CLASSICS TO GO

NEVERMORE

ROLF BOLDREWOOD

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CHAPTER I

'Then, by Heaven! I'll leave the country. I won't stop here to be bullied for doing what scores of other fellows have done and nothing thought about it. It's unjust, it's intolerable—'

Thus spoke impetuous Youth.

'I should say something would depend upon the family tradition of the "other fellows" to whom you refer. In ours gambling debts and shady transactions with turf-robbers happen to be forbidden luxuries.'

Thus spoke philosophic Age, calm, cynical, unsparing.

No power of divination was needed to decide that the speakers were father and son; no prophet to discover, on one side, sullen defiance following a course of reckless folly; on the other, wounded family pride and long-nursed consuming wrath.

As the rebellious son stood up and faced his sire, it was curious to mark the similarity of the inherited lineaments brought out more clearly in his moments of rage and defiance.

Both men were strong and sinewy, dark in complexion, and bearing the ineffaceable impress of gentle nurture, leisure, and assured position. The younger man was the taller, and of a frame which, when fully developed, promised unusual strength and activity. More often than the converse, does it obtain that the son, in outward appearance or mental constitution, reproduces his mother's attributes or those of her male relatives; the daughter, in complemental ratio, inheriting the paternal traits. But in this case Nature had

strongly adhered to the old-established formula 'like father like son,' for whoso looked on Mervyn Trevanion, of Wychwood—the head of one of the oldest families in Cornwall—could not doubt for one moment that Launcelot Trevanion was his son.

If all other features had been amissing or impaired, the eyes alone, which contributed the most striking and peculiar features in both faces, would have been sufficient to establish the relationship, not only because they were, in both faces, identical in colour and form, but because of the strange, almost unnatural lustre which glowed in them in that moment of excitement; neither large nor especially bright, they were scarcely remarkable under ordinary circumstances—of the darkest gray in colour and deeply-set under thick and overhanging eyebrows. A stranger might well overlook them, but, when turned suddenly in anger or surprise, a steady searching light commenced to glow in them which was discomposing, if not alarming. Even in a quick glance such as mere badinage might provoke, they were strange and weird of regard. Lighted up by the deeper passions, those who had been in the position to witness their effect spoke of it as unearthly and, in a sense, appalling.

In the family portraits, which for centuries had adorned the walls of the long gallery in Wychwood, the same feature could be distinctly traced. There was a legend, indeed, of the 'wicked' squire—one of the hard-drinking, duelling, dicing, dare-devils of the second Charles' day—who had so terrified his young wife—a gentle girl whose wealth had been the fatal attraction in the alliance—that she had fallen down before him in a fit, and never afterwards recovered health or reason.

All through Cornwall and the neighbouring counties they were known as the 'Trevanion eyes.' There was a hint of

demoniacal possession in the first ancestor, who had brought them into the family from abroad, and a legendary compact with the Enemy of mankind, from whom the fiendish glare had been derived. Since the birth of the first Mervyn, 'the wicked squire,' the eldest son had inherited the same peculiar regard as regularly as to him had come the estate and most enviable rent-roll.

A saying had long been current among the county people that when the lands went to a younger son, this remarkable and, as they held, unlucky feature would be removed from the family of Trevanion as suddenly as it had entered it. But up to this time, no break in the succession, *de male en male*, had ever occurred.

Launcelot Trevanion (mostly called Lance) was the eldest son of this ancient house. There were two younger boys—Arthur and Penrhyn—respectively fourteen and twelve years old; but a cousin, early orphaned, was the only girl in that silent and gloomy hall. Her beauty—she was the fairest flower of a race of which the women were proverbially lovely—irradiated Wychwood Hall, while her enforced gaiety charmed the saturnine Sir Mervyn out of many a fit of his habitual gloom. With the neighbours, the villagers, the friends of the house, she enjoyed a popularity as universal as unaffected, and not unfrequently had the remark been made by individuals of all these sections of provincial society, that Estelle Chaloner had, in a measure, thrown herself away, as the phrase runs, by betrothing herself to her wild cousin Lance; that she was too bright and bonnie a creature to become the mate of any Trevanion of Wychwood—hard, unyielding, and, in some sense, ill-fated as they had all been since the days of the first Sir Launcelot, no one knew how many centuries ago.

Certainly they had not been a fortunate or a prosperous family. Possessed originally of immense estates, and

boasting an ancestry and military suzerainté—long anterior to the Conquest—undeniably brave, chivalrous, and daring to the point of desperation, they had uniformly espoused the wrong side in every important conflict. They had suffered from attainder, they had regained their lands only to lose them again. Bit by bit they had lost one fair manor after another, until, at last, Wychwood Hall and manor, a fine but heavily-mortgaged estate, were all that remained out of the vast dominion which stretched, according to time-worn charters still in the muniment room of the Hall, from Tintagel to the Devonshire border.

