THE ADVENTURES OF DICK TREVANION

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at https://www.gutenberg.org/license. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this ebook.

Title: The Adventures of Dick Trevanion
A Story of Eighteen Hundred and Four

Author: Herbert Strang

Release Date: June 01, 2013 [eBook #39800]

Language: English

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ADVENTURES OF DICK TREVANION ***

Produced by Al Haines.

[image]

Cover

[image]

"THERE LOOMED OUT OF THE MIST A THREE-MASTED VESSEL." (See page 175.)

THE ADVENTURES OF DICK TREVANION

A STORY OF EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FOUR

BY
HERBERT STRANG

ILLUSTRATED BY W. RAINEY, R.I.

LONDON
HENRY FROWDE
HODDER & STOUGHTON
1911

BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO., LD., PRINTERS,
LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER THE FIRST THE VILLAGE AND THE TOWERS

CHAPTER THE SECOND JOHN TREVANION RETURNS HOME

CHAPTER THE THIRD THE BLOW FALLS

CHAPTER THE FOURTH THE CAVE OF SEALS

CHAPTER THE FIFTH ST. CUBY'S WELL

CHAPTER THE SIXTH PENWARDEN DOES HIS DUTY

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH THE BREACH WIDENS

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH A LIGHT ON THE MOOR

CHAPTER THE NINTH DOUBLEDICK'S MIDNIGHT GUESTS

CHAPTER THE TENTH THE FIRE BELL AT THE TOWERS

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH SIR BEVIL INTERVENES

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH PENWARDEN DISAPPEARS

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH CROSS-CURRENTS

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH DOUBLEDICK ON DUTY

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH ACROSS THE PIT

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH A PACKET FOR RUSCO

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH PETHERICK MAKES A DISCOVERY

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH A HIGH DIVE

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH A BARGAIN WITH THE REVENUE

CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH THE LAST DEAL

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIRST THE ATTACK ON THE TOWERS

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SECOND JOHN TREVANION IN THE TOILS

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-THIRD THE PRICE OF TREACHERY

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH PEACE AND GOODWILL

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"THERE LOOMED OUT OF THE MIST A THREE-MASTED VESSEL" . . . . . *Frontispiece, see page* 175

"'HALT, IN THE KING'S NAME!' CRIED MR. MILDMAY"

"'STAND!' CRIED DICK, DASHING FORWARD. 'LEAVE HIM, OR WE'LL FIRE'"

"AS THE SEAL PLUNGED INTO THE SEA, SAM BROUGHT HIS HAMMER DOWN"

"THERE WAS NO ONE TO HEAR THE SHORT DIALOGUE THAT ENSUED AT THE HEAD OF THE WELL"

"DICK RUSHED LIKE A WHIRLWIND ON THE MAN"

"PETHERICK'S HEAD APPEARED THROUGH THE HATCH"

"DELAROUSSE RUSHED HEADLONG TOWARDS THE APPROACHING GROUP"

CHAPTER THE FIRST

The Village and the Towers

The village of Polkerran lies snugly in a hollow between cliffs facing the Atlantic, at the head of a little bay that forms a natural harbour. The grey stone cottages

rise from the sea-level in tiers, as in an amphitheatre, huddled together, with the narrowest and most tortuous of lanes between them. Through the midst a stream flows from the high ground behind, in summer a mere brook, in winter a swollen torrent that colours the sea far out with the soil it carries down. The bay is shaped like a horseshoe; at low tide its mouth is closed by a reef except at the northern end, where there is always a narrow fairway between the reef and the sharp point of land known as the Beal. Northward of this is another little inlet called Trevanion Bay, whence the coast winds north-east, a line of rugged, precipitous, and overhanging cliffs, unbroken until you come to St. Cuby's Cove, where they reach a height of three hundred feet, and bulge out over the sea like a penthouse roof.

One August evening, in the year 1804, a wide tubby boat lay in twelve feet of water, just outside the line of breakers beneath the cliffs, about a mile and a half from the village. The sun had been down some two hours, but there was enough of twilight to show to any one out at sea—the boat being invisible from the land—that it contained two lads, one a tall, slight, but muscular youth of seventeen or thereabouts, the other a thicker, sturdier boy, who looked older, but was, in fact, a year or more younger than his companion.

"Well, Maister Dick," said the younger boy, "I reckon we'd better go home-along; it do seem as if the water be too clear to-night."

"They're not on the feed, Sam, that's certain," replied Dick Trevanion. "But I don't like going empty-handed. I'm thinking of supper."

"It do be queer, sure enough. 'Tis a hot night, and they mostly comes in close when 'tis hot, and the biggest comes the closest. I 'spect what us do want is a bit of a tumble, to stir up the bottom and muddy the water."

Dick Trevanion had come out at sunset with his companion Sam Pollex to fish for salmon bass, which at this time of year were usually plentiful along the coast. For two hours they had had no luck. Every now and then a ripple and spirt on the smooth surface showed that fish were sporting beneath; but though they changed the bait, trying squid, pilchard, spider-crab in turn; varied the length of line and the weight of the lead; trailed the bait where they last saw the surface disturbed—though they tried every device known to them to lure the fish, they had not as yet been rewarded with a single bite. It was exasperating. Dick knew that the larder at home was bare, and had set his heart on carrying back two or three fish for supper and next morning's breakfast.

"It will be high-water in half-an-hour," he said. "We'll wait till then, and no longer."

Baiting his hook with cuttle-fish, he got Sam to row slowly up the shore towards a spot where the sea broke gently over a yard or two of half-submerged rocks. The air was very still; there was no sound save the light rustle of the waves

washing the foot of the cliff. As the sky darkened and the last faint radiance vanished from the west, the stars appeared and the shade beneath the cliff became deeper. Sam rowed up and down for some minutes, Dick hauling in his line once or twice to see that the hook was not fouled with sea-weed; but still there was no sign of fish.

All at once, when he was on the point of giving up, he felt a slight tug at the line, which began immediately to slip through his fingers.

"At last!" he whispered, jumping to his feet so hastily as to set the boat rocking.

He held the line loosely until a dozen yards had run out, then tightened his grasp with a jerk. Meanwhile Sam had thrown the anchor overboard.

"He's a whopper," said Dick, letting his line run again. "See; there he goes!"

He pointed to a slight phosphorescent glow on the water about twenty yards away. The line was running out fast. It was only a hundred yards long, and he must check the rush of the fish, or he would lose line and all. Grasping the twine with both hands, he exerted a steady strain, at one moment being almost jerked out of the boat by the violent struggles of the fish. He set his feet against the gunwale and pulled again. With a suddenness that threw him backwards the tension relaxed.

"He's gone, Sam! He's torn away the hook," he cried.

"Scrounch un for a rebel!" said Sam indignantly. "Why couldn't he bide quiet!"

Dick wound up his line rapidly, feeling no resistance until he had recovered about thirty yards of it. Then once more it began to slip away.

"He's not gone yet, Sam, after all. I'll have him, sure as I'm alive."

Steadily he worked the fish in. For a few moments he would draw in the line without resistance; then there was a jerk; it swerved to right, to left; and he could merely hold his own in the desperate struggle. But gradually, fight as the fish might, it was drawn nearer and nearer to the boat. At the broken water it spent its last energies; phosphorescent flashes showed where it was dashing to and fro in the vain effort to regain its liberty. Then, its strength exhausted, it suffered itself to be dragged slowly towards the boat.

Sam was eagerly on the watch, bending over the gunwale to seize the fish as soon as it came alongside. Suddenly he flung out his hands, only to draw them back with a cry. He had pricked them against the fish's sharp dorsal fin. Once more he stooped, and as Dick hauled hard on the line, Sam got his arms beneath the fish, and with a mighty heave cast it into the bottom, where it struggled for a moment and then lay still.

"A beauty, sure enough," said Sam.

"Worth waiting for," remarked Dick. "'Tis getting late, and Mother will

have given me up, so we'll go now. He's big enough to give us two meals at least."

They bent down to disengage the hook and wind up the line. So intent had they been on the capture of the bass that neither had noticed, until that moment, a smack about three-quarters of a mile out at sea, sailing rapidly across the bay towards St. Cuby's Cove. The moon was rising, faintly illuminating the vessel, but casting a deep shadow on the water immediately beneath the cliff, so that the boys were invisible from the smack. Familiar as they were with all the small craft belonging to Polkerran, they knew at the first glance, in spite of the dim light, that the smack was a stranger.

"She's not Cornish," said Dick, taking a long look at her.

"Nor even English," added Sam. "Maybe a Frenchman from Rusco, though 'tis early for the running to begin."

"They won't run a cargo at the Cove, surely. The path up the cliff is too steep, and Joe Penwarden's cottage too near. I think she's a stranger that doesn't know the coast."

They watched the smack until she rounded the headland between them and the Cove, and then began to row in the opposite direction. They had just reached the end of the promontory bounding Trevanion Bay on the north, and had swung round landward, when, their faces now being toward the open sea, they saw something that caused them to pause in mid-stroke. Perhaps a mile in the offing like a phantom barque in the quivering radiance of the moonlight, lay a large three-masted vessel with sails aback. Through the still air came the sound of creaking tackle, and the boys, resting on their oars, saw a boat lowered, and then another, which pulled off in the same direction as the smack.

"This be some jiggery, Maister Dick," said Sam. "Do 'ee think, now, it be Boney come spying for a place to land?"

Those were the days when the imminence of a French invasion kept the people of the southern counties in a constant state of alarm.

"Boney wouldn't come to this coast," replied Dick. "He wouldn't risk his flat boats round the Lizard. No; he'll make some lonely quiet spot on the south coast; Boney won't trouble us."

"Well, daze me if I can make head or tail o't," said Sam.

"Pull in a bit, so that we can see without being seen."

From the shadowed headland they watched in silence. The boats had scarcely gone a third of a mile across the bay when a shrill whistle cleft the air. They at once put about, returned to the larger vessel, and were hoisted in, whereupon the ship made sail, and in the course of ten or fifteen minutes disappeared into the darkness.

"There be queer things a-doing, I b'lieve," said Sam, while the vessel was

still in sight.

"Maybe," rejoined Dick, "but we don't know. Don't speak a word of it till I give you leave, Sam. 'Tis a matter for Mr. Mildmay if any one."

"Zackly. I can keep a still tongue with any man; and now seems to I we'd best go home-along."

He dipped the oars, and pulled, not towards the Beal, beyond which lay the village, but towards the head of Trevanion Bay. It was now high-water. Below the cliff only a narrow stretch of white sand was visible. Within ten yards of this beach Sam shipped oars, and the boat was carried along until its nose stuck in the sand. Both the boys then sprang out, and dragged their craft up to the base of the cliff beyond high-water mark.

"'Tis lucky tide be high," said Sam, wiping his brow with the back of his hand, "for 'tis a hot night, and old boat be desp'rate heavy."

"True, she's both heavy and old," said Dick, as he secured her to a post driven deep into the sand. "She's a good deal older than you or I, Sam."

"Ay, true, and Feyther have give her more knocks than he've give me. You can see his marks on her, but you can't see 'em on me—hee! hee!"

Dick laughed. Many a time had the planks been repaired by old Reuben Pollex, the signs of whose rough and ready handiwork were easily discoverable.

Carrying his tackle, Dick ordered Sam to bring the bass, and led the way along a steep path that zigzagged up the face of the cliff, being soon hidden from the sea by knobs and corners of rock. It was a toilsome climb; the cliff was two hundred feet high, but the windings made the path three times as long. When they reached the top, Sam found it necessary once more to wipe his brow; then followed his young master across a stretch of coarse bent towards a large building, mistily lit by the moonbeams, about a hundred yards distant.

The Towers, at one time a manor house of no little importance, was now in the stage of decrepitude. It had been for centuries in the possession of the Trevanions, who, in the time of King Charles I., had been a family of great wealth and influence, owning estates, it was said, in three counties. But the squire of that time had sold part of his property to provide money for the King, whose cause he espoused with unselfish loyalty, and from that time the family fortunes had gradually declined, partly through the recklessness of certain of the owners, partly through sheer ill-luck. For many years wealth had been drawn from tin and copper mines beneath the surface, parts of whose apparatus, in the shape of ruined sheds, scaffoldings, pipes, conduits, broken chains, strewed the ground in desolate abandonment. In the early manhood of the present squire, Dick's father, the lodes had shown signs of exhaustion, and Mr. Trevanion, wishing to keep the mines going as much for the sake of the miners as for his own interest, had spent large sums on opening up new workings, which proved unprofitable. He had

mortgaged acre after acre in this fierce struggle with misfortune, having more than his share of the doggedness of his race; but all his efforts were fruitless; the mines were closed and the men dismissed; and the Squire himself at last had no property unencumbered except the land on which the Towers stood, and the barren cliff between the house and the end of the promontory, almost worthless save for the little grazing it afforded.

To this he had clung with grim tenacity. He was often hard put to it to pay the interest on his mortgages as it became due; his little household, consisting now only of himself, his wife and son, and the two Pollexes, often had barely enough to eat; many a time he was tempted to raise money on the little remnant of his property; but for long years, as often as the temptation came, he had resisted it. Though he would not admit the fact, even to himself, superstition had a good deal to do with his determination. He scoffed at the country folks' belief in omens and witches, and professed to think nothing of an old motto which had attached to his family for near a hundred and fifty years. In the reign of Charles II., when the Trevanions owned estates not only in Cornwall, but the adjoining counties, the spendthrift whose extravagance had been a partial cause of their ruin had, at some crisis in his affairs, consulted a wise woman who lived alone in a little cottage on the moor. He brought nothing from his interview with her but the couplet:

> Trevanion, whate'er thy fortune be,
> Hold fast the rock by the western sea.

Like his forefathers, Roger Trevanion derided the witch's counsel, but, like them, too, he had "held fast" until, a year before the opening of our story, he had been forced to relax his grip. Now every rood of the land, to the uttermost extremity of the Beal, was in the hands of mortgagees, and the dread of foreclosure weighed on the Squire like a nightmare.

The Towers had been allowed to fall into decay. Only one wing was now inhabited; the remainder was ruinous, and for the most part roofless. In the south wing lived the Squire, now past fifty years of age, his wife, a few years younger, and Dick, their only son. Their sole attendants were Reuben Pollex, a widower, who had grown up from boyhood with the Squire, and steadily refused to leave him, and his boy Sam. These two did all the household work, grew vegetables, bred poultry and pigs, the sale of which, together with the small sums obtained by letting to neighbouring farmers the grazing rights of the cliff, was all that kept the family from abject poverty. Dick himself was, to a large extent, the family provider. With Sam's help he snared rabbits, shot wild fowl, and fished along the coast. His bronzed skin and hard flesh bespoke an active life in the open air,

and as he went about in his jersey, rough breeches, and long boots, he would scarcely have been distinguishable from the fisher lads of the village but for a certain springiness of gait and a look of refinement and thoughtfulness.

Dick and his companion hastened towards the south wing, where an unusually bright light in one of the lower rooms proclaimed that the Squire had company. While Sam took the fish, which turned out to be a fine fourteen-pounder, into the kitchen, Dick changed his boots, washed his hands, and entered the living-room. His father sat at the head of the table, his mother at the foot; between them was a man of about the Squire's age, dressed in a blue coat with brass buttons, with "seaman" written on every inch of him. The table was covered with a spotless but much-darned cloth; the only viands were a loaf of bread and half a cheese. A large brown jug contained ale brewed in the family brew-house by old Pollex.

"Why, Dick, how late you are!" said his mother. "We are just going to begin supper."

"Better put it off for a few minutes, Mother. I've brought home a fine bass. How d'ye do, Mr. Mildmay?"

"Ah, Dick, glad to see you, my boy! Good fishing to-night, eh?"

"One catch after two hours, sir," replied Dick. "The weather's too fine, I suppose."

"Shall we wait, Mr. Mildmay?" asked his hostess.

"As you please, ma'am."

Mr. Mildmay, a naval lieutenant, now in command of a revenue cutter, knew very well by the expression of the lady's face that the postponement of the meal was welcome to her. He was an old friend of the Squire's—a messmate indeed, for Mr. Trevanion had served for a few years in the Navy; and his acquaintance with the penury of the household had neither diminished his friendship nor damped the cordiality of the Squire's welcome. In these days there were few visitors to the Towers, and those who came knew what they had to expect in the way of entertainment. Such as might have looked merely for the satisfaction of the inner man had long since ceased to call. Mr. Mildmay could have supped contentedly on bread and cheese. The meagreness of the fare would have troubled Mrs. Trevanion the most, and the look upon her face told Dick how welcome was his addition to it.

Dick went into the kitchen to see how Sam was getting on, and soon returned with a portion of the fish broiled and garnished with herbs.

"As fine a bit of fish as I've tasted," said Mr. Mildmay, "and well cooked, upon my word."

"I am glad you like it," said Mrs. Trevanion, giving Dick privately an ap-

proving smile.

"You'll soon be hard at work, I suppose, sir," said Dick to the lieutenant.

"Yes, no doubt I shall have a merry winter. But I wish the Commissioners would make better arrangements on land. What can I do, with miles of coast to keep an eye on? One riding-officer and a few old excisemen here and there! I can't be everywhere."

"Why don't they, sir?" asked Dick.

"Because every man of muscle is snapped up by the press-gang or the recruiters. Upon my word, I wish Boney would come, if he is coming. When he has had his walloping there'll be a little time to attend to our proper concerns. As it is, with this eternal war going on, the free-traders play ducks and drakes with law and ordinances."

The Squire said nothing. His attitude to smuggling was one of neutrality. His training in the Navy made him in general adverse to the contraband trade; but there was a time, not very long since, when the owners of the Towers were actively engaged in it, or at least accessory to it, and the landowners along the coast regarded it with sympathy, open or secret. Indeed, it is probable that the cask of brandy in Mr. Trevanion's own cellar had never paid duty to the Crown, and old Reuben Pollex, who loved his "dish of tay," would certainly not have been able to enjoy it in that time of high prices unless he had known a little back room in Polkerran where it was easy to slip in and out secretly, and without the knowledge of the exciseman.

"The smugglers are getting bolder and bolder, confound 'em," Mr. Mildmay went on. "With the land force so weak, what's the result? If I'm called to a spot, ten to one by a trick, I must leave the rest of the coast unguarded. As you know, the only man permanently in this neighbourhood is old Penwarden, who is zealous enough, but not so active as a younger man would be."

"No, poor man," said Mrs. Trevanion. "He has often said to me that he fears the Government will replace him. He will cling to his duty as long as he can for the sake of his old sister. You know he supports her, in Truro, Mr. Mildmay."

"I know it, and I'm not the man to put him out of a job, though one of these days a Commissioner of Customs will make his appearance, and then I'll get a wigging."

All this while Dick had been considering whether he ought to tell the lieutenant about the strange vessels he had seen. He knew that smuggling was the only matter on which there was a certain constraint between his father and Mr. Mildmay. It was tacitly understood between them that the Squire would not round on the smugglers. On the other hand, the revenue officer knew that anything he told the Squire would be perfectly safe with him. He therefore discussed the subject quite openly with his old messmate, though, like a wise general, he

never spoke about any plans that he had in view.

Dick made up his mind to say nothing. The lieutenant's cutter was lying in the little harbour, and if he mentioned what he had seen, Mr. Mildmay would certainly hurry away and sail in chase of the stranger. What the Squire would not do, his son could not. But he had scarcely come to this decision when matters took an unexpected turn.

"By the way, Squire," said the lieutenant, "I've just heard from Plymouth that the *Aimable Vertu*—precious fine name for a rascally privateer—is showing herself very active in the Channel. She made two captures last week, and was sighted two days ago off Falmouth, where a barque only just managed to escape her. She's said to be a vessel of extraordinary speed. The Government would give a good deal to catch her and hang her captain, that daredevil Frenchman, Delarousse; but it's with privateers as it is with smugglers: we can't be everywhere at once, and while we're fighting the French on the high seas, I suppose our home waters must be left to the enemy."

This led to an exchange of reminiscences of privateer-hunting during the American war, when both were young in the service. Meanwhile Dick felt uncomfortable. What if the larger vessel he had lately seen was this very privateer, the *Aimable Vertu*? In that case it was no question of smuggling, but of piracy. He felt that he ought at least to mention the matter, yet hesitated to speak without consulting his father. By-and-by there came an opportunity of speaking to him privately. While Mr. Mildmay was conversing with Mrs. Trevanion, Dick slipped to the Squire's side and told him in a sentence or two what he had seen.

"Mildmay," cried the Squire, "hark to this. Dick tells me that an hour or more ago he saw a strange three-master in the bay. She lowered a couple of boats, but recalled 'em, and sailed away westward. D'ye think she's the privateer?"

"Dash my bones, Dick," cried the lieutenant, starting up, "why on earth didn't you speak before? Oh! I see—I see; I won't reproach you; but I'll be as mad as a hatter if 'tis the rascal and she gets away. Good night to you all; you'll excuse me, Mrs. Trevanion. Oh, you young dog!"

He shook his fist at Dick, and hurried from the room.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

John Trevanion Returns Home

About half-an-hour before Mr. Mildmay left the Squire's supper-table so hurriedly, a man laboured up the last few feet of the winding path leading from the beach of St. Cuby's Cove to the cliff-top, which he gained at a point rather more than half-a-mile from the spot where Dick and Sam had previously ascended. He was a tall man, his build and figure indicating a capacity for lithe and rapid movement, so that the heaviness of his gait was probably due solely to the size and weight of the leathern trunk he carried. Like Sam Pollex, he paused for a moment on reaching the top to recover his breath and mop his brow; then, shouldering his trunk, he struck into a narrow footpath that led over the cliff. It branched into two after a few yards, the right-hand branch going direct to the Towers, the left-hand running away from the sea to join a rough, ill-made road which led past the gate of the Towers to the village.

On reaching the fork the pedestrian did not hesitate, as a stranger might have done, but took the left-hand path. After proceeding a few steps along it, however, he made a sudden half-turn, and stopped, looking across the open ground towards the Towers, where one room on the ground floor made a patch of light against the dark background of sky and sea. The man stood but a moment, then resumed his march along the path in the same direction as before. A smile wreathed his lips, and he muttered to himself. He went on at a smart pace over the level ground, turned to the right when he came to the road, passed the Towers' gates, which he observed were broken, and walked for another quarter of a mile before he again halted. Then he set his burden down by the roadside, sat upon it, and wiped his heated face, where the smile had been replaced by a frown.

"I daresay I'm a fool," he muttered in a growling undertone. "Why did I chafe and gall myself with carrying this plaguey trunk? However, maybe 'tis best."

While he was still resting, he heard footsteps upon his right hand, and looked round quickly. The moon was up, and he saw a young fisherman rolling along a path that ran into the road a few paces distant.

"Ahoy, there!" cried the traveller in a deep and mellow voice.

The fisherman, who had not as yet perceived him, came to a sudden stop as the silence of the night was broken thus unexpectedly and so near at hand; then, catching sight of the figure on the trunk, he slipped off the path on to the grass and began to run.

"Ahoy, there! What ails you?" cried the man. "D'you want to earn a groat?"

Reassured, apparently, at the mention of so material a thing as a groat, the fisherman turned and came slowly towards the speaker.

"Did you think I was a ghost?" the stranger went on with a laugh. "I want you to carry this trunk to the village, and I'll give you a groat for your pains."

"I'll do it, maister," replied the fisher, shouldering the trunk. "But ye give me a fright, that ye did."

"Why, you never saw a ghost with a brown face, and a black hat, and a blue coat, not to speak of brown breeches and long boots, did you?"

"I won't say I did, but the neighbours do say there be ghosteses up-along by St. Cuby's Well. Maybe yer a furriner, maister?"

"No, no; I'm good Cornish like yourself," replied the man, who knew that to Cornishmen all who lived beyond the borders of the duchy were accounted foreigners.

"Well, I can see plain ye be a high person, and jown me if I know why ye carry yer own bag and traipse afoot, instead o' coming a-horseback, or in a po'chay."

The traveller shot a glance at the lad. He saw a rugged profile, a brow on which thought had carved no furrows, a half-open mouth: the physiognomy of a simple countryman. Then, after a scarcely perceptible pause, he said:

"Well, I hate close folks who make a secret of everything, so I'll tell you. I got a lift in a travelling wagon from Newquay, but the wretch that drove it was bound for Truro, and point-blank refused to bring me farther than the cross-roads a couple of miles back. So now you know, my man, and I daresay you could tell a stranger what I've told you."

"Sure and sartin. You be come from Newquay in a wagon, and when ye got to cross-roads driver said he'd be jowned if he'd carr' 'ee a step furder."

"You have it pat; and now step out; 'tis getting latish."

They proceeded along the silent road at a good pace toward the village, the traveller dropping a remark now and then from which the fisherman understood that he was not a complete stranger to the district. Just as they reached a spot where the road dipped somewhat steeply, there were sounds of rapid footsteps behind them, and in a few moments two men came up, one Mr. Mildmay, the revenue officer, the other an old weather-beaten fellow in seaman's clothes. He wore a black shade over his right eye, and the unnaturally short distance between his nose and the tip of his chin showed that he had lost his teeth. This was Joe Penwarden, the veteran exciseman who had been mentioned at Squire Trevanion's supper-table. On leaving the Towers, Mr. Mildmay had gone first to the right, and fetched Penwarden from his little cottage on the cliff, and then retraced his steps through the Squire's grounds. Had he been a few minutes earlier, he could hardly have failed to see the pedestrian trudging with his trunk on his shoulder along the path that ran a score of yards from Penwarden's cottage.

"Halt, in the King's name!" cried Mr. Mildmay, as he overtook the two men who had preceded him along the road.

"I'll halt if 'ee bid me in the King's name," said the fisher, recognising the

[image]

"'HALT, IN THE KING'S NAME!' CRIED MR. MILDMAY"

revenue officer, whom he, like the population of Polkerran generally, held in detestation mingled with unwilling respect, "but I bean't doin' nowt agen the law, I tell 'ee, carr'in' a genel'um's traps for a groat."

"A gentleman, is it?" said Mr. Mildmay, turning to the traveller. "I must ask you to tell me your business."

"And you shall have an answer. I come from Newquay, and am going to seek a night's lodging at the Five Pilchards, if you have no objection, captain."

Mr. Mildmay looked suspiciously at the speaker, whose accent was that of an educated man. He was not the type of person to meet afoot with his trunk on the high road. Old Penwarden's single eye also was fixed on the stranger's swarthy, bearded face.

"No more objection, my dear sir, than you will have to my taking a look at the inside of that trunk of yours. In the King's name!"

"With all the pleasure in life. Amos, or whatever your name is, set down the trunk for the inspection of this exceedingly zealous officer of His Majesty's."

The trunk was opened, and Penwarden turned over its contents, Mr. Mildmay looking on. He found articles of apparel, a sword, some bundles of papers, a bag of money, a large leather-bound book, a brace of pistols, and sundry insignificant articles, none of which was chargeable with duty.

"Thank you, sir," said Mr. Mildmay, when the inspection was concluded. "I am sorry to have detained you, but in these times——"

"Quite so, captain," interrupted the other. "In these times one cannot be too particular. I bid you good-night, and better luck at your next examination."

Mr. Mildmay hurried on with Penwarden, and was soon lost to sight.

"Who's that popinjay?" said the traveller, when the lieutenant was out of hearing.

"That be Maister Mildmay, the preventive officer, and a dratted furriner," replied the fisher. "He've been in these parts two years now, and a meddlesome feller he be too. Hee! hee! He got nowt for his pains this time, maister, and if there's one thing I do like to see, 'tis the preventives fooled. Hee! hee!"

"Old Penwarden looks the same as ever, except for the shade over his eye."

"Do 'ee know him, maister?"

"I used to, years ago."

"Iss, old Joe be a decent good soul of his trade, and we was vexed, trewly,

when 'a got his eye put out in a fight by Lunnan Cove. But there, he shouldn' meddle with honest free-traders. Lawk-a-massy! I be speakin' free."

"Oh, you're quite safe with me. I'm a bit of a free-trader myself, in my way."

They went on, and in a few minutes came to an inn at the lower end of the village near the beach. This was the Five Pilchards. The village boasted another inn, a hundred yards away, called the Three Jolly Mariners; but it belied its name, being frequented mainly by farm labourers.

The traveller paid and dismissed the fisher, and rapped at the closed door. It was opened by the innkeeper himself, a podgy, red-nosed, blear-eyed fellow, with an underhung lip, and a chin like a dewlap. A small candle-lamp hung above in the doorway, showing a dim yellow ray upon the smiling face of the visitor. The innkeeper started back.

"I startled you, eh?" said the visitor. "Yes, it is I myself—John Trevanion come home again. I am getting on in years, Doubledick, and I felt I should like to die among my friends."

"Ha, ha! Ho, ho!" laughed the innkeeper. "'Tis Maister John, for sure, come home with his little jokes. Come along in, maister, come in; daze me if I bean't as pleased as pigs to see 'ee."

"Take me to a room, Doubledick, and get some clean sheets, will you? And send me up something passable to eat and drink; I'll sup alone."

"Iss, sure. I'll give 'ee the best I've got in the house. What do 'ee say, now, to collops and fried taties, or a nice bit o' bass, or a dish o' pickled pilchurs, and some real old—you know what, Maister John? Hee, hee!"

"Whatever you like, Doubledick, only be quick about it."

The innkeeper led his visitor along a passage past the open door of the bar-parlour. John Trevanion glanced in as he went by. A number of rough fishermen in various garments sat drinking on settles along the wall. The most noticeable among them was a man of vast breadth, brawny and muscular, his strong features tanned copper-colour by years of sea-faring, his thick hair and beard the hue of ebony. The sleeves of his scarlet jersey were turned up, revealing brown and hairy forearms that would have befitted a Hercules.

"Tonkin is still flourishing, I see," said Trevanion in an undertone to the innkeeper as he passed.

"Iss, Zacky Tonkin be as great a man as ever he wer, and a tarrible plague o' life to the preventives. Mr. Curgenven—ye mind of him, Maister John?—died two year back, and they sent a furrin feller, Mildmay by name, to look arter us mortals—hee! hee! He be a good feller at his job, a sight better than Curgenven, who loved an easy life, as 'ee could remember; but Zacky do know how to deal wi' un, he do so. Oh, 'tis a rare deceivin' game he plays wi' un. He's up-along and down-along, and this Mildmay feller atraipsin' arter un, by sea and land, 'tis

all one to Zacky. Here's yer room, Maister John. Do 'ee set yerself down and I'll bring 'ee up a supper fit for a lord in no time."

He looked at his visitor doubtfully for a moment.

"I'd axe 'ee one thing," he said. "Be I to let 'em know down below as you be in house?"

"To be sure, Doubledick, there's nothing to conceal. You might remember to say that I've come from London—no, hang me, I am forgetting; from Newquay directly, from London ultimately. You understand?"

"Iss, I understand. No matter where 'ee come from, if 'twere from old Nick hisself, they'll be glad to see 'ee, that they will."

John Trevanion kept to his room until the morning. At nine o'clock he left the inn and made his way through the village by back lanes, to escape the notice of such fishermen as might remember him, and proceeded at a quick pace along the road to the Towers. He was dressed this morning in a black hat turned up at one side with a rosette, a bottle-green frock coat, white kerseymere breeches, and long boots. "He looks summat older and nearer graveyard, as must we all," remarked Doubledick to a crony as he watched him depart, "but he's a fine figure of a man still."

Arriving at the Towers, John Trevanion lifted the latch of the door leading to the inhabited portion, and entered with the freedom of one of the family. The Squire was at breakfast with his wife and son.

"Come in," he shouted, in answer to a tap on the door, and rose from his chair as the well-dressed visitor entered, thinking, as might have been gathered from his manner, that it was one of the few friends who had the freedom of the house. But at a second glance his demeanour altered.

"You have made a mistake, I think," he said stiffly, resting both hands on the table. His fine face was flushed, and Dick, looking on in wonderment, noticed that the riband that bound his queue of grey hair was quivering.

"Surely, Cousin Roger, you'll let bygones be bygones," said John Trevanion suavely. "'Tis now—I don't know how many years ago."

"When I last saw you, sir, I bade you never enter my door again. I do not call back my words, and see no reason to do so. You will oblige me by relieving me of your presence."

The words came sternly from his trembling lips. Dick felt himself go hot and cold.

"Is there no word repentance in your dictionary, Roger Trevanion?" said his cousin bitterly. "You're a good Christian, I suppose—go to church and say the Commandments, 'love your neighbour,' and all that; but you'll harden your heart against one of your own kin that had the ill-luck to offend you——"

"Stop!" thundered the Squire. "The offence to me I make nothing of; you

have shamed your name and put yourself beyond the pale of honest men. 'Ill-luck,' you call it! 'Twas no ill-luck—though we Trevanions have enough of that, God knows!—but the act and nature of a scoundrel. I am ashamed you bear my name. I disown you. Take yourself out of my sight."

His wife laid a gentle hand on his arm.

"A pretty welcome, on my soul, for a man who has lived down the faults of his youth," said John Trevanion. "I tell you, Roger Trevanion, I will not put up with such usage—I will not! I don't want your forgiveness; a fig for your friendship! But I demand decent treatment from you, and——"

"By the Lord that made me," cried the Squire, "if you do not instantly remove yourself from this house I will have you thrown out. Do you hear me, sir?"

John Trevanion's eyes glittered as he returned his cousin's wrathful look. He half opened his mouth, closed it with a snap; then an inscrutable smile stole upon his face. He shrugged, turned on his heel, and went silently from the room.

The Squire sank into his chair. The flush had vanished from his face, leaving it ashy pale. His hands trembled with excess of indignation.

"My dear, calm yourself," said his wife soothingly. "He is gone."

He made no reply. Dick sat silent, every nerve tingling with excitement. In a minute his father rose, leaving his coffee half finished, and strode heavily from the room.

"Mother, what does it mean?" asked Dick breathlessly. "Was that cousin John?"

"Yes, my dear. Do not name him to your father. I will go to him; I fear he will be ill. Finish your breakfast, Dick, and go to the Parsonage. You had better stay there all day; Mr. Carlyon will give you some dinner."

She followed her husband, leaving Dick to his breakfast and his wondering thoughts. He faintly remembered his cousin John Trevanion, who ten years before had lived in the now empty Dower House, between the Towers and the village, as his father had done before him. John Trevanion had then been a gay, careless, happy-go-lucky young man of thirty, who lived on the Squire's bounty, riding his horse among the county yeomanry, hunting with his neighbours, roistering it with the most rakish young blades of the adjacent manors, joining in daredevil escapades with the smugglers. His antics and riotings became a by-word in the country-side, and Dick remembered how, when a young boy, he had witnessed several violent scenes between his father and John after some particularly outrageous exploit. Old Pollex had told him that the Squire had threatened many times that unless John reformed he would no longer be allowed to occupy the Dower House, and had forgiven him over and over again. At last a day came when John disappeared. Dick had never learnt the true reason; the Squire never

mentioned his cousin; Pollex, when questioned, shook his head and pursed up his lips, and said that John Trevanion was a villain; and Dick had formed the conclusion from stray hints that the ne'er-do-well cousin had been driven out of the country by some criminal act. For ten years he had not been heard of, and he had wholly slipped from Dick's thoughts.

Having finished his breakfast, Dick took his cap and set off for his two-mile walk to the Parsonage, where he went daily to receive lessons in classics and literature from Mr. Carlyon, the vicar. He had never been to school, his father's resources being incapable of bearing the expense. A few years before this time the Squire had been seriously disturbed about his son's education. He was himself a sufficiently competent tutor in mathematics, but what classics he ever had had wholly left him, and he was miserable in the thought that the boy was growing up without the elements of the education of a gentleman. At this point the vicar stepped in with a proposal. He was a liberal-minded, genial man, a fellow of his college, a student of his county's antiquities, and in his 'varsity days had been a notable athlete. Now, though well on in years, he would often, on a Sunday afternoon after church, lend his countenance to wrestling bouts and games of baseball among the village youths. He rode to hounds, and judged at coursing matches, these and similar avocations probably accounting for the fact that a history of the parish, which he had commenced twenty years before, was still unfinished. One day he suggested to the Squire that he should give Dick lessons in Latin and Greek, to keep himself from rusting, as the worthy man delicately put it, but really to make good the deficiency due to his friend's straitened means. Mr. Trevanion gladly accepted the offer, and Dick had now been for five years under the parson's capable tuition.

When Dick returned home in the evening he was met by Sam Pollex in a state of considerable excitement.

"I say, Maister Dick," he said, "this be a fine mossel o' news. Yer cousin John—a rare bad 'un he be—have come home-along."

"I know," replied Dick. "I've seen him."

"Have 'ee, for sure? I hain't seed un, but I heerd tell on un in village. Ike Pendry were goin' along road last night when up comes my genel'um and axed un to carr' his bundle for a groat. He wer traipsin' along from St. Cuby's Cove way, about an hour, it do seem, arter we come up from fishin'."

"Where had he come from?"

"Newquay, 'a said; but 'tis my belief he come out o' the smack we seed, and clomb the cliff, same as we."

"That's nonsense. He wouldn't come in a smack, and if he did he wouldn't land at the Cove. He has made no secret of his return, and there's no reason why he shouldn't land at the jetty."

"Ah, well, things be as they be; but I reckon he come in the smack, all the same."

"What is he doing in the village?"

"He bean't there no longer. This arternoon he packed up his traps and rid off on one of Doubledick's hosses to Trura. Feyther seed un go. 'A called to un as he rid by. 'Hoy, Reuben!' says he, "tis a cold country, this!' That just 'mazed Feyther, 'cos it was a frizzlin' day. 'Spect he've been in furrin parts, wheer what's bilin' to we is nawthin' but chill-off to they. So 'tis, to be sure."

At this piece of news Dick felt much relieved. He hoped that Polkerran had seen the last of John Trevanion. But it turned out that the return of the native was only the first scene in a series of strange happenings that were to be long remembered in the village, and were vitally to affect the fortunes of the family at the Towers.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

The Blow Falls

For some days after the event just related, life at Polkerran and the neighbourhood flowed on its customary sluggish tide. The fishermen were idle, waiting for pilchards to appear off the coast. The harvest had been gathered in from the fields. There was little for the village folk to do except to gossip. Men gathered in knots on the jetty and at the inn-doors, chatting about the return of John Trevanion, the strange vessels that had been seen, and the revenue cutter's failure to catch them, the appearance of a ghost at St. Cuby's Well, the prospects of the fishing season, the chances of making good "runs," and besting Mr. Mildmay and the excisemen. At the Towers there was nothing to show that anything had happened to disturb the placid surface of existence, except that the Squire was more silent than usual, and went about with a pale face and a preoccupied and troubled look.

One afternoon, after the lapse of about a week, Dick, leaving the Parsonage after his daily lessons, was surprised to see his father approaching across the glebe. The Squire was on foot: his last horse had been sold long ago.

"Ha, Dick!" he said, as he met his son, "you have finished with Greeks and Romans for the day, then. I have come for a word with the parson. Shall be home to supper."

Dick went on, and his father entered the house.

"Ah, Trevanion, I am glad to see you," said Mr. Carlyon, cordially, his keen eyes not failing to note a certain gravity in his old friend's expression.

"I want your advice, Carlyon," said Mr. Trevanion abruptly.

"And you shall have the best I can give, as you know well. Come into the garden and smoke a pipe with me. Good, honest tobacco, even if 'tis contraband—and I can't swear to that—will do no harm to you or me."

When they were seated side by side in wide wicker chairs beneath the shade of an elm-tree, the Squire drew from his pocket a folded paper which had been sealed at the edges.

"Read that," he said, handing it to the vicar.

Mr. Carlyon carefully rubbed his spectacles, set them on his nose with deliberation, and slowly opened the paper.

"H'm! God bless my soul! Poor old Trevanion!" he murmured, as he read, unconscious that his words were audible. "This is bad news, Trevanion," he said, aloud, looking over the rims of his spectacles with grave concern.

"It is. It is the very worst," said the Squire, gloomily. "It is the end of things for me."

"No, no; don't say that. Every cloud has a silver lining."

"A musty proverb, Carlyon. You don't see the silver lining in a thunder-storm, and it doesn't keep your skin dry. This spells ruin, ruin irretrievable."

The parson pressed his lips together, and read the document again. It was a brief intimation from a Truro attorney of his client's intention to foreclose on the mortgages he held upon certain parcels of land, if the sums advanced on them were not repaid within a month from that date.

"This is not your own man?" said the parson.

"No. I never heard of him before."

"What is the extent of the obligation?"

"Two thousand pounds. I can't muster as many shillings. I am in arrear with the interest. Within a month we shall be in the poor-house—a noble end for Trevanion of the Towers!"

"Tut, tut! You take too black a view of things. 'I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.'"

"But I have, and so have you, Carlyon. I see things as they are. 'Tis no surprise to me; these many months I have felt the blow might fall at any moment; but the condemned man hopes to the last for a reprieve, and I have gone from day to day, like a weakling and simpleton, refusing to face the facts. Not that I could have done anything; I am bankrupt; there's no way out of it."

"Who holds the mortgages?"

"Sir Bevil Portharvan. I have nothing to say against him. He has been very

patient. A man of business would have foreclosed long ago, though he would have got little by it, for the mines are worked out, the Towers is a ruin, and the land will grow next to nothing but thistles and burdock. 'Twas to be."

"But he can't take the Towers from you. Do you not hold fast to that?"

"I did till a year ago, but there's a small bond on that now—a paltry hundred pounds; I could raise no more on it and the cliff. Sir Bevil does not hold that, however; 'tis my own lawyer."

The parson sawed the air with his hand, a trick of his when perplexed.

"Well, old friend," he said, "I am sorry for you, from the bottom of my heart. If I had the money, I would gladly lend it you, but 'passing rich on forty pound a year,' you know——"

"I know well. 'Tis not for that I come to you. Give me your advice. What can I do? I must leave the Towers; what can I do for a livelihood? Like the man in the Book, 'I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.' What a miserable fool I was to throw up the sea when I came into the property! And yet I don't know. Look at Mildmay; a year or two younger, 'tis true, but still a lieutenant, and thought fit for nothing better than to chase luggers and circumvent the trade. I've no interest with the Admiralty; they've enough to do to provide for the seamen invalided from the wars. What can an old fool past fifty do to earn his salt? Years ago I had my dreams of paying off the burdens and reviving the Trevanion fortunes; but they have long since vanished into thin air; the task needed a better head than mine. And what little chance I might have had was doomed by the misdeeds of that scoundrel cousin of mine——"

"I heard that he reappeared the other day. I hoped it was not true."

"'Twas true. He had the boldness, the effrontery, to come to me with his 'let bygones be bygones,' and sneering at my Christianity. You know the facts, Carlyon. You know how, but that I impoverished myself, he would to this day be in the hulks or slaving in the plantations. I was too tender, I was indeed. I ought to have let the law take its course, and put my pride in my pocket. 'Twas a weakness, I own it; and now 'tis time to take my payment."

"No, my good friend, you did right to keep your name unstained. But I wonder, indeed I do, that John Trevanion has dared to show his face here again."

"Oh, 'tis no wonder," said the Squire bitterly. "No one knew of his crime but three, you and I and John Hammond; only Hammond had proof of it, and he is dead. My worthless cousin learnt of his death, I warrant you; the Devil has quick couriers for such as he; and he comes back, relying on my weakness and your holiness. But I'll speak no more of him; he is gone, and I hope I shall never see him again. There's my boy Dick: what is to become of him? He is seventeen; he ought to be making his way in the world. I can't put him to a profession; I keep him at home drudging for us; and but for your kindness, Carlyon, he would

be as ignorant and raw as the meanest farm-hind. 'Tis not right; 'tis cruelty to the lad; and he will live to curse the day he was born a Trevanion."

"Come, come, this is not like you, Squire," said Mr. Carlyon warmly. "The lad is doing very well. He lives an open, honest life, and a useful one. What if his hands are horny? He makes good progress with his books, too, and will be fit in a year or two to win a sizarship at Oxford, and he will do well there, take orders, or maybe become secretary to some great person. You need fear nothing for Dick. No; 'tis for yourself and your good wife we must think. And now let us put our heads together. What say you to visiting Sir Bevil, and seeking further grace? I will myself undertake the office."

"Never!" cried the Squire firmly. "I will have no man supplicating and beseeching on my behalf. No; let what must come, come; never will I whine and grovel for mercy."

"You are an obstinate old fool, Roger Trevanion," said the parson, laying a friendly hand on the other's arm. "But I own I sympathise with your feeling. Well, then, my counsel is—and you may scorn it—do nothing."

"Nothing!"

"Simply wait. The foreclosure must come, I see that; but the other mortgagee has not moved; you will still have a roof above you; you make no profit of the mortgaged lands, and so will be not a whit worse off than you are now, save in the one point of pride. That pride of yours has been your snare, Trevanion."

"Well I know it!"

"I don't preach, except on Sundays, but I believe in my heart that this trouble will turn out for your good. Hold fast your rock, old friend; 'twas sound advice, even though it came from a witch. No man can give you better, and I am superstitious enough to believe that while you follow it the Trevanions will not come to beggary."

The two friends sat talking for some time longer. When the Squire rose to go away, he said—

"I thank you, Carlyon. You have done me good. I see nothing but darkness ahead, but I'll take your advice; I'll stick to the ship, and keep my colours flying, and who knows?—perhaps I shall weather it out after all."

They shook hands and parted, and the parson returned to his study to read over an ode of Horace in readiness for Dick's lesson next day.

After his conversation with Mr. Carlyon the Squire recovered his wonted serenity. So cheerful was he when he told his wife and son what was going to happen, that they refrained from giving utterance in his presence to their own feelings on the matter, for fear of bringing back his gloom. He rode over one day in the carrier's cart to Truro to pay the interest on the Towers mortgage with the proceeds of a fine litter of pigs, and showed his lawyer the letter he had received

from his professional brother.

"An excellent practitioner, sharp as a needle," said the lawyer. "He came to me a while ago wanting to purchase the little bond I myself hold; but I refused him point-blank, and went so far as to express my surprise at Sir Bevil. He grinned at me, Mr. Trevanion—yes, grinned at me in the most unseemly way. 'Twas not Sir Bevil's doing: that is one comfort."

"Who bought up the bonds, then?"

"That I cannot tell you: I do not know. No doubt a stranger, who has more money than judgment. I am sorry for this; I am indeed; and if there were any chance of getting metal out of the earth I could have transferred your mortgages with the greatest ease. As it is—but there, I won't talk of it. As for my own little bond on the Towers, that may remain till Doomsday so far as I am concerned. It would cut me to the heart to see the old place in the hands of any one but a Trevanion."

"You're a good fellow, Trevenick," said the Squire, "and I'm grateful to you."

"Not at all, not at all, my dear sir. I am perfectly satisfied with my investment."

And the Squire returned home more cheerful than ever, convinced that lawyers were not all as dry as their parchments.

The allotted month sped away. One afternoon, when Dick was at the parson's, Sam Pollex ran at headlong speed up the road from the village, dashed into the house, and forgetting his manners, burst into the Squire's room without knocking or wiping his boots, as he had been strictly enjoined always to do.

"If 'ee please, sir," he panted, "there be a wagon full of females pulled up at the door o' the Dower House yonder."

"Indeed!" said the Squire. "Have you never seen females before, Sam?"

"Iss I have, sometimes, in the village; but these be furriners, sir."

"Well, maybe they'll buy your eggs, and that'll save you three-quarters of your walk to the village."

Sam went out, looking very much puzzled. What had brought foreign females to his master's house, he wondered? Within half an hour he was back again, this time a little less eager, though equally excited. He rapped on the door, and being bidden to enter, said, less breathlessly than before:

"If 'ee please, sir, I seed a man on a hoss ride up to Dower House, and he went inside, sir, and 'twas Maister John."

"Who? John who?" The questions came like pistol-shots.

"His other name be Trevanion, it do seem," said the boy.

The Squire got up in great agitation.

"Are you sure, boy?" he asked.

"No, sir, I bean't sure, 'cos I never seed un afore; but I axed Tom Penny, who

was standing by, who 'twas, and he said, 'Why, ninny-watch, doan't 'ee know yer own maister's born cousin? 'Tis the same fine genel'um that give Ike Pendry a groat for carr'n his portmantel.'"

Then something happened that scared Sam out of his wits and sent him scampering to the kitchen for his father.

"Feyther, Feyther," he cried, "come quick! Squire's took bad. 'A went all gashly white and wambled about, sighin' and groanin' that terrible! He's dyin', I b'lieve."

Old Reuben was lame, but he caught up a jug of water and hobbled with it as fast as he could to the Squire's room, sending Sam to fetch the mistress. He found the Squire seated in his chair, with a stony look upon his ashen face.

"What ails thee, maister?" cried the terrified servant.

"Nothing, nothing, Reuben," replied Mr. Trevanion. "Don't be afraid, and don't alarm your mistress."

Here Mrs. Trevanion came hastily in, Sam hanging behind as if afraid to approach too near.

"I am sorry they called you, my dear," said the Squire. "There is nothing wrong. Leave us, Reuben."

The old man hobbled away. Mrs. Trevanion stood by her husband's chair.

"I was overcome for a moment, but it has passed," said the Squire. "John Trevanion is the master of my lands."

"It cannot be, Roger!"

"It is, it is. Sam saw a party of servants drive to the Dower House, and John himself ride up a while after."

"But, Roger, I do not understand."

"'Tis very simple. He has bought up the mortgages from Sir Bevil's attorney—'twas hard to believe that the foreclosure was Sir Bevil's doing—and has come to mock me and flout me at my own doors; ay, and to drive me away, if he can!"

"A penniless man, Roger! You told me he left here a beggar."

"Yes, a beggar, and worse—a thousand times worse. But that was ten years ago, and in ten years beggars may become rich, and scoundrels may tread down many an honest man. But he shall not tread me down. He may own my land, and fence me in, and do what he will; but the Towers is mine, and by heaven I will hold it!"

Discretion was one of Mrs. Trevanion's qualities. Being relieved to find that Sam's alarming report of the Squire's illness was exaggerated, if not wholly imaginary, she sought with her wonted tact to divert her husband's thoughts into a calmer channel, and soon had him interested in purely domestic matters.

The re-opening of the Dower House was already the all-engrossing topic of

conversation among the old wives and young wives, fishers, farmers, tradesmen, loafers and small fry of Polkerran and the neighbourhood. The "wagon-full of females" of Sam's kindling eye turned out to be one plump woman of forty and one slim maid of half that age, the cook and housemaid whom John Trevanion had engaged, as afterwards appeared, in a Devonshire village. On the same day two heavy wagons, each drawn by four enormous horses, arrived from Truro with furniture, kitchen utensils, and other things needed in setting up house, and on the next appeared a couple of riding-horses in charge of a lively young groom.

These important events were retailed and freely commented on in the tap-room of the Five Pilchards.

"We shall see brave doings up at the old house, neighbours," said Doubledick, the innkeeper, to the group of fishermen idling there. "Maister John is a fine feller, that he be. He were allers the chap for a randy, and 'twill be a rare change for we to have some one as will have feastings and merry-makings arter the miserable cold time we've had wi' Squire."

"'A must have a heap o' gold and silver in his purse to pay for all they fine-lookin' things we seed goin' in," said one of the men. "Wheer 'd he get it all from, can 'ee tell us that, neighbour Doubledick?"

"I might if I put my mind to it," said Doubledick sententiously. "But it don't matter a mossel wheer it do come from; there 'tis, and we shall have the good o't. The lord-lieutenant 'll make un a magistrate, if I know the ways o' providence, and I do know summat about 'em, neighbours all; and if any of 'ee are brought up afore un for a innocent bit o' free-tradin', he'll not be the man to stretch the law against 'ee, not he."

"'Tis a terrible affliction for Squire, to be sure," said another. "There be no loving-kindness 'twixt 'em, if all's true as folks tell, and a dog can't abide seein' another run off with his bone, that bein' my simple way of speech."

"Squire be goin' down, that's the truth o't," said Doubledick. "Well, some goes up and some goes down, and all gets level in churchyard."

Sam Pollex lost no time in making acquaintance with the new household. On the day after their arrival he carried a basket of eggs to the back-door of the Dower House, and blushed to the roots of his hair when it was opened by a pretty Devonshire lass, who smiled sweetly on him, asked him the price, and said she would speak to Cook.

"She will take them," said the girl on her return, "and bids me say you must come to-morrow and she'll let 'ee know if any is addled. What be the name of 'ee, boy?"

"Sam Pollex, ma'am," said Sam sheepishly.

"And where do 'ee live?"

"Up at Towers, yonder."

"Well I never! Bean't that where Maister's cousin the Squire lives?"

"Iss, him and me lives there, and the mistress, and Feyther, and Maister Dick."

"Only think of it, now! Squire selling eggs like a common dairyman!"

"Squire don't sell 'em; 'tis me, and I take Mistress the money. Sometimes it come to two or three shilling a week, but the hens don't lay in winter, and then I sell sides o' pork and chitterlings."

"Well, run away now, boy—Sam Pollex, did you say? What a funny name! And mind you don't lose the money."

Sam went away all aglow with admiration of the sweet looks of the maid-servant, and told Mrs. Trevanion how kindly she had spoken to him. He was seized with a terrible depression of spirits when he left his mistress's presence.

"Never go there again to sell eggs, or anything else, Sam," she said firmly. "Your master will be very angry with you if he hears of it. Here is the money. Take it to your father, and mind you never do such a thing again."

Sam, with a rueful face, told Dick what had happened.

"I should think not, indeed," said Dick indignantly. "If I catch you going inside the gates of the Dower House grounds again I'll break your head, young Sam; you remember it."

For several days the Squire scarcely left the house. Then he happened to meet John Trevanion riding along the road. The supplanter swept off his hat with a mocking salutation, but the Squire passed him without a sign of recognition.

A day or two later Sir Bevil Portharvan, owner of an estate some miles distant, rode over to the Towers.

"Ah, Trevanion," he said to the Squire, "how d'ye do? 'Tis only yesterday I heard that your cousin was the purchaser of the bonds I held. It must be a great comfort to you that the property has not gone out of the family."

"Let me tell you, once for all, Sir Bevil," cried the Squire, his cheeks red with anger, "that the owner of the Dower House is a stranger to me. I will not speak to him, nor look at him, and I don't care who knows it."

"Dear me, I am sorry," said the astonished visitor. "I had no idea of it, or, believe me, Trevanion, I would never——"

"Enough, Sir Bevil. I have no grudge against you. You have been very long-suffering; I thank you for it; but I would have given you my property rather than it should fall into the hands of its present owner. I say no more."

And Sir Bevil told his friends that old Trevanion was growing very crusty,

and it was a pity to see such paltry envy in a man of his years.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

The Cave of Seals

Some few days afterwards, Mr. Mildmay, visiting the Towers once more, chanced to mention that as he passed St. Cuby's Cove in his cutter he had seen a couple of seals disporting themselves in the shallow water under the cliff. The conversation passed at once to other matters, but next morning Dick told Sam what the lieutenant had said, and suggested that they should go seal-hunting. Sam was nothing loth, and promised to accompany his young master as soon as he had fed the poultry and cleaned out the sties.

Seals were not often seen on the coast; indeed, Dick had only once before heard of their appearance, so that the proposed expedition had all the charm of novelty. While waiting for Sam, he went to the kitchen, where Reuben Pollex was washing the dishes, and asked him if he could tell him how to tackle a seal.

"That's more than I can do, Maister Dick," said the old man. "I never caught nawthin' but fish and rabbits, and maybe a stoat now and again; never seed a seal in my life."

"They're valuable, Reuben," said Dick. "The skins are worth a good deal. They are made into coats and tippets and such things for ladies, you know."

"The mistress wants a new coat, so 'twould come handy, and I wish 'ee luck. I've heerd tell that the critters sometimes hide in the cave yonder, though as no man, 's far 's I know, ever did see 'em there, it may be only guesswork."

The cave mentioned was at the head of St. Cuby's Cove. Its entrance was exposed only at low tide, and Dick had more than once visited it at such times, exploring its recesses by the light of a torch or one of the house lanterns. He had never made any interesting discovery there, and had for some years ceased to visit it.

"Didn't you tell me once that there is an entrance to the cave from the land side, Reuben?" he asked.

"Ay, folks used to say so when I was a boy, but I don't know as there be any truth in it. Once upon a time, long afore my day, there was a mine thereabouts, and maybe one of the adits ran down to the cave; but 'tis sixty year or more since the mine give out—in yer grandfer's time—and not a soul have been down in the

workings ever since, 's far 's I know."

Here Sam appeared and announced that he was ready. The two lads, provided with a gun, a cutlass, a lantern, and a few candle-ends, proceeded to the spot on the beach of Trevanion Bay where their boat was moored, launched her, and rowed round the promontory to St. Cuby's Cove. The tide was running out, and as the interval during which the cave was free from water was very short, Dick and his companion worked the boat through the entrance with their hands as soon as there was room for them to pass between the roof and the surface of the sea.

The opening was at first a narrow tunnel in the cliff, but after some yards it began to widen gradually, and at length enlarged itself into a spacious vault, in which there was a continuous murmur, such as is heard on putting a shell to one's ear. By the time the boys reached it the tide had completely left the cave, and the boat stranded on a sandy beach, littered with rocks of all shapes and sizes, which had apparently fallen at various times from the roof. They lit their lantern, whose yellow rays fell on jagged granite walls, glistening shells, and slimy seaweed covering the rocks on the floor. Here and there were small pools which the tide never left dry, and where the light of the lantern revealed innumerable little marine creatures darting this way and that with extraordinary rapidity.

The boys made the boat fast by looping the painter round a jagged boulder. They moved warily, for the seal was a beast unknown to either of them, though Dick, in his total ignorance of these creatures of the deep, hardly expected to find them in the cave now that the sea had receded. Presently, however, they heard above the hollow murmur another sound, like the feeble bleat of a very young lamb. They peered about, moving the lantern to and fro, and at length discovered, lying on a rocky ledge at the inmost end of the cave, two small cream-coloured objects, scarcely more than a foot long, whose soft eyes blinked in the light, and from whose mouths issued plaintive cries of alarm.

"Bean't they proper little mites!" said Sam, putting out his hand to touch them.

"Don't do that!" cried Dick hastily; "the old ones may be about, and if they're like other beasts, they'll attack us if they think we'll hurt their young."

"Shan't we take 'em, then?" asked Sam.

"Of course not; they're too young."

"And shan't we look for the old uns?"

"No; the young ones would die if we killed the parents. We must come again later on, when they're old enough to take care of themselves. But our day shan't be wasted. We'll see if we can find the other entrance to the cave."

"What other entrance?"

"Your father says 'tis thought that at one time there was a way in from an adit above."

"I can't believe it. The free-traders would have found it long afore this if so 'twere."

"I don't know. The adit wouldn't be an easy passage for them with their bales and kegs. But don't let us waste time; the tide will be running back soon."

They followed the irregular circuit of the cave, thrusting the lantern into every recess and hollow, holding it high and low, but discovering nothing except the same rugged and apparently impenetrable wall.

"There bean't no opening," said Sam at length. "'Twas fiddle-faddle to say there be."

"Perhaps it is high above us, out of reach," suggested Dick.

"Where's the sense o' that?" replied Sam, disappointed of the anticipated sport. "What mortal good would it be to any soul alive to make an opening where 'ee'd break yer neck if you come to it?"

Dick did not answer, craning his neck to scan the heights above him. The light of the lantern failed to penetrate the overarching gloom. The roof of the cave was invisible, and the walls appeared to rise perpendicularly, with projections here and there that looked, in the spectral glimmer, like the grotesque gargoyles on a church-tower.

"I'd like to climb up there," said Dick at length.

"Lawk-a-massy, you'd break yer neck for sure. 'Tis a 'mazing hard job to climb the cliff arter gulls' eggs, but this be death and burial."

"We could do it with a ladder."

"Our ladder bean't long enough by half; the only ladders long enough be they in church-tower, and they be too heavy to lug here, and sexton wouldn't let us take 'em. Scrounch it all, Maister Dick, I do think 'ee be muddled in yer head to think o' sech daring doings. See now, tide's comin' in, and we don't want to be drownded."

"That's the most sensible thing you've said for a while, Sam. We'll go now, but I won't give it up. We'll get a ladder, or make one, and come back another day. I'm determined to find out if there really is an opening."

"Well, Feyther says most heads do have a magget in 'em, like turmits, and this be yours; 'tis indeed."

They loosed the boat, and paddled out as they had come, Dick resolving, in spite of his follower's damping attitude, to return before long, and make a thorough exploration of the place.

Later in the day, as he walked home from the Parsonage, he was struck with an idea of a contrivance for serving his purpose. He consulted old Reuben about it when he got home, and Sam, on returning from an errand in the village,

found his father and Dick hard at work in an outhouse, splicing short lengths of rope, and fixing them at regular intervals between two thin but strong poles about six feet long.

"What be doin', Feyther?" asked Sam.

"Use yer eyes, sonny, and put a name to 't yerself," replied Reuben.

"Well, if I was to speak my thought, I'd say 'ee was makin' a ladder that 'ud let a man down as soon as he put a foot on it."

"Then 'tis for you to make it stronger, my son, babe and sucklin' as 'ee be. T'ud be a sin to let so much cleverness run to seed. Strip off yer coat and lay into it, and keep yer tongue quiet, for if 'ee set all the organs of yer body goin' at once, you'll die young."

This implied rebuke had the effect of making Sam enter zealously into the work, and before supper two light ladders were finished, each six feet long, which, together with a short ladder of the ordinary kind that Reuben used in his duties about the premises, provided Dick with a total length of eighteen or twenty feet. His notion was to carry these separate pieces down to the cave, and then lash them together to form one continuous whole.

