A

# Night at Isley's Grange:

AN

## INTERESTING NOVELETTE.

BY

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"Methinks before the issue of our fate,
A spirit moves within us, and impels
The passion of a prophet to our lips."

CINCINNATI:
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.
G. B. BENTLEY & CO., PRINTERS.
1859.

# A NIGHT AT ISLEY'S GRANGE.

## CHAPTER I.

"To what end did our lavish ancestors
Erect of old these stately piles of ours?"

JUST as they came by the romantic-looking ruin on Weirvin's Cliff, the sun went behind a dark and heavy cloud; and the landscape, which had before appeared so charming, was now, though thrown into deep shadow, of a caste more befitting the tale which Hervey in low, musical tones was reciting. Agnes, with a slight, sudden, and a quick glace at the ruined structure, drew her scarf more closely about her and said: "Mr. Montiver, was Oakland manor-house any thing like that ruin on the cliff?"

Hervey, who had not apparently been observing what was passing around him, now looked up and said, hastily, "Those clouds portend a storm and we must immediately seek shelter!" Spurring forward to the guide, he inquired the distance to the nearest hamlet, and received information that the first mansion they should reach was yet eight miles before them.

"What if we explore yon weird-looking pile," said Hervey, pointing in the direction of the mouldering edifice, his fine features animated by the thought of an adventure. "Benton shall kindle a fire on the old broken hearth-stone, and by its light you shall listen to my ghost story, till the flickering, uncertain shadows on the wall seem like jibing demons, and the trailing cry which the night wind shall blow in at the loop-holes, like the skeleton fingers of unquiet spirits."

"Oh, indeed, Mr. Montiver!" said Agnes, whose cheek had been gradually paling with apprehension; "indeed I think we may reach the village before the shower is upon us, if we but hasten. Surely you can not once think of going into that dark looking place!"

"Well, let us hear what the guide says. Benton, speak to him about it."

Benton returned in a short time with the countryman close at his heels, who had come to beg the "laird" by all the saints in the calendar, as he valued his life in this world and his soul in that to come, not to venture near the spot. "Indeed, sir!" he made bold to add, "nor witches nor goblins never haunted castle more nor Isley's Grange!"

Hervey looked at Agnes and then at the clouds, from which some heavy drops had begun to fall. "Well, we can not stand here and get wet through," said he a little impatiently. "Benton, do you too, with this fellow, fear to go into the ruin?"

Benton, with a look of contempt at the clown, moved his horse behind that of his master, and replied: "I am ready to follow you, sir."

Agnes, who was more afraid of Hervey's displeasure than of ghosts, even made no remonstrance when he placed his hand upon her bridle-rein, and they were soon moving up the cliff.

## CHAPTER II.

"Lightly we tread these halls around,
Lightly tread we;
Yet hark! we have scared with a single sound
The moping owl on the breathless tree,
And the goblin spirits!
Ha! ha! we have scared with a single sound
The old gray owl on the breathless tree,
And the goblin spirits!"

"Such scenes had temper'd with a pensive grace,
The maiden lustre of that faultless face;
Had hung a sad and dream-like spell upon
The gliding music of her silver tone,
And shaded the soft soul which loved to lie
In the deep pathos of that volum'd eye."

"Well!" said Hervey, throwing his arm carelessly over the back of the rude settle, on which Agnes half-reclined, too nervous to be at ease; "what can be more desirable? Rain, wind and darkness without, and here is light, warmth and cheerfulness"—and he cast a playfully sarcastic look from the pale and disturbed face of Agnes to that of the trembling guide; then rising with a slightly impatient air, he walked moodily to the window, and pulling away the woodbine, looked out into the night. The wood which Benton had piled high in the wide chimney was burning briskly and sending forth a broad glare through the large hall; and the bats and insects, which the fire seemed to have called into life, were fluttering hither and thither, apparently seeking to escape from its light, yet fatally attracted toward it. The hooting of the owls echoed and re-echoed through the deserted rooms, and at each cry of these dismal birds Agnes would start and shudder, as though fearful of the presence of some troubled and malignant spirit. Her soft, golden ringlets were flowing loosely over her riding-dress of dark velvet; and the black feather of her hat, which had been broken in passing beneath a low arch, was trailing upon her shoulder, and contrasted painfully with the paleness of her cheek.



As Hervey left her side she glanced anxiously after him, and then began to weep silently. Hervey hastened toward her. "My dear Agnes," he said, "this want of courage in you is not womanly—it is childish. In having urged you to come hither, I sought only your well being, as these walls, however rude, afford us shelter from the tempest which is raging without. Look up, Agnes!" he continued, "and tell me your fears are quieted, and that you are only overcome by this day's long journey."

Agnes took her handkerchief from her eyes and said, sadly, "I know, Hervey, you will think me weak, for though some exhausted by this day's travel, I must plainly tell you that the weariness I feel is not the cause of my emotion; nor is it alarm for my safety, for while with you," she continued with a sweet, sad smile, and laying her hand trustingly in his, "that would indeed be idle, since it is for you alone that I am anxious."

Hervey replied silently by slightly pressing the hand he held.

"To-day," continued Agnes, "while we were searching among the dust and rubbish of this lonely place, I experienced an awe which I tried in vain to suppress; and when you turned the shattered frame, that contained the torn and faded portrait upon which I gazed so long, a sensation came over me which even to you I can not find words to describe. It was with great terror that I looked upon the blood bespattered wall, and the deep red stains upon the floor, which seemed to speak to me of a dreadful deed that years, long years, had failed to erase. And when you bade me to observe how sadly the canvass of the picture had been rent, as if by a sharp pointed instrument—a dagger, perhaps—and how mildly beautiful

were the features of the noble lady there represented, I felt an earnest, earnest longing to behold the living face of her whose painted lineaments were thus ill-used. And, Hervey, you to whom I am so much indebted, now that I have confessed my weakness, will, I trust, allow me your forgiveness."

