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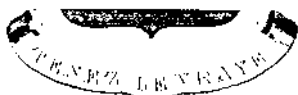
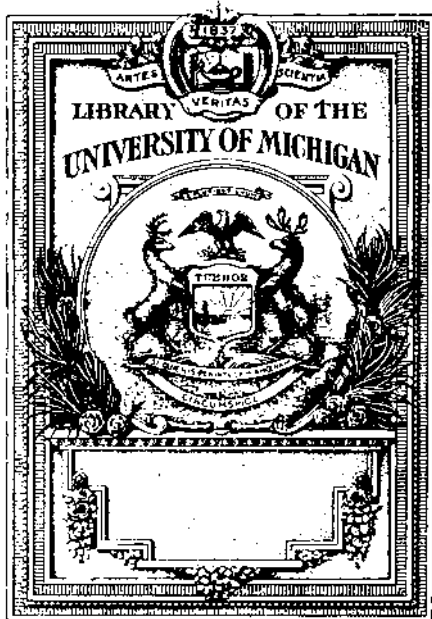
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GEORGE BALCOMBE.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

Edw. L. ...

NEW-YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, 82 CLIFF-STREET.

1836.

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GEORGE BALCOMBE.

CHAPTER I.

When the whole host of Hatred stood hard by,
To watch and mock thee shrinking, thou didst stand
With a sedate and all-enduring eye.

BYRON.

WE now approached the seat of justice for
— county, and as we mingled in the crowd of
countrymen flocking to the same point, our conver-
sation was necessarily interrupted. I soon saw
that Balcombe was distinguished, and that he was
an object of interest and curiosity, which was
painful to me. By him it seemed to be un-
marked, and he moved on with a countenance of
quiet serenity, as a man familiar with notoriety,
and secure of himself

“In all that he would do or should endure.”

The county having been newly laid off, there
was no courthouse. The place was called a

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town, though there was but a single rude dwelling, in one room of which the court was already sitting. We entered just as the grand jury had been sent out. Many of the bystanders had followed, so that at the moment the crowd was thinned, and there was a pause in business. In one corner, behind a small table, over which his leg was thrown, sat a good-looking man, of a sleepy eye and sluggish air, puffing lazily at the stump of a cigar. This, I learned, was the judge. At another table was the clerk, and clustered around were several persons, various in air, dress, and aspect, whose bustling manner indicated that they were lawyers. A little apart sat two gentlemen, whose intelligent countenances, as they glanced with a cool inquiring look on all that passed, at times exchanging whispers, sometimes serious, sometimes playful, marked them as the master minds of the place. In one of these I recognised my acquaintance Shaler. The other was a man of striking appearance. Though apparently not more than thirty years of age, he was quite gray; but his complexion was fresh and ruddy, his features regular and bold, his forehead broad and high; and his dark gray eye, quietly moving around the room, dwelt a moment on each individual, as if reading and thoroughly understanding all in turn. There was something in the flush of his cheek that might betoken dissipation, and a recklessness in his roving eye not compatible with a very strict code of moral principles; but the *tout ensemble* bespoke a man of quick and

clear perceptions, and a bold and vigorous thinker. Observing me, Mr. Shaler bowed with polite recognition, and approaching, accosted me with a courtesy so little like his former careless manner, as to convince me that he had learned the character of the parties implicated, and regarded the prosecution of a man like Balcombe as a very different affair from that of a poor devil like Keizer. He was now grave, considerate, and delicate in his manner of approaching the subject, and inquiring whether my friend was prepared to take his trial. He seemed desirous to let me know that he had restrained the officers of the court from calling the parties, thinking it would be more agreeable to a gentleman like Mr. Balcombe to appear uncalled. In short, I saw plainly that he found himself involved in a disagreeable business, and would gladly escape from it; though I had no doubt that when once fairly pitted, he would do his best to accomplish the destruction of a man who had never wronged him, and whom, if he knew anything of him, he must esteem and admire.

Such is the lot of the intellectual prizefighters of the bar. Their hearts may sink, like that of Boisguilbert when battling against the champion of her he loved best on earth; their powers may fail them under the crushing weight of sympathy for their victim, but while their powers remain they must be exerted.

“Can it be true, as I am told,” said Shaler, “that Mr. Balcombe has retained no counsel?”

"None," said I.

"He will at least indirectly have the benefit of the talents of the other prisoner's counsel."

"They have none."

"Poor devils! I suppose they are too poor. But the court will assign them counsel, and in that case they will have the best the country affords, as my friend Whitehead from St. Louis is here and disengaged."

"They have no wish nor need for counsel," said I.

He looked really distressed when I said this. "Surely," said he, "they are not aware of the serious aspect of the case. Besides," continued he, "though we don't deal in the maxims of chivalry, it really seems ungenerous, that I should come in aid of the counsel for the prosecution against an undefended man."

"Are you acquainted with Mr. Balcombe?" I asked.

"I am not. I know him by character, and should be glad to know him personally, if it were proper or delicate to seek an introduction."

"I merely asked," said I, "because I thought if you had known him, you would think him no contemptible adversary."

"I know he is far from it; common fame testifies of that, as well as of his high honour and unexceptionable character; and I sincerely hope that he may 'outlive the envy of this day,' and not be in-

duced by anything that may pass to deny me the pleasure of his acquaintance."

"Yours must be a strange and painful situation," said I.

"It is anything but pleasant," he replied; "and so impatient of it am I, that I trust I do not break faith with my client when I hint to you, that Mr. Balcombe will have more need of the aid of counsel learned in the law than he is aware of."

"I believe," said I, "he would as soon lose his life, as save it at the expense of honour, as it would be, if saved by legal quibbles."

"I am easily persuaded, my dear sir," said Shaler, with earnest kindness, "that he has no need of any defence of that sort; but he will need the aid of professional skill to protect himself *against* legal quibbles."

"Who will use them?" said I, somewhat alarmed.

"I shall," said he. "It is strange how it can be any man's duty to do so; but it is my duty. The functions of a lawyer are peculiar, and his duty to 'smite and spare not' is ascertained by considerations which I have no time to detail, but the soundness of which cannot be questioned. But this duty does not commence until the trial, except that I am not at liberty to disclose the point or mode of attack. But though I am bound to strike unsparingly, at the head and at the heart, I am not bound to beguile my adversary into fancied security, or to let him rest in it. It would relieve me

from an unpleasant feeling if you would mention this matter to Mr. Balcombe."

I did so. He heard me with composed attention, and then said,

"No, William; I have set my life upon the cast. I was at one time intended for the bar, and have some little knowledge of the law; and I am aware that there are difficulties in the way of which I have not spoken to you. Such a prosecution as this in itself is a reproach upon my name, which can only be wiped off by meeting it with no armour but that of innocence. An acquittal procured by the aid of counsel would not remove the stigma; and sooner than bear that home to the pure bosom of her that awaits my return, I will peril that utter destruction which she, I know, will not long survive. Think of *her* as she is, William, and you will not wonder at what I do."

In uttering these last words, his voice faltered for the first time, and he seemed more deeply moved than I had ever seen him. He presently recovered himself, and added, "Will you do me the favour to say to the gentleman, that if he apprehends no very decided impropriety in an introduction to me, I shall be glad to have an opportunity of acknowledging, personally, my sense of his kindness."

I mentioned his wish to Shaler, who immediately approached, and was introduced to Balcombe. "I owe you my acknowledgments, sir," said he, "for the interest you express in me, and

the reluctance with which you enter on a duty, rendered painful by the kindness of your feelings towards a stranger. It gives me pleasure to be thus guarded against misconstruction of what you may do to-day, and to say that I hope hereafter to find occasions to show my sense of your honourable frankness."

Shaler tried to say something in reply, but his words stuck in his throat. He turned away, and threw himself into a chair by his companion, and I heard him say, "By God! Whitehead, you must help these poor fellows out, if you find that damned fool going to decide any important point against them."

Whitehead made no reply, but turned his head, and twisting his tobacco in his mouth, fixed an eye of cold and heartless scrutiny upon Balcombe; then rising, he squirted a mouthful of tobacco juice through his teeth, thrust his hands into his breeches pockets, and walked away.

The grand jury now appeared, and returned true bills against George Balcombe, James Scott, and John Keizer for the murder of Andrew Ramsay. After some conversation between Shaler and the circuit attorney, it was asked whether the accused were ready for trial. Balcombe promptly answered that he and Scott were, but that Keizer had not appeared. He was accordingly called, when, to my great relief, he answered, and bustled into court. He was more soiled and shabby than I had ever seen him, with a double portion of blood and grease on his leather clothes, and his thin beard

seemed to have been for weeks a stranger to the razor. I had never before seen him exhibit any signs of weariness. Now he looked fagged and jaded, and though the fire of his keen black eye was not quenched, it showed the want of sleep. As it fell on Balcombe it resumed its expression of cheerful confidence, and he approached his patron with an outstretched hand.

"Where upon earth have you been, John?" said Balcombe.

"Why, you see, colonel, I was just tired of doing nothing, and as the hunting season was come, I thought I'd just take a turn a while in the prairies, and be back to court."

"Well, are you ready for trial?"

"Oh, yes! if *you* say so, sir."

Balcombe accordingly informed the court that all were ready; and being asked whether the accused wished to be tried separately, he replied that they did not. An offer to assign counsel was also respectfully and modestly declined. Copies were now handed to Balcombe of the panels of jurors to be examined, while they were called into court. Glancing his eye over that which belonged to his own case, he rose, and said,

"Before we proceed to swear the jury, sir, I have one word to say, which will stand instead of all those cavilling exceptions to the qualifications of jurors, which I have no wish to make. I am not a man to pass through life without enemies. Now, sir, the name of the gentleman who has sub-

scribed this panel as returning officer is new to me. I cannot, therefore, be understood as ascribing to him any improper bias; but it somehow so happens, that there is not a man in the county of whose enmity I have cause to be proud, or whose unkind feelings I have occasion to lament, but I find his name on this paper. I thank God they are not many; but their array looks somewhat formidable, at the very head of this list, where they seem to require of me to commence the preparations for the trial by exhibiting the unfavourable symptom of a captious disposition. If any such expectation is entertained, it shall be disappointed. I am not so uncandid as to deny that I see here the names of men, from whom, notwithstanding private hostility, I should expect nothing but justice. But if there be any who are conscious to themselves of a malignity which would delight in the ignominious death of an innocent man, I shall rest in the hope that they will first sit in judgment on themselves, and voluntarily declare their own disqualification. I shall pry into the secret of no man's heart. There is One to whom all are open, and he will judge between them and me."

As Balcombe said this, I saw marks of emotion on almost every face in the room. In no two, perhaps, precisely the same; it varied in degree and character in each individual. Respect, sympathy, admiration, or malignity was displayed in every countenance, two only excepted. The stolid apathy of the judge was unmoved. Whitehead, who

had resumed his seat near Shaler, turned his head again as Balcombe began to speak, and fixing on him a look of intense but undefinable interest, continued his scrutiny until long after he had finished his remarks.

The jury were now successively called to the book. The first who appeared, a fine-looking man of good address and an intellectual countenance, unhesitatingly declared his hostility to Balcombe.

"I am perfectly aware of it, sir," said Balcombe; "it has been shown openly as becomes a man; but I make no objection on that account."

"Perhaps," said Shaler, "the gentleman has formed or delivered an opinion in the case. If so, I shall challenge him."

"I have not," replied the juror, quietly, and took his seat.

Another, another, and another were called, and making the same objection, were permitted to withdraw. The influence of Balcombe's appeal, and of the example of the first juror, was such, that I am persuaded it effectually purged the panel of all Balcombe's enemies but two or three by whom he chose to be tried. Having got through them, he quietly went on, rejecting none but men whose appearance and manner indicated a low intellect or degraded and vicious minds. In the end a jury was obtained, on which it was impossible to look without seeing that they were men to whom innocence might safely trust for a defence against anything but perjury.

CHAPTER II.

Never any man acted such a part on such a theatre with more wisdom, constancy, and eloquence; with greater reason, judgment, and temper, and with a better grace in all his words and actions.—WHITLOCKE.

THE witnesses were now called, and good old Mr. Jones repeated very accurately what he had said before the justice. When he came to speak of the return of the pistol, he was stopped by Shaler, who said that he did not mean to inquire whether Balcombe had acknowledged it to be his or no; he therefore requested nothing might be said of that matter. Then, addressing the court, he added, "As I do not mean at all to avail myself of any admissions of Mr. Balcombe, I wish to be understood as objecting to all evidence which may be offered of words spoken by him."

Then turning to the witness, he asked whether Scott had recognised the picture. I had observed, as he spoke, a slight flush on the pale and withered cheek of the old man, and a gleam of light in his dim eye, as if he had a glimmering and unpleasant perception of the effect of this course of examination. He now replied that Scott claimed the pic-

ture eagerly, and that neither he nor Balcombe seemed at all disconcerted, but that the latter appeared to forget everything in the thought of the original of the picture. This was said in the hurried way of a man fearful of being interrupted, and I was pleased to see that as the toils of the law were drawn around Balcombe, the sympathies of good men were awakened in his favour.

Notwithstanding this, I was now, for the first time, filled with consternation; for I could not be insensible how much the candid and perspicuous narrative of Balcombe had done to impress the justice and the bystanders favourably on the former occasion. This advantage was now to be denied him, and I saw the necessity of making it up, if possible, by the fulness and clearness of my own testimony.

Johnson now came forward and repeated the tale of his adventures in the wilderness. When he came to tell that Balcombe and Scott, as it would seem, decoyed Ramsay to the scene of his assassination, I observed that the foreman of the jury cast on him a glance of indignation, and turning his eye on Balcombe, rested it there with a calm expression of respect and confidence. Here again was ground of hope, and I admired the sagacity of Balcombe in trusting his fate to a man who, though an enemy, knew him to be incapable of seeking a base and cowardly advantage. Having told his tale, Johnson was now turned over to Balcombe,

who, addressing him in an easy conversational style, said,

"Mr. Johnson, I don't think I had seen you before that evening since we parted on the frontier ten years ago, and I did not know you at all. I am surprised that you knew me."

"Oh! I know'd you well enough, for I had reason to remember you."

"Why, what harm had I ever done you?" said Balcombe, mildly.

"What," said Johnson, "I suppose you don't remember how you served me away out upon the *Simmirone*!"

"Indeed I do not," said Balcombe; "and I am sorry you should bear malice so long. And was that the reason you took part against me that night? I remember now—it was you that tied my hands. But the fellow that held me behind, and never spoke a word, nor let me see his face; I suppose he thought I would know *him*. I wish you would tell me who that was."

The witness hesitated and looked perplexed. Balcombe went on:

"Mr. Johnson, you and Ramsay went there together—why did you not go with him down the hollow?"

"Nobody asked me to go," said Johnson.

"And are you very sure you did not go? Well, did Scott and I carry Ramsay, or did he and the rest of you carry us?"

"No, you just walked along together friendly like."

"I am glad to hear we were so friendly; I thought you said a while ago that Ramsay vowed vengeance against me."

The witness looked a little disconcerted, and Balcombe struck at the opening his confusion afforded, by saying,

"Why, Ramsay must have got more than his share of the plunder that night; I suppose he dropped the picture and pistol when he was shot."

"Ramsay never had the pistol nor the picture neither," said Johnson.

"You are *very* sure, then, that I did not give them to him *after we parted from you.*"

The witness looked as if he did not know how to take or answer this remark, and remained silent.

"I will not trouble you any further, sir," said Balcombe; "and you, gentlemen of the jury, will be governed by your own sagacity and knowledge of mankind in deciding whether this witness has displayed either the indignation or surprise that my questions might have occasioned to a man to whom such suggestions were new, or merely a dogged resolution to adhere to his first story."

The rest of the testimony on behalf of the prosecution was pretty much what it had been before; with the additional fact of Keizer's attempt to escape from the state. In bringing forward the evidence on the part of the accused, it was thought advisable to explain this last matter at once, by

calling Mr. Green, the sheriff of St. Louis county, to prove that Keizer went in quest of Montague, and wished to take him back. This was objected to as an attempt of Keizer to make evidence for himself, and excluded by the judge, in a half sentence, lazily uttered between two puffs of his cigar. The circumstances of the arrest were, however, detailed, and the fact that Keizer had dogged Montague instead of avoiding him, could not be disguised. It was now my turn to testify, and as I had arranged my history of the transaction in my own mind, I began far enough back to enable the jury to see it in all its bearings. But objections on the score of what was called irrelevancy were at hand, when no other occurred, and were all sustained. Of all that I had to say of events antecedent to the death of Ramsay, I was not permitted to tell more than that, on that evening Balcombe and Scott had walked out towards the spot where Johnson said he had seen them. The only effect, then, of this part of my story, was to confirm the testimony of that wretch. I then proceeded to speak of the interview with Montague. I was permitted to tell what I had seen, but as soon as I began to detail the conversation with Montague, I was again stopped, and told to confine myself to what I knew, and to bear in mind that hearsay testimony was not admissible.

Balcombe now arose, "I would thank the gentleman who makes the objection to favour me with a definition of *hearsay testimony*."

"*Hearsay testimony*," said Shaler, "is testimony of anything that any other person but a party or witness present in court has been heard to say."

"I think," replied Balcombe, "that I could supply the gentleman with a better definition."

"I will hear it with pleasure, sir," said Shaler.

"*Hearsay testimony*," continued Balcombe, "is that by which one would prove a *fact* by proving that some person not a party had asserted that fact."

"I see no difference," drawled the judge.

"This case, sir," said Balcombe, "illustrates the difference. I propose to prove by the witness that Mr. Montague being asked where I was, said that I was at the Rockhouse. Do I offer this in proof of the *fact* that I was there? Is that a fact for me to prove? Does not the success of the *prosecution* depend on the establishment of *that very fact*? Why else is that pistol here? Why else was Johnson sworn to prove that he saw me go that way? Take away these proofs, and wary as the gentleman is not to permit a word that I have said to be repeated, he would gladly receive proof that even I had said that I was there. I now say that I was there. Will the gentleman be hardy enough to allege that in saying this I am making testimony for myself? Evidence of the words of Montague, then, is not offered in proof that the words were true. The gentleman may have it that they were false if he can afford to put the matter on that footing. It is offered solely and simply in

proof that the words were *spoken*. *The speaking of those words* is a fact on which I rely, in connection with his trepidation, and his possession of an article which must have been just before taken from Scott or me, in proof not of the *fact asserted by him*, but of *another fact*, of the fact that *he knew* that I was there; from which I shall argue that I was there *against my will*, and in the power of *persons acting under his orders*."

He ceased, and Shaler, evidently pleased though baffled, rose to reply, but was stopped by the judge, who repeated that he saw no difference, and that the only definition of hearsay evidence was that given by Shaler. Had he looked at that gentleman as he said this, he would have seen an expression of disappointment and disgust which even he could not have mistaken.

