CHAPTER IX

CORNISH PASTIES

MAGGIE had not been asked to go with the rest to see the pilchard-getting. True, it was a sight familiar enough to her. True, also, that in the rough-and-tumble of country life no one expects formal politeness. But, seeing and not seen, Maggie had watched Lorry and Cassin at the garden gate, had heard the Heva, and noted the departure of the three. She could have joined them had she liked; but, instead, she turned again to the gooseberry bushes on which was hanging out stockings to dry; her face was flushed and angry.

"It seems they didn't want of I," she said. She spread out a stocking so clumsily that a spiked branch sprang up and tore her hand. She applied her tongue to the wound.

"It seems everything and everybody's agen me to-day," she broke out bitterly.

She returned to the house. The cat was on the doorstep. She kicked it out of her way.

The sun shone brightly into the kitchen; the fire glowed in the grate; the air felt close and sickly this hot September day. Flies buzzed thickly in the window; a smell of hot fat came from the oven.

Maggie tugged off her sun-bonnet and threw herself into a chair. She hated the kitchen for its narrow homeliness; she hated the limitations of her comfortable life; she hated the kind complacency of the people by whom she was surrounded. Hers was a tempestuous nature, one that would be the safer for clearing storms.

Granma was making pasties. She had just heaped one half of a round of paste with potatoes, onions, turnips, and a sprinkling of chopped meat. She folded it over, patted it into shape, pinched up the edges, pricked the pasty with a fork. Then she looked up at Maggie over her spectacles.

"Is there no work to be done?" she asked, quietly.

Whatever she had said it would have made no difference. At that moment Maggie would have managed to twist anything into an occasion for offence. So now she broke out bitterly.

"It's always work—work—nothing but work!"

"Well, so it belongs to be, m'dear, this life," said the old woman gently, as she set to work upon another pasty.

"I'm dead and sick of it." Maggie drummed her heels upon the stone floor and twirled her bonnet by the string.

"You've come to it soon and early, but we all gets to it one time or another. Soul and body, us cries out agen it."

Maggie raised herself to a more alert position. She had expected, even courted, opposition; she had, in fact, deliberately desired to shock her grandmother. Her grandmother, it appeared, was of the same opinion as herself. The wind was taken out of Maggie's sails.

"You haven't never felt like that," she asserted, beginning to pinch out the frill of her tumbled bonnet.

"That is to say I be different flesh and blood from the rest, then," stated the old woman, as she busily plied the bottle that served her for rolling-pin. "It be the way of all of us," she went on slowly, half her mind apparently absorbed in her occupation. "At first we likes work. Look how set up little uns be if you let 'em do a bit of anything; and boys and girls fresh from school, them's proud enough to show their strength. And so it goes on a while, till on a day when you're not so busy you begins to think about this work and how it goes on and on, and however much you gets abreast of it, it goes past you sometimes—and then your stomach turns sick at the name of work."

She paused to coax the pasty, which she had over-filled, into shape.

"Yes?" questioned Maggie.

"Well, there it is," the old woman returned with naïve philosophy. "You're got to work, and you're got to make the best on it. That's the medicine for a sick stomach. You're just got to——"

"I hate work," Maggie interposed defiantly; "I hate

the need of it, and I hate the thought of it, and the remembrance of it, and I hate the work itself—so there!" she added, defiantly, as she rose to her feet.

Granma's old grey head nodded in answer. "I know, I know," it seemed to say.

"It ain't worth it," Maggie threw out. Her lips were pressed together, and drooped at the corners like those of a child about to cry. She sat down again suddenly, and, picking up the cat, she smothered it with rough caresses, pressing it close to her heaving bosom.

"You say you know," she continued; "then just tell me, what is the end of it?"

Her eyes were red and hot.

"The end of it, m'dear—there isn't exactly no end. But you gets wiser as you gets older, and finds out this work's not a curse, but a blessing. As God willed it," she added, as she opened the oven door.

