



THE
ORANGE GIRL OF VENICE;

OR,

THE SECRET COUNCIL OF TEN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE SWAMP STEED; OR, MARION AND HIS MERRY MEN"
ETC., ETC.

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ORANGE GIRL OF VENICE.



CHAPTER I.

THE STUDENT.

IN a low vaulted chamber, in the upper story of an humble building, situated in a disreputable section of the far-famed queen of the Adriatic, sat a youth of some three and twenty years. A low, broad, cross-legged table was before him, on which, in careless disorder, some ten or twenty volumes, bound in parchment, and ornamented with metal clasps, were scattered. Sheets of unstained parchment, lay here and there, while directly before him was a sheet half filled with annotations, dates, &c., apparently for reference. A saucer of brass, containing a dark liquid, rested within a few inches of the dotted parchment, while a long gray quill, cut at the tip, and stained with writing fluid, lay on the edge of the table, as if just put down. The youth leaned backward in his low-seated but high-backed chair, his right hand supporting his pale, high brow, while his left hung listlessly over the cross-piece of his chair. The features of the youth were more of the feminine than of the masculine cast, the forehead being high and pale, the eye dark, lustrous, yet soft and melting, the cheek pale, the eyebrow arching, the

nose small, and with but a slight show of nostrils; the lip slight; and the chin small, but pointed. He wore a small, silky mustache, and a slight, pointed tuft adorned his chin. His hair was dark and redundant, and fell in long, wavy curls over his narrow shoulders. He wore a tunic of ordinary gray cloth, square at the neck, and bordered with dark velvet. His pantaloons, fitting tightly to the skin, were of a blue color, but somewhat faded by constant use. His shoes were of a russet hue, and ornamented with rosettes of the same color.

The apartment was small, containing one window only, through which the moonlight entered, and fell upon a low, rude couch in a corner, which gave evidence of the lateness of the hour when its master rose. Hanging on a peg, over the couch, was a cross-hilted sword, sheathed in a scabbard of bright yellow metal, while a belt of dark velvet hung down its side. A slouched cap of gray stuff, with a full, jetty plume, hung against the wall, a short distance from the sword, while a mantle of dark cloth rested beside it. The rest of the apartment was chillingly bare.

The student appeared rapt in meditation, his eye falling vacantly upon the parchment before him. A small three-cornered lamp burnt dimly beside the saucer, gave to his countenance the appearance of one overworked with midnight toil.

A knock at his chamber door roused him from thought, and, in a deep, stern voice, as he turned slightly round in his chair, he bade the knocker enter.

The door opened, and a tall, majestic personage, enveloped in a mantle of dark and glossy velvet, of the finest texture, entered the apartment. A slouched cap, of the same material as his mantle, surmounted by a cluster of raven plumes, adorned his head. He wore mustachios, and his bold chin was hid beneath a thick, jetty beard. His eyes were large, black and piercing as an eagle's; his forehead was high and massive, and there was an expression of sternness and resolution about his broad nostrils and firm upper lip, calculated to strike a beholder with awe.

On perceiving the garb and rank of his visitor, the student sprang hastily from his seat and offered it to the stranger. The latter took it in silence, and motioned the student to be also seated.

'Thou art called Calvari, the scribe, art thou not?' said the stranger.

'I am, my lord,' replied the student, bowing in surprise.

'Thou dealest in ancient and modern lore, dost thou not?'

'A little, my lord.'

'Canst translate me this?' said the stranger, drawing from his girdle a letter, and handing it to the student.

'I will try, my lord,' replied the student,

advancing toward the lamp and opening the parchment.

The face of the student grew pale, as he glanced at the characters traced on the page.

'Thy cheek blanches,' observed the stranger, resting his sharp eye upon the student.

'Doth it, my lord?' said the student, faintly.

'Aye, it doth. The meaning of't?'

'Take back the parchment, my lord,' said the student, with increased agitation, 'I—I—dare not translate its language!'

'Dare not!' exclaimed the other, ironically. 'What fearest thou?'

'Death!' answered the student, holding the parchment towards the stranger.

'Ha! is it so?' cried the latter, starting up, and seizing the document. 'Lies the wind that way?' he added in irony, glancing with a curled lip and contemptuous eye at the pale student. 'Go to, I took thee for a man!'

'I am no coward, my lord,' answered the student, in a deep, and half reproachful tone, 'but I will not rashly throw away life. The contents of that document are not for my eyes: to read it were sealing my own doom.'

'Wherefore?'

'Tis signed by the "Ten,"' was the reply.

'By the "Ten!"'

'As I do live, my lord, 'tis true.'

'Well?'

'The usual warning, my lord, is given in the first part of it: "Whoever dares to read this document, save he to whom it is directed, shall be visited by the vengeance of the "Ten."'

'Ha! is it so?' exclaimed the stranger in a deep voice, 'is it so? Then it is a sentence! No matter—I must know its contents. Look you sir,' he continued, 'I'll give thee choice of gold or instant death to resolve me the tenor of this parchment.' Saying which, the stranger flung the letter and a purse upon the table, and drawing a dagger from beneath his cloak, he pointed the student to the table.

Calvari remained motionless.

'Wilt thou obey, or perish?' demanded the stranger, in a voice that made the chamber echo.

'Perish!' answered the student, boldly.

The noble looked at him with apparent astonishment, then sheathing his dagger, he advanced toward the student, and in a voice in ill accordance with his words, exclaimed—'Fool! thou art only fit to mingle with the herd that so cravenly fear the "Ten." Thou hast a form and face that belie thy soul. I took thee for a man; one who had suffered, still suffers, and had heart enough to dare a struggle for his freedom. But I mistook thee—thou art a worm! The "Ten" will rule ever thee if sunlight and a dark-

ness—at all times, in all places—thou art only fit to be a slave! Fear not me; I would not stain my blade with blood like thine. But, sir, a word with thee: If thou would'st henceforth revel in gold, go thou to-morrow to St. Mark's; seek the house of Count Foscari, and tell him, all potent as he is, there is another man in Venice,—one Count De Galliano,—who will overthrow him and the "Ten." Tell him this, and tell him too, that a plot is now afoot, to drive all tyrants from the soil of Venice, and that Count Galliano is at its head. Tell him, too, that we meet to-morrow night, in the vault of St. Mark's, and that our watchword is—'The Orange Girl of Venice!'

The student uttered a cry of recognition, and fell on his knees before the stranger.

CHAPTER II.

THE GONDOLIER.

On the day following the incidents in the preceding chapter, a nobleman approached a group of gondoliers, who were rattling dice, on a little round table, in front of a low hostel, which stood in a long, broad street leading from the grand square of St. Mark's, and fronting the sea. Small heaps of copper coin lay here and there upon the table; and it was evident, from the excited features of the players (that the stakes, to them, were of an unusually large amount. One face alone of the party evinced but little symptoms of excitement, although, to the deep observer, there was more meaning, more real language, to be detected in his passionless features than in those of his more frothy, and more talkative companions. His eyes were large, dark, lustrous and full; his forehead high, his hair thrown back, and falling in careless disorder adown his swarthy, sunburnt neck; his nose was Roman in its shape, with the nostrils wide and heavy, denoting the deep, fearless, and violent nature of their owner; his chin was bold, pointed, and covered with a heavy tuft of black and glossy hair; a heavy mustache covered his firm, upper lip, and his thick, bull-like throat was exposed to the effects of the sun and atmosphere from the shoulders upward. He wore a loose, red shirt, with a broad, rumpled collar; the sleeves rolled up to the elbow, revealing a pair of stout, muscular, sunburnt arms, which seemed to bid defiance to the best stalwart compeer in the struggle for gondolier or wrestling fame. Yellow shoes, blue trousers, fitting tightly to the skin, a rough, short, canvass frock, just reaching to the knees, and a leathern belt, with an enormous steel buckle in the front, completed the gondolier's attire. His height was slightly above the common, and his figure, as he half stood by, and half sat on, the edge of the

rude table, displayed a suppleness and muscularity of limb not often found among the every day tenants of this habitable house, the world. The garb of his companions was similar to that of the bold gondolier, with the exception that, in general, his habiliments seemed tidier and cleaner than theirs.

The master of the inn stood at the door, smoking his long, reed-like pipe, apparently with great satisfaction. Ever and anon, he cast his eyes furtively upon the gamesters, as if watching the progress of their games; and, at each result of the 'last throw,' a sickly, sarcastic smile would play around his mouth, revealing a set of teeth which seemed made to contrast, in their whiteness, with his dark and swarthy complexion. Judging him by his appearance, he could not have been far from five-and-forty years of age. He wore an apron, of coarse, dirty muslin, and looked every inch the landlord of 'the inn of St. Mary's.' A stout, ill-favored knave he seemed, and though, while smoking, he paid, apparently, but little attention to the oaths and other exclamations of triumph or disappointment of those at the table, still a keen observer could easily have seen that not a word escaped his ear, or a gesture of the gondoliers his eye.

As the noble approached, two or three of the gamesters threw down their dice, and, running towards him, proffered their services to row him out into the Lagoon, 'if it was the noble Signior's pleasure.'

Passing them by unnoticed, the noble motioned the stout gondolier already described, to jump into his boat. The latter, with a respectful silence, sprang into his gondola, which lay moored beside a small flight of landing stairs, directly in front of the hostel. The noble followed slowly, and took his seat in the stern with a dignity which impressed the group on shore with an awe they could scarcely banish, even when the fleet bark had rounded the quay.

'Lie to,' said the noble, when the boat had reached the centre of the Lagoon. 'Dost know me?'

'I knew thee at the first,' replied the gondolier, resting on his oars.

'How speeds the cause?' demanded the noble, in a low voice.

'Bravely, my lord: the innkeeper, Marco, hath a daring and patriotic heart. He hath gold, too, and will loan it to the cause, without interest.'

'Good! and the rest?'

'They wear their dirks in their bosoms, 'twixt their flesh and shirts. Three hundred of them, as brave hearts as ever pulled oar or wielded knife, are ready to march at word of mine. When do we strike?'

'That will be determined to-night. I think 'twill be on Carnival night: though I speak without authority. The number of men we can surely count on?'

'Three hundred.'

'And all determined?'

'Every one, my lord.'

'Speak lower, and title me not,' said the noble, leaning forward in his seat. 'Since I have been travelling for assistance to our cause, I have learned that water and air have listening ears and tell-tale tongues, as well as dungeon or cavern walls. Why, man, the elements around us are witnesses to our speech; and strange things are told of how the "Ten" have made even the waters, aye, and the floating atmosphere creatures of their will. Therefore, lest our voices betray us, speak thou in whispers: the Lagoon, though broad and deep, hath, ere now, been the doom of many a votary of its bosom. Remember the fate of De Gama, and title me not.—The "Ten" are every where.'

'Were it not better I should row about?' said the gondolier, in a low tone. 'If we should be watched from the shore, by any of the spirits of the Tribunal—'

'Right,' replied the noble, 'row on—but guide her farther from the shore.'

'What success from abroad?' inquired the gondolier, slowly pulling outward.

'None,' responded the other; 'we must depend upon ourselves. Physical help is hopeless; although, in one shape, it is certain. I have raised twelve thousand ducats, in sound yellow coin, from certain citizens in Rome, Verona and Cyprus, which now lies in a corner of the vault of St. Mark's: it will be shown to-night, at our meeting.'

'Gold may do much,' observed the gondolier, meaningly.

'It will rouse the hearts of the desponding, if any be among us, when convened,' said the noble, quickly; 'for, to the vulgar mind, there is a power, yea, an eloquence, irresistible in a sack of shining dross. But be that as it may, we have a doom even for the weak-hearted.'

'Aye—the cord and knife!' observed the gondolier, with a slight curl of the lip. 'Pah! 'tis too like the "Ten."'

'Can they be dispensed with?' demanded the noble, quickly.

'They can,' replied the gondolier, impetuously.

'How?' said the noble, earnestly.

'By depending on the honor of all who choose not to proceed,' responded the gondolier.

'Psha! you know not men!' exclaimed the noble, hastily. 'When men league themselves together for a mighty work, there must be a fear held out to bind them to be true. Else doubts and fears as to the success of the enterprise, would be the fore-runners only to desertions and betrayal. Men are not all true, all brave; and the weak nerved must be held in check, must be kept true, by the known brave, and the known true, beside them: which latter failing, there must be a doom for apostates, which they

must fear, to keep them true. For great ends, we must not scruple to employ small means. And what end, what enterprise more glorious, than the freeing of one's country from a horde of villains that make all fear! They scruple not to shed our blood, they scruple not to tear away from life, on most trivial and uncertain causes, too, those they deem dangerous to themselves or to their power—and should we risk our lives, the lives of all united with us, by sparing one, who, knowing all our secrets, would depart on dastardly excuse, and peril the safety of us all? No; once colleague'd, we must not risk our enterprise and lives at the soft voice of mercy. We aim for freedom and for life—perpetual freedom, and life's life—not for one, but all—high and low, the wealthy and the low born: and such an aim were rashly endangered, to spare a craven's life, for sake of mercy.'

'I fear not betrayal,' observed the gondolier, proudly.

'Nor I,' replied the noble, 'while we have a doom for traitors. But, enough of this. I called, last night, on our spy, in the eastern section. Wouldst believe it—he knew me not!'

'Ha, not know thee!' exclaimed the gondolier, leaning forward on his oars. 'Has he turned traitor?'

'In good faith! not he,' replied the noble. 'It was my beard and face and dress he knew not.'

'By St. Mark! I feared something else!' said the gondolier, half smiling. 'What number reports he ready for the trial-hour?'

'Four hundred and twelve,' answered the noble. 'Their names are registered on parchment. In truth, that same student is a brave worker: his parchments contain the names of every member of our order, in characters as plain and bold as ever came from the hand of man. Our constitution and our laws, our rewards and penalties—the progress of our order, and its history—the causes of our existence—the wrongs we have suffered, the injuries forborne—in fine, our order's whole history,—are traced in characters of truth, upon his parchments. His daily journal keeps he: of the proselytes made, wrongs suffered, the day and hour of the deed, and the names of the wronged and the wrongers. A terrible history of life lies in those parchments; a terrible history of blood, lust, murder and oppression, which cries aloud to heaven for vengeance.'

'And it will come, ere long!' exclaimed the gondolier, with a savage smile.

'Aye, it will,' cried the noble, in a deep tone, though without stirring a hair, '—it will—aye, it shall!—and when it does, wo, wo to the doers of dark deeds! wo to the Tribunal! wo to the "Ten"!''

'Amen! with all my heart!' exclaimed the gondolier, slowly pulling his oars.

'Now, to what I would tell thee,' added

the noble, leaning forward a little, and resting his elbow on the rim of the boat. 'The old count of Romagna has been missing these three days: and his motherless daughter, the lady Isabel, is all but mad in consequence. The count's friends speak of his absence with a pallid cheek and a faltering tongue. 'Tis evident that they suspect, and yet—the cravens!—they dare not give utterance, with their tongues, to that which is seen so plainly in their eyes!'

'Hast thou no suspicion of his fate?' said the gondolier, earnestly.

'I have,' replied the noble, drawing a small roll of parchment from his belt. 'The lady Isabel herself did, but yesterday, put into my hands this note, traced in characters recognisable only by those familiar with the hand writing of the President of the infernal Tribunal. Listen: it runneth thus—'

'This day, Friday the 9th, 4 of the dial. 'Thomaso Romagna, we summon thee to appear before us within the hour.'

(Signed) "THE TEN."

The gondolier turned pale.

'Thou seest the necessity of action,' said the noble, on perceiving the change in the countenance of his companion. 'Thou seest the manner in which we live—we, the rightful inheritors of our beloved Venice—we, the strong armed and lion-hearted—we, the descendants of the fathers of the Adriatic's chosen isle—we, the favored and the gifted of nature and of God! Shall we endure it, shall we suffer these upstarts of power to trample upon the God-chartered rights of Venetians, and crush us at their will? Shall we live on, in base and abject fear—shall we crawl, like worms, before these soulless, heart-spotted lepers, till or Nature, Accident or Tyranny, tears us from such mind and body vassalage? Shall we endure to have the bravest and purest blood amongst us rifled from our midst, and not raise a hand to smite the murderers? Forbid it, God of my fathers! while there yet exists a son of Venice wise enough to detect, and brave enough to strike at, Villainy and her myrmidons!'

The gondolier pulled his oars lustily, fearing that the excited gestures and bold, loud voice of his companion would be heard by those on shore.

'Think'st thou he is dead?' asked the gondolier, striving to turn the excitement of the noble back to its former cautious current.

'Think he is dead?' exclaimed the Count, in a lower tone. 'If I thought so, if I thought there existed the slightest shadow of a hope that the old man was yet alive, all Venice should ring with the war-cry of Galliano! Think he is dead! the summons of the victim of the "Ten" is but another word for: "Thou art marked, and doomed—come to thy death!"'

'But the cause?' inquired the gondolier,

pale with terror at the loud voice of his companion, and rowing rapidly farther out from the shore.

'Foscari's son!'—was the reply; 'Foscari's son,—that insolent, purse-proud dastard,—proposed to the lady Isabel to become his mistress!—Dost hear it, his mistress—she, the daughter of a race of nobles old as Venice self, and whose scutcheon had never known stain!—His mistress! his! aye, the mistress of a mongrel heart that never had courage enough to strike a whining dog! His mistress! Ha! ha! ha! O, that I had been by, to have smote him for the word! He proposed, I say, in dastard speech, to lady Isabel, and was ejected from the lord's house he had insulted. Stung with rage and mortification, he forged a lie, and told it to his father. In an hour, the black messenger of the Tribunal summoned him before the "Ten." He bowed, and seizing his hat and cloak, left the house, in company with the note bearer, without even taking leave of, or bidding adieu to, his daughter. While leaving the room, he dropped the summons, which the lady Isabel picked up. She tried to read it, but the warning sentence was the first that met her eye, and, though she kept, she did not dare to read it. But yesterday, she gave it me—but yesterday, I saw her, like a lily which once had reared its head in towering pride, now bowed to the earth with the shafts of sorrow and despair! She sits now, in her home, a motherless, fatherless girl: with nor friend, nor brother to save her from the importunities and insults of the dastard who robbed her of her father!'

The cheek of the gondolier crimsoned a moment, with rage and scorn; when the blood fell back into its channels again, leaving his features pale as marble.—Dark and terrible were his thoughts; and, though he grasped his oars till the nails almost entered the wood, he spoke not.

The noble felt conscious that he had touched a string in the breast of his companion, which would not soon die away; and, pointing silently to the shore, the gondola was soon back to the spot from which it started.

As many were lounging about the door of the hotel, the noble sprang hastily from the boat, saying, in a low voice, as he passed the gondolier:

'Remember to-night! The vault of St. Mark's!'

CHAPTER III.

THE PRIDE OF VENICE.

It was a night of beauty and of music, in Venice. The vault of heaven seemed like an eternal canopy of darkest velvet, thickly

gemmed with silver, and crowned with a ball of fire. The house-tops, the balconies, the vestibules, the gardens, streets and quays, were thronged with the young and old, of both sexes, drinking the evening ether. The moon-kissed waters were covered with fantastically arrayed gondolas, from which arose the ripe, rich voices of the gay young roysterers and cavaliers in melodious song; while from others, the flute and guitar mingled their music with the floating zephyrs, rendering the whole a fairy scene. It was a night of harvest to those who loved the bright and beautiful; it was a night of harvest to the maidens whose lovers had been coyish in naming the hour for betrothal before high heaven; it was a night of harvest to the aged and infirm: for their pains and rheums were dissipated by the mellowness and liveliness of the air; it was the harvest night of gondoliers and musicians and drink-venders; and it was the harvest night of the sorrowing ones: the beauties of earth, air and sky—their veriest beauties—made their sorrows lighter, their griefs less poignant, their woes less dark, less terrible; it was a night when the grief-stricken could smile without deeming it a sacrilege; it was a night when foes thought kindlier of each other, and were half disposed to forget injuries past, and to look kindly on accidents of the future. Who has not seen such nights in the course of life's travel—but who has ever seen them in such perfection as they are found in Venice in the merry month of June?

On the night described, two young females, evidently of high rank, were walking up and down the gravelled walks of a private and beautifully-fashioned garden, adorned with statues and a small fountain. They were dressed in darkest mourning, and without ornament of any kind. Their hands were linked together as they walked, and their voices were low as doves' when whispering the feelings of their hearts. A wall of some ten feet guarded them from the intrusion and observation of those without; while an old, white-headed servant, who sat on a cushioned bench on the porch of the house, attested at once the fearfulness and chariness of character of the females. The appearance of the elder—for there was evidently a discrepancy in their years—was that of a maiden of about twenty summers. She was slightly above the common height of her sex, and had a full, high and beautifully polished forehead; her nose was Grecian, and the mould of her lips like unto a perfect bow; her chin was slightly pointed, yet dimpled; her eyes large, and black as night; her hair, of which there was a profusion, was black and silky, and was parted tastefully in the centre of her brow, and hung in wavy masses adown her snowy neck. A narrow collar of the whitest and finest lace, hemmed the neck of her dark

velvet frock, and gave to her figure a beauty which could scarcely be idealized by a painter. Her dress fitted tightly to her waist and arms, and her hands were hid by gloves of white kid. The costume of her companion was precisely the same: but though the features and figure of the latter were smaller, less imposing, less striking, less beautiful, still they had in them something more winning, something more pleasing, something more congenial to the humble soul. Her brow was of a moderate height, and its complexion was like that of one accustomed to wander in the sunlight, fearless of the effects of such exposure upon the skin; her lips were small, her eyes moderately large, but full of lustre, full of love, full of gentleness, confidence and kindness. Her chin was bold, but it was a softened boldness; her neck was beautifully shaped and full, but it was of the shape that artists love to draw from, not the neck which creates passion in the sensualist. Her form was perfect in its proportions; but it was one of those forms which strike the eye of the gentle heart, not the proud, the brave, the impassioned. It was a short, delicate form; and one which seemed to tell the looker-on, that it was a spirit-sojourner here, not a human one; that it was a tender plant formed to bloom in the most carefully cultivated and most tenderly watched plots, not in the rough, wind-exposed spots, of God's green garden, Earth.

They were, evidently, not sisters in kin, but it was also evident that they were more than sisters in love. Perhaps Suffering had made them such, perhaps Trial; but whatever the cause, though strangers in blood, they were without question sisters in heart.

The old servant who sat on the porch, kept his eyes upon them with a look of love and affection, which attested his anxiety for their welfare. And when any thing like a smile played around the lips of either, his own heart bounded and his own cheeks were enlivened more cheerily than theirs. It was something worth looking after, we opine, or the old man would not have watched so earnestly for a smile from either of the females.

Whatever the subject of their discourse, it was dissipated by a servant, who entered from the house, stating that a gentleman would see the lady Isabella.

'His name?' demanded the elder of the ladies.

'He'll not reveal it, my lady,' answered the servant.

'His age?' inquired the lady.

'He is turned of sixty, lady,' replied the servant.

'Say I will wait on him,' responded the lady, majestically.

The servant bowed, and withdrew.

'Shall I remain here?' inquired the younger lady.

'Yes, Eugenia,' replied Isabel, with emotion; 'talk to aged Philippo, on the porch yonder; though not an Adonis, he is yet a merry talker; and, in good truth! he can while an hour away as pleasantly as many a younger of his make.'

Though the lady Isabel spoke with an attempt at pleasantry, there was yet a sadness in her tone which touched the heart of her companion, and brought a tear into her eyes.

They kissed each other, and the elder slowly entered the house.

When the lady Isabella entered the reception room, an old man, sitting on a high cushion near the window, and dressed in a gay and flashy suit illy becoming his years, met her eye. A crafty and sinister expression played around his small thin lips, and sharp, ferret-like eyes. He wore a pointed beard, and mustachios, white as the driven snow, and both, to all appearance, cultivated with the extremest care. His eye-brows were white and sloping, which gave to his visual organs the appearance of having been set in without regard to taste, propriety or fashion. His forehead was low, but the absence of hair upon the crown made it, at first view, appear lofty. He was dressed in a scarlet jacket and shoulder cloak, and trunks and hose of the finest and whitest silk. He wore slippers with white rosettes, and a long, slender rapier was slung around his waist, upon the hilt of which his both hands rested, as Isabel entered the apartment.

'Your pleasure, sir?' demanded the lady, sitting on a raised cushion, opposite him.

'I have called on an errand, lady,' said the stranger, 'which involves thy safety, and the lives of all thy kin. I would first ask if thou art aware of the existence of a young noble called Galliano?'

'I am,' replied the lady, slightly blushing.

'I would further ask, lady,' continued the old man, 'if thou hast seen him within three days?'

'Why these questions?' said the lady, turning slightly pale.

'Tis thine office to answer, not to question, lady,' replied the old man with a sarcastic smile, and rivetting his bold and crafty eyes upon the lady.

'What if I answer not?' inquired Isabel, proudly.

'Means will be found to make thee answer, lady,' responded the old man smiling, and in a tone which made the young lady's heart sink with terror. 'There are means for the performance of every thing, lady,' he continued in the same biting, sneering tone, 'and it will argue wisdom in thee not to provoke the engines of wrath. Thy father did, and thou now wearest sables for his imprudence!'

The cheek of Isabel now turned ghastly white; her bosom panted with emotion, and

a tear leapt into her eye: but, after a silent but violent struggle, she forced it back, and, rising, approached the table, as if to ring a little bell, which stood upon it. The stranger, divining her intent, suddenly rose, caught her by the wrist, and exclaimed, in a low but biting tone—

'Lady, be not in haste to call your servants.—I can leave your house without their aid. Besides, this is not a question of politeness, but one of life and death. So, oblige me by taking my blunt speech as it suits you, till I am done.' Pray, be seated! And he led her, with scrupulous politeness back to her seat.

'The gallants of our sea-girt isle, call thee the Pride of Venice,' continued the old man, seating himself opposite Isabel, and gazing at her with a cold and brazen eye. 'See what it is to be beautiful, lady,—see what it is to have an angel's stamp on human lineaments! Reflect what it is to have youth and hot blood and all the appetites for the luxuries and pleasures, invented by man to charm youth and the summer of Life! And ponder over the beauties and luxuries, generously accorded to all human kind by Nature, to make man, from his first to his second childhood, feel the enjoyments created for his sole benefit. Connect them with the luxuries conceived and perfected by man, and then feel the poignancy of the thought that human hands have doomed thee to taste no more of either—have doomed thee to the eternal sleep found only in the grave!'

Isabel spoke not—though her cheeks blanched every moment, paler, her eyes quailed not at the steady and brazen gaze of the man now before her, but her heart throbbed painfully rapid.

'What if thou wert doomed, lady?' continued the old man, in a tone indicating, in spite of himself, his disappointment in not receiving any response to his observations.

'I—' said Isabel, faintly, as a sickly pallor darted across her features.

'Aye, lady,' added the old man, 'what if thou wert doomed?'

'I'd meet it, like my father,' replied Isabel, firmly.

'So thou say'st now,' said the old man, with a quiet and cold smile; 'but, if thou stood'st in a chamber whose walls were bare as thine own limbs of vesture, with the engines of death girding thee around, while the grim forms of scurvy clad and masked executioners stood waiting the signal of their master to rend thy bones asunder,—thy speech would falter as thy cheek now doth blanch!'

'What is thine errand here?' demanded Isabel, in a low, deep voice.

'To warn thee beware a traitor,' answered the old man, 'to warn thee cease all communication with one to whom thou givest too free license with thine ear and lip.'

For shame on thee! that one so highly born—an orphan, too!—should think so lightly of her honor as to permit the free addresses of a known libertine and—

'Stop thy dastard tongue!' exclaimed the lady Isabel, starting up, and pointing the old man to the door,—'whoe'er thou art—whate'er thine errand—I care not! Begone!'

'Lady—'

'Not a word! This house—this roof is mine—mine, by heritage and law—mine, by the legal codes of Venice—and, while beneath mine own roof, no low-born hind, nor creature of birth or power, shall assail mine ear with insolence, or bravado. Begone!'

The old man leaned upon his cane, between her and the door, his feathered cap hanging in his left hand, and his eyes gleaming maliciously and sharply at the fair speaker as she stood, stern, bold and erect, her finger pointing to the door.

'Lady, I am here for a purpose,' said he, in a low, soft voice, and with a smile which was an index to his nature, 'I am here for a purpose, and till it be accomplished, thy threshold shall calmly await my inclination to cross it.'

'What ho, Martino!' exclaimed Isabel, loudly, and ringing a silver bell which rested on the circular table, 'what ho, Martino! thy mistress needs thy help!'

The object of her wrath, smiling, quietly resumed his seat.

A hurried step was heard in the entry—the door opened hastily, and a young servitor, of some seven and twenty years, entered the apartment.

'The matter lady!' he exclaimed, hurriedly and bowing.

'Turn yon hoary wretch from out my doors!' she cried, pointing to her visitor.

The eyes of the servitor and the old man met—a hasty sign from the latter, unobserved by the lady Isabel, but which the sharp eye of the servitor detected, silenced the latter, and caused his cheek to blanch to the hue of ashes.

'Leave us,' said the old man, in a calm and silvery tone.

Without a word—without an upraised look—without a glance at his astonished mistress, the servitor bowed, and, his eyes resting upon the carpet, slowly retired from the apartment.

Isabel looked after him in astonishment.

'Thou seest the engines of thy house,' observed the old man, sardonically, 'thou seest the faith of its small pillars!'

The lady Isabel heeded him not, but clasping her hand to her forehead, staggered, pale and ghastly, to a cushion, and sank upon it speechless.

CHAPTER IV.

The sun was playing through the casement when the lady Isabel awoke, and the hum of voices mingled with the winds. She

looked round. The door was closed; and, save herself, no human thing breathed in the chamber. The apartment seemed smaller than usual, and the drapery around the walls seemed darker than on the preceding day. A large and heavy lock was on the door too; and the door itself had changed its color since yester-night. The entire aspect of the apartment seemed changed. A picture—a small one—hung between the windows, which she could not recollect. She sprang up, and advanced towards it—she did not know it.—Her brow felt heated—her eyes weak and nervous. She sat down on a cushion, and tried to think—she could not. A sharp pain shot athwart her brow, and scattered the loose leaves of her memory. She felt sick at heart, chilled in soul, vacant in mind. A phantom seemed to dance before her—a dim and shadowy phantom—yet could she not give it shape: for when her eyes gazed intently and boldly at it, it vanished, and the sunbeams were before her. She rose, and paced the chamber, vacantly. Something heavy was on her heart—an iron weight upon her brow.—Air! air! Her tongue was parched—her lips seemed glued together.

'Water—water!' she muttered, unconsciously.

She paused,—her eyes riveted upon a narrow slit in the carpeted floor. It gradually widened, till a square hole, of some four feet, revealed a dark vault beneath.—She stood fixed, gazing into the depth, which appeared like the chasm of eternity. Presently, a slender and curiously carved wash-stand, with a snowy towel dangling at its side, rose, as if by some springy pressure, and, when its base had reached the carpet's edge, the wooden floor resumed its place, and the stand, surmounted by a circular basin of brass, filled with scented water, remained motionless. She gazed upon it half vacantly, a moment; then plunged her hand into the liquid and applied it to her brow. Memory seemed to return shadowingly, with the first drop of the cooling liquid, and, frantically seizing the towel and bathing it in the bowl, she applied it to her burning brow. A sob—a cry, burst from her parched lips, and she sank overpowered upon the floor. As if by magic, the stand immediately disappeared—the casements darkened, and a huge torch rose through an opening in the floor. The drapery on the wall opposite the windows was thrown aside, and a young and magnificently dressed cavalier entered, and raised the inanimate lady in his arms. A smile hovered around his lips, as he gazed upon the fevered lip and ashy cheek of his burden. A smile—but it was not the smile of love, nor guilt. Raising her in his strong arms, he silently and stealthily departed, with his burthen, through the secret panel, behind the drapery.

The torch still burned on.

CHAPTER V.

THE KINSMAN'S TALE.

It was eventide: the stars shone dimly in the heavens, and the moon was pale. The atmosphere, after a warm and sultry day, was cool and pleasant, and infused new strength into the feeble, and made the couch of the despairing invalid a couch of hope. It was one of those nights when the nervous mind feels settled, joyous, strong, fearless; one of those nights when the timorous heart is sanguine of success, and fears not to make a venture; one of those nights when the malignant heart is so acted upon by the elements, that its dark conceptions centre on one spot, and that a bloody one—when it is in such a state that one kind word from its hated foe would change its venom into love; one of those nights when the woe-stricken and the trampled of God's make half forget their wrongs, their injuries, their sorrows, calamities and woes, and feel cheerful, half joyous, more than resigned; one of those nights when, if ever, angels in heaven look down upon mortality with a hope and a smile; one of those nights when earth has more laughing, joyous ones, and less weeping and groaning ones—one of those nights when the King of the Eternities says to the recording angel—"Cease thy recording labors—crime sleeps!"

Venetians, of every grade, promenaded the streets and squares and quays. The tide was high, and almost on a level with the piers. The Lagoons were covered with the richly caparisoned barges and gondolas of the nobility and higher classes of citizens; while the humble gondolier, his bark freighted with young lovers, pulled his oars cheerily, as the ripe, rich voices of his passengers chaunted their favorite melodies. It was a night of universal joy. Universal? No—there were exception. Despite the cool and delicious air—despite the joy which seemed so universal, there were two that night in Venice upon whose cheeks no joy, no smile, nor aught betokening mirth or happiness, could be detected. An old man, with locks snowy as the vesture of the highest Alps in winter, and clad in coarse, brown velvet trunks, and a jacket of the same, sat on the edge of the Orfano canal, bathing his feet in the tide. Beside him, half-distended, his elbow resting on the earth, and his head supported by his broad, sinewy hand, was a young, stout, well proportioned youth, of some four-and-twenty years, clad in the garb of a gondolier.

'What a beautiful night, Paulo!' exclaimed the elder, glancing at his companion; 'it half tempts one to forget his griefs, and think Venice a free land. 'Tis a shame, boy, that thy barge was broken at the regatta of Monday last. It would have been money in thy pouch, to-night—for, look!

all Venice hath disgorged its living, and they float upon the Lagoons like water-fish. The young maid leans upon her lover's arm, and, happy now, dreams that the Future hath in it no more of Joylessness. Umph! she'll find her mistake out, ere the world hath done with her. Boy,' he added, 'dost recollect thy sister?'

'Aye father,' replied the other, sadly.

'Dost recollect her beauty, boy—her angelic smile, her heavenly eyes, her spirit-like form, her tiny feet, and lady-like hands, so small, so white. We used to call her our 'little belle.' Throughout Venice she was called 'the pretty Orange Girl,' she used to sell her fruit on sunny days, in her little, round basket, ornamented with orange leaves. Every body used to buy of her, she was so fair, and had such winning ways with her! Dost remember her perfectly, boy?'

'Aye, father, aye!' replied the youth, in a deep guttural voice.

'And then her voice, too! so ripe, so rich, so mellow, that, when she pleased, she could lull the steepest heart into the calmest, gentlest humor, and make it sad, or joyous, as she willed. Ah! she was too fair, too beautiful for earth!' A tear danced a moment on the lid of the old man's eye, then leapt upon his rough and hoary cheek. He brushed it off—a moment afterward, and the snowy locks that covered his crown were not more pale than his tear-kissed cheek.

'Tis now three years since she was taken from us,' continued the old man, as if speaking to himself, 'and yet no word, no trace of her! Boy,' he added sternly, 'hadst thou but the spirit, the fire, the bold blood that should mark thine age, thy father's spirit would, in the winter of its years, take its last look of Venice and of earth, with a smile!'

'What mean'st thou, father?' cried the youth, starting up, with surprise.

'What do I mean—what do I mean?' muttered the old man, sarcastically, 'aye, boy, what do I mean!'

'Speak out, father,' cried Paulo, earnestly.

'Foscari!' said the old man, laconically.

'Well?'

'He robbed thy sister of her honor, and yet lives!'

'Remember his birth, father!'

'His birth?'

'Aye; father, his birth—remember that!'

'Too well, too well do I remember it,' muttered the old man, satirically, 'Too well do I remember it; my heart is like a burning coal when I remember it!'

'What would'st have me do, father?'

'Avenge her wrongs—hadst thou the heart!'

'Have I it not, father?'

'Thy conduct doth not show it, boy!'

'The hour hath not yet come father!'

'Dost look for it, Paulo?'

'I watch for it, father.'

'Watch for it! The brave heart and cunning mind *make* time, and, for revenge, wait not for circumstance or accident. I'll tell thee a tale, boy.—When I was of thine age, or near it, I loved thy mother. We were poor, both; we were young, both, we were comely, both. She had no superior in beauty among the haughtiest or lowliest, in Venice, of her sex. For her beauty's sake; a young lord wooed her—wooed her, but wooed her not to wed her. He dazzled her eyes with his gold, rank and promises. She was weak enough to believe that he would disgrace his birth, pride and rank by wedding a lowly craftsman's daughter; and therefore, though professing much before to love me, discarded me. Knowing well the motives of the noble's visits to her cottage, I confronted him, one night, upon the Rialto, as he was returning from her house, and charged him with his vile intents. He answered me with a look, only—a look of supercilious scorn—and bade me stand out of his path. Persons were passing at the moment, and I obeyed him, *meekly*. He passed on, with a loud, scornful laugh. My blood was up—but the hour had not yet come. The moon was up, the stars were forth, in all their light and beauty—it was not the hour! Fearful of death, he did not venture to cross the Rialto, again, by night, for a week; when, conquering his timidity, he donned his plume and sword and cloak, and posted for her house. She had been expecting him, and was arrayed in her most glittering and showy attire. She looked beautiful, and knew it. She stood at the door, anxiously awaiting his arrival. The night was dark, and the streets and quays were dimly lighted. Concealed behind the gate of an adjoining house, I heard every whisper which passed between them. She had promised to become his on the ensuing night. It was to be a secret marriage—to be kept concealed at first—then gradually broached to his family and her's. Thou understandest the meaning of such a marriage, Paulo! I heard it all—understood it all! My heart was rent with jealousy and rage, and yet I kept my post, till he quitted her to return home. Taking off my shoes, so that my footfalls should not alarm his ear, I stealthily followed him, till he had arrived within ten paces of the Rialto. Then drawing my knife, I rushed upon him, and the blade had thrice entered his heart ere he could recover from his surprise. A groan—the faint groan of the despairing—escaped his lips, and he lay upon the pavement, lifeless as a stone. No human ear save mine had heard his fall—no human eye, save mine, had seen the deed. I rolled him in his cloak, and dragged him to the brink of the Lagoon hard by. A pile of stones lay near, from which I gathered a dozen of the largest, and placed them on the body; then taking a cord from my girdle,

carefully tied the cloak around them, and plunged the bulk into the watery tide. It sank, and, till now, no human ear hath heard of the fate of our doge's elder brother.

'Twas a base and bloody deed!' exclaimed the gondolier, shuddering, as he turned his gaze away from the old man, and looked fearfully around to see if other ears beside his own had listened to the dark recital.

'A base and bloody deed!' repeated the other, mockingly; 'a base and bloody deed! Pah! He would have slain thy mother's honor, robbed me of peace for life, and made wanton with a score of hearts as fond, as trusting as her's,—perchance driven an hundred others into despair, like me—had I not slain him. Pah! He was a villain, and deserved it. He was a noble, and the trampler on peace, virtue and honesty—he had well nigh murdered my peace forever, and for that act, I became mine own avenger. But mark, how his kindred have avenged him: his nephew, the present young Foscarei, beguiled, seduced my only daughter—thy sister—and yet he is at large!—branded eternal shame upon her erst innocent forehead, and upon mine and thine, and yet he lives, to play the same pranks upon others. Thou knowest that that vile deed of his sent the heart and hairs of thy mother with anguish to the tomb, and made a wanton of thy sister, and made the ruin of our house what it is, and all but broke the heart of him who wooed her, ere Foscarei laid his serpent eyes upon her to lure her on to ruin—and yet he lives, and so do I—I, in weakness and gray hairs;—and so dost thou—thou, in young manhood's vaunted strength and fire! The hour hath not come!' thou say'st;—three years have flown since first the dastardly deed was consummated, and yet for thee and vengeance, 'the hour hath not yet come!' 'Out upon thee, coward, boy!'

'Father! father!' groaned the young gondolier, passionately, 'crush not my spirit by branding me with such opprobrious names. Coward! boy! Oh!'

'What art thou else?' said the old man, gibingly, and glancing maliciously at his son. 'What art thou else? Where is the bold spirit, where the lion-darling, that should mark thy years? For three years, hath the cloud of Wrong floated over our house—for three long years hath the finger of scorn pointed at us as varlets that patiently submit to infamy, oppression, indignity, without the courage to raise a finger to smite the villain down. Three long years of shame, opprobrium—three long years—an old man, I—a young man, thou! Three long years of unavenged shame!—three long years!—think of that!'

The young gondolier groaned, deeply. He buried his head in his broad, tanned hands, and wept, like a little child.

'Hast thou a soul—a heart—a brain—an eye—a hand?' persisted the old man, his-

mgly: 'hast either of these—and yet weariest Shame, Cowardice, upon thy brow? Hast thou a heart, a hand, I say, and dost thou play the woman's game: *watching*! Out on thee, craven!'

'Father!'

'Not a word!—not a word! and dare not call me by that name again, or I shall smite thee! 'Father! Who gave thee the right to call me by that name? Dost dare to call thyself of my blood—my name—my race? 'Father! Now, as I live! I do believe thee to be the spawn of some chicken-hearted dastard, whose wily arts exchanged thee, in infancy, for mine own proud-souled and fearless child, when my wife was absent. Go to! thou art no son of mine!'

The chafed spirit of the young gondolier could stand no more. He sprang upon the old man, and, grasping him by the collar, with one stern and sudden jerk, stretched him, lengthwise, upon the pavement; then planting one knee upon his breast, he, with his disengaged hand, drew a long, narrow blade from his girdle, and, raising it aloft, exclaimed—

'If thou would'st have me an assassin, what subject so fit to dye this yet-unstained knife, as thine own foul carcase? Another word—another taunt—and, though thou wert ten times my father, thou'lt find I am not the poor, patient, gibe-bearing spaniel thou deemest me!'

'Let go thy hold!' cried the old man, struggling and writhing, as the white foam of passion gathered around his lips. 'Let go thy hold, or I shall call for help!'

'Call on, I care not!' exclaimed the gondolier, huskily, 'call on, I care not, even if thou should'st be answered by the all-potent "Ten"!'

'The Ten!' said a low, deep voice, beside him, "'the Ten!" it is a terrible power to defy!'

The gondolier started at the unexpected and thrilling voice. Did he know it? Was there a magic spell in its deep, rich tone that his ear recognized an old acquaintance? His fingers let go their clutch of the prostrate fruit-vender—the knife dropped from his hand—his face lost its passionate flush, and was usurped by a chalk-like paleness. He rose from his threatening position by the old man, and catching the eye and cloaked form of the stranger, dropped upon one knee before him, saying—

'What would'st thou, master?'

'Does such an attitude become a Venetian?' said the stranger, impatiently; 'To thy feet, man—to thy feet!'

The gondolier, crimsoning to the temples, started up, and, suddenly doffing his plumeless cap, with downcast eyes, and in a tone husky with shame and emotion, inquired—

'Art in need?'

'I am,' replied the stranger, softly; 'a

burden, not far from hence, needs thy carrying. I have had a heavy task of it, myself, this hour, and need aid. Canst go?'

'I can.'

'Then follow me.'

They left the spot, together; and, ere the old fruit-vender could recover from the effects of their sudden meeting and departure, the stranger and gondolier were out of sight.

'There's more in this than I can fathom,' said the old man, pondering over the strange scene; 'there is matter touching the State in't! Who is yon stranger? Methinks I've seen his face before, but where—where? I cannot recall the time, or place. Some high-born scion, doubtless—common blood hath no such eyes, no such face, no such voice, no such step, no such trappings, as his! What can it mean? Paulo trembled, lost manhood, fire, dignity, passion, at his voice! Some dark game's a foot! The State needs cleaning—I've heard Paulo mutter it in his sleep. If he be engaged in a conspiracy to sweep off all our lordly tyrants—if he be!—a strange light, like the enthusiastic gleam sometimes seen in the eyes of youth, shone in the fruit-vender's dark orbs—"if he be! why, then, his father's benison go with him! O, that I were young again—young as my brave, wronged boy—with what a heart I'd plunge into the midst of these conspirators, and be one of them! I would—I would—I would! But I am old—weak—half-falling into my grave. No, no: I must think of other things than blood. The State must be cleaned by the young—the down-trodden, avenged by the young. Old men can but preach. And yet, how I have wronged poor Paulo! how wrongly charged him! He watches for the hour! I see it all, now—I see it all! How I have wronged him!—My poor, wronged daughter will yet be avenged!'

With thoughts and mutterings like these, the fruit-vender hied him homeward.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COMPANIONS.

They walked on, the stranger and the gondolier. They kept side by side, and spoke in low tones. They walked on, firmly, yet nervously, as if on each step the existence of an empire depended. The streets and squares and quays were now alive with the young and aged, of every class, returning to their homes. The deep-toned bell of St. Mark's fell upon their ears, and throughout Venice its heavy toll warned the populace that it lacked but an hour of midnight. The moon and stars waxed paler and dimmer every moment, till the stranger and his companion could scarce see their way. Still they walked on. Wished they for darkness?

The moon and stars were hid. The whole vault of heaven was curtained with drapery, dark and thick and frightful. It seemed as if man's last hope had been cut off—as if Deity had drawn a sheet of darkness between his Throne and Earth, that his already-offended eye might be no more offended by the deeds of darkness committed by man upon his fellow man. Yet the elements were not at peace:—the winds played bo-peep with each other on the Lagoons and throughout the corners of old Venice, as if to frighten the few still awake, and to arouse to wakeful fear the thousands sleeping.

They wandered on, the gondolier and stranger. They had already traversed half of Venice, and yet had not reached their goal, if goal they had in view.

They had neared the Rialto, still in conversation earnest as when they had first set out, when the watchful eye of the stranger discerned lights ahead. He laid his hand upon the arm of his companion, and, pointing to the advancing torches, both noiselessly and cautiously drew back, and concealed themselves behind a broad, towering pillar at the base of the bridge.

'Now,' whispered the stranger to his companion, 'now, thou wilt see the scourge of our fair isle; now, thou wilt behold the instruments of that power, the very name of which makes the cheek of childhood turn pale, and the nerves of gay youth and stern manhood turn watery. Behold, but speak not—stir not—breathe not; nay, utter not a word, though the victim be thine own sire!'

'I will not,' said his companion.

'Hush—they come!'

In silence, and with slow and solemn step, a double file of guards, six on each side, and each bearing a naked, double-edged sword, crossed the Rialto, and passed the pillar behind which the stranger and his companion were concealed. In their midst, with ponderous and muffled chains around his wrists, was a young man of some seven-and-twenty years, in the garb of a gondolier. A tall, half-naked, swarthy-complexioned slave, bearing a torch in one hand, guarded either side of the prisoner; while before and behind the little troop marched one in the costume of a cowed monk, with a long, white cross in his right hand, carried carelessly like a cane.

'Ha!' exclaimed the gondolier, as his eye fell upon the prisoner's face, 'tis—'

But ere he could complete the sentence, the hand of the stranger was upon his mouth.

The procession, with its victim passed on, and, turning an angle of the square, was soon lost to view.

'Rash man!' exclaimed the stranger, reproachfully, 'would'st betray us?'

But the latter answered not—a film was before his eyes—his whole frame shook with terror and emotion—and he sank into the arms of the stranger, speechless.

The winds whistled, and the Rialto seemed almost on the point of giving away before the violence of the gale.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STORM.