Estelle Chaloner, in whose veins ran several strains of Trevanion blood, had a character curiously compounded of the qualities of both families; outwardly resembling the Chaloners, who were a fair, blue-eyed race, more conspicuous for the grace and charm of social life than for the sterner traits, she possessed, unsuspectedly, a large infusion of the ancestral Trevanion nature.

In early youth those strongest tendencies and proclivities which come by inheritance are chiefly latent. Like the seedlings of a tropical forest they remain for years almost hidden by undergrowth. But when successive summers have stirred sap and rind, the deeply-rooted scions commence to assert themselves, towering over, and eventually, it may be, dwarfing the plants of earlier maturity.

Estelle and her cousin Lance had been playmates and friends since earliest infancy. There were but three years between them; like twins they had grown up with a curious similarity of thought and feeling, though of strongly contrasted temperaments. Then the divergent stage was reached when the girl begins to tread the path which leads to the goal of womanhood, when the boy essays the freedom of speech and act which mould the future man.

She was so gentle, he so haughty, yet were they alike in fearlessness, in love of dogs and horses, in passionate attachment to field-sports and the teachings of animated nature. Wanderers in the summer woods, fishing in the brook, climbing the old tower of the ruined church, what an Eden-like season of unstinted freedom was that of their early youth! It was a sorrowful day for both when Lance was sent to a public school and Estelle was relegated to a prim, high-salaried governess who stigmatised nearly all out-door exercise as unladylike, and forbade field-sports as being destructive to the hope of mental progress.

But though separated for the greater part of the year, there were still the precious vacation intervals when the cousins met and wandered in untrammelled freedom. Thus they rode and rambled, drove the young horses in the mail-phaeton to Truro—the market town—fished and hunted, shot and ferreted, she walking with the guns, none caring to make them afraid.

It had chanced in the year preceding Lance's unlucky quarrel with his father that they told each other of the love which had grown up with their lives, and which was to make a portion of them for evermore.

And now this rupture between the stern father and the stubborn son threatened the wreck of her young life's happiness. She had repeatedly warned Lance of the imprudence of his conduct, and laid before him the danger which he was too headstrong and reckless to forecast for himself; had long since reminded him that of all youthful follies and outbreaks, for some unexplained reason, his father was especially intolerant of those connected with the turf. The very mention of a racecourse seemed sufficient to arouse a paroxysm of rage. Why he was thus affected by the concomitants of a popular sport which country gentlemen, as a rule, regard in the light of a pardonable relaxation, was

not known to any of his household. Sir Mervyn was not so strait-laced in other matters as to make it incumbent upon him to frown down horse-racing for the sake of consistency. Still the fact remained. Any hint of race-meetings by Lance was viewed with the utmost disfavour. No animal suspected of a turn of speed was ever permitted lodgings in the Wychwood stables, spacious as they were. And now the sudden bringing to light of Lance's serious loss of money by bets at a recent county meeting, with moreover a proved part-ownership of the unsuccessful quadruped, had raised to white heat his sire's slow gathering, yet slower subsiding anger. Thus it came to pass that after one other stormy interview in which the elder man had heaped reproaches without stint upon the younger, the son had declared his resolution of 'quitting England, and taking his chance of a livelihood in some country where he would at least be free from the galling interference of an unreasonably severe father, who had never loved him, and who refused him the ordinary indulgence of his youth and station.'

'In the extremely improbable event of your quitting a comfortable home for a life of labour and privation,' the elder man said slowly and deliberately, 'I beg you distinctly to understand that I shall make you no allowance, nor even suffer your cousin to do so, should she be weak enough to wish it, and you sufficiently mean to accept it. Sink or swim by your own efforts. *I* shall never hold out a hand to save you.'

Then the son gazed at the sire, looking him full and steadfastly in the face for some seconds before he answered. Had there been a painter to witness the strange and unnatural scene, he might have noted that the light which blazed in the old man's eyes shot forth at times an almost lurid gleam, as from a hidden fire, while the youth's regard was scarcely less fell in its intensity.

'It is possible, even probable,' he said, 'that we may never meet again on earth. You have been hard and cruel to me, but I am not wholly unmindful of our relationship. Careless and extravagant I may have been—neither worse nor better than hundreds of men of my age and breeding, and may well have angered you. I had resolved, partly persuaded by Estelle, to humble myself and ask your pardon. That state of mind has passed—passed for ever. I shall leave Wychwood to-morrow, and if anything happens to me in Australia, where I am going, remember this—if evil comes to me, on your head be it—with my last words, in my dying hour, I shall curse and renounce you, as I do now.'

As the boy spoke the last dreadful words, the older man, transported almost beyond himself, made as though he could have advanced and struck him. But with a strong effort he restrained himself.

The younger never relaxed the intensity of his gaze, but with a slow and measured movement approached the door, then halting for a moment said—'Enjoy your triumph to the uttermost—think of me homeless and a wanderer—if it pleases you. But as repentant or forgiving, never—neither in this world nor the next.'

