THE

HEIRESS OF BELLEFONT.

BY EMERSON BENNETT.

AUTHOR OF "CLARA MORELAND," "VIOLA," "FORGED WILL," "PIONEER'S DAUGHTER," "BRIDE OF THE WILDERNESS," "KATE CLARENDON," "ELLEN NORBURY," ETC.

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THE HEIRESS OF BELLEFONT.

CHAPTER I.

BELLEFONT AND ITS WORLDLY PROPRIETOR.

IN a certain county of Kentucky, which, for various reasons, shall be nameless, and not far from a city of considerable note, there stood, some ten or twelve years agone, a beautiful mansion, the country seat of a gentleman reputed to be very wealthy, which was known by the name of Bellefont, sometimes called Bellefont Retreat. That it merited a poetical title, and was, in sooth, a lovely retreat, no one who had seen it would ever deny. The mansion itself stood on a slight eminence, from which the ground gently sloped off in every direction, and could be approached by carriages from the highway, only through two large arched gateways, and two long, heavily shaded avenues—or what, in fact, was but one; that being in the form of a rainbow—leaving the road at two points, and, by its circle, running close to the building in question. At each of these gateways, was a small structure, in the form of a tower, which were occupied by two negro slaves in livery, whose business it was to open and shut the gates for all vehicles coming in or going out. These towers formed the extreme right and left of the park in front, and were connected in a measure by a high, broad, solid wall of masonry, running from one to the other, with the exception of a slight separation, occasioned by another arch exactly in the centre, whence opened beneath, for people on foot, a smaller gate, directly into a beautiful walk, leading straight up to the mansion, shaded by a long bower of grape and other vines, and rendered really fascinating by rows of flowers on either hand, of all colors and varieties. About midway from the mansion to the street, and between the foot-path and carriage avenues, on either side, was a sparkling fountain, whose waters, first rising from the mouths of two well carved stone sea monsters, some ten or twelve feet in the air, with much spirit, sunk gently back into two large sandy-bottomed basins, with murmurs most delightful, and then stealing away in two tiny rivulets, and meandering about for some distance, among the shrubbery, grass-plots a ndflowers, at last united and disappeared by means of a pipe under ground.

To diversify the grounds in front, and give them the charm of variety, as also to aid the distant perspective from the mansion, a green smooth lawn occupied the space between the building and lower wall, the foot-path and the fountains, through which vistas, when standing on the central steps, the eye, owing to the height of the eminence whereon the main structure stood, had a vast range over a charming landscape below the highway, and, in two places, could catch a glimpse of La Belle Riviere, at the distance of nearly a mile, whose waters under the rays of the noonday sun, resembled large beds of molten silver, over which ever and anon glided some magnificent steamer, with its hoarse steam-notes of action sounding on the still air, like the spoutings of the mighty leviathan of the briny and fathomless deep. To the right of the front was another view, that overlooked a pleasant little village, some half mile distant, at whose further extremity the boats occasionally made a short tarry on their upward and downward progress, while afar to the left could be seen the spires of a city of no mean dimensions. In the rear of the mansion was a delightful garden, wherein were several hot houses, and beyond which the park, extending more than a mile, was enclosed by a high wall, and filled with fruit and other trees of all descriptions, interspersed with shrubbery, as if to add a sort of romantic wildness to the whole, and make it a retreat indeed, wherefor poets might sigh and gods become envious.

The mansion itself was a magnificent stone structure, two stories in height, with a cupola for observing the surrounding country, had two large wings, massive pillars in front of the main building, and was entered by a long flight of polished marble steps. The door of the main entrance opened into a long broad hall, on either hand of which was another door, leading, the one on the right into a splendid saloon, furnished almost gorgeously, and the one on the left into a grand drawing-room. About mid way of the hall was a winding flight of stairs, covered with a Brussels carpet, that

led up into the other story—and, in fact, to the cupola—whence, from the space being left open, a mellow light, through ground glass, descended evenly and softly to the first floor, lighting the whole distance above and below most beautifully. Servants in livery were ever in attendance on visitors, and the whole place, within and without, had the luxurious appearance of a princely palace.

Allan Montrose, the proprietor of Bellefont Retreat, was by birth an Englishman, who had emigrated to this country some nineteen years before the opening of our story; and though he had brought with him but a small fortune — say five hundred pounds—he had failed not in bringing that self and national pride so characteristic of the natives of his country. He had been well educated and well brought up among the middling class, as they are called, and had had many opportunities of observing, without the privilege of enjoying, the luxurious ease of the nobility. He was naturally proud and arrogant, and it had touched him to the quick, that he must be merely a looker-on, but never a partaker of, what he so ardently courted, namely, aristocratic distinction; and hearing that fortunes were easily made in this country, he had determined at length to emigrate, for the mere purpose of gaining wealth, and thereby importance and affluence, whereby to exalt himself over republican simplicity, as he felt the nobility of England had done and were doing over such as himself. With all these matters in view, it will not perhaps be surprising to the reader, that from the start he should assume an importance to which in reality he was not properly entitled—and such indeed was the fact. Whatever else he might be, Allan Montrose was by no means a fool, in the common acceptation of the term; and as he had had some little experience in the ways of human nature, (he had been clerk to his father, who was a shopkeeper in Liverpool,) he went on the principle, that if nothing was assumed nothing would be granted; and that when a man had no herald, he must either trumpet his own importance, or remain in inglorious insignificance. As the latter was by no means a desirable position in his eyes, he had consequently begun, like many of his countrymen, in talking largely of himself—his ancestors—their importance to their country—and even had gone so far as to assert that one of them had taken a prominent part in the restoration of Charles II., for which he had been knighted by royal hands; and that ar other ancestor, in another line of succession, was tinctured with the blood royal.

That these bare assertions of his family consequence in his own country, were believed by all, would be preposterous to suppose; but there is, even at the present day, a strong leaning on the part of Americans, of a certain class, towards gullibility—if we may so use the term—a feverish desire to ape and run after something foreign—and Allan Montrose had experienced but little difficulty at the time in question, in finding sufficient credulity amongst the simple republicans, as he termed them, for his purpose; the more so, perhaps, that he had been very scrupulous in dressing a la mode—putting on many extravagant airs, which, by his dupes, had been mistaken for those of a gentleman—and making a somewhat lavish display of his limited means. Nor had this been done simply to gratify a present whim, or become the lion of a day among the vulgar. Allan Montrose, in a worldly sense, was a deep, shrewd personage, who was in reality playing for a high stake, which, by careful management, and great adroitness, he at length succeeded in winning. This was none other than the uniting himself to a lady of fortune.

For this purpose, when first arrived in this country, he had immediately selected a place of fashionable resort; where, by one means and another, he had ascertained that the belle of the season was an heiress, and had succeeded in being favorably introduced to her notice; from which moment all his abilities became taxed in winning her affections—or at least gaining her consent to a union with himself; in which design, as before hinted at, he had at length succeeded—perhaps easier than he had anticipated—and certainly to the chagrin and disappointment of a long list of pretended admirers.

Clara Wentworth, the lady in question, and his present wife, was one in every respect as worldly-minded as himself, who thought she saw in an alliance with the said Allan Montrose, rather a close connection with the aristocracy if not nobility of England; (for he had failed not in tickling her ear with his pretended family position in the old country,) and consequently an elevation from her own plebeian descent, and what she now considered her former plebeian admirers. She was an only daughter of worldly parents, who had, besides, one son—a gay extravagant young coxcomb, then on a tour in Europe,—and Montrose being withal a good-looking young man, the matter succeeded to a charm, as the saying is; the consent of father and mother

—who also saw in the alliance a worldly elevation—was easily gained; and in three months from first acquaintance, he had had the satisfaction of leading the blushing Clara to the altar, receiving the blessings of the parents, and, what was of more consequence to himself, the sum of ten thousand dollars as a bridal present.

Doubtless Montrose was expecting a larger portion; but if so, he was destined to be disappointed; for this was, in fact, all his father-in-law had to spare; he, owing to his own and his son's extravagance, not being in sooth as wealthy as was currently reported. However, if he fancied himself taken in on the matter, there was no help for it now—the fatal Rubicon was passed—and Montrose had had the wit to keep his thoughts to himself, well knowing that he had himself been playing a game where honesty would not be likely fo signalize his dealing of the cards.

Having gone through the honey-moon on a grand scale, Montrose, contrary to his wife's desire, (who was, as might have been supposed, eager to proceed to England, and take her position in the fashionable circle,) determined at once to embark in some profitable speculation, whereby he could amass that competence which he had thus far failed in getting, and for which his very soul still thirsted. In answer to her inquiries respecting such a plebeian undertaking, and why he did not now return to his fatherland, he stated, that some time before quitting home, he had quarreled with his relations, concerning some property of hereditary descent, that a duel had ensued, and that he was in consequence an exile until the matter could be laid favorably before the king, and his pardon obtained; and that possessing a proud spirit, he had sworn to gain a fortune ere his return, whereby he could lord it over, and actually purchase a position of nobility far above, the best of them.

Whether his wife believed his present tale or not, certain it is that she failed not to reprimand him in a very severe manner, for having, as she asserted, wilfully deceived her; and even went so far as to declare she would have a separate maintenance; to all of which he only replied, that if she preferred it, he had not the least objection. This was a point in the game of matrimony, she had not counted on, when her passion got the better of her prudence; and consequently finding her partner and opponent was not to be frightened by so bold a move, she had been fain to take it back, and go forward in a less presumptuous and dangerous manner,—or, in other words, to acquiesce in his wishes, and make the best of what she could not alter.

To make a long story short, as the phrase goes, our worthy proprietor of Bellefont had entered largely into speculation, at a time when capitalists were making their fortunes, and the result had been in his being successful even beyond his most sanguine expectations —so much so, that at the end of five years' venture, he had seen fit to close his accounts, and retire on the handsome competence of three hundred thousand dollars.

To suit himself in a residence, he had made a tour to the West; and after much rambling hither and yon, had at length selected and improved the site and built the mansion we have already described to the reader. Hither, when completed, he had removed his family—which then consisted of his wife and two children —the eldest a daughter, the other a son.

To the great grief and disappointment of his parents, who saw in the latter the perpetuator of the name of Montrose, and the heir to their fortune, he had, soon after their removal, been called to his long, last home. They were not religious people, and consequently did not feel that this dispensation of an All-wise Providence, had been altogether for the best; but their repinings and murmurings availed them not. No other issue succeeding, their hopes now became centred upon their daughter, whom—almost as unlike them, in a moral point of view, as day is unlike night—we shall anon present to the reader as the heroine of our story.

In the expenses attendant upon purchasing the place in question, improving it, building and furnishing the mansion, and all so magnificently, Montrose found that no mean portion of his fortune had been called in requisition; and that to properly suppor this assumed position of princely grandeur would require no small income; accordingly, he had invested the residue of his capital in various ways, and up to the date of our story had been signally prosperous. Neither pains nor money had been spared in the education of his daughter, Evangeline, both as regarded her mental and fashionable qualifications —and to her he now looked for that wealthy alliance, which, should any untoward event occur in his own pecuniary affairs—whereof he sometimes had a presentiment —she would ever be enabled to hold that position in aristocratic circles, wherefor he had designed her. Whether he was destined to be elated with success, or cast down with disappointment, may be seen from what follows.

CHAPTER II.

INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE WORLDLY FATHER AND HIS LESS WORLDLY DAUGHTER.

Evangeline Montrose, the heiress of Bellefont Retreat, had just completed her education abroad, and returned to her parents, only a short time prior to her eighteenth birth-day, and the opening of our story. Ever since her return, preparations had been going forward, on an extensive scale, for celebrating the anniversary with all due pomp and rejoicing. Cards of invitation had been sent to all the fashionable circles in the vicinity; and some dozens of mantua-makers, with their apprentices, had been hurried as for life, day and night, to have dresses expressly prepared for the coming grand occasion—which was of course to be a most magnificent affair —the real bona fide BON TON of the season.

This affair was looked forward to by the young coxcombs, as a most eventful period, when each, in his own self-conceit, was to establish his reputation as a heart-killer for life; and, what was of even more consequence still, make his fortune, by making a conquest of the lovely heiress of Bellefont Retreat. Nor was it less anxiously held in view by the belles of the upper circles, and their dutiful mammas, each of whom foresaw, in this gathering, an excellent opportunity of showing off the unmarried pet—as an auctioneer does his wares, on a holiday—and bargaining her to the highest bidder—that is, provided they should be so fortunate as to receive a bid at all.

To each and all, then, of the invited guests, it was to be an anxious time of display, dissipation, and intrigue—a market time of human wares, in which each calculated on out-dazzling and cheating each other—a grand meeting of scheming heads and hollow hearts; in short, a fashionable party. How it was thought of by the heiress herself, and her worldly father, may be gleaned from what follows.

On the day preceding the entertainment in question, Allan Montrose was seated in his library, in a musing mood, awaiting the coming of his daughter, to summon whom, a negro menial had just been dispatched. As this is his first introduction in *propria persona,* we will slightly glance at his appearance.

The worthy proprietor of Bellefont, was a man of small stature, about forty-five years of age. His features were small, sharp and cunning, with nothing of the true manly nobility in their expression. His eyes were likewise small, of a cold gray, somewhat sunken, and seemed to glance at every thing suspiciously. His mouth was thin-lipped, and contracted into a somewhat sinister look of contempt; his nose and chin were sharp —his forehead high, but not open—and, in fact, the whole aspect of his countenance decidedly corresponded with the selfish, arrogant, worldly nature of his heart. His hair, probably on account of deep scheming, and grief at the loss of his son, had changed from its pristine color to an iron gray. He was dressed with the most scrupulous exactness to the fashion of the day—so much so, in fact, as rather to give him an air of stiffness than ease. The same effect might have been observed of the library he now occupied—where everything in its place, denoted that order was not the least of his phrenological developments.

The door opened, and Evangeline Montrose entered. She took her seat without speaking, in a vacant chair that had been placed for her, a few feet distant from her father. She was a beautiful being, radiant with the bloom of early womanhood, queenly in her deportment, with a sweet, modest, lovely expression of countenance, that contrasted strongly with her father's, and which, of itself, would have rendered her extremely fascinating, even had it not been taken into consideration that she was an heiress to great possessions. Her form was graceful and symmetrical, rather above medium, and her carriage dignified. Her complexion was between a blonde and brunette, with large deep blue eyes, that shone through long lashes, with an animated, intelligent and bewitching expression. Her features were regular, with no harsh lines, but all sweetly blended in harmonious keeping with a guileless heart. Her hair was of that peculiar hue which looks golden in the sun-light, and fell in a profusion of ringlets around her neck and shoulders of alabaster whiteness. There was everything so noble and lofty in her appearance, and so contrasted with the cunning, scheming worldly appearance of her father, that one of an observing mind, who had seen them together, would at once have been led into a train of serious reflection on the strange caprices of nature.

"Evangeline," said her father, in a short, business-like voice, as she took her seat, "I have sent for you here, to give you a little parental advice, regarding matters whereof one in your position, and at your age, should not be ignorant. To-morrow will be the anniversary of your eighteenth birth-day, and a large party will be given, apparently to welcome the event with great rejoicing, but, in sooth, to bring you at once into the fashionable world, and make you the belle of the season."

"But, father," interposed Evangeline, playfully, "I have no desire to be the admired of all admirers."

"It matters not, girl, what are your desires; but attend to what I say. You have now completed your education, and arrived at the proper point in your life for being married."

"Father!" exclaimed she, with a blush.

"Nay, do not interrupt me," continued he, sternly. "I trust you are not a fool, Evangeline, and will not use to me the simper of a country rustic, when the business of marriage is spoken of. Do not bring any sentimental coyness to bear on the matter. Matrimony is only a business arrangement, whereby two individuals, of opposite sexes, enter into a co-partnership for life, and should be treated in the same light as other pecuniary transactions."

"Do you indeed consider matrimony a pecuniary transaction, father?" inquired Evanline, with a look of surprise.

"Certainly I do," returned Montrose, in his turn surprised also, "why not? What do people in your position in society marry for, but to better themselves, by adding to their wealth? and what is that but a pecuniary transaction, view it as you will?"

"But if some are, I trust all are not, influenced by motives so sordid," returned Evangeline, with spirit.

"Sordid!" echoed her father, with a smile of contempt. "Sordid! Why, girl, you speak like a fool."

"Thank you," was the response; "I am near akin to yourself."

"Silence! you are my daughter, and as such should know your place, and not presume to treat me with disrespect."

"Neither should I, had you not used to me language not appropriate."

"Well, well, enough of that. To the point again. I expect there will be one here to-morrow night, whom I wish you to use all your maiden arts to captivate. You may be coy or hoidenish, I care not which, so you effect my purpose. I have had my eye on him some time—believe him wealthy—vastly so—and therefore a suitable husband for you."

"But, father; consider; suppose I do not fancy him?"

"But he is wealthy, child; is not that enough?"

"And would you have me barter my hand for gold—simply gold—to a man I did not like—could never love?" asked Evangeline, with sparkling eyes.

"Barter! love!" repeated the worldly man, in astonishment, with a heavy frown. "Why, what in the name of all the saints are you talking about, girl? Love? faugh! pho! stuff! nonsense! Why, you—you make me angry, child—you do, indeed. Love! umph! where did you get that word from, I should like to know? From your grammar, I suppose, when you were conjugating verbs, professedly—but conjuring nonsense, in reality. You don't believe the word love has any meaning in it, I hope?"

"As I believe in Heaven, I believe in a pure and holy love," answered Evangeline, solemnly.

"You do?"

"I do."

"Then you are no daughter of mine," cried Montrose, with a burst of indignation, rising and pacing the apartment with rapid strides. "To talk to me in that foolish manner! Child! you—you—nonsense!—I won't talk with you!—get you gone! Yet stay!" he added, as she calmly rose, with a dignified look, to depart. "Sit down again. I—I will talk to you; and I'll drive this nonsense from your head—or I'll disown you—that I will!"

After the lapse of a few minutes, Montrose resumed his seat, and in a calmer mood, continued:

"So, you believe in the trumped up story of two fools—for I can call them nothing else—joining their hands in marriage for the silly matter of love, eh?"

"Marriage," answered Evangeline, with dignity, "is a sacred and holy rite, whereby two beings solemnly pledge themselves, in the presence of God, and his angels, as also before earthly witnesses, that they will love and cherish each other until divided by death; and if they love not, then have they perjured themselves in the sight of God and man, and are guilty of a great sin."

"Umph! I suppose you have read some such silly trash in some sentimental novel, and now it has become law and gospel with you," replied the other, in a nettled manner. "Or," added he, looking her keenly in the eye, "mayhap you fancy you have had some experience in this matter of love? Eh? is it so?"

The features of Evangeline at once grew crimson, and for a moment or two she seemed greatly embarrassed, during which time her father eyed her in no very amiable mood. At length she threw back her head, and answered with dignity.

"And if I have, father?"

"And if you have!" echoed Montrose, his face flushed with passion, and with difficulty commanding his voice: "If you have! why then—then—you—you—but what is the use of my talking with one who provokes me beyond all patience? Thunder and Mars! I can't stand it, girl, and I won't!" He rose from his seat, and again commenced pacing the floor.

"Why, father," said his daughter, gently, "wherein have I offended? I have neither done nor said aught intending to wound your feelings in the least."

"But your head is full of nonsense, and I can't get you to talk reason. I spoke to you of matrimony, and you seemed startled that I should bring up such a subject. I spoke of uniting you to a man of fortune; and forthwith, without even hearing the name of the gentleman in question, you began to talk of the great sacrifice you would have to make, or to the same effect, if you did not love him; and when I spoke of the silliness of such a thing as love, you put on a dignified air, and even had the audacity to partially admit to my face, that you knew better from experience. Now, you demurely ask what you have done to offend me! Pshaw! pshaw!—that a daughter of mine should ever own to such a thing as *love!* a catch-word of some silly novel-writer, to tickle the ear of some sentimental rustic. Never speak the sentiments you have uttered here, in a fashionable circle, daughter, or you will be laughed at."

"Only by fools, father, saving your presence; and they, I am sorry to say, form too large a portion of the circles in question. However, it needed no caution on that score—as I intend to express my views only to such as can comprehend them. But you were speaking of this gentleman—pray, who is he?"

"Ah, now you talk to the point," replied the man of money, again resuming his seat. "The gentleman in question is one who stands very high in the estimation of the world—very high—although he has a few eccentricities, now and then—but then you see he is very rich—vastly rich, I may say—and his little affairs need make no difference with you, you know; and besides, his uncle is a peer of England, and he the nearest male heir—so that there is a probability of his becoming a lord himself. Only think, how fine the title of lady—my lady—would sound in one's ear, eh!—ha, ha, ha!" and Montrose ventured to rub his hands with joy, in anticipation of becoming father-in-law to a lord.

"But who is he—do I know him?" inquired Evangeline, peremptorily.

"Why, y-e-s—I—I rather think you do—or at least have heard of him," replied the father, in a hesitating manner, that showed him by no means entirely at his ease. "The person I allude to is—is—Harold Bolingbroke," concluded he, very much with the air of one who is doubtful as to the way in which his intelligence will be received.

"What!" cried Evangeline, springing to her feet, and drawing up her beautiful form to its full height, with all the majesty of an insulted queen, while her fine countenance became crimsoned with surprise, pride and indignation. "What, father!—this to me—your daughter!—have me wed with Harold Bolingbroke, the rake of L——? No!—no!—I will not believe it!—you were jesting, father, were you not?"

"A-a-hem!" answered Montrose, fidgeting about in his chair, and really for once overawed by the noble demeanor of his daughter. "Why, you see, the fact is—as—I—I said before—Harold is a *little* eccentric, you know—but then—"

"Nay! hold, father, hold!" interrupted Evangeline, giving her hand a sweeping gesture, as of command. "Whatever may be your claims upon me, as a father upon a daughter, and I am willing to admit them all, you have no right to insult me."

"Fool!" cried Montrose, springing from his seat in rage, and losing all respect for his daughter: "I say, a fool!—a silly, ranting, romantic, sentimental, novel-reading, school-girl fool! Who wants to insult you, I should like to know? Zounds! Miss, you talk to me, your father, as though I were an underling! This comes, I suppose, of sending you abroad to school, and letting you get your head filled with all the romantic nonsense of the day! A pretty pass it has come to, I think, when sentimental maidens in their teens can insult their parents with impunity!—a pretty pass, indeed! But you sha'n't do so to me! for I—I'll have you locked up and fed on bread and water! that I will. O, you—you—d—— it all, Miss, leave the room!" and Montrose tore up and down the apartment, like one insane; while his daughter stood and gazed calmly but sorrowfully upon him.

"I obey you in this," she at length said; "but oh! father, I beseech you never to recur to the other again! for what you ask is impossible."

"What is impossible!" cried he, turning fiercely to her.

"For me to wed, or even to look upon Harold Bolingbroke with other feelings than those of contempt and dread."

"By ——! you shall wed him, though; mark that!" cried her father, stamping his foot upon the floor, and uttering an oath. "Did you ever see him?"

"I never did, to my knowledge; but I *know* him by reputation, to be a dissolute, unprincipled young man; and I should wonder at his being received in society at all, did I not know that he is reputed wealthy, and that that is sufficient recommendation among a certain class of hollow-hearted sycophants, who throng what is called the fashionable world."

"Umph! I thought as much! You don't know the individual yourself, and yet here you are giving out a tirade of abuse against him."

"And do you know him, father? and if so, pray who is he? A year ago he came to L——, a stranger; and by one means and another, got himself introduced into fashionable society; where, I regret to say, from what I have heard of him, he still remains. How do you know he is what he represents himself? How do you know that his uncle is a lord? or that he himself is not a swindling impostor?"

"Egad, girl, you are right! I only know from general report, I must own; but every body seems to believe his story, so I never thought to question it."

"And this is the man you would have me wed?"

"Well, well; I was too hasty, I see. Yes, yes, I must look into this matter; because, if he is not really rich, I would not have you wed him, though it were to save you from the tomb. Nay, do not look surprised, my child; for I honestly own, I would rather see you in your grave, than wedded to a poor man; indeed I would, But why do you look so pale? What is the matter with you now, my child?"

"Nothing, father," answered Evangeline, faintly, sinking upon a seat. "I—I feel much better now. It was only a little weakness that I am subject to. It is all over now, I assure you."

"Hum!" answered her father, as one who is not exactly satisfied. "Very strange I never heard of these little weaknesses before. Well, well, girl; go to your room. I'll look into this affair more closely; and if I find there are any doubts about money matters, depend upon it, I shall be the last one to urge you to the business; for, mark me, girl! you *must* marry rich!"

"But what necessity is there for my doing so, father?—Have you not property enough?"

"I may have enough to live on now, child; but something might turn up and all be lost; there is no telling what may happen. Besides, even for the name of the thing, if for nothing else, would I have you marry thus. Would it not sound fine in the aristocratic circles, to have it said that the heiress of Bellefont had wedded a beggar, or beneath her position? No, girl! aim high! aim high! Imitate the eagle, not the duck, if you wish to be respected. Now go to your room, and keep this motto in your mind: *Evangeline Montrose must marry rich, or not at all.*"

She rose and departed for her room. When there, she locked the door, threw herself upon a sofa, and wept.

Does the reader guess the secret?

CHAPTER III.

THE FASHIONABLE PARTY AT BELLEFONT.

It was the eve of Evangeline's eighteenth birth-day. The park gates of Bellefont were thrown open, and carriage followed carriage up the avenues, crowded with the beauty and fashion of L——, and the surrounding country. Slaves in livery were bustling about, and ushering into the saloon, with all due ceremony, the fancied great ones of the earth. Now would the company already gathered together, suddenly pause in the midst of general conversation and laughter, to greet with proper respect the venerable Judge Gravity, or the Hon. Mr. Stumper, or the celebrated Dr. Bleadem, or the distinguished General Shotwell, or the elegant and fashionable Mr. Primrose, and their respective ladies, when all would again become animated, during which time the stars of lesser magnitude would glide into the brilliant galaxy almost wholly unnoticed.

Among those of the latter class, there was one who seemed to receive even less attention than either of the others. This was a young man, some twenty-two years of age, with a pale, thoughtful countenance, plainly, but neatly attired in a suit of black. His figure was handsome, rather above the ordinary in size, and his demeanor graceful and commanding. His features were comely, open and intelligent; his forehead high, broad, and noble; and in his bright hazel eye was a depth of soul and lofty feeling, that gave assurance of a man; and which, in an assembly where mind was to be sought, rather than position and external show, would have made him a marked individual. There was a sedateness in his look rather beyond his years; and this, together with the unnatural paleness of his complexion, denoted one who had been much given to thought and study.

As he entered the gorgeous apartment, amid the dazzling light of a dozen splendid chandeliers, with a modest step and dignified carriage, the usher pronounced in a loud, clear voice, the name of Arthur Everett. Some half a dozen individuals, who chanced to be conversing near the door, slightly turned their heads to note the new comer, and, catching his eye, bowed rather stiffly, more with the air of people of breeding, who feel themselves constrained to show civility, than as persons having any desire to cultivate further acquaintance. The young man read their feelings at a glance, bowed as stiffly in turn, with a look of offended pride; and then casting his eyes slowly over the assemblage, as if in search of one whom he was not able to discover, moved leisurely away to a distant and less frequented part of the room, where, throwing himself upon a sofa, he soon appeared absorbed in his own reflections.

To most of those present, he was an entire stranger; with nothing in the way of wealth, fashion, or any other particular accomplishment, to recommend him to their notice; and this he knew and *felt*—ay, felt with an acuteness known only to proud and sensitive minds. He felt himself to be an intruder there; and but one earthly consideration would have induced him to be present; and that was a promise to that effect, made to one bright being of that dazzling throng, whom he sincerely and devotedly loved. For a few minutes he sat buried in no pleasing meditations, unheeding the different names that were continually being called, until that of Harold Bolingbroke sounded in his ear, and aroused him from his revery. He looked up, and beheld at a distance, a tall, graceful young man, gayly dressed, obsequiously bowing his way into the centre of the saloon, with such an air of coxcombry and self-importance, as at once excited within Arthur a feeling of disgust. Nor was this feeling lessened, by his observing the crowd of fops and belles that at once gathered around this butterfly of fashion, to whom he seemed the oracle of the occasion. There might have been other matters in the breast of Arthur Everett, to aid this sense of aversion for Harold Bolingbroke; but of these hereafter.

By nine o'clock, the guests were all arrived; and a brilliant assemblage they were, if considered merely in external appearance. Silks and satins, and broadcloths, of the finest quality, were there displayed in every form that fashion allowed to be proper, and in every variety of color that the combined tastes of their owners could suggest. These were surmounted and set off by chains of gold and pearl, and pins of diamond, ruby, sapphire, &c. Heads of ladies were encircled, as by a halo, with sparkling and costly bands; ears were hung with jewels; arms, bare, soft and white, were relieved by glittering bracelets; and fingers, long and tapering, were loaded with rings of great value. To these we may add, eyes that sparkled with merriment—flashed with repartee—lan guished with sentiment—looked dull with stupidity—or fiery with anger, jealousy and contempt, according to the several moods of their owners; faces that bore corresponding expressions to the eyes, of smiles and frowns, of peevishness and anxiety; and hearts that were cold, selfish and worldly.

Among his guests, Allan Montrose and his lady moved with studied politeness and ease; but even here the sordid nature of each was palpable, in their different manner towards different individuals. To some they were extremely obsequious and affable; to others, somewhat haughty and distant, according to the reputed wealth and distinctions of each. At length, Montrose, in sauntering through the saloon, came near where Arthur Everett was sitting, in a part somewhat retired from the mass; and probably mistaking him for some one else, the worldly man bowed, smiled, and then approaching the young man direct, reached forth his hand in a manner the most affable; but suddenly, and just as the other was on the point of rising to take it, the host paused, his whole physiognomy underwent a rapid change, and drawing his little person up proudly, he said, coldly:

"I beg pardon! *Mr.* Everett, I believe? Ah! hum! Glad to see you enjoying yourself, sir. Make yourself free and easy, sir!" and again bowing, but stiffly, he turned away to speak with Judge Gravity, who chanced at the moment to be near at hand.

Arthur felt cut to the heart—for he perceived that many eyes had seen the slight put upon him, and that many a glass was now turning in that direction; and his face grew crimson with wounded pride and indignation. At this moment, an unusual movement at the farther end of the saloon, attracted the attention of the guests; and looking in that direction himself, Arthur beheld the beautiful and queenly form of Evangeline Montrose, who, having entered by a side door, was now advancing among the crowd, with that grace and modest assurance of demeanor, which is characteristic only of a refined, polished and high-minded woman. For a moment, Arthur gazed upon her with strange emotion; the next she was hidden from view, by the throng of belles and beaux which immediately surrounded her; some anxious to pay their addresses and resume an old acquaintance, and others to be honored by an introduction to one so rich and lovely.

Ay! and lovely indeed was Evangeline of Bellefont, on that night which completed her eighteenth birth-day, as she moved over the rich yielding carpet, with the ease of a fairy, amid the mellow, bewitching light of that gorgeous saloon. She was richly dressed, with great taste and simplicity, in a pale pink silk, that finely corresponded with her complexion—the only ornament of which was a beautiful red rose on the bosom. Her soft white arms were bare above the elbow, on either of which was a bracelet—the one of pearl, the other of gold, studded with diamonds. A golden band passed around her head, in the centre of which, near the upper part of her forehead, was a star, formed of diamonds, which glowed and sparkled in all the hues of the rainbow, as it decomposed the light, producing the most beautiful and brilliant effect imaginable. From this band, soft, wavy, golden ringlets floated down over a fair polished neck of such exquisite beauty, as would rival, if not surpass, the finest conceptions and most delicate touches of a Benvenuto Cellini. The excitement of the occasion was just sufficient to throw a beautiful color into her countenance, and, with her soft blue, sparkling eyes, give a most fascinating expression to her now animated features.

Evangeline was any thing but pleased with the group of individuals, of both sexes, who now surrounded her; for she saw at a glance there were none but the fawning sycophants of fashion; and gladly, were such a thing possible, would she have exchanged this scene of splendor, for the quiet solitude of her own apartment.

"Ah! my dear Miss Montrose, how delighted I am to see you, to be sure, after such a long—*long* absence," said Miss Fidgety, a gaudily dressed *young* lady of twenty-eight, with a thin face, highly rouged, sharp features, squint eyes, and curly red hair; whose position in society rested on her being niece to a rich miser, whom, for the last ten years, she had every day been hoping and expecting would die and leave her a fortune; but as the old miser had not as yet seen fit to accommodate his niece, and as Miss Fidgety would be worth nothing of consequence until that important event should take place, and there being no certainty of its ever happening, in *her* lifetime at least; therefore, Miss Fidgety had not been able to get married, which now perplexed her sorely.

"Why, I declare, Miss Evangeline," she continued, "you do look most charmingly beautiful, upon my word. Never saw you looking so well before in my life. It is astonishing how age improves one's features and complexion!"

"So I perceive," answered Evangeline, pointedly, and smiling with a peculiar look, which Miss Fidgety was not slow to interpret.

"Ah-hem!" returned she, somewhat deepening the color of the rouge by a slight confusion. "Pray allow me, my dear Miss Montrose, to present to you Mr. C. Augustus Fitz Noodle, of High Brier."

The personage in question was a tall, spare, pale-faced young man, with a countenance full of stupidity and self-conceit, who wore, on account of his literary pretensions, a shirt collar a la Byron, and his hair long, well greased, and down over his shoulders; it might be for the purpose of concealing his *ears;* and whose principal merit consisted in his being worth fifty thousand dollars. On being introduced to our heroine, C. Augustus Fitz Noodle, Esq., (so he wrote his name) bowed very profoundly, but with a supercilious smile, which seemed to say: "I am more, even, than I really seem."

"Mr. C. Augustus Fitz Noodle is one of our literati, Miss Montrose," continued Miss Fidgety, who, he being her gallant per occasion, wished to make the most of him. "He writes most elegant poetry. Have you never met with any of it through the columns of the press?"

"Never, to my knowledge," answered our heroine.

"Augustus," continued Miss Fidgety, "pray *do* repeat those sweetly touching and sentimental elegiac stanzas, 'To A Dead Poodle," which appeared a few days since, in the first column of the Morning Gossip."

"Ah, Miss Fidgety, I admire your taste, in selecting from my fugitive productions," simpered the highly flattered poet; "as I think that one the best I ever put in print." This *was* the best that C. Augustus Fitz Noodle, Esq., had ever put in print, sure enough, because it was the only one; and a five dollar note had especially recommended this to a half-starved editor of an obscure sheet, and gained it an insertion. "Permit me, Miss Montrose, and you, ladies and gentlemen," continued the poet, "I will give you a specimen of the poetry, so highly and justly extolled by my fair friend Miss Fidgety." Here Augustus smiled complacently, rolled up his dull eyes, which bore no bad resemblance to pewter buttons, and placing himself in what he considered a striking attitude, in a voice of much affectation, resumed: "It runs thus:

"Thou art gone, poor little poodle,
  From this world of pain and care;
But oh! departed poodle,
  Let me ask thee, 'Gone to where?'
Thy breath is cold and silent,
  As the ice on Andes' top;
And when I think of thy fate, poodle,
  A tear I can't help letting drop."

"Oh, how affecting!" interposed Miss Fidgety, wiping her eyes.

"O, very!" said our heroine, with difficulty repressing a burst of laughter.

"Whene'er I—"

Began the poet again; but was here interrupted by an individual known as Dandy Primrose, the fashion setter, who had just come up to pay his respects to the heiress of Bellefont. Dandy was the pink of fashion, who, with a little money, got nobody knew how, a large share of impudence, and clothes always of the best quality and latest style, managed to hold his position among the aristocracy. It was supposed by some —evil-minded persons of course—that Dandy was a walking advertisement for a tailor, who supplied him with the best, that he might introduce his patterns in the upper circles, and recommend his establishment; which latter, for one reason or another, Dandy never failed to do. The face of Dandy was small and effeminate, with fine, well oiled whiskers, and the most delicate little moustaches imaginable. His hair was frizzled *a la mode;* and a gold chain, over a white embroidered vest, suspended an eye glass, almost in constant use. Dandy had great affectation of speech and manners, and prided himself on being a great *lady killer.* He was very popular among a certain class.