He fixed on the following afternoon for his second visit to the cave. The morning turned out very wet, the rain pouring down in quite unusual volume; but the sky cleared after dinner, and the two boys set off, timing themselves as before to reach the cave when the ebbing tide left the entrance free. Again the baby seals were alone, and much as Dick would have liked a tussle with their parents, his sporting bent was for the time subordinate to his wish to find the supposed landward entrance to the cave.

The ladder perfectly answered its purpose, but it was disappointing to find that it was by no means long enough. Even when Dick, the taller of the two, stood on the topmost rung, Sam holding the ladder steady at the bottom, he saw that the walls still stretched for several feet above him. But the roof was now in sight, an irregular arch, consisting of knobs, wedges, and inverted pyramids of rock, and Dick felt the tantalising certainty that the opening, if opening there was, could not be far away.

They went all round the cave, setting the ladder up at frequent intervals, Dick exploring every foot of the jagged wall with the aid of his lantern. There were plenty of recesses and depressions, ranging from a finger's breadth to the length of his arm; but he did not find one where he was unable to touch the back of it with his outstretched hand. It was clear that the opening, if it existed, must be above his head.

"We shall have to make another length of ladder, and come back again," he said to Sam. "I won't give it up."

He was standing high on the ladder as he spoke, dangling the lantern by

a ring at the top. The words were scarcely out of his mouth when there was a tremendous crash, which shook the place, and so much startled him that, in an instinctive movement to cling on to something, he let the lantern fall. It lighted fairly on the top of Sam's head, bounced off, and dropped with a thud to the sandy floor, where the candle was instantly extinguished.

"Are you hurt, Sam?" cried Dick, anxiously.

"Rabbit it all!" roared Sam, in high indignation. "Do 'ee think my head be wood then? Bean't I got feelings like any other common man? My skull have got a furrow in it a yard long, and I may rub it till I'm dead, I'll never straighten it out again."

"I'm sorry, but I couldn't help it, Sam. Light the candle again, will you, so that we can see what has happened."

Sam growled and grunted as he struck a light from his tinder-box. The rekindled candle revealed a strange catastrophe. A huge mass of the wall and roof of the cavern had collapsed, owing perhaps to the heavy rains in the morning, and the débris was lying in a heap against the opening of the tunnel leading to the exterior.

"If this bean't a pretty kettle of fish, never call me Sam again," said the boy in consternation. "'Tis closed up; we be shet in."

Dick climbed down the ladder, and crossed the floor of the cave to see the extent of the mischief. It was as Sam had said. Their exit was barred by a mass of rock and loose soil that must weigh several tons.

"Quick, Sam!" cried Dick, "we must work hard to clear it away. The tide will be on the turn, and we don't want to be imprisoned here all night."

They began to work with all haste, but soon found that the task would be a long one. The smaller pieces of rock were easily cast aside; but there were many large masses which, besides being heavy and cumbersome themselves, were very difficult to move by reason of the earth in which they were imbedded. The boys had made but little progress when the sea began to creep in.

"We'll be drownded alive!" said Sam, now in a state of terror.

"Work, then. Shove your hardest, Sam; we'll do it yet."

They tugged and hauled and pushed with fierce energy, and by employing their united strength upon the largest masses, they succeeded in clearing a path wide enough to allow room for the boat. By this time the water was almost up to their knees, and they heard the boat graze the rocks as it floated on the incoming tide. Loosing the painter, they pushed the craft through the tunnel, only to find, when they approached the seaward opening, that but a small segment of the sky was visible, the gap being too shallow to afford a passage.

"We are trapped, Sam; there's no denying it," said Dick quietly. "But don't be alarmed. I don't suppose the water reaches the roof of the cave even at high

tide, so that we can float in the boat quite safely. It only means a few hours' imprisonment."

"If I've got to be jailed, I'd rather be in village lock-up; 'tis dry at any rate. Can't we swim out, Maister Dick?"

"Of course we can, but I doubt whether we had better do it. There's a dozen yards or more under water first, and then a good half-mile outside before we can land. We should get pretty well knocked about on the rocks if there's any swell on the sea. We had much better stay here."

Sam gloomily assented to this course. They got into the boat, and sat there for some time watching it rise gradually as the tide grew higher.

"Hang me for a jackass!" cried Dick suddenly.

"What have 'ee been and done?" asked Sam with concern.

"Why, we haven't got gun, cutlass, or any other weapon."

"'A b'lieve not," said Sam, "but we couldn't keep out the tide with un if we had forty guns and fifty cutlasses."

"The seals! They'll come back with the tide, and be in a terrible rage with us, thinking we're after their babies."

"Be-jowned if I thought of it! 'Twas a true word; you do be a great jackass, sure enough."

"Mind what you say, Sam, or I'll throw you out."

"'Twas your word, not mine. I wouldn't go so far as that. Ninnyhammer is the worst I'd call 'ee. But I told 'ee how 'twould be, with yer head itchin' with this magget of openin's and ladders and all that."

"Be ready to use the boat-hook, or the anchor, if the seals attack us. I'll use one of the oars."

"I don't believe we'll have to fight at all," cried Sam. "Look 'ee! There be they two young seals swimmin' out to find the old uns. They bean't so young as you thought if they can swim like that, and we med as well have took 'em yesterday as not."

"Well, 'tis too late now. They're gone."

"To get their supper, I reckon. I be mortal hungry, Maister Dick, arter all that work. Have 'ee got a morsel of bread in yer pocket?"

"Not a bit."

"Not a apple or codling?"

"Not one."

"I could eat a turmit or a raw tater. But don't name 'em to me, or I shall feel very bad for thinkin' of 'em. Best thing is to go to sleep when yer hungry, 'cos you don't feel it then."

"Well, sleep. I'll wake you if anything happens."

The boy curled himself up in the bottom of the boat, and soon filled the

cavern with his snores.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

St. Cuby's Well

To see another eat when oneself is hungry, or sleep when oneself is wakeful, is surely very trying to the temper, except to those happily-constituted individuals who are incapable of envy. Dick Trevanion was as generous-hearted a boy as you could wish; but as the time went by, unmarked by anything but the slow rise of the boat and the quick dwindling of the candle in the lantern, he looked at Sam's open mouth with impatience, listened to his untuneful solo with dislike, and felt a deplorable desire to kick him. He had no watch, and bethought himself that it might be as well, when he got home, to test the duration of a candle, so that if he were ever in such a predicament again he might at least have a clock of King Alfred's sort. Every now and then he snuffed the coarse wick, and when the tallow had sunk almost to the socket, he substituted another candle-end that he happened to have in his pocket. Beyond this he had nothing to employ him.

But by-and-by, as the roof of the vault came nearer to him with the gradual lifting of the boat, an idea struck him. Why not use the boat as a raised platform for the ladder, and so contrive to examine an additional ten or twelve feet of the walls? The ladder!—it was floating on the surface of the water, heaving simultaneously with the boat as the tide gently rippled in.

"Wake up, Sam!" he called.

Sam snored on.

"Wake up!" cried Dick again, leaning over and pinching the sleeper's nose.

Sam struck out with his fist, as any honest English boy would have done, without opening his eyes. But at a third call he roused himself, sat up, and rubbing those heavy organs vigorously, sighed like a furnace, and then said sleepily:

"Why, where be I?"

"In dreamland, I should think," replied Dick, laughing. "Wake up! I want you to hold the ladder against the wall while I climb again."

"In twelve feet o' water! Not me; I bean't growed enough for that. 'Tis work for a giant."

"Not on the ground, of course; in the boat, I mean."

Sam looked dubious.

"Won't it wamble? And if you tumble you'll sink us."

"Well, we can try. Take hold of the end of the ladder floating by you, and I'll paddle close to the wall."

On lifting the ladder, they found that its top came within a few feet of the roof. But when Dick began to climb, he descended in a hurry, for the ladder being of necessity set up at an angle, every upward step drove the boat from the wall towards the middle of the cave.

"Be-jowned if we can do it!" cried Sam. "That there openin' will be the death o' me."

Dick was at a loss. There was no way of keeping the boat in a fixed position. Even if he dropped the anchor and it held in the sandy bottom, the boat would still have a range of movement that altogether prohibited the success of his plan. He looked gloomily at Sam; it was vexatious to be baulked when achievement was so near. Sam, with his hands on the sides of the ladder, was gazing up its length, his eyes gradually converging as they travelled higher, until they seemed almost to be looking at each other. All at once they reverted to their natural position, and he cried:

"I've got a noble thought, I do b'lieve."

"What's that?"

"Why, 'tis as easy as anything. See that place, Maister Dick, up aloft there, where the wall goes in summat?"

"Well, what then?"

"I'll show 'ee. You'd never ha' thought of it, 'cos you was lookin' down instead o' lookin' up."

He drew down the ladder until its whole length lay along one side of the boat.

"Look 'ee here," he said. "We'll take the anchor, and fix it upright in middle of the ladder, lash it to the top rung, do 'ee see?" He suited the action to the word. "There! Now 'tis a hook, or a clutch, or whatever name you like to gie un. We'll lift un again till it hooks on that ledge; then it will hang free, and you can climb as easy as climbing trees."

"A capital notion, Sam," cried Dick.

"I said it was, purticler for a poor mazy stunpoll of a feller like me."

"You're a genius if it works out. The thing is to try it."

Raising the ladder to its former position, they moved it along the face of the wall until one fluke of the anchor held firmly to the ledge of rock, as they proved by exerting a considerable downward strain.

"This is splendid," said Dick. "Now to go up."

"Ah, don't 'ee take the lantern with 'ee this time. I don't want no more cracks on the nob, and if it fell again, 't 'ud get soused in the water, and then

we'd be in darkness."

"You're right. I'll take the candle out and stick it in my hat as the miners do. I must have a light, of course."

"I reckon you must, if you be goin' to find that openin'," said Sam, sceptical to the last.

Dick stuck the lighted candle into the band of his hat, stepped out of the boat, and began to climb, Sam watching his progress and offering bits of cautionary counsel. In a few seconds, when Dick's head projected above the anchor, he saw that the ledge of rock, extending for some distance on both sides, was the floor of a roughly rectangular fissure, which penetrated the earth much as the tunnel below penetrated the cliff. It ran upwards. The smoky light from the candle did not reach far, but Dick, peering over the ledge, was unable to see any solid background to the fissure.

"I've found the opening!" he said.

"What do 'ee say?" called Sam. "Yer voice sounds all a mumble and a rumble."

Clinging firmly to the ledge with both hands, Dick lowered his head and repeated the words.

"Now yer satisfied, then," said Sam. "Better come down afore the candle goes out."

"No. I'm going on."

"But chok' it all, you won't leave me all alone! I'm not afeard, not I; but if there be three or four seals a-comin' home by-and-by, I can't fight 'em all."

"You must come up too when I've looked a little farther."

"But you can't climb on to the ledge without summat to hold to. Maister Dick, think of yer feyther and mother, and what I'm to say if 'ee falls and breaks yer neck, and I take 'ee home a gashly corp."

"Don't talk rubbish. I shan't fall if you don't worry me. I'm not going to sit for hours longer in the boat till the tide goes down, so hold your tongue till I am safe aloft."

Leaning well forward, he carefully lifted his foot to the next rung, then to the next, watching the anchor to see that it was not displaced by his movements. Then he got one knee on the rocky shelf, stretched his arms in front of him, and with a sudden movement heaved his body on to the ledge and fell flat, his feet projecting into space. He crawled along on hands and knees until his boots disappeared from Sam's view, and stood up within the dark entrance of the fissure.

"I'm up, Sam," he called, his voice reverberating hollowly in the vault.

"Then I be comin' too," cried the boy.

"Not yet. You must wait a little until I see where the opening leads to. I'll come back for you presently."

He turned his face to the opening and went in. Dim as the light was, he recognised almost at once that he was at the end of a mine adit. Within a few paces the fissure narrowed to a dwarf tunnel, through which a tiny stream trickled, disappearing, not over the ledge into the cave, but into a fissure in the wall of rock. There was space for only two persons to pass abreast, and as Dick proceeded, he had to bend his head to avoid striking the roof. He was about to explore further, when he remembered that the candle in his hat could not last more than a few minutes, and to advance in the dark would be foolhardy. He had no more candles, and supposed that Sam had none, so that it seemed as if he must postpone further exploration. But returning to the ledge, he saw a light in the cave.

"You've got some more candle-ends, then?" he cried.

"One, that I've just fished up out of my pocket along with a bit of string, some bait, a bit o' pudden that I'd forgot—can't eat it now, hungry as I be, 'cos 'tis all tallowed—and a green penny."

"I want the candle, Sam; mine's going out. Can you pitch it up?"

"I can, but it 'ud only fall back into the water and go to the bottom."

"Wait. I've a bit of string in my pocket. I'll let it down; tie the candle on."

"I must do it, I suppose. Iss, you shall have it, and I'll be left in the dark, but I'm not afeard—not very."

In a minute Dick had the fresh candle in his hat-band, and once more entered the tunnel.

It was very damp, and Dick guessed from the trickling stream at his feet that the adit had been designed, when the mine was in operation, to drain the upper workings. How long ago this was he had no idea. It must have been long before old Reuben's time, or the man would have had more definite knowledge than he actually possessed, and the existence of the opening would have been known as a fact instead of being a mere fragment of village tradition.

Dick went on. In some parts the tunnel was almost impassable with earth and rocks that had fallen in. Step as cautiously as he might, every now and then the rattle of loose earth displaced by his movements caused a cold shiver to run down his back. What if there should be a fall behind him which would cut off his retreat to the cave? The tunnel ought to lead to an opening to the air above, but the way might be blocked, and the possibility of being entombed was daunting. But having come so far Dick was unwilling to give in. The peril might be purely imaginary. Plucking up his courage, he hastened his steps, and after a few minutes came to an enlargement of the tunnel. To his left a second gallery ran downward at a sharp angle with that in which he was; no doubt this also led to some point of the shore. Still advancing, he saw, with some surprise, that the passage was strutted in places, and much freer from obstructions than the portion

he had already traversed. About a hundred yards beyond the transverse gallery, however, his progress was suddenly checked: the whole width of the tunnel was filled with a mass of rocks, stones, and loose earth. A few seconds' examination sufficed to show the impossibility of proceeding farther in this direction; accordingly he retraced his steps and, a few yards away, came to another passage, to find, however, after twenty or thirty paces, that he was again brought to a stop.

This time the obstruction was of a different nature. It was a rough door made of stout wooden beams, closed with a heavy bar resting in sockets. He lifted the bar and pulled the creaking door, which came towards him for an inch or two, and then stuck. To open it fully he had to remove from the floor a number of planks and beams, which appeared to be the parts of a broken windlass. Having got the door open and passed through, he found himself in a square chamber that smelt very damp and close, though, on looking upwards, he could see no roof. He concluded that he was at the bottom of a deep shaft. But it had not the look of a mine shaft, which, so far as Dick's experience went, was always timbered. The walls here were cased with stone, moss-grown and damp.

Near the doorway he caught sight of a staple of rusty iron let into the wall; a little above this, a second of the same kind; and at the same interval above the second, a third. Looking up the wall, he perceived that similar staples projected from the stonework as far up as the flickering light of his candle revealed. Their shape, and the intervals between them, indicated that they were steps by which the wall could be climbed. And then it flashed upon him suddenly that he was in an ancient well, known as St. Cuby's Well, though who St. Cuby was nobody knew except, perhaps, Mr. Carlyon, deeply learned in the antiquities of his county. The upper end of the well-shaft opened on the cliff, about a quarter-mile from the cottage of old Joe Penwarden, the exciseman. It was covered by the ivy-grown ruins of a small oratory, whither in times long past the faithful had come to have their children baptised in the water of the holy well, to drink of it for the cure of their diseases, and to offer up vows and repeat prayers before the sacred cross.

Strange as it may seem, Dick's first impulse, when the identity of his whereabouts flashed upon him, was to dash through the doorway and scamper with all imaginable speed back to the cave. He was not more superstitious than other boys of his age; but in those days, before old beliefs and fancies had undergone the cold douche of science, people were credulous of omens and spells, blessings and curses, beneficent influences and the evil eye. From St. Cuby's Well the aroma of sanctity had long since departed; according to village tradition, a murder of peculiar horror had once been committed there; and now it was shunned as a plague spot. No pilgrims came to kneel beneath the sacred roof; no children ever played hide and seek among its picturesque ruins; everybody, from

the Squire downwards, avoided it, and at night not a man would have ventured within a hundred yards of its unhallowed precincts. Stories were rife of apparitions seen there; it was these ghosts of which Ike Pendry had spoken to John Trevanion on the night when he had overtaken the trudging pedestrian on the high road.

Dick, of course, had no belief in ghosts, and regarded the stories with as much intellectual contempt as his father gave to the witch's couplet. But his imagination was subject to impressions which his reason scorned; and in the gloom of the well-shaft, which the yellow rays of his candle rendered more awful than complete darkness could have been, these vague conceptions of murder, sacrilege, and midnight hauntings possessed his mind so completely as at first to overwhelm his common-sense. But he resolutely crushed down these figments of his imagination, told himself that such evil traditions might probably be traced to no more real origin than the failure of the spring of water, and decided to go back for his companion and put an end to their captivity by climbing up the iron steps to the surface of the cliff.

"Oh, I am glad to see 'ee," cried Sam, as his young master's head appeared at the brink of the ledge. "I bean't afeard, not I, but 'twas 'nation dark, and I felt a queer wamblin' in the inside o' me, 'cos I'm tarrible hungry, I reckon."

"Well, come along. I've found the way out. The opening leads to St. Cuby's Well, and we can climb to the top in no time."

"St. Cuby's Well! Dash my bones if I go within a mile o't. Dead men's bones, and sperits o' darkness—no, never will I do it."

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried Dick, as stoutly as if he had never felt the least tremor on his own account. "I've seen no bones, and the spirits haven't laid a hand on me. Those silly tales only frighten children."

"And females. Ah, 'tis a pity the mistress won't let me take eggs and things to the Dower House. What I could tell to that nice young female wi' the hole in her rosy cheeks! How they'd go yaller and white when she heerd my tale of blood, and ghosteses in night-gowns, and all the other things o' darkness! Ah, 'twas to be, I s'pose: she'll hear it from some one else, and I shan't get the credit of it."

"No; she'll hear that you were too much of a baby to face 'em, and she'll despise you, instead of thinking well of you as she does now."

"Don't say it, Maister Dick," cried the boy. "Scrounch me if I lose my fame in that miserable way. I'll come, if you'll stand by me, and hold my hand if we hears a noise, and use your finest language to the sperits if they meddle wi' us. I've heerd tell that the Lord's prayer said back'ards will tarrify 'em out of their wits, but I reckon yer head's full of ancient heathen words that go straightfor'ard, and won't put 'ee to such a tarrible tax as turnin' religion topsy-turvy."

This was said as Sam climbed with deliberate care up the ladder. He gained the ledge more easily than Dick had done, having the help of Dick's hand.

"Can we get there afore candle's out?" he said anxiously, when they stood side by side.

"If we make haste," replied Dick, taking off his hat and looking at the inch-and-a-half of candle left, and the mass of tallow that lay on the brim like a small lake of lava. "We can fetch the boat at low-tide to-morrow."

They hurried on, and, Dick knowing the way, reached the shaft in much quicker time than when he had come alone. Sam got behind him at the doorway, peering under his armpits with wide eyes, and taking much comfort when he saw nothing but mossy walls.

"I'm downright shamed o' folks that believe in such gammut," he said, valiantly following Dick into the chamber.

"Well, now we'll climb up. It must be after sunset, or we should see a glimmer of light at the top. I'll go first."

"No, I'd better go first," said Sam hastily, looking round with something of his former air of timorous expectation. "You see, if you go first, the brim of yer hat will shet out all the light, and I'll miss my footing and be nawthin' but scattered members. But if I go first, do 'ee see, and you come close behind me—but not close enough to set my stockings afire—the light will be ekal betwixt us two. Do 'ee see my manin', Maister Dick?"

"Quite plain. I don't mind. We'll try one or two of the staples first, to make sure they are firm in the stonework, and then you can mount, and as your hind foot leaves one step, my fore hand will clutch it."

The staples stood the test of pulling, first by Dick, then by Sam, who also tried them, on the plea that he had more muscle. Then Sam began to climb, followed closely by Dick. After an ascent of perhaps a hundred feet, the former declared that he felt a whiff of fresh air, and immediately afterwards the candle flame was blown out. Looking up past Sam's fore-shortened body, Dick saw one star in the clear dark vault of the sky, and in a few seconds they were both standing on the ground beside the well-head, cooled by the breeze that blew through the ruined walls of the chapel from the sea. The roof had gone long ago; grass grew on the floor, and ivy twined itself in and out of the mullioned windows.

"There!" said Dick. "We are safe, you see. All that talk of ghosts is pure balderdash."

The darkness and the weird associations of the spot combined to make him set his tone of voice to a murmur. At that moment there fell upon the ears of the boys, as they stood side by side to recover breath after their climb, a low sound from somewhere beyond the walls, but not far away. It was like that of a person

speaking in hollow, mournful accents. Sam caught Dick by the arm; Dick heard his teeth chatter.

"'Tis he!" whispered the trembling boy. "'Tis the ghost! Oh! let me hide myself afore he see I."

Dick did not reply. He was, it must be confessed, sufficiently startled. The sound ceased; but in a moment or two it recommenced, now being somewhat louder. Dick was in two minds, now thinking that he would run, now wondering whether he had not better stay. The slow droning still approached, and at last he caught articulate words:

"A-deary me! A-deary me! The world's a-cold, a bitter place for——"

The next words were indistinguishable.

"Hark to him!" whispered Sam. "He be in mortal pain, and I do feel that leery all down the small o' my back."

Dick sniffed, and sniffed again. Then he said:

"Ghosts don't smoke, Sam—at any rate, not tobacco. I'm going to see."

"How do 'ee know?" whispered Sam, still holding him by the arm. "I won't be so much afeard of him if he do be smoking bacca, but it may be summat else. It do smell rayther strong for a livin' man."

He followed Dick as he groped his way over fragments of masonry and through close-woven masses of ivy and weeds, until they came into the open. The night was very dark. The first thing they saw, at a distance of about twelve yards, was a small red glow, which brightened and faded at intervals. Drawing nearer to it cautiously, they perceived at the moments of greatest brightness that it lit up for an instant a grizzled chin, a sunken mouth, a quite ordinary nose, a ruddy face with a black patch over one eye, and a black hat over all.

"'Tis old Joe Penwarden," said Dick, in a tone that expressed surprise, relief, and a shame-faced consciousness.

"So 'tis, I do believe," cried Sam. "Be-jowned if 'a didn't ought to be locked up for playing such gashly tricks on poor souls."

"Avast there! Stand, in the King's name!" cried the old man, hearing their voices.

"So we will, so we will," said Sam. "Don't 'ee be afeard, maister; we bean't ghosteses, but just common mortals like yerself."

"Oh! 'tis you, Maister Dick," said Penwarden, as the boys came up to him. "'Pon my life, I was skeered for about a second and a half, never expectin' to see mortal men in this old haunt. What be 'ee doin' at this time o' night, in such a place, too?"

"What time is it, Joe?" asked Dick.

"Time all young things like lambs and birds and boys were abed and asleep. 'Tis past ten."

"Lawk-a-massy, if I didn't think it by the terrible emptiness in my inside," cried Sam, feelingly. "Come home-along, Maister Dick; I be mortal afeard as Feyther will send me to bed wi'out any supper."

"Wait a bit," replied Dick. "Where do you think we've been, Joe?"

"Not night-fishing, for ye've got no tackle. Nor rabbitin', for ye've got no snares. Ah, well! Ye med as well tell me first as last, for I be no good at guessin'."

"We've come up St. Cuby's Well."

"Come up, you say; but you must go down afore ye come up. I wouldn't like to say I don't believe 'ee."

"That would be very unfriendly. The truth is, Joe, we were down in the cave and got shut in by the tide, and to pass the time away we climbed up over a ledge and found ourselves in an old adit, and went along it till we came to the well-shaft. There are iron steps in the wall, and up we came."

"Well, if that bean't the queerest thing I've heerd for many a day. Who would ever ha' thowt it!"

"Didn't you know there were steps down the well side?

"Never heerd tell o' sech a thing."

"But haven't you seen it for yourself? I was thinking that, perhaps, you being here now, you knew all about it, and the idea did cross me that you might be the ghost people talk about, though to be sure you don't look like one."

"Bless 'ee, I've never set foot inside they walls. Sometimes of a night I come ramblin' round to smoke a peaceful pipe and meditate on the days o' my youth afore I turn in, but as for goin' inside—no, I've never thowt o't."

"Was 'ee afeard you med see the ghost, maister?" asked Sam, rejoicing to think that he had a fellow in timorousness.

"Well, no. A ghost is a sperit, they say, and I reckon I've got enough muscle in my aged arm to fend off a thing as has got no body."

"Still, you was talkin' to yerself as if ye was in great pain and sorrer. 'A-deary me,' 'ee said; I heard 'ee twice; and then 'the world's a-cold,'—and I s'pose 'ee felt the need o' takin' a comfortin' pull at yer pipe, for I heerd no more."

"It do show how young small chickerels like 'ee may be mistaken. Whenever I talk like that I be feelin' warmish and contented; remember that, young Sam, and don't traipse about spreadin' false reports about me. Moreover, don't 'ee tell nothing of yer climbing up the well, for 'a don't want the village rampin' round, spoilin' my peacefulness. St. Cuby's ghost hev his uses, and long may he walk."

"Very well, Joe," said Dick, "we'll say nothing about it. There have been no runs yet, I suppose?"

"No; 'tis early days for that. 'Tis true as Mr. Mildmay was called off Morvah way to-day. Maybe they'll try a run there to-night. But it won't be long afore we

have trouble here, I reckon, for the pilchurs are late this year, and when they're late, smugglin' is early, 'cos the men get tired o' doin' nothing."

"Well, we had better be going. I usually tell Mother when I expect to be late, fishing or what not, and she'll wonder what has become of me. Are you coming our way, Joe?"

"Not yet, sir. I've a bit more meditation to get through first."

"What do you meditate about?" asked Dick.

"About my days o' youth, when I was a nimble young feller and served the King afloat. Ah! they were days, they were. Lord Admiral Nelson be a fine little chap, but nothing to the admiral I served with."

"Who was that?"

"Lord Admiral Rodney. Never shall I forget the time he spoke to me: yes, lord as he was, he did so. It do warm me of a cold night to think of it. Not every simple mariner could say he'd been spoke to ashore by sech a high person as a admiral."

"What did the lord high admiral say to 'ee?" asked Sam, much impressed.

"Well, 'twas on Plymouth Hoe, and the admiral was walking with two handsome females, showing 'em Drake's Island; Drake was another mariner, you must know, as lived about a thousand year ago, seemingly. Well, I turned round to look at the great man, and that moment he changed his course, put up his helm, ye may say, and ran across my bows. 'Get out o' the way, you cross-eyed son of a sea-cook!' says he to me. Ah! never shall I forget it, nor the tinkly laugh o' they fine females. 'Twas a great honour to be spoke to special by Lord Admiral Rodney, a fine feller of a man."

"I don't wonder it keeps you warm," said Dick, laughing. "Good-night, Joe."

"Good-night to you, sir. And young Sam, mind 'ee o' what I said."

"Make yourself easy, maister," returned Sam. "Oh, dear, what a thing it 'ud be to tell the maidy at the Dower House if on'y Squire warn't so cruel!"

"What are you mumblin' about?"

"Nawthin', Maister Penwarden. I were on'y thinkin' to myself what a lot o' folk 'ud be mazed if they knowed what sorrerful things ye do say when yer happy."

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

Penwarden does his Duty

Late as it was, neither Dick nor Sam was fated to get any sleep for hours. They walked rapidly without speaking across the cliff towards the Towers, being in fact so tired and hungry that the thoughts of both were fixed on supper and bed. There was no path on this part of the cliff, except a faint track which daylight would have revealed, where the grass had been slightly worn by Joe Penwarden in his marchings to and fro. Ordinary pedestrians always avoided the windings of the shore, taking the high road farther inland.

The boys had come within a hundred yards of Penwarden's cottage, when Sam all at once took Dick by the sleeve, saying:

"Look, Maister Dick, there be some one at old Joe's door."

It was too dark to see clearly, but Dick could just distinguish, now that it was pointed out to him, a dark form close against the whitewashed cottage on the side facing the sea.

"It's very odd at this time of night," he said. "We had better go and tell the man, whoever he is, where he can find Joe."

They hurried on, but had not gone more than half-way to the cottage when the figure moved from the door, and walked quickly in the direction of the Towers. There was a footpath at the back of the garden, over which the villagers had an immemorial right of way, though it was really the Squire's private property.

Dick was on the point of calling out when Sam checked him.

"That be Jake Tonkin," he said, quietly: "I know un by his bow legs. What med he want wi' old Joe, now?"

Jake was the son of Isaac Tonkin, the expertest fisher, the boldest seaman, and the most cunning and resourceful smuggler in the village. Isaac was a rough, quick-tempered fellow, violent when roused, but honest according to his lights; and Dick had a certain admiration for him, as every boy must have for a strong man who excels in bold and daring deeds. Once or twice he had gone fishing in Tonkin's smack, and had learnt a good deal from the man's blunt speech and craftsmanlike actions.

It was perfectly well known in the neighbourhood that Tonkin was the ringleader of the smugglers, but owing to his wariness and craft, and to the supineness of the revenue officer who had preceded Mr. Mildmay, nothing had ever been openly proved against him, and he had never been caught in the act. In the previous winter he had narrowly escaped a conflict with Mr. Mildmay, then in his first year of duty at this part of the coast; and it was common talk in the village that he resented the intrusion, as he regarded it, of so zealous an officer, and had promised to give the revenue men a very hot time if they interfered with him. It was he whose presence John Trevanion had remarked as he passed the open door of the tap-room in Doubledick's inn.

Dick was as much surprised as Sam to find that Penwarden's visitor was

Tonkin's son. There was naturally no love lost between the exciseman and the free-traders, who had, however, looked upon him with a sort of contemptuous tolerance until Mr. Mildmay came. The old man had been harmless enough in the days of Mr. Curgenven; not that he was remiss in his duty, but that his efforts had been rendered nugatory by his superior's apathy. The advent of Mr. Mildmay acted as a stimulus; Penwarden was in truth fearful of being thought too old for his work, and seemed to set himself deliberately to prove the contrary to the officer. More than once in the previous winter he had prevented a run by his timely warnings; and though the checks were only temporary, the smugglers were annoyed with him for the difficulties he threw in their way. It was therefore strange that young Tonkin should have gone to visit, so late at night, a man from whom the smugglers in general held severely aloof. Suddenly Dick remembered what Penwarden had said about Mr. Mildmay having been summoned to Morvah, twenty-five miles or more down the coast. It was a favourite device of the smugglers, by aid of confederates, to decoy the officers to distant parts when they were intending to make a run, and Dick could not help wondering whether they were putting it in practice on the present occasion. But it did not explain Jake Tonkin's visit, and Dick was now sufficiently interested to think no more of his fatigue and hunger in his desire to ascertain what was afoot. He knew that it was no business of his; the Squire had carefully abstained from taking sides in the perennial quarrel between the smugglers and the revenue men, and had indeed resigned his magistracy, partly because of his reduced circumstances, but quite as much in order to avoid any official action as a county justice. Dick did not intend to break this neutrality; he was simply curious and athirst for excitement.

But he reflected that he could hardly satisfy his curiosity without spying on Jake Tonkin, and this was out of the question. He would have ruefully done nothing more had he not seen that the lad, instead of keeping to the path that ran directly to the village, struck off to the left along a track that led nowhere but to the Dower House. This raised his curiosity to a still higher pitch. What had Tonkin to do with John Trevanion? Knowing that his father and John were on bad terms, and having seen many little indications that the latter was bent on annoying his cousin, it was natural that he should wonder whether the interests of the Squire were in any way affected by the apparent connection between John and the smugglers. After a little hesitation, he sent Sam into the Towers, to reassure his parents and then go to bed, and went on himself after the waddling figure of Jake Tonkin, now almost out of sight.

Walking quickly, he was in time to see Jake enter an outhouse at the rear of the mansion. The door closed behind him, and Dick, taking a look round, and seeing no one, ran swiftly to the building and peeped through the window. The room was lighted by a single candle, whose rays fell on the forms of a dozen men

seated on chairs, stools, pails, and the table. All had their faces blackened, and he failed to discover among them the large and massive form, almost impossible to disguise, of Jake's father.

"He be fast asleep," he heard Jake say, evidently in answer to a question. "I knocked once, a little un; then twice, rayther louder; then I tried the door: 'twas locked. I didn't hear un snore, but maybe he sleeps quiet."

"Hee! hee! 'a will sleep quieter in the grave," said a voice, which Dick had no difficulty in recognising as that of Doubledick, the innkeeper, whose conversation was always partial to death and the churchyard and similar cheerful subjects.

"Mildmay would fly in a passion if he knew old Joe were asleep," said a man whose voice Dick could not identify.

"Ay, and so would riding-officer," added a third. He referred to the official so denominated, whose duty it was to work on shore hand in hand with Mr. Mildmay on the sea, and who was in effect in charge of the coast for ten or fifteen miles, acting under the Custom House officer at St. Ives.

"Oh, 't'ud only be a little small passion," said Doubledick, "'cos the summer bean't over, and not a man of 'em will look for us to begin afore pilchur fishin' be past."

"Body o' me, hain't we 'ticed Mildmay away to stop a run?"

"Nay, sonny, 'twas tidings of a French privateer that baited him. 'Tis a proper dark night, and if the wind holds, Zacky will be here a little arter midnight. And the manin' o' that is twenty pound in our pockets, a noble fust lesson to say 'magnify' arter."

Dick sighed inwardly; what a boon twenty pounds would be to his father's impoverished treasury! Like all the gentlemen of the county, the Squire was willing to purchase smuggled goods; it seemed to Dick that there was not a great distinction between the purchaser and the smuggler; and yet he knew that his father would be horrified at the idea of enriching himself in that way. From what he had overheard it was clear that a run, the first of the season, was to be attempted that night, and since this did not concern the Squire, he was about to return home, when he heard the click of a lock, followed by footsteps from the house, and slipped round the angle of the building just in time to escape the eyes of John Trevanion.

The owner of the Dower House joined the smugglers, and Dick heard his loud and hearty greeting.

"Well, my friends, is all clear? No scent for the hounds, eh?"

"Not so much as would cover a penny-piece," cried Doubledick. "Hee! hee! Old Joe's abed."

"I'm glad of it. Mind you, you must not bring the tubs here if there's any

interruption. It would never do for the county to know that I'm a freighter."

"Trust we for that, yer honour; we know you must keep up yer high place, and 'tis generous of 'ee to lend us yer cellars."

"Well, Doubledick, here's the key. I shall be abed, of course; I know nothing about your doings, and I can trust you to work quietly and not wake the servants."

"Iss, fay, yer honour," said a man: "ye can trust Billy Doubledick, to be sure. He be a very clever feller: I say it to his face."

"Good night, then. I wish you well."

Dick heard his cousin return to the house and lock the door. So John Trevanion was a freighter: one who bought contraband goods in a foreign port, paid the expenses of shipment and carrying, and received the profits. This was food for reflection. A word to Mr. Mildmay or Mr. Polwhele, the riding-officer, would lead to John Trevanion's arrest. The fate of smugglers caught in the act was five years' service in a man-of-war, or a long term of imprisonment; aiders and abettors also were subject to heavy penalties; and Dick would have liked to rid the neighbourhood of the man who had caused his father such distress. But he could not play the shabby part of informer, and for the first time in his life he wished heartily that the smugglers might be caught, and their connection with Trevanion discovered; hitherto his sympathies had been entirely on their side.

Since there was nothing to be gained by remaining longer at the outhouse, he went quietly away and walked back towards the Towers. But he was so much interested in his strange discovery that he felt it would be impossible to sleep until he knew whether the run proved successful. On reaching home, therefore, he went first to his mother's room to bid her good-night, then to the dining-room to get some supper, and shortly after eleven o'clock stole out again. He had never seen a smuggling run, and the likelihood that this one would be entirely undisturbed promised a peaceful view, without any risk of running into danger, of which he knew that his parents would disapprove.

He had not learnt where the run was to be, but guessed, if the tubs were to be carried to the cellars of the Dower House, that the head of Trevanion Bay would be the chosen spot. It was the most convenient place near to the Dower House, except the little harbour itself, which was not likely to be selected. He made his way, therefore, along the narrow headland known as the Beal, which formed the southern boundary of the bay. Near the end of the headland, overlooking the narrow passage between it and the reef, by which vessels could enter the harbour at low tide, was the favourite playground of his early boyhood. It was a hollow in the cliff, screened from observation seaward by a huge boulder somewhat insecurely poised. Only a few years had passed since Sam and he used to play there at fighting the French. There they had their toy citadel, from which they bombarded Boney's squadrons attempting an invasion. From it, too, they

could see on to the decks of vessels passing in and out of the harbour at low tide, and hugging the cliff to avoid the reef. They played also at smuggling, and it is noteworthy that they were always the successful smugglers, and never the baulked and discomfited preventive men. It was a lonely spot, and they had it quite to themselves except for the gulls.

When, as they grew older, they no longer took the same childish delight in playing French and English, they turned the place into a storehouse for fishing gear. In a remote corner of the nook, they scooped out the earth to form a deep recess, lined this with wood, and kept there a reserve supply of hooks, tackle, rope, a spare anchor and sculls, two fowling-pieces, and other articles, by this means often saving themselves a journey back to the Towers. Lonely as the spot was, they often quaked with apprehension lest their secret should be discovered, especially during the pilchard season. At that time the huer, whose duty it was to keep watch, and indicate by flourishing a bush, for the benefit of the fishers below, the direction in which the shoals of fish were swimming, was accustomed to take his stand on the headland. But he naturally chose the highest point, and had no reason to seek the lower level of the cave, where he could neither see nor be seen so well. The boys were always careful to avoid the neighbourhood of their storehouse when the huer was about, and there being nothing to draw any one else to the spot, the secret had remained undiscovered.

It was towards this place that Dick proceeded on leaving the Towers. But when he arrived there, he found at once that if the smugglers' cargo was to be run in the bay it would be impossible to see anything of it. The night was particularly dark; only such moonless nights were chosen by the smugglers for their operations; and even the grey cliffs were almost invisible from where he stood. He determined, therefore, to return along the headland, and make his way down the face of the cliff by the path whereby he had ascended with Sam on the night of their bass fishing. There were recesses at the foot, in one of which he could easily conceal himself and watch all that went on. And as there was no time to lose, if he was to be in hiding before the smugglers arrived, he walked rapidly, and climbed down the steep path at a pace that would have been dangerous to any one who was not well acquainted with it.

He was unaware that a figure was following him. There was no sound of footsteps to attract his attention: he did not look back, and if he had done so he could hardly have seen the form that steadily kept pace with him at the distance of sixty or seventy yards. The second figure descended the path with the same surefooted ease, paused at the foot till Dick was out of sight, and then stole after him and ensconced himself in a hollow of the cliff only about three yards from that in which Dick had stationed himself. These hiding-places were some twenty yards from the bottom of the path.

Neither of the two silent watchers suspected that, on the cliff above them, a third figure was approaching the path by which they had descended, but from the opposite direction. Old Penwarden, so far from being snugly asleep, as Jake Tonkin rashly concluded, had never been more wide-awake in his life. The summoning of Mr. Mildmay to a distance, the lateness of the pilchard season, and the darkness of the night, combined to make him suspicious, and he had resolved to patrol the cliff from St. Cuby's Well to the Beal, to satisfy himself that the smugglers were not already at their tricks. Having smoked through his pipe at the Well, he returned to his cottage, took the telescope, the brace of pistols, the ammunition, the cutlass, and the blue light for giving an alarm which were his regular equipment, and began to march slowly and quietly up and down.

About ten minutes after the lads had taken up their positions, they heard a stone come rattling down the path twenty yards to the left. A few seconds after, they were just able to discern a dark figure emerge on to the beach. This was followed by another, and a third, and soon the whole beach was alive with dusky shapes. The tide was ebbing, but a stiff breeze sent long rollers dashing over the sand, their roar and rustle smothering the low voices of the men as they talked fitfully together.

The watchers saw one of the men drive an iron post firmly into the sand and attach to it the end of a rope. The other end was fastened to a similar post in the earth at the top of the cliff. By this means a rail was formed, to give assistance to the carriers as they climbed up with their burdens.

A little later there came from seaward a faint creak, scarcely distinguishable among the other sounds. The watchers pricked up their ears. Even at low tide there was enough water beneath the cliffs to enable a vessel to run in very close, and the hidden spectators guessed that a lugger was drawing in: at present they could not see it. The shore men were all low down on the beach. In a few minutes the men could be heard splashing in the water as they waded out to the vessel. Then the lugger itself appeared, a dark shape on the surface.

Soon the men could be seen returning in a long line, each one apparently twice as big as before. Each bore two tubs, one in front, one behind, slung over his shoulders by ropes which had been fitted before they left the lugger.

Several of the men had deposited their burdens on the beach, and were going back for more, when there was a noise of scrambling on the path. Work ceased instantly. A figure ran a few yards towards the sea, and spoke to a large man who appeared to be directing the operations. His words were just audible to the watchers.

"Old Joe be comin' along cliff-top, Feyther."

"But they told me you said 'a was asleep."

"So 'a was, but 'a must ha' waked up. He be comin', sure enough."

"You must be a cussed stunpoll, then, to come slitherin' down cliff like that, makin' a rattle to wake the dead. Well, no matter. We can deal wi' old Joe, if so be as he's alone."

"Iss, he be alone. I pulled up the post and brought the rope down-along."

"You've some sense in yer skull, then. Now you, Pendred, and you, Simon Mail, go up cliff and keep a watch. Stand yerselves in that narrow part three-quarters of the way up, and if the old meddler comes, seize un, and choke un, but don't do un a hurt unless he shows fight. We don't want no crowner's quest."

The two men selected to waylay the exciseman set off to climb the cliff, and the work of running the cargo was resumed.

Dick was in a quandary. He had no interest in doing preventive work, and there were many reasons why he should refrain from interfering. But old Penwarden was a friend of his, and a mettlesome old fellow, who would certainly not allow himself to be seized without a struggle. Moreover, being armed, as he doubtless was, he would have a temporary advantage over the smugglers, who, expecting no opposition, would probably have no weapons with them but their knives. But it might well be that in the struggle the smugglers, driven to desperation, would make short work of rushing upon him and flinging him over the cliff; or if the struggle were prolonged, they could summon help from below, overpower him, and truss him up. In either case the old man would be in considerable danger, for the smugglers, when their passions were aroused, would not be over-scrupulous.

These considerations flashed through Dick's mind in a second. He could not let Penwarden run into danger unwarned; yet how was the warning to be given? There was but one way. A few yards to the right of the spot where he stood it was possible to scale the cliff. The ascent was much longer and more arduous than the regular path, and there was the risk that he would not be in time. Unless he gained the cliff-top before Penwarden had passed, he would be too late. There was not a moment to spare.

Dropping down on hands and knees behind a boulder that intercepted the view seaward, he crawled as fast as he could towards a slight indentation of the cliff beyond which he would be invisible to the smugglers, and where the ascent began. He was followed within a few moments by the second watcher. Just as he was beginning to climb he heard a low whisper behind him.

"I be comin' too, Maister Dick."

"You here, Sam? What do you mean by this?"

"Don't 'ee talk, now. I'll tell 'ee when we get to top."

They scrambled up the face of the cliff as actively as goats, clutching at stunted bushes and tufts of coarse grass, dodging awkward corners, fearful lest the stones and loose earth they disturbed should strike upon the boulders below

and reveal their presence to the smugglers. Both were active lads with good wind, and their progress was no doubt more rapid, foot for foot, than that of the smugglers on the path a hundred yards to the right, encumbered as they were with their heavy sea-boots. But this advantage in speed was counterbalanced by the greater length of their course, though this in its turn was compensated by the fact that, unless Penwarden had already passed, they would be a hundred yards nearer to him when they reached the top.

In six minutes from the start, panting with their exertions, they heaved themselves over the brink of the cliff and stood erect. Twenty yards to their right, Penwarden was in the act of raising his telescope to spy over the waters of the bay. With trembling limbs they ran towards him, Dick giving him warning of their presence by a low clear whisper. The old exciseman shut up his telescope with a snap, and turned.

"'Tis you, Maister Dick!" he said.

"Yes. Some one saw you. Two men are waiting for you on the path. I can't tell you their names. You'll be knocked over if you try to go down."

"That's the way o't, is it? We'll see about that. Thank'ee for the warning. You didn't tell me they be running a cargo, but I know it. I'll dash their tricks."

"But, Joe—"

"Don't stop me," said Penwarden, shaking off Dick's detaining arm. "'Tis my duty to stop this run, Mr. Mildmay being haled off on a wild-goose chase, and do it I will. But get 'ee home-along, sir, you are best out o' this, though if 'ee were a bit older, dash my bones if I wouldn't call on 'ee to help in the King's name."

Without more ado, he took from his pocket the blue light, struck a spark from his tinder-box, and in a moment the cliff-top for many yards around was illuminated by the brilliant sputtering flame. It was intended to warn the lieutenant of the revenue cutter, if he were within sight, and to draw from their cottages in the village the tidesmen, as they were called, whose duty it was, on the alarm being given, to hasten to the exciseman's assistance. These men were cobblers, tinkers, and other small tradesmen, for the most part Methodists, who were ready to brave the hostility of the smugglers for the sake of good pay and a bounty for every hogshead seized.

Dick was aghast. Things were turning out even worse than he expected. The light would enrage the smugglers, and they would be in no mood to handle the old man gently. Penwarden was already hurrying towards the path. It seemed to Dick sheer madness for one man, and a man no longer young, to attempt to deal with a score of rough and determined smugglers. He was rushing headlong upon destruction. All care for what might be the consequences to himself vanished from Dick's mind; he could not leave the exciseman to his fate. But what could

he do to help him, without weapon of any kind? He suddenly bethought him of the fowling-pieces laid up in the little nook on the Beal.

"Come, Sam," he said, and started to run at full speed to fetch them. They passed Penwarden like a flash; there might just be time to return before he encountered the ambushed men. The blue light was now extinguished, and sea and land were covered with the former darkness.

Much fleeter of foot than Sam, Dick outstripped him in a few seconds, and ran on alone to the little cave. He seized the fowling-pieces, and discovered that there was no ammunition; nevertheless, he raced back with them; they might serve to over-awe the smugglers, or in the last resort be used as clubs.

He had only just rejoined Sam when they heard a rough voice call out a command to halt, and Penwarden's answer.

"Stand aside, in the King's name."

Clearly the dauntless old man had arrived at the spot where the smugglers were in wait for him. The boys dashed forward, came to the head of the path, and ran recklessly down, Dick hoping that they might still be in time to prevent mischief. But before they reached the scene of the scuffle, they heard the noise of some heavy body crashing down the cliff, and then the roar of a pistol. Immediately afterwards they caught sight of two figures hurrying down the path.

"They've killed un dead!" muttered Sam.

With his heart in his mouth, Dick ran down the path, slipping, recovering himself, and running again. Sam was close behind. About half-way down a body lay huddled on a projecting ledge, which had broken its fall and prevented it from crashing to the base of the cliff. Dick stooped over it, expecting to see Penwarden shot to the heart. To his intense relief he heard a groan, and turning the man over, he was just able to perceive that his face was blackened. Joe, then, had escaped, and was one of the two who had gone down the path and were now out of sight.

The two boys hurried on. There was a great hubbub below them; having been discovered, the smugglers no longer troubled to preserve silence; and Dick, hearing their angry shouts and curses, feared that Penwarden's quixotic action in attempting to tackle them single-handed would prove his destruction. He took the rest of the path in reckless leaps, and, when he reached the beach, saw that the old exciseman had posted himself beside a row of tubs which he had seized in the King's name.

In the confusion Dick's arrival was unobserved. The smugglers were thronging up the beach with threatening cries. Penwarden's pistol flashed, but next moment a heavy missile, hurled by one of the men, struck him on the head, and he fell.

"Throw un into the sea," shouted a rough voice.

Half-a-dozen men rushed towards the prostrate man and began to drag him

towards the water.

"Stand!" cried Dick, dashing forward. "Loose him, or we'll fire."

[image]

"'STAND!' CRIED DICK, DASHING FORWARD. 'LEAVE HIM, OR WE'LL FIRE.'"

A sudden silence fell upon the scene. The men who held Penwarden's arms stood aside; the others edged away, taken aback by this unexpected intervention; there had not been time for the tidesmen to arrive from the village. Dick and Sam stood over the exciseman, pointing their useless muskets at the crowd. For a moment there was absolute stillness; then one of the men murmured:

"'Tis young Maister Trevanion."

"Yes," cried Dick, "and I warn you that if any of you lays a hand on the old man again I will report you all to Sir Bevil. I know you, for all your black faces. There's Doubledick, and Tonkin, and——"

"Iss, 'tis I, and I don't care who knows it," interrupted Tonkin, pushing forward. "What 'nation call ha' you got to meddle, cuss you!"

"I don't meddle with your trade; it's nothing to me; but I won't see an old fellow killed by a pack of ruffians."

Tonkin cursed again, but some one drew him back and spoke to him in low tones. The fact that the interruption had come from the Squire's son was more daunting than the lads' muskets, which had no terror for armed men accustomed to contend with equal numbers. But the name of Trevanion, in spite of the fallen fortunes of the house, was still a moral power in the country-side, and, further, if any harm befell the Squire's heir, they could not escape a heavy retribution.

After a few moments' colloquy, a man came forward.

"Hark 'ee, sir," he said, and Dick recognised his voice as Doubledick's, in spite of an attempt to disguise it. "We take it hard as you've meddled wi' honest free-traders as never did 'ee no harm. As for old Joe, 'twas only a bit of fun—hee! hee!—he bean't for drownin'. What I says I says for all, and that is, we'll let 'ee take un away if you do give us yer sacred word not to gie our names to Sir Bevil or Mr. Mildmay,—them as you knows."

"I don't want to play informer," replied Dick. "I agree to that."

"Not a word to a soul?"

"No. I've said so."

"That's fair spoke," said the man, turning to the rest.

A murmur of approval broke from them. Dick at once lifted Penwarden,

with Sam's help, from the pool of water in which he was lying. It was difficult to keep him on his feet, for he was as yet only partially conscious. Without either assistance or interference from the smugglers they led him slowly to the foot of the path, and, one on each side of him, began to carry, rather than walk, him up the cliff. One of the smugglers dogged them throughout the toilsome ascent. When they came to the place where the man had fallen, after a shrewd thrust from Penwarden's cutlass, they found that he had disappeared, having no doubt made his way homeward.

"Thank 'ee for this, Maister Dick," murmured Penwarden when they paused to rest at the cliff-top. "I'll have the law of those tidesmen for not comin' when they was called."

"No doubt they didn't see your light. And look here, Joe, I promised not to split on the men, so I want you to promise too."

"Daze me if I could split if I tried. I didn't see one of 'em plain, nor hear their voices, and I got this crack on the head afore I could tell one from t'other."

"Do it hurt much, maister?" asked Sam.

"More'n you'd care about, young Sam. But 'tis nawthin' at all to the cracks and wounds we got when we served wi' Lord Admiral Rodney. Have I telled 'ee what 'a said to me purticler one day on Plymouth Hoe?"

"Yes, yes," said Dick, quickly. "The sooner you are in bed the better."

They took him slowly to his cottage, where Dick put him to bed, gave him some brandy, and bathed his wounded head.

"You'll stop with him to-night, Sam," he said. "Don't leave him until Gammer Oliver comes in the morning."

"What'll 'ee say to Feyther, Maister Dick? I'm afeard he'll be in a terrible rage wi' poor me."

"I'll make that right. Now, lock the door when I've gone, and give Mr. Penwarden anything he wants during the night. I'll come over in the morning."

It was nearly two o'clock before Dick got to bed, and day was breaking before he slept. Meanwhile the smugglers finished their work unmolested, and before morning eighty tubs of good French spirits lay in the capacious cellars beneath the Dower House.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

The Breach Widens

Next morning John Trevanion, fresh and ruddy, dressed in white breeches and a blue coat with shining buttons, rode gaily down to the Five Pilchards and summoned Doubledick to the door.

"Well, you did the business, I see," he said jovially. "A small beginning: I wish my cellars held more."

"Iss, fay, a little small haul, to be sure; little and good. Hee! hee! But, Maister Trevanion, I've summat plaguey awk'ard to tell 'ee."

"What's that?" said Trevanion, with an uneasy look.

"Why, drown me if old Joe didn' come upon us, and, worse than that, when we'd cracked him on the head, who should come bouncing down-along but Squire's boy and young Sam Pollex, vowin' and swearin' they'd shoot us through the gizzard if we laid a finger on the old man."

"The deuce they did! and you knocked them on the head, of course?"

The look of uneasiness passed from Trevanion's face.

"Well, no, not 'zackly. 'Twas Squire's son, you see."

"What of that? You should have cracked their numskulls together and sent 'em home howling. Afraid of two boys! What did you do, may I ask?"

"Crackin' skulls is all very fine, but we didn' want a crowner's 'quest on young Squire. No, no, we don't want hangman's necklace chokin' the breath out of us. We let 'em take old Joe home-along, arter they'd give their Bible word to be mum as gravestones."

"Then you were a pack of fools. Don't you see the monkeys were spying on you? 'Twas they brought Joe, without a doubt, though I'd like to know how they got wind of the business."

"Well, if I didn' think it! ... Here's Zacky Tonkin. Maister Trevanion was sayin' as they two brats spied on us, Zacky."

"Not they, 'a b'lieve," said Tonkin, who had come up. "Young Squire said he'd no mind to meddle wi' the business, but was only a bit tender over old Joe."

"And you believe that!" said Trevanion, angrily flicking his riding-whip. "Make no mistake, the Squire has turned on you. I happen to know that Mildmay has been twice to the Towers of late; the Squire's as poor as a church mouse, and informer's pay will be riches to him."

"Squire turn informer!" cried Tonkin. "I can't believe it."

"I can, though," said Doubledick. "When a man's as low down in the world as Squire, he'll do a deal o' dirtiness to fill his purse, 'a b'lieve."

"Of course he will," said Trevanion. "You don't know the world, Tonkin. Depend upon it, a good many golden guineas will find their way to the Towers before a week's out."

Tonkin was an honest fellow, save in so far as the King's revenue was concerned, and had that simplicity of soul which is incredulous of trickery in others.

He was not proof against the cunning suggestions of Trevanion. Naturally short-tempered and violent, he smote the flank of Trevanion's horse a blow that set it prancing, and cried with a savage oath:—

"Then I'll make 'em pay for 't, as sure as my name be Zack Tonkin. I will so."

"Hee! hee! That 'a will," said Doubledick, rubbing his hands. "They golden guineas 'll be a bad egg, to be sure."

Trevanion smiled. He had laid the train; he could trust his minions to fire it.

"Well, we'll speak no more of that," he said. "I'm riding to Truro: can you tell what for?"

"Not for more furnichy?" said Tonkin.

"Goin' a-courtin', hee! hee!" smirked Doubledick.

"No, no; I shan't trouble the parson yet awhile. I'm going to open the mines again, my men."

"Then I'm sorry for 'ee," said Tonkin bluntly. "Mines were worked out long ago."

"Maybe, maybe not. I'm going to try. I shall begin in quite a small way. I shan't fling my money into the earth as my cousin did. But I mean to try my luck, and within a week or two I shall have a few men at work."

"'Twill be good for the parish," said Doubledick. "The miners are drouthy souls, and have a proper taste for good sperits. Ay, sure, 'twill do us all good."

"You won't give up the trade, sir?" enquired Tonkin.

"Not I. The Polkerran men will do more than ever before. A fig for your Mildmays and Polwheles—Polwhele is still riding-officer, isn't he? My wits against them any day. We'll double our trade with Roscoff this winter."

"If Delarousse bean't nabbed," said Tonkin. "His game of privateerin' will souse him in hot water one o' these days."

"Oh! we can do without Delarousse. There's a man in Roscoff, no friend of his, who will deal with us better than he."

"It do maze me, Maister Trevanion," said Doubledick, "that arter bein' away all these years ye know so much about the trade."

"I keep my eyes open, that's all," replied Trevanion, with a laugh. "Well, I must be off. You can tell the neighbours about the mines. I'm glad to do something for the old village."

He rode away, giving smiling greetings to the people, men and women, whom he passed on the road.

"A fine feller!" said Doubledick, enthusiastically. "'Twill be heyday in village, Zacky; stirring life, and not so much of a tomb as 'tis since Squire became a pauper."

"But I'm sorry he do want us to break with Delarousse. He be a good trader, for a Frenchman. Howsomever, if there be a better, all the better for we, to be sure."

The men parted, to retail to their friends and neighbours the pleasing news of the great things John Trevanion was about to do for the village.

Roscoff, the place mentioned in the course of their conversation, was a little port in Brittany which had become the chief seat of the contraband trade with the south-west of England since a restrictive Act of Parliament had put a stop to it in the Channel Islands. The French Government had made it a free port to smugglers, and in a few years it had grown from a tiny fishing village to a thriving town. There were three classes of people engaged in the contraband trade. The freighters consigned or received the goods, and paid the expenses of their shipment. The boatmen conveyed them from port to port, always on moonless nights, and usually when a strong wind was blowing. The tub-carriers bore them to their destination. The boatmen received a fixed sum for each trip, the tub-carriers for each cargo run, and frequently in addition a portion of the goods, or a small share in the proceeds.

Until John Trevanion reappeared in Polkerran, Isaac Tonkin had been the principal freighter of the village, and was the owner and master of the lugger which plied between it and Roscoff. His dealings were chiefly with a certain Jean Delarousse, a ship-owner of Roscoff, who was notorious also as a daring seaman, and in his privateer vessel preyed on English shipping in the Channel between Poole and the Lizard. Delarousse had never come to Polkerran, but he was well known to Tonkin and the crew of his lugger, the Isaac and Jacob. Tonkin having little capital, the cargoes run at Polkerran were usually small, and were disposed of solely among the innkeepers, farmers, and gentry of the neighbourhood. Now that Trevanion had come home, the Polkerran folk expected great developments in the trade, and looked forward to an exciting and profitable winter. Apart from the monetary gain, the risks of smuggling exercised a fascination upon those engaged in it, providing the only excitement in their otherwise dull and monotonous lives. The fraud on the revenue weighed very lightly on their consciences. In their view they were entitled to the full value of the goods for which they had honestly paid, and the Government officials were thieves and tyrants. To best the Customs and Excise was both a business and a sport.

It was not long before the consequences of Dick's intervention on behalf of Joe Penwarden made themselves felt. Hitherto the smugglers had recognised the Trevanions of the Towers as rather for them than against them, but now, actuated by John Trevanion's malicious suggestion, they looked on them in a different light. For the first time a Trevanion had ranged himself on the side of the representatives of the law, and Tonkin, resenting what he regarded as defection,

soon began to show that in threatening vengeance he meant to be as good as his word.

One morning Dick, going down with Sam to inspect the night lines he had set in the waters of Trevanion Bay, discovered with surprise and annoyance that they had been cut. A day or two afterwards they found their boat, which they had drawn up as usual above high-water mark, bumping among the rocks half a mile up the coast. They did not report these occurrences, hoping that they were nothing but a mark of temporary ill-feeling and would soon cease. But when for the third time their lines were tampered with, Dick became seriously concerned. The fish they caught were a very important part of the provisions for the household. What was not required at once was salted and dried for consumption when fishing was over for the season. Without these constant supplies they would have to draw more largely on their pigs and poultry, which they were accustomed to sell. Dick was unwilling to impart his troubles to any one, and for several nights he and Sam kept watch, hoping that if the culprits were caught in the act, the fear of exposure would put a stop to their mischief. On three nights nothing happened: and yet, on the first night when they left the lines unguarded, the same fate befell them.

"This is more than I can bear," cried Dick, in the morning. "I shall tell Petherick."

Petherick was the village constable, who filled also the offices of sexton, bell-ringer, and beadle in the parish church.

"Bless 'ee, you'll waste yer breath," said Sam. "Old Petherick be a crony o' Tonkin, and wouldn' lift a finger against him, without it were murder or arson: and then he'd have to get the sojers to help him. Why, 'tis said he've let 'em keep the tubs in church-tower sometimes when the preventives have been smellin' too close."

"Well, we must put a stop to it somehow. I'll tell Joe, and see what he has to say."

Later in the day he went into the village to buy some new fishing tackle at a general-shop, where the folk could buy tea, sugar, cheese, needles, thread, letter-paper, bootlaces—in short, every small article they needed. On his return, he heard a hubbub proceeding from the village green, where wrestling-bouts, games of quoits, dog-fights, and other sports took place. In the midst was a duck-pond. Bending his steps thither to see what was going on, he beheld Sam with his back against a tree, sturdily defending himself with fists and feet against a crowd of the village lads, among whom the hulking form of Jake Tonkin was conspicuous.

"Heave un in duck-pond," he heard Jake cry.

"You'd better!" he shouted, rushing forward to assist his companion.

The crowd fell back as he forced his way through it, bowling one fellow

over like a ninepin, and driving another out of his path with a shove that nearly sent him into the pond. It is probable that his energy, and the prestige attached to him as the Squire's son, would have put an end to the affair; but it chanced that John Trevanion rode by at this moment, and reining up his horse, contrived in some subtle manner to indicate that his sympathy was with the larger party. Only this could explain the sudden change in their attitude. They closed round Dick and Sam with derisive yells.