Before the last words were concluded, Sir Mervyn turned his face with studied indifference to the window, and gazed upon the park, over which the last rays of the autumnal sun cast a crimson radiance. For a few moments only the solar beams glowed above the horizon; the landscape with strange suddenness assumed a pale, even sombre tone. A faint chill wind rustled the leaves of the great lime-tree, which stood on the edge of the lawn, and caused a few of the leaves to fall. When the squire looked around, Launcelot Trevanion was gone. He turned again to the window; mechanically his eye ranged over the lovely landscape, the

far-stretching champaign of the park—one of the largest in the county, the winding river, the blue hills, the distant sea.

'What a madman the boy is,' he groaned out, to leave all this for a few hot words—and I too! Who is the wiser? I wonder. Will he be mad enough to keep his word? He is a stubborn colt—a true descendant of old Launcelot the wizard. If he fails to gather gold, as these fools expect, a voyage and a year's experience of what poverty and a rough life mean will be no bad teaching.'

'For what is anger but a wild beast?' quotes the humorist How many a man has, to his cost, been assured of this fact by personal experience. A wild beast truly, which tears and rends those whom nature itself fashions to be cherished.

With most men, reason resumes her sway, after a temporary dethronement, when regret, even remorse, appears on the scene. The consequences of the violence of act or speech into which the choleric man may have been hurried, stalk solemnly across the mental stage. Were but recantation, atonement, possible, forgiveness would be gladly sued for. But in how many instances is it too late? The sin is sinned. The penalty must be paid. Pride, dumb and unbending, refuses to acknowledge wrong-doing, and thus hearts are rent, friends divided, life-long misery and ruin ensured, oftentimes by the act of those who, in a different position, would have yielded up life itself in defence of the victim of an angry mood.

It was not long before the inhabitants of Truro, and, indeed, the country generally, were fully aware that there had been a violent quarrel between Sir Mervyn and his eldest son.

'The family temper again,' said the village wiseacres, as they smoked their pipes at night at the 'King Arthur,' 'the squire and the young master are a dashed sight too near

alike to get on peaceably together. But they'll make it up again, the quality makes up everything nowadays.'

'Blamed if I know,' answered Mark Hardred, the gamekeeper of Wychwood, who, though not a regular attendant at the 'King Arthur,' thought it good policy to put in an appearance there now and then, 'there's a many of 'em like our people, just as dogged and worse, I'm feared Mr. Lance won't come back in a hurry, more's the pity.'

'He's a free-handed young chap as ever I see,' quoth the village rough-rider, 'it's a pity the old squire don't take a bit slacker on the curb rein, as to the matter of a bet now and then, all youngsters as has any spirit in 'em tries their luck on the turf. But he'll come back surely, surely.'

'He said straight out to the squire as he'd be off to Australia, where the goldfields has broke out so 'nation rich, along o' the papers, and it's my opinion to Australia he'll go,' replied the keeper. 'I never knew him go back of his word. He's main obstinate.'

'I can't abear folks as is obstinate,' here interpolated the village wheelwright, a red-faced solemn personage of unmistakable Saxon solidity of face and figure. 'I feel most as if I could kill 'em. I'd a larruped it out of him if I'd been the vather of un, same as I do my Mat and Mark.'

This produced a general laugh, as the speaker was well known to be the most obstinate man in the parish, and his twin boys, Matthew and Mark, inheriting the paternal characteristic in perfection, in spite of their father's corrections, which were unremitting, were a true pair of wolf cubs, taking their unmerciful punishment mutely and showing scant signs of improvement.

'I must be agoing,' said the keeper, putting on his fur cap. 'I feel that sorry for Mr. Lance that I'd make bold to speak to

the squire myself if he was like other people. But it'd be as much as my place was worth. It'll be poor Miss 'Stelle that the grief will fall on. Good-night all.' And the sturdy, resolute keeper, whose office had succeeded from father to son for generations at Wychwood, tramped out into the night.

CHAPTER II

It looks at times, it must be confessed, as if, the individual once embarked upon a course involving the happiness of a lifetime, an unseen influence hurries on events as though the fabled Fates were weaving the web of doom. Hardly had Lance thrown himself upon a horse and galloped over to Truro, directing, in a hasty note left in his room, that his personal effects should be forwarded to an address, than the first paper he took up contained an announcement which fitted exactly with his humour. It ran as follows—

'Steam to Australia.—For Melbourne and the Goldfields. The clipper ship, *Red Jacket*, three thousand tons register, Forbes, Commander, will have quick dispatch. Apply to Messrs. Gibbs, Bright, and Co.'

