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GEORGE BALCOMBE.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER I.

"'Tis night; and from the empyrean the bright moon
Fitfully glances through the clefts, that part
The snowy radiance of the rifted clouds,
Piercing, like glimpses of eternity,
The vaults blue depths, as if to sound the abyss
Of space unfathomable."

At length, issuing from the wood, I entered a prairie, more beautiful than any I had yet seen. The surface, gently undulating, presented innumerable swells, on which the eye might rest with pleasure. Many of these were capped with clumps and groves of trees, thus interrupting the dull uniformity which generally wearies the traveller in these vast expanses. I gazed around for a moment with delight; but soon found leisure to observe that my road had become alarmingly indistinct. It is easy, indeed, to follow the faintest trace through a prairie. The beaten track, however narrow, wears a peculiar aspect, which makes

it distinguishable even at a distance. But the name of Arlington, the place of my destination, denoted at least a village; while the tedious path which I was travelling seemed more like to terminate in the midst of the prairie, than to lead to a public haunt of men. I feared I had missed my way, and looked eagerly ahead for some traveller, who might set me right, if astray. But I looked in vain. The prairie lay before me, a wide waste, without one moving object. The sun had just gone down; and as my horse, enlivened by the shade and the freshness of evening, seemed to recover his mettle, I determined to push on to such termination as my path might lead to.

At this moment, a shout from behind reached my ear. I turned, and saw a man on horseback, standing between me and the sky, on the top of the east swell. Though a quarter of a mile off, his figure stood out in such distinct relief, that every limb was conspicuous, and well defined on the bright background. He was stationary, standing erect in his stirrups, and twisted around, so that his back and his horse's head were both towards me. After repeating a shout, which I found was a call to a dog, he put his horse in motion, and advanced at a brisk trot.

I was now in no hurry, and he soon overtook me. Touching his hat, he was passing on at a gait too rapid for my jaded horse, when I accosted him. He drew up immediately, and again erecting himself on the wooden stirrups of his Spanish

saddle, and resting his left hand on the pommel and the right on the cantle, brought his horse to a walk, and faced half round towards me.

I asked if I was on the road to Arlington, and was answered in the affirmative. The distance? "Some eight miles."

"I hope," said I, "the road grows plainer, or I shall hardly find it in the night."

"You will have no difficulty," said he; "your horse will keep it instinctively, as there is no fork in the road. Besides, I am going nearly to the place, and as the evening is pleasant, I will accommodate the gait of my horse to the weariness of yours."

I made due acknowledgments for this unlooked-for courtesy, which, however, surprised me less, than a turn of expression, so little in keeping with the stranger's appearance. At this moment his dogs came up—two beautiful greyhounds; one jet black, the other spotless white. He stopped his horse, spoke first reproachfully, and then kindly to them; and as the white dog reared up to his knee, patted his head, saying, in a tender tone, "My poor fellow! my poor dog! my poor Gryphon!"

"*Gryfin*!" thought I. "This fellow, now, is an illiterate clown, who has seen the word griffin somewhere, and has given the name to his dog, without knowing how to pronounce it. He is no better than he looks to be, after all; though his

words and tone are those of a cultivated and well-bred man, he is no better than he looks to be."

And truly this was not saying much for him. I could not distinguish his features by the waning light, but saw that he was a tall, spare man, in his shirt sleeves, without a cravat, and with a broad-brimmed straw hat, turned up behind and down before. A shirt, white enough at the bosom, a shabby, half-worn Marseilles waistcoat, trousers of country linen, and a pair of old slip-shod pumps, constituted his dress. He rode a large, high-formed, and apparently high-bred mare, of fine action, but long tailed, bare footed, and in low order, that seemed as much at cross purposes with herself as did her rider.

We moved slowly, and in silence. I had no doubt my companion, after the fashion of the country, would soon begin to question me; and, as I had some curiosity concerning him, I was prepared to be civil and communicative. But I was disappointed. My name, my residence, my journey and its object, seemed to be quite indifferent to him. It appeared as if the first glance had told him all he wanted to know, and he scarce looked at me again. I determined to begin.

"You have a beautiful country," said I.

"Yes," he replied; "and there are few scenes more beautiful than that which the darkness is beginning to hide from your eye."

"But the night itself is beautiful; and the moon will shine almost as bright as day."

"The night is indeed beautiful," said he, "but that is nearly the same everywhere; and moonlight, however beautiful, shows no distant objects. Observe my dogs," continued he; "they wind a deer. He is near us, on the side of the naked swell we are ascending; but look as you will, you cannot see him. Even they do not see him; if they did, they would give chase. Gryphon! come in, sir! Back! back!"

A sharp whistling sound was now heard near us, and the bounding of the deer immediately followed. The eager dogs were restrained, with difficulty, by the master's voice; and in a few seconds the sound ceased.

I now spoke to the white dog, as he trotted by my side. "Griffin," said I. The dog took no notice of me. "Griffin! Griffin! poor fellow!"

"I once knew a gentleman," said my companion, "who had a passion for pronouncing words as they are spelled. In the management of a little amour, it became necessary that he should acquaint himself with the name of the house dog. You know a dog's name is a spell of mighty power to subdue his fierceness. The dog in question was named Boatswain. He took great pains to call him Boat-swain, and was bitten for his trouble. You might get into a scrape of the same sort with my dog, sir."

"How so? Is not his name Griffin?"

"*Gryphon*, sir."

"*Gry*phin?" said I. "Well, if you choose so

to pronounce the word, it is his name, to be sure. But give me leave to ask why you so pronounce it?"

"Because it is so spelled, and always so pronounced."

"*Gri*-fin?" said I.

"No," said he, "Gry-*phon*," emphasizing the last syllable. Then pointing to the dogs alternately, he added, "Gryphon, the white, and Aquilant, the black."

I was taken all aback at once. "I believe," said I, "I have seen those names so associated, but where, I cannot remember. Where is it?"

"In the Orlando Furioso," said he.

I think I never felt more foolish in my life. I had tried to play the pedagogue, and I was flogged with my own birch. I had been trying, too, to decipher this strange half clown, half gentleman, but all in vain; while he, as I saw, had read me through and through, like print. I really felt too much abashed to say another word for several minutes. At length it occurred to me, that the best way to re-establish our intercourse on an easy footing, was to speak out and make a clean breast.

"I perceive," said I, "that, in pretending to correct a fancied blunder, I have made a very foolish one. But, as I would not have you think me more impertinent than I really was, it is well to say frankly, that I am sensible of having been so."

"My dear sir," replied he, in the kindest tone,

"it is only by blunders that we learn wisdom. You are too young to have made many as yet. God forbid, that when you shall have made as many as I have, you should have profited as little by them. But it will not be so. You take the right plan to get the full benefit of all you make. I am not sure," continued he, "that we do not purchase all our good qualities by the exercise of their opposites. How else does experience of danger make men brave? If they were not scared at first, then they were brave at first. If they were scared, then the effect of fear upon the mind has been to engender courage. Virtue, indeed, may be formed by habit. But who has a habit of virtue? very few. The rest have to arrive at virtue by the roundabout road of crime and repentance; as if a man should follow the sun around the earth to reach a point but a few degrees east of that from which he started. But it is God's plan of accomplishing his greatest end, and must be the best plan."

It may be readily believed, that such a speech as this, though it effectually soothed my feelings, did not dispose me to talk much at random to this "learned Theban." Philosophy in shirt sleeves, taking the air by moonlight, on a prairie in Missouri, was so strange a phenomenon, that I knew not what to say, or even to think. But my companion relieved me at once.

"You are lately from Virginia," said he, in a tone between inquiry and affirmation.

"I am," said I; "but give me leave to ask why you thought so?"

"I can hardly tell," he replied; "I believe I arrived at the conclusion almost *per saltum;* but it may be amusing to endeavour to trace the process. To begin with small things. Your equipment is too elaborate for one who has been long among us. Your whip, your umbrella, your saddlebags and valise, your martingale and surcingle; had you been long here, you would have learned to exchange these for the curt and succinct equipments which we use on the longest journeys. This pocket" (pointing to a pouch on the cover of his saddle, just in front of the right knee) "would hold two shirts; the opposite, waistcoats and drawers; behind is another of the same size for socks, handkerchiefs, &c.; and then there is a fourth for crackers, cheese, or jerked venison. By-the-way, will you have a bit?"

Saying this, he handed me something that looked and felt like a piece of split wood. I took it, tasted it, found it delicious, and he went on thus: "Shall I go on with my reasons? Well; your horse! No horse can be put in his order without being first made very fat. He is now worked down, but still in good condition, and his flesh is as hard and dry as that you are chewing; *ergo*, he is from a long journey."

"You have made it very clear," said I, "that I have come from a distance; but why from Virginia?"

"Because from nowhere else. Not from the western country, or you would have asked me more questions in five minutes than I think you would in a week. Besides, you are a judge of horseflesh; I see that you admire my mare, and you would have been beating about me for a trade before this.

"You are not from the South, or you would have been on wheels. You are not from the East, or you would never have made the frank speech which just preceded my remark, 'that you were lately from Virginia.' And by the same token, you are from the country below the mountains; and I should locate you on tide water, and designate you an alumnus of William and Mary. Am I right?"

"You are."

"You see how curiosity whets observation, and how that is whetted by a residence in this remote country. Hence the universal propensity to ask questions. When restrained by delicacy, or self-respect, or respect for others, curiosity effects its object by keen observation."

"I think," said I, "I may infer from all this that you too are a Virginian."

"Of course, I would not suppose you could doubt it. There is a sort of freemasonry among us by which we know each other. By-the-by, it is time I were giving you one of its 'due signs and tokens.' A Virginian, who suffers another, who is a stranger in the land, to part company

with him at his own gate, is a cowin, and should be turned out of the lodge. I would not disparage my neighbours of the city of Arlington, but I am afraid your accommodations there would not much refresh you after a hard day's ride."

"I suppose there is a public house there."

"Not exactly. In the first place, there is nobody there who lays himself out for the entertainment of travellers; and, in the second place, though there is a town there, yet, properly speaking, there is no house."

"Why, then, was I directed there?"

"Because there is a man there who will take your money for what you eat, if you can get it, (and that depends on his gun,) and for what your horse *should* eat, whether he gets it or no; and that, I suspect, depends mainly on the negroes in the neighbourhood."

"Your account is rather discouraging."

"Yes, but I am only showing you the greater evil. I think my shanty is the less of the two, and I am the more anxious that you should choose wisely, because I foresee that you will not travel to-morrow."

"Why not?"

"Because 'I hear a sound of much rain,' and *see* signs of it, too."

"Hear! I hear nothing in all this vast solitude but the sound of our voices and our horses' hoofs."

"Listen a moment. Do you hear nothing else?"

"I hear something like the sound of an axe."

"That axe is more than two miles off."

"And what of that?"

"Were it not about to rain it could not be heard half the distance."

"But I never saw a more beautiful night."

"Nor I."

"The wind is in the west, the moon is bright, the atmosphere is clear, and 'the clouds are drifting east the sky,' at a rate which will soon sweep them all to the Atlantic. And see how light and beautiful they are."

"True! they are beautiful. Do you observe their milky whiteness?"

"Yes."

"Do you observe the intense blaze of the sky?"

"Yes."

"Do you mark the deep, deep chasms between the clouds? not as if they glided along the *surface* of the blue vault, but as if it lay myriads of miles beyond them. See! it is the *moon* that is set in the solid vault. The clouds are *here*—though far above us, still comparatively here—is it not so?"

"It is."

"Well, whenever you see that appearance, make up your mind to spend the next day wherever you spend the night; and so make up your mind to spend the night where you wish to spend the next day. Now, if you are what, as a Virginian, I would have you to be, you will take me at my

word; if not, you will begin to talk about hating to give trouble—and so I shall let you go."

I paused, and was at a loss what to say; so he went on: "I see I have posed you. So, before you commit yourself too far, it is but just to add, that I have no house, any more than my neighbour Dennis at Arlington. But I can keep you dry, and the weather will keep you warm; and I can give you something to eat, and a book to read, and, as you know well enough by this time, I can talk to you. So, end as you began with me. Speak up frankly, and say that you will camp with me."

"Then, frankly," said I, "I thank you, and I will."

"Good," said he. "And here we are at my field."

We were indeed at the corner of an enclosure, along one side of which we rode, until we came to a rude slipgap in the fence. This my conductor let down. We led our horses over, and found ourselves between two black walls of Indian corn, rustling in the night wind. Nothing was visible before us but the narrow turning row which served for a road, until we reached an open space in the field of an acre or two. Here I found myself by the side of a low log cabin, through the open crevices of which gleamed the red light of a large fire. Before the door of this stood the dusky figure of a negro, who took our horses.

As we alighted, my companion said, "I have all this time neglected to introduce myself, or to

qualify myself to introduce you. My name is Balcombe." I gave mine in return, and we went on. As yet I had seen nothing of a dwellinghouse, or even of the promised shanty; but as we turned the corner of the cabin a strong light gleamed upon us. This proceeded from a dwelling, which I will describe now as I saw it the next day. It consisted of two pens, each about ten feet square, made of such timbers as are used for joists, set on edge, one above another, and dovetailed into each other at the corners. The two were placed about ten feet apart, and both were covered by a roof, which sheltered also the intervening space. The floors of this passage and of both rooms consisted of loose rough boards. Into each room was cut a doorway and window; but there was no door, nor any means of closing either that or the windows, but blankets hung up by way of curtain.

In the passage stood a table, covered as for supper, with a white tablecloth, a neat set of china, and the necessary accompaniments; and from this table flamed two large candles, which threw their light to the spot where we were. The figure of my companion was in the light, mine in the shade, as we advanced. In front of the table stood one of the most striking female forms I ever beheld—tall and queenlike, and, as I soon found, in the bloom of youth, and with a countenance corresponding in expression with the air of her person. She was plainly, but neatly, and even fashionably dressed. Looking intently towards us, as soon as

my companion emerged into the light, she ran to meet him, and, throwing her arms about his neck, kissed him affectionately. He returned her caress with playful fondness, and then said, laughing, "You do not see who is here." She instantly disentangled herself, and, bending her large black eyes on the darkness in which I was shrouded, stood covered with blushes. I went forward, and was introduced to her as Mrs. Balcombe. We now entered this strange habitation, and my new friend said, "I need not ask if you have dined. The earnestness with which you masticated that dried venison showed that you had not. So, dearest Bet, if Tom has killed a deer this evening, then a hot steak; if not, the cold saddle."

"There," said she, pointing to the table, "is the saddle waiting for you, and you shall not wait long for the steak."

"In the mean time," said Balcombe, "here is some good brandy, and there is sugar on the table, and here is water, and now here is nutmeg."

All proved good, and the mixture was hardly swallowed before two negro girls appeared, bringing the steak, together with coffee, butter, and all the etceteras of a good supper. My talkative host now gave his tongue a holyday, while his teeth took their turn at work. For my own part, I never enjoyed in higher perfection that first of all luxuries, a traveller's supper.

"It is late," said Mr. Balcombe, as soon as we

had ended our meal, "and you are weary. To bed, then, *sans ceremonie.*"

"Let me look out on the night first" said I, "for I doubt your augury of the weather."

"It is indeed a lovely night," said he, looking up at the moon; "and the signs I read in this dappled sky, with its floating islands of light, seem given to remind us that the fairest appearances are often falsest. I am not mistaken, for we shall have a rain that will give me your company for more than one day, for it will make the streams impassable."

"Then I must use the more diligence, and place them behind me before they rise."

"And so place yourself in a wilderness between two impassable streams. Content yourself, my dear sir. If it does not rain, you shall be called at daylight. If it does, you shall not deny or grudge me the pleasure that Providence sends me. Are you content?"

"I am sorry to requite your kindness by saying I am content *per force;* but I do say so. I will abide the event of your prediction, and if it proves true, stay without a murmur until you tell me the way is open."

"Agreed. Here, Tom!" A servant came. "If it does not rain in the morning have this gentleman's horse ready at daylight, and call him up. If it does rain, do not disturb him; but go to Colonel T——'s and Mr. H——'s, and tell them

I have a friend with me whom I wish to introduce to them. If they can slip along between the drops of rain, I shall be glad of their company to dinner. Ask Mr. H—— to bring P—— with him. And now to bed."

He accordingly took a candle from the table, drew aside the curtain from one of the doorways, and introduced me to my pen.

"I did not promise you a house," said he; "but here you will be dry, for the planks that form this roof cannot leak. So, good-night."

He left me alone, and, strange to tell, in the midst of substantial comfort. A dressing table, water, and glasses, and basin; a neat bed with clean sheets, and a plank between me and the sky. What more could a traveller want after a hearty supper on fat venison? I felt somewhat exposed, indeed, for I had money about me that I could ill afford to lose; but there was no mistrusting the honesty of my host's intentions towards me—so I was soon asleep.

CHAPTER II.

"And is a name my sole inheritance?
Is this the sum of all the honours won
By them who bore it? And have time and chance,
Of all their toils have purchased, left alone
This dying echo of their old renown?
Where are all its records? Time has left no trace
On sculptured brass or monumental stone.
What is the name of a forgotten race?
A drop in history's ocean. Who can point its place?"

"Bless me!" exclaimed I, as I awoke, "it is broad daylight! I should have been two miles on the road."

"Why so? Did the rain get at you in bed?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then you are better where you are. Do you not hear the rain?"

"I do, indeed. I *had not* observed it, for it does not sound like rain. It falls like a heavy soft mass, as if it would crush the roof."

"Shall I come in?" said my entertainer, still speaking from the outside of the curtain.

"Certainly; but what is the hour?"

"Nine."

"Nine! I hope you have not waited breakfast for me."

"No danger of that. It is not so easy to have an early breakfast in such weather, when the fire is half out of doors, and everything else wholly so. Breakfast has not waited for you, but we have waited for breakfast. But it is now near at hand, and will be ready by the time you are."

I was not long at my toilet, and issuing from my pen in company with my friend, was conducted across the passage into the opposite stall of this curious establishment.

"We are all out of doors here," said he; "but there are three degrees of comparison in this as in most things else. This is the positive, the passage the comparative, and there" (pointing out into the column of rain) "is the superlative. In such weather as this the *intus penetralia* is exposed enough; so I must make you free of my lady's chamber."

Accordingly in my lady's chamber stood the breakfast table, loaded with good things, and furnished in a style in most amusing contrast with the mansion. The table itself was of rich mahogany; the bedstead handsomely carved, and room had been found for a neat bureau. The equipage of the table was in good taste; and, in short, as many comforts were there as could be brought together without rendering the *tout ensemble* uncomfortable in so narrow a space. Mine host, too, this morning, was dressed like a gentleman, and his

wife was "*point device* in her accoutrements," and every inch a lady of the highest finish.

"Put that other doghole in some sort of order," said the master to one of the maids, "and set an iron pot of burning charcoal in there. You don't see" (turning to me) "that there is one under the table, but you will not be sorry to feel it. It is not easy to be too warm in this raw weather, and there is no great danger of being stifled by the vapour in this palace of the elements."

We now sat down to breakfast with recovered appetites, but not so keen as to deny Mr. Balcombe the use of his tongue.

"As soon as you told me your name," said he, "I knew that you must belong to a family of that name on York River. I was half tempted to ask to what branch of it, and would do so now, but the question is superfluous. By daylight I see that you are a son of Mr. Napier of Craiganet.

"You happen to be right," said I; "but strangely enough, for I am utterly unlike my father."

"So I should suppose; but I never saw him."

"For Heaven's sake, then, how do you come at my filiation?"

"Very easily. You are very like your mother's family, and none of your name but your father married into that family."

"You are strangely familiar with such things; but you are wrong. My father's brother married my mother's sister."

"But she died, leaving an only daughter."

"That is true. Did you know that family?"

"No. But there is nothing strange in my knowledge. I am myself of one of your oldest families, and could trace a relationship to you in more ways than one."

"You must have a curious fancy for genealogies. For my part, I only care to know that I am my father's son."

"Then you do yourself great wrong. Were you a Plantagenet, men would hardly blame you for claiming descent from the Conqueror, though traced through the treacherous John and his imbecile son, or any others whose crimes tarnish the glories of that illustrious line. Is it not a higher honour to be sprung from a race of men without fear and without reproach—the ancient cavaliers of Virginia? Men in whom the spirit of freedom was so blended with loyalty as to render them alike incapable of servility and selfishness; and who, when their sovereign tore himself from his place in their hearts, transferred their allegiance to their country, and again poured out their blood like water, and scattered their wealth like chaff. Had they fostered this and transmitted it to you, you would have been careful to make out your claim to the inheritance. Are you not degenerate, if you do not prize, even yet more highly, the name, for the honour of which they gave so freely that which was, in their estimation, comparatively but as 'the small dust of the balance?' You wrong yourself. You do not deem lightly of this

inheritance; nor would you, for all the broad lands of which you and your fathers have been defrauded, change your name for the once honourable, but now dishonoured name of Montague."

I started at this name, for it touched a chord that vibrated to my very heart, and laying down my knife and fork stared in amazement on the face of this strange being, who seemed to know all that I knew of myself and my affairs, and might by possibility know much more that I was anxious to discover.

He appeared not to heed me, but paused, with compressed lips and an abstracted but flashing eye, which told that memory and fancy were both hard at work.

"Tell me," said he, "do you know nothing of the history of a gentleman whose body, after death, was seized by his creditors, during the latter part of the revolutionary war, for debts contracted to feed, and clothe, and pay troops in the service of his country, and which had already swallowed up his princely estate? The same who, with his own hands, pointed the first gun at his own house, which the soldiers had been careful not to injure, although occupied by the enemy? You have heard of him."

"He was my kinsman."

"Then you do trace yourself beyond your father, as well you may. My dear sir, do not disparage yourself by adopting the cant of a political fanaticism, that, with a false zeal for liberty, denies

those honours which, in a free government, being open to all, give liberty its greatest value in the eyes of honourable men. It is not for you to give into the humours of those who swell and rage at the word 'gentleman,' as if here, as in England, it was one of the designations of an order in the state. What does it mean with us, but a man who scorns what is base, and detests what is brutal, and whose manners, either by nature or by training, conform to those sentiments? From this aristocracy, as they are pleased to call it, none are shut out but by their own fault. And hence they rage against it, for their exclusion is a sentence of condemnation which conscience ratifies. 'Twas but the other day that a good old man, who lives just west of me, was told, 'that if I should come to live here, the sun would not shine on him till twelve o'clock.' Truly, my mansion casts a mighty shadow! But I could forgive the fellow this malignity for the sake of his originality of thought. What hinders the author of such a conception from a place among those he envies? What but the baseness which prompted him to poison another's mind against one who had done him no wrong? Yet they come to me for favours —they come to me for advice. and try to engender hatred of me in their own hearts. And why? Am I rich? No. Do I vaunt my lineage? They do not know whether I am the son of a king or a cobbler. Am I ostentatious? I think with all my Sunday clothes on, my dress should excite no

man's envy. What you took me for yesterday, you know best; certainly not for an aristocrat. What to think of my establishment, you yourself don't know. But no matter; it keeps us dry, and, for my own part, I am not sure that I am not as well off at this moment as in a palace. So let us eat our venison, and comfort ourselves with the thought that, fall as we may, the ground will catch us, and is not quite so hard as it seems to be. We are of the race of Antæus. We have been lifted in air, and fell from dizziness; but the touch of mother earth restores us."

I was not sorry for this turn in a speech, under some parts of which I felt a little restiff. But I was fairly talked down. I felt the force, if not the truth, of what I had just heard; and, though I was not prepared to assent to it, was well pleased that I was not called on to refute it. There was something in the hardiness of thought and freedom of speech of my new acquaintance quite bewildering. The rapidity with which he hurried my mind along took away my breath. I found, too, that I was beginning to stand in awe of a perspicacity, which read my thoughts at a glance, and a quickness, which made it impossible to anticipate what sort of ideas anything I might say would call forth. I was amused, but felt something of the same sort of uneasiness which I once saw manifested by a tame rackoon when forced into a game of romps by a tame otter. In short, I had never seen a man, the breath of whose mouth held me so much in check,

as this anomalous stranger. But he had opened a peephole for my curiosity, and I indulged it.

"You have, indeed," said I, "strangely contrived to secure your present comfort under unpromising circumstances. My own part in the matter leaves me no room to regret anything I have left behind me, at least on this side of the Mississippi. As to yours, I presume your being here, under such circumstances, is only a sort of whim."

"Something like it," said he. "Twenty miles off, I might be under a roof bigger than the bonnet of a tobacco hogshead, and surrounded by brick walls. But my affairs require me here so often, (for I am about to build here,) that I had this shanty put up, to screen me from the sun. Then I set up a bed, that I might not always have to go to the house of a neighbour at night; and then my lady wife made me a visit, and likes the frolic so well, that she will not go away; and I cannot leave her, you know. But frost is coming, and then I shall get rid of her."

"Indeed you shan't," said she. "I will make the workmen build a chimney, and stop the cracks, and stay here as long as you do."

"Imitation, or contrast!" said he; "nothing between the two. Fashion or innovation! Exactly like everybody else, or totally different from everybody else; which is best? Neither. First one and then the other. That's woman. Is it not so, Bet? When I build, my house must be just like your father's, furniture and all; until then, a hollow

tree, or a tobacco hogshead with an outside chimney, is all too good. But come; I see you have breakfasted. Let us get to our den, and leave my lady to her housewifery."

He now turned to a bureau, on which lay several volumes.

"You must help yourself to a book," said he; "for I have some letters to write, which will afford you a respite from my tediousness."

I took one accordingly, and we adjourned to the other side of the passage, where he wrote and I read for an hour or two. I could hardly be said to read. The allusion to the wrongs of my family, and the mention of the name of Montague, coupled with an imputation of dishonour, tallied so exactly with my suspicions, that I felt a hope that this strange being knew the truth of what I had suspected. I waited, accordingly, with impatience, until the closing of his letters should again open the door to conversation. But although he had volunteered a remark which invited inquiry, I was at a loss how to make it; and no man, about to make his decisive love speech to his dulcinea, ever turned over his thoughts and words in his mind with more solicitude than I did.

CHAPTER III.

A glance that took
Their thoughts from others, by a single look.
BYRON.

As soon as he had sealed his last letter, he tossed it from him and turned towards me. I closed my book, and, looking up, saw his eye fixed on mine with an expression, which, together with a half smile on his lips, showed that he was about to speak. I, of course, waited for him.

"I see so much," said he, "of what other people are about, (by what faculty I know not,) that I should feel like a spy, if I did not lay myself as open to them as they are to me. I flatter myself this is the reason why I talk so much, and say whatever comes into my head. We cannot play the game fairly, if I don't show my hand, when I know the backs of your cards. The object of your present journey is to find Edward Montague, and obtain from him information he will be careful not to give you. Your emotion, at my mention of his name this morning, leaves no doubt of this; and you are now burning with impatience to learn the drift of what I then said. Is it not so?"

"You are indeed bound, in honour, to be as

frank as I find you," said I. "You are exactly right; and if you are as successful in unriddling other people and their affairs, as you have been with me and mine, I shall have little cause to care whether Mr. Edward Montague makes a clean breast or no."

"But he has more occasion for concealment than you, and is rather more wary. It would be long before he would make the acknowledgment you did, last night, about my dog's name. That acknowledgment let me into your character; that brought you here; that interested me in you, and first disposed me to serve you. As far as I can I will. But I do but suspect Mr. Montague; and that I do suspect him he knows; and his alternate defiance of my suspicions, and attempts to lull them, do but confirm them. Sometimes he is distant and reserved, and affects dignity; then he is gracious and conciliatory, and tries to come over me.

"It is pleasant to amuse myself with a fellow who is thus ever acting a part. He always finds me as inaccessible to his approaches as a hedgehog; and when he draws himself up in his terrapin shell of dignity and reserve, I delight to put fire on his back, and make him show sport for the children. He hates me, and fears me accordingly, and would gladly keep out of my way; but we sometimes meet."

"I am sorry," said I, "that you have him so much on the *qui vive* with you."

"I would have him so. There is no other way to find him out. A man habitually cautious is most apt to betray himself when alarmed. In his eagerness to draw his blanket over his head, he uncovers his feet. Do you know him?"

"I never saw him; and had a mind to see him, without letting him know me."

"There you are wrong. Let him hear your name and who you are at once, and unexpectedly. Yes; he shall hear it, for the first time, with my eye upon him, and we will see how the compound works. In the mean time, as you know much that I do not, you shall tell me your whole story exactly as you understand it; and when we have put together all that I already know, and all that you can tell me, it shall go hard but we find out the rest. Business should bring him to this neighbourhood about this time. I can learn to-day if he is expected; and though the fellow shall never darken the door of a dog kennel, that calls me master, we shall meet with him in some of our visits. Come! tell me all about it."

I did not answer immediately, and he continued—

"You hesitate, and perhaps you are right. I dare say, my claim on your confidence is so abrupt as to alarm suspicion. I shall make no profession for the purpose of quieting it. I will only suppose you to ask, as you would do, but for delicacy, what there can be to excite, in my mind, so earnest an interest in your affairs. For the present I will

give no answer but this. We are both anastomozing branches of the same rich stream, flowing direct from the heart of honour, which has not yet lost its vital energy and warmth. But tell me, is this distrust a first impression, or a thought just now suggested by prudence?"

"I can assure you," said I, "that I have never distrusted you, since the first five minutes of our acquaintance. But I have charge of the interests of others, as well as my own, and I felt a doubt, whether I had a right to peril them on the sudden confidence of a raw boy in an acquaintance of twelve hours."

"Then your first impressions led you to confide in me?"

"Entirely."

"Trust them, then. They are nature's testimony. Were you not ingenuous, my frankness would alarm you; for instinct would show you, that there was something about me uncongenial to you; and men, the world calls prudent, would condemn your disposition to confide in me, because, in your place, they would not do so. Much good may their prudence do them. But our instincts are as safe guides as theirs. They get no advantage of me, for nature makes me shun them; and I obey her impulses, confident in her guidance. Your friend Montague would as soon trust Jonathan Wilde as me. Why? Does he doubt my honour? Not in the least. He does but feel that he and I have nothing in common."

"I cannot say," replied I, "that I exactly understand your metaphysics. But I am, at least, determined to act on as much of it as I understand, for this once, and give you the history of my unfortunate family.

"You are aware, then, that my mother was one of two daughters, the only children of a man of vast wealth. You probably know, too, that, with a large inheritance of that honour you prize so highly, my father received from his but a small remnant of an estate sacrificed in the public service. You perhaps do not know that the wealth of my mother's father consisted, mainly, of property entailed on his male descendants, with remainder to a distant relative, who, though a native Virginian, resided, and still lives in England. His wife died in the year 1770, in giving birth to my mother, her second daughter.

"In the interval which preceded the revolution, my grandfather, who disclaimed all thought of ever marrying again, was strongly urged to take measures for docking the entail. This he always refused to think of, not from indifference to his children, for he devoted his life and all he deemed his own to them, but because he could not be made to see the fairness of such a proceeding. Even when the revolution put an end to entails, he declared that his children should not profit by, what he called, a dishonest measure. He accordingly executed a will, by which he devised the entailed property to the remainder-man; and this will,

properly attested, he transmitted to him in England.

"So matters stood, until his two daughters married my father and uncle. He was then seen to take so great an interest in them and their families, that people began to think that he might be induced to change his will in favour of a grandson. But his daughters bore none but daughters for many years. At last, in 1799, I was born. Then the delight of the old man's heart, at the prospect of a male heir, displayed itself. He claimed me from my mother, as soon as I could walk, and made me his pet and plaything. About this time, too, he told my father that he had made a new will, devising his whole property to be divided into two equal parts, of which one half should go to the first of his grandsons that should attain the age of twenty-one; and that the other half should be again divided between his daughters. He added, that this will was in the hands of a confidential friend. My father's extreme delicacy made him a silent listener to this communication; and he did not even ask the name of this depositary of my grandfather's confidence and will.

"Up to this time, the old gentleman, having little that he thought he could honestly give away, besides his income, had given no fortune with either daughter; but he paid faithfully and punctually to the husband of each a handsome annuity. There was no deed of any sort for this. He had merely promised it, and it was regularly paid."

CHAPTER IV.

"Coward hypocrisy fools but himself;
Shrinks from the eye of him he would observe,
And shuts his own, lest he be seen. He bears
The assassin's lantern, but intent to light
His timid steps, turns the detecting blaze
Full on himself."

"ARE you aware," continued I, "of Montague's connection with my grandfather?"

"I am," said Balcombe; "I know that he was the last remaining scion of a respectable and decayed family; that he was left a penniless orphan; that the old gentleman brought him up, educated him, had him trained to the bar, and gave him all the benefit of his countenance, and no little money."

"Then his obligations were even greater than I was aware of. Still he was poor, but, by diligence, and some talent, he got along, though slowly, in the world. He was much employed by my grandfather, sometimes as an amanuensis, sometimes as a man of business; and when the old gentleman died, suddenly, and without naming the person who had his will, no one doubted that Montague was the man. He was accordingly applied to, but in vain.

In the mean time, the devisee under the former will brought it forward; none later was produced, and it was established.

"My grandfather's liberality to his daughters had somewhat involved his estate; and, when his debts were paid, there was little left besides the entailed property. The annuity, of course, ceased; and my poor father, never an economist, having lived up to his income before, now tried in vain to bring his expenses within the compass of his reduced means. He never could be prevailed on to take any active measures to recover the lost will, for he said he had not married for fortune. Whether the pressure of necessity would have overcome his scruples, had he lived to this time, I do not know. But he died before the ruin of his family was so manifest, though not before it was inevitable. His death hastened the consummation. About the time I came of age last April, all he left was sold; and, from the proceeds of the sale, all that remained to us were the means of my taking this journey, and of a scanty subsistence for my poor mother and sisters till I return."

"Was no opposition made to the probate of the will?"

"No further than to summon Montague."

"And what did he say?"

"Before that time he had professed total ignorance of the last will; but being on oath, said he had seen such a paper, and did not know what had become of it, or where it was."

"Was he asked when he saw it last?"

"Yes. He said he had never seen it since the day it was acknowledged before him. Now it was obvious that he did not wish to say anything about the will; but when thus much was wrung from him by the power of conscience, many took that as a proof of the truth of the whole story. For, said they, it would have been as easy to lie, out and out, as to admit that he had witnessed the paper, but to say he did not know what had become of it."

"As *easy*, to be sure, but not quite so safe."

"Why so?"

"Because in the one case he cannot be contradicted; in the other he might have been."

"Contradicted! By whom?"

"By me."

"By you?"

"By me. I was there. I witnessed the will as well as Montague. I saw the old gentleman close it up in an envelope, and seal it with three seals, and hand it to Montague."

"Good Heaven! is it possible? But how, then, do you say that Montague's assertion that he never saw it again could not be contradicted?"

"Because I do not know that he ever saw it again."

"How so?"

"I do not know that he ever opened the envelope."

"But how can he fail to know what has become of it?"

"That I cannot tell; but I have no doubt he has devised some plan by which he has been enabled, in saying so, to speak the truth *literally*."

"*Literally!* yes. But in so doing he would incur all the guilt of falsehood."

"No doubt; but not the penalties."

"Not in this world, but in the next."

"Conscience and religion would make no difference, but superstition might distinguish."

"But Montague passes for a religious man."

"He was always absurdly superstitious, even when an open reprobate. He would not *then* have sworn to a literal lie, though he was a great liar. When did he become religious?"

"I believe in the interval between the death of my grandfather and the establishment of his will. Montague was under great obligation to him, and seemed to take his death very much to heart. He became gloomy and serious, and joined the church."

"There it is! The *form* of religion and *literal* truth as a salvo for wronging the dead, and plundering the living, by moral perjury."

"Are you, then, quite sure the will was never revoked or destroyed by my grandfather?"

"Quite sure. *I* have a letter from him which must have been written just before his death, full of all the fondness of a father's heart for his children, and especially for you, whom he expected to uphold the honour of his name."

"Why, then, did you not come forward?"

"I knew nothing of it. I was wandering about the earth, and did not hear of his death till the controversy was at an end. Even now I know not a word of the contents of the will. Have you any proof on that point?"

"Nothing, but my father's memorandum of what my grandfather told him, written the same day."

"That's no proof. As to Montague, he came here a few years ago, obviously improved in circumstances, though without much property. It was plain he had a plenty of money, though he followed no business; for he only *affected* to practise law.

