are not alone!" he impetuously exclaimed—"I love you, Sisily—that is what I wished to say. I came here to tell you."

He caught a swift fleeting glance from her dark eyes, immediately veiled.

"Do you really mean what you say?" she replied, a little unsteadily.

"Yes, Sisily. I have loved you ever since I first met you," he replied. "And, since then, I have loved you more and more."

"Oh, why have you told me this now?" she exclaimed. "You think I am lonely, and you are sorry for me. I cannot stay longer. Aunt will be waiting for me."

He sprang before her in the narrow path.

"You must hear what I have to say before you go," he said curtly. "We are not likely to meet again for

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some time if we part now. I intend to leave England."

She looked at him at those words, but he was at a loss to divine the meaning of the look.

"You are leaving England?" A quick ear would have caught a strange note in her soft voice. "Oh, but you cannot—you have responsibilities."

"Are you thinking of the title, and your father's money?" he observed, glancing at her curiously. "What do you know about it, Sisily?"

"I have heard of nothing but the title ever since I can remember," she replied.

"I learnt for the first time this afternoon that I was brought down here to rob you," he said gloomily.

"I am glad for your sake if you are to have it—the money," she simply replied.

He answered with a bitter, almost vengeful aspect.

"I would not take the money or the title, if they ever came to me. They should be yours. I will show them. I will let them know that they cannot do what they like with me." He brought out this obscure threat in a savage voice. "If I had only known—if I had guessed that your father——" He ceased abruptly, with a covert glance, like one fearing he had said too much.

She kept her eyes fixed on the lengthening shadows around the rocks.

"Do not take it so much to heart," she timidly counselled. "It is nothing to me—the title or the money. They made my mother's life a misery. My father was always cruel to her because of them, I do not know why. It is in his nature to be cruel, I think. He has a heart of granite, like these rocks. I hate him!" She brought out the last words in a sudden burst of passion which startled him.

"What nonsense it all is!" he exclaimed, suddenly changing his tone. "All this talk about a title which may never be revived. Let them have it between them, and the money too. Sisily, I love you, dear, love you

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better than all the titles and money in the world. I am not worthy of you, but I will try to be. Let us go away and start life . . . just our two selves."

"I cannot." She stood in front of him with downcast gaze, and then raised her eyes to his.

Had he been as experienced in the ways of her sex as he believed himself to be, he would have read more in her elusive glance than her words.

"You may be sorry if you do not," he said, with a sudden access of male brutality. "There are reasons—reasons I cannot explain to you——"

"Even if there are I cannot do what you ask," she replied. Her face was still averted, but her voice was steady.

"Then do you want to go with Aunt to London?" he persisted, trying to catch a glimpse of her hidden face.

She shook her head.

"Or to stay with your father?"

"No!" There was a strange intense note in the brief word.

"Then come with me, Sisily. I love you more than all the world. We have nobody to please except our two selves."

"You have your duty to your father to consider."

"Let us leave him out of the question," said the young man hurriedly. "He is as selfish and heartless as—his brother. I tell you again, I'll have nothing to do with this title or your father's money. I will make my own way with you by my side. I have a friend in London who would be only too glad to receive you until we could be married. You are leaving your home to-night, and you are as free as air to choose. Will you come?"

"Of course," he began again, in a different tone, as she still kept silent, "it may be that I have misunderstood. I thought that you had learnt to care for me. But if you dislike me——"

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"Do not say that," she replied, turning a deeply wounded face towards him. "It is not that—do not think so. You have been kind and good to me. and I —I shall never forget you. But I—I have a contempt for myself."

"I have a contempt for myself also after this afternoon," he retorted. "Come, Sisily——"

"No, it is impossible. Hark, what was that?" The girl spoke with a sudden uplifting of her head. Above them, from the direction of the house, the sound of a voice was heard.

"It is Aunt calling me," she said, "I must go. Goodbye."

"Is it good-bye, then?"

"It must be. But I shall often think of you."

He had the unforgettable sensation of two soft burning lips touching the hand which hung at his side, and turned swiftly—but too late. She was speeding along the rocky pathway which led to the house.

"Wait, Sisily!" he cried.

A seabird's mournful cry was the only answer. He glanced irresolutely towards the path, and then retraced his steps towards the edge of the cliffs.

A cold sun dipped suddenly, as though pulled down by a stealthy invisible hand. The twilight deepened, and in the lengthening shadows the rocks assumed crouching menacing shapes which seemed to watch the solitary figure standing near the edge, lost in thought.

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CHAPTER V

THROUGH the flowers on the hotel dining-table Mrs. Pendleton was able to watch her niece unnoticed, because the flowers occupied such an unreasonably large space on the little round table set for three. Besides, Sisily had been engrossed in her own thoughts throughout the meal. Mrs. Pendleton was disturbed by her quietness. There was something unnatural about it—something not girlish. She had not spoken once during the drive from Flint House to Penzance, and she sat through dinner with a still white face, silent, and hardly eating anything.

Mrs. Pendleton supposed Sisily was fretting over her mother, but she did not understand a girl whose grief took the form of silence and stillness. She would have preferred a niece who would have sobbed out her grief on her shoulder, been reasonably comforted, and eaten a good dinner afterwards. But Sisily was not that kind of girl. She was strange and unapproachable. There was something almost repellent in her reserve, something in her dark preoccupied gaze which made Mrs. Pendleton feel quite nervous, and unfeignedly relieved when Sisily had asked to be allowed to go to her room immediately the meal was concluded.

As she sat at the table, reviewing the events of the afternoon, after the girl had taken her departure, Mrs. Pendleton regretted that she had consented to take charge of Sisily. She flattered herself that she was sufficiently modern not to care a row of pins for the stigma on the girl's birth, but there were awkward circumstances, and not the least of them was her own rash promise to break the news to Sisily that she was

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illegitimate. That disclosure was not likely to help their future relations together. Mrs. Pendleton reflected that she knew very little about her niece, whom she had not seen since she was a small girl, but the recollection of her set face and tragic eyes at the dinner table impelled prompt recognition of the fact that she was going to be difficult to manage.

But there was more than that. With a feeling of dismay Mrs. Pendleton's mind awoke to a belated realization of the scandal which would fasten on Sisily and her birth if Robert succeeded in establishing his claim to the title. A peer of the realm with an illegitimate, disinherited daughter! The story would be pounced upon by a sensational press, avid for precisely such topics. In imagination Mrs. Pendleton saw the flaming headlines, the photographs, and the highly spiced reports in which every detail of her brother's private life was laid bare for a million curious eyes.

Such an exposure was too terrible to be faced. Mrs. Pendleton saw her own comfortable life affected by it; saw her position in her small social circle shaken and overwhelmed by the clamour of notoriety. She saw herself the focus of the malicious tea-table gossip of all her friends. Decidedly, it would not do.

She did her brother the justice to realize that he had overlooked the public effect of the disclosure of his painful domestic secret as completely as she had. He had forgotten that his accession to the peerage would make him, as it were, a public figure, and the glamour which the newspapers would throw over his lifelong quest would invest every act of his life with a publicity from which he could not hope to escape. If he had foreseen this, he would have made some other arrangement for his daughter's future, not for the girl's sake, but for the honour of the famous old name of which he was so fanatically proud.

The question remained, what was to be done? Rob-

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ert would have to be told, of course. Mrs. Pendleton's first impulse was to retract her promise to take charge of Sisily, and wash her hands of the whole affair. Then she thought of the money, and wavered. Robert had made her a generous offer, and the money would have helped so much! She had already planned the spending of the cheque he had given her that afternoon. She had thought of a new suite of drawing-room furniture, and bedroom carpets. She had a vision of a small motor-car, later on.

As she pondered over the situation she thought she saw a way out—a way so simple and practical that she was astonished that it had not occurred to her before.

Mrs. Pendleton was a woman of decision and prompt of action when she made up her mind. Her mind was made up now. She glanced across the table at her husband. "Joseph!" she said.

Mr. Pendleton, hidden behind the sheets of a newspaper just arrived from London, had the temerity not to hear. He was in a grumpy mood, arising, in the first instance, from having been dragged away from his business and his club to Cornwall. It was nothing to him that he was in the Land of Lyonesse. His brief impression of the Duchy was that it was all rocks, and that Penzance was a dull town without a proper sea-front, swarming with rascally shopkeepers who tried to sell serpentine match-boxes at the price of gold ones, and provided with hotels where dull tourists submitted to a daily diet of Cornish pasties and pollock under the delusion that they were taking in local colour in the process. Mr. Pendleton's stomach resented his own rash deglutition of these dainties, and in consequence he was suffering too much with acute indigestion to think of the compensation he would gain at next year's Academy by standing with a bragging knowing air before pictures of the Cornish coast, expatiating to his bored acquaintances (who had never been to

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Cornwall) on their lack of merit compared with the real thing. Like most husbands, Mr. Pendleton had been able to reach the conclusion that the real cause of his bodily and mental discomfort was his wife, so he maintained a sulky silence behind the pages of his newspaper.

With that lack of ceremony which the familiarity of marriage engenders in the female breast, his wife leant across the table and plucked the paper from his hand.

"Listen to me, Joseph," she said, "I want to talk to you."

Lacking the newspaper screen, Mr. Pendleton's rebellious tendencies instantly evaporated beneath his wife's searching eye.

"Yes, my dear," he replied meekly. "What about?"

"About Sisily. Did you notice that she did not speak a word during dinner?"

"Perhaps she was overcome with grief, my dear."

"Nonsense! Grief does not make a woman speechless. She's one of the dumb sort of girls. I always mistrust a girl who hasn't plenty to say for herself."

"Well, you know, my dear, she has had a strange sort of life. She hasn't had the educational advantages of other young women"—Mr. Pendleton was going to add "in her station of life," but a timely recollection of the afternoon's disclosures caused him to substitute: "with wealthy fathers."

"Robert has neglected his duty to her shamefully. I've been thinking it all over, and I'm half sorry now that I consented to take charge of her."

"Then why do it?" said her husband placidly.

"It's the scandal I fear," rejoined his wife, pursuing her own thought. "There's bound to be a lot of talk and newspaper publicity when Robert comes into the title. It would be much better to keep this quiet, after all these years. There is really no occasion for it, if

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Robert will only listen to reason. Robert wishes to avoid future trouble and complications about the succession. That could be arranged by getting Sisily to sign some agreement renouncing all claim on the title."

"I doubt if such a document would be legal, my dear," said her husband dubiously.

"That wouldn't matter in the least," replied Mrs. Pendleton, with a woman's contempt for the law. "It would be purely a family arrangement. Sisily could be assured by somebody in whom she has reliance—not her father, of course—that there was some legal reason why she could not succeed. I do not think there would be any trouble with her. She does not look the kind of girl to delight in a title and a lot of money. Robert would have to settle a handsome allowance on the poor child—indeed, it is the very least he can do! If Robert agreed to this course there would be no need to blurt out the brutal truth, and I would take Sisily under my charge."

Mr. Pendleton saw several objections to his wife's plan, but he had long learnt the futility of domestic argument—on the husband's side at least. "How much do you consider your brother ought to allow Sisily?" he asked.

"Two thousand a year. Robert can well afford it."

"Do you think your brother Austin would agree?"

"Of course he wouldn't. Austin is horribly selfish. He wouldn't give Sisily a penny if he had his way, now that he knows the truth. But I don't intend to consult Austin in the matter. I thought of asking Dr. Ravenshaw to go with me and try and influence Robert. Robert trusts him implicitly, and he seems to have a great deal of influence with him. I feel sure he would do his utmost to bring Robert to listen to reason. Do you not think my plan a good one?"

In the secret depth of his heart Mr. Pendleton did

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not, but with the moral cowardice of a husband he forebore from saying so. "It might be tried," he feebly muttered.

"Very well, we will try it, then," said his wife, rising from her seat as she spoke. "Go and order that motor-car we had this afternoon while I get ready."

Mr. Pendleton was accustomed to his wife's energetic way of doing things on the spur of the moment, but he had never become used to it. "Do you intend to go and see your brother to-night?" he said, with an air of surprise.

"Why not?"

Mr. Pendleton sought for a reason, but could find none. "It's rather late, isn't it?" he suggested.

"Nonsense!" Mrs. Pendleton glanced at her wrist watch. "It's not much past eight."

"Why not leave it until the morning?" said her husband, with a lingering glance at the cheery glow of the log-fire in the lounge. "It's a beast of a night to be out. Hark to the wind!"

"If it is to be settled, it must be settled to-night," said Mrs. Pendleton decisively. "There'll be no time in the morning for anything, if we are to catch the ten o'clock train for London. Beside, Austin would see us if we went there in daylight, and I do not want him to know anything about it—he would only try and put obstacles in our way."

"What about Sisily?"

"She will be quite all right in her room. She looked tired out, and needs a good night's rest. You had better see about the car at once."

Mr. Pendleton said no more, and his wife bustled away to put on her outdoor things. When she descended from her room her husband was awaiting her in the lounge, and the head-light of the hired motor-car gleamed in the darkness outside.

They set out through the narrow uneven streets,

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which smelt strongly of mackerel and pitch. In a few minutes the car was clear of the town, and running at an increased pace through the gusty darkness of the moors.