"Ay!" she went on, "it's likely them pasties would cry out, if they could, that there oven is over-hot and they just can't stand it. But what sort of eating would they be, m'dear, if I let 'em have their own way? So is God's dealings with us," she concluded, with a simple reverence that took away any suggestion of grotesque humour in her words.

Both alike passed Maggie's comprehension. Her eyes were fixed on the oven door, which had closed with a bang.

"I wouldn't like to be hurt," she said; her eyes sought the red line the gooseberry thorns had left on her hand; "yet I dunno' but what I wouldn't sooner be hurt than just go on working always the same."

Though the door stood open to the sunshine, the kitchen was hot; a bluebottle droned sleepily amongst the sharp buzzing of the smaller flies. The old woman lifted her apron, wiped the sweat from her face, and patiently went on with her work.

"Some people has more'n their share," Maggie protested.

Granma went on rolling and cutting. She had a good many mouths to fill, and some of them, Maggie's for one, took a good deal of filling.

"There's Cassin, now"—Maggie at last approached her real point of grievance—"I don't never hear you at

her, with your work, work, same as you does at me. No, nor Aunt Susie, either."

"P'r'aps there ain't no need," said her grandmother, dipping her hand into the bag of flour.

"Just because I be big and strong——"

Maggie pouted, though there was a certain satisfaction in the thought of her own strength as compared with Cassin's delicacy.

"Strong isn't always willing."

"I dunno' about willing——" Maggie tossed her head.

"I know this"—the old woman rolled out her crust more vigorously—"since Cassin came I've never had to try my eyes with stockun-darning; and she's a better knitster, Cassin is, than me and your Aunt Susie rolled into one; and her feet and hands always ready, and such a one for learning. Your Uncle John, he——"

This was too much for Maggie.

"Oh, she's an angel right enough, Cassin!—go down, you beast!"—this last to the cat, who suddenly resented Maggie's thoughtless caresses with unsheathed claws—"she's an angel! But there"—she sprang to her feet—"I never had no hankering after angels. Nor men don't neither——"

She threw the last words over her shoulder with an impudent grin as she flung open the door of the staircase that led to the floor above.

"So like her mother," the old woman said. Once again she raised her apron. This time it was to her eyes.

CHAPTER X

STOLEN LUCK

URGED by the restlessness of her young, growing body, Maggie flounced away to her own room.

"Granma's that old. It's easy enough for her to talk."

There was a certain reflection upon life that had failed of full expansion summed up in the girl's words. In spite of her grandmother's sage advice, Maggie had no intention of giving her idle fingers work to do; unless, indeed, drumming them upon the window-ledge could be considered in that light.

Her bedroom was, perhaps, more untidy than usual. From the point of view of sweetness alone it would have repaid a good dusting; motes danced in the long sun-rays that streamed through the dusky window-panes. Only Cassin's bed was smoothly made; the top of her tin box winked in the sunlight.

Maggie grew tired of drumming her fingers. Resting her elbows on the sill, she leant her chin upon her hands and looked out idly. The beauty of the heather-land, the stretch of vivid sea, had no appeal for her. Such sympathies as Maggie possessed were absorbed by her fellow men.

The floor of the room was boarded and not ceiled, so every movement in the kitchen below came plainly to her ears: the clang of the oven door, the clatter of pans, and finally the splash of water. The pasties were finished then? Granma was washing up.

Maggie swung the tassel of the blind idly.

"'Tisn't fair," she said aloud; her voice was full of self-pity. "Some has all the work, so they do, and others gets all the credit. But what Andrew sees in *her*——" The accent on the pronoun expressively concluded the sentence.

"There's Lorry Grainger, too"—so Maggie went

on—" before haying-time I did think that job as good as settled—but since then——"

She altered her position so that she could caress her plump elbows in either hand.

" I wouldn't like to say but what that Cassin hasn't got round Lorry, too. 'Tisn't natural, so it isn't, in face of a girl like me ! "

With sudden energy she crossed the room to where the looking-glass stood on the chest of drawers. It was small and cracked across one corner, and, unless carefully humoured, it had a habit of swinging round and presenting an imperfectly boarded back to the observer. But Maggie had known that glass for many years. It was the thing of all others most sure of her gentle treatment.