The belfry of St. Mark's gave a solitary toll; the gale swept around the old tower, and gave to its chime, a heavy, stern, iron-like sound, which seemed almost powerful enough to re-awake to time and being the tomb-sleepers of old Venice. The wail of the increasing gale seemed like a dirge of devils over the corpse of their king, in the royal chamber of the Shades. The Rialto shook as if an earthquake were coursing beneath its foundations.

The gale was at its height. As if the ministers of Deity had been ordered to level their several shafts at Earth and destroy it, the windows of heaven were opened—of lightning, flash succeeded flash, and peal followed peal of thunder—the rain came rushing down upon the seemingly-doomed city—and the angry blast flew around the squares and Lagoons as if determined to make a chaos of the isle towering above the waters. Mothers, with their infants in their arms, started out of their beds affrighted, and with their nurslings, crouched in corners and dark places to hide them from the broad, bright flashes of the red lightning, and the deafening roars of the booming thunder. Young and tender-hearted brides crept, shudderingly, from their couches, and dropped upon their knees, in prayer. Old men, hoary with age and crime, turned pale, and mumbled half-broken sentences of long-forgotten prayers. Widowed matrons, upon their knees, sent up supplications to the throne of the Most High, for sons exposed to the dangers of the angry deep; and youthful and hoary monks counted their beads and said earnest prayers that He would yet spare their criminal city for repentance.

The waters of the Lagoons were swollen to a fearful height, deluging the piers and streets, and sweeping off into the tide of the broad Adriatic every floating thing that came within their reach. Yet all was darkness, save when, ever and anon, the gleam of some fitful flash exposed the havoc of the storm.

The stranger, cloaked, bent over the senseless gondolier, who lay in a sitting posture, at the base of the pillar, and shielded him from the descending rain. Though drenched to the skin, the noble cared not for himself, but had every thought centred upon the peril of his companion.

'Terror hath unnerved, unwitting him,' he muttered, 'and the discord and battle of the elements have not in them enough of power to wale him!'

The tide rose higher, and the noble felt the water entering his shoes. Quick as thought, he raised the inanimate gondolier from his perilous position, and dragged him up the bridge. This sudden movement, together with the sharp, heavy and rapid beatings of the rain, roused the latter from his stupor. He started, and put out his hands wildly—for the darkness prevented his eyes from being of any service—and he felt the cloak and hand of the noble. At this moment, a bright flash revealed the face of the latter, and, the evening's events rushing through his mind, he cried out—

'Still here? Let us fly!'

'Whither?' responded the noble, as a chill ran through his frame at sight of the ghastly features of his companion. 'Whither? The streets and piers and squares are deluged, and the Rialto alone affords refuge from the waters. Here we must abide till the storm gives o'er!'

'But we shall die here!'

'Die! Fear it not: fate hath not yet spoken such decree; and till it hath, why fear the mere playthings of fate? The rain may wet, the tempest rage, the lightning play in antics in yon clouds, but till the word is spoken in tones louder than yon rumbling thunder, Galliano shall bethink him of Life, not Death!'

Scarce had he spoken, when a broad, bright flash, that, for a moment, lit every thing around brighter than noon-day, struck the spire of the marble-pillar, which had been the concealment of the companions, shivering it in fragments.

'Lo, the warning of the waters!' exclaimed Galliano, pointing to the ruins. But five minutes ago, thou and I were there, for shelter and concealment. Now, behold the wreck of our arc! The lightning hath robbed it of its glory and its power, and we must here bide the peltings of the pitiless storm!'

All was darkness again, and yet the eyes of the two were rivetted in silence, in the direction of the shattered pillar. A dim, hazy light seemed to rise from its centre, like the faint rays of a lamp in some dark passage. The pillar, broken as it was, was still about three feet above the level of the fast rising waters surrounding it. The rain fell ceaselessly, and yet that strange, dim light still shone around the broken remnant of the pillar. Cautiously, the noble and his companion advanced toward the spot. They looked down—the pillar was hollow, and a circular flight of narrow stairs, widening as they descended, met their gaze. A lamp, with five burners, was suspended from the ceiling, a small distance from the gap, apparently under the earth. The entrance was not more than five feet, but gradually widened in its descent. The walls were damp, and big drops of vault-sweat were continually falling to the bottom. A low, moaning noise saluted the ears of Galliano

and his companion, as they bent their heads and listened. A sickly pallor overspread the features of the latter, and a momentary tremor ran through his frame. He glanced at Galliano, whose face was dimly seen by the reflection of the vault lamp; but the latter, though gazing thoughtfully at the mysterious entrance, evinced not the slightest symptom of astonishment, or fear.

'What dost think it is?' said Paulo, gathering courage from the other's coolness.

'Think!' answered the noble, with an exulting smile, 'think! why, that the elements have revealed to us one of the chief pathways to the dungeons of the 'Ten.' Had we now but twenty men, brave-hearted and true, we might storm this dungeon-entrance, and perhaps rid Venice of its tyrants, without the spilling of more blood than flows in the veins of the death-dealing 'council.' Dost thou not see through it all?' continued Galliano, his face radiating with alternate scorn and pleasure at the discovery; 'dost not see through it all? For safety and escape, should they be assailed in their infernal councils, lo! the staircase and the magic outlet! Would they, at midnight, enter, unobserved, their bloody caverns, lo! the marble door! When their fiendish tortures have put to death a victim, lo! the staircase and the door—close beside the canal—by which, at dark hour and solemn, to slide the mutilated corpse into the deep Lagoon! Who dies in Venice? Who breathes his spirit out, among his kindred, on the calm and peaceful couch of home? We die not—we disappear! and the Adriatic tide of an after day, finds us floating down its current, our bodies crised and headless—memorials of Blood, Secret Deed and Tyranny—tyranny that hides its dastard face in God's daylight, and prowls about in darkness, with dagger, cloak and mask, to sweep from Life and Earth the suspected! The marble-door—the secret stair-case—and the grand-canal! Convenient instruments! But the red lightning hath shivered their pillar, and we, we the patriotic band, we of the sworn body, shall rend the tyrants themselves!'

Though excited almost to delirium, yet the young noble's voice rose not above the gale.

'Let us depart,' said Paulo, looking earnestly around; 'eyes, even now, may be upon us! Let us depart!'

'In good faith, not I,' replied the noble, coolly; 'I go not hence till these eyes know more of the 'mysteries' of yon staircase. Wilt follow me?'

'I have no weapon,' answered the gondolier, half fearfully.

'Thy knife?' said Galliano, interrogatively.

'I have it not.'

'Then fill thy pockets with scraps of yon strewn marble,' said the noble, gaily, and ringing into the pillar; 'they will, I trow

be weapons enough to silence the clamors of any we may encounter ere our return. Hast got them?

'I have.'

'Stay, a moment, here is my dirk: thou may'st have need of it. Now, as thou hast a heart, follow me!'

The noble drew his oft-tried rapier, and, throwing off his cloak, that it might not interrupt his activity, or speed, quickly, yet cautiously, descended the narrow stairs. The gondolier followed after him, noiselessly as possible, his heart beating painfully with excitement.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DUNGEONS OF THE TRIBUNAL.

After descending the spiral staircase, our heroes, on verging to the right, found themselves in a long, broad avenue, of an iron hue, dimly lighted by lamps, with three burners, suspended by heavy chains, from the ceiling. On either side of the passage, were massive oaken doors, covered with heavy iron bars, rivetted transversely, and each fastened outwards by a ponderous padlock. The cells were ranged in pairs,—i. e. every pair formed one little block, or square, which was divided from the next by a narrow pathway leading into the avenue behind it. The passages were covered with a dark, yielding substance, which had the effect of killing the echo of a footfall; so that, while one stood conversing with a companion, a spy might, unheard, turn an angle, and, approaching within earshot, catch every word. The door of each cell, was numbered, near the top, immediately under a transversed pair of shoulder-bones, surmounted by a grinning skull—the relics, doubtless, of the cell's last victim. The ceiling of this subterranean vault presented a dark, spongy aspect, as if intended to drown the loudest sound, and thus prevent the groans of the Tribunal's victims from being heard above.

The noble, despite his natural nerve, panted and snudged at the grim silence and appalling aspect of the strange scene. A dreary, heavy, choking atmosphere was around him, and he repented of having thrown away his cloak. Taking a few steps onward, a sudden and unaccountable feeling came over him. The iron of his nerves seemed gradually departing, and the invincible energy and indomitable resolution of his nature, by some mysterious process, appeared to be oozing through his pores, and his blood, weak and tremulous, felt as if converted into water. His cheeks and lips blanched—heavy drops of hot sweat rolled rapidly down his limbs—his eyes grew haggard—his lips quivered—the moisture was fast departing from his gums—his knees

smote each other—respiration grew, every moment, more and more difficult, and he felt as if the Icy-Hand were tugging with his frame to tear away his heart. A long, deep, agonising groan fell upon his ear, and, dropping on his hands and knees, his face close to the ground, he crawled, shudderingly, backwards, in the direction of the staircase. His feet touched something heavy behind him, and, turning his face, Galliano beheld his companion stretched upon the pave, his mouth and eyes agape, his erst sun-burnt cheeks pale as chalk, his lips twitching as if a serpent were gnawing them within, his breast heaving with agony, and his arms swinging above his head frantically, as if to ward off some horrid phantom visible to his terrified eyes. With a bold and convulsive effort, the noble passed him, and, weak and faint, reached the base of the staircase. A few moments' sojourn here partially recovered him: when, anxious for his companion, and deeming his strength sufficiently restored for the task, he boldly rushed into the passage, and, catching the gondolier by the collar of his jacket, dragged the body, hastily, into the arca, by the stairs.

The sudden change of atmosphere soon restored the latter to his senses, and reinvigorated the strength of both—yet both were pale, very pale. Their eyes were strained and bloodshot with their recent terror and struggles to escape the empoisoned air.

'We have seen enough—let us now depart,' said Paulo, half whisperingly.

'Not I,' replied Galliano; 'life and curiosity are yet sufficiently strong within me, to urge me on to more than a glance at these infernal avenues. I must behold in full, ere I again ascend to the world above us. The atmosphere of the avenues beyond is, perchance, better than that of the first. Did'st notice that it was not till we passed the third block of cells that the air changed so suddenly, and that it was when near the fourth that the deadly ether first saluted us?'

'Methinks I did; but what inference draw you from that?'

'A plain one,' replied the noble; 'murder is going on in that cell—murder, not by the knife, nor by the pincer, nor by the thumb-screw, rack or burning floor—but murder, by robbing the poor victim of his feelings and senses one by one, that, with his last gasp, the victim may spring into the portals of Eternity with a thrill of agony unequalled by any other torture. Did'st hear a groan?'

'I did.'

'Be sure 'twas the victim's last! No torture could drag from living clay such a groan as that; it, more than the sulphurous air, struck me to my knees!'

'So did it me—I never heard its like.'

'Hush!' said Galliano, whisperingly, and placing his finger on his lip.

A sound, like the rumbling of a door swinging upon its rusty hinges, now jarred upon their ears. The noble peeped cautiously into the passage, and beheld a sight which made his blood creep. Two stout, goodly sized wretches, garbed in long, greasy, blood-stained tunics, without sleeves, and sandalled and capped, were dragging the remains of their victim, on a broad board, from the cell. The body was entirely naked, and, by the process of the torture, reduced almost to a skeleton. The little flesh that remained upon the limbs was torn and ragged, as if by the violent struggles of the victim while writhing under the poisonous and sense-killing vapor. The wretches, after having taken out the body and the vapor-box, threw in a powder to kill the effluvia remaining in the cell, carefully locked the door, and, taking up the body, slowly and silently disappeared through an adjoining passage.

'The curse of a Venitian be upon ye, bloodhounds!' muttered the young noble, shaking his doubled fist in the direction which they had taken. 'Follow me!' he exclaimed, turning suddenly to his companion, and immediately darting into the vault, apparently with the intention of hastening after the murderers and inflicting upon them the punishment due to their crime.

The noble ran with speed, but soon found himself bewildered in the countless and complicated passages. His sword was drawn, and grasping it firmly in his hand, he darted from avenue to avenue, from narrow passage to narrow passage, his eyes, the while, searching every lighted and dark spot for the myrmidons of the Tribunal, but all in vain—they had vanished. Tired, panting and spent out, he leaned against a cell, in one of the avenues, for support. Having rested awhile, and bethinking him of his companion, he strode swiftly in, what appeared to him, the direction of the staircase. But in this he was baffled: for, notwithstanding all his efforts, he could not reach the spot. Avenue after avenue, passage after passage he traversed, but all in vain, and he was forced to trust to chance in reaching it at all.

In this critical situation, and pondering on the dangers to which he was exposed, he resolved to explore every avenue and passage till all the secrets of the vault were known to him, or till he stumbled upon some path leading to an outlet. Accordingly, he paced impatiently the lengthy avenue in which he stood, till he unexpectedly found himself within a few yards of an approaching personage, masked and enveloped in a long, dark mantle. Fortunately for Galliano, his own sombre costume, the sound-killing pave, and the darkness around, prevented him from being seen or heard, and

'The cross of St. Mark's,' was the response.

'Pass on,' said the voice, in a satisfied tone.

As Galliano was about leaving his concealment, a hand, from some one behind was laid gently upon his shoulder, and some one whispered into his ear—

'Stay! Death is before thee!'

'Ha!' exclaimed the noble, quickly recognising and grasping the hand of the gondolier; 'I'm glad I've found thee! I thought thee lost in these infernal labyrinth.'

'I've been searching for thee,' said the other, in a hollow whisper.

'Knowest thou the direction of the staircase?' continued Galliano, earnestly, 'for I have lost it.'

A despairing groan escaped the gondolier as he replied: 'And I! Great God!'

'Hush!' exclaimed the noble, quickly and clapping his hand to his companion's mouth, 'thou'lt betray us!'

They plunged deeper into the gloom, and stood mute as statues; when, finding they were not overheard, they stole carefully into the avenue behind, and, after looking watchfully around, walked onward. As they passed on, a masked figure, holding a sharp-pointed spear, suddenly darted from an adjoining passage, demanding sternly—

'The password?'

'The cross of St. Mark's,' replied Galliano, carelessly, and passing on.

'The password, thou?' said the figure, addressing Paulo.

'The cross of St. Mark's,' muttered the gondolier, in a tone, which nothing but his last, bold effort of the despairing could sustain.

'Pass on,' was the response.

Tremblingly, indeed, did Paulo obey his order, while the sentinel returned silently into the passage from which he had so suddenly emerged.

'Cease thy trembling, man,' whispered the noble, 'else we are ruined! By chance I learned the watchword, and therefore was prepared for the fellow's challenge. He member it!'

'I shall;—the cross of St. Mark's?'

'Aye! That knave was a watchman and challenged us when we passed his post. Be sure we'll meet with others, ere we reach our goal.'

'Why not ask the next to lead us to the staircase?'

'Umph! I doubt if 'twould be safe. It would, for all our knowledge of the password, suspect us. Suspicion would be the forerunner only of capture and certain death. No; we must trust to fortune for escape.'

'The watchword!' cried a figure, suddenly entering the avenue.

whispered Galliano; 'we must be chary of our speech. These villains must have their allotted posts, like the watchmen of our city. Count the dungeon-sets we pass, ere we again are challenged.'

'Six,' whispered the gondolier, as soon as they had passed the next sentry.

'Right, my count exactly,' said the noble, softly; 'could we, now, through the dim light of these avenues, but learn the number of dungeon-squares from end to end of the vault, and the number of avenues, we might easily compute the amount of sentries at all times on guard here.'

'The advantage of such knowledge?'

'We then might guess the number of foes we should be likely to meet, in case we should storm the "Ten" in this, their den. I doubt much if their number is as great, as the prevailing fears and reports of our countrymen would lead one to imagine. Their great weapons are Mystery and Fear. Venetians are prone to fear an unseen power, and that is an all-subduing sword when properly handled. And yet, after all, how men, gifted with reasoning faculties and brave hearts, can be frightened by such paltry bug-bears is more than I can fathom. A mystery is easily made up by the simplest mind; the lookers-on may see the action of the mystery, but the mind that created it sees in't only the working result of his own mechanism; tear away the cover, or the curtain, and the gaping spectators, seeing the machinery, no longer wonder. These dungeons look mysterious and terrible, and yet they are nothing more than thick, wooden boards put together by the aid of iron-nails and ordinary rivets. The head and bones of some poor victim are nailed upon them, for effect. Take away the human—human? inhuman, rather—instruments, and of what danger can the dumb bones and painted boards be? A frowning, elf-like visage and physique, like to the form and features of the last knave that challenged us, are easily made up by the aid of paint and dirt and black cloth. They might be made on blocks, to frighten children with, and yet the scare-crow would be harmless. So with these knaves on duty here; disrobe them of their black tunics, shave them of their matted beards and lanky wigs, wash them of their stained hands and filthy faces, and what would their bare forms present of terror more than ours? Pah! That men should suffer wrongs, and let the perpetrators pass unpunished, because wrapped in Mystery and Paint!

The gondolier acknowledged the truth of these observations, but, though physically brave, he could not shake off the fears which his adventures among the dungeons thus far had gathered round him.

They passed on, giving the password whenever demanded, till they reached the end of the avenue—but no outlet met their view.

'What shall we do?' cried Paulo, whose presence of mind and courage now seemed to shrink at the hopeless prospect before them.

'Pass on to the next,' was the cool response.

'But the sentries there may be the same that we have already met,' added the gondolier, falteringly.

'We'll make sure they are not, by taking our path to the one beyond. Lo! our goal! see where the light gleams in yon area,' continued Galliano, when they had reached the point proposed, and pointing, as he spoke, to what seemed to be the entrance to the staircase.

The hearts of both bounded, as they saw deliverance. They pressed forward, hastily, but on reaching the threshold of the area, the cheek of the gondolier blanched as if suddenly converted into marble—they were on the threshold of the hall leading to the council chamber! A sentry was on duty there—almost before them—pacing, slowly, up and down the hall. His back was towards them, when they approached so near his post. He was about turning, when a sudden jerk of the gondolier, by the hand of Galliano, preserved both from the eyes of the sentry, as he re-paced the pave by the door.

'Where is thy coolness—where thine eyes, man!' muttered the noble, as they hurried into a contiguous and dark passage.

They had been in their concealment scarce a minute, when a cavalier cloaked and masked, and wearing a scarlet cap, shaped like a sugar-loaf, which was ornamented by a tall, white feather, fastened by a glittering loop in front, passed them and entered the hall.

'The password?' demanded the sentinel, presenting his spear.

'The merey of the Ten,' responded the cavalier, laughing.

'Pass,' said the sentinel, recovering his weapon, and resuming his pace.

'The watchword is changed?' whispered Paulo, aghast.

'Aye, for that department,' added the noble, in explanation. 'Fear not—another door than the one we entered, must be near at hand, as the quick breathing and sudden entrance of yon cavalier plainly denote. Let us seek it.'

They emerged slowly from their concealment, and, watching the moment when the sentinel had turned, strode hastily past the door. Turning an angle, some few yards beyond, they found themselves in a broad, high, arched passage, whose only light was received from a torch, which stood in the centre of the pave, supported by three portable, upraised poles.

'We are near the door,' whispered the noble; 'dost detect the coolness of the air?'

'I do,' responded Paulo, looking fearfully around.

'Have the dagger I gave thee at hand,' continued Galliano, 'for if there be a password for the knave who stands sentry at the door other than the ones we have, we must fight for our egress.'

As they proceeded, the passage, at every step grew less wide, till only one person could make his way. A faint light ahead, encouraged them, and they trode swiftly on, when, all at once, they found themselves in a large, semi-circular vault, lighted by three lamps, hanging by chains from the high, arched ceiling, each about forty feet from the other. The atmosphere was cool and refreshing, and contrasted strongly with the confined air of the vault they had just left. A sound like the rushing of waters fell upon their ears, but no human object met their searching eyes. By the light of the burning lamps, they could distinctly perceive a semi-circular range of dungeons before them, each heavily barred and locked. Convinced, by the atmosphere and the noise of the beating surge, that either a door or window was at hand, the keen eye of the noble searched every spot around, till, glancing upward, over the range behind him, he discovered a small, grated window, through the broken panes of which the night winds rushed, and revealed to him at once the cause of the refreshing atmosphere around him. While pondering on what part of Venice the grated window faced, his companion touched him gently on the shoulder, and pointed silently to a figure, with his back towards them, sitting on a low stool, in the extreme corner of the vault. Imagining, and with reason, that this man must be the sentry of the main entrance, though, in consequence of the gloom around him, no door was visible, Galliano touched his lip with his finger, to his companion, and, grasping firmly the hilt of his drawn sword, advanced, on up-toe, in the direction of the sentry, when he suddenly grasped him by the throat, and butted him to the ground. It was the work of a moment, and so hastily and perfectly had the feat been executed, that the poor wretch fell without a mutter, or a groan.

'A word, a whisper, or the slightest movement, and this steel is in thy throat!' exclaimed Galliano, in a hurried whisper, as he stood threateningly over the prostrate figure, his sword pointing to his breast. 'Seize his keys!' added the noble, to his companion, who, dagger in hand, had now approached.

Paulo stooped, and, from the girdle of the unresisting sentinel, wrenched a huge bunch of keys, and handed them, in silence to Galliano, who, grasping them firmly, bade his astonished victim rise. The gondolier assisted, and, in the act, bared his dagger across the wretch's throat, muttering as he did so—'Attempt to struggle, escape, or call for help, and my knife and thy gullet shall be acquainted!'

The poor wretch made no attempt to disobey, but gazed sullenly at his captors.

'Now, knave,' said the young noble, imperatively, 'where is the door that leads from these infernal caverns? Speak, or I'll slay thee!'

The sentinel spoke not, but pointed to the wall in front of which he had been sitting.

The noble turned, and discovered a broad, dark door, with a huge lock and three heavy cross bars. Seizing, instinctively, the largest key, he applied it cautiously to the key-hole, and turned the lock. Then sliding back the bars, the door easily came open, revealing a flight of broad, winding stairs.

'On reaching the top of yon stair case, where shall I find myself?' demanded the noble, sternly.

'In a bare apartment, lit by a single lamp, the door of which, fastened by a single lock, opens into the Grand Square, directly fronting St. Mark's,' replied the sentry.

'And that door can be opened from without?'

'Aye—by a latch-key, of which every member of the Council is provided with a duplicate. The exterior of the apartment represents an ordinary dwelling, and is guarded on either side by the habitation of a member of the Tribunal.'

'Is this the entrance for prisoners?'

'It is.'

'The only one?'

'No;—there is another.'

'And that—'

'Is through a secret door in the white pillar by the Riato.'

'How long art thou on guard here?'

'From dusk till dawn.'

'Thy name?'

'Ugerto.'

'How long hast thou been in the service of the "Ten"?'

'Three years.'

'Stayest thou by force?'

'I do.'

'Thy wages?'

'Bread, wine, raiment and couch.'

'If thou desert'st?'

'The creatures of the "Ten" dare not desert.'

'And if they do?'

'If caught, the "Fire Chamber" is their doom—they are burned to a crisp, and their ashes flung, at midnight, into the Adriatic.'

'Have any prisoners been brought through this door to-night?'

'Aye, two.'

'The first—'

'A woman—the daughter of a noble.'

'Her name?'

'I know it not.'

'Where is she now?'

'In the next range.'

'Through yonder passage?'

'The same.'

'And the second victim—'

'The sentinel's face grew pale, and his voice husky, as he replied—'A gondolier, I think.'

'Ha! and he—'

'Lies chained in yonder cell—number eight.'

'Is the key in this bunch?'

'Aye—the key of every cell in the first range is there.'

'And this is the first range?'

'It is.'

'The number of ranges in all?'

'Twenty.'

'And, of cells, each range counts—'

'Fifty.'

'Stay, a moment, till I open number eight.'

'Thou can'st not, without my aid.'

'Ha! Wherefore?'

'Except by a practised hand, the lock cannot be turned, without alarming the bell-wa-ther in the next range.'

'The distance is too far for him to hear.'

'Thou dost mistake: to every lock there is a wire attached, that rings a bell in the watch-room, which no one but an accustomed turn-key can prevent.'

'The motive of that?'

'Is a safeguard against strange hands, in case a stranger should, by any possibility, find entrance here, and seek to set captives free, and also to prevent prisoners from escaping by forcing the doors.'

'Wilt thou open number eight?'

'Aye, if thy companion here will take his dagger from across my throat?'

'I do not know the prisoner in number eight?'

'Do.'

'His name?'

'Gennaro!'

'Ha! Didst thou know him?'

'I did!'

'Wert thou of his calling?'

'Aye, my lord! I it was who first taught him how to pull the gondolier's oar; taught him how to brave the deep and angry tide, when billowy waves ran high amidst the storm. We slept under the same roof, ate at the same table, prayed the same prayers, from his infancy, till I was summoned before the "Ten."'

'Indeed! Who art thou?'

'Gennaro's father!'

'What! his father? Swear it!'

'As I do hope for heaven's mercy!'

'Enough! I trust thee! Release him!'

Paulo let go his hold, and the old sentinel bowed his thanks. Emotion was plainly visible on his boldly delineated features; but it was the emotion of one who had long since learned to curb the rising passions of his heart. His face was livid, clammy; his eyes large, dark, but lustreless; his hands rough, bony, and indicative of great strength; his form about the common height, his shoulders broad, and covered with a loose, coarse, dark-hued tunic, which reached but

slightly below his knees, revealing the nakedness of his legs and feet, the latter being preserved from contact with the ground by a pair of rough, black sandals. His arms were bare, and his chin and upper lip covered with a profusion of dark, bushy hair. His aspect was hideous, gaunt and grim. As the light of the hanging lamp fell upon his face, the keen eye of Galliano detected a twitching on his wrinkled brow and cheeks, and a swimming in his lustreless eyes, which plainly told how deeply his heart was wrung with suffering.

'Shall I open number eight?' asked the sentry, his voice thicker and hoarser than before.

'Thou mean'st no treachery?'

'By all my hopes of heaven, no!'

'Enough—I'll trust thee. Take the keys.'

The old man took the bunch, and, selecting the proper key, advanced towards the dungeon. After cautiously turning the lock and shoving back the bars, the door swung open, and the old man entered the cell. A noise, like the falling of chains, was heard, and, a few moments afterwards, the old man re-appeared, bearing in his sinewy arms the slumbering body of his son. He laid his burden softly upon the pave before the noble; and, kneeling by it, pointed to the body and exclaimed, in a low, choked voice—'Behold, in the dungeons of the masters and rulers of Venice—behold a sight for a father!'

'Hast thou a father's heart and permittest thy son to lie there, when an effort of thine could restore him to life and freedom?' said Galliano, in a stern, reproachful tone, eyeing the sentry.

'That effort were death to him and me,' responded the old man, in a low, hoarse voice; 'the argus-eyed Tribunal would hunt us in the extreme corners of the earth, and drag us back to unescaping death!'

'What! lovest thou life?'

'Aye, count—for my boy's sake.'

'His sake! Ha! ha! old man, what aid can'st thou render him?'

'None, my lord, till his sentence be over. Then—'

'Ha! and then?'

'Then,—that is my secret, my lord!' said the sentry, suddenly recollecting himself, and raising the body.—'Follow me, and thou shalt see,' he added, lifting his son carefully, and walking in the direction of the passage through which the noble and his companion had come.

'Ha! stay, whither goest thou?' demanded Galliano, sternly, and advancing towards him.

The sentry answered not, but on reaching the entrance to the passage, paused, and pressing a stone, a door in the wall flew open, into which the old man entered cautiously, Galliano and his companion following, wondering.

The apartment into which they entered was square, about six feet in height, and the same in length and width. A small lamp rested on a low cross-legged table, which stood in the furthest corner, beside a bed. It was a wretched, filthy-looking hole, and the poisonous stench arising from the bed was almost sufficient to strangle the noble.

Having entered, the sentry placed his senseless son upon the rude couch, and then carefully and silently closed the door. A bolt soon made the latter fast, and the old man, though really deeply agitated, seated himself coolly upon the foot of the bed, and gave a loud laugh.

'How now—the meaning of this?' demanded the noble, a suspicion of treachery flashing across his mind.

'Let me have my laugh, my lord!' said the sentry calmly. 'No living soul, ourselves excepted, is aware of the existence of this little chamber. It is the handiwork of these unpractised hands, and made during the few hours allotted me for sleep. I have robbed nature of her dues to cheat the eyes and interests of men. It is a rare workmanship, is it not my lord?' he added, with a chuckle and a smile which gave him more the semblance of a demon than a man.

'Look my lord, how tastefully the hangings and the tapestry are arranged.' As he spoke, he touched a cord beside the foot of the couch, when as if by magic, the sombreness of the walls changed to a beautiful and luxurious appearance, each side having a portrait painted in its centre. The ceiling was white as porphyry, and a number of circles, each smaller than the other, were painted with great skill, in its centre, giving it the appearance of a magnificent dome. The table, by some mysterious process, assumed the aspect of a card board, and the low couch became a couch of rare beauty. The floor alone remained unchanged, and its dark hue presented a melancholy contrast with the rest of the apartment.

The noble and his companion were mute with astonishment. The former, at last, broke the silence, by demanding of the sentry—'Art thou man, or devil?'

'Neither, my gracious lord,' replied the sentry, with a sardonic grin, 'nor magician, nor fiend; but a simple man, one who has made use of his simple wits to outwit the craftiest ones of Venice.'

'The Tribunal?'

'The same, my lord. For years, they have played upon each nerve of this poor frame, till they have broken—as they think—the sole remaining links that bind me to man. As a captive and a slave, they have used me as they listed—as a captive and a slave, I have used what they could not succeed in robbing me of, my will, to their ultimate undoing. Behold!'

As he spoke, the sentry touched a spring

in the picture, when the latter fell back, revealing a large, high-vaulted chamber, faintly lighted. The room was bare of furniture or ornament, of any kind, and nothing but a single lamp, suspended from the ceiling, could be descried.

'The purpose of that chamber?' said Galliano, interrogatively.

'Tis the dungeon into which they are plunged who are doomed by the Tribunal to linger out a torturing life by starvation, answered the sentinel, coolly. 'But it is not used much,' he continued, ironically; 'the Ten are rapacious, and love to hear the quick groans and screams and yells of those whom they doom. But see, my boy moves; the air has changed the action of his blood. In a few moments, he will be conscious, and then ye must all depart; for the dawn is close at hand. But not a word must be heard from you that will teach him who I am!'

'But if I should wish to return,—say by to-morrow night—with a friend or two with me—wilt thou admit us?' asked Galliano.

'I will,' replied the sentry, 'but remember and ponder on the peril of the attempt.'

'I shall remember all,' said the noble, 'and the Tribunal shall remember me, too. I have a work to do, old man; a work in which five thousand of the bravest and most patriotic of Venetians are sworn to aid me. A work, I say, a work of retribution—dost thou understand me?'

Their eyes met—and, though neither uttered a word, they understood each other's thoughts and meanings, and were satisfied with each other's faith.

'Ha! where am I?' cried the gondolier, starting from the couch, and gazing around him in astonishment. 'Sure I know your faces!' he added, gazing alternately at the noble and his companion. 'Are ye what ye seem—or are ye but the dreamy figures of my crazed brain. Speak, art thou not Paulo, the son of the fruit-vender?'

'I am, Gennaro,' replied Paulo, in a low tone, extending his hand.

'And thou?' he gazed, addressing the noble.

'Thy friend,' said Galliano, softly; 'but one whose name even these walls must not hear. Thou art a freeman, once more, if thou hast strength to walk to where I'll hide thee even from the Tribunal. What say'st thou—be brief, thy answer, man, for day is fast approaching.'

'I cannot walk,' replied Gennaro, faintly, and sinking on the bed,—my limbs have lost their wonted strength. I am feeblér than a child.'

'Let him remain,' said the sentry in a choked tone, which he endeavored to hide by coughing. 'Let him remain then, in heaven's name. I'll answer for his safety with my life. His trial cannot take place till to-morrow night, at the earliest,—as the Tribunal sit only at night—and, as other'

prisoners are yet to be tried, ere he is summoned, he shall in thy company depart—I trust, never to return!

'Then farewell,' said the noble, extending his hand to the prisoner. 'The Tribunal, perchance, did Venice a service in arresting thee. Thou hast a foretaste of the horrors that have been rioting in these infernal caverns: it will serve to nerve thee for the coming trial. Brother, farewell.'

A moment more, and the gondolier was alone. But a few minutes had elapsed, when the sentry again entered the apartment.

'Thou must return to thy dungeon,' said he, in a low, deep tone. 'There is danger that thy cell may be searched between this and the coming night, and it, in such case, thou wert not found, my life would answer for thine absence. Thou wilt receive no food during thy imprisonment, therefore take this loaf and pitcher of wine—all I can give thee—and when the hour of ten arrives, be sure that I shall be with thee. Follow me, in silence: for thy life or death dependeth on thy conduct. Follow me.'

Without a word, without a murmur, though with his brain full of conjectures, the young man soon found himself re-locked in his first dungeon.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOUSE OF THE USURER.

With our kind reader's leave, we will now leap over time a week, during which interregnum some incidents pertaining to this history transpired, which, in their proper time and place shall find a fitful record. We'll change the scene, too, and usher into sight one fair being whom we have already kept too far in the vista—our heroine.

Reader, hast thou ever been in the favored land—the land of song and beauty; the land, above all others, where the Eternal One tarried the longest while creating his fair and beauteous Earth; the land where every zephyr is an angel's whisper—where every rustling of a flower leaf is a flower's sigh—where the orange blooms with a moistening, golden beauty that almost shames the bright and mellowing sun—where the dews of dawn infuse new life, new strength, new blood, new nerve, into the weariest frame—where the pale cheek is made rosy and healthful, as the first blush of youth, by the pellucid atmosphere—where, at night, the stars shine brightest, and the moon gleams purest—where the sky is bluer, the clouds lovelier, the atmosphere clearer, the flowers brighter, gayer and more lovely in their variegated hues, and the waters more blue and clear than in any other of the water-bound islets of God's

fair garden, Earth; where man is blithest, gayest, boldest—where woman is more the seraph and, at the same time the syren—the syren conscious of the all-conquering attributes of her nature—where old men of three-score are glad, joyous and fleet-limbed as the youth of eighteen of less-favored climes—where every gale hath music in it—where the very waves dash on the pale sands like murmuring lullabys, and are echoed by the busy, ever-flying zephyrs above—and where the full, loud, ripe, hearty laugh is heard from every honest heart the isle around, for very mirth and gladness—Venice! Hast thou been there reader mine, and not felt thyself nearer the Paradise of eastern fable, or that truer, holier home spoken of in the Tome of tomes, than ever, or in reality or in thy dreams, before? What though dark dungeons, and bridges, and narrow, winding waters confront thee at every turn—what though mystic tales, and legends of terror and mystery, salute thine ear at dawn, high noon and dusk and even—what though grim processions and fiendish instruments of a power inhuman warn thee to be mute in thy speech and thought, and ever inert in action—what then?—The calm, refreshing, invigorating air—the mellow haze and inspiring sheen of earth's day-god—the bright, blue sky—the deep, broad, gay, sun-kissed mirror of the clouds and sky—the Adriatic, are about thee still, telling thee of beauties so vast and glorious, that man, for all his powers of appreciation of the bright and beautiful, for all his skepticism of the works of Deity, for all his loathing of the depravity of man, must first bow his head in worship to the bright and beautiful, ere he passes censure on the things of ill and villainy around him.

In an obscure quarter of the city, in a dwelling as humble in its exterior as the obscurity of the section in which it stood, dwelt Uberoni, the Usurer. Though strongly suspected of possessing wealth, the humble exterior of his abode seemed to give such belief the lie. Though as well known throughout Venice as the Doge himself, and equally as loathed, yet—for all his reputation for wealth—no man's doors were freer from the depredations of midnight thieves, nor the person of Foscarei himself more safe from danger or insult. In fact, he was strongly suspected of being one of the numerous instruments or spies of the secret and dreaded "Tribunal," and by not a few was he secretly deemed to hold a more important position in the eyes of that terrible body. Though the quarter of the town in which he lived was inhabited by the poorest and vilest, and therefore the section most populated, still, for years previous to the opening of our tale, the rude, low dwellings on either side of the Usurer's house, had stood tenantless. Though their rents were comparatively, nominal, still so

great and so universal was the dread of this man, that the dwellings in question were shunned by all, as if a curse rested upon them. Whenever the Usurer was seen to leave his door, at what hour soever of the day or night, the inhabitants of the street, though sitting before their own doors, ceased speaking—the laugh was broken—the merry jest sundered—the low whisper silenced, each eye bent fearfully to the ground, till he had passed from their sight. His door was ever closed and locked, and his small windows heavily curtained; precautions almost entirely useless; for scarcely a being, of the thousands dwelling in that part of the city, passing, would have had the nerve, to turn his eye in the direction of the house though its door stood agape. A small, square, faded sign hung by the entrance, giving notice of the name and calling of the tenant, and also of his business hours; still, as was well known to the people of that neighborhood, the Usurer did his business elsewhere.

On a bright morning,—about a week after the incidents recorded in the preceding chapter,—a young, handsome and gaily attired cavalier, was seen advancing in the direction of the Usurer's house. He wore scarlet trousers, fitting tightly to the skin, the outward seams hidden by a bright, gold-spangled stripe; a jacket, of blue velvet, trimmed with white ermine and snowy frills, and a jewelled cross; a shoulder cloak, of the same glossy material; a circular, low-crowned cap, of a hue corresponding with his cloak and jacket, ornamented with a high, ostrich-plume, fastened in front by a jewelled loop; white kid gauntlets, yellow boots, and a long, slender, silver-burnished rapier. His figure was slightly above the common height, and finely moulded; his step firm and proud; his features of the Roman order, and haughty as the noblest-born of that once martial race; his head was covered with hair of the deepest jet, and was thrown backwards in ringletted masses, revealing in full his broad, highly-polished brow; he wore small mustachios, and his jetty beard was trimmed to a point. His whole appearance, at once proclaimed his rank, and as he passed, the obsequious and deferential bows and doffing of caps, by the people, attested their knowledge of his name, caste and person. On arriving at the house of the Usurer, the young noble tapped hastily at the door; it was opened slowly, by a tall, stout black, dressed in a long, dark tunic, fastened together, in rough, careless folds, round the waist by a leathern belt, from which hung a long, slender dagger, encased in a sheath of plain brass; a pair of well-worn sandals completed his attire.

'Is thy master at home, knave?' demanded the noble, haughtily.

The black answered by gestures, that he was, but engaged.

'But I must see him,' said the noble, brushing past him, haughtily, and entering a door on his right.

The black gave a significant shrug, closed the door, and disappeared, hastily, down the basement stairs.

'Ho, ho, my trusty man-of-gold,' cried the noble, laughing, on entering the room, as he caught a glimpse of a female dress hastily disappearing through the door of an inner room; 'Ho! ho! So thou hast not forget thy young years, yet—a petticoat in thy house! Ho, ho! a precious sage and moralist thou art, my trusty-gray-beard!'

The Usurer colored, and was stammering an excuse, when the noble, laughing, interrupted him saying—'Nay, no excuses, bring in the lady—I must see her—you know how fond I am of the fair—what pains I take to make myself agreeable, and how agreeable I can make myself, when I try! So, oblige me with an introduction.'

'Pardon me, my lord,' said the Usurer, slowly, 'but I cannot oblige you, at least to-day.'

'Why not, my youthful money-lender?' inquired the other, laughing, 'you must have the poor thing imprisoned in this little box, like a captive bird, and allow no eyes other than your own, and that dumb porter's and knave-of-all-work of thine, to gaze upon her beauty, or listen to her songs! And that, too, while Leonardo Foscarei,—the Prince of Gay Gallants,—as his companions term him, lives! Out on thee, the very idea is unworthy thy reverend wisdom!'

'I'm sorry for it, my lord,' replied the usurer, coldly.

'Nay, man, never purse thy brow so deeply,' added the noble, 'it is bad for thy wrinkles—it exposes them terribly, believe me. Come, my gay Adonis, do let me have one word with—one glimpse of, thy Venus!'

'Not to-day, my lord,' was the cool response.

'What! you won't? Ha! ha! ha! By St. Mark! I do believe thou hast been cutting thy stale bachelorship, and that this is thy honeymoon! Well, if thou art already jealous, heaven watch o'er thy young bride! for she'll have a time of it, with thee for her lord! Come, lend me an hundred ducats, and I'll leave thee to thy fair one!'

'An hundred ducats, my lord?'

'Aye, my young bridegroom, an hundred ducats! Not a moiety less will answer.'

'But it is impossible, my lord.'

'What is impossible?'

'For me to lend you an hundred ducats, my lord.'

'Why so—ch?'

'I have not so much money in the house, my lord.'

'Pooh! pooh! fiddlestick! I know your old excuse, to drag out of me a higher interest than usual. But it won't do, my venerable child. I must have the money—'

and instantly—my honor is pledged for it!"

"But your lordship has had three hundred ducats within this fortnight."

"His lordship is perfectly aware of the fact, and his lordship now wishes another hundred added to the amount, and that without delay, as his lordship feels himself growing more and more choleric," added the noble, in a tone not to be misunderstood.

"But I have not the money," said the usurer, biting his lip; "but I might possibly raise it of a friend, if I could give him a pawn for security."

"Nay, but thou'lt raise it without security other than what thou hast had on the other three hundred," said the noble, playing with the hilt of his sword.

"But—"

"Nay, me no buts," said the noble, laughing, but his pale visage giving the lie to his seeming pleasantness; "I want the money, or I know a tale shall jeopardize thy head!"

"My lord—" gasped the usurer, turning pale, and starting.

"Ho, ho! it brings thy pale liver up, does it?" said the noble with a quiet smile of triumph; "I thought it would."

At this moment a groan was heard—the noble started, and looked wonderingly around; when he again turned, he beheld the usurer lying upon the floor,—his eyes turned upwards, as if in death, and his thin lips covered with white foam.

Somewhat startled, and still more confused, the young noble instantly resolved to quit the house, and return towards evening for the money which he needed. So, summoning the black, and pointing out to the slave the condition of his master, he, with hasty strides, took his departure. "Ho! ho!" he muttered, as he passed up the street, "how soon that hint of the murder of old Galliano brought him to his senses! The pale fool thought it was forgotten. But he labored under a mistake. That is my hold upon his purse and services—when he fails me in either, when he dares again to look me so boldly and insolently in the face—the base murder of his white-haired victim, the noble Galliano, shall be a luxurious end to the one I have in store for him. Ha! ha! ha! And then, when I have eased him of his saucy blood, how easy it will be, with a troop of disguised and masked confederates, to enter his crib at night, and take possession of his strong-box. Ha! ha! ha! The thought is quite refreshing. But that groan—what could it mean? Spirits hide not themselves in holes and corners by day! So our worthy confessors tell us, and they, passing their days and nights in holy and spiritual studies, should know. And the mysterious petticoat, too—I must understand it, and that before long. Umph!" And in this singular train of thought—this mingling of the assassin with the rone—he hied him to the house of a companion.

When the usurer recovered from his spasm, which he did in about half an hour, he found himself stretched on a low, broad, cushioned bench, his head supported by a high pillow. A young girl, of some eighteen or nineteen years, sat on a low bench beside him, wiping, with her handkerchief, the saliva from his lips, and the cold moisture from his cheeks and brow. The stony eyes of the usurer fell on her fair, small, tanned features, and rested there in silence. She was small in stature, but of a contour of form and features that would strike a sculptor with reverence and awe. Her lips were small, but shaped like a perfect bow, and were ripe and rosy as the flower that, itself the loveliest, reigns queen amid the fairest. Her brow was high, but, like the rest of her skin, bronzed by her Italian sun. Her hair, parted in the centre of her forehead, and falling in heavy masses round her neck, was dark and silky as the wings of a raven. Her attire was plain, but tasty, and revealed in full the perfection of her *petite* figure. It consisted of a dark merino frock, fitting close to the shoulders and waist, and reaching a little below the knees; while her small and delicately-shaped feet and ankles were encased in black silk stockings and buskins of the same hue. She was pale, and the expression of her large, dark eyes, as they met the usurer's, was—"Thou, poor, suffering man, I can feel for thee; for I, too, am a sufferer."

The usurer interpreted the glance, and the hard stoniness of his eyes immediately changed into a moistening softness that, it was evident, was unusual to them. Finding this sudden change was visible to the young girl, and fearing that it might be seized by her for a purpose which would conflict with his interests, the usurer coughed to hide his feelings, and, finding himself fully equal to the effort, started up, with a brief "Thanks!" and hastily left the room.

Scarcely had he quitted the apartment, when a hand from without pushed by the curtain, and a small piece of parchment was thrown into the room. The young girl picked it up, but ere she had time to read, the footstep of the usurer was heard, and in another moment, he was before her. Agitation marked his step, his features, though he was evidently struggling to master it. He paced the room hurriedly, his eyes bent upon the matting covering the floor. Finishing himself a little calmer, he seated himself upon the cushioned bench, and, looking the young girl full in the eyes, said, sternly—

"Girl of a blighted name, for thy kindness in tending me in my weakness, accept my thanks: in return, if I can do aught for thee, name it."

"Restore me to my friends," said the girl, falteringly.

The usurer smiled, and shook his head.

as he replied: Thy friends cannot receive thee."

"Have they refused to?" asked the young girl, weeping.

"They have not," replied the usurer; "they would be glad, doubtless, to have thee with them. Shall I tell thee a secret? And if so, wilt thou retain it?"

"I—?" She laughed, but a sob was mingled with it.

"Thou'rt right," said the usurer, catching the meaning of her laugh; "if thou hast no means of conversing, to whom canst thou reveal? Thou'rt right: and for that reason I will tell thee why thy friends cannot receive thee—they are not in Venice."

"No?"

"No."

"But where, then?"

"That remains a mystery."

"Have they fled?"

"By some strange means, they have," replied the usurer; "but their flight is merely momentary: they will soon return."

"Thank heaven for that!"

"They would scarce thank thee for such offering."

"Ha!"

"When they return—as return they must, they but return to die!"

"Are they, then, condemned?"

"The suspected, in Venice, are condemned before they are arrested. The arrest is but the forerunner of the shroud."

"But they've escaped?"

"Aye—and I will tell thee how. Dost remember the night of the old man's arrest?"

"I do."