While Balcombe was speaking, I observed Whitehead a third time turn in his chair, and look at him earnestly. His countenance now wore a less equivocal expression than formerly. It bore marks of approbation, intelligent attention, and a kind of sympathy. He rose, and placing himself so that, with a slight change of position, he could face either Balcombe or the court, he said, "I have watched the progress of this case, sir, with a mind passing from a state of profound indifference to one of the highest interest. I should have more cause than I have to regret a course of life which has hardened my heart and made it callous to the misfortunes of others, if I could look with com-

posure to the possible fate of a brave and honourable man, involved in the snare of a base conspiracy, and hunted to destruction by the best talents which could be employed against him. I have so far been silent out of respect for that delicate sense of honour, that noble confidence of innocence, which was unwilling to accept an acquittal rendered equivocal by professional aid. Nor would I now offend those generous feelings by an offer of aid, except in strict subordination to the pleasure of one who has so far conducted his defence with ability not less distinguished than its delicacy and propriety. On behalf of such a man, sir, I would not presume to make a point which his judgment and his feelings did not alike approve. But having himself made one, I trust he will pardon me for asking his permission to offer a few remarks in furtherance of his own."

He paused; and turning to Balcombe, awaited his reply with an air of lofty deference, which imposed silence and awe on all present.

"You have my thanks, sir," said Balcombe, resuming his quiet air and tone, though with a countenance not void of emotion—"you have my thanks, sir, for the offer of your assistance, and yet more for the manner of it, and under the restrictions suggested by yourself, I accept it."

"I am flattered by the acceptance, sir," said Whitehead. Then turning to the court, "I do not propose," said he, "to call upon the court to reconsider the question just now decided, I will not

say *hastily*, but *without thought*. Not having been heard by counsel, as he has a right to be, Mr. Balcombe might not only ask, but demand a reconsideration. But it would require a reach of presumption of which I am incapable to flatter myself that I can add anything to the clearness and conclusiveness of the argument you have just heard from himself. He who cannot understand it will never understand the simplest rule of grammar or arithmetic. He who is unconvinced by it will yield to no conviction that does not lead him to the gratification of his own wishes. He who is not moved by the exhibition we have seen this day of the quiet dignity of innocence, of honour, candour, sagacity, and ability, struggling in the toils of art, or crushed beneath the dead fall of dulness, will never shake off the torpor of his selfish apathy until the last trump shall rouse him from his last sleep.

“ My purpose in rising, sir, is to call the attention of the jury to what has just passed, and to prepare their minds to assign it its due place, and its due weight. You, gentlemen, are judges of law and of fact. The facts you obtain by testimony, and that is made up of what is sworn by witnesses which you hear, and of the deportment of the witnesses under examination, and of the defendant under trial, which you see with your own eyes. It is for this reason that the accused has a right to be confronted with the witnesses, and the jury, and to confront them with each other. Truths are thus

made manifest to the senses which no language can communicate. And shall you believe that the wisdom of the law which requires that these sources of truth shall be opened to you, forbids you to drink of them? Shall you be told that the exhibition of character which has this day borne to the mind of every other person a conviction of the defendant's innocence, is testimony to all but you? Is it required of you to condemn as a felon a man of whom all that we have seen and heard here has left no doubt in the mind of me, a stranger, and can leave no doubt in your minds, that if unerring wisdom should designate the man of all in this presence most worthy to sit in judgment on all the rest, the prisoner at the bar would be that man. Gentlemen, the whole deportment of the prisoner is in evidence before you; and as it is the most interesting, so it is the most satisfactory evidence laid before you this day.

“I do not propose to argue before you the question just now decided, were it admissible. I am here without books, and could only add my testimony that the law is as was stated by Mr. Balcombe. To his argument I could add nothing. Nothing can deepen your conviction of its truth. Nothing can ever make you doubt that the testimony offered was not only lawful, but the only testimony by which this mystery of iniquity can ever be unravelled. Nothing can ever make you doubt that Mr. Balcombe was prepared to give such testimony. My only purpose now is to premonish

you that there is nothing in the law requiring you to reject these convictions, derived from that which is testimony in the eyes of the law. I beg you to bear these things in mind, and to hold yourselves prepared to assign them their due weight, when the proper time shall come for the last appeal to you, the final judges of law and fact. That appeal will be confidently made; for I shall always appeal with confidence to honour and intelligence, even in an enemy, from the stolid indifference of apathy and dulness."

He ceased, but continued standing, and having with the last words glanced his eye from the foreman to the judge, it remained fixed on him with an expression of cool scorn.

"Why—really—Mr. Whitehead," said that worthy, "this is a—most extraordinary—" He paused and looked around. As soon as he began to speak Whitehead threw himself into his chair, and giving his shoulder to the judge, fixed his eye steadily on Balcombe. His honour looked to Shaler for encouragement, but found none. In every other countenance he must have sought in vain for any expression but that of contempt. He remained silent, lay back in his chair, and puffed his cigar.

A momentary feeling of triumph passed across my mind at this instant, but it soon gave place to the thought of the aspect of the case, as seen in the facts proved before the jury. The dead body of a man slaughtered in this obscure place, and thrown into the river, as no one could doubt, by the hand

of Keizer ; Balcombe's pistol, and Scott's picture found at the spot ; the enmity between Balcombe and Ramsay, and the fact that the latter had fallen in with the former accompanied by Scott, and that the three were seen going together towards the place about the time the deed must have been done ; these facts made up the case on the part of the prosecution. The exculpatory evidence was frittered down to the single circumstance of the possession of the casket by Montague, which merely showed that he and Balcombe had met. What hope remained but that the jury, with the sturdy independence on which the men of the West pride themselves, should stand out in the belief that there was a something in the business not yet understood ? On this slender thread hung the destiny of my noble friend, and into this peril he had been brought by his zeal in my service. I could not look at him, especially after I had told the only other fact I was permitted to mention ; the damning fact that the blood of Ramsay was yet warm when I saw it.

Balcombe was now asked if he had anything farther to offer, and replied in the negative. At this moment an Indian came forward, who proved to be our old acquaintance Billy John. He looked around him with an undisturbed countenance ; but as his cold eye fell on Balcombe, it rested there for a moment with an appearance of satisfaction, and he immediately said, striking his breast with the point of his finger, "Me, me kill him man." He

He then folded his arms, and stood patiently waiting what might be required of him.

"What does the fellow want?" said Shaler.

"He wants to be sworn," said Keizer. "Swear him."

"Does he speak English?" asked Shaler.

"Oh yes; me 'peak 'Merican."

"Do you understand the nature of an oath?" inquired Shaler. No answer. The question was repeated.

"Not know—not unnestan'," said the Indian, shaking his head.

"It appears," said Shaler to the court, "that he does not understand the nature of an oath."

"Or the meaning of your question—which?" said Balcombe.

Then, after speaking a few words in a foreign tongue, he added,

"If you repeat your question now, sir, you will probably obtain an answer."

"I suppose so, sir," said Shaler, sarcastically, "after—" Then, suddenly checking himself, he added, in a tone of deep respect, "I beg pardon, sir; I was going to make a remark which even my situation would not justify."

He then repeated the question, to which the Indian replied,

"Great Spirit hate liar. Me call him hear—me tell lie—he very mad."

"And what do you think he will do with you if you tell a lie?"

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"Oh, he do me very bad," replied Billy John.

"But *what* will he do?"

"Not know," said the simple savage.

"And what will become of you when you die?"

"Oh, good man go to fine country. Plenty deer—plenty buffalo—plenty elk—plenty bear: shoot—good rifle—never miss."

"But what will become of *you*?"

"Not know," said the Indian.

"He has no idea of a future state of rewards and punishments, sir, and cannot be sworn," said Shaler to the court.

The judge then began to echo this remark, when Balcombe said,

"Give *me* leave, if you please, sir, to ask if he believes the Great Spirit will do him bad, as *he* calls it, after he dies."

"Oh, yes," said the Indian, "very much—very bad."

"But what do you think he will do?" said Shaler.

"Not know," said he.

Shaler looked at Balcombe, who said, quietly, "Do you?"

The matter was now left to the court, and it was decided that he might be sworn.

After taking the oath, he was asked if he knew who killed Andrew Ramsay, to which he replied in the negative. If he knew anything of his death: no.

"Then what does he know about the matter?" said Shaler.

"Everything but the man's name," said Balcombe; who now asked him if he knew who killed a man at the Rockhouse on a certain night, whose body was thrown into the river. To this he answered, "Me, me, me kill him."

"And where was I at the time?"

"Oh, you there too. He lie close to the rock—him hand tied."

"Another accomplice, sir," said Shaler. "I submit, sir, that we might as well have examined Keizer, while we believed him to have been the perpetrator of the murder, as examine this fellow who declares that he did the deed. We had only mistaken the instrument, it seems, sir; and this disclosure just makes such a change in the case as if we had found that a different weapon had been used from that supposed."

"Such a weapon," said Balcombe, dryly, "as a man may use with his hands tied."

Affecting not to heed the interruption, Shaler was going on to propose to cut short the testimony of the witness by committing him, when Keizer spoke:

"It is not worth while," said he, "to be putting the poor fellow to trouble when there's no use for him. Nobody wanted him here; but then he's a truehearted fellow, that would not let the colonel suffer for what he had done. Sheriff, call Sam Todd."

I started at this name, which I remembered to have heard before as that of one of Montague's confederates. It was repeated by the sheriff; and a man dressed a good deal after the same fashion with John himself, but tall, gaunt, and wolfish in his aspect, made his appearance. He stepped boldly forward at once and was sworn.

CHAPTER III.

I'll be no longer guilty of this sin.

SHAKESPEARE.

JOHN, who now acted as spokesman, asked the witness to tell what he knew about Andrew Ramsay's death.

"Why, gentlemen," said he, "I know pretty much all about it from first to last; but nobody knew that I did but them that would never tell; and I would not have been here, only I could not bear the thoughts of a good man coming to the gallows, when he wasn't no more to blame than a child."

"Well, well, sir," said Shaler, "we want none of your reasons or opinions; give us your facts if you please, and as you know all about it, tell us all about it."

“Well, that’s what I’m a going to do, stranger, and you may as well let me do it my own way. First and last you’ll get it all, whether you like it or no, and you won’t get it no faster than it comes.”

He then reflected a moment and went on:

“It was a Saturday morning of the great camp-meeting there near the village, I was standing sorter out upon the edge of the crowd, about eleven o’clock maybe, when this same Ramsay (least ways, that’s what he called his name—anyhow, the man that was killed that night) he comes along by me. And he stands and studies a while, and then says he,

“‘Ain’t your name Sam Todd?’

“‘I passes for him,’ says I.

“‘Well,’ says he, ‘I want to speak with you.’

“‘So with that we walks out, and says he,

“‘What I want to speak to you about is another man’s business, and he told me about you, and told me to find you, and for us to go to him together.’

“‘Who is he?’ says I.

“‘I’m a stranger in these parts,’ says he, ‘and I cannot say I know his name; only I have seen him here mighty busy, and mighty great among the preachers, ever since the meeting began.’

“‘Is he here now?’ says I.

“‘No,’ says he, ‘and it wasn’t here we were to meet; but if you’ll go with me, I’ll carry you to the place.’

“So we started off together, and as we went I

asked him if he knew what sort of business it was. And says he,

“‘No; I can't say rightly as I do know; only it's something in our line, sorter ruffianlike.’

“‘Well,’ says I, ‘I don't know that I have any objection to that, so as he pays me for it well.’ ‘Cause you see, gentlemen, if any man gets me into danger, and maybe into trouble, and I have to get out of it as I can, he must pay me for it; and if he saves his skin, why his purse must suffer. So we goes along until we gets almost to the head of the hollow that leads down to the Rockhouse, and I sees a man setting upon a stump, with a book in his hand reading mighty seriouslike. And when we came up to him I saw it was the man I hear them call Mr. Montague. So when we came to where he was, he just raised his eyes from his book, and then he looks at it again and turns down a corner of the leaf and shuts it; and then he looks at Ramsay and then at me, and we howd'yed; and he looks down again and studies a while, and then he looks at me, and says he—”

“Stop, sir, if you please,” said Shaler.

The witness did stop, but it was only to square himself around to Shaler, on whom he looked with a countenance of displeased surprise.

“I perceive, sir,” said Shaler, addressing the court, “that here is to be another attempt to palm upon us the words of this everlasting Mr. Montague as evidence. Now, sir, as the decision of the court upon that subject has been already ex-

pressed, I hope the witness may be admonished not to repeat anything that Mr. Montague said."

I never saw Balcombe so much disconcerted as at the cool effrontery of this objection. He remained silent a moment, as I thought, chiding down his impatience, and endeavouring to recover the calm self-command which he had hitherto displayed. Before he could accomplish this, the judge (who doubtless considered the point as identical with that he had already decided) had time to rouse himself, and to draw out to the witness,

"The court has already decided, that nothing that Mr. Montague has said is evidence in this case."

As soon as he began to speak, the witness went to the right-about and faced him, the expression of his savage countenance changing, as he listened, to one made up of ferocity and amazement. Whitehead, at the same moment, sprung to his feet, bent on the judge a look of withering scorn and indignation, and seemed about to speak, when the calm voice of Balcombe was heard, replying to what had been said with this question:

"Is it the *pleasure* of the court to say that the words of Montague, *spoken in conversation with the deceased*, are not to be received?"

Whitehead, who had turned to Balcombe at the sound of his voice, now again set his eye upon the judge with an expression of derision and curiosity, as if he would have said, "I wonder what the fool will say to that?" The apathy of the judge

seemed to be somewhat moved by his vexation, at being thus called to what was to him a task of thought, and he began a sort of puzzling attempt to say something, when the circuit attorney requested to be heard.

I have said nothing as yet of this gentleman. He seemed a plain, unpretending, quiet man, who appeared to think his duty required of him nothing more than a proper attention to the formalities of the prosecution. What else I wish to say of him, may be given in his own words.

"Heretofore, may it please the court," said he, "I have acted but a secondary part in this prosecution. I hope my reasons have not been misunderstood. While the testimony in this case pointed to the accused, and to them alone, as the perpetrators of the murder of Ramsay, it was my duty to accept of any aid in furtherance of the prosecution. I was therefore glad to avail myself of the distinguished abilities of the gentleman, who has been employed, as I understand, by this same Mr. Montague, to assist in conducting it. It became me, sir, in this state of things, to postpone myself to him, and to permit him to take that lead in the examination of witnesses, to which his readiness, dexterity, and address entitled him. I saw, indeed, but I trust I saw it without envy, that his conspicuous display of these qualities has thrown me quite in the shade; but I hope it will not be imputed to me as a fault, that I have not permitted any petty vanity of mine, or childish impatience of

his manifest superiority, to embarrass the prosecution by interfering with him. But the aspect of this case is suddenly changed, and I am reminded by what I have just heard, that while I represent the state, Mr. Shaler does but represent Mr. Montague. He represents a man, who, for some cause which I do not presume to inquire into, vehemently desires the punishment of the defendants, whether guilty or no.

“I represent the state, which desires the punishment of the guilty only, and yet more earnestly desires the acquittal of the innocent. Now, sir, as the testimony now offered seems like to throw new light upon this subject, as it may probably show Mr. Montague to me in a light which may change the relation of an ally into that of an antagonist, by making it my duty to prosecute him for this or some other offence, and as I have no doubt that the testimony offered is not only such as the law permits, but requires, I find it my duty to withdraw the objection to it, made by my friend Mr. Shaler. My right to do so, sir, he will not question. He will see that the alliance between myself as the representative of the state and him as the representative of Mr. Montague, must terminate. If, on his own behalf, as a friend of justice, as a curious and skilful investigator of truth, he feels at liberty to give me his aid in unravelling this mystery, such aid, guided and controlled by his own sense of honour and love of virtue, I will

thankfully receive. His further co-operation as counsel for Mr. Montague I must reject."

Shaler now said, in a few words, that the right of the circuit attorney to disclaim his further interference as an ally was unquestionable. "As to interfering in any other character," continued he, "I have no call to do it. I am *functus officio*. I am here by contract to prosecute, not to defend. Should a further investigation of this matter implicate Mr. Montague, that will be a new case, and the subject of a new bargain. As to aiding the circuit attorney in the further investigation of the case, as an individual, though no man likes to work at his trade without wages, I would gladly do so, were it necessary. But, sir, that gentleman needs no aid; and if he did, I much mistake if he should ask any more efficient than he has. Let him give Mr. Balcombe a fair field and a clear sky, unembarrassed by technical quibbles, and my life upon it he will get at the whole truth."

He sat down, and the witness was directed to proceed.

"I suppose," said he, "I am to tell all about it."

"Oh yes," said the circuit attorney; "tell all."

"It's well you give me leave," said the witness, "because I came here to do it, and flesh and blood should not have kept me from it. Well, I believe that gentleman stopped me, the minute I began to talk about what Montague said; so there's where I left off. Well, says he, 'Is your name Samuel Todd?' So I told him it was.

“Well,’ says he, ‘I have heard of you, and you are the sort of man I want.’

“Says I, ‘It depends upon your business,’ says I, ‘whether I’ll suit you or no, ’cause I hain’t got no book larning.’

“‘No,’ says he, ‘but you are a brave man.’

“‘If any man disputes that,’ says I, ‘maybe he’d better try me.’

“‘Well,’ says he, ‘a brave man is the sort I want.’

“So, gentlemen, he goes on and tells us that he had a tract of land in Virginia, and there was a fellow that had got hold of the deed, and would not let him have it, and there was another that backed him in it; and they wanted to make him pay four thousand dollars, I think it was, before they’d give it up. So he said he had seen them and agreed to pay the money, and they had appointed to meet him at that same place about sunset, and he was to give them his bond for the money, and they were to give him the deed.

“‘So,’ says he, ‘what I want is for you two to be lying about here, and to hide yourselves, and after you see me get the deed I want you to creep up, and seize them, and keep them until I can get away.’

“‘Oh,’ says I, ‘that’s easy done.’

“‘And more than that,’ says he, ‘I cannot start to Virginia before Monday,’ (that was Saturday, you see, gentlemen,) ‘and if I don’t get at least a week’s start of them, they’ll be after me, and put

me to trouble before I can get the deed recorded. So,' says he, 'I want them kept somewhere out of the way for a week or ten days.'

" 'Well,' says I, 'I think we can manage that matter handy too. Because,' says I, 'here's the Rockhouse right down here on the river bank, and we can keep them there till we get a boat; and then there's the mouth of the Osage most just across the river, and we can run up that, and be outside of the settlements before day.'

" 'Well,' says he, 'that will do exactly; but I'm a thinking,' says he, 'you'll want more help.'

" 'That depends,' says I, 'on what sort of men they are; though I have a notion,' says I, 'that this man and I ought to be enough for any two common men, when they wasn't a looking for us before we got hold of them.'

" 'Well,' says he, 'one of them is little more than a boy, just come from Virginia, but I know his blood, and I reckon he's right good pluck, and the other man is George Balcombe.'

" 'That makes a difference,' says I, ''cause, you see, Colonel Balcombe is equal to any two common men, take him any way you will; and more than that,' says I, 'it's right hard to catch him with both eyes shut at once.'

" 'I think,' says he, 'the best way will be to have force enough to master them at once,' cause,' says he, 'I don't want nobody to be hurt in the scuffle.'

" 'I'm mighty glad to hear that,' says I, 'be-

cause Colonel Balcombe is a good man, for all he don't like me, and I should not like to do him any harm.'

"And with that I sees Ramsay look right hard at me, and then he and Montague looks at one another, but they never said nothing, nor I neither. So, thinks I, maybe there's more between these fellows than they want me to know. So I speaks up, and says I, 'Maybe you are right enough, so I'll just speak to my brother to help us,' says I, 'for he's a man I can depend on to do anything that's got manhood in it.'