"Agnes, my love," said Hervey with kind earnestness, "I fear you have suffered a morbid sensibility to take the place of reason; yet, after the fatigue you have this day endured, it is not strange you should indulge in these odd fancies. The proprietor of this place, I have been told, is a dark, pensive man, who, on the sudden decease of his wife, left his native land never to return. The mansion thus deserted by its rightful owner and left to decay, has since become the subject of many foolish rumors in which I trust my Agnes has too much sense to believe."

"Mr. Montiver," said Agnes gravely, "the abbey in which, by the kind care of your uncle, I was reared, is too far distant from this place to ever have been reached by the idle tales of which you speak; and yet there are enough to relate the like reports could they but find credence and attention."

"That you should ever have been influenced by absurdities like these," said Hervey, "do not, I pray you, think I have for a moment supposed; and still, the romantic incidents of your early life, and the strict seclusion in which you have since lived, has, I am inclined to believe, tended to impress your too susceptible mind with ideas that may justly be termed visionary and inconsistent."

"And are these thoughts which you call fanciful," said Agnes mildly, "of a character to lower me in your estimation so far as to cause my company to become distasteful to you?"

Hervey, who, with his exuberant spirits, was utterly averse to any thing inane or common-place, hastened to reply.

"Indeed, Agnes, if a neglect of duties the most imperative, in order to seek your society, be an evidence that it is unpleasing to me, then must I plead guilty, since by no less sacrifice have you had proof of it."

"In holding your duties thus lightly," said Agnes, while an arch smile curved her lips, "do you not merit the just displeasure of Sir Reginald?"

"Dear Agnes," replied Hervey, "that my uncle has sufficient reason to be angered, is true; yet could he comprehend the all-powerful temptation that is presented to me, I feel he would overlook



every thing in which I have proved remiss, and for any future negligence on my part grant me his free pardon."

After a short pause Hervey resumed: "And, Agnes, you may remember that though it is now three years since first we met, I have never fully learned the details of your history. Do I presume too much in asking you to relate them to me?"

Agnes mused for a few moments and then said: "At what time of my life do you desire me to commence?"

"Oh," answered Hervey, "tell me every thing as far back as you can remember."

"Some few scenes of my infant years," began Agnes, "are ever present to my memory; and yet, though always distinct, they seem more like happy dreams, or pictures of the imagination, rather than reality. There are bright skies and balmy breezes—distant mountains and smoke-wreathed cottages—luxuriant vines and women with tall baskets gathering their produce—droves of cattle and flocks of sheep driven by herd-boys; yet best of all do I remember of walking by the shore of some wide and bright expanse of water, a tiny child, that could scarce peep over the back of a huge and shaggy dog which kept always near to me. A large, pleasant-faced woman, whom I called nurse, attended solely to my wants, and kindly answered my childish questions. But ever before us moodily strode a tall, dark man, who sometimes paused to look steadily at the sea and sometimes to speak to the woman who held me by the hand, and gravity would always settle upon the countenance of the woman whenever he addressed her, and at such times she would often raise and place me in his arms. With my little hand on his broad shoulder, I would look up to the large, piercing, black eyes and wonder they were so seldom turned on me; and when his strong arms held me so tenderly, that he should never speak."

"And have you no recollection of the manner in which you fell into the hands of Angerford?" asked Hervey.

"None," replied Agnes. "The first time I remember to have seen him was this: It was in a strange, low room, and a black woman was holding me upon her knees; Angerford entered the apartment, and speaking to the woman, he approached, and taking my chin in his hand, looked sternly, almost fiercely, into my face. His hand was not rough, neither was his touch ungentle, yet his look startled me and I crouched and trembled with fear, when a grim smile passed over his countenance. I afterwards learned that the room in

which this interview took place, was the cabin of a vessel of which Angerford was commander. I saw him often in the cabin and upon deck, yet I can not recollect that he ever again took notice of me while I was with him on the water. The black woman I have mentioned had charge of me, I suppose, as she was always by; and though she took no pains to procure any thing for my amusement nor gave attention to my inquiries for "nurse" and "papa," still she was never unkind, and even lifted me about with a degree of carefulness which I am now disposed to think was something unusual. In what manner or at what time I was placed among the rude people with whom your uncle found me, I have never learned. Angerford, who often visited the gipsy camp, was certainly the one who placed me there, and I also believe it was he who separated me from my father."

Agnes paused for a short time, as if in thought, and then resumed.

"A child of about my own age, the grand-daughter of an old gipsy woman, was my companion and playmate. Her name was Zephy, and though she was willful and sometimes overbearing, my life among the gipsies would have been intolerable without her. She was lithe and agile, with flashing eyes and black, elfish locks falling over her shoulders. She seemed utterly fearless or unconscious of danger; and in her laugh, which was loud and wild, yet musical, there was something at once alluring and derisive. The favorite and plaything of the gipsies, they failed to do nothing that could add to her comfort or gratification; and being always petted and indulged, she was naturally wayward, though seldom passionate. Her attire was ever pretty, yet fantastic. A low-crowned hat, covered with wild flowers and ribbons of crimson or scarlet, was either swinging from her arm or placed carelessly on one side of her head. Her frocks were of red or purple, or yellow cashmere, and she invariably wore a jacket of black velvet, with rows of gilt buttons. These last were solely for ornament, as the garment they adorned was never fastened, but, hanging loosely, disclosed her silken girdle, to which, by a small chain, was attached a small poniard. The old woman, her grand-dame (ugly and ill-tempered as she was) was doatingly fond of Zephy; and to the influence of this fay alone do I attribute the leniency shown me by these crafty and capricious people. Zephy delighted to array me in her prettiest dresses, and to deck my neck and arms with trinkets. Of these she had a large