As she stood before it now, her face began to resume its good-natured comeliness.

" A proper face for sweetheartin', so it is," she said with a smile that showed her flawless teeth.

" All that hair," she went on, " did ought to be made more of, somehow. Next time I'm to town I'll get some of them pad things. They do give style ! Like as not, Lorry Grainger he do laugh at me for just a ' poor girl.' Let him laugh ! "

Her face grew fierce. Then she smiled again.

" 'Tisn't likely any man would look at *her*, not besides me ! Any man in his senses——"

Then suddenly at her own words an idea came. The blood began to hammer in her veins. Under a thin—very thin—veneer of modernity, she was Cornish, blood and bone.

" Not in his senses," she said again, slowly. Then she glanced over her shoulder at Cassin's trunk. The sun had passed it now and rested on Cassin's little bed.

Maggie stood still in the middle of the room.

Supposing—no one knew for certain about such things —there might be nothing in it—then, again, there might ! Luck in love—Cassin had said !

Maggie looked round furtively.

All was silent in the kitchen below. Granma had gone to fetch water ; Maggie listened to the sound of her footsteps, getting less along the flagged path.

If there were nothing in it, no harm would be done.

On the other hand—— Maggie's eyes burned at the thought!

In another moment she was down on her knees by the trunk. Though she was quite sure she was alone in the house, she raised the lid with every precaution against a tell-tale sound. Very cautiously she went to work. Not that the virginal order of all within rebuked her desecrating fingers, but that their work might not be found out.

After sundry dives and careful investigations, she drew forth Cassin's simple treasure. Then the box was closed, and once more Maggie stood in the middle of the room. She had thrust the shoe into her pocket, and she held it firmly there, as though the inanimate thing, aware of her treachery, would, if possible, escape her fingers. Her first thought had been to hide or bury it, and so deprive her cousin of her too evident, and otherwise inexplicable, luck in love. But now another wild thought had come.

Why should not Cassin's loss be her gain?

She took out the horseshoe. It was only a small one, yet it might be none the less lucky for that, and why should not that luck be hers, Maggie's? Yet how to secure it?

How, as Maggie put it, make "them" transfer the valuable properties of the thing from Cassin to herself?

She gazed at it so long that she grew almost frightened lest the insensate thing of hammered iron should have power to read her thoughts.

"I dursn't carry it about with me—no, I dursn't," she said, as though in answer to some mute suggestion.

She heard her grandmother filling the kettle. They would all be back soon.

She looked hurriedly about the room. It must be hidden somewhere indisputably hers, yet little likely of discovery.

After one or two discarded resting-places, the horseshoe was finally enfolded in Maggie's best corsets, at the back of the bottom drawer.

"They isn't often in use, and I shall call to mind not to fetch them out when she's by," she said as she shut the drawer.

Then, with an appearance of careless cheerfulness, but with guilt at her heart, she went downstairs and offered to " put the table " ready for dinner.

" Her's good at bottom," so Granma told herself, as once more her apron went to her eyes.

CHAPTER XI

IN A CORNISH KITCHEN

ONE wild moist night in late September Andrew Thomas knocked at Mayon door, and entered as a ready "Come in" was called by more than one voice.

To the young man's eyes, blinking in the sudden light after the darkness outside, the kitchen seemed full of people. On one side of the hearth was a big figure in corduroys, Uncle John bending down to get the firelight on his work as he tinkered at the handle of a hedge-cutter. Uncle James, stretched on the horsehair sofa, was reading a day-old "Western News." He held the paper at an awkward angle to catch the light of the lamp; the smoke from his pipe made a blue fog about his head. Aunt Susie was busy at the square table.

