

BAFFLED SCHEMES.

A Novel.

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CHAPTER I.

A NIGHT AT WYCKOFF HALL.

WYCKOFF HALL was the name of a large, luxurious, old-fashioned mansion, built of dark red stone, that stood many years ago, delightfully situated, on the east bank of the Hudson, about forty miles from the city of New York. It had been the residence of a jovial old bachelor, and was a place noted for hospitality and good cheer. But on the night with which this story opens Wyckoff Hall was gloomy enough. Its owner was dead.

All the inmates of the mansion had retired to rest, with the exception of one gentleman, who, though he proceeded to his room, had no thought of sleep. A decanter of brandy and a box of cigars had been brought up to him. He carefully closed the window-blinds, adjusted the curtains, and lit several candles. A bright lamp was already burning, but the room seemed dim to him. He glanced at himself in a mirror, and turned hastily away with a shudder. His face was ghastly pale, his eyes wild, his hair disordered. His best friends would scarcely have recognized James Graham, the cool, calm, gentlemanly New York banker.

The night, that had hitherto been calm and fair, began to be vexed with the presages of a rising storm. Dark clouds had reached the zenith, and the fleet couriers of the coming gale shivered the mirror-like surface of the river and smote the bare trees. Graham heard a peculiar, solemn wail in the wind as it rushed through the wide, old-fashioned chimney. It seemed to chant distinctly, "Murderer! murderer!"

"Confound these nervous fancies!" he muttered, and, pouring out a tumblerful of brandy, swallowed it at a draught. He lit a

cigar; it did not "draw" easily; he dashed it down with an execration, and took another. He then proceeded to remove his garments, and clothe himself in entirely different attire. There was a small log fire on the capacious hearth; into it he threw the clothes of which he had divested himself, and, piling fresh wood thereon, stood and watched them burn, with satisfaction.

He drew his chair to the table, and, opening a writing-desk, wrote to his wife in substance as follows:—He and his friend, Mr. William W. Moore, a merchant of New York, had come up to Wyckoff Hall, as Mrs. Graham was aware, to attend the funeral of its owner, Mr. Wyckoff. The will of the deceased had been read that day. To his intense astonishment, he found that Mr. Wyckoff had bequeathed the bulk of his fortune, amounting to nearly six hundred thousand dollars, to Mr. Moore and himself, with a distinct provision that in case of the death of either of the devisees leaving his co-devisee surviving, the entire property was to go to this survivor. That afternoon, the letter proceeded to say, Mr. Moore, while walking on the river bank, had fallen in, and, in spite of every effort made to rescue him, had been drowned. Thus it had chanced, as Mr. Graham triumphantly summed up, that all of the late Mr. Wyckoff's wealth was now his own. The will was duly executed and attested, and he would take immediate steps to have it admitted to probate, and enter at once into possession of the property.

The cold perspiration stood on Graham's forehead as he finished the letter, and his lips were utterly bloodless. He had narrated the events, in the main, correctly, but he had omitted one circumstance,—Mr. Moore had not fallen from the river bank accidentally. Graham had deliberately shoved him off, as they two were walking there in

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conference together. And now he sat in that room alone, in the silence of midnight, and heard perpetually the horrid plash of his victim as he fell, and his drowning cry. He lit another cigar, and poured another glass of brandy down his throat, but still he heard the wind's sad refrain, — "*Murderer! murderer!*" Tortured by his thoughts, he looked about for some book to read. A small shelf of novels hung against the wall; he seized one without selection; his face grew ghastlier still, and his eyes stared wildly. He dropped the volume in horror, crying, "*Eugene Aram!* My God! what a book to read this night!" He flung himself, face downward, on the bed, and buried his head in the pillows. He was smitten with the agony of remorse.

James Graham's commercial career in New York had been, apparently, successful. His family, consisting of but his wife and an only son, lived with every appliance of wealth at its command. But within the last eight months he had adventured daring schemes of speculation, and they had all disastrously failed. His losses were enormous, and he had lately endured the terrible life that none but a bold and unlucky speculator knows. He walked over fires. He led the life of Damocles. Unspeakable, then, was his delight at finding himself the sudden possessor of three hundred thousand dollars by Mr. Wyckoff's will. But the chief portion of the amount that his friend bequeathed him would be needed to set his affairs right, so deeply had he wandered into speculation. Twice that sum would secure him independence. Such thoughts filled his mind as he walked with Mr. Moore by the declivitous river bank. Suddenly assailed by the opportunity and the temptation, he had yielded, and as the horrid conception flashed across his mind, he acted upon it, and mercilessly flung his friend into the stream to drown. Yet he was no hardened villain; and, as he looked back upon the deed in the silent watches of the night, he suffered intolerable torture. He constantly rehearsed the incidents of that fatal walk; the scene presented itself with startling vividness, — the October twilight, the placid river, the new moon trembling on the verge of the western hills. He even recollected the scent of the wild flowers along the bank, and the sweet notes of the air sung by a party of rowers resting on their oars in the distance, that had come floating over the water, and to which the unsuspecting Moore had stopped to listen. Then

he saw his victim's face, swept by agony, and lit by a ghastly ray, gazing at him with a look of such mingled terror and supplication, that it would have melted a Nero, or brought tears to a Caligula's eyes.

He sprang from the bed and paced the room wildly. Again and again he drank the fiery liquor, but he could not steep his senses in forgetfulness. He longed unutterably for the dawn to come, but he did not dare to open the window to see if morning was approaching.

Suddenly the awful necessity of writing to the murdered man's wife occurred to him, and he staggered at the thought. With inconceivable anguish he framed a letter to Mrs. Moore; he proffered her his condolences; he expressed the deep grief he felt at the casualty that had robbed her of a husband and him of a dearly loved friend. His hand shook with uncontrollable agitation; when he arose, his face was like the face of a corpse.

Early in the morning an old Scotch servant of the house rapped at Graham's door to arouse him. Receiving no response, he went in, and saw the wretched man crouched upon the floor, staring with frenzied look at the dying embers of the fire. The Scotchman did not seem at all surprised. He announced the hour of the departure of the New York train, and retired; but, as he closed the door, Cameron McManus said to himself, with a queer smile, —

"He hasn't passed a very pleasant night, and I don't wonder."

CHAPTER II.

GOOD SAMARITANS.

Two days after these events, Mr. Ebenezer Moore, of Boston, brother of the ill-fated William Moore, received a letter from a woman signing herself Margaret Jarvis, informing him that she was his brother's house-keeper, and telling him of that gentleman's death. She also wrote that Mrs. William Moore, a woman of delicate health, had sunk beneath the sudden and terrible shock and died. She urged him to come on to the funeral. The body of Mr. Moore, she said, had not been recovered.

Mrs. Jarvis' letter was a correct statement of facts, but, like Mr. Graham, she had withheld one particular. She did not mention that immediately previous to hear-

ing of her husband's death, Mrs. Moore had received a letter telling her that her only son, Harry Moore, a wild and dissolute young fellow, had been killed in a drunken brawl at San Francisco. It was this intelligence that first prostrated the unhappy mother. Her son's disgrace and death had loosened her always frail hold on life; the news that her husband was no more had wrenched it violently away. Mrs. Jarvis read the letter relating Harry Moore's melancholy fate; but, for reasons of her own, she did not choose to communicate it to Mr. Ebenezer Moore. She carefully concealed the fact of Harry Moore's death, but preserved the letter announcing it.

Mr. Ebenezer Moore had not seen his brother for many years, and did not know his brother's wife at all, but was, of course, much shocked by this sudden news. He started at once for New York, with his wife. With his usual *ultra* punctuality, he drove down to the Boston and Worcester R. R. depot at least half an hour earlier than necessary. The capacious building was filled with the ordinary motley crowd, and the stifling smell of smoke drove Mr. Moore from the platform into the interior rooms. He left his wife in the ladies' room, and wandered to the telegraph office. The only person there, besides the operator, was an individual who instantly attracted Mr. Moore's attention. He was a rather short, slightly built man, with carrot-red hair. Although evidently not more than twenty-two years of age, he wore a long heavy beard, also red. A slouched felt hat was pulled down low upon his forehead, not quite concealing, however, a pair of greenish eyes, with an extravagant obliquity, — eyes that, sunk beneath thick, protruding brows, shot out a quick and restless glance. He had a cruel and pitiless expression, and a wicked, feline look when he smiled, as he did to himself several times. His limbs were finely shaped, and one could see that, in spite of his small frame, he was very strong. It needed but a glance to tell you that this was a man of inflexibility, endurance, and courage. He was dressed in a thick, shaggy suit, — all his garments of the same material.

He was writing a despatch, and as Mr. Moore entered, he glanced at him cursorily, and continued his occupation. He seemed to be in good humor, or pleased at what he was writing, for he repeated his repulsive smile quite often. At last he handed this

message to the operator, after having written and torn up several, —

"Meet me at Springfield with the package.
"EZRA HOYT."

Mr. Moore, curiously watching the man, little thought that his own happiness and future life were, in a great measure, to be affected by this simple telegram.

On taking his seat in the cars he was not at all pleased to see this disagreeable personage sitting directly opposite to him. Arriving at Springfield, Mrs. Moore, a delicate woman, and unused to travel, felt unwell, and they concluded to wait over one train. Mr. Moore noticed as he stepped upon the platform that the stranger also left the train. This circumstance gave him an uncomfortable feeling of being watched and followed, but a few moments' observation convinced him that such was not the fact.

The man, whose name we have discovered to be Hoyt, was evidently awaiting the arrival of the train from Hartford. Ascertaining the hour that it was due, he compared his watch with the depot clock, and began to deliberately pace up and down. He was a man who, plainly, was accustomed to repress the manifestation of feeling, for he did not evince the slightest impatience, though the time designated passed by without the arrival of the expected train.

A student of human nature could not fail to have been attracted by the face and mien of this young man, as he appeared then. There was something utterly wicked, almost fiend-like, about his whole appearance; and one regarding him would instinctively recoil in abhorrence, and then look again, impelled by some dread fascination.

The train at length thundered into the depot and disgorged its weary occupants. Hoyt, in eager expectancy, glanced sharply at each passenger, but the individual he sought did not appear. He expressed his deep disappointment in a muttered oath, and hurrying to the ticket-office inquired when the next train started for the south. When informed that it would not be for some hours, he seemed greatly agitated, and, asking to be shown a livery stable, disappeared in haste.

If Hoyt had not been so much engrossed by his own affairs he could not have failed to notice the unusual excitement prevailing among the passengers who had just arrived. A common topic appeared to engage their conversation. "Curious incident," "un-

lucky brat," "the old story," etc., were some of the disjointed observations to be heard. The conductor, an exceedingly neat and gentlemanly-looking little man, was endeavoring to make his way through the crowd that, drawn by curiosity, gathered round him. He carried a small infant in his arms, and hurried into the "Ladies' Room." One or two followed him, but the door was locked on the remainder. Mrs. Moore was lying on the sofa, but, as the conductor tenderly placed the child on the table, she started up and approached, much interested.

It appeared from the conductor's account that among the passengers who had left Hartford, was a respectably dressed and apparently young woman, who carried this infant. There was nothing remarkable about her appearance, except a blue veil bordered with white. Just before the train had reached the last station, the woman had left the child lying on the seat, together with a small reticule, which perhaps she meant to have carried away, and stepped upon the rear platform.

She must have left the car with the others who did so, and immediately disappeared; for when the train started again and the conductor passed through the cars to collect tickets, he found the infant lying on the seat, and the woman gone. He stopped the train at once, and had the track searched for a considerable distance back, thinking she might have fallen from the platform; but, finding nothing, had proceeded. The conductor seemed considerably embarrassed by his charge, and at a loss what to do. Mrs. Moore bent over the child, as it lay perfectly quiet, with its blue eyes wide open. Her own eyes filled with tears, as she asked, —

"What can be done with the poor little thing, Mr. Moore?"

"It must be sent to a Foundling Asylum, or Almshouse, I suppose."

"Almshouse! It ought to have some nice, careful woman to take charge of it now."

"Molly's the woman for that!" enthusiastically exclaimed a pleasant-looking brakeman, who had been fortunate enough to gain an entrance into the room. He seemed much abashed as every one turned to look at him, but endeavoring to appear unconcerned, and ludicrously failing, he emphatically repeated his statement.

"Molly's your wife, Ben, isn't she?" inquired the conductor.

"Yes, sir, and she lost her own baby

to other day. She'd be glad of the chance to nuss this little critter."

"Get him to take it, my dear," entreated Mrs. Moore of her husband.

"There's a soft spot in your heart for babies, Hannah, isn't there?" said Mr. Moore, in a low voice, smiling at his wife. "We had better not meddle with this, my dear; the child must eventually be given to the charge of some public charity."

"Oh, but not just yet; it is so very young and tender. Let that nice-looking man take it home."

"You can carry the child to your house, Ben, if you want to," said the conductor. "I am too busy to look out for it myself. I don't know, in fact, whether there is a Foundling Asylum here or not."

"Yes, take it home, my good man," said Mr. Moore. "I will be back here in a few days and see that a proper disposition is made of the child. Take it home; I will relieve you of it."

Mrs. Moore smiled thankfully at her husband. "Now if you live near here," he pursued, "I'll go home with you."

"Only a block away, sir."

"Very well. Will you go, Hannah? We have plenty of time to see your *protégé* in comfortable quarters."

"Yes, yes, the walk will do me good."

The brakeman lifted the child gently in his rough arms, and went out, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Moore. The crowd on the platform parted respectfully for them to pass.

They had scarcely left when the conductor drew from his pocket the reticule the woman had left, and saying, "Those benevolent people should have this," darted out and placed it in Moore's hand.

He stopped and opened the little bag; Mrs. Moore, much interested, looking on. It contained nothing but a railway ticket to Springfield, a pair of black worsted gloves, and a paper with a few lines written in pencil, with no date or name attached, and with no envelope, — nothing in fact to give a clue either to the writer or the person addressed. The words were faint and hardly legible. Mr. Moore with difficulty deciphered the following lines, —

"This poor child I consign to your care with tears. It is born while I am in disgrace and grief. It has no father, and but a heart-broken and dying mother; but it, poor thing, is innocent. Oh, protect and cherish it!"

Mr. Moore sighed deeply as he read; his

wife could scarcely restrain her tears. Those words plainly revealed to them the nature of the infant's birth, — the frailty of its unhappy mother.

"These lines seem to be addressed to us," said Mrs. Moore. "Poor little nameless orphan! Let us accept the injunction of the unknown mother; she was at least a woman."

The good man shook his head gravely, but he looked upon his wife with pride and love.

The brakeman's wife proved to be a young and pleasant woman; she gladly accepted the charge of the child, and Mr. and Mrs. Moore proceeded on their journey. Arriving at New Haven, the latter found herself quite sick, and further travel was out of the question for the present. Comfortable apartments were secured at a hotel, and Mr. Moore telegraphed Mrs. Jarvis to postpone the funeral, if possible, as they would go on at the earliest opportunity. The funeral had been appointed for the following afternoon, but it was not until then that Mrs. Moore was able to proceed. That evening found them in New York. As soon as he could, Mr. Moore left his wife and proceeded to his brother's house. It was shut up and dark. He rang several times, and was on the point of leaving in despair, when he heard shuffling steps in the hall, and the door was opened to the limit of a small brass chain. In response to a gruff "Who's there?" —

"Mr. Ebenezer Moore," replied that gentleman.

"Why, bless my soul!" exclaimed Mrs. Jarvis, a harsh, wrinkled, middle-aged Irish woman. "Is it possible! I had quite given you up, sir." And she threw open the door. The hall was perfectly dark. Mrs. Jarvis apologized for this circumstance, remarking that she had been sitting upstairs in her mistress' room, "putting away the dear lady's things, and having a good, comfortable cry." This was scarcely true, for Mrs. Jarvis had just emerged from the kitchen, where she had been drowning her sorrow in gin, her favorite beverage. Her eyes, indeed, were red, but not from weeping.

She hastened to light the hall-lamp and the gas in the front parlor, whither she ushered Mr. Moore. The room was damp and cheerless; the stiff, formal sofas and chairs, covered with shining black hair-cloth, were arranged in a precise array. Mr. Moore thought with a sigh of his comfortable dining-room at home.

He learned from the woman that Mr. William Moore's body had not been recovered. The funeral of Mrs. Moore would take place in the morning. The physician, Dr. Hayes, by name, who had attended her, had sailed for California, the day after her death, in accordance with previous plans. Mr. Moore regretted this, inasmuch as he would have liked to have conversed with him about his sister-in-law's last moments. Mrs. Jarvis, indeed, was very ready to supply all particulars, but, for some reason, Mr. Moore did not feel at ease while talking to her. He took an instinctive dislike to the woman, but the only reason he could give himself was, "I don't like her looks."

"Mr. Graham called here yesterday," said Mrs. Jarvis, "and seemed a deal shocked when I told him Mrs. Moore had died of grief."

"Mr. James Graham? Yes, I know him, — a fine man. Didn't poor Ellen recover consciousness before she died?"

"No, sir, she didn't know a thing."

"Sad, sad, sad!" mused Mr. Moore, pacing the parlor. "What do you intend to do, Mrs. Jarvis?" he asked, abruptly, after a pause.

"Oh, sir, I have some friends in the city, which I shall stop with for the present. But I want to get another place. Couldn't you be so kind as to give me a character, sir?"

Mr. Moore, prepossessed against her as he was, hesitated; but the reflection that she had enjoyed the confidence of his brother for so long a time decided him to grant this request.

"Do you know a Mr. Franchot, sir?" asked Mrs. Jarvis.

"M. Auguste Franchot, a Frenchman? Yes, very well; but he's not in this country."

"Yes, sir, but he is. He called here last evening, and is coming to the funeral."

"Ah! Well, I can recommend you to him, if he wants a house-keeper."

The next day Mrs. William Moore was committed to the grave, her brother-in-law and his wife the only mourners. The funeral was very quiet; the Moores' acquaintance had not been large. Two days after, Mr. Ebenezer Moore was ready to return home. He found no difficulty in quickly arranging his brother's affairs. The lease of the house had just expired. Scarcely anything of the small property Mr. William Moore left, remained when every debt had been liquidated. Thus was this small household utterly extinguished. The place that once

knew them, knew them no more, and Moore was soon forgotten.

Forgotten by all save his brother. That tender-hearted man was deeply though silently affected. On the journey back to Springfield his wife's efforts to cheer him were almost nugatory. A wish that had sprung up in her breast before, became stronger than ever. She greatly desired to adopt as her own the little castaway they had encountered.

"You must do it for your own sake," she urged her husband. "The little thing will drive away your grief. It is impossible to be sad when there is a baby near."

"But quite possible to be annoyed sometimes," said Mr. Moore, with a sad smile. "Well, well, my dear, we'll see her when we get to Springfield, and perhaps I may fall in love with her, too."

It is probable that he did, for Mrs. Moore found no difficulty in obtaining his consent to the adoption. It was much more difficult to induce the brakeman's wife to give the infant up; in fact, they had to compound matters, and take the woman to Boston with them as the child's nurse,—the natural objections of the brakeman himself to this arrangement being finally overridden.

"She is henceforth my own daughter," cried Mrs. Moore, and it was so indeed. All a mother's ineffable tenderness was ever after freely poured out upon this child. Mrs. Moore quickly grew to love her with an affection scarcely inferior to that she felt for her own son.

A conclave of the family was held to select a name for the little stranger.

"I know what name you want," said Mr. Moore, looking tenderly at his wife.

"Yes, yes, my dear, dead sister," said she, in tears. "This sweet little thing shall be Ethel Moore."

And it was so settled, *nem con.*

CHAPTER III.

A WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

MR. WYCKOFF's will was duly proved, and Mr. Graham came into possession of the entire estate. His first act was to advertise the Hall for sale. The servants had now all left, and the house was shut up and deserted. He succeeded in obtaining a purchaser in the person of a Monsieur Auguste Franchot,—a jolly old Frenchman, who had

acquired an immense fortune during twenty-two years of an assiduous business-life in the West Indies. He was a bachelor, and, although it was whispered that the elderly but accomplished Miss Villiers, who bloomed a perennial belle in West Indian society, had laid a vigorous siege to the French millionaire's heart, and had, in fact, made him a direct offer of her hand, he had as yet escaped the "hymeneal noose." He bought Wyckoff Hall for the rather curious reason that Mr. William Moore had there met his death. He expressed the greatest affection for the unfortunate Moore, and the utmost grief at his untimely fate; and the foundation of this sentiment was the singular one that Mr. Moore had won the love of, and married, Miss Ellen Somers, a young lady whom Franchot, when a comparatively young man, and resident in New York, had madly loved and wooed. The fair Miss Somers had preferred young William Moore, a handsome young collegian, who had carried her maiden heart by storm, to the elegant and vivacious Frenchman. Young Franchot, in the vehemence of his Gallic nature, had given himself up to despair, on his rejection, and attempted suicide. Fortunately, he overdosed himself, and on recovering saw the rashness of this step, and refrained from further attempts. He had, however, torn himself away from New York and gone a voluntary exile to Jamaica. He had now, yielding to the urgent solicitations of his physicians, retired from business and come to the United States to enjoy his wealth. He arrived in New York the day after the death of Mrs. Moore. He called at Moore's house, not knowing of the recent sad events. When Mrs. Jarvis, in her rough, unfeeling way, had introduced herself and told him all, the sorrow of the poor Frenchman was really pathetic.

"*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" he cried. "*La belle dame! La belle dame!*"

He threw himself, to Mrs. Jarvis' profound astonishment, on a sofa, buried his head in the cushions, and cried like a child. Mrs. Jarvis was beginning to think he was some lunatic astray, when he recollected her presence and rose with his native politeness.

"I beg pardon, madame. My heart has the great grief, the sadness,—my beautiful friend is dead. Auguste Franchot," he continued, addressing himself, "your life is a useless thing,—you have lived to no avail. Ah! Madame Jarvisse, my heart is broke."

Mrs. Jarvis inquired whether Mr. and Mrs. Moore were relatives of his.

"Ah! no, no; not relatives, but dearest friends. I loved them both like brothers," said the Frenchman. "I would have made them rich," he added.

At these words Mrs. Jarvis became all interest and attention.

"Yes," he continued, in a mournful voice; "my money is all—what you call it?—droze;" by which Mrs. Jarvis supposed he meant dross.

"But they have a child!" he suddenly exclaimed. "Ah, they have a child! I will leave the son of such adorable parents all my money."

Mrs. Jarvis was about to speak, but checked herself. A sudden thought flashed upon her; she determined not to correct the Frenchman in the error he was under.

"*Bon soir, madame,*" he continued. "I shall weep all the night," and, bowing, he hastily retired.

Mrs. Jarvis sat looking at the fire long after her visitor had departed. She seemed sunk in profound reverie. To assist her meditations she had recourse to her bottle of gin. For several hours she sat, sipping her potation and pondering over the fire. She appeared at length to come to a satisfactory conclusion; for a smile, not pleasant to see, lit up her wrinkled face. She rose and drained her glass, exclaiming, "It shall be done, or my name's not Maggy Jarvis."

Mr. Franchot purchased Wyckoff Hall soon after his interview with Mrs. Jarvis. He bought the place without seeing it, for the reason, as we have said, that it had seen the last of William Moore. On visiting it, the Frenchman was greatly pleased with the house and grounds, and delighted with his bargain. He pronounced the view from the front piazza, "*magnifique*." The furniture and books had been sold with the house, and everything was soon in readiness for immediate possession. M. Franchot took up his abode there with a numerous retinue of servants. The house was certainly large for a single occupant, and its owner determined to fill it with company. He renewed his acquaintance with several old friends in New York, and sent pressing invitations for whole families to visit him. Many, whom he had known in Jamaica, he encountered in New York, and pressed into the service. Soon the halls and rooms of Wyckoff Hall (which name M. Franchot retained, probably for the reason that he could not pronounce it) were soon echoing with the unwonted sound of girlish laughter, and the broad staircase was swept by

satin robes. The stately drawing-room was thrown open, and jollity and mirth reigned in the quaint old house by the river bank.

The wife of Mr. James Graham was "a very superior woman." She was endowed with more than ordinary intellect, was large and stately, and might in younger days have been deemed beautiful. A certain haughtiness in her mien repelled familiarity. She was a woman more scared than loved. Her husband stood in secret awe of her, although he did not own it even to himself. The truth was, she ruled him as completely as ever master his slave, but with a dominion so insensible that he never felt the slightest pressure of her control. When Mr. Graham was a young man, junior partner in a wealthy firm (the same in which Mr. Wyckoff had been principal, and William Moore clerk), and possessed of brilliant business talents, Helen Vincent determined that he should be her husband. She fascinated him by her beauty and the brilliancy of her conversation. Observing this, she had suddenly become cool and reserved, thus inflaming his passion. In a word, she succeeded, in a marvellously short time, in bringing young Graham to her feet. She had made him an excellent wife, and their union had been happy enough. Mrs. Graham was perfectly acquainted with the state of her husband's affairs, and if a woman's tact and skill could pull him through his difficulties, he was safe. She was an ambitious woman, and the thought of descending from her present position of wealth and influence was unendurable. She had carried, then, through the last few months a sickening anxiety beneath her smooth white brow. But no lady had been more brilliantly attired in the thronged saloons of fashion, none had been a more constant attendant, and none had charmed her hearers more by the liveliness of graceful wit. To such a person the acquisition of Mr. Wyckoff's large fortune was, it is needless to say, an event of exquisite delight. Her joy at the reception of Mr. Graham's letter, acquainting her with the facts already related, was intense. Such a combination of fortunate events,—for such she termed them,—the death of Wyckoff and the drowning of Moore, was, she declared, unparalleled.

In spite of the exultant tone of her husband's letter, Mrs. Graham fancied that she detected an air of reserve. "Is he decaying me," she thought, "in the extent of the

property? Absurd man! I could easily find out." She wrote, urging him to hasten home.

"That odious, silly Mrs. Fairfax will now perceive whether her kind conjectures as to our impending ruin are correct," thought she, in triumph. She took pains to call upon that lady in the course of the afternoon, inform her that she was about to completely refurnish her residence, and solicit her company and judgment in the selection of velvet carpets for the drawing-rooms. Mrs. Fairfax was fain to comply, with rage in her soul, taking with her her daughter Jessie, a pretty little girl of six.

Mrs. Graham stopped at one of the magnificent jewelry establishments that enrich Broadway, and selected a very costly diamond bracelet. Mrs. Fairfax looked on in wonderment.

"Mr. Fairfax," she thought, "must really be mistaken about Mr. Graham's difficulties. I believe he's been making money."

Mrs. Graham's taste was extremely fastidious in the matter of carpets. Several that Mrs. Fairfax, who indulged, after the manner of her sex, in hyperbole, pronounced "the loveliest things she had ever seen in her life," were immediately rejected by her friend.

"Oh, do look at this, my dear Mrs. Graham!" exclaimed Mrs. Fairfax; "is not this pattern perfectly enchanting? and the blending of the colors is most exquisite!" Mrs. Graham inquired the price of this incomparable carpet, and, when told, loftily expressed her intention of purchasing a much more expensive article. A gorgeous tapestry affair was at length settled upon, and Mrs. Fairfax exhausted her most expressive adjectives in its praise.

"Are you going to Mrs. Widgeon's ball, my dear Mrs. Fairfax?" sweetly inquired Mrs. Graham, who was perfectly aware that Mrs. F. had not the honor of an acquaintance with that exclusive leader of fashion.

"No, I believe not," said Mrs. Fairfax, cheerfully.

"I heard you say, ma, you hadn't got an invitation," observed Miss Jessie, with a pretty lisp. Miss Jessie was one of the "enfants terribles."

The ladies parted in Broadway with smiles and nods. To see Mrs. Graham and Mrs. Fairfax part, one would think it a severance of two dear sisters. No one could have perceived Mrs. Graham's triumph, nor the mortification Mrs. Fairfax felt.

Sweet woman! all that poets have sung

in your praise is but an incomplete expression of the truth. Faithful, true, heroic, with more fortitude than man and less selfishness, you are the very poetry of life,—a golden vein running through, and giving value to, the common clay of humanity. But you have traits that your inferior, man, disdains. There is a sweet vindictiveness and honeyed malignity in your nature, that would kill with a caress, and which renders you a soft assassin and gentle murderess. Mrs. Graham launched the most deadly missives at her foe (whom she had that moment sweetly kissed) with a radiant smile, and in her lowest, gentlest, and most melodious accents.

CHAPTER IV.

VINCENT GRAHAM.

THE only child of Mr. and Mrs. Graham was a son named Vincent—his mother's maiden name. He was, at the period at which we have now arrived—seven years after the death of Mr. Wyckoff—about fifteen years old, and gave promise of being a noble young fellow. He was tall for his age, symmetrically shaped, with wavy chestnut hair, and with the small, firm, finely-shaped hand, the type of strength. His eyes were exceedingly beautiful, being of the peculiar steel-gray hue, that deepened with excitement into black, or, lit up with pleasure, became radiant blue. A chief peculiarity of his was a courage of the rarest order, that enabled him to endure with calm nerve prolonged moments of horror. In short, nothing, apparently, could daunt this lad, and his modesty was as great as his valor. A remarkable proof of this had lately occurred. In the dead of night, young Vincent, who slept in a small "hall bedroom" in the second story of the front of the house, had suddenly found himself, without knowing why, thoroughly awake and sitting up in bed. He could plainly hear some one slowly and cautiously ascending the stairs. He knew at once, from the stealthy step, that it must be a burglar. There was no one in the house but Mr. and Mrs. Graham and the servants, and they were all in a remote part of it. It never occurred to him to alarm the household by his outcries, nor could any one have heard him. He slipped quietly out of bed, and quickly

threw on his clothes—so expeditiously, in fact, that he was sufficiently dressed before the robber had reached the top of the long flight. He then sat quietly down to determine the best course to pursue. A large revolver, of the Colt patent,—presented him by a fond uncle, who was a wholesale dealer in guns and other warlike paraphernalia,—he had, in boyish pride, hung loaded, nightly, above his head; to his mother's intense alarm. Vincent smiled queerly as he took this murderous implement down and carefully examined the position of its chamber and the state of the caps.

"Mother will now see," he muttered, "whether this is a dangerous toy or not. The gentleman in the hall, also," he added, with a chuckle.

He now carefully opened his door and cautiously peered into the dimly lighted hall. The robber, who appeared to be a large, black-bearded man in an immense overcoat, although it was a sweltering August night, was proceeding slowly down the hall with his back to Vincent, and trying the knob of each door he passed. Vincent saw that he had already rifled the plate-room; for he could perceive silver spoons and forks sticking from his upper side-pockets, while the lower ones were bulged out by bulkier articles.

"A nice little booty. You've done well, my man," muttered Vincent. "He can't get into any of those rooms," he continued. And so it seemed, for the fellow, grinding his teeth at finding each door locked, seemed to make up his mind to depart. As he turned, Vincent darted back into his room. In a moment he heard the burglar slowly descending the stairs.

"Now's my chance," said the boy in a low tone, and he ran noiselessly but quickly to the top of the stairs. The robber had nearly reached the foot of the flight.

"Hollo! down there; a word before you go," cried Vincent, in a rather low but perfectly clear voice, and at the same time cocking his revolver.

The ruffian turned hastily with a start, and looked up. He saw a slim, young lad of fifteen standing in a graceful and erect attitude on the stair-landing, and with a slight and scornful smile upon his lip.

On seeing this weak antagonist, the robber sprang forward as if to rush at him.

"Stay where you are, my good friend, or I fire," said Vincent, in exactly the same tone he had first used, and presenting his Colt's gleaming muzzle.

The robber instantly paused and recoiled a step.

"Don't fire, you infernal little whelp!" he roared.

"You are by no means complimentary, my good sir, but I won't fire if you keep quiet; but if you try to get away, I'll pink you as I would a cat."

"Put down your pistol," said the man, "and I won't touch you. I'm going right out."

"Oh! are you?" said Vincent. "Well, you won't go without a hole in that overcoat of yours; so, if you value the garment, I advise you to stay where you are."

"What are you going to do, my gay young bantam?"

"Oh! I am very comfortable. I intend to stay where I am," returned Vincent, seating himself on the stairs, but carefully keeping his pistol pointing at the stranger, and his thumb upon the cock.

"Are you going to keep that pistol of yours pointing at me?"

"Oh! certainly, I believe so," answered Vincent, cheerfully.

"Curse you!" muttered the man, who began to realize that his young antagonist had the entire advantage of position.

"What a blasted, infernal fool I was not to bring my revolver!"

"Now don't get angry," said the boy, tauntingly; "you will get yourself heated; the night is warm."

The baffled burglar read determination in the boy's gleaming eyes. He noted the steadiness of the young fellow's hand.

"I don't believe I can frighten the lad, but I'll try it on."

"I don't want to hurt you, my boy," said the man; "but if you don't put that thing down, I'll call in my pals, and I won't answer what they'll do to you. I have two men with me; they're overhauling the library now."

Vincent was not to be frightened at this lie.

"Introduce the gentlemen," said he. "I should like to make their acquaintance. I have six barrels in this revolver,—two for each of you."

The ruffian tried the coaxing dodge.

"You're a game young un, I must say. Come, now, my good fellow, let me off this time. I will take everything out of my pockets, and go quietly out. You won't get a man into trouble now, will you? You have saved your father's traps. Come, now, let me off—"

"O my dear sir," said Vincent, "I really can't part with you just now. I find your society so agreeable that I must insist on detaining you for some time. Really, you look so amiable, just at this moment, that I find great pleasure in contemplating your face."

"Are you going to keep me here all night, you young scamp?"

"Now, my good sir," cried Vincent, in the mildest tone of his melodious voice, "do, I pray, be more select in your expressions, if you expect me to converse with you. Do I intend to keep you here all night? Why, I wouldn't turn you out of doors at *this* hour."

"But you'll let me go before light, now, won't you, sir?" said the man, who grew respectful.

"I don't think I can; I have an idea my father would like to see you in the morning."

The rage of the burglar at this knew no bounds. He made a movement as if to rush at Vincent; but the six-mouthed pistol pointed pitilessly at him, and he recoiled.

"I don't believe that pop-gun of yours is loaded."

Vincent smiled.

"You seem to keep at a respectful distance from an unloaded weapon," said he, sneeringly. "I advise you to lie down and take a nap," he continued. "It is an hour or two to daylight."

This remark put an idea into the wily burglar's mind; he lay down and rested his shaggy head on the step above, and remained perfectly quiet. In a few moments his regular and loud breathing betokened sleep.

"He don't catch me by that game," said Vincent to himself; "he is feigning sleep, thinking that I shall get fatigued and really doze. It's no go, old fellow; I don't take my eye off you till morning."

And he did not. Quite early in the morning Mr. Graham came out. He did not sleep well now, and was an early riser. He was amazed to see Vincent, with a pistol in his hand, sitting on the stairs.

"Pray what are you doing, my son?" cried he.

"Merely mounting guard over that ugly dog below, sir," said Vincent.

The "ugly dog" sullenly surrendered himself, and was given up to justice. Mr. Graham was immensely pleased at his boy's prowess, and told the story with great delight to all his friends.

Young Vincent had gone for several years to a "classical French and English school for boys" in the city. He greatly distinguished himself there, rising steadily, step by step, till he became the acknowledged leader of the school. Its faith in Vincent Graham was really sublime. Was there ever a boy who could scan and construe like him? Had he not been right and the teacher wrong, in that memorable dispute about the derivation of a Greek word, which the boys, aghast at Vincent's hardihood, had listened to with wonder and admiration? "Vincent Graham is a trump," pronounced little Ed. Temple; and the unanimous voice of the school approved the verdict.

But about seven months after his adventure with the burglar, Vincent had begged his father to allow him to go away to boarding-school. Mr. Graham had willingly agreed to this. There was something in the clear, earnest looks of Vincent's eyes that the guilty man could not endure. So Vincent, with youthful delight, had been sent away to "Parnassus Hall," which was the classical name of Dr. Euripides Brown's large boarding-school for boys, "situated," according to the circular of the school, "in the midst of a delightful mountainous region, and in the most salubrious climate, where a limited number of young gentlemen may find all the comforts of home, superadded to the advantages of a thorough course of instruction in the classics and the ordinary English branches." This paper went on to say that it was "the aim of the principal, ably aided by a corps of accomplished scholars, to prepare his pupils for entrance into any of our seats of learning, or to fit them for the counting-room of the merchant. But while their minds are trained, and the seeds of learning liberally sown, due regard is had, by Dr. Euripides Brown, to the moral and religious culture of the youths committed to his charge. The system that he has for many years successfully pursued is one of truly parental discipline. He looks upon his scholars as children of his own, and does not forget that he stands '*in loco parentis*.'"

The school was situated in the beautiful village of H—, in Massachusetts. The building was a great, straggling, red brick mansion, originally erected for a Deaf and Dumb Asylum; and a more dreary exterior, perhaps, no structure ever presented. A bare square of ground, without a blade of herbage, and trodden hard by the boys in

their sports, surrounded the house, itself bounded by an ugly high board fence, from which the rain had long since washed away all signs of paint. The lower floor of the school-house, or Parnassus Hall, was devoted to the recitation-rooms and the dining-room. Upstairs were long, wide dormitories, capable of accommodating some forty or fifty boys. The principal, his daughter, — of whom more presently, — and the assistant teachers, had apartments in a wing of the building, as had also the servants. The staircases and halls, dormitories, recitation and dining rooms, were all uncarpeted. Rendered cheerless by this circumstance, they were made still more so by their great size and half-furnished appearance, with bare, whitewashed, and discolored walls. "The comforts of home" were certainly not apparent on entering the precincts of Parnassus Hall.

The doctor was a man of about sixty-two years of age, over six feet in height, and large in proportion. His features were large and coarse, with the exception of his eyes, which were small and twinkling. His face had a shrewd and good-humored expression, and his deep guffaw rang through the capacious rooms of his school like a bassoon. There was a large mixture of drollery in his composition, but, rather curiously, he was always funniest when angry. In fact, the boys quaked when he began to joke, well knowing that something had aroused his ire. Perhaps no teacher ever had a more thorough control over his pupils than Dr. Euripides Brown. His immense physical proportions inspired awe, and the impartiality and severity of his punishments secured discipline and enforced respect. He was without the vice of many masters, — he made no favorites, — but every boy stood or fell on his own merits. The boys knew him as a just and determined man, and gave him the involuntary tribute of their respect. Paradoxically speaking, his "right hand man" was his daughter, Miss Antigone Brown, an unmarried lady of about forty, the possessor of a capricious and violent temper. It was rumored that the sweetness of her disposition had been soured by a love-disappointment. Such was really the case. When about seventeen years of age she had been devotedly attached to the son of a well-to-do storekeeper in the village, — a large, coarse-looking fellow. He had heroically courted Miss Antigone, and won from her an avowal of her love. We say heroically, for he had

encountered obstacles that Leander would have shrunk from. He was forced to meet the sarcasms, witticisms, and mimicry of all the boys of Parnassus Hall, to whom the courtship was ludicrous, for they had not the highest opinion of Miss Antigone's charms. As for Richard Hoyt, the boys, with the instinctive insight into character peculiar to youth, thoroughly despised him as a selfish, hard-hearted cheat. In spite of these anomalous obstacles, the love affair had progressed, and the day of the wedding been appointed. The perfidious Hoyt spent the evening before the momentous day with Miss Brown, and departed breathing vows of love. The next morning Parnassus Hall was thrown into consternation by the news that Hoyt had run off with a young Irish girl employed in a milliner's shop (with whom he had had a secret understanding all the time), married her in a neighboring town, and was then on his way to parts unknown. From that time Miss Antigone had devoted herself with great energy to her duties, working like a slave from morning till night. But the entire amiability of her character had disappeared, and she was fast becoming a shrew.

At this school, then, on a breezy April day, shortly after the commencement of the spring term, young Vincent Graham arrived. His coming was unheralded, but it became a momentous era to the school. Young Graham was destined to cause great sensation in Parnassus Hall before many hours elapsed.

CHAPTER V.

SKILL vs. STRENGTH.

THE doctor received Vincent kindly, asked him multifarious questions, and seemed pleased with his replies. He then took him in to supper.

It was rather an embarrassing thing for Vincent to encounter fifty pairs of eyes or so, keenly gazing at him as he entered the long dining-room, but he walked in erect at the doctor's side.

"Vincent Graham, young gentlemen," said the doctor, by way of introduction.

Vincent bowed gracefully. Some of the boys nodded. Polite manners are rarely learned at boarding-school.

"A Miss-Nancy looking chap," said young Simmons.

"I don't think so at all," said Tom Baxter, with the air of a *connoisseur*. Tom was the "cock of the school," and a great strapping youth. "I know he's plucky, from his mouth," he added.

Vincent's appearance made a favorable impression. The doctor assigned him a seat near himself, and a good-natured, mild-looking boy made room for him with a smile.

"My name's Jenkins," said he, "but the boys call me Jenks. How old are you?"

"Fifteen."

"Have you got any brothers?"

"No."

"Any sisters?"

"No."

"Where do you live?"

"New York."

"Are you a *classy* or *merky*?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, are you going to take a classical or commercial course?"

"Both."

"What! why you aint obliged to take but one."

"I know it, but I prefer to take both."

"What a chap! Did your father send you here?"

"No, I came of my own accord."

"You don't mean so!" cried Jenkins, in the utmost astonishment.

"Why, certainly; what is there strange in that?"

"Just hear him, Robbins," said Jenkins, to his next neighbor; "here's this Graham come to school of his own free will!"

Robbins who was a great, dull, heavy-looking fellow, paused a moment in his process of gormandizing, and cast a look of stupid amazement at Vincent. Other boys, who had heard the conversation, looked at Vincent with a pitying incredulity.

"That's all gammon," cried Tom Baxter, quite loud enough for Vincent to hear, although he sat on the other side of the table; "don't believe such stuff as that. The idea of a fellow's coming to school for fun!"

The color deepened in Vincent's cheek. It was an utter impossibility for this young fellow to receive an affront in silence, and, although he wanted to be on good terms with every one, he felt himself compelled to retort.

"My big friend, where did you learn manners? I don't wonder from your looks that you can't comprehend a fellow's taking pleasure in study. You're not quick in comprehending things any way, are you?"

He said this in a tone of mild interrogatory.

The amazement of Baxter at this remark was unbounded. To appreciate his feelings, it must be remembered that he was, and had been for many months, complete lord of the school. His authority over the boys was no less than that of Dr. Euripides, and he exercised it mercilessly and rigorously. "Big Tom" as he was called, was a tyrant and a bully, but nevertheless brave. The ascendancy he acquired over his school-fellows by dint of unlimited thrashings he had greatly increased by the neat manner in which he had "laid out" the son of a butcher, who had been daily wont to revile the boys as he passed in his wagon. Baxter had pummelled this "son of the shambles" into a most docile and well-behaved youth, and from that moment no one dared to question his acts, always excepting the doctor. His mandates were implicitly obeyed. He had several "fags" (for they are by no means confined to the schools of England), and them he worked like slaves. Jenks was one. Poor Thomas, an assistant teacher (a consumptive young man with a weak pair of blonde side-whiskers), stood in the greatest awe of Tom and dared not correct his mistakes in Latin, which were numerous. Tom was a thick-headed fellow, and had been in the school for six years without rising to the highest class, until, at length, his great size had shamed the doctor into admitting him to that grade, where he held an ignominious position at its foot. So Tom kept an iron rule in Parnassus Hall, and was most thoroughly detested and feared.

To be thus braved and jeered at by a newcomer, publicly and almost under the doctor's nose, was too much. The boys were aghast with horror. Poor little "Jenks" was terribly frightened.

"O Lord! how he'll wollop you, Graham, after supper!" said he to his new friend.

Vincent smiled.

"He'll lick me, anyhow," said poor Jenks, sadly.

"He'll have to fight me first," said Vincent.

Jenkins looked at him in amazement. "What! you fight with 'big Tom'! Why, he'd murder you!"

"Is he such a fighter?" asked Vincent, nonchalantly.

"Why, dear me. I should rather think he was. He nearly killed Bill Stokes the butcher."

"Perhaps Bill Stokes didn't know how to fight," said Vincent.

"I'll polish you off, see if I don't, you impudent brat," said Tom, across the table, to Vincent.

"I advise you to polish your manners," said Vincent, sneeringly.

"Oh, don't rile him, Graham," cried Jenkins, imploringly.

Vincent laughed. "Come, eat your supper, Jenkins," said he, "if you've no more questions to ask."

"My appetite's all gone. You've got yourself into a pretty scrape!"

This seemed to be the general opinion. Vincent's fearless manner had produced great admiration and dismay.

"Tom will never stand such lip," said they to one another. "I wouldn't like to be in that new chap's shoes."

They looked at Vincent curiously. He was eating with a good appetite sharpened by his journey, and was as cool as possible, while Tom's face was swelling with repressed rage. Perhaps the oppressed boys felt that they had a champion in this young fellow, and a delightful thrill of coming liberty and emancipation stirred their breasts. The worthy doctor had not heeded this conversation, apparently, although there was a quiet twinkle in his eyes as though he were amused at something.

It was his custom never to restrain the boys at meals unless they grew boisterous.

Supper finished, the doctor told Vincent that he wished to see him in his study. They left the table and a tremendous hubbub instantly arose. This was the hour of freedom, and the boys always made the most of it. Vincent followed the doctor from the room, encountering calmly the glaring eyes of Tom. In a moment they had gone out, and Tom began breathing vows of vengeance to the assembled school.

Dr. Brown and Vincent went into the study.

"You were quite bold, my young friend, in speaking up to Baxter that way."

"How so, sir?"

"Why, he intends to thrash you the first chance."

"But I don't intend to let him," said the boy, quietly.

"Why, he is much stronger than you, Vincent."

"I dare say, sir; but strength does not always win. I have had some practice in boxing, although I never had a fight."

This was true. Vincent had taken several courses of lessons in both boxing and fencing and was an adept in them. Exceedingly quick and agile, he had become quite scientific in those useful accomplishments.

"Well," said the doctor, "I never meddle with these quarrels; I find it the best plan to let the boys fight it out. So, if you intend to thrash Tom," he added, smiling, "I shall not interfere."

"Thank you, sir," said Vincent, amused.

"But," continued the doctor, "I don't want the battle to take place to-night. Sleep well to-night and do your best in the morning."

Vincent bowed, greatly pleased. "He's an old trump," thought he.

The doctor accompanied Vincent back to the supper-room, and remained there, thus checking hostilities. He sent Vincent to bed early, assigning him to another dormitory than the one in which Baxter slept.

Vincent was much annoyed at the incessant remarks that were addressed him upstairs.

"I shan't say another syllable," cried he, at length, and getting into bed, pulled the clothes about his ears, and was soon sleeping soundly. He appeared in the morning looking fresh and rosy. Young Jenks came down to prayers with eyes swollen and red.

"What's the matter, young one?" asked Vincent.

"Tom thrashed me for being so thick with you."

Vincent ground his teeth. "I'll pound that bully well," he muttered to himself.

When the exercises of the school began, Dr. Brown assigned Vincent to the first class. He took his seat at the foot, near to Baxter. The lesson was in Virgil.

"You'll prompt me, won't you, chap?" said Tom to Vincent.

"Certainly not," said Vincent.

"Do you mean to say you are so confidently mean as all that?"

"Call it what you please," said Graham. "I am not here to recite your lessons."

Tom rose to recite. He blundered fearfully.

Vincent read his lines with such fluency and ease, and answered every question with such promptness, that Dr. Brown was delighted, and the boys amazed.

"This boy is a scholar," said the doctor. "I put you at the head of the class;" and Vincent modestly took the place.

As soon as morning school was over,—the boys had an hour and a half before dinner,—Baxter, who had accumulated a large stock of grievances, immediately accosted Vincent.

"You insolent young dog! why the devil didn't you prompt me?"

"See here, Baxter," said Vincent, now thoroughly aroused; "either take back that expression you've just used, or make up your mind to get the biggest thrashing your ugly carcass ever received."

"He's challenged 'Big Tom' to fight," went round the room, in tones of amazement.

"I'll finish you off before dinner, my young dandy," said Baxter, bursting with rage.

"Well, then, the sooner you go to work the better," said Vincent.

The entire school proceeded in a body to a meadow in the rear of the school, hidden from the building by a small, but thick grove.

The boys hastily marked off a ring on the turf, and stood around in silent excitement. The decisive combat between tyranny and liberty was about to come off. Baxter was the embodiment of oppression and misrule; Vincent the young champion of rights and freedom. All the boys felt a tremendous interest in the result. If Vincent was vanquished, they feared that the oppression of Baxter would become intolerable; while their hopes of future happiness were centered in young Graham.

"He's as cool as a cucumber," said Simmons, "but what's he doing? He's stripping to the skin!"

"Good! that looks as if he meant work," cried Popkins.

Vincent stepped quietly out. He had stripped bare to the waist, and fastened his handkerchief tightly about him. This unusual act rather appalled Baxter. He did not like this grim preparation. He, however, followed Vincent's example.

As the two antagonists now stood face to face, every one saw the great disparity of size, and felt that Baxter had every advantage. He overtopped his foe by at least an inch and a half, and was much heavier. But a critical observer would have noted other and more significant facts. Vincent's skin was white and clear, and shone like satin. It was firm to the touch as a rock; and the roll of his fine and well-developed muscles was plainly to be seen beneath the surface. He looked like an oarsman in a racing shell, in rowing trim. His chest was

broad and deep, while the muscles of his shoulders and upper arms were ponderous. He had no superfluous flesh, but his ribs could be traced like the ribs of a race-horse. His flank was narrow, and hips broad, and his hands, though white and small, as hard as iron. He stood in a graceful attitude, with his weight resting on his right leg, his left slightly advanced, and pressing lightly on the turf. His head was thrown back a little, and his lips slightly pressed together, with relentless determination. His gleaming eyes, now black as jet, were already lit up with a victor's joy, as he stood the perfect embodiment of grace,—a young Apollo.

The burly frame of Baxter confronted him. In spite of his long, sinewy arms, and ponderous fists, an expert would have detected many faults. His skin was flabby and unhealthy-looking; for this fellow gorged too much pastry, at his dinners. He was slightly round-shouldered, and stooped a trifle; his hips were narrow, and he stood awkwardly. He seemed weak in the legs, his eyes were unsteady, and his posture faulty.

The graphic annals of the "ring" do not contain probably a shorter round than was the first in this fight,—a fight ever after memorable, in the legends of Parnassus Hall. Baxter, determined to demolish his opponent at a blow, rushed at him with immense force. Vincent nimbly turned aside, and the huge fist of Tom grazed his ear, while Baxter's awkward body was carried on by the unchecked momentum. As he passed, Vincent swiftly turned on his heels, and struck Tom a tremendous swinging blow, with the back of his right fist, behind the ear. It sounded like the rap of a policeman's club on the pavement, and Baxter fell like lead on his face, burying his nose in the soft earth. The whole affair did not take five seconds. The effect on the boys was wonderful. A shout arose that fairly shook Parnassus Hall; while caps and arms were tossed wildly in the air, and many figures danced like maniacs. They had seen with bated breath the fierce rush of Tom at his frail antagonist; the next second, the white gleam of Vincent's rapid arm, the fearful sound of the blow, and the huge bully prostrate upon the ground.

Poor Jenks was perfectly wild with delight. He shouted, danced, and insanely flung his cap into the stream that rippled by. Vincent smiled. "Pshaw, this is mere play. The fellow hasn't the least idea of boxing. I can thrash him at my leisure,

and shall do it thoroughly," he said to himself.

Baxter, stunned for a moment, rose and glared about him. "You didn't strike me with your fist, you cheat. You've got a lead ring on your knuckles!"

"You lie!" said Vincent, quietly. This insult roused Tom, as Vincent had intended it should. "If he gets mad," thought he, "I can punish him at my case."

Baxter stepped up for the second round, and was this time more cautious. He made several passes at Vincent, but they were each time easily evaded. Vincent nimbly led him around the ring, while he exhausted his strength in fierce blows in the air. He was fast becoming "blown," and he had not yet touched Vincent. At length he struck wildly out a powerful blow. Vincent stopped it neatly with his right fore-arm, and at the same instant launched straight out with his left, hitting Tom an awful blow square and full in the face. Tom uttered a howl of pain, sank feebly to the ground, and round number two was over.

Tom's second carefully wiped the blood from his face; but every time he touched his nose Tom groaned piteously.

"I can't stand this, Jack," said he. "That fellow strikes like a sledge-hammer."

"Stand on the defensive, Tom," said Jack, "and get back your wind. Don't give in."

So when the young fighters next confronted each other, Tom stood "on guard," and made no attempt to strike his opponent.

"You want me to take the offensive, do you?" said Vincent. "I'll oblige you. Look out for your left eye;" and at the same moment he struck that organ fiercely. "Take that, and that, and that," he added; and with every word he struck Tom in the ribs, with a blow that made an ugly "thud" each time. The effect of these body blows was soon apparent. Tom gasped for breath, and could scarcely lift his arms.

"Oh! oh! I can't stand this!" he cried, "I give in." And he turned and ran from the ring. A fallen tyrant has no friends. The boys whom he had kicked and maltreated received him with jeers. "Run, coward! Who got polished, Tom?" they cried.

That short battle, which had not lasted ten minutes, destroyed Tom's power completely and forever. The defeated bully never held up his head at the school again.

His appearance after the fight was pitiable in the extreme. The bridge of his nose was broken, his left eye closed, one of his eye-

brows completely cut in two, his side one mass of bruises, and a lump as big as his huge fist behind his ear. Vincent did not have a scratch, and the only mark of the encounter that he showed was his right hand swollen from the effect of his first blow. He walked down quietly to the stream and bathed his face and hands in the cool water. He resumed his clothes, and was at once as fresh and composed as if he had been taking a morning stroll in the placid meadow.

The boys escorted Vincent back to school in triumph. They encountered the doctor standing in anxiety on the steps. On seeing Vincent's calm and cool appearance, he exclaimed, "Why, you haven't been fighting after all;" but the next moment the bloody and crest-fallen Baxter came in sight, and revealed the truth.

"Baxter is quite hurt, sir," said Simmons.

"So it seems," said the doctor. "I must inquire into this affair;" and he did so on the spot.

"Well, Graham," said he, "it seems you were the aggrieved party. You have sufficiently punished Baxter, I think, so I shall not add to his castigation. Go to your room and compose yourself, and learn in future, not to molest unoffending persons."

"My nose is broken, sir," whimpered Tom.

"Well, let the doctor attend to it."

Thus Dr. Brown dismissed the fight, but not so the boys. Vincent was at once raised to the exalted position of "lord of the school," and he ruled with a sway so gentle and impartial that the boys were all his willing, devoted slaves.

CHAPTER VI.

"LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM."

DURING the seven years that elapsed from the time of Mr. Moore's death to the entrance of Vincent Graham at Parnassus Hall, Ethel Moore had been leading the happy life of childhood at the house of Mr. Ebenezer Moore. That gentleman had one son,—Edwin, a fine young fellow,—who, at the age of sixteen had gone to Parnassus Hall, shortly after Vincent.

The years passed away, and Edwin Moore and Vincent Graham became fast friends. They entered college together, and were rivals, though still friends.

As Ethel grew up, her rare beauty became more and more evident. There was a certain ineffable sweetness in her face, and grace in her movements, that rendered her indescribably lovely.

Mr. and Mrs. James Graham were living in elegant style. Their Fifth Avenue residence was what Mrs. Fairfax termed "palatial." About the time when Miss Jessie Fairfax reached the age of sixteen, Mrs. Graham gave a grand ball, as a compliment to that young lady. Miss Jessie was about to be one of the belles of New York, and Mrs. Graham was very ready to solicit "the pleasure of her company." She was tall, and rather stately. Her figure was graceful, although somewhat slight, and gave promise of being really fine when rounded by riper years. She had a sweet and wonderfully flexible voice, and sang ballads in a style that ravished the hearts of a score of male admirers. This young lady had a decided tendency to flirt, and had cruelly rejected some half-dozen despondent swains, though not yet out of school. Her face was exceedingly animated, and, if not handsome, certainly pretty. She was altogether a bewitching young maiden, and a great favorite with Mrs. Graham.

"You will certainly come, Jessie?" inquired that lady.

"I shall be perfectly enchanted, my dear Mrs. Graham, to dance the German at your ball. I love the German. In fact, I adore all dances. To dance the "Flick Flock" gallop with Ned Moore is perfectly heavenly. Mr. Moore will be present, will he not?"

"I should certainly invite Mr. Moore, if only on your account," said Mrs. Graham, smiling. "Don't blush; he is a very fine young man. But there is another friend of yours coming to the ball, M. Auguste Franchot."

"Oh! is he?" cried the young girl, delighted. "I'm so glad! M. Franchot is one of the dearest old fellows alive. What do you think? he has invited mother and me to make him a visit at a charming old place on the Hudson, and we are going."

"Yes, he has invited Mr. Graham and myself. He is going to have a grand *fête champêtre* in June, and sent down a pressing invitation for us to attend. But when I proposed to Mr. Graham to go, he was most strangely agitated. 'I wouldn't go for ten thousand dollars!' said he. Ever since that time he went there to attend Mr. Wyckoff's funeral, and Mr. William Moore was drowned, he shudders at the mention of the

place. I had no idea he was so attached to Mr. Moore."

"How is Mr. Graham?" inquired Jessie, with a great show of interest.

"I don't think he is at all well. He has an unaccountable melancholy. I don't think he has sufficient occupation for his mind. He seemed very well when he first returned from Europe, but of late he has been much depressed. I thought this little excitement of Mr. Franchot's would do him good; but he will not listen to the proposal. 'Never let me hear you mention Wyckoff's fall to me again!' said he; and he seemed terribly put out."

"I think," said Miss Jessie, returning to the theme, "that old M. Franchot is perfectly lovely. He is so kind and good; and then he flatters so, like all Frenchmen. Not that I like flattery, by any means. I detest it generally, but I do not mind it in him. He declared the other night, Mrs. Graham, that I was the perfect image of a Miss Ellen Somers, who, he said, was an old flame of his, and, in her day, the most beautiful girl in America!"

"Why, Miss Somers was the wife of Mr. William Moore," said Mrs. Graham.

"And was she so very beautiful?"

"Why, I never thought so. Speaking of Mr. Moore, I understand his son Harry is coming home from San Francisco soon. Every one thought he was dead; but a Mrs. Jarvis, who was an old servant in the family, wrote to him, and to the surprise of everybody had a letter from him the other day. Mr. Graham told me that M. Franchot had determined to leave his entire fortune to this young Moore, as the child of his old love."

"How charmingly romantic!" cried Jessie. "What sort of a young man is he?"

"I never saw him, but Mr. Graham says he is reported to be a coarse, vulgar fellow."

"But he will be rich."

"Yes," said Mrs. Graham, "and I dare say the girls will think him good-looking enough; and the good lady, having uttered this libel on her sex, smiled very pleasantly."

Nothing could have been more magnificent than the appearance of Mrs. Graham's drawing-rooms and parlors on the night of the ball. It was a warm evening, and the conservatories and windows were open. The gorgeous chandeliers were dazzling with numberless jets of gas; the rooms tastefully decorated with flowers. A covered way stretched from the street to the front door, and over it youth and beauty

passed in a resplendent stream till midnight. The rooms presented a grand *coup d'œil*, as the newspaper reporters say.

Mr. Graham was, of course, present, but much against his inclination. He passed to and fro among his guests, and uttered complimentary phrases and smiled; but they were sickly smiles. His dark face was now habitually pallid. His hair was plentifully streaked with gray, although he was yet in the prime of life. His eyes were ever roving restlessly about; his manner was quick and nervous. Dark streaks beneath his eyes betokened broken sleep. There was evidently something preying on this man's mind. An ineffaceable picture was ever before him: a calm river, a young moon, a twilight scene, with a drowning man struggling in the black water, — this was what James Graham saw painted everywhere; in the variegated streets; in the darkness of his midnight room; on the angry seas; in the dim interiors of churches; on the placid sky; in the purple undulation of distant mountain tops; even there on the frescoed walls of his parlors. This was the appalling recollection that music could not charm away, nor wine drown, nor the theatre's shifting scenes change, nor the gambler's frenzy overpower.

"I think," said Vincent to his cousin, Lucy Vincent, in the pauses of a quadrille, "I think my mother has been extremely fortunate in securing an array of beauty to-night. Who is the young lady my friend Moore seems to be so much pleased with? I was presented to her, but did not hear the name."

"I am surprised that you should ask. That is Miss Fairfax."

"Quite pretty," said Vincent, carelessly, — too adroit to praise a lady's beauty to another.

"Do you think so? Gentlemen seem to admire her. Well, she is a nice girl, but her mother is a ridiculous woman. — a perfect Mrs. Malaprop. That is she talking with your father."

"And not much to my father's delight, judging from the expression of his face."

"Your father does not seem to be in very good spirits." Vincent's face fell. "I have noticed lately that he is much depressed. He has retired from business, or I should say mercantile affairs troubled him."

In the mean time Jessie Fairfax and Edwin Moore had strolled into a little room at the left of the dancing-hall, where they enjoyed a delightful tête-à-tête. Moore was

completely charmed by the vivacity of his young companion.

"Now, Miss Fairfax," said he, "you must give me a description of these people whom we can see through this open door."

"You will find me a poor critic, Mr. Moore. If I am entertaining, you will say I am sarcastic; and if I praise every one, you will think me disingenuous."

"Are there many here, then, whom you could satirize with justice?"

"Yes, indeed. The old gentleman standing by the pillar, for instance. He is a merchant in South Street and is immensely rich. He talks like an old sailor. He actually told me once I was 'a trim little yacht.'"

"A nautical compliment, truly," said Edwin, laughing. "There he goes to speak to Mrs. Graham. I wonder whether he will address her in the same style. What an elegant woman Mrs. Graham is!"

"She was a great belle when young, I have heard," said Jessie. "You and her son are great friends, — are you not?"

"We ought to be. He has saved my life three times; once from drowning."

"What were the other occasions?"

"When I nearly died of typhoid fever at college, Vincent devoted every moment to watching me. The doctor said I owed my life to his more than woman's tenderness and skill. But another act of his I shall never forget while I live. Perhaps you may have heard his mother mention a trip he took to Panama during his long winter vacation last year. I accompanied him. We found great sport hunting and fishing. Vincent is a perfect Indian in the woods. One day we two together wandered far off from camp and were surprised, so engrossed were we with our sport, by night. It was hopeless to attempt to rejoin our companions, — so we determined to bivouac for the night where we were. But scarcely had the sun set when a thick and palpable mist covered us. That mist, Miss Fairfax, looked to us like a death-shroud. We well knew what it was. It was the fatal sign of malaria, common to that beastly climate, — pardon the expression. The unhappy traveller, once chilled through with that, has not a hope of life. 'We are in for it, Ned,' said Vincent; and we were indeed. To light a fire with the soaked wood was impossible. We drained our flasks of whiskey, wrapped ourselves in our thin cloaks, the only protection we had, and lay down. I remember how we bade each other 'good-by,' for we

never expected to awake a live. Well, I lay there shivering, unable to sleep. 'Are you cold, my boy?' said Vincent, cheerfully. My teeth chattered in reply. After a while I dozed. I remember waking several times in the night, feeling warm and comfortable, and hearing a dull noise around me. In the morning I was aroused by the bright rays of the sun, and, jumping up, imagine my astonishment and gratitude, Miss Fairfax, when I saw that I had slept with Vincent's cloak and coat over me; and there was the dear fellow in his shirt-sleeves, thrashing the trees with a log to keep warm. This man had stripped himself of his only protection against death to save my life. As soon as I was able I spoke to him. 'Come, belay that yarn,' cried Vincent, 'what are you making all that fuss about? I made up my mind that if one of us had to die it shouldn't be you, for I got you into this scrape. I can't for the life of me see that I've done anything remarkable.' And Vint. never did see it. I know that he regarded that deed of rare devotion as a mere ordinary act of common friendship."

"And did he never feel the effect of the miasma?" asked Jessie, who had listened breathlessly to the narrative.

"Not in the least. I don't believe that fellow is composed of the same materials ordinary mortals are made of. He told me that when he felt the deadly cold creeping to his bones he had gone through the most arduous gymnastic feats on the limbs above my head, and then commenced threshing the trees. He had used up about a cord of wood, he said; and I should think he had. Certainly the spot looked as if a herd of wild bulls had held high carnival there during the night. It was wonderful that he could maintain his circulation; for the effect of the fatal mist is to deprive one of all desire or power of activity. 'I made up my mind to grind myself down to it,' said Vincent, — and that is the secret of his success. He 'grinds himself down,' as he says, when he wishes to accomplish anything, and is perfectly incapable of giving in."

"You are truly an eloquent eulogist, Mr. Moore."

"Any blockhead could be eloquent on such a theme," cried Edwin. "I never loved any one as I love that man, — any man, I mean."

Miss Jessie's heart beat tumultuously at these words. An unaccountable prescience told the young girl that Moore loved her.

They had met only once or twice before; but Edwin's intellectual face had interested her at once, and she had found a charm in his presence, and felt an indefinable want when he was away. It is the old, old story.

These two had met their fate.

All the accessories of the place were perfectly adapted to a love-scene. The elegant, and retired apartment, — perfectly retired now, for an opaque ground-glass door had swung to, shutting out the dancers, — an apartment evidently constructed for tête-à-têtes, the faint odor of flowers, the ravishing strains of music, the glimpse of the open conservatory, the crystal moonlight shining through the latticed window.

"And," continued Moore, "when I love, I worship."

"But that is idolatry."

"Well, although I do not admit I am a heathen, I confess I idolize."

"But there is no one worthy of such a sentiment, Mr. Moore."

"There is, Miss Fairfax. At least, I know one."

"Shall we not rejoin the company, Mr. Moore?"

"Why so?"

"Why, I want to introduce you to some of those young ladies."

"Oh, not now!" cried Edwin, becoming sentimental. "The violet is a pretty flower, but tame beside the rose."

"Really, Mr. Moore, you speak in parables."

"Will you let me, then, speak plainly?"

Jessie grew alarmed. She knew the defences of her heart were weak, and she dreaded an assault. She sought to parley with the besieger.

"Would you not like to dance?" said she.

"The sets are full, and the music has begun. I find this little room so pleasant I should like to stay here."

"But will they not miss us?"

"Oh, every one is too much engrossed with the business of the ball to note even your absence, Miss Fairfax."

Jessie was fain to be content. She strove to distract the enemy till help arrived.

"Come, tell me some more anecdotes," cried she.

Unfortunate girl! She opened the gates for the stormer to rush in.

"The story I have is short, but true, Miss Jessie."

"Let me hear it," said the unsuspecting maiden, rejoicing at her success.

Moore knew that time was precious. It

was a habit of his never to throw away opportunities, and he thus seemed to others to create them.

"My story," said he, "is in three words, — I love you."

At this sudden avowal, Jessie's glowing cheek showed a deeper fire. She could not repress her agitation. She plucked the unoffending rose, she held, to pieces, and dropped the fragrant fragments on the floor.

"And there is a sequel to it," pursued Edwin. "Do you, *can* you ever love me? O Jessie!" he continued, "you have heard to-night of a love that could brave drowning, and fever, and malaria, to serve a friend. My heart is full of a love for you, beside which this sentiment sinks to cool indifference. I am not used to the phrases of the courter, Jessie, but I say with the full force of my being that if you blessed me with your love, there is no act so difficult, no danger so appalling I would not do or dare for you."

Faster fell the fragments of the flower. Her impatient lover could not see Jessie's averted face.

"I know not whether you turn away in diffidence or aversion, but let me know my fate, Jessie, — will you not? Whisper the one word that will make me ever happy," said he, in a low tone, bending over her. "Do you not wish to speak? Place, then, that torn rose in my hand, and I shall know it as a token of my joy; let it drop to the floor, and my hopes will fall, too."

There was silence. Jessie held the mutilated flower in her taper fingers. Edwin looked on breathlessly. She raised it slowly. "Is she going to drop it?" thought he, in tremor. Slowly Jessie's lovely face turns towards him, and a look of love, — deep, intense, and heartfelt, — glances from her violet eyes; the white hand approaches Edwin's; a slight touch sets his veins on fire; she places the rose lightly in his hand and swiftly draws her own away.

"Oh, this is heaven!" cries Edwin. "Croakers and fools! there's no such thing as sorrow on the earth!" And he encircles the lovely form with ardent arms. The blushing girl does not draw away; she yields to his caress, and her velvet lips meet his in the first thrilling kiss of love.

O Love! relic of paradise! privilege of gods! Let woe come! So thou art not absent, every other joy may go; every grief come in!

The soft notes of the music still are heard. They were fine before, but they are strains

of heaven now, sweeter than ever thrilled angelic wires, to those two lovers.

CHAPTER VII.

MIDNIGHT ADVENTURES.

IN one of the dirtiest and most dismal streets that lie like a vast morass on the east side of New York, where beggary skulks and thieves "most do congregate," there stood at the period of which we write, and perhaps now stands, a small, two-story, wooden house, whose appearance was dilapidated and forlorn. The old, wooden steps were worm-eaten and broken, the windows were mostly destitute of glass, the clumsy shutters hung precariously on one hinge, or were altogether gone. The interior was what one would have expected from the outside. A broken floor, uncovered by oil-cloth or carpet, a decrepit pair of stairs, rough, unpainted plaster walls. The lower rooms were vacant and unfurnished. Upstairs there was but one apartment that gave any evidence of habitation. In this wretched room there were a few incomplete chairs, a low table, on which were scattered writing materials, and on which sputtered a solitary, miserable "dip." In a corner stood a large safe, which had once been very handsome, but its veneer and gilt were almost completely knocked off and rubbed out; the ceiling was discolored by the rain that had made its way through the leaky roof; the bare floor was encrusted with mud; a melancholy fire smouldered in the rusty grate, — in short, an air of complete discomfort prevailed. There were two occupants of this room. In the short, well-formed man, with red hair and brutal mouth, we recognize our old acquaintance, Ezra Hoyt. He poured some steaming liquor into a broken tumbler, stirred it with the handle of his knife, and slowly drank it. Years had changed this man's *physique* greatly. His shoulders were very broad, his arms huge; he was evidently possessed of immense strength.

His companion, who sat smoking a short clay pipe, was a man of about fifty years of age. He had a head of coarse black hair matted down upon his narrow forehead. His eyes were black and piercing, his full lips were licentious-looking. He was evidently a great drinker; he had gone beyond the stage that makes the face flushed and

red; it was pallid with habitual drunkenness.

"I think we have managed the game well, Ezra," said this man.

"Don't call me Ezra, old man. I'm Harry Moore."

"Beg pardon," said the other, jocosely touching his cap. "Have you seen the old Frenchman?"

"No, I've been in no hurry to present myself."

"You've done well. Mounseer Parlez-vous would be none too pleased at such an ugly cub as yourself."

"Come, look here! have a civil tongue in your head, will you?" cried the other, savagely.

"Don't flare up so. That game won't work with me. You can't get along without me and the old woman."

"Oh, you've done remarkably well, no doubt; but if I'm to be so immensely rich, I should like some of 'the wherewithal' now. I'm broke, I tell you."

"Have patience—have patience. It will come in time."

"Have patience!" cried the other, fiercely. "Haven't we been waiting year after year, and year after year, without getting any nearer? Franchot is as likely to live as long as either of us. Why the devil can't he die?"

"Mrs. Jarvis says that; ha! ha! aint she a trump?"

"Now, what are you grinning at?" said Ezra, with slow, sarcastic enunciation. The other seemed immensely tickled at some fancy.

"I say, aint that woman a genius? Gad a lucky day for us when we made Mrs. Jarvis's acquaintance. Ha! ha!"

"What if the old woman blows on us?"

"Blow be hanged! Why, man, her game's ours. Cut me up into bullet patches, if I ever saw her equal. The way she managed to make herself Franchot's house-keeper beat the devil!"

"What does she say about his health?"

"She says he's got the gout bad."

"That's nothing. Men live for years with the gout. I tell you that man ought to die, and die now."

"But suppose he won't?"

"Then," said Ezra, stretching across the table to his companion, and lowering his voice to a malignant whisper, "he ought to be made to die."

The other started, and his glass stopped midway to his lips.

"You don't mean—"

"Yes, I do mean. What's the use of mincing matters? Knock the old dog on the head."

"I don't like the idea," said the other (who was Ezra's father).

"Why not? I'd do it myself. I ripped a fellow open in St. Louis once, and I'd do it again."

The fellow's face looked like a fiend's, as he uttered this brutal boast. His ruffian companion instinctively drew back.

"But suppose we should kill him before he had made his will; then we should be cutting our own throats," said Richard Hoyt.

"That's true. Well, we must find out whether he has made it or not; and Mrs. Jarvis must do that job."