"So to make a long story short, gentlemen, he agreed to give Ramsay and me a hundred dollars a piece, and I was to make the best bargain I could for him with Jim, and if nothing else would do, *he* was to have a hundred dollars too. So with that we parted, and I went one way, and he and Ramsay went towards the campmeeting.

"So that evening, gentlemen, an hour by sun or so, Jim and I goes there, and we looked about and fixed ourselves to hide, and after a while here comes Ramsay and another fellow with him. And I did not so much like that, 'cause we three was enough for any two men, and they had not said nothing about nobody else, and I sorter misdoubted that maybe they wanted to do Colonel Balcombe some mischief. And I looked at the fellow, and an ill-looking devil (axing the court's pardon, gentlemen) he was."

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"Did you know him?" said the commonwealth's attorney.

"I never seed him before, to my knowing, sir, and he wasn't a man to forget easy; but it was the same fellow that swore he seed Ramsay, and Colonel Balcombe, and Mr. Scott together."

"Was that the man?" said the commonwealth's attorney, pointing to Johnson, who, having thoroughly besotted himself since his examination, had now blundered into court.

"That's the very fellow," said Todd. "Well, sir, he was there too, and as I said I did not much like it, but we had not much time to talk, and then again I thought that Jim and I, with Colonel Balcombe to plan for us, was more than a match for them two fellows anyhow. So I made myself easy, and we all hid ourselves; and after a while here comes the colonel and another man with him. And when they got to the place, Montague he comes from right t'other way from where we were, and the colonel and the other man stood right facing him, so their backs were to us.

"So when they come up, after a while the strange man hands Montague something, and he holds it out before him to look at it, sorter like making a sign to us, and with that we starts and crawls up and seizes them. And Ramsay and Jim gets hold of the stranger, and Johnson and I gets hold of the colonel, 'cause you see, gentlemen, our plan was, if we saw any signs of mischief, to let go all holds and take their part. So I holds the colo-

nel's arms behind him, for I did not want him to see me, and I slips a rope round his arms, and made a sort of half knot, and so I held on like as if I had tied him fast, till Johnson went before him and tied his hands. And by this time I saw that they did not mean to hurt him, *then*, nohow, and then I ties my knot too. And when we had him fast, then Montague began, and such a saucing he gave him you never heard. And after he had jawed at him a spell, (and the colonel he never said a word,) says he,

“ ‘Boys, you know what to do with them; and, Mr. Balcombe,’ says he, ‘I wish you a pleasant journey.’

“ So with that, gentlemen, he goes away, and we takes the men down the hollow towards the Rock-house. And when we got about halfway, we comes to a fire at a sort of a camp where John Keizer and some Indians had been staying, and by this time it was almost dark, and says Ramsay,

“ ‘Suppose we stop here a while; ‘cause,’ says he, ‘I want to see what these fellows have got in their pockets.’

“ And so, gentlemen, I thought it wasn't no time then to make a fuss with the fellows, and I did not want the colonel to hear my voice; so I says nothing, ‘cause, gentlemen, you see I thought after all was done, it would not be too late to rob them villains again; and, anyhow, what I got the colonel could get it again, my share and Jim's too.

“ So they both had some money, and the colonel

he had a pair of first-rate pistols, and a capital dirk. So Jim and I knew the dirk and pistols, and that the colonel had had them with him in places where a man learns to love his fighting-irons; and I seed the picture was a mighty pretty girl, and I thought the boy would hate to lose that; so I takes the picture and one pistol for my share, and Jim he takes the other and the dirk for his, and we let the other fellows have the money. And after that was done, we went along down to the Rockhouse, and Jim he starts off a little way down the river for a boat, and the rest of us staid there.

“So we sets down pretty close to the rock, and the colonel was next to me, and the young man next to him, and the others were the other side; for you see, gentlemen, I chose to keep near the colonel for fear.

“So we had not been there long before we hears a whistle like a rifleman’s whistle, and I guessed that minute it was John Keizer and his Indians. And I knew they wasn’t men to fool with, and I did not want to hurt nobody, especially John; and so, gentlemen, I just determined if they fell in with us to clear out and be off. But before I had time to think as much, the colonel he blows his whistle, and with that here they come with a right Indian warwhoop. So I was next to them, and as I seed them coming along the wall, I could have stopped one of them mighty easy with a bullet; but I did not want to do that. So I jumps from the wall and halloos to the others to run, and with that they

jumps out too. So I just stopped to listen a minute, for all was dark there, and I heard the cocking of rifles and setting of triggers, and I jumped down the bank. And Ramsay he made a stop, and says he, 'Stand your ground, men,' and that minute a rifle went off. And Ramsay was a top the bank right over me, where I could see him right plain against the sky, and he had his rifle pointed in under the rock, when the other went off and down he came.

"So by this time the thing was pretty well over, and I went off and crossed the branch, and lay by till I heard them throw the dead man in the river; and then the colonel and them went off, and after a while Jim comes along with the boat, and I hails him and tells him about it. So he carried the boat back, and then I went to look for Montague to tell him. So I knew where he staid, and I went there, but all was dark, and he wasn't there. So I stopped a while, and presently I hears him coming along talking, and John Keizer with him. So I guessed by that he knew all about it, and that we wasn't to blame. So John Keizer he goes away, and Montague he goes in the house in the dark. Then I goes to the door and knocks, and he asked who was there, mighty scaredlike; and I tells him, and he lets me in. So there we sot a talking in the dark, and I tells him all, and how Ramsay was killed and thrown in the river. And when he heard that, he started up, and said something I did

not hear rightly, and then he sets down agin and considers. So after a while says he,

“ ‘Did you rob them men?’

“ ‘That’s none of your business,’ says I.

“ ‘Yes it is,’ says he; ‘because if you have got anything of theirs about you, I’ll give you any money for it.’

“ ‘You’d better pay me,’ says I, ‘what you owe me already.’

“ ‘And so I would,’ says he, mighty civillike, ‘but I cannot tell one bank note from another here in the dark.’

“ ‘It’s mighty easy to get a light from the kitchen,’ says I.

“ So, with that, he goes to the kitchen and fetches a light, and then he pays me a hundred dollars, and says he,

“ ‘Now, here’s another hundred; and let me see what you have got to give me for it.’

“ So I showed him the pistol and picture; and as soon as he saw the picture, gentlemen, he started and dropped it on the table, and he clapped his hands to his head and walked across the room, and such a groan as he gave I don’t reckon nobody ever heard, unless they have seen a man shot down and scalped before he was dead. And then he comes back and sits down, and leans his head upon his hands, and he was pale and *gashly*-like, and his eyes glassy like as if he was dead. After a while he comes to himself, and says he,

“ ‘Now, here’s another hundred dollars for you,

if you'll take these things down to the Rockhouse and leave them there.'

" 'What's that for?' says I.

" 'Why,' says he, 'they'll be found there, and the blood and all, and then them men will be taken up, and I can get away to Virginia and they cannot follow me.'

" 'But,' says I, 'I don't want to bring Colonel Balcombe into any trouble.'

" 'He won't be in any danger,' says he, 'because you can keep out of the way, and your brother and that other man, and the dead body's gone, and they'll only just think it something strange, and they'll be just taken up, but nobody can hurt them; and more than that,' said he, 'they'll get their things again.'

" 'Well,' says I, 'if that's to be all, I have no objection, and Jim and I can go out a hunting, and take that other fellow with us.'

" So, with that I left him and went straight to the Rockhouse, and there I left the pistol and picture as I had promised, and I saw that the body was gone sure enough, so that I felt right easy in my mind about the colonel. Then, next day, Jim and I got ready to go out and take our fall hunt, and we hunted up Johnson, but the fellow was drunk, and such a beast we could not make him understand anything; and then I thought nobody would ever mind a word he'd say, and besides, he would not want to talk about it. So we concluded there was no danger, and we went off away out on the heads

of the Osage ; and after a while Keizer comes to us, and so one night, sitting down at the camp fire, says he to me—”

“ It is not proper,” said the circuit attorney, “ to repeat what he said.”

“ Why, I just wanted,” said Todd, “ to tell how I come to come in.”

“ I suppose,” said the circuit attorney, “ you mean to say you came in in consequence of what he told you.”

“ To be sure,” said Todd ; “ that’s it.”

“ That is enough,” said the attorney, “ without telling what it was.”

“ Ah ! well,” said Todd, “ I suppose it makes no such mighty odds, for I reckon you have heard enough, and you have got the truth this time, anyhow.”

CHAPTER IV.

And woman’s pure kiss—sweet and long,
Welcomed her warrior home.

HALLECK.

THE perfect verisimilitude of this story could leave no doubt on the minds of any person. Even the judge seemed to have had his attention awa-

kened ; and having smoked out the cigar he was puffing at when the witness began, forgot to light another. He now asked if there were any more witnesses, and being told there were none, requested the circuit attorney to go on.

"I have nothing to say, sir," replied that gentleman, "but what, perhaps, were better deferred till the jury have rendered their verdict. You, I presume, sir," addressing Balcombe with great respect, "do not feel it necessary to say anything."

"Nothing at all, sir," was the quiet reply of Balcombe.

"Gentlemen," said the attorney, "you may retire."

"There can be no occasion, sir," said the foreman, glancing on the rest, who all nodded assent.

"How say you, gentlemen?" said the attorney. "Are the defendants guilty, or not guilty?"

"Not guilty," was the answer uttered, with acclamation, by every voice.

"Before the accused are discharged," said the attorney, "I beg leave to say what I just now expressed a wish to say—that the testimony has left not a shadow of doubt on my mind of the perfect innocence of all these gentlemen."

They were now discharged, and Balcombe, advancing to Whitehead, said, "I owe you many thanks, sir, for the generous and delicate manner in which you came to my aid to-day. You will add to the favour if you will show me how otherwise than by words I shall express them."

"You owe me nothing, sir," said Whitehead, with the same reckless, heartless air I had first remarked in him. "Not even thanks. What I did, sir, was done to please myself."

Balcombe looked mortified and amazed, and said, "The debt is the more onerous, sir, that I am only allowed to discharge it by thanks, and that they are not valued."

"You mistake me, sir," said Whitehead, "if you suppose I should not value them if they were due. But I neither served you nor wished to serve you. I said what I did, because my admiration of you, and my indignation at that stupid beast, disposed me to say it, but I did you no service, and you needed no aid from me;" saying this, he turned away.

The foreman of the jury now approached. "Mr. Balcombe," said he, "you have had an opportunity to-day of doing *me* justice, and you have done it nobly. Had not the appearance of the last witness deprived me of the opportunity, I beg leave to say that I was prepared to requite it by giving my recorded opinion, that testimony, however strong, which should charge you with a dishonourable and cowardly act, must be false, as proving too much. Let me hope, sir, that hereafter we may meet as friends."

"I shall rejoice at it," said Balcombe, extending his hand; "and I beg you to believe that it has never been by my wish or by my fault that we have met otherwise."

"I will believe anything *you* can say, sir," replied the other.

It was now nearly dark. We hurried out, and at the door met the good old colonel, who had left the house as soon as he had heard enough to see that the danger was past. He advanced to Balcombe with an extended hand, and without speaking walked with us to our horses. He at length mastered his emotion, and we began to converse on the events of the day. A brisk ride brought us to Colonel Robinson's before midnight. I saw a light at the window of Balcombe's chamber, and a female figure leaned out of it.

"All well!" he exclaimed, leaping from his horse. The window was closed, and he ran up stairs.

The next morning Balcombe appeared at breakfast, no otherwise changed in his deportment than that he now conversed freely on indifferent subjects, though not exactly with as much gayety as formerly. Indeed, the wide discursive range of his thoughts seemed more restricted, and his whole manner was more sobered than at any time before the death of Ramsay. The countenance of his wife still glowed with a sense of indignant honour and insulted pride, which, perhaps, shone out more conspicuously, because whatever of gloom had overshadowed it was entirely dissipated. The fire of her eye was less lurid, but brighter; the flush of her cheek was no longer the deep crimson of choked excitement, but the healthy glow which

rises from a heart that beats freely. She was relieved, but not satisfied; and still incensed, though the fierceness of her resentment was much appeased. As she was about to leave the room after breakfast, she turned, and said to her father,

"My dear father, my husband will never tell me all about himself, except when he thinks he has done something wrong or foolish. You and Mr. Napier must tell me all about what passed yesterday."

"I can tell you no more at this moment, my dear child," said the old gentleman, kissing her tenderly, and holding her in his arms, with her face turned up to his as he spoke, "I can tell you no more than that hereafter you may be as proud of your husband as you will, and I will never laugh at you about it."

"And I, my dear madam," said I, "can only say, that had you been there yesterday, you would have been a thousand times prouder of him than you ever were before, and none present would have thought you as proud of him as he deserved."

As I spoke, she quietly disengaged herself from her father's arms, and looked at her husband with more emotion than I had ever seen her display. At length all a woman's softness rose to her eyes; her features worked, her whole frame shook, and stretching her hands to heaven, she exclaimed, "Oh, thank God! thank God!" and fell upon his neck. There she hung, as if unconscious of our presence, shedding, during the whole time, a continued flood of tears. In that torrent the fire that

had burned her heart was quenched. She withdrew herself from his embrace an altered woman. From that time forth she was the same reserved, silent, modest, though dignified lady that I had first seen her. The sun of her husband's honour (to use Balcombe's figure) once more shone clear and bright above the horizon, and she modestly paled her beams in his presence.

I need not say how we were all affected. Even Balcombe's nerves, which seemed formed to endure the rack without shrinking, were shaken like a child's. But he recovered himself before she did, and as she was about to withdraw he said,

"You must take your share of praise, my dear Elizabeth. If there be any justice in what my partial friends have just said, I owe all the honour to you. I committed myself, dearest, to be guided by what Napier would call 'the confident, unerring instinct of *woman's love*,' and it pointed the path that led to victory over my enemies. Had not you been my wife I should have been safe, but not triumphant."

She again clung to him, and hid her blushing and beaming countenance in his bosom. She was about to leave us, but he detained her, and added,

"You must stay and hear me tell all. I was not unapprized," continued he, addressing us, "of the nature of my situation. I knew the professional character of Mr. Shaler, and was prepared for all that took place, except the exclusion of Napier's account of his conversation with Montague.

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But even with that testimony, had it been admitted, my main dependance was on my character; and to act out that character fully, so as to give the lie to any testimony which should charge me with dishonourable and cowardly assassination, was the part, not of magnanimity, as you, William, would say, but of true policy. I said nothing of these things to you, but with my wife I had no reserve. The part I acted was rather the suggestion of my own mind than hers, but it was her noble confidence that inspired me to possess my soul in patience, and to look calmly on my danger, when it was most appalling. If you remember what was said by Mr. Roberts, the foreman of the jury, you will see that I was not mistaken."

"Good God!" said Mrs. Balcombe, "was Mr. Roberts on your jury? The bitterest enemy you have in the world."

"Yes, dear, he was, and by my choice; for though my enemy, he is brave and honourable, and knew me to be so too."

"Oh my husband!" exclaimed she, looking at him with tender admiration, "that choice was doubtless wise, but I could never have advised it."

"I know that," said he; "it is not the part of woman to meet danger in person, but to buckle on the armour of her husband's heart, and fortify it for the encounter. Go now, dear. You will see Mr. Roberts in a few days. Yesterday's work has made him my fast friend."

Saying this he kissed her, and she left the room, the proudest and happiest woman upon earth. She presently returned, leading her little girl.

"You have not seen your child," said she; "she was dressed and at play before you awoke."

He stooped down and held out his arms; the little thing ran into them; and for a few moments he forgot everything else in her caresses and artless prattle. Her mother then took her away, and turning to me he said,

"How say you, William? I wish to train up that child to be the wife of a great and good man. What model would you propose to me?"

"Her own mother, assuredly," said I.

"I am afraid, then," said he, "we must educate her ourselves; lest, at a boarding-school, she might choose another model."

"But if she is endowed by nature with the same primitive qualities which I most admire in her mother, then, learn what she may, she cannot help adopting and acting on her generous sentiments and noble principles."

"I shall expect her mind to bear the same fruit if the same seed is planted."

"What is that?"

"An habitual subordination of the heart and mind, not to the authority, but to the wisdom, real or fancied, of her parents."

"And how will that have such an effect?"

"It will prepare and dispose her to enthrone, as the master feeling of her heart, a cherished sense

of her husband's superiority, from which will spring an assurance of his virtue, a reliance on his wisdom, a zeal for his honour, a pride in his distinction, and an undoubting confidence in his fortunes and his prowess, which will make her to her husband what her mother is to me. What else she is to be let it depend on him. If he is her superior at first, as he should be, he will raise her to his own level, or as near it as comports with the happiness of both. Even should her faculties be superior to his, he cannot raise her so high but that she will still feel herself the creature of his hands. His confidence will result back to her, and she will be his best adviser, because she will always encourage him to put his trust in himself and in God. This last is a necessary effect of a woman's natural confidence in her husband's fortunes. The master of her heart and person is, in her eyes, the master of her destiny and his own. This connects her confidence in him with her confidence in the great Disposer of events, whose favour she would never have him forfeit. Did ever woman's love incite to a vicious act? Did ever the chance of war, to a loving woman, seem equal between her husband and another? If so, what peace of mind to one whose husband is abroad in a campaign in which it is foreseen that one half will perish? With an equal chance that she may never see him again, how could she endure his absence? Yet she sleeps soundly and feeds kindly. She prays, indeed, fervently; but her prayer is full of hope, for

she is his *alter ego*. She fears for him only as a brave man confident in himself fears for himself.

"I know the authority of Shakspeare is against me here. But I must read human nature for myself. It is the wife, and not the mother of Coriolanus who should have been made to say,

'He'll beat Aufidius' head below his knee,
And tread upon his neck.'

Had I been the friend, the brother, the son of Elizabeth, she would have trembled for me. For her husband she had no fears. This comfortable condition of woman's mind, which reason cannot justify, reason can yet trace to its causes. I may err in my judgment of these; but I must be *very* sure that I am wrong, before I will consent to peril this invaluable quality in woman, for the sake of experimenting on the intellectual capabilities of a being who, after all, must, and of choice will spend more than half her life in nursing children."

I have already said that Balcombe was the hardest man to talk with that I had ever seen. I made no reply; but I was still unconvinced. With all the advantage of a striking example at hand, I saw that he rested his case, after all, on a beautiful but romantic theory, which might be fallacious. Indeed, I was rather more inclined to adhere to my former opinions, because I was satisfied I had heard all that could be urged against them, and still saw no sufficient reason to reject the argu-

ments, with which all are familiar, in favour of that system of education which would place the mind of woman fully on a level with that of the companion of her life.

CHAPTER V.

His gallant bearing won my heart.

SCOTT.

ABOUT midday we were surprised by a visit from Mr. Shaler, who called on his way home to say, that he could not leave the county without doing himself the pleasure of offering his respects to Mr. Balcombe. He was desirous, too, he said, to obtain the assurance of what his experience of Mr. Balcombe's candour would hardly permit him to doubt, that the manner in which he had been constrained, on the preceding day, to perform a disgusting and painful duty, had not been taken amiss. To this Balcombe replied, by assuring him that he had perfectly understood his situation, and added some remarks, showing that he had well weighed all the considerations, which are regarded in ascertaining the duty of the lawyer to his client.