supply; yet I never saw her wear any of them, except a rich gold chain, to which was fastened a locket set with precious stones. This she wore constantly about her neck, and seemed coy about showing it to me. Together through the woods we sought wild flowers and berries, and acorns, and the red-cupped moss; together we built bowers of fern and pine boughs, and played in sunny nooks, or with the bright pebbles in the stream. As time passed I experienced an affection for Zephy, which I had reason to believe was returned, and I was not unhappy. The wild and wandering life we led was not without its charms; still at times I felt strange, intense yearnings for I knew not what. Zephy, who was full of life and gaiety, could not endure I should be silent or reserved, and whenever a fit of abstraction came over me, she would grow sullen, or indulge in passionate ill-humor.

"One fine morning in early summer Zephy called me to the door of the tent, and pointing to a knot of trees that stood at a little distance from the camp, she said:

"'Look, Agnes, at those pretty waving trees! Do you not see that though the fields, the meadows and the hamlet yonder are all covered with the beautiful sun-light, this little wood looks sombre and dark? While you were yet asleep I came out here to look at the dew-drops, and to listen to the birds; and then, in glancing away over the land, I spied that cluster of pines. I am going there to spend the day. Will you go also? We will call it Twilight Grove.'

"As I never failed to consent to any of Zephy's propositions, she went to acquaint the old gipsy woman with her intention, and to ask her to prepare our luncheon. We were soon ready, and with willow-baskets on our arms, containing coarse bread, dried meat and fruit, we began our little journey; and before the sun had half reached the meridian, we were in the deep shadow of the pine trees. Till noon we busied ourselves in constructing a bower and in plaiting wreaths to adorn it; and then, when the wind had almost ceased to stir the leaves, and the birds were weary with singing, we sought a little bubbling stream and sat down to eat our dinners.

"'Let us stay here for the rest of the day,' said Zephy, 'and not go back to the bower. See! there is a beautiful moss-covered rock, and all those green brakes, and here are so many sweet flowers.'

"'Yes, Zephy,' said I, 'I would much rather stay here; it is not so dark and lonely; the sun-light has found a window open, and is

creeping in through the trees, and this little brook is laughing with joy to see it.'

"'Do you call that rippling noise laughter?' asked Zephy.

"'Yes,' answered I; 'it is a low, pleasant laugh, such as I like to hear.'

"'Then you don't like to hear ME laugh,' said Zephy? 'But you say the brook is glad because the sun is shining upon it. If clouds were over the sun, so that its beams could not come through the trees at all, the brook would keep bubbling just the same.'

"'Then,' I answered, 'its laugh would be changed to a sad, murmuring sound, as if it bewailed the absence of one it loved.'

"Zephy was silent for a little time, and sat pulling the flowers from her hat. By and by she arose and stepped from the bank into the stream. After wading a short distance she called me.

"'Come, Agnes,' she said, 'I am searching for the pretty pebbles that make the brook laugh. Come in here and help me to look!' And she indulged in a burst of merriment, her own wild, peculiar laugh, that made the woods ring, and startled many a drowsy bird from its nest in the thick bushes.

"'No,' said I, 'I am tired, and will stay here till you find them.'

"She kept on, walking slowly down the stream, stopping occasionally to pick up some smooth, round stone, that had attracted her gaze. I watched her for a few moments, and then my thoughts wandered, and I became insensible to every thing around me. I was aroused by a touch on the shoulder, and, on looking up, perceived Zephy standing by my side. She looked at me rather sharply, and said:

"'There! you were dreaming again! Now, Agnes, I know you are going to be dull this afternoon. Didn't you hear me calling to you to come and look at the little spotted fish I had found? No, I am sure you did not. You stare at me as though you had just come down from the clouds, and were surprised to find yourself in this place, and with such a one as I talking to you. Why did you wish to stay here and not go back to the bower? It was just because you wanted to go into one of these fits again. I might have known what was coming when you began telling about the brook's being sad, because the one it loves was not by. Now I want to know if that's the case with you? You don't love me, that's certain, nor any of us, and I wish you would go back to the place whence you came. I don't care any thing about you!' And she walked angrily



away. When at a short distance, she stopped abruptly and turned toward me.

"'Agnes,' she said, deliberately, 'if you do not promise me never to have any more of those spells, I shall do something you will not like.'

"She knelt down, and taking the locket from her neck placed it upon a stone.

"'Do you see?' she said, 'If you refuse to do what I ask, I'll break this miniature in pieces;' and she held a large stone over it.

"'But I can not perceive, if you do destroy the locket, in what manner it's going to harm me,' said I, with some persistency.

"'No, you don't see,' returned Zephy, pettishly. 'Well, I will show you.'

"She came near, and holding out the locket bade me look at it. It was the miniature of a man in the spring of life; the eyes were large, dark and earnest; the features fine, the head well shaped, and the expression of the face noble and commanding. As I gazed upon the picture a strange sensation came over me, and I think I turned pale.

"'Have you ever seen this before?' inquired Zephy.

"'I do not know,' returned I.

"'Well, I am sorry I have shown it to you,' said Zephy, in a softened tone, 'but you are so provoking.'

"She sat down beside me, and passing her arm around my waist, was silent for some time. At last she spoke.

"'Do you remember a strange man who sometimes comes among us? He is very pale, with fierce eyes and long black hair, and he wears a great many knives and pistols in his belt.'

"'The one they call Angerford?' I asked.

"'The same,' replied Zephy.

"'Oh yes, I remember him well,' said I. 'I was with him once upon the water, but it is a long, long time ago.'