"Aw, Miss Montwose," he said, as he came up to our heroine, interrupting the poet in his sublime recitation, making what he considered one of his most graceful bows, and looking unutterably fascinating out of his small, gray eyes: "Aw, Miss Montwose, allow me to congwatulate you. Weally, you aw looking most extwemely bootiful to-night; you aw, indeed, 'pon honaw!"

"Thank you!" said Evangeline, drily, and bowing somewhat stiffly. "I should be happy, could I return the *flattering* compliment, Mr. Primrose."

"Aw — ye-e-a-s — ahem!" rejoined Dandy, reddening, and a little confused, while some three or four of the now enlarged circle smiled. "Aw—allow me! Miss Pimp, Miss Montwose."

Miss Pimp, a doll beauty, hanging affectedly on the arm of Dandy, now bowed and smiled, and simpered forth something which nobody understood.

"The second stanza, Miss Montrose, runs thus," now resumed the anxious C. Augustus Fitz Noodle, Esq.

"Whene'er I—"

Here the poet, like many another of his profession, both before and since, was again doomed to disappointment, by another couple coming up for introduction, and then another and another. At last, becoming desperate, he in turn interrupted the party with:

"Whene'er I think of thy hard fate,
Poor little poodle dog,
I——"

"Mr. Harold Bolingbroke, Miss Montrose," said a voice close beside the poet, interrupting him, and presenting the individual in question.

C. Augustus Fitz Noodle, Esq., was now offended in earnest; and he turned a look of indignant contempt upon Bolingbroke and the speaker, whom he considered in the light of intruders; and muttering something about "manners, and people that couldn't appreciate poetry," he offered his arm to Miss Fidgety, and, in company with that estimable lady, moved away.

"Aw—yes!" said Mr. Dandy Primrose, eying the departing Augustus through his glass, and addressing himself to Miss Pimp. "It's all vewy well, poodles and poetwy, in thaw places; but we don't want them here—Eh! Miss Lucinda—he, he, he!"

"No, Mr. Dandy, we don't want them here," simpered Miss Pimp—"he, he, he!"

Meantime, Harold Bolingbroke found, perhaps, a colder reception by the heiress than he had counted on; for drawing herself up proudly, Evangeline returned a very formal bow to his somewhat obsequious salutation. This individual was richly dressed, with scrupulous attention to both fashion and taste. His countenance was rather handsome than otherwise, and would have been prepossessing, but for certain cunning and sinister expressions, which shone in his dark eyes, and lurked around the corners of his mouth, together with a rakish and dissolute look. His features were well formed and intellectual, with bright, animated eyes, a nose slightly aquiline, thin lips, and a dark complexion. He wore neatly curled whiskers and moustaches, moved with easy grace, was polished in his manners, had a good address, and was a man, in fact, every way calculated to shine in the world of fashion.

"I am most happy," he said to Evangeline, notwithstanding her proud, cold look, "in being honored by an introduction to one whom I have often heard spoken of, as being distinguished both for her beauty and intellect."

"If, then," answered Evangeline, with a dignified reserve of manner, "Mr. Bolingbroke considers me entitled to the latter, I trust he will not offend further, by barefaced flattery."

"Excuse me, Miss Montrose," rejoined the other, coloring, and slightly embarrassed, "I intended no flattery, and spoke nothing but truth. If truth is considered flattery, I suppose I must plead guilty."

Evangeline slightly bowed, but made no reply; and a silence ensued, during which the features of Harold flushed and paled alternately, and it was evident he felt *cut*, confused, and indignant. At this moment, to the great relief of all parties, the host himself joined the circle.

"Ah!" he said, smiling complacently, and rubbing his hands together: "All enjoying yourselves here, I perceive. Well, that's right—glad to see it. I beg pardon, ladies and gentlemen, for interrupting your agreeable conversation, and withdrawing Eva; but the fact is, there are several individuals in the other part of the saloon, who are anxious to make her acquaintance. Ah! Mr. Bolingbroke—happy to see you—how are you this evening, sir?—not had the pleasure of meeting you before." Here, to the surprise of his daughter, who remembered the conversation of the day previous, he shook the hand of the other very cordially. "Making love to the ladies, eh! as usual—ha, ha, ha!"

"But not very *successfully*," replied Harold, pointedly, and glancing at Evangeline.

"Eh! Ah! You're a sly one," rejoined the host, laughing and winking at his guest. "But come, Eva. Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen;" and bowing and taking the arm of his daughter, he moved away.

"By heavens!" muttered Bolingbroke, mentally, looking after the retreating form of our heroine; "there she goes, a perfect gem—lovely as Venus, proud as Lucifer, rich as Crœsus, and cold as marble. By heavens! she shall be mine, though I move the spirits of the infernal regions for it!" With this, he sauntered leisurely to a part of the saloon where he could observe and study her unnoticed.

"So you have been introduced to Bolingbroke, I perceive," said Montrose to his daughter, as they separated from the circle. "Well, Eva, my child, make a conquest there—it's all right. I have been conversing with Judge Gravity, on the matter we were speaking of, and he seems to think there is no mistake as to his being what he represents himself; and says, if he had a daughter, he shouldn't fear to marry her to him; on the contrary, would be glad to do so—and the Judge is a shrewd man and ought to know."

"But, father—"

"Tut! tut! girl; now none of your nonsense; but do as I say, and all will be right. I know what is best for you, I'm thinking. By-the-by, what is that young Everett doing here to-night? and who invited him? I didn't, I know; and your mother says she didn't either."

On the mention of the name of Everett, Evangeline crimsoned to the eyes, and seemed greatly confused; but collecting herself by an effort, she stammered forth:

"Is—Is he—he here, then, father?"

"Indeed, is he! and mistaking him for another, I came nigh shaking hands with him, before I discovered my mistake, which luckily I did in time to let him know he was not to be thus honored in such an assemblage as this," replied the worldly man, with a smile of contempt.

"Why, you did not *cut* him, father, on discovering your mistake?" asked Evangeline, breathlessly.

"Indeed I did! and in a way he felt it too, I assure you; for his face turned the color of red flannel."

"And for what reason did you thus?"

"For what *reason?*" repeated Montrose, angrily.—"For what reason, girl! Why, because he has no business here. Is he not a poor orphan, without distinction, whom nobody knows nor cares for? What business has he in a fashionable circle, I should like to know?"

"But very little, I presume," replied Evangeline, indignantly; "for he is a man of *sense*, which is more than I can say for any other I have seen here to-night. Even supposing he had no right here, that is no reason why he should not be treated as a gentleman, so long as he behaves himself as such. But let me tell you he *has* a right, for he is here by my express invitation."

"Your invitation?" exclaimed Montrose, pausing in astonishment, and facing his daughter with an angry look. "Your invitation? *You*, invite *him?*"

"I did invite *him*--Arthur Everett," answered Evangeline, proudly, with heightened color and flashing eyes; "and I wish him treated respectfully—otherwise I will quit the saloon and retire to my own apartment."

"Child! child!—you—you—you—" began Montrose, angrily; but at this moment Judge Gravity suddenly approached; and curbing his temper on the instant, the ambitious man turned to him with a bland smile. "Ah, Judge, very opportune—ha, ha! Allow me, Judge Gravity—my daughter, Evangeline."

The Judge—a corpulent, full-faced, dry old bachelor of sixty, with white hair, whose principal delight was in parties and dinners, wine and women—now bowed profoundly, and said, with a smile, but in a gruff voice:

"I am most happy of your acquaintance, Miss Montrose; and I think, if I were on the bench, and you a prisoner at the bar, I should charge the jury very strongly to think twice before bringing you in guilty, and all on account of that lovely face. Egad! if I were twenty years younger, I—Eh! Montrose—ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, Judge, no flattery," said Evangeline, with a smile; "for I think I have had enough of that to-night."

"Ah—ha! *Meritum est tuum.* You deserve it all, you rogue—ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, but, Judge, *Ne quid nimis,* giving you Latin for Latin. Too much of a thing spoils all, you know, and so—adieu;" and bowing as she spoke, Evangeline and her father passed on, leaving the Judge staring after her, and muttering:

"A fine lass that, and a smart one. She quotes Latin like an old lawyer. Egad! if I were only twenty years younger——Ahem! Judge Gravity—have a care of thyself—have a care, man!"

Evangeline was now formally presented, by her father, to several ladies and gentlemen, in rapid succession, among whom, of the latter class, was Dr. Bleedem—a tall, thin, pale man, dressed in black, with green specks—who remarked to a friend, with whom he had been holding a scientific discussion: "That she would make a most elegant subject for phlebotomy and dissection." She was also presented to Gen. Shotwell, a large, noble specimen of humanity, in full uniform; and to the Hon. Mr. Stumper, M. C., a plump, oily-faced, cunning politician, both of whom were heard to make remarks characteristic of their profession; the former observing: "That she was just such a woman as a soldier would fight and die for; being one of those that always make a target of a man's heart, and fit to command a regiment;" and the latter saying: "That he would be satisfied in being returned by two majority, if he could see the extra votes polled by two as lovely beings as the one before him."

At length, the introductions over, Evangeline embraced the first opportunity of gliding away from her company unnoticed, and approaching Arthur Everett, who was still seated where we first described him to the reader.

"Arthur," she said, as she gained his side, frankly extending her hand with a sweet smile—a favor she had bestowed on but very few of the other guests—"I fear you are not enjoying yourself here to-night."

"Then your fears are not groundless, Miss Montrose," replied the other, somewhat coldly.

"Arthur! this from you?" said Evangeline, reproachfully, her beautiful features becoming very pale.

"Pardon me, Miss Montrose; but the *serf* must not presume too much upon the *countess*."

"This is strange language, to come from you, Mr. Everett! You were not wont to talk thus—nor be so formal in your address."

"True! but I am older now—every day adds experience; and I have learned that to-night which I shall not soon forget."

"And what is that?"

"My place and yours."

"I do not understand you."

"Then will I be more explicit. I have learned to-night, that there is no more affinity between the rich man of fashion and the poor nameless orphan like myself, than there is between Heaven and Hell; and that the great gulf which divides the two, is scarcely more impassable, than the one which separates you and me forever."

"Good Heavens! Ar—— Mr. Everett—how strangely you speak!" exclaimed Evangeline, as she sunk upon a rich crimson velvet ottoman, her features flushing and paling alternately, and her bosom heaving like the sea after a storm.

"Perchance I do speak somewhat strangely," said Everett, with a sigh, and softening his voice as he observed the emotion of the other; "but I speak only the truth, nevertheless. At your urgent request, Eva, and contrary to my own inclination, I came hither to-night; and what has been the result? I have not only been treated with scorn, but have been openly insulted, and that, too, by your father! Fool, fool that I was!" he continued, bitterly: "I, the poor, nameless Arthur Everett—a bankrupt's son—to *dare* to place myself on anything like an equality with these *things* of fashion! But I have seen the folly of my presumption. I shall now endeavor to retrieve the error, as much as possible, by departing immediately; and which I would have done ere this, but for my desire of informing you wherefore I leave thus early."

"Since I know the cause, Arthur, I cannot censure your decision; though, believe me, I shall regret your absence exceedingly; but you will call again to-morrow, Arthur?"

"Perhaps I may; as I shall wish to see you once again, prior to my leaving the country forever."

"Leaving the country forever!" gasped Evangeline, repeating the words in astonishment, and turning deadly pale. "Good Heaven! Arthur, what mean you?"

"As I have said, Evangeline," replied Arthur, with emotion: "My decision is made. Think you I can tarry here and see you wedded to another? you, who have been my schoolmate, my playmate, in childhood? with whom, in days of innocence, I have rambled over these lovely hills? you, who have occupied my thoughts by day and my dreams by night? you, who have been the hope, support, and guiding star of a soul long borne down by misfortune, and suffering the contumely of a heartless world? No! Evangeline! I love you too deeply for that."

"But, Arthur," said Evangeline, breathlessly, "you talk more strangely than ever. I wed another! What other do you mean?"

"And do you not *know*, Eva?"

"I do not."

"Harold Bolingbroke."

"Never!" exclaimed Evangeline, indignantly. "I wed him? Never! Sooner would I have my corpse borne to the mouldering churchyard."

"Right, Eva!" rejoined Arthur, almost wildly; "for the last would be the better destiny. Swear it, Eva! and I know you will keep your oath."

"As I hope for Heaven, Arthur, I swear I will never wed Harold Bolingbroke!"

"Enough! I am satisfied. I would not have put you to your oath, Eva, only that I believe him to be a villain, and know it the design of your father to wed you to him; for I heard as much this morning, in a conversation between himself and another; besides, such is the rumor abroad."

"Why, how can that be? I never saw him till this evening!" said Evangeline in astonishment.

"I know not how; but such is the report I have heard, and since I last saw you. But I see your mother coming, and so I will be gone, ere I meet with further insult. Adieu, dearest Eva! and though I feel there is an impassable barrier between us, yet it will be a consolation to me, when far away, to know thy oath divides thee from the villain Bolingbroke. Farewell, until I see thee again, and for the last time."

With this, Arthur strode away, leaving Evangeline pale and motionless as marble; in which condition she was found by her mother, who now joined her. Mrs. Montrose was still a rather handsome woman, who dressed very gay, and prided herself on being *a la mode*. The most prominent expression of her countenance was a cold, cautious, haughty look, which sometimes changed to one of sickly affectation, if she fancied herself in the presence of a superior. Her eyes were small and dark—nose pointed—lips thin—and her voice rather shrill.

"I am astonished at you,

Eva," she said, as she came up, "for sitting here and talking with that upstart of a fellow, Everett, in the presence of so many fashionable people, who would not deign to notice him. Why, girl, if this is the way you conduct yourself, on your debut night, you will lose all cast in society, I can tell you. Come, the Misses Caxon are playing the piano, yonder, and several calls have been made for you. They are excellent players both; but I know you can excel them, if you choose, which will be a splendid triumph, and one that will be talked of by all the TON. Mercy, though, how pale you look!" continued Mrs. Montrose, as she noticed her daughter's features now for the first time. "What is the matter? Has that fellow, Everett, dared—"

"Nothing, mother," interrupted Evangeline, as she rose from her seat. "I felt somewhat faint, that is all. It is over now—so come!" and taking her mother's arm, she moved forward, to join the gay, worldly throng, with whom her heart was not.

Meantime, Everett gained the door leading into the hall, and just as he had passed through he heard a quick, light step behind him, felt a hand lightly tap his shoulder, and, on turning round, found himself confronted by Harold Bolingbroke. The features of the latter were now deadly pale, his lips white and compressed, and his eyes fiery.

"Sir!" he said, in a suppressed voice of passion; "my name is Harold Bolingbroke!"

"Well, sir!" returned the other, drawing himself up haughtily, "mine is Arthur Everett!"

"While passing near where you and Miss Montrose were sitting, a short time since, I accidentally heard my name mentioned, and listening further, I heard my character traduced, sir! and by you, Mr. Everett."

"Doubtless!" replied Arthur, coldly. "Listeners rarely hear any good of themselves."

"Sir! you are a villain!"

"I have already said as much of you."

"I demand satisfaction, sir!"

"You shall have it, sir! when you please, where you please, and how you please," retorted Everett; "and the sooner the better."

"Then, sir!" rejoined Harold, "let it be to-morrow—ten o'clock—Granite Hollow—pistols, and ten paces."

"I shall be there, sir!" said Arthur; and the two parted—the one to leave, the other to join, the gay throng of fashion and folly.

"At the proper hour, the guests were invited to partake of a grand supper, prepared in the drawing room; after which came wine, toasts, music dancing, cards, chess, back-gammon, &c., &c., until the revel broke up.

That night Allan Montrose and Harold Bolingbroke sat at a table apart from the others, playing cards and drinking wine, from which the former arose one thousand dollars winner.

It was his first fatal step toward ruin and death!

CHAPTER IV.

THE DUEL AND FLIGHT.

ON quitting the gay assemblage described in the preceding chapter, with feelings that drove him almost to madness, Arthur Everett shaped his course directly towards the village, previously mentioned as standing on the banks of the Ohio, to the right of the mansion of Bellefont, and under the hill of which that elegant structure formed the crowning point. This village, which we shall call Redmond, had been the residence of Arthur since a mere child—his father having removed hither from an eastern settlement, some sixteen or eighteen years prior to the date of our story.

The father of Arthur, at that period, was a man of some property, who had been bred to mercantile transactions; and immediately on his arrival in Redmond, he opened a store, and, for a number of years following, did a flourishing business; but being a man of excellent heart, he had been prevailed upon to go security for a friend, to a large amount, who, absconding, left him beholden, which, together with one or two unfortunate speculations, that he happened at the time to be engaged in, reduced him at once from affluence to poverty. The shock proved too much for his physical system, which was not in good health, and he shortly after died, leaving a widow, and Arthur—an only child—to mourn the loss of a kind husband and parent. Mrs. Everett did not long survive her partner; and at the age of eighteen, Arthur was thrown upon the world a poor orphan.

During the period of the Everetts' affluence, Allan Montrose and his lady had seen proper to associate with them; and, in consequence thereof, Arthur and Evangeline had been thrown much together in their childhood. As the former told, the latter, they had been schoolmates and playmates, and had together, many a time, rambled over the lovely hills in the vicinity. They seemed born and fitted for each other—their tastes and feelings were in unison—and it was only a natural consequence, that two such beings, of ardent temperaments, whose likings were mutual then, should, as they ripened in years, become mutually attached, by a deep-er and holier tie. It is not improbable, moreover, that had the Everetts continued prosperous, this attachment of Arthur and Evangeline would have found encouragement from the parents of both; but Montrose and his lady, as we have shown, were worldly people; and after the failure of Everett, no idea perhaps could have been advanced, more preposterous to them, than that of uniting themselves, by the marriage of an only daughter, to a family whom they now passed by in cold contempt. And furthermore, as they themselves had, at one bold stroke, broken off associations of years' standing, they believed that their daughter had done the same, and therefore thought no more upon the matter; but in this they erred; for Evangeline and Arthur still continued to meet frequently, though perhaps less openly than before, and grew stronger in their love, as adversity ennobled the one, and drew out the sympathies of the other.

But there came a time of painful separation for the lovers; and this occurred some three years before the date of our story, when Evangeline had been sent abroad to finish her education, from which we have previously noticed her return. Prior to her departure, Arthur had put himself under the tuition of an excellent lawyer in the village, for whom he acted as clerk, in order to defray his expenses, and with whom he had remained during the absence of Evangeline—studying diligently, night and day, that he might rise in his profession, and be worthy of the being he loved. They had corresponded somewhat regularly during the time of separation, they had opened their young hearts fully to each other, and hope had buoyed up the spirits of each, that at no very distant day they would be united forever. On the return of Evangeline, they had met, had experienced the happiest hour of their lives, and Arthur had then reluctantly accepted the pressing invitation of the lovely being by his side, to be present at the celebration of her eighteenth birth-day. There it was, among that heartless, dazzling throng, that the proud, sensitive mind of Arthur Everett had felt more keenly the stings of poverty than at any previous moment of his life; there it was that he for the first time had been made sensible of the utter fallacy of his hopes of gaining the hand of Evangeline Montrose with the consent of her worldly parents; and there it was, in lonely meditation on the slight put upon him by her father himself, that he had first formed the desperate resolution of quitting the country immediately and forever—the reasons for which, as we have seen, he subsequently made known to the heiress herself.

Such is a brief outline of the past history of Arthur Everett, and the relative position of himself and Evangeline to each other, at the time of his departure from the mansion, suffering from ruined hopes, and smarting under the slight of Montrose, and the insult of Bolingbroke. With a hurried step he passed through the grounds of Bellefont, and, gaining the highway, accelerated his speed, to keep pace with his wild thoughts, until he reached the village of Redmond, or, rather, until he reached a small building near its centre, from which a bright light was shining into the dark street. Rapping hastily on the door, and scarcely waiting an anwer, he opened it, and entered a small office, where a young man, about his own age, was sitting, with a book in his hand, who, on his entrance, looked up in surprise, and said:

"Why, Arthur, this you? I thought you were at the party on the hill."

"Henry, I want your assistance," gasped Arthur, as, pale and trembling, he staggered to a seat.

"Good Heaven!" cried the other, starting to his feet; "how pale you look, Arthur? What is the matter?—what has happened?"

"Much, Henry—much!" answered Arthur, struggling to compose himself, while his eyes glared wildly, and his breath came quick and short, with a choking sensation. "The world has grown rich and wise, Henry, and we are fools! nay, worse than fools! dupes of our own conceit—and poor besides; *poor!* mind I say that! poverty's *slaves!* a thousand times worse than idiots!"

"Why, Arthur, what mean you? are you mad?" cried Henry, in alarm.

"I know not—perhaps so—my brain seems on fire: by Heavens! Henry, I believe I am mad!" rejoined Arthur, wildly. "Yet stay—be not alarmed—I am growing calmer. Listen! I went to Bellefont, as I told you I intended to do when we parted. I was then in high, good spirits—now you see me here a miserable man!—and three hours have been sufficient for it all."

"But what has happened?"

"Much! Evangeline Montrose can never be mine. I have been insulted—challenged—have accepted, and you must be my second."

"Insulted and challenged!" repeated the other; "and by whom?"

"A villain! Harold Bolingbroke."

"Do you fight with pistols!"

"Ay! at ten paces."

"Why, he is considered a dead shot!"

"Well!"

"Well, Arthur! Why, you are but little better than a dead man, if you fight with him!"

"All the same to me, Henry. I care not for consequences. I will meet him, unless he prove recreant; and if he escape my aim—why, let him, and I will pardon him all past offences. Can I depend on your assistance?—time, ten o'clock to-morrow — place, Granite Hollow."

"You can."

"Enough! I will arrange all my affairs to-night, and if I fall, so be it. If he fall, and I escape, I must have the means of quitting the country forthwith—therefore have a fiery steed ready, to bear me to L——, where a boat will leave at eleven for New Orleans."

"All shall be arranged as you desire."

"Thank you, Henry, my friend!" said Arthur, rising, and grasping the hand of the other warmly. "Circumstances *may* place me in a situation to do you a favor in return; if so, count on me. And now, adieu for the night, as I have much to do before I sleep."

Seeking his own apartment, Arthur sat down, and, after several fruitless trials, at length succeeded in inditing an epistle to Evangeline Montrose, which, having thrice read, and sealed, he concealed about his person, to be given her, in case he should be mortally wounded and die upon the field. He then wrote another, which he superscribed to the lawyer with whom he had been living. He then proceeded to place all his most valuable articles in a trunk, which he labeled to the care of his friend, Henry Vance. This done, he betook himself to bed; but his sleep, what little he experienced, was broken and feverish, and full of strange and startling dreams.

On the following day, about nine o'clock, Arthur, in company with his friend Henry, quitted the village of Redmond, and straightway repaired to Granite Hollow, to encounter his mortal foe, Harold Bolingbroke.

The place of meeting was a beautiful and retired spot, some half a mile to the rear of the park of Bellefont Retreat, and on the estate owned by Montrose. It was the bottom of a basin, formed by surrounding hills, one of which rose high and precipitous, covered with the granite rock, from which the hollow derived its leading title. It was a celebrated resort for pic-nic parties, and was in consequence known to almost every person living in the vicinity.

"We are in advance of our opponents, it seems, Arthur,"

said Henry, as the two friends came upon the ground, and found themselves sole masters of the field; "and so we will occupy our time in selecting the spot best adapted to our present purpose, until they come—unless," he added musingly, "they fail us entirely."

"*Fail!*" echoed Arthur, with flashing eyes. "Umph! let the villain *dare* to fail, and I will publicly cowhide and brand him as a coward."

"He has ten minutes yet left him," said Henry, looking at his watch. "Now remember, Arthur, my instruction, and fire at the word 'one'—or you are a dead man. It is your only hope."

"Are you sure," inquired Arthur, "that the horse is stationed where I said, close to the highway?"

"I am sure, Arthur."

"Whether I fall or escape, Henry, you will not forget my instructions?"

"They shall all be faithfully executed, Arthur. But see! they come!"

As Henry spoke, three individuals were seen descending the hill towards the east, whom, as they came up, he recognized as Harold Bolingbroke, Frederic Story, (his second,) and Dr. Bleedem, surgeon. Harold, on the present, as well as on the occasion of his introduction to the reader, was scrupulously and elegantly dressed; wearing, among other costly garments, a white, embroidered vest, fine ruffled shirt, and white kid gloves. His face was pale, with compressed lips, around which lurked—as he somewhat insolently surveyed, from head to foot, the person of Arthur—a sneering, sinister smile. Arthur returned his look, with one of cold, haughty contempt.

"Have you made your *will* yet, Mr. Everett, and spoken for an undertaker?" inquired Harold tauntingly, as the seconds moved aside to arrange preliminaries.

"Yes, I have made my *will*, and appointed myself executor," replied Arthur quietly, suppressing all show of passion. "And if this arm, and eye, and weapon fail me not, you, Mr. Bolingbroke, shall be my *heir!* As to the undertaker, he will doubtless be supplied by the party employing the surgeon."

Harold bit his lips, and was about to make an angry retort, when the seconds announced that all was ready, and immediately proceeded to arrange the principals in their respective places, ten paces apart.

"I am to give the word," whispered Henry to Arthur, as he handed him his pistol; "and now remember to fire at 'one;' and even should you miss your antagonist, you will be more likely to escape yourself, by confusing him, and drawing his fire unawares. Adieu, my friend, and God protect you!" and shaking him warmly by the hand, Henry retired.

There was now a moment of silent and solemn suspense, as the two mortal foes stood, weapon in hand, coldly eying each other and waiting the signal, which would, perhaps, send one or both to eternity.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?" said the clear voice of Henry Vance, breaking the almost awful stillness.

"Ready!" replied both Arthur and Harold, at the same time.

"Fire!—One——"

At the first word both pistols were raised, and the second was drowned in the sharp report of Arthur's, followed instantly by that of Harold's, who, as he fired, staggered back and sunk to the earth, with a groan. Arthur was unharmed—though the ball of his antagonist had passed through his clothes, and slightly grazed the skin over one of his ribs—and, together with the others, he sprung forward to learn the extent of his injury,

"Fly, sir!" said Dr. Bleedem, turning to our hero, after a slight examination of the wound of the other. "Fly, sir! if you wish to escape: Harold Bolingbroke's last great debt of nature will soon be canceled."

Arthur tarried to learn no more; but grasping the hand of Henry, he wrung it hard and said, with emotion:

"God bless you, my friend! and if we never meet again, let me assure you, while Arthur Everett lives, you will never be forgotten. Lend a hand to the wounded man, if your services are needed; and so farewell—farewell!" and brushing a tear from his eye, he turned aside, and darted up the hill nearest to Bellefont with great rapidity.

The direct course of Arthur to the highway, where the horse provided by Henry stood concealed, lay but a little to the left of the splendid residence of Evangeline Montrose; and as he came to the park wall, a thousand old associations revived in his breast, and he determined on seeing her once again, though it were but to bid her a hasty farewell. As he came opposite the mansion, he accidentally discovered a low place in the wall surrounding the park, and rushing to, he managed by great dexterity to scale it, though at the imminent risk of getting a serious fall. Gaining the park, he darted forward up the slope, amid a beautiful grove, directly toward the building itself; and in a few moments, pale and panting, he stood upon the marble steps leading up to the main entrance.

"Is Miss Evangeline at home?" inquired he, hurriedly, of a negro menial who was standing in the doorway.

"Ye-ye-yesah, massa—she at home—but—"

"Tell her Arthur Everett wishes to speak with her immediately."

"Ye-yesah, massa—like to 'blige ye massa—but—but de fac' is, ye see, Massa Montrose say as how I musn't neber not let you in here again no more, sah!"

"Did he?" said Arthur, with flashing eyes, and setting his teeth hard. "Then your master is a knave! and if he ever crosses my path, I will tell him so. Here is a dollar for you; and now be quick, and carry my message, and I promise I will never trouble you nor your master again."

The negro seized the money with avidity, but seemed to hesitate about the propriety of complying with Arthur's request, when, and just as the latter was on the point of giving vent to his impatience in words, our heroine herself, pale and agitated, suddenly stood before him.

"Ar-a-a—Mr. Everett," she said, "I overheard your directions to the negro, that you wished to speak with me."

"Evangeline," answered Arthur, somewhat wildly, "this is no time to stand on ceremony! You now behold me, probably for the last time."

"And—and—is it so?" gasped Evangeline, trembling violently, and motioning the negro to depart.

"It is so, dear Eva—it is so!" replied Arthur, in a tremulous voice, with quivering lips. "Fate has now sealed our final and immediate separation. I am a fugitive, flying from justice."

"Gracious heavens! Arthur, what mean you?"

"Our conversation last night was overheard by Bolingbroke. As I left the saloon, he followed, insulted, and challenged me. We have fought, and the surgeon says his wound is mortal."

"Good Heaven!" gasped Evangeline, clinging to the doorway for support.

"I have come to say farewell, Eva, and repeat what I told you last night, that our roads through life are different. I must tarry no longer. One kiss, dearest Eva!—the last favor I must ever ask of the being I love." As he spoke, Arthur timidly approached, and pressed his lips to those of Evangeline. A slight pressure was returned, and a faint voice said:

"Fly, Arthur!—farewell! God bless——" and the speaker sunk senseless into the young man's arms.

There was not a moment to be lost; and calling for aid, Arthur consigned the lovely form of Evangeline, the idol of his heart, to the care of the first menial who approached, with the information that she had suddenly fainted; and then turning away, with what feelings we leave to the reader's imagination, he flew down the central path to the postern gate, gained the highway, and, in less than ten minutes from that time, was mounted, and riding with terrible velocity towards the city of L——.

An hour from his parting with Evangeline Montrose, and Arthur Everett had quitted the land of his adoption, the scenes of his childhood, and the home of his thoughts, to behold them no more for many long and wearying years.

CHAPTER V.

THE RUINED MAN'S LAST HOPE.

In the preceding chapter, we left two of our characters in critical situations, namely, Harold Bolingbroke and Evangeline Montrose; and though it is not our design, in the present instance, to enter into any detail concerning them, yet a few passing remarks may not here be improper.

Harold, by the orders of Dr. Bleedem, was conveyed to Bellefont, as being the nearest residence to Granite Hollow, where he was placed upon a bed, in a state of insensibility. The wound, upon close examination, was found to be not absolutely mortal, yet so dangerous that but little hope was entertained by the doctor of his recovery. The ball, which had penetrated his right side, was, after much difficulty, and danger to the life of the patient, extracted; and from that time the symptoms of the wounded man became more and more favorable; though for weeks, he was confined closely to his bed, and his condition considered, at the best, very precarious. Slowly, and by degrees, however, he recovered; and at the expiration of some six weeks from the duel, he was able to sit up and walk across the apartment, wherein, by the orders of Dr. Bleedem, he was still held a prisoner.

But Harold Bolingbroke was not the only patient of the worthy M. D., in that elegant mansion. On the departure of Everett, Evangeline of Bellefont had been borne to her own apartment, in a swooning state—from which she revived, only to pass into a delirious fever—and for several days her life was despaired of; but, like Harold, she gradually gained a state of convalescence, to the unbounded delight of her parents, who, as their only hope, had hung over her night and day, in a state bordering on distraction.

Some two months from the foregoing events, Evangeline had recovered so as to be somewhat abroad; and, at the pressing instance of her parents, had mingled again in society; but the rose was no longer on her cheek, and the fresh, happy, buoyant look of former days, had given place to one of pale, sweet melancholy. This, however, as it rather added to her beauty, troubled her parents but little—they believing it caused by a foolish whim, which, in time, would pass away, without any serious result to the idol of their hopes.

Bolingbroke continued a guest at the mansion, until the surgeon pronounced him out of danger. During the latter part of his stay, he and Montrose were much together, in some private apartment, where in fact most of their nights were spent, in drinking wine and playing cards, the consequences of which were soon apparent, in the changed manners of the worthy host of Bellefont. From being a man of strict habits—who always rose at a certain hour, was ever punctual in his engagements, and scrupulously exact in the matter of dress—he gradually began to show habits of dissipation, had red, swollen eyes, rose late in the morning, neglected his business, and grew slovenly in his person,—appearing at one time flushed and flurried—at another, pale and abstracted. This remarkable change in one who might have been correctly termed a man of system, even to a bow or a tie of his cravat, could not long escape the eyes of his wife and daughter, who viewed it with feelings of alarm, and guessed the cause; though all interrogations put to him on the subject, received the most vague and unsatisfactory replies.

After having recovered from his wound, and taken up his abode elsewhere, Bolingbroke, by his continual visits, became almost as constant a guest at Bellefont as before; and, ere long, it was rumored abroad, that he was an accepted suitor of Evangeline Montrose, and was only waiting a favorable opportunity to lead her to the altar. This latter, perhaps, was true; but the former was not, most decidedly; for Evangeline could never endure his presence; and when forced, by the rules of good breeding and the peremptory commands of her father, to be near and listen to the remarks of Harold, and reply to his interrogations, she ever displayed such haughty reserve, as would have chilled and disheartened any one less obdurate, presumptuous, and determined than himself.

Thus, month upon month passed away, a year rolled a round, and still matters at Bellefont apparently remained much the same as on the opening of our story, with the exception of some rumors abroad, that Montrose had become a dissipated and altered man, and a few hints thrown out by his enemies, that he was growing somewhat embarrassed in his pecuniary affairs.

We say matters at Bellefont were *apparently* much the same at the end of a year; but in reality they were very different, as will be seen by an interview which took place about this time between Montrose and his daughter.

Both were together by themselves, in the same apartment where they were first introduced to the reader. The features of Montrose, on this occasion, were pale and haggard, and there was a wildness in his eye, and a certain nervousness in his motions, as he surveyed the sweet, melancholy countenance of Evangeline, who had repaired hither by his orders, such as she had never seen before, and which now excited both her fears and her sympathy. For some moments Montrose eyed his daughter without speaking, when she said, in a voice of much tenderness:

"Are you ill, dear father?"

Montrose started, pressed his hand to his temples, and a painful expression swept over his features, as he replied:

"Ill, Eva! I am more than ill—I am wretched."

"Wretched, father?" cried his daughter, in alarm.

"Ay, wretched—that's the word. By heavens! I think I shall go mad!"

"You alarm me, father! What has happened?"

"Much, child, much!"

"O, pray do not keep me in suspense!"

"Do you remember, Eva, the conversation I had with you, in this apartment, the day preceding the one that made you eighteen, concerning Harold Bolingbroke?"

"I do, father."

"I wish to renew it on the present occasion."

"Indeed! and wherefore?"

"To know your present opinion regarding him."

"It is quickly told, father. It is nothing changed from then—at least, nothing for the better. I can not bear him in my company—I fairly loathe the sight of him."

"Has he ever acted improperly towards you?"

"Never!"

"Then wherefore this utter repugnance?"

"Because I believe him an unprincipled villain, and wholly unworthy the countenance of any honest woman."

"Well, I suppose you can give your reasons for so thinking," rejoined Montrose, coldly; "and I should like to hear them."

"Reasons, father! Why, in the first place, is he not a gambler?"

"Well, well," said the other, hastily, "perhaps he—he does play sometimes—but—"

"But what, father?" cried Evangeline, in angry surprise, interrupting him. "Is not that enough?"

Montrose crimsoned to the eyes, then suddenly became very pale, and his whole frame quivered, as he replied:

"Why you—you know, Eva, its a very common thing for young men to play sometimes."

"And does the general evil make the individual case any less a fault?" inquired the other, fastening her eyes earnestly upon her father. "Does the crime of a community make each actor less a criminal?"

"Perhaps not, Eva; but its natural, you know, for one to imitate another."

"In doing wrong, I will admit. But there is a difference between the man who plays occasionally, and the one who follows it for a living. Harold Bolingbroke is a gambler of the latter class; and I wonder that you, father, will demean yourself, by associating with him, and having him about your premises."

"But how do you know he is a professional gambler?"

"I have proof sufficient—have not *you*, father?"

Montrose seemed much confused, but did not reply.

"Besides," continued Evangeline, "he is a rake, and has seduced——"

"O, yes, I have heard," said Montrose, interrupting her, "I have heard some trumped up story about some country rustic."

"Well, father?"

"Well, fiddle-sticks! You—you make me angry, child."

"Because I have given my reasons for detesting Harold Bolingbroke?"

"Because—nonsense! But to the point. Like him or dislike him, there are reasons why you must wed him."

"*Wed* him, father?"

"Ay, *wed* him—that's the word."

"Never!" cried Evangeline, with vehemence.

