

lads were brought home kilt I've not been myself at all."

"It's very sad, Betsy," said Edward.

"I think I could have mastered it this time," went on the woman, her tongue gradually becoming loosened, "on'y I saw Stephen Grainger look in at the door."

"Stephen Grainger?"

"Yes."

"Looking in at your door?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"This evening. Not long since. Before this thing overcame me."

"Are you sure, Betsy, that it was Stephen Grainger?"

"Quite sure," answered Betsy. "I was sitting knitting, an' the door was standing wide open. All at once I heard a footstep outside the door, and, looking toward it, I saw Stephen Grainger peerin' in."

Edward was amazed. Betsy's statement bore out Rake Swinton's, and it was plain that Stephen Grainger did revisit Trethyn at times.

"He were disguised, an' had big whiskers," went on Betsy, "but I knowed him at once."

"And then you followed him?"

"Yes, but I remember no more."

"You did not again see him?"

"I think not."

"You are quite sure about this being Stephen Grainger?" persisted Edward, for as yet he could scarcely credit the statement.

"Positive."

They got Betsy safely home, and then Edward remounted his horse and turned its head towards the Manor House. Leisurely and thoughtfully he rode along. What could be Grainger's object in again revisiting Trethyn? Surely it was a foolish and reckless thing of him to do, and Edward could not reconcile such recklessness with Grainger's usual craft. Edward felt convinced that some dire purpose underlay the late agent's motives, and the thought gave him no little uneasiness. Could it be that Stephen Grainger came back again into Trethyn with the object of personal vengeance against someone, and, if so, against whom? Again the thought brought him much uneasiness of mind; but the next moment all his quiet and anxious thought was suddenly turned into terribly excited thought and action by the sharp report of a pistol or gun, fired by someone that could not be a

dozen yards from him. Edward's horse started and bolted at the sound, but it had not gone far before Edward felt it give way under him, and the next moment he was lying in the muddy road. Disentangling his left foot from the stirrup, Edward struggled to his feet as fast as he could, but he could hardly bear the pain in his thigh, for he had fallen heavily upon it and bruised it considerably. His first thought, however, was, "Who fired that shot?" He looked around him, but observed no one in sight, and all was calm and still as the grave. The moon still shed her silvery light over the scene, but just then it was partially obscured by great clouds.

"It was Stephen Grainger," Edward at once concluded. "No one else would do such a dastardly deed. No one else had cause."

In his great indignation Edward would have rushed away in the direction from which the shot had been fired, but the pain in his thigh prevented him.

Greatly enraged at the unknown desperado who had done this cruel deed, and yet filled with palpitating sympathy for the sufferings of his faithful horse, Edward took out his handkerchief and endeavoured to staunch the blood. But a few minutes afterwards it was dead.

Edward's grief was indescribable. But to remain there longer was both purposeless and dangerous, so, covering the poor creature's head with his coat, he painfully made his way home.

Edward opened the door of the Manor House with a latchkey, but the wish to escape observation, and so get a chance of making himself presentable before appearing before his mother, was frustrated by his encountering the housekeeper on the threshold of the door.

"Good gracious me!" she exclaimed, throwing up her arms on seeing him, "whatever has been the matter?"

"Hush!" whispered Edward. "Don't alarm Lady Trethyn. It's nothing, I can assure you—"

"But, sir, your coat—where's your coat?"

"Hush!" Edward still urged.

"There's blood on your shirt-sleeves!" still cried the housekeeper.

"Mrs. Thornton," said Edward sternly, "hush! I won't have my mother unnecessarily alarmed."