LEGENDS

OF

LOVE AND CHIVALRY.

The Cavaliers of England.

THE

CAVALIERS OF ENGLAND,

OR

THE TIMES OF THE REVOLUTIONS OF 1642 AND 1688.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "THE ROMAN TRAITOR"—"MARMADUKE WYVIL"—"CROMWELL,"
"THE BROTHERS"—"CAPTAINS OF THE OLD WORLD," ETC.

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My Dear Halleck:—

I know that to no purer judge, no deeper drinker at the well of English undefiled than yourself could I do myself the honor of dedicating my volumes. I know also that to no friendlier auditor could I offer it, than to you, who, of American poets, was the first to encourage my efforts by the grateful meed of your approbation. Accept, therefore, this slight tribute of my regard and gratitude, in which if you recognise some of my earlier lucubrations, you will find them retouched by an elder, if not abler hand, and contrasted with several the very latest, and pray, Believe me ever,

Your sincere friend and faithful servant,

Henry William Herbert.

The Cedars,
January 1, 1852.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

In producing this volume of "Legends of Love and Chivalry," I neither desire to palm off an old work on the public as a new, nor yet to have what is really, in some considerable part new, regarded as a mere reproduction.

For nearly twenty years, I have been engaged in the preparation of articles for various magazines, some yet alive and flourishing, many long since defunct. Many of these magazines had but a small circulation at any time, many are utterly forgotten, all are considered more or less as ephemeral, to be read once and laid aside for ever. A new generation, moreover, has arisen since I first assumed the pen as a profession; and it is the consideration of all these things, united with the hope that some of my more recent readers may care to learn something of the man who is, in the boy who has ceased to be, and the pardonable desire of placing in a permanent shape, what has only heretofore appeared in a fugitive form, that I now lay before a public—which has always been indulgent to me—a revised, rewritten, and augmented edition of some wri-

tings, which, perhaps, with the natural partiality of the old for the things they did when young, I do not consider the worst of my humble efforts.

The papers which compose this series, in part original and new, are herein published, not in chronological order as they were written, but in chronological order as the events occurred to which they relate—they are in close connection as to time, place, and I believe, historic verisimilitude—they are intended to illustrate the habits of society, life, and manners, the usages and feelings, both military and domestic, of various countries, at various epochs, from the commencement of chivalry in the crusades, to its conclusion in the epoch of Louis XIV., of France.

I have no more to say in explanation, either of my work, or of my motives in producing it, but only to submit it to the candor and kindness of my readers, be they few or many.

HENRY WILLIAM HERBERT.

THE CEDARS,
January 1, 1852.

The Brothers in Arms;

OR,

THREE NOBLEST VICTIMS FOR OPINION SAKE.

A

Battlefield of Berkshire.

1643.

THE BROTHERS IN ARMS.

It is the saddest of all the considerations which weigh upon the candid and sincere mind of the true patriot, when civil dispute is on the eve of degenerating into civil war, that the best, the wisest, and the bravest of both parties, are those who first fall victims for those principles which they mutually, with equal purity and faith, and almost with equal reason, believe to be true and vital; that the moderate men, who have erst stood side by side for the maintenance of the right and the common good—who alone, in truth, care for either right or common good—now parted by a difference nearly without a distinction, are set in deadly opposition, face to face, to slay and be slain for the benefit of the ultraists—of the ambitious, heartless, or fanatical self-seekers, who hold aloof in the beginning, while principles are at stake, and come into the conflict when the heat and toil of the day are over, and when their own end, not their country's object, remains only to be won.

So great and manifest a truth is this, and so heavily has the sense of this responsibility weighed upon the souls of the best, and therefore *greatest* men, that not a few have doubted whether it be not better to endure all endurable assaults on liberty, all, in a word, short of its utter extinction, than to defend it through the awful path of civil war; which, terminate it how it may,

leaves the state, nine times out of ten, in the end, as much aloof from true liberty on the one side, as it was in the commencement on the other.

This sad and terrible truth was never more clearly demonstrated than in the opening of the great English civil war between the first Charles and his parliament—a war which began, undeniably, with the king, as principally in the wrong—though the worst grievances on his part were already redressed, and his most odious pretensions renounced—and which ended with the parliament as the most odious, intolerant, persecuting, and despotical oligarchy, that ever induced true men almost to loathe the prostituted name of liberty.

I am not about to write history, but to portray one true and sad scene of it. Yet to do so, it is necessary to glance briefly at the events preceding it. All readers are of course aware that, during the whole seventeen years, between the accession of the unfortunate Charles to the throne and the hoisting of his standard at Nottingham, there had been a long and fiercely-disputed civil struggle between the supporters of constitutional liberty and the upholders of irresponsible monarchy; in which the latter were beaten, step by step, till every stronghold of their position was forced, and the position itself abandoned as untenable.

When Charles, at Nottingham, raised that hapless standard, amid the wind and tempest, which, ominous of ill, rent it from the banner-staff, he had no choice but to do so if he intended aught beyond holding the title and wearing the insignia of a royalty which had ceased to exist. And so clearly was this visible, that many of those who had waged the civic strife most strenuously in their places in the senate, who had risked their all—that all which the signers of the Declaration of Independence pledged—their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honors, against the absolute yea of a despotic king—now risked that

very all against the arrogant assumption of an intruding parliament. Nay! that the most prominent of the leaders on the side of the parliament itself, dreading the victory of their own masters but little less than that of the king, suffered the war to languish which they might have finished at a blow, almost before it was begun; while the "nobles who fought for the crown" were almost equally unwilling to see Charles too suddenly and thoroughly successful, lest with the recovery of his just prerogative he might return to his unjust assumptions.

But scarcely had a year flown, or ever the field was left clear, the true patriots—the wise, the noble, and the good, on either side—had fallen fruitless victims to their principles—clear for the conflict of the unscrupulous and the selfish, the bold and the bad.

Every field, on which the kindred armies met during the first two years, was watered with the best blood of England. But though great men and good men fell on either side, it is on record, from the lips of one not likely to overlaud the royalists, that in every action, whether he won or lost the day, the king was the loser; for that he lost nobles and gentlemen, while the parliament lost pimple-nosed serving-men and drunken tapsters; and Oliver Cromwell was not the man to value the life of gentleman or noble above that of serving-man or tapster, merely for the station which he filled or the title which he held, unless there had been something truly noble—noble with the nobility of manhood, truth, and virtue—in those dead peers of England to whom he left this honest epitaph.

Of those who had most earnestly, most usefully striven, side by side in the house for constitutional liberty, before the sword was drawn, the best and wisest were, John Hampden; Lucius Cary, better known as Lord Falkland; Hyde, earl of Clarendon, the great historian; Sir Harry Vane; Lord Kimbolton, afterward earl of Manchester; the Lord Carnarvon; and many

another commoner and peer, all alike true to their trust as Englishmen, all alike resolute champions, noble conquerors of England's constitutional freedom.

The sword was drawn: and where were those banded brothers? Hampden in arms for the state, Falkland in arms for the king; Hyde and Sir Harry Vane with but the rapier's length between them; Manchester a general of the parliament, Carnarvon the best horse-officer of the king!

Alas, patriotic blood! alas, noble victims! on both sides victims to the same cause of liberty—each as he understood the term in his sincere, unselfish soul!—alas! band of brethren severed and set in mortal opposition, by the least difference of opinion, by the mere shadow of a shade!

And of all these, or ever a full year had passed away from the displaying of that standard, the best slept in a bloody grave. Or ever the fierce struggle was fought out, *all* had retired to make way for the unscrupulous and unpatriotic, who fought for names, not for things; for profit, not for principle.

The first action of the armies, at Edgehill, was a drawn battle; but its consequences, no less than the prestige of first victory, were with Charles. Essex retreated; and the king took Oxford, Reading, marched on his metropolis, beat the parliament-men at Brentford, within six miles of London, and might have finished the war that day; but that his own officers, distrusting him, as Essex distrusted *his* masters, persuaded him to draw off his forces, and retire to Oxford, in hope of a speedy accommodation.

So closed the first campaign: but here to close the war was found impossible; for the king *could* not, the parliament *would* not, recede one inch. With the spring of 1643 the war was recommenced; and, with the war, havoc unheard of in England since the bloody conflict between the rival roses. In the north the cavaliers, in the east the puritans, were in the ascendency; and in these quarters little fell out of importance. In the west, every stream ran red, every grass field grew rank, with carnage. At Stratton, on the 16th of May, the Cornish under Trevannion, Slanning, and Sir Bevil Grenville, all peaceful and accomplished men, torn from the endearments of home and the charming ties of family by an overruling sense of duty, and the last of the three admitted by his enemies to be the best-beloved person in all the west of England, carried all before them—weeping amid the joy of victory over the gallant dead who had fallen by their own unwilling swords. At Chalgrove-field, in Berkshire, only a few weeks later, fell John Hampden, serving as a volunteer with the horse of Lord Essex; and—I quote from a well-known historian—"what most pleased the royalists was the expectation that some disaster had happened to Mr. Hampden, their capital and much-dreaded enemy. One of the prisoners taken in the action said he was confident Mr. Hampden was hurt; for he saw him, contrary to his usual custom, ride off the field before the action was finished; his head hanging down, and his hands leaning on his horse's neck. Next day the news arrived that he was shot in the shoulder with a brace of bullets, and the bone broken. Some days after he died, in exquisite pain, of his wound; nor could his whole party, had their army met a total overthrow, have been thrown into greater consternation." The death of John Hampden most pleased the royalists!—most pleased the very men who, one little year before, had been his friends and fellow-voters, for freedom and against the king! And this is civil war! its consequences and its glory!

Oh, fatal joy of the victorious royalists! For had John Hampden not ridden off the field of Chalgrove, "with his head hanging down and his hands on his horse's neck," but lived to see the end of that dread war, the first Charles had never bent his head to the block at Whitehall; had the good commoner

not died in exquisite pain of that wound, neither had the weak king died in exquisite indignity of the headman's blow.

Almost at the same moment, on Lansdown, known to this day as the "field of gentle blood," fell Basil Grenville, "the person most beloved in all the west of England"—fell in the arms of victory, almost rejoicing to be thus early released from the sad task of fighting against Englishmen, as he believed for England's welfare. At Roundway-down, on the 13th of July, Wilmot, with fearful loss, utterly routed Waller for the parliament; and the next month Rupert won Bristol at the pike's point, but left in the bloody breaches Slanning, Trevannion, Viscount Grandison, all patriots, all men of moderation, with five hundred others, all gentlemen of veritable honor.

Again the king might have marched upon London, and again would he certainly have carried it. But again the moderation of his nobles, and their distrust of him whom yet they most trusted, prevailed; and they induced him to sit down, fatally for the royal cause, before the trifling town of Gloucester—still hoping that in its weak and reduced condition the parliament might now be willing to treat on fair and equitable terms. But the moderate men were dead, or disgusted with the weary war, and had retired from a strife which they already perceived to be hopeless if not endless. And with persistency equal to that of Rome when Hannibal was thundering at her gates—and had it been in as just a cause, equally noble—the parliament still stood defiant, refusing all accommodation, save on terms that would have left the king virtually crownless and the realm actually churchless. Within the walls of Gloucester, Massey made a defence that was indeed heroical. And as the king's fortunes waxed sick with hope delayed, more and more did the moderate men, at length then perceiving the ambition of the parliament, fall off from those who no longer fought for freedom. Bedford, Holland, and Conway, all peers of England,

peers of the first and noblest, all *then, and to this day*, lovers of the largest liberty, deserted the puritans' parliament at Whitehall, to join the king's parliament at Oxford. Northumberland, the parliamentarian admiral, forsook the fleet and retired to his castle in his own northern county; Essex, the parliamentarian general, exhorted his masters to peace, and almost declined their service. All thoughts of pacification were then laid aside, for the presbyterian pulpits thundered, the puritan zealots of the city raved and rioted, the parliamentarian statesmen *lied*, without shame or remorse; spreading a rumor, which they knew to be false, shaking the national and religious heart of England to its very core—"a rumor of twenty thousand Irish papists who had landed, and were to cut the throat of every protestant."

Then Essex marched, and then reluctant—marched only then because unwilling to resign his leading to fierce, unscrupulous, fanatic gladiators. By a masterly move, he relieved Gloucester; but, still unwilling to conquer, declined battle, and retired by a circuitous route on London. The cavaliers meanwhile did now, when it was too late, what, had they done in July, would have placed the king in that palace which he was never to enter but once more, and only thence to issue upon the scaffold. They marched straight upon London, seeing at last that peace could be only had through conquest.

When Essex came to Newbury, some sixty miles from London, thinking that he had circumvented the royalists and left them far to the rearward, he found them in force, and prepared for instant action, between him and his goal. He had no choice but to fight; and it was with a heavy heart, and a dull, careworn countenance, that he saw the sun go down behind the Berkshire hills, as he gave orders to deliver battle on the morrow.

There is no lovelier or more sweetly pastoral plain in all the

southwest of England than that through which flow the bright waters of the brimful Kennet, whereon stands the old town of Newbury, defended by the gray and dismantled keep of Donnington, stretching away northward in a boundless champaign of green luxuriance far into level Berkshire, but to the southward bounded by the rich beech-woods of Hampshire, above which rise, scarce six miles distant—this bleak and bare to the top, where it is crested by the *vallum* of a Roman camp, that clothed in glorious umbrage to the very summit—the twin chalk-hills Beacon and Syddon. Sweet plain! dear, unforgotten hills! two fifths of a century have flown since I beheld you last, happy in easy, careless childhood, and in all chances of mortality never shall I behold you any more; yet the memory of your green slopes, your gleaming waters, and of those gray, war-battered walls of Donnington, is fresher and warmer at my heart than many a thing of yesterday—fresh and warm as the tones of a voice, long since mute in the cold grave, which told me, yet a mere child, while the speaker's hand pointed to the crumbling keep, that beneath those gray ruins, nearly two hundred years ago, ONE fell, who bore a familiar and a kindred name—fell in his duty, fighting for his king, his country, and his God; and fixed the moral in the boy's mind by the injunction, "When need shall be, see that thou do in likewise!"

The day had come when that one finished his career of glory. And on the morning of that September day he sat with two others, brothers in arms, before a frugal table, nigh to a latticed window of his then unbattered tower of Donnington. And he gazed through the lattice over the deep woodlands of East Woodhay, then glowing with the first golden hues of autumn, over the fair demesnes of Highclere, toward those fair hills, his birthright, as his birthplace: but between these and his eye frowned the deep masses of the parliamentarian foot, bristling with puissant pikes, and sparkling with the already kindled

matches of the firm London trainbands; and he turned him from the sight, and raised the winecup with a sigh.

Robert Dormer, of that line the last earl of Carnarvon—his portrait, and in his portrait the man, yet lives, as he lived then, in the unaltered colors of Antonio Vandyke. Tall, slender, graceful, with the high, sharp-cut, aquiline features and loose-waving chestnut locks—sure indications of his Norman blood—with the loose velvet jerkin, the broad embroidered sword-belt, the richly-wrought lace collar, in which—for few of the cavaliers wore defensive armor, although their enemies were cased in complete steel—he was ever wont, as Clarendon has left it of him, to charge home.

His friends and fellow-soldiers, fellow-lovers of liberty above glory, now fighting for its substance and reality against its empty name and semblance, were Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland, and the young earl of Sunderland, immortalized they also by the same wondrous Flemish painter.

But Falkland lives not on his canvass as he showed on that morning, but as before the civil wars began—young, smooth-faced, serene, joyous, happy; courtly attired in rich blue velvet, with large white tassels pendent from his Flanders lace cravat. Such was he in happier days, who, "when called into public life, stood foremost in all attacks upon the high prerogatives of the crown, and displayed that masculine eloquence and undaunted love of liberty, which, from his intimate acquaintance with the sublime spirits of antiquity, he had greedily imbibed." Such was he in happier days, who, when compelled to choose sides in actual war, when he had elected to "defend those limited powers which remained to monarchy, and which he deemed necessary to the support of the English constitution," lost all his natural cheerfulness and vivacity, became almost a sloven in his dress, and was wont oftentimes, even when in the midst of joyous friends, with wine and revelry around him, to shake

his head in sorrowful abstraction, to wring his hands, and "ingeminate with shrill, sad accents, the words 'peace, peace!'" Such was he in happier days, who was beloved by friend and foe; the friend of John Hampden, the friend of Charles Stuart; one of the best and truest gentlemen the world ever saw—orator, scholar, statesman, soldier, patriot, man. Even when he took arms for conscience sake, for conscience sake also he would take no command, but fought ever, as Hampden was fighting when he fell, a volunteer in the horse.

The earl of Sunderland was the youngest of the three, and, as the youngest, untried in statesmanship though proved in war, less a scholar than a soldier, and less a thinker than an actor, the cheeriest and lightest-hearted of the three. He alone of the three was sheathed from head to foot in a complete panoply of antique armor, but he wore his visor up and beaver down, revealing the whole of his smooth, youthful face and delicate features, flushed a little by the heat of his armor and the excitement of the moment.

"Why do you sigh," he said, "Carnarvon? You are not wont to sigh, I think, on the eve of battle."

"I am not wont to sigh," replied the other, "you should say rather, Sunderland, in the act of battle. But who would not sigh to look on such a sight as that?" He pointed to the steady front of the puritans, stationary on the plain, and thence to the gay cassocks and plumed hats of Rupert's highborn cavalry, wheeling and careering in the distance; and concluded by quoting in a solemn and melancholy tone the glorious lines of Massinger:—

> "'They have drawn together
> Two royal armies full of fiery youth,
> Equal in power to do and courage to bear,
> So near intrenched it is beyond all hope
> That shall be divided any more
> Until it be determined by the sword

> Which hath the better cause; seeing that success
> Concludes the victor innocent, the vanquished
> Most miserably guilty.'

"Is it not so, dear Falkland?"

But he whom he addressed shook his head with a calm, grave smile; and then his companions observed, for the first time, that he was dressed with elegance and taste very unusual for him in later days, and that his long, light hair, once so beautiful, was carefully combed out and curled, and although sadly faded and thickly streaked with gray, bespoke the courtier and the cavalier rather than the spirit-broken murmurer for "*peace! peace!*"

Sunderland saw this first, and partly it may be from a touch of recklessness, partly from a desire to cheer up the despondent spirits of his gallant friends, he still spoke in livelier tones than his own heart suggested.

"The days of miracles have come again, I think," he said. "Here is Carnarvon grave and Falkland gay at the prospect of striking one more good blow for the king, perhaps the winning blow. For if we scatter, as the Lord in his grace send we may, those scurvy Londoners to the four winds of heaven, it is as clear as yon rising sun that the rogue parliament can raise no army any more, and the king must enjoy his own again. Thinkest thou not with me, gallant Falkland? Nay, but I know thou dost, else why so light a smile and so gay a garb, unless that thy clear soul foresees thy long-desired peace?"

"Those scurvy Londoners are Englishmen still, Sunderland," replied Carnarvon; "Englishmen fighting, as we fight, for what they honestly believe the right. I for one am sick of smiting, and would it were over, whether it were by peace or by—"

"Death, dear Carnarvon," interrupted Falkland; "death, gentle Sunderland. It is death that I foresee, not victory nor peace. I would not that the enemy should find me dead in slovenly

attire or in any guise indecent and unfitting to our calling and our cause. Therefore it is that I am brave to-day; and if I be less sad than is my wont, it is that I am aweary of the times and foresee much more misery to England. But I believe that I shall be out of it before night."

"Indeed! indeed! do you too feel this?" cried Carnarvon. "Why, as I looked but now over my greenwoods of East Woodhay, over my chase of Highclere, over my Hampshire hills, I felt as if a voice spoke to me audibly, 'Look thy last, look thy last at them, Robert Dormer; for never wilt thou, nor any of thy name, see the sun rise up any more or go down over them.'"

"But it was not therefore thou didst sigh?" asked his friend. "Thou dost not *fear* to fall; dost thou regret to die?"

"I neither fear nor regret, Lucius Cary. But I *would* fain live to see my king restored to his throne, and the servant of my God restored to his churches. Nevertheless, not my will be done, but His, for He knows best who knows all things."

"Amen!" said Falkland solemnly.

"And amen!" replied Sunderland a moment afterward. "And may he be gracious to us and forget not us, even if we forget him, in the heat and hurry of the day that is before us; for if you dream aright, and you too fall before me, I think I shall not be far behind you."

And as he spoke, he stretched out his mail-clad arms, and in one close embrace commingled stood for the last time those three noble brothers.

While they were still clasped breast to breast, sharp and shrill rang the trumpets from below with a right royal flourish, until from "turret to foundation-stone" the old keep resounded, and almost seemed to rock, at that soul-stirring summons.

"The king! the king! God save the king!" shouted Carnarvon, casting his beaver on his long love-locks, and snatching his heavy sword from the table.

"To horse and away! to horse and away!" cried Sunderland.

"And the best man to-day is he who strikes the hardest," exclaimed Falkland, every trace of melancholy vanishing from his fine face.

Down stairs they hurried, and as they reached the castle-court, there stood the king, all armed except his helmet, which a page held behind, with the George in its blue riband about his neck, and the star of the garter on his breast, about to mount a splendid snow-white charger, with a tall greyhound at his side, looking, as he was to the very last, every inch a man, a gentleman, and a king.

His face, that serene, melancholy face—prophetic, as some thought, of a violent and early death—kindled as he looked on that devoted three, and his manner, usually so austere and grave, relaxed.

"My noble lords, my faithful friends—" Some inward feeling overpowered the stern, grave nature of the man, and he could say no more. But as each bent his knee in silence, and left a teardrop with the last kiss of loyalty upon his ungloved hand, a tear—a tear which no extremity of his own sorrows ever wrung from those calm, steady eyes—dropped on the head of Falkland.

Again the trumpets flourished, and every cavalier was in his saddle, every sword out of its scabbard.

A little hour and they stood face to face, those kindred hosts arrayed beneath the glorious sun for mutual slaughter—but no time now for thought, but for action! action! action!

Hot Rupert's sword is out, his banner on the wind, his spur in his charger's side. "God and the king! God and the king!" and out went the unconquered cavaliers, an overwhelming torrent of black feathers, and blue scarfs, and glittering sword-points. "God and the king!"—and though the troopers of the parliament fought like men, and rallied again and again when

broken; and still resisted after regiments were regiments no longer; and fought by squadrons first, with Sir Philip Stapleton's white hat conspicuous in their van, and then in troops, and at last in little knots, back to back—still who were they, that they should match the matchless cavaliers of England?

In the words of the gallant Sunderland, they *were* scattered to the four winds of heaven, but not until the sun had already "sloped his westering wheel," and verged toward the horizon. And now the day seemed to be all but won, and of the three not one had fallen, not one was even wounded.

What foot as yet had borne the brunt of the charging cavaliers? For once, Rupert forgot not his duty in the fury of his triumph; for once, he restrained his madness for the chase, and wheeled on the pikes of the puritans, lined by the musketeers of the London trainbands. "Charge home! charge home! God and the king! the day is ours!"

But theirs it was not yet; for the pikes stood like a wall of solid steel, and that appalling roll of revolving English fire, which no human horse has ever faced unbroken, rose and fell, rose and fell incessant. And for the first time the cavaliers were hurled back, dauntless though bent and shattered, like a broken billow from an iron coast. There went down Lucius Cary, shot through the heart by a musket-bullet from the scurvy London trainbands. There went down Sunderland above him, his avenger; for, as the fatal shot was discharged, his long, keen broadsword cleft the musketeer, through skullcap, hair, and skull, down to his eyes, and hurled him dead upon his noble victim. But in that very point of time, one pike-point pierced his charger's poitrel, and drove deep into his counter; a second found the unguarded spot, the open visor of the gallant rider, and down went he, unconscious of the sudden death-wound—

"Rider and horse, friend and foe, in one red burial blent."

Rallying to the trumpet and the royal cry, steadily wheeled the unconquered cavaliers over the dying and the dead—again upon the serried pikes. again upon the rolling volleys. And now! now—is it victory?—back! back! by the very impetus of their own charge—back! back! two hundred yards and better, they bore the pikes before them! But the pikes were still unbroken, and the fire still rolled incessant, tolling the knell of many a patriot soul departed. Again the cavaliers recoiled from that impenetrable phalanx, from that withering fire.

Bareheaded, in his shirt-sleeves, dripping from head to foot with the blood of the enemy, but unscathed, as the bravest often are, Carnarvon fought the foremost and fell back the last from that second charge—ignorant still of the fate of his banded brothers, such was the tumult and confusion of the fray. He fell back, only to rally his men once more unto the charge; and as he galloped after them, shouting, adjuring, praying them, with his sword-point lowered, his eyes intent on the halting and fast-rallying cavaliers, and thoughtless of any enemy at hand, his charger started from a confused heap of dead which lay right in his path.

The seat of the earl was too firm to be shaken, but his eyes wandered for a moment to the pile of carnage. He saw and knew his friends, and saw or knew no more on earth. For at that instant a trooper of the parliamentarian army, not one of whom had been seen on the battle-field for hours, came straggling back to his banners; and as he casually passed in the rear of the brave earl, recognised him on the instant, and drove his sword, a coward blow from behind, through his unguarded side, and laid him dead within five paces of his faithful fellows.

Charge after charge, again and again, on went and home went Rupert! But in vain, all in vain! for those pikes still received them—still, as they recoiled, advanced unbroken—that fire still rolled on incessant!

Night at last, that common friend of all weary and dismantled armies, severed them, and they sank down to sleep, with no watch-fires kindled, no sentries posted, among the dying and the dead, in the very lines where they had fought all day exhausted but unconquered.

No note was taken of the dead that night, and the cold moon alone kept watch over the solemn death-bed of the devoted three. But when, at dawn of day, Essex decamped in haste, and Rupert's trumpets sounded boot and saddle to beat up the rear of the retiring army, Carnarvon was not there, nor Sunderland, nor Falkland: and all men knew—their wars over—that Sunderland's hot gallantry was cold, Carnarvon's latest wish frustrated, and Falkland's "peace, peace," won.

Thus fell they, the three noblest victims, for opinion's sake—the last "brothers in arms" in England—and may they be the last for ever!

With them, too, fell the crown; for from that day there were no moderate men, on either side, for many a year, nor any real hope of victory for Charles or peace for England. Therefore with them fell for a while the crown, as never may it fall again while the round world holds fast.

The Rival Sisters;

OR,

INGLEBOROUGH HALL.

A

Local Legend of the Great Civil War.

1644.

THE RIVAL SISTERS.

CHAPTER I.

In one of those sweet glens, half-pastoral, half-sylvan, which may be found in hundreds channelling the steep sides of the moorland hills, and sending down the tribute of their pure lime-stone springs to the broad rivers which fertilize, no less than they adorn, the lovely vales of western Yorkshire, there may be seen to this day the ruins of an old dwelling-house, situate on a spot so picturesque, so wild, and yet so soft in its romantic features, that they would well repay the traveller for a brief halt, who but too often hurries onward in search of more remote yet certainly not greater beauties.

The gorge, within the mouth of which the venerable pile was seated, opens into the broader valley of Wharfdale from the northeastern side, enjoying the full light and warmth of the southern sunshine; and although very narrow at its origin, where its crystal rivulet springs up from the lonely well-head, fringed by a few low shrubs of birch and alder, expands here at its mouth into a pretty amphitheatre or basin of a few acres' circuit.

A wild and feathery coppice of oak, and birch, and hazel, with here and there a mountain-ash showing its bright-red ber-

ries through the red foliage, clothes all the lower part of the surrounding slopes; while, far above, the seamed and shattered faces of the gray slaty limestone rise up like artificial walls, their summits crowned with the fair purple heather, and every nook and cranny in their sides crowded with odorous wild flowers. Within the circuits of these natural limits, sheltering it from every wind of heaven except the gentle south, the turf lies smooth and even, as if it were a cultured lawn; while a few rare exotic shrubs, now all run out of shape, and bare and straggling, indicate yet the time when it was a fair shrubbery, tended by gentle hands, and visited by young and lovely beings, now cold in their untimely sepulchres.

The streamlet, which comes gushing down the glen with its clear, copious flow, boiling and murmuring about the large gray boulders, which everywhere obstruct its channel, making a thousand mimic cataracts, and wakening ever a wild, mirthful music, sweeps here quite close to the foot of the eastern cliff, the feathery branches of the oakwood dipping their foliage in its eddies; and then, just as it issues forth into the open champaign, wheels round in a half-circle, completely isolating the little amphitheatre above mentioned, except at one point, hard beneath the opposite hill-face, where a small, winding horse-track, engrossing the whole space between the streamlet and the limestone rock, gives access to the lone demesne.

A small, green hillock, sloping down gently to the southward, fills the embracing arms of the bright brook, around the northern base of which is scattered a little grove of the most magnificent and noblest sycamores that I have ever seen; but on the other side, which yet retains its pristine character of a smooth, open lawn, there are no obstacles to the view over the wide valley, except three old gnarled thorn-bushes, uncommon from their size, and the dense luxuriance of their matted greenery.

It was upon the summit of this little knoll that the old homestead stood, whose massive ruins of red freestone, all overgrown with briers and tall, rank grass and dock-leaves, deface the spot which they adorned of old; and, when it was erect, in all its fair proportions, the scene which it overlooked and its own natural attractiveness rendered it one of the loveliest residences in all the north of England.

The wide, rich, gentle valley, all meadow-land and pasture, without one brown, ploughed field to mar its velvet green; the tall, thick hawthorn hedges, with their long lines of hedgerow timber, oak, ash, and elm, waving above the smooth enclosures; the broad, clear, tranquil river, flashing out like a silver mirror through the green foliage; the scattered farmhouses, each nestled as it were among its sheltering orchards; the village spire shooting up from the clump of giant elms, which overshadowed the old graveyard; the steep, long slope on the other side of the vale, or strath as it would be called in Scotland, all mapped out to the eye with its green fences and wide, hanging woods; and far beyond the rounded summits of the huge moorland hills, ridge above ridge, purple, and grand, and massive, but less and less distinct as they recede from the eye, and melt away at last into the far blue distance—such was the picture which its windows overlooked of old, and which still laughs as gayly as of yore, in the glad sunshine, around its mouldering walls and lonely hearthstone.

But if it is fair now, and lovely, what was it, as it showed in the good old days of King Charles, before the iron hand of civil war had pressed so heavily upon England? The groves of sycamores stood there, as they stand now in the prime and luxuriance of their sylvan manhood; for they are now waxing aged, and somewhat gray and stag-horned; and the thorn-bushes sheltered, as they do now, whole choirs of thrushes and blackbirds; but all the turf, beneath the scattered trees, and

on the sunny slope, was so shorn, and rolled, and watered, that it was smooth and even, and far softer than the most costly carpet that ever wooed the step of Persian beauty.

The hall was a square building, not very large, and of the old Elizabethan style, with two irregular additions—wings as they might be called—of the same architecture, though of a later period; and its deep-embayed oriel windows, with their fantastic millions of carved freestone, its tall, quaint chimneys, and its low porch with overhanging canopy and clustered columns, rendered it singularly picturesque and striking.

The little green within the gorge of the upper glen, which is so wildly beautiful in its present situation, left as it is to the unaided hand of nature, was then a perfect paradise; for an exquisite taste had superintended its conversion into a sort of untrained garden. An eye, well used to note effects, had marked its natural capabilities, and, adding artificial beauties, had never trenched upon the character of the spot by anything incongruous or startling.

Rare plants, rich-flowering shrubs, and scented herbs, were indeed scattered with a lavish hand about its precincts, but were so scattered that they seemed the genuine production of the soil. The Spanish cistus had been taught to carpet the wild crags, in conjunction with the native thyme and heather; the arbutus and laurestinus had been brought from afar, to vie with the mountain-ash and holly; the clematis and the sweet-scented vine blended their tendrils with the rich English honeysuckle and the luxuriant ivy; rare lotuses might be seen floating, with their azure-colored cups and broad green leaves, upon the glassy basins into which the mountain streamlet had been taught to expand, among the white wild water-lilies and the bright-yellow clusters of the marsh-marigolds; roses of every hue and scent, from the dark-crimson of Damascus to the pale blush of soft Provence, grew side by side with the wild wood-brier and eglantine; and many a rustic seat of mossy stone, or roots and unbarked branches, invited the loitering visiter in every shadowy angle.

There was no spot, in all the north of England, whereon the winter frowned so lightly as on those sheltered precincts—there was no spot whereon spring smiled so early, and with so bright an aspect—wherein the summer so long lingered, pouring her gorgeous flowers, rich with her spicy breath, into the very lap of autumn. It was indeed a sweet spot, and as happy as it was sweet and beautiful—before the curse of civil war was poured upon the groaning land, with its dread train of foul and fiendish ministers: and yet it was not war, nor any of its direct consequences, that turned that happy home into a ruin and desolation.

It was not war—unless the struggles of the human heart—the conflict of the fierce and turbulent passions—the strife of principles, of motives, of desires, within the secret soul, may be called war—as indeed they might, and that with no figurative tongue; for they are the hottest, the most devastating, the most fatal, of all that bear that ominous and cruel appellation.

Such was the aspect then of Ingleborough hall, at the period when it was perhaps the most beautiful, and when, as is but too often the case, its beauties were on the very point of being brought to a close for ever. The family which owned the manor—for the possessions attached to the old homestead were large, and the authority arising from them extended over a great part of Upper Wharfdale—was one of those old English races which, though not noble in the literal sense of the word, are yet so ancient, and so indissolubly connected with the soil, that they may justly be comprised among the aristocracy of the land. The name was Saxon; and it was generally believed, and probably with truth, that the date of the name and of its connection with that estate was at the least coeval with the Conquest. To

what circumstances it was owing that the Hawkwoods—for such was the time-honored appellation of the race—had retained possession of their fair demesne, when all the land was allotted out to feudal barons and fat priests, can never now be ascertained, nor does it indeed signify; yet that it was to some honorable cause, some service rendered, or some high exploit, may be fairly presumed from the fact that the mitred potentate of Bolton abbey, who levied his tithes far and near, throughout those fertile valleys, had no claim on the fruits of Ingleborough. During the ages that had passed since the advent of the Norman William, the Hawkwoods had never lacked male representatives to sustain the dignity of their race; and gallantly had they sustained it: for in full many a lay and legend, ay! and in grave, cold history itself, the name of Hawkwood might be found side by side with the more sonorous appellations of the Norman feudatories—the Ardens, and Mauleverers, and Vavasours—which fill the chronicles of border warfare.

At the period of which I write, however, the family had no male scion. The last heir-male, Ralph Hawkwood, had died some years before, full of years and of domestic honors—a zealous sportsman, a loyal subject, a kind landlord, a good friend. His lot had fallen in quiet times and pleasant places; and he lived happily, and died in the arms of his family, at peace with all men. His wife, a calm, placid dame, who had in her young days been the beauty of the shire, survived him; and spent her whole time, as she devoted her whole mind and spirit, in educating the two daughters, joint heiresses of the old manor-house, who were left by their father's death—two bright-eyed, fair-haired prattlers—dependent for protection on the strong love, but frail support, of their widowhood mother.

CHAPTER II.

Years passed away, and with their flight the two fair children were matured into two sweet and lovely women; yet the same fleeting suns, which brought to them complete and perfect youth, were fraught to others with decay, and all the carking cares and querulous ailments of old age. The mother who had watched, with keen solicitude, over their budding infancy, over the promise of their lovely childhood, lived indeed; but lived not to see or understand the full accomplishment of that bright promise. Even before the elder girl had reached the dawn of womanhood, palsy had shaken the enfeebled limbs, and its accustomed follower—mental debility—had in no small degree impaired the intellect of her surviving parent; but long before her sister had reached her maturity, the limbs were helplessly immovable, the mind was wholly clouded and estranged.

It was not now the wandering and uncertain darkness, that flits across the veiled horizon of the mind alternately with vivid gleams, flashes of memory, and intellect, brighter, perhaps, than ever visited the spirit, until its partial aberration had jarred its vital principles. It was that deep and utter torpor, blanker than sleep, and duller—for no dreams seem to mingle with its day-long lethargy—that absolute paralysis of all the faculties of soul and body, which is so beautifully painted by the great Roman satirist, as the

> Membrorum damno major dementia, quæ nec
> Nomina servorum, nec vultum agnoscit amici
> Cum quo præterita cœnavit nocte, nec illos
> Quos genuit, quos eduxit—.

that still, sad, patient, silent suffering, which sits from day to day in the one usual chair, unconscious of itself, and almost so of all around it; easily pleased by trifles, which it forgets as soon; deriving its sole, real, and tangible enjoyment from the doze in the summer sunshine, or by the sparkling hearth of winter. Such was the mother now—so utterly, so hopelessly dependent on those bright beings, whose infancy she had nursed so devotedly—and well was that devotedness now compensated; for day and night, winter and summer, did those sweet girls by turns watch over the frail querulous sexagenarian—never both leaving her at once, one sleeping while the other watched, attentive ever to her ceaseless cravings, patient and mild to meet her angry and uncalled-for lamentations.

You would have thought a seclusion so entire, from all society of their equals, must have prevented their acquiring those usual accomplishments, those necessary arts, which every English gentlewoman is presumed to possess, as things of course—that they must have grown up mere ignorant, unpolished country lasses, without taste or aspiration beyond the small routine of their dull, daily duties—that long confinement must have broken the higher and more spiritual parts of their fine natural minds—that they must have become mere moping household drudges; and so to think would be so very natural, that it is by no means easy to conceive how it was brought to pass, that the very opposite of this should have been the result. The very opposite it was, however—for as there were not in the whole West Riding two girls more beautiful than Annabel and Marian Hawkwood, so were there surely none so highly educated, so happy in themselves, so eminently calculated to render others happy.

Accomplished as musicians, both, though Annabel especially, excelled in instrumental music, while her young sister was unrivalled in voice and execution as a songstress; both skilled in

painting; and if not poetesses, insomuch as to be stringers of words and rhymes, certainly such, and that, too, of no mean order, in the wider and far higher acceptation of the word. For their whole souls were attuned to the very highest key of sensibility; romantic, not in the weak and ordinary meaning of the term, but as admirers of all things high, and pure, and noble; worshippers of the beautiful, whether it were embodied in the scenery of their native glens, in the rock, the stream, the forest, the sunshine that clothed all of them in a rich garb of glory, or the dread storm that veiled them all in gloom and terror—or in the masterpieces of the schools of painting, and of sculpture—or in the pages of the great, the glorious of all ages—or in the deeds of men, perils encountered hardily, sufferings constantly endured, sorrows assuaged by charitable generosity. Such were they in the strain and tenor of their minds; gentle, moreover, as the gentlest of created things; humble to their inferiors, but with a proud, and self-respecting, and considerate humility; open, and free, and frank, toward their equals, but proud, although not wanting in loyalty and proper reverence for the great, and almost haughty of demeanor to their superiors, when they encountered any such, which was, indeed, of rare and singular occurrence.

It was a strange thing, indeed, that these lone girls should have possessed such characters; so strongly marked, so powerful, and striking—should have acquired accomplishments so many, and so various in their nature. It will appear, perhaps, even stranger to merely superficial thinkers, that the formation of these powerful characters had been for the most part brought about by the very circumstances which would at first have appeared most unpropitious—their solitary habits, namely, and their seclusion—almost absolute seclusion—from the gay world of fashion and of folly! The large and opulent county in which their patrimony lay, was indeed then, as now, studded

with the estates, the manors, and the parks of the richest and the noblest of England's aristocracy. Yet the deep glens and lofty moorlands, among which Ingleborough hall was situated, are even to this day a lonely and sequestered region; no great post-road winds through their devious passes, and although in the close vicinity of large and populous towns, they are, even in the nineteenth century, but little visited, and are occupied by a population singularly primitive and pastoral in all its thoughts and feelings. Much more then—in those days when carriages were seen but rarely beyond the streets of the metropolis, when roads were wild and rugged, and intercourse between the nearest places, unless of more than ordinary magnitude, difficult and uncertain—was that wild district to be deemed secluded. So much so, indeed, was this the case, that at the time of which I write, there were not within the circle of some twenty miles, two families of equal rank, or filling the same station of society with the Hawkwoods. This, had the family been in such circumstances of domestic health and happiness as would have permitted the girls to mingle in the gayeties of the neighborhood, would have been a severe and serious misfortune; as they must, from the continual intercourse with their inferiors, have contracted, in a greater or less degree, a grossness of both mind and manner; and would, most probably, have fallen into that most destructive habit—destructive to the mind I mean, and to all chance of progress or advancement—the love of queening it in low society. It was, therefore, under their circumstances, including the loss of one parent, and the entire bereavement of the other, fortunate in no small degree that they were compelled to seek their pleasures and their occupations, no less than their duties, within the sphere of the domestic circle.

The mother who was now so feeble and so helpless, though never a person of much intellectual energy, or indeed of much

force of any kind, was yet in the highest sense of the word, a *lady*. She had seen something of the great world apart from the rural glens which witnessed her decline; had mingled with the gay and noble even at the court of England; and being possessed of more than ordinary beauty, had been a favorite, and in some degree a belle. From her, then, had her daughters naturally and unconsciously imbibed that easy, graceful finish, which, more than all beside, is the true stamp of gentle birth and bearing. Long before children can be brought to comprehend general principles or rules of convention, they can and do acquire habits, by that strange tact of observance, which certainly commences at a stage so early of their young frail existence, that we can not by any effort mark its first dawning—habits, which thus acquired can hardly be effaced at all—which will endure unaltered, and invariable, when tastes and practices, and modes of thought and action, contracted long, long afterward, have faded quite away and been forgotten. Thus was it then, with these young creatures, while they were yet mere girls, with all the pure right impulses of childhood bursting out fresh and fair, they had been trained up in the midst of high, and honorable, and correct associations. Naught low, or mean, or little, naught selfish, or dishonest, or corrupt, had ever so much as come near to them; in the sight of virtue, and in the practice of politeness, they had shot up into maturity; and their maturity, of consequence, was virtuous and polished.

In after-years devoted as they were to that sick mother, they had no chance of unlearning anything, and thus from day to day they went on gaining fresh graces, as it were, by deduction from the foregone teaching, and from the fact that purity and nature when united must be graceful—until the proudest courts of Europe could have shown nothing, even in their most difficult circles, that could surpass, even if it could vie with, the

easy, artless frankness, the soft and finished courtesy, the unabashed, yet modest grace, of those two mountain maidens.

At the period when my sad tale commences—for it is no less sad than true—the sisters had just reached the young yet perfect bloom of mature womanhood—the elder, Annabel, having attained her twentieth summer, her sister Marian, being exactly one year younger; and certainly two sweeter or more lovely girls could not be pictured or imagined—not even in the brightest moments of the painter's or poet's inspiration. They were both tall and beautifully formed—both had sweet low-toned voices—that excellent thing in woman! but here all personal resemblance ended; for Annabel, the elder, had a complexion pure and transparent as the snow of the untrodden glacier before the sun has kissed it into roseate blushes, and quite as colorless—her features were of the finest classic outline. The smooth fair brow, the perfect Grecian nose, the short curve of the upper lip, the exquisite arch of the small mouth, the chiselled lines of the soft rounded chin, might have served for a model to a sculptor, whereby to mould a mountain nymph or Naiad. Her rich luxuriant hair was of a light and sunny brown; her eyes of a clear and lustrous blue with a soft languid and half-melancholy tenderness, for their more usual expression, which suited well with the calm placid air that was almost habitual to her beautiful features. To this no contrast more complete could have been offered, than by the widely different style of Marian's loveliness. Though younger than her sister, her figure was more full and rounded—so much so, that it reached the very point where symmetry is combined with voluptuousness; yet was there nothing in the least degree voluptuous in the expression of her bright artless face. Her forehead, higher than Annabel's and broader, was as smooth and as white as polished marble; her brows were well defined and black as ebony; as were the long, long lashes that fringed her

laughing eyes—eyes of the brightest, lightest azure, that ever glanced with merriment or melted into love—her nose was small and delicate, but turned a little upward, so as to add, however, rather than detract from the *tout ensemble* of her arch, roguish beauty; her mouth was not very small, but exquisitely formed, with lips redder than anything in nature, to which lips can be well compared; and filled with teeth, regular, white, and beautifully even. Fair as her sister's, and like hers, showing everywhere the tiny veins of azure meandering below the milky skin, Marian's complexion was yet as bright as morning, with faint rosy tints, and red warm blushes, succeeding one another, or vanishing away, and leaving the cheek pearly white as one emotion followed and effaced another in her pure innocent mind.

Her hair, profuse in its luxuriant flow, was of a deep, dark brown, that might almost have been called black—but for a thousand glancing golden lights, and warm, rich shadows, that varied its smooth surface with the varying sunshine—and was worn in a thick, massive plait, low down in the neck behind, while on either side the brow it was trained off and taught to cluster in front of each tiny ear, in an abundant maze of interwoven curls, close and mysteriously enlaced, as are the tendrils of the wild vine, which fluttering on each warm and blushing cheek, fell down the swan-like neck in heavy natural ringlets.

But to describe the features is to give no idea, in the least, of Marian's real beauty. There was a radiant, dazzling lustre, that leaped out of her every feature, lightening from her quick speaking eyes, and playing in the dimples of her bewitching smile, so intoxicating to the beholder, that he would dwell upon her face entranced, and know that it was lovely, and feel that it was far more lovely, far more enthralling, than any he had ever looked upon before. Yet, when without the sphere of

that enchantment, he would be all unable to say wherein consisted its unmatched attraction.

Between the natural disposition and temperaments of the two sisters, there was, perhaps, even a wider difference than between the characteristics of their personal beauty, for Annabel was calm and mild, and singularly placid; not in her manners only, but in the whole tenor of her thoughts, and words, and actions—there was a sort of gentle melancholy, that was not altogether melancholy either, pervading her every tone of voice, her every change of feature. She was not exactly grave, or pensive, or subdued; for she could smile very joyously at times, could act upon emergencies with readiness, and quickness, and decision; and was at all times prompt in the expression of her confirmed sentiments. But there was a very remarkable tranquillity in her mode of doing everything she did; betokening fully the presence of a decided principle, directing her at every step, so that she was rarely agitated, even by accidents of the most sudden and alarming character, and never actuated by any rapid impulse.

The very opposite of this was Marian Hawkwood; for although quite as upright and pure-minded as her sister—and what is more, of a temper quite as amiable and sweet, yet was her mood as changeful as an April day; although it was more used to mirth and joyous laughter than to frowns or tears either, yet had she tears as ready at any tale of sorrow, as are the fountains of the spring-shower in the cloud, and eloquent frowns and eyes that lightened their quick indignation at any outrage, or oppression, or high-handed deed. Her cheek would crimson with the tell-tale blood, her flesh would seem to thrill upon her bones, her voice would choke, and her eyes swim with sympathetic drops, whenever she read, or spoke, or heard of any noble deed, whether of gallant daring, or of heroic self-denial. Her tongue was prompt always as the sword of the knight-errant

to shelter the defenceless, to shield the innocent, to right the wronged, and sometimes to avenge the absent. Artless herself, and innocent in every thought and feeling, she set no guard on either but as she felt and thought, so she spoke out and acted, fearless, even as she was unconscious of any wrong; defying misconstruction, and half inclined to doubt the possibility of evil in the minds of others; so foreign did it seem, and so impossible to her own natural, and, as it were, instinctive sense of right.

Yet although such, in all respects, as I have striven to depict them, the one all quick and flashing impulse, the other all reflective and considerate principle, it was most wonderful how seldom there was any clashing of opinion, or diversity of judgment, as to what was to be done, what left undone, between the lovely sisters. Marian would it is true, often jump at once to conclusions, and act rapidly upon them too, at which the more reflective Annabel would arrive only after some consideration; but it did not occur more often that the one had reason to repent of her precipitation, than the other of her over-caution. Neither, indeed, had much cause for remorse of this kind at all; for all the impulses of the one, all the thoughts and principles of the other, were alike pure and kindly. With words, however, it was not quite the same; for it must be admitted, that Marian oftentimes said things, how unfrequently soever she did aught, which she would willingly have recalled afterward. Not, indeed, that she ever said anything unkind, or wrong in itself, and rarely anything that could give pain to another, unless that pain were richly merited indeed; but that she gradually came to learn—long before she learned to restrain her impulses—that it may be very often unwise to speak, what in itself is wise— and very often, if not wrong, yet certainly imprudent, and of evil consequence, to give loud utterance even to right opinions.

CHAPTER III.

Such were the persons, such the dispositions of the fair heiresses of Ingleborough at the time when they had attained the ages I have specified; and certainly, although their spheres of usefulness would have appeared at first sight, circumscribed, and the range of their enjoyments very narrow, there rarely have been seen two happier or more useful beings than Annabel and Marian Hawkwood, in this wide world of sin and sorrow.

The care of their bereaved and hapless parent occupied, it is true, the greater portion of their time; yet they found many leisure hours to devote to visiting the poor, aiding the wants of the needy, consoling the sorrows of those who mourned, and sympathizing with the pleasures of the happy, among their humble neighbors. To them this might be truly termed a work of love and pleasure; for it is questionable whether from any other source the lovely girls derived a higher or more satisfactory enjoyment, than from their hours of charity among their village pensioners.

Next in the scale of happiness stood, doubtless, the society of the old vicar of that pastoral parish; a man who had been their father's friend and counsellor in those young days of college friendship, when the fresh heart is uppermost in all, and selfishness a dormant passion; a man old enough almost to have been their grandsire, but with a heart as young and as cheery as a boy's—an intellect accomplished in the deepest lore of the schools, both classical and scientific, and skilled thoroughly in all the niceties and graces of French, and Spanish, and Italian literature—a man who had known courts and

camps, too, for a short space in his youth; who had seen much and suffered much, and yet enjoyed, not a little, in his acquaintance with the world; and who, from sights, and sufferings, and enjoyments, had learned that if there is much evil, there is yet more of good, even in *this* world—had learned, while rigid to his own faults, to be most lenient to his neighbor's failings—had learned that charity should be the fruit of wisdom!—and had learned all this only to practise it in all his daily walks, to inculcate it in all his weekly lessons.

This aged man, and his scarce less aged wife, living hardly a stone's throw from the hall, had grown almost to think themselves a portion of the family; and surely no blood kindred could have created stronger ties of kindness than had the familiarity of long acquaintance, the confidence of old hereditary love. Lower yet in the round of their enjoyments, but still a constant source of blameless satisfaction, were their books, their music, and their drawings; the management of their household, the cultivation of their lovely garden, the ministering to the wants of their loved birds and flowers. Thus, all sequestered and secluded from the world, placed in the midst of calm, unostentatious duties, and cares which to them were no source of care, though they had never danced at a ball, nor blushed at the praise of their own beauty flowing from eloquent lips, nor listened to a lover's suit, queens might have envied the felicity, the calm, pure, peaceful happiness of Annabel and Marian.

They were, indeed, *too* happy! I do not mean too happy to be virtuous, too happy to be mindful of and grateful to the Giver of all joy—but, as the common phrase runs, too happy for their happiness to be enduring. This is a strange belief—a wondrous superstition!—and yet it has been common to all ages. The Greeks, those wild poetical dreamers, imagined that their vain gods, made up of moral attributes, *envied* the bliss of

men, fearing that wretched earthlings should vie in happiness with the possessors of Olympus. They sang in their dark mystic choruses:

> "That perfect bliss of men not childless dies,
> But ended, leaves a progeny behind,
> Of woes, that spring from fairest fortune blind—"

and, though their other doctrines of that insuperable destiny—that absolute necessity, to resist which is needless labor—and of ancestral guilt, through countless generations, would seem to militate against it, there was no more established faith, and no more prevalent opinion, than that unwonted fortunes were necessarily followed by most unusual wo. Hence, perhaps, the stern self-mortification of the middle ages—hence, certainly, the vulgar terror prevalent more or less among all classes, and in every time and country, that children are too beautiful, too prematurely clever, too good to be long-lived—that happiness is too great to be lasting—that mornings are too fine to auger stormless days!

And we—aye! we ourselves—we of a better faith, and purer dispensation—we half believe all this, and more than half tremble at it, although, in truth, there is no cause for fear in the belief—since, if there be aught of truth in the mysterious creed, which facts do in a certain sense seem to bear out, we can but think, we can not but perceive, that this is but a varied form of care and misery, vouchsafed by the Great All-perfect toward his frail creatures—that this is but a merciful provision, to hinder us from laying up for ourselves "treasures upon earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal"—a provision to restrain us from forgetting, in the small temporary bliss of the present, the boundless and incomparable beatitude of the future—to warn us against bartering, like Esau, our birthright, for a mess of pottage!

But I am now called to follow out this train of thought, suggested by the change in the fortunes of those to whom I am performing the part of historian; by the change, I say, in their fortunes—a change, too, arising from the very circumstances, as is frequently the case, which seemed to promise the most fairly for their improvement and their permanence. Oh! how blind guides are we! even the most far-sighted of us all!—how weak and senseless judges, even the most sagacious—how false and erring prophets, even the wisest and the best!

It was, as I have said already, late in the summer, wherefrom Annabel reckoned her twentieth and Marian her nineteenth year—very late in the last month of summer, an hour or two before the sunset of as beautiful an evening as ever smiled upon the face of the green earth. The sky was nearly cloudless, though a thin gauze-like haze had floated up from the horizon, and so far veiled the orb of the great sun, that the eye could gaze undazzled on his glories; and the whole air was full of a rich golden light, which flooded the level meadows with its lustre, except where they were checkered by the long cool blue shadows projected from the massive clumps of noble forest-trees, which, singly or in groups, diversified the lonely vale, and gilded the tall, slender steeple of the old village-church, and glanced in living fire from the broad oriel windows of the hall.

Such was the evening, and so beautiful the prospect, with every sound and sight in perfect harmony—the sharp squeak of the rapid swifts, wheeling their airy circles around the distant spire, the full and liquid melodies of thrush and blackbird from out the thorn-bushes upon the lawn, the lowing of the cows, returning from their pasture to pay the evening tribute, the very cawing of the homeward rooks, blended by distance into a continuous and soothing murmur, the rippling music of the stream, the low sound of the west wind in the foliage of

the sycamores, the far shout of the children, happy at their release from school, the carol of a solitary milkmaid, combining to make up a music as sweet as can be heard or dreamed of by the sleeping poet. That lovely picture was surveyed, and that delicious melody was listened to, by eyes and ears well fitted to appreciate their loveliness: for, at an open casement of a great parlor in the hall, with furniture all covered with those elegant appliances of female industry—well-executed drawings, and books, and instruments of music, and work-baskets, and frames for embroidery—which show so pleasantly that the apartment is one not of show, but of calm home-enjoyment—at an open casement sat Annabel, alone—for the presence of the frail paralytic being, who dozed in her arm-chair, at the further end of the room, can not be held to constitute society. Marian, for the first time in her life, was absent from her home, on a visit, which had already endured nearly six weeks, to the only near relative of the family who was yet living—a younger sister of her mother, who had married many years ago a clergyman, whose piety and talents had raised him to a stall in the cathedral church of York, where he resided with his wife—a childless couple.

This worthy pair had passed a portion of the summer at the hall, and when returning to the metropolis of the county, had prevailed on their younger niece, not altogether without difficulty, to go with them for a few weeks, and see a little society on a scale something more extended than that which her native vales could offer. It was the first time in their lives that the sisters had been parted for more than a few days, and now the hours were beginning to appear very long to Annabel; as weeks were running into months, and the gorgeous suns of summer were fast preparing to give place to the cold dews and frosty winds of autumn. The evening meal was over, and a solitary thing was that meal now, which used to be the most

delightful of the day; and hastily did the lonely sister hurry it over, thinking all the while what might be Marian's occupation at the moment, and whether she too was engaged in thoughts concerning her far friends, and the fair home of her childhood.

It was, then, in a mood half-melancholy and half-listless, that Annabel was gazing from her window, down the broad valley to the eastward, marvelling at the beauty of the scenery, though she had noted every changing hue that flitted over the far purple hills a thousand times before. She listened to every sweet familiar sound; and yet, at the same time, pondered, as if she were quite unconscious of all that met her senses, about things which she fancied might be happening at York, when on a sudden, her attention was aroused by a dense cloud of dust, rising beyond the river, upon the line of the high road, and sweeping up the valley, with a progress so unusually rapid as to indicate that the objects, which it veiled from view, must be in more than commonly quick motion. For a few moments she watched this little marvel narrowly, but without any apprehension or even any solicitude; until, as it drew nearer, she could at times see bright flashes, as if of polished metal, gleaming out through the murky wreaths, and feathers waving in the air.

The year was that, in which the hapless Charles, all hopes of reconciliation with his parliament being decidedly frustrated, displayed the banner of civil war, and drew the sword against his subjects. The rumors of the coming strife had circulated, like the dread subterraneous rumblings which harbinger the earthquake, through all the country far and near; sad omens of approaching evil! and more distinctly were they bruited through Yorkshire, in consequence of the attempt which had been made by the royal party to secure Hull, with all its magazines and shipping—frustrated by the energy and spirit of the Hothams

—so that, as soon as she perceived that the dust was beyond all doubt stirred up by a small party of well-appointed horse, Annabel entertained no doubts as to the meaning, but many serious apprehensions as to the cause of the present visitation.

CHAPTER IV.

THE road, by which the cavaliers were proceeding, though well-made and passable at all times, was no considerable thoroughfare; no large or important towns lay on its route; nay, no large villages were situated on its margin. It was a devious winding way, leading to many a homely farmhouse, many a sequestered hamlet, and affording to the good rustics a means of carrying their wheat and eggs and butter, or driving their fat cattle and black-face moorland sheep to market; but it was not the direct line between any two points, or places, worthy even of a passing notice. It is true, that some twelve or fifteen miles down the valley there was a house or two tenanted by gentry—one that might by a liberal courtesy have been designated a castle; but above Ingleborough hall, to northwestward, there was no manor-house or dwelling of the aristocracy at all, until the road left the *ghylls*—as those wild dens are designated—and joined the line of the great northern turnpike.

It was extremely singular, then, to say the least, that a gay troop of riders should appear suddenly in that wild spot, so far from anything that would be likely to attract them; and Annabel sat some time longer by the window, wondering, and at the same time fearing, although in truth she scarce knew what. Ere long at a mile's distance she saw them halt, and after a few moments' conversation with a farming-man on the wayside, as if to inquire their route, turn suddenly down a narrow by-road

leading to the high narrow bridge of many arches, which crossed the noble river and gave the only access to the secluded site of Ingleborough. When she saw this, however, her perturbation became very great; for well she knew that there lay nothing in that direction except one little market-town, far distant, and a few scattered farmhouses on the verge of the moors, so that there could be but little doubt that Ingleborough was indeed their destination.

The very moment that she arrived at this conclusion, Annabel called a serving-man, and bade him run quick to the vicarage, and pray good Doctor Somers to come up to her instantly, as she was in great strait, and fain would speak with him; and at the same time, with an energy of character that hardly could have been expected from one so young and delicate, ordered the men of the household—including in those days the fowler and falconer, and half a dozen grooms and many a supernumerary more, whom we in these degenerate times have long discarded as incumbrances, to have their arms in readiness—for every manor-house then had its regular armory—and to prepare the great bell of the hall, to summon all the tenants on the instant, in case such proceedings should be needful.

In a few moments the good gray-haired vicar came, almost breathless from the haste with which he had crossed the little space between the vicarage and the manor, and a little while afterward his wife followed him, anxious to learn as soon as possible what could have so disturbed the quiet tenor of a mind so regulated by high principles, and garrisoned by holy thoughts, as Annabel's. Their humble dwelling, though scarce a stone's throw from the hall, was screened by a projecting knoll feathered with dense and shadowy coppice, hiding from it entirely the road by which the horsemen were advancing; so that the worthy couple had not perceived, or suspected, anything to justify the fears of Annabel, until they were both standing in her

presence. Then, while the worthy doctor was proffering his assistance, and his good wife inquiring eagerly what was amiss, they caught sight of that gay company of cavaliers, with feathers waving and scarfs fluttering in the wind, and gold embroideries glancing to the sun; as, having left the dusty road, they wheeled through the green meadows, and flashed suddenly upon their eyes—a spectacle as unexpected as it was gorgeous and exciting!

"Who can they be? What possibly can bring them hither?" exclaimed Annabel, pointing with evident trepidation toward the rapidly-approaching horsemen. "I fear—oh! I greatly fear some heavy ill is coming—but I have ordered all the men to take their arms, and the great bell will bring us twenty tenants in half as many minutes! What can it be, good doctor?"

"Indeed, I know not, Annabel," replied the good man, smiling cheerfully as he spoke; "in truth I know not, nor can at all conjecture; but be quite sure of this, dear girl, that they will do, to us at least, no evil!—they are King Charles's men, without doubt, churchmen and cavaliers, all of them!—any one can see that! and, though I know not that we have much to fear from either party, from them at least we have no earthly cause for apprehension. I will go forth, however, to meet them, and to learn their errand—meantime, fear nothing."

"Oh! you mistake me," she answered at once; "oh! you mistake me very much; for I did not even for a moment fear personally anything; it was for my poor mother I was first alarmed; and all our good neighbors; and indeed all the country around, that shows so beautifully and happy this fair evening!—oh! but this civil war is a dread thing; and dread I fear will be the reckoning of those who make it."

"Who make it *without cause*, my daughter! A dreadful thing it is at all times, but it may be a necessary, ay! and a holy thing—when freedom or religion is at stake! but we will

talk of this at another time; for see, they have already reached the furthest gate, and I must speak with them before they enter here, let them be who they may."

And with the words, pressing her hand with fatherly affection, "Farewell," he said, "be of good cheer. I purpose to return forthwith." And then he left the room, and hurrying down the steps of the porch, walked far more rapidly than seemed to suit his advanced years and sedentary habits, across the park to meet the gallant company.

A gallant company, indeed, it was, and such as was but rarely seen in that wild region—being the train of a young gentleman, of some eight or nine and twenty years, splendidly mounted, and dressed in the magnificent fashion of those days, in a half-military costume; for his buff coat was lined throughout with rich white satin, and fringed and looped with silver, a falling collar of rich Flanders lace flowing down over his steel gorget, and a broad scarf of blue silk supporting his long silver-hilted rapier. By his side rode another person, not certainly a menial servant, and yet clearly not a gentleman of birth and lineage; and after these a dozen or more armed attendants followed, all wearing the blue scarf and black feathers of the royalists, all nobly mounted, and accoutred, like regular troopers, with sword and dagger, pistols and musquetoons, although they wore no breastplates, nor any sort of defensive armor.

A brace of jet-black grayhounds, without a speck of white upon their sleek and glistening hides, ran bounding merrily beside their master's stirrup, and a magnificent goshawk sat hooded on his wrist, with silver bells and richly-decorated jesses. So much had the ladies observed, even before the old man reached the party; but when he did so, and paused for a moment to address the leader, that gentleman immediately dismounted from his horse; and after shaking hands, cordially,

the two advanced together, apparently engaged in eager conversation, toward the entrance of the hall.

This went far, on the instant, to restore confidence to Annabel; but when they came so near that their faces could be seen distinctly from the windows, and she could mark a well-pleased smile upon the venerable features of her friend, she was completely reassured. A single glance, moreover, at the face of the stranger, showed her that the most timid maiden need hardly feel a moment's apprehension, even if he were her country's or her faction's foe; for it was not merely handsome, striking, and distinguished, but such as indicates, or is supposed to indicate, the presence of a kindly disposition and good heart. Annabel had not much time, indeed, for making observations at that time; for it was scarce a minute before they had ascended the short flight of steps, which led to the stone porch, and entered the door of the vestibule. A moment longer, and they came into the parlor, the worthy vicar leading the young man by the hand, as if he were a friend of ten years' standing.

"Annabel," he exclaimed, in a joyous voice, as he crossed the threshold of the room, "this is the young Lord de Vaux, son of your honored father's warmest and oldest friends, and in years long gone by, but unforgotten, my kindest patron. He has come hither, bearing letters from *his* father—knowing not until now that you, my child, were so long since bereaved—letters of commendation, praying the hospitality of Ingleborough, and the best influence of the name of Hawkwood, to levy men to serve King Charles in the approaching war. I have already told him—"

"How glad, how welcome, doubtless, would have been his coming"—answered Annabel, advancing easily to meet the youthful nobleman, although a deep blush covered all her pale features, as she performed her unaccustomed duty—"had my dear father been alive, or my poor mother"—casting a rapid

glance toward the invalid—"been in health to greet him. As it is"—she continued, "the Lord de Vaux, I doubt not in the least, will pardon any imperfections in our hospitality, and believe, if in aught we err, it will be error not of friendliness, or of feeling, but of experience only; seeing I am but a young mistress of a household. You, my kind friend, and Mistress Somers, will doubtless tarry with us, while my Lord de Vaux gives us the favor of his presence."

"Loath should I be, indeed, dear lady, thus to intrude upon your sorrows, could I at all avoid it," replied the cavalier—"and charming, as it must needs be, to enjoy the hospitalities tendered by such a one as you, I do assure you, were I myself concerned alone, I would remount my horse at once, and ride away, rather than force myself upon your courtesy. But, when I tell you that my father's strong opinion holds it a matter of importance—importance almost vital—to the king, and to the cause of church and state in England, that I should levy some force here of cavaliers—where there be so few heads of noble houses living—to act in union with Sir Philip Musgrave, in the north, and with Sir Marmaduke Langdale, I both trust and believe that you will overlook the trouble and intrusion, in fair consideration of the motives which impel me."

"Pray," said she, smiling gayly, "pray, my Lord de Vaux, let us now leave apology and compliment—most unaffectedly and truly, I am glad to receive you both as the son of my father's valued friend, and as a faithful servant of our most gracious king—we will do our best to entertain you; and Doctor Somers will aid you, with his counsel and experience, in furthering your military levies. How left you the good earl, your father? I have heard mine speak of him many times, and ever in the highest terms of praise, when I was but a little girl—and my poor mother much more recently; before this sad calamity affected her so fearfully."

Her answer, as it was intended, had the effect of putting an end to all formality, and setting the young nobleman completely at ease. The conversation took a general tone, and was maintained on all sides with sufficient spirit, until—when Annabel retired for a little space, to conduct her mother to her chamber—De Vaux found himself wondering how a mere country-girl, who had lived a life so secluded and domestic, should have acquired graces, of both mind and manner, such as he never had discovered in court ladies; while she was struck, even in a greater degree, by the frank, unaffected bearing, the gay wit, and sparkling anecdote, blended with many a touch of deeper feeling, which characterized the youthful nobleman's conversation.

After a little while she reappeared, and, with her, was announced the evening meal, the pleasant, old-fashioned supper; and, as he sat beside her, while she presided, full of calm, modest self-possession, at the head of her hospitable board, with no one to encourage her, or lend her countenance, except the good old vicar and his homely helpmate, he could not but draw fresh comparisons, all in her favor, too, between the quiet, graceful confidence of the ingenuous girl before him, and the *minaudéries* and the meretricious airs of the court dames, who had been hitherto the objects of his passing admiration.

Cheerfully, then, and pleasantly, the evening passed away; and when upon her little couch, hard by the invalid's sick bed, Annabel thought over the events of the past day, she felt concerning young De Vaux, rather as if he had been an old familiar friend, with whom she had renewed an intercourse long interrupted, than as of a mere acquaintance, whom that day had first introduced, and whom the next might possibly remove for ever. Something there was, when they met next, at breakfast, on the following morning, of blushing bashfulness in Annabel, which he had not observed, nor she before experienced; but it passed rapidly away, and left her self-possessed and tranquil.

And surely in the sparkling eye, the eager haste, with which he broke away from his conversation with Doctor Somers, as she entered—in his hand half-extended, and then half-awkwardly, half-timidly withdrawn, there was much indication of excited feeling, widely at variance with the polite and even formal mannerism inculcated and practised in the court of the unhappy Charles. It needs not, however, to dwell on passing conversations, to narrate every trifling incident. The morning meal once finished, De Vaux mounted his horse, and rode forth in accordance with the directions of the loyal clergyman, to visit such among the neighboring farmers, as were most likely to be able to assist him in levying a horse regiment.

A few hours passed; and he returned full of high spirits and hot confidence—he had met everywhere assurances of good will to the royal cause; had succeeded in enlisting some ten or more stout and hardy youths, and had no doubt of finally accomplishing the object which he had in view, to the full height of his aspirations.

After dinner, which, in those primitive days, was served at noon, he was engaged for a time in making up despatches for his father, which having been sent off by one of his own trusty servants to the castle in Northumberland, he went out, and joined his lovely hostess in the sheltered garden, which I have described above; and there they lingered until the sun was sinking in the west, behind the huge and purple-headed hills that screened the horizon in that direction. The evening circle and the social meal succeeded; and when they parted for the night, if Annabel and young De Vaux could not be said to be enamored, as indeed they could scarcely be as yet, they had at least made so much progress to that end, that each esteemed the other the most agreeable and charming person, it had been hitherto their fortune to encounter. And—although this was decidedly the furthest point to which the thoughts of Annabel

extended—when he had lain down on his bed, with the sweet rays of the harvest moon flooding his room with quiet lustre, and the voice of the murmuring rivulet, and the low flutter of the west wind in the giant sycamores, blending themselves into a soft and soothing melody—the young lord felt himself considering how gracefully that fair pale girl would fill the place which had been long left vacant by his mother in the grand hall of Gilsland castle.

CHAPTER V.

Another and another day succeeded—a week slipped away—a second and a third followed it; and still the ranks of the royal regiment, though they filled rapidly, had many vacancies, and arms had yet to be provided, and standards and musicians; messengers went and came continually between the castle and the manor, and all was haste and confusion in the lone glens of Wharfdale. Meantime a change was wrought in Annabel's demeanor, and all who saw remarked it—there was a brighter glow than ever had been seen before, in her transparent cheeks; her eyes sparkled almost as brilliantly as Marian's; her lips were frequently arrayed in bright and beaming smiles; her step was light and springy as a young fawn's on the mountain. Annabel was in love, and had discovered that she was so—Annabel was beloved and knew it—the young lord's declaration and the old earl's consent had come together; and the sweet maiden's heart was given, and her hand promised, almost before the asking. Joy! joy! was there not joy in Ingleborough?

The good old vicar's tranquil air of satisfaction; the loud and eloquent mirth of his kind-hearted housewife—the merry, gay

congratulations of wild Marian, who wrote from York, half crazy with excitement and delight—the evident and lovely happiness of the young promised bride—what pen of man may even aspire to write them. All was decided—all arranged—the marriage was, so far, at least, to be held private, that no festivities or public merriment should bruit it to the world, until the civil strife should be decided, and the king's power established; which all men fancied, at that day, it would be by a single battle—and which, had Rupert wheeled upon the flank of Essex at Edge-Hill, instead of chasing the discomfited and flying horse of the Roundheads, miles from the field of battle, would probably have been the case.

The old earl had sent the wedding gifts to his son's chosen bride, had promised to be present at the nuptials, the day of which was fixed already; but it had been decided that when De Vaux should be forced to join the royal armies his young wife should continue to reside at Ingleborough, with her bereaved mother and fond sister, until the wished-for peace should unite England once again in bonds of general amnity; and the bridegroom find honorable leisure to lead his wife in state to his paternal mansions.

Days sped away—how fast they seemed to fly to those happy young lovers! How was the very hour of their first interview noted, and marked with white in the deep tablets of their minds—how did they shyly, yet fondly recount each to the other the first impressions of their growing fondness—how did they bless the cause that brought them thus together. *Proh cæca mens mortalium!*—oh! the short-sighted scope of mortal vision! alas! for one—for both!

The wedding day was fixed, and now was fast approaching; and hourly was Marian, with their good uncle and his dame, expected at the hall, and wished for, and discoursed of by the lovers—"and oh!"—would Annabel say, half-sportively, and

half in earnest—"well was it for my happiness, De Vaux, that *she* was absent when you first came hither, for had you seen *her* first, her far superior beauty, her bright wild radiant face, her rare arch *naïveté*, her flashing wit, and beautiful enthusiasm would—*must* have captivated you all at once—and what had then become of your poor Annabel?"

And then would the young lord vow—that had he met her first in the most glorious courts of Europe, with all the gorgeous beauties of the world to rival her, she would alone have been the choice of his soul—his soul, first touched by her, of woman! And then he would ask in lowered tones, and with a sly simplicity of manner, whether, if *he* had loved another, she could have still loved him; to which, with all the frank and fearless purity that was so beautiful a trait in Annabel—"Oh yes—" she would reply, and gaze with calm reliance, as she did so, into her lover's eyes—"oh yes, dear Ernest—and then how miserably wretched must I have been through my whole life hereafter. Oh! yes, I loved you—though then I knew it not, nor indeed thought at all about it, until you spoke to me—I loved you dearly!—and I believe it would almost have killed me to look upon you afterward as the wife of another."

The wedding day was but a fortnight distant; and strange to say it was the very day, two months gone, which had seen their meeting. Wains had arrived from Gilsland, loaded with arms and uniforms, standards and ammunitions; two brothers of young De Vaux, young gallant cavaliers, had come, partly to officer the men, partly to do fit honor to their brother's nuptials.

The day, although the season had now advanced far into brown October was sunny, mild, and beautiful; the regiment had, for the first time, mustered in arms in Ingleborough park, and a gay show they made, with their glittering casques and corslets, fresh from the armorer's anvil, and their fluttering scarfs, and dancing plumes, and bright emblazoned banners.

The sun was in the act of setting—De Vaux and Annabel were watching his decline from the same window in the hall whence she had first discovered his unexpected coming; when, as on that all eventful evening, a little dust was seen arising on the high road beyond the river; and, in a moment, a small mounted party became visible, amidst which might be readily descried the fluttering of female garments!

"It is my sister"—exclaimed Annabel, jumping up on the instant, and clasping her hands eagerly—"it is my dear, dear sister—come, Ernest, come, let us go and meet dear Marian." No time was lost, but arm-in-arm the lovers sallied forth, and met the little train just on this side of the park-gate.

Marian sprang from her horse, light as a spirit of the air, and rushed into her sister's arms, and clung there with a long and lingering embrace, and as she raised her head, a bright tear glittered on either silky eyelash. De Vaux advanced to greet her, but as he did so, earnestly perusing the lineaments of his fair future sister, he was most obviously embarrassed, his manner was confused, and even agitated, his words faltered. And *she*, whose face had been a second before, beaming with the bright crimson of excitement—whose eye had looked round eagerly and gladly to mark the chosen of her sister—*she* turned as pale as ashes—brow, cheeks, and lips—pale, almost livid!—and her eye fell abashed, and did not rise again till he had finished speaking. None noticed it but Annabel; for all the party were engaged in gay congratulations, and—they recovering themselves immediately—nothing more passed, that could create surmise—but *she* did notice it, and her heart sank for a moment, and all that evening she was unusually grave and silent; and, had not her usual demeanor been so exceedingly calm and subdued, her strange dejection must have been seen, and wondered at, by her assembled kinsfolk.

CHAPTER VI.

