



"MY THROAT WAS RELEASED, AND WHILE THE BLOOD STREAMED FROM HIS LACERATED HAND, HE TURNED WITH A HOWL OF RAGE AND AGONY UPON HIS UNKNOWN ASSAILANT, AND BEHELD ZENOBIA, IN HER SHROUD! ZENOBIA, WHOM HE THOUGHT DEAD UPON EARTH FOR EVER."

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STARTLING DISCLOSURES! MYSTERIES SOLVED!

OR THE HISTORY OF

# ESTHER LIVINGSTONE,

AND DARK CAREER OF

## HENRY BALDWIN.

This Narrative not only pictures the singular career of Esther Livingstone, and the Crimes of Henry Baldwin, but the scenes in which they were actors in the

### MAMMOTH CAVE,

are related by the wretched Baldwin in a bold, truthful, but absorbing style. And the Murder of Miss Annie Harnley in Charleston on the

### NIGHT OF HER MARRIAGE,

is in these pages terribly explained.

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PHILADELPHIA:

PUBLISHED BY E. ELMER BARCLAY,

No. 283 MARKET STREET.

1853.

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Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1853, by  
E. ELMER BARCLAY,  
in the Office of the Clerk of the District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

ESTHER LIVINGSTONE.

It was on the night of December 23d, that the event happened which changed the whole current of my life. At that time I was a medical student, completing my studies in the office of the celebrated Dr. N——, well known as one of the first surgeons of the age. I had barely completed my twenty-third year. A mother and two orphan sisters, living on the banks of Seneca Lake, in respectable poverty, depended upon me, and upon me only, for support. Very poor, but ardent and ambitious, I was in love with my profession, and looked forward to the ensuing spring as the time when I would complete my course as a student, and receive my diploma. But the night of December 23d changed the whole current of my life. Regrets are unavailing; but, O how bitter the wish! would I had never seen that night! Would that I could blot its record from the annals of time and of eternity! Up to that period I had been simply a student; isolated from the world; ignorant of its habits and pleasures, having but one hope, success in my profession, and the welfare of my widowed mother and orphan sisters. That night found me the only tenant of a deserted mansion, situated among the heights of Weehawken, in the centre of a garden, and in sight of Hudson river. It was the summer mansion of Dr. N——, which in summer time was exceedingly beautiful, as it stood in the centre of a luxuriant garden, with green boughs interlocking above its pointed roof and grey stone walls. But now, on this cold winter night, it was altogether desolate; the garden was covered with snow; the wind howled dismally among the leafless trees; my light alone, shining from an upper window of the silent mansion, was the only sign of the presence of a living being for miles around the spot. In the afternoon the Doctor said to me, as he and I stood together in his private office, in the city—

“Henry, I wish you to spend to-night in my summer house, on the heights of Weehawken. Between the hours of twelve and two o’clock two persons will bring a *subject* to that place. I wish you to be there when they arrive. You will receive the *subject*; place

it carefully in the private dissecting room, and in the morning meet me again at this office."

Of course I complied with the Doctor's request, and soon after nightfall hastened from New York to Hoboken, and from thence to the summer house. There was something in the manner in which the Doctor spoke of the expected *subject*, which excited in me the deepest curiosity. Besides, why not have this *subject* brought at once to the college, in New York, where it could be safely delivered into the hands of the Janitor?

As the clock in the hall struck twelve, I was seated in an oblong room of the lonely mansion, beside a table, on which stood a lamp with a clouded shade. Near my feet burned a comfortable wood fire. One side of the room was lined with shelves, loaded with heavy volumes; it had but one window and two doors. One of these doors led into the body of the mansion, and the other opened upon a narrow stair-case, which terminated in a garret, extending the entire length of the house. This garret was the *private dissecting room* of the Doctor. Seated in an arm chair, with an open volume on my knee, I was gazing seemingly into the fire, and thinking by turns of my mother and sisters, living in their quiet home, on the banks of Seneca Lake, and of the *subject*, so mysteriously announced by the Doctor. I found myself forming all sorts of conjectures as to the sex, position, and life of this *subject*, before it became a *subject*. And the lonely hour, the howling wind, and the utter stillness of the place, gave a tinge of melancholy, approaching terror, to my solitary reverie. My reverie was interrupted by the sudden opening of the door. I started in my chair, and beheld two rudely attired men standing by the table, their faces concealed from the light by their fur caps, which were drawn low over their foreheads. They held in their arms a bundle, covered with a piece of coarse canvass. That bundle was the *subject*. As the resurrectionists stood beside the table, holding it in their arms, I could trace, even through the rude folds of the canvass, the outlines of a human form.

"Here we *air*," said the tallest of the body-snatchers, in a voice by no means musical, "and here's this *stiff 'un*."

"How did you obtain entrance into this house?" I asked, as I rose from the chair; for I had been startled by their unexpected entrance. "Why didn't you wait at the hall door, and ring the bell?"

"'Cause the Doctor give us a key to the door, an' told us to get the body out of the sleigh and into the house as quick as the devil 'ud let us."

This was the response of the shorter ruffian of the two.

"And just tell us where to stow it away, and let us travel," rejoined the one who had first spoken.

I lighted a small lamp, handed it to the taller resurrectionist, and opened the narrow door leading to the garret—"Take it up there, and lay it upon the table," I said. And while they disappeared up the narrow stairway, I stood by the door anxiously awaiting their return.

"Here are the ten gold pieces which the Doctor promised you," I said, as they again appeared, "and let me ask you, where did you get this subject?"

The ruffian gingled the gold pieces in his brawny palm, and indulged in a sort of internal burst of laughter:

"I may a got it in Greenwood, and I may *not*. Wouldn't you like to know? D'y'e spose the Doctor would heve paid ten yaller boys if it hadn't been a sort o' dangerous job, an' if he hadn't a wanted this particler subject *infernal* bad? Catch a weazel asleep! Young man, you'll have to git yer eye teeth cut afore you git anything out o' me!"

"The goods is here, and we've got the dimes," said the other, "an' that's all you need know about it."

With that they shuffled out of the room, and I heard their footsteps resound upon the stairs, followed by the harsh sound of the hall door, as it was "slammed to." I looked from the window, and by the faint moonlight which came through the leaden clouds, I saw the body-snatchers cross the garden, and enter the sleigh, which waited for them at the gate. And then the sleigh drove noiselessly away, without the faintest tinkle of a bell.

I now *felt* myself alone with the dead. Why should a sensation of fear, amounting to horror, slowly creep through my veins? Was I afraid of the dead? Had I not been long familiar with the details of the dissecting room, seen the bodies of young and old, and of both sexes, severed by piecemeal—and what reason was there for me now to feel afraid—*afraid*, because I was alone in the same house with a dead body? Thoughts like these agitated me as I sat down near the fire, and tried to banish the *subject* from my mind. But it would not do.

"Well, I will see this subject," I said at last, and starting from my chair, seized the small lamp, and went up the garret stairs. "It is doubtless a person who has died of some strange and unusual disease, the causes of which the Doctor wishes to investigate."

And I reached the garret. It occupied the entire length of the main body of the mansion; its ceiling was formed by the unplastered rafters of the steep roof, and there was a small gable window at each extremity. In the centre stood a large table of unpainted pine, and on this table was extended the body, in its rude envelope of dingy canvass. Around the table were various objects, which at this lone hour, by the light of a dim lamp, would have looked very horrible to other than medical eyes—such as a skeleton, suspended from the rafter; a shelf loaded with jars, in which was preserved in spirits, various specimens of *morbid anatomy*; and a recess near the window, in which stood erect, not the skeleton, but the embalmed body of a notorious wretch who had been hung for murder. These, I say, would have looked very horrible to any other than medical eyes; and even I, used to such sights, could not restrain an ugly sensation, as the light flitted over the features of the embalmed wretch—features which had been hideously distorted in the process of embalming.

I drew near the table and placed the light upon it. Determined to know what the *subject* looked like, I seized the canvass and flung its folds aside. An exclamation, whether of surprise or horror, I cannot determine, was forced from my lips. For the body extended upon the coarse canvass, was that of a young and beautiful woman, somewhat above the medium size, and with her hair waving in thick masses over her white shoulders and snowy bosom. Her hair was of a dark brown, approaching black; and with one arm bent upon her breast, the other resting by her side, she was extended in the light in the attitude of a quiet slumber. The shroud had been stripped by rude hands from her bosom and faultless limbs; a portion of a sleeve only dangled on the right arm. Never, among pictures or statuary, had I beheld a form of such transcendent loveliness; and as for the face, environed in the waving hair, the lips gently parted, and the long fringes of the eyelashes, resting softly on the cheek, it was a countenance mingling the purity of the virgin with the ripeness of the mature woman. After the first cry of surprise I stood spell bound, gazing in dumb pity and admiration upon the beautiful dead.

"How did you meet your death?" I found myself unconsciously uttering aloud these words. "By your own hands, or by the hands of others? For certainly you died not in the regular course of disease."

Again a cry was forced from my lips. A singular circumstance

had arrested my attention. Around each slender wrist a thin cord was tightly wound; so tight, indeed, as to make an indentation in the skin; and casting my eye along the uncovered form, I discovered that a similar cord was tied around each slender ankle.

"Ah! I see how it is. Poison, or a powerful opiate, has been administered, and then the circulation of the blood has been stopped by the pressure of these cords. The murderer who did this deed has done it with a skilful hand."

Seizing the scalpel, I carefully cut the cords on the right, and then on the left wrist; and my hand rested on the left ankle, when I started and turned my head over my shoulder; it seemed to me that I heard footsteps on the stairs; I listened eagerly. Was it a mere fancy? The wind sighed mournfully among the leafless boughs that swept over the roof; but even through that noise it seemed to me I could distinguish footsteps on the stairs. I gently left the table, and advanced to the head of the stairs, where I stood for a moment, listening with painful eagerness. It was only a fancy of mine; there was no sound of footsteps. I turned from the stairs and approached the table; judge of my horror! The dead woman had risen into a sitting posture, and was gazing round the place, with unclosed eyes; eyes glistening with almost supernatural light. And she had raised her right hand to her forehead. As thus she sat, her uncovered form, but poorly concealed by her flowing hair, stood out from the darkness like a marble figure suddenly aroused into life. I could not speak, nor move. Horror held me, and fixed me to the floor.

"My God! what a wretched dream!" the dead woman spoke in a low voice. "What a frightful dream! will I never awake?"

She looked around with a look of indefinable terror. Her words gave me courage. Rushing forward, I exclaimed:

"You will awake; you are awake! This night you have been rescued from the grave. Listen to me, I entreat you;" and with hurried utterance I ran over the incidents of the night, as far as I knew them. How Dr. N—— had purchased a *subject*, and how she had been brought from some unknown grave to the place in which she found herself. "And, lady," I concluded, as I saw her gazing at me with her glittering eyes, which she shaded with her uplifted hand, "here you are safe; for I will be your friend against all enemies; I swear it, to the death."

She slowly reached forth her right hand, as if to grasp mine, but as suddenly withdrew it, as she for the first time saw that her limbs

and form were uncovered. A burning blush spread from her bosom to her forehead.