"Do you suppose I never thought of that before? Mrs. J. has been at it for a month, but he keeps his papers hidden."

"They must be got at."

"Well, Jarvis will do it, if any one can."

"Tell her to hurry up. I tell you, I must have some money."

"Have you tried garroting, lately?"

"—st! man, —don't talk so loud. No, but I shall, this night. What do you keep this infernal hole here for? Don't the police suspect this crib?"

"No; they think an old miser lives here."

"I say, what have you got in that safe?"

"Oh! some very interesting little documents."

"I dare say. Can't I see them?"

"Not to-night. Some time."

"Soon?"

"Yes."

"Well," said Ezra, rising, "I came here to-night to broach this plan of finishing the old Frenchman. I tell you, it must be done. Think over it. I will see you soon again."

The men separated. Ezra, or the *pseudo* Harry Moore, groped down the creaking stairs.

"I must relieve some swell of his superfluous cash," he muttered; "but there are no lucrative individuals in this vile street. How's this?" and he slunk quietly into the shadow of the house.

It so happened that that evening Vincent Graham had gone over to Brooklyn to call upon some friends in that city. Returning late, he found no stages running, and set out to walk up town. He made a short cut through the city, and thus it came to pass that, as Ezra came into the street, young Graham was approaching with rapid steps.

Vincent carried a light cane which he habitually took in midnight perambulations. It was made of finely tempered steel, but painted in exact imitation of rattan. Its weight alone revealed its true character. He walked along with the swift, elastic step of youth and health. His keen eye detected the huge outlines of the ruffian traced against a fence.

"Suspicious stranger, I think I will avoid you. I don't fancy street fights." Muttering this, he crossed the street. His object was twofold, — to avoid a fight, and to discover whether the man had any intentions of molesting him. He had gone but a few yards, when Ezra also crossed the street.

"Ah!" said Vincent to himself, "the hostile vessel shows her colors. You are not in a pleasant fix, Graham. That ugly craft can probably gather a fleet in no time. At any rate, I'll meet him bows on," and he turned on his heel and advanced towards the man.

Ezra, surprised at this movement, stopped. Vincent approached, and would have quietly passed, but the fellow stretched out his brawny arm and barred his way.

"Well, what do you want?" said Vincent.

"What time o' night is it?"

"About quarter of one."

"Let's see your watch."

"No, sir."

"Then I'll take it," and he rushed at him with fury.

Vincent nimbly dodged beneath the man's arm, and the fellow brought up violently against a lamp-post. Uttering a cry of pain, he turned suddenly towards his antagonist. Vincent stood by quietly with his cane uplifted.

"Stand back, or you'll repent it!" he cried.

"Curse you!" roared Ezra, "do you think to frighten me with a twig? Give me your watch and money, and I'll let you go."

"You are very generous. Come with me quietly to a station-house, and I won't hurt you."

"Curse your insolence! Come, fork out! You won't? Then take that, you fool!" and he sprang forward to strike.

Vincent's cane descended like a lightning flash across the man's bare neck. The ruffian staggered and fell. Vincent stooped over him. "I've severed his jugular," thought he. At that instant he heard the distant click of a policeman's club. He struck the handle of his steel cane on the

pavement, and presently the "custodian of the night" approached.

"This fellow attacked me, and I laid him out," said Vincent, looking at the prostrate and insensible Ezra.

A livid welt half-encircled the man's neck, and the blood slowly trickled from it.

"What did you strike him with,—not that rattan?"

"It is a steel cane," said Vincent.

"I think I've seen this cove afore," said the policeman. "The station-house is not far off. Will you help me lug this chap around, sir?"

"Certainly," said Vincent.

They raised the man with difficulty.

"What struck me?" gasped he; and then catching sight of the uniform of the Metropolitan police, he added, "All's up, I see."

"Assault, with attempt to kill," said the policeman, grimly. "Assault and battery, anyhow. Some years in the jug, if Judge Mack Kunn don't let you off."

They all three walked along in silence. Ezra glanced with admiration at his vanquisher.

"What magic is in that stick of yours, sir?" said he, "if I may be permitted to inquire. It felt like a sabre-stroke. Will you sell that cane, sir?"

"No, sir."

"Well, you'll let me look at it, I presume?"

"Yes, I'll do that."

The man took the cane and examined it curiously, and, to do so with more ease, stood still.

"Come, move on," said the policeman.

"Oh, come, now, let me look at this cane before you lock me up. That isn't much of a favor. Let me stop a minute beneath this lamp."

"Well, there's no harm in that, if you're not too long."

They all stopped. The policeman stood kicking the curb-stone with his heel. Vincent took out a match-case, and endeavored to light a cigar. Ezra looked at the cane with the greatest apparent curiosity.

"It isn't steel, then, after all," said he.

"Yes, it is," said the policeman.

"Are you sure? Let me see," and he took out his large clasp-knife. "I think I can cut it."

"Guess not," said the policeman, and he leaned forward to observe him.

"Why, see here," cried Ezra; "I cut it."

The policeman leaned still nearer. In a second the villain, with the quickness of

thought, plunged the sharp blade into the unfortunate man's side, dashed the cane into Vincent's face, and ran like a deer down an obscure side street.

The affair was so sudden that Vincent, who was at some little distance, had not time to reach them with a rapid bound, before the man was off.

Doubtful for an instant whether to pursue the assassin, or succor the wounded man, he stood still, poised by the two opposite impelling forces, and the fellow was beyond the reach of pursuit. Vincent bent over the unfortunate policeman. A red stream was running swiftly from his side. He tore his scarf quickly off, and, with difficulty, passed it around the man's side. He twisted his cane into it, and thus improvised a *tourniquet* on the spot.

"It's no use, my friend," said the policeman, faintly; "I'm a goner. Leave me here, and run round to the station in the next street. If I die before you get back, you will let the department know I died in my duty, sir, — won't you?"

"Indeed, I will," said Vincent, hurrying off.

In a moment he was back with assistance. The officer had fainted, and they thought him dead. They lifted him up. As they carried him along, he came to and groaned.

"There's life in him, Dexter," said one of the men.

"Oh, he's as good as ten dead men yet."

They carried him into the station-house. Surgical assistance was soon procured, and, to Vincent's joy, the wound pronounced not mortal. Vincent gave his name and address, and rose to leave.

"You'd better not walk home," said one of the men.

"Why not? I don't think I shall be molested again."

"Perhaps not, but your clothes are spattered with blood, and you may be arrested. A man covered with blood, and walking the streets at this time of night, isn't the most innocent-looking object in the world."

"That's so," said Vincent, laughing.

"Let me send and get you a carriage."

"Thank you, I would be obliged."

Now this was a ruse to detain Vincent till the wounded man revived sufficiently to talk, which he did soon.

"This chap all right?" asked a captain of police, in a low tone.

"Well, I should rather think he was. He's the gamest chap I've seen for many a day."

"His *tourniquet* saved your life," said the surgeon.

"What is your name, sir?" asked the injured policeman.

Vincent told him.

"Will you be kind enough to mark it down in my book, sir? I'm no hand at minding names."

Vincent did so.

"Well, Mr. Graham," said the man, "if you ever want Jim Parker to do anything for you, I'll esteem it a favor if you'll let me know."

"I'll remember," said Vincent, smiling.

"I think I'll walk home, after all," said he, "if you'll allow me to arrange my dress."

"Certainly," said the men, who were now very respectful; and Vincent, with all traces of blood removed, went out into the cool night, and walked briskly up-town.

"My blood has been nicely stirred," said he to himself. "I should like a row. I'd give a good deal to come across my treacherous acquaintance of Catharine Street just now."

He reached the quiet up-town streets, and began to think he should meet with no more adventures that night. As his steps echoed down the dismal avenue, he saw a man approaching. They met beneath a gas-lamp. The stranger — a tall man, with long, black beard — glanced indifferently at Vincent's face, on which the lamp cast a full, clear light. The careless gaze changed instantly into a look of keen intentness, and he stopped.

"Another footpad," thought Vincent, smiling grimly, and he stopped. The stranger gazed in silence, while a look as of mingled hate and fear was plainly painted on his face.

"Well, what do you want?" said Vincent.

"Great Heavens! the look! the voice! Has the devil renewed his youth?"

At these strange words Vincent stared.

"A lunatic, evidently," thought he.

"What do you mean, sir?" he said; "can I do anything for you?"

"Away, you fiend!" cried the man, shuddering, and there was certainly a wild look in his eyes.

Vincent said nothing, and the man soon grew calm.

"Fool that I am!" cried he; "it must be his son. This is young Mr. Graham, is it not?"

At this Vincent stared in amazement.

"You are right; but who are you, may I ask?"

"Yes," said the man, as if talking to himself, "this must be James Graham's son."

"It is," said Vincent.

"A fair blossom for so foul a root."

"What do you mean by that?" cried Vincent.

"Hark you, boy!" said the man; "does your father live?"

"Yes, sir."

"In wealth and honor?"

"Yes, sir."

"The lightning has never stricken him, nor the earth swallowed him?"

"Most decidedly not."

"It must be so! There is no God in heaven!"

Vincent, thoroughly puzzled, was determined to investigate this mystery.

"Pray how did you know me, sir?" he asked.

"Thank God! he still lives," said the stranger, continuing his soliloquy, utterly ignoring Vincent's presence. "The greedy grave has not cheated me." Then looking at young Graham, he added, "And this is a human being. You have no claws or cloven feet, young sir?"

"Really, sir," said Vincent, "if you wish me to stand out here at this time of night, to talk with you, I beg you to be more intelligible."

"Pardon me," said the man, recovering himself; "my feelings overcame me."

"What is the cause of your agitation, sir?"

"Oh, ask me not! God grant you may never know!"

"But how did you know me?"

"By your resemblance, slight indeed, but unmistakable, to your father."

"Then you know him well?"

Again the man's eyes glared. "What mystery is here!" thought Vincent.

"I know him slightly," said the stranger, with an effort; "but he does not know me."

"What is your name, sir?"

"Morris."

"Do you want to see my father?"

"Not now, not now, but soon, but soon," said the man, rapidly.

"Do you live in the city, sir?"

"I arrived to-night from Australia."

"Well, Mr. Morris, I will not detain you."

"Stay; where does your father live?"

Vincent told him.

"I am obliged to you. Do you believe in ghosts?" he asked, abruptly.

"I believe in the possibility of ghosts," said Vincent.

"Well, you have talked with one to-night."

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us," cried Vincent, in pretended alarm.

"Do not jest, young man," cried the other, sternly.

"Whom do you haunt?" asked Vincent.

"None now; I bide my time."

"Well, my supernatural sir, good-night."

Vincent walked home. He went into his room. Ed. Moore, who was his "chum" here as well as at college, was asleep and dreaming of love. He awoke as Vincent came in.

"Well, you've kept good hours to-night."

"I could a tale unfold," my chum, 'would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood, make each particular hair to stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine.'"

"What in the name of sense have you been doing, Vint.; what's become of your scarf?"

"Oh, I've been told to 'stand and deliver' on the mayor's highway, have cut down the 'gentleman of the road,' have bound the wounds of an assassinated man, and have met and talked with a ghost."

"Really, you've done well. I pray you when you these unlucky deeds relate, nothing extenuate nor set down aught for effect. I know from your looks you've been up to something, and just my luck to be out of the way."

Vincent thereupon told him of his eventful walk from the Brooklyn ferry.

"This Morris passes my comprehension, — calling himself a ghost and me a devil."

"Tis strange," said Edwin.

"As I do live, my honored' chum, 'tis true."

He and Moore were soon asleep. Had they looked into the street they would have seen the black-bearded man pacing up and down on the opposite pavement, and gazing with glaring eyes at Graham's house.

CHAPTER VIII.

"SWEET SIXTEEN."

THE lovely promise of Ethel Moore's childhood was not falsified. At sixteen she was the most bewitching young creature that can be well imagined. Of the peculiarly lovely type of beauty uniting dark hair and clear light complexion, she pos-

sessed, too, a very pleasing voice, and a laugh that was the embodiment of light-hearted merriment. Until the time when Mr. Moore reluctantly revealed the story of her infancy, nothing had occurred to shade her face or dampen her natural gaiety. And, though she heard the recital with many tears, the sorrow was evanescent, and her elastic spirits soon recovered from the depressing effect of the revelation. She perused the few lines her dead mother had written, over and over, and kept them among her girlish treasures. Her sweet voice was soon heard in happy songs again.

Visiting New York with her father, she was invited with him to attend M. Franchot's annual *fête champêtre*, at Wyckoff Hall. So, one charming June day, Mr. Moore and Ethel reached the hospitable mansion. As they walked from the railway station over the smooth gravel-path and up the velvety lawn, they could hear the sound of music and laughter in the house, and catch glimpses through the open parlor windows of many figures dancing. Old Franchot stood on the steps to receive them; he had grown corpulent, red-faced, and jolly as Falstaff. He was evidently astonished at Ethel's radiant beauty. "It is an angel! a seraph!" he exclaimed, ecstatically. Ethel, unused to social assemblies, was dazzled by the brilliancy of the scene, at which she stole a glance, then hurried up the wide old stairs.

Conspicuous among the gentlemen present on this occasion were Vincent Graham and Edwin Moore. The former had just returned from an extended tour in Europe; the latter had obtained a commission in the army immediately after graduation, had been ordered to New Mexico, distinguished himself there in an affair with Indians on the frontier, been breveted, and was now home on "sick leave."

"I enjoyed your *fête* very much the last time I was up here," observed Mrs. Fairfax to M. Franchot. "I do love to see the young people dancing by moonlight, — that is," she added, "if there is any moon."

"Your daughter is very lovely, madam," said Franchot, irrelevantly.

"Yes," replied the lady, with pride, "I think she is. Everybody says she is the image of what I was at her age."

"You must really have been very beautiful."

"Why, yes, I was," said Mrs. Fairfax, complacently. "I think I have faded a good deal."

"Oh, upon my word, not much," said the hypocritical Frenchman.

As Ethel and her father entered the house, Vincent was standing leaning carelessly against a pillar opposite a door, talking with a young lawyer, — Harry Kavanagh. Ethel's graceful figure passed quickly by the door, and her timid, eager glance met Vincent's.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, starting; "vision of paradise! Are we in the East, Kavanagh?"

"Explain."

"I saw an houri glide by; I caught a glimpse of an unveiled goddess in the hall; the days of mythology have returned; Venus has come down from Olympus."

"Where is the vision?" said Kavanagh. "I see no one in the hall but a pleasant-looking old gentleman talking with our host."

"Oh, she has gone back to the clouds, no doubt. The earth is too base for her to tread."

"Really, Vint., your rhapsodies excite me. Think you the goddess will return?"

"I pray Jupiter she may, and yet I dread to see her. I could not bear the full effulgence of her beauty, and retain my sight."

"Upon my word, Vint., the apparition must have been a rare one. I never saw you so excited."

"I looked into heaven, Harry," said Vincent, gravely.

"I shall ask M. Franchot who the angel is," said Kavanagh, and off he went.

The listlessness had now all disappeared from Vincent's manner. He stood erect, eager, expectant, — his cheek aglow, his eye on fire. As Ethel entered, leaning on her father's arm, he felt that his rhapsodies had been tame. Gentlemen gathered around her, but Vincent stood aloof. He could not define the feeling he experienced. There was nothing like bashfulness in his composition, but he felt a sort of awe of this young creature, as one might feel in the presence of a superior being. "That girl bewitches me," he said to himself, wondering.

What need to multiply words? That rare, beautiful, yet awful miracle had occurred, — he had fallen in love at first sight.

Franchot approached. "Come, Mr. Graham, let me present you to *la reine du salon*."

"I shall be most happy," said Vincent, with a momentary faintness.

"*Allons donc*."

His timidity — which amazed and enraged him — vanished after he had exchanged two sentences with Ethel. Her girlish bashfulness put him instantly at ease, and he gradually drew her into an animated conversation. They naturally spoke of the house.

"Yes, it is a pleasant place," observed Vincent; "but a melancholy catastrophe occurred here once. Ah! I forget it was your uncle, Mr. William Moore, who was drowned here. Forgive me for recalling the event."

"I knew my uncle was drowned in the Hudson, but did not know it was at this place."

"He was drowned the day after Mr. Wyckoff's funeral. The old gentleman's will had just been read, leaving his fortune to your uncle and my father, half to each, and if one died, the other to have the whole. Within an hour your uncle was drowned, and my father left sole heir."

"So, by the melancholy death of two dear friends, your father found himself possessed of a large fortune," said Ethel.

Now Vincent had often heard these facts related, had often thought of them; but the way Ethel presented them, by her casual remark, started a new and horrible thought. The awful conjecture rushed with such force into his mind, that he staggered as if a powerful blow had smitten him, and his face blanched to an ashy paleness. Nothing but the marvellous power this man had over his nerves prevented him from falling.

"You are ill, Mr. Graham," cried Ethel, in alarm.

"It is nothing," said Vincent, recovering himself with an effort. "A sudden faintness! It is very curious; I never was affected this way before. The room is warm; will you come out on the piazza, Miss Moore? You could hardly have observed the view on entering, and it is really fine."

They went out and sat upon a rustic seat on the veranda. The night was cloudy, but quite light, for the moon was full. The bluff opposite bank was bathed in light from the eastern moon, though the nearer side was buried in gloom.

"You can see the distant peaks of the Catskills up the river," said Vincent. "I should like to have an opportunity, Miss Moore, of showing you the country about here; you are an enthusiastic lover of nature."

Ethel smiled at the quiet way in which he

took this fact for granted. "I have seen nothing in the way of country other than the rural suburbs of Boston."

"They are beautiful. I have travelled over a large part of the globe, seen Swiss Alps, Italian champagnes, Sicilian vineyards, and after all, Miss Moore, I think America is lovelier than any other land. The Rhine ought not to be mentioned in the same breath with this river at our feet."

"But did you not think the intense cultivation of English lands produced a much more beautiful effect than the picturesque wildness of our own?"

"Well, certainly, trim hedges and smooth lawns, as evidencing taste and refinement, are very pleasing; but I was only speaking of what nature has done for us. I should be glad, indeed, to see the hand of art remove some of our American roughness."

"Is there not here a want of the elaborate perfection of Old-World life, — a want of finish, a sort of repulsive newness?"

"A freshness and newness, indeed, but not repulsive to me. The newness of abundant and unused material, the freshness of undeveloped capability. When our country has grown ripe and mellowed, as it were, there will be a 'perfection' beside which the polished beauties of Europe will seem commonplace. Our universities, our art, poetry, — all are yet young. But really, Miss Moore, we are very sage. This scene, the sound of music, the laughter of revelers, are poor accompaniments to such a very grave conversation."

"A most abrupt change would be to poetry."

"And a happy one. You are a poetess."

"Indeed, I'm nothing of the sort."

"Pardon me, — you are."

"Why are you so positive on a point on which it is impossible you should be informed? Have you ever seen any of my poetry?"

"Nothing but the poetry of your glance and smile."

"Now, Mr. Graham, though the moonlight may seem to demand it, do not become sentimental."

"Sentimental! I was making the most prosaic statement in the world."

"Well, if there was no rhyme in it, neither was there reason. Do you not think my brother looks very ill?"

"Not very strong. But there is no fear of him; he carries about a preservative of life."

"Indeed! what?"

"Why, love. That passion will keep him alive, even if his splendid constitution should fail."

"Is there, then, such an efficacy in that sentiment?"

"I merely speak from observation and testimony. I have as yet had no experience. I wonder I have escaped so long."

"And so do I when I look at those young ladies in the other room."

"Yes. I have thought them all beautiful."

"Have thought! Why do you use the past tense?"

Vincent hesitated. He did not dare to say what he meant. "I suppose," said he, "I have become wearied of their styles of beauty."

"Then you have a capricious and unreasonable taste, Mr. Graham. Here come some of the beauties now; you must introduce me."

"With pleasure. (Confound the people!)" muttered Vincent to himself.

A large party soon gathered on the piazza. The clouds suddenly broke away, and the full moon shone in unveiled loveliness. The river lay like molten silver.

"A perfect night for a row on the river," remarked Temple.

"A lucky thought, Ned," cried Vincent. "How does the proposal please you, young ladies?"

Several pleaded the dampness of the evening and declined, but a small party that included Jessie Fairfax and Ethel applauded the scheme.

They walked down the lawn to the picturesque boat-house. The party was hilarious and noisy, but Vincent was quiet, for a tranquil happiness possessed him. He felt the first calm delight of that strange passion, which sometimes is a pleasant dream, sometimes a waking horror, sometimes a placid joy, sometimes a destroying frenzy.

"It was about here, I suppose, that my poor uncle was drowned," said Ethel.

A spasm of pain swept across Vincent's face.

"Yes," he replied, "I believe he fell from the bank yonder. Are you clad warmly enough, Miss Moore?"

"Oh, yes, thank you. It was strange he could not climb up that bank! It is not so very steep."

Again the horrible thought tortured Vincent. "My God!" he thought in silent agony, "it cannot be so. I will not yield to the awful fancy."

"He might have fallen in a fainting-fit into the water, as your brother did once," said he.

"My brother!"

"Yes, I think it was he, if I recollect aright. He fainted in the water and had a narrow chance of it."

"How was he rescued?"

"One of the fellows fished him out, I believe. Don't you think the house looks pretty from here?"

"Ethel," said Moore, who was walking behind them with Jessie on his arm, "I never wrote about that little affair, did I? I knew better than to frighten mother out of her wits. The 'fellow' who fished me out, Ettie, is the 'fellow' you are walking with."

"Is it possible!" cried Ethel, looking with such a bewitching glance of admiration and gratitude into Vincent's face, that he felt he should like to spend a year in diving after drowning men to earn another. "No wonder then you are such good friends. You shall be my friend for that, Mr. Graham."

The low, tender tones perfectly ravished Vincent's heart. He felt an almost irrepressible impulse to clasp the lovely young creature to his arms on the spot, but, instead of outraging propriety thus, remarked quietly but in tones whose deep earnestness thrilled Ethel, —

"Then I am indeed repaid."

The merry party took possession of Mr. Franchot's large barge and each gentleman seized an oar.

"Now, young ladies," said Moore, "a division of labor. We will pull, but you must sing. Come, Jessie!"

A stirring air was sung melodiously, and the boat dashed along in time to its measure.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FETE CHAMPETRE.

THE day of the fête was a glorious one. The forenoon was spent in busy and delightful preparation, and, at about one, the party proceeded in a joyous procession to the grove, where the music of a band was already astonishing the birds. The green sward had been trimmed, and rolled into a smooth, elastic dancing-floor, and the fantastically attired guests were soon merrily

at work. It had been Mr. Franchot's desire that each one should assume a character, and wear the appropriate costume, although not masked; so, on that pleasant summer afternoon, the shady old grove was filled with lords and clowns, shepherdesses and naiads, angels, devils, courtiers, quakers, — in short, everything that whimsical fancy could devise. Vincent — a bold outlaw and archer in Lincoln-green — looked with impatience through the throng for Ethel. He saw, at length, a gracefully attired dryad — a vision fairer than Calypso. A tall, slim young fop, appropriately gotten up as a baboon, was talking with her, making a combination exceedingly ludicrous and absurd.

Vincent approached.

"Fair nymph!" said he, "sweet goddess,

*'Sprang from fountains, and from sacred groves,
And holy streams that flow into the sea,'*

will fortune attend my arrow in the chase to-day?"

"Nay, bold archer, these revels will fright away the timid deer."

"Then will I forego the hunt, and stay to attend thee, fair Oread."

"Be thou constant then, and I will show thee 'springs of streams and verdant grassy shades,' where the base minions of the law cannot molest thee."

"That will I. Come with me and add thy graceful figure to the dance."

"I am bespoken now."

"What! to that creature! to that caricature of man?"

"Really, Mr. Graham," said the inane swell, who did not at all enter into the spirit of the scene, "your expressions, sir —"

"Upon my word, Mr. Livingstone," interrupted Vincent, with a slight sneer, "do you expect me to take off my hat and bow to a baboon; or did you assume that tasteless costume with an intention of supporting the character?"

"Oh! aw! beg pardon. Forgot I was rigged up so. I believe I shall take this off; it is not at all comfortable."

"Oh, do not, Mr. Livingstone," cried Ethel; "you are really a second Martinetti."

"Well, Miss Moore, let us join the dancers."

They strolled off. Ethel smiled at Vincent over her shoulder, and he raised his plumed hat and bowed.

"Lovely girl," thought he, "take off that flowing robe and you are still a goddess!"

At this moment Jessie Fairfax, exceedingly pretty in the graceful garb of Undine, approached with Kavanagh, who was picturesquely attired as a cavalier of Charles the First, with long, flowing wig and ruffles, velvet doublet and small-sword dangling at his side.

"I thank thee, fair Undine, that thou hast strayed away from thy native stream, to visit the haunts of mortals. Be not frightened at this honest archer."

"Ha!" cried Vincent, advancing; "your purse, my pretty lord!"

"What, sirrah! wouldst thou bite the dust?"

"Peace, men!" cried Jessie; "put up your weapons."

"I yield to thee, sweet nymph," said Vincent.

"I sheathe my thirsty steel at thy command," said Harry, with so much *empressément* that they all laughed.

A comical contrast was now presented by the appearance of a gentle shepherdess, Miss Schuyler by name, in the escort of an Italian bandit, Edwin Moore.

He was very fierce and handsome in his plumed hat, sash, and jacket, and immense top-boots.

"Behold gentleness and fury side by side," said Vincent.

"Sweet shepherdess, may I not seek thy wandering lambs?" said Edwin.

"Nay, bold robber, you would alarm the timid flock."

"So I do not frighten the shepherdess, I am content. Ah! Robin Hood, and you, my gallant lord, why join ye not the merry dance?"

"This sprite of the stream has charmed us forth," said Kavanagh.

"Graceful Undine, release thy spell over these; let me be thy slave."

"What, false one!" cried the shepherdess, "wouldst thou desert me?"

"Nay, I would swear allegiance to both."

"But I will not have a divided homage. I renounce thee."

"And I," said Undine.

"Then bold bandit," said Vincent, laughing, "in striving for each, thou hast lost both."

"I see. Then will I seek other charmers;" and he went merrily away.

"The cavalier has deserted me for the shepherdess," said Jessie. "Nay, come not back now; it is too late."

"Loveliest of naiads," said the archer, "may I presume to be thy slave?"

"I fear me thou art bewitched by a wood-nymph."

"Nay, goddess of the stream, thou dost me wrong. A dweller in her own wild woods, a hairy monster has borne her off. — Ah!" he added, forgetting his character in his earnestness, "was she not, Miss Fairfax, beautiful as she sat in the boat last night with the moonlight on her face?"

"I thought at the time you watched her closely," said Jessie, slyly.

"Well, I sat directly opposite and could not well help it."

"You could not, indeed. Did you not dream of her last night?"

"Yes, I did."

"Well, that is frank. Know, then, she dreamed of you."

"How know you?"

"Her own laughing confession to me."

"I trust her dream was pleasant."

"It was merely that she and you were sailing on the sky in a balloon and criticising the American landscape as you skimmed along."

"Would that I could take such a voyage with such a fellow-traveller!"

"Fear not, Mr. Graham, I doubt not you will be companions on a longer journey."

"Explain, mysterious Undine."

"You understand me. I wish you success, my 'merrie man.'"

"Success in what?"

"In chasing the fair fawn. Do not look so puzzled, and excuse my freedom."

"I can do the one, but not the other, for I do not understand you."

"Oh! I will not believe such obtuseness. Are you the same man you were yesterday morning?"

"Truly, I think I am."

"You are not. You are not now your own master."

"Not my own master!"

"Why, no. Yonder nymph has robbed thee of thy heart, and thou art her slave. Do not deny the charge."

"Would you have me plead guilty to the 'soft impeachment?' Really, you women have a marvellous discernment in these matters. You know that we love before we know ourselves."

"Why, no discernment is necessary in your case. You look and talk and act the lover."

"What, now?"

"Yes."

"Then Edwin will be jealous."

"Absurd man! Do not pretend to mis-

understand me," said Jessie, laughing. "But I do not blame you, — far from it. You show a most excellent taste."

"Then you will be my coadjutor?"

"Most assuredly."

"But really, I know not that I am in love."

"You are in doubt? Then you may be certain that you are."

"Oh, well, *you* must know all the signs of the sweet passion certainly. 'Experience is the best teacher,' as the copy-books say. How does it feel to be in love, Miss Fairfax?"

"Pray how know you that I am in love?"

"Why, are you not engaged to that fierce bandit over there?"

"I deny it not; but is that your only proof?"

"Is not that sufficient?"

"Innocent archer! Simple dweller in the wood! Dost suppose that all who marry, love?"

"Not I. Sad to say, I see the fact is otherwise, but Cupid be praised not in *your* case."

"Why think you so?"

"Because you are Jessie Fairfax, and your lover Edwin Moore."

"And consequently?"

"Each irresistible to the other."

"Well answered. Therefore you love Ethel Moore because she *is* Ethel Moore."

"And I trust the remainder of the proposition is correct?"

"I will not say; but I do not bid you despair."

"If *merit* wins the love of Ethel Moore, I *must* despair; nay! speak not, I am not angling for compliments. No one in my opinion *is* worthy of her."

"Well, but if she doesn't think so, it is all right. But who is this fiend approaching?"

It was Ned Temple who was dressed and really looked like a devil; but he was a very graceful and polite fiend. He came to summon them to take part in a dance. The cavalier and shepherdess were partners, while Moore, the bandit, had secured the hand of an angel, Miss Lucy Vincent.

The gay revellers danced on, the merry masqueraders shouted. All was mirth and music.

Some few of the party whose characters demanded it were masked, although by far the greater part of the gay throng was not. There were two masked figures whom no one seemed to know, — both men, dressed as bears. They kept together and did not

join the dance. Franchot had tried in vain to speak to them; they invariably avoided him when he approached. They stood in a retired spot remote from the dancers, talking together in low tones.

"Jolly times these swells are having, Ezra," said one, who was no other than Dick Hoyt.

"Curse 'em," muttered Ezra. "See that fancy cove in green with a bugle slung around him? He's the infernal rascal who knocked me down with an iron stick in Catharine Street."

"Eh? what?"

"The same. I'd like to serve him as I did the officer."

"He looks game."

"Never saw his equal — but I'll be even with him. The old woman's sure it's all right about the will?"

"Yes, yes. She read it and copied part of it for me. Here it is."

He pulled a crumpled letter from his breast, and read, —

"I enclose a koppy of what you wanted to no about. I had a tuff jobb fishin the thing out of the frenchman's desk."

"What she copied," said Hoyt, "is on another bit o' paper. This is it:" and he read, —

"Lastly I give and bequeath the entire rest, residue, and remainder of my estate, real and personal, to ———, only child of William W. and Ellen Moore, formerly of the city, county, and state of New York, and both deceased."

"He hasn't got the blank filled up," said Ezra.

"That's nothin'. I s'pose he didn't know the full name, but the will's good as it stands."

"Let me keep the extract," said Ezra.

Hoyt handed it to him, and put the other slip of paper in his cap. "I know the will's all right," said he; "Murragh said so, and Donny ought to know if anybody."

"Well, I trust everything's O. K. Did you explore the house?"

"Yes. Jarvis took me over it not half an hour ago. We can get into the Frenchman's room from the ground, and I have got our boat ready by the bank near the boat-house. We'd better not loaf around here any longer."

"I'd like to get acquainted with some of those females."

"It won't do to speak to them. Come."

"Curse that fellow in green!" muttered Ezra, as they moved off deeper into the woods.

The gay scene grew gayer as the day passed away. The *fête* was a success. In the interior of the grove a thousand colored lamps were lit, causing a fine effect as the variegated figures passed to and fro. But on the broad lawn outside, the full moon alone shone upon the dancers. The night was so warm that the tables were spread in the open air, and there the merry throng had supper.

Not till long past midnight did the music and dancing cease; but at length the lamps in the woods went out, the weary musicians put away their cornets and violins, the dancers sought their several apartments, and only two figures remained outside the house, — the ruffian Hoyt and his son.

Edwin Moore and Vincent went to their room and sat down to smoke a quiet pipe, and talk over the incidents of the day. Vincent was eloquent on the subject that lay nearest his heart.

"Spare me a lover's rhapsodies!" cried Edwin. "I give you joy, — you shall win. I will use all my brotherly influence."

"Which will be very efficacious, doubtless. Shall we turn in?"

"To sleep? Oh, no! Let's sit in this moonlight and smoke. Put out the light, Ned; that's right."

"How quiet the house is!"

"Yes; every one will sleep to-night. But I heard footsteps on the lawn just now."

"Some of the servants, probably."

"I think not. Listen, Ned."

CHAPTER X.

A BLACK DEED.

WHILE the lights glimmered in the windows of Wyckoff Hall, the ruffians still lurked in the shadow of the wood. One by one the lamps went out.

"They've doused all the glims but one," said the elder Hoyt. "I see two swells up in that room smoking."

"Yes," said Ezra, "one's that fancy cove in green, — curse him."

"Don't talk so loud. They'll go to bed presently. Has Franchot turned in?"

"Yes, I saw him through the blinds just now, and his light's out."

"Well, then, patience for a while."

"Gad! this bear's skin's a good idea, for it's getting chilly since it clouded up. Rain before morning."

"All the better."

The light in Vincent's room at this moment disappeared.

"Now's our time," cried Ezra.

"No; wait till they get asleep."

In a few moments the men stole cautiously, keeping in shadow, to the window of Franchot's room. They turned a bow-window which concealed them from Vincent and Edwin. They opened the blinds carefully; the window was already open, and they could plainly hear the regular breathing of the doomed man.

"You go in and finish him," said Dick.

"No; let's both go. He may wake up and show fight."

"Well, then, come on! Make haste! Let's hurry up this job. I don't like it."

"Pshaw! I think it's sport. Let me do the jabbing."

At this moment the moon burst forth in its full glory through a rift in the clouds, and shone upon the two assassins. It had been fitter had it hid itself in clouds as black as death. By its light the murderers plainly saw Franchot tranquilly sleeping. His arm lay over the bed's side, and on his finger sparkled a diamond ring. Ezra stole up to him on tiptoe. Hoyt followed tremblingly. "Come, make haste," he hoarsely whispered. Ezra lightly pulled the slight covering from the sleeper's chest. The movement partially aroused the Frenchman. He turned a little on his side without opening his eyes, and said,—

"That you, Francois?"

Had Ezra remained silent he would no doubt have slept again; but the fellow answered,—

"Yes, sir."

The gruff tones instantly awakened Franchot. He opened his eyes and saw two hairy monsters standing by. "*Ciel! qui est là? Ah! mon Dieu!*" This last ejaculation was uttered as Ezra plunged his knife into his naked breast and smothered his horrified cry with his heavy hand.

"I think that settled him; but I'll make sure," and he reiterated the cruel thrust. The unhappy victim's eyes rolled in anguish, and then quickly glazed in death. The crimson tide poured forth copiously and crept in the moonlight on the floor.

"Good Lord! let's get out of this," said Hoyt, with pallid face.

"No hurry, old man. The night's before us. Give me a chew of tobacco."

"Death and the devil! what are you made of?"

"Of better stuff than you, you coward. This fellow's dead as a door-nail."

"Come, then, let's get off."

"Not till I have that ring," said Ezra, raising the ghastly hand of the murdered man.

"Death! Are you going to wait for that?"

"I'm not going to do anything else. Curse it, the thing won't come off."

"Oh, let it go."

"Curse me if I do. This way will answer," and he severed the finger from the hand with his sharp knife, and put the bloody trinket in his mouth.

"Now, I'm at your service, command me," said Ezra, gayly, not noticing his knife, that he had laid on the bed in his eagerness to secure the diamond.

The men threw back the blinds and got out.

"I dropped my bear's head in the room," said Hoyt.

"Clumsy fool! well, let it lie."

They hurried around the projection of the bow-window. At this moment Vincent and his friend were peering eagerly out. Subdued and strange sounds had reached their ears and awakened their curiosity; but no suspicion of the horrible truth had, as yet, dawned upon their minds.

"Look, Vint., the two mysterious bears are prowling about."

"Ned," said Vincent, gravely, "this is a serious business. Those are rascals in disguise, and they've been up to mischief."

"What shall we do?"

"Villains are cowards. Let's tackle them."

"I'm your man," cried Moore.

The murderers were now hurrying down towards the river. Vincent got out of his window, and, with wonderful agility, slid lightly down a lightning-rod, dropped like a panther on the projection of a ledge below, leaped and caught a limb of an old maple that grew near, and sprang nimbly to the ground. Moore followed in precisely the same manner. "Midnight gymnastics," said he. "We'll have hot work, Vint.; those are stout fellows."

"Shall we rouse the servants?"

"We haven't time."

"Let's call up Franchot. He's on the ground floor."

"Well, run quickly."

Moore darted around the bow-window. In an instant he was back with ghastly face.

"O my God! Graham, Franchot is murdered!"

"Murdered!"

"He is stabbed and dead,—an awful sight!"

"And, great heavens! the murderers will be off! Come, Moore! I'd lose my life to catch the villains!"

"And I. Come, then, and Heaven be with us!"

Moore grasped a heavy stick that chanced to be lying at his feet, and they both ran with the swiftness of hares and the silence of shadows down the lawn. Their object was to throw themselves violently on the men's backs and overpower them by the sudden assault; but in this scheme they failed. The murderers turned when the pursuers were within a rod or two, and instantly stood at bay. Vincent, with the swiftness of lightning, leaped like a leopard and struck Ezra with both heels in the side with all the force of his weight and acquired momentum. The ruffian grasped Vincent's throat as he fell. Moore rushed directly at Hoyt, and then suddenly veered off and ran towards the grove. The villain, thinking he was frightened, darted after him; but it was a ruse of Moore's, for as Hoyt neared him he suddenly sank upon his hands and knees, and the man, stumbling over him, fell on his face. In a thought Moore was upon him. Thus far the murderers had the worst of it; but the conflict was uncertain. Hoyt, with wonderful strength, raised himself with Moore on his back, and running swiftly a few rods, fiercely slung the youth to the ground. Moore bounded up like an india-rubber ball, but the shock had weakened him, though his courage was not abated one whit. Vincent was struggling with Ezra on the ground. The villain's hands were twisted in Vincent's scarf, and he was slowly choking him to death. "Two can play at that game," thought Vincent, and his iron fingers clutched the murderer's throat. He had wonderful strength in his fingers, he could bend a silver coin double with his thumb and forefinger. His vice-like grip started the villain's eyes in a horrid stare from their sockets, and Ezra's pallid face grew purple, his fingers relaxed their clutch, and Vincent was free. Still his awful hold remained and Ezra suffered strangulation. "Do you surrender, wretch?" said Vincent, between his teeth. He moved his head in affirmation. Vincent released him, but he lay as still as death. "You're settled for the present," cried his antagonist, and he darted to his friend's assistance.

He was none too soon. Edwin had sprung forward to meet Hoyt, and tried to keep him from closing in. He was a finished boxer, and for a time Hoyt could not break through his guard; but at last he rushed in, receiving a fearful blow as he did so, and grasped Edwin in his brawny arms. It was indeed a bear's hug, and a hug so fierce that it would soon have been fatal, had not Moore suddenly brought up his knee with force, and striking Hoyt, drove the breath from his body; but he retained his hold and Moore could not free himself; however, he rained blows fast and heavy in the fellow's face. All at once the man abandoned Edwin, and, running a rod or two, picked up the club that Moore had brought and dropped. With this he sprang with fury at his antagonist and struck him savagely on the head. Poor Moore staggered, groaned, and fell insensible. The man raised the stick to finish him.

At this critical juncture Vincent rose from the vanquished Ezra. In a second he saw the situation. There was his friend stretched upon the turf, while the burly ruffian was raising the club to dash out his brains. Like the rush of a whirlwind Vincent was upon him. With all his accelerated speed and might, with the fury of horror, with the rage of grief, with the eternal strength of friendship, with an arm nerve by the strongest passionate human nature knows, the young athlete dashed his clenched fist,—harder than adamant,—into the villain's face. Had a Titan struck him with his hammer, the effect could not have been greater. The man's frontal bone crushed in like a piece of paste-board; the uplifted club fell harmlessly, and Hoyt rolled over on the ground, with his skull fractured, stone dead. Vincent at this moment looked like an avenging fury, like a demi-god drunk with battle. He bent over poor Moore who lay unconscious. "My brother, has he killed you?" cried he. The words were scarcely uttered when there rang the sharp crack of a pistol, and Vincent fell, shot through the body, at his friend's feet. Had there been a spectator he would have seen Ezra, who had revived, slowly rise to a sitting posture on the grass, level his revolver and fire.

"That score's wiped out," said he, calmly. "Time for me to get out of this. Oh! but I thought I was a goner. How many more men will you choke, you dog?" he added, with a grin of exultation.

He rose and glanced at the prostrate

bodies. "The old chap seems keeled over. Well, there's no time to carry off the wounded. You must follow me as best you may," and he ran quickly to his boat, cast her off, jumped in, and was soon buried in the gloom that hid the river.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DETECTIVE.

THE report of Ezra's pistol did not arouse the sleepers in Wyckoff Hall from their sound slumbers. There was one whom no earthly sound would ever again waken. Through the lingering hours of early morning the murdered man lay staring at the ceiling with a fixed gaze of horror, while his heart's blood soaked slowly through his bed and fell dripping on the floor.

Ethel opened her eyes at early dawn and awakened Jessie, her companion, with a kiss. "What say you to a morning stroll on the lawn, love? It has been raining but has cleared off."

"I will go with pleasure," said Jessie.

Soon the two girls, equipped for a walk, stepped out upon the lawn. The level beams of the rising sun turned the green blades of grass into tiny golden spears, and "rosy-fingered morn" blushed with delight as she looked upon the beauty spread beneath her,—the emerald hills, the pellucid, tranquil river.

"Oh, what a lovely morning!" said Ethel. "What a perfect scene of peace this old place is!"

"A sweet old place for lovers," said Jessie, naively.

"Do you find it so?" asked Ethel.

"Well, if I must confess it, yes," said Jessie. "I think you will find it so, too, before long," she added, maliciously.

"You wicked creature! what do you mean?"

"Oh! a certain bold archer in Lincoln-green was chasing you yesterday."

"Well, do you mean to say he caught me?"

"Oh, no, not yet; but you cannot long evade his swift pursuit."

"Well, I don't mind owning to you that I am greatly pleased with Mr. Graham; he is so handsome, and graceful, and intellectual, and —"

"Stop! stop!" interrupted Jessie, "what a catalogue of virtues! Oh! I see how it is, your heart's gone. Won't you confess to

me now, in strict confidence, that you love him?"

"No, indeed! for I do not. I will *never* confess such a thing."

"O Ethel!" cried Jessie, grasping her companion's arm, "What is that yonder?"

"Where?"

"Over there lying on that rise of ground."

"It looks like a man asleep," said Ethel.

"Can it be one of the servants drunk? Let us go in."

"I think we ought to go and see what it is. The man, if it is a man, may be sick."

The two timid young creatures cautiously approached.

"It is a man, yes, and look! *three* of them. O Ethel, what can it mean?" said Jessie, with pale face.

"Let us find out. What is that great black object? O Jessie, there is one of those men dressed as bears!"

They drew nearer. Suddenly Jessie burst away from her companion and rushed wildly to the group of senseless bodies.

"O my God!" she cried, wildly; "my poor Edwin! Oh! you are not dead! you are not dead! No! no! no! God would not let you die!"

She was sitting on the grass with Edwin's bruised head in her lap, passionately kissing his pallid forehead. He looked like a corpse, and his brown hair was matted down and soaked with blood; he was still senseless. Jessie took no heed of either of the other bodies. "O Ethel!" she cried, piteously, "tell me he is alive! you *know* he is alive, why don't you tell me so, cruel Ethel? You know you are alive, Edwin, darling! Oh, speak to me!" and the unhappy girl fell fainting on her lover's breast.

Ethel took no heed of Jessie's wild entreaties. As Andromache might have gazed at the mutilated corpse of Hector, so gazed Ethel at the prostrate Vincent. He was lying like a dead man, staring with unblinking eyes at the rising sun. His hand grasped the short grass he had clutched in his agony. The vivid green of his dress was crimsoned with a ruby stream of blood; his lips were slightly parted, as if his spirit had escaped through them. The dead body of Hoyt lay on its face, so there was nothing repulsive in its appearance.

A moment Ethel stood, the personification of agony and horror; the next, with a low cry of anguish, she was beside the wounded man. Vincent was insensible. Ethel's sweet lips pressed against his bloodless ones; her profuse hair swept his face.

"O my darling! my life!" she murmured. "O Vincent, are you dead? Oh that I could die beside you!" and she kissed the insensible lips again.

Whether this delicious treatment was a restorative, or not, we cannot say; but the color flowed back slowly into Vincent's cheeks, and his blue eyes withdrew their gaze from the sun. He felt the warm pressure of Ethel's lips, felt her satin cheek against his own, and immediately closed his eyes.

"Am I in heaven?" thought he; "if not, where am I?" Gradually his memory returned. "Ah! I am lying here, shot by that rascal. Well, I might be in worse places. Thank God for that dastardly shot! for I would not else have known that this peerless creature loves me. This is no time to come to."

But Ethel felt the warmth return to her lover's lips. "He is reviving; God be praised!"

Vincent's eyes opened, and a look of such unutterable love sprang from them, that the young girl drew back, with a burning blush.

"Oh, I am so thankful you have revived, Mr. Graham! I thought you were dead. Oh, how did this happen?"

"I have been shot by a murderer. But Edwin, tell me, is he alive?" and he vainly tried to rise.

Ethel, for the first time, looked at Edwin. "Ah! Edwin, too,—my brother! See, the color creeps into his cheek; he is insensible, but not dead, thank God! thank God!"

"Will Miss Moore please go to the house, and get some of the servants to lug us in? I think I am badly hit."

At these words Ethel arose, and "heavenly pity" filled her eyes.

"Your wound does not bleed, Mr. Graham."

The rain had saved his life. The green flannel coat had soaked into the wound and stopped the flow of blood.

Ethel ran like a young fawn to the house. The affrighted servants followed her quickly. Edwin and Vincent were lifted tenderly, borne into the house, and laid upon improvised couches in the parlor. Ethel, cool and self-possessed, gave her orders quietly and correctly. She despatched a man for Dr. Parkes. Vincent lay quiet; he seemed not to want to talk. Edwin had recovered animation but not consciousness, and raved deliriously.

"Franchot is murdered, Vincent," he muttered.

At these words every one started, and Frangois, the valet, hurried away to his master's room. In a moment he was back, looking like a ghost.

"O *Mon Dieu!*" he feebly cried, "*mon maitre est tué.*"

"Oh, what a deed of horror took place last night!" cried Ethel. "Who could have done it?"

"One of the villains, miss, is lying on the lawn," said a servant.

"Well, carry him into one of the out-buildings; and you, Thomas, ride over at once and acquaint the magistrates at R—."

"Yes, miss," said the man.

"Are any of the ladies or gentlemen up?"

"No, miss."

"Well, say nothing about what has occurred, but let breakfast be prepared as usual. Don't you think that is the best plan, Jessie?" said she to that young lady, who had revived, and was bending over Edwin.

"Yes, yes; but, for the sake of Heaven, get the doctor here!"

"He will be here in a moment, love;" and, as the words were uttered, in came Dr. Parkes.

He was a skilful practitioner and a gentleman. The ladies reluctantly left the room at his request.

"You are a lucky man, Mr. Graham," said the doctor. "Your wound is severe, but not dangerous. It is one of the miraculous shots I have met occasionally in my practice. The ball has grazed no less than four mortal spots," he continued, as he probed the wound, "and gone out beneath your shoulder-blade."

"My spine is safe?"

"Yes, by the twentieth part of an inch," returned the surgeon.

He now looked at Edwin. As he did so, his face grew grave.

"Is the poor boy badly hurt?" asked Vincent.

"Very badly, very badly, indeed. This is a serious business. How long was he insensible?" he continued, as he carefully dressed the wound.

"Well, he must have been knocked over about half-past two," answered Vincent, "and he did not speak till a few minutes ago."

"I trust I can save him, but it will be touch and go. And one thing,—that young woman who was hanging over him when I came in, must be kept out of his room, at all hazards. She must be locked up, if nothing else will serve."

"Yes, sir," said Vincent.

"And is this true, that poor Franchot is murdered?"

"Too true."

"And you boys were hurt in trying to arrest the murderer, I understand."

"There were two of the rascals, sir. I clipped one over, and I think I must have hurt him. I never struck so hard before."

"Where is the fellow?"

"They have carried him into the carriage-house, I believe."

Dr. Parkes went out. In about ten minutes he returned.

"Poor Franchot is dead, indeed," said he; "three stabs directly through the left ventricle and cardiac region. But I say, Graham, what did you strike that fellow with? He is dead."

"Dead!" cried Vincent. "Is it possible! Well, I'm not sorry. I struck him merely with my fist."

"With your fist!" cried the doctor, in blank surprise. "Jove! are your hands made of iron? You have crushed his *os frontis*, sir, and driven a piece of bone as big as your finger into his *cerebrum*."

"I meant to hurt him, sir, when I struck. It was a matter of life and death. He would have killed poor Moore in another moment."

"Well, I must not talk to you any more," and the good doctor left directions with the attendants and retired. "Heavens! what a *biceps* that Graham must have! Never knew of such a case. Must make a note of it."

Edwin was carried into a remote and darkened room. Poor Jessie pitifully begged to be allowed to go in, but the attendants were inexorable. So the absurd girl spent the day sitting on the floor outside the door, and listening to her lover's ravings.

The weary masqueraders did not rise till late that morning. As one by one they heard the terrible event related, great confusion and consternation ensued.

"Oh, what a dreadful affair this is!" exclaimed Mrs. Fairfax, as, an hour or two afterwards, when the excitement had partially subsided, they were talking over the catastrophe in the parlor. "But it is fortunate it occurred after the *champêtre*. And is poor Edwin very badly hurt?"

"Very, indeed," replied Ethel.

"Well, he ought to have known better than to turn himself into a policeman. Oh, I am so sorry about poor Mr. Franchot! It was only the other day I heard him ridi-

culing life insurance. Now, if he had only had his life insured in the Disinterested Brotherly Love Life Insurance Company, of which Mr. Fairfax is a director, he wouldn't have been murdered."

"I wonder whether Mr. Franchot left a will," observed Mr. Moore.

"Mrs. Jarvis, the house-keeper told me," said Ethel, "that she heard Mr. Franchot say that he had left all his property to Uncle William's son, who lately returned from California. Poor woman! I pitied her greatly. I never saw any one so affected as she was when she heard Mr. Franchot was dead. She cried as if her heart would break."

"Did Mr. Franchot ever see this young Moore?"

"No, I believe not," said Mrs. Graham. "Something has always happened to prevent their meeting. Mr. Franchot has often expressed his disappointment at not being able to see him. Several letters have passed between them, however, he told me."

"Have you ever seen the young man, Mrs. Graham?"

"No. I understand he is not very good-looking, but a very intelligent man, and well educated."

The melancholy guests, with a few exceptions, dispersed that day, and went their several ways. Jessie would not hear of such a thing as leaving. It was necessary that Mr. Moore should return to Boston; he went, leaving Ethel under Mrs. Fairfax's charge. Mrs. Graham, of course, remained with her son.

A coroner's jury decided that Franchot had been killed by some person, or persons, to them unknown, and that the slaying of the assassin by Vincent was an act of justifiable homicide.

Dr. Parkes, as an intimate friend of the deceased, took upon himself the direction of all necessary proceedings. He telegraphed for a detective to come up from the city, and by the afternoon train he arrived. The officer was a small and gentlemanly looking man, Alexander Conger by name. He was dressed with extreme neatness, and wore kid gloves on a small hand. His eyes were gray and bright and exceedingly restless; his teeth were white and regular; his complexion was a deep olive.

He walked up quietly to the house, gave his card to the doctor, heard the details of the affair, and then asked to be shown the murdered man's room. He looked at the corpse, examined the window and door, and

instantly detected, what no one else had seen, the bear-skin cap of Hoyt. It had rolled beneath a sofa. He also found the assassin's knife in the folds of the bed. In the cap was the scrap of paper that enclosed the extract from the will. All these articles he took into his possession.

"Can I see young Mr. Graham?" he asked.

"Do not talk with him long."

"I have but a few words to say."

He was alone with Vincent about ten minutes. He then went out and looked at the body of Hoyt long and carefully. He then sat down on the front piazza and smoked his cigar quietly, thus ruminating,—

"That dead man's Dick Hoyt. Yes. Saw enough of him, when he was old Peter Vincent's secretary, to know him again. Now the question is, who's his pal?" He called François.

"What did your master wear on the finger that's cut off?"

"A diamond ring, sir."

"Yes."

He got up and went into the carriage-house and carefully examined the dead man's costume. The bear's suit contained no pockets. He pried open the man's mouth.

"The diamond's not here," said Conger to himself. He called the doctor.

"Who have touched the dead man in the carriage-house since he was found?"

"No one but the man who carried him in and myself. The door has been locked all day till you came."

"Yes. That's all, doctor."

"Humph," cogitated the detective. "The same chap cut off his finger that killed the man, I've no doubt. Hoyt did not do it, that's clear. I know him well enough not to imagine for a moment that he would part with the trinket if he once got hold of it. His pal's the man who did the business. A strong, heavy man with pale face, red hair, and a bad cast, Mr. Graham says. Yes. A neat case, a very neat case, very."

Mr. Conger took the scrap of paper and looked at it carefully. "The Frenchman's desk, hem! this must have been written in the house. Could these devils have done it? François!"

"Eh! bien, monsieur!"

"Your master was a nice man, wasn't he?"

"Indeed he was, sir."

"Yes. How long have you lived with him?"

"Two years in Jamaica and sixteen in this country."

"So long! You must feel bad at his death,"—and indeed the poor Frenchman's red eyes and woe-begone face plainly evidenced his grief.

"What are you going to do now, my man?"

"I know not, monsieur."

"Can you write?"

"No, nor read, monsieur."

"Can you not write at all? That's a pity. If you could only write a little, I might get you a good billet."

"I cannot write a word, sir."

"Well, well, I am sorry. Has your master had any company here lately?"

"He has had all the people who were here to-day."

"He has not had a visit from two men lately, has he?"

"Yes, sir, there were two queer-looking men shut up with him all last Monday afternoon. They went away the same night, and monsieur seemed to be much excited at what they told him."

"Ah! Was one a fellow with red hair?"

"No, sir."

"Wasn't one a large man with a squint?"

"No, sir."

"What sort of looking fellows were they?"

"One was a tall man with black beard, the other, an old, common-looking fellow, seemed to be a Scotchman."

"Humph!" said Conger to himself, "not the parties."

"What servants are there in the house?"

"The butler, coachman, hostler, waiter, and cook."

"Nobody else?"

"There is madame, the house-keeper."

"Yes. Who is she?"

"Mrs. Jarvis."

"Yes. Well, that is all, François."

Mr. Conger sat in deep thought for some time. Taking, at length, a blank-book from his pocket he tore out a leaf and wrote,—

"Mr. Conger wishes Mrs. Jarvis would inform him whether she knows if Mr. Franchot had any relatives in this country."

"She will suspect nothing from the form of this question. Here, François, take this to Mrs. Jarvis, and bring back an answer."

In a few minutes François returned with these words written on the back of Conger's note,—

"Mrs. Jarvis don't know nothing at all about the matter whatever. I think sir he had nott."

Conger smiled as he looked at the writing. "Exactly the same hand. So you are in it, too, Mrs. House-keeper," he continued, carefully putting the papers into his pocket-book. "Oh, a very pretty case, if well worked up. Yes. Very pretty and very neat."

CHAPTER XII.

TENNYSON AND LOVE.

THE most expert medical attendance, assiduous attention, careful nursing, and a firm constitution pulled Edwin Moore through, and he began slowly to improve. But for three days and nights he raved with brain-fever. At one time he imagined himself to be passing a college examination, and would ask himself and answer all manner of questions in natural philosophy and chemistry, displaying such extensive information on the abstrusest topics, that Dr. Parkes was amazed. But on the fourth morning after the murder his delirium departed, and his consciousness returned. He at once asked to see Jessie. The poor girl went in, and the lovers were, for a short time, left alone together. The interview appeared to have a very beneficial effect on the patient, for he improved from that hour.

"O Edwin!" cried Jessie, "when I saw you lying there, as I thought, dead, with your head all blood, I thought my heart would break. I never knew I loved you so deeply till that moment."

"And I," answered the youth, "should have been killed by that ruffian if it hadn't been for you."

"If it hadn't been for me! How do you mean?"

"Why, when that fellow had me in his powerful hug, nothing but the determination to live and enjoy your love, sweet one, kept me from giving in, and if I had, he would have killed me in a moment. But tell me, Vint. is safe?"

"He was shot through the body, but —"

"Shot through the body!"

"Yes, by the fellow he attacked first, but he is getting along finely. He says he will be out in a week. He has a devoted nurse."

"Who, pray?"

"None other than your sister."

"So? Have matters gone so far already?"

"I don't know whether they have had an explanation yet or not, but depend upon it, it is a match."

"Well, I am right glad."

"And I. Do you know, Ethel was with me that dreadful morning we found you on the lawn."

"Yes? And how did she act when she saw Vincent lying wounded?"

"To tell the truth I can't say. I saw only you."

On this followed, of course, caresses and endearing words *ad lib.*

Ethel had been dreadfully alarmed lest Vincent had heard her loving words and felt her kisses. She did not know that she loved him till that morning, and perhaps she really did not. But love is a curious plant. Years of tender nursing sometimes will not cause it to grow, and again it springs up full-blown and hardy in an hour. This was the case with Ethel Moore. The sight of Vincent's pallid face and lifeless eyes, his bloodless lips and wounded side, had banished her maiden reluctance, and the sweet passion had complete possession of her. In thinking the matter over, she came to the conclusion that Vincent was ignorant of her feelings. It was not, however, without great embarrassment, and with her sweet face suffused with blushes, that she followed Mrs. Graham into Vincent's room. He lay in a deep, recuperating slumber, looking exceedingly handsome as he slept, his brown curls lying carelessly on his forehead and his white hand resting on the counterpane. Mrs. Graham looked at him with pride and love.

"Dear boy, how pale he is! Oh! what a dreadful fight he must have had with those men, and there were we all sleeping quietly in our beds!"

"What a terrible, what a cruel murder it was, Mrs. Graham! I do hope Mr. Conger will find the other man!"

Vincent opened his eyes and lay quiet, with the delicious sense of rest and absence of all desire of movement that the convalescent sometimes feel.

"You are much better, my son," said Mrs. Graham.

"I never felt better in my life," said Vincent.

Mrs. Fairfax opened the door, smiled at the occupants of the room, and came in.

"Why, upon my word, you look quite fresh, Mr. Graham."

"Oh, my dear madam, I am quite well. I think I shall take a horseback ride this afternoon," said Vincent, smiling.

"Oh, do not, on any account," said the matter-of-fact lady.

"Well, if you insist upon it, I shall not. But how is Ned? Is he still delivering an extemporaneous lecture on chemistry, for the benefit of Dr. Parkes?"

"No, he is much better; but, poor fellow, the doctor had his head shaved, and he looks like a fright."

"Poor fellow, indeed! And Miss Jessie, I suppose, has the Hyperion curls?"

"I don't know, I'm sure; but she saved a lock or two of his hair, I believe. But, really, a strange thing has happened. Two men came here this morning, asked for Mrs. Jarvis, told her that some friends of hers wanted to see her in New York, and took her off in the cars. I have to act as house-keeper."

"Is Mr. Conger here yet?"

"Oh, no. He went back that same night. I think he is the *strangest* man! I asked him if he didn't think this was a most horrible murder, and he said, 'Oh, very pretty; very neat indeed.' Did you ever hear such an expression?"

Vincent smiled.

"Oh, he looks at it from an artistic point of view. These detectives haven't much feeling. Miss Moore, may I ask a favor of you?"

"Certainly you may, Mr. Graham."

"Will you read aloud to me?"

"With pleasure. What shall it be?"

"I leave the selection to your taste."

"Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, or *Evelina*?"

"Oh, strike a happy mean," said Vincent, smiling. "I should like to hear some poetry."

Ethel went into the library and brought back a small volume. "Here is *In Memoriam*," said she.

"You have hit it. Let me hear you read it, and I shall be listening to philosophy, poetry, and music all at once."

So Ethel took a low seat by his bedside. She sat with her face towards him, and the tempered rays of the sun, struggling through the curtained windows, turned her brown hair into gold, — a touch of Midas, — while her eyes shone like amethysts. Vincent lay in a delicious waking trance. Like Abou Ben Adhem, an angel seemed to be reading to him "from a book of gold." Mrs. Graham and Mrs. Fairfax, not to interrupt

the reading, left the room, and Vincent was alone with her he loved. The modulated music of Ethel's voice seemed the fit medium through which the sweet rhythm of Tennyson should meet the ear. Presently she grew interested, enthralled, by that poetry of poems, and her eyes fired with the appreciation of genius, her cheek glowed and bosom heaved. Vincent, as he lay drinking in the beauty, noted the effect upon her. Soon the exquisite pathos of the lines filled her eyes with tears, and her sweet voice faltered.

"O Mr. Graham," said she, "Tennyson must have been inspired when he wrote this!"

"He was, undoubtedly," said Vincent, "in the same situation I'm in now."

"What! shot through the body?"

"No; drinking inspiration from an angel's eyes."

A charming blush crimsoned Ethel's cheeks, and she replied, —

"You are to hear poetry from me, sir, not I from you."

Vincent smiled. "Well, go on."

Now it was really putting human nature to too severe a test to place Vincent where he then was. The soft, sweet odor of early summer flowers stealing in through the windows, the calm, subdued light of the half-darkened room, a beautiful young girl reading in a voice of music the most charming production in our language, all these circumstances bewitched him. Every moment his love grew fiercer, resistance vanished utterly, irreclaimably; he gave himself up to the intoxicating influence of the passion, — he felt it flooding his soul and set up no barrier to its impetuous rush. Ethel read on, but he did not hear the words; he heard indeed the symphonies of her voice, and watched the movements of her lips, followed her azure eye as it ran along the lines, and noted the varying expressions that swept her face at the poet's command; but he had not the faintest idea of what she read. Her lips seemed to him to be saying over and over again, "You are my slave, Vincent Graham, you are my slave; you love me and you cannot help it! you love me and you cannot help it!" She glanced up at him now and then, and the swift look quivered each time through his heart. She thought him deeply interested, and he was, without doubt. She stopped suddenly, and said, —

"Oh, how true that is, Mr. Graham! Isn't it?"

"Yes, it is, indeed," replied Vincent, without the vaguest notion of what she meant.

"And did you ever hear anything more beautifully expressed?"

"No, never!" he answered, referring to her style of reading.

"I love Tennyson! the dear good man," cried Ethel, enthusiastically.

Vincent felt an absurd pang of jealousy, and hated the poet-laureate in his soul.

"He is married, Miss Moore," said he.

Her eye darted out a look of reproach, and she went on reading. Gradually an intense and overwhelming desire seized Vincent to avow his passion, and an intense and overwhelming force held the words back. He was torn by the conflicting emotions, and still Ethel absorbed by the poem made music of the lines. Love triumphed; all at once Vincent said in low tones, "stop."

Her voice ceased, and she looked at him.

"Is anything the matter?"

"Yes, I am dying."

Her face blanched and her eyes distended with terror.

"O Mr. Graham, what has happened?"

"You are killing me with love, Ethel."

At this unexpected announcement made in a voice of perfect melody, and with the first utterance of her Christian name by his lips, the blood rushed tumultuously back to her cheeks, her lip trembled and her bosom panted wildly.

"How you frightened me! I thought your wound had broken open or something dreadful had happened. Now don't terrify me again, and don't interrupt me," and she turned resolutely to the book.

"Put down the book, Ethel, I want to talk with you."

"No, I shall not. Dr. Parkes has forbidden you to talk."

"Dr. Parkes be — behests shall not be heeded," said Vincent, dexterously turning the intended anathema.

"Then I shall leave you as an obstinate man."

She rose and moved to the door, opened it, turned, and looked at him.

There was a glance of mild entreaty, of unutterable love, of tender supplication in his lustrous eyes that seemed to beg her not to go. Had he commanded her to stay she would have gone, but she could not withstand that pleading look. She shut the door and walked timidly to his side — like a half-tamed fawn approaching the kind hand of its master, ready to fly at a hostile look.

"Now, sir, what do you want?" said she, "now don't be absurd or childish if you are sick. Do you know I think you are very impolite?"

"Ah! why?"

"To interrupt me in the middle of a beautiful passage after asking me to read."

"But I couldn't hear a word you said."

"And why not, pray?"

"There was another voice that drowned yours. What a pretty ring!" and he took the fair hand that hung within his reach and pretended to examine the bauble.

"There, sir! Have you seen it sufficiently?"

"Pardon me, I am something of a soothsayer. Let me read your fortune in these delicate lines."

"No. I am an infidel in such matters."

"Well, will you not brush the hair from my eyes? It pains me to lift my hand."

Ethel's soft, warm hand lightly pushed back the brown mass of hair, the tips of her fingers scarcely touched his forehead; but it was a touch of fire to a ready fuse. The hands that the hypocrite could hardly raise caught both of hers and held them in a firm, but gentle grasp.

"You are my prisoner."

"So I see — at this moment."

"And for life, for life," he cried, with sudden energy, and drew her towards him.

"Oh! will you not, dear girl?"

Vincent was an eloquent fellow, but he said not a word more. Words are gross, clumsy, inefficient; but his eyes flashed forth an oration in a second. They told her in one swift, transient glance, the height and depth and length and breadth of a love sincere, pure, eternal; they demanded eloquently, pitifully, imploringly, hers in return. There probably never was a quicker declaration than his. Now, how did she know what he meant by the incomplete and irrelevant question, "Will you not?" But woman's heart is a good deal subtler than electricity or magnetism, or any other impalpable agency. She seemed to think the query pertinent and natural. She looked at Vincent, but her eyes were cowards; his gaze swept them down; she tried to draw away, but his grasp was firmer than steel, though softer than velvet. She was surprised, vanquished. Her face was suffused, burning with blushes; she could not hide it with her hands, nor could she bear his gaze upon it, so she did the only practicable thing there was to be done; she hid it on his breast. She was a prisoner now, indeed.

Vincent's arms swept around her neck and he held her in a close embrace.

At this interesting moment the door opened, and Mrs. Fairfax walked in with a waiter and bowl in her hand.

"Mr. Graham," she began, "I've brought — oh, goodness gracious me!" — and down went the savory broth with a crash. "Oh! I'm sure I did not know — pray pardon my intrusion;" and the good lady made for the door.

"Don't go, Mrs. Fairfax," said Vincent. "Ethel and I were having a little confidential talk, but —"

"Oh, yes, I understand."

"Well, we are engaged; but you needn't say anything about it."

"Not for the world!" exclaimed Mrs. Fairfax.

"Upon my word, sir," cried Ethel, looking perfectly enraptured in her confusion; "you have an insolence of your own! We are no such thing, Mrs. Fairfax! He has not had my answer."

"Well, do give him a favorable one," said Mrs. Fairfax.

"Yes, *do*, Ethel," said Vincent, with the irresistible pleading look.

"Oh, dear, dear! was any one ever so beset!"

"Come, love, say yes," said Mrs. Fairfax, who was a natural match-maker.

"Come, love, say yes," repeated Vincent.

"Oh, it is not fair, two to one. I suppose I must. Well, yes," she cried; "there! are you satisfied?" and the blushing girl ran swiftly from the room.

Vincent lay back upon his pillow with a glow of delight upon his pallid face.

"There, Mrs. Fairfax," said he, "you are a witness, you heard her accept me."

"I did, and I am very glad. Really, Mr. Graham, you improved your time. I left you with Ethel quietly reading poetry to you."

"I didn't have the slightest idea of proposing; but somehow I couldn't help it."

"Oh! I dare say it came very natural to you; but some men find it a difficult thing to do. I remember when Mr. Fairfax offered himself to me. 'Jane,' said he, 'I — I —' and blushed and stammered, 'love me, I suppose,' said I. 'Yes,' said he, 'that's what I mean, and will you — you —' 'marry you?' says I. 'Yes,' says he, 'that's what I wanted to say.' 'Well,' says I, 'I don't mind if I do,' and on that he up and hugged me."

"He didn't hesitate in *that*, at all; I suppose," said Vincent, laughing.

"Oh, no, he was quite fluent in embracing," said Mrs. Fairfax. "Oh, dear me, I'm afraid I've spoilt the carpet and your broth's all gone!"

"Never mind the broth, Mrs. Fairfax, I've had a feast already."

"Yes? Why, who brought it to you?"

"Ethel," answered Vincent, quietly.

Mrs. Fairfax looked puzzled; but Vincent lay smiling to himself on the pillow, and a look of perfect rapture filled his eyes.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE TRACK.

A DAY or two before the scene described in the last chapter, Mr. Alexander Conger was sitting in an exceedingly neat office talking with two men, both of whom were remarkably quiet in their manner, and remarkably intelligent in their appearance. They made notes of what Mr. Conger said, and nodded in assent, but said nothing.

"And now about this Mrs. Jarvis, she doesn't suspect she's spotted, Roberts?"

"Not the least glimmering in the world, sir."

"Yes. Well, what have you done with her?"

"My wife has her as a sort of overseer of the servants, and if she outwits Polly Roberts, it's more than I could ever do."

"Very well. Now how about hunting up the costumer who furnished this bear's suit?"

"I was at it all yesterday," said the man, who had not yet spoken, "and all this morning. Now there are a good many such places in the city, and I've not come across the spot yet."

"Yes. Well I've an idea, Fellows, that this chap got that bear's skin at a sporting shop."

"Why so, sir?"

"Why y'see its much more in accordance with the habits of these fellows, and they could get it cheaper — they may not have been very flush. You have a list of pawn-brokers, Fellows?"

"Yes," said Fellows, and he produced a very neatly written slip of paper.

"Well," continued Mr. Conger, "you needn't hunt up any more costumers, but take a look into a few of these places and let me know your success at four this afternoon. You say, Roberts, that you've seen this Dick Hoyt?"

"Yes, sir. I saw him one night at a billiard saloon in Grand Street, and I remarked him pretty well at the time and found out his name."

"Where is the place?"

Roberts told him. Mr. Conger got up, took off his kid gloves, put them in his pocket, donned a rowdy-looking felt hat, and went out looking like a sporting character.

"A cool chap that Conger," observed Fellows.

"A perfect blood-hound," said Roberts.

"Going to arrest a man without any force to back him!"

"Just like him; he thinks it a jolly lark."

Mr. Conger walked down to the billiard saloon he had been directed to, and went in leisurely. The atmosphere was reeking with tobacco-smoke and whisky. A spruce young fellow behind a bar was diligently studying a very valuable work entitled "American Fancy Drinks."

"What will you have, sir?" said he to Conger.

"Give me a little rye." He took the liquor and said genially, "Take something with me." The young man poured out a few drops and drank.

"Not many customers this afternoon," remarked the detective.

"No, it's hardly time yet. Would you like to play, sir?"

"Well, I'll play one game, but you'll have to give me odds."

"I'll give you twenty points."

They began the game. Conger soon noticed that if his antagonist gained on him he was loquacious and merry, but was instantly rendered taciturn by ill success. He therefore allowed him to get far ahead.

"You play a mighty strong carom game," said Conger.

"Oh, I'm not in practice," said the man.

"I don't play much myself," continued Conger. "I came in here to-day to meet a friend, — Dick Hoyt, — do you know him?"

"Don't know the name."

"He's a heavy-built man, with black hair and beard. There's a queer-looking chap always with him, — a fellow with red hair and cross eyes."

"Oh! I know who you mean. I haven't seen him for two months. That red-haired chap handles a mighty pretty cue. Blast me if he can't discount me!"

"You don't say so!" said Conger, carelessly. "What's his name?"

"I don't know. He squints like the

devil; but he can play billiards for all that."

"I should like to see him. I guess he's the same man I know. — You counted then; go on; you want three for my pocket, too. — Does he ever come in here?"

"He was here last night."

"Do you think he will be here this afternoon?"

"He never comes in the daytime."

"I didn't count. Perhaps he'll be here to-night? I should like to see him play."

"No, I heard him say he was going to the Old Bowery to-night with his gal. I'd like to know what's become of Dick Hoyt."

The game was soon finished, and Conger went out. He had scarcely left the room when a cue-rack against the wall swung forward, and the amiable Ezra emerged from a recess behind it.

"Cursed fool! Think you've got me, don't you? I say, Wilkins, what did you send him to the Old Bowery for? I did want to go there to-night, though I didn't tell you so."

"Well, why don't you go?"