"I am perfectly aware," said he, "that the

nature of the human mind disqualifies any man for *investigating* both sides of any question at once. Yet no decision can be properly made, until all that can be said on both sides (right or wrong) is duly considered; and the wisdom of the law is in nothing more manifest, than in the designation of a set of men, qualified by nature, education, and experience, for such investigations, to seek out and lay before the judge or jury, everything worthy to be taken into view. To do this, the counsel on each side must have a single object, and to the pursuit of this object he must be stimulated by interest, without being withheld by any consideration of the rights or interests of the other party, which are committed to the guardianship of his adversary. I say this, my dear sir," continued he, "not by way of showing that I do or do not understand what I am talking about, but that you may see that I speak advisedly, and not mere words of course, when I assure you that all you have done has been taken in good part."

We found Mr. Shaler the same pleasant, intelligent gentleman that he had shown himself in our ride together, with a vein of mingled humour and sarcasm. He seemed to take the highest pleasure in his profession, and exulted with the spirit of a keen sportsman, in the exercise of the talents appropriate to it. With these he was eminently gifted, and possessed, moreover, some literature, a good taste, and the manners of a gentleman. He seemed to be a man of kind feelings, somewhat

blunted by professional exercise. He spoke of Montague with playful scorn, and promised himself a full feast of revenge should he ever return to Missouri, for the trick he had played him in drawing him in to aid in such a scheme of iniquity.

"I would gladly," he said, "ride from St. Louis to prosecute him for the conspiracy, and as accessory to the robbery of Mr. Balcombe and Scott."

After sitting an hour he rose to take his departure. He was pressed to remain, but said that Whitehead, who had refused to call, was waiting for him at the next house. Balcombe then took him aside, and spoke a few words to him in private. In answer, he said aloud,

"I will hand it to you, sir, as you pass through St. Louis so authenticated as to pass unquestioned anywhere. And I hope," added he, "that I shall then not only have the pleasure of seeing more of you and Mrs. Balcombe, and Mr. Napier, but that you will also permit me to communicate to my friends there a part of the satisfaction I have enjoyed in your acquaintance."

Having said this, he took his leave. About dinner time poor John came limping along on foot, completely broken down in everything but mind and spirits. He brought the pistol and picture, which in our hurry we had left behind. James took the latter, and gazed on it with tearful eyes, and kissing it, was about to return it to his bosom, when Mrs. Balcombe begged leave to look at it.

She took it, expressed her admiration of its surpassing beauty, and stepping out, returned with a riband, with which she tied it about James's neck. It was delightful to look upon the grateful expression of the poor boy's countenance as he looked up at her while performing this office of delicate respect for his poor sister. I have never seen anything like his affectionate devotion to her. It was not merely love to her as a sister, nor gratitude to the instructress of his youth, nor compassion for a friendless and unfortunate woman. It amounted to absolute idolatry to one who seemed to him a perfectly faultless being. The interest in her manifested by Balcombe had bound the gentle youth to him. His gratitude, admiration, and confidence appeared to have no bounds. It was plain he knew nothing of Montague, and had no idea of the cause or nature of the cloud that rested upon her. Indeed, after the manifestations I had seen of his quick feelings, delicate sense of honour, and high spirit, I had no doubt that the least intimation of her wrongs would be fatal to her betrayer. The propriety and gentleness of his demeanour had endeared him to us all, and the utmost caution was uniformly observed to save his feelings, and to say nothing from which he could possibly suspect the truth. Balcombe now asked John how he had been so fortunate as to fall in with Todd.

"I God, colonel!" said he, "I went after him, and that's the way I fell in with him."

"But," said Balcombe, "what put it into your head to go after him?"

"Why," said he, "it's a long story, colonel; but I reckon you'd like to know all about it, so I'd as well begin at once and tell you. You see, the day before I went away I happened to be at a warrant trying, and who should be there but that same fellow Perkins, that wanted to put in his jaw that day before the justice. A nasty, tallow-faced, greasy, bloated, long-legged, water-jointed rascal, that looks for all the world like a hound puppy, that's got fat by stealing pot liquor out of the kitchen. Well, he was there, and I heard him say, 'I God,' says he, 'twas pretty cunning in Balcombe to make no objection to hearsay testimony, when all he wanted was to get in all that long rigmarole about what Montague should have said to that fellow Napier, and then tell the story his own way besides. But I guess,' says he, 'he'll find the difference when Lawyer Shaler gets him before the judge; for when all that loose jaw comes to be left out, his case will look d——d slim, I can tell him. And then,' says he, 'I guess he'll be glad enough to get a lawyer to plead for him—a pettifogger, as he calls it. But I'll see him d——d before I say a word for him, unless he pays me, and that well too,' says he.

"So you see that sets me to considering, colonel; and I sees plain enough that it was just as he said. So the next day I starts away to tell you, and when I got there you wasn't at home, and when you come in, the madam, she was there, and I did

not want to say nothing before her. So then the talk riz about the pistol, and thinks I, I'll just go and try to see that woman, and tell the colonel about it another time. So I starts after her the way she went, and I remembered how she was dressed, and I sort o' guessed who she was. So after a while I comes up with her, and she had a sort of sun bonnet on, so that I could not see her face; and I speaks to her, and she answers me, and looked up, I seed it was a woman that lives with Sam Todd when he's at home—or rather Sam lives with her, for he aint got no home of his own rightly; and you see, gentlemen, if she aint his wife, she ought to be, anyhow. So says I,

“ ‘Why, is that you, Jenny? Why, I met you a while ago, and I did not know you no more than if I never had seed you! And,’ says I, ‘did Sam Todd send that pistol to Colonel Balcombe that you carried there a while ago?’

“ ‘Says she, ‘I don't know nothing about no pistol.’

“ ‘Well,’ says I, ‘maybe you don't; but you carried a box there, anyhow.’

“ ‘Well,’ says she, ‘and what if I did?’

“ ‘‘Cause,’ says I, ‘I want to know if Sam Todd sent it. ‘Cause,’ says I, ‘the colonel takes it mighty friendly-like of Sam.’

“ ‘Ay, ay, John,’ says she, ‘you aint a going to come over me that way.’

“ ‘Well,’ says I, ‘but, Jenny, I don't mean you no harm in the 'versal world, nor Sam neither,’

says I ; ' 'cause you know Sam and I was always good friends; and you know he and I is going out hunting together this fall.'

" 'I reckon,' said she, 'you won't hunt much with him this fall, 'cause he's gone out already.'

" 'Gone !' says I ; 'how come he to go without me, after he and I agreed to go together ?'

" You see, gentlemen, I sort o' suspicioned as much as that Sam was gone to get out of the way. 'Cause you know, colonel, there was four of them villains, and Ramsay was one of them, and Johnson was one ; and then I remembered I had heard old Jones tell Montague about Sam Todd and his brother ; so I made sure partly Sam and Jim were the other two ; and I knew where to find Sam, and I thought if he was anyways friendly, I could not do better than to go right after him. So I just talked so with the woman to try to find out how that was. So when I axed her how come Sam to go away and leave me, says she,

" 'He did not think it worth while,' says she, 'to wait for you after you were taken up about that scrape of Ramsay's.'

" 'When did he go ?' says I.

" 'Sunday morning,' says she.

" 'Why,' says I, 'that was before I was taken up.'

" 'Well,' says she, 'if you wasn't taken up then, Sam could give a right good guess you would be.'

" So by that, gentlemen, I made sure Sam was in the scrape, and 'twas he that sent the pistol, and

I did not much doubt but he was friendly. So I speaks right up, and says I, 'Well, I don't want so much to know who sent the pistol, but I just want to know whether Sam is friendly to the colonel or not. 'Cause,' says I, 'the colonel is in a sort o' ticklish fix just now, and he wants friends, and I know,' says I, 'that if Sam is a friend anyhow, he is a good friend.' And with that says she,

" 'I won't tell you nothing at all, John, about the pistol nor the box, nor who sent it; but you may be sure of one thing,' says she, 'Sam Todd don't mean no harm by Colonel Balcombe nor you neither. 'Cause,' says she, 'the colonel is a brave soldier and a good man, for all Sam knows he don't like *him*.'

" 'Well,' says I, 'Jenny, where's Sam now?'

" 'I shan't tell you that neither,' says she; 'and I'm not sure as I know; but I reckon you know where you and he was to hunt.'

" So, gentlemen, I had got all I wanted, and I considered a while; and it was a desperate long way to the head of Sac River, where I expected to find Sam; and I had my rifle with me, and it wasn't no use saying nothing about it to the colonel, nohow, so I starts right off.

" Well, I went out upon Sac River, and I hunts a long time before I could light upon Sam's trail. At last I falls in with him, and from that we camped together. So that night, setting by the fire, says I, 'Colonel Balcombe was mightily obliged to you, Sam,' says I, 'for sending him that pistol, 'cause

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it looked friendly-like; and besides, though you and I is a couple of sort o' ruffianlike fellows, and likes to make money by taking the part of them that has not got the pluck to take their own part, yet as to taking what don't belong to us, or robbing, or anything in that way, it's what we don't hold with. So I suppose while them other fellows, Ramsay and Johnson, was a robbing the colonel, you just took your share to keep for him, and sent it back like an honest man.'

" ' Did not Squire Montague make him pay nothing for it ?' says he.

" And the minute Todd said that, I begun to think of something I had not thought of before, and says I, ' I never suspicioned it came from him, and how was Squire Montague to know anything about it ?'

" ' Why, he knowed where I left it,' says he.

" ' And where was that ?' said I.

" ' At the Rockhouse,' says he.

" ' And the picture too ?' says I.

" ' Yes,' says he.

" And with that he ups and tells me all about it, just the same as he did yesterday, how he managed to save what the colonel and Mr. Scott would hate to lose the most. And when he was done telling, says I,

" ' Well, I am mighty sorry to tell you, Sam,' says I, ' that that pistol is a going to get the colonel into a sight of trouble.'

" ' Oh,' says he, ' it cannot be of no great force

nohow, 'cause,' says he, 'there wasn't nothing there but the blood, and nobody knows whose blood it was; and as to Ramsay, the catfish have done eating him long ago, and he won't be missed.'

“ ‘There's where you are mistaken,' says I, 'for Ramsay's body washed up on a sand bar right by; and when Squire Montague and old man Jones went there and found the picture and the pistol, by the time they could say, 'Eh, what's this?' there was the corpse to tell them all about it, as plain as a live man could talk.'

“When Sam heard this he studied and looked mighty uneasy-like, and then says he, 'Squire Montague had not ought to have carried old man Jones there right away. He'd ought to have gone there by himself first,' says he, 'and seen how the land lay; 'cause,' says he, 'that wasn't doing the right thing by me; 'cause you see, John, when he give me the hundred dollars for the things, to make my mind easy, he tells me the men should get their things again; and he'd just fix so as to fling a running noose, like, over the colonel in the start of the race, and so sort o' trip him, and then he'd get to Virginia first. And,' says he, 'I tell'd him right straight that he should not have the things nohow, if the colonel was to be brought into any serious trouble about the business.'

“ ‘Well,' says I, 'it's a slim chance to depend upon what almost anybody says; but as to such a natural born devil as that Montague, you could not look for anything from him. Do you think,'

says I, 'he didn't carry Mr. Jones down there Sunday evening, and then a Monday morning he was off by crack of day? and he puts that fellow Johnson up to tell it all just right to hang the colonel; and then when he gets to St. Louis, he employs a first-rate lawyer there, (one Shaler, I think they call his name,) that they say is a right roarer, to come up to prosecute the colonel, right or wrong.'

"And while I was a saying this, gentlemen, Jim, he looks straight at me right through the fire, and if he did not look like the devil in his own element, I don't know. And with that he jumps right up, and such a cursing as Montague got, it did not do his soul no good, now mind I tell you. So after a while, when his steam was pretty well blowed off, he just said he'd start off next day, and come right in and tell all about it. And you see, gentlemen, all the time I never said a word about myself, 'cause that was part of the story he did not know nothing about; and more than that, 'twasn't no use; for you see, for all Sam know'd the colonel didn't like him, 'cause he was a hardheaded devil out upon the Spanish frontier, that wouldn't neither lead nor drive, and he and I was right good friends, yet I know'd he would not so much mind my coming to a bad end, as such a man as the colonel. 'Cause you see," added John, with a knowing look, "maybe he thought if I did not deserve it now, I did another time, and maybe he wasn't so mighty far wrong either; though as to taking life," (and here he spoke with great gravity.) "ex-

cept of an Indian, or them that wasn't no better, and that in the way of fair manhood, it's what I never did do, and never will. And besides, if such a poor fellow as I was put out of the way, there's plenty more just like me; leastways, maybe Sam thinks so; and I aint so sure but what he thinks he'd do just as well in my place, for all the good I'll ever do, or harm either. But then, if Colonel Balcombe was gone, where would we find anybody to pay a poor fellow sometimes for doing what an't agin his conscience? For a man may be pretty well up to all sorts of devilment, and yet maybe he won't like to be always at it. So you see, gentlemen, Sam never know'd a word about my part in the scrape more than he know'd before till he got in the courthouse, and I an't so mighty sure he know'd it then. So, gentlemen, to make a long story short, the next day we *cached* our skins, and started in, and a tough time we had of it to save our distance."

"And where did Billy John come from?" said Balcombe; "and what brought him?"

"I had not a chance to ask him," said John. "I suppose he just staid long enough to see that you was out of the scrape, and then slipped away to his hunting ground again. You see, that day they took me at the camp meeting he and Snake was there, and the minute they seed me in trouble, they came up and waited for orders. And so I tells them to be off if they did not want to be hanged: so they put right off. How they got the

news of your being in trouble, the Lord knows. But as to his coming in after he heard that ! Bless your soul, colonel ! why, that fellow, before he'd let you come to any harm, especially for what *he* had done, he'd let 'em roast him before a slow fire, and cut slices off, and eat 'em before his face."

"And did Todd know nothing about the other pistol?" said Balcombe. "Because I should like to get the dirk that was in company with it. It's an old friend that I should not like to lose."

"I reckon so, sir," said John, "and so did Sam ; for we both seed it stand your friend once, when nothing else could have helped you. But he could not tell rightly about that. Only just when I told him how it come, he seemed pleased, and said it must be Jim's work. And he said he was mighty glad Jim sent it. 'Cause,' says he, 'I'm sorter jubus Jim an't so mighty partickler about holding fast what he gets.' And then he axed me about the dirk, and he said Jim ought to have sent that too ; but maybe he had just carried it out with him for a hunting-knife, and would give it back to the colonel when he come in. And, anyhow, he said it should be forthcoming."

"I am afraid," said Balcombe, "it will come too late ; for I must be off to Virginia immediately."

"Do you still propose going?" said I, delighted.

"Yes," said he, "and I shall take my wife with me. We shall lose no time by taking her. She has relations in Fauquier whom she wishes to see. We take the steamboat to Wheeling, the stage to

Baltimore, Washington, and Fredericksburg, which last will pass near her destination; and after leaving her, to touch at your mother's in King and Queen, and fall down into Essex to Raby Hall. How would you like the trip, John?"

"Of all things in the world, if you'd any use for me."

"Well, John, Colonel Robinson says whenever there are such men as Montague there's use for such as you. So here's my hand. We must go to the tailor, and have ourselves made decent, and be off."

"I God," said John, laughing, and looking at his tattered buckskins, "I don't think a set of new rigging would do me any harm; but don't you think, colonel, that a new suit of leather would answer me best?"

"That will never do, John, where we are going. You must shed that dress, or the boys will all run after you in the streets."

"Why, colonel," said John, "in the part of Virginia where I was raised, nobody hardly wears nothing else; and I should think a *man* wasn't such a strange sight where *you* come from. But maybe it's away down towards Norfolk you are going, and *then* I know it won't do. So I must try and learn to wear breeches and shoes."

He went out, and Balcombe, looking after him with a good-humoured smile, turned to me and said,

"Well, William, what do you think of my man John?"

"The fellow's worth his weight in gold," said I.

"He's an extraordinary animal," continued Balcombe; "and I hardly know a more curious study than to follow him in such a detail as he has just given us, and note the process of his mind in 'putting that and that together,' as he sometimes says. His quickness in tracing actions to their motives, and determining the influence which the motive thus ascertained will have on other actions, is even less remarkable than his accuracy in defining the extent to which they may be depended on. Did you observe, that though he had no doubt that that sort of attachment, which, in spite of individual grievances, men will form for those who have led them safely through danger, would dispose Todd to save me, he was careful not to tell him too much. He was not so very sure of the wisdom of letting the fellow know, that by holding his tongue he might get him out of his way, and so establish himself in that pre-eminence among the rogues and ruffians of the region, to which John's title is incontestible; though, after him, no man has a better claim to it than Todd. John's place among such fellows is something like that of Bamfylde Moore Carew among the beggars. Indeed he often reminds me of the gipsies and suchlike sapient vagabonds that we meet with in modern romances. I don't mean to speak of such marvellous creatures as Edie Ochiltree or Meg Merrilies. I allude to

the innumerable paltry imitations which the popularity of these characters has produced. But Scott himself might have profited by a personal knowledge of such a man as John Keizer. He would have seen that it was not necessary to endow these creatures of his fancy with powers bordering on the supernatural, so that they sometimes seem to have the faculty of ubiquity, and sometimes preternatural means of knowledge. The spell which this 'wizard of the north' casts on us, disqualifies us for observing this while we read. We are ourselves bewitched, and magic seems nature. But there is no witchcraft about John. We know whence and how he comes; he does nothing that other people cannot do, and as to his information of all that concerns him, we know he comes by it by what he would call 'a knack of knowing by a little what a great deal means.' He makes no mystery of the matter, and is always ready to explain his means of knowledge. It is impossible to tell the fellow any three facts, from which he will not instantly infer a fourth; and this, with courage, address, and activity, makes up the sum total of his efficiency.

"His manner of telling his story," continued Balcombe, "characterizes the operations of his mind. You may perceive that his language is not now that which you first heard from him. You were then a stranger, and he was on his p's and q's before you, and trying to talk 'high larnt' as he would call it. He now talks to you as he would to me, in the dialect of his native mountains. It

is one which we often see put into the mouths of men who are made to spin out their narratives with digressions and wanderings, and 'says he's' and 'says I's' innumerable. But John's narratives are not spun out. If you have caught the run of his slang, amuse yourself with writing down what he has just told us in his own words; and then try whether you can by any means express the same facts and ideas in good gentlemanly English, as perspicuously or in the same compass. It will be an amusing exercise."

I thought so, and tried it. The reader has the result of the first part of the experiment. What I have given as John's narrative is a copy from what I then wrote down. I shall be excused from giving my paraphrase. It turned out to be such an improvement as paraphrases of the Bible generally are. If, instead of telling John's story for *him*, I could have gotten *him* to tell mine for *me*, we should have been through it long ago, and much more agreeably. Different as they were, John and Balcombe had much in common. In describing the operations of John's mind, Balcombe had described his own. Their principles and modes of action made the difference. It was the possession of these faculties that had enabled them to extricate themselves from the deep-laid schemes of the most artful villain under the sun. That Balcombe would have ultimately achieved his deliverance without the aid of Keizer was rendered probable by what Roberts had said. Indeed John may

have anticipated his commands by his journey into the wilderness, for they had both interpreted the appearance of the pistol in the same way. It is possible that a part of Balcombe's astonishing composure, under the very eye of danger, may have proceeded from his confidence in the other's sagacity and activity. The two together certainly constituted a league of offence and defence, the most efficient imaginable. They called to my mind a remark I had seen, that his alliance with the dog had given to man his mastery over other animals. John, in Balcombe's hands, was the wild dog, retaining his courage, his rapacity, and his hardihood, but fitted to the uses of his master by having his ferocity subdued, his sagacity trained, and his courage directed against the denizens of his native forest.