"Gie un both a duckin'," shouted one, and they made a sudden concerted rush, trying to seize the two boys.

Dick, never having been to school, had never had occasion or opportunity to learn the noble art; but his muscles were in good condition, and the obvious necessity was to make full use of them. Standing beside Sam against the tree, he hit out against any head, trunk, or shoulder that came within reach, Sam making good play as before with feet as well as arms. One young fisher retired with a crimson nose, another with a bump over one eye, a third shouting that his leg was broken. All the time John Trevanion sat his horse, smiling, and flinging out now and then an encouraging word, which might have been intended for either side, but was appropriated by Tonkin's crew.

Courage and the best will in the world cannot prevail over a triple excess of numbers. The fisher-lads were still six when their wounded comrades had retired to the rear. Led by Jake Tonkin they hurled themselves upon the two defenders. For a few minutes there was a brisk scrimmage; many good blows were given and exchanged; then Dick and Sam fell, to be immediately pounced on by the victors, who caught them by legs and arms and began to drag them down to the pond.

They were within a yard of the brink when a loud voice thundered a command to halt, and a riding-whip cracked and curled its thong round the legs and backs of the aggressors. With howls of pain they released their victims and fled across the green. Rising, bruised and muddy, from the ground, the two boys saw Mr. Polwhele, the riding-officer, close by on horseback, his face flushed and stern-set with anger.

"You look on and do nothing!" he said indignantly to John Trevanion.

"My dear sir, why should I interfere? Boys must fight, let them fight it out."

"Three to one—is that your idea of fair play?"

Trevanion shrugged.

"Hadn't you better reserve your whip for stimulating your tidesmen, Mr. Polwhele? They need a little spiriting, if what I hear is true."

And with that as a parting shot Trevanion rode away.

"What was the origin of this?" asked Mr. Polwhele. "I'm sorry to see it, Master Trevanion."

"'Twas like this, sir," said Sam, rubbing his head and legs alternately. "I comed upon they chaps, and Jake Tonkin says to me, 'Catched any fish lately, young Sam?' Says I, "Tis easier to cut lines, to be sure,' says I, and then they set on me, and they'd ha' melted and mashed me if Maister Dick hadn't come up."

"Have they been cutting your lines, then?"

Dick saw no help for it but to acquaint the riding-officer with the petty persecution he had lately suffered, and the cause of it, which hitherto Mr. Polwhele had not known.

"'Tis rascally, 'pon my soul it is," said the officer, "and I'm sorry Penwarden has brought it on ye. Not but 'twas your own doing, Master Dick; you'd better have kept out of it, though I own 'twas a good deed to old Joe. I'm on my way to see Sir Bevil, and I'll tell him as a magistrate, and he'll engage to commit any ruffian that molests ye."

"Not on my account, if you please, Mr. Polwhele," said Dick earnestly. "There's bad blood between the Towers and the village as it is, and 'twill be ten times worse if Sir Bevil comes into it."

"Maybe you're in the right. Well, I'll see you safe home, and if I may advise ye, keep out of the way o' the village folk. You're not friends with Mr. Trevanion seemingly. Is he backing the smugglers, d'ye know?"

"I can't say anything about that. My father has nothing to do with him."

"Well, well, these family quarrels are common enough. Come along beside me."

Nothing could have been more unfortunate than the intervention of the riding-officer. Purely accidental as it was, the villagers regarded it as another proof of the new alliance between the Towers and the enemy. John Trevanion did not fail to describe to the elder Tonkin, the next time he met him, how savagely Mr. Polwhele had laid his whip upon Jake, and the irate smuggler swore that if he encountered the riding-officer he would make him pay for it.

That evening Dick consulted Joe Penwarden on the situation, as he had intended. Joe was much distressed to think that he was the cause of the bitterness with which the village folk now regarded the family at the Towers.

"I don't know what you can do," said he. "But let things bide; maybe they'll see by long and late they've misread 'ee."

"But we can't have our fishing spoilt time after time, Joe."

"'Tis a pretty stoor, be dazed to it!" said Joe, angrily. "And all for a wambling old carcase like me! Ah! I warn't allus like as I be now. When Lord Admiral Rodney spoke to me on Plymouth Hoe I was as limber a young feller as you'd see in Devon or Cornwall. He was goin' along with two handsome females——but there, I think I've telled 'ee. What I say is, why did Maister John come home, cuss him? There was none o' this afore."

"I don't think that's fair, Joe. They'd have run a cargo all the same, if he were at the ends of the earth; and I couldn't have done differently."

"Ye may say so, but I hold to it, whatever ye say. He's ill-wished 'ee, that's the truth, and a pity it is he ever showed his face here."

Two evenings later, when Dick was struggling with a piece of Latin prose for Mr. Carlyon, there was a knock at the outer door, and Reuben admitted Penwarden, with Jake Tonkin firmly in his clutch.

"Axe Squire if I can have speech with him, Reuby," he said.

Mr. Trevanion came out into the hall.

"Well, what's this, Joe?" he asked.

"I catched this young reptile a-meddlin' wi' Maister Dick's lines, Squire," said Penwarden, "so I brought him up to be dealt with according to law."

"Meddling with his lines, indeed!" cried the Squire in surprise. "Why should he do that? What have you to say for yourself, rascal?"

Jake had nothing to say for himself, but stood with a sullen glower upon his face.

"'Tis not the first time either, Squire, and I be mazed as you didn' know it," Penwarden continued.

"I knew nothing about it. Dick," he called into the room, "come here."

Dick obeyed reluctantly.

"Penwarden tells me," said his father, "that your lines have been tampered with. Is that true?"

"Yes, sir."

"How often?"

"Three or four times within a week or so."

"Why did you not tell me?"

"I didn't want to bother you, sir."

"But this is new; it shows a hostile spirit——. Well, I'll say no more now. As for you, you young scoundrel, I'm not a justice, or I'd commit you. You shall take your choice; a sound flogging, or haled before Sir Bevil: that will mean three months in Truro jail. Which is it to be?"

"I don't want to see Sir Bevil," said Jake, sullenly.

"Strip off your coat, then. Reuben, bring my whip."

Dick went away: he could not remain to see the lad thrashed.

"Now, Reuben, half a dozen lashes," said the Squire when his man returned. "No; I'll do it myself. Stoop!"

Dick pressed his fingers into his ears when at the third or fourth stroke Jake began to howl. The Squire gave him full measure; then bade him begone, and take care not to offend again, declaring that he should not get off so easily next time.

"Now, Dick," he said, returning to the room, "what is the meaning of all this?"

Thereupon Dick made a clean breast of it, telling all that had happened since the rescue of Penwarden. The Squire's face clouded as he listened to the story.

"John Trevanion is at the bottom of this," he cried, thumping the table. "They would never believe I was against them unless their minds had been poisoned. I will see Tonkin to-morrow and get at the truth." Then, with one of the swift changes of mood characteristic of him, he added: "No, I won't do it. I won't gratify that cur; he shall never think I care a snap for him. Tell me if anything of the kind happens again, and I will myself go over to see Sir Bevil. On my life, the toad shall smart if he is proved to be stirring folk against me."

Every succeeding incident in this series did but confirm the village folk in their conviction that the Squire was now their declared enemy, and in staunch alliance with the revenue officers.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

A Light on the Moor

Next day everybody in Polkerran knew of Jake Tonkin's thrashing. It was discussed by the men in tap-rooms, on the jetty, in barns and piggeries, in mills and cobblers' work-rooms. Fishwives chattered about it on their doorsteps and at their windows. Boys meeting their playmates asked if they had heard that Jake Tonkin had been walloped by Squire, and Jake, as the victim of two assaults of this nature in succession, was looked upon as something of a hero. Public opinion was dead against the Squire, and was perhaps only the stronger because it was in the wrong.

It was clear that John Trevanion intended to make himself as unpleasant as possible to his relative. In the afternoon a number of men were seen mounting the steep road from the village to the cliff, drawing trolleys laden with short narrow planks of wood. On reaching the green level they proceeded to erect fences on the ground that had formerly been the Squire's, and was now John Trevanion's. By the end of the next day a large portion of the land was enclosed, the effect of these operations being that the inmates of the Towers were cramped in their movements out of doors, being restricted to the high road and the various rights

of way, which even the landlord could not close against them.

Sam Pollex hoped that the Squire would retaliate. The Beal, from which the huer was accustomed to show his signals to the pilchard fishers, was still Mr. Trevanion's property, and he could, if he chose, fence it round in the same way. But there was nothing petty in the Squire's nature. He was not the man to take a mean revenge on his neighbours, so that when a fisher reported one evening that he had seen sharks and grampuses some distance out at sea, a sure sign that the pilchards were coming, the villagers went to bed without any fear that access would be forbidden to the usual haunt.

Just before dawn next morning, Nathan Pendry, father of John Trevanion's portmanteau carrier, the most experienced fisher in the village, took his stand at the extremity of the Beal, carrying his bush. Seaward, the sky was gloomy; in the east a pale orange and pink glow on the horizon announced the rising sun. The air was very still, only the slow ripples washing the sand at the foot of the cliff breaking the silence. In the fairway lay three boats, the largest of them a smack of eight tons burden, manned by six oarsmen, together with Tonkin and a fisher nearly as large as he. These men and the occupants of the other boats sat without speaking, their eyes fixed on the huer above. He stood motionless, gazing intently on the surface of the sea. Beyond the promontory the village was as yet asleep; one man stood solitary at the end of the jetty.

Suddenly the huer bent forward, in an attitude of intense expectancy. A few minutes passed; then lifting himself he waved his bush aloft. His experienced eyes had detected a shadow in the water, moving across the bay in a direction parallel with the shore. Instantly the men in the first boat fell to their oars, and Tonkin, standing up in the stern, and making a trumpet of his hands, shouted, "Havar! havar!" towards the single figure on the jetty. This man repeated the cry; it was taken up in the village; and soon from every street and lane a crowd of men, women, and children poured up towards the cliffs, dressing themselves as they ran, and shouting, "Havar! havar! Yo-hoy, hoy, hoy!"

Meanwhile the rowers were tugging at their oars with all their might, Ike Pendry, who was rowing bow, having his eyes fixed on his father, and directing the steersman in accordance with the movements of the bush. The ground behind the huer was now thronged with spectators, no longer shouting, but watching Pendry and the boatmen in tense silence. All at once the huer dropped his bush; the rowers shipped oars; and Tonkin and his mate grasped a long net, which had lain folded ready to their hands, and with a few deft movements shot it overboard.

"Yo-hoy, yo-hoy!" broke from every throat. Then the crowd relapsed into silence, watching the further proceedings in the bay.

The "seine net," as it was called, was a quarter of a mile long and sixteen fathoms broad at the middle. It was fastened on each side to two stout double

ropes, and at each corner to four strong warps about fifty fathoms long. Corks were fixed to the upper edge, and leaden weights to the lower. When it was "shot," the corks buoyed up one end to the surface of the water, the leads sank the other perpendicularly to the bottom. The boat meanwhile was rowed round the shoal, following the directions of the huer, until, the two extremities being made fast, the fish were imprisoned in an oblong barrier of network. As Tonkin straightened his back after completing his part of the work, another shout rent the air, and the huer, his task also accomplished, broke through the dignified calm which had hitherto distinguished him, and waved his cap triumphantly.

Now came the turn of the "tuck-boat," one of those that had remained as yet in the fairway. It was rowed within the area enclosed by the seine, and laid close to the seine-boat, to the bows of which one end of a smaller net, called the "tuck," was fastened by a rope. The boat then slowly made the inner circuit of the seine, the tuck being paid out and deftly hooked at intervals to the larger net. Meanwhile the men in the third boat beat the water with their oars, so as to scare the fish into the middle of the enclosure.

Now came the most exciting moment of the day. The cliff-top all round the bay was dark with spectators. Small boys, eager to get in front, dodged and shoved among the legs and skirts of their elders. The village blacksmith was there; cobblers with bent backs and leather aprons; tinkers, tailors, wheelwrights, carpenters, ploughmen, dairymaids, old men with sticks and crutches, old women who could scarcely totter, mothers with babies in their arms: all were agog with excitement to see the final act. Sam Pollex was there, and when he caught sight of the parlourmaid of the Dower House he sidled up to her elbow, listened with delight to her exclamations of "My gracious!" "Look 'ee see, now!" "Lawk-a-massy me!" and by-and-by ventured to instruct her ignorance of the movements passing below.

With the shouts of the boys were now mingled the deeper tones of the seiners as, ranged in a row in their boat, they began to haul on the tuck, calling "Yo, heave ho!" in time with their rhythmic movements. "Pull away, boys!" shouts the huer; "Yo-hoy!" scream the boys. "Up she comes! Look at 'em! Look at 'em!" The water eddies like a mill-race; in the midst is seen a heaving mass of gleaming scales; and from round the point come boats of all sizes, which range themselves in a circle about the shoal. Men lean over the sides, dip their baskets, lift them full of shining fish, empty them into the boats, and dip them again for more. Soon they stand ankle deep in pilchards, and when the boats sink to the gunwales, they are rowed away to the jetty, where men are waiting with shovels and barrows, ready to carry the fish to the salting-house.

Dick Trevanion was among the spectators. He never missed the first haul of the season. But to-day he was acutely conscious of a change. Last year the

villagers had greeted him with smiles and cheery words; to-day they lowered their eyes, passed him in silence, and edged away from him as he moved from place to place. He could not but feel bitterly his isolation. Why did they so misjudge him? He had not changed: he knew well that, in any ordinary contest between the smugglers and the revenue officers, his sympathy would have been with the former; friendly as he was with Mr. Mildmay, he would enjoy nothing better than that gentleman's discomfiture, if it were due to fair means and the villagers' wits. Yet, because he had intervened to prevent harm to an old man, he was now regarded by the villagers as their enemy, one who would descend to play the mean part of spy and informer.

With gloomy face he turned away and walked back along the promontory. At the end he met Mr. Carlyon, who had just ridden up on his cob. The parson's ruddy face was suffused with cheerfulness; he knew by the jubilant shouts of the crowd that the catch was a good one, and rejoiced that his parishioners were winning from the deep their means of subsistence for the winter. He marked Dick's clouded face, and, guessing the occasion of it, he tried to cheer him.

"Come, Dick," he said genially, "cheer up, my lad; this haul will put the folk in a good temper, and they will forget their grudge against you."

"I hope they will, sir," replied Dick, "but there's one man who'll try to keep them in mind of it."

"You mean your cousin?"

"Yes."

"But surely he'll not be such a cur. He's a scoundrel—there now, what am I saying? I'll tackle him, my boy. Why, bless my soul, he was in church on Sunday, and my text was 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' I'll ride there now, and get him to give me some breakfast—though I detest the fellow," he added in one of his unconscious asides.

"He is away from home, I believe," said Dick.

"Well, then, I'll put it off till another day, but tackle him I will. I've a bit of news, Dick. The carrier brought me some books last night; that's not the news, though. No. You have heard, maybe, of a Frenchman named Delarousse?"

He looked slyly at Dick; everyone in Polkerran knew the name of the Frenchman with whom the smugglers had such close dealings.

"As a natural enemy of our country I don't pity him," pursued the parson, "but as a—h'm—an honest free-trader I own I feel for him. His privateer was badly knocked about in the Channel by a revenue cruiser a week or two ago, and while she was being repaired, it appears that he tried to run a cargo at Polperro. As ill-luck would have it—dear me! I wonder if I ought to have said that," he added under his breath—"he ran into the arms of the revenue people; they seized his lugger and carried him to Plymouth, where he'll cool his heels for a time until

they put him among the other French prisoners on Dartmoor."

"Do they know it in the village yet, sir?"

"Probably not; the carrier was going straight on to Newquay; he had nothing for us except my books. But you may be sure the folk will soon know all about it. The carrier had a glass of brandy with Petherick, and Petherick, as you know, is the biggest gossip in the parish. His brandy is better than mine, the dog! I must ask him where he gets it."

Dick could not help smiling at the parson's unconscious self-revelation.

"That's right; you're feeling better, I see," said Mr. Carlyon cheerily. "Now I'll go on and bespeak my basket. Pilchards of the first catch are the daintiest dish I know. 'Tis a holiday to-day, but I shall see you to-morrow. Good-bye."

He rode on. Dick turned to watch him, and saw Sam Pollex walking beside the maid-servant of the Dower House. When Sam observed his young master he left the girl and came sheepishly towards him.

"I've been tellin' to she the hows and whys of it, Maister Dick," said he.

"Indeed."

"Iss, I have. Bein' a furriner, she be 'mazin simple for such a well-growed female. She axed me why I never brought no more eggs."

"And what did you say?"

"Well, not likin' to hurt her feelings, I telled her our hens be uncommon idle lately, and she said she knows they do have fits that way sometimes. Maister John's gone to Lunnon, to buy things for his mine."

"I wish he'd stay there."

"Her name be Susan."

"Quite a common name."

"She's as nice a female as ever I've seed."

The pilchard fishing was for several days so engrossing an occupation that the villagers had no time for fostering their grievance against the Towers. Dick and Sam, who had formerly been in the thick of it, sometimes as spectators merely, occasionally as participators, kept away, and spent the greater part of their time in fishing quietly some few miles up the coast. One day Dick reverted to the project of hunting seals, which he had temporarily abandoned, partly through the diversion afforded by the discovery of the well, partly because he did not care to kill the parent seals while their offspring were so young. Now, however, the prospect of sport, and the practical wish to obtain a sealskin for his mother, made him resolve to try his luck in the cave, and he laid his plans in consultation with the ever-ready Sam.

He guessed that the seals left the cave at low tide to find food in the deep, and returned when the sea flowed in. Since the cave was at such times inaccessible from the sea, he decided that it must be approached from the well, of which

neither he nor Sam had now any remaining dread. One evening they sallied towards it, carrying a well-made rope-ladder, a musket apiece, a large hammer, and several torches, which would give more light than the ancient candle-lantern they had formerly carried. To one end of the rope-ladder they had attached a series of stout meat-hooks borrowed from old Reuben: they could more confidently trust their safety to a number of teeth gripping the rock than to the single fluke of their small boat anchor. They had timed their start so that they would reach the cave just as the tide turned.

It was a dull, murky evening, with a touch of autumn rawness in the air. Twilight had not quite merged into darkness when they arrived at the ruined chapel at the well-head. They looked warily around to make sure that their presence was not observed, then prepared to descend.

"'Tis rayther fearsome," murmured Sam, as he looked into the black shaft. Now that he was on the spot, the tradition of ghostliness in which he had been brought up revived something of his former fears.

"Nonsense," said Dick, "we have laid the ghost for ever, Sam. I will go down first. Don't follow until I come to the door. I will whistle for you. When you hear me, fling down the ladder and the hammer. At a second whistle, come yourself."

Sticking a lighted candle-end into his hatband, and slinging the musket over his shoulder, he stepped backward into the well, and began the descent. He found the successive staples entirely by the sense of touch, the candle throwing a deep shadow below him. At first he felt a little nervous, but gathered confidence after a few steps, and made the latter part of the descent very quickly.

Sam, waiting above, heard a whistle, curiously prolonged by its reverberations from the walls. He threw down the hammer, and gave an involuntary start when he heard it thud upon the bottom. The ladder followed, and the unkindled torches; then, without lighting a candle for his own hat, he stepped over the brink, muttering to himself:

"S'pose I fall! But I won't. S'pose I do though. But Maister Dick didn't. S'pose *I* do. Well, if 'tis to be, 'tis, so I med as well go cheerful."

In reality he descended more quickly than Dick had done. They gathered up their burdens, and made their way by the light of Dick's candle along the passage until they came to the ledge overlooking the cave.

Here they stopped and peered over. The tide was rather lower than they had expected. Their eyes ranged the cave for a time without discovering any sign of the seals. Then Dick lit a torch, and holding it over the dark space beneath, he suddenly saw two orbs of light, like the eyes of a monstrous cat, in a far corner to the right of him. Moving along the ledge in that direction, he descried two seals, greyish in colour, and much larger than he had supposed them to be, lying on a rock, with the two young ones between them.

"We will only kill one, Sam," he whispered, "and I hope 'twill be the father."

The seals were apparently fascinated by the glare of the torch, for they made no movement, their eight eyes glowing like balls of fire. In order to obtain more light upon his task, Dick kindled two more torches, and stuck all three into crevices of rock in such a way that they illuminated the whole corner of the cave where the seals lay. But now the animals had caught sight of him, and as if instinctively realising that the intruder was an enemy, they scrambled with clumsy movements off the rocks into the water.

"They be goin' out to sea, scrounch 'em!" whispered Sam, whose attitude to all prospective victims was an indignant surprise that they did not wait meekly for their doom.

But the seals, after swimming a yard or two, took up their position behind a larger boulder, above which the tops of their sleek, massive heads could just be seen.

"We shall have to go down to them, Sam," said Dick.

"They be great big creatures," said Sam dubiously. "Wi' those terrible big flappers they could smite us flat as flounders."

"You had better take the hammer in case I miss and they attack us. We must at any rate prevent one of them from getting away."

They retreated to the further end of the ledge, to which the light of their torches scarcely reached, and carefully hooked the ladder to the jagged rock. Then in perfect silence they descended. The water only came to their knees. Wading through it with scarcely more noise than an otter might have made, they drew gradually nearer to the rock behind which the seals had sheltered. Here they found themselves baulked. The rock was close to the wall, and it was impossible to get a shot at the animals without circumventing it, which appeared to Dick a dangerous movement. The surprising quickness with which the seals had shuffled off their former perch showed that, if a shot failed, they might fling their heavy bodies upon the assailants before they could escape. He was considering what to do, when a movement among the seals forced him to act on the instant. The largest of the creatures heaved itself to the top of the rock, and lay there as if on the watch for the enemy, presenting the side of its head to Dick. He raised his musket, a firelock of ancient type, and fired. The reverberations in the hollow vault were broken in upon by a hoarse roar, and through the cloud of smoke the seal slid over the rock into the water, and came swimming towards the two boys. Dick seized Sam's musket, preparing to fire again; his first shot had only enraged the animal. But before he could raise the weapon, the seal threw itself out of the water, and he had just time to spring aside and evade its onset. As it passed, its flipper struck the musket from his grasp, and it fell with a splash into the water.

Sam, for all his fear of ghosts, was brave enough before a real enemy. He

was standing a yard or two in Dick's rear. As the seal plunged heavily into the sea, Sam brought the hammer down with all his force upon the creature's head. There was one tremendous convulsion of the water, then the seal's movements ceased and it sank to the bottom.

[image]

"AS THE SEAL PLUNGED INTO THE SEA, SAM BROUGHT HIS HAMMER DOWN."

Meanwhile, the other animals, scared by the noise, had flung themselves into the water, and were swimming towards the mouth of the tunnel.

"Well done, young Sam!" said Dick. "You did that famously."

"So I did, to be sure," replied Sam, "but I couldn' help it. You shot un, Maister Dick; see his blood."

There was a red tinge upon the water.

"How are we to get him up?" said Dick. "He's a monstrous big fellow."

"We'll wait till tide is down and skin him here. Be his body good to eat?"

"That I don't know; we can try. But the skin is the valuable part of him, and having that we may leave the rest."

In two hours the receding tide had left the dead seal on the sand. The boys took out their knives, and, expert in such work, in another half-hour had removed the skin. Their torches were by this time burning low, so they clambered up to the ledge, and carried their implements and booty as quickly as possible through the adit to the foot of the well, and then up to the surface.

Vastly pleased with the success of their expedition they set off towards home. The night was very dark, and a thin rain was falling, which increased as they proceeded, until it became a steady downpour. They were tired; their burdens, light enough when they started from home, now seemed to be pounds heavier; the rain beat full in their faces, finding out every crevice between their clothes and their skin; and the ground was rough, covered here with tussocks of grass that squelched under their tread, there with fragments of mining gear which threatened to trip them up. They trudged on in silence, feeling the loneliness and the inclemency of the weather the more keenly because it ensued upon the high excitement of their adventure.

As they struck into the path leading by Penwarden's cottage, Sam suddenly declared that he saw a flicker of light to their left, some distance across the moor.

"I can't see it," said Dick, scarcely looking in the direction indicated, "and it doesn't matter to us. I'm tired; this skin is heavy; I want to get home."

"'Tis moving," said Sam a moment later. "Maybe 'tis Maister John comin' back from Lunnon."

"He wouldn't come that way. I see it now; 'tis some belated traveller, no doubt."

"But the light bean't on the road; 'tis too far away."

"Never mind about the light," Dick replied, testily. "Come along."

They soon came to one of John Trevanion's new fences, which compelled them to leave the path and seek the high road. In his moody frame of mind Dick resented this bitterly. They now perceived that the light, spread starwise by the rain, was much nearer to them, and presently heard the creaking of wheels and the dull thud of horses' hoofs on the turf. A minute after they had struck the road a closed travelling carriage, drawn by two horses, turned into it from a byway, scarcely more than a bridle path. On the right of the driver there was a single lamp. Catching sight of the two figures on the road, bending forward under their loads, the driver hailed them and pulled up his horses beside them.

"Hi! can 'ee tell me if this be the right road for Polkerran?" he asked.

"Iss, fay, right for'ard," answered Sam.

"And where be the Five Pilchards?"

"Down-along through village. Better mind the hill, if you be a furriner, 'cos 'tis 'nation steep and twisty."

"So be they all, od rake it."

Here another voice interposed, and a head showed itself dimly at the carriage window.

"Vill you—ah! how say it!—vill you embark on ze—ze coach, and, if you please, show ze road?"

"Drat it all, why will 'ee talk?" cried the driver. "Put yer head inside, for gospel sake. Come up beside me, friends, if you'll do a kindness, and say the word when I do come to the hill. I don't want to break hosses' knees nor my own neck."

The boys, glad enough to get a lift, mounted beside the driver, with a tingling curiosity about the passenger inside who spoke in so strange an accent. It was not far to the Towers, and when they came to it Dick asked the driver to stop, and bade Sam get down and carry the sealskin and his share of the other burdens to the house.

"You bean't a fisher?" said the driver to Dick as Sam was descending. There was a note of anxiety in his voice.

"I fish, but I'm not what you would call a fisher."

"I knowed it by your speech. Well, then, I won't trouble 'ee, sir, this mizzly night," said the man, with some eagerness.

"No trouble at all. 'Tis not very far."

"Well, 'twas to be," muttered the coachman. Dick thought it was an odd thing to say. Still more surprised was he when the driver leant over and extinguished the candle-flame with his fingers. "You see," he explained, "the gentleman inside is terrible bad, met with an accident, as 'a med say."

"Bring him to our house, then," said Dick instantly; "my mother will be pleased to do something for him."

"Not for gold and di'monds," replied the man quickly. "No, we go to Five Pilchards; 'tis a good enough inn, I've heerd tell."

Dick said no more. He wondered who the stranger was, and what brought him to Polkerran, where visitors were rare. The carriage rumbled on slowly; every now and then the driver made the horses walk, though the road here was level. It seemed to Dick that his attitude and manner were those of a man intently listening.

They came to the spot where a short drive led from the road to the Dower House, which could just be discerned, a black mass in the rain. "That villain has not returned, then," thought Dick, seeing no light in the house.

At this moment there came upon their ears the clattering sound of several horses from the foot of the hill which they had nearly reached. The driver jerked his horses to a standstill, looked from side to side, and seeing the carriage-drive, to which there was no gate, wheeled the horses round and drove in, not on the hard road, but on the bordering grass.

"This is a private road," said Dick, wondering.

"'Twas my thought. These be ticklish times for travellers, and 'tis best not to meet strange riders in the dark. I'll bide till they be past, and then go on again."

He drew up under the trees about forty yards along the drive, within a few yards of the house. Dick heard him breathing heavily. The clattering of hoofs drew nearer: the driver seemed to hold his breath; then, when the horsemen had passed the end of the drive at a fast trot, he heaved a sigh of relief. He waited until the sounds had died away in the distance, and wheeled the horses round. There was not room on the grass for the carriage to turn completely, and the wheels made a crunching sound on the pebbly road. The side of the carriage was still turned to the house when the door opened, and John Trevanion appeared on the threshold, holding a candle above his head, and peering into the dark.

CHAPTER THE NINTH

Doubledick's Midnight Guests

"Who's that?" cried Trevanion.

Dick, being on the offside, was concealed by the driver's burly form, but he shrank back against the front of the carriage. He did not wish to meet his cousin's eyes at that moment, and began to wonder why he was on the box in the rain when he might have ridden inside.

"Axin' yer pardon, sir," replied the coachman, "I be afeard I've took the wrong road. 'Tis 'nation dark, and my lamp has gone out."

"What was that clattering of horses I heard?"

"Ah, I can't tell 'ee that. I didn't see no one. Maybe 'twas riding-officer. I axe yer pardon for disturbin' ye, sir, this terrible bad night and all, and I'll drive on to village."

"You're a stranger, aren't you? Have you got anybody in your carriage?"

"Never a soul, sir. The truth is, I've lost my way, and shan't be sorry to get out o' this pesty rain."

"'Tis heavier now. Well, good-night. You'll find a warm room in the inn at the foot of the hill, if the innkeeper hasn't raked out the fire and gone to bed. Good-night."

He retreated with his guttering candle into the house and shut the door, the coachman driving back to the high road. Dick was mystified. Why had the man denied having a passenger? Why had he extinguished his light and turned out of the road on hearing horsemen? The driver said nothing, except to grumble under his breath at the weather, and Dick refrained from questioning him, thinking that some light might be thrown on the mystery when they reached the inn.

The carriage had just wheeled into the road when Dick felt a touch on his right arm. He looked round: the passenger was leaning forward out of the window.

"How is ze name of zat man—him zat hold ze light?" asked the stranger eagerly.

Dick hesitated; then, seeing no reason for not answering, said: "That is Mr. John Trevanion."

"Tre—vat say you, if you please?"

"Trevanion."

"Trevanion!" repeated the questioner, giving a strange intonation to the name. "Ah! Shank you."

He withdrew his head into the carriage. Dick heard the driver mutter:

"Why can't he clap a stopper on his tongue, the stunpoll!"

He drove slowly down the steep winding hill.

"There's the inn," said Dick presently. "Doubledick isn't abed, late as it is."

A light shone through the red blind of the inn parlour. The door was open, and Doubledick stood in the doorway, illuminated by the light behind. In spite of

the heavy rain several men, among whom Dick distinguished the elder Tonkin, were grouped about the door. They had heard the wheels of the oncoming carriage, and there were signs of excitement among them. As the vehicle drew up, Tonkin stepped forward, thrust his head in, uttered a smothered exclamation, then opened the door hastily. The eyes of all the men were fixed on the figure that emerged, so that Dick on the box was not noticed. A short, broad man, clad in a long overcoat, his cocked hat pulled low over his brow, descended from the carriage and went quickly into the inn, the men following him. The door was shut. Feeling that he was in a somewhat false position, Dick seized the opportunity to slip down from his seat and withdraw round the angle of the wall, where a flight of steps ascended between it and the wall of the opposite house. He heard Tonkin speaking to the driver; the carriage rumbled over the cobbles, not returning up the hill, but going through the village in the opposite direction. Immediately afterwards the inn door was reopened, the heavy boots of the fishers clumped along the street, and in a few moments nothing was to be heard except the pattering of the rain.

Dick felt a little sore at having to trudge back afoot, without a word of thanks. He was drenched to the skin. Glancing behind as he began to climb the hill, he saw that the light had now disappeared from the inn-room. The whole village was in darkness. More than ever dispirited and mystified, he plodded along. Apparently the carriage had been expected. He could not help connecting it with the horsemen whom the driver had been so anxious to avoid, and, remembering the strange accent of the passenger, it suddenly flashed upon him that the man might be one of Boney's spies, whom he had unwittingly helped to escape pursuers. But on reflection this idea seemed untenable, because a spy was hardly likely to appear at this remote part of the coast, and he could not believe that the smugglers of Polkerran, like those of the south-eastern counties, had any treasonable communications with the French ogre.

He was still pondering on the baffling occurrence when the sound of horses trotting again fell on his ear. In a few moments he had to stand aside to avoid being knocked down by the first of half-a-dozen horsemen, whom, dark as it was, he recognised by their headdress to be soldiers. Their uniforms were covered by their riding cloaks. He was seen as he shrank back: a rough voice called "Halt!" and the horsemen reined up.

"Stand forth, in the King's name, and answer for your life," said the same voice.

Dick went towards the foremost horseman.

"Who are you?" he was asked.

"My name is Trevanion," he replied.

"Ah! Same as the gentleman up the hill," cried the soldier. "Now, tell us

quick; have you seen a coach, wagon, or other four-wheeled piece of machinery hereabouts?"

"Yes; a two-horsed carriage drove down to the inn yonder about twenty minutes ago."

"What road did she come?"

"This very road that you're on."

"Confusion on it! Then how did we miss the thing? But there, no matter; we'll after it and catch the villain."

Without more delay the sergeant and his men clattered off down the hill, relieving Dick of the necessity of giving explanations, which he felt might be somewhat awkward. Being now thoroughly excited, he forgot his fatigue and wetness, and ran after the dragoons to see what happened when they reached the inn. He was but a minute or two behind them. The village was still in complete darkness; the rain had ceased, and the moon showed her rim through a rift in the scudding clouds.

The troopers were at the door of the inn, five still on horseback; the sixth had dismounted and was rapping on the door with the hilt of his sword.

"Hang me, will he never open?" cried the man, when repeated blows drew no response.

"Must be a rare sleeper, to be sure," said another.

"I'll bust the lock with a shot from my carbine if he don't open soon," cried the angry sergeant. "This is some jiggery-pokery, sure as I'm alive."

He thundered again on the door, calling upon the innkeeper with many imprecations to open in the King's name. At last there was the sound of a casement opening above. Looking up, the troopers saw first a blunderbuss, then an arm, and finally a head in a white nightcap.

"Who be that a-bangin' and smitin' at an honest man's door, when he be abed and asleep?" demanded Doubledick's voice angrily.

"'Tis for you to answer questions, not to axe 'em," said the sergeant. "Now, speak like a true man, and hide nothing, or the King will have your miserable head. Did a carriage come down the hill a while ago?"

"Oh, if ye be King's men I bean't afeard o' ye. A carriage? Why, to be sure 'a did, a half-hour ago, or maybe more."

"And where is it now?"

"There's a question to axe a poor simple soul wi' only two eyes. How be I to know that, captain, on a dark night like this?"

"Be hanged to you! You know whether it stayed or went on, and you'd best speak up without any shilly-shally."

"True. I do know that. The carriage went on, to be sure."

"Which way? Speak up."

"Well, I can't 'zackly say, but 'twarn't up the hill, so I reckon 'twas through village towards Redruth. Iss, I reckon 'twas that."

"And the man inside?"

"Daze me if ever I knowed of any man inside. Driver had lost his way, seemingly; 'a was like a squashed turmit in the rain: and when he'd took summat to comfort his innards, off-along he drove. Warn't here five minutes, no, nor yet four."

"'Tis treason-felony and hangman's job if you're not speaking the truth," said the sergeant. "Confusion take him, we'll have to ride on. Look here, Tom; you stay here with Matthew and keep your eye on the door. The rest of us will ride on after the carriage, and come back to you if we catch our man."

"What rascal of a deserter be you a-chasin' by night, captain?" cried Doubledick.

"No deserter, but a prisoner that escaped from Plymouth. We've been after him all day and all night, and smite me if it don't seem he has given us the slip. Come on, men."

The sergeant rode off with three of his men, the other two dismounting and taking up their stand at the door.

"I reckon I can go back to my warm bed now, eh, sojers?" said Doubledick. "But ye're sappy wet, poor fellers, and tired too, to be sure, hikin' arter a runaway prisoner all day and all night. Bide a minute till I've pulled a few garments on my cold limbs, and I'll come down and give 'ee summat to warm yerselves."

The nightcap disappeared, a candle was lighted, and in a few minutes Doubledick came to the door with two steaming beakers of hot brandy and water, which the troopers accepted gratefully.

Dick, from the shadow of an alley, had seen and heard all that went on. The soldiers chatted with the innkeeper for a while; then he retired into the inn, shut the door, and put out the light.

A minute or two afterwards Dick saw a figure stealing down the steps at the side of the inn, peep round the corner, and then retreat hastily. He supposed it was one of the men whom he had seen at the door previously, but was unable to distinguish his features, owing to the deep shadows thrown on the alley-steps by the moon. To avoid discovery himself, he shrank back against the blind wall. It must now, he thought, be nearly midnight; but, wet though he was, he determined not to leave the spot until he had seen how the matter ended. Having been behind the wall when the carriage drove away, he was not sure whether the passenger had re-entered it or not. The hurried manner in which the man had gone into the inn was not that of one who intended coming forth again. Doubledick had lied when he said that he knew nothing of the occupant of the carriage; yet why should he harbour an escaped prisoner, who was almost certainly a French-

man? The mystery was deeper than ever.

It was perhaps an hour later, and Dick was on the point of going home, when the silence of the night was again broken by the sharp ringing clatter of hoofs. The sergeant and his three men returned, a white mist rising from their horses' backs.

"We caught the carriage," said the sergeant, as he rode up, "but 'twas empty as a sucked egg. The driver said he'd lost his way on the moor coming from Truro, and was going on home to Redruth. Have you seen anything?"

"Not a thing," replied one of the troopers at the door.

"Well, we must search the inn. What a miserable fool I was not to ask that young feller if there was any one in the carriage when he saw it!"

Dick hesitated for a moment. Should he tell what he knew? A French prisoner was an enemy of his country; might it not be his duty to help the dragoons to capture him? But reflecting that the man might be nothing worse than a smuggler, in which case to inform against him would only embitter the inimical feeling of the villagers against him, besides being an ungracious act in itself, he decided to say nothing.

After a long-continued knocking and the expenditure of much abusive language, Doubledick once more opened the door.

"Ye'll gie me the rheumatiz and send me to my grave," he said with a whine. "What be ye rampin' men o' war wantin' now?"

"We're going to search your inn for that there mounseer, my fine feller, and you'd best take it quiet, or you'll find yourself strapped to one of our hosses and carried with all your bones a-rattling afore the Colonel."

"Search, if ye must. Name it all, why should I hinder 'ee! Turn the inn topsy-versy, ye'll find nothing but maybe a rat or a cockroach."

The sergeant and two of the troopers entered. They searched the tap-room, the inn-parlour, kitchen, cellars, bedrooms, lofts; rummaged cupboards, empty barrels, a clock-case, the copper in the scullery, an overturned water butt in the backyard; all to no purpose.

"He's not here, that's certain," said the sergeant at last, dashing the perspiration from his brow. "We must have overshot the villain somehow. Plague on it! We shall have to ride back to Truro and try to get on his tracks, or the Colonel will be in a rare passion."

"I won't ask 'ee to stay, brave men," said Doubledick, "knowing what terrible rages noble officers do fly into. But a nibleykin o' real old stingo won't do 'ee no harm, and ye can drink confusion to Boney. Hee! hee!"

All the soldiers accepted the liquor with alacrity, and the two who had already tasted its quality winked at each other, not acquainting their comrades with their previous pleasurable experience. Smacking their lips and declaring

that the innkeeper was a real good-hearted fellow, they remounted and rode up the hill. Doubledick watched them until they were out of sight, a leer of triumph on his face. Dick heard him chuckle as he shut the door and shuffled up the stairs. The light was extinguished, and Dick, vexed with himself for remaining so long and so unprofitably, set off homeward in the track of the dragoons.

A few minutes after he had left, a heavily-cloaked figure—the same that Dick had seen a while before—stole down the steps at the side of the inn, and, looking round cautiously, approached the door and rapped six times upon it, pausing a brief while after every second tap. Immediately after the sixth, the casement above opened, and Doubledick, looking out, said in a hoarse whisper:

"Be that you, Zacky?"

"No, 'tis I, John Trevanion. Come down and let me in, Doubledick."

"Good sakes, I didn' know 'ee was to home, Maister John. Thought 'ee was still in Lunnon town. A pretty stoor there's been to-night. Bide a minute, sir."

He lit his candle, descended, let Trevanion in, and barred the door behind him.

"I never thought you were such a fool," said Trevanion, angrily eyeing the nightcapped and nightgowned innkeeper. "What on earth possessed you to harbour Delarousse?"

"Chok' it all, why shouldn't I?" replied Doubledick truculently. "Bean't he a good friend of ourn? Who better?"

"Confound you, he's a Frenchman, and a runaway prisoner. The soldiers will get on his track again, and your ridiculous folly will be the ruin of us all. You have no business to run such risks."

In his anger Trevanion raised his voice.

"Risks, do 'ee say? Jown me if you hain't run risks yerself, Maister John, and a deal bigger; hee! hee!"

"Silence!" shouted Trevanion. "Don't provoke me, or upon my soul and body I'll——"

The threat died on his lips, for at this moment a door opened at the further end of the passage in which they stood, and there appeared the short, rotund form of the passenger who had descended from the carriage some hours before. The overcoat and the cocked hat were gone; the Frenchman wore the rough fustian, marked with a broad arrow, in which the authorities arrayed prisoners. His eyes gleamed with the fire of hatred as he looked full at Trevanion, who on his part returned glare for glare, but whose countenance wore a strange expression, which Doubledick, watching him, could not fathom.

"It is you," said the Frenchman, in his own tongue. "You, Robinson—or Trevanion, is it not so?"

"You be known to each other, then?" said Doubledick. "Hee! hee! Why

don't 'ee shake hands, like friends?"

"Silence!" cried the Frenchman sternly. "You go," he added, addressing Doubledick in English. "I haf somezink to say to zis monsieur—Trevanion."

He took the candle from the astonished inn-keeper's hand, and motioned to Trevanion to enter the parlour. Following him, he shut and bolted the door, leaving Doubledick in the dark passage. The innkeeper promptly knelt down and put his ear to the keyhole, but since he knew almost nothing of French, he understood little of the ensuing dialogue, which was conducted in that tongue.

"You see I have found you, monsieur—Trevanion," said Delarousse. "You thought, no doubt, that you had escaped me when you landed that dark night. But you should not have come to Polkerran; that was a foolish step for one so clever to take. You would have been caught, but for a sudden alarm from the shore; yet it mattered little that I had to sail away then, for, as you see, I have found you—cheat, thief, scoundrel!"

Trevanion did not flinch as the Frenchman hissed these words at him. He thrust his hand into the breast pocket of his cloak.

"Aha!" laughed Delarousse. "You have a pistol? I have not. You would like to shoot me, but you dare not. I should like to shoot you, but I have no weapon, and, equally, if I had, I dare not. I will not hang for you: so you deal in this country with men that kill others, is it not so? But I tell you, Trevanion—that is a name I do not forget—I tell you that you shall not escape. It is not the time now, but there will come a day when you shall repent of having deceived and robbed the man who trusted you. Once more I tell you what you are: cheat, thief, scoundrel!"

"Pretty words, monsieur," said Trevanion with a sneer. "You had better take warning. This country is not safe for Frenchmen. You have escaped from prison, by some piece of imbecile folly——"

"Not so," interposed Delarousse. "It was by the skill of good friends, who are loyal to one that has done business loyally with them. They would have taken me to Roscoff in their lugger, and tried to dissuade me when I said that I should come here. But they helped me. One of them risked his neck to drive me here, and my true friends have guarded me. I came to assure myself that the man who called himself Robinson lives here in this village. I saw you from the carriage when you stood at your door; I learnt your real name, and now, once more I say it, I will wait my time, and you shall pay for your knavery."

"I care nothing for your threats. You have been lucky to escape once; you will not escape a second time. Set foot on this shore again and the whole country will rise at you. Expect no mercy from me."

"Mercy! From you! Mon Dieu, is it you that talk of mercy?"

He broke off, and let out a gust of harsh, sardonic laughter. Then, thrusting

himself forward, he cried:

"Bah! I spit at you! When all men know you as I know you there will be no talk of mercy. Are you fool as well as villain? Go! Return to your fine house. Flourish on my money. It shall be for a season, and then!——"

Trevanion bit his lip. His expression told of a struggle for self-control. He glared at the Frenchman for a few moments; then, with a hollow laugh, he moved towards the door.

"Do your worst," he said, turning with his hand on the bolt. "I am in England; I defy you; and, by heaven! I promise you ten feet of English rope as a spy 'if you dare to show yourself here again."

He drew back the bolt, causing Doubledick to scuttle like a rat along the passage. A mocking laugh followed Trevanion as he strode from the inn.

Before there was the least hint of dawn in the sky, a man, unrecognisable in oilskins and sou'-wester, stole from the house next to the inn, where he had been concealed when the dragoons made their search, and walked rapidly to the jetty. Tonkin's lugger, the *Isaac and Jacob*, lay alongside. Delarousse stepped on board; the vessel cast off; and by the time that the mass of the villagers were awake, the guest, whose presence few had known, was several leagues nearer to the French shore.

But the departure of the lugger had not been wholly unobserved. In the little white cottage on the cliff, Joe Penwarden had enjoyed a full night's sleep, as he usually did when the moon was up. The sound of horses on the high road did not reach him, and he was ignorant of the strange happenings in the village. But the moon was in its last quarter; the "darks" would soon return, and with them the activity of the smugglers might be expected to be resumed. The cargoes were sometimes brought from Roscoff in French luggers, sometimes in the *Isaac and Jacob*, and Penwarden was accustomed to watch the sailings of Tonkin's vessel. On this particular morning he woke early, and after he had kindled a fire, he rested his telescope on the window-sill to take a look round while the kettle was boiling. He soon spied the well-known lugger scudding along under full sail.

"So you be at it again, Zacky," he murmured with a chuckle, as he shut the telescope. "Well, please God, I'll be ready for 'ee."

CHAPTER THE TENTH

The Fire Bell at the Towers

Next day the escape of Jean Delarousse, smuggler and privateer, was the talk of the countryside. The dragoons had called at the Towers and roused the Squire from bed, supposing that he was a magistrate and would assist them. Then they rode for several miles across the moor until they came to Sir Bevil Portharvan's house. That gentleman promised to raise the hue and cry next day, and called up his servants to ask if any of them had seen a carriage cross the moor that evening. The groom declared that as he rode back from an errand in Truro he had seen a moving light some distance to the left, concluding that it probably proceeded from a belated carrier's cart on the way to Polkerran. On this the troopers galloped back, and seeing a light in the Dower House they called there and acquainted John Trevanion with their errand. He guessed at once that the fugitive had been in the carriage which had turned into his drive, and inwardly cursed his ill-luck in missing the opportunity of laying by the heels a man whose recapture would have rejoiced him; but having reasons of his own for not disclosing his knowledge of the man, he forbore to mention the earlier incident, and contented himself with wishing the pursuers success. When they had gone he cloaked himself and followed them down the hill, being but a few hundred yards behind Dick, whom he did not see in the darkness and the twists and turns of the road.

There was not a man in the village but suspected that the Frenchman had got away on Tonkin's lugger; but not one of them would have said a word to betray him. Delarousse was not an enemy, but a friend with whom they had profitable dealings. When Sir Bevil rode down and questioned Doubledick and others, it was clear to him from their manner that they would give no information; and guessing, when he heard that Tonkin had sailed early that morning, that the Frenchman had gone with him, he was rather relieved than otherwise, for, like all the gentry around, he bought his liquor cheap, and was never depressed when the revenue officers were outwitted.

Two days passed. Sam Pollex reported that there was a subdued air of excitement in the village. Mr. Polwhele, the riding-officer, was seen speaking to Penwarden, and the revenue cutter, which had been absent for some time, once more anchored in the little harbour. Mr. Mildmay did not come ashore: he seldom did so during the smuggling season; but one of his men trudged up the hill to Penwarden's cottage, and did not return. These facts made Dick tingle with excitement: but the Squire had forbidden him to go near the smugglers again, so that he was unable to keep watch for the run which he, like everyone else in Polkerran, expected to take place.

On the third morning, when Dick was tramping over the cliff with his gun towards a cleft where he had heard that a pair of choughs had nested, he saw Penwarden smoking on the bench beside his cottage door.

"Morning to 'ee, Maister Dick," he said.

"Good morning, Joe. You look very spry," replied Dick genially.

"Well, and I feel spry, to be sure. Haven't 'ee heard?"

"Heard what?"

"Why, how we brought up the smugglers wi' a round turn last night."

"Did you? Tell me about it, Joe. I wish I had seen it, but Father won't let me out of the house at night now."

"Why for, maister?"

"Because I got home very late the other night, and he's afraid I shall get my head broken, I think, now that the folks are so set against us."

"'Tis a very wise commandment of the Squire. Well, I'll tell 'ee. Never was they so flambustered afore. When I seed *Isaac and Jacob* goin' off so merry t'other morning, I guessed she wouldn't come back empty, the wind favourin' and all. So what do I do but put on my considerin' cap——"

"That means a pipe and a bowl of rum, doesn't it?" said Dick with a laugh.

"I won't say but it do. Thinks I, now where will they try to run their cargo? Tonkin went off in a 'nation hurry, and the reason o't you know as well as I, but we won't speak o' that. There warn't time for him to fix up with the shoremen, leastways with many of 'em, afore he went, so thinks I, Zacky won't try to carry his kegs inland. What then? Why, she'd sink 'em somewheres off the coast, and let 'em lay till he gets a chance o' liftin' 'em. I've knowed a crop o' goods lay for a month afore they could be lifted."

"Doesn't it spoil the spirits?" asked Dick.

"It do, if the tubs lay too long. Then the spirits be stinkibus and fit for nothing. Howsomever, they'll sink 'em, thinks I, and what's to be the place? Well, I mind that ten year or more ago they dropped a big crop just beyond St. Cuby's Cove, and got 'em clean away in two nights, while Mr. Curgenven was playin' cat and mouse miles down the coast. Says I to myself, that's the very place."

"But how did you know it ten years ago?"

"By one or two things I noticed when I went a-rambling at foot of cliffs; trifles I could hardly tell 'ee of. That's the very place, says I, so I has a little talk with Mr. Polwhele, and he made it known to Mr. Mildmay, and betwixt us we hitched up a pretty scheme to circumvent 'em. And I was right, and wrong too, as you'll see.

"Well, we sent over to Plymouth for a half-troop of dragoons, and put them in Penruddock's empty farmhouse on the moor yonder. They came quiet last night, and not a soul knowed about 'em. You see, 'twas only my calcerlation as Tonkin wouldn't try a run, and 'twas best to be on the safe tack, as you may say. Wi' the dragoons on shore, and Mr. Mildmay at sea, we reckoned we'd spoil their

game, whether 'twas sinkin' or runnin'. When 'twas dark, we brought the sojers down to shore, and put 'em among the rocks on each side of where I thought 'twould happen. I had a sort o' suspicion that the smugglers had a hiding-place somewhere along shore thereabouts, though I'd never been able to find it."

"What made you suspect that?"

"Because we grappled for the sunk crop two days arter 'twas sunk, but 'twas gone; yet 'twas more than a week arterwards afore the stuff was carr'd into the country, so it must ha' been hid somewhere. Well, we had waited some hours, and the cutter had sailed away down the coast to put 'em off the scent, when just afore six bells we heard the creakin' o' the lugger's gear, and I knowed I was right. At the same time the fellers come creepin' round the cliff from the village. 'Twas to be a run arter all. Our plan was to let 'em get warm to work, and not pounce on 'em till we'd seed where their hiding-place was. Mr. Mildmay meant to fetch about and come on 'em from seaward, while the sojers took 'em from landwards.

"Drown it all, 'twas ruined—ruined, I say; but 'twas not so bad as that neither—'twas almost ruined, by a sappy landlubber of a sojer. The unloadin' was goin' on as merry as you please when this soft stunpoll of a chap let out a sneeze fit to blow yer gaff off. 'Twas all up then; no good waiting for Mr. Mildmay; the smugglers' look-outs heard the tishum and gave the alarm. Mr. Polwhele blew his whistle for the attack, and we pounced out from our lairs, sojers and tidesmen, and dashed upon 'em from two sides at once.

"Some of 'em dropped their tubs like hot taters, and slipped off in the darkness. But the rest stood their ground like men, and there was a tidy little tumble, pistols cracking, cutlasses flashing——"

"How could they flash in the dark?" said Dick.

"You could hear 'em if you couldn't see 'em, and I don't care who the man is, I call that flashin'. There was some pretty wounds dinted on both sides, but as 'ee med think, the sojers' swordplay was a trifle more learned than the free-traders', and arter some time we King's men got the better o't, and they couldn't stand against us no longer. But that sneeze: why couldn't the feller clap it under for five minutes more? We catched nine of the smugglers, and laid them tied hand and foot on the beach. But the rest got away, and drown it all, Tonkin was one of 'em. I knowed un by his size, and a sojer and I and some more had him betwixt us, but he let out with those sledge-hammer fists of his, spun a sojer this way and a tidesman that, and by long and short broke his moorings and swam out to the lugger. If that sneeze hadn't come so soon Mr. Mildmay would have been there with the cutter, and we should ha catched the whole crew. But 'twas not to be. By the time the cutter fetched up, the lugger was well out to sea, and we lost her. But we've got the nine men, who'll have to choose betwixt gaol and

the King's service, and I've chalked the broad arrow on twenty-four tubs, which be now half-way to the King's store at St. Ives."

"And did you discover the hiding-place?"

"Chok' it all, we did not. Maybe there's no such thing. But 'twas a proper tit-for-tat for the knock they give me, and I reckon 'twill be some time afore they fly their colours again."

"'Tis the biggest haul you've ever made, isn't it?" asked Dick.

"We've got more tubs afore, but never so many men. I'm a deal more cheerful in my mind than I used to be. We are doing the King's work better in these parts than 'twas done in Mr. Curgenven's time, and I hope them above will remember it."

Dick went on. He was pleased for the old man's sake that he was so well succeeding in his duty; but at the same time was full of misgiving as to the hatred his energy would breed among the village folk.

When he returned later in the day from a vain quest for the choughs, Sam Pollex told him that the village was seething with rage, and everybody was asking what had become of Doubledick. He was not among the nine men who had been carted to Plymouth; search had been made for his dead body on the shore; it was known that he had been among the tub-carriers, but nobody had seen him since the fight.

The mystery was solved at nightfall. The inn-keeper, dressed as a peaceable fisherman, trudged into the village with a fat goose on his back, and declared with a wink that he had been on a short visit to his friend Farmer Nancarrow, five miles distant. His cronies knew that Doubledick had adopted this course as a blind to the revenue officers if they made an inquisitive visit to his inn. However strong their suspicions, they could not proceed against him with any chance of success. They were in the same difficulty in regard to Tonkin, whom none could swear to, his face having been blackened. Nor could it be proved even that it was his lugger which had brought the cargo. When the *Isaac and Jacob* came into the harbour next day and was boarded by the revenue officers, it contained nothing but a few hundredweight of fish; and though grappling operations were conducted in St. Cuby's Cove, and for some distance on each side of it, no discovery of sunken tubs was made.

It was a fact, often remarked on in after days by the Polkerran folk, that the only spectator on the jetty when Tonkin's lugger put in—exclusive of the revenue officers, a toothless old fisher, Ike Pendry's sweetheart, and a handful of children—was Mr. John Trevanion. He seemed to be in the top of good humour; joked with Mr. Mildmay, gave the old fisher a plug of tobacco, favoured Marty Bream with an admiring glance, and chucked the children under the chin. When the lieutenant's examination was concluded, and Tonkin came ashore, a free man,

but under suspicion, Mr. Trevanion had a word for him too, asked to see his catch, and bought some of the finest of the fish. Then with a nod to Mr. Mildmay he strolled with easy gait up the hill.

That Tonkin himself, an hour or two later, should carry his fish to the Dower House was natural enough, but it was not perhaps quite so natural that, having delivered them to Susan for transmission to the cook, he should have been asked to step into the house and taken to the master's own room. Nor was it likely, when he was let out at the front door by Mr. Trevanion an hour later, that the conversation which had passed between them in the interim had for its subject nothing but fish. Nobody in Polkerran knew of this visit, or some intelligent person might have suspected that it had a connection with a remarkable change that came about in the villagers' manner of regarding Monsieur Jean Delarousse. Hitherto they had looked upon him as a keen man of business, with whom it was as safe as it was honourable to have dealings of a free-trade nature. But from that day they cherished a sour distrust of him; they resolved to do business with him no longer, and to transfer their custom to another merchant of Roscoff, whose name is of no importance in this history. In this transference they followed the lead of Tonkin, blindly—all but Doubledick, who swam with the current, indeed, so far as outward appearances went; but in the privacy of his own cunning mind, buzzing still with the recollection of what he had heard through the keyhole of his parlour door, indulged in speculations of a very tantalising nature, and wondered what Maister John's little game was.

Whether the relation of cause and effect existed between this meeting of Trevanion and Tonkin, and an event that took place a few hours later at the Towers, is a matter on which the reader may presently form his own conclusion.

Dick had gone to bed a little earlier than usual, tired out after a long tramp over the moor in search of wild fowl. His room faced the sea, and he had left his window open, as his practice was except in stormy weather. In the dead of night he suddenly found himself awake, and wondered why, for he had not been dreaming, nor was he conscious of having heard a sound. But in a few seconds he was aware of an unusual smell, that appeared to be wafted through the window on the sea breeze. It was the smell of burning wood. He leapt out of bed, ran to the casement, and looked out over a row of outhouses that extended for some yards from the dwelling towards the cliff. One glance was sufficient. The tool-house at the furthermost end was on fire.

Quickly pulling on his breeches, he ran to the adjoining room, occupied by Sam, hauled the snoring boy from his bed, shook him vigorously, and cried—

"The tool-house is on fire! Run to the turret and pull the bell. Quick! The breeze is off the sea, and we shall have the whole place in a blaze."

Then he rushed to Reuben's room on the lower floor, wakened the old man,

and told him to fill every bucket he could find with water from the well. Lastly, he ran to his parents, breaking the news gently so as not to terrify his mother. By this time the alarm bell was clanging its quick strokes out into the night.

Dick ran out of the house to the well-head near the dismantled stables, where Reuben already had two buckets filled and was still pumping vigorously. He caught up the buckets, hurried to the conflagration, and flung the water on the flames. But it was clear that they had got such a hold upon the shed that to extinguish them with water laboriously pumped from the well would be impossible. The wind was steadily carrying the fire toward the main building, and unless the blaze could be checked within a few minutes, the old place was doomed.

To fetch more water would, Dick saw, be a waste of time. What could be done? Between the burning tool-shed and the dwelling-house was a long wooden structure that contained the brew-house and a shed in which Reuben kept vegetables, grain for the pigs, and other materials. Dick remembered that the brew-house, though substantially built, was worm-eaten, and, like the rest of the Towers, had not been repaired within memory. Acting on an idea which had suddenly struck him, he ran at full speed to the scullery, brought thence a rope and, returning, made his way with it through the smoke into the brew-house, and attached it firmly to one of the stout timbers supporting the roof.

The Squire had now come upon the scene.

"We must pull down the brew-house, Father," cried Dick. "'Tis the only chance to prevent the flames from spreading."

Together they hauled upon the rope. The timber did not give an inch. They summoned Reuben to assist them, but the oak, worm-eaten though it was, resisted their united efforts.

"Once more! Pull all together," cried Dick in despair. The post did not move.

"Ha, Squire!" shouted a voice behind, "I see what you are about. 'Tis a good notion. Give me a hold."

"Polwhele, 'tis you. We'll be glad of your arm."

"Did you ride, sir?" cried Dick eagerly.

"I did," replied the riding-officer. "Egad! I see your meaning. My horse is hitched to the fence. I'll bring him in a second."

He ran off, returning soon with his horse, which pranced and snorted when it came within the smoke and heat. Mr. Polwhele and Dick knotted the rope to the animal's collar, while the Squire covered its eyes with his coat. They turned its head away from the flames, and smote its flanks. It started forward, almost escaping from the grasp of Mr. Polwhele, who held it by the bridle. The post, already weakened by the previous straining, gave at last, and a portion of the roof fell in with a crash. The same operation was performed on a similar post in the opposite corner. This was brought down at the first pull, and all that remained

of the brew-house was a heap of laths, beams, tiles, and broken utensils.

They proceeded then to smother the ruins with water and earth, paying no heed to the blazing tool-house. After some twenty minutes the flames began to subside; they poured more water, as quickly as it could be drawn, on the glowing ruins, and had the satisfaction of seeing that the demolition of the brew-house had been effective. The fire spread no further; the Towers was saved.

Panting and perspiring with their exertions, the four men stood for a while in silence, watching the gradual dwindling of the flames.

"That bell may stop," cried Mr. Polwhele suddenly. "'Tis well pulled, whoever is doing it, but to little good, it seems. 'Pon my soul, I'm the only man that has come to its call."

"Ah! You see how things are with me," said the Squire bitterly. "Not a soul cares whether the Towers burns to the ground, and I and mine in it. I remember, forty years ago, when the place took fire, the bell brought the whole village to our help. Now they'll lie abed and laugh to think I'm homeless."

"'Tis a disgrace and a scandal," cried the riding-officer, "and I'll tell them so. The idiots, to suppose you would inform on them! I'll set that right, Squire; I blame myself for not doing it before, but I believed they would come to their senses."

"You will waste your breath, Polwhele. Don't attempt it for me. I could tell you one way to dash their enmity, but that's impossible."

"What is it?"

"Send John Trevanion where he came from. 'Tis he that is poisoning folks' minds against us; yes, 'tis he."

At this point Dick returned from the house, whither he had been to stop the ringing of the bell. Sam came with him.

"Now, young Sam," said his father wrathfully, "'twas you that started this blaze, I'll be bound, wi' yer mischief and jiggery. I'll leather 'ee, that I will."