"This infernal squint plays the devil with me. If it wasn't for that, I might disguise myself. But I say, what a soft that chap was, to swallow all you told him!"

But Conger wasn't half so much of a fool as Ezra imagined. He walked up the street slowly, for a rod or two.

"It's pretty clear," said he to himself, "that that fellow's about here somewhere. Yes, he was rather too anxious for me not to come back. And it's tolerably certain that he ain't going to be at the 'Old Bowery' to-night, or his pal wouldn't have mentioned the place. I'm up to their dodges."

He turned and went back to the saloon. It was on the second floor. He ran quickly and noiselessly up the stairs and into the room. As he entered he thought he heard something strike against the wall. The bar-keeper looked scared and confused.

"Gad! I believe the man's in here!" said Conger to himself. "Thought I'd come back and try another game," said he; "don't believe you can beat me again. Let's have some more rye."

The liquor was brought, and the second game begun. Conger played well and "led" his opponent.

"You 'laid off' last game," remarked the keeper.

"No, I didn't, but I had bad luck, — I say, Mr. — what's your name?"

"Wilkins."

"I say, Mr. Wilkins, I'm going to tell you something."

"Well, out with it."

"I'm in a devil of a scrape. I've got the 'beaks' on me."

"The deuce you have! what for?"

"Why, y'see I knocked a man down with a decanter the other night when I was pretty high, and they say he's in a bad way. I daren't walk up the street. You couldn't stow me away here anywhere, till dark, could you?"

"No, I couldn't."

"Because if you could, I'd pay you handsome."

"No, I've no place to hide any one."

"Let's look into that closet," and Conger opened it as he spoke. It held nothing but coal-hods and brooms. There was no other door in the room, except the one opening into the hall. Conger was puzzled. "I'm certain that fellow's here," he muttered, "perhaps under the bar."

"Let me get under that counter."

"It's all piled up with bottles and lemon-boxes."

"Let me see," and Conger vaulted nimbly over. It was as Wilkins had said.

"Where the devil could he have stowed him?" and his eye caught the cue-rack. The room was rather narrow and the space between the end of the table and the rack, not great. Conger stood there to make a shot and rammed the butt of his cue with great force against the rack. The hollow sound was unmistakable.

"Oho!" thought he, "I've hit it."

"Look here, man, you'll stave that rack down."

"It isn't very strong, is it?" said Conger, pulling the frame. It did not yield. "Let me get behind the rack," said he, quietly.

Wilkins turned pale. "What do you mean?" he stammered.

"Oh! come now! don't be innocent. I know all about it."

"All about what?" asked Wilkins, with well-feigned astonishment.

"All about the room behind there!" roared Conger. "Oh! it's a very pretty dodge, yes, a very neat dodge. When's that fellow in there coming out?"

"There's no fellow in there, — I mean there's no place for a fellow to get into."

He saw he had committed himself. "Damnation!" he cried; "what do you mean by prying about here? I don't want you here, clear out!"

"Now don't get angry, Mr. Wilkins."

"I tell you to clear out. Will you go?"

Instantly Conger's manner changed. He stood erect, with gleaming eyes, and uttered one or two words in a calm, resolute tone.

The change in Wilkins' manner was ludicrous. His hostile air immediately gave way to an obsequious and fawning one.

"Oh, I beg pardon, sir. I didn't know you were in the police. I meant no harm, sir, I assure you."

"No harm's done. But let me see behind that rack."

"There's nothing there, sir, on my soul."

"I prefer to believe my eyes. Open it or I'll have it broken down in two minutes."

Wilkins saw concealment was no longer possible. He touched a spring and pulled the rack open. A recess was disclosed about five feet deep, and the width of the rack. Conger looked in, — to his astonishment it was empty!

"There, I told you so, sir!"

Conger looked at and felt the walls all around. They were smooth and unbroken. He stamped on the floor; it gave forth a dull, heavy sound.

"Well," said he, perfectly concealing his disappointment, "I've found out all I wanted."

"If you want to nab that squint-eyed chap, sir, I advise you to go to the 'Old Bowery.'"

"Yes, and waste my time there; oh, yes!" said Conger, with great apparent indignation; "do you take me for a fool?"

He went out and walked rapidly to the office he had started from. "Let a man watch that billiard room in Grand Street till eight o'clock," said he, and in five minutes a placid, abstracted-looking individual, in citizen's dress, was standing in front of the place, looking up at the opposite house with great apparent curiosity.

After Conger had disappeared, a wide board rose slowly from the floor of the recess and the brutal visage of Ezra made its appearance.

"Coast clear?" growled he.

"Yes."

He came out and swore a terrible oath or two.

"That skunk, who is he?"

"A detective."

Ezra turned pale. "You don't mean it!" "Yes, and a mighty cute chap. How the devil did he find out about this hole?"

"Why, because he happened to ram his cue against it."

"Happened to? Pshaw! man, he did it on purpose."

"Do you think so? Then we've got a sharp cove to deal with."

Conger sat down in his quiet room and lit a cigar. "Of course," said he to himself, "that fellow'll go to the 'Old Bowery' if he had any intention of doing so. I'll drop in during the course of the evening, I think."

At this moment Fellows came in.

"I've found the place, sir," said he, "but that's about all."

"What have you learned?"

"I found a place in West Broadway, where a broad, red-haired man bought two bear-skin suits; but his pal was not with him."

"Well, did the Jew know anything about his customer?"

"Swears he never saw him before or since."

"Did he pay for the suits in cash?"

"No, sir, he gave this thing in barter," and Fellows pulled out an old-fashioned gold snuff-box, elaborately chased and very solid, with the inscription "R. H. from E. B." deeply cut on the lid.

Mr. Conger looked at it curiously. "This may lead to something," said he, and he put it in his pocket.

At about eight in the evening Conger and Fellows went down to the "Old Bowery Theatre." No one would have known Conger in his long, brown beard and mustache. He had on a light-colored summer overcoat and carried an eye-glass and a cane.

The two men took their seats in the pit near the orchestra. There they had a good view of the house. Conger saw no less than three large cross-eyed men, but they were all looking at the stage (as well as he could judge), and with apparent satisfaction.

"None of those chaps," said Conger, to himself. "The man I want will be looking round the house just as I am doing. None but detectives, and rascals keep staring about at a play."

A large, merry-looking old gentleman sat next to Conger. He seemed much delighted with the tragedy, and wiped his eyes furtively, more than once. About the middle of the performance Conger pulled the snuff-box from his pocket and looked at it. The old gentleman happened to glance down at him just then. As he saw the box, a look of great surprise came over his face, and he looked sharply at Conger.

"Hem!" said he, nudging that gentleman. "Allow me, sir! Pray, where did you get that box?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I think I've seen it before," replied our old friend, Dr. Euripides Brown.

"Yes? Well, look at it," said Conger, putting it in his hand.

Dr. Brown examined the box carefully. "Yes," said he, "it's the same. I knew it. There are the initials, 'R. H. from E. B.' Sir," said he, "I used to own that box."

"Are you the 'E. B.' on it?"

"Yes, sir. I am Dr. Euripides Brown of Parnassus Hall. Here, sir, is my circular," and he took one of those documents from his pocket and placed it in the detective's hand.

Conger glanced at it, and put it in his pocket.

"Yes, sir," continued the worthy doctor; "I'm the 'E. B.' and Dick Hoyt's the 'R. H.' and a pretty scoundrel he is, too,—a precious rascal. Yes," he added, growing warm, "the greatest rascal unhung!"

"Yes. What do you know about him, doctor?"

"What do I know about him! I know that if ever I catch him, I'll choke the breath of life—the vital principle—from his villainous carcass!"

"Well," said Conger, "I can tell you, for your satisfaction, he's dead."

"You don't say so!"

"Yes," said Mr. Conger.

"When was he hung?" asked the doctor.

"He wasn't hung, unfortunately. He was killed by a man who tried to arrest him for murder."

"So I thought! 'Tis just as I told Tiggy! I knew he'd come to some such end. Sir, I breathe freer now he's off the earth."

"Yes. Have you seen him lately, doctor?"

"Not for many years."

"Then you don't know any of his companions?"

"No, thank God! I don't."

"Well, I'm after one of them to-night."

"What has he been up to, sir?"

"Oh! merely murder," said Conger, coolly.

"Are you a policeman?"

"Yes. I'm Inspector Conger, and am glad to make your acquaintance, doctor. Perhaps you can help me nab the fellow."

"What sort of a looking chap is he?"

Conger described him.

"Well, there he is," said the keen-eyed doctor, "leaning against that pillar yonder."

Conger looked. There was the man, certainly, with a flashy-looking girl, in a gaudy bonnet, with him.

"Don't let him see you looking," said Conger. "I say, Fellows, let me make you acquainted with Dr. Brown."

The doctor bowed gravely, and Fellows keenly looked at him as he nodded his head.

"You'd better keep your eye on the cove," said Mr. Conger.

"No fear, sir," said Fellows.

"I am going to the door," said Conger, and he rose and went.

Ezra was sitting near the door, evidently ill at ease. He glanced furtively about him now and then, and paid not the slightest attention to the young woman at his side. But all at once he turned to her and said,—

"I say, Sal, let's get out of this."

"Oh! hold up till this act's over."

"You've got to come now, or go home alone," said Ezra; and the girl rose reluctantly and followed her companion. At the same moment Fellows and Dr. Brown (who had expressed his determination to assist in the capture) also left their seats. Conger was already standing at the door.

This movement instantly attracted Ezra's attention. His wits, sharpened by apprehension, at once told him that he was watched.

"Those men are after me, Sal," said he, indicating Fellows and the doctor, with a jerk of his thumb.

Now Sal was a quick-witted young woman. Probably the only feasible plan of escape there was, flashed upon her in a moment. She drew her companion into one of the dim recesses in the corridor of the old theatre, formed by an arch and column. The gas-lamps near this spot had gone out, or had not been lit, and the place was really dark to those who came out from the glare of the theatre.

"Have you got on two pair o' pantaloons?" she asked, hurriedly.

"Yes, of course I have; I always wear two pairs."

"Then off with one," said she, at the same time shaking herself out of her skirt. Ezra had his outer pantaloons off in a moment, and the girl quickly donned them.

"Hop into that dress," cried she, and Ezra did so in a twinkling. "Now let me have your coat and hat, and take my long shawl."

These changes were almost instantly

effected. The girl piled her short curls on the top of her head, and put on Ezra's big felt hat. With his great-coat reaching to her knees, she certainly looked like a short and thick-set man. The hat almost entirely concealed her hair and face. Ezra, in the shawl, skirt, and bonnet, might certainly pass for a woman of great size.

All this had not taken half a minute. Fellows and Dr. Brown had not reached the door of exit before Ezra and his companion emerged with their changed appearances from the shady nook, and instantly separated.

Conger, however, had seen them enter the recess, and suspected their intention. When they came out he at once detected the ruse, but he had not time to call his companions before the man, dressed as a woman, darted out into the Bowery. Conger followed without a moment's delay.

Fellows and Dr. Brown were surprised to see Conger rush out after the woman (as they thought), while the man was walking leisurely to another door. Without stopping, however, to comment on this, they overtook the supposed man, and Fellows clapped his hand on her shoulder. His amazement may be imagined, when a shrill girl's voice cried,—

"Well, you *are* rude, I must say; and she took off her hat and showed her woman's curls.

"Well, may I be damned!" cried Fellows.

"Oh, you will be — never fear!" said the girl.

"*Varium et mutabile semper femina*," said the doctor.

"What's that lingo?" asked the woman.

"Outwitted by a girl," groaned Fellows. "Come with me, my woman."

"Where to, may I ask?"

"To the station-house."

"What for? I should like to know what I've done," said Sal.

"Accomplice to a murderer, that's all," said Fellows; and he marched her off, followed by the doctor.

Conger kept his eye on Ezra as they left the theatre. Some instinct prompted the fellow to run, for he did not know he was pursued. So he pulled up his skirts in a very unfeminine manner, and ran swiftly up the Bowery. His appearance was certainly *unique*, and so the boys in the street thought. "Go it, old woman!" "I bet on you!" and other remarks, complimentary and otherwise, followed the rapid female as she splashed along.

"Stop that woman!" shouted Conger.

Hearing this, Ezra looked behind and saw the detective fast overhauling him. To dart into a miserable little alley, that looked like a canal choked with filth, and strip himself of his woman's gear, was the act of a second.

The night was dark and drizzly. Conger saw the man suddenly disappear, but where he went he could not tell. Whether he had taken refuge in some house or darted into some alley, he was, of course, unable to say. Now, the operations of the detective's mind were swift. In an instant he had argued the question, and decided that he had not entered any building. "It is not likely," thought he, "that he has any cribs or pals so near the one he has in Grand Street. He has gone up that alley." Conger stood still near its mouth and made a peculiar whistle. At once, as if they had sprung from the ground, two men appeared, and touched their caps to him respectfully.

"Chap gone up that alley. Can we get him?"

"Dexter is stationed on the corner of Elizabeth Street, sir," said one of the men.

"That's lucky. Let's see him."

They all three entered the alley, which looked like a vault and smelt like a sewer. They had not gone a yard, when they stumbled against the cast-off clothes of Sal.

"Ah! that's what he had on. Take care of 'em."

One of the men picked up the skirt and shawl and rolled them dexterously into a small, compact bundle, which he stowed away.

They walked through to Elizabeth Street, and found Dexter standing on the corner. He told them that the man they sought had certainly gone by not five minutes before.

"Did you notice which way he went?"

"Yes, sir. I allays looks arter suspicious wagabonds. He went up this street, sir, and went into that oyster saloon where you see that red lamp."

"All right, then," said one of the men; "we've got him."

"We haven't got him yet," said Conger; "but we're on his track."

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. MORRIS.

THE two wounded men at Wyckoff Hall recovered rapidly. The recuperative power

of love is great. From the day of the reading of Tennyson, Vincent quickly mended; a fortnight saw him up; a month walking around the house; six weeks perfectly well. A shorter time sufficed for Edwin. He had recovered from all effects of the blow in a month.

In the mean time, after the funeral of the unfortunate Franchot had taken place, his will was opened and read, and Dr. Parkes found to be the sole executor appointed. The fortune was left, as we already know, to the only child of Mr. and Mrs. William Moore. Dr. Parkes found the correspondence of the so-called Harry Moore among the papers of the deceased. He had written to the young man inquiring about the probate of the will, and so forth. An answer had come in a strange hand, signed Peter Wilkins, informing the doctor that Mr. Harry Moore had gone to Canada, where he expected to be a month or more; but that he would write at once and inform him of the events that had taken place. Dr. Parkes took up his residence at Wyckoff Hall till its owner should appear, and Mrs. Graham and Mrs. Fairfax, with Jessie and Ethel, remained. Mr. Ebenezer Moore had written that Ethel might stay till Jessie went away, and that he would then come after her. Mr. James Graham was anxious that his wife should come home, but he had not once gone up to see her and his son.

The gloom of the sad events passed off gradually, in a measure; and in the mean time love matters progressed favorably. Never was there a happier party. They had not seen enough of Mr. Franchot to feel very sad at his death, although, of course, his recent tragic fate kept them from anything like boisterousness.

One day they all four started off, on horseback, for a pleasure excursion. The road lay for some distance along the bank of the river, and all were charmed with the view, — the white sails of many craft, the distant smoke of some steamer, the green shore opposite. As they reached the top of a gentle eminence, they looked back and saw the red walls of Wyckoff Hall far away behind them.

"How picturesque," said Ethel, "the old house looks from here!"

"Yes. Who would think that old pile was such a fatal place? But I shall always love it better than any spot on earth."

"Why? Because you were shot there?"

"Yes, that's it; because I was shot there, and you were the assassin."

"O Vincent, it seems wicked that we should be so happy so soon after poor Mr. Franchot's murder!"

"Will it do 'poor Mr. Franchot' any good for us to be gloomy? I trow not; so, my sweet equestrienne, let's enjoy ourselves while we may."

They dashed along over a road perfumed by the aromatic odor of pines. It would have made a beautiful picture for a painter, — the lovely girl with her flowing curls, and her handsome escort at her side. Jessie and her lover were at some distance in advance.

The entire cavalcade rode with speed up to a wood at the side of the road. They found it dense, but there was no underbrush. They dismounted, and the horses were tied to the trees. The gay party selected a smooth ridge, and sat down.

"What a pretty place! How far are we from Wyckoff Hall, Ned?" asked Ethel.

"About ten miles."

"Are there any houses about here?"

"There is a small house yonder; you can see the chimney through the trees. I believe some one has been living there for the last month or two."

"Yes, and lo! he approaches," said Vincent. A tall, melancholy man, with long black beard, was slowly advancing, apparently unconscious of their presence and with eyes bent on the ground. He did not look at all like a farmer or woodsman, but was dressed in a black suit and wore a beaver hat. As he came near, Vincent exclaimed, in great surprise, —

"As I live, my mysterious friend, who insists upon being a ghost; but he hasn't on the regulation white."

Mr. Morris, for it was he indeed, glanced up and seemed astonished at seeing the party. He raised his hat politely, and was about to turn away, when Vincent said, —

"Stay, Mr. Morris, do you not recollect me, — Mr. Graham?"

"Graham!" cried the man, with a start, looking at Vincent.

"Yes; don't you remember your midnight catechizing of me?"

Morris did remember it, and advanced and shook Vincent's hand. "I hope you're well, sir," said he, as he glanced at the others.

His eye passed quickly off Edwin and Jessie, but was instantly riveted on Ethel.

"Merciful heaven!" he cried, "who are you? Pardon me, miss," he quickly added, "your face affects me strangely."

"Permit me," said Vincent: "Mr. Morris, Miss Fairfax, Miss Moore, Mr. Moore."

"What!" cried the man, in a sort of shriek, "Moore! Moore!"

"Yes," said Vincent, astonished, "Mr. and Miss Moore of Boston."

"Ah! of Boston! Yes, yes. Mr. Ebenezer Moore's children."

"Yes, sir," said Edwin, in surprise. "Do you know my father?"

"I *did* know him. Is he well?"

"Quite well, thank you."

"I am truly glad, and you are his son. Yes, yes, and this young lady his daughter. Strange!" He said these words in a meditative manner, as if to himself, with his bright eyes eagerly looking at Ethel.

That young lady seemed almost equally interested in Mr. Morris. She could not define the feeling she felt. A thrill of pity stirred her breast as she looked at the melancholy man.

"Will you not come up to my poor house, ladies and gentlemen, and take a glass of wine?" said Mr. Morris, with an air of great courtesy.

They all declined with thanks.

"Well, let me give your horses a feed."

"No, thank you, sir," said Vincent; "we shall not stay long, and I think we had better not feed the horses."

During all this time Mr. Morris had scarcely taken his eye from Ethel's face. Ethel was embarrassed. Rousing himself, at length with a start, he said, —

"I will intrude no longer. Permit me to take your hand," said he to Ethel, and he raised it to his lips, bowed to the others, and hurried off. The kiss felt strangely to Ethel; it affected her in an unaccountable way. She felt like weeping, with no apparent reason in the world.

"What an odd man!" said Jessie.

"Yes; but no lunatic, Vint., as you imagined."

"No. What agitation Ethel caused him!"

"Yes," said Jessie, "she probably reminded him of some old love. Depend upon it, unrequited affection is the cause of his melancholy."

"It is strange," said Ethel, like one in a reverie. "I could never have seen this gentleman before, and yet I feel as if I had."

"He spoke of knowing your father," said Vincent; "perhaps you may have seen him at home."

"No, I am sure I have not. He has never been at our house, — has he, Edwin?"

"I never saw him there, certainly."

Morris? Morris? I never even heard the name."

"Well," said Jessie, "let the mysterious stranger go. Perhaps he is a ghost, — who knows? We ought to start for home, Edwin."

Soon they were all cantering merrily home together. Mr. Morris saw them go. He came out from his house, and threw himself on the grass.

"O my God! my God!" he groaned; "poor Nellie! O my darling! Oh, the villain! the villain!"

Suddenly he sprang up erect, his fierce eyes gleaming, —

"My revenge is nearly ripe, thank God! nearly ripe, nearly ripe!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE PURSUIT AND CAPTURE.

"Now," continued Mr. Conger, "what does the rear of that oyster-saloon open on to?"

"A small yard, sir, with high brick wall round it, and spikes to the top o' that."

"Very good. Now Dexter, do you go in and get the fellow out. We'll wait outside. He's seen me, and I want to get him quietly, without fuss, d'ye see? or I'd nabbed him in the theatre."

"Yes, sir; but he knows me, too. He looked at me sharp as he passed me, and besides, I'm in uniform."

Dexter was a short man, with a face close shaven. Conger mused. "Those other men," said he, "don't know him, and may make some mistake. I'd rather have you go. Take Tim's long coat."

Tim's coat was certainly an *unique* garment. It was of a bright chrome-yellow color and very long, reaching in fact below his knees.

"Here," said Tim, doffing the garment, "slip on this, and this, too," he added, pulling off an immense grizzled beard and disclosing a smooth and boyish face. "See," he continued, "it goes on very easy," and he adjusted it to Dexter's chin. With the yellow coat and gray beard, Dexter was certainly well disguised.

"Now," said Mr. Conger, "get the fellow out on some pretext and we'll quietly nab him."

"All right," said Dexter, and as he spoke he left his companions, and descending a couple of stone steps that led to a ground-

glass door, on which were painted in red letters the words, "Oysters in every style," opened the door and went in. He saw a rather neat-looking place, with sanded floor, a man in his shirt-sleeves opening oysters behind a counter, and a small boy asleep in a corner. No one else was visible; but as he walked in, a gruff man's voice behind a chintz curtain, demanded, —

"Another *bourbon*, Boggs."

"Let me have a stew," said Dexter to the man.

"Yes, sir, in a moment. There's a gent in there a-cath' of one now, but he'll be out in half a jiff."

Ezra peered cautiously out, and seeing the odd, small figure of Dexter, burst in a loud horse-laugh. "Come in, old covey, room enough for you."

"Oh, I won't intrude," said Dexter, modestly.

"Come in, I say," repeated Ezra; "I want to talk to you."

Dexter went in and took his seat on a pine bench. Boggs brought his "stew."

"Take something, patriarch. Another *bourbon*, Boggs. I say, where did you get that coat?"

"Not very far off."

"I'd like to get one like it."

"Well, I've no objections," said Dexter.

"Won't you show me where the place is?"

"Well, — yes, but wait till I've eat my stew."

"Oh, certainly."

Now it is impossible to say what it was that aroused Ezra's suspicions of his companion, for a more harmless-looking individual was never seen; but certain it is that Ezra was immediately on his guard, and watched Dexter keenly. The latter was too sure of the efficiency of his disguise. His bright eye and florid cheek belied the grizzled beard, and Ezra sat so near him that he noted the difference between his beard and hair, and saw the smooth, plump hand indicative of youth. Stretching suddenly across the narrow table, he caught Dexter's beard and plucked it off.

"Aha!" he roared, "you thought you had me, did you? You're not so cursed smart, after all!"

Dexter felt for his pistol, but before he had time to pull it out, Ezra snatched a bottle from the castor, and struck him violently on the head. He followed this attack with a fearful blow on the face, and Dexter fell over on the table, senseless.

"Here, Boggs, quick!" cried Ezra; "this fool's been trying to cheat me, but I have rather *euchred* him."

Boggs appeared.

"Come," said Ezra; "help me to get this coat off." They divested the unfortunate Dexter of the garment; Ezra hastily put it on, and adjusted the false beard to his own brutal face, taking also Dexter's cap.

"I suppose he's got a crowd outside waiting for me. Don't they wish they may get me!"

"Where are you going?" cried Boggs; "not into the street!"

"Of course."

"Why, man, they'll nab you!"

"Never you fear. Perhaps they will, and then again, perhaps they won't. But I must get this fool's pistol;" and he took that from the still insensible man's pocket, and examined it. "All right, — ready loaded. By-by, Boggy dear," and he sauntered out. As he emerged into the street, Conger approached.

"Isn't the fellow there?"

Ezra put his finger to his lips. "St—"

"What's up now?" asked Conger.

"Be quiet," whispered Ezra.

"Where are you going?"

"Wait a moment till I get back."

Conger was puzzled, but Tim, who was looking at the man intently, suddenly cried out, "That's not Dexter! Nab him!" and he rushed at Ezra. Ezra levelled his pistol and fired. Poor Tim staggered, groaned, and fell, exclaiming, —

"O God! I'm plugged."

"Serves you right," cried Ezra, dashing off at great speed.

For an instant Conger and the remaining man stood still in surprise; the next, they darted quickly in pursuit.

Ezra did not have more than five rods start, but he ran like a deer. Conger, maddened at being baffled, put all his might into his pace, and soon distanced his companion, who was rather stout.

It was very late. Not a soul was in the street. The rain was falling, and the dim gas-lamps scarcely illumined the street for a radius of ten feet; but Conger managed to keep the yellow coat in sight, and settled down for a steady chase, with clenched hands at his hips, and lips tightly closed. "Clap, clap," sounded the heavy shoes of Ezra; "pat, pat, pat," went Conger's neat little boot. On, on, they rushed for three or four blocks up Elizabeth Street, when suddenly Ezra turned into a side street at

the left, and made for Broadway. Conger hastened around the corner about fifteen seconds after, and was amazed to see Ezra standing quietly at some distance up the street, on the edge of the pavement. Yes, there could be no doubt it was he; there was the yellow coat, motionless.

"He is winded," thought Conger; "and is going to stand at bay with his pistol." He drew his own, and cautiously approached. "If you fire, I'll plug you, you rascal," cried the officer; "surrender peaceably." No answer. He drew nearer. "The fellow's leaning against a tree," said Conger to himself. "Speak, or I fire!" he shouted. Still no answer. Conger levelled his revolver, took deliberate aim, and fired. To his astonishment the figure did not stir. Rushing up to it, conceive of his mortification to find the old yellow coat hanging over the tree-box empty, and no one in sight. The bullet had gone through it, and lodged in the tree behind.

"Great Jove!" exclaimed Conger, between his teeth; "I'm glad nobody saw this. Now where the devil could he have gone? Curse the luck!"

Near the corner was a rum-shop in a cellar. The detective's plan was instantly formed. Hastily pulling off his coat, he fired a bullet through it, resumed the garment, and, running swiftly, burst into the cellar, exclaiming, in a terrified voice, and gasping for breath, —

"For God's sake, save me! For God's sake, save me!"

The only occupant of the place was a phlegmatic-looking Dutchman, with a red face, who stared stupidly at him, and exclaimed, —

"Mein Gott! vat ish de matter?"

"The police are after me. Didn't you hear a pistol?"

"Yah," said Mynheer.

"Well, look here. They fired one shot at me, and hit my coat; the other missed me. They've been chasing a friend of mine and me, and nearly got us. Did you see my friend?"

"Vas he a pig fellow vid a squint in his eye?"

"Yes; that's him."

"Vell, he's upstairs aped."

"Good! Let me see him."

"Nein. I vill do no such ting."

"Why, he's my pal, I tell you."

"I no cares vedder he's your *bal* or not. He tells me not to let any man go *ub*, and bays me vell, too."

"How much did he pay you?"

"He give me vive dollar."

"Well, I'll give you ten dollars if you'll show me his room."

"Yah!" cried the Dutchman; "ten dollar!"

"Yes," cried Conger; "here's the money."

"Vell, come on."

He took a lamp, and went up a creaking pair of stairs. Conger followed; then up another and another.

"There's his room," said the Dutchman, "vere you sees de light."

Conger went up to the door. It was locked. He pushed against it violently, and it flew open; no one to be seen. The window was open, and the bed stripped of clothes. Conger rushed to the window; the sheets, twisted and knotted together, were hanging far down below.

"D—tion!" cried the detective; "the fellow's got off."

The Dutchman stared stupidly at the sheets; his lips moved, as if to form the words, "Mein Gott!" but no sound issued from them.

Conger was boiling with rage, though apparently calm. "Thousand devils!" he muttered. "Shall I let this man outwit me?"

"Good-night, my friend," he cried; and out of the window he went, and down the improvised rope. It did not reach the ground by ten feet or more, but Conger dropped, and went nearly up to his knees in the soft mud. There was no flagging to the yard.

Scarcely had the detective disappeared, when Ezra emerged from beneath the bed, looked at the petrified Dutchman, and burst out laughing.

"Well, old lager-bier, you look astounded."

The Dutchman gazed at him with a blank look, and feebly ejaculated, —

"Mein Gott!"

"I'm not caught yet; but see here, you old beer-barrel, what the devil did you let that fellow come up here for?"

"Vy, he said he was your bal."

"My pal be hanged! He's a policeman."

"Mein Gott!" repeated the Dutchman, whom these continued surprises were fast rendering idiotic.

"Well, well," said Ezra, laughing, "let's go down and have a drink."

As soon as Conger had reached the

ground, he drew a small dark lantern from his pocket, with difficulty lit it, and carefully examined the ground. The soft mud showed no footprints but his own.

"Death and fury!" he exclaimed; "the fellow didn't get out after all!"

He hastily blew out the lantern, ran and vaulted over the low, rotten board-fence, and found himself in the yard of a neighboring house. He emerged from this in the same manner, and got into a yard with a high fence with a door in it. The door was fastened. Conger took a short steel bar from his pocket, and wrenched the padlock open. He passed through the door, and found himself in a narrow lane or alley running between the fence and the wall of the next house. Quickly running down this alley, he came into the street in which the gin-shop was situated, and in a moment was back to the place.

"The fellow's in there yet," was his thought. "Now, how to get him out?"

At this moment the officer who had started in the chase with him, and had been outrun, came along from the direction of Broadway. He uttered an exclamation of satisfaction when he saw Conger, and said, —

"Where have you been, sir? I got blown, and went back and took care of Tim; he's badly hurt. Since then, I've been trying to find you."

"Yes. Well, the man we want's in that house."

"Is that so? Well, can't we get him out, sir?"

"I guess so; but he's a tough customer. Do you go in, Joe, and see what's to be seen."

Joe went in and was gone some fifteen minutes. On coming out, he said, —

"There's no one in there, sir, I do believe, but the Dutchman and his wife. I showed my authority and searched the house."

"But how could he have got out?"

"Don't know, I'm sure; but he's not there, Mr. Conger."

"But I think he is. Hollo! here comes mein frau."

As he spoke, a large woman came up from the cellar. She had on an immense bonnet, and a shawl was wrapped around her neck and chin. A long cloak, reaching nearly to her heels, and a huge blue cotton umbrella afforded her protection from the rain. On seeing Mr. Conger and his companion, she stonned.

"My good woman," said Conger, "where are you going at this time of night?"

"None of your tam business, sir. You mind your business and I will mind my business."

"Now don't be so cross, my good soul," said Conger.

"I aint your good soul," said the woman, gruffly. "You go to de tevil. I'm going to the station-house."

"What are you going to the station-house for?"

"None of your business," said the woman, moving off. Conger and Joe followed and overtook her.

"Go back, Joe," said the former, "and watch the place. I'll attend to this woman."

"Now vat you vant?" asked the woman.

"Why I want to accompany you," said Conger. "It isn't safe for a woman to be out alone at this time of night."

"Vell, I don't vant you, I tell you."

"Oh! you'd better let me go," said Conger, persuasively.

"I'll let you go to the tevil."

"You are very kind, I'd rather go with you."

"Vell, I won't go at all," and she sat down on the steps of a house.

Conger stood still near the curb and pulled out a piece of plug tobacco.

"Give me some tobacco," said the woman.

Now it is not very unusual for a woman to smoke, especially a Dutch woman; but they rarely, if ever, chew tobacco. So thought the detective, and he instantly suspected her sex. He adopted a very simple expedient to find out. He tossed a piece of plug to her. She brought her knees quickly together and caught it in her lap.

Now when a man goes to catch anything in his lap, thrown at him, he always brings his knees together, of course; but a woman separates hers that a larger surface for it to fall into may be made. This ruse instantly exposed the attempted cheat.

Conger sprang forward. "Ah! my man I have you, have I? Here, Joe!"

Ezra, for it was he indeed, sprang up, and levelled his huge fist at Conger, but the latter dodged. Out came his pistol in a twinkling.

"Do you give in?"

"Not yet!" cried the ruffian, and, springing on the steps, he kicked the detective's wrist, and the pistol flew from his grasp and discharged in the air. Conger was no match in strength for the burly murderer.

He prudently drew back from the onslaught, and Ezra ran swiftly for Broadway. Conger, instead of pursuing him, shouted again to Joe and hurried into the lane. "He'll make for up-town, no doubt," was his thought. He ran up the alley into a side street and just as he emerged into Broadway he saw an omnibus, with a single occupant, going up. He had lost sight of Joe, — for that officer after coming out of the alley had gone in an opposite direction.

It was very late for a stage to be running, but this was the last one, and had been delayed by falling horses. Conger looked at the passenger; there could be no doubt it was Ezra, sitting on the hither seat with his back towards him. The detective ran and nimbly mounted to the driver's seat without stopping the vehicle, or being seen by Ezra. "Ah," thought he, with exultation, "I've got him now. There's a murderer inside," said he, to the driver, — "a man dressed as a woman."

"Well, that's none of my business," replied that stoical individual.

"Won't you help me catch him?"

"See you to the devil, first. How do I know but what *you're* a murderer?"

At this complimentary question, Conger was silent. He had no means of proving his official character.

The stage turned down Ninth Street into the Eighth Avenue. At Twenty-third Street Ezra got out. Conger jumped down and followed him without being seen. Ezra walked rapidly up the Avenue. Conger, at some distance behind, followed. The murderer at last entered a sort of hotel, on a corner. Conger, to avoid being seen, had stayed a half block or more behind. He followed Ezra quickly in. No one was in the office, save a sleepy porter. A gas-lamp was dimly burning.

"Where did that woman go, who just came in?" asked the officer.

"Nobody has come in here, sir, for the last hour or more."

"D—tion! I just *saw* her come in."

"She didn't come in here, sir; p'raps she come in by the hall."

Conger went into the hall. It was dark, but there was a light on the floor above, and he heard heavy footsteps there. He ran quickly up the stairs and was amazed to see Dr. Euripides Brown, in his shirt-sleeves, walking up and down, smoking a pipe.

"*Mirabile dictu!*" cried the doctor. "Is that you, Mr. Conger?"

"Hollo! Dr. Brown? What are you doing here?"

"Why, I am stopping here. Are you?"

"No. I'm after that fellow."

"You don't say so? Haven't you caught him?"

"No, d—n him."

"Well, come up here, I want to speak to you. Come into my room."

"I can't. I am going to search the house. The fellow's here."

"Oh! don't chase him any more to-night."

"Yes, but I must; he's got away from me twice. I'll catch him, or leave the service."

"Well, don't chase him any more to-night, anyhow."

"Why not?"

"Oh! there's no use."

"No use! How the devil am I to get him if I don't chase him?"

"But I tell you there's no use."

"Why not?"

"Come here and I'll show you," said the doctor, and he opened the door of his room and pointed in. The detective looked in. There was Ezra, with his hands and feet tied, sitting in a chair, and gnashing his teeth with rage. His woman's habiliments were off.

"He's making me a call," said the doctor, with his loud laugh.

CHAPTER XVI.

"DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND."

EDWIN MOORE, being now entirely well, and urged by his conscience to report for military duty, reluctantly bade farewell to Jessie and the others, and hurried down to New York. Dr. Parkes advised Vincent to wait a few days longer, and also persuaded Mrs. Fairfax to remain, protesting that he could not get along without her just then. Mrs. Graham, however, yielded to her husband's entreaties, and went down to the city with Moore. Vincent stood no longer in need of her care.

Mrs. Graham seemed to have taken a great fancy to Edwin Moore. In fact, Jessie declared, laughingly, that she was jealous of that lady, and warned Edwin not to be too attentive to Mrs. Graham in the cars. Young Moore appeared equally attracted towards Vincent's mother, and had been overjoyed at the opportunity of escorting her to the city. Arriving there, Mrs. Graham insisted upon Edwin's staying at her

house during the few days that he was obliged to pass in New York.

Having some leisure, one evening, Moore strolled down to Edward Temple's room. That young gentleman occupied lodgings in a private boarding-house, kept by a lady who rejoiced in the not common name of Jiggleswitch. As Moore went in he was surprised to see Mr. Conger, the detective, sitting there talking with Temple.

"Mr. Conger wants to know when Vint's coming home. Do you know, Ned?"

"Very soon, I think. Hasn't he written to you?"

Just as Temple was about to reply in the negative, Mrs. Jiggleswitch, the landlady, entered with a letter in her hand, which she gave to Temple without uttering a word. Mrs. Jiggleswitch was a curious exception to her sex, for she never spoke unless it was absolutely necessary, and then in the fewest possible words. She seemed to hold conjunctions and other copulative parts of speech, auxiliary verbs and pronouns in contempt; for she rarely employed them. She was a middle-aged female; her face, though it usually wore a severe expression, might once have been quite pretty.

"Ah," said Temple, "this is from Vint, himself; and is good news. He writes that he is all right after what he calls his 'little shindy on the lawn.' He adds that he will be down here to-morrow."

"That is lucky," said Mr. Conger. "I must see Graham. It's the roughest thing my losing Franchot's murderer."

"What do you mean?" said Moore; "how lost him?"

"Why, I nabbed him once, and he's got off. He's the toughest customer I ever had anything to do with. Bless you, it was like chasing a fox; and when caught, he slipped away like an eel. He nearly killed Tim Montgomery, too, one of the best men I've got."

"Montgomery!" cried Mrs. Jiggleswitch, — who had remained in the room ostensibly for the purpose of examining the condition of the window-shades, — "Montgomery! Lord! Baltimore man?" The woman seemed much agitated.

"No," said Conger. "I guess you don't know him. He's an Englishman."

Mrs. Jiggleswitch seemed much relieved.

"Moore —" began Temple.

"Hah!" cried the landlady, a second time starting violently. "What's that? Your name Moore?"

"Yes," said Edwin, "Moore is my name."

"Your father's, sir?"

"Ebenezer Moore, my good woman. Why do you ask?"

Mrs. Jiggleswitch sat down in a chair, very pale and gasping for breath. The others said nothing, and presently she rose and left the room.

"That beats the devil," said Edwin; "what's the matter with the woman?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," said Temple; "she never acted that way before in here."

"Come, Conger," said Moore, "ferret out this mystery."

"Hardly my line," replied the detective. "I'm too busy, too. These are very pleasant quarters of yours, Mr. Temple, but I masn't stay here any longer." And he pulled out a very neat memorandum book, and consulted it.

"What have you there?" asked Temple, carelessly.

"A perfect barometer of the public morals, my dear sir. I have a habit of jotting down the work before me, after the fashion of lawyers' diaries. When this book of mine is full, you may know that roguery abounds. I am sorry to say that it is full at present, — very full."

Mr. Conger left the house. Just at that moment, an old man, apparently a Scotchman, was going up the steps. He accosted Mr. Conger, with, —

"Can you tell me, sir, whether one Louisa Murray keeps this house?"

"She does not," said Conger. "No such person here."

The old man seemed much disappointed. "It's very strange," said he; "let me tell you about it, sir. I —"

"I can't stop here, my man," interrupted Conger; "walk along with me and I'll hear what you have to say." And the Scotchman and detective passed up the street together.

Vincent arrived, and went with Moore around to the abode of Mrs. Jiggleswitch to see Temple. They found him in conversation with a young gentleman, who stared at them impertinently, through an eye-glass, as they entered. Temple was leaning back in his chair, the picture of weariness. He started up eagerly to welcome his friends, but did not introduce them to the youth with the eye-glass, who at once took his departure, receiving merely a cool nod from Temple as he went out.

"Thank fortune you came!" cried he; "that brainless fop has nearly been the death of me. He came to try and induce me to join his club. His talk was nothing but his club, varied with laudations of my tailor, and anathemas upon his own."

"What club is it?"

"The New York Swell club," said Temple.

"The fellow seems to have riled your sweet temper, Temple."

"He 'fooled me to the top of my bent,'" said Temple. "I happened to speak of Harry Kavanagh. 'Who is Kavanagh? I don't know him,' said he, as if it were a fact utterly damning to all Kavanagh's pretensions to good society. I said Hal was a pretty good fellow. 'Introduce me,' said he, 'perhaps I may put up his name for membership at the club,' speaking in a way that would lead one to suppose this would secure Kavanagh's earthly bliss."

"Well," said Vincent, "to change the subject, where did you get that? It is faultless."

He pointed to an exquisite painting in oil, by Haseltine, — a craggy shore with amber rocks, a stretch of sea, into whose lucent waves the azure of the cloudless sky had penetrated; a dim, distant horizon, flecked by specks of sails. One could almost hear "the breathing of the summer sea asleep."

"I bought it to-day; it took my eye. I like to have pictures hanging round, especially marine views."

"You're a sensible fellow," said Vincent. "If your walls were bare and unadorned, you'd become worse even than you are now, which is saying a good deal. There's nothing like the improving power of beautiful objects. Pictures are educators; they promote the growth of the soul."

"Hear him, Moore! What hobby is he on now? 'Growth of the soul!' Vint. is talking rather mystically."

"There is philosophy in what I say, Ned; but of course I can't expect you to see it. Haven't you any decent cigars? Thank you."

"The question may be irrelevant, but — may I be a groomsman, Vint.?" said Temple.

"Pon my word, you're jumping at conclusions."

"Not much of a leap, my dear fellow," and he and Moore laughed. "I saw how it was at Wyckoff Hall."

"Discerning youth! Well I can't stay here to hear nonsense, I'm off. You say Conger want's to see me. Adieu."

He went into Mr. Conger's office, but found no one there but Fellows. That officer observed that he thought Mr. Conger would be in soon, and, asking Vincent to be seated, left the room.

A green, baize-covered table, a desk, one or two chairs, and a safe, comprised all the furniture of the room. There were no pictures on the walls, but a number of maps of New York City. Several inkstands, quill-pens, sheets of blotting-paper and writing paper, were on the desk, but there was not a book to be seen, nor a newspaper. Vincent walked round and examined the maps and yawned. A small scrap of paper with some words written on it, caught his eye. He picked it up to examine, scarcely aware of what he was doing. In an instant he turned deadly pale, and felt a sudden sickness. He saw these words in Mr. Conger's handwriting: "Circumstances of William Moore's death suspicious — very. McManus don't lie. Must worm more out of him. In this matter I —" here the paper was torn off.

The awfulness of his position rushed, overwhelmingly, upon Vincent's mind. The suspicion of his father's guilt, that had flashed upon him during his conversation with Ethel, was now strengthened. It was, it appeared, no morbid fancy of his own, — this shrewd detective also suspected foul play. And he well knew that the officer would never let the matter rest till he had satisfied himself. If his father was a murderer, — horrible thought! Vincent groaned as he mentally formed the words, — it would eventually be known. The young man instantly resolved to screen his father, guilty or not guilty, and to bend all the powers of his mind to the task of foiling the detective. As he thought of the unendurable consequences of detection, Vincent grew calm. With him, the necessity of being cool always imparted coolness. He felt his brain grow clear; he sat there in the detective's office a match for the detective himself.

The first thing to be done, he thought, was to discover how much Conger knew about the affair. For some time he was puzzled as to who McManus was, but he at length remembered hearing his father speak of an old Scotch gardener who lived with Mr. Wyckoff. He did not doubt for an instant that this was he. With a ready and correct inference, he concluded that McManus had been at Wyckoff Hall at the time of William Moore's drowning, seen something that had excited his suspicion of

Mr. Graham, and, encountering Mr. Conger had, unintentionally perhaps, dropped some expressions that had excited the acute officer's curiosity. "Whatever Conger has heard from this Scotchman," thought Vincent, "I must counteract. I must disabuse his mind of his suspicions, make him think this McManus is an old fool. I'd give a good deal to find out what he really knows."

Knowing well the rare solace of tobacco, Vincent pulled out a cigar; but he had no matches in his pocket. He looked around the room, not one of those useful articles was to be found; but he was gratified to see a broken piece of a match lying on the floor. He seized it eagerly; the fragment was the part that contained the sulphur. "Now, if I had a piece of paper, I could get a light," said Vincent to himself, and he pulled out a small, crumpled bit of manuscript from a waste-paper basket under the table. His eye instantly caught these words, written in Conger's small, neat hand. The paper was evidently a leaf torn from the detective's memorandum book.

"G.'s powerful motive to the deed.

"His horror of the place.

"His present wretched looks and preoccupied mind.

"McManus, I think, saw the thing done. No motive to injure G. Must find out all he knows."

"Were G. and M. ever on bad terms? Was G. in need of the money?"

Vincent threw the paper back where he had found it, and sighed deeply. "How well he expresses my own thoughts! Good God! I will not listen to these damnable suggestions! Heaven help me to put him off the track!"

For some minutes he sat in deep and gloomy thought. At length, hearing some one in the outer hall, he pulled a letter from his pocket, and Conger entered to find him leaning back in his chair, apparently absorbed in some correspondent's epistle.

"Well, my *Jupiter Tonans* of detectives!" cried Vincent, gayly; "thou hast come at last, — hast thou? If it is your custom to keep visitors waiting in this style, allow me to suggest the propriety of having a file of illustrated newspapers on your table for their entertainment. 'Pon my word, this is the most uninteresting place I ever got into. This letter is quite amusing, but the most piquant epistolary matter palls in time."

"The room is rather bare, I admit, but you see we don't want our attention distracted by external objects, Mr. Graham. —

I wanted to see you about that extraordinary villain you had a brush with up the river. I don't know what his name is yet. Didn't you say you saw him once in Catharine Street?"

"Yes; I had a 'brush' with him there, too. It was the same fellow. I think he came out of a house in the vicinity of the spot where I met him. I will tell you where it was. But I hear you captured and lost him. Let me hear about it, Mr. Conger. I am in the mood for hearing stories. I was most bored to death waiting for you here."

"This man don't suspect his father, that's plain," said the detective to himself. "Well," he replied aloud, "I'll tell you all about it, although I don't think the recital will raise me in your estimation," and he thereupon gave Vincent a minute account of the pursuit up to the time when he was astonished to find Ezra a prisoner in Dr. Brown's room.

"Imagine my amazement! The doctor had actually taken the game from under my gun. 'How did you get him?' cried I. 'Why,' said the doctor, 'I was just going downstairs for a match to light my pipe, when this fellow came in. I knew him in a moment. 'Are you the landlord?' asked he. 'Yes,' I answered. 'Well, show me a room, quick.' 'Walk upstairs,' said I. 'I got him into my room,' continued the doctor, 'and grabbed him by the throat, and though he's a pretty tough chap, and fought well, I somehow got his hands tied, and then his feet, and all in half a minute.' You know what a perfect giant old Brown is. He added that he found a match on the hall-floor, and had just lit his pipe as I came in."

"Well," said I, "he's led me a pretty dance to-night, but the jig's up." "No, not yet," muttered the fellow between his teeth. "Oh, you think not?" said I. "Why, man, there never was a clearer case in life, — almost caught in the act." Then I told him that his pal, who was with him up there, was killed. He didn't seem to care much. But when I told him that it was you who killed the fellow, he was terribly riled. He seemed to be fearfully disgusted that that pistol shot hadn't killed you."

"His feelings towards me are very amiable," said Vincent.

"The doctor appears to be a great admirer of you," said Conger. "I asked him if he hadn't heard about it. Said I, 'Vincent Graham killed the man with a blow of the fist; his forehead looked as if a horse had kicked him.'

"'Vincent Graham!' cried the doctor, 'what, my pet, my pride! the smartest lad I ever saw in my life, by the shades of Hercules! Why, sir, he can read the preface to Livy as easily as the first page of *Viri Romæ*, — think of that.' That's something very smart, I suppose, for the doctor was much excited."

Vincent smiled. "Well, go on, sir, please." "I think you ought to be a detective," said Conger.

"I should like to be an amateur detective," said Vincent. "Or a foiler of detectives," he added, to himself.

"Well," continued Conger, "I thought I'd take the fellow around to a station-house, and lock him up for the rest of the night. The doctor went into a closet to get me a glass of wine, and I stooped down to take the handkerchief off the villain's ancles. Scarcely was his foot released when he kicked me with his ponderous shoe, in the pit of my stomach. I rolled over on my back, speechless; the blow had well-nigh killed me. Quick as thought the wretch rushed to the closet, put his back to the door, and turned the key in the lock, with his hands which were tied behind him. 'Hallo,' cried the doctor, 'what are you doing, Conger? I can't see.' 'Aha,' chuckled the fellow, 'you can stay where you are till morning, my learned friend, and if you are as good a mathematician as you told me you were a while ago, why, *work yourself out!*' Laughing at his jest, he glanced at me, who lay gasping for breath, and said, between his teeth, 'Now I've got you, I'll stamp you to death, you dog!' Imagine how pleasant I felt just then. I couldn't stir. 'But I must free my hands first,' muttered the man; 'how the devil can I?' The doctor began to kick the door, and shout lustily. 'D — tion! he'll have the house up,' growled the fellow, and, abandoning his playful intentions towards me, he ran out of the room and down the stairs. In another moment Dr. Brown had smashed down the closet door. As soon as he saw me he knew what was up, and went thundering down the stairs, raging like a wild beast. He came back in a few moments and told me that the fellow had met the porter below in the hall, and scared him into untying his hands. It seems he butted the man against the wall, like a ram, almost jamming him to death. The doctor sent the porter after a surgeon for me, but I had nearly recovered when the surgeon arrived. I felt a little weak for a day or two, but am all right now."

The doctor went back to his school in Massachusetts, the day after this adventure, first entreating me to let him know when this murderer's hanging took place, for he wanted to see it. It isn't my way, to boast much, Graham, but I'll make New York too hot to hold that fellow."

"Well," said Vincent, who had listened to Conger's narrative with much interest, "I think you detectives are to be envied. It must be a very exciting life. It seems to demand both mental and physical activity. The most interesting part to me would be working up a case, starting from mere hints and tracking a thing out through maze after maze. How is it with you?"

"I agree with you; searching after clues is the best fun; and I like to 'work up a case.' The poor fellow little thinks I'm working up a case now," said Conger, to himself.

"But I should think," pursued Vincent, "that your profession would tend to render you unmerciful and pitiless. Of course it wouldn't do to let any sentiments of compassion interfere with your duties."

"Of course not," said Conger, "nor do we allow ourselves to be swayed by any consideration of the unhappiness we may cause innocent parties. *Justitia fiat*, etc., is our motto, Mr. Graham."

"Quite right," said Vincent. "At least it is very easy for me, who sit here with a clear conscience and have, happily, no criminals among my relatives, to say 'quite right.' I don't know how I would feel had I a personal interest in your investigations."

As he said these words in a gay, careless manner, with a radiant smile on his face, it was impossible for Conger to suspect the sickening apprehension that his last remark had excited in Vincent's breast. But the wily detective's mind was sharpened by long practice, and, in spite of appearances, a shadow—a mere shadow—of doubt occurred to him, as to whether Vincent was really so innocent, after all. Determined to find out, he asked, very suddenly, and looking keenly at his companion,—

"Where's your father, sir?"

Vincent, much startled, did not betray the least sign of agitation; his face did not lose color one shade, nor did he allow the least quiver of lip or eyelid; he merely turned to the officer with a natural look of mild surprise, and answered, quietly,—

"In town, I suppose. He was this morning, at least. Why do you ask?"

"He's in blissful ignorance of his father's

doings,—that's as clear as the sun," was the watchful Conger's mental comment.

"Why, I came across an old fellow yesterday who would like to see him."

"Didn't you know where to direct him? We live at No. —, Fifth Avenue."

"The man didn't seem to want to go there."

"Some beggar, I suppose. Who was he?"

"McManus is his name. I promised not to let your father know he was in town; don't tell him."

Vincent laughed, not loudly, and seemed much amused. Conger looked at him in surprise.

"Pon my word, Conger, this is rich. So you are taken in too,—of all men! ha! ha!"

"What do you mean?" asked Conger, rather disturbed.

"I don't know as I blame you much, though," said Vincent, "you knew nothing about the old man. So you really supposed he had some business with my father? I think my father would like to see him, however, to keep him out of mischief. The man's as crazy as a loon."

"He didn't talk like a crazy man," said Conger, puzzled.

Vincent smiled satirically. "Don't you think so? I always thought he did; but I've seen more of him than you have."

Conger began to feel that not to believe McManus was insane was a proof of want of discernment.

"I did notice that he talked rather disconnectedly," said he.

"Yes, you could scarcely have failed to observe that," said Vincent, confidently. "Did the old man know that you were connected with the police?"

"I don't think he did."

"I supposed not, or he would have confided to you that he had committed a murder and begged to be taken into custody. He's crazy on the subject of murders. His own father was murdered before his eyes when he was a young boy, and he never got over the horror he experienced. He has a habit of going and surrendering himself as an atrocious murderer, or else lodging complaints against innocent people. He always fancies himself to have been an eye-witness. He is harmless enough in other respects, and made old Mr. Wyckoff an excellent gardener; but nobody will employ him now. He lives alone by himself. Dr. Parkes told me all about him. The first time I saw him he took me by the button-hole and begged

leave to show me where the body of a murdered man was concealed in a ravine. The unfortunate individual had met his death about thirty years ago, and is decently buried in a church-yard at R——. Didn't he get on his monomania while talking with you? When did you see him?"

"I met him in the street. He *did* pretend that he knew something about a murder in — county."

"Poor devil!" said Vincent, compassionately; "his mind must be filled with pleasant thoughts. Fancy the delight of continually brooding on such topics! I hope he will call at father's; he will detain him and send word to Dr. Parkes. Dr. Parkes thinks he can cure him eventually, but I don't see much chance myself."

Conger was silent. Not the least suspicion that Vincent was hoodwinking him dawned upon his sagacious mind; for, in view of the circumstances, there was nothing to lead him to imagine, as will be observed, any possible motive for the young man so to do. "It is bad enough," thought the detective, in silent rage, "to be deceived by a sane man, but when it comes to an old crazy,—bah!"

"I wonder if insane people do suffer much," said Vincent, reflectively. "I suppose they do. They say dyspeptics are much like monomaniacs, and I'm sure they have a rough time of it. Heaven defend me from dyspepsia,—'parent of all blue-devils!' I've seen enough of that infernal malady at home."

"How so?"

"My father is a perfect martyr to it. He bears up well, but I see the torture he suffers. In the rare intervals when he is free from it, he is like his old self, as merry as a lark; even when it is at its worst he endeavors to be cheerful."

"What a fool I am!" thought Conger; "it isn't his conscience that troubles him, but his *pancreas*."

"Are you going to stay in the city all summer, Mr. Conger?"

"Yes, I suppose so. I don't have much time to myself, Graham. It is a pretty hard life."

"I'd like to take you on a yachting cruise. It's fearful to contemplate the vigor of mind such a thing would impart to you. Rascals might as well go hang themselves after you returned."

"I'm not half as smart as people think me, or as I thought myself," said Conger to himself.

"Ned Moore feels gay," pursued Vincent, "he's got a further leave, and is going with me to New Haven. Don't you like Moore?"

"What I've seen of him,—yes, very much."

"I believe my father thinks more of him than he does of me; and all because he's nephew to poor William Moore, who was drowned. You heard about it, didn't you? He was my father's most intimate friend."

"Was he?" said Conger, with interest. "Did your father think a great deal of him?"

"Well, I should rather think he did," said Vincent. "He loves to sit and talk about him by the hour; rather bores me, in fact. He keeps a miniature portrait of this unfortunate Moore hanging by his bedside. A devilish good-looking young fellow he must have been.—Take a cigar, Conger."

"Thank you. Your father was present when William Moore was drowned, wasn't he?"

"Yes, and came near being drowned himself in his attempt to rescue him. He says Wyckoff Hall is the gloomiest spot on earth to him. I don't think anything could induce him to revisit it."

"Curse my absurd conclusions!" muttered the detective to himself; "of course, he would naturally hate the place."

"He sold Wyckoff Hall as soon as he came into possession of it. How strange it is, Conger, that rich men almost always leave their fortunes to other rich men! My father has often wondered why Wyckoff didn't found a hospital or something of the sort with his money instead of leaving it to him."

"He didn't need it, then?"

"Need it! bless you, no! I don't pretend to say father is a second Astor, but he's got more money than he knows what to do with, and had at the time of Wyckoff's death. He has never touched a penny of the old gentleman's fortune. He's got some plan in his head for the foundation of a magnificent hospital for dyspeptics, ha! ha! But if I keep on chatting with you much longer, I shall interfere with the administration of justice. Good-morning, my bulwark of the law. What glorious weather! It's enough to make a howling dervish merry," and Vincent went out gayly into the street.

"Shades of Epaminondas! forgive my lies," said he to himself, as he walked rapidly up-town; "I think I've thrown considerable dust into this amiable detective's eyes. He's altogether too shrewd a man to

do anything so smart as to 'work this case up' any more. I've put him off the track, I know. Now if I prevent his seeing McManus, or hearing more about him, it will be all right. As for this horrible business, I'll not believe it till it's proved."

"I'm mighty glad," ruminated Conger, after Vincent had left, "that he happened to come in. I might have wasted any quantity of time on this confounded nonsense. I didn't think I was so soft," continued he, as he carefully erased the memoranda he had made concerning the elder Graham; "but I see it is possible for you to be bamboozled, Conger; yes, quite possible."

CHAPTER XVII.

DR. BROWN FOILED.

DR. BROWN was considerably astonished, the morning after he returned to H—, to see Ezra Hoyt in the street.

"Shades of Hercules!" he cried, — the doctor's favorite invocation, — "I'll have that man or my name's not Euripides Brown! I'd like to get him myself by some trap. Now, how can I do it?" — and the doctor fell into a "brown study."

The explanation of Ezra's presence in this town is simple. H— was the residence of a celebrated eye-doctor, whose specialty was *strabismus*. Cross-eyed people blessed him. Most wonderful cures had been effected by this man, — Dr. Heavyvale by name, — as countless certificates of the "most respectable citizens" amply proved. His fame and name, blazoned daily in all the newspapers in New York, had come to Ezra's ears, and induced that individual to make a personal trial of this oculist's skill. Glad enough to get out of New York, he had, the very morning after he escaped from Conger's custody, gone to H— with the hope of having his sight — his physical, not moral vision — straightened. He knew that it was essential that this defect should be remedied if he hoped to appear as Harry Moore, without fear of detection.

"Now, how to nab him," ruminated the doctor. "Shall I send for Conger? No, I must have all the glory of his capture myself. Upon my soul, fate seems to favor me; the fellow's continually running into my hands."

The doctor had gone out with the intention of taking a walk, but seeing Ezra, he

went back into Parnassus Hall. In about half an hour Miss Antigone, with a settled and resolute expression upon her pale face, came out and walked rapidly down the street. She met one of the scholars.

"Have you seen a big, cross-eyed man, Jimmy?" she asked.

"Yes, miss. I saw him going into Dr. Heavyvale's office about quarter of an hour ago."

Miss Brown immediately went up to Dr. Heavyvale's office, and asked for the doctor.

"He's got a patient with him, ma'am, in the consultation room," said a man-servant, who appeared, in answer to her knock.

"Ask him if I can come in."

The man brought back word that she might enter, and opened the private door as he spoke. Miss Brown went into a small, neatly-furnished room. Its occupants were Dr. Heavyvale, a withered-up little old man, and Ezra Hoyt. The doctor rose with great politeness and inquired her business.

"I have come to you, doctor," said Miss Antigone, in a pleasant voice, "as a gentleman who knows nearly everything, to ask you if you could tell me where I can find a man to act as porter for us up to the hall. Our man has gone away, and father wants to get another for a week or so, if we can't get one permanently now."

"I am very sorry, Miss Brown," began the doctor, "but I really know of no —"

"I'll go," said Ezra, gruffly, "for a week or so, till the doctor gets through with me." Ezra was very "hard up," and puzzled as to how he should procure funds for current expenses.

"Well," said Miss Brown, "you look like a stout man. Father will pay you at the rate of fifteen dollars a month."

"Well, I'll take the place."

"Can you come this morning? What's your name?"

"James Smith. I will be ready as soon as the doctor's through with me."

"I can do nothing more for you this morning," said the doctor. "Yours is a complicated case, Smith. I can't perform the 'instantaneous cure' on your eyes. It may take many months. Come again tomorrow at this hour."

At this Miss Brown and Ezra took their departure, and walked towards Parnassus Hall. Miss Antigone felt a thrill of exultation at the success of her manoeuvre, and walked along with a victor's air. She

glanced at Ezra occasionally, and his face affected her strangely; for, in spite of his crooked eyes and red hair, he was very like his father, the deceased Mr. Richard Hoyt, whom, it will be remembered, Miss Antigone had loved and lost. Had the lady been aware of Ezra's parentage, it is probable that she would have assisted her father in the villain's capture with even more readiness than she did.

They entered the bare play-ground of the school, passed through it, and went into the house.

"Where is the gentleman?" asked Ezra.

"He is not well; but there is no need of your seeing him. I can show you what we want you to do. In the first place, you must bring down some boxes from the garret. Come with me."

They went up the uncarpeted stairs, and entered a large, low room at the top of the house. There was no furniture in it, with the exception of a table and one chair. On pegs against the wall hung several suits of clothes, and one or two pine boxes containing clothes were in the room, while a great heap of straw, used for packing purposes, quite filled one corner. A small oval-shaped window, not more than eight inches wide nor long, scarcely illumined this apartment.

"There, James," said Miss Antigone; "empty those boxes and bring them down into the yard."

He began the work. Miss Antigone went quickly out, slammed the door behind her, instantly turned the key in a large, rusty lock, and Ezra was a prisoner.

"There!" cried the damsel, with exultation, "I think I've managed nicely;" and she hurried downstairs to acquaint her father with her success.

Ezra, surprised and amazed, ran to the door and shook it violently; but it was of tough oak, and resisted all his force. He went to the window, — he could not get even his head through the small hole. Grinding his teeth he swore horribly for some minutes. He was, and no wonder, unspeakably surprised at the turn affairs had taken.

"This beats the very devil!" he growled. "Now how to get out?"

The wily ruffian sat down and pondered over his situation gloomily. "I have it!" he cried, at length, and immediately sprang up and began his operations for liberation.

"Miss Brown hastened to her father.

"I've got him!" cried she; "I've locked him up in the attic chamber. I do believe he's that scamp's son: he looks like him. What are you going to do with him, father?"

"Send a boy with a notice to Justice King, and another to the sheriff. They can take him into custody, and I will write to Mr. Conger."

In about an hour the two officials arrived.

"Where is the rascal?" asked Squire King.

"I have him locked up all right."

"What charge do you bring against him?"

"Why, he's a murderer."

"Well, I can't have him arrested in this State, without authority. Can't you prefer some charge against the man, yourself?"

"Yes; I can charge him with false imprisonment; he locked me up in my own room."

"Well," said the justice, "make out your affidavit, and I'll issue a warrant."

The papers were soon drawn up, and, armed with the warrant, the sheriff went upstairs, followed by the magistrate and doctor.

"Will you surrender peaceably?" shouted the officer, through the keyhole. "I have a posse with me."

"Yes," said Ezra, within the room.

They opened the door. Ezra was sitting quietly at the table, with his back to the door. They all rushed in, and the sheriff grasped — a suit of clothes, stuffed with straw into the figure of a man, while at the same moment the murderer slipped out from behind the door and ran noiselessly down the stairs.

"Great Jove! Doctor Brown," cried the justice, in great wrath, "did you send for me to arrest a man of straw, — a lay figure?"

The doctor gasped with amazement. "Shades of Hercules! Justice King, the man was here, — you heard him speak."

"Yes," said the sheriff; "and while we've been gaping like fools, he's slipped out!"

They all rushed downstairs. Ezra was out of the house and gone, — no one knew whither.

"Hang me!" cried the doctor; "he's the most ingenious dog I ever saw. It would take the devil to hold him!"

"I'll catch him before night," cried the sheriff, who had an exceedingly good opinion of himself; "see if I don't!"

"Do," said the doctor, "and I'll give you a barrel of cider."

The sheriff seemed to be much overjoyed at this announcement, and to have the highest opinion of the doctor's beverage. The sheriff was a short man, with thick brown hair, and coarse yellow beard. He was very strong, apparently; his legs were thick and massive; his nose had a very abrupt upward tendency. He had as little of the "*suaviter in modo*," probably, as any man in the county; his style was rather the "*fortiter in re*." His voice was harsh and loud. He wore a massive gold chain at his vest, and he chewed tobacco profusely. He was the terror of all the small boys in the place.

"Come in," continued the doctor, "and take a glass of wine, gentlemen."

"Thank you, I believe not," said Justice King; but the sheriff, who loved his little glass, made answer, —

"Well, I don't care if I do, doctor, seeing it's you," and he engulfed a stiffish glass of brandy and water with evident relish.

"Now," said Sheriff Bangs, with refreshing complacency, "I'll have that chap before dark. He must be aarnation smart fellow if he outwits me."

Ezra, on leaving the inhospitable precincts of Parnassus Hall, made a strike across the fields for the railway-station. He had no baggage, and purposed leaving H— at once. Dr. Heavyvale had informed him that he would be in New York soon; so he could see the doctor there as well as anywhere else.

The sheriff drove rapidly to the station, himself. He was delighted to see a thick-set, red-haired, cross-eyed man standing on the platform, evidently awaiting the train. He corresponded entirely to the description the doctor had given of Ezra. "There, my man," thought the exultant officer, "I've got you!" and, springing from his "buggy," he hastily tied up his horse, and advancing to the stranger (who was an unoffending, respectable merchant bound to Boston), he clapped him smartly on the shoulder, crying, "Come with me, I want you." The man, a well-dressed and intelligent-looking individual, with pale countenance, and traces of deep grief in every lineament of his face, stared in surprise, and asked him calmly, who he was.

"I'm the sheriff of the county," answered Bangs, with impatience.

"Well," said the man, in an utterly unimpassioned, sad voice; "it matters not to me whether you're an United States Marshal; I don't think you've any business with me. Who do you take me for?"

"Isn't your name James Smith?" cried the sheriff.

"Yes, that's my name, certainly," answered the stranger, with *nonchalance*.

"I thought so. Well, I want you: you are charged with murder."

This announcement, which would certainly have amazed most innocent men, did not cause this man the slightest emotion. He merely replied, carelessly, —

"You've made some mistake, sir."

"Mistake be hanged! You're the man I want, so come along quietly or I'll call in assistance."

"Let me see your warrant," said the man, in the tone of one who asks, "What time is it?"

The sagacious Bangs, in his haste, had left this document at Parnassus Hall. He felt in his pockets, and said, with a blank face, —

"I haven't it with me."

"Then I believe I won't go with you," said Smith. "Hands off!"

The sheriff rushed at him. Smith roused himself sufficiently to deliver a very scientific blow with his left hand, and knocked the officer neatly off the platform. At this moment the cars came along, and nearly ran over the astounded Bangs; and almost before he had regained the platform Smith had taken his seat, and the train moved off. Smith put his head out of the window and nodded to the sheriff in a mild and exasperating manner. If Bangs had not been so much engrossed with rage he would have seen Ezra, who certainly *did* look very much like James Smith, jump upon the rear car and hastily enter.

The baffled officer returned to acquaint Dr. Brown with his *flasco*, breathing vows of vengeance all the way.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SUSPICIONS CONFIRMED.

SINCE Vincent's avowal of love to Ethel, the latter had been greatly agitated and perplexed by various considerations. Her heart was fully given to young Graham and she felt perfect confidence in his love; but she was persuaded that she ought to acquaint him with the facts regarding her infancy. She was convinced that every sentiment of justice and honor demanded the revelation, and yet she shrunk from it. She had no doubt in her own mind, after reading

the lines that her mother had written, that she was the illegitimate child of some unfortunate woman. She did not have a very clear conception of the stain and stigma that this cast upon herself, but she knew enough of the nature of her misfortune to fear that it might be a bar between Vincent and her, although she never entertained this thought without reproaching herself for it, as an injustice to Vincent. She felt utterly unable to communicate the facts to him herself, but she begged her father to write and acquaint Vincent with everything, immediately after her return to Boston.

Vincent had noticed a sort of sadness in Ethel's manner occasionally, and had puzzled himself as to its cause. He had approached the topic, but she, avoiding it, had utterly ignored the matter. Soon after her return to Boston, he received a long letter from Mr. Ebenezer Moore, informing him of everything that he himself knew about Ethel's infancy, and containing a delicate allusion to Ethel's wish that he should consider himself at perfect liberty to annul their half-formed engagement.

This letter affected Vincent very little. The sad circumstances of her birth rather increased his love than otherwise. He at once wrote back in a fervent strain reiterating his vows of love, and strongly expressing his utter disregard of any accidental circumstances of parentage. He cared nothing about Ethel's mother, he said, — it was Ethel herself whom he desired to win, and as for a name, she should henceforth have his own.

Ethel was greatly touched by her lover's magnanimity, and soon Vincent was the delighted recipient of a long epistle full of the tenderest love and expressing her unbounded confidence in him. Thus was this momentous matter disposed of. Vincent acquainted his parents with his love for Ethel and their engagement. His mother seemed delighted, but Vincent was puzzled at his father's conduct. That gentleman rose and left the room abruptly without saying a word. The truth was, that Mr. Graham was horrified at the idea of his son marrying into the Moore family; he did not wish to be eternally linked with that hated name.

In spite of the elder Graham's horror of the name of Moore, when Mr. Ebenezer Moore came to New York (as he did shortly after this) he stayed at his house at his urgent solicitation. A great friendship almost instantly sprang up between the two gentlemen. They had been acquainted in

former years, and this acquaintance was warmly renewed. Mr. Moore's business kept him in New York for nearly two months. Mr. Graham was almost constantly with him, and it was soon evident that he had acquired great influence over the Boston merchant. Mr. Moore invariably applied to him on matters requiring a sagacious judgment, and had apparently the greatest confidence in his profundity and knowledge. Mr. Moore informed his friend that he intended to leave his property, which was very considerable, to Ethel and Edwin, after giving one-third to his wife (should she survive him, which did not seem probable), and that he should make Mr. Graham his sole executor. This latter piece of intelligence was very agreeable to Mr. Graham. In spite of the large fortune he had so basely acquired, Mr. Graham lived far beyond his income. The reparation of his losses in speculation had consumed nearly the whole of his proper share of Mr. Wyckoff's six hundred thousand dollars. His perquisites as executor of Mr. Moore's will would be very acceptable. He was also informed of a provision in that will, of which more anon.

Mr. Moore had scarcely returned to Boston when he took a very severe cold. Neglecting this, inflammation of the lungs followed. His health, naturally delicate, gave way, and in ten days he was dead. Mrs. Moore, at this time a confirmed invalid, did not survive the shock of her husband's death a week. Thus, poor Ethel suddenly found herself an orphan indeed. We will not attempt to paint her grief at this her first great sorrow. A less elastic nature than hers would never have recovered from the double blow. Mr. Graham hastened on to the funeral, and, when the will was opened, and he found himself executor of it and guardian of Ethel, he brought the sorrow-stricken young girl with him to New York, henceforth to live at his house. Mrs. Graham, who had a tender heart in spite of her stateliness and reserve, set herself to the task of comforting Ethel, and in this she was so ably aided by Vincent, that the young lady soon recovered her cheerfulness of manner, and overcame her sorrow, in a measure.

Vincent, now in daily contact with his betrothed, was, it is needless to say, perfectly happy. His love for Ethel became the absorbing passion of his soul. Nothing disturbed the deep content he felt, but the dreadful suspicion of his father's guilt in

connection with the death of William Moore. He determined to satisfy himself of this at all hazards. He was not one of those who think that, "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise;" but invariably did his best to discover anything he ought to know, no matter how distressing the knowledge might prove. But he could not tell what steps to take in the present matter.

Two years or more thus passed quietly away. His marriage with Ethel was delayed by her parents' death.

One day he received a note from Dr. Parkes requesting him to come up to Wyckoff Hall. Surprised at this summons, he took the first train thither. Dr. Parkes met him at the depot, and told him that he had discovered a very singular paper in a desk of the late M. Franchot, which he wished to show him. He led Vincent into the library, and produced the following lines, evidently written in great agitation, —

"Grand Ciel! How terrible! how horrible! Are my senses to be believed? *Mon Dieu! Mon pauvre ami*, William Moore, murdered! Would the aged *Ecossais* lie? Heavens! is he not incapable of such? And Mr. Graham! Can I believe it? Oh, what crime, what wickedness! *Memo*. To see this melancholy, pensive man, in long black beard, and the hoary Scotchman."

Vincent read these words with blanched lips. "What do you think of that?" asked Dr. Parkes.

Now, although the paper convinced Vincent of his father's guilt, he resolved to screen him, and so replied, —

"It reads like the vaporings of insanity. What can it mean? 'William Moore murdered!' Bah! was he not seen to fall overboard?"