"But what need of modesty have the dead?" she said after a moment, again extending her hand and resting it on my shoulder. "For I have been dead and buried you know. After all that I have gone through I need not blush to find myself living, when, according to all human probabilities, I should have been dead. What is your name?"

"Henry Baldwin," I answered.

She pressed my shoulder gently, and looked at me steadily with a glance that fired my whole being.

"Henry, swear to me," she said slowly, "that you will never reveal to any one, without my permission, the events of this night."

I took the oath.

"And swear, that in every respect you will do and act as I direct you."

Again, as though my will had passed from my control, I took the oath.

In less than half an hour the scene was changed from the gloomy garret to one of the largest parlors of the Doctor's mansion. I had built a fire upon the broad hearth, and provided the unknown woman with a dress, which I had taken from a wardrobe belonging to one of the Doctor's daughters. It was a habit of dark velvet, which well became her noble bust and luxuriant shape, as seated upon one side of the fire she threw her dark hair aside from her face, and regarded me steadily with her large dazzling eyes. She was pale and thoughtful, and somewhat absent, but there was the stamp of a fixed resolve on her proud and beautiful face. As for myself, bewildered by her entrancing beauty, and scarcely knowing whether to consider the events of the night as a reality or the creation of a dream, I stood gazing at her in dumb admiration.

"Henry," she said, "you have saved my life, and it is right that you should know my history; but not to-night. As for my name, I will never again bear that by which the world has known me; I have left it in the grave. Call me Esther."

She placed her hand upon her forehead, and after a slight pause, resumed:

"In the morning, Henry, you will visit the office of Doctor N—. You will tell him, that the persons whom he employed to rob the grave failed in their object—or stay—that they received the money from you, and deceived you by placing in the garret a bundle of

worthless canvass. And you will prevent the Doctor, by all means, from visiting this house to-morrow."

Her voice was sweet and musical, but her tone was that of absolute command. I was to meet my friend and benefactor with a LIE! The very thought was hideous to me, but when my gaze turned to the face of Esther, I could not help murmuring, "I will obey you, madam."

"Do not call me madam, call me Esther," she said with a smile that imparted a richer fascination to her face. "And after you have seen the Doctor," she continued, "return at once to the mansion, and I will inform you of some other steps which it is needful for us to take."

"But should the Doctor come here during the day—"

"He must *not* come here," she interrupted me, in a decided tone.

"You *must*, by all means, keep him from coming here to-morrow."

"Esther, I will obey you to the death," I replied warmly, and at the same moment she reached forth her hand to grasp my own; the pressure of that hand ran through my veins like lightning.

"And now, good night, Henry," she said, "you are wearied and require rest; as for myself, I require this night for *thought*, for to-morrow will be a busy day."

I left her and went up stairs to the study, but not to sleep. Seated in the arm chair, gazing vacantly into the embers of the smouldering fire, I remained thinking over the events of the night, until the grey light of the winter's dawn stole through the window panes. I felt conscious that, by some means or other, this strange woman would hereafter be intimately connected with my fate through life.

As soon as the sun rose I left the mansion, and from a neighbouring farm house procured the requisites for a rude breakfast, with which I returned again to the house of the Doctor. I placed the food before Esther as she was seated upon a sofa in the parlour.

"You will need food after the fatigue and excitement which you have undergone; as for myself, I will at once away to the city."

She did not answer me in words, but pressed her finger on her lips, and gazed at me steadily, as though to impress me anew with the commands which she had given the previous night.

I made the best of my way down the heights of Weehawken, and along the river shore to Hoboken. There I took the ferry boat and crossed to New York; it was but a little after eight o'clock when I entered the office of Doctor N—, in Chamber street, near Broadway. The Doctor, a tall, sedate looking man, with boldly marked

features and grey hair, was already in the office. Seated by the table, he raised his eyes eagerly as I entered.

"Well, Henry, all right I suppose; those persons brought the subject?"

Looking at him sternly, I uttered the *LIE* which Esther had taught me:

"Those persons came, Doctor, bearing a bundle in their arms, which I directed them to place in the garret; they received the money and left the house. Judge of my surprise, when on going up stairs to examine the bundle, I found it to consist of nothing but worthless canvass."

No words can depict the surprise and dismay which came over the Doctor's face. Usually a very calm and quiet man, he now suffered himself to give utterance to an oath.

"It cannot be, Henry, it cannot be," he cried; "surely there must be some mistake;" and again and again he questioned me, and cross-questioned, but I remained firm in my original story.

"I will set the Janitor of the college on the track of these villains, and without delay," he said, walking rapidly up and down the office. "They have been bribed to do this; bribed by the *other party*."

"*Other party!*" I could not help echoing his words. He stopped abruptly in his walk.

"Do you know, Henry," he said, gazing at me fixedly with his large grey eyes, "that it was not for the purpose of dissection that I desired the body of this woman? By no means. It was to aid me in the unravelling of a series of crimes; crimes, Henry, which involve some of the first names and highest families in the city."

"It was the body of a woman, then?" said I, affecting surprise.

"A murderess! a *murderess!*" he interrupted me, almost fiercely. "An incarnate demon!" and he resumed his hurried walk up and down the room.

My heart died within me at his words. Esther a murderess! It could not be. She, so nobly beautiful, stained with the guilt of murder! "It is a falsehood!" The words were on my lips, but I did not utter them.

"To-night, Henry, you will return to the house, and wait there again," said the Doctor. "And for myself, I will spend the day in unravelling this mystery."

He took his hat and cloak, and bidding me a hearty "good morning," hurried from the office. I was lost in perplexity. What, if

he should take a notion to visit the country house during the day? I determined to lose no time in returning thither, and at once carried my determination into effect. Crossing the river, and hurrying along the shore, I ascended the heights of Weehawken, and in less than one hour, from the time of my leaving the Doctor's office, I stood before the door of the deserted country house. The clear sunlight of a keen, cold winter morning was shining brightly over its dark walls, and the garden was white with snow. I entered the mansion, and found Esther seated in the parlour, still clad in the habit of dark velvet which she assumed the night before. She started to her feet as I entered, and the light of the winter's day, which stole through the curtain, revealed her countenance, pale as death, but at the same time inexpressibly beautiful. Her rich brown hair was gathered back from her face, and her eyes, undimmed by the loss of rest, shone with dazzling lustre; and as she confronted me, the folds of her dark robe were agitated by the impetuous swell of her bosom. I know not why it was, but the moment I entered that woman's presence, I felt that I was no longer my own master; that I was in her power, for life or death, or any good purpose or any crime.

"Well, Henry, what news?" she said, laying her hand gently on my shoulder.

"I obeyed your bidding, Esther," I said slowly, and then looking her deliberately in the face, and measuring every word—"And he calls you—a—murderess!"

She did not start, nor turn paler, nor withdraw the pressure of her hand from my shoulder; the only sign of agitation which she showed, was the swelling of a slight vein between her eye-brows, which for an instant gave a kind of fiend-like beauty to her face.

"*A murderess!*" she said, in an absent way; and then pressing her face close to mine, before I could guess her purpose, she pressed her lips to my forehead; and raising her face, no longer pale, but flushed and glowing, she said, "*Was that the kiss of a murderess, Henry?*"

Maddened by that kiss, I sank at her feet, and clasped her hands in mine.

"O, woman!" I gasped, "you take my soul from me. I am yours through life and death; yours, whether you are innocent as the angels, or whether your hands are red with human blood."

She raised me gently to my feet, and passed her arms as gently round my neck; her voice was low, but clear, as she said:

"Henry, you raised me from the dead, and I belong to you. You

are the only man I ever loved. I know not whether those stories about love at first sight are true, but this I know: last night, awaking from the sleep of death, I felt in every fibre of my being, even as my gaze first met yours, that you and I were bound together for life and death; not by the ties of love alone, but by the hand of Fate. And now, my friend, let us *act* to-day, so that we may *live* to-morrow."

She led me to the sofa, seated me by her side, and while we sat alone in that spacious room, where the sunlight and the light of the fire on the hearth mingled together, she told me her history. O, I can see her gaze; I can hear her voice even yet!

### ESTHER'S HISTORY.

ONE year ago I was seventeen. I resided with my mother, in the upper part of the city of New York, in one of its most aristocratic mansions. My father had died years before, leaving an immense estate to his only daughter; and his daughter to the guardianship of her mother. That mother, who still looked young and beautiful, more like an elder sister than the mother of her child, had no care nor thought but to see me educated properly, with all the accomplishments suited to my station, and in due time to behold me married to a man worthy of her daughter. Thus matters continued until I had attained my seventeenth year, when a change came over my mother's life. She contracted a second marriage; her second husband was a man of middle age, reputed to be immensely wealthy, and known as Captain CORWIN. There were strange rumours in circulation about this man; his title as Captain was derived from his having for years commanded some of the largest merchant ships, but it was strongly hinted that the foundation of his reputed wealth had been laid in *piracy* and *murder*. Still, as he was reputed to be wealthy, he was received in the first circles of New York, and mothers with marriageable daughters regarded him with anxious eyes. In appearance he was of the middle size, thick set, and slightly inclined to corpulence; his face was broad and brown, dark hair and whiskers, and his eyes were small, but quick and brilliant in their glance. Well dressed, smooth in speech, and despite his sunburnt and scarred face, exceedingly insinuating in his manners, the Captain was a man, whom, from the first, I never looked upon save with loathing. It seemed to me that there were traces of a desperate nature and of fiendish

crimes upon his face. When he married my mother he was under the impression that she was the sole inheritor of my father's wealth; but when he discovered his mistake, my mother soon fell sick, and faded slowly away, and died; the world and the Doctor said of consumption; but if the truth was known, of poison, administered by the hands of her husband. Prior to her death, the Captain, unknown to me or any of the relatives of our family, persuaded or forced my mother to sign a will or some other legal instrument, investing him with the guardianship of her only daughter. After my mother's death he consequently became my guardian—the trustee of my father's immense estate. Nothing could exceed his kindness to me; he accompanied me on every occasion, when, as the wealthy and envied heiress, I mingled with the gay and aristocratic world; and the world thought that Captain CORWIN idolized his step-daughter. But one night, coming unperceived in his study, (it was in our mansion,) as he sat before a table overspread with the account books and papers of the estate, I heard him, as if thinking aloud, mutter these remarkable words:

"Soon she will be eighteen, and at eighteen my trusteeship is at an end; and of course the estate slips from my fingers. Well! I must therefore introduce her to a proper man, and have her married before she is eighteen."

I never forgot these words, nor the tone in which they were spoken. Soon afterwards he brought to the mansion a fashionable young man, of aristocratic exterior, named CHARLES VANDERWENT, who was in fact, despite his prepossessing appearance, simply the penniless and profligate scion of an old family. The attentions of this young man soon became pressing, and my step-father began to hint about marriage. At last Charles, backed by my step-father, proposed, and was plainly but firmly rejected. The look of cold-blooded malignity which shot from my step-father's eyes, when I repeated my decision to him, I can never forget.

"You will think better of it, Esther," he said, with a meaning look, "I *know* you will think better of it."