CHAPTER VI.

There's wit there, ye'll get there
Ye'll find nae ither where.

BURNS.

I now found that the preparations for our journey had never been entirely discontinued, and they were soon completed. A steamboat appeared passing up the river, and we put ourselves in readiness for her return. I was amused at the appearance of John, when he presented himself to go on board. As had been arranged with Balcombe, he was fully equipped in a suit of decent blue, with hat and shoes. He did not look like a little boy when first breeched, for there was no mixture of pride or satisfaction with his sheepishness. It was more like that same urchin when mounted on a high dunce stool, with a fool's cap on his head. He thought everybody was looking at him, and that none looked but to laugh. And really he looked queer enough; for he still carried his pouch, and horn, and butcher knife, and charger, all slung across his shoulders in their greasy belts; and in his hand he still bore his heavy rifle, the barrel looking like a crowbar, and the stock seeming as if fashioned with a hatchet.

“What are you going to do with the rifle, John?” said I.

“Ah! Lord, sir,” replied John, “that’s more than you or I knows. You see, Mr. Napier, just to please the colonel I made out to shed my leather and put on these drotted things; and it puts me in mind of the colonel’s spaniel dog he got me to shear last summer. When I seed the poor thing looking round and trying to run away from himself, it made me laugh, and now you’ve all got me in the same fix, I suppose you’ll laugh at me. But as to my rifle and me, sir, we never parts in this life.”

We went on board in the evening, after taking an affectionate and grateful farewell of Colonel Robinson and his lady. I have said little of these. They have had no part in my story, and it is not my purpose to detain the reader with descriptions of character. So far as the narrative develops this, I owe no apology for the detail of any circumstances that may illustrate it. I love these good people, and have reason to love them. But if their chance to be remembered in the world depends on my inserting their panegyric here, they must die without their fame. I will only add, that the kind old gentleman had high as well as good qualities, of which, under another name, the history of his country bears testimony.

An early hour the next day brought us to St. Louis. Here we landed, and learned that there was a boat bound for Louisville, which would go

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the next day. In the mean time Mrs. Balcombe, to whom the novelty of her situation had not allowed much sleep the night before, was glad to repair the loss at a public house. It was curious to observe the effect of this untried danger on the nerves of this high-spirited and intrepid woman. I have rarely seen one more alarmed, though she did not go into hysterics, nor say nor do anything to call the attention of others to her fears. She overmastered them with the spirit of George Balcombe's wife, but could not triumph over them. Perhaps the thought of dangers in which even her husband would be no more than a common man, left her without the support she generally found in her reliance upon his resources. I am more inclined to this opinion, because in the progress of our journey I did not find that use removed her fears.

As soon as we were established in our lodging, Balcombe despatched a note to Shaler, who soon called, excusing himself for not bringing his wife to wait on Mrs. Balcombe, on account of the weather. He seemed delighted to see Balcombe, and his feelings were wrought into quite a tumult of pleasure, at the thought of introducing him to his friends. For this purpose, he invited us to spend the evening with him, proposing to have a number of gentlemen to meet us. This courtesy was frankly declined by Balcombe, on account of his wife, who could not go, and whom he did not wish to leave in solitude.

"But," said he, "to show you that I am not in-

sensible to your kindness, nor to the value of the favour you propose to do me, I will avail myself of your good offices for a purpose but slightly different. I think I know who the friends must be to whom you propose to introduce me. If I am right, they are gentlemen of whose acquaintance I am ambitious. Such, for example, as H——, and B——, and B——, and W——, and G——.”

“They are the very men I was thinking of,” said Shaler.

“Well,” said Balcombe, “would it be asking too much of them to give an evening to a stranger, or of you, to beg you to use your influence to bring them *here*?”

Shaler hesitated a moment ; at length,

“If it cannot be managed otherwise,” said he, “I will do so with great pleasure.”

“I would also name Whitehead,” said Balcombe, “but I dislike to ask anything of a man, who, having already served me, will neither receive money nor thanks, and cares nothing for my gratitude.”

“He is a strange fellow,” said Shaler ; “a man of wonderful powers ; but of irregular education, irregular feelings, appetites, impulses, and principles. Sometimes these pull against each other, and then he is a kind of amphibia. There is no knowing which end will go foremost. But sometimes they all tend the same way, and then he moves like a rocket, with an energy and brilliancy truly astonishing. I think I can foresee that they will coincide to bring him here ; and if they should

prompt him to show off, you will discover that he is an extraordinary man. If you will give me leave, I will bring Mr. Napier's acquaintance, Mr. Green, our worthy sheriff. I propose this, not so much for your sake as his. The interest he has expressed in you is my warrant that it would give him great pleasure to see you. You will find him somewhat formal in his manners, and precise in his notions; but his honour and truth, his strict principles and good sense, make him a desirable acquaintance and inestimable friend."

Having received Balcombe's cheerful assent to this proposal, he left us. Wine, cigars, &c., were now ordered to our room. Shaler returned, accompanied by two gentlemen. One by one, the rest dropped in, each wearing an air of *empressement* and respect in approaching Balcombe. Whitehead alone came in with something like the careless movement between a swagger and a lounge, which I had seen him assume when requested by Shaler to watch the interests of Balcombe in the trial. I was offended, too, at the glance he cast at Mrs. Balcombe, and glad her husband did not see it. She did; and Whitehead must have had very little tact if he had not discovered that it was not well received. His manner underwent an instantaneous change, and he was from that moment polite, circumspect, and regardful of all the decurms of polished society.

The evening passed off delightfully; and I was filled with amazement at finding myself, in that

remote region, in company, not only with polished gentlemen, but men whose extent of information was great, and whose reach of thought is rarely surpassed. The names of some of them since occupy places in the history of the Union, and of the different states, which fully justify the estimate I then formed of them.

I remember no particulars of that evening, and regret it. There was not much display of wit, and none of learning, but there were sprightliness, readiness, good sense, vividness of thought and force of language, such as I had rarely found. Balcombe talked little. He was too polite to take the lead in such a company of his own guests, and he could not talk without doing so. I do not mean to say that he was the first man there; but such was his style of talk. He conversed rather with his own thoughts than with those of others. Was this habit formed in solitude? Perhaps so. And from long association with those who looked to him alone for light. To all such it was poured out as a spontaneous emanation. But I now saw plainly that in a drawingroom he might seem dull. The give and take of flippant chitchat he had no talent for. Once or twice he threw off in his own peculiar style, and I then saw that he justified in the estimation of his hearers, the favourable representations which Shaler had doubtless made of him.

When we were alone, I expressed to Balcombe my surprise at seeing an amount of talent in that

remote country, so vastly disproportioned to its total population.

“The remoteness of the country,” said he, “explains the phenomenon. There is no article of value so easy of transportation as talent. Hence we have more of it than of more bulky and less valuable articles. I asked for herrings for supper, and was told they are never brought here; but here, you see, are raisins, almonds, and olives, to our Madeira and Champagne. To have come here, too, as early as these gentlemen did, implies energy, and energy is talent, and the parent of talent. Few fools have sense enough to lose their way to such a distance from home. But that is not all. Men’s minds are whetted against each other, ‘as iron sharpeneth iron;’ and though men here are fewer, their collisions are more frequent, of more importance and violence. Hence a man learns here what he will learn nowhere else so well. He learns to take care of himself and to think for himself. One of the gentlemen who has just left us is about to return to his native state, having found this theatre, I presume, too narrow for him. And so it undoubtedly is for the *performance* of his part in the drama of life, but not for the *study* and *rehearsal* of it. Nor does he think so.

“I have been here,” said he, “five years, and am five thousand dollars poorer than I came; but I have wasted neither time nor money. How comes it I know not, but

'There's wit here, ye'll get here
You'll find nae ither where.'

"He said rightly, and I make no doubt that that gentleman carries with him powers acquired here by which he will at once break down the barriers that formerly obstructed the path of his ambition. And *there* is another cause of the phenomenon you observe. Talent is ambitious. It is impatient of a second place in society. Talent of the *very first* order stands its ground and fights its way up to the first place on a lofty theatre. It aspires to be great *among the great*. Inferior talent, but still respectable, is often driven by this impatience to seek easier triumphs, and is content to be *great among the little*. Hence you find here many very efficient men, many men of very considerable powers and acquirements. But you will see few of the very first order; for if such, mistaking themselves, should come here in youth, they will go away as soon as they discover their mistake."

We were at length afloat on the Mississippi, which, below St. Louis, retains all the turbulent appearance of the Missouri, enlarging itself in breadth and depth. As I looked down from the deck of the boat on the turbid thick water, boiling up continually from the bottom in surges that break the surface, and spread like the head of a cauliflower, I was awfully reminded of John's saying that the Missouri never lets go a man that falls in with his clothes on. I felt all the force of Byron's expression, "a hell of waters," applied by him

to a different appearance, but surely never more applicable than to this. I was impatient to be on the tranquil bosom of the Ohio, and felt a good deal of the awe that displayed itself in Mrs. Balcombe's countenance.

The first evening was chiefly occupied in making ourselves at home. The captain, a manly and civil man, was particularly polite to Balcombe and myself. Every arrangement was made to our satisfaction; and we went to our berths in health, spirits, and comfort, and full of hope.

On waking in the morning I had the mortification to find that we had lain all night at St. Genevieve. Leaving that place, there seemed no end to the occasions which offered for touching at different points on the Missouri side of the river. I was vexed, too, at a change in the captain's deportment. I could obtain no answer to any inquiry, and to Balcombe his manner was yet more repulsive. The passengers, I thought, treated us with scant courtesy, and my situation on the whole was quite uncomfortable. I saw that Balcombe remarked the same things, and that they only drew from him a quiet and somewhat humorous smile. My impatience, however, was not to be governed; and seeing the boat rounding-to at the little village of Bainbridge, I expressed my vexation in the hearing of the captain, who said significantly,

"You and *your friends*, sir, seem in a great hurry to get out of Missouri."

I looked at Balcombe, who heard this, and was

surprised to see the same smile still on his face. He took me to the table, and opening the register which lay there, turned to the list of passengers in a trip made about a month before, and pointed to the name of Edward Montague.

"Good God!" said I, "is it possible that wretch has prepared any trouble for us here?"

"It would be perfectly in character," said Balcombe, and turned away.

We stopped but a few moments, and presently touched again at Cape Girardeau.

"I don't think," said the captain, "you'll have to complain of any more stops after this."

"As he said this, passing me to go on shore, I thought I saw something like a sneer on his countenance. He was gone half an hour, and came back accompanied by several men. Pointing to Balcombe and Keizer, he said, "These are the men;" and they were instantly arrested. Balcombe asked for the warrant. It was shown him. The affidavit. It was presented, and proved to be a duplicate of that affidavit of Montague's of which I had a copy.

"Is the justice who issued this warrant present?" said Balcombe.

"He is," said the constable, pointing to one of the new comers.

"I will thank you to read that paper, sir," said Balcombe, handing a record of his acquittal, duly authenticated.

The justice, the constable, and the captain, all

looked at it with an air of dissatisfaction. At last the justice said,

“Well, I suppose it must be so. As to how the jury got over the facts mentioned in that affidavit, it’s no business of mine. So I suppose I must withdraw the warrant.”

“Will you have the goodness,” said Balcombe, “to look over this other paper?”

The justice did so, and his countenance changed instantly.

“This is all right,” said he. “I know Shaler; this is his handwriting; and he’s never the man to think a case against him unless its very clear.”

The captain now looked over the paper, and turning to Balcombe, apologized with great earnestness for the indignity offered him. Then addressing himself to the company, he explained that Montague, on coming aboard, had placed the affidavit in his hands, to be used, as he said, if necessary, in preventing the escape of two of the most artful men on earth.

He had made a merit, it seems, of his reluctance to appear against Balcombe, who had been a friend in early youth; but said that the appearance of Keizer in St. Louis, flying from justice, had awakened him to a juster sense of his duty to his country. The captain now, by Balcombe’s permission, read aloud the record of the verdict, and Shaler’s affidavit, certified by the clerk of St. Louis county, setting forth the whole affair, and his late relation to the parties, in their true light. Having gone

through with the papers, the captain said that he had taken that office on himself as a proof of his concern at what had passed, and expressed a hope that it was forgiven. Balcombe assured him that it was, and that he had not been at all surprised at what had passed, as was manifested by his precaution in procuring those papers. His knowledge of Montague had taught him, he said, that there could be no safety but in believing of him all sorts of evil, and guarding against all sorts of mischief.

I now expressed my concern at this new outrage to the feelings of Mrs. Balcombe; but he said he had put her on her guard. He had seen Montague's name, and marked the changed demeanour of the captain and company on finding ours. He knew that a proper occasion for explanation would offer, though he had not anticipated the nature of it. He had awaited it patiently, and charged his wife to keep her cabin till all was over.

He now went to her, and I was asked to give the history of his adventure. This I did to the whole assembled company. Its effect was to make Balcombe the lion of the day; and even John, who had been slinking about in his inconvenient broad-cloth, and looking as sheepish as if he thought everybody was observing his dress, became a man of consequence. It was soon found that he had been where few had been, and seen what few had seen; and he was a perfect oracle among the younger passengers, on the subject of bears, and buffaloes, and wolves, and wild horses, and salt

mountains, and, above all, of Indians. He had killed his man, he had taken scalps, and nothing but the loss of his own could have made him a man of more consequence than he was. I was afraid so much attention might make him foolishly vain; but there was no such danger. John had not enough respect for those to whom tales of manhood, as he called it, were new and strange, to be flattered by their notice.

CHAPTER VII.

Of all men, saving Sylla the manslayer,
Who passes for in life and death most lucky,
Of the great names that in our faces stare,
The General Boon, backwoodsman of Kentucky,
Was happiest among mortals anywhere.

BYRON.

THE character of Balcombe's adventure was such as to make him a favourite with the ladies, and to give him the *entree* of their cabin. In this arrangement I was easily included, and we passed many of the hours of our long voyage in pleasant conversation with them. Frequently, too, we used our privilege as the means of securing us a pleasant seat on the stern gallery of the boat, where

we could converse without interruption. Here Balcombe occasionally entertained me with histories of his wild adventures on the Spanish frontier, during the tumultuous occurrences of Taledo's insurrection, in which he had taken a part. I could not help remarking my surprise that he had ever returned to peaceful life, instead of ending his days in scenes so rife with pleasurable excitement, and to which his peculiar talents so well fitted him.

"You are mistaken there, William," said he; "I have little doubt I should have been now roaming the wilderness in quest of adventures, had I not been deficient in an indispensable faculty."

"What is that?" said I.

"I believe," he replied, "the phrenologists call it the organ of locality. I have no recollection of place. It was this defect that caused the loss of life in the action I detailed to you in Missouri. Had I seen the ground, which I had traversed times without number, with the mind's eye, as I saw it on the spot, I have little doubt I should have given the captain such timely advice as would have saved him and his men. All that I can do is to look with a soldier's eye on what is actually before me. But to remember places exactly as they are, and to recognise them when I see them, is not given to me. That is the faculty of these pilots. When their watch comes, they rouse themselves, look out, and know at once where they are. Keizer has it. Turn him into the hills here, and he

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would come back to the river as certainly and directly as a stone falls to the earth. On reaching it, too, he would know at a glance whether he had ever been there before.

"It was this that made Daniel Boon so remarkable a man. He was otherwise distinguished for nothing but a strange compound of quiet and restlessness. He loved solitude, and was one of the mildest and most peaceable men I ever knew."

"You knew him, then?"

"Oh yes; very well. He is now living not very far from me in Missouri. I could tell you instances in which this faculty has displayed itself in a manner that really seemed miraculous."

He went on to speak of these, and mentioned one which I hope the reader will pardon me for detailing. Coming to me from the lips of an eye-witness, I regard it as authentic enough to deserve a place in my story.

"Forty years ago," said Balcombe, "Daniel Boon was much employed to make locations of land in Kentucky. Being in the midst of danger, he was obliged to devise means to fix the locality of each tract without marking lines around it. His plan was to mark a corner, declare the quantity, and that it was laid off in a square, the diagonal of which was in a given direction. Nothing could be more precise than this; it identified the land as certainly as a mathematical point. The difficulty was to find the corner tree, where its place was not indicated by notorious natural objects.

“This difficulty brought many of Boon’s locations into dispute. He had made some such in a part of the country in which ten years ago there were still but few inhabitants, and which he had not visited for thirty years. About that time they became a subject of litigation. I had purchased one of them. Colonel Boon lived at a distance, and was very old. Joining with those circumstances like myself, we raised a sum of money sufficient to compensate him for his long journey. Our title to something was indisputable—but what was it? Our locations were the oldest in the country, and all others must give way to them—but where were they? These questions he alone could answer.

“Having drawn him from his distant home, all concerned travelled with him to the part of the country where the lands were said to lie. Our first object was to find the corner of a friend of mine. The old man went to the nearest of the old stations, as they were called, and from thence set out, followed by the rest of us. Our care was to observe, but not to interrupt him. We trusted him as the sportsman trusts his pointer. He took his course, and travelled many miles into the wilderness, apparently musing, and closely observing every object. Towards the close of the day he was seen to stop, look around, and meditate with an air of long abstraction. At length, speaking rather to himself than to us, he said, in short sentences, pausing and musing between,

“I know this place. The night before I established that corner I camped here. It rained that day, and two of my men, when they shot off their rifles to clean them, fired them at a mark on a beech tree, somewhere there.’

“He pointed as he said this, and we, following the direction of his hand, found a beech, on the bark of which were two small round swelling spots, near enough to each other to have been made by shots fired at the same mark. We cut into the tree, and found two balls. The rings in the wood showed that the wounds had been given in the same year in which the location was made. Now, I assure you I saw nothing in that spot by which I could have distinguished it from a hundred I had passed that day.

“At length we moved on, and in half a mile reached a little open space, perhaps twenty or thirty yards across. Here again Boon stopped, and again speaking as before, said,

“I know this place. We stopped here to dry our blankets and get our breakfasts. John Henderson marked his name on one of these trees. While we staid here Andrew Jones went out and shot a deer close by. The corner is about two miles from here.’

“As soon as this was said we began to look for Henderson’s name, but we looked in vain. We then took the course indicated by the old man, to see if we could find any trace of Jones; and we actually found his initials A. J. on a tree. We

now resumed our search for the other name. There stood, on the margin of the open space, the remains of a tree, the top of which had been broken off, ten or twelve feet from the ground. The trunk was decayed and covered with moss. This was now stripped off, and beneath was the name of John Henderson, at full length. The old man now resumed his course, and, plunging into the forest, brought us, in two or three miles, to a tree, answering, point by point, to the description in his entry of location.*

"It is this faculty," continued Balcombe, "which makes the boundless waste of forest or prairie familiar as the home of his childhood, that qualifies a man to excel in the wild enterprises to which I was too prone. Wanting it, I was forced to use those who possessed it. There is my man John, whom I caught young, (for he was a boy at the time,) and tamed to my uses. He was to me, in this respect, what the horse is to the man. But I could not always have him with me; and alone I was a fool, and no match for a native centaur of the wild."