"'Indeed,' said Zephy, in surprise; 'I did not know it; it must have been a great while since; for it seems as if you had been with us for many years. I am eight years old now, and am not any larger than you.'

"'But what were you about to tell me of Angerford?'

"'Well,' returned Zephy, 'one day last summer, he came to me with this miniature in his hand, and holding it up so that I could see all these pretty stones sparkling at once, he said he intended it

as a gift for me. You may believe I was glad enough; but as I had seen him talking very closely with grandmother a moment before, I wanted to know very much what it was about. So I pretended not to care to have the locket, and told him I must first ask grandmother if I might take it. He laughed aloud when I said this, and called me a 'true gipsy;' but he afterward told me the locket was worth a great deal of money, and that grandmother knew all about it, and was willing for me to wear it around my neck as long as I wished.'

"'Well,' said I, 'I will wear it if you will tell me the name of the one of whom this picture was painted.'

"'He said I would not know the one if he told me.'

"'No matter,' said I, 'you must tell me something about him, or you may take the locket away.'

"'Then he looked very wicked, and taking hold of me made me promise never to tell you nor any one what he was going to say. I was some frightened, and after he had told me, I promised very sincerely never to make it known to any one living.'

"Zephy stopped suddenly, and after waiting some time for her to speak, I remarked:

"'And you have nothing further to say about it?'

"'All this time,' Zephy resumed, 'I have worn the locket, and have neither shown it to you nor said any thing about it; but now I am going to give it to the one to whom it belongs, for I have not been happy in keeping it away from her;' and she arose and put the chain about my neck. I was much surprised, and asked her meaning. Zephy replied:

"'This it was what Angerford said to me:—The miniature is of the father of Agnes, a man whom I hate.'

"'And now,' continued Zephy, her eyes flashing, 'Angerford may kill me, as he said he would, but I can no longer keep this from you.'

"I was greatly shocked, and instantly attempted to take the miniature from my neck; but Zephy withheld my hand, saying:

"'Agnes, I beg you to keep it; if you do not, I shall throw it into the stream, and you will never again behold the likeness of him whose absence you mourn.'

"Seeing me still filled with apprehension for her, she continued:

"'If you will keep it from the sight of all, Angerford can never learn that I have made known to you the secret.'

"As she ceased speaking a peal of thunder resounded through the wood, and we were startled on finding that a shower had come upon us unawares. The wood then became dark indeed, and the pines that had so lately stood in solemn silence began to sway to and fro, and to toss their branches, and in weird whispers seemed to express their dread of the coming wrath of the tempest. The thunder that, like a voice of doleful warning, had told us of the approaching conflict of the elements, now rolled above our heads, and the vivid flashes of lightning followed each other in quick succession. The thick branches of the trees were riven apart, disclosing the murky heavens traversed by forked tongues of fire. Terror-stricken, yet with awe, for a moment I contemplated the dread workings of nature, and then tremblingly turning to Zephy, bade her lead me from the wood. To my surprise she stood gazing steadily upward, while an expression of intense pleasure rested upon her face. The mad writhing of the trees; the wild whistling of the wind; the dazzling flashes, and deafening roar of heaven's artillery, appeared to have filled her with a rapture which to me seemed strange and fearful. I besought her to return with me to the camp. At that moment a fiery bolt descending, struck one of the tall, graceful pines that stood at a short distance from us on the opposite side of the stream, and in an instant the lovely tree was shorn of all its beauty and grandeur, presenting only a shivered and darkened trunk, from which every waving bough was riven. With an exclamation of delight at beholding this work of destruction, Zephy clasped her hands and bounded across the brook; but ere the loud crash that succeeded it had ceased, another blinding arrow of flame sped downward, and I knew no more—"



For a few moments Agnes remained silent; but at last, perceiving Hervey was regarding her intently, as if deeply interested in her narrative, with a sigh she resumed.

"There is but little left to tell, and the recollection of Zephy's violent death is so painful to me that I could wish it might never return. When I regained consciousness I found myself lying upon a pile of mats in the tent of Zephy's grand-dame, or Mother Verduraine, as she was called. The old woman was not present; but on one side of the tent, where stood our little bed, was a group of gipsies, and on every dark countenance there was an expression of deep grief. I crept to the bed, and there beheld my bright, my pretty Zephy, the pet, the idol of the gipsies, a stiff and blackened corpse. Mother Verduraine had gone mad, they said; and after-

ward, when I would see the old woman sitting apart, moaning and mumbling to herself, I would try in my childish way to serve and comfort her. All my attempts at consolation, however, were received with indifference, and, though offered in sincerity, they could, I am sure, have been but slight, for I was never entirely able to overcome certain feelings, partaking of fear and aversion, with which I approached any of the tribe. At length Mother Verduraine died, and the box which contained Zephy's dresses and trinkets the chief of the gipsies presented to me, saying I should need them soon, as we were going to 'tramp' to the city. Not long after this we went to Paris; and it was in the Rue du Temple, while with the woman Genifrede, that Sir Reginald first observed me. The loathing entertained by me for the life I then led—the life of a street musician—was equalled only by the joy, the gratitude I experienced on being separated by your noble and benevolent uncle from my vagabond companions. In the Abbey of St. Margaret, and under the guidance of the good lady Abbess and the holy sisterhood, I have passed the last ten years of my life; years of tranquility and quiet happiness, such as can never come to those who mingle with the world. The instructions and wise counsels bestowed upon me, I trust have not been thrown away; indeed, it had been the height of ingratitude to have neglected the duties given me to perform; and could the debt I owe to Sir Reginald Heathwood be in any measure repaid, I should be happy in remembering that by me his slightest injunction has ever been closely observed. Do you not recollect with what disinterested kindness he endeavored to discover my parentage? and though all attempts to learn aught of the original of this picture have proved unavailing, and my life is still involved in mystery, for him who has so greatly befriended me, I must still cherish the deepest feelings of gratitude and reverence."

