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afternoon there was the as yet unfulfilled threat of Wilson Polgleaze to "come again shortly and be his own spokesman." And the days were ebbing fast towards the date when the crippled deformity, Simon Trehawke, would lay rapacious hands on the Tower, and drive Hilda forth from the beloved home of her fathers.

Pascoe had hardly replenished the fire and left the hall when Mrs. Pengarvan, who had been gazing through the window, uttered an exclamation, and ran to the front door, flinging it open.

"Come in, my dear!" she cried. "Whatever are you doing out in such weather? Why, you are drenched to the skin."

Pale as a ghost and with the water dripping from her soaked garments, Marigold Craze darted into the hall, glancing affrightedly behind her. Mrs. Pengarvan closed and bolted the door, and the girl, to whose side Hilda had run, was laid tenderly down on a couch. Her breath came in gasps, and it was some time before she could speak.

"It is my father," she panted at last. "He was going to kill me—sacrifice me, he called it. One of his religious fits is on him. Oh, please see if he is coming. I may have given him the slip. He is just mad. He may do anything."

But they were able to assure her that there were no signs of Nathan Craze in the drive, and after a while they got her story from her. For some days her father had not spoken a word, and then an hour ago he had come in from his fishing and had burst into sudden fury, accusing her of being the mistress of Wilson Polgleaze.

"But, my dear little Marigold, you were able to tell him that it was not true. Surely he believed you?" said Mrs. Pengarvan.

The girl staggered to her feet, and stood pitifully searching each kind face in turn for sympathy.

"Oh, listen before you condemn me," she wailed. "It is true in a way. Wilson Polgleaze courted me all last summer, and I was married to him, as I thought, the week before Christmas, at the registrar's at Falmouth. But it wasn't the registrar he took me to—only a lawyer who, they say, has him in his grip. My dear, dear ladies, I am neither maid nor wife, and now I have no home."

HILDA'S supporting grasp on the girl's waist tightened, but Mrs. Pengarvan was constrained to begin the question:—

"And you have occasion, poor child, to fear—?"

But Marigold cut her short with: "No, not that, thank God. The time is past for that horror to haunt me ever again. My father found out months back that Wilson used to meet me in the Devil's Cave, and he has been growing crueller every day, till an hour ago, when he called me a dreadful name. In self-defence I told him of the sham marriage, and of how I had been deceived. It made him worse than ever. He swore to kill me, and chased me out of the house. If you will let me say good-bye to Billy, and stay till after dark I will go away out into the world, and begin a new life where I am not known. I am strong, and shall soon get some work to do."

Hilda had left it to Mrs. Pengarvan to drag the grisly skeleton to light, but now that it stood revealed, and, though fearsome enough, yet shorn of its worst terrors, the Lady of the Tower had her say, impetuous and indignant.

"You are not to blame, dear," she declared. "The shame is not yours, and as to going away we shall not hear of it, shall we, cousin? You will just stay here with us, Marigold, till Captain Pengarvan comes home, which is to be sooner than was expected. Your father need not know that you have sought sanctuary with us, any more than he does about Billy. The captain can manage your father better than anyone. He will prove to him that you have done no

wrong, and will take steps to punish the wretch who entrapped you. Now come along with me and get into some dry things."

"One moment," interposed practical Mrs. Pengarvan. "This mock registrar—was he a lame man, with no hair or eyebrows? Ah, I thought it would be Mr. Simon Trehawke. All right, my dear. You have furnished me with a very pretty rod, which I will put in pickle for the rogue."

But when the two girls had left her alone in the hall Lance's mother kicked the log on the hearth into a blaze with the toe of her stout boot, and shook her grey curls impatiently.

"God help us all!" she muttered. "Hilda has forgotten that we shall not have a refuge to offer so much as a stray cat soon after my boy casts anchor. And as to rods, I reckon those two villains have readied a worse one for us than ever we can ready for them."

Then she, too, left the hall, and from behind a screen crept Billy Craze, his brown face darkened with a purposeful scowl.

CHAPTER XVI.

Bearding a Wolf.

MR. Simon Trehawke sat in his dingy office, conning a parchment, which was the mortgage assigned to him on St. Runan's Tower by Wilson Polgleaze as his father's heir. The attorney's lips were curled in a malevolent grin which bared his yellow snags of teeth as he gloated over the document that was part of his price for financing his client's debaucheries.

Of late years Mr. Trehawke had done very little business as a lawyer, honest folk fighting shy of his unsavoury reputation. He had never acted for old Jacob Polgleaze, and being to some extent the shipowner's rival as a money-lender he had gleaned an additional pleasure in aiding and abetting the junior partner's extravagances. He now expected to live in clover for the rest of his days, part of the pound of flesh which he had exacted being the undertaking which Wilson had given him that in future he should be entrusted with all the legal business of the firm.

His only clerk was a half-starved youth, who sat in a little outer den performing the duties of a door-keeper, running errands, and safeguarding his employer from unwelcome callers.

About three in the afternoon of the day following Marigold's escape to the Tower Mr. Trehawke's drudge announced that a boy who refused to give his name or state his business desired to see him.

"Tell him I'm not in," snapped the attorney.

In less than a minute the underling was back again. "The boy says he'll wait on the doorstep, sir, till you come in or go out," he said.

Mr. Trehawke reflected. He had at wash a good deal of dirty linen which would be none the whiter for an altercation on his doorstep. Probably the boy brought an insolent message from some defrauded and angry debtor.

"Show him in," he relented. "I'll soon settle his hash."

But when Mr. Simon Trehawke looked upon the drawn, set face of Billy Craze, whom he had never seen before, he felt some misgiving. Somehow the echo of his threat sounded feeble and impotent in his ears at sight of the resolute ferocity in the countenance with which the boy entered. This was no messenger, but a principal, palpitating with a purpose of his own—no friendly purpose if Mr. Trehawke was any judge or shades of expression. He made himself, if possible, a trifle more revolting by putting on one of his would-be ingratiating smiles.

"Well, my lad, and what can I do for you?" he piped in his squeaky treble. "Been breaking somebody's windows; and want me to get you out of the scrape, eh?"

Billy waited till the clerk had departed, then advanced a step or two

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