THE morning after Marian's arrival at the manor, was one of those bright lovely dawns, sure harbingers of sweet and sunny days, that often interrupt the melancholy progress of an English autumn; fairer and softer, as the season waxed older, and more enchanting from the contrast, which they can not fail to suggest, between their balmy mildness, and the chilly winds and gloomy fogs of the approaching winter. The sky was altogether cloudless, yet it had nothing of the deep azure hue which it presents in summer, resembling in its tints and its transparency a canopy, if such a thing could be, of living aqua-marine, and kindled by a flood of pure, pale yellow lustre.

None of the trees were wholly leafless, though none, perhaps, unless it were a few old oaks, but had lost something of their summer foliage; and their changed colors varying from the deepest green, through all the shades of yellow, down to the darkest amber, although prophetic of their coming doom, and therefore saddening, with a sort of chastened spiritual sorrow, the heart of the observer, added a solemn beauty to the scenery, that well accorded with its grand and romantic character.

The vast round-headed hills, seen through the filmy haze which floated over them, filling up their dells and hollows, showed every intermediate hue from the red russet of their heathery foreground, to the rich purple of their furthest peaks. The grass, which had not yet begun to lose its verdant freshness, was thickly meshed with gossamer, all sprinkled by the pure and plenteous dews, and flashing like a net of diamonds upon a ground of emerald velvet, to the early sunbeams.

It was summer—late indeed in that lovely season, but still full summer, with all her garniture of green, her pomp of full-blown flowers—the glorious mature womanhood of the year! when Marian left her home. Not a trace of decay or change was visible on its bright brow, not a leaf of its embroideries was altered, not a bud in its garland was blighted. She had returned; and everything, though beautiful and glowing, bore the plain stamp of approaching dissolution. The west wind blew as softly as in June through the tall sycamores, but after every breath, while all was lulled and peaceful, the broad sere leaves came whirling down from the shaken branches, on which their hold was now so slight, that but the whisper of a sigh was needed to detach them; the skies—the waters—were as pure as ever, as beautifully clear and lucid, but in their brightness there was a chill and glassy glitter, as different from their warm sheen under a July sun, as is the keen unnatural radiance of a blue eye in the consumptive girl, from its rich lustrous light in a mature and healthy woman.

Was it the contemplation of this change that brought so sad a cloud over the brow of lovely Marian Hawkwood; so dull a gloom into her speaking eye; so dread a paleness upon the ripe damask of her cheek? Sad indeed always is such contemplation—sorrowful and grave thoughts must it awake in the minds of those who think the least, to revisit a fair well-known scene which they have quitted in the festal flush of summer, when all the loveliness they dwelt on so fondly is flown or flying. It brings a chill upon the spirit, like that which touches the last guest—

> "Who treads alone
> Some banquet hall deserted,
> Whose lights ars fled,
> Whose garlands dead,
> And all save he departed."

It wakes a passing anguish, like that which thrills to the heart's core of him, who, after years of wandering in a foreign clime, returns to find the father, whom he left still in the prime of vigorous and active manhood, bowed, bent, gray-haired, and paralytic; the mother, whom he saw at their last parting, glorious in summer beauty, withered, and wrinkled, and bereft of every trace of former comeliness. All this it does—at times to all! to the reflective always!—the solitary contemplation of the decaying year.

Yet it was not this alone, it was not this *at all*, that blanched the cheek and dimmed the glance of Marian, as at a very early hour of the morning she was sauntering alone, with downcast eyes and slow uncertain gait, beside the margin of the stream, in the sheltered garden. For she did not, in truth, seem to contemplate at all the face of external nature, or so much as to note the changes which had taken place during her absence; yet were those changes very great, and nowhere probably so strongly marked as in the very spot where she was wandering, for when she stood there last to cull a nosegay, ere she parted, the whole of that fair nook was glowing with the brightest colors, and redolent with the most fragrant perfumes, while hundreds of feathered songsters were filling every brake and thicket with bursts of joyous melody—and now only a few, the hardiest of the late autumnal flowers, displayed their scattered blossoms, and those too crisp and faded, among sere leaves and withered branches; while, for the mellow warblings of the thrush and blackbird, nothing was heard except the feeble piping of a solitary robin, mixed with the wailing rush of the swollen streamlet.

For nearly an hour she walked to and fro buried in deep and melancholy silence, and thinking, as it seemed from her air and gestures, most profoundly—occasionally she paused for a few seconds in her walk to and fro, and stood still,

gazing abstractedly on some spot in the withered herbage, on some pool of the brooklet, with her mind evidently far away, and once or twice she clasped her hands, and wrung them passionately, and sighed very deeply. While she was yielding thus to some deep inward sorrow—for it could be no trivial passing grief that had so suddenly and so completely changed so quick and gay a spirit—a gentle footstep sounded upon the gravel-walk, behind a cluster of thick leafy lilacs, and in a moment Annabel stepped from their screen upon the mossy greensward. Her pale and pensive features were even paler and more thoughtful than was common, and her eyes showed as if she had been weeping, yet her step was as light and elastic as a young fawn's, and a bright smile dimpled her cheek, as she addressed her sister.

"Dear Marian, why so early? And why did you not call me to share your morning walk? What ails you, dearest? tell me. For I have seen you, from my window, walking here up and down so sorrowful and sad—"

"Oh, can you ask me—can you ask me, Annabel?" exclaimed the lovely girl, in a wild, earnest burst of passion—"can you not see that my heart is breaking?" and with the words she flung her arms about her sister's neck, and burying her face in her bosom fell into an agony of tears.

Annabel clasped Marian to her heart, and held her there for many moments, kissing away the big drops from her cheeks, and soothing her with many a kind and soft caress, before she replied to her incoherent and wild words—but when her violent sobbing had subsided—

"Dearest," she said, "I do not understand at all, nor can I even guess, what had so grievously afflicted you; but, if you fancy that we shall be parted, that our lives will hereafter be divided, and weep for that fond fancy, it is but a false apprehension that distresses you. I go not hence at all, dear sister,

until these fearful wars be over; and, then, I go not till the course of time shall place De Vaux in his good father's station, which, I pray Heaven, shall not fall out for years. And when I do go—when I do go away from this dear happy spot, you can not, no, you *did* not dream, my sister, that you should not go with me. Oh, if you did dream that, it would be very hard for me to pardon you.

"Oh, no—no! no! dear Annabel," replied the other, not lifting up her eyes from the fond bosom on which she hung so heavily, and speaking in a thick husky voice, "it is not that at all; but I am so unhappy—so miserable—so despairing! Oh, would to God—oh, would to God! that I had never gone hence—or that Ernest De Vaux, at least, had not come hither!"

"Nay! now, I must know what you mean," Annabel answered mildly, but at the same time very firmly; "I must, indeed, dear Marian; for either such words have a meaning, in which case it is absolutely right that I, *your* sister and *his* affianced wife, should know it; or if they have not any, are cruel equally and foolish. So tell me—tell me, dear one, if there be aught that I should know; and, in all cases, let me share your sorrow."

"Oh! do not—do not ask me, Annabel; oh! oh! to think that we two, who have been so happy, should be wretched now."

"I know not what you would say, Marian; but your strange words awake strange thoughts within me! We have, indeed, been happy! fond, happy, innocent, dear sisters; and I can see no cause why we should now be otherwise. I, at least, am still happy, Marian, unless it be to witness your wild sorrow; and, if I know myself, no earthly sorrow would ever make me wretched, much less repining, or despairing."

"Yes, you—yes, you indeed may yet be happy, blessed with a cheerful home, a noble, gallant husband, and it may be one day, sweet prattlers at your knee, but, I—oh! God!"

and she again burst into a fierce agony of tears and sobbing. Her sister, for a time, strove to console her but she soon found not only that her efforts were in vain, but that, so far as she could judge, Marian's tears only flowed the faster, her sobs became more suffocating, the more she would have soothed them. When she became aware of this, then she withdrew gradually her arms from her waist, and spoke to her in a calm, melancholy voice, full at the same time of deep sadness, and firm, decided resolution.

"Marian," she said, "I see, and how I am grieved to see it, no words can possibly express, that you look not to me for sympathy or consolation—nay, more, that you shrink back from my caresses, as if they were insincere or hateful to you. Your words, too, are so wild and whirling, that for my life I can not guess what is their meaning, or their cause—I only can suspect, or I should rather say, can only *dread*, that you have suffered some very grievous wrong, or done some very grievous sin; and as I must believe the last impossible, my fears still centre on the first dark apprehension. Could you confide in me, I might advise, might aid, and could, at least, most certainly console you! Why you can not or will not trust me, *you* can know *only*. Side by side have we grown up, since we were little tottering things, guiding our weak steps hand in hand in mutual dependence, seldom apart, I might say *never*—for now, since you have been away, I have thought of you half the day, and dreamed of you all night—my earliest comrade, my best friend, my own, my only sister! And now we are two grown-up maidens, with no one exactly fit to counsel or console us, except ourselves alone—since it has pleased our heavenly Father, in his wisdom, for so long to deprive us of our dear mother's guidance. We are two lone girls, Marian, and never yet, so far as I know or can recollect, have we had aught to be ashamed of, or any secret one should not have com-

municated to the other. And now there is not one thought in my mind, one feeling or affection in my heart, which I would hide from you, my sister. What then can be this heavy sin, or sorrow, which you are now ashamed, or fearful, to relate to one, who surely loves you as no one else can do, beneath the canopy of heaven? Marian, you must reply to me in full, or I must leave you till better thoughts shall be awakened in your soul, and till you judge more truly of those who most esteem you."

"Too true! it is too true!" Marian replied—"no one has ever loved me as you have done, sweet Annabel—and now, no one will love me any more—no one—no one, for ever. But you are wrong, quite wrong, when you suppose that any one has injured me, or that as yet I have *done* any wrong; alas! alas! that I should even have *thought* sin! Oh! no; Annabel, dear Annabel, I will bear all my woes myself, and God will give me grace to conquer all temptations. Pardon me, sister dear, pardon me; for it is not that I am ashamed, or that I fear to tell you; but that to save my own life, I would not plant one thorn in your calm bosom. No! I will see you happy; and will resist the evil one, that he shall flee from me; and God will give me strength, and you will pray for me, and we shall *all* be blessed."

As she spoke thus, the wildness and the strangeness of her manner passed away, and a calm smile flickered across her features, and she looked her sister steadfastly in the eye, and cast her arms about her neck, and kissed her tenderly as she finished speaking.

But it was plain to see that Annabel was by no means satisfied; whether it was that she was anxious merely, and uneasy about the discomposure of her sister's mind; or whether something of suspicion had disturbed the even tenor of her own, appeared not. Her color came and went more quickly than was

usual to her, and the glance of her gentle blue eye dwelt with a doubting and irresolute expression on Marian's face, as she made answer:—

"Very glad am I that, as you tell me, Marian, you have not suffered aught, or done aught evil; and I trust that you tell me truly. Beyond this, I can not—I can not, I confess it—sympathize with you at all; for in order to sympathize, one most understand, and that, you know, I do not. What sin you should have thought of, I can not so much as conceive. You say you have resisted your temptations hitherto—but, oh, what possible temptations to aught evil can have beset you in this dear, peaceful home? I doubt not that you will be strengthened to resist them further. You tell me, Marian, that you would not plant a thorn in my calm bosom. It is true that my bosom was calm yestermorn, and very happy; but now I should speak falsely, were I to say that it is so. What *thorn* you would plant in my heart I know not, by speaking openly—nor how you could suppose it; but this I *do know*, Marian, that you have set distrust, and dark suspicion, and deep sorrow, in my soul this morning: distrust of yourself, dear Marian—for what can these half-confidences breed except distrust? suspicion of, I know not—wish not to know—dare not to fancy, what; deep sorrow that, already, even from one short separation, a great gulf is spread out between us. I will not press you *now* to tell me any more; but this I must impress upon you, that you have laid a burden upon me, which, save you only, no earthly being can remove; which nothing can alleviate except its prompt removal. Nay! Marian, nay! answer me nothing now—nothing in this strong heat of passionate emotion! think of it at your calmer leisure, and, if you can, in duty to yourself and others, give me your ample confidence, I pray you, Marian, do so. In the meantime go to your chamber, dearest, and wipe away these traces of your tears, and re-arrange your hair. Our guests will be as-

sembled before this, and I have promised Ernest that we will all ride out, and see his falcons fly, this beautiful morning."

Marian made no reply at all, but following her sister into the house, hurried up to her chamber, to re-adjust her garments, and remove from her face the signs of her late disorder. Meanwhile, sad and suspicious of she knew not what, and only by a violent effort concealing her heart-felt anxiety, Annabel joined her guests in the pleasant summer-parlor. All were assembled when she entered, and all the preparations for the morning meal duly arranged upon the hospitable board—the morning meal, how widely different from that of modern days, how characteristic of those strong stirring times, when every gentleman was from his boyhood half a soldier, when every lady was prepared for deeds of heroism. There were no luxuries, effeminate and childish, of tea and chocolate, or coffee, although the latter articles were just beginning to be known; no dry toast or hot muffins; nor aught else of those things, which we now consider the indispensables of the first meal: but silver flagons mantling with mighty ale, and flasks of Bordeaux wine, and rich canary, crowned the full board, which groaned beneath sirloins of beef, and hams, heads of the wild boar, and venison pasties, and many kinds of game and wild fowl.

Ernest de Vaux arose, as Annabel came in, from the seat which he had occupied by the good vicar's lady, whom he had been regaling with a thousand anecdotes of the court, and as many gay descriptions of the last modes, till she had quite made up her mind that he was absolute perfection, and hastened forward to offer her his morning salutation. But there was something of embarrassment in *his* demeanor, something of coldness in *her* manner, which was perceived for a moment by all her relatives and friends; but it passed away, as it were, in a moment; for, by an effort, he recovered almost instantly his self-possession, and began talking with light, careless pleasantry,

that raised a smile upon the lips of all who heard him, and had the effect immediately of chasing the cloud from the brow of Annabel. And she, after a few minutes, as if she had done injustice to her lover in her heart, and was desirous of effacing its remembrance from both herself and him, gave free rein to her feelings, and was the same sweet, joyous creature that she had been, since his arrival had awakened new sensations and new dreams in her young, guileless heart.

Then, before half an hour had elapsed, more beautiful, perhaps, than ever, Marian made her appearance. Her rich profusion of brown curls clustered on her cheeks, and flowed down her neck from beneath a slashed Spanish hat of velvet, with a long ostrich feather, and her unrivaled figure was set off to more than usual advantage, by the long waist and flowing draperies of her green velvet riding-dress. Her face was, perhaps, somewhat paler than its ordinary hue, when she first entered, but as she met the eye of Ernest, brow, cheeks, and neck, were crimsoned with a burning flush, which passed away, however, instantly, leaving her not the least embarrassed or confused, but perfectly collected, and as it seemed, full of a quiet, innocent mirthfulness.

Nothing could be more perfect than was her manner, during the long, protracted meal, toward her sister's lover. She seemed to feel toward him, already, as if he were a tried friend and brother. Her air was perfectly familiar, as she addressed him, yet free from the least touch of forwardness, the slightest levity or coquettishness. She met his admiring gaze—for he did, at times, gaze on her with visible admiration, yet admiration of so quiet and dispassionate a kind, as a good brother might bestow upon a sister's beauty—with calm unconsciousness, or with a girlish mirth, that defied misconstruction.

And Annabel looked on—alas for Annabel!—and felt her doubts and suspicions vanishing away every moment. The

vague distrust that had crept into her heart, melted away like mist wreaths from before the sunbeam. She only wondered now, what the anxiety, what the distrust could possibly have been, which, for a moment, had half maddened her.

Then she began to marvel, what could the sorrow be which, scarce an hour before, had weighed so heavily on Marian; and which had in that brief space so utterly departed. "It must be," she thought, as she gazed on her pure, speaking features, and the clear sparkle of her bright blue eye, "that she too loves, loves possibly in vain; that she has lost her young heart during her absence from her home; and has now overmastered her despair, her soul-consuming anguish, to sympathize in her sister's happiness." And then she fancied how she would win from her that secret sorrow, and soothe it till she should forget the faithless one, and tend her with a mother's fond anxiety. Alas! alas, for Annabel!

CHAPTER VII.

THE morning meal was ended; the sun already high in the clear heavens, and the thin mist wreaths were dispersing from the broad valley, and the bright river; and now a merry cavalcade swept round the lawn from the stables — a dozen foresters and grooms, well mounted, with led horses, two of the latter decked with velvet side-saddles, which were then used by ladies; and seven or eight serving-men, on foot, with hounds and spaniels in their leashes; and among them, conspicuous above the rest, the falconer, with his attendants, one bearing a large frame whereon were *cast* — such was the technical jargon used in the mystery of trainers — eight or ten long-winged falcons, goshawks, and gerfalcons, and peregrines, with all their gay paraphernalia of hoods, and bells, and jesses.

A little while afterward the fair girls came out, Annabel now attired like her sister in the velvet riding-robe, and the slashed, graceful hat, and were assisted to their saddles by the young lover. Then he, too, bounded to his noble charger's back, and the others of the company in their turn mounted, and the whole party rode off, merrily, to the green meadows by the fair river's side.

Away! away! the spaniels are uncoupled, and questing far and wide among the long green flags, and water briony, and mallows, that fringe the banks of many a creek and inlet of the river — over the russet stubbles — up the thick alder coppices, that fringe the steep ravines.

Away! away! the smooth soft turf, the slight and brushy hedges, invite the free and easy gallop, invite the fearless leap! Away! with hawk unhooded on the wrist and ready — with graceful seat, light hand, and bounding heart! See how the busy spaniels snuff the hot scent, and ply their feathery tails among the dry fern on the bank of that old sunny ditch; there has the game been lately — hold hard, bold cavaliers — hold hard, my gentle ladies! — hurry not now the dogs. Hush! hark! the black King Charles is whimpering already: that beautiful long-eared and silky water-spaniel joins in the subdued chorus — how they thread in and out the withering fern-stalks, how they rush through the crackling brambles! Yaff! yaff! — now they give tongue aloud — yaff! yaff! yaff! yaff! — and whir-r-r upsprings the well-grown covey — now give your hearts to the loud whoop! — now fling your hawks aloft! — now gather well your bridles in your hands, now spur your gallant horses — on! on! sweep over the low fence, skim the green meadow, dash at the rapid brook — ladies and cavaliers pell-mell — all riding for themselves and careless of the rest, forgetful of all fear, all thought,

in the fierce, fast career, as with eyes all turned heavenward to mark the soaring contest of the birds, trusting their good steeds only, to bear them swift and safely, they drive in giddy routes down the broad valley.

And now the flight is over, each gallant hawk has struck his cowering quarry; the lures are shaken in the air, the falconer's whoop and whistle recall the hovering falcon, and on they go at slower pace to beat for fresh game—and lo! flip-flap, there rises the first woodcock of the season.

"Ho! mark him—mark him down, good forester—we must not miss that fellow—the very prince of game—the king he would be, save that gray heronshaw of right has old claim to the throne of falconrie!"

"Lo! there, my masters, he is down—down in that gulley's bank, where the broom and the brachens feather the sunny slope, and the long, rank grasses seem almost to choke its mossy runnel."

"Quick! quick! unhood the lanner—the young and speckled-breasted lanner!—cast off the old gray-headed gerfalcon—soh, Diamond, my brave bird! mark his quick, glancing eye, and his proud crest, soh! cast him off, and he will wheel around our heads, nor leave us till we flush the woodcock. No! no! hold the young lanner hard, let him not fly, he is too mettlesome and proud of wing to trust to—and couple all the dogs up, except the stanch red setter."

"Now we will steal on him up wind, and give him every chance."

"Best cross the gully here, fair dames, for it is something deep and boggy, and if ye were to brave it, in the fury of the gallop, you might be mired for your pains."

"That bird will show you sport, be sure of it, for lo! the field beyond is thickly set with stunted thorns, and tufts of alder-bushes; if your hawks be not keen of sight, and quick of wings

too, be sure that he will dodge them; and if he reach yon hillside only, all covered as it is with evergreens, dense holly brakes, and thick oak sapplings, he is as safe there in that covert, as though he were a thousand leagues away in some deep glen of the wild Atlas mountains."

"Lo! there he goes, the gray hawk after him—by heaven! in fair speed he outstrips the gerfalcon, he does not condescend to dodge or double, but flies wild and high toward the purple moorland, and there we can not follow him."

"Ride, De Vaux, gallop for your life—cut in, cut in between the bird and the near ridge—soh! bravely done, black charger—now cast the lanner loose! so! that will turn him."

"See! he has turned; and now he must work for it. The angle he has made has brought old Diamond up against his weather wing; now! he will strike—now! now!"

But lo! the wary bird has dodged, and the hawk who had soared, and was in the act of pouncing, checked his fleet pinion and turned after him—how swift he flies dead in the wind's eye—and the wind is rising; he can not face it now—tack and tack, how he twists—how cleverly he beats to windward; but now the odds are terribly against him, the cunning falcons have divided, and are now flying sharply to cut him off, one at each termination of his tacks—the lanner has outstripped him.

"Whoop! Robin, whoop!—soh! call him up the wind—up the wind, falconer, or he will miss his stroke. There! there he towers—up! up! in airy circles—he poises his broad wing—he swoops—alack, poor woodcock! but no! he has—by Pan, the god of hunters!—he *has* missed his cast—no swallow ever winged it swifter than the wild bird of passage: not now does he fly high among the clouds, but skims the very surface of the lawn, twisting round every tree and baffling the keen falcons."

Now he is scarce ten paces from his covert; the old bird,

Diamond, flying like lightning, struggles in vain to weather him—in vain—the game dashes behind the boll of a tall upright oak, darts down among the hollies, and is lost. Well flown, brave quarry—well flown, noble—ha! the hawk, the brave old hawk, bent only on retrieving his lost flight, his eye set too steadily on the bird which he so fiercely struggled to outfly, has dashed with the full impetus of his arrowy flight against the gnarled stem of the oak. He rebounds from it like a ball from the iron target: never so much as once flaps his fleet pinions; tears not the ground with beak or single. Diamond, brave Diamond is dead—and pitying eyes look down on him; and gentle tears are shed; and the soft hands that were wont to fondle his high crest and smooth his ruffled wings, compose his shattered pinions, and sleek his blood-stained plumage. Alas, brave Diamond!—but fate—it is the fate of war!

Another flight—another glowing gallop to make the blood dance blithely in our veins—to drive dull care from our hearts!

But no, the sylvan meal is spread: down by that leafy nook, under the still green canopy of that gigantic oak, where the pure spring wells out so clear and limpid, from the bright yellow gravel under its gnarled and tortuous roots—there is the snow-white linen spread on the mossy green sward; there the cold pasty and the larded capon tempt the keen appetite of the jolly sportsman; there, plunged in the glassy waters, the tall flasks of champagne are cooling! Who knows not the delicious zest with which we banquet on the green sward; the merry, joyous ease which, all restraint and ceremonial banished, renders the sylvan meal, in the cool shadow by the rippling brook, so indescribably delightful? And all who were collected there were for a moment happy!—and many, in sad after-days, remembered that gay feast, and dwelt upon the young hopes, which were so flattering then, hopes which so

soon decayed—and lingered on the contemplation of that soon perished bliss, as if the great Italian had erred, when he declared so wisely that to the sons of man—

"Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tiempo felice
Nella miseria."

The bright wine sparkled in the goblet, but brighter flashed the azure eyes of Marian, for her whole face was radiant with wild starry beauty. Was it the thrilling rapture of the gallop, that sent her blood boiling with strange excitement "through every petty artery of her body"—was it the spirit-stirring chase alone, or did the rich blood of the Gallic grape, sparingly tasted though it was, lend something of unnatural power? hark to the silvery tones of that sweet ringing laugh—and now how deep a blush mantles her brow, her neck, her bosom, when in receiving her glass from the hand of Ernest, their fingers mingled for a moment.

But Ernest is unmoved, and calm, and seemingly unconscious—and Annabel, fond Annabel, rejoices to mark her sister's spirits so happily, so fully, as it seems, recovered from that over-mastering sorrow. She saw not the hot blush, she noted not its cause—and yet, can it be—can it be that casual pressure was the cause?—can it be love?—love for a sister's bridegroom, that kindles so the eye—that flushes so the cheek—that thrills so the life-blood of lovely Marian! Away! away with contemplation.

Ernest reflects not, for his brow is smooth and all unruffled by a thought, his lips are smiling, his pulse calm and temperate—and Marian pauses not—and Annabel suspects not—Hush! they are singing. Lo! how the sweet and flute-like tones of the fair girls are blended with the rich and deep contralto of De Vaux. Lo! they are singing—singing the wood-notes wild of the great master of the soul—

"Heigho! sing heigho! under the green holly!
Most friendship is feigning,
Most loving mere folly!"

Alas for trusting Annabel!—soon shall she wake from her fond dream, soon wake to wo, to anguish. Again they mount their steeds—again they sweep the meadows, down to the very brink of the broad, deep, transparent Wharfe—and now the heronshaw is sprung. He flaps his dark grey vans, the hermit-bird of the waters, and slowly soars away, till the falconer's shrill whoop, and the sharp whistling flutter of the fleet pinions in his rear, arouse him to his danger. Up! up! he soars—up! up! scaling the very sky in small but swift gyrations—while side by side the well-matched falcons wheel circling around him still, and still out-topping him, till all the three are lost in the dull, fleecy clouds—the clouds!—no one had seen—no one has even dreamed, engrossed in the wild fervor of the sport, that all the sky was overclouded; and the thick blackness of the thunderstorm, driving up wind, and settling down in terrible proximity to the earth, was upon them unseen and unexpected.

Away! away! what heed they the dark storm-clouds—the increasing flash!—these bold equestrians! Heavens! what a flash—how keen! how close! how livid! the whole horizon shone out for a moment's space one broad blue glare of fearful living light—and simultaneously the thunder burst above them—a crash as of ten thousand pieces of earth's heaviest ordnance, shot off in one wild clatter. The horses of the party were all careering at their speed, their maddest speed, across a broad, green pasture, bordered on the right hand by the wide channel of the Wharfe and on the left by an impracticable fence of tall old thorns, with a deep ditch on either side, and a stout timber railing. The two fair sisters were in front, leading the joyous cavalcade, with their eyes in the clouds, their hearts

full of the fire of the chase, when that broad dazzling glare burst full in their faces.

Terrified by the livid flash and the appalling crash of the reverberated thunder, the horses of the sisters bolted diverse—Annabel's toward the broad, rapid Wharfe, between which and the meadow through which they had been so joyously careering, there was no fence or barrier at the spot where they were then riding—Marian's toward the dangerous oxfence, which has been mentioned! The charger of De Vaux, who rode next behind them, started indeed, and whirled about, but was almost immediately controlled by the strong arm and skilful horsemanship of his bold rider; but of the grooms who followed, several were instantly dismounted, and there were only three or four who, mastering their terrified and fractious beasts, galloped off to the aid of their young mistresses. They were both good equestrians, and ordinarily fearless, but in such peril what woman could preserve her wonted intrepidity unshaken—the sky as black as night, with ever and anon a sharp clear stream of the electric fluid dividing the dark storm-clouds, and the continuous thunder rolling and crashing overhead—their horses mad with terror, and endowed by that very madness with tenfold speed and strength!—Annabel, whose clear head, and calm, though resolute temper, gave her no small advantage over her volatile, impetuous sister, sat, it is true, as firmly in her saddle, as though she had been practising her menage in the riding-school—and held her fiery jennet with a firm, steady hand; but naturally her strength was insufficient to control its fierce and headlong speed; so that she saw upon the instant, that she must be carried into the whirling waters of the swift river—for a moment she thought of casting herself to the ground, but it scarcely required one moment of reflection to show her that such a course could lead but to destruction. So on she drove, erect and steady in her seat, guiding her horse well, and keep-

ing its head straight to the river bank, and hoping every instant to hear the tramp of De Vaux's charger overtaking her, and bringing succor—alas! for Annabel!—the first sound that distinctly met her ears was a wild piercing shriek—"Ernest—great God! *my* Ernest—help me!—save me!" It was the voice of Marian, the voice of her own cherished sister, calling on her betrothed—and he? Even in that dread peril, when life was on a cast, her woman heart prevailed above her woman fear, she turned, and saw the steed of Marian rushing with the bit between his teeth toward the dangerous fence, which lay, however, far more distant than the river to which her own horse was in terrible proximity! and he, her promised husband, the lord of her soul, he for whom *she* would have perished—oh! how willingly!—perished with but the one regret of that reparation—he had overlooked entirely, or heeded not at least, *her* peril to whom his faith was sworn; and even before that wild appealing cry, had started in pursuit—and was, as she looked round, in the act of whirling Marian from her saddle with one hand, while with the other he controlled his own strong war-horse.

When she first heard that cry, her spirit sank within her—but when she saw herself deserted, when the drear consciousness that she was not beloved, broke on her, it seemed as if an icebolt had pierced her heart of hearts! her eyes grew dim! there was a sound of rushing waters in her ear!—not the sound of the rushing river, although her horse was straining now up the last ascent that banked it!—her pulse stood still! Had Annabel then died, the bitterness of death was over. Before, however, she had so much as wavered in her saddle, much less lost rein or stirrup, a wild plunge, and the shock which ran through every nerve, as her horse leaped into the brimful river, awoke her for the moment to her present situation: unconsciously she had retained her seat—her horse was swimming boldly—a

loud plunge sounded from behind! another, and another! and the next instant her steed's head was seized by the stalwart arm of a young falconer, and turned toward the shore she had just quitted; her brain reeled round, and she again was senseless—thus was she borne to land, without the aid or intervention of him, who should have been the first to venture all, to lose all, for her safety. Alas! alas! for Annabel!

CHAPTER VIII.

When next she opened her eyes, she lay on her own bed, in her own well-known chamber, and the old nurse and the good vicar's wife were watching over her. As her lids rose, and she looked about her, all her intelligence returned upon the moment; and she was perfectly aware of all that had already passed, of all that she had still to undergo. "Well," she replied, to the eager and repeated inquiries after the state of her bodily and mental sensations, which were poured out from the lips of her assiduous watchers—"oh! I feel quite well, I do assure you—I was not hurt at all—not in the least—only I was so foolish as to faint from terror. But Marian, how is Marian?"

"Not injured in the least—but very anxious about you, sweet Annabel," replied Mistress Somers, "so much so, that I was obliged to force her from the chamber, so terrible was her grief—so violent her terror and excitement. Lord de Vaux snatched her from her horse, and saved her before he even saw your danger; he, too, is in a fearful state of mind; he has been at the door twenty times, I believe, within the hour; hark, that is his foot now, will you see him, dearest?"

A quick and chilly shudder ran through the whole frame of

the lovely girl, and a faint hue glowed once again in her pale cheek; but mastering her feelings, she made answer in her own notes of sweet, calm music.

"Not yet, dear Mistress Somers, not yet; but tell him, I beseech you, that I am better—well, indeed! and will receive his visit by-and-by; and, in the meantime, my good friend, I must see Marian—must see her directly, and alone. No! no! you must not hinder me of my desire, you know," she went on, with a faint and very melancholy smile, "you know of old, I am a wilful, stubborn girl when I make up my mind, and it is quite made up now, my good friend! so, I pray you let me see her; I am quite strong, I do assure you; so do, I beseech you, go and console my Lord de Vaux, and let nurse bring me Marian hither."

So firmly did she speak, and so resolved was the expression of her soft gentle features, that they no longer hesitated to comply with her request; and both retired with soft steps from the chamber.

Then Annabel half uprose from the pillows, which had propped her, and clasped her hands in attitude of prayer, and turned her beautiful eyes upward—her lips moved visibly, not in irregular impulsive starts, but with a smooth and ordered motion, as she prayed fervently, indeed, but tranquilly, for strength to do, and patience to endure, and grace to do and to endure alike with Christian love and Christian fortitude.

While she was thus engaged, a quick uncertain footstep, now light and almost tripping, now heavy and half faltering, approached the threshold; a gentle hand raised the latch once, and again let it fall, as if the comer was fluctuating between the wish to enter, and some vague apprehension which for the moment conquered the desire.

"Is it you, Marian?" asked the lovely sufferer; "oh, come in, come in, sister!" and she did come in, that bright lovely sufferer, her naturally high complexion almost unnaturally brilliant now, from the intensity of her hot blushes: her eyes were downcast, and she could not so much as look up into the sad sweet face of Annabel. Her whole frame trembled visibly, as she approached the bed, and her foot faltered very much; yet she drew near, and sitting down beside the pillow, took Annabel's hand tenderly between her own, and raised it to her warm lips, and kissed it eagerly and often.

Never, for a moment's space, did the eyes of Annabel swerve from her sister's features, from the moment she entered the door until she sat down by her side; but rested on them, as if through them they would peruse the secret soul with a soft, gentle scrutiny, that savored not at all of sternness or reproach. At last, as if she was fully satisfied, she dropped her eyelids, and for a little space, kept them close shut; while again her lips moved silently, and then pressing her sister's hand fondly, she said in a quiet soothing voice, as if she were alluding to an admitted fact, rather than asking a question—

"So you have met him before, Marian?"

A violent convulsion shook every limb of her whom she addressed, and the blood rushed in torrents to her brow; she bowed her head upon her sister's hand, and burst into a paroxysm of hysterical tears and sobbing, but answered not a word.

"Nay! nay! dear sister," exclaimed Annabel, bending down over her, and kissing her neck, which, like her brow and cheeks, was absolutely crimson, "Nay! nay! sweet Marian, weep not thus, I beseech you, there is no wrong done—none at all—there was no wrong in your seeing him, when you did so—it was at York, I must believe—nor in your *loving* him either, when you did so; for I had not then seen him, and of course could not love him. But it was *not* right, sweetest Marian, to let me be in ignorance of all this; only think, dearest, only think what would have been my agony, when I had come

to know, after I was a wife, that in myself becoming happy, I had brought misery on my second *self*, my own sweet sister! nay, do not answer me yet, Marian; for I can understand it all —almost all, that is—and I quite appreciate *your* motives, I am sure that you did not know that *he loved you*, for he does love you, Marian!—but fancied that he loved me only, and so resolved to control yourself, and crush down your young affections, and sacrifice yourself for me; thank God! oh! thank God, that your strength was not equal to the task, for had it been so, we had been wretched, oh! most wretched! But you must tell me all about it; for there is much I can not comprehend—when did you see him first, and where? Why did he never so much as hint to me, that he had known you? Why, when I wrote you word that he was here, and afterward, that I liked, loved, was about to marry him—why did you never write back that you knew him? And why, above all, when you came and found him here—here in your mother's house, why did you meet him as a stranger? I know it will be painful to you, dear one; but you must bear the pain; for it is necessary now, that there shall be no more mistakes. Be sure of one thing, dearest Marian, that I will never wed him; oh! not for worlds! I could not sleep one night, not one hour, in the thought that my bliss was your bane; but if he loves you as he ought, and as you love him, sister, for I can read your soul, he shall be yours at once; and I shall be more happy so—more happy tenfold, than pillowing my head upon a heart which beats for another—but he must explain all this, for I much fear me, he has dealt very basely by us both—I fear me much he is a bold, base man!"

"No! no!" cried Marian, eagerly raising her clear eyes to her sister's, full of ingenuous truth and zealous fire—"No! no! he is all good, and true, and noble! I, it is I only, who have for once been false and wicked; not altogether wicked,

Annabel, perhaps more foolish than to blame, at least in my intentions; but you *shall* hear all; you *shall* hear all, Annabel, and then judge for yourself," and then, still looking her sister quite steadily and truthfully in the face, she told her how at a ball in York, she had met the young nobleman, who had seemed pleased with her; had danced with her many times, and visited her, but never once named love, nor led her in the least to fancy he esteemed her, beyond a chance acquaintance; "but I loved him, oh! *how* I loved him, Annabel; almost from the first time I saw him, and I feared ever—ever and only—that by my bold, frank rashness, he might discover his power, and believe me forward and unmaidenly; weeks passed, and our intimacy ripened, and I became each hour more fondly, more devotedly, more madly—for it was madness all!—enamored of him.

"He met me ever as a friend, no more! The time came, when he was to leave York, and as he took leave of me he told me that he had just received despatches from *his* father, directing him to visit *mine;* and I, shocked by the coolness of his parting tone, and seeing indeed he had no love for me, scarcely noting what he said, told him not that I had *no father*, but I did tell him that I had one sweet sister, and suddenly extorted from him, unawares, a promise that he would never tell you he had known me. My manner, I am sure, was strange and wild; and I have no doubt my words were so likewise, for his demeanor altered on the instant. His air, which had been that of quiet friendship, became cool, chilling, and almost disdainful, and within a few minutes he took his leave, and we never met again till yester even.

"You will, I doubt not, ask me wherefore I did all this! I was mad—mad with love and disappointment. And the very instant he said that he was coming hither, I knew as certainly that he would love you and you him, Annabel, as though it had

been palpably revealed to me. I could not write of him to you —I *could* not, Annabel, and when your letters came, and we learned that he was here, I confessed all this to our aunt; and though she blamed me much, for wild and thoughtless folly, she thought it best to keep the matter secret. This is the whole truth, Annabel—the whole truth! I fancied that the absence —the knowledge that I should see him next my sister's husband—the stern resolve with which I bound my soul—had made me strong enough to bear his presence: I tried it, and I found myself, how weak—this is all, Annabel; can you forgive me, sister?"

"Sweet, innocent Marian," exclaimed the elder sister through her tears, for she had wept constantly through the whole sad narration, "there is not anything for me to forgive—you have wronged yourself only, my sister! But yet—but yet!—I cannot understand it—he must have seen, no *man* could fail to see that one, so frank and artless as you are, Marian, was in love with him. He must, if not before, have known it certainly, when you extorted from him, as you call it, that strange promise. Besides, he loves *you*, Marian; he loves you; then wherefore, in God's name! did he woo me—for woo he did, and fervently, and long, before he won me to confession? oh! he is base! base, base, and bad at heart, my sister!—answer me nothing, dear one, for I will prove him very shortly—send Margaret hither to array me. I will go down and speak with him forthwith. If he be honest, Marian, he is yours—and think not that I sacrifice myself, when I say this, for all the love I ever felt for him has vanished utterly away—if he is honest, he is yours. But be not over-confident, dear child, for I believe he is not; and if not, why then, sweet Marian, can we not comfort one another, and live together as we used, dear, innocent, united, happy sisters? Do not reply now, Marian, your heart is too full; haste and do as I tell you; before supper-

time to-night all shall be ended—whether for good or for evil, He only knows, to whom the secrets of the heart are visible, even as the features of the face. Farewell, be of good cheer, and yet not over-cheerful."

CHAPTER IX.

WITHIN an hour after that most momentous conversation, Annabel sat beside the window, in that pleasant summer-parlor, looking out on the fair prospect of mead and dale and river, with its back-ground—of purple mountains the very window from which she had first looked upon De Vaux!

Perhaps a secret instinct had taught her to select that spot, now that she was about to renounce him for ever; but if it were so, it was one of those indefinable impulsive instincts of which we are unconscious, even while they prompt our actions.

De Vaux was summoned to her presence, and Annabel awaited him—arbiter of her own and her sister's destinies!

"Ernest," she said, as he entered, cutting across his eager and impetuous inquiries, "Ernest de Vaux, I have learned to-day a secret"—she spoke with perfect ease, and without a symptom of irritation, or anxiety, or sorrow, either in her voice or manner; nor was she cold, or dignified, or haughty. Her demeanor was not, indeed, that of a fond maid toward her accepted suitor; nor had it the flutter which marks the consciousness of unacknowledged love; a sister's to a dear brother's would have resembled it more nearly than, perhaps, anything to which it could be compared, yet was not this altogether similar. He looked up in her face with a smile, and asked her at once:—

"What secret, dearest Annabel?"

"A secret, Ernest," she replied, "which I can not but fancy you must have learned *before*, but which *you* certainly *have* learned, as well as I, to-day. My sister loves you, Ernest."

The young man's face was crimson on the instant, and he would have made some reply, but his voice failed him, and, after a moment of confused stuttering, he stood before her in embarrassed silence; but she went on at once, not noticing apparently, his consternation.

"If you did know this, as I fear must be the case, long, long ago! most basely have you acted, and most cruelly to both of us; for never! never! even if it had been a rash, unsought, and unjustifiable passion on her part, would I have wedded, knowingly, the man who held my sister's heart-strings!"

"It was," he answered, instantly, "it was a rash, unsought, and unjustifiable passion on her part, believe me, oh! believe me, Annabel! that is—that is," he continued, reddening again at feeling himself self-convicted, "that is, if she felt any passion."

"Then you *did* know it—then you *did* know it," she interrupted him, without paying any regard to his attempt at self-correction, "then you did know it from the very first—oh! man, man! oh! false heart of man—oh! false tongue that can speak thus of the lady whom he *loves!* yes, loves!" she added, in a clear, high voice, as thrilling as the alarm-blast of a silver trumpet; "yes, loves, Ernest de Vaux, with his whole heart and spirit! Never think to deny it! Did I not see you, when you rushed to save her from lesser peril, when you left me, as you must have thought, to perish? Did I not see love written as clearly as words in a book, on every feature of *your* face, even as I heard love crying out aloud in every accent of *her* voice?"

"What! jealous, Annabel? the calm and self-controlling Annabel, can she be jealous, of her own sister, too?"

"Not jealous, sir," she answered, now most contemptuously, "not jealous, in the least, I do assure you! For though, most surely, love *can* exist without one touch of jealousy, as surely can not jealousy exist where there is neither love, nor admiration, nor esteem, nor so much as respect existing."

"How! do I hear you aright?" he asked somewhat sharply, "do I understand you aright? What have become, then, of your vows and protestations, your protestations of yester-even?"

"You *do* hear me, you *do* understand me," she replied, "entirely right, entirely! In my heart—for I have searched it very deeply—in my heart there is not now one feeling of love, or admiration, or esteem, much less of respect for you; alas! that I should say so; alas! for me and you; alas! for one, more to be pitied twentyfold than the other!"

"Annabel Hawkwood, you have never loved me."

"Ernest de Vaux, you never *have* known, never *will* know, because you are incapable of knowing the depth, the singleness, the honesty, of a true woman's love! So deeply did I love you, that I have come down hither, seeing that long before you knew *me*, you had won Marian's heart—seeing that you loved her, as she loves you, most ardently, and hoping that you had not discovered her affection, nor suspected your own feelings until to-day—I came down hither, I say, with that knowledge, in that hope. And had I found that you had erred no further than in trivial fickleness, she loving you all the while beyond all things on earth, I purposed to resign your hand to her, thus making both of you happy, and trusting for my own consolation to consciousness of right, and to the love of HIM who, all praise be to him therefor, has so constituted the spirit of Annabel Hawkwood, that when she can not honor, she can not afterward for ever feel either love or friendship. You are weighed, Ernest de Vaux, weighed in the balance and found wanting! I leave you now, sir, to prepare my sister to bear the blow your base-

ness has inflicted. Our marriage is broken off at once, now and for ever! Lay all the blame on me—on me! if it so please you; but not one word against my own or my sister's honor! My aunt I shall inform instantly, that, for sufficient reasons, our promised union will not take place at all; the reasons I shall lock up in my own bosom. You may remain here, you *must* do so, this one night; to-morrow morning we will bid you adieu for ever!"

"Be it so," he replied. "Be it so, lady; the fickleness I can forgive, but not the scorn! I will go now, and order that the regiment march hence forthwith. What more recruits there be, can follow at their leisure, and I will overtake the troops before noon, on the march, to-morrow;" and with the words he left the room, apparently as unconcerned as if he had not left a breaking heart behind him, and as if all the agonies of hell had not been burning within his own.

And was it true that Annabel no longer loved him? True! oh, believe it not! where woman once has fixed her soul's affections, there they will dwell for ever; principle may compel her to suppress them; prudence may force her to conceal them; the fiery sense of instantaneous wrong may seem to quench them for a moment; the bitterness of jealousy may turn them into gall; but, like that Turkish perfume, where love has once existed, it must exist for ever, so long as one fragment of the earthly vessel which contained it survives the wreck of time and ruin.

She believed that she loved him not; but she knew not herself; what woman ever did—what man—when the spring-tide of passion was upon them? And she, too, left the parlor, and within a few minutes, Marian had heard her fate, and after many a tear, and many a passionate exclamation, she, too, apparently, was satisfied of Ernest's worthlessness; oh! misapplied and heartless term! She *satisfied?* satisfied by the

knowledge that her heart's idol was an unclean thing, an evil spirit, a false God! she *satisfied?* oh! Heaven!

Around the hospitable board once more—once more they were assembled; but oh! how sadly altered; the fiat had been distinctly, audibly pronounced; and all assembled there had heard it, though none, except the sisters and De Vaux, knew of the cause; none probably, but they, suspected it. Well was it that there were no young men—no brothers with high hearts and strong hands to maintain or question? Well was it, that the only relatives of those much-injured maidens, the only friends, were superannuated men of peace—the ministers of pardon, not of vengeance—and weak, old, helpless women! There had been bloodshed else—and, as it was, among the serving-men, there were dark brows, and writhing lips, and hands alert to grasp the hilt at a word spoken; had they but been of rank one grade higher—had they *dared* even as they were—there had been bloodshed! Cold, cold and cheerless was the conversation; formal and dignified civilities, in place of gay, familiar mirth; forced smiles for hearty laughter; pale looks and dim eyes, for the glad blushes of the promised bride—for the bright sparkles of her eye!

The evening passed, the hour of parting came; and it was colder yet and sadder. Ernest de Vaux, calm and inscrutable, and seemingly unmoved, kissed the hands of his lovely hostesses, and uttered his adieu and thanks for all their kindness, and hopes for their prosperity and welfare; while the old clergymen looked on with dark and angry brows, and their helpmates with difficulty could refrain from loud and passionate invective. His lip had a curl upon it—a painful curl, half sneer, as he bowed to the rest, and left the parlor; but none observed that as he did so, he spoke three or four words, in a low whisper, so low that it reached Marian's ear alone, of all that stood around him, yet of such import, that her color came and went

ten times within the minute, and that she shook from head to foot, and quivered like an aspen.

For two hours longer, the sisters sat together in Annabel's bedchamber, and wept in one another's arms, and comforted each other's sorrows, and little dreamed that they should meet no more for years—perchance for ever.

CHAPTER X.

THREE hours had elapsed since all the inhabitants of Ingleborough hall had retired to their own chambers, and one, at least since Marian had retired from her sister's dressing-room to bed, but not to sleep. During that weary hour, she had lain tossing to and fro, feverish with anxiety and expectation, irresolute, anxious, and heartsick.

The last words which Ernest de Vaux had whispered in her ear, unheard by any others, contained a fervent entreaty, perhaps—I should say, rather, a command—that she should meet him after all the house had gone to rest, in the garden. And strange it was, that despite all that had passed, despite all her own good resolutions, all the resistance of her native modesty, all her conviction—for she was almost convinced that he was base and bad—she yet lacked firmness to set the tempter at defiance.

It is a singular fact, but one which we nevertheless encounter more frequently than would be supposed, that it is women of the most bold, and free, and fearless characters, who, so long as their fancies are untouched, appear the wildest and the most untameable, that are subdued and engrossed the most completely, when they once become thoroughly enamored, when they once meet with an overmastering spirit.

And so it was with Marian Hawkwood; high-spirited, and almost daring, while her heart was free, no sooner had she fallen desperately in love, as she did, with De Vaux, than she became, so far as he was concerned, the most thoroughly subjugated and tamed of beings. Her whole nature, toward him at least, seemed to have undergone a change. Her very intellect appeared to have lost much of its brilliancy, of its rapid and clear perceptions, as soon as he was to be judged.

To us, such things appear very strange, although we see them happening before our eyes almost daily. To us, they are as inexplicable as the one half of our motives and our actions must appear incomprehensible to the other sex. But all these diversities, all these inexplicable contradictions as they seem, in the nature and characteristics of our race, have been created, and unquestionably for wise ends, by Him whose every deed is all-wise, whose every purpose perfect. And it may well be that it is these very differences, these very extremities of thought and action, that render the two sexes so eminently attractive to one another.

To the mind of a man it naturally would appear impossible, that after what had passed, Marian should still entertain a belief, a hope even, that De Vaux could explain honorably his most dishonorable conduct; dishonorable, if possible, yet more toward herself than toward Annabel. It would seem that when he presumed to whisper in her ear that prayer for a clandestine interview, she would have recognised and spurned him for the villain that he was. But it was not so; she still hoped, if she did not believe, and if she made him no answer at the time, it was that her maiden purity of soul revolted from the idea of a rendezvous with any man at that untimely hour, and in a place so sequestered.

At first, indeed, she resolved that she would not meet him, and even made up her mind to confide his request to Annabel,

as a fresh proof of his atrocious baseness. But gradually worse thoughts and more fatal wishes began to creep in, and she suffered the long conversation between herself and Annabel to come to a termination, without touching on the circumstance at all. At length she left her sister's chamber, and withdrew to her own, still without any fixed intention of granting his request, but certainly without any fixed determination not to do so.

After she had undressed herself, however, and that she did so was a proof that up to this time her better principles had the upper hand, she knelt down by her bedside, buried her face in her hands, and seemed, at least, to pray. It was, however, but too evident that her mind was in no state for prayer. She burst into a fit of violent and convulsive weeping, mixed with sobs almost hysterical, while strong shudderings ran through her whole fair frame.

"No!" she said, starting up after a while, and calming herself by a powerful effort of the will, "no, no, I can not pray—it is mockery—a shameful mockery to bend my knees and move my lips in prayer before the throne of God, when no thought of him remains fixed in my mind; when by no effort can I concentrate my wandering senses upon his goodness and mercy; when by no effort can I banish from my soul the recollection, the wild yearning for the creature usurping thus the place of the Creator! Oh, my God!" she continued, even more wildly than before; "my God, what shall I do? what shall I do? what have I done that I should be thus terribly afflicted? To bed, to bed!" she added, extinguishing her taper, as she spoke, "to bed, but not to sleep! never to sleep again in peace or dreamless. Would to God that this bed were the grave, the cold unconscious grave!"

And with the words, she laid her head upon the pillow, and closed her eyelids, saying to herself: "No, no, it were unmaidenly, I will not think of it—no, no!" But she did think of it—nay, she could think of nothing else; and ere long she unclosed her eyes, and looked about her chamber with a wild, eager glance, as if she were in search of something which she expected to see there, but saw not. Again she closed them, and cast herself back impatiently upon the bed, and lay quiet for a little while; but it was only by a great effort that she forced herself to do so, and before long, she started up crying, "I shall go mad—I shall go mad—I hardly know if I am not mad already. It is all fire here!" and she clasped her small white hands over her brow, "all raging and consuming fire! Air! air! I must have air—I am choking, stifling! Can it be that the room is so suffocatingly hot? or is it in my own heart?"

The comfortable, roomy chamber in which she lay, could not have been more pleasantly attempered to the weather and the season, had it been regulated by the thermometer. It was a large and airy chamber, situated at the corner of the house, so that its two large latticed casements looked out in different directions, one over the little garden amphitheatre so often noticed, the other down the broad valley to the southward. The moon, which now was nearly full, streamed in at the eastern window, and would have rendered the room nearly as bright as day, if it had not been for the leafy head of one of the huge sycamores that interrupted the soft beams partially; and swaying backward and forward in the west wind, which was fitful and uncertain, now blowing in long gusts, now lulling altogether, cast huge and wavering shadows over the floor and walls—so that they were at one time all bathed in lustrous light, and the next moment steeped in misty shadows.

There was something in this wavering effect of light and shade, that at first caught the eye merely, and attracted the physical attention, if it is allowed so to speak, and afterward began to produce an impression on her mind. It seemed to

her as if the vagueness and incertitude of these fleeting shades were in some sort assimilated to the wild and whirling thoughts which were chasing one another across the horizon of her own mind. Then she compared them to the changes and chances of mortal life, and thence, as we are all so prone to do, when in trouble and affliction, she began to charge all her own misfortunes, and many of her own faults, to the account of fortune.

If it had not been for the irresistible destiny which had compelled Ernest to leave her at York, it could not have been, she thought, that seeking her out so eagerly as he did on all occasions, and admiring her personal charms so evidently, Ernest should not have ended by loving and wooing her instead of her passionless and gentle sister.

And from this train of thought she fell into another yet more perilous. How, she now asked herself, had it come to pass that he had wooed Annabel at all—how, when he loved herself, should he have sought her sister's love—or how, loving her sister, should he have given way, so clearly and openly as he had done to-day, to a passion for herself.

His conduct did seem, in truth, incomprehensible—perhaps to himself, even, it might have been so—for, I believe that, far oftener than is generally believed, men, if they were to subject themselves to strict self-examination, would be at a loss to account to themselves for the motives whence arise very many of their actions.

This very strangeness of Ernest de Vaux's demeanor—this very impossibility of accounting for his conduct on any reasonable hypothesis, had the worst possible effect for her happiness, on the mind of Marian. If she was to consider this whole course of conduct infamous and base, the baseness seemed too gratuitous, the infamy too void of motive, to be credited. And hence she was led to fancy that there must be some unseen and secret hand which had given motion to the whole machinery, and which, could it but be discovered, would probably afford a ready clue and complete solution to all that now appeared dark and enigmatical in her lover's words and actions.

For whatever we find glaringly inconsistent, or foolishly miscontrived in the conduct of men, we are wont, in our blindness and conceitedness of heart, to consider enigmatical and obscure. As if, forsooth, men were anything but masses of inconsistencies the most glaring and self-evident.

Having soon brought herself to the conclusion that, because she could not understand the conduct of Ernest, there must necessarily be something in it to be understood, she now went to work to find out what this something could be. The original bane of woman, curiosity, was busy in her secret soul, and soon there came together two sister-friends to aid her in the invidious onslaught she was seeking on the strongholds of principle and virtue—fit partners in the foul alliance, vain self-esteem and jealousy.

First she commenced asking herself how it could have been that he should have failed to love her, and yet have fallen in love instantly with Annabel—then she half doubted whether he had, indeed, ever loved Annabel at all—that he did so no longer was quite evident—and in the end she convinced herself, that she had been the object of his love from the beginning, that by some misapprehension of her manner he had been led to believe her indifferent to himself, and that in pique he had devoted himself to her sister.

This train once kindled in her mind, the flame ran rapidly from point to point, and she was very soon so completely self-deluded, that she gave herself up to the conviction that she was herself the only true love of De Vaux, that his conduct had been natural, and, if very blameable, still honorable, and deserving some compassion, from the fact that her own charms had been the cause of all the mischief. Still she was very far

from having made up her mind to meet him, though she had already admitted to herself that it was cruel to condemn him without giving him an opportunity of defending himself, and one step leading to another, she soon began to consider seriously the possibility of doing that, which but an hour before she could not have contemplated without terror and disgust.

Ere long it was fear only that dissuaded her from going—the fear of discovery, and that was but a weak opponent to strong and passionate love—for she did love Ernest de Vaux strongly and passionately—particularly when that love was aided and abetted by the other kindred spirits of evil, which I have enumerated, and which for ever lie hid in the secret recesses of the human heart waiting the opportunity to arise, and do battle, when the better principles are weakened by temptations, and the tone of the mind soured by vexation, and rendered angry by disappointment.

Then she arose at length, half-timidly still, and half-reluctantly. Nor did she as yet admit to herself what was her intention as she dressed herself hastily, and stole, with a beating heart and noiseless step, to the door of her sister's chamber. Opening it with a careful hand, she entered, and stole silently to the bedside. Pale as a lily, calm and tranquil lay sweet Annabel, buried in deep, and as she at first thought, dreamless sleep. One fair slight hand was pressed upon her bosom, the other arm was folded under the head of the lovely sleeper. The broad light of the moonbeams fell in a flood of pure silvery radiance over the lovely picture—and surely never lovelier was devised—of virgin innocence, and purity of meekness.

For many moments the perturbed and anxious Marian stood by the side of the couch gazing upon the face of that once beloved sister—alas! that I must say *once* beloved—for already had jealousy, and distrust, and envy, come over the heart of the no less lovely watcher—and she felt, as she stood there, that

she no longer loved that sister, as she used to love, or as she was still herself beloved. No contrast can be imagined more striking than that between the sleeper, so still, so tranquil, so serene—yet so inanimately pale and spiritual in her aspect—and the flushed cheeks, and flashing eyes, and frame quivering with wild excitement of the half-trembling, half-guilty girl who stood beside her. The deep, regular, calm breathing of the sleeper, the short, quick, panting inspirations of the excited watcher—the absolute unconsciousness of the one, and the terrible and over-wrought feelings of the other—the innocence, the confidence, the trust in God, of Annabel—the agonies, the wishes, and the doubts of Marian.

And strange as it may seem, the very peacefulness, the very absence of all semblance of earthly feeling or earthly passion in her slumbering sister, the infantile repose which brooded over the candid face, augmented Marian's feelings of nascent dislike or disaffection. An angry sense of vexation that Annabel should be able to sleep sound and quiet, even amid her griefs, while she could neither rest in mind or body. Then she began to justify herself in her own eyes, by suffering her mind to dwell on the idea that Annabel could not be wronged by her, should she consent to wed Ernest, for that her very calmness and tranquillity must needs betoken the absence of true passion.

While she was wondering thus a slight sound from the garden under the windows caught her ear, and she started wildly, her heart bounding as if it would have burst out of her tortured bosom. A shadow steals not across the moon-lighted landscape more noiselessly than did Marian Hawkwood glide over the carpet to the lattice, and gaze down into the quiet shrubbery. Alas! for Marian—there on the gravel-walk, half hidden by the shadow of the giant sycamores, stood the graceful and courtly figure of the tempter. His eyes were directed upward to the casement at which she was standing—they met hers—and on

the instant, deeply versed in all the hypocrisies of gallantry, Ernest de Vaux knelt down, and clasped his hands as if he were in prayer, and she might see his lips tremble in the moonlight.

She turned—she retrod the chamber-floor in silence—she stood again beside her sister's bed—but this time it was to see only whether that sister's eyes were sealed in oblivious slumber. As she paused, she had an opportunity of judging whether the dreams of that pale sleeper were indeed so blissful—whether the heart of Annabel was so serene and passionless. The moonbeams fell full on her face, as I have said, and Marian saw two heavy tears glide from her deeply-curtained lids, and slide down her transparent cheeks; and while she gazed upon her she stirred, and stretched out both her arms, as if to clasp some one, and murmured in her sleep the name—of Marian.

Had that small,simple thing occurred before the girl looked out and saw Ernest, all might have yet been well—but it was all too late—passion was burning in her every vein, and bounding in her every pulse—it was too late!—she turned and left the chamber.

Cautiously she stole to the staircase, groping her way in the glimmering twilight through the long oaken corridor—as she reached the stairhead she again, paused, listened, and trembled—did she hesitate? Upon that landing-place there stood two complete panoplies of steel, worn by some loyal Hawkwood of old time in the wars of the Roses, and as the eyes of the excited girl fell upon them, it appeared to her that the spirits of her dead ancestors were looking out from the bars of their avantailles reproachfully on their delinquent daughter. Hastily she darted past them, and flew down the stairs and reached the vestibule, and there she met another interruption, for a small favorite greyhound—her favorite—she had reared it from a puppy when its dam perished—which was sleeping on the

mat, rose up and fawned upon her, and would not be repulsed, but stood erect on its hinder legs and laid its long paws on her arm, as she thought afterward, imploringly, and uttered a low ominous whine as she cast it off.

She unbolted the hall door, opened it, glided out like a guilty spectre into the glimpses of the moon—and as she did so a fleecy cloud passed over the pale face of the planet, and a long wailing cry rose plaintively upon the still night. It was but the cry of an owl—there were hundreds of them in the woods around, and she heard them hoot nightly—yet now she shuddered at the sound as if it were a warning; and was it not so? The smallest things are instruments in the hands of Him, to whom all earthly things are small.

CHAPTER XI.

Despite the warning sounds, which at the moment smote on her soul so ominously, Marian went down the steps leading from the little porch into the garden, although her steps faltered, and her heart beat violently between fear and expectation, and the consciousness that she was acting wrongly. Before she had advanced, however, ten paces, round the corner of the hall, into the grove of sycamores, wherein the shadows fell dark and heavy over the gravel-walk which threaded it, she was joined by Ernest de Vaux.

He appeared, at the moment, to be little less agitated than she was herself; his countenance, even to the lips, was ashy pale, and she could see that he trembled, and it was owing, perhaps, to this very visible embarrassment on his part, that Marian felt less forcibly the extreme impropriety, if not indelicacy, of her own conduct.

Had he come to meet her, confident, proud, and evidently

exhilarated by the success of his machinations, it is possible that her modesty would have been offended; that she would have discovered the danger she was running, and withdrawn, ere it was yet too late, for happiness or honor.

But, as it was, when she saw the man she loved, coming to meet her, wan and agitated, timid, and with the trace of tears on his pallid cheeks, a sense of pity rose in her bosom, and lent its aid to the pleadings of that deceptive advocate within her soul, which needed no assistance in his favor.

Still, as she met him, there was an air of dignity, and self-restraint, and maidenly reserve about her, that went some little way at least to screen her from the consequences of her exceeding indiscretion; and when she addressed him—for it was she who spoke the first—it was in a voice far cooler, and more resolute, than the mind which suggested and informed it.

"I trust," she said, "my Lord de Vaux, that you have good and sufficient cause for the strange request which you made me at our last interview; some cause, I mean, sir, that may justify *you*, in requiring a lady to meet you thus clandestinely, and alone, and *her* in consenting to do so. There has been so much strange and mysterious, my lord, in your whole conduct and demeanor, from the first to the last; and that mystery—if not deceit—has wrought effects so baleful on my sister's happiness, that I confess I have hoped you may have something to communicate that may, in some degree, palliate your own motives, which now seem so evil; and repair the positive evil which you have done her. It is on this consideration only, that I have consented to give you a hearing. It is in this trust only, that I have taken a step, which I fear me is unmaidenly and wrong in itself—but it is by my motives that my conduct must be judged; and I know those to be honorable and correct. Now, my lord, may it please you to speak quickly that you have got to say; but let me caution you, that I hear

no addresses, nor receive any pleadings, meant for my own ear—one such word, and I leave you. Speak, my lord!"

"You are considerate, ever, dear young lady," replied Ernest de Vaux, in tones of deep respect, not drawing very near her, nor offering to take her hand, nor tendering any of those customary familiarities, which, though perfectly natural at any other time, might, under present circumstances, have had the effect of alarming her, and checking her freedom of demeanor.

"You are considerate, ever, dear young lady! and I am bold to say it, your confidence is not misplaced, nor shall your trust be deceived!"

"I do not know," answered Marian, "I do not know, my lord! It is for you to show that; at present, appearances are much against you; nor do I see what explanation you can make, that shall exonerate you. But to the point, my lord, to the point!"

"None, Miss Hawkwood—none! I have no explanations that I can make, which shall exonerate——"

"Then why," she interrupted him, warmly and energetically, "why have you brought me hither? or to what do you expect that I shall listen?—not methinks, to a traitor's love-tale."

"Which shall exonerate me—I would have said," De Vaux resumed, as quickly as she left off speaking, "had you permitted me—from the grossest and most blind folly—hallucination—madness!—Yes! I believe I have been mad."

"Madness, my lord," exclaimed Marian, "is very apt to be the plea of some people for doing just whatsoever they think fit—without regard to principle or honor, to the feelings of their fellow-creatures, or to the good opinion of the world. I trust it is not so with you; but I, for one, have never seen aught in your conduct that was incompatible with the most sound and serious sanity."

"I hardly know how I may speak to you without offence, dear Mistress Marian. My object, in requesting you to hear a few last words from a very wretched, and very penitent man, arose from a painful yearning to stand pardoned, if not justified, in the eyes of one being at least, of this family, to whom I owe so much, and by whom I am now so grievously misapprehended."

"Then I *was* right!" answered Marian, joyously, and her eye sparkled for a moment, and her pale cheek flushed crimson; "then you have some excuse to offer—well! my lord, well. It was in hopes of hearing such, that I came hither—there can be no offence to me in that—I shall be very glad to hear that one of whom I have thought well, is worthy of such estimation."

"But to prove that," he answered, in a soft, low voice, "I must enter upon a history; I must speak to you of things that passed long ago—of things that passed at York!"

"My lord!" and she started back, a brief spark of indignation gleaming in her bright eyes, "my lord!"

"Nay," he replied, humbly and sadly, "if you forbid me to speak, I am silent; but by no means can I exculpate myself, but by naming these things; and I asseverate to you by the earth and the heavens, and all that they contain!—I swear to you, by Him who made them all! that, if you deign to hear me, I have a perfect and complete defence against all but the charge of folly. And, as you hope for happiness yourself, here or hereafter, I do conjure you to hear me!"

"Your promises are very strong, my lord; and your adjuration such, that I may not refuse to listen to you."

"I must speak to you of yourself, lady!"

"Of myself?"

"Ay! of yourself—for you, Marian Hawkwood, are the cause, the sole cause of everything that has appeared inconsistent, base, or guilty, on my part!"

"I! my lord—I!—I the cause of your inconsistency, your guilt, your baseness!" she cried, indignantly. "Prove it, prove it; but I defy you," she added, more calmly, and with a scornful intonation of voice: "you know that all this is words—words—false and empty words! Now, sir, speak out at once, or I leave you—better it were, perhaps, had I never come at all!"

Better, indeed! Alas! poor Marian, that your own words should be so terribly prophetic, that your one fault should have so sealed and stamped your life with the impression of remorse and sorrow. For Ernest de Vaux had now gained his end, he had so stimulated and excited her curiosity, and through her curiosity, her interest, that she was now prepared, nay, eager, to listen to words, which, a little while before, she would have shrunk from hearing. And he perceived the advantage he had gained—for all his seeming agitation and embarrassment were but consummate acting, and made himself ready to profit by it to the utmost.

"You can not but remember lady," he resumed, artfully, adopting the unconcerned tone of a mere narrator, "the day when I first saw you at the high-sheriff's ball?"

"I do not know, my lord, what very charming memories I have to fix the time or place, upon my mind, of an event by no means striking or delightful; was it at the high-sheriff's ball?—it might have been, doubtless; for I was there—and if you say it was, I do not doubt that you are quite right."

But this affected unconcern, this little stratagem of poor Marian, availed her nothing with De Vaux; for he saw through it in a moment. He knew instinctively and instantly, that it was affected—and more, the affectation convinced him that there was something that she would conceal; and what that something was, his consummate knowledge of the female heart informed him readily. But he replied, as if he was taken in by her artifice.

"It is fortunate for you," he said, "that you can forget so easily—would to God that I had been able to do likewise; but if you have forgotten the time and the place, I can not believe that you have as speedily forgotten the deep and evident impression which your charms made upon me—my eagerness to gain your acquaintance—my constant and assiduous attentions—in short, the deep and ardent passion with which you had filled my very soul, from the first hour of our meeting."

"Indeed!" she replied, very scornfully and coldly, "you do far too much honor to my penetration. I never once suspected anything of the kind; nor do I even now conjecture what motive can impel you to feign, what, I believe, never had an existence in reality."

"You must have been blind, indeed, lady, as blind as I was myself. And yet you can not deny that my eye dwelt on you; followed you everywhere—that I danced with you constantly, with you *alone*, and that when I danced not with you, I waited ever nigh you, to catch one glance from your eye, one murmur from your sweet voice. You can not but have noticed this!"

"And if I did, my lord—and if I did, ladies of birth and station do not imagine that every young man, who likes to dance with them, and talk soft nonsense to them, who perhaps thinks them pretty enough, or witty enough, to while away a tedious hour in the country, is in love with them, any more than they wish gentlemen to flatter themselves, that *they* have yielded up their hearts, because they condescend to be amused by lively conversation, or even flattered by attentions, which they receive as things of course!"

"And did you so receive—did you so think of my attentions?"

"Upon my word, my lord, I don't remember that I thought anything at all about them, that I perceived them even! But

your self-justification is taking a strange turn. To what is all this tending, I beseech you?"

"To this, Marian Hawkwood, that when I saw you daily, nightly, at York, I loved you with the whole passionate and violent devotion of a free, honest heart—that I endeavored by all means in my power, by the most eager and assiduous devotion, by all those nameless indescribable attentions, which we are taught to believe that women prize above all things—"

"Women are much obliged to you, my lord, upon my word!" she interrupted him.

"To let you perceive," he continued, as if he had not heard her, "to make you understand how I adored you; and I believed that I had not been unsuccessful—I believed more, that you both saw, and appreciated, and returned my love, Marian!"

"Did you, indeed!" she replied, with a bitter expression of haughtiness and scorn. "Did you, indeed, believe so? Then you were, in the first place, very unhappily mistaken; and, in the second place, egregiously misled by your vain self-conceit."

"I believe *not*. Mistress Marian, ladies are generally sufficiently clear-sighted in matters that concern the heart, especially when men endeavor to make those matters evident to them. I did so, and you received my attentions with very evident gratification. I do not now believe that you are in the least a coquette—though I did think so for a time—besides, I *know* that you love me now."

"Love you!" she replied, with a burst of fiery indignation, "nay! but I hate, scorn, loathe, detest you!" and she gave way in a moment, to a paroxysm of violent and hysterical weeping; staggered back to a garden-chair; and sank into it; and lay there with her head drooping upon her breast, the big tears rolling down her cheeks, heavy and fast as summer's rain, and her heart throbbing and bounding as if it would break from her bosom.

CHAPTER XII.

ERNEST DE VAUX gazed on her for a moment or two, with a well-satisfied and scrutinizing eye, and then crept with a noiseless foot to her side; knelt down on the turf at her feet, before the paroxysm had, in any wise, abated, and gained possession of her hand, after a moment of faint and ill-feigned resistance.

"O my God!" she exclaimed, "what does this mean, De Vaux?"

"It means," he answered, with a voice admirably modulated to suit his object, "it means that I adore you, that I have adored you ever, that, save you, I never loved a woman."

"How dare you?" she replied, anger again, for a moment, gaining the ascendency—"How dare you mock me thus—and your addresses to my sister—what did they mean, my lord?"

"Hear me," he said; "however it may please you to deny that you perceived my attentions, that you remember where we first met, you can not, I think, have forgotten the morning, the accursed morning, when I came to take leave of you before setting forth to your father's house. That morning, Marian, I came with an ingenuous heart upon my lips, a heart to cast before your feet, had you been willing to receive it. But on that morning, I know not wherefore, you were a different creature; petulant, wilful, wild, repulsive; for at this moment, I must speak the truth—you checked my speech, you jeered and mocked at me, you spoke strange, whirling words against the truth, and honesty, and honor of human kind at large, and of men in particular—you said strange things about your beautiful and charming sister; till you convinced me quite, though, up to that time, I had believed that you loved me, that from the

beginning you had merely been coquetting with me—that you were a vain, heartless girl, eager for admiration only, and careless of the agonies which your caprice had occasioned."

"Ernest de Vaux!"

"Marian Hawkwood!"

"You had no right—no cause—no shadow of a reason so to surmise!"

"Pardon me, lady, your conduct left no possible interpretation else. Even at this moment, when I know that it was not what I deemed it, I still am at a loss utterly to conceive your motives or your meaning. You never hinted to me even that your father was dead long ago, though I spoke to you of visiting his house. You called on me to promise that I would never whisper to your family that I had seen or known you. What could I think? what do? I went my way conceiving myself a man scorned, slighted, outraged in the tenderest and nicest point; I went my way with a heart crushed, and yet embittered—humiliated, and yet maddened."

"You had no right, I say it again; you had no right to think so; you had never spoken to me of love—never so much as hinted it; ladies do not believe that men love them, because they are civil at a morning visit—attentive at an evening ball. Oh! had you spoken to me; had you spoken to me on that fatal morning, Ernest de Vaux, all might—"

"All might what, Marian, all might what?" he interrupted her, very eagerly.

"All might have been understood between us," she replied, coldly, bridling her impetuosity of speech.

"But, Marian Hawkwood," he made answer to her, "if ladies do not believe they are loved till they are told so in plain words, neither will gentlemen, unless they be consummate fools, speak those plain words until, at least, they have some little cause for believing that those words, when spoken, will

be acceptable. Now, on the morning when I sought you, I fancied that I had such cause—and I did so believe—and I came to speak those plain words; but by your own changed tone, and altered manner—"

"True! true!" she replied, at length, in sad and faltering tones, quite overcome by the intensity of her feelings; for, strange to say, De Vaux had, perhaps, struck on the only chord which would have at all responded to his touch; certainly on that which thrilled the most powerfully in her soul. Had he, indeed, read her mind, had he heard the thoughts expressed aloud, which had been nourished secretly within her for so long a time, he could not more skilfully have ministered to her vanity, have gratified her curiosity, have appeased her wounded self-respect, have reawakened her half-dormant passion than he did now by the course which he adopted. "True! true!" she murmured, suffering her head to fall upon her bosom in calm, sad despondency, "it is all true—too true! too true!"

Her dream was then realized, she thought within herself; it was as she had fancied—hoped! He had loved her from the beginning, and her only; it was her own fault, and he! he the idol of her soul, was guiltless—alas! how prompt are we to deceive ourselves, when the deception pampers our desires!

"And why," he whispered in her ear, tenderly, "why was it so, Marian?"

"You have no right to ask me, sir; and after all, your defence is faulty, is vain; nothing worth! If you loved me, even if I did misuse you, how does that palliate your treason to my sister? for shame, my lord, for shame! How dare you challenge me, or question my deeds, when your own crime glares in the eye of Heaven!"

"You wrong *me*, Marian, and deceive yourself; I am no traitor, nor have I ever, wilfully, ever *at all*, wronged your sister. There is, at all times, a reaction of the heart after strong

passion, checked and cast back upon itself. Outraged and wronged by one, it is natural, it is almost a necessary consequence, that we fly for consolation, for love to another. Pride, too—wounded and lacerated pride—urges us to win, where we have lost our all, in the love of woman. And so it was with me. To my own soul's deepest belief, in my most holy and most sacred conscience, I believe that I loved Annabel, as I had never loved even you. The strange similitude, blended with as strange dissimilitude, between your styles of beauty, between your tones of thought, between your characters of mind, yet more enthralled and enchained me. Then I perceived, as I thought, that Annabel did love me as truly as you had sported with me falsely—and there, too, was I mistaken! and then for the sweetest drop, the most powerful ingredient in the love-philtre, arose the thought that I should be avenged on you, whom then I hated, as I had loved you once, more than all womankind united. I was happy, quiet, contented, conscious of honor—yes! Marian, I was happy! till you returned; and at the first momentary glance, the scales fell from my eyes, and I saw that you loved me, the darkness vanished from my heart, and I found that I loved you yet—as I had loved you before, madly—devotedly—for ever!"

"My God! my God!" exclaimed the wretched girl, wringing her hands in the excess of mental anguish, "what have I done, that I should be so wretched?"

"Why, why should you be miserable?" replied the tempter; "if it be true, as you say it is, that you did not perceive or suspect my love—that you have never cared for me—that you now hate me? Why, Marian, why should you be miserable?"