The die was cast. He saw himself speeding over the ocean on his way to the wild and wondrous land of gold, absolutely uncontrolled henceforth and free as air to follow his inclinations. There was intoxication in the very thought. For years to come he would not be subject to the trammels of civilisation. The trackless wilds, the rude, even savage society of a new, half-discovered country had no terrors for him. The wilder elements in the blood of the Trevanions seemed to have precipitated themselves in the person of this their descendant; to have rendered imperative a departure in some direction, no matter what, from the conventional region with its galling limitations and absurd edicts. Such are the problems of heredity. Despite of some natural regret that so serious a quarrel with his father, and the head of the family, should have been the proximate cause of his exile, the mere anticipation of a wholly free and unfettered life in a new land filled him with joy. Then arose

visions such as course through the brain of ardent, inexperienced youth; of wondrous wealth acquired by lucky speculation or the discovery of a cavern filled with gold, after the manner of the *Arabian Nights*. With what feelings of triumph would he *then* return to his native land, having in all respects given the lie to the predictions of his foes and calumniators, receiving with complacent pride the congratulations of his father, in that hour softened and converted by the reputation of his distinguished son. His name, once spoken with bated breath, now a by-word for success, would be in all men's mouths.

'Then! yes! then, darling Estelle!' had he said to his cousin in their last conversation, when she had vainly tried to shake his determination to leave England—'then I shall pay off the mortgage on the old estate; not that it matters much for one generation, I suppose, but I should like to be able to give a cheque for it to old Centall. Then I would buy the St. Austel lands, which will be pretty sure to be in the market by that time. Every one knows the estate is eaten up with interest as it is, and at the rate the Tredegars are living there must be an end in a few years. After that it will be about time to look out for a wife. Now whom would you like to recommend? Why, how grave you look!'

'Dreams and visions, Lance. Vain hopes, false and unreal,' said the girl. 'I see no prospect of success, much less of fairytale treasures. Think of all the adventurers who have left this very Duchy of Cornwall in old days or later. How few have ever returned!—fewer still who were not poorer than they left! It seems to me madness that you should go at all.'

'You are no true Englishwoman, Estelle, if you have not a spice of adventure in you,' he replied. 'Lovers and kinsfolk have always been sped on the path of glory before now. How else would the Indies have been gained or the new world discovered, if all hearts had been as faint as yours?'

'It is not that,' said the girl sadly, and laying her head wearily upon his broad breast, as she threw her arms around his neck. 'It is not that! I could send you away, almost rejoicing, in a good cause, were it to fight the Queen's battles, for the glory of our native land. But my heart sinks within me when I think of your going away with a father's curse upon your head, with a deep quarrel about a light matter on your mind, and for object and pursuit, only to seek for gold among an ignoble crowd of rude adventurers.'

'Gold!' said the young man, laughing lightly; 'and what else is every one striving for in these latter days? Gold means perfect independence. The realisation of dreams of fairyland—the respect of the herd—the friendship of the powerful—the love of the lovely! Why decry gold, cousin mine? But, except for the adventure—the wild freedom—the strangeness and danger of a new world, few care so little for it as Lance Trevanion. And that you well know.'

'I know, my darling; I know. If it be so, why not stay at home? My uncle, I am sure, is sorry for having been so hasty. He will be glad of any chance to tell you so. A few years and your position as heir and eldest son must be acknowledged. Why leave these proved and settled privileges, and tempt dangers of sea, and storm, and an unknown land?'

'Too late! it is too late!' he said gloomily. 'I am a changed man. I can neither forget nor forgive his insults, my father though he be; and I feel as if I was irresistibly driven to take the voyage—to see this new country—to share in this great gold adventure. I could not draw back now.'

'And I feel, day by day, more strongly and vividly,' said the girl, 'that it will be your doom to go forth from us and return no more. It seems like a prophetic instinct in me. I feel it in every fibre of my being. But I will come to you, if you do not

come to us. Whatever may happen, I will never rest satisfied till I have seen you in your new home. So, if you do not return in five years, you know what you have to expect But you will return, will you not?' And again she clasped her arms around him, sobbing as if her heart would break.

Estelle Chaloner was a proud girl, one of those reserved yet passionate natures which habitually conceal their deeper feelings, as if jealous of exhibiting the sacred recesses of their hearts to the careless or irreverent. Ice on the surface, they resemble those regions which in springtime need but the touch of that great enchanter's wand to cause the living streams to flow, to produce the magically sudden apparition of verdure and fragrant flowerets.

'Darling Estelle! in five years I will come back,' he said, 'if I am alive. The time will soon pass. Think how much I shall have to talk about, and what wonders I shall have seen. You will hardly know me again.'

The girl sighed deeply, then raised her head, and gazing steadfastly at her lover, as the tears streamed unheededly adown her face, continued her pleading appeal without noticing his jesting speech—

'You will promise me then, will you not, solemnly and faithfully, you will swear by King Arthur's sword—our family vow—that on next Christmas five years, whatever betide, you will return?'