But I met all his propositions, and all the attentions of Vanderwent, with the same denial.

Thus matters remained until last Thursday; some four days ago. The Captain came to me in a cordial manner, and with a smiling face, and said:

"To-morrow, *my pet*, you will be eighteen, and your own mistress; no longer under the care of your *cruel* step father, (laughing,) but

free to marry whom you please, go where you please, and act as you please. Well, well, I'm sorry you don't like Vanderwent, but it can't be helped. Let's shake hands and be friends."

Imposed upon by his kindly manner, I took his hand, and we spent the greater part of the day in conversing about the estate. In the afternoon, as we sat at the dinner table together, he said in an off-hand way:

"Daughter, suppose we take a ride this afternoon out to your country seat; it's only eight miles from town. The place will need repairs next spring, and I'd like to give you some suggestions about the matter."

I consented. Entering the carriage we were whirled northward from the city; it was a clear, cold afternoon, and the Hudson looked beautiful in the bright sunshine. Although the place is only eight miles from the city, we did not reach the lane which leads to it from the highway, until after dark. This I thought strange. It was quite dark when the carriage drew up before the garden gate. The country seat is a venerable edifice, built mainly of stone, with additions of timber; it stands in the garden, and is surrounded with tall sycamores. Alighting from the carriage, and passing along the garden walk, I entered one of the main parlors, a large room pannelled with oak, and was surprised to find a table spread with an elegant collation, and lighted with tall wax candles.

"I thought we'd be hungry, Esther," said my step-father, as he joined me; "and so I sent some of the servants ahead of us with orders to prepare this collation."

I sat down to the table with him, the wood fire meanwhile imparting a pleasant warmth to the old parlor.

"What noise is that?" I cried, as I heard the sound of wheels.

"It's only our carriage," he replied, "there's something the matter with one of the wheels, and I directed the coachman to take it to the blacksmith's shop, at the forks of the road, and have it repaired."

"We'll have a pleasant ride home by moonlight," I replied, and then it occurred to me to ask,

"Where are all the servants?"

"They have made a fire, and are taking supper in the servants' hall, at the other end of the mansion," he replied.

The old clock in the hall struck eight, and I remarked, "Why the carriage has not returned; what can detain the coachman so long?"

"O, he'll be here presently," replied my step-father; "see! the

moon is rising; we'll have a delightful ride home, Esther. By the bye, my child, allow me to take a glass of wine with you. Let us pledge each other, 'Oblivion to all past differences.'"

He filled two glasses, and handed one to me; I took it, and drank about one half of its contents, and sat it down upon the table, saying to myself as my gaze met the cordial face of my step-father, "*Can that man be the poisoner of my mother?*"

We remained at the table, conversing pleasantly about my future prospects, when he remarked: "I think I'll go and look after our coachman; I'll be back in a few minutes, Esther."

He left the old parlor, and it occurred to me, in his absence, to visit some of the upper rooms of the mansion, and take a look at the old fashioned furniture. Taking a wax candle I ascended the broad stairway, formed of massive oak, and passed slowly through three rooms, all pannelled with oak, and furnished with high backed chairs, antique mirrors, and carpets of the style of some forty years ago. There was dust upon everything; everything breathed memories of people long since dead; and the place was so deathly still that I was almost afraid of the echo of my own footsteps. Pausing for a moment before a mirror, I could not help remarking that my face was flushed with unusual color, and my eyes unusually bright; and a strange indefinable feeling began to pervade me. I thought it was mere fancy, and continued to wander through the old rooms until I came to the chamber in which my father died. It was like the others, vast and gloomy, with a broad hearth, mirrors reaching from the ceiling to the floor, pannelled walls, and antique furniture. Opposite to the hearth stood a massive bed, with a white coverlet, high canopy, and thick curtains; it was the bed on which my father died. As I stood by it, holding the candle over my head, the singular sensation, of which I have before spoken, began to increase, and was now accompanied by a feeling of irrepressible drowsiness. I could scarcely restrain the impulse to fling myself on the bed, and sink into sleep. But like a light suddenly struck from a flint with steel in the darkness of a cavern, the horrible truth rushed at once upon my mind.

"The wine I drank was poisoned! I am the second victim of my step-father! O, blind, blind that I have been, not to see through his plot before!"

And I strode hastily up and down the chamber, for I felt that in my case to go to sleep, was to die. A sense of oppression weighed upon my chest; I felt as if suffocating for the want of air, and

madly tore open the front part of my dress, until my bosom was exposed to the light.

"I will *not* sleep," I said resolutely, and paced up and down the room, and —

"I hope I see you well this evening?" said a voice, and Charles Vanderwent stood before me. He was clad in an overcoat of light cloth, which stood forth boldly from the dark panels, as he passed his hand through his short curling hair, and smoothed his moustache, and surveyed me with an insolent leer.

"You here!" I cried, as I stood thunderstruck by his appearance; but bewildered as I was by the potion, I managed to pull the folds of my dress over my bared bosom.

"Never mind, my dear," he said, observing the action, "you needn't do that because I am here. This useless modesty is not the thing, between *husband* and *wife*."

And he drew a step nearer.

"*Husband* and *wife*!" I gasped.

"Yes, my love," and he drew a step nearer, "husband and wife, that's the way to say it. Didn't you know that we were married? And that this is our *bridal night*? And this —" he sprang forward, seized me in his arms, and bore me struggling to the couch. "And *this* our *bridal bed*?"

As I struggled in his arms—the grasp of one of his hands was upon my throat—I felt that in another moment I would sink into a state of helpless unconsciousness. The thought was madness, and for the instant nerved me with more than mortal strength.

"Don't struggle, my dear; you see, step-father gets half of *our* estate, for helping in this marriage. How rosy your cheeks are, love—how—"

His words ceased. Even as he held me in his arms, something, which projected from the breast pocket of his overcoat, touched my hand; in my madness I seized it, and struck him with all my might in the throat beneath the left ear. It was a small dagger, and it was buried half-way to the hilt in his neck. He never spoke again, but fell bleeding and dead in my arms. The sight of his eyes rolling in the last death struggle, and the gushing of the monster's blood into my face, for a moment startled me into full consciousness; for a moment the effects of the drug were stayed. I sprang from the couch and stood by it, transfixed by the sight of that bleeding corpse, which only an instant before had been a living and remorseless demon in the shape of man.

The sound of footsteps fell upon my ear. I turned, and beheld my step-father. He stood before me as if stricken with horror by the sight, but still a smile was on his face—a brutal, fiendish smile.

"Well done, girl! I had not calculated upon *this*—but still, I'll make it help my ends. You see, your will is made, signed by you, dated *to-morrow*, and properly witnessed, too—it leaves all your property to me—and to-morrow, you'll be found dead, having *committed suicide after murdering your lover*."

I saw his infernal plot in all its details, but it was too late to help it. Overcome by the potion, I closed my eyes, and sank insensible upon the floor. Those eyes never opened again, until the moment when I first beheld you."

After Esther had concluded her narrative we sat for a long time in silence. The story of her life, told by herself, with all shades of expression fitting over her beautiful countenance, filled me with deep emotion and scrutinizing reflections. It was clear to me, that her step-father had given her the potion at first merely to lull her senses into sleep, but after the death of Charles Vanderwent he completed his work by tying the cords about her wrists and ankles. Then he forged a will, bequeathing the immense wealth of Esther's father to himself. "The young lady committed suicide after killing her lover," was doubtless the story which Captain Corwin had told to the immediate friends of both families. But how did he manage to avoid the publicity of a judicial investigation? This is a question hard to answer. Esther and I conversed for a long time upon these matters, and then concluded finally upon our *plan of action* for the day and succeeding night. What that plan of action was, will appear from the ensuing pages of this narrative. To carry it into effect we proceeded in the following manner:

Esther procured a woman's cloak from the wardrobe up stairs, dark in color, with heavy folds, and a black velvet bonnet with a thick veil. When her noble form was encased in the cloak, and her face covered with the veil, it was impossible to distinguish her feature. She then took from the third finger of her left hand a diamond ring, remarkable at once for its brilliancy and the singular style of its setting; such a ring, in fact, as once seen would not soon be forgotten. This ring had been buried with her; she now placed it upon the little finger of my left hand. I provided myself with a

bowie knife, drew my cap low over my brows, and left the mansion with Esther just as the sun went down.

"Henry," she said, as we pursued our way over the frozen snow, "after what has occurred I can never live in New York again, or wear my own name. The *plan upon which we have agreed* must be firmly carried into effect this night; and to-morrow we leave New York forever."

I felt my heart beat quicker at her words. Convinced that I was about undertaking an enterprise, which in all possibility might result in death to myself, I did not once falter. I was Esther's body and soul! It was after dark when crossing from Hoboken we arrived in New York. We pursued our way toward Broadway, only stopping for a few moments at the store of a locksmith, in Dey street, where Esther carefully selected and purchased a night key of particular and singular shape. Then threading our way through the crowd of Broadway, we paused in front of St. Paul's church—

"Here I leave you, Henry," she said, speaking through the thick folds of her veil. "*Remember—all that we have agreed upon—remember.*" And pressing my hand she disappeared in the crowd.

I at once hurried to the Astor house, and entered the reading room, where, from the rays of the flaring gas-light, I discovered a party of gentlemen seated in a circle, chatting and laughing together. Among them was a thick-set person, with broad shoulders, and a brown weather-beaten face. He wore a blue coat with metal buttons, stock and vest of black satin, ruffled bosom, and a heavy gold chain. I at once recognized my man.

"When do you leave, Captain?" said one of the company, addressing this individual.

"To-morrow, for a trip of three or four weeks to Havana," was the reply. I stepped to his shoulder.

"Captain Corwin, I should like to see you alone for a few moments," I said. He started in his chair, and regarded me with a look of insolent surprise. "And who the d—l are you?"

I bent my head close to his ear, "I come from Dr. N——," I said. At once the Captain's manner changed. He seized his hat, and flung his overcoat on his arm, made his excuses to the gentlemen, and hurried me out upon the steps of the hotel.

"And what message has the Doctor for me?" he asked eagerly, and with a singular light in his small dark eyes.

"It is about Esther, your step-daughter," I replied; "I am Henry Baldwin, the Doctor's *confidential* student."

These words made a great impression upon the Captain; he at once called a carriage.

"Come, I must see you at my own house," he said, and we entered the carriage, and were rapidly whirled along Broadway.

He did not say a word for half an hour, when the carriage halted in front of a lofty mansion, near Union Park; a mansion of brown sand-stone, which, from the side-walk to the roof, was dark and silent as a tomb. Captain Corwin dismissed the hackman, and requesting me to follow, opened the door with a night-key; we entered, and stood side by side in the darkness. I confess that a sudden shudder passed over me, as I found myself alone with this desperate man.

"I have discharged all the servants," he said, "and there is no light nearer than my room; take my hand."