"By whom?"

"By whom? Why, by my father and the servants," replied Vincent, who heartily believed that deception is sometimes justifiable.

"Ah! by the servants. Are you sure?"

"Sure! of course I am. My father instantly called the servants who were out of doors, and they all tried their utmost to rescue the unfortunate man. 'The hoary Scotchman!' Pshaw! some impostor trying to deceive the credulous Frenchman. Who do you suppose this Scotchman is?"

"I have no idea," said the doctor, in deep thought.

"Well," continued Vincent, "I would not regard these incoherent lines at all."

"They do not appear to be worth much regard," said the doctor. "Let us think no more about the matter."

Vincent, at the doctor's urgent request, concluded to stay till the next morning.

"Have you heard nothing from Mr. Harry Moore?" he asked.

"Yes. He will be here in a week or two."

Vincent remained in the library with the doctor all the morning. The latter was engaged in examining the deceased's papers. All at once he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Look here, Graham," and he held up a small miniature, in an oval case, which he found in an obscure recess of a desk. It was the picture of a pleasant-looking gentleman of about thirty, undoubtedly Mr. William Moore.

"Just like Franchot!" said Dr. Parkes; "none but he would preserve the likeness of his successful rival."

Vincent gazed at the painting. "May I have this, doctor?"

"It properly belongs to Mr. Harry Moore, but I will lend it you."

That afternoon Vincent mounted one of the doctor's horses, and trotted swiftly along to the grove whither he had ridden with Ethel. His mind was full of gloomy thoughts. The sorrowful exclamations of poor Franchot had convinced him of his father's guilt. He a murderer's son, — a *murderer's*! The thought was torture. He spurred his horse furiously, and dashed along. "Would that I could see this Scotchman!" he cried.

He soon reached the grove. He rode up to the small house occupied by the mysterious Morris. The door was open. Vincent dismounted and went in. He was surprised to see an elderly man sitting at a table reading a large-typed Bible. He certainly looked like a "hoary Scotchman." In an instant Vincent knew that this was the man he sought.

"Pardon me," said he; "is Mr. Morris in?"

"No, sir; he's in the city," said the old man, rising.

"When do you expect him back?"

"In a day or two at farthest. Pray be seated, sir."

Vincent took a chair, and looked keenly at the old man. He was apparently between fifty-five and sixty years of age, but his hair was totally white. He had a shrewd look

in his small gray eyes, but his face was worn and aged.

"My name is Graham," said Vincent, quietly.

"What!" cried the Scotchman, with a start, "Graham!"

"Yes, I am the son of Mr. James Graham, of New York. Do you know him?"

"Ay, I know him well. What may you want here, sir?"

"I have come," replied Vincent, in a very quiet voice, and looking steadily at the old man, "to inquire about William Moore's murder."

"Sir!" cried the other, rising from his chair, "Mr. William Moore's —"

"Murder!" I said. "You know all about it."

"I!"

"Yes, yes; and so do I. Mr. Moore did not fall into the river; he was shoved overboard."

"Ay, he was, he was," said the man in a mournful tone. "The cruelest deed ever I saw."

"You saw! Ha! you were engaged in it, were you?"

A look of great dignity was on the old man's face, as he rose impressively.

"Sir, your suspicion wrongs me. I am as innocent of the crime as yourself."

"Forgive me," said Vincent. "I am sure you are; but tell me all about it."

"Nay, I shall not; you said you knew," returned the other, suspiciously.

"I do know nearly all, but I want my knowledge confirmed. Mr. William Moore was walking on the river bank after Mr. Wyckoff's death with my father and was pushed into the river."

"Ay! by whom?"

"I think I know; but the thought is dreadful."

"You are right, young man, — more's the pity. 'Twas your father shoved him in. I saw him."

Although Vincent expected this announcement and thought himself prepared for it, he could not repress a low cry of anguish at the old man's words.

"Nay, nay, my *puir* lad, do not grieve."

"And you knew about it, did you? Why have you kept it secret all these years?"

At this question the Scotchman writhed, as if in pain.

"Ask me not, ask me not. I could not do it. I have been a wicked man. I have greatly wronged your father, and could na bear the thought of telling on him."

"What have you done to my father?" asked Vincent, surprised.

"I canna tell ye. Ask me not."

"Isn't your name McManus?"

"Yes. I was gardener to Mr. Wyckoff."

"So I thought; and what are you doing now?"

"I am living with Mr. Morris."

"Now I want you to tell me who this Mr. Morris is?"

The old Scotchman's face instantly assumed an expression of impenetrability, and his thin lips closed tightly.

"That's a secret I shall not tell ye."

Vincent saw further inquiries would be useless.

"Well, Mr. McManus, you may be sure it is not pleasant to me to know that my father is a murderer," and a spasm of pain distorted his face, "but I was determined to find out. Now tell me all about it, — every detail of this horrible business."

"Well, sir," said the Scotchman, "seein' as how you know all the principal p'ints in the matter, I s'pose I mought as well."

"Yes, yes. Go on."

"Well, you see, sir, after Mr. Wyckoff's funeral, I was sort o' stunned, as it were, d'ye see; so that I felt as though I were choking. I could na bide in the house, so I walked down to the river to think o'er the dreadf'ul eend of the *puir mon*. Weel, I mostly loikes to row on the river, when I get a chance, so I stepped into the boat that was hitched along-side the bank, and took a bit of a pull into the stream. Weel, sir, ye see, I got kind o' abstracted like, and 'stead o' rowin', I let the tide take me down. Of a sudden I looked up and saw I had got a mile or so from where I started, so I lay to and pulled brisk for a spell. I mought ha' been a quarter of a mile or so from home, when I heered an awful screech or yell. I lay back and done my best. When I got pretty nigh the boat-house, I saw your father sort o' jabbin' at something in the water. I saw him shove a man's head under, just as you might an eend o' log."

"Oh! horrible! horrible!" groaned Vincent.

"Well, sir, I was in the shadow of the thick bushes on the bank, and Mr. Graham did not see nor hear me. I was mortal 'traid, sir, I must confess. There was a bit o' moon, and your father's face as the dim light fell on it, — he looked like a devil," said McManus, in a low voice, shuddering at the recollection.

"Well, sir," he continued, "as I sat there

debating, it couldna ha' been half a minute, I saw poor Mr. Moore floating by. He had on a light overcoat buttoned tight. This seemed filled with air and to float him up; at any rate, he was on the top o' the stream, and seemed dead, quite dead. I made a push to shove my boat arter him, but my oar, sad to say, snapped in two. I tried to scull, but I am a poor hand at sich exercise, and the tide was so dreedful swift, I lost sight of the drowned men."

"And my father?"

"Why, sir, he was making for the house like mad, screaming for help. The servants came rushin' out, and then I showed myself. We spent half the night searching for him, — and that's all," and the Scotchman stopped abruptly.

Vincent, at the close of the recital, remained with his head fallen on his breast, a prey to the gloomiest thoughts.

"Do you live here, McManus?" he inquired at length.

"Yes, sir," said the Scotchman, absently. He seemed to want to say something further to his visitor, and yet could not quite make up his mind to do so.

"Will you be here long, — so that you may hear from me, if necessary?"

"Yes, sir, and if I go away, I'll send you my address."

Vincent rose and hastily bade the old man adieu. He walked his horse home slowly, now and then driving in his spurs and dashing ahead furiously, a short distance. Dr. Parkes wondered at his silence and gloom, all the evening. Early the next morning he returned to the city.

He went home, and a servant informed him that his father desired to see him as soon as he had returned. He went into a small room that his father called his "study." Mr. Graham was sitting there, apparently reading. He motioned his son to a chair. Vincent with difficulty repressed the emotion that the sight of his father caused.

"You wish to see me, sir?"

"Yes. About this marriage connection you desire to form with Miss Moore."

"The marriage connection that I intend to form," corrected Vincent, quietly.

Mr. Graham frowned slightly. "Well, in relation to that marriage, I have to say that it cannot take place."

"Cannot, and how, sir?"

"Cannot with my consent, which is the same thing."

Vincent smiled grimly. "I believe I have

generally been an obedient son, but in this matter I shall certainly act according to my own determination, no matter whether your wishes, sir, may unfortunately clash with mine."

"You think so, do you? Perhaps you will change your mind when I read this paper to you. Are you ready to hear it?"

"I listen, sir."

CHAPTER XIX.

FATHER AND SON.

MR. GRAHAM deliberately unfolded a legal-looking document, and, glancing at his son, observed, "This is the will of the late Mr. Ebenezer Moore, which has just been admitted to probate."

Vincent bowed.

"As you know," pursued his father, "it left a third of his estate to his wife. Since her death this portion reverts to his children. The will also leaves one half of his remaining fortune to his son, the other to his daughter. This you also know. But the condition on which the remaining moiety was left to his daughter, you do not know. I will read it to you. 'I give and bequeath to my beloved adopted daughter Ethel, the remaining half of my estate, real and personal, *on condition* that she does not marry without the full permission and consent of her guardian, hereinafter named. And this condition is imposed, not through any want of confidence in my beloved child, in whom I have, and always have had, the most complete trust, but through fear that her beauty and fortune might cause her to fall a prey to some unprincipled adventurer.' This provision is not drawn up in very lawyer-like style (I suppose the old gentleman wrote it himself), but is very full and clear, isn't it?"

"Very, sir."

"You are also aware that I am the guardian appointed by the will?"

"I am, sir."

"Very well. Then it only remains for me to observe that my consent shall *never* be given to my ward's marriage with you, for reasons which are all-sufficient, although I do not choose to tell them to you. I may also state that the portion of my estate which I have bequeathed by will to you, is forfeited if *you* marry without my consent, and that my consent to a marriage with Miss Moore, will, as I have said before,

never be given. You thus perceive that if you still intend to 'act according to your own determination,' you will marry a penniless bride, and be yourself without resources. Such a shrewd fellow as yourself will not be long in making up your mind."

"Not very long," said Vincent, quietly. "May I ask the reason of this very extraordinary act of yours? I intend to speak dutifully."

"I am not at liberty to tell you. Enough that *nothing* can alter my purpose in the least."

"*Nothing*, sir? Pardon me, I think you will alter your mind this morning, — in less than half an hour."

"What do you mean?" cried Mr. Graham.

"I think I am right," pursued Vincent.

"You mentioned that you would not leave me the share of your fortune that you intended me, in case I married Miss Moore?"

"I did."

"May I ask whether by 'your fortune' you mean the three hundred thousand dollars Mr. Wyckoff left you, or the three hundred thousand in addition, that properly belonged to Mr. William W. Moore, now deceased?"

Mr. Graham started at these words, and changed color.

"Why do you ask such a question? You know very well that by this man's death I came in possession of Mr. Wyckoff's entire fortune."

"I am aware of it. By 'this man' I presume you mean Mr. William Moore. Why do you hesitate to pronounce his name?" He looked at his father keenly, with gleaming eyes. Mr. Graham dropped his own, and said, —

"I have no reason to hesitate in pronouncing his name."

"Oh, you have not? I am very glad, yes, very glad, oh, excessively glad! The recollection of William Moore is very pleasant to you, sir, doubtless. You love to think about him, I imagine. You generally do think about him, do you not? Yes, yes, you haven't forgotten his form, his features? Wouldn't you like to see his portrait?" and he pulled Mr. Moore's miniature from his pocket and thrust it into his father's face.

Mr. Graham drew back with an involuntary cry of horror; his face was the color of ashes, and he veiled his eyes with trembling fingers.

Vincent looked at him with a pitiless scrutiny. His horror at the deed his father

had been guilty of was so great, that all sentiments of filial affection, of natural love, were overborne, annihilated. He felt a savage joy at his father's distress. In punishing tyranny or crime, he was an inexorable judge, an executioner utterly incapable of pity. As he had felt in thrashing Baxter in his school-days, so he felt now, as he confronted his father sinking under the burden of his guilt.

"Why, the sight of his features discomposes you, doesn't it? Strange! Why, he was your most intimate friend; you knew him when you were both young men; you have travelled with him, feasted with him, held business connections with him. He loved you as a brother; he thought you the embodiment of manly honor; he confided his griefs to you; he thought you a man incapable of baseness, of treachery, of guilt!"

At these words, each of which pierced the guilty man's breast like a barbed arrow, Mr. Graham was terribly agitated. His face was always colorless, but now it was the face of a corpse. He looked at his son with a strange alarm, but his self-command did not desert him. He composed his features, and, in an unconcerned voice, asked the meaning of all this rodomontade. "Are you crazy? You talk wildly, and are wandering from the subject of our conversation."

"Pardon me, I am not. Will you allow me the use of this pen a moment?"

"What do you want to write?"

"I will show you in a moment. In the mean time, sir, you can recover your composure, which seems to have been unaccountably disturbed."

Vincent wrote, and handed what he had written to his father. Mr. Graham read it, and smiled scornfully.

"A written unconditional consent to Ethel's marriage with you. Have I not already told you that I will not give this consent?"

"Yes; but I said I thought you would. I know a little circumstance which perhaps you may not wish to have generally noised about."

Mr. Graham looked puzzled. No suspicion of his son's knowledge of the murder yet dawned upon him. "What is the little circumstance?"

"Shall I tell you?"

"Yes."

They were sitting opposite each other at a narrow, massive, oak writing-table. Vin-

cent stretched across, and bringing his face close to his father's, and, looking with an inflexible gaze into his startled eyes, said, with the clearest enunciation and in his hardest, cruellest, most pitiless tones, — tones which seemed to freeze the blood, —

"Merely, sir, that you are the murderer of William Moore." He had risen as he spoke, and now stood towering above the abject man, with eyes that glowed like coals, like an avenging fury.

We are utterly incapable of depicting the effect, upon the murderer, of this awful charge, so unexpected, so overwhelming. He who sat there a moment before, proud and erect, was now a miserable, quivering dotard, his teeth chattering, his trembling hands raised above his head, as if to ward off an assassin's blow.

"Mercy, pity, pity!" he groaned, almost inaudibly.

"Mercy, pity to you / pity to you!" cried Vincent, in the same terrible tone.

"My son, my son, kill me not," moaned the almost lifeless man.

"Your son! O God, I am! Oh, unutterable woe!" and a groan of such despair as Dives might have uttered, burst from his lips. He gazed at his father with the same disgust one feels for a disfigured corpse, — utter loathing.

"I am your son, and I could curse you for it!" Mr. Graham's face fell over on the table, and he groaned aloud. Vincent strode up and down the narrow room, with teeth hard-set, and hands fiercely clenched. His respiration was difficult, so great was the excitement he labored under. But he soon gained a sombre calmness, — a calmness more frightful than his late vehemence. He advanced to the table.

"Mr. Graham," said he, — "for I will never call you 'father' again, — will you sign that paper?"

"Yes, yes," cried the other, raising his head a little. "I will sign anything, only spare me."

"I will reveal nothing; I do not wish your shame published. But stay, I will change the form of that paper. I can never marry Ethel; no, never, never!" and a low cry of utter despair struggled from his bloodless lips. He hastily wrote again. "Here," said he, "is your full, unconditional consent for Miss Moore to marry whom she pleases. Sign it," and he pointed to the pen with an imperative gesture. The crushed man with difficulty affixed his trembling signature.

"Let me go now," he said, piteously.

"No, stay. Know, sir, that this most foul deed of yours has forever blasted all my earthly hopes. The creature who is dearer to me than life, I can never call my own. A murderer's son marry Ethel Moore! Impious thought!"

"Forgive me!" groaned his father.

"Forgive you! Yes, if a heart-broken widow could have forgiven you, had she known the deed, I could forgive; if poor Moore struggling in the water could have forgiven you standing above him on the bank, so could I."

"I will deed all my fortune to you, Vincent, if you will forgive me, and be merciful."

"Your fortune! the infernal proceeds of your crime! Sir, I would not touch a penny. Henceforth I shall make my own fortune. Listen. I have you, Mr. Graham, in a position in which I could extort anything from you; but am I here to serve my own interests, merely, think you? I have lifted the veil from your hideous secret to compel justice to your ward. I can never marry this angel; whether she is penniless or an heiress matters not to me. As for me, cut me off with nothing; I want no money of yours. But this I say, and this you must do. Every cent of the three hundred thousand dollars that you stole from William Moore you must account for and turn over, with interest, to his son, Harry Moore. Do you hear? every cent."

"O Heaven! it will leave me in penury."

"Well, let it. Do you agree?"

"I must."

"Yes, you must. I give you a month to make the accounting. Mr. Kavanagh, who is in Mr. Seagrave's office, is familiar with the condition of the late Mr. Wyckoff's estate. He has seen the appraisal of it. He shall examine and verify your statements, and shall have no suspicion of the reason of it. You understand?"

"Yes," said the other, faintly.

"Very well; you have a month. You are aware I have a small fortune of twenty thousand dollars left me by my mother's father, and that I have managed it since I came of age. On this property I shall live. To preserve appearances, I shall continue to reside at this house with my mother, but all connection with you, Mr. Graham, I discontinue from this moment. I shall do nothing to excite remark or wonder, but henceforth we are mere acquaintances. I am about to pursue the profession of the

law. I have studied it, leisurely but thoroughly, for the last two years. As for Miss Ethel Moore," and his haughty tones faltered, "I shall immediately release her from the obligation she has entered into with me. And now our interview is over. Believe me, sir, it has been as painful to me as to you," and the poor fellow almost broke down, as he added, in a voice of infinite sadness, "Is it a pleasant thing, think you, for a son to ferret out the crimes of his father?"

"Oh, but tell me how you discovered this, after such a lapse of time. Does any one know it besides you?"

"I have for a long time had my suspicions. Yesterday they were confirmed."

"Does any one know of this?" he asked, after a moment's pause.

"Yes, some one else does know, — an eye-witness to the scene."

"Death and fury!"

"Yes; you will never rest at ease. You will always be tortured by fear of the revelation that this man can make at any time. A fitting punishment."

"Does — does your mother know of it?"

"No, and pray God she never may! Sir, I wish you good-morning," and he turned and went out, leaving his father almost insensible, from agony and fear.

Despair seized James Graham. He remembered the night of the murder that he had passed at Wyckoff Hall; every night since then had been a more or less vivid repetition of it. No wonder his hair had grown gray and his eyes sunken. As he lay there groaning, after Vincent had gone, there burst from his pallid lips the wretched cry that Cain had uttered, — "O God, my punishment is greater than I can bear!"

CHAPTER XX.

VISIT FROM THE DEAD.

As the detected murderer sat groaning in the bitterness of his soul, he heard footsteps in the hall that caused him to start up erect, and the blood in his veins to run cold as ice. Had he not heard that measured tread in years long past? Do the dead walk?

The footsteps approached, and a rap was made upon the door. In response to his trembling "Come in," Mr. Morris entered. Disguised by a long, black beard, and otherwise changed from the genial, pleasant man

of eighteen years ago, it would have been impossible for Mr. Graham to suspect — even if he had not seen him drowned — that this man was (as the sagacious reader has, of course, supposed all along) none other than William Moore.

"Pray be seated, sir," said Graham; "whom have I the honor of addressing?"

"My name is Morris," said the other. Again Graham's blood congealed at a sound so unfamiliar and yet so strangely known.

"Can I do anything for you, Mr. Morris?"

"Yes, if you will be kind enough to give me your attention for a few moments," and, as he spoke, his eye caught the miniature of himself lying on the table. He picked it up in amazement.

"Is not this the likeness of the late William Moore?"

"Yes," faltered the other, "but your business?"

"Pardon me for a moment. I knew Mr. Moore. He was drowned, was he not?"

"Yes."

"On the Hudson."

"Yes."

"You were there at the time, I believe?"

"Yes, yes, but —"

"Pardon my inquiries; I have great interest in this subject. I have long desired to hear the details of Moore's death. Will you not favor me with an account?"

Mr. Graham felt himself to be in a horrible situation, but he could not well refuse the request, according to his ideas of politeness.

"There is very little to say, sir. He was walking on the bank and accidentally fell in. The tide carried him off, and he was drowned."

"Yes. You were walking with him, were you not?"

"Yes, I was, but I could not rescue him."

"How sad! You were quite near him when he fell?"

"No, I was at some distance."

"Ah! You rushed to his assistance?"

"Certainly I did."

"Of course, — and did he not rise to the surface?" Mr. Graham's face showed the torture this examination caused him.

"No, he did not."

"Why, that was singular. A drowning man generally rises to the surface twice. So you did not see him after he sunk?"

"No! Why are you so particular in your inquiries?"

"These melancholy details interest me

greatly. I know of an unfortunate affair very similar to this. Let me relate it."

"Pray, sir," cried Mr. Graham, "come at once to the business you have with me. My time is much occupied. I have not the honor of your acquaintance, sir. What do you want with me? Did you come here to tell anecdotes?"

"Yes, partly for that. I came here to talk of Mr. William Moore."

"Well, sir, the subject is very disagreeable to me."

"Ah, indeed! His death caused you much sorrow, did it not? He was your most intimate friend, I believe?"

"Yes; your questions are very singular."

"You will see their pertinency soon, sir. Let me tell you the story I was about to tell. There were once two friends who loved each other as brothers. They went to the funeral of a mutual friend, an old gentleman, who had a residence on the bank of a river, — are you ill?"

"It is nothing. Go on."

"They stayed to hear the old gentleman's will read. Quite similar to your own experience, was it not?"

"Very similar," gasped the frightened man. "The names of those persons, — who were they?"

"I will tell you soon. Let me finish. By this will, these two friends were made co-heirs of the old gentleman's fortune. A fine example of friendship, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"Really, Mr. Graham, you seem quite touched by the affair. It was very delicate. Now in your case, Mr. Wyckoff left you sole heir to his estate."

"No, he left half to this man."

"To William Moore! is it possible? Why, upon my word, the two affairs are almost identical, a most remarkable coincidence! Hear now the dreadful *denouement*. That night, these two gentlemen were walking on the river bank —"

"What river was it?"

"We will call it the Delaware — were walking on the river bank, the one plunged in profound grief at his friend's sudden death, the other revolving an infernal scheme. Yes, Mr. Graham, — you will doubtless find difficulty in believing the horrid truth, — one of these men resolved then and there to murder the other for his money. No wonder you start, sir. It was most fiendish. And how did he execute this conception of hell? He threw his companion off the bank into the water; the unhappy

victim rose to the surface, this devil on the bank thrust him under again, and held him there till he floated away, dead. I think, sir, you must agree with me that a more diabolical deed was never perpetrated. Why, Mr. Graham, look at all the circumstances. These two men were more than friends, their relations were more than intimate, they were brothers almost; they had been in daily contact for years, and yet for three hundred thousand dollars, — Mr. Graham, your agitation alarms me."

"There's nothing the matter," ejaculated the other, in the tone of a man being strangled; "I was only amazed at the sum you mentioned."

"Was it the same Mr. Wyckoff left you and your friend? Is it possible? 'Pon my word, I never heard of such coincidences! As I was saying, for this money, this — I am at a loss for a word to designate this man — deliberately consigned him to a cruel death, deliberately stole the fortune from his wife and children, deliberately availed himself of the wealth thus acquired, and has ever since been living on the accursed gains!"

"For God's sake, stop!" cried Mr. Graham; "I have heard enough."

"Mr. Graham, your susceptibility does you honor. I have almost done with the subject. I wish to ask you a question. What in your opinion would be a fitting punishment for that man? Could anything be too severe?"

"No," came almost inaudibly from the other's lips.

"Would the loss of all peace of mind; the daily, hourly, incessant presence of hideous remorse; sleepless nights, or nights full of dreams of horror; the continual haunting of the dead man's face; the sight of that river and the drifting corpse, wherever he looked; the death-cry of his victim forever ringing in his ears; eternal reproaches in the affectionate looks of his wife, in the honest, manly gaze of his son, — for he has a son, sir, about *your* son's age, — a never-absent awful dread of detection; a 'fearful looking-forward-to of judgment,' — would all this, all this accumulated horror be too much?"

"He deserves it all," cried Graham, in agony.

"Well, sir, I think so, too. But there is another punishment he might have. It is this. Suppose that, occasionally, this murderer should see the murdered man, not in the spirit, but corporeally in human form,

with the air of life, dogging his footsteps; suppose that he should meet him in society, sit beside him at banquets, encounter him in the streets and public conveyances, be, in short, continually running across the man whom eighteen years before — ah! sir, what is it? Mr. Graham, your sudden, violent starts quite frighten me. What is their cause?"

"A nervous affection, sir."

"Ah! superinduced by mental anxiety, perhaps? Well, sir, would it not be eminently fitting for this atrocious demi-devil I have told you of, to be ceaselessly tortured by the apparent presence of his unhappy victim? Yes; I see you agree with me. Very well, Mr. Graham, the object of my call is accomplished."

"But, sir," cried Mr. Graham, rallying a little, "why have you come here, a stranger, and told me all this, and recited what appears to you a piece of poetical justice?"

"I will tell you, sir," and instantly Morris's manner changed. He rose and looked at Graham with such an awful scrutiny, that the unhappy wretch quailed before him.

"I have told you the story of the old gentleman leaving his property to his two friends, because that old gentleman was Mr. Wyckoff, those two friends Mr. William Moore and yourself."

Mr. Graham fell back, speechless; his labored breathing alone showed he was alive. His tormentor went on, —

"I have told you about that fatal evening walk by the river bank, because Mr. William Moore and you were the men who took it; because *you* were the wretch who threw the other into the river; *you* were the fiend who held him under the current till he died. Are you dead? Well, I shouldn't be surprised. I see not how you *can* live, unless 'tis through cowardice. I have mentioned the friendly, intimate, *brotherly* relations that existed between these men, because there *were* such relations; because this fact aggravated, unspeakably intensified, the enormity of the deed. I have related the punishment that this man ought, as you yourself have assented, to bear: a mind everlastingly preyed upon by remorse; sleepless or hideous nights; a horrible, ineffaceable picture before his frightened eyes; the knell of poor Moore's death-cry ceaselessly torturing his ears; continual reproaches in the innocent and loving looks of his family meeting him at home, — because *this* is the punishment you have borne, James

Graham, for eighteen years. And, finally, I have suggested a further torment for the murderer, — for *you*, — the being haunted by the murdered man in the body, because, mark my words, you will feel this last and most dreadful punishment in the awful future. I have done with you, sir. I hope you have seen the pertinence of my questions and the application of the little anecdote I have related; and he rose to leave. A strange sound from Mr. Graham caused him to turn; the miserable man was trying to speak, but uttered merely inarticulate sounds. At length he said, —

"Mr. Morris, for the love of God tell me how many others know my awful secret, — a secret that has been buried in my breast for eighteen years?"

"Murder will out, sir. I will not answer your question. Suffice it to say that this horrible deed of yours is no longer a secret. It is known. How long it will be confined to a few I don't know. But this I can assure you," he added, as if a sudden thought had struck him: "if you seek relief from the awful torture you will henceforth know, in death, the full facts of your guilt shall be blazoned to the world. So try not to rob the murdered Moore of his vengeance, by suicide! The very day you die by your own hand, that very hour, the facts of the murder, duly authenticated and attested, will be published, and infamy and the execration of your species will follow you to the grave!" And the tall, melancholy man stalked on. If he had wished for an exquisite revenge, he would have been completely satisfied had he known the anguish he caused Mr. Graham.

The "small study" opened into a large apartment, — the library. The library, as well as the study, opened into the hall. Mr. Morris, or rather Moore, after leaving his victim, went at once into the former apartment.

Mr. Graham quickly recovered from the stupor into which his visitor's revelation had thrown him. He rose and walked around the room, throwing his arms about in anguish. He did not dare to appeal to the Deity to alleviate his misery; the crime he had committed shut him out from the resource of prayer. He sat down at the table and, resting his head upon it, groaned aloud.

At this moment Mr. Moore, divested of his long, black beard, with his cravat arranged in his old negligent way and looking — but for the lines in his face and the

streaks of gray in his hair—very like the William Moore of eighteen years before, appeared, standing in the library door, erect, motionless. He was dressed in black, and his face was pale. He was looking at Graham with a melancholy rather than an angry gaze. He stood there, like a statue, till the other should turn and see him.

Mr. Graham, as he sat in his attitude of despair, was thinking of suicide. The agony he had borne so long, seemed to him to have reached an intolerable climax. But then the terrible announcement that Mr. Morris had made,—that all his guilt should be promulgated to the world, in case he destroyed himself,—rang in his ears. Of all the unaccountable sentiments that man feels, this excessive regard for his posthumous character seems to us the strangest. Of course to be in good repute with men while you live, is one of the most desirable of things, and yet have there been those, who have willingly encountered the detestation of their contemporaries to secure fame—fame! the most unreal, intangible of things. *Power in life* is to be sought for, but what good is fame after death? Yet Mr. Moore had touched the right chord in this man's mind, when he spoke of an infamous name hereafter. Mr. Graham resolved to endure his present misery, rather than insure "the execration of his species," after death. But he looked forward to the future with unutterable horror. He felt sure that the day would come when those who held his secret would divulge it. What use they might make of it, in the meantime, in the way of extorting money, he did not care to conjecture. As for the threat of being haunted by the man's ghost, Mr. Graham scornfully laughed at it. He was one of those persons, called practical and sensible, who reject everything that does not come within the pale of their daily and ordinary experience. He scouted at everything supernatural, for the wise reason that it *was* supernatural. So he smiled and raised his head as he thought of the last torment his visitor had spoken of. "As for spectres, ghosts, or other hobgoblins, I'd meet them by the regiment," he said aloud, and, turning around, beheld Moore standing in the doorway.

When a man like Mr. Graham, who has steadily disbelieved all his life in such a thing as the dead revisiting the earth in mortal shape, has, at last, what he deems an indisputable proof before his eyes, that the dead do appear to the living,—the re-

vulsion in his mind is awful; the horror that takes possession of him unspeakable. Many are the authenticated cases of such persons dying the most horrible of all deaths,—being killed by fright,—falling victims to wicked jokes or disordered fancy. Fright at supernatural appearances is the most dreadful of all emotions, if we may believe those who have, or think they have, beheld them. Mr. Graham, though a bold man, was one peculiarly fitted by nature to feel the most exquisite poignancy of terror at spectral apparitions. The events of the morning had "unstrung his nerves," as the vague saying goes. When, therefore, after uttering his boast, he turned and beheld the man standing before him, whom eighteen years before he had seen floating a corpse in the river; when he saw his victim standing there, with mild reproach and sorrow in his eyes, the pulsations of his heart were checked, and he felt the unnamable horror of Eliphaz. This was no optical delusion, no phantom born of darkness; he was not ten feet from the "spectre;" the day was now in the full glare of noon, and the sunlight flooded the room. He felt the fascination of horror; he could not draw away his gaze. He was as fully persuaded that he saw William Moore's ghost, as he had before disbelieved in its possibility; and the idea was awful. There stood the man in the reality of life, whom he had before seen in the impalpable visions of night. The appalled man, half-risen from his chair, gazed with starting eyes. The vision was "a goblin damned" bringing with it "blasts from hell." Then burst upon him the full force and horror of Moore's threat; then did he feel the complete significance of that "further torment," his visitor had mentioned. Moore did not speak; he merely kept that sad, unvarying look upon the unhappy man, and slowly moving backward, disappeared behind the door; and, at the same moment, Mr. Graham fell forward on his face, in a fit, felled by fright.

CHAPTER XXI.

A TEST OF LOVE.

VINCENT left his father's presence in the deepest grief. He did not feel the slightest compunction at the severe punishment he had inflicted. As has been said, he no

longer looked upon the man as his father. He was so constituted as to have the most intense horror for crime and the criminal; the most profound love for virtue and the virtuous. In Mr. Graham he did not see a father, but a murderer; all ties of blood were swept away, all filial love annihilated. He felt no pity for his father, no sorrow for the bitter words he had uttered; but as he went out his heart was pierced with acute misery at his own situation. He did not for an instant waver in his determination to tell Ethel that a stain was upon his name,—not indeed to reveal its nature,—an ineffaceable stain, one which rendered their union impossible. He *had* meant to have straightway sought her presence and imparted this dreadful intelligence; but man is mortal. He had not courage to deliberately sever the sweet ties between them, and encounter Ethel's unavailing grief. He, therefore, went out into the open air to walk the streets in agony all day.

After Mr. Moore had moved away from the library door, he hastily resumed his disguise. He stepped into the hall and met a servant. "Show me to the parlor," said he, "and inform Miss Moore that a gentleman wishes to see her on quite important business."

Ethel surprised at this message, hurried down. As she entered the drawing-room she did not at first recognize Morris.

"I see you have forgotten me, Miss Moore. I have had the pleasure of seeing you twice before. Don't you recollect meeting me in a grove, once while you were out on a horseback excursion? And I saw you at a party about a fortnight ago."

Ethel remembered both occasions. "O Mr. Morris!—a very unexpected pleasure, sir—" and she paused, quite embarrassed. There was something about this man that unaccountably agitated and fascinated her.

"You kindly invited me to call," continued Morris. "Pardon my remissness. I waited till I could communicate something important."

"Then you have something important to say this morning? Indeed, you sent up word that you had."

"Very important, Miss Moore, but something which will cause you much grief," replied Mr. Morris, gravely.

"Then keep me no longer in suspense."

"You are engaged to be married to Mr. Vincent Graham, are you not? Pardon the apparent rudeness of the question. I want to be sure of my facts before I proceed."

"Mr. Graham and I are engaged," said Ethel, blushing slightly.

"Well, Miss Moore,—oh, how can I tell the dreadful truth!"

Ethel sprang up with pallid face and caught Moore's arm in a tight grasp,—

"Has anything happened to *him*?" she cried, in a strange voice,—a voice through which struggled the agony of apprehension she felt.

"Calm yourself, my dear Miss Moore. Mr. Graham is perfectly well."

"Oh! then I don't care what it is you have to tell!" cried the ingenuous girl.

"It is something which does not affect his life or health, but his name."

"His name!" repeated Ethel, with scarcely perceptible *hauteur* in her calm voice. "His name is safe. I have no fear."

"Well, the name of his family, then. Miss Moore, there is disgrace upon the name of Graham."

"Of what nature, sir?"

"A disgrace of the blackest kind. This is a very distressing revelation for me to make, but I have felt it my duty to acquaint you with certain circumstances before you take the name of Graham upon yourself."

"Let me entreat you, sir, to relate those circumstances at once."

"Miss Moore, would you marry a murderer?" asked Mr. Morris, abruptly.

"A very extraordinary question," replied Ethel. "Of course not."

"Would you marry a murderer's son?" he pursued.

In a moment Ethel knew what he meant, and she instantly returned,—

"If I loved him and believed him good, noble, and true, I would."

"Well, Miss Moore, then you relieve my mind. There may be no necessity to withdraw from any obligations."

"Do you mean to say—"

"Yes. I must tell you the truth. Mr. James Graham is a murderer."

"Oh! how know you?"

"From the most indubitable testimony,—the revelation of eye-witnesses. Mr. Graham is guilty of the drowning of Mr. William Moore, your uncle, which everybody has supposed to have been accidental."

"Oh! how dreadful! I cannot believe it!"

"Do not deem me capable, Miss Moore, of coming here to deliberately deceive you in such a matter. Believe me, I *know* the truth of what I say."

"But is it not possible you have been misinformed, Mr. Morris?"

"Unfortunately, it is not. I have talked with one who saw Mr. Graham shove poor William Moore into the river, and push him under again when he rose to the surface."

"And he gained great wealth by it," said Ethel to herself; "and this is why he has been so wretched; yes, yes. How has this horrible murder been so long concealed?" she asked aloud, calmly, although almost overcome by the revelation.

"Those who knew of it have concealed it for purposes of their own; but it will be known to every one eventually. Think, then, of the disgrace you will encounter if you marry Mr. Vincent Graham. I have discharged what I felt to be my duty, Miss Moore, in acquainting you with this very painful fact."

"Sir," said Ethel, in tears, "I think it kind in you to have told me this before I had committed myself by marriage, but I assure you it will not make the least difference in the world as far as my actions are concerned. It has not changed my—my opinion of the younger Mr. Graham, in the least. Such fortuitous circumstances, however dreadful they may be, have not the slightest influence with me."

"I am truly glad to hear of it, Miss Moore, for both your sakes. Let me close an interview that has been painful to us both," and he rose and took her hand. Again his eager gaze scrutinized her face, again Ethel felt the strange influence this man had over her, again the indefinable feeling of interest and pity took possession of her.

After he had gone, Ethel went to her room and gave way to her restrained tears. Vincent the son of a murderer! Vincent, the embodiment of all that was manly and honorable, noble, good, and true!—her hero, her ideal, the object of her purest love!—Vincent the son of a man who had cruelly murdered her uncle for money! She found difficulty in believing it, and yet Mr. Morris had been positive of the truth of what he said. If any ordinary stranger had come to her and made this statement she would probably have laughed in his face, or rang for a servant to show him the door; but Mr. Morris seemed like *no stranger* to her; she felt, without knowing why, the most unbounded confidence in him. And the more she thought of the matter the more probable did it seem to her that her guardian was actually guilty of the alleged crime,—that supposition solved so many little previous mysteries. It was only when she thought

of Vincent that the crime seemed incredible.

"Shall I give him up," said Ethel to herself, "now that this great sorrow is upon him? Shall I desert him when he most needs a woman's solace? Should I do so, I would indeed be unworthy of his love! I care nothing for the disgrace I shall have to bear; its weight shall not fall upon him alone; I shall help him bear it. As long as I am assured of his love I can bear the odium of the world! He does not know anything about this awful truth. I am glad. I shall not reveal it to him, I shall keep it from him."

With such thoughts as these did the young girl rededicate her heart to Vincent and renew her vows of love—this time alone. Instead of Mr. Morris' revelation causing the faintest feeling of repugnance in her mind towards the murderer's son, it exalted and vivified her affection, if that were possible; it introduced an element of pity—that soft passion—into the vehemence of her love. She felt glad to think there was now occasion for *her* to exercise magnanimity; that her lover would find that *she* could overlook "accidental circumstances of parentage" as well as he.

But Vincent, as he walked along through the most sequestered streets he could find, was a prey to the most unmitigated anguish. He thought that others must feel the same intense horror of his father's crime that he felt. For him, the son of a murderer, to marry Ethel Moore, was an idea not to be entertained for a moment. If he had been hideously deformed, or an idiot, he could not have considered himself less fit to be the young girl's husband. But he greatly dreaded to make the revelation to her; he could not bear the thought of going to her and saying, "I am no longer a man of unblemished name—I am the son of your uncle's murderer." Yet he had inflexibly determined to make this revelation; that it would be unspeakably base to keep Ethel in ignorance of the truth. But at any rate she should enjoy the sweet illusion a little longer,—he would defer his wretchedness a few days.

He was informed on returning to the house that his father had been found lying insensible on the study floor, and had been revived with difficulty,—that Mrs. Graham was attending him, and that consequently Ethel and he would dine together alone. He waited for her to descend. It was the first time he had not fretted with impatience

at the tardy moments, when he expected her. Now he rather feared her coming lest she should read something amiss in his face. Ethel, too, felt a strange diffidence in going in to meet him. For the first time in the harmonious course of their love she had something to hide from him, and she was afraid that his loving scrutiny would detect the concealment. The lovers met. Ethel instantly noted Vincent's unusual paleness; he at once perceived the indefinable marks of sorrow in her eyes. Both attributed these unwonted appearances to Mr. Graham's illness.

"My—my father," asked Vincent, stammering at the word, "is more comfortable,—is he not?"

"Yes. Do you know what was the cause of his fainting?"

"Probably overwork," said Vincent, constrainedly; "he was writing long."

Ethel noticed his agitation. "How he loves his father! poor fellow!" thought she.

Both endeavored to cover their praiseworthy reticence by a display of gaiety; so the dinner, if not as happy as previous ones, was at least as hilarious. When occasionally in the midst of their merriment the thought of the wretchedness in store for him flashed across Vincent's mind, it seemed to reveal, as a lightning flash does sometimes to the dismayed traveller, a yawning, profound, bridgeless chasm in his path. At times he was on the point of disclosing the truth to his companion; but the sight of her bright face looking up at him with an *abandon* of love he had never seen before, checked the dismal revelation.

CHAPTER XXII.

EZRA IN LUCK.

EZRA HOYT, after his narrow escape from capture at H—, proceeded to New York. Secreted in a miserable house in one of the most out-of-the-way streets in the city, and never venturing out of doors except at night, and then impenetrably disguised, he had managed to elude the police. No one knew of his presence there, save Mr. D. Murragh,—a legal gentleman of good abilities but vile character, who had once or twice but narrowly escaped being thrown over the bar for his misdeeds,—and Dr. Heavyvale. Mr. Murragh lived in a

wretched house down-town, but was reputed to be very rich. In fact, he had despoiled many clients of the greater part of their wealth. His practice was now confined to criminal cases of the most desperate kind. He was an utterly unscrupulous man. There was but one person in the world he feared, and that was Ezra Hoyt. He feared him for reasons which will be hereafter apparent.

Dr. Heavyvale knew nothing at all about Ezra's character. The latter had told him that, for very urgent private reasons, he did not wish his presence in the city known, and the doctor, with the honor of his profession, had carefully kept the secret. He attended Ezra two or three times a week, and, although the case was a very difficult one, held out hopes of ultimately eradicating the "cast" in his eyes. Through the legal assistance of Mr. Murragh (who had a full power of attorney from his principal), Ezra had had Mr. Franchot's will "proved," and had entered into possession of the estate. He rented Wyckoff Hall to Dr. Parkes. That gentleman was informed that very pressing business detained Ezra in Canada, afterwards that he was dangerously ill and unable to travel, and finally that he had sailed to the Mediterranean to re-establish his health, leaving Mr. Murragh empowered to act for him in everything. Thus had it come to pass that two years had elapsed since Franchot's murder, without Ezra having been seen. Mr. Conger came to the conclusion that the man he sought so diligently was dead.

At the date at which we have now arrived, however, Ezra was ready to make his debut as Harry Moore. Certainly a wonderful transformation had taken place in his appearance. Thanks to Dr. Heavyvale's skill, his oblique vision was entirely rectified; he had not now the slightest "cast" in his eyes. Owing to the scientific application of dyes, his hair was no longer caroty-red, but of a rich dark-brown hue. His heavy side-whiskers and beard were carefully removed and his face closely shaven, with the exception of a heavy mustache, also dark-brown, that entirely altered the expression of the lower part of his face. He was no longer the rough, rowdyish fellow of two years ago. He was dressed with the most scrupulous neatness, his boots resplendently polished. He wore a delicate pair of gold spectacles (plain glass), to add to his altered appearance. In short, he seemed some highly respectable

ble well-to-do banker or merchant. He was so thoroughly changed that he did not fear detection in the least. He now began to promenade Broadway. One day, about noon, he met Mr. Conger face to face. The detective glanced at him indifferently without the slightest recognition and passed on. Ezra then felt perfectly secure.

"I have three persons 'in the mind's eye, Horatio,'" said Ezra to himself, "whose scores are not yet wiped out, — Conger, that infernal Dr. Brown, and Vincent Graham — curse him."

It was the last whom he most cordially hated, and against whom he vowed the most complete vengeance. He removed his quarters to a fashionable hotel, and passed under the name of H. Moore.

One morning, while reading the *Times*, at the breakfast-table, he was thunderstruck to come across this paragraph, —

"CAUGHT AT LAST. — It will be remembered that, about two years ago, a most atrocious murder was committed at the residence of a gentleman on the Hudson, near the town of R—. The murdered man was Mr. Auguste Franchot, an elderly Frenchman, of most unoffending character. The object of the deed has always been a profound mystery; for no robbery was committed, — no motive could be imagined. One of the murderers was killed in an attempt to capture him; but the other escaped. Since that time, all efforts to apprehend this man have been in vain, although all the resources of that secret police, of which our city is so justly proud, have been employed. It affords us, then, great satisfaction to announce in this morning's issue that the perpetrator of the cold-blooded deed has at length been seized. He was arrested in Boston day before yesterday, and was brought to this city last night. He gives his name as James Smith, and stoutly denies his guilt. His capture was effected by the dexterity and skill of Sheriff Bangs, of — County, Massachusetts. This energetic officer came very near catching him once before. The prisoner has been lodged in the Tombs, and will probably be tried at the next session of *Oyer and Terminer*. He is a short, thick-set man, etc., etc."

Ezra dropped the paper in astonishment. "James Smith!" he repeated. "James Smith arrested for this affair! What the devil does it mean?" Suddenly he recollected that this was the name he had assumed at H—. "Ah! they have nabbed some poor devil who looks like me and hap-

pens to be named James Smith. Good joke! Well, I must help get him hung, and then I shall be all right; for Conger will drop the scent;" and he rubbed his hands complacently.

The unfortunate Smith, after his successful resistance to the worthy sheriff at H—, had pursued his journey in quiet. It took a good deal to astonish this man, and he did not think much about the circumstance. As time passed away, he forgot the adventure entirely. Shortly after arriving in Boston, he had gone to New Orleans, where he remained for eighteen months, and therefore, — although Sheriff Bangs, chagrined at his failure, had tracked him to Boston, and had done his best, aided by the police of that city, to capture him, he had as yet remained unmolested. But, on his return from New Orleans, as he was one day walking in Tremont Street, he encountered the indefatigable sheriff. He did not recognize him at all; but the exultant officer instantly knew his man, and, directing a subaltern to watch the unsuspecting Smith, he hastened off to procure the necessary papers, and, thus properly armed, entered the restaurant where the unfortunate man was dining. He advanced towards him, with a smile.

"Ah, Mr. Smith, I am very glad to see you, — delighted to see you."

"Pardon me, sir," said Smith, "you have the advantage of me."

"Yes, I think I have," said Bangs, with a disagreeable laugh. "I don't think you'll knock me off a railway platform this time, my dear sir."

At these words, Smith recollected the *rencontre* at H. "What fatality pursues me!" thought he. "Have you still got that absurd charge of murder against me?" he asked.

"Certainly. There is no limitation of time in murder cases, you know. I will have to trouble you to come with me, Mr. Smith."

"Let me finish my dinner, won't you? Sit down and take a glass of wine."

The sheriff complied with alacrity.

"Now be kind enough to let me know all about this affair, if you please. Whom have I murdered, and when, and where?"

"Gad, you're a cool one! You don't recollect, maybe, sticking an old Frenchman in the ribs, about two years ago?"

"I do not, certainly."

"You've forgotten, too, I suppose, about going to H—, and seeing Dr. Heavyvale about your eyes?"

"I never was in H—, except for half an hour the day I met you, and never saw Dr. Heavyvale, to my knowledge, in my life."

"Now, really," said the sheriff, "I would advise you, as a friend, not to deny these immaterial points, which can be easily proved. Plead 'not guilty,' of course, to the charge of murder, but don't deny going to H—, seeing Dr. Heavyvale, going as porter to Dr. Brown's, being locked up in his garret, getting out by a very neat dodge, and knocking me off the platform, for they can all be proved."

"I do deny everything except knocking you off the platform. Going as porter to Dr. Brown, indeed! Do I look like a porter, sir?"

Mr. Smith was well dressed, and seemed opulent. The sheriff admitted that he *did not* look like a porter.

"Come, now," said Smith, "this is some most singular mistake."

"Oh, undoubtedly!" said the sheriff, dryly.

"A case," pursued Smith, "of mistaken identity. Now tell me all about this murder which it appears I committed."

The sheriff thereupon related all the particulars of the murder of Franchot, the killing of Dick Hoyt, the escape of the other, the pursuit by Conger, the *ruse* at the Bowery Theatre, the capture by Dr. Brown, the escape, the recapture by Miss Antigone Brown, and the second escape.

Smith listened in wonderment.

"And," concluded Sheriff Bangs, "this wily chap was short and thick-built, like you, had very red hair, like you, was cross-eyed, like you, had a scar across his neck, like you, and was named James Smith, like you."

"But nevertheless was *not* I. Very remarkable coincidences, I grant."

"Very remarkable," repeated the sheriff.

"Perhaps you will be kind enough to tell me where you were on the 5th of June, 18—, — the day this Frenchman was killed?"

At this question Mr. Smith's face turned deadly pale, and he uttered a low groan.

"The *fifth of June!*" he gasped. "O God!"

"What's up now?" asked the sheriff.

"Oh! oh! oh!" groaned Smith, as if in great agony. "Oh! how horrible, — the fifth of June. My God!"

The sheriff stared at him in amazement.

"Pardon my emotion," said Smith, in a broken voice; "I cannot explain the distress

your words have caused me, neither can I tell you where I was on that horrible day."

"Won't you tell in court?"

Smith groaned. "No, I cannot tell in court either."

"Well," said the sheriff, "if you were not at Wyckoff Hall, I advise you to prove it."

"Alas! I cannot."

"Then it will go hard with you."

"So be it. If I am to fall a victim to a marvellous chain of coincidences, and to mistaken identity, so be it; but I shall never tell where I was, or what I did that day, although I can prove I was not at Wyckoff Hall."

The sheriff stared at him in blank wonder. "Well," said he, "then you'll be a confounded fool, to speak plainly."

"Can't help it," said Smith. "I shall never tell where I was that day," — and he sank into gloomy reverie.

His position was by no means pleasant or safe. Circumstances which will come to light in these pages utterly prevented him from proving an *alibi*. Again, by a most singular chance, he had been present at the Old Bowery Theatre on the night that Conger had tracked Ezra thither, having followed a crowd in, which was drawn by the same attraction that induced Dr. Brown to go, the appearance of some famous "star" tragedian. He was entirely without kindred. He had a considerable property of his own on which he lived. He had not been in business till within the past two years; the greater part of his life had been spent in Europe. He had not a friend in the United States, scarcely an acquaintance. He was a desolate, unfortunate, unhappy man, who seemed to be a football for Fortune's hardest kicks.

As he revolved this present difficulty, he did not see how he could possibly prove that he was innocent. His lips were sealed. He could not prove his absence from Wyckoff Hall on the day of the *fête champêtre*, and this circumstance in itself would be highly prejudicial to him should he be brought to trial. His only hope seemed to be that some of the intimate friends of the real murderer would perceive and testify that he was not the man they thought him. But how to get at these companions of the murderer?

"Do you know whether the fellow that killed this M. Franchot had any brothers or either parent living?"

The sheriff smiled. "I was going to say

that you ought to know if any one, but you're so cool that, hang me if I don't begin to believe you're innocent."

"I am innocent, believe me. But I don't see how I can prove it unless some of this man's relatives swear I'm not he. Now, how can I find out whether he has any friends? I don't believe his name's James Smith."

"Well, Mr. Smith," said the sheriff, "I hope you'll get clear, for I've taken a shine to you. I only did my duty in arresting you."

"Oh! you're not to blame. Come! I'm at your service;" and they went out together.

Mr. Smith was given over to the Boston police; an officer came on from New York, in response to a telegram, and took him to that city, where he was lodged in the "Tombs."

The same idea had occurred to Ezra as to Mr. Smith; viz., that his (Ezra's) intimate companions could prove that Smith was not the guilty man. Now his intimate companions, thanks to his unsocial habits and to the fact that at the time of the murder he had but recently arrived in New York, — and since then had been very secluded, — were very few. In fact, but two or three individuals knew him intimately. One of these had recently gone to California, and none remained but Mr. Peter Wilkins and Mr. D. Murragh. But then there was Dr. Heavyvale. "Curse him!" said Ezra to himself; "they'll have him on the stand, of course, to prove that this unlucky dog of a Smith was at his office in H—. How'll I manage him? Ah! a risky dodge, but I'll try it. I'll make him think he never saw me at H—."

At that moment he heard the doctor's light step approaching. It was the day for his periodical call.

"Ah! my good friend, how are you? Take a cigar, doctor."

"Thank you. Well, my dear Mr. Moore, I'm glad to find you looking so well. And your eyes haven't troubled you at all?"

"Not a bit. Doctor, I can never thank you enough for changing the expression of my face. I don't think it will scare a woman now to look at me. I'm going to hunt up some fair damsel to make Mrs. Moore. Don't you think they'll like the name? Don't you think *Moore* a pretty name, doctor?"

"Yes; quite so."

"And I haven't always been called Moore. Once I travelled under the name of Smith."

"Ah! I recollect you called yourself Smith when you came up to H—."

"What under the sun do you mean by that?"

"Why, don't you recollect when you went up there and disappeared so suddenly? You went to Dr. Brown's as porter, and all at once vanished. I asked the doctor about you, but he didn't seem inclined to say much."

"What the devil do you mean, doctor? I never was in H— in my life."

"Sir!" cried the doctor, in great surprise.

"Never in my life, I assure you. What was the name of the fellow you saw there?"

"James Smith."

"Well, as I said before, I *did* assume the name of Smith, but it wasn't *James* Smith. The name I took was Frederick F. Smith. James Smith! Ah! I see how it is. That James Smith, doctor, is the bane of my existence. Wasn't he a man about my build, with red hair, and very cross-eyed?"

"Yes."

"Well, I've been taken for that man, confound him, and he for me, more than fifty times. That's the principal reason I was so anxious to get my eyes fixed all right, and have had my hair dyed. I know the chap. I mean I've seen him. He's no more me than I'm you."

The simple-minded doctor really believed all this, and merely said, in tranquil surprise, — "Is that so?"

"Yes. How is it," asked Ezra, "that you never happened to mention H— to me before?"

"Why, the fact is, I thought it might not be agreeable to you, as you never said a word about it. I must confess I was very curious to know why you left so suddenly. I certainly thought when you sent for me, at the time you lived in Cherry Street, that you was the same man I'd seen in H— about a week before."

"Well, it's a queer mistake, although a natural one. I a porter to Dr. Brown! By Jove! that's a good one."

The worthy doctor thoroughly believed he had made some mistake, and was very earnest in his apologies.

"Capital!" thought Ezra, when his visitor had left. "I've fixed him all right. Now for Wilkins."

He rode down to Grand Street and went

at once to the billiard-saloon, which was still kept up there.

The two years had scarcely changed Mr. Peter Wilkins. His black hair was oiled and curled with more disgusting elaborateness than ever, and his nose had a more permanent redness in its hues. He did not recognize his *quondam* friend at all, but was rather impressed by his genteel and well-to-do appearance. Ezra sat down composedly and looked on at a game of billiards then in progress. Wilkins approached respectfully. "Shall I get you a partner for a game, sir?" he asked.

"I'd like to play a game with you," returned Ezra.

The fact that Ezra had had several teeth which he had lost supplied by false ones, rendered his voice no longer recognizable. Wilkins and he began the game. Ezra soon managed to put the marker at ease. Suddenly he asked, —

"Do you remember Ezra Hoyt?"

"No," said Wilkins, startled, "who's he, sir?"

"Why, I used to see him around here. Don't you recollect a red-haired, cross-eyed man the police were chasing so hard?"

"Seems to me I do. What's become of him?" asked Wilkins, indifferently.

"Well, they've nabbed him at last. He's in the Tombs now, charged with murder."

"Will they string him up?"

"Yes, I suppose so; and serve him right."

Whereupon Wilkins, seeing that his visitor was hostile to Ezra, remarked that he hoped they would hang him.

"He's an infernal rascal," said Ezra, with more truth than was his wont.

"So I think," said Wilkins. "I don't want you to suppose he's a friend of mine."

"Certainly not. You'd just as lief see him hung as not?"

"Yes, and a little rather."

Ezra smiled to himself at this touching proof of friendship.

"Well, perhaps you may assist in it," said he.

"How so, sir?"

"Why, I hear that this Ezra Hoyt swears he *isn't* Ezra Hoyt, but that his name is James Smith. He wants to make out that they've got hold of the wrong chap, you know."

"I see. Well, will that game work?"

"No, not if you can swear that he *is* Ezra Hoyt."

"Oh! I don't want to get mixed up in the business at all," said Wilkins.

"Why, you *won't* get mixed up in it at all. You haven't had anything to do with any of his larks," said Ezra, knowing that such was the fact.

"Yes; but I don't like to own that I know the fellow, if he's up for murder, you see."

"Pshaw, man, all you've got to say is, that you've often seen him at this saloon. That don't prove anything against your character."

"Well, but between you and me, I hid him here once when the police were after him. I didn't know what he'd been doing to be sure, but still I hid him."

"Suppose you did; who's going to say anything about that? He won't, if he's trying to make out he isn't Ezra Hoyt, that's clear, and you needn't mention the little circumstance."

"That's so," said Wilkins, reflectively.

"I'd give a good deal to have that fellow hung," continued Ezra. "Poor Mr. Franchot, whom he killed was a particular friend of mine. Still, I shouldn't wonder if this Hoyt got clear."

"A fellow wastes so much time attending court," said Wilkins, still hesitating, "and the witness' fees don't amount to anything."

"Don't let that trouble you," said Ezra, "I'll see that you are well paid. Come now, oblige me and you won't regret it."

"Well, I'll do it," said Wilkins, reluctantly.

Ezra could scarcely conceal his satisfaction.

"Well," said he, "then I can tell the district attorney to call on you to prove this fellow *is* Ezra Hoyt."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"All right. It's no more than fair for you to help bring this fellow to justice. — What'll you have to drink? This is pretty good whiskey you keep here. — I don't know but what you'll find him a good deal changed since you last saw him."

"Devil! I'd know Ezra Hoyt in China. Has this chap red hair, is he cross-eyed, and got a scar on his neck?"

"Yes," said Ezra, remembering the description in the newspaper.

"Well, then, he's the cove, and I'll swear it."

"All right," said Ezra, and he paid for the game and went out, highly pleased at the success of his interview, and also at finding that Wilkins did not recognize him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SUCCESSFUL DECOY.

POOR Smith, without a friend in the city and imprisoned in the Tombs awaiting his trial for murder, felt, naturally, somewhat depressed. The more he thought of it, the more convinced he became that he ought, by all means, to discover some of the murderer's intimate friends or relations; but how to do this?

One day Mr. Conger called to see him. The detective was greatly chagrined that the prey should have escaped him after all and fallen into the hands of another. He felt considerable admiration for Ezra's cleverness and called to have a good look at him. He was shown to the prisoner's cell. It is not a reflection on Mr. Conger's acuteness to say that he did not for a moment doubt, on seeing the unfortunate Smith, that he was the man he had chased so hotly, for it must be remembered that he had never had a very close scrutiny of the fellow, had never seen him face to face, without disguise, but once, and that in Dr. Brown's room for a few moments. He had pursued the man from the description furnished by Vincent Graham. To that description Smith answered in every respect.

Smith looked at his visitor with curiosity.

"Well," said Conger, "it's a long time since I saw you last."

"I don't remember to have ever seen you," replied Smith.

Conger laughed quietly.

"You're a queer bird, I must say. Why, man, you don't expect to make anything out of this game of denying your identity, do you?"

Poor Smith was most wild.

"Good heavens!" he cried, "this is the most extraordinary affair! I swear before God, sir," he continued, with no irreverence, but in a very solemn manner, "that I'm no more the man you think me than I'm Andrew Jackson. I never heard of this Frenchman, this Franchot, or of Wyckoff Hall in my life!"

"Well," said Conger, "I suppose you can easily prove who you are."

"No, I can't; there's the trouble! If people will swear that I'm this murderer, how am I going to prove I'm not?"

"Why, get some of your friends to prove it."

"Ah!" said the other, with profound

melancholy, "I have no friends. Would that I could find some of *this man's* friends who would perceive that I'm not he!"

"Well," said Mr. Conger, "there's Wilkins."

"Who?" cried Smith, starting up. "Do you know of any of this man's associates? Oh! send for them, sir; they'll know at once I'm not the man you all think I am!"

"That can be easily done," said the detective. "I'll send a man for Mr. Wilkins at once," and he went out as he spoke.

Smith, with hope revived, hastily arranged his toilet. Unfortunately he brushed his long, red hair behind his ears, a fashion in which Ezra had been wont to wear his own.

After what seemed an interminable time, Mr. Conger reappeared followed by Mr. Peter Wilkins. The latter gentleman advanced at once to Smith and said, cordially, —

"Well, old fellow, how *are* you?" He did not have the slightest suspicion that the man before him was not Ezra Hoyt.

Smith groaned. "Merciful heavens!" he gasped, "do *you* take me for the murderer, too?"

"Pshaw!" said Wilkins, "you're not going to try that game, are you? Why, man, I'd know you anywhere. Let's see your neck. Yes. There's the blue scar around it. What nonsense! Own up you are Ezra Hoyt."

"Ezra Hoyt!" said Conger; "is that this man's name?"

"Heavens and earth!" cried Smith, goaded to madness, "my name's James Smith!"

"Well, James Smith, then," said Wilkins, "if you like that any better. Perhaps you will say you never saw me before!"

"I never did."

"Well, you've got cheek! I suppose you never hid yourself behind a cue-rack in my billiard-room when this gentleman was so anxious to find you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you do come this innocent dodge well, but you may swear you're not Ezra Hoyt till you're black in the face, but I can swear you are."

Smith groaned. "It's all up with me, I see."

"Yes, I guess it is. Why the devil don't you own up you're Ezra Hoyt, like a man?"

Smith was silent. At length he asked, —

"What is your name, sir?"

Wilkins laughed loudly. "Come, I like

that. You know my name as well as you do your own."

"I begin to doubt mine," said poor Smith.

"Well, they call me Peter Wilkins," said that gentleman. "Don't you remember, Ezra, standing up with me when I got married, just after you returned from San Francisco?"

"San Francisco! I never was in San Francisco in my life."

Mr. Wilkins gave utterance to his incredulity in a prolonged whistle.

"Do you whistle to doubt me, sir?" cried Smith, in wrath.

Mr. Wilkins did not reply, but addressing Conger, observed that he saw no use in staying longer. "That man's Ezra Hoyt, and I'll swear to it on a pile of Bibles as high as the Worth Monument."

"Stay!" cried Smith, in anguish. "Are there any other people in town who know this Ezra Hoyt well?"

"I guess not. You know you never were fond of making acquaintances."

"But where are my father and mother?"

"I swear you've got more brass! Your respected father, you know, was killed in that little affair up the river. As for your mother, I never saw the lady, and I don't believe you ever did either."

"Haven't I any brothers or sisters?"

"Nary brother or sister."

"Can you tell me whether Mr. Simeon Rogers, a lawyer of this city, is alive? I've been trying to find him."

"He died about six months ago," replied Conger.

"Well then," said Smith, with a resigned air, "I don't see but what I shall be legally murdered."

Wilkins laughed, and followed Conger, who went out with a very thoughtful face.

Ezra Hoyt, after leaving the billiard saloon in Grand Street, went into Broadway and walked up-town with an elated air.

"Now," thought he, "I shall get this poor devil of a Smith hung, and I will be all right. To serve out my fine gentleman, Mr. Vincent Graham, is next in order."

At this moment he became aware that Vincent was walking in front of him in an apparently thoughtful and melancholy mood. Ezra's eyes brightened, and he slackened his pace to keep behind, concocting a most villainous scheme the while.

It was the day after Vincent's interview with his father. He had not as yet revealed

his terrible secret to Ethel. It occupied his thoughts continually. He dreaded more than ever to tell her, but felt that he must do so. He entered the reading-room of a hotel and sat down to write a note. Ezra followed him, and standing behind his chair, and, apparently much interested in a file of newspapers that hung against the wall, read every word that Vincent wrote.

This was his letter, —

"My dear Ethel, — I have had so few opportunities of speaking to you lately, alone, owing to my mother's illness, that I beg you will permit me to have a private interview with you, to-morrow morning at nine o'clock, in the library. I have a most distressing communication to make. You have observed my strange manner for the past few days. I will explain it all to you. I have to tell you that I am not what you suppose I am. But I will trust nothing further to paper. I cannot bear the weight of my misery longer alone; I must tell you all. God knows what my wretchedness may drive me to!

"Yours ever,

"VINCENT GRAHAM.

"New York, March 10, 18—."

Vincent sealed and directed this note, and went out to the office of the hotel to post it. Ezra, with his infernal plan all formed, followed him. Taking a blank card from his pocket, he hastily wrote a few lines with pencil, in a disguised hand, and going up to Vincent in a hurried manner, he touched his hat respectfully, bowed and said, —

"Pardon me, am I not addressing Mr. Vincent Graham?"

"That is my name, sir," said Vincent bowing.

"Yes, they told me you came in here. Please read this, sir, at once," and he thrust the card into Vincent's hand.

Vincent read, in what seemed to be a woman's hand, —

"For the love of God, Mr. Graham, come to a poor woman at the point of death, who has got something of the *greatest importance* to tell you and you only. Come quick.

"SARAH H. GREEN.

"No — Chrystie Street."

"What can this possibly mean?" said Vincent, greatly surprised. "I know of no such woman, sir."

"I know nothing about her, sir, except

that I was called in to attend her day before yesterday. She is dying of consumption, and seems to be in great distress of mind. I consented to carry this message to you. Allow me to introduce myself, — Dr. J. K. Brown."

"Happy to make your acquaintance, doctor. I don't think I have ever met you, although your face seems familiar," said Vincent, looking at him keenly. Ezra was not pleased by this intelligence.

"Curse this Graham!" said he to himself, "he's the first man who has seen the least of my old looks in me. He's got the eyes of a vulture."

"Well, sir, can you go with me now?" he asked.

"Yes," said Vincent, "let's start at once. I must see what this means," and he glanced at the card again, and then tore it up, throwing the pieces away. Little did he think that he would afterward have given the wealth of the world, did he own it, to repossess himself of that piece of paste-board!

They entered a stage and rode downtown. Ezra felt a thrill of fiendish delight at his approaching triumph.

"I shall kill the dog," he muttered to himself.

Vincent looked intently at his companion. He was perplexed by the idea that he had seen him before; "Dr. J. K. Brown," he repeated to himself; "Brown, Brown. I have never seen this man. Who does he remind me of?"

"Are you a relative of Dr. Euripides Brown, of H —?" he asked, abruptly.

Ezra started. "No," said he, "I never heard of him."

"Your face is strangely like some one I have known," said Vincent, reflectively.

Ezra, ill at ease, sought to change the conversation.

"Have you never seen this woman?" he asked.

"No, nor can I imagine what she wants of me. Have you no idea of the nature of the revelation she wishes to make me, Dr. Brown?"

"Not the slightest," replied Ezra. "I trust we may be in time. I hardly thought the poor woman could live through the day."

They left the stage at Spring Street. They walked through to the Bowery, crossed over, and, passing down a block in Delancey, came out into Chrystie Street, and walked down.

If there is any place where poverty ap-

pears most hideous and sickening, it is in the crowded, squalid, pestilential streets of a vast city. Miserable, sickly children were playing in gutters filled with garbage, sounds of drunken strife or ribald merriment came from the open windows of the overcrowded, wretched dwellings. Pale, overworked women, with want and degradation, and hopeless misery in their attenuated faces, stood in the doors gazing listlessly into the abominable street. The free rays of the beneficent sun hardly made their way into these dismal courts and alleys, — the beams of joy or even hope never penetrated the breasts of these wretched beings, brutalized by want and woe, preyed upon by every species of suffering.

Thus thought Vincent as he walked swiftly along by the side of his companion. "What extremes of human condition," he reflected, "meet together in a city like this!"

"Here is the place," said Ezra, turning into a small dark alley running between the brick walls of two dilapidated houses. The ground was paved with bricks, and pools of blackish water filled its sunken hollows. Emerging from this, Ezra conducted his victim into a dreary court, flanked on two sides by the rears of two lofty tenement houses, and on the others by crumbling brick walls. He descended two or three broken stone steps, and unlocked a huge rusty padlock in a door at the rear of the house opposite the entrance of the alley.

"I had to lock the woman in when I left," explained Ezra.

He opened the door and went in, followed by Vincent, wonderingly. It was a low, dark room, sunk several feet below the ground, the rough, plastered ceiling, blackened by age and festooned with cobwebs. The atmosphere struck Vincent with a chill like a vault. The room contained nothing but an old pine box with a broken cover.

"The woman's in the front room," said Ezra; "sit down on that box, and I'll tell her you're here." He went out and left Vincent in almost utter darkness. Very soon he appeared at another door, one that Vincent in the gloom had not perceived, and called to him to come. Vincent groped his way to the door and endeavored to pierce the profound darkness beyond. "Come on," said Ezra, "follow me." Vincent took one step forward, and at that instant, was struck fiercely on the head by some heavy instrument wielded by an unseen assailant, and fell senseless to the ground.

"I hope I haven't killed him," said Ezra,

to himself, "that's too easy a death for him to die," and he struck a match and stooped down to examine the body by its lurid light.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN EXTREMIS.

WHEN consciousness returned to Vincent, he lay for some moments perfectly quiet, endeavoring to recall his thoughts and recollection. He was utterly unable, at first, to imagine where he was or what had taken place, but suddenly it all flashed upon him, his entering the low, dark cellar, his stepping out into the hall and being felled by some unknown and murderous hand. But what did it mean, his lying there, in the dark, unmolested? Had the assassin left him for dead? He rose to a sitting posture and stretched out his arm; his hand struck a brick wall. He thrust out his other arm and touched another wall on that side. As he did so the cold sweat burst from all his pores, and he hastily endeavored to rise, but his head struck violently against brickwork above, and he sank back almost stunned a second time. Then burst upon him in all its horror, the awful truth that he was *buried alive*, and he groaned in the agony, that none but those who have felt like torture, know. It was too true. He was buried alive, bricked up in a narrow vault, in impenetrable darkness, solid masonry beneath, above, around him, with but a few cubic feet of vitiated air, fast turning into poison, to breathe, — and then, to die. He laid his face on the cold, damp bricks in utter, unspeakable despair.

This was one of those moments so full of concentrated agony and horror as to have bereft, many a time, the hapless victims of reason, or mercifully killed them. Such an instant as this has turned black, youthful ~~him~~ to gray, toppled Reason from her seat, and changed men of intellect into chattering idiots, — so great is the destroying influence of fright.

But these horrible seconds had no such effect on Vincent Graham. For a brief moment he endured the ineffable agony of despair, but hope, long-lived hope, upon whose nature he had so lately speculated, sprang up within his ardent breast. Then thoughts of Ethel, of her sorrow should he die in this unknown, mysterious way, came to him. Strange to say, the contemplation of the anguish she would feel, softened his

own. Suddenly he recollected the letter he had sent to her that morning, and he groaned aloud. Should he never return, he knew that she would imagine, from its dismal tone, that he had destroyed himself. Unendurable thought! To be deemed a cowardly suicide by Ethel Moore! For a moment he thought he should go mad, but his iron will instantly banished thoughts of the letter and its consequences, and he sat up, cool and collected, with eyes that sparkled in the darkness, to contemplate his position and attempt escape. Vincent, without a quickened pulsation of his heart, calmly surveyed his situation.

He discovered that he was enclosed in a brick ditch or vault scarcely longer than his body and about four feet wide, with not height enough to allow him to take a kneeling posture. When he sat up, his head nearly touched the slightly-arched brick roof above. He determined to feel for any opening, however slight, that there might be, and began his operations systematically. Every square inch of the floor did his fingers pass over; he felt nothing but the hard bricks, with not a crevice or fissure in them. He felt along where the sides and ends joined the floor; any crack there might have been there was filled with mortar hard as stone. Then over the walls did his patient fingers pass; there he felt the same unbroken, unvaried stretch of mortar. With much difficulty and some pain he explored the roof, passing his fingers over the mortar between each brick. Along the sides and ends of the roof his hands made their slow way; still nothing but brick and mortar harder than cement; and he called aloud in his anguish to the Deity, with heart-rending supplication. With incredible patience he persisted in his examination, and, as he reached the roof's summit, the tips of his fingers sank suddenly in the soft, fresh mortar between bricks recently laid. A thrill of such joy convulsed him as the mariner feels as, when about to drown, his feet strike against the smooth, hard shore beneath him. He pushed with all his might against the bricks. Alas! they did not yield at all. Almost frenzied, he called out all his prodigious strength; the bricks, tightly wedged in, did not budge. The confined air was now hot and stifling. Vincent felt suffocation creeping upon him; he must liberate himself at once, if ever.

"Good God, help me!" groaned Vincent, in his wretchedness.

At that moment he heard heavy steps that

seemed to be walking on a floor above his head. They approached his grave and the noise roared like thunder through his hollow prison. They stopped as they neared him. Oh joy! some liberator is coming! and Vincent nearly fainted from the reaction. Alas! unhappy man, quick is the transition from hope to hopelessness! A hoarse, deep voice, sounding muffled to Vincent, but distinguishable, cried, —

"Hollos! down there!"

"Dr. Brown!" cried Vincent. "Oh! for the love of God get me out of this; I'm dying." Vincent, in his ignorance, had not, as yet, thought of this man as his murderer.

"Dr. Brown!" roared Ezra, with a brutal laugh. "Oh! you poor gull! I'm no more Dr. Brown than you, you miserable dupe! I'm Ezra Hoyt!"