"Ernest de Vaux," answered the hapless girl, raising her pale face, and fixing her large azure eyes full on his features, "why trouble you me any further? Between you and me there is a great gulf fixed. If you did love me, as you say, and

were prevented by any girlish fears or girlish folly on my part, from speaking your love honestly—if you did as you aver, fall innocently into love with Annabel, and awake from that fancied love again at sight from me—what does it avail me now to hear this? Why do you tell it to me? unless it be to make me utterly and hopelessly wretched, by contemplating the happiness which might have been mine once, but from which I am now debarred for ever."

"It may be yours yet, Marian—if you still deem it happiness to be mine—my own—my own wife, Marian."

"How, my lord, how?" she asked with a sort of cool and concentrated indignation. "How, without utter infamy? You mistake the girl you address, my lord. You little know the heart of Marian Hawkwood, if you believe that she would break a sister's heart, or lose her own good fame by wedding with her traitorous and rejected lover."

"Marian—*she* never loved me! Her calm and placid temper, her equable and quiet spirit, was not made for so violent affections, so hot passions, as true love. Even to-day—"

"Hold! my lord—hold!" Marian almost fiercely interrupted him, "not a word more; even to-day, you told that angel, whom in your wickedness you dare to slander, even to-day, you told Annabel, that if I felt *any* passion toward you, it was a rash, unsought, and unjustifiable passion! Those were your very words—your very words to-day, when she would have resigned herself, and brought us honorably wedded. Oh! man, to lie so plausibly, and with so fair a grace, you are but too forgetful. Begone, my lord, begone! you stand self-convicted!"

"Marian," he replied solemnly, and lifting his right hand up impressively to Heaven, "this is almost too painful, but I can not, no, I can not permit innocence such as yours to be thus played upon by jealousy and envious selfishness; I swear to you by the honor of my father, by my mother's virtue, by

HIM who made, and who now listens to us both! such words as those never passed lip of mine—such thoughts were never conceived in my brain."

And it did not thunder!—

> "Alas! that guilt is by no presage known!
> The tempter's voice hath oft the truest tone."

"You did *not* tell her that—you did *not*!" cried Marian, wildly, as she sprang to her feet, "deceive me not, I adjure you, as you love me, as you hope for salvation! deceive me not, now, Ernest de Vaux! You did *not* tell her that?"

"As I hope for salvation, I did not!" and his voice did not falter, nor his cheek blanch, nor his lip quiver, as he swore, by the holiest and the highest thing that shall be, to that consummate lie! "Nay, I confessed to her the whole truth; I told her the whole truth; I told her all, and all as I have told it now to you; I conjured her to pardon any wrong I might have most unintentionally wrought her—for she had told me before that, with a mien and voice as firm as mine are now, that from the moment when she knew my love for you, she had ceased entirely to regard or love me! and I implored her to reconcile us two, that together we might yet be happy?"

"Can these things be?" replied Marian, gazing into his eyes as she would read his soul. "Oh! Ernest, Ernest, if you say these words from the hope of winning me, I do beseech you, I do adjure you once more, on my knees, Ernest, dear, dear Ernest—unsay, unsay it—do not, for God's sake, sow the seeds of distrust, and enmity, and hatred, between two orphan-sisters. Oh! spare me, Ernest De Vaux, spare me!"

"I would to God that I could!" he answered with the most perfect and unmoved hypocrisy, "I would to God that being so adjured, I dared unsay them. But for my soul, I dare not; what did she tell you, Marian?"

"That you denied me—that you pronounced my love for you, rash, unsought, unjustifiable; can it be? God! God! I shall go mad; can it be, Annabel, that you so dealt with me?"

"And she came back to me, and told me with calm air and pensive look, and her eyes full of hypocritical tears, 'that you were so much set against me, that you would not so much as hear me—that you had sent me a fierce, scornful, passionate message, which she would not do you the wrong to deliver!'"

"O Annabel! sister, sister Annabel! Heaven is my judge, I would not so have done by you to win an eternity of blessings!"

"And me," whispered De Vaux softly in her ears, "can you pardon me now, my sweet Marian?"

"Nay! my lord, I have naught to pardon; we have both been deceived, first by our own misconceptions, and then, alas! alas! that it should be so! by my own sister's treason. If there be any pardon to be asked, it is I that should ask yours, De Vaux."

"It would be granted ere it would be asked, Marian," he replied, "but now, will you not hear me? will you not let me pray you on"—

"Oh! no, no, Ernest, how can it be? What my God! what would you ask of me?"

"To be mine, mine for ever—my wife, my own wife, Marian!" And he glided his hand around her waist, and drew her to his bosom; and she no longer shunned him, nor resisted, and their lips mingled in a first kiss, as she sighed out that irrevocable yes! Alas! for Marian!

"But how?" she whispered, as she extricated herself blushing and trembling from his arms, "how can it be?"

"You must fly with me, ere dawn, my love. I have a friend at Ripon, the worthy dean, we can frame easily a tale to win him to our purpose, who will unite us! We will set forward presently, my horses are equipped even now—your palfrey

shall be made ready—at the next village, we can get some country-maiden, who will accompany you; at Ripon we shall overtake my brothers with the troops, and all will go happily!"

At first she refused positively, then faintly and more faintly, as that false, wily man plied her with prayers and protestations—nay, tears even, and at last—oh! that we should be so weak to resist deception, when our own hearts conspire with the deceiver—at last, amid tears, and sobs, and kisses, "while saying I 'will ne'er consent,' consented.'"

CHAPTER XIII.

STEALTHILY as Marian had descended the staircase, to keep that fatal rendezvous, more stealthily yet did she return. At Annabel's door she again paused for a moment; but she paused only now to mark if she slept soundly; to hear if any breath or movement betokened that she was awake to interrupt her. At first she heard nothing, but by-and-by, as her ear became more and more accustomed to the silence of the house, and as the quick beating of her own fluttering heart subsided into stillness, which for a time had filled her ears with its tumultuous murmur, she could distinguish, without difficulty, the deep and regular breathing of her slumbering sister as it became distinctly audible; and she was satisfied that from her at least she was in no danger of any interruption. Thence the unhappy girl crept into her mother's chamber; which, though it communicated with Annabel's by an open door, and though she knew that the slightest noise in that cherished chamber was wont to arouse her sister, she felt that she must visit, ere she could quit the home of her fathers, as she believed, for ever.

Oh! there is something indeed holy in the atmosphere of a

mother's chamber; and that holiness fell, not like a soft and gentle balm, but like a keen and acrid irritant upon the wounded spirit of the excited maiden. There was something in the whole aspect of the room unaltered from her earliest childhood —in the immovable old-fashioned furniture which had survived in its quaint old age so many owners, which had looked on so many changes and chances; in the grim cornices and heavy sculptured posts of the huge canopied bedstead; in the strange carvings of the vast oak mantelpiece, in the rich dark hues of the brocaded hangings; in the tall cabinets of lacquered Indian ware; in the fantastic images embossed in gold upon their doors, at which her childhood used to shudder; in the very ticking, slumberous and monotonous, of the old eight-day clock, by which she was wont years ago to study her small tasks— there was something in all this, I say, that operated strangely, and very painfully upon the mind of Marian Hawkwood.

She was embittered, angry, jealous—yet more indignant, heartsick, at what she believed to be Annabel's cruel treachery —than angry or jealous either. Her soul had drunk in, and received as truth, all the base falsehoods of that false and fickle lover. It was perhaps impossible, after she had taken the first false step of meeting him at all, that it should be otherwise— and resolved as she was, that she would not permit the whole bliss of her life to be frustrated by the premeditated baseness of another, she yet felt and appreciated to the utmost, the whole bitterness and agony of her position.

Her very heart was wrung by the idea of quitting that loved home, that cherished mother, those dear memories at all—and then to quit them, as she must, clandestinely, in shame and darkness, and dishonor—oh! it was anguish! anguish nnspeakable!

For a considerable time, Marian stood motionless beside the bed of the paralytic woman, happy for once, at least, in the very thing

which rendered her an object of compassion; happy that she was ignorant of the sufferings and the trials, the sins and the sorrows, of her beloved daughter.

Wonderful, terrible contrast! the lovely face of the young girl, in its wonted aspect so bright, so radiantly beautiful, now pale alternately and flushed, harassed and agitated, nay, almost distorted, and showing in every line, every feature, the prevalence of fierce and overmastering passion! And in the calm, composed, vacant—nay! almost infantile expression of the old woman's countenance! The one in the very spring-time of life, when all should be innocence and peaceful mirth, so full of unnatural and stormy tumults of the soul! The other in extreme old age, when the traces of long cares and many sorrows are expected to be stamped visibly on the lineaments, so perfectly, so deadly tranquil!

For many moments she stood there, wistfully gazing on her mother's face, as it showed paler even, and more wan and deathlike than its wont, in the faint moonbeams; and, as she gazed, a milder and less painful expression came over her excited features; and her sweet, blue eyes filled with tears—not the fierce scorching tears of passion, which seem to sear rather than soothe the brain, but the soft, gentle drops of penitence and moderated sorrow. She fell upon her knees beside the bed, and burying her head in her hands, remained there half reclined, her whole frame shuddering from time to time, with a sharp and convulsive tremor, and the tears flowing so abundantly that all the bed-linen was moistened by her weeping.

Whether she prayed, I know not—probably not in words, nor in any fixed and determined mood of humble supplication —but it would seem that she communed with herself deeply, and called on Heaven to guide and prosper her deliberations. For she uprose, after a little while, with a serener look and a quieter eye, and as she rose, she said, in a whisper: "No! I

will not; I will not," and had already turned to leave the chamber, when from the inner room, wherein Annabel was sleeping, there came a rustle, a short, sudden sound, which caused Marian to stop short and listen, fearful that her sister was awakening. All was still for two or three seconds, and then the noise was repeated more loudly than before, and simultaneously with the noise, several words were uttered, with that peculiar intonation which always characterizes the speech of somnambulists. Marian listened as though her soul was suspended on her sense of hearing, yet, at first, she could distinguish nothing. Annabel, however, ere long spoke again, and the second time, unhappily, her lips syllabled, but too distinctly, the fatal name of Ernest.

The blood rushed to the brow of Marian in a hot, burning torrent, her eyes lightened with fiery anger—she stamped her small foot passionately upon the carpet, and clenched her hand so tightly that every nail left its visible point in the palm. She ground her teeth together, and muttered through them:—

"Ah! is it then so? never—no! never shall she have him—never! never! never!"

So slight a thing will at times suffice to change our whole souls within us—to set our blood boiling—to alter the whole tenor of our actions, our lives—to decide our destinies in this world, perchance in the world to come!

One moment, Marian stood resolved to bear her sorrows boldly and nobly—to combat with the tempter, and be strong—to do her duty, let what might come of it! The next, and the good resolve was swept from her heart by the wild rush of a thousand evil and bitter thoughts, anger, resentment, jealousy, ambition, pride! And what, what was the puissant spell that had evoked these baneful spirits; baneful indeed, for fatal was their consequence to her, and to all those that loved her; these chance words spoken by a disturbed and feverish sleeper?

Alas! she paused no more, nor looked again on her scarce living mother, nor gave heed to the memories which had but now so nearly won her; but rushed away with fleet and noiseless steps to her own chamber, and then busily applied herself to her brief preparations.

Brief indeed were the preparations which she had the time or the disposition to make, on that night!—she dressed herself rapidly, and almost mechanically, in a dark riding-dress and velvet cap, hurriedly thrust a single change of raiment, and the small casket which contained her few simple jewels, into a light travelling bag of scented cordovan leather, which had by chance been left in her room, when the rest of her baggage was removed on her return from York; and was, within a quarter of an hour, prepared to set off on her untimely journey, whither she knew not, nor when to return again!

While she was thus engaged, a little incident occurred, perhaps scarce worth recording; yet so much wisdom may be deduced oftentimes from observation of the smallest and most seemingly trivial incident, and so strongly did this, I think, denote the extreme perturbation of her mind, that I will not, trifling although be it, leave it unmentioned.

While she was on her knees, busily packing up her case, a beautiful tortoise-shell cat, a soft, glossy creature, which she had reared up from a little kitten, and taught to follow her about like a dog, jumped down out of a large arm-chair in which it had been dozing, and trotted toward her with its tail erect, uttering a small note of pleasure and affectionate recognition. In a moment, seeing itself unnoticed, it laid its velvet paw upon the arm of its young mistress with an impatient mew; but she, preoccupied with quick and burning thoughts, repulsed her with so rude a hand, that she was thrown off to a yard's distance, and stood gazing as if in astonishment at so unkindly treatment from one who had always fondled her and fed her.

The very moment after she had done this, as if repenting the action, she caught up the little animal in her arms, and burst into tears, as she kissed and addressed it, as if it had been a human creature.

"Good-by," said she, "good-by, poor Pussy; I shall never see you any more; you will be fed by other hands, you will forget your poor mistress, Pussy. Yet happier will you be than I—for you will not be driven from your pleasant home—you are not betrayed or deserted by your friends—you are not wronged by those you love—for you love no one—happy creature! love no one but her only to whom you look for food—happy, happy creature! and when she quits you, will love equally the next hand that shall fondle you!—for you, thrice happy that you are! you are not cursed with memory, nor with affection, nor with passion—those agonies to which we are subject."

Then, for some minutes, she wept very bitterly, still holding the cat in her arms, purring with pleasure, and patting its fair mistress's cheek, with its velvet paws—until the distant sound of a horse's foot upon the gravel road smote on her ear, a summons to quit the home of her youth, the friends of her childhood—and for what? When she heard it, she raised her head, and gazed about her wildly, as if to collect her thoughts, lifted her eyes to heaven, while her lips moved very rapidly as if in inward prayer.

"May God forgive me!" she said, rising, "if this thing which I do is evil; and oh! may he guard and guide my steps aright—and may he pardon those who have driven me to this!"

And then, without another word, she laid her little favorite gently down on the bed, and snatching up the leathern case which she had made ready, she hurried out of the room, not once casting her eyes behind her, for she felt that if she did so, her resolution was at an end at once, and stole down stairs, silent and trembling between fear and apprehension, and something near akin to remorse.

No sound this time came to appal her; no obstacle occurred to interrupt her progress, yet she shuddered as she stood on the threshold of that once happy home, and a quick, chilly spasm ran over her whole frame, as if it were an ague fit. Her fate, however, or at least that which men call fate, the stubborn and determined energy of her own erring passion—cried out within her, and nerved her body to do that which she knew to be imprudent, and almost knew to be wrong likewise.

She raised the latch of the front door, and issued forth, closing it carefully behind her, and stood upon the stone steps, gazing with a wistful eye over the calm and tranquil scenery of that fair valley. The autumn morn was already breaking in the east, ere yet the moonlight had faded altogether from the sky—the heavens were pure and cloudless, and colorless as a huge vault of crystal, except where on the horizon a faint yellowish hue was visible, first harbinger of the approaching sun. There was not a breath of wind astir; even on the topmost branches of the tall trees about the hall, the sere leaves, ready to flutter down at the slightest breath, hung motionless—here and there a gray mist wreath soared up ghostlike, in a straight column, from some small pond or lakelet, and a light smoky haze marked the whole course of the Wharfe through the lowlands; the frosted dew lay silvery white over the lawn and meadows—and not a sound or tone of any kind except the continuous murmur of the neighboring rivulet, swelling the louder for the cessation of all other noises, was to be heard through the sleeping country. The earliest bird had not yet left its roost, the very dogs were in their heaviest slumber. And Marian, oppressed as she was by sad thoughts and heavy memories, felt that the silence was yet more oppressive—spoke more reproachfully to her conscience than the loudest and most

vehement rebuke. Those might have called forth anger and awakened in her heart the spirit of resistance; this, on the contrary, appealed to her better reason, and voiceless in its wholesome admonition, led her to self-blame and self-accusation.

Had she stood many minutes there alone, with no other comrade than her own restless and tormenting thoughts, it is probable that she would have found their burden intolerable, and have taken refuge from them in a return to her duty; but, alas! ere the reaction came, the voice of the tempter again sounded in her ear; and he, she loved so madly, stood beside her.

"Sweet Marian," he murmured, gently passing his arm round her slender waist, "why did you tarry so long? I almost feared that something had occurred to detain you—I fancied that your sister might have awakened, and perhaps, have even used force to prevent you. Come, dearest, come, the horses are prepared and await us by the hawthorn bush under the hillock."

Was it chance—was it accursed and premeditated art, that led De Vaux to utter the one word that thrilled every chord of her soul, that instantly attuned her to his purpose, banishing every soft and tender memory, and kindling jealousy and distrust, and almost hatred, in that impulsive soul, from which they had been gradually fading, under the better influence of quiet thought, aided by the tranquillizing and harmonious sympathies of nature?

I know not; but she started as if a serpent stung her, when the word sister fell upon her ear; and though she had almost shrunk from De Vaux as he first approached, with something more than the mere timidity of maiden bashfulness, she now gave him her hand quickly, and said, in an eager, apprehensive voice: "Come! come!"

He led her down the gentle slope, to the spot, where a single groom, an old, grave-featured, gray-haired man, was holding two horses, and her favorite palfrey. He lifted her to her saddle, sprang to his own, and, without another word, they rode away, gently and heedfully, till they had left the precincts of the park behind them; but when they had once gained the road, they fled at a rate that would have almost defied pursuit, had there been any to pursue them.

But there were none; nor was her flight discovered until she had been gone above two hours.

The morning broke, like that which had preceded it, serene, and bright, and lovely; the great sun rushed up the blue vault in triumphant splendor, all nature laughed out in his glory—but at a later hour, far later than usual, no smoke was seen curling from the precincts of the hall, or sign of man or beast was visible about its precincts. The passionate scenes, the wild excitement of the preceding day, had brought about, as usual, a deep reaction; and sleep sat heavily on the eyelids, or the souls of the inmates. The first who awoke was Annabel—Annabel, the bereaved and almost widowed bride.

CHAPTER XIV.

Dressing herself in haste she sought, as usual, her mother's chamber and found her happy—oh! how supremely happy in her benighted state, since she knew not, nor understood at all, the sorrows of those whom she once had loved so tenderly—found her in a deep, calm slumber—kissed her brow silently, and breathed a fond prayer over her, then hurried thence to Marian's chamber. The door stood open, it was vacant! Down the stairs to the garden—the door that led to that sweet spot was barred and bolted—the front door stood upon the latch, and by that Annabel passed out into the fresh young morning.

How fair, how peaceable, how calm, was all around her—how utterly unlike the strife, the trials, the cares, the sorrows, the hot hatreds of the animated world—how utterly unlike the anxious pains which were then gnawing at that fair creature's heart-strings!

She stood awhile, and gazed, around and listened, but no sound met her ear, except the oft-heard music of the wind and water—except the well-known points of that familiar scene; she walked—she ran—a fresh fear struck her, a fear of she knew not what—she flew to the garden—"Marian! Marian!"—but no Marian came! no voice made answer to her shrill outcries—back! back! she hurried to the house, but in her way she crossed the road leading to the stables—there were fresh horse-tracks—several fresh horse-tracks—one which looked like the print of Marian's palfrey!

Without a moment's hesitation, she rushed into the stable-court; no groom was there, nor stable-boy, nor helper—and yet the door stood open, and a loud tremulous neighing—Annabel knew it instantly to be the call of her own jennet—was awakening unanswered echoes. She stood a moment like a statue before she could command herself to cross the threshold.

She crossed it, and the stall where Marian's palfrey should have stood, next her own, was vacant.

The chargers of De Vaux were gone; the horses of his followers—all, all gone! She shrieked aloud—she shrieked, till every pinnacle and turret of the old hall, till every dell and headland of the hills, sent back a yelling echo. It scarcely seemed a second before the courtyard, which, a moment since, was so silent and deserted, was full of hurrying men and frightened women—the news was instantly abroad that Mistress Marian had been spirited away by the false lord. Horses were saddled instantly, and broadswords girded on, and men were mounting in hot haste, ere Annabel had in so much recovered

from the shock as to know what to order or advise—evil and hasty counsels had been taken, but the good vicar and the prebendary came down in time to hinder them.

A hurried consultation was held in the house, and it was speedily determined that the two clergymen should set forth on the instant, with a sufficient escort to pursue, and if it should be possible, bring back the fugitive—and although Annabel at the first was in despair, fancying that there could be no hope of her being overtaken, yet was she somewhat reassured on learning that De Vaux could not quit his regiment, and that the slow route of the troopers on a long march could easily be caught up even by aged travellers.

The sun was scarce three hours high when the pursuers started—all that day long it lagged across the sky—it set, and was succeeded by night, longer still, and still more dreary—another day! and yet another! Oh, the slow agony of waiting! the torture of enumerating minutes!—each minute seemingly an age—the dull, heart-sickening suspense of awaiting tidings—tidings which the heart tells us—the heart, too faithful prophet of the future—can not, by possibility, be good! While Reason interposes her vain veto to the heart's decision, and Hope uplifts her false and siren song!

The third night was at hand, and Annabel was sitting at the same window—how often it occurs, that one spot witnesses *the* dozen scenes most interesting, most eventful to the same individual.

Is it, that consciousness of what has passed, leads man to the spot marked by one event, when he expects another? or can it be indeed a destiny?

The third night was at hand, and Annabel was sitting at that same window, when, on the distant highway, she beheld her friends returning, but they rode heavily and sadly onward; nor was there any flutter of female garbs among them. Marian

was not among them? They came—the story was soon told! —they had succeeded in overtaking the regiment, they had seen Ernest, and Marian was *his wife!*

The register of her marriage, duly attested, had been shown to her uncle in the church at Ripon, and though she had refused to see them, she had sent word that she was well and happy, with many messages of love and cordiality to Annabel, and promises that she would write at short and frequent intervals.

No more was to be done—nothing was to be said at all. Men marvelled at De Vaux, and envied him! Women blamed Marian Hawkwood, and they, too, envied! But Annabel said nothing—but went about her daily duties, tending her helpless mother, and answering her endless queries concerning Marian's absence, and visiting her pensioners among the village poor, seemingly cheerful and contented. But her cheek constantly grew paler, and her form thinner and less round. The sword was hourly wearing out the scabbard! The spirit was too mighty for the vessel that contained it.

Five years passed thus—five wearisome long years—years of domestic strife and civil war, of bloodshed, conflagration, and despair, throughout all England. The party of the king, superior at the first, was waxing daily weaker, and was almost lost. For the first years Marian *did* write, and that, too, frequently and fondly, to her sister; never alluding to the past, and seldom to De Vaux, except to say that he was all she wished him, and she more happy than she hoped, or deserved to be. But gradually did the letters become less frequent and more formal; communications were obstructed, and posts were intercepted, and scarce, at last, did Annabel hear twice in twelve months of her sister's welfare. And when she did hear, the correspondence had become cold and lifeless; the tone of Marian, too, was altered, the buoyancy was gone—the mirth—the soul

—and, though she complained not, nor hinted that she was unhappy, yet Annabel saw plainly that it was so. Saw it, and sorrowed, and said nothing.

Thus time passed on, with all its tides and chances, and the old paralytic invalid was gathered to her fathers, and slept beside her husband in the yard of the same humble church which had witnessed their union—and Annabel was more alone than ever.

CHAPTER XV.

Five years had elapsed since Marian had fled from Ingleborough hall, and, as I have said already, Annabel knew but little what had passed with the cherished sister since her flight. She knew, indeed, that for the first years of her marriage she was happy; and so joyously did she sympathize with that happiness, so sincerely did her letters, whenever she had an opportunity of writing, express that sympathy, unmixed with any touch of jealousy or enviousness, that Marian could not long resist the growth of the conviction, strengthened at every renewal of the correspondence, that Ernest had deceived her, in the account by which he had prevailed on her to elope with him. It is not, perhaps, very strange, however—for we can not call anything strange with propriety that is of usual occurrence—that, so long as Ernest de Vaux continued to be the rapturous lover, and after that, the gentle and assiduous husband, she felt no resentment, nor indeed any inclination to blame him for the deceit, which had produced only happy results to herself, and had resulted in no permanent estrangement or breach of confidence between herself and Annabel. What contributed, moreover, in no slight degree to this placability on

Marian's part, was that, without ever actually confessing that he had spoken falsely, De Vaux, as soon as she was once irrevocably his, exerted himself to palliate the conduct of Annabel, representing it as a natural result of galled and wounded feelings, as a lapse to be pitied rather than blamed severely, and effectually succeeded in re-establishing kind thoughts in her heart. And so—for poor Annabel never knew nor imagined aught of Marian's causeless suspicion and dislike—brought the sisters back to their wonted footing of perfect familiarity and untrammelled confidence.

Still, in despite of this, though Marian had nothing which she desired to conceal from her sister, except what she believed to be the solitary instance of deception in her husband—which, though she excused it to herself as a sort of pious fraud, necessary to insure her happiness, she yet felt, as it were intuitively, that Annabel could neither regard in that light, nor ever pardon very readily—though Marian, I say, had nothing except this which she desired to conceal, and though her sister was the very soul of frankness and ingenuous truth, still any correspondence, even the freest and most unreserved, is but a sorry substitute for personal intercourse and conversation, and can at best but convey very slightly an idea of the true state of sentiments, emotions, and events, especially when they are protracted through a long course of years.

Events, and the course of the earlier part of the civil war, which was waged for the most part in the southern and midland counties, had prevented the sisters from meeting, Annabel remaining, during the lifetime of her beloved mother, assiduously and earnestly devoted to her comforts, while Marian, for the most part, followed the court of the unhappy Charles, who, still at Oxford or elsewhere, kept up the semblance, at least, of his kingly style, and held his parliament of such peers as remained true to the cause of their own order, of the church and the crown.

Among all the bold cavaliers, who fought and bled so generously for the unhappy king, the most unhappy and least vicious of an unhappy vicious race, there was not one more gallant, one who achieved more glory than De Vaux. Among all the fair dames, aristocrats of nature, as of birth, who graced the halls of declining royalty, there was not one more lovely, more admired, or more followed, than the bright and still happy Marian. Delighted by the fame and honors which daily fell more thickly on her husband, amused, pleased, and dazzled, by the novelty of her position, for a considerable time Marian believed herself perfectly happy, as she believed herself also to be devotedly beloved by her husband.

The very hurry and turmoil in the midst of which she necessarily lived, was not without its wild and half-pleasurable excitement—after custom and experience, and the seeing him return home victorious and unwounded, had steeled her against the terrors and the anguish which assailed her at first, whenever he rode forth to battle; there was a sort of charm in the short absences, from which he ever hurried home, as it appeared more fond and more enamored than in the first days of her wedded life. This hurry and turmoil, moreover, afforded to De Vaux constant and plausible excuses by which to account for and mask his irregularities, which became in truth more and more frequent, as the fresh character and lovely person of his wife gradually palled on him by possession. For in truth he was a wild, reckless, fickle man—not by any means all evil, or without many generous and gentle impulses, although these had been growing daily weaker and less frequent through a life of self-indulgence and voluptuousness, till very little was now left of his original promise, save courtly manners, a fair exterior, and—simply to do him justice—a courage as indomitable, cool, and sustained, as it was vigorous and fiery.

He lived in a period of much license—he was the eldest son

of a doating father—he had lost his mother, while he was yet a mere boy—all three vast disadvantages—vast misfortunes to a young man. Indulged to the utmost of his wild and fantastic wishes by his father, encouraged rather than checked in those extravagances which the cavaliers of the day affected somewhat, in order to mask their detestation of the cold-blooded hypocrisy and ridiculously insincere profession of those most odious impostors who constituted the vast majority of the puritanic leaders—launched very young into the world, with handsome person, courtly manners, high rank, and almost boundless wealth, his success with the women of the court, in an age the most licentious England had then witnessed, was wide and unbounded.

He had already become the most hardened being in the world, a cool voluptuary, a sensual, luxurious, calculating courtier, when he met Marian at the sheriff's ball, at York, and was struck instantly by her extraordinary beauty. Having approached her in consequence of this admiration, tired as he was, and sick of the hackneyed and artificial characters, the affectations, and *minauderies*, and want of heart of all the women with whom he had as yet been familiar, he was soon yet more captivated by the freshness of her soul, the artlessness of her manner, the frank, ingenuous, off-handed simplicity of her bright, innocent youth, fearless of wrong, and unsuspicious of evil, than he had been by her beauty. So that before he was compelled by paramount duty—the only duty which he owned, military duty, namely—to quit York, he was as much in love as his evil course of life and acquired habits had left him the power of being, with the sweet country maiden. That is to say—he had determined that the possession of her was actually necessary to his existence, and a thing to be acquired on any terms—nay! he had even thought many times, that she might be endurable for a much longer period than any of his

former loves, and begun to fancy, that, when his passion should have settled down into esteem, he might be able to tolerate in Marian Hawkwood, the character he most dreaded in the world, that of a lawful wife.

There was something in the whole air and demeanor of Marian Hawkwood, that told the young debauchee, almost instinctively, that there was but one name in which she could be addressed—a purity and innocence of heart and manner, likewise, which would have prevented the most dissolute and daring of mankind from dreaming even of approaching her with dishonorable addresses. Now, it was difficult for a man of De Vaux's character and principles—if that can be called principle which is rather a total absence of all principle—accustomed to doubt and disbelieve and to sneer at the possibility of female virtue, to bring himself to the resolution of deliberately offering his hand to any woman, how passionately he might be attached to her soever; and this difficulty of making up his own mind it was, and not any timidity or bashfulness—things utterly strange and unknown to his hard and worldly nature—which caused that irresolution which had given offence so deep to Marian Hawkwood.

It can not be denied that her manner on that interview did pique and provoke him beyond measure—that it threw him into doubt as to the question whether she did indeed love him or not, and by awakening for a moment an idea of the possibility of his being rejected—an idea which had never so much as occurred to him before, even casually, materially increased his dislike to subsiding into a tranquil and domestic Benedict.

These were the real reasons for his seemingly extraordinary conduct toward Marian in the first place; and not at all that which he had stated, for he had been indeed false—false from the beginning.

It was then in a singular state of mind, vexed with himself

and irritated at finding himself subject to a passion seemingly hopeless, annoyed that he was unable to shake off that passion lightly, indignant with Marian for not appreciating sufficiently the honor he had done her, in so much as thinking of making her his wife, foiled, furious, discontented, and devoured all the time by the agony of his fierce desire—for it is mere profanation to call that which he felt, love—he set forth from York to visit, as he imagined, the father of his cruel, fair one.

Many wild schemes and projects flitted through his mind as he journeyed westward, which it were neither profitable nor pleasing to follow out; but each and all of these had reference to winning Marian in some shape or other, and at some period not remote.

What occurred when he reached Ingleborough, is known already to those who have thus far followed the fortunes of the sisters; but what in truth passed in the recesses of his own heart has never been divulged, nor can be known to any one. It may be that pique and anger at Marian's manner when they parted had really disposed him, as he said, to love another honestly and truly. It may be that the exquisite repose and charming sweetness of Annabel did indeed win upon his soul and work for the time a partial reformation—but what alone is certain is, that he felt more of that repugnance to sacrificing what he called his liberty, which had actuated him with regard to Marian, when he proposed to Annabel.

It may be, on the other hand—and it would be by no means inconsistent with either his past character or after conduct—that fickle and light as he was, and very liable to be captivated for the moment by the charms of women, that, I say, he was influenced by a twofold motive—twofold and doubly base—of gratifying a passing caprice in marrying Annabel, and inflicting the heaviest punishment he could imagine on her sister at the same time. It is probable, even, that he might have had baser

and more infamous projects in view, with respect to poor Marian; and it is certain that he looked to the disturbed and perilous state of the country, as to a favorable position of things to his purpose, should he desire to abandon his fair, young wife after a time—seeing that she had no influential relations to protect her, and that if peace should be restored at last, little inquiry was likely to be made after affairs of mere personal consideration.

Frustrated in his intentions by the return of Marian, and by her inability to conceal the violence of the hopeless love which she still nourished for her sister's wooer, although she nourished it without one thought of evil entering her pure spirit, having betrayed moreover his own maddening passion, which returned upon him with redoubled violence, when he was thrown again into her society, he could not endure the scorn, the contempt, which he felt gathering around him, nor bear the publicity of his disappointment.

It was the fear of this publicity, then, and the determination that he would, under no circumstances, leave Ingleborough in the character of a rejected and disappointed suitor, that induced him to renew his solicitations to poor Marian. Shrewd and keen-sighted, and able judge of character as he was, he readily perceived that in the calm and composed soul of Annabel Hawkwood, there was a deep, settled principle, a firm and resolute will, a determination capable of calling forth any powers, whether it were to do or endure. It required, therefore, little reflection to show him that with her he had now no possibility of succeeding—that once detected, as he felt himself to be, his whole mind and motives perused and understood as if they had been written out in a fair book for her inspection, the very love which she had entertained for him in the past, would but the more strongly arm her against him in the present.

Nor was this all—for even his effrontery was at fault, even

his natural audacity shrank from encountering the tranquil scorn, the quiet and unutterable loathing which he saw visible in every glance of her mild eye. Ere long, between the sense that he had irreparably injured her, and the knowledge that she understood him thoroughly, he came to hate her with a vehement and bitter hatred.

In this hatred, too, he found a new instigation to persevere in his attempts on Marian, for he was certain that, although the ordinary sources of annoyance, envy or jealousy, could never inflict a single sting on Annabel, he could wreak no heavier vengeance on her than by making her beloved sister his wife —the wife of a man whom she despised so utterly—and he acknowledged it in his own secret soul—so worthily.

Unhappily, in the impulsive and impetuous character of Marian, which he had studied to its inmost depths, he encountered no such resistance as he knew he should encounter from her sister. Falsehoods which would have been discovered instantly and rejected with scarce a consideration, by the quiet thoughtfulness and innocent penetration of the elder sister, wakened suspicions in the quicker mind of the younger, galled her to the very quick, dwelt in her heart, filling it with bitterness and gall, and at last ripened into terrible and dark convictions of the unworthiness of her who was, in truth, the best of sisters, and the tenderest of friends.

These were the motives, these the means of Ernest de Vaux —and we have seen, alas! how fully they succeeded.

What are the necessary consequences of a marriage contracted with such views as these, founded upon a man's caprice for a woman whom he would have made his mistress if he could, and only made his wife because he could by no other means possess her, can not be doubted.

Nothing first could be happier than Marian Hawkwood—for she mistook, naturally enough, the fierce and violent passion

of her young husband for genuine and veritable love; and, indeed, after satiety and possession had long dulled the ardor of this passion, circumstances for a long time conspired to keep up the illusion in the mind of Marian. The hurried and changeful life which they led; the very large portion of their time which was passed, to a certain degree, in public; the gratified vanity of her husband at the admiration which she excited everywhere, and which delighted his vain and fickle temperament long after he had ceased himself to care for her, all tended to delay the fatal discovery, which it was clear that she must one day make, that she was loved no longer.

At first, as she perceived that his attentions were declining, that he no longer hurried homeward with eager haste, his duty in the camp or in the court accomplished, that the revel or the dice detained him, she threw the blame on the unsettled times, on the demoralizing influence of civil warfare, and wild company, and the want of a permanent and happy home. She prayed, and believed that with the war these things, which were converting fast her life into one scene of sorrow, would come to an end, and that shortly.

But neither did the war, nor the sorrows which she attributed to that war, seem likely to be brought to any speedy or even favorable termination.

No children had blessed that ill-fated union, and Marian, when she did not, in obedience to the order of her husband, go into the court gayeties, such as they were at that time, was almost entirely alone.

Alone she brooded in despondency, almost in despair, over her hapless present life, and almost hopeless future. Write to her sister of her griefs she could not; where was the use of torturing that worn heart with other sorrows, when she must needs have enough sorrow of her own.

Abroad she was subject to the twofold agony of witnessing

the bold and open faithlessness of her husband, his infamous addresses to the wild and licentious beauties, made, perhaps, wild and licentious by the extravagance of their natural protectors, and the strange and corrupting circumstances of the times —and of enduring the base solicitations and addresses of the gay friends of her husband—solicitations and addresses which she could scarce believe were unknown to him, who, most of all men, should have resented and avenged them.

Thus year by year dragged on, until Marian, thoroughly convinced of her husband's infidelity and baseness, which, indeed, he scarce now affected to conceal, was the most miserable of her sex.

All her high spirits had taken to themselves wings, and flown away—all her wild daring elasticity of character—tameless gayety, which was so beautiful of old—her strong impulsive frankness—were broken, gone, obliterated. She had become a quiet, sad, heart-broken, meditative creature. Yet she repined not ever—nor approached him—nor gave way to sadness in his presence—but strove, poor wretch, to put on a semblance of the manners which he had once seemed to love, and her pale lips still wore a sickly smile as he drew near, and a wild cheerfulness would animate her for a moment; if, by chance, he spoke kindly, a hope would arise within her that he might still be reclaimed to the ways of virtue and of love.

But still the hope was deferred, and her heart grew sick, and utter gloom took possession of her; so that she now looked forward to no other termination of her sorrows than the grave, and to that she indeed looked forward, at what time it should seem good to Him to send it, who orders all things, and all wisely.

CHAPTER XVI.

Thus then had the days passed with Marian during those years of which her sister knew so little, each day sadder and bearing less of hope than the last. She had heard of her mother's death, that mother whom she had once so cherished, whose memory was still so dear to her—yet had those gloomy tidings brought no increase to the unhappy wife's cold sadness. No! so completely had the hardening touch of despair petrified all her feelings, that she now felt that nothing could increase or diminish the burden under which she labored. If she thought of the dead at all, it was to envy, not weep—it was to clasp her hands, and turn her eyes up to heaven, and to cry—"Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord; even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labors!" And worse every day, and more vicious—ay! and more loathsome and more cruel in his vices, did Ernest de Vaux show himself. Alas! the career of virtue is as it were on a road up a steep mountain's side. There is no halting on the way, no standing still—no power of remaining where you are. Upward or downward, you must on, and on for ever! Upward with conscientious hopes and earnest struggles and energetical resolves to virtue, and to honor, and to peace—or downward, with headlong speed, to crime, and agony, and ruin, and that perdition which shall not end when all things else have reached their termination. Alas! I say—alas! for this latter was the path in which the steps of De Vaux were hurrying, and toward this termination.

From gentlemanly vice, as it is falsely called, and those extravagances or excesses rather, of which men, deemed by the world honorable, may be guilty without losing caste, Ernest

began now to degenerate into low profligacy, vulgar habitual debauchery! His noble features and fine form had already begun to display the symptoms of habitual intemperance; his courtly manners and air, once so noble, had deteriorated sadly; his temper, equable and mild, and at the least in outward show so kindly, had become harsh, and querulous, uneven, and at times violent and brutal.

Yet Marian still clung to him, faithful in weal and wo, in wealth as in poverty—for at times, in the changes and chances of the civil war, they had in truth undergone much hardship—she was still the unchanged, unrepining, fond consoler—but alas! how cruelly, and how often were her sweet consolations cast back upon her, her kind and affectionate advances met with harsh words, and bitter menaces—and once! yes, once, when the mad demon of intoxication was all-powerful within him—yes! once with a blow.

It was the fifth year of the civil war, and though many fierce and sanguinary fields had been fought, many towns taken, many halls and manor-houses stormed and defended, much generous, noble blood prodigally wasted, neither side yet had gained anything of real or permanent advantage. It was the fifth year of the civil war, and the marquis of Newcastle, one of the most accomplished and gallant noblemen of the day, was holding York for the king, though besieged by an overwhelming force, by the united forces of the English puritans and independents, under Lord Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell, and the Scotch covenanters, under David Leslie, and many of the protestant lords of the sister-kingdom.

The siege had indeed lasted some time, but although those within the city were beginning to look eagerly for the relief which was expected daily from Prince Rupert, they were not as yet straitened for provision, or dispirited. And here in the midst of present apprehension, and perhaps soon to be in the

midst of peril, here in the very city, wherein she had passed those few bright days, the brightest and the happiest of her life, alas! that they should have led to consequences so cruelly disastrous—here, in a poor, mean lodging in a small, narrow street, nigh Stonegate, dwelt the once bright and happy Marian.

It was night, and although summer-time, the air was exceeding damp and chilling. It was night, dead night, and quite dark, for there was no moon, and the skies were so cloudy that the faint glimmer of the stars failed to pierce their thick folds. There were no sounds abroad in the beleaguered city but the distant call from hour to hour of the answered sentinel, and the occasional tramp and clash of arms, as the grand rounds passed through the streets to visit the outposts, or the relief parties marched toward the walls.

At this dead hour of the night, in a small, wretched parlor, scantily furnished with a few common wooden chairs, a coarse oak table, on which stood a brazen lamp diffusing a pale, uncertain light through the low-roofed apartment, and sufficing barely to show the extreme poverty and extreme cleanliness of that abode of high-born beauty, sat Marian, Lady de Vaux, plainly attired, and in nowise becomingly to her high station, pale, wan, and thin, and careworn, and no more like to the Marian Hawkwood of old days than the poor disembodied ghost to the fair form it once inhabited.

The floor of the wretched room was neatly sanded, for it was carpetless, and no curtains veiled the small latticed casements—the walls were hung with defensive armor and a few weapons, two or three cloaks and feathered hats, disposed with a sad attempt at symmetrical arrangement and decoration—four or five books, some paper and materials for writing, and an old lute lay on the table by which Marian was sitting, and on another smaller board at a little distance, neatly arranged with a clean white cloth, stood a loaf of bread, the remnants, now very

low reduced, of a sirloin, and a half bottle of red wine—the supper prepared by the hapless wife, herself fasting and hungered, for the base recreant husband.

An open Bible lay before Marian on the board, but though her eyes rested on the blessed promises, and her hands, at times, as if mechanically, turned its pages, her mind was far away, suspended on every distant sound that rose from the deserted streets, starting at every passing footstep, with a strange mixture as it seemed of eager expectation and wild fear.

At length a quick, strong, heavy tread came up the street, and paused under the window.

"It is he," she said, listening intently, with a deep crimson flush rising to her whole face, but receding rapidly, and leaving only two round hectic spots high up on her cheek-bones. "Thank God! it is he at last!" and she arose and trimmed the lamp, and drew the little table forward with the preparation for his supper—but, as the door below yielded to the pass-key which he carried, she started and turned white as ashes; for the sound of a second step reached her ears, and the soft cadence of a female voice. She paused, with her soul intent upon the sound, and as they came nearer and nearer, and more and more distinct—

"My God!" she said to herself, in a low, choked whisper, clasping her hands together, as if in mortal anguish, "my God! it can not be!"

But it was—it was, as she dreaded, as she would not believe! Shame on the dastard villain! it was true!

The door opened suddenly, and Ernest de Vaux entered, with a tall and exceedingly handsome woman leaning upon his arm, whom Marian recognised the very moment their eyes met, for the Lady Agnes Trevor, of whose bold and shameless conduct with her husband she had long heard, though she strove to close her ears to them, a thousand cruel rumors. This last

worst outrage, however, was not without its effect; even the worm, when trodden under foot, will, it is said, rise up against its torturer; and even her base husband was astonished at the superb and stately majesty with which the wronged and heart-broken woman drew herself up, as they entered—at the flash of grand indignation which lightened from every speaking feature; if he had calculated that her spirit was so utterly cowed and broken, that she would endure everything in silence, madly had he erred, and tremendously was he now undeceived.

Even the guilty woman who accompanied him, started back and in dismay; it would appear even that she had not known before whither he was conducting her, for she shrank back aghast, and clung to his arm yet closer than before, as she asked in a tremulous and agitated tone, "Who is this? who is this lady, Ernest?"

"It is his wife, madam!" replied Marian, taking a forward step; "his wedded wife, for whom it is rather to ask, who you are, that intrude thus upon her, at this untimely hour?"

"It is my wife, Agnes," answered De Vaux at the same moment, "my wife, who will be happy to extend her hospitality to you, until these most unhappy jars are ended, and you reconciled to my lord; Marian, it is the Lady Agnes Trevor, who asks your welcome; assure her—"

"I do assure her," replied Marian, haughtily, "that she is perfectly, fully welcome to enjoy all the comforts, all the hospitalities which this roof has to offer—this roof—"

"Why, that is well," replied her husband, with a sneering smile; "I told you, Agnes, she would be very glad to receive you; she is a sweet, mild, patient little creature, this pretty wife of mine!"

"This roof," continued Marian, "which, from this hour, shall never cover my head any more."

"Heyday! heyday! what is all this? what does this mean?"

"It means, simply, that hitherto I have borne much, have borne all—but infamy. And infamy I will bear never. Fare you well, sir; may you repent, I say—may you repent, I say, and ere it be too late; and may *you*," she added, turning to the frail beauty, who trembled in her presence, "may you never know the agonies which you have heaped upon my soul!"

And she passed by them, with a movement so impetuously rapid, that she was out of the door before Ernest, to whom Agnes Trevor was clinging still in mortal terror, could interpose to arrest her flight. But recovering himself, instantly he darted after and caught her by her dress, and would have dragged her back into the room, but she laid hold of the balustrades of the staircase, and clung to them so strongly, that he could not move her.

"Do you so little know me, Marian," he exclaimed furiously, "as to imagine that I would suffer my wife to go forth alone, a mark for evil tongues, at such an hour as this? Back, Madam Marian! back to your chamber, or you will force me to do that which I shall be sorry for!"

"Sorry for!" answered Marian, with calm scorn, "you sorry for aught of injury to me! and do you, sir, so little know me, as to imagine that I would stay one moment under the same roof with your—"

"With my what?—with my what, madam?" shouted De Vaux, "beware how you answer!"

"Unhand me, sir, unhand me!" she replied, "unhand me; for I will go forth!"

"Answer me; with my what? under the same roof with my what?" he again exclaimed, shaking her violently by the arm.

"With your harlot, sir," she replied, firmly, and at the same moment two fearful sounds followed her words; one the most fearful sound, perhaps, that can be heard on earth at all; the sound of a heavy blow dealt by a man to a weak woman; the other a wild, piercing female shriek—a shriek that echoed far and wide through the midnight city. But it came not, that awful shriek, from the lips of Marian.

No, no; it was the reckless, the abandoned, outcast wife of Lord Albert Trevor, that uttered the heart-rending cry, as she rushed with a frantic air out of the chamber, and threw herself at the feet of her seducer, and clasping his knees wildly with one hand, caught with the other his upraised right arm—upraised to smite again her whom he had sworn to love and honor.

"Me, me!" she cried, "oh, God—me! me! not her—strike me—strike me, not her! for I deserve it—deserve it all—all—all—me, as she rightly termed me; me, the outcast—the harlot!"

And with so powerful a grasp, moved by the ecstasy of remorse and frenzy, did the frail creature restrain the ruffian's fury, that he was forced to stoop down and exert some power to remove her. But the moment Marian perceived what was passing, she darted down the stairs, and through the front door, which she closed violently behind her, and into the vacant street, and fled with a speed that soon set pursuit at defiance. That night she slept at her old uncle's house in the minster yard, the following day York was relieved, and the siege of the puritans raised by the fiery Rupert. On the third morning the royal troops sallied forth to give battle to the troops of Fairfax upon the fatal moor of Long Marston, and while the roar of cannon was deafening the ears of all for miles around her, and her bad husband was charging in the maddest strife, Marian was hurrying home to die—hurrying home to die in the calm shades of Wharfdale.

CHAPTER XVII.

THUS things went on in the busy world abroad, and at home in the quiet vale of Ingleborough, until some few days after the deadly fight and desperate defeat at Long Marston.

Autumn had come again—brown autumn—and Annabel, now in her garden tending her flowers, and listening to her birds, and thinking of the past, not with the keen and piercing anguish of a present sorrow, but with the mellow recollection of an old regret. She stood beside the stream—the stream that all unchanged itself had witnessed such sad changes in all that was around it—close to the spot where she had talked so long with Marian on that eventful morning, when a quick, soft step came behind her; she turned, and Marian clasped her!

No words can describe the feelings of the sisters as they met; and it was not till after many a fond embrace, and many a burst of tears, that Marian told her how, after years of sufferance, compelled at last to fly from the outrageous cruelty of him, for whom she had thrown up all but honor, she now came home—home, like the hunted hare to her form, like the wounded bird to her nest—she now came home to die. "What could it boot," she said, "to repeat the old and oft-told tale, how eager passion made way for uncertain and oft-interrupted gleams of fondness How a love founded on no esteem or real principles, melted like wax before the fire. How inattention paved the way for neglect, and infidelity came close behind, and open profligacy, and bold insult, and cool, maddened outrage followed. How the ardent lover became the careless husband, the cold master, the unfeeling tyrant, and at last the brutal despot."

Marian came home to die—the seeds of that invincible disease were sown deep in her bosom; her exquisitely rounded shape was angular and thin, emaciated by disease, and suffering, and sorrow. A burning, hectic spot on either cheek were now the only remnants of that once all-radiant complexion; her step so slow and faltering, her breath drawn sob by sob with actual agony, her quick, short cough, all told too certainly the truth! Her faults were punished bitterly on earth, and happily that punishment had worked its fitting end—these faults were all repented, were all amended now. Perhaps at no time of her youthful bloom had Marian been so sweet, so truly lovely, as now when her young days were numbered.

All the asperity and harshness, the angles as it were of her character, mellowed down into a calm and unrepining cheerfulness. And oh! with what delicious tenderness did Annabel console, and pray with, and caress her—oh! they were, indeed, happy! indeed happy for those last months, those lovely sisters. For Annabel's delight at seeing the dear Marian of happier days once more beside her in their old chamber, beside her in the quiet garden, beside her in the pew of the old village-church, had, for the time, overpowered her fears for her sister's health, and as is almost invariably the case in that most fatal, most insidious of disorders, she constantly was flattered with vain hopes that Marian was amending, that the next spring would see her again well and happy. Vain hopes! indeed, vain hopes; but which of mortal hopes is other?

The cold mists of November were on the hills and in the glens of Wharfdale; the trees were stripped of their last leaves, the grass was sere and withered, the earth cheerless, the skies comfortless, when, at the same predestined window, the sisters sat watching the last gleam of the wintry sun fade on the distant hill-top. What was that flash far up the road? That round and ringing report? Another! and another! the evident reports of musketry. And lo! a horseman flying—a wild fierce troop pursuing—the foremost rides bareheaded, but the blue scarf that flutters in the air, shows him a loyal cavalier; the

steel caps and jack-boots of the pursuers, point them out, evidently, puritans; there are but twenty of them, and lo! the fugitive gains on them—Heaven! he turns from the highroad! crosses the steep bridge at a gallop! he takes the park gate at a leap! he cuts across the turf! and lo! the dalesmen and the tenants have mustered to resist—a short, fierce struggle! the roundheads are beaten back! the fugitive, now at the very hall doors, is preserved. The door flew open; he staggered into the well-known vestibule, opened the parlor-door with an accustomed hand, reeled into the presence of the sisters exhausted with fatigue, pale from loss of blood, faint with his mortal wounds—yet he spoke out in a clear voice:—

"In time, in time, I thank God! In time to make some reparation—to ask pardon, ere I die."

And with these words, De Vaux, for it was he, staggered up to his injured wife, and dropping on his knees, cast his arms around her waist, and burying his head in her lap, exclaimed in faltering tones:—

"Pardon me, Marian, pardon me, before I die—pardon me, as you loved me once."

"Oh! as I love you *now*, dear Ernest, fully, completely, gladly do I pardon you, and take you to my heart, never again to part, my own dear husband."

"Groaning, she clasped him close, and in that act
And agony, her happy spirit fled."

Annabel saw her head fall on his neck, and fancying she had fainted, ran to uplift her; but ere she had time to do so, both were beyond the reach of any mortal sorrow. Nor did she, the survivor, tarry long behind them. She faded like a fair flower, and lies beside them in the still bosom of a common tomb. The hall was tenanted no more, and soon fell into ruin. But the wild hills of Wharfdale must themselves pass away, before the children of the dalesmen shall forget the sad tale of "The Rival Sisters."

Jasper St. Aubyn;

OR,

THE COURSE OF PASSION.

A

Legend of King James the Second.

1688.

JASPER ST. AUBYN.

INTRODUCTION.

In the commencement of the seventeenth century, there stood among the woody hills and romantic gorges which sweep southwardly down from the bleak expanse of Dartmoor, one of those fine old English halls, which, dating from the reign of the last of the Tudors, united so much of modern comfort with so much of antique architectural beauty. Many specimens of this style of building are still found to be scattered throughout England, with their broad terraces, their quaintly-sculptured porticoes, their tall projecting oriels, their many stacks of richly decorated chimneys, and their heraldic bearings adorning every salient point, grotesquely carved in the red freestone, which is their most usual, as indeed their most appropriate material. No one, however, existed, it is probable, at that day, more perfect in proportion to its size, or more admirably suited to its wild and romantic site, than the manor-house of Widecomb-Under-Moor, or, as it was more generally called, in its somewhat sequestered neighborhood, the House in the Woods. Even at the present time, that is a very rural and little-frequented district; its woods are more extensive, its moorlands wilder, its streams less often turned to purposes of manufacturing utility,

than in any other tract of the southern counties; but at the time of which I write, when all England, was, comparatively speaking, an agricultural country—when miles and miles of forest existed, where there now can scarcely be found acres—when the communications even between the neighboring country towns were difficult and tedious, and those between the country and metropolis almost impracticable—the region of Dartmoor and its surrounding woodlands was less known and less frequented, except by its own inhabitants, rude for the most part and uncultured as their native hills, than the prairies of the far west, or the solitudes of the Rocky mountains.

The few gentry, and lords of manors who own estates, and had their castellated or Elizabethan dwellings, scattered here and there, at long intervals, among the sylvan scenery of that lonely region, were for the greater part little superior in habits, in refinement, and in mental culture, to the boors around them. Stanch hunters and hard drinkers, up with the lark and abed before the curfew, loyal to their king, kind and liberal to their dependants, and devout before their God, they led obscure and blameless lives, careless of the great world, a rumor of which rarely wandered so far as to reach their ears, unknown to fame, yet neither useless nor unhonored within the sphere of their humble influence, marked by few faults and many unpretending virtues.

To this general rule, however, the lords of Widecomb manor had long been an exception. Endowed with larger territorial possessions than most of their neighbors, connected with many of the noblest families of the realm, the St. Aubyns of Widecomb manor had, for several generations, held themselves high above the squires of the vicinity, and the burghers of the circumjacent towns. Not confining themselves to the remote limits of their rural possessions, many of them had shone in the court and in the camp; several had held offices of trust and

honor under Elizabeth and her successor; and when, in the reign of the unfortunate Charles, the troubles between the king and his parliament broke out at length into open war, the St. Aubyn of that day, like many another gallant gentleman, emptied his patrimonial coffers to replenish the exhausted treasury; and melted his old plate and felled his older oaks, in order to support the king's cause in the field, at the head of his own regiment of horse.

Thence, when the good cause succumbed for a time, and democratic license, hardly restrained by puritanic rigor, strode rampant over the prerogative of England's crown, and the liberties of England's people, fines, sequestrations, confiscations, fell heavily on the confirmed malignancy, as it was then termed, of the lord of Widecomb; and he might well esteem himself fortunate, that he escaped beyond the seas with his head upon his shoulders, although he certainly had not where to lay it.

Returning at the restoration with the second Charles, more fortunate than many of his friends, Sir Miles St. Aubyn recovered a considerable portion of his demesnes, which, though sequestrated, had not been sold, and with these the old mansion, now, alas! all too grand and stately for the diminished revenues of its owner, and the shrunken estates which it overlooked.

It would not, perhaps, have been too late even then, for prudence and economy, joined to a resolute will and energetic purpose, to retrieve the shaken fortunes of the house; but having recovered peace and a settled government, the people and the court of England appear simultaneously to have lost their senses. The overstrained and somewhat hypocritical morality of the protectorate was succeeded by the wildest license, the most extravagant debauchery; and in the orgies which followed their restoration to their patrimonial honors, too many of the gallant cavaliers discreditably squandered the last remnants of

fortunes which had been half ruined in a cause so noble and so holy.

Such was the fate of Sir Miles St. Aubyn. The brave and generous soldier of the first Charles sank into the selfish, dissipated roysterer, under his unworthy successor. He never visited again the beautiful oak-woods and sparkling waters of his native place, but frittered away a frivolous and useless life among the orgies of Alsatia and the revels of Whitehall; and died, unfriended, and almost alone, leaving an only son, who had scarce seen his father, the heir to his impoverished fortunes and little honored name.

His son, who was born before the commencement of the troubles, of a lady highly bred, and endowed as highly, who died—as the highly endowed die but too often—in the first prime of womanhood, was already a man when the restoration brought his father back to his native land, though not to his patrimonial estates or his paternal duties.

Miles St. Aubyn, the younger, had been educated during the period of the civil war, and during the protracted absence of his father, by a distant maternal relative, whose neutrality and humble position alike protected him from persecution by either of the hostile parties. He grew up, like his race, strong, active, bold, and gallant; and if he had not received much of that peculiar nurture which renders men graceful and courtly-mannered, almost from their cradles, he was at least educated under the influence of those traditional principles which make them at the bottom, even if they lack something of external polish, high-souled and honorable gentlemen.

After the restoration he was sent abroad, as was the habit of the day, to push his fortunes with his sword in the Netherlands, then, as in all ages of the world, the chosen battle-ground of nations. There he served many years, if not with high distinction, at least with credit to his name; and if he did not

win high fortune with his sword—and indeed the day for such winnings had already passed in Europe—he at least enjoyed the advantage of mingling, during his adventurous career, with the great, the noble, and the famous of the age. When, on his return to his native land after his father's death, he turned his sword into a ploughshare, and sought repose among the old staghorned oaks at Widecomb, he was no longer the enthusiastic, wild, and headstrong youth of twenty years before; but a grave, polished, calm, accomplished man, with something of Spanish dignity and sternness engrafted on the frankness of his English character, and with the self-possession of one used familiarly to courts and camps showing itself in every word and motion.

He was a man moreover of worth, energy, and resolution, and sitting down peacefully under the shadow of his own woods, he applied himself quietly, but with an iron steadiness of purpose that insured success, to retrieving in some degree the fortunes of his race.

Soon after he returned he had taken unto himself a wife, not perhaps very wisely chosen, from a family of descent prouder and haughtier even than his own, and of fortunes if not as much impoverished, at least so greatly diminished, as to render the lady's dower a matter merely nominal. But it was an old affection—a long promise, hallowed by love, and constancy, and honor.

She was, moreover, a beautiful and charming creature, and, so long as she lived, rendered the old soldier a very proud and very happy husband, and when she died—which, most unhappily for all concerned, was but a few months after giving birth to an only son—left him so comfortless, and at the same time so wedded to the memory of the dead, that he never so much as envisaged the idea of a second marriage.

This gentleman it was, who, many long years after the death

of the gentle Lady Alice, dwelt in serene and dignified seclusion in the old hall, which he had never quitted since he became a widower; devoting his whole abilities to nursing his dilapidated estates, and educating his only son, whom he regarded with affection bordering on idolatry.

With the last Miles St. Aubyn, however, we shall have little to do henceforth, for the soldier of the Netherlands had departed so far from the traditions of his family—the eldest son of which had for generations borne the same name of Miles—as to drop that patrimonial appellation in the person of his son, whom he had caused to be christened Jasper, after a beloved friend, a brother of the lady, afterward his wife, who had fallen by his side on a well-fought field in the Luxembourg.

What was the cause which induced the veteran, in other respects so severe a stickler for ancient habitudes, to swerve from this time-honored custom, it would be difficult to state; some of those who knew him best, attributing it merely to the desire of perpetuating the memory of his best friend in the person of his only child; while others ascribed it to a sort of superstitious feeling, which, attaching the continued decline of the house to the continual recurrence of the patronymic, looked forward in some degree to a revival of its honors with a new name to its lord.

Whatever might have been the cause, the consequences of this deviation from old family usage, as prognosticated by the dependants of Widecomb, and the superstitious inhabitants of the neighboring woods and wolds, were anything but likely to better the fortunes of the lords of the manor; for not a few of them asserted, with undoubting faith, that the last St. Aubyn had seen the light of day, and that in the same generation which had seen the extinction of the old name the old race should itself pass away. Nor did they lack some sage authority to which they might refer for confirmation of their dark

forebodings; for there existed, living yet in the mouths of men, one of those ancient saws, which were so common a century or two ago in the rural districts of England, as connected with the fortunes of the old houses; and which were referred to some Mother Shipton, or other equally infallible soothsayer of the county, whose dicta to the vulgar minds of the feudal tenantry were confirmations strong as proofs of Holy Writ.

The prophecy in question was certainly exceeding old; and had been handed down through many generations, by direct oral tradition, among a race of men wholly illiterate and uneducated; to whom perhaps alone, owing to the long expatriation of the late and present lords of the manor, it was now familiar; although in past times it had doubtless been accredited by the family to which it related.

It ran as follows, and, not being deficient in a sort of wild harmony and rugged solemnity, produced, by no means unnaturally, a powerful effect on the minds of hearers, when recited in awe-stricken tones and with a bended brow beside some feebly-glimmering hearth, in the lulls of the tempest haply raving without, among the leafless trees, under the starless night. It ran as follows, and, universally believed by the vassals of the house, it remains for us to see how far its predictions were confirmed by events, and how far it influenced or foretold the course of passion, or the course of fate—

> "While Miles sits master in Widecomb place,
> The cradle shall rock on the oaken floor,
> And St. Aubyn rule, where he ruled of yore.
>
> "But when Miles departs from the olden race,
> The cradle shall rock by the hearth no more,
> Nor St. Aubyn rule, where he ruled of yore."

Thus far it has been necessary for us to tread back the path of departed generations, and to retrace the fortunes of the Wide-

comb family, inasmuch as many of the events, which we shall have to narrate hereafter, and very much of the character of the principal personage, to whom our tale relates, have a direct relation to these precedents, and would have been to a certain degree incomprehensible but for this retrogression. If it obtain no other end, it will serve at least to explain how, amid scenes so rural and sequestered, and dwelling almost in solitude, among neighbors so rugged and uncivilized, there should have been found a family, deprived of all advantages of intercommunication with equals or superiors in intellect or demeanor, and even unassisted by the humanizing influence of familiar female society, which had yet maintained, as if traditionally, all the principles, all the ideas, and all the habitudes of the brightest schools of knightly courtesy and gentlemanly bearing, all the graces and easy dignity of courts, among the remote solitudes of the country.

At the time when our narrative commences, the soldier of the Netherlands, Sir Miles St. Aubyn—for though he cared not to bear a foreign title, he had been stricken a knight banneret on a bloody battle-field of Flanders—had fallen long into the sere, the yellow leaf; and though his cheek was still ruddy as a winter pippin, his eye bright and clear, and his foot firm as ever, his hair was as white as the drifted snow; his arm had lost its nervous power; and if his mind was still sane, and his body sound, he was now more addicted to sit beside the glowing hearth in winter, or to bask in the summer sunshine, poring over some old chronicle or antique legend, than to wake the echoes of the oak-woods with his bugle-horn, or to rouse the heathcock from the heathy moorland with his blythe springers.

Not so, however, the child of his heart, Jasper. The boy on whom such anxious pains had been bestowed, on whom hopes so intense reposed, had reached his seventeenth summer. Like all his race, he was unusually tall, and admirably formed,

for both agility and strength. Never, from his childhood upward, having mingled with any persons of vulgar station or unpolished demeanor, he was, as if by nature, graceful and easy. His manners, although proud, and marked by something of that stern dignity which we have mentioned as a characteristic of the father, but which in one so youthful appeared strange and out of place, were ever those of a high and perfect gentleman. His features were marked with all the ancestral beauties, which may be traced in unmixed races through so many generations; and as it was a matter of notorious truth, that from the date of the conquest, no drop of Saxon or of Celtic blood had been infused into the pure Norman stream which flowed through the veins of the proud St. Aubyns, it was no marvel that after the lapse of so many ages the youthful Jasper should display, in both face and form, the characteristic lines and coloring peculiar to the noblest tribe of men that has ever issued from the great northern hive of nations. Accordingly, he had the rich dark chestnut hair, not curled, but waving in loose clusters; the clear gray eye; the aquiline nose; the keen and fiery look; the resolute mouth, and the iron jaw, which in all ages have belonged to the descendant of the Northman. While the spare yet sinewy frame, the deep, round chest, thin flanks, and limbs long and muscular and singularly agile, were not less perfect indications of his blood than the sharp eagle-like expression of the bold countenance.

Trained in his early boyhood to all those exercises of activity and strength, which were in those days held essential to the gentleman, it needs not to say that Jasper St. Aubyn could ride, swim, fence, shoot, run, leap, pitch the bar, and go through every manœuvre of the *salle d'armes*, the tilt-yard, and the *manége*, with equal grace and power. Nor had his lighter accomplishments been neglected; for the age of his father and grandfather, if profligate and dissolute even to debauchery, was still

refined and polished, and to dance gracefully, and touch the lute or sing tastefully, was as much expected from the cavalier as to have a firm foot in the stirrup, or a strong and supple wrist with the backsword and rapier.

His mind had been richly stored also, if not very sagely trained and regulated. For Sir Miles, in the course of his irregular and adventurous life, had read much more than he had meditated; had picked up much more of learning than he had of philosophy; and what philosophy he had belonged much more to the cold self-reliance of the camp than to the sounder tenets of the schools.

While filling his son's mind, therefore, with much curious lore of all sorts; while making him a master of many tongues, and laying before him books of all kinds, the old banneret had taken little pains—perhaps he would not have succeeded had he taken more—to point the lessons which the books contained; to draw deductions from the facts which he inculcated; or to direct the course of the young man's opinions.

Self-taught himself, or taught only in the hard school of experience, and having himself arrived at sound principles of conduct, he never seemed to recollect that the boy would run through no such ordeal, and reap no such lessons; nor did he ever reflect that the deductions which he had himself drawn from certain facts, acquired in one way, and under one set of circumstances, would probably be entirely different from those at which another would arrive, when his data were acquired in a very different manner, and under circumstances altogether diverse and dissimilar.

Thence it came that Jasper St. Aubyn, at the age of seventeen years, was in all qualities of body thoroughly trained and disciplined; and in all mental faculties perfectly educated, but entirely untrained, uncorrected, and unchastened.

In manner, he was a perfect gentleman; in body, he was a

perfect man; in mind, he was almost a perfect scholar. And what, our reader will perhaps inquire, what could he have been more; or what more could education have effected in his behalf?

Much—very much—good friend.

For as there is an education of the body, and an education of the brain, so is there also an education of the heart. And that is an education which men rarely have the faculty of imparting, and which few men ever have obtained, who have not enjoyed the inestimable advantage of female nurture during their youth, as well as their childhood; unless they have learned it in the course of painful years, from those severe and bitter teachers, those chasteners and purifiers of the heart—sorrow and suffering, which two constitute experience.

This, then, was the education in which Jasper St. Aubyn was altogether deficient; which Sir Miles had never so much as attempted to impart to him; and which, had he endeavored, he probably would have failed, to bestow.

We do not mean to say that the boy was heartless—boys rarely are so, we might almost say never—nor that the impulses of his heart were toward evil rather than good; far from it. His heart, like all young and untainted hearts, was full of noble impulses—but they were *impulses;* full of fresh springing generous desires, of gracious sympathies and lofty aspirations—but he had not one principle—he never had been taught to question one impulse, before acting upon it—he never had learned to check one desire, to doubt the genuineness of one sympathy, to moderate the eagerness of one aspiration. He never had been brought to suspect that there were such virtues as self-control, or self-devotion; such vices as selfishness or self-abandonment—in a word, he never had so much as heard,

> "That Right is right, and that to follow Right
> Were wisdom, in the scorn of consepuence"—

and therefore he was, at the day of which we write, even what he was; and thereafter, what we propose to show you.

At the time when the youthful heir had attained his seventeenth year, the great object of his father's life was accomplished; the fortunes of the family were so far at least retrieved, that if the St. Aubyns no longer aspired, as of old, to be the first or wealthiest family of the county, they were at least able to maintain the household on that footing of generous liberality and hospitable ease which has been at all times the pride and passion of the English country gentleman.

For many years Sir Miles had undergone the severest privations, and it was only by the endurance of actual poverty within doors, that he was enabled to maintain that footing abroad, without which he could scarcely have preserved his position in society.

For many years the park had been neglected, the gardens overrun with weeds and brambles, the courts grass-grown, and the house itself dilapidated, literally from the impossibility of supporting domestics sufficiently numerous to perform the necessary labors of the estate.

During much of this period it was to the beasts of the forest, the fowl of the moorland, and the fish of the streams, that the household of Widecomb had looked for their support; nor did the table of the banneret himself boast any liquor more generous than that afforded by the ale-vats of March and October.

Throughout the whole of this dark and difficult time, however, the stout old soldier had never suffered one particle of that ceremonial, which he deemed essential as well to the formation as the preservation of the character of a true gentleman to be relaxed or neglected by his diminished household.

Personally, he was at all times clad point device; nor did he ever fail in being mounted, himself and at least one attendant, as became a cavalier of honor. The hours of the early dinner,

and of the more agreeable and social supper, were announced duly by the clang of trumpets, even when there were no guests to be summoned, save the old banneret and his motherless child, and perhaps the only visiter for years at Widecomb manor, the gray-haired vicar of the village, who had served years before as chaplain of an English regiment in the Low Countries, with Sir Miles. Nor was the pewter tankard, containing at the best but toast and ale, stirred with a sprig of rosemary, handed around the board with less solemnity than had it been a silver hanap mantling with the first vintages of Burgundy or Xeres.

Thus it was that, as Jasper advanced gradually toward years of manhood, the fortunes of the house improving in proportion to his growth, seeing no alteration in the routine of the household, he scarcely was aware that any change had taken place in more essential points.

The eye and ear of the child had been taken by the banners, the trumpets, and the glittering board, and his fancy riveted by the solemnity and grave decorum which characterized the meals partaken in the great hall; and naturally enough he never knew that the pewter platters and tankards had been exchanged, since those days, for plate of silver, and the strong ale converted into claret or canary.

The consequence of this was simply that he found himself a youth of seventeen, surrounded by all the means and appliances of luxury, with servants, horses, hounds, and falcons at his command, the leading personage, beyond all comparison, of the neighborhood, highly-born, handsome, well-bred, and accomplished. All this, by the way, was entirely uncorrected by any memory of past sufferings or sorrows, either on his own part or on that of his family, or by any knowledge of the privations and exertions on the part of Sir Miles, by which this present affluence had been purchased; and he became, naturally enough,

somewhat over-confident in his own qualities, somewhat overbearing in his manner, and not a little intolerant and inconsiderate as to the opinions and feelings of others. He then presented in a word, the not unusual picture of an arrogant, self-sufficient, proud and fiery youth, with many generous and noble points, and many high qualities, which, duly cultivated, might have rendered him a good, a happy, and perhaps even a great man; but which, untrained as they were, and suffered to run up into a rank and unpruned overgrowth, were but too likely to degenerate themselves into vices, and to render him at some future day a tormentor of himself, and an opposer of others.

Now, however, he was a general favorite, for largely endowed with animal spirits, indulged in every wish that his fancy could form, never crossed in the least particular, it was rarely that his violent temper would display itself, or his innate selfishness rise conspicuous above the superficial face of good-nature and somewhat careless affability, which he presented to the general observer.

It was, perhaps, unfortunate for Jasper, no less than for those who were in after-days connected with him, whether for good or evil, that, at this critical period of his adolescence, when the character of the man is developed from the accidents of boyhood, in proportion as his increasing years and altered habits and pursuits led him to be more abroad, and cast him in some degree into the world, the advancing years and growing infirmities of his father kept him closer to the library and the hall.

So that at the very time when his expanding mind and nascent passions most needed sage advice and moderate coercion, or at least wary guidance, he was abandoned almost entirely to his own direction. The first outbreaks, therefore, of evil principles, the germs of a masterful will, the seeds of fierce and fiery passions, and, above all, the growing recklessness with regard to the feelings and the rights of others, which could

scarcely have escaped the notice of the shrewd old man had he accompanied his son abroad, and which, if noticed, would surely have been repressed, were allowed to increase hourly by self-indulgence and the want of restraint, unknown and unsuspected to the youth himself, for whom one day they were to be the cause of so many and so bitter trials.

But it is now time that, turning from this brief retrospect of previous events, and this short analysis of the early constitution of the mind of him whose singular career is to form the subject of this narrative, we should introduce our reader to the scene of action, and to the person whose adventures in after-life will perhaps excuse the space which has necessarily been allotted to the antecedents of the first marked event which befell him, and from which all the rest took their rise in a train of connection, which, although difficult to trace by a casual observer, was in reality close and perfect.

The manor-house of Widecomb, such as it has been slightly sketched above, stood on a broad flat terrace, paved with slabs of red freestone, and adorned with a massive balustrade of the same material, interspersed with grotesque images at the points where it was reached from the esplanade below, by three or four flights of broad and easy steps.

The mansion itself was large, and singularly picturesque, but the beauties of the building were as nothing to those of the scenery which it overlooked.

It was built on the last and lowest slope of one of those romantic spurs which tread southerly from the wild and heathery heights of Dartmoor. And although the broad and beautifully-kept lawn was embosomed in a very woody and sylvan chase, full of deep glens and tangled dingles, which was in turn framed on three sides by the deep oak-woods, covering all the rounded hills in the rear of the estate, and to the right and left hand, yet as the land continued to fall toward the south for many and

many a mile, the sight could range from the oriel windows of the great hall, and of the fine old library, situated on either hand of the entrance and armory, over a wide expanse of richly-cultivated country, with more than one navigable river winding among the woods and corn-fields, and many a village steeple glittering among the hedgerows, until in the far distance it was bounded by a blue, hazy line, which seemed to melt into the sky, but which was in truth—though not to be distinguished as such, unless by a practised eye—the British channel.

The hall itself, and even the southern verge of the chase, which bounded the estate in that direction, lay, however, at a considerable distance from the cultivated country, and was divided from it by a vast broken chasm, with banks so precipitous and rocky that no road had ever been carried through it, while its great width had deterred men from the idea of bridging it. Through this strange and terrific gorge there rushed an impetuous and powerful torrent, broken by many falls and rapids, with many a deep and limpid pool between them, favorite haunts of the large salmon and sea-trout which abounded in its waters. This brook, for it scarcely can be called a river, although, after the rains of autumn or the melting snows of spring, it sent down an immense volume of dark, rust-colored water, with a roar that could be heard for miles, to the distant Tamar, swept down the hills in a series of cascades from the right hand, or western side of the park, until it reached the brink of the chasm we have described, lying at right angles to its former course, down which it plunged into an impetuous fall and rapid of nearly three hundred feet, and rushed thence easterly away, walled on each side by the precipitous rock, until some five miles thence it was crossed at a deep and somewhat dangerous ford, by the only great road which traversed that district, and by which alone strangers could reach the hall and its beautiful demesnes.

To the westward or right hand side of the chase the country was entirely wild and savage, covered with thick woods, interspersed with lonely heaths, and intersected by hundreds of clear brawling rills. To the eastward, however, although much broken by forest-ground, there was a wide range of rich pasture-fields and meadows, divided by great overgrown hawthorn hedges, each hedge almost a thicket, and penetrated by numerous lanes and horse-roads, buried between deep banks, and overcanopied by foliage, that, even at noonday, was almost impenetrable to the sunshine.