I took his hand, hard and bony, the hand of a determined man, and he led me in the darkness up a broad stairway, along a passage, and through a doorway. With a lucifer match he lighted a candle, and I discovered that we were in a small apartment which communicated with a larger room by folding doors, now carefully closed, and with the entry by a single door. There was a desk in the room, divided into pigeon-holes, filled with papers; and before the desk a large table, overspread with account books, loose papers, bank notes, and some gold and silver. Amidst the miscellaneous mass I discerned a brace of revolvers, and a square box, looking very much like a cash box. The Captain seated himself in an arm chair by the table, and I took a seat near him; we stared at one another in dumb listless silence for about a minute.

"Now, sir," said he, sternly, "what message has Dr. N—— for me?"

"Now's my time," I thought, and then said aloud:

"Your step-daughter, Zenobia, poisoned herself a few days ago, after murdering her lover, in a fit of jealousy. Am I correct?"

"You are, sir!" and his gaze devoured my features.

"It is only through the influence of the families of both parties, that a public judicial investigation has *thus far* been evaded?"

He nodded, but did not speak.

"Dr. N—— is under the impression that Zenobia also poisoned her mother, who died within the last year. Indeed, when he made his *post mortem* examination of the body of the mother, he discovered traces of a singular and subtle poison; with your aid he traced the deed to Zenobia, but through your entreaties, and for the sake of the family, he kept quiet about the matter?"

"You are right, sir."

"And when Zenobia died so suddenly," he wished to examine the body, in order to ascertain whether she died of the same subtle poison which she had administered to her mother; but your earnest entreaties, your desire to avoid all publicity, induced him not only to withdraw his request in regard to a *post mortem* examination, but also to give you a certificate, (which you presented to the coroner,) that she died in the natural course of disease?"

"Y-e-s, you are correct," said Captain Corwin, with a look that plainly said, "*What in the devil are you driving at?*"

At this moment I raised my left hand to my mouth, and the diamond ring on my little finger flashed into the Captain's eyes. The effect upon him was almost appalling. He changed color, half rose from his chair, and then sinking back again, grasped the arms of the chair with his hands, and said in an altered and husky voice—

"Where did you get that ring, young man?" and glanced towards his pistols.

I knew that the decisive hour was near.

"Why, the Doctor, not feeling precisely easy in his conscience about the certificate which he gave you, caused two men to disinter the body of your step-daughter."

The Captain said nothing, but his breath came hard and strong through his set teeth.

"And the body was brought by those men to the summer house of the Doctor, on the heights of Weehawken, last night; the Doctor has not seen it yet."

A strange light flashed from the Captain's eyes. "So, he has not seen it yet?"

"The truth is, I thought it better to see you before informing the Doctor of the arrival of the body," I continued; "I told him that the men had failed to bring it; and I am now here, to ask your advice about the matter; especially about *those cords on the ankles and wrists.*"

Our eyes met; I was convinced that the Captain understood me.

"Did you cut those cords?" he asked, bending forward.

"I did not," was the reply, as I carelessly pushed the hair from my forehead, with the hand upon which glittered the ring; "had I cut the cords your trip to Havanna might have been indefinitely postponed."

The effect of these words was remarkable; a malignant glance towards his pistols, a violent contraction of the muscles about the mouth, and then he said:

"Young man, let us understand each other. You and I are the only persons in the world, who have this secret in keeping; I have reasons to keep it—you desire to be paid, and well paid, for your secrecy. Is that the state of the case?"

"You come right to the point, Captain; that is the state of the case."

"And your price?" showing his white teeth with a sardonic grin.

I put my right hand under my cloak, and grasped the hilt of my bowie knife.

"I should judge from the title deeds, and other papers, scattered over this table, that you have turned this immense estate into cash; that is, so far as you could?"

"You are right."

"Now, my price is simply, one half of the estate."

He sank back in the chair, and pursing up his lips, emitted a low whistle.

"*The devil!*" I heard him murmur.

And the next instant he sprang from his chair, flung his full weight upon me, and gathered my throat in his iron grip; I was suffocating; my tongue and eyes began to protrude; he tightened his clutch—"You charge too much, my friend. I can secure your secrecy at a cheaper rate."

In vain I tried to draw the knife, in vain; he was choking me to death. My senses began to fail me, when the folding doors behind him were stealthily opened. A woman's form, clad in a shroud, over which her dark hair fell loose and waving, silently and quickly advanced. In a moment she stood at his shoulder, her right hand poised above his head; and then the hand fell, and a knife drawn rapidly across his hand with which he clutched my throat, severed it to the bone. My throat was released, and while the blood streamed from his lacerated hand, he turned with a howl of rage and agony upon his unknown assailant, and beheld Zenobia, in her shroud! Zenobia, whom he thought dead upon earth forever! The cry which he then uttered I shall never forget. As for Esther, (or Zenobia,) she stood there like a statue; her face deathly pale, but her eyes flashing with more than mortal hatred.

"I struck your *hand*, and not your *heart*, because I wished you to know me before you died. It is I, Zenobia, whose mother you poisoned! It is I, Zenobia, by you consigned to the grave while still living! Do you know me, step-father?"

While his right hand dangled from his wrist, the Captain, whom

the sight of Zenobia seemed to have deprived of all his accustomed courage and ferocity, retreated step by step before her. Again she struck at him with the knife; he attempted to ward off the blow with his left arm, but his hand was severed to the bone at the wrist. He was now completely helpless.

"Spare my life, and you may take all!" he cried, as cringing against the wall, he held both arms, with the lacerated hands, above his head—the blood spouting over his face. "Spare my life, only spare my life!"

"Spare him, Esther, O spare him!" I cried, rushing forward.

But it was too late. With her lips compressed, her eyes flashing, her hand firmly clasping the knife, she advanced upon him, and struck him madly once, twice, thrice. The third blow was the last; it left the knife buried up to the hilt in his left breast. He fell on his face, and never breathed again.

"And now, Henry," she cried, as she hurried to me, with her shroud spotted with blood, "thus far all is well. After we separated I purchased this shroud, and other articles which I needed; I then came near the mansion, and watched near the door until you and this wretch entered; with the aid of my night key I entered immediately after, and silently took my place in the next room. So far well!" Her face, so long unnaturally pale, was now flushed from excitement.

"And now for the future," she continued. "This desk contains my jewels, and also the bank notes and gold which he received from the sale of a large portion of my estate. These checks, which he had drawn upon various banks, in anticipation of his flight to-morrow, you perceive are for large amounts. Yow will get them cashed the first thing to-morrow. I have everything arranged for our departure, in disguise, in the steamer which leaves this port to-morrow afternoon for Havana. Have I done well? Ah! I am weary." She sank into a chair, and motioned me to her side.

"Henry," she said, encircling my waist with her arm, and drawing my face close to hers, until her bosom, enveloped in that white garment stained with blood, rested against my own; "Henry, you will always love me, won't you?"

Assuredly, Zenobia (or Esther) Ransom was a remarkable woman.

The next year of my life was passed in Havana. It was to all appearance altogether a happy year. Esther and I were married; I had changed my name from Baldwin to Edward. From Havana I frequently sent large amounts of money to my mother and sisters, without letting them know the source from whence it came. The occupant of a palace; the owner of an immense fortune; the husband of a woman no less remarkable for her intellect, than for her surprising personal loveliness; what more could I desire? The assassination of the Captain created considerable excitement in New York, but suspicion was never coupled with my name. As for Doctor N——, I never heard from him again. Was not my safety assured, and my happiness complete? I was *not* completely happy. Was it the stain of blood upon the past life of Esther, which gave me such an incessant, harrowing fear and anxiety, or was it the shadow of events to come that so often darkened my soul with an impenetrable cloud? I know not; but after the second year in Havana, I left for Charleston. Here I purchased from a Jewish family, about to depart for Europe, a magnificent estate; a town residence, which stood in the centre of a garden surrounded by a lofty wall, and shaded by palmetto trees; and a plantation of a thousand acres, and stocked with one hundred slaves. Within the lofty walls, and gorgeously furnished chambers of the residence, Esther and I passed our days, secluded from the world, and passionately attached to each other. It is true, that about this time a feeling began to influence me which I cannot precisely define. I found myself, at times, regarding Esther with a sensation of fear and loathing. Many times, even when gazing with admiration upon her beautiful face as she slept by my side, have I found myself pronouncing the word, "murderess!" and it seemed to me that stains of blood were visible upon her soft white hands. But I did my best to conquer this feeling.

It was about two years and a half after my departure from New York, when an incident occurred which had a strong bearing in directing the events of my future life.

I was sitting in a large parlor, which, adorned with pictures and statuary, opened upon a garden amidst whose rich foliage fountains rose dazzling and musical into light. The rays of the rising moon, and the light of the lamp, mingled softly together. It was a quiet dreamy hour. I was sitting alone with a book on my knee, but I was not reading; I was partly enjoying the serene quiet of the hour, and partly absorbed in the mazes of a reverie. My reverie was interrupted by a slight sound, the light echo of a footstep. I raised

my eyes, and uttered a cry of surprise and wonder. Before me, motionless as a statue, stood a beautiful woman, with her hands folded over her bosom, and her eyes fixed upon me. Her whole appearance was singular and striking. Her complexion was pale, but it was not the palour of sickness or death, for in the centre of each clear colorless cheek glowed a vivid tint of burning red; her lips were also vivid red; her eyes almond shaped, intensely black, and veiled with long lashes; her brows arched, and her hair as black as midnight. As for her form, it was something above the medium stature, and was marked by that fulness of the bosom, that pliancy of the waist, that exquisite delicacy of formation in the hands and feet, which denotes at once an impetuous and voluptuous organization. Her dress was singular. A white garment fell from her neck to her feet, girdled loosely to her waist with a scarlet sash. Over this she wore a tunic of blue velvet, open in front, and reaching to the knees. Around her head, contrasting with the clear, rich brown of her complexion, and the intense blackness of her hair, a scarlet kerchief was gracefully wound. A more singularly beautiful woman I never beheld. Had I been asked to tell her race and lineage, at sight, I should have pronounced her a combination of the Quadroon and the Jewess.

"Who are you?" I exclaimed, as she stood like a statue before me.

"Your slave, master," she replied, without changing her position.

"My slave?"

"Yes, master, one of the hundred which you purchased with the estate."

"You a slave? Why you are whiter than I am!"

"My father was a wealthy Hebrew, and my mother a Quadroon and a slave," was the reply, and still she did not change her position.

"Your name!"

"Naomi!"

"And if you are my slave, why have I not seen you before?"

She came a step nearer.

"Because," and her voice dropped, and she lowered her eyes until the black fringe of her eyelashes rested on her cheeks; "Because mistress did not wish you to see me."

"Mistress did not wish you to see me, and why?"

She raised her eyes; her glance was like liquid fire; and she glided gently toward me—

"Because she knew I would love you, and that you would love me."

And she knelt at my feet, and laid her hands on my knees, and looked up into my face. I was intoxicated, not with love, but with the *magnetism* of her animal loveliness. Naomi had been raised by her slave mother with but one purpose: that she might become one of the most beautiful creatures, rich in such accomplishments as music and dancing, and worthy of the embraces of some rich master. And it was this burning incarnation of voluptuousness that now knelt at my feet, and poured all the fire of her organization into me, through the light of her vivid eyes.

"Naomi! you are the most beautiful of women, and your master will love you!"