"As soon as I saw him, I was led to suspect that all was not right. Of course I expected no advances to me, and I certainly made none to him, for I had always an undisguised aversion to him. But the remarkable thing was, that he seems desirous not to have it known that we have ever seen each other. I cannot learn that he has ever given a hint of our former acquaintance to any person: we have accordingly met as strangers at the houses of our common acquaintance, and I have indulged his fancy for seeming not to know me. Sometimes, indeed, when I have permitted him to think that he has a little ingratiated himself with me, he will make allusions, *sotto voce*, to bygone days.

"All this convinced me that there was something not exactly right in his history since I left

Virginia. When I heard some vague rumours about the lost will, my suspicions began to draw to a point, and I set on foot a system of observation on his ways and means which confirmed them.

"I told you, that without business or property of any consequence, or any known fund to draw on, he was never without money; not that he ever displayed large sums, or seemed to have them at command; but he was the realization of Phillips's idea, of a man who always has a shilling in his pocket. He seemed to have found Fortunatus's purse: a small one, indeed, but always full.

"Happening at last to have need of Eastern funds, I applied to a merchant for the purpose of purchasing a bill on New-York. He accordingly furnished one drawn by Montague on a house there, for the desired amount of one thousand dollars. On inquiry, I ascertained that he drew regularly, at the same time every year, on the same house, for the same sum.

"A most palpable annuity! *Unde derivatur?* That was the question. I had little doubt whence; and if my suspicions were just, then there was foul play, and the children of my earliest friend, my patron and benefactor, were foully wronged.

"Ay, William!—you see I know your name—you have no idea of my debt of gratitude to that kind, generous, conscientious, benevolent old man. You know nothing of me. Your mother was married and gone before I came under your grand-

father's eye; a distant relation, an orphan of scanty patrimony, insufficient to obtain a proper education. This deficiency your grandfather made up, and by his aid I graduated at William and Mary when you were but a child. Not long afterward I went into the wide world in quest of fortune, and here I am. You are not to judge of my success by this partridge trap. Though not rich, I am not poor. What I might have been, had I hoarded, I neither know nor care. I was myself the foster-child of charity, and in every deserving object of it, I see one sent, as it were, by Him whose stewards we all are, to receive a portion of that unextinguishable debt I owe your grandfather. I speak of these things now, because I would not have you think me an officious intermeddler in other men's matters, nor imagine an extravagant disproportion between my inducements and what I have done, am doing, and propose to do.

"Well, I bought the bill, and sent it to my correspondent in New-York, with instructions to obtain English funds in payment. This he did, getting a draft on a Liverpool house, accompanied by a letter of advice. The correspondent in Liverpool was instructed in like manner to take a draft on Northumberland. This was also obtained, with a letter of advice, duplicates being furnished in each instance. Here they are."

He went out, and presently returned, bringing a Russia leather portable desk. From this he took six papers: three of them were the seconds, in

common form, of three drafts. One drawn by Montague on Tompkins and Todd of New-York; one by that house on Bell and Brothers of Liverpool; and the third by Bell and Brothers on Mr. Raby, the possessor of my grandfather's property in Virginia. The other three ran as follows:—

"*To George Balcombe, Esq.*

"DEAR SIR,

"I wrote you, under date of March tenth, that the bill remitted by you for one thousand dollars, drawn by Edward Montague on the house of Tompkins and Todd of this city, had been paid by a draft on Bell and Brothers of Liverpool, England. This draft I remitted, according to your directions, to my friend John Ferguson, of the house of Ferguson and Partridge, our correspondents there, with instructions to obtain, if possible, from the same house, a draft on the county of Northumberland. In this he succeeded, by procuring a draft on Edward Raby, Esq. of that county, for a like amount.

"Enclosed you have the seconds of the several bills, and duplicates of the letters of advice accompanying the same. At my request, Mr. Ferguson waited on Mr. Raby in person. The money was promptly paid, but not without a good deal of grumbling. Nothing very intelligible was said; but Mr. Ferguson could distinguish in the mutterings of Mr. Raby such words as, 'Harpy!' 'Rapacious scoundrel!' &c.

"I begged, as you requested, that my friend Mr. Ferguson would make a charge, as in the way of business, for his trouble in this affair. Within you have his account, showing the net proceeds of the draft, and the balance in my favour. That balance is to your credit with me. Hoping that this business may have been conducted to your satisfaction, I remain, dear sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"JAMES LANGSTON.

"New-York, June 1, 1820."

"*To Messrs. Bell and Brothers, Merchants, Liverpool.*

"GENTLEMEN,

"A draft drawn by Edward Montague, Esq., for one thousand dollars, was this day presented, and paid by us in pursuance of your standing instructions.

"We have accordingly drawn on you in favour of Mr. James Langston of this city, for a corresponding amount.

"We remain, gentlemen,

"Your obedient servants,

"TOMPKINS & TODD.

"New-York, March 9, 1820."

"*To Edward Raby, Esq., of Raby Hall, Northumberland.*

"SIR,

"The draft of Messrs. Tompkins and Todd, on

account of Mr. Montague's annuity, is to hand, and has been duly honoured.

"We have this day drawn on you for the amount, in favour of Mr. John Ferguson, of this place. Hoping that it may be quite convenient to you to meet the draft, and begging a continuance of your favours, we remain, sir,

"With great respect,
"Your most obedient
"humble servants,
"BELL & BROTHERS.

"Liverpool, April 10, 1820."

CHAPTER V.

The grief assumed compelled her to be kind,
For he would proof of plighted kindness crave,
That she resented first, and then forgave;
And to his grief and penance yielded more
Than his presumption had required before.

CRABBE.

"You see," said Balcombe, "by the dates, that this is a recent transaction. It is not long since I received the papers, and I was casting about to devise some means of opening a communication with you, when Providence threw you in my way. I say *Providence*, because, though I am not quite so superstitious as Montague, who worships the devil, and calls him God, I do believe in a special providence, and look upon such coincidences as providential and ominous of good. But tell me—How came Montague to leave Virginia?"

"I cannot answer that question with certainty; but there were those who could not be persuaded that all was right, and they looked coldly on him. His circumstances were certainly improved; but this, as I understand, was rather *discovered* by others than *displayed* by him. He was less engaged in business, but had more money,

and was more at his ease. He never finessed so deep, as to affect any embarrassment or difficulty, but seemed rather desirous to glide into a place among the first gentlemen of the country. The earliest manifestation of this disposition was the signal for a distinct and marked exclusion. He was made to understand at once that he was not of their order; and even with the poorer classes, and the very negroes, (you know their unerring instinct in these matters,) he could never pass for more than what Paddy calls 'a half-mounted gentleman.'"

"And what became of poor Mary Scott?"

"Ah! were you aware of that matter?"

"Yes, from the first. I could never be said to be in the fellow's confidence, for I would not have accepted it: but circumstances made me privy to it from the very commencement of his *amour*. Indeed I did not suppose it had ever become public, and, in asking the question, thought I might be giving you a hint of something new to you. But let me tell you all I know, and you shall give me the sequel. We must look narrowly into this matter. Men, as versatile in wickedness as Montague, sometimes find one crime the avenger of another; and my knowledge of the parties has inspired me with a hope, that it is in that very quarter that light is to break out, and disclose the villany of which you have been the victim.

"You must understand, then, that when I left college in 1805, your grandfather, seeking, with his accustomed delicacy to disguise a benefit, con-

ferred under the semblance of a favour received, pretended that it would be to his interest for me to reside a while at his estate on Rappahannock. There was a fine old house there, somewhat decayed; there were old supernumerary house servants, who were never permitted to labour in the field; there was a tolerable supply of oldfashioned furniture; and, above all, there were a great many good old books, which, added to my little modern library, afforded the means of profitable employment of my time. In truth, there was nothing for me to do but to study; and I must have been a dunce indeed if I had not seen that I was put there for my good. The place was admirably adapted to the plan. The vast extent of the estate placed me in the centre of a wide solitude. I could hardly be said to have any neighbours; and was, therefore, not tempted to dissipation. The necessary exercise with my gun afforded me healthful and abundant recreation; and, as I had every opportunity, so I had every disposition to improve myself. To have done otherwise would have been a base abuse of unmerited kindness. I was exposed to one only danger; and from that Montague saved me. I suppose I ought to thank him, and, in due season, I will try to show my gratitude in the proper manner.

"The poor girl, of whom we speak, was the overseer's daughter. He lived in one of those secondary houses, which so often form a part of our old establishments. Drawing his supplies from

the estate, he might have saved nearly the whole of his handsome stipend, had he not lavished so much on her. She was beautiful and intelligent; gay, sprightly, and impassioned. As there were servants, more than enough, she had nothing to do. She was fond of reading, and read a great deal; but having access to all sorts of books, and no one to direct her choice, her reading was, perhaps, worse than unprofitable. A dangerous turn for romance, fatally cultivated, was, at once, her fault and her misfortune; but this did not make her less attractive to a raw youth just from college. What might have come of it, I do not know, but for Montague. I took great pleasure in her society, for she was cheerful, imaginative, witty, ardent, and confiding. I have rarely seen a more agreeable girl, and her beauty was of an order to make the beholder imagine that the blood in her veins was right royal. You have seen her!"

"Only in decay."

"Her person was then majestic; her complexion, though deficient in the milky whiteness of a skin which the breath of heaven is never suffered to visit, was fair, rich, and transparent; her features were regular, lighted up by an eye of ever-varying expression, to which the tones of her voice were always in perfect unison. She was gifted, indeed, with a spontaneous flow of words, which often gushed forth in streams of fervid eloquence, or sparkling wit, or bubbling gayety, or deep, low-murmured tenderness. In short, she was a glorious

creature, formed to fill to overflowing the cup of bliss of him to whom she might give her heart. If I ever saw perfect disinterestedness, it was in her. If I ever saw a woman, whom no consideration could influence to surrender herself to the embrace of any but the master of her affections, she was that woman. I admired her very much; I loved her very sincerely; I should have loved her, in spite of myself, with all the fierceness of passion, had she permitted it.

"It was quite natural that she should take pleasure in my society; for I was the only person who could converse with her on the topics which interested her most. She delighted in poetry. I read well, and often read to her, while she listened with rapture. I taught *her* to read it, and she was grateful for an acquisition which enabled her to perceive new beauties in passages, uttered in her own rich, mellow, and flexible tones. She delighted in knowledge. I instructed her in such things as she most desired to know, and enjoyed, for the first time, that sweetest and purest of all pleaures—that of imparting to a lovely and beloved female ideas which are reflected from her eyes and echoed by her voice; which sink into her mind, and become a part of it; which refine, and purify, and elevate her affections; which open to her a new world of existence, and make her even to herself a new creature. To do this, is to wield and to brave all love's artillery. Nothing but pre-engaged affections can withstand it; and faithful is the heart which

even these do not surrender to such an attack. Such a heart was hers. She already loved—and loved Montague. She saw the necessity of arming me against myself, and frankly told me so.

"There was great nobleness and generosity in this. How many women scruple to make their sport of the best feelings of the heart of man?—playing on its chords as on a stringed instrument, and listening to its wailing tones with a pleasure hardly less savage than that of Dionysius, at his artificial ear!! How many women deny themselves the advantage of playing off a rival against a favoured lover—alarming his fears, heightening in his eyes the value of the prize, and thus securing his fidelity? Had this poor girl done this, she would have been now the cherished wife of Montague.

"I should have mentioned, that he was a frequent visiter there. As he attended the court of that county, where your grandfather's large property gave him so great an influence, the good old man invited him always to spend a day at the old mansion. 'It will be of service to you,' said he: 'people will see that you are in my intimacy and confidence; they will think that you are employed about my business, and will give you theirs.' No man understood the effect of such things better than Montague. He had, accordingly, availed himself of the privilege, even before I went there, often enough to become attached to Mary Scott, and to secure her heart. You may suppose, his visits were not less frequent when he saw one

established there who might be a formidable rival. That he loved her as much as his selfish heart could love, I am sure; at least in the beginning. At first, too, he would have been glad to marry her. His delay was dictated by proper prudence, for both were poor. But, as his circumstances improved, he discovered that Scott was even poorer than he had supposed, having saved nothing. A certain elderly maiden, too, of tolerable property, and good expectations, was said to look kindly on him. So it was; his visits became less frequent, and she was often doomed to the misery of disappointed expectation. But when he did come, all was forgotten. Some satisfactory excuse was found; and he professed to indemnify himself for his long absence by more protracted visits. In one of these, I accidentally witnessed a circumstance (no matter what) which led me to suspect him of dishonourable designs. The idea that he had accomplished them did not enter my head. I soon had cause to fear that he had, and that, but a few hours earlier, my interference would not have been too late. I sought a private interview with him.

"'Montague,' said I, 'do you love Mary Scott?' He hesitated, muttering something about the strangeness of the question. 'Understand me, sir,' said I, 'I do not ask your confidence. I would not accept it. I demand to know the fact, for my own purposes, and to be used at my own discretion. Mark me. I do not ask whether you *profess* to love her. I know that you do. I have that

from her own lips. I demand to know whether you *do* love here in very truth.'

"'Oh!' said he, in the mildest tone, 'if she has made you her confidant, I have no need to be secret. Therefore, I acknowledge to you that I do love her with all my heart.'

"'Why, then,' said I, 'do you not marry her?'

"He paused again. 'Speak *on*,' said I, 'and speak *out*.'

"'Why, really, Mr. Balcombe, I do not understand this peremptory tone.'

"'You understand it well,' said I, 'and you understand perfectly that I will have an answer. I want it for my own purpose, again, and to be used at my own discretion. Answer you shall. Truly or falsely, is your own concern. I hardly expect the truth, and do not care to have it. But I will know on what footing you place this thing.'

"'Well!' said he, 'you know I have a will of old Mr. Raby's in my hands, in which I am handsomely provided for by a bequest of valuable lands. I am, therefore, careful not to offend him; and I have reason to believe this marriage would not be agreeable to him. Poor as I am, he would regard it as a duty I owe to my ancestors not to ally myself to his overseer.'

"'And is this,' said I, 'the reason you assign to her for your delay to claim her hand?'

"'It is.'

"'Then you have told her what is false.'

"'How can *you* say that?' said he: 'I wrote the will. You never read it.'

"'That is true,' said I, 'but I witnessed it.'

"'What of that?'

"'Why, this, sir. It is witnessed only by us two. What can you claim under it by your own testimony? Would you, the wary, the crafty, the selfish, rapacious Edward Montague, have been content to have a will of *lands*, under which you expect to claim, so witnessed? Shame upon you, sir. Would you palm such a barefaced lie upon me, as well as on that poor, confiding, generous, true-hearted girl? I will undeceive her instantly.'

"I shall never forget the grim smile, in which something like triumph seemed struggling to free itself from the mire of degradation into which I was trampling him.

"'You will use your own pleasure about that,' said he; 'I mean to marry her when circumstances will permit. Before that I cannot.'

"'Marry her you never shall,' said I.

"'Will you take her off my hands?' said he, with the same incomprehensible smile. I sprung at him, I know not why. But he darted through the door, and jerked it after him. I did not pursue him. I heard him order his horse, and he soon rode off."

CHAPTER VI.

The lovely toy so fiercely sought,
Has lost its charm by being caught:
For every touch that wooed its stay,
Has brushed its brightest hues away.
BYRON.

"I THEN went to look for poor Mary. She was alone; her eyes red, her cheek flushed, her countenance full of excitement. As I entered, she brushed away her tears, and tried to assume an air of playful gayety.

"'Mary,' said I, 'will you walk with me?'

"'Certainly; but where, and why?'

"'Where, is a matter of no importance; why, is what I want to tell you.'

"But I forget myself," said Balcombe, stopping short. "Before I go on with my story, I should ask you, how much of reputation remains to this poor girl?"

"Of reputation! none. Her fall has been complete and notorious. Montague's motives for the concealment of his pretended purpose of marriage, ceased on my grandfather's death. He then threw off the mask to her, though he would have been glad enough to keep the real truth concealed from

the world. This he might have done, for their intercourse proved unfruitful; but when she saw the whole truth, the fierceness of her long-smothered passions drove her into a phrensy of despair, which changed suspicion into certainty. But go on; I will take up the tale, when you get through, and tell you all. Indeed, I have no doubt that I shall understand my own story better, when I have heard yours. You have already placed it in a new light, by the view you have given me of her character. It puts quite another face on her subsequent history."

"What! I suppose her conduct, under the influence of self-reproach and wounded pride, and the self-abandonment of conscious degradation, has been mistaken for a total want of delicacy. She is not a fallen angel, but a born devil. Is it so?"

"Exactly. But go on."

"Poor girl! poor girl!" said he; "who, that knew you, can wonder that your native generosity, and cherished love of virtue and good fame, should drive you to desperation, when both were lost? The Spartan boy could suffer in silence, while the fox was preying on his vitals. But the fox's tooth is not tipped with fire, like the stings of conscience to a mind like Mary Scott's. I heard the first shriek they wrung from her; I never shall forget it; it told all; and that at a moment when the art of one hardened in guilt, and practised in self-command, might have recovered her power over me, and made me her husband. You shall hear. We

went out, and I drew her arm within mine. I conducted her towards the garden of the family mansion, abounding in shady walks, bowers, and grass plats, without speaking.

"'Why do you bring me here, George?' said she; 'and what do you wish to say to me?'

"'That which I was unwilling to say, until we had reached a spot where any start of emotion might be unseen by others.'

"'You alarm me,' said she. 'For the love of Heaven! what do you mean?'

"'I *did* mean,' said I, 'to ask a question which your tears have too plainly answered. I meant to ask if a time was appointed for your marriage.'

"'That is a most extraordinary question,' said she, stopping short and letting go my arm. I did not think it so myself, for I had tried to familiarize myself with the subject by frequently adverting to it. My allusions had never before been unwelcome, and you may judge my surprise, when, after disengaging herself, she stepped back, and looked up in my face, pale, trembling, and with eyes starting from their sockets with a searching eagerness of expression that seemed to pierce my inmost soul. She seemed on the point of falling. I took her hand, and led her to a shaded turf seat on a plat of grass. For a few minutes she rested her bowed head upon her hands, and shook convulsively. I thought she was weeping, but heard no sob. When at length she raised her head, her eyes were tearless. The paleness of her face was

rendered more striking by one crimson spot on her left cheek, and her eager gaze had subsided into a stony glare.

"I now placed myself on the step of her seat, took her hand, moulded her cold fingers in my own, kissed them, and tried, by all admissible blandishments and tenderness of murmured tones, to sooth her. At length she seemed restored to consciousness. Her eye, withdrawn from its gaze on vacancy, looked down kindly on me; a tear suffused it, gathered to a drop and fell on her hand. Then came a start, a burning blush, a shudder, and she was calm again.

"'Mary,' said I, 'when, knowing my feelings, you made me the depositary of the secret of your love for Montague, you gave me a right to all your confidence. Have I ever forfeited it?'

"Her eye now turned full upon me with an expression of the most confiding tenderness.

"'No, George, no!' said she; 'in all things you have shown yourself such a friend, as no man can be whose friendship does not deserve a better return than it was mine to make. A better than—' Again her cheek burned like fire; her voice choked in her swelling throat, and in a moment more she was ashy pale, but calm and attentive.

"'I will not repeat my question,' said I; 'it is answered. No time *is* fixed for your marriage. And why, Mary? Surely the delay cannot proceed from you. You are no spoiled child of affluence, to refuse to share the lot of the man of your

heart, however humble. I mistake you much, if the enjoyment of the wealth which Montague will one day probably acquire, would be so sweet to you as the pleasure of cheering and aiding his exertions. That you love him, I have such proof as self-love will suffer no man to doubt; nor can he doubt it.'

"'He doubt my love!' said she, wildly; 'oh God! oh God! No, never! never!' added she, with a deep sigh, 'never can *he* doubt it.'

"'The obstacle, then, to your union, is suggested by him. Tell me, then, Mary—you have no brother—tell me, as to a brother—to one who loves you with more than a brother's love—what is the reason he assigns for delaying your nuptials?'

"'I will tell you,' said she; 'though perhaps I am rather betraying his confidence than giving my own. He has large expectations under a will of Mr. Raby, now in his custody. The old gentleman has other views for him; and he fears to offend his patrician pride by marrying his overseer's daughter. But the old man is frail, and he thinks it may not be long before he is master of his own destiny. He proposes, therefore, to wait one year, if Mr. Raby should live so long; after that, he says he will take his own course.'

"'When did he tell you this?'

"'Not an hour ago.'

"'Since your return from the arbour, or while there?'

"She sprang to her feet, again gazed on me with

the same wild eager look that my first question had excited; but recovered herself, and sank down on the step where I had been sitting, while her countenance assumed the expression of one prepared to hear the worst. I went on:

"'I, too, have just had a conversation with Montague. I felt it my duty, as your friend, to demand one, after what I witnessed this morning.'

"'After what you witnessed!' screamed she, wildly; 'what did you witness?—what did you witness?'

"Again she covered her face with her hands.

"'I witnessed freedoms,' said I, 'which, if not preceded by marriage, should be quickly followed by it.'

"A wild scream interrupted me, but I continued: 'I saw you as you issued from the arbour. I saw him take his lips from your's. His arm was around your waist; and, Mary, to speak out plainly, I saw him withdraw his hand from your bosom.'

"I ceased, and she remained for five minutes with her face buried in her hands. When she looked up, a bright glow was on her cheek, differing not more from the marble paleness it succeeded, than from the burning blush I had witnessed before. Her eye had recovered its brightness, and her whole face was radiant with beauty. Her lip, though she smiled not, was no longer that of one who had forgotten how to smile. In short, I ought to have discovered that she was relieved by

finding that I had seen no more. But I was blinded, or saw nothing but her transcendent beauty. While I gazed on her, she suddenly looked at me, as if trying to recollect something; and, after a moment, fixing her eye on me with all the fierceness of a woman's rage, exclaimed, 'What means this, sir? How have you dared to pry into my feelings—to count the pulse of my heart, and watch its workings?' She suddenly checked herself; looked up and down, and around, with a bewildered look; again hid her face, and, after a moment, recovered herself, and said, 'Forgive me, George. Go on.' Here again she betrayed herself by her obvious fear that she had done so. At this time it appears to me strange how I could have been deceived. But I was not then as I am now. Besides, I had been more in love than I was aware of; and the breath of hope, rising in a moment when my sympathy had been so strongly excited, and just when her beauty had blazed out so intensely, had kindled the stifled fire in my bosom into a maddening flame. 'My eyes were holden that I could not see.' I accordingly went on:

"'I asked Montague,' said I, 'the question I asked you, and he gave me the same answer. That answer, Mary, makes it my duty to undeceive you. You are deceived. His tale is false. There is no such bequest in that will.'

"She started as if stung by a scorpion, and with a face glowing with indignation, said, 'This to me,

sir! This to the betrothed wife of Edward Montague! Why this, indeed, is manly, as well as kind and generous. But methinks, sir, it might have been more manly to give the lie to his beard, than to insult with it a defenceless woman.'

"'Your indignation becomes you, Mary; and your reproach would be just, were the fact as you suppose. But I did give him the lie to his beard.'

"'And you live to tell it, and to me!'

"'I live to tell it, and to you, my poor girl. I convicted him of falsehood, on his own showing, and he fled from before my face like a guilty thing.'

"'Fled! Whither?'

"'To hide his shame. He is gone, as I hope never to return.'

"She made no answer, but sat with a look of perplexity and amazement, but devoid of the alarm and horror which her countenance had displayed before. I resumed my place at her feet, again took her hand, and moulded and chafed it between mine for some minutes. At length I said: 'I do not ask you, Mary, to believe what I have said on my bare word, though when you doubt that you will believe nothing but your own senses; but you shall have the evidence of *them*. I will dog Montague through the world, and make him give me, under his own hand, an acknowledgment of the truth of what I have told you. And when I bring that, Mary, I will not ask you to give me the hand

which he has forfeited; for I know, that, without your heart, you will never give it, nor without your heart will I ever receive it. But though I will not ask this, let me say frankly, that I shall no longer be withheld by delicacy from endeavouring to awaken in your bosom the same sentiments which animate mine. Should I fail, I will endeavour not to annoy you by a long continuance of unacceptable assiduities. Should I succeed, it will then be my pride and delight as my duty, to make you forget this villain in the devoted affection of an honourable husband.'

"When I first began to speak she hardly seemed to hear me. As I went on, her attention was gradually aroused, and she fixed her large eyes upon me, which dilated as she gazed till they looked like moons. As I uttered the last words, a movement like spasm passed across her face; she sprung to her feet, exclaiming, 'An honourable husband! and FOR ME!' and with a wild, unearthly shriek; and tossing her hands on high, she clasped and wrung them above her head, and fell on her face on the grass. I tried to raise her, but she forced herself by convulsive tossings from my grasp, obstinately burying her face in the high grass.

"In this position she lay, uttering, at short intervals, the same fearful shriek. Then she became calmer, and spoke in snatches, 'Honourable! honourable! and for me! *Husband!* Honoura-

ble husband! and for me! Oh, too late! too late! Oh, to recall but yesterday! But this day! this day! It has swallowed up all my yesterdays! All! all! All time past! all time to come! All but eternity!'"

CHAPTER VII.

Pinched are her looks, as one who pines for bread,
Whose cares are growing, and whose hopes are fled;
Pale her parch'd lips, her heavy eyes sunk low,
And tears unnoticed from their channels flow.

CRABBE.

"THE blindness of passion itself could not misunderstand this. The villain had pursued his object, with unremitting assiduity, for more than two years, (for *I* had spent two years there,) and had at length found the unguarded moment in which a woman can deny nothing to the man she loves. I can tell you nothing of my feelings. There lay one of the loveliest and most generous of human beings, polluted by the vile touch which, though it reached not her heart, had rendered all her beauties loathsome. Never, surely, had she deserved to stand higher in my estimation than at that moment, but contamination had reached her; the plague was on her breath; and I shrank from her as from a hateful reptile. Yet I awaited her recovery from this paroxysm of despairing agony, and saw her safe home. We entered unobserved. I left her, returned to the hall, and immediately prepared to leave it for ever.

"My preparations were soon made. That night I heard she was ill. The next morning I called to take leave of the family. She heard I was in the house, and sent for me. I found her in bed, pale, wan, and wasted, as by long disease. Her features were sharpened, and she looked as if an age of winters had passed over her. She held out her hand to me, and sent away the servant. I took her hand, not without shuddering, and said,

"'It is kind of you, Mary, to permit me to see you before I go away for ever. I wished to say farewell, and I will not say more. Nay, do not speak. Spare yourself, my poor girl. May God comfort and bless you!'

"She stretched out the other hand, and raised her head as if to kiss me. I turned away.

"'Kiss me, George,' said she, 'kiss me, dear George. My *lip* cannot pollute you. Alas! yours cannot take away the stain. But I feel as if the touch of lips as pure as yours would sooth my heart. Kiss me, dear George! this once—this once!'

"There was no withstanding this. I turned, and folded her in my arms, never more lovely, never more beloved; never, in my estimation, so exalted as then. But language has no words for the thoughts and feelings of that moment. We wept together, and parted for ever."

It was now my turn to take up the story, which I did, by telling Balcombe that poor Mary buried herself in obscurity from the day on which he left

her. A rumour somehow got out that all was not right, and she and her parents alike seemed conscious that it was not unfounded. Dejection had come over them all, and they avoided all explanation of the cause. Balcombe was gone; the visits of Montague were discontinued; and a black shadow seemed to settle on the family.

Of all this my good old grandfather knew nothing. He was not a man to be approached by gossips; so Scott retained his post, and Montague his patron's confidence. Indeed, he suffered but little in public estimation by the affair. The idea that he had ever presented himself as an honourable suitor to the daughter of a man like Scott, was never current. Those who heard of his amour supposed that he had but opened his mouth to catch the fruit that was ready to drop into it; and the dejection of Mary was rather attributed to his desertion than to the reproaches of her own conscience. But Scott was a man of good feelings. He perhaps never knew or suspected the whole truth. He only saw that his daughter's peace was destroyed, and that her dejection was immediately consequent upon the abrupt departure of Montague. He returned no more, and she was never seen to smile again. She was the object on which all the old man's affections and hopes were centred, and his heart sunk and withered under the affliction. He did not long survive it; and poor Mary, with her mother and little brother, was obliged to seek another home.

They were very poor. The boy was too small to do more than lighten the household labours of his mother and sister; and they must have found it hard to live, even on a reduced scale, and in the little cottage where they found refuge. Here Montague was seen to renew his visits. They were repeated monthly, and filled all the intervals of leisure between the courts of that county and the next. No one else visited the house, and nothing could be inferred of his footing there, but from the fact, that their purchases of necessaries from the neighbouring store were larger, and their payments more punctual. Pecuniary difficulty did not seem to be one of their troubles, though there was nothing of extravagance or profusion in their expenditure.

These things were not of general notoriety beyond the neighbourhood. In that where I lived, and where Montague had lived, they were not known at all. But, when I betook myself to the task of tracing Montague, I visited all his old haunts, and sought out all his old associates. In the course of my investigation I learned the circumstances I have mentioned. I made two visits to that neighbourhood: the first before I had learned where Montague was to be found. I then saw Mary; but I saw nothing of the charms of which Balcombe spoke. A black gown, carelessly put on, disfigured her person; a close cap nearly hid her face. She was fair, but pale and sallow; delicate, but her features were sharp; and, though

she spoke with great propriety, she said as little as possible. There was an air of desolation about her that told her whole story; yet there was that in her demeanour which bespoke sympathy and respect for her misfortunes. I did not shock her with the name of Montague, but I made my inquiries of the mother, and learned from her that they knew nothing of his whereabout, and that Mary was anxious to discover it. When I myself ascertained it, I called again in passing, and gave the information.

This was just before I left Virginia. They would then have been reduced to the most abject poverty but for the devoted exertions of the son, who must have been a boy some six or eight years old when Balcombe left Virginia.

I did not see him, but understood that he was a spirited, energetic youth, who cheerfully gave all the fruits of his labour to promote the comfort of his mother and sister. It seemed to be understood, that whatever aid the family received from Montague had ceased when he left the country, or soon after; and that, but for the exertions of this boy, they might have wanted bread. As it was, they had not much more. It may be as well to add here, that in my visits to that county I did not make myself known. I might learn, as a stranger, all that was to be learned, and it might be desirable not to give any confederate of Montague's a chance to apprize him that I was searching for him.

CHAPTER VIII.

"The gleeful noise of children,
And the glad laugh that from the rosy mouth,
As from a grot inlaid with pearls and coral,
Pours forth its prattling stream, to him were music."

By the time we had got through these reciprocal communications, Tom made his appearance to say, that one of the gentlemen to whom he had been sent had company in his house, and that the other had been invited to dine with him.

"I am not sorry for that," said Balcombe, as soon as the servant withdrew. "Had I known, last night, who you were, I should not have sent for them to interrupt our conference; but now all is safe: we have the evening to ourselves, and may spare time for a little refreshment. "But, dearest," continued he, raising his voice, "will you send us some wine and fruit? and give us the light of your countenance too, darling; for the day is dark, and a charcoal fire gives but a grim fuliginous glare, uncongenial to wine and friendship. Bright eyes afford the only light that's fit to drink by."

A servant soon appeared, with wine and cake, and a delicious cantelope, and some rich, mellow, glowing peaches. The lady soon followed, and

we feasted together on these dainties, the appearance of which seemed hardly less miraculous than that of the manna in the wilderness.

"I have not thought to ask you yet," said Balcombe, "if you remember anything of me."

"I do not think I have the least recollection of any such person," said I.

"That's strange. You were taken to your grandfather's before you were two years old. His house was my home until I went to college, and I spent my vacations there. I left it for the old hall in 1805. You were then six years old, and I saw you, for the last time, two years after, when I returned to take my final leave. Do you remember the first day you ever put on breeches?"

"As if 'twere yesterday."

"And how you pinned up your hat into a three-cornered cock, and stuck a feather in it? and how you mounted a stick horse, and went to take a ride? and how you would go prancing along the plank across the mill stream? and how you fell in, and were fished out? and who fished you out?"

"Was that you? Yes, his name *was* George; *my* George, as we used to call him."

"Yes, I was *your* George, and your cousin's George. Dear little Ann! no doubt she has forgotten me entirely. She was three years younger than you. She was my pet, and I was her playfellow, and her horse, and her dog, and her cat; in short, I was everything to her, and *now*, it is just as if no such being as George Balcombe

ever existed. So goes the world! We love, we toil, we fight, we give our heart, and purse, and blood for those who presently forget us, and whom we forget. Of all whose joys and sorrows, whose strifes, whose defeats and triumphs I have shared, who is there that cares for me? One, and but one—Bet. This is a great thing, this marriage, William. It is the only anchor of the affections that will hold through the storms of life. Without this we drift from our moorings, the sport of every gale of fortune or passion.

'The magnet of our course is gone, or only points in vain
The shore to which our shivered sail shall never stretch again.'

The harbour of matrimony affords the only safe anchorage, and he who overshoots that may go cruise with the 'Flying Dutchman.'

"The love of children, too, is the most hallowing of our affections. We cannot help loving them if they are good, but to love other people's children is to sow the seeds of happiness on the shifting islands of the Missouri. The crop springs up and flourishes; it is fresh and green over night. In the morning the land itself is gone. Why do all mankind detest ingratitude? Because it robs virtue of her sweetest reward—the pleasure of doing good, and receiving nothing but affection in return. Children and dogs alone never disappoint this hope. They are the proper recipients of that stream of descending affections which must have vent. May it not be," continued he, in a more

thoughtful tone, "that they are implanted in our hearts to enable us to comprehend something of the love for us which is avowed by God himself, by the great King above all gods, for us helpless worms? and how he asks nothing in return but our hearts?"

He looked up, and after a long pause added, in a tone of musing enthusiasm, "Like as a father pitieth his children."

A tear sprang to his eye, and he remained for some minutes silent and thoughtful. I said nothing, for I had never seen a man it was so hard to talk to. It was impossible to keep pace with the wild digressions of his mind. By the time I could frame an observation on any topic he touched on, he was away to something else; and was most apt to pause when he had just uttered some thought that had never entered my head, or perhaps his own, or that of any other human being until that moment.

"I wish," said he at length, "our little Delia was here. I would let you see how I can love a child."

"You have a daughter, then?"

"Yes, a little urchin of three years, now with her grandmother. Bet, don't you want to see her?"

"To be sure I do."

"Well, then, let us go to-morrow. By that time, I think the novelty of this shieling will have worn out with you, William, and you will not be sorry to go into snugger quarters. I should be badly

off, if I had no better place to welcome a friend to than this. I am inviting you, indeed, to another man's house; but I have a right to do so, and can promise you a cordial reception, on your own account, as well as mine."

"You forget," said I, "that I have other objects than amusement."

"Not a whit," said he. "My proposal is made in due subordination to that matter, and will be acted upon, or not, accordingly. Before to-morrow, I mean to know something of the motions of the enemy."

He rang a small hand bell. A servant came. "Is Henry here?" said he.

"Yes, sir."

"Then send him to me. God forgive us! this is Sunday, and but one allusion have I made to him this day."

"It would be a good thing," said I, "if every sermon preached to-day contained one thought as well calculated to recommend religion to the heart as that was."

"Perhaps! perhaps!" said he, impatiently. "This Henry belongs to my neighbour H——, and has a wife here. Here he comes. Henry, what gentleman was it that came to your house last night?"

"Mr. Montague, sir."

"Do you know how long he means to stay?"

"I believe he was going away this morning, if it had not rained."

"He is in a mighty hurry. Where is he going to?"

"I hear 'em say, sir, he is going to see Mr. Jones there, near Colonel Robinson's."

"How are all at home to-day, Henry?"

"All very well, I thank you, sir."

"That's all. Bet, my dear, give Henry a dram if you please. You may add one for the rest of them, for they have a hard time of it in such weather as this."

She left the room, and he went on: "This is just as I supposed. When I heard there was a gentleman there, I suspected it was Montague. Had he been a friend of mine, H—— would have brought him. If a stranger, he would have sent for us to dine with him, as he could not come. Business calls Montague this way about this time; and this visit to Jones may be of some days."

"Why do you think he will be there so long?"

"Why, to-morrow is court day, and he has business at court. Jones lives near. He is a *really* pious man. Montague is an *enthusiast* in, what *he calls*, religion. A great camp meeting commences in the neighbourhood on Thursday. Now, Colonel Robinson is Elizabeth's father; and 'tis to his house I invite you. So, if we don't scare Montague away, we are sure of him, for a week at least. So now to dinner."

The jingle of plates and dishes had just then announced the approach of this important meal; so we recrossed the passage, and found all ready.