Vincent did not know, it will be remembered, who Ezra Hoyt was. He had never learned the name of Franchot's murderer.

"Yes, my dear young friend, I'm the man you thought you choked to death that night up at the Frenchman's. I'm the man you set that detective Conger on; I'm the man you haven't caught yet! I'm the man who's got you in a place you'll never get out of; no, never; for I'm going to let you lie and rot there! Ha! you fool; do you think you'll ever knock me down with sham rattans again? Death! do you think I'm a man who ever forgets? Did you think, you dog, you could squeeze my windpipe, and never hear of it again?"

Vincent was silent with amazement and despair. Now the infernal trick was plain. He had been decoyed to this horrible death by the revengeful murderer. "Fool, fool, fool!" he groaned, "to run into such a trap! O God! forgive my sins!" He thought death was upon him. His lungs were almost bursting, and his panting heart labored violently within him. He lay motionless. Ezra, outside, listened for his groans, but heard none. He longed to see his victim in his death agony, and was enraged that this was impossible.

Becoming convinced at last from Vincent's quietness that he was dead, Ezra walked off in exultation. Vincent heard him go and violently slam a door behind him, and he again sat up. He would not give in. "Can I not cut myself an exit?" thought he, and out came his penknife in a twinkling. It was a slight, delicate affair; he was without any stronger implement. But then rushed into his mind all the stories

he had read of those who had cut their way out of captivity by lesser means than this, and the thought gave him courage. If he had but air, he felt convinced that he could hew his deliverance through ten times that amount of brick; but he was almost stifled. His vigorous young lungs had drunk up nearly all the oxygen that his grave contained. "Oh! for one short hour of life!" he groaned. He crouched on the floor of the vault and began to pick away the fresh mortar with the thin blade of his knife. Almost any one but Vincent Graham would, in his desperation, have gone furiously to work and instantly broken his knife; but this man, thinking that his life hung on that frail blade, was as delicate in his operations as it was possible to be. The mortar was drying fast, but he managed to scrape it out. He cautiously thrust the blade through the yielding mass till its farther progress was stopped by the handle meeting the bricks. So tightly were the bricks wedged in, that there was not space enough for the knife-handle to pass between them after the cement had been dug out. The blade was too short to reach through to the blessed air beyond. Vincent suffered the tortures of Tantalus. The air he was dying for was but an inch beyond his reach. Could he but penetrate that last inch, the "breath of life" would rush in. He felt in his pockets, — they contained nothing that he could possibly use to pierce the mortar, and it was then with a groan, he thought of the long, stiff card he had thrown away. He took off his scarf-pin; it was no longer than the blade of his knife. He tore his handkerchief into narrow strips and tried to bind the pin to the blade. He succeeded in fastening them together, but not firmly enough to serve his purpose. Again he tried, but the knife-edge cut the cloth. Maddened at his failure, he incautiously dropped the pin, and it rolled away. He would not spend the precious moments in feeling for it. What could he possibly use to thrust through the mortar? He felt his strength giving way. He tried to pull off one side of the handle of his knife, but could get no "hold" on its smooth edges, and abandoned the attempt. A lucky thought! He pulled off a boot and cut a narrow strip of thick leather from the back of its leg. It was too thick to enter the fissure between the bricks; he pared it hastily with his knife; but, alas! it was now too slender, and had no more effect upon the mortar, which had stiffened on the outside, than a

piece of paper would have had. In this extremity, Vincent, still perfectly calm, bethought him of a plan that saved his life. He cut into the "shank" of his boot, in the desperate hope that it might be lined with steel. To his inexpressible joy it was. Conceive of the rapidity with which he tore off the sole and pulled out the thin piece of iron! With horror he found that although nearly two inches in width, it was no longer than the blade of his knife. We have elsewhere mentioned the marvellous strength of his fingers; it stood him in good stead now. He bent the thin strip of iron double, and opened and shut it till it parted in the crease. He then twisted the two pieces firmly together, and, to make it stronger, bound it tightly with the strips of handkerchief, thus improvising a very respectable blade of the requisite length. He pushed it through the mortar, and a ray of light and a vivifying stream of air darted through. The air came from the mouldy cellar above, but it was purer, more delicious to Vincent than any summer breeze that had ever kissed his brow, laden with the scent of flowers and sweeping over grassy meads. A terrible pain in his head disappeared, his drooping limbs regained their strength, he felt prepared to work now with more than mortal energy.

Very little light struggled through the crack he had made between the bricks, but his eyes, becoming familiar with the semi-darkness, enabled him to discern the interior of his cell. It was very rough brick-work. He could not conceive what the place had been constructed for. There was no outlet to it, other than the place on top, where the recent bricks had been put in.

Vincent had gained light and strength and increased hope, but he was as much a prisoner as ever. The appalling prospect of starvation was before him, — a cruel, painful, lingering death; but he resolutely turned his mind from the thought.

As soon as he felt sufficiently revived, he resumed his task of picking out the mortar. It seemed to become hardened very quickly. He found more and more difficulty as his work progressed. The pieces of iron came apart, but with great difficulty and ingenuity he joined them strongly together. He took his boot, and used the heel as a hammer and his iron as a chisel. And now he had a misfortune. An obstinate piece of mortar on the outside had hitherto resisted his attempts upon it. He placed his rude chisel against it, and struck hard with the

leather mallet; the mortar gave way, and the strip of iron darted through the fissure after it, and fell on the floor outside. Vincent's self-reproach for his carelessness was bitter. He had nothing left but his penknife. "Misfortunes never come single." Though he used his knife with the utmost care, the blade got bent, and in trying to draw it from the crack, it snapped short off by the handle; nothing remained for him to work with. He tried in vain to remove the steel lining from the "shank" of his other boot; without his knife he could do nothing. As his last chance, as his *only* chance, he resolved to *push the bricks bodily out*. The height of his cell favored this plan.

Everybody knows the great force with which one can push with his back, if his feet are braced against some unyielding support. Vincent placed himself in such a position that his shoulders rested against that part of the roof where he had attempted to cut away the mortar. His feet, much cramped, were planted firmly against the side of the vault. He began to stretch himself out. Every tendon and muscle became more rigid than steel; every atom of his physical force he put into that tremendous strain against the roof. It was his soul more than his body that labored. *It would not be confined; bricks could not hold it in.*

A young, vigorous man like Vincent Graham, actuated by the strongest motive that can move the powers of man, can, at such a crisis as this, almost immeasurably transcend ordinary efforts. He felt now as he had oftentimes felt when pulling "stroke-oar" at college races, an inflexible determination to succeed, only there was now an infinitely stronger purpose as there was an infinitely higher stake to win. He felt the resolve that glows in the breast of heroes, martyrs, leaders of revolution, — to "do or die." In a mechanical point of view, his great strength could not have been better disposed. The most powerful muscles of his body were in their fullest, most untrammelled play. As he endeavored to straighten out his body, he grimly determined that either the brick-work should give way, or his back break. Bone and sinews won; the bricks started, stuck fast, started again, and then, yielding suddenly before the steady pressure, tumbled noisily upon the floor outside, leaving an irregular hole in the roof of his prison, some six or eight inches wide. Imagine how quickly he pulled away the loosened bricks, and, push-

ing his body through, leaped nimbly out upon the cellar floor, erect, free, resurrected from death.

Vincent was not a religious man, as the term is commonly understood, but in the rush of gratitude and joy that flooded his heart, he sank down upon the damp stone floor, and, leaning his head upon the roof of his late grave, that rose, a brick mound, above the ground, he poured forth a *Te Deum* to the Power that had snatched him from an awful death.

But when he rose and looked about him, he discovered that his imprisonment, although unspeakably ameliorated, was not ended. The cellar, which contained absolutely nothing, except some mortar spread on the head of a barrel and a mason's trowel, was barely lighted by two narrow slits in the wall high up. There was no outlet to the place except a large iron door at one end. This, to Vincent's dismay, was bolted and firmly locked on the other side. To effect an exit by its means he perceived at a glance was hopeless. He looked about him;—nothing but unbroken stone walls on all four sides.

"Here's a pretty go," said Vincent. "It's plain, from the looks of this place, that it isn't used. Nobody is likely to come here. Will that infernal Hoyt come back? They say murderers are impelled by some mysterious fascination to revisit the scene of their victim's death; but this man, I fancy, is an exception to mankind. I wonder if he is still in the house. I'll attract his attention. If he comes, perhaps I shall make him a fit occupant for the grave he prepared for me." He picked up the trowel, and struck the iron door violently with its handle, shouting lustily the while. He was almost deafened by the clamor he made, but he listened in vain for a response from outside. He went to the vault, extricated his mutilated boot, and put it on.

"Ah!" thought he, "if I get out of this place without the amiable Hoyt's knowledge, it may serve me to make him think I am still buried," and he went to work and very speedily and neatly replaced the bricks he had pushed out, cementing them together.

"I have the knack of a mason," he said to himself, approvingly.

He picked up and pocketed the strips of steel he had used, and spread out the mortar a little to disguise the fact that he had used any of it. If Ezra returned, he would cer-

tainly think that the vault had remained undisturbed.

Vincent had been in such a horrible position, he had so lately tasted the bitterness of death, that his present position gave him very little uneasiness. He felt sure that he should ultimately liberate himself. But now that the reaction came, and the strict tension on his nerves was slackened, he became aware that he had been badly hurt by that cowardly blow in the dark. The pain in his head became excruciating; he felt drops trickling down his forehead; he put up his hand, and found his hair soaked and matted with blood. He began to feel sick and faint; his brain reeled, and he could hardly stand. He tried to walk but could not; he sat down upon the brick vault. He still held the trowel in his hand; he crawled along to the iron door; with the last remnant of his expiring strength struck two or three resounding blows, and then overtaken nature succumbed, and he sank over on his face, insensible.

The house, in whose cellar Vincent was incarcerated, was a *rendezvous* for thieves very much like a Parisian *tapis-franc*. The front of the building was upon the Bowery. It was a sort of fifth-rate hotel, where board and lodging, on moderate terms, were held out to the hungry and houseless. The front sub-basement was devoted to the sale of the vilest liquors, and was also a *restaurant*, where oysters and pork-chops were vended. Rather curiously, the house was divided in the middle, from roof to cellar, and thus while the front section was a tavern, dance-house, and rum-cellar, the rear part was an over-crowded tenement-house. The hotel opened into the Bowery, the tenement-house looked into the dreary court that Vincent and Ezra had entered. There were means of communication between the two segments of the building, on the lower floor, but none above. The cellar in which Vincent was confined originally belonged to the keeper of the drinking saloon and had been used by him as a place in which to store his barrels, and manufacture (by the simple process of mixing) his various kinds of liquors. The mysterious vault in which Vincent had been buried was nothing but a receptacle that had been made to hold and preserve ice. Ezra's father, Dick Hoyt, had hired this subterranean apartment, and there carried on a very brisk business in counterfeiting coin. He had used the ice-vault both as a furnace and as a hiding-place for the tools of his handicraft. Placed at

the bottom of this receptacle, and covered by a stratum of ice, they had defied discovery when their proprietor had been absent in the prosecution of other schemes. Ezra, as a participator in the villainies of his father, knew of this place and retained its lease, and the lease of the room above, into which he had first ushered Vincent; but until this time had made no use of either, though he kept the key.

The low tavern and rum-shop in the Bowery had fallen under the suspicion of the police. The proprietor, besides, was a receiver of stolen goods, and the keeper of an unlicensed pawnbroker's shop. He was "hand in glove" with the most desperate criminals in New York. He hid them from the pursuit of justice, furnished them with disguises and money (well secured and at enormous usury), and his "Shades" (fit name) was their *rendezvous*, the place for their infernal conclaves. The police had made several fine "hauls" here. In fact, it was darkly whispered that Baxter, the proprietor, had not scrupled to "blow," that is, inform on the malefactors, his customers; that he had betrayed more than one criminal into the hands of the law, to avert suspicion from his own misdeeds. It remained but to be proved that he was a Judas Iscariot among thieves for him to have most terrible vengeance wreaked upon him. Baxter was a large, sinewy man, with low, retreating forehead, and brutish face. Still in the prime of life, terrible, unrestrained debauch had ruined him physically. Although really weak, his swaggering and defiant manner (not changed in the least from what it had been in his school-days at Parnassus Hall) inspired a certain awe, and, his strength having never been tested, his weakness was not known.

On this day the police had received information that a certain notorious burglar, who rejoiced in four or five *aliases*, might be found at Baxter's "Shades." A squad of picked men under the charge of a tried sergeant was dispatched thither, and shortly before Vincent had succeeded in emerging from his grave, they entered the drinking saloon, abruptly. The consternation they produced was intense. Several endeavored to slink out, but were quietly prevented. The surprise of Mr. Baxter, real or apparent, was great.

"Who are you after, sir?" he respectfully asked the sergeant.

"I'm after Bill Weaver, *alias* Billy Bowlegs," said the sergeant.

"*Alias* Cockle, *alias* Juniper," said one of the squad.

"*Alias* Stokes the butcher," added another, in supplement.

"Well," said the sergeant, doggedly, "Weaver, Cockle, Bowlegs, Stokes, or Juniper, he's in this crib, and has got to come out if my name's Jim Parker, and I believe it is."

"I assure you, Sergeant Parker," began Baxter—

"Stop!" said the sergeant, contemptuously. "Show me round these premises. No, don't go yet; you stay by me."

Three or four men were sitting around a table with their hats pulled over their eyes. The officer went up to them and requested them to uncover. They sullenly obeyed. The sergeant smiled grimly, and said, "I know you, my men; but I don't want you to-day. Have you seen this Weaver?"

"Don't know him," said the men together.

"Oh! of course not," said the officer, ironically. Followed by one or two of his squad, he searched the small adjoining rooms and the bar, without success.

At this moment, a distant, muffled sound, as of some one pounding on iron, was heard.

"What the devil's that?" exclaimed Parker.

"Don't know, I'm sure," said Baxter, much surprised.

"Well, we might as well find out. Follow me, boys. I'm going to search the house from top to bottom. Two of you stay here."

They went up a back staircase under Baxter's guidance. The search, though thorough, was speedy.

On descending the stairs they again heard two faint raps against some iron body, and then all was still.

"Bless me!" cried Baxter, "there's some one rapping on the door into the Chrystie Street cellar."

"Oho!" said Parker, "you have a Chrystie Street cellar,—have you? Let's see it."

"I haven't the key, sir; the place's rented to other parties."

"Never mind the key! Can't you open any door, Bob?"

"I guess so," said Bob, confidently.

Baxter conducted the party to the door of Vincent's room. Various steel levers were produced by Bob. Rip went the bolt, the lock was snapped, and Parker, descend-

ing hastily, tripped over Vincent's prostrate body.

"Good heavens! what have we here? Bring a lamp this instant, Baxter!"

Baxter, scared, hurried off. Meantime, the sergeant took a match from his pocket, lit it, and stooped down to examine Vincent.

Thus that very day had another man bent down to look at him as he lay; but what a difference! Then a murderer glared in triumph at his victim; now, a saving hand, with pity in its touch, held the transient torch!

"Great God! it's the man who saved my life!" said Parker, in an awe-struck whisper. "Curse my memory! what's his name?"

Baxter brought a candle and they raised the insensible youth.

"Foul work," said Parker, as he saw his bloody scalp. "If there's a God in heaven the wretch that did this thing shall rue the day!" There was a terrible earnestness in the officer's voice as he uttered these words, but he immediately added in tender, husky tones, "Poor boy! have they killed you? Run," he shouted, in so fierce a manner that Baxter jumped. "Run for a surgeon! Send him to my lodgings, No—Broome Street; run for your life! Death and fury! what are you staring at?"

At this oburgation the startled landlord darted out. The policemen lifted Vincent in their arms, and tenderly conveyed him to the sergeant's lodgings. A surgeon arrived almost at the same moment. They laid Vincent on a bed. The surgeon looked at the wound with a dispassionate and critical eye.

"The thick hair has saved the skull from fracture," said he; "at least I should say so," he hastily added, "from this cursory examination. I will restore the patient's consciousness. He ought not to be conveyed home in this state. Send word to his friends. Who is he?"

"He's a perfect trump; but, deuce take it, I can't think of his name. He saved my life once by his coolness. A scamp stuck me with his knife in Catharine Street, and I'd a-bled to death if it hadn't been for this young gentleman. Now, thank God! I've been able to do him a turn."

Vincent opened his eyes and gazed vacantly at Parker.

"How do you feel, my dear fellow?" said the sergeant.

"The mortar's getting very stiff," said Vincent, mournfully.

"Delirious," said the surgeon. "Get some ice. Brain fever, I'm afraid."

Scarcely had Vincent been found and removed,—in fact, not three minutes afterwards,—a portion of the wall of the cellar, about four feet square, made of wood and painted in exact imitation of stone, opened outwards, and Ezra entered. This secret mode of ingress, which owed its existence to the ingenuity of Dick Hoyt, had, naturally enough, escaped Vincent's notice, in the obscurity. Parker had, indeed, saved Vincent's life. Had Ezra found him lying senseless on the ground he would have instantly dispatched him. As it was, he saw, with horrible complacency, that the brick vault had been to all appearance undisturbed.

"Ah!" said the villain, with a hideous laugh, "this fighting swell is dead and buried! Yes, dead and buried, and without any funeral expenses."

He stamped triumphantly upon the supposed grave, and, glancing at the iron-door, which was tightly closed, went out as he came in, and shut the secret entrance with a clang.

CHAPTER XXV.

MR. MOORE'S NARRATIVE.

We have not shown a proper deference to her sex, in leaving Mrs. Jarvis so long unmentioned. But, in truth, the existence of that excellent creature, for the past two years, had been unbroken by any event of interest or excitement. It may seem strange that she had never been brought to trial as an accessory to Franchot's murder; but the fact was, that nobody in the world suspected her but Mr. Conger, and he had been willing to bide his time, trusting through her to discover the missing murderer. When, indeed, he heard that the man he had hunted was at last captured, he had thought of accusing Mrs. Jarvis as his accomplice; but his visit to Smith's cell had awakened doubts in his shrewd mind. From the accused's manner and language, he had begun to greatly doubt his guilt. He hoped in fact, that there had been some mistake, for the detective still felt very much chagrined that he himself had not been Hoyt's captor.

Mrs. Jarvis, then, remained in the family of Mr. Roberts (one of Conger's subordinates) as a sort of upper servant or housekeeper, and, although in reality a prisoner, and under the watchful eye of Mrs. Roberts, she had never suspected it in the least. She had no desire to leave; she was well pleased with her situation.

A continual subject of wonder and conjecture to Mrs. Jarvis was the whereabouts of Ezra Hoyt. She hoped to have profited greatly by the wealth he would secure by murdering Franchot, since she had assisted him; but not one word of or from him had she heard, nor did she know that he had entered into possession of the Franchot estate through his attorney Mr. D. Murragh.

The time at length arrived when she accidentally learned that Ezra had sailed for the Mediterranean to be gone an indefinite time. Mrs. Jarvis was enraged.

"I hate vipers!" she remarked. "An ungrateful man is a *beast*! Now there's them two Hoyts, father and son. I've been a slave to both, and how have they repaid me? The old man has to go and get killed, and the other betakes himself to foren parts! That's what I calls abominable!"

Why she should class the misfortune of being killed with voluntary exile, is not clear.

One day about dusk, while hastening home after making some purchases for the house, she saw a well-dressed man standing under a gas-lamp that had just been lit. He was looking into the gutter in a thoughtful mood, and held his hat in one hand, while with the other he pushed back his rather long brown hair. Mrs. Jarvis could not be mistaken in the profile, in the attitude or gesture. In spite of broadcloth, dyed hair, and spectacles, she at once recognized Ezra, and, rushing hastily towards him, exclaimed,—

"Bless my soul! Why Ezra—"

"Be quiet!" muttered Ezra, with a fierce execration, and glancing about him alarmed. "Thank God! no one heard you. Now, old woman, what the devil do you mean by bawling out my name in that style?—say?" and he grasped her arm in a powerful grip.

"Let go of me!" cried Mrs. Jarvis, in pain. "It was risky, I allow, to speak your name; but, bless me! I was so kind o' taken aback when I saw you! I thought you were gone to the Mediterranean!"

"Where I wish you were, confound you!"

"Oh, you do, do you?" said Mrs. Jarvis,

with rising wrath. "You're ashamed of me now, aint you, since you've got on fine clothes, and are starched up like a gentleman? Now I want to know where the money is I was to have after that affair?"

"What money?"

"What money! You know well enough what money. My share for the murder!" she added in a whisper. "Do you want me to tell about it? Will you give me the money, or not?"

"See you hanged first!" said Ezra.

"What!" cried Mrs. Jarvis; "do you mean to say you'll have nothin' more to do with me, now that you haint got no more use for me?"

"Yes; that's just what I mean to say! As for your blowing about that affair up the river, do you take me for a fool? I don't believe, old woman, you are any too anxious to run your neck into the noose. Bah! Get out of my way!"

"See here, Ezra!" said Mrs. Jarvis, in the low tone of restrained rage. "Do you mean to give me the slip? Do you refuse to give me any of the money you promised?"

"To both your questions, I say,—yes!"

"Then," said Mrs. Jarvis, drawing close to him, with a threatening gesture, "then I'm your enemy for life! You needn't laugh! I'll show you I'm a woman not to be laughed at, Ezra Hoyt! I'll make you repent this evening! I'll have revenge! If there's anything I can do to bring ruin upon you, I'll do it!—anything; and you know I don't stick at trifles!"

"Oh, go to the devil!" said Ezra, drawing away from her, and walking off. He smiled to himself, but the smile was not one of satisfaction.

As for Mrs. Jarvis, she hurried along to Roberts's house, full of bitterness and rage.

She had not gone half a block, when her impetuous pace suddenly stopped, and she stood motionless. There, right before her, looking listlessly into a shop-window, stood Mr. William Moore.

Mrs. Jarvis did not believe in ghosts, nor did she for a moment imagine this a supernatural appearance. Ghosts do not, it is popularly supposed, saunter up crowded streets and gaze idly into windows. Mrs. Jarvis felt no phantom-inspired awe. She was indeed unspeakably astounded, and might at that moment have well represented a Gorgon-petrified statue. She had a remarkable faculty for remembering faces; she could not be mistaken in the features

of her old employer. Despite his long, black beard and aged look, one glance told her this was William Moore. Perhaps a circumstance that helped her to recognize Ezra, aided her here. Mr. Moore stood with his well-defined profile towards her. There could be no earthly doubt of it. This was the man she supposed to have been drowned eighteen years before.

As she gazed, Mr. Morris (or rather Moore) turned away from the allurements of the shop-window, and walked leisurely along. Mrs. Jarvis followed, and then flashed into her mind a scheme for a notable revenge on Ezra.

Mr. Moore turned into a quiet side street, and entered an unpretending hotel; or, rather, he attempted to enter (he had gone to the private entrance), and, in his carelessness, he had forgotten his key. He rang the bell, and, as he stood on the steps, Mrs. Jarvis approached.

"Mr. Moore!" she said; "is this really you?"

Mr. Moore started as if he had been shot.

"Good God! who are you?"

"Mrs. Jarvis, sir!" said that personage, courtesying. "I lived with you and Mrs. Moore (God bless her!) for twenty years."

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Jarvis!" The servant opened the door. "Come in, my good woman, I want to talk with you. Come up into my parlor." And Mr. Morris went upstairs, followed by the excellent female.

The servant shrugged his French shoulders, as his eyes glanced at Mrs. Jarvis. "*L'Americaine est un homme comique*," said he.

"Now, my good Mrs. Jarvis, how did you know me?" asked Morris.

"Lord bless you, sir!" cried she, "I couldn't forget you. But where have you been, Mr. Moore, if I may be so bold?"

Mr. Moore was silent a few moments, and then said,—

"Well, I suppose I might as well tell you the story; that is, if you will keep it to yourself."

"I will, sir; depend on it!"

"It's a long story, Mrs. Jarvis. You know everybody thought me drowned?"

"Yes, sir! You fell into the river, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Mr. Moore, with an effort; "I fell into the river, and must have fainted in the river, too; for when I recovered my senses, I was lying on the deck of a schooner, with an old negro rubbing my hands. Well, my hat was gone, my clothes

were muddy from the bank of the river, and torn —"

"How did they get torn?" asked Mrs. Jarvis.

"Why, I suppose," said Moore, after a very slight pause, "they must have got caught in the branches on the bank. Altogether, I was a pretty hard-looking character. As soon as I could speak, I asked the captain to put me ashore; but the captain, who was a villainous-looking fellow, with one eye, and almost as black as a negro, said 'he'd see me damned first,' and the crew (one man and a boy) they laughed. 'I guess,' said the one-eyed skipper, 'Cap'n Silas will give twenty-five dollars for you; you're a pretty strong-looking hand, and will make a good sailor.' 'What do you mean to do with me?' I asked. 'I'm going to make a sailor of you,' said he; 'that's what I'm going to do. You must know,' he went on, 'that Cap'n Silas Tompkins is master of one of the biggest clippers out o' New York, and he wants to sail to-morrow for China; but he's short-handed, as are all the clippers, for the matter o' that. Says he to me, 'I'll give you twenty-five dollars for every likely hand you pick up, and if they won't go by fair means, why then they shall by foul! I'm going to introduce the press-gang!' So," concluded the captain of the schooner, 'yer might as well stop yer gam, for yer've got to go!'" I could hardly believe that this villainous fellow was in earnest; but I soon saw that he was. I grew frightened. "Let me go," said I, "and I will pay you well!" The captain laughed. "You look like a man who can pay well," said he. "Let's see yer money." I had none with me. I told him so, but added that I had just had three hundred thousand dollars left me by an old friend, and would give him something handsome if he'd let me go ashore when we got to New York. But the captain laughed again, and said I was a fool to try to make him swallow such stuff. Well, that night," continued Mr. Moore, speaking very rapidly, "I had a fever, and was delirious. When I came to, the next afternoon, I found myself lying in a nasty bunk in the fore-castle of a ship, and heard we were outside Sandy Hook, with a fresh breeze. Oh, how I groaned when I thought of poor Ellen! I crawled out of my bunk, and went aft to remonstrate with the cap-

*Captain Tompkins is not a solitary instance of ambitious masters who have filled their crews by "foul means." They generally manage to leave the impressed seaman at some foreign port, to escape his evidence at home.

tain, and threaten a prosecution when I recovered my liberty; but I was knocked down and kicked by the third mate for my pains, and Captain Tompkins looked on, laughing. Well, I made the best of my situation, and worked hard. When we got into the Indian Ocean, we met a hurricane, were dismasted, ship foundered. Myself and rest of the crew got into one of the boats,—the captain, officers, and some passengers in another. Well, the captain's boat was overloaded, and capsized. The captain swam to our boat, and got his hands on the gunwale. 'You can't come in here,' said a stout fellow, who, like me, had been kidnapped; and, indeed, the boat was more than full. 'For the love of God, take me in!' cried the captain. 'No!' roared the stout fellow; 'this is what you get for dragging me away from wife and babbies, who've starved to death by this time, p'raps!' and he drew his sheath-knife, and slashed the captain's fingers till he dropped his hold and sunk, and we never saw him again."

"Served him right!" observed Mrs. Jarvis, much interested.

"Well," continued Mr. Moore, hurriedly, "I will pass over the horrors of the ten days in that boat, how we lay broiling in the sun,—you can't conceive that torture,—how our scanty stock of provisions went at last, and we endured the torment of thirst and hunger, how, after seven of us had died and none of the survivors had strength to throw their bodies overboard, we were picked up by a French vessel bound from Java to Cartagena in Spain. Well, I recovered and told my story to the captain, who promised to send me home the first chance he got. We reached the Mediterranean Sea, when one morning the ship took fire, burned like a cinder, barely giving us time to get into the boats. This time we did not suffer from hunger or thirst for that very night we were picked up by an Algerine craft and carried into Constantinople. Although this city had been captured by Gen. Darnement the year before, its occupation by the French did not appear to have benefited it much. We were all sold as slaves and sent to Fez. For four years, Mrs. Jarvis, I, with three of my shipmates, worked in that city being employed (much against our will) in the manufacture of leather. We did our best to escape, but in vain. After this we were sold to the captain of a Tripoli pirate and thrown in among a barbarous Moorish crew. We were captured, fortunately, by an English frigate, brought to England and liberated. I found

myself in Liverpool without any money and without a friend. I was sick, too. I tried to get a berth on board some vessel bound to the United States, but no captain would take me. At length I found employment in the shop of a trunk-maker. All this time I was, as you may suppose, dying to hear from my poor wife. I wrote letter after letter to her and waited in vain for a reply. One day, in repairing the lid of an old trunk, I found it lined with an old American newspaper, and in that newspaper I saw the announcement of my wife's death, about the time it was supposed I was drowned. Well, after I learned that, I lost all desire to get back to this country; everything worth living for seemed to have left me. I cared nothing about the property that was bequeathed to me by Mr. Wyckoff. I resolved to wander over the face of the earth till I died. I was now strong and well. I shipped on board a vessel bound to San Francisco. I had but one desire to find out my poor boy Harry," and Mr. Moore's voice faltered.

Mrs. Jarvis' eyes glittered.

"I arrived in San Francisco. Then I learned in a very curious and entirely accidental manner that my son was dead, and had died in a—but never mind that. I would that he had never been born if what I learned is true. But I am in great doubt. I have learned since I have been here that my son is alive and in this country. I have done my best to find him, but cannot. There is a fellow who calls himself Harry Moore, but he is an impostor. I have seen him. There is some mystery I cannot unravel."

"Your son is dead," said Mrs. Jarvis.

"Oh! how do you know?"

"Read this letter," and Mrs. Jarvis took from her bosom a small bag, suspended from her neck by a steel chain, opened it and took from thence the letter from the San Francisco police, containing particulars of Harry Moore's death. Mr. Moore read it and sighed deeply. "I feared it was true," said he at last. "I had faint hope he was alive."

"Please go on with your story Mr. Moore."

"Well, when I learned of my son's death, I was nearly crazy. I gave up all thought of going back to America. I got the position of second mate on a ship bound for Australia. When I arrived there, I invested all my wages, which amounted to a considerable sum, in a tract of land and turned farmer. One day I awoke and found myself enormously rich. I had bought a

rich and almost inexhaustible stratum of gold. Well, I worked my mine. Other miners bought adjacent lands. A village sprang up, which soon grew into a town. We all got rich; I am not able to tell you how rich."

Mrs. Jarvis gazed at him with immense respect.

"Well, I lived there for ten years. Having amassed more money than I could hope to spend during the remainder of my life, I resolved to return to my native land and spend my riches for her good. Several years ago I arrived here. I have founded two hospitals, — but, pshaw! I will not talk about this. And now you see, Mrs. Jarvis, a lonely, wretched man, with more money than he can ever spend, but without a tie to bind him to the earth. I care not how soon I leave it. Not a relative in the world but my brother's children; — but what do they care for me? There is, indeed, my grand-uncle, Phineas Somers, who used to be very fond of me; but he's most likely dead. I don't know where he is, — they say he's not in Salem."

Mrs. Jarvis was silent for some time. At length she said, —

"How is it, sir, you have never claimed your share of Mr. Wyckoff's money?"

Mr. Moore's brow grew dark. "Have I not enough of my own?" he asked, evasively.

Again Mrs. Jarvis was silent; but soon, with considerable agitation, she began, —

"Mr. Moore, I have got something to tell you that will greatly surprise you and make you feel bad, but I ought to let you know it I suppose. Me and another person only knows it. I am almost afraid to tell you, sir, you will blame me, I know, but I couldn't help it, sir, I couldn't in faith."

"Let me hear it," cried Moore, starting up with sudden interest. "What is it? Go on, go on!"

"Well, sir, before my poor mistress, your wife, Mrs. Moore, died, she had a baby born. She died, but it lived."

"WHAT?" cried Mr. Moore, reaching Mrs. Jarvis at a bound and clutching her tightly by the arm. "My good God! is this possible! I have a child! it lived! repeat those words! — it lived! my child!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Jarvis, alarmed at his tremendous agitation. "The very night Mrs. Moore heard you were drowned her child were born. I didn't look for such a thing, sir; it was a seven months' child, but a sweet, pretty little creature — a girl. Alack! alack!"

"Where is she? Where is my daughter? Tell me this instant, woman! where is she?" cried Moore, with great vehemence.

"La! sir, how you hurt me! Let me go and I will tell you all about it. It's a sad story."

"Tell me all, my good woman, pass over nothing."

CHAPTER XXVI.

MRS. JARVIS' NARRATIVE.

"WELL, you see, sir," began Mrs. Jarvis, "when my poor mistress, your wife, got that letter from Mr. Graham, telling about your being drowned —"

"From Mr. Graham!" interrupted Moore, with such an awful expression of countenance that Mrs. Jarvis was frightened. "Did *Graham* write about my drowning to Ellen?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Moore smothered a fierce execration. "Go on," he muttered.

"Well, sir, when Mrs. Moore read them words, she fell right back on her pillow, speechless, and didn't say a word. Well, sir, I ran up to the corner and got Dr. Hayes, — you remember him, don't you, sir? and he came, and bimeby we fetched her to; but she kept a-fainting all night long, and after the little baby was born, why the doctor said she must die. Well, towards morning her mind all came back, and I thought she looked right smart and was going to get well; but she knowed better. She bid me get a piece of paper and a pencil, and calling me to her, she said (I mind the very words), 'After I am dead, I want you to take this infant to Boston and give it to my brother, Mr. Ebenezer Moore, and give him this paper, too,' and then she writ this letter, sir," and Mrs. Jarvis again opened her bag, and produced a torn sheet of paper hardly legible, but Mr. Moore managed to decipher these words, —

"MY DEAR BROTHER, — William is dead and I am dying. I have no friends in the world but you. Will you not, my brother, take this poor child and rear her as your own? I know you will, and I send her to you with confidence. She is the last of your brother's family. My poor Harry is dead — has died a shameful death. My hand is growing feeble, I cannot write more, but I know you —"

Here the paper was torn off.

"Mrs. Moore's strength gave out," said Mrs. Jarvis, "as she finished this note, and she couldn't sign her name."

"But what else did the paper say?"

"It ran this way, sir, I have never forgotten the words, —

"I commit this child into your hands with tears. It is born while I am in disgrace and grief; but it, poor thing, is innocent. Oh! protect and cherish it."

Mr. Moore's eyes filled with tears. "How did the paper get torn?" he asked.

"Why you see, sir," said Mrs. Jarvis, rather embarrassed, "I tore it accidentally, but I kept both parts, and meant to have given them to Mr. Moore."

"Well, go on."

"After the funeral, I started in the cars for Boston. I carried the baby with me. When we got to the place next Springfield, I left the child lying on the seat, and went out of the cars to get a drink of water. Well, sir, the cars they started off so quick, I couldn't get aboard of them again."

Mr. Moore groaned.

"Well, sir, I was well-nigh frantic. The next train did not go on for some hours. I hastened on to Springfield. I saw the conductor of the car, but no one knew anything about the child, and I have never seen nor heard of it since."

"O woman, what have you done! O poor babe cast away thus! God knows what has become of her!"

Mrs. Jarvis's feelings were by no means pleasant as she saw the anguish in Moore's pallid face.

"Did you tell my brother all about it?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Jarvis, at once; since Mr. Ebenezer Moore was dead, she had no hesitation in her lies. "I told him all about it when he came on to settle up your affairs, and he done his best to find the baby."

Mr. Moore sat silent, buried in gloomy thought. "Well, Mrs. Jarvis," said he, at length, "I want you to keep perfectly silent about my being alive. Don't mention it to anybody. I will keep these letters, the one from San Francisco, and my poor wife's note," and he put them both carefully in his pocket. "Where do you live now, Mrs. Jarvis?" She told him.

"Well, if you are ever in any difficulty, come to me; and in the mean time, I beg you will take this," and he handed her a fifty-dollar note. "Now," continued he, "do

you know who this fellow is who pretends to be my son, and has taken possession of Mr. Franchot's property, and has gone to the Mediterranean?"

Mrs. Jarvis hesitated. "No, sir, I do not," said she, at length.

"This letter proves him to be a base impostor."

"Has he really got possession of — of — Mr. Franchot's money, sir?"

"Yes, through his attorney."

Mrs. Jarvis ground her teeth with rage.

"You will show him up, of course, sir?"

"What do you mean? expose him? Oh, certainly, but I'm in no hurry. I must find my daughter, first of all."

"And are you going to let this fellow, sir, enjoy the money in the mean time?"

"Yes, if he *can* enjoy it, but not for very long, my good woman. It is the most infamous imposture I ever heard of, but he shall have his deserts, — and others, too," he added, in a low voice.

"Have you seen Mr. James Graham, sir?"

"Yes, but he doesn't know me."

"He will be delighted when he finds you're alive."

"Doubtless," returned Mr. Moore, dryly.

"Were there any marks on the child, or any peculiarity of dress by which its identity may be proved?"

"Sir?"

"I mean, would you know the child's dress again if you saw it?"

"Not the dress, perhaps, but it had on those coral armlets Mrs. James Graham gave your wife when Master Harry was born; don't you remember, sir?"

"Yes, yes, I would know them."

Mrs. Jarvis went away, rejoicing in the thought that detection would ultimately overtake Ezra. Nothing but his renouncement of her would have tempted her to reveal these matters to Mr. Moore. Ezra did not act with his customary shrewdness in making an enemy of Mrs. Jarvis.

Mr. Moore sat for more than an hour in front of the fire, in deep thought. Again and again, did he read the faint lines his dying wife had traced. Any one would have perceived a change in him now. His face was sad, certainly, but the look of hopeless misery had gone. He had now an object in life, — to discover his child. He shuddered as he thought what might have been her fate.

Mr. Moore stood erect, an air of inflex-

ible determination gleamed in his dark eyes; all appearance of age vanished from his face and form, as he said aloud, looking up to heaven, —

"I dedicate my life to the recovery of my child!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

ETHEL received Vincent's gloomy letter the day it was written, and its contents grieved her much. She tried in vain to conjecture the cause of her lover's sadness, and anxiously awaited the interview in the library.

Vincent did not appear at dinner. At that time he was lying senseless on the floor of the cellar in Chrystie Street. It was very seldom that he was absent at the dining hour, for Mr. Graham was very punctilious about having all the family present.

In answer to his inquiry, Ethel said that she had not seen Vincent since breakfast.

He did not appear at breakfast the next morning. Mr. Graham sent a servant to his room. The man came down and reported that Vincent was sleeping so soundly he could not waken him.

"What hour did Mr. Vincent come in last night?"

"I do not know, sir."

"Ask the porter." The porter was equally ignorant. Had not heard nor seen him come in.

"It is strange," said Mr. Graham, "that he should stay out all night, without sending me word."

When the day passed away, and another night, and still Vincent did not make his appearance, every one grew alarmed.

Ethel banished the horrible idea that suggested itself to her mind, as she re-read the words he had written, "God knows what my wretchedness may drive me to." She would not think of Vincent Graham as a suicide, — the thought seemed to her profanity. Finally, she showed Vincent's note to Mr. Graham. She marvelled as she saw the expression that came over her guardian's face as he read. She thought it was alarm for Vincent, but it was, in fact, alarm for himself. He at once conjectured rightly what it was to which Vincent so gloomily referred. He was about to reveal the murder to Ethel. Words cannot paint the anguish Mr. Gra-

ham felt. He secretly hoped that his son, Vincent, his pride and boast, was dead.

"What do you think of this?" faltered Ethel.

"I trust it does not amount to anything," replied her guardian; and he tried to reassure her.

But Ethel went to her room a prey to the most harassing thoughts. She would not, *could* not believe that Vincent had destroyed himself, but she felt persuaded that some misfortune had befallen him. She could not endure her thoughts. She picked up the morning paper and glanced at it carelessly. Her eye fell and was riveted upon this advertisement, —

"CASTAWAY. — Any one who can give any information in regard to a female child, who was lost in a railway car about eighteen years ago, will be liberally rewarded on calling or addressing W. W. M., Whitney House, New York."

"This means *me*!" exclaimed Ethel, with flushed cheek and palpitating heart. "It *must* mean me! Oh, am I about to find my parents?"

She hurried downstairs and showed the paper to her guardian.

Now Mr. Graham, it will be remembered, had not the slightest suspicion that Ethel's father was William Moore, and his curiosity was greatly excited by the advertisement. He hastily wrote, —

"W. W. M. may derive the desired information by calling at the residence of Mr. James Graham, No—Fifth Avenue."

About eight o'clock that evening the door-bell rang, and Mr. William Moore entered, — after first ascertaining that Mr. Graham was not in, — and asked to see Ethel. That young lady was surprised and pleased to see her caller.

"Mr. Morris!" she exclaimed, after warmly greeting him, "pardon me, but why do you look at me so strangely? Are you ill? Really, you are deadly pale."

"My agitation is great, Miss Moore. Did you see an advertisement in the paper this morning that excited your curiosity?"

"O sir! do you know anything about that?"

"I put it in," said Moore, quietly.

Ethel eagerly caught his arm. "Tell me what it means, sir! Oh, explain at once! Oh, speak!"

"Give me time, my dear Miss Moore; know, then, I am searching for my daughter." And, in a succinct manner, he told her all that Mrs. Jarvis had revealed to him.

Imagine how breathlessly Ethel listened. Although Mrs. Jarvis's narrative was not in strict accordance with the facts, yet it was sufficiently true to show Ethel that *she* was the child referred to.

She gazed a moment with mingled astonishment and delight, and crying, "My father! my father!" threw herself into Mr. Moore's arms.

"My child! You, my child! O heaven! Is there such rapture for me? This repays all my hardships, all my misery!" And he clasped the young girl in a warm embrace, and kissed her with unspeakable tenderness and love. Let the reader imagine the scene that followed.

Their talk was long. Not a doubt remained that Ethel was, in truth, his child. She went upstairs and brought down the little white dress and the coral ornaments she had worn when Mr. Ebenezer Moore found her in the cars. Mr. Moore instantly recognized the coral. Ethel also showed him the scrap of letter her dead mother had written and which she had so religiously preserved all those years. It exactly corresponded with the portion Mr. Moore had, and the two parts put together made an intelligible whole.

"How inscrutable are the ways of God!" cried Mr. Moore. "My poor Ellen's dying wishes were fulfilled, and you *were* adopted by my brother."

"Yes," said Ethel, "and he treated me as his own child; no father could have been more tender."

"And I," continued Moore, "had I remained here, should, most probably, have met with poverty, whereas, being *driven* to Australia, as it were, I came back with boundless wealth."

In the absorbing interest Ethel had felt in the story that lifted the veil from her birth, she had not thought of the revelation her father was making about himself, but now she suddenly cried, starting up with excitement, —

"Oh! it was *you* my guardian threw overboard! and you were not drowned! Oh, thank God! Vincent's father is not a murderer!"

"No," said Mr. Moore. "Forgive me for not relieving your mind before, but I did not think the time had come. Perhaps I

did wrong. I wanted to see too, whether you would reject the young man."

"Reject him!" cried Ethel, her cheek aglow; "reject him! O sir, you little know a woman's heart if you thought I would, if you thought I *could*! *Nothing* kills a woman's love, not even the unworthiness of its object, much less a crime of which the loved one is innocent. O my dear father! it matters not how crumbling, weak, and poor, the wall may be, the ivy will cling round it still! As it grows older, more infirm, the closer will the loving plant entwine herself! Thus will a true woman's heart *envelop* her lover, as 'twere, and seek to cover, with herself, every rent and fissure in his name or character!"

Mr. Moore was rather staggered by this rhetoric, but it did not sound like silly rhapsody to him, for he saw the young girl was in earnest. On the contrary he looked with admiration at her, as she stood before him, eloquent and grand, if not sublime.

"Dearest one," said he, "I am glad to see you true to the man you love. I approve heartily of your choice. I have watched Vincent Graham. He has nothing of his father in him except his inflexibility of character. He is worthy of you, darling, — there can be no higher praise. Does he know about his father?"

"O sir! I am so *dreadfully* anxious about him! For two days and nights we've heard nothing from him, nor seen him. See, this is the last I have heard from him," and she gave him Vincent's note.

Mr. Moore read it hastily, and his brow contracted slightly.

"Ah!" said he, mournfully, "it is possible that —"

"Speak on, sir!" cried Ethel. "I know what you would say. You think this letter hints at suicide. O sir, banish such a thought from your mind! It *cannot* be so! I *know* it is not so!" she said, with a noble faith.

"No, no," said Mr. Moore. "Vincent Graham would never be a suicide. But what can this absence mean?"

"I fear something dreadful has happened," said Ethel. "Nothing but necessity would keep him away from me — I mean," she corrected, blushing, "would keep him away from home."

"I will do my best to hunt him up, my dear child. God grant that now you have found a father, you may not lose a lover!"

Ethel grew pale at the thought.

"Say nothing about me, Ethel, to your guardian."

"O sir, will you still suffer him to be tormented by his conscience?"

"Yes, for a while longer. Remorse is salutary. Listen, my daughter. Two years ago I landed here in New York, bringing vast riches with me from Australia. I could, of course, have made myself known at once, and compelled Mr. Graham to restore to me my portion of Mr. Wyckoff's estate. But I was in no hurry. I made inquiries; I learned that he was living in grand style, but was evidently unhappy. I saw him, and knew he was wretched. I learned that he was living extravagantly; I made calculations and found he was far exceeding his income and that he would soon have squandered the three hundred thousand dollars that properly belonged to him. My plan was formed. I knew that the torture of his conscience was the severest punishment he could possibly have. I determined to let him live in ignorance of my existence, and then, after he had spent his share of Wyckoff's money, to appear and claim my own. I also wanted to frighten him with supernatural terrors, — to haunt him as the ghost of his victim. In this I succeeded. I appeared to him the other day as he was sitting in his study —"

"Ah!" interrupted Ethel, "then that accounts for his fainting-fit."

"Did he swoon away? I saw he was horribly frightened. I am not vindictive, dear Ethel. Do not deem me so. I consider that I have but bestowed a fitting punishment on this man."

"Oh! but be merciful now," cried Ethel. "Reveal yourself to him, — remove the awful recollection of his murder from his mind."

"The time has nearly come," said Mr. Moore. "If I claim my money now I shall leave him penniless."

"Oh! but Mrs. Graham and Vincent?"

"I shall provide for Mrs. Graham; Vincent has property of his own. Is it not possible, Ethel, that Vincent suspects his father's crime?"

"Oh! I never thought of that," cried Ethel. "That would explain his strange words and manner. Oh! you will at least relieve his mind?"

"Certainly, I will. What can have become of the boy? I will set the secret police at work. Whatever affects your happiness, dear child, touches mine. Grieve not; Vincent shall be found."

Sweet and long was the interview between the new-found father and his daughter. Their happiness may be imagined, but not depicted. The man who had roamed a wretched wanderer over the face of the globe had regained his native land and found his child, — found her, not struggling with want, not a wretched outcast, but a young maiden tenderly and lovingly nurtured, elegant, accomplished, good. As for her, the mystery clouding her birth had suddenly rolled away and disclosed nothing to blush for, but everything of which to be proud. She had hardly been aware of the sense of humiliation she had always borne, but now that it had utterly and forever gone, she knew that there *had* been a weight. Her birth was spotless, her dead mother a saint, and she smiled through her tears of thankfulness, and laid her head upon her father's breast with a sweet sense of perfect rest and peace.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

EZRA IN LOVE.

DR. PARKES was sitting one evening upon the front piazza of Wyckoff Hall, quietly smoking his pipe and thinking about a "beautiful operation" he had, that afternoon, performed, when he saw a well-dressed man approaching from the road, over the lawn. The stranger came up to the house and, lifting his hat, observed that he presumed he was addressing Dr. Parkes.

"You *are*, sir," said the doctor; "pray walk in, sir. Whom have I the pleasure of seeing?"

"Mr. Harry Moore," replied Ezra Hoyt.

"Is't possible! Really, my dear sir, I'm delighted. I had begun to think you were a myth."

"Well, sir, I'm a myth that weighs a hundred and seventy odd," replied Ezra, quietly taking the proffered seat. "I got back from Palermo last week, and thought I would run up and see my property."

"Your sojourn in the Mediterranean has done you good," said the doctor, looking with envy at Ezra's robust frame.

"Oh! a vast deal of good, doctor. Upon my word, this is a very pretty spot. I think my generous friend Mr. Franchot must have been a gentleman of elegant taste."

"He was. A fine man in every respect. Thank God! they've caught the rascal who killed him."

"Amen!" said Ezra. "A most infernal murder. What was the motive?"

"I can't conceive, sir. There was scarcely an attempt at robbery, and Franchot was incapable of having enemies."

"I was in Canada at the time it took place," said Ezra, "and never learned all the particulars. I should be glad to hear them from you."

Here was a man who rejoiced in the recital of his own crimes. He listened eagerly to the doctor's narrative.

"A most dreadful affair!" was his comment. "Do you think this Smith will swing for it?"

"The evidence against him seems to be conclusive," replied Dr. Parkes. "Oh! the infernal rascal! If I had him here, I'd pitch him into yonder river."

Ezra smiled to himself. "But what *would* you do, really, doctor, suppose he should appear and come and sit here on the piazza with you?"

"Sit on the piazza with me! Sir, if he should come disguised as the angel Gabriel I'd know him! Why man, this piazza would fall with him, should he dare to desecrate it with his presence! If I had him here sitting by my side, gad, I'd — I'd have an *ante-mortem* dissection of his body!"

Ezra felt glad that he was not disguised as the aforesaid angel.

"Well, doctor," said he, after a pause, "I came up here not only for the purpose of seeing my house, but to get you to introduce me a little in New York. You see I know very few people there. I was only here a short time after I arrived from San Francisco, and then went to Canada, and from there to Sicily. I want you to introduce me to Mr. James Graham and family. Why, I forget, I need no introduction there, his ward, Miss Ethel Moore, is my cousin. On the whole, though, I'd rather be presented by you than introduce myself. Miss Moore is very beautiful, I understand."

"She is, but there's no use for you to look to that quarter. Mr. Moore. She's mortgaged property. Young Vincent Graham has a 'lien' on her — if I may borrow an illustration from the legal profession."

"What sort of a man is this Vincent Graham? I've heard a good deal about him."

"A splendid young fellow in every respect. They say he's most wonderfully smart. I dare say he is. And as to his physical development, bless me, sir! if all men were like him, we poor doctors would starve!"

"Is he so very strong?"

"Strong! Why, sir, the night of that devilish murder he split one of the villain's skull with his fist — with his *fist*, sir! and choked the other rascal till he left him for dead."

Ezra instinctively felt of his throat.

"And he is engaged to this Miss Moore?"

"Yes, and a fine match it is, too. Miss Moore is an heiress, — she inherits half of Mr. Ebenezer Moore's fortune, which, I understand, is very large."

At these words Ezra pricked up his ears. "Ah," thought he, "since Graham's off the stage I might as well go in there myself. A fig for her beauty, but if she's got the *rhino* I'm her man."

"Well," said Dr. Parkes, "I shall take great pleasure in introducing you to my acquaintances in New York. I'm going down to-morrow afternoon. Stay with me here to-night and return to the city with me."

"Thank you," said Ezra, "you are very kind."

"Come in, and take a glass of wine. I have some port which was in the house when Wyckoff lived here."

The doctor and his guest sat over their wine and smoked their cigars till a late hour. When they parted for the night the doctor led Ezra into the room where Franchot had been murdered. "I think you will find this room comfortable." Ezra at once recognized it. He smiled his horrible smile and said, "The room suits me to a dot, doctor," and he spoke the truth. He felt a sort of savage satisfaction in sleeping in that room. As for supernatural terrors and "nervous fancies" this man was an utter stranger to them.

The doctor left him. Ezra walked to the window and looked out. It had been, since the murder, grated with strong iron bars. "Ah," thought the murderer, "here's the place where I got in. I suppose that is the same bed. It must have been pretty well soaked that night. Ah! these bars are a good idea, nobody can come the same game on me." He extinguished his light, jumped into bed, and in a few moments was sleeping as peacefully as an infant.

As there are men born without some portion of the human organization, physically, so there are certainly those who are destitute of some of the attributes and qualities of human nature. Ezra must have come into the world without a conscience. Assuredly he never betrayed its existence. Eugene Sue represents the hideous *Maitre*

d'Ecole tormented by visions of his murdered victims, and tortured by dreams of unutterable horror. These apparitions would never have appeared to Ezra Hoyt. Had he been Macbeth, the ghost of Banquo would not have risen at the banquet.

He slept soundly and awoke refreshed. "A mighty good bed!" said he to himself. "I wonder how Vincent Graham found the brick one I laid him on. I can fancy the fellow's horror when he came to. I'd liked to have seen his face! He thought marrying Ethel Moore would feather his nest well. Well, well, I must see this young lady. Now Graham is dead, she must be pining for another lover," thought he, with his brutal notions.

The doctor met him cordially, at breakfast. "You'd like to ride around with me and see the country, wouldn't you, Mr. Moore?"

Ezra cared nothing for rural beauties, but he expressed his readiness to go.

While waiting for the carriage, the doctor and his guest strolled down to the river bank. They found an old Scotchman sitting there looking thoughtfully into the river. He rose and took off his hat respectfully, as they approached. The doctor nodded to him kindly.

"Here," said Dr. Parkes, "is the place where your poor father fell off and was drowned, — this very spot."

Ezra heaved a sigh from his hypocritical breast.

"Did you know him, Dr. Parkes, did you know Mr. William Moore?" asked McManus.

"No," said the doctor, "I don't think I ever saw him, but I always understood he was a very fine man."

"Ay, he was," said the Scotchman.

"What a pity he was drowned," said Ezra, who probably rejoiced more in that catastrophe than anything in the world.

"Maybe he'll come to life," said the Scotchman, as if talking to himself. Ezra started.

"Eh? what's that?" cried the doctor.

"I mean naught," said McManus, rather confused.

"He means something," said Ezra to himself. "I don't like this. Jove! If this Moore should turn up, my cake would be dough!" and he looked at McManus keenly.

"You are down early, this morning, McManus," said the doctor.

"Yes, sir. I started at daylight to walk to R —, and thought I would bide here a spell."

"Won't you go up to the house, and get a cup of coffee?"

"I'm obliged to you, sir, I believe not."

"How is Mr. Morris?"

"Quite well, and thank you, sir. He's in New York now."

"Who is Mr. Morris?" asked Ezra.

"A queer, eccentric gentleman, who has a place about ten miles from here, but he's never there. He seems to be a mysterious sort of individual, and to be troubled by some secret. McManus, here, lives with him."

"I should like to make Mr. Morris's acquaintance," said Ezra to himself.

"Here, McManus," cried the doctor, suddenly, "let me introduce you to Mr. Harry Moore, Mr. William Moore's son."

The old Scotchman smiled queerly to himself. He bowed low, but did not seem to see Ezra's outstretched hand. "Ah!" said he to himself, "this is the impostor Mr. Moore was a-telling me about. I mought know he was a rascal, — there's villany in his eyes, spite of his specs."

"Why, sir, is it possible?" said he, aloud;

"I heard you were dead in San Francisco."

"Glad to say I'm not," said Ezra, with a repulsive laugh. "Did you know my father?"

"Yes, sir, well; and I knew master Harry, too, before he run off to sea."

"Do you think I've changed much?" asked Ezra, rather ill at ease.

"Very much indeed," said McManus, with emphasis. "I shouldn't have known you, sir."

Ezra was glad that the arrival of the carriage at this moment, put an end to this conversation.

He and Dr. Parkes went down to the city that afternoon. The former, elegantly dressed, was escorted by his friend, in the evening, to Mr. Graham's house. The doctor pleaded a professional engagement, and very soon left.

Mr. Graham received Ezra with much courtesy. "I will treat the son of William Moore," thought the guilty man, "with the utmost kindness." Ethel entered, and he introduced Ezra to her.

There was mingled joy and sorrow in Ethel's face, — the happiness of finding her father, the sickening anxiety she felt for Vincent's sake.

We have endeavored to picture Ethel as the perfection of loveliness. Let the warm imagination of each reader present her portrait to the mind's eye. Let it draw her from these suggestions. Hair of the rich,

warm brown that poets (who are not, as a rule, critically exact) would call "auburn;" complexion of transparent whiteness tinged with a softened pink; large, lustrous eyes, of changing hues, capable of an infinite variety of expression; soft, yet dazzling, velvety, yet clear; with the queenly carriage of the head that the base-born never have; a form in which grace and stateliness were beautifully blended; a hand and arm that Phidias would have longed for as a model, a foot that Terpsichore would have envied. Such was Ethel Moore at eighteen. Such was Ethel as we first beheld her, her beauty unapproachable, although it had not yet reached its full perfection. She inspired every one at first sight with the feeling that transfixed Vincent at Wyckoff Hall, — a certain awe, as of a superior being. One was afraid to love her; you might as well fall in love with an archangel. Ethel! sweet goddess! Nature's *chef-d'œuvre*!

Ezra sat restless under the inquiries of Mr. Graham, when suddenly Ethel entered, and the full effulgence of her beauty burst unveiled upon him. He was dazzled, blinded. Ethel returned his salutation with the imperial haughtiness that so well became her. Before he had spoken a word she distrusted and feared this man. She could not tell why; a mysterious antipathy, the cause of which we cannot divine, actuated her.

Ezra, unaccustomed to the society of ladies, was embarrassed and silent. Ethel conversed with ease and grace, seeking to entertain her guardian's guest. He had been introduced as Mr. Moore, but she did not imagine him a relative of hers. Suddenly Mr. Graham said, —

"Why, how stupid of me! Ethel, this is your cousin. This is your uncle, Mr. — Mr. — William Moore's son."

Ethel turned pale, and could with difficulty smile in reply to Ezra's expression of satisfaction. "This man my brother!" thought she, with horror. "I do not believe it! It is not so! He is a bad man, I know."

McManus by the lumbering process of reasoning, Ethel by the fleet, infallible dictate of instinct, both arrived at the same estimate of Ezra. That gentleman gradually recovered from the benumbing influence of Ethel's charms, and became quite loquacious. With considerable tact he began to talk about Vincent, well knowing that this theme would interest her.

"I was much pleased with Mr. Graham," said he, "what I saw of him."

"You have met him, then?"

"Yes, once or twice." He did not give particulars of these interviews.

"Have you seen him lately, Mr. Moore?" asked Mr. Graham.

"Not since last Saturday, sir." That was the day he had decoyed him to Chrystie Street.

"Why, he disappeared that day," said Mr. Graham.

"Disappeared, sir! Has he disappeared?"

"Yes, we have not seen him since that morning. What time did you see him?"

"About one o'clock, I should think. He was writing in the reading-room of the La Farge House. I did not interrupt him. I thought he looked pale and sick, and in some trouble of mind. He sighed heavily once or twice."

Ethel listened, sick at heart. "He was groaning," thought she, "over the crime of his father, and feared to confide his sorrow to me, lest I should turn from him. Oh that I could see him to tell him that his father was innocent in deed at least!"

"It is very strange," resumed Ezra.

"What can have become of him? Have none of his intimate friends seen him?"

"I have called on Temple and Kavanagh," said Mr. Graham. "They do not know where he is; were surprised to find that he had gone."

"But the secret police will find him," cried Ethel.

"The secret police!" exclaimed Mr. Graham, in surprise; "why, who has set the secret police at work?"

Ethel was embarrassed; she had nearly betrayed Mr. William Moore.

"I was thinking, sir, that if they were employed it would be a good thing. Will you not see about it, sir?"

Here, Ezra, who had been revolving sinister projects, interposed with, —

"It will do no good, Miss Moore, if he has already left the country."

"Left the country!" cried Ethel, with blanched face; "what do you mean, sir? How left the country?"

"Why, now I recollect it," replied Ezra, "as I was sitting in the reading-room of the hotel, I saw a man come in and go up to Mr. Graham and say, 'I have found out all about it, sir.' 'Well,' replied he, 'what hour does the steamer sail?' 'At ten to-morrow,' said the man. I thought nothing about the circumstance, for I supposed Mr. Graham was writing a letter to send by the steamer, as, indeed, he may have been."

"No," said Ethel, "the letter was to me; it was dated at the La Farge House. But he may have written another. Did he, sir?"

"He only wrote one letter, and it seemed a short one. He then went immediately."

"Ah! I fear he has gone," and there was misery in Ethel's voice as she uttered these words.

"But what can it mean?" cried Mr. Graham. "Why should he leave the country?"

Ezra smiled queerly, shrugged his shoulders and glanced at Mr. Graham. "He has something," was her mental comment, "that he wants to tell my guardian. Oh! my forebodings! Some sorrow has occurred to him, and I am powerless to remove it, powerless to console!"

She presently made some excuse to leave the room, and Mr. Graham turned instantly to Ezra. "My dear Mr. Moore," said he, "do you know anything about this mystery? Have you any conjecture?"

Ezra paused. He purposed to ruin Vincent both with father and betrothed, but he hardly knew how to begin without offending Mr. Graham; supposing, naturally, that that gentleman's paternal love and pride were great. When, at last, he spoke, his words seemed strangely irrelevant.

"Your son is to be married to my cousin. It is, I presume, a match in which there is love on both sides; or, at least, I presume that you think it is such a match?"

"Why," said Mr. Graham, surprised, "I certainly think my son and ward are in love with one another — as the phrase is."

Again Ezra shrugged his shoulders, — a movement meaning anything or nothing.

"That Miss Moore," said he, artfully, — and by way of sounding the father's feelings towards his son, — "that Miss Moore should love Mr. Vincent Graham is very natural, for a finer specimen of man, physically and mentally, I have never seen. You may well be proud of your son, Mr. Graham. In fact, a man with a son like yours ought to be happy."

"Pshaw!" said Mr. Graham, with visible impatience and an annoyance that did not escape Ezra's keen regard, "why this pangyric upon Vincent? What has it to do with my question? I have nothing to complain of him, nor has he of me, I fancy," he added, sulkily.

"This man is not overflowing with paternal love," thought Ezra. "He speaks as if he were jealous or afraid of Vincent. I don't think it would kill him to imagine his son a rascal."

"Sir," continued he, aloud, and without any perceptible pause, "it deeply grieves me to say anything that may tend to shake your confidence in Vincent, or that, if known to her, would cause Miss Moore sorrow; but I have reason to believe — will you pardon me if I state my suspicions?"

"Say on," cried Mr. Graham, eagerly, and with a certain joyous haste he sought to conceal, but did not.

"Well, then, Mr. Graham, to be frank with you, — and nothing but my sense of duty could give me courage to say it, — I have good reason to believe that your son is utterly unworthy of the young lady who has given him her hand; that, in fact, he has deceived her; that his affections are otherwise engaged; nay, that he is, at this moment, already married to another."

"Impossible!" cried Mr. Graham, with an exultation that he did not hide from Ezra's watchful eyes.

"You are shocked, my dear sir. I cannot wonder; so was I, when I made the discovery."

"But how *did* you make the discovery? It seems to me impossible that Vincent should be guilty of such perfidy."

"So I would have said, sir, and I don't ask you to believe me without proofs. Those proofs I will furnish you to-morrow. In the mean time, do not, I entreat, say anything to Miss Ethel about this matter. Why destroy her happiness sooner than necessary?"

"Sir," said Mr. Graham, unaffectedly, "you have a good heart."

"I have at least a heart that can feel for others' woes," said Ezra, modestly. "Believe me," he continued, "I would not bring such charges against your son without the strongest grounds of belief in the truth of what I allege. I have seen Vincent's wife, and spoken to her as such."

"Is it possible!"

"There is another matter," said Ezra, musingly, "of even greater importance, in regard to which I cannot, unhappily, divest myself of suspicions. Were it not, sir, that it cannot be possible that your son is peculiarly embarrassed —"

"Ha!" interrupted Mr. Graham, "what do you say? It is possible that Vincent may be in pecuniary embarrassment, nay, more than probable; for since a — a misunderstanding between us that occurred some time ago, he has, with what he imagines, I suppose, proper pride, refused to receive any money from me, and has lived entirely

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SCHEMER.

on the income of his own property, which is not large to a man of his expensive habits. But what do you mean to intimate? You quite startle me."

Mr. Graham looked anything but startled.

"Ah!" thought the schemer, "they have had a quarrel, have they? So much the better for me."

"Why, sir," he answered in a voice of profound melancholy, "if your son were hard-up for money, pressed by creditors and unable to look to you for assistance, why then he might yield to the temptation, and — but no! I cannot believe it! Your son would not be guilty of such baseness. Excuse me, sir, I cannot shock your feelings. Permit me to keep my suspicions to myself."

"Never mind my feelings," said Mr. Graham, with the air of a martyr, "if my son is unworthy of me —" he nearly choked in uttering these words — "I am anxious, by all means, to know it."

"Well, then," resumed Ezra, seeing that he might venture to say anything, "I have reason to believe, nay, I am assured, that your son has sailed to Europe, with his wife, and taken with him an immense sum of money belonging to other people."

Mr. Graham was utterly astounded. Vincent a robber! Vincent seeking safety from the avenging law by flight! Much as he desired to believe in his son's villany this staggered him. He leaned back in his chair with staring eyes and open mouth.

Ezra watched him with anxiety.

"I do not ask you to believe all this merely on my word," said he; "I will bring you the proofs of both charges to-morrow."

Mr. Graham recovered from his amazement and felt only unmixed satisfaction at finding Vincent, who had so bitterly upbraided him, — Vincent, the possessor of his fatal secret, — a villain and an outlaw. Ezra smiled quietly as he saw the glance of contentment in the other's eyes.

"Not a word of this to Miss Moore, my dear sir. To-morrow I shall prove my words. And," continued Ezra, seizing the favorable opportunity, and sinking his voice to a confidential whisper, "if it is all proved true, may I not aspire to the hand of your ward? May I not hope to be your son, if Vincent is discarded from your heart?"

"You may," said the other, pressing his friend's hand warmly. "Prove your words and — command me."

Miss JESSIE FAIRFAX sat in her own elegant apartment, which she called her *boudoir*, and which deserved the appellation, reading for the tenth time that morning, a letter she had just received from her soldier-lover, Edwin Moore. A genial fire glowed in the polished bars of the grate, and its light danced on the gleaming surface of the furniture. A brighter light beamed from Jessie's blue eyes that darted along the ardent page. Exquisite cabinet paintings beautified the walls, thick luxurious curtains stole away the glare of the sun's rays, but left their cheering radiance; a carpet, bright and soft as crushed roses, variegated the floor; a delicate and refined taste was everywhere apparent.

Edwin, whom she had not seen since he came home to attend his parents' funeral, was in Minnesota, in some insignificant but perilous war with a refractory tribe of Indians. He had risen to the deserved grade of captain, and enjoyed an enviable reputation among his brother officers as "the bravest of the brave." He inspired great dread among the cruel and cowardly foes, whom he pursued with a power resistless and implacable. The invigorating climate and the out-door life had given him the strength again that his severe studies had impaired. He had acquired vigor, if not robustness. He spoke now of an early leave of absence and urged a speedy marriage with all the ardor of love.

Jessie had wonderfully improved since we last saw her. There was a more defined grace now in her undulating form, a steadier brilliancy in her lovely eyes, — eyes that haunted Moore as he sat by the bivouac fire, or lay in his shelter-tent of boughs; her vivacity and sprightliness, although they had not disappeared, were tempered and improved by a certain stateliness and dignity; her complexion rivalled, if it did not eclipse, Ethel's; her full lips, that shone like wet coral, slightly apart now as she drank in Edwin's eloquence, disclosed teeth of dazzling whiteness; her prodigal hair, rather lighter than Ethel's, gracefully disposed about her ivory brow, was such as *Alfarata* would have sighed for.

A young and pretty French girl, elaborately "got up" with "flim-flams" and a redundancy of jewelry, entered and daintily extended a little *billet*.

"Mr. Graham's carriage is waiting at the door, Mam'selle," said the maid, with a charming accent.

Jessie opened the delicate envelope and read, —

"DEAR JESSIE, — Come and spend the morning with me, I am lonely and unhappy. Do come — at once, dear sister.

" Lovingly,
"ETHEL."

"Ethel lonely and unhappy!" said Jessie to herself. "I will go at once. Juliette, tell the coachman I'll be right down," and she put Edwin's letter away with a sigh.

"O you dear girl," cried Ethel as her friend entered, "how good of you to come! You make me so happy!" and to prove her words began to sob.

"That's right, darling, cry away," said Jessie drawing the fair head of her companion to her bosom; "it will do you good. What is it, Ethel?"

"It is Vincent," said Ethel, almost inaudibly.

"Has he played you false?" cried Jessie, with flashing eyes.

"No, no," cried Ethel, vehemently, starting up. "Oh! how can you! He false! Vincent!"

"Is he sick?"

"Alas! I do not know, Jessie; he has disappeared."

"Disappeared! what do you mean?"

"No one knows what's become of him. It's now ten days — only think! *ten* days, and none of us have seen or heard from him."

"Don't be anxious, love," said Jessie, herself much frightened. "He has undoubtedly been called off somewhere, suddenly, and his letter informing you has been lost."

"Oh, if I could only think so! But see, Jessie, this strange note;" and the poor girl showed Vincent's letter, blurred with her tears.

Jessie read it, wonderingly. "I see nothing to alarm you in this, dear Ethel. He speaks as if he were going to tell you of some misfortune. Perhaps your guardian has lost his property. Vincent, very likely, felt he ought to tell you, and yet dared not, and has gone off for a while to get up his courage; perhaps will write you."

With like arguments Jessie endeavored to soothe her companion, but with very little success; nor did she feel at all at ease herself. At length Ethel said, —

"But this is not my only source of disquiet. Mr. Graham, my guardian, made some very mysterious remarks, yesterday. He seemed very much embarrassed and was not clear in his meaning; but he gave me the impression that he thought he had discovered something dreadful about Vincent, and hinted — only think of it! — that he had been guilty of some crime!"

"Who? Vincent?"

"Yes, Vincent, my Vincent. I interrupted him in the midst of his obscure sentences and did not attempt to disguise my indignation. I left him, more angry myself than I like to remember."

"You should have stayed and heard what he had to say."

"What! listen to slanders on my affianced husband's name! I could not bear it even from his father. But Mr. Graham seemed to be convinced of the truth of what he said."

"Could you gather from what he said what it is they accuse poor Vincent of?"

"It was something about perfidy towards me, and dishonesty, if not positive crime, to others."

"Who *could* have put such ideas into your guardian's head?"

"It may be ungenerous in me to say so; but I cannot help thinking that my cousin is at the bottom of it."

"Your cousin? What cousin?"

"Oh, you haven't heard! Why Mr. Harry Moore, heir to Mr. Franchot's property, has made his appearance."

"And how do you like him?"

"I *detest* him! I don't know why, but I *do*. He is very polite, and by no means ill-looking; but I *feel* he is a bad man. Jessie," she continued, after a pause, "you will laugh, I dare say; but I have a conviction that this man is concerned in Vincent's disappearance."

"He! Why, how? What makes you think so?"

"I can give no reason at all; but there is something within me, Jessie, that tells me it is so."

Jessie did not laugh, but said, "Come, Ethel, you should not let your antipathy against this man prepossess you. How could he possibly be interested in having Vincent disappear, unless, indeed —" and she stopped, suddenly.

"Unless what? Speak, Jessie."

"Unless he sought your hand himself."

"My hand!" cried Ethel, with heightened

color. "The insolent — no, no, that is too ridiculous."

"Nothing seems ridiculous to self-love," said the fair philosopher.

"His manner towards me is certainly curious," said Ethel, musing. "He is very deferential and seeks to interest me, while I can scarcely conceal the aversion he creates."

"Well, let me advise you," said the subtle Jessie, "not to make an enemy of the man. Treat him kindly; extinguish his matrimonial hopes at once, of course; but keep him friendly."

"What harm have I to fear from him?"

"If he deems Vincent a rival, and is as you think, a bad man — everything."

"O Jessie! you give expression to my own fear. If he has injured Vincent —" she did not finish her threat, but one could read it in her eye and gesture.

"Edwin will be home soon," said Jessie, "and then —"

"Is Edwin coming? He wrote me nothing about it. Oh, how glad I am! He will aid him and restore him to me, I know."

"He will," said Jessie. "Edwin loves Vincent as much as he does —"

"You," said Ethel, slyly.

"I wasn't going to say that," said Jessie, laughing; "but he certainly loves him better than himself."

"In the mean time we must hope and pray," said Ethel, softly.

We must leave these two pure young creatures in their loving interchange of confidence, and turn to another and less pleasing character.