From that time forth Naomi had her separate *suite* of apartments in my mansion. Ostensibly the *maid* of my wife, she was in reality the queen of the household. Intoxicated by the magnetism of her surpassing loveliness, I passed days and nights in her presence, like one entangled by the visions of a delirious dream. And how did Esther regard all this? She did not seem to *notice* even the existence of Naomi. She treated me with her usual kindness, and never mentioned the name of Naomi with any more emphasis than that of any other slave; although perfectly aware of the relations in which Naomi stood towards me, Esther manifested the utmost indifference and apparent blindness of the fact. Matters continued thus for months, but finally Naomi's altered shape indicated that she was about to become a mother. I was called away to the plantation, which was about half a day's ride from the city, and was detained by urgent business for three days. When I returned to my home in Charleston, I first paid my respects to my wife; she received me kindly and affectionately. I then hurried to Naomi's room, but Naomi was not there. I questioned the servants, and was informed that Naomi had disappeared two days before. It was supposed that she had secreted herself on board of a northern vessel, with the view of giving birth to her child in a land where it would not be the *slave* of its father. I was struck with an agony like madness by this news. Loosing all control over myself, I hurried in the presence of my wife.

"Esther! Esther!" I cried in agony, "Naomi has gone! Naomi has gone!"

Esther was seated at the breakfast table, sipping her chocolate as she languidly cast her eyes over a newspaper. She turned her proud and beautiful face to me—

"Ah, has she, indeed!" and she sipped her chocolate and read the paper. I was cut to the quick by her *non chalance*.

"I say, Naomi, my beautiful slave has disappeared!" I cried, putting my hand on Esther's shoulder. "Don't you hear me, Esther?" She languidly raised her eyes—

"Well, Henry, how does that concern me? Can you not attend yourself to our *negroes* without troubling me about them?"

As she pronounced the word "*negroes*" with such quiet and cool contempt, I thought I should have gone mad outright. To save myself the shame of striking her, I rushed from the room.

What avails it to tell how earnestly I sought to recover Naomi? How I sent messengers in every direction, offered the largest reward in the newspapers, and had my spies on the alert for months in all the cities of the North? It was in vain. Months passed, and I had no tidings of Naomi. Esther treated me, meanwhile, with her usual affection, but never suffered the name of Naomi to cross her lips.

Business, connected with my plantation, again called me thither. One bland sunny day I was engaged in superintending some repairs upon the portico, in front of my country mansion. The head mechanic, a man of slight but strong and sinewy frame, was from the North. Before I was aware I found myself in conversation with him; and after talking about the repairs, we gradually began to talk about the relations of labor and capital in the North and South, and upon the social state of the North with its free labor, and the South with its system of slavery. Charmed with the animated manners of this mechanic, whose first name was John, I invited him into the parlor, and asked him to take a glass of wine with me. He sat down opposite to me, in his apron and shirt sleeves, manifesting that composure of manners characteristic of the educated mechanic of the North.

"You have odd notions about the South, John," said I, "odd notions about our social state."

"And is it a wonder? Why the first night I landed in Charleston, I met with a most singular adventure."

"Singular adventure!"

"I was strolling along such a street, in the dark, when a carriage stopped, and a veiled lady beckoned to me from the window."

"Are you a mason?" said she.

"No, madam, I am a carpenter, but I can do mason work at a pinch."

"Do you wish to earn a hundred dollars without much trouble?" Of course, being a Yankee, I answered yes.

"Then be at the corner of such a street, to-morrow night, at twelve o'clock, with all the tools necessary for a piece of mason work." I consented; and the next night I found myself at the appointed place, with a basket on my arm containing some mortar, my trowel, and other tools. I waited till twelve, but no one appeared. A rain came up; it thundered and lightened, and amidst the thunder and lightning a tall lady, thickly veiled, stood by my side.

"Walk behind me—not a word," she said; and basket in arm, I walked behind her, up one street and down another, until we came to what seemed to me to be a garden wall. It was dark as pitch, and I could neither see the surrounding buildings or mark the peculiar features of the wall.

"Do you consent to do as I bid you?" said the lady, in a soft but decided voice.

"I do."

"Then tie this handkerchief over your eyes, and swear not to remove it until I direct you." Of course I swore, and with her soft hands the lady herself bound the handkerchief over my eyes.

"Take my hand," she said, and led me forward. I was led through a gate or door, for I heard a key turn in a lock behind me; then along a garden walk; it was a garden, from the smell of roses and orange trees everywhere; and then through a narrow door, and up a stairway quite as narrow. At last I was directed to remove the bandage, and found myself in an elegant chamber, the walls of which were hung with lilac hangings; there was a bed in one corner, a bed without a canopy, but with a coverlet of white satin, and opposite the bed hung an oval mirror. But I weary you."

"By no means, by no means. Go on, I beg you."

"Before me stood the lady in black, closely veiled, with a candle in her hand. 'Remove the bed,' she said. I obeyed. 'Lift the hangings in that place.' Again I obeyed, and behind the hangings

discovered the frame of a door, the door itself being formed of one huge oaken panel. 'Remove that panel,' said the lady, and with my tools I soon succeeded in removing the panel, without injuring it. Behind it appeared a wall of solid bricks; that is, the frame of the door was compactly built up with brick. 'Now I wish you to remove those bricks carefully, so that you can replace them just as they are; remove them until you reach this point;' she placed her white hand upon the bricks about three feet from the top. At once I set to work. In less than an hour I had removed the bricks half-way down, and a cavity appeared which seemed like the entrance to a closet or a small room. While I worked the lady held the light, directing me to place the bricks upon a coarse cloth, which she laid upon the carpet. She held the light in one hand, and in the other, amidst the folds of her dress, she held a small pistol. I am not a coward, but I by no means liked the looks of affairs; the lonely hour, the veiled lady, the mysterious closet, and the pistol, were not calculated to produce the most agreeable sensations. 'Now resume the bandage,' she said. I obeyed. 'Come with me,' and she led me into another room. 'Wait here in the dark without removing the bandage, wait until I come for you; do you swear?' I gave my assent. She then left me with my eyes bandaged, and darkness around me; and I heard a key turn in a lock. My reflections were not pleasant. How long the time seemed! I felt my way all round the room, but could discover no window; nothing but the door, and that was locked. I groped my way again to my seat, and waited. After a long time the key turned, and her hand touched mine; it was cold as death, and covered with moisture. 'Come,' she whispered, and led me into the first room, where she uncovered my eyes. It was the same as when I left it, and there was the pile of bricks before the secret closet. 'Build it up again,' she said, and held the light; in vain I attempted to pierce the darkness of the cavity, as I placed brick upon brick. All the while the veiled lady stood beside me, with the light in one hand and a pistol in the other. At length the wall was replaced, the same as before, save that on the upper part the mortar looked new and fresh. 'Now cast this sand over the mortar,' said the lady. I obeyed; and the entire wall had the same appearance. 'Replace the panel;' the panel was replaced. 'Drop the hangings, and move the bed back to its place;' all of which was done, the lady having first tied up all the rubbish and mortar in a coarse cloth. By this time I was completely bewildered, and more than half-frightened. 'Resume the bandage,' she said,

quite sternly, and placed it over my eyes again. 'Swear that you will take no object from this place, with a view of enabling you to find this room or this house again.' I took the oath. The veiled lady then led me from the room, down the narrow stairway, through the garden, out into the street, and along the street, I know not how many hundred yards. 'Here is your money,' she whispered, and filled my hand with gold. 'Promise, that you will not remove the bandage until you have counted two hundred.' I promised. 'You are a brave young man,' she said, and then put her lips to mine, and kissed me. O, such another kiss! And then I heard her footsteps as she glided away! You may be sure I did not lose any time in counting two hundred. But when I had counted that, I removed the handkerchief, and found myself at the corner of three streets; all dark as pitch about me; the veiled lady gone; but the basket was on my arm, and the gold pieces in my hand. Now was not that an adventure? Bless me, sir, how pale you are?"

"I am a little child; this room is damp," said I, passing my handkerchief over my face. "On what night did all this occur, John?"

He named the night; it was the same on which, months before, I had left for my plantation.

"Now don't you think that was a strange adventure?"

"Well, it was somewhat strange," said I, "but you should be aware that many houses in Charleston have just such closets in which to safely conceal their valuable plate, or gold, or jewels, or other treasures."

And resuming my hat and gloves, I went out into the open air, and continued the superintendence of my repairs, endeavoring in the mean time to look perfectly composed. But in an hour, no longer able to endure the torture which was gnawing at my heart-strings, I ordered the carriage, and bade the coachman to drive to Charleston. I entered the city after night; went into my house, and found my wife calmly sleeping, her cheek rosy with slumber, and her bosom heaving gently under her unbound hair. I contemplated her for a moment, but did not wake her. I then took a lamp, and hastened on tip-toe to a distant part of the mansion. I entered a room, and locked the door behind me. It was a room hung with *lilac* hangings; upon the bed, opposite to the mirror, many a time had Naomi reposed in my arms. I looked in the glass, and was startled at the palor of my face.

But no time was to be lost; I pushed the bed aside; lifted the

hangings; and the lamp shone upon a doorway, with a single oaken panel for a door. With a hatchet and a small crowbar, with which I had provided myself, I removed the panel. Behind it appeared a brick wall. Passing my hand over the upper portion of the bricks I discovered that the mortar, which held them together, was fresh and new. I do not know how I managed to keep my feet; I felt like fainting every instant; but perhaps it was the very agony of the hour which gave me strength to use the crowbar, and tear the bricks away. I worked, and bruised my hands until the blood streamed from them. At last I had removed the bricks until there was a cavity half-way down. Trembling and pale, I held the light into the cavity, and looked. That sight disclosed a small apartment, about ten feet square, without door, window, or anything like an entrance, save the secret door by which I stood. An object on the floor arrested my attention, and I silently crept through the cavity, and held the light near the object. It was a woman's form, dressed in a white garment, over which was a short tunic of blue velvet, and with a scarlet handkerchief about the dark hair. The face was blue and featureless with the ravages of decomposition; the odor of the grave filled the room. And upon the breast was the corpse of a babe wrapped in a shawl; Naomi and her child together!

How I got from the place I know not. How I managed to replace the bricks and panel, and erase every sign that might tell of the existence of the secret door, and of the awful secret which it concealed, I cannot tell. But when morning came, I found myself sitting on the bed in the lilac chamber, my elbows on my knees, and my head between my hands. I saw my face in the mirror; in one night it had grown twenty years older.

Esther remarked my palour during the day; I attributed it to physical illness. In a few days I proposed that we should shut up our house in Charleston, and travel for a few months. She willingly consented. We spent the winter partly in Havana, and partly in New Orleans, sharing in every kind of gaiety, from the opera to the masquerade ball. And Esther was so loving, so passionately affectionate! Spring came, and with a party of ladies and gentlemen we went up the Mississippi to the Falls of St. Anthony. Here we spent the earlier part of the summer, and on our return southward the whole party agreed to visit the Mammoth Cave. How joyous we all were on that beautiful summer morning, as a gay party of twenty ladies and gentlemen went from the clear sunshine into the gloomy cave; and then, attended by careful guides, and lighted

by torches, began to examine the wonders of the place, its fairy halls, and avenues, and winding passages, and subterraneous rivers. Everybody knows that the Mammoth Cave is one of the wonders of the world.