And such a dinner! It had been prepared, indeed, for a company twice as large, and it was sufficient for twenty persons. The saddle of venison alone would have given eclat to the most sumptuous feast of a London alderman. The ham of bacon could not be matched at any table but that of a Virginian. The etceteras were in proportion; and then followed a rich plum pudding, with appropriate accompaniments; and, afterward, walnuts, peccans, apples, peaches, cantelopes, and watermelons. To wash down all these, was fine old cognac, Jamaica rum, and Madeira wine. In short, it was a feast of fat things spread in the wilderness.

But the great charm was in the welcome. I seemed to have recovered all my friends. A man, whom I had not known twenty-four hours, and of whose existence I had not heard, was now, to me, the most important personage in the world. There he sat, full of energy, spirit, sagacity, and penetration, knowing more of my affairs than any other person, and prepared to exert to the uttermost all his extraordinary faculties in my service. All the difficulties which had encompassed me seemed to vanish; and I felt as sure of an effectual triumph over the arts and villanies of Montague as if I had the will of my grandfather in my pocket. A life of comfort for my widowed mother, competence for my sisters, and affluence for myself and my dear Ann, lay in prospect before me. I was too happy, and the wine I took, though not much, made the buoyancy

of my spirits somewhat excessive. My host, who both ate and drank temperately, perceived it, and rose from table.

"Come! come! Master William," said he, "*fas est ab hoste doceri*. I have learned a lesson from my red neighbours here, which you will do well to profit by."

"What's that?" said I.

"To keep a cool head in the neighbourhood of an enemy," said he; "and always to go into action sober. Dutch courage is a poor dependance, especially in a war of wits. We have to do with one who drinks only water."

He now sent for Tom, and we returned to what must, in courtesy, be called the other *room*. Tom appeared.

"Go to Keizer," said Balcombe, "and tell him, rain or no rain, I must see him with the speed of light."

Tom vanished, and Balcombe went on: "This Keizer," said he, "is a sort of familiar of mine. He is the only tool of the knave kind I ever work with. Not that I ever use him as a knave. In my service, and in that only, he acts the part of an honest man. I may therefore say, that he is such a friend as few men have; for he will do for me what he will not do for himself. If I wanted dishonest service, there is none so competent, and there would be none so ready. But there are some meritorious actions which a knave is better qualified for than an honest man can be. 'Set a thief

to catch a thief,' says the proverb; and this proverb is true in analogous cases as well as in cases in point. This fellow has activity, courage, hardihood, coolness, sagacity, and plausibility. He is indefatigable as a bloodhound, and never runs a false scent. Every one knows him to be a knave; yet, to a certain extent, every one trusts him, while he trust nobody but me. And the reason is this: He is bound to me by ties of gratitude. It is his only virtue. I have done him service, and he is grateful; the more so, because he has no cause to be grateful to any one else on earth. Every man has some good in him. This is his good quality. It all centres here, and all for my benefit. *Ergo*, I have a zealous and devoted agent, in all things wherein he can serve me. He will even be true to others at my bidding, and so long as he considers them as under my special protection. After that, they may look sharp. Now, as he knows that I know him, and have no doubt he would do anything for me, and as I never require or permit any service that is not honest, he has set me down as that *rara avis*, an honest man.

"What I want with him just now, I do not know. But I *may* want him; and if I do, I have but to give him a hint to be on the alert, and, by some sort of instinct, he will be present at my wish, whenever the emergency occurs. And, *apropos* to the remark, here he is now. Come in, John! Come in!"

CHAPTER IX.

The crafty race from Egypt came;
Dark haired, and black browed, swart, and lean;
Of stature small, but sinewy frame,
Active, and little, and shrewd, and keen.

The Zingaro.

At the moment I saw a man pass the window. The curtain was presently lifted, and he entered. He was a low slight figure, apparently about twenty-five years of age, with an olive complexion; long, lank, black hair; small, keen, jet-black eyes; and diminutive and rather handsome features. He was clothed from head to foot in half-dressed buckskin; hunting shirt, leggins, and moccasins, all glazed with grease and mottled with blood. A fillet of bearskin, of three fingers' breadth, tied around his head, served for a cap. His long hair partly escaped through this, and hung down his cheeks, and part fell over the top of it. He carried in his hand a formidable rifle, and wore a butcher knife stuck in a leather case at his belt.

"You are a good fellow, John," said Balcombe, holding out his hand without rising; "I sent for you to come with the speed of light, and you are here with the speed of thought."

"Why, colonel," said he, "I went out last night, just at sunset, and killed an amazing fine buck; and I heard you had company; so as soon as it slacked raining, I thought I'd bring you the hind quarters. So you see I met Tom just at the bars, and he told me you wanted to see me."

"Are you going to court to-morrow, John?"

"No, sir."

"I wish you were. Are you going to the camp meeting?"

"I did not mean to go; but if you have any business for me to do I *will* go to the camp meeting, and to court too."

"To tell you the truth, John, I do not know that I shall have anything for you to do. But I am going there to-morrow, and I think it likely enough that things may turn up so, that I would rather have you by me than any other man in the world."

"I should be mighty sorry, colonel, if ever that should be the case, to be anywhere but right by you; because, you see, you have stood by me when nobody else would."

"We have stood by each other, John, in ticklish times. A man who will take a turn through the prairies, from here to Mexico, will have a chance to know the value of one who will stand by him. Do you know where Billy John and Black Snake are camped just now?"

"I fell in with them yesterday, but I did not ask them where their camp was."

"Could you find them to-morrow?"

"I have not a doubt of it, sir."

"Well, there's no knowing what may happen, nor what sort of men I may want. I shall not want you sooner, at all events, than Wednesday; and if you will all be about there, I'll contrive to let you know when I do want you, and what for."

"We'll be pretty sure to be there, sir; I can *make* business anywhere, you know, so that my time is never lost."

"Well, John, I wish you to understand, that I do not want you to say anything about this matter. You can keep a still tongue, and so can the Indians; and, with you there, there are few things I'd undertake but what I think I could do."

"If it just depended upon wit, or manhood either," said John, "I am sure I don't know what it would be we couldn't do."

"Do you remember that night upon the Arkansas, John?"

"*Maybe I do,*" said John, laughing. "Ah, Lord! that *was* a spree."

"Pray, what was it?" said I.

"Tell it, John," said Balcombe.

"Why, you see, sir," said Keizer, "we were going away out, through the prairies, towards the Spanish country, the colonel, and I, and them two red devils; and one evening, just towards sunset, we came down upon the Arkansas. We knew the Pawnees were about, because we saw horse tracks everywhere; and as there were no colt tracks

among them, we knew it wasn't wild horses. So, you see, we took care to march in Indian file. The colonel, he went ahead, and Billy John was about one hundred yards behind him, and then came Snake, about as far behind Billy John, and I brought up the rear. So when the colonel got in about a quarter of a mile of the timber of the river, there they were, sure enough. The Lord knows how many of them there was: maybe a hundred, maybe five hundred; all on horseback, with guns, and bows, and arrows, and shields; and such a yell they raised as you never heard. So the colonel pulled up and cocked his rifle, and sat as still upon his horse as if he had been at a stand for a deer.

"As soon as they came near enough, he let drive, and downed one of them, that was before the rest; and that minute he laid whip, and rode away to the rear, till he got a hundred yards behind me, and then he stopped and loaded. Indians do not like to lose a man, especially a chief, and the fellow the colonel dropped looked like a chief, for he had a feather in his hair.* So, when he fell, they made a sort of stop, and then rushed on again. Then Billy John dropped one, and then Snake took his turn, and then I, and then the colonel again; and so we had it till we had three shots apiece. By this time it was getting dark, and they

* This badge of chieftainship (a single eagle's feather) is common to the Scotch Highlander and the North American savage. It is a remarkable coincidence, traceable, no doubt, in both cases, to the same association of ideas.

got to be rather shy; and after a while they hauled off, and we came back into the settlements. I do not know how many we killed; but you may be sure we did not waste *much* powder."

"And were none of you hurt?"

"Lord! no, sir; they cannot shoot. Besides, their guns were not so good as ours, and would not bear up so far; and how could they take aim, when they were just riding helter-skelter, whooping and hallooing, and trying to scare us. Lord bless you, sir, a real bush-fighting Shawnee, like these here, don't mind a hundred such as them. A man that is half scared, stranger, cannot fight a man that *cannot be* scared."

"Oh John," said Balcombe, "I beg your pardon for not introducing Mr. Napier to you. My good friend Mr. Keizer, William."

The fellow got up, made an awkward bow, and extended his hand. I had tact enough to give him mine, and Balcombe went on:

"My friend Napier *must not be a stranger* to you, John. I have often got you to serve my friends, and now I want to bespeak your good offices for him, if *ever* you see occasion. He is a good man and true, John, and whenever you can do him a service, charge it to me. If ever he wants your help, you may just take for granted that, if I was there, I would help him, and call upon you to help me; and I know you would not fail me."

"You may say that, colonel; if ever I fail you,

it will be when I cannot stir hand or foot. You never said so much to me for anybody else; and if ever I fail Mr. Napier, it shall be when I forget you, and that will never be."

"Thank you, John, thank you," said Balcombe, with some emotion; "I am sure of that; and now, my good fellow, to business. It is a stirring time. Napier and I have many things to arrange; you have some of your own matters to fix, and then you have to find the Shawnees. So Tuesday night, or Wednesday morning at farthest, I shall expect to hear your whistle. You have not lost it?"

"No, sir. I never expected to have any more use for it, except to call my dog; but it has stood my friend so often, I should hate to lose it."

"Well, here is mine," said Balcombe, showing a little rifleman's whistle, made of ivory, about as large as the last joint of a man's thumb. "I always wear it about my neck, with the same old thong of dressed squirrel's skin. It is better than riband, or a gold chain. Do you remember that squirrel, John?"

"I reckon I do," said Keizer. "God! the sight of that squirrel did me more good than many a herd of buffalo that I have seen."

"What does that mean?" said I.

"Famine," said Balcombe, carelessly. "What does this signify, John?"

He sounded a succession of short toots on the whistle.

"It just means that I am about, sir," said Keizer.

"And this?"—a long sharp note.

"Danger, sir."

"Good; you remember the signals. And now, John, another drink, and to business."

"Thank you, colonel, not another drop; I must have other things in my head now besides whiskey."

"You see," said Balcombe, as Keizer left the room, "that he knows the value of the Indian maxim. The game we play at in this wild region is so intricate, and the stake so deep, (for it is rarely less than life or death, affluence or beggary, honour or infamy,) that every man is obliged to keep his wits about him. It is like Indian fighting —every man to his tree. The eye must never wink, the mind must never doubt, the nerves must never shake. The lungs must play freely and equably, and the very pulse of the heart must be held in check."

"Yours," said I, "must have been a life of high and strange adventure, well worth hearing."

"Perhaps," said he; "but not worth telling. Something occasionally to stir the blood, but nothing strange. Besides, we have other matters on hand just now. I am apt enough to talk about myself; and if we are as much together as I hope, you will probably learn all about my adventures worth hearing. But I cannot give them to you in a bound book. You must take the sibyl's leaves

as the freakish gusts of fancy or humour bring them in your way."

"I observed," said I, "that Keizer called you colonel; do you hold a commission of any sort?"

"No; and never did. It is a sort of *nom de guerre*, conferred with a corresponding authority in a time of common danger, by those who sought safety under my guidance. It is a title I am not ashamed of.

> 'A king can make a belted knight,
> A lord, a duke, and a' that.'

Honours may descend, and offices may be conferred on the unworthy; but instinct makes no such blunders; and men, when environed by peril, do not put themselves under the command of fools or cowards. No; I hold no commission of any sort. I take no part in the scramble for office, which is now going on at the seat of government, where they are at this moment enacting the game of sovereignty, and putting the new state of Missouri into its first breech. Much such a figure it will cut as you did. I wish it may get into no worse scrape. I shall not be the man to help it out. I am nothing to this people, and they are nothing to me. I suppose I might have some office, if I would, and reign a sort of King Cockroach in this commonwealth of insects. But my heart is in Virginia, and my home would be there too, if there were a spot in the state I could call

my own. But enough of myself! Let us call another cause."

He threw himself back in his chair, and spent some minutes in silent musing. I did not interrupt his thoughts, but occupied myself in tracing their shadows as they flitted across his speaking countenance. He was a weatherbeaten man, of about five-and-thirty, who never had been handsome. A bright gray eye, high sharp features, a sandy complexion, and sandy hair, were the particulars that would strike a careless observer. But the *character* of the face was in a high prominent forehead, a flat compressed mouth, and in the peculiar setting, and varying expression of the eye. It corresponded with his style of conversation, which, always serious, but never grave, found a moral in the most frivolous subjects, and enlivened his most sober thoughts with whimsical illustrations, and unexpected combinations of ideas. It was like

"The smile on the lip and the tear in the eye;"

and, in truth, this association was by no means rare, either in his face, or in those of his auditors. But the paradox did not stop there. I had never seen a man more entertaining, and never listened to one whose conversation was so fatiguing. My mind became jaded with continued excitation and exercise; while his reminded me of a mischievous romping boy, whose animal spirits will never flag,

and who will never let his companions rest. I was, in truth, not sorry when he ceased to speak. I wanted an opportunity to fall into my own jog-trot gait of reflection on the new aspect of my affairs, and dreaded the recommencement of his discourse. At length he sat erect, and fixed his eye on me, as if to speak. I suppose he marked the lassitude of my countenance, for he suddenly changed his manner, and said, "Not now—not now—another time. You are weary, and need rest of body and mind. So throw the one on your bed, and the other on a book, and I will not disturb you."

I took his advice; the letters presently began to crawl over the page, and I was soon asleep. I awoke to coffee, and felt quite refreshed by a cup or two.

CHAPTER X.

There was a youth, whom I had loved so long,
That when I loved him not I cannot say.
Mid the green mountains many and many a song
We two had sung, like gladsome birds in May.
When we began to tire of childish play,
We seemed still more and more to prize each other.
* * * * * * * * *
And I, in truth, did love him like a brother,
For never could I hope to meet with such another.

WORDSWORTH.

"COME, Bet," said Balcombe, "we ride in the morning; so to bed. And you, William, back to your den. You are rested now," said he, as we recrossed the passage; "are you ready for another long talk? I see that I am serving you as the devil served the old woman of Berkeley, whom he came after in the shape of a high trotting horse, and carried off on his back. But I had compassion on you. I saw that you were weary, and set you down to rest. Now your time is out, and you must up and ride. 'Needs must,' you know, 'when the devil drives.'"

I expressed my readiness to hear him, and he went on:—

"It is your turn to talk now. I wanted to ask all about my dear little pet Ann, of whom my own baby so often reminds me; but I saw you colour at her name, and would not make the inquiry in my wife's presence. What of her?"

"She lives with my mother since my grandfather's death. His house, you know, was her home, from the time she was left an orphan in infancy."

"Has she any patrimony?"

"A trifle of pecuniary income, sufficient to complete her education at some fashionable seminary. But she has no turn, she says, for the 'ologies, and prefers to learn the housewifely duties and plain oldfashioned sense of a Virginia lady, from my mother."

"God bless my dear girl!" said Balcombe; "I would not have her unlearn that preference, for all the sciences, and all the accomplishments, and airs, and graces, ever taught at a boarding-school."

"I suspect," said I, "her true motive is, that her little *peculium* may go to eke out the scanty resources of the only mother she has ever known."

"Better and better!" said Balcombe; "wise, generous, and delicate. I should like her none the less if there were a deeper motive still."

I felt my cheek burn; but replied with all the composure I could master, that I was not aware of any other.

"I am sorry for it," said he; "I was in hopes there was something more, that I, as *her* friend and

yours, might hear with pleasure. I see you speak frankly, and therefore conclude that no apology for my curiosity is necessary."

"There is certainly no need of any," said I. "There is something you shall hear, but not, I think, with pleasure."

"No evil of her, I trust?"

"None. She is everything she should be, in mind, manners, person, and conduct."

"You grew up together in the same house?"

"We did; and the consequence, on my part at least, was what might have been expected."

"And on her's?"

"I hardly know how to answer that question, without making a long story of the answer."

"The longer the better. You are refreshed, and I am never sleepy."

I began, accordingly, and gave the history of my early love for my cousin: of her apparent fondness for me; of the strange alteration in her feelings, and of the anomalous relation in which we stood towards each other. But as the reader does not know this, I may as well again tell the story to him and Balcombe in the same breath.

"I need not tell you," said I, "that Ann is beautiful."

"Of course not. In your eyes she must be so. But she was a beautiful child; and the character of her face, her large blue eyes, fair skin, and flaxen hair, was too marked to leave any doubt as to her style of beauty. Is she tall or short?"

"Neither; her stature is a medium, her figure slight, and her movements agile."

"Then I have her before me. Go on."

"Bred up with her, it was, as you foresaw, of course, that I should love her. Whether it was of course that she should love me, was a matter of which others could judge better than I. I thought she did. In one sense, I *know* she did, and does; but how can I judge of the true quality of her affection, but by her professions? And how can she judge of it? We have been always together. Our feelings must be different from those of persons who live apart, yet love each other. No yearning for each other's society, such as I am sensible of at this distance, could be expected to arise. I have no idea when any change in *my* feelings took place; yet surely children do not love as I do now. In short, like Paul and Virginia, we were wedded by circumstances, united in all the habitudes of domestic intercourse like man and wife. I still remember how we both cried, when first separated at night. We saw no sense in the measure then, and I doubt if she sees it yet. It curtailed, indeed, our enjoyment of each other's society; but still we were together all day, and the day's length was the measure of our happiness, and the night of our dreams of each other. We were soon reconciled to the change. We missed nothing, and looked forward to nothing.

"This could not last, though, but for other peo-

ple, I see no reason why it might not have lasted for life. It lasted through her sixteenth and my nineteenth year. Why not always? What can the heart know of the fierceness of passion that it may not know then? But sweet illusions, it seems, can never be permitted to continue. One year ago, while my father was yet alive, and before the family were made sensible of his ruin, by the loss of the comforts or even elegances of life, young Howard, the heir of that wealthy family, came to spend a few weeks at his princely estate in our neighbourhood. He was accompanied by his mother and sister, and a gay party of young people of both sexes. He is a handsome man; gentlemanly, generous, intelligent, and of good principles and manly character. His sister is a pretty girl, sprightly and agreeable, and mistress of a handsome fortune. Visits were, of course, promptly interchanged, and the two families were much together at each other's houses, and at parties of pleasure in the neighbourhood.

"We young folks were all delighted with each other's company. Ann and I were particularly pleased with Howard and his sister, and they apparently so with us. No thought of jealousy entered my head. A husband, secure in the affections of a beautiful wife, could not take more pleasure in seeing her admired, than I did in witnessing the respectful attention of Howard to my cousin. I requited it by a similar attention to his sister,

which was well received. At the same time a cordial intimacy grew up between her and Ann, and between her brother and me.

"Things went on in this way, until I observed a sudden change in Ann's manner. She was more grave and thoughtful, and to me, for the first time in her life, she showed something of distance and reserve. This, however, was not so marked as to call for distinct explanation. At times, indeed, I could not refrain from some slight expression of dissatisfaction, and this always called forth such a display of unaffected tenderness and affection, as satisfied me for the time that all was right. In her deportment towards Howard there was a change of an opposite character. She was sometimes a little fluttered in his presence, and generally seemed flattered and obliged by his attentions. I hardly understood these things then, but am now sure that I describe them as they really were.

"One day my father called me into his room, locked the door, and having seated himself, gravely desired me to do the same. He was silent for some time, and looked thoughtful and sad.

"'My son,' said he, 'you are aware how all my expectations from your grandfather's estate have been disappointed. You have been too little acquainted with my affairs to know how fatal this disappointment is to the wellbeing of my family. I thank God that the blow did not come upon me until your education was so far advanced as to leave its completion within the compass of my

scanty means. They are now spent, and you are the only hope of my family. The expense incurred, in qualifying you to uphold the honour of my name and the sinking fortunes of my house, has been well bestowed, and you will rejoice at having it in your power to requite it.'

"'Certainly, sir,' said I, 'anything that I can do will be done with all cheerfulness and zeal. I have not yet mastered a profession, but this life of pleasure is little to my taste. Under such circumstances it is criminal; and I will betake myself at once to the study of the law or medicine, as you think most advisable.'

"'There will be no need, William,' said he; 'a pleasanter path leads directly to the object.'

"'What is that, sir?'

"'Marriage.'

"'Marriage!' replied I. 'I really am at a loss to see, sir, how the burden of a family of my own would help me to aid you in the support of my mother and sisters.'

"'That is only because your modesty, my dear boy, prevents you from seeing what is obvious to everybody else.'

"'What is that, sir?'

"'The manifest partiality of Miss Howard for you.'

"I do not think any greater surprise can await me in life, than I experienced on hearing these words. The multiplicity of ideas that came thronging to my mind would have rendered any

answer impossible; but my father saved me the necessity of answering by going on thus:

"'I consider the visit of young Howard as singularly fortunate at this time. It throws a gleam of sunshine on the evening of my days, which promises that the fortunes of my family will shine with renewed brightness under your auspices. My constitution, my dear boy, as well as my estate, is in ruins. My days are numbered; and sad and gloomy have been my anticipations for your mother and sisters. For you personally I had no fears. I now see that you can not only make your way good, but secure your mother's comfort, and afford your sisters opportunities of forming respectable and desirable connections. In this you will be sure of the aid of young Howard, whose attachment to your cousin cannot have escaped your observation. He has frankly and honourably spoken of his wishes to me, and she has received hints which enable her to understand attentions which are manifestly not disagreeable to her.'

"You may believe I had no mind to interrupt this long speech. He might have talked till doomsday. I continued silent, confused, bewildered, thinking of everything and nothing, and looking, I dare say, enough like a fool, to pass for a man beside himself with unexpected good fortune. I suppose my father so understood the matter, for he added, after a short pause:

"'Let me give you one hint about the conduct of

this affair. Your attentions to Miss Howard have not been so marked as to lead her to expect any immediate declaration. You should therefore preface it by a proper course of attention, or she may perhaps suspect that you speak upon some hint. The truth is, that one of her young friends has made herself mistress of her secret, and communicated it to your sister Jane. Anything abrupt, therefore, might alarm her pride. And now, my son, take your horse, and join the young people in their ride.'

"I did ride out, but without any intention of joining the party, who had gone out long before. I purposely took an opposite course from their's, spurring hard, as if to find, in the excitation of a brisk gallop, some relief to my feelings. The consequence was, that, at the distance of several miles, I met the young people, who, having made a circuit, were returning by the way I went. Foremost of the party rode Miss Howard, accompanied by two young gentlemen; not far behind was a promiscuous and merry company of both sexes. Behind all came Ann, attended by Howard. As a matter of course I turned my horse, and joined the foremost party. I had little to say, and was so unmercifully rallied on what my companions called my dejected looks, that I roused myself, and rattled away like a madman. The young men presently drew up, and speaking aloud to some of those behind, waited for them and joined them.

"I would gladly have done so too, but the lady moved on, and I had no choice but to keep by her side. I was impatient to get to the end of my ride, but had no mind to increase the interval between us and the next party. I accordingly rode slowly; but, ride as I would, they kept behind, and rather fell back than gained on us. An occasional turn of the head showed Ann, far in the rear, hardly advancing, and in close conversation with Howard. I felt vexed, I scarce knew why, at what, until then, I had always witnessed with pride; and, rallying my spirits, made myself as agreeable as I could to Miss Howard. She became more animated than I had ever seen her, and a brisk and lively conversation, during the rest of the ride, made me half forget my chagrin.

"On reaching home I assisted her to dismount, and handed her into the house. I lingered near the door, and saw Howard perform the same offices towards Ann. She entered with a flushed countenance, and in passing, instead of greeting me as usual with a smile, turned away her head, and hurried to her room."

CHAPTER XI.

To see thee; hear thee; near thee stay;
And hate the night; I know not why:
Save that we meet not but by day.
With thee to live: with thee to die
I dare not to my hopes deny.
Thy cheek, thine eyes, thy lips to kiss
Like this! and this!—no more than this!

Bride of Abydos.

"My father's account of the matter, then, was right throughout. But what was I to do? I had never thought of marrying Miss Howard; but could I not bring myself to reciprocate her preference? The state of my father's affairs and of his health, certainly made the match eminently advantageous in a pecuniary light. But I had heard my father account for his supineness in regard to my grandfather's will, by protesting indignantly that he had not married for money. Did he then expect me to do so? Certainly not; but why might I not love Miss Howard? This brought the thought of Ann. But Ann was to marry Howard. What then was she to me? She was my cousin; the companion of my childhood; the friend of my youth; and should I not rejoice at

the prospect of her escape from dependance and poverty, to affluence and splendour? Reason said yes; but there was something in my heart that said no; and that something I rebuked as selfish, envious, and base. But it would not stand rebuked. What, then, should I do? Address Miss Howard? My father's plan admitted of delay. Should I increase my attentions to her? I certainly felt no inclination to do so; but my father's wishes were entitled to respect, and some little feeling of pique came in aid of a sense of duty. The upshot was, that I threw myself down the stream of events, and, without precisely intending to do so, left the result to the chapter of accidents.

"In the evening we walked out; my arm by some chance fell to Miss Howard, and her brother's to Ann. How did this happen? I could not tell. I had then no suspicion that everybody about us was in a league. If, as there is too much reason to believe, one half of the misery and crime in the world springs from unsorted marriages, what have matchmakers to answer for?"

"All women," said Balcombe, "are matchmakers. Marriage is their vocation. Woman is a marrying animal. Some men live by the law; some by physic; some by divinity; some by the labour of their hands. All women live by marriage. It is their only calling, and they are always ready to further it. The article might perish on hand, if the market was not sometimes forced.

Anything is better than stagnation in trade. A bad bargain is better than none. A dead stock must be got rid of on any terms, that the channels of commerce may run free."

"You are satirical," said I. "You forget that for every marriage there is a lover less in market."

"Yes; but there is a rival out of the way, and the fashion of marriage is kept up. Suppose the next generation of men did not marry until thirty. Who would marry the women who were growing old at the same time? They would come under the denomination of old shopkeepers; and the fear of this makes them anxious to keep up a brisk business. The sexes don't deal on equal terms. It is like buying fish. If I do not buy to-day, my money will keep till to-morrow. But if the fisherman do not sell to-day, what becomes of his fish? A man is none the worse for wear until forty. What he loses in personal appearance he makes up in intelligence, wealth, and reputation; to say nothing of his increased knowledge of the road to woman's heart. As to her, her personal charms are ephemeral, and *they* fix the value of all her other qualities. While she is young and beautiful, she may be modest, intelligent, and pious; but when the roses fade from her cheek, she is a prudish, pedantic bluestocking. Ah! William,

> 'Man to man so oft unjust,
> Is always so to woman;'

and we must not too severely blame her, if, in

weaving the web of her own destiny, she involves others in its meshes. But go on—go on."

"I hardly know how to do so," said I; "the whole affair is like a dream to me. A puzzle to decide between things equally palpable, which is real, which illusive. Scenes such as I described were repeated day after day, until, I suppose, the aggregate of my unavoidable attentions to Miss Howard was no inconsiderable sum, the whole of which was set down to the account of voluntary assiduity. I was of course registered in the chronicles of neighbourhood gossip as a regular suitor, as it *seemed*, favoured, and perhaps accepted. At the same time Howard's attentions to Ann were unremitted, and apparently received with gratitude, if not with pleasure. She was perhaps less cheerful, paler, and thinner than usual, but from that I could infer nothing. I had never spoken of love to her but as to a sister. I had known no difference, but that I loved her better than the rest. But this seemed quite natural, for I was brought up with her, and not with them. I had been happy in her society, but I never analyzed the elements of my happiness, nor asked myself which of them I could least spare. The idea of losing her first taught me how essential she was to it. The idea of her union to another explained to me the whole secret of my heart. Had she discovered a like secret in her own bosom? I knew not: I had no means of knowing. I had no right to ask; for what right had I to prefer the suit which such an

inquiry would imply? Should I ask her to share with me, a beggar, the scanty pittance, saved from the wreck of her father's property, which was barely enough for her? You perceive the delicacy and difficulty of my situation?"

"I do," said Balcombe, "and respect the principles which restrained you. But did not the proverbial ingenuity of love suggest some means of prying into her feelings?"

"I would have given the world," said I, "to know how she stood affected towards Howard; but I could not probe her heart. Could I wound her by an indelicate approach to such a subject? Could I subdue my voice and countenance to the air of playful raillery necessary to any allusion to it? I could ask, and did ask, whenever her manner was particularly constrained or cold, whether I had in anything offended her; and, when I did, her answers were so kind, so affectionate, and uttered in such a tone of gushing tenderness, that I felt that I was as dear to her as ever. But how dear was that? Not so much, it seemed, as to make me necessary to her happiness as she was to mine; for of late I formed no part of it. Yet she was happy.

"In the mean time, the necessity for my attentions to Miss Howard seemed every day more and more inevitable, and they became every day more and more irksome to myself. But what could I do? It always seemed that unless I attended to

her she was to be unattended. If we walked or rode, she alone had no escort. If she wished to make a visit without a female companion, no one else was ever ready to wait on her. If I entered a room, and there was but one vacant seat, it was sure to be near her. In short, everybody gave way when I approached her, everybody drew off when we were engaged in conversation, and I was frequently left alone with her. She is a gay, sprightly, witty girl, and he must be very dull indeed who cannot keep up a lively chitchat with her. It was easy, therefore, for careless observers to suppose that I took pleasure in her society; and, at times when self-love is busiest in finding favourable explanations of Ann's conduct, I have supposed that she might have thought me attached to Miss Howard."

"No doubt she did," said Balcombe; "and so you will find, if things have not already gone too far, in consequence of this mistake."

"I am afraid they have," said I; "but I find comfort in your remark; for I have somehow learned to place so much confidence in your sagacity, that I look to you to help me to unriddle this enigma."

"It is easily read," said he. "You have no doubt that Ann loved you once better than any one else on earth?"

"None whatever. My doubt is of the quality of that affection in her young unpractised mind."

"Look into your own heart, and you will find it there. A woman's love for the man she loves best is always the exact reflection of his love for her.

"This supposes affection of some sort on both sides, and no previous entanglement. Either or both may be deceived, but if either loves, both love. This is that union of the heart which God effects, and of which he has said, 'let no man sever it.'"

"That thought," said I, "never occurred to me before. I hope there is something in it. It sounds like truth, and is too consoling to be rejected, though I should be at a loss to establish it by fact or argument."

"There is no need," said he. "Great truths rarely require the aid of argument. Stated strongly and plainly, they often vindicate themselves. The empire of truth would be precarious, indeed, if she were obliged to display her pedigree and vindicate her title to the learned and the unlearned. It is enough to show herself *incedit regina*, and the homage of all the faithful is hers at once."

"I wish to God," said I, catching the infection of his confidence in his own views of every subject, "that you were there!"

"And will I not be?" said he. "Do not you see, that unless we are totally baffled in our attempts to unearth this fox, this Montague, my

presence will be indispensable? And do you think I will permit your happiness and Ann's to suffer shipwreck for want of some one to pilot you? But let us have the rest of your story."

"It is soon told," said I. "The crisis could not long be delayed. Howard's suit, after a due course of delicate but assiduous attention, was distinctly preferred. Ann pleaded youth, inexperience, ignorance of her own heart, and asked for time, which was frankly allowed. Then came my father's sudden death, and mourning weeds, and gloom, and distress, and unmasked ruin, and hideous desolation. Amid such scenes Howard could not show himself, nor intrude even by letter. He had returned with his sister to their accustomed residence, and the state of my affairs made it nothing strange that I did not follow the lady. Indeed, it would not have been without precedent, if the utter ruin of my family had determined Howard to discontinue his suit, and rendered a visit from me anything but desirable. But he is an honourable and disinterested young fellow, and deeply enamoured. Accordingly, not long before my departure from Virginia, I received a letter from him, addressed to me, as the head of the family, announcing his intention to be at Oakwood on a certain day, and expressing a hope that the renewal of his visits at our house might not be unwelcome. He begged that he might find an answer at Oakwood on his arrival there."

CHAPTER XII.

Oh, not my brother! Yet unsay!
God! am I left alone on earth?
Bride of Abydos.

"Up to this time, strange as it may seem, I had scarcely had an opportunity of speaking to Ann alone since Howard's attentions first commenced. I might, at any time, have taken her hand and led her apart; but I had no excuse for doing so with a serious face; and to be playful in any manner, on such an occasion, was impossible. One or both of my sisters was always present; and, as they never rallied either of us, there was no possibility of gliding into the subject. But now, in my new character of *pater familias*, and temporary guardian, a private interview was not only proper, but necessary. I accordingly mastered my feelings as well as I could, and, entering the parlour with the letter in my hand, took hers, and asked her to accompany me into another room. I led her to a sofa, and before seating her folded her gently in my arms, as I had done a thousand times, (though not for months before,) and kissing her tenderly, let her sink into the seat. I drew a small foot

stool that stood by, and placed myself at her feet.

"'My dear cousin,' said I, 'I have just received a letter, the answer to which must be dictated by you.'

"I put it into her hands; she blushed, turned pale, trembled violently, and pressing her hand upon her brow, seemed to make a strong effort to compose herself. She at last succeeded so far as to glance her eyes over the letter, and then, slowly folding it, she returned it to me.

"'What answer shall I give, Ann?' said I.

"'You are the only judge of that,' said she.

"'True,' said I, 'as far as I am concerned. But what shall I give for you?'

"'Is it necessary to say anything on my behalf?' said she.

"'Perhaps not. But I was so anxious to avail myself of an opportunity to learn something of an affair that interests me so deeply, that I had not thought of that.'

"'What can you be desirous of knowing, William, that I am not ready to tell you?'

"'That was spoken like yourself, Ann; but it is long since I have heard you speak so.'

"'Long! how so? What has happened to change my feelings towards one who has always been to me as a brother, my only brother? And wherein has my deportment been changed?'

"'I don't know; I cannot describe the change. Perhaps there has been none. But for months

past there has seemed to be an impassable gulf between us.'

"'A gulf! a gulf!' said she. 'What gulf! Who has placed a gulf between us?'

"'I don't know,' said I. 'But whenever I would approach you, I find myself intercepted by an unseen barrier. Our thoughts no longer blend, and the chord of sympathy, that once vibrated from heart to heart, is severed.'

"'Is it so?' said she. 'I was not aware of it. I may no longer have your confidence, William; but have I ever denied you mine?'

"'No, Ann; you never have. It is I that have shrunk from asking it. But you have encouraged me to ask whatever I wished to know, and I will man myself to the task. What answer, then, have you given to Howard's suit?'

"'I cannot exactly tell you; but enough to justify him in renewing his visits.'

"'And what answer will you give?'

"She hesitated, changed colour, trembled, and seemed to restrain her tears with great difficulty. I continued:

"'Ann, dear Ann! if you knew how deep an interest I take in this question, you would not withhold the answer. Our lives from infancy have been spent together; each, as it were, a part of the other, 'like two twin cherries growing on one stalk,' and shall we separate now?'

"I saw her bite her lip, and her cheek flushed

a little, while her countenance assumed an expression of slight indignation.

"'Would you urge me, then,' said she, 'to accept the hand of Howard?'

"'To accept Howard's hand!' exclaimed I; 'to place any man on earth between you and me! Oh, Ann! who can be dearer to you than I have been? And how could I endure that any other should ever occupy that place in your heart where I have lived so long; where all I know, all I can imagine of earthly bliss is centred?'

"The fervour of my manner, I suppose, more than my words, made her at length perceive my meaning. She started, drew back, and gazed at me with a countenance in which amazement and grief contended for the mastery. The latter presently prevailed, and exclaiming,

"'Oh, William! this from *you!*'

"The sluices of her heart seemed to open all at once; and, with a look and air of utter desolation and self-abandonment, she threw her face on the arm of the sofa, and dissolved in a flood of tears. I was inexpressibly shocked and amazed. I tried to sooth her, but in vain. She wept, and wept on, speechless from sobbing, until, exhausted, she sank down on the sofa; and I saw, by her white lip and glazing eye, that she had fainted. I screamed for help, and she was carried to her room.

"I saw her no more that evening. The next morning Jane handed me this note:—

"'What I would have said yesterday, William,

could I have found utterance, I say now. My astonishment and grief at the ungenerous conduct of one I had deemed faultless; at receiving insult from my only protector, and wrong from one whose whole life had been one act of kindness, need not be expressed in words. But I owe it to myself and all concerned, to insist that the subject of yesterday's conversation shall never be resumed. I will try to forget it, and deport myself towards you as if that conversation had never taken place. Help me, dear William, to forget that you have ever, for a moment, thought of being anything but a brother to A. N.'"