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CHAPTER VI

WITH a face grimly immobile as the carved head of a heathen god, Thalassa stood at the front door watching the departure of Sisily and her aunt until the car was lost to sight in a dip of the moors. Then with a glance at the leaping water at the foot of the cliffs, grey and mysterious in the gloaming, he turned and went inside the house.

It was his evening duty to prepare the lamps which lighted up the old house on the cliffs. Sisily generally helped him in that tedious duty, but she was gone, and for the future he must do it alone.

The lamps were kept in a little lowbrowed room off the stone kitchen. There Thalassa betook himself. Robert Turold disliked the dark, and a great array of lamps awaited him: large ones for the rooms, small ones for the passages and staircase. Thalassa set to work with a will, filling them with oil, trimming the wicks, and polishing the glasses with a piece of chamois leather.

As he filled and trimmed and polished he sang to himself an old sea song:

"The devil and me, we went away to sea,
In the old brig 'Lizbeth-Jane'——"

His voice was gruff and harsh, and the melody, such as it was, did nothing to relax his expression, which remained grim and secret as ever.

Each lamp he lit as he finished it, and their gathered strength gushed in a flood of yellow light on his crafty brown face and deep-set eyes. He placed several of the

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lamps on a tray, carefully lowered the wicks, and carried them to their allotted places, returning for others until only half a dozen small lamps remained. These he gathered on the tray and took upstairs.

Night had fallen; the wind was rising without, and seemed to rustle and whistle in the draughty passages of the old house. Thalassa placed one lamp at the head of the stairs, and others in the niches of the passage, where they flickered feebly and diffused a feeble light. Halfway down the passage he paused before a closed door. It was the room in which Sisily's mother had died. With an expressionless face he went in and left the last lamp burning dimly on the mantelpiece, like a votary candle on an altar of the dead. Issuing forth again he cast a look around him and walked to Robert Turold's study at the end of the passage. The door was closed, but he opened it and entered.

Robert Turold was busily engaged writing at a large table by the light of a swinging lamp. He looked up from his papers as Thalassa entered, and thoughtfully watched him as he trimmed the lamp and tended the fire. With these duties completed Thalassa still lingered, as though he expected his master to speak.

"What's the glass like to-night, Thalassa?" remarked Robert Turold absently.

The allusion was to a weather glass which hung in the hall downstairs. As a topic of conversation it was as useful to master and servant as the weather is to most English people. That is to say, it helped them when they were wordbound.

"Going down fast," replied Thalassa.

"Then I suppose we are in for another rough night."

"The glass is always going down in Cornwall, and we are always in for another rough night," responded the servitor curtly. "Are you going to stay much longer in the forsaken hole?"

"Not much longer," replied his master in a mild tone.

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"It is, perhaps, a dreary spot to you, but not to me—no, never to me. The last link in my long search has been found here—hidden away in this little out-of-the-way Cornish place. Think of that, Thalassa! I shall be Lord Turrald."

"I don't see what good it will do you," retorted the man austerely. "You've spent a mint of money over it. I suppose that's your own affair, though. But what's to come next? That's what I want to know."

"When I leave Cornwall——"

"You mean we, don't you?" Thalassa interrupted.

"Of course I mean you as well as myself," Robert Turold replied almost humbly. "I should be sorry to part with you, Thalassa, you must be well aware of that. It is my intention to purchase a portion of the family estate at Great Missenden, which is at present in the market, and spend the remainder of my life in the place which once belonged to my ancestors. That has been the dream of my life, and I shall soon be able to carry it out."

A silence fell between them upon this statement, and Robert Turold's eyes turned towards his papers again. But Thalassa stood watching him, as though he had something on his mind still. He brought it out abruptly—

"And what about your daughter?"

"My daughter is going to London with my sister for a prolonged visit," said Robert Turold hurriedly. "She needs womanly training and other advantages which I, in my preoccupations, have been unable to bestow upon her. It is greatly to her advantage to go."

Robert Turold gave this explanation with averted face, in a tone which sounded almost apologetic. The relative positions between them seemed curiously reversed. It was as though Thalassa were the master, and the other the man.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" Thalassa turned a cautious

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yet penetrating eye upon his master. "Well, she's your own daughter, so I suppose you know what's the best for her." He spoke indifferently, but there was an odd note in his voice. He picked up his tray, and carelessly added: "For my part I shall be glad to get out of Cornwall. It's a savage place, only fit for savages and seagulls. There's the wind rising again."

A violent gust shook the house, and rattled the window-panes of the room. It was the eyrie in which the deceased artist had painted his pictures, with two large windows which looked over the cliff. Again the gale sprang at the house, and smote the windows with spectral blows. Downstairs, a door slammed sharply.

"Damn the wind!" exclaimed Thalassa peevishly. "There's no keeping it out. I'm going downstairs to lock up now. You'll have your supper up here, I suppose?"

"Yes. I have a lot of work to do before I go to bed."

Thalassa left the room without further speech, and Robert Turold began rummaging among his papers with a hand which trembled slightly. The table was littered with parchments, old books, and some sheets of newly written foolscap. He picked up his pen and plunged it into a brass inkstand, then paused in thought. His face was perturbed and uneasy. It may be that he was reviewing the events of the day, wondering, perhaps, whether he had paid too high a price for the attainment of his ambition. For it he had sacrificed his daughter and the woman who now slept in the churchyard near by, indifferent to it all. Nothing could restore to him the secret he had divulged that afternoon.

A shade of apprehension deepened on his downcast face. Then he frowned impatiently, and plunged into his writing again.

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CHAPTER VII

ON leaving his master's room Thalassa went swiftly downstairs and disappeared into some remote back region of the lonely old house. He had other duties to perform before his day's work was finished. There was wood to be chopped, coal to be brought in, water to be drawn. Nearly an hour elapsed before he reappeared, candle in hand, and entered the kitchen.

A little woman with a furtive face, sharp nose, and blinking eyes was seated at one end of the kitchen table with playing-cards spread out in front of her. She looked up at the sound of the opening door, and fear crept into her eyes. She was Thalassa's wife, but the relationship was so completely ignored by Thalassa that other people were apt to forget its existence. The couple did the work of Flint House between them, but apart from that common interest Thalassa gave his wife very little of his attention, leading a solitary morose life, eating and sleeping alone, and holding no converse with her apart from what was necessary for the management of the house.

How he had ever come to bend his neck to the matrimonial yoke was one of those mysteries which must be accounted a triumph for the pursuing sex—a tribute to the fearlessness of woman in the ardour of the chase. On no other hypothesis was it possible to understand how such a feeble specimen of womanhood had been able to bring down such an untoward specimen of the masculine brute. Outwardly, Thalassa had more kinship with a pirate than a husband. There was that in his swart eagle visage and moody eyes which sug-

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gested lawless cruises, untrammelled adventure, and the fierce wooing of brown women by tropic seas rather than the dull routine of married life. As a husband he was an anomaly like a caged macaw in a spinster's drawing-room.

Mrs. Thalassa's victory had ended with bringing him down, and she soon had cause to regret her temerity in marrying him. Thalassa repaid the indignity of capture by a course of treatment which had long since subdued his wife to a state of perpetual fear of him—a fear which deepened into speechless shaking horror when he stormed out at her in one of his black rages. Some women would have taken to drink, others to religion. Mrs. Thalassa sought consolation in two packs of diminutive and dog-eared cards. Her shattered spirit found something inexpressibly soothing in the intricacies of patience: in the patchwork of colour, the array of sequences, the sudden discovery of an overlooked move, the dear triumph of a hard-won game.

It was thus she was occupied now, shuffling, cutting, and laying out her rows with quick nervous movements of her worn little hands. She glanced once more at her husband as he entered, and then bent over her cards again.

The night had descended blackly, and the wind moaned eerily round the old house. Thalassa sat in a straight-backed wooden chair listening to the wind and rain raging outside, and occasionally glancing at his wife, who remained absorbed in her patience. Half an hour passed in silence, broken only by the rattling of rain on the window, and the loud ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece. Suddenly the bell of Robert Turold's room rang loudly in its place behind the kitchen door.

It was one of the old wired bells, and it sprang backwards and forwards so violently under the impulse of the unseen pull that the other bells ranged alongside responded to the vibration by oscillating in sympathy.

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Thalassa watched them moodily until the sound ceased. He then left the kitchen with deliberate tread, and stalked upstairs.

The door of his master's study was closed. He opened it without troubling to knock, but started back in astonishment at the sight which met his eyes. Robert Turold was crouching by the table like a beaten dog, whimpering and shaking with fear. He sprang to his feet as Thalassa entered, and advanced towards him.

"Thank God you've come, Thalassa," he cried.

"What's the matter with you?" said Thalassa sternly.

"He's come back, Thalassa—he's come back."

"He? Who?"

"You know whom I mean well enough. It was——" His voice sank suddenly, and he whispered a name in the man's ear.

Thalassa's brown cheek paled slightly, but he answered quickly and roughly—

"What nonsense are you talking now? How can he have come back? How often must I tell you that he is dead?"

"You mean that you thought he was dead, Thalassa. But he is alive."

"How do you know?"

"I heard him."

"Heard him! What do you mean?"

"I heard his footsteps pattering around the house, as clear and distinct as that night on that hellish island. Shall I ever forget the sound of his footsteps then, as he raced over the rocks, looking back at us with his wild eyes, and the blood streaming down his face—running and running until he stumbled and fell? The sound of his running footsteps as he clattered over the rocks have haunted me day and night ever since. I heard them again to-night."

"I tell you again that he is dead. What! Do you

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think that you could hear footsteps on a night like this?" The man stepped quickly across to the nearest window and flung it open. The room was filled with rushing wind, and the window curtains flapped noisily. "And where would he be running to? Do you suppose he could climb up here from outside?"

"It might have been his spirit," murmured the other.

"Spirits don't cross the ocean, and their footsteps don't clatter," responded Thalassa coldly. "The house is all locked up, and there is no other house near by. Come, what are you afraid of? You are worrying and upsetting yourself over nothing. I'll bring you up your supper, and some whisky with it. And the sooner you leave this cursed hole of a place, the better it will be."

He crossed over to the fireplace and poked the coal into a red glow, and then turned to leave the room. It was plain that his words had some effect on Robert Turold, and he made an effort to restore his dignity before the witness of his humiliation left him.

"No doubt you are right, Thalassa," he said in his usual tone. "My nerves are a little overstrung, I fancy. You said the house was locked up for the night, I think?"

"Everything bolted and barred," said Thalassa, and left the room.

He returned downstairs to the kitchen, where he wandered restlessly about, occasionally pausing to look out of the window into the darkness of the night. The rain had ceased, but the wind blew fiercely, and the sea thundered at the foot of the cliffs. The gloom outside was thinning, and as Thalassa glanced out his eye lighted on a strange shape among the rocks. To his imagination it appeared to have something of the semblance of a man's form standing motionless, watching the house.

Thalassa remained near the window staring out at the object. While he stood thus, a faint sound reached

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him in the stillness. It was the muffled yet insistent tap of somebody apparently anxious to attract attention without making too much noise, and coming, as it seemed, from the front door. Thalassa glanced at his wife, but she appeared to have heard nothing, and her grey head was bent over her cards. He walked noiselessly out of the kitchen, closing the door gently behind him.

His wife remained at the table, unconscious of everything but the lay of her cards; shuffling, dealing, setting them out afresh in perpendicular rows, muttering at the obstinacy of the kings and queens as though their painted faces were alive and sensitive to her reproof. The old house creaked and groaned in the wind, then became suddenly silent, like a man overtaken by sleep in the midst of stretching and yawning. Time sped on. Thalassa did not return, but she did not notice his absence. More rain fell, beating against the window importunately, as if begging admission, then ceased all at once, as at a hidden command, and again there was a profound silence.

A piece of coal jumped from the fire with a hissing noise, and fell at Mrs. Thalassa's feet. She got up to replace it, and observed that she was alone.

She thought she heard her husband's footsteps in the passage, and opened the door. But there was nobody there. The lower part of the house was gloomy and dark, but she could see the lamp glimmering on the hall stand. She was about to return to her seat when the hall lamp suddenly mooned up, cast monstrous shadows, and went black out.

This fantastic trick of the lamp frightened her. What had made it flare up like that and go out? And whose footsteps had she heard? With a chill feeling of fear she shut the door and turned again to her game. But for once the charm of the cards failed her. Where was Jasper, and why did he not return? Silence held

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oppressive empire; her fears plucked at her like ghostly hands. The lamp and the footstep—what did they mean? Had she really heard a footstep?

She thought she saw something white in the uncurtained space of the window. She buried her face in her hands, lacking the courage to cross the room and pull down the blind.

Mysterious noises overhead, like somebody creeping on all-fours, drew her eyes back to the door opening into the passage. With dismay she saw it was not properly shut. She wondered if she dared go and lock it. Suppose it was her husband, after all? And the noises? Were they real, or had she imagined them?

There came to her ear an unmistakable sound like the slamming of a door above her. A sudden accession in the quality of her fear sent her flying to the passage door to lock it. Before she could get there the door flew open violently, as though hit by a giant's hand, and then the wind blew coldly on her face. The lamp on the kitchen table sent up a straight tongue of flame in the draught, and also went out. As she stood there with straining eyes a cry rang out overhead, followed in a space immeasurable to the listener in the gulf of blackness, by a shattering sound which seemed to shake the house to its foundations. Then the external blackness entered her own soul, shrouding her consciousness like the sudden swift fall of a curtain.