"But you must, Eva—you must."

"Never, I say! I have so sworn, and I will not break my oath. And can you, father, so far forget yourself, as to tell me I *must* wed the man I despise and hold in horror! No! no! you do not, can not mean it!"

"But there are circumstances, Eva."

"Circumstances, say you? and what circumstances can induce a father to ask his only child to sacrifice her happiness?"

"Ruin and dishonor!"

"What mean you?"

"I am a beggar now, Eva!"

"A beggar?" gasped the other.

"Ay, *beggar!*—that's the word. The secret must out, and you must hear it. Hark ye! I have gambled, and lost all—everything—every farthing. My estate, personal property and money, are all gone, and in the hands of Harold Bolingbroke."

"Gracious Heaven!" gasped Evangeline, clinging to the table, near which she was sitting, for support.

"There is only *one* way that I can be saved from utter ruin," continued Montrose.

"And that?" said the other, quickly.

"And that is by your marrying Bolingbroke; in which case the main portion of my property will be restored to me."

"And did he *dare* propose such insulting terms?"

"He proposed the terms, it is true; but I can see no insult in them."

"Alas! alas! woe is me!" cried Evangeline, wringing her hands in agony.

"And will you not comply, Eva, and save me from ruin and disgrace?"

"Comply—marry the man I now detest more than ever? Never! father—never!"

"But consider, child, my gray hairs, your mother, the disgrace of us all, and what the world will say to our poverty!"

"*You* should have considered all this, father, and shunned the viper ere he stung you! but no considerations on earth could induce me to unite myself with the villain Bolingbroke. I will work for you—slave for you—do anything you may ask—but wed Bolingbroke I never will, so help me Heaven!

"And that is the only thing that can save me," groaned Montrose, while large drops of perspiration, started forth by mental agony, stood on his troubled countenance. "This is unkind of you, Eva, and unjust; that you, for a silly school-girl whim, should force your parents—who have labored hard and watched over you carefully—to utter ruin and unhappiness."

"With your views of the world, father, with your ideas of society, it may perhaps seem as you say, unjust; but sooner would I put a dagger to this already wretched heart, than comply with the terms proposed."

"Well, then, let the consequences follow—I shall say no more. Go, child—leave me—go!"

"Nay, but father——"

"No more, Eva, no more! Go!"

Evangeline arose, her eyes swimming in tears, and silently obeyed. As she departed, Harold Bolingbroke entered the apartment by another door.

"You have heard!" said Montrose, turning toward him a pale, troubled countenance.

"I have!" answered the other, compressing his lips, and frowning darkly: "She rejects me!"

"Peremptorily."

"The opportunity for her to do so again will never occur. Had she accepted the proposition, I would have abided by my offer. *Now* she shall know what it is to be poor!" and a grim smile played darkly over his features.

"But remember, Bolingbroke, I am a ruined man. I did my best—the fault was not mine—I trust you will not be severe upon me."

"Montrose," answered the other, coldly, "we played high, and I won. Had I lost, *you* would have exacted all. I have already acted more generously by offering you one-half of what you once possessed, for your daughter's hand; and she, your daughter, has rejected the offer; should I be more liberal than your own flesh and blood?"

"But consider——"

"I have," interrupted the other, "considered everything. By fair winnings, I now hold in my possession your money, and the title deeds to your estate; besides notes, over and above what you are worth, according to your own statement, to the amount of ten thousand dollars, by which I can arrest and throw you into prison, at any moment."

Montrose groaned.

"Now mark me!" continued Harold: "I want no difficulty in this matter; and if you will vacate the premises peaceably, with your family, within a month, I will destroy all these obligations, and present you with a thousand dollars. Contest my right here, and I will put you to the extremity of the law!"

"But how, sir, if I prove they have been obtained illegally?"

"That you can not do," replied Harold, with a smile of peculiar meaning: "You have no proof that they were won by cards; and I have taken care, good sir, to have them all drawn up in a proper form."

Again Montrose groaned.

"Do you accept my offer?" continued Harold impatiently.

"And—and—is that the best you will propose?"

"I pledge you my word, sir, to be brief," answered the other, "that that is not only the *best*, but the *only* offer I will ever make you!"

"Oh, God!" groaned Montrose, covering his face with his hands, and trembling violently, "that it should ever come to this! Well, well," he added, after the pause of perhaps a minute, "I—I suppose I must submit to it."

"Am I to consider your answer in the affirmative?" asked the other coolly.

"Why, I suppose you must."

"'Tis well!" rejoined Bolingbroke; and he immediately quitted the apartment, leaving the ruined man of the world to his own bitter reflections.

Within a month from the

foregoing conversation, Allan Montrose and his family, to the surprise of every one who knew nothing of the cause, departed from the splendid mansion and grounds of Bellefont—homeless and friendless, with what feelings we shall not pretend to say—to seek the means of existence, by buffeting with a cold, calculating, selfish world.

Immediately on their departure, Harold Bolingbroke took possession as proprietor; and for months afterward, the walls of the mansion rung with the sounds of revelry and dissipation.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAST HOUR OF THE RUINED AND REPENTANT MAN OF THE WORLD.

"*Time is not of Years.*"

It was a cold, autumnal night, some three years from the date of our story, and the wind and rain were rushing fiercely against an old, low, dingy structure, that stood in one of the dark, narrow and filthy streets of L——. From a miserable window, of this mean habitation, shone forth a faint light, on the night in question, which stood on a plain deal table, in a scantily furnished apartment, wherein, on a low pallet, a man, past the meridian of life, lay dying. Around the bed of the sufferer stood three individuals—two of whom, a wife and daughter, were weeping bitterly; while the third, an attendant physician, was gazing upon the invalid, with a look of sorrow. The carriage and manner of the females, even in their grief, denoted people of high breeding; and there was that in their dress, which, though but little superior to the general appearance of the habitation itself, bespoke them persons who had seen better days. The features of the eldest of the two were sharp, thin, and apparently wasted by grief, anxiety and some inward disease; but those of the younger, although evidently more pale and thin than their wont, were still exceedingly beautiful. The face of the sick man had been so changed, by bodily ailment and mental suffering, that but little of its original expression could be seen there now His cheek bones were almost visible through a sallow skin, the cheeks themselves very hollow, the skin feverish and wrinkled, and the eyes sunken and death-like.

And this poor human being, only three years before, was the opulent, fashionable, aristocratic and worldly Allan Montrose; and those two females, his wife and daughter! How changed! how changed! Verily it is said, "Time is not of years."

For a few minutes the silence was unbroken, save by the sobbings of Mrs. Montrose and Evangeline, while the breath of the dying man came quick and short, and evidently with an effort.

"Eva," he said, at length, feebly turning his fading eyes upon his daughter: "Eva, did I dream it, or was there something said, not long since, about Harold Bolingbroke?"

"Nay, father," answered Evangeline, tenderly, "mention him not!"

"Yet tell me, my daughter, and truly; was there not something said of him of late?"

"Some week or ten days ago, dear father, I read an account in the paper of his arrest, for a very extensive forgery on a wealthy citizen of this city; and subsequently, it was stated, that several others, which have happened during the last five years, have been traced to him."

"Ah! I see, Eva—I see I was wrong in asking you to marry such a villain. Oh, God! what a wretch I have been! to squander all my property, and leave you two—my wife and daughter—without money and friends, in a heartless world!—but it is too late to repent now—at least, to retrieve the error."

"Ah! dearest father," said Evangeline, affectionately, taking him by the hand, "do not let these things trouble you now! The same Being who watched over us in our prosperity, will take care of us in our adversity; and the lesson we shall learn, of the fallibility of wealth, will suffice to draw our minds from things of earth, and teach us to prepare and look for happiness only beyond the grave."

"True, my daughter, true!—the only real happiness must be there. Since I have been upon this bed of death, I have seen the error of my former days, and felt it most keenly. I once thought, that the man who possessed the most wealth, enjoyed the most happiness; but it is not so. The nearest approach to happiness, on earth, springs from a guileless conscience, and a knowledge that we have improved, and still continue to improve, our talents in doing good—so that we may be able to say, let us be called at any moment, we have not lived in vain. I do not care to live my life over again, to go through once more the ills and vexations of earth—but were I to do so, with the knowledge I now possess, I should live a very different one. I am dying, I know—I am failing fast—and in a short time, at the longest, shall be in the boundless eternity, in the presence of my God; yet with the exception that I feel for the distress of you, my wife and daughter, I can say, this is the happiest moment of my existence.

"Once my whole theme, my whole ambition, was earthly gain; I set my heart, my soul, upon it; I won and I lost; and in losing, methinks I won; for it proved the means of opening my eyes to the true state of things, as they should exist, and led me to a preparation whereby I can meet death calmly and with pleasure. Weep not, Clara, my wife!—bear up nobly, what few days still remain to you!—for I see upon your pale, haggard features, the mark of the inward destroyer. Your days are already numbered. You have been my partner, in weal and in woe, for many years; and now, I trust, you will soon be my partner in a better land—for you can no longer enjoy pleasure here—where tears, pain, and parting will be no more."

"I trust it may be so," answered Mrs. Montrose, in a weak, tremulous voice, with a fresh burst of grief.

"Weep not, Eva!" continued the dying man; "bear up the best you can, my child!—you, who have always been good—and I trust, as you say, that He, who has watched over and protected you thus far, will still continue His protection, and terminate your existence as happily as you deserve. You will doubtless outlive both your parents, and become a poor, friendless orphan; but with your own views of what is right, and the painful experience you have now had, it will perhaps be needless for me to caution you against temptation. Had I heeded your counsels once, I should now, probably, have had the power of placing you above want; but I erred, and I now crave your forgiveness."

"Oh, you have it, dearest father, a thousand times over!" cried Evangeline, with emotion.

"Thank you, my child—thank you, Eva! I shall now die more happy still. Should you ever feel disposed to marry, my child, seek a man of virtue and intellect, but not one of wealth; for the first two will endure; but the last, as in my own case, may, in an unlucky moment, forever pass away."

"I shall never marry, father."

"Nay, my child, make no rash promises. If you could find a suitable partner, it would be far better for you, than to buffet against the world alone. There was, Eva, one that you loved, I know—and one who, I am satisfied loved you in return—who might have made you happy had not my selfish ambition driven him to other climes. He *may* return, though it is not probable; but should you ever behold him again, say to him, that on my death-bed I bitterly repented of the wrong I did him, and that he must forgive the dead, what the repentant living had not the power to ask of him. He, I am sure, will grant your request; for he was a high-spirited, noble-hearted youth."

"Should I ever behold him again, dearest father, I will joyfully repeat all that you have said; and I know that he will be ready to forgive and forget," replied Evangeline, earnestly, with tearful eyes.

"Well, my say is said—my task is over—and if in poverty, I am at least dying in peace. I forgive all my enemies, even Harold Bolingbroke, who has wronged me the most. God bless you, my friends! and prepare you to follow me in His own proper time. Farewell, Clara—farewell, Evangeline—farewell! but not forever."

As he spoke, the dying man turned upon his back, folded his hands upon his breast, cast his eyes upward devoutly, a shudder passed over his worn out frame, and the spirit of Allan Montrose had joined the spirits of his fathers.

And over this sad scene, we must now draw the vail of years.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MEETING AND FINALE.

On a bright spring morning, some ten years from the date of our story, a plainly dressed stranger, who had but a short time previous landed from a passing boat, was seen leisurely traversing the main street of Redmond. His costume, somewhat different from that worn by the citizens, and his general appearance, drew many eyes upon him; and many a one as he passed, paused and gazed after him, with a look of idle curiosity. His countenance was handsome, manly and striking; and his dark, bronzed complexion, his black, heavy mustaches, long hair, and large Panama hat, denoted one recently from some tropical clime.

The stranger, as he sauntered along the street, gazed curiously about him, and his dark eyes shot penetrating glances at all he met; but still he continued his course, without making a remark, or asking a question, until he had gained the extreme suburbs of the village, lying under the hill still known as Bellefont, when he paused, and gazing in silence, for a few minutes, at the splendid mansion on its brow, he turned and addressed himself to an old citizen, who chanced at the moment to be passing:

"Your pleasant little village here, friend, loses nothing in beauty, I perceive, by that elegant structure yonder overlooking it."

"Why, yes," replied the other, an old, gray-headed sexton of the village, "it does add somewhat to the good looks o' our town here, since young Harry Vance's become proprietor on't."

"Ha! Harry Vance, did you say?" exclaimed the stranger, with a start. "Henry Vance of Redmond?"

"Ah! then you know him, el?" queried the old man, locking his hands on his back, and peering curiously into the stranger's face.

"I have heard of him," returned the stranger. "In fact, he is an old acquaintance of one of my most intimate friends."

"O!—aha!—yes. Yes, you see, Mr.——; I beg pardon, sir, but I forget your name!"

"Call me Benton," observed the stranger.

"Ah! yes, and a very good name it be too. Yes, you see, Mr. Benton, young Harry's now proprietor on't—and a right smart, clever young man he is to be sure."

"I—I suppose, of course—he—he—is then married!" said Benton, inquiringly, in a voice that trembled, in spite of the speaker's efforts to the contrary.

"O, in course, sir! He have been married five year or so."

"And—and does his father-in-law live with him?"

"O, no, sir! Mr. Vincent's been dead this three year."

"Mr. Vincent!" exclaimed the other, in surprise.

"Yes, sir! you axed about him, didn't you?—young Harry's father-in-law?"

"His father-in-law, certainly—but—but of course I supposed that personage to be Mr. Montrose."

"Montrose!" cried the sexton, astonished in his turn: "Montrose! Why, Lord bless you, Mr. Benton! you don't know much o' affairs round here abouts, not to know that Allan Montrose ha' been dead and buried this eight year come fall."

"Dead and buried!" echoed the stranger, with a start.

"Yes, sir! dead and gone, and his wife too: she followed him about six months arterward, with consumption."

"His wife too!—and—and—good heavens, sir!" cried the other, greatly agitated, "this news astonishes me!"

"Ah! then you knew him, eh? Well, poor man, he'd trouble enough, arter his ruin; and its thought he died with a broken heart—though he stood it along for three year."

"*Ruin!*" almost shrieked the stranger, in his excitement grasping the arm of the sexton somewhat fiercely: "*Ruin!* say you?"

"There, there, Mr. Benton, if you please, don't squeeze *quite* so hard; you see my limbs is old now; but there *was* a time——"

"I beg pardon, sir!" interrupted Benton, hastily; "I was not aware of what I was

doing; but you were speaking of Montrose's ruin!"

"O, yes, so I was. Why, Lord bless ye, sir! you must ha' been away a long time, not to hear o' that—that is if you ever knew much about him, which I 'spect you did, from your flurried manner. Maybe he owed you some'at, eh? Well, well, everybody's got to lose something in this world. Well, you see, Mr. Benton the story's, naturally long, to tell the whole on't—but I'll make it short's I can, cause I'm in a little of a hurry. You see there was once a fine, noble, likely young lad, as was raised in this village, called Everett, who got in love with Montrose's darter, Evangeline, called Eva for short. Well, Eva was a nice, smart gal, and she loved Everett; but the old man himself didn't care to further the match, cause Everett was poor, (though his father was once well off to do, but failed,) and he was rich. Well, the night o' Eva's eighteenth birthday, they had a big party, and Everett went to it. While there, he got into a quarrel about Eva, with a villainous feller, called Bolingbroke, and a duel followed, and Everett shot him dangerously, and fled the country, and has never been heard on since, and probably never will be, poor feller. Well, this Bolingbroke was taken to Montrose's house, and arter a long spell o' sickness, got well again, and got to gambling with Montrose, and I 'spect cheated him, until he'd won all his property, and got his deeds and everything in his hands. Then he offered him back part, if Eva'd marry him; but bless her honest soul, she wouldn't do it; and so the whole family had to leave; and it's 'spected they suffered terribly arterwards, afore they died."

"Are—are—*all* three dead, then?" gasped Benton, turning deadly pale.

"Why, no! Eva's yet living in L——, and teaches music, poor creeter!"

"Is—is she married?"

"No, she's single yet—though she's had ever so many good offers, folks say—and what's more, they say she says as how she won't never marry; and between you and me, I 'spect the reason is 'cause she still loves Everett—though everybody thinks he's dead, poor feller!"

"God bless her!" ejaculated the stranger, with a long drawn sigh, as of relief. "But you were speaking of Bolingbroke."

"O, yes. Well, he moved into the house yonder, and for a great while there was great doings up there. He gin parties, and balls, and feasts, and I don't know what all, until he'd run through with a big share o' the property; and then to keep himself up, he went at some o' his old tricks o' forgery—got detected—got arrested and put in prison. Then he had his trial, and there was great excitement at it, I tell you—everybody went to it—and he was at last proved guilty o' what he was charged with; and five or six more o' such offences, that had happened in the South, was traced to him, and he was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment. Then all his property was sold to auction, by law; and Harry's father—who'd just made a great speculation, and had the money—bought it, and gin it to his son arterward as a wedding present. But the old man's dead now, and I hear Harry wants to sell out—though I'm sorry for't, 'cause he's such a clever young man. But that's the story, Mr. Benton."

"Thank you!" returned the stranger, slipping a dollar into the old man's hand.

"Lord bless you, young sir!" exclaimed the other, with sparkling eyes, as he gazed fondly upon the coin: "I—I'm very poor, sir—or——"

"It is all right," interrupted Benton: "I have only paid you for your time. Good day, sir!" and turning away as he spoke, amid a hearty "God bless you!" from the old man, he took the direct course to Bellefont.

Leaving the stranger to pursue his way for the present, unmolested, we shall pass over an interval of five or six hours, at the end of which time we again find him rapidly traversing one of the streets of the goodly city of L——, A few minutes walk brings him to the door of a house, of genteel appearance, at which he pauses, ascends the steps, and raps with the knocker on the door.

"Does Miss Montrose reside here?" was his query of the person answering his summons.

"She does," was the reply.

"Is she within?"

The answer was again in the affirmative, and Benton was forthwith shown into a very neat parlor, where he was presently joined by the object of his inquiry.

The features of Evangeline were still very beautiful, though years had added to them a more mature and womanly expression, than when we saw her last. There were some traces, too, of previous care, and grief, and suffering, which had been rather mellowed down by time, into a look of sweet, quiet melancholy. Her dress was neat, but plain, and she appeared before the stranger with all the ease of one who had been bred in good society.

As she entered, the stranger rose and bowed, and then said, apparently with some hesitation:

"Have I the honor of addressing Miss Montrose?"

"That is my name," replied Evangeline, modestly, as she took a seat a few feet distant from the other.

The stranger resumed his own seat, and appeared greatly embarrassed for some moments. At length he said, but apparently with an effort:

"I will introduce myself, as a Mr. Benton. I have called upon you, at the request of a friend of yours—one who knew you well, I believe, in by-gone days."

"Ah! indeed, sir," said Evangeline, slightly coloring. "Will you favor me with his name?"

"With pleasure. It is Arthur Everett."

At the sudden mention of this well loved appellation, Evangeline started, all color forsook her face, and placing her hands to her throat, she seemed struggling to catch her breath. The next moment there was a strong reaction, the blood rushed swiftly upward, crimsoning the neck and face, and with a marked effort at composure, she faintly articulated:

"Does—does he still live?"

"He lives and is well."

"Almighty God, Father of the orphan, I thank thee!" cried Evangeline, clasping her hands, and looking upward, with a devout expression on her now radiant countenance. Then, as the thought occurred to her of having so decidedly betrayed her feelings to a total stranger, she became exceedingly confused and embarrassed, but at length resumed:

"Excuse me, Mr. Benton; but the individual you have mentioned, Mr. Everett, was a *very* particular friend of mine, who was forced to quit the country, some ten years ago, on account of a quarrel with a villain, and of whom I have never had the least tidings until now; and of course it affected me somewhat, as I have long mourned him as dead. But you—you say he is alive—and—and well?"

"As I am," replied the other.

"And—and—where is he now?"

"*Here!*" cried the other, with a burst of emotion, unable to restrain his feelings longer, springing forward, and clasping her hands in his "Here, Eva!—my own dearest Eva!—here—at your feet—do you not know me!"

For a moment, Evangeline gazed upon him with a wild, bewildered look; then murmuring "Arthur," she sunk senseless into his arms.

Such was the meeting of the lovers, after a separation of ten long, eventful years.

In a few minutes Evangeline recovered from her swoon; and then two bright hours rolled happily by, in the interchange of a thousand thoughts. Questions were asked and answered, on both sides, with almost breathless rapidity; and many things were detailed, needless for us to mention.

"And now," said Arthur, in continuation of something that had gone before: "And now, dearest Eva, let me claim you as mine for aye. We have both had our days of stormy adversity—we have both seen our parents sink from affluence to poverty—we have both seen them die, and ourselves thrown upon the world, poor, almost friendless orphans,—but we have borne up under all our affliction, and have struggled forward, I trust, to a brighter day—let us think so at least—to a time when the sunshine of hope and happiness will be clouded no more, but brightly and cheerfully shine upon our path, for the rest of our journey, even to the dark gates of death itself. I have accumulated, in my absence to the West Indies, a small amount at least, which, if carefully husbanded, with what I may be able to add to it from time to time, will enable us to be above the stings of poverty and want."

"I ask nothing more," returned Evangeline, sweetly, with an enchanting smile: "for riches I do not crave. O! I will add what I have saved to yours, Arthur, and we will purchase some beautiful little cot in the country—surround it with shady trees, and creeping vines, and lovely fragrant flowers—and there, away from the turmoil and bustle of the city, and from fashionable life, we will live so happy!"

"Bless you, my own, dearest Eva!" cried Arthur, in a transport of delight, as he caught her to his breast, and pressed kiss after kiss upon her sweet lips. "Bless you, dearest Eva! you are in yourself a fortune, and all I seek."

Again we draw the vail.

A week from the return of Arthur Everett saw him and Evangeline Montrose united forever. The ceremony was performed before a small assemblage, in the early part of the evening, in the same house and apartment where the lovers had met after their long separation. Scarcely were the two pronounced man and wife, and before the congratulations of those there assembled were over, when a splendid carriage, with four white, beautiful horses—followed by a long train of other carriages, crowded with the intellect, beauty and fashion of L——, and led by Henry Vance and his lady—paused at the door, to the no small surprise of Evangeline and the rest of the company.

"It is our wedding party, Eva," said Arthur, with a smile, to his astonished wife. "Friends, will you join us? There are seats for all; and we are going upon a short, but I trust pleasant, ride."

In a few minutes, the company found themselves seated in the vehicles—Arthur, his blushing bride, and their attendants, occupying the one in front, drawn by the four white horses—and then off rolled the carriages, at a merry pace, in the direction of Bellefont, turned in at the gates, ascended the avenues, and paused before the splendid mansion, amid a dazzle of lights, and a strain of soft, sweet music, from unseen musicians.

"Welcome, Eva, to your once more beautiful home!" cried Arthur, as he assisted his lovely bride to alight from the carriage.

"What means this, dear Arthur?" inquired Evangeline, in blushing and trembling confusion.

"It means, dearest Eva, that you are now mistress of Bellefont," returned Arthur, gayly, pressing her soft hand in his. "It means, that in a far off clime, I gained a fortune, and have, since my return, purchased this place of my friend, Henry Vance, for your future abode, with whom I arranged matters to give you a joyful surprise. It means, too, dearest Eva, that I have deceived you. I told you the truth, Eva, when I said I had saved a small amount—but not the whole truth. I am rich, Eva—rich beyond your calculations, in worldly goods—rich in happiness, in calling you mine, and restoring you, after years of adversity and trouble, to your rightful possessions, and to the heart that has been, and ever will be, yours. Yet, in the excess of our joy, dearest Eva, let us be ever prudent, and not forget the hard lesson we have both experienced, OF THE UNCERTAINTY OF WEALTH—nor the trials by which, with you and me, A FORTUNE HAS BEEN LOST AND WON.

As Arthur spoke, he caught his now speechless and joyful wife to his heart, while the welkin rung with a hearty cheer, for the return of the wanderer, and the restoration of Evangeline of Bellefont.

That night there was music, and laughter, and *joy*, within the splendid and crowded apartments of that elegant mansion.

WALDE-WARREN;

A TALE OF

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

CHAPTER I.

WALDE-WARREN.

FAR up towards the head-waters of one of the tributaries of the Cumberland river, and not many leagues distant from that portion of the Cumberland mountains which divide the state of Tennessee, there is a wild, beautiful, romantic valley. This valley is about three miles in extent, oval in shape, with the breadth of a mile and a half in the centre, closing up at either end by the peculiar curve of the hills which environ it, and leaving just sufficient space for the passage of the stream alluded to, and a traveled road which winds along its banks and slightly cuts the southern base of the projecting eminences. About central way of this valley, is a quiet, picturesque village, of neat white houses, overlooked by the mountains, and as rural and sequestered as one could wish to find. This village occupies both sides of the stream, which is spanned by an arched wooden bridge, beneath which the waters sparkle, foam and roar, as they dash over a rocky bed, and dart away with the frolicsomeness of youth. In fact the stream itself may not inappropriately be likened to a youth just freed from the trammels and helplessness of infancy, when budding strength begins to give buoyancy, independence, ambition, and love of wild adventure; for, nurtured among the mountains, and fed to a good estate, it has burst from the control of parental nature, and now comes hopping, skipping and dancing along, with childish playfulness—occasionally sobered for a moment as it glides past some steep overhanging cliff, like a youth full of timid curiosity on entering a place of deep shadow—but in the main, wild, merry and sportive—laughing in the sunshine—rollicking, gamboling, purling and roaring—now playing hide and seek among the bushes, and now rushing away, with might and main, to explore the world that lays before it, unconscious that aught of difficulty may lie in its path.

The village in question consists of some thirty or forty buildings, the majority of which are private dwellings. That white structure which stands a little back, on rising ground, near the base of the northern hills, crowned with a neat, modest cupola, and which seems to overlook the place with a kind of calm, parental affection, is the village church; and that pretty little building near it, with a lawn and some shade trees in front, is the village school-house. On the right of this again, you see the pastor's cottage, with its trellissed windows, its flowery, vine-creeping, shrubbery yard, enclosed by white palings, and its beautiful garden in the rear—all looking so rural, so cheerful, so calm, so quiet, as if in keeping with the sacred calling of him who tenants it. On the opposite side of the road, lower down, near the bridge, is a house of entertainment, with its sign swinging and creaking between two up-right poles in front, its blazonry a deer hunt, which corresponds with its appellation, the White Deer Inn. Just beyond this inn, is a store—a little further on a blacksmith, a shoemaker, a tailor, a wheelwright, a cabinet maker, and so forth, which comprise nearly all the mechanical trades of the village. There are, besides, a number of dwellings which we need not specify, scattered along the hard, smooth road, which forms the only street of the place.

Some quarter of a mile above the village, on the opposite side of the stream, are a grist-mill and a saw-mill, the dam for which, stretched across the afore mentioned stream, can be seen from the bridge, and adds an artificial waterfall to the otherwise picturesque beauty of the valley. Near these mills—the one above and the other below—are two dwellings, whose peculiar architecture indicates two periods in their existence, namely, a rude new-territory erection of early times with modern improvements. And such is their history. They were the first buildings ever put up in this valley, and belonged to two families of settlers, who removed hither from Virginia, near the close of the eighteenth century

when all around was a wilderness. The names of these families were Waldegrave and Warren; and as they were sole and equal proprietors of the valley—having together purchased it from Government—and as the village was equally founded by each, they resolved to blend their names, and at the same time perpetuate them, by giving it the appropriate title of Walde-Warren—a name which it bears at the present day, though we warn the reader he will not find it on any map of the State.

Of these two families it becomes our province more particularly to speak than of any others of the valley, as certain events connected with their history forms the subject of our present story. Archer Waldegrave, and Horatio Warren were both born in the same year, and within a mile of each other. They were townsmen, play-mates, schoolmates, and, from youth up, sworn friends. They differed in their tastes and dispositions only so much as nature requires to make two distinct characters harmonize. Two persons exactly alike do not experience that pleasure in each other's society, which is felt when one finds in the other peculiarities and qualifications he does not himself possess. Nature is made up of contrast and variety; and these are the aliments of the human mind, without which it would languish and become imbecile.

Partly by accident and partly by design, the two friends were married on the same day, and together spent their honeymoon. As both were now of age, and had been given a fair start in the world, they resolved to settle in some new country, and together spend their days. To make short a long story, they purchased the Walde-Warren valley, and removed hither, bringing with them some ten or twelve slaves.

It is not our purpose to detail the progress of the settlement thus begun. Years rolled on, and the rude log-cabins of early times were, without being demolished, gradually converted into the two large mansions already pointed out to the reader. And in every respect were these two mansions so much alike, that to see one was to see both. Both had lawns in front, running down to the road, enclosed by palings, and set out with shade trees. Both had fine gardens in the rear, and orchards, and farms stretching away to the enclosing hills, which farms were worked by negroes.

At the precise period our story opens—and we must date back some twenty-five or thirty years—both Waldegrave and Warren were very wealthy. Without a legal co-partnership, they had ever acted as if one existed, in the division of property. Thus they had purchased together the entire valley, and then divided the lands in as equitable a manner as was possible for them to do at the time; but there was an understanding between them, that if at any future period the one should find his division more valuable than that of his friend, an equivalent should to that friend be rendered; and this verbal agreement had been as faithfully regarded as if it had been the very letter of the law. Time had brought other settlers to Walde-Warren, and their purchases had increased the value of the remaining lands; but not equally, as regarded the owners; for Waldegrave now found his division the most valuable, and saleable; but at every such sale, he was punctilious and scrupulous in giving Warren his share.

The village, small even at the present day, had not been rapid in its growth—it was too far inland, and inaccessible for that. It had sprung into existence slowly, gradually; and though it never bore any similitude to the mushroom, like many frontier settlements we could name, still, what it gained one year it retained the next, and was never known to retrograde.

Small as it now is, it was smaller, though scarcely less beautiful, at the time of which we write. The house of devotion was then there, for it had been jointly erected some years previously by Waldegrave and Warren. The school-house was also there, the inn, the bridge, the store, the mills, and several dwellings; and though some of the mechanical branches named have since been added to the place, there was even then a pleasant variety of honest, useful trades. Take it all in all, it was a cheerful little place, full of kindness and hospitality, as every stranger, who chanced to sojourn there for never so brief a season, could testify. It seemed as if the true fraternal feeling existing between the proprietors of Walde-Warren valley, had thrown an air of goodness over the village—had imparted itself to every one who came in contact with them.

Men may preach what they will—it is practice alone which tells upon the heart. Our passions, like our feelings, gain or lose by sympathy. Vice cannot flourish where virtue prevails. Place a vicious man in a strictly moral, religious community, and he can no more exist there a bad man, than a fish can live out of its native element. He must either quit that community or reform; for the examples of goodness he must daily witness, coupled with an absence of sympathy for, and an

abhorrence of, any thing evil, will as naturally work a change as water runs down hill. We believe that every human mind, however depraved, possesses, as an inherent quality, in a greater or less degree, a love of approbation; and therefore, when we find none to applaud us for a bad action, we instinctively seek to do a good one, and *vice versa*. Every part of the physical system seeks sympathy with some other part; and hence a disease here shows itself there. So with the mind. Sin is entailed upon all born of woman; so is disease and death;—but as by cleanliness, temperance, and frugality, we render the body less liable to malady, so by an upright striving we fortify the mind against its sinful inclinations. As one man, by the peculiar organization of his physical system, is more liable to disease than another, so is the mind of one more than another prone to vice; and in either case a more careful watching, a more guarded action, is necessary. Indulge the body with excesses, and it becomes diseased; and vice is a disease of the mind, fed by the passions. Our tastes, both physically and mentally speaking, are not natural, but acquired; we eat as others eat—we like what others like—we do as we see others do. The first mental faculty developed in the child is imitation, and its proudest and happiest achievement is to do exactly what it has seen others do. As it is taught, so will it learn—as it is trained, so will it grow up, for good or evil; hence the importance, not alone of precept, but of good example. Think of this, ye mothers of the rising generation! Remember that on you, mainly, rests the heavy responsibility of the future conduct of your offspring! In proof of this assertion, you shall take an infant and train it to the most rigid abstemiousness, to any faith, to any principle of honor, and its early education will become as much a part of its inner being as the air is of its outer life—the one inseparate from the other.

But we digress.

There was no wretchedness, misery, drunkenness, or avarice, in the vale of Walde-Warren—but every where cheerfulness, sobriety, frugality, honesty, and good fellow ship. Each one was at peace with himself, loved his neighbor, feared God, and respected the Sabbath. And all this was the fruit of the noble example of its founders.

But Providence, which metes out blessings, likewise metes out afflictions; and it was ordained, doubtless for a wise purpose, that the friends, whose lives had so long run parallel in prosperity and happiness, should suddenly be bowed with sorrow and anguish, and that there should be woe in the valley where so long had been rejoicing.

Neither Warren nor Waldegrave had been blessed with children, but each with a child—the former a son, the latter a daughter. Each was the pride of its parents, who fondly looked forward to the day when the two families, who had always lived in such pleasant harmony, might find themselves united by other ties than those of friendship.

At the date of our story, Arthur Warren was about twenty-one, and Marian Waldegrave seventeen years of age. For the last four or five years, they had seen very little of each other, both having been kept away at school. They had occasionally met at home during the holidays; but then there was so many friends to visit, so many to call upon them — for they were well known for miles around—and so many little things to see to and occupy their time, that they were rarely alone together. As children, they had been very partial to each other, and had grown up warm friends—but there had never any thing passed between them to warrant the report that they would ever be connected by a closer tie. Still such a report had gone abroad, and was universally believed; for the wishes of the parents on this point were no secret; and it was reasonable to suppose that parental desires, and family interest, would bring about a union in every respect so equal. Perhaps both Arthur and Marian looked forward to such an alliance when the proper time should arrive; but be that as it may, nothing had ever passed between them on the subject and neither had confirmed or contradicted the rumor that all was settled for such an event.

The precise time chosen for the opening of our narrative —for what has gone before, we consider merely introductory—is the day fixed on for the return of Arthur Warren. He had just graduated at one of our northern medical colleges, and had written home, that on the day in question, nothing unforeseen preventing, he expected to reach Walde-Warren by the mail coach, which thrice a week passed through the village, and should bring with him a friend, a college chum, who was on his way to his residence in Alabama, but who had consented to sojourn for a few days at his father's house. We will only premise in this connection, that Marian Waldegrave, having finished her course of studies abroad, had been at home some three months, though she and Arthur had not met for more than a year. Our prelude finished, we will now, forthwith, enter upon our story.

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CHAPTER II.

THE RETURN.

It was on one of those mild, soft, balmy days of Spring, which so refreshingly follow the chill blasts and frosts of winter, and give us a foretaste of the approaching summer, that a small group of persons was collected in front of the piazza of the White Deer, awaiting the arrival of the mail coach, which, it being past ten o'clock in the morning, was already due.

The eldest of this group was a man between forty-five and fifty years of age, stout built, of medium height, and robust and active. His countenance had scarcely lost the freshness of youth, and expressed frankness, good-humor, benevolence, and a contented mind. There was something peculiarly gentle and pleasing in his mild, grey eye; and you would have liked his face—not for its comeliness, though it was far from being ugly—but for the kindliness and goodness which beamed forth in every expression. He was the personation of vigorous health, and his dark brown hair showed not a single silver mark of the years that had rolled over his head. His dress was plain, but neat, and bespoke a man well-to-do in the world, as also one devoid of ostentation. This personage was Horatio Warren, one of the opulent proprietors of the valley.

Of the others composing the group, some four or five in number, it is needless for us to speak, as they have little to do with our story. We may state, however, that one was the inn-keeper of the White Deer, another the post-master, and the remainder, persons who, having idle time on their hands, felt disposed to enjoy it in a little harmless gossip on the affairs of the day. Standing somewhat back from this group, and leaning lazily against one of the columns of the piazza, but so as to get the full warmth of the sun's rays, and as little of the light breeze stirring as possible, was a sleek, fat negro, who was amusing himself by making grimaces at a child in the street, who in return enjoyed this species of fun vastly, as it ever and anon gave proof by a merry, exuberant laugh; and this attracting the attention of other urchins at a distance, they dropped their occupations, and hastened to gather around this black Momus, as bees collect around a cup of honey. There were, besides those mentioned, other loungers here and there, two of whom were on the bridge, one leaning over the railings, looking down into the stream, in a sort of dreamy reverie, and the other sitting flat on the planks, with his legs hanging over the water, and in his hand a fishing rod, which he jerked up occasionally, like a drowsy man's nod, as if he thought it necessary to demonstrate that he was not actually asleep if the fish were. In short, the picture of a warm, lazy Spring day, in a quiet, inland village, was complete; and if we have not done full justice to it, we feel confident the reader's recollection, or imagination will supply the finishing touches.