Agnes finished speaking, and, with a sigh of weariness, involuntarily removed her riding-hat.

"Forgive me," said Hervey, quickly, "for having been thus selfishly unmindful of your comfort." He arose, and throwing his cloak over the couch on which Agnes was seated, begged she would try to take some repose. Something of the awe with which Agnes had entered the ruin was perceivable in the glance which she threw around the hall before yielding to Hervey's entreaties; but when wrapped in the broad folds of his cloak, with her face shaded by its wide cape, she forgot to listen to the hooting night birds; and her



closed eyes no longer beholding the spectral shadows on the wall, her mind grew calm, and then—

"As one
Who drifts out seaward, sees the dim shore
Receding slow, hears the voice of waves
Call to him fainter—"

All at last grew vague, and so she fell into a deep, yet tranquil slumber.

## CHAPTER III.

"Methinks before the issue of our fate,
A spirit moves within us, and impels
The passion of a prophet to our lips."

"Stand! or I fire!!" These startling words were addressed by Hervey to a dark figure that had suddenly appeared at an entrance on the right of the hall, and toward whom he had quickly directed the point of a pistol. A low and rather contemptuous laugh was the only reply he received, and the figure, which appeared to be that of a tall and well-proportioned man, advanced into the apartment.

"Young man, put by thy weapon," said the intruder, calmly. "What! wilt thou fire upon a peaceful traveler, who but seeks a shelter which is apparently as much his as thine?"

Hervey, who in the short space of time that had intervened, had closely scrutinized the stranger, instantly put up his pistol, and replied:

"I was too hasty, and beg you will receive an apology for my abruptness."

The stranger answered only by a bow, and approached the fire. The guide, who had long been slumbering heavily, was now sitting up against the wall, and staring wildly about him; while Benton, who on the first appearance of the unknown, had seized a large club of wood, no doubt with hostile intentions, now that he observed his master's returning tranquility, let it slip gently from his hand to the floor.

"A stormy night," amicably remarked Hervey to the stranger, who was quietly removing his hat and cloak.

The unknown assented, and hanging his dripping garments upon

the stag's antlers that branched from the wall, drew a seat to the fire. He was soon engaged in conversation with Hervey; and having learned the latter's destination, he replied, in answer to Hervey's inquiry as to his intended route, that he had spent many years abroad; and now, having returned to his native Britain, he had wished to revisit that portion of the country in which he then was, but for what reason he scarce knew.

The frank and earnest manner of Hervey seemed to win upon the stranger, and by degrees the reserve, which seemed habitual to him, melted away;

"For, though he hated not his fellow-men,
Yet from their close companionship he shrank."

Still his converse with the young heir of Heathwood (for such was Hervey) was easy and familiar; and though in his tone there was an occasional sadness, and in his manner there was something which left the impression that he had suffered from a deep and lasting affliction, he seemed to enter freely into descriptions of the scenes of his early life, and to engage readily in a discussion upon the political subjects of the day. Hervey was filled with admiration of the stranger's powers of conversation, and the elegance of his manner, and inwardly confessed that he had never met with so charming a companion. As the night wore away Lyndhurst (for by this name the unknown introduced himself) began to appear more desirous of entertaining his auditor; and when the latter gave evidence of weariness, he roused him to new animation by the exceeding eloquence of his discourse, which now excelled in arguments of amazing force and clearness, and now sparkled in narratives of strange and exciting adventures. Hervey's eyes flashed, and his intelligent face expressed the deep interest with which the stranger's words inspired him—when, suddenly—in the midst of a relation brilliant with shining scenes and incidents—Lyndhurst paused, as if struck by some painful and appalling recollection—the benignant expression of his bold and handsome features changed to one of anguish; his dark brows contracted, and, raising his clenched hand above his head, with a muttered exclamation, he sprang into the middle of the apartment, and began pacing the floor with rapid and unequal steps. Hervey watched the singular being with an astonishment not unmixed with awe; and at last saw him throw himself into his seat, as if exhausted by his emotions.

"Young man," said Lyndhurst, and his voice was deep and husky,



"you see before you one whose manhood was blasted, whose happiness destroyed, whose very existence poisoned, through the hatred and malevolence of another."

A heavy sigh checked his utterance, and he remained silent for several moments, then the cloud of stormy passions which had come over his countenance passed away, leaving it calm and gentle, and beaming with a holy tenderness.

"I was unworthy one so good, so lovely, and so beautiful," he said softly. "Oh! she was fair!—too fair for earth! But to perish by the hand of violence!—to be torn from me in a moment, and by so terrible a fatality!—this was too much!—too much!" and Lyndhurst beat his brow with his clenched hand. "Oh!" he continued, in the most agonizing tone of voice, while the gloomy rage which writhed his features subsided, "Oh! that I might behold thy angelic face once more! That I might once again clasp thy loved form to my aching heart. For this I would endure an age of misery! Alas! this raving avails not! Yet the thought that thou art gone for ever distracts me—to know that the bright beaming of thine eyes is quenched in death!—that I may never more behold thy loving glance!—may never hear the music of thy voice, nor feel thy gentle touch upon my brow! Oh! this is madness!" and Lyndhurst clasped his hands with the frenzy of despair. At length he became calmer, and rising walked slowly to the window. The storm was over, and the moon was shedding her peaceful light upon the wild and picturesque landscape stretched out before him. Again his form shook with the stormy emotions that agitated his soul; but by a powerful effort he controlled them, and, turning from the window, as though the objects without too deeply harrowed up his memory, he returned to the rude chair which he had left.