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CHAPTER VIII

IT seemed a long wild journey in the dark, but actually only half an hour passed before the car emerged from the wind and rain of the moors into the dimly-lighted stone street of the churchtown. A few minutes later the car stopped, and the driver informed Mr. and Mrs. Pendleton in a Cornish drawl that they had reached Dr. Ravenshaw's.

Husband and wife emerged from the car and discerned a square stone house lying back from the road behind a white fence. They walked up the path from the gate and rang the bell.

A rugged and freckled servant lass answered the ring, and stared hard at the visitors from a pair of Cornish brown eyes. On learning their names she conducted them into a small room off the hall and departed to inform the doctor of their arrival.

Dr. Ravenshaw came in immediately. The quick glance he bestowed upon his visitors expressed surprise, but he merely invited them to be seated and waited for them to explain the object of their late visit. The room into which they had been shown was his consulting room, furnished in the simplest fashion—almost shabbily. There were chairs and table and a couch, a small stand for a pile of magazines, a bookcase containing some medical works, and a sprawling hare's-foot fern in a large flowerpot by the window. Mr. Pendleton seated himself near the fern, examining it as though it was a botanical rarity, and left his wife to undertake the conversation. Mrs. Pendleton was accustomed to take the lead, and immediately commenced—

"I have taken the liberty of coming to ask your

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advice about my niece, doctor. You heard what my brother said this afternoon?"

Dr. Ravenshaw inclined his head without speaking, and waited for her to continue.

"As you are a friend of my brother's——"

"Hardly a friend," he interrupted, with a gesture of dissent. "Our acquaintance is really too short to warrant that term."

There was a professional formality about his tone which pulled her up short. Like all impulsive people she was chilled by a lack of responsiveness. Her impulse in visiting him had hoped for an interest equalling her own. She reflected now that she should have remembered that nobody liked being bothered with other people's affairs. She recovered her feminine assurance and went on, with a winning smile.

"But you are in my brother's confidence, doctor—you were present at our family gathering this afternoon. It is because of that I have come to see you again at this late hour. My husband and I are returning to London in the morning, and there would be no other opportunity. I have been thinking over all my brother said this afternoon, and I am very much distressed about my niece."

He gave a short comprehending nod which encouraged her to proceed.

"I am extremely desirous of preventing this scandal of my brother's marriage coming to light after all these years," she earnestly pursued. "It seems to me that Robert has decided to let the truth be known without first considering all the circumstances. He has forgotten that if he succeeds in restoring the title he will come prominently into the public eye. As the holder of a famous name his affairs will have a public interest, and details will be published in the newspapers and eagerly read. That is why this story about Sisily's

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mother would be so terrible for all of us, and especially for Sisily."

"I should think your brother had foreseen all this," said Dr. Ravenshaw, after a short pause.

"I do not think Robert has realized it," Mrs. Pendleton eagerly rejoined. "He is a most unworldly man, and lives in a world of his own. His whole life has been devoted to the idea of restoring the title. He has thought of nothing else since he was a boy. He is quite incapable of understanding what a sensation this story of an earlier marriage will cause if it is made public. Indeed, I did not realize it myself until afterwards. Then I decided to come and see you, and ask your help."

"I quite agree with you that it would be better if the story could remain unknown, after all these years. But how can I help you?"

She had anticipated that question, and proceeded to unfold her plan.

"It might be kept quiet, I think," she said meditatively. "It is Robert's duty to keep it secret for Sisily's sake. I am chiefly concerned about her. Girls are difficult, so different from boys! It wouldn't be so bad if she were a boy. A boy could change his name and emigrate, go on a ranch and forget all about it. But it is different for a girl. Leaving the shock out of the question, this thing would spoil Sisily's life and ruin her chances of a good marriage if it was allowed to come out. People will talk. It is inevitable that they should, in the circumstances. I fancy the matter could be arranged in a way to satisfy Robert—so as not to interfere with his plans about the title."

"What do you suggest?"

"Sisily could be told that there is some obstacle which prevents her succeeding to the title. Robert has not brought her up as an heiress with expectations. He

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has never treated her fairly, poor girl. It was his dream to have a son to succeed him. Not that it would have made any difference if Sisily had been a son, after what's come to light! Sisily would never question anything that was told her about this wretched title, for I'm quite sure that the idea of inheriting it has never entered her head. It certainly never entered mine. I thought titles descended in the male line. I don't know, really, but that has always been my idea."

"It depends on the terms of the original creation. The Turrald barony originally went into abeyance among several daughters. One daughter could have succeeded. There is nothing in the wording of the original writ to prevent it—no limitation to male heirs. It is now well established by precedent that a daughter can inherit a barony by writ. But for the unhappy obstacle revealed by your brother's story, his daughter would undoubtedly have succeeded to the restored title on his death."

"I'm sure it's very good of you to explain it to me," murmured Mrs. Pendleton, in some confusion of mind. "It sounds quite reasonable, too. A woman can inherit the throne of England, so why not a title? But it never occurred to me before. Sisily, of course, cannot succeed to my brother's title because of her birth. But is there any need for this to be known? Could she not sign a paper renouncing her rights in return for a share of my brother's fortune?"

"I doubt if the law would approve of the arrangement if it became known."

"The law should realize that it was done from the best of motives to keep from an innocent girl a secret which would darken her life," responded Mrs. Pendleton with decision.

"I wasn't looking at it altogether in that light," replied Dr. Ravenshaw with a slow shake of the head.

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"But it might have been tried—oh yes, it might have been tried." He rose from his chair, and paced thoughtfully up and down the room.

"Is it too late to try it now?" she asked.

He looked at her thoughtfully.

"In what way?"

"By trying to persuade my brother to change his mind."

"He is not likely to change his mind."

"That," responded Mrs. Pendleton, "remains to be put to the test. I intend to see him to-night, before it is too late. I beg you for Sisily's sake to come with me and try and persuade him."

"Such a request as you propose to make should come only from a member of the family," replied Dr. Ravenshaw. "It is a matter in which I would rather not be involved. If you wish support, I would remind you that there are two other members of your own family—your other brother and his son—staying temporarily in this churchtown, not far from here. Why not go to them?"

With a charmingly feminine gesture Mrs. Pendleton washed her hands of the other members of the family. "I would not dream of going to Austin," she said in decided tones. "He would not approve of my plan, nor, indeed, would Robert listen to him if he did. But he would listen to you, I feel sure. That is my reason for coming to you." She rose from her seat, and sought to shepherd him into compliance by approaching him with a propitiatory smile. "Do come, doctor. I have trespassed too much on your kindness already, but oblige me further in this."

"It's rather late for a visit," he replied.

"It's only half-past nine," she said, with a glance at her wrist watch. "My brother sits up till all hours over his papers and books. I will take all responsibility upon myself for the visit. I will tell Robert that I

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literally had to drag you with me, and he will understand that we simply had to see him to-night, as he knows we are going home to London first thing in the morning. Do come, Dr. Ravenshaw. The car is waiting."

He consulted his own watch.

"Very well, Mrs. Pendleton," he assented. "I will accompany you. Please excuse me while I get my coat."

He rejoined them in a moment or two, and they proceeded outside to the waiting car.

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CHAPTER IX

A FEW minutes later the car stopped in the gloom outside the old house on the cliffs. The storm had passed, but the sea still raged white beneath an inky sky. A faint gleam from a shuttered front window pointed a finger of light to the gravel path which led to the front door.

Mrs. Pendleton knocked, and an answer came quickly. The door was partly opened, and Thalassa's voice from within parleyed: "Who's there?"

"Mrs. Pendleton—your master's sister," was the reply. "Let us in, Thalassa."

The door was at once opened wide, and Thalassa stood back for them to enter. By the light of the lamp he carried they saw that he was dressed and coated for a journey, with his hat on.

"I'm glad you've come," he said to Dr. Ravenshaw. "It's you I was just going out to fetch."

There was something strange in his manner, and the doctor looked at him quickly. "What's the matter with you, man? Is there anything wrong?"

"That's what I don't know. But I'm afeered, yes, by God, I'm afeered."

His voice broke hoarsely, and he stood before them with his eyes averted from the three wondering faces regarding him. Mrs. Pendleton stepped quickly forward, and grasped his arm.

"What is it, Thalassa? Has anything happened to my brother?"

"There's been a great noise in his room, like as if something heavy had crashed down, then silence like the grave. I went up and called—an' tried to open the door, but I couldn't."

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"Why didn't you try to break in the door?" said Dr. Ravenshaw.

"Tweren't my place," was the dogged retort. "I know my place. I was just going to St. Fair for you and his brother."

"How long is it since this happened—since you heard the crash, I mean."

"Not many minutes agone. Just before you came to the door."

"Light us upstairs at once, Thalassa," said Mrs. Pendleton sharply.

"Mrs. Pendleton, will you wait downstairs while we investigate?" suggested Dr. Ravenshaw.

"No," she resolutely answered. "I will come with you, doctor. Robert may need me. Do not let us waste any more time."

She slipped past him to Thalassa, who was mounting the stairs. Dr. Ravenshaw hurried after her. Mr. Pendleton, with an obvious call on his courage, followed last. The lamp in Thalassa's hand burnt unsteadily, first flaming angrily, then flickering to a glimmer which brought them to a pause, one above the other on the stairs, listening intently, and looking into the darkness above.

"His bedroom is open and empty," said Thalassa when they had reached the end of the passage above. "See!" He pointed to the gaping door, and then turned to the closed one opposite. "He's in here." His voice sank to a whisper. "It was from here the noise came."

He placed the lamp on the floor, and knocked hesitatingly on the dark panel of the closed door, then again more loudly, but there was no reply. Far beneath them they could hear the solemn roar of the sea dashing against the cliffs, but there was no sound in the closed chamber. Its stillness and hush seemed intensified by the clamour of the sea, as though calamity were brooding in the darkness within.

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"Robert, Robert!" The high pitch of Mrs. Pendleton's voice shattered the quietude like the startling clang of an unexpected bell. "Knock again, Thalassa, more loudly, very loudly," she cried, in the shrill accents of tightened nerves.

Thalassa approached the door again, but recoiled swiftly. "God A'mighty!" he hoarsely exclaimed, pointing, "what's that?"

They followed the direction of his finger to the floor, and saw a sluggish thin dark trickle making its way underneath the door. Mr. Pendleton stooped and examined it, but rose immediately.

"There's been trouble in there," he said, with a pale face.

"How could anybody get in?" said Thalassa sullenly. "The door is locked from the inside, and it's two hundred feet from the windows to the bottom of the cliffs."

"Oh, for pity's sake stop talking and do something," cried Mrs. Pendleton hysterically. "My poor brother may be dying." She rattled the door-handle. "Robert, Robert, what is the matter? Let me in. It is I—Constance."

"We must break in the door," said Dr. Ravenshaw. "Stand away, Mrs. Pendleton, please. Now, Thalassa, both together."

The doctor and the servant put their shoulders to the door. Mr. Pendleton watched them with a white face, but did not go to their assistance. At the fourth effort there was a sound of splintering wood, the lock gave, and the door swung back.

They peered in. At first they could see nothing. The light of the swinging-lamp had been lowered, and the interior of the room was veiled in shadow. Then their eyes detected a dark outline on the floor between the table and the window—the figure of a man, lying athwart the carpet with arms outstretched, face down-

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wards, the spread finger-tips clutching at some heavy dark object between the head and the arms.

Thalassa stepped across the threshold, and with shaking hand turned up the lowered wick of the swinging lamp. The light revealed the stark form of Robert Turold. At this sight Mrs. Pendleton broke into a loud cry and essayed to cross the room to her brother's side.

"Keep back, Mrs. Pendleton!" cried Dr. Ravenshaw, interposing himself in front of her. "I begged of you not to come upstairs. Mr. Pendleton, take your wife away at once."

But Mr. Pendleton's timorous and inferior mind was incapable of translating the command into action. He could only stare dumbly before him.

"No, no! Let me stay, I will be calm," Mrs. Pendleton pleaded. "Is—is he dead, doctor?"

Dr. Ravenshaw crossed to the centre of the room and bent over the body, feeling the heart. Husband and wife watched him, huddled together, their white faces framed in the shadow of the doorway. In a moment he was on his feet again, advancing towards them.

"We can do no good here, Mrs. Pendleton," he said gently. "Your brother is dead."

"Dead? Robert dead!" Her startled eye sought his averted face, and her feminine intuition gathered that which he was seeking to withhold. "Do you mean that he has been killed?" she whimpered.

"I fear that there has been—an accident," he replied evasively. He stood in front of them in a way which obscured their view of the prone figure, and a small shining thing lying alongside, which he alone had seen. "Come," he said, in a professional manner, taking her by the arm. "Let me take you downstairs." He got her away from the threshold, and pulled the broken door to, shutting out the spectacle within.

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"Are you going to leave him there—like that?" whispered Mrs. Pendleton.