"That night Odo, the Tribunal's Death Messenger, presented the old lord a packet: it summoned him to leave undone whatever he was doing—if eating his food, to lay down the untasted mouthful—if drinking, to set down the cup, without tasting, though it were within a hair of his lip—if preparing for his bed, to don his cloak and cap, and, without a word, without a glance, without a movement, without a sign could be translated by a child, to follow the Tribunal's messenger. He did so: for his rank's sake, the Ten awaited his coming. Sooner even than they thought, sooner than they looked for, their victim was before them. Sooner than he wished, the old man stood in the council chamber, in the presence of those whose fiat was as relentless as their decrees were terrible. A chamber, eighteen feet high, fifty broad, and fifty deep, the walls and ceiling hung with black, with devices of every torture used, curiously wrought thereon, each device being in itself a picture to fright the prisoner ere he has spoke a word, ere a word has been spoken to him,—with ten masked men, in black, sitting in a semi-circle, on a raised platform, before him. Pale but firm, the lord stood before his doomsmen. The charge of endeavoring to

suborne the peace and welfare of the state was put against him. The old man replied by demanding the name of his accuser. "Leonardo Foscarei," was the answer. The accuser and the accused stood face to face—a triumph in the young man's eyes,—astonishment, withering scorn and defiance, in the face of the old. Deep silence reigned awhile. A signal was given—a box was handed round—the box was opened—and lo! 'twas empty—the lord's doom was spoken, sealed, without a word—the interior of the box was black—nothing whitened it—he was doomed! Three nights afterward, he suffered in the sulphur dungeon. Hast thou ever heard how terrible is that death? I'll tell thee.—The victim's dungeon is strongly barred, so that his strength, be it as superhuman as it may, cannot burst the door; the walls and ceiling are covered with soft, springy wool, so that, when frantic, the victim cannot dash his brains out; by degrees, the sulphur, mixed with white powder, ground from lilies' hearts, begins to ooze through holes in the floor: the sensation is delightful beyond conception—to the aged victim, youth seems to be restored; the bright visions and dreams of boyhood, glide past the mind's eye—the air built castles, the amours and gaudies and enjoyments of body and mind pass, as in a mirror, before his mental vision—in a moment, as if by magic, this vanishes, and the victim is seized with cramps and chills,—his very blood seems dried up—his veins and nerves knock one against the other, creating pains and agony beyond belief. The flood of vapor changes, as to a mist—through which the victim's countless actions and scenes, from youth to the silver hairs upon his head, the gay and the grave, the innocent and the guilty hours of past time—it seems as if all the chambers of memory are opened wide, that the spectres of the brain are dancing before your eye, as in a magician's mirror. The vapor fades slowly—and again the chills and pains of torture seize upon the victim, only more intensely than before. A sharp pang fastens upon his forehead—vultures appear to be devouring his body—he strives to speak, to cry, to groan, but cannot—the pain is so intense that he cannot utter a single word. Again the vapor rises—the victim feels relief according as the mist increases in thickness around him. The cell becomes more crowded with the vapor every moment, and in proportion does the delight of the victim increase. The spiritual world is opened to his mental vision, all his conceptions of the happy land of the Hereafter are embodied and figured before him. A spirit stands on the shore, and beckons him to come. The vapor again vanishes, and the former tortures seize him with increasing virulence. He yells, screams, starts, springs from corner to corner of his cell, as if pursued by a demon. Again the vapor rushes

through the floor—the cell becomes hot as fire—the burning Lake, with all its horrors, rises to his view—the King of the Doomed leaves his throne to drag him into his fire—the sweat rushes in torrents from the victim—his senses leave him one by one, and with a cry, rising from the exquisite perfection and very acme of human torture, he bounds into the air. The power of the vapor ceases—the executioners enter the cell, and naught is visible but a mass of fleshless bones!

The orange girl did not shudder—she did not scream—but leaning back in her chair, gazed wonderingly at the speaker. Her features, indeed, changed, and, as the Usurer paused, turned, shade by shade, paler and paler, till her whole visage resembled a countenance of cold and frigid marble.

Having exhausted his anger, and indifferent to the terrified feelings of his victim, the usurer changed his tone, and added, in a bland voice—'Time presses—I must hence. When my business for the day is finished, I shall return. Meanwhile, ponder on what I have said. If I find thee in a humor consorting with mine own, thy future days shall be one eternal reign of joy and bliss. If not—mark me: the wretch that lives in caverns, and feeds on mouldy diet—whose loathsome carcass even worms shudder at and shrink from—whose bowels like the fabled magi's, are ever being devoured by serpents—whose palate, like those of the doomed in the ever-flaming lake of the Eternities, is hollow and painful through thirst—I tell thee, girl, the sufferings of such an one shall be bliss, compared with the tortures I have in store for thee! Adieu!

A minute more, and the orange girl was alone.

Reader, mine, hast thou ever had thy mind so begirt with fears—so harrowed, narrowed, cornered—so hemmed round that thy very physical members have seemed to join in the dreadful league against thee—so crushed, so overburdened, so wrought upon by those possessing Power over thee, that even the fountains of thy soul have refused thee a single drop of moisture—a single tear—wherewith to cool the fire of thy anguish? Hast thou ever? If not, then kneel, and thank thy God for sparing thee—when others are afflicted—from such heart-breaking woe.

How still she sat—how calm—how pale—how silent!

The hum of voices spread through the key-hole of the outer door—through the crevices in the crazy walls, and yet no sign, no token that the tenant of that little chamber lived and breathed, was visible. There she sat, motionless as marble—her eye gazing on the spot where the usurer last had stood, as if unconscious of the absence of him, she had seen standing there!

Dusk had stolen in—lightly at first—then heavier—even as gray hairs fall on the crown of man—until Night had usurped the place of Day. Night, with her stars and drapery, and clouds, and bright silver orb—night, fair and graceful and beautiful, without—night, all dark, and dreary, and cheerless within.

She moved not, that fair, that beautiful, that terrified girl.

The hours waxed on, and yet the usurer, contrary to his word, did not make his appearance. Did his victim expect him—did she yearn for his arrival?

Midnight arrived—midnight: that hour when deeds unholy and dark and murderous are perpetrated by God-defying hands; that hour when the student's brightest conceptions flash athwart his vision,—when man ponders deepest on human schemes, and woman's dreams are holiest—midnight!

The outer door swung back on its oiled hinges, noiselessly—the door of the chamber in which the orange girl sat, opened softly—a hand was laid upon her shoulder; the fear-spell was broken, and, without uttering a moan, or a sob, or a shriek, the orange girl turned her head slightly around. The unknown, at that moment, pulled aside the heavy drapery curtaining the window, when, like a bright haze, the sheen of the moon fell upon her features, and the stranger beheld a fair, pale face, gazing at him, her eyes full and lustrous, and tears rushing, like a silent stream, adown her alabaster cheeks.

'Dost thou not know me?' said the stranger, in a low, deep voice.

'Know, thee!' she repeated.

'Aye, thou poor, wronged girl,' added the stranger, 'Dost thou not know me? I am thy friend.'

'Friend—my friend!'

'Even thine, Eugenia. Cheer up—I've come to save thee!'

'Save me!'

'Aye, girl! The hour is propitious—the usurer is absent—my gondola is at hand—and friends, who have mourned over thine absence, anxiously look for thee.'

'Friends—I'm to sleep in the vault below us—over a dead man's grave—over the ashes of the father of one who—'

'Why dost thou pause, fair one?'

'Thou'lt betray me!' said the girl, timidly.

'Nay,' replied the unknown, encouragingly, 'I am no spy.'

'Art sure?'

'Nay, look into mine eyes.'

'They are no index of the man.'

'Wilt thou not trust me, then?'

'I trusted once—and was deceived.'

'All men are not villains, lovely one.'

'Right—my brother was not—nor yet my father—nor Gennaro—yet all deserted me.'

'Twas cruel in them.'

'It was, and yet they did it. A wronged, betrayed, affrighted girl, I fled from home, and they never tried to find out and bring me back. I fled, to escape reproach—expecting they would seek me out—promise to chide no more, and take me home.'

'And for that thou didst fly thine old home, thy friends and kin?'

'For that, and no other.'

'Poor girl!'

'I like thee, stranger, thou hast a heart; for lo! how thy voice doth change while thou speakest. Bend low thine ear, and I will tell thee the name of him over whose grave I am to sleep and dream, till I have dreamt my soul away!'

The stranger obeyed. She whispered to him a word—but one—and, almost ere its final accents had died upon her tongue, the chamber echoed with loud, wild and thrilling laughter.

'Ha! ha! ha! My father's! Are circumstances and my suspicions at last verified? Ha! ha! ha! And I am in the house whose walls do hide his ashes! Ha! ha! ha! My father's grave found at last! his murderer, too! Ha! ha! ha! Revenge, revenge! thou at last hast found thine altar!'

He paced the apartment wildly, his brows knit—his cheeks pale—his hand clenching the hilt of his oft-tried blade. Then turning to the trembling girl, he cried—

'But thou, poor victim of a coward's lust and an assassin's tyranny, thou must hence! I've pledged mine honor to rescue and restore thee to those who, like thyself, have felt the hand of a villain! Nay, fear not—give me thy waist, girl! Time presses, and we must fly while yet the tiger is absent from his lair!'

Throwing his arm around her waist, and raising her, like a feather, from the ground, he was about rushing with his burden, from the apartment, when his ear caught the sound of heavy and hurried footsteps, and the next moment, the gigantic black mute stood on the threshold of the door, his left hand holding a burning torch, in his right a naked cimeter, while round his lips and in his large sleepy-looking eyes there hovered a grin that would have answered for the chuckle of a fiend.

The aspect of this personage was so revolting, that Galiano, despite his natural nerve, shuddered as his eye fell upon him. The orange girl crept closer and closer to the noble, twining her arms tightly round his well-shaped neck, and gazed fearfully upon the hideous being before her.

Conquering his momentary tremor, and clasping firmer his burthen, the noble demanded, sternly—'Thy business, slave?'

The black raised his large dark eyes, and, pantomimically, ordered him to set his burthen down, and depart.

The noble, now wholly self-possessed, laughingly responded—'What if I obey not?'

The black glanced significantly at his cimeter.

'Ah! thou wilt make that acquainted with my breast?'

The mute bowed.

'Thou art very kind, my prince of spades but, as I'm in no humor for jesting, I'll obey thee for the nonce. So, give way, or I'll cleave thee to the head.'

The mute replied only by planting the spear-pointed toron in the floor of the hall, and casting on the noble a look of stern defiance.

'What?' cried the noble, sharply, 'thou lovest sword-play? Then taste the temper of mine!' And he aimed a hasty blow at the head of the black, which was as quickly parried as given; a cold, heavy laugh warned the noble that he had no mean swordsman to deal with, and, setting his burthen on a chair, he firmly, yet cautiously, re-approached his antagonist, in the hall. Their swords met, but, so perfect was each in the art of handling his weapon, that neither could touch the flesh of his foe. At every thrust, the black warded off the glittering blade, with a derisive grin, that called up all the pride and passion of the noble. Every trick of fence, every stratagem calculated to take away the other's guard was resorted to, but without success: the black appeared invulnerable. On his part, the mute tried every move to bring his antagonist to disadvantage; but his efforts were vain—victory stood poised between them, not knowing the brow her garland yet should crown.

Through the door, the orange girl beheld the combat which was to restore her to light and liberty, or plunge her deeper into misery. Told she not, in voiceless numbers, prayers to the Mighty One?

The combatants paused spontaneously, as if to recover the muscularity of nerve spent in the all but silent trial.

Lo! hand to hand, foot to foot, eye to eye, they are again. Every nerve is strained—every trick of fence again played o'er. Now they thrust high—now low—now, round and round, like rings of glittering steel dancing in the air, play their swords. O'er head and shoulders—at breast and neck, they at each other aim. Mark well their eyes—how full, how fiery, how lustrous, and yet how cautious, as if all the daring and cunning attributes of their natures were centred in their eyes!

Again they pause.

Their eyes shoot fire and hate—their breasts swell with loathing and scorn which only those men feel who have a foe, yet know they cannot harm him, because his courage and cunning are, at any moment, a full match for theirs.

Now, they eye each other doggedly, as if conscious that the third trial is victory to one, death to the other, or, perchance, death to both. Shrink they?

Mark the pale cheek—the clasped hands, the anxious eyes of that poor, peril-girt girl within, as they are rivetted upon the features of her champion! Move not her lips? Performs she not a double task? Prays she not, and watches she not?

Lo! their blades are crossed again—quicker than before each weapon flies from point to point—who wavers? Both—they scarce can stand the fire and deadliness of each other's eyes! Death stands between them—his shaft raised on high to strike! Who wavers now, in that struggle! See! the white foam gathers round their lips—now, 'tis changed to blood! Hark! a cry from within—has her champion received the javelin? No: for look, where, across the threshold, lies the black, and where, above him, his knee upon his enemy's breast, the noble's bold hand presses the hilt of that unflinching steel whose point now pins the dark slave to the earth!

Hark! the lock turns in the outer door—the door swings back—and now, the murderer and the first born of the murdered one stand eye to eye, in the presence of the dying, yea, over the sepulchre of the dead!

Mark! how blanches the one cheek—how fires up the other. Note the quailing of the old man's eye, and mark how each white hair rises erect upon his crown, as if in judgment against the owner of the crown—as if conscious that God's human Avenger stands there, with bold hand, good sword and unflinching heart, to stain each snowy lock with its owner's blood! The old man, brave in youth, brave in manhood, yea, to his heart's core fearless, why shrinks he now at the eagle eye of one so much in years his junior? He sees his foe before him, yet has not thought enough to reach from its scabbard his sword! Fresh from halls where human blood and dying groans are a nightly banquet—where among the heartless he is the most heartless—old man! old man! where is thy iron heart, now?

'Reach forth thy weapon, man,' cried Galliano, sternly; 'I've sworn to take the life of my father's murderer. Yet would I give thee a chance for the retaining of thy life. Draw, and defend thyself.'

The spell was broken—though returned, and the usurer, casting a glance behind him, snatched up the torch, and darted down the stairs leading to the vault. With a spring blithe as his own, the noble darted after him, closely followed by the affrighted orange girl. As she flew past the distended black, a hasty hand attempted to grasp the skirts of her dress, but fear winged her footsteps, and she escaped the death-clutch of the wounded mute.

The vault into which the usurer fled was deep and spacious, and contained a range of nine low arches, which were covered by heavy oaken doors—the depositories, doubtless, of the old man's valuables and papers

The walls were thick and mouldy, and a chilly atmosphere pervaded its length and breadth. A small blind grating stood on one side of the vault, near the ceiling, while directly beneath it, rose an earthy mound, shaped like a lowly grave.

As the orange girl reached the foot of the rough, broad stairs of the vault, she started on beholding Galliano grasping the distended usurer by the throat, with one hand, and with the other pointing to the grave.

The features of the usurer were pale as ashes, his eyes seemed starting from their sockets, and his whole frame shivered like one in the last throes of life. In his powerless hand he grasped a broken blade, which plainly told the history of his last short, but hasty combat.

'Look there, catiff!' exclaimed the excited noble, pointing to the grave, 'look there, where repose the bones of my father! See where his spirit stands in sorrow—his lustreless eyes gazing on thee, his murderer, and now on me, his avenger! Look at his hollow cheeks and bloodless lips!—made so by thee, villain! Lo! where I stand, a dim and misty shadow of his former being, upon the roof of his obscure grave! See—his hand is raised—'tis the signal for mine avenging sword! Die, wretch! Go, and join thy fellow-assassins in the realms of the Infernal!

Then dragging the body to the grave, he exclaimed—Father! let thy troubled spirit rest: for here, on the altar of thy grave, I immolate thy murderer!

The sword of the frenzied noble passed thrice through the breast of the usurer, and the dreaded President of the Tribunal was no more.

CHAPTER X.

THE ROBBERY AND DISCOVERY

The night following the incidents of the preceding chapter, two fashionably dressed young men were conversing in a retired room of an hostel well known in Venice, at the time of our tale, as the 'Inn of the Golden Grape.' It stood on the broad quay Orfano, and was the favorite resort of the young nobles and higher ranks, as its wines, edibles, smoking-reeds, and accommodations were said to be superior to those of any other hostel in Italy.

A round table was before them, on which two large waxen tapers burned, throwing a bright light on the spangled and jewelled gear of the gallants, as they quaffed their goblets of generous grape, during their whispered speech.

'I tell thee, Leon, no harm can possibly come of it, if we proceed with despatch

and secrecy,' said the taller of the two, in a low, cautious voice, and draining his cup of its mellow juice.

'But we need more help,' responded his companion, half falteringly: 'if we should be surprised—'

'We need not be surprised,' persisted the former, earnestly; 'if we but take the proper hour, and use sufficient precaution, neither noise nor scuffle shall ensue. What need, then, of other confederates, to whom we must allow an equal share of the spoil? Besides, how know we that they would keep their own counsel, after the deed? They might betray us, and then, shame and ruin would be our portion. No—no! we must have no more sharers in that rich booty. There will be none too much—even though there should be a thousand times more than I suspect—in his strong box. Besides, think of the girl—for, despite what I have said, I do not believe she is yet wedded to the old man—is there not joy, rapture, more than bliss in that thought? Speak, shall we hazard it?'

'I care not if we do,' replied the other, slowly, 'provided thou art certain there is no danger in the attempt: and that, after the usurer is dead, thou wilt share fairly in the monies and jewels.'

'I pledge myself to as much. Is it a bargain?'

'It is,' replied his companion, giving him his hand.

At this moment, the door of the chamber opened, and a young fashionable presented himself to the eyes of the plotters.

'Ha! Lorenzo, my gay madcap,' exclaimed the first speaker, his sober countenance changing, all at once, to the roysterer's careless smile, 'give thee good even! What circumstance indebted us for thy most welcome company?'

'Have ye heard the news?' said the new comer, seating himself, and clearing his throat with a draught of the tempting juice before him.

'In good sooth! not I,' replied the roue, 'I, for one, am no newsmonger. But to what do you allude?'

'The usurer,—the life of the money-mart—has not been seen "on change" to-day.'

'Indeed! The reason?'

'I have not heard. Some suppose him ill—others, that he is engaged in forming a contract with the devil how to get all the currency of Venice in his grasp. I confess that I incline to the latter opinion myself.'

'Ha! ha!' laughed the roue, glancing meaningly at Leon, 'doubtless, it is so: for the white-haired knave hath either had his soul so deeply wrapt in the study and worship of Mammon, that it is no wonder if he hath now, in his old age, sacrificed a day in studying out how to change his copper into gold. Why, my merry hearts,' he continu-

ed, re-filling his cup, and emptying it at a swallow, as if to quiet the restlessness which had seized upon his nerves by the intelligence brought by Lorenzo, 'do ye not recollect how, some ten or twelve years ago, the old wretch was absent from the mart two whole days; and that, when he returned, how desperately he plunged into the stocks, outbidding all, till it seemed as if he meant to buy up all Venice? Do ye not remember it?'

'I was young then,' said Lorenzo; 'but I remember the sensation it made throughout the city.'

'I have a recollection of it, too,' added Leon; 'it was about the time of the mysterious disappearance of the elder Galliano.'

'Exactly,' said the roue, his cheek changing color, 'it was the very time. And, my life on't! this is but another of his tricks; and, it will be well for our impoverished merchants, if his re-appearance to-morrow, or next day, be not followed by the same disastrous result.'

As he spoke, his eyes met Lorenzo's; a sickly smile hovered round the lips of the latter.

'But come, my merry hearts,' cried the roue, 'let us forth. The night is tempting, and woos us forth. I would not stay indoors on such a night for the brightest smile of my mistress. Come!'

'Nay, I prefer the grape and weed,' said Lorenzo, filling his cup to the brim. 'Soon as this goblet is emptied, and this sweet-flavored Turkish powder wasted in clouds, I shall bid me home: for I have a chiding letter to write to my fair mistress, ere I seek slumber; and I must drink wine enough to nerve me for the task.'

'Chide her not too harshly,' said the roue, laughing, and leaving the room, followed by Leon.

They passed through the hostel, laughing, and nodding carelessly to those whom they met.

They walked on, in silence, each busy with his thoughts, till they reached an unfrequented part of the quay.

'Hold'st thou still thy mind?' said Lorenzo, breaking the silence.

'Listen, and then judge,' replied the other, with great coolness. 'For the past eight months I have run out, in extravagance, upwards of four thousand ducats; a thousand of which was furnished me by my father. The rest was obtained partly from the usurer, and partly from friends who must be paid. Most of the money falls due within a week, or my credit is lost. The notes held against me by the usurer I care not a straw for, as I do not mean to pay them; and he dare not seize upon me, partly because I am son to the first man of Venice, and partly because he is aware of a secret of his in my possession, which might harm him, if revealed. But I am in direct

need—creditors—impertinent varlets!—dog my heels at every step—my father's patience and kindness are exhausted, and I must have means to hold my head up, as befits my birth. The mammon-eaten bags of the old usurer can supply my wants, and—THEY SHALL!

His face was pale, but not with fear; his lips were bloodless, but not with remorse; his eyes were cold and stony, but not with shame. A haughty smile hovered round his lip, and a slight blue shade was visible under his eyes. His whole aspect was terrible.

His companion, who, so far as his means and prospects were concerned, was scarcely a jot better off, surveyed him, a moment, with awe. But as his nature was not above temptation—as he loved Pleasure, and cared but little for Honesty, when she interfered with his dearer mistress, Pleasure,—as, moreover, he had been, for years, the boon companion and co-mate of Leonardo Foscari, in all his scenes of dissipation,—his awe soon gave way to impatience, and he flattered the bent of the young lord by exclaiming—

—'Time wanes; let us on!'

—'So be it!' replied Foscari, laconically.

They passed on.

A few minutes of travel brought them to the street in which the usurer's house was situated. Every thing seemed to favor their purpose. The street was silent and, apparently, deserted. The moonbeams shone on the side opposite the house they were about to enter, and the house itself was shaded. Were not their prospects bright?

They neared the door, and paused. Were they conscience-stricken?

Lo! they are masked. And now, they press against the door, gently at first—anon, heavily. In vain: it yields not. A thought strikes the noble—he whispers to his companion, and they leave the door. The house beside the usurer's is old, tenantless, and ruinous. They press against its door—it yields, and now, they are in darkness.

Hark! voices are heard—low, confused, but still voices, aye, and human as their own. The sound of pickaxe and spade as they clash against each other, or strike into the earth, is heard. A faint gleam, like unto that of the solitary star sometimes seen in the heavily-curtained sky, at night, stole through a crevice in the floor. Foscari bent over the spot, and, with his dirk, widened the crevice. The sounds now were plainer, but naught was visible, save the torch-gleam.

Foscari groped round the floor, cautiously. Joy! his fingers touch an iron ring. A trap-door is in his grasp—'tis raised—and now—!

His eyes fall on a *tableau* that turns his naturally strong nerves into wavering reeds.

It was a strange and startling picture. The vault was lit by a huge, flaming torch,

which, resting in the earth, near a pile of fresh dug earth, threw a broad and brilliant glare around the terrific scene. Standing in a grave, and holding in his hands a fleshless earth-bued skull, stood a masked figure, in the guise of a gondolier. A few feet from him, his left hand resting on the edge of a new made and open coffin, which was mounted on a pair of cross-legged stools, stood another in the same garb and masked. Behind the latter, and near the coffin's foot, stood a tall, majestic personage, enveloped in a mask and cloak, and wearing a low-crowned circular cap, surmounted by a cluster of raven plumes; while, at the side of the grave, his left hand holding a white waxen taper, and his left a long, slender cross, stood a monk, also masked and cloaked. As the skull was raised by the figure in the grave, the form of the capped figure was seen to tremble and turn away, as if shook by some internal agony—but no word, no sigh, no groan escaped him; his grief was not for other's woes.

The grave-digger, after a moment's survey of the skull, handed it, silently, to the figure on his right, by whom it was laid silently into the coffin.

Plying again his pickaxe and spade, the figure in the grave soon drew forth a few half decayed bones, which were also placed, in silence, in the coffin.

'They are all there,' said the figure, now leaping out of the chasm, and with the other, counting the relics of the dead.

'They are,' added he to whom the bones had been handed, arranging them in the shroud.

'Then, children,' said the monk, advancing, 'let us to prayer.'

On the bare earth they knelt, that little and solemn group; their caps off, and their heads bent, and their hands clasped in holy and heart-feeling prayer.

The holy words were o'er; all rose, but that lone form whose heart was bent the most; whose cheek was palest, whose eyes most dim with tears—the loftiest, the bravest, the proudest, the noblest of them all.—From his pocket the monk drew forth a phial, containing holy water, and sprinkled the relics. Then opening his missal, read the prayers of his church for the dead; which, being done, the water was again sprinkled over the bones. The ceremonies being concluded, the most thrilling one to the noble youth at the foot of the coffin, now presented itself; it was the closing and screwing of the coffin lid. During its operation, he rose from his knees, and leaning against an upright beam, near the staircase, gave vent to his overcharged heart, in a stream of mournful tears.

The lid was closed—the last screw riveted into the wood—when one of the figures drew from a sack, a black velvet pall, and threw it over the coffin.

The noble resumed his erst stern bearing—the gondoliers raised the bier upon their shoulders—the monk seized the torch from its niche in the earth, and thus, the noble leading, in silent procession, they ascended the staircase, and the vault was in darkness.

The hall was reached—the door opened, and, slowly and solemnly, the party marched forth. A few stragglers, fresh from scenes of mirth and vice, were passing up the pave, singing snatches of low, lewd songs; but their mirth was checked by the strange and sudden sight. On beholding the priest, as he marched in the rear, with cross in one hand and the flaming torch in the other, their voices were hushed, and, doffing their caps, bent their heads till the procession was passed and beyond their sight.

The moonbeams shone on the jetty pall, as it was borne to the quay Mazollo, a few yards from the usurer's house, and the stars looked bright as it was placed carefully in the gondola, which was to bear it to the ancestral vault of the Galliano family.

The noble seated himself sternly at the helm—the bier rested lengthwise, on a bench, brought for the purpose, in the centre of the boat—the monk took his station forward—the gondoliers taking their seats near the stern, raised their oars, and the next moment the little barge was gliding rapidly o'er the smooth waters, in the direction of a little island, where stood a mansion, towering above the rest, known as the home of the Gallianos.

Return we, now, to the watchers.

Foscari understood at once the meaning of the ceremonies attendant on the disinterment, and in the form of the masked stranger recognized the favorite of the metropolis; and his once beloved friend. His companion was not so fortunate in comprehending the scene, but Foscari enabled him to gather enough to form a dim conception of its meaning, by pretended conjectures and exclamations.

The darkness was no obstacle to Foscari, for he well knew, by repeated visits to the house, where to find appliances to furnish him a light, and, leaping down into the vault, groped his way to the staircase. Ascending, and searching an apartment in the rear of the house, he found box, flint and tinder, by which he was soon in possession of a light. A portable lamp, with three small burners, stood on a mantle before him, and, touching the igniting wick, he was soon in possession of light enough to guide him back to the vault.

'Thou may'st spring,' he exclaimed, to his companion, and holding the lamp under the trap.

Leon leapt down, and, for the first time, the hopeful youths had a full view of the objects around them. In one corner, cold and stiff, and gory lay the body of the usu-

rer; his glassy eyes staring full upon them, while at the foot of the staircase, as if he had fallen headlong from the top, lay the corse of the gigantic black—its features betraying the last agonies of death. The youths started at the sight, and Foscari exclaimed—

'By St. Peter! there has been foul murder here! It would be well to inform the authorities of the matter! What thinkest thou of it?'

'We had better see if his money bags have been jilted of life also,' answered Leon, nervously.

'Right, business first—pleasure afterwards,' responded Foscari, laughing. 'Let us examine yonder arch: perhaps, as the doors are fast, they have neglected to add theft to their crime.'

They proceeded to the first of the arches, but were somewhat staggered on finding no means of opening it, as the lock was on the inside. They then advanced to the next, and to the next, but the same unpleasant sight greeted them at each.

'Where, in Satan's name, is the master-key of these treasure caves,' said Foscari, impetuously, and glancing, uneasily around.

'The girdle of the black,' said Leon, suggestively.

'Psha!' exclaimed the other, contemptuously, 'think'st thou the cunning gray-beard silly enough to thrust the magic key of his whole wealth to that foul carcase? More likely his own breast!'

'Then, try, thou that,' responded Leon, 'while I examine the mute.'

'So be it,' said Foscari, hastily, and advancing towards the corse of the usurer.

'Tis not here,' said he impatiently.

'But 'tis here,' cried Leon, joyfully, holding up a bunch of cunningly-devised keys, which he cut from the leathern girdle of the mute.

After several attempts, Foscari succeeded at last, in hitting on the right key, and in opening the first arch. But, nothing but shelves of parchment met their gaze. Giving vent to his disappointment in an oath, the rone proceeded to open the next, but with no better success. The third and fourth arches were opened, and found to contain little packages, evidently pledges, of rings, and jewels of considerable amount.

'Cospetto!' exclaimed Foscari, 'but the knaves have left us something, after all. Here!' and he handed handful after handful to his companion, after having filled his own pockets first. 'But the gold itself, he added, impatiently, 'I must have that. This trash may do for those who want it!'

He did not, however, disencumber himself of what he had already in his possession.

The fifth arch was opened, and then what a sight greeted his gaping eyes. On broad shelves, extending from side to side

of the arch, lay heaped piles of glittering coin.

'Ho! ho! my merry heart!' he exclaimed, rapturously, to his companion, who was busily engaged in helping himself to the little packages in the next cell, 'what think'st thou of this? Is it not a feast to the hungry! Look!'

But he gave Leon little chance for sight, ere he commenced filling his own pockets with the tempting food.

Leon exerted his utmost to grasp the golden coin, but so violently did Foscari repulse him, so eagerly did the rascal seek to clutch it all, that he had but a small prospect of reaching any without a struggle. Desperate at the repacity of his companion, and eager to seize upon a pile of ducats on the third shelf, he violently thrust the hand of Foscari aside, and, in the struggle, the stirred shelf gave way, and down tumbled coin, shelf and all upon their heads.

A bag of gold, of considerable weight, concealed behind some piles of ducats, fell with them, and with such force that, striking the young lord on the breast in its descent, it felled him to the earth; where he was soon covered with the coin swept from the shelves by Foscari. When the greediness and rapacity of the latter had somewhat abated, he exclaimed—'Now, Leon, take thy share, and let us begone.'

But Leon answered not.

'Leon!' he exclaimed, looking around, 'Leon, where art thou?'

No answer came.

Springing over the heap of treasure before him, his heel grazed something fleshy beneath him, and immediately after a sharp cry rang through the vault, and all was silent. Half suspecting the actual state of things, Foscari hastily flung the heap aside, and, to his horror, discovered a gash on the head of his companion, and his face and neck all covered with blood!

'Great heavens!' he exclaimed, recoiling, 'have I slain him! Leon! Leon!'

No voice responded to his own.

'Leon! 'tis I! for heaven's sake, speak!'

No answer came from the lips of the prostrate man. Foscari knelt, and placed his hand upon the heart of his friend—it was still!

Cold sweat rolled down the cheeks and limbs of the rascal on this discovery; his knees trembled and his eyes grew moist. For a few moments, terror unnerved him, and the finger of a child might have robbed him of his balance. Thought then came to his aid, and he was himself again. In that dark vault, where Death reigned over three ghastly subjects,—in that dark vault, where mammon yawned from his glittering cave—in that dark vault, with the life of earth before him, and three pictures of the King of Terrors around him,—in that vault where Fate seemed to level her shafts

unerringly on all who entered it,—in that vault of Darkness, and Mammon and Death and Terror, the strong heart of Leonardo Foscari did not desert him.

He seized the spade, and, like a ceaseless and fearless worker, threw up the earth, till a hole of sufficient size to suit his purpose was made, when he flung the body of his late companion in, and covered him with the soil. Having filled up the gap, and strewed the superfluous earth around, to hide the evidence of his crime, he shovelled the treasure back into the cell,—yea, every coin,—fastened each arch, and, with his pockets sinking with his ill-gotten gold, departed from the house.

As he closed the outer door, he beheld two muffled and masked figures on the opposite side of the street. But, careless of, or indifferent to, aught in the shape of danger, he passed on, regardless of their presence.

'Tis my mine!' he muttered, 'from whose depths I shall, henceforth, draw mine income. The master-key of the cell is in my possession; the house's door secret spring is known to me, and the entrance to the vault through the crazy cot, known to me alone. A week must elapse ere the suspicions of the "Ten" are aroused; during which time, those arches must be emptied; and then, what care I how soon the bodies are discovered? They are not my work! But for Leon!—the fool—his greediness brought his doom upon himself—I had no hand in't! Ere a week expires the earth around his grave will have lost its freshness—and then who will suspect that aught lies beneath other than common soil? But if they do? What then—I murdered him not; 'twas an ill-timed accident; no more. Psha! I am reasoning myself into an assassin. Ha! ha! ha!'

He laughed, but it was a faint laugh.

He journeyed home; and, as he sat beside his gay couch, he counted the gains of his crime. A smile played around his features.

Wine was within his reach—he drank, and the coin before him repaid him amply for his guilt.

Hiding the gold in his dressing case, he wooed sleep. But did it come? Hath guilt a charter to refreshing, balmy slumber?

As the gray dawn first peeped through the lattice of his chamber, sleep threw her folds over his physical orbs. But his mental vision—the conscience—slumbered not!

CHAPTER XI.

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

Ere yet the dial had told the hour of nine on the succeeding morn, the few domestics

of the house of Galliano were assembled in the old reception hall, to witness the last sad rites of 'holy church' over the ashes of the dead. The bier stood in the centre of the chamber, upon two mounted stools; around which, on little circular tables, waxen tapers gleamed. A priest sat by the coffin, reading his breviary in silence, while the parties who were privileged to attend the service were gathering.

Two young females in deep mourning, sat together on a cushioned and muffled bench near the reverend man, while the few friends of the young lord of Galliano sat on muffled chairs in promiscuous groups around the bier. The young lord himself soon entered, attired in a suit of mourning, and took a seat at the foot of the bier. He shed no tears, but his features bore those unmistakable traces of true grief, which command more attention than even tears; and, as his large dark eyes fell sadly on the pall, every eye was moistened, every heart touched in sympathy. There was a nobleness in his tearless eye, a majesty in his colorless cheek, yea, a solemnity on his pale, nervous brow, which struck the assembled auditors with pity, and produced in each a willing readiness to die in his defence, if such sacrifice was necessary. There was scarce a being in that chamber who had not, within the past few months, felt the blessings either of his courage or his purse; and there was not one but knew his love of right, his ardor as a patriot and a man, his nobleness of soul under every situation, and his willingness to battle even for the most friendless in the hour of danger. Yet in his grief—in that hour when he mourned over the new found relics of his murdered father—who could give him consolation?

His mother had long since taken her place amid the ashes of the kindred of her lord—he was motherless.

His father's bones now rested in their ceremonies—he was fatherless.

His only brother had sunk to the tomb in early youth, when the worm of that fell destroyer of the fair and beautiful—consumption—had eaten up his heart—he was brotherless.

His fair and angelic sister had pined and sickened, and died on the loss of her father—the young lord of Galliano was, in view of all the world, kinless.

Unknown to the Tribunal, he had returned to Venice, and now, in his ancestral halls, was sole heir to his ancestral name, and mourner over his father's dust!

The solemn rites of 'holy church' were now performed—and the remains of the noblest Venetian nobles were borne, with measured step and solemn, into the family vault, and placed among the ashes of its kindred.

The rites were o'er; the guests returned to their homes, and the only pillar of the Galliano house retired to his chamber to

glean that repose which the exciting incidents of the past three days had rendered doubly imperative.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOUSE OF CONCEALMENT

An humble dwelling, in a retired quarter of Venice, was Mastachio Benedetti's; and a merry heart was Benedetti's; and a merry dame was Madame Benedetti; and a merry maid was Junetta, the daughter of these Benedetti's.

Benedetti was a respectable citizen; Madame Benedetti was a respectable woman, and a respectable citizen's wife; and Junetta Benedetti, being the daughter of two such merry and respectable people, was, of course, a very merry and a very respectable girl herself. But it is a dangerous thing for the young of the sterner sex, when a young lady of respectable parentage has found such qualifications to recommend her as respectability, wealth, merry-heartedness and beauty, because such things are apt to engross their attention, rob them of their sternness, and render them love-sick: i. e. tender. When a youth is once touched with the disease commonly nicknamed Love, he degenerates in dignity and manliness, until he becomes the veriest bondman imagination can picture. With his love a change comes over his mental and physical parts, which has every thing but dignity in it; and it is not until he is either noosed or loosed, that he recovers his former manly nature. The fact is, while the Love fever is on him, a man is a sort of pliant sapling; and the object of his affections a sort of ladle, whose coquetry draws from him the greater part of the natural sap in his cranium. When he is knotted, he begins to get an insight of the real state of things around him. Romance is very deceptive; and until matrimony sweeps it aside, man is a laughable and ridiculous animal. The gentle sex understand this fact intuitively, and, through life, man is their victim—their play thing: in view of which facts, we wonder where man's charter is for pre-dominancy.

These thoughts ran through the mind of Junetta, as she beheld, from day to day, how perfectly her beloved mother led her beloved husband round the matrimonial circle; and, as she fancied her mother's system of domestic government, she had made up her mind to run a cord through the nostrils of her beloved, whoever he might be, and lead him into obedience in the same masterly manner. But, somehow, or another, the youth whom, out of all her admirers, she esteemed the most, looked very like one who would stand but little of this kind of

government. His features and general bearing bore the impress of one born to command, not those of one born to be led. At least, so Junetta thought, and she sighed as she pondered over it. Now, when a young maiden sighs over the result of thought, it is a pretty good evidence that she is diseased around the heart; and that that disease is the result of too much thought upon the object that created it.

A young man, whose features proclaimed his recent entrance into manhood, knocked gently at the door of the Benedettis.

It was opened, by a servant, and the youth, as if accustomed to the house, nodded familiarly to the servant, and entered the sitting room without ceremony. When a youth is as far advanced as this, he is in a dangerous state indeed; for he even forgets politeness.

'I am sure you might have knocked, Messer Calvari,' said Junetta, starting up in coquettish confusion, as though she had not seen him, through the curtained window, ere he knocked at the door.

'Indeed, my pretty lady,' replied Messer Calvari, 'so I might, if my head had not been so filled with thoughts of a certain young lady.'

'To whom does Messer Calvari allude?' inquired Junetta earnestly, as though not aware, in the slightest of who that certain young lady could be.

He took her hand in his—he turned his eyes on her's—he twined his arms around her waist—he drew her close to his breast—he put his lips to her's—and he gave her to understand that way, to whom he alluded.

Junetta appeared to be satisfied with the reply.

This introductory business finished, Messer Calvari inquired if one Eugenia and a certain lady Isabel were visible.

Junetta pouted, as if jealous at the interrogatory.

'Nay, my beloved, I bear a message to them, from a gentleman in whose fate they are interested; and I have promised to use despatch,' said the youth, earnestly.

'But do tell me what all this mystery means, Calvari,' said Junetta, inquisitively. 'I can't bear to live in suspense. Do tell me who and what these strange ladies are, and who that strange man is that brought them here.'

'Thou would'st not have thy Calvari forfeit his honor by a breach of faith, would'st thou, Junetta?' inquired the youth, earnestly.

'What, there is a mystery about them then? I knew there was: from the strange manner in which they were brought here by that Messer Galliano. In the night he brought them—in the dead of the night—and I knew nothing of their presence till I met them at breakfast. Father, nor mother, would tell me any thing about them; and, moreover, enjoined me not to speak a word about them in the presence of

strangers, on any account. I declare it's a shame! so it is, that any modest and well behaved girl can't be admitted into a share of secret matters, as well as any one else.'

And the coquettish beauty appeared to be very indignant at her cruel treatment.

'And of course Junetta has not periled the safety of the unhappy ladies under her father's roof by disobeying her parents?' inquired the youth, earnestly and tenderly taking her hand.

Junetta gazed fondly upon him, as she responded, smiling, 'Junetta loves her parents too much to permit any rash and idle curiosity of her's to bring them misery, or mar the happiness or safety of others. But,' she continued in love's tone or tender reproach, 'how comes it thou dost play the truant from thy Junetta so much of late?'

'My studies'—

'Thy studies, indeed! As if they were so important to the world! Ha! ha! ha! You used to come and take me out on the Lagoons every fair moonlight, and compare my eyes to the bright stars, my brow to the snowy clouds, my cheeks and lips to the blushing rose, and my hair to the locks of an elfin. But now, if I see thee once a week, 'tis wonderful; and even then, thou never comest, unless on some such message as to night, to these fair and unhappy ladies. It is not fair. Besides, how dost thou know how thine absence may operate against thee, if thou persistest in this unloving course? Are not our doors besieged, nightly, by brave and goodly formed gallants—and is it not possible that one of them—I need not say which—might steal away my heart without my knowing it? Stranger things than that have happened. Thy allegiance to thy lady love demands a constant attendance, and look that she exact it not!'

'Hast thou done, Junetta?'

'No, I have not done. Thou must pay me mere attention, or I shall cut thee from my favor.'

'Must is a hard word, Junetta.'

'I cannot help it.' O, Calvari, if thou could'st but take in thy brain, the yearning that maid feels for the every visit of the man she loves! If thou could'st but conceive her watchings on his expected presence—how her ear catches the slightest token of his approach—how her eyes traverse an hundred times an hour the path he is accustomed to approach her by—if thou could'st but comprehend her silent and ever-offered prayers for his present and eternal safety—the anguish of her heart when he comes not—the joy delirious of her soul when she hears his footstep—then, then, Calvari, thou would'st not wonder that she is anxious for his presence in lovers' hours—night—then, then, Calvari, thou would'st not marvel that she grows jealous when he plays the truant, or gives her slightest cause for believing he is indifferent to, or careless of her love.'

Her speech was earnest, yea, and earnestly spoken, and its import and truthfulness struck deep into her lover's heart.

'Nay, but thou dost me wrong, Junetta,' said he, kissing away the tears that danced upon her cheek; 'there's not a slave in Venice but has more holiness than thy Calvari. Sleep seldom greets these eyes for more than an hour at a time. I am struggling and toiling for a cause which shall yet bring joy and comfort to our Isle. My poor brain is overtasked, and my erst strong limbs have lost their iron, by my 'cep studies, severe toil and broken rest. Thou dost not know, fair one, what it is to pass unnumbered hours, in thy solitary chamber, at a never-ending task; liable at any moment, to be summoned from thy studies or thy bed, to give healing balm to the sick, or ease the pangs of the dying. Thou dost not know what it is to live in the eternal fear of such a dreaded power as the 'Ten,' in the following of such an art as mine; for learning is not paid with reverence or gold by our mysterious and terrible rulers: they regard the searcher after knowledge with suspicion, and once seized, what follows, but death. Thou dost not know what it is to struggle through the dark days and lonesome nights against poverty, with no other hope than that thy ceaseless efforts may, at last, be crowned with some small share of man's passport through life—success. If thou did'st, thou would'st not chide my unavoidable absence.'

'Nay, I knew not before of the stern necessity of thy toil, or—'

'Nay, sweet one, apologies are needless. The day, I trust, is not far distant, when our old and gladsome evenings shall return; and then, doubt not but that we shall be happy. But till then, if thy Calvari is tardy in his coming, be sure thy pangs at his absence are not more painful than his own.'

'Wilt thou forgive me?'

'By this kiss. Now lead me to the chamber of your fair prisoners: for what I have to deliver to them is of importance.'

'Then tarry a moment, till I inform them of your arrival.'

She soon returned, and bade the student follow her.

The back chamber on the second floor was closely curtained, and neatly furnished with white and red matting, three or four cushioned chairs, a picture of the virgin over the mantel, a guitar in one corner, a lute and a small circular table. The females were sitting beside each other, their arms around each others waists, when our student entered. Junetta, after opening the door, immediately withdrew.

The student bowing, advanced and handed the lady Isabel a small leaf of parchment, neatly folded, saying—

'This, from the Messer Galliano, to the lady Isabel; and this, from the Messer Genaro, to his beloved, the fair Eugenia.'

He gave an ivory cross to the orange girl. Isabel opened the note: it ran thus—

'Beloved of my soul—these lines to thee, in haste, greeting:

'The hour when our country shall be freed from her oppressors, rapidly approaches. After mature thought, I deem it better for thy safety and the well-being of the deeply wronged Eugenia, that ye prepare to leave your present abode, and take shelter in the dwelling of a friend whom I have made in the isle of Cyprus. There, till the storm be o'er, and our oppressors swept away, thou canst remain in safety. I would have sent this warning to thee last night, but circumstances, of which I will hereafter inform thee, prevented my so doing. Be in readiness by the midnight of to-morrow, when I, with a couple of trusty friends, shall be with thee.

'Thine, through time and eternity,
'GALLIANO.'

When she had concluded her perusal of the note, Isabel took a ring from her finger, and, handing it to the student, said—

'This to the gentleman who sent thee—say that that circle represents the unbroken faith the unfortunate Isabel has in his honor, and that I shall be prepared at the hour he names.'

'I shall so report, honored lady,' said the student, bowing.

'Hast thou no answer for thy beloved?' asked Isabel of her companion.

The orange girl's lip quivered, and her cheeks colored, as she replied—

'The hour is past when I could speak of love; the hour is fled when I could return truth for truth, or plighted faith for plighted faith; I fear I must return his token!'

'And break his heart?' exclaimed Isabel, staying her hand as she was returning the white cross to the student.

The latter, though well acquainted with Eugenia's history, was too much of a novice in the study of woman, not to be surprised at this movement on her part; but he had presence of mind enough to conceal its effect upon him.

Eugenia, bursting into tears, exclaimed—'What should I do, lady?'

'Give him a token,' replied Isabel smiling, 'but send not back his own. Thy ring for instance, or something that thou dost prize, and so prove thy willingness to make a sacrifice for the returning of his good opinion.'

Eugenia had a little golden cross, around her neck, which she had worn since childhood. She gave it to the student, and, with an agitated voice, said—

'Give him this—'tis all I have—but he will know how deeply I do prize it.'

She wore it in her days of innocence, ere yet the brand of shame was blazoned on

brow. It was the only relic of her happier days. Was it a wonder, then, she sighed on parting with it?

'No word, no cheering sentence, to send with it?' said the student, interrogatively.

'Tell him, Eugenia is grateful for his fidelity,' replied the orange girl, in a tremulous voice, and with downcast eyes.

'A world is in that sentence,' said the student, smiling respectfully. 'Adieu!'

'Think'st thou he can love me?' asked the poor girl, when they were alone. 'Think'st thou—knowing as he does my shame—think'st thou he can love me?'

'If he be human, and aware of the vile arts by which Foscari first entrapped thy guiltless and too confiding heart—if he is yet aware of thy sorrow, thy repentance, thy trials and thy persecutions—if he ever loved thee, I say, and his heart still be human, fear not but that his re-proffered love is honest as his first.'

'But, lady, if thy case were mine—if thou hadst been lured away from virtue's path as I have been—if thy soft heart had been ensnared and wronged, as mine has been—if, after the shame, thou hadst awoke to sense and misery,—if, knowing the nobleness of the heart you forsook, he, forgiving your great fault, should offer you again his hand and home and honored name,—would'st thou forget thine own sense of right, the world's sneer upon thy former shame, and his weakness in affiancing thee in thy shame, would'st thou so outrage his name as to accept his new loyalty through thy short stay on earth?'

Isabel pondered a while with a pale cheek and throbbing heart, as the timid eye of the orange girl rested on her; then, without raising her eyes, replied, nervously—

'No, so help me heaven! I would not!'

'I thought so—I knew so!' murmured the broken-hearted girl, sinking back in her seat.

That night was one of tears.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MEETING.

The moon and stars shone brightly in the heavens; the sky was like a blue arch, here and there dotted with specks of snowy clouds. The air, after a sultry day, was cool and refreshing to those within and without. The proclamation of nature seemed to have gone forth to all the children of earth—"Night reigns: cease your toil!" Nature seemed to invite the house-dwellers forth, that in the rich and beautiful combination of the beautiful sky, the silver night orb, the bright and silent stars, the murmuring waters and the pellucid air, they might enjoy a foretaste of the Paradise of the Holy.

A white-haired man, of the middle height, with a proud step and a noble mien, was pacing the marble pave in front of the ducal palace, and surveying the lofty pile of St. Mark's. His eye was large, dark and bright; his forehead was high, full and slightly wrinkled; his nose was of the Roman mould, and his lip was small, and spoke much for its owner's firmness and decision; his chin was bold and pointed; he wore a small mustache and beard, and they gave to his features a venerable and sage-like expression. He was cloaked, as much to hide his costume as to prevent the effects of the night air upon his person. This was Foscari, the Doge of Venice. It was his custom thus to traverse the pave, fronting his palace, on pleasant nights; and no particular object, other than the beauty and calmness of the evening, called him forth on the evening in question. But it was not his custom to turn his eyes so frequently and so earnestly on one spot during these short wanderings.

A strange form, cloaked and masked, and majestic as the pile itself, stood, in stern dignity, in the shade of the broad door of the entrance of the temple of St. Mark. A jetty cap, with a heavy clustre of plumes of the same color, adorned his head. He stood there as motionless as a block of marble, contemplating, apparently, the motions of the Duke.