Ezra, on leaving Mr. Graham's house, walked to his hotel with an elated air. He felt great satisfaction at the result of his evening call. He did not, indeed, disguise from himself the fact that Ethel viewed him with repugnance. But this gave him very little uneasiness. "I can soon come it over her," thought he; "in the mean time I've bamboozled the old man. Lucky for me he dislikes his son! He's all the more ready to swallow what I tell him. What can be the reason? Jealousy, perhaps; yes, that's it. He has an unpleasant conviction that Vincent's the smarter man of the two. Well, I see my game. Let me once convince him that his son has absconded, and he will communicate his belief to Ethel in time. By Jove! the girl's a stunner! How scornfully she looked at me! I'll take you down yet, my beauty! Yes; Ethel will gradually come to believe he's faithless, and then will

be my chance. I'll ingratiate myself with the silly sage, old Graham, and his wife, and get a slice of his fortune. Come, Ezra, you've played your cards well, and your hand's not out yet. Let — me — see. I've completely foiled that over-smart detective. I've got that old Frenchman's, what's his name? Franchot's money. I've made myself Harry Moore, — I wonder what sort of a chap the real, original Harry Moore was? Wonder if his shades look with complacency at me in his role? I'm Harry Moore (*requiescat in pace!*), and nobody's a bit the wiser; and now I'm getting into society. Best of all," and Ezra stroked his mustache, complacently, "I've done that Vincent Graham, hard-hitter as he is. That's the neatest thing I ever did. I mustn't rent that cellar; no, that would never do; his body must not be found till it's dust. And, on the whole, I think I won't be seen around that shanty soon. I must not forget to see that beef-eating Robbins. Nobody knows me but Murragh and he's safe. I can't conceive how he was fool enough to write that letter about the St. Louis lark; no fear of his blowing while I have that document. Heavyvale's a fool; Wilkins ditto. I've nothing to fear from them! Ah! Mrs. Jarvis! Devil! there's the rub. I'd give a good deal to know just now whether it's a fact that she carries a letter about with her in a little bag, that could knock me 'higher than a kite.' Swears she's carried a paper about with her for eighteen years that proves Harry Moore dead. Must get hold of it, — must be done. Come to think about it, I was an infernal fool to get her mad. Will she blab? No, she dare not. I'll see her and give her a little of the 'essential.' Smith will be hung, of course. If he's such a miraculous fool as not to prove an *alibi*, he deserves to be hung. I'll get Murragh to defend him and insure a conviction. Everything has gone swimmingly with me. Ezra, I congratulate you! you're a genius. But this one thing bothers me. What the devil did the old man do with the safe and papers he had in his den in Catharine Street? Suspicious old dog. He put that safe out of sight cursed quick after I noticed it, I remember. Ought to have held my tongue. Those documents must be interesting. He said they were. I must see Donny about that. Another thing; what in the name of wonder did that old devil of a Scotchman mean by muttering that William Moore might come to life? And he doubts me, too. And who is Mr. Morris? — oh! ah!"

As Ezra had been thus surveying his situation he had been walking rapidly along; but as he gave utterance to the last ejaculations he stopped suddenly, turned ghastly pale, tottered, and would have fallen had he not leaned against a lamp-post for support. For, as the name of Mr. Morris came into his mind, by some subtle association it would puzzle metaphysicians to account for, by some mysterious process of thought, the idea flashed upon him that Mr. Morris and Mr. William Moore were one and the same. There was no evident earthly reason for him to form this conjecture, no *data* whatever from which to deduce a probability even, but a mysterious something, seizing perhaps merely the resemblance in the names linked with McManus's strange words, revealed the truth. He did not doubt an instant; he felt persuaded on the spot that he was right. Thus had the sudden suspicion of his father's guilt rushed upon Vincent's mind at Wyckoff Hall. The conviction was so complete, so perfect, that Ezra did not stop to argue probabilities. He felt a deathly faintness and an awful terror for a moment; he saw, in that brief moment, a fuse, lit and blazing, inserted under the fair fabric of his accomplished designs; he saw a spark of fire creeping towards an ignitable force that would blow him to utter, irremediable ruin. The faintness quickly passed away, the old look of settled determination returned to his face, and there was something awfully diabolical in this villain's eyes, as he muttered, —

"I see my way, — nothing but the extremest measures now, — no boy's foolery. A risky *finesse*, bold play, and the game's mine."

CHAPTER XXX.

CONSTANCY.

JIM PARKER sat by Vincent's bedside all night, patient and anxious. Not a wink did the good fellow indulge in, all those hours. There was visible anxiety in the surgeon's grave face when he went away. He left the most minute directions to the watcher, and most faithfully did the grim sergeant of police — withal as gentle and tender-hearted as a woman — observe them. Vincent fell into an uneasy slumber, from which he persistently started and broke the silence of the sick-room with wild outcries. He was much more dangerously hurt than Edwin

Moore had been at Wyckoff Hall; brain fever had almost instantly set in.

Parker showed that he was not accustomed to watch beside the bed of a delirious man, for he paid strict attention to the patient's ravings. Much that Vincent muttered, or whispered, or shrieked out, excited his profoundest wonder.

"I'm afraid the poor lad's been up to mischief," said the sergeant to himself. "I'm glad the doctor isn't here to hear him. Talk away, my boy, I'm safe. Don't mind me. I'd let the whole police service go before I'd blow on you."

"I'll hide it from Conger," muttered Vincent.

"Conger!" repeated Jim; "ah! I know — Inspector Conger of the secret force. 'Gad! I hope Conger isn't after the poor fellow, or it's all up with him. I say," said he, addressing Vincent, "Conger's all right; he don't know anything about it."

Vincent ceased muttering, and said in a hoarse whisper, —

"You will never be the same to me again, — never again, my father."

At length he dozed, and the sergeant tenderly applied the cooling lotions to his head.

The surgeon came very early in the morning, and his face brightened as he looked at his patient.

"If this man's organization wasn't perfect he'd never get over that blow. I trust his mind is tranquil. Did he rave much?"

"Yes, a good deal."

"I trust he has nothing on his mind; it would complicate the case. Did anything appear to trouble him?"

"Well, doctor," said the officer, "he talked a heap of nonsense, but nothing connected like. I couldn't make head or tail of what he did say."

"Well," said the surgeon, "he must be kept perfectly quiet to-day. Can you stay and watch him?"

"If you'll go round to the head-quarters, sir, and get me off duty."

"I will. Now I wish we could find out the young gentleman's friends. Is there nothing in his pockets that can give a clue?"

"Not a scrap of anything, sir."

"Are not his clothes marked?"

"All marked with the letter V, sir, that's all. Confound the luck! I had his name written in a memorandum book, and I lost it last week; first time I ever was so careless in my life. I say, doctor, I wish you

would have them send round to that cellar in Chrystie Street and search it, and then watch it."

"Yes. Now don't forget what I told you. I must be off; will be back at twelve."

For four days and nights Vincent hung between life and death. Parker was unceasing in his devotion; the surgeon unremitting in his attentions. At last he fell into a sort of lethargic state, in which he lay perfectly quiet and apparently unconscious, with restless eyes roving about the room.

Parker had an advertisement put into the papers, which ran thus, —

"The friends of a young gentleman who has dark-brown hair and mustache, was dressed in a black frock-coat and light pantaloons, who disappeared from his home four days ago, or more, can find information in regard to him by calling at No. —, Broome Street, and inquiring for the sergeant."

Now neither Ethel, Jessie, Mr. Moore, Mr. nor Mrs. Graham, nor Ezra, saw this advertisement, although it was repeated every day for a week. Only one person interested in Vincent *did* see it, — who that was, will be seen.

In accordance with his promise Ezra went to Mr. Graham's office, — for that gentleman, although out of business, had an exceedingly neat little office, that looked like a parlor, down-town, where he lounged away his mornings, — the next day, and proceeded to unfold his "proofs" of Vincent's guilt.

"Here," said he, "is a letter that came into my possession. Is it, or is it not, your son's writing?"

Mr. Graham took it, and read, —

"DEAR AL, — The thing is all ripe for execution — \$35,700 in U. S. 6's. Turn the mortgages into cash. Sell out your Erie shares. I foot up our *proceeds* altogether at \$575,000. This agrees with your figures. I don't think our little *little financiering* will come out, — certainly not till we get to Berlin. You'd better wait for the next steamer and attend to that other affair. I shall sail to-morrow in the *Persia* at ten o'clock. Let me see you on the wharf."

"Yours,

"V. G."

Mr. Graham read this note with amazement.

"This is certainly Vincent's writing. How did it come into your possession?"

"In a very simple way. I saw the letter lying on the pavement in Waverley Place. Glancing at it, I was attracted by the superscription, '*Allez Toujours.*' I picked the thing up, and read it. But to be sure there are other V. G.'s besides Vincent Graham."

"This is Vincent's writing, I tell you. It is very strange. Well, what else have you got?"

"How long is it?" asked Ezra, "since your son had rooms at the Everett House?"

"Rooms at the Everett House!" cried Mr. Graham; "he has never had rooms there."

"Pardon me, I've been living there for four months, and your son had a suite of apartments there when I came."

"Is't possible?"

"Yes; why I thought you knew it. Well, my room was next to his parlor. One evening I was standing at the door of my room when a little boy came running up the stairs, and handed me a pink-colored note, without any address. 'Missus says she will come for the answer,' said he. 'You've made some mistake,' I called out as he turned to go away. 'Guess not,' cried the urchin, running downstairs; 'do you see any green in my eye?' Whereupon I opened the note. Here it is."

Mr. Graham read the following, written in a beautiful Italian hand, —

"DEAREST VINCENT, — I am not jealous of Miss Moore, believe me, but really you spend too much time at your father's house. I have heard you call Mr. Graham 'an old noodle,' — so he can't be the attraction. Who, then, is? Now, I want you to let me come and live at the Everett with you, as your wife ought. I am tired of boarding-house life. I am coming 'bag and baggage,' as you horrid Americans say. Expect me."

"Your loving wife,

"BEATRICE."

Mr. Graham was terribly enraged by this short epistle. The reference to himself it contained excited his hottest ire.

"The infernal rascal! I'll disinherit him! By heaven! he shan't have a cent of my money!"

"Don't do anything rash, my dear sir," said Ezra, delighted.

"Anything rash, sir! I tell you I shall alter my will before dinner. I disown the scoundrel from this moment! Heavens! Who knows how long he's been carrying on his devilish practices? Perhaps he's been robbing ME!" and Mr. Graham turned pale.

"No, that can't be; my money's too securely invested."

"I'm afraid," said Ezra, with a deep sigh, "that it is not of late, only, that your misguided son has been engaged in this criminal business. He must have been at it for a long time, or how could he have amassed the stupendous sum of \$575,000? Many months, if not years, I should say."

"That is true," said Mr. Graham, "and now the fellow has gone off to Europe with this foreign woman and his stolen wealth to enjoy himself! But by heavens! I shan't let him alone, — I'll chase him!"

"Yes, do," said Ezra, after a moment's reflection. "If he leaves Ethel behind," thought he, "I shall have a clear field to work in; if he takes her I'll go too."

"I suppose," said he, "my poor cousin Ethel will feel very badly at this. 'Gad! if the fellow was here I'd call him out,'" added Ezra, pulling his mustache.

"Oh! pshaw! Ethel will get over this romantic nonsense very soon, depend on it. You're just the man to suit her, Harry. I shall praise you up to her, you may be sure."

"Don't say a word about me at present," cried Ezra, hastily, "not on any account! No, no, that would spoil everything. We must wait till she has gotten over Vincent. And I will plead my own cause, sir."

"Well," said the other, "as you please, 'but I shall show her this letter to-day.'"

"Very well; but I would rather have you not mention that you obtained the letters from me. People don't like the source of bad news."

"I won't mention your name. What's your haste? Can't you stay? Well, come and dine with me Saturday. Thank you. Good-by, my dear fellow, good-by. Take care of yourself. Saturday, remember, — sharp six," — and the friends parted.

Mr. Graham went home, and in accordance with the determination he had expressed to Ezra, sought an interview with Ethel. He found it by no means easy to disclose "Vincent's guilt" to her. Her manner towards him, of late, had been very constrained; she seemed to be struggling with an aversion she did not wish to betray.

At the first intimation of Vincent's perfidy and guilt, the young girl turned upon him a look of such noble reproach that he stammered and was unable to proceed. He began again, and, without looking at her, blurted out that Vincent was unfaithful to her, and was a rascal and embezzler. At this Ethel sprang up erect, with a dangerous

look in her eyes, which then seemed black as night, and actually frightened the man by the vehemence of her indignation. What her words were, she could never afterwards recall, — they rang in James Graham's ears for many a day.

The day of Jessie's call, and soon after that young lady had returned home, Mr. Graham endeavored to renew the conversation. Ethel, who regretted her previous anger, listened to him with deference. Graham mumbled over various platitudes about his unwillingness, as a father, to say anything against his son, *et cetera*, and immediately thrust the note signed "Beatrice" into Ethel's hand. She read it carefully, nor did she betray the least sign of agitation. The color did not forsake her cheek, but deepened slightly. She read the note through, and then threw it on the table, saying quietly, —

"An evident forgery."

"Why evident?" asked her guardian.

"Internal evidence," said Ethel. "In the first place Vincent is incapable of being such a person as this note would prove him."

To such an argument there was no reply. Ethel was evidently begging the question.

"That's just the point at issue," said Mr. Graham. "Is he incapable of being such?"

"Sir," said Ethel, with the most distinct enunciation, "pardon me, but I am amazed that you, as the father of Vincent, should put such a question even to yourself. Is he incapable? Why, sir, how old is he? Twenty-six. He has, then, for twenty-six years been living under your eye, constantly in your presence. During any of those years have you known him to do anything ignoble or dishonorable, — I will not say criminal? The question is an insult! Have you ever heard a whisper against him? Has there ever been a breath upon the untarnished gleam of his honor? Is he not a synonyme for all that is good, true, noble? I will not conjecture who it is has been seeking to poison your mind, sir, but let me say that all such attempts upon my mind are worse than useless. I will believe nothing against Vincent. I will listen to nothing against him. If what you are about to say is a continuation of what you have begun, I must beg you to excuse me; I will go," and the young lady swept the awe-struck Graham a queenly salute, and went out, as Marie Antoinette might have bowed to her judges, and retired.

But her haughty step failed Ethel as she reached the door of her room; she could barely totter to her bed, and, burying her

face in the pillows sobbed aloud. It was not that she doubted Vincent; no! she was sincere in the words she had uttered; but the charges against him, the fact that he had desperate enemies, as this forged letter proved, added overflowing wretchedness to the poor girl's surcharged heart.

"O Vincent, Vincent!" she groaned, "what will they do to you? Have they got you in their power? Oh that I were by your side! Oh that I were by your side!"

Not an instant did that constant heart waver from its faith. Not a single insinuating doubt crept through the portals of her mind, close-guarded by love. Ezra's machinations could not harm that loyal one, but against appearances, against mysteries, against the poison of that forged letter, against the arguments and opinions of her guardian, against the insidious suggestions of her own imagination, she opposed, triumphantly, the simple words of love Vincent had spoken, and rested secure in the purity of her love, in the depth of her faith, in the eternal strength of her constancy.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A FARCE WITH ONE ACTOR.

MR. WILLIAM MOORE, shortly after his return from Australia, had gone up to Wyckoff Hall. He could scarcely have explained why it was he went there. He felt a sort of mysterious attraction towards the place, and desire to revisit it. He wandered about the house, but did not show himself. He rode over the surrounding country. His artistic eye was pleased by its beauties, and he resolved to take up his residence in that neighborhood. He stayed in R — for some time. One day, in the course of a long excursion, he entered a thick grove and sat down to rest. It was the same spot where Ethel first saw him. The sympathetic sound of the zephyr-fanned pine trees caused him to utter his thoughts aloud. He spoke of his desolation, his wretchedness, the ruin James Graham had made of all his earthly happiness.

"What good is my wealth to me?" he said, with ineffable sadness. "It might have been better for you, William Moore, had you, indeed, been drowned that night!"

As these words escaped his lips, he heard a vehement ejaculation of wonder, quickly suppressed, and, turning round, saw an old,

white-haired man, with amazement depicted in his face, half-risen from a seat on an old mossy trunk. Moore was greatly annoyed that he had betrayed his secret to this stranger; but the old man — none other than McManus — hastily forestalled his outbreak of anger.

"Forgive me, Mr. Moore, — that ever I should live to speak to you again, sir! — I was too surprised to interrupt you, sir. Is it really Mr. William Moore I see?"

"I am William Moore, and not dead as you supposed, — more's the pity. But who are you who speak as if I was no stranger?"

"Cameron McManus," said the other, raising his hat. "I was gardener to Mr. Wyckoff, — bless his memory! Mr. Moore, if 'tis you, indeed, I canna tell ye how it gladdens my een to see ye. It removes a heavy weight from my mind; I felt like an accomplice to your murder."

"Ha!" cried Moore, "you know it all! How did you know this? Speak, man!"

"Sir, I saw James Graham drown ye in the river."

"And you have never told?"

"The secret has been locked in my breast these dreary years. Some time, sir, I will tell you why I felt I could na bring James Graham to the scaffold."

"It's fortunate you have been so discreet. Never tell a soul what you know."

The Scotchman liked nothing better than to be entrusted with a secret. Moore felt he could rely upon him.

"What are you doing for a living, my good man?"

"I'm most too old to work, sir. Mr. Wyckoff left me a good round sum of money, and I haven't wasted any on it. I am living down in this cottage, sir; I'd be proud to show it to you."

He did show it to him, and Mr. Moore was so much pleased with it that he soon came to an arrangement with the Scotchman by which he was to live there and ostensibly own the place. He took the trusty old man into his service and confidence.

Mr. Moore did not spend much of his time in this retired spot, although he came up from the city, now and then, for a few days. He joyfully acquainted McManus with the discovery of his daughter.

McManus lived at the cottage, and passed his tranquil days mostly with his Bible and his garden. He had never told Moore of Vincent's visit and the revelation he had

made him, fearing that his employer might regard it a breach of confidence. Now that his mind was at rest about the murder, he was comparatively happy and contented, though one secret still preyed upon him.

He was at work one day in his garden, which was separated, by a slight fence, from a path, hardly meriting the name of road, that ran through the grove, when he perceived a very aged man approaching. His appearance was so venerable that McManus would have been deemed a stripling beside him. His aged limbs seemed scarcely able to support the slight weight of his frail and bent body. A long, white beard reached nearly to his waist, and his trembling hand held a weighty cane which seemed to impede rather than to aid his pace. There was something pitiable in the appearance of this old man tottering on the verge of the grave, and McManus threw down his spade to invite him into the house. The octogenarian, however, paused before he reached the path leading to the doorway, and sat down on a rock beneath the bare branches of a maple, which intercepted very little of the sun's heat.

McManus approached, but so noiselessly that he did not attract the old man's attention. The latter sat with his chin resting on his breast, apparently in profound meditation. The Scotchman, unwilling to disturb his reverie, stood, silent, by.

"It must be hereabouts," soliloquized the aged stranger. "They told me it was five miles further and in a wood. This must be the wood. O William! am I going to see you again before I die? Poor William! poor Ellen!"

The Scotchman listened in great surprise. "Is he talking about Mr. and Mrs. Moore?" thought he.

"Poor William!" continued the old man, in a feeble voice, "I never thought to see you again. O William Moore, you are a man raised from the dead!"

At these words, McManus exclaimed in great excitement, "Who are you that speaks of William Moore?"

The aged man turned hastily. He endeavored to rise, but his feeble limbs refused to support him.

"Don't get up," said McManus; "bide there and rest ye. May I ask ye who ye are, sir, and who ye seek?"

"I am trying to find William Moore."

"William Moore! why, isn't he dead?"

"Nay, I hear he's alive. He has written

to me," and the old man fumbled feebly for a letter.

"He is alive," said McManus.

The old man's eyes sparkled.

"Thank God! then it was not a trick on a poor, lone man. I feared it was a cruel hoax, sir."

"Who are ye, sir, if I may be so bold, that takes such interest in William Moore?"

"My name is Phineas Somers."

"What! Mr. Moore's grand-uncle?"

"Yes, or rather his wife's grand-uncle, but it's all the same. He thought I was dead, doubtless, and I thought he was drowned. How did he know I was alive?"

"There was a letter came to him from Salem a week ago," replied McManus.

"Ah! who could have sent it? Well I was amazed t'other day to get a letter signed William Moore, bidding me come on here. I haven't travelled twenty miles these twenty years, but I started right off to see the dear boy before I died. I haven't many days to live. I—" Here the old gentleman was interrupted by an harassing cough that racked his weak frame.

"Well, Mr. Somers," said McManus, "will ye not come up to the house? Mr. Moore will be here this afternoon, I think, sir. You must be tired. Have you walked far, sir?"

"About five miles this morning. I'm not as hearty as I once was."

This information seemed superfluous, but McManus replied, —

"Are you not, sir? You are pretty well advanced in years, sir."

"I'm ninety-three, sir, come next Independence day."

To say that McManus felt like a young man would not be expressing half the truth. He felt like a stripling, like a boy, like an infant.

He helped the patriarch to rise, and leaning on his arm the venerable Somers tottered into the house, and sank into an arm-chair in such extreme exhaustion that McManus hastily poured out a tumbler of brandy. The old man drank it in a drivelling manner, nearly choking himself. His power of speech gradually returned and he managed to say, —

"Sit down my lad, let's have a chat."

McManus would not have been at all surprised at being called "baby." He sat down.

"When did William turn up?"

"More'n two year ago, sir."

"And he never wrote me once," said the old man in mild reproach.

"He thought you were dead, sir," said McManus; "in fact, he saw your death in a Boston paper."

"Yes, yes, it was another Phineas Somers; but he was quite young, he was only eighty."

"Now tell me," continued Somers, "how William escaped from drowning, where he has been all these years, and what he is doing now."

McManus hesitated. He did not know whether he ought to reveal anything, but then the reflection that this old gentleman was Mr. Moore's grand-uncle, and certainly entitled to the knowledge, decided him and he related the whole story. He did not say anything, however, about Mr. Graham's share in Moore's disappearance. His visitor listened with great apparent interest.

"And isn't he going to claim Mr. Wyckoff's fortune?"

"Yes, in time. He's in no hurry. He has several people to pay up. You know his son is dead?"

"Is he? I heard he was alive and in this country."

"It is not so, sir. The fellow that pretends to be Harry Moore is a miserable impostor. In my opinion 'tis he that murdered Mr. Franchot."

Mr. Somers seemed intensely interested.

"Yes," continued McManus, "and he's trying to palm himself off as Harry Moore and has taken possession of the old Frenchman's property."

"The villain! Why don't William expose him?"

"Oh! he will, sir, never fear. He'll oust him from his position. Mr. Franchot's property belongs to Mr. Moore, at least as trustee."

"Ah! how is that?"

"Why, Mr. Franchot left it to Moore's child."

"Yes, I know."

"Well, there is an heir alive."

"Ha! pray explain."

"Don't get excited, sir. It may do you harm. Hadn't we better stop talking a spell?"

"No, no, go on! I want to hear everything." So greatly was the old gentleman interested that he sat nearly bolt upright.

"Well, you must know, Mr. Somers, that Mr. Moore has a child really living."

Mr. Somers here cried out, with great energy considering his years, —

"It cannot be so! it cannot be so!"

"'Tis so in faith," replied McManus. "He had a daughter born just arter he disap-

peared and t'other day he found her. But you are very pale, my dear sir; pray take some more brandy."

In fact the excitement of the conversation seemed too much for the weak old man; he had fallen back in his chair perfectly colorless.

"I am subject to these faints; never mind me, go on!"

"Yes, sir. He found his daughter the other day, and a fine girl she is, too, — a beautiful young lady of eighteen."

"Who is she?"

"She is living with Mr. James Graham."

"Mr. James Graham!"

"Yes, she's his ward, — the adopted child of Mr. Ebenezer Moore."

"What! Ethel Moore!"

"The same."

"How strange! how strange! How was this discovered?"

"Why, the child was abandoned in a railway train, and Mr. Moore, learning it, advertised. She, or her guardian, answered the advertisement. He went to see her and found a paper and some jewelry that proved her indemnity, or whate'er ye call it."

Mr. Somers seemed greatly affected by this narrative. He was evidently a kind-hearted man.

"Who told him about the child being abandoned in the cars?"

"An old servant of his, Mrs. Jarvis."

"Ha! Mrs. Jarvis! Yes, yes. What joy it must have been to poor William to clasp his child to his arms, — a child he had never seen!"

"He has been a new man ever since, sir. He looks ten years younger."

"What do you suppose he will do to the scoundrel who pretends to be his son?"

"I don't know, sir, but he will punish him pretty heavy, you may be sure."

"I hope he will," said Mr. Somers; "it is outrageous!"

At this moment a little boy, whom McManus sometimes employed to do errands, appeared, with a letter which he had taken from a post-office in an adjoining town. It proved to be a few lines from Mr. Moore, saying that he could not come up that day. Mr. Somers seemed greatly disappointed. He rose with difficulty and announced that he should go to R —, and take the cars to New York. McManus in vain urged him to stay at the cottage.

"Let me go and get you a wagon, to drive you down, sir."

"No, thank you, I prefer to walk. I shall

take my time. I'll take another glass of brandy."

He drank the liquor and went out. He walked with such extreme feebleness that McManus ventured to expostulate with him, and again offered to procure a conveyance; but the old gentleman refused with some degree of acerbity, and shuffled off alone. He passed through the gate and down the shady path, followed by the Scotchman's pitying eye.

At about a hundred rods' distance from the house the path turned sharply around a cluster of poplars, and hid the old gentleman from view, and McManus went in to prepare his frugal dinner.

Mr. Somers walked on till he was completely hidden from the cottage, and then suddenly stopped, burst into a loud, harsh laugh, flung his cane away, pulled off his long, white beard, and resumed an erect and sturdy attitude. The venerable old patriarch disappeared, and in his place stood a stout, fresh man in the prime of life, with ruddy face and brown mustache. Phineas Somers vanished, and his stead stood, Ezra Hoyt.

"Ha! ha! well done! What a farce! Jove! that beard's enough to smother one. How are you, Phineas Somers? 'Gad! Ezra, I said you were a genius. You ought to be on the stage, ha! ha!"

But his first exultation at the success of his dodge, over, the wily villain fell into a sombre train of thought.

"Jove! I've found out more than I bargained for. Ethel Moore his daughter! Heavens! I thought that brat was dead by this time. O Mrs. Jarvis, I've a score to settle with you! This is what informers get from me,"—and he crushed a caterpillar with his heel.

He walked on rapidly. "Mrs. Jarvis must be punished. Shall I knock her on the head? No, she may be useful yet. But Moore and daughter! They must 'shuffle off this mortal coil.' Yes, I'll send the girl to heaven after her lover,—she won't be sorry,—and silence William Moore, forever."

CHAPTER XXXII.

ETHEL AND EZRA.

SHORTLY after Ezra's visit to Dr. Parkes, that physician was induced by a wealthy patient to accompany him to the south,

whither he had been attracted by the climate, and to take up his residence and pursue his profession there. Henceforth the worthy doctor disappears from these pages. Mr. Julius Kavanagh, Harry's father, a wealthy merchant of the Corn Exchange, became the next tenant of Wyckoff Hall.

The unfortunate James Smith was duly brought to trial,—the Grand Jury having found a "true bill" against him. While Ezra was pursuing his plots and Vincent was battling with death, the court of *Oyer and Terminer* met, and "the People against Hoyt" was the first case on the calendar. The jury was composed of the usual miscellany of citizens. An impartial judge was there. The district attorney was indefatigable and zealous in the discharge of his unpleasant duties, and did his best to have justice secured.

Smith's counsel was, unhappily, no other than D. Murragh, Esq., a man, as has been said, of damaged character.

Smith, unfortunately, knew nothing about this man's bad name, but had heard only of his talents. He had gladly accepted, then, Mr. Murragh's offer of his services,—an offer that had been prompted by Ezra. Ezra instructed the lawyer to make but a show of defence, and the tool obeyed to the letter, or at least intended to do so. Sometimes, however, on the trial his professional zeal got the better of his discretion.

A day or two before the court opened, Mr. Conger, who had become more and more convinced of Smith's innocence, called on Murragh and proposed that Mrs. Jarvis should be called upon to give her testimony,—not doubting that she would prove that they had been mistaken in the person's identity with Hoyt. Murragh approved of the proposal and immediately informed Ezra of it. In accordance with the scheme concocted between these worthies, Mr. Conger was led to believe till the last moment that Mrs. Jarvis would be summoned as a witness, and only learned, after the testimony for the defence had closed, that he had been beguiled.

The trial lasted several days and caused considerable excitement. Ezra Hoyt sat on a back seat in the court-room, an interested spectator of the proceedings. Mr. Murragh's treacherous defence could not save the prisoner. The overwhelming circumstantial evidence against him, the testimony of Wilkins, and of one Levi Solomons, a pawnbroker; his refusal to show where he was on the 5th of June, 18—, and the cir-

cumstance of Mr. Murragh's being his counsel, were more than sufficient to insure a conviction. The jury were not out fifteen minutes, and their verdict was, "Guilty, of murder in the first degree."

A black film shot before Smith's eyes, as he heard the foreman's words, and he felt a deathly sickness. He seemed choking, and gasped for breath. No one spoke; Smith, partially recovering, rose unsteadily, and, turning to the jury, said distinctly, and in a voice of unutterable misery,—

"Gentlemen, you have convicted an innocent man. God forgive you. I am a victim to circumstantial evidence."

Ezra left the court-room, with the excited throng, in an elation that he could not conceal. Not the slightest feeling of sorrow for the unfortunate Smith penetrated his marble heart,—all he felt was a delicious consciousness that he was safe now from the consequences of his murder.

Mr. Murragh was accosted by a legal brother,—

"Your defence was very able, my dear sir, but you couldn't do anything, of course, with the evidence against your man."

"Of course not; his conviction was a foregone conclusion. I didn't know but what I might bamboozle the jury and get them to disagree. Of course I knew the fellow was guilty, or he'd have proved an *alibi*."

Ezra had not seen Mrs. Jarvis since he had played the role of old man for McManus's delusion. He rode directly to Roberts's house. Mrs. Jarvis herself opened the door, and took him at once into the parlor.

Ezra carefully shut the door, and, catching the woman by the wrist, dragged her into the middle of the room.

"Now, you old she-devil! you've been blowing on me, have you? By heaven! you shall suffer for it."

"Let me go, Ezra! let me go! let me tell you about it."

"Oh! I know all about it. I know everything you've told Mr. William Moore."

"Mr. William Moore! How did you find out he's alive?"

"Pshaw! old woman, don't I find out everything I want to know? Now none of your shuffling. Why did you tell him that he had a daughter, and that you left her in the cars? Come, speak!"

"Why did I tell him? Why did you tell me to go to the devil?"

"Oh! it was revenge on me, was it? you got mad at a few hasty words I spoke. Oh! you're a sharp one, you are!"

"I didn't mean for to do you any harm."

"You didn't, did you? Do you know the fix you've got me in?"

"I haven't done anything. I couldn't help Mr. Moore's being alive, could I? As for his daughter, he'll never see her again."

"Won't he? He has found her already."

"WHAT!"

"Oh! you're astonished, are you? You see now the mischief you've done, I hope. Well, then, let me tell you that Miss Ethel Moore is his daughter."

"Miss Ethel Moore? It can't be so."

"Be still, you old fool! It *is* so, and all on account of your infernal nonsense."

"What did I have to do with it?"

"Didn't you, when the brat was born, write me about it, and tell me the nice little scheme you had concocted, after you saw that old fool of a Frenchman, to have me pass off as Harry Moore?"

"Yes."

"Well, didn't I like the idea, and propose to smother the young one? And you were too squeamish to do that, and wanted to abandon the thing, so as to have it turn up some day, just as it has?"

"Yes. I couldn't bear—"

"Oh! I know. You couldn't bear to kill the child, but you didn't have any compunctions about turning it adrift. Well, didn't you say you'd come on to Boston and see me, and then I telegraphed you to meet me in Springfield with the brat? You remember, don't you?"

"Yes, I remember all about it. What's the use of going over all that?"

"I want to go over it; keep quiet. Well, then; I telegraphed you to meet me in Springfield as a sort of half-way place, and you started with the young one. I hadn't seen you, you know, for a long time, and you were to wear a blue veil bordered with white, so I'd know you in a moment. Well, I go on to Springfield, and you're not there. I go and get a horse and wagon and ride to the next station, and there I find you. And what do you say? Why, that you were afraid I'd take the child and kill it, as I would have done, and so you left it in the cars to be picked up and sent to a Foundling Asylum. Well, you have to hurry back to New York to get there before Mr. Ebenezer Moore, and I, like a fool, go with you. Then I loaf around New York a week, and when I get back to Springfield, nobody knows or cares what has become of the brat. And now look at the luck. Mr. Ebenezer

Moore himself finds the child, adopts her, and after eighteen years, William Moore suddenly appears, advertises in the paper, finds his daughter in a jiffy, and where am I? Now have I told the story right, or not?"

"Yes, that's just as it happened."

"Well, then, do you see why I've been over it all? To show you what an infernal fool you've been in the whole business, — that's why. And finally you go and spoil everything by blabbing to this William Moore."

"Well, it would have been just as bad if his daughter *hadn't* turned up; he's here to oust you himself."

"I know it, but that doesn't help the matter. By heavens! you've informed on me, and shall suffer for it!"

"Do you threaten your own mother, Ezra?"

"Yes, I threaten my own mother. I don't care whether you're my own mother or not. I want you to know you shall be punished!"

"I'm not afraid."

"Ha! you defy me, old woman, do you? Take that!" and the cowardly brute struck his mother a fierce blow in the face. Mrs. Richard Hoyt, *alias* Mrs. Jarvis, fell, and striking her head against the corner of the mantel-piece, sank to the floor, insensible, with the blood pouring furiously from a ghastly wound on her temple. Ezra looked at her, smiled, and, turning on his heel, went out slamming the door behind him. No one saw him enter or leave.

"Served the blabbing old fool right," muttered Ezra.

"It's rather a pity," thought he, as he walked along, "to put an end to Ethel Moore, but it must be done. She's a fine girl, but she's in my way. I'll see the beauty this evening," and he walked to Mr. Graham's house and asked to see Miss Moore.

Ethel was, unfortunately, crossing the hall as he entered, so she could not refuse to see him.

"Well, cousin Ethel," said Ezra, gayly, "forgive me for not calling sooner."

"It is not long, Mr. Moore, since you did us the honor of calling," replied Ethel, with a tinge of *hauteur*.

"Measuring time by days and hours, no; by loneliness and *ennui* it has been an age," said Ezra, not at all disconcerted.

"Having experienced no such feelings myself, the time has been short," said Ethel.

"Then you do not miss Mr. Vincent Graham?"

Ethel's incomparable eyes blazed upon him.

"I confess that the strangeness of your question prompts me, rather curiously, to ask you why you infer anything of the sort?"

"Then you would insinuate, that, as a general thing, it is indifferent to you what the motives of my remarks may be."

Ethel raised her arched brows slightly, in unaffected surprise.

"Insinuate! I made no insinuation, sir; it was an unqualified assertion."

Ezra gnawed his pale lip in rage.

"In what respect have my words or conduct displeased you, Miss Moore?"

"They have not displeased me, sir."

"Oh! then you approve of them?"

"Pardon me, sir, if I say you are hasty in your conclusions. How can I be displeased at, or approve of anything on which I have not bestowed a moment's regard?"

"There is no need, I presume," cried Ezra, hotly, "to disguise the fact that we are enemies?"

"You *do* presume, I think," said Ethel, looking regal. "Enemies indeed! pardon me, we are acquaintances and — nothing more. You wished to see my father; I am sorry; he is not at home."

"Nay, I called on you."

"Ah! A very delightful evening, Mr. Moore."

Ezra, in spite of his unparalleled audacity and futile resources, felt utterly vanquished in the presence of this superb creature. She was as cool, as overpowering, as impenetrable as an iceberg. Their conversation, thus far, had not deepened her color one shade; she had not shown the slightest depth of feeling; she merely betrayed a rather languid, slightly wearied air, as if supporting, out of politeness, an interview which was simply stupid and nothing else.

This was the impression the crafty Ezra received.

Ethel was not really undisturbed, although she appeared so. She felt, as has been said, an intuitive horror of this man; she looked at him with the innate enmity one feels for a snake. It is a beneficent provision of the Creator, that virtue and purity are armed against corroding vice in whatever shape it may come disguised, by this natural, inflexible, inexplicable repugnance.

The wily schemer, whom she had certainly repulsed thus far, had no thought of giving up the attack. He felt that Ethel was his intellectual superior, and to cope with her, with the weapons of irony and sarcasm, was

hopeless, but he knew a theme on which he could distress her, — her absent lover.

"'Tis a beautiful night. I trust Mr. Vincent Graham is having fine weather on his voyage."

"I should be glad to think he was on his way to Europe," answered Ethel.

This reply surprised Ezra. He could not understand how a woman could prefer to have her lover false than dead.

"Do you not believe he has left the country?"

"You might as well ask me whether I believe he has gone to the moon," said Ethel.

"Why, what is there improbable in his going abroad?"

"The supposition is simply absurd, childish. Why should he go abroad? What assignable reason is there for Mr. Graham's going abroad, or at least, of his going abroad in such a manner?"

"Did you not see the letters that came into your guardian's hands?"

Ethel turned her eyes, flashing scorn (mingled indeed with fear) upon him.

"How did you know he had those letters?"

"Why, he showed them to me," said Ezra, promptly, never at a loss for a lie. "He came to me in great distress and revealed all his apprehensions in regard to his son. I must confess that, much as I admire Vincent, the proofs of his guilt were conclusive to my mind."

"I don't wonder at that," said Ethel; "for, from what I remember of those forgeries, they appeared the weakest, grossest lies conceivable."

"They were conclusive to your guardian's mind, also."

"I have no doubt his mind had been skilfully prepared to receive them. But of what possible interest to me is the effect of those silly documents on your mind, or even on the mind of my guardian? Let us think of some other topic."

"I must confess this one is interesting to me. Do you know what I think has become of Vincent?"

"I do not; and if my knowledge of them depends upon my desire to know, I shall always remain in ignorance of your sentiments."

"Confound this woman's tongue," muttered Ezra, beneath his breath. "I never flattered myself, Miss Moore, that my opinions were otherwise than indifferent to you. You seem strangely determined to take

everything I say in bad part. I *had* intended to show you a letter which came into my possession in a very extraordinary manner; but I presume, of course, you do not care to see it."

Ethel's feminine curiosity was somewhat aroused.

"Does it relate to Mr. Vincent Graham?"

"It is written by him."

"I confess that *his* opinions and writings *do* interest me," said Ethel.

This was just what Ezra wanted.

"Here is the letter, Miss Moore," and he handed her the following production, —

"I will not deny, my own Beatrice, that I have most shamefully neglected you of late; but remember, darling, that I have a most difficult *role* to play. Being unhappily engaged to Ethel Moore, I am obliged, naturally, to be a good deal in her society. How insipid I find that society, after reveling in the vehement outpouring of your love, *mie carissima*, I need not say. It is like brackish water after champagne, if I may use so coarse an illustration. Ethel is a good enough girl, amiable, rather pretty, etc., but as for having her for a wife, — *parbleu!* a day with you is better than ten thousand spent in *her* smiles. I may say, without vanity, that the poor creature is desperately in love with me. It's a shame to break her heart, — I am sorry enough that I committed myself. The truth is, that she attended me when I was wounded in that affair I told you of, and one day, while she was reading poetry to me, something, perhaps what she read, bewitched me, and I threw myself, metaphorically, at her feet. Since I met you the engagement has been hateful to me. I have thought the best plan for me to pursue is to write the poor thing some doleful message, intimate suicide, and then disappear suddenly. After she has cried a little at my death, she'll get over it, and marry some well-to-do old fogey. But enough about Ethel Moore; forgive me for lingering on the uninteresting theme. I wanted to define my position."

"Do not be angry with me, sweet Beatrice, for concealing our marriage. Is not what I have written a sufficient justification of my course? When we reach Europe you will be addressed as Mrs. Graham and shall never suffer disquietude again. Till then, aid me in carrying on the deception."

"I must escort Miss Moore to the opera this evening; after that I will see you, and believe me, darling, every throb of my

heart, every pulsation of my life, beats for you and you alone.

"Wholly yours,

"VINCT. GRAHAM.

"NEW YORK, Sept. 3, 18—."

The first words of this letter fascinated Ethel, and she read it carefully through. Ezra watched her with a devil's joy.

Ethel, as she read, was seized by an overpowering fear. This was certainly Vincent's handwriting; this was certainly Vincent's style. She looked at the signature, — there was the familiar abbreviation he always used. Was it possible? Was Vincent this villain? Every feeling, every sentiment in that true heart, rose up rebellious, against the idea; and yet her senses told her that this letter was no forgery. Every atom of color deserted her face; had Ezra been nearer he would have had the gratification of seeing her tremble violently. She read slowly to recover her composure, but every line added to the horrible suspicion. The explanation that the letter gave of the mournful epistle she had received, of his sudden disappearance, tended to confirm the dreadful thought of his perfidy. But all this horror, all this suspicion hastening to conviction, were as transient as a breath upon a mirror. Thanks to her unsullied soul, her inflexible constancy, her sublime faith, doubt died in the act of coming into life. A bitter scorn and detestation of herself swept across her very being, and her lips moved in a swift prayer to Vincent, living or dead, to pardon her evanescent infidelity. The next moment the deep depths of her love were as undisturbed and calm, as if this storm had never hurried over them.

So, when she came to the close of this epistle, she was reinstated in her serenity. She carefully folded up the note, restored it to its envelope, and, apparently suppressing a yawn, returned it to her companion, saying, —

"A very ingenious composition, Mr. Moore. Really I must congratulate the writer, whoever he may be, on his skill in imitating Mr. Graham's hand and style. Mr. Graham couldn't have written the letter better himself."

Ezra, baffled, was consumed with rage. He felt a considerable degree of admiration, too; he thought the young lady was acting all the time. Such faith was above his comprehension.

"If the writer of that note keeps on he

will make a very successful forger," said Ethel, in a meditative manner. "Have you any more specimens, Mr. Moore?"

"I am really rejoiced that you did not believe Mr. Graham was the author of this," said Ezra. "I was afraid he wrote it himself."

Ethel laughed merrily. "That Mr. Graham wrote it! Pray pardon me, but the idea struck me as very funny. Why should he amuse himself by writing such an epistle? Have you seen Hackett as Falstaff, Mr. Moore?"

"Hackett be hanged!" muttered Ezra, inaudibly. "Were we talking about the theatre, Miss Moore?"

"We were not, but it would be an agreeable change."

"Don't you want to see any more of what you call 'ingenious compositions,' Miss Moore?"

"No, I confess I do not. I have read three specimens already. Cleverly done, I admit, but they grow tame."

"Well, we will change the subject. Have you seen my father?"

Ethel was really surprised this time, but she did not show it.

"Oh! you know then that he is alive? I congratulate you, sir. Pray how did you discover it? Yes, I have seen him frequently."

"I have not had that pleasure yet. Can you tell me where he lives?"

"At the Whitney House, I believe."

"Thank you," said Ezra, rising. "I will pay him my respects. Can you appreciate the feelings of one who has not seen his father for many years?"

"I can," said Ethel, sadly, and Ezra bowed himself out, ill-concealing the chagrin that the interview had caused him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A SURPRISE.

AFTER the conversation just related, Ezra no longer wavered in his purpose of murdering Ethel and her father. It was absolutely necessary that they should be "put out of the way," as he expressed it, if he would prevent Franchot's property being taken from him, and his imposture becoming known. And now he felt an uncontrollable rage against Ethel, — a rage which only her life could satiate.

He walked rapidly down-town till he reached Houston Street, and, passing down this towards the East River, he turned into Allen Street, and entered one of the vilest houses in the neighborhood. He did not ring, but, opening the door with a latch-key, went up a creaking pair of stairs in the midst of utter darkness, and stopped at a door on the second floor. Here he made three rapid light knocks and a peculiar scrape with his thumb-nail. In answer to this signal the door opened, and Ezra went at once into the presence of D. Murragh, Esq., attorney and counsellor-at-law. This man was, apparently, about forty years of age. His hair was black, tinged slightly with gray; his eyes small, piercing, and sunk in cavernous sockets; his face close-shaven and sallow, almost of the color of the parchment upon which he was at work before Ezra arrived. He was tall and very thin, — in fact, emaciated, — and his sunken cheeks gave evidence of studies prolonged far into the night. He was dressed in a rusty suit of black, much too large for his shrunken limbs.

We have elsewhere stated that this man was very rich. Why he lived in such a wretched den was a mystery to his acquaintances. Strictly speaking, however, his residence was wretched only in consideration of its surroundings. This room was furnished with some degree of neatness, and a very cosy bedroom adjoined it. The furniture was heavy oak, and a Brussels carpet of oak and green, rather worn and faded, but once handsome certainly, decorated the floor. A shelf of books bound in legal calf occupied a considerable portion of the wall, and the room boasted a large, old-fashioned desk, full of recesses and "pigeon-holes." A cheerful fire burned brightly in the grate, although the night was by no means cold. A table in the centre of the apartment was laden with manuscripts and books; piles of books filled the window-sills and the three chairs which the room contained.

Mr. Murragh resumed the stool he had been occupying; Ezra nodded familiarly to the lawyer, and, coolly turning the contents of a chair upon the floor, sat himself down.

Mr. Murragh was a very shrewd man, a remarkably shrewd man. He came of an admixture of blood that produces schemers, — the mingling of the Irish with the Italian. His father, an Irish Roman Catholic priest, relinquished the sacerdotal office to marry a young Italian girl who had been wont to confess her sins to him. In course of time

she had confessed her love besides, and, being offered absolution in marriage, accepted it. The present gentleman had arrived in the United States with his parents when about six years of age; had lost them both in one week by small-pox; had been a news-boy, "runner" in a lawyer's office, lawyer's clerk, and was now a rich attorney, rarely appearing in court but enjoying a by no means despicable practice. With wonderful assiduity he had educated himself, not only in English studies but in classics, and was an exceedingly well-informed man.

"What's up now, A. B.?" he asked.

"A rather ticklish job to be done, Donny," replied Ezra.

"State your case," said the lawyer.

"Well, in the first place, I want —"

"Stop! If you please. Allow me. I don't want to know what *you* want to do or to be done. Say A. B. if it's all the same to you."

"Well, then, A. B. has two individuals in his mind's eye whom A. B. particularly desires to rid of the burden of existence."

"Yes. Go on."

"One of these individuals is a man named —"

"Excuse me," — interrupted the other, "don't say his name *is*, say his name *might be*!"

"All right. A man whose name might be William W. Moore."

Mr. Murragh nodded. The name seemed familiar to him.

"The other," continued Ezra, "is a young lady, who might be called Ethel Moore."

"Is it possible that she may be any relation of the first-mentioned party?"

"It is possible that she may be his daughter."

"Very good," said Murragh, smiling.

"Go on."

"I — I would say A. B. — has, as you are aware —"

"Beg pardon, I am *not* aware; don't say I am aware; I know nothing about these circumstances."

"Excuse me. Well, A. B. has been representing himself to be the son of this so-called William Moore, and has by means of such representations come into the possession of the fortune of a man named — I mean who might be called Auguste Franchot? D'ye understand?"

"Perfectly. Proceed."

"A. B. has been all the time under the supposition that the so-called William

Moore was dead. The fact that he is *not* dead is an ugly fact to A. B. Therefore A. B. desires that the so-called William should be dead, and that at once. A. B. is also desirous that the so-called Ethel Moore —

"Don't bawl her name out that way, man."

"What an infernally cautious chap you are! Well, A. B. wants the young woman to die, also, because she is really the heiress to the property which A. B. is now in possession of."

"You have told your story very well," observed Mr. Murragh. "Now what course does A. B. intend to pursue?"

"That is exactly what A. B. wishes to ask Mr. Murragh, and, having great confidence in the judgment of Mr. Murragh, intends to abide by his advice."

"Will A. B. be suspected by anybody in case the supposititious individuals should depart this life?"

"He would be suspected by no one except possibly an old Scotchman, who does not amount to much."

"Scotchman! bah! if that's all A. B. is safe. Well, does A. B. require any suggestion in regard to the mode of putting people into another and a better world?"

"Possibly not; but it is always well to take Donnizetti Murragh's opinion."

"A. B. does me honor. Well, there are various modes, — the knife, noiseless, but brutal and inartistic —"

"Bah! We've had enough of the knife, Murragh."

The lawyer's face grew a shade paler. "Hist! man, what do you mean by calling out in that style? Happily these walls are non-conductors of sound; but do be more discreet."

"Ask your pardon — to return. No, the knife won't do — especially for the fair so-called Ethel. I feel like Othello, — 'I would not scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,' etc. You don't like poetry, do you, Murragh? Well, I won't quote any more. The knife's disposed of. What next?"

"Poison."

"Poison is dangerous to use. These prying chemists will find the millionth part of a grain with their infernal analyses, and detectives will always ferret out where you purchased it."

"Well, then, there's drowning."

"Hard to be done without being seen."

"True. Smothering?"

"I like that better; leaves no trace, and is easily done."

"What do you say to starving to death?"

"That's not so good — takes a long time, and, besides —"

"Is too cruel?"

"Pooh! I never thought of that. I meant it gives the party a chance to escape, — unless, indeed, he's buried alive," added Ezra, thinking of Vincent."

"Starving's all out of the question, of course," said Murragh. "I only mentioned it to see what you'd say. Starving's absurd and impossible. Well, do you decide on smothering?"

"Yes, I think smothering's the best plan, after all. Now let's have your opinion as to how to manage the affair."

When Ethel informed her guardian that she had found her father and that his name was Morris, Mr. Graham was very much agitated. His horror and dread of Morris were unspeakable, — Morris, the sharer of his fatal secret, his denouncer, — the man whose word could consign him to the scaffold. So much agitated and confounded was he by the announcement that he was incapable of making any inquiries of Ethel, and that young lady was not obliged to relate a little fiction she had concocted to explain matters without betraying her father's *incognito*. Mr. Graham, feeling that he must sleep if he would live, dosed himself with laudanum now every night. In the sleep thus gained he dreamed frightful dreams; a wretched consciousness tortured his waking hours. It was impossible for him to stand this kind of life; he was fast verging to the grave. Mrs. Graham was also unwell, and had left the city for change of scene.

It was about eleven o'clock in the evening when Ezra and Murragh began their conference. Two hours later a carriage rattled noisily through Fifth Avenue and stopped in front of Graham's house. Ethel started up wide awake, and the next moment the door-bell, violently pulled, clanged through the mansion. She heard the porter drag himself sleepily through the hall and open the front door; she could catch the sound of men's voices in excited talk; she heard the porter run up the stairs and knock hurriedly at her waiting-maid's door, and presently that young woman, rather *en deshabille*, rushed into Ethel's room, looking very pale, and besought her mistress to arise.

"What is it?" cried Ethel, very much alarmed.

"Your father, miss —"

"Well, speak."

"Is very sick, miss, — perhaps dying. They've sent for you."

Ethel uttered a low cry; but she instantly grew very calm. "Tell them," said she, in her ordinary tones, "that I will be instantly down."

She was down in a marvellously short space of time. Mr. Graham appeared at the top of the stairs; he was terribly haggard, and in his white dressing-gown looked like a ghost. He was but half awake, and bewildered by the oplate. "Where are you going?" he called, to Ethel.

"To my father," she answered. "Come, let's start at once. Oh, come! don't wait —" this to the messenger standing by the door.

"Your father!" ejaculated Graham. "Ah! your father! yes, yes, I know. My respects to Morris," and he looked at her idiotically. She hurried down the steps after her conductor; he seemed to be an Irishman, and a tall, thin man; one of the porters of her father's hotel, she thought. On the carriage box sat two men besides the driver. The man with Ethel opened the carriage door for her; she sprang in, and the fellow turning to the driver, asked, —

"What are those men up there for?"

"Oh, they're friends of mine that likes to ride about with me o' nights."

The man grumbled to himself, and without apology entered the carriage, first saying, "To where I said," — and the carriage whirled away.

Whirled away, out from the long line of palaces that flanked the deserted Avenue, into narrow, dismal streets redolent with bad odors; whirled rapidly along across the city towards the river.

Ethel, in her agitation (great, although she was outwardly calm), knew not in what direction they were driving. "Is this the way to my father's hotel?" she asked, at length, anxiously.

"Of course," replied her companion, gruffly.

Ethel wondered a moment at his rudeness; but thoughts of her father drove all suspicion from her mind.

They passed beyond the limits of brick and stone and entered the city's dreary outskirts. In front of a large weather-beaten and unpainted wooden house, standing almost on the water's edge, the carriage stopped at last. Ethel could not see the building; there were no gas-lamps near the spot, and the night was very dark. Her companion — Mr. Donnizetti Murragh —

burst open the carriage door and sprang to the ground. Ethel eagerly followed. Then, for the first time, thoughts of treachery flashed upon her. "Where am I?" gasped the poor girl.

"My visitor, Miss Moore," cried the harsh voice of Ezra, and he grasped her waist with his brawny arm and dragged her up the dilapidated steps into the house. "The other party's all right," said he to Murragh. "Send off the carriage and come in."

The driver had driven his vehicle down on to a wharf to turn around, and was not, therefore, a spectator of this scene. As he reappeared, Murragh noticed that the two men who had been riding with him were no longer to be seen. "They jumped off some time back," said the driver, in answer to Murragh's inquiry. He took his fare, and drove rapidly away, turning a corner and disappearing from sight.

Ethel, more dead than alive, was hurried through a damp and musty-smelling hall, and into a large, half-furnished and uncarpeted room. It was partially lit by a smoky oil lamp, and its plaster walls showed great black blotches where the rain had soaked through.

"Prepare yourself for a surprise, Miss Moore," said Ezra. "What do you see yonder?"

Ethel, peering into the obscurity, could barely distinguish the outline of a lounge, in a farther corner, with what appeared to be a human form upon it.

"There's an acquaintance of yours over there, Miss Moore," continued Ezra. "Come and see him. Donny, bring the light."

He dragged the almost inanimate girl across the room. Murragh held the lamp high up, and Ethel saw her father lying on a miserable bed, bound hand and foot and gagged. He was conscious, for he turned his eyes with a piteous look upon his daughter.

Ethel uttered a shriek, loud and piercing, and sought to throw herself upon him; but Ezra caught her in his ruthless grasp and held her back.

"Not so fast, my beauty!" cried he. "No affectionate demonstrations, if you please; they sicken me."

Murragh replaced the light on the table and sat down, smiling devilishly. Ezra also took a seat and forced Ethel into his lap. She struggled and fought with the fierceness of desperation; but it was of no avail.

Ezra was disguised to look like an Irishman; he now pulled off red false whiskers, and burst out laughing in horrid glee.

"Donny, take off that beard; you are ugly enough any way. — Now, Miss Moore, — what's the matter? are you dead? If so, it's premature. Bah! don't die in my arms," and he let her sink upon the floor.

"Now," continued Ezra, speaking very slowly, and in a very cheerful voice, "isn't this a complete surprise for you? You thought you'd find your father dying; he never was in better health in his life. How do you like this place? It's a good ways from the city, — all the better; nobody can hear your screams. It's dark and dismal, — all the better; a fitter place to die in. It's never visited, — all the better; your body won't soon be found. This gentleman here — my friend, Mr. Donny — queer name, aint it? — and I, are going to put you and your father to death, — murder you, in fact. You didn't expect to be murdered when you went to bed last night, did you? Quite a surprise for you, isn't it? Donny and I think we'll smother you. How do you like the idea? Come, I'll be generous; you may choose the mode you prefer. What, won't you speak? Well, there's no use wasting time. Smother it is, Donny. Get the pillows. Confess, Miss Moore, we have given you a complete surprise. The pillows are in that closet, Donny."

Scarcely were the words uttered when the closet door flew open wide, and three strong men sprang out. The foremost — a great fellow in shaggy clothes, and with immense whiskers — rushed, as quick as thought, at Ezra, and crying, "Tit for tat, a surprise for you," struck him fiercely on the head with a club, and felled him, senseless, to the floor.

Murragh, seized with panic, started for the hall; but too late; a tall man, with a shield gleaming on his breast, stood with his back to the door, smiling scornfully and waving the lawyer back with a disdainful gesture. Murragh felt for a pistol, but was quietly clutched and handcuffed by the third man — also a policeman.

Ethel had nearly swooned away. The man who had felled Ezra, raised her tenderly in his arms and covered her face with impassioned kisses.

"Don't cry, don't tremble, Ettie darling. Bah! what a fool I am! of course you don't know me. Here." He placed her on her feet, pulled off his disguises, took off his

hat and laughed merrily. Ethel gazed a moment, and then rushed forward into the arms of — Edwin Moore.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

EXPLANATIONS.

ETHEL'S astonishment at Edwin's sudden appearance was no greater than his when he was told that the man who lay there bound and gagged was her father. It was nearly three o'clock in the morning, but Edwin would not listen to such a thing as going away till he had heard the whole story. In fact, Mr. Moore was ready enough to stay, for he felt weak and sick after the rough handling he had received. It appeared that he had been summoned from his hotel, by a man who represented himself to be a servant of Mr. Graham's, to go at once to his daughter, who was dangerously ill; and on entering the carriage waiting for him had been attacked and overpowered by the fellow — Ezra Hoyt.

Edwin directed the policemen to take Murragh and the still senseless Ezra into another room, and await further instructions.

Then Ethel, sitting with her arm around her father's neck and holding Edwin's hand, told the latter all in a few brief words, William Moore assisting her and supplementing her narrative.

"You must not feel, dear Ned," said she, "that you have lost a sister."

"No, but found an uncle," said Mr. Moore. "But come, I want to know how you happened to be here in the right spot, at the right time."

"Well," said Edwin, "while you're getting back your strength I'll tell you my yarn. You know that I was expecting leave of absence. Well, I got it the other day, and started at once for the east. I arrived yesterday morning."

"And didn't come to see me!" cried Ethel.

"I had to go and see Jessie first," said Edwin, ingenuously.

"Oh! of course, and you made a pretty long call."

"Hear me out, you little minx! Jessie seemed very glad to see me, and —"

"Is it possible!" cried Ethel.

"And," continued Edwin, "gave me all the news, except about my uncle here, your father. I was very sorry to hear that Mrs.

Graham was sick. Why didn't some of you write me about Vincent's disappearance? You thought he'd turn up, I suppose. Well, I didn't know a word about it till Jessie told me. Now, in coming here from Minnesota, I had to ride a good many days in the cars with nothing to read but a couple of newspapers. Well, simply because I had nothing better to do, I devoured all the reading-matter and then began the advertisements, and lucky enough it was that I did so. Stowed away in one corner I saw half a dozen lines, saying that the friends of a young man, with dark-brown hair and mustache, dressed in such a manner, and who had disappeared from his home some days ago, would find information in regard to him, by calling at such and such a place in this city."

Every vestige of color left Ethel's face and she trembled like a leaf.

"Go on, dear brother, go on!" she cried, in an almost inaudible voice, her agitation increasing every moment.

"Well, when I read that, I, of course, never dreamed that it was Vincent, and thought no more about it. But when Jessie told me the story, this advertisement popped into my head at once, and I came near being fool enough to blurt out my idea. Instead of that, however, I kept mum; and when she let me go, — no, I don't mean that, — when I could tear myself away, I went on the double-quick to the house in Broome Street, — that's where the advertisement said to inquire, you know. They took me up into a very pleasant room, and what do you think I saw? Nothing very dreadful. Ettie, — don't shiver so, — it was only Vincent lying in bed, with his eyes considerably bigger than saucers, and his face pale as — well, your cheeks at this moment aint a circumstance. When the old fellow saw me he smiled, — George! that ghastly smile of his nearly made me blubber right out, — and stretched out a hand, — thin and white and shrivelled up, very much like the 'skinny hand' of that disagreeable old chap in the 'Ancient Mariner,' — and said in a voice so weak that it was positively ridiculous, coming out of Vincent Graham's throat, 'Ned, my boy, is that you?' At this up jumped a pleasant-looking man, dressed in the uniform of a sergeant of police, and roared out, 'Hurrah! bully for you, stranger!' and gave me a crack in the back that tingles to this moment, 'Jerusalem crickets! I'm glad you've come!' then suddenly dropping his voice, as if in apprehension that he

made too much noise (and he certainly did), he added in a whisper, 'Cap'n (he noticed my bars, you see), are you a friend of his'n, say, are you?' and he jerked his thumb towards Vincent."

"'I aint anything else,' said I, and down I sat on the bed by Vint's side, and — but let that go, that's spooney."

"No, no," said Ethel; "what was it?"

"Well, I kissed him," said Edwin, blushing (an actual fact, captains in the army sometimes blush).

"I'll kiss you for that," said Ethel, proferring her entrancing lips.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" said Edwin, giving her a hearty smack. "I'm no relation to you."

"I don't care, Edwin," said Ethel, ingenuously, "it's just as much pleasure to kiss you."

"Hear that!" cried Edwin. "Mr. Moore, you'd better look out for this daughter of yours. Well, Vint. was dreadfully weak, for he had fainted away already. Now don't cry, Ettie, — he's in no sort of danger. Hereupon this police sergeant — Parker's his name, and he's a trump, if there ever was one — went to work at him as skilfully as any hospital nurse I ever saw, and brought him to. 'Cap'n,' said Parker, 'them words he spoke when he saw you, were the first that have passed his lips these ten days, as I'm a living man. I was afeared the boy was dumb for life.'

"How long since he recovered consciousness?" I asked.

"Only last night. He couldn't speak and tried to write with a pencil, but dash me, if he had strength enough to scribble a word."

"Well, I managed to get Parker's story all out, although he imparted it in a rambling fashion;" and Edwin, in a few clear and condensed sentences, told his interested listeners all that Parker knew about the matter.

"Well," continued Edwin, "while the sergeant was talking away, wandering a thousand miles off and then suddenly getting back again, old Vint. lay quiet with his skeleton hand in mine and looking as peaceable as an infant. When Parker finished, Vint. said, and his voice was so clear and firm that we were amazed, 'Well, Ned, I suppose you'd like to know how I got into that cellar, and you, too, my friend,' he added, looking towards the police-officer. Well you may be sure we didn't tell him not to trouble himself."

"But first," said Vint., "tell me, how is Ethel?"

"Now the idea of his thinking about you then!"

"Ned," cried Ethel, with pretended severity, "we don't want to hear any of your tiresome reflections. Go on with your story."

"Well, I told him you were well, and says Vint., 'Thank God!' Now what are you crying about? I never did see anything like you girls! You cry when you positively ought to laugh."

"What does she think has become of me?" asked Vint.

"She hasn't the remotest idea. There's a story that you've run away to Europe."

"Does Ethel believe it?" cried he, looking very savage for a ghost.

"Not a bit of it," says I.

"Of course she don't," said Vint. "What a fool I am!"

"Well, after he had satisfied himself about you, he told us this little tale, — a very pretty thing to happen in the nineteenth century, as you'll allow;" and Edwin graphically related, to the horror of his auditors, what the reader already knows, how Vincent had been decoyed to Chrystie Street, felled by a blow in the dark, buried alive, and how he had effected his liberation. The last thing he recollected was striking the iron door with the trowel. Parker's narrative supplied the rest. "And," concluded Edwin, "that man I struck on the head just now, — that man, that man, Mr. Moore, who decoyed you here, and was on the point of killing you, is the wretch who knocked Vincent senseless in that vile den, and then entombed him to die in the lingering agony of suffocation. Did you ever see him before, Ethel?"

"Yes," said Ethel, quietly, but very, very pale; "that man is your son, father! that man is my brother! O my God!"

"Not so," said Mr. Moore; "calm yourself, Ethel; that villain is an impostor; he is not Harry Moore."

"Not by a — hem! considerable sight!" cried Edwin, in a heat; "that fellow is Ezra Hoyt."

"Ezra Hoyt! the man they had in the 'Tombs' as the murderer of Mr. Franchot," cried Ethel.

"You've hit it, Ethel," said Edwin, "the same."

"And who's the other?"

"His name's Murragh," replied Edwin.

"I shall lodge both those rascals in the

'Tombs' to-day, and their villainies will come out."

"Oh! come, father," said Ethel, "let us leave this place."

"Presently, my love," said Mr. Moore; "let's hear the rest of his story before we go. Come, Edwin."

"Well, Vint. of course, described this rascal of an Ezra Hoyt, his long, brown hair, mustache, and gold spectacles, and I said I'd try to ferret the fellow out. I didn't know nor did Vint. that he had been arrested for murder. Wonder how he got away? I didn't dream I should see him. It was about nine o'clock when I left the dear fellow, and I started at once for Mr. Graham's house. As I went up the front steps the porter was out there, just taking in a mat, so I got in without ringing. The parlor door was ajar; in I looked, and who should I see but you, Ethel, with that scamp talking with you, and he looked as savage as a bull. I knew the fellow in a moment; there were the hair, mustache, and spectacles, all as described. I had no doubt he was up to mischief. Thinks I, I'll follow you, my man, and see where you put up. So out I went as quietly as I came in, and told the porter not to say a word about me. In a few moments Hoyt left. He looked devilish wicked as he came down the steps, gnashing his teeth. I took good care he shouldn't see me. He walked off pretty fast, — I following, — and finally brought up at a most miserable place in Allen Street and went upstairs. It was pitch-dark. The stairs creaked so, I didn't dare to go up after him. He entered a room on the second story, and then I crept up the flight. I lit a match and discovered that he had entered the office of one D. Murragh, a lawyer, who, I suppose, is that amiable-looking individual who assisted him in this business to-night. I tried my prettiest to hear what the two scamps were plotting about, but the door was so thick I couldn't hear much. However, I was certain that I caught the words 'Ethel Moore,' and I could then have taken my oath that they meant you some mischief. I made up my mind to stay there till Hoyt came out, if it took till morning. I didn't have to wait as long as that; in about an hour the fellows left together, and I heard Hoyt say, 'Well, I'll go after the old man then, and you fetch along the girl, — you know where.' The men parted at the steps; being, unfortunately, unable to divide myself, I was compelled to let one go and follow the other. Knowing Murragh was after you I concluded

to dog him. I would have nipped his contemplated enterprise in the bud and had him arrested, only, you see, I wanted to let him alone for the present, for I knew he would join Hoyt again and then I should get them both. Well, I followed him to a livery stable. He ordered a carriage, and while they were putting in the horses, I ran around the corner to a station-house I happened to know was there, and got a couple of policemen. They instantly furnished me with the handsome disguise you saw me in, and hid their shields with overcoats. One of them found a chance to have a private confab with the driver, and fixed him all right. We all mounted to the driver's seat; Murragh got inside, — and you know the rest. It went against the grain, Ethel, for me to allow you to be scared, but unless I had let Murragh carry out his plan, I could not have caught Hoyt. Besides, I wanted to find out who the 'old man' was. I never dreamed that it was you, Mr. Moore, — uncle William, I should say. When the carriage stopped in front of this place, the policemen and I instantly jumped down and ran in, barely escaping encountering Hoyt. By some intuition we went into this room (probably because there was a light here), and hid ourselves in that closet. We found comfortable seats on some huge pillows in there, — intended for your use. So that's my report of the whole affair; no loss on our side and two of the enemy prisoners, — one wounded."

"I can never thank you sufficiently, my dear fellow," said Mr. Moore.

"As if the thing required thanks!" said Edwin, scornfully. "But we'd better take Ethel home; the carriage is waiting round the corner."

"Can't I go and see Vincent?" asked Ethel, timidly.

"Yes, and excite him into a brain fever again. Oh, of course."

"What! has he had brain fever?"

"Rather so," said Edwin; "he was a regular maniac for two or three days. But he's all right now; all he needs is quiet. The doctor was angry with me for talking to him last night. He came in just as I was leaving, and said he was afraid the conversation would put him back; but I don't believe it will. Come, let's get off."

They all went downstairs. They stopped for a moment below, and went into a miserable room on the ground floor, — a room containing two large windows, each destitute of sashes or glass. Here was Ezra

still lying insensible and apparently badly hurt, the two policemen, — and Murragh sitting sullenly on the floor, his feet tied.

"We can't bring this fellow to," said one of the men.

"Perhaps he's dead," said Edwin.

"No, sir, his heart beats."

"Well, as soon as you can, carry them down to your station. I'll appear in the morning and prefer my charge. Will one of you call the carriage?"

Mr. Moore, Edwin and Ethel went out upon the sidewalk. One of the policemen hurried off after the carriage.

The remaining policeman looked with great disgust at the prostrate Ezra. "Couldn't stand a tap with the locust better than that, bah! What a nasty-smelling hole this is!" he muttered. "Gad, I'm going to get some fresh air," and he followed the rest of the party into the street.

Scarcely had he disappeared, when Ezra started up, alert and vigorous, and saying, "Good-by, Donny; sorry you're in such a fix!" sprang from a side window, and was out of sight in an instant.

He had been temporarily stunned by the blow, and his head badly bruised, but that was all; Ezra Hoyt was as indomitable as ever.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A MISCONCEPTION.

VINCENT GRAHAM undoubtedly owed his life to Jim Parker's tenderness, assiduity, and care. Having once passed the crisis of his sickness, his recovery was wonderfully rapid. He regained his strength almost as quickly as he had lost it. How he longed to leave his sick-room, none but himself knew.

During the few days that elapsed between the time of Edwin's call, and the morning when he extorted a reluctant consent from the surgeon to go out, Vincent had been the recipient of many tender epistles from Ethel. She reserved the announcement of the discovery of her father till she saw Vincent himself. There are some communications that one does not care to commit to paper, but prefers to pour into the confidant's ear through the warmer, readier, freer medium of speech. She had also requested Edwin not to inform Vincent of Mr. Moore's appearance, for she wished the pleasure of telling him herself.

She thus gave to her letters (otherwise loving enough, certainly), an appearance of reticence, and, to her lover's exacting eyes, of coldness. "Has Ethel grown estranged from me in this short absence?" was the half-formed thought that tortured him. At length, on a warm morning of that mild autumn, Vincent sallied forth, — his physician half consenting, half protesting. Sergeant Parker accompanied him. The delight to Vincent of breathing the free air was so great, that he would not consent to ride, but, leaning heavily on the arm of his escort, strolled up-town. As they neared Mr. Graham's residence, Vincent could scarcely restrain his eagerness. He felt no fatigue; every step seemed to increase his strength. He longed for the meeting that should remove all his doubts and bless him with the proofs of love.

He parted with Parker at the steps of the house, insisting upon an early call from the sergeant. He sprang up the broad flight (for he felt now perfectly well), and was on the point of pulling the bell, when the door opened, and a servant appeared. The man was about to utter an exclamation of surprise and delight, but Vincent stopped him. "Be quiet," said he, "and do not announce me. Is Miss Moore in?"

"Yes, sir. Miss Moore is in the parlor with a gentleman."

Vincent's brow contracted slightly.

"Ah!" said he, "well, go on." The man went out and Vincent was left alone in the hall.

Now Vincent Graham was as little likely, in a healthful state of mind and body, to be tortured by jealousy, as any man. He was not made of the weak stuff of which doubting lovers are composed. But at this time he had scarcely recovered from a long and wearing illness, his nervous system was unstrung, his mind irritated and irritable, his sensibilities morbidly acute. At this moment, "trifles light as air," would be to him "confirmation strong as proofs of holy writ." As there are certain conditions of the body which render one peculiarly liable to be infected by disease, so there is a *status* of the mind, accompanied, and perhaps induced, by a disordered frame, that permits jealousy and other weakening passions to rush in unchecked, subduing, dominant. Vincent advanced quietly along the wide, marble-paved hall. He approached a small and luxuriously furnished ante-room, a sort of *salle-basse*; its door was ajar. Subdued sounds of conversation reached his ear. The tones of some man's deep

voice flowed along in what seemed to Vincent the fluency of love, broken into now and then by Ethel's silvery treble.

Nothing was more repugnant to Vincent than playing the ignominious part of eaves-dropper; he hastened forward to interrupt the conversation with his presence, when these words struck his ear and literally paralyzed him; he leaned against the wall, incapable of motion, — "My chief happiness is your love, sweet Ethel;" and to this observation, that seemed sacrilege to Vincent, a reply came in the liquid melody of Ethel's voice, accentuated by love, "And that happiness you shall never, never lose!"

Now, if Vincent had, at this moment, been in possession of a tithe of his usual self-command and powers of discrimination, he would not have been deluded. Starting from the indisputable premise that such words *could not* be addressed by Ethel to any one save himself, or a near relative of hers, he would have at once apprehended that she was conversing with her brother, uncle, or, as was really the case, with her father. But Vincent knew that the voice was not Edwin's, and the possibility that her father had appeared never occurred to him. He murmured to himself, "She is tired of me,—she has found another lover," and leaned, broken-hearted, against the cold, hard wall.