I could fill a volume with strange and interesting narratives with which Balcombe amused me, during our long though rapid journey. The journey itself was not without incident, but only such as can hardly fail to happen to every traveller in a

* The reader is assured that this account is given, (excepting names, which are not remembered,) exactly as the writer received it from an eyewitness of unquestioned veracity.

route of a thousand miles. But every one may make the same trip for himself ; and, among our people, roaming like Tartars over this vast continent, there are few who have not made or will not make it. But the adventures I have detailed, and those which yet remain to be told, are such as do not happen to every man ; and no man would encounter them by choice.

CHAPTER VIII.

The toils are pitched and the stakes are set ;
 Ever sing merrily, merrily ;
 The bows they bend and the knives they whet,
 Hunters live so cheerily.

It was a stag, a stag of ten,
 Bearing his branches sturdily ;
 He came stately down the glen,
 Ever sing hardily, hardily.

He had an eye and he could heed.

Scott.

On our arrival at Wheeling we lost no time in securing our seats in the stage, and prepared to proceed on our journey the same evening. It was amusing to see how John, who never in his life had been so long pent up before, crawled out of his

confinement, looking for all the world like a bagged fox. Not even when he came in from his forced march to the Sac River, had I seen him so completely worn out and divested of his energy. He yawned and stretched his limbs, and looked around on the houses and people, as on things of no interest to him. At last he lazily raised his rifle, and fixing his eye on the head of a nail in the wreck of an old flat boat, drove it through the plank. He said nothing, and did not even smile, but I saw by a twinkle of his black eye that he was waking up.

"If that had been a squirrel's eye, John!" said I.

"Ah, Lord! Mr. Napier, if I could only take a turn through these hills for a day or two, I'd show you something better than squirrels."

"What would that be?"

"Bear meat," he replied.

"Would you expect to find bears in a country so populous as this?"

"It's mighty hard to drive the bear out of such a rough country as this; and as to the people, that makes no odds if they an't of the right sort. I dare say they don't know there's a bear in the country."

"And why do you think there is?"

"I see plenty of sign, sir, along the river where we stop to get wood, and there's a fine beech mast this year, and the bears are busy lapping now, as boys in a cherry tree."

"Lapping!" said I; "what's that?"

“Why, you see, sir, a bear has got hands almost like a man, and when he gets up in a tree he’s so heavy he can’t go out on the branches, and the creature’s amazing strong, so he gets hold of them and pulls them in, or maybe breaks them off; and that’s what we call lapping. So you see, sir, when we find the branches lying about in the woods, we know there’s bears about; and when we see the marks of their nails on the smooth bark of the beech trees, then we stop and listen every now and then; and presently we hear *snap, snap*, and it’s sure to be a bear up a tree.”

“I suppose you have him safe enough,” said I, “when you catch him there.”

“Not always, sir; if he sees you or hears you coming before you get a shoot at him, he’s mighty apt to be off, unless you have a dog to stop him.”

“I have been told,” said I, “that they climb like sailors, but are awkward in coming down.”

“I God!” said John, “they don’t stand on climbing at such times. If the tree is one hundred feet high, the fellow just lets go all holds, and claps his head between his arms and rolls himself as round as a hoop, and down he comes like a hairy worm. Lord! if I have not seen them fall on a steep hillside, and roll away to the bottom just the same as a wagon wheel.”

“Does it never kill them?” asked I.

“Lord! no, sir. It does not even bruise them. You see, sir, the fleece saves them.”

"But their fleece is not so thick as that of a sheep, and such a fall would kill a sheep."

John looked at me a moment in some perplexity, and then laughing said,

"Oh, you are thinking about the fur, but I don't mean that. What we call the fleece is the hard coat of fat outside like a hog, maybe three or four inches thick. You cannot hurt a fat hog if you hit him in the body ; and the fleece of a bear will stop a ball if your powder and all are not very good. And you see, sir, when we are away out of the settlements, and bears are plenty, we cannot bring in all we kill, so we just take the skins and fleeces."

When we took our places in the stage, John, whose rifle would have been in the way in the body of the coach, gladly seated himself beside the driver ; and as he was perfectly at home with such characters, they were soon well acquainted. I could hear their voices and frequently a laugh, but that was all ; but when we stopped to change horses, I saw that they were as intimate as brothers. John, glad of employment, soon learned to lend a hand in gearing, and commenced the next stage, more than half acquainted with his new companion. In the body of the coach we had an intelligent company of communicative men, and were soon too much engaged in conversation to feel the want of him ; so that we hardly heard a word from him for a day or more.

On reaching the Alleghany Mountain, we were

to pass the night (from ten to three) at a public house on the top. On our arrival we found supper ready, and having swallowed a few mouthfuls, were hurrying to bed, when John caught Balcombe's eye, and coming near said,

"I want to talk with you, gentlemen, where nobody can see us."

"Go out, then," said Balcombe, "and we will follow you."

He did so; and we saw him walk off in a direction opposite to that to the stables, where we saw the gleaming of lanterns, and the figures of men moving about. John soon stopped, and we came up with him.

"Colonel," said he, "all isn't right here, I'm a thinking. Maybe you'd better not go on in the morning. But I'll just tell you all, and you'll know best."

"Go on, John," said Balcombe, "and then we'll consult about it."

"Well, sir," continued John, "you see I'm mighty thick with all these drivers, and I tell 'em strange things about hunting, and Indians, and the like; and I have my fun out of them, 'cause, you see, it an't no use to be always sticking to the truth, when a fellow wants to hear something sorter miraculous. So you see I'm a mighty man among them, and as it happens, I haven't never said nothing about you, and they don't know as I knows you. So to-night, sir, when we stopped to change horses last time, I was setting on the dickey (I think they

call it) and you was in the tavern. So when the driver takes his seat, he opens a tin box I see them carry, and he takes up a paper, and holds it to the lantern and looks at it, and says he,

“‘Balcombe! Balcombe! Is there a gentleman of the name of Balcombe in the stage?’

“‘Yes,’ says I; ‘do you know such a man?’

“‘No,’ says he; ‘only it’s a strange sort of a name. Which is the man?’

“‘That one as wears the blanket capot,’ says I.

“So then he blows his trumpet, and the colonel comes out, and just stops under the lantern at the door, and I sees the fellow look mighty hard at him. And then I hears him talking to himself, and says he,

“‘Balcombe! Balcombe! that’s the very name.’

“So I gets to considering, and we starts off, and after a while says he,

“‘An’t this Mr. Balcombe from Missouri?’

“‘I believe he is,’ says I.

“So he says no more just then; and he hadn’t much to say nohow, but just kept a studyinglike, and at last says he,

“‘Do you know which way a man would go from here down into Essex county in Virginia?’

“I didn’t know no more than a child, and I told him so; but then, thinks I, an’t that where they say Montague’s gone? So I was glad that I did not let him know that I knew the colonel, and then I begins and talks about the mountains, and where I was raised in Virginia; and I never lets on that

I had ever been in Missouri in my life. And then I tells a heap of stories I had heard about robbing people on the road, and the like, and I made out as if I didn't think so mighty much harm of the like of that; and I tells him of a friend of mine that was sent to the penitentiary for robbing a stranger, how 'twas a pity of him, because he was such a clever fellow. And he didn't say much, but sorter let on that it was a ticklish business, but a smart fellow might do pretty well at it anywhere close to the state line, where he could dodge the law. I cannot tell you rightly all he said, but something like as if a man might do a worse business sometimes than just to keep still and say nothing.

“How's that?” says I.

“Why,” says he, ‘suppose any of my friends was to meet us now, and want to rob the mail or the passengers, and you there with your rifle. Do you think they could not afford to give you something handsome to keep quiet?’

“That would depend upon what they got,” says I. ‘Cause I thinks I ought to share and share alike with them.’

“No,” says he, ‘that would not be fair; ’cause you wouldn't run no risk.’

“Maybe so,” says I; ‘but I reckon any of them would be glad to give me his share and mine too, before he'd let me take a crack at him.’

“You see I didn't want to seem too anxious, ’cause I thought he would not be so apt to suspicion me, if I held out for a good bargain. But

he didn't say no more ; and when we gets here I sees him and the other driver that is to go on from here in the morning, get together, and they had a heap of whispering, and I thought I heard your name and Montague's, and I sees 'em look right hard at me, and says t'other one,

"No, damn it, let him alone ; I can manage him."

"So I just sets my rifle down in the stall, and I goes away and stays a while, and when I comes back I takes it up and comes to the house. And I looks at the rifle, and the priming was wet, and I puts down the wiping stick, and when I draws it out that was wet too. So I put that and that together, sir, and then I thought I'd tell you all about it."

"Well, John," said Balcombe, "a little rest won't hurt us ; so I'll just stop here to-morrow, and find out how the land lies. But how are we to manage this ? If we all stop, they'll find out that we are all travelling together, and then they'll be cautious before you."

"Oh," said John, "you can just stop because the madam is tired ; and as to me, I can be the sickest man in half an hour that ever you seed."

"That will do, John," said Balcombe. "Steal away, then, and let us to bed."

To bed we went, and presently we heard a great bustle of people running to and fro, ministering, as I found, to poor John, whose illness had taken a most alarming aspect. In the midst of the uproar

I went to sleep, and was roused by the driver with his lantern. He knocked at the door of Balcombe, who asked the hour.

"Two o'clock," was the reply.

"Is not that earlier than common?" asked he.

"It's none too soon," said the fellow, in a sulky tone; "the drivers at the next stage say I am always too late."

"I cannot help that," said Balcombe; "I will not go until three. So take yourself off, and don't disturb my family."

"I shall have to leave you," said the driver, in a tone of expostulation.

"I suppose," said Balcombe, "that your employer will explain why I am left."

The man was silent for a minute, and then said, "I'll wait half an hour for you, sir."

No answer.

"I'll wait three quarters of an hour."

No answer.

"I'll wait an hour."

"Harkee, friend," said Balcombe; "I mean to ask your employer by what right I have been disturbed at this hour of the night. Do you want me to get up and discuss the matter with you? Depend on it, if I do, I shall use rougher arguments than you like."

This was spoken in a dry tone that was not to be mistaken, and the driver moved off.

CHAPTER IX.

The lion preys not on carcasses.

A QUIET night and a day of rest ensued, which would have been delightful but for my impatience to reach home. Yet that feeling had begun to give way to one of an opposite, but more painful character. The critical posture in which I had left affairs there, made me dread my return almost as much as I desired it. I felt myself borne on and on to my fate, by an impulse irresistible as fate itself, and the very sense of which weighed on my spirits as ominous of a fearful doom. Such a feeling in its deep strong current, sweeps us along like the suck of a cataract. We listen in vain for the roar of the water, but though we understand not the impulse, a dread presentiment of evil accompanies it. We would turn and fly, we know not whither or from what, but are powerless. We sink down and close our eyes, and yield to the current that may bear us to bliss or to destruction. I was now near enough my journey's end to experience all the wretchedness of this condition. I was impatient of rest, incapable of repose. But whether to move onward or backward was most

dreaded or most desired I did not know. Had I yielded to every impulse, I might have traversed and retraversed the same ground a hundred times.

In the morning, John made the most of a sick man's privilege, and lay in bed perhaps later than he had ever done in his life. At last he made his appearance, trying to assume an air of languor, which the shrewd twinkle of his keen black eye strongly belied, and contrived to limit himself to a moderate breakfast, by which, however, he professed to be mightily refreshed. Soon after, a rude-looking fellow stepped in, and sitting down to the table, began to eat of what was left on it. At the moment the landlord (who was also the contractor's agent) entered, and expressed surprise at seeing him there. I soon discovered that he was the driver who had driven us the night before, and should have returned that morning. I had observed him cast an inquisitive look at John, who received it with an answering glance of intelligence; but neither spoke, and John left the room, after looking at Balcombe, and cutting his eye at the other with an expression not to be misunderstood.

"Tom," said the landlord, "how is this? Why are you not with your horses?"

"I had business the other end of the road," said Tom; "and I got Bill to drive for me."

"You're a pretty fellow," said the landlord, "to get such a chap as that to manage your team. Do

you think we would give you fifteen dollars a month, if a fellow we could get for eight would do as well? You are getting above your business, sir, and such another trick will throw you out of our service."

"For the matter of that," said the fellow, "I don't care how soon you discharge me."

"Don't you?" replied the landlord; "then, sir, you will drive one more trip, and by to-morrow I can get another in your place."

"Not another whip do I crack in your service," said Tom. "You talk about discharging me to-morrow, and I'll discharge myself to-day; and you must do the best you can."

"Well," said the landlord, "I suppose Bill will do to drive to-morrow as well as to-day."

"Oh yes," said the ruffian, "*he'll do well enough*, only just when you want to find fault with me."

"None of your insolence," said the landlord; "you are discharged, and your board is out; so take yourself off."

"I guess this is a tavern," said the fellow, "and I'll stay here just as long as I please, and call for what I want. You've got money enough of mine to pay for it."

There was no gainsaying this, and the fellow kept his seat in all the triumph of brutal insolence. To make it more complete, he adjourned from the breakfast table to the bar, to enjoy the privilege of drinking without responsibility to any one.

In the mean time, Balcombe, turning over the

leaves of the register, asked of the landlord careless questions concerning persons whose names he saw, and with whom he was acquainted. At last he came to that of Montague. The landlord remembered him well. He had been there a month before; arrived Saturday night, and lay by for the Sabbath, being unwilling to travel on that day. He was a mighty quiet, good sort of a man; had spent the day in reading, and had very little to say, except when he heard the drivers swearing; and then he talked to them so reasonably, and with so much benevolence, that they seemed to take to him, and he to them.

"I don't think this fellow profited much by his lecture," said Balcombe.

"No," said the landlord; "but he was the very one that he had most to say to, for the fellow played me the same trick then, and staid here all day; and ever since he will check himself in his oaths at times, and speak of Mr. Montague's good advice."

Balcombe now proposed to me and James, that we should amuse ourselves with shooting our pistols at a mark. So said so done. A target was set up. James fired with such precision as belongs to a good eye and a steady though unpractised hand; and I, in the martinet style of one who has learned to fire at the word, as part of the education of a man of honour. Both were pretty good shots. As to Balcombe, his ball obeyed his will. He did but look at the mark; and raising

his arm as carelessly as Locksley himself, the bullet was lodged in the mark.

Meantime John and the driver had come to the place, the former leaning on his rifle, the latter flourishing his long whip, and blurting out an occasional oath, as if to show that he felt his independence and his grog. His attention was soon attracted to what was going on, which seemed to have a sobering effect upon him. I observed a growing uneasiness in his manner, and he began to draw up to John, who took little notice of him, but seemed lost in admiration at the skill of Balcombe. Addressing him at length he said,

“I say, stranger, it an't no match at all between you and these gentlemen; suppose you let me try you a shot.”

“Agreed,” said Balcombe; “will you take a pistol or your rifle?”

“I don't much care which,” said John; “but I should like to try my rifle against your pistol, sixty yards to twenty, for a drink of grog.”

The match was soon made. Balcombe fired with his usual success. John snapped; and examining his pan, found the powder wet. He now put down the wiping stick, and, withdrawing that, pronounced it to be wet too. The driver was near him at the moment, and some words passed between them which I could not hear. I only saw that John's countenance was accusing, and the other's deprecatory. The rifle was soon put in order, and then the match began. The trial of

skill was wonderful. Which beat I don't remember, except that once when Balcombe's pistol made long fire, he left room for John's ball between his and the mark, so that John was proclaimed victor. We now returned to the house and dined, when Balcombe, going to his room, ordered up the forfeited liquor, and sent for John to join us in drinking it. As soon as we were seated,

"Well, John," said Balcombe, "how did the physic work?"

"Oh, prime, sir!" said John. "That fellow don't think there's your match upon earth, except it be me."

"Well, what does he say to it?"

"Oh, I've been honeying him up all the morning, and talking about what business he'll go at next, and I sorter put him in mind of what he was talking about last night; and he seemed sorter so, and sorter not so; like he wanted to talk and was afraid. So when he seed you a shooting, maybe it didn't make him open his eyes; and every now and then I could see him scringe, like he thought the bullet was in him. And when I told him I could shoot as well as you, he pretended to make light of it, but then he followed me and looked mighty anxiouslike. The creature had forgot about wetting the powder, and when the rifle snapped he looked right innocent till I found out what was the matter. And with that I looks right hard at him, and says I,

"'I'll tell you what it is, stranger; you don't

start me from here to-morrow morning with a wet load in my gun.' Lord! if he didn't look guilty I don't know. 'And I reckon,' says I, 'you think I don't know what you were after down the road before day this morning.'

" 'Hush! hush!' says he, 'don't say a word and I'll tell you all about it.'

" So with that I cracks away, and he thought I beat you, 'cause you did not say your pistol blowed, and just gave it up so. So then we goes to the stable together, and says I,

" 'What is that you are going to tell me?'

" And he sorter hummed and hawed about it, and says I,

" 'Stranger, you see it's just so: if you've anything to tell me, tell it; if not, its all one to me. I can take care of myself I reckon.'

" Then he looks right dubious, and says he,

" 'Did you hear me and Joe talking last night?'

" Says I,

" 'If I didn't, I reckon my gun did when I set it there in the stall. And I reckon,' says I, 'it will take a smarter fellow than Joe to *manage me*, and I with both eyes wide open.'

" And with that says he,

" 'I wish Joe was here, 'cause I haven't got no right to speak too plain without his leave, especially after he told me not; but,' says he, 'you come down to the stable after supper and we'll see about it.'

" So I agreed, and then I come away."

"Well, John," said Balcombe, "now go to sleep if you can, and sleep till supper, and I'll do so too, because we must not sleep any more afterward. When everybody else is asleep, come to my room, and then you can tell me all about it. As to you, boys, new flints and dry powder, and wait for the word of command. I don't want to weary you, and you can trust me."

I heard no more of the matter until next morning. There happened to be no one in the stage but our party and one other, whom I could not distinguish in the dark. He had already taken his place on the back seat, when Balcombe handed in his wife.

"As we are going down the mountain," said she, "I will sit in front."

She did so; and Balcombe placing himself by her side, I took the opposite corner on the same seat. The stranger fronted me, and James was *vis a vis* to Mrs. Balcombe. John, as usual, rode with the driver. We went off at a rapid rate, but presently slackened our speed at a moderate rise. Balcombe now said,

"Are your arms in order, James? and your's, William? Is your powder dry?"

We both replied that we had examined all a few minutes before, and all was right.

"Then," continued Balcombe, "take each of you a pistol in one hand and a dirk in the other. Now if the carriage stops before we reach the end

of our stage, do both of you both shoot and stab the fellow that sits in that corner."

Then dropping the little window at the driver's back, which was just behind his own head, he said,

"You can drive, John, and must be in readiness to catch the reins if the driver falls from his seat. And you, driver, take notice: I have a pistol pointed at your back that never misses fire. If any ruffians attack the stage, as was done yesterday morning, and you suffer the horses to stop a moment, I will shoot you through the body; and do you, John, shoot down any man that attempts to stop the horses, and drive on. And now, boys, all of you remember the watchword, 'Deliberate promptitude.'"

This formidable arrangement, which gave me for the first time a precise view of our situation, was heard in silence by the driver and his confederate.

"Move on quietly," said Balcombe; "keep your horses hard in hand until we come to the point of attack, for your life depends on their having mettle enough to break away from anybody who may try to stop them."