Was he a spy? The Duke was hated by the "Ten"—feared for his impartial decisions in matters pertaining to justice, and his fearlessness in advocating and maintaining the rights of the poor against the insolence and tyranny of the rich and the noble—hated equally by the poor, because he spared no caste in his administration of the laws. Was the stranger a spy? If not, was he an assassin, awaiting the moment when the duke's back should be toward him, that he might plunge the cowardly steel, unseen, into the spine of his victim? In either case, the duke had nothing to fear; for his private guards stood on the steps of his palace, and within call at any moment, when he choose to summon them.

The moonlight was no favorer of murder, if that was the stranger's object.

The duke, to settle all uneasiness and gratify his curiosity, watched the moment, when the pave was clear of the throng passing to and fro the facade of the palace, and walked slowly towards the door of the temple. The figure budged not at his approach.

'Who art thou?' said the duke, when within a few paces of the stranger.

'A man,' was the reply.

'Thy business here?'

'To feed my humor!'

'Less pertness and more politeness would better become thyself and me. Whose knave art thou?'

'Mine own.

'It would seem so, indeed, from the license which thou givest thy tongue. What charter hast thou for standing in the portals of St. Mark's?'

'Every true Venetian's.'

'Ha! thou usest strange language, Messer Breggart. Art thou mad, I pray?'

'Not wholly; though there be enough in our fair sea-kissed isle to change us all to madmen.'

'I do not understand thee, knave.'

'Then thy white hairs indicate more brains than their owner is master of: for thou hast at least, the semblance of wisdom. Fie upon thee, that thy years and experience have not taught thee yet to understand the prattlings of children, let alone the language and figures of men!'

'Knave thou art yet!'

'Softly, good master: thou didst first propound ere I did answer. If I have puzzled thee, in my replies, thou should'st have been content.'

'Doth defeat teach contentment to the vanquished?'

'Look at Venice, and judge for thyself.'

'What shall I learn by looking?'

'Much for the eye, but nothing for the tongue.'

'Why not for the tongue?'

'Because we may see, but speak not.'

'Give me light, I pray thee.'

'It would be dangerous to my head.'

'Nay 'm no babbler.'

'Art sure?'

'Men call me honest; and honest men blab not that given to them in confidence. I think that I deserve my reputation.'

'Men never know us truly. We know not even ourselves till we are tried.'

'Do we even then?'

'Most veritably: we know then of what we are capable when tried by circumstance and interest. Hast thou been tried?'

'Of.'

'Deeply?'

'Deeply.'

'By what guage?'

'Truth—right—justice.'

'And hast never found thyself a recreant to thy soul's interest?'

'Never!'

'Old man—on the dome of this holy temple there is a cross guarded by angels, whose ears catch the lowest whisper of undefiled Truth, and waft it up to heaven; they are Truth's watchmen, and hover round the honest lip, like a halo of eternal light, as bulwarks against all evil: on the first syllable of falsehood they, shrieking, fly away, and never more return. If till now, thy tongue hath spoke no falsehood, on peril of thy soul, chase not thy angels from thee!'

'What mean'st thou?'

'Twixt thee and me there is a current of tell tale air, which, as Venetian ether is

dangerous to trust, might peril my safety if my speech were in unison with my thoughts; if thou wilt step into this shade, or go with me where our converse can be free and dangerless, I will open my mind to thee.'

'What if I object?'

'Thou canst, if 'tis thy humor; but if thou dost, the thing concerning which I would speak to thee, will remain unsaid—perchance to thy sorrow and mine!'

'Strange man! there is a mystery in thy speech and bearing, doth tell me there is a connecting tie between thy fate and mine. Follow me: and fear not.'

The duke led the way, through a private door, and into the palace.

It was a pleasant room for converse that they entered. It was the private chamber of the Duke, and situated in the rear of the marble pile, and looked out upon the broad sheet of the moonlit Adriatic. The casements—of which there were five—were furnished in the most gorgeous style of the middle ages. The walls were hid by heavy arras of blue and crimson velvet; and on one side, the ducal bed stood prominent, ornamented with gold and azure; beside it, the easy chair in which the reverend noble sat and meditated when released from the cares and troubles of his office. A few feet from it was a small marble altar, whose top was garnished by a silver crucifix; in front of this, a low cushion, on which the old man knelt at morning, noon and night, while offering up his prayers. A silver burner, rested on a toilet table of polished oak, between two windows. The floor was covered with a soft matting, ingeniously figured to represent the mosaic pave of a palace hall.

'Be seated,' said the duke, on entering, and pointing to a high cushion near his favorite chair.

The mask obeyed.

'Now, to thy business,' said the duke, seating himself. 'To what doth it relate?'

'Thy son,' replied the stranger, laconically.

'Indeed!—a new subject! Say on.'

'He hath wronged a confiding heart—broken it—sundered it from all its ties and kindred—blasted its hopes and prospects—cut it off from all its earthly joys and the sunny days which, ere his presence blighted, promised a harvest.'

'Her name?'

'Eugenia.'

'Her rank?'

'Of the fourth caste.'

'Has she kindred?'

'She had—his crime sundered her from them.'

'Her age when wronged?'

'Sixteen.'

'So, so! And this deed was committed—'

'Three years ago.'

'Did he then desert her?'

'He did.'

'And she since hath led the life of—'

'A harlot? No, duke. She had still a soul when he, in sight of all the world, had made her honorless; and, when by him deserted, found friends.'

'For her, and in her case, what would'st thou have me do?'

'Justice.'

'I am in the dark as to thy meaning.'

'Compel him render back the honest name he stole from her to gratify his lust.'

'Art in thy senses?'

'I hold the wits given me by my God, and till he takes them from me shall deem me still as sane as e'er a breather this side the Eternities.'

'What! the son of a Venetian doge wed a wanton?'

'No wanton, duke; but one, by his unmanly acts, torn ruthlessly from honor, and plunged into never ceasing misery. The pangs are her's—the guilt, Leonardo Foscari's.'

'But think of the shame he'd bring upon his ancestral name by such affiancement.'

'I think of nothing but his guilt, duke. I am a Venetian born; and, from childhood up to the present hour, have revered Jacopo Foscari, the famed Doge of Venice, as the first and purest ruler of any state on earth; have prayed for him, at early morn and dusky eve, as one beloved and renowned for his justice. I would not in my travels, allow a taint upon his name to pass unvindicated or unpunished. I fought for him when a boy, and in his wars with the Turks have borne his royal banner through seas of blood and carnage; have ever loved him as a father; reverence him still, and would not let his glorious fame pass on to posterity blemished by his son. I would have him vindicate his fame and name when assailed by his dearest kin, as well as when attacked by those foreign to his eye and heart. I would have him ever just—to the lowly as to the noble—to the weak as to the strong—I would have him ever Foscari the just.'

'But thou dost forget the ignominy such marriage would bring upon our nobility—the dangers to which our throne would be exposed from the indignant nobles of Venice by such impolitic union!'

'Let the marriage be never so secret, my lord duke, I care not, so long as it be done. The lease of life of the victim herself is fast drawing to a close; even if she live, she would not subject herself to the ridicule of the world by appearing as bride to the son of the great Doge of Venice. But she cannot live: for the worm, created by his hand, hath eaten up her heart—and she is nigh unto death. Do her sorrows justice, then, O duke; let her not die with the blight upon her name and soul for ever! Do and the prayers of her kindred, the

prayers of her friends, yea, the prayers of the poor victim herself shall be recorded by thy name on the archangel's record when thy soul seeketh for entrance into heaven!'

The duke pondered.

'What if my son refuse?' he asked, after a pause.

'Thou art his father,' was the meaning response.

'Thou dost not know him,' said the doge, with a sigh.

'He does not!' exclaimed a voice behind the arras.

The doge started, and colored to the temples. The next moment, Leonardo Foscari stood before them.

'Thou hast overheard us, then?' said the duke, angrily; 'thou hast been playing the eavesdropper. Shame on thee, son!'

'Nay, shame on thee, father,' responded Leonardo, coolly, 'who could'st give audience to the vituperation heaped upon thy son by yon vile slanderer!'

'Tis well thou art in thy father's presence and 'neath thy father's roof,' said the mask, sternly, 'or thy base throat and degenerate heart should answer for thine insolence: as it is, I have no answer for thee other than scorn.'

'Indeed!' exclaimed the other, mockingly, 'then a time will come when we shall hold converse in terms more in consonance with our rank.'

'Cease these idle threats,' cried the duke, indignantly. 'Go, my son—that I should call an eaves dropper a son of mine!—go hence, till my conference is ended with this stranger. When he is gone, I shall summon thee, and look that thou be ready.'

'But father,—'

'Not a word, I charge thee. Go, and play not the spy again upon thy sire's privacy, or a doom thou little dreamest of, shall be visited upon thee.'

Leonardo obeyed, with scowling brow, and wrathful step.

'Said I not thou didst not know my son?' said the duke, in a somewhat piqued tone.

'Thou said'st truly,' rejoined the mask; 'and I dare venture to assert your lordship hath never, till this hour, known how far his presumption could lead him from that manly path which honor hath ordained.'

'I confess as much,' returned the duke, testily; 'and were it not for pity of his youth, I should have chastised his insolence on the spot. But, enough of him; return we now to his victim.'

'Which one, my lord?'

The duke glanced at the questioner—but the mask shrank not from his eye.

'Which one? Hath he wronged more than one?'

'That question, my lord, argues thy little knowledge of thy son; What would your highness think should I prove him a murderer and a thief, as well as a seducer?'

The duke turned pale and gasped.

'Said'st thou?—' he muttered, feebly.

'A spy, too, on his father's every word and act—a liar, and—'

The mask paused: for the duke had fainted.

The mask started back in confusion at this his critical position, scarce knowing what to do. His eye fell on a small silver bell, standing on the altar. He rang it, and, a moment afterwards, a servant entered the apartment.

'Water, sirrah, in haste,' cried the mask: 'for lo! the doge hath fainted.'

The servant rushed out; as if he had heard the order—as if it had recalled him to consciousness, Foscari raised his eyes, feebly, till they encountered his companion.

'Stay,' he muttered, 'what need of alarming the knaves for trifles? 'Twas but a slight touch of the weakness of age; but heaven preserve me from them in future! Another such, and this beating pulse would soon be still. Tell me all—stay.'

A host of servitors were now in the apartment.

'Beware knaves!' he cried, angrily; 'and wait till ye are summoned.'

They departed, in confusion.

'Tell me all,' he repeated, addressing the mask; 'tell me all, and spare not: thou seest now firmly I can bear it; now the first shock of amazement is over. Tell me all—all thou knowest.'

'I have no more to tell,' replied the mask; 'I have given thee the outlines of his character: time will reveal to thee the minutiae. Meanwhile, as the hour grows late, I'll take my leave. But, ere I go, a word with your highness: on the night of the coming Carnival, leave not thou the palace.'

'And why not, mysterious man?'

'Danger to thy person will then be avoided, your highness. More, I have neither the power nor inclination to expose. But, as thou valuest thy life, pay heed to my warning.'

'Explain thy meaning fully, strange man, or I shall summon and bid my servants to seize thee as one dangerous.'

'Summon them,' said the mask, coldly.

'Art thou so determined, so fearless in thy nature, then? I implore thee to expound thy strange words.'

'It would aid thee naught, and jeopardize myself, said the mask, with a stern laugh.

'Art thou my foe?'

'Doth my conduct of to night lead thee to so think, doge?'

'Nay, I know not what to think: thy bearing is noble, thy voice manly, but thy conduct inexplicable.'

'Time will unravel my mystery; as neither force nor fair speech on thy part can enlighten thee now, take the wise man's alternative—time—and put thy faith in it?'

'Thou dost not hate me?'

'No, doge.'

'Dost thou love thy country's chief ruler?'

'With a patriot's love? Aye.'

'And thou dost know of a danger threatening his well being, and yet concealest it from him?'

'I have told thee enough to preserve thee from all danger, if thou but followest my counsel.'

'What wrong in me, if I should now order thy arrest?'

'What wrong, doge? A foul wrong—a wrong would blast thy fame through all time, and do thee not a jot of benefit—the base and treacherous wrong of inviting a stranger to thy house, and, taking advantage of thy power, robbing him of his chartered liberty. Durst thou do it, duke? Thou durst not—it were too vile a deed for one so strictly just.'

'Thou art right, strange man—I dare not.'

'I knew it—and, warning thee again not to quit thy palace on the night of the approaching Carnival, I take my leave. Farewell!'

'A word, ere thou goest: Shall we meet again?'

'We shall.'

'Where?'

'E'en there where circumstance shall place us.'

'Ere long?'

'Ere long, doge. Shall the wronged girl of whom I spoke be righted?'

'If possible, aye.'

'Without delay?'

'As soon as I can prevail on my son to right the wrong.'

'Wilt thou not compel him, doge?'

'Think'st thou he can be compelled?'

'The man who, sheltered by small power, doth play the tyrant and the villain, can, by a power greater than his own, be compelled to aught—be it base or godlike?'

'That is thy thought?'

'Tis nature, doge.'

'Thou hast studied that?'

'All things befitting man to know, that can be had for mental labor, know I.'

'I fear me much, thou'rt but a braggart.'

'Princes are privileged to doubt, and to speak their doubts.'

'Thou art bold, too, as never a man in Venice is bold.'

'He who would serve the cause of Truth must not enter her ranks with a timid heart.'

'Thou art a courtier, by thy ready speech.'

'Courtier I am not, your highness; but a plain, unpretending man. The air of court agree not with my humor; at least those courts that I have seen. There is not enough of God's unpolliuted essence sprinkled in their halls. I would not be a courtier, and am none.'

'Thou art a strange, bold man.'

'Your highness is at liberty to hold me

in your thought as your inclination wills. I have performed mine errand—warned thee and advised thee; and so, farewell!”

“Strange, strange man!” soliloquized the doge; “brave and honest, noble and proud, young and wise.—ah! why, why was I not blessed with a son like him! But, for the victim of whom he spoke, yes, she shall be ighted! Leonardo must do her justice—lowly though she be! It will teach him a lesson—perhaps incline him to wisdom. He is in that stage of manhood when sharp lessons have the most power in regulating and strengthening the mind. The lesson may make a man of him. He is wild, impetuous, frolicsome, half thoughtless; and a bold act on my part might transform all his youthful follies into virtues. It shall be tried—my word is pledged, and justice must be done!”

He rang the bell—a servitor answered it. “Go, and tell my son, his father awaits his presence.”

The servitor bowed, and withdrew.

“I’ll have no refusal,” soliloquized the doge, “he must consent to right his victim. I’ve borne his follies till they have ceased to be follies. I’ll put up with them no longer. He hath a winning way with him, in excusing his errors; but I’ll be firm now, and insist on his giving them o’er for ever. If he braves me, I’ll discard, nay, disinherit him. I’ll be tender with him no longer.”

Footsteps were heard in the hall, near the door.

“He comes, but not alone,” muttered the doge; “he fears my reproaches, and therefore comes in company. But I’ll be stern and firm with him.”

The door was thrown open rudely, and a huge black, cloaked and capped, and attended by six masked figures in black, entered the chamber.

The doge’s heart sank, and his cheeks turned pale, and his nerves quivered and his voice trembled, as he demanded of the leader his business.

The latter, without a word, placed a sealed packet in his hand.

The doge broke the seal, and, with an effort, mastering his agitation, scanned its contents.

When its perusal was concluded, the statues fronting his ducal palace, were not more white than he.

His voice was subdued, his head bowed low to the dark bearer, as he responded—“I am ready—lead on!”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EFFECTS OF THE ARREST.

Pass we now three days.

The faces of the nobility and citizens of

Venice were marked with fear, mistrust, sadness. One might have read their thoughts in their eyes, without hearing a word from their ashy and quivering lips. As if an all-slaying plague were raging through the streets, the citizens kept in-doors, fearfully. The marts of trade were deserted, the shops closed, and the churches void of worshippers. Those whom stern necessity drove forth to traffic, did their business in laconic sentences, and downcast eyes, as if an universal edict had been issued, forbidding speech and action. Men met each other in the streets and squares, and, though their acquaintance-ship and friendliness were unbroken, yet passed without a word or sign of recognition. A dark cloud seemed to hover over the fair city, although the sun shone glowingly, and the sky was lovely as ever. Doors were closed, windows heavily and closely curtained, as if the stricken ones within feared the eyes of the fear-stricken ones without.

One form alone was seen traversing the streets boldly. One form alone, amid the Fear-contagion dared to stalk through street and square, and look at the right and left, his large dark eye searching every face he met without a moment’s quailing. Pale was his cheek, though; pale his lip; as he read the Fear in the closed doors and curtained windows and hasty steps and downcast eyes, and caught the laconic and fear-choked words of those whose stomachs forced them into traffic. Pale was he! but not with that paleness which marks the wretch whose timidity is caused by fear; but pale with that hue which the strong heart wears when indignation at man’s cowardice takes the place of pity.

With hasty strides, his good sword hanging boldly at his side, he passed from street to street, from square to square, from quay to quay, from canal to canal, his eyes every moment searching each spot, before, behind and around him, as if in anxious pursuit of some loathed foe, or beloved friend.

So passed the day.

Night came; night, with all her beauties and magical influences; night, with her bright stars, sky drapery and moon, and soft, wooing air; night came, and, one by one, as if ashamed of their cowardice, the inhabitants of Venice braved the outside of their doors. Still, the silvery laugh rang not in the air, and voices were not heard aloud, as in nights gone by. It appeared as if habit, not the loveliness of the night, brought them forth; and, more like funeral followers they seemed, than beings forth for pleasure, so whisperingly they spoke.

On this night, three men, guised as common gondoliers, met, as if by accident, at the foot of the quay Zechetti.

“Give thee good even, friend,” said one, “art thou for a sail on the Lagoon to-night?”

“Customers are scarce,” replied the other;

“I know not if I shall pull an oar, or pocket a piece of the mint.”

“Nay, rather than pull not for reward, I’ll e’en pull for mine own pleasure,” said the third.

“I like thy spirit, friend,” said the first, “and if thou hast no dislike to my company, will join thee at a tug.”

“So, be it, an’ thou wilt,” replied the other, “I’ve done nothing to-day, but sleep, and must have exercise. So jump in.”

“Wilt thou not join us?” he added, addressing the remaining boatman.

“I care not an’ I do,” responded the other, leaping into the boat.

“I’ll take thy seat astern,” said the owner of the gondola, arranging his oar, “for, till we are tired, thou can’st not exercise thy skill. Now, then, my merry hearts, let’s dive into the breast of our ocean mother, and sing our passage out, in the merry strain of our craft. Hast thou thy pocket flute?”

“I have,” responded the boatman at the helm.

“Then make the air ring with its tones,” said the inquirer, “while we follow thee with our voices.”

They pushed from the quay, and as they rowed forth, the flute led the strain, and the ears of those assembled on the quay, caught the following song:—

SONG OF THE GONDOLIER.

The night—the night—the night,
When the sky is calm and clear,
The night—the night—the night,
When the tide and shore are near.—

From the pier I leap,
In my boat on the deep;
And with bark all full,
To the Lagoons I pull,
Cheerily! Cheerily!

The night—the night—the night,
When the sky is calm and clear;
The night—the night—the night,
When the tide and shore are near.—

From the crowded quay,
To the deep broad bay,
The lover with his love,
To my gondola move,
Cheerily! Cheerily!

The night—the night—the night,
When the sky is calm and clear—
The night—the night—the night,
When the tide and shore are near.—

Who will fly the quay,
And in my bark away—
Who will fly the pier
With the gondolier,
Cheerily! Cheerily!

The song died away in the distance; the

persons congregated on the pier, drinking the breeze of the sea, shrugged their shoulders at the temerity of the singers in disturbing the silence of the night; and, recollecting their own fears through the day, muttered to each other, as they glanced at the gondola, fast receding from the shore, “Bold fellows! bold fellows!” Many expressive “umphs!” and meaning glances were directed toward the boat also, as though the gondoliers had committed high treason by indulging in mirth. But example has a powerful effect, and our worthy cynics soon had sufficient courage to speak above a whisper, though their tones were not over loud at that.

Return we to the boat.

Soon as the gondola was far enough from the shore, to suit the purpose of the gondoliers, the owner of the boat exclaimed, in a low tone, “Enough of the song; it hath done its office, in blinding those on the pier as to our real purpose. Now, to business. How speeds the cause!”

“Bravely,” replied the second oarsman. “My men are ready—their knives are sharpened, their courage strong, their spirits buoyant, as the hour approaches.”

“And thine, Gennaro?” said he of the stern, in a voice not to be mistaken, how much sooner his garb might do him wrong.

“They wait the hour impatiently; each day but makes them more impatient. The days pass slowly.”

“I thought so to-day,” exclaimed he of the stern, “as I passed from street to street, and beheld the cowardice of our inhabitants, in hiding within doors. Scarce a man to a street! and all because Foscari had disappeared so mysteriously. Is this the courage of our Venetians?”

“They have been used to terror for years,” replied Gennaro; “rid them of ‘the cause’ of that terror, and then see if their fears are greater than those of any other nation. The ‘Ten’ have held our speech and action in check so long—have robbed us of our rights and privileges for so many generations, that it is no wonder that at this their last and most daring deed, the people shrink aguish in terror. In fact, your lordship is not altogether free from the universal dread, else why that unseemly guise, in which thou now art wrapt!”

“Not from fear have I donned it,” responded the noble, “but from a fancy that it would save me from rude remark in my perambulations. I would see without being seen, and hold converse with the leaders of our cause without being noticed by vulgar eyes. But this aside—have ye no suspicion, after what I’ve told you of my conference with the duke, of the accuser’s name?”

“Hast thou?”

“I have.”

“Whom dost thou think?”

“Leonardo Foscari.”

'What—his own son?'

'The same.'

'Heavens! Can he be so lost to filial love and honor? The cause?'

'Nay, I suspect it only. But I opine that fear of his father's anger and reproaches led him to the deed. You know he is the leading spy of the "Ten"—has, from that power, free license to do what he will against the laws, for his service as a spy upon those whom meaner spies cannot reach—and that he likewise receives reward for his unprincipled labors. Ye know all this?'

'We have so heard?'

'My intelligence is beyond a doubt, and subsequently confirmed by witnesses whose probity is beyond peradventure. Ye must implicitly believe my reports, and speak of them, among our men, as facts beyond a doubt, else my labors in procuring them will prove of no avail. But to the main matter of this conference—how didst thou find thy sister?'

'Ill in health—lowly in spirits,' replied the second oarsman, whom the reader has ere this recognised.

'And the lady Isabel—thou saw'st her, also?'

'Sad in spirit; e'en as sad as my sister.'

'Liked they their new abode?'

'Tis safer than their last.'

'Sent they no message?'

'Much the lady Isabel blushed when your name was mentioned; and much she trembled when I spoke of the sudden and mysterious disappearance of the doge.'

'But no message?'

'None.'

Galliano sighed, and for a few moments, gazed in silence toward the island where his beloved was concealed.

'All hope is o'er for thee, Isabel,' he murmured, 'if this our glorious cause succeed not; thy Galliano will not outlive his struggle for his country's freedom, and then, O Isabel! what, what will be thy fate. Kinless, harmless, poor and friendless, what, what will be thy fate! But shall we fail?—after all our secret meetings—our midnight watchings, our expenditure of time, and wealth, and blood,—our wrongs, our sufferings, and high hopes—shall we fail? Great God forbid it!'

In good truth, the noble was sad at heart, yea, o'er-shadowed to the very soul. The circumstances attendant on his father's death—the singular discovery of his father's grave—his burial in the old family vault—the scenes witnessed in the subterranean dungeons—the sudden death of the father of his beloved—her own dependence, weakness, danger—his combat with and triumph over the black—his meeting with the usurer, and the latter's death over the grave of him he murdered—the doge's disappearance, perhaps death, and all through his means,—the gloom he witnessed o'er the city—all this

floated through the chambers of his mind in images darker than the facts;—was it then a wonder he was sad?

He thought of his own cheerless home—of the dark prospect before his beloved in case all his schemes for emancipation from the Tribunal's tyranny should fail—of the wo and ruin of all engaged in that great enterprise, if fortune, time and circumstance favored not the cause—of the revolution in men and things, if the enterprise succeeded—of the blood that must flow, whether triumph or defeat was their guerdon for the peril—he thought of this, and he was sad,—very, very sad.

'Have ye any new proselytes?' said the noble, in a deep voice.

'Seventy in our section, since our last meeting,' replied Gennaro.

'And thirty-three in ours,' added the other.

'Good!'

'When saw you last the secretary?' asked Gennaro.

'An hour before dawn of to-day,' replied the noble.

'What addition to his leger since last report?'

'Ninety.'

'The work speeds on.'

'Aye, bravely,' said Galliano, in a more cheerful voice. 'But as for the doge, he must not die. He is a friend to the people—opposed to the Tribunal—and loves freedom equal to the best of us;—he must not die.'

'How can we save him?' said the gondoliers, anxiously.

'By hurrying on the hour when we strike for liberty,' responded the noble.

'He is of too high rank for the Tribunal to hurry on his death,' said Gennaro. 'We had better look to the cause first;—the hour already rapidly approaches—to hasten it were dangerous.'

'Thou dost not know the "Ten" for all that thou hast suffered,' said the noble; 'tis the Tribunal's policy, once their victims are in their power, to hurry on their doom. It lacks but a week of the Carnival, and ere that time, the chances are an hundred to one that the mock trial, sentence and death of the doge will be over. In which case, what new tyranny will be planted on the ducal throne! It were best to strike at once, and, saving ourselves, preserve the duke.'

'It were dangerous,' said Gennaro, 'for any cause soever, to change the day or hour for striking: our preparations are made for the Carnival night—our men have been told to look forward to that night for the signal—their minds have no other thought. To change the time, or for an earlier hour or later, would change their thoughts, mar their plans, and perhaps chill their patriotism. Knowing the minds of the rude ones in our section, I think a change would be dangerous to the cause.'

THE EXPLANATION.

'Well, we'll let it pass,' said Galliano, gloomily. 'Row in; perhaps fortune may save the old man without our aid. I shall not see ye again till the last meeting night, when, if fortune fail me not, I shall bring ye a proselyte ye little dream of. Row in.'

The gondola was turned toward the shore; and, as it flew over the waters, a huge crowd was seen congregating on the pier from whence our heroes started.

'Something is going on there,' said the noble, in an excited tone. 'I know not what it is, but my heart misgives me! On your lives, row in!'

The gondoliers needed but little bidding; for that natural fear which creeps over men when conscious that those they love may be in jeopardy, lent fiery strength to their arms and sped their bark with the speed of lightning to the pier.

The noble sprang hastily from the boat, and made his way through the crowd; and, when his companions had neared the spot on which he stood, they beheld him standing in triumph over the prostrate figure of one well known to, and loathed by, every son of Venice—Leonardo Foscari!

'Coward! dastard!' exclaimed the excited noble, waving aloft the sword he had wrenched from the prostrate rone, 'are acts like these the charters for thy manhood? Hast thou neither soul, nor honor, nor shame left in thy foul, filthy carcase, but thou must play the dog for ever? What! steal women from their homes by night, when their defenders are away and beyond their cries! Take that, cowardly slave!' and as he spoke, the foot of the excited and indignant noble was plunged into the side of the wretch; 'take that!' he added, 'and bear it as a living mark of thy unworthiness to be punished by the sword!'

The miserable wretch groaned at the pain inflicted upon his person, and gasped with a demon's passion. Starting up, he ran up the pier with wild and hurried speed, and uttering threats of vengeance.

All gave way fearfully before him, and many of the crowd, fearing lest spying eyes should be upon them, stole from the spot noiselessly, and soon were lost from view. Ere those who remained had time to recover from the sudden and startling incidents, the young noble, his companions and two young female forms were seen in the gondola, and rowing fast from the shore.

The forms on the pier, as if aware of the danger of being found there after such a scene, were soon scattered over other parts of the city, and the quay was deserted, all wondering when Venice would be like the Venice of olden time, free from broil and tyranny and wrong.

The boat swept over the water, like a bird fleeing from the deadly gun of the sportsman. A little island, containing about an hundred houses, was the spot to which the bow of the gondola was directed. Having reached a broad stair flight, the rescued females were hastily landed, and, escorted by the noble, borne to an obscure looking dwelling on the eastern part of the isle. The gondoliers, immediately afterward, released their bark, and, again plying their oars, pulled for an island about three hundred yards distant; on reaching which, they pulled their boat ashore, and, covering it with a quantity of old canvass,—thus giving it the appearance of a boat which had lain there for some days—fled, hastily, to a low-looking shed about forty paces distant from the shore. They were met at the door by one of their own caste and costume, to whom they hurriedly related the cause of their sudden appearance, and with whom they immediately departed to another dwelling, of the same rude caste, in another part of the island.

Return we now to the rescuer and the rescued.

When they had reached the dwelling, the noble conducted the females into a neatly furnished apartment on the second floor, where, after pointing out to them a secret door, and discovering to them the manner of its opening, in case of a surprise, he left them, saying that he would soon return.

Descending the staircase, the noble entered the front apartment, where he was met by a middle-aged man, whose costume at once proclaimed his calling.

'Ho, good master goldsmith,' said the noble, smiling, 'I have used the privilege thou gavest me—and, lo! thy chambers are in my possession. Two fair beings, whose misfortunes and persecutions are only equalled by their beauty, are now in thy charge.'

'Aught in my humble power to serve them, shall be heartily given my lord!' replied the goldsmith.

'At another time, my good friend, I will tell thee of the cause of my sudden appearance here, and of the wherefore of my guardianship of the ladies who now lodge beneath thy honest roof.'

'It matters not, my lord,' replied the goldsmith; 'that they are under your protection is sufficient for me that they are ladies of worth. How speeds the cause?'

'Bravely! our next meeting will make the most sanguine of us leap for rapture. Meanwhile, thy lady will do me honor and great service by keeping close the fact of her knowledge of our fair unfortunates.'

'I pledge myself for her secrecy, my noble lord.'

'Enough, my honest friend. As time is precious, and as my fair friends may need my presence for a few minutes, I'll take my leave.'

The noble hurried up stairs.

Isabel and Eugenia were in tears, by the window, as he entered.

'What! weeping, fair ones!' he exclaimed, taking a seat near them. 'Shall the villain have it to boast that he can make us all weep, when'er he lists? Nay, cease, as ye love me! I ne'er could bide the sight of tears—they rob me of my manhood, and turn me back, in years and feeling, to a weak and timid child.'

'Have we not cause for weeping?' said Isabel.

'Nay, I'm no woman and cannot answer thee,' said Galliano, with a smile. 'Men think not of weeping o'er a wrong—they redress it straight, and, in the joy o'er revenge, laugh till all remembrance of the deed is swept away. But tell me, lady, how it chanced I found ye so far from that asylum in which I placed you. Methought my measures for preserving you from all further persecution by Foscari were most effective.'

The orange girl blushed, and exclaimed, 'The fault was mine, my lord, and on me let your anger fall.'

'Nay, fair trembler,' responded the noble, 'your severe sufferings swallow up all anger. Give me to know how it all hath chanced, that I may take warning and prevent the further visits of the princely libertine.'

'The night was fair,' said Isabel, 'and, weary of our room, we sought the garden. A small arbor invited us, where, as we inhaled the evening ether, we spoke of our several destinies, our past, our present, and our future. While speaking thus, a strain of music, proceeding from the garden next our own, fell upon our ears. We paused to listen; anon, arose, and approaching the fence, drank in the sounds of the melodious instrument, till our souls forgot their woes, and were wrapt in bliss. Thus we stood, entranced, when he, Foscari, suddenly stood before us. Palsied, by fear, we scarce could speak; and when our tongues had found free utterance, we were being dragged from our house of refuge to the beach. We screamed and struggled, but none came to our aid. For the villain had a band of fierce and armed knaves around him, whose bright swords awed the few whom we encountered on our way. Brought to the beach, we were hurried into a boat, filled with stalwart and masked rowers, whose stout arms soon bore us far from shore. The wretches gagged us to silence our screams, while he, the chief villain, held our arms, and with insulting words bade us struggle not, or we should be plunged into the deep. We were silent, unresisting, till we were landed. A crowd was gathered round the pier; and in the

hope that some brave hearts would attempt our rescue, we screamed and struggled as they bore us up the pier. Nor were we mistaken: for our young friend, Calvari, was among the crowd; who, recognising our voices, and divining the rank and intentions of our abductors, rushed boldly forward, and felled the foremost wretch, who held us, to the earth. The rest catching the spirit of his courage and enthusiasm, rallied to our defence. Foscari, at length declared his name and rank, and bade them stand back on peril of their lives. They all gave way but Calvari, who, fearless of every thing but our danger, seized me and bade the villains do their worst. The wretches paused, fearing lest the crowd should fall on them again; when Foscari, rushing forward and dealing him a blow, commanded his myrmidons to seize and bear us to the palace. They hesitated, and he, to inspire them, seized us, and, bidding the crowd give way, was dragging us onward, when your timely arrival saved us from further outrage, and punished the foul dastard.'

'Enough! enough!' said the noble, gaily 'yea, more than enough,' he muttered to himself, 'I thought him base before, but knew not till now the perfection of his villainy. But the hour is coming for him, and for all his kind. Till then, we'll let him pass. Ye are safe here,' he continued aloud, and rising; 'the suddenness of our flight and this change in your abode will baffle the vigilance of the keen villain. A few days and all shall be quiet, all at rest. Our friend, the goldsmith, and his kind dame, will be your guardians in my absence. Every thing necessary to your well-being will be by them provided. I need not warn you of being careful to preserve your faces from strangers, nor of listening to music in neighboring yards,' he added smiling. 'There are other cavaliers as dangerous as the gay Foscari. And now,' he took their hands, and his voice faltered as he spoke, 'farewell! for five days you must not expect to be visited by the gloomy Galliano. Duties weighty and imperious will detain me from paying my respects to all save a few stern friends, and they reside not in this Isle. Farewell, Isabel; farewell, Eugenia, brighter days I trust are in store for us. The clouds are not always dark, and the sun is not always hid. But when I come to ye again, I shall look for the smiles that adorn beauty and spur men on to high and glorious deeds. Another shall accompany me,'—he glanced at the blushing orange girl—'whose presence, I trust, will add more joy to thy heart than thou hast felt this many a day. Farewell, again—and may He who watcheth o'er the shelterless lamb as o'er the housed one, protect ye till my return!'

The orange girl sank back with emotion.

The lady Isabel accompanied the noble to the door, her hand still lingering in his.

Galliano trembled, as he felt the pressure of that soft hand. It sent a thrill through his stern frame that robbed him of his collectedness. At last, unable longer to withstand the force of his passion, he clasped the peerless, unresisting beauty to his breast, and, in one wild, long, burning kiss, told at once his long-concealed and ardent love.

CHAPTER XV

THE LAST MEETING OF THE CONSPIRATORS.

It was the night before the Carnival.

Scarce a heart in Venice but bounded with anticipative delight; scarce a maid but had spent the day in searching the city wide for gaudy trinkets, bright colors and attractive gauds; scarce a youth but tried every depot of second-rate clothes for the fancy attire he would wear on the succeeding night. The merchant's clerk, the artisan's apprentice, the merry-hearted bachelor, yea, and the churchman, too, burned impatiently for the darkness of the coming day, when all Venice should be alive with mirth, joy, frolic and gladness. Every where the needle was plying with wonderful rapidity, every where the hammer fell on the rivet, every where the jest and loud laugh rang forth, as the sports of the Carnival darted in anticipation through the minds of the gay. The streets and shops swarmed with runners and buyers of every sex. Already the sports of the laughter loving and mirth-provoking had commenced. Torches floated through the city, borne by the hands of gay apprentices, merry-hearted clerks, and young gondoliers, at the head of motley processions and roving groups. From their casements, maidens, preparing for the Carnival, peeped forth a moment upon some gay and boisterous throng, then hurried back to their needlework to make up for the misspent time. Sober citizens, whose reverend tongues two hours before pronounced the cause of mirth an absurd and ridiculous farce, unworthy to be ever looked upon by men of sense or years, by some strange means lost their prejudicial notions, and slowly approached their windows, where, like men, who are not fond of roaming from spot to spot without sufficient inducements, they quietly remained,—not to look upon the roysterers, of course not,—and some how or other their eyes were directed towards the motley groups passing by, without the slightest sign that they beheld them. Jealous minds would perhaps assert that they loved, and were infected by, the general mirth; but, psha! old men's blood warmed by the follies of youth!

Men, with merry faces and laughing eyes, albeit when they deemed none were looking on, were not so merry in their features, or youthful in their steps—men, we say, many

of them, old men, yea, and young men, too, sped hastily through the streets, as if in great anxiety to meet a fellow wight in pleasure. There was a peculiarity about these men; a certain fixedness, or earnestness, in their gait and features, which would have recommended them to the close inspection of an observing eye, even on such a night as the eve before the Carnival. There was a certain restlessness in their eyes,—a sharp prying all around them as they sped on, as if half fearful of being surprised, or watched, or followed by those they loved not, or at least had no very great affection for. Something more than pleasure produced this incessant,—this great anxiety to reach their goal unnoticed. By a strange mystery, too, these men all bent their steps in the same direction—that is, towards St. Mark's Square, and there they disappeared.

A man might walk beside you for a moment; your eyes bent forward, in thought, perhaps, on the words which have fallen from his lips. Perhaps you are answering a reply; ere your speech is finished, lo! you are alone!

You are in St. Mark's Square; hundreds on hundreds are playing merry feats, and setting hundreds on hundreds of others in a roar. Some of the windows are illuminated while from others, young and aged faces are gazing upon the sights below. One by one the spectators withdrew, till scarce one half of the original number remained. Where are they? The hour of eleven approaches, and the actors are surprised to find they outnumber their auditors. Where are the latter? Gone to their homes?

In a vault of some two hundred and eighty feet in length and about one hundred and twenty in breadth, were assembled a host (for they were countless) of masks. Skull caps adorned their heads, hiding the dark and gray locks of every member of the assemblage. A host, we say, a host of masked heads. Their forms were dominoed, so that it was impossible to catch the slightest sight of the gear they wore. Like one massive body of human forms conjoined they seemed, as they stood in close proximity to each other from wall to wall of the long, broad vault. A sea of human heads, silent and breathless as that assembly of old which waited the moment of the tyrant's entrance into the imperial hall of the capitoline city that each 'might kill his share of him.'

Silent were they, as if on each one's speechlessness depended the lives of the united throng. In one direction their eyes were turned, and there, on a rough and temporary stage, an altar stood; a lamp, with five burners, suspended from the ceiling, threw a bright glare on the open leaves of a written volume, whose characters symbolic, together with a bare dagger, a skull on each side of the book, struck awe into every heart of that mighty throng. Grim and gaunt and

terrific, yea, and majestic was that altar. In gazing on't, and on its eloquent symbols, a thrill ran through the multitude, enthusiastic as that of the pious pilgrim who has spent months in weary travel to his favorite shrine.

On one side of the altar, and in view of the whole assemblage, sat a masked figure, with a large volume before him, over whose pages he appeared to be absorbed in patriotic earnestness. Like the rest of the assembly, he wore a domino, which enveloped him from head to foot. The excitement was high, as was evinced by the quick breathings which, like the first swell of ocean, ever and anon, rose up and fell back into the bosom of the throng.

Why was that multitude so silent? Feared they speech would betray them, if they dared to use it? Or, tarried they a leader to open their proceedings? The hour is late, and yet, though the assembly is huge beyond conception, no word hath been spoken, no form of meeting opened.

Hark! a sound as of a muffled gong! lo! the assemblage breathe freer—that sound, what doth it betoken?

Lo! the front of the altar sinks, and within two forms are seen. Their rank is noble, or else nature hath made men wear the aspect of nobility, without the silken charter given by man to man to proclaim him above the common herd. Hark to that shout, deafening as the sudden peal which the dark and angry clouds roll forth, when the elements would fling the Fear pall over the hearts of the Triune's images. Again the peal rings forth as if to split the earth above into countless fragments. And now, lo! a masked but gallant form enters from the altar's bosom, leading a weak and tremulous companion into the presence of the mighty throng. The face of the latter is bare, and on his reverend brow and cheeks a tale of recent and terrible agony is written, as if the veil which hides the caves of the Infernal King from human vision had been opened to him alone of all the breathers this side the abyss of the Eternities. The shout of the multitude ceases on his appearance, and mouths are agape with wonder. Murmurs run through the vault, and whispers of half-believed treachery are audible. Concealed knives are half-drawn from their sheaths, and half-suppressed mutterings tell the danger of the new comer.

The younger raises his hand aloft—and now, the murmurs cease, the daggers are returned to their sheaths, and marvel takes the place of audible suspicion.

The old man casts his eyes around the mighty throng, but masks—masks—masks greet his vision on every hand. His cheek is pale with suffering, not fear. His limbs are tremulous, and his lips in vain assay to speak.

His younger and more hardy companion

leads him to a seat on the right of the altar, and, like a son humoring the whims of a feeble-minded parent, fears not, in sight of a thousand eyes, to do each little act which gives relief or feeds the humor of his sire. And now that kindness is acknowledged by the throng, for lo! how lustily they shout.

The hand of the mask is raised again—the assemblage is dumb.

'Hark! to the voice of the swayer of the multitude:

'Venetians, ye must not deem me faithless to the post which ye have honored me with, because of the lateness of my arrival at this our last, most solemn meeting. But when ye have heard the cause of my detention, ye will pardon my lateness. Ye know well the features of yon old man—ye have known, ye have felt, his kindness, justice and humanity for years, when the dark power, for whose destruction we are now assembled, held over us the hidden steel and midnight summons. Look on him, pity him, for he hath suffered,—welcome him, for I bring him to ye as a candidate for your voices.

'For the last five days, he hath suffered the infernal torments which only the Fiends of Venice are capable of inflicting upon man. On a base, false and cowardly charge he was summoned at midnight, by the dark messenger of the Tribunal to appear before the "Ten" and answer to charges which none but a devil could invent. He was tried, condemned, and sentenced to the "Sulphur Death." Venetians, he is your doge—ye are his loyal subjects, and, now, fresh from the dungeon's torture, he comes to join us in our battle with the foes of liberty and conscience. Shall he be one of us? it is for your voices to decide whether our cause shall be aided by the influence and worth of one so potent as our doge.'

'Who will vouch for his honesty?' demanded a voice, in the throng.

'Galliano,' responded the noble, boldly.

A look of gratitude from the aged victim rewarded the young noble's generosity.

'Shall he be one of us?' demanded Galliano, energetically; 'shall we proceed in the coming struggle with a star at our side, whose fame as a warrior, a statesman and a man hath never been excelled by the brightest of our country's sons? Shall we go forth, with this brave man and true, this great man and good, this sage and warrior, at our head, or shall we, trusting to his honor for fidelity, let him depart, to be again seized by the dark Tribunal, a victim to its rapacity. It is for you to say whether he shall become one of us, and live; or, return to the vengeance of the "Ten," and die!'

The assembly was silent.

'Your signal, friends, your signal,' cried the noble.

Every right hand of the throng was raised aloft.

'Enough, friends—I thank ye. Then

turning to the pale doge, the noble added—'Father of Venice, Jacopo the Just, it is the pleasure of these worthy citizens that you be admitted into our holy cause. Thou wilt now prepare to take the initiatory oath; it is a solemn and an holy one, and he who breaks it, forfeits all right to honor, manhood, yea, and life. Art thou willing to run such hazard?'

'I am,' replied the old man, firmly.

'Then arise, and take thy stand with me beside this altar.'

The doge obeyed.

'Lay thy hand upon this holy volume,' added the noble, 'and follow me in the oath.'

'By all my hopes of life on earth—by all the ties that bind me to kindred, friends and country—by all my hopes of heaven and fears of hell—I swear to be faithful and true to the cause of which I am a brother; to hold myself in readiness to follow the orders of my officers; to aid my brother members when in suffering or in danger; to be ready at all hours, whenever summoned, to carry out the object of our institution—to keep secret its secrets, to keep secret its proceedings, to keep secret the names of its members, to keep secret its place of meeting—to advance its power, influence and number by every means in the power of my hands, mind and tongue. To give of my means and abundance all that can be given, to sustain and strengthen our institution; to obey when ordered, though it were to sacrifice my dearest friends, my kindred in blood, or though it were to jeopardise mine own life. To know no object in precedence of this—to obey its officers, though to obey were peril beyond conception. This do I swear, in sight of heaven and earth, and will maintain my oath before the courts of Life, Death or Darkness!'

Word for word, with trembling lips, the doge followed the speaker, till the last word of the fearful and responsible oath was uttered.

Then advanced the secretary with his ledger. Laying it on the altar, he opened its pages, saying—'Thy name?'

'For what?' demanded the doge.

'This book doth bear the name of every member of our order, signed, or marked, by his own hand,' responded the secretary.

'Give me the pen,' said the duke, huskily.

It was put into his hand.

Why paused he? His son was one of the creatures of the "Ten"—the "Ten" were terrible in their decrees, terrible in their terrors—but his son was allied to them—if the "Ten" were destroyed, his son, his darling, spoiled, but yet his son, would be swept away with them. He had suffered by both, terribly suffered—but he was a father, and had a father's feelings. Even now, if his Leonardo stood before him, for all his wickedness of heart, he felt he could forgive him, wholly, yea, heartily forgive

him. Though his son had forgot his duties, his loyalty, his manliness, his affection, still there was yet a pleader for him in his father's heart. He knew his boy to be marked—that many a heart in that throng thirsted for his blood, and would have it,—and yet he, a father, was about to join a band of men whose solemn purpose was to slay, in cold blood, suddenly, and at midnight, the protectors of his son. He felt his eyes grow dim—he could not see the book before him, his hand trembled.

'Why dost thou pause?' said the noble.

The lips of the doge moved, but no sound issued forth.

'The torture hath done its work upon him,' thought the noble.

'He fears to sign, but he has taken the oath,' shouted a voice.

'He must sign, or die, doge or no doge,' shouted another.

'Aye, he must,' echoed an hundred voices, at once.

'Silence!' thundered Galliano, indignantly; 'think ye the old man means us treachery? For shame! Scarce two hours have flown, since I, with the connivance of one of the Tribunal's instruments, rescued him, stealthily, from the dungeon where he was to linger till murdered by the torture! Last night the Tribunal stretched him on the rack to extort confession. 'Tis the agony of his tortured limbs that now makes him pause. His strength is gone. Would you add to his sufferings by harsh, unkind reproaches?'

The throng was silent.—

The old man leaned against the altar, and, casting a look of gratitude upon his defender, said, feebly—'Cease thy pleading, noble youth; I am not popular with these stern men, and thy efforts will be of little or no avail. My hours are well nigh numbered,—my aid in your cause feeble, no matter how heartily given. Still, go on; go on, with an old man's dying blessing. Rid Venice of its plague—sweep them off, and be freemen once more. Posterity will do your efforts justice, whether fruitless or successful. If you succeed, go at once into an election and create your doge. Let the people's choice live and reign for the people; not for himself, but for the great body of Venice, I—'

His voice had now sunk to a whisper. Galliano rushed toward and supported him from falling.

The secretary ran, and, throwing the old man's right shoulder over his neck, sustained him on one side, as the young noble did the same on the other.

Thus supported, the doge, turning his face toward the throng, and, running his eyes over the multitude, as if to command their attention, said, in a tone feeble, but whisperingly audible. 'Venetians, you need not give yourselves uneasiness, relative to

one who has made Truth, Justice and Honesty his study all his days. I have not enough of life in me to aid your cause physically; but, judging you kindly, and believing your intentions to proceed from pure patriotism, I believe, what before I doubted, that your great number, if harmoniously acting, will accomplish your noble purpose. Fresh from the torture house of the Tribunal, with the effects of the rack now hastening me into the dark house of the lifeless, I can attest how high and how holy is the cause which has for its object the entire destruction of so dark and terrible a power. No thought of vengeance for mine own wrongs urges me to bid you proceed, but for the sake of your wives, your children, your children's children, aye, for the sake of all posterity, I implore you to put a period to this fiendish Tribunal. Its acts for an hundred years, as the archives of our royal library all attest, have been of the most remorseless and fiendish character—its dark pall falling alike on the youthful, the manly and the aged, on the tender maid, as on the time-hued matron; sparing none, but with mocking trials, and relentless tortures, hurrying all into the dark shades of the Eternities. Its spies eat at our domestic and festal boards, and, their lips scarce dry of the food they've ate, the wine they've drank, post to the Tribunal with the secrets they have gleaned, and, rearing mountains out of molehills, report us to the Relentless. We cannot quit our doors, and know we shall return; we cannot speak a word, and know it will not be the signa of our doom; we cannot impart a word in confidence to a friend, lest that friend should be a spy; we cannot sit down to a meal with the consciousness that we shall finish it unsummoned by the dark messenger of the Tribunal.