"Be choked if I did!" was Sam's indignant cry. "Why do 'ee say it, Feyther? You think because I break a dish now and again that I do all the mischief, but I don't care who the man is, I hain't been nigh tool-house or brew-house this mortal day."

"Then who did it? Tell me that."

"I can't tell what I don't know, but if I med put a meanin' to it, I'd say 'twas done by the same hands as cut our lines and set our boat adrift, be drowned to 'em."

"By heaven, I see it!" cried the Squire, smiting one fist with the other. "'Tis part of the scheme, Polwhele. They will stick at nothing. Penwarden caught young Tonkin cutting Dick's lines, as you know, and I thrashed him. They avenge him by firing my house. I'll clap them in jail; unpopular as I am, the justices can't

refuse to punish such a crime."

"You've no proof, Squire," said Mr. Polwhele. "You can't arrest the whole village on suspicion. And now I think of it, if it is as you say, there is no need to suppose your cousin is at the bottom of it. You have no proof."

The Squire was silent. Mr. Polwhele's view was no doubt that which would be taken by the majority of people. Mr. Trevanion was conscious of the weakness of his position, and regretted that in his impulsiveness and resentment he had spoken so freely. The only facts upon which his conviction of his cousin's venomous treachery depended were the purchase of the mortgages and the subsequent fencing-in of the acquired property, and neither singly nor in combination were these strong enough to justify his accusation before reasonable people.

"Well, well," said the Squire at last, "I may be wrong. I say no more about it. But this persecution has gone far enough, and 'tis time it was stopped, though how to stop it I know no more than the dead."

"I'll see what I can do, Squire. The Towers is saved, and glad I am of it. 'Tis to be hoped the wretches will try their tricks no more."

He mounted and rode away, the Squire having warmly thanked him for his assistance. The four inmates of the Towers then returned to their beds.

"You did well, Dick," said the Squire as they parted. "'Twas a good thought of yours to pull down the posts; without it we might have been burnt out. We'll hold fast to the old place a while longer, my lad."

To his wife he related all that had happened, and mentioned what Mr. Polwhele had said about his suspicion of John Trevanion.

"I've no proof, that's true; but in my heart I know it; time will show whether I'm right or wrong."

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

Sir Bevil Intervenes

Soon after breakfast next morning Dick and Sam went down to the shore to launch their boat for a day's fishing. The post to which it was moored being close under the cliffs, they did not come in sight of it until they reached the foot of the winding path. Then Sam, who was walking ahead, uttered a cry.

"What is it?" asked Dick, hurrying on.

"Scrounch it all, look 'ee, Maister Dick!"

The boat lay on the white sand, but it was a navigable vessel no longer. It had been sawn across in three places. The old craft, which had withstood for forty years the battering of innumerable waves and the more insidious attacks of time, and in which three generations of Trevanions had sailed upon the deep, would be launched no more. It would henceforth serve no useful end except as firewood.

Dick felt first a pang of grief, then a surge of bitter rage. His enemies could not have chosen a more galling or vindictive means of wreaking their ill-will. They had dealt with the boat as the smugglers' craft were dealt with when captured by the revenue officers. Dick saw in their act a subtle indication of the thoroughness with which they identified him with the Government men. It said: "You have joined the revenue officers; very well, we treat you as they treat us." He had no doubt that the destruction of the boat and the firing of the tool-house were parts of one scheme.

"The cowards!" he exclaimed, "to do behind our backs what they durst not do to our face."

"'Tis a miserable, dirty deed," agreed Sam. "We must tell of it to the high powers."

"Much good that will be!" cried Dick bitterly. "We can't tell who did it; Sir Bevil will only instruct Petherick, and he is too much of a fool ever to find out, if he wanted to, which is unlikely. We can do nothing, Sam."

"How can we go fishing now?" said Sam gloomily. "'Tis takin' the bread out of our mouth, that's what it is. They mean us to starve, the wretches."

The loss of the boat was indeed a serious blow to the family at the Towers. The principal source of their food supply was cut off. In the present state of war between them and the villagers it would be impossible to borrow a boat, and the only place from which the boys could now fish the sea was the head of the jetty, where they would come into awkward contact with the hostile fishermen.

Dick examined the segments, with a lingering hope that even now old Reuben, who had so often patched and caulked the boat, might be able to repair it. But the destroyers had done their work only too well; he turned away without a word, and gloomily wended his way homeward.

As he walked towards the house, he saw a horseman riding down the road towards the village. At a second glance he recognised him as Sir Bevil Portharvan. When he reached home his father told him that Mr. Polwhele had ridden over to Portharvan House very early, and informed Sir Bevil of the night's occurrence. That gentleman had never been on more than speaking terms with Squire Trevanion; it is not easy for a wealthy man to be cordial with one who has gone down in the world and yet retains his pride. Sir Bevil disapproved of the Squire's attitude to his cousin, which seemed to him the outcome of sheer envy. But he

was sufficiently loyal to his class to be greatly incensed at the criminal action of which the riding officer told him, and he promised to exert his influence as a magistrate to prevent any further proceedings of the same kind.

He rode to the Towers, learnt the particulars from the Squire's lips, and, having coldly expressed his sympathy, went on. As he came to the Dower House it occurred to him to see John Trevanion, whom he had met often of late, and ask him to use his efforts to put down the persecution. Trevanion's attitude was admirably correct. He acknowledged that he was on bad terms with the Squire; deplored the breach, which was not of his making; and promised to let it be known in the village that he disapproved of such violent measures as the people had recently taken. That was as much as he could do. Sir Bevil went away feeling that John Trevanion was an excellent fellow, and regarding his own errand even more in the light of a troublesome duty than he had done before.

From the Dower House he went straight to the inn, which was the focus of the village life, and the place from which his views would radiate with every man who left it after drinking his ale, cider, or brandy. Reining up at the door, he called Doubledick forth.

"Good mornin', yer honour," said the innkeeper, rubbing his hands deferentially as he obeyed the great man's command.

"Look here, Doubledick," said Sir Bevil bluntly, "I've heard of what went on at the Towers last night. That sort of thing won't do, you know; it must be stopped, and you can tell your customers I say so. Free-trading is all very well, but arson is an ugly word and a hanging matter; and, egad! if any man is caught playing such low tricks, and brought before me, he'll get no mercy, I promise you. Make that clear, will you?"

"Iss sure, Sir Bevil," replied the innkeeper. "'Twas a cruel deed, the Squire bein' so cast down and all. I'll tell the folks yer very words, sir, that I will."

"That's right. I saw Mr. John Trevanion on the way down, and he agreed with me, so there will be an eye on the village nearer than mine."

"Oh, if you seed Maister John, Sir Bevil, 'tis as good as seein' the Lord High Constable o' the county, I warrant 'ee. Folks think a deal o' Maister John, they do."

A keener observer than Sir Bevil might have detected a spice of irony in Doubledick's remark. But the baronet was satisfied, and after yielding to the innkeeper's invitation to take a glass to help him on his homeward journey, he rode off with the comfortable sense of having done his duty.

When Dick went to the Parsonage that afternoon for his usual lesson, he told Mr. Carlyon all that had happened. On the next Sunday the vicar preached an excellent sermon from the text, "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark," which the women listened to without understanding, the men going

to sleep as usual.

The loss of the boat caused something like consternation among the inmates of the Towers. The Squire could not afford to buy a new one; how was the necessary fishing to be carried on? This problem taxed the wits of Dick, who lay awake for two nights pondering and puzzling. Then the thought came to him, why not build a boat? He had never attempted such a ticklish piece of work, but he was pretty handy with tools, and the idea of setting his wits against the machinations of the enemy fixed his resolution.

He remembered sorrowfully that with the burnt tool-house had perished his tools and the carpenter's bench at which he had been accustomed to work. But he could borrow the necessary implements from Petherick, the sexton, who did all the repairs required at the church and the Parsonage. There was no lack of timber in the planking of the ruined portion of the Towers. The most formidable obstacle was his absolute ignorance of the art of boat-building, but a means of overcoming that soon suggested itself.

The Polkerran fishers obtained their boats from St. Ives, fifteen or sixteen miles away. A tramp of that distance was nothing to a healthy lad, so, early one morning, taking some bread and cheese in a wallet, and telling no one of his intention, Dick set off. It was a raw November day; the road was wet and muddy, and as Dick passed under the trees along the route his face and neck were bespattered by the drippings from their bare boughs. But he made light of such ordinary discomforts of winter; the swinging pace at which he walked set his blood coursing, and by the time he arrived at St. Ives his whole body was in a healthy glow. He entered an inn and moistened his dry fare with a glass of ale, then found his way to the principal boat-builder's yard, and stood looking on as the workmen sawed and planed and hammered. The builder had no secret to guard; his yard was open to any one who cared to visit it. He gave Dick a friendly greeting; the men threw a glance at him, and went on with their work and their gossip as unconcernedly as though he were not there.

Having spent several hours thus, strolling through the town to warm himself while the men were at dinner, he set off in the afternoon on his long tramp homeward, going over in his head the details of the operations he had witnessed. Next day he appeared in the yard at the same time. The master-builder himself was absent, and there was a shade of surprise in the men's expression of face as they saw him enter; but, as before, they paid no attention to him, and showed neither interest nor curiosity.

On the third day, however, when he again made his appearance, their rustic stolidity was penetrated at last.

"Mornin' to 'ee, sonny," said the foreman builder, a cheerful-looking veteran of sixty; "you be as regular as church-clock, to be sure."

Dick smiled and returned the man's greeting.

"You will know a boat from keel to gunwale," continued the foreman.

"That's what I've come for," said Dick.

"Well, now, think o' that!"

"Didn't I tell 'ee so, gaffer?" remarked one of the men.

"True, you did, and a clever seein' eye you have got, Ben."

"And *I* said 'a was not a common poor man," said another. "That's what *I* said, bean't it, Ben?"

"Iss, fay, they was yer very words."

"Well, sir," said the foreman, "seein' that these clever fellers have seed so far into ye, maybe you'll tell what's your hidden purpose in lookin' at we."

"I'm learning how to build a boat," replied Dick.

"Good now! You never thought o' that, Ben, clever as ye be, I warrant 'ee. Well, sonny—sir, I mean—I've been nigh fifty year larnin' to build a boat, and I bean't done larnin' yet."

"That's bad news, because I want to build one in a week or two."

"Well, I won't say but you can make some sort of a tub in the time, but 'twill be a wambly figure o' fun, and be very useful for givin' ye a sea-bath. Ha! ha!"

"There's no harm in trying, though," said Dick, good-humouredly. "Perhaps if you'd let me try my hand I might pick up a notion or two."

"I don't mind if I do. Just set they thwarts in the splines; that's a little small job, and we'll see how 'ee do set about it."

Dick stripped off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and proceeded to perform the task given him, the foreman watching him critically the while.

"Not so bad," he said when the job was finished. "I won't say but Maister will cuss when he do see it, but 'tis not so bad for a young feller; what do 'ee say, my sonnies?"

The men left their work and inspected Dick's, twisting their necks, pressing their lips together, and showing other marks of solemn consideration. They pronounced the work pretty good, and declared they wouldn't have believed it.

The foreman gave Dick other little jobs to do, and being more pleased with the lad's handiness than he had admitted, he took pains to instruct him. Dick learnt about ribs and splines; how to steam the ribs and give the necessary "flare"; the difficulty of getting the planking to "fly" to a true curve without "shramming"; and many other technical details which dashed his hope of being able to build a boat in a week.

"Don't 'ee go and set up for a boat-builder, though," said the foreman pleasantly. "Maister will werrit if he do think the bread 'll be took out of his mouth."

"No fear of that," replied Dick laughing. "I only want to build a boat for

myself, to replace an old one I lost."

"Well, I will say 'tis a right good notion to build one yerself instead o' buyin' one, though 'twouldn't do for we if everybody was so handy."

Dick's journeys to and fro between Polkerran and St. Ives extended over ten days. His absences greatly puzzled Sam, but Dick gave no explanation until he felt that he had learned enough to make a start, and decided to visit the boat-builder's no more. He was not so foolish as to suppose that he had mastered the trade, but believed he knew enough to enable him to construct a boat that would serve his simple purpose. Then one morning he set Sam to collect a number of sound planks from the floors and wainscoting in the unused rooms at the Towers, and having borrowed from Petherick the tools necessary to supplement those that Reuben had, he began his task.

Day by day for a fortnight the lads worked steadily, using the dilapidated stables for their workshop. Occasionally the Squire and Reuben stood by and criticised; old Penwarden, too, looked in and offered a more or less impracticable suggestion. Once when Dick was at a loss how to proceed, he trudged to St. Ives to consult the foreman.

"What, Maister, has she sunk a'ready?" said the man with twinkling eyes, as Dick entered.

He obtained the information he desired, and within a few days afterwards the boat was finished. Nobody at the Towers, except her makers, believed that she would float. How to get her down to the water was at first a baffling problem. She was too heavy and cumbersome to be carried down the cliff-path by the boys, and they would not seek assistance from the villagers. It was Mr. Carlyon that solved the difficulty. He suggested that the boat should be conveyed on a farmer's wagon to a dell about four miles northward, where a stream flowed into the sea. This was done early one morning, the farmer, a friend of the Vicar's, being bound to secrecy. They launched the boat on the stream, and Sam gave a whoop of delight on seeing that she rode fairly upright. With a couple of spare sculls from their nook on the Beal, they pulled her out to sea, and Dick was pardonably proud of his handiwork when she proved quite seaworthy, if somewhat lumbering.

"She's not very pretty, but she's strong," he said to Sam, "and that is all we need trouble about."

During the weeks in which Dick had been thus occupied, no further annoyance was suffered from the villagers. Sir Bevil's warning had apparently taken effect. Penwarden reported that two more serious checks had been given to the smugglers. Once they had been interrupted in the act of running a cargo at Lunnan Cove, some miles to the south, and a hundred tubs had been seized by Mr. Mildmay. A few days later, the cutter had gone in chase of a lugger in a stiff gale, and the seamanship of the smugglers being at least equal to that of the King's

men, the quarry had escaped. But her crew, not daring to run the cargo while the revenue officers were on the alert, had sunk the tubs, which were always carried ready slung to meet such an emergency, in five fathoms of water beyond St. Cuby's Cove. In their hurry, however, the work was not done so carefully as usual, with the result that one of the tubs was chafed off the sinking rope, drifted about, and next morning was descried by Penwarden from the cliff. He informed Mr. Mildmay. The shallow water along the shore was systematically searched, and the whole cargo was hooked up by means of "creeps," as the grapnels were called. Rumour, reaching the Towers by way of the Parsonage, said that on both these occasions Tonkin was the freighter, so that his loss by the successive failures was probably not far short of £300.

Tidings came, also, by the local carrier, of renewed activity on the part of the *Aimable Vertu* in the Channel. A revenue cruiser had fought an action with her off the Lizard, and was worsted, her commander being wounded, and the vessel only escaping by running in shore to shallow water, where the privateer could not follow. The authorities, already deeply incensed by the escape of Delarousse from Plymouth, were furious at this recurrence of his depredations, and had offered a high price for information of his movements, and a still higher reward to any officer who should capture him.

For a few days Dick laid up his new boat, when fishing was done, in the mouth of the little stream on which he had launched it, tramping back with Sam over the four miles to the Towers. But this became irksome, and he tried to think of some means of keeping the craft nearer home without running the risk of its destruction by the smugglers. After a good deal of anxious consideration he hit upon the idea of building a shed for it on the beach at the foot of the cliff.

"Jown me if I see the good o' 't," said Sam, when Dick explained his plan. "They'll break into the shed, or fire it, if they want to, and we'll lose our boat and our labour too."

"But I've thought of a way of preventing that, Sam. They won't interfere with it in daylight: 'tis only the night we need fear. Well, we'll make 'em give us warning of any trick they play."

"I don't see how, unless they be born fools."

"They're not fools: far from it: but they might be a trifle sharper in the wits, perhaps. If it comes to scheming, I think we can beat 'em, Sam. We'll build the shed close under the house. Now listen. We'll make the door to open outwards, and tie a strand of sewing thread to the bottom, running it through hooks along the wall and out at the back of the shed. There we'll tie it to a fishing-line, and round a pulley up to the cliff-top, taking care to keep it off the rock by making it run through notches in sticks of wood. At the top we'll have another pulley, and at the foot of the house wall another, and so carry it into my bedroom. There we'll

fasten it to a weight—a poker will do; which we'll sling up beside the window. We'll put a tea-tray underneath it, d' you see? so that if the shed door is pulled open the thread will break, the poker will fall, and make such a clatter that we are bound to hear it all over the house."

Sam broke into laughter.

"Ha! ha! it do mind me of the old 'ooman and little crooked sixpence," he cried. "Do 'ee mind, Maister Dick? 'Cat began to kill the rat, rat began to gnaw the rope,' and so on till th' old 'ooman got home at last. My life, 'tis a noble notion! What a headpiece you have got, to be sure! But, scrounch it all, won't they see the line?"

"I don't think so. 'Tis so much the colour of the rock that it will escape notice."

"True. But s'pose we do hear a clatter-bang. That won't stop 'em from hauling out the boat, and we couldn' get down the cliff in time to save her."

"I'd thought of that. We'll fix up a booby-trap over the door."

"Never heerd o't. What be a booby-trap?"

"'Tis a thing that Mr. Carlyon told me of, a trick he used to play when he was a young fellow at college. You fix above the doorway something that will tumble down when the door is opened, and come plump on the head of any one entering. That will stagger them, and while they are recovering their wits we shall have time to run down. You may be sure they'll run away before we get to them, for if we recognize them they'll have Sir Bevil to reckon with."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Sam. "That 'ud be a funny sight to see. We'll do it, Maister Dick, and 'tis my wish I bean't too sleepy to tumble up when they tries their tricks."

It was a full day's work, from daybreak to long past sunset, to erect the shed from materials carefully prepared beforehand. Dick felt the necessity of completing the apparatus before another day dawned, lest their proceedings should be spied from a passing boat and reported in the village before they were ready. He obtained permission from his father to remain out, telling him frankly what his purpose was, but without giving details, and toiled on, by the light of a screened lantern, until the whole contrivance wis finished. The booby-trap consisted of a pail nicely balanced on a bar running across the shed, and filled with water deeply coloured with indigo. It was connected by a thread with a loose board in the floor beneath, so that a trespasser stepping across the threshold would snap the thread, cause the pail to turn on its axis, and receive its contents on his head.

"The parson used flour, he told me," said Dick, "but 'tis too good to waste on those rascals."

"Ay, and a dousin' will make 'em cuss more," said Sam. "Oh, 'twill grieve me tarrible if I be asleep!"

Three days passed. Apparently the shed had not been discovered by the villagers. The boys tested their invention and found it successful. They took the boat out each morning, and restored it to its place when the day's fishing was done, fastening the door from the inside, connecting it with the booby-trap, and leaving the shed by a small door, just large enough to crawl through, at the back.

On the third evening Mr. Carlyon came to the Towers to join the Trevanions in a game of whist, as he did frequently during the winter months. It was a still, clear night, with a touch of frost in the air; but the cold did not penetrate to the Squire's room, where a blazing wood fire threw a rosy radiance on the panelled walls, and woke smiling reflections in the glasses and decanters that stood on a table near that at which the party of four were absorbed in their game. The house was quiet; Reuben and Sam had retired to rest, for the Vicar would need no attendance when he mounted his cob to ride home.

The Squire was in the act of shuffling the pack, when suddenly the silence of the house was shattered by a tremendous crash in one of the rooms above. Mrs. Trevanion pressed her hand to her side; the Squire missed his cast, and let the cards fall to the floor; Mr. Carlyon put down the glass which he had just raised to his lips, so hastily that the fluid spilled on the baize. Dick sprang up.

"'Tis the alarm!" he cried. "They are at my shed!"

He dashed out of the room, to meet Sam in shirt and breeches tumbling down the stairs. Dick seized a cutlass hanging on the wall, Sam the parson's riding-whip, and throwing open the door they sallied out into the night.

"It dinged me out of a lovely dream," said Sam. "Dash my buttons, 'twas a noble noise."

They scampered along the cliff to the zigzag path. Meanwhile the Squire hurriedly explained the matter to the astonished Vicar.

"Bless my life, I must go too," cried Mr. Carlyon. "The impudence of the scoundrels! Is this the result of Sir Bevil's intervention? Come along, Squire; bring your pistols. Man of peace as I am, I will give you absolution if you wing one of those fellows!"

The two hastened forth less than a minute after the boys. Both were active men, in spite of their years, and they scrambled down the path with no more stumbles than were excusable in elderly gentlemen a little short in the wind. Before they got to the bottom they saw a boat just pulling off from the shore, and the boys knee-deep in water, trying to give a parting salutation with their weapons to the disturbers of the peace. Sam had the satisfaction of hearing a bellow from the man in the stern of the boat as the whip-thong slashed his face; but Dick's cutlass was not long enough for effective use, and in a few seconds the marauders were out of reach.

The four met on the beach and hastened up towards the shed. To their

surprise the door was only half open.

"They must have heard the noise," said Dick. "My window is open. I daresay they waited to see what it meant, and then heard us coming down, for when we got to the foot of the path they were beginning to shove the boat off."

"The neatest contrivance I ever heard of. I congratulate you on your ingenuity," said the Vicar heartily. "But we may as well see that the villains have done no mischief."

As he spoke he pulled the door fully open, and before Dick could check him, set his foot on the threshold. Instantly there was a splash; the worthy man gasped and spluttered, and came out with a spring, shaking his head like a dog emerging from a bath.

"God bless my soul!" cried the Squire, looking with amazement at the dark shower pouring from his friend on to the sand. "What on earth is this?"

"Ho! ho!" laughed Sam, prancing with delight, his veneration for the Church quite eclipsed by his joy at a fellow mortal's misadventure. "I ha' seed it arter all. Ho! ho!"

Dick, overwhelmed with dismay, shook Sam by the arm and bade him be silent. What excuse, what reparation could he make to the venerable gentleman who had suffered so untoward an accident?

"I didn't think—I tried to—I'm dreadfully sorry, sir," he stammered.

"Ha! ha!" came the parson's rolling laugh. "'Pon my life, he's an apt pupil, Squire. The young dog! Ha! ha!"

"Explain this—this—" began the Squire angrily.

"This booby-trap, Squire," cried Mr. Carlyon. "'Tis I am the booby. I taught Dick, in a reckless burst of confidence, how we young rantipoles at Oxford used to deal with each other—and our tutors too, I'm bound to say. I wish I hadn't. But, you young rascal, I told you that we used flour: what is this horrible stuff?"

"Only a solution of indigo, sir; it won't do you any harm," replied poor Dick.

"Won't do me any harm? Only make me black and blue, eh? Ha! ha! I'm glad 'tis no worse. But 'tis a thousand pities those ruffians escaped the shower. Well, well, the rain falls on the just and the unjust, we're told, and——bless me, Squire, it takes me back forty years, when we had rigged up a trap for a freshman, and it toppled on the reverend head of the dean himself. Ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Squire, his vexation giving way to his sense of humour.

"Ho! ho!" roared Sam. "Drown me if it bean't the——"

"Shut up!" growled Dick. "Why must you laugh at the Vicar in that idiotic way?"

"'Cos he laughs at hisself," said Sam, highly aggrieved. "I wouldn' laugh at him with his nightgown on in church, not I; but when he be just like a simple

common man, daze me if I can keep it in."

The two elders were now climbing the path. Dick stayed to retie the thread, though he did not expect that the marauders, after the alarm they had had, would make a second attempt that night. Having closed the door, he accompanied Sam up the cliff, greatly relieved when he heard, far above, the Vicar's hearty laugh, as he related to the Squire sundry other pranks and escapades of his younger days.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH

Penwarden Disappears

As Dick hoped, the scare given to the enemy by his prompt sally from the Towers proved effectual; no further attempt was made to interfere with the boat. Rumours of the contrivance for giving an alarm spread among the villagers, and Mr. Carlyon, without revealing his own misadventure, took care to explain to Petherick, sexton, beadle, and constable, that the intruders would have suffered material damage if they had had the courage to enter the shed. Petherick duly reported this, as the parson intended, adding on his own account that the young monkeys had invented an instrument of torture for all who dared to molest them. The parson's housekeeper discussed with Petherick a strange stain upon her master's stock, and Petherick himself, despatched one day to the Truro perruquier with a parcel carefully tied, was amazed when the tradesman, opening it in his presence, revealed a wig, not iron grey, but mottled blue in colour. These matters were a topic of conversation in Polkerran for many a day, and there were some who offered explanations, and some who shook their heads and looked profoundly wise, but discreetly held their tongues. The truth was never known outside the Towers, Dick threatening Sam with excommunication if he breathed a word of it.

One Wednesday, early in December, the boys set out a little before dawn to fish. The air was cold and misty; trickles of condensed moisture ran down their faces and necks, and little pools formed on the rims of their hats. The exercise of rowing warmed them, and the discomfort, always less to their seasoned skins than it would have been to a townsman and a landlubber, was forgotten altogether when the fish rose freely to their bait. They made a good catch after two hours' work, and turned to row back in order to carry the fish home in time for

early breakfast.

They had come nearly a mile from shore, and were pulling hard, the wind blowing off the land against them, when all at once, some distance astern, there loomed out of the mist a three-masted vessel of considerable size.

"Look, Sam," said Dick, "isn't that the same craft we saw following the smack that night?"

"'Tis so," replied Sam; "the night Maister John come home-along. I said he landed from the smack, you mind; you said 'a didn't; and I don't care who the man is, but I know I be right."

"Pull away, Sam. We don't want to be seen. It may be the French privateer we've heard about, and we ought to tell Mr. Mildmay or Penwarden."

"True, and there's money if she's catched. Would they gie us a bit o't, think 'ee?"

"I daresay. There! She has vanished into the mist again. Do you know if the cutter is in the harbour, Sam?"

"She warn't yesterday. Maister Mildmay is busy down coast. I'd liever old Joe got the money than he."

They saw no more of the vessel, even from the top of the cliff. Mr. Trevanion was interested in their news, and agreed that it should certainly be imparted to Penwarden or Mr. Polwhele, Mr. Mildmay being absent.

Dick remembered that the old exciseman had probably been up all night. He sympathised with him in his arduous duty of watching all through the long hours of darkness, in fair or foul weather, frost or rain. At dawn of day Penwarden was accustomed to take a "watch below," as he called it, until noon, priding himself on requiring no more than four or five hours' sleep. At noon an old woman from the village came to get his dinner and tidy up, leaving when her work was done, his other meals being prepared by himself. Dick decided not to awaken Penwarden until he had had his sleep out, but to seek Mr. Polwhele, whose house stood on the cliff half-a-mile on the further side of the village. Dick went there by a roundabout way, to avoid meeting the fisher-people and their sour looks. The riding-officer was much surprised at the news he brought.

"'Tis a risky thing on the part of Delarousse, if 'tis indeed he," said Mr. Polwhele; "and why he should come here I can't tell, for Polkerran is not worth powder and shot."

"Maybe to arrange for running a cargo," said Dick.

"I don't think that, for 'tis whispered that the folks here do not deal with him any longer. I can't think 'tis he, but I will run up my signal to warn Mr. Mildmay, if he can see it through the mist. Thank 'ee for the news. Perhaps you will tell Penwarden, and ask him to keep an eye lifting."

Dick promised to do so, and returned home.

Shortly before twelve, the time when Penwarden was usually moving about again, Dick walked up to the cottage to inform him of the strange vessel. He knocked at the door, but there was no answer. Thinking that the old man was lying later than usual after a tiring night's duty, Dick felt loth to rouse him, and resolved to wait a while, walking up and down before the cottage, beating himself for warmth's sake. Now and then he stopped to listen at the door, but there was no sound from within, nor indeed without, except the booming of the surf, the whistle of the wind impinging on the cliff edge, and the screams of gulls which had not yet flown inland to seek their winter sustenance in the neighbourhood of farms. The mist cleared off, and not a sign of the vessel was to be seen on the horizon.

"Old Gammer Oliver is late, too," thought Dick. "Perhaps Joe told her not to come at her usual time."

He took a book from his pocket, and read it, still walking up and down. But he soon tired of this; the hour for the midday meal at the Towers was drawing on; and he would have returned but for his promise to Mr. Polwhele.

"I ought to have hammered hard on the door at once," he said to himself. "Tired as he must be, he would not mind being disturbed in this case."

He shut up his book, slipped it into his pocket, and strode briskly towards the cottage, about thirty paces distant. No smoke was rising from the chimney; nothing was audible but the wind rustling the leaves of a laurel bush, and causing the bare tendrils of last year's creeper to scratch against the wall. The sudden scream of a gull wheeling its flight above the roof made Dick start and look round uneasily. There was nothing living, on four feet or on two, in sight.

He came to the door, and, hesitating no longer, rapped smartly upon it. Neither voice nor movement answered him. Again he knocked, with greater energy, calling the old man by name. The perfect silence when his knuckles ceased their tattoo alarmed him. Joe always locked the door when he left the cottage by day, and locked and bolted it when he retired at night. Still, it was a natural act to turn the handle, and Dick, when he did so, almost laughed, for the door opened, revealing the dark little passage, on one side of which was the bedroom, on the other the kitchen and sitting-room in one. Of course, the old fellow had gone out.

But as Dick stood on the threshold and his eyes became accustomed to the dimness within, this comforting reflection gave way to surprise and apprehension. Half-way down the passage Penwarden's hat lay on the floor. Near it was a bundle of bulrushes which he had brought back from a voyage in his sea-going days; it usually stood against the wall beneath a portrait of Rodney. Beyond, the glass of a case enclosing a stuffed John-Dory was broken to splinters, which glinted from the stone floor. The passage presented a strange contrast to its usual

neat and tidy appearance.

"Joe!" Dick called.

His voice reverberated; there was no other sound. He entered the passage and opened the door of the kitchen. It was empty; nothing was in disorder; a kettle stood on the hob; on the table lay a mug, a knife, and a plate holding a few crumbs of bread, witnesses to the old man's supper. Dick turned about, crossed the passage, and halted for a moment at the bedroom door, seized by the shaking thought that Joe had been taken ill in the night—was perhaps dead. He called, rapped, and, with quivering nerves, entered. The blind was down, so that he could scarcely see; but there was the bed, empty, the bedclothes disturbed. He pulled up the blind. The cold light of the winter sky flooded the room, and he saw things that filled him with alarm. A chair was overturned; fragments of a pipe and a tinder-box lay beside the bed; a thin hair rug was creased into the shape of billows; on one of the white deals was a dark red stain. The appearance of both room and passage pointed to a struggle. The stain was the fresh mark of blood.

What had become of the old man? Dick felt the answer to his unspoken question. Excisemen had many enemies; sometimes they lost their lives, not merely in open fight with the smugglers, but by insidious attack. Mr. Mildmay had told of ambushes, midnight assaults, torture, brutal murders. Such incidents were almost unknown in the west country; the fair fame of Cornishmen had not been sullied as that of the men of Kent and Sussex had been. But what more likely than that the bitter ill-feeling rife in the village, which had lately vented itself against the inmates of the Towers, should now have sought a new victim in Penwarden? If the smugglers were prepared to go such lengths against the Trevanions, towards whom their hereditary loyalty had for generations been akin to the Scottish clansman's devotion to his chief, they would scarcely be disposed to spare a humble old seaman, to whom they attributed the heavy losses they had recently suffered.

These thoughts ran through Dick's mind in a moment. That Penwarden had suffered violent handling he could not doubt. He must at once report the disappearance. He hurried from the room, closing the door, and in the passage met Gammer Oliver, as she was called, the old woman who came daily from the village.

"Oh, Maister Trevanion!" she exclaimed, "you did give me a turn."

"Mr. Penwarden is not here; something has happened to him. You don't know anything about him?"

"Do 'ee say it? Lawk-a-deary, and me so late and all! My darter was took bad this morning, or——"

"Do you know anything about him?" repeated Dick.

"Not a mossel, sir. I hain't seed the gaffer since I gied un his dinner yester-

day. Save us all! What a moil and muddle things be in!"

"Yes, I don't know what has happened. Tidy up, and bring the door-key to the Towers. I am going now."

He hastened home, and told the Squire what he had discovered, and what his suspicions were. Mr. Trevanion, often supine and sluggish in matters concerning himself, was energetic enough when he heard of wrong or injustice suffered by others.

"This is scandalous!" he exclaimed. "Do you go at once and find Mr. Polwhele, Dick. I will hurry to the parson. Stay, I'll give Sam a note for Sir Bevil; we must raise a hue and cry after the old man. Where is Mildmay, I wonder?"

"Mr. Polwhele was going to signal to him, sir," said Dick.

"That's right. He must watch the coast. I've heard of the wretches shipping off to France preventive men who make themselves troublesome. 'Tis ten to one they will serve Penwarden so; that vessel you saw may have come for that purpose."

Within a few minutes the three active members of the household had gone their several ways. Dick hastened for the second time to see the riding-officer. As he went he came to a resolution. The smugglers, it was clear, were determined on pursuing their policy of persecution. All who opposed them, or whom they supposed to be their opponents, would have to reckon with their remorseless animosity, which might express itself in open violence or deeds of stealth as necessity demanded. It was to be war, and, as events were shaping themselves, war between the village and the Towers. Well, the war should be fought out. The quarrel had been forced on the Trevanions; they had not willingly departed from their neutrality; but matters had now gone so far that to remain neutral was impossible, and Dick resolved to take once for all the side of the law. He anticipated some difficulty in bringing his father to adopt the same attitude; but at the present moment the Squire was so indignant with the smugglers that, even if he was not ready to throw himself into active opposition to them, he might not forbid Dick to do so. Feeling that at such a crisis all quiet work at his books was impossible, Dick determined to beg Mr. Carlyon to release him, and to devote himself heart and soul to the contest, whether of wits or weapons. The first object must be the rescue of Joe Penwarden.

Mr. Polwhele was still at home.

"This is a new thing, 'pon my life," he said, when Dick had told him his tidings. "Till now the villains have been only on the defensive; to take the offensive means there's a new spirit working in 'em. D'you think, now, that your father is right, and John Trevanion is the man behind?"

"I don't want to say what I think, Mr. Polwhele," replied Dick. "Whether he is or not, we must put a stop to it. I can't do much, but what I can do I will."

"I'm glad to hear it. The curious thing is that John Trevanion has but lately been here. One of the fishers had told him of the strange vessel, and he came for the same purpose as you, to ask me to signal to Mr. Mildmay. He said it was scandalous that the Frenchman should be allowed to cruise at large."

"Do you think she came to ship Penwarden away, sir? That is my father's idea."

"'Tis a notion, now, but not likely, unless John Trevanion came here to throw me off the scent. You saw no small boat pulling to the ship, did you?"

"No, sir."

"Then I think the Squire is wrong. Now, seemingly, Mr. Mildmay has not seen my signal, but he must be somewhere off the coast. As soon as 'tis dark I will show a light with my telescope lantern; that will fetch him; and if you are ready to join hands with us, I will bring him to the Towers and we'll hold a council of war. Will the Squire agree to it?"

"I don't know. I'll ask him, and if you'll meet me at six o'clock on the bridge yonder, I will tell you what he says."

When the Squire returned from his visit to the Parsonage, Dick opened his mind to him. At first Mr. Trevanion shrank from definitely committing himself to the cause of the revenue officers, but when Dick pointed out that his position could scarcely be worse than it was, and that the Trevanion influence might still have some weight with the better-disposed among the village folk, he consented to the riding-officer's proposal.

"The vicar is coming over this evening," he said. "We shall at any rate have all the wisdom of the parish."

At half-past six there met in the Squire's room, Mr. Mildmay, the riding-officer, Mr. Carlyon, and Dick. They drew their chairs to the fire; the elder men lit their churchwarden pipes, and, with glasses of steaming toddy at their elbows, proceeded to discuss the situation.

"I have a note from Sir Bevil," said the Squire. "He is sending to Truro for assistance. What shape that may take I don't know."

"The shape of a constable or two, probably," said Mr. Polwhele, "and if they are no better than Petherick, they won't help us much."

"Petherick shall cry the village to-morrow," said the Vicar. "Being a justice as well as parson, I have written out a proclamation, summoning all good and true men to give information that will lead to the discovery of Penwarden, dead or alive."

"I don't believe they'd murder him," said Mr. Mildmay, "or they wouldn't take the trouble to spirit him away. A crack on the head would be a much simpler matter."

"What do you suppose is their object in kidnapping him?" asked the Vicar.

"Either to hold him while they run a specially valuable cargo, or to ship him to France and keep him permanently out of their way. A fool's trick; for he's bound to be replaced, though we'd find it hard to get a better man, old as he is."

"And foolish in another way," added the riding-officer. "They ought to know that a deed of that kind will only stir up the rest of us. I wouldn't give much for their chances of running a cargo yet awhile."

"Nor for shipping him," said Mr. Mildmay. "I'll swear they haven't done it yet. My boats were up and down the coast all last night. One of them spied that rascally privateer putting in towards St. Cuby's Cove in the mist this morning, but she sailed away, and though I gave chase, she got off. To-night we'll have the boats patrolling for miles; I defy 'em to slip through us."

"When did they seize him, d'you suppose?" asked the Squire.

"In the early morning, I think, Father," said Dick, "before it was light. The blood stain was quite fresh. They must have hidden him somewhere; they wouldn't carry him away in the daylight, in case some one saw them."

"That wouldn't trouble them, bless you," said Mr. Mildmay. "All Polkerran and most of the folk around are hand-in-glove with them. They could count on the silence of everybody but a few ranters and psalm-singers, who would either be abed and asleep, or going about their business."

"I don't agree with you, Mildmay," said the Squire. "They would have to pass this house on the way to the village, and they know very well that Dick and young Sam are early birds; they wouldn't risk meeting them. No; 'twas done in the dark, depend on it."

"That might be if they took him to the village, but we don't know that," retorted Mr. Mildmay. "No doubt there are any number of underground cellars and secret passages in the village: 'twas in some such place that fellow Delarousse was hidden while the dragoons were searching the inn, you may be sure. But those are not the only possible hiding-places. What with nooks, caves, and adits in the abandoned mines, we might search for a month of Sundays and not find the poor fellow."

"But they won't hold him long, surely," said Dick. "What a trouble it would be to guard him and feed him!"

"True; they would expect to be able to ship him soon. If they are planning a run, and find we're too watchful for them, I'll be bound they'll let him loose before long, and we'll find him one fine morning back again."

"Dick speaks of guarding and feeding," said Mr. Carlyon. "May not that give us a clue? It seems probable, as Mr. Mildmay suggests, that he is not in the village. If he is elsewhere, somebody must leave the village to carry food to him, and a vigilant watch would detect the fellow."

"Bless my life, parson," said Mr. Polwhele, "you don't know these rascals.

They're as wary as otters and as slippery as eels. I'll warrant they'd slip us in broad daylight, and as to the darkness of night, why, a regiment of soldiers wouldn't be large enough to net 'em."

"Well, to be practical," said the Squire. "You, Vicar, as a justice, can give Mr. Polwhele a warrant of search. You may unearth him in the village, and I should begin with the inn; Doubledick's name suits him. With the coast closely watched by Mr. Mildmay's men, the kidnappers cannot ship him. Sir Bevil will raise the hue and cry in the neighbourhood inland, and 'tis such a serious matter that I doubt whether any of the yeomen would connive at it. The name of *habeas corpus* would scare them out of their wits. I'm inclined to think with Mr. Mildmay that the rascals will let him loose in a day or two when they see what a stir they have made; but of course we must not rely on that, but do our best to ferret him out."

"Very well summed up, Squire," said the Vicar. "We cannot do more to-night; and, as 'tis not late, perhaps you and these gentlemen would favour me with a rubber. Polwhele trumped my trick last time," he added, under his breath.

"With all my heart," cried the Squire. "Dick, bring the cards, and ask Reuben to fry some pilchards. All work and no play, Mr. Mildmay, you know——"

The gentlemen were nothing loth to spend an hour or two in this way. They had supper at eight; the officers then left to attend to their nocturnal duties; and as Mr. Carlyon remained to play piquet with the Squire, Dick went to bed early, resolving to take some independent steps in the morning.

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH

Cross-Currents

Polkerran next day was the stage upon which a series of dramatic incidents were enacted, pure comedy to the spectators, but with a possible tragedy behind the scenes.

At an early hour a mob of boys and girls, with a sprinkling of aged folk verging on second childhood, followed at the heels of Petherick, the constable, as he shambled through the streets, stopping at the corners to ring his bell, shout "Oyez! Oyez!" and mumble the formal words of Mr. Carlyon's proclamation. He pretended to read them from the sheet of double foolscap that he held at arm's length before him, but being perfectly illiterate, he in reality recited them by

heart, the Vicar having devoted two solid hours since dawn in drumming them into the man's head. His duty thus religiously performed, Petherick repaired to the tap-room of the Five Pilchards, where he discoursed for a time on *habeas corpus, felo de se*, and other magical prescriptions, relieving his dryness so frequently with rum-hot that he was at length overcome with emotion, and mingled his liquor with his tears.

Two hours later, Sir Bevil Portharvan rode down with Mr. John Trevanion, a brother magistrate, and a sheriff's officer from Truro, intending to harangue the populace and impress them with the majesty and terror of the law. But finding that no audience gathered about him except the young and old children aforesaid, a few pallid indoor workmen, and a number of women accompanied by squalling infants in arms—the able-bodied men being, curiously enough, otherwise engaged—he abandoned that part of the programme, and contented himself with solemnly superintending the affixing to the inn-door of a bill, headed with the royal arms, which he had ordered overnight to be printed in Truro.

At noon came Mr. Mildmay, Mr. Polwhele, a posse of excisemen, and a soldier on furlough, who, with the authority of a warrant signed by the Vicar, proceeded to make a thorough search of the houses, beginning with the inn itself. They descended to the cellars, ascended to the lofts; rummaged in clothes presses; turned down beds; rapped at walls for hollow sounds indicating secret passages or receptacles; peeped into horse-troughs, cow-byres, and pigsties; poked in coppers and washtubs; in short, worked themselves into a fine perspiring heat and the village folk into an itching frenzy by the conscientious thoroughness of their inquisition. Some of the men who had been undiscoverable by Sir Bevil were now energetically employed, in advance of the search party, in removing bales, kegs, packets, and canisters, so that when Mr. Mildmay appeared at one end of a street, these interesting objects were collected at the other; and when this end in turn was visited, the barefooted carriers of the articles in question slipped back and replaced them in their former hiding-places.

While Mr. Mildmay and his assistants, after three hours' unremitting toil, stood mopping their brows and venting their honest opinion of the Polkerran folk, John Trevanion rode down the hill. He reined up when he reached the group, and greeted the discomfited representatives of the law.

"How d'ye do, gentlemen?" he cried. "Have you had any success?"

"Confusion seize 'em, Mr. Trevanion!" replied the lieutenant. "We've not seen a sign of the old man, nor discovered a single cask or bundle of contraband. You'd think 'twas the most innocent, duty-paying village in the three kingdoms."

"That's most unfortunate. As to the contraband—well, you know, we all like to get our goods as cheap as we may, I don't disguise it; but old Penwarden is another story. Have you no notion where he is?"

"No more than you, Mr. Trevanion," said the riding-officer, throwing a keen glance on the horseman.

"Then you must be blank indeed," said Trevanion with an easy laugh. "'Tis my belief there's a great deal too much fuss made about old Joe's disappearance. Surely nobody in Polkerran would wish to injure so ancient an institution. 'Tis a prank, depend upon it, and when the prankers have achieved their object—you and I can guess what that is—they'll let him loose as sound as a bell."

Trevanion's debonair frankness disarmed Mr. Mildmay, to whom he was a comparative stranger. It seemed ridiculous that the Squire should harbour such unworthy suspicions of his cousin.

"By the way," continued Trevanion, "I am glad I met you. I am having a few friends in on Saturday night—a bit of a randy; that's our name for it here—and I shall be delighted if you will join us. I haven't seen so much of you as I should like; this mine I'm starting has kept me busy."

"I'm much obliged to you," said Mr. Mildmay, "but I fear——"

"Oh, I know what you would say. But your cutter can spare you for an hour or two. Not for the world would I hinder your duties; to catch that villain Delarousse in particular would be worth a good deal to you; but 'tis dark early; the hour fixed is six; and I won't say a word if you must leave us before we are ripe."

"Well, I will come. Thank you."

"And you too, Mr. Polwhele? The service of your country can spare you for a little while?"

"To be sure. I'll come too, Mr. Trevanion; 'twill be like old times, indeed."

The riding-officer's assent was much more hearty than Mr. Mildmay's, which was perhaps a little surprising in view of the suspicions he had confessed to on the previous day in speaking to Dick.

"That's right," said Trevanion. "I shall be glad to welcome you. The hour is six—did I name it? I hope Penwarden will be found by that time; you'll feel easier, I dare say. Good-bye, then."

When he had ridden away, Mr. Mildmay dismissed the underlings and went off to have a meal with the riding-officer.

"That fellow's too free-and-easy to be the villain the Squire thinks him," said Mr. Mildmay, as they walked southward out of the village.

Mr. Polwhele smiled.

"I'm beginning to think he's the cleverest free-trader the duchy ever bred," he remarked.

"My dear fellow!" expostulated the lieutenant.

"I had my suspicions; this invitation has convinced me," replied Mr. Polwhele. "Bless my life, to think you are so simple, Mildmay! Don't you see the

game? They've put Penwarden out of the way. What does that mean? A big run, as sure as I'm alive. But we two are obstacles; they blink at kidnapping us, but they do better. They invite us to a randy, and while we are making merry they slip inshore, run their cargo, liberate Penwarden, and laugh at us for a pair of jackasses."

"That's nonsense, Polwhele. The cutter will be out, though I'm not on it. Besides, didn't he say we can leave when we like?"

"Yes, with the belief that when he has us there, warmth, good liquor, and pleasant company will prove more attractive than hunting rascals in the cold."

"Why did you accept, then?"

"First, to look after you, Mildmay. Second, to keep my eyes open. Third, to make Trevanion think I don't suspect him, so that the smugglers may go forward with their plans. He is playing a deep game, I'm sure of it."

"That's detestably unjust, Polwhele," said Mr. Mildmay, with some heat. "Give a dog a bad name, and——I tell you what. We will both leave at nine; not a minute later. That's several hours before any run took place that ever I heard of. Nine it shall be, and call me jackass if the shore's not as quiet all night as the churchyard."

Meanwhile, what had Dick been doing?

At the hour when Mr. Carlyon was driving the terms of his proclamation into Petherick's reluctant skull, Dick rose from bed, and taking the key of Penwarden's cottage, brought to the Towers by Gammer Oliver, went up the cliff to make a more thorough examination of the premises than he had made on the previous day. He wished that he had thought of doing so before, for there had not only been rain in the night which would help to obliterate any traces that the kidnappers might have left on the ground, but the neighbourhood had been visited by inquisitive boys, dairymaids, farm-hands, and idle folk from the village, who tramped round the cottage, gazed at the door, and peered in at the windows, leaving innumerable footprints on the soil.

Dick was puzzled to think how Joe's captors had obtained entrance to the cottage. It was not by the front door, unless Penwarden had carelessly left it open; its timbers were sound and the lock unbroken; not by the chimney, which was too narrow to admit anything larger than a pigeon. They might have gone through the garden and forced the back door; though they would surely have tried to effect an entrance quietly, while the old man lay asleep.

Arriving at the cottage, Dick unlocked the door, entered, and went through the passage to the back door, which opened on a tiny garden. The lock had not been tampered with. Penwarden was very proud of his garden, devoting

many hours a day in the summer, when his duties were light, to the cultivation of peonies, fuchsias, nasturtiums, and other flowering plants, together with onions, artichokes, and vegetable marrows. The flowers were on one side of a narrow path, the vegetables on the other. There was a small gate in the rear fence. At this time of year the ground was bare, Penwarden finding nothing to do but a little rake and spade work.

A glance at the path apprised Dick that the captive had been carried out this way. The pebbles were disturbed; parts of the boxwood borders were trampled down, and over the edge there were prints of heavy boots on the brown earth. Dick examined the kitchen window. The explanation was at once clear to him. There were deep scratches on the sill and the woodwork; the conclusion was irresistible; the kidnappers had climbed into the kitchen and gained the bedroom before Penwarden was aware of their presence. That they had carried their victim out by the back door seemed to show that at any rate they had taken him inland, and not down to the shore. How the front door came to be unlocked was a puzzling circumstance, since they had clearly neither entered nor come out that way.

Dick went again to the back, and sought to trace the footsteps beyond the gate; but the grass there was so beaten down by the rain and the feet of the curious idlers, that the most careful investigation must prove fruitless. He returned into the cottage, to make a thorough search of the bedroom. Gammer Oliver had made the bed, straightened the rug, set the chair on its legs, and washed over the stained plank. It seemed probable that his instruction to her to tidy up had robbed him of any chance of making a discovery. But Dick resolved not to err again through over-haste, and, the small window admitting little light, he found a candle, lit it, and began to prowl methodically round the room. For some time his search met with no reward, but all at once, catching a glint of light reflected from some object on the floor in the angle between a grandfather's clock and the fireplace, he stooped, and picked up a large steel button, to which hung by the broken threads a torn scrap of blue cloth.

Dick felt a thrill of excitement. Penwarden had not been carried away unresisting. He knew that already by the signs of struggle formerly observed. The severed button was an additional proof. No doubt it had been wrenched off in the fight—from whose coat? Not from Joe's; his buttons were the regulation brass buttons of the Government service. Many of the fishers had steel buttons on their winter coats, and one button was like another. But it occurred to Dick that the particular garment which had lost this button might not yet have been repaired, and he wondered whether the Vicar's search-warrant would justify Mr. Mildmay in demanding that all the blue coats in the village should be spread out on the beach for examination. The absurdity of the idea struck him at once. Of course

the very garment that was wanted would not appear. But he thought of a better way—one that would arouse no suspicion, though it might prove impossible of execution. He would go down into the village and scrutinise the clothes of all the men he met. The owner of the lost button was probably one of the most active of the smugglers, and not an indoor man, so that there was some chance of meeting him in the street, on the beach, or on the jetty.

He set off at once. On the way he met Sir Bevil and other horsemen riding from the Dower House, where John Trevanion had entertained them after the futile ceremony in the village. The fishers, who were not to be seen when Sir Bevil was burning to address them, now stood smoking at the corners, in front of the inn, on the jetty, and elsewhere. They appeared to be very much amused. Some of them scowled at Dick as he passed; others laughed and spat; one asked him with an oath what he was staring at. Dick was seldom in the village now, and the hostility of the folk's attitude might have made his heart sore had he not been hardened to it.

He walked along as unconcernedly as he could, standing for a few moments to watch some fishers mending nets on the beach, and lingering until their movements brought the front of their coats into view. Some coats were brown, some blue; some had steel buttons, others bone. Not one was lacking. Presently he came to the jetty, where Isaac Tonkin, sitting on an upturned tub, was superintending some repairs to the seine-net in his lugger. He wore a blue coat, but his arms were folded, one hand holding his pipe to his mouth. He threw one glance at Dick, but made no movement, and thenceforth ignored him.

Dick strolled up and down. Excitement utterly possessed him; to his fancy Tonkin was deliberately concealing two out of his four buttons. The two visible were of steel. What could he do to make the man unclasp? But it was not necessary to practise any wile. The simplest causes effected what he desired.

"Feyther," called Jake Tonkin from the lugger, "fling us a quid o' yer bacca."

"'Tis bad for young stummicks," said the father. "Howsomever, here 'ee be."

His right arm fell as he sought his pocket: the front of his coat was revealed; one button was missing.

It is probable that Dick, but for his long waiting and his excitement, would not have yielded to impulse. But as Tonkin threw the tobacco into the lugger, Dick stepped up to him, and, holding out the incriminating button, said:

"This is yours, I believe."

Tonkin stared at him for an instant, blew a cloud from his lips, and held out his hand for the button as if to examine it. In anticipatory triumph Dick handed it to him.

"Did I hear 'ee say as this button do belong to me?" asked the man in a curiously quiet voice.

"Yes, I did say so."

"Well, drown me if I want it," and with a flick between his forefinger and thumb he sent it skimming through the air. It fell into the sea a dozen yards away.

Dick's cheeks flamed with rage at his stupidity in allowing himself to be outwitted. He had had in his possession the sole piece of evidence against the kidnappers, and now it was lost on the sandy bottom of the harbour. Shaken out of his self-control, he said hotly:

"'Twas you that kidnapped Penwarden. Don't think you will escape. There'll be an end to this villainy."

"Go and inform, then, you cussed young slip of a rotted old tree. 'Tis not the first time, neither, you dirty young whelp."

A burst of laughter from the lugger brought Dick to his sober senses. Disdaining to contradict the aspersion, he turned abruptly on his heel, tingling with fury at his own indiscretion. Jibes and jeers pursued him as he walked towards the homeward road; these stung him less than the knowledge that by his own folly he had thrown away a chance of helping Penwarden.

Gloomy thoughts kept him company as he toiled up the hill. Nor was he cheered by the air of malignant triumph manifest on Doubledick's fat face, when, half-way up the hill, he met the inn-keeper waddling down. In imagination he heard the gleeful chuckles with which Doubledick would learn of his discomfiture. After the heroic resolution he had lately come to, it was a sorry thing to have been worsted in the first encounter.

Walking more rapidly on the level road past the Dower House, at a cursory glance to the left he saw a short, thickset form scramble over the fence that bounded the premises, and hasten furtively in the direction of the Towers. The sight struck him with surprise and wrath at once, for the slinking figure was undoubtedly that of Sam Pollex. Being himself partially concealed by the hedge, he thought it probable that Sam had not seen him, so, hurrying along, he turned as soon as possible into the grounds of the Towers, and came face to face with Sam as the boy arrived at a little wicket-gate.

"What do you mean by it?" he demanded angrily, holding the gate so that Sam could not pass through.

Sam blushed and dropped his eyes, looking flustered and perturbed.

"Were you not bidden never to go there again?" Dick continued. "Didn't I say I'd break your head for you if you disobeyed?"

"Iss, you did so," said Sam ruefully. "Ah, well, you'm better do it and get it over."

"What were you doing there?" said Dick, still holding the gate.

Sam looked sidelong, shuffled his feet, then, as with a great effort, replied:

"I didn' go to sell eggs, nor nawthin' o' that sort. If you must haul it out of

a poor feller, I rambled there to——"

"Well?"

"To see maidy Susan; now I've said it."

"Then you're a silly ass. She's years older than you. What does a maid of twenty want with a boy of sixteen?"

"Twenty she is, and sixteen be I, but I've a deal more wisdom in my noddle than she, arter all. She's a simple soul about pilchurs, and night-lines, and buildin' boats, and all sorts o' famous things I've knowed since I wer table-high, and she do have a tarrible thirst for high knowledge. She've a clever little head-piece, too, for when I wer tellin' to she how pretty 'tis to see a otter divin' for fish, who should come up-along but Doubledick——"

"Did he see you?" interrupted Dick.

"I wer just agoin' to tell 'ee. No, 'a didn't see me, 'cos I slipped behind Maidy, she being well growed, and says I, 'That feller is my 'nation enemy,' says I, and afore I knowed wheer I wer, she whisked me into a little small cupboard place wi' coats and boots hangin' on the wall, and commanded me, in a feelin' whisper, to bide theer till she toled me out. Drown me if I didn' hear Doubledick go shailin' past wi' Maister John, and then there comed a rumblin' through the wall, and I knowed they two was a-talkin'."

"Did you hear what they said?" asked Dick eagerly.

"Iss, I did. I hadn' nawthin' better to do, so I put my ear to the wall. Iss, I heerd a thing or two."

"Well, what did you hear? Anything about Penwarden?"

Sam had gradually pushed open the gate, and was now walking beside Dick.

"Not a word. I wer so flambustered in bein' poked in that hencoop of a place, and thinkin' what they'd do to me if so be they catched me, that 'twas all mixed up, and I couldn' tell A from B."

"But think: you must have heard something clearly. You didn't lose all your wits, did you?"

"Well, I did hear Maister John say wind was steady, and 'a hoped 't 'ud hold fair for business."

"Yes: what then?"

"Don't 'ee bustle me; then maybe I'll mind o' more. Iss, I mind Doubledick said, 'Hee! hee!' says he; 'if it do hold for another forty-eight hours,' says he;—and be-jowned if I could hear any more o' that piece of reckonin', my poor heart was a-strummin' so."

"Confound your poor heart!" cried Dick. "Do pull yourself together. It may mean salvation to Joe."

Sam scratched his head.

"If you'd only been theer instead o' me!" he muttered. "Ah! 'Twas carriers.

Iss: Maister John axed if 'twas settled about carriers. 'A round score,' says Doubledick, if 't wasn't two; 'good fellers all; no wamblin', slack-twisted cripple-toes for this job,' says he."

"What job?"

"That I can't say. But Zacky Tonkin was in it; iss; gie me a minute for rec'lection; iss. Doubledick says, 'Zacky be sour as a green apple.' 'Ha! ha!' laughs Maister John, "a don't like playin' second fiddle,' says he, which is a passel o' nonsense, 'cos Zacky never played on fiddle, fust, second, nor last either, all his born days, that I do know. "Tis for 'ee to keep un quiet!' says Maister John. 'He hev his uses, but hain't got a mossel of brains. You've got enough for two, Doubledick,' says he."

Dick was becoming impatient. The conversation as reported was not very enlightening, and surely Doubledick had not visited the Dower House to discuss such trivialities. But Dick had learnt his lesson; he would not err again by being over-hasty; so he schooled himself to endure the slow trickle of information as it oozed from Sam's reluctant memory.

"Didn't they name Penwarden at all?" he asked.

"Never heerd un. The only other names I heerd wer Tom Pennycomequick and Jimmy Nancarrow."

"Ah! what about them?"

Sam reflected.

"Tom Pennycomequick and Jimmy Nancarrow," he repeated, as if the repetition would recall the connection. "Iss; I mind o't. Says Maister John, 'Who be on guard to-day?'"

"'On guard!' Not 'on the watch'?"

"That's what 'a meant, seemingly, but 'a said 'on guard.' 'Tom Pennycomequick and Jimmy Nancarrow,' says Doubledick. There was summat about 'bogeys,' if I could only mind. Iss, fay; I've got un. 'Two,' says Maister John, 'what for?' 'Hee! hee!' goes Doubledick; "cos they was afeard to go alone,' says he. 'Afeard o' their own bogeys,' says Maister John, and then they both laughed so hearty that daze me if I didn't bust out too, and had to clap the tail of a coat in my jaws so they shouldn' hear. 'T'ud ha' been gashly if they found me, and drawed out o' me how maidy Susan had put me theer, and—well, you bean't a-hearkenin', so I'll say no more."

In truth, Dick's ears were closed; his mind was rapidly piecing together the fragmentary items of information Sam had given him. They had now reached the Towers; Dick went straight to his bedroom, and sat with his elbow on the window-sill, looking out over the grey sullen sea, and striving to bind together these separate strands. The outcome of his meditation was as follows:

Something important was to happen within forty-eight hours, and it de-

pended on the weather. It was now midday on Friday; what was to be done would be done before midday on Sunday. There had been mention of carriers—that implied a smuggling run. Penwarden's name had not been mentioned, but two men had been said to be on guard. Over whom or what? Not over smuggled goods, for the run had not yet taken place. Not over the revenue officers, for the phrase would then have been "on the watch" or something similar. The word "guard" would naturally be used in connection with a prisoner; that prisoner must be Penwarden: where was he? The men on guard were afraid; no doubt the place chosen for his imprisonment was a lonely spot, not in the village, but somewhere remote from the scene of the impending operations, unless, indeed, it was intended to ship him to France in the lugger that brought the cargo. In that case he would probably be in some secure nook near the shore.

Perplexed, Dick wondered whether he had at last discovered a clue. It was at least worth while to follow it up. The men whose names had been mentioned were well known to him. Pennycomequick was a cobbler, Nancarrow a farmer, whose holding was situated about three miles away on the moor. To make direct inquiries might awaken suspicion: how could he discover where they were? An idea struck him. No doubt their guard would be relieved. Trevanion had been surprised to learn that two were on duty; the task, then, was usually undertaken by one. Was it possible to find out if any one left the village secretly during the day?

Suddenly a simple stratagem occurred to him. He took up an old, worn pair of boots, ran downstairs, and called Sam.

"Take these down to Pennycomequick's, and tell him to sole them, and to put a good iron tip on the heels. If he is not there, ask when he will be back. Be sure not to forget that, and be as quick as you can."

"Iss, I woll," said Sam, "for I do have a hankerin' arter dinner."

He hurried away, and returned when Dick was half through his midday meal. Dick heard the boy clumping into the house, but did not go to him at once, being disinclined to enter into explanations with his parents at this stage. He left the table as soon as he could, and found Sam busy with dumpling and gravy in the kitchen.

"Well, Sam?" he said.

"Mistress commands me not to speak wi' my mouth full," mumbled the boy. "Now I can tell 'ee," he went on after a few moments. "Pennycomequick bean't to home. He be gone to Trura to buy leather."

"When will he be back?"

"'Them above alone knows,' says the woman when I axed her. 'He said four, but what Pennycomequick says, and what he do, be as far apart as from here to nowhere.' If that be all you want to know, Maister Dick, I'll continny work on

this noble pudden."