Andrew heard the clump, clump of her iron before he had opened the door. Granma Penrose was knitting a coarse blue stocking; her needles flashed above the cat curled upon her slanting lap. Maggie bent over a closely printed page on the little round table in the window. Her candle-flame slanted back at the opening of the door. She looked up from her loves of dukes and duchesses, her eyes bright and starry. Cassin, seated in the shadow, was polishing an old brass candlestick; she was humming over her work. Her voice stopped short at Andrew's entrance.

He stood for a moment as though embarrassed. Then at Uncle John's hearty "Come in, m'son, come in!" he closed the door behind him and held out a bunch of shining mackerel to Aunt Susie.

Such is the kindly Cornish custom. Fishermen look down on "farm-people," yet, in almost compassionate friendliness, they bestow upon them "herrin'," "pilshurd," "mullets," each in due season. The farmers, for their part, despising fishing as an uncertain, not to say dangerous, "trade," nevertheless welcome so pleasant

a change of fare, and, on their side, make presents of eggs, scalded cream, and rabbits—rabbits especially at the great time of St. Cleer Feast.

Andrew's mackerel were therefore duly admired, and he was called to draw in a chair to the fire. No formal greeting passed between him and individual members of the party. The general sense of welcome was sufficient for all purposes of hospitality.

Like a little detached bit of the night without, Nero slipped in behind his master and, with lowered head, crept under the sofa. Andrew took the offered chair. The range, opened for ironing purposes, sent out a cheerful flicker which threw his shadow black on the boarded ceiling above his head.

He drew a cigarette from his cap, and, in Cornish fashion, replaced the latter on his head, as he felt for a match.

"It's full of rain, the sky—and the sea's lumping," he said between puffs at his cigarette.

"The cat's been racing round; there's wind coming." Granma paused in her work to pass a gnarled hand over the grey ball of fur on her knee.

"The glass is going down. At least ours is. I can't speak for the rest." Aunt Susie was evidently an upholder of independence of personal action even as applied to barometers.

"Our corn's in, thank the Lord," said Uncle James, looking over his spectacles, "but there's five acres or more still standing to Trezelah."

Andrew drew up his legs and bent easily towards the fire.

"It'll come, sure enough, and soon too," he said. "Going on sunset, Scilly Isles was so clear as day."

"It's well you caught they mackerel when you did." Maggie had sufficiently recalled her faculties from her sumptuously staged Happy Ending Story to put in her word.

Andrew turned and smiled. He liked to know his little gift was appreciated.

"They're none so bad," he said, "but the lot Dickie Pender he got, they was a deal finer."

"It isn't the biggest is the best eating," observed Granma.

"Nor the biggest men as does the most work," chuckled Uncle James from behind his paper. He was so long of limb that he could only recline on the sofa by projecting his feet over the back. He wore no boots, and so displayed to advantage a pair of blue-grey stockings of Cassin's knitting.

It was warm and pleasant in the kitchen, from which all draughts were rigorously excluded. The fastidious, indeed, might have complained of a lack of fresh air. The scent of tobacco hung solidly on the atmosphere, with a substratum of frying fat and onions, a whiff of cheesy butter, and the pleasant odour of slightly singed linen from Aunt Susie's irons. Add to all this a fire, a lamp, a guttering candle, four women, three men, a cat and a dog, and the very acme of cosiness was reached from a Cornish point of view.

Tongues wagged freely, more especially when, yielding to the torrid atmosphere, the men had divested themselves of their coats and every one was sipping with satisfaction at hot, well-sweetened tea. In the midst of this kindly circle Andrew set aside his usual reserve and talked well and vividly. No doubt he would have been the first to deny that he was the principal talker; none the less, so it was.

Now and again Uncle James put in a sly witticism, or Uncle John cried "Hear, hear," to some lively sally; Granma made an occasional kindly comment; Aunt Susie and Maggie fired off interjectory remarks of surprise or otherwise, and Cassin once or twice asked a question; but it was Andrew who held the floor.

He spoke well when he was in the humour for it, or, as he himself would have expressed it, when he "took a fit to talk."