"It is necessary, till the police have seen him," he assured her. "We had better send Thalassa in the car to the churchtown. Go for Sergeant Pengowan, Thalassa, and tell him to come at once. And afterwards you had better call at Mr. Austin Turold's lodgings and tell him and his son. Hurry away with you, my man. Don't lose a moment!"

Thalassa hastened along the passage as though glad to get away. His heavy boots clattered down the staircase and along the empty hall. Then the front door banged with a crash.

The others followed more slowly, stepping gently in the presence of Death, past the little lamps, hardly bigger than fireflies, which flickered feebly in their alcoves. They went into the front room, where a table lamp gave forth a subdued light. Mrs. Pendleton turned up the wick and sank into a chair, covering her face with her hands.

It was the room where only that afternoon Robert Turold had unfolded the history of his life's quest: a large gloomy room with heavy old furniture, faded prints of the Cornish coast, and a whitefaced clock on the mantel-piece with a loud clucking tick. Dr. Ravenshaw knew the room well, but Robert Turold's sister had seen it for the first time that day, and the recollection of what had taken place there was so fresh in her memory that it brought a flood of tears.

"Poor Bob!" she sobbed. "He denied himself all his life for the sake of the title, and what's the good of it all—now?"

That was the only light in which she was able to see the tragedy in the first moment of the shock. Other thoughts and revelations about her brother's strange death were to come later, when her mind recovered its bearings. For the moment she was incapable of think-

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ing coherently. She was conscious only of the fact that her brother had been cut off in the very moment of success—before it, indeed; ere he had actually tasted the sweets of the ambition he had given all his years to gain.

Silence fell between them, broken only by the clucking of the whitefaced clock and the dreary sound of the wind outside, crying round the old house like a frightened woman in the dark. Nearly an hour passed before they heard the sound of a guarded knock at the front door. Dr. Ravenshaw went and opened it. Austin Turold was standing on the threshold.

"This is bad news, doctor," he said, stepping quickly inside. "I came ahead of the others—walked over. Thalassa is waiting at the churchtown for the sergeant, who is away on some official business, but expected back shortly. They may be here at any minute."

He spoke a little breathlessly, as though with running, and seemed anxious to talk. He went on—

"How did it happen? Tell me everything. I could get nothing out of Thalassa. He was detained at the police station for a considerable time, waiting for Pengowan, before he came to me with the news. He gave a great knock at the door of my lodgings like the thunder of doom, and when I got downstairs he blurted out that my brother was killed—shot—but not another word of explanation could I get out of him. What does it all mean?"

"I cannot say. Your sister and I reached the house just as Thalassa was about to leave it to seek my assistance. Your sister is in the sitting-room."

Austin Turold brushed past the doctor and opened the door of the lighted room. At his entrance Mrs. Pendleton sprang from her seat to greet him. Grief and horror were in her look, but surprise contended with other emotions in Austin's face. She kissed him with clinging hands on his shoulders.

"Oh, Austin," she cried, "Robert is dead—killed!"

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"The news has shocked me to the last degree," responded her brother. "What has happened? Did somebody send for you? Is that what brought you here?"

Mrs. Pendleton shook her head, embarrassed in her grief. She remembered that she wished to keep the object of her visit secret from her younger brother, and she could not very well disclose the truth then.

"Not exactly," she repied, a trifle incoherently. "I wanted to see Robert again before I returned to London in the morning. So we motored over after dinner, and found him—dead." Fresh tears broke from her.

Austin Turold wandered around the room quickly and nervously, then drew Dr. Ravenshaw to the door with a glance. "I should like to go upstairs before the police come," he whispered.

Dr. Ravenshaw nodded, and they went upstairs together. The shattered door creaked open to their touch, revealing the lighted interior and the dead man prone on the floor. Austin approached his brother's corpse, eyed it shudderingly, and turned away. Then he stooped to look at the small revolver lying alongside, but did not touch it. Again he bent over the corpse, this time with more composure in his glance.

The object on which the outstretched arms rested was an old Dutch hood clock, which had fallen or been dragged from a niche in the wall, and lay face uppermost, the glass case open and smashed, the hands stopped at the hour of half-past nine. It was a clock of the seventeenth century, of a design still to be found occasionally in old English houses. A landscape scene was painted in the arch above the dial, showing the moon above a wood, in a sky crowded with stars. The moon was depicted as a human face, with eyes which moved in response to the swing of the pendulum. But the pendulum was motionless, and the goggle eyes of the mechanism stared up almost reproachfully, as

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though calling upon the two men to rescue it from such an undignified position. At the bottom of the dial appeared the name of Jan Fromantel, the famous Dutch clockmaker, and underneath was an inscription in German lettering—

"Every tick that I do give
Cuts short the time you have to live.
Praise thy Maker, mend thy ways,
Till Death, the thief, shall steal thy days."

"Look at the blood!" said Austin Turold, pointing to a streak of blood on the large white dial. "How did it happen?"

"I know very little more than yourself. Your sister called at my house about an hour ago and asked me to accompany her here. She wished to see your brother on some private business, and she was very anxious that I should accompany her. Thalassa let us in, and said he was afraid that there was something wrong with his master. We came upstairs immediately, burst in the door, and found—this."

"Did Thalassa hear the shot?"

"He says not, only the crash."

"That would be the clock, of course. Was my brother quite dead when you found him?"

"Just dead. The body was quite warm."

"The door was locked from inside, I think you said."

"We found it locked."

"Then it must have been locked from inside," returned the other, who appeared to be pursuing some hidden train of thought. "But where's the key? I do not see it in the door. Oh, here it is!" He stooped swiftly and picked up a key from the floor. "Robert must have taken it out after locking the door."

"Perhaps it fell out when we were breaking in the door," observed the doctor.

"Of course. I forgot that. I notice that the clock

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is stopped at half-past nine." He bent down to examine it. "My brother kept private papers in the clock-case," he added. "Yes—it is as I thought. Here are some private documents, including his will. I had better take charge of them."

"Yes; I should if I were you," counselled his companion.

Austin rose to his feet and placed the papers in his pocket.

"It is plain to me—now—how it happened," he said. "Poor Robert must have shot himself, then tried to get his will from the clock-case when he fell, bringing down the clock with him."

"Is that what you think?" said Dr. Ravenshaw.

"I see no other way of looking at it," returned Austin rapidly. "The door was locked on the inside, and the room couldn't be reached from the window. This house stands almost on the edge of the cliff, which is nearly two hundred feet high. My feeling is that after my poor brother shot himself he remembered in his dying moments that his will was hidden in the clock-case and might not be found. He made a desperate effort to reach it and dragged it down as he fell."

The doctor listened attentively to this imaginary picture of Robert Turold's last moments.

"But why should he destroy himself?" he queried.

"Grief and remorse. Do you remember the disclosure he made to us this afternoon? It is a matter which might well have preyed upon his mind."

"I see," said the other thoughtfully. "Yes, perhaps you may be right."

Their conversation was interrupted by the sound of a loud knocking downstairs.

"That must be the police," observed Dr. Ravenshaw. "Let us go down."

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CHAPTER X

"WHY should Robert commit suicide?"

That was the burden of Mrs. Pendleton's cry, then and afterwards. There was an angry scene in the old cliff house between brother and sister before the events of that night were concluded. She utterly refused to accept Austin's theory that their brother, with his own hand, had discharged the revolver bullet which had put an end to his life and ambitions. Sitting bolt upright in indignant amazement, she rejected the idea in the sharpest scorn. It was nothing to her that the police sergeant from the churchtown shared her brother's view, and that Dr. Ravenshaw was passively acquiescent. She brushed aside the plausible web of circumstances with the impatient hand of an angry woman. They might talk till Doomsday, but they wouldn't convince her that Robert, of all men, had done anything so disgraceful as take his own life. Arguments and events, the locked door and the inaccessible windows—pathetically masculine insistence on mere details—were wasted on her. The marshalled array of facts made not the slightest impression on her firm belief that Robert had not shot himself.

Shaking a large finger of angry import at Austin, and addressing herself to him alone, she had said—

"Robert has been murdered, Austin, I feel sure. I don't care what you say, but if there's law in England I'll have his murderer discovered."

And with that conclusion she had indignantly left the house with her husband, leaving her brother to walk back to his lodgings at the churchtown in moody solitude across the rainy darkness of the moors.

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For herself, she returned to her hotel to pass a sleepless night, tossing by the side of her placidly unconscious husband as she passed the tragic events of the night in review and vainly sought for some clue to the mystery. The dreadful logic of the circumstances which pointed to suicide, hammered at her consciousness with deadening persistence, but she resolutely refused to give it entry. Why should Robert commit suicide? Why indeed? It was the question which had sprung to her lips when she first heard Austin's belief, and it was to that she now clung in the midst of her agonizing doubts, as though the mere wordless insistence in her mind made it an argument of negation which gathered force and cogency by frequent repetition.

But in the mass of teeming thoughts which crowded her brain in the silence of the small hours, she long and vainly sought for any other theory which would account for her brother's death. If he had been murdered, as in the first flush of her indignation she had declared, who had killed him? Who had gone to the lonely old house in the darkness of the night, and struck him down?

It was not until the first faint glimmering of dawn was pushing its grey way through the closed shutters that there came to her the recollection of an incident of the previous day which had left a deep mark upon her mind at the time, but had since been covered over by the throng of later tremendous events. It was the memory of that momentary glance of a pair of eyes through the slit of the door while her brother was telling of his daughter's illegitimacy and her mother's shame. In the light of Robert's subsequent death that incident appeared in a new sinister shape as a clue to the commission of the deed itself. With the recollection of that glance there sprang almost simultaneously before her mental vision the grim and forbidding features of her brother's servant, Thalassa.

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If she had been asked, Mrs. Pendleton could not have given a satisfactory reason for linking Thalassa with the incident of the eyes, but she was a woman, and not concerned about reasons. The two impressions had scurried swiftfooted, into her mind together, and there they remained. She was now convinced that she had all along believed it was Thalassa she had seen watching through the door, watching and listening for some fell purpose of his own. She knew nothing about Thalassa, but she had taken an instant dislike to him when she first saw him. That vague dislike now assumed the form of active suspicion against him. She determined, with the impulsiveness which was part of her temperament, to bring her suspicion before the police at the earliest possible moment.

She was essentially a woman of action, and in spite of her sleepless night she was up and dressed before her husband was awake. He came down to breakfast to find his wife had already finished hers, and was dressed ready to go out.

"Where is Sisily?" he asked, with a glance at the girl's vacant place.

"I've ordered her breakfast to be taken to her room, and sent word to her to rest in bed until I go to her," his wife replied. "I have a painful ordeal before me in breaking the news of Robert's death to her. It's all over the hotel already, unfortunately. Sisily is out of the way of gossip in her room. After I've seen her I shall leave her in your charge, Joseph. I shall have plenty on my hands to-day."

Mr. Pendleton received this mandate with a blank face, and momentarily regretted that the arrangements for their departure by the morning's train had been cancelled. Then his better nature asserted itself, and he meekly replied that he would do what he could. "What do you suggest?" he asked.

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"Take her for a walk," responded his wife. "Try and keep her interested and her mind occupied."

With these words she left the breakfast table and proceeded upstairs to Sisily's room before going out. On the way there she again regretted having undertaken the responsibility of her niece's future. She had not disturbed Sisily on the previous night. She had tried her door on her way to her own room, but it was locked, so she had let the girl sleep on, and deferred breaking the tragic news until the morning.

She now paused outside the door reluctantly. But she was not the woman to shrink from a duty because it was unpleasant, and womanly sympathy for her unhappy niece banished her diffidence. She knocked lightly and entered.

Sisily was seated by the window reading. A breakfast tray, still untouched, stood on a small table beside her. She put down her book as her aunt entered, and rose to greet her.

Mrs. Pendleton bent over the girl and kissed her, and took her hand. As she did so she observed that Sisily looked worn and fatigued, with black rings under her eyes, as though she, too, had passed a sleepless night. But she was wonderfully pretty, the elder woman thought, and nothing could rob her of the fresh charm of youth and beauty.

"Sit down, Sisily," she said, leading her back to her chair, and taking another one beside her. "I have sad news for you, dear, and you must be a brave girl. Something has happened to your father."

"What has happened?" asked Sisily quickly. Then, as if taking in the import of her aunt's tone, rather than her words, she added: "Do you mean that he is . . . dead?"

Mrs. Pendleton inclined her head with tears in her eyes. "It is worse even than that," she went on, her voice drooping to a whisper. "He . . . he has been killed.

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We found him last night. Listen, dear, I will tell you all."

She gave the cold fingers a comforting pressure as she spoke, but the hand was immediately withdrawn, and Sisily sprang away from her, then turned and regarded her with blazing eyes and a white face.

"Tell me about it!" she said.

Mrs. Pendleton imparted as much of the facts as she felt called upon to relate. There was something about the girl's reception of the news which puzzled her, and her own look fell before the sombre intensity of her gaze. Sisily heard the story in silence, and when it was finished, merely said—

"I think I would like to be left alone for a little while, if you don't mind."

"Oh, you mustn't sit here moping, my dear," said Mrs. Pendleton, with an attempt at cheerfulness which she felt to be clumsy and ill-timed, but Sisily's manner had momentarily disconcerted her. "You had better put on your hat and coat and go out with your uncle. He is waiting downstairs for you. It is very sad, very terrible, but you must let us help you bear it. You must not stay here alone."