"By-the-by, Mr. Nixon," said Warren, breaking off somewhat abruptly from a political discussion, which he had been holding with a young sprig of the law, and which he had evidently been drawn into against his will, and addressing the inn-keeper —"what time have you?"

"I am just seventeen minutes past ten," replied Nixon, looking at his watch.

"And I nineteen," said Jones, the postmaster.

"And I eighteen," put in the young lawyer, whose name was Collins.

"And I fourteen," added a fourth speaker.

"Well, gentlemen, you see I am right," returned Nixon, jocularly, "because I have the *mean* time."

"Yes," said Jones, with that ready wit in punning which is always appreciated in a crowd, pointing to the bull's-eye the landlord was transferring to his fob—"yes, Nixon, you may well say *mean* time; you might have said the *meanest* time."

"Well, you all agree on one point, I perceive," said Warren, "that it is past the time for the stage."

"It should be here by ten at least," replied the postmaster; "but the rains to the north'ard have gullied the roads so as to render it slow traveling. You are expecting your son, I understand?"

"Yes, Arthur writes me, that without some unforeseen delay, I shall see him to-day."

"Will he remain with you now? or does he go away again soon?"

"I hope he will remain—but there is no telling what fancies a young man may take into his head now-a-days. He has finished his collegiate course, and if he sets up practice, I hope it will be somewhere in this region."

"There is not much business for a doctor in our little village," said Nixon.

"No, Dr. Potter says it is distressingly healthy," returned Jones, "and that, with present prospects, he will have to move or starve."

"It is a poor place for law and physic," said Collins.

"Because there is too much

law and order," rejoined the postmaster. "No offence, Mr. Collins; but doctors and lawyers flourish best in a bad community; for where men most indulge in excesses, and give most way to their passions, there is always the most for your professional gentlemen to do."

"I think it would be the wisest plan to give doctors and lawyers a regular salary when they are not needed, and stop it when they are," said Nixon.

"I differ with you," replied Warren. "I think it would be better to live soberly, frugally, uprightly, and dispense with them altogether."

"And yet you bring your son up to one of these professions," rejoined the innkeeper.

"Ay, sir, because the world is not likely to take my advice; and so long as such professions are needed, so long must they be supplied; besides scientific knowledge will not injure a man, even if he do not live by it."

"And both doctors and lawyers may be required when you least think so," said Collins, laughing.

These words were prophetic, though the speaker was by no means a prophet.

"Ha! here comes your twin brother, Mr. Warren," said Jones, pointing to Waldegrave, who was now seen crossing the bridge.

"Ah, you may well say twin brother," replied Warren; "for had we both drawn our sustenance from the same breast, at the same time, we could not have grown up with warmer attachment for each other. When it shall please heaven to call either of us hence, you may depend it will be a sad day for the other."

He spoke with feeling; and those who observed him closely, saw that he was more affected than he chose to have appear.

We have elsewhere said that Waldegrave and Warren were both born in the same year; but the former had a much older look, and differed materially from the latter in his personal appearance, being tall, of a slender make, with a countenance intellectual, but a complexion rather too sallow to indicate a sound constitution and a state of perfect health. His features were regular, soft, and pleasing, and had a kindly, benevolent look, and were rendered the more interesting, perhaps, by the slightest shade of melancholy, equally perceptible when wreathed with a smile or remaining in grave repose. His hair was quite grey, and altogether he had the look of a man who had seen more than fifty winters. He dressed in deep black, which became his figure and person remarkably well.

Just as Waldegrave joined the group, the stage was espied coming down the winding road of the valley; and a few minutes after it rolled heavily over the bridge, making its strong timbers creak and tremble, and drew up before the inn, the horses panting and covered with mud and foam. The next moment the door of the coach was thrown open by the impatient father, and the hand of a handsome young man was grasped and shaken with true paternal affection.

"Why, father, I am delighted to see you looking so well," said Arthur, gaily, as he sprang to the ground. "I need not ask how you do, for your cheerful, healthy countenance speaks for itself. How is mother? Ah, Mr. Waldegrave, most happy to greet you—how is your good lady and Marian?"

"All your friends are well, Arthur," said his father; "and Marian and her mother are at our house, waiting to receive you as becometh old friends."

"Bless her sweet little face—Marian I mean: but I forget—she is no longer little—I was thinking of old times," returned Arthur, in the same buoyant, lively strain. "But here comes my friend," added Arthur, as another young man, splendidly dressed, alighted from the coach. "This is my father, Ernest—father, this is Mr. Clifford, the friend mentioned in my letter, whom I have prevailed upon to spend a few days with us in Walde-Warren."

"Most happy to greet you, sir, as the friend of Arthur," said the elder Warren, shaking heartily the hand of Clifford. "Welcome, sir—a true old fashioned welcome to our little valley—and may you be long our guest."

"Thank you, sir—thank you kindly," replied Clifford.

"Mr. Waldegrave, my father's old friend, Ernest, of whom you have so often heard me speak," said Arthur, introducing the gentleman named. "And now," he pursued, with a gay laugh, "as you have the mortal head and front of Walde-Warren within your grasp, my dear Ernest, you will excuse me a few moments, till I speak to my friends here."

He then passed round among the by-standers, whose number had augmented since his arrival, and greeted each in that frank, easy, cheerful manner, which never fails to get a cordial response and win the hearts of old and young, more especially if the individual, as in the case of Arthur Warren, stands one grade higher on the sliding scale of society than those he addresses. He had a few kindly words for each, seasoned with playful humor, sometimes a pleasant jest; and when he had gone the entire round, and spoken to all, there was not a man but in his heart wished long life and happiness to the heir of Walde-Warren.

Arthur now espied the negro—who, no longer amusing the children with his grimaces was standing respectfully back, watching every motion of his young master, and anxious for his turn to be noticed—and approaching him with a smile, the young man took his hand, and said gaily:—

"Why, Pete, my oily ebony, how fares the world with you? Really, you look as if your greatest exploits, for the last six months, had been eating and digesting! How is Dinah, boy?"

"She well, massa, God bress you!" replied Pete, doffing his hat. "I's so glad you come, massa, and you is looking so well and so hansome, massa! Why, massa, all de niggers will be tickled to deff to seed you got back agin."

"Thank you, Pete—I always love to look upon cheerful and happy faces, and it takes nothing from my pleasure to know they are made so by my presence. You have the carriage here, Pete?"

"Yes, Massa Arthur, um jus' round in de shed dar; I couldn't go fetch um till I spoke to you."

"Well, you can go now, Pete. Drive round the moment the stage drives off, and put on all that baggage you see piled up yonder. Now hasten, Pete, for I am impatient to reach home."

"Yes, massa, I do um quick as chain lightning strike de t'under clap;" and away bounded the black, with a light and happy heart.

And here we will take occasion to say a few words of Arthur and his friend. When Peter called his young master handsome, he applied no misnomer, for in truth he was very comely. Unlike his father, he was of slender build, of medium height, straight as an arrow, and in every respect symmetrical. His features were fine, regular and intelligent, and in expression, frank, cheerful, vivacious. There was nature's nobleness in his high, broad, smooth forehead, and dark eloquent hazel eyes. You could see he had temper, quick and high, but coupled with a disposition more forgiving than vindictive. If quick to take an affront, he was quick to forgive one, provided forgiveness became a virtue. In short, he was a high-spirited, noble young man, of the winning and easy manners of a true-bred gentleman. His face was smooth, for he wore no beard, and his short curly, brown hair gave his head a classic appearance.

In many essential points, Arthur Warren differed from Ernest Clifford. The latter was taller, and not in every respect so symmetrical. His features were more elongated, his cheeks more thin and hollow, and his complexion had a sallow hue. His eyes were dark, almost black, and intense and piercing in their expression. There was something about him you would like and dislike at the same time. There was intelligence in his countenance, but it lacked the open, cheerful candor of Arthur. You felt he could be cool and self-collected under any circumstances, and that his passions were so completely under his control, that he could dissemble almost without an effort. He never laughed loud and heartily as Arthur sometimes would; but if pleased, he smiled; and unlike Arthur, too, he could smile and be angry at the same time. He was one of those persons who never act from impulse, but are wholly governed by self-interest, or by a deliberate resolve. He was a man you would rather have for a friend than an enemy—but, at the same time, ten to one, you would prefer he were neither. His features were regular, and many would term them handsome; but to a keen physiognomist, a sinister expression, too often exhibited, destroyed their beauty. His nose was long and pointed, and his lips were thin and compressed: he wore a neatly trimmed beard under his chin, and his long and well oiled hair dangled about his face and neck. His manners were easy and polished, yet a close observer could detect they were, to a great degree, artificial. He was, on the whole, and in brief, a man of the world, and a man of circumstances. We will say no more for the present, for the reader will soon have an opportunity to see and judge both him and Arthur for himself.

"Come, Ernest," said Arthur, as soon as the carriage was ready, "get in, and I will soon show you my valley home. I will show you Marian, too, but I warn you not to fall in love with her."

"I fear I shall, if all you have said of her be true," smiled Ernest.

"He has been praising her to you then?" said Warren, exchanging glances with Waldegrave.

"Ah, sir, he has extolled her beyond woman born—so I shall look to find an angel," replied Ernest.

"She is a sweet, good girl," returned Warren, "and one universally beloved for her many virtues."

"Come, come," chimed in Waldegrave, "she is my daughter, and I am proud of

her; but praise to the face, you know, Horatio—"

"Ay, ay, Archer," laughed the elder Warren; "I know: but still, my friend, that modest blush becomes you."

"Well," said Ernest, as the carriage, with Pete as driver, now rolled away over the bridge, "I suppose one may speak in praise of this valley, without being considered an open flatterer, even though you, gentlemen, have a sort of parental claim to its many beauties. At all events, I shall venture to say it is the most delightful place it has ever been my good fortune to visit."

"I am glad you like it," replied Warren, "and trust you will have no reason for making your first visit a short one."

A few minutes sufficed to bring our friends to their destination; and as the carriage drew up at the door of his home, Arthur, impatient to greet his mother and friends, begged Ernest to excuse him, and darted into the house, the others following more leisurely. He found his mother and Mrs. Waldegrave in the parlor; and embracing the former, and shaking hands with the latter, with all the affection and warm open-heartedness of his nature, he said a few hurried words, appropriate to the occasion, and then, glancing quickly around the room, exclaimed:

"But is not little Marian here to receive her old playmate?"

"In the next apartment," smiled his mother.

Arthur waited for no more, but hastily opening the door, bounded in. This apartment was a kind of sitting-room and library; and as he entered it, he beheld the object of his search seated near the window, with a book in her hand, the leaves of which she was tumbling over in a manner that, had he been less excited himself, he must have perceived indicated a good deal of nervous agitation.

"Why, Marian, how is this?" he cried, advancing with a quick step to her side. "I thought you would be the first to welcome me, and yet I find you—"

He stopped suddenly; for by this time Marian had risen, with true maidenly grace, and turned her sweet face full upon him, covered with blushes, the import of which was not to be mistaken. Arthur seemed struck dumb by that look, and, quick as lightning, the truth flashed upon him, and he in turn felt embarrassed and confused. Had he ever made the heart of woman his study, and particularly that of Marian Waldegrave, he might have anticipated all this; but somehow he had always thought of her as a child, his old playmate, his sweet little friend, his pretty little

Marian, and as such he had loved her, as such he had expected to meet her now. But Marian was no longer a child—no longer a romping little girl; she had grown to woman's estate; she had a woman's feelings, a maiden's delicacy; she loved, and the object of her love stood before her. All this Arthur now knew and comprehended from a single glance at her countenance; and its effect, as aforesaid, was to confuse and embarrass him; the words that were but now bounding from his lips, seemed driven back into his very throat, as if to choke him; he tried to speak, but could not; he tried to appear at ease, but knew he was conducting himself awkwardly, and this embarrassed him still more; he felt he was acting like a simpleton; he was glad there was no one to witness it; and he would have given half his fortune to be himself for five minutes When he first began to speak, he had extended his hand; he had not withdrawn it; Marian now took it, and dropping her eyes to the ground, said, in a faltering tone:

"I hope you are well, Arthur."

Her voice in a measure seemed to break the spell that bound him; he essayed to speak again, and he succeeded? but still his words did not flow freely, and he knew he still appeared constrained and awkward. He replied that he was well, very well, and hoped she was also; to which she nodded an affirmation, and then another embarrassing pause succeeded. Arthur wanted to compliment her on having arrived at the bloom of maturity—on her looking better and more beautiful than he had ever before seen her; but somehow he felt afraid to venture so much; the gay, sprightly, dashing young man had suddenly become timid and bashful.

"But come," he said, at last, rallying himself, and assuming a tone of ease he was far from feeling; "come, Miss Waldegrave, I have a friend here to whom I have promised to introduce you the moment we should arrive. I hear him speaking in the other room."

He called her Miss Waldegrave,—she whom but now he had termed Marian—she who had been his playmate and sweet little friend from infancy—she on whom he had never bestowed so formal a title in all his life: he addressed her as Miss Waldegrave! She noticed it—he noticed it. Why did he not call her Marian still? Why, simply, because he somehow thought—he fancied—that—that Marian was a too *familiar* appellation just at that time.

O, Cupid, thou art a mischievous little god! Thou dost play such strange, wild

pranks with hearts of which thou gettest possession, making simpletons of the young, and down right fools of the old.

"You must excuse me, Arthur—Mr. Warren, I mean," replied Marian. "I—I—that is—I am not prepared to see your friend just now—I will presently;" and she hastened out of the room.

Arthur followed her with his eyes, till she had disappeared; and for several minutes after he seemed lost in a deep reverie.

"It is strange!" he sighed, at length—"it is very strange!" and with slow steps, and in a thoughtful mood, he re-entered the parlor, and joined his friends.

CHAPTER III.

LOVE AND DOUBT

Marian Waldegrave truly deserved the epithet of lovely, as applied not only to her material form, but to her mind. She was one of those mild, sweetly tempered, gentle beings, that seem sent here as a sort of connecting link between earth and heaven—a thing of earthly mould, earthly substance, but devoid of the passions which so often mar what is otherwise nearly perfect and most beautiful. Her right, strictly speaking, to the latter epithet, beautiful, many would gainsay; but to that of lovely, none. She was about medium in stature, and what might be termed well-formed, but not in every respect symmetrical. Her face was one of those we ever love to gaze upon—soft, fair, radiant with intelligence, and beaming with affection, and all the nobler and holier attributes of our nature. Her features were fine, regular and comely, and were pervaded by an expression of great sweetness, which even to the ugliest countenance, always lends a charm, but which, aided by nature, as was the case with her, proves irresistible in its attraction, and becomes more potent than beauty the most perfect when not so adorned—for beauty, after all, is a matter of taste, and what one sets up as a standard another decries, while all unite in praise of what is sweet and lovely. The eyes of Marian were gray, lustrous and mild as those of a dove, and were shaded somewhat, and softened still more, by long drooping lashes. Feeling they expressed, deep and strong; but it was that feeling of meekness, of patient endurance, of reliance on a holy faith, rather than that which urges one on to combat opposition, to surmount a difficulty as it were by storm. You looked there in vain for any evidence of that passion which raves and rends like a madman, foams and boils like an angry sea. You could see through those orbs of the soul a heart that might sink under grief; but one that would so sink, slowly, calmly, gradually—not crushed as by a sudden blow—not uprooted by a whirlwind—but one that might fade, wither and die, like a gentle flower from which the dew and sunlight have been withdrawn. Her complexion was light, clear, and warm in tone; and her hair was long and fine, and of the flaxen hue ascribed to the Saxons. Her nose was almost Grecian; her mouth beautiful, with pearly teeth; and over her countenance generally, like moonlight upon a flower, lay the lightest tinge of melancholy—something like what we described of her father—and this gave additional interest to a face in every other respect so attractive and lovely. As she was in outward semblance, so was she in inner being. Her mind was pure, gentle, affectionate and confiding. In short, the elder Warren had well described her, in brief but homely phrase, when he said she was "a sweet, good girl, and one universally beloved for her many virtues."

On quitting the presence of Arthur, Marian hastened up stairs to a little sleeping chamber—which had always been assigned her, when, as nad not unfrequently been the case, she had spent the night with the Warrens—and closing and bolting the door, she threw herself upon a seat, and, covering her face, gave vent to her mingled emotions in a flood of tears. She wept for joy at the return of Arthur, whom she had long loved in secret; and she wept, too, in maidenly shame, that she had betrayed that secret to him. What would he think of her? Would he not think her bold, forward and scheming, and, in consequence, despise her? She would have given all she possessed in the world, to have met him as of old—to have concealed in her breast that she felt toward him other than as a sister or a friend. And he had called her Miss Waldegrave instead of Marian! Doubtless he was offended, and had taken this method to show her, that, having overstepped the bounds of true maidenly propriety, he must henceforth regard her in the formal light of a mere acquaintance. Perhaps he loved another—in all probability he did, for he had been years away, and he was of too warm and ardent a nature to live long without some object of attachment. And even were this not the case, what could he see in her to admire above all others? particularly after having conducted herself in a manner so unbecoming? No he must despise her—or, if

not despise, pity her, which was equally as humiliating to her sensitive nature. Yes, he pitied her, for he was too noble to despise, and for this reason he had been so anxious to introduce her to his friend. Oh! what would she not have given, to have known what she knew now, previous to that interview, that she might have met him, not with different feelings, but with those feelings hid under a light and cheerful mask! Yes, she thought, were she to go through the same part again, she would so act, that the secret of her heart should never be known to him. She would talk gaily, she would laugh, she would be merry, be frolicsome, no matter how much it might cost her. But it was now too late; she had already exposed herself—had rendered herself ridiculous to the one, whom of all others, she would have think well of her. But though she might not blot out the past, she reasoned, she might in some degree atone for her foolish, unmaidenly conduct, by a different course of action in future. He should not pity her,—no, no—he should not pity her. She would meet him as an equal, as a friend—he should see she was a friend—but nothing more. She would school her feelings to play a part in his presence; and only when no human eyes were upon her, should nature have full sway. She could not hope, she did not in fact desire, to eradicate the love she felt for him; but she would evermore conceal it, bury it deep in her heart, even though it should feed on that heart, like a living thing, and consign her to an early grave.

Thus thought, felt, and resolved Marian Waldegrave, as alone she wept in that little chamber. Ah! could she at that moment have seen the heart of Arthur Warren, all tears of regret would have been banished from her eyes—all her hard wrought resolves would have "vanished into thin air,"—all her petty griefs would have disappeared as shadows before the sunshine. But such is love—strange in its operations—inconsistent with itself—retarding its own advancement—a thing of light and joy, yet concealing itself in the deepest recesses of the heart, and feeding on melancholy—shrinking from notice like a sensitive plant from the touch, and torturing its possessor with a thousand alternate hopes and fears—till haply, it is discovered by circumstances, dragged forth from its hiding place, and made to take its just position among the higher and holier passions of our nature.

It was perhaps an hour, ere Marian found herself qualified for the part she had so firmly resolved to sustain in the presence of Arthur Warren. She dried her eyes, and strove to obliterate all traces of recent tears: she arranged her hair with unusual care, in the little mirror before her; she stilled the painful throbbings of her heart, by the mere force of her will; and lastly, she called upon her countenance a look of smiling contentment, such as nature had implanted there, ere love had come to banish it, and cause it to be replaced by sheer dissembling.

Thus prepared, she descended to the parlor; but the nearer she approached it, the greater became the mental struggle, till, having reached the door, which would admit her to the dreaded presence, she was obliged to pause some moments, to subdue her agitation, and force her will to gain a mastery over her feelings. At length she entered; and a single glance assured her, much to her relief, that the object alike of her love and dread was not there. In fact, but two persons were present—her mother and Arthur's friend—and drawing a long breath of relief, as she turned somewhat abruptly to close the door, she felt she was truly herself once more.

"You are rather tardy in making your appearance, Marian," chided her mother, a mild, pleasant looking, middle-aged lady. "My daughter, Mr. Clifford," she added, turning to that gentleman.

"Most happy to make your acquaintance, Miss Waldegrave," replied Clifford, rising, bowing, and advancing to her with polished ease. "Truly," he continued, taking her hand, and looking earnestly upon her sweet countenance, "I feel as though we were not meeting for the first time—for I have heard Arthur speak of you so often, that you seem to me as an old and valued friend."

At the mention of the name of Arthur, Marian crimsoned to the very temples, and for a moment or two appeared much confused; but she recovered herself, with an effort, and answered:

"Yes, Arthur and I were old playmates, and I am happy to hear he has not forgotten the days lang syne."

"On the contrary, I fear he has thought more of them than his studies," pursued Clifford, keeping his eyes fixed steadily upon Marian—those black, piercing orbs, that seemed to read her very soul. "Truly," he continued, smiling, "I would have vouched to his being in love with you, only that I know love, as the term is generally understood, is a something timid and shrinking, which nestles in the heart and keeps its own secret."

Marian again crimsoned to

the temples, and then became deadly pale. Had Clifford known her very thoughts, and been anxious to displace the image of Arthur, he could not have chosen a time and words better calculated to effect his object. We must do him the justice to say, however, that whatever might have been his wish on this point, the words he uttered were purely accidental, as regarded their so unfortunately chiming in with her own sentiments and feelings.

Having noted for a moment the effect of his language, without knowing the secret cause of its sinking so deeply and all-powerfully into the heart of her he addressed, Ernest rallied and said, gaily:

"Come, Miss Waldegrave, a truce to this. I have not known you the brief space of three minutes, and already you see, I have introduced the subject of love, which, however naturally brought about, is, I perceive, inappropriate and ill-timed. Besides, I have no right to make use of the confidence of my dear friend, Arthur, whose communications, I doubt not, were confidential, though accompanied with no stipulations. Pray, let me hand you to a seat, and change the subject. This is a delightful valley, Miss Waldegrave," he added, placing his own chair at a decorous distance from hers.

"To me it is," replied Marian, greatly relieved of her recent embarrassment, and determined to make herself cheerful and agreeable, if only to mask her feelings; "but I believe one is generally partial to the place of one's nativity, Mr. Clifford."

"Yes, there is no place like home," returned the other, with sentimental languor; "for however bleak, and barren, and disagreeable it may appear to others, to us it must ever be beautiful for being home; and, thus if I, a stranger, can justly speak in praise of this, your native vale; you, in the same ratio, may be pardoned for worshiping it."

"Nay, not quite that, Mr Clifford," said Marian, with a smile; "for," she continued, solemnly, and with great simplicity, "we are permitted to worship none but God."

Ernest seemed struck with her words and manner, and quickly rejoined:

"Nay, you must not take my language literally, Miss Waldegrave. I spoke comparatively; for I agree with you, that God alone is entitled to the heart's worship."

"I like you, Mr. Clifford, for that sentiment," chimed in Mrs. Waldegrave, who, since introducing Marian to him, had been busy at one of the windows, disentangling a skein of silk, and who, in consequence, had only overheard the latter portion of their conversation, while resuming her seat. "I love to hear young persons speak reverently of the Creator from whom flow all our manifold blessings; and setting aside the sinfulness thereof, there is nothing, in my opinion, lower, and more degrading, than profanity. Are you a member of any church, Mr. Clifford?"

"I am not," replied Ernest, coloring; "though, I trust in God, I am not worse at heart than many who are."

"A public profession is a good thing, if only for example," replied the matron, peering at Ernest over her glasses; "and as you seem religiously inclined, I hope your influence in this way, upon your associates and community, will not long be delayed."

Now to suppose Ernest Clifford religiously inclined, was to suppose a man in love with God and Mammon at the same time; and those who knew him best, would have been the very last to accuse him of such a thing; though were hypocritical expressions of piety necessary to advance his interest, we regret to say they were not likely to be long wanting.

The topic of conversation now became a religious one, which for several minutes was carried on between Clifford and Mrs. Waldegrave, Marian taking no part, and, judging by her abstracted air, heeding nothing that was said. At length a pause ensued; and Mrs. Waldegrave, asking to be excused a few minutes, quitted the room, leaving Ernest and Marian *tete a tete.*

"You seem dejected, Miss Waldegrave," said Clifford, turning to her with a respectful air, and speaking in a low, bland, and rather sympathetic tone.

"Me? I dejected," answered Marian, starting and coloring. "Oh, no, you must be mistaken—why should I be dejected?"

"Excuse me! perhaps I was mistaken," replied Clifford, in the same low, bland tone evidently intending to render himself agreeable. "But I noticed you were looking pale, and methought I heard you sigh. I wonder where our mutual friend, Arthur, can have gone?"

As he said this, he fixed his eyes keenly upon Marian's countenance, though without appearing to do so, and, being quick of penetration, he saw enough to convince him of what he had before suspected, namely, that something had passed between her and Arthur which she wished to conceal. Now Ernest was selfish, and worldly; and though he called Arthur his friend, yet friendship in his view was only a name, and should at all times be sacrificed to interest, in the event of the two coming in collision. He saw that Marian was lovely, if not beautiful; and he knew she was an heiress, which was more important in his eyes than either; and it now occurred to him, that if by any means he could win and carry off the prize, it would be a grand achievement. Perhaps this selfish and treacherous consideration did not now occur to Ernest Clifford for the first time; some such idea might have entered his head before he came to Walde-Warren; but be that as it may, Ernest was not the man to let any opportunity for bettering his worldly condition pass unimproved. At college he and Arthur had been very intimate; and where Arthur Warren was intimate, he bestowed his confidence without reserve, and laid bare the secret recesses of his noble soul. The world had always gone pleasantly with him—of its treachery and deceit he knew little or nothing—and it would have been almost as difficult to convince him that one he called his friend would betray his confidence and prove his most bitter enemy, without other than a merely selfish cause, as that his faith in Divine Providence was misplaced. Ernest had read his open nature at a glance, and had made him his friend, merely because he had thought he might be useful to him. And he had used him more than once—having at different times borrowed sums of money, to be paid at some future day, which day had not yet arrived. In their association, Ernest had always been more ready to listen to Arthur than to talk himself; and, without exhibiting any intentional reserve, had so managed as to get at all of Arthur's secrets without revealing any of his own. He had sometimes spoken of his family, connections, and prospects, it is true; but always in such a way, that, without making any positive statement, the inference would be drawn, that he was a much more important personage in the world, than modesty allowed him to blazon forth. The truth was, his father was a man in moderate circumstances, with a large family, who had permitted him to acquire a profession; but had limited himself to means barely sufficient to pay his board and tuition; for the rest he had managed by borrowing of such kind friends as were not likely to be troublesome about a return, and in this respect Arthur had proved to him a perfect god-send.

Let the reader keep in view these unworthy characteristics of Ernest Clifford, his desire for wealth, and the feeble prospect he had of acquiring it suddenly by other means than marriage, together with the slight incidents recorded of his brief acquaintance with

Marian, and he will hardly be surprised that such a personage should begin to consider on the possibility of his obtaining the hand and fortune of the latter, and, with this consideration uppermost in his mind, should begin to scheme for its accomplishment.

"If," he mentally soliloquised, "Arthur does not love her—and my random words may have hit the mark—else why her blushes and confusion?—or if, again, he does love her, and they had a lover's quarrel, I may, by playing my cards skillfully, win the game. It is certainly worth the trial; and if nothing else come of it, it will serve to amuse me while I remain in this dreary country valley. Should I succeed, it will be a fortune, and fortunes are not to be acquired without an effort. Something has occurred between her and Arthur, that is certain; for since meeting her, he is sober and abstracted, and she blushes whenever I mention his name. If he does love her, I shall make him jealous; and if they have quarrelled, I will widen the breach. I shall offend him perhaps—but what of that?—what is his friendship weighed against her fortune?—a straw against a bag of gold. Perhaps she loves him! Well, then, she is but woman, and I must make *her* jealous—not by any broad statement, but by the most subtle inuendo. I will praise Arthur to her, and praise her to Arthur; and yet if they love one another, I will so manage as to estrange them, and harass the souls of both, but at the same time steer clear myself of the shipwreck I shall make; if they do not love one another, then the sea is open, and I shall have fair sailing."

All this floated through the scheming brain of Ernest Clifford, as it were in a moment of time; and to Marian's reply, that Arthur might have stepped out to visit his father's negroes, as was his custom immediately on coming home, and that doubtless he would soon return, he rejoined:

"Speaking of Arthur, I have been picturing to myself the delight you must have experienced in meeting after so long a separation. It is nearly five years, he tells me, since you have been much together; and for this reason, doubtless, he always seems to speak of you as a child, his little playmate Marian, his charming little *friend*, rather than as one grown to your estate. Ah, Miss Waldegrave, you would have laughed to have heard the rapturous encomiums he ever bestowed upon you; really, he could not have shown a warmer, more ardent affection for you, had you been his *sister*."

Had these words of Clifford been daggers, pressed slowly home to some vital part, the torturing anguish of Marian had scarcely been greater than it now was. But she concealed her emotions wonderfully, considering she was such a novice in the art of dissimulation; and one less observing and penetrating than Clifford, would never have suspected how much she mentally suffered; but those dark, keen eyes of his were upon her, and he saw with a feeling of triumph, that already he had planted a thorn in her breast. She replied, however, with a look of animation, and in a cheerful tone:

"So Arthur was in raptures about his little Marian, as he termed me, eh? Ah, Mr. Clifford, could you have seen us romping together while children, you would not have been surprised at it."

"I am not surprised as it is," returned Ernest with a meaning look; "for since I have seen you, I must frankly acknowledge he had more reason for his transports than I gave him credit for at the time. But this is a changing world, Miss Waldegrave," he continued, altering his tone to one better suited to grave moralizing; "a changing world; and it always makes me sad when I take a retrospective view, and see how time pulls down and destroys the airy fabrics of youthful creation—consigning to the grave all those gay, buoyant spirits that made childhood so delightful and happy—or immersing them in the business, the cares, and anxieties, which grow upon us with our growth, and attend us ever after, till death drops the curtain before the scene of mortal strife. It has often with me been a matter of curious speculation, too, that so few of those who set out in life together, and seem by nature peculiarly adapted to each other, ever unite their fortunes, both as regards co-partnership and marriage. The stranger to the stranger is a rule that has but few exceptions."

"Alas! yes, it is too true," sighed Marian, completely thrown off her guard.

At this moment the door opened and Arthur Warren entered. He seemed surprised to find Ernest and Marian *tete-a-tete*; but was more surprised still, when the latter spoke up quickly, in a gay tone, smiling through the color that mounted to her temples:

"So, truant, you have come at last, have you? We were just speaking of you—do your ears burn?"

Arthur, remembering the brief interview he had had with Marian, her abashed and confused manner, so entirely different from the one she now assumed, could scarcely credit his senses; but he rallied himself, and replied in the same vein:

"Speaking of me, were

you? no good I'll be bound. I wish you joy of your subject though. But come! am I to know what you have been saying?"

"Aha! methought I could raise your curiosity," answered Marian. "You gentlemen always pretend to have no curiosity, and ascribe that failing to us of the weaker sex, citing mother Eve as a proof—but we catch you occasionally. Shall I tell him what was said, Mr. Clifford?"

"If you like, since it concerns you as much as himself, and is not calculated to make him vain."

"Nor to pull down his pride either. But since, as you say, it concerns me too, why, I will leave you to be informer, while I make my exit;" and Marian rose and turned to quit the apartment.

"Surely, you are not going to make us miserable by so abrupt a departure?" said Ernest.

"O, no, not going to make you miserable, but going to make my exit nevertheless," replied Marian, with a laugh, as she bounded gaily out of the room. Arthur looked after her, with an expression in which doubt and astonishment strangely blended.

"She is a lovely creature, and I do not wonder you used to be so in raptures about her," said Clifford. "By my faith, Arthur, if you had not warned me not to fall in love with her, I fear I should by this time have been your rival—she is so pretty, so intelligent, so agreeable, so entertaining."

"Why, one would think you were in love with her as it is," answered Arthur, turning quickly upon his friend, but forcing a laugh to conceal the vexation he felt at the other's language.

"And should I admit that I am, I hope it will give no offence, my dear Arthur," replied the other, half jestingly, half earnestly.

"Offence!" repeated Arthur, thrown into some confusion: "Offence! O, no, of course not."

"I knew you were too warm a friend, and of too noble and manly a spirit, to mind a matter so trifling. Not that I wish you to understand, my dear fellow, that I am actually and *bona fide* in love with her—O, no—though I will say, frankly, that I have never before seen one of her sex that pleased and interested me so much on so short an acquaintance. And even if I did love her, my dear friend, and I knew that she returned my attachment, I would sooner cut off my hand than stand in your way—so I will try and forget her."

"Nay, you need not forget her on my account; I have no more claim on her than you—perhaps not so much," replied Arthur, quickly and tartly, nettled and vexed at the language of the other.

"Say you so, my dear Arthur?" cried Ernest, seizing his hand, and appearing not to notice there was any thing wrong. "Ah, you are a noble fellow!" "But then," he added, in an altered tone, letting his countenance lose its exultant animation, "you have often said it was the wish of your parents and hers, that in you two both families and fortunes should be united."

"True, such is their wish still," answered Arthur, coldly; "but I believe they would sooner see us both in our graves than united with hearts estranged. One thing is certain. I will never wed one who loves another, though I loved that one never so well. If Marian likes you better than me, as your words seem to imply, why, marry her, in heaven's name, and peace go with you!"

As he said this, in a cold, severe tone, Arthur wheeled on his heel, with the intention of quitting the room abruptly; but Clifford, who was playing a deep game, with the skill of an adept, caught him by the arm, and exclaimed, with well feigned emotion:

"Stay, Arthur, my dear friend, and let me explain! Oh! I have offended you, I see—offended my best friend—and all unintentionally. But you have mistaken me entirely; I only spoke of my own feelings; I did not even hint at Marian's. She like me on so short an acquaintance? Poh! she neither likes nor dislikes, I'll be bound. We spoke of love, it is true—but with reference to you, Arthur, not to myself. Now do not be offended, I pray you! I know Marian likes you, dearly—she said as much—and only say the word, and you shall have it all your own way—I will not interfere."

"Indeed you are *very* kind," said Arthur, with a proud curl of his lip.

"There, I have offended again. Forgive me! Pray tell me what I shall do to get once more into your favor!"

"I am wrong to get angry," replied Arthur, bethinking himself. "There is my hand, Ernest—forget all my hasty words."

"With all my heart," returned the other, seizing and shaking the proffered hand warmly, and with a show of considerable emotion. "I see now, my dear friend, you love the girl, and I have made you a little jealous with my ill-timed remarks. But forget them, my dear fellow—forget them! I know Marian thinks much of you, already—ay, were you even her *brother*, she could scarcely think more of you. Nay, you need not start, and look so astonished! I pledge you my reputation for discernment it is true; and therefore you have only to press your suit in that quarter, to be successful."

Ere Arthur, vexed, confused, and half bewildered, could frame a reply, Mr. Warren entered the parlor, to bid his guest and son to dinner. Perhaps Arthur was not sorry for this interruption; for turning quickly away from Clifford, he said:

"Father, I give Ernest into your charge. Conduct him to dinner, and I will join you presently;" and without waiting a reply, he opened the door, and passed into the room where he had first met Marian.

"Bravely done!" said Clifford to himself, as he accompanied the elder Warren to the dinner table—"bravely done! The game opens beautifully; and with the cards all in my own hands, I am a fool if I do not win!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE STRANGER AND THE WARNING.

We will not here interrupt the thread of our narrative, to describe the clashing feelings which agitated the heart of Arthur Warren, on finding himself alone in the library, as we will term the apartment he entered. Suffice it to say, that for some ten minutes he paced the room in no enviable frame of mind, ever and anon clenching his hands, and otherwise giving evidence of the action of the stronger passions. At length a servant appeared to again bid him to dinner: and recollecting that the family were at the noon-day meal, and that further delay on his part would occasion surprise and inquiry, he calmed himself as much as possible, and crossing a narrow hall, or entry, which ran through the centre of the house, entered the dining room. As he expected, he found all his friends seated at table, and busy with the tempting viands before them. To his surprise and chagrin, however, he saw that Ernest occupied a place next to Marian, whom he was waiting upon assiduously, and that the only vacant seat was directly opposite. This arrangement might have been accidental, it is true; but to Arthur, in his peculiar frame of mind, it looked very much like design; and so vexed and annoyed him, that he was half inclined to make some excuse and leave the room. Perhaps he would have done so, but for the words of his father, who said:

"Come, come, Arthur, you pay our guests a poor compliment by your delay, and are like to be punished for your neglect by a cold dinner."