There was a momentary lull whilst he lit a cigarette—the younger Cornish fishermen have almost entirely abandoned the old-fashioned pipe. Then, as he threw away the match, he remarked to Uncle John, whose horny fingers were busy shredding "twist" into his pipe:

"Have you been by Carn Morvah this side o' Sunday?"

Uncle John ruminated profoundly for a moment, thrust his pipe between his blackened teeth, and shook his head.

"There's a stranger of some sort living there in a tent. Some of the boys says he was in The Success last night. He seemed a bit free with his money, so George Trewerne was saying."

"George Trewerne is a bit of a wet chap hisself," interposed Uncle John.

"It do seem odd"—Andrew cast an appreciative eye round his snug surroundings, where every inch of room on shelf or wall was crowded with the cheerful accumulations of Granma Penrose's long and busy life—"it do seem odd for a man to take to a tent when he could be in a comfortable house."

"They're doing it now, the gentry," said Granma. "I do suppose it belongs to be a change."

"It wouldn't suit the like of we," guffawed Uncle James, making the ancient sofa creak as he turned on his side.

Nero beneath it loudly thumped his tail.

"I do think I would like it," so Maggie asserted, "just for a bit of a lark."

"It would be lonesome, though," said Aunt Susie, suspending her iron above her work, "when night did come on, and never so much as a comfortable bolt to put to and keep the darkness out."

"He do have a lamp, though," explained Andrew. "I was yonder myself, Tuesday night it was, and the light shone green through the tent, so as it minded me of a great big glow-worm, so it did. And, as I went past, I did see his shadder bent over, for all the world like a great big frog. I wondered, was he reading. They do say he has a sight of books in that tent."

"I didn't know as men cared that much for books," came in Maggie's voice across her close-printed page of ducal love affairs.

"Gentlemen does," said Uncle John; he hitched up his corduroys and settled himself more comfortably in his chair. "Them has nought else to do," he added with a smile.

"It do keep 'em out of mischief, like as not," remarked Granma, with a complacent forbearance towards the weaker members of the community.

"Because a man reads it doesn't say he can't work——"

Cassin's eyes shone, there was a spot of colour in her cheeks. She was thinking of her father's head with silver streaks in the dark hair, bent above his treasured books.

"And because he works, it doesn't say he can't read," declared Uncle James with a flourish of his creased newspaper.

"Papers isn't books," said Aunt Susie, rather contemptuously; "you learns a deal from books, so I think."

"My! but you do!" Maggie agreed with enthusiasm.

Aunt Susie cast a look of scorn on the Happy Ending Story. As a matter of fact, like all its class, it was as harmless as it was silly. But there had been a passage in Aunt Susie's life which had given her an introduction into an altogether different class of printed matter. Aunt Susie had neither time nor inclination for much reading, but such books as she had read she considered vastly superior to those Maggie so enjoyed. Aunt Susie's were bound in cloth and printed—"so as you could read them without a candle all to yourself."

So, "I didn't mean that there trash," declared Aunt Susie.

"You haven't never read it," objected Maggie, spreading her big hands across the open page.

"No, and I wouldn't like——"

"Then how do you know as it is trash?"

"You was had there, Susie, m'dear," bellowed Uncle James.

"I dunno' about 'had,'" his sister returned; she was putting a great deal of energy into the straightening of an apron-string. "If you can only speak of them things you knows about, there wouldn't be much talking in this world; leastways, not from *you*." With which sally her iron went down on its stand with a triumphant bang.

Uncle John stroked his chin. It made a rasping sound; he only shaved on Saturdays.

"Some knows a lot more'n they tells," he said, then lapsed into silence.

"And some tells a lot more'n they knows," returned Aunt Susie triumphantly.

"How do you know how much they knows?"

Which being something of a poser, Aunt Susie covered her retreat by changing her irons with considerable clatter.

Andrew moved his chair to clear her way to the fire. This brought him close to Cassin's side.

She had rubbed the candlestick to a state of faultless polish, and now she held it upright upon her knees between both hands. Something virginal, almost saintlike, in her attitude stirred the poetry that slept in Andrew's heart.