"You are very kind"—the girl's lips quivered slightly, though her face remained calm—"but I would rather not go out. I should prefer to be left alone."

There was in her expression a despairing yet calm detachment and resolve which forced Mrs. Pendleton in spite of herself to yield to her wish with a meekness which was almost timidity.

"Very well, dear," she said. "If you feel like a walk later on, you will find your uncle downstairs."

As she left the room she heard the door shut behind her.

But Mrs. Pendleton had other things to think about that morning than the strangeness of her niece's disposition and the manner in which she had received the

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news of her father's death. The horror of that event filled her own thoughts to the exclusion of everything else, and she was determined to remain in Cornwall until the mystery was explained.

She glanced at her watch as she reached the bottom of the stairs. She had breakfasted early, and it still wanted a few minutes to ten o'clock. The lobby of the hotel was deserted, and through the glass doors leading to the breakfast-room she could see a few guests still at their morning meal. A porter was sweeping the front entrance, and of him she enquired the way to the police station, and set out for it.

It was chill and grey after the storm, with a sky obscured by scudding clouds, but a gleam of truant sunshine was sporting wantonly on the hoary castled summit of St. Michael's Mount, and promised to visit the town later on. Mrs. Pendleton walked briskly, and soon arrived at the police station.

A young constable in the office came forward as she entered and enquired her business. She disclosed her name, and her relationship with the inmate of Flint House, deeming that would be sufficient to gain her an interview with somebody in authority. In that expectation she was not disappointed. The constable favoured her with a good hard stare, went into another room, and reappeared to say that Inspector Dawfield would see her at once.

She followed him into the inner room, where a slight man of middle age was seated at a leather-covered table opening his morning correspondence. He looked up and bowed as he saw his visitor, but waited until the constable had retired before he spoke.

"Good morning," he said. "What can I do for you?"

His eye regarded her with a thoughtful glance. His professional interest had been aroused by the strange death of the occupant of Flint House, whose object in

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visiting Cornwall had been common gossip in the district for some time past.

"It is about my brother's death that I wished to see you." Mrs. Pendleton spoke earnestly, drawing her chair closer with the feeling that the man before her had sufficient intelligence to give her a sympathetic hearing.

"So I gathered from your card. It seems a very sad case. Sergeant Pengowan's report has just reached me. Anything I can do for you——" Inspector Dawfield pretended to occupy himself in cutting open an official envelope with scrupulous care.

"Sergeant Pengowan regards it as a case of suicide, does he not?" asked Mrs. Pendleton rigidly.

"Well, yes, I believe he does," replied Inspector Dawfield. "There is no doubt on that point, is there? Your brother's revolver was lying near him, and the door was locked on the inside."

"There is the greatest doubt in my mind," returned Mrs. Pendleton vehemently. "I do not—I cannot believe that my brother has taken his own life. In fact, I am sure he did not."

On hearing these words Inspector Dawfield looked at his visitor again, with something more than surprise in his eyes, then he pulled a document from a pigeonhole and hastily scanned it.

"Pengowan's report states quite definitely that it is suicide," he said as he replaced it. "In the face of that, do you think——"

"I think my brother has been murdered," she said in a decided voice.

"This is a very grave statement to make, Mrs. Pendleton. Have you anything to support it? Anything which has not been brought to light, I mean?"

Mrs. Pendleton proceeded to give her reasons. She had thought over what she was going to say as she came

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along, and she spoke with growing conviction, intensified by the sight of the earnest attentive face before her. The incident of the person she had detected looking through the door took on a new significance as she related it. By her constant association of the eyes with the disliked face of her brother's servant, she had unconsciously reached the conclusion that she had all along recognized the eavesdropper as Thalassa.

"You say your brother was talking about some family matters at the time?" asked Inspector Dawfield, as she related that part of her story.

"Yes," responded Mrs. Pendleton. She had repressed all mention of her brother's announcement of his daughter's illegitimacy, but afterwards she tried to persuade herself that it slipped her memory at the time.

"It's common enough for servants to listen at doors," remarked Inspector Dawfield. "In this case it may seem to have a sinister interpretation because of what happened afterwards. How long has this man been in your brother's employ?"

"A number of years, I believe," replied Mrs. Pendleton. "But he has a wicked face," she added hastily, as though that fact cancelled a record of lengthy service. "I took a dislike to him as soon as I saw him."

Inspector Dawfield veiled a slight smile with a sheet of foolscap. "Have you any other reason for suspecting him?"

"Oh, I wouldn't like to say that I suspect Thalassa, or anybody else." Mrs. Pendleton was prompt with this assurance. "But there are certain things which seem to me to need further investigation. There's the question of the door being locked on the inside. It seems to me that the door might have been locked on the outside, and the key dropped in there afterwards. The door had to be smashed before we could get in, and the key wasn't in the door then, you know."

Dawfield nodded thoughtfully. "Who has charge of

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the keys in your brother's house? This servant with the strange name—Thalassa, is it?"

"Yes, and he was upstairs in my brother's room last night, after we came down. And when we got there he was ready to go out, with his hat and coat on. It all seems very strange."

Again the courteous inspector hid a slight smile. His lady visitor might disclaim suspecting anybody, but her inferences carried her to the same point.

"What do you wish me to do?" he asked.

"I feel there should be further inquiries. Sergeant Pengowan does not strike me as the kind of man capable of bringing to light any mystery which may be hidden behind my brother's supposed suicide. He does not look at all intelligent. I thought of sending a telegram to Scotland Yard, but I decided to see you first."

The hint was not lost on Inspector Dawfield, but it was unnecessary. It was his duty to look into her complaint and make further inquiries into the case.

"Your statement shall certainly be investigated," he said emphatically. "I am rather short of men just now, but I'll see if I can get Bodmin to send over a man. I will inquire immediately, if you will excuse me."

He retired into a curtained recess in a corner of the room, where Mrs. Pendleton could see him holding a colloquy over the telephone. After rather a lengthy conversation he returned to announce that a detective was coming over by the next train to investigate the case.

"The Bodmin office is sending over Detective Barrant, of Scotland Yard," he explained. "He happens to be in Cornwall on another case, and was just on the point of returning to London. I was able to speak to him personally and relate the facts of your brother's death. He decided to telephone to Scotland Yard, and come over here at once. He will arrive soon after lunch. I will take him to Flint House myself. He

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may wish to see you later on. Will you be at your hotel?"

"If not, I will leave word where I can be found," replied Mrs. Pendleton, rising as she spoke. "Good morning, and thank you."

She left the police station feeling that she had accomplished an excellent morning's work, and hurried back to the hotel with visions of letters to be written and telegrams to be sent before lunch. But she was destined to do neither. As she entered the lounge, her eye fell upon its solitary occupant, a male figure in a grey lounge suit sitting in her favourite corner by the window. It was her brother Austin.

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CHAPTER XI

HE rose from his seat as he saw her, but waited for her to approach. Her eyes, dwelling on his face, noted that it was not so angry as she had last seen it, but smoothed into the semblance of sorrow and regret, with, however, something of the characteristic glance of irony which habitually distinguished him, though that may have been partly due to the pince-nez which glittered over his keen eyes. There was something of an art in Austin Turold's manner of wearing glasses; they tilted, superiorly, at the world in general at an acute angle on the high bridge of a supercilious nose, the eyes glancing through them downwards, as though from a great height, at a remote procession of humanity crawling far beneath.

At that moment, however, there was nothing superior in his bearing. It was so unwontedly subdued, so insistently meek, that it was to be understood that his mission was both conciliatory and propitiatory. That, at least, was the impression Mrs. Pendleton gathered as her brother informed her that he had been waiting nearly an hour to see her.

She reflected that he must have arrived shortly after she left the hotel to go to the police station, and she wondered what had induced her brother to rise at an hour so uncommonly early for him, in order to pay her a morning visit.

"I was up betimes," said Austin, as though reading her thought. "Sleep, of course, was impossible. Poor Robert!"

Mrs. Pendleton waited impatiently for him to disclose the real reason of an appearance which had more

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behind it, she felt sure, than to express condolences about their common bereavement. Of Robert she had always stood a little in awe, but she understood her younger brother better. As a boy she had seen through him and his pretensions, and he did not seem to her much changed since those days.

"I have been upset by our difference last night, Constance," he pursued. "It seems deplorable for us to have quarrelled—yes, actually quarrelled—over our poor brother's death."

His sister's face hardened instantly. "That wasn't my fault," she said distantly.

"You'll excuse me for saying that I think it was. You took an altogether wrong view of his—his death; a view which I hope you've seen fit to change after a night's reflection."

"You mean about Robert committing suicide?"

Austin inclined his head.

"I haven't changed my opinion in the slightest degree," she retorted. "I am still quite convinced that Robert did not commit suicide."

Austin darted an angry glance at her, but controlled himself with a visible effort. "Have you reflected what that implies?" he asked in a low tone.

"What does it imply?"

"Murder." He breathed the word with a hurried glance around him, as though apprehensive of being overheard, but the lounge was empty, and they were quite alone.

"I am aware of that."

"Then is it still your intention to go to the police with this terrible suspicion?" he asked, in a voice that trembled with agitation.

It was on the tip of Mrs. Pendleton's tongue to reply that she had already been to the police, but she decided to withhold that piece of information until she had heard all that her brother had to say.

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"Certainly," she replied.

"Then you must be mad," was his indignant rejoinder. "Have you considered the scandal this will entail upon us all?"

"Not half such a scandal as that Robert should be murdered and his family permit the crime to go unpunished."

"I do not think that you have given this matter sufficient consideration. It is for that reason I have come to see you this morning—before you take action which you may have reason to regret later on. I want you to think it over carefully, apart from a mere feminine prejudice against the possibility of a member of the family destroying himself. If you will listen to me I think that I shall be able to convince you that Robert, deplorable though it may seem, did actually commit suicide."

"What's the use of going through all this again?" said Mrs. Pendleton wearily. "Robert would not commit suicide."

"Suicide is always difficult to explain. Nobody can say what impels a man to it."

"Robert had no reason to put an end to his life. He had everything to live for—everything in front of him."

"You cannot say that a man bordering on sixty has everything in front of him. I know it's considered middle-aged in this misguided country, where people will never face the facts of life, but in simple truth Robert had finished with life to all intents and purposes."

"You won't say that when you come to sixty yourself, Austin. Robert was a great strong man, with years of activity before him. Besides, people don't kill themselves because they are growing old."

"I never suggested it. I was merely pointing out that Robert hadn't everything in front of him, to use your own phrase."

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"In any case he would not have killed himself," replied Mrs. Pendleton sharply. "Such a disgrace! He was the proudest of men, he would never have done it."

"You always hark back to that." There was faint irritation in Austin's tone.

"I really cannot get away from it, Austin. Can you conceive of any reason?"

"There was a reason in Robert's case. I did not mention it to you last night in the presence of the police sergeant, but I told Dr. Ravenshaw, and he is inclined to agree with me. Since then I have thought it over carefully, and I am convinced that I am right."

"What is the reason?"

"You recall the disclosure Robert made to us yesterday afternoon?"

"About his marriage and Sisily?"

"Yes. It must have been very painful to Robert, more painful than we imagine. It would come home to him later with stunning force—all that it implied, I mean. At the time Robert did not foresee all the consequences likely to ensue from it. It was likely to affect his claim for the title, because he was bound to make it known. When he came to think it over he must have realized that it would greatly prejudice his claim. A body like the House of Lords would do their utmost to avoid bestowing an ancient name on a man, who, by his own showing, lived with a married woman for twenty-five years, and had an illegitimate daughter by her. These are painful things to speak of, but they were bound to come out. My own feeling is that Robert had a bitter awakening to these facts when it was too late—when he had made the disclosure. And he may have felt remorse——"

"Remorse for what?"

"Remorse for giving the secret away and branding his daughter as illegitimate on the day that her mother

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was buried. It has an ugly look, Constance, there's no getting away from that."

He lapsed into silence, and awaited the effect of his words. Mrs. Pendleton pondered over them for some moments in manifest perturbation. There was sufficient resemblance between Austin's conclusions and the thoughts which had impelled her nocturnal visit to Flint House, to sway her mind like a pendulum towards Austin's view. But that only lasted for a moment. Then she thrust the thought desperately from her.

"No, no; I cannot—I will not believe it!" she cried in an agitated voice. "All this must have been in Robert's mind beforehand. His letters to me about Sisily indicated that there were reasons why he wished me to take charge of her. Robert had weighed the consequences of this disclosure, Austin—I feel sure of that. He was a man who knew his own mind. How carefully he outlined his plans to us yesterday! He was to appear before the Investigations Committee next week to give evidence in support of his claim to the title. And he told me that he was purchasing a portion of the family estate at Great Missenden, and intended to live there. Is it logical to suppose that he would terminate all these plans and ambitions by destroying himself? I, for one, will never believe it. I have my own thoughts and suspicions——"

He turned a sudden searching glance on her. "Suspicions of whom?"

"I took a dislike to that terrible man-servant of Robert's from the moment I saw him," said Mrs. Pendleton, setting her chin firmly.