Arthur muttered some unintelligible reply, and then took his seat in moody silence, glancing only furtively at Ernest and Marian, as he helped himself from the nearest dish, and began to eat almost voraciously.

"Upon my word," said Marian, speaking across the table, and smiling good humoredly, "It must have been something important, Arthur, that detained you so long away with such an appetite."

"It was," replied Arthur, darting upon her a meaning look, that, in spite of herself, brought the color to her temples.

"One would think he had been amputating the limb of his dearest friend, or taking some of the medicine he is now legalized to prescribe to others," said Ernest jestingly.

"Only a little of the excrescence of the *Quercus infectoria*, which a *friend* administered," rejoined Arthur, rather tartly, looking sharply at Clifford, who slightly changed countenance, but otherwise appeared to take no notice of the cutting sarcasm.

Marian saw that Arthur was offended, and her smiling countenance instantly became grave, which accorded better with her feelings, for her smiles, as the reader is aware, were all assumed. The meal, so far as the three most important actors in our life-drama were concerned, passed off rather dully. Ernest was very attentive to Marian, anticipating her every wish at the table, and made several very unsuccessful attempts to draw her into animated conversation. When he waited upon her, she thanked him politely—and when he asked her a question, answered him civilly—but, beyond these, said little or nothing. Ernest seemed determined at first to rally her into good humor, and even ventured on a conundrum for this purpose.

"Why are you like the soaring eagle, Miss Waldegrave?" he asked.

"I am sure I do not know," she replied, with great simplicity, and without exhibiting any further interest in the matter.

"Shall I tell you?"

"If you please."

"Because you are on the *wing*," he rejoined, alluding to that portion of a fowl, from which she was trying to disengage the meat.

"Capital! capital!" cried Warren, from the head of the table, who chanced to overhear the jest; and the others, of the elder personages, echoed "capital;" and laughed at the joke; but Arthur and Marian scarcely smiled; and Ernest, who saw he had failed in his design, as regarded the latter, for once in his life looked quite chagrined.

The elder Warren now noticed there was something wrong, and said:

"Why, what ails you young folks all at once? one would think, to look at your serious faces, that your friends were all dead. Arthur, how is it? you seem to have lost your light spirits all of a sudden."

"I do not feel well," was the answer.

"I am very sorry to hear it, my son; but, for a sick man, you have a good appetite."

"I thank you for the hint, father," was the rejoinder; and he instantly rose from the table, with a flushed face, and quitted the room.

Mr. Warren looked surprised; but Mrs. Warren suggested that his long ride might have fatigued him, and immediately changed the subject. She, with a woman's quick penetration, already suspected the cause of the peculiar humor exhibited by both Arthur and Marian—but for the present wisely determined on keeping her thoughts to herself. As soon as dinner was over, Marian retired to the little chamber before mentioned, nor did she again make her appearance till called by her mother to accompany her home.

As for Arthur, on quitting the dining room, he repaired to the parlor; and after taking a few hasty turns up and down the room, in a very excited state of mind, he stopped suddenly, and exclaimed:

"I am a fool! Why do I give rein to my feelings and passions in this half-crazed manner? What will Ernest think of me? Doubtless he meant nothing beyond common civilities; and if he did, is he not my guest? and am I not bound by the rules of hospitality and good breeding to treat him like a gentleman—to show him all proper courtesy and respect? And what did he do, or say, to offend me? He was studiously polite to Marian. Well, would I have him otherwise, would I have him act like a boor? Should I be called upon to bring a charge against him, and should I state the real truth, would not people laugh at me? Pshaw! pshaw! let me redeem my foolish error, by behaving myself in future."

Arthur had got thus far in his soliloquy, when the door opened, and his father, accompanied by Ernest and Mr. Waldegrave, entered the apartment.

"What is the matter, my son?" inquired Mr. Warren, anxiously; "are you really ill?"

"I feel better now, father, much better," replied Arthur, in an animated tone. "I did not feel exactly right when I left the table; but give yourself no further uneasiness about the matter;" and then advancing to Ernest, he drew him aside, and continued, in a low tone: "Forgive me, my

friend, for my rude conduct just now! I do not know what possessed me—I was not myself."

"There is my hand," replied Ernest, with assumed frankness. "I never harbor malice for trifling matters. I saw you looked hurt and offended; but for the life of me I could not conjecture the cause that put you out of humor, and so concluded something had gone wrong before you came in to dinner. True, I did once or twice think, that perhaps what I had said—"

"There, there, say no more about it," interrupted Arthur, smiling. "We are not so far removed from childhood, even at one and twenty, but that we do sometimes act with infantile simpleness—at least I speak for myself, and acknowledge it with shame. But let that pass. And now for the day. Would you like a run on the hills for the fowler's game? or are you too much fatigued with your journey?"

"The hills, by all means," replied Ernest; "I am passionately fond of gunning."

"So be it: remain here and amuse yourself, till I get every thing ready;" and saying this, Arthur left the room, with his usual light, elastic step, his features glowing with their wonted animation.

About an hour later, Arthur and Ernest, having donned the regular hunting gear, with pouch and powder-horn slung over their shoulders, and accompanied by Pete, who carried their fowling-pieces and game-bag, set out for the mountains, taking with them a fine dog for rousing the game. It is not our purpose here to treat the reader to a gunning excursion; for the incidents which properly belong to our story, are of a heavier and more startling character; and as our space is limited, we must avoid all digression; for which necessity, you who follow the traces of our pen, have, without doubt, good reason for being thankful. We will only say, therefore, that our friends, for so we must still continue to term them, had a long ramble, some sport, and, very much fatigued, set their faces homeward, just as the sinking sun was streaming a golden light over the beautiful vale and village of Walde Warren, which lay spread before them, a living picture. Their course had been eastward, high up on a ridge, which, beyond the limits of the valley, kept the windings of the stream at its base for a considerable distance. Along the bank of this stream, ran the road before alluded to; and just where the two entered the valley, was a mountain gorge—a deep, wild, romantic pass—where the hill seemed to overhang the road, and the road the river, which dashed over its rocky bed, with sullen roar, some ten or fifteen feet below the traveled route. The hills which environed the valley, as elsewhere mentioned, here came together, or were separated only by the river, which, in early times, to judge by its present appearance, had cut its way through them with the impetuosity of a mountain torrent. Altogether the locality in question was singularly wild, and, in colloquial phrase, *pokerish;* and a really timid person would never have trod the ground alone, at twilight, or at a later hour, without looking fearfully around, and recalling dire tales of murder and hobgoblins.

The sun had left the valley, and the dark shadows of advancing night were beginning to steal over the landscape, and envelope it as with a pall, when our friends, having descended the mountain to the road, and sent the negro on before, reached the gloomy place we have attempted to describe.

"Ugh!" ejaculated Clifford, with a shudder, looking eagerly around him, as he and Arthur walked along, side by side, through the pass.

"What is the matter, Ernest?" inquired his companion, turning to look at him.

"Nothing, nothing," replied the other, quickly; "only somehow—Did you ever have a presentiment, Arthur?"

"Not that I remember."

"Well, there is something about this place—I know not what nor why—that makes my blood run cold."

"You are not afraid, Ernest?"

"No, I never knew what it was to fear—and yet I shudder."

"Cold, doubtless; for since the sun has set, the air feels quite chilly and damp."

"Nay, it is not that—I am warm enough—but—Ha? what is that yonder?"

"Where? what do you see?"

"There, beside the road—that dark object; it looks like a human being."

"And a human being it is," replied Arthur, fixing his eyes upon a dark mass a few paces before him "Yes, some person in distress, perhaps," he continued, quickening his steps, till he came close up to the object, which proved to be a man, stretched at full length upon the ground.

"Drunk," said Ernest, giving the prostrate individual a rude push with his foot, just as Arthur was bending down to ascertain the cause of his lying there.

The man raised himself upon his elbow, as he felt the foot of Clifford, with a start almost spasmodic, and glared upon the latter with an expression of vindictive rage:

and then, with a half stifled groan, lay down again. It was too dark by this time, and in this place, shaded as it was by overhanging trees and bushes, to see any thing very distinctly; but, nevertheless, Arthur was able to make out that the man was about forty years of age, poorly clad, with a harsh, strangely marked countenance, sun browned, begrimed, and rendered still darker and more repulsive by a black, heavy beard, of a week's growth.

"Who are you, my friend?" inquired Arthur, kindly; "and what do you here?"

"I am a man," answered the stranger sullenly; "and if you have eyes, you can see what I am doing here?"

"But the night sets in chilly, and if you lie here you will suffer."

"Well, what of that, who cares?" growled the other.

"I care," returned Arthur. "I would not see a fellow being suffer, while I am blessed with the power to relieve him."

"You wouldn't, eh?" rejoined the stranger, in tones a little softened, partly raising himself, but, as it seemed with considerable effort. "You wouldn't see a fellow being suffer while you have the means to relieve him, eh? Come, let me look at your face—for a man like what you profess to be, is a rare sight, which I should like to see before I die"

"You speak with bitterness, as if the world had not used you well, my friend."

"The world use me well? —*the world?*—ha, ha, ha!" returned the man, with a hollow, mocking laugh.

"Come on, Arthur, the man is drunk," put in Clifford; "and what is the use of spending breath on a liquor cask!"

"There," said the stranger, getting into a sitting posture with some difficulty—"do you not hear? there speaks one of the world—listen to him!"

"You are insolent, knave!" returned Clifford, rather sharply.

"Don't call names!" growled the man, again glaring ferociously upon Ernest—"or if you do, just please to apply some that don't belong to yourself."

"Silence, sirrah! or—"

"Or what?" said the man, as the other hesitated; "apply your foot to me again, maybe?"

"Perhaps."

"Just do it! I dare you to do it again, you miserable coward!" almost shouted the stranger.

"Hold!" cried Arthur, as he saw Clifford raise his foot; "surely—"

He was interrupted by a yell almost demoniac, as the foot of Clifford again touched the man—not heavily, but contemptuously—and the latter gathered himself upon his feet, as one suffering from weakness and pain; but though his countenance expressed the raging of the most vindictive passions within his dark soul, he appeared of a sudden to recollect himself, and made no attempt to advance upon the other, as his first notion seemed to imply he intended to do.

"For shame, Ernest—for shame—to treat the man thus!" said Arthur sternly; "he did you no harm."

"It will teach him, perhaps, to keep a civil tongue in his head, when next he addresses a gentleman," was the reply. "You see I am cool, Arthur—and I should scorn myself, did I let such a human beast excite my passions — but, nevertheless, no man shall dare me and go unpunished."

"Come, no more of this!"

"O, let him go on," said the stranger—"I like to listen to him. His jests amuse me—they do indeed. Heard you not he called himself a gentleman? *He* a gentleman! ha, ha, ha!—was not that a capital joke?" and again he laughed contemptuously. "Why, all the broadcloth ever imported, and all the wealth of the Indies, would not make him a *man*, much less a *gentleman*."

"Now hold your saucy tongue!" cried Clifford—"or your taunts will make me forget myself."

"A happy oblivion if you could," rejoined the other, sneeringly—"for it would save you much vile reckoning hereafter."

Ernest clenched his hand, and seemed about to strike the stranger, when Arthur stepped between the two, and said, sternly:

"Peace, both! I'll have no more quarrelling! Ernest, if you love me, go forward—I would speak with this man alone."

"Let him thank you, then, that he escapes further chastisement," answered Clifford, moving away down the road.

"And now, my good fellow," said Arthur to the man, "let me first give you a piece of good advice, which one of your years should have learned ere this; and that is, if you would be well treated by the world, put your passions under proper restraint, and a strong curb on that unruly member, your tongue. Soft words are a better armor than shirt of mail."

"With gentlemen like yourself, I grant you," answered the other, civilly; "but not with counterfeits, like yonder villain: a stout arm, and vantage ground, is the best defence against such."

"Now peace, I pray you; for I would serve you if I can—but yonder gentleman is my friend."

"Then tear his friendship from your heart, and banish him your presence, lest he do you harm—wrong you most foully!—this is my advice

young man, and I give it in exchange for your's. I should be twice your age, young sir, and have seen more of the world, and of mankind, than you will ever see—for I have studied them in every form, from the ill-shaped dwarf to the fairy-like belle—in every degree, from the beggar in rags to the prince in velvet—and I say it without boasting, I can read a human face as the scholar doth his book; and with all this knowledge of humanity, I warn you to beware of that man, as you would a crawling viper! for if he can, he'll sting thee in thy dearest interest. I tell you this, because in your young face I read inexperience—a kind, benevolent, trusting heart—and you have made me fancy you, almost against my will—otherwise, I should have laughed to see you made miserable by your *friend*—for I hate mankind, with a bitter, bitter hate, and delight to see them war upon each other."

"By your speech, you should be other than you seem," said Arthur, feeling a strange interest in the stranger.

"I *was*," replied the man, with emphasis; "but what I was, and what I am, are matters that concern you not. Ask me no questions, but go your way in peace. Yet stay," he added, hesitatingly, averting his face: "I never yet did stoop to beg; and when I laid me here, a half-hour since, it was in hope that I should die to-night, and so end a life of misery and wretchedness; but now, *now*," he pursued, with much vehemence, "I wish to live a little longer; and if you would—O, the words stick in my throat—in short, sir, I have not tasted food for eight-and-forty hours."

"Merciful heaven!" cried Arthur—"why did you not tell me so at first? Dying for want of food! Come, come with me, my friend, and you shall be provided for."

"No, no—I will go my own way—not with you," replied the other. "If you would assist me, give me money—there, the words are out."

"Certainly, money you shall have, if that will answer; but money is not food, there is no house nearer than my own, and you seem too weak and faint to be left thus."

"Give me money — that will do—I will not further trouble you. Is there an inn in yonder village?"

"Yes, a good one."

"I may perhaps go there."

"Well, here is my purse," pursued Arthur, drawing it from his pocket; "it is not so heavy as it might be, but it is all I have with me. Take it—it will serve your immediate wants—and when it is gone, have no scruples about calling on Arthur Warren. You need not mention that I gave it you."

"May God bless you, Mr. Warren!" said the other, with emotion, as he took the purse.—"Your's is the charity of a noble heart, that does not vaunt its deeds with brazen tongue. Heaven prosper you and your's!"

"But I do not like to leave you thus," hesitated Arthur. "Come, will you not go with me?"

"No, I would be alone. Fear not—I shall do well enough now. I have a purpose to live for, that will give me strength beyond my present seeming. By-the-by, how is your friend called?"

"Ernest Clifford."

"Does he reside in yonder village?"

"No, in Alabama; he is spending a few days with me on a visit. But why do you ask?"

"O, nothing, nothing—only remember my warning! When goes he hence?"

"I know not."

"That is all—good night."

"Shall I see you again?"

"It is uncertain."

"Well, good night, my friend, since you will not let me do any thing more for you;" and Arthur hastened down the road to overtake Ernest Clifford.

The stranger watched him out of sight; and then, as he turned to depart, his foot struck against something, which he stooped to pick up.

"Ha! the very thing!" he muttered—"the very thing!" and a terrible expression swept over his countenance.

CHAPTER V.

THE BREACH WIDENS.

A WEEK passed away, and found Ernest Clifford still a guest of the Warrens; but between him and Arthur had grown up a certain degree of coldness, consequent upon the prosecution of his base purpose, which purpose has already been made known to the reader. There had as yet been no open rupture, no public quarrel, between Arthur and his guest, though matters were gradually tending to such an event. The storm was brewing and advancing none the less surely, that its pent up lightnings had not yet been sent on their fiery mission—that its crashing thunders had not yet shook the heavens.

Arthur had never forgotten the warning of the stranger; and the more closely he studied Ernest, the more reason had he for thinking the man was right. The selfishness which formed a prominent characteristic of Clifford, he could not now perceive, because it

suited the purpose of the latter to lift the mask a little at times, though too much an adept to throw it off altogether, and stand revealed in all his native blackness.

But Arthur had not seen this change in one heretofore considered his dearest friend, without deep regret,—without experiencing all those soul harrowing feelings which attend upon the dawning conviction that the world and mankind are not as we in the simplicity and singleness of our mind have believed. The awakening from the dream of innocence, to the bitter realities of an evil world, is always attended with the keenest anguish of soul—with melancholy—with a sad depression of spirits; it is, in fact, the quitting of all the delights and beauties of Paradise, to wander in a cold, sterile, unknown region. And against this awakening conviction did Arthur struggle, and struggle manfully; he would fain have shut his eyes and dreamed on still; but, alas! the rosy sleep of early life was over, perchance to return no more; the silver veil had fallen from the Mokanna of his heart's worship; the doom of Scotland's bloody king seemed ringing in his ear,

"Sleep no more to all the house."

But still Arthur performed the duties of the host, if not with the same pleasure he had anticipated, at least, so far, without insult to his guest. He had taken Ernest around the village, and introduced him to his friends *as* his friend; they had hunted, fished, and rode together; and such had been their outward seeming, that no one suspected their lips and hearts spoke not in unison.

All might have gone well still, had the scheming Clifford so willed it; but it was his deliberate intention to break with Arthur when it should best suit his design; and he prepared himself, and arranged matters accordingly. His first step, as shown in a preceding chapter, had been to try and estrange Arthur and Marian; and a week had enabled him to succeed just so much as he wished to succeed in a week. It was no part of his scheme to separate them abruptly, by a hot quarrel—for then they might as abruptly come together again, and mar all his projects. No, he wished to separate them gradually—to cause a feeling of restraint and coldness to grow up between them; to make the pride of one wound the pride of the other; to make both so far jealous as to be cynical and sarcastic, and each think the other indifferent and heartless. This Ernest never could have accomplished in any degree, had he not been aided by Marian's first great error in regard to Arthur; and even as it was, it was an undertaking in which any one less cunning and smooth tongued than he would have failed. But he worked with the skill of a master, and so played upon the feelings of each, as to make them play upon each other to his advantage.

During the week in question, he had several times called upon Marian in company with Arthur—but had so managed as to engross the conversation of the former, and leave the latter to the unpleasant reflection that he played a second part. He had contrived, too, to see Marian more than once alone; and then he had spoken of Arthur in the highest terms, and said how happy must be the woman of his choice; but had adroitly hinted, at the same time, that that choice was made; which so chimed in with Marian's belief or fear, considered with Arthur's manner toward her, that the lying insinuation swelled in her mind to a mighty truth.

So matters stood, when Arthur, Ernest, and Marian received an invitation to a party at the house of Mr. Lynch, the merchant, who lived in the village, on the opposite side of the bridge. Notwithstanding a certain degree of coldness had grown up between him and Marian, Arthur now resolved to forget all, and ask her to accompany him—intending, also, to learn, if possible, why she had so changed toward him of late; for since their first meeting, on the day of his return, he had never seen her, to converse with her alone—having, whenever he visited her, taken Ernest along, at the particular request of the latter.

On the evening of the day on which he received the invitation, therefore, he managed to get Ernest and his father engaged in a friendly discussion, and slip away without being perceived. He repaired to Waldegrave's, and, as chance would have it, found Marian entirely alone, in the parlor, her father and mother having gone out to spend the evening. She greeted him in a polite and friendly manner, but seemed not a little embarrassed, and her features wore a heightened color.

"Where is your friend, Mr. Clifford?" was her first question, when the usual common places of meeting had passed between them.

Arthur felt his own face crimson, as he replied with some severity:

"Am I only welcome, Miss Waldegrave, when I bring another to usurp the conversation? If so, say the word, and I will instantly go and bring my *friend*—or, perhaps, I should rather, say *yours*."

"Arthur—or Mr. Warren, rather, since you see proper to deal in formalities—this is cruel, unkind of you," answered Marian, only by a great effort restraining herself from bursting into tears. "I inquired after Mr. Clifford, as was natural I should, seeing you have not thought proper of late to honor my poor presence without him."

"For the very reason that I deemed *his* presence necessary to make *mine* acceptable."

"Oh, Arthur!" exclaimed Marian; and no longer able to hold in check her emotions, she hid her face in her handkerchief and wept.

"Oh, Marian, I have wounded your feelings—forgive me!" cried Arthur, forgetting every thing but that he had spoken harshly to the weeping girl before him, and thinking only how he might repair his error. "Forgive me, Marian, for speaking so rudely, so unkindly!—and to you, my old friend and playmate,—forgive me, or I will never forgive myself!"

But Marian only wept the more. The founts of her soul had burst through their bright gates, and the torrent would not be stayed.

"Oh, Marian, Marian," pursued Arthur, "you make me wretched, for my unguarded words—how could I have been so heartless, so unfeeling as to utter them? Come, Marian, come—(taking her hand, and gently drawing her to him—) look up, my sweet friend, and forget that I have spoken! Oh, say that you forgive me!"

"I do, I do, with all my heart," murmured the other; and carried away by her feelings, she for the moment leaned her head upon his manly breast, and wept anew.

"There, now, we are friends again, sweet Marian—friends as of old—are we not, Marian?—are we not?"

"Yes, Arthur—yes—as of old—at least I hope so," replied the other, starting up rather hurriedly, wiping her eyes hastily, and appearing a good deal confused and agitated.

"There has been coldness between us of late," continued Arthur, still retaining her hand, which she now seemed inclined to withdraw—"but why, I know not—unless," he added, seemingly struck with a new idea—"unless my friend, or some one else, has abused me to you."

"Oh, wrong not your friend with such a suspicion!" returned Marian, quickly—"for he is honor's self, and always speaks of you in the highest terms."

"Then tell me whence this coldness?"

"I know no more than you, Arthur."

"Then you really have no ill-feeling toward me, Marian?"

"Toward you, Arthur? ill-feeling toward you?" cried Marian. "Oh, how can you ask the question?"

"Bless you, fair girl! there speaks the friend of old. Ah! did you know how miserable I have been, thinking you were offended, Marian!"

"And I, Arthur, for the same cause."

"Why, then, we have both been unhappy without a cause! Well, thank heaven! we understand each other now, and I trust there may be no misunderstanding hereafter."

"Heaven send it!"

"But of Ernest—does he indeed speak of me in such high terms?"

"He does, Arthur, and seems never weary of the subject; he is the truest of true friends."

"Then have I wronged him most shamefully."

"How, Arthur?" inquired Marian, in surprise.

"In thought. Do you know, Marian, I have been jealous of his attentions to you, and often fancied he was playing me false—that he was seeking, by sly means and base, to estrange us."

"Oh, then, Arthur, you have indeed wronged him—for never heard I friend extol friend, as Ernest Clifford extols Arthur Warren. Oh, I sometimes felt I could love him for the words he uttered."

"Love him, Marian?" repeated Arthur, a little coldly, forgetting that the cause of that love was praise of him self, and that consequently he must be the foremost object in the heart of her he addressed. "Did you say love him, Marian?"

"I used the term, but perhaps wrongly," replied Marian, blushing: "esteem, it may be, had been the better word."

"Esteem, in such cases, easily ripens into love," returned Arthur; "better to use the expressive verb at once."

"You mistake me, Arthur," cried Marian, hastily, with considerable confusion.

"Well, no matter—let it pass—we will not quarrel on mere terms."

"We will not quarrel on any terms, Arthur," rejoined Marian, quickly.

"Ay, true—so be it with all my heart. So you feel much esteem for Ernest, eh?"

"As your friend, Arthur, yes."

"Nay, put not the responsibility on my shoulders!—do you not esteem him for himself? since you prefer that word to love."

"Arthur, Arthur, what mean these questions, asked in such a way, and in such a tone?" exclaimed Marian uneasily.

"O, you do not wish to answer them, I suppose—no matter."

"Now Arthur, you grow unkind again—as if I would refuse to answer whatever you

may ask. Yes, I do esteem Mr. Clifford, for himself—I look upon him as a kind, benevolent, high-minded, noble-hearted gentleman."

"Rare qualities—but I hope he has them, and that you may never be deceived."

"What mean you, Arthur?"

"O, nothing—nothing."

"Nay, Arthur, there is a hidden meaning in your words."

"Is there, faith?—then if you are sure of so much, perhaps you know what it is. I wish you joy beforehand."

"Wish me joy of what?"

"Of every thing you wish."

"I do not understand you."

"No? Well then let it pass, till the time comes you do."

"Do you refer to Mr. Clifford?"

"Ha! you take my meaning wonderfully well, for one that does not take at all."

"Arthur how strange you talk!" cried Marian, becoming a good deal agitated.

"And yet talk what will not be strange ere long. Ernest, I believe, is rich."

"Well?"

"And you are an heiress."

"Well?"

"That is all—I only spoke to show equality."

"I understand you now," said Marian, who would have wept in vexation of spirit, but that pride came to her aid.

"O, I knew you would understand me with a little reflection," returned the other, drily. "One easily understands in such cases, when one feels inclined."

But Marian did not understand Arthur aright—that is to say, if she guessed at his allusions, she put a wrong construction upon them; for believing him engaged to another—or at least in love with another, as Clifford had vaguely hinted he was—she fancied he spoke thus to show her there was no hope he would ever be other to her than now; and with this idea uppermost in her mind, she rejoined, in a tone a little tremulous with emotion:

"Well, let what will happen, Arthur, I trust we shall ever be friends!"

"O, certainly, friends! O, yes, certainly!" he answered, affecting to laugh indifferently.

"Now, by your manner, you mean not what you say."

"Now, by my faith, I do."

"You seem offended already."

"Pshaw! you mistake me. Come, I will convince you of my sincerity. Here is a plain gold ring, (producing one from his pocket (which was made to fit your finger. If you look inside, you will see engraved, 'From A. W. to M. W.;' will you accept this as a friendship token?"

"Yes! yes!" cried Marian, eagerly.

"And wear it as such?"

"Yes—it shall never leave my finger."

"Let me place it on. Why, how your hand trembles! There, now, so long as I see that ring there, I will call you by the sweet title of friend—since it seems decreed I may never call you by a dearer term;" and in spite of himself the voice of Arthur faltered, and he turned aside his face to conceal his emotion, while Marian actually wept.

O, how blind is love at times—wilfully, jealously blind! Here were two persons now, formed for each other, mutually loving, but contriving through the very excess of that love to establish something like formal friendship. Had Arthur but spoken the dearest wish of his soul, the heart of Marian would have responded, and these two beings, now so miserable, would both have been happy. When Arthur first met Marian after his return, he was struck with the conviction that she loved him; but her subsequent manner had led him to doubt, and finally to think himself mistaken; and this very interview, instead of setting both parties right, only tended to make matters still worse, as will be seen by what immediately follows.

"Now that I have accomplished one object of my visit to-night," said Arthur, at length—"that is to say, brought you and I, Marian, to a friendly understanding—I may as well make known the second. I suppose you intend going to the party at Mr Lynch's?"

"I had thought of doing so," replied Marian, coloring

"Well, shall I do myself the pleasure to call for you?"

At this question Marian seemed not a little embarrassed, and answered hesitatingly, in a tremulous tone, as if afraid of giving offence:

"Why, Arthur—I—had I known—I—but—"

"Well, speak out, Marian!"

"Why — I — am —already engaged, Arthur."

"Indeed!" rejoined the other, starting and flushing. "May I know to whom?"

"Mr. Clifford."

"I might have known as much," returned Arthur, rising with a cold, offended air. "I understand it all now. So, so—well, well;" and he began to hum a tune, and button his coat, preparatory to taking his leave.

"Surely, you are not going, Arthur!" cried Marian, looking greatly troubled.

"Yes, they may be inquiring for me at home, for I stole away unknown to any."

"But say you are not offended!"

"O, no, Marian—no—I wish you well—indeed I do! But now I think of it, may I inquire when you made your engagement with Ernest? for it was only to-day I received my invitation."

"He called this afternoon."

"Ha! yes—I see:" and again Arthur thought of the words of the stranger—"If he can, he'll sting thee in thy dearest interest;" for he remembered Ernest had made some trifling excuse for separating from him, for an hour or so—and now he could see why, and where he had been.

This reflection did not tend to put him in any better humor; and when Marian timidly inquired if he would not come with Mr. Clifford, he answered "*No,*" so sharply, that she turned pale and trembled.

"I am sorry I made the engagement," she rejoined.

"Look to it, that you make no other you will regret more!" he said, chillingly. "Meantime, allow me to wish you a very good night;" and he strode to the door.

"But stay, Arthur—one moment—do not go thus!" cried Marian.

"Well?" he said, almost savagely, turning full upon her, with the air of one who did not wish to be detained.

He saw that she was pale and trembling; but if the sight in the least touched or softened his feelings, he did not show it; his look was stern and cold.

"I thought we were to part friends," faltered Marian.

"And do we not?" was the response.

"I hope so—I pray so, Arthur!"

"Any further commands?"

"No," answered Marian, faintly.

"Then good night!" and Arthur almost rushed out of the house.

He did not go home for an hour, but strolled about in no enviable mood. He was ill-at-ease with himself, and felt bitterly toward all mankind, and particularly toward Ernest. Had the two met then, there would in all probability have been a quarrel.

That night was a very restless and unhappy one to Arthur, and Marian wept herself to a troubled sleep

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CHAPTER VI.

THRILLING INCIDENTS.

The party at Mr. Lynch's was fixed for the third night from that on which Arthur had a private interview with Marian. The day following this interview was stormy; so was the next; the rain poured down in torrents, and Arthur and Ernest did not stir from the house. This made it somewhat unpleasant to both; for Arthur, in endeavouring to act the agreeable host, did it with a certain coldness and formality, that told his guest he was no longer a welcome visitor, and that a sense of duty and propriety had taken the place of pleasure. But this troubled Ernest less than it would have done, had he not deliberately brought it about, and in a measure prepared himself for it. He resolved to let matters take their own course for the present, however, and should a rupture result therefrom, he could in that event take up his quarters at the inn—for to quit the place ere he had fully ingratiated himself with Marian, was no part of his design.

The third day, the day on which the party was to come off in the evening, rose clear and beautiful; and the crystal drops that, on leaf, and blade, and flower, sparkled in the morning light, were soon dispelled by the warm rays of a cloudless sun. At an early hour Arthur mounted his favorite riding horse, and without saying a word to Ernest, but merely telling his father he should be absent most of the day, rode swiftly away toward the village. As he crossed the bridge, he observed that the stream was very much swollen and turbid, and that its waters were still rising fast, occasioned by the recent rains on the mountains. The idea struck him, too, that he had rarely seen the stream so high, and that if it continued to rise any considerable time, it must sweep away the bridge; but this he thought it would not do, simply because such an event had never occurred; and beyond this he thought nothing about it.

We shall not follow Arthur in his day's wanderings—for wanderings is, perhaps, not an inappropriate term—since his object in riding forth was merely to escape from himself, by finding a new channel for his thoughts, and also to have an excuse for not attending the party, which he felt would yield him no pleasure, now that Marian would be escorted thither by another.

It was his intention to return by nine o'clock in the evening; but having ridden to the county seat, and got in company with a few choice friends, he did not get away from there till near that hour; and then the roads were so washed and gullied, that the night being dark, his progress homeward was slow, and he only reached the lower pass to the valley, the opposite one to that heretofore described, about midnight. This, like the other, was wild and gloomy; and as he walked his horse along the road, around the base of the hills, the roar of the angry waters below sounded portentously in his ear, and a solemn dread, as of some awful calamity, seized upon his soul, and he felt a strange, undefinable thrill pervade his frame. Occasionally, too, a flash of the turbulent waters showed him

that the stream had overleaped the usual bounds even of a flood; and as the bridge naturally recurred to his mind, he felt additional uneasiness, lest that had gone, and with it his only chance of reaching home that night.

As he rode on through the valley, half wrapped in a gloomy reverie, while his eye scanned closely each object presented to it, Arthur felt he would willingly give no trifling sum to be assured that all was well. As he drew near the village, he perceived lights like torches moving to and fro in several places; and apprehensive from his own feelings, that something terrible had happened, he buried his spurs in the flanks of his high-mettled beast, and dashed forward on the run. Just before entering the village, he perceived a group of three or four persons carrying a torch, and moving slowly down the bank of the stream, apparently in search of some object. Riding up to them, Arthur demanded, in a tone of considerable uneasiness, what had happened.

"Ah! sir," said the one who carried the torch, as he threw its ruddy gleams upon the pale face of Arthur, "we have terrible news for you, Mr. Warren."

"Speak, Mr. Nixon!" gasped Arthur, "do not keep me in suspense!"

"Prepare yourself for something dreadful! Your friend Mr. Clifford, and Miss Waldegrave, we fear are drowned!"

"Drowned!" shrieked Arthur, half springing, half tumbling, from his horse.

"Yes," pursued the other, "we fear it is all over with them. Oh! it is an awful event, the like of which was never known in Walde-Warren. They were returning together from the party at Mr. Lynch's, and just as they were crossing the bridge, the flood swept it away, carrying them with it. We heard Miss Waldegrave shriek, and Mr. Clifford cry for help, and then all became still. Quick, here, some one assist Mr. Warren!" he cried, as Arthur sank to the ground, too weak to support himself, on hearing this dreadful news.

"And I parted from her in anger!" Arthur muttered, inaudibly, as a couple of the party assisted him to his feet. "Oh! that Clifford's place had been mine! Is there no hope that she may be saved?" he cried, wildly. "Oh! tell me not that she is lost forever!"

"We fear the worst," answered Nixon. "But try and calm yourself, Mr. Warren; we will do all that can be done. Perchance they may escape; but the stream is very high and turbulent, and, as I said before, we have little hope. It is barely possible they may drift to the shore, and we will follow the stream down as far as the most sanguine may think necessary."

"Oh! merciful heaven! how terrible! how terrible!" groaned Arthur, wringing his hands. "And to think I parted from her in anger!" he repeated to himself. "I will go with you, Mr. Nixon," he continued, addressing the inn-keeper. "Let us hasten on as fast as we can, and at the same time examine closely as we go. Do her parents know of this heart-rending calamity?"

"Probably not; for the bridge being carried away, there is now no way of communicating with persons on the other side of the river."

"Oh! what a crushing blow for them! it will break their hearts!" said Arthur.

"The whole village will mourn," replied Nixon, sadly; "for poor Marian was beloved by all, young and old. Alas! this is a woful day for Walde-Warren."

Arthur said no more; but he felt a pressure on his brain, as if it would burst. He would have given a world, had it been his, to have recalled that last meeting, and parted from his sweet, gentle, lovely playmate, as a true friend should have parted. Alas! he could not now unsay his cruel words, and he felt that his life must henceforth be one of regret and misery. He had parted in anger from the only being he truly loved on earth; and without the chance of reparation, without an opportunity to ask forgiveness, she had suddenly been snatched from time to eternity. Oh! pen cannot portray, even in a feeble degree, the intense, overwhelming anguish he suffered. His brain seemed at times on fire; and often did he wish Clifford's fate had been his—that he had been with her on the fatal bridge, and, if death were decreed, that he had died in a noble effort to save a life dearer than his own.

For hours did the citizens of Walde-Warren search the banks of the stream for the bodies of Ernest Clifford and Marian Waldegrave. Far down below the western pass did they go with their torches—examining every projection, curve, and drift—in fact, every inch of ground, for the whole distance. But they sought in vain. The muddy, turbulent waters went hissing, whirling, roaring, and flashing onward, but were silent concerning the awful deed they had performed. Not a trace of the unfortunate victims was found, and it was finally decided that no more could be done till daylight. Slowly, sadly, and with heavy gloom on each countenance, did the searchers retrace their steps to the village; where they were met by a hundred eager inquiries, from their wives and daughters,

who had remained behind in torturing suspense; and many were the exclamations of horror, pity, and grief, when the latter found their worst fears confirmed by the report.

Arthur, who had returned with the others, now became an object of universal attention and commisseration—as, his features, pale as marble, and expressive of the keenest anguish—his eyes red from weeping—his head bowed upon his breast—he walked slowly past groups of anxious citizens, who, out of respect to his heavier sorrows intruded upon him no empty words of condolence, but, on the contrary, hushed all conversation as he went by.