"Mr. Montiver," he said, and his voice betrayed the conflict that had been passing in his heart, "in me you behold the owner of Isley's Grange—and the remembrance of the terrible scene"—he stopped abruptly—

"I am aware, my Lord of Lyndhurst," said Hervey, with a profound inclination, "that there is a deep mystery connected with this domain, which for years has been the subject of strange rumors, and the meeting with its master here to-night I shall ever consider as an incident not a little remarkable."

"Listen to the tale which I can tell of this decaying mansion and its unhappy possessor," said Lyndhurst, and commenced as follows:

"Blessed with youth, with health, a princely fortune, and a wife so good, so beautiful, that all in knowing loved her, you will believe the Lord of Lyndhurst happy; and he was. Yes," he continued, "in spite of the gloomy forebodings that so often came over me, chilling my heart, and dulling the energies of my brain, I was happy; for *her* presence cheered me, and her soothing influence chased away these odious presages as the morning sun dispels the mists of the valley. From my childhood I had been the object of the jealousy and resentment of my only brother, Geoffrey Lyndhurst. He was the younger son, and by the right of eldership, on the death of my father I succeeded to the estates, Geoffrey receiving merely a legacy of ten thousand pounds. He had expected more, and directly after the reading of the will he sought a private interview, and sullenly demanded of me to double the amount he had received. I complied, and on the day of possession gave him the necessary papers, which he received without thanks, and left me with a lowering brow. Three years passed. During this time rumors of his extravagance and dissipation often reached me; but there had been too little love between us for these reports to cause me more than a passing uneasiness. If thrown into difficulties or danger he solicited no help from me, and no direct intelligence from him ever came till this letter."

Lyndhurst handed a folded paper to Hervey, who perused it by the flickering light of the fire. Its contents were these:

"Have you not enough? Does not the entire possession of my father's broad lands satisfy you, that you must crave more happiness? By what right do you exclusively enjoy all the good that fortune can bestow, while I, consigned to a younger brother's portion, must be restricted, buffeted, and repulsed? Oh! but thou art good, my saintly *brother!*—art principled! brave! generous! Maledictions on you! I hate, I despise you! and I say you shall *never* enjoy the possession of that you now seek. Listen! Not content with usurping what should be mine, you would rob me of the hand of the only woman I have ever loved! But beware! So sure as she accepts—so sure as you wed with the Lady Annabel, as certainly shall ye both feel the deadly vengeance of—Geoffrey Lyndhurst."

"Soon after the reception of this," continued Lyndhurst, "I married Lady Annabel Raymond, and removed from Lyndhurst Castle to Isley's Grange, which I had previously purchased. Then followed a year of happiness the most tranquil—the most profound—



such as I can never hope again to enjoy. The Lady Annabel possessed a strength, an energy of character, which seemed at variance with her slender figure and gentle face. But words would fail me were I to attempt to portray one half the noble qualities that adorned her mind, or the beauty and grace which endeared her to every heart. She was all virtue—all loveliness—and my affection for her was such that I was happy only in her presence. Days, months flew by in uninterrupted happiness, and when at last a sweet babe was laid within her arms, I believed my cup of joy filled to the brim, and trembled lest it should be dashed from my lips. Ay! my fond heart foreboded that these, the objects of my tenderest solicitude, must ultimately be wrested from me. Still, when the rose again bloomed on my Annabel's cheek, and the fire of intelligence sparkled in the eyes, and the glow of health reddened the lips of our darling child, my fears gradually subsided.

"It was at the close of a mild sunny day in the autumn of 17—, and soon after our return from hawking with a party of guests that had assembled at the Grange, that I entered my wife's apartment, and found her standing by an open window, which led out upon the terrace; her face, partly turned from me, was pale and agitated, and her gaze seemed riveted upon an inanimate object lying at her feet, over which she was slightly bending. I approached, and to my surprise beheld a beautiful King Charles' spaniel, of which my wife was particularly fond, but which that day, from some slight cause, had not been permitted to accompany us, stretched in death, and lying in his gore. I raised him; every particle of life was extinct; he was cold, and had apparently been dead some hours, for his eyes were thickly glazed, and his black silken hair was entangled and clotted with the blood that had ceased to flow from a ghastly wound in his side—a wound which had been given by a steady and practiced hand, and one that had instantly penetrated his vitals. The astonishment which the servants manifested when summoned, convinced me they could have no knowledge concerning the perpetrator of the deed; and after all traces of the occurrence, as far as possible, had been removed, I endeavored to drive away the dismal thoughts it had engendered.

"'Come, Edward,' said my wife, who had for some time been busy with her toilet, 'do not let the fate of poor Feather trouble thee The loss is mine, and see how well I bear it;' and she playfully tapped my arm, and bade me re-adjust my dress, and join the guests

in the hall. But the vague suspicions that tortured my mind could not be so easily displaced, and the evening was passed by me in gloom and anxiety. Sitting apart, silent and dejected, I scarcely noted the passing hours, nor heeded what was going on around me, when all at once I was aroused by an exclamation, and the following words: 'What has happened to the picture of Lady Lyndhurst?'