Dick was satisfied. He returned to his room, and, about three o'clock, mounted to the roof of one of the towers from which the house took its name. With him he carried an excellent spy-glass which remained to the Squire from his seafaring days. From this lofty eyrie a view could be obtained for miles around. If the cobbler and the farmer were on guard together, it was likely that they would be relieved together, and they could hardly return, the one to the village, the other to his farm on the moor, without coming at some part of their journey within range of vision. Dick felt a momentary damping of the spirits when it occurred to him that Penwarden's place of concealment might be some nook below the cliffs. In that case the sentries would be changed by boat from the harbour, and he would see nothing of them. But even in that case the farmer must ascend the hill and cross the moor, and though he might be concealed at some portions of his road by trees and bushes, he must at length cross open country. Behind the parapet Dick could watch unseen, and he settled himself to wait in patience.

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH

Doubledick on Duty

It was a chill, dreary afternoon. The sky weighed upon earth and sea like a canopy of lead. The wind moaned and sighed about the roof; the trees seemed to shiver in their nakedness. From over the cliff came the hollow murmur of the breakers. Northward Penwarden's cottage stood lonely and forlorn; eastward stretched the dark gloomy waste of moorland; southward the village huddled in its cleft as if for warmth, a few thin streamers of smoke flying inland on the wind. Nearer the Dower House a score of men were engaged in erecting sheds and machinery for Trevanion's miners, and the sound of their voices came in mournful cadence to Dick's ears.

For some time there was scarcely a movement on the face of the country. Presently a carrier's cart rumbled down the road, stopping at the Dower House. Through his spy-glass Dick saw Susan's bright face smiling as she spoke to the carrier, who conveyed into the house boxes, baskets, and packets of various shapes and sizes. Dick remembered that on the morrow Trevanion was entertaining a party of friends to celebrate the reopening of the mines. He was miserably conscious of the contrast between his cousin's lot and his own. Why, he asked

himself, had Fate dealt so hardly with the Trevanions of the Towers? The cart moved on, no doubt to the Five Pilchards, where the carrier would refresh himself before starting on his return journey to Truro. The workmen shouldered their tools and tramped after it, and when they had disappeared the land was left in its former immobility.

At length, as the gloom was deepening with the dusk, Dick descried, some distance to his left, two figures moving slowly along, one towards him on the high road, the other away from him, crossing a ploughed field towards a footpath that led from the road, some distance behind, across the moor. The sky was so lowering that Dick could not at first, even through his glass, identify the men. The receding figure dwindled, and was by-and-by lost to sight; the advancing one increased, and became recognisable by its crookedness as that of Pennycomequick, the cobbler. But he bore no bundle of leather. He passed the Towers in the direction of the village, and soon he too had vanished.

Dick could not doubt that the other man was the farmer, Jimmy Nancarrow. The path into which he had struck led to his farm. Where had they come from? Not far along the high road, otherwise the farmer would have left it when he reached the path, and have gone the easiest and shortest way home; unless, indeed, he had remained with the cobbler for company's sake. Dick smiled at this thought. Pennycomequick was the most crabbed and crossgrained man in the village; whereas Nancarrow was a hearty, jovial fellow, not the kind of man to walk an extra half-mile and tramp over a ploughed field for the pleasure of the cobbler's society. It seemed more probable that the men had come to the road together from some adjacent spot, and that the farmer had left it at once.

Cold and hungry after his hour of watching, Dick was about to descend into the house when he caught sight of Tonkin's lugger beating up from northward against the south-west wind, and evidently making for the harbour. He gazed at her through his glass. Tonkin and three other men were aboard her. A large fishing-net was heaped on the deck. It was a strange coincidence that these movements on sea and land should have been contemporaneous. Dick went down the stairs to the living-room, then vacant, lay down in front of the fire, and ruminated on what he had seen, until the warmth sent him to sleep.

When he awoke, his father was in the room. Dick considered whether he should speak about the clues which he believed he had discovered, and decided that, since nothing was as yet certain, he would keep silence until he had carried his investigation further. To search for the tracks of the two men, or to follow them up if found, would be impossible that evening; but this was to be his task as soon as there was clear daylight on the morrow.

"Mr. Mildmay is going to the randy at the Dower House to-morrow, I hear," said the Squire.

"Is he, sir?" replied Dick, surprised.

"Yes; I heard it from Mr. Polwhele, who is going too."

"Mr. Mildmay is almost a stranger, and 'tis rather a dull life for him between whiles; but Mr. Polwhele knew John Trevanion years ago, did he not, sir?"

"Oh! he is going as watch-dog. He suspects that the invitation may be a trick to get them out of the way while the smugglers run a cargo, and got Mr. Mildmay to promise to leave promptly at nine. He accompanies him to see that he is not detained."

"Nothing has been heard of old Joe, Father?"

"Nothing at all. I incline to think that we shall soon see him again. With Mr. Polwhele on the alert, and Mr. Mildmay also, let us hope, there can be neither run nor shipment, and the rascals will tire of keeping guard on the old man."

Again Dick was on the point of disclosing what he knew, but was restrained by the same feeling that suspicion must become certainty before any steps were taken.

Next morning, waking before it was light, he rose and dressed, roused Sam, and set off with him to investigate the neighbourhood of the spot where he had first seen Nancarrow and Pennycomequick. The air was crisp and clear, with the first nip of frost, giving promise of a fine morning. There had been rain in the night, but a thin film of ice covered the ruts and pools, and the boys might have been tracked in the darkness by the slight crackling under their feet as the icy layer gave way.

The night was yielding by the time they reached the high-road near the point where Nancarrow had left it. The farmer's tracks were easily discoverable in the ploughed field, for, having been filled up by rain, the prints of his large boots formed a series of white and regular patches in the frost-besprinkled ground. A covey of snipe rose into the air from the sedgy border of a pool at the side of the field, and Sam pointed out a fox with lowered brush slinking along after them beside a hedge of brambles.

"We have other foxes to run to earth—two-legged foxes," said Dick, who had told Sam on the way the occasion and the object of their expedition. Sam had a quick eye for the tracks of birds and beasts, but when they had traced the farmer's footprints back to the road, even he was at a loss. The rain had washed the hard surface of the highway, and obliterated the tracks of footfarers.

Finding their examination of the road likely to prove fruitless, they scrambled through the hedge on the left, and crossed into the rugged and uneven ground that lay between the road and Penwarden's cottage. There were no footprints on the path that ran past the cottage, nor on the coarse grass with which the earth was covered. Returning to the road, they walked for a quarter of a mile further, until they reached the footpath which, in the ordinary course of things,

the farmer would have taken. They failed to light upon any more traces.

"I'll work backwards along the other side under the hedge," said Dick. "Nancarrow must have crossed the road. You go back to where we saw his footprints, and I'll keep pace with you. No; we'll change parts; I can easily find the prints; your eyes are quicker than mine to discover new ones."

"That's true," said Sam, gratified by this testimony to his powers. "Wend along, then, Maister Dick, and holla when you come to 'em."

In a few minutes Dick called to Sam to halt. The latter bent towards the road, and scrutinised its hard surface minutely, for several yards in each direction beyond the point opposite to that where Dick stood.

"Neither heel nor toe mark do I see," he said at length. "The road be washed clean."

He stood erect and gazed about him in a puzzled way. All at once his eyes became fixed on one portion of the hedge. Stepping towards it, he stooped and peered among the stiff rime-encrusted leaves.

"Hoy!" he called.

"Hush!" said Dick, hastening towards him. "Speak low; there may be some one about. What have you found?"

"Look' ee see," replied Sam in a mysterious whisper.

Dick stooped; there was a patch of foliage less thick than the hedge around it; some of the leaves had apparently been shaken off, and here and there twigs were broken.

"Some man, fox, or other creeping thing hev squeezed hisself through theer," said Sam. "We'll do the same."

He thrust his body against the hedge, which yielded to his pressure, and without much effort he passed through to the other side.

"Dear life!" he whispered, "here be the line o' fortune. Come through, Maister."

Dick followed him. The softer earth on the seaward side of the hedge, more receptive than the highway, showed distinct traces of the passage of clumping boots. Some were recent; some appeared to be of slightly older date. Looking along the ground towards the sea, they saw that the grass was crushed over a width of two or three feet, though many more goings and comings were needed to make it a beaten path.

This was a discovery indeed.

"We will follow it up," said Dick.

They set off side by side. Dick was surprised to find how frequently, and to all appearance erratically, the track wound to right and left. But after a few moments it became clear that the deviations were not accidental, but purposeful. The general surface of the ground was very uneven, here a bump, there a hol-

low; now a patch of gorse, then a stretch bare of all but grass. Of these features advantage had been taken by those whose passing had made the track. They had chosen, not the easiest route, but that on which they would be least visible from the direction of the village. Dick noticed that nowhere along the path were the towers of his home in sight, although a few yards to right or left they were completely in view. This explained how it was that Pennycomequick and Nancarrow, if they had come this way from the cliff to the road, had escaped his observation from the parapet.

They had followed the track for perhaps half a mile when the ivy-clad ruins of the chapel above St. Cuby's Well came into view. Instantly recollections, suspicions, deductions linked themselves in Dick's mind. Penwarden had mentioned a hiding-place which the smugglers were believed to have on the shore, but which was seldom used, and had never been discovered. The old mine, with its abandoned workings, would form an ideal temporary store for contraband goods. But how was access to it obtained from the sea? Not by the entrance to the seal cave, for this was unsuitable in itself for a storehouse, and the work of hoisting the tubs up the wall and over the ledge would be very laborious. Dick remembered the transverse gallery which he had passed on his way through the adit to the well; probably the hiding-place would be found at the shoreward end of that, though it was strange that the pertinacity of the revenue officers had never discovered it. Another surprising circumstance was the choice of the well as the channel for the conveyance of goods between the shore and the country. The horror and dread in which it was held by the villagers had seemed genuine; yet, if his reasoning was correct, the fear of ghosts had not been so potent as to prevent the smugglers from entering it. Possibly there was another shaft connecting the hiding-place with the upper ground; but remembering the strutted adit he had traversed, Dick felt sure that the goods were brought to the surface by way of the well. The explanation of this puzzling fact did not occur to him till later.

As they approached the well the boys proceeded with great caution.

"I believe they have got Penwarden down there," said Dick. "Somebody is guarding him; somebody may be watching in the chapel. If we are seen it will be awkward for us, and perhaps still more for old Joe."

"Daze it all, we could run to the Towers and tell of all their wicked doings. But do 'ee think they bean't afeard o' the ghosteses?"

"They don't appear to be."

"Dash my simple soul, I see their manin', I do b'lieve. 'Afeard o' their own bogeys,' says Maister John. They do be the ghosteses their own selves. To think o' their deceivin' ways, tarrifyin' poor simple folks like you and me wi' their feignin'!"

They spoke in whispers, peering ahead, listening for sounds. But there was nothing to alarm eyes or ears, and they came at length beneath the shade of the masonry, and stood on the brink of the well. Here there were clear traces of recent movements—traces which might have escaped them had they come unsuspectingly, but which were evident to their prepared perception. The herbage was slightly trodden; the topmost staple was not so thickly cased with rust as it had been at their last visit; and the mossy coating of the stonework at the edge was darkened at two places, about two feet apart, where the hands of men ascending would have rested for support.

"We must go down and explore the adits," said Dick.

"But we couldn't see a hand's length ahead of us," replied Sam, fumbling in his pocket. "No; there's no candle; have you got one?"

"No. 'Tis a pity. We had better go back for breakfast and come again by-and-by. Just take a look round and see that nobody is about."

Sam left the slight hollow in which the ruins were situated, and mounted to a spot whence the ground sloping up to Penwarden's cottage, and the whole expanse southward to the Towers, could be scanned. No one was in sight, but the boys considered it prudent to return by the road, as they had come, and made the best of their way back. The hour was still early; there were neither vehicles nor pedestrians visible; and they arrived at the Towers considerably excited by their discovery, and with a healthy appetite for breakfast.

While they were still engaged in that meal, John Trevanion issued from the front door of the Dower House. He wore an old shooting-coat and leggings, and carried a fowling-piece slung over his shoulder. Leaving his own grounds, he skirted those of the Towers, gained the road, walked along it for some distance, then struck into the path leading past Penwarden's cottage in the direction of St. Cuby's Well. He sauntered easily along, and although he had apparently come out to shoot, he was not accompanied by a dog, nor did he proceed with that intent watchfulness which a sportsman usually displays.

When he arrived on the crest of rising ground beyond which lay the well at the distance of a quarter-mile, he paused, and looked round in all directions, as a man might look who is either seeking game or admiring a landscape. Then he resumed his walk, but at a much brisker pace than before. On coming within a hundred yards of the ruins, he began with apparent carelessness to whistle a tune. In a few moments the mass of ivy hanging before a doorway parted, and a man appeared. Trevanion threw a swift glance behind him, then advanced, joined the man who was awaiting him, and vanished with him behind the ivy.

"All well, Doubledick?" he asked.

"Iss, well enough, though I shall say 'praise be' with a feelin' heart when 'tis all over."

"*You*'re not afraid of bogeys, Doubledick?"

"Not I. But 'tis lonesome, and never a soul to change a word with."

"Jake Tonkin did not stay with you, then?"

"No. 'A would hev if so be I'd axed un; but when his feyther landed me I seed they two chuckleheads afeard o' their own bogeys—hee! hee! 'tis your sayin', Maister John. I wouldn't lose my fame wi' the likes o' they, so when Jake axed should he bide, I answered un bold as brass, I assure 'ee. Not that I wouldn' ha' been glad o' company, for 'tis a 'nation long time from four o'clock yesterday till midnight to-day."

"It is, but 'twas right not to change guard too often. The less coming and going the better, even by sea. Pennycomequick and Nancarrow returned on the lugger, of course?"

"Well, no. The sea was choppy, and the wind stiff agen 'em, so they come this way to save time and squeamishness."

"Chuckleheads, as you say. I hope they were careful not to be seen."

"Trust 'em for that. Nanky 'ud go straight to farm, and Penny's crooked frame 'ud make nobody mispicious."

"Well, twelve hours will see the end of it. All is planned, and will go like clockwork. The officers are coming at six; they talk of leaving at nine, and I shall not hinder them."

"Hee! hee!" laughed Doubledick.

"Tonkin and his crew will do their part. They won't be back in time to lend a hand here, but we have enough without them. The wind holds; the cutter will not trouble us; and we can go to church to-morrow and sing 'Te Deum' with some satisfaction."

"Ay, true, 'twill be summat noble to talk about to-morrer in churchyard among the tombs."

"Well, I'll go and bag a brace of woodcock on the moor. I'll look in on Nancarrow, too; 'tis just as well to be sure he met nobody."

Trevanion moved to the ancient doorway and pulled aside the screen of ivy. But he let it fall quickly and stepped back.

"Look here, Doubledick," he said in a whisper.

Doubledick went to his side, and peered out through the foliage. Two figures were approaching the spot, not by the track from the road, but across the higher ground. Each carried a fowling-piece.

"Come out shooting, like me," whispered Trevanion.

"They didn' see 'ee?" said Doubledick anxiously.

"Not they. If they had seen me they wouldn't have followed. The last person young Dick would wish to meet would be his cousin."

Themselves concealed behind the ivy, the two men could watch the new-

comers without the risk of being seen. They expected the boys to pass by, as nine villagers out of ten would have done, and the expression on their faces changed when Dick and Sam came directly towards the ruins, and, what was still more surprising, straight towards the well. Anger was written on Trevanion's countenance, and alarm on Doubledick's. The boys stood for a moment at the brink of the well. Then Dick, telling Sam to follow him immediately, kindled the candle in his hatband, lowered himself over the edge, and began to descend.

A muffled curse broke from Doubledick's lips. He reached for Trevanion's gun, but Trevanion, now smiling, withdrew it, and signed to the inn-keeper to be silent. They remained where they stood for a minute or two after Sam had disappeared, then went forward to the well and peered down into the depths. The shaft was in darkness. It was clear that the boys had entered the adit.

There was no one to hear the short dialogue that ensued between the two men standing close together at the head of the well. Apparently it was of agreeable tenor, for both smiled, though hardly with amusement. Doubledick took from his pocket a strip of something soft and black, removed his hat, and tied to his face a mask of crape. Then, with no light to guide his footsteps, he made his way downward into the shaft as the boys had done. When he had entirely disappeared, Trevanion shouldered his gun, and sauntered towards the road. Crossing this, he tramped over the moor towards Nancarrow's farm. Rather more than an hour later he was overtaken on the Truro road by Mr. Carlyon, who was riding his cob towards the village.

[image]

"THERE WAS NO ONE TO HEAR THE SHORT DIALOGUE THAT ENSUED AT THE HEAD OF THE WELL."

"Fine birds, vicar," said Trevanion, holding up a brace of woodcock and a moor-hen. "They'll look smaller on my table a few hours hence."

"Good morning, Mr. Trevanion," said the parson, and rode by.

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH

Across the Pit

All unconscious of what was happening behind them, the boys, on reaching the foot of the well, passed through the open doorway into the narrow passage.

"These be rare doings," began Sam; but Dick silenced him.

"Don't speak, Sam," he whispered. "We don't know who is here, or how near."

They passed on their left the passage where Dick had been checked by the landfall on his first approach from the cave. Moving slowly and with great caution, stopping every now and then to listen, they uttered never a word until they arrived at the point where the transverse gallery struck off to the right. Here they halted. It was necessary to decide whether to go straight on, and come by-and-by to the seal cave, or to turn into the passage, which they had never as yet traversed. A moment sufficed for coming to a decision. The light from Dick's candle showed that this passage was strutted, like that along which they had already come.

"This must be the way," whispered Dick, and low as was his tone, the words echoed and re-echoed strangely in the narrow gallery.

They advanced, picking their way still more carefully than before, peering into the darkness ahead, occasionally turning to look behind them. The floor of the adit at first sloped slightly downwards, but at length appeared to become level. The air was close and stuffy. Sam, following his young master, and seeing the weird shadows cast on the walls by the smoking flame, was soon in a cold sweat, not so much of fear as of nervous anticipation. His dread of ghosts had disappeared with knowledge; but it was knowledge of a negative kind. He knew there were no ghosts, but his imagination conjured up nameless terrors. More than once he was tempted to retreat, but he was too apprehensive even to halt long enough to strike a light and kindle his own candle, and the sight of Dick's tall form moving steadily on in front of him helped him to pluck up courage.

When they had been walking for a few minutes, Sam suddenly hurried forward and caught Dick by the arm.

"I heerd summat!" he whispered hoarsely.

Dick stopped. Far from comfortable himself, the touch of Sam's hand made him jump, and the thumping of his heart was almost audible. They listened intently; no sound struck upon their ears.

"It must have been a falling stone," said Dick.

"Suppose the roof fell on us, same as it did in the cave!" murmured Sam.

"'Tis not likely. Don't get jumpy, Sam. Let us go on."

Again they advanced; a few steps brought them to another adit branching to the right; but a glance at this revealing no struts, Dick decided not to change his course until he had thoroughly explored the passage in which he was. In a few minutes he came to another adit, this time on the left, and this also he passed

by for the same reason, and because it was narrower than any of those he had hitherto seen. Now the floor seemed to ascend gradually, and shortly afterwards became much more uneven. At length he stopped short, and waited until Sam came up with him.

"Look at this," he whispered.

Sam looked, and saw a narrow plank bridge, about seventeen feet long, spanning a black, yawning chasm.

"'Tis an old mine shaft," said Dick. "We must cross the bridge."

"Will it bear us, think 'ee?" said Sam timorously.

"It will, if it bears smugglers carrying tubs. We must try."

Dick leant forward and probed the planks with the muzzle of his fowling-piece.

"'Tis firm and steady," he said. "I will go first. Don't start until I get across. The candle will give you more light than it gives me."

"I don't like to see 'ee do it," said Sam, almost whimpering. "If ye fall, 'twill be yer grave."

But Dick had already set his foot on the bridge. He trod warily, moving almost by inches until he reached the middle. Then he quickened his pace, and covered the second half in three swift strides.

"'Tis quite safe," he whispered, turning at the end.

"Didn' it wamble?"

"No."

"Not a little teeny bit?"

"Come, come, I am heavier than you."

"Well, I woll."

He moistened his lips, pressed his hat firmly on his head, then started forward and crossed the whole bridge at a run.

"Here I be!" he panted. "Name it all! I'll never do it again."

"Then I shall leave you behind. My word! 'tis close and stuffy here."

They went on. In a minute or two the passage widened, and looking round, they discovered that they were in what appeared to be the entrance to a huge cavern. Still advancing, they were brought up within a few yards by a rough and irregular wall, not wholly of granite, like the wall of the seal cave, but partly of rock, partly of earth. There were small heaps of soil and stones of different sizes on the uneven floor, and the wall was not perpendicular, but inclined like the eaves of a house.

Dick gazed about him in search of a further opening. There was none. The way was blocked, just as it had been in the offshoot of the passage from the seal cave to the well. The general appearance of the place indicated that at some time or other the upper earth had fallen in. To make sure that there was not even the

smallest orifice in the wall, Dick moved close along it, carefully examining it by the light of his candle. When about half-way round, he stopped, and placed his hand on something that protruded from the wall, which was here earthen. But this projecting object was neither earth nor rock. In shape it was convex and regular. He passed his hand over it, brushing off some adhering particles of soil.

"Why, Sam," he said wonderingly, "'tis part of a tub."

"Do 'ee tell o't?" said Sam, moving his palm over the surface. "So 'tis, and be-dazed if there bean't a rope on it."

He tugged at the rope, and fell backwards, almost upsetting Dick.

"Rot it all!" he exclaimed.

"'Tis rotted already," said Dick smiling. "It must have been there a long time."

"Cansta pull un out, Maister?" said Sam. "Maybe there's summat inside, and I do be most tarrible dry."

"We'll see; but you shan't drink neat spirit, Sam, so you needn't think it. Lend a hand here."

Between them the boys soon succeeded in working the tub from the loose earth in which it was imbedded. It was a small barrel about fourteen inches in diameter, bound with wooden hoops, exactly similar to those which the smugglers were wont to use. The broken rope, or "sling stuff," as it was called, attached to it proved that it had once formed part of a run cargo. Sam shook it; there was no "glug" of liquor.

"'Tis spiled, sure enough," he said, "but the hoops bean't broke."

"Here's another, Sam," said Dick, who had been looking into the hole left by the removal of the tub. "I can't help thinking we have come to an old haunt of the smugglers; yes, I understand it now. You know there was a landslip hundreds of years ago, just beyond the cove. The earth must have fallen in on a cargo before it could be removed."

"But why didn' they dig 'em out arterwards? And why be the tub as empty as a drum?"

"Yes, 'tis strange they did not dig them out, but the emptiness is easy to understand. The spirit has run away."

"Run away! How could it with the tub sound, not a hole in it? Besides, there bean't no smell, and I don't care who the man is, but if sperits run out, you can smell 'em anywhere."

"I suppose——" began Dick, but his answer was suddenly cut short. From the direction of the passage through which they had come there fell upon their ears a dull rumbling sound, which reverberated for a few seconds, then died away into silence.

The boys stood for a moment in silent bewilderment; then, with a forebod-

ing of evil, Dick hastened back from the cavern along the gallery. In a minute the astounding cause of the noise was explained. The bridge by which they had crossed the shaft was gone. Only the jagged end of it jutted out from the further brink of the chasm. By the flickering light of the candle Dick thought he saw a figure moving backwards through the gallery on the opposite side. He shouted, his voice coming back to him in a hundred echoes. The figure disappeared, if indeed it were not an hallucination: Dick's state of horrified amazement might well predispose him to see visions. He stood on the brink, bathed in chill and clammy perspiration. He realised to the full the situation of himself and his companion. They were trapped in the gallery. Before them was a shaft perhaps hundreds of feet deep; behind, an impenetrable wall.

"I said I'd never do it again, and I never will," sobbed Sam.

"Hoy! hoy!" shouted Dick.

"Yo-hoy, hoy!" Sam repeated in his rougher tones.

But there was no reply; only the mocking, receding echoes.

Dick leant against the wall in dull stupefaction. He had said nothing to his parents about the expedition; he had expressly charged Sam not to speak of it to Reuben. His very caution had proved his undoing. So common was it for him to be all day away from home with Sam that their absence would scarcely be remarked until night, and then, even if it caused alarm, no one would dream of looking for them at the well, still less in one of the passages below. But if Dick's suspicions and inferences were well founded, at some time during the day or night there would be smugglers in one or other of the galleries, and they would surely come within sound of his voice, and not be so base as to refuse to help him. Then it struck him that perhaps such a cry might merely terrify them; that they might believe it to be the utterance of the disembodied spirits that were said to haunt the place. But no; as his first terrors subsided, and he regained his thinking power, a sudden light dawned upon him. The ghosts were the invention of the smugglers themselves! They had taken advantage of ancient tradition and floating rumour for their own purposes, encouraged the credulity of the many in order that the few might preserve the secret of their hiding-place. And then it flashed upon him that his presence near their jealously-guarded lair had been discovered, and that his return had been deliberately cut off, so that they might carry out undisturbed the important operation of which Trevanion and Doubledick had spoken. In that case his incarceration would be temporary, like Penwarden's. As soon as the run had been accomplished, he, like the old exciseman, would be liberated, and the smugglers would gloat over their triumphant strategy.

"How many candles have you got?" he asked suddenly.

Sam rummaged in his pocket, and produced five stumps varying in length.

"They will last about twelve hours," said Dick. "There is no wind here to

make them gutter."

"But they won't make us a bridge," groaned Sam.

"Listen to me," said Dick.

Speaking calmly, he told Sam the conclusions to which he had come.

"Now, Sam, you see what we have to do. It was about nine o'clock when we came down the well. It will be twelve hours or more before they attempt the run. We have twelve hours before us; we must get across the shaft and dish them—I don't know how, but we must do it."

"How can we? Rake it all, we shall have no dinner!"

"Don't talk like that," said Dick sternly. "We want all our wits and determination. 'Tis mere folly to think about dinner, or groan and moan because we are hungry. I tell you, young Sam, you must do your best to help, and be cheerful, or you and I will split."

"Well, I'll keep my solemn thoughts to myself and spake out nothing but merry ones, if I can think 'em."

Dick considered for a few moments; then he took from his pocket a knife and a long piece of string, knotted the latter about the haft, and stuck the blade into a lighted candle. This he lowered into the chasm, lying at full length to make the most of the string. But the flame revealed no bottom to the shaft. Even had they seen a floor it seemed impossible to get there, or, getting there, to be in any way profited. At one time, no doubt, there had been a means of ascending and descending the shaft; but the very existence of the bridge showed that the machinery had long since disappeared, and the passage-way by which they had made their entrance was the only exit.

"We had better blow out the candle," said Dick. "We don't know how long we may be here, and you may be glad to eat it before we get out of this."

"That I never could; but 'tis wisdom to save it, when we can't see anything nice to look at, and you can allers meditate better in the dark."

They reclined against the wall of the gallery. For a time they were silent except for sighs that now and then escaped Sam's heaving breast. After one prolonged expiration Dick asked sharply what he was grunting about.

"Don't 'ee laugh, now, if I tell o't," said Sam pleadingly. "My simple thought was, what would Maidy Susan say if she knowed o' this horrible place o' torment? 'There shall be weepin' and gnashin' o' teeth,' says pa'son; 'twill come to that afore long wi' me. There now, 'nation take it! I said I'd spake merry thoughts. Maybe you could put one into my mizzy-mazy head, Maister Dick."

"I'll break it for you if you can't talk sense—— There! Did you hear that?"

"'Twas like the whisk of a rabbit's scut among the furze. Hoy! Yo-hoy! Come and help two poor boys in misery."

"Hoy! hoy!" shouted Dick.

The echoes crossed and clashed, but there was no answer.

Another period of silence. It seemed to last for hours. At length Dick relit the candle and once more scanned the shaft. Could he jump it? He measured it with his eye. He had never been to school; jumping as a sport was unknown to him. In the ordinary course of his outdoor adventures he had sometimes leapt across a stream or from rock to rock, but never a space so wide as this. Realising the impossibility of the feat, he blew out the candle and returned to his place beside Sam.

"I seed yer thought," said the boy, "but Sir Bevil fox-hunting never took a gap like that. A hoss med do it, but not a two-legged body."

Again there was silence. Presently Sam fell asleep, snoring vigorously. Dick pondered and puzzled; to him sleep was impossible. All at once he remembered the barrel he had found in the wall of the cave. A faint hope stirred within him. He wakened Sam, relit the candle, and hurried back through the passage.

"What be goin' to do?" asked Sam.

"To see how many tubs there are," he said.

"If there be a million they bean't no good wi' all the sperits gone a-lost," said Sam. "Howsomever, 'twill be summat to do to count 'em, and keep us from the squitchems."

They regained the cave. Dick, bending so that the light of the candle shone full into the hole in the wall, began to scrape away with his knife the earth that partially concealed the second barrel. Not to be backward, Sam set to work in the same way a little to the right. The second tub was soon unearthed, then a third.

"We must be careful not to disturb the earth above," said Dick, "or we shall have the rest covered up again. I believe there are a good number here."

"All leery," said Sam with a sigh. "But I don't care who the man is, they bean't leerier nor I.... There's my tongue runnin' to vittals again; I reckon 'tis because I hain't done growin'."

After resting a while, they resumed their work. In course of time, they had a row of ten or twelve barrels standing against the wall.

"I wish there was something else," said Dick.

"What yer manin' be 'tis not for me to say," said Sam, "but my feelings be just the same. Why, dash my bones, here *be* summat else; a box, Maister; look at un."

He drew forth a long flat box, which he shook as he had shaken the barrels.

"Ah! 'tis full o' nothing, seemingly. If 'twas only tay, now, or bacca that we med chaw; but 'tis a'most as light as a feather."

He prised up the lid of the box with his knife. The wood was thin, and crumbled away at the touch of the steel. There was something pink beneath, and the removal of the lid disclosed a quantity of silk, which, when it was unfolded,

proved to be many yards in length.

"Only think o't!" said Sam. "Don't it feel plum! Oh! what a noble garment 't'ud make for Maidy Susan!"

"'Tis much too good for her," said Dick. "It would suit Mother better."

"True, 'tis fit for queens and other high females, but the Mistress be gettin' a old ancient person, and 't'ud look more fitty on a nesh young frame. Ah me! it bean't no good for high or low, this side o' that dark fearsome hole in the ground."

"Let us see if there are any more boxes," said Dick. "And let me tell you, Mother is only forty-five, so mind what you say, Sam."

"Well, forty-five is more 'n double twenty, can 'ee deny it? When I be forty-five, I shall be a old aged feller with a beard and a shiny sconce like Feyther, and he don't care a cuss what raiment he do wear."

Further search brought to light several boxes like the first, containing silks of various hue, and laces which even to Dick's inexperience appeared valuable. The materials seemed to be in as good a condition as when they left Lyons or Nice, and without doubt represented a considerable sum of money. But to Dick, as he contemplated them, they suggested a more immediate and urgent use than the turning into money. The wood of the barrels appeared to be sound; it had been preserved from rotting by their spirituous contents. By breaking them up into their separate staves, he would have at his disposal enough timber to make a bridge. The staves were two feet long and about five inches broad; ten or twelve lengths would be required to span the gap, and allow sufficient grip. The "sling-stuff" round the barrels, as he had already proved, was too friable to be of any value for lashing, but the silk, torn into strips, might answer this purpose.

"Take hold of the end of this," he said to Sam, handing him a length of the material, "and pull as hard as you can."

The test proved that the silk was capable of enduring a heavy direct strain, and if this were so in the piece, it would be still stronger when wound many times about the wood.

Dick explained his plan.

"Drown it all!" cried Sam. "What a tarrible deed o' wickedness! Can 'ee abear to think o' this noble shinin' stuff tore to strents and lippets?"

"'Tis a pity, of course, but 'tis more important that we should get over the gap than that any woman, matron or maid, should flaunt it in fine array. We'll set to work at once. Time must be getting on. The candle has nearly gone: that means three hours or so. Light another, Sam."

Dick tore the silk carefully into even strips, while Sam knocked the ends off the tubs, and broke the staves apart. Every now and then the boy paused, heaving a deep sigh.

"'Tis like a knife goin' through my soul every time I hear the hoosh ye do

make," he said. "There, I says to myself, there goes the sleeve, and that's the petticoat, and there's this part and that I don't know the true name of. Ah well, Maidy Susan will never know from me, that's one comfort. She'd be cryin' her pretty eyes out, that 'a would, if she did see the deed o' destruction."

When nine or ten barrels had been broken up, and the floor was strewn with strips of silk, pink, blue, green, and other colours, Dick began to arrange the materials for constructing the bridge. It was to be about twenty feet long, to allow for a sufficient overlapping at each end of the gap. When he came to consider the actual details of construction he saw that his first idea, a bridge to cross on foot, was not feasible. The staves were too narrow to afford a secure foothold, and if placed side by side, the risk of their breaking apart was very great. He resolved, therefore, to concentrate his energies on a single pole, formed by binding three layers of staves together, and by means of this, work his way across the gap hand over hand, his legs dangling in the shaft. It would be a ticklish feat; indeed, he was by no means confident of its possibility; but he had the strongest motives for making the attempt, as well as a native doggedness that forbade him to sit idle in the face of difficulty.

The short staves had little curvature. He laid a number of them end to end to form a length of twenty-two feet, placing them alternately so that one had its convex, the other its concave, side to the ground, and with overlapping ends. These he bound very firmly together. Then he laid a second set on the first, in such a way that their joins occurred at different spots. Then he wound the strips of silk as tightly as possible round this double pole, carrying the windings several inches on each side of the joints. When four or five feet of the double pole were finished, he tested its rigidity by endeavouring to snap it across his knee; but though the thin wood bent slightly, the lashings held firmly, and he was well satisfied.

"'Tis very good so far, Sam," he said; "now we must put on a third layer."

"'Nation take it, we shall never be done," cried Sam, stretching his aching body. "I be mortal tired, and hungry!—there now, Maister Dick, spake yer mind like a simple honest feller, wi'out any tongue-twistin', and fine deceivin' language. Bean't 'ee most achin' hungry? Now, tell me true."

"I own I am, but 'tis no good thinking of it."

"No more do I want. You've said it. I reckon you be just as famished as I, if not more, only too proud to own it. Be-jowned if there be any sech lofty pride in me."

They proceeded with the work, lashing the third layer firmly to the other two, and employing, for greater security, the flexible wooden hoops which had held the barrels together. At last the bridge was complete. It had been a long and laborious task: neither of the boys had any idea how many hours it had

occupied; they had lighted successive candle-ends mechanically, without taking count of them. The close air of the cave was now impregnated with smoke and tallow fumes, and both longed for a breath of fresh air.

All this time they had neither seen nor heard any person or thing. Indeed, they had been so fully occupied, as scarcely to bestow a thought on what might be going on beyond the gap. It did cross Dick's mind that the noise made by Sam in breaking the barrels might have been heard; but it was a considerable distance from the cave to the gap, and the passage between them was not straight. Nobody could have seen them at work; the sound, if it travelled beyond the gap, could only be a faint, indistinguishable murmur then; and the absence of a bridge was an effectual preventive of interference. It now remained to throw the suspension bridge across the gap. They carried it through the passage, stood it on one end, and lowered it over the opening, Sam holding the bottom end steady while Dick let the structure down by means of a silken rope.

"'Tis too crazy a thing to bear a cat's weight," said Sam gloomily, when it rested in place.

"I don't believe you. At any rate we can't make anything better. I'll go first, being the heavier. If I get safe across you can come after. Hold your end firmly as I go."

"You don't want me to look at 'ee?"

"Why not?"

"Because—because—drown it all!" said the boy, dashing tears from his eyes. "Do 'ee think I could bear it if I seed 'ee drop into this everlastin' pit?"

"You're a good fellow, young Sam; but I shan't drop, please God!"

He took his boots off, so that he could get a firmer grip if he had to scramble up the opposite side. Then, while Sam lay flat on the ground across the end of the pole, Dick swung himself over the shaft, gripping the bridge with both hands extended above his head. He remained motionless for a few moments, testing the strength of his support; then, realising that the quicker he moved the better, since the strain both upon the pole and his own endurance would be less than if he went slowly, he began to advance hand over hand, but as smoothly as possible, towards the other side. As he approached the middle, he saw by the light of the candle in his hatband that the pole was sagging alarmingly, and he felt it sway with his every movement. The further end of it was no longer flat on the floor of the passage, but tilted up at an angle of 30 degrees. Dick shivered as he felt his support apparently slipping downwards into the shaft. But he did not pause, and in a moment he was relieved to find that the downward movement ceased.

Arriving within a foot or two of the wall, he saw that he was some little distance below the level of the passage, and the free end of the pole, now almost perpendicular, was swaying terribly. How was he to get up? There was no pro-

jection from the side of the shaft which he could grasp, and it seemed that at any moment the pole might slip off into the gulf, carrying him with it. His arms were aching with the unaccustomed strain; not much longer could they sustain the weight of his body. Groping with his toes on the sheer face of the shaft, he managed to get a slight purchase with one foot. In another moment he obtained a little better grip with the other, though in so doing he had to spread-eagle himself. Now, with his double purchase on the wall, he was able to relieve the weight on his hands, and take breath for the final effort.

The lessening of the strain on the pole reduced the angle of inclination of its free portion to the floor. Dick worked his way inch by inch along; then, drawing his body upwards, he swung his leg over the pole, gripping it firmly with his hands, and in a few moments was able to reach out and grasp the free portion above the brink and haul himself on to the floor.

He flung himself face downward to rest, gasping a murmur of thankfulness. Sam at the other end, though he had at first closed his eyes, opened them almost immediately, unable to resist the fascination of that perilous crossing. He shuddered when he saw the pole bend and sway under Dick's weight, and pressed his lips hard together so that he should not cry out as the further end rose higher and higher from the level. When Dick had safely landed, Sam was too much overcome with emotion to utter a sound. He rubbed the chill moisture from his face and waited.

Presently Dick got up, rekindled the candle, which had been extinguished when he threw himself down, and called across.

"Now 'tis your turn, Sam. You will have an easier passage than I. Drive a couple of staves into the ground and lash the pole to them. I'll hold it firm on this side, so that it will not sway so much as when I crossed."

"No; I can't do it; I'm all of a sweat," said Sam.

"Come, come! you'll not give in, surely."

"Iss, I woll, cheerful. Never could I sink my legs into that gashly hole. It do put me in mind of poor fellers dangling on the drop in Bodmin jail. No; there bean't meat enough in my inside to give me sperit for it, and here I'll bide—I don't care who the man is—till you finds a gangway."

"But you'll be left in the dark. This is the last candle."

"You won't make me afeard if you try. Here I be safe; not a soul can get to me across this hole; and dark or light, I bean't the man for sech a deed. I be truly sorry to leave 'ee, Maister Dick, but you'd rayther see me sound in all my members than here a bit, there a bit."

"Very well. You've lost your nerve, that's clear. Shy over my boots, will you?"

Sam lifted one and cast it; but he was apparently too much shaken to take

good aim. The boot fell into the shaft.

"See now! 'Tis plain!" he said forlornly. "My poor wambling arm! Even as yer boot fell, so——"

"Hush!" cried Dick.

There had been no sound of the boot striking on the bottom. After what seemed a long time—it was in fact no more than two or three seconds—from the depths came rumbling reverberations of a splash. The water must have been nearly two hundred feet below. Both the boys were silent as they thought of the terrible fate Dick would have met with if he had fallen.

"Well, good-bye, Sam!" said Dick at last, rousing himself. "One boot is no good without the other, so you can keep it. I'll come back for you as soon as I can."

"I wish 'ee well, Maister."

He stood near the brink, with a piteous expression upon his rugged face, watching Dick's gradually receding form. When a bend in the passage hid his master and comrade from view, he leant against the wall, and buried his face in his hands.

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH

A Packet for Rusco

During many hours Dick had been solely preoccupied with the problem how to recross the chasm. Penwarden, the smugglers, even the destroyer of the bridge, were all forgotten. But now all the circumstances of his recent misadventure returned with full force to his mind. A run was to be attempted. The smugglers' hiding-place, which the revenue officers had sought in vain, must be somewhere near at hand, and the person, whosoever it was, that had flung the bridge down the shaft—for its fall could not have been accidental—had done so with the intention of forestalling interference.

Dick considered what he had better do. Should he make his way back to the well, in the hope of being able to climb it secretly and give warning to the officers? He reflected that it might be too late for that. Besides, his presence in these underground passages had been observed by some one early in the morning; that same person might still be lying in wait for him. As this idea occurred to him, he remembered that he had left his gun behind in the cave, and for an instant

thought of returning for it; but a slight sound from the other direction made him hastily extinguish the candle, and advance cautiously along the passage; perhaps the bridge-destroyer was coming towards him.

In pitch darkness he stole along, scarcely conscious of the sharp edges and rough projections of the stone floor on which he trod. In a few minutes he saw a faint glimmer of reflected light ahead, the source of which was hidden from him by a bend in the passage. On reaching the bend, he descried, moving across the end of the gallery along a transverse one, a procession of men with candles in their hats, hurrying, at short intervals apart, from the direction of the well. Clinging to the wall, confident that in the black darkness he was wholly invisible, he crept forward. By the time he came within a few yards of the transverse passage, this, too, was in darkness, the last of the line having passed by.

He hastened to the corner, and peeped round to the right. The last man was entering the narrow tunnel, which he had noticed casually as he came by with Sam. The dimness of the flickering light, and the fact that the man's back was towards him, prevented him from forming any conclusion as to the identity of the individual. The light gradually dwindled, until the opening of the tunnel was quite indistinguishable.

Waiting for a moment or two, to listen and look along the passage leading to the well, Dick ventured to creep stealthily in the same direction as the men, and to penetrate into the tunnel. He had advanced in this but a few yards, when he was made to beat a hasty retreat by a faint but growing light at the further end, and the sound of heavy footsteps approaching. As quickly as possible he tiptoed back in the darkness, and regained his former station in the side gallery, where he stood eagerly watching. In a few moments a man crossed from right to left. His face was blackened; before and behind him hung a tub, exactly similar to those which Sam had lately broken up. A second man followed at a short interval, loaded in the same way; then a third, and so on, until twenty-two had passed. They seemed by their dress to be for the most part farm-hands, but the light from their candles was too dim to reveal them clearly.

The light diminished, the sound of footsteps died away, and Dick, emerging once more into the passage, saw the end of the procession on the way to the well. From the other direction there was no sound. Dick felt an overmastering curiosity to discover how the run was being worked, and whence the tubs were brought. He hastened to the tunnel, paused for a little at the entrance, straining his ears for the slightest sound of men returning, then went on.

After a few steps he heard a slight creaking from some point ahead. A glance behind assuring him that there was no present danger in this direction, he was emboldened to proceed. There was a sudden bend in the tunnel; at the far end he saw a light; and, hugging the wall as closely as possible, he crept forward

until the scene beyond was clearly in view.

He found himself near the entrance to a small oblong chamber, perhaps twenty feet by sixteen, and scarcely eight feet high. The walls were shored up by thick balks of wood: the roof was supported by rough beams. The place was dimly illuminated by two lanterns standing on the top of a pile of barrels that reached within two feet of the roof. At the far end a man was working a windlass over a hole in the floor. Two barrels, slung on ropes, emerged from the depths, were unhooked by the man, and rolled against the wall on the other side of the chamber. A whiff of cold salt air struck gratefully on Dick's senses; the smugglers' mysterious hiding-place was clearly very near the sea.

Dick was watching the man lower the hooks into the space beneath when he was startled by the sound of footsteps at no great distance behind him. Looking back, he saw a glimmer of light. Regress was barred; in a few moments he would be discovered unless he could find a new place of concealment. There was no time for hesitation. The back of the man at the windlass was towards him; the tackle creaked as more tubs ascended. In the corner of the chamber to the right was the stack of barrels on which the lanterns stood. There appeared to be just squeezing space between them and the wall. With his heart in his mouth Dick stole across to them on tiptoe, and had barely gained their shelter when the man released the tubs which had just ascended, and added them to those that were arranged along the opposite wall.

As Dick was creeping between the barrels and the wall, his foot touched an obstacle, over which he almost stumbled. Fortunately, having no boots on, he made no sound. He stood still, panting, in desperate anxiety. In the urgency of the moment he had made for the first hiding-place that offered itself, without reflecting that the carriers were no doubt returning for these very barrels, and their removal must reveal him without a possibility of escape. A thrill shot through him as he felt a slight movement in the object at his feet, and he edged instinctively away from it, wondering what it could be. The light from the lanterns did not reach the floor; indeed, scarcely illuminated the space behind, they being closed in that direction.

He heard the footsteps drawing nearer, and, peeping through a chink between two barrels, saw, not one, but the whole twenty-two carriers file into the chamber, which they nearly filled. He suspected that they had deposited their burdens at the foot of St. Cuby's Well, whence, in all probability, these were being hoisted to the surface by means of the windlass, which he remembered having seen near the door when he first approached it from the seal cave.

The man at the windlass had raised only a few barrels during their absence, and these having been slung on the shoulders of the men who had first entered, they returned to the entrance of the tunnel, waiting for their comrades in turn to

receive their loads.

"Bean't this lot to go, Maister?" said one of the latter, jerking his head towards the stack behind which Dick was concealed. Dick shivered, and prepared to dash forth and force his way through the men grouped at the tunnel, in the hope that their surprise and alarm, and their being encumbered, would give him time at least to escape instant seizure. To his relief the man at the windlass replied sharply:

"No, they bean't. They be for the higher powers; let 'em alone. And you come and hoist; I be tired."

The voice was Doubledick's.

While the tubs were being hoisted, and the waiting men talked quietly among themselves, Dick had leisure to turn his thoughts towards the object at his feet. It could hardly be an animal; otherwise it would long since have betrayed him. He gently moved a foot towards it, and touched it. Again he detected a slight movement. Passing his stockinged toes over a few inches of the obstruction, Dick gave a start as he recognised by the touch a man's boot. It did not move when he pressed it: clearly it was attached to a leg, the leg to a body—and the conviction flashed upon him that, bound and gagged at his feet, lay the lost Joe Penwarden. To assure himself he bent down quickly, and felt his way upward to the face. His hand encountered the shade over the old man's sightless eye: it was Joe indeed.

Penwarden was lying on his back, and Dick very soon discovered that he was bound hand and foot to a plank, so tightly that only the slightest movement was possible. His mouth was heavily gagged, but there was no bandage over his single sound eye. Dick could not see him, and durst not speak even in the lowest whisper, so near was he to the smugglers. But if Penwarden was to be liberated he must be definitely assured in some way that a friend was at work who was himself in danger; otherwise, on being freed, he might make some sound or movement that would betray them both. Then it occurred to Dick that, while he was unable to see Penwarden's features, Penwarden had probably seen his, for the lanterns shed a faint illumination on the upper part of the space behind the barrels, to which his head almost reached. This suggested a means of giving the old man a warning. Raising himself to his full height he looked downwards and pressed his forefinger to his lips. The sign, if observed, would, he knew, be effectual.

Once more he stooped. He drew his knife from his pocket, opened it without clicking, and silently cut the rope binding the prisoner's feet. Then, working upward, always with the same slow care, he severed in turn the ropes that strapped his knees and elbows to the plank, those binding his wrists, and finally the gag over his mouth. This last probably gave the old man the most discomfort, and might have been removed first, but the use of his limbs was of more urgent

importance just now than his voice.

By the time that this was done the last of the carriers had received his load, and the creaking or the windlass had ceased.

"That's all," said Doubledick. "Now get 'ee up-along to well, and lend a hand in the hoisting."

"Be we to wait for 'ee, Maister, when the tubs be all up?" asked a man.

"No, no. You'll do best to carr' the tubs off as quick as may be. I'll go straight home-along. To-morrer mornin', after church, if ye like ye can come down-along to inn, where there'll be a nibleykin of rum-hot ready for every man of 'ee."

The carriers tramped into the tunnel, and the sound of their footsteps died away.

A voice came up into the chamber from below.

"Iss," said Doubledick in reply. "Stand by while I let down the passel. Belike ye know enough English to understand that."

Dick fancied that he heard a low chuckle from below, and a foreign voice say, "All right."

Doubledick had already begun to clear away the barrels at the end of the stack nearest to the windlass. It was plain that what he had got to do was a secret between himself and the men below; the tub-carriers were ignorant of it. Dick moved silently to the other end of the stack, the place where he had entered, and gazed round to watch the innkeeper's proceedings. Even now, though there appeared to be no danger of detection, the upper part of his face remained covered with a mask. He had removed the lanterns, and placed them on the floor; several of the top row of barrels had been lifted down. His object, without doubt, was to drag Penwarden forth, and lower him by means of the windlass to the men waiting beneath. Dick felt sure that these were the French crew of the lugger that had brought the cargo, and that the "parcel" they were expecting was the old exciseman, whom they were to carry to France.

The innkeeper's pre-occupation was Dick's opportunity. In another second or two the cutting of the prisoner's bonds must be discovered. As Doubledick was rolling a barrel towards the wall, Dick, moving silently on his almost bare feet, rushed like a whirlwind on the man. Doubledick at that moment made a half-turn, as if some instinct warned him of danger, but he was too late to prevent Dick from getting a suffocating grip round his neck. He gasped, groaned, struggled frantically to free himself. Both fell to the floor, knocking over one of the lanterns, and rolling perilously near the open trapdoor. Dick never let go his grip on the inn-keeper's throat, for it was necessary to prevent the men below from suspecting that anything was amiss.

Meanwhile Penwarden had scrambled painfully to his feet, and limped towards the scene of the struggle. His limbs, cramped and numbed by his bonds,

[image]

"DICK RUSHED LIKE A WHIRLWIND ON THE MAN."

were as yet almost powerless. But seeing Doubledick's legs for an instant disentangled from those of his assailant, the old man suddenly threw himself across them, pinning Doubledick to the floor, and so putting an end to his struggles. Dick raised himself, keeping his hands on the man's throat. The heaving and writhing ceased.

While Dick still held him down, Penwarden hobbled behind the barrels, carrying a lantern, found the gag that had been used on himself, and brought it back to turn it to account with Doubledick. His own hands were still too much numbed to tie an effective knot, but he held the gag between Doubledick's teeth while Dick made it fast.

All this time there had come through the hole in the floor the murmur of voices. Without relaxing his grip, Dick leant over and peered down. He was just able to see that a boat lay beneath; the hole was vertically above the sea.

"Ah, mon Dieu!" cried one of the boat's crew, perceiving Dick's head, "ven come ze—ze packet?"

Dick withdrew.

"Answer," he said to Penwarden.

The old man tried to speak, but could give utterance only to a hoarse whisper. Whereupon Dick, in a voice intended to be an imitation of Doubledick's, replied:

"In a minute."

His imitation was so entirely unsuccessful that he durst not say more.

The Frenchman's question had suggested a means of dealing with Doubledick. In attacking him, Dick had no definite plan in his mind for subsequent action. He was concerned only to prevent Penwarden from being lowered through the trapdoor. But now that Doubledick was in his power, it struck him that it would be simple justice to serve him as he had intended to serve Penwarden. He whispered the suggestion to the old man, who received it with a low chuckle.

"But they fellers down below will know un," he murmured.

"Will they? They are French; Doubledick has never been to France. They won't remove the gag, probably, until they are well out to sea, and if I know them, they won't put back and run the risk of meeting the cutter, even if they do discover their mistake."

"Ze packet, ze packet!" came the impatient cry from below.

No more time was lost. The cords that had bound Penwarden were useless, but there was plenty of sling-stuff on the tubs, and in a few seconds enough was slipped off for the purpose. Both Dick and the exciseman were used to handling rope, and though the latter's fingers were still somewhat numb, he was able to lend some feeble assistance to Dick in securing Doubledick to the plank. At the end of this there was a hook. They attached this to the rope over the windlass, and prepared to lower the innkeeper to the hands waiting below.

At the last moment Penwarden slipped off the crepe mask that still covered Doubledick's face.

"Look 'ee, Maister Dick," he said hoarsely. "You can swear to the feller, so can I. You be goin' to Rusco, you miserable sinner, and if so be you ever come back, I'll swear an information against 'ee for unlawful detainin' of one o' the King's lieges, and Maister Dick will kiss the Book and bear testimony. Good-bye to 'ee, and may the Lord ha' mercy on yer soul."

They let the frenzied man down through the trapdoor, and heard guffaws of laughter from the Frenchmen as they received their expected packet. The boat pulled off towards a lugger that lay a few cables' lengths from the cliff. The prisoner was hauled up the side; the men climbed on board and hoisted the boat in; and in a few minutes the lugger disappeared into the darkness.

It was not the time to enter upon explanations on either side. Penwarden was eager to follow up the tub-carriers, Dick to release Sam. When the exciseman heard of the boy's situation, he yielded with a sigh, and considered with Dick a means of bringing Sam across the shaft. They were not long in deciding that the best plan would be to make use of the quantities of rope at hand, and form a running tackle by which the boy might be drawn over. This was soon done, and taking one of the lanterns, they hastened back to the scene.

"Hoy, Maister, be that thee?" cried Sam out of the darkness when he saw the approaching light.

"Yes, and Mr. Penwarden is with me. We are coming to bring you away."

"Praise and glory be! I did think I'd never see daylight again. Have 'ee got a true and proper bridge?"

"You'll see. Run back to the cave and bring two staves and our guns."

They waited at the brink of the shaft until Sam reappeared.

"Now drive the staves into the floor," cried Dick.

"I can't. It be hard stone."

"Well then, go back to the cave again and bring some of those big pieces of rock on the floor."

Sam went obediently. Instructed by Dick, he arranged a number of the rocks, four or five feet deep, to form a sort of platform.

"Now knot this rope to the staves," said Dick, flinging it across. "Put it

behind the rocks, and pile more rocks on top to hold it down."

While this was being done, he made the other end of the double rope fast to a large boulder near the head of the shaft.

"Now, Sam, all you have to do is to clasp the rope and let yourself down. We will do the rest."

"Be it firm and steady?" asked the boy anxiously.

Dick hauled on the rope; it was held firm by the rocks.

"There, you see 'tis quite safe. All you want is a little courage; it will not take half a minute to get you across."

"I'll send summat fust to prove it," said Sam.

He withdrew a few paces into the passage, and returned, carrying a long, flat box. This he hitched to the rope.

"Haul away, Maister Dick, and let me see wi' my own eyes."

The box was drawn to the further side in a few moments.

"Now are you satisfied?" asked Dick.

"Iss, fay; and I've some more boxes that had better go fust."

Four boxes and the two guns were hauled across before Sam consented to venture himself, and then only because he feared he could carry no more when he got to the other side.

"'T'ud be a sin," he said, "to leave all these silks and satins behind."

"How do you know the boxes contain silks and satins?"

"'Cos I opened 'em and felt 'em in the dark. 'Twas like strokin' a cat's back, wi'out no fear o' scratches. You'll be sure and not let me drop into the pit, Maister?"

"Yes. Come along; I want my supper."

"Be-jowned, and so do I. Here I come."

He grasped the rope, let himself gently down, and was hauled to the other side.

"Oh, Maister Penwarden," he cried as he landed, "I be 'nation glad to see 'ee safe and sound. Wheer have 'ee been all this time? You have gied us all a terrible deal o' trouble."

Penwarden growled.

"Never mind about that, Sam," said Dick. "Our trouble is well repaid, and we had better get home as soon as we can."

"True. If you go first and turn the lantern so's it do gie me a light, I'll be able to carr' these boxes wi'out tumblin' and breakin' my head. So for home-along."

On the homeward way Dick related his adventure. The old man said nothing until he heard of the discovery of lace and silks.

"Ah!" said he, "and these boxes that young Sam be carr'in' on his head are filled with silks and laces, I s'pose."

”Iss, fay,” cried Sam exultantly, ”and noble gowns and pinnies they will make, to be sure.”

”Well,” said Penwarden, ”then I seize ’em in the King’s name.”

”Rake it all!” exclaimed Sam. ”Did the King buy ’em? Did he bury ’em? Did he find ’em? No, the King be a good man, but ’a never did no free-tradin’ in his life, I reckon, and we won’t part with ’em, will we, Maister Dick?”

”I know my duty,” said Penwarden, ”and seized they be. Resist at yer peril.”

”Daze me if I don’t wish ye’d been carr’d to France,” cried Sam. ”Arter what we’ve been through for ’ee, too!”

A wordy war ensued that lasted until they reached the door of the Towers, where the boxes were deposited for the night. It required a peremptory command from Mr. Polwhele next day to induce Penwarden to relinquish his claim on them, the old man then being more than ever convinced that the world was a strange mix-up.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH

Petherick makes a Discovery

About an hour before Doubledick was embarked for Roscoff, a group of men employed by Mr. Polwhele as his assistants stood on the bridge spanning the stream that flowed through the village. It was freezing, and they stamped and swung their arms to keep themselves warm.

”’A said he would jine us by half-past nine o’clock,” said one.

”Well, church-clock has tolled the half-hour, and ’tis gashly cold. What shall us do, neighbours?” asked a second.

”Go home-along, say I,” a third answered. ”He be a true man of his word. Half-past nine, ’a said; half-past nine ’a meant, and if he bean’t here ’tis a plain token he bean’t a-comin’!”

”I tell ’ee what, neighbours,” said the man who had first spoken. ”We’ll gie un five minutes’ law, as near as we can guess it by trampin’ forth and back; then we’ll wend up-along to Dower House and axe un for orders. I’ll be sworn he be fillin’ up his inside wi’ high meat and noble drink.”

”Ay, and maybe figgy pudden or squab-pie,” said another, licking his lips. ”Do ’ee think, now, we bein’ pore men all, they’d gie us a croust and a nibleykin, like the rich gaffer and Lazarus?”

"Jown me if we don't go straight as a line and see. Hey! step out, souls all."

They hurried into the village and up the hill, arriving at the Dower House about ten minutes to ten. The house was brightly lit, and from within came sounds of laughter.

"Sech merry doings bean't for we poor souls," remarked one of the men despondently.

"True, neighbour Pollard, we bean't all portigal sons," said another.

"You be a bufflehead, sure enough. The portigal son in the Book comed home-along a beggar in rags, arter swallerin' pigs' wash."

"Ah well, I must ha' been thinkin' o' some other holy man."

"True; Lazarus was the man. Rap at the door, neighbours, and make a goodish noise, or ye won't be heerd through this yer racket."

Susan came to the door in answer to the knock.

"Please, ma'am, we be come," began Pollard, and then found it necessary to swallow.

"Well I never! What be come for?"

"For Maister Polwhele, wishin' 'ee no harm. 'A said he'd jine us when clock said half-past nine, and we'll be obleeged to 'ee if you'll say as we be come for orders."

"Why, bless me, Mr. Polwhele went away when clock strook nine, and as sober as a jedge."

"Well, souls, 'tis 'nation hard to traipse up that hill for nothing at all. We med as well go home-along and get to our beds. We be sorry to bring 'ee out, ma'am, such a bitter cold night, but 'twas to be."

"I wish 'ee well, poor souls," said Susan.

"A nesh young female," remarked one of the men, as they departed.

"She'd as lief as not ha' gied us some grog if I warn't sech a humble feller of my inches. Hey! theer's a deal lost in this world by modest men like we."

They shambled dolefully down the hill. Half-way down they were met by the boatswain and six seamen from the cutter.

"Ahoy! mates," cried the boatswain, "have ye seen or heard anything of Mr. Mildmay?"

"Neither heerd a cuss nor seed the tip o's nose."

"Ah well, then. I thought you might have, coming along by Mr. Trevanion's house."

"Ha' ye seed or heerd anything o' Maister Polwhele, now?"

"Neither bowsprit nor whistle. No doubt he's with our officer, dancing a hornpipe, or whatever they do at fine gentlemen's parties."

"No, he bean't at Dower House. We've been to call for un. 'A told us he'd jine us on bridge when church-clock strook half-past nine."

"That's curious, because Mr. Mildmay told us the same thing, putting the cutter instead of the bridge. Isn't Mr. Mildmay up there, then?"

"That we don't know. It didn't come into our heads to axe for he."

"Well, we'd better go up and put the question. Step out, messmates."

Mr. Polwhele's men returned with them, in the hope that the bold sailors would ask for the grog, which their modesty had missed. The door was again opened by Susan.

"Now, my dear," said the boatswain, "we won't keep you in the cold. Just answer a little question. Is Mr. Mildmay aboard?"

"Dear life! First Mr. Polwhele, now Mr. Mildmay. No, sailorman, they both wented out together, a minute arter clock strook nine."

"Bless your pretty face! Well, messmates, we've had our cruise for nothing, unless this lovely lass will give us something to drink her health in."

"Here's Maister!" cried Susan, stepping aside hastily as John Trevanion came to the door.

"Well, my men, what's this?" he asked genially.

"Please yer honour," began Pollard.

"Avast there!" cried the boatswain. "Mr. Mildmay was to come aboard by three bells, sir, and seeing he was late, we made bold to come up here for orders."

"Please yer honour," said Pollard, "Maister Polwhele telled we the same, only 'twas nine and a half bells wi' him."

"Well, my men, you're too late. They both left here at nine. But come in: 'tis a cold night, and you won't be the worse of something warm. Susan, bring a full jug and tumblers. No one shall leave the Dower House to-night without drinking success to the mines."

The men tramped in, voluble with thanks. Susan served them each with a tumbler hot, and they left a few minutes later, with a high opinion of Mr. Trevanion's hospitality, and the comfortable feeling that they had not made their journey for nothing.

Sunday morning broke bright, frosty, and clear, the sun shining with a brilliance that belied the cold. About half an hour before church time, as Mr. Carlyon was conning over his sermon for the day, there entered to him the pluralist of the parish, Timothy Petherick, constable, sexton, beadle, and bell-ringer. There was a scowl of annoyance upon his face.