It was the wish of Arthur, as expressed to Mr. Nixon, that some kind of a raft should be constructed, by which he could reach the opposite side of the swollen stream, relieve his parents of all anxiety concerning himself, and report the dire event of the night. Several persons accordingly set to work, and by daylight a rough water-conveyance was finished and placed upon the stream. Upon this Arthur and one other ventured with long poles; and after one or two narrow escapes, owing to the power and velocity of the current, reached the opposite shore in safety, about a quarter of a mile below the point of embarkation.

Arthur now made the best of his way home, fearing to trust himself to communicate the awful intelligence to the parents of poor Marian. His own father and mother were rejoiced to see him; for although they knew nothing of the washing away of the bridge, they had been concerned at his long absence; but when he came to relate the loss of Marian and Ernest, they were appalled and overwhelmed with sorrow, for they loved Marian as a daughter.

"Oh! woful tidings! woful tidings! and wo is me, that I must be the first to break this dreadful news to Archer!" said the elder Warren, when Arthur had finished his heart-rending tale. "But it must be done, and delay can ease no pang;" and with these words he set off on his soul trying mission.

We pass over the reception of the intelligence of the loss of their beloved daughter, by the parents of Marian. No pen, though wielded with the combined power of all the great masters that ever had a being, can portray one tithe of the anguish which is felt on similar occasions; and therefore we leave the reader to imagine—or, it may be, recall—their feelings; for doubtless we are addressing some who have felt a like visitation of Providence. Oh! it is hard, very hard, to lose a near and dear friend by the hand of death, and know that his or

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her welcome voice will sound no more in our ear while we tread the shores of time; but when we have seen such a one pass gradually down to the vale of shadows, heard his or her parting words, and felt the last pressure of his or her hands—how light is our affliction compared to that of having one snatched from us in the bloom of health, without a moment's warning! In the latter case the shock is terrible; and there are many constitutions that sink under the blow, or withstand it only with a final or temporary loss of reason.

The latter was not the case with the parents of Marian, however; they survived the news of her loss, without the derangement of their mental faculties; but over what they suffered for a few hours we will draw a veil.

As for Arthur, having repaired to his own private chamber, he locked himself in, and then gave unrestrained way to his grief. And it was fearful; fearful. Now he would throw himself upon the bed, and roll from side to side, as if undergoing the agonies of mortal convulsions; now he would start up suddenly, and pace the floor with rapid strides, wringing his hands, or swinging them wildly to and fro; and now he would sink himself heavily upon a seat, and, leaning his head upon his breast, clasp his temples, ever and anon exclaiming, with a groan:

"Poor dear Marian! and I parted from thee in anger!"

How many, whose eyes fall upon the traces of our pen, will recall some dear friend from whom they parted in anger, or coldness, which parting death unexpectedly made a final one.

It is not well to part from a friend in anger.

The sun was more than half way to the meridian, when Mr. Warren rapped at Arthur's door, and cried:

"Joyful news, my son—joyful news! Marian and Mr. Clifford are saved."

With one bound Arthur reached the door, and the next moment stood confronting his father, pale, haggard, trembling, and with an expression of hope and fear blended on his countenance.

"Did I hear aright?" he gasped.

"Yes, Arthur—yes—thank God, they are saved!"

"Thank God, indeed!" returned Arthur, solemnly; and sinking down upon his knees, he offered a silent tribute of thanksgiving to the Most High. "Now tell me, father, the particulars," he said, as he rose to his feet.

"Why, I hardly know the particulars myself, Arthur," answered the other; "but it appears, from what I could gather from the messenger sent over to apprise Marian's parents of her safety, that Mr. Clifford, with wonderful presence of mind, on finding the bridge giving way, clasped Marian around the waist with one arm, and the railing with the other; and so they were borne down the stream some three or four miles—she barely kept from drowning by his unremitting and almost superhuman efforts—when, Providentially, they lodged against some bushes, and he succeeded in getting ashore and dragging her after him, in an unconscious state; from which, though nearly exhausted himself, he finally recovered her, by constant rubbing and other attentions. As both were too weak to walk, they remained on the bank of the stream through the night, and were found this morning, in a rather precarious condition, by a party of the villagers who had gone down to search for their dead bodies. They were immediately taken to a farm-house in the vicinity, proper restoratives applied, and subsequently conveyed to the village in a carriage, where they now are, at the house of Mr. Lynch. All Walde-Warren is in a state of rejoicing, and young and old are loud in the praise of the noble, heroic conduct of Ernest Clifford."

A pang shot through the heart of Arthur at this recital—a selfish pang we dare not deny. He rejoiced that Marian had been saved from an awful death; but he could not avoid the regret that she owed her life to Clifford. Though living, he now felt she must henceforth be dead to him; for though never so much opposed to the advances of Clifford—and he had yet to learn that she *was* opposed to them—how could she conscientiously resist the impassioned suit of her preserver? This idea now became one of torture to Arthur; and if the truth must be told, he scarcely felt more happy than before he heard what to every one else was joyful news. His father saw that he was greatly agitated—but he attributed it to a very different cause than the real one—and merely adding, that the parents of Marian had gone back with the messenger to see her, and thank her preserver, he retired, leaving Arthur to himself.

Once more alone, Arthur threw himself upon the bed, and fairly wept in bitterness of spirit. Not naturally of an envious disposition—not naturally of a jealous one—he was now both envious and jealous of one he had so lately called his friend, but whom he felt he could call his friend no more. Yes, he felt, truly felt, he had nursed a viper to sting him to the heart. He had crawled between Marian and himself; and though so feeble at first that an iron heel might have crushed him, yet now circumstances had given him a power that made him more than his equal in combat.

"Oh! that it had been my

fortune to have saved that life dearer than my own, even at the sacrifice of my own!" groaned Arthur; "but, alas! it was not so ordered; and henceforth I must be miserable in knowing that she lives for another, and that other unworthy so rich a prize."

As we claim to speak the truth of Arthur, even when it tells against him, we must not omit to mention here, that with all his selfishness—and who can truly love and not be selfish?—the keenest pang of his heart was the reflection, that Ernest Clifford was totally unworthy so sweet, so gentle, so innocent, so pure, so confiding, so unsuspecting, so angelic a being as Marian Waldegrave. Had he been what Arthur first believed him to be—a generous, upright, honorable man—he could have said—not perhaps without a pang of regret—but still he could have said: "You have saved her life—it belongs to you—take her and make her happy." But he could not say it now, though his voice, he fancied, had no longer power to make or mar.

At length Arthur started up quickly, with the sudden resolve that he would see Marian without delay. In his peculiar frame of mind, and with his fiery, passionate energies, to resolve was to execute. He hurried from the house toward the village; and finding no other means of crossing the still roaring flood, he plunged in, regardless of the danger he incurred, and succeeded in gaining the other bank in an exhausted condition. Resting himself for a few minutes, and feeling his strength in some degree restored, Arthur, all dripping with water, unmindful of his appearance, set off for Mr. Lynch's. He found a group of some dozen persons in front of the merchant's dwelling, discussing the late exciting events; and just as he came up, he heard the name of Clifford mentioned in terms of the highest encomium.

"Why, Mr. Warren," said the same speaker, glancing at Arthur's dripping garments, "it seems you have been taking a bath also."

"But I have saved nobody's life," replied Arthur, almost bitterly, as he passed on into the house, which he found very much crowded, mostly by ladies, many of whom were still dressed as at the party, having remained up all night, under too much excitement to think of their personal appearance.

On inquiring for Marian, Arthur was informed that she was now asleep, and that the physician had given strict orders not to have her disturbed.

"But your friend, Mr. Clifford, is in a condition to see you," said Mr. Lynch coming up to Arthur.

Arthur would have declined seeing him, only that he feared such a proceeding would be too pointed, and elicit inquiry as to the cause—for as yet it was not known that Ernest and himself were not on the same friendly terms they had ever been. So he was shown to Mr. Clifford's room by Mr. Lynch, who immediately retired, leaving the young men to themselves.

Arthur found Clifford enveloped in a dressing gown of the host's, sitting on the side of the bed, from which he had just risen, and sipping a glass of port wine negus. Advancing to him, with a rather embarrassed air, Arthur held out his hand; but Ernest was busy sipping his wine, and appeared not to see it.

"I have called to congratulate you on your Providential escape from a horrible death," Arthur said, hardly able to suppress the indignation which the cool, deliberate insult of the other aroused.

"Ah, yes, *we* had a very narrow escape of it," replied Clifford, with perfect nonchalance, taking another sip at the wine glass.

"Perhaps I intrude!" said Arthur, biting his nether lip with vexation.

"O, no, not at all," replied the other, in a tone of cutting indifference. "No, my physician has not forbidden me to see any one—though I believe Marian is not so fortunate. Poor Marian! only for her sufferings, it had been a happy night to me. Do you not wish me joy, Mr. Warren?"

"No," said Arthur, "I do not. I will be frank, and not let my tongue lie to my heart. Mr. Clifford, I once called you my friend—I can do so no longer."

"O, as you please," answered the other, with perfect composure—"it is a matter of no importance to me. I will send for my luggage—I suppose you do not intend to keep that?"

Arthur flushed to the very roots of his hair, his hands clenched, his brows contracted, his eyes flashed, and for a moment or two it seemed as if he would have struck his insulter to his feet. But he choked down his choler, so as to speak distinctly, in a low but tremulous tone:

"Mr. Clifford, I see it is your intention to insult me beyond forgiveness—nay, you have already done so—but I do not wish to have any open quarrel with you, and therefore I curb my temper and my passions; but beware you do not go too far!"

"Thank you, for your timely caution. By-the-by, if you will make out my bill, I will settle it, and change my quarters."

"Well, then," replied Arthur, "the first item is two hundred dollars, borrowed money."

"Ah! yes—I remember; have you my note?"

"Your note? no! am I a paltry usurer?"

"Well, I never pay any thing but notes?"

"Swindling scoundrels seldom do!" rejoined Arthur, with a look of contempt and scorn.

"Ha! that language to me, sir?" cried Clifford, beginning to grow excited for the first time.

"If the coat fits, wear it!" said Arthur.

"You are bold, knowing me an invalid."

"Were you not one, you would find me bolder. But I did not come here to quarrel—so I will take my leave."

"Good morning," rejoined Ernest carelessly. "I am sorry I have put you to so much inconvenience; but the fact is, you see, we had no idea the bridge would be carried away when we attempted to cross on it; for dear Marian and I were in such earnest conversation, we never once looked at the water til. too late. She was regretting you should be so much offended, because she happened to prefer my company to yours; and to say the truth, I regretted you were so unfortunate."

"That's a lie!" returned Arthur, setting his teeth hard.

"Sir," replied Clifford, slightly coloring, "there is but one way to atone for that expression. I trust you will give me honorable satisfaction."

"If you have reference to a duel, I say no," was the answer; "duelling is against my principles."

"All cowards say the same," was the cutting rejoinder.

"I am no coward, Mr. Clifford, as you may find to your cost, if you push your insults too far."

"Then select your friend, without more urging."

"No, I will not."

"Then you must apologise for what you have said, and that too in the presence of others."

"So far from that, I throw it back in your teeth, that you are false, treacherous, a common swindler, and no gentleman."

Ernest sprang from the bed, with the evident intention of striking Arthur; but at this moment the door opened, and Mr. Lynch entered, with a couple of young gentlemen, who had called to see Clifford. The latter greeted the new comers with a cordial smile and shake of the hand; and Arthur, taking advantage of the interruption, went out—Ernest calling after him, in a very pleasant tone:

"Another time will do, Arthur!"

Almost beside himself with rage, Arthur made the best

of his way home; and, returning again to his own apartment, threw himself upon the bed. When, an hour or two later, his mother entered his room, she found him laboring under a violent attack of fever, and wildly delirious.

CHAPTER VII.

A BLOW AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

For more than a week the life of Arthur Warren was despaired of; and it was a couple of weeks after this, ere he was able to quit the house, for a short walk.

Meantime Ernest had removed to the hotel, and continued to call daily upon Marian at her father's house, where he had managed to become quite a favorite with the parents of her he sought as a bride. His heroic conduct, as it was termed, in saving the life of Marian, had given him a strong claim to their favor, and he was not the person to let such an opportunity pass unimproved. And Marian herself, looking upon him as the preserver of her life, and believing that Arthur cared nothing for her, had come to regard him in some sort as a suitor; and though she might not love him, in the true sense of the term, she frankly acknowledged he stood high in her esteem.

We must premise here that the true character of Ernest Clifford was known only to Arthur Warren; and during the sickness of the latter, he had so ingratiated himself with the villagers, young and old, that it would have been no easy matter to convince them he was other than he seemed. He had made no mention of his quarrel with Arthur; but had given as a reason for changing his quarters, that he did not wish to intrude upon the hospitality of the Warrens, while his dear friend lay so ill. This looked reasonable, and was believed.

On the second day of his leaving the house, Arthur rode down to the village. The flood had long since subsided, and a temporary bridge now spanned the stream. A group of several persons, among them Ernest Clifford, stood on the piazza, of the White Deer as he drove up. All came forward to congratulate him on his recovery, and among the foremost was Ernest himself. As the latter held out his hand to him, Arthur turned to him, with flashing eyes, and said, in a severe tone:

"Sir, we must henceforth be strangers."

Ernest appeared to be shocked at this rudeness, and the by-standers really were.

"Mr. Warren," said Clifford, with offended dignity, "I must ask an explanation of this singular conduct on your part!"

"You have it already in your hypocritical heart," replied Arthur, sharply. Then addressing the others, "This man," he said, "whom I once called friend, I here publicly denounce as a wolf in sheep's clothing—as a base and unprincipled villain, who will sacrifice friendship to self, and stoop to any meanness that will accomplish his purpose."

Clifford, on hearing this, appeared to be seized with violent rage; and springing to Arthur, ere any one could interfere, struck him a smart blow, exclaiming:

"There if you are not a coward, resent that!"

The by-standers now rushed between the parties and prevented any further collision—otherwise, there is no telling what might have been the consequence—for Arthur was excited to a point of madness, and, weak as he was, it took two strong men to hold him.

"A blow!" he shouted—"a blow!—the stigma of a blow can only be effaced by blood! O, he shall pay dearly for this!"

It was at least an hour ere Arthur in any degree became tranquillized; and his last words to those who had interfered between him and Ernest, as he was on the point of being driven home, were:

"Gentlemen, you have succeeded in preventing me chastising a villain now; but we *shall* meet again, and then let him beware!"

On arriving at his father's house, he immediately repaired to his own apartment, and did not leave it again that day, notwithstanding the earnest entreaties of his parents that he would spend an hour or two with them in the parlor. He refused to eat, also, and went to bed fasting—but not once did his eyes close in sleep. No! he lay and thought, struggled with himself, wrestled manfully with the demon that had entered his soul, and prayed earnestly to be delivered from evil.

Feverish and haggard, he arose the next morning, before any one else was astir, and went out, directing his steps towards the village. As he was passing the dwelling of the Waldegraves, he looked up, and, as chance or fate would have it, saw the face of Marian at one of the upper windows. She bowed a recognition, and beckoned to him at the same time. He returned her salute, coldly and haughtily, and seemed about to pass on; but stopped, hesitated a moment, and then turned his steps towards the mansion. Marian met him at the door, and seemed much agitated.

"I have much wished to see you of late, Arthur," she said, in a tremulous tone "but for some reason you appear to avoid me. I have never had one moment's conversation with you, except in the presence of others, since the night you called here, before the accident of the bridge: why is this?"

"I did not know you wished to see me alone," he replied, with an air of reserve; "and you are aware that I have been much confined to my bed since then by sickness."

"Oh, yes, you have been very, very ill, Arthur; but, thank God! you are still in the land of the living. But you look pale and ill now, Arthur; I fear you are far from well; come in and rest you awhile, and let us talk as of old."

"No, Marian, that cannot be," returned Arthur, sadly, allowing himself to be conducted into the parlor, where he chose a seat beside a window, which he opened to catch the refreshing breath of the morning.

"And why can it not be, Arthur?" inquired Marian. "Oh! if you could but know what I have suffered, in thinking you angry with me, methinks you would not continue so cruel."

"I am not angry with you, Marian," replied Arthur; "I am not cruel; but we are changed; we are no longer what we were; and therefore, we cannot meet as in the days that are past."

"And why are we changed, Arthur? it is of that I wish to speak. I feel toward you the warm, sincere friendship of a sister, and I would have you regard me as such, since—"

She paused, and the color mounted to her face, for she felt she was on the point of venturing an expression that might be misconstrued.

"Since you are engaged to another," said Arthur, a little tartly, completing the sentence in a very different manner than Marian had intended.

"No, Arthur," she replied, "that is not true—I am not engaged to another."

"Well, about to be, then—it is all the same."

"Nay, nor about to be, Arthur. I suppose you allude to Mr. Clifford; but—"

"Mention not his name in my presence," cried Arthur, flushing with indignation; "and let me charge you to beware of him, Marian! for he is a dissembling villain, and I have denounced him as such."

"Yes, I have heard."

"Who told you?" demanded Arthur, quickly.

"Why," replied Marian, with some hesitation, and coloring as she spoke—"he was here himself last night, and is very sorry that—"

"No more!" said Arthur, rising, "I will take my leave: you cannot entertain him at night and me in the morning."

"But stay—one moment—

and let us come to an understanding. Tell me why you feel so bitterly toward Mr. Clifford?—he says he knows no reason for it, and most deeply regrets that your intemperate language led him to lift his hand against you; but being blinded by passion, he knew not at the time what he was doing."

"Saving your presence, Marian," returned Arthur, frowning darkly, and setting his teeth hard, "Ernest Clifford is a liar, and a villain of the most unmitigated stamp! He hates me, now, with all the malignancy of a fiend; but he puts on a show of friendship in the presence of others, that I may appear the aggressor. Oh! I could tell you—but no! why should I? Enough that if you heed not my warning, you will live to repent it! As you have become so deeply interested in his fortunes, however, one thing I will say, and that is, he already looks upon you as his."

"Indeed, Arthur! how know you this?"

"He as good as told me so."

"When?"

"The morning after your escape from drowning, at the house of Mr. Lynch. Did he ever mention our interview there?"

"Yes, and said you parted from him in the most friendly manner."

"And you believed him?"

"I had no reason to doubt his word."

"Have you any for doubting mine?"

"No, Arthur—what a singular question!" said Marian, in surprise.

"Were I to flatly deny what he has said, which would you believe?"

"You, Arthur—for I never heard you utter an untruth."

"Well, then, I take heaven to witness, that he grossly insulted me at that interview—we quarrelled—he challenged me—I refused to meet him, but told him to his teeth that he was a villain—and we were about to come to blows, when we were interrupted."

"You amaze me, Arthur?"

"You do not know him, Marian, or this would not amaze you in the least."

"Were it not that he is my preserver, that I owe my life to his heroic conduct—I would never see him more," rejoined Marian; "but—"

"O, I understand," interrupted Arthur: "you need be at no further pains to find a reason for the impropriety of bidding him stay away. But I hear others stirring; and as I am not in a mood for meeting either of your parents, I will take my leave."

"But, Arthur, we are to be friends!" said Marian, in a tremulous tone, holding out her soft, white hand.

"Certainly, Marian—certainly—I will not again part from you in anger," replied Arthur, clasping her hand cordially. "God bless you, Marian, and guard you ever!" he pursued, with deep feeling. "I shall ever remember you; and whatever may be my fate, know that to the last you have a warm, unselfish friend in me."

Marian was much affected, and tears came to her eyes.

"You speak," she said, "as if you were going away."

"I am, Marian; this is no longer a place for me; I have been publicly disgraced; and as soon as I have settled this affair with Mr. Clifford, I shall bid adieu to Walde-Warren."

"Oh! this is sorrowful news," sighed Marian, still weeping.

"I am happy to know you will regret my absence."

"Could you doubt it, Arthur?"

"When a man's most cherished companion—his bosom friend—his confidant—suddenly becomes an open, bitter enemy, one is led to doubt almost any thing," replied the other.

Marian scarcely knew what to say, and her tears still flowed freely.

"I shall see you again ere you leave?" she murmured, in a faltering tone.

"Perhaps so; I will not promise, as I may leave suddenly."

"Oh, yes, Arthur, I must see you again! this is surely not a final parting! And oh! if Mr. Clifford is the man you represent him, I pray you avoid him!"

"No, he would misconstrue my motive; he would publicly proclaim me a coward."

"Well, see him, but do not quarrel with him!"

"I will promise nothing, but that I shall see him as early to-day as possible. I am now on my way to the inn for this purpose."

"Arthur, do *not* see him!" cried Marian, suddenly, with unusual energy.

"Why not?"

"Because I somehow fear the result of this meeting. I have a presentiment of something dreadful!"

"I regret you take so deep an interest in him, Marian—but see him I must!" said Arthur in a decided tone.

"Now, for my sake, Arthur!"

"Nay, Marian, it is useless to plead—I am resolved—and so farewell. Whatever may happen, I trust that you will always regard me as a brother; and in remembrance of the past, forever wear the ring I gave you as a sacred pledge of friendship."

On hearing these words, Marian turned as pale as death, and then flushed to a deep crimson.

"What means this emotion?" inquired Arthur, not a little surprised. And then, a sudden thought flashiug across his mind: "Let me see your hand!" he exclaimed. "Nay, the other one! Ha! the ring is not there—how is this, Miss Waldegrave? That ring, by your own solemn promise, was never to leave your hand: how is this?"

"Hear me!" gasped, rather than said, Marian, sinking upon a seat, greatly agitated.

"Well, speak!" cried Arthur, sternly.

"Why—There, now, do not be angry, Arthur! Oh say you will not be angry?"

"Speak!" reiterated Arthur, even more sternly than before, compressing his lips.

"Why, the truth is—that—I—I should say—that—Mr. Clifford—"

"Ha! I see!" cried Arthur, interrupting her. "No more!—there is no excuse, no palliation for this! Miss Waldegrave, farewell;" and without waiting to hear another word, he rushed from the house, in a state of mind bordering on frenzy, and bent his course for the White Deer Inn.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE AWFUL DEED.

The reader, who has closely followed us in our story of life, cannot have failed to perceive the marked change which has taken place in Arthur Warren, since his return from abroad with one he believed to be his friend; and the causes of this change are likewise known to him Then, he was buoyant, spirited, and happy—looking upon life as a bright reality, unshadowed by clouds; but now we find him dejected, dispirited, and gloomy, a prey to bitter feelings and fancies, and viewing the world as a theatre of contention, disappointment, and vexation, where he was forced to play a part ill-suited to a noble confiding nature. The severest misanthropes are probably those who, at one time, have felt the greatest general love for mankind; and who, regarding all men like themselves—honest, honorable, and generous to a fault—have trusted implicitly, with a whole heart, and been deceived to an extent they could not have believed possible; and which, when convinced of its reality, has shattered their whole moral system, by one tremendous blow, leaving them a mere wreck of what they were, with all faith in humanity destroyed. It is a fact well known, that the swiftest running stream, if suddenly obstructed, will send its waters backward with the greatest velocity; and, as in this case, so in every other; one extreme, if suddenly checked, gives us another directly its opposite

The angel, fallen from a high estate of grace, holiness, and beatitude, becomes a demon of the worst type; and she, the most lovely, pure minded, and virtuous among women, when once degraded, becomes the vilest of the vile; and if she is ever reclaimed, it may be set down as one of God's miracles—as an event beyond the regular order of nature.

In some degree these remarks will apply to Arthur Warren; for in just so much as he had believed mankind perfect, and fit to be trusted, he now regarded it as base and unworthy of confidence; but as in the former case, there ever had been with him considerable qualification, so he was still prepared to acknowledge there might he some good in the world, though so mixed up with cunning hypocrisy, as to be received only with great caution. after a careful examination and proper test. There might be such a thing as pure, disinterested friendship, he thought; but the cases of the reality were at the same time so rare,, that they might be said to serve as the proper exceptions to an opposite rule of action, and by said rule he resolved henceforth to abide, and regard friendship only as a name. He fancied he had good cause for this uncharitable resolution; for the man he had called his dearest friend, had proved his worst enemy; and she who had occupied no trifling place in his youthful dreams, he now began to regard as false, and unworthy of his esteem; but in this latter he was mistaken; for his own hasty acts had compelled appearances against Marian, when she was really innocent.

In this gloomy, bitter, morbid state of mind, Arthur hurried forward to the inn, to confront Clifford, ere the village was much astir. It was a clear, beautiful morning, and as he crossed the bridge, he saw by the golden glory sent before the sun in the east, that he was about to make himself visible. A lovely, picturesque landscape lay before him, with diamond dew drops sparkling on leaf, and blade, and flower; birds were singing melodiously their morning songs, and the stream murmured sweetly over its rocky bed; but this fine combination of sight and sound harmonized not with his feelings, and he experienced no enjoyment from the scene.

On arriving at the inn, Arthur found a son of the landlord, a lad of sixteen, standing on the piazza, cleaning a gun; and of him he inquired if Mr. Clifford was yet stirring.

"Yes, sir," was the reply; "he came down about fifteen minutes ago, and went up your way. If you came direct from home, it's a wonder you didn't meet him. I reckon he's in sight yet, Mr. Warren;" and the lad stepped off the portico, and looked up the valley. "Yes, there he goes now," he continued, "just beyond your house. I shouldn't wonder if he were going up the mountain, for lately he seems very fond of a morning ramble."

"Thank you," replied Arthur; and as he turned away, he muttered to himself, "Now then shall I be able to meet him alone, and we will see who is the coward."

The traveled road which ran through the village, as we have previously said, crossed the bridge, and continued up the right bank of the stream, past the mills and the residence of Waldegrave and Warren, when it again crossed the stream, and took the left bank through the eastern pass, and around the base of a steep mountain. By going through a field, and over a steep hill, you could reach this pass from the inn by a nearer but less pleasant way than following the road, and this nearer course was the one taken by Arthur.

He had been gone about fifteen minutes, when Mr. Nixon appeared on the piazza, and inquired of his son with whom he had been speaking.

"Arthur Warren," was the reply.

"What did he want?"

"He was asking for Mr. Clifford, and I told him he'd gone up the valley, and he immediately started off after him."

"George, you should not have done this," said his father, reprovingly; "for if they meet, there will surely be a quarrel."

"Well, if they want to fight, I reckon it's best to let 'em," said the lad.

"Well, sirrah! I reckon it isn't," replied the father sternly. "I should be sorry to have the village disgraced by a figh · and besides, if these young men meet, something more serious than an ordinary fight may result from it; and as I have a regard for both, I am determined to interfere, though I may not be thanked for my pains. Who knows but this may end in a secret duel? I will after them; stay you here till I return."

Saying this, Mr. Nixon set off in the direction taken by Arthur, at a hasty pace. On reaching the summit of a steep eminence, about half way between the village and the upper pass, he espied Arthur some half a mile distant, and a little further on, Ernest Clifford, both walking very fas.. He shouted to Arthur; but probably he did not hear, for he kept straight on, neither turning his head to the right nor left. Nixon descended the hill on a run, and did not slacken his pace to a walk till near the pass so often alluded

to, though he failed to overtake Arthur, of whom and Ernest, for the last few minutes, he had lost sight.

In a former chapter, we gave a brief description of the wild and gloomy appearance of the spot where the road left the valley, winding round the base of a steep, and overhanging the stream; and how the branches of the trees, interlocking, formed a leafy canopy, that almost excluded the rays of the noon-day sun, and at all times rendered the place sombre with shadow. It was now an early hour in the morning—the sun had not sufficiently risen above the hill to throw his rays here at all—and consequently at the moment Nixon passed beneath the trees, the light here was rather like the approach of night than that which belongs to sun-rise. At first, therefore, he saw nothing distinctly; but after having advanced some half a dozen paces, he fancied he beheld Arthur, about twice that distance ahead of him, bending over a dark object, that lay upon the ground, on one side of the road. Fearful of, he scarcely knew what, he quickened his pace; and as he drew near, he found that his conjecture as to Arthur was correct, and that the object under inspection was a man, stretched at full length upon the earth. Arthur was on his knees, with his back toward Nixon, and so disposed that the latter could only see the extremities of the person beneath him—but from what he did see, he doubted not it was Clifford.

"What are you doing, Mr. Warren?" inquired Nixon, in a tone of slight alarm.

Arthur started up quickly, for he had not heard the other's approach, and turning to Nixon, exhibited a face ghastly and horrified.

"All merciful heaven!" he cried—"look here!"

Nixon took a step or two forward, and uttered an exclamation of horror. At his feet lay the bloody corpse of Ernest Clifford.

"Oh! I feared this," he said, turning to Arthur, who stood as one bewildered, his fingers convulsively working with the handle of a large clasp-knife, whose sanguine blade too clearly proclaimed it the instrument with which the awful deed had been performed. "Oh, heaven! I feared this, Arthur Warren," he repeated: "and I hastened after you; but alas! I have come too late."

"Then you knew something of it?" said Arthur, in a quick, eager, excited tone.

"As I said before, I feared it, Mr. Warren."

"Then you have su·picion of who has done it?" cried Arthur.

"*More* than suspicion," replied Nixon, pointedly.

"Speak! quick! who is he?

name him!" and Arthur, in his excitement, would have laid his bloody hand on Nixon's arm, but the latter drew quickly back, with a shudder.

"I have no need to name him, while he carries such damning evidence of his crime," replied Nixon, pointing to the other's hands.

Arthur looked down, with an air of surprise, as if he did not understand what was meant; but the moment his eyes rested on his hands and the knife, both bloody, an expression of the most appalling horror swept over his handsome countenance; and letting the knife fall to the ground, he fairly shrieked:

"Oh! what have I done! I am lost! I am lost! ruined! forever ruined! Oh, my father! oh, my mother! this, this will be a death-blow to you both!" and he leaned against a tree near-by for support. But suddenly he started up again, exclaiming with energy: "No! no! why should I think so? they cannot, they will not, they dare not accuse me! Sir," he continued, addressing Nixon, "appearances are against me; but as God is my judge, and as I hope for mercy in another world, I am not guilty of this deed!"

"I would I could believe you, Arthur Warren," returned the other, with a sorrowful shake of the head.

"And do you not? can you believe me capable of so foul a crime?" cried Arthur, with passionate energy.

"When one is blinded by rage, and a desire for revenge, I believe one may be led to do a deed, which, in his cooler moments, he would shrink from with terror," was the reply. "You say, Arthur Warren, that appearances are against you; and you say truly; and whether I believe you guilty or innocent, can in no manner affect the past. The man is dead, that is certain—killed—stabbed in several places—and I find you here, bending over him, your hands bloody, and a bloody knife in your hands. What must I infer? more especially, when it is well known you and the deceased quarrelled yesterday, that you sought him this morning, and that, on hearing you had followed him, I followed you both, lest, without the interference of a third party, something like this should happen."

"I see! I see!" groaned Arthur, wringing his hands; "circumstances have made me a murderer. Oh, fate! thy work is done, and I am lost! But God, who sits above the tribunals of man, and readeth the heart, knoweth my innocence. I did follow Clifford, to chastise him for the blow he gave me yesterday—that is true—but I never contemplated a deed like this. I found him as you see him, with the knife buried in his

heart. I was shocked, bewildered, horrified; and scarcely knowing what I did, I stooped down to see if life were extinct. My eye falling upon the knife, I was struck with its resemblance to one I had recently lost; and instinctively, as it were, without a thought of the consequence, I drew it forth, and, to my utter astonishment, found it indeed was my own. In this manner my hands became bloody; and I was examining it as you came up and surprised me. This, Mr. Nixon, is the real truth; but I comprehend sufficiently the position in which a chain of circumstances has placed me, to deem it useless to repeat my tale."

"You are right, Mr. Warren," was the rejoinder; "it would be little better than useless to repeat your story, for I fear your best friends would not believe it. Oh, heaven! this is a sad business; and I regret that I have any thing to do with it; but I must back to the village and report what I have seen. An inquest must be held upon this body before it can be removed. But, Arthur," he continued, "I feel for you deeply, and for your family; it will be a terrible blow for them; and whether innocent or guilty, I for one would not like to see you arraigned before the bar of justice; do you understand me?"

"I know not that I do."

"Then in plain language, I would advise you to fly while opportunity presents; in all probability, if you go now, you will escape; I will not lift a hand to detain you."

"You mistake me," said Arthur, proudly; "though my very life depended on taking your counsel, I would not stir a single step. No, I will abide my fate, whatever it may be; none but cowards and the guilty flee. Come, let us away at once; you shall tell your tale, and I will confirm it. There is a God above us all; and if it be his decree that I shall wrongly suffer, so be it; I can die like a man, strong in mine own innocence."

"But think of your friends, Arthur?"

"No more, Mr. Nixon," said Arthur, with stern resolution. "I know you mean me well, but you give bad counsel. Come, there is no time for delay."

"You are a noble fellow," rejoined Nixon, "and it grieves me to think of the trouble that has come upon you. Come, since you are resolved, let us go."

The two accordingly set off toward the village, following the road. Both were busy with their thoughts, but neither gave voice to them. When he came opposite his father's house, Arthur spoke for the first time since quitting the presence of the dead.

"By your leave, Mr. Nixon," he said, "I will be the one to break this terrible news to my parents. Go forward, and tell your story; but do not reflect upon me more than is necessary. Say that I am here, and voluntarily yield myself up to the law."

"I will do as you desire," was the answer, and the two separated.

On reaching the house, Arthur met his father at the door.

"Ah, I am glad you have returned Arthur," said the latter, "for I was beginning to grow uneasy at your absence. It is only within a few minutes I had learned you had left the house, which, being unusual with you at this hour, occasioned me some surprise. Whither have you been, my son? you look pale and agitated."

"Where is mother?" was Arthur's only reply.

"In the kitchen, superintending the breakfast."

"Pray call her into the parlor! I have sad news for you both."

"Ha! what has happened, Arthur?"

"I must tell you both at once. Go, father, hasten, and call her! for this delay is torture to me as well as you;" and as his father departed, Arthur repaired to the parlor, and threw himself heavily upon a seat.

When Mr. and Mrs. Warren entered the room, they found Arthur pale as death, his eyes fixed on the ceiling, with an abstracted gaze, and apparently unconscious of every thing around him. His father spoke to him, but he did not heed him; and advancing to him, Mr. Warren took hold of his arm, saying, in a tone of some alarm:

"Arthur! Arthur! why do you not speak to me?"

The latter turned upon his father, with a kind of a spasmodic start, and seemed at first a little bewildered, as one suddenly aroused from sleep: then glancing to the pale face of his mother, who stood in anxious expectation, he uttered a deep groan, and motioned them to be seated.

"I have shocking news for you," he said; "prepare yourselves for the worst!"

"Go on!" almost gasped his father, while his mother sank upon a seat, and fairly held her breath.

"Ernest Clifford is dead!" said Arthur, in an agitated tone.

"Dead!" echoed both his hearers in the same breath.

"Ay, my dear parents, he has been *murdered*."

"Murdered!" exclaimed both, with a convulsive gasp of horror.

"Yes, father—yes, mother—murdered; and though innocent as either of you, a chain of circumstances fixes the horrible crime upon me."

"Upon you, Arthur?" shrieked Mr. Warren, while Mrs. Warren sank back in her chair, with a fond mother's cry of anguish. "Oh, God! support us in this trying moment!" pursued the agonised father. "Oh! this is indeed terrible news!—but if you are innocent, Arthur, you can prove yourself so—surely you can prove yourself so!"

"Alas!" groaned Arthur—"buoy yourself up with no such hope, for it is better that you be not deceived."

"Speak! speak, my dear boy! tell me all! give me all the particulars, and then I can judge for myself."

"But my dear mother—I fear she will not be able to bear so much ill news at once," said Arthur with wild emotion. "See! she faints!"

"No, no," murmured Mrs. Warren, faintly; "go on, Arthur; I would know all; I cannot bear suspense."

Arthur then proceeded to relate, in a hurried, excited tone, much that is known to the reader; but when he came to speak of how he had been discovered by Mr. Nixon beside the corpse, with his own knife in his hands, and his hands red with the blood of the victim, as they still were, Mrs. Warren, unable to endure more, uttered a deep groan, and fell senseless to the floor.

"See! it has already killed my dear mother!" he cried, springing to her side.

Servants were called, and Mrs. Warren was borne in a state of unconsciousness to her own room, and laid upon the bed, where the usual restoratives in such cases were applied, but for a long time without avail. Pete was sent in all haste for the village physician; but ere the latter arrived, Mrs. Warren had recovered from her swoon, only, as it were, to show her afflicted friends that another heavy calamity had befallen them—for, alas! her reason was gone.