I know not how it was, but towards noon, when by a main avenue we had penetrated far into the mysteries of the cave, the whim seized me to examine one of the side passages, which branch off from the main avenue. I seized a torch—

"Come, Esther," I said, "let us see if we can't make some discoveries in this quarter." Esther hung lovingly on my arm.

"Take care," said one of the guides, "if you go far you will be entangled among a number of passages that cross each other, and lose your way."

But I laughed, and Esther laughed, and we broke away from the party, and were soon threading the mazes of a winding passage, the light of the torch flashing redly on our faces as we went.

Sure enough, we did lose our way! Esther, at first, was frightened, but I laughed off her fright, and we wandered on; up and down, and round and round again; but never once came near the main passage, or in the hearing of the voice of our friends. Thus hours passed away. The torch still burned, and Esther hung on my arm, very pale, but extremely beautiful, as she fixed her confiding eyes upon me.

"This is quite an adventure," she said at last, breaking a long stillness.

"Quite, my love! How beautiful you look! I'll have to call you the Fairy of the Mammoth Cave."

"O, look there! O, look, look!" she said, and pointing with her hand, she stood there the very statue of awe and admiration.

I raised my torch, and looked. Our path terminated a yard before us on a jutting rock, which projected over a vast abyss. From the depth of this abyss ascended the moan and the sigh of a subterraneous river. And above the narrow passage suddenly spread out into a vast dome, which resembled a sky formed of rock, and glittering with petrifications in the place of stars. It was an awful sight. The torchlight flashed over the abyss, but could not light with one ray the river far, far below; but it did light up that cavern sky, until every stalactite shone like a diamond or a star. And our path ended in the rock which jutted over that fathomless abyss.

"Don't, don't go so near," faltered Esther, as pale with awe, but with eyes glittering with mute admiration of the scene, she clung to

my arm. How the dear creature trembled! "Don't go so near, a single step; O, the very thought is horrible!"

"This is a cavern hitherto undiscovered," said I. "It is not described in any of the books; we are the first discoverers. Let us give it a name, Esther, dear. What name shall we give it?"

"The cavern of the stars," she replied.

"A beautiful name," I answered, "but I know a better. Let us call it, the Cavern of Naomi!"

And I flung her from me, and urged her toward the edge of the rock, flaring the torchlight in her face.

"The Cavern of Naomi! for here the murderess of Naomi will meet her fate! Do you hear me? Yet, before you take your plunge from that rock, never, never again to rise, answer me one question, did you poison Naomi or starve her to death?"

The horror, the livid despair of Esther's face, would have touched the heart of a devil, but it did not touch mine.

"Pardon! pardon!" and she fell on her knees, on the very edge of the cliff. "Forgive! forgive! Oh, Henry!"

But I advanced upon her, and thrust the torch into her face. In withdrawing herself from it she stumbled, and slid from the rock into the abyss, her death screams echoing horribly along the vast expanse.

I advanced, and bending forward, held the torch over the abyss. Esther, in her fall, had caught hold of a piece of the rock, with both hands; and there she clung, her hands near my feet, her eyes imploringly raised up to mine, and below her was the fathomless abyss and the moaning river.

"Henry! Henry! mercy! The child which I bear in my body is yours!"

"And Naomi's child was also mine," I said, and unwound the clutch of her fingers slowly, slowly—and she fell!

I held the torch over the abyss, and watched the flutter of the white garment which she wore, and heard her last cry.

And then I retraced my steps to the main avenue, (for I had not lost my way,) and joining my friends, inquired after Esther, who, I informed them, had left me some hours before. They had not seen her. I was amazed, and then horrified. We searched for her for hours, but without success; and the next day, and the day after, and still our efforts were fruitless. Every one pitied me, the disconsolate husband—and I was to be pitied.

Two days after the disappearance of Esther I left the Mammoth Cave, and directed my course homeward by way of New Orleans. In that city I remained for nearly a week, endeavouring in the wine cup, and in the excitement of the gambling table, to forget that face which haunted me—the face of a Woman, agonized by death, as her hands clutched with a death-grip the rock of the Cavern.

It was in New Orleans, as I sat one night in a gambling hell, watching the haggard faces of those who lost, and the ill-concealed triumph of those who won, (I was seated on a sofa in a dark corner of the saloon,) that my attention was attracted by a singular, yes, an impressive countenance.

It was the face of a young man, who with folded arms stood near the table, silently watching the chances of the game. About the medium height, and clad in fashionable attire, which looked somewhat the worse for wear, his face was bold and strongly defined, his complexion a dark olive, his eyes deep-set, large, and intensely brilliant; and his closely cut hair, threw his Napoleon-like forehead boldly into view.

"There's a story about that man's face—a tragedy dark as my own life;" the thought forced itself upon me, and I at once made out to obtain some acquaintance with him. In a little while we left the "Hell," and went to my apartments in the *St. Charles Hotel*; and I called for wine. As he drank his reserve vanished, and he gave me the details of his life. His name was CHARLES BERNARD,\* and his history was, indeed, as strange and terrible as my own. A Prince of the blood royal of Spain, he was now a penniless adventurer in New Orleans, about to embark on the Lopez expedition! The name which he bore was of course assumed.

"I would not have told you all this," he said in conclusion, as his sallow cheek was flushed with wine, "had I not felt in my very soul, you also bear a dark secret in the recesses of your conscience."

"You are mistaken," I said with a laugh, endeavouring to maintain my composure.

"Nay, deny it as you will, it is written on your face. Well! I do not ask your confidence. But it has done me good to unbosom myself to you. To-morrow, I leave with Lopez, for Cuba. We will never meet again. And likely the next thing you will hear of

\* NOTE BY THE EDITOR.—The life of the singular man, who is alluded to above as "CHARLES BERNARD," otherwise a *prince of the blood royal of Spain*, has lately been published, under the title of "THE ADVENTURES OF CHARLES BERNARD AND RACHEL MENDOZA."

me, will be, that the "*prince of the blood royal*" has become a successful rebel, or that he has been choked to death by the *garrote*." He smiled, and drained his glass. What a fascination there was in that man's look! Impelled perchance by the very feeling which swayed him—to relieve his heart by making another the *confidant* of its mysteries—I at once unbosomed myself, and told him all. All, from the night when I had restored Esther to life, to the dark hour when I plunged her into the fathomless abyss. The light of the morning broke through the window curtains, upon our wan faces, ere I had done.

He seemed deeply affected by my story. "Yes! my impression was correct. You, like myself, have been the sport of a singular destiny. We are both young. Where will we end?" Where, indeed? The question buried us in thought.

Starting up, he exclaimed—"This morning I leave for Cuba. I must be stirring. It is time for me to be aboard."

In vain I besought him to remain, offering to start him anew in life with half my fortune—for I was, as may easily be seen, won to this man, by a fascination as singular, as it was irresistible.

Thanking me for my offers, he concluded as he shook my hand—"But I cannot accept them. Destiny beckons me to Havana. Who knows what will happen? Victory or the *garrote*?" And he hurried from the room. I never saw him, never heard of him again. How often have I wondered what became of him! The story which he told me, was no fabrication, for he confirmed it by documents which bore the stamp of truth in every line.

Before a week passed, I found myself once more a tenant of my magnificent residence in Charleston. How I wandered, at dead of night, up and down the deserted rooms, thinking of Esther and Naomi!

The sad accident of the Mammoth Cave, formed only a passing paragraph in the newspapers; and as I had not mingled much with society in Charleston, I was not annoyed either by the condolence or the suspicions of my neighbours.

A year passed away. I kept myself apart from the world, in the silence and shadows of my home. One day I rode out to my plantation, and about night-fall found myself journeying homeward, along a lonely and desolate road. At every step my horse sank wearily in the sand, and the more I urged him, the slower became his pace. I had ridden him far and long that day, and he was evidently suffering much from fatigue. As night drew on, I reached the summit

of a gentle elevation, and stopped for a moment, to enjoy the stillness of the scene. On either side the view was shut in by stunted pines, and toward the west the last flush of daylight gleamed through their sombre branches. And over the silent scene, the first star of evening shone like a lamp suspended by an invisible chain, to the great dome of Heaven.

After contemplating this scene for a few moments, I spoke encouragingly to my horse, and urged him onward,—he sprang forward as with new life, but the next moment fell like a dead weight by the roadside. I managed to extricate my feet from the stirrups, and to leap from him as he fell. He lay there struggling, the blood pouring from his mouth and nostrils over the sand. In a little while he was still,—it took but a glance to assure me, that the noble animal was dead.

Here was an adventure! Nothing remained for me, but to leave him there, and trudge on foot, through some weary miles of sand, to Charleston,—I took my pistol from the holsters, and started on the journey, heartily sorry for the fate of my poor horse, but at the same time, somewhat amused at the prospect of a pilgrimage through the pines, and over the sand.

I had not been more than half an hour on my journey, when I heard the sound of carriage wheels behind me,—I stepped quickly into the shadows of the pines by the roadside,—and watched the carriage as it drew near.

It was drawn by two fine horses, going at a "spanking" pace, despite the sand; the coachman, a huge negro in livery, sat on the box flourishing his whip; and as it came near me, I heard the sound of a woman's voice from within,—"*Cato! Cato!* This is not the way home! *Cato*, you have lost the way!"

The negro coachman did not at first seem to hear this voice,—at least he paid no attention to it,—but as he drew near the spot where I stood, he suddenly wheeled the carriage to one side of the road, and dismounted from the box.

The carriage was so near me, that from my place of concealment, I could gaze directly into it. It's only occupant was the woman whose voice I had heard. I could not see her face, but her form, in the dim twilight seemed slender and youthful.

While I stood gazing unperceived into the carriage, the coachman approached, and looking in at the window, said without raising his hat, "*What say, Missus?*"

"This is not the way," said a sweet voice, slightly touched with

impatience or anger. "You were to drive me from the plantation to town, in half an hour, and you've been nearly two hours on the way."

Leaning familiarly against the side of the carriage, the negro,—even Cato, with his huge frame dressed in a light livery, glittering with huge metal buttons,—indulged himself in a burst of laughter.

"You and your fader come from de Nort', Missus," he said, with a *patois*, which I in vain attempt to imitate,—“Now, de folks in de Nort' like de niggas Ise told. An,—yah, hah! Cato like you, Missus. Cato do.”

Without further words, he opened the carriage door, and seizing the young lady with his brawny hands, dragged her forth upon the sand. She uttered a wild scream, but he placed his hand upon her mouth, and wound his arm tightly about her waist.

"De nigga like you, Missus," he said, and,—was so near me, with the struggling woman in his brutal grasp, that I could have touched him without advancing an inch.

I silently drew forth a pistol from the breast-pocket of my coat,—“You're worth about two thousand dollars, Cato,” thus I thought,—“but you're a dead chattel this time,”—and placing the pistol close to his temple, fired. He reeled and fell back like a stricken ox, bearing the fainting girl to the earth as he fell.