She was not pretty. At least he did not think she was. He had always supposed that girls like Maggie—he glanced across the room to the table in the window—yes, he had always supposed they were the pretty ones, girls strong-coloured and buxom. All the boys were eager enough, so he knew, to walk out with Maggie. But this other girl—he stole a look at Cassin— Again there was that strange little flutter that was not exactly pain at his heart.

Andrew told himself, prosaically, that the room must be too hot and made him feel "sick-like." Yet he made no attempt to rise and go.

Nor did he join further in the conversation, which was still kept up with a fire of attack and counter-attack between Aunt Susie and the brothers James and John, with every now and then a shrewd word above Granma's knitting-needles.

The room was certainly very hot, and perspiration stood on more than one brow. Not on Cassin's. She, with her shining candlestick held erect, looked cool as a flower. At that thought Andrew's heart gave a queer little bound. He felt he ought to say something. She must think him foolish, sitting there "so silent as a fog-bound rock." He wanted to say something, but could think of nothing to say.

He was half relieved, half annoyed, when his silent contemplation was interrupted by a sharp knock at the door.

"A full house to-night," laughed Uncle James; whilst his brother shouted a lusty "Come in."

The door opened to admit Lorry Grainger.

"Ah! good evening, all of you," he said easily. "I just called for a match, that's all."

"Here you are, sir, and welcome," said Uncle James, producing a blackened box of "England's Glory" from his pocket.

"A beastly night outside," remarked Grainger as he lit his pipe; "raining and blowing like old Harry."

"You're all wet, m'son," said Uncle John, laying a hand on the young man's smart coat-sleeve; "best stay a bit, in case it clears."

"I'm afraid it will get worse rather than better," answered Grainger. But he seemed in no hurry to go. His eyes were bright, his cheeks a little flushed. Perhaps with the wind and rain.

"Take a seat, sir. Andrew here'll give you his chair," said Uncle James, settling himself more comfortably on the sofa. Thump, thump, went Nero's tail below it. Perhaps *he* found the room rather over-hot and welcomed the chance of his master's departure.

Andrew rose to his feet.

"Nay," said Grainger, laying a hand on the other's shoulder, "never will I turn out a better man than myself."

Nevertheless he sat down on the chair. Behind Aunt Susie's back he winked at Maggie, whereupon she began to choke violently in her efforts to hide her laughter. To her mind Lorry's remark and action were desperately funny.

As no other chair in the room was vacant, Andrew crossed his legs, tucked his hands into his pockets, and leant against the wall, a position of ease and grace which a Cornish fisherman is capable of keeping for hours without apparent fatigue.

For some reason Andrew felt his blood rise. He was never over-fond of "this Grainger." In any case he wasn't going to turn out "because of he."

Nor did his anger at all abate by reason of the fact that his sharp ears could catch sundry asides that "this Grainger" had the audacity to make below his breath to Cassin. Silly little nothings they were in reality, which she had too much sense to resent. But Andrew thought her complacent, and, by reason of that newly awakened tremor of the heart, he raged inwardly, whilst Lorry stretched out his well-gaitered legs to the fire,

passed his tobacco-pouch; was hail-fellow-well-met with James and John, treated Aunt Susie and Granma—"just as though he was all the same as we"—as the latter confided to a crony next day. As regards Maggie, another wink or two and a pressure on the hand at parting made her more than content.

As to the "pretty little shy bit"—it wasn't half bad fun to make the colour come and go in her smooth cheek.

There is no doubt Lorry Grainger could be "the very deuce and all of a fellow!"

CHAPTER XII

THE CAMP ON CARN MORVAH

THE threatened gale had come, causing all the boats to lift anchor and run into the little harbour for safety; then it had frittered itself away in a few hail showers, and was gone. Though the roused sea still thundered on the shore, boomed into the caverns, sobbed and seethed about the rocks, the air was still. The sky was primrose, faintly flushed. The water a shimmer of gold and green, with gleams of steely blue. The foam of the breaking waves, pink-touched in the light, was mauve-tinted in the shadows.