This feminine flight was too swift for Austin Turold to follow.

"What has that to do with what we are talking about?" he demanded.

"When we reached the door last night it was Tha-

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lassa who let us in, with his hat and coat on, ready to go out. There was something strange and furtive about his manner, too, for I never took my eyes off him, and I'm sure he had something on his mind. I'm quite convinced it was he who was listening at the door yesterday afternoon. And he's got a wicked and crafty face."

"Good God!" ejaculated Austin Turold, as the full force of his sister's impressions reached his mind. "Do you mean to say that because you took a dislike to this unfortunate man's face, you think he has murdered Robert? And yet there are some feminists who want to draw our judges from your sex! My dear Constance, you cannot make haphazard accusations of murder in this reckless fashion."

"I am not accusing Thalassa of murder," said Mrs. Pendleton, with a fine air of generosity. "And there's more than my dislike of his face in it, too. He was looking through the door in the afternoon——"

"You only think that," interrupted her brother.

"I feel sure it was he. It was also strange to see him with his hat and coat on when he answered our knock. He told Dr. Ravenshaw that he was going to the churchtown for him."

"That reminds me that I haven't yet heard what took you up to Flint House last night, Constance," said her brother, looking at her fixedly. "What were you doing there at that late hour, and why was Ravenshaw with you?"

Mrs. Pendleton told him, and he listened coldly. "I think you might have consulted me first before Dr. Ravenshaw," he observed.

"I didn't because I thought you would have put obstacles in my way," she replied with frankness.

"I most certainly should. Of course the whole position may be altered now, with Robert's death. Have you told Sisily?"

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"Yes. She took it almost passively. She is the strangest girl, but after last night I look upon her as a sacred charge—Robert's last wish."

"It will be best for you to take charge of her, I think," said Austin absently. "I expect she is provided for in Robert's will. I found that in the old clock case last night, and I've handed it to the local lawyer who drew it up. But this is beside the point, Constance. I have come over here this morning to beg of you to let this terrible business rest where it is. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that our unhappy brother has ended his own life—all the facts point to it only too clearly—and I particularly desire, for all our sakes, that you do nothing to put your ill-informed suspicions into action. Let the thing drop."

"It is too late," said Mrs. Pendleton decidedly. "I have already been to the police. There is a detective from Scotland Yard on his way over from Bodmin."

"You might have told me this before and saved my time," said Austin, rising with cold anger. "In my opinion you have acted most ill-advisedly. However, it's too late to talk of that. No, there is no need to rise. I can find my way out."

Austin Turold left the hotel, and made his way up the crooked street to the centre of the town. His way lay towards Market Jew Street, where he intended to hire one of the waiting cabs to drive him back to St. Fair. As he neared the top of the street which led to the square, his eye was caught by the flutter of a woman's dress in one of the narrow old passages which spindled crookedly off it. The wearer of the dress was his niece Sisily. She was walking swiftly. A turn of the passage took her in the direction of the Morrab Gardens, and he saw her no more.

Her appearance in that secluded spot was unexpected, but at the moment Austin Turold did not give it more than a passing thought. He hurried across

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Market Jew Street and engaged a cabman to drive him home.

The ancient vehicle jolted over the moor road in crawling ascent, and in due time reached the spot where the straggling churchtown squatted among boulders in the desolation of the moors, wanting but cave men to start up from behind the great stones to complete the likeness to a village of the stone age. The cab drifted along between the granite houses of a wide street, like a ship which had lost its bearings, but cast anchor before one where a few stunted garden growths bloomed in an ineffectual effort to lessen the general aspect of appalling stoniness. Austin Turold paid the cabman and walked into this house. He opened the door with his latchkey, and ascended rapidly to the first floor.

Lunch was set for two in the room which he entered, and Charles Turold was seated at the table, turning over the pages of a book. He glanced up expectantly, and his lips formed one word—

"Well?"

"It is not well," was the testy response. "My charming sister has called in the assistance of Scotland Yard. You'll have to stay. We've got to face this thing out."

His son received this piece of news with a pale face. "You should have foreseen this last night," he said.

"I saw Sisily in Penzance—near the gardens."

"Where was she going?" asked Charles, flushing slightly.

"I really cannot say. You should be better acquainted with her movements than I," was the ironical response. "You do not suppose I have been altogether blind to your infatuation, do you? If you choose to go walking and flirting with a girl on Cornish moors you must expect to be observed. As a matter of fact I thought it rather a good move on your part, until I learnt the secret of Sisily's birth."

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"I tell you I won't stand this," exclaimed Charles, springing up from the table.

"Won't?" said his father. "You carry things with a high hand—Jonathan." His look dwelt coldly on his son. "Do not be a fool. Sit down and let us have lunch, and we'll discuss afterwards what's best to be done."

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CHAPTER XII

WITH a slightly incredulous air Inspector Dawfield placed his London colleague in possession of his own knowledge of the facts of the case, based on the statements made to him by Mrs. Pendleton that morning and the facts as set forth in Sergeant Pengowan's report.

Detective Barrant listened attentively, with the air of a man smiling to himself. He was not actually doing so, but that was the impression conveyed by his keen bright eyes. He was a Londoner, with an assured manner, and the conviction that his intelligence was equal to any call which might be made upon it. By temperament he was restless, but his work had given him a philosophical outlook which in some measure counterpoised that defect by causing him to realize that life was a tricky and deceptive business in which intelligence counted for more than action in the long run. He had a wider outlook and more shrewdness than the average detective, and he already felt a keen interest in the case he had been called in to investigate.

When the inspector had finished his story he picked up the blue foolscap on which was inscribed the sprawling report of the churchtown sergeant. With a severe effort he mastered the matter contained under the flowing curves and flourishes.

"The local man seems certain that it is suicide," he said, "but the sister's statement certainly calls for further investigation. How far away is this place?"

"Flint House? About five miles across the moors. I've hired a motor-car to drive you up. Nothing has been disturbed so far. As soon as I learnt you were

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coming I telephoned to Pengowan to leave things as they were until you arrived."

Barrant nodded approval. "Let us go," he said.

The car was waiting outside. The way lay through the town and then across the moors in undulating ascent until at the highest point a rough track crossed the road at a spot where four parishes met. On one side of these cross-roads was a Druidical stone circle, and on the other was a wayside cross to the memory of an Irish female saint who had crossed to Cornwall as a missionary in the tenth century, after first recording a holy vow that she would not change her shift until she had redeemed the whole of the Cornish natives from idolatry.

From the cross-roads the way again inclined downward to the sea in increasing savageness of desolation. Stones littered the purple surface of the moors, or rose in insecure heaps on the steep slopes, as though piled there by the hands of the giants supposed to have once roved these gloomy wilds. Solitude held sway, but there was more than solitude in that lonely aspect: something prehistoric and unknown, unearthly, incomprehensible. Cairn Brea and the Hill of Fires brooded in the distance; the remains of a Druid's altar showed darkly on the summit of a nearer hill. No sound broke the stillness except the faint and distant sobbing of the sea.

St. Fair lay almost hidden in a bend or fold of the moors about a mile before them, and beyond it Dawfield pointed out to his companion Flint House, standing in gaunt outline on a tongue of coast thrust defiantly into the restless waters of the Atlantic.

"A lonely weird place," said Barrant, eyeing his surroundings attentively. "An ideal setting for a mysterious crime."

They drove on in silence until they reached the churchtown. Inspector Dawfield steered the car to the

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modest dwelling of Sergeant Pengowan, whom they found at his gate awaiting their arrival—a shaggy figure of a rural policeman of the Cornish Celtic variety, with no trace of Spanish or Italian ancestry in his florid face, inquisitively Irish blue-grey eyes, reddish whiskers, and burly frame.

Inspector Dawfield bade him good-day, and added the information that his companion was Detective Barrant, of Scotland Yard. Pengowan greeted Barrant with the respect due to the name of Scotland Yard, and took a humble seat at the back of the car.

They went on again, and in a few minutes the car stopped at the end of the rough moor track, close to where the black cliffs dropped to the grey sea.

Flint House rose solitary before them, perched with an air of bravado upon the granite ledge, as though defying the west wind which blustered around it. The unfastened gate which led to the little path banged noisily in the breeze, but the house seemed steeped in desolation. A face peeped furtively at them from a front window as they approached. They heard a shuffling footstep and the drawing of a bolt, and the door was opened by a withered little woman who looked at them with silent inquiry.

"Where's your husband?" asked Sergeant Pengowan.

She glanced timidly up the stairs behind her, and they saw Thalassa descending as though in answer to the question. He scanned the police officers with a cautious eye. Barrant returned the look with a keen observation which took in the externals of the man who was the object of Mrs. Pendleton's suspicions.

"You are the late Mr. Turold's servant?" he said.

"Put it that way if you like," was the response. "Who might you be?"

Barrant did not deign to reply to this inquiry. "Take us upstairs," he said.

"Pengowan wants us to look at the outside first,"

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said Dawfield, but Barrant was already mounting the stairs.

"You do so," he called back, over his shoulder. "I'll go up."

At the top of the staircase he waited until Thalassa reached him. "Where are Mr. Turold's rooms?" he asked.

Thalassa pointed with a long arm into the dim vagueness of the passage. "Down there," he said, "at the end. The study on the right, the bedroom opposite."

"Very well. You need not come any further."

The old man's eyes travelled slowly upward to the detective's face, but he kept his ground.

"Did you hear me?" Barrant asked sharply. "You can go downstairs again."

Again the other's eyes sought his face with a brooding contemplative look. Then he turned sullenly away with moving lips, as though muttering inarticulate words, leaving Barrant standing on the landing, watching his slow descent.

When he was quite sure that he was gone, Barrant turned down the passage-way. He had his reasons for wishing to be alone. The value of a vivid first impression, the effect of concentration necessary to reproduce the scene to the eyes of imagination, the mental arrangement of the facts in their proper order and conformity—these were things which were liable to be broken into by the disturbing presence of others, by the vexatious interruption of loudly proffered explanations.

He knew all the facts that Inspector Dawfield and Sergeant Pengowan could impart. He knew of Robert Turold's long quest for the lost title, the object of his visit to Cornwall, his near attainment to success, his summons to his family to receive the news. In short, he was aware of the whole sequence of events preceding Robert Turold's violent and mysterious death, with the exception of the revelation of his life's secret, which

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Mrs. Pendleton had withheld from Inspector Dawfield. Barrant had heard all he wanted to know at second hand at that stage of his investigations, and he now preferred to be guided by his own impressions and observations.

His professional interest in the case had been greatly quickened by his first sight of Flint House. Never had he seen anything so weird and wild. The isolation of the place, perched insecurely on the edge of the rude cliffs, among the desolation of the rocks and moors, breathed of mystery and hinted at hidden things. But who would find the way to such a lonely spot to commit murder, if murder had been committed?

Reaching the end of the long passage, he first turned towards the study on the right. The smashed door swung creakingly back to his push, revealing the interior of the room where Robert Turold had met his death. Barrant entered, and closed the broken door behind him. It was here, if anywhere, that he might chance to find some clue which would throw light on the cause.

The profusion of papers which met his eye, piled on the table and filling the presses and shelves which lined the musty room, seemed, at the outset, to give ground for the hope that such an expectation might be realized. But they merely formed, in their mass, a revelation of Robert Turold's industry in gathering material for his claim. There were genealogical tables without number, a philology of the two names Turold and Turrald, extracts of parish registers and corporation records, copies from inscriptions from tombstones and mural monuments, copied pedigrees from the British Museum and the great English collections, a host of old deeds and wills, and other mildewed records of perished hands. But they all seemed to have some bearing on the quest to which Robert Turold had sacrificed the years of his manhood.

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He had died as he lived, engrossed in the labour of his life. A copy of Burke's "Vicissitudes of Families" was lying open on the table, and beside it were two sheets of foolscap, covered with notes in thin irregular handwriting. The first of these depicted the arms of the Turrald family, as originally selected at the first institution of heraldry, and the quarterings of the heiresses who had married into the family at a later date.

The second sheet was headed "Devonian and Cornwall branch of the Turolds," and contained notes of Robert Turold's ancestral discoveries in that spot. The notes were not finished, but ended abruptly in the middle of a sentence: "It is necessary to make it clea——"

Those were the last words the dead man had written. He had dropped the pen, which lay beside the paper, without finishing the word "clear."

The sight of this unfinished sheet kindled Barrant's imagination, and he stood thoughtful, considering the meaning of it. Was it the attitude of a man who had committed suicide? Was it conceivable that Robert Turold would break off in the middle of a sentence, in the middle of a word, and shoot himself? It seemed a strange thing to do, but Barrant's experience told him that there were no safe deductions where suicides were concerned. They acted with the utmost precipitation or the utmost deliberation. Some wound up their worldly affairs with businesslike precision before embarking on their timeless voyage, others jumped into the black gulf without, apparently, any premeditated intention, as if at the beckoning summons of some grisly invisible hand which they dared not disobey. Barrant recalled the strange case of a wealthy merchant who had cut his throat on a Bank holiday and confessed before death that he had felt the same impulse on that day for years past. He had whispered that the day marked to him such a pause in life's dull round that it seemed

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to him a pity to start again. He had resisted the impulse for years, but it had waxed stronger with each recurring anniversary, and had overcome him at last.