"Well, Petherick, what is it?" said the Vicar, looking up.

"Yer reverence," said the man, "hain't I telled 'ee times wi'out number that the bats and owls do make a roostin' place o' holy church-tower?"

"I believe you have."

"Well, yer reverence, it didn' oughter be," said Petherick, smiting his fist. "They heathen animals didn' oughter take up their habitation in sech a Christian

place. 'Like owl in desert,' says the Book, not 'like owl in church-tower.'"

"Clear 'em out, and be hanged to 'em," said the parson. "Yet, after all, they don't do any harm."

"No harm! Dash my bones, yer reverence—God forgi'e me for usin' Saturday words of a Sunday—they do do harm. Do 'ee think I can strike a true Christian note out o' the bell? No, not I; 'tis all clodgy, like the spache of a man that's rum-ripe, and all because some owl or airy-mouse hev made his nest on the clapper, scrounch un."

"Well, go up the ladder and brush it off."

"Theer 'tis, now. What's happened o' the ladder, I'd like to know? Theer bean't no ladder. 'Twas theer yester morn, but not a mossel o' ladder be theer to-day. 'Tis bewitched, sure enough; some pixy or nuggy, or little old man, hev sperited un away in the night, for I squinnied up-along and down-along, and never got a sight o't."

"Well, time is getting on. Do your best, Petherick. Someone has borrowed the ladder, no doubt, and will bring it back to-morrow. You should lock the tower door, and then this sort of thing couldn't happen."

Petherick retired, a man with a grievance. Entering the tower, he pulled at the bell-rope with a scornful air, and, indeed, the sound given out was little like the clear note that ordinarily summoned the Polkerran folk to worship.

They were on the whole good church-goers. At least half the population were regular attendants, some of the other half being Methodists, who preferred going to "meeting." The principal smugglers were sound churchmen to a man, and repeated the responses after the Commandments with great fervour, especially after the eighth, when they glared reproachfully at Mr. Polwhele in his pew by the chancel steps.

In spite of the strangely muffled bell, there was an unusually large congregation on this Sunday morning. The villagers, as their custom was, assembled in the churchyard, waiting until the Squire and his family had passed into the church before they should follow to their seats. Much animation was observable among them this morning, and when Dick walked up the centre path with his parents, he guessed that many of them were discussing the successful run of the previous night, and a smaller number the supposed deportation of Joe Penwarden. There was no sign of perturbation among them, whence he inferred that the disappearance of Doubledick was not yet known. It was not uncommon for the innkeeper, after a run, to absent himself for a day or two, so that, even if it were known that he had not yet returned to the inn, they would feel neither surprise nor alarm. Nor was the failure of their plot against Penwarden suspected. He had not spent the night in his cottage. Dick had insisted that the old man should sleep at the Towers, in order that he might have a good supper, and that Mrs.

Trevanion might bathe and anoint his chafed wrists and ankles.

The Squire's large curtained pew was on the north side of the chancel, Mr. Polwhele's next. Opposite, and facing it, was John Trevanion's. The master of the Dower House looked particularly fresh and cheerful when he strode up the aisle to his place. He smiled a greeting to one or two families with whom he was acquainted, carefully avoiding his relatives.

The village folk clattered in; the band in the gallery above the door tuned up their instruments; the toneless bell ceased to ring, and Mr. Carlyon having made his solemn entry, the service began.

The Vicar had just come to the end of the second lesson when, through a postern leading from the tower, came Petherick with a face full of news. He hastened to the reading desk, touched Mr. Carlyon on the sleeve, and said in a church whisper:

"Please, yer reverence——"

"Not now, Petherick," the Vicar whispered back. "Go to your seat."

"I bean't in fault, and say it I woll," said the man. Then in a low tone, which, in the breathless silence of the congregation, penetrated to the remotest corner of the gallery, he added:

"Maister Mildmay and riding-officer was in belfry, tied round the middle to bell."

"God bless my soul!" murmured the astonished Vicar unconsciously. "This is unseemly," he said sternly: "'tis brawling. Go to your place, Petherick."

The beadle marched to his seat under the pulpit with the air of one who had spoken his mind and scorned rebuke. Those of the congregation who had been in the secret tittered when he made his announcement; the larger number, who were vaguely aware that something had happened to the officers, but did not know its nature, gazed at one another with startled looks, which speedily changed to smiles. The occupants of the Squire's pew alone preserved their composure. Mr. Carlyon's stern look silenced the giggles and whispers of the frivolous, and the service proceeded.

The hymn had been sung, the Vicar was in the midst of the prayer for the King's Majesty, and had just recited the words "our most gracious sovereign Lord King George," when a man quietly entered from the outer porch, and stood within the church beneath the gallery. The heads of the congregation were bent forward, so that his presence was unnoticed. The prayer came to an end; everybody said "Amen," but one voice rose above all the rest. It was that of the new-comer. Tonkin, in his pew a few paces down the aisle, started and turned his head like one thunderstruck. A bruise was noticeable on his right cheek. All held their breath as Joe Penwarden marched steadily down the aisle to his seat near the riding-officer's. As he passed the Vicar, he raised his hand to the salute, then

knelt quietly at his place, where the coloured sunbeam, streaming in through the south window, lit up his weather-beaten face.

That dramatic scene in the church was talked of in Polkerran for many a long year. A deep hush had fallen upon the whole congregation; even the most fractious and fidgety children felt awed, by they scarcely knew what. Consternation held the smugglers rigid in their seats. John Trevanion's face turned sea-green, and the smile by which he tried to conceal from the congregation the mingled emotions—surprise, rage, even fear—that possessed him, did but reveal them the more clearly to two pair of eyes in the Squire's pew.

Meanwhile the Vicar had turned over a few leaves of his prayer-book. Now, in a peculiarly solemn tone, he began to read the thanksgiving "For peace and deliverance from our enemies." The words rolled through the church: "We yield Thee praise and thanksgiving for our deliverance from these great and apparent dangers wherewith we were compassed"; and at the close Penwarden's voice was again uplifted in a loud and prolonged "Amen."

Mr. Carlyon was a man of tact. He knew very well that his people would be on tenter-hooks until they could discuss these strange incidents. It was no time to preach to them. A sermon was not an essential part of the service. Accordingly he finished the order for morning prayer and gave the Blessing without ascending into the pulpit. The congregation streamed forth. Tonkin and his friends in a knot hurried down to the inn, followed closely by the tub-carriers of the previous night, whom Doubledick had invited to meet him there. John Trevanion came out alone, and walked rapidly homeward, without a word or a look to anyone. The rest went their several ways, except the Squire and his family, and Penwarden, whom Mr. Carlyon invited to the Parsonage. There they found Mr. Mildmay and the riding-officer sitting in the sunlight at an open window, sipping toddy and taking snuff, thoughtfully brought to them by the housekeeper.

"Upon my word," said the Vicar, on beholding their wrathful countenances, "if I had not so lately taken off my surplice I fear I should laugh. What is the meaning of it, gentlemen?"

It is regrettable, but the truth must be told. The two officers, Mrs. Trevanion not having entered the room, let forth a flood of language such as certainly had never before been heard within those walls.

"Come, come," said the Vicar, "remember my cloth. I will change my coat, and then ask you to tell me calmly, as befits the day, all that has happened."

"Your cousin, Squire——" began Mr. Mildmay, on the Vicar's departure, but he choked.

"Is a consummate scoundrel, sir," said Mr. Polwhele for him.

"He hoodwinked us," said the lieutenant.

"He trapped us," cried the riding-officer.

"Calmly, gentlemen," said the Vicar, re-entering. "Now, Mildmay."

"He invited us to his house——"

"And laughed and joked," put in Mr. Polwhele.

"And made himself deuced pleasant," said Mr. Mildmay.

"One would think they were parson and clerk," said the Vicar under his breath.

The hint was taken, and Mr. Mildmay was able to speak a few sentences without interruption.

"Well, we left together, Polwhele and I, at nine o'clock, as we intended. 'Twas pitch dark. We had quitted the grounds but half a minute, and were walking along by that stone hedge near the mine-shaft, when we fell headlong over a rope stretched across the road. Before we could get to our feet, hang me if a crowd of ruffians didn't fling themselves upon us and well-nigh choke the breath out of our bodies. I hit out——"

"So did I," said Mr. Polwhele, his feelings overcoming him.

"So did Polwhele. I barked my knuckles."

"So did I," said Mr. Polwhele.

"So did Polwhele; but we might have been fighting air for all the good we did. The rascals held us down while they gagged and roped us——"

"And never a word said," put in the riding-officer.

"No, confound it all! 'Twas too dark to tell black from white. All the scoundrels were masked, and didn't breathe a word we could identify 'em by. They roped us so that we couldn't move hand or foot, and carried us we didn't know where——"

"Except that it was over plaguey rough ground. I was jarred and jolted till I felt as if all my joints were loose."

"So was I," said Mr. Mildmay. "I knew no more till I found myself being hauled up a ladder, and then, confusion seize them! they lashed me to the bell——"

"Mildmay on one side, I on t'other, the same rope going all round."

"And there they left us all night. I didn't get a wink of sleep——"

"Nor I——"

"Till the morning, and as soon as I dropped oft, that dunderhead Petherick must pull the bell-rope, and I felt a great thwack in the small of my back, and woke in a desperate fright. There was a second thump, and then it stopped, and we had peace for a few minutes."

"That was when Petherick was telling me that I really must clear the tower of owls and bats," said the Vicar.

"Bats!" cried Mr. Polwhele. "They were whisking me in the face all night."

"And the owls were tu-whooing like fog-horns," said Mr. Mildmay. "Then

the thumping began again, and I was jarred till I thought I should die. Then there came a horrible noise of fiddles and serpents and clarinets from below, and yowling and growling, and soon after Petherick's head appeared through the hatch, and he had the impudence to laugh in our faces. When he had done cackling, he loosed us, and we crawled down the ladder more dead than alive, and here we are."

[image]

"PETHERICK'S HEAD APPEARED THROUGH THE HATCH."

"And I lay my life 'twas John Trevanion's plot," cried Mr. Polwhele hotly. "Never has such a scandalous outrage been known in Cornwall before. The Judas came to the door and bade us good-night, and said he was sorry we must go, but duty must be done—the detestable hypocrite."

"There was certainly more art in it than the village folks are capable of," said the Vicar. "By——dear me! I am forgetting myself, but it brings back to me the pranks we played at Oxford. I remember——but there, that's best told on a week-day. You'll find it hard to prove anything against John Trevanion, my friends."

"That's the cunning of the villain," said Mr. Mildmay. "But I'll keep a lynx-eye on him for the future, and my gentleman will overreach himself one of these days. No doubt he made a fine haul last night."

"He did so," said Penwarden, who had remained in the background. "The carriers made five trips betwixt the cave and the well, and though I couldn' see 'em, I reckon they ran summat nigh two-hundred tubs."

"Bless my soul, where do you spring from, Joe?" cried the riding-officer.

"Ah, sir, there be no spring left in my aged frame. I bean't what I was in my young days, when I served wi' Lord Admiral Rodney. But I'm not dead yet, thanks to Maister Dick, and I'll be on duty to-morrer, sir, same as ever."

"Come, Joe," said the Vicar, "we must hear all about it. I own I almost forgot where I was when I saw you tramp up the aisle just now."

"The Squire's lady did say I wasn't to get up, Pa'son, but when I woked and found 'em all gone-along to church, I couldn't bide wi'out goin' up to the House of the Lord like holy David, and givin' my humble and hearty thanks to the Almighty."

He related how, at dead of night, he had been hauled from his bed by half-a-dozen masked figures, carried to the well, let down in a basket, and taken to the place where Dick had found him.

"'Twas that 'nation rascal Doubledick at the bottom of it," he said. "When I laid there flat on a plank, wi' a blanket atween my teeth, and a gashly ache in every inch o' my body, I could ha' borne it all like a holy martyr, but for the villain's tormentin' mouth-speech. 'A tried his best to change his tone o' voice, but I knowed un through it all. 'You be agoin' on yer travels,' says he. "Tis uncommon spry in 'ee at yer time o' life, wonderful brave in a old aged feller. And ye'll lay yer bones in a furrin grave, wheer ye'll bide till Judgment Day, and when the trump wakes 'ee and they axe 'ee what be doin' in a strange heathen land, ye'll have to tell, 'twas because ye couldn't keep yer tongue from evil speakin', nor yer hands from pickin' and stealin'. Ah! 'tis a sorrerful sight to see a old ancient like 'ee goin' the way to everlastin' bonfire for sech ungodly deeds.' So 'a went on a-rantin' and ravin' till I come nigh bustin' wi' the rage inside me. But I reckon he sings another tune now. 'Tis he hev gone on his travels, and he dussn't show his face here no more, for 'twill be transportation if he do."

It was Dick's turn to recount the steps of his discovery, and he learnt from Penwarden the explanation of the only point that still puzzled him: why he had found the front door of the cottage unlocked. Penwarden said that one of the kidnappers had opened the door to keep a look-out. The presumption was that, after locking the back door behind his comrades when the deed was done, he had merely closed the front door, probably because he was in haste to rejoin them.

While Dick told his story, the Vicar was turning over the yellow leaves of an old leather-bound manuscript book.

"Ah! I have it," he exclaimed at length. "This is the diary of William Hammond, vicar of this parish eighty years ago—material for my poor starveling history, Trevanion. You have seen his name on the tablet in church. Listen. 'To-day I read the burial service for seven men of this parish, to wit, Anthony Hallah, Francis Hocking, John Tregurtha, John Maddein, Richard Kelynack, Paul Tonkin, Thomas Rowe, who 'tis supposed were overwhelmed in the late landslip beyond St. Cuby's Cove. Their bodies have not been recovered, but I yielded to the entreaties of their families that I would recite the solemn office of the Church, that their souls might rest in peace.' Do you see the story in this? The poor fellows were smothered while running a cargo into the cave which Dick found blocked up. Naturally the place was shunned by the smugglers, and I daresay it was years before a new generation made for themselves the hiding-place Dick has discovered. No doubt it is in the part of the cliff that bulges over the sea. They must have hollowed out the chamber, and pierced a hole in its floor, and you might have searched for ever, Mr. Mildmay, without perceiving from below the trap-door with which it was concealed. No doubt, as Dick suggests, they have traded on the superstitions of the people in regard to the ghost at the well, and the fact that they seldom needed to use the hiding-place has helped them to preserve

their secret. This will be a terrible blow to the smuggling hereabouts, and 'tis an extraordinary thing that it should be due to Dick, whose intervention has been brought about so strangely."

"Confound it, Dick, you ought to be in my place," said Mr. Mildmay with a rueful look. "Here have I been dashing about in the cutter, and Polwhele riding up and down, and all the fuss and fury not half so effective as your quiet use of your wits. 'Tis a dash to one's proper pride."

"There was a great deal of luck about it, sir," said Dick. "If Sam hadn't overheard the conversation between John Trevanion and Doubledick, we might have puzzled our wits for years without getting at the truth."

"Ah!" said Mr. Carlyon with a chuckle, "and there's a lady in the case as usual. I understand that Sam takes a brotherly interest in Mr. Trevanion's maidservant—a very good girl, behaves well in church, and seems most attentive to my sermons. Upon my word, Squire, we owe something to John Trevanion after all."

"Humph!" grunted the Squire. "What does the Book say, Vicar? 'The wicked diggeth a pit, and falleth into it himself.' That is true in the case of Doubledick, at any rate."

"And he's no loss to us," said Mr. Polwhele. "Without a doubt he hid that ruffian Delarousse. I suppose they'll now be hob-a-nob together in Roscoff. What's that at the window?"

He sprang up and put his head out.

"Do 'ee feel better now, sir?" asked Petherick, sympathetically.

"What are you doing there, Petherick?" asked the Vicar, recognising his voice.

"I wer just a-comin' along to tell 'ee wheer I found ladder, yer reverence. 'Twas in the ditch over beyond the linney, and be-jowned if I wouldn' give a silver sixpence, poor as I be, to know who 'twas carr'd un theer. We must clear out these owls and airy-mouses, to be sure."

"Well, set about it to-morrow," said the Vicar, closing the window.

"I'll be bound the fellow has heard all that we've said," cried Mr. Polwhele.

"Then you may be sure it will be all over the parish to-morrow," said Mr. Carlyon.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH

A High Dive

The failure of their carefully-laid plan afflicted the smugglers with a numbness of dismay and stupefaction, and robbed them of all power to appreciate the success of the trick played on the revenue officers. Tonkin bitterly reproached himself for leaving the shipment of Penwarden to Doubledick and undertaking the seizure of John Trevanion's guests. Moreover, honest and simple-minded as he was, a tiny seed of suspicion was beginning to germinate in his mind. Before John Trevanion came home, the freighting had been done by Tonkin on a modest scale in co-operation with Delarousse. Now, however, John Trevanion had taken the lead. For some reason, which none knew, and only Doubledick suspected, he had thrown over Delarousse, and did business with a rival and enemy of his in Roscoff. Having more capital than Tonkin, whose recent losses had indeed been crippling, he could buy more largely and employ more men, so that Tonkin found himself in a position of galling subordination. As Trevanion had said to Doubledick, the big man did not care to play second fiddle. He was beginning to wonder whether the jovial master of the Dower House was quite so good a friend as he seemed.

The escape of Penwarden was a blow, the more crushing because so mysterious. After church on Sunday, Tonkin and his fellows foregathered with the tub-carriers in the Five Pilchards, where Mrs. Doubledick attended to them in her husband's absence. The young farm labourers had been in complete ignorance of the presence of Penwarden behind the stacked barrels. His projected deportation was the secret of Tonkin and a few trusty friends, who knew better than to run the risk of being betrayed by an informer. They were still anxious to guard their secret, and being unable to discuss the matter freely in the presence of the carriers, they made themselves so unpleasant that the latter presently betook themselves in dudgeon to the Three Jolly Mariners. But even when the important people had the taproom of the Five Pilchards to themselves, they were at a loss. In Doubledick's absence no light could be thrown on the mystery.

"Do 'ee know wheer yer man be, Mistress?" asked Tonkin of the gaunt woman behind the bar.

"I do not," she replied, "but 'a will come home-along in a day or two, to be sure. He loves his home, does Doubledick."

"Well, you ought to know, if anybody."

"Hey, my sonnies," said a voice at the door, and Petherick entered. "I be come to jine ye in yer laughter and merrymakin'."

"Then you be come the wrong road," said Tonkin gloomily. "We be downcast and dismal."

"Ay, mumchanced and mumblechopped," added Nathan Pendry.

"You do surprise me! Never did I see anything that tickled my ribs so much as they two King's servants lashed to the holy bell. I don't care who the man is, 'twas a merry notion. But good now! I know what yer dark thoughts be. 'T'ud

make angels weep and wail, so 'twould. To think that Cuby's ghost will walk never more!"

"Oh, Cuby's ghost be jowned! If ye do know anything, tell it out without hawkin' and spettin', constable," said Tonkin.

"Well, neighbour Doubledick be a lost soul this day, that's sartin," said Petherick.

"My Billy be dead!" shrieked Mrs. Doubledick, sinking into a chair and rocking herself to and fro.

"No, no, Mistress," said Petherick. "It bean't gone so far as that. Dry yer eyes, woman. He bean't a corp, 's far 's I do know, but never will ye see un again, no, never."

"Name it all, constable, don't spin it out so long," said Nathan Pendry. "Put the 'ooman out of her misery."

"Well, I will. Neighbour Doubledick be this day in Rusco."

"Dear life!" exclaimed Mrs. Doubledick.

"How do 'ee know that, constable?" asked Tonkin.

"I heerd it all wi' my own ears. Seems as if Joe Penwarden was to go, but the voyage wer too much for his old aged stummick, so he and young Trevanion sent neighbour Doubledick instead."

He then repeated what he had overheard at the window of the Parsonage, his audience listening in wrath and amazement.

"So ye see," he concluded, "he dussn't show his face hereabouts again, for they two will swear to him afore Sir Bevil, and neither might nor power can save un. Seems to me as ye've met your match in young Squire."

This opened the floodgates of rage, and the room rang with execrations and threats of vengeance. At last Tonkin declared that he would sail to Roscoff next day, hear Doubledick's version of the matter, and learn whether the innkeeper himself admitted the impossibility of returning from his exile. Meanwhile he bound all those present not to disclose their knowledge of what had happened. He felt that the ignominious failure of the scheme would make them all a laughing-stock, which was especially to be avoided now that a score of miners had been imported into the village by John Trevanion. The men loyally kept the secret, even Petherick restraining his gossiping tongue, for he had a wholesome fear of Tonkin.

Next morning, therefore, Tonkin sailed away in his own lugger, beating out against a stiff breeze. An hour or two later, Mr. Mildmay paid a visit in the cutter to the scene of the night's events, seized the tubs still left in the smugglers' den, broke up the windlass, and blocked up the tunnel leading to the well.

Next afternoon Dick and Sam launched their boat, and sailed out to fish at some distance from the point of the Beal. Meeting them on the cliff, Penwarden

advised them to keep their eye on the weather. The sky was threatening, and the boat, while safe enough on a calm sea, had not proved her capacity to ride out a storm.

Sam appeared to be in low spirits. Usually talkative, he had scarcely spoken to Dick on the way from the house, and had indeed not been visible since breakfast time.

"What's the matter, Sam?" said Dick, as he sat at the tiller, noticing the boy's gloomy face as he rowed to assist the sail.

"Nawthin'," replied Sam curtly.

"But there is. Your face is as long as a fiddle. Something must have upset you. What is it?"

"Well, if I must tell, I will. My poor heart be broke."

"That's bad. What broke it?"

"The Mistress."

"My mother! What has she done?"

"'Tis not what she does, but what she says. Oh! 'tis terrible hard for poor folks in this world."

"I agree with you. We are all pretty poor at the Towers."

"That's why I feel it. Some poor folks can have noble raiment, others can't, and drown me if I can see the why and wherefore."

"Don't talk rubbish."

"'Tis not rubbish. Hevn't Mistress got a fine new sealskin coat? Didn't she wear it to church yesterday? Didn't she look like a queen, and make all the women's eyes open as wide as saucers? And there was Maidy Susan, poor young thing, lookin' as plain as a sparrer beside her."

"Well, you wouldn't expect to see a servant-maid as fine as the Squire's wife."

"Iss, I would so, when her might be. I showed they silks and satins to Mistress, and telled her I had broughted 'em for Maidy Susan. 'No, indeed,' says she; 'quite unsuitable for a girl in her station o' life.' 'Why for, please 'm?' says I. 'Because I say so,' says she; 'I never heerd o' sech a thing.' Be-jowned if I can see why. Pretty things be fitty for pretty females, and I don't care who the man is, Maidy Susan would look as fine in 'em as Mistress do in her noble sealskin."

"Fine feathers don't make fine birds, they say," remarked Dick with a smile.

"No, nor fine coats don't make old women young and pretty. They only make 'em look fatter."

"Sam, don't be impudent."

"Bean't impedence, leastways, not meant for sech, as you know well. It be truth," insisted Sam. "Can 'ee deny it? I axe 'ee, bean't Susan a pretty maid?"

"She is, I own."

"Well, then, there you are."

This appeared to Sam a clinching argument. Dick laughed.

"I'll speak to Mother," he said. "Perhaps she will let Susan have a little silk for high days and holidays. But you know the story of the jackdaw that dressed up as a peacock and was pecked to death by the peacocks it went amongst?"

"Never heerd o't, and I don't believe it. Peacocks be sech silly mortals. Howsomever, if ye'll speak to Mistress I'll say no more, for she'll do whatever you tell her."

By this time they were far out in the bay. They cast their lines overboard, and caught one or two flat fish; but sport being very slow, and the wind increasing in force, after about an hour they decided to return.

Another boat, meanwhile, had put out for the same purpose. It contained Jake Tonkin and Ike Pendry. The two boats passed within a few yards of each other.

"Afeard of a capful o' wind," said Jake with a sneer to his companion, loud enough to be heard on the other boat.

"Ay, they'll 'eave up afore they get ashore," rejoined Pendry.

Dick paid no attention to them. Running in behind the Beal, which sheltered him from the wind, he found the sea in Trevanion Bay so calm that he began to wonder whether he had not been over-hasty in putting back. They landed, moored the boat, and carried their meagre catch to the Towers.

"They may jeer," said Dick, as he steadied himself against the wind, which on the cliff-top blew with the force of half a gale, "but they'll run in themselves pretty soon, you'll see."

Having handed the fish to Reuben, they left the house again, and made their way along the Beal, somewhat curious to see how the two fisher-lads were faring. Jake's boat, an old tub, as crazy as that of Dick's which had been destroyed, was tossing and rolling in a way that must have rendered fishing a very uncomfortable occupation.

"They're a couple of jackasses," said Dick. "The wind is getting up every minute. Look at that! That gust nearly capsized them."

"I reckon they be showing off," said Sam. "Ah! they're putting back arter all, and 'twas time."

The boat's head was turned for home. Dick and Sam walked to the end of the promontory, whence the sea on both sides was in full view.

"'Twill be a noble sight to see 'em cross the reef," said Sam.

"Oh, they won't try that," said Dick. "The tide is too low. You can see the rocks every now and again through the breakers. They will make for the fairway."

The wind was now blowing with terrific force, the gusts smiting the boys, exposed as they were, like the fists of some unseen gigantic boxer. They kept

their feet with difficulty. Sam's hat was whirled away, and rolled and bounded along the Beal at the speed of a hare. The surface of the sea was broken by innumerable little white ridges, and at intervals one of these was seen to be the crest of a huge wave, which reared itself, and before it fell was torn into shreds of spindrift.

Jake Tonkin's boat ran clear of the headland towards the harbour, and, having got what he apparently considered to be sufficient sea-room, he hoisted his lug-sail, and steered direct for the fairway. It seemed to the two watchers on the Beal that the wind had been maliciously awaiting this opportunity of mischief. A more than usually fierce gust ripped the sail loose; the boat staggered, spun round, and drifted broadside to the sea. The two lads in her seized their oars, and after great exertion brought her head once more towards the shore. But in a few moments one of them started baling, then resumed the oars, only to ship them almost instantly afterwards and bale out again.

When the sail was carried away, the boat was about a third of a mile from the spot on which Dick and Sam stood. Her progress towards the harbour had been extraordinarily slow, though the wind was behind her. Dick guessed that she had sprung a leak, and when the baling became continuous, he realised the extreme peril of her occupants. Every moment she was in danger of being swamped. He watched with excitement, not unmixed with anxiety. She drew gradually nearer, but with a sluggish heaviness of movement that bespoke her water-logged condition. Another twenty or thirty yards would bring her within the shelter of the reef, in which case the danger of being swamped would be over, unless the leak gained upon the lad energetically baling.

A shout from the left drew Dick's attention towards the jetty. The lads' plight had been perceived, and a large boat, manned by a crew of four, was pulling off to their assistance. If they could hold their own for five more minutes they would be taken off. But just as Dick, thus calculating the chances, turned from this momentary glance shorewards to watch the labouring boat again, a great wave broke over her, she disappeared, and the lads with her.

A quick look round, then Dick dropped to the ground, unlaced his boots, drew them off, and flung off his coat.

"Go to our den, Sam," he cried, "and fling over the two barrels we use for chairs."

"You be never going to——"

But Sam's protest was unheeded and almost unheard. Dick was clambering down the steep face of the cliff. The fisher-lads could not swim; scarcely a man in Polkerran was more skilled than they; and it was plain that unless assistance came to them at once they must be drowned, for the boat, pulling out against wind and wave, could not reach them in time.

Thirty feet above the sea, and almost exactly over the spot where the boat had capsized, there was a narrow ledge. As a swimmer Dick was self-taught. He usually plunged into the sea from a rock a few feet above the surface; the dive he now prepared to take was at least five times as great as he had ever attempted before. Fortunately the fairway was clear of rocks, although the waves beat roughly against the almost perpendicular cliff. A momentary hesitation, then Dick dived off. He took the water cleanly, but, somewhat dazed by the violence of the shock, he went far deeper than a practised diver would have done. To himself, as to Sam, gazing at him horror-stricken from above, it seemed a terribly long time before he shot up to the surface.

But he emerged at last. Shaking the water from his eyes, he looked round for signs of the fisher-lads. Within twelve yards of him he saw the boat, bottom upwards, and a boy clinging to the rudder. A gust of wind whipped the spindrift into Dick's eyes; for some moments he could see nothing more. But then, five or six yards away, between the boat and the cliff, he caught sight of an arm rising from the sea, only to disappear instantly. He struck out for the spot. In a few seconds a dark mass surged up almost beside him. Another stroke or two enabled him to get a grip upon it before it could sink again. Fortunately both for the drowning lad and his rescuer, the former was by this time unconscious. In the rough sea that tumbled about him Dick could scarcely have fought against the struggles of a frantic man. In a trice he turned the lad face upward, and, firmly grasping his collar with one hand, swam on his back with his legs and one free arm. Surely he could hold out until the boat came up! He heard the shouts of the men and the splash of the oars; it could not be far away.

There was a danger that he might be swept by the waves against the frowning cliff, and knocked senseless. To avoid this, he struck out furiously towards the middle of the fairway, where the empty barrels thrown down by Sam were floating. In a calm sea his strength might easily have endured the fatigue of supporting a dead weight, but he knew that he was being conquered by the tumbling waves, and the blinding, choking spray that swept over him, it seemed without intermission. Again and again he felt that he could never regain his breath. The struggle to do so weakened him far more than the muscular exertion. The dreadful conviction seized him that he, too, was drowning. But his grip never relaxed; even when a dazed and helpless feeling came over him, he kept the lad's collar firmly in his clutch. Then he was dimly conscious of a quiet restfulness and content; and Sam, in frantic terror above, saw his movements cease, and felt an agonising certainty that his young master was lost.

When Dick came to himself, he found himself lying in the bottom of Nathan

Pendry's boat, within a few yards of the jetty. The rescuers had come up in the nick of time. Dick and the lad he had saved were hauled into the boat together, and the fingers of the former were so tightly clenched that for some time it was impossible to separate the two. The overturned craft had drifted within a few yards of the cliff, and the other boy still clung to it. He was taken aboard, and meanwhile two of the men used all the means they knew to restore the others to consciousness. Without waiting to secure the capsized boat, they pulled with all speed for the jetty, which was thronged with village folk, whom the news of the accident had brought in hot haste from their houses.

The dripping lads were taken out and carried to the inn, where Mrs. Doubledick had made up a roaring fire, and had blankets and hot brandy awaiting them. Sam, pale as a sheet, forced his way through the crowd at the door towards his master.

"Oh, 'tis good to see 'ee safe!" he cried, almost hugging Dick. "Hev 'ee swallered much?" he asked anxiously.

Dick was too weak to reply. He began to laugh childishly, for within a few feet of him, swathed in a steaming blanket, sat his old enemy, Jake Tonkin, even more feeble than himself.

"'Twas him ye did it for!" cried Sam indignantly. "No one could ha' blamed 'ee if ye'd let the villain drown."

Dick shook his head.

"Now, young Sam Pollex," cried Mrs. Doubledick, "you be off! Maister Trevanion don't want 'ee kiddlin' and quaddlin' about when he do feel bad. Just pick up his clothes out o' that plosh o' water and spread 'em on this chair-back. Then go. We'll send him home-along in a cart or a wheelbarrow when he's better."

"Daze me if I go, Mistress!" cried Sam. "Here I bide till Maister be able to shail along, so I tell 'ee."

"Let the chiel bide," said Nathan Pendry. "They be like two twains in everything, mischief and all, and they 'm best not parted."

"Iss, fay, my brother Ben was twain to me," said Simon Mail, "and 'a quenched away when they took un from me."

"Why, dear life now, neighbour Mail," cried Mrs. Doubledick, "bean't it true, then, that yer brother Ben was shot in the nuddick at some great battle in Egypt, or other furrin land?"

"True, he was; but he couldn't ha' been if he hadn't been parted from I."

"A-course not, ye chucklehead!" said Mrs. Doubledick. "If ye hadn't been parted he would ha' been talkin' foolishness along with 'ee now. Off ye go now, neighbours all. The lads will do better wi'out ye, and there bean't no need to send over to Redruth for a doctor."

"I wish 'ee well, Maister Trevanion," said Pendry as he went out. "Us do

hate 'ee like p'ison, that's true; but I don't care who the man is, 'twas a brave deed, and that I'll stand by, so theer!"

The village folk were somewhat divided in their opinion as to their future attitude towards the inmates of the Towers. The better sort, of whom Nathan Pendry may be taken as a representative, were so much struck by Dick's rescue of Jake, that their feelings underwent a change. They were not at first very ready to show their altered sentiments openly, but the leaven was beginning to work. If Dick, who had been so much persecuted, they argued, had the generosity to risk his life on behalf of one of those who had most injured him, it was hardly credible that he should really be the spy and informer he was suspected of being. Others, however, would not agree that the family was less open to suspicion, so far as smuggling was concerned, because of a single plucky act. Their view was supported by John Trevanion, who, having heard of the incident, took care to drop seeds of depreciation in the ears of such of the fishers as he encountered here and there.

The former party received a notable accession on the evening of the rescue. Isaac Tonkin returned home. The first person he met when he set foot on the jetty was Nathan Pendry, who told him what had happened in his absence. Tonkin was so much surprised at the news that he did not wait to give an account of his discoveries in Roscoff, but hurried at once to his house, where, as Pendry had told him, Jake had been put to bed.

"Be ye feelin' bad, my sonny?" he said with rough tenderness, leaning over the boy.

"Not so bad as I did in the water, Feyther," Jake replied.

"'Tis good to hear, my son. You be safe as a trippet, right enough. And 'twas young Squire saved 'ee! Well, there's norra man in the whole parish could ha' done it. I reckon ye gied un a proper word o' thanks?"

Jack did not reply.

"Did 'ee hear what I axed 'ee? A-course ye gied young Squire a good word for 's kindness? Did 'ee, or did 'ee not?"

"I didn'."

"Ye didn'! And why not?"

"Never did it come into my head."

"Well, it better come into yer head now, and quick, or I'll have to ding it in. Pull on your clothes, and go up-along this minute to the Towers, and say as you be tarrible ashamed o' yerself for forgettin' to say thank 'ee. Get on with 'ee!"

Jake had to get up there and then, and set off on his errand. He had not been gone five minutes before his father, who had been walking restlessly about, suddenly went down into his cellar and brought up a keg of brandy and a large canister filled with tobacco. Then he rapped on the wall, and hearing a faint

"Hallo!" in answer, he shouted:

"Be that you, Ike Pendry?"

"Iss, 'tis I."

"Come-along in; I want 'ee,"

When the lad entered, Tonkin handed the keg and canister to him, saying:

"Carr' them things up to Towers for me, my son. Axe for Squire, and tell un they be a present from Zacky Tonkin, go along now."

Ten minutes after Ike started with his load, Tonkin, as restless as ever, banged the table with his great fist, startling his meek little wife, and cried:

"Drown me if I don't do it!"

"What, Zacky, my dear?"

"Go up-along myself and thank young Squire. Name it all, hain't he saved our only boy, Betty? A man can't do less than say thank 'ee, I don't care who he is."

He thrust on his hat, and set off in haste. At the top of the hill he overtook Ike, who, laden as he was, had walked slowly.

"Stir your shanks, Ike," said he. "Here now, I'll take keg; you keep canister."

They went on together. At the Dower House they came up with Jake, who was shambling along, feeling anything but comfortable at the thought of the impending interview.

"What, slug-a-stump!" cried his father angrily. "Bean't theer yet?"

"Seeming not," said Jake. "I be tired."

"Well, my son, ye'll just step out a bit quicker, or I'll have to take a loan of the Squire's whip."

All three now proceeded until they came to the Towers.

"Be Squire to home, neighbour Pollex?" asked Tonkin of Reuben, who opened the door.

"Iss sure; but I reckon he don't want to see 'ee, Zacky Tonkin," replied the old man.

"Maybe, but I want to see he, and ye can tell un so."

Reuben departed. In a minute he returned.

"Squire says ye're to step in," he said, sourly. "For me, I'd shet the door in yer face, and well you know why."

Tonkin and his companions were led to the living room, where sat the Squire and his wife.

"Well, Tonkin, what can I do for you?" said the Squire pleasantly.

"Nawthin' as I know on, Squire, thank 'ee kindly. My respects, my lady." He turned his hat awkwardly between his hands. "The truth is, Squire," he went on, "I b'lieve I'm the feyther or an ungrateful young feller. I be real vexed to think he didn' say a word o' thanks to Maister Dick for what he done for un, and he

hev got to say it now, or I'll leather un. Med I see young Maister?"

"Not to-night, Tonkin. I sent him to bed, and there he'll stay."

"Then maybe ye'll carr' it for me, sir. Now Jake, make yer bob and say yer say."

Jake touched his forelock, but stood in lubberly silence.

"What, can't 'ee find yer tongue? Now, hearken to me, and say what I say. If you please, Squire——"

"'If you please, Squire——'"

"I be truly thankful——"

"'I be truly thankful——'"

"As Maister Dick saved me from being drownded."

"'As Maister Dick saved me from being drownded.'"

"Purticler as I didn' deserve it."

"'Purticler as I didn' deserve it.'"

"Good now! I mean it, sir, and so do he. And I've brought 'ee a keg of cognac and a tin o' bacca—bought with honest money, Squire; and I axe 'ee to take 'em as a little small offering from a man who's a feyther like as you be."

"Thank you, my man," said the Squire, his face kindling with pleasure. "I appreciate your thanks, and so will Dick: and I shall appreciate your gift, I assure you. Jake isn't much the worse for his ducking, I can see."

"And I hope Maister Dick bean't either," said Tonkin.

"Not a bit. He'll be as well as ever after a night's rest. Jake should learn to swim, you know."

"And I woll, if Maister Dick'll larn me," said Jake suddenly.

"Well, I don't know about that," said the Squire, with a slight reserve in his manner. "You see, there has been some feeling lately——"

"See now, Squire," interrupted Tonkin bluntly, "answer me a plain question, man to man. Did you, or anybody belongin' to 'ee, ever spy or inform on we honest free-traders?"

"That's a question you ought to be ashamed to put to me," said the Squire warmly. "Do you think a Trevanion would ever do such a thing?"

"Well, no, I didn' think so till—— Howsomever, I'll say no more o' that. I axe yer pardon, and I hope ye'll let bygones be bygones, and that's said honest."

"With all my heart." The Squire extended his hand to the smuggler, whose grip made him wince.

"That's brave and comf'able," said Tonkin. "And now I wish 'ee well, sir, and you, ma'am, and if so be as Maister Dick 'll larn Jake to swim, I'll be proud, and so will he."

The Squire showed the three men out, and they returned home well satisfied with their interview. Tonkin was soon the centre of a group of his particular

friends in the parlour of the Five Pilchards, to whom, after announcing that he would believe no more "'nation gammut," as he put it, about the Squire and his son, proceeded to relate the issue of his visit to Roscoff.

"I hain't brought Doubledick back wi' me," he said. "For why? 'Cos he warn't theer!"

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH

A Bargain with the Revenue

About eight o'clock that same evening, while Tonkin was still conversing with his intimates in the parlour of the Five Pilchards, a horseman rode up to the house occupied by Mr. Polwhele on the south cliff. His seat was not that of an accomplished equestrian, and his manner of dismounting would have given some anxiety to anyone who had a regard for him. The long cloak he wore, with the collar turned up almost to the eyes, incommoded his legs, and only by clutching at his patient steed's mane did he avoid a fall.

The house stood alone, and its solitary situation was a source of satisfaction to the traveller. A light within, and a full moon without, gave him a reasonable assurance that the riding-officer was at home. Accordingly he hitched the bridle to a hook placed for that purpose in the wall beside the door, and knocked. Mr. Polwhele was a bachelor, and it happened that the woman who was housekeeper, cook, and housemaid in one, had gone into the village, so that he opened the door himself.

"Well?" he said, peering at the close-wrapped figure that stood on the threshold.

"'Tis I, Maister Polwhele," said the man, at the same time turning down his collar.

"Doubledick!" exclaimed the astonished officer. "Well, of all the——! You'd be safer in France, my man."

"Iss, maybe; but I be come home, and I'd like a word with 'ee, Maister."

"Well, there's no warrant out for your arrest, so I suppose you——; yes, come in. I don't understand this at all."

Doubledick followed the riding-officer into the room where he had been reading. He carefully shut the door behind him, offered Mr. Polwhele a pinch of snuff, and took one himself, then sat down rather stiffly.

Half an hour later he emerged from the house, remounted his horse, and rode away, not northward in the direction of his home, but eastward along a bridle path across the moor. In a quarter of an hour, however, he turned to the left, skirted the village, passing about midway between it and the church, and continued for some time in the same direction. Then once more he struck to the left and came by-and-by to the high-road, at a point between the Towers and the Dower House. He turned into the drive leading to the latter, but instead of reining up at the front entrance, he passed round the house to the back, and having again awkwardly dismounted, he rapped on the kitchen door.

"Oh, 'tis you, Maister Doubledick," said Susan, when she opened to him. "Folks said you'd gone away."

"So I had, my dear; but I be back-along, as you can see wi' yer pretty eyes. Now tell me, be the Maister to home?"

"Yes, he be in his room, raythe poorly."

"And be he alone?"

"Yes, but 'tis not for long, folks say. We'll have a mistress afore long, and i hope she be likeable, that I do."

"Well, now, that's new news, to be sure. And who be the woman?"

"She bean't 'zackly a woman. 'Tis Sir Bevil's darter, seemingly, and she be a maid younger nor I, they say."

"So she be, to be sure. Dear life! And I never heerd o't. Here's a shillin' for your news, to buy 'ee a fairin'."

"Thank 'ee, Maister Doubledick, but I shan't need un for a fairin'. I'm to have a fine gown o' silk, only think o't!"

"A present from Maister John, I s'pose?"

"No; 'tis to be from Sam Pollex, that young boy as lives up at Towers. Didn't 'ee know what a treasure he found?"

"What was it, my dear?"

"Why, he and young Squire were rummagin' in some cave yonder—I don't know 'zackly wheer—and they come upon boxes full o' silks and satins, all the colours o' the rainbow. Young Sam be goin' to gie me enough for a gown—a kind young feller, that he is."

"Well, then, if ye don't mind, my dear, I'll take back that shillin', seein' as ye're so well purvided, and gie 'ee a groat instead. Bean't no good to waste money, be it? And now, will 'ee tell yer maister I be come for a word wi' un?"

Susan went away with a cloud upon her face.

"Maister will see 'ee," she said when she returned. "Take yer groat, Maister Doubledick; some day ye may need it more nor I."

Doubledick pocketed the coin with a chuckle, and followed her along the passage to her master's room.

"This is amazing, Doubledick," cried Trevanion, when the door was shut. "I never expected to see you again."

"Hee! hee! Rusco bean't fitty for everyone, Maister John," replied the innkeeper, with a meaning look. "Ye be took bad, the maidy says."

"Oh, 'tis nothing but a fit of the dismals. How in the world did you get away?"

"It do seem a miracle to 'ee, I s'pose. Why, fust man I seed when they put me on quay was a old friend o' yourn—leastways, 'a used to be sech. He be a good friend o' mine, too, 'cos I did un a good turn a while ago. He don't speak our Christian tongue very well, poor soul, but I made un understand a mistake had been made wi' me, and he showed his true friendship by bringing me over to Megavissey. I rid over from there, and plaguey stiff I be in the jints."

"But you're in great danger; don't you know that? You made a terrible bungle of the job, my man."

"True, but them above had a finger in it. I bean't sorry as I've seed Rusco, not I. And as to danger, well, Maister John, I'll speak to 'ee as a friend. The feller I named—no, to be sure, I didn' name un, but 'tis all one—the Frenchy do seem to be mizzy-mazy in his head. He telled to I of a feller called Robinson, and seemed to have got it in his furrin noddle that 'twas the same name as Trevanion, or fust cousin to 't. He axed a tarrible lot of questions about un, wheer he lived, and what he did wi's days and nights, and seemed to I as if he'd got a rod in pickle for un. Jown me if I didn' think 'a wanted to make a call on this Robinson feller, and 'ud be tarrible wisht if 'a didn' find un to home."

Doubledick kept his eyes fixed upon Trevanion's face, but if he had expected to see any sign of uneasiness, he was disappointed.

"I take no interest in your friend or what he wants," said Trevanion. "I am more concerned about you, Doubledick. You're not safe here, you know."

"That's what I've come to see 'ee about," returned the innkeeper. "But truly I be a bufflehead; I ought to ha' named un to 'ee, in course I ought. His name is Delarousse, Maister. And to tell 'ee the truth, thinkin' he was a bit over coorious in the questions he axed, I telled un a thing or two as wer a trifle crooked, I did. I telled un how this Maister Trevanion as he thought was Robinson was often away from home, and how 'a dwelt in a big house on the cliff called the Towers. He axed I if the Towers was near the top of a hill, and I telled un 'twas a goodish bit away, Maister Robinson—Trevanion, I mean—havin' come into the property. Thinks I to myself, if he comes to Polkerran one fine day a-caprousin' and makin' a stoor, 't'ud be just as well he went up-along to Towers and showed his tantrums to the cussed folk theer. What do 'ee say to that, Maister John?"

"You are talking a deal of nonsense, Doubledick," was the answer. "Don't you understand that as soon as 'tis known you are back in the village you'll be

arrested for kidnapping Penwarden?"

"Oh, ay, that's what they say, is it? But don't 'ee think, now, we could persuade the officers o' the law to leave me bide?"

"Quite impossible. Penwarden and my young cousin will swear to you, and there has been such a stir about the matter that Sir Bevil or the Vicar will sign the warrant the moment they hear of your arrival."

"Maybe. But money do make the mare to go, Maister, and seems to I, if so be you'd help, we med put a clapper on evil-speakin' tongues. A-course 't 'ud need a pretty big sum to do it proper, but theer, what's that to 'ee, rollin' in money as you be? And I know well ye'll put yer hand in pocket to help a poor feller in a quag, purticler as he've done summat for 'ee, in Polkerran and Rusco both."

"I'll be hanged if I do," cried Trevanion, at last shaken out of his composure. "You made a wretched bungle of a simple job, and you'll have to take the consequences."

"Good now! I like to hear a man speak fine and brave, but I hev a brave mouth-speech o' my own." Doubledick's tone was as smooth and deferential as it had been throughout the conversation, but an onlooker might now have observed that he was beginning to show his teeth. "Zacky Tonkin, now," he proceeded: "I reckon he'd be fain to know why Delarousse warn't no longer the feller to do trade with: that bit o' knowledge med be worth payin' for. And Sir Bevil: iss sure, his darter be a nesh young female——"

"Confound you! What do you mean by that?" cried Trevanion.

"Ah! little small birds do carr' little small seeds, they do. High persons like Sir Bevil be mighty purticler when 'tis question o' lawful matrimony."

Trevanion, red with anger, rose from his chair and came towards Doubledick threateningly.

"Ah! dear life!" continued the innkeeper, unflinchingly, "and there be Mounseer Delarousse, too, thankful for what I done for him. It did vex me tarrible to mizzle un; but a word can put that right, and let un know the true dwellin' o' that coorious feller Robinson. In course his grudge agen Robinson bean't nothing to I, but he do seem tarrible sour and rampageous. Howsomever, let every man fight his own battles. Now I'll go home-along, and I wish 'ee well, Maister."

He rose, took his hat, and moved towards the door.

Trevanion looked after him for a moment irresolutely, then stretched his hand towards the bell-rope.

"Stay, Doubledick," he said, "you must take a thimbleful before you go."

"Not for me, Maister," replied the innkeeper, with a virtuous expression of countenance.

"Nonsense, man. It won't poison you. You have read me quite wrongly, my

friend. Did ever a man take offence so easily! You've come badly out of my little test, but I'll overlook it. I've a deal more patience than you.... Susan, bring the decanter and glasses. Hot, Doubledick?"

"Well, I don't mind if it be, this chilly night. But 'tis gettin' latish; it must be only a nibleykin, Maister."

"Now, Doubledick," said Trevanion, as they sipped their liquor, "I'm not the man to refuse to help a friend, even if he shows himself only a fair-weather friend after all."

"I knowed it," cried Doubledick heartily. "A little small voice inside telled me ye were only a-tryin' me, and 'ud show yerself in yer natural true colour at last. Well, Maister, ten pound won't do it; no, King's servants do hev high notions, be-jowned to 'em. Twenty? I be afeard it wouldn' go far. 'Tis well to do a thing handsome when 'tis to be done. Fifty? Iss, a man can do summat wi' fifty. Fifty pound 'll keep a many tongues quiet, and I'll be dazed if I don't snap my fingers at justices, sheriffs, hangmen, and constables, if I do hev fifty pound to my hand."

Trevanion rose and went to a cabinet in a corner of the room. Unlocking it, he opened a drawer, standing with his back to Doubledick. There was a sound of rustling paper.

"'Tis a monstrous sum," he said, half turning.

"Ah, 'tis, to be sure," said Doubledick feelingly, "but King's officers do hev' a tarrible big swaller."

"Well, here you are," said Trevanion, recrossing the room. "I'm not the man to refuse a friend."

"So ye said afore. Thank 'ee. 'Tis atween us two, in course; my mouth is shet. But there's another thing, Maister. Did 'ee know as old Joe and young Dick brought a heap o' silks and satins out o' the old mine?"

"The deuce they did!" cried Trevanion in astonishment. "Where did they get them from?"

"That I can't say. But old mine do belong to 'ee, surely."

"It does. Whatever they have found is my property. How do you know this, Doubledick?"

"The little small birds, Maister. Well, I've telled 'ee for yer good."

"I'll not forget it. Egad, they shall hear from me."

When Doubledick left the house a few minutes later, he carried the bundle of crisp white notes snug in his breast-pocket. He said good-bye very cordially to his host, and, mounting his horse, rode boldly along the highway and down the hill to the inn.

Most of the smugglers had returned to their homes, but Tonkin, Nathan Pendry, and one or two more still remained in the inn-parlour, with their legs

stretched out towards a genial fire, their long churchwarden pipes filling the room with clouds of smoke. Mrs. Doubledick had gone to bed. No other visitors were to be expected at this hour, and the company would let themselves out at their own time. The woman was torn between hope and fear. Tonkin had learnt in Roscoff that Doubledick had left with Delarousse; and Mrs. Doubledick was relieved to know that her husband had escaped the miseries of confinement in a French prison; but she was troubled lest he should fall into equally rigorous hands at home.

Doubledick entered the room quietly.

"Well, neighbours all," he said behind their backs, "a man's home be the fittiest place for un, I b'lieve."

The men sprang up in amazement, grasped his hand, smote him on the back.

"What did I tell 'ee!" said Tonkin. "Didn' I say neighbour Doubledick was a clever feller, and 't 'ud take a deal o' cleverness to get over he?"

"Ye did, there's no denyin' it," said Simon Mail. "Ah, neighbour Doubledick, you was born wi' noble intellects."

"But you be a terrible bold feller," said Pendry. "There'll be a warrant out for 'ee, and ye'll be carr'd to Trura jail, as sure as I be alive."

"If 'tis to be, 'tis; and rayther would I be jailed in Cornwall than in France," replied Doubledick. "But I won't be jailed nowheer, I b'lieve, and I'll tell 'ee why. Theer was only two as seed me—Joe Penwarden and the young tom-holla at the Towers. Well, they dussn't swear to me."

"Why not, neighbour?" said Pendry.

"Because they been up to jiggery theirselves, hee, hee!"

"Speak yer meanin' plain, for the sake o' poor simple I," said Mail.

"Hee, hee! I mind I telled old Joe he'd hev to answer for pickin' and stealin', and so 'a woll. Do 'ee know, neighbours, they brought out o' well a noble store o' raiment, purple and fine linen, as pa'son says?"

"Never!" ejaculated Pendry and Mail together, Tonkin smoking in silence.

"Iss, 'tis true as Gospel. They brought out silks and satins and who knows what all, and look 'ee, friends, that be thievin'!"

"I don't know about that," said Tonkin.

"But I do know," said Doubledick positively. "We hain't used the well for ten year, we all do know that. Last time 'twas only 'bacca and brandy—not a bale o' silk or passel o' lace. Well, then, this stuff bein' buried in the earth, or we'd ha' found it, I reckon it had been theer ever since the landfall, hunderds o' years ago, in yer grandfer's days, Zacky. See then, the true owner o't, arter all this time, be the owner o' the land, and that's Maister John—would ha' been Squire till three months ago. Hee, hee! They ha' stole Maister John's proputty."

"I've heerd tell o' what clever folks call treasure trove," said Mail, "and that belongs to King Jarge."

"King Jarge ha' got quite as much as he can do with up-along to Lunnon," said Doubledick, "and I don't care who the man is, they silks and satins do belong now to Maister John. Well, do 'ee think they wicked robbers will hev the impedence to swear agen a honest free-trader like me? They'll never do it. Maister John will claim the goods and threaten 'em wi' the law, and that'll be enough to keep their mouths shet, trust me."

"How did this wonderful bit o' knowledge come to 'ee neighbour, you bein' away and all?" asked Mail.

"Ah! little birds, Simon, little small birds," replied Doubledick with a knowing look.

"Then maybe you do know another 'mazin' bit o' news," said Pendry.

"Maybe I do. Tell to me, and then I'll tell 'ee."

"Why, young Squire this very day did save young Jake from bein' drownded, didn' he, Zacky?"

"Iss, fay," said Tonkin, "and I went up-along to-night to say thank 'ee, as a true Cornishman oughted. And I tell 'ee what, friend, we been all wrong about Squire informin' and all that. I axed un plain, man to man, and he telled me I oughter be ashamed to think sech a thing, and I believe un."

"But did he deny it?" asked the innkeeper.

"Well, no, I couldn' go so far as to say that."

"Ah, Zacky, you be a simple plum-baked feller, to be sure. Ye don't know the windin's and twistin's o' these high gentry. Plain simple souls like 'ee don't know what eddication do for a man. That young whelp of Squire's do go to pa'son and larn all the wisdom and cleverness of ancient men of old; 'a can twist 'ee round his finger, I b'lieve."

Tonkin looked troubled. Doubledick had such a reputation for knowingness that his opinion carried weight.

"Well, time will show," said Tonkin. "I tell 'ee one thing, that I won't hev a hand no more in anything agen Squire, not till I do know sartin-sure. What do 'ee say, Nathan?"

"Iss, I say the same. Let's be sartin-sure, that's what I say," replied Pendry.

Doubledick puffed his scorn of such simple-mindedness.

"Well, I be tired, neighbours," he said. "Riding a-hoss-back from Megavissey hev well-nigh scat me in jowds" (by which he meant, broken him in pieces), "and I yearn for my bed. We'll see what we will see, I b'lieve."

The company broke up. The fishers went their way; Doubledick closed the door behind them, and raked out the fire. Before he ascended to his bedroom he locked his bundle of banknotes in a strong box which he kept under the stairs,

and might have been heard chuckling gleefully.

Next morning the inn was early besieged by a crowd of fishers who had heard of Doubledick's return, and were agog to learn all the circumstances from his own lips. A little later the newly-imported miners arrived, and, later still, as the news travelled farther, farmers, millers, and dairymen flocked into the village. Doubledick rubbed his hands with glee at the trade he was doing. Except to his intimates, he explained very little. To the questions of the others he replied only by nods and winks, and they at last ceased to interrogate him, remarking one to another that he was a real knowing one; nobody could get round him; "a wonderful feller, truly, for see how soon he hev slipped away from France, wheer many a good man hev rotted in prison since these 'nation wars began."

There were many who expected that before the day was out Doubledick would be arrested and carried before Sir Bevil, and a throng of idlers hung about the inn in anticipation of this exciting event. But no constable, soldier, or sheriff's officer appeared, and at nightfall the innkeeper's reputation was higher than ever.

Two men believed that they knew the reason of the authorities' forbearance. John Trevanion fondly supposed that the banknotes with which he had parted had found their way into the pockets of Mr. Mildmay, Mr. Polwhele, and Joe Penwarden. In those days the bribery of revenue officers was not infrequent. Tonkin, on the other hand, suspected that the Squire had persuaded Penwarden not to prosecute, in order to consolidate the better feeling between the village and the Towers to which Dick's rescue of Jake had given birth. The actual reason was known to four men alone: the revenue officers, Penwarden, and Doubledick himself.

About midday Sam Pollex came rushing up to the Towers from the village with the news of Doubledick's return.

"Nonsense," said Dick; "he wouldn't dare show his face again."

"Name it all, Maister, didn' I see un with my own eyes?" cried Sam. "There he be, down-along at his kiddly-wink, more bustious nor ever, or may I never speak again."

Dick hastened instantly to the little white cottage on the cliff, where Penwarden had again taken up his abode.

"Joe," he cried, bursting in like a whirlwind, "Doubledick is back! Come with me to the Parsonage; we'll get a warrant for his arrest."

Penwarden was eating his dinner. He conveyed a piece of fish to his mouth without showing any sign of surprise.

"Back, is he?" he said. "Ah, well! Rusco warn't good for his health, seemingly."

"It would suit him better than Truro jail. Come along; there's just time to get to the Parsonage and back before my dinner."

"Not for a old ancient feller like me."

"Well, I'll go alone then; but they'll want two witnesses, I believe, before any justice will commit him."

"They will, I believe, but I won't be one. No, I couldn' bring myself to 't."

"What on earth do you mean?" cried Dick in amazement. "'Tis your duty to bring the villain to justice."

"Villain he is, and I'd crack his skull as soon as look at him. But as to duty—I knows my duty, Maister Dick, and my duty is to let un bide. Besides, never could I face the stoor of appearin' in a court o' justice. Theer'd be lawyer fellers in wigs and gowns, axin' me this, that, and t'other till I wouldn' know whether I pitched on my head or my heels. But I'd fain fetch un a crack on the nuddick, so as 'a couldn' stir for a fortnight."

"Oh, well, of course 'tis your business," said Dick, somewhat offended. "If you don't prosecute him, I suppose he'll go free. 'Tis no concern of mine."

And he returned to the Towers, and told his father that old Joe hadn't so much spirit as he thought.

Two hours before, Penwarden had received a visit from Mr. Mildmay and Mr. Polwhele. When they informed him that Doubledick had returned, he started up, seized his hat, and declared with great vehemence that he would go straight along to the Parsonage and get Mr. Carlyon's warrant for the villain's arrest. The revenue officers had much ado to appease him, and only when Mr. Mildmay made a strong appeal to his sense of duty as an old Navy man did he agree to the inactive course proposed.

"If 'tis a matter of duty to the King, as ye say, sir," he remarked, "I reckon I do know my duty as well as any man. Hain't I served with Lord Admiral Rodney? Not a man of us but did what he bid at once, or he'd ha' knowed what for. Did I ever tell 'ee how the Lord Admiral spoke to me special one day?"

"Well now, let me see," said Mr. Mildmay, who had heard the story a score of times. "Did you ever hear it, Polwhele?"

"In Jamaica, wasn't it, Joe?" said the riding-officer, who having been on the coast ten times as long as Mr. Mildmay, had probably heard the story ten times as often.

"No, 'twas on Plymouth Hoe, sir. I was cruisin' theer one day when who should I see beatin' up but Lord Admiral Rodney, convoyin' two handsome females—ah! as clippin' craft as ever I seed. While I was standin' by, all of a sudden he put up his helm and steered right across my bows. 'Get out of the way, you cross-eyed son of a sea-cook!' says he, and the two females laughed like a brook in June. Ah! 'tidn' every common mariner as could say he'd been spoke to special by sech a fine man-o'-war as Lord Admiral Rodney."

"You're right, Joe," said Mr. Mildmay. "No admiral at all, let alone a great

man like Rodney, ever spoke to me, worse luck. Well then, you'll let matters rest, old fellow, and you won't be sorry for it."

"But I may crack un over the skull if he gets in my way, I s'pose?"

"Well, yes, but not too hard; dead men tell no tales, you know."

"I'll mind o' that, and not gie un a whole broadside. Dear life! What a mix-up of a world it is, to be sure?"

CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH

The Last Deal

For a week or two there was a lull in events. One day the Squire received a letter from John Trevanion's attorney, demanding that he should give up the property of his client which had been feloniously abstracted from the abandoned mine. The Squire swore, a rare occurrence with him, and sent Dick with the letter to his own lawyer in Truro. Dick returned with a piece of news that staggered his father. The attorney had died suddenly a few days before. He was the holder of the mortgage on the Towers and the Beal; it was almost certain that his executors would demand payment of the advance. For the first time the Squire was faced with the absolute loss of his ancestral home. He waited some days in torturing suspense: then the dread letter came. The amount of a hundred pounds must be paid within a month.

The Squire had not even a hundred shillings to spare. In deep distress of mind he walked to Truro to consult another lawyer, and see whether the bond could not be renewed or transferred. He applied to a young solicitor who had recently set up business in the town, and who undertook to do what he could. The Squire placed in his hands also the letter he had received from John Trevanion's attorney.

A correspondence ensued between the two men of law, with great ingenuity of argument and ample quotation of authorities on both sides. It did not terminate until the precise question in dispute was no longer of importance. Meanwhile the Squire retained the silks and satins.

With the approach of Christmas the vigilance of Penwarden and his superiors became incessant. At that season there was a great demand all through the countryside for the wares of the free-traders, and unless precedent was to fail, many a bale and keg would be landed on the coast without paying dues to the

King's Government.