God, in his mercy, has provided different ways for us to bear up under the inflictions he in his wisdom sends; and one among the rest, is a kind of stupefaction, which not unfrequently succeeds to great and overwhelming griefs. This was the case with Arthur and his father. To have judged merely from their appearance, as they moved listlessly about the chamber of the invalid, one would have pronounced them indifferent spectators, or persons under the somniferous influence of opiates.

On the arrival of Dr. Potter, who reported the village in a state of the greatest excitement, Arthur, in a quiet tone, said:

"I can no longer be of any use to my dear mother—therefore I will retire to my own room. Save you father, I will see no one till the officer comes to arrest me. I know my doom, and shall try to meet it with fortitude, relying solely upon mine own innocence and the mercy of God."

Arthur had scarcely gained his own apartment and locked himself in, when Mr. Waldegrave, his wife, and Marian arrived at the house of affliction, to condole with the now truly miserable occupants.

"Alas! we know not what an hour may bring forth," were the solemn and impressive words of Mr. Warren, as he seized the hand of his more than brother. "One hour since, Archer, I was a happy husband and father. Now look! the partner of my bosom lies there, a maniac; and he, the offspring of my sunny days—our prop—our hope—is doomed to worse than death. Pity me, Archer! I am wretched."

"I do, Horatio—I do from my heart. But cheer up! all may not be so bad as it seems. Surely, you did not think Arthur guilty?"

"I trust in God not; but the evidence against him will convict him—of that I feel certain."

"Oh! no! no! say not that!" cried Marian, who stood by and heard the words; "say not that! He must, he *shall* be saved!"

"*Blood for blood! that's the Mosaic law, and Moses was a great law giver*," shrieked the maniac-mother, starting up in bed.

An icy shudder pervaded the frame of every one who heard that awful and seemingly prophetic denunciation.

"Oh, God! support me!" groaned Warren.

"I must caution you to be exceedingly careful of what is said in the presence of the patient," admonished the Doctor.

Waldegrave, Warren, and Marian, now quitted the room together, leaving Mrs. Warren in the charge of the physician, Mrs. Waldegrave, and one or two servants. Mr. Warren now repeated Arthur's tale to his friend, and both agreed that there was little hope of his being cleared by an intelligent jury. Marian took exceptions.

"I know he is innocent," she said: "Oh, I would stake my life on his being innocent! Would I could see him! oh, I must see him, if only for a few minutes."

A message was accordingly dispatched to Arthur, to this effect; but he returned for answer, that he would see no one but his father.

"Ah! he is cruel," said Marian; and she retired to give vent to her emotions in private.

We must now pass briefly over the events of the day. A coroner was sent for, and an inquest held on the body of the murdered Clifford. Nixon gave in his testimony, and the verdict of the jury was rendered in accordance with the facts—"That the

deceased came to his death by means of wounds, inflicted by a knife, supposed to be in the hands of Arthur Warren."

A warrant for the apprehension of the latter was accordingly issued; and a little before night, the sheriff of the county himself appeared with it at the house of Mr. Warren. To some it may seem a little singular, that Arthur was not sooner taken into custody; but the truth is, he was so universally known and beloved, his father stood so high in the esteem of the community, that no one cared to act in the matter with more haste than the law actually compelled; and had Arthur taken the advice of Nixon, and fled, he would have escaped without difficulty.

The dread officer of the law was shown to the room of Arthur by the afflicted father, and on entering, he said:

"I have come on an unwelcome errand, Mr. Warren."

"You must do your duty—I have been long expecting you," was Arthur's reply. "I have only one request to make—that you will hurry me through the village in a close carriage—for at present I am not prepared to see even my friends."

"I have anticipated your desire," rejoined the sheriff, "and a covered vehicle is at the door."

Arthur now embraced his agonised father, bade him remain with his mother, and giving the sheriff his arm, hurried down to the carriage. Quite a crowd was collected to see him as he appeared; and Marian stood by the door through which he passed, hoping at least he would speak to her, if only to say farewell. But she was disappointed; he did not even seem to see her; with his eyes on the ground, looking neither to the right nor left, he pressed forward to the vehicle, which, immediately on his entering it, was put in rapid motion.

"And thus the friend of my youth, my old playmate, is borne away a prisoner, accused of a horrible crime!" cried Marian, with a burst of grief she could not control.

It was a mournful day in Walde-Warren—a day long to be remembered.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PRISONER.

On the following day, Arthur Warren had an examination before a magistrate, in what suits our purpose to call the town of Bertram, the seat of the county in which the fatal deed had been committed. This examination was conducted as privately as possible; but the news of the murder had spread far and wide, and as the Warrens were well known for miles around, the sensation throughout the country was immense, and quite a mob gathered about the office of the magistrate, all eager to get a sight of the prisoner. There were several persons from Walde-Warren present, and among the rest the father of Arthur, Mr. Waldegrave, and Nixon. Arthur was pale and dejected, though composed; but his father was greatly bowed by grief, and appeared ten years older than when we saw him last. To Arthur's eager inquiries concerning his mother, Mr. Warren shook his head, and replied there had been no change for the better. For a few moments Arthur was deeply affected at this sad intelligence; but soon regained his composure, and taking his father's hand, said:

"Perhaps it is better thus, for she is unconscious of her misery. This event will kill you both, father, and that is my keenest pang. Were it not so, I should care little what becomes of me, for I am sick of life."

"Nay, my son, it grieves me to hear you speak in this manner," replied Warren. "What has come over you of late to work this change?"

"I have learned that mankind are false and hollow hearted," answered Arthur, bitterly; "for where I trusted most, I have been most deceived—where I hoped most, I have been most disappointed."

"If you refer to Marian in these remarks," said Mr. Waldegrave, who stood by, "let me assure you, Arthur, you deeply wrong her, for she has told me all."

"I mentioned no names," rejoined Arthur, coldly, and the subject dropped.

The examination of Arthur elicited no new facts. The principal testimony, of course, was that of Nixon; and that was proof convincing to all minds that Arthur did the deed. Even his warmest friends, not excepting his own father, believed him guilty of killing Clifford; and the only palliation of the crime they could advance was, that he did it in a moment of temporary insanity, and on the return of reason, found himself beside his gory victim. This was improbable, it is true; but they reasoned it was possible; and his father clung to it as his only stay against the conviction that his son was a homicide. Others thought the two might have met, and quarreled, and that Arthur killed him in the heat of passion—it might be in self-defence—and were surprised he should persist in denying it, as an open acknowledgment would do him less harm. Of all that heard the details of the case, not a single soul, with the exception of poor Marian, believed Arthur Warren guiltless of the death of Ernest Clifford; and she, fondly loving, took counsel of her heart rather than her head.

For the question immediately arose, if Arthur killed not Clifford, who did? and for what purpose. The day before they had quarreled—Ernest had struck Arthur—Arthur had said the stigma could only be effaced by blood—had sought Ernest that morning—had followed him—had been followed by one who naturally feared such a catastrophe—had been found, stained with the murdered man's blood, beside the body, with the knife that had done the deed—his own knife, too, as he himself admitted, in his hands. Besides all this, Ernest had only been dead a few minutes at the farthest—for both had been seen by Nixon from the hill, at no great distance apart—and the deceased's watch, money, and several valuable articles, had been found untouched on his person—showing that no robbery had been committed—the only motive it was supposed any one else would have in perpetrating the deed. Added to all this, it was an early hour in the morning, when but few people were stirring, and the very last time to think of any one being abroad for the purpose of plunder. Could there be a stronger case of circumstantial evidence? Reader, you to whom the heart of Arthur Warren has in a degree been exposed, have you a doubt that his hand struck the blow that deprived Ernest Clifford of life?

And yet sweet Marian Waldegrave believed him innocent. Such is love.

Notwithstanding this formidable array of circumstances against him, it was decided to admit Arthur to bail—but the amount was fixed at ten thousand dollars. His father, rejoiced at the idea of having him at liberty, at once offered the necessary securities; but to the surprise of all, Arthur refused to be set free.

"No," he said, "give me the solitude of the prison—I care not if it be a dungeon—where no eye but that of God, who knoweth the heart, can behold me. I thank you, friends—deeply thank you—thank you from my heart, for your sympathy; but I can read in the eyes of all—ay, even of you, father—the conviction that my hand slew Clifford—and I will not go forth branded even with the suspicion of being a homicide. I wish to be tried, impartially tried, by a jury of my countrymen; and if they pronounce me guilty, I will meet my fate like a man. I can die but once, and I prefer even death to a life of disgrace."

These few remarks made a deep impression on those who heard them, and did more to convince his hearers, that, if guilty of the death of Ernest, he was innocent of murder, than the strongest reasoning which could have been brought to bear upon these subjects. In vain his father urged, and plead, that he would suffer himself to be released from confinement; he steadily refused; and finally, to end the matter, declared, in the most positive terms, that if bailed, he would leave the country; and turning to the magistrate, concluded thus:

"Sir, after what I have said, you dare not accept securities for my appearance."

He was therefore remanded to prison; and his father returned to Walde-Warren, with his friends, nearly heart-broken.

The case of Arthur being laid before the grand jury, a true bill for murder in the first degree was found against him, and his trial fixed for the fall term of the circuit court.

For several days Arthur gave himself up to gloomy meditations, refusing to see any one but his father, his counsel, and the jailor. He became morose, misanthropic, and what he said was tinged with a certain bitterness that was not always pleasant to hear. After a time he began to grow peevish, restless, and his eyes assumed a peculiar glare, that seemed to betoken a gradual approach of insanity. His father, who visited him almost daily—though the distance between Bertram and Walde-Warren was some ten miles, which he not unfrequently rode in the night, for he took such times as he could best be spared from his afflicted wife—became alarmed lest the son should eventually be like the mother; and called in a very eminent physician, who, after an hour's conversation with Arthur, gave it as his opinion, that the terrible malady was advancing upon him, caused by great disappointment, and the continual brooding upon one subject; and said that unless his mind could be diverted into another channel, the loss of reason must certainly follow.

In the prison Arthur enjoyed unusual privileges; his cell was the pleasantest, and best ventilated; was carpeted, and furnished with every comfort—a good bed, table, and chairs—and the walls were adorned with pictures of a quiet and cheerful nature; the best of viands tempted his appetite, and he was informed that he could leave his cell and walk in the prison yard at certain hours of the day; but notwithstanding all this, the change we have spoken of had begun to take place, and the physician advised his father to try him with books, as the only remedy he could suggest. This was a happy idea, Mr. Warren thought, for Arthur had always been fond of books; and the next day a fine library of poetry, romance, history, and scientific works was placed before him. Arthur seemed surprised; and though he said little, his father was rejoiced to see his eye brighten with something of its wonted look.

From this time there was a perceptible alteration for the better; the gloom of his countenance gradually lightened; his moroseness gradually forsook him; his language grew more cheerful and less bitter; and ere a month had rolled away, Arthur seemed more like himself than at any time since the first week of Clifford's arrival in Walde-Warren. Still he retained much of his misanthropical feelings, and refused all visitors, save such as came on business.

"Urge me not to see any one," he would say to his father, "for my best company is solitude and these books; and should I be pronounced innocent on my trial, of which I have no hope, I think I shall forsake the world and turn anchorite. I have been grossly deceived in mankind; and though I still believe the world contains good and honest hearts, yet they are far too few, and I would not search a field of stubble for a grain of wheat. These books, my dear father, deceive me not, for I expect no more from them than I get. Besides, they suit all my varying humors, and their name is legion. If poetically inclined, here can I sit and converse with the great masters of song; if I want to increase my knowledge, what better than these works of science?—would I dive into the shadowy past, behold these chronicles of ancient times; would I have life pictured with its lights and shades, see here is reality under the title of fiction; and last, though not least, when I would turn my thoughts to a better state of existence, where none deceive nor are deceived—where all see as they are seen, and know as they are known—behold the Bible, God's blessed word of truth, wherein is taught meekness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, charity, benevolence, long-suffering, and all the nobler and holier attributes. What need I more, father?"

One day Mr. Warren appeared before his son, with a more cheerful countenance than he had exhibited since the tragic event.

"Good news, Arthur!" he said,—"good news! Your mother is much better; and Dr. Potter tells me, with careful nursing, and the avoidance of all exciting topics, her reason may soon be restored; there is a glimmering, as of the dawning of intellect."

"Well, for your sake, father," returned Arthur, "I am rejoiced at this; though, as I said before, I feel it is better for her to be unconscious of her misery."

Arthur now, to the surprise of his father, inquired what was the general feeling toward him in the village—a question he had never asked during his confinement—and what is more, had strictly forbidden the mention of a single event, beyond what concerned his mother, of the world without.

"Why, my son," answered the other, "the feeling is all in your favor; and thanks to sweet Marian—heaven's blessing on her!—there are many who begin to think you may be innocent after all."

"Marian?" said Arthur, with a touch of feeling, and a quickening of the blood: "does she then think me innocent?"

"Yes, and has positively declared it from the first."

"Why have I not known this?" said Arthur, with increased emotion.

"Because you would not. Did you not forbid the mention of her name in your presence? and when I bore her earnest entreaty that you would see her, did you not refuse in terms of scorn and indignation?"

"I did, I did," replied Arthur, "for I believed her false."

"Oh! Arthur, cried his father—"how have you wronged that girl!—and oh! how much has she suffered, in silence, without a murmur! Daily does she come to ask after you—to know if you once mentioned her name—and daily goes she back weeping, and almost broken-hearted. Arthur, why have you treated her thus?—how could you think her false? You must have been blind—wilfully blind—not to have seen, not to have known, not to have felt, that her heart is yours, wholly yours, and has ever been! I am glad that you have introduced the subject, my son, that I may speak freely. Oh! you know not the anguish I have suffered on her account, when to her daily calls, I have had no kind message to bear from you to her, to revive her drooping spirits. Arthur, do not be offended, if I say I think you have been cruel—very, very cruel—and if you persist in the course begun, she will not long be here to trouble you—for I can see her fading away, day by day."

"Oh, I am a wretch!" cried Arthur, with a burst of emotion he no longer tried to control. "I am a wretch! I see it all;" and he covered his face and groaned. "If she is true," he continued—"if she loves me, I have indeed deceived myself; and the fruit of my base, unmanly suspicions and conduct, is all the misery that has been brought upon us. If she is true, then is the world not so bad as I have thought it. Poor Marian! if I have so wronged her, I shall never forgive myself—but heavily have I been punished already. Ah! what strange mortals we are! and how much of our happiness or misery dates with ourselves—finds its fountain head in our hearts! Do you think she will forgive me, father?"

"You shall ask her that question yourself, Arthur; and after what has passed, it is no more than right you should."

"Father, I would see her alone; will she come to me, think you?"

"Do you then doubt her still?"

"But I have so wronged her."

"She grieves, Arthur, but harbors no unkind thought; she would give her life for your's, I am certain."

"Say no more, father! say no more! I cannot bear more. Oh, bid her come to me tomorrow! and I will make all the reparation in my power: alas! that is but little."

"This will be the happiest night she has known for many a troubled week," replied Mr. Warren; "and I will hasten home to glad her aching heart."

"Fly! father—fly! oh, lose not a moment! Can it be that the night of my adversity is already breaking into morn? Yes, it must be so—else why does the bright star of hope which I fain would think precedes the dawn of prosperity, shed its mild and cheering rays upon my heart? Fly! father—fly! and say what you will—but make happy the heart of dear Marian!"

For more than an hour after his father left him, Arthur paced the floor of his cell in great agitation; and then throwing himself upon the bed, gave vent to his feelings in a flood of tears—the first he had shed within the walls of his prison.

Oh, tears! blessed tears! happy are they who can weep; for mighty griefs too oft make dry the founts of the soul—and burning thought, unquenched, consumes the heart.

CHAPTER X.

LOVE AND GRIEF.

It was a warm, clear, beautiful summer morning, and Arthur Warren sat by the window of his cell, looking forth, through the iron grate, upon a pleasant landscape. The view was toward the east, and a few dwellings of the town of Bertram was visible, and beyond them green and flowery fields, shaded here and there by trees, in the branches of which birds of different plumage were singing merrily, and over all the rising sun was streaming with golden glory. It was a delightful scene to any who was free to range at will; and as Arthur sat and gazed upon it, in a meditative mood, his mind instinctively recurred to the past; and memory became busy with the happy hours of his youth, when hand in hand, with his gentle playmate Marian, he had wandered over the charming valley of Walde-Warren, culling the brightest flowers, to weave into a garland for the fair brow of his heart's queen; and he remembered how, when tired of their ramble, they had partially ascended some one of the many surrounding hills, and there seated on some smooth rock, that overlooked their rural homes, he had taken no note of time, as he wreathed together his floral gatherings, and entwined them with her sunny curls. Did he doubt her heart then? Did he think those mild, soft, grey eyes—whose every expression was gentleness, sweetness, frankness—which seemed formed expressly to beam with the holy light of pure affection and love—did he believe them the gates of a soul that harbored one thought of deceit? Did he deem those rosy lips, which his own in childish innocence and admiration so often pressed, could utter an untruth? No! he would as soon have doubted the warmth and light of the sun, as doubted the purity, the guilelessness, of his fond, sweet little playmate, his pretty little Marian.

And he had lived to think that same fair being false, deceitful, and leagued with another more false and treacherous still! Oh! how much we lose, in losing the innocence of childhood! It is the lifting of the silver veil which hangs before the Mokanna of the future, and we shudder at what we behold! It is the tasting of the forbidden tree, by which we know good from evil; but alas, all we gain in knowledge illy compensates us for the moral death we suffer, in being driven from our Eden of happiness.

"Wretch am I, that I could so wrong her! and wretched am I, that I have so wronged her!" said Arthur; and tears of regret rolled slowly down his pale cheeks. "Oh, that she were come! that I might ask her forgiveness!"

As he spoke, he had a glimpse of a carriage, passing along the road below him.

His cell was so situated, that he could only see the upper portion of it, and he only saw it for a moment; but he recognised it as his father's or Waldegrave's—he knew not which—and his heart beat fast, for he believed it contained Marian. He arose in no little agitation, and paced the floor hurriedly, over and anon stopping to listen, with his breath suspended. Presently he heard the rattling of bolts and bars, the opening and shutting of ponderous doors, and knew that some one had entered the prison. The noise drew nearer, and he involuntarily placed his hand upon his heart, to still its beatings. Nearer it came, stopped at his door, and as he heard the key applied to the lock, he grasped a chair to support himself, for he felt weak and faint. The next moment the door was thrown open, something was said by the jailor, a female figure glided into the cell, a half suppressed shriek followed, and Arthur Warren held the lovely Marian Waldegrave in his embrace, with her head pillowed upon his bosom, while the closing of the iron door, with a bang, told him they were alone.

For some moments Arthur was too deeply affected to speak, and Marian lay heavily upon his support, without moving. At length, in a voice tremulous with emotion, he murmured her name. Still she stirred not, spoke not; and gently altering her position, so that the light streamed full upon her lovely countenance, he saw that she had fainted. Oh! how his heart smote him, as he gazed upon that pale, sweet, sad face, and traced in its fading lineaments, lines of grief and suffering. And this was the gentle being he had rashly torn from his heart, as unworthy of his love, and deemed mankind selfish and base, because of her falsity! Ah! good reason had he for thinking the world all hollow-hearted, if she were not true—for when angels sin, where shall we look for goodness?—but the great error of Arthur, was in first mistaking her; and the moment his faith drew her from the foundation of the false fabric his mind had reared, the unsupported structure came tumbling to the ground.

There was water in the room, and still sustaining his gentle burthen, Arthur sprinkled some on her face. Soon she showed signs of returning animation; and carefully seating her in a chair, he removed her hood, kneeling beside her, and taking one of her soft white hands in his, reverently placed it to his lips, and bedewed it with tears. That was a moment of happiness, such as he had not known for a long, long time; and contrasted with his recent misery, seemed to exceed all he had ever known.

Gradually consciousness returned; and as the warm blood slightly tinged the pale cheeks of Marian, her mild, dove-like eyes unclosed, and beamed softly upon him who had been the cause of so much sorrow to her. At first she seemed only to comprehend in part her situation; but the soul, regaining its empire, made her face radiant with joy and sadness commingled; and while a sweet, melancholy smile played around her lips, her eyes filled with tears.

"Arthur!" she murmured; "Oh! Arthur."

"Marian! dear, dear Marian!" he replied; and starting to his feet, he clasped her to his heart.

Both now wept, and wept freely, for the hearts of both were too full to yet find vent in words. At length, growing more composed, they seated themselves beside the window, with a ray of sunlight streaming in between them—as if nature would unite them in brightness—and gently taking her hand again, Arthur said:

"Can you forgive me, dear Marian?"

"Oh, Arthur, it is I who should ask that question of you."

"Nay, no more of that!" cried Arthur, with energy—"no more of that, Marian! I could bear your scorn better than such words, now. I would I had something to forgive—for then there might be a slight excuse for my own conduct—but now there is none. My father tells me, Marian that you believe me innocent of the crime of which I stand accused.'

"I do, Arthur—O, I do!"

"Bless you for this! bless you! And now tell me why you think so, dear Marian? for you, of all my friends, have best cause for thinking otherwise—as I left you in a bitter mood to seek Ernest, notwithstanding your prayer to the contrary. O, tell me *why* you think me guiltless of his death?"

"Because, dear Arthur, you told your father you did not do it—and my heart tells me you would not utter an untruth to save your life."

"Heaven bless you, dear Marian, for this unwavering confidence in my integrity!—but in return, I must stand condemned before you—for I could doubt your truth, and think you false."

"You wronged me in that thought, Arthur—but perhaps you had a cause."

"No, no cause that would justify it, I now feel assured; and all I can plead in extenuation is a certain degree of jealousy, arising from excess of love. Oh, Marian, you could not have known how much I loved you, I am now

certain, or you would not have made me miserable by encouraging the advances of one who was seeking to supplant me!"

"Love!" almost gasped Marian, turning pale as death: "did you then love me, Arthur?"

"Ay, Marian, too well for my own good; and not till convinced you only felt toward me a kind of worldly friendship, did I seek to tear that love from my heart."

"Oh, what a fatal mistake!" cried Marian. "I did not know this, Arthur; I never dreamed it; I thought—(her voice faltered, and her eyes sought the ground) I thought you loved another."

"Ha! methinks I see through all this!" exclaimed Arthur: "were you not told so Marian?"

"Not in so many words; but I was given to understand so, by some casual remarks of Mr. Clifford."

"Yes! yes! I see! Oh, the——. But he has gone to his account, and I will say nothing harsh. And yet, Marian, you said he always spoke of me in the highest terms?"

"And so he did, Arthur, else should I not have listened to him. He extolled you most highly, and as *your* friend won my esteem; though once I remember, in speaking of this, you unfortunately misunderstood me."

"Ah, yes, I remember. And he led you to think I loved another?"

"Yes, Arthur; and that belief caused my manner to bear a certain restraint in your presence; and I encouraged the attention of Mr. Clifford, in order that you might not feel compelled through courtesy to wait upon me. I fancied you knew the secret of my heart—that I had too palpably made known its love for you—and that if you did not actually despise me, you wished it otherwise. I was told you esteemed me, regarded me as a friend, looked upon me as a sister—and maidenly delicacy would permit me to show no other feeling toward you, if I could avoid it. You confirmed me in this belief—for you spoke to me of friendship, and hinted there could be no nearer tie between us."

"And that was because I fancied you cared more for another than myself—for I too had been told, by the same designing individual, that you looked upon me as a brother. Oh! Marian, you said right, when you termed this a fatal mistake; for had we understood each other, I should not have quarrelled with Clifford, and therefore should not be here now."

"But you had no hand in his death, Arthur?"

"What! do you begin to doubt now?"

Oh, no, no, no, Arthur—do

not let us misunderstand one another again; but you said if you had not quarrelled you would not be here now."

"By which I mean, if I had not gone to seek him in an angry mood, I should never have placed myself in a position to be suspected of his death"

"I understand you now. Ah! how guarded we should be in all our actions, since there may be a fate in the most trifling thing we do."

"True," replied Arthur musingly—"true, Marian, true. The ways of God are intricate; and not the more easily to be understood, that he works by the simplest means. Trifles make up the sum of human existence; and though we are occasionally startled by great events, which come upon us suddenly, yet each event, if traced to its cause, will not only be found to have had its beginning in trifles, but to be entirely composed of trifles, which, having been brought together, like so many kernels of powder, have at length exploded, causing destruction and consternation. Take every marked circumstance, that ever happened in the life of an individual, and if he will run his mental eye back along the vista of the past, he will find some trifling point where the whole consequence had a beginning; and he will freely acknowledge, that had this point been changed in the smallest possible degree, the result must have been entirely different—as a stream turned never so little from its channel, near its source, may perhaps water another country. Yes, Marian, yes—we cannot be too guarded, even in our most trifling actions. Oh, had I taken your advice, and not gone in pursuit of Clifford, this had not been; and I might perhaps have done so—I do not say I should, but that I might—had not the missing of that ring re-aroused all my most vindictive feelings."

"Alas, dear Arthur, you must not blame me too severely that the ring was not where you placed it."

"The time for blaming you, sweet Marian, has gone by, thank heaven!" said Arthur, with sad earnestness. "I no longer doubt your friendship, or your love; and whether you explain the cause of its absence or not, my feelings will remain unaltered."

"A word then will suffice," rejoined Marian, "and this explanation is due to you. The day after that awful night, when we were borne down the angry torrent, I missed the ring from my finger, and next saw it in the possession of Mr. Clifford, who persisted in retaining it, in spite of all my entreaties. You may judge of my anxiety on the subject, regarding it as I did the sacred pledge of your friendship. But what could I do? I could not compel its return, and he was

the preserver of my life, and, as I then believed, your friend."

"Well," replied Arthur sadly, "it matters not now—every thing was so to be, it seems—and we must bear in mind that a Power above us had the ordering of all." Then, after a thoughtful pause: "Marian," he said, "dear Marian, you must not think me inconsistent, cruel, or unkind, that even now, at the very moment of our reconciliation—with that knowledge of your love which, under other circumstances, would make me the happiest of mortals—I frankly confess, I almost regret you are not what I believed you to be, ere we came to an understanding."

"Why so, Arthur?" demanded Marian, with a start, her pale features deeply flushing.

"Because, dear Marian," he replied, taking her hand, and speaking in a sad, dejected tone; "because, Marian, dissatisfied with the world, I was ready and willing to quit it for a better; and were you what I then thought, my death would have caused you no pang; but now, since I know how deeply you love me—now that I have earthly happiness, as it were, within my very grasp—it will be very, very hard for us to part."

"Part," echoed Marian, in a tone of alarm, her sweet features now becoming deadly pale; "part, Arthur? must we then part?"

"You see me here, Marian, accused of a horrible crime," said Arthur, in a voice of deep emotion.

"Well, but you are innocent, Arthur?"

"What matters that, with such a chain of circumstances against me, Marian? You think me innocent—but you are not my judge and jury—will they pronounce me guiltless, think you?"

"Oh, yes, they must,—they must; you will say you did not kill Clifford, and surely they will believe you."

Arthur shook his head sorrowfully.

"I know the world but indifferently well," he rejoined; "but I know it better than you, it seems, dear Marian. I shall be tried—impartially, I doubt not—but the evidence against me will be overwhelming, and I dare not hope for an acquittal."

"Oh! you terrify me, Arthur?" cried Marian.

"Better that you should prepare yourself for what is about to take place."

"Can an innocent man be condemned, dear Arthur?" cried Marian, greatly excited.

"Many have been ere now, dearest."

"And executed, Arthur?"

"Ay, and executed."

"Will heaven look on and permit it?"

"Heaven sometimes does,

my sweet friend; for God has his own wise purposes to perform, and it is sometimes his will that the innocent should suffer for the guilty."

"Oh! Arthur, this idea will drive me mad."

"It must not, Marian; you must struggle against it; you must pray to be supported under this deep affliction; and I must pray for new strength also."

"Alas! Arthur—dear, dear Arthur—I could not survive you!" groaned Marian.

"We know not how much we can bear and live, till we are tried. Had any one told me, three months since, that I should pass through what I have, and retain my reason, I would have unhesitatingly pronounced it an impossibility—but you behold me here, a living proof that I knew not myself."

"But have you no hope of an acquittal, Arthur?

"None that I dare rely on, Marian."

"Oh, I dreamed not of this," cried the other, with a burst of grief; "it is terrible, terrible," and covering her face, the poor girl sobbed convulsively. Suddenly she stopped, and fixing her tearful eyes upon him she loved, with a ray of hope animating her sorrowful countenance, exclaimed: "But if convicted, Arthur, you may be pardoned—the law is not always carried into effect."

"If convicted, I would hardly accept my life from the Governor," returned the other, gloomily.

"But for my sake you would, Arthur?" pursued Marian, eagerly.

"For your sake," he rejoined, sadly: "Ah! Marian, I fear you do not fully comprehend your own idea; it would be snatching me from a speedy death, to condemn me to a life of misery."

"How so, Arthur?" asked Marian, in surprise.

"Because the stigma of a pardoned criminal would ever attach to me; and I could never stand up again like a man, with the proud consciousness there was no stain upon my honor; and to live degraded and disgraced I could not."

"But you could go where you are not known?" persisted Marian.

"Well, and should I be happy among strangers? should I not feel that every one had a right to shun me? and how, with this feeling uppermost, could I ever mingle in society again?"

"But could we not live in retirement and be happy, Arthur?" said Marian, blushing at her own ingenuous words.

"*We?*" repeated Arthur, emphatically, with a peculiar expression: "*we?* Could you then consent to link your fate to a pardoned criminal, Marian?"

"I would link my fate to yours, Arthur, be it what it might," she replied, with the straightforward simplicity of pure affection—of unwavering love.

Arthur gazed upon her, with an expression of rapture mingled with grief.

"O, blessed is woman!" he exclaimed; "for she makes even this cold earth a Paradise. May heaven forgive me, Marian, for ever having doubted you!—but alas! what you propose would be impossible."

"How impossible?" cried the other.

"Because I would not be so base as to unite you with one dishonored."

"But you would not be dishonored in my eyes, dear Arthur."

"Ah! think it not, Marian," he rejoined, with deep feeling; "hope it not; it could never be. No, if I am condemned, whether pardoned or not, we can never be more to each other than we are now."

"Alas! you give me no hope to sustain my sinking spirits, Arthur!" she cried, again bursting into tears.

"I would I could give you hope, dearest Marian," he replied, in a voice scarcely audible; "but I would not deceive you."

After some further conversation, all tending to the same point, Marian, with tearful eyes, bade Arthur adieu, and returned home, more depressed in spirit than when she came hither; while Arthur, no longer finding relief to his burdened mind in his books, paced the floor of his cell, hour after hour, with his eyes bent upon the ground, and a dark cloud of gloom resting upon his manly, noble countenance.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRIAL.

We must now pass briefly over the minor events of our story, and come to those which decided the fate of our hero. Marian, in company with her father or Mr. Warren, visited Arthur some two or three times a week; and though they could give him little hope of a full acquittal by jury, yet they did much to lighten the tedium of the heavy hours. Arthur was no longer misanthropical, but melancholy; and now that he had every desire to live, the thought of what might be his doom, preyed heavily upon his spirits. While he believed mankind false, he cared little what they thought of him, and the future gave him no uneasiness—for he fancied he had reached the *ultima thule* of misery, and even death itself was stripped of all terrors; but since his first interview with Marian—since he had discovered how greatly he had deceived himself—since he had learned how truly he was beloved for himself alone—the case was entirely changed; and he looked forward to that point of time, which must make certain an uncertainty, with eagerness and fear, scarcely with hope, for he dared not hope. The long suspense now became deeply trying; and no longer able to find relief in books, he grew dejected, and gloomy, and thin, and haggard, and fears were entertained by his friends that his physical powers would not sustain him through the trial. Every thing calculated to cheer, was told him; and every thing likely to produce an opposite effect, carefully withheld. Daily he made inquiries concerning his mother, and daily was he informed that her case was no worse, and sometimes that it was thought to be better, though she had not yet fully recovered her reason

The truth was, Arthur was continually in the mind of Mrs. Warren; she was ever asking for him; and the physician gave it as his opinion, that if he could be restored to her, freed from danger, she would speedily recover—but otherwise, he feared the worst. Oh! what must have been the feelings of the husband and father! and with what painful anxiety must he have looked forward to the period that would decide the fate of those so dear to him! Should Arthur be acquitted, all might yet be well; happiness, like the wandering dove, might once more return to his ark; but should Arthur be condemned, then—oh! then—alas! he dared not think what might be then. He, like Arthur, wasted away, grew thin and haggard, spoke little, grieved in silence and solitude, and passed most of his nights in prayer, and restless agony, and the feverish sleep which gives startling dreams. Already his dark hair, which time had left untouched, had become quite gray with sorrow; and it was believed by his friends that he would not long survive his family, but sink into the grave, a broken-hearted man.

Great was the sensation, therefore, throughout the country, where all these facts were known, as the day appointed for the trial of Arthur Warren drew near. It came at last, and Bertram was filled with strangers, drawn hither by business and curiosity, but all eager to be present at the trial. The court-house was a two story wooden building, of small dimensions, with a cupola, and stood upon a slight eminence, near the central part of the village, surrounded by a pleasant yard, enclosed by a hewn post and rail fence. This yard, at an early hour, was crowded by anxious spectators; and the entrance to the court-house was so densely blocked up by human beings,

that the sheriff and constables had no little difficulty in forcing a way for the court, and those connected with the trial. The court-room itself, being small, was instantly crammed almost to suffocation, more than one person was injured by the rush, and hundreds without either went away disappointed, or lingered around the door, vainly hoping that by some fortunate chance they would yet gain admittance. To avoid another scene of excitement, the prisoner and his friends were smuggled in by a rear entrance—so that very few of those without, who still hung around the court-house, for the purpose of getting a sight of him, had their curiosity gratified.

Arthur Warren entered the court-room, accompanied by his father, his counsel and the sheriff, and taking his seat within the bar, ran his eye rapidly over the assemblage. Those who had known him previous to his confinement, were struck with the alteration in his appearance; and some could hardly credit the fact, that that thin, pale, haggard, melancholy face, belonged to the once gay, sprightly, noble-hearted Arthur Warren.

Ere the sensation caused by the prisoner's entrance had fairly subsided, it was renewed, in degree, by the appearance of Mr. Waldegrave, accompanied by his wife and Marian. The last mentioned person leaned on her father's arm, and advanced with a tremulous step to a seat reserved for her; but a double veil concealed her features from the most prying eyes, and put curiosity at fault. A buzz of speculation, however, ran among the spectators, which was finally checked by the crier calling out, in a loud voice:

"Silence in the court!"

The bench was composed of three judges—the president being a man advanced in years, with gray hair, and a dignified and benevolent countenance. As he was known to be a personal friend of the proprietors of Walde-Warren, some argued that he would lean strongly to the side of the prisoner; but they underrated his character; for he was a man of stern integrity, and regarded not friendship in the official discharge of his duty.

Silence being restored, he announced, in a calm, quiet tone, that the court was now ready to proceed with the case of Arthur Warren, indicted for the murder of one Ernest Clifford; and he trusted the spectators, whether friends or otherwise of the accused, would preserve strict order and decorum, and not seek, by any public manifestation, to influence the minds of those whose duty it was to give the prisoner an impartial trial.

The next thing in order, was the empaneling of the jury; and this, owing to a great portion of those summoned having expressed an opinion on the subject, and had therefore to be set aside, occupied some two or three hours; and on the last man being sworn in, the court took a recess of half an hour.

On the re-assembling of the court, the indictment was read, charging Arthur Warren with having on a certain day, between such and such hours, at such a place, with malice aforethought, and by means of a certain sharp-pointed instrument or instruments, feloniously taken the life of Ernest Clifford, et cetera, et cetera. When the clerk had finished reading this technical paper:

"Arthur Warren," said Judge Whitmore, in a tone of deep solemnity, amid a breathless silence, that had in it something awful, "you are now put upon a trial for your life; you have heard the accusation; do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

There was a moment of intense, breathless suspense, during which the accused, who had risen to his feet, seemed struggling with his feelings; and then the words, "*Not guilty*," rang out clear, distinct, and almost startling and the prisoner resumed his seat amid a deep sensation.