In an instant he was dead, but it cost me some exertion to unwind his dead arm from her waist. This accomplished, I hurried forward to secure the horses, who had started at the report of the pistol; and then returned to the fainting girl. I bore her out into the centre of the road, where the starlight shone more clearly.

She was a girl of some sixteen or seventeen years, her form lithe and slender, clad in a white muslin dress, and her face,—surpassingly fair in complexion, and innocent in expression,—shaded by hair, which looked jet-black as I held her up in the starlight. There was something extremely winning in the shape of her features. While I was gazing at her quietly, she revived, slowly opened her eyes, and looked round, with a shudder. I recalled her to herself, told her the manner in which I had been so fortunate as to rescue her, and offered to conduct her to Charleston.

Leaning on my arm, she overwhelmed me with thanks,—“Father and I,” she said, “are from the North. We are now in Charleston, on a visit, at a cousin of father's,—a planter of whom you have doubtless heard, named Langdon. This afternoon, I left Charleston, to take a short drive to Mr. Langdon's country-seat,—it's only half an hour's journey from town. After spending some hours in wander-

ing over the grounds, I entered the carriage again, and ordered the coachman to drive homeward, but instead of taking the direct course, he came out of his way, into this by-road. And,—” she stopped, her voice faltered—“O, sir, it was heaven itself that sent you to my aid!”

After some further conversation, I discovered that her father was a rich Banker, from New York,—his name Harnley,—and hers, Annie Harnley. She was his only child.

Placing her in the carriage, I cast one look toward Cato,—two thousand dollars lying dead by the roadside,—and mounted the box, and seizing the reins, turned the horses toward Charleston. Is it a wonder as I drove onward, in the still starlight, that Annie changed her place from the back to the front seat of the carriage, and that we conversed through the window, behind the coachman's box? I am afraid the horses walked the greater part of the way. The starlight shone upon her face, as it was upturned to me, and I knew not which most to admire, the fascination of that fair young countenance, or the sprightliness, and the unconscious art of her conversation. Recovered from her alarm she was all life and animation; and now and then, her laugh rang out upon the still woods,—not like the tone of a silver bell,—but like the laugh of a young bewitching and innocent woman. Never shall I forget that ride homeward in the still starlight!

At length arrived in Charleston, I drew up the carriage in front of the house of the planter, Langdon. From the lights hurrying to and fro, and from the crowds of servants at the door, I saw at once that the continued absence of Annie had given rise to great alarm. The “darkies” showed their teeth and opened their eyes as they saw me, instead of huge Cato, dismount from the box. I handed Annie from the carriage, took her arm, and she led the way into the house, and up stairs into a lighted parlor. Two persons stood waiting there,—a dark faced elderly gentleman, with Roman features and snow-white hair, whom I knew to be Mr. Langdon; and a portly good natured gentleman, with a bald head, whom I conjectured was Mr. Harnley.

They both looked at me and Annie with unfeigned surprise, but Annie flung herself into her father's arms and burst into tears, and I drew the planter aside and briefly told him the whole story, including the loss of two thousand dollars worth of “male nigger.”

“Sir, you are a gentleman,” replied the stately planter. “You have done a noble deed.”

"And, sir," fairly blubbered the good Banker, "you have made me your debtor for life! The d—d nigger! To think of such a thing! If you ever catch me, Langdon, talking about their rights again, you may shoot me!"

I left the house of the planter, a happy man, and went home to dream of Annie.

Six months passed away. One balmy moonlit night, my house desolate no longer, was alive with a brilliant festival. There was a long array of carriages before the door; there was a gorgeous banquet spread in the largest parlor; there was the sound of music and dancing; and throngs of guests, wandered up and down in the shade of the palmetto's, and among the orange trees of my garden. It was a wedding festival. The good old Banker gave the bride away, (the stately Mr. Langdon standing near) the clergyman in full costume said the ceremony, and Annie blushing like the morn, looked like an angel as she took the bridegroom's hand. She was my wife! I have forgot to mention, that Annie's hair, which seemed jet-black, when first I saw her, in the pine forest by starlight, was a rich auburn,—that is a twilight mingling of black and purple,—by daylight. Her eyes were not blue nor gray, but a composition of both; and they were always full of life and light. As she stood, in her white bridal robe, her hair gathered back in thick masses from her face, and a single diamond shining from the circlet which bound her fair white neck, she looked surpassingly beautiful. Her form, as you know, was slender, and her small but prominent bust, heaved into light with rapid pulsations, as I took her by the hand. She was, indeed, beautiful as a fairy; and a mixture of the fairy, the child, and the woman.

"God bless you, my boy," said the Banker, as he filled a "bumper" at the supper table. "After the honeymoon is over, you must bring Annie to New York. And with your *capital* added to mine, we can make a handsome spec!" As for the grand South Carolinian, Mr. Langdon, he condescended to touch glasses with me, adding in a voice inaudible to the other guests, "I don't *know* your family, sir. I have't inspected your family tree. But if you don't come of good stock, I am no judge. Sir, you are a gentleman!" Which was exceedingly kind of him, indeed.

The wedding banquet was prolonged until a late hour—Annie, in charge of her aunt and bridesmaids, retired about twelve o'clock—I could not get away until it was almost two. Escaping at last from the guests who had grown somewhat boisterous, and from my father-

in-law, who was sillily, and from Mr. Langdon, who was stately, drunk, I hastened to the bridal chamber and the bride. Those who delight in such details, will be pleased to know, that the bridal chamber was furnished in the most sumptuous manner—the walls concealed by hangings of white silk, the bridal bed overarched by a silken canopy, the windows (opening on a balcony crowded with fragrant plants) concealed by drapery of white lawn, and the chairs, bureau and mirrors, all of snow-white exterior, delicately pencilled with gold.

And those who have loved—or who have crossed the sacred threshold of a bridal chamber—will judge my feelings, as gently withdrawing the curtains, I beheld Annie sleeping there, her cheek on her bared arm, and her hair, escaping from her white cap, straying loosely over the pillow.

I gazed upon her long and ardently, and then—attired as I was, in my wedding dress, dark coat, white satin vest and gloves—I crept back from the bed, and sank into a chair, suddenly overwhelmed by thoughts which had no business in a bridal chamber.

Folding my arms I gazed at the wax lights, fast dripping to their sockets—"In this house, Esther and I passed many happy hours—in this house, Naomi loved me, gave birth to a child, our child, and was buried alive—and shall I, in this fatal house, link poor Annie's destinies with my own dark fortune?"

Such were the thoughts which held me, for hours, while I heard the low soft breathing of my wife, as she slept on the bridal couch.

At length I fell asleep in the chair, and from a multitude of incoherent dreams, at length three faces emerged into view—Esther, Naomi, Annie! And the cliff in the Mammoth Cave, with the poor wretch clinging to the rock at my feet, came vividly to me—even in my sleep I heard her death-cry. That cry awakened me. I started from my chair and looked around. The first pale glimpse of daylight stole through the window curtains. The chamber was still as the grave. Shaking off the stupor of slumber, I approached the bed, and looked upon my bride. She was in a dead sleep—so dead that I could not hear the sound of her breathing. Lifting the curtains, I saw the first glimpse of dawn, playing upon her cheek, and on her unbound hair—her lips were parted; she smiled as she slept. I watched her there, until the dawn grew brighter, and was struck at once by her surpassing beauty, and the dead stillness of her sleep. Poor Annie! Wearied by the uproar of the wedding party, she slept like a child. The dawn grew brighter, and I noticed that

the small but prominent breasts were bare—and could I believe my eyes? There was blood between those breasts, and between them the hilt of a bowie knife, of massive silver, glittered dimly in the light.

I tore the bed curtains aside—I pulled the window curtains down—I suffered the morning light to come freely in. It was no dream! The massive hilt of a bowie knife projected between the breasts of Annie, and there was blood upon her breasts, upon her garment—upon the very arm which supported her cheek. I shook her by the shoulder, called to her, wound my hand in her unbound hair; but she did not awake. She made no reply. She was dead.

And by whose hand? The bowie knife was my own.

I had left it on a table in my chamber the afternoon before. Who had taken it from that table, and brought it to the bridal room, and struck poor Annie, while she slept? Who?

Could I have walked in my sleep, and done this while under the influence of a dream?

My blood curdled—I felt my hair raise at the roots. Circumstances were clear and dark against me—no one but myself had entrance to the chamber in which slept my young wife—my knife was buried in her bosom—I would be arrested as her MURDERER before the setting of the sun, which now in its rising shone so brightly into the room, and upon the beautiful dead girl.

"Annie, Annie," I shrieked in agony—"Awake! awake! Release me from this horrible dream! I did not murder you—you know it, Annie! Awake! awake!"

And I flung myself upon the bed, and laid my cheek against the cheek of my dead wife, and besought her to awake to life once more—when—

"Annie will awake no more! She is with Esther and Naomi!" said a strange voice from the opposite side of the bed. I looked up—and between the parted curtains, on the opposite side of the bed, saw—ESTHER! It was no dream—I saw her there—she was dressed in white—her dark hair swept all unbound about her form, as on the night when first I drew her from the grave—Esther! Living, her great black eyes fixed on me, her finger pressed upon her bloodless lips.

"Annie will awake no more! She is with Esther and Naomi! With Naomi and Esther!" Again I heard that voice, and fell like a dead man upon the bed.

When I awoke the sun was bright in the bridal room—it shone

upon the poor dead girl. Madly I searched the room, behind the bed, under the hangings, but Esther had disappeared.

But on the carpet lay the white dress of a woman spotted with blood—it was the dress which the murderess had worn—it was, (I recognized it,) one of Esther's dresses, which only yesterday I had seen in the wardrobe among her clothes.

But how had she gained admittance into the house? How—how had she escaped death in the Mammoth Cave? Was I in a dream, or had I only seen Esther's ghost? No—there was the blood-stained dress upon the floor, there was the body of my poor young wife, with the hilt projecting from between her breasts. And as I was wrapt in these contending thoughts, the sun grew brighter in the room.

"I must act, and at once! The knife which is buried in the breast of Annie is mine. I will be arrested for her murder. What defence can I make? Shall I tell of Esther, of the Mammoth Cave—folly! Who will believe me? Flight, flight is all that remains to me!"

To show that I was not maddened by the events of that night, I need but relate how, seeing no way of escape but flight, I made my preparations.

I dressed myself in a suit of black—securing pistols and bowie knife, by a belt about my waist. Then securing also what jewels and money I could about my person, I drew near to the bed, and gently wound the coverlet about poor Annie's form—over the breasts, between which rose the hilt of the knife. Then I drew the bed curtains, replaced the window curtains, and rang the bell.

"Serve breakfast for us in this room," I said, as soon as the female slave appeared.

"Yis, massa," she said, and shut the door.

In a little she appeared again, bringing breakfast for two, on a silver salver. She then retired, and I was alone, but I could not eat; little wonder! I disarranged the contents of the salver, so that it might appear as though myself and Annie had breakfasted, and then rang again.

"Take away the breakfast things," I said, "and tell Pompey to saddle the roan horse for me. And look you, Phillis, your mistress," pointing to the bed, "does not wish to be disturbed until an hour before dinner. Let dinner be ready at Five. I will ride out to the plantation."