Here and there lay scattered among the fields and woods, innumerable farm-houses and granges, the abodes of small freeholders, once tenants and vassals of the great St. Aubyns; and, at about six miles from the hall, nestled in a green valley, through which ran a clear, bright trout-stream to join the turbulent torrent, stood the little market-town of Widecomb-Under-Moor, from their unalienated property in which the family of St. Aubyn derived the most valuable portion of their income.

Over the whole of this pleasant aud peaceful tract, whether it was still owned by themselves, or had passed into the hands of the free yeomanry, the lords of Widecomb still held manorial rights, and the few feudal privileges which had survived the revolution; and through the whole of it, Sir Miles St. Aubyn was regarded with unmixed love and veneration, while the boy Jasper was looked upon almost as a son in every family, though some old men would shake their heads doubtfully, and mutter sage but unregarded saws concerning his present disposition and future prospects; and some old grandames would prognosticate disasters, horrors, and even crimes, as hanging over his career, in consequence, perhaps, of the inauspicious change in the patronymic of his race.

They were a happy and an unsophisticated race that inhabited those lonely glens. Sufficiently well provided to be above

the want of necessaries, or the fears of poverty, they were not so far removed from the necessity of labor as to have incurred vicious ambitions—moderate, frugal, and industrious, they lived uncorrupted, and died happy in their unlearned innocence.

It was the boast of the district, that bars and locks were appendages to doors entirely unusual and useless; that the cage of Widecomb had not held a tenant since the days of stiff old Oliver; and that no deed of violence or blood had ever tainted those calm vales with horror.

Alas! how soon was that boast to be annulled; how soon were the details of a dread, domestic tragedy, full of dark horrors, to render the very name of Widecomb a terror, and to invest the beauteous scenery with images of superstitious awe and hatred. But we must not anticipate, nor seek as yet to penetrate the secrets of that destiny, which even during the morn of promising young life, seemed to overhang the house—

"And hushed in grim repose,
Expect its evening prey."

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

THE PERIL.

"I say beware—
That way perdition lies, the very path
Of seeming safety leading to the abyss."—MS.

It was as fair a morning of July as ever dawned in the blue summer sky; the sun as yet had risen but a little way above the waves of fresh green foliage which formed the horizon of the woodland scenery surrounding Widecomb manor; and his heat, which promised ere mid-day to become excessive, was tempered now by the exhalations of the copious night-dews, and by the cool breath of the western breeze, which came down through the leafy gorges, in long, soft swells from the open moorland.

All nature was alive and joyous; the air was vocal with the piping melody of the blackbirds and thrushes, carolling in every brake and bosky dingle; the smooth, green lawn, before the windows of the old hall, was peopled with whole tribes of fat, lazy hares, limping about among the dewy herbage, fearless, as it would seem, of man's aggression; and to complete the picture, above a score of splendid peacocks were strutting to and fro on the paved terraces, or perched upon the carved stone balustrades, displaying their gorgeous plumage to the early sunshine.

The shadowy mists of the first morning twilight had not been

long dispersed from the lower regions, and were suspended still in the middle air in broad fleecy masses, though melting rapidly away in the increasing warmth and brightness of the day.

And still a faint blue line hovered over the bed of the long rocky gorge, which divided the chase from the open country, floating about like the steam of a seething caldron, and rising here and there into tall smoke-like columns, probably where some steeper cataract of the mountain-stream sent its foam skyward.

So early, indeed, was the hour, that had my tale been recited of these degenerate days, there would have been no gentle eyes awake to look upon the loveliness of newly-awakened nature.

In the good days of old, however, when daylight was still deemed to be the fitting time for labor and for pastime, and night the appointed time for natural and healthful sleep, the dawn was wont to brighten beheld by other eyes than those of clowns and milkmaids, and the gay songs of the matutinal birds were listened to by ears that could appreciate their untaught melodies.

And now, just as the stable-clock was striking four, the great oaken door of the old hall was thrown open with a vigorous swing that made it rattle on its hinges, and Jasper St. Aubyn came bounding out into the fresh morning air, with a foot as elastic as that of the mountain roe, singing a snatch of some quaint old ballad.

He was dressed simply in a close-fitting jacket and tight hose of dark-green cloth, without any lace or embroidery, light boots of untanned leather, and a broad-leafed hat, with a single eagle's feather thrust carelessly through the band. He wore neither cloak nor sword, though it was a period at which gentlemen rarely went abroad without both these, their distinctive attributes; but in the broad black belt which girt his rounded waist

he carried a stout wood-knife with a buckhorn hilt; and over his shoulder there swung, from a leathern thong, a large wicker fishing-basket.

Nothing, indeed, could be simpler or less indicative of any particular rank or station in society than young St. Aubyn's garb, yet it would have been a very dull and unobservant eye which should take him for aught less than a high-born and high-bred gentleman.

His fine intellectual face, his bearing erect before heaven, the graceful ease of his every motion, as he hurried down the flagged steps of the terrace, and planted his light foot on the dewy greensward, all betokened gentle birth and gentle associations.

But he thought nothing of himself, nor cared for his advantages, acquired or natural. The long and heavy salmon-rod which he carried in his right hand, in three pieces as yet unconnected, did not more clearly indicate his purpose than the quick marking glance which he cast toward the half-veiled sun and hazy sky, scanning the signs of the weather.

"It will do, it will do," he said to himself, thinking as it were aloud, "for three or four hours at least; the sun will not shake off those vapors before eight o'clock at the earliest, and if he do come out then hot and strong, I do not know but the water is dark enough after the late rains to serve my turn awhile longer. It will blow up, too, I think from the westward, and there will be a brisk curl on the pools. But come, I must be moving, if I would reach Darringford to breakfast.

And as he spoke he strode out rapidly across the park toward the deep chasm of the stream, crushing a thousand aromatic perfumes from the dewy wild-flowers with his heedless foot, and thinking little of the beauties of nature, as he hastened to the scene of his loved exercise.

It was not long, accordingly, before he reached the brink of

the steep rocky bank above the stream, which he proposed to fish that morning, and paused to select the best place for descending to the water's edge.

It was, indeed, a striking and romantic scene as ever met the eye of painter or of poet. On the farther side of the gorge, scarcely a hundred yards distant, the dark limestone rocks rose sheer and precipitous from the very brink of the stream, rifted and broken into angular blocks and tall columnar masses, from the clefts of which, wherever they could find soil enough to support their scanty growth, a few stunted oaks shot out almost horizontally with their gnarled arms and dark-green foliage, and here and there the silvery bark and quivering tresses of the birch relieved the monotony of color by their gay brightness. Above, the cliffs were crowned with the beautiful purple heather, now in its very glow of summer bloom, about which were buzzing myriads of wild bees sipping their nectar from its cups of amethyst.

The hither side, though rough and steep and broken, was not in the place where Jasper stood precipitous; indeed, it seemed as if at some distant period a sort of landslip had occurred, by which the fall of the rocky wall had been broken into massive fragments, and hurled down in an inclined plane into the bed of the stream, on which it had encroached with its shattered blocks and rounded boulders.

Time, however, had covered all this abrupt and broken slope with a beautiful growth of oak and hazel coppice, among which, only at distant intervals, could the dun weather-beaten flanks of the great stones be discovered.

At the base of this descent, a hundred and fifty feet perhaps below the stand of the young sportsman, flowed the dark arrowy stream—a wild and perilous water. As clear as crystal, yet as dark as the brown cairn-gorm, it came pouring down among the broken rocks with a rapidity and force which showed what

must be its fury when swollen by a storm among the mountains, here breaking into wreaths of rippling foam where some unseen ledge chafed its current, there roaring and surging white as December's snow among the great round-headed rocks, and there again wheeling in sullen eddies, dark and deceitful, round and round some deep rock-brimmed basin.

Here and there, indeed, it spread into wide shallow rippling rapids, filling the whole bottom of the ravine from side to side, but more generally it did not occupy above a fourth part of the space below, leaving sometimes on this margin, sometimes on that, broad pebbly banks, or slaty ledges, affording an easy footing, and a clear path to the angler of its troubled waters.

After a rapid glance over the well-known scene, Jasper plunged into the coppice, and following a faint track worn by the feet of the wild-deer in the first instance, and widened by his own bolder tread, soon reached the bottom of the chasm, though not until he had flushed from the dense oak covert two noble black cocks with their superb forked tails, and glossy purple-lustred plumage, which soared away, crowing their bold defiance, over the heathery moorlands.

Once at the water's edge, the young man's tackle was speedily made ready, and in a few minutes his long line went whistling through the air, as he wielded the powerful two-handed rod, as easily as if it had been a stripling's reed; and the large gaudy peacock-fly alighted on the wheeling eddies, at the tail of a long arrowy shoot, as gently as if it had settled from too long a flight. Delicately, deftly, it was made to dance and skim the clear, brown surface, until it had crossed the pool and neared the hither bank; then again, obedient to the pliant wrist, it arose on glittering wing, circled half round the angler's head, and was sent thirty yards aloof, straight as a wild bee's flight, into a little mimic whirlpool, scarce larger than the hat of the skilful fisherman, which spun round and round just below a

gray ledge of limestone. Scarce had it reached its mark before the water broke all around it, and the gay deceit vanished, the heavy swirl of the surface, as the break was closing, indicating the great size of the fish which had risen. Just as the swirl was subsiding, and the forked tail of the monarch of the stream was half seen as he descended, that indescribable but well-known turn of the angler's wrist, fixed the barbed hook, and taught the scaly victim the nature of the prey he had gorged so heedlessly.

With a wild bound he threw himself three feet out of the water, showing his silver sides, with the sea-lice yet clinging to his scales, a fresh sea-run fish of fifteen, ay, eighteen pounds, and perhaps over.

On his broad back he strikes the water, but not as he meant the tightened line; for as he leaped the practised hand had lowered the rod's tip, that it fell in a loose bight below him. Again! again! again; and yet a fourth time he bounded into the air with desperate and vigorous soubresaults, like an unbroken steed that would dismount his rider, lashing the eddies of the dark stream into bright bubbling streaks, and making the heart of his captor beat high with anticipation of the desperate struggle that should follow, before the monster would lie panting and exhausted on the yellow sand or moist greensward.

Away! with the rush of an eagle through the air, he is gone like an arrow down the rapids—how the reel rings, and the line whistles from the swift-working wheel; he is too swift, too headstrong to be checked as yet; tenfold the strength of that slender tackle might not control him in his first fiery rush.

But Jasper, although young in years, was old in the art, and skilful as the craftiest of the gentle craftsmen. He gives him the butt of his rod steadily, trying the strength of his tackle with a delicate and gentle finger, giving him line at every rush,

yet firmly, cautiously, feeling his mouth all the while, and moderating his speed even while he yields to his fury.

Meanwhile, with the eye of intuition and the nerve of iron, he bounds along the difficult shore, he leaps from rock to rock, alighting on their silvery tops with the firm agility of the rope-dancer, he splashes knee-deep through the slippery shallows, keeping his line ever taut, inclining his rod over his shoulder, bearing on his fish ever with a killing pull, steering him clear of every rock or stump against which he would fain smash the tackle, and landing him at length in a fine open roomy pool, at the foot of a long stretch of white and foamy rapids, down which he has just piloted him with the eye of faith, and the foot of instinct.

And now the great salmon has turned sulky; like a piece of lead he has sunk to the bottom of the deep black pool, and lies on the gravel bottom in the sullenness of despair.

Jasper stooped, gathered up in his left hand a heavy pebble, and pitched it into the pool, as nearly as he could guess to the whereabout of his game—another—and another! Ah! that last has roused him. Again he throws himself clear out of water, and again foiled in his attempt to smash the tackle, dashes away down stream impetuous.

But his strength is departing—the vigor of his rush is broken. The angler gives him the butt abundantly, strains on him with a heavier pull, yet ever yields a little as he exerts his failing powers; see, his broad silver side has thrice turned up, even turned to the surface, and though each time he has recovered himself, each time it has been with a heavier and more sickly motion.

Brave fellow! his last race is run, his last spring sprung—no more shall he disport himself in the bright reaches of the Tamar; no more shall the Naiads wreathe his clear silver scales with river-greens and flowery rushes.

The cruel gaff is in his side—his cold blood stains the eddies for a moment—he flaps out his death-pang on the hard limestone.

"Who-whoop! a nineteen-pounder!"

Meantime the morning had worn onward, and ere the great fish was brought to the basket the sun had soared clear above the mist-wreaths, and had risen so high into the summer heaven that his slant rays poured down into the gorge of the stream, and lighted up the clear depths with a lustre so transparent that every pebble at the bottom might have been discerned, with the large fish here and there floating mid depth, with their heads up stream, their gills working with a quick motion, and their broad tails vibrating at short intervals slowly but powerfully, as they lay motionless in opposition to the very strongest of the swift current.

The breeze had died away, there was no curl upon the water, and the heat was oppressive.

Under such circumstances, to whip the stream was little better than mere loss of time, yet, as he hurried with a fleet foot down the gorge, perhaps with some ulterior object, beyond the mere love of sport, Jasper at times cast his fly across the stream, and drew it neatly, and, as he thought, irresistibly right over the recusant fish; but though once or twice a large lazy salmon would sail up slowly from the depths, and almost touch the fly with his nose, he either sunk down slowly in disgust, without breaking the water, or flapped his broad tail over the shining fraud as if to mark his contempt.

It had now got to be near noon, for in the ardor of his success the angler had forgotten all about his intended breakfast; and, his first fish captured, had contented himself with a slender meal furnished from out his fishing-basket and his leathern bottle.

Jasper had traversed by this time some ten miles in length,

following the sinuosities of the stream, and had reached a favorite pool at the head of a long, straight, narrow trench, cut by the waters themselves in the course of time, through the hard schistous rock which walls the torrent on each hand, not leaving the slightest ledge or margin between the rapids and the precipice.

Through this wild gorge, of some fifty yards in length, the river shoots like an arrow over a steep inclined plain of limestone rock, the surface of which is polished by the action of the water, till it is as slippery as ice, and at the extremity leaps down a sheer descent of some twelve feet into a large, wide basin, surrounded by softly swelling banks of greensward, and a fair amphitheatre of woodland.

At the upper end this pool is so deep as to be vulgarly deemed unfathomable; below, however, it expands yet wider into a shallow rippling ford, where it is crossed by the high-road, down stream of which again there is another long, sharp-rapid, and another fall, over the last steps of the hill; after which the nature of the stream becomes changed, and it murmurs gently onward through a green pastoral country unrippled and uninterrupted.

Just in the inner angle of the high-road, on the right hand of the stream, there stood an old-fashioned, low-browed, thatch-covered, stone cottage, with a rude portico of rustic woodwork overrun with jasmine and virgin-bower, and a pretty flower-garden sloping down in successive terraces to the edge of the basin. Beside this, there was no other house in sight, unless it were part of the roof of a mill which stood in the low ground on the brink of the second fall, surrounded with a mass of willows. But the tall steeple of a country-church raising itself heavenward above the brow of the hill, seemed to show that, although concealed by the undulations of the ground, a village was hard at hand.

The morning had changed a second time, a hazy film had crept up to the zenith, and the sun was now covered with a pale golden veil, and a slight current of air down the gorge ruffled the water.

It was a capital pool, famous for being the temporary haunt of the very finest fish, which were wont to lay there awhile, as if to recruit themselves after the exertion of leaping the two falls and stemming the double rapid, before attempting to ascend the stream farther.

Few, however, even of the best and boldest fishermen cared to wet a line in its waters, in consequence of the supposed impossibility of following a heavy fish through the gorge below or checking him at the brink of the fall. It is true, that throughout the length of the pass, the current was broken by bare, slippery rocks peering above the waters, at intervals, which might be cleared by an active cragsman; and it had been in fact reconnoitred by Jasper and others in cool blood, but the result of the examination was that it was deemed impracticable as a fishing ground.

Thinking, however, little of striking a large fish, and perhaps desiring to waste a little time before scaling the banks and emerging on the high road, Jasper threw a favorite fly of peacock's harl and gold tinsel lightly across the water; and, almost before he had time to think, had hooked a monstrous fish, which at the very first leap, he set down as weighing at least thirty pounds.

Thereupon followed a splendid display of piscatory skill. Well known that his fish must be lost if he once should succeed in getting his head down the rapid, Jasper exerted every nerve, and exhausted every art to humor, to meet, to restrain, to check him. Four times the fish rushed for the pass, and four times, Jasper met him so stoutly with the butt, trying his tackle to the very utmost, that he succeeded in forcing him from the perilous

spot. Round and round the pool he had piloted him, and had taken post at length, hoping that the worst was already over, close to the opening of the rocky chasm.

And now, perhaps waxing too confident, he checked his fish too sharply. Stung into fury, the monster sprang five times in succession into the air, lashing the water with his angry tail, and then rushed like an arrow down the chasm.

He was gone—but Jasper's blood was up, and thinking of nothing but his sport, he dashed forward and embarked with a fearless foot in the terrible descent.

Leap after leap he took with beautiful precision, alighting firm and erect on the centre of each slippery block, and bounding thence to the next with unerring instinct, guiding his fish the while with consummate skill through the intricacies of the pass.

There were now but three more leaps to be taken before he would reach the flat table-rock above the fall, which once attained, he would have firm foot-hold and a fair field. Already he rejoiced, triumphant in the success of his bold attainment, and confident in victory, when a shrill female shriek reached his ears, from the pretty flower-garden; caught by the sound he diverted his eyes, just as he leaped, toward the place whence it came; his foot slipped, and the next instant he was flat on his back in the swift stream, where it shot the most furiously over the glassy rock. He struggled manfully, but in vain. The smooth, slippery surface afforded no purchase to his griping fingers, no hold to his laboring feet. One fearful, agonizing conflict with the wild waters, and he was swept helplessly over the edge of the fall, his head, as he glanced down foot foremost, striking the rocky brink not without violence.

He was plunged into the deep pool, and whirled round and round by the dark eddies long before he rose, but still, though stunned and half disabled, he strove terribly to support himself, but it was all in vain.

Again he sunk and rose once more, and as he rose that wild shriek again reached his ears, and his last glance fell upon a female form wringing her hands in terror on the bank, and a young man rushing down in wild haste from the cottage on the hill-side.

He felt that aid was at hand, and struck out again for life—for dear life.

But the water seemed to fail beneath him.

A slight flash sprang across his eyes, his brain reeled, and all was blackness.

He sunk to the bottom, spurned it with his feet, and rose once more, but not to the surface.

His quivering blue hands emerged alone above the relentless waters, grasped for a little moment at empty space and then disappeared.

The circling ripples closed over him, and subsided into stillness.

He felt, knew, suffered nothing more.

His young, warm heart was cold and lifeless—his soul had lost its consciousness—the vital spark had faded into darkness—perhaps was quenched for ever.

CHAPTER II.

THE WAKENING.

When first she dawned upon my sight,
She deemed a vision of delight. WORDSWORTH.

WHEN Jasper St. Aubyn opened his eyes, dim with the struggle of returning consciousness and life, they met a pair of eyes fixed with an expression of the most earnest anxiety on his own—a pair of eyes, the loveliest into which he ever had yet gazed, large, dark, unfathomably deep, and soft withal and tender, as the day-dream of a love-sick poet. He could not mark their color; he scarce knew whether they were mortal eyes, whether they were realities at all, so sickly did his brain reel and so confused and wandering were his fancies.

Then a sweet, low voice fell upon his ear, in tones the gentlest, yet the gladdest, that ever he had heard, exclaiming:—

"Oh! father, father, he lives—he is saved."

But he heard, saw no more; for again he relapsed into unconsciousness, and felt nothing further, until he became sensible of a balmy coolness on his brow, a pleasant flavor on his parched lips, and a kindly glow creeping as it were through all his limbs, and gradually expanding into life.

Again his eyes were unclosed, and again they met the earnest, hopeful gaze of those other eyes, which he now might perceive belonging to a face so exquisite, and a form so lovely, as to be worthy of those great glorious wells of lustrous tenderness.

It was a young girl who bent over him, perhaps a few months older than himself, so beautiful that had she appeared suddenly even in her simple garb, which seemed to announce her but one degree above the peasants of the neighborhood, in the midst of

the noblest and most aristocratical assembly, she would have become on the instant the cynosure of all eyes, and the magnet of all hearts.

Of that age when the heart, yet unsunned by passion, and unused to strong emotion, thrills sensibly to every feeling awakened for the first time within it, and bounds at every appeal to its sympathies; when the ingenuous countenance, unhardened by the sad knowledge of the world, and untaught to conceal one emotion, reflects like a perfect mirror every gleam of sunshine that illuminates, every passing cloud that overshadows its pure and spotless surface, the maiden sought not to hide her delight, as she witnessed the hue of life return to his pale cheeks, and the spark of intelligence relume his handsome features.

A bright, mirthful glance, which told how radiant they might be in moments of unmingled bliss, laughed for an instant in those deep blue eyes, and a soft, sunny smile played over her warm lips; but the next minute, she dropped the young man's hand, which she had been chafing between both her own, buried her face in her palms, and wept those sweet and happy tears which flow only from innocent hearts, at the call of gratitude and sympathy.

"Bless God, young sir," said a deep, solemn voice at the other side of the bed on which he was lying, "that your life is spared. May it be unto good ends! Yours was a daring venture, and for a trivial object against which to stake an immortal soul. But, thanks to Him! you are preserved, snatched as it were from the gates of death; and, though you feel faint now, I doubt not—and your soul trembles as if on the verge of another world—you will be well anon, and in a little while as strong as ever in that youthful strength on which you have ta'en such pride. Drink this, and sleep awhile, and you shall wake refreshed, and as a new man, from the dreamless slumber which the draught shall give you. And you, silly child," he continued,

turning toward the lovely girl, who had sunk forward on the bed, so that her fair tresses rested on the same pillow which supported Jasper's head, with the big tears trickling silently between her slender fingers, "dry up your tears; for the youth shall live, and not die."

The boy's eyes had turned immediately to the sound of the speaker's accents, and in his weak state remained fixed on his face so long as the sound continued, although his senses followed the meaning but imperfectly.

It was a tall, venerable-looking old man who spoke, with long locks, as white as snow, falling down over the straight cut collar of his plain black doublet, and an expression of the highest intellect, combined with something which was not melancholy, much less sadness, but which told volumes of hardships borne, and sorrows endured, the fruits of which were piety, and gentleness, and that wisdom which cometh not of this world.

He smiled thoughtfully, as he saw that his words were hardly comprehended, and his mild glance wandered from the pale face of the handsome boy to the fair head of the young girl bending over him, like a white lily overcharged with rain.

"Poor things," he whispered softly, as if speaking to himself, "to both it is the first experience of the mixed pain and pleasure of this world's daily trials. God save them scathless to the end!"

Then recovering himself, as if by a little effort, from his brief fit of musing, he held forth a large glass goblet which was in his right hand, full of some bright ruby-colored liquid, to the lips of Jasper, saying:—

"Drink, youth, it will give thee strength. Drink, and fear nothing."

The young man grasped the bright bowl with both hands,

but even then he had lacked strength to guide it to his lips, had not his host still supported it.

The flavor was agreeable, and the coolness of the draught was so delicious to the feverish palate and parched tongue of Jasper, that he drained it to the very bottom, and then, as if exhausted by the effort, relaxed his hold, and sunk back on his pillow in a state of conscious languor, exquisitely soft and entrancing.

More and more that voluptuous dream-like trance overcame him, and though his eyes were still open he saw not the things that were around him, but a multitude of radiant and lovely visions, which came and went, and returned again, in mystic evolutions.

With a last effort of his failing senses, half conscious of the interest which she took in him, yet wholly ignorant who or what was that gentle *she*, he stretched out his hand and mastered one of hers with gentle violence, and holding it imprisoned in his burning fingers, closed his swimming eyes, and sunk into a deep and dreamless sleep.

The old man, who had watched every symptom that appeared in succession on his expressive face, saw that the potion had taken the desired effect, and drawing a short sigh, which seemed to indicate a sense of relief from apprehension, looked toward the maiden, and addressed her in a low voice, not so much from fear of wakening the sleeper, as that the voice of affection is ever low and gentle.

"He sleeps, Theresa, and will sleep until the sun has sunk far toward the west, and then he will waken restored to all his youthful power and spirits. Come, my child, we may leave him to his slumbers, he shall no longer need a watcher. I will go to my study and would have you turn to your household duties. Scenes such as this which you have passed will call up soft and pitiful fancies in the mind, but it behooves us not over-

much to yield to them. This life has too much of stern and dark reality, that we should give the reins to truant imagination. Come, Theresa."

The young girl raised her head from the pillows, and shook away the long, fair curls from her smooth forehead. Her tears had ceased to flow, and there was a smile on her lip, as she replied, pointing to her hand which he held fast grasped, in his unconscious slumber

"See, father, I am a prisoner. I fear me I can not withdraw my hand without arousing him."

"Do not so, then, Theresa; to arouse him now, ere the effects of the potion have passed away, would be dangerous, might be fatal. Perchance, however, he will release you when he sleeps quite soundly. If he do so, I pray you, come to me. Meantime, I leave you to your own good thoughts, my own little girl."

And with these words, he leaned across the narrow bed, over the form of the sleeping youth, and kissed her fair white brow.

"Bless thee, my gentle child. May God in goodness bless, and be about thee."

"Amen! dear father," said the little girl, as he ended; and in her turn she pressed her soft and balmy lips to his withered cheek.

A tear, rare visitant, rose all unbidden to the parent's eye as he turned to leave her, but ere he reached the door, her low tones arrested him, and he came back to her.

"Will you not put my books within reach of me, dear father?" she said. "I can not work, since the poor youth has made my left hand his sure captive, but I would not be altogether idle, and I can read while I watch him. Pardon my troubling you, who should wait on you, not be waited on."

"And do you not wait on me ever, and most neat-handedly, dear child?" returned her father, moving toward a small, round

table, on which were scattered a few books, and many implements of feminine industry. "Which of these will you have, Theresa?"

"All of them, if you please, dear father. The table is not heavy, for I can carry it about where I will, myself, and if you will lift it to me, I can help myself, and cull the gems of each in turn. I am a poor student, I fear, and love better, like a little bee, to flit from flower to flower, drinking from every chalice its particular honey, than to sit down, like the sloth, and surfeit me on one tree, how green soever."

"There is but little industry, I am afraid, Theresa, if there be little sloth in your mode of reading. Such desultory studies are wont to leave small traces on the memory. I doubt me much if you long keep these gems you speak of, which you cull so lightly."

"Oh! but you are mistaken, father dear, for all you are so wise," she replied, laughing softly. "Everything grand or noble, of which I read, everything high or holy, finds a sort of echo in my little heart, and lies there for ever. Your grave, heavy, moral teachings speak to my reason, it is true, but when I read of brave deeds done, of noble self-sacrifices made, of great sufferings endured, in high causes, those things teach my heart, those things speak to my soul, father. Then I reason no longer, but feel—feel how much virtue there is, after all, and generosity, and nobleness, and charity, and love, in poor, frail human nature. Then I learn not to judge mildly of myself, nor harshly of my brothers. Then I feel happy, father, yet in my happiness I wish to weep. For I think, noble sentiments and generous emotions sooner bring tears to the eye than mere pity, or mere sorrow."

And, even as she spoke, her own bright orbs were suffused with drops, like dew in the violet's cups, and she shook her head with its profusion of long, fair ringlets archly, as if she

would have made light of her own sentiment, and gazed up into his face with a tearful smile.

"You are a good child, Theresa, and good children are very dear to the Lord," said the old man. "But of a truth, I would I could see you more practically-minded; less given to these singular romantic dreamings. I say, not that they are hurtful, or unwise, or untrue, but in a mere child, as you are, Theresa, they are strange and out of place, if not unnatural. I would I could see you more merry, my little girl, and more given to the company of your equals in age, even if I were to be the loser thereby of something of your gentle company. But you love not, I think, the young girls of the village."

"Oh! yes, I love them dearly, father. I would do anything for any one of them; I would give up anything I have got to make them happy. Oh, yes, I love Anna Harlande, and Rose Merrivale, and Mary Mitford, dearly, but—but—"

"But you love not their company, you would say, would you not, my child?"

"That is not what I was about to say; but I know not how it is, their merriment is so loud, and their glee so very joyous, that it seems to me that I can not sympathize with them in their joy, as I can in their sorrow; and they view things with eyes so different from mine, and laugh at thoughts that go nigh to make me weep, and see or feel so little of the loveliness of nature, and care so little for what I care most of all, soft, sad poetry, or heart-stirring romance, or inspired music, that when I am among them, I *do* almost long to be away from them all, in the calm of this pleasant chamber, or in the fragrance of my bower beside the stream. And I do feel my spirit jangled and perplexed by their light-hearted, thoughtless mirth, as one feels at hearing a false note struck in the midst of a sweet symphony. What is this? what means this, my father?"

"It is a gift, Theresa," replied the old man, half mournfully.

"It means that you are endowed rarely, by God himself, with powers the most unusual, the most wondrous, the most beautiful, most high and godlike of any which are allowed to mortals. I have seen this long, long ago—I have mused over it; hoped, prayed, that it might not be so; nay, striven to repress the germs of it in your young spirit, yet never have I spoken of it until now; for I knew not that you were conscious, and would not be he that should awaken you to the consciousness of the grand but perilous possession which you hold, delegated to you direct from Omnipotence."

He paused, and she gazed at him with lips apart, and eyes wide in wonder. The color died away in a sort of mysterious awe from her warm cheek. The blood rushed tumultuously to her heart. She listened, breathless and amazed. Never had she heard him speak thus, never imagined that he felt thus, before—yet now that she did hear, she felt as though she were but listening again to that which she had heard many times already; and though she understood not his words altogether, they had struck a kindred chord in her inmost soul, and while its vibration was almost too much for her powers of endurance, it yet told her that his words were true.

She could not, for her life, have bid him go on, but for worlds she would not have failed to hear him out.

He watched the changed expression of her features, and half struck with a feeling of self-reproach that he should have created doubts, perhaps fears, in that ingenuous soul, smiled on her kindly, and asked in a confident tone:—

"You have felt this already, have you not, my dear child?"

"Not as you put it to me, father; no, I have never dreamed or hoped that I had any such particular gift of God, such glorious and pre-eminent possession as this of which you speak. I may, indeed, have fancied at times that there was something within me, in which I differed from others around me—something which made me feel more joy—deeper, and fuller, and more soul-fraught joy, than they feel; and sorrow, softer, and moved more easily, if not more piercing or more permanent—which made me love the world, and its inhabitants, and above all its Maker, with a far different love from theirs—something which evermore seems struggling within me, as if it would forth and find tongue, but can not. But now, that you have spoken, I know that it indeed must be as you say, and that this unknown something is a gift, is a possession from on high. What is this thing, my father?"

"My child, this thing is genius," replied the old man solemnly.

The bright blood rushed back to her cheek in a flood of crimson glory; a strange, clear light, which never had enkindled them before, sprang from her soft, dark eyes; she leaned forward eagerly. "Genius!" she cried. "Genius and I! Father, you dream, dear father."

"Would that I did; but I do not, Theresa."

"And wherefore, if it be so, indeed, that I am so gifted, wherefore would you alter it, my father?"

"I would not alter it," he replied, "my little girl. Far be it from my thoughts, weak worm that I am, to alter, even if I could alter, the least of the gifts of the great Giver. And this, whether it be for good, or unto evil, is one of the greatest and most glorious. I would not alter it, Theresa. But I would guide, would direct, would moderate it. I would accustom you to know and comprehend the vast power of which you, all unconsciously, are the possessor. For, as I said, it is a fearful and a perilous power. God forbid that I should pronounce the most marvellous and godlike of the gifts which he vouchsafes to man, a curse and not a blessing; God forbid that, even while I see how oft it is turned into bitterness and blight by the coldness of the world, and the check of its heaven-soaring aspira-

tions, I should doubt that it has within itself a sovereign balm against its own diseases, a rapture mightier than any of its woes, an inborn and eternal consciousness which bears it up as on immortal pinions, above the cares of the world, and the poor realities of life. Nevertheless, it is a perilous gift, and too often, to your sex, a fatal one. Yet I would not alarm you, my own child, for you have gentleness of soul, such as may well temper the coruscations of a spirit which waxes oftentimes too strong to be womanly, and piety, which shall, I trust, preserve you, should any aspiration of your heart wax over-vigorous and daring to be contented with the limitations of humanity. In the meantime, my child, fear nothing, follow the dictates of your own pure heart, and pray for his aid, who neither giveth aught, nor taketh away, without reason. Hark!" he interrupted himself, starting slightly, "there is a sound of horses' hoofs without; your brother has returned, and it may be Sir Miles is with him. We will speak more of this hereafter."

And with the word he turned and left the room.

When he was gone she raised her eyes to heaven, and with a strange rapt expression on her fair features rose to her feet, exclaiming:—

"Genius! Genius! Great God, great God, I thank thee."

Then, in the fervor of the moment, which led her naturally to clasp her hands together, she made a movement to withdraw her fingers from Jasper's death-like grasp, unconscious, for the time, of everything around her.

But, as she did so, a tightened pressure of his hand, and some inarticulate sounds which proceeded from his lips, recalled her with a start to herself.

She dropped into her seat, as if conscience-stricken, gazed fixedly in his face, then stooped and pressed her lips on his inanimate brow; started again, looked about the room with a half guilty glance, bowed her head on his pillow, and wept bitterly.

CHAPTER III.

THE RECOGNITION.

"They had been friends in youth."—BYRON.

THE evening had advanced far into night before the effects of the potion he had swallowed passed away, and left the mind of Jasper clear, and his pulse regular and steady. When he awoke from his long stupor, and turned his eyes around him, it seemed as if he had dreamed of what he saw before him; for the inanimate objects of the room, nay, the very faces which met his eye, had something in them that was not altogether unfamiliar, yet for his life he could not have recalled when, or if ever he had seen them before.

The old dark-wainscoted walls of the irregular, many-recessed apartment, adorned with a few water-color drawings, and specimens of needlework, the huge black and gold Indian cabinet in one corner, the tall clock-stand of some foreign wood in another, the slab above the yawning hearth covered with tropical shells and rare foreign curiosities, the quaint and grotesque chairs and tables, with strangely-contorted legs and arms, and wild satyr-like faces grinning from their bosses, the very bed on which he lay, with its carved headboard, and groined canopy of oak, and dark-green damask curtains, were all things which he felt he must have seen, though where and how he knew not.

So was the face of the slight fair-haired girl who sat a little way removed from his bed's head, by a small round work-table, on which stood a waxen taper, bending over some one of those light tasks of embroidery or knitting which women love, and are wont to dignify by the name of work.

On her he fixed his eyes long and wistfully, gazing at her, as he would have done at a fair picture, without any desire to address her, or to do aught that should induce her to move from the graceful attitude in which she sat, giving no sign of life save in the twinkling of her long, downcast eyelashes, in the calm rise and fall of her gentle bosom, and the quick motion of her busy fingers.

Jasper St. Aubyn was still weak, but he was unconscious of any pain or ailment, though he now began gradually to remember all that had passed before he lost his consciousness in the deep pool above the fords of Widecomb.

So weak was he, indeed, that it was almost too great an effort for him to consider where he was, or how he had been saved, much more to move his body, or ask any question of that fair watcher. He felt indeed that he should be perfectly contented to lie there all his life, in that painless, tranquil mood, gazing upon that fair picture.

But while he lay there, with his large eyes wide open and fixed upon her, as if by their influence he would have charmed her soul out of its graceful habitation, a word or two spoken in a louder voice than had yet struck his ear, for persons had been speaking in the room all the time, although he had not observed them, attracted his notice to the other side of his bed.

It was not so much the words, for he scarce heard, and did not heed their import, as the tone of voice which struck him; for though well-known and most familiar, he could in no wise connect it with the other things around him.

With the desire to ascertain what this might mean, there came into his mind, he knew not wherefore, a wish to do so unobserved; and he proceeded forthwith to turn himself over on his pillow so noiselessly as to excite no attention in the watchers, whoever they might be.

He had not made two efforts, however, to do this, before he

became aware of what, while he lay still, he did not suspect, that several of his limbs had received severe contusions, and could not as yet be moved with impunity.

He was a singular youth, however, and an almost Spartan endurance of physical pain, with a strange persistency in whatever he undertook, had been from very early boyhood two of his strongest characteristics.

In spite, therefore, of his weakness, in spite of the pain every motion gave him, he persevered, and turning himself inch by inch, at length gained a position which enabled him clearly to discern the speakers.

They were two in number, the one facing him, the other having his back turned so completely that all he could see was a head covered with long-curled locks of snow-white hair, a dark-velvet cloak, and the velvet scabbard of a long rapier protruding far beyond the legs of the oak-chair on which he sat. The lower limbs of this person were almost lost in darkness as they lay carelessly crossed under the table, so that he divined rather than saw that they were cased in heavy riding-boots, on the heels of which a faint golden glimmer gave token of the wearer's rank in the knightly spurs he wore.

The lamp which stood upon the table by which they were conversing was set between the two, so that it was quite invisible to Jasper, and its light, which to his eyes barely touched the edges of the figure he had first observed, fell full upon the pale high brow and serene lineaments of the other person, who was in fact no other than the old man who had spoken to the youth in the intervals of his trance, and administered the potion from the effects of which he was but now recovering.

Of this, however, Jasper had no recollection, although he wondered, as he had done concerning the girl, where he had before seen that fine countenance and benevolent expression, and how once seen he ever should have forgotten it.

There was yet a third person in the group, though he took no part in the conversation, and appeared to be, like Jasper, rather an interested and observant witness of what was going on, than an actor in the scene.

He was a tall, dark-haired and dark-eyed man, in the first years of manhood, not perhaps above five or six years Jasper's senior; but his bronzed and sunburnt cheeks curiously contrasted with the fairness of his forehead, where it had not been exposed to the sun, and an indescribable blending of boldness—it might have almost been called audacity—with calm self-confidence and cold composure, which made up the expression of his face, seemed to indicate that he had seen much of the world, and learned many of its secrets, perhaps by the stern lessoning of the great teachers, suffering and sorrow.

The fignre of this young man was but imperfectly visible, as he stood behind the high-backed chair, on which the old man, from whom the similarity in their features, if not in their expression, Jasper took to be his father, was seated. But his face, his muscular neck, his well-developed chest and broad shoulders, displayed by a close-fitting jerkin of some dark stuff, were all in strong light; and as the features and expression of the countenance gave token of a powerful character and energetic will, so did the frame give promise of ability to carry out the workings of the mind.

The dialogue, which had been interrupted by a silence of some seconds following on the words that had attracted Jasper's notice, was now continued by the old man who sat facing him.

"That question," he said, in a firm yet somewhat mournful tone, "is not an easy one to answer. The difficulty of subduing prejudices on my own part, the fear of wounding pride on yours—these might have had their share in influencing my conduct. Beside, you must remember that years have elapsed

—the very years which most form the character of men—since we parted; that they have elapsed under circumstances the most widely different for you and for me; that we are not, in short, in anything the same men we then were—that the gnarled, weather-beaten, earth-fast oak of centuries differs not so much from the green pliant sapling of half a dozen summers, as the old man, with his heart chilled and hardened into living steel by contact with the world, from the youth full of generous impulses and lofty aspirations, loving all men, and doubting naught either in heaven above, or in the earth beneath. You must remember, moreover, that although, as you have truly said, we were friends in youth, our swords, our purses, and our hearts in common, we had even then many points of serious difference; and lastly, and most of all, you must remember that if we had been friends, we were not friends when we last parted—"

"What! what!" exclaimed a voice, which Jasper instantly recognised for his father's, though for years he had not heard him speak in tones of the like animation. "What, William Allan, do you mean to say that you imagined that any enmity could have dwelt in my mind, for so slight a cause—"

"Slight a cause!" interrupted the other. "Do you call that *slight* which made my heart drop blood, and my brain boil with agony for years—which changed my course of life, altered my fortunes, character, heart, soul, for ever; which made me, in a word, what I now am? Do you call that a *slight* cause, Miles St. Aubyn? Show me, then, what you call a grave one."

"I had forgotten, William, I had forgotten," replied, Sir Miles, gently, and perhaps self-reproachfully. "I mean, I had forgotten that the rivaling in a strife which to the winner seems a little thing, may to the loser be death, or worse than death! Forgive me, William Allan, I had forgotten in my selfish thoughtlessness, and galled you unawares. But let us say

no more of this—let the past be forgotten—let wrongs done, if wrongs were done, be buried in her grave, who was the most innocent cause of them; and let us now remember only that we were friends in youth, and that after long years of separation, we are thus wonderfully brought together in old age; let me hope to be friends henceforth unto the grave."

"Amen, I say to that. Miles St. Aubyn, amen!"

And the two old men clasped their withered hands across the table, and Jasper might see the big drops tricking slowly down the face of him who was called William Allan, while from the agitation of his father's frame he judged that he was not free from the like agitation.

There was a little pause, during which, as he fancied, the young man looked somewhat frowningly on the scene of reconciliation; but the frown, it frown it were, passed speedily away, and left the bold, dark face as calm and impassive as the surface of a deep unruffled water.

A moment or two afterward, Sir Miles raised his head, which he had bowed a little, perhaps to conceal the feelings which might have agitated it, and again clasping the hand of the other, said eagerly,—

"It is you, William, who have saved my boy, my Jasper; and this is not the first time that a scion of your house has preserved one of mine from death, or yet worse, ruin!"

William Allan started, as if a sharp weapon had pierced him.

"And how," he cried, "Miles St. Aubyn, how was the debt repaid? I tell you it is written in the books that can not err, that our houses were ordained for mutual destruction!"

"What, man," exclaimed Sir Miles, half-jestingly, "do you still cling to the black art? Do you still read the dark book of fate? Methought that fancy would have taken wing with other youthful follies."

The old man shook his head sadly, but made no reply.

"And what has it taught *thee*, William, unless it be that this life is short, and this world's treasures worthless; and *that* I have learned from a better book, a book of wider margin. What, I say, has it taught thee, William Allan?"

"All things," replied the old man, sorrowfully. "Even unto this meeting—every action, every event of my own life, past or to come, happy or miserable, virtuous or evil, it has taught me."

"But has it taught thee, William, whereby to win the good and eschew the evil; whereby to hold fast to the virtuous, and say unto the evil, 'Get behind me.' Has it taught thee, I say not to be wiser, but to be happier or better?"

"What is, is! What shall be, shall be! What is written, shall be done! We may flap, or flutter, or even fight, like fish or birds, or, if you will, like lions in the toil; but we are nettled, and may not escape, from the beginning! The man may learn the workings of the God, but how shall he control them?"

"And this is thy philosophy—this all that thine art teaches?"

"It is. No more."

"A sad philosophy—a vain art," replied the other. "I'll none of them."

"I tell thee, Miles St. Aubyn, that years ago, years ere I had heard of Widecomb or its water, I saw yon deep, red-whirling pool; I saw that drowning youth; I saw the ready rescue, and the gentle nursing; and now," he cried, stretching his hands out widely, and gazing into vacancy, "I see a wilder and a sadder sight—a deeper pool, a stronger cataract, a fierce storm bellowing among the hills, and torrents thundering down every gorge and gully to swell the flooded rivers. A young man and a maiden—yet no! no! not a maiden! mounted on gallant horses, are struggling in the whelming eddies. Great God! avert—hold! hold! He lifts his arm, he smites her with his loaded whip—smites her between the eyes that smiles upon

him; she falls, she is down, down in the whirling waters—rider and horse swept over the mad cataract; but who—who?—ha!" and with a wild shriek he started to his feet, and fell back into the arms of the young man, who from the beginning of the paroxysm evidently had expected its catastrophe, and who, with the assistance of the girl, supported him, now quite inanimate and powerless, from the room, merely saying to Sir Miles, "Be not alarmed, I will return forthwith."

"My father!" exclaimed Jasper, in a faint voice, as the door closed upon them.

The old man turned hastily to the well-known accents, and hurried to the bedside. "My boy, my own boy, Jasper. Now, may God's name be praised for ever!"

And falling into a chair by his pillow, the same chair on which that sweet girl had sat a few hours before, he bent over him, and asked him a thousand questions, waiting for no reply, but bathing his face with his tears, and covering his brow with kisses.

When he had at length satisfied the old man that he was well and free from pain, except a few slight bruises, he asked his father eagerly where he was, and who was that strange, old man.

"You are in the cottage, my dear boy," replied the old knight, "above Widecomb pool, tended by those who, by the grace of God and his exceeding mercy, saved you from the consequences of the frantic act which so nearly left me childless. Oh! Jasper, Jasper, 'twas a fearful risk, and it had well nigh been fatal."

"It was but one mis-step, father," replied the youth, who, as he rapidly recovered his strength, recovered also his bold speech and daring courage. "Had there been but foothold at the tunnel's end, I had landed my fish bravely; and, on my honor, I believe, had I such another on my line's end, I should risk it again. Why, father, he was at least a thirty-pounder."

"Never do so—never do so again, Jasper. Remember that to risk life heedlessly, and for no purpose save an empty gratification, a mere momentary pleasure, is a great crime toward God, and a gross act of selfishness toward men, as much so as to peril or to lose it in a high cause, or for a noble object, is great, and good, and self-devoted. Think! had you perished here, all for a paltry fish, which you might purchase for a silver crown, you had left to me years—nay, a life of misery."

"Nay, father, I never thought of that," answered the young man, not unmoved by the remonstrance of his father, "but it was not the value of the fish. I should have given him away, ten to one, had I taken him. It was that I do not like to be beaten."

"A good feeling, Jasper; and one that leads to many good things, and without which nothing great can be attained; but to do good, like all other feelings, it must be moderated and controlled by reason. But you must learn to think ever before acting, Jasper."

"I will—I will, indeed, sir; but you have not told me who is this strange, old man."

"An old friend of mine, Jasper—an old friend whom I have not seen for years, and who is now doubly a friend, since he has saved your life."

At this moment the door opened, and the young man entered bearing a candle.

"He is at ease now," he said. "It is a painful and a searching malady to which at seasons he is subject. We know well how to treat him; when he awakes to-morrow, he will remember nothing of what passed to-day, though at the next attack he will remember every circumstance of this. I pray you, therefore, Sir Miles, take no note in the morning, nor appear to observe it, if he be somewhat silent and reserved. Ha! young sir," he continued, seeing that Jasper was awake, and taking

him kindly by the hand, "I am glad to see that you have recovered."

"And I am glad to have an opportunity to thank you, that you have saved my life, which I know you must have done right gallantly, seeing the peril of the deed."

"About as gallantly as you did, when you came so near losing it," he answered. "But come, Sir Miles, night wears apace, and if you will allow me to show you to your humble chamber the best our lowly house can offer, I will wish you good repose, and return to watch over my young friend here."

"My age must excuse me, that I accept your offer, whose place it should be to watch over him myself."

"I need no watcher, sir," replied Jasper, boldly. "I am quite well now, and shall sleep, I warrant you, unto cock-crow without awakening."

"Good-night, then, boy!" cried Sir Miles, stooping over him and again kissing his brow, "and God send thee better in health and wiser in condition."

"Good-night, sir; and God send me stronger and braver, and more like my father," said the youth, with a light laugh.

"I will return anon, young friend—for friends I hope, we shall be," said the other, as he left the room, lighting Sir Miles respectfully across the threshold.

"I hope we shall—and I thank you. But I shall be fast asleep ere then."

And so he was; but not the less for that did the stalwart young man watch over him, sitting erect in one of the high-backed chairs, until the first pale light of dawn came stealing in through the latticed casement, and the shrill cry of the early cock announced the morning of another day.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BASEBORN.

"O agony! keen agony,
For trusting heart to find;
That vows believed, were vows conceived,
As light as summer wind."—MOTHERWELL.

THE earliest cock had barely crowed his first salutations to the awakening day, and the first warblers had not yet begun to make their morning music in the thick shrubberies around the cottage, when aroused betimes, by his anxiety for Jasper, Sir Miles made his appearance, already full dressed, at the door of the room in which his son was sleeping.

For he was yet asleep, with that hardy young man still watching over him, apparently unmoved by the loss of his own rest, and wholly indifferent to what are usually deemed the indispensable requirements of nature.

"You are aloof betimes, sir," said the youth, rising from his seat as the old cavalier entered the room; "pity that you should have arisen so early, for I could have watched him twice as long, had it been needful, but in truth it was not so. Your son has scarce moved, Sir Miles, since you left the chamber last night. You see how pleasantly and soundly he is sleeping."

"It was not *that*, young sir," replied the old man cordially. "It was not that I doubted your good will, or your good watching either; but he is my son, my only son, and how should I but be anxious. But as you say, he sleeps pleasantly and well. God be thanked, therefore. He will be none the worse for this."

"Better, perhaps, Sir Miles," replied the other, with a slight

smile. "Wiser, at least, I doubt not he will be; for in good truth, it was a very boyish, and a very foolish risk to run."

The old man, for the first time, looked at the speaker steadfastly, and was struck by the singular expression of his countenance—that strange mixture of impassive, self-confident composure, and half-scornful audacity, which I have mentioned as being his most striking characteristics. On the preceding evening, Sir Miles had been so much engrossed by the anxiety he felt about his son, and subsequently by the feelings called forth in his inmost heart by the discovery of an old comrade in the person of William Allan, that in fact he had paid little attention to either of the other personages present.

He had observed, indeed, that there were a fair, young girl and a powerfully-framed youth present; he had even addressed a few words casually to both of them, but they had left no impression on his mind, and he had not even considered who or what they were likely to be.

Now, however, when he was composed and relieved of fear for his son's life, he was struck, as I have said, by the expression and features of the young man, and began to consider who he could be; for there was no such similarity, whether of feature, expression, voice, air, or gesture, between him and William Allan, as is wont to exist between son and sire.

After a moment's pause, however, the old cavalier replied, not altogether pleased apparently by the tone of the last remark.

"It was a very bold and *manly* risk, it appears to me," he said, "and if rash, can hardly be called boyish; and you, I should think," he added, "would be the last to blame bold actions. You look like anything but one who should recommend cold counsels, or be slack either to dare or do. I fancy you have seen stirring times somewhere, and been among daring deeds yourself."

"So many times, Sir Miles," replied the young man, modestly, that I have learned how absurd it is to *seek* such occasions without cause. There be necessary risks enough in life, and man has calls enough, and those unavoidable, on his courage, without going out of his way to seek them, or throwing any energy or boldness unprofitably to the winds. At least so I have found it in the little I have seen of human life and action."

"Ha! you speak well," said Sir Miles, looking even more thoughtfully than before at the marked and somewhat weather-beaten features of the young man. "And where have you met with perils so rife, and learned so truly the need of disciplining natural energies and valor?"

"On the high seas, Sir Miles, of which I have been a follower from a boy."

"Indeed! are you such a voyager! and where, I pray you, have you served?"

"I can not say that I have exactly *served*. But I have visited both the Indias, East and West; and have seen some smart fighting—where they say peace never comes—beyond the line, I mean with the Dons, both in Darien and Peru."

"Ha! but you have indeed seen the world, for one so young as you; and yet I think you have not sailed in the king's ships, nor held rank in the service."

"No, Sir Miles, I am but a poor free-trader; and yet sometimes I think that we have carried the English flag farther, and made the English name both better known and more widely feared, than the cruisers of any king who has sat on our throne, since the good old days of Queen Bess."

"His present majesty did good service against the Dutch, young man. And what do you say to Blake? Who ever did more gloriously at sea, than rough old Blake?"

"Ay, sir, but that was in Noll's days, and we may not call him a *king* of England, though of a certainty he was her wise

and valiant ruler. And for his present majesty, God bless him! that Opdam business was when he was the duke of York; and he has forgotten all his glory, I think, now that he has become king, and lets the Frenchman and the Don do as they please with our colonists and traders, and the Dutchman, too, for that matter."

The old man paused, and shook his head gravely for a moment, but then resumed with a smile:—

"So so, my young friend, you are one of those bold spirits who claim to judge for yourselves, and make peace or war as you think well, without waiting the slow action of senate or kings, who hold that hemispheres, not treaties, are the measure of hostility or amity:—

"Not so, exactly, noble sir. But where we find peace or war, there we take them; and if the Dons won't be quiet, on the other side the line, and our good king won't keep them quiet, why we must either take them as we find them, or give up the great field to them altogether."

"Which you hold to be un-English and unmanly?"

"Even so, sir."

"Well, I, for one, will not gainsay you. But do not you fear, sometimes that while you are thus stretching a commission —that is the term, I believe, among you liberal gentlemen— you may chance to get your own neck stretched some sultry morning in the Floridas or in Darien?"

"One of the very risks I spoke of but now, Sir Miles," replied the young man, laughing. "My life were not worth five minutes' purchase if the governor of St. Augustine or of Panama either, for that matter, could once lay hold on me."

"I marvel," said the old cavalier, again shaking his head solemnly, "I marvel much—" and then interrupting himself suddenly in the middle of his sentence he lapsed into a fit of meditative silence.

"At what, if I may be so bold—at what do you so much marvel?"

"That William Allan should consent," replied the cavalier, "that son of his should embark in so wild and stormy a career— in a career which, I should have judged, with his strict principles and somewhat puritanical feeling, he would deem the reverse of gracious or godfearing."

"He knows not what career I follow," answered the young man, bluntly. "But you are in error altogether, sir. I am no son of William Allan."

"No son of William Allan! Ha! now that I think of it, your features are not his, nor your voice either."

"Nor my body, nor my soul!" replied the other, hastily and hotly, "no more than the free falcon's are those of the caged linnet! Sometimes I even marvel how it can be that any drop of mutual or common blood should run in our veins; and yet it is so—and I—I—yet no—I do *not* repent it!"

"And wherefore should you? there is no worthier or better man, I do believe, than William Allan living; and, in his younger days at least, I know there was no braver."

"No braver?—indeed! indeed!" exclaimed the young man, eagerly—"was he, indeed, brave?"

"Ay, was he, youth! brave both to do and to suffer. Brave, both with the quick and dauntless courage to act, and with the rarer and more elevated courage to resolve and hold fast to resolution. But who are you, who, living with him, know both so little and so much of William Allan? If you be not his son, who are you?"

"His sister's son, Sir Miles—his only sister's son, to whom, since that sister's death, he has been—God forgive me for that I said but now—more than a father; for surely I have tried him more than ever son tried a father, and he has borne with me still with a most absolute indulgence and unwearied love."

"What—what!" exclaimed Sir Miles, much moved and even agitated by what he heard, "are you the child of that innocent and beautiful Alicia Allan, whom—whom—" The old man faltered and stopped short, for he was in fact on the point of bursting into tears.

But the youth finished the sentence, which he had left unconcluded, in a stern, slow voice, and with a lowering brow.

"Whom your friend, Denzil Olifaunt, betrayed by a mock marriage, and afterward deserted with her infants. Yes, Sir Miles, I am one of those infants, the son of Alicia Allan's shame! And my uncle did not slay him—therefore it is I asked you, was he brave."

"And yet he *was* slain—and for that very deed!" replied the old man, gloomily, with his eyes fixed upon the ground.

"He *was* slain," repeated the young sailor, whose curiosity and interest were now greatly excited. "But how can you tell wherefore? No one has ever known who slew him—how then can you name the cause of his slaying?"

"There is ONE who knows all things!"

"But HE imparts not his knowledge," answered the other, not irreverently. "And unless *you* slew him, I see not how you can know this. Yet, hold, hold!" he continued, impetuously, as he saw that Sir Miles was about to speak, "if you did slay him, tell it not; for if he did betray my mother, if he did abandon me to disgrace and ruin—still, still he was my father."

"I slew him not, young man," replied the cavalier, gravely, "but he was slain for the cause that I have named, and I saw him die—repentant."

"Repentant!" exclaimed the youth, grasping the withered hand of the old knight, in the intensity of his emotions, "did he repent the wrong he had done my mother?"

"As surely as he died."

"May God forgive him, then," said the seaman, clasping his hands together and bursting into tears, "as I forgive him."

"Amen! amen!" cried the knight, "for he was mine ancient friend, the comrade of my boyhood, before he did that thing; and I, too, have something to forgive to him."

"You, Sir Miles, you!—what can you have to forgive?"

"Tell me first, tell me—how are you named?"

"Denzil," answered the youth, "Denzil, *Nothing!*" he added, very bitterly, "my country, and my country's law give me no other name, but only Denzil—its enemies have named me *Bras-de-fer!*"

"Then mark me, Denzil; as he of whom you are sprung, of whom you are named, was my first friend, so was your mother my first love; and she returned my love, till he, my sometime confidant, did steal her from me, and made his paramour, whom I would have made my wife."

"Great God!" exclaimed the young man, struck with consternation; "then it must, it must have been so—it was you who slew my—my father!"

"Young man, I never lied."

"Pardon me, Sir Miles. Pardon me, I am half distraught. And you loved my mother, and—and—he repented. Why was not I told of this before? And yet," he added, again pausing, as if some fresh suspicion struck him, "and yet how is this? I heard you speak yester even to my uncle, of wrongs done—done by yourself to *him*, and of a woman's death—that woman, therefore, was not, could not have been *my* mother. Who, then, was *she?*"

"*His* mother," replied Sir Miles St. Aubyn, calmly, but sadly, pointing to the bed on which Jasper lay sleeping tranquilly, and all unconsciously of the strange revelations which were going on around him. "If my friend robbed me of William Allan's sister, so I won from William Allan, in after-days, her

who owned his affection; but with this difference, that she I won never returned your uncle's love from the beginning, and that I never betrayed his confidence. If I were the winner, it was in fair and loyal strife, and though it has been, as I learned for the first time last night, a sore burden on your uncle's heart, it has been none on my conscience; my withers are unwrung."

"I believe it, sir; from my soul I believe it," cried the young man, enthusiastically, "for, on my life, I think you are all honor and nobility. But tell me, tell me now, if you love, if you pity me—as you should do for my mother's sake—who slew my father?"

"I have sworn," answered the cavalier, "I have sworn never to reveal that to mortal man; and if I had not sworn, to *you* I could not reveal it; for, if I judge aright, you would hold yourself bound to—"

"Avenge it!" exclaimed the youth, fiercely, interrupting him; "ay, were it at my soul's purchase—since he repented."

"He *did* repent, Denzil; nay, more, he died, desiring only that he could repair the wrong he had done you, regretting only that he could not give you his name, and his inheritance, as he did give *you* his dying blessing, and your mother his last thought, his last word in this world."

"Did *she* know this?"

"Denzil, I can not answer you; for within a few days after your father's death, I left England for the Low Countries, and returned not until many a year had passed into the bygone eternity. When I did return, the sorrows of Alicia Allan were at an end for ever; and though I then made all inquiries in all quarters, I could learn nothing of your uncle or yourself, nor ever have heard of you any more until last night, when we were all so singularly brought together."

"I *ought* to have known this; I would, I would to God that

I *had* known it. My life had been less wild, then, less turbulent, less stormy. My spirit had not then burned with so rash a recklessness. It was the sense of wrong, of bitter and unmerited wrong done in past times, of cold and undeserved scorn heaped on me in the present, as the bastard—the child of infamy and shame! that goaded me into so hot action. But it is done now, it is done, and can not be amended. The world it is which has made me what I am—let the world look to it—let the world enjoy the work of its hands."

"There is nothing, Denzil," said the old man, solemnly, "nothing but death that can not be amended. *Undone* things may not be, but all things may be amended by God's good grace to aid us."

"Hast thou not seen a sapling in the forest, which, overcrowded by trees of stronger growth, or warped from its true direction by some unnoted accident, hath grown up vigorous indeed and strong, but deformed amd distorted in its yearly progress, until arrived at its full maturity? Not all the art or all the strength of man or man's machinery can force it from its bias, or make it straight and comely. So is it with the mind of man, Sir Miles. While it is young and plastic, you shall direct it as you will—once ripened, hardened in its growth, whether that growth be tortuous or true, as soon shall you remodel the stature of the earth-fast oak, as change its intellectual bias. But I am wearying you, I fancy, and wasting words in unavailing disquisition. I hear my uncle's step without, moreover; permit me, I will join him."

"Hold yet a moment," replied the old man, kindly, "and let me say this to you now, while we are alone, which I may perchance lack opportunity to say hereafter. Your mother's son, Denzil Olifaunt—for so I shall ever call you, and so by *his* last words you are entitled to be called—can never weary me. Your welfare will concern me ever—what interests you, will

interest me always, and next to my own son I shall hold you nearest and dearest to this old heart at all times. Now leave me if you will—yet hold! tell me before you go, what I am fain to learn concerning your good uncle—the knowledge shall perchance save painful explanation, perhaps grave misunderstanding."

"All that I know is at your service," answered the young man, in a calmer and milder tone than he had used heretofore—for he was, in truth, much moved and softened by the evident feeling of the old cavalier; "but let me thank you first for your kindly offers, which, should occasion offer, believe me, I will test as frankly as you have made them nobly."

To his latter words Miles St. Aubyn made no answer, except a grave inclination of his head, for his mind was pre-occupied now by thoughts of very different import—was fixed, indeed, on days long passed, and on old, painful memories."

"This girl," he said at length, "this fair young girl whom I saw here last night, is she—is she your sister? I think you had a sister—yet this fair child hath not Alicia's hair, nor her eyes—who is she?"

"God was most good in that," answered the seaman, with much feeling, "he took my sister to himself, even before my mother pined away. A man's lot is hard enough who is the son of shame—a woman's is intolerable anguish. Theresa is my uncle's child—his only child. His love for her is almost idolatry, and were it altogether so, she deserves it all. Lo! there she passes by the casement—was ever fairer face or lovelier figure? and yet her soul, her innocent and artless soul, has beauties that as far surpass those personal charms, as *they* exceed all other earthly loveliness."

"You love her," said the cavalier, looking quickly upward, for he had been musing with downcast eyes, while Denzil spoke, and had not even raised his lids to gaze upon Theresa

as she passed through the garden. "You love this innocent and gentle child."

The young man's cheek burned crimson, ashamed that he should have revealed himself so completely to one who was almost a stranger. But he was not one to deny or disguise a single feeling of his heart, whether for good or for evil, and he replied, after a moment's pause, with an unfaltering and steady voice, "I *do* love her, more than my own soul!"

"And she," asked the old knight, "does she know, does she return your affection?"

Again the sailor hesitated; "Women, they say," he replied, at length, "know always by a natural instinct when they are beloved, and therefore I believe she *knows* it. For the rest, she is always most affectionate, most gentle, nay, even tender. Further than this, I may not judge."

"Father," exclaimed a faint voice from the bed, at this moment. "Is that you, father?" and Jasper St. Aubyn opened his eyes, languid yet from the heavy slumber into which the opiate had cast him, and raised himself up a little on his pillow, though with a slow and painful motion.

"My son," cried the old man, hurrying to the side of the bed, "my own boy, Jasper, how fare you now? You have slept well."

"So well," answered the bold boy, "that I feel strong enough, and clear enough in the head, to be up and about; but that whenever I would move a limb, there comes an accursed twinge to put me in mind that limestone rock is harder than bone and muscle."

Meanwhile, as soon as the old cavalier's attention was diverted by the awakening of his own son from his trance-like slumber, Denzil Bras-de-fer, as he called himself, and as I shall therefore call him, left the room quietly, and a few minutes afterward might have been seen, had not the eyes of those

within the chamber been otherwise directed, to pass the casement, following the same path which had been taken by Theresa Allan a little while before.

CHAPTER V.

THE LOVESUIT.

" He either fears too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who would not put it to the touch,
To win, or lose it all.—MONTROSE.

THE morning was still very young, and the sun which was but just beginning to rise above the brow of the eastern hill, poured his long, yellow rays, full of a million dusty motes, in almost level lines down the soft, green slopes, diversified by hundreds of cool purple shadows, projected far and wide over the laughing landscape, from every tree and bush that intercepted the mild light.

The dews of the preceding night still clustered unexhaled, sparkling like diamonds to the morning beams, on every leaf and flower; a soft west wind was playing gently with the thousands of bright buds and blossoms which decked the pleasant gardens; and the whole air was perfumed with the delicate fragrance of the mignionette and roses, which filled the luxuriant parterres. The hum of the revelling bees came to the ear with a sweet, domestic sound, and the rich carol of the blackbird and the thrush came swelling from the tangled shrubberies, full fraught with gratitude and glee.

It was into such a scene, and among such sights and sounds, that the young free-trader wandered forth from the tranquillity and gloom of the sick chamber in which he had spent a sleepless night; but his mind had been too deeply stirred by his conversation with Sir Miles St. Aubyn, and chords of too powerful feeling had been thrilled into sudden and painful life, to allow him to be penetrated, as he might have been in a less agitated hour, by the sweet influences of the time and season.

Still, though he was unconscious of the pleasant sights and sounds and smells which surrounded him, as he strolled slowly through the bowery walks of the old garden, they had more or less effect upon his perturbed and bitter spirit; and his mood became gradually softer, as he mused upon what had passed within the last hour, alone in that bright solitude.

Wild and impetuous and almost fierce by nature, he had brooded from his very boyhood upward over his real and imaginary wrongs, until the iron had so deeply pierced his soul, that he could see nothing but coldness, and hostility, and persecution, in the conduct of all around him, with the exception of his old student uncle and his sweet Theresa. Ever suspecting, ever anticipating injury and insult, or at least coldness and repulsion from all with whom he was brought into contact, he actually generated in the breasts of others the feelings, which he imputed to them all unjustly. Accusing the world of injustice or ere it was unjust, in the end he made it to be so indeed; and then hated it, and railed against it, for that which it had never dreamed of, but for his own fantastic waywardness.

It was unfortunate for Denzil, that the good man, into whose care he had fallen, ever of a philosophical and studious, nay, even mystic disposition, had become, since the sad fate of his beloved sister, and the early death of a yet dearer wife, so wholly visionary, so entirely given up to the wildest theorizing, the most abstruse and abstract metaphysical inquiries, that no one could have been devised less fitting for the guardian and instructor of a high-spirited, hot-headed, fiery boy than he was.

The consequence of this was, as it might have been expected,

that disgusted early with the strange sorts of learning which the old man persisted in forcing into him against the grain, and discontented with the stillness and deathlike tranquillity of all around him, the boy ran away from his distasteful home, and shipped for the India voyage in a free-trader, half merchantman, half-picaroon, before he had yet attained his thirteenth year. In that wild and turbulent career, well suited to his daring and contemptuous spirit, he had, as he himself expressed it, become hardened and inured, not to toils and sufferings only, but to thoughts and feelings, habits and opinions, which perhaps now could never be eradicated from his nature, of which they had become, as it were, part and parcel.

When he returned, well nigh a man of years, quite a man in stature, and perhaps more than most men in courage, resource, coolness, and audacity, old Allan, to whom he had written once or twice, apprizing him that he had adopted the sea as his home and his profession, received him with a hearty welcome, and with few or no inquiries as to the period during which he had been absent.

Thereafter, he came and went as he would, unasked and unheeded. When he was ashore, the cottage by the fords of Widecomb was his home; and his increasing wealth—for he had prospered greatly in his adventurous career—added materially to the comforts of old Allan's housekeeping. His life was, therefore, spent in strange alternations; now amid the wildest excitement—the storm, the chase, the fierce and frantic speculation, the perilous and desperate fight, the revelry, the triumph, and the booty; and now, in the calmest and most peaceful solitude, amid the sweetest pastoral scenery, and with the loveliest and most innocent companion that ever soothed the hot and eager spirit of erring and impetuous man, into almost woman's softness.

And hence it was, perhaps, that Denzil Bras-de-fer had, as

it were, two different natures—one fierce, rash, bitter, scornful, heedless of human praise or human censure, pitiless to human sorrow, reckless of human life, merciless, almost cruel—the other generous, and soft, and sympathetic, and full of every good and gentle impulse.

And it was in the latter of these only, that Theresa Allan knew him.

It must not be supposed, from what I have written, that Denzil was a pirate, or a buccaneer—far from it. For though, at times, he and his comrades assumed the initiative in warfare, and smote the Spaniards, and the Dutchmen, and the French, unsparingly, beyond the line, and made but small distinction between the *meum* and the *tuum*, especially if the *tuum* pertained to the stranger and the papist, still neither public opinion, nor their own consciences condemned them—they were regarded, as Cavendish, and Raleigh, and Drake, and Frobisher, and Hawkins, had been, a reign or two before, as bold, headlong adventurers; perhaps a little lawless, but on the whole, noble and daring men, and were esteemed in general rather an ornament than a disgrace to their native land.

As men are esteemed of men, such they are very apt to be or to become; and, having the repute of chivalrous spirit, of generosity and worth, no less than of dauntless courage, and rare seamanship, the adventurous free-traders of that day held themselves to be, in all respects, gentlemen, and men of honor; and holding themselves so, for the most part they became so.

It was, therefore, by no means either wonderful or an exception to a rule, that Denzil Bras-de-fer should have been such as I have described him, awake to gentle impulses, alive to good impressions, easily subject to the influences of the finest female society, and in no respect a person from either his habits, his tastes, or his profession, to be rejected by men of honor, or eschewed by women of refinement.

And now, as he followed slowly on the steps of his beautiful cousin, the young man was more alive than usual to the higher and nobler sensibilities of his mind. The information which he had gained concerning his own father's feelings, at the moment of his death, had greatly softened him, and it began to occur to him—which was, indeed true—that, he might have been during his whole life conjuring up phantoms against which to do battle, and attributing thoughts and actions to the world at large, of which the world might well be wholly innocent.

Up to this moment, although he had long been aware of his constantly increasing passion for his fair cousin, he had rested content with the mild and sisterlike affection which she had ever manifested toward him; and, having been ever her sole companion, ever treated with most perfect confidence and sympathy, having found her at all times charmed to greet his return, and grieved at his departure; knowing, above all things, that at the worst he had no rival, and that her heart had never been touched by any warmer passion than she felt toward himself, he had scarcely paused to inquire even of himself, whether he was beloved in turn, much less had he endeavored to penetrate the secrets of her heart, or to disturb the calm tenor of her way by words or thoughts of passion.

Now, however, the words, the questions of the old cavalier had awakened many a doubt in his soul; and with the doubt came the desire irrepressible to envisage his fate, to learn and ascertain, once and for all, whether his lot was to be cast henceforth in joy or in sorrow; whether, in a word, he was to be a wanderer and an outcast, by sea and land, unto his dying day, or whether this very hour was to be to him the commencement of a new era, a new life.

Now, as he walked forth in the beautiful calm morning, in that old, pleasant garden, which had been the scene of so much peaceable and innocent enjoyment, he felt himself at once

a sadder and a better man than he had ever been before; and while determined to delay no longer, but to try his gentle cousin's heart, he was supported by no high and fiery hope. He seemed to have lost, he knew not how or wherefore, that proud, heaven-reaching confidence, which was wont to count all things won while they were yet to win; still less did his heart kindle and blaze out with that preconceived indignation at the idea of being unappreciated or neglected, which would a few hours before have goaded him almost to frenzy.

I have written much of his character to little purpose, if it be not plain that humility was the frame of mind least usual to the youthful seaman, yet now, for once, he was humble. He had discovered, for the first time in his life, that he had erred grossly in his estimate of others, and was beginning to suspect that that false estimate had led him far away from true principles, true conceptions; he was beginning, in a word, to suspect that he was himself *less* sinned against than sinning; and that his was, in fact, a very much misguided and distempered spirit.

He clasped his brow closely with a feverish and trembling hand, as he walked onward slowly, pondering, with his whole soul intent upon the future and the past. He was inquiring of himself, "Does she, can she love me?" and he could make no answer to his own passionate questioning. While he was in this mood, bending his steps toward the favorite bower wherein he half hoped half feared to find Theresa, a soft voice fell upon his ear, and a light hand was laid upon his arm, as he passed the intersection of another shady walk with that through which he was strolling.

"Good-morrow, Denzil," said the young girl merrily. "I never thought to see you out so early in the garden; but I am glad that you are here, for I want you. So come along with me at once, and tell me if it be not a nest of young nightingales which I have found in the thick syringa-bush beside my arbor.

Come, Denzil, don't you hear me? Why, what ails you, that you look so sad, and move so heavily this glorious summer morning? You are not ill, are you, dear Denzil?"

"Dear Denzil," he repeated, in a low, subdued tone. "*Dear* Denzil! I would to God that I were dear to you, Theresa—that I were dear to any one."

So singular was the desponding tone in which he spoke, so strange and unwonted was the cloud of deep depression which sat on his bold, intelligent brow, that the young girl stared at him in amazement, almost in alarm.

"You are ill," she cried, in tones of affectionate anxiety; "you must be ill, or you would never speak so strangely, so unkindly; or is it only that you are overdone with watching by that poor youth's sick bed? Yet no, no, that can never be, you who are so strong and so hardy. What is it, dearest cousin? Tell me, what is it makes you speak so wildly?—would that you *were* dear to me! why, if not you, *you* and my good, kind father, who on the face of the wide earth is dear to poor Theresa! That you were dear to any one! You, whom my father looks upon and loves as his own son; you, whose companions hold as almost more than mortal—for have I not marked the inscriptions on your sabre's guard, and on the telescope they gave you? You, who have saved the lives of so many fellow-mortals; you, to whom those ladies, rescued at Darien from the bloodthirsty Spaniards, addressed such glowing words of gratitude and love; you, Cousin Denzil, *you*, who are so great, so brave, so wise, so skilful, and above all, so generous and kind; *you* talk of wishing you were dear to any one! Good sooth! you must be dreaming, or you are bewitched, gentle Denzil."

"If I be," he replied with a smile, for her high spirits and gay enthusiasm aroused him from his gloomier thoughts, and

began to enkindle brighter hopes in his bosom, "if I be, thou, Theresa, art the enchantress who has done it."

"Ay! now you are more like yourself; but tell me," she said, caressingly, "what was it made you sad and dark but now?"

"Only this, dear Theresa, that I am again about to leave you."

"To leave us—to leave us so soon and so suddenly. Why you have been here but three little weeks, which have passed like so many days, and when you came you said that you would stay with us till autumn. Oh, dear! my father will be so grieved at your going. You do not know, you do not dream how much he loves you, Denzil. He is a different person altogether when you are at home—so much gayer, and more sociable! Oh! wherefore must you leave us so quickly, and after so long an absence, too, as your last? Oh, truly, it is unkind, Denzil."

"And you, Theresa, shall you be sorry?"

"I will not answer you," she replied, half-petulantly, half-tearfully. "It is unkind of you to go, and doubly unkind to speak to me thus. What have I done to you now, what have I ever done to you, that you should doubt my being sorry? Are not you the only friend, the only companion I have got in the wide world? Are you not as near and dear to me, as if you were my own brother? Do not I love you as my brother, even as my father loves you as his son? Ah, Denzil! if you are never less loved than you are by poor Theresa Allan, you will ne'er need to complain for lack of loving."

And she burst into tears as she ended her rapid speech; for she did not comprehend in the least at what he was aiming, and her innocent and artless heart was wounded by what she fancied to be a doubt of her affection.

"And if you feel so deeply the mere temporary absence

which my profession forces on me, Theresa, how think you, should you feel were that absence to be eternal?"