I handed this note to Balcombe, who read it over and over again with profound attention.

"I believe," said I, "I have told you all that had passed, exactly as it did pass; you will then judge my astonishment at the language of that note.

"'For God's sake, what does this mean, Jane?' said I.

"'You should know better than I do, William,' said Jane, with cold severity of manner; 'but I presume Ann feels, as might have been expected, though perhaps too keenly, your strange behaviour yesterday. After what has passed, William, how could you—'

"'And what has passed?' said I.

"'Why do you ask? You partly know, and she has partly told you.'

"'There is surely some strange misunderstanding here,' said I. 'Can I see her?'

"'Not at this moment, certainly, for she keeps her bed to-day. But I will know whether she will think it right to afford you another interview, when she can sit up.'

"'*To afford me another interview!*' said I. 'This is indeed strange. Doubtful whether it be right that I should have an *interview* with one with whom my whole life has been spent as with a sister!'

"'A *sister*, William!' said Jane. 'You forget that your strange words, yesterday, have put an end to that relation. But I will let her know of your wish!'

"She left me, and soon returned with this pencilled paper:

"'To what purpose, William, offer explanation of what could not be misunderstood? To what purpose resume a subject on which, after all that has passed, I cannot listen with propriety, nor you speak without offence? No, William, that subject must never be named between us again. You are soon to go on a distant journey; and I tell you distinctly, that nothing but a solemn promise not to renew it, shall induce me to leave my room until you are gone. Don't force me to this, dear William. It would grieve me to have my earliest and dearest friend part from me, without receiving a farewell which may be the last.'

"Saw you ever anything like that?" said I, as

Balcombe sat gazing at the paper with a musing and abstracted countenance. "*Dear* William! Her earliest and dearest friend! Are not those words there? Was ever anything more affectionate, more tender? It had been just so all the time. And when she left her room (for of course I gave the promise) it was still the same. She was pale and sad, and I saw that she felt for me. In all things else, her manner was the same as in the days of our most cordial intimacy. She had kept her room some days, and I was dreading the embarrassment of our first meeting. But she dispelled it all. She met me, indeed, with a slight tremour; I saw her lip quiver, but her eye was steady, and dwelt upon my face with an expression of holy and confiding affection. She walked directly up to me, put her arms about my neck, and kissed me as she had always done on like occasions. Her manner was graver and more tender; that was all the difference. She rested her cheek, too, a moment on my bosom, and murmured,

"'Thank you, dear William; thank you for your promise.'"

"Was no one present?" said Balcombe.

"Oh, yes! Jane accompanied her into the room; but that very evening she took my arm, and said,

"'Come, let me show you my confidence in your word. Come take a walk with me.'"

"And did you go alone?"

"Yes; Jane moved as if to go with us, but Ann stopped her."

"And what did you talk about?"

"Of old times; of the scenes and sports of infancy and early youth; of blended thoughts; of mingled feelings; of united hearts. She led the way herself. I could but listen to the soft tones of her voice, as she poured forth her feelings in language which showed how much her heart delighted in such recollections.

"'Dear, dear William!' she said, in conclusion, 'my own and only brother, let it be always thus.'

"You may believe that my heart responded to the wish. But is it not strange that while she was thus uttering words that condemned me to despair, I was supremely happy? It was no ordinary pleasure; it was a delirium of bliss. I felt, as she seemed to feel at the moment, as if all my heart had ever coveted was mine. I responded to her sentiments, in a like tone of chastened and refined tenderness; our hearts overflowed in the contemplation and actual fruition of this new scheme of happiness; we revelled in all the luxury of perfect sympathy and unbounded confidence; we seemed to have found a source of enjoyment too delicate to pall, too abounding ever to fail; our spirits rose as we quaffed the nectared flow of thoughts, and sentiments, and feelings, all congenial; and we returned to the house, with faces glowing and beaming with affection and happiness. Is it not strange? How can it be that this, the paramount desire of my heart, by which I know that I love

her, should be reciprocated by her without a corresponding sentiment?"

"If your metaphysics can find an answer to that question," said Balcombe, "I will consent that you shall believe that she does not love you. As it is, I have no doubt that her union with any other man would be more fatal to her than to you. But I see nothing unaccountable in what you tell me. Love, disguise it as you will, is the food that satisfies the heart of love; and that her conduct was the fruit of one of those strong delusions, with which love alone can cheat us, I have no doubt. I know something, William, of the joys of mutual passion; but never have I experienced, nor can I conceive a scene of more thrilling rapture, than you have described. Such things cannot last, indeed; but then what can? Illusions are dispelled, but *realities perish.* But did you part thus?"

"Even so. I had no mind to await the arrival of Howard; so I expedited the arrangements for my journey, and, having despatched to Oakwood a courteous answer to his letter, apologizing for my unavoidable absence, I took my leave."

"And your parting?"

"Was of the same character; marked by the unreserved expression of tenderest affection. I know no more, I desire no more of bliss, than to spend my days in the interchange of such sentiments as she avows and permits me to express. To me they are all of love that the heart of man can live under. She calls it sisterly affection. Be

it so. Let no other come between us, and I am content."

Balcombe made no reply, but sat buried in profound thought. At length he spoke musingly.

"Well managed! well managed! It shows the hand of a master."

"What do you mean?" said I.

"I don't exactly know, but I *will* know. Come, William; to bed! to bed, and dream of happiness. You shall not be disappointed. Good-night."

CHAPTER XIII.

Sweet Teviot! on thy silver tide
The glaring bale fires blaze no more;
No longer steel-clad warriors ride
Along thy wild and willowed shore.
Where'er thou wind'st, by dale or hill,
All, all is peaceful, all is still;
As if thy waves, since Time was born,
Since first they rolled their way to Tweed,
Had only heard the shepherd's reed,
Nor started at the bugle horn.

SCOTT.

AND I did dream of happiness; for I threw myself upon my pillow, full of hope. I could account for this in part, but not fully. How it was I knew not; but I found myself relying on the resources

of my new ally, as on the instincts of a sagacious dog. They are totally different from any faculty we possess, and quite incomprehensible to us; but we trust to them none the less. We watch his movements; we note the expression of his eye and action; and, whether we would seek our game, or shun danger, we are sure that he will admonish us truly and in time. Thus I found myself noting all the movements of Balcombe's expressive countenance, nothing doubting, that, by the time I had gotten to the end of my tale, he would know more about it than I did.

We had scarcely done breakfast the next morning before all things were ready for the road.

"I have mounted you on a fresh horse," said Balcombe, after handing his wife into the carriage. "There is no knowing what need we may have of him. A man who goes on a warfare in this wild region should be prepared for anything. Are you well armed?"

"I have a dirk," said I.

"That will do for to-day; but you must be better equipped before we go into action."

"Why so?"

"Because it may be necessary. A canting hypocrite, when once necessity drives him to overcome his scruples, is the most desperate of all villains. Let Montague see us hedging him around, and it will soon occur to him that you alone are interested to detect his villany, and that I know what is known to no one else. If our lives were

in his power at this moment, they would not be worth an hour's purchase. But he shall know nothing of us until I choose."

"And what do you propose to do?"

"Reconnoitre, and make my dispositions accordingly."

"Do you still protest against the incognito?"

"That is as hereafter may be. We might throw away an advantage by disclosing our hand prematurely. It may be well to give a false lead at first by way of feeler. But we shall see. Look around you; do you admire this scenery?"

"It is beautiful, but too uniform. The monotony of such an extent of champaign country must be tedious after a while."

"It would be so, were it not occasionally exchanged for views of very opposite character."

"But I see none such in the country."

"That is because you keep the high roads, which follow the windings of the prairie ridges. Look before and behind. Do you not see how very crooked the road is?"

"I do; but I see no reason for it."

"The reason is that nature has made a good road here. A straighter one would require labour, and we have none to spare on such objects."

"But the obstacles must be very trivial."

"Have you a mind to see some of them? Tom, we are going the near way; if we get to the fork of the road before you, we will wait for you. If not, wait for us."

So saying, we struck off to the right, and presently fell into a dim path, which we had just passed, and which led directly towards a point of timber jutting into the prairie. On entering this we presently began to descend a hollow, the sides of which became steeper as we went, and soon wound our way down to the bank of a small brawling stream. Along this our path led. On the farther side of it lay a wooded flat of considerable extent; but our path was fenced in by the stream on the right, and on the left by a lofty precipice, rising perpendicularly to the height of a hundred feet, and presenting an unbroken wall of naked limestone. Presently the hill closed in on the other side, and we followed the stream through a narrow dell, resembling in rugged wildness the gorges of the Allegany.

"What say you?" said Balcombe. "Is it not as well to compromise with nature, and take such roads as she gives us, as to battle with these rocks?"

"Half an hour ago," said I, "I should have been incredulous, had I been told there was such a scene as this within fifty miles."

"I am glad I brought you this way. Besides, I told you last night that I liked sometimes to be the hero of my own tale, and here is the scene of one of my adventures. Were you ever on a battle ground?"

"At little York."

"In company with any who had fought there?"

"No. I should delight to traverse the scene of a battle with one of the combatants."

"Well, you shall have that pleasure. The windings of this rill will lead us to the place, and in the mean time I will give you the preliminaries.

"It was five years ago, just after the treaty of peace with England. The Indians had not made peace, but we, anticipating it, had become secure and supine. A poor fellow in this neighbourhood was standing near his cabin with his wife and two little children, when a party of Indians suddenly appeared. They immediately ran for the house. The Indians, with characteristic coolness, *did not fire*, but took deliberate and steady aim at the door. As each entered, a rifle went off. The woman fell dead into the house. The man, badly wounded, tumbled over her. A girl, who was within, barred the door. The children were tomahawked in the yard. The girl fired a random shot between the logs, and sounded a large tin trumpet, such as was kept in every house to give signals of alarm. The Indians made off, and the whole settlement assembled in arms.

"Besides the inhabitants, there was part of a company of rangers billeted there, among whom was their captain, as brave a fellow as ever breathed. I happened to be hereabout, and joined the party.

"We were soon ready to pursue, well armed and well mounted. The captain took command of all. I had some name in the country, as a man familiar

with danger, and he requested me to take charge of the rear. In the pursuit of Indians the centre is the point of greatest danger. There the captain placed himself. The rear is next in peril, and first in importance of the whole. I agreed to take it, if I could have ten steady men assigned to my command, who should take their orders from me. There was something like that number present, who had faced danger in company with me; and these gladly joined me. Keizer was one. The march commenced, and the trail led us into this valley. You see where it stretches away to the right towards the Missouri. It extends, in fact, to the river, and *there* was a populous settlement. We knew, therefore, that our right flank was safe, for the enemy, after alarming the country, would not venture in that direction. On the left you see this lofty barrier, which nothing without wings could pass. Just here we were safe. Not far beyond us was the point of danger. *There* comes down from the left a rapid stream, with high and steep banks, which cuts through this wall of rock, and affords an opening into the plain above. At the mouth of that gorge this path crosses the stream. The rivulet along which we have been riding bears away to the right, and here, you see, leaves a wide plain next the hill. We are now near the spot. A bend in the hill just hides the ford of the creek, which is not fifty yards off. Here I halted my ten men, and commanded them to secure their horses, and stand

close under the rock, while I went forward to assist in reconnoitring the ground about the ford. Let us ride on to it."

We turned the corner of the rock, and the stream was just before us. On the side where we were, the hill came down close to it, affording no more than room for a single horseman to pass up the bank to the stream. On the other side the flat was a swampy thicket. No hill was to be seen, though Balcombe told me that at the distance of fifty yards the same wall of rock again bounded the valley on the left hand. We stopped our horses on the bank, just above the deep narrow track by which alone one horseman could at a time descend. Just below us, on the opposite side, came in another stream, with high, steep, and muddy banks, obviously impassable. This ran alongside the road as far as we could see, leaving barely room for it between the bank and the thicket.

"You see," said Balcombe, "that a body of men on the other side of this stream, if attacked from that thicket, must fight it out at a great disadvantage, or push on up the opposite valley, or recross this stream here. A small force well posted might check them in front, and ten good marksmen here could kill a hundred before one could rise this bank. Here, then, was the point of danger. We accordingly examined the ground carefully on this side, and satisfied ourselves that no one had gone up that narrow pass along this bank before we suffered a man to cross. A few experienced

woodsmen then went over, and skirted the whole thicket as far as the foot of the hill on the other side, but found no sign that any person had entered it. At the same time the trail of the whole party was traceable with great distinctness leading right ahead, along the way we were going. Now, would you believe it? the indefatigable, sagacious, vindictive devils had actually gone on a mile or more till they issued into the prairie, had made a circuit to the left, worked their way to this creek and along its banks back to this spot, and were, at the very moment, lying within ten yards of our scouts, as they were examining the edge of the thicket.

"A part had halted right in front, to stop us there, and half a dozen were here, on this side, just behind this rock."

I could not help starting at this intimation; and looking round, half expected to see the black eye of an Indian glaring on me.

"You see," continued Balcombe, "that my little party could not be seen by them, nor even by us, where we stand. I explained their situation to the captain, telling him I proposed to remain there until his rear should have passed the point of danger. If attacked, I could cover his retreat, if not, I could follow. I accordingly advised him to order his men, if attacked, to retreat this way. He did not understand my plan, made some foolish and rude speech, and in my hearing ordered his men, if attacked, to push right ahead. It was no time for quarrel, and he was not a man for

me to quarrel with, so I let him go on, while I slipped back to my men. I then ordered them to advance one by one to the bend of the hill, where they would come in sight of the ford, and to creep cautiously from thence to trees commanding the bank. This was hardly accomplished before one whole party had crossed. Just as the rear disappeared I heard a shot, another, another, and then a general firing. At this moment half a dozen Indians were seen to steal from behind that rock, and crawling to trees on the bank, to await the return of our party. Seeing nothing of us, they were quite exposed, and their backs were to us. My party were all near together, and I gave the word in a low voice, 'Take time; every man his man, and all together.' We all fired; but, several firing at the same man, one escaped. He sprung immediately behind the rock, and, as it seems, chose a position secure from us, but commanding the spot where we now are. I saw Keizer immediately run to the foot of the cliff, and tipping lightly along towards the corner which the Indian had turned, he set down his rifle, felt for his knife, and drew his tomahawk. In the next moment the head of one of our men appeared above the bank; and, by the time his whole body was in view, the crack of a rifle was heard from behind the rock, and down he went into the water. As quick as lightning John sprung over the low point which just separated him from the Indian, and was upon him with his tomahawk.

"It is hard to take any advantage of these fellows. If any man can do it, Keizer is the man. But he was not so quick but that the Indian met him, tomahawk in hand. John is resolute and active as a wildcat, but you see he is a little fellow. I feared he might want help, and hastened to his assistance. It was well I did; the Indian was slightly wounded, and John had lost his tomahawk in the scuffle. He caught at his knife with his right hand, but the Indian seized the wrist with his left, and with the other lifted his tomahawk to strike. John returned the compliment by catching his arm, and when I came up they were then holding each other; the Indian making awkward half blows, and John holding his life by no better tenure than his hold on the Indian's arm. The odds were against him, for the savage was a powerful man; but, entangled as he was, he was at my mercy, and I had none to spare just then. I have very kind feelings towards these poor devils: I admire their sagacity, courage, and fortitude, and lament their wrongs and sufferings; but when the matter is to kill or be killed, we have no time to think of these things. Besides, the bodies of that poor woman and her children were still before my eyes.

"In the mean time, my little party had manned the bank, and a shot or two fired by them into the thicket disclosed to the enemy the failure of that part of their plan. They immediately drew off, and gave our party leave to bring off their dead

and wounded. The captain had fallen at the first fire, with two or three more. Those who, according to his order, had pressed on to the front, were driven back with the loss of two men. In the rear, the bodies of the five Indians, each lying at his tree, and that of one poor fellow, who lay weltering at the bottom of the bank, told what might have happened had we all crossed. The captain, who was brought over still alive, saw it, and with his voice gurgling with the blood that rose in his mouth, tried to apologize for his rudeness to me. Poor fellow! he lived but a few minutes. How he was avenged we had no means of knowing, for the enemy had carried off all their dead but those which lay on this side of the creek."

We now rode on, and I could not help admiring the judgment with which the savages had chosen their position. But for Balcombe's stratagem, the whites could have had no alternative but to fight as well as they could an unseen enemy.

CHAPTER XIV.

Prospero. Come with a thought.
Ariel. Thy thoughts I cleave to. What's thy pleasure?
SHAKSPEARE.

In a mile or two more we recovered the road, rejoined the carriage, and soon arrived at Colonel Robinson's. I found him a fine old gentleman, whose frank cordiality of manner told me at once that he was my countryman, bred up in that school of genuine hospitality and manly courtesy which has so long flourished in the tide-waters of Virginia.

He met us at the gate, and Balcombe introduced me by the name of "Draper." His wife stared, but he gave her his arm, and as he led her to the house, spoke a few words in an under tone. As soon as we entered he said to Colonel Robinson, "My young friend *may* have reason to wish that his presence in this neighbourhood may not be known for a day or two. It is of my own head that I have introduced him by a name not his own. I would tell you the true one, but that you might inadvertently utter it in the presence of the servants. I will do so, as soon as your tongue is familiarized to the name of Dra-

per. For my part, I have never known him but by his Christian name, and give him no other. I have cautioned Bet, and her habitual silence will secure her from any blunder. So, Master William, you must learn to answer to your *alias* as soon as you can; and you, colonel, must take my voucher for my friend by such name as I choose to give him. He shall be known to all the world for what he is in a day or two."

"He is welcome by any name," said the old man; "and the more so because I infer that his affairs are critical, and that you take great interest in them."

"You are right," said Balcombe; "and I would be the most ungrateful of human beings if I did not make his wrongs my own."

The evening passed off pleasantly, and I found myself in the midst of every comfort and every luxury. The next day was spent in hunting, and a fine buck was the prize of our toil. Returning to dinner, a note was handed to the old gentleman, which he read and gave to Balcombe.

"A note from Montague," said he, "requesting an interview on business. Answer it for me, Balcombe, and ask him to dine with me to-morrow."

"Has he ever visited you?"

"Never."

"Then don't invite him now. He is not a desirable acquaintance."

"How so? He stands fair, he is in good cir-

cumstances, and is about to marry into a most respectable and wealthy family. What do you know of him?"

"More than he would have me know. Besides, though I wish to see him in this house and in your presence, I have that to say to him that I should not like to say under your roof to an invited guest."

"But you will not forget, Balcombe, that my roof protects alike the invited and uninvited."

"Certainly not. I shall say nothing harsh to him. I only mean to experiment upon his nerves with a sort of invisible galvanic fluid. I am anxious to have you note the effect of what will seem as harmless as a bit of zinc or copper; but, depend upon it, the battery I shall bring to bear upon him would drive an alderman from a lord mayor's feast. But trust *me*, colonel, I shall observe all decorum. Do you know what his business is?"

"I believe he wishes to buy a tract of land."

"Then he will be as gracious to me as an old maid at a wedding. That's all as it should be. The effect of his discomfiture will be the more manifest.'

A note was accordingly addressed to Montague, in Colonel Robinson's name, saying that he would be happy to see him the next morning at ten o'clock.

Soon after dinner a tap was heard at the door, which was opened by the master of the house,

when a strange voice inquired if Mr. Balcombe was within.

"Yes, sir," said the colonel; "pray walk in."

He now entered, ushering in a youth of nearly my own age, tall, slender, and remarkably handsome. He was plainly dressed, and soiled with travel; shy and hesitating in his manner, with a countenance which bespoke anxiety and mortified pride. But I had seldom seen a finer face. Its great fault was too much of feminine beauty, which predominated over all the marks of fatigue and exposure. In spite of these, the large dark blue eyes, the well-defined nose, and a budding lip, hardly covered with down, made a face, which, altogether, would have been beautiful in a woman.

"That's Mr. Balcombe, sir," said the colonel.

Balcombe started at this announcement, and rose, looking at the stranger with a countenance in which surprise was mingled with an expression of strange and curious interest. The young man approached him, and said, modestly, that he wished to speak with him in private.

"In private?" said Balcombe, with some eagerness of manner. "Certainly, certainly."

And so saying, he led the way to another room. He was absent but a few minutes, when he returned hastily, holding a large packet in his hand. His whole air bespoke an excited state of feeling. His cheek was flushed; his eye was flashing through the remains of a tear hastily brushed away, and every feature was working with emotion.

"My dear sir," said he, "I must beg you to extend your hospitality to this poor boy. He has come far to see me, is among total strangers, and I am persuaded his means are scanty."

"Surely, Balcombe, you know that you can command my house."

"I do; but he does not. He is in affliction, and needs to be soothed by that kindness which no man shows with more effect than you. Will you go with me and speak to him?"

"Certainly."

They went into the other room. I heard the form of introduction, but did not distinguish the name. Then came the frank, kind, cordial tones of the old man's voice, and all three returned together.

"You have not dined, James?" said Balcombe.

"I have not," said the youth; "but I have little appetite, and am not hungry."

But the colonel's hand was to the bell, and some food was soon brought. The young man took a little, with a dejected air, and then withdrew to a seat in the corner. Balcombe immediately placed himself by his side, and in a kind but low voice conversed with him a long time. The poor lad seemed to have but little to say; his eyes frequently filled, and he appeared to command himself with difficulty. Meantime I conversed with Colonel Robinson about indifferent matters, until night came down.

Presently, the short and oft-repeated note of the

whistle was heard, and Balcombe, rising, looked at me with a quiet smile, and said,

"All is right."

"What does that mean?" said the colonel.

"It is Keizer," replied Balcombe.

"And what is he doing here?"

"He waits my bidding."

"To what effect?"

"That I don't know; but I may have need of him, and he is in waiting."

"He is a sharp tool, Balcombe. Are your own fingers in no danger?"

"None at all. There are some lurking remains of honesty and pride of character about the fellow; and to be employed in meritorious service by one he respects, is an honour he prizes too highly to throw it away."

"That may be so. But I hope you will never have occasion to use him, when it may be to his interest to betray you."

"I would trust him," said Balcombe, "with my purse and life as soon as any man on earth. Anything but my reputation; of that he knows neither the nature nor value."

"Who and what is he?" said I.

"He is a man of all work. A black Dutchman (as it is called) from the mountains of Virginia. I suspect the race is tinctured with the gipsy blood. They have the complexion, the hair, the eye, the slight figure, the activity and hardiness of the gipsy; and this fellow has all their qualities. You

forgot, colonel, that I have more than once saved John's life and he mine; and *you* surely need not be told how the remembrance of common danger binds men to each other. I would not advise other men to trust Keizer. For myself I trust him entirely. He will serve me at a pinch as no other man will, and as few other men can. But, James, you are weary, and should go to rest. I am busy, and must go to work. So good-night."

CHAPTER XV.

And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon: Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house: thou gavest me no water for my feet. But she hath washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

ST. LUKE.

THE next morning, at an early hour, Balcombe entered my room, and put into my hands the following letter:

"*To George Balcombe, Esq.*

"Among the crosses of a wayward destiny, it is not the least, that for so many years I have lost all trace of the only man on earth to whom I could look for kindness or sympathy. Since accident has discovered to me your residence, I have

felt as if fate might have in store for me some solace for a life of poverty and disgrace. For the last, indeed, there is no remedy; for the opinion of others cannot stifle the voice of self-reproach, nor deaden the sense of merited dishonour. But, bad as these are, (and they are enough to poison all enjoyment, to extinguish all hope, and to turn the very light of heaven into blackness,) they may be rendered more intolerable by the cold scorn of the world, by the unappeased wants of nature, and by the constant view of sufferings, brought by ourselves on those we love. This complication of evil has been my lot; and if one ray of comfort has ever shot into my benighted mind, it came with the thought, that he who knew me best knew all my fault, but did not think me vile. But what reason have I to think this? Why may not the misconstruction, which conscience has denied me power to correct, have reached you uncontradicted? How can I hope that you have not been told, that the lip, on which, with your last blessing, you left the kiss of pure, and generous, and ill-requited love, has not been since steeped in the pollution of a villain's breath? All this may have been told you. All this you may believe. But, whatever else may be credited against me, you will never doubt my truth. No, George; the fearful proof I once gave that I am incapable of deception, is not forgotten. Take, then, my single word, against all the world can say, that that hallowed kiss 'my lip has virgined' to this hour.

Except the cold and clammy brow of my dying father, no touch of man has since invaded it; nor has one smile profaned it, since in that moment I consecrated it to virtue.

"You will not, then, disdain to hear the sad story of the poor girl whom you generously tried to save from destruction. Oh! had you come to the rescue one hour sooner! But God is just, and wise, and good. Pride needed to be rebuked. The sin by which the angels fell had rendered me incapable of the happiness of heaven, had it not been punished here. Pride led me to the precipice. Pride deepened the abyss below. Pride urged my fall; and pride prepared the flinty bed of shame, remorse, and horror, where all hope of recovered happiness was crushed.

"To go back to that fatal day, up to which my life was open before you as a book. To return to that blotted page, which mercy may tear from the records of eternity, but which memory can never cancel. Montague never returned to Raby Hall. His dread of you was succeeded by a dread of my father. The poor old man never knew, and, I hope, never suspected the truth. But he had marked the abrupt departure of Montague; he saw my dejection; he saw me indeed to all appearance sinking to the grave; he had known of our engagement and approved it; and he naturally inferred that Montague had deserted me. I had sufficient self-command not to undeceive him. My first struggle with my feelings (though then they

triumphed over me) had taught me to control them. Not that I regretted that then they had triumphed. No, George; I do not now regret it. As your wife, cherished, beloved, and respected, I should have had less peace of mind, than in the recollection that, on that occasion, I was just to you. But why should I break my poor old father's heart? I did not undeceive him; and though his resentment against Montague burned like a volcano in his bosom, it never blazed forth. He determined to avoid the wretch; and when, at my request, he forbade his return to the estate, he gave him warning never, as he valued his own safety, to cross his path. The hint was not thrown away. My father rarely left the estate, and they never met. The poor old man soon fell into declining health, and pined away, and died by inches.

"I could not disguise from myself that he had received his death blow from my hand. I had been the object of his tenderest affection; my misfortune was felt as the direst calamity that had ever befallen him; solicitude for my future destiny occupied all his thoughts. I did what I could to repair my fault, to sooth the wound I had inflicted, and to postpone the fatal hour. He attributed all to filial duty, tearing my heart by calling me the best daughter in the world, and died blessing me.

"Our means of comfort, and even subsistence, died with him. His death disclosed the fact, that his fond indulgence of his darling daughter had consumed all his income, and even involved him in

some debt. This swept away so much of what he left, that we had little more than the means of furnishing an humble cottage on the estate, where the kind old gentleman permitted us to take shelter. My father had served him faithfully for twenty years, and he could not see us turned out houseless in the wide world. He accordingly gave us the place for our lives rent free. You may remember it. It is Martin's former residence. It is humble enough; but sufficient for us, and more than we had a right to expect.

"Here Montague, soon after, sought to renew his visits. I refused to see him, and urged my mother to order him from the house. But she was overcome by his protestations and professions, and pressed me to meet him. I felt that, without undeceiving her, I could not carry my opposition much further, and consented.

"It was a relief to me that he had stipulated for a private interview. I could not have dared to trust my feelings in her presence; and I feared nothing from an unmasked traitor. We met, and he approached me, but stopped short, apparently amazed and overawed by my manner. He did not dare to come nearer, but stood trembling like a convicted culprit. I let him stand without inviting him to take a seat, and merely said,

"'Your pleasure, sir?'

"'I wished to see you,' said he, 'for the purpose of correcting a mistake into which I feared you had been led by Balcombe.'

"'What reason have you to suppose, sir, that Mr. Balcombe had given me any information?'

"'I supposed so, because he told me he would.'

"'You have great confidence in his word; would you have me doubt it?'

"'No, Mary,' said he. I felt my eye flash at this approach to familiarity; he saw it, cowered, and went on:

"'No, Miss Scott; I do not doubt Mr. Balcombe's word; but what he said to me, at the moment of our separation, showed that he had misunderstood me.'

"'Why, then, did you not follow and explain?'

"'After what had just passed,' said he.

"'Wretch!' said I, in a voice smothered by passion, not less than restrained by a fear of being overheard, 'one other allusion to that topic, and I would not ensure your life against a woman's hand.'

"He was now completely subdued. I had made him know his place, and beyond that place I never suffered him to advance.

"'I did not dare then,' said he, 'in the excited state of your feelings, to hazard any explanation in the presence of a third person.'

"'That is plausible,' said I. 'But what room was there for mistake? Have you, or not, expectations under that will?'

"'I have,' said he. 'If things remain as they are, until Mr. Raby's death, I shall certainly gain

a competence that might make us comfortable for life.'

"This was said in a tone so humble and deprecating, that I repressed my indignation at the use of the word *us*, and merely asked, 'How, then, do you deny what Balcombe told me you had said? for this is the same story.'

"'His mistake was,' said Montague, 'that he supposed me to have said, that *lands* were devised to me by that will. This would have been false, and he would have known it to be false; but as the bequest is not of lands, the reasoning by which he arrived at that conclusion did not apply, as I could have convinced him, had he listened to me.'

"'And why was this explanation deferred till now?'

"'Because I was forbidden the house by your father. As no reason was assigned, I was left to conjecture his motive; what my conjecture was, I will not say. I certainly did not suspect the true one; besides, I will frankly acknowledge, that I was not, at first, sensible how much my happiness depended on your acceptance of this explanation, and of my repentance for my past fault. I come to offer these, and tender the only reparation in my power.'

"'And what is that? Food and raiment for her you have made a widow? The means of subsistence and education to the poor little orphan boy, whose fine precocious faculties are wasted in the duties of a household drudge?"

"'These and all else that a life devoted to you can give.'

"'Hear me, Montague!' said I. 'Nothing will I ever receive at your hands. For myself nothing. No; not a cup of cold water at my last gasp.'

"'Not even my hand itself?'

"'No! that, last of all. No, Montague; without love I will marry no man. What solace have I for past errors, but the thought that I was beguiled by the best and purest feelings of the heart? And shall I falsify that plea, by sinning against the heart itself? No; I repeat, without love I will marry no man.'

"'And did you not then love me?'

"'Dare you ask that question?' said I. 'Had you returned promptly, and before the illusion which dressed you in qualities different from those of other men had been dispelled, I might have heard you gladly. Once dissolved, that spell is gone for ever.'

"'I will hope not,' said he. 'For the present, at least, I will do your will. What you permit me to do shall be done. My deportment to you shall be dictated by yourself, and I will see no more of you than you think proper. I see that I must leave you now. What is to be done, I will arrange with your mother.'

"He left me, accordingly, and after conferring with my mother, took suitable measures for her comfort, and for the education of poor little James.

"It is not true, George, as some have said, that love can never die. I will not repeat that I *had* loved Montague. You know it but too well. But when he appeared before me that day, he was to me the most hateful object upon earth. But it is true that while esteem lasts affection cannot perish. It is equally true that *that*—the grossest crime that man can commit against woman—is one that love too readily forgives *to love*. Of all but *that*, Montague had satisfactorily acquitted himself; and when I saw him, with patient assiduity, devoting himself to the comfort of my family, without intruding himself on my notice—without presuming to expect a word or look of gratitude or approbation—could I doubt his love? I certainly did not; and though the frosty barrier which I had placed between us was never thawed, I saw that he began to hope, and I took no pains to discourage the hope, that he might one day recover his place in my heart. You will never see in this that he had already half regained it. Perhaps it was so; for, in addition to what I have said, he was the only man I ever had loved, the only man I could, in common honesty, permit myself to love, the only being towards whom the 'strong necessity of loving' could direct its tendencies.

"About this time good old Mr. Raby died. We saw nothing of Montague for two months. We heard from him, indeed; and though he did not express himself distinctly, we inferred from what he said, that he had not been disappointed in the

will. At length he came, accompanying the English gentleman who now owns this property. He gave me to understand that all was right, and requested a private interview. I remarked a great alteration in his manner. He had become grave, thoughtful, and formal, and let drop some expressions which showed a change in his religious sentiments. In fine, he professed deep contrition and repentance, and a hope that his sins had been forgiven, along with a full purpose of amendment of life. I received this assurance with great satisfaction. I am not going to give you the history of my own opinions and feelings on this important subject. But you will readily believe, that, after having been made to taste the bitterness of death, in disease and pain, in poverty, in degradation, in self-reproach, and in the destruction of all my earthly hopes, I am not the giddy creature you once knew me. I rejoiced in Montague's conversion; I saw no motive to hypocrisy, and believed him sincere. I see none yet, but I know there was one; for I can never believe that the spirit of God could dwell with one capable of his subsequent conduct. He now gave me to understand that he was at length established in a handsome competency, and hinted, as it seemed, under some apprehension of offending me, at a hope to share it with me. I was not prepared to take the hint, or to encourage him to speak more plainly, though I am not sure what answer I might have given had he done so. My heart, indeed, took comfort in the

thought, that I might at last emerge from the abyss into which my folly had plunged me, and there was more of confiding tenderness in my feelings towards Montague, than I had experienced since you left me. I suppose he saw this; and, without laying any stress on his own hopes or wishes, spoke cheeringly to me, encouraged me to look forward to happier days, and informed me that he had added to the provision made for my mother and brother. Something followed, which seemed intended to usher in some proposed favour to myself; but I stopped him by holding up my needle, as the only thing to which I would owe my bread. He seemed mortified and perplexed, complained of my obduracy, and lamented that it debarred him from asking of me a service that no other could render. I told him that my situation was already irksome enough, to make me glad to find any proper opportunity to serve him, and avowed my readiness and wish to do so. He then placed in my hand a packet, as large, perhaps, as a dozen newspapers, enveloped in strong brown paper, and well secured with twine and seals. This he asked me to keep, and I promised to do so.

"'I wish you to promise further,' said he, 'that no eye shall see the contents of that packet.'

"I did so. He mused awhile, and then added:

"'It is of great importance to me that that packet should never see the light.'

"'Then why not destroy it?' said I.

"'I don't wish to destroy it,' said he; 'it may be of some importance hereafter. Put it away.'

"I took it to my room, and locked it up. On my return, he again conversed about other matters until he rose to take leave. He paused at the door and said, hesitatingly:

"'Perhaps you had better destroy that packet.'

"'I will do so.'

"He turned, paused again, and said,

"'No! maybe better not.'

"'As you please; which shall I do?'

"'I really do not know,' said he, after a thoughtful pause. 'Do as you will with it. If it is in your way, throw it in the fire. If not, keep it till I call for it.'

"'Very well,' said I; 'I will do so.'

"He turned, as if to go away; came back, and, standing before me, looked at me earnestly and doubtingly.

"'Mary,' said he, 'will you remember these promises?'

"'Certainly,' said I, offended at once by the implied doubt, and the forbidden familiarity with my name.

"'Were not my confidence as great in your word as in another's oath, so great is the importance of that promise, that I would ask you to bind it with an oath.'

"'Your words,' said I, 'imply the very doubt you disavow. But are you yet to know me, Montague? My words are all spoken in the presence

of God. What I aver, and what I promise, is as an oath. God has heard me, without being invoked. My promise has been given in his presence. It is not form that gives an oath its obligation on the conscience.'

"'You *have* sworn, then,' said he. 'It is enough. God is witness between us.'

"So saying, and without waiting for an answer, he left me.

"I looked after him amazed and perplexed. Was this some new villany? Was his conversion all pretence? Were my dawning hopes again to be swallowed up in darkness? There was at least so much of doubt on these questions, as to determine me to preserve the packet. On that point, at least, I was free. As to my promises, I am not restrained by any blind superstition. I know that 'God hateth a liar;' so do I. I do not remember that, to this day, the stain of falsehood is on my lips. But I am no such casuist as to permit any scruples of that sort to make me the agent of another's villany.

"I did not see Montague again for two months. I received him coldly, and he appeared before me with an anxious and impatient air, as if desirous to say what he feared to say. I determined to bring the matter to a point at once.

"'Do you want that packet?' said I.

"He started, and with an alarmed look said,

"'No; nor do I wish to know what you have done with it.'

"'But I have no wish to keep it any longer.'

"'Then destroy it if you will. You *promised*,' added he, emphatically, 'to do so, or keep it till I called for it. Now I do not call for it, and never will. So destroy it or not as you please. I never wish to know what you do with it.'