'Life is not life, but a continual fear lest we be hurried to death. Our wives cannot go forth to inhale the cheering bracing air, with safety; our daughters cannot receive the addresses of their lovers, lest, beneath the wooer's guise, they turn out spies upon our households; physicians cannot visit us in sickness, lest they prove instruments of the "Ten" for destroying us. Shall this be longer borne, and we be called Venitians? No; let us arise in our might, and, with one purpose, one thought, free ourselves from such cowardly dastards, such blood-thirsty fiends. Their houses of torture are well known to this gallant gentleman beside me, whose strong heart and fearless arm rescued me from the death-cell. He knows their dark avenues and mazes, their mysterious doors and hidden traps, and can lead you through all their labyrinths as unerringly as if he had traversed them since childhood. Let him be your guide. And, if an old man's prayer can aught avail, let him be your leader, too; a faithfuller, a keener, a bolder cannot be found on earth.'

A burst of applause here informed the venerable speaker, that the sentiments of the throng were in unison with his own.

The duke proceeded, in a tone firmer than before:—

'The counsels of your leader must be obeyed; no murmurs must ascend to discourage, no deeds performed other than he has ordered, to balk his purposes. Be firm, courageous, and fear not; in the hour ye choose for the attempt, let no thought of fear enter your breasts; but let each man strike as if a world's existence depended on his bravery. Ask heaven's aid on your enterprise, and fear not but the succeeding dawn will break on the overthrow of the Tribunal, and be the birth hour of our freedom!'

Scarcely had he finished, when a spontaneous shout from the huge throng, rang through the vault, and voices shouted: 'Foscari! Foscari! be one of us! be one of us!'

Over exertion, in his address, had weakened the doge, and he could scarcely master himself sufficiently to bow his thanks. He seized the pen anew, and, with a trembling hand, added his name, to the long list; at sight of which, loud bursts of cheers again rang through the vault, and voices shouted: 'Foscari! Foscari! Foscari the Just! he is one of us—he is one of us!'

When the enthusiasm of the throng had somewhat abated, the President of the Patriots took his seat, and, with a little hammer, called all to silence; and then, called on the secretary for the reading of the list of new members. This being done, the latter were summoned to the altar, and there, hand in hand, the foremost having his hand upon the book, the formalities of initiation were gone through, and the rostrum was again cleared.

The general history of the Institution was then read by the secretary; all its transactions, the amount of funds loaned to aid and support its members in the coming struggle; the number of its members, and all and every thing pertaining to its transactions. Speeches were made to strengthen and encourage the timid; warnings were given to intimidate the doubtful, if any such were there. The place of gathering on the following night appointed; a benediction, by the doge, was pronounced; and ten minutes afterward, the vault was all dark, all silent.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE NIGHT OF THE CARNIVAL.

The skies were dark and starless; the night queen, as if in anger, shed neither ray nor light upon the earth; a gloomy, solemn darkness pervaded the isles scattered over the broad Adriatic; the waters were still

as if the Eternal's voice had turned it into dark and solid glass; the atmosphere was deadly calm and hot.

The piers of Venice were crowded with continually-arriving boats from the numerous isles around; the streets were thronged with citizens and strangers, all attended by servant bearing flambeaux, and all hurrying toward St. Mark's Square. Torches and lamps festooned, hung beneath the windows of every house; music, from a thousand instruments, greeted the comers, now issuing from every corner, in the square.

The street from side to side, was floored with close-grooved planks, and rendered slippery as glass by holystone; and cautions was the foot that did not fall. Shoes, sandals, boots, slippers, and chopines, were chalked by the knowing ones; while those who visited the scene for the first time, afforded great diversion by their numerous falls and awkward attempts to preserve their equilibrium.

The sports commenced by the entrance of an hundred morris dancers, all dressed in tight-fitting pantaloons and jackets, with numerous small bells attached to their steeple caps and belted waists. Their grotesque dance being finished, and confidence implanted in the breasts of the over-modest, the hilarity of the Carnival began. Clowns, sober citizens, monkeys, villagers, tigers, usurers and monks, all joined in one mirthful set, each figure dancing as closely as possible, in imitation of the thing whose character he represented.

The heat was oppressive, and cunning wights, taking advantage of the holitime, carried about water and choice wines, for which, receiving whatever they demanded, they made enough to pay for the time lost in preparing, and the expense incurred in costuming for the gay holitime.

Nuns, with every thing but nun-like steps, might be seen, arm-in-arm, with a soldier; a tiger with a monkey on his back, the monkey doing the roaring part, and the tiger, both through mistake, performing the monkey's squeak; a burly monk with huge chops and laughter-loving eyes, dancing a comic couplet with a gay shepherdess; a king footing it with a huge, greasy looking cook; and ten thousand other fantastic and laughable vagaries might be witnessed, as the sports and crowd increased.

The bell of St. Mark's temple struck the midnight signal; and, ere its sound had died away, the darkness was changed to the light of day, by the sudden discharge of a thousand rockets, from all parts of the torch-lit square. This lasted for about five minutes, in which time a countless host of caps were raised aloft on poles, and swung round, in the air, amidst deafening shouts.

Fedders of food and wine and water were now seen busily disposing of their articles to the hungry and thirsty, while the thou-

sand antics of the merry throng kept the pave alive with boisterous delight.

The throng continued to increase,—the dancers and spectators to grow nearer and nearer to each other, till there was scarce space enough for the trippers to obey the music. At last, one merry wight bethought him of a scheme to clear the pave, and, a few moments afterward, a baricade was seen rolling from the top of the square, with frightful rapidity, from either end of which shot forth, like fire rockets, numerous flaming balls, scattering the crowd and dancers in every direction. But the balls were harmless, doing no other mischief than that of frightening the astonished multitude, amidst peals of laughter.

A tall form stood at the door of a two-story house, opposite the temple of St. Mark, scanning, with scowling brows, the figures of the merry multitude. The house before which he stood had nothing in it to distinguish it from the buildings on either side of it, except indeed that its facade was humbler in its pretensions. It was an ordinary building, and free from all the fancy stucco and carved work which distinguished the majority of the dwellings in St. Mark's Square. It appeared to be the residence of some wealthy, but unpretending citizen, and had nothing to recommend it to the passing eye, but its simplicity. The individual alluded to, was young in years, gay in his habiliments, handsome in figure and features, and evidently one who had no small opinion of his own importance.

His eyes were every where; but an eye was on him, that he little dreamt of; an eye, dark, large, sharp and piercing as his own. Having satisfied his curiosity, and growing tired of gazing on sports in which neither his humor nor pride would permit him to mingle, he opened the door cautiously, though in an apparently careless manner, and disappeared. Whether he had received a signal, invisible to all but himself, to hurry him from the scene where he was only a spectator, or whether he retired to avoid the eye or presence of some approaching foe, it matters not—he retired, and, a few moments afterward, a fancy masque was being played almost in front of the house, which was so attractive that hundreds, aye hundreds on hundreds, gathered around to witness it.

They gathered around to witness the mask, we say; but many, instead of remaining to feast their eyes upon the farce gradually drew back, and one by one, disappeared through the very door which the personage before mentioned had entered. The mirth of the masque was at its height—the spectators were splitting their sides with laughter,—their eyes were bent upon each feature of the gay performance, when, lo! hundreds fell back, just as unproped earth gives way before the press of dampness and approached the opened door. They disappeared

rapidly, and when the masque was over, the remaining auditors were astonished at the thinness of their number. They imagined that the play they had been looking on was poor, and that the greater part of its auditors had retired in disgust; and so, like wise people, they left the spot too, in order that they might not be reproached with gazing delightedly upon a play of *parvenu* caste!

CHAPTER XVII

THE DUNGEONS OF THE TRIBUNAL.

The trial chamber of the Tribunal was about sixty feet in length, thirty in width, and about sixteen feet high. The walls and ceiling were lined with black silk velvet, ornamented (or disfigured, if you will,) with silver emblems of the different modes of torture used by the Council to extort confession or silence the breathings of its victims. Near the head of the apartment, stood an altar covered with the same dark material, the front of which was garnished with a silvery cross, woven into the cloth. A semi-circular seat ran round the altar, on which the members of the Tribunal sat when deliberating, or holding council on their victims. In its centre was an upraised chair, for the President, and before it, lying on the altar, an open book, a naked dagger, and materials for writing. At either end of the altar stood a table, covered with parchments and writing materials; while directly before it stood a circular paling of iron, for prisoners when on trial. A huge lamp, hung from the ceiling, over the paling, whose bright light was calculated to fall directly upon the person of the prisoner. A rack, with all its infernal apparatus, was visible, a few paces from the altar.

Such was the Trial Chamber, when its members were absent. But on the night of the Carnival, it was tenanted, and hideous was the sight it presented. A white-haired man, haggard and pale, stood in the prisoner's dock!—chains on his hands, and chains on his feet; a pulley hung from the ceiling, the hook of which was run through an iron circle attached to the back of a broad, thick, leathern belt which girded the waist of the prisoner; the end of this pulley was in the hands of a couple of fierce-looking wretches, garbed in coarse dark frocks reaching to their knees. The Tribunal was sitting, each member bare-headed, masked, and dominoed. The lamp, before-mentioned, threw a broad, bright light over the features of the half-naked prisoner, over the bright trappings of the velveted walls, and ceiling, over the parchments and altar and rack, and over the glossy masks and dominoes of the judges.

'Jacopo Foscari,' said he, who sat in the

President's chair, 'what hast thou to say to the charge urged against thee?'

'Not guilty,' responded the prisoner.

'Not guilty?' repeated the judge, in apparent amazement. 'We have a witness against thee.'

'Produce him,' said the prisoner.

'Behold him,' said the President, pointing to one of the Council, who had just risen from his seat.

'Doth he accuse me?' demanded the prisoner, faintly.

'He doth,' responded the President.

'Of murder?'

'Of murder.'

'Hath he sworn it?'

'He hath.'

'He hath spoken falsely, sirs. Jacopo Foscari arraigns him for falsehood and perjury.'

'Thou art thyself arraigned, doge, and it behooves thee to rid thyself of the charges against thee, ere thou attemptest to bear witness against another. Thou art accused of the foul murder of Ubertoni, the rich usurer, for the sake of his supposed wealth. Sentence hath been passed upon thee. Why should it not be performed?'

'Ye have the power, dark men, as ye are,' said the prisoner, boldly, 'ye have the power of murder in your hands, and ye may use it on me, soon as it consorts with your will; but I am innocent, and sith there is no means of baffling ye in your humor for my blood, e'en take my life: 'twill be but another to the already long list of your crimes.'

'Beware, rash man,' exclaimed the President, 'less impertinence in thy speech would perhaps incline us to mercy.'

'Mercy! your mercy?' cried the prisoner, in tones of the most withering scorn; 'ye showed it me two nights ago, when, upon this same false charge, ye stretched me on yon rack, and, after glutting your sanguinary eyes upon my tortures, ye bade your slaves release and plunge me back into the dungeon from whence ye took me. Your mercy! the mercy of the "Ten"! Ha! ha! ha!'

'Madman!' exclaimed the President, 'dost beard us to our very throats? Ho! there, ye knaves! lay him on the rack! Wrench him limb from limb! We'll see, if his proud heart cannot be broke, or his unbridled tongue taught reverence and decency in its speech!'

As the minions of the Tribunal obeyed the order of the President, he who had stood up as witness against the doge, was seen to start and heard to groan as if an earthquake had suddenly opened before him. A hand of one beside him, was laid, gently, upon his shoulder, and, his presence of mind returning, he resumed his former seeming stolidity.

'Now,' continued the President, rising, and gazing upon his victim, as he lay stretched upon the iron bed, 'confess the means by which thou didst escape thy dungeon,

THE ORANGE GIRL OF VENICE.

ye sterneright, and thou shalt be saved the torture.'

The prisoner was silent.

'Confess the name of thy accomplice, and thou shalt be pardoned the murder of the usurer,' continued the President.

Still the prisoner uttered not a word.

'Confess, ere I give the sign,' thundered the President.

'I laugh at thee and thy threats, villain,' responded the prisoner.

The Council rose in agitation, and hastily collected round the prostrate man.

In faith, they had good cause for trembling; a traitor was within their gates, or else the secret of the entrance to their dungeons was known to some daring one unknown to the Tribunal. He, the doge, their last and highest victim, had found some secret means of escaping his dungeon; true, they had re-captured him, at dawn, as he was stealing, with a companion, through a bye-path, near St. Mark's cathedral, into the rear of the gardens of the ducal palace: still, the secret of the entrance was known to another than themselves. This fact troubled them, and to find out the name of the being possessing this mighty and dangerous secret, caused the Tribunal to dally with their victim ere they resorted to the last deadly measure.

'Confess, and save thy life,' said the President; 'give us but the name of him our spies found thee with this morn, and thou shalt live. Refuse, and thou shalt die.'

'Do your worst—I'll betray no man,' replied the prisoner, firmly.

'Beware! our vengeance is —'

'Laughed at, and at end,' thundered a voice, without.

A moment more, and a knight, in black armor, his vizor down, his sword drawn, and accompanied by an hundred warriors, in mail, each bearing a broad, bright blade in his right hand, entered the chamber, and confronted the astonished Tribunal.

'Ho, there! what treachery is this?' cried the President, starting back.

'No treachery, villains!' replied the black knight; 'we are Venetians, and your dooms-men! Seize them!' he added, pointing to his companions.

'Stand back, knaves!' cried one of the judges, rushing forward, his sword drawn, and throwing off his dominoe, 'stand back, as ye do value life! Give we but the signal, ye are on all sides hemmed in, and death, death in its most startling and terrible shape, is your portion. Think ye to come and beard us thus in our very den? Fly, fools, fly, and save your wretched lives!'

'Cease, thou foul-mouthed braggart! cease thine empty vauntings, for every passage, or entrance to this bloody chamber is filled with men thirsting for your blood! Think'st thou, by this shallow trick, to intimidate hearts a thousand times more brave

and cunning than thine own? Fool! thou art too well begirt, though armies could now spring up on all sides of this chamber to aid thee—death, death, in its most appalling forms, have been marked out for thee and all thy fellow assassins! Seize them!'

The knights obeyed; and, in five minutes, every member of the Tribunal, together with the wretches who were about to strangle the aged man on the rack, were seized, bound and tied to the altar around which they had so often sat in sanguinary council.

'Behold, my friends,' cried the black knight, pointing to the rack, 'behold the weapons of these midnight murderers. Behold the fearful engines we are called upon by reason, manhood, justice, aye, and fate, to destroy. Release yon noble victim, and bear him to the palace. We'll hear his thanks another time,' he continued with averted face, as the doge, freed from his iron manacles, was about to throw himself on his knees and thank his deliverers, for their timely arrival; 'we'll hear his thanks another time. Bear him hence, and see him well attended, ere ye quit your burden. Away!'

'And now?' continued the knight, 'pass the word for the oil, we'll teach these idle hounds the mercy they have taught to others.'

The oil was brought.

'Now, sirs,' said the black knight, turning to the judges, 'it is but the emptying of these jars upon this pave, and the touching of this torch to the oil, and ye are in a human hell, built by your own death-dealing hands. What if we so act?'

The judges were silent.

'What if, like yourselves, we, to gratify our thirst for blood, fire these dungeons, leaving you, partners in blood and iniquity, to list to each other's cries and shrieks and groans, as the flames of Vengeance hurry ye from this chamber of fire into that burning lake the other side the Eternities which ye so long have laughed at?'

'Do it,' said one of the judges, sullenly; 'we fear not.'

'Liar that thou art,' replied the knight, 'tis thy fear that gives thee this sad show of courage in the dark hour of death. Are ye then so brave, that ye will not ask for mercy? Ho, there!' he added, turning to his men, 'swathe these walls with oil. We'll e'en burn the villains into a crisp.'

A cry of terror, rose from the midst of the captive judges, as they beheld the threat of their unknown-captor being carried into effect.

'What! ye come to your senses at last, eh?' exclaimed the knight, with a derisive laugh; 'ye begin at last to have a foretaste of the dark doom which ye have so oft inflicted upon your wretched victims? Ho, there!

my brave hearts, seize these dastards, and convey them to the outer vault.'

His command was obeyed.

'Now then, friends,' continued the knight, 'pass the word, to set all the captives free, swathe all the dungeons with oil and pitch, and when we reach the outer vault, let the torch fire the dungeons—if possible, we'll end our glorious work without shedding a drop of human blood.'

The dungeons were opened, and captive after captive released, till not a cell was left unexplored. The walls, floors, and ceilings were then bedaubed with oil and pitch, and all moved, hastily, to the outward vault. There the judges stood, charmed, and, devoid of their cloaks, gazing sullenly on their captors—their faces were well known, and the huge throng recognized many a favorite citizen among the now powerless judges.

The black knight advanced towards one who bore a torch, and seizing it, cried out—'Seize these villains, and bear them to the ducal hall. Away, on your lives—for the brand must now end these scenes of blood!'

None needed a second bidding: and making a rush for the stair flight, were, with their captives, soon beyond the reach of danger. The knight finding himself alone flung the burning torch into the narrow passage; and for a moment paused to witness the result. The passage, swathed with oil and pitch, was instantaneously in a flame, and spreading like a sea of fire, till all before him was of one lurid glow. The heat drove him to the stair flight, where stood a large jar of pitch and oil. A slight push sent it into the vault, where it was soon caught by the approaching fire. The danger was now evident, and, closing the door, the black knight ran, with his few remaining companions, up stairs. A crowd was congregated without the door; which, on the approach of our hero, soon gave way, and all bent their steps toward the palace.

In a square phalanx they moved, the black knights in the centre, till they reached the ducal mansion.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRIAL.

The reception hall of the ducal palace was filled to overflowing. An oaken desk, carved in the fashion of the furniture of the middle ages, stood in the upper end of the hall. Behind it, his vizor off, and his manly face exposed to the full view of the multitude, sat Galliano, the hero of the night. Ranged on either side, were twenty knights in black armor, each holding his helmet on his arm before his breast. On either end of the desk stood a large waxen taper, flinging a broad light around. The captive

judges were in a line before the desk, their faces toward the desk, and separated from the spectators by an iron railing, which ran from side to side of the apartment. Silence reigned throughout the hall.

'Venetians,' said Galliano, in a stern voice, 'the late foes of our beloved country, are now before you for judgment. The witnesses against them are your own eyes, and the sufferings which we all have suffered since nature gave us breath. Are ye prepared for judgment?'

'We are,' was the reply, as with one voice.

'Their crimes are known to ye—their villainy as plainly graven on your hearts, as the memory of yesterday. Speak, what is the doom of the prisoners?'

'Death!' was the solemn response.

'Without shriving—without preparation?'

'Without shriving—without preparation?'

'Their mode of death?'

'The block—the block!'

'When, and where?'

'This hour, and in front of the church of St. Mark!'

'Who shall be their executioner?'

'Their chief,' was the reply again, as with one voice.

'Ho, there!' exclaimed the black knight, rising from his seat, 'let the hall be cleared; and let the state block and axe, which have lain so long unused, be brought and placed on the portico of St. Mark's. It is decreed!'

The hall was cleared of all save the knights and their prisoners.

Galliano whispered to his companions; on which two of them hastily left the apartment by a side door.

Silence reigned there some half hour; at the expiration of which time, the knights returned, accompanied by a gray-haired priest and a mantled female.

Galliano led the latter behind the oaken desk. She trembled, and would have sunk, had not the arm of the noble sustained her.

'Courage, fair lady,' he whispered; 'courage, or else our pains will all be turned to nought. Command thy nerves with all thy might: harm cannot come to thee, surrounded as thou art by those who know thy melancholy history well, and who would die for thee. Courage!'

She answered not, but bent her head upon his arm, and wept.

The noble made a sign to those who had brought the lady, and they advanced; resigning the female to their charge, Galliano fixed his eye upon one of the captives, and said, in a deep and solemn tone: 'Leonardo Foscari—on the verge of eternity, as thou art, I summon thee in heaven's name, to do one act of justice, which will, in part, redeem the infamy thou hast brought upon thy father's name.'

'What is it?' demanded Foscari, sullenly.

'Behold this tender form,' said the noble,

turning and pointing as he spoke, 'and let thy once noble heart answer thee.'

'I am no reader of riddles,' replied the rouse, sneeringly.

'Nor need'st thou be, to draw the meaning I would have thee,' said the noble, stifling his anger at the insolent reply. 'Lead him hither?' he added, addressing the knights near the prisoners.

The rouse made no resistance.

'What think'st thou now?' said the noble, lifting aside the veil which had hidden the features of the female.

'Eugenia!' exclaimed the rouse, starting back at the pale countenance of his weeping victim.

'The same,' said the noble, indignantly; 'Eugenia, the orange girl of Venice! She, whom thy false tongue did first betray and afterwards malign. Behold her now, pale with misery and woe—behold her now, heart-broken, as thou hast made her!'

'Well, sir, the object of bringing us again together?' said the rouse, with a sneer, and recovering his self-possession.

'To urge thee to do her justice,' replied the noble, indignantly.

'As how, my gallant lord?'

'By wedding her, ere thou diest,' responded Galliano.

The rouse laughed.

'Hast thou no heart?' said a feeble voice near him.

Foscari turned pale and started—his sire was before him—his sire, pale with suffering in limb and brain.

'Hast thou no heart?' repeated the doge, in a low, feeble, sad, reproachful voice; 'hast thou no heart, Leonardo?'

The rouse heard the tones of that voice, and saw the mighty change in that face, whose features almost till now were ever turned on him with parental love and pride. He shrank as he gazed, he trembled at the changed tones of that voice, as they fell upon his ear—changed, too, by his own ingrate heart.

'On the verge of that dread Eternity, where we soon shall meet together,' continued the doge, 'I implore thee to do what good thou canst whilst yet the breath is in thee, by righting this poor girl. Lo! death is near at hand, boy, and if thou'lt but do this one little act of justice, thy father's lips will pronounce his pardon for thy guilt towards him, and his last prayer shall ascend to heaven for mercy on thy soul! Wilt thou do it?'

Leonardo replied not.

'Hast thou no spark of manliness nor honor left in thee, boy?' said the doge, in a choked voice. 'Shall thy poor father go down into his grave with the conviction that his only begotten, shamed the mother's breast that bore him? Speak, Leonardo,—my boy—one word! See, thy poor sire is on his knees before thee!'

The eyes of the rouse were moistened—

his lips trembled—his frame shook—he spoke no word, but *his sire had conquered*.

The rouse raised his father kindly up—then sank at his father's feet—then seized his father's hands in his, and implored his father's forgiveness.

'When thou hast righted her thou hast wronged!' said the old man, solemnly.

At this moment, the solemn tongue of St. Mark's steeple, toled a solitary chime.

The doge staggered against the desk—his face ashy, his eyes turned upward, and his lips murmuring—'O God!'

'The block is prepared—the axe whetted,' said a solemn voice, at the door.

What is that glossy stream now coursing down the old man's cheeks—tears, silent ones?

The rouse advanced to the orange girl, and taking her hand, said, in a low, deep voice—

'Eugenia, thy hand is cold and icy; unlike the hand which, in days long gone, I used to hold in mine without a sigh or murmur from thy lips: it is cold now, as thy betrayer's soon shall be. I did thee a foul and heartless wrong, for which, on the threshold of Eternity, I implore thy pardon and the forgiveness of thy kindred. The priest is at hand to seal my repentance—let him approach, that my last act on earth may not add to the remorse which now burns within this heart.'

The ceremony commenced, went on, was finished.

Again, St. Mark's bell rang a warning note. The prisoners are summoned to the block, said the voice at the door.

'Let this my first, my last honest kiss, Eugenia,' said the rouse, in a brusque tone, 'be the pledge of my repentance.' Then rushing to his father, he knelt; and, seizing the old man's listless hand, exclaimed—'Father! father! now forgive and bless me!'

The lips of the doge moved, but naught save a whispering sound was heard.

'Father! father! for God's sake! speak to me!' repeated the rouse in agony.

His father's eyes were raised heavenward—his lips were moving, as if in prayer.

The bell pealed again.

'The hour for death is struck,' said the voice.

The rouse started up—embraced his unconscious sire—then waving a farewell to his new made bride, sprang into the procession of judges, as guarded on either side, by the black knights, they slowly left the hall.

The doge, the priest, the orange girl and one in the garb of a gondolier alone remained. The lips and eyes of the doge still heavenward turned; the priest and gondolier supporting the statue-like form of the veiled bride.

The bell struck again; a sound, as of an axe falling on a block, grated on their ears. A long loud shriek rang through the hall—the orange girl fell back.

Shouts swelled in the Square, as the last stroke of the executioner's axe fell on the block, and cries, wild and solemn—and shrill and enthusiastic, split the air—"The tyrants are slain—Venice is free!"

With that loud shout, the lips of the doge ceased to move—his eyes grew glassy—his limbs tottered, and his spirit was travelling with that of his son to the Soul's High Court.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DAWN OF FREEDOM.

The news of the execution flew from mouth to mouth, like wildfire; the people looked in each others' eyes half paralysed; even those who had been in the conspiracy could scarce believe their glorious work was fully accomplished, till they beheld the decapitated trunks of those who had composed the Tribunal. The Carnival ceased only to break forth anew, with wilder mirth. People laughed, danced, shouted, yea, and wept for gladness' sake. Groups met, chatted a moment over the affair, then separated, in wild joy, and, collecting again together, rehearsed their former converse. So wild was the enthusiasm, that old men, forgetting their age, frolicked, danced, gambolled, shouted and made merry, like youths; misers forgot their avarice, and, joining in the general gladness, squandered the savings of years; processions formed in every part of the city, and, preceded by music, strode through Venice in triumph. The sick and the feeble, the halt and the blind were helped to the windows that they might either see the cavalcade or hear the enthusiastic strains which announced their country's freedom from the thrall of the Long-Dreaded. The timid forgot their timidity, and, as they strode in the processions, felt brave as the bravest; the niggard forgot his narrow-heartedness, and when the upraised hand of the beggar met his regenerated eye, gave of his means freely; men who had long been foes, met, and, in the patriotism of their hearts, looked kindly on each other, and embraced; jealousies were discarded by rival tradesmen, and free and generous hands and sympathies exchanged, and lasting friendships formed where all before was hatred. It was a time of universal joy, and brought back to the mental eye of the moralist, those happy days and scenes when men's faces were the outward pictures of their hearts.

Still there was a sadness, too, in Venice—the corpse of the just doge, Foscari,—lay in state, in the ducal palace. Waxen tapers gleamed around the bier, and monks and priests, and the dignitaries of the State sat in little groups, thinking of the dead. Alone in his palace, with no son nor wife nor daughter to weep o'er his pale and deathly

brow, lay Jacopo the Just. None wept for him—none told his virtues, his secret deeds of charity, or his worth. Men of place and mammon were around him, gazing on his shroud, and thinking of their future in regard to place and mammon. They knew their country was freed from a yoke which had, in its time, bowed all their necks to it; but they participated not in the general joy, because the doge's death and the Tribunal's overthrow might be the harbingers only to their loss of office. And, in this train of thought around the bier of Death, they pondered o'er the means of coining gold and place. "Who next shall be doge?" "Who be the electors?" "Shall my office and its emoluments be wrested from me? Or shall I become a favorite with the elected one?" Such were a few of the thousand interrogatories each of the sitters put to himself, while paying one of the last duties of man to his fellow man in that hall where Death rejoiced o'er one victim.

But there were many on that day whose minds were sorely rent while reflecting on the state of things which had been brought about by the conspirators. The doge was dead—this was not expected, and no provision had been made for such emergency.

A party of twenty men were assembled in St. Mark's vault. Their ages varied from thirty to fifty years. They were of different castes in rank, and each was garbed as befitted his rank and calling. They were sitting, in solemn conclave, upon the rostrum and around the altar on which they had before sworn to immolate the tyrannical rulers of their country. They were the officers of the sworn Brotherhood. They had been in council since day-break, and had not broken bread nor tasted drink, nor closed their eyes in slumber since the hour of their entrance into the dungeons of the late Tribunal. It was now verging on to noon, and they had not yet decided on the object of their meeting.

When their council had broken up, a glow of earnest satisfaction was visible in every eye and on every cheek; and on the day succeeding the burial of the late doge, the anxieties and cares of those who had held office under him, were set at rest forever: and—they murmured!

CHAPTER XX.

THE BRIDAL MORN.

Pass we now three months.

It was about the hour of nine, on a lovely morning in June, that a young man, in the garb of a secretary, knocked briskly at the door of an humble and retired-looking dwelling in the Raoni square. He wore a small moustache, a pointed beard and jetty ringlets

hung over his shoulders. A slender rapier hung at his side, and a short dagger dangled from his girdle. He was handsome as the term goes, and—we are afraid to believe—knew it. There was a no small share of importance in his step, and carriage; but then he was young. He entered, *sans ceremonie*, and was met in the hall by a young lady, whom we have already introduced to the reader.

"You are one to keep a promise," said the young lady tossing her head, indignantly.

"Nay, I could not come earlier," replied the secretary: "but we shall lose nothing by this trifling delay: for I have the doge's permission to take thee to the palace, that we may enter St. Mark's with the bridal cortege. So get thee ready soon as may be."

There was a mischievous light in the eyes of the secretary during this brief speech.

They entered the sitting room.

"Ho! ho!" said the secretary, as his eyes fell on some bright and gauzy garments which were lying on a cushion in one corner.

The maiden met his glance and blushed.

She did not speak a syllable, but blushed to the temples. A great deal of meaning is often conveyed in a blush.

"Nay, thou shalt wear it, my beloved," said the secretary, taking her hand and drawing her fondly to his breast, and imprinting a lover's seal upon her lips. "So, like a fair and bewitching damsel, don it with all speed."

Did she need a second bidding?

Ten minutes afterward, they left the house, and bent their steps in the direction of the palace.

St. Mark's temple was crowded with the wives and daughters and scions of all castes in Venice. From the palace to the church was but a short distance; but that short distance was amply taken advantage of by the populace, and a crowd was collected from either side of the palace portals, to either side of the portals of the church, leaving a broad and winding passage for the noble cortege.

The bell of St. Mark's pealed forth merrily, and its notes seemed to spread joyousness over the hearts and faces of the multitude. The bridal bells, the bridal bells, how merrily they sang!

The palace portals were opened wide, and the gaping throng shouted as if their lungs would crack, as the bridal procession appeared.

"Make way—make way!" shouted the guards who had been posted to keep clear the passage to the temple. The throng fell back, but not unwillingly: for there was no one in that mighty throng, but would have died, if necessary, in defence of the well beloved doge.

A party of priests and altar attendants led

the procession; a score of pages following them, and the different grades of the nobility after them, till the doge in his bridal robes appeared. Then rang the echoing air with shouts and *vivas* and waving of caps, and kerchiefs, by the multitude. The doge bowed his thanks, and his noble bearing and splendid figure well became his office, as the whispers of admiration, as he passed, well attested. Almost next him, followed Calvari, secretary to the doge, leading a young and blushing maiden, Junetta by name; and so firm and confident was his step that many believed he had no right to the blushing one at his side. He appeared to be too confident in his carriage for a lover; so thought and so spoke, the ladies. He bore himself like a true and fearless man, so thought and so spoke the men. The procession had reached and entered the church still the bell rang merrily—but where was the bride? So questioned the multitude without, and so did not question the multitude within: for the bride, veiled, had entered by the vestry door, even at the moment her future lord had entered by the front. The broad isle was cleared for the bridegroom and his party, and the bride and bridegroom met, as if by accident—but it was not by accident—and then they strode solemnly—(people put on such solemn airs!) to a royal seat, prepared for them, on the right hand of the marble altar. The secretary and his beloved were not far off; and the parents and cousins of Junetta, by a strange coincidence, were not far off from their daughter. Every body looked grave, and almost every one blushed: although there was but little need of either. These things will happen despite of their improbability!

The bell ceased pealing, and, ere the cadence of its last note had died away, the bride and bridegroom were summoned by the priest, and the doge, Galbano, and his beloved Isabel were united forever. The ring was placed upon the finger of the bride, and then St. Mark's temple re-echoed to the shouts of those within and the cheering of those without. The bell pealed again, and even it seemed to share in the general joy, so silvery were its notes.

Another couple passed the ordeal of the priest, and they were cheered too, but not so loudly as the noble pair that preceded them; still they were cheered, and a little old man and a little old woman were observed to be very fussy, and nervous during the ceremony; weeping and smiling by turns, and turning to the people and mocking them to be silent, as if they had been the cheered ones, and were more important than they were. How people will act sometimes!

As the doge was leaving the church to return to the palace, his eye was observed to look anxiously around, as if in search of

faces that had not yet met his eye. An expression of sadness passed athwart his brow, as if disappointed in his search.

CHAPTER XXI. CONCLUSION.

On a low cushioned couch, in a chamber where the luxuries of the higher caste contrasted strongly with the simple garniture of the lowly, reclined the fragile form of the fair but suffering Eugenie. The apartment had but one window, and that was adorned with a curial, of crimson gauze. It was mid-day; and the sun-rays gleaming through the curtain, cast a glowing tint upon the couch on which the orange girl reclined. Her head was leaning upon her upraised hand, and her dark eyes gazing vacantly upon the antics of a little bird which was hopping from cross-twig to cross-twig of its wiry cage, and singing merrily, as if to impart a corresponding mirthfulness in the heart of its fair mistress. An eastern carpet covered the floor; paintings, amorous and religious, adorned the yellow colored walls; and, like those of the wealthier classes of the day, the ceiling was hid by silken sheets, so disposed as to represent the ceiling of a Venetian boudoir. A small circular table stood beside the couch, whose surface was covered with low, square bottles of rich wines and inspiring waters, for the re-invigorating of the feeble frame of the invalid. But these were untouched, while an earthen jar of water beside them was more than half emptied. The costume of the orange girl was composed of a simple tight-fitting frock of green velvet; a pointed collar of worked lace, and a string of pearls around her waist. A small golden cross, hung from her neck by a blue ribbon, and lay on her breast; a bracelet of hair, mounted with gold, encircled her left wrist, and a plain ring adorned her forefinger. Her hair was in clusters and fell in profusion over her alabaster neck. Her feet, scarcely perceptible, were encased in slippers of green morocco, and adorned with small square silver buckles. In fine, the apartment resembled more the boudoir of some gay and coquettish belle than that of a poor, deluded girl; and the fair occupant herself some spoiled, effeminate child of titled parents, than the daughter of a poor and obscure fruit vender.

But these things aside.

A low knock at the door broke the reflective train of the orange girl's thought. 'Come in,' was the response, in a low, soft voice.

The door opened, and a lady of imperial dress and beauty entered the chamber.

'How art thou love?' said the latter in a tone of affectionate anxiety.

'Better, much better,' replied the orange girl, faintly; 'a few days more, and I shall cease to trouble earth.'

'Nay, Eugenie,' rejoined her companion, playfully, 'we'll have no such melancholy sentiment as that born in our palace household. We brought thee here to make thee happy and life-loving, and we shall not suffer thee to harbor any thought traitorous to our intentions or to happiness. Life was given us to enjoy, not to cause us misery; and it is impiety to be wretched, when we can be happy. Thou must live for thine own sake, for our's, and for love's.'

'Love's? Ah, your highness?'

'Highness! Hey day! Mine own loved friend and companion growing cold and distant! 'Highness' me not, Eugenie; I am no 'highness' to thee. To thee now, as ever, I am plain Isabel. I'll ve thee with a sister's love, and thou, loving me the same, must call me, as heretofore, 'dear Isabel.' Because bride to the doge am I to lose the affectionate greetings of my friends? Marry, not I! Friendship and love are too rare to be sacrificed so cheaply. Call me Isabel, dear Isabel, or never word speak to me again.'

'Dear Isabel?'

'There's a dear girl,' said the other, kissing her, and twining her arms around the orange girl's neck, 'thus thou shalt call me ever. As for title, art thou not the greater 'highness' of the two? Did not the patriots in token of thy wrongs, use thy well known nickname as their signal cry, their watch-word, to inspire each other with confidence and courage in their brave enterprise? By my troth! I shall henceforth 'highness' thee, in revenge; if thou darrest title me again. But I've a word for thee. Now don't blush but boldly guess what it is!'

'Nay, I cannot guess.'

'Cannot guess—my sister, Eugenie, can not guess! Oh, horrid! Thou a woman, and cannot guess? Shocking! I shall henceforth deem thee other than thou art, if thou canst not guess! Look in mine eyes!'

'I see nothing in them but love, dear Isabel!'

'Nothing but love! Of course not! Galliano always says the same; and kisses my lips as a punishment for every such assertion. Nothing but love! Marry! I want thee to see nothing else in them! But there are other eyes could look even more fondly on thee than mine; and my dear sister must let them do so. Come, promise me that they shall have such permission!'

'Dear Isabel—'

'Nay, nay, no treachery, my pretty little captive. Like a grim and hideous bear, I'll hug thee into consenting. Dost thou refuse? Nay, then, thus I keep my word! And she clasped the orange girl affectionately, to her breast.

Eugenie wept.

'Nay, pretty trembler,' said her companion, in the same knock-serious tone, 'have I not already told thee that tears, and all other

symptoms of unhappiness, are treachery to our court! The edict has gone forth—'no tears here!' and wilt thou be the first to be summoned to judgment? Come—come, my little rebel, we'll have no tears—this is the palace of the graces, Love, Hope and Happiness! See that thou rememberest it!'

'Even for joy, dear Isabel, I should weep.'

'Tears are traitors to joy, sweet one. Put on thy smiles, thy brightest ones, for there is a certain young lieutenant—whilom a gondolier—who desires speech with thee. He is in the ante-chamber, fretting his life away, lest his fair mistress should refuse to accept him for her tyrant. I am his ambassador to the court of Love, and the queen of that heart-breaking court must not refuse to reward him for his fidelity.'

A tear now danced on the earnest eye of Eugenie.

'Shall I bid him enter?' said the duchess, in a tone half playful, half earnest.

'O spare me—spare him! I am unfit to wed!' exclaimed the orange girl in reply.

'Unfit to wed! Now, by St. Mark! thou art the very image of a simple-witted child! Unfit to wed! Art thou not ringed and widowed—art thou not free and loving? Was life given thee to make a mockery of? Are thy friends blind to thy merits or thy virtues? Hast thou no virtues? If aye, should'st thou not give them to the eyes of the world, that they may be taken note of and acknowledged? Shalt thou for a paltry squeam refuse to live out thy appointed time as happily as possible? Wilt thou be thine own foe? Be wise—thy lover adores thee, loves thy very footprints, and would sacrifice his life's dearest hopes to make thee happy, to call thee his. And wilt thou do him such deep wrong as to let such devotion as his go unrewarded, unrequited? Go to! Foscarei did thee wrong, but righted thee at last; thou art his widow now,—in sight of heaven and earth, his widowed bride! Heaven and earth so look upon thee; and so thou art, let who will gain say it! The doge of Venice, the duchess, the whole court, aye, and every honest mind in Venice will vouch the same against any caviller soever! Wrong not thyself by flinging aside the honest heart and brave hand of him who hath ever loved thee dearer than himself!'

Eugenie still wept, and the glow of conscious shame shone on her cheeks. She reflected, and she wept while she reflected.

'Summon thy courage at once,' said the duchess, affectionately, and bid me call him in.

The eyes of the orange girl and those of her friend met—it was a meaning glance—the next moment Eugenie was alone.

Her eye grew calm on the instant—no gush of blood marred the alabaster hue of her brow or cheek. Her lip was pale, but firm. A light tread caught her ear—the

door opened, and Gennaro, now a lieutenant in the body guard of the doge, was at her feet.

They were alone.

She did not bid him rise; but there was a language in her eyes, which Gennaro, novice as he was in Love's ambiguous tongue, understood at once.

He sat by her side—her hand in his—his arm around her waist—her head bowed on his breast.

Need we tell their speech, as thus they sat? No; there are scenes and whispers free from the profane pen of the scribe.

The day following, whispers were heard in the palace of a bridal—a private bridal,—at which the doge enacted the father's part, and gave away the bride. The duchess also had a part in the matter; and so did the lady of the duke's secretary. There were some tears shed before, during and after the ceremony; but on such occasions women have a right to weep—though we cannot say for what.

Years passed on, and a group of little boys were assembled in the private garden of the ducal palace. They were a merry little group, and were wrestling for a wreath which a lovely girl, in the simple costume of an orange vender, who stood in the centre of a green plat, held in her hand. A young fellow, about twelve years of age, who called himself her little husband, won the prize, and, like a true little knight, knelt at the feet of the little beauty, while she placed it, gracefully, amid the shouts of the little party, upon his brow.

A party of ladies and gentlemen were sitting on cushioned benches in the balcony, gazing with affectionate anxiety on the scene. There was a shade or two of deeper age upon their brows and faces than when we saw them last; but they were gently touched by Time for all that; and they all looked so happy, too!

Shall we tell their names? Well, Galliano, the doge, and Isabel, the duchess; Gennaro, the leader of the Venetian forces, and Eugenie, his beloved; Calvari, now secretary of State, and his talkative and merry-hearted Junetta; Paulo, captain of the doge's body-guard, and a little body, that he had caught, in a house where mourning was, because its head had been decapitated in consequence of being one of the 'Ten'; he had caught her there, we say, and in his efforts to console her for her father's loss, some how or other got her to accept him as her protector for the remainder of her natural life. Young men have such ways with them!

The reign of the doge Galliano was one of prosperity and happiness to Venice; and to this day, old gossips and young lovers cajole old Time by the recital of the events caused by the wrongs of the Orange Girl of Venice.

AGNES.

CHAPTER I.

The night was dark, and the wind blew keenly over the frozen and rugged heath, when Agnes, pressing her moaning child to her bosom, was travelling on foot to her father's habitation.

"Would to God I had never left it!" she exclaimed, as home and all its enjoyments rose in fancy to her view; and I think my readers will be ready to join in the exclamation when they hear the poor wanderer's history.

Agnes Fitzhenry was the only child of a respectable merchant in a country town, who, having lost his wife when his daughter was very young, resolved for her sake to form no second connexion. To the steady, manly affection of a father, Fitzhenry joined the fond anxieties and endearing attentions of a mother; and his parental care was amply repaid by the love and amiable qualities of Agnes. He was not rich; yet the profits of his trade were such as to enable him to bestow every possible expense on his daughter's education, and to lay up a considerable sum yearly for her future support; whatever else he could spare from his own absolute wants, he expended in procuring comforts and pleasures for her. "What an excellent father that man is!" was the frequent exclamation among his acquaintance. "And what an excellent child he has! well may he be proud of her," was as commonly the answer to it.

Nor was this to be wondered at. Agnes united to extreme beauty of face and person, every accomplishment that belongs to her own sex, and a great degree of that strength of mind, and capacity for acquiring knowledge, supposed to belong exclusively to the other.

For this combination of rare qualities, Agnes was admired; for her sweetness of temper, her willingness to oblige, her seeming unconsciousness of her own merits, and her readiness to commend the merits of others—for these still rarer qualities Agnes was beloved; and she seldom formed an acquaintance without, at the same time, securing a friend.

Her father thought he loved her (and perhaps he was right) as never father loved a child before; and Agnes thought she loved him as child never before loved father. "I will not marry, but live single for my father's sake," she often said; but she altered her determination when her heart, hitherto unmoved by the addresses of the other sex, was assailed by an officer in the guards, who came to recruit in the town in which she resided.

Clifford, as I shall call him, had not only a fine figure and graceful address, but talents rare and various, and powers of conversation so fascinating,

that the woman he had betrayed forgot her wrongs in his presence, and the creditor, who came to dun him for the payment of debt already incurred, went away eager to oblige him by letting him incur still more.

Fatal perversion of uncommon abilities! This man, who might have taught a nation to look up to him as its best pride in prosperity, and its best hope in adversity, made no other use of his talents than to betray the unwary of both sexes, the one to shame, the other to pecuniary difficulties; and he whose mind was capacious enough to have imagined schemes to aggrandize his native country, the slave of sordid selfishness, never looked beyond his own temporary and petty benefit, and sat down contented with the achievements of the day, if he had overreached a credulous tradesman, or beguiled an unsuspecting woman.

But, to accomplish even these paltry triumphs, great knowledge of the human heart was necessary, a power of discovering the prevailing foible in those on whom he had designs, and of converting their imagined security into their real danger. He soon discovered that Agnes, who was rather inclined to doubt her possessing, in an uncommon degree, the good qualities which she really had, valued herself, with not unusual blindness, on those which she had not. She thought herself endowed with great power to read the characters of those with whom she associated, when she had not even discrimination enough to understand her own; and, while she imagined that it was not in the power of others to deceive her, she was constantly in the habit of deceiving herself.

Clifford was not slow to avail himself of this weakness in his intended victim; and, while he taught her to believe that none of his faults had escaped her observation, with hers he had made himself thoroughly acquainted. But not content with making her faults subservient to his views, he pressed her virtues also into his service; and her affection for her father, that stronghold, secure in which Agnes would have defied the most violent assaults of temptation, he contrived should be the means of her defeat.

I have been thus minute in detailing the various seducing powers which Clifford possessed, not because he will be a principal figure in my narrative, for, on the contrary, the chief characters in it are the father and daughter, but in order to excuse as much as possible the strong attachment which he excited in Agnes.

"Love," says Mrs. Inchbald, whose knowledge of human nature can be equalled only by the humor with which she describes its follies, and the unrivalled pathos with which she exhibits distresses

"Love, however rated by many as the chief passion of the heart, is but a poor dependant, a retailer on the other passions—admiration, gratitude, respect, esteem, pride in the object; divest the boasted sensation of these, and it is no more than the impression of a twelvemonth, by courtesy, or vulgar error, called love." And of all these ingredients was the passion of Agnes composed. For the graceful person and manners of Clifford she felt admiration; and her gratitude was excited by observing that, while he was an object of attention to every one wherever he appeared, his attentions were exclusively directed to herself; and that he who, from his rank and accomplishments, might have laid claim to the hearts even of the brightest daughters of fashion in the gayest scenes of the metropolis, seemed to have no higher ambition than to appear amiable in the eyes of Agnes, the humble toast of an obscure country town. Besides, his superiority of understanding, and brilliancy of talents, called forth her respect, and his apparent virtues her esteem; and when to this high idea of the qualities of the man was added a knowledge of his high birth and great expectations, it is no wonder that she also felt the last mentioned, and often perhaps the greatest incitement to love, "pride in the object."

When Clifford began to pay these marked attentions to Agnes, which ought always, on due encouragement from the woman to whom they are addressed, to be followed by an offer of marriage, he contrived to make himself as much disliked by the father, as admired by the daughter; yet his management was so artful, that Fitzhenry could not give a sufficient reason for his dislike; he could only declare its existence; and, for the first time in her life, Agnes learned to think her father unjust and capricious.

Thus, while Clifford ensured an acceptance of his addresses from Agnes, he at the same time secured a rejection of them from Fitzhenry; and this was the object of his wishes, as he had a decided aversion to marriage, and knew besides, that marrying Agnes would disappoint all his ambitious prospects in life, and bring on him the eternal displeasure of his father.