"Eternal!" she exclaimed, turning very pale. "Eternal! What do you mean by eternal?"

"It may well be so, Theresa; and yet it rests with yourself, after all, whether I go or not—and yet be sure of this, if I do go, I go for ever."

"With *me*—does it rest with *me?*" she cried, joyously. "Oh! if it rests with me, you will not go at all—you will never go any more. I am always in terror while you are absent; and the west wind never blows, howling as it does over these desolate, bare hills, with its mournful, moaning voice, which they say is the very sound of a spirit's cry, but it conjures up to my mind all dread ideas of the tremendous rush and roar of the mountain billows upon some rock-bound, leeward coast, as I have heard you tell by the cheerful hearth; and of stranded vessels, creaking and groaning as their huge ribs break asunder, and of corpses weltering on the ruthless waves; oh! such dread day-dreams! If it rest with me, go you shall not, Denzil, ever again to sea. And why should you? You have won fame enough, and glory and wealth more than enough to supply your wants as long as you live. Why should you go to sea again, dear Denzil?"

"I will *not* go again, Theresa, if such seriously be your deliberate desire."

"If such seriously be my deliberate desire!" the fair girl repeated the words after him with a sort of half-solemn drollery. Was it the native instinct of the female heart, betraying itself in that innocent and artless creature, scarcely in years more than a child—the inborn, irrepressible coquetry of the sex, foreseeing what was about to follow from the young man's lips, yet seeking all unconsciously to delay the avowal, to protract the uncertainty, the excitement, or was it genuine, unsuspecting innocence? "You are most singularly solemn," she continued, "this fine morning, Denzil, wondrously serious and deliberate; and so, as you are so precise, I must, I suppose, answer you likewise, in due set form. Of course, it is my desire to have the company of one whom I esteem and love, of one to whom I look up for countenance and protection, of my only relative on earth, except my dear old father, as much as I can have it, with due regard to his interests and well-being. My father is getting very old, too, and infirm; and at times I fancy that his mind wanders. I can not fail, therefore, to perceive that he needs a more able and energetic person near him than I am. I can, moreover, see no good cause why you should persist in following so perilous and stormy a profession, unless it be that you love it. Therefore, as I have said, of *course*, if it rest with me to detain you, I would do so—but always under this proviso, that it were with your own good will; for I confess, dear Denzil, that I fear, if you were detained against your wish, if you still pant for the strong excitement, the stormy rapture, as I have heard you call it, of the chase, the battle, and the tempest, you never could be happy here, whatever we might do to please you. Now, Denzil, seriously and deliberately, you are answered."

"I could be happy here. I am weary of agitation and excitement. I feel that I have erred—that the path I have taken leads not to happiness. I want tranquillity, repose of the heart, above all things—love!"

"Then do not go—then I say positively, Denzil, dear Denzil, stay with us—you can find all these here."

"Are you sure—all of them?"

"Sure? Why, if not here in this delicious, pastoral, simple country, in this dear cottage, with its lovely garden and calm waters, where in the world should you find tranquillity? If

not here, in the midst of your best friends, in the bosom of your own family, where should you look for love?"

"Theresa, there be more kinds of love than one—and that I crave is not cold, duteous, family affection."

Now, for the first time, it seemed that the young man's meaning broke clearly upon her mind; now a sudden and bright illumination burst upon all that seemed strange, and wild, and inconsistent in his conduct, in his speech, in his very silence. Unsuspected before, it was now evident to her at once that deep, overmastering passion was the cause to which she must refer all that had been, for some time past, to her an incomprehensible enigma in her cousin's demeanor.

And now that she was assured, for the first time in her life, that she was really, deeply, ardently beloved—not as a pretty, childish playmate, not as an amiable and dear relative, but as herself, for herself, a loveable and lovely woman, how did the maiden's heart respond to the great revelation?

Elevated on the instant from the girl to the woman, a strange and thrilling sense, a sort of moral shock affected her whole system—was it of pleasure or of pain?

It has been often said, and I presume said truly, that no woman—no, not the best and purest, the most modest and considerate of their sex—ever received a declaration of love from any man, even if the man himself be distasteful to her, even if the love he proffer be illicit and dishonest, without a secret and instinctive sense of high gratification, a consciousness of power, of triumph, a pride in the homage paid to her charms, a sort of gratitude for the tribute rendered to her sex's loveliness. She may, and will, repulse the dishonorable love with scorn and loathing, yet still, though she may spurn the worthless offering, and heap reproach upon the daring offerer, still she will be half pleased by the offer—if it be only that she has had the power, the pleasure—for all power is pleasure—of rejecting it. She

may, and will, gently, considerately, sympathetically decline the honest offers of a pure love which she can not reciprocate or value as it should be valued; but even if he who made the tender be repulsive, almost odious, still she must be gratified, perhaps almost grateful for that which he has done.

To a young girl more especially, just bursting from the bud into the bloom of young womanhood, scarce conscious yet that she is a woman, scarcely awake to the sense of her own powers, her own passions—a creature full of vague, shadowy, mysterious fancies, strange, uncomprehended thoughts, and half-perceived desires, there is—there must be—something of wondrous influence, of indescribable excitement, in the receiving a first declaration.

And so it was with Theresa Allan. She was, in truth, no angel—for angels are not to be met with in the daily walks of this world—she was, indeed, neither more nor less than a mere mortal woman, mortal in all the imperfection, and narrowness, and feebleness, and inability to rise even to the height of its own best aspirations, which are peculiar to mortality—woman in all the frailty, and vanity, and variety, no less than in all the tenderness, the truth, the constancy, the loveliness, the sweetness of true womanhood. She was, in a word, just what a great modern poet has described in those sweet lines:—

> "A creature not too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food;
> For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
> Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles."

And no one who is a true judge of human nature, and yet more of woman's nature, will regret that she was such; for he must be a poor judge indeed, he must know little of the real character of womanhood, who does not feel that one half of her best influences, one half of her sweetest power of charming, soothing, controlling, winding herself about the very heart-strings, arises

from her very imperfections. Take from her these, and what she might then be we know not, but she would not be woman, and until the world has seen something better and more endearing, until a wiser artificer can be found than HE who made her, even as she is, a help meet for man—away with your abstractions! give her to us as she is, at least, if not perfect, the best and brightest of created things—a very, very woman.

She heard his words, she felt his meaning, yet the sense of the words seemed to be lost; the very sounds rang in her ears dizzily, her breath came so painfully that she almost fancied she was choking, the earth appeared to shake under her feet, and everything around her to wheel drunkenly to and fro.

She pressed one hand upon her heart, aud caught her cousin's arm with the other to support herself. Her whole face, which a moment before had been alive and radiant with the warm hues of happiness and youth, became as white as marble. Her very lips were bloodless; her whole frame trembled as if she had an ague-fit.

He gazed on her in wonder, almost in terror. For a moment he thought she was about to faint, almost to die; and so violent, in truth, was the affection of her nerves, that, had she not been relieved by a sudden passion of tears, it is doubtful what might have been the result.

They were standing, when Denzil Bras-de-fer uttered the words which had wrought so singular a change in Theresa's manner, within a pace or two of the sylvan bower of which she had spoken, and without a moment's pause, or a syllable uttered, he hurried her into its quiet recess, and placing her gently on the mossy seat within, knelt down at her feet, holding her left hand in his own, and gazing up anxiously in her face.

He was amazed—he was alarmed. Not for himself alone, not from the selfish fear of losing what he most prized on earth—but for her.

He knew not, indeed, whether that strange and almost terrible revulsion arose from pleasure or from pain. He knew not, could not even conjecture whether it boded good or evil to his hopes, to his happiness. But the scales had fallen from his eyes in an instant. He had discovered now, what her old father, recognizing genius with the intuitive second-sight of kindred genius, had perceived long before, that this young, artless, inexperienced, childlike girl, was, indeed, a creature wonderfully and fearfully made.

He had never before suspected that beneath that calm, gentle, tranquil, unexcitable exterior there beat a heart, there thrilled a soul, full of the strongest capabilities, the most earnest aspirations, the most intense imaginings, that ever were awakened by the magic touch of love, into those overwhelming passions, which can tend to no middle state, but must lead to the perfect happiness or utter misery of their possessor.

But he saw it, he knew it now; and he felt that so soon as the present paroxysm should pass over, she too, would feel and know all this likewise. Whether for good or for evil, for weal or for wo, he perceived that he had unlocked for her whom he truly and singly loved, the hitherto sealed fountain of knowledge.

And he almost shuddered at the thought of what he had done—he almost wished that he had stifled his own wishes, sacrificed his own hopes.

For though impetuous and impulsive, though in some degree warped and perverted, he was not selfish. And when he observed the terrible power which his words had produced upon her, and judged thence of the character and temper of her mind and intellect, a sad suspicion fell upon him that hers was one of those over-delicate temperaments, one of those spirits too rarely endowed, too sensitively constituted, ever to know again, when once awakened to self-consciousness, that quietude, in which alone lies true happiness.

Several minutes passed before a word was spoken by either. But gradually the color returned to her lips, to her cheeks, and the light relumed her beautiful blue eyes, and the tremor passed away from her slight frame; but her face continued motionless, and so calm that its gravity almost amounted to severity. It was not altogether melancholy, it was not at all anger, but it was, what in a harder and less youthful face would have been sternness. Never before had he seen such an expression on any human face—never, assuredly, had hers worn it before. It was the awakening of a new spirit—the consciousness of a new power—the first struggling into life of a great purpose.

Her hand lay passive in his grasp, yet he could feel the pulses throbbing to the very tips of those small, rosy fingers, so strongly and tumultuously, that he could not reconcile such evidence of her quick and lively feeling with the fixed tranquillity of the eye which was bent upon his own, with the rigidity of the marble brow.

At length, and contrary to what is wont to happen, it was he who first broke silence.

"Theresa," he said, "I have grieved—I have pained—perhaps offended you."

And then she started, as his voice smote her ears, so complete had been the abstraction of her mind, and recovering all her faculties and readiness of mind on the instant.

"Yes, Denzil," she said, very sweetly, but very sorrowfully, "you have grieved me, you have pained me, very, very deeply; but oh, do not imagine that you have offended me—that you could offend me. No; you have torn away too suddenly, too roughly, the veil that covered my eyes and my heart. You have awakened thoughts, and feelings, and perceptions, in my soul, of whose existence I never dreamed before. You have made me know myself, as it were, better within the last few minutes than I ever knew myself before. It seems to me, that I have

lived longer and felt more since we have sat here together, than in all the years I can count before. And, oh, my heart! my heart! I am most unhappy!

"You can not love me, then, Theresa," he said, tranquilly; for he had vast self-control, and he was too much of a man to suffer his own agitation or distress to agitate or distress her further. "You can not love me as I would be loved by you—you can not be mine."

"Denzil," she said, in tones full of the deepest emotion, "until the moment in which you spoke to me, I never thought of love; I never dreamed or imagined to myself what it should be, other than the love I bear to my father, to you, to all that is kind, and good, and beautiful, in humanity or in nature. But your words, I know not how or wherefore, have awakened me, as it were, into a strange sort of knowledge. I do *not* love, I almost hope that I never may love, as you would wish me to love you; but I do feel *now* that I know what such love should be; and I tremble at the knowledge. I feel that it would be too strong, too full of fear, of anxiety, of agony, to allow of happiness. Oh, no, no! Denzil, do not ask me, do not wish me to love you so; pray rather, pray for me to God rather, that I may never love at all—for so surely as I do love, I know that I shall be a wretched, wretched woman!"

That was a strange scene, and it passed between a strange pair. Great influences had been at work in the minds of both within the last few hours, and it would have been very difficult to say in which the greatest change had been wrought.

In her, the tranquil, innocent, unconscious girl had been aroused into the powerful, passionate, thoughtful woman. A knowledge of that whereof she had been most ignorant before, "her glassy essence," had awakened her, as the breeze awakens the lake, from repose into power.

In him, the violent, hot-headed, stubborn, and impetuous man

of action, had been tamed down by a conversion almost as sudden and convincing into the slow, self-controlled, self-denying man of counsel. As the discovery of power had aroused her into life, so had the discovery of long-cherished, long-injurious error, tamed him into tranquillity.

One day ago he would have raved furiously, or brooded sullenly and darkly over her words. Now, even with the fit of passion all-puissant over him, with the wild heat of love burning within his breast, with the keen sense of disappointment wringing him, he had yet force of temper to control himself, nay, more, he had force of mind enough to see and apprehend, that *this* Theresa, was no longer the Theresa whom he loved; and that, although he still adored her, it was impossible either for him to meet the aspirations of her glowing and inspired genius, or for her to be to him what he had dreamed of, the tranquillizing, soothing spirit which should pour balm upon his wounded, restless, irritable feelings—the wife, whose first, best gift to him should be repose and tranquillity of soul.

He pressed her hand tenderly, and said, as he might have done to a dear sister.

"I have been to blame, Theresa. I have given you pain, rashly, but not wantonly. Forgive me, for you are the last person in the world to whom I would give even a moment's uneasiness. I did not suspect this, dear, little girl. I did not dream that you were so nervous, or moved so easily; but you must not yield to such feelings—such impulses—for it is only by yielding to them that they will gain power over you, and make you, indeed, an unhappy woman. You shall see, Theresa, how patiently I will bear my disappointment—for that it is a disappointment, and a very bitter one, I shall not deny—and how I will be happy in spite of it, and all for love of you. And in return, Theresa, if you love poor Denzil, as you say you do, as your true friend and your brother, you will control these foolish

fancies of your little head, which you imagine to be feelings of your heart, and I shall one day, I doubt not, have the pleasure of seeing you not only a very happy woman, but a very happy wife."

"Oh, you are good, Denzil," she said, tearfully and gently. "Oh, you are very good and noble. Why—why can not I—" and she interrupted herself suddenly, and covering her eyes with both her hands, wept silently and softly for several minutes. And he spoke not to her the while, nor even sought to soothe, for he well knew that tears were the best solace to an over-wrought, over-excited spirit.

After a little while, as he expected, she recovered herself altogether, and looking up in his face with a wan and watery smile—

"You are not hurt, you are not wounded by what I have done," she said, "dear Denzil. You do not fancy that I do not perceive, do not feel, and esteem, and love all your great, and good, and generous, and noble qualities. I am a foolish, weak, little girl—I am not worthy of you; I could not, I know I could not make you happy, even if I could—if I could—if—you know what I would say, Denzil."

"If you could be happy with me yourself," he answered, smiling in his turn, and without an effort, although his smile was pensive and sad likewise. "No, my Theresa, I am not hurt or wounded. I am grieved, it is true, I can not but be grieved at the dissipating of a pleasant dream, at the vanishing of a hope long-indulged, long-cherished—a hope which has been a solace to me in many a moment of pain and trial, a sweet companion in many a midnight watch. But I am neither hurt nor wounded; for you have never given me any reason to form so bold, so unwarranted a hope, and you have given me now all that you can give me, sympathy and kindness. Our hearts our affections, I well know, let men say what they will,

are not our own to give—and a true woman can but do what you have done. Moreover, even with the sorrow and regret which I feel at this moment, there is mingled a conviction that you are doing what is both wise and right; for although you have all within yourself, though you are all that would make me, or a far better man than I—ay, the best man who ever breathed the breath of life—supremely happy; still, if you could not be happy with me, and in me yourself—how could I be so?"

She looked up at him again, and now, with an altered expression, for there was less of sadness and more of surprise, more of respect for the man who spoke so composedly, so well, in a moment of such trial, on her fair features. Perhaps, too, there might have been a shadow of regret—could it be of regret that he did not feel more acutely the loss which he had undergone? If there were such a feeling in her mind—for she was woman—it was transient as the lightning of a summer's night—it was gone before she had time even to reproach herself for its momentary existence.

"You are astonished," he said, interpreting her glance, almost before she knew that he had observed it, "you are astonished that I should be so calm, who am by nature so quick and headlong. But I, too, have learned much to-day—have learned much of my own nature, of my own infirmities, of my own errors—and with me to learn that these exist, is to resolve to conquer them. I have learned first, Theresa, that my father, whom I have ever been forced to regard as my worst enemy, died conscious of the wrong he had done me—done my mother—and penitent, and full of love and of sorrow for us both. And therein have I convicted myself of one great error, committed, indeed, through ignorance, which has, however, been the cause, the source of many other errors—which has led me to charge the world with injustice, when I was myself unjust

rather to the world—which has made me guilty of the great offence, the great crime of hating my brother-men, when I I should have pitied them, and loved them. Therefore I will be wayward no more, nor rash, nor reckless. I will make one conquest at least—that of myself and of my own passions."

"I know—I know," said the girl, suddenly blushing very deeply, "that you are everything that is good and great; everything that men ought to admire and women to love, and yet—"

"And yet you can not love me. Well, think no more of that, Theresa. Forget—"

"Never! never!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands eagerly together. "I never can forget what you have made me feel, what I must have made you *suffer* this day."

"Well, if it be so, remember it, Theresa; but remember it only thus. That if you have quenched my love, if you destroyed my hope, you have but added to my regard, to my affection. Promise me that wherever you may be, however, or with whomsoever your lot shall be cast, you will always remember me as your friend, your brother; you will always call on me at your slightest need, as on one who would shed his heart's blood to win you a moment's happiness."

"I will—I will," she cried affectionately, fervently. "On whom else should I call? And God only knows," she added mournfully, "how soon I shall need a protector. But will you," she continued, catching both his hands in her own, "will you be happy, Denzil?"

"I will," he replied, firmly, returning the gentle pressure; "I will, at least in so far as it rests with man to be so, in despite of fortune. But mark me, dear Theresa, if you would have me be so, you can even yet do much toward rendering me so."

"Can I?—then tell me, tell me how, and it is done already."

"By letting me see that *you* are happy."

"Alas!" and she clasped her hand hard over her heart, as if to still its violent beating. "Alas! Denzil."

"And why, alas! Theresa?"

"Can we be happy at our own will?"

"Independently of great woes, great calamities, which we may not control, which are sent to us for wise ends from above—surely, I say, surely we can."

"And can you, Denzil?"

"Theresa, *this* is to me a great wo—yea, a great calamity; and yet I reply, ay! after a time, after the bitterness shall be overpast, I can, and more, I will. Much more, then, can you, who have never felt, who I trust and believe will never meet any such wo or grief—much more can you be happy. Wherefore should you not, foolish child?—have you not been happy hitherto? What have you, that you should not be happy now?"

"Nothing," she replied, faintly. "I have nothing why I should be unhappy, unless it be, that if I have made you so."

"Theresa, you have not—you shall see that you have not—made me unhappy."

"And yet, Denzil, yet I feel a foreboding that I shall be, that I must be unhappy. A want—I feel a want of something here."

"You are excited, agitated now; all this has been too much for your spirits, for your nerves; and I think, Theresa, I am sure that you are too much alone—you think, or rather you muse and dream, which are not healthy modes of thinking—too much in solitude. I will speak to my uncle about that before I go—"

"Before you go!" she interrupted him, quickly. "Go whither?"

"To sea. To my ship, Theresa."

"Then you *are* hurt, then you *are* angry with me. Then I have no influence over you."

"Cease, cease, Theresa. It is better, it is necessary—I must go for a while, until I have weaned myself from this desperate feeling, until I shall have accustomed myself to think of you, to regard you as a sister only; until I shall have schooled myself so far as to be able to contemplate you without agony as not only not being mine—but being another's."

"Would it—would it be agony to you, Denzil? Then mark me, I never, never will be another's.

"Madness!" he answered, firmly; "madness and wickedness, too, Theresa. Neither men nor women were intended by the great Maker to be solitary beings. God forbid, if you can not be mine, that I should be so selfish as to wish your life barren, and your heart loveless. No; love, Theresa, when you can—only love wisely. Then the day shall come when it will add to my happiness to see and know you happy in the love of one whom you can love, and who shall love you as you should be loved. Never speak again as you did but now, Theresa. And now, dearest girl, I will leave you. Rest yourself awhile, and compose yourself, and then go if you will to your good father."

"Shall I—shall I tell him," she faltered, "what has passed between us?"

"As you will, as you judge best, Theresa. I am no advocate for concealment, still less for deceit—but here there is none of the latter, and to tell him this might grieve his kind spirit."

"You are wise—you are good. God bless you."

"And you, Theresa," and he passed his arm calmly across her shoulder, and bending over, pressed his lips, calmly as a brother's kiss, on her pure brow. "Fare you well."

"You are not going—going to leave us, *now?*"

"Not to-day—not to-day, Theresa."

"Nor to-morrow?" she said, beseechingly.

"Nor to-morrow," he replied, after a moment's hesitation, "but soon. Now compose yourself, my dear little girl. Farewell, and God bless you."

CHAPTER VI.

THE ROVER.

"The sea, the sea is England's"—quo' he again—
"The sea, the sea is England's, and England's shall remain."
NELL GWYNNE'S SONG.

After scenes of great excitement there ever follows a sort of listless languor; and, as in natural commotions the fiercest elemental strife is oftentimes succeeded by the stillest calms, so in the agitations of the human breast, the most tumultuous passions are followed frequently, if not invariably, by a sort of quiet which resembles, though it is not, indifference.

Thus it was, that day, in the household of William Allan. Tranquil and peaceful at all times, in consequence of the reserved and studious habits of the master of the house, and the deep sympathy with his feelings and wishes which ruled the conduct of his children—for Denzil was, in all respects save birth, the old man's son—that house was not usually without its own peculiar cheerfulness, and its subdued hilarity, arising from the gentle yet mirthful disposition of the young girl, and the high spirits of Denzil, attuned to the sobriety of the place.

But during the whole of that day its quietude was so very still as to be almost oppressive, and to be felt so by its inmates. Allan himself was still enveloped in one of those mysterious moods of darkness, which at times clouded his strong and powerful intellect, as marsh exhalations will obscure the sunshine of an autumn day. Denzil was silent, reserved, thoughtful, not

gloomy or even melancholy, but—very unusually for him—disposed to muse and ponder, rather than to converse or to act. Theresa was evidently agitated and perturbed; and although she compelled herself to be busy about her domestic duties, to attend to the comforts of the strange guests whom accident had thrown upon their hospitality, though she strove to be cheerful, and to assume a lightness of heart which she was far from feeling, she was too poor a dissembler to succeed in imposing either on herself or on those about her, and there was no one person in the cottage, from the old cavalier down to the single femaleservant, with the exception of her father, who did not perceive that something had occurred to throw an unwonted shadow over her mind.

Jasper, alone perhaps of all the persons so singularly thrown together, was himself. His age, his character, his temperament, all combined to render him the last to be affected seriously by anything which did not touch himself very nearly. And yet he was not altogether what is called selfish; though recklessness, and natural audacity, and undue indulgence, and, above all, the evil habits which had grown out of his being too soon his own master, and the master of others, had rendered him thoughtless, if not regardless, of the feelings of those around him.

All the consequences of his accident, except the stiffness and pain remaining from his contusions, had passed away; and though he was confined to his bed, and unable to move a limb without a pang, his mind was as clear, and his spirit as untamed as ever.

His father, who had been aroused from the state of indolence and sedentary torpor, which was habitual rather than natural to him, by the accident which had startled him into excitement and activity, had not yet subsided into his careless self-indulgence; for the subsequent events of the past evening, and his

conversation with Denzil on that morning, had moved and interested him deeply—had set him to thinking much about the past, and thence to ruminating on the future, if perchance he could read it.

He by no means lacked clear-sightedness, or that sort of worldly wisdom, which arises from much intercourse with the world in all its various phases. He was far from deficient in energy when aught occurred to stimulate him into action, whether bodily or mental. And now he was interested enough to induce him so far to exert himself, as to think about what was passing, and to endeavor to discover its causes.

It was not, therefore, long before he satisfied himself, and that without asking a question, or giving utterance to a surmise, that an explanation had taken place between the young seaman and Theresa, and that the explanation had terminated in the disappointment of Denzil's hopes. Still he was puzzled, for there was an air of tranquil satisfaction—it could not be called resignation, for it had no particle of humility in its constituents—about the young man, and an affectionate attention to his pretty cousin, which did not comport with what he supposed to be his character, under such circumstances as those in which he believed him to stand toward her.

He would have looked for irritability, perhaps for impetuosity bordering on violence, perhaps for sullen moodiness—the present disposition of the man was to him incomprehensible. And if so, not less was he unable to understand the depression of the young girl, who was frequently, in the course of the day, so much agitated, as to be on the point of bursting into tears, and avoided it only by making her escape suddenly from the room.

Once or twice, indeed, he caught her eyes, when she did not know that she was observed, fixed with an expression, to which he could affix no meaning, upon the varying and intelligent countenance of his son—an expression half-melancholy, half-

wistful, conveying no impression to the spectator's mind, of the existence in hers of either love or liking, but rather of some sort of hidden interest, some earnest curiosity coupled almost with fear—something, in a word, if such things can be, that resembled painful fascination. Once, too, he noticed, that not he only, but Denzil Bras-de-fer likewise, perceived the glance, and was struck by its peculiarity. And then the old cavalier was alarmed; for a spirit, that was positively fearful, inflamed the dark face and gleaming eyes of the free-trader—a spirit of malevolence and hate, mingled with iron resolve and animal fierceness, which rendered the handsome features, while it lasted, perfectly revolting.

That aspect was transient, however, as the short-lived illumination of a lightning flash, when it reveals the terrors of a midnight ocean. It was there; it was gone—and, almost before you could read it, the face was again inscrutable as blank darkness.

The thought arose, several times that day, in the mind of Miles St. Aubyn, that he would give much that neither he nor his son had never crossed the threshold of that house; or that now, being within it, it were within his power to depart. But carriages, in those days, were luxuries of comparatively rare occurrence even in the streets of the metropolis; and in the remote rural counties, the state of society, the character of the roads, and the limited means of the resident landed proprietors rendered them almost unknown.

There were not probably, within fifty miles of Widecomb, two vehicles of higher pretension than the rough carts of the peasantry and farmers; all journeys being still performed on horseback, if necessary by relays; even the fair sex travelling, according to their nerves and capability to endure fatigue, either on the side-saddle, or on pillions behind a relative or a trusty servant.

Until Jasper should be sufficiently recovered either to set foot in stirrup, or to walk the distance between the fords of Widecomb and the House in the Woods, there was therefore no alternative but to make the best of it, and to remain where they were, relying on the hospitality of their entertainers.

Denzil's manner, it is true, partook in no degree of the coloring which that transient expression seemed to imply in his feelings; for, though unwontedly silent, when he did speak he spoke frankly and friendly to the young invalid; and more than once, warming to his subject, as field-sports, or bold adventures, of this kind or that, came into mention, he displayed interest and animation; and even related some personal experiences, and striking anecdotes, of the Spanish Main and of the Indian islands, with so much spirit and liveliness, as to show that he not only wished to amuse, but was amused himself.

While he was in this mood, he suffered it to escape him, or to be elicited from him by some indistinct question of the old cavalier, that he intended ere long to set forth again on another voyage of adventure to those far climes which were still invested with something of the romance of earlier ages.

It was at this hint, especially, that Sir Miles St. Aubyn observed Theresa's beautiful blue eyes fill with unbidden tears, and her bosom throb with agitation so tumultuous, that she had no choice but to retire from the company, in order to conceal her emotion.

And at this, likewise, for the first time did William Allan manifest any interest in the conversation.

"What," he said, "what is that thou sayest, Denzil, that thou art again about to leave us? Methought it was thy resolve to tarry with us until after the autumnal solstice."

"It was my resolve, uncle," replied the young man quietly; "but something has occurred since, which has caused me to alter any determination. My mates, moreover, are very anxious to profit by the fine weather of this season, and so soon as I can ship a cargo, and get some brisk bold hands, I shall set sail."

"I like not such quick and sudden changes," replied the old man; "nor admire the mind which can not hold to a steady purpose."

The dark complexion of Denzil fired for a moment at the rebuke, and his nether lip quivered, as though he had difficulty in repressing a retort. He did repress it, however, and answered, apparently without emotion:—

"You are a wise man, uncle, and must know that circumstances wtll arise which must needs alter all plans that are merely human. *L'homme propose*, as the Frenchman has it, *mais Dieu dispose*. So it is with me, just now. The changed determination which I have just announced does not arise from any change in my desires, but from a contingency on which I did not calculate."

"It were better not to determine until one had made sure of all contingencies," said William Allan, sententiously.

"Then I think, one would never determine at all. For, if I have learned aright, mutability is a condition unavoidable in human affairs. But be this as it may, the only change, I can imagine, which will hinder me from sailing on the Virginia voyage, so soon as I can ship a crew and stow a cargo, will be a change of the wind. It blows fair now, if it will only hold a week. One other change there is," he added, as his fair cousin entered the room with a basket of fresh-gathered roses, "which might detain, but that change will not come to pass; do you think it will, Theresa?"

"I think not, Cousin Denzil," she replied with a slight blush, "if you allude to that concerning which we spoke this morning."

The old knight looked from one to the other of the young people in bewilderment. Their perfect understanding and ex-

treme control of their feelings were beyond his comprehension, and yet he could not believe that he had mistaken.

"What, are you too against me, girl?" said her father quickly. "Have you given your consent to his going?"

"My consent!" she replied; "I do not imagine that my consent is very necessary, or that Denzil would wait long for it. But I do think it is quite as well he should go now, if he must go at all, particularly as he intends, if I understand rightly, that it should be his last voyage."

"I did not promise that, Theresa," said the sailor, with a faint smile—"although"—

"Did you not?"—she interrupted him quickly—"I thought you had; but it must be as you will, and certainly it does not much concern me."

And with the words she left the room hastily, and not as it appeared very well pleased.

"There! seest thou that?" cried her father—"seest thou that, Denzil?"

"Ay! do I," replied the young man with a good deal of bitterness. "But I do not need to see that, to teach me that women are capricious and selfish in their exigency of services."

There was a dead pause. A silence, which in itself was painful, and which seemed like to give birth to words more painful yet, for William Allan knit his brow darkly, and compressed his lower lip, and fixed his eye upon vacancy.

But at this moment Jasper, whose natural recklessness had rendered him unobservant of the feelings which had been displayed during that short conversation, raised himself on his elbow, and looking eagerly at Denzil exclaimed:—

"Oh, the Virginia voyage! To the New World! My God! how I should love to go with you. Do you carry guns? How many do you muster of your crew?"

The interruption, although the speaker had no such intention,

was well timed, for it turned the thoughts and feelings of all present into a new channel. The two old men looked into each other's face, and smiled as their eyes met, and Allan whispered, though quite loud enough to be audible to all present:—

"The same spirit, Miles, the same spirit. As crows the old game-cock, so crows the young game-chicken!"

"And why not?" answered Denzil, with a ready smile, for there was something that whispered at his heart, though indeed he knew not wherefore, that it were not so ill done to remove Jasper from that neighborhood for a while. "If Sir Miles judge it well that you should see something of the world, in these piping times of peace, it is never too soon to begin. You shall have a berth in my own cabin, and I will put you in the way of seeing swords flash, and smelling villanous saltpetre, in a right good cause, I'll warrant you."

"A right good cause, Denzil? and what cause may that be?" asked his uncle in a caustic tone.

"The cause of England's maritime supremacy," answered the young man proudly. "That is cause good enough for me. For what saith Bully Blake in the old song—

"'The sea, the sea is England's,' quo' he again,
'The sea, the sea is England's, and England's shall remain.'"

and he carolled the words in a fine deep bass voice, to a stirring air, and then added—"That, sir, is the cause we fight for, on the line and beyond it—and that we will fight for, here and everywhere, when it shall be needful to fight for it. And now, young friend, to answer your question. I do carry guns, eighteen as lively brass twelve-pounders as ever spoke good English to a Don or a Monsieur, or a Mynheer either, for that matter; and then for crew, men and officers, I generally contrive to pack on board eighty or ninety as brisk boys as ever pulled upon a brace, or handled a cutlass."

"Why you must reckon on high profits to venture such an

outlay," said Sir Miles, avolding the question of his son's participation in the cruise.

"Ay!" answered Denzil, "if no gold is to be had for picking up in Eldorado, there is some to be gained there yet by free-trading—and once in a while one may have the luck to pick up a handful on the sea."

"On the sea, ay! how so?"

"Once I was going quietly along before the trades, with my goods under hatches as peaceable and lawful a trader, as need be, when we fell in with a tall galleon laveering. Having no cause to shun or fear her, I lay my own course with English colors flying, when what does she but up helm and after us. In half an hour she was within range and opened with her bow guns, in ten minutes more she was alongside, and—"

"Alongside, in ten minutes, from long cannon range!" exclaimed Miles St. Aubyn—"what were you doing then, that she overhauled you so fast?"

"Running down to meet her, Sir Miles, with every stitch of canvass set that would draw, when I saw that she was bent on having it; and—as I was about to say when you interrupted me—in twenty more she had changed owners."

"Indeed! indeed! that *was* a daring blow," said the old soldier, rousing at the tale, like a superannuated war-horse to the trumpet, "and what was she?"

"A treasure-galleon, sir; a Spaniard homeward bound, with twenty-six guns, and two hundred men."

"And what did you do with your prize, in peace time? You hardly brought her into Plymouth, I should fancy."

"Nor into Cadiz, either," he replied with a smile. "Her crew or what was left of them, were put on board a coaster bound for St. Salvador, her bars and ingots on board the good ship 'Royal Oak,' of Bristol, and she—oh! she, I think, was sent to the bottom!"

"A daring deed!" said Sir Miles, shaking his head gravely—"a daring deed, truly, which might well cost you all your lives, were it complained of by the most Christian king!"

"And yet his supreme Christianity fired on us the first!"

"And yet, that plea, I fear, would hardly save you in these days, but you would hang for it."

"Amen!" replied the young man. "Better be hanged, 'his country crying he hath played an English part,' than creep to a quiet grave a coward from his cradle. And now, what say you, young sir, would you still wish to adventure it with us, knowing what risks we run?"

"Ay, by my soul!" answered the brave boy, with a flashing eye, and quivering lip, "and the rather, that I *do* know it. What do you say, father? May I go with him? In God's name, will you not let me go with him?"

"Indeed, will I not, Jasper," said Sir Miles, with an accent of resolve so steady, that the boy saw at once it was useless to waste another word on it. "Besides, he is only laughing at you. Why! what in Heaven's name should he make with such a cockerel as thou, crowing or ere thy spurs have sprouted!"

"Laughing at me, is he!" exclaimed the boy, raising himself up in his bed, actively, without exhibiting the least sign of the pain, which racked him, as he moved. "If I thought he were, he'd scarce sail so quickly as he counts on doing."

Here Denzil would have spoken, but the old cavalier cut in before him, saying with a sneer:—

"It is like thou couldst hinder him, my boy, at any time; most of all when thou art lying there bedridden."

"The very reason wherefore I could hinder him the easier," replied Jasper, who saw by Denzil's grave and calm expression that the meaning his father had attached to his speech, was not his meaning.

"And how so, I prithee?"

"Had he, as you say he did, intended to mock me, or insult me otherwise, I would have prayed him courteously to delay his sailing until such time as my hurts would permit me to draw triggers, or cross swords with him; and he would have delayed at my request, being a gentleman of courage and of honor."

"Assuredly I should," replied Denzil Bras-de-fer, "and you would have done very rightly to call on me in that case. But let me assure you, nothing was further from my intention than to laugh at you. I sailed myself, and smelt gunpowder in earnest, before I was so old as you are by several years; and I was perfectly in earnest when I spoke, although I can now well see that my offer, though assuredly well intended, could not be accepted."

Before Jasper had time to reply to these words, his father said to him with a look of approbation:—

"You have answered very well, my son; and I am glad that you have reflected, and seen so well what becomes a gentleman to ask, and to grant in such cases. For the rest, you ought to see that Master Denzil Olifaunt is perfectly in the right; and, that having offered you courteously what you asked rashly, he now perceives clearly the impossibility of your accepting his offer."

"I do not, however, see that at all," answered the boy moodily. "You carried a stand of colors, I have heard you say, before you were fifteen, and you deny me the only chance of winning honor that ever may be offered to me, in these degenerate times, and under this peaceful king."

"I do not think that it would minister very much to your honor, or add to the renown of our name, that you should get yourself hanged on some sand-key in the Caribbean sea, or knocked on the head in some scuffle with the Spanish guarda costas—no imputation, I pray you believe me, Master Olifaunt, on your choice of a career, the gallantry and justice of which I will not dispute, though I may not wish my son to adopt it."

"I know not what you would have me do," said the boy, "unless you intend to keep me here all my life, fishing for salmon and shooting black-cock for an occupation, and making love to country-girls for an amusement."

"I was not aware, Jasper," answered his father more seriously than he had ever before heard him speak, "that this latter was one of your amusements. If it be so, I shall certainly take the earliest means of bringing it to a conclusion, for while it is not very creditable to yourself, it is ruinous to those with whom you think fit to amuse yourself as you call it."

"I did not say that I ever had amused myself so," replied Jasper, somewhat crest-fallen by the rebuke of his father—"though if I am kept moping here much longer, Heaven only knows what I may do."

"Well, sir, no more of this!" said the old man sharply. "You are not yet a man, whatever you may think of yourself; neither, I believe, are you at all profligate or vicious. Although as boys at your age are apt enough to do, you may think it manly to affect vices of which you are ignorant. But to quit this subject, when do you think you shall sail, Master Olifaunt?"

"I can not answer you that, Sir Miles, certainly. I purpose to set off hence for Plymouth to-morrow afternoon, and, as I shall ride post, it will not take me long ere I am on board. When I arrive, I shall be able to fix upon a day for sailing."

"But you will return hither, will you not, before you go to sea?"

"Assuredly I will, Sir Miles, to say farewell to my kind uncle here, who has been as a father to me, and to my little Theresa."

"And you will pass one day I trust, if you may not give us

more, with Jasper at the manor. We can show you a heron or two on the moor, and let you see how our long-winged falcons fly, if you are fond of hawking. It shall be my fault, if hereafter, after so long an interruption, I suffer old friendship, and recent kindness also, to pass away and be forgotten."

"I will come gladly to see my young friend here, who will ere then be quite recovered from this misadventure; and who, if he rides as venturesomely as he fishes, will surely leave me far behind in the hot hawking gallop; for though I can ride, I am, sailor-like, not over excellent at horsemanship."

CHAPTER VII.

THE EIDOLON.

"Can these things be,
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,
Without our special reason."—MACBETH.

Thus passed the afternoon, until the evening meal was announced, and Jasper was left alone, with nothing but his own wild and whirling thoughts to entertain him. He was ill at ease in his own mind, ill at ease with himself and with all around him. Vexed with Denzil Bras-de-fer, for offering in the first instance to take him as a partner in his adventure, and then for failing at the pinch to back his offer by his stout opinion; vexed with his father for thwarting his will, and yet more for rebuking him publicly, and in the presence of Theresa, too, before whom, boylike, he would fain have figured as a hero; and lastly, vexed with Theresa herself, because, though kind and gentle, she had not sat by his bedside all day, as she did yesterday, or devoted all her attention to himself alone, he was

in the very mood to torment himself, and every one else, to the extent of his powers.

Then, as his thoughts wandered from one to another of those whom he thought fit to look upon as having wronged him, they settled on the most innocent of all, Theresa; and, at the same moment, the wild words, which he had uttered without any ulterior meaning at the time, and with no other intent than that of annoying his father, recurred to his mind, concerning village-maidens.

He started, as the idea occurred to him, and at first he wondered what train of thought could have brought back those words in connection with Theresa's image. But, as he grew accustomed to his own thought, it became, as it were, the father to the wish; and he began to consider how pretty and gentle she was, and how delicate her slight, rounded figure, and how soft and low her voice. Then he remembered that she had looked at him twice or thrice during the day, with an expression which he had never seen in a woman's eyes before, and which, though he understood it not, did not bode ill to his success; and lastly, the worst, bitterest thought of all arose in his mind, and retained possession of it. "I will spite them all," he thought, "that proud, insolent, young sailor, who, because he is a few years older than I, and has seen swords drawn once or twice—for all, I doubt if he can fence or shoot any better than I, or if he be a whit more active—affects to look down upon me as a stripling. His 'young friend,' truly! let him look out, whether he have not cause to term me something else ere he die. By God! I believe he loves the girl, too! he looked black as a thunder-cloud over Dartmoor, when she smiled on me! And my father—by my soul! I think he's doting; and her dainty ladyship, too! I'll see if I can not have her more eager to hear me, than she has shown herself to-day.

I will do it—I will, by all that's holy! Heaven! how it will spite them!"

Then he laid his head down on the pillow, and began to reflect how he should act, and what were his chances of success in the villany which he meditated; and he even asked himself, with something of the boy's diffidence in his first encounter with woman, "But can I, can I win her affection?" and vanity and the peculiar audacity of his race, of his own character, made answer instantly, "Ay, can I. Am I not handsomer, and cleverer, and more courtly? am I not higher born, and higher bred, and higher mannered, not only than that seafaring lout, but than any one she has ever met withal? Ay, can I, and ay, will I!"

And in obedience to this last and base resolve, the worst and basest that ever had crossed the boy's mind, no sooner had they returned from the adjoining room, after the conclusion of the evening meal, than he contrived entirely to monopolize Theresa.

First, he asked her to play at chess with him; and then, after spending a couple of hours, under the pretence of playing, but in reality gazing into her blue eyes, and talking all sorts of wild, enthusiastical, poetical romance, half-earnest and half-affected, he declared that his head ached, and asked her to read aloud to him; and when she did so, sitting without a thought of ill beside his pillow, while their fathers were conversing in a low tone over the hearth, and Denzil was absent making his preparations for the next day's journey, he let his hand fall, as if unconsciously, on hers, and after a little while, emboldened by her unsuspicious calmness, imprisoned it between his fingers.

It might have been that she was so much engrossed in reading, for it was Shakspere's sweet Rosalind that the boy had chosen for her subject, that she was not aware that her hand was clasped in his. It might have been, that, accustomed to its pressure, from his involuntary retention of it during his lethargic sleep on the preceding day, she let it pass as a matter of no consequence. It might have been, that almost unsuspected by herself, a feeling of interest and affection, which might easily be ripened into love, was already awakened in her bosom, for the high-spirited, handsome, fearless boy, who, in some measure, owed his life to her assistance.

At all events, she made no effort to withdraw it, but let it lie in his, passive, indeed, and motionless, save for its quivering pulse, but warm, and soft, and sensitive. And the boy waxing bolder, and moved into earnestness by the charms of the position, ventured to press it once or twice, as she read some moving line, and murmured praises of the author's beauties, and of the sweet, low voice that lent to those beauties a more thrilling loveliness, and still the fairy fingers were not withdrawn from his hold, though her eye met not his, nor any word of hers answered his whispered praises.

At length a quick, strong step came suddenly to the door of the room, and almost before there was time for thought, the door was thrown open, and Denzil Olifaunt entered.

Instantly Theresa started at the sound, and strove to withdraw her hand, while a deep blush of shame and agitation crimsoned her cheeks and brow, and even overspread her snowy neck and bosom.

It was not, as that bold boy fancied at the time, in the vanity and insolence of his uncorrected heart, that she knew all the time, that she was allowing what it was wrong, and immodest, and unmaidenly, to endure, and that now she was afraid and ashamed, not of the error, but of the detection.

No. In the purity of her heart, in the half-pitiful, half-protecting spirit which she felt toward Jasper, first as an invalid, and then as a mere boy—for although he was, perhaps, a year her senior, who does not know that boys in their eighteenth year are a full lustre younger than girls of the same age—she

had thought nothing, dreamed nothing of impropriety in yielding her hand to the boy's affectionate grasp, until the step of the man, whose proffered love she had that very day declined, led her to think intuitively what would be *his* feelings, and thence what must be Jasper's, concerning that permitted license.

But the wily boy, for, so young as he was, he lacked neither sagacity to perceive, nor audacity to profit by occasion, saw his advantage, and holding his prize with a gentle yet firm pressure, without so much as turning his eyes to Denzil, or letting it be known that he was aware of his presence, raised it to his lips, and kissed it, saying, in a low, earnest tone :—

"I thank you, from my very soul, for your gentleness and kind attention, dearest lady; your sweet voice has soothed me more than words can express ; there must be a magic in it, for it has charmed my headache quite away, and divested me, moreover, from the least desire to seek glory, or the gallows, with your bold cousin."

The eyes of Denzil Bras-de-fer flashed fire, as he saw, as he heard what was passing ; and he made two or three strides forward, with a good deal of his old impetuosity, of both look and gesture. His brow was knitted, his hands clinched, and his lip compressed over his teeth, so closely that it was white and bloodless.

But happily—or perhaps, unhappily—before he had time to commit himself, he saw Theresa withdraw her hand so decidedly, and with so perfect a majesty of gentle yet indignant womanhood, gazing upon the audacious offender, as she did so, with eyes so full of wonder and rebuke, that he could not doubt the sincerity or genuineness of her anger.

Acquitting her, therefore, of all blame or coquetry, and looking upon Jasper as a mere boy, and worthy to be treated as such only, reflecting, moreover, that he was, for the time being, shielded by his infirmity, he controlled himself, though not

without an effort, and with a lip now curling scornfully, and an eye rather contemptuous than angry, advanced to the fireside, and took his seat beside his uncle and Sir Miles, without taking the slightest notice of the others.

In the meantime, Theresa, after she had disengaged her hand from Jasper, and cast upon him that one look of serene indignation, turned her back on him quietly, in spite of some attempt at apology or explanation which he began to utter. Walking slowly and composedly to the table, she laid down on it the volume of Shakspere which she had been reading to him, and selecting some implements of feminine industry, moved over to the group assembled round the hearth, and sat down on a low footstool, between Denzil and her father.

No one but the two young men and herself were aware what had passed ; and she, though annoyed by Jasper's forwardness, having, as she thought, effectually repelled it, had already dismissed it from her mind as a thing worth no further consideration. Denzil, on the other hand, though attaching far more importance to his action, saw plainly that this was not the time or the place for making any comment on it, even if he had been capable of adding to Theresa's embarrassment ; while Jasper, mortified and frustrated by the lady's scornful self-possession, and the free-trader's manifest self-contempt, had no better mode of concealing his disappointment, than by sinking back upon his pillow, as if fatigued or in pain, and feigning to fall gradually asleep—a feint which, as is oftentimes the case, terminated at last in reality.

Meanwhile, the two old men continued to talk quietly, in rather a subdued tone, of old times and the events of their youth, and thence of the varied incidents which had checkered their lives, during the long space of time since they had been friends and comrades, with many a light and shadow. And as they, garrulous, as is the wont of the aged and infirm, and

"*laudatores temporis acti*," found pleasure even, in the retrospect on things which in their day were painful, the young man sat beside them silent, oppressed with the burden of present pain, and yet more by the anticipation of worse suffering to be endured thereafter.

Nearly an hour passed thus, without a single word being exchanged between Denzil and Theresa; he musing deeply, with his head buried in his hands, as he bent over the embers of the wood fire, which the vicinity of the cottage to the water's edge rendered agreeable even on summer evenings, and she plying her needle as assiduously as if she were dependent on its exercise for her support.

Several times, indeed, she looked up at him with her candid, innocent face, and her beautiful blue eye clear and unclouded, as if she wished to catch his attention. But he was all unconscious of her movement, and continued to ponder gloomily on many things that had, and yet more that had not, any existence beyond the limits of his own fitful fancy.

At length tired of waiting for his notice, the rather that the night was wearing onward, she arose from her seat, folding up her work as she did so, and laid her hand lightly on her cousin's shoulder—

"And are you really going to leave us to-morrow, Denzil?" she said, softly.

"For a few days only," he answered, raising his head, and meeting her earnest eye with a cold, sad smile. "I am going to ride down to-morrow afternoon as far as Hexworthy, where I will sleep, and so get into Plymouth betimes the following day."

"And when shall you come back to us?"

"I shall not stay an hour longer than I can avoid, Theresa; and I think that in three days I may be able to arrange all that I have to do; if so, you may look for me within the week—at furthest, I shall be here in ten days."

"And how long may we count on keeping you here, then? It will be long, I fear, before we shall meet again."

"The ship can not be fit for sea within three weeks, Theresa, or it may be a month; and I shall stay here, be sure, until the last moment. But as all mortal matters are uncertain to a proverb, and as none of us can say when, or if ever, we shall meet again, and as I have much to say to you before I go to sea this time, will you not walk in the garden with me for an hour before breakfast to-morrow?"

"Surely I will. How can you doubt it, Denzil?"

"I do not doubt it. And then I can give you my opinion about the young nightingales, which we forgot, after all, this morning. I dare say they will turn out to be hedge-sparrows."

"I will be there soon after the sun is up, Denzil, and that I may be so, good night, all," and with the word, kissing her father's brow, and giving her hand affectionately to Denzil, she courtesied to the old cavalier, and left the room without so much as looking toward Jasper, who was, however, already fast asleep, and unconscious of all sublunary matters.

Her rising, though she had not joined in the conversation for the last hour or more, broke up the company, and in a few minutes they had all withdrawn, each to his own apartment; and Jasper was left alone, with the brands dying out one by one on the hearth-stone, and an old tabby cat dozing near the andirons; this night he had no other watchers, and none were there to hear or see what befell him during the hours of darkness.

But had there been any one present in that old apartment, he would have seen that the sleep of the young man was strangely restless and perturbed, that the sweat-drops stood in large cold beads upon his brow, that his features were from time to time fearfully distorted, as if by pain and horror, and that he tossed his arms to and fro, as if he were wrestling with some powerful but intangible oppressor.

From time to time, moreover, he uttered groans and strangely murmured sounds, and a few articulate words; but these so unconnected, and at so long intervals asunder, that no human skill could have combined them into anything like intelligible sentences. At length with a wild, shrill cry, he started up erect in his bed, his hair bristling with terror, and the cold sweat flowing off his face like rain-drops.

"O, God!" he cried, "avert—defend! Horror! horror!" Then raising his hands slowly to his brow, he felt himself, grasped his arm, and sought for the pulsations of his heart, as if he were laboring to satisfy himself that he was awake.

At length, he murmured, "It was a dream! The Lord be praised! it was but a dream! and yet, how terrible, how vivid! Even now I can scarce believe that I was not awake and saw it."

But as his eye ran over the objects to which it had become accustomed during the last days, and which were now indistinctly visible in the glimmering darkness of a fine summer night, he became fully satisfied that he had been indeed asleep; and with a muttered prayer, he settled himself down again on the pillow, and composed himself to sleep once more.

He had not slept, however, above half an hour before the same painful symptoms recurred; and after even a longer and more agonizing struggle than the first, he again woke, panting, horror-stricken, pale and almost paralyzed with superstitious terror.

"It was!" he gasped, "it was—it must have been in reality. I saw her, as I did last night, tangible, face to face; but, O God! what a glare of horror in those beautiful blue eyes—what a gory spot on that smooth, white brow—what agony—what supplication in every lovely feature. And he, he who dealt the blow—I could not see the face, but the dress, the figure, nay, the seat on horseback—great God! they were all mine own!"

He paused for a long time, meditating deeply, and casting furtive glances around the large old-fashioned room, as though he expected to see some of the great heavy shadows which brooded in the dim angles and irregular recesses of the walls, detach themselves from their lurking-places, in the guise of human forms disembodied, and come forth to confront him.

After a while, however, his naturally strong intellect and characteristic audacity led him to discard the idea of supernatural influence in the appalling vision, which had now twice so cruelly disturbed him. Still, so great had been the suffering and torture of his mind during the conflict of the sleeping body and the sleepless intellect, that he actually dreaded the return of slumber, lest that dread phantom should return with it; and he therefore exerted himself to keep awake, and to arm his mind against the insidious stealing on of sleep, from very fear of what should follow.

But the very efforts which he made to banish the inclination, wearied the mind, and induced what he would most avoid; and within an hour he was again unconscious of all external sights and sounds, again terribly alive to those inward sensations which had already terrified him almost beyond endurance.

This time the trance was shorter, but from the symptoms which appeared on his features, fiercer and stronger than before; nor, as before, when he awoke, did the impression pass away which had been made on him before his eyes were opened. No; as he started up erect, and gazed wildly, scarce as yet half awake, around him, the first thing that met, or seemed to meet his staring eyes, was a gray, misty shadow, standing relieved by a dark mass of gloom in the farthest angle of the chamber. Gradually, as he stared at it with a fascinated gaze, which, had it been to save his life, he could not have withdrawn, the shape, if shape it were, drew nearer, nearer, with a slow, gliding, ghastly motion.

The moon had by this time arisen, and cast a feeble, ineffectual light through the mass of tangled foliage which curtained the large diamond-paned casements of the cottage, streaming in a dim, misty ray across the centre of the chamber. Directly in the middle of this pallid halo, as if it had been a silver glory, paused, or appeared to pause, that thin, transparent form —so bodiless, indeed, it seemed, that the outlines of the things which stood beyond it, were visible, as if seen through a gauzy curtain. A cloud passed over the moon's face, and all was gloom; yet still the boy's eyes *felt* the presence of that disembodied visitant, which they could now no longer distinguish in the darkness.

At this moment, as if to add a real terror to that which, even if unreal, needed no addition, the cat, which hitherto had been sleeping undisturbedly by the warm ashes on the earth, uttered an unusual plaintive cry, most unlike to the natural note of her species, whether of pleasure or of anger, and rushed at two or three long bounds, to the bed on which the boy was sitting up in voiceless horror. Her eyes glared in the darkness, like coals of livid fire, her bristles were set up like the quills of the porcupine, her tail was outspread, till it almost resembled a fox's brush.

The cloud drifted onward, and the moon shone out brighter than before; and there he still saw that tall, white shape, clearer, distincter, stronger, than when he first beheld it. The cat cowered down upon the pillow by his side, with a low, wailing cry of terror, her back, bristling in wrath but now, was humbly lowered, dread of something unnatural had quelled all her savage instincts.

Clearer and clearer waxed the vision, and now he might mark the delicate symmetrical proportions of the figure, and now the pale, white outlines of the lovely face. It *was* Theresa Allan. Yet the fair features were set in a sort of rigid cataleptic horror, full of dread, full of agony and consternation; and the blue eyes glared, fixed and glassy, without speculation; and right in the centre of the brow there glowed, like a sanguine star, a great spot of gore.

The thing seemed to raise its arm, and point with a gesture of majestic menace, right toward the terrified beholder. Then the white lips were parted with a slow, circular distortion, showing the pearly teeth within, and—if a voice came forth from those ghastly lips, Jasper St. Aubyn knew it not, for he had sunk back on his pillow—if, indeed, he had ever, as he believed to the day of his death, raised himself up from it—in a deep trance, from which he passed into a dead, heavy, dreamless stupor, which continued undisturbed until the sun was high in the heavens, and the whole household were afoot, and busied about their usual avocations.

In the meantime, she whose image, whether in truth it was *an eidolon*, or merely the idea of a diseased mind and preoccupied spirit had been so busy during the hours of darkness, had awakened all refreshed by light and innocent slumbers, with the first peep of day, and arising from her couch had descended into the garden, still half enveloped in the dewy vapors of the summer night, half-glimmering in the slant radiance of the new-risen sun.

She was the first at her appointment, for Denzil had not yet made his appearance, and she walked to and fro awaiting him, among the flowery thickets and sweet-scented shrubberies, all bathed in the copious night-dews, half-wondering, half-guessing, what it could be that he should so earnestly desire to communicate. And as she walked, she considered with herself all that had occurred during the last three days, and the more she considered, the less was she able to comprehend the workings of her own mind, or to explain to herself wherefore it was that

she could not divest herself of the idea that the crisis of her life, the fate of her heart was at hand.

That she had rejected Denzil's proffered love, his honest, manly love, she knew that she ought not to regret, for she felt surely that she could not love him in return as he ought, as he deserved to be loved; and yet she did almost regret it. Then she began to ask herself why she did not, why she *could* not love him, endowed eminently as he was with many high and noble qualities; and she was soon answered, when she considered how far he fell short of her standard, in mental and intellectual culture, in all that pertained to the secret sympathies of the heart, to the kindred tastes and sentiments, to that community of hopes and wishes, which, under the head of *eadem velle atque nolle*, the Roman philosophical historian had declared to be the sole base of true friendship—might he not better have said of true love?

Thence by an easy and natural transition the girl's thoughts turned to the young stranger—to his magnificent person and striking intellectual beauty—to his singular and original character, so audacious, so full of fiery and rebellious self-will, so confident in his own powers, so daring, almost insolent toward man, and yet, at the same time, so fraught with gentle and sensitive fancies, so rapt by romance or poetry, so liable to all swift impressions of the senses, so humble, yet with so proud and self-arrogating a humility, toward woman.

She thought of the tones of his beautifully-modulated voice, of the expression of his deep, clear, gray eye; she remembered how the one had melted, as it were, almost timorously in her ear, how the other had dwelt almost boldly on her face, yet with a boldness which seemed meant almost as homage.

She mused on these things; and then paused to reflect how helplessly and deathfully he had lain at her feet, when he was drawn forth from that deep, red whirlpool; and how sickly

those fine eyes swam when she first beheld them. How small a thing would have extinguished, and for ever, the faint spark of life which then feebly fluttered in his bosom; how childlike he had yielded himself to her ministration, and with how piteous yet grateful an expression he had acknowledged, when he awoke from his first trance-like stupor, midway as it were between life and death, the gentleness of her protection.

Most true it is, that pity is akin to love; where pity, as is seldom the case from woman toward man, can exist apart from something approaching to contempt; where it is called forth by the consequences of neither physical nor mental weakness. Still more is it the province and the part of woman to love whom she has protected.

With both sexes, I believe that to have conferred, rather than to have received kindness—to be owed rather than to owe gratitude—is conducive to the growth of kindly feeling, of friendship, of affection, love! But with a true woman, to have been dependent on her for support, to have looked up into her eyes for aid on the sick bed, for sympathy in mortal sorrow, to have revived by her nursing, to have been consoled by her comforting—these are the truest and most direct key to her affection.

Theresa thought of all these things, and as she did so, her bosom heaved almost unconsciously with a sigh, and a tear rose unbidden to her eye. She almost loved Jasper St. Aubyn.

Again, to the recollection of his boldness on the previous evening, of his half-forcible seizure of her hand, of the kiss he had so daringly imprinted on her soft fingers, of the too-meaning words which he had addressed to her, and of the tone, which conveyed even more of consciousness and confidence than the words themselves, all rushed at once upon her mind; and, though she was alone, she started, and her face crimsoned at the mere memory of what she half felt as an indignity.

"And could he think me," she murmured to herself, "so

light, so vain, so easy to be won, that he dare treat me thus at almost a first interview? or was it but the rashness, the imprudence, the buoyancy of extreme youth, inspired by sudden love, and encouraged by his own headstrong character?" She paused a moment, and then said almost aloud, "Oh, no, no, I will not believe it."

"And what will you not believe, Theresa?" said a clear, firm voice, close behind her; "what is it that you are so energetically determined not to believe, my pretty cousin?"

She started, not well pleased that even Denzil should have thus, as it were, stolen upon her privacy, and overheard what was intended for no mortal ear. Theresa was as guileless as any being of mortal mould may be; but even the most artless woman can not be altogether free from some touch of instinctive artifice—that innocent and gentle guile is to woman what nature has bestowed on all, even the humblest of its creatures, her true weapon of defence, her shield against the brute tyranny of man. And Theresa was a woman. She replied, therefore, without an instant's hesitation, although her voice did falter somewhat, and her cheeks burn, as she spoke:—

"That you are angry with me, Cousin Denzil." But then, as she felt his cold, clear, dark eye—how piercingly it dwelt upon her features—reading, or striving to read, her very soul, she continued, seeing at once the necessity of placing him on the defensive, so as to turn the tide of aggressive warfare, "but *I* am angry with *you*, I assure you; nor do I think it at all like you, Denzil, or at all like a true cavalier, as you pretend to be, first, to keep a lady waiting for you, I don't know how long, here alone, and then to creep upon her, like an Indian or a spy, and surprise what little secrets she might be turning over in her own mind. You must have trodden lightly on purpose, or I should have heard your step. I did not look for this at your hand, Cousin Denzil."

He still gazed at her with the same dark, fixed, piercing glance, without answering her a word! and, although conscious of no wrong, she met his gaze with her calm, candid, truthful eye, she could not endure his suspicious look, but was fluttered, and blushed deeply, and was so much embarrassed, that had not pride and anger come to her aid, she would have burst into tears. But they did come to her aid, and she cried with a quivering voice and a flashing eye:—

"For what do you look at me so, Denzil? I do not like it—I will not bear it! You have no right to treat me thus! it is not kind, nor courteous, nor even manly! If it be to browbeat me, and tyrannize over me, that you asked me to meet you here, I could have thanked you to spare me the request. But I shall leave you to yourself, and return home; and so, good-morrow to you, and better breeding, and a better heart, too, Cousin Denzil!"

But though she said she was going, she made no movement to do so, but hesitated, waiting for his answer.

"You must be greatly changed, Theresa," he said bitterly, "to take offence at so slight a cause, or to speak to me in such a tone. But you *are* greatly changed, and there's an end of it."

"I am not changed at all," replied the girl, still chafing at the recollection of that scrutinizing eye, which she perhaps felt the more, because conscious that her own reply had not been perfectly sincere. "But I do not allow your right to pry meanly into my secret thoughts, or to catechize me concerning my words, or to accuse me of falsehood, when I answer you."

"Accuse you of falsehood, Theresa! who ever dreamed of doing so?"

"Your eye did so, sir," she replied. "When I told you that I was determined 'not to believe that you were angry with me,' you fixed your glance upon me with the expression of a pedagogue, who, having caught a child lying, would terrify it into

truth. I am no child, I assure you, Denzil, nor are you *yet* my master. Think as you may about it."

It was now Denzil's turn to be confused, for he could not deny that she had construed the meaning of his look aright; and would not, so proud was he and so resolute, either deny or apologize for what was certainly an act of rudeness.

After a moment's pause, however, he looked up at her from under downcast eyelids, with a look of defiance mingled with distrust, and answered bluntly:—

"I do not believe that *was* your meaning, or that you were thinking about me at all."

"And what if it were not? Am I bound, I pray you, to be thinking of nothing but you? I must have little enough to think of, if it were so."

"You might at least have told me so much, frankly."

"I thank you, Cousin Denzil," she made answer, more proudly, more firmly than ever he had heard her speak before. "I thank you, for teaching me a lesson, though neither very kindly, nor exactly as a generous gentleman should teach a lady. But you are perfectly correct in your surmises, sir. I was *not* thinking of you at all; no more, sir, than if you were not in existence, and if I answered you, as I did, sir, *falsely*—yes! *falsely* is the word!—it is because, in the first place, you had no right to ask me the question you did, and, in the second, because I did not choose to answer it! Now, cousin, allow *me* to teach you something—for you have something yet to learn, wise as you are, about us women. If you ask a lady unmannerly questions, hereafter, and she turn them off by a flippant joke, or an unmeaning *falsehood*, understand that *you* have been very rude, and that she does not wish to be so likewise, by rebuking your impertinence. Now, do you comprehend me?"

"Perfectly, madam, perfectly. You have made marvellous strides of late, upon my honor! Yesterday morning an unsophisticated country-maiden—this morning a courtly, quick-witted, manœuvring, fine lady! God send you, much good of the change, though I doubt it. I can see all, read all, plainly enough now—poor Denzil Bras-de-fer is not high enough, I trow, for my dainty lady! Perchance, when he is farther off, he may be better liked, and more needed. At all events, I did not look for this at your hands, Theresa, on the last morning, too, that we shall spend together for so long a time."

Angry as she was, and indignant at the dictatorial manner he had assumed toward her, these last words disarmed her in a moment. A tear rose to her eyes, and she held out her hand to him kindly.

"You are right, Denzil," she said, "and I was wrong to be so angry. But you vexed me, and wounded me by your manner. I am sorry; I ought to have remembered that you were going to leave us, and that you have some cause to be grieved and irritable. Pardon me, Denzil, and forget what I said hastily. We must not quarrel, for we have no friends save one another, and my dear old father."

But Denzil's was no placable mind, nor one that could divest itself readily of a preconceived idea. "Oh!" he replied, "for that, fair young ladies never lack friends. For every old one they cast off they win two new ones. See, if it be not so, Theresa. Is it not so with you?"

She looked at him reproachfully, but softly, and then burst into tears. "You are ungenerous," she said, "ungenerous. But all men, I suppose, are alike in this—that they can feel no friendship for a woman. So long as they hope for her love, all is submission on their part, and humility, and gentleness, and lip-service—once they can not win that, all is bitterness and persecution. I did not look for this at *your* hand! But *I* will not quarrel with you, Denzil. I dealt frankly with you yester morning; I have dealt affectionately with you ever; I will deal

tenderly and forgivingly with you now. I only wish that you had not sought this interview with me, the only object of which appears to have been the embittering the last hours of our intercourse, and the endeavoring to wring and wound my heart. But I—"

"If you had dealt frankly with me," he interrupted her, very angrily, "you would have told me honestly that you loved another."

"Loved another! What do you mean? What other?"

So evident was the truth, the sincerity of her astonishment, that jealousy itself was rebuked and put to silence in the young man's bosom; and he endeavored to avoid or change the subject. But the womanly indignation of the fair girl was now awakened; her pride had been touched; her delicacy wounded; her sensibilities assailed in the tenderest point.

"Leave me!" she said, after a little pause, during which she, in her turn gazing upon him, now bewildered and abashed, with eyes of serene wonder, not all unmingled with contempt—"Nay! not another word—leave me—begone! You are not worthy of a woman's love—you are not worthy to be treated or regarded as a man. Leave me, I say, and trouble me no more. Poor, weak, mean-spirited, vain, jealous, and ungenerous, begone! You know—no man knows better—the falsehood of the last words you have spoken. No man knows better their unfeelingness, their ungenerous cruelty. But if I had—if I had loved another—in what does that concern you? in what am I responsible to you for my likings or dislikings? Once and for all be it said, I love you not—should not love you, were you the only one of your sex on the face of God's earth—and I pray God to help and protect the woman who shall love you—if ever you be loved of woman, which I for one believe not—for she shall love the veriest tyrant that ever tortured a fond heart, under the plea of loving."

"I go," he replied. "I am answered, once and for all. I go, and may *you* never need my aid, my forgiveness."

"Forgiveness!" she exclaimed, with a contemptuous glance. "Forgiveness! I know not what *you* have to forgive! But you should rather pray that I *may* have need of them; then may *you* have the pleasure of refusing me at my need."

"Ah! it is thus you think of me. It is time, then, that I should leave you, Fare you well, Theresa."

"There is no need for farewells at present. The day is early yet; and I trust still to see your temper changed before you set forth on your journey. It would grieve my father sorely that you should leave us thus."

"He will not know how I leave you. He will see me no more for years—perhaps never!"

"What do you mean?"

"That I shall mount my horse within this half hour, and return no more until I shall have twice crossed the Atlantic. So fare you well, Theresa."

"Fare you well, Denzil, if it must be so. And God bless you, and send you a better mind. You will be sorry for this one day. There is my hand, fare you well; and rest assured of this, return when you may, you will find me the same Theresa."

He took her hand, and wrung it hard. "Farewell," he said. "Farewell; and God grant that when I do return, I find you the wife, and not the mistress, of Jasper St. Aubyn."

Ungenerous and bitter at the last, he winged the shaft at random, which he hoped would pierce the deepest, which he trusted would prevent the consummation he most dreaded—that she *should be* the wife of the boy whom he had saved, whom he had now hated.

The other contingency, at which he had hinted basely, unmanly, brutally, he knew to be impossible—but he knew also,

that the surmise would gall her beyond endurance. That, that was the cruel, the unworthy object of the last words Denzil Bras-de-fer ever exchanged in this world with Theresa Allan.

He turned on his heel, and, without looking back once, strode through the garden, with all his better feelings lost and swallowed up in bitterness and hatred — entered his own apartment, and there wrote a few lines to his uncle, to the effect that in order to avoid the pain of a parting, and the sorrows of a last adieu, he had judged it for the wisest to depart suddenly and unawares, and that he should not return to Widecomb until his voyage should be ended.

Then, leaving the house, where he had passed so many a happy hour, in hot and passionate resentment, he mounted his horse and rode away at a hard gallop across the hills toward Hexworthy and Plymouth.

The last words he uttered had gone to Theresa's heart like a death-shot. She did not speak, or even sigh, as she heard them, but pressed her hand hard on her breast, and fell speechless and motionless on the dewy greensward.

He, engrossed by his selfish rage, and deafened to the sound of her fall by the beatings of his own hard heart, stalked off unconscious what had befallen her; and she lay there, insensible, until the servant-girl, missing her at the breakfast hour, found her there cold, and, as at first she believed, lifeless.

She soon revived, indeed, from the swoon; but the excitement and agitation of that scene brought on a slow, lingering fever; and weeks elapsed ere she again left her chamber. When she did quit it, the fresh green leaves of summer had put on their sere and yellow hue, the autumn flowers were fast losing their last brilliancy, the hoar-frosts lay white, in the early mornings, over the turf-walks of her garden, ice had been seen already on the great pool above the fords of Widecomb, and

everything gave notice that the dreary days of winter were approaching, and even now at hand.

The northwest winds howled long and hollow over the open hills and heathery wolds around Widecomb manor, and ever as their wild melancholy wail fell on the ears of Theresa, as she sat by her now lonely hearth, they awoke a thought of him, the playmate of her happy childhood, from whom she had parted, not as friends and playmates should part, and who was now ploughing the fair Atlantic, perhaps never to return.

A shadow had fallen upon her brow; a gloom upon her young and happy life.

And where was he who, unconsciously, though not perhaps unintentionally, had been the cause of the cloud which had arisen, and whence that shadow, that gloom? Where was Jasper St. Aubyn?

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

THE WIFE.

"A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The lady of his love was wed with one
Who did not love her better."—BYRON.

Two years had passed away since Denzil Bras-de-fer set sail on the Virginia voyage, and from that day no tidings had been heard of him in England.

In the meantime, changes, dark, melancholy changes, had altered everything at Widecomb. The two old men, whom we last saw conversing cheerfully of times long gone, and past joys unforgotten, had both fallen asleep, to wake no more but to immortality. Sir Miles St. Aubyn slept with his fathers in the bannered and escutcheoned chapel adjoining the hall, wherein he had spent so many, and those the happiest, of his days; while William Allan—he had preceded his ancient friend, his old rival, but a few weeks on their last journey—lay in the quiet village churchyard, beneath the shade of the great lime-trees, among the leaves of which he had loved to hear the hum of the bees in his glad boyhood. The leaves waved as of old, and twinkled in the sunshine, and the music of the revelling bees was blithe as ever, but the eye that had rejoiced at the calm scenery, the ear that had delighted in the rural sound, were dim and deaf for ever.

Happy—happy they! whom no more cares should reach, no more anxieties, for ever—who now no more had hopes to be blighted, joys to be tortured into sorrows, and, worst of all, affections to breed the bitterest griefs, and make calamity of so long life. Happy, indeed, thrice happy!

There was a pleasant parlor, with large oriel windows looking out upon the terrace of Widecomb hall, and over the beautiful green chase, studded with grand old oaks, down to the deep ravine through which the trout stream rushed, in which the present lord of that fair demesne had so nearly perished at the opening of my tale.

And in that pleasant parlor, within the embrasure of one of the great oriels, gazing out anxiously over the lovely park, now darkening with the long shadows of a sweet summer evening, there stood as beautiful a being as ever gladdened the eye of friend, husband, or lover, on his return from brief absence home.

It was Theresa—Allan no longer, but St. Aubyn; and with the higher rank which she had so deservedly acquired, she had acquired, too, a higher and more striking style of beauty. Her slender girlish stature had increased in height, and expanded in fullness, roundness, symmetry, until the delicate and somewhat fragile maiden had been matured into the perfect, full-blown woman.

Her face also was lovelier than of old; it had a deeper, a more spiritual meaning. Love had informed it, and experience. And the genius, dormant before, and unsuspected save by the old fond father, sat enthroned visibly on the pale, thoughtful brow, and looked out gloriously from those serene, large eyes, filled as they were to overflowing with a clear, lustrous, tranquil light, which revealed to the most casual and thoughtless observers, the purity, the truth, the whiteness of the soul within.

But if you gazed on her more closely,

"You saw her at a nearer view,
A spirit, yet a woman too."

You saw that how pure, how calm, how innocent soever, she was not yet exempt from the hopes, the fears, the passions, and the pains of womanhood.

The woman was more lovely than the girl, was wiser, greater, perhaps better—alas! was she happier?

She had been now nearly two years a wife, though but within the last twelve months acknowledged and installed as such in her husband's house. It had been a dark mystery, her love—the child of sorrow and concealment, although she might thank her own true heart, guided by principle, and lighted by a higher star than any earthly passion, even the love of God, it had not been the source of shame.

Artfully, yet enthusiastically, had that bold, brilliant, fascinating boy laid siege to her affections; and soon, by dint of kindred tastes, and feelings, and pursuits, he had succeeded in winning the whole perfect love of that pure, overflowing soul.

She loved him with that fervor, that devotion of which women alone are perhaps capable, and of women only those who are gifted with that extreme sensibility, that exquisite organization, which, rendering them the most charming, the most fascinating, and the most susceptible of their sex, too often renders them the least happy.

And he, too, loved her—as well, perhaps, as one of his character and temperament could love anything, except himself; he loved her *passionately*; he admired her beauty, her grace, her delicacy, beyond measure. He understood and appreciated her exquisite taste, her brilliancy, her feminine and gentle genius. He was not happy when he was absent from her side; he could not endure the idea that she should love, or even smile upon another, he coveted the possession of a creature so beautiful, a soul so powerful, and at the same time so loving. Above all, he was proud to be loved by such a being.

But beyond this he no more loved her, than the child loves its toy. He held her only in his selfishness of soul, even before his passion had

"Spent as yet its novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse."

But he knew nothing, felt nothing, understood nothing of her higher, better self; he saw nothing of her inner light—guessed nothing of what a treasure he had won.

He would have sacrificed nothing of his pleasures, nothing of his prejudices, nothing of his pride, had such a sacrifice been needed to make her the happiest of women. While she would have laid down her life for the mere delight of gaining him one moment's joy—would have sacrificed all that she had, or hoped to have, save honor, faith, and virtue. And to yield these he never asked her.

No! in the wildest dream of his reckless, unprincipled imagination, he never fancied to himself the possibility of tempting her to lawless love. In the very boldest of his audacious flights, he never would have dared to whisper one loose thought, one questionable wish, in the maiden's ear. It had, perhaps, been well he had done so—for on that instant, as the nightmists melt away and leave the firmament pure and transparent at the first glance of the great sun, the cloud of passion which obscured her mental vision would have been scattered and dispersed from her clear intellect by the first word that had flashed on her soul conviction of his baseness.

But whether the wish ever crossed his mind or not, he never gave it tongue, nor did she even once suspect it.

Still he had wooed her secretly—laying the blame on his father's pride, his father's haughty and high ambition, which he insisted would revolt at the bare idea of his wedding with any

lady, who could not point to the quarterings of a long, noble line of ancestry; he had prevailed on her, first to conceal their love, and at length to consent to a secret marriage.