Every suicide was a law unto himself. Barrant willingly conceded that, but he could not so easily concede that a man like Robert Turold would put an end to his life just when he was about to attain the summit of that life's ambition. It was a Schopenhauerian doctrine that all men had suicidal tendencies in them, in the sense that every man wished at times for the cessation of the purposeless energy called life, and it was only the violence of the actual act which prevented its more frequent commission. But Barrant reflected that in his experience suicides were generally people who had been broken by life or were bored with it. Men of action or intellect rarely committed suicide, not because they valued life highly, but because they had so much to do in their brief span that they hadn't time to think about putting an end to it. Death usually overtook them in the midst of their schemes.

Robert Turold was not a man of intellect or action, but he belonged to a type which, as a rule, cling to life: the type from which zealots and bigots spring—men with a single idea. Such men shrink from the idea of destroying the vital engine by which their idea is driven forward. Their ego is too pronounced for that.

It was true that Robert Turold believed he had realized the aim for which he had lived, and therefore, in a sense, had nothing more to live for. But that point of view was too coldly logical for human nature. Its presumption was only applicable to a higher order of beings. No man had ever committed suicide upon achieving the summit of an ambition. There were always fresh vistas opening before the human mind.

Barrant left the study for the opposite room where the body of Robert Turold had been taken. It was his bedroom, and he had been laid upon the bed.

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Death had not come to him easily. His harsh features were set in a stern upward frown, and the lower lip was slightly caught between the teeth, as though bitten in the final rending of the spirit. But Barrant had seen too much of violent death to be repelled by any death mask, however repellent.

He eyed the corpse closely, and then proceeded to examine the death wound. In doing so he had to move the body, and a portion of the sleeve fell back, exposing the left arm to the elbow. Barrant was about to replace it when his eye lighted upon a livid mark on the arm. He rolled back the garment until the arm lay bare to the shoulder. The disclosure revealed four faint livid marks running parallel across the arm, just above the elbow.

The arms had been straightened to the body to the elbows, and then crossed decorously on the breast. Barrant walked round to the other side of the bed, knelt down by the edge of it, and examined the underneath part of the arm. A single livid mark was imprinted upon it.

The inference was unmistakable. The four upper marks were fingerprints, and the lower one a thumb mark. Somebody had caught the dead man's arm in such a strenuous grip that the livid impression had remained after death.

The discovery was significant enough, but Barrant was not at that moment prepared to say how much it portended. It seemed certain that the marks had not been made by Robert Turold himself. Their position suggested a left-hand clutch, though only a finger-print expert could definitely determine that point. Even if they were not, it was too far-fetched a supposition to imagine a man gripping his own arm hard enough to bruise it.

The relative weight of this discovery was, in Barrant's mind, weakened by the fact that the marks might

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have been caused by the persons who had carried the body from the next room. Nevertheless, the marks must be regarded as infirmative testimony, however slight, of the fallibility of the circumstantial deductions which had been made from the discovery of the body in a locked room, with windows which could not be reached from the outside.

The presumption of suicide rested on the theory that the circumstances excluded any other hypothesis. But Barrant reflected that he did not know enough about the case to accept that assumption as warranted by the facts. The one certainty was that the study could not have been reached from the outside. Barrant had noted the back windows before entering the house; his subsequent interior examination had strengthened his conviction that they were inaccessible. Underneath the study windows there was only the narrowest ledge of rock between that side of the house and the edge of the cliffs. A descent from the windows with a rope was hazardously possible, but ascent and entrance by that means was out of the question.

On the other hand, the theory of interior inaccessibility had a flaw in it, due to the presence of five different people in the room before the police arrived. Their actions and motives would have to be most carefully weighed and sifted before the implication of the discovery of the finger-marks could be determined.

The rather breathless entrance of Inspector Dawfield put an end to Barrant's reflections. He explained that Sergeant Pengowan, in his anxiety to maintain the correctness of his official report, had taken him to various breakneck positions at the back of the house and along the cliffs in order to demonstrate the impossibility of anybody entering Robert Turold's rooms from outside. The sergeant was at that moment engaged in a room downstairs drawing up his reasons for that belief. "A kind of confirmatory report," Dawfield

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explained. "He fears that his reputation is at stake."

"He can save himself the trouble," said Barrant. "The solution of Robert Turold's death lies in these two rooms, if anywhere."

Something in his companion's tone caused Inspector Dawfield to direct an interrogative glance at him. "Have you discovered something?" he asked.

"Finger-marks on the left arm, a left-hand impression, I should say."

He drew back the loose sleeve of the dead man, and Dawfield examined the marks attentively. "This is strange," he said. "It looks suspicious."

"Strange enough, and certainly suspicious. The point is, is it suspicious enough to upset the theory of suicide? The marks are too faint to enable us to determine whether they are of recent origin. But I think that we must assume that they are. It has occurred to me that they may have been caused when the body was picked up from the floor of the other room and carried in here."

"In that case the marks would have been underneath the arm. In lifting a heavy weight like a corpse it would be natural to place the hands under the shoulders, for greater lifting power."

"There's something in that, but it's by no means certain. It would depend on the position of the body. According to Pengowan's report, Robert Turold was found lying face downward. The body would have to be turned over before it was lifted, and the grip might have been made in pulling it over. We must find that out."

"It's a point which can be settled at once by questioning Thalassa. He helped Pengowan carry the body into this room."

"That is the very thing I do not wish to do," rejoined Barrant quickly. "We have to remember that Thalassa is, for the time being, suspect. Mrs. Pen-

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dleton's suspicions of him may be based on the slightest foundation, but we are bound to keep them in mind."

"Do you not intend to question him at all?"

"Not at present. His attitude when he brought me upstairs was that of a man on his guard, expecting to be questioned. I saw that at once, and decided to say nothing to him. I will take him by surprise later on, when he is off his guard, and if he is keeping anything back I may be able to get it out of him. But we must not be too quick in drawing the conclusion that those marks were made by him."

"What makes you say so?" asked Inspector Dawfield.

"Thalassa has a long bony hand, with fingers thickened by rough work. I noticed it when he was pointing to these rooms from the passage. This grip looks as if it might have been made by a smaller hand, with slim fingers. Look how close together the marks are! Unfortunately, that's about all we're likely to deduce from them, and I doubt if a finger-print expert will be able to help us. Observe, there are no finger-prints —merely faint marks of the middle of the fingers, and a kind of blur for the thumb. But the thing is suspicious, undoubtedly suspicious."

"Still, the door was locked from inside," said Dawfield. "We mustn't lose sight of that fact."

"And the key was found in the room. We must also remember that there were several people in the room after the door was burst open, including the dead man's brother. It seems that it was he who first propounded the suicide theory to Dr. Ravenshaw, and subsequently to Pengowan. Do you know anything about the brother?"

"I know nothing personally. Pengowan tells me that Robert Turold secured lodgings for his brother and his

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son in an artist's house at the churchtown about six weeks ago. They arrived next day, and are still there. I understand that the brothers have been in pretty close intimacy, meeting each other practically every day, either at the churchtown or in this house."

"Do you know what took place at the family gathering which was held in this house yesterday afternoon, after the funeral?"

"All I know is that Robert Turold informed his family that he was likely to succeed in his claim for the title. Mrs. Pendleton was rather vague about the details, but she did say that her brother had placed his daughter in her charge, and had made a long statement to them about his future plans."

"She did not indicate what those plans were?"

"Only in the vaguest way. I remember her saying that her brother was a wealthy man: the one wealthy member of the family, was the way she put it. Her principal preoccupation was her suspicion of the manservant, based on seeing him listening at the door. She was very voluble and excited—so much so that I did not attach much importance to what she said, and did not ask her many questions."

"It is of the utmost importance that we should find out all we can about this family council yesterday. It is possible that it may throw some light on Robert Turold's death. I am not prepared at present to say whether it is suicide or not, but apart from any suspicious circumstances, I feel that there is some justification for Mrs. Pendleton's belief that a wealthy and successful man like her brother was not likely to take his own life, unless there was some hidden reason for him to do so. If we knew more of what happened downstairs yesterday we might be in a better position to judge of that. The case strikes me as a very peculiar one—indeed, it has some remarkable features.

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My first task will be to interview all the persons who were present at yesterday's gathering. Can you tell me if the brothers were on good terms?"

"I believe so."

"Is Austin Turold a poor man?"

"I know nothing about him. But what has that got to do with it?"

"It may have much to do with it. He may have stood to inherit a fortune from Robert."

"You surely do not suspect the brother?"

"I suspect no one, at present," returned Barrant. "I am merely glancing at the scanty facts within our knowledge and seeing what can be gathered from them. Robert Turold is found dead in his study, with his hands on an old clock, where he kept important papers, including his will. We are indebted to Austin Turold for that knowledge. But how did Austin Turold come to know that his brother kept his will in the clock-case? Did Robert tell him, or did he find it out? Was Austin aware of the contents of the will? Why did Robert go to the clock? Was his idea to destroy the will? And was that after or before he was shot, or shot himself?

"These are questions we cannot answer without further knowledge, but they seem to point to the existence of some family secret of which we know nothing. We must find out what it is. I shall first interview Austin Turold, and then call on Dr. Ravenshaw, if time permits. You'd better drop me at the churchtown on your way back to Penzance. There's really nothing to detain you any longer."

They returned to the churchtown in the motor-car, and Pengowan from the back seat directed the way to Austin Turold's lodgings.

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CHAPTER XIII

"OH yes, I'm modern enough," said Austin Turold, balancing his cigarette in his white fingers, and glancing at Barrant with a reflective air—"that is to say, I believe in America and the League of Nations, but not in God. It's not the fashion to believe in God or have a conscience nowadays. They both went out with the war. After all, what's a conscience to a liver? But here I am, chattering on to distract my sad thoughts, although I can see in your eye that you have it in you to ask me some questions. Well, go ahead and ask them, and I will answer them—if I can."

"I do wish to ask you some questions," said Barrant—"questions connected with your brother's death."

"I know very little about it. It was a most terrible shock to me, I assure you, and is likely to detain me in this barbarous place longer than I intended—greatly against my will."

"I understand you came to Cornwall at your brother's request?"

"Yes. My brother sent for me and my son more than a month ago, so we came at once. I'll forestall the further inquiry I see on your lips, and tell you why I came so promptly. My brother Robert was the wealthy member of the family, and I was the poor one—a poor devil of an Anglo-Indian with nothing on this side of the grave but a niggardly Civil Service pension!

"When we arrived I found that Robert had already taken these lodgings for us, which was as near as he could get accommodation to his own house. I did not object to that arrangement, because I do not like hotels

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nowadays—not since the newly-rich started to patronize them. So here I've been rusticating ever since, conferring daily with my poor brother, and eating the four meals a day which are provided with the lodgings by the estimable people of this house. My landlord is an artist. That is to say, he's forever daubing pictures which nobody buys. I've come to the conclusion that most people dislike Cornwall because of the number of bad pictures which are painted here. You see some samples of my host's brush on these walls. They are actually too bad to be admitted to the Academy. My poor host and hostess, being unable to make ends meet, were obliged to take in lodgers. The fact, however, is not unduly obtruded. We discuss Art at night, and not the scandalously high price of food. I get on very well, but then I can adapt myself to any society. I pride myself on being a philosopher. But my son is not so facile. My worthy entertainers regard him as a Philistine, and bestow very little of their attention upon him. He spends his time in taking long walks through the wilds. He is out walking at present. I am sorry he is not here."

The conversation was suspended by the entrance of an elderly maid servant with a long and melancholy white face, thickly braided hair, strongly marked black eyebrows, wearing a black dress with white apron, and a white bow in her hair, who came to ask if Mr. Turold required any more tea. On learning that he did not she withdrew as noiselessly as she had entered.

"I see you are looking at our parlour-maid," said Austin Turold, following the direction of his visitor's glance.

"She's a strange sort of parlour-maid," admitted the detective. "She reminds me of—of—"

"A study in black and white," suggested his host. "Her face is her fortune. She's sitting to Brierly—that's my host—for his latest effort. He's painting

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her as the Madonna or Britannia—I really forget which. A new type, you know. The servants in this house are engaged for their faces. They had a villainous scoundrel of a man-servant—a returned soldier—engaged as Judas Iscariot, who bolted last week with the silver spoons. But all this is beside the point, Mr. Barrant, and I must not waste your time. You have come here for a specific purpose—to turn me inside out. What can I tell you?"

"I want to know all that you can tell me about your brother's death," said the other, with emphasis.

"But what can I tell you that you do not already know?" exclaimed Austin, raising his eyebrows with a helpless look. "Ask me what questions you like, and I'll endeavour to answer them. When the famous Detective Barrant—for I understand from the newspapers that you are famous—takes an interview in hand I expect him to handle the situation in a masterly fashion, as befits his reputation. So ask your questions, my dear fellow, and I'll do my utmost to respond." Austin Turold took off his glasses, and posed himself in an attitude of expectation, with his eyes fixed upon the detective's face.