"Saying this, he left me. From that time forth I treated him with scorn, and found him always restless and uneasy. Something of anxiety always marked his manner, mixed with a double portion of grimace and sanctimoniousness. But his visits were now few and hasty, and he always seemed to go away without doing what he came for. Whether he wished to resume the subject of marriage, or to talk about the packet, I could not guess. In either case my answer was ready. At length he summoned resolution to ask me what I had done with the packet.

"'I shall not tell you,' said I.

"'But I really wish to know.'

"'But I have not *promised*,' said I, 'to tell you; and you *promised* not to ask.'

"'You don't mean to betray me?' said he, with an alarmed look.

"'Betray you! I am no traitor, Montague.'

"'Then give me the packet.'

"'You forget that you are not to know whether I have it.'

"'But I *will* know!' said he, furiously.

"'What audacity is this?' said I, fixing my eye

steadily upon him. The look subdued him. He cowered, and slunk away.

"It was now manifest to me that there was some wickedness connected with this packet, to which I was determined not to be accessory. This unusual explosion, too, made it apparent that he was becoming desperate, and I was apprehensive he might resort to violence to carry his point. The house was small, and easily searched, and I had no place of security on the premises. But I found means effectually to put the packet beyond his reach, and did so. It was well I did. The next time he came he locked the door, and put the key in his pocket; examined every hole and corner in the room; then locked me in, and rummaged the whole house. All was, of course, in vain; and he returned to the room, wild with rage and alarm. After this outrage I saw him no more.

"I soon heard that he had left the country; but never knew, until lately, where he was. In the mean time my mother's pension was stopped. I suppose he thought no new provocatien could make matters any worse; and that it was better to escape the consequences of disclosure, than to make a vain attempt to sooth me. I think, too, he did me the justice to suppose that his baseness would not make me regardless of my word. But had I been so, I have no one to advise with—no means of conjecturing what may be the nature of this mysterious packet, or whose interests it may affect. Thirteen years of perfect seclusion from

the world, during which our little dwelling has been avoided as if infected with pestilence, have rendered me totally ignorant of everybody, and everybody's affairs. My needle earns my bread; my books (which, thanks to my poor father's kindness, are not few) are my companions. Forgetting the world, I only wish to be forgotten by it.

"But though my lot must be borne, I am bound to mitigate, if possible, the evils I have brought on others. The infirmities of age have come upon my mother; and poor James, taken from school, where his improvement justified my estimate of his capacity, has been forced to seek an employment, the wages of which just supply her with bare necessaries. These things ought not to be, and shall not be if I can help it. James is the bearer of this. You will see him, and judge whether he is one who should be required to devote to the drudgery of a country store, faculties which might be an ornament to his country. I was going to add, 'and a pride to his family.' But what have I to do with pride?

"But though the thought of what I am checks every such feeling, it does not forbid me to know what I was, and might have been. Humility does not require me to doubt, that but for Montague I might not only have enjoyed advantages which I surrender without a murmur, but that I might have been instrumental to my mother's comfort, and the advancement of this poor boy. What he has prevented me from doing he once agreed to do; and

he shall again agree to do it, and shall perform his promise.

"I have just learned where he is by means of a gentleman who, for some purpose of his own, has been endeavouring to find him out. About the same time I ascertained, by mere chance, that you, my only friend, were in the same part of the country. The coincidence seemed to point the course I should pursue. I would gladly have your counsel, and have determined to secure to myself all the benefits of it, by doing nothing that you do not approve. I have accordingly directed James to find you out, and hand you this letter. He carries one also to Montague, which contains a demand of a suitable provision for my poor mother, and of such aid as may enable James to resume his studies and qualify himself for a profession. Is this exacting too much? Of that I constitute you sole judge. If you disapprove the measure altogether, send James back as he goes. If you approve it, then I must ask that your justice and honour may preside over what is done. Your knowledge of the past, and of Montague's present condition, will make you the best judge of what it is suitable he should do. In making this demand, I do not propose to continue to hold the rod over him. It might seem too much like retaining the means of future and indefinite exaction. I have accordingly placed in James's hands a second communication, the receipt of which will enable Montague to recover the packet. This last will be delivered when you

direct it, and not before; and I have to ask that you will direct it when that which is right in your judgment that Montague should do is done, or so promised as to secure performance. Poor James knows nothing of the nature of his errand. It is not right he should. He knows nothing of Montague's history. If he did, instead of sending him in quest of the wretch, I would try to put the solid globe between them. He is mild and gentle, and softhearted as a girl; but he is sensitive, honourable, and brave; and the fierceness of his indignation, when once excited, is fearful.

"Do I, then, ask too much, when I beg that you will yourself see Montague, and hand him the first letter, which James will give you; and that, when he shall have done what is right, you will direct James to deliver to him the parcel with which he is charged. You will perceive that it is not my wish that this poor boy shall understand anything of what is done, lest by possibility he might come to the knowledge of what might drive him to acts of desperate revenge. The least wrong or insult to me he would repel and punish at the hazard of his life.

"I am sensible that I have asked no ordinary service. But I ask it of one whom I once knew as George Balcombe. If that noble and generous being no longer exists, and another bears his form and name, this letter is not to him. Let it be given to the flames, and let the smoke of it ascend to Him who has promised to hear the cry of the desolate and oppressed. I have no right to suppose that

time, which changes all things else, has wrought no change in you. But of one thing I am sure. You can never be so far changed as to add to the wretchedness you cannot relieve. If you cannot aid, you will neither injure nor betray the unfortunate

"MARY SCOTT.

"Essex county, Virginia, July 10, 1820."

CHAPTER XVI.

"The livid toad,
Cased in the bosom of the cold gray stone,
Lives centred all in self. His world the cell
That bears the image of his bloated form.
The breath of heaven, the cheerful light of day,
To him are fatal. The malignant venom,
Distilled in darkness, on himself reacts,
As skulking malice eats the coward heart
Of him who hates and fears."

WHILE I was reading, Balcombe walked the room with a noiseless step, as if careful not to awaken the youth, who in one corner still lay sleeping off his weariness. At length he awoke; Balcombe sat down by him, and they conversed in a low tone. When I got through, I turned to Balcombe, and said,

"In God's name! how came you by this?"

"He brought it," replied my friend, pointing to the youth; then turning to him,

"It is proper, James, that my young friend here should see your sister's letter. You must trust me."

"I do trust you, sir. I am instructed to put myself, in all things, under your direction; and your kindness disposes me to do so without reserve. My poor sister taught me to expect a friend in you who would not serve her grudgingly or by halves; and I see she was right."

"Serve her!" said Balcombe, with emotion. "Dear, dear Mary! dear, noble girl! What would I not do to serve her!"

"Oh, sir!" said James, "what a comfort it is to hear you speak so of her! My poor sister!"

His voice choked, he buried his face in the pillow, and sobbed aloud. Recovering himself, he went on:

"She is indeed the best woman on earth. But she is unhappy, and the world, for some reason, looks coldly on her. She is the best of daughters, and such a sister as no man ever had; and yet she seems condemned to bury in obscurity not only these virtues, but talents that might adorn a throne. I see nothing in her but excellence; and I have but a vague recollection of having heard language applied to her, before I understood its meaning, which no man of feeling or prudence would now utter in my presence. But *you* know her well,

sir; and it comforts me, and will comfort her, that you speak of her in such terms."

"I may well do so, James; for to me she has been the truest and most generous friend on earth."

"I rejoice to hear that, sir; it will reconcile me, in some measure, to the trouble I may give you."

"There will be little trouble. Montague is in the neighbourhood. I shall see him to-day, and you to-morrow. Your business shall be soon arranged to your satisfaction; and in a week you shall be on your road homeward. It is not certain that I shall not go with you."

"Oh, sir!" said the delighted youth, "I shall be so glad!"

"Come, come!" said Balcombe, "up and dress. We have no time for rejoicing yet."

He went out, and we soon followed. After breakfast, he directed us to retire to our room, and desired James to remain there all the morning. I was to stay until Montague was seated and engaged in conversation. I was then to loiter in carelessly, and take my seat without being introduced.

He soon appeared, and as Balcombe had predicted, was exceedingly gracious. When I entered, Colonel Robinson was in the act of announcing his price for the land. Montague saw me, but finding that my entrance attracted no notice from others, he gave his whole attention to the business in hand. He was a tall and powerful man, and had his countenance been good, would

have been very handsome. Its expression was saturnine and cold, and indicated, as I thought, great concentration and tenacity of purpose. When I observed this, and compared his athletic frame with the slight figure of Balcombe, I hardly knew how to credit the history the latter had given of some scenes between them. But when I turned to *him*, and remarked the cheerfulness, alacrity, and self-confidence of his air, the covert scorn that played on his lip, and the hawking expression of his eye, I saw that it was the falcon hovering over the sluggish and unwieldy bustard.

Montague made some demur to the colonel's terms, and attempted to beat him down, but the other stopped him.

"The only way to discuss this matter, Mr. Montague, is with yourself. Ride over the land, sir, and if you don't think it worth the money, you will not give it."

In this arrangement Montague acquiesced; when Balcombe, turning to me, said,

"Two dollars an acre for such land as this! It is strange how the intrinsic value of things is lost sight of in regarding their relative value. What is land good for in Virginia that it is not good for here? But so it is. Value depends on demand and supply. So say the political economists, and I suppose they are right, *in all things but one.* When *truth* and *honour abound*, they are *most* prized. *They* depreciate as they become rare. If there be a country where money and honour are

both scarce, that is your true Rogue's Harbour—the paradise of successful villains; the proper place for him who 'robs the widow, and devours the orphan's portion,' and fills his pockets with the plunder of them who trust in him; the place where the betrayer of confiding innocence may wed with wealth and beauty. There let him go, and build up a name illustrious in infamy! In the next generation, 'time, the beautifier,' which changes all things to suit prevailing tastes, shall bleach it into honour."

This was addressed to no one in particular, nor did a tone or glance point the meaning to its object. It was just spoken with that careless air which distinguished Balcombe, when, giving the reins to fancy, he suffered himself to be borne along at random. It was the uniform effect of these capricious starts to put a total stop to conversation until he himself chose to renew it. He now threw himself back in his chair, and seemed for a moment lost in abstraction. Then his voice was heard again, breathing, as if unconsciously, in the deep, low tone of solemn imprecation, these lines:

> "If ever he have child, abortive be it,
> Prodigious, and untimely brought to light,
> Whose ugly and unnatural aspect
> May fright the hopeful mother at the view!"

There was nothing in this to revive conversation, and the silence was dead and startling. Colonel Robinson at length turned to speak to Mon-

tague, but remained dumb with surprise. I had been looking at him all the time. The change in his countenance was fearful to behold. I shall not attempt to describe its progress; but when he perceived that we were all looking at him, the measure of his suffering seemed full. There he sat, his stony eye downcast, but with expanded lids, and fixed on vacancy. An ashy paleness overspread his face; the very flesh seemed to shrink to the bone, and large beaded drops stood on his brow. Balcombe did but glance his eye towards him, smiled, and, throwing back his head, whistled a few lively notes. Montague seemed slowly to recover his consciousness at the sound, when Balcombe again said, with the utmost carelessness,

"Oh, Mr. Montague! I have never asked you what became of that will of old Mr. Raby which was witnessed by you and me in 1802, and left in your hands."

Montague looked at him in blank dismay, and made no answer.

"Was it ever cancelled by him or by his order?" said Balcombe.

"I—I really do not know, sir."

"Did you ever return it to him?"

"Indeed, sir—I do not—I cannot remember rightly, sir, that I ever did."

"Do you remember the purport of that will, Mr. Montague? You wrote it, I believe."

"Yes, sir, I wrote it; but I cannot say that I remember *rightly* the *whole* purport of it."

"*Mr. Napier*," said Balcombe, turning to me and pronouncing my name with startling emphasis, "do you remember the substance of the memorandum taken by your father of what Mr. Raby told him about that will?"

"Yes, sir; and I have the memorandum itself in my pocketbook. Here it is."

The sudden annunciation of my name disclosed to Montague that he was in the toil, and again the same overwhelming agony of consternation came over him. Balcombe took the paper coolly, and read as follows: "Christmas day, 1802. Visited my father-in-law, Charles Raby, Esquire. Was informed by him that he had lately made a will revoking all former wills, by which he devised his whole estate to be divided into two equal parts, one of which is to be again divided between his two daughters and their heirs for ever, and the other to go to the first of his grandsons who should attain the age of twenty-one, and his heirs for ever. He added that he had left that will in the hands of a confidential friend."

"Does this memorandum correspond with your recollection of that will, Mr. Montague?"

"I really cannot say, sir; I cannot *exactly* charge my memory."

"I am aware of that, sir; but memory will sometimes carry things without being charged. Do you perceive any difference between the memorandum and the substance of the will?"

"Why, really, Mr. Balcombe!" said Montague,

in a tone of expostulation, and speaking as if, in the extremity of his distress, he was beginning to find courage to ward off the attack of his enemy. Balcombe suddenly shifted his position, and placed himself directly fronting Montague. In doing this he turned his back to Colonel Robinson, but was in full view of me. In his look there was nothing of menace, but I felt that I saw at that moment the same glance of power under which Montague had quailed when questioned concerning his views on Mary Scott. I saw Montague's spirit sink under it, and he stopped short. Balcombe slowly repeated his question. "I ask you now," said he, "whether you perceive any difference between that memorandum and the will, according to your recollection of it?"

"I cannot say that I do," faltered Montague.

"Enough," said Balcombe. "Colonel Robinson, I beg you to observe, that, to the best of Mr. Montague's recollection of that will, *written by himself, left in his care, never returned by him to the testator*, and *never*, to *his knowledge, cancelled by him*, or *by his order*, it corresponds with the memorandum I have read. Here is the memorandum, sir; I will thank you to look over it, see that I read it exactly as it is, and put some mark on the paper by which you can identify it again. Mr. Montague, I will trouble you no further."

These last words broke the spell that bound Montague to his chair. He rose, muttered something meant for an adieu, and left the house.

CHAPTER XVII.

Hear how he clears the points o' faith,
Wi' rattlin' and wi' thumpin'!
Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,
He's stampin' and he's jumpin'.
His lengthen'd chin and turn'd-up snout,
His eldritch squeal and gestures;
Oh! how they fire the heart devout
Like cantharidian plasters
On sic a day.

BURNS.

"WHAT upon earth does this mean?" said Colonel Robinson.

"It means," said Balcombe, "fraud, perjury, and suppression of a will. It means that my young friend here is Mr. Napier, grandson and heir at law of the friend and patron of my youth, Mr. Raby of Barnard's Castle in the county of Northumberland, Virginia; and that he has been defrauded of that splendid inheritance by the knavery of that scoundrel, in combination with another, by whom he has been bribed. It means that I am determined to see him righted and to restore him to the home of his ancestors, and that I will 'neither give rest to my eyes nor slumber to my eyelids,' till I have accomplished this. But come,

William, the game's afoot, and we must not slacken our pursuit; let us see what comes next."

"I am afraid," said I, "that the fierceness of your assault may put the fellow to flight, and that we may have to run him down, before we can bring him to action again."

"You say true," said Balcombe; "we must guard against that." He reflected a moment, and then said, "That will do; it will answer a double purpose. Come, William, we must take a walk."

We went out, and I asked what he proposed to do.

"Ascertain whether Montague will take to his heels; and if he does, pursue him, and bring him back."

"Bring him back!" said I. "By what means?"

"By means he cannot resist," replied Balcombe.

"I do not understand you," said I.

"Do you not? Have you not seen that with my eye upon him he is helpless as a charmed bird? I could lead him to Virginia, and lock him up in the penitentiary, if I could travel so far without sleeping. But I forget myself."

He put his whistle to his mouth and sounded a succession of notes, as if carelessly. Nothing could seem less like a signal; but I observed, that, as he repeated the use of the instrument, several times during the walk, he uniformly sounded the same notes.

"What does that mean?" said I.

"It is a hint to Keizer to fall in with me, as it

by chance. John is not far off, and a ramble of half an hour will hardly fail to bring us within hearing."

As he predicted, so it proved. We soon met with Keizer, when Balcombe asked if he knew Mr. Jones.

"Oh yes, sir."

"Have you any business with him?"

"I can make some, sir."

"Do you know Montague?"

"Oh, I know him mighty well, sir."

"Have you any business with him?"

"None just now, sir; but he is always glad to see me, for he is always getting me to do something for him."

"Well, he is at Jones's. I must see him before he quits the neighbourhood, and you must find out whether he means to stay to the campmeeting. If so, I want to know it. If you find out that he is going away, you must tell me directly, and let me know which way he is going. Does he know you to be my friend?"

"I reckon not, sir; he lives too far off."

"Then don't let him find it out. Now fork off at the next path. You and I must be strangers for a while; and mark this, John: if Montague talks of employing you in any way, you must be ready to do anything for him; and if he wants you to cut my throat, you must undertake it."

"I understand you, sir. Good-morning."

We now returned to the house, and spent a gay

and happy evening. Balcombe's spirits were most exuberant; and he rattled on, from topic to topic, so amusingly, that bedtime came before I thought of it. John did not appear; and we inferred that Montague, fearing to betray himself by precipitate flight, had determined to remain where he was. In the morning Keizer came and told us that Montague had been in the fidgets all the evening; had talked of going away; and had only been restrained by the earnest expostulations of Jones. His pleas of business were all overruled by allusions to those whose private affairs detained them from the marriage supper, and he saw that he might lose character by going away; he had therefore determined to stay.

About noon we all went to the campmeeting. Such things were not known in the part of the country where I lived; and I almost forgot the interesting condition of my affairs in the novelty of the scene.

In the bosom of a vast forest, a piece of ground, nearly an acre in extent, and in form almost a square, was enclosed on three sides by a sort of shed, sloping outward, and boarded up on the outside. This was divided into something like stalls, separated from each other and closed in front by counterpanes, blankets, and sheets, disposed as curtains. Some of these were thrown up, and within we saw coarse tables, stools, and preparations for eating and sleeping, such as piles of straw, beds tied up in bundles with bedclothes, knives and

forks, plates, porringers, and platters, loaves of bread, skimmed-milk cheeses, jirked meat, hams, tongues, and cold fowls. Children and dogs were nestling in the straw, and mothers sat on stools nursing their infants. The whole centre of the area was occupied by hewn logs, placed in extended parallel lines, with the ends resting on other transverse logs, so as to form rows of rude benches. On these were seated a promiscuous multitude, of every age, sex, condition, and hue; crowded densely towards the front, and gradually thinning in the rear, where some seats were nearly vacant, or partially occupied by lounging youngsters, chatting, smoking, and giggling, and displaying, both in dress and manner, a disposition to ape the foppery and impertinence of fashion. Of this, indeed, they saw so little in these remote wilds, that the imitation was of course awkward, but none the less unequivocal.

At the open end of the area was the stand, as it is called. This was formed by raising a pen of logs to a convenient height, over which a platform of loose planks was laid, surmounted by a shelter to keep off the sun and rain. The platform was large enough for a dozen chairs, occupied by as many preachers. It was surrounded by a strong enclosure, about twenty yards square, over the whole of which a deep bed of straw was laid. This, as I understood, was intended to save the bones of those who might be unable to keep their feet, under the eloquence of the preacher, the

workings of conscience, the conviction of sin, or the delirious raptures of newborn hope.

The preachers were, for the most part, men, whose dress and air bespoke a low origin, and narrow circumstances. Conspicuous among them was a stout old man, whose gray hair and compressed lips, ensconced between a long nose and hooked chin, could hardly have escaped observation under any circumstances. He alone was on his feet, and moved about the platform with a noiseless step, speaking in whispers to one or another of the preachers. At length he took his seat, and the officiating minister rose. He was a tall, slender youth, whose stripling figure lost nothing of its appearance of immaturity by being dressed in clothes which he had obviously outgrown. The bony length of naked wrist and ankle set off to the best advantage his broad hands and splay feet, the heels of which were turned out, as he moved forward to his place in front of the platform. His nearly beardless face was embrowned by the sun, his features were diminutive, and only distinguished by a full round forehead, and a hazel eye, clear, bright, and imaginative. He gave out a hymn, which was sung, and then offered up a prayer, which, though apparently meant to pass for extemporaneous, was obviously spoken from memory, and made up, for the most part, of certain forms of speech, taken from all the prayers and all the creeds that have ever been published, and arranged to suit the taste of the speaker, and

the peculiar doctrines of his sect. Then came another hymn, and then the sermon. It was a doctrinal essay, a good deal after the manner of a trial sermon, in which not a little acuteness was displayed. But the voice was untrained, the language ungrammatical, the style awkward, and the pronunciation barbarous. The thing went off heavily, but left on my mind a very favourable impression of the latent powers of the speaker. But he was not (to use the slang of the theatre) "a star." He was heard with decorous but drowsy attention, and took his seat, without having excited a shout or a groan. I could not help suspecting that the poor young fellow, being put forward as a foil for some popular declaimer, had had his discourse pruned of all exuberance of language or fancy, and reduced to a mere *hortus siccus* of theological doctrine. A closing prayer by an old minister, in which the effort of the "young brother" was complimented with a patronising air, was followed by another hymn, and the temporary dispersion of the assembly.

In the mean time the keen eye of Balcombe had discovered Montague, seated, with bare and bowed head, directly in front of the preacher, and listening with every mark of devout humility. He rose with the rest, and, with folded arms, walked apart, as in profound meditation. He joined none of the parties that flocked to the tents for refreshment, but, as if unconsciously, strayed into the wood. There was doubtless little of hypocrisy in his air

of abstraction and thoughtfulness. But how few of those who saw him guessed the nature of his thoughts?

I saw that Balcombe kept his eye upon him, and followed him at a cautious distance, accompanied by James Scott. At length seeing Montague detached from the crowd, they quickened their pace and joined him. He made a sudden stop and drew back, but soon moved on again, and the three disappeared together in the wood. I was much inclined to follow; but Balcombe's movements were all so indicative of some precise plan, that I feared to thwart it by my presence. Had he had occasion for me, he would have told me so. I endeavoured, therefore, to amuse myself with the strange anomalous scenes around me, until the service of the day was renewed.

Now came the turn of the old minister I first described. The audience had been wearied with a discourse not at all to their taste. They were now refreshed, and eager for some stimulus to help digestion. At first, I thought they would be disappointed; for he talked for a long time in a dull, prosing way, about himself, and the church, and was listened to with an air, which led me to conclude that he had established a sort of understanding with his hearers, that whatever he might say *must* be worth hearing, and taken with thankfulness. At length, however, he seemed to warm by slow degrees; his voice became louder, his utterance more rapid, his gestures more earnest;

and an occasional groan from the crowd bespoke their awaking sympathy. Presently he began to catch his breath, to rant and rave and foam at the mouth, and to give all the conventional tokens of enthusiasm and eloquence. The signals were duly answered by the groans, the sobs, the cries, the shouts, the yells of the multitude: some sprang to their feet and clapped their hands; some grasped the hands of others, with smiles and tears of sympathy and mutual gratulation; some fell down, and were hoisted over into the pen, where they lay tossing among the straw, and uttering the most appalling shrieks. The discourse was abruptly closed; and several of the preachers came down into the enclosure, and kneeling among the prostrate penitents, poured forth prayer after prayer, and shouted hymn after hymn, in which the whole audience joined in one wild burst of discord, broken down into harmony by the very clashing of jarring sounds.

The sun went down on this tumultuous scene, of which I could not foresee the termination; and, having lost my dinner, I found it high time to secure my supper by returning to Colonel Robinson's.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A sordid wretch,
Who but of fears knows no control.
He shamed not, loud to moan and howl,
His body on the floor to dash,
And crouch like hound beneath the lash.

SCOTT.

I FOUND Balcombe already at home and in high spirits. I saw that he had been successful in the operations of the day, and was impatient to know particulars.

"How have you sped?" said I, in a low voice.

"Well," said he; "excellent well. I will tell you all after supper."

But supper passed, and he rattled on till bed-time, talking, as usual, of everything and nothing, according to the humour of the moment. At length the ladies withdrew, when he turned to the colonel, and said,

"Come, sir, we must not keep you up. Napier and I have matters to talk over; and we must send James to bed, and have our conference here. So good-night, my dear boy. Good-night, colonel."

They withdrew, the shutters were closed, and all seemed hushed for the night.

"Was not Scott with you," said I, "that you sent him away?"

"A part of the time; not all. I sent him away when we came to speak of matters that he must never hear of. A noble fellow he is, William, and a rare proof he gave me this day of his delicacy and sense of honour."

"How was that?" said I. "But *belier, mon ami, commencez par le commencement*—begin at the beginning, and tell me all about it."

"Well," said Balcombe, "you saw us follow Montague and overtake him. 'I wish to speak with you, Mr. Montague,' said I. The fellow has sold himself to the devil, and how he will look when old Cloots comes to claim his bargain, I do not know; but I should think pretty much as he did when I accosted him. You know how he looked yesterday. Add to that the expression of mortal bodily fear, and you may have an idea of it. He tried to '*clap back*,' but I had cast the spell upon him, and he went on. I walked him away deep into the forest without speaking. I observed he breathed hard, and looked anxiously around. The only living thing he saw was James, following not far behind, and obviously in attendance on me. Seeing this, his terror increased, until he could go no farther. Indeed, we were far enough, in a remote sequestered spot, where interruption was hardly to be apprehended.

I accordingly stopped, drew forth the letter which James had put into my hands for him, and delivered it. He seemed somewhat relieved at the sight of it. I dare say he would have been less surprised to see me draw a pistol. It was long, and while reading it he seemed to recover from his terror. In the mean time, James approached and stood near. Montague at length finished the letter, and slowly folding it, declared himself ready to do and submit to whatever might be required.

"'In the first place, then, Mr. Montague, I wish to see that letter.'

"He started in great alarm, and said,

"'Is that one of the conditions?'

"'No, sir,' said I; 'it is not one of the conditions. It is what, as I have told you on other occasions, I wish to see for my own purposes, and to be used in my own discretion.'

"He looked at me and at James, and was preparing to make a virtue of necessity, when the noble boy spoke:

"'Mr. Balcombe,' said he, 'my sister charged me to see that that letter was delivered to Mr. Montague; and I am afraid it is not right, sir, that I should be aiding and abetting to its being taken from him.'

"'There is no need of your aiding and abetting, James,' said I; 'Mr. Montague will give me the letter of his own free will and accord. Your sister conceals nothing from me that she has a right to disclose. If there is anything in that letter that I

know not, it is Mr. Montague's secret, and he has a right to let me into it if he chooses.'

"'But I am afraid he don't choose, Mr. Balcombe; and if he gives you the letter it may be because we are two to one against him, and he cannot help himself.'

"'You say true, James,' said I; 'it might have that appearance. So go to the house, my dear fellow, and make yourself easy. All will go smooth between Mr. Montague and me.'

"He left us, and when he was entirely out of sight and hearing I turned to Montague:

"'Mr. Montague,' said I, 'I now repeat, that I must have a sight of that letter for my own purposes, and to be used in my own discretion.'

"'Really, Mr. Balcombe—"

"'Hand me the letter, if you please,' said I, quite mildly. I looked steadily in his face, and held out my hand until I felt the letter touch my fingers. I took it, and said,

"'Compose yourself, Mr. Montague. Sit down on this log and calm your mind, sir. We will talk the matter over presently.'

"I read the letter over at my leisure, and again addressed him:

"'It seems that I am made a sort of umpire in this business, sir.'

"'You are,' said he; 'and I submit to your umpirage. I will do whatever you may think it right to require of me, on condition that at the same mo-

ment the parcel there spoken of shall be handed to me.'

"'I require nothing else,' said I.

"'What, then, am I to do?' inquired he.

"'To come directly to the point, sir, I shall expect you to advance one thousand dollars in hand for the relief of this distressed family, and to deliver me ten bonds, for three hundred dollars each, payable to James Scott, at the end of each of ten successive years from this date, with good security to each bond.'

"'But where am I to get so much money?' said he.

"'Oh, quite easily. I will advance the thousand dollars on a draft on Tompkins and Todd of New-York; or, if you please, directly on Bell and Brothers of Liverpool; or more directly yet, sir, on *Edward Raby, Esquire*, of *Raby Hall*, in the county of *Northumberland*, in *England*.'"

I here interrupted Balcombe by exclaiming, "How did he stand that?"

"Exactly as I wished. At first he seemed about to sink into annihilation; then a sort of reaction took place, and he showed more spirit than I ever saw him manifest. His eye glared like that of a pent-up cat; and I dare say, if he had seen mine blench, there might have been some danger from his great strength, at a moment when cowardly ferocity—the very fierceness of terror and despair—supplied the place of courage.

"But I looked him down; a collapse came on,

and he wept and blubbered like a bad boy who is tied to the bedpost, and, after all his biting and kicking, finds he cannot get loose."

"But what motive had you for a taunt which might drive him to desperation?"

"Precisely that. I wish the advantage over him which desperation gives."

"But is there no danger that his desperation will seek some advantage of you?"

"Why, we must run that risk. It is only in the game of lives that openness and boldness have the benefit of their superiority over craft and cowardice. Let us play for chinquapins, and he will beat me from morning till night. Make life the stake, and he won't know one card from another."

"Well, how did the affair terminate?"

"Oh! very well. He came to himself at length, and professed all willingness to do the needful. But he must have time to look for the proper security. To this I agreed. He then mused awhile, and looking round with an eye that seemed to note the privacy of the spot, he said,

"'Meet me here, then, on Saturday evening at sunset precisely, and I will deliver the money and bonds, and receive the parcel. But where is that?'

"'James Scott has it.'

"'He will accompany you, then?'

"'Yes, unless you will authorize me to receive the parcel from him on your account.'

"He seemed alarmed at the bare thought, and

exclaimed against it, saying that he wished to see James. I therefore promised to take him there. In truth, I should not like to trust myself with such a temptation as the possession of that parcel might present. But no matter! I shall catch the villain in his own snare."

"Did you return the letter to Montague?"

"Oh, that's true! No, here it is."

He handed it to me, and we proceeded to make a copy of it. It was as follows:—

"It is not the purpose of this letter to reproach you with your crimes, or to degrade myself by fruitless complaint of the wretchedness they have brought upon me. My weak voice can add no terrors to the thunders of conscience. The history of my sufferings would be superfluous. So far as you are capable of comprehending them, you already know them. The want of the necessaries of life you can appreciate. Of the sting of self-reproach to a conscience not rendered callous by crime, of the deep sense of irreparable dishonour, of the misery of witnessing distress brought by our fault on those we love, you can form no conception.

"But you once professed to be so far sensible of these things as to acknowledge an obligation to repair, as far as practicable, the mischief you had done. How you since have evaded the effect of that acknowledgement you know. With that,

too, I don't mean to reproach you. My business is with justice—not revenge.

"In demanding justice I will do justice. Of the nature of the packet you once placed in my hands I know nothing. That its concealment enables you to work some iniquity I suspect, but to whom I know not. The possession of it, unsought by me, is at this moment only retained as the means of enforcing what you yourself know and have acknowledged to be justice. That done, it shall be restored to you.

"This will be handed to you by one who knows my wrongs, and can judge of the true measure of retribution. My brother, who will hand it to him, carries also a parcel for you, the receipt of which will enable you to regain the packet.

"It is not in my hands: I put it away out of the reach of your violence. It is in the hands of one who will deliver it only on the presentation of a certain token. That token is contained in the parcel placed in my brother's hands, and there also is the name of the depositary of the packet. When you shall have done that which, in the judgment of Mr. Balcombe, you ought to do, that parcel will be handed to you. I commit you to him. You know that you can confide in his honour, and with him you will not dare to palter. Having fulfilled his requisitions, never again, until you stand at the bar of God, will you hear the name of

"MARY SCOTT."

This letter was addressed, "To Edward Montague, by the hands of George Balcombe, Esq." Having copied it, I returned to Balcombe.

"And now," said I, "what is next to be done? That packet, doubtless, contains my grandfather's will."

"I think so."

"And the means of recovering it are now in this house, and in the possession of young Scott."

"Even so."

"Shall we, then, let them go out of his hands?"

"What shall we do? We must not pick Scott's pockets as he sleeps."

"Certainly not."

"I very much doubt whether he will give up the parcel even to me. He is charged to give it to no one but Montague; and he showed me plainly to-day that he is more apt to go beyond the mere letter of his engagement than to fall short."

"I admire and honour his scruples. But would they not give way, if he were made acquainted with the true character of the transaction. What if you were to tell him all you have told me?"

"He would cut Montague's throat, which would be no great matter; but then he would cut his own too. That boy could not live after hearing the history of his sister's dishonour."

"What, then, shall we do?"

"End as we have begun. Do the right thing, come what will of it. But, if we can make the wickedness of others give us a *right* to do what

might otherwise be *wrong*, I believe my casuistry will bear me out."

"I cannot say that I understand you," said I; "but I see you full of confidence, and am sure that you understand yourself."

"I do," said he. "I am now sitting up here to see Keizer."

"Do you expect him here?"

"Yes; he has orders to come at midnight. I expect to hear him every moment."

The expectation was not disappointed. The whistle was soon heard, and Balcombe, leaving the room, went out by a back way, and soon returned, conducting Keizer in the dark.

"You have seen no one as you came?" said Balcombe.

"Not a creature, sir."

"And no one knows of your having any conference with me?"

"Not a word, sir."

"Where do you stay?"

"At the camp, with the Indians."

"That's well. Have you seen Montague lately?"

"I saw him this evening."

"Any talk about business?"

"Nothing very particular; only he gave me to understand he should like to see me to-morrow."

"And what did you tell him?"

"Oh, I told him, sir, that I always liked to do business for a real gentleman, *like him;* and that

he might depend on me to do anything that I could for him; and I told him, too, that I always knew where to find men to help me out, and do such things as I could not do myself."

"Did you give him any hint about the Indians?"

"Oh yes, sir. He asked me where I staid, and I told him I was camped out with a couple of Shawnees, that would do anything in the world I told them."

"Did he ask where the camp was?"

"Yes, sir; and I told him. You know where you and he stopped, this morning, just in the head of a hollow? it's right down that hollow."

"What! did you see us?"

"To be sure I did, sir. What else am I here for? So when you parted, I was pretty sure you wanted to see *me*, and so I fell in with you as you came back."

"Well, how did he like the encampment?"

"He seemed mightily pleased, and said he wished for me to stay there, and then he would know where to find me."

"When are you to see him next?"

"He is to come there to-morrow, about the time the meeting breaks up for dinner."

"Well, John, I told you the other day, in a joke, that, if he wanted you to cut my throat, you must agree to do it. I now tell you so in sober earnest; for, as sure as you are alive, if he does not suspect your connection with me, he will try to get you and the Shawnees to do me some mischief."

"I am very glad we are here, then, sir; for if we were not, he would not have much trouble to find them that would do it."

"Whom do you mean, John?"

"Oh, nobody in particular; but, just at this time, there is not a rogue or ruffian in the country but what's just here."

"Then, John, you must honey him up, and keep between him and anybody else. If he does not make his bargain with you before twelve o'clock on Saturday, you must be sure to let me know, because I shall conclude he has employed some other person, and we must then lay *our* plans. But if he does speak out plain, you'd better not come near me any more lest he might suspect you."

"Mustn't I let you know what he wants me to do?"

"No; there's no need. I know pretty well what it will be. There's no occasion to fix any snare for him; for when I touch the trigger he sets for me, he will be right under his own trap."

"I don't rightly understand you, colonel; but I have no doubt it will all work right. You and I have had to do before now with cunninger folks than this fellow, and braver ones, too, I think."

"Well, John, it is time to rest. I would ask you to stay here, but you must go away under cloud of night."

"Thank ye, colonel. I would just as lief walk to the camp. It's not over two miles off, and all

hours are the same to me. So good-night, gentlemen."

Balcombe conducted him out and soon returned.

"Do you understand the game now?" said he.

"Not exactly."

"Well, here it is. Three hundred dollars per annum, for ten years, amounts to three thousand, and one thousand in hand makes four; and for four thousand dollars Montague would murder his own father, and dishonour the memory of the mother that bore him. Now if, instead of paying this price to possess himself of the token, he can trepan Scott and myself and take it from him, there will be so much saved."

"But will he not fear prosecution?"

"He might if Scott and I should be forthcoming. But that hollow leads down to the Missouri, which is not a half mile off, and, if he meets me there, and *I* had a mind, I could have *him* placed beyond the Rocky Mountains, or buried in the sands of the Missouri; no doubt he thinks he will have the same power over me."

"But would he incur not merely the guilt, but the penalties of murder?"

"No need of that. What law is there to make him responsible for the acts of Indians, in their own country?"

"Then what is your plan?"