Into the molten glory of the sea jutted Land's End, transformed from scarred rock into a wonder of purple mist.

It was that moment of the day just before the closing of the dusk, when near objects spring into intense distinctness. On Carn Morvah every crack and stain, every moss-clump and lichen tuft stood out—little dry grass blossoms, every one distinctly, the faded heather and its twisted grey stems.

The men were distinct, too. Lorry Grainger, his dark hair rumpled, a cigarette between his fingers, bending forward from a camp stool. Philip Knight, a cigar in his mouth, his hands supporting his neck, a slouch hat tilted over his eyes, lolling back in a deck chair. Behind them stood the tent. For Philip Knight was the stranger whose camp on Carn Morvah had been the subject of local talk. The tent was of green canvas, the maker's name in black upon it; round about it were strewn camp utensils; an oil-stove stood in the shelter of a rock; from one of the tent ropes a towel and some teacloths hung motionless against the vivid sea.

Philip Knight had a book open on his knee; he was not reading it, but was listening to his companion, putting in an occasional word with the intention of drawing the

other out. Mostly, he listened in silence. The talk was running on Cornwall and its people.

Lorry, in his easy-going way, had scraped up an acquaintance with the stranger. The latter had invited him to take "pot luck" at the camp. "Pot luck" had proved a very appetising little repast, and had been followed by excellent coffee. The empty cups were tilted over on the grass. Tumblers, a whisky bottle, and a syphon of soda stood within easy reach.

Under the influence of good food and pleasant drink, Grainger, never very reserved, had grown expansive. Later on, when twilight should fall, merging tent and rocks into blackness, and when the occasional spurt of a match, or the glowing ends of lighted cigars, would be the only illumination save that of the twinkling stars overhead —he might grow confidential.

"I envy you your chances," Philip Knight said, as he clasped his ankle, and drew one leg comfortably across the other; "living amongst them, as you do, you must get really to know the people."

Until it was pointed out to him, Lorry had certainly not realised what a privilege was this opportunity. Nevertheless, he flicked the ash off his cigarette, nodded his head, and said:

"I believe you, my boy."

Philip stretched a lazy hand for his tumbler, and took an appreciative draught before he said:

"Ah! the simple life! Pity we can't all return to it, re-envolve our simplicities, so to speak. What do we want with luxuries?" He drew out a cigar-case, its finely-wrought sides gleamed in the dimming light. He carefully selected a cigar, touching it with tender fingers; then he tossed the case to his companion.

"You can't do wrong with those," he assured him, "given me by some one in the know."

He struck a match on his boot and carefully lit his cigar.

"You not ready." He tossed the match into the grass. It sent up a tiny trail of blue smoke before it went out.

Philip removed his cigar from his mouth and looked at it thoughtfully.

"I was down amongst the johnnies at the pub last

night," he said, carelessly. "Couldn't get much out of them, though I stood drinks round. They swallowed those, right enough, but didn't seem inclined to give me any *quid pro quo*."

Lorry laughed.

"They hate strangers," he said. "Though I get on with them right enough."

He, too, struck a match.

"Don't count you a stranger, I suppose?"

"Rather not. I'm in and out just as I like. I don't know why exactly." He looked at his cigar with a modest air. "Somehow or another they took to me from the first. Good deal how you set to work, I suppose. There's no denying it, they *are* a bit stand-offish with strangers."

"Depends, as you say, on how you set to work."

"Not altogether. There seems a native distrust."

"Even a kind of pleasure in leading you astray?"

"Yes, something like that."

"If you question them, for instance, they will answer anything they think will please you."

"Sheer good nature, no doubt."

"With a foundation of distrust?"

"I shouldn't wonder. If you get a bit personal, they think you are prying and put you off."

"Stuff you, in fact?"

"Just so," answered Lorry. Till to-night he had not known he was such a student of human nature. He rather fancied himself in the new character and expanded accordingly.

"The cox'n of the life-boat seems a fine old chap," said Knight.

"You're right there. You should get him on talking. He's a boy for a yarn."