'Well,' he answered, slowly and heedfully, 'if nothing less will do, I suppose I shall have done something in that time or failed utterly and hopelessly. So I will promise. It wants nearly three months to Christmas, and if I do not turn up in December 1857, you may make sure that I am either dead or a captive among the Indians. I suppose there are Indians

there. "By Arthur's sword!"' and here he crossed his hands, after the old Cornish fashion.

'I don't believe there are Indians,' she said. 'If you would read a little more, you naughty boy, you would know. Of course, there are savages of some sort, the worst being white. But we must exchange tokens, like lovers—and we are true lovers, are we not?' Here she seemed as if her tears would flow afresh, but controlled herself with a strong effort. Then she loosened a slender gold chain from her neck, to which was attached a coin of foreign appearance, traced with strange characters, and having upon it a wondrous woman's face, beauteous, but of an antique cast.

'Here,' she said, 'is my precious Egyptian princess. The man who gave it to me said it was possessed of talismanic virtues, that it secured safety and success to the wearer as long as he never permitted it to be taken from him by force or fraud. If he did, the charm was broken. You are the only person in the whole world to whom I would give it.'

'I thought you were too wise,' he said, taking the chain in his hand gently, nevertheless, 'to confess such superstition. But I will take it if it cheers you, darling Estelle, and here I swear that it shall be my companion night and day until we meet again. Here is a companion token, you have often asked for it before.'

'You are not going to give me the Chaloner ring, are you, Lance? How happy it would have made me one little month ago,' she cried. 'I must have it altered to fit my finger, I suppose? It can be altered back when you return.'

'It is yours from this moment, and for ever,' said he. 'May it bring you the good fortune it has failed to give me, so far. On a woman's hand the charm may be broken. It has my mother's name inside, and, see,' here he touched a spring,

disclosing a tiny recess under the principal stone, which was a diamond of great value, 'take your scissors and cut off a lock of my hair, and here is a place to put it. I may be gray when we meet again. Isn't it a queer ring?'

It was indeed an uncommon jewel. It had been his mother's, and by her had been inherited from the uncle who had first made his own and the family's fortunes by a long residence in India. He had received it from a Rajah in those old days when jewels and gifts passed freely between the servants of the Great East India Company and the native princes. A large ruby and an emerald of equal size flanked the centre jewel. The setting was peculiar, massive, but artfully disguised by the exquisite delicacy of the workmanship. The great beauty and value of the jewel would have made it noticeable and prized in any society in which the wearer might have moved.

'You have comforted me,' she said, smiling through her tears, and again taking his head in her hands and pressing her lips again and again to his brow and face. 'I feel now as if I had some guarantee that I should look on your dear face again. And mind, if you do not return in five years and three months I shall come to Australia to search for you.'

Thus they parted. He to face the new world of the strange and the unfamiliar—light of heart and ready of hand, as is the wont of untried youth; she to mourn his absence in secret, and to brood over her sorrow, as is ever the part of the steadfast heart of loving woman. The separation from his cousin Estelle was his sole cause of regret on leaving England. Yet that transient grief soon passed away amidst the turmoil and excitement of which he found himself a part in his capacity of six-hundredth-and-odd passenger on board the crowded ocean-going clipper. A strange enough experience to the home-bred youth, who, save on yachting cruises, had never dared the deep. Heterogeneous and

strangely assorted was the crowd of the passengers—adventurers of every grade, feverishly anxious to reach the land of gold, chiefly inexperienced, but all sanguine of acquiring the facile fortunes which they had persuaded themselves the new world of the South had in store for them. Young men were there—mere boys, like himself—for whom the trials of toil, danger, and privation were all to come. Hitherto unrealised abstractions.

Others, again, whose grizzled beards showed them as men who had fronted foes in the battle of life, and were ready for another campaign. Many had never left England, and, in despite of occasional boasting, were heavy-hearted at the thought of the homes which they had left and might never see more. Nor was the emigration entirely masculine—

> 'There was woman's fearless eye
> Lit by her deep love's truth,
> There was manhood's brow serenely high—
> And the fiery heart of youth.'

A half-expressed hope that the company in the second cabin would be less conventional and more amusing than in the first, joined to the necessity for economising his slender funds, had decided Lance Trevanion upon shipping as a second-class passenger. Certain to be compelled to lead a rough life upon his arrival in Australia, surely, he argued, the sooner he commenced to learn the way to do so the better. Nor would his association with refined women and well-bred men in the first cabin aid him in his search for gold—necessarily with rough, half-brigand comrades. Thus, partly as the outcome of the defiant spirit in which he was leaving home and native land, he booked himself as a second-class passenger.