He was obeyed to the letter; and we descended the mountain at a moderate trot. At one of those short sharp rises, which everywhere break the slope of the Alleghany, we fell into a walk, and had not ascended a hundred yards before we heard the driver say,

"Get away, you damned fools; will you never quit trying to scare people?"

At the same moment the lash rung loud and sharp, and the horses, after a momentary check, dashed away up the hill at a gallop. We now moved on with speed to the next stage, where Balcombe, with a sharp reprimand, dismissed the ruffians.

"I will not take the trouble," said he, "to prosecute you for conspiring against my life. I don't belong to your state, nor care not for offences against her laws, and I have no malice against you. But tell me, before we part, what was that scoundrel to have given you?"

The men looked at each other, and at last Tom answered,

"I suppose it an't no use to try and keep it a secret now. It was a thousand dollars a piece."

"And did he agree to take your word?"

"No, sir; we were to carry the waybill, with your name upon it. He said the newspapers would tell him all the rest of the story."

"Where to?"

"To Essex county, sir."

"Enough," said Balcombe. "I never thought that wretch could make himself so formidable as to be an object of anything but contempt. But his craft and indefatigable malignity begin to entitle him to my resentment. I hope it may have time to cool before I meet him. I should hardly allow

the canting hypocrite time to say his prayers just now."

As we pursued our journey, Balcombe told me that Joe, at Tom's instance, had consented to take John into the plot. Tom was to take his place by Balcombe's side, and at a proper moment stab him in the bustle, and escape. John was to wet our powder; and Balcombe being out of the way, the rest were to be robbed, and taken on to the end of the stage.

"But what," said I, "did you mean by what you said about the stopping of the stage yesterday morning?"

"I forgot," said Balcombe, "that you did not know that. The eastern stage came in after you went to bed, and I learned that the passengers had heard from those who went down yesterday, that they had been stopped, as I suppose, at the place where we were beset."

This was the last adventure of our journey worth recording. Passing by all minor occurrences, I hasten to the scene of those events on which the happiness of my future life depended.

CHAPTER X.

“The sinking of the heart,
The failing sight, in which the light of heaven
Turns all to blackness, whose disastrous gloom
O’ershadows nature’s face! Oh! this it is to love;
To hope; the sickening hope that lives in fear;
The fear that paints a rival throned in bliss,
And tells of charms profaned, and plighted faith
Irrevocable.”

WE reached Baltimore and Washington in safety without any other adventure. At Alexandria Balcombe hired a carriage, in which he conveyed his wife to the house of her friends in Fauquier. I passed on to Fredericksburg, and thence to my mother’s residence in King and Queen, where Balcombe promised to join me the day after my arrival.

I shall not endeavour to paint my feelings during this solitary journey. Solitary it was; for though in the public stage, my mind, missing the excitement of Balcombe’s conversation, sunk into a sort of collapse, which made me alike incapable of conversing with strangers, and sustaining my own spirits under the crushing weight of my forebodings. I had now been absent from home more

than three months. Not knowing where to direct, my friends had never written to me, and I knew nothing of what had passed in the mean time. But I had ground for fearful apprehensions. Ann had forbidden me to think of her except as a sister. Howard, after a long course of well directed and not unacceptable attention, had given notice that he was about to return for the purpose of pressing his suit, which had been neither accepted nor rejected; and with all the advantages of birth and fortune, a handsome person, fine manners, and a high character for talent and honour, had been doubtless urging it during my absence. My heart sickened at these thoughts; and as I approached the place where I was to learn definitely whether my fears were well founded, I was half tempted to turn my back on my friends, to find my way again to the wilderness from which I had just emerged, and lose in a life of adventure a sense of the insufferable wretchedness that oppressed me.

Between twenty and thirty miles south of Fredericksburg, I left the stage, and hiring a horse, turned down eastwardly into King and Queen. Here, in the house which had once been my father's, lived my poor mother, in virtue of an arrangement with the creditors, which authorized her to retain possession until the end of the year. Here were my sisters, and here, unless she had already become the mistress of Howard's affluent fortune, was my meek and gentle Ann. In the neighbour-

hood was Oakwood, one only of the princely habitations of which Howard was master; and here my phrensied imagination saw Ann presiding over the hospitalities of a season of nuptial festivities. If a solitary seaman, shipwrecked on a desolate and barren coast, could envy the feelings with which I now approached the scenes of my youth, there must be a misery in exile which I have never conceived.

I was now but a few miles from home, when I met a negro whom I had known from my boyhood as the body servant of one of the neighbours. He stopped his horse as soon as he came up to me, and looking me in the face exclaimed,

“Why, Lord bless my soul! Mass William, is that you? I mighty glad to see you, sir; and they been looking and waiting for you at home ever so long.”

“How are they all, Jack?” said I, in a tone that sounded fearfully in my own ears. It was the voice of anticipated desolation and wretchedness, which seemed ominous of the fulfilment of my fears.

“All mighty well, sir,” said Jack, “and been looking for you every day. Master sent me there yesterday, sir, and I seed ’em all; Mrs. Napier, and the young ladies, and Mr. Howard and all.”

When I recollect the feeling that came over me as I heard these last words, I only wonder that I did not fall to the earth and die. They who have experienced the same will understand me. They

who have not, never will, until they feel their own hearts withering under such an intimation as the name of Howard, thus used, conveyed to my mind. I could not repeat it.

"Mr. Howard!" said I, faintly.

"Yes, sir; Mr. Howard. Don't you know," said Jack, with a knowing grin, "Miss Margaret Howard's brother, sir. The gentleman they say is going to marry Miss Ann. He there, sir, and Miss Margaret too; but lady's me! Mass William, travelling don't agree with you. You look mighty badly, sir. You been sick, sir?"

"No, Jack, no," said I, recovering myself, relieved as I was by words which, had they been spoken first instead of last, would have hardly been less appalling than those which had blanched my cheek. "*The gentleman they say is going to marry Miss Ann.*" Had any man uttered these words five minutes before, I should have felt inclined to kill him. As it was, I was ready to hug the good-hearted greasy blackamoor to my heart.

I passed on, elate with *hope*. *Such hope* as could be found in the realization of the worst *fears* I had ever permitted to enter into my mind, until the moment before I met the negro. Yet it *was hope*, at least for a few moments; but presently subsided again, not into despair, but despondency.

At length I reached the end of my journey. I approached the house unnoticed. I saw no one. I secured my horse, and slowly and sadly walked to the open door. As I entered, "all things reeled

around me." All was still. I heard no voice; I heard no step. The nearest door was that of the drawingroom. I entered. On a sofa sat Ann, and by her side was Howard. He held her hand, and bent over her with an air of earnest tenderness. Her head hung down, and her eyes seemed fixed in the same direction. She did not look up; perhaps she did not hear me. He did. He raised his head with an exclamation of pleased surprise; he uttered my name, and with extended hand he advanced towards me. I gave him mine, and in doing so took my eyes from Ann. Before I could turn them again she was in my arms. A wild scream of delight was all I heard. All I felt was that I once more held her to my bosom, and that her very heart was poured into it in a torrent of tears. I was conscious of nothing else till she disengaged herself, and, recovering her recollection, drew back, and with a timid glance at Howard, sank into a chair, while alternate blushes and paleness chased each other over her quivering features. At this moment Jane entered. I could not help perceiving that her joy at seeing me did not so entirely occupy her mind as to prevent a glance which seemed to cast rebuke upon Ann. Indeed her manner to me was constrained; but I presently forgot it in the long embrace of maternal tenderness, and in the artless endearments of my younger sister Laura. I now looked around for Howard; but with the delicacy of a perfect gentleman, as he was, he had left the room. I turned

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my eyes again on Ann. She sat with her's fixed on her handkerchief, at the edge of which she was pulling. Her blushes had passed away, except one long line of brightness, extending like the track of a meteor across her cheek to her ear, which still glowed with the fervour of her feelings. I gazed on her. She looked up. Her eye met mine, and glanced timidly to Jane. I followed it, and met the same cold look of inexorable decorum, which had rebuked what she called the glaring impropriety of my declaration of love to Ann.

A half hour passed speedily in the rapid interchange of those inquiries which always attend the meetings of long-absent friends. At the end of this time, Howard reappeared, leading his sister, bonneted and cloaked. He had ordered his carriage, and came in to take leave, saying he would see us again when the fervour of our mutual greetings should have subsided. His sister welcomed me with cordial dignity, while a slight blush mantled her cheek. Again involuntarily I looked to Jane. Her eye was bent on Miss Howard, with an expression of searching eagerness, which suddenly quailed, and she looked down embarrassed and vexed. I turned, and saw the cause in some slight indignation which displayed itself in Miss Howard's countenance as she withdrew her glance from my sister. A few inquiries followed after my health and adventures, and the young people took leave.

In this scene I found ample food for conjecture

and meditation. It now seemed to me that my intercourse with Balcombe, and the habitual excitement of whatever faculty of observation I possessed, during the scenes of the last two months, had endued me with a perspicacity to which I had before been a stranger. No doubt such things had passed in my presence before; but I had marked them not. But I had marked enough to remember that on no former occasion had any tenderness or caress of mine tinged with the slightest flush the marble whiteness of Ann's cheek. Never before in my presence, and while I spoke, had her eyes sought the ground. No. They had always dwelt in calm tranquillity upon my face, with an expression differing from that of my sisters only because she was much more gentle, more tender than they. But I had no time to prosecute such trains of thought; yet I was cheered and revived under their influence. My despondency was so far dissipated as to enable me to converse freely, and I lost no time in giving my friends a hasty outline of my adventures. When I came to speak of Balcombe, my mother recollected the name as that of one she had heard of but never seen; of whom she had not thought for many years, but of whom she was sure she had heard my grandfather speak in the highest terms. While I told of his prompt and efficient kindness, his high endowments, and the generous devotion with which he had periled life and honour in my service, the gratitude of my mother and Laura knew no bounds. Jane, too,

expressed the same sentiment in the strongest terms; but her look was often abstracted, as that of one calculating consequences, and estimating the influence of every occurrence on some preconceived scheme. Ann by degrees withdrew her eyes from the figures on the carpet, and a tear stole from them as I told of the tender interest he had expressed in her who had been his pet and plaything. I taught them to expect to see him the next day, and proposed to fill up the interval with a more detailed narrative of the events which I now hastily sketched.

I was anxious to prepare Ann to meet him as a friend worthy of all her confidence. I trusted to him to detect the secret of her heart. I depended on his address to make her acquainted with it. In her present defenceless condition, having no male friend, no protector but myself, nothing could excuse me for again addressing her on the subject of my love, until I should feel a reasonable assurance that my addresses would not be unacceptable. But I knew that he would need no hint from me, and I felt assured that he would manage his inquisition into the state of her heart so as not to shock, to alarm, or offend. When we separated for the night, I perceived that she again manifested some feeling which I had never observed before, as she held up her lip for the brother's kiss, with which from childhood we had always parted at that hour.

CHAPTER XI.

In that deep midnight of the mind
And that internal strife of heart,
When, dreading to be deemed too kind,
The weak despair, the cold depart.
When fortune changed, and love fled far,
And hatred's shafts flew thick and fast,
Thou wert the solitary star,
That rose, and set not to the last.

BYRON.

In the morning I resumed my narrative, and successfully accomplished my purpose of impressing her mind with admiration for Balcombe, and confidence in his friendship. In the afternoon Balcombe came, accompanied by Keizer and James. He had dissuaded the latter from hurrying directly home, because he had been unwilling to trust so raw a youth to cope alone with Montague, and because he wished to come upon him unexpectedly. The time lost was of little consequence. If Mary held him at bay, she would still await the appearance of her brother. If he had already carried his point, James's presence there could do no good. But we had no doubt that the approach of Balcombe (should Montague be apprized of it) would hurry him to some or any act

of desperation ; and, being now so near the scene of action, we determined to hasten to it without further loss of time.

We would gladly have remained a day or two where we were, but Balcombe's eagerness in pursuit of his prey made him insensible to fatigue. For my own part, all other considerations seemed of little consequence in my eyes in comparison with my desire to be near Ann, and to hear how Howard's suit had sped. Balcombe, by going alone, might have accomplished all that I could. But how contemptible must I appear in the eyes of Ann, if, after his past hazards in my behalf, I should again leave him alone to do what was most properly my own work. It was determined, therefore, that we should both go the next day to Raby Hall, accompanied by James and Keizer.

Soon after this resolution was taken, a servant came from the postoffice, and handed Balcombe a letter. After receiving it he left us to read it in his own room. Presently the servant came to inform James that Balcombe wished to speak to him. They remained together some time, and then I saw Balcombe walk into the park with the letter in his hand, which he read as he went. He did not return until nearly dark. At supper, James did not make his appearance. My mother directed a servant to find him, when Balcombe said,

"I beg he may not be called. He is in his

room. The poor boy has just heard of the loss of his mother."

To the rest of the company these words sufficiently explained a something of gloom which had hung on Balcombe's brow since he returned from his walk, and imparted a tone of tender sadness to his voice. But to me they gave a further intimation that the letter was from Mary Scott, and I turned on him a look of eager inquiry. To this he only answered by a quiet smile, and then began to speak of James; of his fine intellect, of his scrupulous honour and fidelity, and his gentle and amiable deportment. When he rose from table he approached Ann, and gently taking her hand, said in the kindest tone,

"You can have no recollection of me, my dear."

"None at all," said she; "and I regret it, for, from what I have learned, none ever better deserved to live in the memory of his friends."

"You can never fade from mine, while it pleases God to preserve to me my own little daughter, whose blue eyes and fair hair always remind me of you. You were very dear to me. I was then but a boy, and the only return I could make for the unmerited bounty of your grandfather, was in acts of playful kindness to the children on whom he doted. I thus won the hearts of you and William; and I trust mine will never be so hard, as not to love those who love me."

"William has told me," said Ann, "that we

used to call you our George. I think that sound comes to my ear like the voice of an old friend. My George! my George!" she repeated, with the look of one trying to recall a half-remembered tune.

"Say that again," said Balcombe, gently passing his arm around her waist and drawing her to him. "Say that again. You cannot think how sweet to me is a sound that reminds me that I once was young and lived in the paradise of domestic peace, so ill exchanged for the thorny wilderness of strife where my manhood has been spent. I am still your George, my dear child; and I hope you will soon know me well enough to call me so again. In the mean time," continued he, with a mild solemnity of manner, "accustom yourself to whisper those words to your own heart, that they may be echoed back to you, if, at any time, you feel the want of a friend."

As he said this, he gently turned up to his own her face, beaming with a tearful smile, and after gazing on her tenderly for a moment, kissed her forehead, and placed her softly in a chair. In the whole action there was something so quiet, so bland, so soothing, so exactly adapted alike to the delicacy and warmth of Ann's feelings, that I saw that his place in her confidence was at once immovably established. Balcombe, though not a handsome man, was not ugly; though not young, he was yet in the prime of manhood; the unexampled devotion of his young wife showed his power

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over the female heart ; and here I had seen his manner of exercising it. I could not have endured to see Ann's cheek resting on the bosom of any other man ; but in his whole action there was a holy calmness, and a soft breathing of paternal tenderness, with which my whole heart sympathized. As he withdrew his lips from her white brow, I felt as if he had left a blessing there. Had I any part in it ? I was not selfish enough to ask the question.

When the ladies had retired, Balcombe proposed to accompany me to my room. On reaching it, he produced and handed me the letter he had just received. It proved, as I suspected, to be from Mary Scott, and ran as follows :—

“ When I wrote the letter which I sent you by James, I hardly hoped that time, which has left me nothing by which I can recognise my former self, had made so little change in you. That you could not be ungenerous or unkind I knew. But that you would at once address yourself, with all the energy and vivacity of youth, to the service of a distant and dishonoured, though unfortunate woman, was more than I had a right to expect. Still less had I hoped that the history of my wrongs and wretchedness would draw from you a letter so full of kindness and sympathy as that I have just received. Thank God ! *you* at least are unchanged. I rejoice at it more for your own sake than my own. Remaining what you were when I first

knew you, I know that you have been, are, and must be happy. Fate does not do her work by halves, and thus leave a fountain of bliss pouring its perennial freshness through the hearts of those she has doomed as the victims of her malice.

“I have hardly more cause to be thankful for your kindness, than to rejoice that your letter did not reach me a few days sooner. Had it done so, I might have been the dupe of that artful villain, in whom the guile, the malignity, the venom, and the grovelling baseness of the serpent are all blended. For once he overreached himself. The rapidity of his journey defeated his own object. Not seeing James, nor hearing from you, I was suspicious of him; and his eagerness to accomplish his end had, before the arrival of your letter, confirmed my suspicions into a determination not to trust him. But let me begin and tell my story. I shall address this to the care of Mrs. Napier of Craiganet, where you informed me you proposed to be ere this. Later information satisfies me you cannot be there for some weeks, and I shall have time enough to detail to you all the machinations of the wretch. Could you conceive the comfort which it affords to a being desolate as I am, that there is one worthy of all esteem and confidence, who takes an interest in her, and will listen without disgust to whatever tones the agony of remorse, the bitterness of grief, the gloom of despair, or the hope that dawns from beyond the tomb may draw from her heart, you would not wonder that

I am disposed to fill the interval between this and your expected return with a history of the events that have befallen me since James left home. I go to it as to a 'pleasant task,' which, like the poet's dream, beguiled his dungeon's solitude, scarce less lonely, less weary, less desolate than mine. The light which Heaven sheds upon the *mind*, is mine as it was his. All other is shut out. The sun *may* shine. I see him not.

"A few days after poor James left me, a paralytic stroke brought my mother to the grave. I need not describe my situation, thus left alone on earth. The solitude of my cottage, before dreary, was now frightful. It was a relief to me that the only other being in Virginia who cared for my existence, required my presence and aid. My old nurse was taken ill. You remember she was the housekeeper at Raby Hall. I hastened to see her, and found her so ill that I passed the night by her side. In the morning I threw myself on a pallet, and slept a few hours. I was awakened by a strange voice, and saw a venerable and benevolent-looking old gentleman standing by the bed. I immediately conjectured that it was the steward, whom I had never seen. It seems that Mr. Raby had been imposed on by his overseers and agents, and lately determined to engage the service of some reputable man in moderate circumstances to live on one of his estates, and exercise a supervisory control over all of them. The gentleman selected was one whose fortunes were

decayed, and whose family had all left him. He and his wife, both old, had been reduced to poverty. But I need not tell you more than this. He is Major Swann, whose character you know; for I learn that in his better days he was a neighbour and friend of Mr. Charles Raby, and knew you when a youth. I rose on seeing him, and his attention being drawn to me, Mammy Amy told him who I was. He said something very kind, and took occasion to speak feelingly of that strong tie which binds the nursling to its foster-mother, and which goes so far to mitigate the evils of slavery in Virginia. Leaving the room, he sent the old woman her breakfast, and I found that something was added for me, prepared with a delicate care that was more grateful to my heart than the food to my palate. Not long after his wife appeared. She, too, was very kind, and sat and conversed with me a long time. While she was there servants came in, bringing a small cot bed, which was set up silently in one corner of the room. The old lady now left it, saying, that if I should have occasion to stay all night I would be more comfortably lodged. I felt that there was great sincerity and delicacy in this kindness, and made no scruple to remain. I staid by my good old nurse night and day, and she got better. I began to feel some yearning for my solitary home, but my heart shrunk from its desolate loneliness, and I would gladly have staid where I was. Yet I had no longer any excuse to remain, and was about to go

away, when the old gentleman told me that he understood my situation, and begged me to consider whether I could not be more comfortable where I was. You remember the housekeeper's room. It is quite snug; and there was a little girl to do for me many offices which, at home, I must have done for myself. I could not afford a servant. I could hardly afford myself bread. I was much obliged, but said that I could not consent to remain unemployed. This objection was easily removed. The keys were put into my hands; and knowing of old all the fixtures and arrangements of the house, I had no difficulty in fulfilling the duties of housekeeper during my nurse's illness. In this new vocation I was so fortunate as to give entire satisfaction, and as the poor old woman has never recovered her activity, I was invited to consider Raby Hall my home in future, and to take on myself the office she could no longer fill. I was told that I should have the benefit of such aid and advice as she could give, but that her day of service was past; that she had reached that age at which she was entitled to spend her remaining years in repose and comfort; and that my services would deserve a higher remuneration than mere subsistence. This last idea I rejected, and insisted on even giving up my lease, which was at last accepted. The few articles I no longer needed were sold, and I was duly installed as housekeeper at Raby Hall.

