

called a curing shed, but in reality it had long been appropriated to domestic purposes. Joan kept her milk and provisions in it, and used it as a kind of kitchen. Every shelf and stool, almost every plate and basin, had its place there, and Denas knew them. She went to the milk pitcher and drank a deep draught; and then she took a little three-legged stool, and placing it gently by the door, sat down to listen and to wait.

Her father was talking in that soft, chanting tone used by the fishers of St. Penfer, and the drawling intonations, with the occasional rise of the voice at the end of a sentence, came to the ears of Denas with the pleasant familiarity of an old song.

As he ceased speaking some woman began to sing "The Ninety-and-Nine," and so singing they rose and passed out of the cottage and to their own homes. One by one the echoes of their voices ceased, until, at the last verse, only John and Joan were singing. As they finished, Denas looked into the room. Joan was lifting the big Bible covered with green baize. Between this cover and the binding all the letters Denas had sent them were kept, and the fond mother was touching and straightening them. John, with his pipe in one hand, was lifting the other to the shelf above his head for his tobacco-jar. The last words of the hymn were still on their lips.

Denas opened the door and stood just within the room, looking at them. Both fixed their eyes upon her. They thought they saw a spirit. They were speechless.

"Father! Mother! It is Denas!"

She came forward quickly as she spoke. Joan uttered one piercing cry. John let his pipe fall to pieces on the hearth-stone and drew his child within his arms. "It be Denas! It be Denas! her own dear self," he said, and he sat down and took her to his breast, and the poor girl snuggled her head in his big beard, and he kissed away her tears and soothed her as he had done when she was only a baby.

And then poor Joan was on the rug at their feet. She was taking the wet stockings and shoes off of her daughter's feet; she was drying them gently with her apron, fondling and kissing them as she had been used to do when her little Denas came in from the boats or the school wet-footed. And Denas was stooping to her mother and kissing the happy tears off her face, and the conversation was only in those single words that are too sweet to mix with other words; until Joan, with that womanly instinct that never fails in such extremities, began to bring into the excited tone those tender material cares that make love possible and life-like.

"Oh, my darling," she cried, "your little feet be dripping wet, and you be hungry, I know, and we will have a cup of tea. And how be your husband, my dear?"

"He is dead, mother."

"God's peace on him!"

"And the little lad, Denas—my little grandson that be called John after me,"

"He is dead, too, father."