"Good-by, darling," continued Mr. Moore, in the melodious tones that maddened Vincent, and the poor fellow standing there alone in his wretchedness, heard the tantalizing sound of kisses,—so pleasant to participate in, so vexatious for an outsider to hear. So stood the exiled angels without the impassable pearly gates, and listened to the distant sounds of the happiness that they themselves had felt and lost.

In that brief instant, however, away went all the weakness from Vincent's frame, and he stood up as erect and resolute as he had ever been in the fulness of health and strength. His face was pale, but his eyes shone with an incandescent flame, and his lips were firmly pressed together. Two rapid strides brought him to the parlor; he pulled the noiseless door open and looked in. There was Ethel, his betrothed, resting in the arms of a, by no means old, but handsome man, her arms about his neck, her lips pressed against a bronzed and manly cheek. A glance told him this was Morris, the mysterious stranger, the man in whose presence Ethel had always been

so unaccountably agitated. Vincent felt a strange calm; no mad impulse to rush in and slay the usurper and the faithless one, seized him; he looked with a dispassionate although gleaming eye.

Mr. Moore released his daughter from his warm caress, and almost at the same moment they both looked up. Ethel could not repress a cry, and in the excess of her joy her face turned white. To Vincent, that exclamation, that sudden pallor were evidences of shame at detected guilt; so alike are the outward manifestations of totally different feelings. Ethel started up to meet him; Vincent took but a step forward, and then said, in tones that appalled Ethel, so courteous, frozen, exquisitely ironical were they, —

"Pardon me, Miss Moore, and you, too, sir, for this unseasonable intrusion. I confess I did not expect to meet you here, sir, but you seem to be a welcome visitor,—very welcome. Accept my congratulations. Is my mother in, Miss Moore, may I ask?"

Ethel longed to rush forward and throw herself into her lover's arms; but there was a repelling influence about him, a cold, impenetrable barrier of reserve she dared not assail. Was this to be their meeting after weeks of suffering and sickness?

"O Vincent!" she cried, "tell me"—she paused; the cold light from Vincent's eyes frightened her.

"What!" he said, in measured tones of icy *hauteur*, "you call me Vincent! I cannot but admire your assurance, Miss Moore, while I wonder at it."

"Oh, tell me," cried Ethel, "why you talk and look so strangely! What have I done?"

"Yes, what has she done, Mr. Graham, that you treat her thus?" said Moore.

"Sir," cried Vincent, turning his fleet-flashing eyes upon him, and unconsciously making a movement like a tiger, full of grace and terror, about to seize its prey. "Do you ask me why? Your audacity is sublime. My indignation causes you uneasiness, does it? Bah! stay and solace yourself in your companion's accommodating love. I weary myself; good-morning." He turned contemptuously on his heel and moved towards the door. Ethel started forward with blended love and anguish in her look.

"O Vincent!" she cried, with tenderness and supplication, "kill me, but don't despise me! Ah!" she added, a sudden light breaking upon her, "you saw me kissing

him, and you don't understand why I did so. Let me explain."

"I understand it very well," said Vincent, coldly; "no explanations are necessary."

"And you know the relation between us?"

"Perfectly well; a relation on which I congratulate you both."

Unhappy misconception, that a word would have banished! Ethel thought he had heard that she had found her father; Vincent thought that she boasted, with shameless effrontery, of a second engagement. Ethel, knowing then no cause for his anger, began to feel the injustice and cruelty of his words and manner. Vincent, deeming that she had confessed her perfidy, experienced consequent loathing and detestation of one so fair and yet so false. Mr. Moore put the same interpretation on Vincent's words that Ethel had put, and his indignation rose at the unmerited reproaches.

"Sir," said he, "I always thought you worthy of Ethel, but I am beginning to think otherwise. You are cruel and unjust. I don't know that I would now consent to give her up to you."

"Don't torture yourself with the idea, sir. I have no wish to rob you of your prize. You have got her; keep her; I wish you joy."

"Do you renounce Ethel now, on the spot?"

"A strange question! Most assuredly I do. Are you not sorry? You who have lately found this jewel, keep it, but guard it. But why prolong this conversation? I interrupted a tender passage; pray, let it proceed with renewed sweetness." He bowed profoundly, with studied politeness, and left the room, and, at the same moment, Ethel fell fainting in her father's arms.

Vincent strode by several astounded servants in the hall without the slightest recognition, and with a look in his eyes that frightened them all. He went, at once, to his room and shut himself in. Hours of agony now swept over him. The "iron entered his soul." An intense, bitter, hopeless, poignant grief engulfed him. Ethel's death would not have been half so dreadful as was her perfidy,—a perfidy she had openly acknowledged and almost boasted. Ethel false! and with the annihilation of his trust in her, came the annihilation of all life's joy.

Out of doors, the mellow sunshine of October turned the atmosphere into liquid

gold; the vivid blue of the sky was unbroken by the faintest cloud; birds, seduced by the Indian-summer warmth, poured forth melodies in unrehearsed *matinées*, or bathed their rapid wings in light as they cleaved their purposeless, gleaming way; while the silvery plash of fountains in Mr. Graham's garden, the odor of ripe grapes with which the profuse vines were laden, the tropic perfume of orange-trees and other plants stealing through the open doors of the conservatory, — all assailed the senses with the delight and power of beauty.

But there is a time when all the mystic power of Nature is unheeded. This bitter hour had come to Vincent Graham. The yellow glory of the air, the undimmed splendor of the heavens, the rhythmic peals of falling water, the carols of birds, the scent of flowers and fruit, for him existed not. He saw no amethystine splendor in the sky; for him it was draped in funereal black; the sun's glad rays, before they reached his eyes, passed through a prism that wretchedness held up, and were decomposed into dismal tints. If he thought at all of the beauty of the day it was with no pleasurable emotion. The glare of light without merely emphasized the blackness in which his soul was steeped. Bursts of music, to his ear, were discordant clangs; he would have preferred the howling of tempests. He could not repress the cry of anguish, "Oh, insupportable, oh, heavy hour!"

But Vincent was not the man to lie supine beneath misfortune's blows. Knowing well the best palliative for sorrow, he pulled out his books and began to study, as if reading for high academic honors. Chance led him to take down the *Odyssey*, and he read, in the superb hexameters of Homer, of the love of *Penelope*, her faith, her constancy. Vincent groaned and irreverently kicked the epic poem across the room.

"The sentiments have too much play in poetry," he muttered. "Come then, mathematics, — cold, intellectual, passionless!" He seized *La Place*, and, in a few moments, himself, love, Mr. Morris, Ethel, — all were forgotten; he heard nothing, saw nothing, felt nothing, but the mysterious *formule*.

So deeply was he absorbed by this his favorite pursuit, that a repeated rap at his door passed unheeded. The door opened and Kavanagh walked in.

"Vint.!" he cried.

Vincent was deaf. Kavanagh walked around and stood in front of him. Vincent did not raise his eyes from the paper.

"I say!" roared Kavanagh, putting his hand over the page. "Are you cramming for 'biennial?' You'll have the brain fever again."

"But why," said Vincent, abstractedly, "should the cosine of \hat{p} —"

"Oh, hang the cosine of \hat{p} ! Listen to me."

"Holloa! Harry, is it you? How are you old boy?"

"None the worse for seeing you, Vint. Can you tear yourself away from mathematics long enough to listen to me?"

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Listen, then."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CRYPTOGRAPH.

"You must know," began the young lawyer, "that when Ned Moore called and stated the case —"

"He told you everything?" interrupted Vincent.

"Yes. He told me all about this Ezra Hoyt; he described the man exactly as he now appears; he told me all his villainies: how it was he who murdered Franchot; how he decoyed you to Chrystie Street and bestowed premature obsequies upon you; and his last attempted murder, in which Ned stopped him so neatly. I've seen Ned Moore slightly riled once or twice, but I never saw him quite so mad as he was when he told me about the fellow's escape; he swore *some* at the policeman's carelessness. Now it seems that Murragh has escaped, also."

"Is it possible!"

"Yes. They locked him up in a station-house that night in a room alone, and the next morning the bird had flown. I've no doubt this Hoyt helped him out. His room in Allen Street has been searched, but we found nothing of the slightest importance. Since then, Ned and I have been on so keen a search that we haven't had time to report progress to you. I went to Broome Street this morning, and was delighted to find you had gone out. I came up here as soon as I could. How do you feel? Are you getting better? You look very pale. Why under the sun do you begin to bother your head with mathematics?"

"Not quite so fast with your questions, Hal," cried Vincent, with a forced smile. "I feel very well; I am getting much better; I'm studying mathematics to drive away 'the blues.'"

"The blues!" with Ethel Moore downstairs? What's the matter? I don't believe you're well, at all."

"I have a little headache; but it's nothing. Come, go on with your story. What have you found out?"

"Well, we watched the place in Allen Street continually, and last night we were repaid. A little boy came and stuck a note in a crack in the wall at the foot of the stairs. We nabbed the boy, but nothing could be made out of him. It was plain, on examination, that one of these rascals had merely met him in the street and hired him to stow the note there."

"Well, what did the note say?"

"That's just what I want you to find out. It is written in cipher. We made an exact copy of it and put the original back in the crack. Here's the copy. You are an ingenious fellow. Let's see what you make of it."

Vincent took the following note and laid it on the table in front of him, —

"Heck gbknv hpwssw gpqf nnpf tldksld cheqf lpwneh lwu eb olpqf P tlw tegpdrpt cheqf em fecm. hefldq tenuwu ev nwwg tlw thwev teh rkn w lp tegpdrpt ev nnpb P lbkfegfsk qfdkg genpm apg fdkvw ghps skjndou w lp tefwdfpg egdkq ouphv teh nwwmg w fv jkfg nwwg tlw lkgtq eqf lk T kf *wt kf rlpkr mw P. E-hw."

"A very intelligible-looking document," observed Vincent. "Do you bring this to a man to decipher when he's just got over brain-fever?"

"I don't think it will hurt you any more than Analytical Geometry; but perhaps you had better not bother your head with it. I'll make it out with Ned Moore."

"No, no," cried Vincent, hastily. "I'd like nothing better than to read the thing. Let me have it. It's undoubtedly important."

"I couldn't make head or tail of it last night," said Kavanagh; "but I was rather sleepy. I'll find the clue if I work a month."

"I don't think it will take as long as that," said Vincent; "it seems an easy sort of cipher, — mere substitution of letters. Let's go systematically to work. Make an exact copy of it, and we can both work

together. Now this is something I like," continued he, as Kavanagh copied the paper. "How Conger would enjoy this! I wish I was well enough to hunt this Hoyt. Do you know, he's the same fellow who assaulted me in Catharine Street."

"So Ned told me; but don't speak to me or I'll make some mistake. Here now," said Kavanagh, presently, "is a perfect copy of this mysterious epistle."

"Very well, keep it, and let me have the other," said Vincent. "We will assume that these are not arbitrary signs, but transposed letters, and must try and discover the principle pursued. But first let's find out what letter stands for *e*."

"By finding what letter is used most often?"

"Yes; that is the most frequent letter."

"Well, *e* itself occurs twenty-five times."

"And no other one so many? *E*, then, stands for *e*. The writer evidently did not hope to conceal that letter. Let's look for some word of three letters containing *e*; it will probably be 'the'. I see two words spelled 'teh'."

"That undoubtedly means 'the,'" cried Kavanagh. "Why, Vint., the words are merely anagrams."

"No, that can't be," said Vincent, after a short pause. "You can't make anything out of any of the words in the first line, transpose the letters as you will. We're wrong. This was written by Ezra Hoyt, I suppose."

"I've no doubt of it," said Kavanagh.

"Well, he has probably signed his name to it, and the signature must be 'Ezra,' and not 'Hoyt,' for the first letter is *E*. We have found, then, what stands for *z*, *r*, and *a*."

"Good. What do you suppose that capital *P*, that occurs twice, means?"

"The only two words of one letter that I think of are *a* and *I*. As this is a capital, it probably stands for the personal pronoun."

"But that is a very curious word to close the note with."

"So I think; but it must be *I*. The only arbitrary characters, in this thing, are this little dash or hyphen, which we have found means *z*, and that asterisk in the last line. I imagine the asterisk stands for *x* or *y*, for it occurs only once."

"But what word begins with *x* or *y*?"

"Hum! — Ah! Harry," cried Vincent, suddenly, "these words are written backwards, I think, for you see *w*, which means *a*, ending several words; and words, as a general thing, don't end with *a*."

"Yes, yes, you must be right. Let's try it that way. Take the last word but one, *mv*. *W*, we have discovered, stands for *a*. What word of two letters, beginning with *a*, is there? Why '*am*', of course!"

"Yes, '*am*' is the word, undoubtedly."

"Then the last two words are '*am I*.' The note ends with a question."

"Well, now take the fifth word from the end, ending in *x* or *y*. We'll call the asterisk *y*, then we have *ay*. What's the first letter? I should say *d*, making '*day*'."

"All right, Vint. But '*teh*' can't be '*the*,' then?"

"No, I didn't believe it was. We've got those three letters, assuming that *t* stands for *d*, as we have in the word '*day*,' and *h* is *r* in '*Ezra*.' Then his little word must be *red*."

"You don't think that's it?"

"I've no doubt of it."

"Well, what word would be likely to go with *red*?—*hair*? Suppose we call *rkhn*, *hair*?"

"No, don't let's go to work that way,—no guess-work. Besides, *p* stands for *i*, not *l*. That *lha*, which occurs three times,—and begins with *a* and ends with *d*,—is, of course, '*and*.' We've got, then, the symbol for *n*. Now I want to find out the principle on which he's transposed these letters; *a* is represented by *w*. Now if we could only find out what stands for *b*. I am going to assume that *v* does, and it isn't guess-work, either."

"Why do you hit on *v*?"

"Because I think he has turned the alphabet 'upside down,' and, symbolizing *a* by *w*, *b* by *v*, *c* by *u*, and so forth, gone down. Find some word with *v* in it."

"There's *ouphv* just preceding the last '*teh*.'"

"Well, then, by my plan *v* is *b*. *ll*, we've found out in the word *Ezra*, stands for *r*, and *p* is *i*. Thus we have *bri*. Fill up the last two letters, Hal."

"It's '*brick*,' of course. Why, to be sure, '*brick red*.' Now the preceding word ends in *e*, and is of five letters, and must be '*house*.'"

"You're right," said Vincent. "Pshaw! Ezra Hoyt ought to get up a better secret alphabet than this if he wants to hide anything important. The puzzle's as good as solved. Let's make out an alphabet on the plan I suggested, and we shall have the key to this epistle."

They both prepared their alphabets in silence. "He represents *i* and *j* by the same letter, I think," said Vincent.

"Now, then, let's take the words in order, beginning at the beginning."

A short pause, and Vincent said, "I have translated the words in the first line, and this is what I make, '*over blows affair this till unfound*.'"

"That's what I've got. Pretty sense, isn't it?"

"Yes, if you read it backwards," said Vincent, quietly; "then you have—'*unfound till this affair blows over*.' Eureka! He's not only spelled the words backwards, but inverted their order. Ingenious dog! Your '*house brick red*,' Harry, becomes '*red brick house*,' which is certainly more perspicuous. Come, now, let's write the whole thing out."

They both worked in silence for some time. "I've finished," said Vincent; "how are you getting along?"

"Half a line more, only. Read yours; let's see if they agree."

"Here, then,—Mr. Hoyt's *billet* reads thus,—

"I am going, to-day, to D—, on the Hudson, and shall stop at a small red brick house, situated in a clump of firs, about six miles south of the town. I will be disguised in a long red beard, and shall be called Hunter. Meet me there disguised, and I think we can remain there, unfound, till this affair blows over. EZRA."

Kavanagh jumped up, in great excitement, and seized his hat.

"What's up now?" asked Vincent.

"I'm going to get Moore, and nab the fellow."

"Wouldn't you as lief have me?" asked Vincent.

"You! Why, man, you're mad; you're not well enough. We may have a fight."

"Pshaw! not well enough! I could pitch you out of the window this moment, I believe. The fever pulled me down some, but I've picked up wonderfully within a day or two. I'm going, whether you want me or not."

"I'd pick you out of the population of New York, Vint. Do you think you can stand it?"

"Yes, yes. Are you determined to make the capture yourself, instead of employing the police, in a sensible, hum-drum way?"

"I am. No police for me; I want the lark. Well, since you're bent on it, I've no more to say; but how," he continued, laughing, "can you desert Miss Moore so soon?"

A spasm of pain swept across Vincent's face.

"Oh, well," said he, "she must learn to endure these things. When shall we start?"

"Now. Shall we get Ned Moore?"

"No, no; let the boy stay with Miss Fairfax; his leave expires soon."

"Very well. Come, get ready. How about disguises?"

"Oh, I know a man who'll fix us out in ten minutes. Shall I take a pistol?"

"Oh, certainly."

"Well, here's one I had when a boy. It's always been a favorite of mine,—a Colt. I scared a robber with it one night when I was a youngster, I remember. The fellow's chagrin makes me laugh to this day. How'll this rig do? Corduroys, shooting-jacket, and felt hat. Come, Hal, I'm ready."

The friends went downstairs. They met a servant.

"Is Mrs. Graham in?" asked Vincent.

"Why, sir, she has gone to Newark."

"Ah, yes. Can you tell me when she is expected home?"

"I heard Mr. Graham say, sir, not for ten days or more."

At this moment the door-bell was violently rung and almost instantly opened by the servant whose hand was upon the knob. The consequence of this sudden movement was that a large, middle-aged woman, who was leaning heavily with her back against the door outside, fell precipitately into the hall, and was only saved from prostration by Thomas's opportune arms. The lady whose entrance was so *unique* and tumultuous, was not at all embarrassed or startled. She merely observed,

"Sudden thing, very. Prompt people here."

Vincent laughed. "How d'ye do, Mrs. Jiggleswitch?" said he. "How's Mr. Temple?" and taking Kavanagh's arm he went out. He was so diverted by Mrs. Jiggleswitch's imperturbability that not till he had reached the sidewalk did he begin to wonder what could possibly be the cause of her visit to his father's house.

"Who is that woman?" asked Kavanagh.

"Oh! Ned Temple's landlady. But where are you going. Down this street,—this way, and I'll show you a costumer who'll turn you into anything from a Methodist minister to a pirate in a jiffy."

About an hour later, two individuals, evidently Frenchmen, in bell-crowned beavers, and pointed mustaches, chattering the purest French with great garrulity, and

each with a copy of the *Courrier des Etats Unis* sticking from his breast-pocket, were whirling up the Hudson River Railroad in the "fast express." Certainly no one would have supposed them to be Harry Kavanagh and Vincent Graham.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE RECORD OF AN UNFORTUNATE MAN.

MR. JAMES SMITH, shortly after his conviction, was sentenced to be hanged on Friday, the 24th of October, 18—. If Vincent had been present at the trial it is probable that his testimony would have acquitted the prisoner; for he would at once have perceived that the unfortunate Smith was not Ezra Hoyt. Unhappily, he had heard and knew nothing about Smith's trial; neither did Edwin Moore. As for Kavanagh, so eager was he to capture Ezra Hoyt that thoughts of Smith's fate did not enter his mind. Mr. William Moore was under the impression that Ezra Hoyt had escaped from the "Tombs," and he knew not that an innocent man was likely to suffer in his stead.

As Vincent and his friend sped along to D—, Kavanagh glanced carelessly over the columns of the *Courrier*, and the Frenchman rather astonished some of the passengers by suddenly calling out in good English,—

"By heavens! Vint., how horrible! Great Jove, we shall be too late!"

Vincent checked his companion's eagerness with a rapid gesture, and inquired in French what the matter was.

"Simply this," said Kavanagh, in an agitated voice, "my infernal carelessness has sacrificed a fellow-creature's life. To-day is the 23d October, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, read that."

Vincent, thereupon perused a paragraph which informed him that the execution of Ezra Hoyt, *alias* James Smith, would take place between the hours of twelve and two on the 24th October, instant, and that the petition of many members of the bar and respectable citizens, headed by Mr. Alexander Conger of the detective force, to his Excellency the Governor, for a respite or commutation of sentence, had proved unavailing.

"This is awful," said Vincent, in a low voice. "Can nothing be done?"

"We must keep right on to Albany and see the Governor. Perhaps we may be in

time. Our trip to D— must be postponed. Your affidavit will certainly procure a respite till the facts are proved, if nothing else."

"God grant we may be in time!"
"Amen!"

Smith alone in his cell, hearing the solemn steps of his approaching doom, was by no means wretched. For this man there were "everlasting wings" outspread, — a secure refuge; an immutable support. With the sublime faith of David, he uttered the exulting cry, —

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Rejoicing in this heaven-given strength, the condemned man sat in his cell. The sudden severance from all life's joys, the thought that he must soon be parted by a felon's death from the world where he had hoped to win an honorable name; that he should never see again the glad face of nature; never know a lover's, husband's, father's joys, — this thought, these reflections to a guilty, unrepentant man would have been the very dregs of death. They were sad enough to Smith; but he turned his thoughts to other themes, and revelled in the glorious promises of his faith; he thought of the delights in store for him, which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard;" and he sat calm, tranquil, happy.

It was the night before his execution. Reporters for the press and one or two other visitors had called and gone, — gone wondering at his hardened state. No one but the aged clergyman — a disciple of Howard and of Christ — believed him innocent. With him Smith had read the cheering words of divine dictation, and poured out his soul in fervent prayer. The holy man had left him with his blessing.

It was about ten o'clock. An official had kindly furnished him with lights and writing materials. He sat at a rough pine table and pulled the paper towards him; but he remained for a long time buried in thought before he penned a word. The theme he wrote upon seemed to be exceedingly distressing to him; his face was livid and the cold drops stood upon his brow. This is what he wrote: —

"CELL IN 'THE TOMBS,'
NEW YORK, October 23d, 18—. }

"I hoped, Helen, that I should see you before I died. My hours on earth will soon be

over. How wretched they have been, you, the cause of their wretchedness, cannot conceive. I do not write to reproach you now; God forbid! I die without one thought of bitterness towards you. But I *did* wish to see you; you might have come, Helen; it was a little thing to do.

"I am going to write the terrible story fully out, to tell you also of the awful 5th of June. In what I am about to relate you will recognize many facts with which you are already acquainted. I will not stop to discriminate between what you know and what you do not know. I will write down a complete narrative for your eye when I am dead.

"It was twenty-eight years ago this very month, Helen, when I first met you. Every event in my life I have always dated from that era. When my mind goes back to those days, so sweet and horrible, the remembrance of your beauty comes upon me like the unexpected strains of some old loved melody. Do you remember the first night I saw you? No, of course not, but can I ever forget it! I was but twenty-three then, high-spirited, an eager student, hardly conscious of the physical imperfection that has blighted my youth, and is now the cause of my dying on the scaffold. I was rich, talented, the leader of my fellow-students. I was not without the self-satisfaction of youth, and I did not at all envy the brilliant Gerard. Helen, I am able, through God's help, to write my brother's name now without curses rushing to my lips. It was then, with no sense of inferiority, without the humiliation that afterwards embittered me, that I accompanied Gerard to your residence. You remember you had just come to reside near our house, and my father sent us boys to convey to your father a polite message and welcome to the neighborhood. I can call to mind every word Gerard or I uttered in that short walk. I can see him before me now, as he strode along with his proud and buoyant step; his long, flowing hair, — not red like mine, but with a bright golden hue, — his eyes so beautiful, so perfidious; his slight, but perfect, form; his limbs replete with the spring of tempered steel. All these extorted admiration from me, but I did not envy him. I had gauged his intellect and knew that it was shallow; his will had often bent before mine. I knew in my heart he was my inferior.

"We were shown into your parlor; you were reading to your father. The melody of your voice ceased as we entered, but you

had not time to change your seat. There you sat at your father's feet in an attitude that eclipsed grace. Oh! I see now that snowy arm resting in a light caress on your father's knee; your redundant hair in bewitching negligence falling upon your unhidden shoulders, but not concealing the slight carmine of your cheek. And then when your startled eyes were raised to the intruders, what splendor darted into life! From that moment I loved you, madly, wretchedly, insanely. Helen! years have rolled away since that night; you are another's wife. I, a victim to law's fallibility, have but the stretch of a few hours to pass over ere I reach the scaffold; but my thoughts run back with keen distinctness to those hours. I again see you in your unparalleled magnificence; I hear again the heavenly music of your voice; again my fascinated ear drinks in your words, and I feel the delicious torment of that youthful passion. How well I remember Gerard's air of cavalier-like courtesy, as he advanced and made his salutations! his grace, his fluency, his ease, his well-bred smile! His egotism was secure against the radiance that blinded me. I was awkward; I blushed and stammered. Gerard's address, I saw, pleased both your father and yourself. When we rose to leave I saw your eyes rest with timid admiration on his glowing countenance, while you scarcely noticed me, the apparent clown. I must abridge the recital of the weeks that followed; how we became daily visitors at your house; how my passion grew sturdier every day, till I had but one thought, one hope, one feeling, one desire, — you. Never shall I forget the elation that seized me when Gerard told me that he had no desire to win your hand. I had the folly then to be your suitor.

"Gerard's visits to you ceased. I went alone. O Helen! when you read these lines, and think that the hand that penned them, to-night sinewy and vigorous, will then be cold and pulseless; when you think of the life that you despoiled of all joy; when you think of the wicked hypocrisy with which you beguiled me, — how you lured me on by the *ignis fatuus* of a pretended preference, — God help you then! — I pity you, for remorse will seize you. Mine is the anguish of undeserved misfortune; *yours* will be the torture of wretched retrospections, useless self-reproaches.

"You received me with a deceitful smile of welcome; with all the arts of the coquette you encouraged my addresses, and pitilessly

deluded me into an avowal of my love. My cheek still glows with the red blush your insult painted there; my ears still tingle with the mocking laugh with which you scornfully bade me rise, and told me that my sorrow distressed you, but that I was self-deceived, that you loved me not, that you were — and what a cold gleam of triumph lighted up your eyes as you made the announcement! — already affianced to my half-brother, Gerard Montgomery. With what levity you recited what you called your 'little plot' to amuse yourselves and beguile me, — how Gerard's withdrawal from the suit was all pretended, and your encouragement to me fictitious! I did not rise and curse you, Helen. I wonder I did not. Perhaps you marvelled at my calmness, and that I could jest about my own discomfiture; but I went away from your presence grappled by despair. That night, what men call chance, alone saved me from being a murderer. I sought Gerard. I would have killed him. He had been called away, suddenly and unexpectedly, for some days' absence. I felt chiefly *pity* for you, — but bitter, uncontrollable rage against my brother.

"His accidental absence was prolonged, and in the mean time I grew calmer. I resolved never to look upon his face again, to remove myself from your vicinity; and I went away. I tried every device to banish the ever-present picture of your face, so lovely, so deceitful. I plunged into dissipation; but that only wearied my body, without curing my heart. I went abroad; but travel palled. I joined a regiment of French dragoons; but 'not the speed of my best barb' enabled me to outstrip pursuing grief,

'Oclor cervis, et agente nimbo
Oclor Euro.'

In every tumultuous charge, — above the distant bugle, above the clash of sabres and the loud shouts of command, — I heard your scornful laugh; you ever rode a weird comrade beside me, foot to foot. No murderer could have been more haunted by the spectre of his victim than I was by your perfidious self. I left the army.

"I was in Vienna, I remember, when I first heard of your marriage with Gerard Montgomery. Soon after, I learned of Gerard's conduct in regard to me, — conduct to which his first treacherous behavior was a fitting prelude. Actuated by an unaccountable malignity, he seized upon my absence as an opportunity to ruin me in the eyes of my

father, and with such ingenuity and persistency, that he succeeded. He made it appear by forged letters, misrepresentations, and subtle suggestions, that I was a gambler and forger; that I had gone abroad less from a desire for novelty than with the hope to escape the consequences of my crimes. He produced a forged letter, in which I was made to say that I longed and prayed for the day when my father should die and leave me his wealth. The poor old man believed him. Picture his misery at the discovery of my worthlessness. He altered his will and disinherited me. I knew nothing about Gerard's cowardly and covert machinations. I wrote to my father frequently, and attributed his silence to the irregularities of the mails. I at length received a letter from Gerard telling me that my father was dead, and had died a bankrupt. Soon after, through some accidental channel, the news reached me of the birth and death of your son, and, almost immediately after, I heard of Gerard's death. That I had never wavered in my love for you, that even scorn and treachery had not killed it, is evident when I tell you that at once trampled hope revived within me. Smile at my folly if you will; I resolved to return and win your hand.

"But my pride forbade me to go to America till I could go there with wealth to offer you, — I had squandered all my means. I engaged myself to a travelling *virtuoso*, whose love for antique curiosities age had not blunted, but whom it had rendered infirm and almost blind. My duties were to accompany this old gentleman in his researches, carry his box, and lug him over rough places in the roads. I soon conceived a great respect and admiration for him, and attended him faithfully for eight or nine years, and had the satisfaction of obtaining through my efforts many rare additions to his collection. Dying very suddenly he left me the possessor of his entire fortune, five hundred thousand *florins*. At a banker's at Naples I bought a bill of exchange on New York for nearly the entire amount, and flushed with hope, I sailed for home, — for I still called this land my home, although my recollections of it were more sorrowful than pleasant. Seventeen years had passed since I left its shores, a heart-broken, voluntary exile. I was now returning with a mind chastened by sorrow, and not elated by good fortune. I presented my draft to the drawees in New York. Conceive of my misery when they told me that they had no

account with M. Lupardi, the Neapolitan banker, and that they had just received advices, by the same vessel in which I had arrived, that his house had failed! Here, then, was I, a pauper in my native land. Fool that I was! without staying to find out anything about you, without seeing one of my old friends, without learning anything at all about what had occurred during my absence, I took passage, that very day, in a French vessel bound for Marseilles; and on the morrow sailed away, a second time expatriated by misfortune. Not till I was far out on the desolate sea, did I upbraid myself for the stupidity of not obtaining that information which I would henceforth long for, and long for in vain. For nearly six years I lived in the south of France, and manfully did I battle with adversity. I drudged, unceasingly, in the office of an *avocat* at Lyons, I wrote politico-religious pamphlets, I opened a night-school for instruction in the English language, and devoted every spare interval to the study of medicine. But who can paint the weariness of my life, the dreary, unsweetened days, the wretched nights, the unsatisfied yearning of my soul for you? Not for one busy moment, Helen, were you forgotten, not once did your attendant *eidolon* desert me. Years had not dimmed the gleam, nor quenched the ardor of my love. *Had* not? They *never* have!

"I will not linger on this period of my life. Your life's experience is incapable of enabling you to understand the weariness, the sickness unto death, the heart-ache of incessant drudgery. I don't know what led me to France as the scene of my labors, — the choice was unfortunate. Sudden, honest fortunes could not be made where I was. But my aim was lowered; I desired now merely to secure a competence. Coy Fortune relented as I dropped my suit. In the course of the precarious practice that I had picked up among the poorer classes, as a physician, I was called in one night to the death-bed of an old man, a supposed pauper, living in the most abject manner. He seemed to be an Italian; his face, fearfully emaciated, had already on it the gray hue of approaching death. He was in a delirious sleep as I entered, and his broken words and gestures told me of a tortured mind, a mind whose sufferings had killed his body. I stood looking at him; suddenly he awoke. Never shall I forget the amazement of joy that filled his dim eyes as he saw me. Partially rising, he stretched out his attenuated fin-

gers, as if for palpable proof of my presence.

"Santa Maria be praised!" cried he, "it is he! it is, it is, it is!"

"I did not recognize him in the least. 'Who are you?' I cried.

"Lorenzo Lupardi," said he, feebly.

"Ha! the Neapolitan banker?"

"The same, the same, a wretch cursed by God! Sir," continued he in a faint voice, for he was very weak, "I had failed, and failed unavoidably, the day you deposited your money with me, but I took your wealth, alas! the hour! and thought, vain fool, to find pleasure in it; but not one moment of satisfaction have I had since then. See, sir, what remorse has done for me; it has stretched me on a dying bed in a hovel. It is but just —"

"He paused, exhausted, here, but after I had administered him a cordial, he went on.

"The saints have heard my prayers and brought you to me. I have spent the horrible days of the past five years in searching for you that I might restore your money. Do you see that dusty, travel-worn, battered pair of boots? In the legs are sewn your notes, — every one. Bring them here," and there was a world of eager impatience in the command. I obeyed. He demanded my knife, and essayed to rip open the leather, but was too weak. I did it for him, and my grateful eyes beheld the notes into which he had clauged my *florins*. I cannot describe the joy that clothed the old man's face as he bade me count the money, and watched me put it in my pocket. The weight of sin seemed to roll away as he made the restitution, and he smiled, content.

"The next day he died; a few pence were all he left; he had supported a wretched existence on a pittance to preserve my property intact. He sleeps now in a quiet grave, and a chaste slab bears the name of the wrong-doer and the penitent.

"Imagine how soon I was again upon the sea, whose craggy waves impelled the staggering craft fast homewards. A little more than two years ago, again rich, again hopeful, I landed in this city. I tried in vain to find some old acquaintances; all had vanished or were inaccessible. I returned to my hotel, with jaded steps, after a long search far up-town.

"And now comes a recital so dreadful, so environed with recollections of horror, that it is agony for me to write. But I *must* do it; my memory demands it; it vindicates me

from the unfounded but proved charge under which I die.

"It was about one o'clock in the afternoon. I had nearly reached the hotel when I saw before me, — my father. He, whom I thought coffin'd dust, walked the streets of living men, erect and hale. No superstitious terror thrilled me; I felt and knew Gerard's deception, at once. For motives of his own, he had written me of my father's death. I did not stop to conjecture the reason of his lie, I darted forward and laid my hand upon my father's shoulder. Had a viper stung him, he could not, in his hasty gesture, have expressed greater pain, greater disgust. He knew me at once; my distorted features are not those that change with years.

"Wretch!" he cried; "dog! will you pollute me with your felon's touch? Go, — revel in your accursed sins! Leave me, begone, and take my curse!"

"I staggered like a drunken man under the unexpected awfulness of this reception.

"Father" — I gasped, and stopped, for my father's face was frightful to behold. Abhorrence, hate, rioted there in unveiled, hideous glare. Never shall I forget that look. I see it now, — my dungeon walls cannot shut it out. I look up, down, around, — I see it. I expected the paternal smile, the broken words of welcome; I evoked a gaze of horror. Had I been a leper with ashes on my brow, my father could not have shuddered with more affright and loathing at my presence. I stood silent, in agony.

"My father's emotion seemed to die away; his face grew pale, and there came a look of fierce resolve into his eyes, that I noted even in my misery. In a strange voice, he said, —

"Where did you come from?"

"Just from Europe, sir," said I, "after a toilsome, honest struggle for fortune. Ah! sir, I thought you dead; I find you alive, indeed, but dead to me. Oh! what have I done?" and I sought to take his hand; he drew it away, and shuddered. His face was deadly pale, his bloodless lips compressed, his black eyes shining with a strange alarming light, —

"Helen, I was going to give you a detailed account of what followed, but I cannot do it. It is too awful. I am seized with horror at the recollection. You can form some idea of the dreadfulness of my experience that afternoon, when I tell you: that after I had gone into my room at the hotel with my father (at his request), I found myself

alone with a maniac. I did not know, of course, till afterwards, that my father had had one or two periods of temporary aberration of intellect. I learned from his physician that his mind was supposed to be failing, owing solely to his sorrow for my reputed crimes; but not even the physician imagined that he would become a raving madman. It might never have happened, indeed, had it not been for this sudden meeting with me. Then the quick rush of all the accumulated horror and anguish of years overturned his reason; he saw in me a felon, and the overmastering idea in his disordered brain was, that he was called upon to execute justice upon me. I was shocked and stupefied by his manner on the street; but he walked calmly upstairs behind me, and it was not until he had followed me into my room and bolted the door behind him, that I knew my father was crazy. Quick as thought and with a fearful cry, his eyes wildly glaring and his face distorted with passion, he rushed at me and caught me by the throat. In that narrow room, fighting with a madman, battling for my life, I —

"Some minutes after, I awoke from unconsciousness to find my father still lying senseless where I had felled him. I soon restored his animation. Alas! my medical eye instantly saw what had occurred. He was stricken with paralysis; his fluttering heart scarce beat; he lay incapable of speech or motion. But his calm eye showed that reason had returned, his transient madness had disappeared. The maniacal frenzy that had seized him — a precursor, doubtless of settled and cureless insanity — had been only temporary. I divested him of his clothes, and placed him on my bed, hardly conscious of his great weight. All that the skill of a physician could devise and my limited travelling stock of drugs afford, I employed. As I busied myself with unflagging solicitude, I fancied that I saw a softened light creep into his cold, gray eyes, and his stiffened lips moved in the vain attempt to speak. When I had done everything that I *could* do, I sat down by his bedside. I watched keenly, but there was no repugnance in his look. I saw that the late scene was not an entire blank to him; but his recollection of it was evidently vague and distorted. I gave him a full account of it, and then did I calmly go over all my life since I had last seen him. I told him of my love for you, and why I had left my home. I narrated, as I have narrated

to you, all my life abroad. I told him of Gerard's letter representing his death. I went to my trunk, and produced the letter. I held it before his eyes, and as they passed over the lines they filled with tears, — tears that I interpreted to be signs of love to me and repentance of his late belief in my guilt. A great emotion seemed to seize him; his efforts this time were partially successful, for he raised his right arm, and his command over his fingers returned in a measure. I understood his gesture. I brought him paper and pencil, and he wrote these words in scarcely decipherable characters, —

"My son, forgive me, I have wronged you. Gerard deceived me. See papers in my coat."

"With rapture I kissed his cold forehead, and sealed my forgiveness there. I took the papers from his coat-pocket. They embraced almost every conceivable kind of documents written with infernal ingenuity by Gerard, — tending to trace my career as a spendthrift first, then a gambler, a drunkard, a forger, an exile, an assassin. I have made a budget of these papers; you shall read them. It is a budget full of the malignity and hate of Satan. I read them all. I denied everything. In many cases, papers of my own that I had with me enabled me to prove my innocence, and I saw in my father's face the blessed truth that he believed me. Again he signified his desire to write, and this was the command his paralytic fingers traced, —

"Swear, O my son, that while you live *nothing* shall tempt you to reveal the events of this day. Swear that not till you are dying shall any one know where you were or what you did this day."

"Could I refuse? I took my Bible, and, resting my hand on the sacred page, I swore a solemn oath that I would obey his request."

"That day, Helen, was the fifth of June, 18—, the day that the murder for which I am to be executed was committed. A word from me would have saved my life; but that word I could not utter. I could not prove an *alibi*, for I held a sacred compact with the dead, — a compact that the tortures of hell could not have made me break. Men may think I was justified in not regarding it; perhaps I was, but I do not think so, nor could any ingenuity of reasoning make me think so."

"My father managed to make me understand that he wished me to draw up a will for him to sign, leaving me his sole heir. I

did so, and called in two servants as witnesses; but the paralytic strain upon his limbs, that had slackened once, now became more tense; his fingers were rigid, his arms stretched beside him like bars of iron. I saw that he would never rally; physicians were called in; they could do him no good. I leave you to imagine how pitiable it was to watch his agony, — his eager desire to sign the will, his utter inability to do so. Only his eyes were free and they rolled in heart-rending supplication to us, as if we could help him; we could only stand by his bedside and weep.

"I watched beside him with unavailing care that night; he died before the day broke. His funeral was quiet. I would not summon you nor your brother. Only one mourner, I, followed him to the grave."

"My father's fortune was mostly left, by a former will, to the foundation of some eleemosynary institution. There was a bequest of twenty thousand dollars to your son. I read this will with my father's lawyer, Mr. Simeon Rogers. I recollect the scene well; the small, musty, parchment-littered room, the cold, unsympathetic face of the lawyer, the cold, unsympathetic rows of law-books, the cold, unsympathetic walls, devoid of color, devoid of drapery, rough, plastered, angular. It was then that I received the death-warrant of my happiness, for when the lawyer read, in his monotonous tones, that twenty thousand dollars were left to this young man, —

"Who is he?" I asked."

"Why," said he, "the son of Mr. Smith's daughter-in-law."

"What!" cried I, almost inarticulate with fear, "the son of Helen —"

"Yes," said the icicle, completing the name; "didn't you know she was married? Why, she was married in 18—. A very fine match; her husband is a highly respectable man, and quite rich, I understand;" and he gossiped on, but I did not hear a word, — my misery was too exquisite. I had spent my life for nothing; the prize was again unattainable; again had another snatched my happiness away; again I grasped at fruit, and clutched ashes.

"From the lawyer I learned all about you; that scarcely six months had elapsed after Gerard's death, when you married again; that you were still beautiful, rich, apparently happy. He asked me to call on you with him; but I had not the courage. Ruined by sorrow, I walked the streets, desolate, that day. I followed a throng into a theatre,

in the absurd attempt to rid myself of the contemplation of the tragedy of my life, by gazing at the mock tragedies of the stage. And because I was at that theatre that night, I am proved a murderer in court."

"You have read, carelessly, newspaper accounts of the trial of one Ezra Hoyt, for murder, — his conviction. You never dreamed, of course, that it was I. Yet I informed you of my fate — and innocence — ten days ago. Ten cruel days have passed, and you — heart of rock! — have not come to my cell. But I will write no reproach here; I have no reproach to make; accusations against you are crushed by love ere they take form. These pages, the record of my life and history of my love, the vindication of my name, are ended. I shall cease to breathe to-morrow, but I died two years ago. Since then (living in distant cities to avoid you), I have led the prosaic, busy life of a merchant, not deeming it right to isolate myself and feed on bitter thoughts, as I craved to do. God, in his mysterious providence, has brought me to an innocent scaffold. It is as well. You will read these lines alone, Helen. Your eyes will fill with tears of pity — oh! at least of pity! You will sigh, and your thoughts rush back, in swift retreat, to those old, old days, to my God-given love, to Gerard's deceptive passion. You will search out my grave, that men will call 'dishonored;' but you will look at it with reverence, you will smooth the uncouth sod, and plant on it immortal, evanescent flowers. It will be no malefactor's grave to you; it will be a sacred spot that holds the dust of the man who *always* loved you; of your knight '*sans peur et sans reproche*;' of one whose only happiness was his sorrow; of 'one who loved, not wisely, but too well.' J. S."

During the writing of this letter Smith had paused many times, — often seemed unable to proceed, often hastily strode up and down the narrow limits of his cell. As he finished, the dying candles were flickering in their sockets, and the pale gray of dawn struggled through the contracted window. He rolled up the manuscript that his diffuse narrative had made quite voluminous, tied it securely, and traced the name of the addressed person in bold hand outside. He bathed his haggard face, composed his attire, and, with no thought of sleep till the last long one he would so soon fall into, sat down with the open Book before him.

The faint sound of a light footfall in the

corridor without reaches his ear. He stops reading, his hand clutches at his heart, he shivers. He does not hear the heavy tramp and gruff tones of a prison attendant, — he is only aware of a faint step approaching his cell door. A heavy key groans in the lock, a heavy bolt grates along its unwilling groove, the heavy door swings slowly inward, and — tearful, pale, queen-like — Helen Graham — Vincent's mother — stands before him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A TOO LATE CONFESSION.

"At last! God, I thank thee!" cried Smith, with the deepest emotion. "This is Helen Vincent, — no phantom, — she herself!" and he rushed forward as if he would have clasped her to his arms.

"Not Helen Vincent," said she, in a voice almost imperceptibly repellant, herself paler than snow, — "Helen Graham, a wife."

These calm words checked him as effectually as would a barrier of steel; he recoiled.

"Ah, yes," said he, with indescribable bitterness. "It is so; I forgot; forgive me. A wife! more shame to you!"

He sank upon the rude lounge; his visitor took her seat beside him; the jailer retired. Mrs. Graham put her soft, potent hand upon his shoulder, and said, without a touch of reproach, but in a voice musically sad, —

"Why more shame to me?"

"Because," said Smith, with vehemence, "when you married this unhappy Graham, whoever he may be, you perjured yourself at the altar. No, — don't draw away your hand, — put it on my shoulder again, — so, — it soothes and magnetizes me. Yes, Helen, — I will call you Helen, — you perjured yourself."

"Now let me know your meaning."

"Why, it is plain. I say *perjured*. You swore to love him, and you do not; you swore to honor him, and you do not."

Mrs. Graham had not the slightest power to deny this; her head sank upon her bosom.

"But it was *me*," cried Smith, with ardor and with a conviction that had at that moment flashed upon him, "it was *me* you loved and love; it was *me* you honored and honor!"

There was not a tinge of vanity in this assertion, only utter melancholy, utter grief. He gazed at her in profound gloom, not

cheered by the most distant gleam of coming hope.

"Do you think, James, I ever loved you?"

"If I did not think you loved me *now*, I should be less wretched."

She was puzzled at this.

"Less wretched?"

"Most assuredly; for then I would fight and vanquish an absurd, unwarrantable passion, or, failing in that, would bear my solitary sorrow; but now I have your misery superadded to my own."

"James," said Mrs. Graham, in calm, unimpassioned accents, "let me tell you all. When you and — and your — your brother were young men, the one remarkable for beauty, the other for talent, — when you sought my society daily, and plied your suits with ardor, — I loved neither of you. I had a wicked desire to humble *you*. I lent myself to your brother's scheme, for he hated you, — perhaps you never knew how much he *did* hate you, — and I repulsed you with feigned scorn."

"Feigned! oh, say it again! feigned?"

"It was feigned, — *all* feigned, as I live! I do not know what demon possessed me. Many bitter tears, many wretched hours has the recollection of that interview caused me. And when Gerard poured into my ear stories of your guilt and crimes, I did not believe one word."

The lady's eyes quivered under the blaze of gratitude that shone from her companion's at these words. "Sometimes, during those long silent years, I thought you dead; again I thought you were laboriously preparing fame, with which to startle the world; again that you were sick, lonely, unhappy. But still I felt no love for you. I married Gerard. Is it wicked for me to tell you that I hated him? I did. His unkindness nearly broke my heart. But I stood in the wife's position at his bedside when he died, and longed in vain for recognition from his unconscious eyes. When he was gone, oh, how I craved to see *you*!"

Smith groaned.

"I heard that you had landed in New York, and immediately disappeared. From that time, no tidings of you ever reached me. My widowhood was short. I married James Graham from purely ambitious motives. I thought you dead. As yet I had never loved you; but ten days ago your note reached me, telling me that you were a prisoner and condemned to die. Ah! then I knew I loved you; then I felt that I had destroyed my own happiness; then I longed,

oh, how deeply! to die with you. Is it wicked for me to talk so now? I do not believe it is. Standing here, the wife of James Graham, I tell you that I love you, and you alone, and I am as true a wife as ever."

"And a better woman for the avowal!" cried Smith, with fervor, and he kissed the hand upon his shoulder. "Ah! Helen, it would have been better had you not come here, for *now* I do not want to die. You love me! I am like a man who has starved so long that nothing can revive him, — the spring of vitality is broken, — and now you come and offer me a feast."

"No, I do not," said the other, withdrawing her hand in spite of him. "If you lived, you would still starve. I am another's wife."

"No matter. The avowal, the knowledge, the fact of your love is revivifying, all sufficing."

"When I received your note," continued Mrs. Graham, not heeding him, "I was unwell. I seized upon that circumstance as a pretext to go into the country. I went but a few miles from the city. I was there taken really sick and not till to-day could I leave. My absence has not been from cruel indolence, believe me. — Now tell me all about yourself, — I want to hear everything, all about these years, ages to endure, a dream in the retrospect."

"There is the complete history, Helen," said Smith, pointing to the packet. "Take it, — it will tell you everything."

"Is there no hope for you, — none at all?"

"Not the slightest; all efforts for even a reprieve have failed. But what matters my mode of death? I have no family to sink under the disgrace. I can safely leave my posthumous name to you, Helen, — can I not?" — this with extreme tenderness.

She answered not in words, but she threw into her glance a flood of assurances.

"And in your life," continued Smith, "of calm routine and social triumphs, there is not much to tell?"

"My life has been one long, hidden, horrid tragedy," said she, in a voice that smote her listener's heart, such unfathomed sadness did it reveal.

"Will you let me hear the story?" asked he.

"It is comprised in this short sentence, — my husband is a murderer," and she looked at him with preternaturally large, emotionless eyes, beneath which dark semi-circles, tokens of sickness, were traced.

Smith, appalled, said nothing.

"Yes," she went on, "my husband is a murderer, — a *murderer*, and I have known it for more than ten years. Can you conjure up a conception of the daily torture I have suffered?"

"How did you discover it?" asked Smith, at length.

"By his melancholy and manner, his broken words in sleep and strange remarks. I remember the fearful process I went through before I reached my present knowledge: first the half-formed suspicion; next the horrible conjecture strengthening every day, the continual new evidences to my watchful mind; at last the awful certainty. And I am shut out from all sympathy, all confidence. You cannot imagine the relief it gives me to confide this to you; for oh, how burdensome has been the weight upon me! The wife of a murderer! The involuntary, daily partner of his tortured life! Although I tell you it, the horror with which I regard him is unspeakable, and although I bear it, the agony I endure, unendurable. I feel like an accomplice to the deed; but can I reveal it? Shall I denounce my husband?"

"No, — act the wife's part. It is your duty to conceal it. Soften your husband's heart, — make him repent and confess. Ah! selfish man that I am, I thought myself alone wretched, but your load has been greater than mine. Is there no happiness, then, for you in your domestic life?"

"Yes, oh, yes! I have a son," and her rich voice swelled with the unselfish pride that mothers only know. "I have a son, the prototype of human excellence, so good, so brave, so stainless, so pre-eminent; in him is the essence of honor, and all that is noble."

"Then call not yourself unfortunate, for you are blessed. Have you any other sorrow, Helen?"

"Yes, I have the ever-present realization of the fact that I owe everything to my husband. Without him I should be almost a pauper. I have no property of my own."

"No property of your own! Why, your father, Mr. Vincent, was said to be exceedingly rich."

"So everybody supposed, but his fortune was not half what it was conjectured to be. His will left twenty thousand dollars to one Richard Hoyt, his private secretary, and divided the rest between my brother and myself. Our shares were very small."

"I remember that Hoyt. A disagreeable

fellow, to whom I took an inveterate dislike."

"And I. Well, the sum left to him, large in itself, but stupendous in comparison with the rest of the estate, the executors insisted upon paying Hoyt. So our shares were diminished as much. I have never seen this Hoyt since. It seems strange for me to be so coolly discussing money matters with you in an hour like this,—doesn't it? But I assure you these circumstances have caused me no slight sorrow and humiliation."

"I can easily understand that. Is Vincent your only son?" asked Smith, abruptly.

She seemed much agitated at this question. A strange expression swept across her face,—paler now than ever.

"I believe," said she, speaking very low, "that Gerard Montgomery's son still lives."

"What! *your* son,—who died?"

"The same. Shall I tell you about it? I did not speak of this before, because I thought, foolishly perhaps, that you would hate to hear about it."

"No! you wrong me. I am interested in everything that relates to you."

"Well, then, you heard that my first child was dead. I thought so, too. Only last evening did I receive the first intimation of my error. I have been at Newark for the past ten days. Last evening, a woman came and urgently asked to see me. She was a singular, taciturn person, with the strange name of Jiggleswitch. She had been at my house in this city, and then followed me to Newark. The tale she tells is so strange, yet plausible,—so wonderful, and yet so simple,—that I know not what to think."

At this moment, Smith's breakfast was brought in. The time was passing swiftly away. Mrs. Graham, to his great joy, told him that she should stay till the very last. His execution had been fixed for half-past twelve. He expressed his determination to see no visitors. The clergyman had intimated that he would not intrude upon his last moments,—for there was no need,—but would ascend the scaffold with him, and the cell door closed and left the two again together.

Mrs. Graham then related all that she had learned from Mrs. Jiggleswitch. It appeared that very soon after she married Gerard Montgomery, Louise Murray, a young and pretty little woman,—since metamorphosed into Mrs. Jiggleswitch,—had been engaged by her as a waiting-maid. So changed was she, in name and appear-

ance, that Mrs. Graham did not recognize her in the least, at first; but finally, with difficulty, recollected her. About a year after the marriage, Mr. Ebenezer Moore and his wife (also newly married) came to New York, and in compliance with a very pressing invitation, visited at Montgomery's house for several weeks. Mr. Wyckoff at that time lived next door, in an elegant bachelor establishment. A staid Scotchman in his employ became desperately enamored of the pretty Louise Murray, and suffered the tortures of unrequited love. Now Louise was as honest a little woman as ever lived, but endowed with a very unmanageable temper. It so happened that Mrs. Montgomery, through her own carelessness, lost a valuable diamond ring, and charged Louise with the theft. Louise's indignation was intense, and her desire for revenge great; and she *did* revenge herself, by an act deserving the name of crime. As is often the case with shallow, impulsive natures, she lost sight of the enormity of the deed in the anger that possessed her, and she did not hesitate to do what a more wicked person might have shrunk from. A son was born to Mrs. Moore and to Mrs. Montgomery about the same time. Both infants were feeble enough, but one—Mrs. Moore's—had evidently no chance of living. Louise's commands were law to Cameron McManus, the Scotchman. She bade him get the physician out of the way. His native ingenuity enabled him to do this easily. The doctor received an urgent, feigned summons from a distant patient to come to him. He went, and was, necessarily, gone a week. While he was away, Louise—too cowardly to do the deed herself—let Cameron into the nursery, and bade him change the infants from one cradle to another. He obeyed, and henceforth Mrs. Moore thought her hostess's child her own, and Mrs. Montgomery wept over the death of Mrs. Moore's first-born, deeming herself its mother. Mr. and Mrs. Ebenezer Moore never knew the deception. Edwin was ever their own son to them; but he was not Edwin Moore,—he was Edwin Montgomery, Mrs. Graham's son, Vincent Graham's half-brother. No wonder that Vincent and Edwin, drawn together as school-boys by the mysterious affinity of nature, had been such close, inseparable friends. McManus's base compliance was rewarded by Louise as it deserved. She jilted him, and yielded to one Alphonzo Jiggleswitch's fascinations. Leaving Mrs. Montgomery's

employ soon after, she thought little about the deed she had instigated; she felt no remorse, but rather applauded herself. But it seemed that McManus had always been tortured by the part he played in the performance. It was this, in fact, that had prevented him from denouncing Mr. Graham as the murderer of William Moore; for having robbed Mrs. Graham of a son, he could not bring himself to rob her of a husband, also. Lately, with a conscience quickened by his pious studies, he resolved to reveal the truth, more especially as Mr. and Mrs. Ebenezer Moore were not alive to suffer from the revelation. So he had hunted up Mrs. Jiggleswitch, and easily persuaded her that the truth ought to be told. When he placed the deed before her in all its ugliness, she was horrified at herself, and had instantly started for Mrs. Graham's house, and made the abnormal *entrée* there that we have seen. To tell her former mistress the whole story, was the cause of the visit that had surprised Vincent.

All this did Mrs. Graham tell Smith during their protracted conversation. He expressed his belief that the narrative was true, and, learning that Edwin Moore was all that could be desired, sighed deep and congratulated her.

Time, that "the poet" says "gallops" with the man condemned to die, more than galloped with Smith that morning,—it flew. But he felt now that he had not lived in vain. His inflexible love was at last repaid, returned, and he experienced perfect content. He did not suffer his mind to dwell upon the extraordinary ill-fortune that had persistently persecuted him, or upon the unhappy perverseness that had sent him away an exile. Helen loved him,—that was a complete atonement for everything,—for all. As the fatal hour approached, he became calmer,—Mrs. Graham more agitated. She had thus far repressed, in a great measure, the emotion she felt; but her self-command forsook her by degrees.

Smith did not once refer to Gerard Montgomery. Mrs. Graham understood his silence and did not speak of him herself. As their interview drew near a close, however, Smith, with a few brief words, gave her the budget of Gerard's forgeries to read. He had thought to conceal them, but then concluded that she ought to know all.

It was ten minutes past twelve. They sat in a silence more eloquent than words. Her hand was upon his shoulder, her tearful eyes were looking up at him,—an atti-

tude she had preserved all the morning, with but a short cessation. The cell door opened, and the sheriff's deputy courteously intimated that the time had come to clothe him in the attire for the scaffold. He begged ten minutes more,—they were readily granted, and they were alone once again, for the last time. Helen hung, almost swooning, on his arm. He caught her in both arms and drew her to him in a close embrace,—so close that heart beat against heart, breath mingled with breath. Her beautiful arms swept round his neck, and her full, red lips—as full and red as Helen Vincent had ever known—were pressed against his. It was their first kiss, and their last, and all their life-long passion was fused in that one burning caress. Sorrow, separation, impending death, all vanished in that one long kiss,—a kiss that was yet as pure as any that the Virgin Mother ever pressed upon the Holy Infant's brow. For this was no rioting of unlicensed passion,—it was the chaste farewell of godliness and virtue,—the parting salute to the dying,—the seal and knell of a love as pure as ever animated heart of man, or stirred the gentle breast of woman.

"Oh! let me mount the scaffold with you and die, no more innocent than you!" cried the weeping Helen.

"No, you must live to vindicate my memory. Grieve not, darling. Live to follow me where I know I go. 'Press forward to the mark.' 'I have finished the course, I have fought the good fight; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. O Helen, let not this be an eternal parting! Let us meet beyond the grave. Go to Him who so lovingly calls the 'heavy-laden.' Do you remember that most exquisite of all hymns, that you used to sing in those sweet, sad days,—'Flee as a bird to your mountain'? Its melody has never died away. I hear it ever ringing with the clarity of seraphs' songs. Sing it to me now, Helen; it will be my funeral hymn,"—and a beautiful but inexpressibly sad smile lit up his face,— "sing, and angels will incline their ears to hear."

She ceased to sob, and for a moment the cell was silent as the tomb; but presently the faint music of her tremulous, pathetic voice, crept through the stillness, and the perfect strains that the composer must have caught and written as they escaped from heaven, quivered through the listener's soul. The semi-gloom of the cell now vanished, and floods of light from Paradise poured in;

the damp stone ceiling fled away, and the free sky roofed them; the massive walls seemed to disappear. Her voice grew stronger as she sang,—sweeter it could not be; and into her auditor's ravished ear flowed all the pathos that poetry and music can bestow or human voice convey.

The last angelic notes were uttered, and, too pure to live in the gross air, they died. Back rushed the walls and gloom, and the glimpse of heaven vanished. Smith pressed her hand in thanks,—he did not dare to trust his voice. Again the reluctant door swung on its hinges, and the officer appeared.

"Good-by," faltered the doomed man, laying his hand on her head in a touching benediction. "I go to assume the black cap of death; but there is in store for me 'a crown of life.' Oh, do you win and wear it! Forget not the condition: 'Be thou faithful unto the end.' Good-by." And he kissed the hand of the almost inanimate woman, and went out with a step as firm as that with which Huss walked to the stake, or Peter to the inverted cross.

At that instant, Vincent Graham, shuddering with anxiety, was waiting outside the Governor's room at Albany. That dignitary was composedly listening to the reading of an interminable political address, which the State Committee proposed to put forth, if it met his Excellency's approval. Vincent's card, on which were written these words, "I ask an interview at once on a matter of life or death," lay unheeded beside him. The political gentlemen droned away, the governor blandly listened, and the precious moments sped along, irrevocable.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A CONFESSION IN TIME.

EZRA HOYT, after knocking his mother down in Roberts's parlor, would have gone out with less composure, had he known that his cowardly blow had killed her. Being missed some hours afterwards, she was looked for, and found lying there in a little crimson lake of blood, insensible. She was put to bed, and a doctor called, who seemed to think that the wound did not amount to much. She recovered consciousness, and was not delirious, but unnaturally quiet.

The tide of life was fast ebbing out. As she lay that night sleepless and alone,—for she did not seem to require a watcher,—there passed before her mind's eye an awful panorama, painted by conscience. The advancing future, like a black avalanche, crept towards her. In the morning, every one who entered her room started back,—the unpractised glance saw that death had claimed her. During the day she sank rapidly,—the physician, now doleful as the tomb, allotted her but a few more hours of life. At this, seized with sudden energy, she started up in bed, and urgently, imperiously demanded that Mr. James Graham should be sent for. In less than half an hour he was there, and Mrs. Jarvis banished everybody else from the room. Mr. Graham was much surprised at the summons. He might many years before have seen her at Mr. William Moore's, but he did not remember her name nor herself at all.

"Thank yer honor for coming," said Mrs. Jarvis, with a strong Irish accent; for in this hour her old brogue came back. "It would have been better for me, faith, had I seen ye years ago."

"What have you to say to me, my good woman? Who are you? Where have you seen me?"

"It's many a time I see ye at Mr. William Moore's."

The guilty man shuddered. "Is this some new accuser?" thought he.

"And as a dying woman," continued Mrs. Jarvis, "I ask you to pardon me the wrong I've done ye and yours."

"Pray explain yourself."

"Oh, yer honor, who has always been a good, peaceable, Christian gentleman, little knows the torments that have got hold of me. It's what I've heard called remorse, sir."

These words to be addressed to him! He knew nothing about remorse! It seemed to this wretched man that every chance word and casual remark touched his secret guilt.

"What have you done to me?" he stammered. "If you have anything to say to me, Mrs. Jarvis, say it," he added, in rather austere tones. He was anxious to get out of the room; but, in spite of his anxiety, he was there for nearly two hours. Mrs. Jarvis could utter but a few sentences at a time; and when she did speak, it was with her native tautology and diffuseness. The substance of her confession was this.

She seemed to deem it necessary to the

completeness of her narrative, to go back to her early life. She had lived in H——, in Massachusetts, and lost her parents when quite a child. At a tender age she had been apprenticed to a milliner in the village. When about seventeen, she had made the acquaintance of Richard Hoyt, and he had been desperately smitten by her charms. Her Irish prudence had been proof against dishonorable proposals, and Hoyt had been fain to mercilessly jilt Miss Antigone Brown and run away with Margaret Brady. Very little happiness did she derive from this marriage. Hoyt turned out to be a brute and a villain. He had obtained a considerable sum of money from his father, under the understanding that it was to be added to the capital employed in his father's business, and that he was to be a partner in the concern. On this the pair managed to live, in quite a flashy style, for some time, in New York, but their money soon melted under the recklessness of both. Hoyt was a gambler, and an unlucky one, a hard-drinker, and an inveterate one. For many years they led a precarious, guilty existence in New York. Ezra, their son, inherited all the evil dispositions of both his parents, but he saw little of them; he was sent to boarding-school and from thence to college, where he was supported by the liberality of his grandfather Hoyt. He was expelled from college after a career of the most desperate dissipation, but not till he had distinguished himself by the most extraordinary intellectual achievements. The immediate cause of his expulsion was his constructing a trap for one of the professors to fall into, which could not have failed to result in the man's death, had it not been accidentally discovered. After his premature graduation, Ezra obtained a clerkship in a store in Boston, where he amused himself by robbing his employer, and was never detected. Richard Hoyt, reduced at length to extremities, had one night attempted burglary, and, in fact, effected an entrance into Mr. Graham's house. He had been foiled and captured through the integrity and coolness of young Vincent Graham. The boy's taunting words and manner had unspeakably enraged him; his aggravating sarcasms had always rankled in his breast, and he vowed revenge. Pending his commitment and trial, he had managed to escape, and before his real name had been discovered,—nor had the police ever been able to recapture him. He went to Baltimore and stayed there a long time.

Like many illiterate men, his handwriting was beautiful and rapid. This circumstance enabled him to obtain the position of secretary,—a profitable sinecure,—to Mr. Peter Vincent, Mrs. Graham's father, then temporarily residing at Baltimore. With this gentleman he had returned to New York. The scientific application of dyes and an altered tonsure secured him from detection. He managed to ingratiate himself deeply into Mr. Vincent's confidence and made himself entirely conversant with the state of the old gentleman's affairs. Mr. Vincent wrote a will, leaving the bulk of his fortune, that is, some four hundred and fifty or five hundred thousand dollars, to trustees for the benefit of his grandson, Vincent Graham, when he should attain his majority. His handwriting was an almost illegible scrawl, but the document was, as usual, copied in Hoyt's clear characters. It consisted of several leaves merely pasted together, and not fastened by a ribbon and sealed, and Hoyt instantly conceived a feasible plan to enrich himself and wreak his vengeance on Vincent Graham. He detached the leaf that made Vincent heir, and substituted another in the same handwriting, bequeathing the sum of twenty thousand dollars to Richard Hoyt, "in consideration of his faithful and valuable services as secretary." He was afraid to make the amount larger lest it should excite suspicion. Mr. Vincent's sudden and fatal illness occurred very soon afterwards. It followed after a day of unusual and protracted work; a day in which, in consummation of previous plans and arrangements, he had converted his entire fortune, mortgages, bonds, deeds, and all into gold, anticipating a rise in the price of gold, and purposing to sell it at a premium that should insure an immense profit. Hoyt was the only person present when he counted out the mass of specie that he had thus accumulated; it filled two spacious ornamental safes that adorned his library. After the termination of Mr. Vincent's short illness, during the whole of which he was delirious, Hoyt removed one of the safes to a house in Catharine Street where Mrs. Hoyt lived. The very boldness with which he did this ensured him from suspicion. He had a dray rattle up to the house, and pretended that he was removing, in accordance with instructions from Mr. Vincent, a box of old books and rubbish. The house in Catharine Street was the same place from which, the reader may perhaps remember, Ezra emerged just

previous to his first rencontre with Vincent Graham. In this safe were three hundred thousand dollars. The last page of Mr. Vincent's will contained nothing but small legacies to friends, and the appointment of executors. On this page, of course, was the signature of the testator, and also of the witnesses; consequently Hoyt was able to totally change the character of the will, without the necessity of forging Mr. Vincent's name. Knowing that barely two hundred thousand dollars remained after the robbery, he rewrote the first pages of the testament, abridging the bequests to Mrs. Graham and Mr. John Vincent. Thus had it come to pass that, as Mrs. Graham told Smith, to everybody's surprise, Mr. Vincent had died comparatively poor, and Mrs. Graham's share of the property had been unexpectedly small. But no one ever suspected the true state of the case, and the executors had rigidly paid Richard Hoyt the twenty thousand dollars seemingly bequeathed him. Now, for the first time, was the crime revealed by Mrs. Jarvis's confession and Mr. Graham listened in amazement. Among the papers in the safe was a previous will duly executed and written by Mr. Vincent's own hand. It was dated several years prior to his death, and Hoyt, by what seems a fatality among criminals, neglected to destroy this will, and had also preserved the genuine pages which he had feloniously eliminated from the last document. Papers were thus extant, and in Mrs. Jarvis's possession, that made Vincent Graham wealthy.

Mrs. Jarvis, being thoroughly exhausted, paused. Mr. Graham was silent. Although she quite expected an outbreak of wrath, her listener said not a word. But his thoughts were busy and bad. He would conceal these facts from Vincent, and after his son's death, which, almost unconsciously to himself, he purposed should be speedy, he would take possession of the wealth as his own. For he never suspected, as every reader of these pages must have suspected, that Hoyt had squandered the property. Hoyt had not died poor. The money he had obtained was almost untouched. Hoyt, in fact, from being a spendthrift, had become a miser. His wife and son thought him poor, and he had favored the hallucination. While Mrs. Hoyt was living as a servant at Mr. William Moore's (at his request under an assumed name) and afterwards at Wyckoff Hall; while Ezra was bitterly complaining of want of money and concocting murder

to obtain it, Richard Hoyt was the possessor of a vast hoard of stolen wealth, unused. During his interview with Ezra in Catharine Street, while urging the latter to try "garroting" as a means of revenue, at that very time the safe that had attracted Ezra's attention contained bank notes (into which he had converted the gold) amounting in value to nearly three hundred thousand dollars. Mrs. Jarvis had not been ignorant of her husband's robbery; she was aware that he had obtained this safe, but he had represented to her, and she had believed him, that he had lost all the gold in unlucky speculations. He had made her believe that the safe contained now nothing but piles of papers and documents of great value to Mr. Vincent, but worthless to him. Thus the crimes of her husband and son, at all of which she had connived, had been utterly profitless to this wretched woman; she had been compelled to spend her days in poverty and drudgery. She had been a participator in the crimes of her family, but not a sharer of the wealth wickedly accumulated.

"Where is the safe and where are the papers of which you speak?" asked Mr. Graham, at length.

"The safe and all that's in it's buried in the cellar of No. — Catharine street."

"Ah!" thought Mr. Graham, "a good place."

"I don't know for what the old man buried it," resumed Mrs. Jarvis (as we shall still call her), "for there was nothin' in it good for anything."

"Nothing in it!"

"No, nothing but a lot of old docymints and trash."

"Very likely that he would bury trash," was Mr. Graham's mental comment. "Why, what has become of all the money?" he asked.

"Oh! it's all gone, sir. Dick lost it in specklerlation about a week after he got it."

"Highly probable, also!" muttered Mr. Graham. "That was unfortunate," he remarked aloud. "Then your husband died poor?"

"Yes, sir. He didn't leave me a cent, nor did old Mr. Hoyt, either. All old Mr. Hoyt iver did was to sind Ezra — that's my son, you know — to college. He took a fancy to him and wanted him to git some book learning. Small good it's done him, anyhow."

"Where is your son?"

"That's more'n I can tell, sir," said Mrs.

Jarvis, who was greatly agitated. "Oh!" said she, suddenly, "I can't die aisy till I tell your honor all I did, an' all I set Ezra up to; although it's Mr. William Moore I ought to tell it to, rather than you, if he was alive, poor man."

Again Mr. Graham started violently. "Great God!" thought he, "am I never to hear the last of this man?"

Mrs. Jarvis was growing weaker and weaker. Mr. Graham would have had her stop and husband her strength, but she insisted upon telling everything while there was yet time, saying that she knew she must die and a few hours sooner or later made no difference. With many pauses, then, and in a voice almost inaudible, from weakness, the dying woman divulged the conspiracy she had instigated and assisted; the concealment of Harry Moore's death; the false representations to Franchot; the abandonment of Mr. Moore's child. Remembering her promise to Mr. William Moore, she did not say anything about that gentleman's reappearance; nor did she tell Graham that Ethel was the child she had abandoned in the cars. But she went on to relate how, after Franchot had expressed his determination to make William Moore's son his heir, he had been easily persuaded that Ezra was that son, — how Ezra had grown more and more impatient for the Frenchman's murder, which, although she did not advise, she did nothing to dissuade him from. In short, her confession embraced all the plots and performances whose inception and progress the reader has already seen.

With the conclusion of her confession, it seemed as if Mrs. Jarvis's life had also ended. She lay motionless and speechless; the ebbing tide scarcely showed a ripple now. Graham thought her dead and he exclaimed aloud, with energy, —

"I'll get that safe, and nobody shall be a whit the wiser!"

It is always imprudent to utter one's thoughts aloud. It was peculiarly so in this case, for in the next room, separated from this only by a very thin partition, was Mrs. Roberts (the shrewd wife of the detective), with her ear pressed against a crevice in the boards. She heard every word of the conversation, and to Mr. Graham's incautiously uttered boast, she replied to herself, smiling, —

"Always excepting Polly Roberts."

Mr. Graham, experiencing an aversion, amounting almost to horror, in the presence

of the dead, hurried out of the room, and sent up the first person he met to Mrs. Jarvis. The physician, who had just arrived, and others, hastened in, but it was too late. Mrs. Jarvis was dead.

CHAPTER XL.

BAD NEWS AND GOOD.

THE speed of the express train seemed slow enough to Vincent and his companion as they rolled along the Hudson River Railroad. Kavanagh was very much depressed. For a long time he insisted that if Smith's execution was consummated, he would be as culpable as a murderer. Gradually, however, he acknowledged the force of Vincent's arguments, which were to the effect that in no event could Smith's death be attributed, justly, to Kavanagh, for his impending fate had not slipped from the latter's mind through culpable carelessness; but simply because he was occupied in the prosecution of what was certainly his duty, to wit, the capture of the real murderer; and that another circumstance exonerated him, namely, the fact that he had been erroneously informed that the execution had been fixed for a much later date. Somewhat comforted by these representations, Kavanagh busied himself in preparing the draft of an affidavit for Vincent to swear to, and which should be laid before the Governor. It was about ten o'clock in the evening when they arrived at Albany. They proceeded directly to the Governor's house, and, to their dismay, learned that his Excellency was out of town, and would not be back till ten o'clock the next forenoon. There being no train till morning, Vincent proposed that while Kavanagh remained to draw up the affidavit in proper form, he should ride to the place, not very distant, where the Governor then was. Kavanagh expressed some doubt as to Vincent's being able to bear the fatigue; but, his scruples being laughed at, consented to the arrangement. Vincent started, and, after splashing through muddy roads for an hour or two, arrived at his destination only to learn that the Governor had returned to Albany by a special train. Taking a very slight refreshment, Vincent mounted his horse for the return ride. He had not passed over two miles of the road when he began to feel that he had overtaken his strength.