"I sprang forward with a terrible foreboding busy at my heart; a group had collected in front of my wife's portrait, which was suspended between the south-oriel windows. I thrust them aside, and gazed earnestly at the picture. It was pierced in several places; my eager eyes examined every gash; here, this one in the center is larger than the rest; the others are triangular, and their edges are deeply stained with a red-hued liquid; but this one is round, as though the instrument by which it had been made had been writhed by a fierce, vindictive hand. My eyes fell to the floor; directly beneath the portrait, and glowing in the light which fell upon it, lay a poniard, and seizing it I recognized the dagger of Geoffrey Lyndhurst. 'Fiend!' I muttered, 'would'st thou wreak thy despicable vengeance on a paltry picture—on a miserable brute!' Regardless of my guests I paced the floor a prey to the most bitter contemplation, still holding the naked weapon in my hand. A loud, shrill cry, the cry of a woman in terror and distress, smote upon my ear. 'My wife! my Annabel!' I cried. She was not present; and with the swiftness of despair I flew to her chamber. With one blow I burst open the door, and found her struggling in the grasp of—my brother! Like an enraged tiger I bounded forward. Firmly clutching the gleaming dagger, I poised it above his head—it descended—Oh! God! I had plunged it into the bosom of my wife! Geoffrey laughed—a laugh so diabolical my blood ran cold to hear it—and shivering, I knelt by the side of my dying Annabel. Slowly the life-drops trickled down and quenched the fire that quivered in the jewels of her vest. Her golden hair covered my arm like a flood of light. Oh! how I loved each shining tress! Her eyes so blue, so tender, for a moment unclosed, and her sweet lips moved faintly. I bowed my head. 'Edward, my beloved,' she murmured, 'cherish our dear babe—for my sake.—And—kiss me—dearest!' One look of love—one short spasm—and all was over. Oh, the desolation of my heart! Oh, the anguish, the misery that racked my soul when I felt that her pure spirit had for ever forsaken its frail, yet beauteous tenement! that the form I held was but dust, and must perish from my sight! And he! the guilty cause of this! Where was he! He had fled! Again my blood boiled—my brain whirled—and I rushed madly forth to seek him. The sound of receding hoofs reached my ear—I shouted, and franticly waved my sword above my head, but the echoes alone answered my cries; and at last, as the overwhelming knowledge of my bereavement again came upon me, I sank down insensible. For days I raved incessantly; at times calling despairingly upon the name of my beloved, and then pausing, to break into the most wrathful invective against the one who had wrought her destruction, till, wearied by my efforts, I would fall back in a state of



complete exhaustion—my violent words sank into incoherent ramblings—and sleep, the soother of all ills, came to my relief.

"I recovered, but the face of nature seemed changed. Earth for me had lost her brightness. The sun's warm rays penetrated all things, yet failed to dispel the shadows that enveloped my chilled and lonely heart. I shunned my fellow-beings; the sight of their enjoyment was odious to me—the sounds of mirth jarred dissonantly on my ear. Such is the selfishness of grief."

## CHAPTER IV.

"And years had passed, and thus they met again."

"With my young child," continued Lyndhurst, "I left my native land for ever—as I then thought—and wandered hither and thither, without aim or object. Thus three years passed, and I wearied of my roving life, yet dreaded quiet—still, for the benefit of my child I began to think of rest, and, proceeding to Lombardy, I lingered awhile in one of its splendid cities, and then sought to stay my wanderings in one of the peaceful mountain hamlets found in that picturesque and fertile region. It was a charming spot! The village of Argua—so rich in its sublime and varied scenery!—so blessed in its benign atmosphere and salubrious climate! And interesting, too, as the last residence of Petrarch, and hallowed as the spot where lies the dust of the illustrious poet. Still, with the restlessness of sorrow, I could not long remain even in this delightful place; and, recrossing the Appenines, I journeyed onward, till, reaching a beautiful retreat on the Lago Maggiore, I again paused; yet the following autumn found me at the sea coast, in a marine villa, at a short distance only from where the beautiful Arno mingles its waves with the bright waters of the Mediterranean.

"Here my mind began to assume a slight degree of composure, and my fondness for the prattling innocent dependent on me for care and tenderness, seemed daily to increase. Alas! as the tide of paternal affection swelled in my breast, and hope again cast a gleam of light upon my dark despondency, fears for the safety of my heart's only remaining treasure scarce permitted me to lose sight of it for a moment. As a miser guards his gold, so did I watch over my darling child, and so anxiously solicitous was I to preserve it from every danger, that it had nearly fallen a sacrifice to my too great tenderness before I discovered my error. Forgetting my incapacity to ward off the insidious attacks of disease, I had too closely shut out from my little one the warm sun-light and the health-giving airs of heaven, and too carefully restrained the little limbs that had scarce known a moment's inactivity. And when illness came, so great was my alarm and distress, that I had surely run into the opposite extreme, had not its nurse, whose place since our residence in V—— I had nearly usurped, asserted her rights, and retaken the child under her more judicious care. From this time I contented myself with

the knowledge that it was in health, and receiving every thing necessary to promote its infantine happiness, though, as before, my boding heart felt always a pang at its absence. Yet with all my doating fondness for the little being that had just begun to lisp the name of father, in my deep fits of abstraction I would nearly forget its existence; and almost feared to take it in my arms, lest in my mental wanderings I should bear the treasured burden less carefully.

"Thus, by degrees, it became less accustomed to me—its parent; and with the wretchedness of jealousy, I perceived it was scared by my abruptness, and that its little gambols and childish prattle were ever checked with awe on my approach. So weeks glided on, till one day I was summoned by urgent business away from the villa. It was with the greatest reluctance I departed, and not till I had again and again returned to the couch whereon lay my darling, to take one last fond look and to reassure myself that the slight indisposition with which it was that morning affected, was nothing serious. Then to charge the nurse to be unremitting in her care, and to admit no stranger into the house; and also to keep Hero, my faithful St. Bernard, ever near my child. Mounting my horse, I sped away with a heavy heart, inwardly determined to return as soon as it was within my power.