"Let the trial proceed!" said the Judge; and the prosecuting attorney opened the case, by a brief statement to the jury of the facts he expected to prove; but these facts, being already known to the reader, it is unnecessary for us to recapitulate in detail.

The first witness called was Mr. Nixon, who, being duly sworn, proceeded to state that he knew the deceased; that he had first seen him in April last, in company with the accused—both having arrived in Walde-Warren by the stage at the same time; and so forth, and so on. He was upon the stand nearly an hour, before he gave in the direct evidence, which bore most strongly upon the guilt of the prisoner. When he came to speak of how he had followed Arthur; how he had seen him and the deceased some half a mile in advance of him, and not far apart; how he had quickened his pace, till he came to the spot where the fatal deed had been committed, and in what position he had found the accused; and in short all that had been said and done by either party, together with a sickening detail of the appearance of the deceased: when he came to speak of all this, we say, the sensation in the court-room—among the bench, jury, bar, and spectators—was, to use

an expressive term, tremendous; and it was thought by many there was no possibility of the prisoner being acquitted. The knife being produced, with which the fatal deed had been committed, it was identified by the witness as the one he had seen in the hand of the accused.

"And this knife, may it please the court," said the attorney for the prosecution, "we can, if necessary, prove to be the property of the accused."

"We shall not require you to do so," replied the counsel for the prisoner, "since the accused, openly through me, acknowledges the fact, coupled with the statement, that the knife had not been in his possession for more than a month prior to the deed of which he stands charged."

The direct and cross examination of Mr. Nixon occupied the greater portion of the afternoon session.

The next testimony called was the coroner, who briefly, but clearly stated in what position and condition he had found the deceased—described his wounds, of which there were three—and named the articles that were on his person.

"Do you think the wounds were all made with that knife?" inquired the counsel for defence, pointing to the fatal weapon.

"I do."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because they were precisely such wounds as such an instrument make."

"Do you speak knowingly on the subject?

"I am, by profession, a surgeon."

"Could not the deceased have inflicted them upon himself?"

"I should judge not."

"And why not?"

"Because he could not have made the wound in the abdomen, after stabbing himself to the heart; and he would hardly have had strength to press the knife through the heart, after stabbing himself in the abdomen—to say nothing of the third wound on the thorax, which he would not have been likely to have made at all."

"Was there any evidence of there having been resistance on the part of the deceased?"

"There was a slight flesh-cut, leading from the stab on the thorax, as if the deceased had turned quickly on being struck there."

The next witness called was George Nixon, the son of the inn-keeper, who repeated what had passed between Arthur Warren and himself on the fatal morning.

"Did the prisoner seem excited and angry?" inquired the prosecution.

"Yes, sir—I thought he was very angry from his looks."

On the conclusion of young Nixon's testimony, the court adjourned.

At an early hour on the following morning, the court-yard was again crowded by hundreds of eager persons, and the scene presented on the opening of the Court was so much like that of the preceding day, that one description will answer for both. The appearance of Arthur was, if any thing, more haggard and downcast, than the day before. No wonder, poor fellow! for he had slept none during the night.

The first witness called on the second day, was one of those who had been preseet when the deceased struck the accused. He briefly described the event as it occurred, repeated the words that had passed between the parties, and said he was one of several present who had interfered to separate them.

"Did you observe the prisoner closely," inquired the prosecution, "after he was struck?"

"I did, for I had hold of him."

"How did he conduct himself?"

"Like a man insane with passion."

"You say he made use of threatening language—will you repeat his words?"

"'A blow!" he cried; 'a blow! the stigma of a blow can only be effaced by blood! Oh, he shall pay dearly for this!'" and the witness continued to repeat much more that was said of a like nature—with which, however, we do not think necessary to trouble the reader—concluding with Arthur's last words, as he drove away: "'Gentlemen, you have succeeded in preventing me chastising a villain now; but we shall meet again, and then let him beware!'"

Several other witnesses were now called in succession, whose testimony was merely corroborative of that just recorded.

"Much of this last evidence, we might, perhaps, have omitted," said the prosecution; "but we wished to convince the jury of premeditation on the part of the accused. Much more testimony of a like nature—all tending to the same thing—all going to prove—ay, gentlemen of the jury, and proving, too, beyond a cavil, malice aforethought, we could produce, and would produce, but that we know our case requires it not, and we do not wish to trespass needlessly on your valuable time. We will, therefore, call only one witness more; and, apropos—here she comes."

As this was said, all eyes were turned to the door; and quite a sensation was created, by perceiving Marian Waldegrave, deeply veiled, as on the preceding day, leaning heavily on her father's arm, and advancing with a tremulous step. On being conducted to the stand, she appeared greatly agitated, and showed signs of fainting; and it was not till she had drank part of a glass of water which was handed her, that she became sufficiently collected to go through the simple ceremony of taking the oath. Her veil was now partly drawn aside; and the eagerness of the spectators to get a glimpse of her face, caused an unusual commotion in the court-room; and the words, "Silence," and "Order," had to be several times repeated, ere the tumult subsided. Those who did see the countenance of Marian, were struck by its loveliness, pallor, and the anguish of its expression.

"Miss Waldegrave," said the attorney for the State, when silence was again restored, "we are informed that the accused was with you at an early hour—say before sunrise—on the morning of the day on which the deceased came to a violent death."

"He was," replied Marian, in a tone scarcely audible.

"We shall spare you a repetition of much that was said at that interview—but we wish you to state all that was spoken concerning the deceased."

After a short pause, during which Marian seemed to be collecting her thoughts, and nerving herself for the task, she proceeded in a barely audible tone, to repeat that portion of the conversation between Arthur and herself relative to Ernest Clifford. As the reader can refer to it himself, in case it is forgotten, we shall not record it here.

"You say," pursued the attorney, in the course of the examination, "you urged the accused not to see the deceased—why?—had you any fear of what subsequently happened?"

"Not as it did happen," replied Marian; "my fear was that the opposite party would be the victim—for I believed Arthur Warren incapable of such a crime."

This was spoken in a louder and firmer tone than any of the previous answers, and being distinctly heard, caused quite a sensation among the audience.

"Are you of the same opinion still, Miss Waldegrave?" inquired the attorney, with a slight curl of the lip, which seemed to say, "It is perfectly immaterial whether you are or not."

"We are here to listen to

facts, and not to the opinions of witnesses," interposed Judge Whitmore.

"Nevertheless," said Marian, with unusual energy of tone—roused to this by the insidious sneer of the attorney, which she had not failed to perceive—while a bright glow spread over lovely features, making them radiant as with a lofty purpose: "Nevertheless, so may it please the court, I will answer the question: I am of the same opinion still; and I here publicly pronounce Arthur Warren innocent of the murder of Ernest Clifford."

There was no tremor in the voice of Marian as she said this—her bearing had in it all the majesty of a queen—and the words rang out clear, earnest and thrilling. A momentary silence followed her speech, during which you might have heard the fall of a pin; a feeling approaching awe seemed to pervade the entire assemblage; and bench, bar, jury, and spectators, were alike dumb with surprise. Then a low murmur began to run around the room, but was quickly checked by the sharp, angry voice of the attorney, who said:

"You take a great responsibility upon yourself madam; may we know on what grounds you so positively assert the innocence of the prisoner?"

"Because he says he did not do it," answered Marian, in a firm, quiet tone, still supported by the lofty purpose she had in view, that of defending the character of him she loved; "and I appeal to all present—(here she took a sweeping glance of the entire auditory) ay, and to all who know Arthur Warren—I appeal to any, and to all, to say they ever heard him utter an untruth?"

"No, no! never—never!" cried at least fifty voices, amid great noise and confusion; and it was some five minutes, so intense was the excitement, before order and silence could again be restored.

On hearing the appeal of her he loved, and the quick, eager, simultaneous replies of the spectators, amounting to a regular shout, poor Arthur, unable to control his emotions, covered his face with a handkerchief, and wept like a child. As for Marian, the moment she began to consider what she had said, and the construction that might be put upon her singular proceeding and language, she hastily drew her veil over her face, overwhelmed with shame and confusion, and sunk half fainting upon a seat, which a gentleman of the bar kindly handed her.

"We must have no more of this!" said Judge Whitmore, in a severe tone, as soon as he could make his voice heard. "All persons, of whichever sex, must henceforth con-

fine themselves within the limits of propriety, or suffer the penalty for contempt of court."

But few more questions were asked Marian; and on the conclusion of her testimony, the prosecution said:

"We rest our case here."

It being now somewhat late in the afternoon, the court adjourned.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DEFENCE.

Most of the third day was occupied by the defence, in proving the previous good character of the accused; and no man was ever arraigned before a legal tribunal, that ever had better, stronger and warmer testimony in his favor.

The prosecuting attorney began his summing up of the case about three o'clock in the evening, and closed in a couple of hours. He went over the evidence in a brief and pointed manner, remarking it was too direct and positive although circumstantial, to admit of any doubt as to the actual commission of the awful deed by the prisoner, and therefore it would only be a waste of time for him to dwell upon the subject. There had been a quarrel, he said; threats had been used by the prisoner; he had risen at an early hour to seek the deceased, evidently with a vindictive purpose; had followed him; the two had been seen alive only a few minutes previous to the finding of the accused over the murdered remains of the other, with his own knife, the knife which had done the deed, bloody in his hands. What could be inferred, but that he had killed him? and if stronger evidence than this were necessary to convict a man, he thought that justice might as well be set aside as a capital farce. For his part, notwithstanding one witness had made herself ridiculous, by boldly proclaiming his innocence, for the simple reason that the accused had said he did not do it—as if a man who had slain another, would stop at a mere falsehood to hide his crime—notwithstanding all this, he said, and the pain it must cost his friends, he would state it as his conscientious belief, that the accused was guilty of premeditated murder, and he felt, he believed—in fact he knew—that the jury, as honest men, must agree with him.

The counsel for defence was one of the most eminent lawyers in the State, and it was well known he would put forth all his great eloquence in behalf of the prisoner; though what he would find to say touching the case, was a matter of general wonder to every body; for that Arthur was guilty, all were forced to believe; and there seemed not a single point to hang a doubt upon.

The eagerness of the spectators, therefore, to be present on the fourth day, was, if any thing, even greater than at any time previous; and it required the whole police force to preserve the bar from being encroached on during the rush. The appearance of Arthur was much as on the preceding days—pale, haggard and dispirited. It was a terrible trial to him—for on the decision of the jury hung more than life. His father was present, as was also Mr. Waldegrave and his family, Marian still deeply veiled as before.

The counsel for the prisoner—a fine, noble looking man—opened the defence, in the cool, calm, unimpassioned tone of one who knew his own power, and felt confidence in his own mental resources. He began by saying that the case before the court was one of marked peculiarity——more marked, more peculiar, than any it had ever been his fortune to be engaged in, and he had been a member of the bar for upwards of twenty years.

"And that which makes it so strangely peculiar," he went on to say, "is the fact of such a chain of damning circumstances being drawn around an innocent man; for that that individual who sits there before you, pale and wasted with care and sorrow, *is* innocent of the crime with which he stands charged, I as sincerely believe, gentlemen of the Jury, as I do that there is a just God in heaven."

He then went over the evidence carefully, dwelling particularly upon that which had been adduced to prove the character of the prisoner—a character, he said, for honor, honesty, high-mindedness, nobleness of soul, excelling any thing he had ever heard or read of being proved in a court of justice; and he alluded triumphantly to the fact, that upon this one great and essential point, the witnesses had all agreed, without a single exception.

"And now," he proceeded, "I will show you, gentlemen of the Jury, what bearing this testimony has upon the case, which you must keep in mind is one of *presumptive*, not *positive*, evidence. In the first place, there has not been a particle of evidence brought forward, to prove that the accused struck the deceased; but on the contrary, it has been proved that the deceased struck the accused, and that in the most insulting manner—a manner that could not fail to bring disgrace upon him, unless he resented it, as every gentleman should. Now, gentlemen of the Jury, had he retaliated at the time—had he even slain on the spot the man who struck him—which of

you present would cry him guilty of murder?—which of you present, with the proud feelings of a true man, might not have done the same thing under the same circumstances? And yet, as the case stands, you have not even this foundation to build upon; but should you find him guilty, must base your verdict *wholly* upon *position* and *supposition*. In other words, from the position in which the accused was found by Mr. Nixon you must *suppose* he murdered the deceased; and, merely from *supposing* it, deliberately, before God and man, declare he *did*.

"Now, as we are supposing, let us suppose a little further. Suppose the prisoner, when found, had declared he had overtaken the deceased, they had again quarrelled, and in the heat of excitement, he had killed him—which of you, gentlemen, would doubt this story, knowing as you do his unblemished character for truth and veracity? Not one; for each would say to himself, 'It is reasonable—it is natural—and as the man never told a falsehood in his life, as far as we can learn, we are bound to believe him—and believing him, can not, of course, convict him of *wilful* murder.' Again, let us suppose the prisoner did kill him in the manner I have stated, and there were witnesses to the fact: what then? There is not a man within the sound of my voice, but could tell you there is no law under heaven that could convict him of wilful murder; and the very extent to which the crime could be stretched, would be manslaughter, and that, perhaps, in a qualifying degree. Thus, you see, gentlemen of the Jury, that should you dare to bring him in guilty on the evidence before you; I say dare, for it is an awful sin to doom a fellow creature to death, as in this case, without *positive* knowledge of his guilt; and God, who sits in high heaven above, before whom you are sworn, will hold you responsible for your verdict; I say should you dare to bring him in guilty, as the case stands, you would do what you could *not* do were there witnesses to the deed; and therefore you would be actually giving more weight to *circumstantial*, than to *positive* evidence.

"But let us go further, gentlemen of the Jury, and suppose the accused did not kill the deceased; and you cannot say he did; there is not a man among you can say he did; because you do not *know* he did; and you would be charging him with direct falsehood at the same time, which, by every witness called to that stand, it has been proved he never uttered. Were he himself called upon to testify in any other case, you would be bound to believe him; then why not generously extend the same faith to his declaration on the present occasion?—more especially, when I solemnly repeat, you do not *know* to the contrary.

"But perhaps you will think, or be told, that should juries take the word of those they are called upon to try, there would be no conviction—which, even if true, has nothing to do with the case before us; and, gentlemen of the Jury, I repeat, this is a very marked and peculiar case; and unless looked into very closely, and one part considered with another, is very likely to be misjudged. Now if you convict the prisoner, you must reconcile yourselves with several inconsistencies; and yet every man is so far consistent with himself, that, by knowing his character, we can form a very correct idea of what he would do under known circumstances.

"Gentlemen of the Jury, I charge you bear this in mind, and mark what follows!

"It has been proved on trial, that the accused is a generous, noble, upright man, who never uttered a falsehood. Now mark! He is found with the murdered man—solemnly protests his innocency of the deed—at the same time admitting that the knife is his own. Is it through fear of conviction for murder that he does this? No! for in that case, with such evidence against him, he would have owned up to the deed—but pleaded that he did it in the heat of a quarrel—whether he did or not—and this, you must admit, would have placed his case in much better light than it now stands. Again, if he were guilty, and stood in fear of the law—and this, mark you still! is the only reason you can have for doubting the truth of his denial; would he not have fled when urged to do so by Nixon, knowing that he could escape? Would he, if guilty, have gone home, and been the first to break the news to his parents—upsetting the reason o. his mother with the shocking intelligence—and there quietly have waited for the sheriff to come and take him? Is this the conduct of a man base enough to do a murder? and a *premeditated* murder at that. And, at his examination, would he have refused, if guilty, to take bail, and be at liberty to make his escape, instead of insisting on a trial, like an honorable man? These are facts, gentlemen of the Jury, and strong facts, that must be duly weighed and considered. You cannot say it is a case of conscience—for if so, he would have acknowledged to the deed; and yet he denies it; but denies it in such a way, mark you! as to make it tell most against him. How then are you to reconcile these facts with his guilt? You cannot do it.

"But now, gentlemen of the Jury, I will place the case before you in such a way that you can find no inconsistencies. Let us suppose the accused innocent of the crime; and we have as good a right to *suppose* that, as the contrary. Well he comes to the road, following the deceased, who was far enough in advance of him to give another, if lying in wait, time to do the deed and escape—so that there is nothing *impossible* in this surmise:—Well, he comes up, and finds him stretched on the ground, weltering in his own blood. He is horrified and bewildered; and acting on the impulse of the moment, without a thought of any serious consequences, he bends down to examine him, and finds him dead—and what is more, his own knife sticking in the heart of the deceased—at least he thinks it is his own knife—one he had lost—and he naturally draws it forth to see; and while examining it, and wondering how it got there, he is surprised by Mr. Nixon. Does not this supposition reconcile you to the exclamation, '*O, merciful heaven, look here?*' words expressive of astonishment and horror, but not of fear nor guilt, nor such as a guilty man would utter? And then when Nixon said he feared such a catastrophe, the accused, without once thinking of himself, which he would have done had he been guilty, naturally rejoined, '*Then you knew something of it?*' and when the other finally points to his hands, and the accused, looking down in wonder, sees the blood upon them—sees from that he is himself suspected—and foresees at the same time what must follow; is it not perfectly in keeping with his innocence, that he should let the knife fall in horror, and shriek forth, '*Merciful God! what have I done?*' and declare himself ruined? Which of us, placed under the same circumstances, would not have acted in a manner similar? He could not say he killed the deceased in the heat of passion, because he had not killed him at all, and it would be speaking falsely, and he would not deny the ownership of the knife, because it was his own, and this would be an untruth also. You see, gentlemen of the Jury, this supposition—I may say this reality—destroys all inconsistencies in the conduct of the accused, and places him before you, not only an innocent but a most high-minded, and honorable man.

"And now, gentlemen of the Jury," proceeded the learned counsel, "having shown you the improbabitity of the fatal deed having been committed by the accused—and believing as I do that the deceased *was* murdered—I will state an event that may tend to fix suspicion in an other quarter, and finally, under God, lead to a clearing up of the mystery."

He then clearly, and in detail, narrated the circumstance of Arthur and Ernest finding a man in the wood where the murder had been done; what had passed between them; how Ernest had abused the man, and Arthur given him money; how the stranger had warned the accused against his friend; in fact, laid the whole scene before the jury, as we have previously done before the reader.

What had become of this man, he said, was not known; but he, at least, with the sole motive of revenge, might have laid in wait, day after day; and finding at last the long wished-for opportunity, might have killed the deceased, and, on hearing some one approach, might have fled in time to secrete himself. As to the knife, he said, he would note it as a singular coincidence, that the accused lost it on the day he saw the stranger, and saw it not afterwards till he found it in the heart of the murdered man; and it was reasonable to suppose, that when the accused drew forth his purse, the knife came out with it, and, falling on the ground, had subsequently been picked up by the stranger. This he said had not been proved on the trial, because there was no one witness to the fact; but it was a fact, nevertheless, and as such he wished the jury to consider it.

He then proceeded to warn the jury that they could not be too cautious in receiving presumptive evidence; and cited several instances of innocent persons having been condemned by this means, two of whom had actually been executed for murder, and afterwards the real authors had been discovered and brought to justice.

Having now brought the minds of the jury and spectators to the point desired, he put forth all his energetic and powerful talent in a strain of pathetic eloquence never surpassed. He drew a truthful picture of the quiet valley of Walde-Warren, and the happy home of the accused, ere this cruel blow, as unexpected as a thunderbolt from a cloudless sky, fell upon them, crushing them to the dust. He drew a truthful, pathetic, and painful contrast between the past and the present; and portrayed the condition of the family of the accused—the maniac mother, the broken-hearted father—in a manner so affecting, that there was scarcely a dry eye in the house.

"And now, gentlemen of the Jury," he said in conclusion, "I am about to close—about to leave in your hands the life of a noble young man, whom, before high heaven, I believe guiltless of the deed with which he stands charged

Did I say his life? I should have said many lives; for on your decision regarding him, hangs the fate of many more. Bear this in mind, I charge you! and forget not the awful responsibility you take upon your souls, if you pronounce against him! As ye judge, so shall ye be judged, and if ye wrongly judge, ye may cry for mercy and find it not. Should you be tempted to find against him, remember the desolation and wo that will follow! Think of the maniac mother, shrieking in anguish for her first born, and, like Rachel of old, will not be comforted, because he is not! Think upon that kind father, now sitting there; pale, haggard, and grown old with sorrow; his hair made gray by affliction, not by time; and behold him sinking under his new woe to the cold, dreary grave of the broken-hearted! Think of that young, innocent, and lovely maiden—whom, may heaven bless, for her confiding trust in him to whom her heart is given; and remember, if ye doom the accused, ye doom her also to a woful death, and perhaps with her another fond father and mother! Think of all these things, I solemnly charge you! and remember that ere long, each and all of you must severally stand arraigned before the awful bar of the great Jehovah, there to be tried and judged for the deeds done in the body; and may ye so act in the eventful present, that you will have nothing to regret, when the Recording Angel of God's High Court shall unroll to your spiritual view the hand and heart record of your mortal existence! May the angel of mercy be with you in your deliberations, and heaven aid you to the right!"

The close of this speech was greeted with a storm of applause that shook the building; and hundreds who, the day previous, had regarded the prisoner as guilty, now looked upon him as a man by far "more sinned against than sinning."

The prosecuting attorney now made a brief reply, telling the jury not to let the fine, moving eloquence of his talented opponent cause them to lose sight of the *facts* of the case, which facts he recapitulated.

This reply concluded, the Judge proceeded to deliver his charge to the jury, remarking with the learned counsel for defence, that it was a peculiar case, one involving great consequences, and one therefore that should not be hastily decided upon. He would say nothing to influence the decision—it was not his province, the jury were by law in this case the judges; and to lay down the law as a guide to them, was all he had to do in the matter. Having done this, he went over the evidence, briefly, on both sides; and concluded by saying, that if, from the testimony before them, they conscientiously believed the accused guilty of premeditated murder, they could render their verdict accordingly; but if they had any doubt in the matter, they were bound to give that doubt in favor of the prisoner. "For it is better that ninety-nine guilty men should go unpunished, than that one innocent man should suffer."

The Jury now retired, amid the most intense excitement among the spectators. It being about three o'clock in the afternoon, the court decided to remain till night, in the hope of receiving the verdict before adjournment.

Reader, can you picture to yourself the feelings of Arthur and his friends, during that awful suspense? But we are privileged to follow the jury—to hear their deliberations—to see in what manner they arrived at their verdict—and we will do so.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VERDICT.

Twelve men were seated in a small, square chamber, in a retired portion of a building, exclusively devoted to law, and so called justice, in the thriving little town of Bertram. A table, having on it pens, ink and paper, stood in the middle of the chamber; and this table, and the benches on which these twelve men were, as we enter, seated, comprised the only furniture of the apartment. And these twelve men, it needs no conjuror to tell the reader, were here assembled to decide the fate of poor Arthur Warren. We will premise that they had been conducted hither by the sheriff some half an hour previous to our entrance.

"Well," said one, "if we stay here till doomsday, hang me if I'll give in!"

"Well, Sam, you know it's a hanging matter, any how—so don't!" laughed another.

"I wonder," said a third, "there can be any disagreement; for to my mind, it's as clear as daylight that he killed the man; and as long as he don't choose to tell how he killed him—why let him swing, that's all."

"So say I," cried a fourth.

"Well, I was pretty much of the same opinion," put in a fifth, "till Lawyer Gibbs made his speech in favor of the poor fellow—and that, somehow, brought the thing round in quite a different light."

"Dang it, but he's a smart fellow!" rejoined another.

"Blarney," said the one whose remark we first recorded—"all blarney!"

"Well, blarney or not," returned the other, "I saw the tears running down your cheeks while he was speaking."

"Well, that's nothing, if you did. Of course I pity the old man; and when he went on so about his family, of course it touched me; but it don't alter my opinion about Arthur, now I've got where I can think it all over."

"O, of course," chimed in another, "these lawyers are paid for their fine speeches, and they always make 'em to suit the side they're on. Now if he had been employed on the other side, he'd have piled on the prisoner's guilt so thick, that he'd have appeared like a devil incarnate."

"Well," said one, who had not before spoken, "for my part, I really think the man is innocent, for, from what I know of his character, I do believe, if he were guilty, he would boldly proclaim it, let the consequences be what they would."

"More fool he, then," cried another; "for if I were guilty of killing a man, you may be certain I'd wait for it to be proven before I owned up."

"Arthur Warren, and you, sir, are very different persons," was the tart reply.

"Well, so I reckon."

"Now if I were on a jury in your case, with the same facts against you, I would say guilty, without leaving my seat."

"Thank you! and I say ditto to you and Arthur Warren also."

And so they went on, these twelve men, discussing the matter for better than an hour, and finding themselves at the end of that time exactly where they set out.

"Come, come, this will never do!" rapped the foreman on the table: "This hit and fling is all nonsense: we shall never come to an agreement so."

"No, nor any other way," replied a voice.

"Let's agree to disagree," suggested another.

"And stay here and starve," said a third. "O, I know the old Judge well; I was on one of his juries once before; he'll not let us off, without a verdict, till we've taken as many days to consider the case as he was trying it—I believe that's his rule."

"Hang him!" grumbled one.

"No, hang the prisoner—that'll do better," was the rejoinder.

"How do we stand?" inquired the foreman.

"Six and six, Colonel—that is to say, if you are in favor of an acquittal."

"Well, I am."

"What's to be done?—this is dull business."

"Let's hang ourselves, and let the prisoner go," laughed one.

"If we only had a pack of cards here now," suggested another.

"Hurrah! I've two—lucky thought!" cried a third.

"Hurrah for us!" cried half a dozen voices; and amid hilarious tumult, the cards were produced: and those twelve men, assembled there to decide the fate of poor Arthur, soon became absorbed in the to them more important matters of Loo, Poker, and All-Fours.

Oh! could he have seen them there—seen how indifferent they were concerning his fate—his sensitive soul would have been more harrowed, perhaps, than at any time during the painful trial.

After gambling some time; for in those days, and that portion of the country, men seldom played cards without betting something, just to make the game interesting; one of the party, struck with a new idea, exclaimed, striking the table with his clenched hand:

"I have it! I have it! a glorious plan, to get us out of an ugly fix! Come, what do you say, gentlemen? let us have a game to decide the verdict."

"Capital! capital! hurrah! hurrah!" cried half a dozen of eager voices, clapping their hands in glee. "A game to decide the verdict! three cheers for that idea!"

It was soon arranged that the two best players, one on either side, should play a single game of "all-fours," or as it is frequently termed "seven up," and whichever party won, that party should be privileged to decide the verdict. The players selected were Colonel Parker, the foreman of the jury, who was in favor of the acquittal of the prisoner—and one Samuel Page on the opposite side, and of course in favor of his conviction. The rest of the number divided off, five against five, and each party placed itself behind its respective champion, to watch the progress of the game with all the eagerness with which men regard a contest in which they are deeply concerned.

"May heaven aid the right!" said one, and the game began.

"High and game!" exclaimed the Colonel, at the close of the first hand.

"Low and Jack!" cried his opponent—"two and two."

The cards were again shuffled and dealt.

"Low and game to your high," said the Colonel, as the last card of the second hand was played.

"Hurrah for the Colonel!" cried his party. "One ahead; four to three."

"Go it, Sam; it's your deal," was the opposite rejoinder.

The cards were again shuffled and dealt, and a jack was turned by the dealer.

"Good for our side!" cried one of the party for conviction; "we'll win yet; even up."

"I beg," cried the Colonel.

"Take one," said Page; "and that makes you five to my four."

The third hand was played.

"Game!" cried the Colonel.

"High and low!" cried Page.

"Six and six!" shouted the excited by-standers.

The fourth and last hand was dealt out by the Colonel amid breathless silence; for all were now too intensely excited to speak; and something like awe stole over the company, as they saw the game, so equal, and so near a close, with the life of a fellow being depending on the result.

The last card was dealt, and the trump turned. It was the ten-spot of diamonds. Page looked at his hand, and a gleam of triumph shot athwart his face.

"The game is mine!" he cried. "I ask one; you cannot give of course; and the aces of the three remaining suits I hold in my hand;" and he exposed them on the table.

"There is only one chance for us, Colonel," exclaimed one of his party; "you must run the cards, and all will depend upon your turning a Jack."

"If the man is innocent, let heaven send a Jack!" said Page.

"Five to one it don't!" cried one on the same side.

"I'll take that bet," said one of the opposition; and the deal was delayed till the stakes were put up.

"Hold on one minute, Colonel! there's another bet pending. There, all right."

The Colonel dealt three cards each, and in a deep, solemn tone, said:

"Are you ready, gentlemen?"

"Ready!" was the answer; and all eyes were fixed intently upon the pack.

Colonel Parker's face grew deadly pale, and his hand trembled with strange emotion, as he carefully lifted the deciding card. On that stamped pasteboard hung the fate of many human beings; the face of that would bring great happiness or utter misery. For a moment or two he held it inverted, in a horizontal position, and then slowly turned it over. As he did so, a cloud, which had obscured the rays of the setting sun, passed, and a flood of bright light poured in at the window, and streamed upon the hand, and upon the card, a golden glory. Awestruck, the by-standers gazed upon that card, and upon one another, pale and silent, with the dying sunlight bathing them in a flood of golden light. They fancied they saw something more than chance in the decision evoked; they felt that the hand of God was among them.

*That card was the Jack of Spades!**

Slowly—with solemn tread, one after another, single file; tramp, tramp, tramp; those twelve men entered the court-room, and took their places in the jury-box, just as the last golden rays of the sinking sun streamed in at the windows. A strange kind of thrill, something like awe, pervaded every breast. No one who beheld the sober faces of that jury, dreamed that they had been gambling for a verdict.

"Gentlemen of the Jury," inquired the Judge, in a tone of thrilling solemnity, "are you agreed upon a verdict?"

"We are," replied Colonel Parker, the foreman.

"Then, gentlemen of the Jury, you will arise and fix your eyes upon the prisoner; and prisoner at the bar, you will arise and fix your eyes upon the jury."

Arthur stood up, pale, haggard, and with lips compressed, and faced the jury with an unquailing eye; and Marian half rose from her seat, with one hand clasped upon her heart, and her veil thrown back to get her breath, for her respiration came with the labored difficulty of the first stages of suffocation. Every eye was now turned upon the jury—it was an awful moment.

"Gentlemen of the Jury," pursued the learned Judge, "you will now answer—do you find the prisoner guilty or not guilty?"

"*Not guilty.*"

There was a low, half-smothered shriek, and Marian Waldegrave sunk senseless to the ground, overcome with joy; while Arthur reeled and fell into his father's arms, and the shouts of the spectators shook the building.

A few minutes later Arthur was borne in triumph from the court-room, amid loud cheers and tumultuous excitement.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

A WEEK or so had passed away after the trial, when one day, as Arthur sat with his mother—who, since his restoration to her, had, as the physician predicted, recovered her reason—he heard the clatter of horse's hoofs; and looking out of the window, he espied George Nixon, the son of the inn-keeper, advancing up the road with his horse on a keen run. Almost the next moment he reined up to the house, sprang from the back of the panting beast, and rapped on

* Strange as it may seem to many of our readers, this incident of the finding of a verdict in a criminal case, by a single game of all-fours, is a fact, and occurred in the manner related above.

the door. Apprehensive of some new calamity, Arthur sprung to and opened it, while his mother's eyes assumed the wildness of fear.

"The very person!" cried the boy. "Quick! Mr. Warren—mount that horse, and ride to the White Deer, as fast as you can!"

"What is the matter?" gasped Arthur; "what has happened?—my father—"

"No, no, nothing of the kind. There's a man, a stranger, there, that's dying, they say, and he wants to see you before he dies—that's all I know."

"Do not be alarmed, mother—I will be back presently;" and catching up his hat, Arthur rushed out, mounted upon the back of the horse, and in less than two minutes dismounted at the White Deer.

"This way! quick, Arthur!" cried Nixon, running out to meet him; and the next moment the two were ascending the stairs, three at a time.

They entered a small bed-chamber; and there, stretched out on the bed, Arthur beheld a wan, haggard, miserable looking object, with wild bloodshot eyes, long matted beard and hair, who seemed by his convulsive gasps, the nervous twitching of the muscles of his face, and the clenching and unclenching of his hands, to be in the last agonies of mortal suffering. There were two or three persons round the bed, gazing upon the sufferer, who drew back as Nixon and our hero rushed in.

"This is Arthur Warren," said the former.

The dying man turned quickly upon him, and gasped forth, in a faint tone, which he struggled to make strong:

"Do you know me?"

Arthur gazed upon him a moment and then, with strange emotions, which the reader will readily understand, cried, in a quick, eager tone:

"Yes! yes! you are the man I saw in the wood, on the day—"

"On the day a villain spurned me with his foot," cried the stranger, interrupting him with fierce energy, while his face became livid with rage. "But," he added, with a gleam of triumph, "I got my revenge all in good time, and so let him go. I did you a service there, and an injury too, for which I ask your forgiveness. There, don't interrupt me! my minutes are numbered—and I have not said all I would. I have dragged myself hither, Arthur Warren, at the last moment, to see you once more, to do you justice, and ask you to forgive me. Bear witness all here present, that a dying man, with his last words, avows that he alone killed Ernest Clifford, and that Arthur Warren is innocent of the crime! Yes, it happened thus," he continued, fixing his eyes upon Arthur. "After you were gone, I found a knife lying at my feet. I kept it for the purpose of taking the life of Clifford. I did not know it was yours, and what trouble it would bring upon you, or I would not have used it. Well, to be brief. I procured food, and afterward took up my abode on that mountain, in a sort of cave that overlooks the valley, there to wait my chance to settle with the man I hated. It was a long time coming, but it came at last. By chance, one morning, I saw Clifford approaching the pass, as you term it here, I believe. Something whispered me fate had sent him to his doom; and I hastened down, and took up a position behind a tree, at the very spot where he insulted me. I might have killed him elsewhere sooner, perhaps; but that seemed the only place proper to revenge myself upon him. Well, he came up, and I made quick work of it. Just as I had drove the knife through his heart, I heard steps, and secreted myself down the bank. There I overheard all that passed between you and the innkeeper here; and I felt deeply troubled lest I had ruined you. More than once I was on the point of reappearing, and confessing the deed; but somehow, I could not bear the thought of being dragged before a bar of justice, and I did not exactly want to kill myself; and so I remained secreted till you were gone, and then went back to my home on the mountain, determined to stay about here till you had had your trial; and if convicted, I was resolved to appear in time to save you. You know the rest. With joy I overheard some persons passing along the road say that you were acquitted. That night I was seized with a fever, and have been sick ever since. Last night I thought I was dying; but I struggled not to die, till I had seen you, and done you justice; and I believe my will gave me new strength, and chained my spirit here a little longer. I dragged myself hither this morning, and here I shall end a miserable existence. Do you forgive me, Arthur Warren?"

"All that concerns myself I forgive, as I hope myself to be forgiven," was Arthur's magnanimous reply.

"Thank you!" replied the stranger; "for the rest I must take my chance."

"But will you not tell us who you are, and whence you came?"

"No, my secret must perish with me. I have seen better days, and there are those living whom news of me would trouble. Suffice it, that I have been a bold, bad man, with few virtues and many crimes. There, go your way, my end has come."

The stranger had all along spoken with great difficulty, and as he pronounced the last words, he fetched a long, convulsive gasp, and his dark spirit was in the eternal world.

"Thank God!" said Arthur, as he gazed upon him—"the only stain upon my character, is, by this confession, removed." * * *

* * * * *

The fall passed away, winter came and went, and on a calm, pleasant spring day, about a year from the date of our story, a group of several persons stood before the altar of the village sanctuary of Walde-Warren. Never did Arthur Warren look more noble and manly—never did Marian Waldegrave appear more sweet and lovely—than as they stood before the sacred desk, hand in hand, and took upon them the holy vows which made them one by the covenant of marriage.

The parents of both parties were present, as were most of the villagers. When the ceremony was over, Mr. Warren grasped the hand of his friend, the father of the bride, and in a voice of deep emotion said:

"Archer, the hour we have both prayed for has come at last. The night of wo is past—the morning of joy is here—and let us daily petition the Great Ruler of the universe, that the sun of our prosperity and happiness may never again set!"

"Amen!" was the heartfelt response.

Many years have since passsed away, but the bright sun of happiness still shines upon the valley of Walde-Warren; and Arthur and Marian, blessed with worthy descendants, are still happy in the love and companionship of each other.

THE END.

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