As he rode along an irresistible dizziness seized him; he reeled in the saddle, he sank upon his horse's neck; he felt himself sliding to the ground, and then all was blank.

Not very long afterwards Vincent opened his eyes, gazed feebly about him for a moment, and, shutting them again, fell into a delicious, strengthening sleep. It was nearly morning when he awoke refreshed. He found himself lying on a green, leather-covered lounge, in an exceedingly neat room that seemed to be a library, crammed with books and maps. To his amazement, he beheld sitting at a table, reading by the light of a shaded lamp, the massive form of no less a person than Dr. Euripides Brown.

"*Salve domine!*" cried Vincent.

"*Macte virtute!*" exclaimed the doctor, hastily starting up. "Vincent, my boy, give me your hand!"

"Have the goodness, doctor, to tell me how I came here."

"Why, taking my usual midnight walk, I found you about ten rods from here, lying in the mud, and your horse quietly standing beside you. So, reversing Virgil's account, Anchises bore Æneas on his shoulders and deposited him on that sofa, where, very unsociably, he has lain ever since without saying a word. What was the matter? Were you thrown from your beast?"

Vincent briefly explained matters. "Now tell me, sir, do you live here?"

"Yes, Parnassus Hall is no more. 'Carthage was.' A Deaf and Dumb Asylum, as was originally intended, now takes the place of that seat of learning."

"What desecration!" cried Vincent.

"Yes," said the doctor, mournfully. "I had to give up keeping boarding-school after Tiggy left me."

"What! Miss Antigone gone! where is she?"

"Married," said the doctor, in a voice of sorrow. "That's what the best of women come to. She married the assistant Latin teacher."

"Little Thomas!"

"The same. She is old enough to be the mother of the *homunculus*. She married him out of pity, I haven't the least doubt. He needed somebody to take care of him. He is tutor now in — college."

"Poor devil!" thought Vincent, "between the boys and his wife he'll lead a dog's life."

"As for me," continued the doctor, "I have bought this little place. I don't keep a regular school, but have one or two boys

with me whom I am fitting for college. But I am not idle."

"What are you doing, sir?"

"I am writing a book," said the doctor, blushing like a girl, "the *opus maximum* of my life. It is to be called 'History of Greek Literature,' to consist of twenty-five folio volumes."

"How much have you written, doctor?"

"I have written half a volume during the past two years. I will have the first volume finished in two more years."

"At that rate," said Vincent, smiling, "it will be ninety-eight years before your work is finished."

"Bless me," cried the doctor, looking blank, "I never thought of that. I must reduce the projected size."

"Yes, I would," said Vincent.

"The work is to be embellished with steel engravings, and will be very costly, I suppose," added the doctor, with a sigh. "It is to be published by contribution. Perhaps you will consent to put your name down?"

"I think it very likely. How many boys have you?" said Vincent, hastily.

"Only four. They are youngsters, scarcely out of the Latin reader. But come, it is time you and I went to sleep."

This seemed probable, inasmuch as it was now nearly five in the morning.

"I must take the first train to Albany," said Vincent.

"That won't be till after breakfast," said the doctor. "Let me show you a bed."

"No," said Vincent, "with your permission, I will stay here."

"If you don't feel sleepy," said the doctor, "you can look over the manuscript of my work."

"Thank you, doctor, I am sleepy."

Vincent arose at breakfast-time feeling much better than he had for several weeks. The four little boys sat at the table with their teacher. One of them was a brother of a Miss Schuyler, Ethel's most intimate friend. Vincent had often seen young Schuyler, and kindly returned the boy's eager greeting.

The early morning mail was brought in, and quite a little pile of letters handed to the doctor, who sorted them, and handed one to Tom Schuyler.

The boy took it with delight, for if there is ever a moment of unalloyed happiness it is when a homesick boy at school gets a letter from home.

The doctor promised to send Vincent's horse to Albany that day, and his visitor impatiently awaited the hour of departure. All at once Tom Schuyler, who was puzzling over his letter, cried, —

"I do wish Lu. would write so a fellow could read. I can't make it out at all. Won't you read that line for me, Mr. Graham?"

Vincent took the letter, written in the namby-pamby style of chirography that young ladies generally affect, and read these words, —

"You remember Ethel Moore, don't you, Tom; the young lady you said was a great deal prettier than I am?"

"No, I don't mean that," said Tom, "it's the next line. Please read on."

Vincent did not need to be urged.

"Well, she's very — very — what's that? 'happy,' oh! I see, 'happy,' 'she is very happy now; she has found her father.'"

Tom must have been surprised at the agitation that seized Vincent; his face alternated red and white, and his eyes glittered like coals. Without permission he read on, —

"A gentleman whom she has known for some time — a Mr. Morris — turns out to be her father. Only think of it! I'm so glad."

Vincent flung down the letter, and — as Tom afterwards said — "jumped four feet clear off the floor. I thought he was crazy," said Tom, in telling the story; "he danced around the room and slapped the doctor on the back a tremendous whack. 'What's the matter with you?' roared the doctor. 'I'm another man, that's all!' said he; 'good-by,' and he snatched his hat, and kited off to the railway station."

He was indeed another man. All weakness had now vanished from his frame. A subtle strengthening fire ran through his veins, as if he had swallowed the "elixir of life." He was raised now to a height of joy as far above the ordinary level of his mood, as the abyss of despair, he had emerged from, was below it. Ethel was true, and for him grief was a thing that existed not. Then the thought that he had wronged her and believed her guilty came upon him, and he loathed himself. "Have I killed her love," thought he, "by my barbarity? It would serve me right if she despised me!"

He arrived in Albany, and found Kavanagh awaiting him with the papers. Together, they hurried to the Governor's room, — we have already seen with what result. For two hours they waited, almost dead with sickening suspense. When they were at

last admitted, Vincent was not long in making the Governor acquainted with the contents of his affidavit. That functionary turned pale, and dispatched a message to the nearest telegraph office, ordering the postponement of the execution. In less than half an hour these words came back across the electric wire, —

"The execution has taken place. Smith is dead."

"We've done all we could, Harry," said Vincent, turning to the horrified Kavanagh; "you're not a bit to blame."

Kavanagh groaned. "Oh! if I had only thought of it two days ago!"

"It would have made no difference," said the Governor. "I have been ill. Yesterday was the first time I've been out. I would not have admitted you to an audience; I admitted no one; neither could I have seen you yesterday. So you have no cause to reproach yourself, young man."

Kavanagh was unspeakably relieved. "Thank God! his blood's not on my hands," cried he.

"Nobody is to blame that I know of," said the Governor. "This is one of those unhappy affairs that human wisdom cannot guard against. It is the third instance in my official life."

"Great heavens!" cried Vincent; "is it possible that in your short term, sir, there have been three executions of innocent men?"

"This makes the third," said the Governor, composedly. "Men convicted on circumstantial evidence, hung, and the real culprit turns up. But the severity of the law must be maintained. It is better that an innocent man should occasionally suffer, than that guilty men should practise their crimes with impunity."

"Say rather," cried Vincent, much disgusted, "it is better that ninety-nine murderers should go free, than that one innocent man should be hung. The death penalty is barbarous enough any way, but when it is enforced so sweepingly as to include the innocent, I cry, away with it!"

"Yes. That is your opinion, is it?" said the Governor, slightly yawning, and carefully picking a speck of dust off his coat-sleeve. "I am sorry to say that my time will not permit me to attend you any further," and he bowed his visitors out.

Much saddened by the result of their attempt to save poor Smith, Kavanagh and Vincent agreed to start at once on their expedition for the capture of Ezra. Vin-

cent longed to return to New York, and crave Ethel's forgiveness, but did not tell his companion so. They resumed their disguises, and took the first down-train.

They left the cars at a town not far distant from D—, and they determined to make this place their starting-point. They went into a restaurant to dine. At a table near them sat Mr. Alexander Conger, the detective, talking earnestly with a friend. He was evidently giving an account of Smith's execution. He had just come up from the city.

"It sickened me of capital punishment," they heard him say. "There were only about fifty of us in the prison-yard. The poor fellow came out looking rather pale, but as calm as an infant. They said he had just been taking leave of his wife, or sweetheart. I never thought he was an ugly man, in spite of his cross eyes; but, may I be hanged myself, if he wasn't just as handsome then as he could be, by Jove! He said a few words to us, as he stood on the scaffold, and may I never catch thief again if he didn't bring the briny into my eyes. I never was so astonished at myself in my life. When I heard his words I was just as certain that he was innocent as I am this moment. They tied his hands, and the drop fell. I looked away then, for I tell you it seemed to me as if murder was going on. He couldn't have hung ten minutes when we heard the devil of a racket inside the prison hall, and a man rushed out with his face about as white as that wall there, shouting, 'Cut him down! cut him down!' I had no business to do it, but my knife was out, and I was on that scaffold in considerably less time than it takes me to tell you. But it was all over with poor Smith; he had broken his neck when he fell, and now curse me if I aint against hanging men for the rest of my natural life!"

Conger made this recital in so elevated a voice that Vincent and his friend were compelled to hear it. The detective seemed, in fact, to desire hearers of his sentiments, for he glanced at the two apparent Frenchmen and raised his voice.

"Vint.," whispered Kavanagh, "I believe that Smith will haunt me."

"You don't still persist in blaming yourself, do you?"

"In a measure, yes; but I will try not to let the idea torture me. There's one thing, however, that I would lose my right arm to accomplish."

"What's that?"

"To capture Ezra Hoyt," said Kavanagh, grinding his teeth.

"I'm with you there," said Vincent. "Our disguises are good, Harry. Even the lynx-eyed detective Conger doesn't see through them."

"Small chance, Vint., of Hoyt knowing you. He thinks you dead and buried, you know."

"Yes, and I long to see the expression of his face when he sees me with this disguise off," said Vincent. "There goes Conger. We have the room to ourselves; let's concoct a *modus operandi*."

The deliberation that ensued did not last long. They went out, and, hiring a carriage, drove swiftly in the direction of D—. At the distance of about eight miles from the town they stopped at a small tavern, and sent back their team. Here they whiled away the time till dark, and ordered a good substantial supper.

At about eight o'clock they started off in a light, two-horse wagon, driven by a man of immense physical proportions, whom they had been glad to obtain as an ally in their expedition. They had engaged the conveyance for an indefinite time, purposing to take their prisoners to Wyckoff Hall, which was only about twenty miles distant, and thence to New York. They each carried a revolver carefully loaded. The night was dark, and the road rough, so it was some time before they came in sight of the "red brick house," a black mass against a dark sky. At one side stood three or four fir-trees. Stopping then, and instructing the driver to wait there for the arranged signal, they advanced on foot to the house. Before entering it, they made a careful survey of the premises on all sides. There were no side doors; the one at the rear they secured by passing a picket of a fence through the latch-handle on the outside. Going around to the front, they knocked confidently, but not loudly. A murmur of conversation, that had till then been audible, ceased, and, after a considerable pause, the door was opened slightly, and a man gruffly inquired their business. Kavanagh said in French, that they wanted to see Mr. Hunter.

The man, whom they at once knew to be Ezra, replied in the same language, that they would oblige him by talking in English, for his French needed brushing up. "Who did you say you wanted to see?" he asked.

"Vell, ve vant Meester Huntare," said

Kavanagh, in English, that was not only broken, but mutilated.

"Who said I lived here?" cried Ezra somewhat startled.

"Monsieur, the tavern-keeper," replied Kavanagh.

Ezra seemed relieved. He did not at all suspect, what a less shrewd man than he was would probably at once have apprehended, that the two Frenchmen were detectives, or pursuers in disguise. He well knew that not a soul had followed him from New York to this place; that no one knew him in his disguise; that no one save Murragh had been aware of his intention of going to this place of concealment, and that even Murragh had only learned it through a letter written in cipher,—a letter that no one had seen. So, totally unsuspecting, he asked his callers "what he could do for them."

"Why, we heard," said Kavanagh, still preserving a foreign intonation, "that you would rent this house, and my friend and I will take it if it suits us."

"No, I don't want to rent it; I am going to live here myself. But pardon me, gentlemen, for keeping you standing out here. Come in and take a snifter."

"I don't think we can stop this evening," said Kavanagh, with feigned reluctance.

"Oh, come in and rest awhile," cried Ezra, anxious for visitors to relieve his ennui. "Come in, you must be tired; it's quite a walk from the tavern down here."

Thus pressed they complied, and Ezra ushered them into a small, half-furnished room, in the centre of which stood a rickety table, supporting a solitary candle. At this table sat Mr. Donnizetti Murragh, disguised in bushy black side-whiskers, with his hat pulled down low upon his forehead. He was composedly sipping a glass of brandy and water as the visitors came in.

"Mr. Munroe," said Ezra, by way of introduction. "What is your name and your friend's?" he asked of Kavanagh.

"We are brothers," said Kavanagh; "the Messrs. Mallon."

"Sit down, gentlemen," said Ezra. "Take a drink?"

"You are very kind," said Kavanagh; "I believe not," and Vincent courteously declined.

They all four sat around the table, and Ezra and Murragh, being entirely unsuspecting, the conversation soon became free. They spoke of the loneliness and isolation of the house, danger from burglars, means

of defence, and finally about fire-arms. They compared pistols. Vincent, in examining Ezra's revolver, dexterously removed the caps without being seen. His own "Colt" was handed about. Ezra admired it, and looked at it long before he restored it to its owner, who placed it carelessly on the table by the side of the candlestick.

Murragh sat near a corner of the table, and Vincent on the same side. Ezra and Kavanagh opposite. A half hour or more passed away very quickly. At length Kavanagh, pushing back his chair a little, said,—

"Well, it's about time for us to go."

"Yes, I'm getting sleepy," said Vincent, yawning slightly, and he stretched out his hand as if to snuff the candle, but instead of doing so snatched his pistol, and with inconceivable quickness struck Murragh fiercely on the head with its handle. The lawyer, without a groan, fell on the floor, senseless.

At the same instant Kavanagh threw himself with violence upon Ezra, who was half risen from his chair; but he met more than his match. Ezra caught him around the waist with both arms, and, rising with him in his grasp, ran across the room and dashed him against the wall. Kavanagh was much hurt, and for a time was incapable of rising. But Vincent with blazing eyes sprang forward to the encounter, and Ezra seized with panic rushed to the back door. Finding it fastened, he uttered a howl of mingled rage and fear, and stood, a brawny desperado, at bay. Vincent held his pistol levelled, and might have shot him, but he was determined to capture him alive. "Surrender," shouted he. "Never!" roared Ezra. The back door opened into a little kitchen. Vincent and Ezra were in that place now. A heavy iron poker, belonging to the range, leaned against the ledge of the door. This Ezra instantly seized, after he had harmlessly snapped his pistol in Vincent's face, and dashed it down with a horrible oath. Vincent paused, uncertain how to proceed, but his antagonist threw himself forward, struck Vincent's pistol with the poker and sent it whirling across the room, and "closed in," disregarding a blow from Vincent's fist that would have felled an ordinary man. The struggle that ensued, for a few moments was absolutely terrific. Ezra felt that he was fighting for his life, and Vincent was actuated by an unconquerable resolution. He knew, too, that, if he was vanquished, he could expect no mercy from his antago-

nist. They were both men of great strength, and if Ezra was the heavier and actually the more powerful of the two, the deficiency was fully compensated to Vincent in superior agility and suppleness. The ancient gladiatorial sands never saw a fiercer contest. With Vincent was all the redundant strength of youth, and Ezra, in the prime of life, had the free use of consummated vigor.

In silence that deadly struggle went on, not a word did either speak, — nothing broke that frightful stillness save the labored respiration of each, and now and then a smothered oath from Ezra, who uselessly endeavored to fling Vincent to the ground, while the latter in vain sought to throw Ezra off his sturdy, firmly-planted legs. But Vincent could not continue these exertions long. Now the effects of his late sickness began to tell, the strength that excitement had lent him had gradually given way, the results of his last night's sleeplessness began to show themselves, and he felt faintness coming on. With one desperate, last effort he banged Ezra's head against the corner of the dresser, and then his fierce clutch relaxed, and he sank to the floor, utterly exhausted. But Ezra was temporarily stunned by the blow, and, for a few moments, the two combatants sat and gazed feebly at each other. And now Vincent gave himself up as lost, and cried out weakly to Kavanagh, but there was no response, for Ezra quickly revived, while he himself he knew could not hope to continue the struggle longer. With anguish he saw Ezra's dazed look vanish; with eyes lit up by hate, the villain started up. At that crisis Vincent's presence of mind — that had never yet deserted him — saved him. Tearing off his false whiskers (which were so securely put on that the late struggle had not deranged them in the least) there burst upon Ezra's appalled sight the face of Vincent Graham, — the man whom he had left bricked up and dead in a vault.

"I have risen from the dead to capture you, Ezra Hoyt," said Vincent in a calm, clear voice.

Who can describe the awful terror that seized the murderer? His ashy face was smitten with the agony of horror, and his started eyeballs rolled in an ecstasy of fright. His bristling hair darted up erect and his teeth clattered like hail-stones, while his trembling limbs refused to bear him up, and he sank upon the floor, quivering like a leaf, an abject, miserable wretch. In an instant, Vincent, with partially re-

covered strength, was upon him, with his knee pressed against his breast and his lusty fingers twisted in his throat, and at that juncture Kavanagh limped in, very pale and looking rather wild in the eyes.

"I've got him, Hal, my boy! Tie him up." Kavanagh seemed to rally at the sight. He pulled a stout cord from his pocket and, in an instant, Ezra Hoyt lay bound hand and foot, — a prisoner.

CHAPTER XLI.

RETRIBUTION.

"THAT fellow knocked all the breath out of my body," said Kavanagh. "I believe I fainted away."

"Are you much hurt, Harry?"

"No, not much. He lamed me some. I thought he'd broken my leg. That other chap is lying there quiet enough."

"No he isn't," cried Vincent, entering the room.

"By Jove! the fellow's got off!"

Such was the fact. Murragh, recovering, had lain quiet while Kavanagh was in the room, but on the latter's going out had seized the opportunity to slip quietly away.

"Great heavens! Vint," cried Kavanagh; "these fellows are worse than hares. Look out or Hoyt will be off."

"Little danger," said Vincent; "he's so scared he can't move. Well, we've done a good job. Never mind, Murragh; we'll have him before long. Let's get off. Call the fellow with the wagon, Hal, will you? We ought to be at your father's before midnight."

Kavanagh went out, executed a prolonged, peculiar whistle, and in a moment the wagon came rattling up to the door. Vincent and Kavanagh, aided by the gigantic Jehu, lifted Ezra and deposited him on the straw at the bottom of the vehicle, where he lay quiet enough; and his pallid face began to show the first foreshadowings of despair.

They both mounted to the driver's seat and drove rapidly away. Vincent felt a strange exhilaration. He was bearing off his captive in triumph, and he was thrilled by the sweet consciousness of Ethel's constancy.

Kavanagh was rather chagrined at his share in the performances of the evening, but Vincent assured him that it was by no means certain that he could have mastered Hoyt had it not been for his assistance.

They lit their cigars and added to (or spoiled) the fragrance of the evening air. The travelling improved as they proceeded, and they soon struck a long, level stretch of plank road. Vincent continually looked behind to assure himself that the prisoner had not vanished, so impressed had he become by Ezra's volatile powers. But Ezra Hoyt had met his fate, at last, and the meshes of his doom had closed around him. He had a consciousness of this as he lay there muttering curses. He saw that he was utterly ruined. Even should he escape from his captors, the future was all blackness to him. He could no longer pass for Harry Moore, — for had he not boasted to Vincent that he was Ezra Hoyt? He was now known to be an impostor; he must relinquish Franchot's property; he could never marry Ethel Moore. He was known to be Franchot's murderer; he would henceforth be hunted as such. All his schemes had failed, — had ended in utter defeat. But what added the most bitterness to his wretchedness, what was the most intolerable portion of his torture, was the fact that *Vincent Graham* was the cause of his ruin, — *Vincent Graham* who had never met him but to foil him. Every time that Vincent turned to look at him he gnashed his teeth with unspeakable chagrin. His horror of his captor, too, was intense; he regarded him as a sort of avenging spirit. He was utterly unable to account for his appearance. He had certainly thrust him into the vault, and, with his own hands, bricked him up; had subsequently gone to see his grave and found it undisturbed. What supernatural powers, then, did Vincent possess, that he could start up and confront him in this remote retreat, — a retreat that no one on earth knew of except Murragh? It was wonderful, inscrutable, horrifying.

Ezra was driven to the conclusion, in thinking about the capture, that Murragh had betrayed him. He smiled grimly to himself as he accepted this idea, for he had papers in his pocket, — papers that he invariably carried with him, — that proved Murragh's complicity in a murder that had startled St. Louis several years before, — and these papers he determined to give to Vincent, fervently hoping that they would lead to Murragh's execution.

A late and waning moon had just begun to peer timidly, with pale face, over the eastern hills, as the low length of Wyckoff Hall came in sight, faintly pencilled against the lightening sky. They drove past the

grove where the happy equestrian party had ridden so long ago, and Vincent was gladdened by the joyous recollections that the spot inspired. Moore's cottage was shut up and dismal.

They found no one at Wyckoff Hall but the servants, — Mr. Kavanagh and his family having gone to New York. Ezra was unbound and searched, the papers his pockets contained removed, and he was then put into the small room on the ground floor, where Mr. Franchot had met his death. He was perfectly secure there, for it was impossible for him to break through the bars of the window. The door was locked, a servant detailed to walk as sentry in the hall, and Ezra left to his meditations.

In a short time profound stillness reigned in the old house. Kavanagh sat down in the library to finish some law papers that the events of the past few days had obliged him to neglect. Vincent, thoroughly exhausted, threw himself upon a sofa and slept heavily, and the sentry, sitting down and leaning his back against the door of Ezra's room, resumed his interrupted slumbers, reasonably presuming that the door could not be opened without awakening him.

Ezra, for the first time in his eventful career, made no attempt to effect an escape. His spirit, hitherto unflagging, failed; he was thoroughly cowed.

For the second time he was alone in the room where he had stabbed the ill-fated Frenchman. But he felt no brutal exultation now, nor boasted to himself of the deed. He had not recovered from the excessive terror Vincent had thrown him into, and now he laughed no longer at supernatural fancies. There was no light in the room save the ghastly rays of the moon, and the murderer imagined that he saw, in the scarcely mitigated darkness, the white and rigid face of Franchot, gazing at him in horror, with staring, sightless eyes, and he thought he heard the horrid drip of the slow blood falling on the floor; and, stranger than all, it seemed to him that he could see *himself* stealing through the window, — a black, shapeless mass, a huge bear holding a gleaming knife in his hairy paw. Again and again, during these awful moments, as he sat in the middle of the room, was the murder enacted before his quailing eyes. He saw the burly murderer creep in and pull the covering from the victim's breast; he listened to the low, startled cry of the doomed man; he heard the dull

plunge of the knife; saw the life-blood bubble up, and watched the murderer, *himself*, steal away with satanic satisfaction on his face. His flesh crept with horror, as he sat a spectator of this bloody scene constantly repeated. At last he rose and flung himself on the bed, in agony. And presently another and a fearful hallucination possessed him. He thought that he was Franchot, conscious that he was to be murdered, unable to stir to help himself. As he lay he could see the murderer—himself still—climb over the window-sill and cautiously draw near his bedside. He even felt the light pressure of the assassin's hand upon his breast, and, with utterly inconceivable horror, was aware when the knife descended in a painless, but affrighting blow. At each agonizing repetition, he suffered the very pangs of dissolution.

The form of his torture at length changed. It seemed to him that the corpse of Franchot was lying in the bed with him. So actual was this fantasy, that he could trace, beneath the counterpane, the stiffened form of the dead man, and see, outside, his victim's ghastly face, with the unvarying awful stare upon the ceiling. He turned around—horror upon horror!—here was another corpse on *this* side. There he lay, flanked on either hand by the horrid relic of his knife. The imaginary bodies were close beside him. If he moved at all, he felt the clammy, icy touch of the exanimate clay. But the frightfulness of his position did not end here. Peering above the footboard, in a horrible array, was ranged a row of faces, all dead men's, all Franchot's, all gazing at him, all distorted in agony, pallid, fit for tombs. He turned and looked up behind him. Bending over the headboard, leaning down, almost touching his forehead with its bluish lips, was Franchot's face again. Nor was this the worst. Turning his eyes in desperation, to the ceiling, he saw directly above him, lying motionless and supported in the air, the murdered man again, clad in the habiliments of the grave,—all white drapery, except where the shroud was torn away from his breast, so that the wound his knife had made was revealed, and from it slowly trickled drops of bright red blood, that fell with a warm splash in his face; nor could he evade the horrid shower, for, if he raised his head, he was kissed by the lips of the corpse behind him, and the disgusting barriers on either side forbade his moving to the right or left. But nature is merciful, and, after a few

minutes of unparalleled torment,—minutes that one would not endure to purchase an eternal paradise,—the hideous nightmare passed away, and Ezra fell into unconsciousness.

But not for long. Soon he started up, wide awake, though the phantoms of his disordered brain had vanished. The room was utterly dark now, for the moon had slid beneath the edge of an opaque bank of clouds. What is this his senses detect in the air? What is this stifling, insinuating odor? Smoke! He starts up in bed. For a moment he fancies he is amidst the fires of hell, and expects to feel the sharp flames wrap his quivering flesh. A moment tells him where he is; but the smell of smoke grows more and more distinct. He smiles, exulting. He thinks that perhaps the blaze will liberate him,—burning away an exit; for he knows that the house is on fire. Suddenly, he shrieks aloud, and springs from the bed, appalled; for there, beneath the door, creep out little yellow tongues of fire, that lick the sill, and stretch out their hungry tips along the floor. He takes in, at a glance, his doom. The hall outside is blazing, the window is striped with iron-bars,—he must burn to death!

Kavanagh, writing in the library, did not, for some time, perceive the smoke that stole in under the hall door; not, in fact, until he was almost encircled in the suffocating fumes. Then, indeed, he sprang up, and, rousing Vincent, who quickly followed him, rushed out. The hall was black with smoke and red with flame. In another minute the slumbering sentry would have slept in death. He had knocked over a candle, which had instantly set a palmetto mat on fire. With difficulty they dragged him out, badly scorched, and then recoiled before the impassable blaze. The subtle element kissed the walls in a ruinous embrace, and ran along to the limit of the hall; then leaping across its space formed a deadly barrier to the entrance of Ezra's prison. Kavanagh and Vincent could only stand at a distance, and gaze in horror. Up the banisters sprang the riotous conflagration, higher rolled the thick smoke; the fire surged along, destroying as it went, and soon all Wyckoff Hall was wrapped in flames.

In the mean time, the wretched Ezra was feeling a foretaste of hell in his burning cell. With a futile frenzy, he seized the pitchers of water in his room, and dashed them against the shrivelling door; but the thirsty flames shrieked the louder, with re-

doubled venom. He flung up the window and shook the unyielding bars in agony; and the horrified, unserviceable spectators on the lawn outside, heard him curse and rave in his despair. We say unserviceable, for the flames, roaring through an open room above, had sprung from the window, glided down the corner of the house, and thence darted across to the projection of a bow-window, thus completely belting in the room where Ezra was. The fire spread with wonderful rapidity. Unable to save anything,—barely escaping with their lives,—the few servants ran about on the lawn, demented. They were joined by Vincent and Kavanagh, calmer indeed, but equally powerless.

They could see into Ezra's room, which was as light as day. They saw him with his clothes on fire (for the flame outside stretched in and reached him) rush around the room, howling in agony. Now and then he would fling himself against the bars, and thrust his blackened hands into the fire beyond. Suddenly the door was swept away, and a column of flame rushed roaring in. The tormented wretch uttered an appalling yell. He was now in the very midst of the fire. He rushed to the window, and, strange to say, dashed his head between the bars. The iron, almost red-hot, sank, searing, into his neck; and there he remained, stuck fast, broiling to death, outshrieking the blast of the fire with his blasphemies. It was a piteous sight, and one or two strong men in the little group outside fell on the grass, fainting with horror. The tragedy was soon over. Ezra's head—a black, indistinguishable mass—dropped to the ground, burned from his shoulders. His body, utterly consumed, was never after distinguished and separated from the ashes of the house; and thus he died,—stopped in his full career of crime, with curses on his lips, baffled, foiled, ruined.

CHAPTER XLII.

MR. MURRAGH COMES TO GRIEF.

THE sight of Mr. Smith's execution had made Mr. Alexander Conger, inspector in the detective force, a sadder but a wiser man. Chagrin at himself, rage towards the authorities, hatred towards Murragh and Ezra, detestation of his profession, filled his heart in about equal parts. He sat in his

office, furiously puffing an enormous meerschauum, in profound and gloomy thought. He never smoked his pipe except when perturbed; and his subordinates, knowing well the sign, took good care not to intrude upon his privacy.

"May I be cursed if I do!" cried the detective, with much energy. On the happening of *what* contingency he invoked eternal punishment upon himself, remains unknown; for at this moment a small boy, with considerable temerity, came in and presented a note and packet to the redoubtable officer. Conger perused the note, and then, changing the form of his prayer, exclaimed in a voice that made the boy jump,—

"May I be cursed if I don't!"

Having thus offered petitions, which, if they were both granted, would seem to insure his future doom, the detective bade the boy depart (which he did, nothing loth), and then sat down, with his eyes lit up by all their ancient fire.

The note ran thus,—

"DEAR SIR,—Ezra Hoyt has escaped hanging, and has burned to death instead. Mr. D. Murragh, a scarcely inferior villain, is at large,—I don't know where. We caught him, but he escaped. He is disguised in large, black side-whiskers; had on a greenish coat. Will you do me the favor to catch him and keep him?"

"Yours truly,

"VINCT. GRAHAM.

"INSPECTOR, ALEX. CONGER.

"P. S. I send herewith papers found on Hoyt's person.

"R—, N. Y., Oct. 25th, 18—."

Mr. Conger laid aside his pipe and lit a delicate "Havana." He sat down, glanced through the contents of the packet, and his agile mind soon worked out a plan of procedure. He determined to hunt Murragh alone, and capture him alone. He knew him well, having seen him often during Smith's trial, and he was more than a match for him in strength. He went into a room adjoining his office, and, after a considerable time, reappeared disguised in the following extraordinary style.

He looked precisely like a mulatto. His face, hands, wrists, neck, and breast, were stained to exactly the proper hue; a wig of slightly curling hair was skilfully adjusted to his head, and so perfect was this wig that the minutest inspection would not have revealed the fact that it was a wig! He had

on no coat or vest, but simply a coarse, blue cotton shirt, open at the throat, affording a glimpse of his brown breast. He had no whiskers to remove, — he never wore them. A dilapidated felt hat was stuck on his head, in a manner peculiarly African. His lips had a — not glaring, but natural — redness, and his white teeth were more dazzling than ever. The metamorphosis was complete. No soothsayer would ever have dreamed that this intelligent-looking mulatto was Mr. Alexander Conger.

He seated himself in an arm-chair, put his feet on the table, and took up a newspaper. A quick tap at the door.

"Come in, dar!" he cried.

Enter Fellows.

"Thunder!" roared the astonished deputy. "You blasted nigger, what are you doing there? Take your feet off that table! Get out of that chair! Do you take this for Wendell Phillips's study? Where the devil did you come from?"

"Guess dis child knows what he's about," said Conger.

"Well, I guess *this* child knows what *he's* about!" cried the infuriated Fellows, and he rushed forward, on direful deeds intent. Conger pulled up his shirt-sleeve, disclosing his white arm, and burst out laughing heartily.

"Well sold, Fellows! Come, own up! My disguise is good, I see."

"May I be everlastingly cursed if it aint! Ask your pardon, sir. What's the lay, Mr. Conger?"

"The Allen Street cove."

"No? Is't possible? Can't you edge me in, sir?"

"Can't do it, Fellows. I must go alone."

"I *did* want to be in that crack so, sir," said Fellows, sorrowfully — bitterly disappointed.

"Sorry I can't arrange it so, Fellows. You must stay and help Roberts in that Jarvis business."

"Very well, sir," said Fellows, resignedly. "Do you go empty-handed, sir?"

"No, I have this," replied Conger, and he produced a sheathed dirk from inside his shirt. "I won't have to use it; I carry it for form's sake. Can you suggest any improvement in this rig?"

"I cannot."

"It will do, then. Good-by, sah; haw! haw!" and, with an imitation of a negro laugh that nearly put Fellows into convulsions, Mr. Conger went out.

"Let me see," ruminated the detective.

"Graham's note is dated this morning. Murragh must have been captured last evening. I saw Graham yesterday afternoon in L—, with Kavanagh, disguised, — yes, begad, a very neat thing. I knew what the fellows were up to. They drove off towards D—. I s'pose they nabbed the fellows at D—. Murragh undoubtedly lurked around there after he escaped, and will of course be down here to-day, — by the next train, perhaps. — Ah! that's lucky, — a Hudson River timetable," and he stopped in front of a fence, covered with bills and placards, and discovered that an accommodation train would arrive on the Hudson River Railroad in about half an hour. He hurried down at once to the depot, at Chambers Street, and arrived there just in time. He stationed himself in such a position that he could see each passenger who left the cars. Mr. Conger rarely erred in judgment; he was not mistaken this time. To his great satisfaction he beheld Mr. Murragh step upon the platform, carpet-bag in hand. The whiskers did not have even a tendency to disguise him from the detective.

Almost any one but Conger would have taken a man with him, and have seized Murragh on the spot. But Mr. Conger was extravagantly fond of an adventure; he always liked to go single-handed, and nothing pleased him more than to "dog" a man. On this very account, he had sometimes failed; and then, again, he had often achieved wonderful results. Among his professional brethren Mr. Conger was considered a very curious character. They had not known which to wonder at most, his astuteness, or his folly. He had displayed, occasionally, a shrewdness and power of combination that had amazed them; and, at other times, a gullibility and lack of "gumption" that were discreditable.

This day, Mr. Conger was bent on "a lark;" he resolved to watch Mr. Murragh, perhaps make some valuable discoveries through him, and finally "take" him quietly.

He therefore advanced to that gentleman and offered to convey his carpet-bag to his hotel, in consideration of a small stipend.

"What'll you charge to take it round to the — hotel, in Courtlandt Street?" asked Murragh.

"Only quarter, sah."

"Pshaw! I could send it by express for a quarter."

"Gorramity, sah! quarter's berry small muneration. Dese berry hard times, sah."

"That's the very reason I can't throw away twenty-five cents for nothing," replied the penurious Murragh.

"Let's say twenty cents, then, sah."

"Well, we *will* say twenty cents; here, take the bag."

Murragh walked along with Conger at his heels. He was too shrewd to go furtively, with signs of conscious guilt; he walked boldly, with head up and a firm, swift step. This raised him greatly in the detective's estimation.

They reached the steps of the hotel.

"Here, nig," said Murragh, "take your money," and he handed him a dime.

"You 'greed to give me twenty cents, sah."

"Nigger, you lie. I said I would *say* twenty cents. I *did* say twenty cents. I *meant* ten cents. Clear out."

"Good joke," said Conger, showing his teeth. "You s'posed I said I'd gib you dis yere bag when we got here. I *did* say I'd gib it to you. I *meant* to keep it. Good-by!" and out into the street he darted. The astonished Murragh, with horror in his face, pursued him. He would almost have given his life to recover the papers that the bag contained. "Stop, thief!" he yelled.

It was just about dusk; there were several people in the street. A couple of obese gentlemen endeavored to intercept Conger, — the result was that two mountains of flesh collided in a manner painful to behold, just after the slim officer had glided between them. He turned into a narrow side street and for a moment was lost to Murragh's view. Several individuals had taken up the chase, but the long-legged lawyer outstripped them all. He seemed to gain on Conger, — of course the detective did not wish to escape. Murragh steadily overhauled him.

Conger showed a great amount of agility. He easily eluded the officious grasp of many persons who would have stopped him. Murragh, almost blown, was scarcely a yard behind him. The lawyer could not have uttered a word if his life depended on it. Mr. Conger ran along leisurely, with a pleasant smile upon his face; consequently the people whom they met did not suppose a thief was being chased, but that Murragh was "making" for some steamboat about to start, and running "against time," — a supposition strengthened by the presence of the carpet-bag. Without molestation, therefore, the detective led his victim into Greenwich Street, and down this for a short

distance, congratulating himself on this novel way of decoying and capturing his man. Murragh was so engrossed with rage, and so anxious to recover his property, that he did not pause to consider whither he was going; his suspicious mind did not imagine a trap; the man before him was a negro and a thief, and that was all.

Suddenly turning into one of the wretched streets that stretch from the North River to Broadway, Conger sprang down a couple of stone steps, and rushed into what appeared to be a tinman's shop. Murragh followed, exulting at the thought that he had treed his game. He had scarcely time to perceive that he had entered a low, bare room, containing two quiet, severe-looking men, when he was tripped up, and fell on his face. Stunned for a moment, he recovered to find himself sitting in a chair, handcuffed, and a prisoner.

"What does this mean?" he cried, looking around in amazement. "Where's that nigger?"

"It's possible you may refer to me," said Conger, tugging at his wig, — "gad, how this thing does stick! Didn't you ever see a man disguised before? Don't you know me yet? Permit me to use this washstand. Here, Mr. Murragh, look," and he rubbed the burnt umber from his face with a wet towel. Wig and paint gone, — there stood before the petrified Murragh, Mr. Alexander Conger.

"Tricked! and done for!" groaned the villain.

"Rather that way," said Conger. "Mr. Murragh, you run very well, very well indeed! but you ran too far. Here, Joe, you and Tim see what's in this carpet-bag. Mr. Murragh, how did you leave your friend, Ezra Hoyt?"

Murragh sat speechless with despair.

"Why didn't you arrest me at the depot?" he asked at length.

"It was all out of compliment to you, Mr. Murragh. Do you think I'd serve you as I would a common pickpocket? I'd be ashamed to act so scurvily. I was not so much after you, Mr. Murragh, as after glory. I wanted to make the capture all alone. I knew Tim and Joe were lying low, here, and, — I brought them a visitor. Anything suspicious in that bag, boys?"

"Most all the papers written in cipher, sir," replied Tim O'Neil.

"Well, take good care of them, and take them up to the office. Anything I can do for you, Mr. Murragh, before I lock you up?"

"Will you let me go back with you to the hotel?"

"Certainly."

"And, by the way, what's the charge against me?"

"Assisting Ezra Hoyt to obtain money under false pretences, assault with intent to kill, on Mr. William Moore, and Miss Ethel Moore, and the murder of a goldsmith in St. Louis about eight years ago,—that's all."

Murragh turned as white as chalk. "All those charges are silly enough, but what do you mean by the last?"

"You should never write letters in invisible ink and send them by street boys to be posted. Mr. Murragh, you seem agitated. Yes, I *did* read that note of yours of the 22d inst. I passed a hot flat-iron over it,—the ink came out with the distinctness of Thaddeus Davids'. I also read some papers your friend Hoyt had about him. Mr. Murragh, your hand's out."

"I've one more trump to play," muttered Murragh to himself. "Mr. Conger," said he, aloud, "I was mistaken in you,—I ask your pardon. From the way Ezra Hoyt bamboozled you, I thought you were rather soft. I was deceived; you're an honor to your profession. Come, let's go to the hotel."

"In a minute. Excuse the liberty, Mr. Murragh, we must observe these little forms. Search the gentleman, boys."

"You'll find nothing on me, Mr. Conger."

"Mr. Murragh, I did not for a moment imagine that I should. I see you don't understand me yet."

Nothing in the slightest degree contraband was found on Murragh's person. Conger was provided with a coat, cap, and cravat, by Joe, and Tim called a carriage. Murragh and the detective entered it, the latter declining his men's proffered assistance.

Murragh, concealing his handcuffed wrists beneath his sack overcoat, went up to his room at the hotel, followed by Conger.

"Let me take off your handcuffs," said the officer.

"Thank you. I would be obliged. Let's have some cigars and whiskey."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea."

Mr. Murragh rang the bell, and admitted a servant, who was instructed to procure the desired refreshments.

"I came near losing my hat in that chase," observed Mr. Murragh. "It would have been annoying,—it's a brand-new beaver; and he deposited it tenderly on a bureau."

Mr. Conger watched him keenly.

"What's he fiddling with that for?" thought he.

Mr. Murragh's back was towards him, or he would have seen that gentleman very dextrously transfer a paper, containing a powder, from his hat-band to his vest-pocket.

"Isn't the secret police a very arduous service?" asked the lawyer.

"Rather so; but it's exciting."

"How long have you been in it?"

"Half a dozen years. I shan't stay in it long."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I'm disgusted with the whole business. I came to that conclusion this morning. I wouldn't have chased you, if it hadn't been to oblige a friend."

"What friend?"

"Vincent Graham."

Murragh ground his teeth.

"Mr. Conger," said he, after a pause,

"I've got a considerable pile of money."

"I'm glad to hear it."

"More'n I can use, in fact. I shouldn't mind letting you have quite a part of it,—provided —"

"Provided what?"

"Why, you see, I don't like the position I'm in."

"Naturally."

"And I'd pay well to get out of it."

"Would you now?" said Conger, with much apparent interest.

"You could almost name your sum, Mr. Conger."

"My sum for what?"

"Oh, don't let's mince matters. I mean if you'll let me go downstairs, and won't follow me for half an hour, I'll make out my check to your order."

"For how much?"

"Say a thousand dollars."

"Not enough."

"Fifteen hundred?"

"Not half enough."

"Five thousand, Mr. Conger?"

"Don't begin."

"Lord! Mr. Conger, I'm not Jacob Astor. Come, I'll give you eight thousand."

"Not enough, Mr. Murragh."

"For Heaven's sake, how much is enough?"

"About seventeen million," said Conger, coolly. "Great Jove!" he cried, in sudden wrath. "I've a mind to pitch you out of that window. Have I insulted you? called you blackguard? spit in your face? You've

done about that to me when you make such propositions. What a poor, miserable reptile you are, Mr. Murragh!"

Murragh, crestfallen, tried to laugh. "I was only joking, Mr. Conger. Don't be angry. I knew money couldn't tempt you."

"I'd rather," cried Conger, "break stones on the high road at a penny a week, than take a farthing of the money you've stolen from widows and orphans. I've got money enough of my own, and an old aunt of mine has kindly left me a little pile in her will. But here comes your liquor. I don't know whether I'll drink with you, Mr. Murragh."

"Oh! yes, do," said Murragh. "I ask your pardon for what I said; I can't do fairer than that."

"Hum! he seems eager for me to imbibe," said the detective to himself.

Scotch whiskey, lemons, hot water, and a bowl of sugar were deposited on the table. Conger took a cigar, and Murragh proceeded to concoct a punch. The servant retired.

"You'll find matches on the mantel-piece," said Murragh.

Conger went to the mantel-piece, locking the door as he passed. He was back to his seat in ten seconds; but in that time, Murragh, with a sleight of hand worthy of Hermann, had emptied the paper of powder-strychnine upon the sugar at the bottom of one of the glasses. He was innocently cutting up a lemon as Conger returned. During his subsequent operations, Conger watched him sharply, but saw nothing wrong. Two steaming glasses were soon ready. Murragh shoved the poisoned glass to Conger and sipped his own. "Quite a success," said he; "drink your punch, Conger."

"I will. Pshaw, my cigar's out. Hand me a match, will you, Murragh? You're nearer." Murragh turned around and stretched over to the mantel-piece, and, as quick as thought, Conger noiselessly changed the position of the tumblers, and the glass containing sugar mixed with strychnine stood at Murragh's place. The lawyer handed a match to Conger, who was leaning back composedly, tasting the whiskey.

"Do you find it good, Mr. Conger?"

"Excellent."

"I laid myself out on that glass," said Murragh, with a grin of devilish exultation.

"You don't drink yourself," observed Conger.

"Oh, yes; here goes!" and Murragh swallowed the poison at a draught.

"Let's have some more," said he; "more lemon would improve it." He peeled a lemon and sliced it, then took another. As he pressed the knife-edge against it, his arm flew out to its full reach, as swift and straight as an arrow from the bow, and the knife whizzed across the room. He uttered an appalling howl, that Conger did not cease to hear for many days, and fell on the floor.

"What is it?" cried the officer.

"Oh! Christ, have mercy on me! Oh! Christ, have mercy on me!"

"Have you got a fit?"

"Strych-nine!" gasped Murragh.

"You drank the glass you poured out for me."

"Yes, yes, poisoned! poisoned!"

The scene that ensued was absolutely frightful. Strychnine, that most horrible of all poisons, tormented the miserable wretch unspeakably, before it killed him. He gnawed a round of a chair in his agony; then lockjaw seized him, and his teeth sank into the wood in a grip that Conger could not free. The officer pulled the bell, and shouted for help in the hall; people came rushing in, and men were despatched in all directions for physicians. "Did you poison yourself?" cried the landlord.

Murragh moved his head, and uttered an almost inarticulate "yes."

All were utterly powerless to help him; they could only look on, horrified at his awful sufferings. He could not speak; dismal groans were all that issued from his lips,—lips that were stretched in a stiffened, horrid grin. His torture was protracted, but at length he lay dead; his eyes turned inward showing only the whites; his face lacerated; himself bent into a rigid, hideous bow; the back of his head and his heels, alone, resting on the floor; his body curved upwards in the form of an arch.

CHAPTER XLII.

CLOUDS DISPELLED.

MR. JAMES GRAHAM was surprised to learn, on returning to his house after his interview with Mrs. Jarvis, that Vincent

had been there and gone again, no one knew whither. Mr. Graham was very anxious to see his son; he longed to exhibit the supposed proofs of his villany that he had obtained from Ezra, and glut himself with triumph. He had been rather staggered on learning that Vincent had not decamped to Europe, but refused to believe that he had been sick, or the story that he had been buried alive, and he hugged the conviction that he had been absent for purposes of crime.

Ethel, on learning the circumstances of Vincent's involuntary absence, had not mentioned them to her guardian; she could scarcely have told why not. Mrs. Graham, with a mother's anxiety, had hastened to Broome Street at the first tidings of her son's situation. She had told her husband, on returning, that Vincent was recovering from a severe illness; but Mr. Graham smiled to himself incredulously. He did not doubt the authenticity of the letters Ezra had shown him, for a moment, simply for the reason that he wanted to believe in his son's guilt. To say that this man wished his son was dead, is but expressing the depth of depravity to which he had sunk.

On one thing he had fully made up his mind; and that was, to at once obtain possession of the safe in Catharine Street. But how to get at it undetected, puzzled him. Some risk seemed unavoidable, and he determined to accept it.

There was a man in his employ whom he thought he could rely on as a tool. He was remarkable for avarice and shamelessness. A month or two before, Mr. Graham had caught him in the act of robbery; but, instead of bringing him to punishment, had retained him in his service. By this clemency he had acquired a complete ascendancy over the fellow, and he now resolved to take him into his confidence. He called him into his study then, in the evening, and imparted, under promise of secrecy, the following little fiction. That his (Mr. Graham's) grandfather had died many years before, known to be very wealthy, but that his money was nowhere to be found. That he, James Graham, had been left sole heir, but had tried in vain to find out where the old gentleman had hidden his riches. That lately he had found a paper in the secret drawer of a desk that informed him that the money was buried in the yard of a house in Catharine Street, where his grandfather had lived. He proposed to go and dig it up, and needing Robbins' assistance would give

him a hundred dollars for the job. It is needless to say that Robbins readily agreed; so, about eleven o'clock in the night, Mr. Graham sallied forth, and was met on the corner of a street down-town by Robbins, who carried a pickaxe and a spade.

They found the house in Catharine Street shut up and dark, but with very little difficulty they surmounted a high board fence at its side, entered an alley, and thence made their way around into the back yard. Mr. Graham had taken good care to ascertain from Mrs. Jarvis the exact locality where the treasure was buried. The end of the yard was bounded by a low fence, shutting off a contracted court-yard, in the rear of a high tenement house. Graham and his companion began their operations at once. Exactly in the centre of the dingy grass-plot they commenced the excavation. There was but little frost in the ground, and the accumulated mould of years was soft and yielding; so, in a very short time, the spade struck the buried iron with a ringing sound, sweeter than music to Graham. But it required an hour's hard work before they had cleared the earth on all sides of the safe, and then their united strength, as they might have foreseen, was insufficient to raise it from the hole thus made. They were compelled to dig away a considerable space in front of the safe, and open it where it was. The latter job seemed to be a trifle to Robbins; in fact, he displayed a dexterity that would lead one to suppose that he had had no inconsiderable practice in opening safes. By a method well known to burglars, he compelled the safe's fastenings to give way, and its coveted contents were disclosed.

"Aha!" cried Mr. Graham, exultant; "we've rather got the best of the old gentleman at last, Robbins! Come, let's get the packages out."

"Perhaps we can help you!" cried a deep, harsh voice; and at that instant two men sprang nimbly over the aforementioned low fence, and stood, unannounced and alarming, before Graham. They were Messrs. Roberts and Parker, of the police force.

Robbins, at the first sight of these unexpected comers, was seized with panic, and ran away in haste, unpursued.

Mr. Graham, thunderstruck, stood motionless.

"You choose a strange hour, Mr. Graham, to take possession of this property for your son," said Roberts.

"But still, this is as good a time as any,

I suppose," added Jim Parker, "and, as the safe's rather heavy, we'll help you with it."

"Who are you?" gasped Graham.

"Sergeant Parker, Metropolitan Police, at your service," said the officer, touching his cap. "This is my friend Roberts, of the secret force."

"So you have got two responsible witnesses to your proceedings, Mr. Graham," said Roberts, "and this must be very gratifying to you as a man who likes to have things done fair and square."

"Yes," added Parker, "and we will help you take the safe home, and be present when you count the money."

"And thus," continued Roberts, "we will be able to verify any statements you may be obliged to make."

"And satisfy," put in Parker, "any absurd doubts on the part of Mr. Vincent Graham, as to his being fairly dealt with."

"And at the same time," pursued Roberts, "guard you from robbery on your way through the streets."

"So, in view of all these circumstances," said Parker, "I think our arrival here has been very fortunate."

"And we are sensible," observed Roberts, "that you must consider it as such."

Mr. Graham recovered from the stupefaction he had fallen into. Seeing that his scheme was strangely and utterly foiled, he resolved to make the best of his very equivocal position, so he said, —

"I am glad you came, gentlemen, since I see you are police officers. I felt it my duty to remove this safe where it would be more secure from discovery. My son is not well enough to attend to the business himself. But I am at a loss to imagine how you knew me, and you came to arrive here just as you did."

"Why, you see, sir," said Roberts, who had been posted up by Polly, his wife, "we felt a natural curiosity to find out whether Mrs. Jarvis's story was true, and, as we are both great friends of your son, Mr. Vincent Graham, concluded to ascertain and then tell him; but we see you were going to do the same thing."

"Yes, I was," said Mr. Graham, much chagrined. "I don't know how my servant and I could have managed with the safe. I am very glad you came, for I was very anxious to get it to my house; I wanted to give my son a pleasant surprise."

"Instead of which we have given you one," said Parker.

"Yes, just so," said Mr. Graham, with a sickly smile.

"Well, we'll have this safe out in no time; just wait here two minutes," and Roberts went out, soon returning with three men.

"I've got a cart waiting in the street," said Roberts; "shut the safe and h'ist her out, boys."

This was speedily done, and Vincent's fortune, rescued from the grave where it had lain so long, was deposited on a stout dray and carried off. Mr. Graham, feeling excessively cheap, followed behind with Parker. The sergeant accompanied him to his house, nor did his polite attentions then cease. He went in with Roberts, — Mr. Graham not daring to forbid them, — and for two hours the three sat together counting out the piles of bank-notes. Two statements of the exact amounts found were drawn up, and their respective signatures put thereto. One of these statements Mr. Graham retained, and Parker went off with the other. So Mr. Graham, mortified, sought his late pillow that night, foiled in his contemplated crime.

The next afternoon Mrs. Graham arrived from Newark. She at once sought an interview with her husband, and told him of the facts, in regard to Edwin Moore, that she had learned through Mrs. Jiggleswitch. Mr. Graham was not much affected thereby. Whether Edwin was the son of Mr. Ebenezer Moore, or the son of his wife's first husband, mattered little to him, but he of course congratulated his wife, and assured her that he would take early measures to have Mrs. Jiggleswitch's statements verified.

Ethel, in the mean time, was enduring a sorrow that it is sad to think the innocent must sometimes bear. The sickening anxiety she had felt during Vincent's mysterious absence was nothing compared with the misery that his treatment of her caused. She had longed unutterably for their meeting, that she might proudly tell him that the mystery of her birth was cleared, and, best of all, tell him that his father was not, in fact, a murderer. Often she had imagined that interview, and pictured to herself her pride, his glad surprise, their bliss. She groaned as she thought of the dismal contrast of the reality. It was all the more awful from its abruptness and utter unexpectedness. The pitiless remembrance nearly maddened her, and there sprang up a fierce, incessant contest between pride and love. He had been unjust, but then he *had* loved her so; his words had been very

cruel, but she remembered sweet thrilling phrases that he had whispered in loving accents; he had insulted her, but once he had offered her the homage of his love. Vincent's conduct, though it puzzled, did not enrage her. She felt far more sorrow than anger. In spite of all appearances, the faith of this true woman did not waver.

She had not seen her father since that fatal morning. He had left her with much compassion, but greatly incensed at Vincent. And a true woman's character—Ethel's character—could not have been better exemplified than in the scene between these two after his tender attentions had restored her animation and composure. She defended Vincent, with sweet partisanship, against her father's warm censures, and sought to calm her own heart by reasoning, after the manner of her sex, with a charming *petitlo principii*. "Vincent must be true, because it is impossible he should be false." But all her cherished fallacies were insufficient even to tone down the acuteness of her misery,—a misery that one could see in her unaccustomed paleness and weary air.

She sat in the library, looking out into the garden, and seemed like a picture of *Evangeline*. There was that graceful weariness in her attitude, that soft, sweet sadness and pitiiful expectancy in her gaze. Suddenly she started up with imperious grace and flashing eyes, looking as *Violante* must have looked when she found poor *Helen* her rival with *L'Estrange*. For coming through the garden gate and rapidly approaching the house, was Vincent. Pride instantly triumphed over love. She would not demean herself—so she determined—by the slightest unbending from a haughty, calm equipoise. But her heart beat fast, and her color came and went, as Vincent opened the glass door upon the piazza and stood before her.

When this imperial beauty *did* look proud and haughty, an English duchess, or an empress, would have seemed like a washerwoman beside her. On these occasions she did not *walk*, but, as Miss Bronte says, "moved incedingly," and common mortals fell back, seized with a certain awe.

Vincent paused at the first glimpse of her calm face and steady eyes, and did not do at all what he intended, viz., rush forward and clasp her in his arms, but stood still and bowed profoundly. Ethel's salutation was absolutely faultless; she looked very much like a French *marquise* addressing a Parisian *canaille*. Vincent,

the audacious, was actually awed, and, for a time, lost his self-possession.

"How do you do?" said he.

"Very well, thank you, Mr. Graham," said Ethel, languidly.

This brilliant conversation here paused. If it had been possible for Vincent ever to look like a clown, he would have looked so at that moment, as he stood nervously twiddling his hat.

"I have come," said poor Vincent at length, "I have come Eth—Miss Moore—to—to—"

"So I see," said Ethel.

"And have had a long walk," continued Vincent, without the vaguest notion of what he was talking about. "It's very warm, excessively warm, very warm, indeed."

"I beg you will be seated. Shall I ring for ice-water?" said Ethel with exasperating compassion.

"There is no need," said Vincent, recovering himself somewhat. "You are cool enough yourself; in fact, the air seems frigid around you."

"The furnace does not draw well," said Ethel, purposely misunderstanding him; "there is very little heat from that register."

"But an excessive amount of humbug in this conversation," cried Vincent, excitedly. "Pray don't let's act like fools."

"Sir!" said Ethel, in the tones of the *marquise*.

"Or, rather give me a chance," said Vincent, "to show you what an insufferable donkey I've made of myself."

"Are you not improving your present chance?" asked Ethel, raising her lovely brows a little.

"I think I am, on the whole," cried Vincent, candidly. "Don't you hate me?"

"No."

"Despise me?"

"Not much."

"Not much!" groaned the poor fellow.

"See here, Ethel,—is a crazy man accountable for what he says?"

"I suppose not," said she, in a careless tone.

"Then forget what I said last Thursday. Don't think any more about it."

"What you said last Thursday?" said Ethel, in a meditative manner. "Let me see. What were we talking about? Oh! I remember. You wanted to be released from our engagement, didn't you? Oh! certainly. I won't think about it, why should I?"

"I was idiotic, insane, raving mad."

"Are you subject to these aberrations?" asked Ethel, compassionately.

"No," cried he, "and I'm in my right mind now."

"That's a comfort," said Ethel.

"But why are you not angry with me? Do be angry with me!"

"What for?"

"That I may be able to talk with you. I might as well try now to get up a conversation with the Venus de Medici in stone."

"It isn't pleasant to be angry even—even to hear you talk."

"But you may never hear me unless you are."

"Well."

"No more, not again, never," said Vincent, with unusual tautology.

They were both standing during this dialogue and Vincent had gradually approached her. Ethel stood by the side of a table, and was idly playing with an ivory paper-cutter. She was, apparently, as calm as death, but as he uttered these last dismal words, his keen eye saw her tremble slightly,—an almost imperceptible flutter. In an instant, "Richard was himself again." Away went his discomposure, and a renewed boldness inspired him. He absolutely astounded Ethel by springing forward and clasping her in both arms, at the same time covering her lips with burning kisses.

"Let me animate the marble!" cried he.

"Your crazy fit has returned," said Ethel, half laughing, half crying.

"On the contrary, I have recovered my senses, never again to lose them! Ah! sit down, Ethel, and let me tell you all. Do, and forgive me, and don't look like Juno again; I like you better as Psyche. Shades of Cleopatra! On my word you looked so grand just now, you scared me. I was afraid I'd stumbled into a palace, and without the court regalia."

Ethel was the helpless one now; there was no resisting him; he had vanquished her. She sat down beside him, and, in the delightful interview that followed, all was explained,—the flattering cause of his behavior related;—and, in words that were parenthesized with kisses, their one misunderstanding utterly vanished. In that happy hour Vincent learned with rapture that William Moore had *not* been drowned by his father; that no stain of blood rested on the name of Graham. He heard, too, with a delight scarcely less than hers, the recital of the circumstances that had led to the discovery of her father. Ethel shud-

dered as he told her of the fate of Ezra, and Murragh's horrible death (particulars of which he had just learned), but they did not linger long on these themes,—their talk was of pleasanter topics. The eager lover urged a speedy marriage, and Ethel did not have the heart to refuse him.

But lovers' conferences do not last forever. In the midst of one of his most tender sentences, the door opened and a servant appeared, respectfully saying to Vincent,—

"Mr. Graham would like to see you in his study, sir."

CHAPTER XLIV.

EXEUNT OMNES.

EVERYBODY'S astonishment was great when it became known that Edwin was Mrs. Graham's son. Jessie was rather pleased, because she thought Montgomery was a fine-sounding, aristocratic name. Vincent was overjoyed. As for Edwin himself, he wrote that he saw nothing to regret, inasmuch as he did not lose anything, but on the contrary gained a brother and a mother by the arrangement. His letter contained a piece of intelligence interesting to Jessie; it was to the effect that he was to be detailed from his regiment, and sent on detached duty to Governor's Island, in New York harbor, and he begged Jessie to be in readiness for an immediate marriage. Mrs. Jiggleswitch's and McManus's statements were reduced to the form of affidavits and duly sworn to; many little circumstances corroborated them; there could be no doubt of their truth.

Jessie and Captain Montgomery were married. On the birth of her first grandchild, who was named Ethel, Mrs. Fairfax remarked to her husband that she "did begin to believe she was getting old, at any rate, older than she had been;" on which Mr. Fairfax observed that he had been aware of it for some time, and advised her to dye, but admitted with a sigh, that exasperated his wife, that she would probably live as long as he did.

At length, Mr. William Moore conceived that the time had come to make known to the world the fact that he was still alive. He published a letter, over his own signature, in several newspapers, relating all the circumstances, only making the affair ac-

cidental instead of an attempted murder, but declining to mention his reasons for the concealment. Somewhat to his disappointment, the revelation excited very little interest in New York. Very few people remembered anything at all about the catastrophe that had occurred at Wyckoff Hall more than eighteen years before.

It was the very day of Vincent's reconciliation with Ethel that the narrative appeared in the evening papers. Vincent, on receiving his father's summons, went into the study. Mr. Graham was in the act of unfolding a newspaper.

"Sit down," said the elder gentleman, in the tone of formal politeness, that he now habitually employed towards his son. "On an occasion which I am not likely to forget, you mentioned your intention of continuing your residence at this house. Before I consent to the arrangement, you will be good enough to read those papers, and explain them satisfactorily to me,"—and he handed Vincent the forged documents that he had received from Ezra.

Vincent read them with a contemptuous smile on his lip, folded them neatly and restored them to his father. "It rather surprises me," said he, "that so shrewd a man as yourself, Mr. Graham, should have been deceived by such stuff for a moment. This letter, which says I have engaged passage to Europe, is disproved by the fact, that I didn't go to Europe; or, if that isn't sufficient, send down to the office of the company, and find out whether I did engage passage or not. How much of the rest of the note to '*Allez Toujours*' is to be believed, I leave you to determine. As to whether I had rooms at the Everett House, nothing is more easily discovered. Send to the proprietors of the hotel and inquire. As for '*Beatrice*,' you will have to take my simple word, that I never heard of the young lady. Haven't you ever been round to the Everett House to confirm that rascal Hoyt's statements?"—Such a simple expedient had never occurred to the astute Mr. Graham.

Vincent then proceeded to pour into his father's bewildered ears all the facts that had been discovered in regard to Ezra, and to give him a full and circumstantial account of that worthy's death. As he went on, Mr. Graham began to experience an unpleasant feeling of baffled hope, and became convinced that he had made himself exceedingly ridiculous. In fact, the interview ended in his begging Vincent's pardon for

his suspicions, which Vincent coldly granted. Mr. Graham rose to bow his visitor courteously out, but before he reached the door, he fell on his face insensible, with the blood trickling from his mouth. Vincent, alarmed, called assistance; Mr. Graham was carried to his room, and a physician speedily summoned. The doctor was puzzled. Mr. Graham had ruptured a small blood-vessel,—an event in itself not dangerous, but there were other and more serious circumstances. The doctor was afraid of congestion of the brain; he desired to know the cause of the fainting, but no one could tell him. After Mr. Graham had recovered consciousness, he desired every one to leave the room, and that Robbins should come and watch with him. Robbins came, and the two were left together. Mr. Graham was much terrified. He thought he was going to die, and it is not easy to conceive the horror he felt of death. He would not contemplate it; he resolutely turned his mind to thoughts of earth. He desired the man to read the evening papers to him. Robbins obeyed, reading in a slow, monotonous way. Mr. Graham felt drowsy, but suddenly he started up awake, alert; for Robbins, in the same somniferous monotone, read these words; "Truth is stranger than fiction. Wonderful reappearance of William W. Moore, of this city, who was supposed to have been drowned in 18—."

"God in heaven!" cried Graham, in an unearthly voice, badly scaring Robbins. "What is that? Go on! Read! Read away! what are you gaping at? Go on!" And Robbins, fully persuaded that Mr. Graham had become insane, did go on. He read the whole of Moore's rather verbose letter, and heard a deep groan as he ended. He looked, and Mr. Graham was lying unconscious, with the blood pouring furiously from his mouth. When the physician again arrived, he shook his prophetic head, dismally. Mr. Graham was in a very bad way.

Vincent, much shocked at his father's situation, began to think that his own conduct had been rather unfilial. Ethel being inaccessible, he strolled down to Kavanagh's rooms, and found Temple there. The scene was rather discreditable to a banker's confidential clerk, and a steady young attorney. They were sitting at a table, engaged in the eminently American game of *euchre*, with pipes in their mouths, and a pitcher of steaming "punch" on the table. Vincent's arrival was joyfully greeted.

An animated and interesting conversation

ensued. Vincent told his friends about the letters that Ezra had fabricated, suppressing all mention of his father's name.

"I'd give a good deal," said he, "to know how the fellow managed to imitate my handwriting so well. He—"

"Ah!" interrupted Kavanagh, "that reminds me of what I have long meant to speak to you about. Hasn't your father got a fellow in his service, named Robbins?"

"Yes."

"Well, he's the same chap who used to go to school with you at Dr. Brown's,—that's so, Vint.—and he's a rascal, too. I saw him hobnobbing with that Ezra Hoyt, once,—and that's enough to damn him. But that isn't all. I had a little packet of your letters,—some that you wrote me while you were keeled up at Wyckoff Hall,—and I have missed that packet ever since Robbins left our house, to go to your father's. I haven't the least doubt he stole it."

"And gave it to Hoyt," added Vincent; "yes, yes, I see. Well, I don't think he will stay at our house long."

"To change the subject," said Temple, "I suppose you've heard about Conger?"

"No. What of him?"

"He's going to turn minister. You may well stare. Fact, I assure you. He felt so bad about poor Smith, that he vowed he'd have nothing more to do with police or law. The sight of Murragh's death didn't tend to make him like his profession any better. He came into some property lately, and has resigned his post, and is studying for orders."

"Well, wonders never cease! as some one, I think, has observed. Conger'll make a good clergyman."

"He'll have a sharp eye for the faults of his flock, you may be confident. Yes, I think he'll do better as a minister than as a detective."

"Most decidedly," said Vincent. "Conger lacks some of the qualities of a good detective. He's the bravest man I ever saw, however. He would track a giant to his den, all alone. He is too bold, in fact. And then if you get him off the track once, you can lead him anywhere. I mystified him once, completely. Conger believed all I told him, just as fast as I could speak, simply for the reason that I had managed to make him believe beforehand, that I had no object in lying. Still, he has been very successful as a general thing."

"He will be a loss to the secret service." "I know a man that can fill his place ten times as well,—Jim Parker. I shall get it for him;" and he kept his promise. The name of Parker became afterwards a sound of terror to all the criminals in New York.

Vincent told these his intimate friends about the discovery of Ethel's parentage. "All that Mrs. Jarvis says," he added, "is confirmed by Dr. Hayes, who recently arrived from California. He recollected the birth well."

"Is the wedding soon, Vint.?" asked Temple.

"Well, if you fellows play that way," said Vincent, as he rose to leave, "I think I'll follow suit."

On reaching home, he found his father had rallied somewhat. He went into the room, and started with a glad surprise, as he saw his father's face. The restless, furtive look, the look of hidden wretchedness was gone, and gone forever. He pressed his son's hand, feebly.

"I have been a bad man, Vincent, but, through God's mercy, I am not a murderer."

"I know it, father, and I praise Heaven. Will you forgive my harshness, sir?"

No need for words now. Vincent saw more than forgiveness in his father's face,—he saw love there,—love that had been long repressed, but that had never died. It started into hardy life again, at the utterance of that word "father," a word he had not heard for weary weeks.

"I must see him, Vincent," said the sick man. "Send for him."

William Moore soon arrived; he met Vincent in the hall.

"My father is dying."

"I know it. Ah! my boy, one does not think of vengeance in an hour like this. I feel that I have cherished revenge too long. There is much to be forgiven, as well as to forgive. Show me his room." He went in alone, and closed the door. Vincent waited on the stairs. There were traces of weeping in Mr. Moore's eyes, when he came out, and he passed by Vincent without saying a word. Vincent went in, and stood at his father's side. Graham's eyes were closed, but there was a smile on his handsome mouth. He opened his eyes,—there was nothing sinister in them now,—and looked tenderly upon Vincent.

"He has forgiven me, my son, he has forgiven me. Oh! what a load of guilt and

misery has rolled away! I can die contented now." But he did not die. The physician's skill and a peaceful mind restored him, in spite of hemorrhage of the lungs. He recovered, and all that was good in James Graham's character came out. This man had bitterly expiated his intended crime in the ceaseless misery of eighteen years. His punishment began and ended on this earth. Happier days were in store for him. It was reserved for him to see his son decorated with all the honors his countrymen could bestow, ornamenting public and private life, distinguished in statesmanship and letters; it was reserved for him to win at last, the love of his wife, and pass many happy years with her before they both sank simultaneously to peaceful graves. He would have repaid the three hundred thousand dollars, with all its accumulations to William Moore, but the latter would not receive it. He insisted that he had greatly erred in the scheme of revenge he had adopted, and compelled him to retain the money, as a proof that his (Moore's) penitence was sincere.

The legislature of New York did justice to the memory of Smith. He sleeps in no "dishonored grave," but in Greenwood stands an unsullied slab of marble, that bears his name, and, round its base, loving hands delight to plant the fairest and most fragrant flowers. Years afterwards Mrs. Graham told her husband—between whom and her was now perfect confidence,—all the sad story. He listened with compassion. Together they read the record of his life that he had written in his cell. As years rolled by, the remembrance of her youthful passion melted into a half-mournful, half-delightful recollection, and Helen Graham's first wild love was merged into this later perfect and enduring one.

William Moore, still in the prime of life, began to exert the talents he possessed, became a shining light in politics, and reached the highest honors of the State. After many vexatious delays of the law he secured to his daughter the fortune that was hers by Franchot's will. He lived to dandle his grandchildren on his knee, and to build an elegant house near the ruins of Wyckoff Hall,—a house that was as blest and happy as Wyckoff Hall had been fatal.

Mrs. Jiggleswitch, becoming a widow, consoled herself by marrying Cameron McManus. The Scotchman's constancy was rewarded. He lived long and happily with

his spouse, whose Spartan taciturnity, however, was not lessened one jot to the day of her death.

Robbins, at Vincent's request, was dismissed from Mr. Graham's service. Very soon afterwards, a nest of burglars, counterfeiters, and desperadoes was broken up chiefly through the instrumentality of Detective Parker, who had been greatly aided in his operations by some papers found in the deceased Mr. Murragh's carpet-bag. Some half-dozen of these rascals were sent to the State prison for a term of years,—among them our old acquaintances Baxter, Robbins, and Peter Wilkins.

If heaven ever begins on earth, it certainly has begun for Ethel and Vincent. Every circumstance of happiness is theirs,—youth, health, wealth, love. Vincent entered the bar, as the surest road to distinction,—a distinction that he reached beyond his wildest dreams. These two attained the happiness that the machinations of villany had in vain attempted to destroy,—machinations foiled by human skill, and terminated by the hand of God. Their first-born, Edwin, was, it is needless to say, a perfect prodigy, and while yet in his cradle was betrothed to Ethel Montgomery, a young lady but a month or two his junior. They lived amid a circle of tried friends in the midst of love and peace. Occasionally Vincent received a letter from Dr. Euripides Brown, interlarded with classic quotations. These letters showed that the good doctor was enjoying *otium cum dignitate*. He was delighted on hearing that Edwin and Vincent were brothers, and called them his "Castor and Pollux."

Thus the happy days, the loving, golden days, glided along for Vincent and Ethel Graham. Thus, with regret, we leave them. We leave them in the heyday of life, in the heyday of happiness. Farewell, ye favored of the gods! We love to think of you as we last saw you; it is a scene right pleasant to recall. We recollect it well.

It was the glorious hour of autumnal twilight, and the yellow sea of grain in the fields rolled, undulating, beneath the strong west wind; colors that eclipsed all "Solferino" tints bathed the western sky in ruddy glory, while all the fragrance of the woods stole through the exhilarating air. On the portico of a stately house—their country residence—sat the father, by his side the wife, at her feet their children, three in number now. He held a pamphlet on the

"Morrill tariff," but he was not reading it, he was looking into Ethel's calm, true eyes. Her hand—that sculptor's model—lay lovingly upon his knee; her sweet face, lit by the sun's dying lustre, was bent towards him. Vincent put his hand upon her hair—in this light golden indeed.

"On my word, Ethel," said he, "you look better than Miss Moore ever did. Can you remember that ancient time? Do you know it will be seven years next week since you consented to become Mrs. Graham?"

Ethel flung her arms around his neck, and kissed him with pretty fervor. "Take that for the compliment!" said she.

"Oh, you only wanted an excuse!" cried Vincent. "Look there, young Ned is astonished at your behavior. Remember we have been married seven years!"

"So long, and yet so short!" said Ethel, in a low voice. "God has been good to us, Vincent," added she, in hushed tones.

"He has indeed," said Vincent, solemnly. "This is greater happiness than I deserve." and he put his broad arm around her, as if for the assurance that she was still his own. And thus sat the loving group, constancy and honor side by side,—beauty round about them,—innocence and childhood at their feet.

THE END.