"Why, simply this: if he takes the token from Scott by violence, I will take it from him by the hands of his own instruments. But if he disap-

points my calculations on his villany and cunning, and gets it fairly, I will then be fair with him, and try whether, for once in his life, he can refuse to do my bidding. One way or another he shall not escape me; but the advantage I seek I would rather obtain by his fault than mine. But come; the night wears. So to bed."

CHAPTER XIX.

The father, too—a sordid man,
Who love nor pity knew;
Was all unfeeling as the clod
From whence his riches grew.
Long had he seen the secret flame,
And seen it long unmoved;
Then, with a father's frown at last,
Had sternly disapproved.

MALLET.

THE next was a day of leisure. I had no disposition to revisit the encampment; and my mind, for the first time in several days, was left free to turn to home and distant friends. In giving Balcombe the history of my love for my cousin, I had presented a picture which seemed quite flattering in my own eyes, and the more so, because I saw that to Balcombe it suggested a favourable prognosis of my case. I found myself taking encour-

agement to hope that Ann's feelings were just a counterpart to my own. But how could she bring her mind to dwell upon the thought of marrying another man, without being undeceived, as I had been, by like means? Was it possible that she had so far merely acquiesced in the attentions of Howard, without having brought herself to look distinctly at the question of the acceptance or final rejection of his hand? Might not this be so? For some reason, his courtship had been of a very peculiar character, more marked by delicacy than ardour. There was never anything urgent in his manner. His attentions were always ready, but rather deferential than assiduous, and such as might leave a delicate and simple-minded girl—one entirely satisfied with her actual condition, and not at all on the lookout for a husband—to feel as if she had her lifetime to make up her mind in. There certainly was reason to dread the result of such a course of attention, for it seemed precisely adapted to the character and temper of its object. Whether Howard had been led into it by the native delicacy of his own mind, or by an instinctive perception of that of the lady, or by the advice of one who knew her better than he did, I had no means of judging. In offering his hand, too, I understood that he did not press for a decisive answer, but seemed merely to wish permission to lay his pretensions before her, to be considered of at her perfect leisure. Might it not then be that the question had never been so brought home to

her mind, as to startle her with the thought of giving to him that place in her intimacy, confidence, and affection, which I had always occupied.

It appeared to me that Balcombe saw the matter in this light; but it was plain, too, that he was puzzled to understand some things that I had told him.

While I sat meditating on these matters, James Scott, who seemed a very bookworm, was reading, and Colonel Robinson, occupied with the business of his farm, left me in the care of Balcombe, who set me completely at ease by taking no notice of me at all. At length, after bustling about for some hours, he came in, took a seat, and entered into conversation with me.

"The urgency of our affairs, William," said he, "has so engaged me, that I have neglected heretofore to inquire about your family. You are the only son?"

"I am."

"You spoke of sisters."

"I have two; one younger, and one older than myself."

"Married?"

"No; neither of them married."

"Jane is the eldest, is she not? I think it was the name of the little girl I saw at your grandfather's, the last time I was there. She must be three years older than you. Four-and-twenty, and yet unmarried!"

"She probably never will marry."

"Why so? She was a beautiful little girl."

"And is a beautiful woman yet, though somewhat faded. No doubt, fallen as our fortunes are, she might marry respectably enough; but, with her, marriage is, as it should be, an affair of the heart, and she will never marry where she does not love."

"But what should prevent her loving?"

"An entanglement of the affections with one whom she will probably never marry."

"And who is he?"

"Young Douglas; the son of Mr. Douglas of Tamworth."

"What! the brother of Howard's mother?"

"The same. They have been long mutually attached, even from the boyhood of Douglas, who is the younger of the two. At first his father favoured the connection; but soon the ruin of mine was fully developed, and the secret came out, that Jane, instead of being an heiress, and the sister of a man of large fortune, was but one of a family of beggars, no one of whom could help another. Old Douglas, who loves money, presently began to create difficulties. As one obstacle was removed, another appeared, and, finally, he declared peremptorily against the match."

"And what of that?" said Balcombe. "The authority of a father may forbid an engagement, but it can never break off one made with his consent. It is no longer a question between father

and son only. There are covenanted rights of a third person to be considered."

"That is true. But not only is the old gentleman a man of high and stern authority, whom it is not easy to disobey, but his son, educated, like myself, to no profession, is wholly dependant on his father, who will give him nothing if he does not marry to please him. Now, as young Douglas and Jane have both acquired expensive habits, nothing could be more hopeless than their union. The young fellow showed some spirit, and a good deal of constancy; but his visits to our house were forbidden. He was thrown much in company with his cousin, Miss Howard, whom his father wished him to marry, and for a while rumour gave them to each other. But he accompanied her to Oakwood; there he and Jane met; and though I am not sure that their engagement was formally renewed, yet they seemed to be drawn together very much, and I thought I saw symptoms of a good understanding between them. Certain it is, that Douglas, who, until then, was considered as having precedence of all who might approach Miss Howard, distinctly made way for me; and it was into his vacant place that I was so often thrown, as to seem to others, and almost to myself, like a favoured suitor of that lady. Indeed, there was so much of cordial intimacy between Miss Howard and Jane, as to make it probable that the former, indifferent to her cousin, as she plainly was, desired to promote his union with her friend.

"To this object I, of course, was not indifferent. I would not have Jane force herself on the family of a purse-proud old man. I would not have her beguile her lover into a marriage which would beggar him. But when I saw that his affection had not given way under the rude trials to which it had been exposed, I began to entertain a vague hope that time might effect a change in the old man's disposition, and reward my sister's constancy with the hand of the only man she had ever loved. Hence, I found myself more readily giving in to the occasional arrangements which threw me in attendance on Miss Howard; and I am not sure that her wish to transfer her cousin to my sister was not the feeling, which was interpreted by others as partiality for me. I would not interrupt my story the other night by telling you these things; but you now have all the parties before you, in all their various relations to each other."

"And a snug six-handed party it is. Two, and two, and two. Partners all around. But, as far as I can see, Douglas and Jane are the only two that may not wish their partners to lose. *They* have one common object. But it is clearly not so with Miss Howard and you, and, I hope, not so with her brother and Ann. I should like to have a chance to walk around the table, and peep into all the hands. The game is not equal, where some of the party understand each other, and some do not."

"But surely there can be no foul play between *such* parties?"

"Not exactly what they would admit, to themselves even, to be foul play; but there must be a strong bias."

"How so?"

"Suppose Howard to marry Ann. Nay! don't go into fits at the supposition; to comfort you, let us suppose, too, that you marry the sister. The condition of your family would certainly be much improved. Your mother and sisters would not, indeed, be richer, but they would retain that position in society, on which, in affairs of the heart, so much depends, and which is so important in the eyes of a man of aristocratic pride, like old Douglas. The old man would have lost that match for his son, on which he had set his heart; he would be shamed, by the example of the proud, highborn, and wealthy Howards, out of his opposition to a connection which they had eagerly sought; and the union of his son and your sister would follow as a matter of course. Had you thought of all this?"

"Indeed I had not."

"Then reverse the supposition. Let Ann marry you. Let your condition in life be irrevocably fixed at the low point to which the villany of Montague has reduced you. What then would prevent the marriage of Douglas and Miss Howard? And where would the females of your family find means to retain their place in that circle in

which they have hitherto moved? They must lose caste; a fate as terrible to the worshippers of fashion, as to those of Brahma. The lot of a Paria is hardly more deplorable, than that of a young woman excluded by poverty from the circles in which she has been accustomed to be received with attention. Had you thought of these things?"

"No, indeed; and gladly now would I banish thoughts so horrible and disgusting from my mind."

"They are, doubtless, unwelcome. But you must learn to endure their presence and examine into their truth. In the mean time, endeavour to look into the subject philosophically, and you may find the suggestion I have offered less revolting. You will see that they who would marry you to Miss Howard and Ann to her brother are actuated by all the most powerful considerations that can present themselves to the human mind. Of these many are praiseworthy, none base. They may not be aware of any attachment between you and Ann, or they may think it a mere childish fancy, which will easily be dispelled; and may believe that, in directing your affections to other objects, they are, in effect, serving both you and her. Can you think it strange, then, if all about you worked to the same end? and that being the case, can you wonder that Howard should always find a vacant place at the side of Ann, and that the hand of his sister should be always left for you? Don't let my suggestions, William, produce any bitterness of

feeling towards those who love you, and whom you love. I don't mean to intimate any foul play. But I can see plainly how all about you must have wished to establish just such a delusion as, I am sure, has taken possession of Ann's mind and yours."

"I understand all this; and while it awakens something like hope, it fills me with alarm to think of what may happen while I am here. On your hypothesis, the first point in the game would be Ann's marriage."

"Or yours."

"Oh, mine is out of the question; and after what has passed between Ann and me, they must be aware of that. Besides, I am here; and my absence, which renders the one more impracticable, may favour the other."

"I am not so sure of that. Ann has never before been absent from you more than a day or two at a time. She has been happy, and, as you said of yourself, has probably never analyzed the elements of her happiness. If I am right, she will miss something in your absence which may set her to thinking. If she once finds out the secret of her own heart, you have nothing to fear but from injurious misrepresentations."

"Of them there can be no danger."

"Of calumny and malicious slander, none, certainly; but I would not swear that she does not believe you engaged to Miss Howard."

"It is well, then, I did not visit Castle Howard in my way to the West."

"That's as it may be. We have no time to lose here, William. I am impatient to bring matters to a close with this caitiff; and as soon as that is done we must be off. My preparations are begun, and will be easily completed; and if all works well to-morrow night, why, then, we will take with us the prayers of the church for all who travel by land and by water, on Sunday morning."

It may be readily believed that this conversation did not leave me in a very comfortable state of mind. I remembered the disproportionate distress of Ann at the intimation of my passion, and the prudish austerity with which Jane reproved what she seemed to consider a glaring impropriety, but what was, to me, the exercise of a natural right. I remembered how the door of explanation had been shut in my face, and how I had been denied all access to Ann until I had bound myself, by a solemn promise, to seek no explanation. Such had been the effect of that promise, as I now saw clearly; and I trembled to think of the irreparable mischief which might be done in my absence in furtherance of the designs which I now suspected for the first time. The suggestions of Balcombe all seemed to stand before me self-proved. I tried to see the motives of others in the most favourable light, and I brought myself to agree that it was my duty to forgive all that had been attempted; while I felt that it would

be impossible to do so, unless I should be so fortunate as to defeat the attempt. My impatience to return to Virginia became excessive, and was the more restless, because I had no part in what was doing, although my interest in the affair was greater than that of any other person.

CHAPTER XX.

"Friendship was never made for me,
Too poor to have a friend.
Give, and I'll take, whate'er it be,
Or borrow, if you'll lend.
And I'll be grateful to the last
While you have aught to give.
Favours to come, not favours past,
Are those by which I live."

I ACCORDINGLY determined to urge Balcombe to reconsider his scruples, and to endeavour to obtain the token from James Scott at once. He agreed to make the experiment, and we accordingly sought James, whom we found in my room closely engaged with a book. Balcombe now told him that on the next morning he was to meet Montague, who would then comply with the proper conditions, so as to entitle himself,

according to Mary's instructions, to receive the parcel intended for him.

"You have it about you?" inquired Balcombe.

"Oh, yes, sir," said he; showing, at the same time, a small paper, which looked as if it might contain such a little casket as is commonly used to hold a single ring. It was tied up with several threads of silk, all of which were secured at the intersection by a seal.

"I will take it, then, James," said Balcombe, carelessly, "and deliver it to Mr. Montague, when he has done the needful on his part."

The young man hesitated, and said,

"I am afraid that will not be right, sir. My sister made me promise that I would not give this to any one upon earth but Montague."

"But, James, she has committed the whole negotiation to me; and it is therefore necessary for me to have this casket, that I may give it to Montague according to our agreement."

"He shall have it, sir; my orders are to give it to him, as soon as you say the word, and not before; and I will do it. I will go with you, and when you tell me to give it to him, he shall have it."

"Surely," said I, "you can trust Mr. Balcombe."

"I certainly can," replied he; "and I hope Mr. Balcombe does not suppose that there is any distrust of him in my conduct."

"None at all, my dear boy," said Balcombe; "I understand you perfectly."

"But what if I tell you," said I, "that that casket is of more importance to me than to Montague, and that I have a better right to it than he or any other person."

The young man started, stared at me in amazement, then looked doubtingly at Balcombe, and said,

"No; I will not believe it. This was no plan of yours, Mr. Balcombe, to get this deposite into your hands, in order that any one but Montague might obtain it."

"Indeed it was not, James."

"How is this, then, sir?" said he, turning upon me with some fierceness. But his manner became immediately mild, and even tender. "I know you," he continued, "as Mr. Balcombe's friend, but I know you in no other character; and I cannot take it kindly of you, sir, to wish to beguile me into a breach of trust. As to any interest you have in the matter, I don't see it, and if I did I should be but the more on my guard."

"He is right, nevertheless, James," said Balcombe. "He has a great interest in the matter; he has been very much wronged by this same Montague; and the possession of that parcel would enable him to right himself."

"I am sorry for it, sir; and, as I am sure my poor sister would not wrong any man, I wish you

had it. But my word is passed to her, and I shall not put it into any hands but Mr. Montague's."

"Are you satisfied?" said Balcombe to me.

"I am," said I, holding out my hand to Scott; "and I respect your scruples, though I suffer by them."

"I don't understand how it is, sir," said he, taking my hand with quiet indifference. "If you are wronged, I hope you'll get justice. I only wish you had not tried to make me break my word."

"You would not blame him, James, if you knew all," said Balcombe; "and you must be friends."

"I must forget all my sister has told me about you, sir, and all I have seen, before I refuse my friendship to any friend of yours."

Saying this, he turned to me, and held out his hand again with an air of frank cordiality. I took it, and we exchanged a grasp of good-will on his part and admiration on mine.

I now saw that, for the present at least, it was best to await the result of Montague's machinations, and try to turn them against him. I accordingly calmed myself, and resolved to pass the time as agreeably as I could. I found that my hospitable entertainer had invited a party to dine with me, and it was my duty to rally my spirits. How far I succeeded, I know not. The day, however, passed off pleasantly, and I was willing to believe that I had not made myself unacceptable to my new acquaintances. In the evening we had a

dance to the fiddle of an old negro, and separated with good feelings and high spirits, about midnight.

I had just retired to my room, when I heard Keizer's whistle giving notice of his presence; and soon after Balcombe appeared, half dressed, accompanied by this trusty *kenchman*.

"What news, John?" said he.

"Nothing very good, I'm afraid, sir; but I thought I'd just come and tell you all about it, and then you'd be the best judge. You know you told me I need not come to you, if Montague made me any direct offer, because you said you'd know what it was; but then I thought it looked a little suspicious, and was afraid, maybe, he might be trying to fool me; so, you see, I'll just tell you the straight of it all. You know he was to go to see me at the camp to-day, and, sure enough, he was there. And so he tells me, first, there was a certain man that had some of his property, and refused to give it up, unless he would pay him a power of money.

"'Then,' says I, 'why don't you sue him for it?'

"'Why,' says he, 'I cannot prove anything about it; and he would not let me know anything of it; only it's worth a great deal to me, and of little or no use to him.'

"'Well,' says I, 'and what do you mean to do about it?'

"'Why, that's what I don't rightly know,' says he. 'He has promised to meet me at a certain

place, and give it up to me; but then he says I must pay him down a large sum of money on the nail, and give him my bond for three times as much more.'

"'Well,' says I, 'every man knows his own business best; but, if it was me, I'd see him d—d before I'd give him one cent.'

"'I'd rather you wouldn't swear about it,' says he; 'but you may be sure I don't like it. But that is not the worst of it,' says he. 'There's two of them; and they are to meet me together; and when they get me there, in the woods, by themselves, I don't think they'd be a bit too good to take my money and keep my property too.'

"'Then,' says I, 'I guess that you want somebody to go with you.'

"'Something so,' says he. And then he claps to thinking, and he rolls up the whites of his eyes, just like he was going to say grace; and says he, talking mighty serious and solemn, says he, 'Would it not be a righteous deed, in the sight of God, if they do make such an attempt, to turn the tables on them, and take my property without paying for it?'

"Now, you see, colonel," continued Keizer, "the minute I heard him talk that way, I knew he was dubious of me. Because, you see, sir, Mr. Montague knows me before to-day; and he knows how to do business with such as me, and he knows that is not the way."

"How so, John?" said Balcombe.

"Why, sir, in such business as this, it will never do for one man to fool another, nor to tell him anything but the naked truth; because, when a fellow has a ticklish job in hand, he ought to know exactly how the land lies. You see, sir, it's just like what the lawyer said to the thief. Says he, 'If you don't tell me the truth, how am I to know how to tell lies for you?'"

"And why did you think he was deceiving you, John?"

"Because I knew who he was talking about; and I knew that all that, about your wanting to make him pay for his own, was a lie. And as to his thinking that you would want to rob him, Lord bless you, sir! Mr. Montague knows what an honest man is; and he has no more notion of that, than he would have of robbing himself."

"You reasoned the matter well, John. And what answer did you make?"

"Oh, I told him nothing in life would be easier than to turn the tables on the fellows; and, if he wanted help, why, there was I and the Indians."

"And what said he?"

"Why, he made believe he had not thought about it before, and he had no time to stay, but I must go to see him to-night at Jones's."

"And did you go?"

"Yes, sir; and then it was that I saw greater cause to think that maybe he is a little suspicious. You see I went there about dusk, and they had been starving at the campmeeting all day, and

were just getting their dinner. So, as I was not hungry, I sits down in the porch, at the front door; and they were in the diningroom; and the door into the passage was open, and I could hear all the clash of their knives and forks; but they could not see me. For a while they were too busy to talk; but, at last, they seemed to slack eating, and Montague, says he,

"'Brother Jones, do you know what sort of a man John Keizer is?'

"'I cannot say I do, brother Montague,' says Jones; 'but many people give him a desperate bad name. But I rather think he don't deserve it all; because,' says he, 'there's Colonel Balcombe knows him better than anybody else, and he trusts him in his business, and seems to have the greatest confidence in him. And more than that,' says he, 'the colonel has employed him to buy cattle, and horses, and mules for him; and he has bought of me, and, so far as I could see, he never offered to take the least advantage of either of us. There's worse men than Keizer. There's that Sam Todd, that was here this morning, and his brother, ten times as bad.'

"'And how came he and Balcombe so thick?' says Montague.

"'Oh,' says Jones, 'they have been through the rubbers together, in the war, and in the Indian country, and in the Spanish country; and whenever Keizer is in trouble any way, the colonel is always ready to help him.'

"So they talked on a while longer," continued John; "and by this time it was getting dark, and they were done their dinner. So, presently, all was still; and then I heard Jones ask brother Montague to return thanks. So I steps off a few steps from the house, and then turns round and walks right back and meets them in the porch, as they came out to cool themselves; so they had no chance to think I had heard a word. So we how-d'yed all round; and Montague, he had not much to say for a while, and it was so dark I could not see how he looked. But after a while Jones went into the house, and then says Montague to me, in a sort of a whisper like, says he,

"'Can you stay here to-night?'

"'No,' says I, 'I must go back to my camp about midnight.'

"'Well,' says he, 'you can stay till then. There is a bed in my room, and you can tumble it, and then go away after everybody's asleep, and people won't know but what you went off after light; because,' says he, 'I sleep in an outhouse there, off to itself.'

"'Well,' says I, 'I have no objection.'

"So after a while Jones comes out, and Montague tells him he had business with me, and wanted me to stay all night, that we might talk it over in bed.

"'To be sure,' says Jones, 'brother Montague, I shall be glad to accommodate you, and glad of Mr. Keizer's company too.'

"So then we talked a while about one thing and another, and then they had prayers, and we all went to bed. When we got into our room, he sot and studied a spell; and at last says he,

"'Do you know Colonel Balcombe?'

"'I guess I do,' says I; 'I've known him longer and better than any man in the whole country.'

"'Then he is a particular friend of your's?'

"'As to the matter of friendship,' says I, 'that's what I don't know so much about. It is not any great deal I have to do with anybody, except in the way of business; though I suppose if a poor fellow like me has any friends, Colonel Balcombe is as likely to be my friend as anybody else. But I never calculate on nobody's friendship.'

"'Then, I suppose,' says he, 'nobody need calculate on your's?'

"'Why, no, sir,' says I, 'not to say rightly *friendship*; because, you see, sir, I cannot afford it. But I live by my business, Mr. Montague; and I know,' says I, 'the way to do that, is to be as true as my old rifle, that always puts the ball right where I hold it; and them that primes and loads me well,' says I, 'sir, has only just to point me right, and they can give a right good guess where I'll hit.'"

"That was well said, John," said Balcombe.

"I, God! sir," said Keizer, "I was obliged to be right foxy with him, and I thought that speech sorter satisfied him; so says he,

"'Suppose it should be Colonel Balcombe that I am to meet to-morrow evening?'

"'Damn the odds!' says I.

"With that he looks at me desperate hard, as if he was going to scold again about my swearing; but after a while his face brightened up like a bad dollar rubbed over with quicksilver; and says he,

"'Well, come again at sunrise, and I will walk out with you, and show you the place where we are to meet; and then,' says he, 'you can fix things so as to lie close, till you see the time to show yourself.'

"And with that," continued Keizer, "I came away, to let you judge for yourself how the matter stands."

"All right, John," said Balcombe; "all exactly right. It seems a little strange that he should be willing to depend on you; but he thinks you as great a villain as himself, and *he* would betray his own father. But all is right, John; and you must get to rest, and be ready to meet him in the morning."

"No fear of that, sir; I am not apt to sleep too sound when Indians are about."

Balcombe now conducted him out, and returned.

"What think you of that fellow?" said he.

"I think," said I, "that the *twasome* of you would prove a match for the devil, and the best imp in his dominions."

"Perhaps so," said he. "If he is not belied, I

should have the same advantage over him that I have over Montague."

"How so?"

"Being all evil, without any admixture of good, I could calculate on him. Had not this been such a villain as is not to be found again out of hell, he would have foiled me, through fear that John's gratitude might bind him to me. Good-night."

CHAPTER XXI.

Some signs of fray
That strand of strife may bear,
And fragments of each shivered brand,
Steps stamped and dashed into the sand,
The print of many a struggling hand,
May there be marked.

BYRON.

THE result of this conference was entirely satisfactory to me. I saw my way clear to the recovery of the lost will, and the re-establishment of the fortunes of my family. I saw, too, that there was now no prudential consideration to restrain me from pressing my suit with Ann, and, at least, satisfying myself, whether her happiness, as well as my own, had been endangered by my former reserve. But my mind only became more restless

and impatient in view of this aspect of affairs; and, though the night was far spent, I had no disposition to sleep. I began to think that it would be an age to the next evening; but weariness at length overcame me, and I slept. I dreamed of home. Ann was before me; Howard was at her feet; he was ardent and tender; she, pale, agitated, and alarmed. With an averted and tearful eye, she permitted him to take her hand; he pressed it to his lips; his eye searched her countenance with the eagerness of baffled hope; she merely raised hers to lift them despairingly to heaven; they fell on me. She sprung to my embrace, hung on my neck, and seemed to lose all consciousness of anything but that she was once more in my arms.

The next day, Balcombe took pity on my impatience, and employed me about his preparations for our journey. At last the evening came, and he and Scott walked out. Their departure increased my restlessness. The sun was not long down, before I sallied forth and took the direction in which Scott and Balcombe had disappeared. The old gentleman, seeing I was for a walk, called after me and joined me. We loitered slowly along, as I was in no hurry to pass the point at which I had lost sight of Balcombe. Here I paused, and the colonel proposed to go back to the house. I lingered a few moments, and finally expressed my wish to await the return of Balcombe. He ac-

quiesced at first; but, as the night began to close in upon us, became impatient to go home.

"To tell you the truth," said I, when he again suggested this, "I am a little uneasy about Mr. Balcombe's absence."

"Uneasy!" said he; "why so? No man on earth knows better how to take care of himself than Balcombe."

"I am aware of that," said I. "But he had not far to go, his hour of appointment was sunset, and the business which carried him could only be done in daylight. It would not take two minutes. He ought, therefore, to have been here before now."

"He might have been. But why should he hurry back?"

"He knows that I am impatient for the issue of the adventure; and he would be impatient to disclose it to me."

"The *adventure!*" said Colonel Robinson, with some surprise. "What does this mean? Whom has Balcombe gone to meet?"

"Montague," said I, after some hesitation.

"What!" said the old man; "can Montague have screwed up his courage to demand satisfaction for Balcombe's treatment of him on Wednesday?"

"No, indeed; but I am afraid he may have laid a plot to take it, without demanding it. Indeed, I know he did lay a plot of that sort, which could not have failed if his instrument had been true to him."

"What instrument?"

"Keizer."

"Keizer! Good God! I hope Balcombe's safety does not depend on the choice Keizer may make which of the two he may betray, him or Montague. For God's sake, Mr. Napier, what does all this mean?"

His obvious alarm increased mine. I had no time for explanations, but proposed to go in quest of Balcombe.

"Which way did he go?" said he.

"This way, so far; but beyond this I know nothing."

"Beyond this is nothing but one vast forest down to the river."

"Then," said I, "let us go to your neighbour Jones's." He assented and led the way.

"Are you acquainted," said I, "with Mr. Jones's premises?"

"Perfectly."

"There is an outhouse in which he lodges his guests; is there not?"

"There is."

"Montague lodges there. Will it not be well to go to that house first? If he is there, we can see *him* without troubling the family."

To this he assented, and a walk of half an hour brought us to the place. The night was pitchy dark, and we saw nothing of the law building we were in quest of, until we were quite near it. It was a log cabin, of a single room, with a chimney

of logs at one end; on the side next us was a solitary window, and, directly opposite, a door. As we neared it, and began to be aware of its proximity by the deepening shade of darkness, we heard the door open; a dim, red spot of light was seen through the window, and, at the same moment, the door was again closed. I was within a few feet of the window at the moment, and saw that this phenomenon was produced by the entrance of some one bearing a small brand of fire. Waving this to and fro, he groped about, and found a candle, which he soon succeeded in lighting. As the light blazed up, I saw that it was Montague. He placed the candle on a small table which stood between the door and window, took off his hat, sat down, and wiped his brow, and then leaned his head on his hands, as if in great agitation. Presently he recovered himself, and took from his pocket a small parcel, which I immediately knew to be the same I had seen in the hands of James Scott. This he opened, and took out of a small ring casket a scrap of paper, and something, apparently very small, which glanced in the light of the candle with metallic lustre. While he sat looking at these, I stole round to the door. There was an opening between the logs, through which I looked, and saw him in the act of replacing the things in the casket. Keeping my eye upon him, I tapped the door, in the light, familiar, household way. Immediately he closed the casket, and open-

ing a small drawer in the table, threw it in; then rose and opened the door.

I entered, and was followed by Colonel Robinson. He did not seem at first to recognise me, for he had scarcely seen me, but the sight of Colonel Robinson brought him to his recollection.

Nothing could exceed the consternation with which he regarded us both. I gave him no time to recover himself, but walking directly up to his table, placed myself at the end next the drawer. I was now secure of one point, and informed him that we were in quest of Mr. Balcombe.

"Mr. Balcombe, sir! Mr. Balcombe has not been here."

"So I see, sir; but as Mr. Balcombe went out to meet you this evening, we thought you might tell us what had become of him."

"To meet me, sir! Indeed, sir, I don't know what has become of him."

"Nor of my grandfather's will either?" said I, sternly.

He staggered back at these words, and I at the same moment opened the drawer, and taking out the casket, added,

"And how came you by this, sir?"

In all my life I have never witnessed such an appearance of utter discomfiture and dismay as he exhibited. He sunk into a chair in such a condition of body and mind as to make it impossible for a while to carry on any communication with him. This appearance by no means relieved our appre-

hensions for Balcombe. I knew that it was no part of his plan to let Montague carry off the casket. His possession of it, therefore, showed not only that they had met, but that Balcombe had been baffled; and how could that be but by the double treachery of Keizer? and where would he stop when he had made up his mind to play the traitor with Balcombe? He was not a man to do things by halves; and, having gone so far, would not be less interested than Montague to put Balcombe for ever out of the way. I had heard enough, indeed, to suppose that he was probably yet alive, but that he might be carried off and never heard of again. I therefore endeavoured to calm Montague as much as possible; and, as soon as he seemed capable of understanding me, told him that I knew Balcombe and Scott had gone to meet him, that I knew that they carried that casket with them, and that if any harm befel them he would answer it with his life.

"You must be aware," said I, "that I know how desirable Mr. Balcombe's death would be to you. If he disappears, I have but to show this casket, and tell my tale, and no human being will doubt that he has been murdered, and by your procurement. I accordingly take you into custody, and unless you conduct me to Balcombe, I conduct you to the next magistrate. Take your choice, and that instantly."

He now looked at me imploringly, and said, in a tone of despair, "I don't know where it is!"

"Where what is?" said I.

"The Rockhouse! the Rockhouse!" screamed he; "I don't know where it is!"

"But I do," said Robinson. "Is Balcombe there, and alive?"

"Oh," said Montague, "I hope he is there! I hope they have not done him any harm!"

"Come along with us, sir," said the colonel, hastily, and laying hold of the arm of the passive Montague, he led him along. I followed, and we groped our way in darkness until we came to the road which passed near the house. This we took.

"This is not the most direct way," said the colonel, "but we must follow this road to the ferry, and then keep down the bank."

"What is the Rockhouse?" said I.

"It is a place on the bank of the river, where a low projecting rock overhangs the beach, and makes a sort of cave, or rather a shelter, open to the sun. The direction in which Balcombe left the house pointed to the head of a hollow which leads down directly to it. It stands at the mouth of that hollow."

"And in that hollow," said I, "was the camp of Keizer and his Indians."

"Exactly so. By daylight we should go that way; but the place is too dark and rugged. We shall have more light along the river bank."

A walk of an hour brought us to the spot. As we drew near, Colonel Robinson apprized Montague of it, and said, "Now, sir, as soon as we

reach the mouth of the cave you are to speak and make yourself known. Are you armed, Mr. Napier?"

"I am; are you?"

"No; but you are, Mr. Montague. Give me your arms, sir, and speak, as I have told you, to Keizer or Balcombe, as you please."

We now examined Montague, and took from him a pair of pistols and a dirk, with which the old gentleman armed himself. I was equipped in like manner.

As it turned out, we had no occasion for our weapons. We reached the spot, and Montague said, "Mr. Balcombe! Mr. Balcombe!" All was still as death. We listened, and heard no breath or motion. We groped around the wall, looking out, at the same time, to the light at the mouth. But we neither felt nor saw anything. Near the mouth of the cave my foot slipped, and I fell with my hands in a sort of puddle that felt a little warmer than I should have expected to find the ground in that damp place. The idea of blood occurred to me at once. I mentioned it; and Colonel Robinson, who had flint, steel, and touch-wood in his pocket, struck a light. We now saw that I had not been mistaken. On the edge of the bank, just at the mouth of the cave, lay a quantity of blood. Near it was a bit of rope, which seemed to have been tied at each end around something not larger than a man's arm, and then cut loose; and, leading directly down from the puddle of

blood, were steps deeply imprinted in the sand, and the marks of a heavy body dragged down to the water's edge. The track could hardly fail to remind any one who had seen him, of Keizer's moccasin and diminutive foot. This discovery was nearly fatal to Montague. Nothing could exceed the attachment of Colonel Robinson to his son-in-law; and now, frantic with rage, he drew a pistol, and commanded Montague to prepare for death. The poor wretch fell upon his knees in prayer, not to God, but man, and, eloquent with terror, declared that if Balcombe had been murdered, it was contrary to his orders. He had expressly enjoined his agents to do him and Scott no harm.

"What, then, were they to do with them?"

"To carry them out of the state."

"Whither?"

"Into the Indian country."

"And what then?"

No answer. By this time the colonel recovered his self-command, and determining to leave Montague to the fate appointed by the law, we resumed our march. The moon had just risen, and gave a little light, and as the head of the hollow, at the mouth of which we were, was not far from Colonel Robinson's, we determined to grope our way through that gorge. We had not gone far before we saw a light. We approached cautiously, but seeing no living creature, we went near, and found the remains of the Indian encampment. A few

half-extinguished brands gave the light we had seen. We stirred this up, and, looking about, found a scrap of paper, on which were some words in Balcombe's handwriting, and saw in the ashes the track of shoes or boots mixed up with those of moccasins. Here, doubtless, our poor friend had been stopped for the convenience of the light in rifling his pockets.

We now proceeded with heavy hearts, and as we approached the house, I shuddered at the thought of communicating Balcombe's fate to his bereaved family. I have said little of Mrs. Balcombe. She was reserved in her manners, so that it was not easy to see more of her than that she was a perfect lady, and that she was devoted to her husband. She was obviously a proud woman, but her pride rested on him. Her bearing was high and queenlike, but she was the queen consort, not a queen in her own right. She seemed to feel her individuality merged in her husband, and to rest in undoubting confidence on his wisdom, his courage, his prowess, and resources—"his stars, his fortune, and his strength." Torn from him, what would she be? She would either sink into utter and helpless despondency, or rouse herself to endure her loss by nourishing a spirit of revenge against the murderer. The phrensy of her grief in either aspect was appalling to think of. But there was no remedy.

As we approached the house, I saw that there was already an appearance of bustle and alarm.

Lights were glancing about, and heads were frequently thrust out of the windows. As we entered, we heard the joyful cry of "Here they are!" My heart sunk at the disappointment which our appearance in the parlour must produce; but there was no stopping. We walked in in silent dread, when to our utter astonishment, whom should we see but Balcombe himself in full life, and young Scott, and Keizer, and the Indians.

CHAPTER XXII.

A fellow by the hand of nature marked,
Quoted, and signed to do a deed of shame.

SHAKSPEARE.

BEFORE we had time to express our astonishment and delight, Montague dropped upon his knees, and for once in his life, poured forth a sincere thanksgiving for this unexpected deliverance. Not regarding him, we pressed forward to Balcombe.

"My dear fellow!" said the colonel, "how came you here?"

"It will take some time to answer that," said he; "but how comes that fellow here?"

"As a prisoner, on suspicion of having murdered you."

"It is not his fault that I am alive," said Balcombe; "but I suppose he must go quit of that charge. But let us see what else we have against him; for I don't mean to let him go out of my fingers until I recover the parcel he robbed me of this evening."

"I have secured that," said I.

"*Io triumphe!*" cried Balcombe. "Then all is well, except the mortification of being overreached by such a fellow."

He reflected a moment, and then turning to Montague, said, gravely,

'Mr. Montague, if you will reflect how many persons are privy to different parts of this affair, and how easily I, who know all, can make the whole perfectly plain to everybody, I think you will see the wisdom of accommodating yourself to what you cannot help, and accepting such terms as I may offer you. Now, sir, I tell you that I have no wish to punish or expose you; and though you may not understand how that can be, yet you will believe it because I tell you so. I think, if you will reflect on your situation, you will see that you cannot escape, if you provoke me to extremities. This conspiracy, and other matters of which you are aware, you must be held to answer for, unless you merit clemency at my hands by fair dealing. Now, sir, go home to-night. John will conduct you safely, and you can get to bed with-

out having been missed. Go home. Compose yourself, and meet me again at ten o'clock to-morrow morning at the same place, that we may talk this matter over."

"To-morrow is the Sabbath," remonstrated Montague.

"Well said Jim Rat," exclaimed Balcombe, laughing, "that every man has a conscience! Well, Mr. Montague, your scruples shall be respected. Let Monday be the day, at the same hour, and then we will consider the expediency of your accompanying me and Mr. Napier to Virginia."

"If that be all, sir," said Montague, meekly, "I am prepared to say now, that I will set out with you on Monday morning."

"Well said, Mr. Montague. That looks well. I see, sir, that you understand what's right. Think the matter over, then, until Monday, and then we'll talk about it. Good-night, sir!"

Montague now slunk away under the safe conduct of Keizer, at whom, however, he cast an anxious and shrinking look. But he had been so thoroughly frightened, that any distinct and manifest danger was more tolerable than the vague apprehensions that would have haunted his path.

As soon as he was gone, I asked Balcombe to explain the events of the evening.

"Faith!" said he, "I think each of us has had enough of them to his own share for one night. I have my curiosity, too, but am tired enough to

postpone its gratification till morning. I think fatigue will put me to sleep, though at another time the sight of blood on your clothes and hands might keep me awake. But good-night! All's well for the present, and we will compare notes in the morning."