It was long, indeed, ere he could bring her to agree even to that clandestine step; nor, had her father lived but a few weeks longer, would he have done so ever.

The old man died, however, suddenly, and at the very moment when, though she knew it not, his life was most necessary to his daughter's welfare. He was found dead in his bed, after one of those strange, mysterious seizures, to which he had for many years been subject, and during which he had appeared to be endowed with something that approached nearly to a knowledge of the future. Although, if such were, indeed, the case, it was scarce less wonderful that on the passing away of the dark fit, he seemed to have forgotten all that he had seen and enunciated of what should be thereafter.

Be this, however, as it may—he was found by his unhappy child, dead, and already cold; but with his limbs composed so naturally, and his fine benevolent features wearing so calm and peaceful an expression, that it was evident he had passed away from this world of sin and sorrow, during his sleep, without a pang or a struggle. Never did face of mortal sleeper give surer token of a happy and glorious awakening.

But he was gone, and she was alone, friendless, helpless, and unprotected.

How friendless, how utterly destitute and helpless, she knew not, nor had even suspected, until the last poor relics of her only kinsman, save he who was a thousand leagues aloof on the stormy ocean, had been consigned to the earth, whence they had their birth and being. Then, when his few papers were examined, and his affairs scrutinized by his surviving, though now fast declining friend, St. Aubyn, it appeared that he had been supported only by a life annuity, which died with himself,

and that he had left nothing but the cottage at the fords, with the few acres of garden-ground, and the slender personal property on the premises, to his orphan-child.

It was rendered probable by some memoranda and brief notes, found among his papers, the greater part of which were occupied by abstruse mathematical problems, and yet wilder astrological calculations, that he had looked forward to the union of his daughter with the youth whom he had brought up as his own son, and whose ample means, as well as his affection for the lovely girl, left no doubt of his power and willingness to become her protector.

What he had observed, during his sojourn at the cottage, led old Sir Miles, however, who had assumed, as an act of duty, no less than of pleasure, the character of executor to his old friend, to suspect that the simple-minded sage had in some sort reckoned without his host; and that on one side, at least, there would be found insuperable objections to his views for Theresa's future life. And in this opinion he was confirmed immediately by a conversation which he had with the poor girl, so soon as the first poignant agony of grief had passed from her mind.

In this state of affairs, an asylum at the manor was offered by the old cavalier, and accepted by the orphan with equal frankness, but with a most unequal sense of obligation—Sir Miles regarding his part in the transaction as a thing of course, Theresa looking on it as an action of the most exalted and extraordinary generosity.

In truth, it had occurred already to the mind of the old knight so soon as he was satisfied within himself that Theresa's affections were not given to her wild and dangerous cousin, that he would gladly see her the wife of his own almost idolized boy. For, though of no exalted or ennobled lineage, she was of gentle blood, of an honorable parentage, which had been long established in the county, and which, if fallen in fortunes, had

never lost caste, or been degraded, as he would assuredly have deemed it, by participation in any mechanical or mercantile pursuit. He had seen enough of courts and courtiers to learn their hollowness, and all the empty falsehood of their gorgeous show —he had mingled enough in the great world to be convinced that real happiness was not to be sought in the hurlyburly of its perilous excitement, and incessant strife; and that which would have rendered him the happiest, would have been to see Jasper established, tranquilly, and at his ease, with domestic bonds to insure the permanency of his happiness, before his own time should come, as the lord of Widecomb.

And such were his views when he prevailed on Theresa to let the House in the Woods be her home, until at least such time as news could be received of her cousin; who, certainly, whatever might be the relative state of their affections, would never suffer her to want a home or a protector.

He had observed that Jasper was struck deeply by the charms of the sweet girl; he knew, although he had affected not to know it, that, under the pretence of fishing or shooting excursions, he had been in the almost daily habit of visiting her, since the accident which had led to their acquaintance; and he was, above all, well assured that the girl loved him with all the deep, unfathomable devotion of which such hearts as hers alone are capable.

Well pleased was he, therefore, to see the beautiful being established in the halls of which he hoped to see her, ere long, the mistress; and if he did not declare his wishes openly to either on the subject, it was that he was so well aware of his son's headstrong and wilful temper, that he knew him fully capable of refusing peremptorily the very thing which he most desired, if proffered to him as a boon, much more urged upon him as the desire of a third party—which he was certain to regard as an interference with his free will and self-regulation

—while, at the same time he feared to alarm Theresa's delicacy, by anticipating the progress of events.

Thus, with a heart overflowing with affection for that wild, wilful, passionate boy, released from the only tie of obedience or restraint that could have bound her, poor Theresa was delivered over, fettered as it were, hand and foot, to the perilous influence of Jasper's artifices, and the scarce less dangerous suggestions of her own affections.

It was strange that, quick as she was and clever, even beyond her sex's wonted penetration, where matters of the heart are concerned, Theresa never suspected that the old cavalier had long perceived and sanctioned their growing affection. But idolizing Jasper as she did, and believing him all that was high and generous and noble, seeing that all his external errors tended to the side of rash, hasty impulse, never to calculation or deceit, she saw everything, as it were, through his eyes, and was easily induced by him to believe that all his fatherlike kindness and fatherlike attention to her slightest wish, arose only from his love for her lost parent, and compassion for her sad abandonment; nay, further, he insisted that the least suspicion of their mutual passion would lead to their instant and eternal separation.

It was lamentable, that a being so bright, so excellent as she, believing that such was the case, and bound as she was by the closest obligations, the dearest gratitude to that good old man, should have consented, even for a moment, to deceive him, much more to frustrate his wishes in a point so vital.

But she was very young—she had been left without the training of a mother's watchful heart, without the supervision of a mother's earnest eye—she was endowed marvellously with those extreme sensibilities which are invariably a part of that high nervous organization, ever connected with poetical genius. She loved Jasper with a devotedness, a singleness, and at the

same time a consuming heat of passion, which scarcely could be believed to exist in one so calm, so self-possessed, and so innocently-minded—and, above all, she had none else in the wide world on whom to fix her affections.

And the boy profited by this; and with the sharpness of an intellect, which, if far inferior to hers in depth and real greatness, was as far superior to it in worldly selfishness and instinctive shrewdness, played upon her nervous temperament, till he could make each chord of her secret soul thrill to his touch, as if they had been the keys of a stringed instrument.

The hearts of the young who love, must ever, must naturally resent all interference of the aged, who would moderate or oppose their love, as cold, intrusive tyranny; and thus, with plausible and artful sophistry, abetted by the softness of her treacherous heart, too willing to be deceived, he first led her to regard his father as opposed to the wishes of that true love, which, for all the great poet knew or had heard, "never did run smooth," and thence to resent that opposition as unkind, unjust, tyrannical. And thence—alas! for Theresa!—to deceive the good old man, her best friend on earth—ay, to deceive herself.

It is not mine to palliate, much less to justify her conduct. I have but to relate a too true tale; and in relating it, to show, in so for as I can, the mental operations, the self-deceptions, and the workings of passion—from which not even the best and purest of mankind are exempt—by which an innocent and wonderfully-constituted creature was betrayed into one fatal error.

She was persuaded—words can tell no more.

It was a grievous fault, and grievously *Theresa* answered it.

When ill things are devised, and to be done, ill agents are soon found, especially by the young, the wealthy, and the powerful.

The declining health of Sir Miles St. Aubyn was no secret

in the neighborhood—the near approach of his death was already a matter of speculation; and already men almost looked upon Jasper as the lord, *in esse*, of the estates of Widecomb manor.

The old white-headed vicar had a son, poor like himself, and unaspiring—like himself, in holy orders; and for him, when his own humble career should be ended, he hoped the reversion of the vicarage, which was in the gift of the proprietor of Widecomb. The old man had known Jasper from his boyhood, had loved Theresa, whom he had, indeed, baptized, from her cradle. He was very old and infirm, and some believed that his intellect was failing. Between his affection for the parties, and his interest in his son's welfare, it was easy to frame a plausible tale, which should work him to Jasper's will; and with even less difficulty than the boy looked for, he was prevailed upon to unite them secretly, and at the dead of night, in the parish-church at the small village by the fords.

The sexton of the parish-church was a low knave, with no thought beyond his own interest, no wish but for accumulation of gain. A gamekeeper, devoted to the young master's worst desires, a fellow who had long ministered to his most evil habits, and had, in no small degree, assisted to render him what he was, only too willingly consented to aid in an affair which he saw clearly would put the young heir in his power for ever.

He was selected as one of the witnesses—for without witnesses, the good but weak old vicar would not perform the ceremony; and he promised to bring a second, in the person of his aged and doting mother, the respectability of whose appearance should do away with any scruples of Theresa's while her infirmity should render her a safe depository of the most dangerous secret.

And why all this mystery—this tortuous and base deviation

from the path of right—this unnecessary concealment, and unmeaning deceit?

Wherefore, if the boy were, indeed, what he has been described, and no more—impulsive, wilful, rash, headlong, irresistible in his impulses—if not a base traitor, full of dark plots, deep-laid beforehand—wherefore, if he did love the girl, with all the love of which his character was capable, if he had not predetermined to desert her—wherefore did he not wed her openly in the light of day, amid crowds of glad friends, and rejoicing dependants? Why did he not gladden the heart of his aged father, and lead her to the home of his ancestors, a happy and honored bride, without that one blot on her conscience, without that one shadow of deceit, which marred the perfect truthfulness of her character, and in after-days weighed on her mind heavily?

A question to which no answer can be given, unless it be that to tortuous minds the tortuous method is ever the readiest; and intrigue—only for that it *is* intrigue—a joy to the intriguer.

CHAPTER II.

THE TEMPTER.

"If that thou be a devil, I can not kill thee."—OTHELLO.

READER, the heart of man is a strange compound, a deceitful thing.

Jasper St. Aubyn *did* love Theresa Allan, as I have said before, with all the love which he could bestow on anything divine or human. His passion for the possession of her charms, both personal and mental, was, as his passions ever were, inordinate. His belief in her excellence, her purity, in the stability of her principles, the impregnable strength of her virtue, could not be proved more surely than by the fact, that he had never dared an attempt to shake them. His faith in her adoration for himself was as firm-fixed as the sun in heaven. And, lastly, his conviction of the constancy of his own love toward her, of the impossibility of that love's altering or perishing, was strong as his conviction of his own being.

But he was one of those singularly-constituted beings, who will never take an easy path when he has the option of one more difficult; never follow the straight road when he can see a tortuous byway leading to the same end.

Had his father as he pretended, desired to thwart his will, or prevent his marriage with Theresa, for that very cause he would have toiled indefatigably, till he had made her his own in the face of day. Partly swayed by a romantic and half-chivalrous feeling, which loved to build up difficulties for the mere pleasure of surmounting them, partly urged on by pure wilfulness and recklessness of temper, he chose evil for his

good, he rushed into deceit where truth would, in fact, have served his purpose better. A boyish love of mystery and mischief might probably have had its share likewise in his strange conduct, and a sort of self-pride in the skill with which he managed his plot, and worked the minds of older men into submission to his own will. Lastly, to compel Theresa to this sacrifice of her sense of duty and propriety, to this abandonment of principle to passion, appeared to his perverted intellect a mighty victory, an overwhelming proof of her devotedness to his selfish will.

If there were any darker and deeper motive in his mind, it was unconfessed to himself; and in truth, I believe, none such then existed. If such did in after-times grow up within him, it arose probably from a perception of the fatal facility which that first fraud, with its elaborate deceits, had given him for working further evil.

Verily, it is wise to pray that we be not tempted. The perilous gift of present opportunity has made many a one, who had else lived innocent, die, steeped to the very lips in guilt.

Such were the actuating motives of *his* conduct; of her pure love, and the woman's dread of losing what she loved, by over-vehement resistance.

At the dead of a dark, gusty night in autumn, when the young moon was seen but at rare intervals between the masses of dense, driving wrack which swept continuously across the leaden-colored firmament before the wailing west winds, when the sere leaves came drifting down from the great trees, like the ghosts of departed hopes, when the long, mournful howl of some distant ban-dog baying the half-seen moon, and the dismal hootings of the answered owls, were the only sounds abroad, the poor girl stole, like a guilty creature, from her virgin-chamber, and, faltering at every ray of misty light, every dusky shadow that wavered across her way, as she threaded

the long corridors, crept stealthily down the great oaken staircase, and joined her young lover in the stone-hall below.

Her palfrey and his hunter stood saddled at the foot of the terrace steps, and, almost without a word exchanged between them, she found herself mounted and riding, with her right hand clasped in his burning fingers, through the green chase toward the village.

The clock was striking midnight—ill-omened hour for such a rite as that—in the tower of the parish-church, as Jasper St. Aubyn sprung to the ground before the old Saxon porch, and lifting his sweet bride from the saddle, fastened the bridles of their horses to the hooks in the churchyard-wall, and entered the low-browed door which gave access to the nave.

A single dim light burned on the altar, by which the old vicar, robed in his full canonicals, awaited them, with his knavish assistant, and the two witnesses beside him.

Dully and unimpressively, at that unhallowed hour, and by that dim light, the sacred rite was performed and the dread adjuration answered, and the awful bond undertaken, which, through all changes, and despite all chances of this mortal life, makes two into one flesh, until death shall them sever.

The gloom, the melancholy, the nocturnal horror of the scene sunk deeply on Theresa's spirit; and it was in the midst of tears and shuddering that she gave her hand and her heart to one, who, alas! was too little capable of appreciating the invaluable treasure he had that night been blessed withal. And even when the ceremony was performed, and she was his immutably and for ever, as they rode home as they had come, alone, through the dim avenues and noble chase, which were now in some sort her own, there was none of that buoyancy, that high, exulting hope, that rapture of permitted love, which is wont to thrill the bosoms of young and happy brides.

Nor, on the following day, was the melancholy gloom which,

despite all her young husband's earnest and fond endeavors to cheer and compose her, still overhung her mind, in anywise removed by the tidings which reached the manor late in the afternoon.

The aged vicar, so the tale went, had been called by some unusual official duty to the parish-church, long after it was dark, and in returning home, had fallen among the rocks, having strayed from the path, and injured himself so severely that his life was despaired of.

So eagerly did Jasper proffer his services, and with an alacrity so contrary to his usual sluggishness, when his own interests were not at stake, did he order his horse and gallop down to the village to visit his old friend, that his father smiled, well pleased, and half-laughingly thanked Theresa, when the boy had gone; saying that he really believed her gentle influence was charming some of Jasper's wilfulness away, and that he trusted ere long to see him, through her precept and example, converted into a milder and more humanized mood and temper.

Something swelled in the girl's bosom, and rose to her throat, half-choking her—the *hysterica passio* of poor Lear—as the good old man spoke, and the big tears gushed from her eyes.

It was by the mightiest effort only that she kept down the almost overmastering impulse which prompted her to cast herself down at the old man's feet, and confess to him what she had done, and so implore his pardon and his blessing.

Had she done so, most happy it had been for her unhappy self; more happy yet for one more miserable yet, that should be!

Had she done so, she had crowned the old man's last days with a halo of happiness that had lighted him down the steps to the dusky grave rejoicing—she had secured to herself, and to him whom she had taken for better or for worse, innocence, and security, and self-respect, and virtue, which *are* happiness!

She did it not; and she repented not *then*—for when she

told Jasper how nearly she had confessed all, his brow grew as dark as night, and he put her from him, exclaiming with an oath, that had she done so, he had never loved her more—but did she not repent thereafter?

It was late when Jasper returned, and he was, to all outward observers, sad and thoughtful; but Theresa could read something in his countenance, which told *her* that he had derived some secret satisfaction from his visit.

In a word, the danger, apprehension of which had so prompted Jasper's charity, and quickened his zeal in well-doing—the danger, that the old clergyman should divulge *in extremis* the duty which had led him to the church at an hour so untimely, was at an end for ever. He was dead, and had never spoken since the accident, which had proved fatal to his decrepit frame and broken constitution.

Moreover, to make all secure, he had seen the rascal sexton, and secured him for ever, by promising him an annuity so long as the secret should be kept; while craftier and older in iniquity than he, and suspecting—might it not be foreseeing—deeper iniquity to follow, the villain, who now alone, with the suborned witnesses, knew what had passed, stole into the chancel, and cut out from the parish-register the leaf which contained the record of that unhappy marriage.

It is marvellous how at times all things appear to work prosperously for the success of guilt, the destruction of innocence; but, of a truth, the end of these things is not here.

It so fell out that the record of Theresa Allan's union with Jasper St. Aubyn, was the first entry on a fresh leaf of the register. One skilful cut of a sharp knife removed that leaf so as to defy the closest scrutiny; had one other name been inscribed thereon, before hers, she had been saved.

Alas! for Theresa!

But to do Jasper justice, he knew not of this villany; nor,

had he known, would he *then* have sanctioned it. He only wished to secure himself against momentary discovery.

The ill consequences of this folly, this mysterious and unmeaning craft, had now, in some degree, recoiled upon himself. And delighting, as he really did, in the closest intercourse with his sweet, young bride, he chafed and fumed at finding that the necessity of keeping up the concealment, which he had so needlessly insisted on, precluded him from the possibility of enjoying his new possession, as he would, entirely, and at all hours.

He would have given almost his right hand now to be able to declare openly that she was his own. But for once in his life, he dared not! He could not bring himself to confess to his kind father the cruel breach of confidence, the foul and causeless deceit of which he had been guilty; and he began almost to look forward to the death of that excellent and idolizing parent, as the only event that could allow him to call his wife his own.

It was not long before his wish—if that can be called a wish, which he dared not confess to his own guilty heart, was accomplished.

The first snows had not fallen yet, when the old cavalier fell ill, and declined so rapidly that before the old year was dead he was gathered to his fathers. As he had lived, so he died, a just, upright, kindly, honorable man—at peace with all men, and in faith with his God.

His last words were entreaty to his son to take Theresa Allan to his wife, and to live with her unambitiously, unostentatiously, as he had lived himself, and was about to die, at Widecomb. And even then, though he promised to obey his father's bidding, the boy's heart was not softened, nor was his conscience touched by any sense of the wrong he had done. He promised, and as the good man's dying eye kindled with pleasure, he smiled on him with an honest seeming smile, received

his parting kiss, and closed his eyes, and stood beside the dead, unrelenting, unrepentant.

He was the lord of Widecomb; and so soon as the corpse by which he stood should be composed in the quiet grave, the world should know him, too, as the lord of Theresa Allan.

And so he swore to her, when he stole that night, as he had done nightly since their marriage, to her chamber, after every light was extinguished, and, as he believed, every eye closed in sleep; and she, fond soul! believed him, and clasped him to her heart, and sunk into sleep, with her head pillowed on his breast, happier than she had been since she had once—for the first, last time—deviated from the paths of truth.

But he who has once taken up deceit as his guide, knows not when he can quit it. He may, indeed, say to himself "Thus far will I go, and no farther," but when he shall have once attained the proposed limit, and shall set himself to work to recover that straight path from which he has once deviated, fortunate will he be, indeed, if he find not a thousand obstacles, which it shall tax his utmost energy, his utmost ingenuity, to surmount, if he have not to cry out in despair:—

> "Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
> When first we practise to deceive."

Jasper St. Aubyn did honestly intend to do, the next day, what he that night promised; nor did he doubt that he *could* do it, and so do it, as to save her scatheless, of whom he had not yet grown weary.

But, alas! of so delicate a texture is a woman's reputation, that the slightest doubt, the smallest shade once cast upon it, though false as hell itself, it shall require more than an angel's tears to wash away the stain. All cautiously as Jasper had contrived his visits to the chamber of his wife, all guarded as had been his intercourse with her, although he had never dreamed that a suspicion had been awakened in a single mind

of the existence of such an intercourse, he had not stolen thither once, nor returned once to his own solitary couch, but keen, curious, prying eyes had followed him.

There was not a maid-servant in the house but knew Miss Theresa's shame, as all believed it to be; but tittered and triumphed over it in her sleeves, as an excuse, or at least a palliation of her own peccadilloes; but told it, in confidence, to her own lover, Tom, the groom, or Dick, the falconer, until it was the common gossip of the kitchen and the butlery, how the fair and innocent Theresa was Master Jasper's *mistress*.

But they nothing dreamed of this; and both fell asleep that night, full of innocent hopes on the one hand, and good determinations—alas! never to be realized—on the other.

The morrow came, and Sir Miles St. Aubyn was consigned to the vault where slept his fathers of so many generations. Among the loud and sincere lamentations of his grateful tenantry and dependants, the silent, heartfelt tears of Theresa, and the pale but constrained sorrow of his son, he was committed, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, to his long last home, by the son of the aged vicar, who had already been inducted to the living, which his father had held so many years before him.

The mournful ceremonial ended, Jasper was musing alone in the old library, considering with himself how he might best arrange the revelation, which he proposed to make that very evening to his household of his hitherto concealed marriage with Theresa, when suddenly a servant entered and informed him that Peter Verity, the sexton, would be glad to speak six words with his honor, if it would not be too much trouble.

"By no means," replied Jasper, eagerly, for he foresaw, as he thought, through this man a ready mode of extricating himself from the embarrassment of the disclosure, "admit him instantly."

The fellow entered; a low, miserable, sneaking scoundrel, even from his appearance; and Jasper felt as if he almost loathed himself that he had ever had to do with so degraded a specimen of mortality. He had need of him, however, and was compelled, therefore, much against his will, to greet him, and speak him fairly.

"Ha, Verity," he said, "I am glad you have come, I should have sent for you in the morning, if you had not come up to-night. You have managed that affair for me right well; and I shall not forget it, I assure you. Here are ten guineas for you, as an earnest now, and I shall continue your annuity, though there will be no need for concealment any longer. Still I shall want your assistance, and will pay you for it liberally."

"I thank your honor, kindly," answered the fellow, pocketing the gold. "But with regard to the annuity, seeing as how what I've done for your honor is a pretty dangerous job, and one as I fancy might touch my life, I—"

"Touch your life! why what the devil does the fellow mean!" Jasper interrupted him, starting to his feet, "I never asked you—never asked any man—to do aught that should affect his life."

"You never did ask me, right out in words, that is a fact, your honor. You was too deep for that, I'm a thinking! But, Lord bless ye! I understood ye, for all, as well as if you *had* asked me. And so, be sure, I went and did it straight. I'd ha' done anything to serve your honor—that I would—and I will again, that's more."

"In God's name, what have you done, then?" exclaimed Jasper, utterly bewildered.

"Why, seeing as your honor didn't wish to have your marriage with Miss Theresa known, and as there wasn't no way else of hiding it, when the old parson was dead and gone, and a new one coming, I went and cut the record of it out of the

church-register, and I've got it here, safe enough. So if your honor fancies any time to get tired like of miss, why you can e'en take another wife, and no one the wiser. There's not a soul knows aught about it but me, and black Jem Alderly; and we'll never say a word about it, not we. Nor it wouldn't matter if we did, for that, when once you've got this here paper. And so I was thinking, if your honor would just give me five hundred guineas down, I'd hand it over, and you could just put it in the fire, if you choosed, and no one the wiser."

Jasper cast his eyes up to heaven in despair, and wrung his hands bitterly.

"Great God!" he said, "I would give five thousand if you could undo this that you have done. I *will* give you five thousand if you will replace the leaf where it was, undiscovered."

"It ain't possible," replied the man. "The new vicar he has looked over all the register, and made a copy of it; and he keeps it locked up, too, under his own key, so that, for my life, I could not get it, if I would. And I'd be found out, sure as God—and it's hanging by the law! nothing less. But what does it signify, if I may be so bold, your honor?"

"When my poor father died, all cause of concealment was at an end; and I wished this very day to acknowledge my marriage with Mrs. St. Aubyn."

The man uttered a low expressive whistle, as who should say, "Here is a change, with a vengeance!" But he dared not express what he thought, and answered humbly,

"Well, your honor, I don't see how this alters it. You have nothing to do but to acknowledge madam as your wife, and there's no one will think of asking when you were married, nor hasn't no right to do so neither. And if they should, you can say the doctor married you in his own parlor, and I can swear to that, your honor; if you want me, any time; and so'll Jem

Alderly; and this writing, that I'll give you, will prove it any time, for it's in the doctor's own hand-writing, and signed by the witnesses. So just you give me the five hundred, and I'll give you the register; and you can do as you will with it, your honor. But if I was your honor, and you was Peter Verity, I'd just tell the servants, as madam was my wife, and interduce her as Mrs. St. Aubyn like; but I'd not say when nor where, nor nothing about it; and I'd just keep this here paper snug; as I could perduce it, if I wanted, or make away with it, if I wanted; it's good to have two strings to your bow always."

Jasper had listened to him in silence, with his eyes buried in his hands, while he was speaking, and as he ceased he made no reply; but remained motionless for several minutes.

Then he raised his head, and answered in an altered and broken voice.

"It can not be helped now, but I would give very much it had been otherwise." He opened a drawer, as he spoke, in the escritoir which stood before him, and took out of it a small box bound with brass and secured by a massive lock, the key of which was attached to a chain about his neck. It was filled with rouleux of gold, from which he counted out the sum specified, and pushed the gold across the table to the man, saying, "Count it, and see that it is right, and give me the paper."

Then satisfying himself that it was the very register in question, he folded it carefully, and put it away in the box whence he had withdrawn the gold; while the villain who had tempted him stowed away the price of his rascality in a leathern bag which he had brought with him for the purpose, well assured that his claim would not be denied.

That done, he stood erect and unblushing, and awaited the further orders of the young lord of Widecomb.

"Now, Peter," said he, collecting himself, "mark me. *You* are in *my* power! and if I ever hear that you have spoken

a word without my permission, or if you fail to speak when I command you—I will hang you."

And he spoke with a devilish energy, that showed how seriously he was in earnest. "Do you understand that, Master Peter Verity?"

"I do, your honor," answered the man, with a doubtful and somewhat gloomy smile; "but there is no need of such threats with me; it is alike my interest and my wish to serve you, as I have done already."

"And it is my interest and my wish that you should serve me, as differently as possible from the way in which you have served me; or served yourself, rather, I should say, sirrah."

"I beg your honor's pardon, if I have done wrong. I meant to do good service."

"Tush, sirrah! tush! If I be young, I am neither quite a child, nor absolutely a fool. You meant to get me into your power, and you have got yourself into mine. Now listen to me, I know you for a very shrewd rascal, Peter Verity, and for one who knows right well what to say, and what not to say. Now, as I told you, I am about this very evening to make known my marriage with the lady whom you saw me wed. You will be asked, doubtless, a thousand questions on the subject by all sorts of persons. Now, mark me, you will answer so as to let all who ask understand that I *am* married, and that *you* have known all about it from the first; but you will do this in such a manner that no one shall be able to assert that *you* have asserted anything; and further, that, if need should be hereafter, you may be able to deny point blank your having said aught, or known aught on the subject. I hope you will remember what I am desiring you to do correctly, Peter Verity; for, of a truth, if you make the slightest blunder, I shall carry this document, which you have stolen from the church-

register, to the nearest justice of the peace, and make my deposition against you."

"I understand perfectly, your honor, and will do your bidding correctly," said the fellow, not a little embarrassed at finding how much his position had altered, since he entered the library, as he thought, well nigh the young heir's master.

So you shall do well," replied Jasper. "Now get you gone. Let them give you some ale in the buttery, but when I send word to have the people collected in the great hall, make yourself scarce. It is not desirable that you should be there when I address them;" and lighting a hand-lamp as he ceased speaking, for it had grown dark already during the conversation, he turned his back on the discomfited sexton, and went up by a private staircase to what was called the ladies' withdrawing-room, an apartment which, having been shut up since the death of his own mother, had been reopened on Theresa's joining the family.

"The sexton of the church has been with you, Jasper," she said, eagerly, as her husband entered the room; "what should have brought him hither?"

"He was here, you know, dearest, at the sad ceremonial; and I had desired him to bring up a copy of the record of our marriage. He wished to deliver it to me in person."

"How good of you, dear Jasper, and how thoughtful," she replied, casting her fair, white arms about his neck, and kissing his forehead tenderly, "that you may show it to the people, and prove to them that I am indeed your wife."

"*Show* it to the people! *Prove* that you are my wife!" he answered impetuously, and with indignation in his every tone. "I should like to see the person ask me to show it, or doubt that you are my wife. No, indeed, dear Theresa, your very thought shows how young you are, and ignorant of the world. To do what you suggest, would but create the doubt, not de-

stroy it. No, when they have done supper, I shall cause the whole household to be collected in the great stone-hall; and when they are there, I shall merely lead you in upon my arm, tell them we have been married in private these three months past, and desire them to respect you as my dear wife, and their honored mistress. That, and your being introduced to all friends and visiters as Mistress St. Aubyn, is all that can be needed; and, in cases such as ours, believe me, the less eclat given to the circumstances, the better it will be for all parties. And do not, I pray you, dearest, suffer the servant-girls to ask you any questions on the subject, or answer them if they do. But inform me of it forthwith."

"They would not dream of doing so, Jasper," she replied gently. "And you are quite right, I am certain, and I will do all that you wish. Oh! I am so happy! so immeasurably happy, Jasper, even when I should be mournful at your good father's death, who was so kind to me; but I can not—I can not—this joy completely overwhelms me. I am too, too happy."

"Wherefore, so wondrous happy all on a sudden, sweet one?" asked the boy, with a playful smile, laying his hand, as he spoke, affectionately on her soft, rounded shoulder.

"That I need fear no longer to let the whole world know how dearly, how devotedly I love my husband."

And she raised her beautiful blue eyes to his, running over with tears of tenderness and joy; and her sweet lips half apart, so perfumed and so rosy, and radiant with so bright a smile, as might have tempted the sternest anchorite to bend over her as Jasper did, and press them with a long kiss of pure affection.

"Now I will leave you, dearest," he said, kindly, "for a little space, while I see that things are arranged for this great ceremonial. I will warn old Geoffrey first of what I am about to say to them, that they may not overwhelm us by their wonder at the telling; and do you, when you hear the great bell ring to assemble them, put on your prettiest smile, and your most courageous look, for then I shall be on my way to fetch you."

It was with a beating heart, and an almost sickening sense of anxiety, that poor Theresa awaited the moment which was to install her in the house of her husband as its lawful lady. She felt the awkwardness, the difficulty of her situation, although she was far indeed from suspecting all the causes which in reality existed to justify her embarrassment and timidity.

She had not long, however, to indulge in such fancies, and perhaps it was well that she had not; for her timidity seemed to grow on her apace, and she began to think that courage would fail her to undergo the ordeal of eyes to which she should be exposed.

But at this moment, when she was giving way to her bashfulness, when her terrors were gaining complete empire over her, the great bell began to ring. Slow and measured the first six or seven clanging strokes fell upon her ear, resembling more the minute-tolling of a death-bell, than the gay peal that gives note of festive tidings and rejoicing. But almost as soon as this thought occurred to her, it seemed that the ringer, whoever he was, had conceived the same idea, for the cadence of the bell-ringing was changed suddenly, and a quick, merry chime succeeded to the first solemn clangor.

At the same instant the door of the withdrawing-room was thrown open, and her young husband entered hastily, and catching her in his arms, kissed her lips affectionately. "Come, dearest girl," he said, as he drew her arm through his own, "come, it will all be over in five minutes, and then everything will go on as usual."

And without waiting a reply, he led her down the great staircase into the stone-hall, wherein all the servants of the household, and many of the tenantry and neighboring yeomen, who

had not yet dispersed after the funeral, were assembled in a surprised and admiring although silent crowd.

The old steward, to whom Jasper had communicated his purpose, had already informed them of the object of their convocation, and great was their wonder, though as yet they had little time to comment on it, or communicate their thoughts and suspicions of the news.

And now they were all collected, quiet, indeed, and respectful—for such was the habit of the times—but all eagerness to hear what the young master had to say, and, to speak truly, little impressed by the informality of the affair, and little pleased that one whom they regarded as little higher than themselves, should be elevated to a rank and position so commanding.

Gathering even more than his wonted share of dignity from the solemnity of the moment, and bearing himself even more haughtily than his wont, from a sort of an inward consciousness that he was in some sort descending from his proper sphere, and lowering his wife by doing that which was yet necessary to establish her fair fame, the young man came down the broad oaken-steps, with a slow, proud, firm step, his athletic although slender frame, seeming to expand with the elevation of his excited feelings. He carried his fine head, with the brows a little bent, and his eyes, glancing like stars of fire, as they ran over every countenance that met his gaze, seeking, as it seemed, to find an expression which should challenge his will or underrate his choice.

She clung to his arm, not timidly, although it was evident that she felt the need of his protection, and, although there was an air of bashfulness and a slight tremor visible in her bearing, they were mixed with a sort of gentle pride, the pride of conscious rectitude and purity, and she did not cast down her beautiful blue eyes, nor avoid the glances which were cast on her

from all sides, by some desiring to read her secret, by some wishing to prejudge her character, but looked around her tranquilly, with a sweet, lady-like self-possession, that won many hearts to her cause, which, before her coming, had been prepared to think of her unkindly.

Finding no eye in the circle that met his own with an inquisitive, much less an insolent glance, Jasper St. Aubyn paused, and addressed his people with a subdued and almost melancholy smile, although his voice was clear and sonorous.

"This a sad occasion," he said, "on which it first falls to my lot, my people, to address you here, as the master of a few, the landlord of many, and, as I hope to prove myself, the friend of all. To fill the place of him, who has gone from us, and whom you all knew so well, and had so much cause to love, I never can aspire; but it is my earnest hope and desire to live and die among you as he did; and if I fail to gain and hold fast your affections, as he did, it shall not be for want of endeavoring to deserve them. But my object in calling you together, my friends, this evening, was not merely to say this to you, or to promise you my friendship and protection, but rather to do a duty, which must not be deferred any longer, for my own sake, and for that of one far dearer than myself." Here he paused, and pressing the little white hand which reposed on his arm so gently, smiled in the face of his young wife, as he moved her a little forward into the centre of the circle. "I mean, to present to you all, Mistress St. Aubyn, my beloved *wife*, and your honored mistress! Some of you have been aware of this for some time already; but to most of you it is doubtless a surprise. Be it so. Family reasons required that our marriage should be kept secret for a while. Those reasons are now at an end, and I am as proud to acknowledge this dear lady as my wife, and to claim all your homage and affection for her, both on my account, and on account of her own virtues, as I doubt not you

will be proud and happy to have so excellent and beautiful a lady to whom to look up as your mistress."

He ceased, and three full rounds of cheering responded to his manly speech. The circle broke up, and crowded around the young pair, and many of the elder tenants, white-headed men and women, came up and craved permission to shake hands with the beautiful young lady, and blessed her with tears in their eyes, and wished her long life and happiness here and hereafter.

But among the servants of the household, there was not, by any means, the same feeling manifested. The old steward, indeed, who had grown up a contemporary of Jasper's father, and the scarcely less aged housekeeper, did, indeed, show some feeling, and were probably sincere as they offered their greetings, and promised their humble services. But among the maid-servants there passed many a meaning wink, and half-light, half-sneering titter; and two or three of the younger men nudged one another with their elbows, and interchanged thoughts with what they considered a vastly knowing grin. No remarks were made, however, nor did any intimation of doubt or distrust reach the eyes or ears of the young couple—all appeared to be truthful mirth and honest congratulation.

Then having ordered supper to be prepared for all present, and liquor to be served out, both ale and wine, of a better quality than usual, that the company might drink the health of their young mistress, well pleased that the embarrassing scene was at an end, Jasper led Theresa up to her own room, palpitating with the excitement of the scene, and agitated even by the excess of her own happiness.

But as the crowd was passing out of the hall into the dark passages which led to the buttery and kitchen, one of the girls of the house, a finely-shaped, buxom, red-lipped, hazel-eyed lass, with a very roguish expression, hung back behind the

other maids, till she was joined by the under-falconer, a strapping fellow in a green jerkin, with buckskin belt and leggins.

"Ha! Bess, is that you?" he said, passing his arm round her waist, "thou'rt a good lass, to tarry for me."

And drawing her, nothing reluctant, aside from the crowd into a dark corner, he kissed her a dozen times in succession, a proceeding which she did not appear, by any means to resent, the "ha' done nows!" to the contrary, notwithstanding, which she seemed to consider it necessary to deliver, and which her lover, probably correctly, understood as meaning, "Pray go on, if you please."

This pleasant interlude completed, "Well, Bess," said the swain, "and what think'st thou of the new mistress—of the young master's wife? She's a rare bit now, hant she?"

"Lor, Jem!" returned the girl, laughing, "she hant no more his wife than I be yourn, I tell you."

"Why, what be she, then, Bess?" said the fellow, gaping in stupid wonderment, "thou didst hear what Master Jasper said."

"Why, she be his sweetheart. Just what we be, Jem," said the unblushing girl, "what the quality folks calls his 'miss.' Why, Jem, he's slept in her room every night since she came here. He's only said this here, about her being his wife, to save her character."

"No blame to him for that Bess, if it be so. But if you're wise, lass, you'll keep this to yourself. She's a beauty, anyways; and I don't fault him, if she be his wife, or his 'miss,' either, for that matter."

"Lor!" replied the girl. "I shan't go to say nothing, I'm sure. I've got a good place, and I mean to keep it, too. It's naught to me how they amuse themselves, so they don't meddle with my sweet-hearting. But do you think her so pretty, Jem? She's a poor slight little slip of a thing, seems to me."

"She beant such an armful as thou, Bess, that's a fact," an-

swered the fellow, making a dash at her, which she avoided, and took to her heels, looking back, however, over her shoulders, and beckoning him to follow.

Such were not the only comments of the kind which passed that evening; and although, fortunately for Jasper's and Theresa's peace of mind, they never dreamed of what was going on below, it was in fact generally understood among the younger men and women, both of those within and without the house, that Jasper's declaration was a mere stratagem, resorted to in order to procure more respect and consideration for his concubine. And, although she was everywhere treated and addressed as St. Aubyn's wife, every succeeding day and hour she was more generally regarded as his victim, and his mistress.

Such is the consequence of a single lapse from rectitude and truth.

Alas for Theresa! her doom, though she knew it not, was but too surely sealed for ever.

Had it not been for the exceeding gentleness and humility of the unhappy girl, it is probable that she would have been very shortly made acquainted, one way or other, with the opinion which was entertained concerning her, in her own house, and in the neighborhood. But the winning affability of her manners, the total absence of all arrogance or self-elevation in her demeanor toward her inferiors in station, her respect everywhere manifested to old age and virtue, her kindness to the poor and the sick, her considerate good-nature to her servants, and above all her liberal and unostentatious charities, rendered it impossible that any could be so cruel as to offer her rudeness or indignity, on what was at most mere suspicion. Added to this, the fierce impetuosity of Jasper, when crossed by anything, or opposed in his will, and the certainty that he would stop at nothing to avenge any affront aimed at Theresa, so long as he

chose to style her his wife, deterred not only the household and village gossips, but even that more odious class, the hypocritical, puritanic, self-constituted judges of society, and punishers of what they choose to deem immorality, from following out the bent of their mischievous or malicious tempers.

In the meantime, month after month had passed away. Winter had melted into the promises of spring; and the gay flowers of summer had ripened into the fruits of luxuriant autumn. A full year had run its magic round since Theresa gave herself up to Jasper, for better for worse, till death should them part.

The slender, joyous maiden had expanded into the full-blown, thoughtful, lovely woman, who was now watching at the oriel window, alone, at sunset for the return of her young husband.

Alone, ay, alone! For no child had been born to bless their union, and to draw yet closer the indissoluble bonds which man may not put asunder. Alone, ay, alone! as all her days were now spent, and some, alas! of her nights also. For the first months of her wedded life, when the pain of concealment had been once removed, Theresa was the happiest of the happy. The love, the passion, the affection of her boy-bridegroom seemed to increase daily. To sit by her side, during the snowy days of winter, to listen to her lute struck by the master-hand of the untaught improvisatrice, to sing with her the grand old ballads which she loved, to muse with her over the tomes of romance, the natural vein of which was not then extinguished in the English heart, to cull the gems of the rare dramatists and mighty bards of the era, which was then but expiring; and, when the early days of spring-time gave token of their coming, in the swelling flowerbud and bursting leaf, to wander with her through the park, through the chase, to ride with her over the heathery moorland hills, and explore the wild recesses of the forest, to have her near him in his field-sports, to show her

how he struck the silvery salmon, or roused the otter from his sedgy lair—these seemed to be the only joys the boy coveted—her company his chiefest pleasure, the undisturbed possession of her charms his crowning bliss.

But passion is proverbially short-lived; and the most so with those who, like Jasper, have no solidity of character, no stability of feeling, no fixed principles, whereon to fall back for support. One of the great defects of Jasper's nature was a total lack of reverence for anything divine or human—he had loved many things, he never had respected one. Accustomed from his earliest boyhood to see everything yield to his will, to measure the value of everything by the present pleasure it afforded him, he expected to receive all things, yet to give nothing. He was in fact a very pattern of pure selfishness, though no one would have been so much amazed as he had he heard himself so named.

Time passed, and he grew weary, even of the very excess of his happiness—even of the amiability, the sweetness, the ever-yielding gentleness of his Theresa. That she should so long have charmed one so rash and reckless was the real wonder, not that she should now have lost the power of charming him.

Nevertheless so it was; the mind of Jasper was not so constituted as to rest very long content with anything, least of all with tranquillity—

"For quiet to hot bosoms is a hell!"

and his, surely, was of the hottest. He began as of old to long for excitement; and even the pleasures of the chase, to which he was still devoted, began to prove insufficient to gratify his wild and eager spirit. Day after day, Theresa saw less of him, and ere long knew not how or where many of his days were spent. Confidence, in the true sense of the word, there never had been between them; respect or esteem, founded upon

her real virtues and rare excellences, he had never felt—therefore, when the heat and fierceness of passion died out, as it were, by the consumption of its own fuel, when her personal charms palled on him by possession, when her intellectual endowments wearied him, because they were in truth far beyond the range of his comprehension, and therefore out of the pale of his sympathies, he had nothing left whereon to build affection—thus passion once dead in his heart, all was gone at once which had bound him to Theresa.

He neglected her, he left her alone—alone, without a companion, a friend, in the wide world. Still she complained not, wept not, above all upbraided not. She sought to occupy herself, to amuse her solitude with her books, her music, her wild flights into the world of fancy. And when he did come home from his fierce, frantic gallops across the country with the worst and wildest of the young yeomanry, or from his disgraceful orgies with the half-gentry of the nearest market-town, she received him ever with kindness, gentleness, and love.

She never let him know that she wept in silence; never allowed him to see that she noticed his altered manner; but smiled on him, and sung to him, and fondled him, as if he had been to her—and was he not so?—all that she had on earth. And he, such is the spirit of the selfish and the reckless of our sex, almost began to hate her, for the very meekness and affection with which she submitted to his unkindness.

He felt that her unchanged, unreproaching love was the keenest reproach to his altered manner, to his neglectful coldness. He felt that he could better have endured the bitterest blame, the most agonized remonstrance, the tears of the veriest Niobe, than meet the ever-welcoming smile of those rosy lips, the ever-loving glance of those soft blue eyes.

Perhaps had she possessed more of what such men as he call spirit, had the vein of her genius led to outbursts of vehe-

ment, unfeminine, Italian passion, the flashing eye, the curling lip, the face pallid with rage, the tongue fluent with the torrent eloquence of indignation, he might have found in them something to rouse his dormant passions from the lethargy which had overcome them, something to stimulate and excite him into renewed desire.

But as well might you expect from the lily of the valley the blushes and the thorns of the rose, from the turtle-dove the fury and the flight of the jer-falcon, as aught from Theresa St. Aubyn, but the patience, the purity, the quiet, and the love of a pure-minded, virtuous woman.

But she was wretched—most wretched—because hopeless. She had prayed for a child, with all the yearning eagerness of disappointed, craving womanhood—a child that should smile in her face, and love her for herself, being of herself, and her own—a child that should perhaps win back to her the lost affections of her lord. But in vain.

And still she loved him, nay, adored him, as of old. Never did she see his stately form, sitting his horse with habitual grace, approaching listlessly and slowly the home which no longer had a single attraction to his jaded and exhausted heart, but her whole frame was shaken by a sharp, nervous tremor, but a mist overspread her swimming eyes, but a dull ringing filled her ears, her heart throbbed and palpitated, until she thought it would burst forth from her bosom.

She ever hoped that the cold spell might pass from him, ever believed, ever trusted, that the time would come when he would again love her as of old, again seek her society, and take pleasure in her conversation; again let her nestle in his bosom, and look up into his answering eyes, by the quiet fireside in winter evenings. Alas! she still dreamed of these things—even although her reason told her that they were hopeless—even after he had again changed his mood from sullen coldness to

harsh, irritable anger, to vehement, impetuous, fiery wrath, causeless as the wolf's against the lamb, and *therefore* the more deadly and unsparing.

Politics had run high in the land of late, and everywhere parties were forming. Since the battle of Sedgemoor, and the merciless cruelty with which the royal judges had crushed out the life of that abortive insurrection, and drowned its ashes in floods of innocent gore, the rage of factions had waxed wilder in the country than they had done since the reign of the first Charles, the second English king of that unhappy race, the last of which now filled the painful seat of royalty.

Yet all was hushed as yet and quiet, as the calm which precedes the bursting of a thunder-cloud. Secluded as Widecomb manor was, and far divided from the seats of the other gentry of Devonshire by tracts of moor and forest, and little intercourse as Jasper had held hitherto with his equals in rank and birth—limited as that intercourse had been to a few visits of form, and a few annual banquets—the stir of the political world reached even the remote House in the Woods.

The mad whirl of politics was precisely the thing to captivate a mind such as Jasper's; and the instant the subject was broached to him, by some of the more leading youths of the county, he plunged headlong into its deepest vortices, and was soon steeped to the lips in conspiracy.

Events rendered it necessary that he should visit the metropolis, and twice during the autumn he had already visited it—alone. And twice he had returned to his beautiful young wife, who hailed his coming as a heathen priestess would have greeted the advent of her god, more alienated, colder, and more careless than before.

Since he had last returned, the coldness was converted into cruelty, active, malicious, fiendish cruelty. Hard words, incessant taunts, curses—nay, blows! Yet still, faithful to the end

and fond, she still loved him. Still would have laid down the dregs of the life which had been so happy till she knew him, and which he had made so wretched, to win one of his old fond smiles, one of his once caressing tones, one of his heart-felt kisses.

Alas! alas! Theresa! Too late, it was all too late!

He had learned, for the first time, in London, the value of his rank, his wealth, his position. He had been flattered by men of lordly birth, *fêted* and fondled by the fairest and noblest ladies of the land. He had learned to be ambitious—he had begun to thirst for social eminence, for political ascendency, for place, power, dominion. His talents had created a favorable impression in high quarters—his enthusiasm and daring rashness had made an effect—he was already a marked man among the conspirators, who were aiming to pull down the sovereignty of the Stuarts. Hints had been even thrown out to him, of the possibility of allying himself to interests the most important, through the beautiful and gorgeous daughter of one of the oldest of the peers of England. The hint had been thrown out, moreover, by a young gentleman of his own county—by one who had seen Theresa. And when he started and expressed his wonder, and alluded tremulously to his *wife*, he had been answered by a smile of intelligence, coupled with an assurance that every one understood all about Theresa Allan; and that surely he would not be such a fool as to sacrifice such prospects for a little village paramour. "The story of the concealed wedding took in nobody, my lad," the speaker added, "except those, like myself, who chose to believe anything you chose to assert. Think of it, *mon cher;* and, believe me, that *liaison* will be no hinderance."

And Jasper had thought of it. The thought had never been for one moment, absent from his mind, sleeping or waking, since it first found admission to the busy chambers of his brain.

From that unfortunate day, his life had been but one series of plots and schemes, all base, atrocious, horrible—some even murderous.

Since that day his cruelty had not been casual; it had a meaning, and a method, both worthy of the arch fiend's devising.

He sought first deliberately to break her heart, to kill her without violence, by the action of her own outraged affections—and then, when that failed, or rather when he saw that the process must needs be too slow to meet his accursed views, he aimed at driving her to commit suicide—thus slaying, should he succeed in his hellish scheme, body and soul together of the woman whom he had sworn before God's holy altar, with the most solemn adjuration, to love, comfort, honor, and keep in sickness and in health—the woman whose whole heart and soul were his absolute possession; who had never formed a wish, or entertained a thought, but to love him and to make him happy. And this—this was her reward. Could she, indeed, have fully conceived the extent of the feelings which he now entertained toward her, could she have believed that he really was desirous of her death, was actually plotting how he might bring it about, without dipping his hand in her blood, or calling down the guilt of downright murder on his soul, I believe he would have been spared all further wickedness.

To have known that he felt toward her not merely casual irritation, that his conduct was not the effect of a bad disposition, or of an evil temper only, but that determined hatred had supplanted the last spark of love in his soul, and that he was possessed by a resolution to rid himself of the restraint which his marriage had brought upon him, by one means or another—to have known this, I say, would have so frozen her young blood, would have so stricken her to the heart, that, if it had not slain her outright, it would have left her surely—perhaps happier even to be such—a maniac for the poor remnant of her life.

That morning, at an early hour, he had ridden forth, with two or three dogs at his heel, and the gamekeeper, James Alderly, better known in that neighborhood as Black Jem, who had of late been his constant companion, following him.

Dinner-time had passed—supper-time—yet he came not; and the deserted creature was yet watching wistfully, hopefully for his return.

Suddenly, far off among the stems of the distant trees, she caught a glimpse of a moving object; it approached; it grew more distinct—it was he, returning at a gallop, as he seldom now returned to his distasteful home, with his dogs careering merrily along by his side, and the grim-visaged keeper spurring in vain to keep up with the furious speed at which he rode, far in the rear of his master.

She pressed her hand upon her heart, and drew a long, deep breath. "Once more," she murmured to herself, "he hath come back to me once more!"

And then the hope flashed upon her mind that the changed pace at which he rode, and something which even at that distance she could descry in his air and mien, might indicate an alteration in his feelings. "Yes, yes! Great God! can it be? He sees me, he waves his hand to me. He loves—he loves me once again!"

And with a mighty effort, she choked down the paroxysm of joy, which had almost burst out in a flood of tears, and hurried from the room, and out upon the terrace, to meet him, to receive once more a smile of greeting. His dogs came bounding up to her, as she stood at the top of the stone steps, and fawned upon her, for they loved her—everything loved her, save he only who had most cause to do so.

Yet now, it was true, he did smile upon her, as he dismounted from his horse, and called her once more "Dear Theresa." And he passed his arm about her slender waist, and led her

back into the house, chiding her good-humoredly for exposing herself to the chilly night-wind.

"I feel it not," she said joyously, with her own sunny smile lighting up her face, "I feel it not—nor should feel it, were it charged with all the snow-storms of the north; my heart is so warm, so full. Oh! Jasper, that dear name, in your own voice, has made me but too happy."

"Silly child!" he replied, "silly child," patting her affectionately on the shoulder, as he had used to do in times long past—at least it seemed long, very long to her, though they were in truth but a few months distant. "And do you love me, Theresa?"

"Love you?" she said, gazing up into his eyes with more of wonder that he should ask such a question, than of any other feeling. "Love you, O God! can you doubt it, Jasper?"

"No," he said, hesitating slightly, "no, dearest. And yet I have given you but little cause of late to love me."

"Do you know *that*—do you feel *that*, Jasper?" she cried, eagerly, joyously, "then I am, indeed, happy; then you really do love me?"

"And can you forgive me, Theresa?"

"Forgive you—for what?"

"For the pain I have caused you of late."

"It is all gone—it is all forgotten! You have been vexed, grieved about something that has wrung you in secret. But you should have told me of it, dearest Jasper, and I would have consoled you. But it is all, all over now; nay, but I am now glad of it since this great joy is all the sweeter for the past sorrow."

"And do you love me well enough, Theresa, to make a sacrifice, a great sacrifice for me?"

"To sacrifice my heart's blood—ay, my life, if to do so would make you happy."

"Your life, silly wench! how should your little life profit

me? But that is the way ever with you women. If one ask you the smallest trifle, you ever proffer your lives, as if they could be of any use, or as if one would not be hanged for taking them. I have known girls refuse one kiss, and then make a tender of their lives."

He spoke with something of his late habitual bitterness, it is true; but there was a smile on his face, as he uttered the words, and she laughed merrily, as she answered.

"Oh! I will not refuse you fifty of those; I will be only too glad if you think them worth the taking. But I did speak foolishly, dearest; and you must not blame me for it, for my heart is so over flowing with joy, that, of a truth, I scarcely know what I say. I only wished to express that there is nothing in the wide world which you can ask of me, that I will not do, willingly, gladly. Will that satisfy you, Jasper?"

"Why, ay! if you hold to it, Theresa," he answered, eagerly; "but, mind you, it is really a sacrifice which I ask—a great sacrifice."

"No sacrifice is great," she replied, pressing his arm, on which she was hanging with both her white hands linked together over it, "no sacrifice which I can make, so long as *you* love me."

"I *do* love you dearly, girl," he answered; "and if you do this that I would have you do, I will love you ten times better than I do, ten times better than I ever did."

"That were a bribe, indeed," she replied, laughing with her own silvery, girlish laugh. "But I don't believe you could love me ten times better than you once did, Jasper. But if you will promise me to love me ever as you did then, you may ask me anything under heaven."

Well I will promise—I will promise, wench. See that you be as ready to perform."

And, as he spoke, he stooped down, for the keeper had now

retired with his horses, and they were entirely alone, and embraced her closely, and kissed her as he had not done for many a month before.

"I will—I will, indeed, dearest Jasper. Tell me, what is it I must do?"

"Go to your room, dearest, and I will join you there and tell you. I must get me a crust of bread and a goblet of wine, and give some directions to the men, and then I will join you."

"Do not be very long, dearest. I am dying to know what I can do to please you." And she stood upon tiptoes, and kissed his brow playfully, and then ran up stairs with a lighter step than had borne her for many a day.

Her husband gazed after her with a grim smile, and nodded his head in self-approbation. "This is the better way, after all. But will she, will she stand to it? I should not be surprised. 'S death! one can never learn these women! What d—d fools they are, when all is told! Flattery, flattery and falsehood, lay it on thick enough, will win the best of them from heaven to—Hades!"

Oh, man, man! and all that was but acting.

CHAPTER III.

THE SACRIFICE.

"Ask anything but that."

An hour had quite passed, when, as she sat alone in her little gayly-decorated study, with its walls hung with water-color drawing of her own execution, its tables strewn with poetry and music of her own composition, and her favorite books, and her own lute—her little study in which the happiest hours of her life had been spent, the first hours of her married life, while Jasper was all that her fancy painted him—his step came along the corridor, but with a slow and hesitating sound, most unlike to the quick, firm, decided tread, for which he was remarkable.

She noticed the difference, it is true, at the moment, but forgot it again instantly. It was enough! It was he! and he was coming once again to seek her in her own apartment; he had a boon to ask of her—he had promised to love her—he had called her "his dear Theresa."

And now she sprang up, with her soul beaming from her eyes, and ran to meet him. The door was opened ere he reached it, and as he entered, she fell upon his neck, and wound her snowy arms about his waist, and kissed him fifty times, and wept silent tears in the fullness of her joy.

And did not his heart respond in the least to her innocent and girlish rapture; did he not bend at all from his bad purpose; was there no melting, no relenting in that callous, selfish nature; was, indeed, all within him hard as the nether millstone?

He clasped her, he caressed her, he spoke to her fondly, lovingly, he kissed like Judas to betray. He suffered her to lead him to his favorite seat of old, the deep, softly-cushioned, low arm-chair, and to place her footstool by his side, and nestle herself down upon it as she used to do, with her arms folded negligently across his knee, and her beautiful rounded chin propped upon them, with her great earnest eyes looking up in his face, like unfathomable wells of tenderness.

And he returned her gaze of fondness, unabashed, unembarrassed; and yet it was some time before he spoke; and when he did speak at length, his voice was altered and almost husky. But it was from doubt how best he might play his part, not that he shrunk from the task he had imposed upon himself, either for shame or for pity.

"Well my Theresa," he said, at last, "have you thought whether you will make this sacrifice?"

"No, Jasper, I have not thought about it; but if you wish me to make it, I will make it, and it will be no sacrifice."

"But I tell you, Theresa, that it is a sacrifice, a mighty and most painful sacrifice; a sacrifice so great and so terrible, that I almost fear, almost feel that it would be selfish in me to ask it of you."

"Ask it, then; ask it quickly, that you may see how readily it shall be granted."

"Can you conceive no sacrifice that you would not make to please me?"

"None that you would ask of me."

"Theresa, no one can say what another *might* ask of them. Husbands, lovers, brothers, have asked strange sacrifices—fearful sacrifices, at woman's hands; and—they have been made."

"Ask me, then, ask me," she repeated, smiling, although her face had grown somewhat pale as she listened to his words, and marked his strangely excited manner. "I repeat, there is

no sacrifice which you would ask of me, which I will not make. Nay more, there is none which I should think a sacrifice if it is to preserve your love to me, when I feared that I had lost it for ever, though how, indeed, I knew not."

"We shall see," he said affecting to muse with himself, and ponder deeply. "We shall see; you are a great historian, and have read of all the celebrated women of times past and present. You have heard of the beautiful Mademoiselle Desvieux, she who—"

"She who was the promised wife of the great, the immortal Bossuet; and who sacrificed her own happiness, freeing her lover from the claims she held on him, lest a wife should be a clog upon his pure yet soaring ambition, lest an earthly affection should wean him from a higher love, and weaken the cords that were drawing him toward heaven! I have—I have heard of her! Who has not—who does not revere her name—who does not love her?

"And what think you of her sacrifice, Theresa?"

"That it was her duty. A difficult duty to perform, you will say, but still her duty. Her praise is, that she performed it gloriously. And yet I doubt not that her sacrifice bore her its own exceeding great reward. Loving as she loved, all her sorrows must have been changed into exultation, when she saw him in after days the saint he became, the saint she helped to make him."

"And could you have made such a sacrifice, Theresa?"

"I hope so, and I think so," she replied with a little hesitation. "But it avails not now to think of that, seeing that I can not make such. She was a maiden, I am a wedded wife."

"True dearest, true. I only named her, to judge, by your opinion, of what I wish to learn, ere I will ask you. There was another sacrifice, Theresa, a very terrible sacrifice, made of late, and made to no purpose, too, as it fell out—a sacrifice

of far more doubtful nature; yet there be some who have not failed to praise it?"

"What was it—do you praise it?"

"At least I pity it, Theresa."

"What was it?—tell me."

"After the late rebellion at Sedgemoor. Have you not heard, Theresa?"

"No, I think not—go on, I want to hear it; go on, Jasper."

"There was a young man, a cavalier, very young, very brave, very nobly born, and, it is said, very handsome. He was taken after the rout of that coward, Gray of Werk's horse—cast into prison, and, when his turn came, tried by the butcher, Kirke—you know what that means, Theresa."

"Condemned," she said, sadly. "Of course he was condemned—what next?"

"To be hung by the neck upon the shameful gibbet, and then cut down, while yet alive, and subjected to all the barbarous tortures which are inflicted as the penalty of high treason."

"Horrible! horrible! and—what more, Jasper?"

"Have you not, indeed, heard the tale?"

"Indeed, no, I pray you tell me, for you have moved me very deeply."

"It is very moving. The boy had a sister—the loveliest creature, it is said, that trod the soil of England, scarce seventeen years of age, a very paragon of grace, and purity, and beauty. They two were alone in the world—parents, kinsfolk, friends, they had none. They had none to love but one another, even as we, my Theresa; and they did love—how, you may judge. The girl threw herself at the butcher's feet, and implored her brother's pardon."

"Go on, go on, Jasper," cried the young wife, excited almost beyond the power of restraining her emotions by the dreadful interest of his tale, "and, for once, he granted it."

"And, for once, as you say, he granted it. But upon one condition."

"And that was—"

"And that was, that the young girl should make a sacrifice—an awful sacrifice—should submit, in a word, to be a martyr for her brother's sake."

"To die for him—and she died! Of course, she died to save him; that was *no* sacrifice, none, Jasper—I say none! Why, *any* woman would have done that."

"It was not to die for him—it was to sacrifice herself—herself—for she was lovely, as I told you—to the butcher."

"Ah!" sighed Theresa, with a terrible sensation at her heart, which she could not explain, even to herself; "and what—what did she?"

"She asked permission to consult her brother."

"And he told her that he had rather die ten thousand deaths than that she should lose one hair's breadth of her honor!" cried Theresa, enthusiastically clasping her hands together.

"And he told her that life was very sweet, and death on a gallows very shameful!"

"The caitiff! the miserable, loathsome slave! the filthy dastard! I trust that Kirke drew him with wild horses! The gallows were too good for such a slave."

"Then *you* would not have made such a sacrifice?"

"*I*—I!" she exclaimed, her soft, blue eyes actually flashing fire; "I sacrifice my honor! but lo!" she interrupted herself, smiling at her own vehemence, "am I not a little fool, to fancy that you are in earnest? No, dearest Jasper, I would no more make *that* sacrifice, than you would suffer me to do so. Did not I make that reservation? did I not say any sacrifice, which you would ask of me?"

"Ay, dearest!" he replied, gently laying his hand on her head, "you do me no more than justice there. I would die as

many deaths as I have hairs on my head, before you should so save me." And for the first time that night Jasper St. Aubyn spoke in earnest.

"I know you would, Jasper. But go on, I pray you, with this fearful tale. I would you had not begun it; but now you have, I must hear it to the end. What did she?"

"She did, Theresa, as her brother bade her. She sacrificed herself to the butcher!"

"Poor wretch! poor wretch! and so her brother lived with the world's scorn and curses on his head—and she—did she *die*, Jasper?"

"No, my Theresa. She is alive yet. It was the brother died."

"How so? how could that be? Did Kirke then relent?"

"Kirke never relented! When the girl awoke in the butcher's chamber, with fame and honor—all that she loved in life lost to her for ever—he bade her look out of the window—what think yon she saw there, Theresa?"

"What?"

"The thing, that an hour before was her brother, dangling in the accursed noose from the gibbet."

"And God did not speak in thunder?"

"To the girl's mind, he spoke—for that went astray at once, jangled and jarred, and out of tune for ever! *There* was a sacrifice, Theresa."

"A wicked one, and so it ended, wickedly. We'll none of such sacrifices, Jasper. If we should ever have to die, which God avert in his mercy, any death of violence or horror, we will die tranquilly and together. Will we not, dearest?"

"As you said but now, may the good God guard us from such a fate, Theresa; and yet," he added, looking at her fixedly, and with a strange expression, "we may be nearer to it than we think for, even now."

"Nearer to what, Jasper? speak," she cried eagerly, as if she had missed the meaning of the words he last uttered.

"Nearer to the perils of the law, for high treason," answered her husband, in a low, dejected voice. "It is of that I have been anxious to speak with you all the time."

"Then speak at once, for God's sake, dearest Jasper! speak at once, and fully, that we may know the worst;" and she showed more composure now, in what she naturally deemed the extremity of peril, than he had looked for, judging from the excitement she had manifested at the mere listening to the story of another's perils. "Say on," she added, seeing that he hesitated, "let me know the worst."

"It must be so, though it is hard to tell, Theresa; we—myself, I mean, and a band of the first and noblest youths of England—have been engaged, these three months past, in a conspiracy, to banish from the throne of England this last and basest son of a weak, bigoted, unlucky race of kings—this cowardly, blood-thirsty, persecuting bigot—this papist monarch of a protestant land, this James the Second, as men call him; and to set in his place the brave, wise, virtuous William of Nassau, now stadtholder of the United Provinces. It is this business which has obliged me to be absent so often of late, in London. It is the failure of this business which has rendered me morose, unkind, irritable—need I say more, you have pardoned me, Theresa."

"The failure of this business!" she exclaimed, gazing at him with a face from which dismay had banished every hue of color, "the failure!"

"Ay, Theresa, it is even so. Had we succeeded in liberating England from the cold tyrant's bloody yoke, we had been patriots, saviors, fathers of our country—Brutuses, for what I know, and Timoleons! We have failed—therefore, we are rebels, traitors; and, I suppose, ere long shall be victims."

"The plot, then, is discovered?"

"Even so, Theresa."

"And how long, Jasper, have you known this dreadful termination?"

"I have foreseen it these six weeks or more. I knew it, for the first time, to-day."

"And is it absolutely known, divulged, proclaimed? Have arrests been made?" she asked, with a degree of coolness that amazed him, while he felt that it augured ill for the success of his iniquitous scheme; but he had, in some sort, foreseen her questions, and his answers were prepared already. He answered, therefore, as unhesitatingly as if there had been one word of truth in all that he was uttering.

"It is *all* known to one of the leading ministers of the government; it is not divulged; and no arrests have been made yet. But the breathing space will be brief."

"All, then, is easy! Let us fly! Let us take horse at once—this very night! By noon to-morrow, we shall be in Plymouth, and thence we can gain France, and be safe there until this tyranny shall be o'erpast."

"Brave girl!" he replied, with the affectation of a melancholy smile. "Brave Theresa, you would bear exile, ruin, poverty, with the outlawed traitor; and we might still be happy. But alas, girl! it is too late to fly. The ports are all closed throughout England. It is too late to fly, and to fight is impossible.

"Then it remains only that we die!" she exclaimed, casting herself into his arms, "and that is not so difficult, now that I know you love me, Jasper." But, even as she uttered the words, his previous conversation recurred to her mind, and she started from his arms, crying out, "But you spoke of a sacrifice!—a sacrifice which I could make! Is it possible that I can save you?"

"Not me alone, Theresa, but all the band of brothers who are sworn to this emprise; nor them alone, but England, which may, by your deed, still be liberated from the tyrant."

She turned her beautiful eyes upward, and her lips moved rapidly, although she spoke not. She was praying for aid from on high—for strength to do her duty.

He watched her with calm, expectant, unmoved eyes, and muttered to himself, "I have gained. She will yield."

"Now," she said, "now," as her prayer was ended, "I am strong now to bear. Tell me, Jasper, what must I do to save you?"

"I can not tell you, dearest. I can not—it is too much—you could not make it; nor if *you* would, could I? Let it pass. We will die—all die together."

"And England!" exclaimed the girl, with her face kindling gloriously; "and our mother England, must she perish by inches in the tyrant's clutch, because *we* are cowards? No, Jasper, no. Be of more constant mind. Tell me, what is it I must do? and, though it wring my heart and rack my brain, if I *can* save you and your gallant friends, and our dear native land, I will save them, though it kill me.'

"Could you endure to part from me, Theresa—to part from me for ever?

"To part from you, Jasper!" no written phrase can express the agony, the anguish, the despair, which were made manifest in every sound of those few, simple words. A breaking heart spoke out in every accent.

"Ay, to part from me, never to see me more—never to hear my voice; only to know that I exist, and that I love you—love you beyond my own soul! Could you do this, Theresa, in the hope of a meeting hereafter, where no tyranny should ever part us any more?

"I know not—I know not!" she exclaimed, in a shrill, piercing tone, most unlike her usual soft, slow utterance. "Is this the sacrifice you spoke of? Would this be called for at my hands?"

"To part from me so utterly that it should not be known or suspected that we had ever met—ever been wedded."

"Why, Jasper," she cried, starting, and gazing at him wildly, "*that* were impossible; all the world knows that we have met—that we have lived together here—that I *am* your wife. What do you mean? Are you jesting with me? No, no! God help me! that resolute, stern, dark expression. No, no, no, no! Do not frown on me, Jasper; but keep me not in this suspense—only tell me, Jasper."

"The whole world—that is to say, the whole world of villagers and peasants here, do know that we have met—that we have lived together; but they do not *know*—nay, more, they do not *believe*, that you *are* my wife, Theresa."

"Not your wife—not your wife! What, in God's name, then, do they believe me to be. But I *am*—I *am*—yes, before God and man, I *am* your wife, Jasper St. Aubyn! That shame will I never bear. The parish register will prove it."

"Before God, dearest, most assuredly you *are* my wife; but before man, I grieve to say, it is not so; nor will the register, to which you appeal—as I did, when I first heard the scandal—prove anything, but against you. It seems the rascal sexton cut out the record of our marriage from the register, so soon as the old rector died. He is gone, so that he can witness nothing. Alderly and the sexton will not speak, for to do so would implicate themselves in the guilt of having mutilated the church-register. Alderly's mother is an idiot. We can *prove* nothing."

"And when did you learn all this, Jasper?" she asked, calmly; for a light, a fearful yet most clear illumination began to dawn upon her mind.

"Last night. And I rode down this morning to the church,

to inspect the register. It is as I was told; there is no trace of the record which we signed, and saw witnessed, on its pages."

"And to what end should Verity and Alderly have done this great crime needlessly?"

"Villains themselves, they fancied that I too was a villain; and that, if not then, at some after time, I should desire to profit by their villany, and should then be in their power."

"Ha!" she said, still maintaining her perfect possession. "It seems, at least, that their villany was wise, was prophetical."

"Theresa!" his voice was stern, and harsh, and threatening—his brow as black as midnight.

"Pardon me!" she said. "Pardon me, Jasper; but you should make allowance for some feeling in a woman. I am, then, looked upon as a lost, fallen wretch, as a disgrace to my name and my sex, a concubine, a harlot—is it not so, Jasper?'

"Alas! alas! Theresa!"

"And you would have me?—speak!"

"I would not have you do it; God knows! it goes nigh to break my heart to think of it—I only tell you what alone can save us—"

"I understand—it needs not to mince the matter; what is it, then, can save us—save *you*, I should say rather, and *your* friends?"

"That you should leave me, Theresa, and go where you would, so it were not within a hundred miles of this place—but better to France or Italy; all that wealth could procure you should have; and my love would be yours above all things, even although we never meet, until we meet in heaven."

"Heaven, sir, is for the innocent and faithful, not for the liar and the traitor! But how shall this avail anything to save you, if I consent to do it? I must know, all; I must see all clearly, before I act."

"Are you strong enough to bear what I shall say to you, my poor Theresa?"

"Else had I not borne to hear what you *have* said to me."

"It is the secretary of state, then, who has discovered our plot. He is himself half inclined to join us; but he is a weak, interested, selfish being, although of vast wealth, great influence, and birth most noble. Now, he has a daughter—"

"Ah!" the wretched girl started as if an ice-bolt had shot to her very heart, "and you—you would wed her!"

"That is to say, *he* would have me wed her; and on that condition joins our party. And so our lives, and England's liberties, should be preserved by your glorious sacrifice."

"I must think, then—I must think," she answered, burying her head in her hands, in truth, to conceal the agony of her emotions, and to gain time, not for deliberation, but to compose her mind and clear her voice for speech.

And he stood gazing on her, with the cold, cutting eye, the calm, sarcastic, sneer, of a very Mephistopheles, believing that she was about to yield, and inwardly mocking the very weakness on which he had played, to his own base and cruel purposes.

But in a moment she arose and confronted him, pale, calm, majestical, most lovely in her extremity of sorrow, but firm as a hero or a martyr.

"And so," she said, in a clear, cold, ringing voice, "this is the sacrifice you ask of me?—to sever myself from you for ever—to go forth into the great, cruel, cold world alone, with a bleeding, broken heart, a blighted reputation, and a blasted name? All this I might endure, perhaps I would—but you have asked *more* of me, Jasper. You have asked me to confess myself a thing infamous and vile—a polluted wretch—not a wife, but a wanton! You have asked *me*, your own wedded wife, to write myself down, with my own hand, a har-

lot, and to stand by and look on at your marriage with another —as if I were the filthy thing you would name me. Than be that thing, Jasper, I would rather die a hundred-fold; than call myself that thing, being innocent of deed or thought of shame, I had rather *be it!* Now, sir, are you answered? What, heap the name of harlot on my mother's ashes! What, blacken my dead father's stainless escutcheon! What—*lie*, before my God, to brand myself, the first of an honest line, with the strumpet's stain of blackness! Never! never! though thou and I, and all the youth of England, were to die in tortures inconceivable; never! though England were to perish unredeemed! Now, sir, I ask you, are you answered?"

"I am," he replied, perfectly unmoved, "I am answered, Theresa, as I hoped, as I expected to be."

"What do you mean?—did you not ask me to do this thing?"

"I did *not*, Theresa. I told you what sacrifice might save us all. I did *not* ask you to make it. Nay, did I not tell you that I would not even suffer you to make it?"

"But you told me—you told me—God help me, for I think I shall go mad! Oh! tempt me no further, Jasper; try me no further. Is—is this true, that you have told me?"

"Every word—every word of it, my own best love," answered the arch deceiver, "save only that I would not for my life, nay, for my soul, have suffered you to make the sacrifice I spoke of. Perish myself, my friends! perish England! nay, perish the whole earth, rather!"

"Then why so tempt me? Why so sorely, so cruelly try this poor heart, Jasper?"

"To learn if you were strong enough to share in my secrets —and you shall share them. We must fly, Theresa; not from Plymouth; not from any seaport, but from the wildest gorge in the wild coast of Devon. I have hired a fishing-boat to await us. We must ride forth alone, as if for a pleasure-party, across

the hills, to-morrow, and so make our way to the place appointed. If we escape, all shall be well—come the worst, as you said, my own Theresa, at least we shall die together."

"Are you in earnest, Jasper?"

"On my soul! by the God who hears me!"

"And you *will* take me with you; you will not cast me from you; you will uphold me ever to be your own, your wedded wife?"

"I will—I will. Not for the universe! not for my own soul! would I lose you, my own, my own Theresa!"

And he clasped her to his bosom, in the fondest, closest embrace, and kissed her beautiful lips eagerly, passionately. And she, half fainting in his arms, could only murmur, in the revulsion of her feelings, "Oh, happy! happy! too, too happy!"

Then he released her from his arms, and bade her go to bed, for it was waxing late, and she would need a good night's rest to strengthen her for the toils of to-morrow's journey.

And she smiled on him, and prayed him not to tarry long ere he joined her; and retired, still agitated and nervous from the long continuance of the dreadful mental conflict to which he had subjected her.

But he, when she had left the room, turned almost instantly as pale as ashes—brow, cheeks, nay, his very lips were white and cold. The actor was exhausted by his own exertions. The man shrunk from the task which was before him.

"The worse for her!" he muttered, through his hard-set teeth, "the worse for her! the obstinate, vain, wilful fool! I would, by Heaven! I would have saved her!"

Then he clasped his burning brow with the fingers of his left hand, as if to compress its fierce, rapid beating, and strode to and fro, through the narrow room, working the muscles of his clinched right hand, as if he grasped the hilt of sword or dagger.

"There is no other way," he said at length; "there is no other way, and I *must* do it—must do it with my own hand. But—can I—can I—?" he paused a moment, and resumed his troubled walk. Then halted, and muttered in a deep voice, "By hell! there is naught that a man can not do; and I—am I not a man, and a right resolute, and stout one? It shall be so—it is her fate! her fate! Did not her father speak of it that night, as I lay weak and wounded on the bed? did I not dream it thrice thereafter, in that same bed? though then I understood it not. It shall be there—even there—where I saw it happen; so shall it pass for accident. It is fate!—who can strive against their fate?"