One dark night, Tonkin arrived in his lugger at Lunnan Cove, a few miles south of the village, with a fine cargo freighted jointly by John Trevanion and himself. Contrary winds having delayed him, he arrived several hours later than had been arranged, and found that the tub-carriers, evidently tired of waiting, had gone away. He dropped the tubs overboard in the usual manner, taking their bearings carefully, and returned for them on the following night. To his surprise and bitter rage, when he explored the bottom with his creeps, a strong force of tub-carriers waiting on the shore, he failed to find a single tub of the cargo so carefully laid. All had vanished. If he had been on the spot a few hours earlier, he would have seen them hoisted one by one into the revenue-boats, and conveyed to official sanctuary at St. Ives.

The smugglers were furious. Some one must have betrayed them. Occasionally there were traitors among them, but rarely, for the fate of an informer, if discovered, was of such a nature as to deter others. When they returned to the inn to drown their disappointment and talk over the occurrence, Doubledick shrugged.

"What about yer fine friends at the Towers now, Zacky?" he said.

"Good sakes! How could 'em know?" cried the exasperated fisher.

"Oh, you simple soul! Didn' I see yer Jake a-fishin' along wi' young Squire only yesterday?"

"Rabbit it all! Do 'ee mean to say 'tis Jake that split? Why, daze me, the boy didn' know about it hisself, Doubledick; we kept it so close."

"Well, I only tell 'ee what I seed. 'T 'ud be hard to b'lieve sech a miserable dirty thing o' Jake, I own it. In course he never done it, bein' a Tonkin; 'twas only my little bit o' fun. But I don't care who the man is, they folks up at Towers hev turned preventives; norra one of 'ee woll make me b'lieve different."

"Dear life! Won't Maister John be in a gashly passion!" said Simon Mail. "He had more nor you in it, Zacky, I b'lieve!"

"Iss, fay, he did. Neighbour Doubledick loses least; 'tis a mercy for 'ee, neighbour."

"So 'tis, Zacky," said Doubledick. "Ah! I was right to bide quiet a while arter that journey to France. But name it all, I bean't goin' to bide quiet for ever; I'll take a share in the next, be-jowned if I don't, and I hope them above will gie us better luck."

"Ay, Maister John will be in a rare passion," repeated Simon Mail. "He be spendin' money so free that 'twill be a blow to him, to be sure."

"True," said Pendry, "and spendin' for the country, too. Do 'ee think, now, as Boney will come to these parts, neighbour Tonkin?"

"I wouldn' think so myself, but you never can tell," replied Tonkin. "'Tis a

little small place, wi' no great riches to tempt un; but that may be a reason for 't. We've no forts nor cannons nor sojers to defend us, and Boney may choose the place according; 't 'ud be easier to land here than at Weymouth, where the King and all his high generals sometimes be."

"What I say is, Maister John be a fine feller," said Mail. "'Tidn' every gentleman as 'ud do what he be doin'. Why, he've had a dozen men from Trura riggin' up iron shetters to his winders, and a cart come t'other day wi' firelocks and pikes, and I seed him only yesterday marchin' his miners up and down in front o' the house, every man of 'em wi' a terrible weapon o' some sort; and when he shouted, up went firelock or pike, and seein' the guns all pointin' at me, I run off as hard as my poor legs 'ud move, for I didn' want to be hurted, not I."

"Ay, and I seed Petherick goin' up to Dower House wi' a noble bell under his arm," said Pendry, "and when I axed un about it, 'a telled me 'twas to rig up in the roof, to gie the word o' warnin' to the whole village if Boney was spied wi' all his horses and men."

"And what's more," added Mail, "he hev took three men-servants into house, purgy fellers they be too, so's to hev a army to lead agen the enemy. They'll eat a deal o' meat, they will, and sartin sure he'll be in a passion at losin' money over this crop."

"Hee! hee!" laughed Doubledick. "It do make me laugh, neighbours, to think o' Maister John leadin' a army agen Boney. I'll go up-along to-morrer and see this practisin' wi' pikes and firelocks; 'twill do me good, hee! hee! They miners had better turn sojers out and out, for they'll never get tin or copper enough out o' the earth to pay for their keep."

Doubledick strolled up the hill next day, and stood with a look of keen enjoyment on his face as a score of miners drilled under Trevanion's direction. At the close of the exercise he accosted Trevanion.

"'Tis a noble sperit, to be sure, Maister John," he said, "but daze me if I think yer new sojers and yer iron shetters will keep out Boney and his thousands and millions. He's a tarrible feller, by all accounts."

"'Tis every man's duty to defend his country so far as he is able," said Trevanion coldly, beginning to move away.

"Iss, sure," said Doubledick, keeping pace with him; "and it must cost 'ee a tidy bit o' money. But I be afeard it bean't much good. Why now, s'pose 'twas not Boney, but one of his simple generals, or no sojer at all, but a plain feller like me—or like Delarousse, say. I say, s'pose Delarousse took it into his head to hev his revenge for the trade he've a-lost, to wipe off old scores, as ye may say—jown me if he'd be flustered by a passel o' miners or a shetter or two. Howsomever, 'tis not for me to say. Ye do know more about the arts o' warfare nor I, I reckon."

"Your tongue runs on, Doubledick," said Trevanion with a hollow laugh.

His annoyance was plain to see: the fellow was presuming on the secret between them.

"Iss, I be forgettin' what I come to say," said Doubledick. "The folks at the Towers be at their tricks again, seemingly."

"If I knew it!" cried Trevanion furiously. "If you catch young Dick, or that wretched follower of his, spying, I hope you'll take care they don't do it again. You squared the officers on your own matter; can't we keep them quiet on the trade?"

"Ah! that's different. To jail me wouldn' put money in their pockets, like seizin' a cargo. I'm afeard 't 'ud take more nor the crop's worth to put 'em quiet on that, Maister. But there now! we allers do hev ups and downs; maybe the ups will beat the downs in the end."

That Doubledick's philosophy was well founded was signally demonstrated a few days later. Though the loss in case of failure was severe, the profit of a successful run was so high that success once in three times was accounted satisfactory. To recoup the recent loss another cargo was freighted in Roscoff, Trevanion, Tonkin, and Doubledick taking equal shares. The spot selected was the mouth of the little creek four miles north of the Towers, where Dick had launched his home-made boat. Only a few men, on whom the confederates placed absolute reliance, were admitted to the secret. The goods were run ashore in complete safety, and each of the three freighters pocketed a considerable profit.

Elated by this success, another run was arranged a few days subsequently. In this Trevanion had the largest share, Tonkin ranking next, Doubledick, Pendry, and Mail being involved to the extent of a few pounds each. The place was changed, a small cove a little nearer the village on the south side being chosen. Mr. Mildmay had been called to a spot ten miles distant, and everything promised success. Tonkin's lugger anchored off the rendezvous, the goods were "rafted" ashore, and the carriers had all shouldered their burdens, when a dash was made on them by preventive men aided by a troop of dragoons, and, after a sharp fight, only one man got away with his tubs.

John Trevanion never appeared on the scene of operations. He was always kept well informed as to the time and place of the runs, but it was his constant policy to remain in the background. On this occasion, when he learnt of the second failure within a week, he was exasperated beyond endurance. He rode down to the inn, stormed at the smugglers, and having learnt that Mr. Mildmay had been summoned away by his own arrangement, merely as a blind, he declared that either Jake Tonkin or Ike Pendry had betrayed him to Dick, with whom they now occasionally fished. This accusation enraged the elder Tonkin, and the two men would have proceeded from recriminations to blows, if Doubledick had not stepped in between them.

A week passed. It was the Wednesday before Christmas Day. There had been some hesitation among the smugglers, after the last failure, whether to venture on what was usually the most important run of the season. At this time they found customers for their wares much further afield than usual. But the prospect of large profits, and the perpetual fascination of the trade, overcame their doubts and fears, and early on this Wednesday morning, before it was light, Tonkin sailed off in the *Isaac and Jacob* for Roscoff. Once more he had equal shares with Trevanion, no others being concerned in the run except as helpers.

On Wednesday evening, Doubledick left the inn, and walked along the southward bank of the stream in the direction of the church. He had left word that he was going to see Petherick about a Christmas dinner which the Vicar was accustomed to give to the children and young people of the parish, in a barn upon his glebe. He spent an hour or two with Petherick in his cottage near the church, received from him the Vicar's orders for squab-pie (a hotch-potch of mutton, apples, onions and raisins, with sugar and seasoning), "figgy pudden" (which is Cornish for plum-pudding), and other delectables of the season, and having arranged with the sexton the commission to be paid him for passing on an order which he could have placed with no one else, he drank a parting glass and started ostensibly for home. It was a fine night, moonless but clear, with that crisp coldness in the air that exhilarates. Instead of walking along the road by which he had come, Doubledick struck off to the left into a lane that would bring him, after a long round, to the south cliff. There were no houses hereabouts, the church being at least half a mile from the nearest dwelling.

When the innkeeper came to the spot where the ground began to rise, he did not turn to the right, along the path that led to the bridge over the stream, and was the nearest way home, but trudged directly onward, puffing a little as he went higher. It was very dark, or he might perhaps have seen a figure silently stalking him. Every now and again he stopped to take breath and to glance in the direction of the village. At these times the shadowy figure dropped down behind a furze bush, and there waited until Doubledick, with a grunt and sigh, again went on his way.

Presently he came to Mr. Polwhele's house on the cliff. He did not pass it by, nor approach the front door, but stole to the window, where a light shone through the blind, and gently tapped at it. In a few moments the door opened. Mr. Polwhele's figure was for an instant silhouetted against the light from a hanging-lamp in the passage. Doubledick entered quickly, and the door was shut again.

The silent form of the second man was motionless and invisible in the darkness. But when the door was closed, it tip-toed swiftly across the grass, and if a third person had been in the neighbourhood he might have seen the head and shoulders of a fisher in strong relief against the illuminated blind. But there was

no spectator. The fisher placed his ear against the glass, and remained in that posture for several minutes. Then he withdrew, muttering his disappointment, and posted himself behind a clump of gorse a few yards away, where he could keep his eye on the door.

"Well, Doubledick," said the riding-officer, when he had given his visitor a chair, "'tis to be, then?"

"Iss, sir, and a big thing too. Maister Trevanion hev £200 ventured, and Tonkin the same."

"And where is it to be this time?"

"At the creek, sir, same as time afore last. They did so well then that they couldn' think of a better place, the den bein' broke up."

"And when?"

"Thursday night, or ye med say Friday mornin', accordin' to the wind."

"They mean to run, and not to sink, I suppose?"

"Iss, sure, sir. Next day bein' Christmas, ye see, they must hev the stuff carried off at once. I'd axe 'ee, sir, not to lay hands on the men; seize the tubs, in course, but I don't want 'ee to do any hurt to the fellers."

"Well, I'll do what I can; but you know what soldiers are. They've been itching for months to fight Boney, and they want to keep their hand in, you know."

"True, sir. Ah well! the carriers will run fast enough; 'tis only Zacky Tonkin and the rest I be afeard for; they'll fight, 'tis sartin-sure."

"You're a thorough-paced scoundrel, you know, Doubledick," said the riding-officer. "'Pon my word, if it weren't my duty to stop smuggling by hook or by crook, 'twould give me the greatest pleasure in life to see you tarred and feathered. I warned you, you remember. You'll be caught one of these days, mark my words, and the money you're heaping up won't save you then, my man."

"Hee! hee!" laughed Doubledick uneasily. "Name it all, was there any other way to save myself from jail? 'Tis a risk, I own it; it do gie me the creeps in the night sometimes when I think o't. And be-jowned, sir, when you gie me the £50 for this job, I'll pack up my traps and go into other parts wi' my wife, and spend my old age in peace and quietness, if she'll let me. Ye won't stop me, sir?"

"Not I. 'Tis dirty work, and I'd rather fight the trade fair and square, 'pon my word I would."

"'Tis the last time, then, for me. And now I must be traipsin' home-along."

Mr. Polwhele accompanied him to the door. On the step Doubledick turned and said in low tones, his words, however, being distinct in the clear night air:

"Ye'll mind and not take Zacky, sir? I hain't no fancy for blood-money."

"I'll do what I can. Good-night."

He stood for a moment or two watching the innkeeper's receding form,

then turned to re-enter the house. But it happened that, in the very act of turning, he caught sight of a dark figure slinking away from a furze bush in Doubledick's wake. He slipped into the house, turned out the lamps in the passage and the room, and in a quarter of a minute came out again, the darkness completely veiling his movements. With swift steps he followed the two figures down the slope, drawing near to the second of them under cover of the bushes. Having assured himself that Doubledick was being deliberately shadowed, he bent low, rapidly made a circuit, and concealed himself behind a clump which the stealthy pursuer must pass. As the man came abreast of him, wholly engrossed in keeping the innkeeper in view, Polwhele suddenly sprang out, caught his victim by the throat so that he could utter no more than the faintest gurgle, and bore him to the ground. Then, whipping out his pistol, he whispered:

"If you make a sound I will shoot you. Get up and come with me."

Keeping a firm hand on the fallen man's collar, he lugged him to his feet, marched him back to the house, and thrust him through the still open door, which he bolted behind him.

"So 'tis you, Jake Tonkin," he said, as he relit the lamp.

"Iss, 'tis I. Let me go, Maister. Doubledick said 'twas I that split, the villain! Let me go. Scrounch me if the two-faced wretch don't suffer for this!"

"I'm afraid I can't let you go yet, my son," said the riding-officer. "Now 'tis no good kicking or shouting. Remain quiet, and in a day or two you shall go, safe and sound. If you give trouble I shall have to deal with you as your folk dealt with Penwarden."

Jake sullenly submitted. Mr. Polwhele gave him supper, then locked him into a room where the window was heavily barred.

"I am sick of this," he thought, as he returned to his own room. "'Tis well Doubledick is going, or, by George, there would be murder."

Next morning Sam Pollex, going down to the village to buy some raisins for a plum-pudding, overtook Susan Berry, John Trevanion's housemaid. "Aw, Ma'am, ye do look wisht, sure enough," said Sam, remarking the gloomy aspect of Maidy Susan's usually merry face.

"And so I be, Sam," she replied, "I wish I were to-home, I do."

"Now that be cruel to we, daze me if it bean't. Why do 'ee wish sech a cruel thing, Ma'am?"

"Why, to-morrer be Christmas Eve, and there'll be no ashton fagot, and no egg-hot, like us have to-home."

"What be they, Maidy?"

"Don't 'ee know that? Why, the fagot be made of ash-sticks tied about wi' nine twigs, and on Christmas Eve 'tis dragged to the Squire's hearth and set ablaze; and then we do dance and jump for cakes, and dive for apples in a tub o'

water. Oh, 'tis sech fun, you can't think! And then we drink egg-hot——"

"What's that, if it be so pleasin'?"

"Why, silly chiel, 'tis cider and eggs and spice, made as hot as 'ee can drink it."

"Aw, I know what that is. Mess is what we do name it, and as for fagot, we do call that mock, only it bean't sticks, but a mighty block o' wood. Squire don't hev it now, since he hev been so poor. But why don't 'ee axe yer maister if ye can do as ye do to-home?"

"I don't know what be come to Maister. He be all hippety-like—looks as grave as a church owl, and him goin' to be married, too. Pa'son be goin' to pray for un fust time o' Sunday."

"Well, marriage be a fearsome thing, I s'pose. I seed a weddin' up-along at church once, and theer was a little Noah's flood o' tears. I don't think I'll ever be married."

"You be only a chiel yet. But there now, 'tis ever since Maister brought they great lubbers into house, and gied 'em guns and swords and I don't know what all. Seems he be afeard o' summat. Do 'ee think that monster Boney will come and eat the poor childer here, Sam?"

"Not he. He dussn't do it. Don't 'ee be afeard, now, Maidy dear. I'll look out for un, and if I do see un I'll ring our bell so powerful loud that all the brave men in the country will run to defend 'ee."

"We've got a bell, too."

"Not sech a banger as ours, I warrant 'ee. I do wish Squire were rich; then we'd hev the mock, and a great big figgy pudden, not a little small one wi' half a pound o' figs in it; and Squire would axe 'ee and all the country to come and join us, and ye'd come in yer fine new gown that I'm goin' to gie ye. But theer, 'tis not to be, and 'twill only make us wisht to think o't."

"Look 'ee see, Sam: what a throng o' folk! Whatever is the matter?"

They had come within sight of the village green, where a crowd of men, women, and children were talking excitedly.

"What be all this stoor, Ike?" asked Sam of the young fisher.

"Why, Jake Tonkin can't be found nowhere. He wented up-along yestere'en to wood to get some mistletoe, and never come back."

"Never come back?"

"No. His mother be in a tarrible state, Zacky bein' away and all."

"Sure 'a didn' go wi' Zacky to Rusco?"

"Now that's foolish. Didn' I say 'a wented for mistletoe yestere'en, and Zacky sailed off in mornin'."

"So 'a did, to be sure. Here's riding-officer; let us tell him."

Mr. Polwhele rode up into the midst of the crowd.

"Well, neighbours, what's to do?" he cried.

"Jake Tonkin be gone a-lost, Maister," shouted a score of voices in answer.

"Lost, is he? He's big enough to take care of himself, surely. Isn't he with his father?"

"No, Maister," piped a small boy. "Zacky Tonkin be——"

"Wisht yer clatter!" cried the child's mother, catching him by the arm and shaking him.

"Who saw him last?" asked the riding-officer.

"Who seed un last?" repeated several voices. "Here be Un Tonkin; she'll tell to we."

"'A wented last night to get mistletoe, sir," said Mrs. Tonkin, with a pale, anxious face. "Never hev he stayed out all night afore, and I be afeard something bad hev come to un."

"Oh, dear no! I can't imagine anything of the kind," said the officer, cheerily. "Don't be down-hearted. He'll come home-along by-and-by as large as life. I'll ride to the wood and look about, and tell my men to search too. The young rascal! Up to some mischief, you may be sure. Go home, my good woman, and don't distress yourself, and you folks, instead of standing gossiping here, go and hunt. Christmas Day is coming, you know, and we must have Jake back in time for the parson's dinner."

But the day closed without the discovery of any trace of the missing lad, and some of Mrs. Tonkin's kind neighbours were already condoling with her on the loss of her only son, and assuring her that Zacky would be in a terrible way when he came home.

Mr. Mildmay and the riding-officer supped together before setting out, the one by sea, the other by land, for the scene of the expected run.

"Would to heaven we had never come to terms with Doubledick!" said Mr. Polwhele. "Never again for me, Mildmay. Set a thief to catch a thief, they say, but I don't know how you feel: I feel myself a mean rascal, old stager as I am at the game."

"Honestly, I agree with you, and having Jake Tonkin mewed up here complicates things desperately. The moment he is let loose he'll tell his father, and if I know the man, Doubledick's life won't be worth a snap of the finger."

"Well, I warned him. I couldn't foresee that Jake would come upon him in that accidental way. Scheme as we will, Mildmay, there's a Power that overrules us all."

"The best thing we can do now is to warn Doubledick. We've gone into partnership with the fellow, and we can't in honour keep silence. Give him a chance to escape."

"You're right. I'll call at the inn as I ride down, and tell him we have Jake

locked up here. That will give him about twelve hours' grace—time to clear away bag and baggage."

When the lieutenant went aboard his cutter, Mr. Polwhele entered the inn.

"Where's Doubledick?" he asked of the inn-keeper's wife.

"He be gone along to Trura, Maister," she replied, in her usual vinegary manner.

"What for?"

"Well, I don't know as it be any business o' yourn, but 'tis to buy some figs for the pa'son's dinner."

"Oh, well, if he comes back, tell him I want to see him first thing in the morning, will you?"

"He hain't done nawthin' agen the law."

"I'm glad of that. Don't forget my message."

Mr. Polwhele left, firmly convinced that Doubledick had become suspicious and already beat a retreat.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIRST

The Attack on the Towers

That night the Towers was heavy with an atmosphere of gloom. The Squire had remained the whole evening sunk in his chair, not reading, or smoking, speechless, his head bent upon his breast. He had heard from his lawyer that all efforts to transfer the mortgage had as yet proved fruitless: nobody wanted a bond on barren land. The next day but one was Christmas, and the Squire brooded on the melancholy thought that it would be the last Christmas he would spend in his old home. Occasionally he glanced at the motto inscribed above the lintel of the door:

> Trevanion, whate'er thy Fortune be,
> Hold fast the Rock by the Western Sea.

What a mockery the old legend seemed! He had held fast; now he felt as though some inexorable power were unclenching his nerveless fingers. And the bitterness of his mood was intensified by the foreboding that the old house, and his last rood of land, would go, as all the rest had gone, into the hands of the man

who had disgraced his name, and who bore him implacable enmity.

Dick went to bed early, sick at heart, unable to endure the mute misery upon his parents' faces. He meant to rise before it was light, for a purpose which, he sadly felt, he might never accomplish again. It had been his custom for several years to carry to the Parsonage on Christmas Eve a basket of fish of his own catching, as a present to his good friend the Vicar. It was a poor gift, but he had not the means to offer anything better, and Mr. Carlyon was always pleased with it, regarding the spirit in which the simple offering was made.

About an hour before dawn he wakened Sam, and after nibbling a crust, the two boys set off. Experience had taught them that this was the best time to fish at so late a season of the year. The air was damp and raw, with scarcely any wind, and as they issued from the house they shivered, and buttoned their coats high about their necks.

"We must go to the Beal for some tackle, Sam," said Dick. "That will warm us before we go down to the boat."

"Iss. I wish it were to-morrer. Pa'son's dinner will be summat to cheer a poor feller up, these wisht and dismal times. Do 'a think, now, Maister Dick, as we'll ever hev a real Christmas randy up at Towers, same as they do hev at Portharvan?"

"I'm afraid not, Sam. I'm afraid we shan't spend another Christmas at the Towers."

"Well, then, you and I had better go for sojers or sailors. I'm afeard I bean't high enough for a sojer. But sailors get prize-money, old Joe says, and I'd like that, 'cos then I could buy a thing or two for Maidy Susan—and Mistress, too: I wouldn' forget she. Maybe I'd get killed, fightin' the French, but dear life! it wouldn' matter much: we hain't got many friends. I don't s'pose Maidy Susan 'ud fall more 'n two tears, or maybe three."

"None at all, I should think," said Dick.

"Oh, I don't think so bad o' she as that. When I seed her yesterday she said she wished I could go to Dower House to-night. Maister John be goin' to a randy at Portharvan; he'll kiss his young 'ooman under the mistletoe, I reckon."

"And Susan wants you to go to the Dower House and kiss her, I suppose?"

"Now that's too bad, Maister. We bean't neither of us so forward as that. Maidy said she'd like me to go up-along and gie un some o' my merry talk, but jown me if my tongue 'ud run merry wi' things so bad up to home."

"You couldn't go: Father would never allow it. You'll have to be satisfied with the Vicar's nuts and candy, Sam."

They came to their den at the end of the Beal, and remained there for some little time arranging their tackle in the wan glimmer preceding the dawn. Then they emerged, and climbed up beside the big boulder to take a look at the sea,

over which a thin mist hung.

"Isn't that the *Isaac and Jacob*?" said Dick, pointing to a vessel tacking to make the fairway between the cliff and the reef.

"Iss, sure. Tonkin be come home wi'out a cargo, seemin'ly, unless he hev run it a'ready."

They watched the lugger creeping slowly toward the harbour. The tide was on the ebb, and there was not enough depth of water upon the reef to allow the vessel to head straight for the jetty. As she crept into the fairway Dick was struck with the unusual appearance of her deck. Amidships it was almost clear except for two or three men; but, herded under the low bulwarks on the weather side, out of sight from the harbour, were a score or more of men whom he recognised by slight indications in their dress to be foreigners. Almost instinctively Dick slipped behind the boulder, pulling Sam with him.

"That's very curious," he whispered, standing so that he could see without being seen.

On the lee side of the vessel, he noticed arms, legs, and here and there a red-capped head protruding from beneath tarpaulins, thrown with apparent carelessness on the deck. Two or three heads also appeared in the hatchway, suggesting that other men were on the companion below. But what struck Dick most of all was the fact that although Nathan Pendry held the tiller, there lolled against the bulwarks near him a stranger whose hat and coat were manifestly Cornish, but whose lower garments were as unmistakably of foreign cut. He was a short, stout man, and he held a pistol, which was pointed at the helmsman.

Dick was so much fascinated and wonderstruck by this extraordinary spectacle that for a few moments he neither spoke nor stirred.

"Be it Boney at last?" whispered Sam, his eyes wide with alarm.

"No, no: Boney would bring thousands. But I can't make it out. We'll run home, Sam, and tell Father."

Creeping round the boulder, and dipping their heads as long as there was any chance of being observed from the lugger, they set off at a breakneck run for the Towers. Dick dashed up to the Squire's room, and knocked at the door.

"Come in," said the Squire. He was awake—had indeed lain sleepless almost all night, thinking miserably of his affairs.

"Father," said Dick, entering, "Tonkin's lugger has just put in with a gang of Frenchmen on board. Pendry is at the helm; there's a fellow standing over him with a pistol. I didn't see Tonkin."

"What on earth does that mean?" cried the Squire, starting up. "Get me my boots, Dick; I'll pull on some clothes, and go up on the roof to take a look at them."

In a few minutes the Squire, Dick, and Sam were behind the parapet of the

principal tower, the Squire with his telescope in his hand. Lofty as their perch was, the jetty and the lower part of the village were not in sight, being concealed by the contour of the hill. But they could see the upper houses and the cliffs beyond; the church tower and the red roof of the Parsonage away to the left; and almost every yard of ground between the hilltop and the Towers.

"Shall I ring bell, Maister?" asked Sam.

"No; wait a little. We don't want to make ourselves a laughing-stock. There's nothing in Polkerran to make it worth any Frenchman's while to—Ha! I see it all. 'Tis a trick of Mildmay's, the sly dog. Do you see, Dick? He has disguised himself and his men as Frenchmen, and pounced on Tonkin's lugger with a fine crop aboard. Ha! ha! The neatest feat I ever heard of."

"I'm rather doubtful about that, sir," said Dick. "The faces I saw weren't Cornish."

"It would be a poor disguise if they were. You may be sure I'm right, and we shall have Mildmay coming up to breakfast by-and-by with a fine tale of tubs. I slept badly, Dick; I'll return to my bed for an hour or two."

Dick remained with Sam on the roof. He was not at all convinced that his father was right. It was difficult to conceive what object a band of Frenchmen could have in attacking so small a village, yet he felt sure that they were Frenchmen, and that their visit was not an ordinary smuggling affair. After a long look through his spy-glass he said to Sam:

"There's no smoke, no sound of firing—-no noise at all. We can't see anything here, Sam; let us take a run to the Beal again."

But at that moment he saw a man rise over the crest of the hill; immediately behind him came others. They were armed with muskets and cutlasses, and advanced rapidly and in a manner that suggested a definite goal.

"Off to the turret and pull the bell, Sam!" cried Dick. He rushed downstairs to his father's room again.

"Thirty or forty armed men are marching from the village, sir," he said. "I think they're coming to attack us."

"Bless my soul, what fools they must be!" said the Squire with a mirthless laugh. "There's nothing here worth firing a shot for. Ah! there's the bell. We'll see if 'tis more effective than last time we rang it. And we'll give them a warm reception, my boy, by George we will! Go and bring Reuben to me."

So crowded was the next hour, and so conflicting were the accounts given subsequently, in all honesty, by actors in the drama, that the writing of a clear and coherent narrative is a matter of some difficulty. Mr. Carlyon diligently questioned everyone who could throw a light on the separate incidents, and out of this material compiled a long chapter for his history of the parish. But the prolixity of his style, and his habit of interrupting his narrative with classical

parallels and references to abstruse authors, render his book quite unsuitable to the present age, and make it necessary to treat his manuscript as the modern historian treats his sources.

When the *Isaac and Jacob* was moored alongside the jetty, the tarpaulins that covered the deck were thrown aside, the men whom they had concealed sprang to their feet, and, joined by others who swarmed up the companion way, rushed ashore behind their leader, Jean Delarousse of Roscoff. There were but two or three of the Polkerran folk visible. A large number of the fishers were five or six miles away, having affairs of their own to attend to. The majority of the population were still abed. A dozen miners, due for the day shift in an hour's time, were breakfasting. Only the smoke rising into the air from the chimneys of their cottages gave sign of life.

The few men who were out and about fled incontinently to their homes at sight of the fifty determined Frenchmen, armed with muskets, cutlasses, and pistols, advancing across the few yards of open space that separated the jetty from the nearest houses. It was evident that the invaders had prearranged their operations. Twelve of their number separated from the main body and went off hastily in couples, three to the right, three to the left, until they reached the last dwelling in either direction. Then doubling up the hills to right and left, they posted themselves around the village in a half circle, at intervals of about a hundred yards. Their object manifestly was to prevent any villager from breaking through, and carrying news of the raid into the country beyond. The Dower House and the Towers were naturally not included in the cordon.

While this movement was being carried out, Delarousse led the rest of his force straight to the Five Pilchards. The door was already open; the miners usually paid an early visit to the inn before they started for their work. Delarousse on entering was confronted by an elderly woman of shrewish aspect, who stood like a dragon behind the shining taps.

"Ze Towers, vere Trevanion live—it is zat big house on ze cliff?" he asked.

Mrs. Doubledick nodded. Fright bereft her of speech.

"Vere is Doubledick?" asked the Frenchman.

The answer was a shake of the head; whereupon Delarousse, ejaculating "Ah, bah!" returned to his followers, who were collected about the entrance, and led all but six of them up the hill. Like a prudent general, he took care to secure his communications.

Though he presumed that Mrs. Doubledick's shake of the head signified ignorance of her husband's whereabouts, in this he was in error. Doubledick had returned home late at night, unaware of the impending crisis in his affairs.

His wife gave him Mr. Polwhele's message, and he anticipated a very pleasant interview with the riding-officer on his return from circumventing the smugglers. Rising early, he happened to see from his bedroom window the crowd of Frenchmen swarming from the lugger, and without waiting to finish dressing, he ran down to the taproom, pulled up a trap-door behind the bar, and descended into the capacious cellar beneath, having strictly charged his wife not to reveal his whereabouts. He was shaking with fear, rather of possible consequences which his imagination foresaw than of immediate bodily harm. Delarousse could scarcely fail to discover before long that Doubledick had given him misleading information, and he was a man whose wrath it was not wise to face.

Between thirty and forty Frenchmen, strong, hardy fellows, marched rapidly up the hill behind their leader, whose agility was remarkable in one so corpulent. They had just risen upon the crest when the clang of a bell struck upon their ears.

"En avant, mes gars!" cried Delarousse. "Courez, à toutes jambes!"

And being on fairly level ground, they broke into a double.

The Squire, being now convinced that the Towers, as the most conspicuous dwelling-house in the neighbourhood, was the object of the Frenchmen's raid, displayed none of that indecision and vacillation which so often beset him in the matters of every-day life. He was now keen, alert, and ready, as became a man who had served in the King's navy. He smiled grimly as he saw the Frenchmen hasting towards him, as yet half a mile away. "A pack of fools!" he thought; "but 'tis hard that I should be molested when on the brink of ruin."

In a few sharp, decisive words he bade Dick and Reuben close and bolt the doors and shutters, and haul against the former such heavy articles of furniture as they could move in the few minutes at their disposal. Meanwhile he himself collected several old muskets that were at hand, with powder and slugs, in some cases relics of ancient trophies of arms treasured by the family. If he could hold the enemy at bay even for a short time, their project would be ruined, for the alarm bell and the sound of shots would arouse the whole countryside, and unless the invaders were supported by other vessels, they must soon retire to the lugger. At the first glance he had seen that they were not French regular soldiers, and concluded that their landing was not the foretaste of a general invasion, but merely a chance filibustering raid.

In the turret Sam was pulling the bell-rope with short, quick jerks. His brain was in a whirl. The advance of the Frenchmen was hidden from him, but looking out of the narrow window in the opposite direction, he spied, less than a minute after the first clang, Joe Penwarden hurrying along towards the Towers as

fast as his old legs would carry him. Running to the opposite side of the chamber, where a door admitted to the house, he yelled down the stairs:

"Maister, here be old Joe a-comin'. Let un in by the back door."

"Run, Dick," said the Squire, "you're quickest. An addition to the garrison is welcome."

Dick flew to the back door, whither Sam had summoned Penwarden through the turret window. During these few seconds the strokes of the bell were very irregular, but they did not cease.

"What is it, Maister Dick?" said the old man, as Dick closed and barricaded the door behind him.

"A gang of Frenchmen are running to attack us. They landed from Tonkin's lugger about ten minutes ago. Go to Father, Joe; he's in the front room over the porch. I'm going to the roof to see what they are doing."

He leapt up the stairs three at a time, and emerged on the leads of the tower, whence, sheltered by the parapet, he could observe the enemy in safety. They were now within two or three hundred yards of the house. Dick was surprised that there was no sign of pursuers from the village. Now that the feeling between his family and the people was less acute, he had expected that the bell would already have summoned a concourse of fishers, miners, and men of all occupations. He was surprised, too, that the alarm was not echoed by the new bell which had recently been rigged up in the Dower House. Surely at such a moment personal feuds might well be forgotten, and private enemies unite to beat off a public foe. But between the Towers and the hill not a man was to be seen except the advancing Frenchmen. At the Dower House there was no sign of life or movement, a strange circumstance that set him wondering. Why was not John Trevanion alarmed at a French raid? Was it possible that he knew of it beforehand, approved it, had even arranged it? Having failed in some of his schemes hitherto, had he now joined hands with alien filibusters to deal his cousin a crowning stroke?

As his eyes ranged round, Dick suddenly caught sight of a large vessel looming in the mist in a straight line with the head of the Beal. Its shape was very indistinct and blurred, but there was a certain familiarity in its aspect, and a sudden conviction flashed upon Dick that it was the same vessel as he had seen twice before in unusual and mysterious circumstances. Surely it must be the notorious privateer, the *Aimable Vertu*, owned by Jean Delarousse. Why it should have come to an insignificant place like Polkerran, when it might have gained rich prizes on the high seas, was a question that puzzled him greatly, unless Trevanion had made an alliance with the Frenchman.

The Squire's dispositions to meet the threatening attack were as good as could be devised, having regard to the short breathing-space allowed him, and to the nature of his situation. A large rambling building like the Towers could not

be held for any length of time by a slender garrison of five. There were half-a-dozen points at which it could be assaulted simultaneously—the front door facing the village, the back door facing the sea, the stable-yard, the offices, the rooms and passages in the ruined portion. But the principal tower, flanking the porch, was in passable repair, and it was there that the Squire had determined to make a final stand. It contained two or three rooms approached by a stone staircase springing from near the front door. Mrs. Trevanion was sent by her husband to the topmost room. He posted himself, with Reuben and Penwarden, in the room over the porch, where the window-shutters had been loopholed, no doubt by some former owner of the Towers, though the Squire had never given the matter a thought. Dick he sent to the back of the house, instructing him to call Sam to his help if he saw fit.

"Neither for fire nor battle does the bell summon aid," he said bitterly. "Sam may as well save his energies."

His final instruction was that if the Frenchmen broke in, as seemed only too probable, they should all retreat to the tower, the entrance to which from the staircase was protected by a heavy, iron-studded oaken door. Believing that the invaders' object was loot and not slaughter, he scarcely anticipated personal damage, but supposed that the garrison would be allowed to remain in the tower unmolested while the rest of the house was sacked.

Delarousse, panting a little from his exertions, was as much alive to the risks and perils of his enterprise as the Squire could be. Success or failure hung upon minutes. But he had not earned his reputation as a daring and resourceful privateer undeservedly. His object was a very simple one. It was not bloodshed or rapine, but merely the seizure of the man who had grievously wronged him—John Trevanion, or, as he had known him in Roscoff, Robinson. Doubledick, to feed his private malice, had declared that John Trevanion lived in the Towers—the largest house upon the cliff. The Frenchman's little knowledge of the country had been gained solely by observation from the sea, and by the faint glimpses he had obtained on that dark and rainy night when he evaded the pursuit of the dragoons. He remembered that the house at whose door he had seen his enemy was nearer the top of the hill than the Towers; but he had no reason to doubt Doubledick's statement that the latter was now the residence of John Trevanion, and no one had told him that there were other Trevanions who had no dealings with John. It was therefore his whole-hearted belief that the Towers sheltered his bitterest foe which inspired his attack upon a man who had never injured him.

Utterly possessed by his purpose, he wasted no time in a vain summons to surrender. The bell was still clanging overhead. He had taken precautions to prevent interference from the village, where the absence of so many men on the scene of the expected run favoured his design. But he was not to know but that

the summons might draw armed men from every corner of the neighbourhood beyond the village, and his blow must be struck at once. Accordingly he made straight for the porch, and finding, as he had expected, that the door was fast closed, he put his pistol to the lock, and with one shot shattered it to splinters. But the door was held also by bolts and crossbars resting in staples, and further secured by a sideboard placed against it by Dick and Reuben, so that the breaking of the lock availed him nothing. Brought thus to a check, he stood for a few moments within the porch among his men to consider his next step.

Meanwhile the Squire at the last moment had hurried to the top of the tower, with a double object: to observe the movements of the enemy more clearly than was possible through the loophole of a shuttered window, and to scan the surrounding country for any sign of assistance. No one was at present in sight. The air was heavy; the wind was off shore; and in all probability the sound of the bell had not even reached Nancarrow's farm, the nearest house except the Parsonage, much less Sir Bevil Portharvan's place, two miles farther away.

He had given instructions before leaving Penwarden that the French were not to be fired on until they opened hostilities. With his wife in the building, he was determined not to draw upon himself by any premature act the reprisals of so formidable a gang of desperadoes. Now that the Frenchmen were within the porch, they were immune from musket fire, and he began to wonder whether his prohibition was not a mistake. As soon, however, as he heard the report of Delarousse's pistol, with a rapidity that might have surprised those who had only known him of late years, the Squire seized a large block of loose stone that formed part of the half-ruined parapet, and toppled it over on to the roof of the porch below. It fell upon the tiles with a tremendous crash, scattering fragments in all directions, and bounded off on to the gravel path. Though none of the Frenchmen was struck by the stone itself, or even by the splinters of the tiles, it was sufficiently alarming to drive them from the porch, and they scurried instantly into the open. Two muskets flashed upon them from the loopholes above; one man was hit by a slug, and hopped away on one leg, assisted by his comrades. At the same moment the bell ceased to clang. Hearing the shots, Sam rushed down the stairs to take his part in the fray. The whole body of Frenchmen had now withdrawn out of range, and the Squire saw the little stout man, their leader, carefully scanning the building, with the object, no doubt, of finding a weak spot to attack. Only two minutes had elapsed since the enemy made the first move.

Alarmed at the sudden silence of the bell, from which he concluded that its clanging had achieved its object, Delarousse despatched one of his men to the high ground northward to report the approach of any armed force. Meanwhile he himself made a rapid circuit of the Towers, keeping, if not out of range, at least beyond easy-hitting distance. The back entrance seemed to him a vulnerable

point, and the more promising, because it was not commanded by the tower, but only by the small window at which Dick was stationed. His ill-success at the front door made him resolute to go the shortest way to work at the back. He sent half-a-dozen men across the open stable-yard into the half-ruined stable to haul down one of the stout balks of wood that supported the roof, for use as a battering-ram. This movement was concealed from Dick by the angle of the building.

While his men were gone about this errand, Delarousse, impatient of the loss of time, took it into his head to summon the garrison to surrender. He trotted back to the front of the building, set his legs apart, and, lifting his eyes to the top of the tower, shouted a loud "Hola!" The Squire showed his head above the parapet, but did not reply.

"Hola!" repeated the Frenchman. "Trevanion! Render Trevanion; zen I go."

"A trick!" thought the Squire. "He thinks I'm worth a ransom!"

"Trevanion!" cried Delarousse again. "Ze ozers I not touch."

"I'll see what they say," shouted the Squire. "Anything to gain time," he thought.

Going to the door opening on the staircase he called for Dick.

"This fellow wants me, Dick," he said. "Goodness knows why! I suppose he imagines some rich imbecile will buy me back. If I surrender myself, he promises to spare the rest. Just run and see what your mother says: my old bones don't take kindly to those stairs."

Before Dick returned Delarousse lost patience and shouted for an answer. The Squire kept out of sight.

"Mother says you must not think of it for a moment," said Dick, running up again. "I knew she would."

"To tell the truth, so did I," replied his father. "But we have gained two or three minutes. Now to decline as civilly as possible—though he might at least Mounseer me, I think."

As soon as his head reappeared above the parapet, Delarousse shouted:

"Eh bien! You render Jean Trevanion?"

Father and son looked at each other. Dick's face expressed surprise mingled with relief; a strange smile sat upon the Squire's countenance.

"We give up nobody," he called down firmly. "Do your worst."

Dick thrilled with filial pride. It was a lesson in chivalry that he never forgot. A word from his father, he could not doubt, would have sent the Frenchmen in hot haste to the Dower House; but that word the Squire could not speak, even though John Trevanion was his worst enemy.

Delarousse spat out an oath, shook his fist at the impassive gentleman above him, and toddled off to the back, disappearing behind the outhouses.

"We'll see what the rascal is after now," said the Squire quickly, and followed Dick down the stairs.

For a minute or two the further proceedings of the assailants were hidden from view. Then the watchers saw, coming round the corner from the stables, four men bearing a stout twelve-foot post. Delarousse, immediately behind, urged them on with voluble utterance and vigorous play of hands.

"A battering-ram!" said the Squire. "I think, Dick, 'tis time to give them a warning."

Dick lifted his musket and fired through a loophole upon the men rushing forward. There was a cry from below; the effect of the shot could not be seen through the smoke; it was answered by a score of bullets pattering on the shutters. The Squire placed his musket to a second loophole. It was impossible to take aim; he fired at random; and another sharp cry seemed to tell that his slug had gone home. A babel of shouts arose. Peeping through the loopholes they saw that one of the four men bearing the post lay on the ground; he had let fall his end of the battering-ram. At the same moment there came the distant crackle of a fusillade. The sound goaded Delarousse to fury. He rushed forward to lift the dropped end of the post. But just as he was stooping, there was a loud shout from his left. He turned his head, without rising from the ground, and what he saw, in common with the spectators above, was three men half pushing, half dragging a fourth towards the leader of the party. Delarousse remained in his stooping posture, as though transfixed with amazement, while a man might count four. Then, springing to his feet, he rushed headlong towards the approaching group, drawing a pistol as he ran.

[image]

"DELAROUSSE RUSHED HEADLONG TOWARDS THE APPROACHING GROUP."

Up to that moment the fourth man had been passive in the hands of the three; but as soon as he caught sight of Delarousse leaping towards him, he jerked himself violently from the grasp of his captors, felled first one, then a second, with sledgehammer blows from right and left, and, slipping from the hands of the third, dashed with extraordinary speed along by the stable wall in the direction of the village. In ten seconds he was out of sight, and the whole band of Frenchmen, yelling fiercely, some discharging their pistols, turned their backs upon the Towers and doubled after the fugitive.

Dick darted from the room, and up the stairs to the roof, Sam hard upon

his heels, the Squire following at a pace that belied his melancholy allusion to his old bones. Penwarden also, hearing Sam's jubilant shout at the raising of the siege, left his post at the front, and clambered up after the others, muttering "Dear life! what a mix-up the world is!" Leaning over the parapet, the four watched the strangest chase that ever was seen. The fugitive came to the wicket-gate leading out of the grounds, and took it with a flying leap, with the crowd of Frenchmen in full cry behind him. Some, like Delarousse himself, bore a burden of flesh and forty years; others were younger and slimmer, and these, impelled by the furious cries of their leader, leapt the gate in turn, the last of them catching his foot in the top and coming sprawling to the ground.

Their quarry, crossing a strip of land that still belonged to the Squire, came to the fence recently erected around the grounds of the Dower House. It was six feet high, a formidable obstacle to a man of his bulk and years. He clutched the top of it, heaved himself up, rolled across it sideways, and disappeared on the other side, wrenching the tail of his coat from the hands of the foremost Frenchman. In a trice the pursuer scrambled up after him, threw himself over, and also disappeared. Of the other members of his party, some scaled the obstacle with more or less facility; others, baulked by it, ran to right and left to find a path. Delarousse, whose stature and build forbade any athletic feat, yet disdained to leave the direct course, and called to two of his men to hoist him up. For an instant he sat swaying on the top of the fence; then he too dropped like a falling sack. Of all the thirty odd Frenchmen there were now only two or three to be seen.

But in a minute or two the hunt again came fully into view from the lofty tower. The fugitive sped along with amazing swiftness, making a straight line for the Dower House. Behind him, strung at intervals over two fields, poured the impetuous Frenchmen. One or two were close at his heels; the rest followed, each according to his ability.

"They've catched un!" cried Sam, his eyes dilated with excitement. "No, be-jowned if they have. Got away! Yoick! Yo-hoy! Now then, Frenchy! Ah, I thought ye'd do it, now you've smashed yerself. No, he's up again! Halloo!"

The side door of the Dower House stood half-open. The fugitive drew nearer and nearer to it; the pursuers seemed to make still more violent exertions to overtake him before he reached it. A few yards more! Ah! he was inside: the door was closing. But before it was quite shut, the first pursuer flung himself forward and thrust his musket within. To close the door was now impossible. For a few seconds the Frenchman appeared to be engaged in a fierce trial of strength with the persons inside. Two or three of his companions joined him; they threw

themselves together upon the door; it yielded; and they dashed into the house.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SECOND

John Trevanion in the Toils

With the aid of imagination's magic boots we skip now from the Towers to the village, and see what was happening there.

The *Isaac and Jacob* lay alongside the jetty, in charge of half-a-dozen Frenchmen who lolled lazily about the deck. Nathan Pendry, who had steered the vessel into harbour, reclined, the picture of scowling discontent, against the bulwarks. Below, in the dark, reeking hold, trussed like fowls, lay Isaac Tonkin, Simon Mail, and two more of the most respected smugglers of Polkerran.

It appeared from Tonkin's story, told many a time in after years to the breathless company in the parlour of the Three Jolly Mariners, that on arriving in Roscoff to purchase his Christmas cargo, he had been sought out by Jean Delarousse, whose customer he had formerly been. The Frenchman did not complain of Tonkin's desertion, nor did he seek a renewal of their trade relations; his sole object was to persuade the Cornishman, by means of a heavy bribe, to deliver John Trevanion into his hands. Tonkin had his grievance against Trevanion. He felt sore at having had to play second fiddle to the younger man in recent smuggling transactions. But being an honest fellow, and loyal in grain, he rejected Delarousse's offer with indignant scorn, and refused to believe what he understood of the tale poured into his ears in broken English, of a long course of deceit and fraud by which, as Delarousse alleged, Trevanion had enriched himself at his partner's expense. The Frenchman had appeared to take his refusal in good part, and Tonkin, having freighted his lugger, put to sea on his return voyage, intending to run his cargo at the creek in the small hours of Friday morning as arranged.

The *Aimable Vertu*, Delarousse's privateering craft, lay in Roscoff harbour. Tonkin was only a mile or two at sea, when he noticed that the privateer was coming up astern. This circumstance at first gave him no concern; Delarousse was doubtless setting forth on one of his forays. But soon he began to suspect, from the course held by the larger vessel, that he was being chased, or at least dogged. The *Isaac and Jacob* was a very swift vessel, and, laden though she was, her master hoped to be able to maintain his lead until nightfall, and then to es-

cape under cover of the darkness. But he was not long in discovering that his lugger was no match in speed for the privateer. The short dusk of the December evening was closing down upon the sea when the *Aimable Vertu* came within range. The lugger's armament consisted of one small carronade; the Frenchman had a broadside, which at a single discharge would have shattered the lesser craft to splinters. When, therefore, Tonkin was hailed and bidden to heave-to, he chose the sensible, indeed the only practicable, course, and obeyed. Delarousse and a boarding party took possession of the lugger; in spite of vigorous protests, Tonkin and his crew were bound and laid by the board, and, room having been made for them in the hold by the removal of several tubs, they were carried below. The two vessels then in company continued on their course for the English coast.

Favoured by the light mist that hung over the Channel during the night, the privateer escaped discovery by any English cruisers or revenue-cutters that might have been in the neighbourhood. When, however, she approached the rugged Cornish coast, the mist became a danger, and Delarousse had Tonkin fetched from below, and ordered him to pilot the vessels into Polkerran harbour. This the humiliated mariner flatly refused to do, persisting in his refusal in spite of the entreaties, curses, and menaces of his captor. He was carried back by ungentle hands to his noisome lair, and Pendry, a man of less backbone, proved to be more amenable to the Frenchman's commands. Under his skilful pilotage, the lugger safely made the harbour, the privateer standing some distance out at sea, to watch events.

Now Tonkin, as has already been said, was a man of enormous strength, and as the pages of this history have shown, of great courage and resolution also. Nor was he lacking in prudence or common-sense; witness his ready surrender of the lugger when refusal would have meant his being blown out of the water. The same common-sense restrained him from struggling against impossible odds, both when he was trussed up, and afterwards when the vessel was manned by fifty or sixty well-armed Frenchmen. But so soon as he felt the lugger lightly graze the jetty, and knew by the rush of hurrying feet on deck that the great majority of his captors had gone ashore, he began to strain at his bonds. The Frenchmen had done their work of trussing capably enough, and, in the case of ninety-nine men out of a hundred, no doubt there would have been no danger of its being undone. But Tonkin's muscles were hard as iron; he had the strength of a horse. After a few minutes' straining, the rope about his wrists gave way; to release his legs was then easy. Delarousse having gone through his pockets before trussing him, he was without a knife, and had to loosen with his hands the ropes wherewith his comrades were tied. As soon as the first man was liberated, he set to work on the bonds of another, and within a few minutes after Tonkin

had released himself, all the men were free.

Until the lugger reached the harbour, a number of the Frenchmen had clustered on the companion, and at its foot. When the time came for them to dash ashore, they scrambled in hot haste through the hatchway on to the deck, not thinking to batten down the hatch. As soon, therefore, as Tonkin was free, he rapidly planned how to escape from the hold with his men, when they had recovered the full use of their partially numbed limbs. He first felt about in the darkness for articles that would serve as effective weapons, and discovered a marlinspike, the hammer he used for driving spigots into the tubs, and several balks of timber that were employed for preventing the tubs from rolling. Each man armed himself. Long experience of smuggling had taught them to move quickly without noise, and, led by Tonkin, whose agility seemed in no wise lessened by his bulk, they swarmed swiftly through the hatchway.

The men left in charge of the vessel were leaning over the bulwarks, smoking, and envying their comrades at the inn, who, finding that the villagers showed no disposition to interfere with them, had seized the opportunity to refresh themselves at the expense of the innkeeper. Before the idle spectators on the deck could turn and form up to meet the rush, Tonkin and his men were upon them. A few swift, sharp strokes of the fishers' nondescript weapons, and the Frenchmen were lying senseless on the deck.

Without the loss of a moment the Cornishmen leapt the bulwarks and scampered along the jetty. They were half-way to the inn before the careless sentinels in the parlour heard their footsteps and ran out to see what was happening. Forming in front of the door, they brought their muskets to the shoulder and delivered a scattered volley; but surprise, haste, and strong liquor combined to spoil their aim, and none of the fishers was hit except Simon Mail, who dropped his spike with a yell and sat down on the cobbles, *hors de combat.* The Frenchmen had no time either to reload or to retreat. The fishers, burly men all, charged straight at them and struck four to the ground, the other two taking to their heels and starting to run up the hill towards their leader. But as if by magic the neighbourhood of the inn was suddenly alive with figures. The fishermen and miners, who had remained hitherto cowering in their cottages, rushed out the moment they could do so safely. The fugitives were caught and held; a fierce crowd surrounded the others; and in a few minutes all six, bruised and battered, lay in a row against the inn wall.

Meanwhile Tonkin had dashed into the inn, pulled up the trap-door leading to the cellar, and descended into the depths. Doubledick, whom the sound of shots had caused to shake like a jelly, heard the heavy clump of the fisher's boots, and shrank behind a large tun in a corner of the cellar. Unaware of his presence, Tonkin hastened to the opposite corner, where, in a cunningly contrived recess,

lay a store of firearms and ammunition, kept there for use against the King's officers when required. It was now to be turned to a more legitimate purpose. Tonkin seized as many muskets as he could carry, and hurried with them up the ladder, sending down for more those of his men who were not occupied with the Frenchmen. By the time these latter were secured, arms had been served out to the fishers who had escaped from the lugger, and to the most likely of the others. Then a compact body of thirty well-armed men followed Tonkin up the hill.

In order to trace clearly the course of events in that crowded hour of Polkerran's history, it becomes necessary to glance at what had happened at the Dower House.

John Trevanion had become so accustomed to the smuggling operations, and it was so much a part of his policy to keep himself in the background in these matters, that it did not occur to him to rise early in order to learn what luck had attended the run which he had expected to take place at the creek, during the night or in the small hours of that morning. Having a perfectly easy conscience, and the comfortable expectation that he would be richer by two hundred pounds when he awoke, he slept as placidly as a child, and did not become aware that anything unusual was occurring until a repeated rapping at the door by Susan Berry, startled out of her wits, at length penetrated his slumbering intelligence.

"All right," he called drowsily. "What's the time?"

"I don't know, sir," cried poor Susan through the door. "Please, sir, there be a passel o' men firing shots at the Towers."

"Nonsense!" said Trevanion.

"'Tis gospel truth, sir. There be hundreds o' men shoutin' and hollerin', and Cook be fainted dead away in kitchen."

"Fling cold water on her, Susan. There's nothing to be afraid of. They're shooting rabbits, I've no doubt."

Trevanion's thought was that the smugglers had been checkmated at the creek, and then, in their fury, had attacked the Towers, believing that their discomfiture was due to an alliance between the Squire and the revenue officers. His chagrin at the loss of his expected profits was not so profound as his delight in the thought that the enmity he had so carefully fostered was bearing such rich fruit. Far be it from him to interfere. But being now effectually awakened, he bade Susan to return to the kitchen, dressed quickly, and went to an upper window whence he could see something of what was going on. The Towers was, however, too far away, and the air too misty, for him to observe the operations so closely as he would have liked, and, curiosity and malicious pleasure overcoming his prudence, he determined to set forth and watch from a more convenient

standpoint the mischief which he hoped was afoot. But wishing not to attract attention, he forbade his household to leave the premises, issued by the back door, and slunk round the inside of one of his high fences.

He had advanced about half-way to the Towers when he was startled to hear shots behind him, from the direction of the village. The sound brought him to a sudden halt, and a sickening misgiving seized him. Had the firing begun in the village, there is little doubt that he would have at once suspected the attack of which he had long been secretly in dread. But the fact that the Towers was being assaulted, so soon after the run was to have taken place, had thrown him off his guard. Now, in a flash, he remembered what Doubledick had said about his interview with Delarousse, and the misleading information given to the Frenchman. At the time, and since, he had been somewhat sceptical of the innkeeper's veracity, but he began to think that his statement had, after all, been true. At any rate, it was the Towers that was in danger; the Dower House was at present safe; and after a brief pause of hesitation, he turned about and hurried back in the direction of his own house.

But he had scarcely taken half-a-dozen steps when, from behind a bush close by, there rose a red-capped figure, and Trevanion looked straight at the muzzle of a firelock. He stopped, and before he could collect his wits, two other figures joined the first. "C'est lui!" cried one of the Frenchmen. They were three of the sentries whom Delarousse had placed around the village, and were hastening to rejoin their leader in advance of the band now dashing up the hill. Trevanion was so much taken aback as to be incapable of resistance. All that he did when the men roughly seized him was to protest that a mistake had been made. "Ah! ah!" said one of his captors. "On ne s'en trompe pas; pas de tout." The other two each took one of Trevanion's arms, and marched him at a great pace through a gate in the fence towards the Towers, the third man bringing up the rear. What happened when Trevanion and Delarousse came face to face has already been related.

Maidy Susan, when Trevanion had left the house, showed herself strangely callous to the sad plight of Cook. Convinced that the Corsican Ogre had at last effected his long-threatened landing, she wondered in her simple soul why her master had not ordered the alarm bell to be rung, and the men servants to seize their arms and sally forth to defend their country. She peeped in at the kitchen, saw that Cook had recovered sufficiently to fan herself and scream, and then ran upstairs to watch what was going on. Only a minute or two afterwards, Trevanion broke from his captors and fled, the yelling Frenchmen in full cry behind.

"'Tis he! 'Tis Boney!" cried Susan.

She clutched at the casement frame for support, then suddenly flew down-

stairs like a young deer. It was she who held the door open, she who was forced back by the onrush of the infuriated Frenchmen. She crouched behind the door until the last of them, Delarousse himself, passed, then sped to the top of the house and began frantically to pull the bell-rope. Meanwhile the men whom Trevanion had been at such pains to drill had fled towards the village, and fallen into the hands of Delarousse's sentries.

Trevanion darted along the passage and up the stairs like a fox seeking cover from the hounds. He flung himself into his room, slammed and bolted the door, caught up a pistol, and stood, panting from haste and terror, in the middle of the floor. He heard the loud and rapid tramp of his pursuers drawing near.

"Keep out, or I'll shoot you!" he cried.

The Frenchmen laughed him to scorn. He was one; they were many. They set their shoulders to the door; the timbers cracked, gave way; a bullet whizzed harmlessly over their heads; and bursting into the room, they seized their victim and dragged him out and down the stairs again. Delarousse met them at the foot. Gasping for breath, he ordered some of his men to bind Trevanion's arms behind his back and take him down to the lugger, others to set fire to the house.

"Ah! scélérat!" he bellowed. "Tu es à moi!"

Scarcely had the words left his lips when one of his band, who had been wounded by a shot from the Towers, hurried in with the news that a party of men were in pursuit of them. Confiding Trevanion to the charge of four of his most trusty followers, Delarousse collected the rest, and led them to the front of the house, which the newcomers were said to be approaching. At the end of the drive, where it branched from the road, was Tonkin with his company of fishermen and miners.

Tonkin had led his men up the hill with more haste than discretion. When they reached the top they were blown, and for some minutes had to moderate their pace. They could not see from the road what was happening behind the fences, and had come midway between the Dower House and the Towers, at the same time as Trevanion arrived abreast of them in the opposite direction. But the spectators on the tower had seen them. The moment Trevanion entered his door, the Squire, with Dick, Sam, and Penwarden, hurried down the stairs.

"Hang it, Dick, they're Frenchmen!" cried the Squire, his fighting blood roused. "We must clear the rascals out."

On reaching the ground he dispatched Sam to tell Tonkin that the Frenchmen were now going in the other direction, and hurried on with the others, intending to join the fishers at the Dower House. He arrived in time to see Tonkin's men fire a volley at the Frenchmen at the windows. Little damage was done; Delarousse did not return the fire. He had achieved the object of his raid, and had no desire to enter into useless hostilities. Having taken stock of the enemy, he

withdrew his men into the house, which was already filling with pungent smoke.

Tonkin halted his men for a moment in order to recover breath. It looked as if he would have to take the house by storm, a difficult task in the face of odds. But he was a man of bulldog courage, if no tactician. Smarting with the indignity he had suffered, and without stopping to think that Delarousse might have no designs except against Trevanion, he ordered his men to reload, and prepared to lead them to the attack.

Delarousse, however, had taken advantage of the momentary lull to withdraw his men through a long window in the wall of the house facing the village. The result was that when Tonkin, after so much delay as was necessary for his men to regain their breath and prime their muskets, led them at the charge up to the house and broke through the door, he found the house deserted, and the enemy in full retreat down the hill. He rushed after them, eager to overtake them before they reached the village. Some of his men had noticed that the house was on fire, but in their excitement none stayed to extinguish the flames, nor even to warn or assist the person who was still ringing the bell.

By this time the Squire, with Dick and Penwarden, skirting the grounds of the house, had joined Tonkin's party, and was hurrying with them down the hill. The Frenchmen had more than a hundred yards start, and on the descent proved to be as fleet of foot as their pursuers. On reaching the first of the houses, Delarousse was met by the rest of his cordon, who, now that the matter had come to a fight, saw that they could employ themselves more usefully than in keeping guard. Now the Frenchmen turned at bay, and checked the pursuit with a scattered volley.

"Empty your muskets, then charge the ruffians!" shouted the Squire, taking command as of right.

The Cornishmen responded with a cheer. A shower of slugs flew through the air, but the Frenchmen having scattered, and many of them being protected by the angles of houses on the winding road, only one or two were hit. There was no time for either party to reload. The pursuers dashed forward, wielding cutlasses, and their muskets as clubs. The pursued stood to meet the charge; there were a few moments of hand-to-hand conflict; Tonkin's burly figure was conspicuous in the thickest of the fray, wielding his musket like a flail; but the numbers of the Frenchmen prevailed, and the Squire recalled the men, to re-form them and charge again. From this point there was a straggling fight down the hill to the neighbourhood of the inn. The Squire, with Dick, Penwarden, and Tonkin close about him, led a series of rushes against the retreating enemy, whose numbers were always sufficient to give them check.

On coming to the inn, which was within a short distance of the jetty, Delarousse saw with alarm that his escape had been cut off. This was not due to any

prevision on Tonkin's part. He had been too eager to follow up the Frenchmen to consider ultimate contingencies. But his defect as a tactician was supplied by a man whom no one had hitherto suspected of any capacity in that direction, and who enjoyed henceforth, to the day of his death, a very exalted reputation in Polkerran on the strength of this one achievement.