Barrant eyed the elder man with a puzzled curiosity which was tolerably masked by official impassivity. Barrant had his own methods of investigation and inquiry. He brought an alert intelligence, a seeing eye, and a false geniality to bear in his work. Unversed in elaborate deduction, he flattered himself that he knew enough about human nature to strike the balance of probabilities in almost any case. His cardinal article of faith was that there was nothing like getting on good terms with those he was interviewing in order to find out things. Most people were on their guard against detectives, who too often took advantage of their position to assume offensive airs of intimidation, whereas the great thing was to disarm suspicion by a friendly

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manner. Barrant had cultivated pleasantness with considerable success. Some who were not good judges of physiognomy were apt to overlook the watchful eyes in his smiling affable presence, and talk freely—sometimes too freely, as they later on discovered to their cost. A chance word, a significant phrase, was sufficient to set him burrowing underground with the activity of a mole, to burst into the open later on with all his clues complete, to the confusion of the trusting person with an unguarded tongue.

He had put these tactics into execution with Austin Turold. Austin, taking tea when he called, in a bright blue room hung with pictures, had received his visitor with a charming cordiality, insisted on his taking tea with him, and then let loose a flood of small-talk, as though he were delighted with his visitor. His welcome was so perfect, his manners so gracefully unforced, that Barrant had an uneasy suspicion that he was being beaten at his own game, and was slightly out of countenance in consequence. Up to that moment he could not, for the life of him, decide whether Austin Turold's polished self-assurance was a mask or not. It seemed too natural to be assumed.

"Your own opinion is that your brother committed suicide?" he asked again.

"No other conclusion is possible, in my mind."

"But did he have any reason, that you know of, to commit suicide?"

Austin shrugged his shoulders. "Suicide is not usually associated with reason," he observed. "But in Robert's case there is a reason, or so it seems to me. I have not seen him for many years, but during my recent close association with him I was struck by two things: the solitary aloofness of his mind, and his overwhelming pride—pride in the family name. These two traits in his character coloured all his actions. In the

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first place, he disliked opening his mind to anybody, but the stronger influence, his family pride, overcame his habitual secretiveness when he thought it necessary and desirable to do so in furtherance of his darling ambition—the restoration of this title. Men who lead a solitary, self-contained life, like my brother, become introspective and ultra-sensitive, and face any intimate personal revelation with the utmost reluctance. They will nerve themselves to it when the occasion absolutely requires, but the after effects—the mental self-probings, the agonized self torture that a self-conscious proud man can inflict on himself when he comes to analyze the effects of his disclosure on other minds, are sometimes unendurable."

Austin put forward this analysis of his brother's state of mind with a gravity which was in complete contrast with the light airiness of his tea-table gossip, and Barrant felt that he was speaking with sincerity.

"Yes, I can understand that," he said with a thoughtful nod.

"I think that is what happened in my brother's case, when he felt called upon to reveal, as he did yesterday, a shameful family secret which hurt him in his strongest point—his family pride."

"Stop a minute," interrupted Barrant, in a surprised voice. "I really do not follow you here. What is this shameful secret to which you refer?"

Austin Turold looked surprised in his turn. "It had to do with his marriage and his daughter's legitimacy," he slowly replied. "Surely my sister imparted this to the Penzance police inspector, when she besought his assistance?"

"I know nothing about it," replied Barrant quickly and emphatically. "I shall be glad if you will tell me."

"Certainly."

Austin Turold related the story of his brother's dis-

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closure. Again he spoke in careful grave words, and with a manner completely divested of any trace of his habitual flippancy.

"It appears to me that this revelation must have had a very painful effect on Robert's mind," he added. "You must remember that he was an abnormal type. An ordinary man would not have made such a disclosure on the day of the funeral of the woman who was supposed to be his wife. But all Robert's acts hinged on his one great obsession. He allowed nothing to come between him and his one ambition—not even his wife (let us call her so) and child. But it would come home to him afterwards—I mean the normal point of view—the way the world would regard such a disclosure—and I have no doubt that his belated mental anguish and morbid thoughts impelled him to take his life. Understand me, Mr. Barrant, I do not mean that he did this through remorse, but through the blow to his pride. He couldn't face the racket—the gossip, the notoriety and all the rest of it."

"But according to your story, your brother had nothing to blame himself for," said Barrant. "You say that he was ignorant of this earlier marriage until recently?"

"Public sentiment will not look at it that way. People will say he sacrificed a dead woman and his daughter to his own selfish ends—threw them over when he had attained his ambition. That's what came home to him, in my opinion."

"I see." Barrant was silent for a while, turning this over in all its bearings. "Yes. There may be something in that point of view. But did not your brother confide this story to you before yesterday?"

"When we were alone together during the last few days he frequently seemed on the point of telling me something. I could see that by his manner. But he

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never got beyond a certain portentousness, as it were. It's my belief now that he wanted to tell me, but couldn't quite bring himself to it. I am very sorry that he didn't."

"Do you know how long your brother has been aware of this earlier marriage?"

"Quite recently, I believe. He gave us to understand yesterday that it was a death-bed confession."

"Are there any proofs of the earlier marriage?"

"I am afraid I cannot enlighten you on that point either."

"This is very strange," said Barrant. "The proofs are very important. This disclosure vitally affected your brother's ambitions, and was therefore likely to influence his views regarding the disposition of his property."

He shot a keen glance at his companion. Austin laid aside his glasses and bent earnestly across the table.

"I will be frank with you," he said, "quite frank. My brother told me a little more than a week ago that he had made a new will, and that I was his heir."

"Where is this will?"

"I found it in the clock-case at Flint House last night, and I have since handed it to the lawyer who drafted it."

"Your brother gave you no indication of this before?"

"No. He told me when I came that he had summoned me to Cornwall because of the great change in the family fortunes. As I was his only brother he desired my presence in the investigation of the final proofs and the preparation of his claim for the House of Lords. Nothing was said about the succession then. Robert was very excited, and talked only of his own future. I feel sure that he was not then thinking of who was

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to succeed to the title after his death. He looked forward to enjoying it himself. I certainly did not give it a thought, either. Who could have foreseen this tragic event?"

"Do you know anything about this peerage?"

"Not till latterly. I never took it seriously, like Robert. I looked upon it as a family fiction. I understand that the Turrald barony was a barony by writ—whatever that may be. The point is that if my brother had lived to restore it, the title, on his death, would have descended to his only daughter, if she had been born in wedlock. As she is illegitimate, the title would have descended to me, and after me to my son."

"You were here last night when they brought you the news of your brother's death, I understand?" remarked Barrant, in a casual sort of way.

"Yes; I did not go out again after I returned from the funeral."

"Was your son home with you?"

"Most of the time. He came in later than I, and then went out for a walk when the storm cleared away. I did not see him again until this morning. Thalassa came for me with the news of my brother's death, and I did not get back from Flint House until very late."

"I suppose you are aware your sister does not share your view that your brother committed suicide?"

"I understand she has some absurd suspicion about Thalassa, my brother's servant."

"Why do you call her suspicion absurd?" asked Barrant cautiously.

"It is more than absurd," replied Austin warmly. "I am ashamed to think that my sister should have given utterance to such a dreadful thought against a faithful old servant who has been with Robert for half a lifetime, and was devoted to him."

"Mrs. Pendleton saw him looking through the door."

"She only thought so. She went to the door imme-

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diately to find out who it was, but there was nobody there."

"Do you think she imagined it?"

"No; I think somebody was there, but it is by no means certain that it was Thalassa. It might have been Thalassa's wife. It might even have been Robert's daughter."

"Was not Miss Turold present at the family gathering?"

"No; my brother naturally did not wish her to be present, and she went upstairs. She went out while we were in the room. The door was slightly open, and she may have glanced in as she passed."

"But this person was listening."

Austin Turold shrugged his shoulders.

"Was your brother talking about his marriage at the time?"

"Yes."

"Could Miss Turold have heard what he was saying?"

"Anybody could. The door was partly open."

"There is some mystery here."

Barrant spoke with the thoughtful air of one viewing a new vista opening in the distance. These surmises about the listener at the door, by their manifest though perhaps unintended implication, pointed to a deeper and more terrible mystery than he had imagined.

Austin Turold did not speak. Darkness had long since fallen, and a lamp, which had been brought in by the maid who was also the model, stood on the table between the two men, and threw its shaded beams on their faces. A clock on the mantel-piece chimed eight, and aroused Barrant to the flight of time.

"I must get back," he said. "I intended to see Dr. Ravenshaw, but I shall leave that until later. Can I get a conveyance back to Penzance?"

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"There is a public wagonette. I am not sure when it goes, but it starts from 'The Three Jolly Wreckers' at the other end of the churchtown."

" 'The Three Jolly Wreckers!' That's rather a cynical name for a Cornish inn, isn't it?"

"Oh, the Cornish people are not ashamed of the old wrecking days, I assure you."

He accompanied Barrant to the door with the lamp, which he held above his head to light him down the garden path. Barrant, glancing back, saw him looking after him, his face outlined in the darkness by the yellow rays of the lamp.

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CHAPTER XIV

BARRANT found the inn at the dark end of a stone alley, with the sound of tipsy singing and shuffling feet coming through the half-open door. He made his way up three granite steps into a side-entrance, catching a glimpse through a glass partition of shaggy red faces and pint pots floating in a fog of tobacco smoke. A stout landlord leaned behind the bar watching his customers with the tolerant smile of a man who was making a living out of their merriment. He straightened himself as he caught sight of Barrant, and opened the sliding window. The detective inquired about the wagonette, and learnt that it had not yet arrived.

"The roouds is rough, and old Garge Crows takes his time," said the landlord, eyeing Barrant with a heavy stare. "'Tain't as thow 'e had a passel of passergers to be teeren rownd after."

"Can you give me some supper while I'm waiting?"

"Sooper?" The innkeeper scratched his chin doubtfully. "'Tis late in the ebenin' to be getting sooper. There's nawthing greut in the howse. You could 'ave some tay—p'raps an egg."

"That will do."

The innkeeper roared forth a summons, which was answered by a rugged Cornish lass from the kitchen. She cast a doubtful glance on the young man when she learnt what was required, and took him into a small sitting-room, where she left him to gaze at his leisure upon a framed portrait of Cecil Rhodes, a stuffed gannet in a large glass case, and a stuffed badger in a companion case on the other side of the wall. In about

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twenty minutes she returned with a tray, and placed before the detective a couple of eggs, some bread and butter, saffron cake, and a pot of tea. The eggs were of peculiar mottled exterior, and when tasted had such a strong fish-like flavour as to suggest that they might have been laid by the gannet in its lifetime, and stowed away by a careful Cornish housewife until some stranger chanced to visit that remote spot. Barrant was hungry enough to gulp them down, though with a wry face. He had just finished a second cup of very strong tea when he heard the clatter of a vehicle outside, and the girl thrust a tousled dark head through the door to announce the arrival of Mr. Crows and his wagonette.

Barrant paid for his food and went out. An ancient hooded vehicle filled the narrow way, drawn by a large shaggy horse which turned a gleaming eye on the detective as he emerged, and snorted loudly, as though resenting the prospect of having to drag his additional weight back to the town. The driver sat motionless on the box, watching the caperings of the tipsy tin-miners through the half-open door: a melancholy death'shead of a man, with a preternaturally long white face, and a figure shrouded in a dark cloak, looking as though he might be Death itself, waiting for the carousers to drop dead of apoplexy before carrying them off in his funereal equipage. In reply to Barrant's question he informed him that the vehicle was destined for Penzance, and immediately the detective entered the dark interior he drove off with disconcerting suddenness, as though he had been waiting for him only, and was determined to make sure of him before he had time to escape.

The shaggy horse lumbered forward at an unwilling trot, like an animal disillusioned with life. Soon they cleared the churchtown and entered the darkness of the moors. A long and tiring day disposed Barrant

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to slumber. He had begun to nod sleepily when the wagonette stopped with a jerk which shook him into wakefulness. He was able to make out that they had reached the highest elevation of the moors—the cross-roads from where Inspector Dawfield had shown him Flint House in the distance that afternoon. He could just discern the outlines of the wayside cross and the old Druidical monolith, both pointing to the silent heavens in unwonted religious amity.

"Good ebenen', Garge." A lusty voice hailed out of the darkness, and then Barrant was aware of somebody entering the wagonette, a large male body which plumped heavily on his knees as it started again.

"Bed pardin, I'm sure. Aw dedn't knaw Crows had another passenger to-night." A husky voice spoke unseen. "'Taint often it 'appens." There was the splutter of a match, and as it flared up Barrant saw a pair of twinkling grey eyes regarding him from a brown and rugged face. "Old Garge never reckons on haavin' passengers back by th' laast wagonette, so 'e never lights up inside. I'll make a light now, then we'll be more comfortable." He struck another match and lit the candle in the wagonette lamp, and was revealed to Barrant's eyes as a stout and pleasant-faced man of fifty or so, with something seamanlike, or at least boatmanlike, in his appearance. He gave the detective a smile and a nod, and added, "Old Crows is fullish mean about candles."

"It's a wonder he drives the wagonette at all, if there is no demand for it," remarked Barrant.

"Aw, there's a'plenty demand for it—always lots of passergers except by this one," rejoined the man in the blue suit. "You'd be surprised how people gets about in these paarts." He was studying the detective's face with interest. "You be a Londoner," he said quickly. "What braught you down here?"

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