Again he was silent, and during that momentary pause a deep, low, muttering roar was heard in the far distance—a breathless hush—and again, that long, hollow, crashing roll, that tells of elemental warfare.

Jasper's eyes flashed, and his whole face glared with a fearful and half-frenzied illumination.

"It *is*," he cried, "it *is* thunder! From point to point it is true! It is her fate—her fate!"

And with the words, he rushed from the room; and within ten minutes, was folded in the rapturous embrace of the snowy arms of her, whose doom of death he had decreed already in the secrets of his guilty soul.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEED OF BLOOD.

"It rose again, but indistinct to view,
And left the waters of a purple hue."—BYRON.

THROUGHOUT that livelong night, the thunder roared and roared incessantly, and from moment to moment the whole firmament seemed to yawn asunder, showing its inner vaults, sheeted with living and coruscant fire, while ever and anon long, arrowy, forked tongues, of incandescent brightness, darted down from the zenith, cleaving the massive storm-clouds with a crash that made the whole earth reel and shudder.

Never, within the memory of man, had such a storm been known at that season of the year. Huge branches, larger than trees of ordinary size, were rent from the gigantic oaks by the mere force of the hurricane, and whirled away like straws before its fury. The rain fell not in drops or showers, but in vast sheeted columns. The rills were swollen into rivers, the rivers covered the lowland meadows, expanded into very seas. Houses were unroofed, steeples and chimneys hurled in ruin to the earth, cattle were killed in the open fields, unscathed by lightning, by the mere weight of the storm.

Yet through that awful turmoil of the elements, which kept men waking, and bold hearts trembling from the Land's End to Cape Wrath, Jasper St. Aubyn slept as calmly as an infant, with his head pillowed on the soft bosom of his innocent and lovely wife. And she, though the tempest roared around, and the thunder crashed above her, so that she could not close an eye in sleep; though she believed that to-morrow she was about to fly from her native land, her home, never, perhaps, to see

them more; though she looked forward to a life of toil and wandering, of hardship, and of peril as an exile's wife, perhaps to a death of horror, as a traitor's confederate, she blessed God with a grateful heart, that he had restored to her her husband's love, and watched that dear sleeper, dreaming a waking dream of perfect happiness.

But him no dreams, either sleeping or waking, disturbed from his heavy stupor, or diverted from his hellish purpose. So resolute, so iron-like in its unbending pertinacity was that young, boyish mind, that having once resolved upon his action, not all the terrors of heaven or of hell could have turned him from it.

There lay beneath one roof, on one marriage-bed, ay, clasped in one embrace, the resolved murderer, and his unconscious victim. And he had tasted the honey of her lips, had fondled, had caressed her to the last, had sunk to sleep, lulled by the sweet, low voice of her who, if his power should mate his will, would never look upon a second morrow.

And here, let no one say such things can not be, save in the fancy of the rhapsodist or the romancer—that such things are impossible—for not only is there nothing under the sun impossible to human power, or beyond the aim of human wickedness, but such things *are* and have been, and will be again, so long as human passion exists uncontrolled by principle.

Such things have been among ourselves, and in our own day, as he who writes has seen, and many of those who read must needs remember—and such things were that night at Widecomb.

With the first dappling of the dawn, the rage of the elements sunk into rest, the winds sighed themselves to sleep, the pelting torrents melted into a soft, gray mist; only the roar of the distant waters, mellowed into a strange, fitful murmur, was heard in the general tranquillity that followed the loud uproar.

Wearied with her involuntary watching, Theresa fell asleep also, still clasping in her fond arms the miserable, guilty thing which she had sworn so fatally, and kept her vow so faithfully, to love, honor, and obey.

When the sun rose, the wretched man awoke from his deep and dreamless sleep; and as his eye fell on that innocent, sweet face, calm as an infant's, and serene, though full of deep thoughts and pure affections, he *did* start, he *did* shudder, for one second's space—perhaps for that fleeting point of time, he doubted. But if it were so, he nerved himself again almost without an effort, disengaged himself gently from the embrace of her entwined arms, with something that sounded like a smothered curse, and stalked away in sullen gloom, leaving her buried in her last natural slumber.

Two hours had, perhaps, gone over, and the morning had come out bright and glorious after the midnight storm, the atmosphere was clear and breezy, the skies pure as crystal, and the glad sunshine glanced and twinkled with ten thousand gay reflections in the diamond rain-drops which still gemmed every blade of grass, and glistened in every floweret's cup, when Theresa's light step was heard coming down the stairs, and her sweet voice inquiring where she should find Master St. Aubyn.

"I am here," answered his deep voice, which for the moment he made an effort to inflect graciously, and with the word he made his appearance from the door of his study, booted to the mid-thigh, and spurred; with a long, heavy rapier at his side, and a stout dagger counterbalancing it in the other side of his girdle. He was dressed in a full suit of plain, black velvet, without any ornament or embroidery; and whether it was that the contrast made him look paler, or that the horror of what he was about to do, though insufficient to turn his hard heart, had sufficed to blanch his cheek and lips, I know not,

but, as she saw his face, Theresa started as if she had seen a ghost.

"How pale you look, Jasper," she said earnestly; "are you ill at ease, dearest, or anxious about me? If it be the last, vex not yourself, I pray you; for I am not in the least afraid, either of the fatigue or of the voyage. For the rest," she added, with a bright smile, intended to reassure him, "I have long wished to see *La Belle France*, as they call it; and to me the change of scene, so long as you are with me, dearest Jasper, will be but a change of pleasure. I hope I have not kept you waiting. But I could not sleep during the night for the thunder, and about daybreak I was overpowered by a heavy slumber. I did not even hear you leave me."

"I saw that you slept heavily, my own love," he made answer, "and was careful not to wake you, knowing what you would have to undergo to-day, and wishing to let you get all the rest you could before starting. But come, let us go to breakfast. We have little time to lose, the horses will be at the door in half an hour."

"Come, then," she answered, "I am ready;" and she took his arm as she spoke, and passed, leaning on him, through the long suite of rooms, which now, for above a year had been her home in mingled happiness and sorrow. "Heigho!" she murmured, with a half sigh, "dear Widecomb! dear, dear Widecomb, many a happy hour have I spent within your walls, and it goes hard with me to leave you. I wonder, shall I ever see you more."

"Never," replied the deep voice of her husband, in so strange a tone, that it made her turn her head and look at him quickly. A strange, dark spasm had convulsed his face, and was not yet passed from it, when her eye met his. She thought it was the effect of natural grief at leaving his fine place—the place of his birth—as an outlaw and an exile; and half-repenting that

she had so spoken as to excite his feelings, she hastened to soothe them, as she thought, by a gayer and more hopeful word.

"Never heed, dearest Jasper," she said, pressing his arm, on which she hung, "if we do love old Widecomb, there are as fair places elsewhere, on the world's green face, and if there were not, happy minds will aye find, or make happy places. And we, why spite of time and tide, wind and weather, we *will* be happy, Jasper. And I doubt not a moment, that we shall yet live to spend happy days once more in Widecomb."

"I fear, never," replied the young man, solemnly. It was a singular feeling—he did not repent, he did not falter or shrink in the least from his murderous purpose; but, for his life, he could not give her a hope, he could not say a word to cheer her, or deceive her, further than he was compelled to do in order to carry out his end.

The morning meal passed silently and sadly; for, in spite of all her efforts to be gay, and to make him lighter-hearted, his brow was clouded, and he would not converse; and she, fearing to vex him, or to trespass on what she believed to be his deep regret at leaving home, ceased to intrude upon his sorrow.

At length he asked her, "Are you ready?" and as he spoke, arose from the table.

"Oh yes," she answered, "I am always ready when you want me. And see, Jasper," she added, "here are my jewels," handing him a small ebony casket, "I thought they might be of use to us, in case of our wanting money; and yet I should grieve to part with them, for they are the diamonds *you* gave me that night we were wedded."

He took it with a steady hand, and thrust it into the bosom of his dress, saying, with a forced smile, "You are ever careful, Theresa. But you have said nothing, I trust, to your maidens, of our going."

"Surely not, Jasper, they believe I am going but for a morn-

ing's ride. Do you not see that I have got on my new habit? You have not paid me one compliment on it, sir. I think you might at least have told me that I looked pretty in it. I know the day when you would have done so, without my begging it."

"Is that meant for a reproach, Theresa?" he said, gloomily, "because—"

"A reproach, Jasper," she interrupted him quickly, "how little you understand poor me! I hoped, by my silly prattle, to win you from your sorrow at leaving all that you love so dearly. But I will be silent—"

"Do so, I pray you, for the moment."

And without further words, he led her down the steps of the terrace, and helped her to mount her palfrey, a beautiful, slight, high-bred thing, admirably fitted to carry a lady round the trim rides of a park, but so entirely deficient in bone, strength, and sinew, that no animal could be conceived less capable of enduring any continuous fatigue, or even of making any one strong and sustained exertion. Then he sprung to the back of his own noble horse, a tall, powerful, thorough-bred hunter, of about sixteen hands in height, with bone and muscle to match, capable, as it would appear, of carrying a man-at-arms in full harness through a long march or a pitched battle.

Just as he was on the point of starting, he observed that one of his dogs, a favorite greyhound, was loose, and about to follow him, when he commanded him to be taken up instantly, rating the man who had held the horses very harshly, and cursing him soundly for disobeying his orders.

Then, when he saw that he was secure against the animal's following him, he turned his horse's head to the right hand, toward the great hills to the westward, saying aloud, so that all the bystanders could hear him—

"Well, lady fair, since we are only going for a pleasure-ride, suppose we go up toward the great deer-park in the forest. By

the way," he added, turning in his saddle, to the old steward, who was standing on the terrace, "I desired Haggerston, the horse-dealer, to meet me here at noon, about a hunter he wants to sell me. If I should not be back, give him some dinner, and detain him until I return. I shall not be late, for I fancy my lady will not care to ride very far."

"Don't be too sure of that, Jasper," she replied, with an arch smile, thinking to aid him in his project. "It is so long since I have ridden out with you, that I may wish to make a day of it. Come, let us start."

And she gave her jennet its head, and cantered lightly away over the green, her husband following at a trot of his powerful hunter; and in a few minutes they were both hidden from the eyes of the servants, among the clumps of forest-trees and the dense thickets of the chase.

At something more than three miles' distance from Widecomb house, to the westward, there is a pass in the hills, where a bridle-road crosses the channel of the large brook, which I have named so often, and which, at a point far lower down, was the scene of Jasper's ill-omened introduction to Theresa Allan.

This bridle-road, leading from the sparse settlements on Dartmoor to the nearest point of the seacoast, was a rough, dangerous track, little frequented except by the smugglers and poachers of that region, and lay, for the most part, considerably below the level of the surrounding country, between wooded hills, or walls of dark, gray rock.

The point at which it crosses the stream is singularly wild and romantic, for the road and the river both are walled by sheer precipices of gray, shattered, limestone rock, nearly two hundred feet in height, perfectly barren, bare, and treeless, except on the summits, which are covered with heather and low stunted shrubbery.

The river itself, immediately above the ford, by which the

road passes it, descends by a flight of rocky steps, or irregular, shelvy rapids, above a hundred feet within three times as many yards, and then spreads out into a broad, open pool, where its waters, not ordinarily above three feet deep, glance rapidly, still and unbroken, over a level pavement of smooth stone, almost as slippery as ice. Scarce twenty yards below this, there is an abrupt pitch of sixty feet in perpendicular height, over which the river rushes at all times in a loud, foaming waterfall, but after storms among the hills, in a tremendous roaring cataract.

The ford is never a safe one, owing to the insecure foothold afforded by the slippery limestone, but when the river is in flood, no one in his senses would dream of crossing it.

Yet it was by this road that Jasper had persuaded his young wife that they could alone hope to escape with any chance of safety, and to this point he was leading her. And she, though she knew the pass, and all its perils, resolute to accompany him through life, and if need should be, to death itself, rode onward with him, cheerful and apparently fearless.

They reached its brink, and the spectacle it afforded, was, indeed, fearful. The river swollen by the rains of the past night, though, like all mountain torrents, rising and falling rapidly, it was already subsiding, came down from the moors with an arrowy rush, clear and transparent as glass, yet deep in color as the rich brown cairn-gorm. The shelvy rapids above the ford were one sheet of snow-white foam, and in the ford itself the foam-flakes wheeled round and round, as in a huge, boiling caldron, while below it the roar of the cataract was louder than the loudest thunder, and the spray rolling upward from the whirlpool beneath, clung to the craigs above in mist-wreaths so dense that their summits were invisible.

"Good God!" cried Theresa, turning deadly pale, as she looked on the fearful pool. "We are lost. It is impossible."

"By Heaven!" he answered, impetuously, "I must pass it, or stay and be hanged. *You* can do as you will, Theresa."

"But is it possible?"

"Certainly it is. Do you think I would lead you into certain death? But see, I will ride across and return, that you may see how easy it is, to a brave heart and a cool hand."

And, confident in the strength of his horse and in his own splendid horsemanship, he plunged in dauntlessly, and keeping up stream near to the foot of the upper rapids, struggled through it, and returned to her without much difficulty, though the water rose above the belly of his horse.

He heard, however, that a fresh storm was rattling and roaring, even now, among the hills above, and he knew by that sign that a fresh torrent was even now speeding its way down the chasm.

There was no time to be lost—it was now or never. He cast an eager glance around—a glance that read and marked everything—as he came to land; save only Theresa, there was not a human being within sight.

"You see," he said, with a smile, "there is no danger."

"I see," she answered merrily. "Forgive me for being such a little coward. But you will lead Rosabella, won't you, Jasper?"

"Surely," he answered. "Come."

And catching the curb-rein of the pony with his left hand, and guiding his own horse with his right, holding his heavy-loaded hunting-whip between his teeth, he led her down into the foaming waters, so that her palfrey was between himself and the cataract.

It was hard work, and a fearful struggle for that slender, light-limbed palfrey to stem that swollen river; and the long skirt of Theresa's dress, holding the water, dragged the struggling animal down toward the waterfall. Still, despite every

disadvantage, it would have battled to the other side, had fair play been given it.

But when they reached the very deepest and most turbulent part of the pool, under pretence of aiding it, Jasper lifted the jennet's fore-legs, by dint of the strong, sharp curb, clear off the bottom. The swollen stream came down with a heavier swirl, its hind legs were swept from under it, in an instant, and with a piercing scream of agony and terror, the palfrey was whirled over the brink of the fall.

But, as it fell, unsuspicious of her husband's horrible intent, the wretched girl freed her foot from the stirrup, and throwing herself over to the right hand, with a wild cry, "Save me! save me, my God! save me, Jasper!" caught hold of his velvet doublet with both hands, and clung to him with the tenacious grasp of the death-struggle.

Even then—even then, had he relented, one touch of the spur would have carried his noble horse clear through the peril.

But no! the instant her horse fell, he shifted his reins to the left hand, and grasped his whip firmly in the right; and now, with a face of more than fiendish horror, pale, comprest, ghastly, yet grim and resolute as death, he reared his hand on high, and poised the deadly weapon.

Then, even then, her soft blue eyes met his, full, in that moment of unutterable terror, of hope and love, even then overpowering agony. She met his eyes, glaring with wolfish fury; she saw his lifted hand, and even then would have saved his soul that guilt.

"Oh no!" she cried, "oh no! I will let go—I will drown, if you wish it; I will, I will, indeed! O God! do not *you*—do not *you*—kill me, Jasper."

And even as she spoke, she relaxed her hold, and suffered herself to glide down into the torrent; but it was all too late—the furious blow was dealt—with that appalling sound, that

soft, dead, crushing plash, it smote her full between those lovely eyes.

"O God!—my God!—forgive—Jasper! Jasper!"—and she plunged deep into the pool; but as the waters swept her over the cataract's verge, they raised her corpse erect; and its dead face met his, with the eyes glaring on his own yet wide open, and the dread, gory spot between them, as he had seen it in his vision years before.

He stood, motionless, reining his charger in the middle of the raging current, unmindful of his peril, gazing, horror-stricken, on the spot where he had seen her last—his brain reeled, he was sick at heart.

A wild, piercing shout, almost too shrill to be human, aroused him from his trance of terror. He looked upward almost unconsciously, and it seemed to him that the mist had been drawn up like a curtain, and that a man in dark garb stood gazing on him from the summit of the rocks.

If it were so, it was but for a second's space. The fog closed in thicker again than before, the torrent came roaring down in fiercer, madder flood, and wheeling his horse round, and spurring him furiously, it was all that Jasper St. Aubyn could do, by dint of hand and foot, and as iron a heart as ever man possessed, to avoid following his victim to her watery grave.

Once safe, he cast one last glance to the rocks, to the river, but he saw, heard nothing. He whirled the bloody whip over the falls, plunged his spurs, rowel-deep, into the horse's sides, and with hell in his heart, he galloped, like one pursued by the furies of the slain, back, alone, to Widecomb.

CHAPTER V.

THE VENGEANCE.

"A change came o'er the spirit of my dream,
The wanderer was returned."—BYRON.

IT was not yet high noon, when, wet from spur to shoulder with mud and spray, bloody with spurring, spotted from head to heel with gory foam-flakes from his jaded horse's wide-distended jaws, and quivering nostrils, bareheaded, pale as death, and hoarse with shouting, Jasper St. Aubyn galloped frantically up to the terrace-steps of Widecomb house; and springing to the ground, reeled, and would have fallen headlong had he not been caught in the arms of one of the serving-men, who came running down the stone stairs to assist him.

As soon as he could collect breath to speak, "Call all!" he cried, "call all! Ring the great bell, call all—get ladders, ropes—run—ride—she is gone—she is lost—swept over the black falls at Hawkshurt! O God! O God!" and he fell, as it seemed, senseless to the earth.

Acting—sheer acting, all!

They raised him, and carried him up stairs, and laid him on the bed—on *her* bed—the bed whereon he had kissed her lips last night, and clasped her lovely form which was now haply entwined in the loathsome coils of the slimy mud-eels.

He shuddered. He could not endure it. He opened his eyes again, and feigning to recover his senses, chid the men from his presence, and again commanded, so peremptorily, that none dare disobey him, that every servant—man, woman, maid or boy—should begone to the place he had named, nor return till they brought back his lost angel's body.

They believed that he was mad; but mad or sane, his anger was so terrible at all times, and now so fierce, so frantic and appalling, that none dared to gainsay him.

Within half an hour after his return, save himself there was not a human being left within the walls of Widecomb manor.

Then he arose and descended slowly, but with a firm foot and unchanged brow, into the great library of the hall. It was a vast, gloomy, oblong chamber, nearly a hundred feet in length, wainscoted and shelved with old black-oak, and dimly lighted by a range of narrow windows, with dark-stained glass and heavily-wrought stone mullions.

There was a dull wood-fire smouldering under the yawning arch of the chimney-piece, and in front of the fire stood an old oaken-table, and a huge leathern arm-chair.

Into this Jasper cast himself, with his back to the door, which he had left open, in the absence of his mind. For nearly an hour he sat there without moving hand or foot, gazing gloomily at the fire. But, at the end of that time, he started, and seemed to recollect himself, opened the drawer of the writing-table, and took out of it the record of his wretched victim's marriage.

He read it carefully, over and over again, and then crushed it in his hand, saying, "Well, all is safe now, THANK GOD!" Yes, he *thanked God* for the success of the murder he had done! "But here goes to make assurance doubly sure."

And with the word he was about to cast the paper which he held into the ashes, when the hand of a man, who had entered the room and walked up to him with no very silent or stealthy step, while he was engrossed too deeply by his own guilty thoughts to mark very certainly anything that might occur without, was laid with a grip like that of an iron vice upon his shoulder.

He started and turned round; but as he did so, the other hand

of the stranger seized his right hand which held the marriage record, grasping it right across the knuckles, and crushed it together by an action so powerful and irresistible, that the fingers involuntarily opened, and the fatal document fell to the ground.

Instantly the man cast Jasper off with a violent jerk which sent him to a distance of some three or four yards, stooped, gathered up the paper, thrust it into his bosom, and then folding his arms across his stalwart breast, stood quietly confronting the murderer, but with the quietude of the expectant gladiator.

Jasper stared at the swarthy, sun-burnt face, the coal-black hair clipped short upon the brow, the flashing eyes, that pierced him like a sword. He knew the face—he almost shuddered at the knowledge—yet, for his life, he could not call to mind where or when he met him.

But he stared only for an instant; insulted—outraged—he, in his own house! His ready sword was in his hand forthwith—the stranger was armed likewise with a long broadsword and a two-edged dagger, and heavy pistols at his girdle; yet he moved not, nor made the slightest movement to put himself on the defensive.

"Draw, dog!" cried Jasper, furiously. "Draw and defend yourself, or I will slay you where you stand."

"Hold!" replied the other steadily. "There is time enough—I will not balk you. Look at me!—do you not know me?"

"Know you?—not I; by Heaven! some rascal smuggler, I trow—come to rob while the house is in confusion! but you have reckoned without your host this time. You leave not this room alive."

"That as it may be," said the other, coolly. "I have looked death in the face too often to dread much the meeting; but ere I die, I have some work to do. So you do not know me?"

"Not a whit, I tell you."

"Then is the luck mine, for I know you right well, young sir!"

"And for whom do you know me!"

"For a most accursed villain always!" the man answered; "two hours since, for Theresa Allan's murderer! and now, thanks to this paper, which, please God, I shall keep, for Theresa Allan's—husband!"

He spoke the last words in a voice of thunder, and at the same time drew and cocked, at a single motion, a pistol with each hand.

"You know too much—you know too much!" cried Jasper, furious but undaunted. "One of us two must die, ere either leaves this room."

"It was for that end I came hither! Look at me now, and know Denzil Bras-de-fer—Theresa Allan's cousin! your wife's rejected lover once, and now—your wife's avenger!"

"Away! I will not fight you!"

"Then, coward, with my own hands will I hang you on the oak tree before your own door; and on your breast I will pin this paper, and under it will write, 'Her Murderer, taken in the fact, tried, condemned, executed by me,

Denzil Bras-de-fer.'"

"Never!"

"Take up your pistols, then—they lie there on the table. We will turn, back to back, and walk each to his own end of the room, then turn and fire—if that do not the work, let the sword finish it."

"Amen!" said St. Aubyn, "and the Lord have mercy on your soul, for I will send it to your cousin in five minutes."

"And may the fiend of hell have yours—as he will, if there be either fiend or God. Are you ready?"

"Ay."

"Then off with you, and when you reach the wall, turn and fire."

And as he spoke, he turned away, and walked slowly and deliberately with measured strides toward the door by which he had entered.

Before he had taken six steps, however, a bullet whistled past his ear, cutting a lock of his hair in its passage, and rebounded from the wall, flattened at his feet. Jasper had turned at once, and fired at him with deliberate aim.

"Ha! double murderer! die in your treason!" and the sailor leveled his pistol in turn, and pulled the trigger; had it gone off, Jasper St. Aubyn's days were ended then and there; but no flash followed the sparks from the flint—and he cast the useless weapon from him.

At once they both raised their second pistol, and again Jasper's was discharged with a quick, sharp report; and almost simultaneously with a crack, a dull sound, as of a blow, followed it; and he knew that his ball had taken effect on his enemy.

Again Denzil's pistol failed him; and then, for the first time Jasper observed that the seaman's clothes were soaked with water. He had swam that rapid stream, and followed his beloved Theresa's murderer, almost with the speed of the stout horse that bore *him* home.

Not a muscle of Denzil's face moved, not a sinew of his frame quivered, yet he was shot through the body, mortally—and he knew it.

"Swords!" he cried, "swords!"

And bounding forward, he met the youth midway, and at the first collision, sparks flew from the well-tempered blades.

It was no even conflict, no trial of skill—three deadly passes of the sailor, as straight and almost as swift as lightning, with a blade so strong, and a wrist so adamantine, that no slight of Jasper's could divert them, were sent home in tierce—one in his throat, "That for your lie!" shouted Denzil; a

second in the sword-arm, "that for your coward blow!" a third, which clove his heart to the very cavity, "that for your life!"

Ten seconds did not pass, from the first crossing of their blades until Jasper lay dead upon the floor, flooding his own hearth-stone with his life-blood.

Denzil leaned on his avenging blade, and looked down upon the dead.

"It is done! it is done just in time! But just—for I am sped likewise. May the great God have mercy on me, and pardon me my sins, as I did this thing not in hatred, but in justice and in honor! Ah—I am sick—sick!"

And he dropped down into the arm-chair in which Jasper was sitting as he entered; and though he could hardly hold his head up for the deadly faintness, and the reeling of his eyes and brain, by a great effort he drew out the marriage-record from his breast—Jasper's ball had pierced it, and it was dappled with his own life-blood—and smoothed it out fairly, and spread it on the board before him.

Then he fell back, and closed his eyes, and lay for a long time motionless; but the slow, sick throbbing of his heart showed that he was yet alive, though passing rapidly away.

Once he raised his dim eyes, and murmured, "They tarry—they tarry very long. I fear me, they will come too late."

But within ten minutes after he had spoken, the sound of a multitude might be heard approaching, and a quick, strong, decided step of one man coming on before all the rest.

Within the last few minutes, Denzil had seemed to lose all consciousness and power. He was, indeed, all but dead.

But at these sounds he roused like a dying war-horse to the trumpet; and as the quick step crossed the threshold, he staggered to his feet, drew his hand across his eyes, and cried, with his old sonorous voice—it was his last effort—

"Is that you, lieutenant?"

"Ay, ay, captain."

"Have you found her?"

"She is here," said the young seaman, pointing with his hand to the corpse, which they were just bearing into the room.

"And he—ha! ha! ha! ha!—he is there!" and he pointed with a triumphant wafture of his gory sword, toward Jasper's carcass, and then, with the blood spouting from his mouth and nostrils, he fell headlong.

His officer raised him instantly, and as the flow of blood ceased, he recovered his speech for a moment. He pointed to the gaping crowd.

"Have—have you—told them—lieu—lieutenant?"

"No, sir."

"Tell—tell them—l-let me hear you."

"You see that wound in her forehead—you saw it all, from the first," he said, to the crowd, who were gazing in mute horror at the scene. "I told you, when I took you to the body, that I saw her die, and would tell you how she died, when the time should come. The time has come. He—that man, whose body lies there bleeding, and whose soul is now burning in Tophet, murdered her in cold blood—beat her brains out with his loaded hunting-whip. I—I, Hubert Manvers, saw him do it."

There was a low, dull murmur in the crowd, not of dissent or disbelief, but of doubt.

"And who slew master?" exclaimed black Jem Alderly, coming doggedly forward, "this has got to be answered for."

"It is answered for, Alderly," said Denzil, in a faint, but audible voice. "I did it—I slew him, as he has slain me. I am Denzil Olifaunt, whom men call Bras-de-fer. Do any of you chance to know me?"

"Ay, ay, all on us! all on us!" shouted half the room; for

the frank, gallant, bold young seaman had ever been a general favorite. "Huzza, for Master Denzil!"

And in spite of the horrors of the scene, in spite of the presence of the dead, a loud cheer followed.

"Hush!" he cried, "hush! this is no time for that, and no place. I am a dying man. There is not five minutes' life in me. Listen to me. Did any of you ever hear me tell a lie?"

"Never! never!"

"I should scarce, therefore, begin to do so now, with heaven and hell close before my eyes. Hubert Manvers spoke truly. I also saw him murder her—murder his own wife—for such she was; therefore I killed him!" He gasped for a moment, gathered his breath again, and pointing to the table, "that paper, Hubert—quick—that paper—read it—I—am going—quick!"

The young man understood his superior's meaning in an instant, caught the paper from the table, beckoned two or three of the older men about him, among others, Geoffrey, the old steward, and read aloud the record of the unhappy girl's marriage.

At this moment the young vicar of Widecomb entered the room, and his eyes falling on the paper, "That is my father's handwriting," he cried; "this is a missing leaf of my church-register!"

"Was she not—was she not—his—wife?" cried Bras-de-fer, raising himself feebly on his elbow, and gazing with his whole soul in his dying eyes at the youthful vicar, and at the horror-stricken circle.

"She was—she was assuredly, his lawful wife, and such I will uphold her," said the young man, solemnly. "Her fame shall suffer no wrong any longer—her soul, I trust, is with her God already—for she was innocent, and good, and humble, as she was lovely and loving. Peace be with her."

"Poor, poor lady!" cried several of the girls who were present, heart-stricken, at the thought of their own past conduct, and of her unvarying sweetness. "Poor, poor lady!"

"Hubert—Hubert—I—I have cleared her—char—her character, I have avenged her death; lay me beside her. In ten—ten minutes I shall be—God—bless you, Hubert—with Theresa! A—men!"

He was dead. He had died in his duty—which was justice—truth—vengeance!

Vernon in the Vale;

OR,

THE PRICE OF BLOOD.

A

Sad Tradition of the North.

1745.

THE PRICE OF BLOOD.

PART I.

"But it is not to list to the waterfall,
That Parisina leaves her hall;
And it is not to gaze on the heavenly light,
That the lady walks in the shadow of night;
And if she sits in Este's bower,
'T is not for the sake of its full-blown flower."—PARISINA.

IN that remote and romantic district of old England, known in the north country as Milbourne forest, which lies close on the frontier of the three counties, Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Yorkshire, there stood, in the middle of the eighteenth century, a fine old baronial hall, surrounded by a grand, wild chase, of which the deep and solemn woods alone remain to attest its olden magnificence. About equi-distant from Appleby and Penrith, both of which towns were divided from it by a space above ten miles in length, of wild, open moors, and huge, heath-clad fells, as they are called in that part of the world, the manor-house stood in a deep, sequestered lap of land, bordered on the south by a beautiful, rapid trout-stream—one of the tributaries of the Eden—and commanded a striking view of the huge, purple masses of Cross Fell to the north-eastward.

The little hamlet of Ousby adjoining the park on the northern side, and the village of Edenhall, about five miles distant to the westward, were the only human habitations in the neighborhood; and as neither of these small places contained any persons above the rank of peasants or small farmers, with the exception of their respective vicars, it will be readily believed that they contributed little to the society of the proprietors of Vernon in the Vale—a family of high and ancient lineage, from whose name their ancestral seat had derived its appellation.

Even at this day, that is a remote and wild region, traversed by no great road, and, as it lies a little to the eastward of that beautiful and much-visited tract, known as the Lake country, seldom traversed except by the foot of the grouse-shooter, the geologist, or the stray lover of the picturesque—the true "nympharum fugientum amator" of the nineteenth century. If such is the case even now, when all England is intersected by a network of iron roads, and sped across in all directions with almost winged speed by the marvellous power of machinery, much more was it so a hundred years since, when travelling was slow and tedious—when even the great highroads were difficult and dangerous, and above all when it was the fashion of the day for all, or nearly all, the great, the rich, and the noble of the land to dwell permanently in the precincts of the court, and to regard a sojourn on their estates in the country much as a Russian would now look upon an exile to Siberia.

Up to the period of the great civil war of 1642, the nobles and gentry of England had resided constantly on their estates during the chief part of the year, among their tenantry partaking in their rustic sports, and possessing their affections, and visiting the metropolis only for a short period, much as is the case at present, during the session of the houses of parliament.

After the Restoration, however, the profligate and worthless

son of the martyred king, with his vicious companions, introduced, among other continental habits, the fashion of residing permanently in the vicinity of the court, and visiting the country only at long and uncertain intervals. During the successive reigns of James the Second, the Dutch William, Anne, and the first two monarchs of the house of Brunswick, this foolish and injurious fashion continued to prevail; and it was perhaps as much, as to any other cause, owing to the simple habits, the love of rural life, and the quiet country-gentleman tastes of the third George, that the aristocracy of England were again seen to consult alike their dignity, their interest, and their duty, by dwelling principally among their dependants and considering their estates as their home.

A century ago, however, this was very far from being the case; the country-gentlemen were illiterate and coarse-mannered, hunters of foxes and swillers of punch, of whom Squire Western may be regarded as the type, while the rudeness of the resident clergy is scarcely exaggerated in the well-known portrait of Parson Adams.

If a nobleman, in those days, retired to his country-seat, it was, as they now-a-days retreat to the Continent, to economize the relics of their damaged fortunes, and to languish for the hour of revisiting the *fumum et opes strepitumque Romæ*, at the termination of a long and weary banishment.

To this rule, as to all others, there were, however, exceptions; and even in that day there were high-born and high-bred men, habitual dwellers in the country, doing their duty to their dependants, and an honor to their class, as English gentlemen and landlords.

The greater number of these were, perhaps, at the time of which I write, of what was then generally called the old religion; for in those days of violent party strife and political animosity, the Roman catholic gentry were, for the most part, out

of favor with the protestant princes of the house of Hanover, and were supposed to be at least wavering in their allegiance to that dynasty, if not openly attached to the king over the water, who held their own religious faith.

Neglected, therefore, if not actually slighted by the powers in London, obnoxious to insult and even violence from the bigoted rabble of the metropolis, and shunned, in some degree, by their own order of the adverse creed, it was natural enough that the nobles and gentlemen attached to the Romish church, who by the way were for the most part from the northern counties, should prefer living honored and respected among their tenantry and neighbors, a great number of whom were of their own belief, to enduring scant courtesy, if not palpable affront, at the court of St. James.

And many were the families throughout Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cumberland, as well as yet farther north, who had set up their household gods permanently on the hearth-stones of their own baronial halls, and passed their days in healthful sports, and their evenings in elegant and dignified seclusion, independent of the voice of venal senates, and careless of the prejudices or the partialities of foreign monarchs. Pity it was, that the injustice which was in truth done them, nurtured among their class a spirit of disaffection, and even of personal dislike, to the first monarchs of the house of Brunswick; who had indeed no natural qualities, such as conciliate estranged affections, and who as certainly made no artificial efforts to win the love of any portion, and of this least of all, of their new subjects.

Pity it was, I say—not that the first and second Georges should have failed to gain what they would not have valued if possessed, but that the good, the nobly born, and the high-minded of their people should have been led to cherish, year after year, a vain and ill-starred affection for their banished princes—princes of a line the most disastrous to their countries

their adherents and themselves, that ever sat upon the throne; the most selfish and ungrateful in prosperity, and in adversity the most self-seeking, pertinacious and unbending of all sovereign races.

Peace to their ashes! for if their crimes were great, their sufferings were in proportion, heavy; and if, through them, many, the best and truest of their followers, fell on the battle-field—fell on the bloody scaffold—fell weary exiles upon a far land's hated shore, they themselves likewise fattened the battle-field, flooded the block, pined, far from crown and country, faint and forgotten exiles.

But true it is, however lamentable, that in those days—and in those only, for when else was it tried and found faithless—the heart of England's catholic aristocracy was across the seas with the outcast and the stranger, and awaited but the blast of a foreign trumpet, ill-omened harbinger of a native monarch, to leap to arms against the foreign family which filled the royal chair of England.

And of this aristocracy the Vernons, of Vernon in the Vale, were neither the lowest nor the least influential members. So long as the banner of a Stuart had floated to a British breeze, so long had their feet been in the stirrup, and their hands on the hilt, beneath it.

Under the first and second Charles, Marston, and Naseby, and Dunbar, and Worcester—under the second James, the fatal waters of the Boyne, and the sad heights of Aghrim—under the chevalier St George, Burnt Island, and Proud Preston, had each and all seen the Vernon, of Vernon in the Vale, in arms against the Parliament, the Dutch usurper, as the Jacobites were wont to term him, or the intrusive house of Brunswick. But though they had died by the sword, or by the axe, in century after century; though sequestration and confiscation had shorn the splendor of their fortunes—not for that had they

in one iota abated from their ill-omened and almost insane adherence to the ill-fated house of Stuart; and not less fervently did the fire of that disastrous loyalty burn in the breast of Reginald Vernon, the last survivor of the family, in the year preceding the unhappy '45, than it had burned in the cavalier of the first fallen Charles.

Nay, if anything, it burned more fervently, and with a fiercer blaze; for in his heart it had been fed by the blood of a father butchered upon the cruel scaffold, and kept alive by the tears of a half heart-broken mother, who had inculcated with his first lessons, on his tender mind, the all-excelling virtue of loyalty to the living king; the all-engrossing duty of vengeance for the slain sire. And fully, fatally, had Reginald profited by the teaching.

From a musing, melancholy, moody boy, full of strange fancies and unboyish feelings, he had grown up into a dark, brooding, gloomy, but most noble-minded man, who seemed to live for himself the least of all men, and within himself the most.

His father had perished after the '15 by all the possible refinements of barbarity which the law in that day still denounced, and popular opinion still sanctioned, against those guilty of high treason. His mother had survived—though existing much after the manner of that sainted queen

> "Who, oftener on her knees than on her feet,
> Died every day she lived"—

long enough to fill his young soul with one all-overpowering idea—or, to speak more correctly, with two moulded into one—of everlasting faith to the house of Stuart, and of undying hatred to the house of Hanover; and had then passed away to join the lost comrade of her earthly joys, leaving her son to brood over what he regarded as the double murder of his parents, and to dream of a dreadful vengeance, already in his fourteenth year a precocious man of full-grown intellect, and a premature rebel of stern and obstinate resolution.

Notwithstanding, however, the almost continual preoccupation of his inner being with this one fatal sentiment, he had found time to cultivate not only the faculties but the graces of both mind and body to the utmost, so that there were, perhaps, at that day, few men in the kingdom more perfectly finished than Reginald Vernon, in all accomplishments of a gentleman and cavalier of honor. In all sports and exercises, he was pre-eminent above all his peers, though, it was observed, that he ever seemed to partake in them without pleasure, and to excel in them without triumph. As a horseman and a mighty hunter, he was unexcelled in the north country, the home then, as now, of sylvan exercises, and the school for skill in the field-sports. In the use of the sword, the masters-at-arms of Italy and Spain confessed him *facile princeps*. As a marksman and mountaineer, the land of fells and tarns, of the red deer and the eagle, proclaimed him its chiefest glory.

Add to this, that he was "a scholar, and a ripe and good one," that the lore of the old, and the language of the modern world, were both familiar to him as his mother-tongue—that in the exact sciences he was no slender proficient, and that in the theory, at least, of the art of war, he had been pronounced by competent authorities, a stragetist second to none in Europe.

Of a fine person, and a noble countenance, although the last was colored by an habitual gloom which clouded the light of the expressive eye, and saddened the sweet smile which it could not otherwise impair—of a lineage which the noblest could not undervalue, of wealth amply sufficient for the largest wishes—for by great efforts of powerful friends, the attainder had been reversed, and the confiscation of his paternal property remitted, while a long minority had repaired the havoc of past

sequestrations—what position could be thought more enviable, what fortune fairer than that of Reginald Vernon.

Yet, in his own eyes, all these advantages were as nothing —or, if anything, as means only for the attainment of an end, and that end vengeance. Hence, at all hours, amid all occupations, his attention would at times flag, his eye would become abstracted, his mind would flee far away—forward, ever forward, grasping at the intangible, pursuing the unattainable.

In the summer of the year '45, he had arrived at his thirty-seventh year, and his superb and unimpaired manhood gave promise of a long life of utility—for, despite his preoccupation and abstraction, his life *was* eminently useful—and of a green old age and honored exit from this world of probation. By the tenantry, and the poor of his neighborhood, he was more than loved, he was almost worshipped, and justly was he so esteemed, for as proud as Lucifer himself to his superiors, he was humble as the lowliest to his inferiors, courteous to every one, kind to the deserving, charitable to all who needed it—the truest and most devoted of friends—the most generous and considerate of landlords—the most indulgent, apart from weakness, of fathers—and of husbands the most constant, and most unalterable in his calm, grave tenderness. For he had been wedded some four years to a lady of rare beauty, noble birth, and exquisite accomplishment, although many years his junior, and even at that day a minor. For he was the father of two beautiful, bright children, an heir to the father's virtue, an heiress to the mother's beauty.

And yet this marriage, which might have been looked upon as likely to be the crowning act of happiness to his life, which might have been expected to exert influences the most beneficial on his character, and perhaps, even to conquer the morbid thirst for vengeance, and attune his diseased spirit to a better and more wholesome character of sentiment, was perhaps, in

truth, the least wise action of a not unwise man, and had in reality aggravated what a different union might have relieved, if not cured.

Agnes d'Esterre, was, as I have stated, very young, very beautiful, and as accomplished a girl as any in the court of George the Second. For, although she was of a Roman catholic family, and not very remotely connected with her husband's race, her line had carefully held themselves aloof from all partisan politics, and had, indeed, owing to some hereditary disgust at the Stuarts, been so far opposed to their restoration to the throne, as to hold themselves entirely neutral, when neutrality was considered by the more zealous Romanists, as little short of treason.

Thus sprung, and thus endowed with all the graces that charm in a court and fascinate in society, Agnes d'Esterre had been, for nearly two years, the bright, particular star of the Hanoverian court of St. James, and had been somewhat too conspicuous for her love of admiration, and something which her friends called gayety, but which the world at large had set down to the score of levity, when she was suddenly called upon in compliance with one of those old family contracts which were still at that time in vogue, to give up the gay frivolities of the metropolis, and the court, and to take in exchange the noble gravity and decorous dignity belonging to the wife of Sir Reginald Vernon, of Vernon in the Vale, to whom she had actually been affianced before she was herself born, and while he was but a boy scaling the craigs of Skiddaw and Ilellvellyn, to harry the eyry of the eagle, or luring the bright trout with the gaudy fly, from the clear expanse of Derwentwater, or the swift ripples of the Eden.

It had been observed, during the last season of her unmarried life, that, in spite of her girlish humor for gayety and change, and of her volatile and coquettish love for admiration,

the beautiful Agnes d'Esterre was sure to dance at least twice in the course of every fall with young Bentinck Gisborough, of late one of the king's pages, and now a dashing cornet in the crack corps of that day, Honeywood's dragoons; and that his charger was sure to be reined up beside the window of her coach in the park; and his gorgeous uniform regularly seen by her side in the avenues of the hall, or the pavilions of Ranelagh.

The quidnuncs of the town were already beginning to whisper sly inuendoes, and the gossips to say sharp, spiteful sayings, amid their becks and wreathed smiles, about the true love-tale that would ere long be told concerning the rich and beautiful coquette, and the young, penniless coxcomb. And it was already a matter of surmise how Marmaduke d'Esterre, the strictest of Romanists, and the closest-fisted of millionaires, would be likely to regard the alliance of his sole heiress with her penniless cousin, within the forbidden degrees, and protestant of the most orthodox and jealous lineage.

All this, however, was brought to an end by the appearance on the stage of Sir Reginald, in the character of a precontracted suitor, nobler both in birth and appearance, handsomer, richer, more accomplished than his gay rival the cornet, and in every way his superior, in both all that becomes a man and in all that is most apt to win a woman, unless it were for the single drawback of the habitual gloom of the fair, broad brow, the unsmiling sadness of the grave, serene features.

Yet when it was announced that Agnes was the affianced bride of this dignified and handsome gentleman, in whose very gravity and gloom there was mingled something of Spanish chivalry and grandeur, no surprise was manifested by any one at the perfect composure with which she abandoned the old lover and accommodated herself to the new bridegroom. Nor did this absence of wonder on the part of the public arise so

much from any disparaging opinion of the young lady's constancy or good faith, as from the general consent that there were few girls who would be likely to object to the fortune and title of Sir Reginald Vernon, particularly when these were united to a person so superior in all qualities, physical and moral.

The marriage, like all other matters of the like nature, was a nine days' wonder; and then the world ceased wondering at what was in nowise wonderful; while the parties who were the most concerned, having been married, like the dog which bit the duke of Buckingham, settled in the country, and were speedily forgotten by the gossips and quidnuncs of the court.

For above three years that happy oblivion continued, during which period the time wore onward peacefully and calmly in the sweet shades and among the wild mountain scenery of Vernon in the Vale. During those tranquil days the two fair children of which I have spoken were born to Sir Reginald Vernon; and at times, when he looked upon the innocent, bland brow and smiling lips of his first-born, a gladder and more hopeful light would shine over the grave, dark features of the father, and sometimes he would seem to doubt and to debate within himself the virtue and the wisdom of that pursuit of vengeance which had been impressed upon him as the first of duties, and which he had ever heretofore hugged to his bosom as his soul's darling idol.

Perhaps, at this period and crisis of his life, had deep and earnest sympathy come to the aid of his paternal doubts and fears, had the tearful entreaties of a devoted and doting wife been thrown into the scale in addition to the apprehensions of a father for his son's welfare, the balance might have been restored, and the partisan have been subdued to the part of the Christian, of the patriot, and of the man.

But that sympathy came not, those entreaties were not ut-

tered, the fount of those tears was dry. The novelty of her position over, the light and gay Agnes d'Esterre, the belle of a court and the cynosure of all eyes, soon grew weary of her grave and somewhat solitary dignity, weary of playing the Lady Bountiful to the uncultivated rustics, weary to death of the grand Elizabethan halls and gorgeously-stained oriels of the Vernon manor-house, of the wide sloping lawns and sweeping forests of the chase, of the vast purple masses of the moorland fells, inhabited only by the heath-cock, the hill-fox, and the roe.

For a little while the novelty of a mother's care, the claims of the helpless innocent, flesh of her flesh, and bone of her bone, awakened the latent sentiments of her woman's heart, and of love for her babe, there was born a sort of love for her babe's father. But the sentiment was evanescent, the love was not genuine, and when the freshness of the plaything had passed away, the tedium and the loathing of the place, the time and the things around her, returned with tenfold force, and she began to regard herself as an exile from the land of promise, as an imprisoned slave to the whims of a tyrannic husband, as a much-injured, much-to-be-pitied woman.

At first in the very gravity and gloom of her noble husband's brow, in the sweet sadness of his voice, his smile, his expression, in the chivalrous stateliness of his serene and calm deportment, in the total absence of all passion, of anything everyday, or low, or little, in his bearing, there was something which had touched her, something of mystery which had aroused her curiosity, of majesty which had kindled her admiration, of mournfulness which had called forth her sympathy. But as she saw it day by day, unchanged, impassive, regular, and calm as the career of the moon in a cold, cloudless sky, this, too, began to weary her, and ere long it came to pass, that had she asked herself of what she was most weary, of the

great oak-floored halls with the shadows from the mullions of the sunlit windows sweeping across them slowly hour by hour; of the huge oaks like mighty gnomons casting their long, dark umbrages from west to east, across the dial of the smooth, grassy park; of the gleams of light and purple mist, alternating with one another over the glens and gulleys of Cross Fell; of the regular routine and unexciting tranquillity of a country life, with few neighbors, few amusements, and neither balls nor drums, scandal nor dissipation; or of the constant, sad, serene, yet ever-kind, ever-attentive husband, she would have been, perforce, compelled to own that of all the accessories of Vernon in the Vale, the most wearisome to her light and unresponsive spirit was the great, tranquil, sustained character of Sir Reginald.

In her light, frivolous nature, there was no touch of romance, though she would have been most indignant had she been told so, for she delighted to fancy herself the most impulsive and sympathetic of characters—there was nothing capable of feeling any grand or deep impression—of understanding or appreciating anything above ordinary standards of humanity. Hers was a truly every-day worldly nature—she could have measured the colossal frame of the Æthiop Memnon, with the tape of a Finsbury man-milliner, and gauged the mystic head of the Egyptian sphynx, with reference to the duchess of Kendal's last new ear-rings.

What, in the name of all that is almost divine in human nature, had such as she to do, that she should wed with such a one as Vernon!

She should have been the wife of Bentinck Gisborough; the painted butterfly, of the gilded reptile—and he, the noble and the doomed, he should have walked solitary in the solemnity of his dark career, or should have been won from it by the quickening communion of a high and sympathizing soul.

But there was no sympathy, no communion of motives or of thoughts between them, farther than those of everyday existence. How should there have been any other—the one of the earth, all earthy—the other, of the spirit—but, alas! of what spirit—all too spiritual!

And yet, unlike as they were, ill-matched and incongruous in all things, they had by no means, during the brief space of their wedded life, become estranged or cold. No quarrel had ever broken the quiet tenor of their lives, nor had any marked indifference grown up between them.

The lady, although frivolous and light-minded, was light-hearted also, and good-natured—easily pleased as she was wearied easily; and he was all too gentle, and too generous, too regardful of her slightest wishes, too indulgent to her childlike follies, that she could purposely or deliberately do anything to annoy him. Indeed, there was something engaging in the very frivolity of the young wife, something in her utter thoughtlessness and abandonment to the whim of the present moment, which so strongly suggested to a superior mind the want of a guardian and protector for one so innocent and artless, as to create a sort of claim on the affections, similar to that felt by a powerful and athletic man toward a beautiful and sportive child.

And such in a great degree, was the feeling of Sir Reginald Vernon toward the young, petted, and spoiled beauty whom he had taken in an evil hour, obedient to the will of his dead parents, to be the partner of his life and the mother of his children. He, perhaps, even loved her the more in that he could the less esteem her—loved her with a sort of paternal affection, leading to much endearment, many caresses, but to no confidence, no interchange of opinions, no community of sentiments.

And thus he never suspected that she was discontented with her changed sphere? that she absolutely loathed the quiet of

that country life, which was so dear to himself; and that the cultivation of her garden, the care of her birds, the duties of her maternity, about all of which he saw her for the moment interested and apparently happy, lacked the variety and the intensity to fix her volatile and restless tastes. But leaving her to the pursuit of the trifles, which, as he believed, amply engrossed and occupied her every wish and sentiment, he went his own way, wandering alone in deep, abstracted thought under his groves of immemorial oak, or rambling over the wild fells, carabine in hand, rather as an excuse for solitude, than in pursuit of game, or poring over ponderous tomes of casuistry, or of the art strategetical, in his dark, open library.

Thus had three years elapsed, since he had wedded the fair Agnes D'Esterre. The eldest son, a bright, noble boy, whose dark locks and eagle eye, undimmed by the sadness of maturity and thought, were all the father's, while the resplendent smile and unwearied glee were of the mother's spirit, was in his second year, running already on firm, fleet limbs, and even now beginning to syllable his first few words in that broken dialect so sweet to a parent's ear. His second, a daughter, a wee satin-skinned, rosy, blue-eyed thing, with the golden curls and peach-like bloom of Agnes, clung still to the nurse's bosom, nor had essayed its tiny feet as yet, on the hard surface of this thorny world. But at this period a strange alteration took place in the mood and deportment no less of Sir Reginald, than of his lady.

With the arrival of the winter of 1644, there began to spread throughout the people of England, and of the north especially, one of those singular bruits or rumors, which, scarcely even meriting the name of rumors, so unformed and indistinct are they, yet frequently arouse a nation's expectations to the highest pitch; and for the most part as surely indicate some coming convulsion or phenomenon in the political world, as does the

strange unnatural murmur, rather felt than heard, announce the approach of the earthquake, the outburst of the volcano. Thus was it, through that long and dreary winter; and although the court sat unmoved, and drank and gamed at St. James, careless alike, and fearless of the coming storm, the people of the rural districts talked darkly of great changes, and portentous troubles, changes of dynasties, and troublous times of war. And though they knew not what it was they feared, they trembled and shook in their inmost souls; and heard strange voices in the winds; and saw wondrous apparitions in the moonlight of autumnal eves, or among the mists of wintry mornings, apparitions of marching regiments, and charging squadrons, with colors on the wind, and music in the air, on lonely heaths and wilds inaccessible to the foot of man.

At this time it was, that Sir Reginald Vernon shook off, as if by magic, the gloom and abstraction which had characterized his demeanor, and became, on a sudden, quick-witted, energetic, active, both of mind and body, and seemed to be possessed altogether by a kind of eager, enthusiastical excitement, wholly at variance with his usual habits.

He, who had scarce for years absented himself for a night from his own roof, who had scarcely gone beyond the boundaries of his own demesnes, ten times in as many years, unless in pursuit of the chase, was now much abroad—at first for hours, then for days, and at last for weeks, and even months at a time Twice he made distant journeys, once as far northward as to the wild country of the Clans, beyond the highland line in Scotland, and once on a visit to some of the great catholic families in Cheshire.

He was constantly now in the company of the neighboring gentry, was often seen at fair and market, and all casual collections of the country people; and it began to be observed that Sir Reginald Vernon from having been a student of books, had

become on a sudden a student of men, and from a suitor of the Muses, had become a courtier of the people's favor.

About this time, his horses, about the breed, beauty, and condition of which, he had been at all times solicitous, were greatly increased in number, and either personally, or by his agents, he purchased every sound, young, well-bred animal of sufficient bone and substance, till his own stables contained above a hundred excellent cattle, and more than twice that number were distributed, nominally as their own property, among the granges and halls of the tenantry and neighboring yeomen.

To account as it were for this, Sir Reginald now set on foot a pack of staghounds, and a fine mew of hawks, to fly which latter, a train of German falconers were brought to Vernon in the Vale, as well as several French riding-masters, to break the young animals to the manege; and it was noticed that all these men were grayheaded, mustached, weather-beaten veterans, many of them with scarred visages, and all with a singularly military port, and a great habit of bearing weapons.

Thereafter, grand hunting-matches, such as had never been heard of before, became the order of the day. Matches at which the gentry of all the adjoining counties were often present with their mounted followers, to the number of three or four hundred horse. And, though it was noted only at the time to be admired by the rustics, great evolutions were often performed in driving the open country, and everything was done at sound of bugle, and with fanfares of French horns.

Great football plays were also held, by both Sir Reginald and other gentry, in their parks, at which the rural population were gathered, sometimes to the number of a thousand, and then were taught to march orderly to and from the dinner-tents, and were once or twice set to practise with firearms provided for the purpose, at targets in the chase.

Thus far, all was done openly and aboveboard, but it was well known to the initiated few, that on every moonlight night regular drills were held of troops of horse, and companies of foot, in every park for miles around; that all the tenantry and households of the catholic gentry were regularly enrolled, and mustered under arms; and that twice or three times in every month grand parades of battalions and squadrons were called together, in the loneliest places among the hills, at the dead hour of midnight. And these moonlight musters it was, these bands of men hurrying to their trysting-places, or returning at the dead of night, or in the mists of morning, that were construed by the superstitious hinds of Cumberland and Durham into arrays of shadowy apparitions, portentous of coming evil.

And portentous of evil they in truth were; for of a surety they were the harbingers of civil war, the cruelest and most frightful of all earthly evils; the tokens that, ere another year should have run its round, the banner of the Stuarts would be abroad on the winds of England, and the clash of arms and the din of preparation resounding from Land's End to Cape Wrath. And this it was which had aroused Reginald Vernon from his life of dreams, and hurried him at once headlong into a life of action. And then was it seen how wondrously he had prepared himself during that period of seeming inaction, how he had sharpened his faculties, and filed his spirit to the keenest edge, for the emergency which he had long foreseen; how he had girded up the loins of his soul for the pursuit of that vengeance, the scent of which had been for years before hot in his nostrils.

At once he stood forth—not among, but above all his co-religionist conspirators, not only as the shrewdest and the wisest plotter, but as the undoubted man of action, the undeniable leader, the manifest and confessed chief of the rising.

Still, though he had been closeted for many days with his

man of business, rummaging musty parchments, executing deeds of trust, and alienating property—perhaps to put it out of reach of forfeiture or confiscation, Sir Reginald put no trust in the wife of his bosom.

At times his eye would dwell anxiously on her beautiful young face, and his features would work with the internal strife, and his lips would move as though he were about to disclose his hidden griefs; but then again he would shake his head, and mutter a few faint words to himself, and walk aside without casting off his burthen.

Perhaps he feared to trust her discretion with the fate of thousands; perhaps he dreaded to involve her in the perils of his enterprise, for the laws of treason and misprison in those days were awful instruments, which had no respect of person or of sex; nor would the axe of the executioner have spared the white neck of the delicate and tender lady, more than that of the harnessed veteran.

And she—she too was changed. Hitherto, she had been weary only; weary of her home, her life, her companion. Hitherto she loathed only her pursuits, and the place to which she held herself condemned as a captive, without, as yet, loathing him to whom her lot had so unmeetly linked her.

She had regarded him, at first, with a sort of mysterious admiration, not all unmixed with fear, as if of a superior being, this custom and companionship had, in the earlier years of their union, been converted, with the aid of his unvarying kindness and attention, into a sort of calm and tranquil liking, wholly passionless, it is true, and unfervent, and even superficial, but at the same time honest and sincere.

Usage, however, his uniform stateliness, and his want of sympathy with her pleasures, or of confidence in her powers of consolation, had converted this faint liking into total indifference. She ceased to love, yet did not hate him. She

did not love him enough even, paradoxical as such a phrase may seem, to learn to hate him.

But now there was a change! She saw the man energetical, alive, awake, active, full of enthusiasm, full of excitement, interest, daring! Had he been always thus, she could—— What? alas! woman, what?

And now this very awakening up to action, and spirit-stirring thoughts and deeds, was an insult—a proof that his indifference to her and her pursuits was not, as she had believed, constitutional, and not to be amended, but studied, personal, intentional—the child of contempt, of scorn. And what will a woman not endure, rather than a man's scorn, and that man a husband.

Meanwhile the days rolled onward; the snows of winter melted into the lap of spring, and the sunshine of '45 clothed the uplands and vales of England with fresh verdure, alas! to be more redly watered than with the genial dews of heaven, or ere the frosts should sere one blade of the meadow-grass, one leaf of the woodland shade. And, with the summer, rumor waxed more rife, and the advent of the Stuarts was bruited through the land, but scarce believed of any, while the court sat secure in London, in reckless or obtuse tranquillity.

In the north all things went on as before, Sir Reginald even more actively employed than during the past autumn, and rarely now at home, save for a few hours in the early morning, after which he would still ride forth, not to return until the night was far advanced toward another day, and the stars paling in the streaky skies, his lady lighter and more gay and reckless than her wont.

For in the early part of that eventful summer, a squadron of Honeywood's dragoons marched into Carlisle, and there took up their quarters; and in that squadron was Bentinck Gisborough, now elevated to the rank of captain. He was a cousin, as I said, of Agnes, and his two sisters—they were orphans, had

accompanied their brother to the north, and accepted the hospitality of Vernon in the Vale, where they were received cordially by Sir Reginald, who was pleased to secure female companionship for his young wife, and that of her own connections, during the continuance of the strife which he knew was at hand, and his own absence with the army.

Carlisle was not so far distant, nor the garrison duties of that day, when military discipline was relaxed and slovenly, so onerous, but that Bentinck Gisborough was a frequent visiter at the manor-house. And being a gay, good-humored youth, who followed his own careless pleasures, scarcely appearing to notice anything that was going on around him, Sir Reginald was rather pleased than otherwise, to see him often at his house—the more so, that the presence of a king's officer in his family was a sort of guaranty for his loyalty, in those days, of general distrust, and effectually prevented any suspicion of his movements or intentions.

The young officer rode out with the ladies, or loitered with them in the gardens, tuned their spinets, and sang duets with his fair cousin, once his flame; and appeared to pay no attention to the movements of his active host, unless when he was invited to join him in the chase, or to partake of a day's shooting on the hills—invitations which he never failed to accept, and to enliven so effectually by his frank temper and ready wit, that he became ere long almost as much a favorite with Sir Reginald, as with his gay ladye; and all at Vernon in the Vale, while the atmosphere was in that nursing calm abroad, which ever portends a loud convulsion, "went," in the words of the poet, "merry as a marriage-bell."

How long, alas! should that merriment continue. It was the evening of a lovely day in June, and the heat which had been almost oppressive had subsided into a fresh, sweet softness, tempered by the falling dews, and redolent of the refreshed

flowers. The hall, which had been so gay of late, and lively, was quieter that evening than its wont, for Sir Reginald had ridden forth in the morning, followed by two servants, intending to be absent for a week or more in Durham, and Bentinck Gisborough, who had been an inmate during the last three weeks, had accompanied him a few miles on his way, at the end of which he was to strike off for Carlisle to rejoin his regiment, so that the ladies had been left alone during the day, and had grown perhaps a little weary of each other, for they had separated early in the afternoon and retired to their own chambers, and now the Ladies Lucy and Maud Gisborough, tall, elegant and handsome girls, were lounging upon the terrace before the door, playing with a leash of beautiful Italian greyhounds, and wondering where in the world was Agnes Vernon.

And where was Agnes Vernon?

At the northwestern angle of the park there is a deep and most romantic glen, feathered with yews and other graceful evergreens on the farther bank, and divided from the chase by a long hill of young oak plantations, intersected with walks and pleasure drives, forming the most beautiful part of the grounds, as commanding many views of the falls and rapids of the swift, clear mountain torrent which rushes through the wild boar's cleugh, as the glen is named from a tradition that the last of those fierce animals slain in the north country there held his secret lair.

On this tumultuous stream there is one fine cataract, known, from the foamy whiteness of its waters, as the "Gray Mare's Tail," leaping, in a fine arch of fifty feet, over a sheer limestone rock, on the very verge of which, overlooking the shoot of the fall, and the foam brine at its foot, stood a small, gothic hermitage, or summer-house, overshadowed by a superb gnarled oak of many a century's growth.

In this lone hermitage, on that sweet evening, after the summer sun had set, and the purple horror of the woodland twilight had sunk dim and drear over the shaggy glen, sate the young lady of the manor alone, apparently expectant, listening for some sound, which she could scarce hope to hear above the rush and roar of the falling waters.

She was very young, slender and graceful as a fairy, and with her soft blue eyes and long floating golden ringlets, and white dress, with no ornament but a long scarf of deep green sendal, she might well have been taken, in that superstitious day, and that simple neighborhood, for a spirit of the wild wood, or the stream, a thing intangible and aerial, almost divine.

But there was light in those blue eyes that was not of the spirit, a hot flush on those fair cheeks that spoke volumes of earthly passion, a smile on those parted lips, all too voluptuous for anything above mortality.

She was listening with the very ears of her soul—it is—it is! There was a rustle among the foliage, a rush as of stones spurned by a climber's heel, down the steep gully's side, a footstep on the threshold.

With a faint cry she sprang forward, and was caught in the arms, was clasped to the bosom of a man.

Alas, alas! for Agnes!—that man was not Reginald Vernon.

PART II.

"And Hugo has gone to his lonely bed,
To covet there another's bride;
And she to lay her guilty head
A husband's trusting heart beside!"—PARISINA.

"AH! Bentinck, have you come at last?"

"Sweet, sweetest Agnes."

The moon, robed with her soft, silver light, rose above the tree-tops in her full-orbed glory; edging the fresh luxuriant verdure with a fringe of mellow lustre, and checkering the smooth, grassy lawns with long gleams and alternate shadows. The nightingale sings not in wide woodlands of the north, but the jarring cry of the night-hawk, and the plaintive hooting of the distant owls, blended themselves with the near murmur of the waterfall, and with the low, soft music of the western wind among the tree-tops, and formed a sweet and soothing melody, replete with the calm tenderness of moral associations.

But the guilty pair saw not the tender light tipping the green with silver, or glittering in diamond showers upon the spray of the clear cascade; they heard not the cadences of the water and the breeze, nor heeded the cry of the nocturnal birds.

Brighter to him was the unholy fire that beamed from her blue eyes, and sweeter the low murmur of her passionate expressions, than all the lights of heaven, than all the hymns of angels, could they have resounded in his ears deafened by crime and hardened against all diviner sentiments, by the defilement of an evil earthly passion.

It is a mistake to believe that the wicked are not happy in the first transport of their wickedness, and they are both false moralists and unwise teachers, who would have us to believe otherwise.

There is indeed to the guilty, as there is to all of human mould, and in a greater degree than to the calm and virtuous who tread the paths of moderation, the drop of bitterness which still arises, as the poet of nature sang, in the mid fount of every human pleasure, stinging them like a thorn among the sweetest flowers.

It is when the hour of reaction has arrived, when the nerves are relaxed and unstrung by the very violence and fury of their own excitement; when the head aches and the hand trembles, overdone and outworn by the very excess of enjoyment; when the spirit, failing, exhausted, yet yearns with a sick and morbid craving, wearied and insatiate of passion, for some fresher excitement, fiercer stimulant; it is then that the punishment commences which is the inseparable consequence of sin; it is then that conscience resumes her power over the shuddering mind; that the vulture-talons of the fury retribution pierces to the very heart of the miserable sinner.

But for Agnes and Bentinck, thoughtless and young transgressors, the hour of anguish had not yet arrived; nor that strange hatred of the wicked, one against the other, which so constantly succeeds to the decline of unholy passion.

They were yet quaffing the first drops of that beverage, the dregs of which are bitterness, and loathing, and despair; and in their self-deception, they fancied that one thing alone was wanting to their happiness, the power of displaying to each other, before the eyes of the whole world, their deep fondness of being each to the other, at all times, and in all places, openly and without reproval, all in all.

Nor did they fail—as when did the human heart ever fail of

self-deception?—to palliate, nay excuse, their disgraceful sin, to lay the blame on fate, on the world, on anything, except their own corrupt and wilful natures.

And, in truth, as is oftentimes the case, there was some slight show of justice in their reclamations against the world, as they called the society of the court-circle of St. James. For it is true that they had loved in youth, to the utmost extent perhaps of which their frivolous and slight natures were capable of loving; and the affections of the very young, if not of that depth and ardor which characterize the passions of more advanced life, are yet marked by a freshness, and unselfishness, and a quick fervor, which make them pass for more than they are really worth, even with the professors, who over-estimate the violence, owing to the newness of the emotion.

Hence it is that so often those who have been divided or kept asunder by chance, by the rules of social position, or by some violence done to the feelings, return in after-life, as the French proverb says we always do, to their past loves, and that with a violence which breaks all bonds, and overleaps all obstacles; whereas had they been suffered to take their own course, and had no restraint been put upon their actions, the early and unstable fancy or predilection would have worn itself out, which contradiction alone has magnified into a mighty and absorbing passion.

Thus had it been with Agnes d'Esterre and Bentinck Gisborough, had Reginald Vernon never been sent by his evil destiny to claim the hand of his unconsciously-betrothed bride, in an unhappy hour, and one fraught with misery or shame to all whom it concerned. For so light was the character of the vain, spoiled beauty, as was proved by the ease with which she consented to fulfil the contract, and the favorable ear which she lent to Reginald's addresses, and so very a coxcomb was the young dragoon, that ere a second season had elapsed, it is ten

to one they would have separated by mutual consent, and never thought of each other more.

But as it was, when amid the lonely shades of Vernon in the Vale, and in the uncongenial atmosphere of her husband's calm and abstracted society, Agnes began to cast a regretful glance to the gayeties and frivolities of London; to contrast the light-hearted mirth and merry companionship of the gay, handsome, fashionable cornet, with the tranquil and melancholy dignity of Vernon; and above all, to regard it as the despite of fate, and not the operation of her own free will, that had given her as an unresponsive wife to the arms of the sad, silent conspirator; she soon learned to exaggerate in her own thoughts the love she had felt for Gisborough; to brood over the destiny which had separated them; to pine in secret for the absent hero of her fancy's love.

In the solitude and seclusion in which she lived, with no associate of her own rank, by whose companionship to lighten the monotony of her weary existence, with no sympathizing friend, or young monitor, on whose affection she might rely, she nursed and cherished her thick, teeming fancies, till she had persuaded herself into the belief that she was the most miserable of her sex, an unloved wife of a cold, misanthropic, and hard-hearted husband, and the passionate adorer of an idolized and idolizing lover.

By slow degrees she grew to despise and loathe a character too great and noble for her comprehension; she came to regard Sir Reginald as the bar betwixt herself and happiness, to feel weariness for his society, aversion for his person, and something not far removed from actual hatred for the man whom she had sworn to love and honor.

Tranquil in his character, calm in his very affections, never ardent even in the warmest of his feelings, it is easy to imagine that Sir Reginald was the last person to discover the coldness

of his lady, or to suspect her dislike for his person. As there was no society to call forth her coquetry with others, there were no causes by which to excite his jealousy or distrust; and so long as he saw her always beautiful, always graceful, and always, at least in outward semblance, gay—for gayety was an inborn quality of her nature—he thought of her only as a very fair and gentle mistress of his household, and loved her rather as the mother of his children and the partner of his home, with the grave and chaste affection of a pious philosopher, than as she desired to be loved, with the passion of an ardent and adoring lover.

When the fatal year of the rebellion came—that rebellion so disastrous to the catholic and tory aristocracy of England—for the Romanist was then the farthest in the world removed from the radical—and when Sir Reginald Vernon broke out from his repose of moody disaffection, into the activity and eagerness of rebel preparation; when his days were passed in his study, planning the means whence to support the sinews of the war, or by which to avert the consequences of defeat, and half his nights in the saddle, reviewing his tenantry and mustering his yeomen into service, he had even less leisure than before to observe, and less reason to suspect the aversion of his wife.

And she, when she saw the eagerness, the enthusiasm, the spirit, nay, the passion, which he could expend on an object that aroused his interest, and stirred his soul to its depths, was not perhaps all unjustly mortified and galled at being sensible of her own inability to kindle him to life; looked upon herself as a woman scorned; began to detest the neglecter of her charms, and to meditate the woman's revenge by the medium of the very beauty which she conceived to be undervalued.

Bentinck arrived, as I have said, a welcome guest to the confiding and pure-hearted husband, and a long-desired and ready accomplice in her vengeance to the wilful and wicked wife.

Agnes Vernon fell not, nor was seduced into the paths of vice; headlong, yet with her eyes wide open, she rushed into the abyss of sin and shame, and revelled in the very consciousness of infamy, which to her warped and distorted vision, appeared in the light of a just revenge.

It will scarce be believed, except by those who have studied the depths of the human heart, and learned to know, what the Mantuan poet sang, "furens quid fæmina possit," that it was with difficulty Gisborough could prevail upon her so far to veil her guilt, as to avoid her husband's eye, and that she actually grieved, at times, that her revenge was incomplete, so long as Reginald was unacquainted with her infamy.

It is probable that fear only of his desperate wrath—for she well knew the intensity of anger of which his calm, resolute, deep soul was capable—and the unwillingness to sacrifice her luxurious state and high position, alone prevented this infamous, and almost insane wretch from willingly and knowingly betraying herself.

But of late a fresher and stronger inducement was added to her reasons for avoiding a premature discovery of her guilt.

She had become aware of the reason of her husband's altered demeanor, had learned the full extent of his complicity in the rebellion which was on the eve of breaking out, and had exerted her every power of fascination and persuasion to fix him in his fatal purpose, even to the lavishing upon him of those Delilah-like caresses which revolted her as she bestowed them.

She learned, moreover, that in his anxiety to avoid the confiscation of his property and the beggaring of herself and his children in case of failure, he had actually alienated the whole of his estates, transferring them legally and for a valuable consideration, to three trustees, of whom—marvellous infatuation!—Bentinck Gisborough was one, for her benefit and that of his

children as her heirs; and this suggested to her depraved mind, the thought, to which the hope was indeed the father, that he might find a red grave on the battle-field, and she have it in her power to bestow upon that lover, to whom she had already given herself, her hand, together with her own and her children's fortune.

To do Bentinck Gisborough mere justice, he was ignorant of this refinement of domestic treason. Perhaps, had he been aware of it, it might so far have revolted all his better feelings, as to lead him to break off the connection with Agnes, and to escape her fascinations.

Well for him had it been to do so.

But with the woman's wicked craft, she had foreseen that the confession of her morbid motives would disgust the hair-brained and daring spirit, which even in its worst points, had nothing in it of the mercenary or the calculating, and had concealed them from him carefully, well knowing that he could be wrought upon to commit deeds for the secure possession of her person, from which he would have recoiled if suggested for the attainment of pecuniary advantage.

She had disclosed to him, as a matter of course, the intentions of her husband, and made him acquainted with the imminence of the rebellion. But information thus obtained, he was too honorable to reveal to the government, even if he had not been well content to let matters take their course. For he had no conception of the extent of the ramifications of the conspiracy, of the general nature of the discontents against the Hanoverian government, or of the great chances which really existed at that moment for the success of a Jacobite insurrection.

He did not believe for a moment, that the movement would be more formidable than that of the rebellion of '15, which had been put down almost without an effort, and its ashes drenched though not extinguished in the blood of its gallant but misguided leaders.

He was convinced that a single battle in the north of England, would crush the insurrection, and as his own regiment of horse was quartered at Carlisle, and was of consequence likely to be among the first engaged, he hoped to have an opportunity of measuring swords with the man whom he regarded as his enemy, and the wrongful possessor of his own intended bride rather than as one whom he was wronging in the tenderest point of honor.

The present meeting of the guilty pair was chiefly for the discussion of projects, the laying of plans, the betrayal of the husband's last secret by his abandoned wife.

The prince—for of princely birth he was, though outcast from his father's realm, not by his own but by his father's vices—the prince had landed in the wilds of Moidart, and unfurled the standard of rebellion over the heads of seven adherents only, but those made of the stuff which almost supplies the want of armies. The clans were rushing to arms, Lochiel, Keppoch, and Glencarry, had belted on the broadsword, and slung the targe upon the shoulder. The gentry of the northern counties, already ripe for insurrection, would be in arms within six days at farthest, and in a week from that same day, Reginald Vernon would set foot in stirrup, and unsheathe his father's sword, in the vain hope to avenge the death of that father.

I do not mean to assert, for I do not believe it to be true, that direct earthly retribution always or often follows the sinner to "overtake him when he leasts expects it," or that HE to whom eternity is as to-day, is so prompt to strike, that his vengeance is manifest here below. It is, as I regard it, a poor, and presumptuous, and unphilosophical morality, which looks for the punishment of the guilty in this world, by direct Divine agency—which sees the judgment of God in the flash of the lightning's bolt, or hears the voice of his anger in the thunder's roar. "Judge not, that ye be not judged," are as much words

of HIS speaking, as that awful sentence, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." And repay he will, of a surety, and good measure, yea, pressed down and running over—but when, let him say, who can pronounce whence the wind comes and whither it goes in its path of devastation.

But there is another way, in which sure retribution does follow crime and overtake it, even here on earth, and that way the philosopher is prompt to observe and sure to mark. That way is the way of nature, the common course of things, the general law of the universe. For that law has decreed, more immutably than that of the Medes and Persians, that as surely as there is sin, so surely shall there be satiety; and he who shows this as the consequence of vice, is a wise teacher and a good, because he is a true one.

Now that the blow was actually struck, and when intelligence sent to the government could in nowise arrest the outbreak, or anticipate the full disclosure of the conspirator's overt guilt and open action, she prevailed upon Gisborough to write to his father by a special messenger to London, warning him fully of all that had occurred, so to obtain the credit of zeal for the powers that were, and to avoid the suspicion of being privy to the secrets of the rebels.

Next to this she obtained his promise—though many a caress was lavished ere she prevailed in this—to inform Honeywood of the movement of the catholic gentry of the northern counties, and to induce him to act promptly for the suppression of the rising, by striking instantly and in force at the levy of cavalry which would be made at Vernon in the Vale, on the seventh day thereafter.

"Come yourself, Bentinck," she said, "come yourself, my own beloved, brave Bentinck, with your gallant squadrons, and let your own good sword work the deliverance of your Agnes. Let my eyes look upon his fall, sweet at any hand, but doubly

sweet at yours, my love, my champion, my deliverer; and I will hail, will bless the day, which shall make me yours altogether and for ever."