Doubtless, in the curiously mingled crowd of passengers who thronged the first saloon of the *Red Jacket* in that

fateful year of 1851, there were many remarkable persons, whose lives had included a far greater number of strange adventures than most modern novels. But for a wild and fanciful commingling of all sorts and conditions of men—from every clime, of every grade, degree, and shade of character, the second-class passengers bore off the palm. Since the untimely collapse of the architects of the Tower of Babel, there could seldom have been so diverse and bizarre a collection of humanity.

The *Red Jacket*, under the stern rule of Malcolm Forbes, from whose fiat there was no appeal, the most daring and successful maker of quick passages that the records of the Company knew, had steamed off at the hour appointed. Started when far from ready, however, if the masses of deck lumber which needed storage were to be taken into account. The weather, bad from the commencement, became worse in the Bay of Biscay, where raged a perfect hurricane—a storm, or rather a succession of storms, under the fierce breath of which the *Red Jacket* lay-to for forty-eight hours at a stretch, afflicting the inexperienced voyagers with the strongly impressed notion that their voyage would not be quite so long as they expected. But the good ship held her own gallantly; finally ploughed her way through the mountainous billows of the Bay of Storms into lower latitudes. Milder airs and smoother seas cheered the depressed and pallid passengers. An increasing number walked the deck or sat in seats provided for them day by day. Cheerful conversation, merriment, and even such games as the conditions of 'board-ship' life permit were indulged in from time to time. Then Lance Trevanion had leisure to look around and examine his fellow-passengers. He would have been difficult to satisfy who could not among his compulsory comrades have selected one or more congenial acquaintance. In that year the *Red Jacket* was 'the great Club of the unsuccessful': authors and dramatists,

University graduates, lawyers, and physicians, clergymen and artists, soldiers and sailors, tinkers and tailors, plough-boy, apothecary, thief—to quote the nursery classic. All were there.

Men of good family, like himself, chiefly younger sons, however, who had quitted Britain in order to enlarge the proverbial slenderness of a cadet's purse—

> 'One was a peer of ancient blood,
> In name and fame undone—
> And one could speak in ancient Greek,
> And one was a bishop's son.'

The *soigné* ex-guardsman, for whom the last Derby had been the knell of fate, *he* was there, plainly dressed and unpretentious of manner, yet bearing the unmistakable stamp of the class whom King Fashion delighted to honour. The middle-aged club lounger, who thought the new game of Golden Hazard, at which the stakes were reported to be so heavy and the players so inexperienced, worth a voyage and a deal or two—he was there. The farmer's son, who had hunted too much; the farm labourer, who was a bit of a poacher; the gamekeeper, who had kept an eye on him; the shopman, whose soft hands had never done a day's hard work; the groom, the coachman, the gardener, each and every one of the members of the staff of rural and city life—were there. With some exceptions, they were chiefly young, and now, as the fear and discomfort of the early part of the voyage wore off, the natural characters of the individuals commenced to exhibit themselves.

It was pathetic to see the trustful confidence with which delicately-nurtured women, following their improvident or heedless mates, clung to the idea that, once safely landed in the wondrous land of gold, all would be well. They had left in the old land all that had made the solace of their lives,

their tenderest memories and inherited affection. After unutterable wretchedness and discomfort, they were now voyaging towards a land the characteristics of which were practically an unknown to them as those of the interior of Africa, and yet, 'O woman, great in thy faith!' those victims of ironic fate were cheerful, even gay. As they looked in the eyes of their husbands or the faces of their children and saw them happy and sanguine, they dreaded no cloud in the tropic sky, neither storm nor disaster, poverty nor danger, to come in the far south land.

With many young men on board, and others who, though no longer young, were not disinclined for games of chance, it was only to be expected that a little card-playing should go on. Lance was naturally fond of all games of hazard—bad, indeed, born and bred in him—derived from whatever ancestor—the true gambler's passion. He had enjoyed no great opportunity of developing it yet. All games of chance had been strictly interdicted at Wychwood. Now that he had come into freer atmosphere—into another world, socially considered—he felt a newly-arisen desire for play, so strong and unconquerable that it astonished himself. He had, of course, £200 or £300 with him, not intending to land in Australia quite penniless. This was more than many of his shipmates could boast of possessing, and he passed among them, in consequence, as quite a capitalist; in his way. Though he played regularly, almost daily in fact, he was more than moderately successful. The evil genius of chance, who lures men to their destruction by ensuring their success in their early hazards, was not absent on this occasion. Lance won repeatedly, so much so that his good fortune began to be as much a matter of general observation as his apparent easiness as regarded money.

It may be imagined that Trevanion's circle of acquaintances became enlarged. Inexperienced youngsters like himself

mingled every day, when the weather permitted, with men who had played for high stakes in good London clubs. Success, of course, varied. Many of the callow gamblers lost all they had, and had, perforce, to look forward to landing in Melbourne without a penny in the world.