I must confess that, though weary, I was not enough inured to such things to sleep calmly with blood upon me, which, I had no doubt, was warm from the heart of a human creature. Poor Scott was lost in horror at the scenes he had witnessed, but seemed more disposed to ruminate on them than to tell his adventure or to ask mine. All explanation was accordingly deferred until morning; and I closed this eventful week by endeavouring to compose myself to a due sense of gratitude to that good Providence which had presided over its occurrences.

In truth, I had reason to be thankful. Just one week before, I had been wandering through the prairies, without chart or compass, seeking one in whom I expected, with reason, to find a deadly and crafty enemy. I did not know that I had a friend within a thousand miles; and though I was not actually destitute of money, yet my funds amounted to little more than the means of returning home. *Home!* no, I had no home to return to. No place where my widowed mother and sisters could find shelter except by charity. But how suddenly all this was changed! I was all at once surrounded by kind and efficient friends, and

was at last in possession of the means of securing to myself the noble inheritance of my grandfather. All this had been effected by causes of the existence of which I had not dreamed, through the instrumentality of persons of whom I had never heard; and yet these causes seemed to have brought about their effects simply and naturally, and without any strange coincidences. In the occurrences of the night there was indeed a mystery, but that would be explained in the morning.

In short, I found myself by a sudden turn of affairs sweeping down the stream of cause and consequence in the natural flow of events, with the haven of peace and affluence opening before me. One only subject of solicitude remained. And would He who was thus guiding me by his unseen hand to the possession of all the other blessings of life, deny me that best balm of the heart, on which the enjoyment of all besides depended? I found myself becoming strong in Balcombe's faith, that Providence does nothing by halves; and I at last sunk to sleep in the comfortable hope, that on my return to Virginia I should find Ann still unmarried, and ready to share my good fortune with me.

In the morning I found Balcombe quite refreshed, and ready to exchange narratives of the events of the night.

"There's great truth in old proverbs," said he. "Never permit yourself to despise an enemy. The idea of catching that fellow in his own trap

had such complete possession of my mind, that, serious as the business was, I could not refrain from amusing myself at the thought of his discomfiture, and endeavouring to heighten the effect of it. When I reached the place, I saw him approaching in a direction opposite to that where I had reason to suppose the ambuscade would be planted; and I observed that during our conference he carefully maintained the same relative position; so that, while conversing with him, my back should be to his confederates. Now, as my plan was to let him get possession of the casket, so as to take it from him without involving poor James in any breach of faith, it suited me to retain the very position in which I saw it was his wish to place me. I wished, too, to make him show his hand, and was desirous to hear what he would say after he had fairly got me into the clutches of his myrmidons. I had little doubt that, in the exultation of his imaginary victory, he would utter language that would increase my power over him. It adds to my vexation to think how the bungling coward betrayed himself by the eager and anxious glances he cast beyond me towards those who were approaching from behind. And they, too—a set of clumsy awkward villains—I heard them so plainly, that I never should have believed it to be Keizer and his Indians, but that I knew they were willing to be heard. James might have heard them, too; but he suspected nothing, and his ear was listening only to our conversation."

"It was not Keizer, then, and his Indians?" said I.

"No, indeed. I had another sort of customers to deal with. I do suppose, as John said, that Montague had the pick and wale of all the rogues and ruffians in the country; for a more remorseless set of villains the devil never sent to aid one of his allies. But to give you the scene as it occurred. We *howd'yed*, as John says, and he began the conference by saying that he had come prepared to pay the money and hand me the bonds, but that he first wished to see the parcel that James had for him. It was shown, accordingly, and he held out his hand as if to receive it. James drew back. 'Let him have it, James,' said I, carelessly. It was given him, and he affected to look at it with great earnestness, and began a sort of *palaver* manifestly intended to gain time. It was my game to indulge him, and never was I more amused at any scene. Suddenly, James and I were both seized from behind. He struggled manfully, but was soon drawn back and secured. I made a feint of resistance, taking care all the time not to look behind me. I was soon secured by a rope, fastening my arms above the elbows; and then my assailant proceeded to tie my wrists. This brought him before me; and you may judge how I felt when I saw myself in the hands of a perfect stranger, on whose face was every mark of the fiend. He was a man of gigantic strength, and, as I was held behind at the same time, the

momentary struggle I made was unavailing, and I was soon effectually manacled.

"'I think you are a little surprised, Mr. Balcombe,' said Montague, with a sneer. 'You thought to palm one of your own myrmidons upon me, sir, and to make me myself the contriver of your plan for robbing me. I think I have turned the tables upon you, sir, except that I don't mean to rob you. This little parcel has my name on it, and is my own. Having found its way to the hands of its right owner, I think I may as well keep it, without paying the price you wished to exact.'

"I made no reply, for I had none to make. I think I was never in my life caught so completely without an answer. I was, indeed, curious to know more; but I knew that asking was not the way to find it out. So I held my peace, and looked calmly at him. Not that I actually felt calm, for I had some awkward misgivings; and your warning of the danger of driving him to desperation rung awfully in my ears.

"'You are wondering, sir,' said he, 'what has become of your familiar Keizer; as if you did not know that the *enemy of man*'—and here the rascal tried to look sanctimonious—'is apt to fail his friends at a pinch. But your imp is faithful to you, sir; and is, at this moment, proving his fidelity, by waiting your bidding at a different place of assignation, about two miles off, which I showed him this morning. *I watched* him last night, when

he pretended to go to his camp, and went, in the opposite direction, *to you*; and *I heard* his signal.'

"The fellow now exchanged his sneer for a chuckling laugh, which made the malignant scowl with which he regarded me more disgusting, and, to say the truth, more alarming. He now addressed himself to the ruffians, who still held us, and said,

"'You know what to do.' Then, turning to me, he added, 'A pleasant journey to you, Mr. Balcombe. The next time you have the feelings of a fellow-creature at your mercy, you may remember that a day of retribution may come.'

"Saying this, he left me. It was now nearly dark; and as we were hurried down the gloomy dingle, we had not travelled far before the light left us entirely. Presently we came to Keizer's camp, where there was a little fire, and by the light of this the ruffians soon stripped James and me of what little we had about us worth taking. That was not much, and they showed symptoms of angry disappointment which boded us no good.

"They now dragged us rudely along to the Rock-house, and during the whole time heard in silence all that I could say to lead them to a negotiation for my ransom. One of them at last spoke.

"'It is no use talking, colonel,' said he; 'and I reckon if you know my voice you'll think so too.'

"I did know the voice. It was that of one whom I had once detected in an act of treachery,

which endangered the lives of myself and a large party under my command. I had had him whipped, and turned adrift in the wilderness to find his way home as he could. From that time I had never heard his ill-omened croak till then. He was a desperate vagabond ruffian, to whom all countries were alike.

"'What are you going to do with me, Ramsay?' said I.

"'I guess,' replied he, 'by the time you find your way back by yourself from the Kickapoo country, you'll know what it is to serve a poor fellow as you served me; that is, if the Indians let you bring your scalp away.'

"This explained their whole plan. The mouth of the Osage river is just above us on the other side of the Missouri. The Kickapoo country lies on that river, three hundred miles above its mouth. The country across the Missouri is just here quite poor, with only a few straggling inhabitants on the very bank. As soon as a boat enters the mouth of the Osage, it leaves all the settlements behind; and two hours brisk paddling would therefore place us out of the reach of human aid. As to my being turned loose to find my way back, I did not hope for any such good luck. I had no doubt that Montague merely wished to lay the scene of my murder beyond the limits of any jurisdiction to which he would be amenable.

"Arrived at the Rockhouse, one of the party was despatched for a boat. The rest remained

with us, couched under the rock, as close to the wall as we could lie.

"We had not long lain there, when my ear was unexpectedly cheered by Keizer's whistle giving notice that he was near. Though my hands were tied, it was easy to get them to my bosom, and I immediately sounded the signal of danger. It was answered by the warwhoop, which, though to me the sweetest sound I ever heard, no doubt rung fearfully in the assassins' ears, under that rocky vault. They instantly, and I suppose instinctively, sprung forward, so as to place themselves between the light and the assailants, who kept along the wall, till, guided by my whistle, they reached me. The springing of triggers instantly made the enemy sensible of this disadvantage, and two of them threw themselves down the bank and fled; the third spoke a word or two, as if to rally them, when a rifle went off, and he fell dead. I recognised the voice as Ramsay's, and told John who it was.

"'Good enough for him,' said he. 'And the fellow's a stranger hereabouts; nobody knows there is any such man, and he won't be missed. So here goes.'

"Suiting the action to the word, he dragged the body down the bank, and threw it into the river. My bonds were then cut, and here I am."

"I God!" said Keizer, "I do think, that for a fellow that has no more sense when he is scared than a rabbit, that Montague is about the cunning-

est chap when he's rightly at himself that ever I came across. I thought I was tolerably sharp, but he just used me up like nothing. Only to think that I should be fooled so, when I partly knew where he and the colonel were to meet."

"How did you know that?" said I.

"Why, Lord bless you, sir! I saw them the first time, and I ought to have known they would agree to meet at the same place again; and I never thought of nothing else till he carried me off right away the other course. And then he told me I was to be there by sunset, and stay there till they came; and so I staid and staid, and kept wondering why they did not come. You see the colonel had told me they were to meet as well as Montague, so I knew there could be no mistake, unless it was about the place, and the minute I thought of that I saw it all. I was sure that he had carried me and the Indians away off there to be out of the way, and that he had got Sam Todd, that Jones had told him about, and some of his gang, at the other place. You may be sure I was not long guessing what to do; so I gives the word to Snake and Billy John, and we dashed down to the river, and so along the bank to the Rockhouse. When I got most there, I told the Indians what to do, and then we crawled right to the corner of the rock, and I sounded my whistle, and the minute we heard the colonel's we dashed right in, and drove them out from the wall to where we could see them, and they could not see us. So, you see, sir,

we had them right safe, and there wasn't no use to shoot one of them; but then that fellow would not run, and a rifle will go off sometimes."

"I hope," said I, "John, it was not your rifle."

"No, sir, it wasn't mine; but it makes no odds whose it was. As to the Todds, you may be sure they won't say nothing about it, and I don't suppose anybody else in the county knows there was such a man, except the colonel and me."

"But won't the body float, John?"

"Lord! no, sir. The Missouri never lets go a man it gets hold of with his clothes on, and he has made a right smart sandbar by this time."

"How is that?" said I.

"Why, sir, a man's pockets and his clothes all get full of sand in a minute or two, and that sinks him down, and the minute he touches bottom the sand gathers on him, and makes a bar."

There was something horrible in the idea of such a grave even for the ruffian who so well deserved it, and it was rendered more so by the *nonchalance*, and even glee, with which Keizer spoke of it. But I was in no humour then to find fault with his moral code.

The day was one of the happiest of my life; and, next to Balcombe's generous zeal and cool sagacity, I felt most indebted for my happiness to the acuteness and unhesitating intrepidity of Keizer. Well did Balcombe say that John could serve him at a pinch as few others could, and as none would.

"Well, colonel," said Balcombe, when John was gone, "what say you to my sharp tool now?"

"It reminds me," said the colonel, "of a saying that I have heard, 'that this is God's world, and that he has put nothing into it that is not necessary to make up the complete whole.' As long as there are such beings as Montague in the world there should be such as Keizer."

"And as long as there is need of *men* in the world," said Balcombe, "there is need for such creatures as Montague to harden and sharpen their faculties. Here's my friend William, that, but for him, would have been now drowsing away his existence on the banks of the Potomac, a lazy, luxurious, country gentleman. Montague has made a man of him; and a wiser, and better, and more efficient man he will be for last night's work as long as he lives."

It was now high time to look into that mysterious casket, on the possession of which so much depended. On doing so, we were amused at the simplicity and efficiency of the contrivance. It contained nothing but the fragment of a plain gold ring, which appeared to have been twisted off, and a slip of paper, on which was written, "Mammy Amy, the old housekeeper at Raby Hall." As soon as Balcombe read the name, he exclaimed,

"Ah! Mary's old nurse; I remember her. Mary was born on the estate, and this old woman's youngest child was her foster-brother. No doubt

she has the packet secured in some snug hiding-place in the old hall, and holds the other part of the ring as a means of identifying this."

Having come to this conclusion, I deposited the casket with my baggage and returned to my friends.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Knew you of this fair work?

SHAKSPEARE.

This day being Sunday, was the great day of the campmeeting. I had some curiosity to witness the scene, to which the protracted excitement of the past week and the increased multitude might give rise. But I had no mind to look on such a profanation of sacred things, and really shuddered at the thought of seeing Montague enacting the saint, with all the guilt of premeditated murder on his conscience. The feelings of the rest of our party were like my own. We staid within doors; and Balcombe, who was an eloquent reader, read us a sermon. The day was to me one of pure and holy pleasure; and never had I felt so much disposed to pour out my heart in thankfulness to

the gracious Being, of whose fatherly care I had just received such striking proofs.

At supper a note was handed to Balcombe, who was told the bearer waited for an answer. He read it and passed it to me. It ran thus :—

"Edward Montague presents his best respects to Mr. Balcombe, and begs leave to suggest that his affairs render it of great importance to him to spend one day at least at his own house, before his departure for Virginia. To do this, he would be necessarily absent five days, as his residence is two days' journey from hence. But, urgent as the necessity is, E. M. assures Mr. B. that if the delay will be at all inconvenient to him, the thought of this journey will be at once relinquished, and he will be in readiness to accompany Mr. B. to-morrow morning. If, on the other hand, it should entirely suit Mr. B.'s convenience, E. M. begs leave to add, that, as five days will leave only one day of this week, and as E. M. would dislike to commence, or even to continue a journey on the Sabbath, he hopes Mr. B. may, on reflection, find it quite convenient to delay his departure until the following Monday. E. M. would have laid this subject before Mr. B. at an earlier hour, but he did not think it right to devote to temporal concerns any portion of the Lord's day. He now awaits Mr. B.'s answer, and, with *his entire approbation*, proposes to set out at daylight.

"September 24, nine o'clock at night."

"What say you, Bet?" said Balcombe. "Could you be ready to go with us to Virginia by to-morrow week?"

Mrs. Balcombe's eyes sparkled at the question, and I now discovered that such a journey had been already in contemplation, and relinquished in consequence of the sudden emergency of my affairs. I, of course, smothered my impatience and made no objection. The servant who brought the note was accordingly called in.

"There's no occasion to write, Jim," said Balcombe. "Tell Mr. Montague to-morrow week will do just as well."

The next day was ushered in with joyful note of preparation for our journey. At breakfast, the ladies showed manifest impatience to be left to their own occupations. We accordingly adjourned to the drawingroom, and sat chatting over the past, present, and future, until ten o'clock. About that hour Mr. Jones was announced. He was a grave, quiet, sedate old man, with a countenance betokening great meekness of spirit, Christian benevolence, and heartfelt piety. In short, he seemed in all things the very reverse of his friend Montague. He was accompanied by a coarse, rough-looking fellow, in his shirt sleeves, with uncombed hair and unwashed face, and a countenance which, bearing the marks neither of intelligence or intrepidity, hovered between knave and ruffian. He was introduced to me, after the fashion of the country, by some name, I forget what, and took

his seat in silence near the door. A short and somewhat dull conversation ensued. The old man's feelings were obviously too serious and solemn for Balcombe's sportive style of talk, and none of the rest of us had the art of carrying on a conversation alone.

At length Mr. Jones, after fumbling in his bosom, drew forth a small rifle-barrelled pistol of exquisite workmanship, which he handed to Balcombe, saying, gravely,

"That is yours, I believe, Mr. Balcombe."

"Indeed it is," exclaimed he; "and glad I am to get it again."

"Then," continued Jones, "I am in hopes you will be able to tell who this belongs to."

Saying this, he presented a large miniature set in gold, and representing a female. James glanced at it, and immediately claimed it, saying it was his sister's picture.

"Indeed it is," said Balcombe, gazing earnestly at it. "Poor dear Mary," continued he, as a tear swelled in his eye, "how well do I remember the day when the partial fondness of your poor father led him to this extravagance. See, William! I told you she was beautiful. You can now judge for yourself."

I bent over him as he held the picture; and surely never had I seen a more lovely and intellectual face. It spoke her whole character, and explained the secret of that infatuation which,

when her beauty blazed out in all its brightness, had made Balcombe insensible to everything else.

He at length handed the picture to James, and Mr. Jones again addressed him.

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Balcombe, that I have come on an unpleasant business. My respect for you and Colonel Robinson, and for the feelings of the ladies, made me come with the constable—" here he made an embarrassed pause, and sat puzzling how to go on, until Balcombe relieved him by saying,

"The constable, sir! and what have I to do with the constable?"

"He has a warrant against you, sir."

"A warrant!" exclaimed Balcombe. "And for what, in God's name?"

"Let him see the warrant, if you please," said Jones, turning to the officer.

It was accordingly handed to Balcombe, and proved to be a warrant for the arrest of George Balcombe, charged with the murder of Andrew Ramsay. He read it patiently through, and seemed for a while perplexed to know what it could mean. At length the cloud seemed to pass off his mind, his eye brightened, and he said, with a careless though indignant laugh,

"Well! these rascals have really carried their audacity to a pitch I could not have anticipated."

"What do you mean, Mr. Balcombe?" said Colonel Robinson, with an anxious look.

"Mean!" said Balcombe. "I mean that those

ruffians, balked of their prey, have the effrontery to claim it at the hands of the law."

"I don't know what ruffians you mean, sir," said Mr. Jones, mildly. "You certainly cannot mean me, and I am the person that gave the information in this case."

"You, sir! why, what upon earth do you know about it?"

"Perhaps we had better not talk it over here," said Jones. "It may get to the ears of the ladies, and make them uneasy. I have a very high respect for you, Mr. Balcombe, and am in good hopes you'll be able to clear the matter up; so, if you'll just walk with us to the justice close by, you'll hear all about it."

Balcombe assented instantly; and the old gentleman, turning to Scott, remarked that it might be proper for him to go too, as he had recognised the picture as his. Nothing could be more superfluous than this suggestion. The tear was hardly yet dry which Balcombe had shed while gazing on poor Mary's picture, and, though it was to dishonour or death itself, James would have followed him.

A walk of half a mile brought us to the house of the justice. A good many people were in waiting, and, among the rest, I remarked a tall young man, whose dress denoted some pretensions to gentility, and who pressed to meet Balcombe with a fawning smile, obviously meant to be received as encouraging and patronising. Balcombe passed him

coldly, not seeming to observe his offered hand, and walked into the house. We found the justice seated behind a small table, on which lay pen, ink, and paper, a powderhorn, and a single volume, which proved to be a digest of statute laws, with sundry forms by way of appendix. He was a quiet-looking, simple old man, who seemed to have discharged himself of all his knowledge of law, when he had copied the form of a warrant for murder. He now looked anxious and perplexed; and, on our entrance, returned Balcombe's salutation with an air of deep respect, and a flush of sympathy that slightly reddened the old man's eye.

CHAPTER XXIV.

> It cannot be, but he was murdered here.
> The least of all these signs are probable.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

BALCOMBE now seated himself quietly, and awaited the movements of the law; but soon a bustle was observed, and, elbowing his way through the crowd, the constable reappeared, conducting Keizer strongly ironed. At the sight of Balcombe the poor fellow's face brightened, and he exclaimed,

"Ah! colonel, I am glad to see you. Now you are come, I hope these fools will learn to have a little more sense. For my part I cannot make them hear a word."

"Be quiet, John," said Balcombe. "It is our turn to hear what they have to say. But, no!" continued he, rising to his feet, "I believe it is right that I should at once speak out plainly, and tell all I know about the matter."

He accordingly went on, and with great distinctness and simplicity told the whole story as I have given it to the reader.

When he had gone through, the testimony on behalf of the prosecution was called for.

Mr. Jones was now sworn, and deposed, that on Sunday evening he and Montague had both walked out from the campmeeting, in a pause of the exercises, to meditate, and had accidentally fallen together. That they were much in the habit of intercommunication of thoughts on religious subjects, and that their conversation took a turn which they both felt to be edifying and profitable. They accordingly prolonged their walk, and wandered down the glen that led to the Rockhouse.

"We were often in the habit," continued the good old man, "when we had been taking sweet counsel together, of uniting in prayer to the throne of grace; and we took particular pleasure in praying together in such places, where no eye but God's could see us, and no ear but God's could

hear us. When we got near the river, says he, 'Brother Jones—'"

"Stop, sir," said the young fellow I have mentioned, who had bustled in, and taken his seat at the table; "nobody wants to hear what Mr. Montague said." Then turning to the justice, he added, "This is hearsay, may it please the court, which is not evidence. If Mr. Montague knows anything about the matter he ought to be here, sir."

"Is it on my behalf, Mr. Perkins," said Balcombe, quietly, "or on behalf of the state, that you make this objection?"

"On your behalf, certainly, sir."

"Then, sir, I will thank you to let Mr. Jones go on. *I* want to hear what Mr. Montague said."

The witness continued,

"Mr. Montague said, 'Brother Jones, is not there a cave somewhere near this?'

"'Yes,' says I; 'there is a sort of a cave close by on the river bank.'

"'I love,' says he, 'to go into such places, and there, in God's own temples, not made with hands, to meditate upon his mighty works and worship in secret.'

"'Well,' says I, 'Brother Montague, suppose we go there now, and unite in prayer.'

"So he agreed, and we went on. As soon as we got to the mouth of the cave, the first thing we saw was that pistol. I picked it up, and as soon as I looked at it I was sure I had seen Mr. Balcombe with a pair just like it, and I told Brother Mon-

tague so. Well, we both thought it mighty strange; and presently we came to a place where there was an amazing quantity of blood, just like as if a hog had been stuck there. You may be sure this made me feel mighty queer, and so we began to look about on the ground, and we found that picture. And then we took notice of a power of tracks, some shoes and some moccasins, and they were all mightily mixed up, and looked like as if people had been scuffling and fighting. Then we went back to the blood, and there was a mark from the edge of the bank, where the blood was, down to the water, like as if a hog or something heavy had been dragged down the bank, and part of the way the blood was smeared along the track, just as if the thing, whatever it was, had been lying in it, and had dragged the blood along with it; and alongside of that mark of blood there were tracks of a small foot with a moccasin on, dug deep in the sand, like as if a man had been pulling hard at something.

"'Brother Jones,' says Brother Montague—"

"Stop, sir," said Perkins, "until we know whether Mr. Balcombe is willing to hear what Brother Montague said."

"Mr. Perkins," said Balcombe, "I will thank you to let Mr. Jones go on; and I beg, sir, you will not prejudice my case by leading people to suppose that I have deemed it necessary to avail myself of the captious quibbles of a pettifogging attorney. Go on, if you please, Mr. Jones."

Jones went on:

"'Brother Jones,' says Brother Montague, 'this looks mighty like there had been some foul play here.'

"'I am afraid so,' says I.

"'Suppose,' said he, 'we take a pole, and feel if there's anything in the water.'

"So I agreed, and we cut a pole and felt, but the water was deep just there, and we could not touch bottom. And so, sir, as I drew the pole out, just at the water's edge I felt it strike something that felt hard and sounded hollow like; and I stoops down and gets hold of it, and I found it was a powderhorn. That's the same powderhorn," continued he, pointing to that on the table. "So then we looked about, sir, and not far below, just at the mouth of the branch, was a little sand bar, and we saw something on the upper edge of it that looked as if it might be a man. So we got as near as we could, and looked good at it, and then we were right sure it was a man. By this time the sun was about down, and we had not time to go for a boat, and we concluded the body would not wash away, and we'd get help in the morning, and come down and take it away. So we started home, and as we went, just about the head of the hollow we meets Keizer. I had the horn in my hand, and I saw him look mighty hard at it, but he said nothing. And he had his rifle in his hand, for all it was Sunday, and his shot pouch, and belt, and knife, and all, but he had no horn. So says I,

"'Mr. Keizer, you seem to have lost your powderhorn, and I have just found one: maybe this is yours.'

"'I dare say it may be,' says he. 'Let me look at it.'

"So he takes it and looks at it, and he looked mighty queer, and says he, 'I believe it is mine;' and with that he takes out the stopper, and turns like he was going to pour some powder in his hand, and the water run out; and then he started and looked confused, and says he, 'No, it cannot be mine—I don't think it's mine.'

"'Well,' says I, 'Mr. Keizer, if you were going this way to look for yours, you need not go any farther, for Mr. Montague and I have been all the way down to the Rockhouse, and have not seen anything of it; and so you'd as well turn back with us.' Well, sir, he look'd mightily as if he did not know what to do, and that is not a common thing with him; so he turned back, and went on with us towards the camp, and as soon as he got there he left us, and got into the crowd. I kept my eye upon him, though, and presently I got a chance to speak to one or two, and they seized him without making any disturbance more than could not be helped. But we could not be so quiet about it but what there was some little rumpus, and there was a couple of Indians came up, that looked as if they were friendly to Keizer; but he spoke a word or two to them in Indian, and they went off. So we took him to my house and secured him, and

early in the morning a party went down and brought up the body."

The old gentleman here closed his testimony. He was asked a few questions, but the answers were nothing more than iterations of such parts of his story as appeared not to have been understood or remembered.

The name of Thomas Johnson was now called, and a fellow came forward of an aspect and dress more hideously savage than anything I had ever beheld. His features were flushed and bloated by intemperance, his eyes bloodshot, his hair and beard staring and sunburnt, stuck full of bits of straw, and matted with filth; his dress of leather from head to foot, and for blood, and dirt, and grease, that in which I had first seen Keizer might in comparison have become a ballroom. His moccasins were of raw deer skin. Patches of that material were rudely stuck, by means of thongs of the same, on different parts of his garments, and in some places the sowing having given way, the horny edges were curled upward disclosing the holes they were meant to hide. The *tout ensemble* of ferocity and beastliness was horrible to look upon. So degraded and hateful a specimen of humanity I had never conceived of. He advanced to the table, and from his red eye scowled a look of malignity upon Balcombe that would have become the features of the arch-fiend himself. When the oath was tendered to him, he clutched the book with his huge fist in a way which showed that he was an utter stranger to the ceremony.

Having blundered through the form, he proceeded to identify the body of the deceased as that of Andrew Ramsay. He had known him from his childhood; they had been boys together, and were both natives of the county of Tazewell, in Virginia. They had been together ten years before in an expedition towards the Spanish country with a company that put themselves under the command of Balcombe. He stated that while in the wilderness they had fallen in with a party of Spaniards and Indians, and camped near them for a day or two. That suddenly Balcombe's party were put under marching orders, and moved off to a distance from the other company; that on the march Ramsay was seized, and accused of having conspired to betray his companions to be plundered and murdered by the Spaniards. On hearing the particulars of the charge, the witness said he knew it to be false of his own knowledge, but did not dare to say a word, for he saw that Ramsay was prejudged, and feared lest he himself might be charged as an accomplice. That Ramsay was condemned to receive one hundred lashes, which were administered by the hand of Keizer, and then turned out into the wilderness to take his chance to starve or be scalped. That he made his way into the Spanish country, and that the witness, in a subsequent expedition to that country, had fallen in with him. That they had not long since returned together; and that Ramsay, meeting with Balcombe and Keizer, had avowed a

determination to prosecute them for reparation. That he had on Saturday evening seen Balcombe and Scott walking in the wood near the head of the hollow; that they had there met Ramsay, and that all three went together down the glen towards the Rockhouse a little after sunset; that not seeing Ramsay again that night or next day, he suspected something as soon as he heard of the dead body. That he had gone with the party that brought it up, and knew it to be the body of Ramsay.

I will not detain the reader with the shuffling and prevarications of this fellow when questioned whether Ramsay was alone when he met Scott and Balcombe. They could not do much to deepen the impression on the minds of all who saw him, that his testimony could answer no end but to supply any link in a chain of evidence which it might be technically necessary to establish, but which no one could think of impeaching. I do not suppose that his evidence, in fact, proved anything but the dead man's name. Being asked if he had seen Montague that evening, he said that he had never heard of any person of the name of Montague. This was probably true enough according to Madge Wildfire's theory, that rogues should never know each other's names.

Another fellow of the same kidney was then called, who swore that he had seen Keizer that evening about dusk walk down the river at the ferry, and turn down the bank towards the Rockhouse. As he said nothing about the Indians, it was obvious

that although John had done so, he had not seen him. Several other persons were called, who recognised the powderhorn as Keizer's. It appeared, also, that the measure of his remarkably small foot had been taken, and found to agree with the track on the shore. It was further identified by a patch on one of his moccasins. As to the picture and the pistols, Balcombe and Scott avowed the ownership of them.

I was now called upon, and without any interruption told my story, in which, as it regarded the interview with Montague, I was supported by Colonel Robinson, which tallied so exactly with Balcombe's distinct and perspicuous narrative as to leave no doubt that he had been the party assailed, and to make it probable that the death of Ramsay had been made necessary by his own conduct.

The result was, that though the importance of the case made further investigation indispensable, yet the accused parties were all, without difficulty, admitted to bail, and bound to appear at the next court.

Balcombe now inquired where the body was, and being told it was in the next room, expressed a wish to see it. He recognised it at once as the body of Ramsay, and coolly examined the wound. It appeared that the ball had entered close under the left arm without touching the limb, and ranging backward, had broken the backbone between the shoulderblades. Balcombe, without calling the

attention of others to this, merely remarked to me that this confirmed the impression on his mind, that Ramsay was in the act of firing when he was shot. It was too dark to see anything distinctly, but the shadowy figure imperfectly sketched on the dim sky beyond showed some such attitude. He now had no doubt but that at a venture the wretch was determined to throw a ball in the direction whence his whistle had just proceeded. I was pleased to observe that what he said was overheard by others, and favourably received; the more so, perhaps, because he had not seemed to intend to make any such impression, or to remark that he had made it.

CHAPTER XXV.

Dogberry. Masters, it is proved already that you are little better than false knaves, and it will go near to be thought so shortly. How answer you for yourselves?—SHAKSPEARE.

We now returned to Colonel Robinson's to dinner. It was not our intention to give the ladies any intimation of the occurrences of the day; but such things cannot be kept from servants, and it appeared that they had been apprized of what had

passed. We found the poor old lady full of anxious trepidation, and much relieved by our appearance. With Mrs. Balcombe the case was widely different: with cheeks glowing, and eyes flashing indignantly through sparkling tears, she advanced steadily to meet her husband, and stretching out her arms, said, in a firm enthusiastic tone,

"My noble husband! who has dared to cast suspicion on your name?"

He folded her gently to his bosom, kissed her, and supporting her on his left arm, parted the curls from her brow, which he again kissed, and looking at her with a tender and admiring eye, said, "You should be the wife of a hero, Bet."

"And am I not?" said she. "Oh, my unpretending husband! Generous, brave, and wise! The pride of your wife's heart needs but to see you in your own light, and asks nothing from the praises of others. But when, for the first time in your life, your name has been aspersed, even I may be allowed to praise you. And yet I sometimes wish that others could see you just as I do."

"And so they do, dear," said he; "and hence I have the ill-will of those who hate the qualities you love. But who has truer friends than I?"

"And who deserves them better?" said she, involuntarily glancing at me a look, the indelicacy of which a blush instantly acknowledged and rebuked.

"I can answer that question, my dear madam,"

said I, "with an acknowledgment of obligations which my whole life can never repay."

"Enough, enough!" said Balcombe. "My wife, who has a charter to extol her husband, when she does praise me grieves me. My dear William," continued he, "I should prove recreant to the most sacred duty that ever benevolence imposed on gratitude, if I did not hold my life cheap in the service of any in whose veins flows one drop of your noble grandfather's blood. But come, come! My appetite and yours both require a stronger diet than praise or profession. Let's to dinner. Come, John, you must not go away. We must hold a cabinet council presently, and have the benefit of your quick wit."

As soon as we had dined we drew together in another room. "And now," said Balcombe, "what part had Montague in this fair work?"

"He is at the bottom of it, you may depend," said Keizer. "Just give him one hour to get over his scare, and he is the cunningest devil in the world."

"His hand is in it, I am afraid," said I.

"It looks like it," said Balcombe. "But when I have him so completely in my power—stay—did you not say, William, that he had opened the casket and looked into it?"

"Certainly."

"Then as sure as you're alive he's off to Virginia, and has cast this noose over us to keep us here. He knows where the packet is, and if he

can lay his hand upon it, he will not stop till he puts the Atlantic between him and us. You are free, and must follow him."

"Never," said I. "My testimony is of too much importance to you."

"Pho! pho!" said Balcombe; "the prosecution is all smoke, and ought not to give you the least concern."

"Pardon me, my dear sir, I must be governed herein by my own feelings. And if the wealth of the world depended on it I would not leave you, if I did not know a single fact in the case."

"What is to be done?" said Balcombe.

"I can hear in three hours," said Keizer, "which way he went."

"How so?" said Balcombe.

"Why, sir, there's only one road from this to St. Louis, and only one house he could have stopped at for breakfast. If he went that way, I can hear of him there."

"And how then?"

"Why, if once I strike his trail, sir, and I don't have him back, my name is not John Keizer."

Saying this, he sprang to his feet. Balcombe rang the bell, and ordered a fleet horse to be in readiness; and, having handed Keizer some money, he was in the saddle in a few minutes.

"If he has not been there, John," said Balcombe, "return immediately."

"I'll just stop to feed my horse, sir," and away he rode.

Midnight came, and Keizer did not return. There was now no question that Montague was gone for Virginia. I hoped, indeed, that Keizer would overtake him at St. Louis; but of his power to bring him back I had my doubts. That Balcombe could do so, I was sure; but who else could exercise the same absolute control over his craven spirit? Perhaps I might. I now felt that I myself ought to have gone. Was it too late? Was not the attempt worth making? When once the idea had entered my mind I found it impossible to compose myself. I mentioned the matter to Balcombe. He remonstrated, but finally acquiesced.

My horse was saddled, and, with a servant for a guide, I sallied forth by the light of a waning moon which had just risen. At daylight I dismissed the servant, and pushed on for breakfast at the next house. I had now ridden nine hours. My horse was weary, and I expressed a wish to get a fresh one. In this I succeeded, and the horse which Keizer had ridden was produced. He had left him there, and hired one which it appeared Montague had given for a fresh one, paying a difference for the advantage, although his horse was the best. I thus found that we all travelled at the same rate; and being about nine hours apart, we used each other's horses as relays This state of things allowed no relaxation. I had no hope of overtaking Montague short of St. Louis, but he might be delayed there for want of a boat. If he

went on horseback, he would probably slacken his speed in Illinois, and I should overtake him. As I advanced, I had the mortification to find that Montague and Keizer had both travelled faster than I could. They both rode so hard, that the horses were but imperfectly rested when they came into my hands. To make the matter worse, I reached the ferry at St. Charles in the night, and had to wait for daylight. Here I learned that Montague had crossed under the same circumstances the morning before, and Keizer about three o'clock in the evening. I had some satisfaction in the thought that he had reached St. Louis on the same day with Montague, and expected to get there myself to breakfast. I had now ridden a hundred miles; and, except my stops to change horses, and my enforced delay at the river, I had kept the saddle for thirty hours. But I pressed on, losing all consciousness of fatigue in the eagerness of the pursuit.

About half-way between St. Louis and St. Charles I met a party of men, in advance of which, at a distance of fifty yards, rode two well-dressed, well-mounted, and gentlemanly-looking men, who seemed closely engaged in animated conversation. Behind were five others, four of whom carried firearms. The fifth rode in the midst, and, as I approached, exhibited the features and figure of John Keizer. I immediately rode up to him, exclaiming,

"Bless me, John! what means this? Where is Montague?"

"Gone."

"Gone! Where, and how?"

"To Virginia, two hours ago in a steamboat."

"Is there any other boat at St. Louis?"

"None at all. He is off. The rascal has been too cunning for me, and has got me in a hockly again."

"How so?" said I.

"I God!" said he, "don't you see they've got me tied hard and fast here on this horse?"

I now looked down, and saw that the poor fellow's feet were tied together with a rope that passed under the horse's belly. In my life I had never felt myself so perfectly baffled and disheartened. It now seemed that Montague's triumph was complete, and the ultimate success of his machinations inevitable. I turned back and rode in silence, wondering at what I saw, and impatient to ask Keizer, but was rudely prevented by the guard from riding near enough for conversation. In the mean time, seeing the gentlemen before us rein up their horses, I joined them.

As I approached, one of them, a man about thirty years of age, of a shrewd and sprightly countenance, accosted me with a cheerful and courteous air.

"I suspect, sir," said he, "that we are saving you some trouble."

"If you allude to the prisoner," said I, "you have indeed curtailed my ride."