"It was late at night when I again reached the cottage. A group of persons had gathered beneath the porch. Lights were flitting to and fro, and the sound of confused voices and hurried footsteps conspired to fill my mind with the most intense alarm. The crowd before the door immediately separated, to enable me to pass; and rushing into the house, I looked eagerly around for my child. Its little bed was unoccupied, and the disordered drapery about it bespoke a hasty removal. Upon the floor, and weltering in his blood, was my dog; which, on recognizing me, dragged himself to where I stood, and licking my feet, seemed to crave the attention my mind was too distracted to bestow. The nurse was walking up and down, wringing her hands and weeping aloud, and to my agonized inquiries I could learn nothing further than that a short time before my return, the servants had been aroused by the loud barking of the dog, which was followed by a struggle; and that on proceeding to the room whence issued the sounds, the door flew open and a man in a large cloak and slouched hat rushed past them; and before he could be arrested, had left the house and was seen to mount a powerful black horse and ride rapidly away. It was then found that the dog had been stabbed and my child abducted. Without a moment's delay I proceeded to adopt every possible measure that could be thought of, and to put in practice every scheme how wild soever that presented itself, for the recovery of my lost one; but morning came and found me still anxiously awaiting the moment that should restore her to my arms.

"It is useless to speak of the days, the months of torturing suspense that followed, or of the years spent by me in a search the most diligent—the most painful that can be conceived. All my efforts have proved unavailing, and still with the deepest sorrow do I mourn my loss."



Lyndhurst was silent for some time, apparently indulging his melancholy reflections. At length he resumed.

"Chance drew me to Constantinople. Experiencing no desire to witness its magnificence, I shunned those districts remarkable for their handsome and showy appearance; and leaving the wherry at a quay of the meanest pretensions, sought lodgings in a street that could boast of nothing bright or gay. Day after day, as I threaded the streets of the capital, I failed not to scan with interest each child which met my gaze, still faintly hoping that in its lineaments I might trace some resemblance to my lost darling; and this course, which had begun in the eagerness of expectation, was now continued mainly from habit.

"In one of these rambles I strayed out into the suburbs, and slowly ascending the hill of St. Demetrius, found myself at the entrance of the Greek hospital there. With my usual listlessness I entered; yet not with the same indifference did I behold the misery which surrounded me. Yet even in this disgusting yet really charitable abode there were grades of wretchedness. Drawing near to the most pitiable object I had ever seen, I laid back the filthy coverlet in order to examine his face. It was that of a man apparently not old in years; yet so pallid—so shrunken were the features—so emaciated the form—that it seemed disease had done the work of time. As I pushed back the black hair that lay matted upon his forehead, a slight spasm stirred the frame of the sufferer, and his eyes slowly unclosed. On meeting my gaze a glance of intelligence and recognition shot from them, and in an instant I became conscious—the wretched being before me was my brother!

"'You know me,' he faintly articulated. 'It is Geoffrey,' I replied. He again essayed to speak; but failing, I raised him that he might breathe easier, when he whispered me to send for a confessor. His wish being complied with, he seemed relieved; and pressing my hand, murmured his thanks and prayed my forgiveness for the wrong he had done. He was deeply penitent and I forgave him, when suddenly remembering my child I eagerly inquired if he could tell me aught of her. His countenance was rapidly changing, and he seemed conscious of the approach of death. Yet he strove to put back the moment of his dissolution; and in tones of humiliation and remorse, told me how that in learning my great affection for my child, he had determined to separate it from me; how he had watched the cottage and seen me leave the villa; and how he had carried my darling with him to France and placed her among the gipsies! He could tell me no more and I left him alone with the holy man who had arrived. My brother was dead when the priest retired; and after seeing that the last sacred duties for him were performed, I left the metropolis.

"Again my search was renewed with vigor, yet with no better success than before. My daughter, if she yet lives, must be eighteen years of age. Still, the hope of ever discovering her is nearly extinguished. Indeed, should fate restore her to me, at this time, perhaps I could not esteem it a blessing had she been reared among gipsies."

As Lyndhurst finished speaking he arose, and walking to the case-

ment, looked forth at the eastern sky, which the dawn was coloring with gorgeous hues. Then leaving the hall, he proceeded to an outbuilding where his steed had passed the night, and began making preparations to recommence his journey.

Agnes, whose slumbers had been uninterrupted, awoke refreshed, and observing Hervey deeply engaged in thought, she quietly left her place of repose and busied herself in arranging her attire. Occasionally she paused to look at him, and marveled much at his abstraction. At length he raised his head, and perceiving her, said, abruptly:

"Is it with you?—the miniature?"

"Here it is," she replied with some astonishment, as she placed the locket in his hand. For a moment Hervey looked fixedly at the picture and then said, with vehemence:

"Yes; it is he!"

Agnes would have inquired the cause of his unusual emotion, but at that instant her attention was arrested by the sound of approaching footsteps, and turning her head, she beheld a stranger advancing toward her. It was Lyndhurst, who had come to take leave of Hervey before going on his way. As his glance met that of Agnes, he stopped suddenly—his countenance assumed the hue of death—his dark eyes seemed starting from their sockets—and stretching out his arms, he muttered the words "my wife," and fell senseless to the floor. It was long before he was restored to consciousness—and not till Hervey had convinced the weeping Agnes of the relationship which he believed to exist between the stranger and herself.

Bending over him, with his hand pressed to her bosom, she besought him to return to life and to look once more upon his child; and as his bewildered mind slowly comprehended her endearing words, his eyes lighted up with the beams of paternal affection; and clasping her to his deeply-stricken heart, he called down blessings upon her head, and thanked that gracious Being who had at last given back to him his long-lost daughter.

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The broad glare of day was over all the earth, when the travelers resumed their journey; yet before midday they had reached the village in which it had been Hervey's intention to have passed the night; and after partaking of some slight refreshment and rest, they again went forward.

At length they arrived at Heathwood, the place of their destination, and Sir Reginald embraced his wards, and learned with amazement the events that had transpired; and that Lord Lyndhurst, the tall, dignified stranger, who stood by the side of Agnes, was no other than her father.