At length, after playing for some time with her hopes and fears, Clifford requested Fitzhenry to sanction with his approbation his addresses to his daughter: and Fitzhenry, as he expected, coldly and firmly declined the honor of his alliance. But when Clifford mentioned, as if unguardedly, that he hoped to prevail on his father to approve the marriage after it had taken place, if not before, Fitzhenry proudly told him that he thought his daughter much too good to be smuggled into the family of any one; while Clifford, piqued in his turn at the warmth of Fitzhenry's expressions, and the dignity of his manner, left him, exulting secretly in the consciousness that he had his revenge, for he knew that the heart of Agnes was irrecoverably his.

Agnes heard from her lover that his suit was rejected, with agonies as violent as he appeared to feel. "What!" exclaimed she, "can that affectionate father, who has till now anticipated my wishes, disappoint me in the wish nearest to my heart?"

In the midst of her first agitation her father entered the room, and "with a countenance more in sorrow than in anger," began to expostulate with her on the impropriety of the connexion which she was desirous of forming. He represented to her the very slender income which Clifford possessed; the inconvenience to which an officer's wife is ex-

posed; and the little chance which there is for a man's making a constant and domestic husband who has been brought up in an idle profession, and accustomed to habits of expense, intemperance, and irregularity. "But above all," said he, "how is it possible that you could ever condescend to accept the addresses of a man, whose father, he himself owns, will never sanction them with his approbation?"

Alas! Agnes could plead no excuse but that she was in love, and she had too much good sense to urge such a plea to her father.

"Believe me," he continued, "I speak thus from the most disinterested consideration of your interest; for, painful as the idea of parting with you must be to me, I am certain I should not shrink from the bitter trial, whenever my misery would be your happiness (here his voice faltered); but, in this case, I am certain that, by refusing my consent to your wishes, I ensure your future comfort, and in a cooler moment you will be of the same opinion."

Agnes shook her head, and turned away in tears.

"Nay, hear me, my child," resumed Fitzhenry, "you know that I am no tyrant; and if, after time and absence have been tried in order to conquer your unhappy passion, it remain unchanged, then, in defiance of my judgment, I will consent to your marriage with Mr. Clifford, provided his father consents likewise; for, unless he does, I never will: and if you have not pride and resolution enough to be the guardian of your own dignity, I must guard it for you; but I am sure there will be no need of my interference; and Agnes Fitzhenry would scorn to be clandestinely the wife of any man."

Agnes thought so too; and Fitzhenry spoke this in so mild and affectionate a manner, and in a tone so expressive of suppressed wretchedness which the bare idea of parting with her had occasioned him, that, for the moment, she forgot everything but her father, and the vast debt of love and gratitude which she owed him; and throwing herself into his arms, she protested her entire, nay, cheerful acquiescence in his determination.

"Promise me, then," replied Fitzhenry, "that you will never see Mr. Clifford more, if you can avoid it: he has the tongue of Belial, and if—"

Here Agnes indignantly interrupted him with reproaches for supposing her so weak as to be in danger of being seduced into a violation of her duty: and so strong were the terms in which she expressed herself, that her father entreated her pardon for having thought such a promise necessary.

The next day Clifford did not venture to call at the house, but he watched the door till he saw Agnes come out alone. Having then joined her, he obtained from her a full account of the conversation which she had had with Fitzhenry; when to her great surprise, he drew conclusions from it which she had never imagined possible.

He saw, or pretended to see, in Fitzhenry's rejection of his offers, not merely a dislike of her marrying him, but a design to prevent her marrying at all; and as a design like this was selfish in the last degree, and ought to be frustrated, he thought it would be kinder in her to disobey her father then, and marry the man of her heart, than, by indulging his unreasonable wishes on this subject once, to make him expect that she would do so again, and continue to lead a single life; because, in that case, the day of her marrying, when it came at last, would burst on him with tenfold agony.

The result of this specious reasoning, enforced

by tears and protestations, was, that she had better go off to Scotland immediately with him, and trust to time, and necessity, and their parents' affection, to secure their forgiveness.

Agnes heard these arguments, and this proposal, the first time, with the disdain which they merited; but, alas! she did not avoid all opportunity of hearing them a second time. Vain of the resolution she had shown on this first trial, she was not averse to stand another, delighted to find that she had not overrated her strength, when she reproached her father for his want of confidence in it.

The consequence is obvious. Again and again she heard Clifford argue in favor of an elopement: and though she still retained virtue sufficient to withhold her consent, she every day saw fresh reason to believe he argued on good grounds, and to think that that parent whose whole study had been her gratification, was, in this instance at least, the slave of unwarrantable selfishness.

At last, finding that neither time, reflection, nor even a temporary absence, had the slightest effect on her attachment, but that it gained new force every day, she owned that nothing but the dread of making her father unhappy withheld her from listening to Clifford's proposal. It was true, she said, pride forbade it; but the woman who could listen to the dictates of pride, knew nothing of love but the name.

This was the moment for Clifford to urge more strongly than ever that the elopement was the most effectual means of securing her father's happiness, as well as her own; till at last her judgment became the dupe of her wishes, and, fancying that she was following the dictates of filial affection, when she was in reality the helpless victim of passion, she yielded to the persuasions of a villain and set off with him for Scotland.

When Fitzhenry first heard of her flight, he sat for hours absorbed in a sort of dumb anguish, far more eloquent than words. At length he burst into exclamations against her ingratitude for all the love and care that he had bestowed on her: and the next moment he exclaimed, with tears of tenderness, "Poor girl! she is not used to commit faults; how miserable she will be when she comes to reflect! and how she will long for my forgiveness! and, O yes! I am sure I shall long as ardently to forgive her!" Then his arms were folded in fancy round his child, whom he pictured to himself confessing her marriage to him, and with tears of contrition imploring his pardon.

But day after day came, and no letter from the fugitives acknowledging their error, and begging his blessing on their union—for no union had taken place.

When Clifford and Agnes had been conveyed as fast as four horses could carry them one hundred miles towards Gretna-green, and had ordered fresh horses, Clifford started as he looked at his pocket-book, and with well-dissembled consternation exclaimed, "What can we do? I have brought the wrong pocket-book, and have not money enough to carry us above a hundred and odd miles farther on the North-road!" Agnes was overwhelmed with grief and apprehension at this information, but did not for an instant suspect that the fact was otherwise than as Clifford stated it to be.

As I before observed, Agnes picked herself on her knowledge of characters, and she judged of them frequently by the rules of physiognomy; she had studied voices too, as well as countenances; was it possible, then, that Agnes, who had, from

Clifford's voice and countenance, pronounced him all that was ingenuous, honorable, and manly, could suspect him capable of artifice? Could she, retracting her pretensions to penetration, believe she had put herself in the power of a designing libertine? No; vanity and self-love forbade this salutary suspicion to enter her imagination; and without one scruple or one reproach, she acceded to the plan which Clifford proposed, as the only one likely to obviate their difficulties, and procure them most speedily an opportunity of solemnizing their marriage.

Deluded Agnes! You might have known that the honorable lover is as fearful to commit the honor of his mistress, even in appearance, as she herself can be; that his care and anxiety to screen her from the breath of suspicion are ever on the watch; and that, therefore, had Clifford's designs been such as virtue would approve, he would have put it out of the power of accident to prevent your immediate marriage, and expose your fair fame to the whisper of calumny.

To London they set forward, and were driven to an hotel in the Adelphi, whence Clifford went in search of lodgings; and having met with convenient apartments at the west-end of the town, he conducted to them the pensive and already repentant Agnes.

"Under what name and title," said Agnes, "am I to be introduced to the woman of the house?"

"As my intended wife," cried her lover, pressing her to his bosom; "and in a few days—though to me they will appear ages—you will give me a right to call you by that tender name."

"In a few days!" exclaimed Agnes, withdrawing from his embrace; "cannot the marriage take place to-morrow?"

"Impossible!" cried Clifford; "you are not of age, and I cannot procure a license; but I have taken these lodgings for a month, and we will have the bans published, and be married at the parish church."

To this arrangement, against which her delicacy and every feeling revolted, Agnes would fain have objected in the strongest manner; but, unable to urge any reasons for her objection, except such as seemed to imply distrust of her own virtue, she submitted, in mournful silence, to the plan; with a heart then for the first time tortured with a sense of degradation, she took possession of her apartment; and Clifford returned to his hotel, meditating with savage delight on the success of his plans, and on the triumph which, he fancied, awaited him.

Agnes passed the night in sleepless agitation, now forming and now rejecting schemes to obviate the danger which must accrue to her character, if not to her honor, by remaining for a whole month exposed to the seductions of a man whom she had but too fatally convinced of his power over her heart; and the result of her reflections was, that she should insist on his leaving town, and not returning till he came to lead her to the altar. Happy would it have been for Agnes had she adhered to this resolution; but vanity and self-confidence again interfered. "What have I to fear?" said Agnes to herself; "am I so fallen in my own esteem that I dare not expose myself even to a shadow of temptation? No; I will not think so meanly of my virtue—the woman that is afraid of being dishonored is half overcome already; I will meet with boldness the trials which I cannot avoid."

"O Vanity! thou hast much to answer for! I am convinced that, were we to trace up to their source all the most painful and degrading events of our lives, we should find most of them to have their origin in the gratified suggestions of vanity."

It is not my intention to follow Agnes through the succession of mortifications, embarrassments, and contending feelings, which preceded her undoing (for, secure as she thought herself in her own strength, and the honor of her lover, she became at last a prey to her seducer); it is sufficient that I explain the circumstances which led to her being, on a cold winter's night, houseless and unprotected, a melancholy wanderer towards the house of her father.

Before the expiration of the month Clifford had triumphed over the virtue of Agnes; and soon after he received orders to join his regiment, as it was going to be sent on immediate service. "But you will return to me before you embark, in order to make me your wife?" said the half-distracted Agnes; "you will not leave me to shame as well as misery?" Clifford promised everything she wished; and Agnes tried to lose the pangs of parting, in anticipation of the joy of his return. But on the very day when she expected him, she received a letter from him, saying that he was under sailing orders, and to see her again before the embarkation was impossible.

To do Clifford justice, he in this instance told the truth; and, as he really loved Agnes as well as a libertine can love, he felt the agitation and distress which his letter expressed; though, had he returned to her, he had an excuse ready prepared for delaying the marriage.

Words can but ill describe the situation of Agnes on the receipt of this letter. The return of Clifford was not to be expected for months at least; and perhaps he might never return! The thought of his danger was madness; but, when she reflected that she should in all probability be a mother before she became a wife, in a transport of frantic anguish she implored Heaven in mercy to put an end to her existence. "O my dear injured father!" she exclaimed, "I who was once your pride, am now your disgrace!—and that child whose first delight it was to look in your face, and see your eyes beaming with fondness on her, can now never dare to meet their glance again!"

But, though Agnes dared not presume to write to her father till she could sign herself the wife of Clifford, she could not exist without making some secret inquiries concerning his health and spirits, and, before he left her, Clifford recommended a trusty messenger to her for that purpose. The first account which she received was that Fitzhenry was well; the next, that he was dejected; the three following that his spirits were growing better—and the last account was, that he was married.

"Married!" cried Agnes, rushing into her chamber, and shutting the door after her, in a manner sufficiently indicative to the messenger of the anguish she hastened from him to conceal—"married! Clifford abroad—perhaps at this moment a corpse—and my father married! What then am I? A wretch forlorn! an outcast from society! no one to love, no one to protect and cherish me! Great God! wilt thou not pardon me if I seek a refuge from my suffering in the grave!"

Here nature suddenly and powerfully impressed on her recollection that she was about to become a parent; and, falling on her knees, she sobbed

out, "What am I, did I ask? I am a mother, and earth still holds me by a tie too sacred to be broken!"

Then by degrees she became calmer, and rejoiced, fervently rejoiced, in her father's second marriage, though she felt it as too convincing a proof how completely he had thrown her from his affections. She knew that the fear of a second family diminishing the strong affection which he bore to her, had been his reason for not marrying again, and now it was plain that he had married in hopes of losing his affection for her. Still this information removed a load from her mind, by showing her that Fitzhenry felt himself capable of receiving happiness from other hands than hers; and she resolved, if she heard that he was happy in his change of situation, never to recal to his memory the daughter whom it was so much his interest to forget.

The time of Agnes' confinement now drew near—a time which fills with apprehension even the wife, who is soothed and supported by the tender attentions of an anxious husband, and the assiduous of affectionate relations and friends, and who knows that the child with which she is about to present them, will at once gratify their affections and their pride. What then must have been the sensations of Agnes at a moment so awful and dangerous as this! Agnes, who had no husband to soothe her by his anxious inquiries, no relations or friends to cheer her drooping soul by the expressions of sympathy, and whose child, instead of being welcomed by an exulting family, must be, perhaps, a stranger even to its nearest relations!

But, in proportion to her trials, seemed to be Agnes' power of rising superior to them, and, after enduring her sufferings with a degree of fortitude and calmness that astonished the mistress of the house, whom compassion had induced to attend on her, she gave birth to a lovely boy. From that moment, though she rarely smiled, and never saw any one but her kind landlady, her mind was no longer oppressed by the deep gloom under which she had before labored; and when she had heard from Clifford, or of her father being happy, and clasped her babe to her bosom, Agnes might almost be pronounced cheerful.

After she had been six months a mother, Clifford returned, and, in the transport of seeing him safe, Agnes forgot for a moment that she had been anxious and unhappy. Now again was the subject of the marriage resumed; but just as the wedding-day was fixed, Clifford was summoned away to attend his expiring father, and Agnes was once more doomed to the tortures of suspense.

After a month's absence Clifford came back, but appeared to labor under a dejection of spirits, which he seemed studious to conceal from her. Alarmed and terrified at an appearance so unusual, she demanded an explanation, which the consummate deceiver gave at length, after many entreaties on her part, and feigned reluctance on his. He told her that his father's illness was occasioned by his having been informed that he was privately married to her; that he had sent for him to inquire into the truth of the report; and, being convinced by his solemn assurance that no marriage had taken place, he had commanded him, unless he wished to kill him, to take a solemn oath never to marry Agnes Fitzhenry without his consent.

"And did you take the oath?" cried Agnes, her whole frame trembling with agitation.

"What could I do?" replied he; "my father's life in evident danger if I refused; besides, the dreadful certainty that he would put his threats into execution of cursing me with his dying breath! and, cruel as he is, Agnes, I could not help feeling that he was my father."

"Barbarian!" exclaimed she; "I sacrificed my father to you! An oath! have you taken an oath never to be mine?" and saying this, she fell into a long and deep swoon.

When she recovered, but before she was able to speak, she found Clifford kneeling by her; and, while she was too weak to interrupt him, he convinced her that he did not at all despair of his father's consent to his making her his wife, else he should have been less willing to give so ready a consent to take the oath imposed on him, even although his father's life depended on it.

"On! no," replied Agnes, with a bitter smile; "you wrong yourself; you are too good a son to have been capable of hesitating a moment—there are few children so bad, so very bad as I am;" and, bursting into an agony of grief, it was long before the affectionate language and tender caresses of Clifford could restore her to tranquillity.

Another six months elapsed, during which time Clifford kept her hopes alive, by telling her that he every day saw fresh signs of his father's relenting in her favor. At these times she would say, "Lead me to him—let him hear the tale of my wretchedness—let me say to him, 'For your son's sake, I have left the best of fathers, the happiest of homes, and have become an outcast from society!' Then would I bid him look at this pale cheek; this emaciated form; proofs of the anguish that is undermining my constitution; and tell him to beware how, by forcing you to withhold from me my right, he made you guilty of murdering the poor-deluded wretch, who, till she knew you, never laid down without a father's blessing, nor rose but to be welcomed by his smile!"

Clifford had feeling, but it was of that transient sort which never outlived the disappearance of the object that occasioned it. To these pathetic entreaties he always returned affectionate answers, and was often forced to leave the room in order to avoid his being too much softened by them; but, by the time he had reached the end of the street, always alive to the impressions of the present moment, the sight of some new beauty, or some old companion, dried up the starting tear, and restored to him the power of coolly considering how he should continue to deceive his miserable victim.

But the time at length arrived when the mask that hid his villany from her eyes fell off, never to be replaced. As Agnes fully expected to be the wife of Clifford, she was particularly careful to lead a retired life, and not to seem unmindful of her shame by exhibiting herself at places of public amusement. In vain did Clifford paint the charms of the Play, the Opera, and other places of fashionable resort. "Retirement, with books, music, work, and your society," she used to reply, "are better suited to my taste and situation; and never, but as your wife, will I presume to meet the public eye."

Clifford though he wished to exhibit his lovely conquest to the world, was obliged to submit to her will in this instance. Sometimes, indeed, Agnes was prevailed on to admit to her table those

young men of Clifford's acquaintance who were the most distinguished for their talents and decorum of manners; but this was the only departure that he had ever yet prevailed on her to make from the plan of retirement which she had adopted.

One evening, however, Clifford was so unusually urgent with her to accompany him to Drury Lane, to see a favorite tragedy (alleging, as an additional motive for her obliging him, that he was going to leave her on the Monday following, in order to attend his father into the country, where he should be forced to remain some time), that Agnes, unwilling to refuse what he called his parting request, at length complied; Clifford having prevailed on Mrs. Askew, her kind landlady, to accompany them, and having assured Agnes, that, as they should sit in the upper boxes, she might, if she chose it, wear her veil down. Agnes, in spite of herself, was delighted with the representation, but, as—

*Hearts refined the sadden'd tint retain,
The sigh is pleasure, and the jest is pain,*

she was desirous of leaving the house before the farce began; yet, as Clifford saw a gentleman in the lower boxes with whom he had business, she consented to stay till he had spoken to him. Soon after she saw Clifford enter the lower boxes opposite to her; and those who know what it is to love will not be surprised to hear that Agnes had more pleasure in looking at her lover, and drawing favorable comparisons between him and the gentlemen who surrounded him, than in attending to the farce.

She had been some moments absorbed in this pleasing employment, when two gentlemen entered the box where she was, and seated themselves behind her.

"Who is that elegant, fashionable-looking man, my lord, in the lower box just opposite to us?" said one of the gentlemen to the other. "I mean he who is speaking to Captain Mowbray."

"It is George Clifford, of the guards," replied his lordship; "and one of the cleverest fellows in England, colonel!"

Agnes, who had not missed one word of this conversation, now became still more attentive.

"Oh! I have heard a great deal of him," returned the colonel, "and as much against him as for him."

"Most likely," said his lordship; "I dare say that fellow has ruined more young men, and seduced more young women, than any man of his age in the kingdom."

Agnes sighed deeply, and felt herself attacked by a kind of faint sickness.

"But it is to be hoped that he will reform now," observed the colonel; "I hear he is going to be married to Miss Sandford, the great city heiress."

"So he is, and Monday is the day fixed for the wedding."

Agnes started. Clifford himself had told her he must leave her on Monday for some weeks; and in breathless expectation she listened to what followed.

"But what then?" continued the speaker; "he marries for money merely. The truth is, his father is lately come to a long-disputed barony, and with scarcely an acre of land to support the dignity of it; so his son has consented to marry an heiress, in order to make the family rich, as well as noble. You must know, I have my information from the fountain-head. Clifford's mother

is my relation, and the good woman thought proper to acquaint me in form with the advantageous alliance which her hopeful son was about to make."

This confirmation of the truth of a story, which she till now hoped might be mere report, was more than Agnes could well bear; but, made courageous by desperation, she resolved to listen while they continued to talk on this subject. Mrs. Askew, in the meanwhile, was leaning over the box, too much engrossed by the fauce to attend to what was passing behind her.

Just as the gentleman concluded the last sentence, Agnes saw Clifford go out with his friend; and she who had but the minute before gazed on him with looks of adoring fondness, now wished in the bitterness of her soul, that she might never behold him again!

"I never wish," said the colonel, "a match of interest to be a happy one."

"Nor will this be so; depend on it," answered his companion; "for, besides that Miss Sandford is ugly and disagreeable, she has a formidable rival."

"Indeed!" cried the other; "a favorite mistress, I suppose?"

Here the breath of Agnes grew shorter and shorter; she suspected that they were going to talk of her; and, under other circumstances, her nice sense of honor would have prevented her attending to a conversation which she was certain was not meant for her ear; but so great was the importance of the present discourse to her future peace and well-being, that it annihilated all sense of impropriety in listening to it.

"Yes, he has a favorite mistress,—a girl who was worthy of a better fate."

"You know her then?" asked the colonel.

"No," replied he, "by name only; but when I was in the neighborhood of the town where she lived, I heard continually of her beauty and accomplishments: her name is Agnes Fitz—Fitz—"

"Fitzhenry, I suppose," said the other.

"Yes, that is the name," said his lordship.

"How came you to guess?"

"Because Agnes Fitzhenry is a name which I have often heard toasted: she sings well does she not?"

"She does everything well," rejoined the other; "and was once the pride of her father, and the town in which she lived."

Agnes could scarcely forbear groaning aloud at this faithful picture of what she once was.

"Poor thing!" resumed his lordship; "that ever she should be the victim of a villain! It seems he seduced her from her father's house, under pretence of carrying her to Gretna-green; but on some infernal plea or another, he took her to London."

Here the agitation of Agnes became so visible as to attract Mrs. Askew's notice; but as she assured her that she should be well presently, Mrs. Askew again gave herself up to the allusion of the scene. Little did the speaker think how severely he was wounding the peace of one for whom he felt such compassion.

"You seem much interested about this unhappy girl," said the colonel.

"I am so," replied the other, "and full of the subject too; for Clifford's factotum, Wilson, has been with me this morning, and I learned from him some of his master's tricks, which made me still more anxious about his victim. It seems she

is very fond of her father, though she was prevailed on to desert him, and has never known a happy moment since her elopement, nor could she be easy without making frequent but secret inquiries concerning his health."

"Strange inconsistency!" muttered the colonel.

"This anxiety gave Clifford room to fear that she might at some future moment, if discontented with him, return to her afflicted parent before he was tired of her; so what do you think he did?"

At this moment Agnes, far more eager to hear what followed than the colonel, turned round, and, fixing her eyes on her unknown friend with wild anxiety, could scarcely help saying, "What did Clifford do, my lord?"

"He got his factotum, the man I mentioned, to personate a messenger, and to pretend that he had been to her native town, and then he gave her such accounts as were best calculated to calm her anxiety; but the master-stroke which secured her remaining with him was, his telling the pretended messenger to inform her that her father was married again,—though it is more likely, poor unhappy man, that he is dead, than that he is married."

At the mention of this horrible probability, Agnes lost all self-command, and, screaming aloud, fell back on the knees of the astonished narrator, reiterating her cries with all the alarming helplessness of phrenzy.

"Turn her out! turn her out!" echoed through the theatre—for the audience supposed that the noise proceeded from some intoxicated and abandoned woman; and a man in the next box struck Agnes a blow on the shoulder, and, calling her by a name too gross to repeat, desired her to leave the house and act her drunken freaks elsewhere.

Agnes, whom the gentlemen behind were supporting with great kindness and compassion, heard nothing of this speech save the injurious epithet applied to herself; and alive only to what she thought the justice of it, "Did you hear that?" she exclaimed, starting up with the look and tone of phrenzy—"did you hear that? Oh! my brain is on fire!" Then, springing over the seat, she rushed out of the box, followed by the trembling and astonished Mrs. Askew, who in vain tried to keep pace with the desperate speed of Agnes.

Before Agnes, with all her haste, could reach the bottom of the stairs, the farce ended, and the lobbies began to fill. Agnes pressed forward, when, amongst the crowd, she saw a tradesman who lived near her father's house. No longer sensible of shame, for anguish had annihilated it, she rushed towards him, and, seizing his arm, exclaimed, "For mercy's sake, tell me how my father is?"

The tradesman, terrified and astonished at the pallid wildness of her look, so unlike the countenance of successful and contented vice that he would have expected to see her wear, replied, "He is well, poor soul! but—"

"But unhappy, I suppose?" interrupted Agnes. "Thank Heaven he is well;—but is he married?"

"Married! dear me no! he is—"

"Do you think he would forgive me?" eagerly rejoined Agnes.

"Forgive you?" answered the man. "How you talk! Belike he might forgive you, if—"

"I know what you would say," interrupted Agnes again, "if I would return. Enough, enough; Heaven bless you! you have saved me from distraction."

So saying, she ran out of the house; Mrs. Askew having overtaken her, followed by the nobleman and the colonel, who, with the greatest consternation, had found, from an explanation of Mrs. Askew's, that the object of their compassion was Miss Fitzhenry herself.

But before Agnes had proceeded many steps down the street, Clifford met her on his return from a neighboring coffee-house with his companion, and, in spite of her struggles and reproaches, which astonished and alarmed him, he, with Mrs. Askew's assistance, forced her into a hackney-coach, and ordered the man to drive home.

No explanation took place during the ride. To all the caresses and questions of Clifford, she returned nothing but passionate exclamations against his perfidy and cruelty. Mrs. Askew thought her insane. Clifford wished to think her so, but his conscience told him that, if by accident his conduct had been discovered to her, there was reason enough for the frantic sorrow which he witnessed.

At length they reached their lodgings, which were in Suffolk street, Charing-cross; and Agnes having at length obtained some composure, in a few words as possible related the conversation which she had overheard. Clifford, as might be expected, denied the truth of what his accuser had advanced; but it was no longer in his power to deceive the awakened penetration of Agnes. Under his assumed unconcern, she clearly saw the confusion of detected guilt; and, giving utterance in very strong language to the contempt and indignation which she felt, while contemplating such complete depravity, she provoked Clifford, who was now more than half intoxicated, boldly to avow what he was at first eager to deny; and Agnes, who before shuddered at his hypocrisy, was now shocked at his unprincipled daring.

"But what right have you to complain?" added he. "The cheat that I put upon you relative to your father was certainly meant in kindness; and though Miss Sandford will have my hand, you alone will ever possess my heart; therefore, it was my design to keep you in ignorance of my marriage, and retain you as the greatest of all my worldly treasures. Plague on this prating lord! he has destroyed the prettiest arrangement ever made. However, I hope we shall part good friends."

"Great God!" cried Agnes, raising her tearless eyes to heaven, "and have I then forsaken the best of parents for a wretch like this! But think not, sir," she added, turning with a commanding air towards Clifford, whose temper, naturally warm, the term "wretch" had not soothed, "think not, fallen as I am, that I will ever condescend to receive protection and support, either for myself or child, from a man whom I know to be a consummate villain. You have made me criminal, but you have not obliterated my horror for crime and my veneration for virtue—and, in the fulness of my contempt, I inform you, sir, that we shall meet no more."

"Not till to-morrow," said Clifford; "this is our first quarrel, Agnes, and the quarrels of lovers are only the renewal of love, you know; therefore, leaving the 'bitter, piercing air' to guard my treasure till to-morrow, I take my leave, hoping in the morning to find you in a better humor."

So saying he departed, secure, from the inclemency of the weather and darkness of the night, that Agnes would not venture to go away before the morning, and resolved to return very

early in order to protect her departure, if her threatening resolution were anything more than the frantic expressions of a disappointed woman. Besides, he knew that at that time she was scantily supplied with money, and that Mrs. Askew dared not furnish her with any for the purpose of leaving him.

But he left not Agnes, as he supposed, to vent her sense of injury in idle grief and inactive lamentation, but to think, to decide, and to act. What was the rigour of the night to a woman whose heart was torn by all the pangs which convictions, such as those which she had lately received, could give? She hastily, therefore, wrapped up her sleeping boy in a pelisse, of which in a calmer moment she would have felt the want herself, and took him in her arms; then throwing a shawl over her shoulders, she softly unbarred the hall door, and before the noise could have summoned any of the family, she was out of sight.

So severe was the weather, that even those accustomed to brave in ragged garments the pelting of the pitiless storm, shuddered as the freezing wind whistled around them, and crept with trembling knees to the wretched hovel that awaited them. But the winter's wind blew unfelt by Agnes—she was alive to nothing but the joy of having escaped from a villain, and the faint hope that she was hastening to obtain, perhaps, a father's forgiveness.

"Thank Heaven!" she exclaimed, as she found herself at the rails along the Green Park, "the air which I breathe here is uncontaminated by his breath!" when, as the watchman called half-past eleven o'clock, the recollection that she had no place of shelter for the night occurred to her, and at the same instant she remembered that a coach set off at twelve from Piccadilly, which went within twelve miles of her native place. She therefore immediately resolved to hasten hither, and, either in the inside or on the outside, to proceed on her journey as far as her finances would admit of, intending to walk the rest of the way. She arrived at the inn just as the coach was setting off, and found, to her great satisfaction, one inside place vacant.

Nothing worth mentioning occurred on the journey. Agnes, with her veil drawn over her face, and holding her slumbering boy in her arms, while the incessant shaking of her knee, and the piteous manner in which the sighed gave evident marks of the agitation of her mind, might excite in some degree the curiosity of her fellow travellers, but gave no promise of that curiosity being satisfied, and she was suffered to remain unquestioned and undisturbed.

At noon the next day the coach stopped, for the travellers to dine, and stay a few hours to recruit themselves after their labors past, and to fortify themselves against those yet to come. Here Agnes, who, as she approached nearer home, became afraid of meeting some acquaintance, resolved to change her dress, and to equip herself in such a manner as should, while it screened her from the inclemency of the weather, at the same time prevent her being recognised by any one. Accordingly she exchanged her pelisse, shawl, and a few other things, for a man's great coat, and a red cloth cloak with a hood to it, a pair of thick shoes, and some yards of flannel in which she wrapped up her little Edward; and, having tied her straw bonnet under her chin with her veil, she would have looked like a country-woman dressed

for market, could she have divested herself of a certain delicacy of appearance and gracefulness of manner, the yet uninjured beauties of former days.

When they set off again she became an outside passenger, as she could not afford to continue an inside one, and covering her child up in the red cloak, which she wore over her coat, she took her station on the top of the coach with seeming firmness, but a breaking heart.

Agnes expected to arrive within twelve miles of her native place long before it was dark, and reach the place of her destination before bed-time, unknown and unseen; but she was mistaken in her expectations, for the roads had been rendered so rugged by the frost, that it was late in the evening when the coach reached the spot whence she was to commence her walk; and by the time she had eaten her slight repast, and furnished herself with some necessities to enable her to resist the severity of the weather, she found that it was impossible for her to reach her long-forsaken home before daybreak.

Still was she resolved to go on. To pass another day in suspense concerning her father, and her future hopes of his pardon, was more formidable to her than the terrors of undertaking a lonely and painful walk. Perhaps, too, Agnes was not sorry to have a tale of hardship to narrate on her arrival at the house of her nurse, whom she meant to employ as a mediator between her and her offended parent.

His child, his penitent child, whom he had brought up with the utmost tenderness, and screened with unremitting care from the ills of life, returning, to implore his pity and forgiveness, on foot, and unprotected, through all the dangers of lonely paths, and through the horrors of a winter's night, must, she flattered herself, be a picture too affecting for her father to think upon without some commiseration, and she hoped he would in time bestow on her his forgiveness;—to be admitted to his presence was a favor which she dared not presume either to ask or expect.

But, in spite of the soothing expectation which she tried to encourage, a dread of she knew not what took possession of her mind. Every moment she looked fearfully around her, and as she beheld the wintry waste spreading on every side, she felt awe-struck at the desolateness of her situation. The sound of a human voice would, she thought, have been rapture to her ear; but the next minute she believed that it would have made her sink in terror to the ground.

"Alas!" she mournfully exclaimed, "I was not always timid and irritable as I now feel; but then I was not always guilty. O, my child! would I were once more innocent like thee!" So saying, in a paroxysm of grief, she bounded forward on her way, as if hoping to escape by speed from the misery of recollection.

Agnes was now arrived at the beginning of a forest, about two miles in length, and within three of her native place. Even in her happiest days she never entered its solemn shade without feeling a sensation of fearful awe; but now that she entered it, leafless as it was, a wandering wretched outcast, a mother without the sacred name of wife, and bearing in her arms the pledge of her infancy, her knees smote each other, and, shuddering as if danger were before her, she audibly implored the protection of Heaven.

At this instant she heard a noise, and, casting a startled glance into the obscurity before her, she

thought she saw something like a human form running across the road. For a few moments she was motionless with terror; but judging from the swiftness with which the object disappeared that she had inspired as much terror as she felt, she ventured to pursue her course. She had not gone far when she again beheld the cause of her fear; but hearing, as it moved, a noise like the clanking of a chain, she concluded that it was some poor animal which had been turned out to graze.

Still as she gazed on the object before her, she was convinced it was a man that she beheld; and, as she heard the noise no longer, she concluded that it had been the result of fancy only, but that, with every other idea, was wholly absorbed in terror when she saw the figure standing still, as if waiting for her approach. "Yet why should I fear?" she inwardly observed; "it may be a poor wanderer like myself, who is desirous of a companion; if so, I shall rejoice in such a rencontre."

As this reflection passed her mind, she hastened towards the stranger, when she saw him look hastily around him, start, as if he beheld at a distance some object that alarmed him, and then, without taking any notice of her, run on as fast as before. But what can express the horror of Agnes when she again heard the clanking of a chain, and discovered that it hung to the ankle of the stranger! "Surely he must be a felon," murmured Agnes; "O, my poor boy! perhaps we shall both be murdered! This suspense is not to be borne; I will follow him, and meet my fate at once!" Then, summoning all her remaining strength, she followed the alarmed fugitive.

After she had walked nearly a mile farther, as she did not overtake him, had flattered herself that he had gone in a contrary direction, she saw him seated on the ground, and, as before, turning his head back with a sort of convulsive quickness; but, as it was turned from her, she was convinced that she was not the object which he was seeking. Of her he took no notice; and her resolution of accosting him failing when she approached, she walked hastily past, in hopes that she might escape him entirely.

As she passed, she heard him talking and laughing to himself, and thence concluded that he was not a felon, but a lunatic escaped from confinement. Horrible as this idea was, her fear was so far overcome by pity, that she had a wish to return, and offer him some of the refreshment which she had procured for herself and child, when she heard him following her very fast, and was convinced by the sound, the dreadful sound of his chain, that he was coming up to her.

The clanking of a fetter, when one knows that it is fastened round the limbs of a fellow-creature, always calls forth in the soul of sensibility a sensation of horror; what then, at that moment, must have been its effect on Agnes, who was trembling for her life, for that of her child, and looking in vain for a protector around the still, solemn waste! Breathless with apprehension she stopped as the maniac gained upon her, and, motionless and speechless, awaited the consequence of his approach.

"Woman!" said he, in a hoarse, hollow tone—"woman! do you see them? Do you see them?"

"Sir! pray what did you say, sir?" cried Agnes, in a tone of respect, and curtsying as she spoke—for what is so respectful as fear!

"I can't see them," resumed he, not attending to her, "I have escaped them! Rascals! cowards!

"I have escaped them!" and then he jumped and clapped his hands for joy.

Agnes, relieved in some measure from her fears, and eager to gain the poor wretch's favor, told him she rejoiced at his escape from the rascals, and hoped that they would not overtake him; but while she spoke he seemed wholly inattentive, and, jumping as he walked, made his fetters clank in horrid exultation.

The noise at length awoke the child, who, seeing a strange and indistinct object before him, and hearing a sound so unusual, screamed violently, and hid his face in his mother's bosom.

"Take it away, take it away!" exclaimed the maniac, "I do not like children."

Agnes, terrified at the thought of what might happen, tried to soothe the trembling boy to rest, but in vain; the child still screamed, and the angry agitation of the maniac increased. "Strangle it! strangle it!" he cried; "do it this moment, or—"

Agnes, almost faint with terror, conjured the unconscious boy, if he valued his life, to cease his cries; and then the next moment she conjured the wretched man to spare her child: but alas! she spoke to those incapable of understanding her,—a child and a madman!

The terrified boy still shrieked, the lunatic still threatened, and, clenching his fist, seized the left arm of Agnes, who with the other attempted to defend her infant from his fury; when, at the very moment that his fate seemed inevitable, a sudden gale of wind shook the leafless branches of the surrounding trees, and the madman, fancying that the noise proceeded from his pursuers, ran off with his former rapidity.

Immediately the child, relieved from the sight and the sound which alarmed it, and exhausted by the violence of its cries, sank into a sound sleep on the throbbing bosom of its mother. But alas! Agnes knew that this was but a temporary escape: the maniac might return, and again the child might wake in terrors; and scarcely had the thought passed her mind when she saw him coming back; but as he walked slowly, the noise was not so great as before.

"I hate to hear children cry," said he, as he approached.

"Mine is quiet now," replied Agnes. Then, recollecting that she had some food in her pocket, she offered some to the stranger in order to divert his attention from the child. He snatched it from her hand instantly, and devoured it with terrible voraciousness; but again he exclaimed, "I do not like children; if you trust them they will betray you;" and Agnes offered him food again, as if to bribe him to spare her helpless boy. "I had a child once,—but she is dead, poor soul!" continued he, taking Agnes by the arm, and leading her gently forward.

"And you loved her very tenderly, I suppose?" said Agnes, thinking that the loss of his child had occasioned his malady; but, instead of answering her, he went on.

"They said that she ran away from me with a lover; but I knew they lied; she was good, and would not have deserted the father who doted on her. Besides, I saw her funeral myself. Liars, rascals, as they are! Do not tell any one; I got away from them last night, and am now going to visit her grave."

A death-like sickness, an apprehension so horrible as to deprive her almost of sense, took possession of the soul of Agnes. She eagerly tried to obtain a sight of the stranger's face, the features of

which the darkness had hitherto prevented her from distinguishing; she however tried in vain, as his hat was pulled over his forehead, and his chin rested on his bosom. But they had now nearly gained the end of the forest, and day was just breaking; and Agnes, as soon as they entered the open plain, seized the arm of the madman to make him look towards her—for speak to him she could not. He felt, and perhaps resented, the importunate pressure of her hand, for he turned hastily round, when, dreadful confirmation of her fears, Agnes beheld her father!

It was indeed Fitzhenry, driven to madness by his daughter's desertion and disgrace!

CHAPTER II.

After the elopement of Agnes, Fitzhenry entirely neglected his business, and thought and talked of nothing but the misery which he experienced. In vain did his friends represent to him the necessity of making amends, by increased diligence, for some alarming losses which he had lately sustained. She, for whom alone he toiled, had deserted him—and ruin had no terrors for him. "I was too proud of her," he used mournfully to repeat, "and Heaven has humbled me even in her by whom I offended."

Month after month elapsed, and no intelligence of Agnes. Fitzhenry's dejection increased, and his affairs became more and more involved. At length, absolute and irretrievable bankruptcy was become his portion, when he learned, from authority not to be doubted, that Agnes was living with Clifford as his acknowledged mistress. This was the death-stroke to his reason; and the only way in which his friends (relations he had none, or only distant ones) could be of any further service to him was, by procuring him admission into a private mad-house in the neighborhood.

Of his recovery little hope was entertained. The constant theme of his ravings was his daughter—sometimes he bewailed her as dead, at other times he complained of her as ungrateful; but so complete was the overthrow which his reason had received, that he knew no one, and took no notice of those whom friendship or curiosity led to his cell. Yet he was always meditating his escape; and, though ironed in consequence of it, the night he met Agnes, he had, after incredible difficulty and danger, effected his purpose.

But to return to Agnes. When she beheld in her insane companion her injured father, the victim probably of her guilt, she let fall her sleeping child, and sinking on the ground, extended her arms towards him, articulating in a faint voice, "My father!" then prostrating herself at his feet, she clasped his knees in an agony too great for utterance.

At the name of "Father," the poor maniac started, and gazed on her earnestly with savage wildness, while his whole frame became convulsed; then, rudely disengaging himself from her embrace, he ran from her a few paces, and dashed himself upon the ground in all the violence of phrensy. He raved, he tore his hair, he screamed and uttered the most dreadful execrations; and, with his teeth shut and his hands clenched, he repeated the word "Father," and said the name was mockery to him.

Agnes, in mute and tearless despair, beheld the dreadful scene; in vain did her affrighted child

cling to her gown, and in its half-formed accents entreat to be taken to her arms again; she saw, she heeded nothing but her father. She was alive to nothing but her own guilt and its consequences; and she awaited with horrid composure the cessation of his phrensy, or the direction of its fury towards her child.

At last she saw him fall down exhausted and motionless, and tried to hasten to him; but she was unable to move, and reason and life seemed at once forsaking her, when he suddenly started up and approached her. Uncertain as to his purpose, Agnes caught her child to her bosom, and falling again on her knees, turned on him her almost closing eyes; but his countenance was mild, and gently patting her forehead, on which hung the damps of approaching insensibility, "Poor thing!" he cried in a tone of the utmost tenderness and compassion, "Poor thing!" and then gazed on her with such inquiring and mournful looks, that tears once more found their way and relieved her burning brain, while seizing her father's hand, she pressed it with frantic emotion to her lips.

He looked at her with great kindness, and suffered her to hold his hand, then exclaimed, "Poor thing! I don't cry—don't cry—I can't cry—I have not cried for many years—not since my child died—for she is dead, is she not?" looking earnestly at Agnes, who could only answer by her tears. "Come," said he—"come," taking hold of her arm, then laughing wildly, "Poor thing! you will not leave me, will you?"

"Leave you?" she replied, "never—I will live with you—die with you!"

"True, true," cried he, "she is dead, and we will visit her grave." So saying, he dragged Agnes forward with great velocity; but as it was along the path leading to the town she made no resistance.

Indeed, it was such a pleasure to her to see that, though he knew her not, the sight of her was welcome to her unhappy parent, that she sought to avoid thinking of the future, and to be alive only to the present. She tried also to forget that it was to his not knowing her that she owed the looks of tenderness and pity which he bestowed on her, and that the hand which now kindly held hers, would, if recollection returned, throw her from him with just indignation.

But she was soon awakened to redoubled anguish, by hearing him exclaim, "They are coming! they are coming!" and as he said this, he ran with frantic haste across the common. Agnes, immediately looking behind her, saw three men pursuing her father at full speed, and concluded that they were the keepers of the bedlam whence he had escaped. Soon after, she saw the poor lunatic coming towards her, and had scarcely time to lay her child gently on the ground, before her father threw himself into her arms and implored her to save him from his pursuers.

In an agony that mocks description, Agnes clasped him to her heart, and awaited in trembling agitation the approach of the keepers.

"Hear me! hear me!" she cried; "I conjure you to leave him to my care—he is my father, and you may safely trust him with me."

"Your father!" replied one of the men; "and what then, child? You could do nothing for him, and you should be thankful to us, young woman, for taking him off your hands. So come along naster come along," he continued, seizing Fitzhenry

who could with difficulty be separated from Agnes, while another of the keepers, laughing as he beheld her wild anguish, said, "We shall have the daughter as well as the father soon, I see, for I do not believe there is a pin to choose between them."

But, severe as the sufferings of Agnes were already, a still greater pang awaited her. The keepers finding it a very difficult task to confine Fitzhenry, threw him down and tried by blows to terrify him into acquiescence. At this outrage Agnes became frantic indeed, and followed them with shrieks, entreaties, and reproaches; while the struggling victim called on her to protect him, as they bore him by violence along, till, exhausted with anguish and fatigue, she fell insensible on the ground, and lost in a deep swoon the consciousness of her misery.

When she recovered her senses all was still around her, and she missed her child. Then hastily rising, and looking round with renewed phrensy, she saw it lying at some distance from her, and on taking it up she found that it was in a deep sleep. The horrid apprehension immediately rushed on her mind, that such a sleep, in the midst of cold so severe, was the sure forerunner of death.

"Monster!" she exclaimed, "destroyer of my child, as well as my father! But perhaps it is not yet too late, and my curse is not completed." So saying, she ran, or rather flew, along the road; and seeing a house at a distance, she made towards it, and bursting open the door, beheld a cottager and his family at breakfast; then, sinking on her knees, and holding out her sleeping boy to the woman of the house, "For the love of God," she cried, "look here! look here! Save him! O save him!"

A mother appealing to the heart of a mother is rarely unsuccessful in her appeal. The cottager's wife was as eager to begin the recovery of the child of Agnes as Agnes herself, and in a moment the whole family were employed in its service; nor was it long before they were rewarded for their humanity by its complete restoration.

The joy of Agnes was as frantic as her grief had been. She embraced them all by turns, in a loud voice invoked blessings on their heads, and promised, if she was ever rich, to make their fortune; lastly, she caught the still languid boy to her heart, and almost drowned him in her tears.

In the cottager and his family a scene like this excited wonder as well as emotion. He and his wife were good parents; they loved their children,—would have been anxious during their illness, and would have sorrowed for their loss; but to these violent expressions and actions, the result of cultivated sensibility, they were wholly unaccustomed, and could scarcely help imputing them to insanity—an idea which the pale cheek and wild look of Agnes strongly confirmed; nor did it lose strength when Agnes, who, in terror at her child's danger, and joy for his safety, had forgotten even her father and his situation, suddenly recollecting herself, exclaimed, "Have I dared to rejoice!—wretch that I am! Oh! no, there is no joy for me!"

The cottager and his wife on hearing these words looked significantly at each other.

Agnes soon after started up, and clasping her hands, cried out, "O my father! my dear, dear father! thou art past cure, and despair must be my portion."

"Oh! you are unhappy because your father is ill," observed the cottager's wife; "but do not be so sorrowful on that account, he may get better perhaps."

"Never, never!" replied Agnes; "yet who knows?"

"Ay; who knows, indeed!" resumed the good woman. "But if not, you nurse him yourself, I suppose; and it will be a comfort to you to know that he has everything done for him that can be done."

Agnes sighed deeply.

"I lost my own father," continued the cottager's wife, "last winter, and a hard trial it was, to be sure; but then it consoled me to think I made his end comfortable. Besides my conscience told me that, except here and there, I had always done my duty by him, to the best of my knowledge."

Agnes started from her seat, and walked rapidly round the room.

"He smiled on me," resumed her kind hostess, wiping her eyes, "to the last moment, and just before the breath left him, he said, 'Good child! good child!' Oh! it must be a terrible thing to lose one's parents when one has not done one's duty to them!"

At these words, Agnes, contrasting her conduct and feelings with those of this artless and innocent woman, was overcome with despair, and seizing a knife that lay by her, endeavored to put an end to her existence; but the cottager caught her hand in time to prevent the blow, and his wife easily disarmed her, as her violence instantly changed into a sort of stupor; then throwing herself back on the bed on which she was sitting, she lay with her eyes fixed, and incapable of moving.

The cottager and his wife now broke forth into expressions of wonder and horror at the crime which she was going to commit; and the latter, taking little Edward from the lap of her daughter, held it towards Agnes. "See," cried she, as the child stretched forth its little arms to embrace her, "unnatural mother! would you forsake your child?"

These words, assisted by the carcases of the child himself, roused Agnes from her stupor. "For sake him! Never, never!" she faltered out; then, snatching him to her bosom, she threw herself back on a pillow which the good woman had placed under her head, and soon, to the great joy of the compassionate family, both mother and child fell into a sound sleep. The cottager then repaired to his daily labor, and his wife and children began their household tasks; but ever and anon they cast a watchful glance upon their unhappy guest, dreading lest she should make a second attempt on her life.

The sleep of both Agnes and her child was so long and heavy, that night was closing in when the little boy awoke, and, by his cries for food, broke the rest of his unhappy mother.

But consciousness returned not with returning sense. Agnes looked around her, astonished at her situation. At length, by slow degrees, the dreadful scene of the preceding night, and her own rash attempt, burst on her recollection; she shuddered at the retrospect, and clasping her hands together, remained for some moments in speechless prayer. Then she arose, and smiling mournfully at the sight of her little Edward eating voraciously the milk and bread that was set before him, she seated herself at the table, and tried to partake of the coarse but wholesome food provided for her. A

she approached, she saw the cottager's wife remove the knives. This circumstance forcibly recalled her rash action, and drove away her returning appetite. "You may trust me now," she said; "I shrink with horror from my wicked attempt on my life, and swear in the face of Heaven, never to repeat it—no; my only wish is, to live and to suffer."