"You were in pursuit of him, then?" said he.

"I was," replied I; and, not knowing how to break my request to be permitted to converse with him, I said no more. Indeed, I was never more perplexed or indisposed for conversation in my life; and, in spite of all my endeavours to be courteous, I have no doubt I answered the remarks and met the advances of the stranger in a manner which seemed to him repulsive.

It is probable, too, that he imputed them in part to my concern for the fate of the deceased. Seeing me in pursuit of Keizer, he might naturally suppose the murdered man to be a relative or friend of mine. At all events, he seemed determined to break down the barrier of my reserve, and closing up to me, said, in that sort of tone which solicits confidence by seeming to give it, that he was accompanying the sheriff with his prisoner, having been employed to aid the counsel for the state in the prosecution of the murderers.

"Employed!" said I. "By whom?"

"By a Mr. Montague," said he; "who seems to take a deep interest in the deceased, and is anxious to secure the most effectual vengeance for his death."

Though I had been accustomed to associate with the name of Montague the idea of every mode of villany, there was something in this communication for which I was unprepared; and I uttered

my abhorrence and detestation of the wretch in terms which completely undeceived my companion. He heard me, however, with great complacency; and, as the disclosure of my sentiments produced no reserve on his part, and opened a vent for the smothered excitement of my feelings, we began to converse on the subject very freely. I gave him the true history of the affair, for I had nothing to conceal, and he, on his part, told me all he knew of Keizer's arrest. It seemed that Montague had seen him the night before in St. Louis, and, having already engaged the services of Mr. Shaler, acquainted him with the fact. By his advice, an affidavit sufficient for the purpose was prepared and sworn to by Montague; a warrant was procured; Keizer was taken; and, preparation for his removal being made in the night, he was hurried off at sunrise. No doubt was entertained that Keizer was flying from justice, though Mr. Shaler remarked, that, strangely enough, he had seemed to throw himself into Montague's way.

"But," said he, "I think you said he had been already arrested and was discharged on bail."

"Certainly."

"Then our meeting may have the effect of curtailing our journey as well as yours. There is no law, Mr. Green," continued he, addressing the sheriff, "for arresting a man on a charge for which he has been already arrested and bailed."

"So I understand," replied the other, a tall, strong, middle-aged man, of a serious but benevo-

lent and intelligent countenance—"so I understand, sir; but the difficulty is to discharge myself of the duty required of me by my warrant."

"That is easily done. This gentleman has only to apply for a *habeas corpus*, when we stop at St. Charles, and make affidavit to the facts he states here, and the fellow will be discharged. Your return to that effect will exonerate you."

"I thank you, sir," said I, "for the frankness of this information, which I had no right to expect."

"You have no occasion to thank me. Such would be the result at all events, and I do but save myself a fruitless journey. I dare say Montague would not thank me, but I am not bound to cater for his petty malice. My engagements with him will make it my duty to prosecute with unsparing rigour when the case comes to trial; but I am under no obligation to harass the accused beforehand. You see, sir," continued he, "that I place undoubting confidence in the fairness of your intentions. This may seem strange to you, as you have probably little idea of the keen insight into character, which the practice of our profession imparts. There is indeed a point beyond which we must not rely upon it; and you must not therefore be surprised, if, when this matter is inquired into on the *habeas corpus*, I cross-examine you as closely as if I did not believe a word you say."

I was pleased with the manly frankness of my new acquaintance, and especially with the delicate compliment to myself, which I requited in my best

way by acknowledging his candour, by hinting that none but a gentleman could be expected to recognise a gentleman, jaded, haggard, and travel-soiled as I was.

"We have to *do* with all sorts of people, sir," said he; "and, in this new country, inhabited by insulated individuals, no one of whom can stand sponsor for another, we must learn to *know* all sorts of people. Now there are some marks of the gentleman which he can never lose under any circumstances. The tones, the modulations and inflections of his voice, never can be mistaken. As to the candour you are pleased to compliment, I would not advise you to trust too much to that. A lawyer's eyes are like those of a cat. He is not obliged to keep his mouth shut; because he sees plainly, and knows that he is not seen."

This curious remark made me turn and fix my eye upon him with, no doubt, a perplexed look. He observed it, and added, laughing, "See, now! at this moment you are at fault. You don't know whether to adhere to the favourable opinion you just now intimated, or to reverse it."

"It is really so much more agreeable," said I, "to adhere, that I must see much more cause to change it before I give it up."

"Thank you, sir," said he, more seriously. "We are not so hardened by our commerce with the base, as not to know how to prize the approbation and confidence of honourable men. Your enthusiasm on behalf of your friends is not to be

mistaken; and as to Mr. Montague, I assure you his grimace and sanctimonious deportment did not deceive me. So far as he is my client, I shall be true to him. His character I have not taken under my charge, though if I had I should try to whitewash him as well as I could."

By this time we reached the river, and having crossed it, I took the necessary steps for procuring poor John's discharge, which was soon effected. In the mean time I took copies of Montague's affidavit and of the warrant. I found that this last embraced the names of Balcombe and Scott. Montague doubtless supposed, when he saw Keizer in St. Louis, that Balcombe was there too, and was particularly anxious to secure him. To effect this object, he spoke of the pistol as one "known to be Balcombe's." I mention this as a specimen of his art, in so swearing to the truth as to make others believe what is false. It confirmed me in my opinion of Mr. Montague's conscientiousness, leaving no doubt that he was the last man in the world to swear to a *literal* falsehood.

Having procured John's discharge, we found leisure for the rest we both so much needed. I say *both;* for of course he must have been weary. But his eye was as bright, and his air as cheerful, and his whole appearance as fresh as if nothing had happened. For my own part, I was not in condition to resume my journey until the next morning. Indeed, my impatience was effectually subdued. I was baffled, beaten, overwhelmed by

the utter ruin of all the golden hopes that had shone so bright but two days before. I had no hope even in Balcombe's resources; and the thought of the difficulties in which he was involved on my account, made me look forward to our meeting with anything but pleasure.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Why should I tremble?
You know not woman's love: that spell of power,
That guards her husband's heart. It hangs about him,
An amulet, a charm, a talisman.
It wards the blow that's levelled at his life.
It nerves his arm, and makes his trenchant blade
A wand of power, within whose magic sweep
No foe can live. Then wherefore should I tremble?
For the kind friend whose tenderness has soothed
My sickness, dried my tears, and cheered my sorrows:
For the protector of these helpless babes
I well might fear, were not my heart instinct
With woman's love. But for my lord! my master!
The master of my person and my fate!
How can I tremble?"

The next morning we resumed our journey, and I now sought to beguile the time by asking the history of Keizer's adventure.

"Just about dusk," said he, "I got to St. Louis,

and as I went along into the town I heard a bell. So I asked the boy that took my horse at the tavern what was the meaning of it, and he told me it was for meeting. As soon as I heard that, I was pretty sure that Montague would be there. So I took notice where the noise came from, and as I was pretty sharp set I thought I would get my supper, and then go to look for him. I knew well enough if I could catch him out in the night by himself he would never get away from me. So after supper I walks up to the meetinghouse, and I stands by the door till they all comes out. And sure enough, presently the meeting breaks up and out they come. I just stood to one side, so as the light should not shine upon me, and presently here comes Montague. But there was another man with him, and they two walked down the street together till they got to a tavern, but it was not the same house where I put up; and Montague he stopped, and the other one wished him good-night and went on. So I follows, and looks through the window to see whether Montague stopped in the room before I would go in. But I did not see him at all, and good reason for it, for just at that minute he turned round and came out to speak to the other man, and there was I standing with the light shining right in my face. I noticed that he saw me, for he started right back, and through the bar-room he went as fast as he could. Then I did not know what to do; so just to get time to think about it, I goes right across the street to a sort

of a dark corner, to consider. And while I stood there I could see into the door, and I saw Montague come into the room after a while and look all around, and then he goes back. So I concluded I would just stay where I was till bedtime, in hopes that maybe after a while he would venture out, and if he meant to do me any mischief he should not know where I was. I suppose I staid there better than an hour, and I saw a heap of people going in and coming out, and at last Montague comes to the door and looks out, and the night was dark and sort of drizzly like, and he buttons up his coat and looks out again. Then he goes back and gets his hat, and again he comes to the door and looks out, and then he goes back and gets his greatcoat, and stands right before the door and puts it on. So I did not see anybody else that looked like going out, and I made sure I had him. So I starts across the street, and got pretty near the other side in a dark place, where I knew he could not see me just coming out of the light, and sure enough here he comes by himself and passes along right by me, and so round the corner. So just as he turned the corner I was right behind him, and I spoke sorter low: 'Mr. Montague, Mr. Montague,' says I. With that he turns and speaks up, right loud, and says he,

"'Oh! is that you, Mr. Keizer?'

"'Yes,' says I, 'this is me, and you must go back with me,' says I.

"'Why, Mr. Keizer?' says he; and the word

was hardly out of his mouth before they had me—four of them. So they carried me right in, and into a back room; and there was the justice, and the sheriff, and this same lawyer Shaler, and they had the warrant and the affidavit all fixed and sworn to, just waiting there till Montague should step out and make me show myself. So you see, sir, they had me fast enough. So the next morning about sunrise they started me off, and just as we started, the steamboat started too, with Montague, for Virginia."

Here ended John's story; and thus ended all our schemes for entrapping the most artful villain that ever breathed.

"There's one thing I forgot to tell you," said Keizer. "That sheriff is a clever fellow, and he was as kind and tender with me as if I had been his own brother. And, says he to me,

"'Mr. Keizer, it may be of some service to you to know that I heard you last night tell Mr. Montague he must go back with you.'

"'I am much obliged to you, sir,' says I; 'but I don't see what good that's going to do me.'

"'Why,' says he, 'they'll want to make it appear that you were flying from justice, and that shows it was not so.'"

"As to that, John," said I, "I can explain that matter to the satisfaction of everybody."

"Oh yes," replied John, "I know that, and the whole affair is not of no consequence only as it

keeps you and the colonel here, but it was civil and fair in him, sir."

The next evening brought us to Colonel Robinson's, where I found such consolation for fatigue and disappointment as a kind and cordial welcome could afford. I now discovered that Balcombe had not expected a very different result. He was too well aware of the ever ready craft of Montague to expect it to fail him, but under the influence of feelings which Keizer would not know how to excite. Expecting little, therefore, his disappointment was proportionate. His excitement was calmed down, and I found him cheerful, tranquil, and philosophical, eccentric and discursive as ever, but more disposed to give a romantic and tender turn to his thoughts than formerly. His wife had undergone a change of an opposite character. Her high spirit seemed called fully into action, and displayed itself not only in her words, but in the tones of her voice and the flash of her eye. Her extreme modesty had not forsaken her, but did not prevent occasional manifestations of a spirit which looked with scorn upon the generality of mankind, yet bowed itself with a yet deeper prostration in admiration and deference of her husband. When he was silent, her eye dwelt upon him. When he spoke, her ear seemed to drink in greedily all his words. She seemed impatient that any one should differ from him in opinion, and indignant that all did not reverence him as she did. The colonel would sometimes amuse himself with

rallying her enthusiastic devotion for a man, old enough, as he said, to be her father. This she sometimes parried playfully, at others she seized on it as a pretext for venting her impassioned admiration.

"What has age to do with it?" said she. "What has age to do with one, in whom

> 'All things wear
> An aspect of eternity; whose thoughts,
> Whose feelings, passions, good or evil, all
> Have nothing of old age; and whose bold brow
> Bears but the scars of *mind*, the *thoughts* of years,
> Not their *decrepitude*.'

My dear father, you make me speak proudly, but only as George Balcombe's wife should speak, when his name is stained with the imputation of base, dishonourable crime. When mind can perish, when virtue can die, he may grow old. But don't you know the poet says,

> 'To things immortal time can do no wrong,
> And that which never is to die, for ever must be young!'

"I, too, wonder sometimes, but it is at *his* love for *me*, and of that I should doubt, were it possible to doubt his truth. Let me feel worthy of that, and I shall be the proudest woman on earth. But how can I deserve it but by loving him? And this insolent aspersion, which makes me feel that I love him more than ever, and gives me a right

to speak of his virtues and my love, makes me speak proudly."

This impassioned burst may be taken as a specimen of the change wrought in one who until now had been one of the most reserved and shrinking females I had ever seen.

"Would it not be as well," said Colonel Robinson one day to Balcombe, "to employ a lawyer?"

"Employ a lawyer!" exclaimed Mrs. Balcombe; "for what? To *set* the stain on his name? To deepen the soiled spot by an attempt to wash it out with dirty water? To pick flaws? To start quibbles? Or to build up a reputation for eloquence on the ruins of his honour, that his daughter may hear it said that her father owed his escape from an ignominious death to the address and ingenuity of Mr. Such-a-one? Never! never!"

"Bless you, my dear girl!" said Balcombe, playfully, laying his head in her lap. "Why, Bet, I never thought to be so much indebted to Montague as I am for letting me see what a wife I have."

She looked down fondly on him, and passing her hand through his grizzled hair smiled proudly and affectionately, while a large tear fell on his cheek. I doubted if either ever felt happier than at that moment.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Philosophy, baptized
In the pure fountain of eternal love,
Has eyes indeed; and, viewing all she sees,
As meant to indicate a god to man,
Gives *him* his praise, and forfeits not her own.

COWPER.

A DAY or two after my return Balcombe and I walked out, and he took me over the ground which had been the scene of the adventures of the preceding Saturday night. The tracks of different persons moving violently to and fro, were fresh and distinct under the shelter of the rock, and may be so to this day. The stain of blood, too, was still there; but all traces without had been obliterated by recent rain. We were curious to observe, that, just at the point where the body had been thrown in, the water swept the shore in a deep and strong current, and just below lay a fallen tree, making a small bar on which the stream broke violently. This explained the rare phenomenon of the body of a man with his clothes on being cast up by the Missouri. The leather dress, too, of Ramsay, was not so readily clogged with

sand as cloth would have been. I mentioned these things to Balcombe.

"All that is so," said he; "but you overlook the main cause of all. It was the will of God it should be so."

"I see," said I, "that you are as observant of the ways of Providence as ever; though it would seem that your confidence in your last prognostics begins to fail you. Do you then consider Providence as having declared against us?"

"By no means," said he. "But I am admonished not to think of knowing more of the book of fate than the page which is open before me. We can always see enough to keep us in mind that God rules over the events of every passing hour. We know that his general purpose is just, benevolent, and wise. But we do not always reflect that there may be that about ourselves which, for the very attainment of this ultimate end, may require to be rebuked by seeming departure from the line of justice. Look back upon your former self, the pampered child of indulgence, the overweening inheritor in anticipation of unpurchased and unmerited affluence. You have not told me that you were such as I describe. But were you not something like this?"

"Indeed I was."

"How say you, then? The rich, we are told, are the stewards of God's benevolence. And surely so it should be; for how else shall we reconcile to the principles of universal justice *any*

claim that you could set up to the possession of more than you want, while the necessaries of life are denied to others? And can it be that the ends of a plan of justice thus comprehensive can be accomplished, if, in every instance, all the power over the happiness of others incident to a princely patrimony should be permitted to descend with unvarying certainty, on such a spoiled child of fortune as you admit yourself to have been? You may parry this question by recalling the innumerable instances in which things have been suffered to take their course, in favour of men more likely to abuse the bounties of Providence than yourself. But will you murmur at having been selected as a fit subject for a discipline that might but have been wasted upon them? or will you take merit to yourself for being a more hopeful pupil than they? Who made you to differ? Who endowed you with those qualities, which might have been spoiled by unchecked prosperity, but which, matured by the training of the last (and it may be of the next) five years, may qualify you to resume the rights of your fathers, with the capacity and disposition to be the protector, and guide, and comforter of your dependants, and not their luxurious, insolent, and heartless oppressor? My dear William, in the armory of God's displeasure against the vices and follies of mankind, there is not one shaft too many, nor is one of them misdirected. In this instance, I fear, you are suffering rather for my faults than yours."

"For your faults," interrupted I. "What have you done that was not praiseworthy? What have you omitted, that ingenuity, address, and courage could accomplish?"

"To that question, on Monday morning, in the exultation of a proud heart, I should have answered, 'Nothing.' Did not that presumption need rebuke? I should have so answered, and I should have answered falsely. Did not that error need correction? I had given myself credit for motives altogether pure, and for plans laid in wisdom. I now see that my motives were vicious and my schemes childish. Can I murmur at my own share, or will you, William, at yours, in the mortifications that have undeceived me?"

"Pray undeceive me too," said I. "I will not offend your delicacy by saying what I *did think*; but certainly I did *not* impute to your conduct any defect of wisdom or virtue."

"I dare say not," replied Balcombe. "On the contrary, I am sure the exhibition was calculated to call forth the admiration of an unpractised young man. And hence, in part, my error. It is not my wife alone—God bless her!—who has an overweening pride in her husband's real or fancied endowments. Her husband, I am afraid, is not far behind her in this. Hence the pleasure I took in drawing Montague into a controversy of craft against boldness. Had this pleasure a virtuous source? And the further and higher gratification I promised myself, in taking this imbecile wretch

in his own snare, and looking on the agonies of his terror and shame. Was this virtuous or fiendlike? And when the eagerness with which I pursued these objects blinded me to the obvious course of turning James back without holding any communication with Montague, and relying on my influence with Mary Scott to recover the will, did I show my wisdom? It is true that we should want Montague's testimony to establish the will; and to get that it was necessary to involve him here in difficulties from which he would have been glad to be released by doing my bidding. In that point of view I dare say my plan was well laid; for, but for Ramsay's death, it would not have been in his power to escape punishment, either here or in Virginia, but by my forbearance. But I am not sure that we might not have got along without his testimony; but still I don't despair. My self-love and presumption have been undeceived and rebuked, and that end accomplished, all may yet go well. I rememer old Amy. She must detest Montague as the destroyer of the peace of her dear child, for so she considered Mary. She had a hard head, a loud tongue, and a bold spirit thirteen years ago; and the continued experience of indulgence, and the habit of authority among her fellow-servants have hardly abated these. I am, therefore, not without hopes that she will hold Montague up to the production of the ring which we have here. In that case there will be a war of wits between him on one side and the old woman and Mary on

the other. He may resort to violence; but in defence of his foster sister I'll put Charles, if he's alive, against him at that game. If he seeks the aid of the law, why, then we shall have the benefit of the law's delay as well as he. So, one way or the other, I am in hopes we may reach the field of action before the battle is fairly over."

"You are still my good angel," said I; "and gloomy as things look, I find I cannot despair while I have your energy and sagacity on my side."

"Oh, no more of that! 'Put not thy trust in princes nor in the sons of men.' 'The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong.' Let us take care that each event has its due influence upon our own hearts, and if we do not suffer *them* to deceive us, our trust in Providence will not deceive us."

"Yours is a curious philosophy, Mr. Balcombe," said I.

"It is such philosophy," said he, "as an educated man, brought up in a Christian society, learns in a life of solitary danger, where he must think his own thoughts, supply his own wants, and make his hand guard his head; while his naked and unhoused condition, battling with the elements, which are God's immediate ministers, continually reminds him of his helpless dependence. How can he but feel that his strength is but weakness, when daily grappling with such giant foes as the tempest or the mountain torrent? Depend upon it, men learn,

from the impertinent prate of what is called philosophy, few things more true or more profound than the thoughts that throng the mind of the solitary savage as he sits at night by his little fire, with the stars above him, and the wild waste of untamed nature around him. Hence the peculiar character of our Indians. It is born and nurtured in solitude. They are indeed an intellectual race; but mind must have materials for thought, and *they* find them in a condition which nourishes at once a sense of dependence upon God, and an independence of all things else. *Mutatis mutandis*, you will find few old sachems whose philosophy is not analogous to mine."

While he spoke thus I looked up to the rock above us, and felt how appropriate such discourse was to what the hypocrite Montague called "one of God's own temples, not made with hands." In my mind I could not help comparing his formal cant and false profession with the unpretending piety of the extraordinary being from whose lips I had just heard a discourse which impressed me with a deeper sense of God's providence than all I had ever read or listened to. I thought this, but I did not express it. I saw that Balcombe was in no humour to hear with pleasure even an allusion to the faults of any but himself, or the praise of any but God. I was silent, and we bent our steps homeward.

On reaching the house we found Keizer there, and a small cigar box, such as is commonly called

a quarter box, was handed to Balcombe by a servant. On the top was awkwardly scrawled with chalk what seemed intended for these words, "For Kurnal Balkum." Opening it, it was found to contain the fellow to the pistol which had been discovered at the cave.

"Who brought this, Tom?" said Balcombe.

"A woman, sir, that I never saw before. She said she had orders to leave it here."

Balcombe looked musingly at it. "Whence comes this?" said he; "from friend or foe? If I had not distinctly avowed the ownership of the fellow to it, I should suspect this was sent here that some one might come to search for it, and by finding it fix on me the property of the other. But there can be no such purpose. I was robbed of it. Has the thief repented and returned it? Or has some other person robbed the thief to make restitution? What say you, John? What do you make of it?"

"I could give a pretty good guess, sir, if I could see the woman that brought it. How long ago was it, Tom?"

"About half an hour, sir."

"Which way did she go?"

Tom showed the direction.

"I met her," said John, "as I came here, but I cannot say that I ever saw her before. But I will try and see if I cannot find her out." He took up his rifle and disappeared.

I find I have omitted to mention, in the proper

place, that while at St. Charles I had written to a friend in Virginia, explaining my situation, and the nature of Montague's errand, and urging him, if possible, to anticipate the villain, by going to Raby Hall and seeing Mary Scott before he should get there. Should he fail in this, he might yet be in time to put her on her guard against his art, or to defend her against his violence. I now apprized Balcombe of this; and being satisfied that we had done all that could be done, we composed ourselves, and committed the event to Providence.

The time for the meeting of the court was now at hand. We had not seen Keizer since the day when the pistol was returned, and, on inquiry, we could hear nothing of him. As the time wore away, I could not help suspecting that he was too doubtful of his own character to be willing to try conclusions with the law, in a case of so much moment. To make his escape, and leave his securities to pay the forfeiture of his recognisance, was the measure which I feared he had adopted. For that, had I been able to pay it, I should have cared nothing, as his peril had been incurred on my account. The same consideration would doubtless have reconciled Colonel Robinson (who was his security) to the loss, as John's devotion to Balcombe had completely won his heart. Indeed, he had acted under the orders of Balcombe, who would never have permitted him to come by any loss if he could help it. But there was another aspect of the case. John's disappearance would wear the

air of conscious guilt; and if he was guilty, Balcombe's tale was false, and all were guilty. This thought gave me great uneasiness. I did not like to mention it to Balcombe, but he had adverted to it, and assured me of his confidence in John.

"He was not idle," he said. "He could not be idle. I rather think," continued he, "that John (with too much reason, perhaps) has not so much faith in Providence as I have; and my great fear is, that he may be engaged in some scheme of his own devising which he knows I would not approve."

As he said this, his wife entered the room. I would have changed the conversation, but seeing her, he went on:

"No, William; have no fear that Keizer will betray or desert me. I know him for exactly what he is, and I feel that it is impossible he should ever fail me."

"You are right, my husband," said Mrs. Balcombe. "Bad as human nature is, there is no depth of baseness so great as that of the wretch who would betray your noble confidence."

"You forget Montague," said Balcombe.

"No, I do not. Did you ever trust Montague? Even he, the vilest of the vile, could not betray *you*, if it were possible you should ever trust him."

"But did I not trust him, on his promise to go with me to Virginia?"

"No; you did not trust *him*; you trusted to

your power over him. If he could evade that, he was as free to go as a prisoner to break jail."

"You are a nice casuist, Bet."

"You have taught me to distinguish. Montague's fault was not in giving you the slip, but in the crimes which made that step necessary, and his endeavour to fix a charge of guilt on you. But could John Keizer be false to you, he must be a baser wretch than Montague himself. No, my husband! confidence like yours cannot be betrayed. I know the power of that spell too well to doubt it."

"How say you, William?" said Balcombe.

"She is right, sir," said I; "and I shall never again have faith in the instinct of woman's love if it do not prove so. But tell me, I pray you, the secret of this strange power of commanding the fidelity of those who are faithful to none besides?"

"It is very simple. To go, if possible, beyond the letter of my own engagements, and to trust entirely, or not at all."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

But though, dear youth, thou shouldst be dragg'd
To yonder ignominious tree,
Thou shalt not want one constant friend
To share thy better fate with thee.

Oh, then her mourning coach she called,
The sledge moved slowly on before;
Though borne on a triumphal car,
She had not loved her favourite more.

SHENSTONE.

At length the day of trial came, and Keizer had not yet made his appearance. Yet I saw no sign that either Balcombe or his wife at all doubted that he would be forthcoming in due time. I had not expected to see the ladies at breakfast on the morning of that day, but they were both present. Mrs. Robinson commanded herself, but her pale lip and unsteady eye showed that she did so with difficulty. But Mrs. Balcombe appeared with a firm step and erect countenance, her cheek flushed, her eye flashing with unusual brightness, but it was slightly reddened, and the veins of her forehead and temples were full and corded. She was silent, and I observed that she ate little, but her

deportment was steady and majestic. Balcombe was composed and calm as a spring morning. He said little, for the subject of his thoughts was not a fit subject for conversation; but his whole air betokened the same cheerful confidence in himself which I had always seen him manifest, chastened and subdued by a sense of decorum, and respect for the feelings of others. Young Scott, whose faith in him seemed greater even than my own, and who had spent the last few weeks with a book in his hand, as if nothing had happened, now seemed to reflect his feelings. He looked on Balcombe's face, and read there that all was well, and he was satisfied. At length we rose to depart. Balcombe now tenderly took his wife by the arm to lead her out; but she stopped short, and said, firmly,

"No, my husband, we part here; I have no woman's weakness to hide."

"Bless you, my child!" said Balcombe, tenderly folding her in his arms. "May God bless you and be with you, my noble girl!"

"God *is* with you," said she. "Then go, my husband, go; and in his strength and in the strength of innocence and courage, and the resources of your own mind, baffle and confound your enemies, as you have always done."

We set out, and whether it were accident, or that I was drawn towards Balcombe by admiration and sympathy, we fell together in the narrow road where only two could ride abreast. We rode in

profound silence for some time. At length Balcombe turned to me, and with a face beaming with a degree of animation which showed that its spirit had shaken off its load, he said,

"I cannot help it; my wife has infected me with the contagion of her own feelings. It is not, I know, *selon les regles;* but she has talked about me until I *must* talk about her."

"If you will give me leave to do so too," said I, "I will say that a worthier theme of praise could not be found."

"You say true, William. She is a noble creature. The noblest of God's works—a *right woman*—a *genuine unsophisticated woman.* You may be inclined, perhaps, to think differently, and regard the strength of mind and firmness she displays as rather unfeminine."

"I acknowledge," said I, "that I was unprepared for an exhibition of character so much at variance with the shrinking reserve which marked her deportment until this prosecution commenced. Both are admirable; but the union of both in the same person puzzles me."

"They are but different phases of the same object," replied he. "The moon has not lost her brightness because the side next you is dark. It is so because the other is full of light. There is good philosophy in that mythology which makes the sun a man and the moon a woman. Man should always shine by his own light, woman by that which is cast upon her. In the heart of

woman, uncorrupted by a false philosophy which would unfit her for her proper sphere, the proudest feeling is that of admiration of her husband. Her strength is in her reliance on his prowess; her hope is in her confidence in his fortunes. The master of her heart and person is, in her eyes, the master of her destiny and his own. This is as God meant it should be. To this state the natural feelings of a woman's heart will tend, let quacks in education do what they will. While woman remains what she is, in this relation she will settle down. That is no fiction of municipal law which merges the existence of a woman in her husband. It is the fiat of nature. Generous, devoted, trusting, tender, and weak, she registers this decree in her heart, and executes it on herself. Take from her these qualities, make her something that God did not make her, nor mean that she should be, and she will struggle for supremacy, and contend for distinction with her husband. But leave her heart uncorrupt, and she will put from her, as a deadly bane, whatever may tempt it to insubordination to him she loves. Respect for him is so essential to her comfort, that, if she cannot raise him above herself, she will sink herself below him. What he does not know she will try to forget, or learn to undervalue. This is woman's nature, William, and war against it as you will, thank God you cannot destroy it. '*Naturam expellas furca tamen usque recurret.*'

"Now what have you seen in Elizabeth? A

woman who while her husband's light was above the horizon, hid herself beneath it, or if she appeared at all, modestly paled her lustre in his presence. But let him sink, and she rises, in all her glory, to show the world that his beams, though hidden, are not extinguished.

"When you told me that Ann said 'that she had no turn for the 'ologies,' my heart warmed towards her. I see by what you say of her that she is gentle as a dove. Cherish her indisposition for those useless acquirements, that rather dazzle than enlighten, and she will nestle in your bosom, and only look out with her meek eyes upon the world, seeing without caring to be seen. But let her sanctuary be invaded, let a blow be aimed at your honour or your heart, and she will guard her nest with the beak and talons of an eagle."

"Do you mean, then, to say," asked I, "that the faculties of the female mind should not be cultivated?"

"I mean to say," he replied, "that woman ought not to be made ambitious of *intellectual distinction*, or *distinction* of any kind. Such a feeling unsexes her. The feeling which disposes a woman to see her name in print, is hardly less meretricious than that which makes her show her ankles. If woman should insist that her limbs were as shapely as ours, and complain of the custom which condemns their symmetry to concealment, should we hearken to the plea? If she can add to the light that is in the world let her do so. But there is no need that

she should show *herself*. If she will do it, let her, like Mrs. Hannah More, renounce her sex, disclaim all thoughts of matrimonial connection, for which she is unfit, and make herself a sort of working bee in the hive, neither male nor female. I have no objection to that; but in this country, where husbands are plenty and few women are in danger of being driven to such a *pis aller*, I suspect they would not accede to the terms. Be it so. Let them figure in the world, and make themselves conspicuous as lady patronesses and lady presidents of societies, and put their names to prize essays and prize poems if they will. Let such a woman still hold herself out to society as a marrying character, and let her marry. Of one thing she may be sure. *A man of delicacy will not marry her.* He will require that she be not only chaste but *intact*. Fanned by the sweet breath of heaven, but not blown upon by the corrupting gale of public praise. He will never consent that the 'tender bloom of the heart' shall have been rubbed off by other hands. He will never consent, that, glutted with popular applause, the delicate hint of admiration shall be valueless, and a husband's love and a husband's calm discriminating approbation be rejected as flat and insipid, to an appetite already palled by the loud acclaim of the world. A wealthy or titled libertine will marry an actress from the theatre. Would you? Would I? 'Be she as chaste as ice, as pure as snow,' would either of us marry her? Why not? Because she has been pawed

and mouthed by the nauseous wretches that caricature love upon the stage! Not that alone; but because

> 'Being daily swallowed by men's eyes,
> We could not look upon her with that gaze
> Such as is bent on queenlike beauty,
> When it shines seldom in admiring eyes:
> But sick and blunted with community
> And surfeited with honey, would begin
> To loathe the taste of sweetness, whereof a little
> More than a little is by much too much.'

Now I can tell those learned ladies that 'there are secrets in heaven and earth not dreamed of in their philosophy.' That whether it be their personal or intellectual charms which are made

> 'So common hackneyed in the eyes of men,
> So stale and cheap to vulgar company,'

such men as they would choose to marry, will not be very eager to appropriate the leavings of the public."

"But," said I, "will not a general standard of female education, more elevated than heretofore adopted, have a tendency to raise that of the men, by stimulating them to improvement, that they may win the favour of intellectual women?"

"Yes," said he, "whenever marriage is more necessary to men than to women. But when will that be? Do not you see that marriage is an invention of civilized society for the benefit of women

and the protection of children? Woman must marry. 'Wo is me! if I do not marry,' she may well say. And she must and will marry man as she finds him. It is their fate to take such husbands as Heaven sends. Suppose there was not a woman in the community fit to be the wife of a fool. What then? Would the fools go without wives? No such thing. But the women would be unqualified for happiness with such husbands as they must put up with."

"But should we not afford such means of education as may qualify women to be the wives of men of sense?"

"By all means."

"Would you not then educate highly at least as many as practicable for their benefit?"

"Yes, when I see that men of sense want *highly* educated wives. But if I can understand the run of the market, such women are commonly left to men of cultivated but effeminate minds, of pretty talents, not of masculine sense; while they whose names live in the mouths of men, prefer the plain housewifely girl, who reads her Bible, works her sampler, darns her stockings, and boils her bacon and greens together."

"But is not that a perverted taste?"

"Does it become us to sit in judgment on the tastes of such men as we speak of? Is it not rather the part of wisdom to inquire whether this thing has not its foundation in truth and nature? How shall we try this? By experience. If such

women make the homes of their husbands happy, is that no proof? If such women train up their sons to walk in the paths of science, honour, and virtue, is that no proof? What more would you have? That they should train up their daughters to be such as themselves. But that the modern inventions in education will not allow. A girl of fifteen, who does not think her mother a fool, will not pass an examination now. The whole is in order. Let her grow up in contempt of her mother, and spend her days in contempt of her husband, and let God's commandment and God's established order of domestic society be exploded as an antiquated fashion."

"I am afraid," said I, "that I shall find you an uncompromising opponent of what I had regarded as one of the greatest improvements of the age."

"What is that?"

"Female education."

"Female education! I know nothing more important."

"Then, to be more precise, the degree of attention paid to it."

"That can never be too great. There is no object which requires such unremitting attention. The heart of woman is the fabled garden of the Hesperides. Its golden fruits require all the vigilance of the sleepless dragon that guards them for the rightful owners, her husband and her God. It is you who would break up the privacy of its imbowered recesses, and let in the gaudy glare of

day, and the common eye, and the foot of the multitude, where I would have shade and quiet, and the dewy freshness of the morning."

"Still you misapprehend me. It is not the degree of attention of which I speak, but the subjects of instruction—*science* and *literature*."

"I understand you perfectly; but I choose to make you state accurately the point of difference between us. This is one of those controversies in which, from its nature, nearly all that is written is on your side. You are the bookmakers, not we. You are of the allies of the *trade*, as it is called, and from the printer's devil to the great bookselling capitalist, all the fellows of the craft are on your side. Let you state the question your own way, and impute to *us* the maintenance of an absurd proposition, and you have nothing to do but to *refute* it. But state *your own*, and *prove that*."

"But the *reductio ad absurdum* is sometimes the only mode of proof."

"What are the proper subjects of it? Cases where you can put two things together and show that they don't fit. I am willing to abide that test."

"What, then, is your proposition?"

"I have none to make. *Sto bene*. I am very well as I am, and wish to be let alone."

"You maintain, then, that female education is as good already as it can be."

"It is as good as anything that is no better. Show me what you think better and I will choose.

You are terribly afraid of that *reductio ad absurdum* that you wish to use against me."

"You seem to fear it too; for you refuse to state what you contend for."

"I contend for nothing. I am merely satisfied with woman as she is. And how do I shrink from the *reductio ad absurdum?* Nothing can be more definite than my proposition. I show you woman as she is. Look at her. Now find her place in society, and if she does not fit it, then my proposition is condemned; and if you can make her fit it better you shall be my Apollo."

"But what is her place in society?"

"That which must be filled, and which she alone can fill. My dear William, you propose to be a husband and a father. In this relation, on which the whole happiness of your life will depend, what you want is a wife and a mother. This is woman's place in society. What more exalted would you have for her than that compound relation in which she constitutes the chief happiness of man."

"But will she not be more or less qualified to fill that place according to her education?"

"Assuredly. And if I be asked what education fits her best for it, I will take the practical wisdom of the wise and good for my guide, and choose that as my standard, which I find to be, in point of fact, the education of the sort of women they choose for wives. As I remarked a while ago, instead of

wondering at or censuring their choice, I make it my business to look for the reason of it?"

"And have you found one?"

"I think I have. The education I speak of prepares a woman to receive instruction from her husband, and does not impair the natural and healthy disposition of her mind to receive his instructions as the teachings of truth and wisdom. You have never married, William; but you have been brought up in the house with her you loved. You are her senior, and have had means of instruction denied to her. I will not ask if you have been in the habit of communicating their benefits to her. I know you have; and I know that that occupation has afforded you the sweetest, the purest, the most refined and delicate enjoyment of your life. Would you have been willing to be forestalled in this? You will not say 'yes;' and unless you do, I need not continue the argument."

I could not say "yes;" and though I will not admit that I was convinced, yet this *argumentum ad hominem* fairly knocked my heels from under me, and silenced me for the time.

END OF VOL. I.