Pennycomequick, the cobbler, perceiving that the Frenchmen on the lugger were apparently stunned, hastily got together a little party of men and boys, boarded the vessel, clapped the Frenchmen under hatches, and then punted out some distance from the jetty, towing the boats that had lain drawn up on the little beach. No one as yet knew that the Frenchmen had not sailed all the way from Roscoff in the lugger; the *Aimable Vertu* in the offing was concealed by the mist that still shrouded the sea. Finding himself thus cut off from communication with his vessel, Delarousse, who had released the men trussed up by Tonkin, with ready resource flung himself into the inn, and ordered his company to reload and occupy the windows. The Squire, now as keen as when he had been a young lieutenant, saw instantly that, the superiority in force being with the Frenchmen, the possession of the inn gave them an additional advantage which would render an attack hazardous to the last degree. He called a halt, to consider the next move.

At this moment the clatter of a horse's hoofs was heard from round the corner leading to the hill, and Mr. Carlyon rode down.

"What's all this, Trevanion?" he cried.

"A pack of rascally Frenchmen have raided the place, Vicar," answered the Squire, "and are now holding the inn."

"Bless my life! What impudent scoundrels!"

He dismounted, nimbly for a man of his years.

"Give me a gun," he cried. "Here, you—I forget your name—get on my horse and ride to Truro as fast as you can and bring all the able-bodied men and any old soldiers you can find there. You, Benjamin Pound, go round to Doubledick's stables, take a horse, ride to Portharvan, and ask Sir Bevil from me to call out the yeomanry."

"Please, yer reverence, I can't ride a hoss," said the young fisher addressed.

"Can't ride! You must, or find someone who can. Off with you, or you shan't come to my dinner to-morrow. Bless my soul! Raiding on the day before Christmas! Can't we turn 'em out, Trevanion?"

"Impossible, Vicar, unless we're prepared to lose half our men. And then we'd fail. One man behind a wall is equal to four outside."

"What did Doubledick mean by letting the villains into the inn? How did they come here? I don't see any vessel."

Tonkin was explaining the circumstances when, down the stairs beside the inn wall, came Doubledick, pale, dishevelled, and covered with dust. Becoming

alarmed for his safety when the inn was invaded by the Frenchmen, he had made his way out by a secret passage leading up the slope into a house abutting on the stairway. He came up to the group silently and unobserved, and listened to Tonkin's explanations and the further account given by the Squire of the attack on the Towers and the subsequent pursuit and capture of John Trevanion. Then he pressed forward to the Vicar's side.

"Ah! yer reverence," he said with unction, "'tis a judgment, 'tis indeed. It do cut me to the heart to say so, but Maister John be the wicked cause of this affliction."

"What do you mean, Doubledick?" asked the Vicar, with a sidelong glance at the Squire.

"Do 'ee mind, sir, that night a while ago when the sojers wer ridin' about country arter a runaway prisoner? Well, I own 'a was for a little small time in my inn; I'd never seed un afore, and didn' know he wer a runaway till 'twas too late to gie un up." (Doubledick, it will be observed, was not over-scrupulous as to his facts.) "While he was here, Maister John came down from Dower House and seed un, and they hollered at each other in the French lingo till my ears wer drummin'. Ah! 'twas then I first had my mispicions o' Maister John."

"Cut your story short, man," said Mr. Carlyon impatiently.

"Well, then, yer reverence, when I went over to France, the Frenchy telled me as how Maister John, Robinson by name, wer his partner for ten year, and robbed him right and left. Ah! he was a clever rogue, too, keepin' in the background so as our Polkerran men shouldn' see un when they wented over to—to sell fish. And Delarousse swore to me, 'a did, that he'd take vengeance on him, and now he be come to do it, sure enough. If I may make so bold, I'd say let the Frenchy take Maister John and leave us in peace. I don't want to see my inn riddled wi' shots and crumbled about my ears."

"Iss, and so say I," cried Tonkin. "Delarousse telled me the self-same story, but I didn' believe un; no, I couldn' believe as Maister John were sech a 'nation rogue. I must believe it, now Doubledick hev telled us all. Let un go, sir, and be-jowned to un."

Fierce cries of approval broke from the crowd, but the Squire held up his hand for silence.

"Let me have a word, neighbours," he said. "We're Cornishmen, every man of us, and good subjects of King George. We can't allow a French raiding party to arrest a man on English soil, whatever his character may be. 'Tis flat treason; what do you say, Vicar?"

"I agree with you. As a magistrate, neighbours, I say we must do our duty."

"I won't go agen Squire and pa'son," cried Tonkin. "I stand up for King Jarge."

"King Jarge for ever!" shouted the crowd.

"Well, then," said the Vicar, "we'll hold our ground here until the yeomanry come up, and then we'll storm the inn. God save the King!"

At this moment Dick pushed his way through the crowd.

"The privateer is under weigh, sir," he cried, "and standing in for the harbour."

All eyes were turned towards the sea. The *Aimable Vertu*, which had been lying off the headland, almost concealed by the mist, was steering for the fairway, evidently with the intention of coming to the assistance of the landing-party.

"Where's Mr. Mildmay?" cried the Squire. "'Tis for him to capture that rascally privateer."

Doubledick looked conscious; Tonkin and his fishers exchanged glances, and thought of the cargo in the hold of the *Isaac and Jacob*.

"We can do it, sir," cried Dick suddenly. "She must pass beneath that big rock at the head of the Beal. It doesn't stand steady, and a good push would hurl it over into the fairway. Let the vessel come in, and then block up the channel; she'd be caught then."

"A capital notion," said the Vicar. "Off with you, Dick; take two or three men with you. Have a care not to throw yourself over too."

Dick hurried off with a few of the younger men. When they arrived at the landward end of the Beal, the privateer was slowly threading her course through the fairway towards the jetty, a man in the chains sounding busily. She crept in, and had come within a hundred yards of the jetty when Dick and his companions reached the boulder. They heard the rattle of her anchor; she swung broadside to the village, and the spectators on shore saw a formidable row of guns grinning from her portholes. Dick and his companions set their shoulders to the rock.

The door of the inn meanwhile had opened, and Delarousse appeared, holding aloft a musket, to which a white cloth was attached as a flag of truce.

"I vill speak viz you," he said, pointing to the Squire, whom he recognised.

"Shall I parley with the rascal?" asked the Squire of Mr. Carlyon.

"Yes. We wish to avoid bloodshed, but it must be unconditional surrender, Trevanion."

The Squire stepped towards the inn, meeting Delarousse half-way.

"You speak French, monsieur?" said the latter courteously.

"Not a word, sir," replied the Squire.

"Ah! C'est dommage! I speak English, bad, monsieur. I make a meestake: I demand pardon. I not know ze house vas to you; pardon ze meestake, monsieur."

"We'll say no more about that, sir," said the Squire. "I am willing to believe you had no wish to attack me. But this is an act of war, sir. You must at once set your prisoner free, and surrender, every one of you."

"Ah, no, monsieur," returned the Frenchman with a smile. "I haf to say your demand is ridicule. I make vun sign: bah! ze shot from my vessel zey strike ze village all to pieces. Voyez! Ze boats come now for me. You stop me? No."

The Squire turned and looked in the direction of Delarousse's outstretched hand. Two boats had been lowered from the deck of the privateer, and, filled with men armed to the teeth, were now pulling for the jetty. It was clear that under the vessel's broadside no attempt to check this fresh invasion could be successful.

"You see?" continued the Frenchman, who had watched the expression on the Squire's face. "I not quarrel viz ze people here; mon Dieu, no! Zey are my friends; viz zem I haf excellent affairs, zey profit us both. Ze man zat injure me, I haf him. Vat avantage of resistance? None. Zen I depart: all is finish vizout—vizout combat sanguinaire."

"Your proposal——" began the Squire, but at this moment a dull splash was heard from the direction of the Beal. Dick and his assistants had displaced the rock, which rolled over the edge, bounded on to the ledge whence Dick had made his dive, and then plunged almost into the middle of the fairway. Even at that distance a few feet of it could be seen projecting above the surface.

"Sacré nom d'un chien!" cried Delarousse, startled out of his equanimity. "Vat is zis?"

"Some of my men have blocked up the fairway with a large rock," replied the Squire. "It is now impossible for your vessel to clear the harbour."

"But zis is perfidy, monsieur!" cried the furious Frenchman. "Ve speak as parlementaires; zere is arrest of hostilities; ma foi! zis is ze perfidy of English."

"Not at all, sir. The men had already gone to do their work; I could not stop them. You see your position, sir. I advise you to consult with your men and surrender at discretion."

They parted. Delarousse, livid with anger, returned to the inn; the Squire rejoined his party.

"We have the rascals," said Mr. Carlyon gleefully.

"I axe yer pardon, sir," said Tonkin, "but don't 'ee think we'd better let the Frenchies go in peace arter all? They guns 'ud knock the village to dust, and there's the women and childer to think of."

"Ah! that's true," said the Vicar, and taking Mr. Trevanion aside, he began to discuss the matter with him. While they were still earnestly talking, there was a shout. They broke apart, and turning, saw that Delarousse had solved the problem in his own way.

The inn fronted the jetty, but on its southward side a narrow lane ran between the blind walls of the pilchard fishers' salting-houses. The further end of this was nearer by a few yards to the sea. Rendered desperate, the Frenchman saw in the conversation between the two gentlemen an opportunity for making

a dash. He ordered four of his men to throw open a low window giving on the lane, and to rush John Trevanion as quickly as possible down to the jetty, while he maintained his position with the rest at the front windows. Then, as soon as he was informed that the four men had arrived at the end of the lane, he gave the word for all to follow. Before the besiegers were aware of this sudden movement, the Frenchmen had gained a start of more than fifty yards.

"After them, my men!" cried the Squire, when he saw them rushing from behind the wall of the salting-house towards the jetty.

The whole party poured in pursuit. But by the time they reached the shoreward end of the jetty, John Trevanion had been lowered into the first of the privateer's boats. The second had towed back a number of the craft which Pennycomequick had removed from the shore, the lugger itself, however, with the cobbler and his helpers aboard, still lying in the harbour on the inner side of the reef. Into these boats Delarousse and his men leapt, and pulled off swiftly to the privateer. They had no sooner left the jetty than a puff of smoke issued from one of the vessel's portholes; there was a roar, and a round shot crashed into the planking, smashing several yards of it, and sending up splinters almost into the eyes of the Squire.

"'Tis no good, Trevanion," cried the Vicar. "We shall all be slaughtered if we line up and fire at them. They've got your cousin, and we can't help it."

"But they can't get out of the fairway, and there's no water on the reef," said the Squire. "If only Mildmay were here!"

He was soon to see that he had not reckoned with the seamanship of Jean Delarousse. The first of the boats pulled at full speed towards the fairway, receiving from the deck of the privateer a sounding-line as she passed. From the second boat Delarousse climbed to the deck of his vessel. The pilot crew, having sounded and measured the width of the channel between the fairway and the cliff, signed to their captain that he might proceed. It seemed to Dick impossible that the vessel should win through, and he watched with unstinted admiration the Frenchman's skilful seamanship. Delarousse ordered the anchor to be tripped, and the vessel moved slowly towards the fairway, close-hauled on the starboard tack. When she reached the rock, she seemed to graze the cliff as she passed into the narrow channel; but with Delarousse himself at the helm she passed safely through. Then, there being a fair wind on her starboard quarter, Delarousse hauled up his courses, mainsail and foresail, and threw his foreyard aback. The check on the ship's way gave him time to take aboard the boat, which had been moored to the rock, the rest of his crew having already clambered up the side from the other boats. These were then cast adrift; the foreyard filled, and the

Aimable Vertu stood out to sea.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-THIRD

The Price of Treachery

One stride of our magic boots takes us from Polkerran to the creek, five miles away, where another little drama was being enacted.

Doubledick's information to Mr. Polwhele was that the *Isaac and Jacob* might be expected to arrive at the creek from Roscoff about five o'clock in the morning. Some little time before that hour, therefore, the riding-officer took up his position in a hollow a hundred yards beyond the stream. In order that no suspicion might be engendered in the village, he had not brought his usual assistants, but was accompanied by a posse of excisemen from Newquay, and a half-troop of dragoons from Plymouth. At the same time Mr. Mildmay's cutter anchored in a sheltered cove northwards, having sailed in precisely the opposite direction on the previous night, in order to deceive the smugglers.

Mr. Polwhele had not long posted himself when some thirty strapping fellows, fishers and farm-hands for the most part, marched down the sloping ground south of the creek, and congregated at a spot where the bank was a foot or two above the water, a convenient place for the debarkation of the lugger's cargo. The murmur of their voices could be heard by the hidden preventive men across the stream, and Mr. Polwhele chuckled at the thought of the fine haul he was about to make. The excisemen with him were old hands, and knew how to keep silence, and the dragoons, although they hated this revenue work, were too well disciplined to hazard the failure of the ambuscade. Their horses had been left tethered half a mile away.

The minutes passed; five o'clock came, and both parties were on the alert for any sound from seaward. The wind blew from the north-east, so that it was not at all surprising that the lugger should be late. But when six o'clock came they began to be restless. It was tiring and comfortless, waiting in the misty gloom of a raw December morning. The sky was pitch dark. Neither party could see the other. The murmurs of the tub-carriers became louder, and the dragoons muttered and grumbled under their breath.

The night was yielding, the outlines of the country were becoming distinguishable, and yet the lugger did not come. Mr. Polwhele began to wonder

whether he had been fooled, and inwardly promised Doubledick a bad quarter of an hour if this long vigil in cold and darkness proved vain. Jimmy Nancarrow, in charge of the tub-carriers, had misgivings of a chase and capture on the sea. Now that dawn was breaking, he went to the top of the cliff and looked out into the mist, but never a sign of the lugger did he see. As he descended to rejoin his men, something caught his eye among the bare trees in a hollow on the opposite bank. He crouched behind a gorse bush, and watched for some minutes; then, instead of continuing on his direct course downward, he crept away at an angle, taking advantage of every depression and furze-patch that afforded cover, and so came to his company again. He told them what he had seen. Consternation seized them; they became suddenly silent, then whispered anxiously among themselves.

There could be little doubt that they had been spied by the preventives. What was to be done? On the one hand they could not depart, leaving Tonkin unwarned, to fall into the hands of the revenue officers. On the other hand, they were in no mood or condition to relish a brush with dragoons, and it was certainly a dragoon's forage-cap that Nancarrow had descried. The best course seemed to be to wait; perhaps the revenue officers would grow weary first.

Another hour passed. Then the tub-carriers saw the nose of the revenue cutter appear round the corner of the cliff. The game was up. No run could be made: the lugger would not put in while the cutter was in sight; and Nancarrow and his men in sullen rage left their posts and set off to trudge homeward.

In a moment Mr. Polwhele was hailed by the lieutenant from the cutter.

"Ahoy there, Mr. Polwhele!" he shouted.

The riding-officer left his place of concealment, and moved to the edge of the cliff, within speaking distance of Mr. Mildmay.

"Tricked again!" he said, angrily. "My word! Doubledick shall suffer for this."

At that moment an unusual sound made them both start. It was like the distant thud of some object falling on the ground.

"A gun! Bless my life, Polwhele, what's this?" cried the lieutenant.

"Goodness knows! A ship in distress, maybe. 'Tis no use waiting here any longer, so I'll ride back and see."

"I'll come round in the cutter as quickly as I can. She must have run on the rocks in the mist. The wind wouldn't cast her ashore—I'll come round in the cutter."

Mr. Polwhele hastened back to his men. They, too, had heard the shot.

"Come, my men, that's a big gun," said the riding-officer. "Smugglers be hanged! Maybe there's rescue work to do. Soldiers, get your horses; we'll dash to the village and do our duty. You others, march after us; there may be work for

you, yet."

The men were thankful for the opportunity of movement, and the prospect of breakfast. The dragoons raced to their steeds, mounted, and were soon galloping with Mr. Polwhele towards the village. In a few minutes they overtook the disconsolate tub-carriers.

"Aha, you black-faced rascals!" cried Mr. Polwhele as he galloped by, adding jocularly: "Stir your stumps and come and fight Boney."

"Not if I knows it," muttered Nancarrow, and forthwith struck inland, followed by the farm-hands. The fishers, being of sterner stuff, and taking Mr. Polwhele seriously, hastened their step, thinking of their wives and children in the village, perhaps at the mercy of the Corsican Ogre.

Mr. Polwhele and the dragoons had got half-way to Polkerran when they were met by the Vicar's messenger to Sir Bevil, and reined up.

"Pa'son sent me to fetch Sir Bevil and yeomanry, sir," said the man. "The French hev landed."

"Good heavens! Is it Boney himself?" cried the riding-officer.

"No, it be Maister Delarousse from Rusco: he've come and catched Maister John, and hev shet hisself in the inn."

"Delarousse, begad! Well, my men, there's a thousand pounds offered for the capture of that rascally Frenchman. Ride on, then; we'll have the villain!"

They galloped on, sparks flying from beneath the horses' hoofs. When they came to the crest of the high ground overlooking the Towers, they saw smoke and flame rising from the Dower House, and spurred the faster. In another minute they spied three figures making their way towards the Towers. The middle one of the three was a plump, red-faced woman in a print dress, her bonnet askew, her ribbons flying. On the left she was supported by a sturdy, thick-set lad, on the right by a slim and comely maid. Each clasped the woman about the waist, their arms crossing, and thus assisted her slowly over the ground. The dragoons kissed their hands gallantly to the maid as they flashed by.

"All safe at the Towers, Sam?" shouted Mr. Polwhele.

But Sam at that moment was too self-conscious and abashed to reply.

Meanwhile the whole population of Polkerran was gathered on the shore of the harbour, watching the privateer fade away into the distance, and discussing the extraordinary events of the past hour. Doubledick and Tonkin were the centre of an excited throng, to whom they had to relate over again the tale of John Trevanion's iniquities. The Squire and Mr. Carlyon had withdrawn to the inn-parlour, where they sat conversing over their pipes and glasses of rum shrub. Some of the children had climbed the hill to witness the Dower House blazing. Nobody thought of making an attempt to save the place, which indeed would have been impossible.

"Well," said Petherick, in the midst of the crowd, "'tis the Lord's doin', and marvellous in our eyes. But now I axe 'ee, Zacky, where be yer boy Jake?"

"What d'ye mean, constable?" asked the fisher.

"Ah! the neighbours hev been too stirred up in their minds to tell 'ee. No one hain't seed Jake since Wednesday night, and 'tis the question we all do axe, whether he be in the land o' the livin' or not."

"Dear name! Do 'ee tell me?" cried Tonkin. "Bean't he with the carriers?"

"Seemingly not," said one of the women. "I seed yer missis cryin' her eyes out yesterday, neighbour Zacky."

"Maybe he's took away for a sojer or sailor," suggested Doubledick. "He wented up-along to pluck mistletoe, so 'tis said, and maybe was pounced on by some rovin' sergeant on dark lonesome moor."

At this moment a cheer was heard from the direction of the hill, and then the ringing clatter of horses' hoofs. A boy ran up.

"Riding-officer and sojers be comin' down hill," he cried.

Tonkin darted a glance around. The horsemen were approaching at a walking pace down the steepest part of the descent. It suddenly flashed upon him that his lugger had a cargo of contraband on board, which it behoved him to secure before the riding-officer could lay hands on it. For the moment his anxiety for Jake was eclipsed.

"Lunnan Cove an hour after sundown," he whispered to Doubledick, then slipped away, and ran at headlong speed along the jetty. Four of the fishermen at the same moment set off with him, but instead of going on the jetty, they hastened at the double along the beach, following its curve towards the southern end of the reef.

All this time the lugger had lain within the reef. Pennycomequick, proud of his achievement, was waiting until, the excitement on shore having subsided, he could run her in and draw all eyes to himself.

On reaching the end of the jetty, Tonkin, one of the very few fishermen who could swim, dived into the water and swam towards his vessel. Pennycomequick flung him a rope. He heaved himself on board, secured one of the smaller boats which the Frenchmen had set adrift, and made it fast by the painter to the stern of the lugger. Then he hauled up the anchor, and hoisted sail, apparently with the intention of running in to the jetty. All his movements were deliberate.

At this moment Mr. Polwhele reached the inn. A hundred voices shouted that the Frenchman had got away; then catching sight of the lugger, with a sudden inspiration he galloped across to the jetty, calling on the dragoons to follow him.

"Hi, Tonkin!" he shouted, "I want to have a look at your cargo, my man."

But Tonkin, as if he had not heard the riding-officer's voice, suddenly put

up the helm and stood away towards the reef. It was ebb tide: the rugged line of rocks was exposed; and as the lugger came within a few feet of it, a number of men could be seen jumping from rock to rock, sometimes wading in the pools between them, in the direction of the vessel. They were too far away for their features or their gait to be distinguished, but any one counting them would have found that they were not four, but five. Tonkin sprang into the boat, rowed to the reef and took the men off, then returned to the lugger. All the men clambered on board, the boat was made fast, and the vessel sailed across the bay, but in a few minutes suddenly brought up again. Once more Tonkin entered the small boat, this time accompanied by another man. He landed him on the reef, rowed back to the lugger, and while this threaded the fairway between the fallen rock and the cliff, the man returned to the shore and disappeared.

Mr. Polwhele bit his lips with chagrin, observing a snigger on the faces of the crowd. Then he rode back to the inn, dismounted, and entered, to learn the details of the recent events from the Squire, and to give in his turn particulars of his futile errand at the creek.

A few minutes later Sir Bevil Portharvan rode down at the head of a troop of yeomanry. He, too, entered the inn, and Doubledick enjoyed a brief moment of importance when, at Mr. Carlyon's request, he explained the relations between Delarousse and John Trevanion. Sir Bevil's ruddy cheeks turned pale with rage and mortification.

"Thank God!" he murmured.

"'Tis indeed a mercy," said the Vicar. "I sympathise with you with all my heart, Sir Bevil."

"The scoundrel!" cried the baronet. "Trevanion, I beg your pardon. I have listened to that villain, and had hard thoughts of you. Good heavens! he was to have married my daughter."

"Poor girl!" said the Squire. "I knew my cousin, Sir Bevil. I should have warned you, only——"

"Only I was a fool, Trevanion. Your warning would have fallen on deaf ears; my mind was poisoned against you. Forgive me."

The two men shook hands, and soon afterwards left the inn with Mr. Carlyon, the riding-officer remaining behind.

"Doubledick," he said, when alone with the inn-keeper, "you had better get away. I've got Jake Tonkin locked up in my house—caught him spying on you the other night. I can't keep him much longer, and as soon as he is free your life won't be worth a snap, if I know his father."

The innkeeper shivered.

"For mercy sake, sir, hold him until to-morrer mornin'! I'll go away this very night. Hold him, sir, and I'll tell 'ee wheer Zacky do mean to run the cargo."

"A traitor to the last!" cried Mr. Polwhele. "'Tis my duty to the King to listen to you. Well?"

"'Tis at Lunnan Cove, sir, an hour after sun-down."

"Ha! That fellow who ran along the reef is making the arrangements, no doubt. Well, I'll hold the boy till daylight to-morrow, but not an instant longer. 'Tis illegal, and they may *habeas corpus* me. So take my warning. What about your wife?"

"She must bide here a little until I hev found a home for her. Zacky won't hurt a woman. 'Tis a terrible thing to leave the place I've dwelt in for thirty year."

"You've only yourself to blame. I wish you no harm, but take my advice: live straight for the rest of your days. I shan't see you again."

He left the inn, and rode up the hill to look for the arrival of the cutter. The Dower House was still blazing, watched by an immense crowd of villagers, dragoons, yeomanry, and folk from the neighbouring farms, who had flocked in when they saw the glare. There was at present no sign of the cutter, and Mr. Polwhele, tired out by his night's vigil, rode back to his own house, to hoist on his flagstaff a signal to Mr. Mildmay, and then to have a meal and rest.

Unlocking the door of the room in which Jake Tonkin had been confined, he was amazed and alarmed to see that it was no longer occupied. One of the iron bars across the window had been wrenched away after patient work in loosening the sockets, and the prisoner had dropped sixteen feet to the ground. Mr. Polwhele called up his housekeeper, whom he had forbidden to disclose Jake's whereabouts on pain of dismissal.

"You knew nothing of this, Mary?" he asked.

"No, indeed, sir. I neither heard un nor seed un."

"Well, say nothing about it. I want you to take a note for me at once to Doubledick at the inn. Put on your bonnet."

By the time the woman was ready, Mr. Polwhele had scribbled a brief note. "J. has escaped: don't wait."

"Be sure and give it to Doubledick himself," he said.

"Iss, I woll, sir," said the woman.

An hour afterwards Mr. Mildmay came up to the house.

"This is the worst slap in the face we have ever had, Polwhele," he said. "Why on earth didn't you collar Tonkin?"

"Why didn't you?" retorted the riding-officer angrily. "The cutter is for chasing luggers, not my horse."

"Don't fly out at me. We are both in the same hole. The only pleasant feature in the whole miserable business is that Trevanion will never freight another cargo."

"What do you suppose Delarousse will do with him?"

"Skin him, I should think. What a pair of numskulls we have been about that plausible scoundrel!"

"A good riddance to the Squire, too," said the riding-officer. "But the property is still his, I suppose."

"Without doubt. The Dower House will be a heap of ashes, but the land and the mine are still John Trevanion's, for all they were bought with money villainously come by. However, the miners haven't brought up enough metal to buy their candles, and as there is no one to pay their wages, they'll close down again, certainly. By the way, you still have young Jake, I suppose?"

"No, confound it all! He escaped this morning. I fancy he must have been among those fellows who got along the reef to the lugger."

"Whew! Doubledick had better make himself scarce, then."

"Yes; I have sent Mary down with a note for him. I had promised him to keep Jake till to-morrow morning, in return for a piece of information."

"What! a run after all?"

"Yes, Tonkin intends to run at Lunnan Cove to-night. We'll not let him slip this time."

"By George, no! I shall enjoy my Christmas better if we've dished that bold fellow. I'll go back to the cutter and turn in for a spell. You'll arrange with the dragoons?"

"I will. They're not in the sweetest of tempers, I assure you, and no wonder. But I told them to go and get a sleep at the inn, and made 'em swear to keep sober. Mrs. Doubledick won't give them too much to drink, however; I threatened her with pains and penalties if she did."

"Have a thimbleful before you go, Mildmay. We'll drink to success at Lunnan Cove."

Mr. Polwhele's housekeeper set out with the firm intention of carrying the note straight to Doubledick. But the sight of the blazing mansion was too much for her resolution; so magnificent a spectacle had never been seen at Polkerran before. When she reached the bridge, instead of turning to the left towards the inn, she went straight along the road, intending to watch the fire at close quarters for a little while, and call on Doubledick on the way back. She had put the note into her pocket.

On arriving near the Dower House, she met several acquaintances among the crowd, and walked with them round to the north side of the blaze, to avoid the smoke and sparks blown by the north-east wind. The wind had been increasing in force since the early morning, and blew the women's skirts about as they stood with their backs to it.

"Mind yer bonnet, my dear," said one of them to the housekeeper. "Ye wouldn't like to see it blowed into the bonfire, that I'm sure of."

”Bonnet-strings be poor useless things in a wind like this,” said another. ”I’ll tie my handkercher over my head, and I reckon ye’d better do the same, my dear.”

”Iss, I think,” said the housekeeper, drawing her handkerchief from her pocket.

With it came a fluttering scrap of paper. She clutched at it, but a gust of wind caught it, and swept it along into the midst of the glowing building.

”Drat it all!” she cried with vexation.

”’Tis to be hoped ’twas not vallyble, my dear,” said one of her friends.

”If ’tis a love-letter,” said another, ”and ye can’t hold the man to his promise, ’twill be a gashly misfortune, to be sure, though maybe he’s a poor slack-twisted feller as ye’ll be glad to be rid of.”

”No, ’tis not that,” said the housekeeper.

”Well, ye needn’t werrit, if ’tis a bill for yer maister’s goods. Bills come over again, ’nation take ’em.”

But the housekeeper gave nothing to the probings of neighbourly curiosity. Afraid to meet her master lest he should question her, she remained for several hours in the village, taking care not to return home until she learnt from a small boy that Mr. Polwhele had been seen riding inland towards Redruth among the dragoons.

Doubledick was on tenter-hooks all that day. His customers noticed how pale he was, and commiserated him on being ”took bad” the day before Christmas. He jumped at the entrance of every new-comer. A great part of the day he spent in the seclusion of his cellar, gathering together a few valuables, which he placed along with his hoarded money in two stout bags. As evening drew on he became more and more restless and irritable, and gave short answers to his customers, wishing with all his heart that he could close his door. He dared not leave the village in daylight, for so many people were about, discussing the incidents of the morning, that he could hardly have escaped without being seen by some one. Never in all his smuggling ventures did he long for darkness as he longed for it to-day.

About six o’clock a lad ran into the inn with the news that a flare had been seen towards Lunnan Cove. It was the time when Tonkin had arranged to make the run, and Doubledick took the flare as a signal from the riding-officer to Mr. Mildmay on the cutter. The customers poured out of the inn, in anticipation of more excitement before they retired to rest.

Meanwhile there had been interesting doings at the Towers. When the Squire, with Tonkin’s party, pursued the Frenchmen down the hill, Sam Pollex slipped

away and ran with all his might to the Dower House, where the alarm bell was clanging, while smoke poured from the lower windows. He dashed into the house, found the cook in hysterics in the kitchen, and receiving no answer from her when he demanded where Maidy Susan was, hunted through all the floors until at last he discovered her in an attic, tugging frantically at the bell-rope.

"Oh, maidy," he said, "come wi' me, or you'll be smothered in the burnin' fiery furnace. Yer maister be took; come, maidy, please."

He removed the rope from the girl's hands, put his arm about her, and led her quickly down the stairs.

"Where be Cook?" she cried, gasping, half suffocated by the rolling smoke.

"In kitchen, hollerin' and screamin'," replied Sam.

"Oh! poor thing, we can't leave her. Come, Sam, quick."

They ran into the kitchen, and while Susan tried to calm the frenzied woman, Sam took down her bonnet from its peg, and set it, hind part before, on her head. Then they lifted her, and led her out into the open air.

"Wherever shall we go?" said Susan. "I declare, I've left all my things behind; I must go back for them."

"Never in life!" said Sam. "I can't hold this great big female up wi'out 'ee. You must come home-along wi' me. Mistress will take 'ee in: she do hev a kind heart."

Thus it happened that when Dick reached home in company with the Vicar, Sam met him at the door with a face like the rising sun, and whispered:

"She've come, Maister Dick!"

"Who has come?" asked Dick.

"Maidy Susan, to be sure. Mistress hev right-down took to her, I do believe. Cook be here, too, and Feyther do look tarrible low in the sperits, 'cos she told un he'd no more idee than a chiel o' three how to stir up a figgy pudden."

When Dick joined his parents, he found them discussing the future of the two women with Mr. Carlyon.

"We can't afford to keep them, you know, Vicar," said Mrs. Trevanion. "The girl seems a pleasant, handy young thing, and I should like her about the house much better than young Sam; but——"

"Exactly," said the Vicar. "Well now, 'tis Christmas Eve. Shall we forget all our troubles, and get our souls in tune for to-morrow? One thing makes for peace, and that is the disappearance of John Trevanion, to whom I trace all the unneighbourly feeling between the village and you."

Thus the matter was left. After the Vicar had drunk a dish of tea, he walked back in Dick's company to the Parsonage, his horse having not yet been returned to him.

When Mr. Polwhele and the dragoons were seen riding in the direction

of Redruth, they were really proceeding to a sheltered spot on the coast whence they could watch for the flare which was to signal the approach of the *Isaac and Jacob* to Lunnan Cove. Mr. Mildmay's cutter was lurking behind a headland not far away. As soon as the blue light was seen, the riding-officer galloped to the spot, and saw, a little distance out at sea, a dark shape, which from its size he knew to be the lugger. Igniting another blue light, he was surprised to find that the vessel was making no effort to escape, nor was there the bustle on board that might have been expected. There were no tub-carriers in sight; no doubt, thought he, they had scattered on seeing the flare. He reined up on the beach, and waited for the cutter to appear.

In a few minutes he heard Mr. Mildmay hail the lugger, and by the aid of another light he saw the cutter run alongside, and a rummaging crew spring aboard the *Isaac and Jacob*, without opposition. Lamps were lit on deck, and the figures of the lieutenant's men could be seen descending into the hold. Immediately afterwards there was a burst of rough laughter, mingled with a volley of curses; the sailors emerged from the hatchway one by one, and Mr. Mildmay's quarter-deck voice was heard abusing something or somebody. Then he and his men returned to the cutter, which headed for the shore, while the lugger set her sails and stood out towards the harbour.

"Fooled again, Polwhele!" cried the lieutenant, when he came within hailing distance. "The hold is empty, and Jake Tonkin, young Pendry, Pennycomequick, and half a dozen more are grinning their heads off."

"Confusion seize 'em!" exclaimed Mr. Polwhele. "I see it! That rascal has betrayed us, in the hope of redeeming himself with Tonkin. Well, we deserve it for joining in with such a scoundrel. Depend upon it, they've made their run somewhere else, and are laughing in their sleeves."

The crestfallen officer dismissed the dragoons, who were chuckling at his discomfiture, and rode home.

When Jake Tonkin escaped from Mr. Polwhele's house, he took the shortest cut over the cliffs to the harbour, and reached the shore just as the four men were running to gain the lugger by way of the reef. He joined them, and on meeting his father told him in a few words about Doubledick's treachery. Tonkin immediately sent a man back to countermand the order to await him at Lunnan Cove, and to arrange secretly with the tub-carriers to assemble at the spot previously chosen, the creek five miles to the north. He had then run out to sea, and, taking advantage of the mist, made a circuit that brought him astern of the cutter, which was then returning to the harbour. He sunk his cargo near the mouth of the creek, stepped with one man into the small boat he had taken in tow, and

sent the rest out to sea again in the lugger, instructing them to make for Lunnan Cove at the appointed time.

Consequently, at the moment when the officers were condoling with each other, Tonkin and his man were rowing into the creek, towards a large body of tub-carriers gathered on the shore. The boat moved very slowly, and a light thrown on the scene would have revealed, attached to its stern, a rope on which the first of a line of tubs was bobbing up and down. When it came within a few yards of the waiting men, half a dozen of them waded out and drew it high on the beach. The rope was then hauled in, scarcely a word being spoken, and in less than ten minutes thirty men, each carrying two tubs slung across his shoulders, were trudging to their appointed destinations.

Tonkin was alone. As soon as the men had disappeared, he removed a plug from the bottom of the boat, and pushed it towards the middle of the stream, where it sank in eight feet of water. Then he set off with long strides towards the village. His business was accomplished: now he could deal with Doubledick.

A few minutes after the flare had been announced in the inn, Doubledick, left alone for a moment, let himself down into the cellar. Not even his wife knew of his design. He slipped on a pair of goloshes, took up two heavy and cumbersome sacks, slung them over his shoulders, and hurried through the secret passage, which opened half-way up the narrow-stepped lane. The night was very dark; there was a blind wall on each side of the lane; and no one saw the laden man as he crept stealthily up the steps. Soon he came to a similar passage at right angles to the other, leading down to the bank of the stream. He turned into this, went more quickly to the bottom, and then trudged along among the rushes in the direction of the bridge.

Coming to that point, he did not ascend by the steps that led to the road, but passed under the arches and continued his way along the stream. When he had walked about a quarter of a mile, he paused for a minute or two to take breath, then laboriously climbed up the steep bank with the assistance of bushes and saplings, and came panting to the top. He was now within a few yards of the path that led past the Parsonage across the moor, and joined the Truro road after a winding course of nearly a mile. At this hour of the evening he had no doubt that the Vicar would be in his study, and his small household engaged in preparations for the morrow.

Doubledick had gone only a short distance, however, along the path, when he caught sight of a figure coming in the other direction. Instantly he stepped on to the grass on the left, and picked his way as carefully as he could in the darkness over the rough ground and among the furze bushes. He dared not turn his head. The merest glimpse of a pedestrian was enough to set him quaking; nor had he the courage now to make his way back to the path. Having met one

person he might meet another. In his state of panic-fear he saw in every dark bush a man lying in wait for him, and the thought of tramping for miles over this desolate moor filled him with terror. There was another way to Truro, by the high-road running past the Towers to the cross-road from Newquay. In a few minutes, therefore, he turned again to the left, and struck across the uneven ground towards a point about midway between the Dower House and the Towers. Dark as the night was, he would at least see the road and fare more easily upon it. Passers were rare at this hour, and he hoped, if he should chance to meet any one, to catch sight of him in time to slip aside on to the dark moorland.

As he came to the road, he threw a glance to the left, where the ruins of the Dower House were smouldering, sparks now and then flying southward on the wind. The sight awoke no reflections, regrets, remorse, in his soul. He was obsessed by anxiety for his own safety.

Dick, having accompanied Mr. Carlyon to the Parsonage, remained there for an hour or two, talking over the strange events of the day, and then started homeward along the path that would bring him to the bridge. He noticed a man, bowed beneath a load, turn aside on to the moor, and chuckled at the thought that perhaps the smugglers had made their run after all, and this was one of the tub-carriers conveying his precious load to an expectant farmer. Well, it was no business of his. He went on until he came to the road, turned to the right, sniffing as the wind brought pungent smoke to his nostrils, and when he came opposite to the Dower House, which the spectators had now deserted, halted for a few moments to contemplate the empty shell, momentarily lit up as a gust stirred the embers. It was little more than three months since John Trevanion entered into possession. How swiftly retribution had overtaken him for the ill that he had done! In the short space of an hour his prosperity had vanished like the smoke from his burning house, and he was gone to pay the penalty, Dick could not doubt, for the fraud and trickery of years.

Turning away from the smoking ruins, Dick pursued his homeward way. A few minutes later he was surprised to see, stepping into the road from the unfenced moorland, the same figure as he had seen twenty minutes before going in the contrary direction. The man had come from the village; why then had he chosen so roundabout a route? His curiosity thoroughly aroused, Dick hurried on after the lumbering figure, expecting to overtake it before it reached the Towers. He was struck by the strange fact that while his own footsteps rang on the hard surface of the road, he heard nothing of the movements of the man in front, though the wind was blowing towards him. Fast as he walked, the distance between them did not appear to lessen. He was convinced now that the man was a smuggler, hurrying to avoid observation. He slackened his pace; it was not worth while chasing the man, even to discover his identity. To-morrow was Christmas;

he was going to sell his burden, so that he might have the wherewithal to make merry on the festive day.

The man had just passed the gate leading to the Towers. In less than a minute Dick would turn into the drive and lose sight of him. But suddenly there was a dull thud behind, and a glare momentarily lit up the sky. A portion of the masonry of the Dower House had fallen into the smouldering mass below, and stirred a fitful flame. Immediately afterwards he heard a hoarse cry in front, then a sound of scrambling, of snapping twigs, of heavy footsteps in the field on the other side of the hedge in the direction of St. Cuby's Well. Dick knew that there was a gap a few yards beyond the gate; he raced on, forced his way through, and sprinted after the retreating footsteps. Coming on to higher ground, he was able to see, in the dim diffused light thrown by the flickering flames behind, two figures, separated by a short interval, rushing towards the well. One minute they were visible; the next, where the ground dipped, they disappeared into pitchy darkness.

Dick saw that the second figure was steadily gaining on the first. Leaving the zigzag course that had been traced by the smugglers, and was now followed by the fugitive, the pursuer ran in a more direct line for the well. The former, perceiving with the instinct of a hunted animal that he was being headed off, and could not reach the haven of the ruined chapel, towards which he was hurrying, without encountering the other, suddenly swerved to the left in the direction of the cliff. He was followed instantly by the second man, who now seemed to leap after him like a wild animal after its prey. In a few moments, just as they came to the brink of the cliff, the two men closed. Running towards them at headlong speed, Dick heard a furious cry, a scream of terror, and saw one of the men lifted from his feet above the head of the other. But before the captor could summon his strength for the effort of hurling the captive over the edge of the cliff, Dick flung himself forward, caught the victim's feet, and tugged him violently back. A savage oath broke from the other man's lips. He staggered backward, and attempting to recover his footing, let his burden drop with a dull thud and a jingling crash to the ground.

"Tonkin!" cried Dick, "what are you doing?"

"Out of my way!" shouted the man, throwing himself upon the prostrate figure, from which there came a piteous squeal for mercy.

Dick tried to drag the smuggler from his victim, but he might as readily have moved an oak.

"Tonkin, I say!" he cried in agitation, "for God's sake get up. Would you commit murder, like the murderer at the well? Think! Calm yourself! 'Tis Christmas Eve."

A terrible scream rent the air. Dick caught Tonkin by the collar and exerted

all his strength to pull him from the fallen body. Finding this useless, he flung himself on the ground beside him, and tried to loosen his grip on the man's throat. He was in despair, when he heard a shout near at hand, and the next moment Penwarden rushed to the spot, carrying a lantern.

"'Tis you, Zacky Tonkin!" he cried. "Get on your feet, or I don't care who the man is, I'll arrest 'ee in the King's name."

The light of the lantern fell on the distorted face beneath him, and for the first time Dick saw that the victim was Doubledick.

"Think of yer wife and boy," said Penwarden. "Shall they lose 'ee for such as he?"

Tonkin's first frenzy of rage had spent itself. He slowly rose to his feet, leaving the innkeeper gasping, half-throttled.

There was silence for a space. Dick and Penwarden were held spellbound by the expression upon Tonkin's strong, rugged face. He stood like a statue, gazing down upon the huddled figure of Doubledick. Then he turned.

"You see that man!" he said, in a voice surcharged with emotion. "He was my friend. I trusted him. He and I hev worked together this many year, fair and foul, winter and summer. And now I know him for what he is, a spy, an informer, that takes money for betrayin' his true mates. Ay, and when things came to nought, he said 'twas my own son that split on us. Look 'ee see! He carr's his wages wi' un, afeard o' the face of an honest man. Worm that he is, let him crawl his way to everlastin' bonfire; but no price o' blood shall he take along, nor no one else shall touch it for evermore."

He stooped, wrenched the bags from the rope, which snapped in his mighty hands like thread, and, lifting each high above his head, hurled it far out into the sea. Then, turning on his heel, he strode away, and was swallowed up in the black night.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH

Peace and Goodwill

"A merry Christmas!" cried Dick, going into his parents' bedroom early in the morning.

"Thank'ee, my boy," said the Squire. "'Twill be the last Christmas we shall spend within these walls, so we will be as merry as we can.... Bless my life! Who

is that singing?"

Through the open door came the sound of a clear young voice:

"I saw three ships come sailin' in
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
I saw three ships come sailin' in
On Christmas Day in the mornin'."

"'Tis Susan, sir, no doubt," replied Dick.

"Dear me, I had forgotten the maid. Well, 'tis a sweet voice. She is merry enough, poor soul."

"A very nice girl," said Mrs. Trevanion. "Listen!"

"And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
And what was in those ships——"

The singing was interrupted by a rippling peal of laughter.

"Oh, Sam, you'll be the death o' me!" said Maidy Susan. "If you could only see the face of 'ee."

"What be purticler about the face o' me?" asked Sam.

"Oh, I can't tell 'ee, only it do make me smile. What was ye thinkin' of?"

"Why, I was wishin' one o' they ships was Maister's—his ship come home, as folks do say."

"Silly boy! 'Twas thousands o' years ago:

"And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day in the mornin'?"

"Well, I never heerd that psalm afore. Troll it over to Pendry afore church; he've got a wonderful ear, and if ye sing it twice he'll play it on his fiddle bang through wi'out stoppin'. Maybe Pa'son will command us to sing it instead of 'Aaron's Beard' or 'Now Isr'el say.'"

"I can't go to church, Sam. I must stay and help Cook."

"No; be-jowned if 'ee do. Old Feyther be man enough to help Cook, wi' sech a little small pudden and all. If we'd only knowed ye were comin' we'd ha' made it bigger, cost what it might. But you shall have my share, Maidy, so don't

be cast down in yer soul."

"Bless the boy! Do 'ee think I can't live wi'out pudden?"

"Well, then, if that be yer mind, I'll eat the pudden, and you hev two servings o' pig—but not too much apple sauce, Maidy."

"Good now! You do talk and talk, and there's the boots to clean and the cloth to lay. We'll never be done. Be off with 'ee."

The voices ceased.

"A very nice girl," repeated Mrs. Trevanion with a sigh. "I wish we could keep her. She would have a good influence on Sam, who is inclined to be idle."

Dick smiled.

"When my ship comes home, my dear," said the Squire. "Upon my word, 'tis cheering to hear a song in the morning, and the sun shining, too. I think the fire yesterday has burnt some of my melancholy away."

After breakfast they walked over to the church. The people assembled in the churchyard bobbed and curtsied as the party from the Towers passed up the path, and wished them a merry Christmas, a sign of renewed friendliness which made the Squire glow with pleasure. There was a large congregation, and everybody expected that the Vicar would preach a sermon bearing on the events of the previous day. He had indeed looked out two old discourses, one on the text, "The wages of sin is death," the other on "The ways of transgressors are hard"; but he replaced them in his drawer, and selected a third, on the verse, "Peace on earth, goodwill towards men."

"I won't spoil the day for them," he said to himself; "but they shall not get off; they shall have something warming next Sunday." The worthy man did not foresee that next Sunday the church would be half empty, the people having concluded that he had found the iniquities of John Trevanion an unprofitable theme.

After church the young folks trooped into the barn, where a Christmas dinner had been spread for them, and the men flocked down to the village, to spend an hour while their wives prepared the meal. For the first time in the history of the parish they passed by the open door of the Five Pilchards and made their way to the Three Jolly Mariners, to the delight of the innkeeper and the amazement of its few *habitués*.

In the afternoon someone suggested that they should row out to the fairway to see the rock which Dick had thrown down. The oldsters, after their Christmas dinner, were disinclined to move; but Jake Tonkin, Ike Pendry, and others of the younger generation hailed the opportunity of stretching their legs, and a procession of boats rowed out to the spot. The sun, by this time creeping to the west, lit up the face of the cliff with a ruddy gleam, and a young miner, perched on the top of the rock, called the attention of the others to the appearance of

curious streaks on the rugged surface of the promontory, where the falling rock had struck off fragments as it bounded down.

"They look uncommon like silver," said he.

"'Tis the deceivin' sun," said Jake Tonkin. "Theer bean't neither silver nor tin worth delvin' for hereabouts."

"Maybe, but I be goin' to see," said the miner. "Gie me that boat-hook, my sonny."

He got into a boat, and was rowed to the base of the cliff, whence he climbed with careful step. The others watched him with more interest in his feat than in the object of it. On reaching one of the longest of the streaks he hacked at the rock with the hook, then suddenly looked round, and cried—

"Daze me, my sonnies, if it bean't as good silver tin ore as ever I seed. There's riches here, take my word for't."

"Be-jowned if I bean't fust to tell Squire," cried Jake Tonkin, instantly pulling his boat round and making for the shore. The others followed him, deaf to the entreaties of the miner to come back and take him off. Half-a-dozen boats raced madly to the beach; a score of youths sprang out, dashed through the village, up the hill, and along the high road. One, thinking to gain an advantage over the rest, tried to leap one of John Trevanion's fences, and fell headlong to the ground, his competitors shouting with laughter, none attempting to emulate him.

Jabez Mail, the son of Simon, arrived first at the Towers, but Ike Pendry, only a yard behind, caught him by the tail of his Sunday coat, and while the two were wrestling, Jake Tonkin slipped past them and rushed into the house without knocking. Remembering the situation of the Squire's room from his last visit, he ran straight to it, followed by a dozen others, some entering with him, others crowding at the door.

Within the room sat the Squire and Dick, with the Vicar, Mr. Mildmay, and Mr. Polwhele, smoking before a huge log fire. They had started up at the sound of heavy boots clattering along the passage, and stood in amazement as the young fishers, red and blown with running, clumped in.

"What do you mean by this?" exclaimed the Squire testily. "D'you think this is an inn?"

Jake, the foremost, was at once overcome by his habitual sheepishness, and stood as though glued to the floor, twisting his hat between his hands, and grinning vacantly. Ike Pendry thrust him aside.

"Please, sir, I be come——" he began.

"Scrounch 'ee, I was fust!" cried Jake, suddenly recovering his speech, and sticking his elbow into Ike's ribs.

"Now, now," said Mr. Carlyon severely, "this is very unmannerly behaviour.

What do you mean by it?"

"Please, yer reverence," said Ike, "theer be great and noble riches down-along at Beal. We be come with all our legs to tell Squire."

"I was fust," added Jake.

"You're a liard," said young Mail, thrusting his way to the front. "I was fust, only Ike Pendry catched me by the tail o' my coat, which he couldn' ha' done if 'twere a common day."

"Well, then, Jabez," said the Vicar, "as you seem to have best command of your breath, perhaps you will tell us the meaning of these antics."

"Iss, fay, that I woll," said the lad. "We pulled out to the Beal, to see wi' our own eyes the rock as Maister Dick tumbled down, and Tim Solly, the miner, says, says he, 'Be-jowned, my sonnies, if it bean't the noblest silver tin as ever I seed.' 'Twas the rock, yer reverence, and genelum all, had strook away the ground as covered it, and theer 'tis, bidin' to be dug out."

The Squire's face, as he listened to this, flushed and paled by turns.

"This is most extraordinary," said the Vicar. "I think we had better all go down to the Beal and see for ourselves."

"We will," said Mr. Polwhele. "Come along, Squire."

"'Tis pure fancy," murmured the Squire. "The ore would have been discovered long ago if it existed. My old mine comes within a few yards of the Beal."

"We can but see," said Mr. Mildmay. "Let us go at once, before the sun is down."

They hurried forth, the messengers following, Sam being now among them. As they went, the crowd was increased by many more of the villagers, who had poured out of their houses when they heard of the stampede. In a few minutes they reached the Beal, at the spot where the fallen rock had stood.

"Hi!" shouted a voice from below; "up or down, I don't care which it be, but I can't bide here all the cold night."

"Don't 'ee werrit, my son," said Tonkin, who had joined the throng. "Fling up a mossel o' that shinin' rock they tell about."

"Mind yer head, then, my dear, or 'twill hurt 'ee."

Up came a jagged knob of rock, which Tonkin deftly caught and handed to the Squire. A breathless silence fell on the crowd as he turned it over in his trembling hands. He passed it to Mr. Polwhele, and he in turn to the foreman of Trevanion's mine, who stood by.

"'Tis tin ore, gentlemen, without doubt," he said, "and, I think, very rich in metal. You will do well, sir, to bring an assayer to test it."

His words were received with a joyous shout. Caps were flung into the air; a hundred lusty throats roared cheers for the Squire. Mr. Carlyon grasped his old friend's hand.

"'Hold fast the rock by the western sea!'" he said. "Wonderful! Wonderful!"

"Let us keep our heads," said the Squire. "It may be a false hope."

"Hi!" shouted the miner. "When be I a-comin' up-along?"

"Never, my son," cried Tonkin. "We can't heave 'ee up wi'out doin' a deal o' damage to yer mortal frame. Bide quiet, and we'll fetch 'ee in a boat."

"I'll never disbelieve in witches again," said the Vicar. "Dick! Where is the boy? 'Twas an inspiration—upon my word it was."

Dick was not to be found. He was running like a deer to tell his mother the great news. Sam followed, hopelessly outstripped, eager to pour the story into the ears of Maidy Susan. The Squire and his friends returned more slowly to the house, and the people, giving him a parting cheer, hurried to the village.

When a mixed crowd of fishers, farmers, and miners entered the taproom of the Three Jolly Mariners, they found Joe Penwarden comfortably settled in the place nearest the fire. As an excise-man, he had never frequented the smugglers' haunt at the Five Pilchards, but occasionally dropped in for a glass at the other inn. Observing Tonkin, Pendry, and a dozen more free-traders among the newcomers, he shook the ashes out of his church-warden, gulped down his grog, and rose to go. It was against the rules of the service to consort with smugglers, known or suspected.

"Bide where ye be, Maister," said Tonkin, heartily. "'Tis peace and goodwill to-day, and though some may hate 'ee like a toad o' common days, we'll treat 'ee like a true Christian to-day; what do 'ee say, neighbours all?"

"Ay, Maister," said Pendry, "set 'ee down and hark to the noble history we've got to tell 'ee. 'Tis rum-hot all round—eh, souls?"

They pressed Penwarden into his chair, and, all speaking together, poured into his ears the story of the great discovery.

"Well," he said presently, "'tis the noblest Christmas box as ever man got in this weary world."

"Iss, sure," said Petherick, adding in his ecclesiastical manner, "'Tis 'My soul doth magnify' for Squire and parish too, I don't care who the man is."

"True," said Penwarden, "and little small fellers like we must gie them above the credit o't. Theer be doin's in high parts as we cannot make head or tail of. Squire's cousin comes here, a right-down villain, a-deceivin' high and low from Sir Bevil himself down to small fry like 'ee."

"That no man can deny," said Tonkin.

"And yet," pursued Penwarden, enjoying his unaccustomed *rôle* as oracle,—"and yet, if he hadn' a-come, theer'd 'a been no Frenchy poking his nose in Polkerran, and no call for Maister Dick to shift a stone that has held to the same moorings maybe since the beginnin' o' the world. Ay, the Almighty do say a word sometimes to us miserable worms."

The old man's solemnity caused a hush to fall on the assembly. For some moments no one spoke. The room filled with clouds of smoke. Then Penwarden took his pipe from his mouth, and, in a different tone, said: "It minds me o' Lord Admiral Rodney."

"What do mind 'ee of him, Maister?" asked Simon Mail, whose arm was in a sling.

"Why, a high person speakin' to a low. Did 'ee never hear how the Lord Admiral once upon a time spoke special to me?"

"Never in life, Maister," said Mail. "Spet out the story for the good of us all."

"Well, 'twas on Plymouth Hoe. Theer was I, takin' a spell ashore, and cruisin' about: ah! I had a good figurehead in them gay young days. Daze me if Lord Admiral Rodney didn' run athwart my course, convoying two spankin' fine craft in the shape of females. The sight took the wind out o' my sails, I assure 'ee, and I fell becalmed full in the fairway, as ye med say. 'Get out o' my way, you cross-eyed son of a sea-cook,' says the Lord Admiral, and the two handsome females laughed like waves dancin' in the sun. 'Twas a wonderful honour for a great man-o'-war like Lord Admiral Rodney to speak to a humble and lowly feller like me."

"'Twas a gashly scornful name to call 'ee, I b'lieve," said Pennycomequick, the village wet-blanket.

"Ah! but you should ha' heerd what he called the swabbers aboard," replied Penwarden, lighting another pipe.

The result of the assayer's tests was more satisfactory than the most sanguine had dared to anticipate. The ore was particularly rich in metal, and the lode appeared to extend through the lower part of the Beal seaward. A careful examination of the ground explained the reason why the discovery had not been made earlier. Between the old mine and the new lode extended several yards of granite, by what is known in geology as a "fault."

When the assayer declared that in all probability the tin-bearing stratum stretched for thousands of yards under the sea, the question to be debated was whether the Squire should sell the land, or attempt to work it himself. There was little doubt as to what his decision would be. His long-vanished ideas of restoring the fortunes of his family returned with double force, and it scarcely needed the persuasiveness of Mr. Carlyon and Dick to fix his determination. The ground having been thoroughly surveyed, his new lawyer in Truro had no difficulty in negotiating a loan which furnished him with enough capital to start working. Plant was soon on the spot, miners were engaged, and within a few months the yield was sufficient to pay the interest on the loan, a portion of the capital sum,

and a contribution towards the increased expenditure at the Towers. Now that the tide had turned towards prosperity, the Squire put in hand the repairs long needed there, and Mrs. Trevanion decided to retain Cook and Maidy Susan in her employment.

The question of Dick's future came up. Mr. Carlyon urged that he should continue his studies and go to Oxford; but Dick's inclination was for a more strenuously active life. He worked for a time as a common miner in order to learn the details of the trade, visited other mines to widen his knowledge, and ultimately became his father's manager, in which capacity he showed a genius for organisation and the control of men.

Sam Pollex, basking in the continual sunshine of Maidy Susan's smile, became the Squire's gardener, and was very proud of the results of his handiwork. He grew a few inches, and by the time he was twenty stood a little higher than Susan's shoulder. Convinced that he would grow no more, he asked her to marry him, pointing out that though she was older in years, he was older in knowledge: that she looked younger than she was, and he older. They made a match of it, Susan's wedding dress being fashioned out of a blue silk recovered from the cave.

A month or two after the day of the great discovery, the Collector at Plymouth paid a visit to Polkerran, and decided that Penwarden was too old for his post. This gave deep offence to the old man. "Too old, be I?" said he; "we'll see about that." The Squire offered him the post of overseer at his new mine, which he accepted. His indignation at the slight put upon him in the King's name scarcely diminished with the lapse of time, and a village tradition asserts that, during the next ten years, the smuggler who caused the most trouble and annoyance to the revenue officers was Joe Penwarden, once exciseman. But no one who knew the old man's strong sense of duty, and had heard him speak of his service under Admiral Rodney, could ever believe that the actions of his later life so far belied his principles.

About six months after John Trevanion's disappearance, a billposter came from Truro and posted notices on the fences of the desolate grounds of the Dower House, and Petherick, as village crier, rang his bell and proclaimed the approaching sale of "all that messuage and tenement," et cetera. It was already known, through the resumption of business relations between Tonkin and Delarousse, that the latter had thrown Trevanion into prison, and lodged a claim against him for the restitution of large sums of money which he had obtained by a systematic course of fraud. When the day of the sale came, it was remarked that none of the neighbouring land-owners put in an appearance except Squire Trevanion. Sir Bevil Portharvan had, in fact, personally persuaded his friends to absent themselves, and leave the bidding to the Squire. As is generally the case with forced sales, the bids were low, and the estate was knocked down to Mr. Trevanion of

the Towers, at a ridiculously small figure. The proceeds of the sale did not suffice to clear John Trevanion, who remained in prison until his death of fever a year later. The Squire told Mr. Carlyon that as soon as Dick set about seeking a wife, he would rebuild the Dower House. But Dick did not marry until after his father's death, sixteen years later, and the site of the Dower House was then a picturesque ruin.

Doubledick was never again seen in Polkerran, nor was anything directly heard of him by his former associates. The inn lost all its customers, who transferred their favours to the Three Jolly Mariners. In three months, Mrs. Doubledick was on the brink of ruin, and one day she mounted the carrier's cart, with a few bundles, and departed, no one knew whither.

Some few years afterwards, the landlord of a low public-house in the precinct of Whitefriars, London—a haunt of thieves, coiners, and other bad characters—was discovered in an alley behind the house, dead, with a bullet-wound in his temple. He went by the name of Brown, and was believed to be a West-countryman. It was rumoured that his murderer was one of a gang whom he had betrayed to the police. No one came forward to claim relationship with him, and he was buried by the parish.

For many years rare visitors to the village wondered at a dilapidated building that stood near the jetty, its windows broken, its door blistered by the sun, the fragment of a signboard creaking on a rusty pole whenever the wind blew in from the sea—a mournful symbol of neglect and decay. If any stranger was curious enough to inquire into the history of this unpicturesque ruin, he would always find a small boy ready to conduct him to the house of one of the Tonkins, who related, with the exactitude of personal knowledge, the lamentable story of Doubledick the informer.

BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO. LD., PRINTERS, LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.

* * * * * * * *

STORIES BY HERBERT STRANG

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

"The best of living writers for boys."—*Manchester Guardian.*

"The majority of writers of boys' books are content to provide their young friends with mere reading. Herbert Strang offers them literature."—*Glasgow Herald.*

HUMPHREY BOLD: His Chances and Mischances by Land and Sea. A Story of the Time of Benbow

"Mr. Strang's work is astonishingly vivid and alive, and he imparts his varied and wide knowledge with the easy mastery of an artist."—*Publishers' Circular.*

ROB THE RANGER: a Story of the Fight for Canada.

"A stirring story of the Fight for Canada, bringing into relief the romantic side of the great struggle, and showing the author's keen observation, rapid and lucid narration, and clever construction at their best."—*Educational Times.*

ONE OF CLIVE'S HEROES: a Story of the Fight for India.

"An absorbing story ... The narrative not only thrills, but also weaves skilfully out of fact and fiction a clear impression of our fierce struggle for India."—*Athenæum.*

PALM TREE ISLAND: a Story of the South Seas.

"For desperate daring and resourceful ingenuity Harry Brent and Billy Bobbin will be hard to beat, and many will be the boy who finds this story of their trip to the South Seas full of fascination and interest."—*Army and Navy Gazette.*

PRICE SIX SHILLINGS EACH

*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ADVENTURES OF DICK TREVANION ***

A Word from Project Gutenberg

We will update this book if we find any errors.

This book can be found under: https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/39800

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the Project Gutenberg™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for the eBooks, unless you receive specific permission. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the rules is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. They may be modified and printed and given away – you may do practically *anything* in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

The Full Project Gutenberg License

Please read this before you distribute or use this work.

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at https://www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use & Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work,

you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the Foundation" or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country outside the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate ac-

cess to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" appears, or with which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at https://www.gutenberg.org . If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this ebook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase "Project Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Guten-

berg™ web site (https://www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from both the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and The Project Gutenberg Trademark LLC, the owner of the

Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3. below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES – Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND – If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS,' WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PUR-

POSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY – You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need, is critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation web page at https://www.pglaf.org .

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project

Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's principal office is in Fairbanks, Alaska, with the mailing address: PO Box 750175, Fairbanks, AK 99775, but its volunteers and employees are scattered throughout numerous locations. Its business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887, email business@pglaf.org. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

For additional contact information:

Dr. Gregory B. Newby
Chief Executive and Director
gbnewby@pglaf.org

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without wide spread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit https://www.gutenberg.org/donate

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation meth-

ods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: https://www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works.

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For thirty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our Web site which has the main PG search facility:

https://www.gutenberg.org

This Web site includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.