Soon after, the cottager's wife made an excuse for bringing back a knife to the table, to prove to Agnes her confidence in her word; but this well-meant attention was lost on her—she sat leaning on her elbow, and wholly absorbed in her own meditation.

When it was completely night, Agnes rose to depart. "My kind friends," said she, "who have so hospitably received and entertained a wretched wanderer, believe me I shall never forget the obligations which I owe you, though I can never hope to repay them; but accept this (taking her last crown piece from her pocket) as a pledge of my inclination to reward your kindness. If I am ever rich you shall—" Here her voice failed her, and she burst into tears.

This hesitation gave the virtuous people whom she addressed an opportunity of rejecting her offers. "What we did, we did because we could not help it," said the cottager. "You would not have had me see a fellow-creature going to kill soul and body too, and not prevent it, would you?"

"And as to saving the child," cried the wife, "am I not a mother myself, and can I help feeling for a mother? Poor little thing! it looked so pitiable too, and felt so cold!"

Agnes could not speak; but still, by signs she tendered the money for their acceptance.

"No, no," resumed the cottager, "keep it for those who may yet be willing to do you a service for nothing."

And Agnes reluctantly replaced her money. But then a fresh source of altercation began; the cottager insisted on seeing Agnes to the town, and she insisted on going by herself. At last she agreed that he should go with her as far as the street where her friends lived, wait for her at the end of it, and if they were not living, or were removed, she was to return, and sleep at the cottage.

Then, with a beating heart and dejected countenance, Agnes took her child in her arms, and leaning on her companion, with slow and unsteady steps she began to walk to her native place, once the scene of her happiness, but now about to be the witness of her misery and her shame.

As they drew near the town, Agnes saw on one side of the road, a new building, and instantly hurried from it as fast as her trembling limbs could carry her.

"Did you hear them?" asked the cottager.

"Hear whom?" said Agnes.

"The poor creatures," returned her companion, "who are confined there. That is the new bedlam, and hark! what a loud scream that was!"

Agnes, unable to support herself, staggered to a bench that projected from the court surrounding the building, while the cottager, unconscious why she stopped, observed that it was strange that she should like to stay and hear the poor creatures. For his part, he thought it shocking to hear them shriek, and still more so to hear them laugh: "for it is so pitiable," said he, "to hear those laugh who have so much reason to cry."

Agnes had not power to interrupt him, and he went on.

"This house was built by subscription; and it was begun by a kind gentleman of the name of Fitzhenry, who afterwards, poor soul, being made low in the world by losses in trade, and by having his brain turned by a good-for-nothing daughter, was one of the first patients in it himself."

Here Agnes, to whom this recollection had but too forcibly occurred already, groaned aloud.

"What; tired so soon?" said her companion.

"I doubt you have not been used to stir about—you have been too tenderly brought up. Ah! tender parents often spoil children, and they never thank them for it when they grow up neither, and often come to no good besides."

Agnes was going to make some observations wrung from her by the poignancy of self-upbraiding, when she heard a loud cry as of one in agony; fancying it her father's voice, she started up, and stopping her ears, ran towards the town so fast that it was with difficulty the cottager could overtake her.

When he did so, he was surprised at the agitation of her manner. "What, I suppose you thought they were coming after you!" said he. "But there was no danger; I dare say it was only an unruly one whom they were beating."

Agnes, on hearing this, absolutely screamed with agony; and seizing the cottager's arm, "Let us hasten to the town," said she, in a hollow and broken voice, "while I have strength enough left to carry me thither."

At length they entered its walls, and the cottager said, "Here we are at last. A welcome home to you, young woman."

"Welcome! and home to me!" cried Agnes, wildly, "I have no home now—I can expect no welcome! Once indeed—"

Here, overcome with recollections almost too painful to be endured, she turned from him and sobbed aloud, while the kind-hearted man could scarcely forbear shedding tears at sight of such mysterious, yet evidently real, distress.

In happier days, when Agnes used to leave home on visits to her distant friends, anticipation of the welcome she should receive on her return was, perhaps, the greatest pleasure that she enjoyed during her absence. As the adventurer to India, while toiling for wealth, never loses sight of the hope that he shall spend his fortune in his native land,—so Agnes, whatever company she saw, whatever amusements she partook of, looked eagerly forward to the hour when she should give her expecting father and her affectionate companions a recital of all that she had heard and seen. For, though she had been absent a few weeks only, "her presence made a little holiday" and she was received by her father with delight too deep to be expressed; while, even earlier than decorum warranted, her friends were thronging to her door to welcome home the heightener of their pleasures, and the gentle soother of their sorrows (for Agnes "loved and felt for all;" she had a smile ready to greet the child of prosperity, and a tear for the son of adversity.)

As she was thus honored, thus beloved, no wonder the thoughts of home, and of returning home, were wont to suffuse the eyes of Agnes with tears of exquisite pleasure; and that, when her native town appeared in view, a group of expecting and joyful faces used to swim before her sight, while, hastening forward to have the first glance of her,

fancy used to picture her father!—Now, dread reverse! after a long absence, an absence of years, she was returning to the same place, inhabited by the same friends; but the voices that used to be loud in pronouncing her welcome, were now to be loud in proclaiming indignation at her sight; the eyes that used to beam with gladness at her presence, would now be turned from her with disgust; and the fond father, who used to be counting the moments till she arrived, was now—I shall not go on—suffice, that Agnes felt, to her "heart's core," all the bitterness of the contrast.

When they arrived near the place of her destination, Agnes stopped, and told the cottager that they must part.

"So much the worse," said the good man. "I do not know how it is, but you are so sorrowful, yet so kind and gentle, somehow, that both my wife and I have taken a liking to you. You must not be angry; but we cannot help thinking you are not one of us, but a lady, though you are so disguised and so humble; but misfortune spares no one you know."

Agnes, affected and gratified by these artless expressions of good will, replied, "I have, indeed, known better days."

"And will again, I hope with all my heart and soul," interrupted the cottager with great warmth.

"I fear not," replied Agnes, "my dear worthy friend."

"Nay, young lady," rejoined he, "my wife and I are proper to be your servants, not friends."

"You are my friends, perhaps my only friends," returned Agnes, mournfully. "Perhaps there is not, at this moment, another hand in the universe that would not reject mine, or another tongue that would not upbraid me."

"They must be hard-hearted wretches, indeed, who would upbraid a poor woman for her misfortunes," cried the cottager; "however you shall never want a friend while I live. You know I saved your life; and, somehow, I feel therefore as if you belonged to me. I once saved one of my pigeons from a hawk, and I believe, were I starving, I could not now bear to kill the little creature; it would seem like eating my own flesh and blood—so I am sure I could never desert you."

"You have not yet heard my story," replied Agnes; "but you shall know who I am soon; and then, if you feel still disposed to offer me your friendship, I shall be grateful to accept it."

The house to which Agnes was hastening was that of her nurse, from whom she had always experienced the affection of a mother, and hoped now to receive a temporary asylum; but she might not be living—and, with a beating heart, Agnes knocked at the door. It was opened by Fanny, her nurse's daughter, the playfellow of Agnes's childhood.

"Thank Heaven!" said Agnes, as she hastened back to the cottager. "I hope I have, at least, one friend left;" and telling him he might go home again, as she was almost certain of shelter for the night, the poor man shook her heartily by the hand, prayed to God to bless her, and departed.

Agnes then returned to Fanny, who was still standing by the door, wondering who had knocked at so late an hour and displeased at being kept so long in the cold.

"Will you admit me, Fanny, and give me shelter for the night?" said Agnes, in a faint and broken voice.

"Gracious Heaven! who are you?" cried Fanny, starting back.

"Do you not know me?" she replied, looking earnestly in her face.

Fanny again started; then bursting into tears, as she drew Agnes forward and closed the door—"O dear! it is my young lady!"

"And are you sorry to see me?" replied Agnes. "Sorry!" answered the other, "Oh no! but to see you thus! O my dear lady! what you must have suffered! Thank Heaven, my poor mother is not alive to see this day!"

"And is she dead?" cried Agnes, turning very faint, and catching hold of a chair to keep her from falling. "Then is the measure of my affliction full—I have lost my oldest and best friend!"

"I am not dead," said Fanny, respectfully.

"Excellent, kind creature!" continued Agnes, "I hoped so much alleviation of misery from her affection."

"Do you hope none from mine?" rejoined Fanny, in a tone of reproach. "Indeed, my dear young lady, I love you as well as my mother did, and will do as much for you as she would have done. Do I not owe all I have to you? and now that you are in trouble, perhaps in want too—but no, that cannot and shall not be," and she wrung her hands and paced the room with frantic violence. "I cannot bear to think of such a thing. That ever I should live to see my dear young lady in want of the help which she was always so ready to give!"

Agnes tried to comfort her; but the sight of her distress notwithstanding was soothing to her, as it convinced her that she was still dear to one pure and affectionate heart.

During this time little Edward remained covered up so closely that Fanny did not know what the bundle was that Agnes held in her lap; but when she lifted up the cloak that concealed him, Fanny was in an instant kneeling by his side, and gazing on him with admiration. "Is it—is it—" said Fanny, with hesitation.

"It is my child," replied Agnes, sighing; and Fanny lavished on the unconscious boy the caresses which respect forbade her to bestow on the mother.

"Fanny," said Agnes, "you say nothing of your husband."

"He is dead," replied Fanny, with emotion.

"Have you any children?"

"None."

"Then will you promise me, if I die, to be a mother to this child."

Fanny seized her hand, and, in a voice half-choked by sobs, said, "I promise you."

"Enough!" cried Agnes; then holding out her arms to her humble friend, Fanny's respect yielded to affection, and falling on Agnes' neck, she sobbed aloud.

"My dear Fanny!" said Agnes, "I have a question to ask, and I charge you to answer it truly."

"Do not ask me, do not ask me, for indeed I dare not answer you," replied Fanny, in great agitation.

Agnes guessed the cause, and hastened to tell her that the question was not concerning her father, as she was well acquainted with his situation already, and proceeded to ask whether her elopement and ill conduct had at all hastened the death of her nurse, who was in ill health when she went away.

"Oh no," replied Fanny, "she never believed that you could be gone off willingly, but was sure you were spirited away; and she died expecting that you would some day return, and take the law

of the villain; and no doubt she was right, though nobody thinks so now but me, for you were always too good to do wrong."

Agnes was too honorable to take to herself the merit which she did not deserve; she therefore owned that she was indeed guilty; "Nor should I," she added, "have dared to intrude myself on you, or solicit you to let me remain under your roof, had I not been severely punished for my crime, and resolved to pass the rest of my days in solitude and labor."

"You should not presume to intrude yourself on me!" replied Fanny. "Do not talk thus, if you do not mean to break my heart."

"Nay, Fanny," answered Agnes, "it would be presumption in any woman who has quitted the path of virtue to intrude herself, however high her rank might be, on the meanness of her acquaintance whose honor is spotless. Nor would I thus throw myself on your generosity were I not afraid that if I were to be unsoothed by the presence of a sympathizing friend, I should sink beneath my sorrows, and want resolution to fulfil the hard task which my duty enjoins me."

I shall not attempt to describe the anguish of Fanny when she thought of her young lady, the pride of her heart, as she used to call her, being reduced so low in the world, nor the sudden bursts of joy to which she gave vent the next moment, when she reflected that Agnes was returned, never perhaps to leave her again.

Agnes wore away great part of the night in telling Fanny her mournful tale, and in hearing from her a full account of her father's sufferings, bankruptcy, and consequent madness. At day-break she retired to bed, not to sleep, but to ruminate on the romantic, yet in her eyes feasible, plan, which she had formed for the future; while Fanny, wearied out by the violent emotions which she had undergone, sobbed herself to sleep by her side.

The next morning Agnes did not rise till Fanny had been up some time; and when she seated herself at the breakfast-table, she was surprised to see it spread in a manner which ill-accorded with her or Fanny's situation. On asking the reason, Fanny owned she could not bear that her dear young lady should fare only as she did, and had, therefore, provided a suitable breakfast for her.

"But you forget," said Agnes, "that if I remain with you, neither you nor I can afford such breakfasts as these."

"True," replied Fanny, mournfully; "then you must consider this as a welcome, madam."

"Ay," rejoined Agnes, "the prodigal has returned, and you have killed the fattest calf!"

Fanny burst into tears; while Agnes, shocked at having excited them by the turn which she unguardedly gave to her poor friend's attention, tried to soothe her into composure, and affected a gaiety which she was far from feeling.

"Now then, to my first task," said Agnes, rising as soon as she had finished her breakfast. "I am going to call on Mr. Seymour—you say he lives where he formerly did."

"To call on Mr. Seymour!" exclaimed Fanny. "Oh, my dear madam, do not go near him, I beseech you! He is a very severe man, and will insult you, depend upon it."

"No matter," rejoined Agnes, "I have deserved humiliation, and will not shrink from it; but his daughter Caroline, you know, was once my dearest friend, and she will not suffer him to trample on the

fallen; besides it is necessary that I should apply to him in order to succeed in my scheme."

"What scheme?" replied Fanny.

"You would not approve of it, Fanny, therefore I shall not explain it to you at present; but when I return, perhaps I shall tell you all."

"But you are going so soon—not in daylight, surely! If you should be insulted!"

Agnes started with horror at this proof which Fanny had unguardedly given how hateful her guilt had made her; but recovering herself, she said that she should welcome insults as a part of the expiation which she meant to perform.

"But if you will not avoid them for your own sake, pray do for mine," exclaimed Fanny. "If you were to be ill-used, I am sure I should never survive it; so, if you must go to Mr. Seymour's, at least oblige me by not going before dark."

Affected by this fresh mark of her attachment, Agnes consented to stay.

At six o'clock in the evening, while the family was sitting round the fire, and Caroline Seymour was expecting the arrival of her lover, to whom she was to be united in a few days, Agnes knocked at Mr. Seymour's door, having positively forbidden Fanny to accompany her. Caroline, being on the watch for her intended bridegroom, started at the sound; and though the knock which Agnes gave did not much resemble that of an impatient lover, still "it might be he—he might mean to surprise her," and half-opening the parlor door, she listened with a beating heart for the servant's answering knock.

By this means she distinctly heard Agnes ask whether Mr. Seymour were at home. The servant started, and stammered out that he believed his master was within; while Caroline, springing forward, exclaimed, "I know that voice—oh yes! it must be she!"

But her father, seizing her arm, drew her back into the parlor, saying, "I also know that voice, and I command you to stay where you are."

Then going up to Agnes, he desired her to leave his house directly, as it should be no harbor for abandoned women and unnatural children.

"But will you not allow it to shelter for one moment the wretched and the penitent?" she replied.

"Father, my dear father!" cried Caroline, again coming forward: but was immediately driven back by Mr. Seymour, who turning to Agnes, bade her claim shelter from the man for whom she had left the best of parents; and desiring the servant to shut the door in her face, he re-entered the parlor, whence Agnes distinctly heard the sobs of the compassionate Caroline.

But the servant was kinder than the master, and could not obey the orders which he had received.

"Oh madam! Miss Fitzhenry, do you not know me?" said he; "I once lived with you. Have you forgotten little William! I shall never forget you; you were the sweetest tempered young lady—that ever I should see you thus!"

Before Agnes could reply, Mr. Seymour again angrily asked why his orders were not obeyed; and Agnes, checking her emotion, besought William to deliver a message to his master. "Tell him," said she, "all I ask of him is, that he will use his interest to get me the place of a servant in the house, the bedlam I should say, where—he will know what I mean," she added, unable to utter the conclusion of the sentence.

William, in a broken voice, delivered the message.

"O, my poor Agnes!" cried Caroline, passionately. "A servant! She a servant! and in such a place too!"

William added, in a low voice, "Al! miss! and she looks so poor and wretched."

Meanwhile Mr. Seymour was walking up and down the room, hesitating how to act; but reflecting that it was easier to forbid any communication with Agnes than to check it if once begun, he again desired William to shut the door against her.

"You must do it yourself, then," replied William, "for I am not hard-hearted enough."

Mr. Seymour, summoning up resolution, told Agnes that there were other governors to whom she might apply, and then locked the door against her himself. Poor Agnes now slowly and sorrowfully turned her steps towards the more hospitable roof of Fanny.

She had not gone far, however, when she heard a light footstep behind her, and her name was pronounced in a gentle, faltering voice. Turning round, she beheld Caroline Seymour, who seizing her hand forced something into it, hastily pressed it to her lips, and without saying one word, suddenly disappeared, leaving Agnes as motionless as a statue, and, but for the parcel she held in her hand, disposed to think that she was dreaming. Then, eager to see what it contained, she hastened back to Fanny, who heard with indignation the reception she had met with from Mr. Seymour; but on her knees invoked blessings on the head of Caroline, when, on opening the parcel, she found that it contained twenty guineas, inclosed in a paper, on which was written, but almost effaced with tears, "For my still dear Agnes—would I dare say more."

This money the generous girl had taken from that allowed her for her wedding outfit, and felt more delight in relieving with it the wants even of a guilty fellow-creature, than the purchasing the most splendid dress could have afforded her. And her present did more than she expected—it relieved the mind of Agnes; she had taught herself to meet without repining the assaults of poverty, but not to encounter the scorn of the friends whom she loved.

But Caroline and her kindness soon vanished again from her mind, and the idea of her father and her scheme took entire possession of it. But it might not succeed—no doubt Mr. Seymour would be her enemy; still he hinted that she might apply to the other governors. And Fanny having learnt that they were all to meet at the asylum, on business, the next day, Agnes resolved to write a note, requesting to be allowed to appear before them.

This note, Fanny, who was not acquainted with its contents, undertook to deliver; and, to the great surprise of Agnes (as she expected Mr. Seymour would oppose it), her request was instantly granted. Indeed, it was he himself who urged the compliance.

There was not a kinder-hearted man in the world than Mr. Seymour; and, in his severity towards Agnes, he acted more from what he thought his duty than from his inclination. He was the father of several daughters, and it was his opinion that a parent could not too forcibly inculcate on the minds of young women the salutary truth, that loss of virtue must be to them the loss of friends. Besides, his eldest daughter, Caroline, was going to be married to the son of a very severe, rigid mother, then on a visit at the house; and he feared that, if he took any notice of the fallen Ag-

ness, the old lady might conceive a prejudice against him and her daughter-in-law. Added to these reasons, Mr. Seymour was a very vain man, and never acted in any way without saying to himself, "What will the world say?" Hence, though his first impulses were frequently good, the determinations of his judgment were often contemptible.

But, however satisfied Mr. Seymour might be with his motives on this occasion, his feelings revolted at the consciousness of the anguish which he had occasioned Agnes. He wished, ardently wished, that he had dared to have been kinder; and when Caroline, who was incapable of the meanness of concealing any action which she thought it right to perform, told him of the gift which she had in person bestowed on Agnes, he could scarcely forbear commending her conduct; and while he forbade any future intercourse between them, he was forced to turn away his head to hide the tear of gratified sensibility, and the smile of parental exultation. Nevertheless, he did not omit to tell her to keep her own counsel; "For, if your conduct were known," added he, "what would the world say?"

No wonder then, that, softened as he was by Agnes's application (though he deemed the scheme wild and impracticable), and afraid that he had treated her unkindly, he was pleased to have an opportunity of obliging her, without injuring himself, and her request to the governors was strengthened by his representations; nor is it extraordinary that, alive as he always was to the opinion of every one, he should dread seeing Agnes, after the reception which he had given her, more than she dreaded to appear before the board.

Agnes, who had borrowed of Fanny the dress of a respectable maid-servant, when summoned to attend the governors, entered the room with modest but dignified composure, prepared to expect contumely, but resolved to endure it as became a contrite heart. But no contumely awaited her.

In the hour of her prosperity she had borne her faculties so meekly, and had been so careful never to humble any one by showing a consciousness of superiority, that she had been beloved even more than she had been admired; and hard indeed must the heart of that man have been, who could have rejoiced that she herself was humbled.

A dead, nay, a solemn silence took place on her entrance. Every one present beheld with surprise, and with *stolen* looks of pity, the ravages which remorse and anguish had made in her form, and the striking change in her apparel; for every one had often followed with delight her graceful figure through the dance, and gazed with admiration on the tasteful varieties of her dress; every one had listened with pleasure to the winning sound of her voice, and envied Fitzhenry the possession of such a daughter. As they now beheld her, these recollections forcibly occurred to them—they agonized—they overcame them. They thought of their own daughters, and secretly prayed to Heaven to keep them from the voice of the seducer—away went all their resolutions to receive Agnes with the open disdain and detestation which her crime deserved; the sight of her disarmed them, and not one amongst them had, for some moments, firmness enough to speak.

At last, "Pray sit down, Miss Fitzhenry," said the president, in a voice hoarse with emotion.

"Here is a chair," added another. And Mr. Seymour, bowing as he did it, placed a seat for her near the fire.

Agnes, who had made up her mind to bear expected indignity with composure, was not proof against unexpected kindness; and hastily turning to the window, she gave vent to her sensations in an agony of tears. But, recollecting the importance of the business on which she came, she struggled with her feelings; and on being desired by the president to explain to the board what she wanted, she began to address them in a faint and faltering voice. However, as she proceeded, she gained courage, remembering that it was her interest to affect her auditors, and make them enter warmly into her feelings and designs. She told her whole story, in as concise a manner as possible, from the time of her leaving Clifford to her reconcourse with her father in the forest, and his being torn from her by the keepers; and when she was unable to go on, from the violence of her emotions, she had the satisfaction of seeing that the tears of her auditors kept pace with her own.

When her narrative was ended, she proceeded thus:—"I come now, gentlemen, to the reason why I have troubled you with this narration. From the impression which the sight of me made on my father, I feel a certain conviction that, were I constantly with him, I might in time be able to restore to him that reason of which my guilt has deprived him. To effect this purpose, it is my wish to become a servant in this house; if I should not succeed in my endeavors, I am so sure that he will have pleasure in seeing me, that I feel it my duty to be with him, even on that account; and, if there be any balm for a heart and conscience so wounded as mine, I must find it in devoting all my future days to alleviate, though I cannot cure, the misery which I have occasioned. And if," added she, with affecting enthusiasm, "it should please Heaven to bless my endeavors to restore him to reason, how exquisite will be my satisfaction in laboring to maintain him!"

To this plan, it is to be supposed, the governors saw more objection than Agnes did; but, though they rejected the idea of her being a servant in the house, they were not averse to giving her an opportunity of making the trial which she desired, if it were only to alleviate her evident wretchedness; and having consulted the medical attendants belonging to the institution, they ordered that Agnes should be permitted two hours at a time, morning and evening, to see her father. And she, who had not dared to flatter herself that she should obtain so much, was too full of emotion to show otherwise than by incoherent expressions and broken sentences, her sense of the obligation.

"Our next care," observed the president, "must be, as friends of your poor father, to see what we can do for your future support."

"That, sir, I shall provide for myself," replied Agnes. "I will not eat the bread of idleness, as well as of shame and affliction; and shall even rejoice in being obliged to labor for my support, and that of my child—happy if, in fulfilling well the duties of a mother, I may make some atonement for having violated those of a daughter."

"But, Miss Fitzhenry," answered the president, "accept at least some assistance from us till you can find means of maintaining yourself."

"Never, never," cried Agnes; "I thank you for your kindness, but I will not accept it; nor do I need it. I have already accepted assistance from

one kind friend, and merely because I should, under similar circumstances, have been hurt at having a gift of mine refused; but allow me to say, from the wretchedness into which my guilt has plunged me, nothing henceforward but my own industry shall relieve me."

So saying, she curtsied to the gentlemen, and hastily withdrew, leaving them all deeply affected by her narrative, and her proposed expiatory plan of life, and ready to grant her their admiration, should she have resolution to fulfil her good intentions, after the strong impression which the meeting with her father in the forest had made on her mind should have been weakened by time and occupation.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN Agnes left the governor's room, she hastened to put in force the leave which she had obtained, and was immediately conducted to her father's cell. She found him with his back to the door, drawing with a piece of coal on the wall. As he did not observe her entrance, she had an opportunity of looking over his shoulder, and she saw that he had drawn the shape of a coffin, and was then writing on the lid the name of Agnes.

A groan, which involuntarily escaped her, made him turn round. At sight of her he started, and looked wildly as he had done in the forest; then shaking his head and sighing deeply, he resumed his employment, still occasionally looking back at Agnes, who, at length overcome by her feelings, threw herself on the bed beside him, and burst into tears.

Hearing her sobs, he immediately turned round again, and patting her cheek, as he had done on their first meeting, said, "Poor thing! poor thing!" then fixing his eyes steadfastly on her face, while Agnes turned towards him and pressed his hand to her lips, he gazed on her as before with a look of anxious curiosity; then, turning from her, he muttered to himself, "She is dead for all that."

Soon after, he asked her to take a walk with him, adding, in a whisper, "We will go and find her grave;" and, taking her under his arm, he led her to the garden, smiling on her from time to time, as if it gave him pleasure to see her, and sometimes laughing, as if at some secret satisfaction which he would not communicate. When they had made one turn round the garden, he suddenly stopped and began singing—"Tears such as tender fathers shed," that affecting song of Handel's, which he used to delight to hear Agnes sing. "I can't go on," he observed, looking at Agnes—"can you?" as if there were in his mind some association between her and that song; and Agnes, with a bursting heart, took up the air where he left off.

He listened with restless agitation; and when she had finished, he desired her to sing it again. "But say the words first," he added: and Agnes repeated—

*Tears such as tender fathers shed
Warm from my aged eyes descend,
For joy, to think, when I am dead,
My son will have mankind his friend.*

"No, no," said her father, with quickness; "For joy to think, when I am dead, Agnes will have mankind her friend. I used to sing it so;

and so did she when I bade her. Oh! she sung it so well! But she can sing it no more now, for she is dead; and we will go and look for her grave."

Then he walked hastily round the garden, while Agnes, whom the words of this song, by recalling painful recollections, had almost deprived of reason, sat down on a bench, nearly insensible, till he again came to her, and taking her hand, said, in a hurried manner, "You will not leave me, will you?" On her answering "No," in a very earnest and passionate manner, he looked delighted, and saying, "Poor thing!" again gazed on her intently; and again Agnes's hopes that he would in time know her returned.

"Very pale, very pale!" he added the next moment, stroking her cheek; "and she had such a bloom! Sing again; for mercy's sake, sing again."

In a horse, broken voice, Agnes complied. "She sung better than you," rejoined he, when she had done; "so sweet, so clear it was—but she is gone!" So saying, he relapsed into total indifference to Agnes, and everything around him—and again her now raised hopes vanished.

The keeper now told her it was time for her to depart. She mournfully arose; but, first seizing her father's hand, she leaned for a moment her head on his arm; then, bidding God bless him, walked to the door with the keeper.

But on seeing her about to leave him, he ran after her, as fast as his heavy iron would let him, wildly exclaiming, "You shall not go—you shall not go."

Agnes, overjoyed at this evident proof of the pleasure her presence gave him, looked at the keeper for permission to stay; but as he told her it would be against the rules, she thought it more prudent to submit; and before he could catch hold of her in order to detain her by force, she ran through the house, and the grated door was closed behind her.

"And this," said Agnes to herself, turning round to survey the melancholy mansion which she had left, while mingled sounds of groans, shrieks, shouts, and laughter, burst upon her ears, "this is the abode of my father! and provided for him by me! This is the recompense bestowed on him by the daughter whom he loved and trusted, in return for years of unparalleled fondness and indulgence!"

The idea was too horrible; and Agnes, calling up all the energy of her mind, remembered the uselessness of regret for the past, but thought with pleasure on the advantages of amendment for the present and the future; and by the time she reached Fanny's door, her mind had recovered its sad composure.

Her countenance at her return, was very different to what it had been at her departure. Hope animated her sunken eye; and she seemed full of joyful though distant expectations; nay, so much was she absorbed in pleasing anticipations, that she feebly returned the caresses of her child, who climbed up her knees to express his joy at seeing her; and even while she kissed his ruddy cheek, her eye looked beyond it with the open gaze of absence.

"I have seen him again," she cried, turning to Fanny; "and he almost knew me! He will know me entirely in time; and next, he will know every thing—and then I shall be happy!"

Fanny, to whom Agnes had given no clue to

enable her to understand this language, was alarmed for her intellects, till she explained her plans and her hopes; which Fanny, though she could not share in them, was too humane to discourage.

"But now," continued Agnes, "let us consult on my future means of gaining a livelihood;" and finding that Fanny, besides keeping a day-school, took in shawl work, a considerable shawl manufacture being carried on in the town, it was settled that she should procure the same employment for Agnes, and that a small back room in Fanny's little dwelling should be fitted up for her.

In the meanwhile, the governors of the asylum had returned to their respective habitations, with feelings towards Agnes very different to those with which they had assembled. But too prudent to make even a penitent sinner the subject of praise in their own families, they gave short, evasive answers to the inquiries that were made there.

Mr. Seymour, on the contrary, thought it his duty to relieve the generous and affectionate heart of his daughter, by a minute detail of what had passed at the meeting; but he had no opportunity of doing this when he first returned home, as he found there a large party assembled to dinner. Caroline, however, watched his countenance and manner, and seeing on the first an expression of highly awakened feeling, and in the latter a degree of absence and aversion to talking, which he always displayed whenever his heart had been deeply interested, she flattered herself that Agnes was the cause of these appearances, and hoped to hear of something favorable.

During dinner, a lady asked Caroline which of her young friends would accompany her to church in the capacity of bridesmaid. Caroline started, and turned pale at the question—for melancholy were the reflections which it excited in her mind. It had always been an agreement between her and Agnes, that whichever of the two were married first, should have the other for her bridesmaid, and the question was repeated before Caroline could trust her voice to answer it. "I shall have no bridesmaids but my sisters," she replied, at length, with a quivering lip; "I cannot—indeed, I wish to have no other now." Then, looking at her father, she saw that his eyes were filled with tears; and unable to suppress, but wishing to conceal, his emotion, he abruptly left the room.

There is scarcely any human being whose heart has not taught him that we are never so compassionate and benevolent towards others, as when our own wishes are completely gratified—we are never so humble as then. This was the case with Mr. Seymour. He was about to marry his eldest daughter in a manner even superior to his warmest expectations, and his paternal care, therefore, was amply rewarded. But his heart told him that his care and his affection had not exceeded, perhaps not equalled, that of Fitzhenry; nor had the promise of his daughter's youth, fair as it was, ever equalled that of the unhappy Agnes; yet Caroline was going to aggrandise her family, and Agnes had disgraced hers. She was happy—Agnes miserable. He was the possessor of a large fortune, and all the comforts of life—Fitzhenry was in a madhouse.

This contrast between their situations was forcibly recalled to his mind by the question addressed to Caroline; and already softened by the interview of the morning, he could not support his feelings, but was obliged to hasten to his chamber

to vent in tears and thanksgivings the mingled sensations of humility and gratitude. Caroline soon followed him, and heard with emotions as violent, her father's description of Agnes' narration, and her conduct before the governors. "But it is sufficient," said she, "that you tell me this; you must tell it wherever you hear the poor penitent name mentioned, and avow the change which it has made in your sentiments towards her; you must be her advocate."

"Her advocate? What would the world say?"

"Just what you wish it to say. Believe me, my dear father, the world is in many instances like a spoiled child, who treats with contempt the foolish parent that indulges his caprices, but behaves with respect to those who, regardless of his clamors, give the law to him, instead of receiving it."

"You speak from the untaught enthusiasm and confidence of youth, Caroline; but experience will teach you that no one can with impunity run counter to the opinions of the world."

"My experience has taught me that already; but, in this case, you do not seem to do the world justice. The world would blame you, and justly too, if, while talking of the unhappy Agnes, you should make light of her guilt; but why not, while you acknowledge that to be enormous, descant with equal justice on the deep sense of it which she entertains, and on the excellence of her present intentions? To this, what can the world say, but that you are a just judge? And even suppose they should think you too lenient a one, will not the approbation of your own conscience be an ample consolation for such a condemnation? O my dear father! were you not one of the best and most unspoiled of men, your anxious attention to what the world will say of your actions, must long ere this have made you one of the worst."

"Enough, enough," cried Mr. Seymour, wounded self-love contending in his bosom with parental pride, for he had some suspicion that Caroline was right; "what would the world say if it were to hear you schooling your father?"

"When the world hears me trying to exalt my own wisdom by doubting my father's, I hope it will treat me with the severity which I shall deserve."

Mr. Seymour clasped her to his bosom as she said this, and involuntarily exclaimed, "Oh, poor Fitzhenry!"

"And poor Agnes too!" added Caroline, throwing her arms round his neck; "it will be my parting request, when I leave my paternal roof, that you will do all the justice you can to my once honored friend, and let the world say what it pleases."

"Well, well, I will indulge you by granting your request," said Mr. Seymour, "or, rather, I will indulge myself."

Then, satisfied with each other, they returned to the company.

A few days after this conversation Caroline's marriage took place, and was celebrated by the ringing of bells and other rejoicings.

"What are the bells ringing for to-day?" said Agnes to Fanny, as she was eating her breakfast with more appetite than usual.

Fanny hesitated, and then, in a peevish tone, replied, that she supposed they rang for Miss Caroline Seymour as she was married that morning. Adding, "Such a fuss, indeed! such preparations! one would think nobody was ever married before!"

Yet, spitefully as Fanny spoke this, she had no dislike to the amiable Caroline; her pettishness proceeded merely from her love for Agnes. Just such preparations, just such rejoicings, she had hoped to see one day for the marriage of her dear young lady; and though Agnes had not perceived it, Fanny had for the last two days shed many a tear of regret and mortification, while news of the intended wedding reached her ear on every side; and she had not courage to tell Agnes what she heard, lest the feelings of Agnes on the occasion should resemble hers, but in a more painful degree.

"Caroline Seymour married?" cried Agnes, rising from her unfinished meal; "well married, I hope?"

"O yes, very well indeed—Mr. Seymour is proud of the connexion!"

"Thank God!" said Agnes, fervently; "may she be as happy as her virtues deserve!" and then, with hasty step, she retired to her own apartments.

It is certain that Agnes had a mind above the meanness of envy, and that she did not repine at the happiness of her friend; yet, while with tears trickling down her cheek she filtered out the words, "Happy Caroline!—Mr. Seymour proud! Well may he be so!" her feelings were as bitter as those which envy excites. "Oh! my poor father! I once hoped—" added she; but overcome with the acuteness of regret and remorse, she threw herself on the bed in speechless anguish.

Then the image of Caroline, as she last saw her, weeping over her misfortunes and administering to her wants, recurred to her mind, and in a transport of affection and gratitude, she took the paper that contained the gift from her bosom, kissed the blotted scrawl on the back of it, and prayed fervently for her happiness.

"But surely," cried she, starting up and running into the next room to Fanny, "I should write a few lines of congratulation to the bride!" Fanny did not answer; indeed she could not; for the affectionate creature was drowned in tears, which Agnes well understood, and was gratified, though pained, to behold. At length, still more ashamed of her own weakness when she saw it reflected in another, Agnes gently reproved Fanny, telling her it seemed as if she repined at Miss Seymour's happiness.

"No," replied Fanny, "I only repine at your misery. Dear me! she is a sweet young lady, to be sure, but no more to be compared to you—"

"Hush! Fanny; 'tis I who am not to be compared to her—remember, my misery is owing to my guilt."

"It is not the less to be repined at on that account," replied Fanny.

To this remark, unconsciously severe, Agnes with a sigh assented; and, unable to continue the conversation in this strain, she again asked whether Fanny did not think she ought to congratulate the generous Caroline.

"By all means," replied Fanny. But before she answered, Agnes had determined that it would be kinder in her not to damp the joy of Caroline by calling to her mind the image of a wretched friend. "True," she observed, "it would gratify my feelings to express the love and gratitude I bear her, and my self-love would exult in being recollected by her with tenderness and regret, even in the hour of her bridal splendor; but

the gratification would only be a selfish one, and therefore I will reject it."

Having formed this laudable resolution, Agnes, after trying to compose her agitated spirits by playing with her child, who was already idolized by the faithful Fanny, bent her steps as usual to the cell of her father. Unfortunately for Agnes, she was obliged to pass the house of Mr. Seymour, and at the door she saw the carriages waiting to convey the bride and her train to the country-seat of her mother-in-law. Agnes hurried on as fast as her trembling limbs could carry her; but as she cast a hasty glance on the splendid liveries, and the crowd gazing on them, she saw Mr. Seymour bustling at the door with all the pleased consequence of a happy parent in his countenance; and not daring to analyse her feelings, she rushed forward from the mirthful scene, and did not stop again till she found herself at the door of the asylum.

But when there, and when looking up at its grated windows, she contemplated it as the habitation of her father, so different from that of the father of Caroline, and beheld in fancy the worn, sorrowful face of her parent, so unlike the healthy, satisfied look of Mr. Seymour—"I can't go in, I can't see him to-day," she faintly articulated, overcome with a sudden faintness, and, as soon as she could recover her strength, she returned home, and shutting herself up in her own apartment, spent the rest of the day in that mournful and solitary meditation that "maketh the heart better."

It would no doubt have gratified the poor mourner to have known that, surrounded by joyous and congratulating friends, Caroline sighed for the absent Agnes, and felt the want of her congratulations. "Surely she will write to me!" said she, mentally, "I am sure she wishes me happy; and one of my greatest pangs at leaving my native place is, the consciousness that I leave her miserable."

The last words that Caroline uttered, as she bade adieu to the domestics, were, "Be sure to send after me any note or letter that may come." But no note or letter from Agnes arrived; and had Caroline known the reason, she would have loved her once happy friend the more.

The next day, earlier than usual, Agnes went in quest of her father. She did not absolutely flatter herself that he had missed her the day before, still she did not think it altogether impossible that he might. She dared not, however, ask the question; but, luckily for her, the keeper told her, unasked, that her father was observed to be restless, and looking out of the door of his cell frequently, both morning and evening, as if expecting somebody, and that, at night, as he was going to bed, he asked whether the lady had not been there.

"Indeed!" cried Agnes, her eyes sparkling with pleasure. "Where is he?—Let me see him directly." But, after the first joyful emotion, which he always showed at seeing her, had subsided, she could not flatter herself that his symptoms were more favorable than before.

The keeper also informed her that he had been thrown into so violent a raving fit, by the agitation he felt at parting with her the last time she was there, that she must contrive to slip away unperceived whenever she came; and this visit having passed away without anything material occurring, Agnes contrived to make her escape unseen.

On her return she repeated to Fanny several times, with a sort of pathetic pleasure, the question her father had asked—"He enquired whether the lady had not been there—think of that Fanny," while so incoherent was her language and so absent were her looks, that Fanny again began to fear her afflictions had impaired her reason.

After staying a few days with the new married couple, Mr. Seymour returned home, Caroline having, before he left her, again desired him to be the friend of the penitent Agnes whenever he heard her unpitifully attacked; and an opportunity soon offered of gratifying his daughter's benevolence, and his own.

Mr. Seymour was drinking tea in a large party, when a lady, to whose plain, awkward, uninteresting daughters, the once beautiful, graceful, and engaging Agnes had formerly been a powerful rival, said, with no small share of malignity, "So!—fine impudence indeed!—I hear that good-for-nothing minx, Fitzhenry's daughter, is come back—I wonder for my part she dares show her face here—But the assurance of those creatures is amazing."

"Ay, so it is," echoed from one lady to another, "But this girl must be a hardened wretch, indeed," resumed Mrs. Macfiendy, the first speaker: "I suppose her fellow has now become tired of her."

"Ah!" replied Mr. Seymour, whom a feeling of resentment at the vulgar expressions of female spite had hitherto kept silent; "Miss Fitzhenry has lost the power of charming the eye of the libertine, and even the wish; but she is an object whom the compassionate and humane cannot be held or listen to, without the strongest emotion."

"No, to be sure," replied Mrs. Macfiendy, bridling, "the girl had always a plausible tongue of her own—and as to her beauty, I never thought that was made for lasting. What, then, have you seen of her, Mr. Seymour? I wonder that you could condescend to look at such trash."

"Yes, madam, I have seen and heard her too; and if heartfelt misery, contrition, and true penitence, may hope to win favor in the sight of God and expiate past offences, 'a ministering angel may this frail one be, though we lay howling.'"

"I lie howling, indeed!" screamed out Mrs. Macfiendy. "Speak for yourself, if you please, Mr. Seymour! For my part, I do not expect, when I go to another world, to keep such company as Miss Fitzhenry."

"If with the same measure you mete it should be meted to you again, madam," replied Mr. Seymour, "in another world you and Miss Fitzhenry will not be visiting acquaintance." Then, bespeaking the attention of the company, he gave that account of Agnes, her present situation, and intentions for the future, which she gave the governors; and all the company, save the outrageously virtuous in their and her daughters, heard it with as much emotion as he felt in relating it.

Exclamations of "Poor unfortunate girl! what a pity she should have been guilty!" followed his recital.

Mrs. Macfiendy could not bear this in silence; but with a cheek pale, nay, livid with malignity, and a voice sharpened by passion, which at all times resembled the scream of a pea hen, she exclaimed, "Well, for my part, some people may do anything, yet be praised up to the skies; other people's daughters would not find such mercy. Before she went off, it was Miss Fitzhenry this, and Miss Fitz-

henry that—though other people's children could perhaps do as much, though they were not so fond of showing what they could do."

"No," cried one of the Misses Macfiendy, "Miss Fitzhenry had boldness enough for anything."

"True, child," resumed the mother: "and what did it all end in? Why, in ruin!"

"Fie madam, fie!" cried Mr. Seymour; "why thus exult over the fallen?"

"Oh! then do you allow her to be fallen?"

"She is fallen indeed, madam," said Mr. Seymour, "but, even in her proudest hour, Miss Fitzhenry never expressed herself with unchristian severity, but set you an example of forbearance which you would do well to follow."

"She set me an example!" vociferated Mrs. Macfiendy. "She indeed! a creature!—I will not stay, nor shall my daughters, to hear such immoral talk. But 'tis as I said—some people may do anything—for, wicked as she is, Miss Fitzhenry is still cried up as something extraordinary, and is even held up as an example to modest women."

So saying, she arose; but Mr. Seymour rose also, and said, "There is no necessity for leaving the company, madam, as I will leave it; for I am tired of hearing myself so grossly misrepresented. No one abhors more than I do the guilt of Miss Fitzhenry; and no one would more strongly object, for the sake of other young women, to her being again received into general company; but, at the same time, I shall always be ready to encourage the penitent by the voice of just praise; and I feel delight in reflecting that, however the judges of this world may be fond of condemning her, she will one day appeal from them to a merciful and long-suffering Judge."

Then, bowing respectfully to all but Mrs. Macfiendy, he withdrew, and gave her an opportunity of remarking that Mr. Seymour was mighty warm in the creature's defence. She did not know that he was so interested about her; but she always thought him a gay man, and she supposed Miss Fitzhenry, as he called her, would be glad to take up with anything now.

This speech, sorry am I to say, was received with a general and complaisant smile, though it was reckoned unjust; for there are few who have virtue and resolution enough to stand forward for an absent and calumniated individual, if there be anything ludicrous in the tale against him; and the precise, careful, elderly Mr. Seymour, who was always shrinking from censure like a sensitive plant from the touch, accused by implication of being the private friend of the youthful Agnes, excited a degree of merry malice in the company not unpleasant to their feelings.

But, in spite of the efforts of calumny, the account Mr. Seymour had given of Agnes and her penitence became town talk; and, as it was confirmed by the other governors, every one, except the ferociously chaste, was eager to prevent Agnes from feeling pecuniary distress, by procuring her employment.

Still she was not supplied with work as fast as she executed it; for, except during the hours which she was allowed to spend with her father, she was constantly employed; and she even deprived herself of her usual quantity of sleep, and was never in bed before one, or after four.

In proportion as her employment and profits increased, were her spirits elevated; but the more she gained, the more saving she became; she would scarcely allow herself sufficient food or clothing

and, to the astonishment of Fanny, the once generous Agnes appeared penurious, and a lover of money.

"What does this change mean, my dear lady?" said Fanny to her one day.

"I have my reasons for it," replied Agnes, coldly; she then changed the subject, and Fanny respected her too much to urge an explanation.

But Agnes soon after began to wonder at an obvious change in Fanny. At first, when Agnes returned from visiting her father, Fanny used to examine her countenance; and she could learn from that, without asking a single question, whether her father seemed to show any symptoms of amendment, or whether his insanity still appeared incurable. If the former, Fanny, tenderly pressing her hand, would say, "I am so glad!" and prepare their dinner or supper with more alacrity than usual; if the latter, Fanny would say nothing, but endeavor, by bringing little Edward to her, or by engaging her in conversation to divert the gloom which she could not remove; and Agnes, though she spoke not of these artless proofs of affection, observed and felt them deeply; and as she drew near the house, she always anticipated them as one of the comforts of her home.

But, for some days past, Fanny had discontinued this mode of welcome so grateful to the feelings of Agnes, and seemed wholly absorbed in her own. She was silent, reserved, and evidently oppressed with some anxiety which she was studious to conceal. Once or twice, when Agnes came home rather sooner than usual, she found her in tears; and, when she affectionately asked the reason of them, Fanny pleaded mere lowness of spirits as the cause.

But the eye of anxious affection is not easily blinded. Agnes was convinced that Fanny's misery had some more important origin; and secretly fearing that it proceeded from her, she was on the watch for something to confirm her suspicions.

One day, as she passed through the room where Fanny kept her school, Agnes observed that the number of her scholars was considerably diminished; and when she asked Fanny where the children whom she missed were, there was confusion and hesitation in her manner, while she made different excuses for their absence, which convinced Agnes that she concealed from her some unwelcome truth.

A very painful suspicion immediately darted across her mind, the truth of which was but too soon confirmed. A day or two after, while again passing through the school-room, she was attracted by the beauty of a little girl, who was saying her lesson; and smoothing down her curling hair, she stooped to kiss her ruddy cheek; but the child, uttering a loud scream, sprang from her arms, and sobbing violently, hid her face on Fanny's lap. Agnes, who was very fond of children, was much hurt by symptoms of dislike so violent towards her, and urged the child to give a reason for such strange conduct; on which the artless girl owned that her mother had charged her never to touch or go near Miss Fitzhenry, because she was the most wicked person that ever breathed.

Agnes heard this new consequence of her guilt with equal surprise and grief; but on looking at Fanny, though she saw grief in her countenance, there was no surprise in it; and she instantly told her she was convinced that the loss of her scholars was occasioned by her having allowed her to reside with her.

Fanny, bursting into tears, at last confessed that

her suspicions were just; while to the shuddering Agnes she unfolded a series of persecutions which she had undergone from her employers, because she had declared her resolution of starving rather than drive from her house her friend and benefactress.

Agnes was not long in forming her resolution; and the next morning, without saying a word to Fanny on the subject, she went out in search of a lodging for herself and child—as gratitude and justice forbade her to remain any longer with her persecuted companion.

But after having in vain tried to procure a lodging suitable to the low state of her finances, or rather to her saving plan, she hired a little cottage on the heath above the town, adjoining to that where she had been so hospitably entertained in the hour of her distress; and having gladdened the hearts of the friendly cottager and his wife by telling them that she was coming to be their neighbor, she went to break the unwelcome tidings to Fanny.

Passionate and vehement indeed was her distress at hearing that her young lady, as she still persisted in calling her, was going to leave her; but her expostulations and tears were vain; and Agnes, after promising to see Fanny every day, took possession that evening of her humble abode.

But her intention in removing was frustrated by the honest indignation and indiscretion of Fanny. She loudly raved against the illiberality which had robbed her of the society of all that she held dear, and as she told every one that Agnes left by her own choice and not at her desire, those children who had been taken away because Agnes resided with her, were not sent back to her on her removal. At last the number of her scholars became so small that she gave up school-keeping, and employed herself in shawl-working only; while her leisure time was spent in visiting Agnes, or in inveighing, to those who would listen to her, against the cruelty that had driven her young lady from her house.