"Can you be more mine than you are now, my own Agnes?" cried the young man eagerly.

"Only in this, my Bentinck, that I shall then be yours before the face of the world, before the face of my Maker, who never meant me for the wife of that cold-blooded, haughty despot."

"Sweet Agnes," cried the soldier; "Heaven send it, as you say; and I will slay him!"

"And I say, never! adulterer and murderer, never!" said a harsh voice without, in deep, hoarse, grating accents, but yet with something feminine in the manner and intonation. Instinctively the soldier's hand fell to the hilt of his sword, and the next instant he stood without the little building, on the small, open esplanade, on which, save a small space under the shadow of the oak-tree, the full moonbeams dwelt lovingly, so that for fifty yards around, all was as bright as day.

There was no braver man than Bentinck Gisborough, in that island of the brave, whereon he had his birth; and with all the national courage of his breed, all the hereditary courage of the race, and that last cause for courage added—the instinct, *quod etiam timidos fortes facit*, which prompts the wren to do battle for its partner—the defence of the woman prompting him—he sprang forth, expecting to do battle on the instant with a resolved and mortal foe.

But the blood turned stagnant in his veins, and the hair seemed to bristle on his head, as he gazed on the sward around him, and found nothing—no sign of human life—no form, no sound, no footstep, although no time had elaspsed for flight, although no covert was within reach for the shelter of a human

being, although the voice which he had heard, uttered its words within ten paces of the door.

To circle round the building, the oak-tree, to examine its leafy canopy, and every trifling hollow of its gnarled trunk, was but a moment's work, but it was all in vain. There was no one present, or within ear-shot of anything less than a halloo; although the words which had reached his ear, were not spoken much above the usual tone of conversation, and although they implied that all the low whispers of their guilty schemes had been overheard by the speaker.

There was no one present; and after all, the young soldier had naught to do but to return to the pale and trembling Agnes, and explain how fruitless had been his exertions to find the intruder, and ask of her if it could have been imagination that had presented the strange sounds to their senses.

"No more than this, our meeting is imagination," she replied, "my Bentinck. But what matters it? Had it been he, you should have slain him now and here, and that had been the end of it. For the rest, he is in the toils, and he can not escape them, for all he be brave, wise, and wary; and if we have been observed, I care not even if the observer tell him. It will but add a pang to an existence, the term of which is already fixed, and which may not be much prolonged by any means. So, tell him, listener, if you will," she added, raising her soft and musical voice to a pitch all unwonted, and stepping to the door with an impudence of bearing, which, had it been less guilty, had been almost sublime: "Tell him that you have heard Agnes d'Esterre—for Agnes Vernon I am not—assure her Gisborough, with all the truth of earnest love, that she was his, and his alone. Tell him that, secret spy—tell him that—and you will but serve my purpose, torturing him with tidings that shall avail him nothing!"

"Hush! Agnes. Hush! beloved one," cried the young man, shocked and amazed by this wild outburst of immodest and unwomanly defiance. "These are wild, whirling words, and such, in truth, avail nothing, if they even mean anything."

"Mean anything! Mean anything, do you say, Bentinck Gisborough? What should they mean, but that I hate him deeply, deadly? hate him more even than I love you! hate him so utterly that his death would bring me no pleasure, if he die fancying that I love him."

"Oh! do not, Agnes, do not say such words, if you love me—even if they be true; say them not, my own Agnes."

"If I love you," she exclaimed; "if they be true! Have I not given you proof that I love you, and will I not prove that they are true, to the very letter? But if you love not to hear me, I am silent. Once more, then, go your way, with blessings on your head, and fail me not, I implore you, this day week, my own Bentinck. For of precious truth! I do believe, that if he survive that day, I shall die even of his odious life!" At length, she tore herself away, and darted through the dim, wild woods, homeward—homeward—half-fearful, half-rejoicing in the partial discovery of her treason.

He stood for a moment, gazing after her beautiful, elastic figure, till he lost sight of her among the trees, and then with a deep drawn sigh, he turned away, bounded down the near side of the steep ravine, leaped from stone to stone across the channel of the noisy stream, and appeared indistinctly a moment afterward among the shrubbery on the farther bank, scaling the steep acclivity.

Five minutes afterward, the clang of a distant horse's tramp was heard sounding on the rocky brow of the hill, at a hard gallop, and then there was silence.

A moment or two passed, and then a sort of trap or shutter was raised in the stylobate, or substructure of the hermitage, the floor of which was elevated some two feet above the surface of

the soil, and was rendered accessible by four low, flat steps, under which a secret door had been constructed, giving access to a vault or cellar underneath the building.

From this aperture, there now emerged cautiously and slowly the head and then the whole person of a tall, gaunt, and raw-boned woman, apparently of very great age, for her dark, sallow skin was fretted with so many wrinkles, that at first sight, she struck the observer as having been tattooed after the fashion of the Australasian savages, and her hair, which was cut short round the head, like a man's, was as white as the driven snow of winter, as were her shaggy pendant eyebrows, likewise, and her long, thin lashes, from beneath which a pair of small, black piercing eyes gleamed out with a spiteful, venomous sparkle, like that of some vicious reptile.

Her face, however, in spite of this ominous and threatening eye, was decidedly intellectual, full of thought, and not unbenevolent in its general character, although decidedly its most distinctive feature was the firm resolution expressed by the thin, compressed lips, and the bony angular jaw.

In figure, she was very tall, and although gaunt and emaciated by age, rather than privation, her limbs were sinewy and muscular, more than is usual among women, and her hands especially were as large and almost as strong as a man's. The dress of this singular and masculine looking female consisted of a petticoat of the common russet serge, which constituted the usual country wear, with a sort of coarse, half-manlike jerkin or doublet over it, made of bright blue cloth, with tight sleeves and a high collar, this unwonted garment descending nearly to the hips. Above this again she wore a long and voluminous scarf of scarlet duffle, disposed about her gaunt and angular person, much after the fashion of a highlander's plaid. On her head she had a Scottish bonnet, and in her sinewy hand she carried a stout pike-staff of some five feet in length, with a

sharp, steel head. Nor did it appear that this was her only weapon, for there were two protuberances closely resembling the form of pistol butts, clearly visible at the waist of her blue jacket; and the black leathern scabbard of what was undoubtedly a long knife, protruded below its hem.

Her legs were covered by blue woollen stockings, with large scarlet clocks, and her feet protected by stout brogues of untanned hide, which, strong as they were, gave evidence of much hard usage and long travel.

As she emerged from her place of concealment, which she did warily and slowly, closing the trapdoor securely after her so that no trace was left to unfamiliar eyes of the existence of the secret vault, that woman stood and gazed anxiously in the direction which Agnes had taken in her flight, and then listened if she might judge aught of the lover's whereabout from the sound of his distant horse-hoofs. But there was neither sound nor sight to guide her, and satisfied as it would seem, that she was entirely alone, she gave way to the full force of her indignation and disquiet, dashing her pike-staff violently upon the rocky soil, and gnashing her teeth in the bitterness of her rage.

"Accursed wanton," she exclaimed, "foul, soulless, sensual wretch! False Delilah! accursed Jezebel—may the fate of Jezebel be thine; may dogs eat thee yet alive, and may thy name perish utterly from among thy people; and it is to such as thee that wise men intrust their honor! that prudent men confide the fate of mighty enterprises, the fortunes of their best and dearest friends. It is to insure the being kissed in luxurious chambers by thy curled darling that a great, a royal undertaking must be cast to the winds—that the blood of the noble, and the faithful, and the brave, shall dye the moorlands with a ruddier hue than the bloom of their purplest heather. Out on it! out on it! that after all the doings, all the sufferings of our church, our people, and our lawful king, the lust of a titled

wanton and an embroidered coxcomb, should prostrate all the wisdom of the wisest, the bravery of the bravest, and change the course of dynasties, the fate of nations! Out on it! out on it? So young, so delicate to look upon, and yet so shameless, and so daring, and of so resolute and bold a spirit. But, by the faith of my fathers! I will thwart her, or she shall rue the day when she dared to hatch domestic treason, and plot murder under trust. But I will thwart her."

She spoke rapidly, and in a low, muttered tone, but with fierce emphasis, and fiery eyes full of vindictive anger; and as she ended her soliloquy, she too plunged into the deep woods, in a direction nearly parallel to that taken by Agnes Vernon, but pointing more directly toward the manor-house; and was speedily lost amid the shadowy glades, while the little summer-house was left all silent and untenanted, amid the cold, clear moonlight, and the calm stillness of the summer-honse.

Meanwhile the wretched woman hastened with fleet steps homeward. She had already threaded the greater part of the woodland path which led somewhat circuitously through the plantings to the open park, and she might see already the moonlight sleeping calm and serene on the smooth grassy lawns, beyond the opening of the bowery walks in which she stood secluded, as if within a vault of solid verdure, when a quick, sudden rustling of the bushes, violently parted by the passage of some body in quick motion, startled and in some sort alarmed her. But almost instantly she rallied from her half-conceived apprehension, as she reflected how near she was to the house, and how little chance there was of any real danger within the precincts of her own park.

The sound, moreover, ceased as suddenly as it commenced, and she laughed with a low, musical laugh at her own fruitless fear, muttering to herself: "It was a deer only, or perhaps a timorous hare or rabbit startled from its form, and I, fool that I

am, was afraid, when I might have known well that no danger can reach me here."

"Adulteress and liar!" exclaimed the hoarse voice which she had heard before, now close at her elbow; and at the same instant that tall, gaunt, sinewy woman started from the thick coppice and confronted her, barring her homeward path, and bending on her eyes of deadly and revengeful wrath.

"Adulteress and liar!" she repeated, clutching the delicate and slender wrist of Agnes in her own vulture-like, iron talons, while with the other hand she drew a pistol from her girdle, cocked it, and levelled it within a hand's breadth of her head. "There *is* danger here; and even here shall God's vengeance find thee. Down on thy knees, I say, down on thy knees, wanton, down on thy knees, accursed murderess of thy wedded lord, and make thy peace with Heaven, for with the things of earth thou hast done for ever."

"What have I done to thee, that thou shouldst slay me—me who have never seen thee before, much less wronged thee?" asked Agnes, faltering now in mortal terror, for she recognised in the harsh, croaking tones which she now heard, the voice which had broken off her guilty interview with Bentinck in the hermitage, and doubted not that this singular and terrible old woman was cognizant of all her crimes, and capable of revealing all her hidden projects.

"Much!"—cried the fierce old enthusiast, "much hast thou done already against my cause—for the cause of the true church and the rightful king is mine—much hast thou done already, traitress and murderess, and much more wilt do, if I cut not off at once thy crimes, and thy thread of being. Wilt thou pray, woman, wilt thou pray, I say, or wilt thou die in thine impenitence, and so go down to hell with all thy sins rankling on thy soul, unconfessed and unshriven?"

"It is too late!" replied the wretched girl, now terribly

alarmed, but striving to maintain a bold front, for she half believed the strange woman to be mad, and perhaps fancied that by boldness she could overawe her. "It is too late!—but if it were not so, and I were all that thou hast called me, who constituted thee mine accuser, my judge, and my executioner?"

"He who made all things, who seeth all things, and who hath set his law on high, that all who run may read it, even the law of blood for blood. Pray, I say, pray, adulteress, for this day thou diest."

Agnes Vernon closed her eyes in despair, expecting to receive the death-shot in her face from the close levelled weapon of the fanatic, when the shrill, savage bay of a deer greyhound smote her ear with tidings of near help, and at the same time the voices of men nigh at hand.

Hitherto she had been silent, fearing by her cries, that she should only irritate the maniac and precipitate her action, without procuring assistance, but now she screamed aloud in mortal terror, for the click of the pistol lock had fallen on her sharpened ear, and she felt that she had, indeed, but an instant to live, if aid came not.

"It is my lady's voice," cried one of the men, a keeper, or wood-ranger. "Forward, Hugh, forward, Gregory, to the old horn-beam walk." But swiftly as they hurried forward, they would have come too late, had not a swifter foot and more vigorous ally rushed to the rescue.

With a repeated yell, a large wire-haired, dun-colored deer hound burst through the coppice, and springing at the woman's arm, caught the sleeve of the coarse jacket which she wore, in his strong teeth. He bore down her hand, and the levelled weapon which went off harmlessly in the struggle; when the enthusiast, seeing that she could not effect her purpose, turned to escape, and Agnes, who by no means desired her capture, called off the dog, as if for her own protection.

"In God's name, my lady, what has harmed thee?" cried a rough woodman, bursting upon the scene, with his loaded musketoon in his hand; "we were out seeking thee, even now."

A highly ornamented bracelet had fallen from her arm in the struggle, and lay on the green sward at her feet, glittering in a stray moonbeam, which had found its way through a chink in the verdant arch overhead, and this suggested to her quick wit a ready answer.

"A robber—a ruffian!" she replied; "a strong, armed man, disguised as a woman. See, he tore off my jewels, and would have murdered me, but for my brave and faithful Bran," and therewith she caressed the great, rough dog, which, in truth, had preserved her. "Follow him quickly, Hugh, and see you shoot him dead at once! Seek not to make him prisoner, he is a desperate villain, and it will cost life to secure him. Shoot him dead, I say, on the sight. I will be your warranty, and you, Gregory, go with me home. I had lost my way in the wilderness, and got belated, when this rude wretch assaulted me, and would have slain me."

The men scarcely paused to hear her out; two of them plunging into the underwood in pursuit, while the third accompanied her toward the hall, leading the fierce hound in a leash, and carrying his carabine cocked in the other hand.

Before they had gained the open park, the loud report of one, and then of a second shot, came ringing from the woodlands, and a thrill of mingled horror and exultation, rushed through her veins, as she muttered between her teeth—"Now! now! they have dealt with her, and I have well escaped this peril, and the witness of my shame lives no longer."

But the guilty woman reckoned without her host, for she had not long arrived at the hall, before the men returned, saying that they had failed to apprehend or kill the fugitive, owing to the darkness of the woods, and his speed of foot, although

they had both fired on his track, and believed that he was severely wounded, since they had found much blood both on the leaves of the bushes, and on the ground, where they had fired.

Be that, however, as it might, no more was heard of the stranger; and on the third day thereafter Sir Reginald returned, absorbed as usual in the details of the rebellion, and all unsuspicious of his faithless wife; and then, over the heads of the plotters and counterplotters, the days rolled on serene and tranquil, toward the appointed time, and toward that end, which though many fancied they could see, one alone saw and knew, and HE, from the beginning.

PART III.

"And the headman with his bare arm ready,
That the blow may be both swift and steady
Feels if the axe be sharp and true
Since he set its edge anew."—PARISINA.

SWIFTLY, indeed, those brief days fled away; and not a thought of trouble or regret came over the strong mind of Sir Reginald Vernon.

His part was taken, his line had been laid down from the beginning, and acting as he did on what he was convinced to be the road of duty, he was not the man to shrink at the moment of execution.

He was, moreover, so thoroughly satisfied that the cause of the Stuarts would prevail, and "the king enjoy his own again," that he was untouched by those anxious and sad forebodings which often almost shake the firmness of the bravest breasts, when setting forth upon some desperate or dubious enterprise.

He had, it is true, taken precautions in case of the failure of

his party, for the preservation of his estates to his children, but this done, except some natural doubts regarding the chances of his own life, on which he looked, as brave men ever will look, sanguinely, he was prepared to set forth on a campaign against the established government, with as little dread concerning his return home, as if he were about to ride out only on a hunting match.

Between himself and Agnes, there had never existed any very rapturous or romantic relations, and these had long, in so far as they ever had existed, subsided into the mere commonplaces of every-day, decorous, married life. The wily girl had, moreover, affected so much enthusiasm for the cause of church and king, the better to confirm him in the prosecution of his mad schemes, that it cost her little to veil her delight at his departure, under the disguise of zealous eagerness for the restoration of the right line.

And never, perhaps, had the unhappy and doomed man so much admired the beautiful being to whom he was so fatally linked as when he saw her, on the eve of his departure, with the white rose in her beautiful fair hair, the chosen emblem of their party, infusing hope and courage into the meanest of the tenantry, and adding fresh spirit to the ardor and enthusiasm of the catholic gentry by her brilliancy, her beauty, and her indomitable spirits.

Perhaps, indeed, it was fortunate for the guilty woman, that from the instant of her husband's return home to that of his departure, the hall was one constant scene of tumult and excitement, for had it been otherwise it would have been difficult indeed, for her to have maintained the disguise she had adopted, or to have blinded her husband, unsuspicious as he was to the real motives of her joy.

But he was accompanied when he came by a large party of the Jacobite gentry, and others kept flocking in continually to

the rendezvous, as it was now resolved that the mask should be thrown aside altogether, since it was known that the prince had beaten the first force of regulars sent against him, and captured Perth, and been promoted regent of England, Ireland, and Scotland.

Honeywood's dragoons, the only troops in that part of the country capable of opposing them on their first rising, had, it was well known, got their route, and marched to reinforce Cope, who was moving northward to defend Edinburgh, unless Charles Edward should intercept him; and this fact, added to the prestige of a first success already gained by the rebels, decided them on rising instantly, and raising the standard of rebellion, while the absence of all regular troops, and the disaffection of the northern militia, should the lord lieutenant attempt to call them out, set aside all apprehension of their being interrupted, until such time as their raw levies should be disciplined.

On the appointed morning, therefore, among the flourish of trumpets, the discharges of a few light field-pieces, and reiterated shouts of "God save King James," the white standard was hoisted, and civil war proclaimed — God grant it may be for the last time — in England. Above a thousand men were collected under arms, of whom nearly half were horse, admirably mounted, thoroughly equipped, and familiar with the management of their horses, though rather as grooms and huntsmen than as dragoons or troopers. Still they formed as good a material as could be desired for the composition of a light cavalry corps, they were officered by gentlemen, many of whom had served, and all of whom were skilful in the use of their weapons. They were full of spirit, and confident in their prowess, and the valor of their leaders.

Many ladies were present, most of whom, like the fair hostess, had donned the white rose for Stuart, and wore white cockades at their bosoms; nor though the ladies Lucy and

Maud Gisborough were of a whig family, and more than that, were personally attached to the reigning dynasty, did they disdain to look upon the muster, although they had not assumed the emblems of the party, much less to talk soft nonsense and make sweet eyes at the younger and handsomer of the tory leaders.

Thus matters stood at Vernon in the Vale, on the morning of the celebrated rising of the '45; and although Agnes was apprized already that her hopes of betraying and cutting off the whole party, together with her hated husband, had been thwarted by the unavoidable call of the dragoons to the north, she was yet in unusual spirits, for she had no belief in the possibility of success to the rebels' cause; no fear that Sir Reginald would escape either the soldier's sword, or the headsman's axe; and little cared she by which he should fall, so his death should restore her to liberty.

And hence, never did she look lovelier, or move more gracefully, or speak more charmingly, than when she bade adieu to her gallant lord, and saw him with his brave, misguided followers, set foot in stirrup and ride proudly northward, with banners to the wind, and music on the summer air.

As Agnes stood on the terrace, with her blue eyes sparkling with a strange unnatural light, her cheeks flushed crimson, her glowing lips apart, her whole frame seemingly expanded and alive with generous enthusiasm, waving her embroidered kerchief to the parting cavaliers, Maud Gisborough gazed upon her with a feeling she had never felt before.

It was in part admiration, for she could not but see and confess her surpassing loveliness; in part, it might be, envy, for she knew her her own superior in womanly attractions — but it was something more than this, it was something between wonder and fear. For she saw now, that there was something deeper and stronger in the character of her friend, than she

had ever heretofore suspected; and she saw also that it was not all right with her.

Maud Gisborough was a light, vain, giddy girl; but the world and its flatteries or its follies had not corrupted a naturally good heart, so far that she could not distinguish good from evil.

She had long perceived, with the quickness of a woman in all matters relative to the affections, that Agnes Vernon did not love her husband with that sort of love, which she would have looked to give and to inspire in a married life. Perhaps, she half suspected that she *did* love her brother, Bentinck Gisborough; but she did not imagine, that there was anything guilty or dishonorable in that love; that it had ever gone beyond feelings, and those innocent and Platonic, much less found vent in words and deeds of shame.

But now a light shone upon her understanding, and she began to see much which she had not thought of before. And it was under the impression of such an impulse or instinct, call it as you will, that she turned to her suddenly, and said in a low voice, half blushing as she spoke:—

"You are a strange person, Agnes Vernon. One would think to see you now, so joyous and excited, that you were on the point of gaining a lover, rather than running great risk of losing a husband."

There are moments when the heart is attacked so suddenly, when overloaded with strong passion, that the floodgates of reserve, nay, of common prudence, are thrown open on the instant; and the cherished secrets of the soul, guarded with utmost care and anxiety for years, are surrendered at the first call, nay, even without a call, and a life's labor cast to the winds by the indiscretion of a minute.

Great criminals, who have laid their plans with the extremest ingenuity, who have defied the strictest cross-examinations,

baffled the wiliest lawyers, till suspicion herself has been at fault, and their guilt disbelieved through a long course of years, have, at some chance word of an infant, or at the gossipping of an old woman, betrayed the secret causelessly, and sent themselves, by their own act and impulse, to the scaffold, thus giving rise to the old adage, *quos deus vult perdere, prius dementat.*

But such is far from being the result or consequence of madness; showing much more the intense operation of the mind, than the lack of it. Be this, however, as it may, such a moment was this with Agnes Vernon; and to the half-casual, half-intended words of her lover's sister, she replied on the instant:

"It may be that you are right, girl. The gaining of a lover and the losing of a husband, are not always events so far removed as you may have imagined."

"Good faith, Agnes," replied the other; "I never have imagined anything about it. It seems to me it were my first essay to *get* a husband, not to think how to lose one. But you are jesting with me, Agnes, for presuming to talk to a staid, married lady like yourself, about husbands."

For a few minutes, Agnes Vernon was silent, more than half aware that she had partially betrayed herself; but, whether the impulse was too strong for her, or whether she was led on by the confidence that it was Bentinck's sister to whom she spoke, after a pause she answered:—

"Take heed, dear girl, take heed, I beseech you, ere you *do* get one; for this world has many miseries, but none so dreadful, I believe, as to be linked to a husband whom you hate!"

"Whom you hate, Agnes! God forbid such a thing were possible! You do not mean to say that it is so with you?"

"Not so!—not so with me! with whom then should it be so? Heaven alone knows, how I loathe, how I detest that man—"

"But wherefore, Agnes? what has he done to you, that you should so detest him?"

"What rather has he *not* done to me? Did he not come and claim me, when I was a girl—a mere girl—a happy girl, in London—and tear me away from all whom I loved, all who loved me, and drag me down to these doleful woods here in the north; and chill me with his stately, stern, cold-blooded, heartless dignity, till he has turned all my young, warm, healthful blood, into mere stagnant puddle; till I have been for years as hopeless as himself, if not as heartless. But Heaven be praised for it, Maud, there is a good time coming."

She stopped abruptly, whether she felt that she had gone too far already, or that the fiery spur which had goaded her to such strange revelation, had grown cold; and the quick light faded from her eye, and the flush paled from her cheek, and she let her head droop upon her bosom, and clasped her hands together, and wrung them for a moment vehemently.

But Maud Gisborough gazed on her with a cold, fixed eye, and answered nothing; that conversation had made the gay girl older by half a lifetime, and more thoughtful than she would, in any probability, ever have been otherwise.

"I do not understand you, Agnes," she said, at length, still gazing upon her with that cold, grave, unsympathizing eye. "I am not sure that I wish—that I ought—to understand you. I am going to my sister."

"God help me," cried the miserable woman; "I do not know that I understand myself."

But Bentinck's sister paused not, nor looked back, but crossed the terrace, passed through the great hall, ascended the staircase, and rushing into her sister's chamber, where she sat in her loose, brocaded dressing-room, reading a light French novel, while her French fille-de-chambre was brushing the marechal powder out of her fine hair, threw herself into a seat, perfectly stunned and bewildered.

"What ails you, Maud?" cried the elder sister, a sharper and far more worldly girl, "what ails you? have you seen a ghost, that you look so pale and terrified? give her a glass of the camphor-julep, Angelique."

"No! no," replied the younger girl, waving aside the proper stimulant. "No, no; leave us a while, good Angelique, I must speak with my sister, alone."

"*Mais, mon Dieu!*" said the cunning French waiting-woman, with a shrug, "*apparement*, miladi Maud has found out she has got one leetle heart of her own, for somebody or oder."

"Is it so, sis?" said Lucy, laughing at the girl's flippant impudence, "and have you found a heart, or lost one? But, no, no," she continued, alarmed at the increasing paleness of Maud's pretty features, "it is something more than this. Leave us, Angelique, and do not return until I ring the bell. Now, Maud, what is it, little, foolish sister?"

"Lucy," replied the other, faltering a little in her speech, for she scarce knew how what she was about to say would be received, "this is no place for us any longer; nor is Agnes any companion for us."

"What do you mean, Maud? Have you gone mad all on a sudden?"

"You can not conceive, how frightfully she has been talking, since the gentlemen rode away to join the prince. She told me in so many words, that she loathed and detested Sir Reginald; and almost said that she hoped ere long to lose him, and to get a new lover; and if I do not very greatly err, she means our brother Bentinck. I do believe she loves Bentinck, Lucy."

"Ha! ha! ha! Do you, indeed, believe so, innocent, little

sis?" cried the elder, laughing boisterously. "Ha! ha! ha! you make me laugh, upon my word and honor. Why, I have known they loved each other since the first week we were here. I have seen him kiss her and clasp her in his arms, a dozen times, when they did not dream that I was near; and she meets him every evening in the woods somewhere. I am sure she was with him that night, too, on which she made such an outcry against some person, who she said, had robbed her. No such thing! Some one might have detected them together, and threatened to expose her; and so she wished to have him put out of the way, whoever it was, to preserve her secret. Bless you, I saw it with half an eye—I have known it all along. You are certainly either very innocent, sis, or a very great hypocrite—one of the two."

"Very innocent, I hope, Lucy," replied the girl, blushing deeply. "I have heard of such things in the great world, but never thought to see them. What a wretch she must be! and how wicked of Bentinck, too, and she a married woman! We must leave her, Lucy—we must leave this place to-morrow."

"I think so, Maud, dear," answered the other, still laughing and bantering; "and, indeed, it was determined a week since, that we should do so. It is Bentinck's desire; and he wrote to Hexham, about it before leaving for his regiment—but not, Maud, darling, because our hostess is a little *fie! fie!* but because it will not do for such loyal folk as we to stay in the house of a proclaimed rebel. Now, don't be foolish, Maud, I tell you. You must be very civil to her while we stay here, and keep your little lips close shut about her naughtinesses;—in the first place, because you can not speak of them without getting Bentinck into trouble; and, in the next, because, if anything happens to Sir Reginald, she is to have all this fine place and property, and when she gets her right love, her *first* love—you know, Maud, dear, she was to have married Bentinck, till

this horrid Vernon came and took her away—she will make a charming sister-in-law!"

"Lucy! Lucy! how can you talk so! But you are not—you can not be in earnest."

"Indeed, I am perfectly in earnest, and I had no notion that you were such a little simpleton. Why, such things happen every day, and nobody thinks about it, or pays any attention to them, unless they are found out, and a scandal comes of it. We girls, I know, are not supposed to know anything about such things, but we are not blind, or fools altogether; and you are just as well aware as I am, that a dozen of the fine ladies of the ton, at whose houses we visit, are not one whit better than they should be, without taking our dear duchess of Kendal, into consideration. So just keep yourself as quiet as you may, and be very sure that as soon as tidings can arrive, we shall hear from our brother, the earl, ordering us home to Hexham castle. Now, if you take my advice, you'll have a headache this evening, and go to your own chamber, and to-morrow forget all that has passed, and be just as friendly with this pretty Agnes, as if nothing had been said. I will go down and take my coffee with her *tête-a-tête*, if you will let me ring for Angelique."

"I will do as you bid me, Lucy," replied the other, rising to leave the room. "But believe me, I don't like it the least, nor do I think it will add anything to our fair reputations."

"To make a scandal about it, would be certainly to destroy them," answered the wiser and more worldly sister. "For, besides bringing down upon our heads the deadly hatred of all the D'Esterres, and getting anything but thanks from our own people, all the world say, 'Those Gisborough girls know too much by half,' and set it down to envy or ill-nature, or anything but modesty or virtue. Believe me, Maud, it is better in the world's eye to seem innocent, than to be so."

At this moment the entrance of Mademoiselle Angelique put an end to the conversation, and not long afterward, Maud left her sister's chamber, and went to lie down, and think over the differences between principle and practice, not altogether feigning a headache.

But Agnes Vernon, after her brief, wild conversation with her lover's sister, overcome by the excess of her own passions, faint and exhausted, and agonized by the perception that the crisis of her fate was at hand, and that if not speedily liberated from her husband, by some strange catastrophe, detection and disgrace must be her portion, though she had no blush for the sin or the shame, was yet overwhelmed by the thought of the open scandal, and of the world's undisguised scorn.

She could not conceal it from herself, moreover, that she had already escaped very narrowly being convicted and exposed; that her infamy was known to many of her own servants, she had been made painfully aware within the last week, when a waiting-woman whom she had reproved somewhat sharply for lightness of demeanor, replied with a flippant toss of her head, that she saw no reason, for her part, why poor girls had not as much right to have sweethearts as great ladies; and more too, seeing that they had no husbands; an insult which she was compelled to pass in silence, not daring to provoke the vengeance of the offender.

Nor was this the only risk she had run; for it must not be supposed that the strange tale of the attempted robbery in the park, on the night of her last interview with Bentinck, had escaped the ears of her husband; and when he came to inquire into the particulars, and heard her version of the story, Sir Reginald shook his head gravely as he answered:—

"There is something very strange in all this, Agnes—something which I do not understand. I hope you are not deceiving me in anything, for I know the person very well, whom

you have described. It was no man at all, nor in disguise as you imagine, but a veritable woman; and although she is a very singular person, and perhaps not altogether right in her reason, she is certainly incapable of robbery, or I may add of injuring any person connected with myself. She has been for many years one of the trustiest messengers and go-betweens of our party. Her faith was sorely tried and not found wanting during the terrible '15, and from that day to this she has been the repository of secrets, which, if divulged, would set half the noblest heads in England rolling. She was born in the village at the park-end, and was foster-sister to my grandmother. She married a Scotch drover afterward, and went away with him into the western Highlands, where some adversities befell her—it was a dark tale—by which her brain became unsettled. She believes herself to be endowed with second sight, and the country people regard her as a witch, and dread her accordingly; but she has not been seen in these parts for many years, coming when she has had occasion to bring me tidings from the leaders of our party, under the shadow of the night, and concealing herself in a vault under the hermitage summer-house, as it is called, near the waterfall, in the Wild Boar's glen, which is known only to herself and me, of people now alive. She had brought me a message on the morning of that day, when I set forth with Bentinck Gisborough, and has again gone northward. I shall see her with the army, and will then learn more of this strange business. But as you love me, Agnes, if she come here in my absence, suffer her not to be harmed or interfered with. The lives of hundreds hang upon her tongue."

No words can express the terror of the miserable wife, as she learned that the witness of her crime was her husband's trusted confidante, that he would see her before many days, and learn unquestionably all that she would most willingly conceal. There was, however, nothing to be done, and she had only to

wait anxiously in the hope that death would find her hated husband in the field, or ere the fatal explanation should take place.

The remainder of his stay at Vernon in the Vale, was fraught to Agnes with terror and agony most intense and unutterable. She knew not at what moment the woman might return; she had no one in whom she could repose the slightest trust, now that Bentinck Gisborough was afar off with his regiment, and she well knew that Sir Reginald, cold as he was, and impassive under the ordinary course of events, was as stern and implacable as fate itself, where his honor was concerned, and she foreboded but too surely that the discovery of her guilt would be the signal for punishment as sudden and as sure as heaven's thunder.

It was with double ecstacy, therefore, arising from a twofold cause, that she beheld him mount his horse, and ride away, never, she trusted, to return.

His departure liberated her from an almost oppressive sense of immediate peril; and she believed that he was running headlong on his ruin.

It was under the impulse of her boundless sense of relief and exultation, that she had given vent to her feelings so incautiously as to alarm the vain and worldly mind of Maud Gisborough, and thus, by her own act, she had incurred fresh peril.

Scarcely had Maud left the room, before she became aware of her own imprudence, and with a vague wish to be entirely alone, and to review her own position, where she could not be interrupted—perhaps spurred on by one of those incomprehensible impulses which seem to urge men to their fate—she took her mantle and walked away, accompanied by the great deerhound which had rescued her before, toward the scene of her sin and shame.

She soon reached the secluded bower, and entering it cast herself down on the seat, and sat gazing on the waterfall, and

on the wooded glen now beginning to exhibit the first tints of autumn, scarcely conscious what she was looking upon, so wildly and unconnectedly did her mind wander over the past and the present, and strive to unravel the future.

Had she not been in such a mood, she would soon have perceived by the strangeness of the dog's demeanor that there was something amiss, for from the moment he had entered the alcove, he had not ceased to snuff at the crevices of the floor, as if he scented something, with his eyes glaring and his bristles erect along the whole line of his neck and shoulders, uttering at times a low, short whine; until at length he went out, and, after circling twice or thrice round the little building, laid himself down at the mouth of the secret trap, and began scratching violently with his forepaws, in which occupation he at last became so furiously excited that he burst into a sharp and savage crying.

This sound it was which first aroused Agnes from her stupor, but as she stared about her with bewildered eyes, not understanding what had occurred, a strange indistinct murmur from below her feet, a faint groan, and a few half articulate words reached her ears, and riveted her attention, while they shook her very soul with terror.

The dog heard them too, for he began to bay with increased fury, and it was not till after a second effort that she could compel his silence.

Then followed a second, and a third groan, and then a hollow and unearthly voice came up from the vaults below:—

"Help!" it cried, "help! Oh! in God's name, whoever you are, help! I am dying—dying in agony of thirst and famine."

The words came forth at intervals, as if forced out by the utmost effort only, with agony indescribable, and were accompanied with deep racking sighs that seemed to announce a hu-

man being's last parting struggles to the eternity in view already.

An impulse, stronger than her terrors, almost unnatural, urged her on, though she more than half suspected who was the speaker. She flew to the trap, seized the dog by the collar, and tied him with her scarf to an oak sapling which had shot up in the shadow of the old tree.

Then, after a little effort, she found the spring by which the door was opened, lifted it, and gazed unconsciously into the dark cavernous vault, feebly illuminated by the ray of light, half interrupted by her own figure, which fell into it through the doorway. It was a moment or two before she could distinguish objects in the gloom, but as her eyes became accustomed to the obscurity, she made out the figure of the woman she most dreaded lying on the bare floor, emaciated to the last degree, with the dews of death already on her sallow brow. A quantity of dry clotted gore on the pavement and on her dress explained the cause of her inability to move thence, as an empty flask lying near her head, and one of her shoes cut into fragments and partially eaten, told the extremity to which she had been reduced in the last week by famine.

"Heaven be thanked!" she muttered as the feeble light fell upon her glaring eyes. "There is yet time; water, for holy love, fetch me water."

"But will you not betray me, if I save you?"—faltered the wretched Agnes, moved by the sight of so much horror, to the one soft spot which must remain in the heart, even of the most depraved of women. "Will you swear to preserve my secret, if I save you—will you swear it?—"

She spoke quick and short, and in a voice rendered husky by the intenseness of her excitement.

Then and not till then did the dying woman recognise her, —"Ah—" she cried—"it is she—the adulteress—the harlot! Then I am lost—lost—" and she sank back on the stony floor, from which she had half raised herself under the influence of renewed hope, and the presence of ready succor.

"No, no, not lost—" cried Agnes eagerly—"not lost, but saved, if you will swear to be silent—"

"Never!" cried the woman, "never, I will die, sooner."

"Then die you must," returned Agnes, shuddering between the horror of her own purpose, and her dread of the consequences of her enemy's recovery, "for I can not save you to be my own destruction."

"Water, for God's sake! but one drop of water."

"Swear; and you shall have water, wine, food, surgical advice, all that wealth can procure, all that the human heart can desire—only swear, swear, I implore you," and she clasped her hands beseechingly, "and let me save you."

"I must die, then," muttered the woman hoarsely, "but not alone—you too, adulteress, you too!" and with a sudden effort of expiring strength, she raised one of her pistols, levelled and discharged it at the head of Agnes. The bullet whistled close beside her, but without harming her; it just grazed, however, the haunch of the greyhound, who chanced to be in the line of the aim, and who was struggling already fiercely against the leash which held him. At the wound he made a yet more violent spring, and loosening the knot of the scarf, dashed forward with a fierce yell, leaped over the prostrate form of Agnes, who had fallen back in terror at the shot, and plunged down headlong upon his old antagonist.

There was an awful and confused struggle—a mixture of fierce snarls and broken gasping groans, and before Agnes could reach the spot—thoughwinged by horror and mercy she rushed almost with the speed of light, into the area of the fatal vault—all was over.

But the fierce dog was still nuzzling and crunching the throat

of the throttled carcass, and it was only by a strong and persevering effort that the terrified lady dragged him from his victim, and led him, licking his bloody chops, and growling angrily, up the low steps from that scene of horror. She dared not look back for a second on the mutilated corpse, but closed and secured the trap, with trembling fingers, and fled, pale and haggard, through the green woods homeward. Haggard and pale, and with a sense of indistinct blood-guiltiness upon her soul, though not in the very deed guilty—for when she questioned her own heart, she was forced to confess to herself that she would have left the woman there to die alone and untended, had not the savage hound anticipated her design with unintended mercy—she felt that the very joy she felt at the death of her worst enemy, was the joy of the successful murderess. No wonder that gay Lucy Gisborough found her *tête-à-tête* with her handsome hostess insufferably dull, and wondered what had become of all the light, joyous mirth, and hairbrained excitement, which were her characteristics, and which, until now, had never failed her.

Both ladies, in a word, were thoroughly dissatisfied, one with the other; and it was a relief to both when the hour for retiring came; nor did it seem other than satisfactory to all parties, when on the morrow morning, even before the early hour at which our unsophisticated forefathers of those days were wont to breakfast, a special courier arrived from Hexham castle, the bearer of a message from the earl to his fair sisters, that they should return home with all speed, and of a letter to the lady Vernon, full of regrets and condolence, that Sir Reginald should have taken so rash a step as to join the misguided gentlemen, who had taken up arms for the chevalier (the earl of Hexham was by far too shrewd a courtier to style a prince, who within a few months might be king—even although he espoused the other side—by the odious title of pretender), and

pointing out the impossibility of his sisters remaining at the house of a gentleman, who howsoever the earl might privately respect and esteem him, had yet been proclaimed a rebel.

Hereupon, with a multitude of kisses and protestations, the ladies parted, all, to say the truth, excellently well pleased to part; for there never had been any bond of union between them, except in the person of the now absent major of dragoons; and Agnes was left to solitude and the insatiate restlessness of her own over-boiling passions, incessantly craving the presence of the one loved object of her every thought.

Her children were little company for her, and it seemed almost as if her undisguised hatred for their father was fast ripening into a confirmed dislike of them also.

Society she had none, for the secluded habits and grave demeanor of her husband had deterred the neighboring families in the first instance from forming intimacy with the stern baronet and his beautiful wife; and latterly, the increasing rumors—though secretly whispered only—concerning the looseness of the lady's conversation, had operated yet more as a decided bar against her.

She went forth now but seldom, never beyond the precincts of the park, and passed the most of her time in dark and moody musings, most unlike to the old levities of her former life.

Only at one time did she arouse herself from this gloom, which was fast growing habitual to her, and that was when tidings arrived from the army of Charles Edward's progress southward, relating the deeds, the victories of his followers, the wounds, the death, the glory of those who fell in the arms of triumph.

Then something of their old fire would kindle her blue eyes, of their ancient brilliancy flush crimson to her pallid cheeks. A quick, nervous restlessness would agitate her whole frame, and mark her whole demeanor.

But all this would subside again into the original, cold, and deathlike quietude, when the despatches were once perused, and she had learned that her own fate was unaltered—for what to her mattered the fate of empires.

At first, and for many a day, the tidings were all prosperous to the prince's faction—first, he had taken Edinburgh, on the 19th of September, and then a few days later he had defeated Cope at Preston Pans, where Honeywood's dragoons had distinguished themselves by falling into a sudden panic at the sight of the highlanders, and running away in spite of all their officers could do, as fast as their horses could carry them, full thirteen miles from the field of battle.

Sir Reginald, who had joined the prince, after defeating a detachment of horse sent to intercept himself, had distinguished himself greatly, and been slightly wounded in the action.

He wrote in great spirits, and with more show of affection toward his wife than he had of late manifested toward her, and congratulating himself on the idea of seeing her a countess ere a year had passed, the prince having promised to revive an ancient earldom, which had long been in abeyance, in favor of his brave supporter.

This letter was rewarded by the faithless wife, so soon as she was left alone, and its contents thoroughly perused, by being torn indignantly to atoms, and trampled under foot in a paroxysm of scorn and fury.

A few days after this she received a visit from her lover, at the head of a squadron of dragoons, who was now in full retreat for England, before the victorious armies of the prince, who was advancing by forced marches into Cumberland. He came under the pretext of searching for arms and papers, but in reality, to snatch a few moments of guilty consolation for defeat from his abandoned paramour, who received him with undisguised and rapturous affection.

Scarcely a month afterward siege was laid to Carlisle by the pretender; and after a few days it surrendered to his army, and with a joyous and triumphant party of his friends and companions, Sir Reginald Vernon visited the house of his fathers, eager once more to embrace his beautiful wife and beloved children.

All was enthusiastic joy and loud triumph. Nothing was spoken of but an uninterrupted march to London, but a succession of victories and glories, crowned by the coronation of the king at Westminster, before the old year should have given birth to the new.

It was with difficulty and disgust that the wife submitted to his caresses, the more odious now, that they were aggravated by his joy, which she termed insolence, and by his success, which seemed to prostrate the dearest of her hopes. And had it not been for the revelry and merriment which rendered the stay of the chevalier's adherents at Vernon in the Vale almost one continued scene of tumultuous enthusiasm, her husband could scarce have failed to discover the total alienation of her feelings.

The only pleasure she tasted during his visit, was his assurance, that Mabel M'Farlane never having been heard of since the night of her attack on Agnes, he was well assured that she had become entirely demented, and during some paroxysm of insanity had been guilty of the outrage, in consequence of which she had probably come to her end.

After a brief sojourn, Sir Reginald rejoined the highland host; and full of high anticipations never to be fulfilled, and joyous dreams soon to be changed for tears and lamentations, their proud array took their way southward. For a time longer, victory still clung to their footsteps. Manchester, with all the catholic gentry of its ancient county, received the prince with open arms; and Derby saw his gallant ranks defile, and

his white banners wave in triumph as he passed under its antique gateways.

But there was the limit of his success, the term of his progress. Thence his retreat commenced, and with retreat, ruin—for after he had turned his back to the capital, not a man in all the kingdom looked upon his success as possible, or did not augur his discomfiture. Within a little more than two months after their triumphant passage through Carlisle, faint, hopeless, and dispirited, the army of the unfortunate pretender retreated again through that old city; but this time so speedy was their transit that Sir Reginald found no time to visit Vernon in the Vale, merely acquainting his wife by a brief and desponding letter, that he was resolved to adhere to the last to the fortunes of Charles Edward, and since revenge and victory had been denied to him, at least to die for the noble cause which he had adopted.

A week had not elapsed, before the cavalry of the duke of Cumberland came up in hot pursuit, thundering on the track of the rebels, and again Bentinck Gisborough found time for a few hours of dalliance with his once more exulting mistress.

The parting gleam of victory at Falkirk shed a last lustre upon the prince's arms, but availed him nothing, and the retreat was continued so far as to Culloden, where the highland array was utterly and irretrievably defeated, the rebellion crushed, the hapless chief a fugitive, literally pursued with bloodhounds through the fastnesses of his hereditary kingdom, the birthplace of his royal lineage, and all his brave adherents flying with a price on their heads, from the vengeance of the house of Hanover.

The energy and talent which Sir Reginald Vernon had displayed throughout the whole insurrection, would alone have entitled him to the undesirable eminence of especial guiltiness above all the rebels, but when to this were added the consideration that he had been actuated even more by hostility to the

reigning house, and personal rancor against the king, than by any loyalty to the Stuarts, and the secret instigations of the house of Gisborough, actuated by Bentinck, it was soon understood that whosoever else might be spared, no mercy would be shown to Vernon, of Vernon in the Vale.

Meanwhile the prince escaped after incredible fatigues and hardships. Of his brave adherents, too many perished by platoons of musketry under the martial law; too many on the bloody scaffold, victims to a mistaken and disastrous loyalty—a few escaped, and when vengeance was satiate of blood, a sad remnant received pardon and swore allegiance to the king.

But of Sir Reginald Vernon no tidings had been received since in the last charge of Honeywood's dragoons at Culloden, he was seen resisting desperately to the last, till he was unhorsed, cut down, and left for dead upon the plain. His body was not found, however, on the fatal field, and none knew what had befallen him; but it was generally supposed that he had escaped from the field only to die in some wretched and forlorn retreat among the inaccessible fastnesses of the Highland hills.

His name was fast sinking into oblivion, and was remembered only by his wife, when she congratulated herself on her liberation from his detested power.

The winter had passed away, and flowers of spring had given way to the more gorgeous bloom of summer, and still nothing had been heard of Sir Reginald. Pursuit had ceased after the rebels. Peace had resumed its sway in the land; and once more Bentinck Gisborough, and his elder sister Lucy, were on a visit at Vernon in the Vale.

It will be remembered that Reginald had devised his estates in trust to this very man, and the arrangement of this trust was the pretext of the present visit. Lucy accompanied her brother in order to play decorum, and prevent scandal concerning the young widow—for such Agnes was now generally regard-

ed, though she had never assumed weeds, or affected to play the mourner for the fate of a husband, whom she now openly spoke of as a cold, stern, selfish tyrant.

Ill success is a great accuser, a great condemner of the fallen. And what between the fury of the country against the vanquished rebels, by which it compensated its terror while they were victorious, and the address and beauty of Agnes Vernon, she had come to be regarded as a victim, in some sort, a very charming, and greatly-to-be-pitied person — a beautiful, innocent child, ill-assorted with a kind of public Catiline and domestic Blue-Beard. And Lucy smiled, and jested, and played the unconscious innocent, while her brother played the villain, and her hostess the wanton, openly before her unblushing face.

And the world had begun to whisper that it was a pity that Sir Reginald's death could not be authenticated, that his widow might find consolation for all her sufferings and sorrows, in a more congruous marriage with the young officer who, it was rumored, had been the first object of her wronged affections.

Such was the aspect of affairs, when late on a July evening, while Lucy was gazing at the moon through the stained windows, and Agnes and Gisborough were talking in an under tone in the shadow of a deep alcove at the farther end of the withdrawing-room, a servant entered with a billet which he handed to the lady of the house, saying that it had been brought in by one of the head forester's children, who had it from a stranger he had met in the park, near the Wild Boar glen.

Agnes turned pale as she heard his speech, and a half shriek burst from her lips, as her eyes fell on the handwriting.

It was from her husband, and contained these words only:

"AGNES: By God's grace I am safe thus far; and if I can lie hid here these four days, can escape to France. On Sunday night a lugger will await me off the Greene point, nigh the

mouth of Solway. Come to me hither, to the cave I told thee of, with food and wine so soon as it is dark. Ever my dearest, whom alone I dare trust.

"THY REGINALD."

"It is from him!" whispered Bentinck, so soon as the servant had retired, which he did not do until his mistress had read the letter through, and burned it at the taper, saying carelessly, "It is nothing. A mere begging letter. There is no answer to it. Give the boy a trifle, and send him home, Robinson."

"It is from him, Agnes!" whispered Bentinck, in a deep voice trembling with emotion.

Agnes replied by a look of keen, clear intelligence, laying her finger on her lip, and no more was said at the time, for Lucy had paid no attention to what was passing and asked no question, and Gisborough took the hint.

After a while, however, when the stir created by this little incident had passed over, she in her turn said carelessly in an ordinary tone, not whispering so as to excite observation:—

"Yes! It is he, and he must be dealt withal."

"Ay!" answered Bentinck. "Ay! but how?"

"You must not be here, Gisborough, the while; that is clear. So order your horse and men for to-morrow morning, and ride away toward York, or to Hexham, it were better, to your brother's, and tarry there a week, saying naught of this to anybody."

"Well? but what then? How shall the rest be done? or who shall do it?"

"I!" replied the miserable woman, her eye sparkling with fierce light, but her brow, her cheek, her lip, as white as ashes. "I!"

"You! Agnes, you!" said her lover, half aghast at such audacity and cruelty combined.

"Yes! I, infirm of purpose, I!—not with my hand though,

with my head only! It has come to this, that we must take or be taken—that we must kill or die. I prefer the former."

"I will go," answered Gisborough quickly; and perhaps not sorry to be away from the spot during the acting of so awful a tragedy, and to have no absolute participation in the crime. "I will go, and order my horses now, and set forth at six o'clock;" and he rose from his seat as if to go and give directions.

"Well, if you must go, I suppose it is better so," she replied. "Lucy," she added, raising her voice, "Bentinck goes to Hexham to-morrow, to see your brother upon business. Will you not run up to your room, dearest, and write a few lines to Maud, with my love, asking her to return hither with him for a few weeks."

"Surely, yes, Agnes," answered the girl, hurrying to obey her. "I shall be very glad, that is so kind of you." And she left the room quite unconscious of what was going on.

Gisborough gazed on his paramour with something between admiration at her coolness, and disgust at her cold-blooded ferocity, but the former feeling, backed by her charms, and his own interests, prevailed.

He drew her toward him, whispering, "You are a strange girl, Agnes. So soft and passionate in your love, so cold and stern in your hatred."

"And do you reproach me with it?"

"Reproach you? I adore you."

"A truce to these raptures now. This is the time for council and for action! this deed accomplished, I am yours, all and for ever—now—where are the nearest soldiers, and of whose corps?"

"At Edenhall. Ligonier's veteran foot. One company with Captain de Rottenberg."

"Enough!" she answered. And, after a few moments' search in the drawer of a writing-table, she found a piece of

coarse, soiled paper in which some parcel had been folded up, and scrawled some lines on it, in a coarse, masculine hand, ill-spelled, and ungrammatical, acquainting the officer commanding the detachment, that by searching the vault under the summer-house, in the park of Vernon in the Vale, hard by the waterfall in the Wild Boar's glen, he would secure a prize of importance, and gain a high reward.

This she directed and endorsed with speed, in the same manly hand. Then giving it to her lover: "When you are ten miles hence, on the road to Hexham, let one of your men, in whom you can place confidence, ride down to Alstone moor, and forward it thence by express to Edenhall, post-haste. Let the man use no names—tell him it is for a bet, or what you will, to divert him—only let him forward it post-haste, and then follow you direct to Hexham. Once there, invent some cause to send him off to London, or to my father's it were better in the New Forest, so all shall be over, or ere he return again."

"I will; I see, brave Agnes! clever Agnes!" and again he gazed at her passionately. "I see; and when he shall return—"

"*His* head shall have fallen," the woman interrupted him, "and we shall be one for ever—secure and unsuspected; now leave me. I must go to him, and lull him to security. Fare you well, and God bless you!"

Most strange that lips, which scarce an instant ago had syllabled those bloody schemes of adultery and murder, should dare to invoke a blessing from the all-seeing God. But such and so inconsistent a thing is humanity.

And then, with fraud on her lips, and treason at her heart, she went forth, and carried food and wine, comfort, and hope, and consolation, and more, "the fiend's arch mock," the unsuspected caresses of a wanton, to her betrayed and doomed part-

ner, where he lay, horrible concealment, in that dark, loathsome vault, that charnel-vault, wherein had rotted the mortal relics of the slaughtered woman, whose bones yet lay bare on the damp and mouldy pavement.

What passed at that interview, none ever knew. For terror, if not shame, held her tongue silent, and his was soon cold in death. Certain it is, however, that she did lull him into false security; for, on the second morning afterward, when De Rottenberg's grenadiers, obedient to the note of their anonymous informer, surrounded the summer-house, and entered the vault, they found Sir Reginald sleeping, and secured him without resistance.

The course of criminal justice was brief in those days, and doubly brief with one so odious to the government and the country at large, as a Roman catholic rebel.

His trial quickly followed his apprehension; conviction, sentence, execution, went almost hand to hand with trial, so speedily did they succeed to it.

No hope of mercy was entertained by Sir Reginald from the first. The obstinate adherence of his family to the hapless house of Stuart, forbade that hope, and he made no exertions to obtain it, neither hurrying rashly upon his fate, nor seeking weakly to avoid it.

It was observed at the time as strange, that he constantly refused to see his wife after his arrest, though he spoke of her respectfully, and even affectionately, to his attendants, and sent her his miniature, at last, by his confessor. Some attributed this refusal to a sense of his own past unkindness, and to self-reproach—others to a fear of compromising her with the government—but whatever was the cause, he kept it to himself; and died, with undaunted resolution, commending his soul to his Maker, and crying with his last breath, "God save King James!"—under all the appalling tortures which the law denounces, and which public opinion had not then disclaimed against those guilty of high treason.

He died, the good, the gallant, the high-minded—a victim not to disloyalty or wicked partisanship, not to ambitious and self-seeking motives—but to a mistaken sense of right—a misguided and blind loyalty to one whom he deemed his rightful sovereign, to family traditions, and what he believed to be hereditary duty.

He died—silent! and whether unsuspecting or unforgiving, even the guilty and fiendish wife who sent him to the reeking scaffold, slaying him by her thought and deed, as surely as if she had stricken him with her own hand, though she might doubt and tremble, never knew to her dying day.

So died, at Carlisle, in his prime of noble manhood, unwept and soon forgotten, Reginald Vernon. Peace be to his soul!

Vice was triumphant, then, and virtue quite downfallen and subdued with rampant infamy exulting over her. But the end was not then. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

And so was it seen thereafter.

PART IV.

"But in these cases
We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which being taught return
To plague the inventor. This even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of the poisoned chalice
To our own lips."—MACBETH.

TEN years had flown from the day on which Reginald Vernon died on the scaffold, devouring his own heart in silence.

Ten years! That is one-seventh part of the whole term of human life, as it is laid down by the inspired writer; one-fourth part nearly of that portion of existence in which maturity both of mind and body permit of enjoyment in its largest and most comprehensive sense. Ten years! Many and great events are wont to happen even to the calmest and most every-day individuals, events transforming their characters, altering their very natures, raising them from the depths of misery and wo, or on the other hand precipitating them from the pinnacle of earthly bliss;—the death of friends, the defection of the loved, the birth of children, the mutations of worldly fortunes, the arrival of maturity, the approach of old age, the ravages of disease, the shadow of death creeping across the dial premonitory of his coming.

It is rarely indeed that ten years pass away over the head of any human being,—unless it be the very humble and laborious poor, whose life may be summed up in four words, to be born, to toil, to suffer, and to die,—without leaving their impress indelible either upon the features or upon the character. Happy are they whose career is so moderate, whose course of life is so innocent and tranquil, that their years glide away serene and

unnoticed, and old age steals upon them, hale, and green, and happy, or ere they have discovered that they are not still young.

Ten years had rolled away, in storm and sunshine, over the antique groves and time-honored mansions of Vernon in the Vale, over the heads of its inhabitants; and all were still the same, and yet how different. The very woods no longer wore the same aspect, as the growth of the younger and the decay of the more ancient trees had altered their outlines, let in sunlight where there used to be dark shadows, and made deep gloom where there used to be merry sunshine.

Buildings, perhaps, display the flight of time less than anything else on the face of this transitory world, until extreme old age and dilapidation has overtaken them. Still the old hall, though not dilapidated, had taken a stride farther on the road to ruin than the lapse of ten years should have warranted had a master's eye overlooked it. The slated roof was overrun with wild leeks and the yellow flowering stone-crop, the ivy had encroached so far as to darken many of the windows, the swallows' nests had accumulated under the eaves into great heaps of rubbish, dank moss and lichens covered the neglected terraces, and the grass grew rank among the stones of the court-yard.

Still it was not uninhabited or abandoned, for two or three columns of smoke were worming their way slowly up into the dull misty skies of November, and a few servants were seen loitering to and fro, listless and inanimate, and seemingly but half alive.

It was a melancholy, misty evening; the sere leaves lay thick on the grass of the neglected lawns, the leafless boughs of the great trees were groaning in the gusty night-wind, and the solemn cawing of the homeward-bound rooks alone broke the sad and chilling silence.

From one of the oriel windows of the withdrawing-room of that old hall a solitary female figure was overlooking the melancholy landscape, with an air as dark and in an attitude as cheerless as the weather or the scenery.

A thin, emaciated, pallid female figure. The outlines of the form still showed some traces, it is true, of grace and symmetry; the gentle curve of the flexible throat, the soft fall of the shoulders, the pliability of the waist, the delicate smallness of the hand, the foot, the ankle, are things which do not pass away, and these were still visible in the wreck of faded, frozen beauty.

All else was angular, and hard, and dry, as if the living woman had been a mere skeleton overlaid with the parchment skin of a mummy; in like manner, the features were still good, but they were fleshless and attenuated, pinched and sharpened almost into the likeness of a corpse.

The great blue eyes, once so soft and languishing, or so full of vivid and speaking fire, retained their size indeed, nay, in the general shrinking of all else they looked preternaturally wide and open; but they were cold and stony as the carved orbits of a marble statue, that have no speculation in them.

Her bosom heaved and fell with a quick, painful motion, as if every breath was drawn with exertion and anguish. One thin hand, which rested on her knee, was beating it with a nervous, restless movement of which she evidently was unconscious. Her hair, of old so luxuriant and of so glossy and so rich an auburn hue, was now thin and dead-looking, and bleached to a dull flaxen whiteness, utterly unlike the bright and beautiful silver which is so honorable to the head of respected age.

That wasted, withered figure was all that time had spared of the once lovely, once voluptuous Agnes Vernon!

"Time!" said I—"what had time to do with that swift, noiseless, premature decay?"

She had not as yet seen her thirty-third summer, and hers, when we saw her last, was a frame that promised increased vigor, health, luxuriance, beauty, as she should advance toward maturer years and riper womanhood.

Time, we lay upon thy shoulders and broad wings many a load which should be laid to the charge of our own secret sins and withering passions. Excess of body, agony of mind, are greater sowers of gray hairs on the head, deeper ploughers of furrows on the brow of youth, than all the time that has passed from the creation downward.

Time, thou wert guiltless of all this fair creature's swift decline into the valley of sorrow—the valley of the shadow of death; for such was the road which she was travelling, as the most casual glance of the most careless passer could not fail to see.

Yes! Agnes Gisborough was dying, and she knew it; but she knew not whether she most wished to die from weariness of the life present, or dreaded it from weariness of the life to come.

Yes! Agnes *Gisborough!*

For hardly was the martyred rebel cold in the bloody cerements of his untimely grave, before the youthful widow gave herself and all her rich possessions to the choice of her young heart, the partner of her secret sin, with the approval and amidst the sympathizing joy of the selfish world.

The play was played out, and the great stake was won; then followed a few months of wild rapture, of passion satiated, of anticipation more than fulfilled, a few seasons of brilliant glitter and blithe revelry in the gay scenes of the metropolis, and then exhaustion, tedium, apathy, satiety, disgust.

I have wasted many words to little purpose, if I have not made it evident that under all her lightness of exterior Agnes had a secret well of immense energy and earnest passion, a

vast power of will, an intense power of feeling, whether good or evil—that she was one of those strangely constituted persons who, as an Italian writer has paradoxically but not untruly observed, demonstrated by the very atrocity of the crimes which they commit, the perfection of their organization, and the greatness of the virtues of which, under different circumstances, they are capable.

She could not have hated so bitterly, had she not been capable of loving devotedly; nay, more, she could not have hated so bitterly, unless that very hate had been itself born of the wrecks, the chaos of wronged, disappointed, and distorted love.

Detesting Reginald Vernon, she had no love for his children, and she had devoted the whole intense energies of her affections on a man utterly unworthy of appreciating her devotion, utterly heartless, selfish, frivolous, and vain. The woman's necessity—the necessity of loving something—was upon her, and she had loved Gisborough, or rather the image of qualities and attributes with which her fancy had invested him, with all the depth of adoration which such a woman feels when she does love indeed.

How terrible the extent of that love was can be estimated only by the consideration of the atrocious crime of which she had been guilty, and of the secret workings of the mind which had goaded her on irresistibly to its commission; for she was not hard or cruel by nature, nor had even the very perversion of her passions rendered her so; on the contrary, she was joyous, light-hearted, fond of pleasure, voluptuous, averse to pain herself, and unwilling to inflict it on others. It can be conceived what strange workings and self-deceptions of the secret soul she must have felt ere such a one as she could be wrought to the temper of the murderess.

It can be conceived what a self-imposed task and horror it was that she bore, and what a struggle it cost her ere she could bring herself to do the deed, although her firm character gave no outward sign at the time of the inward convulsion.

She believed that by that deed she had bound Bentinck Gisborough to herself by bonds indissoluble, everlasting—bonds of affection as of gratitude. She had given him more, perhaps, than woman ever gave before or since, acquired at such a price of blood and honor.

She had raised him from actual penury to enormous wealth; for, the younger brother of a peer, not himself so rich as he was lavish and expensive, he had speedily consumed his small patrimony in fashionable dissipation, and possessed nothing whereon to live but his commission and a host of debts, when she, with her beautiful form, her ardent temperament, and her boundless adoration, bestowed on him a life-interest in the immense incomes and noble demesnes of Vernon in the Vale.

But cold-blooded, weak-spirited, and irresolute, and, in a word, incapable of strong feeling or energetic action of any kind, Bentinck Gisborough had never loved her except with the short-lived passion of the voluptuary, extinguished almost as soon as it is satisfied; and had it not been for the strange events that followed, he would probably have quitted her soon after winning her for the arms of a new beauty.

When he perceived, on Sir Reginald's taking arms against the government, that he had a manifold chance of ere long succeeding to the reversion not of his wife only, for whom he was then in the first glow of guilty passion, but in the common course of things, without any overt action of his own, much less any crime, of his estates and treasure likewise, he persevered and persisted until the matter was resolved as it was.

In truth, from that moment, instead of gratitude for the love and adoration of the woman, he felt only horror for the crime, and dread lest he should in turn be a victim to the violence of her passions. His interests, however, prevailed, and in wealth

and in all that it could procure, and in the intoxication of her beauty and of her adoration, while it was new, he had drowned his apprehensions for what he felt could not be termed remorse.

For a time, therefore, all went on merrily, if not well, and she thought not of sorrow or repentance, enjoying the full glow of the world's admiration, revelling in prosperity and pleasure, and possessed, as she believed, of Gisborough's intense affection.

By degrees, however, the novelty of the situation passed away, Bentinck grew negligent, inattentive, and—though she knew not as yet or suspected that—faithless to her person, and a follower of other beauties.

That was a coarse age, indelicate in its pleasures, unrefined in its profligacy. Vice wore no veil at the orgies of her worshippers. And ere long, Gisborough began to indulge constantly in the lowest debauchery, often intoxicated, often gambling, until the sun was high in heaven, and she was left alone to her own thoughts.

Her own thoughts, and they were horror. Thence she began to reflect, began to mope, began to pine. And when he would at times feel some return of passion, she could not meet his raptures, but was cold, abrupt, or reluctant.

The seeds of distrust and dislike were sown; they had taken root, and they grew apace.

At length, how it needs not to relate, for such details must ever be offensive to pure minds, she detected him in open infidelity—and that with a woman whom he openly disliked and despised—a woman no more to be compared with herself in charms than Hyperion to a satyr.

At once, and with all the impetuosity of her nature, all the vehemence of a woman wronged, all the intense and lacerated passion of a benefactor ill-requited, she taxed him with his ingratitude, not tenderly and reproachfully, but with all the roused fury of a woman scorned.

He replied coarsely, brutally, cruelly. He reminded her of her own faithlessness to her late husband, and went so far even as to tell her laughingly that they well understood one another now, and he would give her *carte blanche* for her actions, if she would extend the like privilege to him.

The paroxysm of almost frantic rage into which this cast her, seemed only to excite his merriment at first; but when it had lasted some minutes, and when she at length threatened that she who had given could take away, out broke the secret of his soul.

"Look you," he said, "my lady. You can not terrify me by your menaces, even though I know all of which you are capable. I shall not go throw my neck into the noose, like that fool Vernon, that you may choke me at your leisure—nor, though I well believe you have the will to use knife or poison on me, do I think you dare it. If you do, I am on my watch, my lady, and on the first attempt, I hand you over to the Bow Street people—do you understand me? That is the way to treat a harlot and a murderess!"

She gazed at him while he was speaking, as if she was perfectly stupified, and did not comprehend his meaning, but before he had ceased, every sign of passion had passed away from her face, and though as pale, she was as firm as a marble statue.

"Bentinck Gisborough," she said, "no more! You have said enough. Together we can live no longer. I will go my way to Vernon in the Vale, and live there alone with my memory. Allow me what you will of that which was once my own; enjoy the rest, after your own fashion. There has been that between us, which, treat me as you will, will not make me hate you—the memory of mutual happiness—perhaps even the consciousness of mutual crime. Spare me more bitter words, and with to-morrow's dawn I will return home—home

—to such a home, as you and my own frenzy have left me, and I will trouble you no more for ever. God help me, and forgive you, Bentinck Gisborough—for if ever a woman loved a man with her whole soul and spirit, even so did I love you. Answer me not; now, fare you well for ever."

Before he could reply, if he would have replied, she had left the room; and before he had awaked from his drunken sleep on the following morning, she was miles away from London on her way to the north, with a single woman-servant as the companion of her way.

At the first moment, he might have felt some small compunction, but some of his gay companions came to seek him, and new orgies and a deeper bowl washed away all remembrance of that shameful scene. Her absence liberated him from a restraint that had of late become almost insupportable, and he soon rejoiced that he was rid of her power.

The only touch of feeling which he showed to one who had loved so much, who had sinned and suffered so deeply, and all for him, was that he allowed her more than an ample maintenance, more, by two thirds, than she expended, in her altered state; and even this was probably the thoughtlessness of an extravagant and careless disposition, lavish of what he hardly valued, rather than the result of any kind or generous sympathy:—of those he was incapable.

Thenceforth, as she had said, she lived with her memories, and what those memories were, her altered aspect, her blanched hair, her nervous, almost timid bearing, testified.

She found her children at the hall, where they had been left under the care of a trusty servant, during those two years of wild dissipation at the capital. They were much grown, much improved—but they knew not their mother, nor recognised the voice of her that bore them.

But from that day forth, although she showed little of a

mother's fondness, nothing of a woman's overflowing tenderness, she became the most exemplary of mothers, as a guide, as a teacher.

It was remarked often by those who observed what was going on, that she behaved as if she were performing a duty which had no pleasure in it; as if she were paying a debt, for which she should receive no reward.

And it is very like that she herself felt thus; and if she did feel thus, her feelings were forebodings, for she did reap no reward in this world, and of the next we judge not.

The children grew in beauty, in excellence of form, and rare quickness of intellect; and they had learned to love their calm, kind, quiet monitress with an exceeding love, though very different from the glad, joyous affection of ordinary children.

In the second summer of her return home, however, the little girl was taken with a terribly contagious fever, which was raging in the district, and in spite of all Agnes's care, who never left the bedside till she too was stricken down by the disease, she died delirious while her mother was insensible.

The wretched woman returned slowly to herself—she was not destined to die—and saw by the black dresses of her attendants that all was over. She asked no question, made no sign, nor ever again spoke the name of her little Agnes; but when she regained her strength, devoted herself as before to her now sole trust, the boy Reginald.

I should have stated that she persisted in refusing to see any visiters, even the clergyman of the parish, who would fain have called to console her. She never received the offices even of her own church, nor would admit the good priest, who performed in secrecy, at peril of his life, the services of religion in the chapels of the parish gentry of the neighborhood more than the episcopalian rector.

The boy was sent to church—to the protestant church—

weekly, in the charge of an old steward; but for the lady, none knew that she ever prayed at all, or that she believed in any creed, or had faith in any doctrine.

Thus things went on for some years, the mother pining hourly and fading, and becoming every year more frail, more gray, more taciturn, more wretched; the boy growing daily in strength and beauty, in proficiency in manly sports and exercises, in intellect and scholarship.

If ever boy gave promise of a noble manhood, it was he; and he had now reached his twelfth summer. Nine years had elapsed since the death of the late Sir Reginald Vernon, and seven since the return of his mother from her short sojourn in London with her second lord; and since that day Bentinck Gisborough had never visited the hall, nor, with the exception of a formal letter, covering a large remittance every quarter, had he given any token to the inhabitants of that seclusion that he was in life, or mindful of their existence.

Of his career, however, tidings were rife in that remote rural solitude. The most desperate roisterer in England was the once refined Bentinck Gisborough; a furious gambler, an unsparing ruiner of female reputations, a duellist of deadly skill.

But in this last year it was said that he had surpassed all former violences, all the extravagances of past conduct; and it was whispered that the bold impudence of his conduct with a certain beautiful French countess, the wife of the embassador of the day, was such that it had called forth the animadversions even of royalty, and that he would not be able much longer to brazen it out in the metropolis.

Retirement in the country, it was whispered, or a tour on the continent, would soon be the only resources left to the ruined Bentinck Gisborough.

One summer's afternoon, some twelve months previous to

the evening on which we have seen Agnes gazing out alone on the darkening scenery of the park, she was walking out in a distant part of the chase, without a servant, accompanying her boy, who was mounted on a new pony, which she had lately procured for him from London at great cost and trouble. It was a beautiful and graceful creature, an Arabian full of spirit and quick fire, but gentle and docile as it was eager and high-blooded. The boy was an excellent and fearless rider, and had been careering to and fro over the open lawns, now diving into the dark groves and rousing the fallow deer from their lairs, now returning at full speed to his mother's side, topping the rugged fences as he came, and calling up a wan smile on her faded lips by his enthusiastic spirit.

Suddenly she saw him reappear from one of the clumps into which he had galloped, with his cap off, his horse frantic either with pain or with terror, and a furious stag close in pursuit goading the horse with its antlers.

They broke away across the open lawn, and plunged into an avenue which she knew but too well. It was that leading to the fatal Wild Boar's Glen, which she never had visited since that night of horror. Now she rushed to it by a short cut desperately, madly—a short cut through the woods, the same in which she had encountered Mabel on the eve of her first crime—but she thought not of that now as she fled onward, onward, shrieking so painfully that she aroused and brought out all the servants from the distant hall.

But she outstripped them all, and reached the esplanade of the fatal summer-house, just in time to see the Arabian plunge in its frantic terror down the steep ravine, with the powerless rider hanging rather than sitting on its back.

The servants when they reached the spot found the horse and the two bodies together on the stream's verge, at the bottom of the ravine. At first they believed that all three were

dead, but for Agnes there was no such fortune! The boy and the horse were killed outright, the wretched mother had only fainted; but it was months before she returned to the possession of her senses, and during her delirium she raved so fearfully, and uttered hints of such dark deeds, that the most practised nurses fled her bedside in terror.

But as before she recovered, and as before asked no questions.

Her observers could observe her lips move often, when she was silent, and tried from their movement to conjecture the words which she syllabled. Some fancied that they were, "Thy will be done." But that spirit was not in her; they were one sad, ceaseless, uninterrupted sigh, mea culpa, mea culpa. Had she repented? Who shall read the soul! Only she was seen oftentimes to draw forth from her bosom a small vial of some very transparent liquid, to look at it wistfully, and to shake her head as she returned it muttering, "Not yet, it is not yet time."

They thought in their simplicity that it was holy water. And now she was sitting, as she was wont to do for hours, gazing out on the growing gloom, devouring her own soul in silence. If mortal agony endured on earth may wipe away mortal sin, then indeed might we hope that hers might have been cleansed and purified; but alas! we are told by those pages which can not tell amiss, that we must repent, that we must believe if we would be saved.

And did she repent, or in what did she believe?

Suddenly, as she sat there, she shuddered, for the sound of wheels coming up the avenue at a rapid pace smote upon her ears, and then the unwelcome sight of a travelling carriage at full speed, with six horses and eight outriders, met her eyes.

She started to her feet, and pressed her hand on her heart forcibly. Her foreboding spirit told her what was about to be.

Nearer it came and nearer, and now she might distinguish the liveries of her husband's house, and now at the open window her husband's head, and behind it a female hat of the newest fashion, plumed, furbelowed, and flowered to the height of the ton.

"It is too much," she cried, in a hoarse, husky cry, "it is too much—yet I looked for it. O God! O God! have mercy."

And with the words she rushed up to her own room, entered it, locking and double locking the door behind her; a female servant seeing her wild looks followed hastily, and knocked and there came no reply, and listened but there was no sound; and after a while, growing weary of waiting, and supposing that her lady was in a moody fit, she ran down stairs to see the new-comers.

It was as wretched Agnes had foreseen. It was her miserable, shameless lord, with his last paramour, the French embassadress, driven out of London by the loud burst of indignation which the impudence of their infamy had elicited, and come to intrude upon the last refuge of his victim.

"Where is your mistress?" he asked sharply of the steward, when he saw that the rooms were empty. "How cold and cheerless everything looks here. Bring lights and make a fire, and fetch refreshments too, and some of the old Burgundy; and hark you, Robinson, let Lady Gisborough's woman bid her come down and greet the countess of Penthicore."

All below was soon in confusion; servants hurrying to and fro with lights, and rich wines, and costly viands, but all above was cold and silent as the grave. Agnes's maid knocked and knocked at her lady's door in vain, and at last descended the stairs fearfully, and sent word to Bentinck, who was by this time, as his wont, half-intoxicated, that her lady would neither come down nor make any answer.

"She shall come down," said Bentinck, uttering at the same

time a fearful imprecation, "she shall come down, if I drag her by the hair—I will stand no woman fantasies. Show me her room;" and rushing up stairs, scarcely pausing to shout fiercely and violently to her to open the door for a harlot as she was, kicked in the fastenings with his heavy boot, and darted in, perhaps intending to do worse violence, followed by all the servants, trembling, and pale, and foreboding I know not what of horror.

It was a fearful sight. On the bed, cold and stiff already, she lay outstretched, with her hands clenched, her white lips apart showing the pearly teeth within hard set, her glassy eyes glaring wide open, and full of some strange supernatural horror, which seemed to have come over her in the last agony.

The stopper of a small glass phial rolled on the carpet under the feet of one of the first who entered and on examination, the bottle was found clenched in her right hand.

There was a faint odor in the room as of burnt almonds or bruised laurel leaves.

She had gone to her fate, rash, headlong and impenitent.

Within three days Bentinck Gisborough fell by the hand of the count de Penthicore, whose sword avenged not his own wrongs alone, but the blood of many an innocent and one guilty victim.

Truly was it written, that the wages of sin is death.

THE END.

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