The slave again retired; I approached the bed, and kissed poor Annie on the brow! O, the unmixed anguish of that moment! Then, while my heart seemed ready to burst, I went from the room,

carefully locking the door, and placing the key in my pocket. Descending the stairs, I passed through the garden, and soon reached the stables. Pompey stood grinning with his hand upon the bridle of the roan horse.

"Fine mornin', massa," said Pompey, who was a bright mulatto.

"Delightful," said I, and flung him a dollar, and mounting my horse, rode rapidly out of town. It was a clear bland morning; the air was full of the fragrance of blossoms. But all within me was hell, and the very beauty of the external world gave me new torture.

I took a bye-road, determining to put as many miles between me and Charleston, before sundown, as the life of the horse which I rode would permit. And riding on, I gained the spot where I had saved Annie from the brutal negro—and it was here, while pausing for a moment to contemplate the scene—that a new thought dawned upon me.

Why had I forgotten to withdraw from the breast of my wife the bowie knife which bore my name? That knife withdrawn, and secreted, one damning point of evidence against me would be destroyed. But I had forgotten it—I cursed my folly—and half determined to return. "But no! there is no such thing as going back now!" And I rode onward.

All day long I rode, and at night, wearied out, half-dead with excitement and fatigue, I stopped at an obscure tavern, among the hills.

Here I rested until morning, and the next day, and the day after pursued my way, taking the bye-roads, and avoiding public observation as much as possible, until on the third day I found myself among the Alleghanies. As I ascended slope after slope, the view grew broader and grander, but I had no thought for the beautiful in nature. The cry—"Stop the murderer!" seemed ringing in my ears behind me, and I pushed onward.

"Stranger, you seem to have rid the crittur purty hard," said a man—a pedlar with a pack upon his back—whom I encountered on the mountain road—and he pointed to the flanks of the poor horse, covered with dust and foam.

"O, he's good blood," I answered, spurring on, and at the next bend of the road I dismounted, took my cloak on my arm, and led the horse into a ravine, and left him there among the giant oaks and chestnuts. On foot I pursued my way until I reached the summit of the Alleghanies, where, pausing for a few moments, I looked

back—saw the far spreading view of mountains, crested by forest-trees—and the far, far off horizon, shut in by the fast gathering mist. And behind that mist was Charleston—was my home—was the dead body of poor Annie!

For a few moments, bending upon the hickory staff which I had cut in the woods, I contemplated this scene, and then turned my face to the west. That night I slept in the log cabin of a rude old hunter, among the mountains. And sitting by his fire, and sharing of his trout, which he had taken from the mountain stream, and listening to his stories, I was thinking all the while of Esther, Naomi, and Annie! O how I wished that I could *take off myself*, and begin life anew, as a simple hunter and trout fisher among the mountains!

When morning came I went on, and —. But what need I tell, how for two weeks, I wandered on, through Kentucky and Tennessee, now on foot, now by steamboat or stage, always changing my dress, and always afraid of being arrested as "the murderer of my wife!"

In three weeks I found myself in Cincinnati, my hair and beard grown, and my dress coarse and rough but neat, resembling the attire of a returned Californian. I put up at the BURNETT HOUSE, and entered my name on the books, as "*John Thompson, San Francisco*"—"Destination, *Milwaukie, Wisconsin*." As soon as I had taken supper, on the evening of my arrival, I lounged into the reading room, and eagerly—you may be sure—sought for the Charleston papers. This paragraph met my eye:

"A young NORTHERNER, of great wealth, who for the last two years has lived in this city, lately married a young lady, Miss H——, niece of one of our first citizens, Mr. L——. She was found dead the morning after the wedding—it is rumoured by the hand of her husband. He has disappeared, and the matter is now undergoing judicial investigation. For the present we refrain from further remark."

This was dated three days after the death of Annie! While I had been wasting three weeks in reaching the North, by a circuitous route, doubtless the agents of the police, in all the large cities, had been set upon my track. I paid my bill, as soon as I read the paragraph, and next morning took the cars for Cleveland. It was near evening when I arrived in sight of Lake Erie—I saw a steamer, at the pier, advertised to sail that night for the *Sault St. Marie*, (commonly called the "*Soo*,") a journey of a thousand miles or more. I at once took passage, secured my berth, and then in my rough garb, with my long hair and beard, strayed up the high bank, and into the town. For a moment I wandered into the principal hotel—called, I think, the Weddell or Peddle House—and looked over the book. Judge of my horror, when I discovered among the day's list of arri-

vals from the East by the lake, the names of—"Mr. HARNLEY, *New York*," and "Mr. LANGDON, *Charleston*." Hurrying from the hotel, I made the best of my way to the pier, and in less than half an hour had the pleasure of standing on the stern of the boat, as she was ploughing up the lake—Cleveland, on its high bank, fading every moment dim and dimmer, into the dusk distance.

At the "Soo," on Lake Superior, I remained until September, and then, having heard nothing of affairs in Charleston, (although the prominent daily papers of the large cities had reached me,) I took the steamer for the East, and about the middle of the month, landed at Buffalo. My hair was long, my face covered nearly to the eyes with beard; my dearest friend would not have known me. Clothing myself in black, and adorning my apparel with jewels and gold chains—so as to resemble a returned Californian—I took the cars for Geneva, at the head of Seneca Lake. I had determined to visit the old homestead—to see once more my mother and sisters; if happily, they yet survived. Seneca Lake, as most people know, is a beautiful sheet of water, framed in rolling hills, covered with cultivated fields, orchards, and farm houses to the summit. It was in the dusk of evening that I descended from the stage, and carpet-bag in hand, took my way along the lane that led through the orchard to the house—a one-storied building, with many rooms, and a steep roof—which overlooked the lake. As I drew near, and saw the light shine from the window of the sitting room, you may be sure that my heart leaped to my throat. I had not been home since the last year of my studentship.

The dog came forward and barked at me as I approached the door—old "Cæsar" didn't know me. I did not pause to look in the window, but pushed open the door, and went in. An aged woman, and two daughters—one about seventeen, and the other near twenty—were seated near a table, by lamp-light; the mother knitting, one of the daughters sewing, and the other reading.

They were all clad in black; and the venerable face of the mother seemed to catch a kindly glow from the youth and freshness of her daughters. They started up as I entered, and looked at me, half in wonderment, and half in terror. I sat quietly down, by the table, near the Family Bible—the very seat in which I used to sit in my childhood.

"Well, sir, who are you—whom do you wish to see?" began my mother, when I said in a low voice, "Mother! Mary! Margaret! Don't you know me?"

The effect of these words was like an enchanter's spell. In a mo-

ment my mother's arms were about my neck, while Mary and Margaret wept tears of joy, as they covered my face with kisses. When the first strong out-burst of emotion had somewhat subsided, my mother and sisters asked in the same breath, "Where have you been so long?"

"In California," I replied, "and I've come home with enough to make us all comfortable for life, and"—I proceeded to relate a plausible story of my adventures in the last three or four years. That night I slept in my old room, and heard once more the rain patter on the roof. And at home I remained until winter came on, and the hills of Seneca Lake were white with snow. I kept myself secluded from the observation of the neighbours, and passed my time altogether with my mother and sisters. Did I enjoy peace? Far, far from it. I started at every breath. Now my fear was that some clue would be obtained to the mystery of the death of Captain Corwin; and again, yes, always, I felt that the friends and relatives of poor Annie were on my track. O, how bitterly I rued the hour which first brought me in contact with Esther Livingstone! (I have hitherto called her Esther Ransom, but her real name was Zenobia Livingstone—the name of Esther, it will be remembered, she assumed after her resuscitation.) One winter night I had retired to my room, and was reading by the light of the candle. It was a small apartment, with a single window, which opened upon a shed. The slope of the roof formed its ceiling. The storm beat without, and the snow lay white and deep upon the hills. I was deeply interested in my book, when suddenly the window was burst open, as if by the blast—I raised my eyes, and—ESTHER stood before me.

Clad in a dark dress, thick with furs, and with a black bonnet, which made her palid face seem even more deathly pale, she stood before me, her arms folded, and her eyes fixed upon my face. I was dumb, and sat rooted to my chair, unable to move or frame a word.

"Husband!" she said, and advanced a step.

"Accursed woman! Has the grave again given you up, to haunt my soul, and force me into new crimes!" And rising, I spread forth my arms, and retreated from her in utter horror.

"The grave has not given me up"—and a smile, which I cannot describe, crossed her face.—"I fell, in the Mammoth Cave, from the rock on which you stood, to a shelving rock, but a short distance below—a rock which you in your madness did not perceive. How long I lay there insensible, and how at last I managed to find a path from the rock to the main avenue, matters not now. Nor does it matter to relate how I passed from the cave at night, without being observed, or how, from the sale of the diamonds about my person, I procured

means to follow and to watch you. Suffice it, Henry, that I am here, and you are my dear husband. I knew you could not be happy without me." Thus speaking in a calm voice—a voice poisoned with the very bitterness of scorn and hate—she drew near to me, as if to put her arms about my neck. O, how pale she was, how her eyes shone—her face was like the face of a corpse, only for the glaze of her eyes. Then took place an instant of madness, in which my brain reeled. I can remember how she came toward me, how something bright glittered from her dark dress, near the waist—but I cannot remember how I clutched at this bright object, and with it struck the wretched woman in the breast—it was the very dagger with which she had stabbed *Vanderwent*—when I awoke from that moment of madness, she was stretched at my feet, her eyes fixed on me for a moment, and then glassy and cold. Will it be believed that when I saw her, dead at my feet, I bent over her, and burst into tears. At the sight my first love for her came back to me.

It was after midnight, when (assuring myself that my mother and sisters were asleep) I dragged the body through the window, out upon the shed, and then sprang with it into the snow beneath. Then slowly through the fields, and the ravine, down to the lake shore, where I knew there was a boat tied to the trunk of a tree. Placing the body in the boat, I rowed out into the lake. The emerald waves were still. The storm had passed, and from the parting clouds the moon shone out—lighting up the hills white with snow, and the waves of that lake, upon which ice is never seen—and streaming calm and cold upon the face of the dead woman, and upon the eyes, which I had not been able to close. Near the centre of the lake, having tied heavy stones to the feet and arms, I slid the body over the side of the boat into the waves. A plunge and a ripple, and all was still again—that was Esther's funeral. Then I rowed back sadly to the shore.

It is now two weeks since that night. I have employed the time in writing out this history of my life. Who will read it, I know not, care not. But I have in some measure relieved the remorse of my soul by putting upon paper the dark record of my career—a career which I feel is near its close, and which can have no other end than suicide or madness. Esther, Naomi, Annie —

[Here the MANUSCRIPT, written by this unfortunate man, abruptly ends. It was found in his room, on the day which saw him taken, a hopeless madman, to the State Lunatic Asylum. His remorse, together with the fear of a public trial, shame and death on the scaffold, no doubt bereft him of his senses. This narrative is now made public, as the time has passed, when it might wound the feelings of his family, or certain families in Charleston or New York.—B. T.]