Among those who were proverbially unsuccessful was a young man, who, from that and other reasons, commenced to attract an unusual share of attention from the other passengers. He and Lance Trevanion were decidedly unsympathetic. They were always pitted against one another in play. They appeared to be rivals in all things. More than once they had been on the verge of a quarrel, which the bystanders had prevented from being fought out. What was perhaps really curious was the fact, which all were quick to remark, that the two men resembled each other in personal appearance to a most uncommon degree. Lawrence Trevenna, for such was his name, was probably a year older, but otherwise had much the same figure, features, and complexion. The eyes, too, strange to say, were of the same shape and colour; and, as the two men faced each other in the quarrel before mentioned, more than one looker-on remarked the curious peculiarity—the strange unearthly glitter, the lurid light, which shone forth in the hour of wrath and defiance. No one had noticed it before in either face. 'They were as much alike,' said the second mate, who was standing by, somewhat disappointed that the fight did not come off, 'as if they were brothers. There couldn't have been a closer match.'

As it turned out, they had never seen one another before,—in fact, came from different parts of England. The other man, when looked at closely, was decidedly coarser in feature and less refined in type. His conversation, too, disclosed the fact that his early education had been indifferent. Handsome and stalwart as he was, under no

circumstances could he be considered to rank as a gentleman. That his temper was violent was put beyond a doubt by the savage outbreak which led to the quarrel. It was not certain that he would have got the best of it in a hand-to-hand encounter, but his expression on reluctantly retiring was of unequivocal malevolence, as was indeed exhibited by his parting speech.

'I'll meet with you another day,' he said. 'Australia is not such a big place, after all. You may not have so many backers next time.'

'It's perfectly indifferent to me,' answered Trevanion, 'when or how we meet. I dare say my hands will save my head there, as they can do here. People shouldn't play for money who can't keep their tempers when they lose.'

The passengers of the *Red Jacket* had in a general way too much to think about to bother their heads about the accidental likeness existing between two young fellows in the second class, still the story leaked out. It was said 'that one of them was an eldest son and heir to an old historic name and a fine estate. The other was a very fine young man, but evidently a nobody, inasmuch as he dropped his aitches and so on. *But* they were so wonderfully alike that you could hardly tell them apart. It would be worth while to get up amateur theatricals and play the *Corsican Brothers*. Effect tremendous, you know! Queerest thing of all, too, they'd never met before and didn't like each other now they had met.'

'Strange things, doubles,' said Captain Westerfield, late of H.M. 80th Regiment. 'Not so very uncommon though. Most men in society have one. My fellow turned up at Baden, most extraordinary resemblance, wasn't an Englishman either. Raffish party too, spy and conspirator persuasion,

that sort of thing. Did me good service once, though. Story too long to tell now.'

'Oh, Captain Westerfield, *do* tell it to us,' said the fascinating Mrs. Grey, as they walked back to the first-class region, after inspecting the two Dromios.

'Some day, perhaps,' murmured the Captain.

The *Red Jacket* held on her way with unslackened speed. Night and day, fair weather and foul, with winds ahead or astern, it was all the same to Captain Forbes. Never was an inch of canvas taken in before the 'sticks' began to give token of ill-usage. 'What she couldn't carry she might drag,' was his usual reply to remonstrating passengers. And he had his accustomed luck. In the murkiest midnight, or when fogs made the best lights invisible a ship's length in advance, the *Red Jacket* ran into no homeward-speeding bark. Nor did any other reckless-driving vessel, with a captain vowed to make the passage of the season, encounter him. The long, low coast-line of Australia and the Otway light were sighted at as nearly as possible the hour when they were expected to be visible, and through the Rip and up the vast land-locked haven of Port Phillip Bay went the Racer of the Ocean one afternoon, fully two days in advance of the shortest passage which had ever been known in those days between the old old world and that new one which so long lay unknown and unpeopled beneath the Southern Cross.

CHAPTER III

So this was Melbourne! At least the nearest that the *Red Jacket* could get to it, on account of certain natural obstacles. But it lay only seven miles off, that is by the river, of which they could trace the windings through high walls of the thick-growing, but slender ti-tree (melaleuca). Anchored now in a broad bay, a low sandy shore on the eastern side, on the west a green level promontory, with a few huts and cottages sprinkled over it, falling back to far-stretching plains, with a volcanic peak in the foreground and a mountain range in the hazy distance.

Without much delay comes a roomy lighter alongside the *Red Jacket*, in which the passengers mostly elect to embark.