"Ah! I must have a try. Then there's an old black-bearded chap——"

"Peter Tregellis. He's a holy terror. I could tell you a tale about him"—Lorry stopped to smile—"mind, I don't vouch it's true, though I've no reason to suppose it isn't."

It was not a pleasant little story that he told, but both men laughed.

The light was fading now, the stars were coming out

one by one, the air was very still. The laughter of the men sounded discordant.

After it had died away the glasses were refilled. Then Lorry, having scored a distinct success, went on bringing out all the tit-bits of gossip he had gathered during his familiar intercourse with the men.

Philip Knight, with a well-directed question here and there, encouraged him to the top of his bent.

Presently, Lorry, having temporarily at all events, exhausted his powers of memory, Philip said :

"That young fellow, Andrew Thomas, strikes one as being of rather a superior type."

"I don't know about that. He's all right, Andrew; quite a friend of mine. No! I shouldn't say he's superior at all. Just the usual rough, rather narrow-minded kind, like the rest."

"By the way." He settled his collar with a pleased smile. "I know a girl who was jolly sweet on him."

"Was?"

"Till I cut him out!"

"You devil!" cried Knight, over his lifted whisky glass.

Lorry modestly disowned so high a compliment, but was duly elated, nevertheless. He had not the slightest suspicion that he was being drawn out; and he told all he knew—perhaps in his desire to keep the good opinion the other had so tersely expressed—just a little more than he knew—for certain, that is.

Presently the conversation turned upon smuggling.

"All done away with, I suppose, in these prosaic, modern days," stated Knight.

"So they say," answered Lorry. He closed his lips on his cigar, pointing it upwards to the stars.

Philip leant forward and placed a hand upon the other's knee.

"No, but really?" he asked.

Lorry laughed.

"I'm not going to tell tales out of school."

"Just between ourselves," urged the older man. The light was nearly faded now. "You know, I really am interested in these things, as old-world survivals."

Lorry moved on his seat uneasily.

"Well, I have heard a thing or two. But the coast-guard keep a good look-out, you see."

"Even in an out-of-the-way-spot like this?"

"Even in an out-of-the-way-spot like this."

"And nothing's ever slipped in?"

"I wouldn't like to swear that."

Lorry laughed again.

"I suppose, though, it's impossible," said Knight, leaning back in his chair. He seemed so imperturbably convinced of the impossibility, that Lorry was piqued.

"Has a French boat been in since you squatted here?" he asked.

Philip pricked up his ears, but he answered, lazily:

"A French boat? Why should they come here?"

"For crabs—no, it's lobsters—they don't take crabs, French tariff too high——"

"No, is it? That's decidedly interesting, now."

Philip Knight was apparently quite willing to branch off on a side line. Yet, later on, the conversation had, in some way, managed to veer round again to smuggling.

By that time it was quite dark.

When Lorry Grainger left the camp on Carn Morvah the moon was just rising. Though it was a clear night, the edge of the moon looked a little blurred to Lorry.

He felt elated, though, highly pleased with himself. This Knight was a good chap, one of the best. There was no doubt, too, that Lorry himself had been entertaining.

But as he trudged along the white line of road that twisted and turned, without apparently getting him any nearer to Trezelah, the farm where his travesty of a training was being carried out—he began to feel a little less satisfied with himself and things in general. As a matter of fact, he could not recall with any clearness how the latter part of the conversation had gone. He began to doubt whether he had not made an ass of himself. He felt sleepy, and tripped now and then against a stone.

"Beastly bad form to give the girl's name," he found himself muttering.

On Carn Morvah the light of the tent was shining, as Andrew Thomas had said, like a big glow-worm. On

the slanting roof the shadow of its inmate bent grotesquely. Philip Knight was hard at work, covering sheet after sheet of ruled paper. The lamp shone upon it with a powerful light, yet could Andrew, or any of the fishermen, have looked over the bent figure of the writer, they would have set down his work as "queer foreign stuff with no meaning for we."

The closely-ruled pages were covered by shorthand.