Fanny used to begin by relating the many obligations which her mother and she had received from Agnes and her father, and always ended with saying, "Yet to this woman, who saved me and mine from a workhouse, they wanted me to refuse a home when she stood in need of one! They need not have been afraid of her being too happy! Such a mind as hers can never be happy under the consciousness of having been guilty; and could she ever forget her crime, one visit to her poor father would make her remember it again."

Thus did Fanny talk, as I said before, to those who would listen to her; and there was one auditor who could have listened to her far ever on this subject, and who thought Fanny looked more lovely while expressing her affection for her penitent mistress, and pleading her cause with a cheek flushed with virtuous indignation, and eyes suffused with tears of artless sensibility, than when attended by the then happy Agnes, she, in the bloom of youth and beauty, gave her hand to the man of her heart.

This auditor was a respectable tradesman who lived in Fanny's neighborhood, to whom her faithful attachment to Agnes had for some time endeared her; while Fanny, in return, felt grateful to him for entering with such warmth into her feelings, and for listening so patiently to her complaints; and it was not long before he offered her his hand.

To so advantageous an offer, and to a man so amiable, Fanny could make no objection, especially

as Agnes advised her accepting the proposal. But Fanny declared to her lover that she would not marry him, unless he would promise that Agnes and her child should, whenever they chose, have a home with her. To this condition he consented, telling Fanny he loved her the better for making it; and Agnes had soon the satisfaction of witnessing the union of this worthy couple.

But they tried in vain to persuade Agnes to take up her residence with them. She preferred living by herself. To her, solitude was a luxury; as, while the little Edward was playing on the hearth with the cottager's children, Agnes delighted to brood in uninterrupted silence over the soothing hope, the fond idea, that alone stimulated her to exertion, and procured her tranquillity. All the energies of her mind and body were directed to one end; and while she kept her eye steadfastly fixed on the future, the past lost its power to torture, and the present had some portion of enjoyment.

But were not these soothing reveries sometimes disturbed by the pangs of ill-requited love? and could she, who had loved so fondly as to sacrifice to the indulgence of her passion everything that she held most dear, rise superior to the power of tender recollection, and at once tear from her heart the image of her fascinating lover? It would be unnatural to suppose that Agnes could entirely forget the once honored choice of her heart, and the father of her child; or that, although experience had convinced her of its unworthiness, she did not sometimes contemplate, with the sick feelings of disappointed tenderness, the idol which her imagination had decked in graces all its own.

But these remembrances were rare. She oftener beheld him as he appeared before the tribunal of her reason—a cold, selfish, profligate, hypocritical deceiver, as the unfeeling destroyer of her hopes and happiness, and as one, who, as she had learned from his own lips, when he most invited confidence, was the most determined to betray. She saw him also as a wretch so devoid of the common feelings of nature and humanity, that, though she left her apartments in London in the dead of night, and in the depth of a severe winter, with an almost helpless child in her arms, and no visible protector near, he had never made a single inquiry respecting her fate, or that of his offspring.

At times, the sensations of Agnes bordered on phrenzy, when in this heartless, unnatural wretch, she beheld the being for whom she had resigned the matchless comforts of her home, and destroyed the happiness and reason of her father. At these moments, and these only, she used to rush wildly forth in search of company, that she might escape from herself; but more frequently she directed her steps to the abode of the poor—to those who, in her happier hours, had been supported by her bounty, and who now were eager to meet her in her walks, to repay her past benefactions by a "God bless you, lady!" uttered in a tone of respectful pity.

When her return was first known to the objects of her benevolence, Agnes soon saw herself surrounded by them, and was, in her humble apparel and dejected state, followed by them with more blessings than in the proudest hour of her prosperity.

"Thank Heaven!" ejaculated Agnes, as she turned a glancing eye on her humble followers, "there are yet those whose eyes mine may meet with humble confidence. There are some beings in the

world towards whom I have done my duty." But the next minute she recollected that the guilty flight which made her violate the duty which she owed her father, at the same time removed her from the power of fulfilling that which she owed the indigent; for it is certain, that our duties are so closely linked together, that, as the breaking one pearl from a string of pearls hazards the loss of all, so the violation of one duty endangers the safety of every other.

"Alas!" exclaimed Agnes, as this melancholy truth occurred to her, "it is not for me to exult; for, even in the squalid, meagre countenance of these kind and grateful beings, I read evidence of my guilt—they looked up to me for aid, and I deserted them!"

In time, however, these acute feelings wore away; and Agnes, by entering again on the offices of benevolence, and humanity towards the distressed, lost the consciousness of past neglect in that of present usefulness.

True, she could no longer feed the hungry or clothe the naked, but she could soften the pangs of sickness by expressing sympathy in its sufferings. She could make the nauseous medicine more welcome, if not more salutary, by administering it herself; for, though poor, she was still superior to the sufferers whom she attended; and it was soothing to them to see "such a lady" take so much trouble for those so much beneath her—and she could watch the live-long night by the bed of the dying, join in the consoling prayer offered by the lips of another, or, in her own eloquent and impassioned language, speak peace and hope to the departing soul.

These tender offices, those delicate attentions, so dear to the heart of every one, but so particularly welcome to the poor from their superiors, as they are acknowledgments of the relationship existing between them, and confessions that they are of the same species as themselves, and heirs of the same hopes, even those who bestow money with generous profusion do not often pay. But Agnes was never contented to give relief unaccompanied by attendance; she had reflected deeply on the nature of the human heart, and knew that a participating smile, a sympathising tear, a friendly pressure of the hand, the shifting of an uneasy pillow, and patient attention to an unconnected tale of twice told symptoms, were, in the estimation of the indigent sufferer, of as great value as pecuniary assistance.

Agnes, therefore, in her poverty, had the satisfaction of knowing that she was as counseling to the distressed, if not as useful, as she was in her prosperity; and, if there could be a moment when she felt the glow of exultation in her breast, it was when she left the habitation of indigence or sorrow, followed by the well-earned blessings of its inhabitants.

Had Agnes been capable of exulting in a consciousness of being avenged, another source of exultation might have been hers, provided she had ever deigned to inquire concerning her profligate seducer, whom she wrongfully accused of having neglected to make inquiries concerning her and her child. Two months after her return from London, Agnes saw an account of Clifford's marriage in the paper, and felt some curiosity to know what had so long retarded a union, which when she left town, was fixed for the Monday following; and Fanny observed an increased degree of gloom and abstraction in her appearance all that day. But, dismissing this feeling from her mind as unworthy of it, from

that moment she resolved, if possible, to recall Clifford to her imagination as one who, towards her, had been guilty not of perfidy and deceit only, but of brutal and unnatural neglect.

In this last accusation, however, as I said before, she was unjust. When Clifford awoke in the morning after his last interview with Agnes, and the fumes of the wine he had drunk the night before were entirely dissipated, he recollected, with great uneasiness, the insulting manner in which he had justified his intended marriage, and the insight into the baseness of his character which his unguarded confessions had given to her penetration.

The idea of having incurred the contempt of Agnes was insupportable. Yet, when he recollected the cold, calm, and dignified manner in which she had acted when he bade her adieu, he was convinced that he had taught her to despise him; and knowing Agnes, he was also certain she must soon cease to love the man whom she had once learned to despise.

"But I will go to her directly," exclaimed he to himself, ringing his bell violently, "and I will attribute my infernal folly to drunkenness." He then ordered his servant to call a coach, finding himself too languid, from intemperance, to walk; and he was just going to step into it, when he saw Mrs. Askew pale and trembling, and heard her, in a faltering voice, demand to see him in private for a few minutes.

I shall not attempt to describe his rage and astonishment when he heard of the elopement of Agnes. But these feelings were soon followed by those of terror for her safety and that of his child; and his agitation for some time was so great as to deprive him of the power of considering how he should proceed, in order to hear some tidings of the fugitives, and endeavor to recall them.

It was evident that Agnes had escaped the night before, because a servant, sitting up for a gentleman who lodged in the house, was awakened from sleep by the noise which she made in opening the door; and running into the hall, she saw the skirt of Agnes' gown as she shut it again; and looking to see who was gone out, she saw a lady, who she was almost certain was Miss Fitzhenry, running down the street with great speed. But to put her being Agnes beyond all doubt, she ran up to her room, and finding the door open, went in, and could see neither her nor her child.

To this narration Clifford listened with some calmness: but when Mrs. Askew told him that Agnes had not taken any of her clothes with her, he fell into an agony amounting to phrensy, and exclaiming, "Then it must be so—she has destroyed both herself and the child!" his senses failed him, and he dropped down insensible on the sofa. This horrible probability had occurred to Mrs. Askew; and she had sent servants different ways all night, in order to find her if she were still in existence, that she might spare Clifford, if possible, the pain of conceiving a suspicion like her own.

Clifford was not so fortunate as to remain long in a state of unconsciousness, but soon recovered to a state of misery and unavailing remorse. At length he recollected that a coach set off that very night for her native place, from the White Horse Cellar, and that it was possible that she might have obtained a lodging the night before, where she meant to stay, till the coach set off on the following evening. He immediately went to Piccadilly, to see whether places for a lady and child had been taken; but no such passengers were on the list. He then

inquired whether a lady and child had gone from that inn the night before in the coach that went within a few miles of the town of—. But as Agnes had reached the inn just as the coach was setting off, no one belonging to it, but the coachman, knew that she was a passenger.

"Well, I feel certain," said Clifford to Mrs. Askew, endeavoring to smile, "that she will make her appearance here at night, if she does not come to-day; and I will not stir from this spot till the coach starts off, and will even go in it some way, to see whether it will not stop to take her up on the road."

This resolution he speedily put in practice. All day Clifford was stationed at a window opposite to the inn, or in the bookseller's office; but night came, the coach was ready to start off, and still no Agnes appeared. However, Clifford, having secured a place, got in with the other passengers, and went six miles or more, before he gave up the hope of hearing the coachman ordered to stop, in the soft voice of Agnes.

At last all expectation failed him; and complaining of a violent headache, he desired to be set down, sprang out of the carriage, and relieved the other passengers from a very disagreeable companion. So that Clifford, in a violent attack of fever, was wandering on the road to London, in hopes of meeting Agnes, at the very time when his victim was travelling on the road to her native place, in company with her unhappy father.

By the time Clifford reached London he was bordering on a state of delirium, but had recollection enough to desire his confidential servant to inform his father of the state in which he was, and then take the road to—, and ask at every inn on the road whether a lady and child (describing Agnes and little Edward) had been there. The servant obeyed: and the anxious father, who had been informed of the cause of his son's malady, soon received the following letter from Wilson, while he was attending at his bedside:—

"MY LORD.—Sad news of Miss Fitzhenry and the child, and reason to fear they both perished with cold. For, being told at one of the inns on this road that a young woman and child had been found frozen to death last night, and carried to the next town to be owned, I set off for there directly; and while I was taking a drop of brandy to give me spirits to see the bodies, for a quain came over me when I thought of what can't be helped, and how pretty and happy she once was, a woman came down with a silk wrapper and shawl that I knew belonged to the poor lady, and said the young woman found dead had those things on. This was proof positive, my lord, and it turned me sick. Still it is better so than self-murder, so my master had better know it, I think; and humbly hoping your lordship will think so too,

"I remain, your lordship's most humble servant to command,

"J. WILSON.

"P. S.—If I gain more particulars shall send them."

Dreadful as the supposed death of Agnes and her child appeared to the father of Clifford, he could not be sorry that so formidable a rival to his future daughter-in-law was no longer to be feared; and as Clifford, in the ravings of his fever, was continually talking of Agnes as self-murdered, and the murderer of her child, and of himself as the abandoned cause; and as that idea seemed to haunt and terrify

his imagination, he thought, with his son's servant, that he had better take the first opportunity of telling Clifford the truth, melancholy as it was. And taking advantage of a proper opportunity, he had done so before he received his second letter from Wilson:—

"Mr. Lord,—It was all a mistake; Miss F. is alive, and likely to live, at —. She stopped at an inn on the road and parted with her silk cloak and shawl for some things she wanted, and a husky of a chambermaid stole them and went off in the night with them; but justice overtakes us sooner or later. I suppose his honor, my master, will be cheery at this; but, as joy often distracts as much as grief, they say, though I never believed it, I take it you will not tell him this good news hand-overhead, and am your lordship's most humble servant to command, "J. Wilson."

"P. S.—I have been to —, and have heard for certain that Miss F. and her child are there."

His lordship was even more cautious than Wilson wished him to be; for he resolved not to communicate the glad tidings to Clifford, cautiously or incautiously, as he thought there would be no chance of his son's fulfilling his engagements with Miss Sandford, if he knew Agnes was living; especially, as her flight and her supposed death had proved to Clifford how necessary she was to his happiness. Nay, he went still farther; and resolved that Clifford should never know, if he could possibly help it, that the report of her death was false.

How to effect this was the difficulty; but wisely conceiving that Wilson was not inaccessible to a bribe, he offered him so much a year, on condition of his suffering his master to remain convinced of the truth of the story that Agnes and her child had perished in the snow, and of intercepting all letters which he fancied came from Agnes; telling him at the same time that, if he found he had violated the conditions, the annuity should immediately cease.

To this Wilson consented, and when Clifford recovered, he made his compliance with the terms more easy, by desiring Wilson, and the friends to whom his connexion with Agnes had been known, never to mention her name in his presence again, if they valued his health and reason, as the safety of both depended on his forgetting a woman, of whom he had never felt the value sufficiently till he had lost her forever.

Soon after, he married, and the disagreeable qualities of his wife made him recollect, with more painful regret, the charms and virtues of Agnes. The consequence was that he plunged deeper than ever into dissipation, and had recourse to intoxication in order to banish care and disagreeable recollections; and, while year after year passed away in fruitless expectation of a child to inherit the estate and the long-disputed title, he remembered, with agonizing regrets, the beauty of his lost Edward, and reflected that, by refusing to perform his promises to the injured Agnes, he had deprived himself of the heir he much coveted, and of a wife who would have added dignity to the title which he bore, and been the delight and ornament of his family.

Such were the miserable feelings of Clifford—such the corroding cares that robbed his mind of its energy, and his body of health and vigor. Though courted, caressed, flattered, and surrounded by affluence and splendor, he was disappointed

and self-condemned. And while Agnes, for the first time condemning him unjustly, attributed his silence and neglect of her and her offspring to a degree of indifference and hard-heartedness at which human nature shudders, Clifford was feeling all the horrors of remorse, without the consolation of repentance.

CHAPTER V.

I HAVE before observed that one idea engrossed the mind and prompted the exertions of Agnes; and this was the probable restoration of her father to reason. "Could I but once more hear him call me by my name, and bless me with his forgiveness, I should die in peace; and something within me tells me that my hopes will not be in vain; and who knows but we may pass a contented, if not a happy life, together yet! So toil on, toil on, Agnes and expect the fruit of thy labors."

These words she was in the habit of repeating not only to Fanny and her next-door neighbors (whom she had acquainted with her story,) but to herself as she sat at work, or traversed the heath. Even in the dead of night she would start from a troubled sleep, and repeating these words, they would operate as a charm on her disturbed mind; and as she spoke the last sentence, she would fall into a quiet slumber, from which she awoke at daybreak to pursue with increased alacrity the labors of the day.

Meanwhile Agnes and her exemplary industry continued to engage the attention and admiration of the candid and liberal in the town of —.

Mr. Seymour, who did not venture to inquire concerning her of Fanny while she lived at her house, now often called there to ask news of Agnes and her employments; and his curiosity was excited to know to what purpose she intended to devote the money earned with so much labor, and hoarded with such parsimonious care.

But Fanny was as ignorant on this subject as himself, and the only new information which she could give him was, that Agnes had begun to employ herself in fancy-works, in order to increase her gains; and that it was her intention soon to send little Edward (then four years old) to the town to offer artificial flowers, ornamented needle-books, work-bags, &c., at the doors of the opulent and humane.

Nor was it long before this design was put in execution; and Mr. Seymour had the satisfaction of buying all the lovely boy's first cargo himself, for presents to his daughters. The little merchant returned to his anxious mother, bounding with delight, not at the good success of his first venture, for its importance he did not understand, but at the kindness of Mr. Seymour, who had met him on the road, conducted him to his house, and helped his daughters to load his pockets with cakes, and put in his basket, in exchange for his merchandize, tongue, chicken, and other things to carry home to his mother.

Agnes heard the child's narration with more pleasure than she had for some time experienced. "They do not despise me, then," said she; "they even respect me too much to offer me pecuniary aid, or presents of any kind, but in a way that cannot wound my feelings."

But this pleasure was almost immediately checked by the recollection that he wore wounded

spirit would have been soothed by seeing her once more an object of delicate attention and respect, and for whose sake alone she could now ever be capable of enjoying them, was still unconscious of her claims to it, and knew not that they were so generally acknowledged. In the words of Jane de Moyfort, she could have said—

*He to whose ear my praise most welcome was,
Hears it no more!*

"But I will hope on," Agnes used to exclaim, as these thoughts occurred to her; and again her countenance assumed the wild expression of a dissatisfied but still expecting spirit.

Three years had now elapsed since Agnes first returned to her native place. "The next year," said Agnes to Fanny, with unusual animation, "cannot fail of bringing forth good to me. You know that, according to the rules of the new asylum, a patient is to remain five years in the house; at the end of that time, if not cured, he is to be removed to the apartments appropriated to incurables, and kept there for life, his friends paying a certain annuity for his maintenance; or he is, on their application, to be returned to their care."

"And what then?" said Fanny, wondering at the unusual joy that animated Agnes's countenance.

"Why then," replied she, "as my father's time for being confined expires at the end of the next year, he will either be cured by that time, or he will be given up to my care; and then who knows what the consequences may be?"

"What, indeed!" returned Fanny, who foresaw great personal fatigue and anxiety, if not danger, to Agnes in such a plan, and was going to express her fears and objections; but Agnes, in a manner overpoweringly severe, desired her to be silent, and angrily withdrew.

Soon after, Agnes received a proof of being still dear to her amiable friend Caroline, which gave her a degree of satisfaction amounting even to joy.

Mr. Seymour, in a letter to his daughter, had given her an account of all the proceedings of Agnes, and expressed his surprise at the eagerness with which she labored to gain money, merely, as it seemed, for the sake of hoarding it, as she had then; and always would have, only herself and child to maintain, as it was certain that her father would be allowed to continue, free of all expense, an inhabitant of an asylum which owed its erection chiefly to his benevolent exertions.

But Caroline, to whom the mind of Agnes was well known, and who had often contemplated with surprise and admiration her boldness in projecting, her promptness in deciding, and her ability in executing the projects which she had formed, and, above all, that sanguine temper which led her to believe probable what others only conceived to be possible, found a reason immediately for the passion of hoarding which seemed to have taken possession of her friend; and following the instant impulse of friendship and compassion, she sent Agnes the following letter in which was enclosed a bank-note of a considerable amount:—

"MY DEAR AGNES,—I have divined your secret. I know why you are so anxious to hoard what you gain with such exemplary industry. In another year your father will have been the allotted time under the care of the medical attendants in your part of the world; and you are hoarding that you

may be able, when that time comes, to procure for him elsewhere the best possible advice and assistance. "Yes, yes, I know I am right; therefore, lest your own exertions should not, in the space of a twelvemonth, be crowned with sufficient success, I conjure you, by our long friendship, to appropriate the enclosed to the purpose in question; and should the scheme which I impute to you be merely the creature of my own brain, as it is a good scheme, employ the money in executing it."

"To silence all your scruples, I assure you that my gift is sanctioned by my husband and my father, who join with me in approbation of your conduct, and in the most earnest wishes that you may receive the reward of it in the entire restoration of your afflicted parent. Already have the candid and enlightened paid you their tribute of recovered esteem."

"It is the slang of the present day, if I may be allowed this vulgar, but forcible expression, to inveigh bitterly against society for excluding from its circle, with unrelenting rigor, the woman who has once transgressed the salutary laws of chastity; and some brilliant and persuasive, but, in my opinion, mistaken writers, of both sexes, have endeavored to prove that many an amiable woman has been for ever lost to virtue and the world, and become the victim of prostitution, merely because her first fault was treated with ill-judging and criminal severity."

"This assertion appears to me to be fraught with mischief, as it is calculated to deter the victim of seduction from penitence and amendment, by telling her that she would employ them in her favor in vain. And it is surely as false as it is dangerous. I know many instances, and it is fair to conclude that the experience of others is similar to mine, of women restored by perseverance in a life of expiatory amendment to that rank in society which they had forfeited by one false step, while their fault has been forgotten in their exemplary conduct as wives and mothers."

"But it is not to be expected that society should open its arms to receive its prodigal children till they have undergone a long and painful probation—till they have practised the virtues of self-denial, patience, fortitude, and industry. And she whose penitence is not the mere result of wounded pride and caprice, will be capable of exerting all these virtues, in order to regain some portion of the esteem which she has lost. What will difficulties and mortifications be to her? Keeping her eye steadily fixed on the end which she has in view, she will bound lightly over them all; nor will she seek the smiles of the world, till, instead of receiving them as a favor, she can demand them as a right."

"Agnes, my dear Agnes, do you not know the original of the above picture? You, by a life of self-denial, patience, fortitude, and industry, have endeavored to atone for the crime which you committed against society; and I hear her voice saying, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee!' and ill befall the hand that would uplift the sacred pall which penitence and amendment have thrown over departed guilt!"

Such was the letter of Caroline—a letter intended to speak peace and hope to the heart of Agnes, to reconcile the offender to herself, and light up her dim eye with the beams of self-approbation. Thus did she try to console her guilty and unhappy friend in the hour of her adversity and degradation. But Caroline had given a still

greater proof of the sincerity of her friendship—she had never wounded the feelings, or endeavored to mortify the self-love, of Agnes in the hour of her prosperity and acknowledged superiority; she had seen her attractions, and heard her praises without envy, nor over with seeming kindness but real malignity related to her, in accents of pretended wonder and indignation, the censures which she had incurred, or the ridicule which she had excited; but in every instance she had proved her friendship a memorable exception to what are sarcastically termed the “friendships of women!”

“Yes, she has indeed divined my secret,” said Agnes, when she had perused the letter, while tears of tenderness trickled down her cheeks, “and she deserves to assist me in procuring means for my poor father’s recovery—an indulgence which I should be jealous of granting to any one else, except to you, Fanny,” she added, seeing on Fanny’s countenance an expression of jealousy of this richer friend; “and on the strength of this noble present,” looking with a smile at her darning and pieced, though neat apparel, “I will treat myself with a new gown.”

“Not before it was wanted,” said Fanny, peevishly.

“Nay,” replied Agnes with a forced smile, “surely I am well dressed enough for a runaway daughter. ‘My father loved to see me fine,’ as poor Charissa says, and had I never left him, I should not have been forced to wear such a gown as this; but Fanny, let me but see him once more capable of knowing me, and of loving me, if it be possible for him to forgive me,” added she, in a faltering voice, “and I will then, if he wishes it, be fine again, though I work all night to make myself so.”

“My dear, dear lady,” said Fanny, sorrowfully, “I am sure I did not mean anything by what I said; but you have such a way with you, and talk so sadly! Yet, I can’t bear, indeed I can’t, to see such a lady in a gown not good enough for me; and then to see my young master no better dressed than the cottager’s boys next door; and then to hear them call master Edward little Fitzhenry, as if he were not their betters; I can’t bear it—it does not signify talking, I can’t bear to think of it.”

“How, then,” answered Agnes, in a solemn tone, and grasping her hand as she spoke, “how can I bear to think of the guilt which has thus reduced so low both me and my child? Oh! that my boy could exchange situations with the children whom you think his inferiors. I have given him life, indeed, but not one legal claim to what is necessary to the support of life, except the scanty pittance which I might, by a public avowal of my shame, wring from his father.”

“I would beg my bread with him through the streets before you should do that,” hastily exclaimed Fanny; “and pray say no more on this subject! He is my child, as well as yours,” she continued, snatching little Edward to her bosom, who was contentedly playing with his top at the door; and Agnes, in contemplating the blooming graces of the boy, forgot that he was an object of compassion.

The next year passed away as the former had done; and at the end of it Fitzhenry being pronounced incurable, but perfectly quiet and harmless, Agnes desired, in spite of the advice and entreaties of the governors, that he might be delivered up to her, that she might put him under the care of Dr. W.

Luckily for Agnes, the assignee of her father

recovered a debt of a hundred pounds, which had long been due to him, and this sum they generously presented to Agnes, in order to further the success of her last hope.

On the day fixed for her father’s release, Agnes purchased a complete suit of clothes for him, such as he used to wear in former days, and dressed herself in a manner suited to her birth rather than her situation; she then set out in a post-chaise, attended by the friendly cottager, as it was judged imprudent for her to travel with her father alone, to take him up at the asylum, while Fanny was crying with joy to see her dear lady looking like herself again, and travelling like a gentlewoman.

But the poor, whom gratitude and affection made constantly observant of the actions of Agnes, were full of consternation when some of them heard, and communicated to the others, that a post-chaise was standing at Miss Fitzhenry’s door. “O dear! she is going to leave us again; what shall we do without her?” was the general exclamation; and when Agnes came out to enter the chaise, she found it surrounded by her humble friends, lamenting and inquiring, though with cautious respect, whether she ever meant to come back again.

“Fanny will tell you everything,” said Agnes, overcome with grateful emotion at observing the interest which she excited. Unable to say more, she waved her hand as a token of farewell to them, and the chaise drove off.

“Is Miss Fitzhenry grown rich again?” was the general question addressed to Fanny; and I am sure it was a disinterested one, and that, at the moment, they asked it without a view to their profiting by her change of situation, and merely as anxious for her welfare; and when Fanny told them whither and why Agnes was gone, could prayers, good wishes, and blessings have secured success to the hopes of Agnes, her father, even as soon as she stopped at the gate of the asylum, would have recognised and received her with open arms. But when she arrived, she found her father as irrational as ever, though delighted to hear that he was going to take a ride with “the lady,” as he always called Agnes; and she had the pleasure of seeing him seat himself beside her with a look of uncommon satisfaction.

Nothing worthy of relating happened on the road. Fitzhenry was very tractable, except at night, when the cottager, who slept in the same room with him, found it difficult to make him keep in bed, and was sometimes forced to call Agnes to his assistance; at sight of her he always became quiet, and obeyed her implicitly.

The skilful and celebrated man to whom she applied received her with sympathising kindness, and heard her story with a degree of interest and sensibility peculiarly grateful to the afflicted heart. Agnes related, with praiseworthy ingenuousness, the whole of her sad history, judging it necessary that the doctor should know the cause of the malady for which he was to prescribe.

It was peculiarly the faculty of Agnes to interest in her welfare those with whom she conversed; and the doctor soon experienced a more than ordinary earnestness to cure a patient so interesting from his misfortunes, and recommended by so interesting a daughter. “Six months,” said he, “will be a sufficient time of trial; and in the meanwhile you shall reside in a lodging near us.”

Fitzhenry then became an inmate of the doctor’s house, Agnes took possession of apartments in the neighbourhood, and the cottager returned home.

The ensuing six months were passed by Agnes in the soul-sickening feeling of hope deferred; and while the air of the place agreed so well with her father that he became stout and healthy in his appearance, anxiety preyed on her delicate frame, and made the doctor fear that, when he should be forced to pronounce his patient beyond his power to cure, she would sink under the blow, unless the hope of being still serviceable to her father should support her under its pressure. He resolved, therefore, to inform her, in as judicious and cautious a manner as possible, that he saw no prospect of curing the thoroughly-shattered intellect of Fitzhenry.

“I can do nothing for your father,” said he to Agnes (when he had been under his care six months) laying great stress on the word *I*; Agnes, with a face of horror, started from her seat, and laid her hand on his arm; “but you can do a great deal.”

“Can I? can I?” exclaimed Agnes, sobbing convulsively: “Blessed hearing! but the means—the means!”

“It is very certain,” he replied, “that he experiences great delight when he sees you, and sees you too employed in his service; and when he lives with you, and sees you again where he has been accustomed to see you—”

“You advise his living with me, then?” interrupted Agnes with eagerness.

“I do, most strenuously,” replied the doctor. “Blessings on you for those words!” answered Agnes; “they said you would oppose it. You are a wise and a kind-hearted man.”

“My dear child,” rejoined the doctor, “when an evil can’t be cured, it should at least be alleviated.”

“You think it can’t be cured, then?” again interrupted Agnes.

“Not absolutely so; I know not what a course of medicine, and living with you as much in your old way as possible, may do for him. Let him resume his usual habits, his usual walks, live as near your former habitation as you possibly can; let him hear his favorite songs, and be as much with him as you can contrive to be; and if you should not succeed in making him rational again, you will at least make him happy.”

“Happy! I make him happy now!” exclaimed Agnes, pacing the room in an agony. “I made him happy once!—but now—”

“You must hire some one to sleep in the room with him,” resumed the doctor.

“No, no,” cried Agnes, impatiently; “no one shall wait on him but myself. I will attend him day and night.”

“And should your strength be worn out by such incessant watching, who would take care of him then? Remember, you are but mortal.”

Agnes shook her head, and was silent. “Besides, the strength of a man may sometimes be necessary; and, for his sake as well as yours, I must insist on being obeyed.”

“You shall be obeyed,” said Agnes, mournfully. “Then now,” rejoined he, “let me give you my advice relative to diet, medicine, and management.” This he did in detail, as he found Agnes had a mind capacious enough to understand his system; and promising to answer her letters immediately, whenever she wrote to him for advice, he took an affectionate farewell of her; and Agnes and her father, accompanied by a man whom the doctor had procured for the purpose, set off for—

Fanny was waiting at the cottage with little Edward to receive them; but the dejected countenance of Agnes precluded all necessity of asking

concerning the state of Fitzhenry. Scarcely could the caresses of her child, and the joy which he expressed at seeing her, call a smile to her lips; and, as she pressed him to her bosom, tears of bitter disappointment mingled with those of tenderness. In a day or two after, Agnes in compliance with the doctor’s desire, hired a small tenement very near the house in which they formerly lived, and in the garden of which, as it was then empty, they obtained leave to walk. She also procured a person to sleep in the room with her father, instead of the man who came with them; and he carried back a letter from her to the doctor, informing him that she had arranged everything according to his directions.

It was a most painfully-pleasing sight to behold the attention of Agnes to her father. She knew that it was not in her power to repair the enormous injury which she had done him, and that all she could now do was but a poor amends; still it was affecting to see how anxiously she watched his steps whenever he chose to wander alone from home, and what pains she took to make him neat in his person, and cleanly in his appearance. Her child and her self were clothed in coarse apparel, but she bought for her father everything of the best materials; and altered as he was, Fitzhenry still looked like a gentleman.

Sometimes he seemed in every respect so like himself, that Agnes, hurried away, by her imagination, would, after gazing on him some minutes, start from her seat, seize his hand, and breatheless with hope, address him as if he were a rational being, when a laugh of vacancy, or a speech full of the inconsistency of phrensy, would send her back to her chair again, with a pulse quickened, and a cheek flushed with the fever of disappointed expectation.

However, he certainly was pleased with her attentions; but, alas! he knew not who was the bestower of them; he knew not that the child whose ingratitude or whose death he still lamented in his ravings in the dead of the night, was returned to succor, to soothe him, and to devote herself entirely to his service. He heard her, but he knew her not; he saw her, but in her he was not certain that he beheld his child; and this was the pang that preyed on the cheek, and withered the frame of Agnes; but she continued to hope, and patiently endured the pain of to-day, expecting the joy of to-morrow; nor did her hopes always appear ill-founded.

The first day that Agnes led him to the garden once his own, he ran through every walk with eager delight; but he seemed surprised and angry to see the long grass growing in the walks, and the few flowers that remained choked up with weeds, and began to pluck up the weeds with hasty violence.

“It is time to go home,” said Agnes to him, just as the day began to close in, and Fitzhenry immediately walked to the door which led into the house, and finding it locked, looked surprised; then turning to Agnes, he asked her if she had not the key in her pocket; and on her telling him that that was not his home, he quitted the house evidently with great distress and reluctance, and was continually looking back at it, as if he did not know how to believe her.

On this little circumstance poor Agnes lay ruminating the whole night after with joyful expectations; and she repaired to the garden at day-break, with a gardener whom she hired, to make the walks look as much as possible as they formerly did. But they omitted to tie up some strag-

gling flowers; and when Agnes, Fanny, and the cottager, accompanied Fitzhenry thither the next evening, though he seemed conscious of the improvement that had taken place, he was disturbed at seeing some gilliflowers trailing along the ground, and suddenly turning to Agnes, he said:

"Why do you not bind up these?"

To do these little offices in the garden, and keep the parterre in order, was formerly her employment. What delight, then, must these words of Fitzhenry, so evidently the result of an association in his mind between her and his daughter, have excited in Agnes! With a trembling hand and a glowing cheek she obeyed; and Fitzhenry, with manifest satisfaction, saw her tie up every straggling flower in the garden, while he eagerly followed her, and bent attentively over her.

At last, when she had gone the whole round of the flower beds he exclaimed, "Good girl! good girl!" and putting his arm round her waist, suddenly kissed her cheek.

Surprise, joy, and emotion difficult to be defined, overcame the irritable frame of Agnes, and she fell senseless to the ground. But the care of Fanny soon recovered her again; and the first question she asked was, how her father (whom she saw in great agitation running round the garden) behaved when he saw her fall.

"He raised you up," replied Fanny, "and seemed so distressed; he would hold the salts to your nose himself, and would scarcely suffer me to do anything for you; but hearing you mutter 'Father! dear father!' as you began to come to yourself, he changed color, and immediately began to run round the garden, as you now see him."

"Say no more, my dear friend," cried Agnes; "it is enough, I am happy, quite happy; it is clear that he knew me; and I have again received a father's embrace! Then his anxiety too while I am ill. Oh! there is no doubt now that he will be quite himself in time."

"Perhaps he may," replied Fanny! "but—"

"But! and perhaps!" cries Agnes pettishly; "I tell you he will, he certainly will recover; and those are not my friends who doubt it." So saying, she ran hastily forward to meet her father, who was joyfully hastening towards her, leaving Fanny grieved and astonished at her petulance. But few are the tempers that are proof against continual anxiety and the souring influence of still renewed and still disappointed hope; and even Agnes, the once gentle Agnes, if contradicted on this subject, became angry and unjust.

But she was never conscious of having given pain to the feelings of another, without bitter regret, and an earnest desire of healing the wound which she had made; and when, leaning on her father's arm, she returned towards Fanny, and saw her in tears, she felt a pang severer than that which she had inflicted, and said everything that affection and gratitude could dictate, to restore her to tranquillity again. Her agitation alarmed Fitzhenry; and exclaiming "Poor thing!" he held the smelling bottle, almost by force, to her nose, and seemed terrified lest she was going to faint again.

"You see, you see," said Agnes, triumphantly, to Fanny; and Fanny, made cautious by experience, declared her conviction that her young lady must know more of all matters than she did.

But month after month elapsed, and no circumstances of a similar nature occurred to give new

strength to the hopes of Agnes; however, she had the pleasure to see that her father not only seemed to be attached to her, but pleased with little Edward.

She had indeed taken pains to teach him to endeavor to amuse her father; but sometimes she had the mortification of hearing, when fits of loud laughter from the child reached her ear, "Edward was only laughing at grandpapa's odd faces and actions, mamma;" and having at last taught him that it was wicked to laugh at such things, because his grandfather was not well when he distorted his face, her heart was nearly as much wrung by the pity which he expressed; for, whenever those occasional slight fits of phrensy attacked Fitzhenry, little Edward would exclaim, "Poor grandpapa! he is not well now; I wish we could make him well, mamma!" But on the whole, she had reason to be tolerably cheerful.

Every evening, when the weather was fine, Agnes, holding her father's arm, was seen taking her usual walk, her little boy gambolling before them; and never, in their most prosperous hours, were they met with lower curtsies, or bows more respectful, than on these occasions; and many a one grasped with affectionate eagerness the meagre hand of Fitzhenry, and the feverish hand of Agnes; for even the most rigid hearts were softened in favor of Agnes, when they beheld the ravages which grief had made in her form, and gazed on her countenance, which spoke in forcible language the sadness, yet resignation, of her mind. She might, if she had chosen it, have been received at many houses, where she had formerly been intimate; but she declined it, as visiting would have interfered with the necessary labors of the day, with her constant attention to her father, and with the education of her child. "But when my father recovers," said she to Fanny, "as he will be pleased to find that I am not deemed wholly unworthy of notice, I shall have great satisfaction in visiting with him."

To be brief. Another year elapsed, and Agnes still hoped, and Fitzhenry continued the same to every eye but hers. She every day fancied that his symptoms of returning reason increased, and no one of her friends dared to contradict her. But in order, if possible, to accelerate his recovery, she had resolved to carry him to London; to receive the best advice that the metropolis afforded, when Fitzhenry was attacked by an acute complaint, which confined him to his bed. This event, instead of alarming Agnes, redoubled her hopes. She insisted that it was the crisis of his disorder, and expected that health and reason would return together. Not for one moment, therefore, would she leave his bedside; and she would allow herself neither food nor rest, while with earnest attention she gazed on the fast sinking eyes of Fitzhenry, eager to catch in them an expression of returning recognition.

One day, after he had been sleeping some time, and she, as usual, was attentively watching by him, he slowly and gradually awoke; and, at last, raising himself on his elbow, looked round him with an expression of surprise, and seeing Agnes, exclaimed, "My child! are you there! Merciful God! is this possible?"

Let those who have for years been pining away life in fruitless expectation, and who see themselves at last possessed of the long-desired blessing, figure to themselves the rapture of

"He knows me! He is himself again!" burst from her quivering lips, unconscious that it was too probable that restored reason was here the forerunner of dissolution.

"O my father!" she cried, falling on her knees, but not daring to look up at him—"O my father, forgive me, if possible! I have been guilty but I am penitent."

Fitzhenry, as much affected as Agnes, faltered out, "Thou art restored to me, and God knows how heartily I forgive thee!" Then raising her to his arms, Agnes, happy in the fulfilment of her utmost wishes, felt herself once more pressed to the bosom of the most affectionate of fathers.

"But surely you are not now come back?" asked Fitzhenry. "I have seen you before, and very lately."

"Seen me! O yes!" replied Agnes, with passionate rapidity; "for these last five years I have seen you daily; and for the last two years you have lived with me, and I have worked to maintain you."

"Indeed!" answered Fitzhenry; "but how pale and thin you are! You have worked too much. Had you no friends, my child?"

"O yes! and guilty as I have been, they pity, nay, they respect me, and we may yet be happy, as heaven restores you to my prayers. True, I have suffered much, but this blessed moment repays me; this is the only moment of true enjoyment which I have known since I left my home and you!"

Agnes was thus pouring out the hasty effusions of her joy, unconscious that her father, overcome with affection, emotion, and, perhaps, sorrowful recollections, was struggling in vain for utterance.

"At last! For so many years—and I knew you not—worked for me—attended me—bless! bless, bless her, heaven!" he faintly articulated, and worn out with illness, and choked with contending emotions, he fell back on his pillow and expired!

That blessing, the hope of obtaining which alone gave Agnes courage to endure contumely, poverty, fatigue, and sorrow, was for one moment her own, and then snatched from her forever! No wonder, then, that, when convinced her father was really dead, she fell into a state of stupefaction, from which she never recovered; and, at the same time, were borne to the same grave, the Father and Daughter.

The day of the funeral was indeed a melancholy one. They were attended to the grave by a numerous procession of respectable inhabitants of both sexes, while the afflicted and lamenting poor followed mournfully at a distance. Even those who had distinguished themselves by their violence against Agnes at her return, dropped a tear as they saw her borne to her long home. Mrs. Macfiendy forgot her beauty and accomplishments in her misfortunes and early death; and the mother of the child who had fled from the touch of Agnes, felt sorry that she had ever called her the wickedest woman in the world.

But the most affecting part of the procession was little Edward as chief mourner, led by Fanny and her husband, in all the happy insensibility of childhood, unconscious that he was the pitiable

hero of that show, which, by its novelty and parade, so much delighted him, while his smiles, poor orphan! excited the tears of those around him.

Just before the procession began to move, a post-chaise and four, with white favors, drove into the yard of the largest inn in the town. It contained Lord and Lady Mountcarrol, who were married only the day before, and were then on their way to her ladyship's country seat.

His lordship, who seemed incapable of resting in one place for a minute together, did nothing but swear at the postilion for bringing them that road, and express an earnest desire to leave the town again as fast as possible.

While he was gone into the stable, for the third time, to see whether the horses were not sufficiently refreshed to go on, a waiter came in to ask Lady Mountcarrol's commands, and at that moment the funeral passed the window. The waiter (who was the very servant that at Mr. Seymour's had refused to shut the door against Agnes) instantly turned away his head, and burst into tears. This excited her ladyship's curiosity, and she drew from him a short but full account of Agnes and her father.

He had scarcely finished his story when Lord Mountcarrol came in, saying the carriage was ready; and no sooner had his bride begun to relate to him the story which she had just heard, than he exclaimed in a voice of thunder, "It is as false as hell, madam! Miss Fitzhenry and her child both died years ago." Then rushing into the carriage, he left Lady Mountcarrol terrified and amazed at his manner. But when she was seating herself by his side, she could not help saying that it was impossible for a story to be false, which all the people in the inn averred to be true; and as he did not offer to interrupt her, she went through the whole story of Agnes and her sufferings; but before she could proceed to comment on them, the procession, returning from church, crossed the road in which they were going, and obliged the postilion to stop.

Foremost came little Edward, with all his mother's beauty in his face. "Poor little orphan!" said Lady Mountcarrol, giving a tear to the memory of Agnes. "See my lord, what a lovely boy!"

As she spoke, the extreme elegance of the carriage attracted Edward's attention, and springing from Fanny's hand, who in vain endeavored to hold him back, he ran up to the door to examine the figures on the panel. At that instant Lord Mountcarrol opened the door, lifted the child into the chaise, and throwing his card of address to the astonished mourners, ordered the servants to drive on as fast as possible.

They did so in despite of Mr. Seymour and others, for astonishment had at first deprived them of the power of moving; and before the witnesses of this sudden and strange event had recovered their recollection, the horses had gone too far to be stopped.

The card with Lord Mountcarrol's name explained what at first had puzzled and confounded, as well as alarmed them; and Fanny, who had however fainted at sight of his lordship, because she knew him, altered as he was, to be Edward's father, and the bane of Agnes, now recovering herself, conjured Mr. Seymour to follow him immediately, and tell him that Edward was bequeathed to her care.

Mr. Seymour instantly, ordered post-horses and

in about an hour after set off in pursuit of the kidnapper.

But the surprise and consternation of Fanny and the rest of the mourners were not greater than that of Lady Mountcarrol at sight of her lord's strange conduct.

"What does this outrage mean, my lord?" she exclaimed in a faltering voice, "and whose child is that?"

"It is *my child*, madam," replied he; "and I will never resign him, but with life." Then pressing the astonished boy to his bosom, he for some minutes sobbed aloud—while Lady Mountcarrol, though she could not help feeling compassion for the agony which the seducer of Agnes must feel at such a moment, was not a little displeased and shocked at finding herself the wife of that Clifford, whose name she had so lately heard coupled with that of villain.

But her attention was soon called from reflections so unpleasant by the cries of Edward, whose surprise at being seized and carried away by a stranger now yielded to terror, and who, bursting from Lord Mountcarrol, desired to go back to his mamma, Fanny, and Mr. Seymour.

"What! and leave your own father, Edward?" asked his agitated parent. "Look at me—I am your father; but I suppose your mother, as well she ought, taught you to hate me?"

"My mother told me it was wicked to hate anybody; and I am sure I have no papa; I had a grandpapa, but he is gone to heaven along with my mamma, Fanny says, and she is my mamma now." And again screaming and stamping with impatience, he insisted on going back to her.

But at length, by promises of riding on a fine horse, and of sending for Fanny to ride with him, he was pacified. Then with artless readiness he related his mother's way of life, and the odd ways of his grandpapa. And thus by acquainting Lord Mountcarrol with the sufferings and the virtuous exertions of Agnes, he increased his horror of his own conduct, and his regret at not having placed such a woman at the head of his family. But whence arose the story of her death he had yet to learn.

In a few hours they reached the seat which he had acquired by his second marriage; and there too, in an hour after, arrived Mr. Seymour and the husband of Fanny.

Lord Mountcarrol expected this visit, and received them courteously; while Mr. Seymour was so surprised at seeing the once healthy and handsome Clifford changed to an emaciated valetudinarian, and carrying in his face the marks of habitual intemperance, that his indignation was for a moment lost in pity. But recovering himself, he told his lordship that he came to demand justice for the outrage which he had committed, and in the name of a friend to whom Miss Fitzhenry had, in case of her sudden death, bequeathed her child, to insist on his being restored to her.

"We will settle that point presently," replied Lord Mountcarrol; "but first I conjure you to tell me all that has happened, since we parted, to her whose name I have not for years been able to repeat, and whom, as well as this child, I have also for years believed dead."

"I will, my lord," answered Mr. Seymour; "but I warn you, that if you have any feeling it will be tortured by the narration."

"If I have any feeling!" he replied; "but go on,

sir; from you, sir—from you, as—as *her friend*, I can bear anything."

Words could not do justice to the agonies of Lord Mountcarrol, while Mr. Seymour, beginning with Agnes' midnight walk to —, went through a recital of her conduct and sufferings, and hopes and anxieties, and ended with the momentary recovery and death-scene of her father.

But when Lord Mountcarrol discovered that Agnes supposed his not making any inquiries concerning her or the child proceeded from brutal indifference concerning their fate, and that, considering him as a monster of inhumanity, she had regarded him not only with contempt but abhorrence, and seemed to have dismissed him entirely from her remembrance, he beat his breast, he cast himself on the floor with frantic anguish, lamenting in all the bitterness of fruitless regret, that Agnes died without knowing how much he loved her, and without suspecting that, while she was supposing him unnaturally forgetful of her and her child, he was struggling with illness caused by her desertion, and with a dejection of spirits which he had never altogether been able to overcome—execrating at the same time the memory of his father and Wilson, whom he suspected of having deceived him.

To conclude. Pity for the misery and compunction of Lord Mountcarrol and a sense of the advantages both in education and fortune that would accrue to little Edward from living with his father, prevailed on Mr. Seymour and the husband of Fanny to consent to his remaining where he was; and from that day Edward was universally known as the son of his lordship, who immediately made a will bequeathing him a considerable fortune.

Lord Mountcarrol was then sinking fast into his grave, the victim of his former vices, and worn to the bone by the corroding consciousness that Agnes had died in the persuasion of his having brutally neglected her. That was the severest pang of all! She had thought him so vile that she could not for a moment regret him.

His first wife he despised because she was weak and illiterate, and hated because she brought him no children. His second wife was too amiable to be disliked; but, though he survived his marriage with her two years, she also failed to produce a heir to the title. And while he contemplated in Edward the mind and person of his mother, he was almost frantic with regret that he was not legally his son; and he cursed the hour when with shortsighted cunning he sacrificed the honor of Agnes to his views of family aggrandisement.

But, selfish to the last moment of his existence, it was a consciousness of his own misery, not of that which he inflicted, which prompted his expressions of misery and regret; and he grudged and envied Agnes the comfort of having been able to despise and regret him.

Peace to the memory of Agnes Fitzhenry:—And may the woman who, like her, has been the victim of artifice, self-confidence, and temptation, like her endeavor to regain the esteem of the world by patient suffering and virtuous exertion, and look forward to the attainment of it with confidence! But may she whose innocence is yet secure, and whose virtues still boast the stamp of chastity, which can alone make them current in the world, tremble

with horror at the idea of listening to the voice of the seducer, lest the image of a father, a mother, a brother, a sister, or some other fellow-being, whose peace of mind has been injured by her deviation from virtue, should haunt her path through life; and she who might, perhaps, have contemplated with fortitude the wreck of her own happiness, be

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