Their luggage, an avalanche of bags, bundles, trunks, and boxes, is shot on deck. A puffing, vicious-looking tug, with the air of 'a guinea a minute for my time,' drags them off, through the shoals of the Yarra, and so bustles forward till that grand and wonderful structure, the Melbourne wharf, a rudely planked platform fringing an illimitable ocean of black mud into which the river flat, guiltless of macadam, has been churned. Here their goods and chattels are unceremoniously transferred to the unsheltered wharf. It had been raining. The passengers, surrounded by draymen, hotel and lodging-house keepers, look blankly at each other. A few of the women begin to cry. Thus for them, as for all the *Red Jacket's* passengers, save the favoured few of the saloon, the hard schooling of colonial experience commences. If quarrels arise and animosities are generated on board ship, so also do friendships, true and permanent, spring up. Trevanion had made acquaintance with a young couple from the border of his own county. The man was a

sturdy fellow, half miner, half farm-labourer, whom the hope of bettering his condition had tempted to the desperate step, as it appeared to all his neighbours, of emigration. His wife was a fresh-coloured, innocent, country villager, their one child, an engaging little button of three years old, one of the pets of the ship. The two men had arranged to go up to the diggings together, and Trevanion decided that in some respects he could not have a better mate. 'Gwenny here can cook and wash for us, and if we get a share of the gold and Tottie doesn't fall into one of their deep holes as they tell us about, we shall do main likely, Mr. Trevanion.' So it was settled, Mrs. Polwarth was a little nervous about travelling through the 'bush' and living at a 'digging,' but where her man went, she, as an Englishwoman and wife, was bound to go too. '"For better, for worse," pa'son he says, and I reckon, lad, I'll stick to thee as long as we've bread to eat or a shed to cover us.' Such was her simple creed.

'It strikes me,' said Trevanion, after the first few minutes of blank astonishment, in which the country-bred couple, and even he himself gazed around at the strange crowd and unfamiliar surroundings, 'that we'd better hail one of these drays and get our luggage taken up to a lodging-house, till we can look around. The weather is rather cold to my fancy for camping out, though it is Australia. We mustn't get laid up with chills, and fever, and ague, as that American warned us, to start with. So Jack, you take care of the boxes and the family—I'll soon manage a conveyance.'

After a short but spirited engagement with a drayman, who seemed an educated person, to Lance's astonishment, he compounded for a payment of two guineas, for which moderate sum the owner of this expensive equipage—worth a hundred and fifty pounds at ruling prices—covenanted to land them all in safety at a decent lodging-house.

'You are in luck,' said the drayman, as they were walking back to the wharf, 'to find a place to put your head in to-night, I can tell you. Lots of your fellow-passengers will have to camp out under any shelter they can extemporise. But I happen to hear the people I am taking you to say they had one bedroom and a small attic to let, the occupants having started for Ballarat this morning.'

'And how is it you are not there with all the rest of the world, if it's as rich as they say it is?'

'They can't exaggerate the richness of it. I know so much of my own knowledge, but I happened to buy this old nag and the dray, which brings me in about a thousand a year at present. I'm not an avaricious man, so I'm waiting on here till I feel in the humour to tackle digging in earnest.'

By this time the wharf was reached, and the dray being loaded with their boxes and bundles, Mrs. Polwarth placed comfortably in the centre, the men walked beside the driver. Two long and very broad streets were traversed before they arrived at a neat weatherboard cottage with dormer windows and an upper floor. The proprietor, a bronzed colonist, received them cheerfully, and immediately set to work to take in their luggage.

'Mother,' he said to a cheery, brisk little woman who now came up to the garden gate, 'you take in this young lady and little gal, and make 'em comfortable. Mr. Waters says as they've just come out in the *Red Jacket*. They'll be all the readier for their tea, I'll be bound. We'll see to all the boxes and things.'

'Mr. Waters, you'll just have time to do up the old horse afore the tea-bell rings. I wouldn't let them beef-steaks get cold, if I was you.'

As they sat smoking over a snug fire in the kitchen, after a well-cooked and sufficing meal, Lance and his 'mate' came fully to the conclusion that they *had* been in luck in falling across their friend the drayman, and being guided to such good quarters. Here they were comfortably lodged at a reasonable charge, and, moreover, had the advice of two experienced and well-disposed men as to their future plans and prospects.

'Yes. After stopping a week in Melbourne, I should certainly make tracks for Ballarat, if I were in your place,' said Mr. Waters the drayman. 'You've come all this way to dig. Jack has a wife and a child to work for, and the sooner you set about it the better.'

'But what is the best way to get there?' asked Lance. 'The road is bad, and it's a long way there. We can't carry our boxes. It's too expensive to go by coach. I don't see my way.'

'What Mr. Waters says is God's truth,' chimed in their host. 'You can't do nothing but spend money, and waste your time here, unless you was in a way of business, which ain't likely. Your only dart is to buy a staunch horse with a tip-cart, and put a tent atop of your luggage. Take tea, and sugar, and flour with you, a little bacon and so on. Then you camp every night. It costs you little or nothing, and you're as jolly as sand boys.'

'And how about finding the road, Mister?' asked Jack, looking rather anxious. 'It's many a long mile, and mostly through the woods, as I'm warned. We might lose our way.'

'A blind man could find the road night or day,' said Waters, with a laugh. 'It's a mile wide, and there's a string of carts and drays, men, women, and children, going along it, like a