"I was now invited to a seat at Major Swann's

table. This I declined. It was pressed upon me until I was obliged to speak of my unfitness (my pride would not let me say unworthiness) for society such as that of Mrs. Swann. The kind old gentleman said something very civil about the place to which my manners and conversation entitled me, but acquiesced. Here I have been ever since, dividing my time between my books and household cares, and quietly eating my humble but comfortable meals with Mammy Amy by her little fire.

“Can you forgive the egotism of this preamble? I know you will; and I will not aggravate my fault by excusing it.”

CHAPTER XII.

“Look on this withered rose. Canst thou renew
 Its bloomy freshness?—the torn leaf repair?—
 Restore it to the stalk where once it grew,
 To shed again its fragrance on the air,
 And with its balmy breath repay thy fostering care?”

“THINGS remained in this state, when one day coming in from the dairy, I saw a man enter the house. I supposed his visit to be to the major, and quietly entered by the private door and went to

my room. As I approached the door, I heard the voice of the old woman, saying,

“‘Sit down if you please, master. Did you say you wanted to see me, sir?’

“‘Yes,’ was the answer, in a voice that did not sound entirely new to me. ‘I have a message for you.’

“‘A message, sir! And who’s it from, master?’

“‘It is from a lady.’

“‘A lady! I’m sure I don’t know what lady it can be, unless it’s Miss Ann, poor thing! and I reckon she don’t hardly remember the old woman.’

“‘It is a lady,’ said the voice, now sounding husky and choking, ‘who put something in your hands to keep a long time ago, and she has sent me for it.’

“I now perceived that the speaker was Montague, and nothing but my abhorrence of him prevented my rushing into the room to ask him about my brother. I restrained myself, and the old woman made no answer.

“‘You don’t understand me, I believe,’ said Montague.

“‘Maybe I don’t,’ said she, with some sharpness of tone.

“‘You know,’ said he, ‘that the thing I speak of was a bundle of papers, and that you were to keep it until she came or sent for them.’

“No answer.

“‘I suppose you are waiting to see the token that she sent.’

“‘I don’t know what you call a token,’ said the old woman.

“‘Well,’ said Montague, ‘you know you and she broke a ring in two, and you have one half and she the other. Whoever she sent for the bundle was to bring it.’

“‘You talk like you got something to show me, master,’ said the wary old woman. ‘Will you let me see what it is, sir?’

“‘I have lost it,’ was the reply.

“‘Well, I reckon it don’t make no odds,’ said she, carelessly.

“Startled at this answer, which, however, I totally misunderstood, I entered the room. Montague was sitting opposite the door. He obviously did not recollect me at first, and rose with a slight salutation, such as he doubtless deemed appropriate to my humble apparel. Before he resumed his seat, however, his eye met mine, and he sunk into it overwhelmed with trepidation and dismay. My own agitation was scarcely less than his. I first found my voice, and inquired for James. He hesitated, faltered, and stammered out that he had parted with him on the way, and expected him in a few days.

“‘Where did they separate?’

“‘In Missouri.’

“I inquired for you, and was told that you and James would come together.

“The manner in which this was said, indeed, his whole deportment, would have filled me with distrust, even if I had never known him. But when I reflected on his habitual baseness, and remembered his uneasy tone while speaking with the old woman, and then the utter discomfiture with which my appearance overwhelmed him, I had no doubt that he had been guilty of some new villany. My alarm was excessive, and I could scarcely command it so far as to continue the conversation. He now turned to the old woman, who told him with great composure, that if his message was from me, I was present to speak for myself. Having taken up this position, she remained perfectly impracticable to all his attempts to draw her into a discussion. With me he saw that his case was hopeless for the present. Still he could not at once desist from endeavouring to get me to talk of the packet, but I had taken my cue from the old woman, and resolutely imitated her obstinate silence. At length he went away, and left me in a state of anxiety and alarm for my poor boy which I have no words to express.

“The next day he again made his appearance, and, suppressing his impatience to get hold of the packet, made a display of great interest in my welfare, was full of concern for the humble and dependant situation in which he saw me, and hoped that James’s return would place me in a more desirable and suitable condition. To all this I only answered that in *my* condition James’s

return could make no difference. This baffled him again by showing that I was not to be approached on the side of pecuniary interest.

“He now lamented in pathetic terms his misfortune in not being permitted to contribute, in any way, to the happiness of one whose happiness was so dear to him; and he dropped many distant hints which made me see that there was no depth of *hypocrisy*, at least, perhaps no sacrifice, to which he would not descend to carry his point. I was therefore but the more resolved to maintain mine, and at all events to hold the packet as a hostage for the safe appearance of James. Accordingly, when, after speaking me fair during a long glozing conversation, he concluded with expressing a hope that I would give up the packet, seeing that he had complied to the letter with all your requirements, I coldly said that I should await the return of James.

“‘But,’ said he, ‘you may assure yourself that your brother will certainly be here in a few days.’

“‘There can be the less inconvenience, then,’ said I, ‘in waiting for him.’

“This disconcerted him excessively: he muttered something about the urgency of his affairs, to which I answered,

“‘I know nothing about your affairs, sir, and am resolved to know nothing about your business with me until I see my brother.’

“He now became silent, mused a while, and again began to talk in a strain of great respect,

with distant and guarded expressions of kindness. I saw his drift, and let him go away without obtaining any further satisfaction, or giving him more insight into my thoughts than I had already done.

“The next day he appeared again with a handsome equipage, and dressed with studied care. The topics of the preceding day were resumed. He spoke of his departure from Virginia, of losses and difficulties, which had embarrassed his affairs, and rendered that measure necessary; of the pain it had cost him to think of the situation in which I had been left, and of his inability to afford me relief; of his subsequent successful enterprises, and of the prosperous condition of his affairs at this time; of his respect for my mother, his sorrow for her death; and his deep regret that he had not been so fortunate as to effect the arrangements designed to provide for her comfort before she was beyond the reach of human aid. My poor mother! You will hardly wonder that this allusion to her wretched life and recent death brought tears into my eyes. The hypocrite saw and misunderstood them. He had found me, as he supposed, in melting mood, and closed his long discourse of protestation and profession with an offer of marriage.

“Humiliation has subdued my spirit, George; and the duty of bearing myself meekly under the scorn and scoffs of the world, (of which, though unjust, I have no right to complain, for the world’s injustice is but a rod in the hands of Him whose chas-

tenings I have so well deserved,) has taught me self-command. But though you will see that such is the natural effect of past events upon my character, you will hardly believe that I bore this insult calmly. But I did. I quietly turned to the little negro girl, and said,

“ ‘Go to Major Swann, and ask him if he pleases to come here.’

“ She went out, and he remained completely disconcerted. I have neglected to mention that the old woman was out. As to the girl, she was a mere child, to whom all she had heard was without meaning. I now turned to Montague, and said, with perfect composure,

“ ‘After what has passed between us formerly, sir, you cannot wonder that I should deem it necessary to ask you to repeat, in the presence of a witness, what you have just said.’

“ This added to his perplexity. The struggle of contending passions was dreadful. I saw that he deemed himself taken in a trap; that his first thought was to break away by retracting what he had said, and escaping before the major's appearance, and that he finally determined to yield to necessity, and go through with what he had begun. I did not interrupt his cogitations, but amused myself in silence with tracing in his countenance those workings of his mind. At length the major appeared. He looked surprised at the sight of a well-dressed man in the housekeeper's room, and stood a moment as if waiting for an introduction.

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But waiving this ceremony, I respectfully begged him to be seated, saying that I had sent for him to be a witness of what should pass between that gentleman and myself. Then turning to Montague, I said, 'I will trouble you now, Mr. Montague, to repeat precisely and distinctly the proposition which you just now made me.'

"He looked every way, and turned all colours, and at length made out to say, that he had just made me, and now repeated an offer of his hand in marriage.

"It was sinful, George, the triumph of my feelings at that moment. What had I to do with insolent exultation, even over the wretch to whom I owed all the miseries of my wretched life? But I did not then ask myself that question. All my overmastered feelings broke loose from my control. I felt my frame dilate, and my features swell with abhorrence and disdain, as I fixed my eye upon him, and said,

"'And I spit my scorn at you, vile betrayer of trusting innocence!'

"I never in my life expected to behold such a tumult of rage, perplexity, and dismay as Montague's countenance now exhibited. I cannot describe anything that he did, or repeat anything that he said. It was all spasm, tumult, and interjection, horrible to behold or hear.

"At length he went away, leaving the kind old gentleman lost in amazement. He now spoke to me, and with a good deal of hesitancy and embar-

rassment intimated to me that the words I had used to Montague required explanation.

“‘I am sensible of it, my dear sir,’ said I; ‘and if the disclosure of what those words imported has been delayed to this day, it has not been the effect of duplicity, or a wish to deceive, but of a feeling of delicacy. I beg you to remember that I cautiously declined all those proposals which might have given me more of the countenance and society of your kind lady than I had a right to expect. Even in my present humble condition I fear I may be deemed a furtive intruder, and have long wished to make known the whole truth. To you I cannot speak it. Will you give me an opportunity of conversing with Mrs. Swann, that she may have it in her power to judge whether I am a proper inmate of this family?’

“‘I will send her to you,’ said he.

“‘I thank you sir, and beg that you will prepare her for what I have to say by telling her what has just passed.’

“He did so. The good old lady came; and I disclosed to her what, until then, was known to none on earth but Montague and you. I did not expect any harshness from her; but I was unprepared for her kindness. She wept over me, she comforted me, she even praised me. Oh, what a relief! To find myself in the presence of a high-minded and delicate matron, who, knowing the worst of me that I knew of myself, yet did not spurn me, nor look on me with loathing, but re-

garding me as one 'more sinned against than sinning,' gave me her sympathy, and with all a mother's tenderness poured the balm of consolation into my heart. Since the day that you so far overcame the repugnance of outraged love, as to let me feel that, though fallen, I was neither hateful nor despicable to you, I have experienced no such comfort as in that interview. The gratitude I have owed you ever since has now a second object. But not the less are my acknowledgments, my thanks, my prayers, due to the generous effort you then made, to spare the heart of her who had placed a dagger in your own."

CHAPTER XIII.

A fox, full fraught with seeming sanctity,
That feared an oath, but like the devil would lie;
Who looked like Lent, and had the holy leer,
And durst not sin before he said his prayer.

DRYDEN.

"I now found the full benefit of the advantage Montague had given me over him. It entitled me to entire credence in the history I gave, and I received it. The kind old lady left me in tears, and presently her husband returned with features work-

ing with emotion, to say what he could not say. He could but take my hand, press it in silence, and leave me.

“I tell you these things because you will know how I was affected by them, and your kind heart will rejoice that comfort has found its way to mine. But to my tale.

“The next day Montague reappeared. As soon as he was announced I sent for Major Swann, and when that gentleman came admitted him. I had not yet sufficiently rebuked the insolence of triumph to repress something of a sneer, as I told him that after what had passed the day before, he would see the impropriety of my meeting him again except in the presence of a witness.

“‘I have no objection, madam,’ said he; ‘I don’t care how many witnesses are present. I am come to demand my property, and I am glad Mr. Swann is here, because if you don’t give it up I shall appeal to him.’

“‘I am not conscious that I have anything of yours, sir. The only article that I ever received at your hands you gave me to do with as I pleased. Is it your purpose to reclaim that?’

“‘It is my purpose,’ said he, ‘to reclaim the packet you have kept from me so long.’

“‘Be pleased,’ said I, ‘to say how long, and how I came by it.’

“‘It makes no difference,’ he replied. ‘It is a packet of valuable papers belonging to the estate of Mr. Raby, and if Mr. Swann has a proper care

of the interest of his employer, he will not suffer them to be secreted in this very house.'

" 'When I need to be instructed, sir,' said the spirited old gentleman, 'in my duty to my employer, I shall be glad to learn of you. In the mean time, Miss Mary, I have no doubt you will inform me what all this means.'

" 'I will tell you,' said I, 'all I know.'

" Accordingly, I gave him an account of so much of the affair as it was necessary he should know. He heard me through, and then said that it seemed that the papers must be of small value, as it appeared that Montague had been totally indifferent to their destruction. To this he remarked that he had not then known their value.

" 'If you did not then know what they were,' asked the major, 'how have you found out since?'

" 'I did know *what they were*,' said he, 'but it is only of late that I have been made acquainted with their importance.'

" 'And where do you suppose them now to be?'

" 'In this house. In her possession, or in that of old Amy.'

" 'What reason have you for thinking so?'

" 'Her own letter.'

" 'Where is that?'

" 'I have been robbed of it,' said Montague, after hesitating a while.

" 'This is a strange affair,' said the major.

" 'Strange or not strange,' said Montague, 'I tell you it is so, and that the secreting of those

papers is of the utmost importance to the interest of Mr. Raby. Now, sir, if you do not choose,' added he, petulantly, 'to use your authority for his benefit, so far as to search his own house for his stolen property, I shall be under the necessity—'

"He paused as he caught the eye of the major, who said coldly,

"'To do what, sir?'

"'To get a search warrant, sir,' said Montague, after taking a second thought.

"'You shall have one, sir, on making the proper affidavit. I am a justice of the peace. I will send for the constable to-night; and though I have no right, as master here for the time being, to outrage Miss Scott's feelings by searching her apartment, on your bare suggestion, yet, as an officer of the law, I am no respecter of persons. Call in the morning, sir,' added he, with an air of lofty politeness, 'and you will find it so.' Montague took the hint and disappeared.

"The next morning I felt somewhat indisposed. I had been the day before invited to consult my ease more than I had done; and as Mammy Amy was now well enough to attend to some trifling duties, I kept my bed until ten o'clock. Before I left it I was told a gentleman wished to see me.

"'Was it Montague?'

"'No.'

"I described you. No. It was a *young* man of *dark* complexion; a stranger. I excused myself to him, and he went away, leaving a packet

hastily folded up, and directed, in pencil, 'To Miss Scott, with the compliments of James Brown.' I opened it, and found a letter to him, the seal of which was broken. Of course it was meant that I should read it. It proved to be from a gentleman of the name of Napier, and contained the history of the machinations of Montague against you and James. I was somewhat relieved, because it explained the poor boy's absence; and though it showed that the arts of Montague had placed you both in an unpleasant predicament, I saw that no danger was apprehended. But I need not tell you what you know. I now for the first time understood the nature of this mysterious packet, and the drift of Montague's strange conduct regarding it. Knowing him as I do, it was all made plain to me. He is at once the wickedest and the most superstitious wretch on earth, and I doubt whether avarice itself, or even mortal fear (his two master passions) could make him swear to a literal falsehood. I remember, too, that at the critical moment when his work of fraud was to be accomplished, he was overtaken by one of those visitations which such as he are apt to mistake for the workings of the spirit of God. I remember the awful writhings of his remorse; and that his mind ran much on the subject of perjury; though he always spoke of it with abhorrence, and seemed to seek consolation in the thought that of *that* crime he was free. I now see that at that very time the wretch was contriving a scheme to cheat not only man but

God. I suppose he was unwilling to trust any one capable of becoming a knowing accomplice in his villany, and I see the motive of the pains he took to establish such an intercourse with me, as would give countenance to his request that I would take charge of the packet. His strange behaviour on the occasion, and the art he used after having got it lodged in my custody, to beguile me of what I should deem equivalent to an oath, left no doubt of this.

“My first thought was to hand the letter and packet to Major Swann, but it presently occurred to me that, by doing so, I might place him in a delicate situation between his duty to his employer and his duty as a man. I resolved, therefore, to let things take their course, but at the same time to use effectual measures to keep the packet from falling into Montague’s hands.

“Before I gave it to Mammy Amy, I had put it into a small toy trunk, which I locked, keeping the key myself. Near the hearth was a place where a hole had been burned in the floor, and here a short plank had been laid down. This was loose. I took it up, put down the trunk, and, with the broom handle, pushed it away to the wall. I had taken the precaution to tie a bit of tape to the handle, the end of which I left in reach, but too far under to be seen without stooping low and putting the face to the hole. I did this while my nurse was out, so that I alone knew where it was.

Having thus completed my arrangements, I awaited patiently the approach of the enemy.

"About noon Montague arrived. The constable was already there. Montague was a long time closeted with the major, I supposed engaged in coining a suitable affidavit. At length they all came together to my room. The kind old gentleman apologized with the utmost courtesy and deference to my feelings for what he was about to do, and handed me Montague's affidavit. This testified that six years ago he had left at my mother's a packet which he described by external marks and seals; that he had reason to believe and did believe that I had got possession of it, and that it was secreted somewhere in the house. The search was now commenced, and every corner of the room was ransacked. Montague took little part in it, but kept his eyes on me, and pointed out suspected places. I became at last impatient of his insolent gaze, I felt my spirit rise, and was conscious of that flash of the eye before which his always quails, even when he sees it in the face of a woman. I now kept *my* eye on *him*, and his avoided it, though he occasionally stole a furtive glance. At length, walking across the floor, he felt the loose plank move under his feet. He stooped and raised it. I felt my courage give way, and as he lifted himself up after his short and fruitless search, our eyes met, and I was conscious that mine had blanched. I felt that thick throbbing of the heart which always displays itself in the coun-

tenance, and again stole a look at him to see if he had observed me. He had replaced the plank, and looked on the protracted search with less apparent interest than before. I saw, indeed, that he was weary of its continuance, and he soon expressed himself satisfied. They now left the room; Montague last of all. There is no fastening to the door, but a large bar inconveniently heavy, and a slight latch. This caught as he closed the door after him, and I was once more alone. I listened a moment, and heard the trampling of many feet, and the sound of many voices die away along the passage. My uneasiness now took its natural course. I ran to the hole and lifted the plank. At the moment the door opened, and Montague reappeared. The sagacity of the cunning wretch had taught him to expect what I would do under the influence of my alarmed and excited feelings. He had stopped at the door while the rest went on, and came in suddenly as soon as he had allowed time for nature to do her work. He now sprang forward, while I, powerless with alarm, sank into a chair. He stooped down, and looked eagerly along the dark hole, and finally, groping, got hold of the end of the string. He drew it out, and I heard the little trunk come grating along over the laths below. I screamed and sprang to him. He pushed me back, drew out the trunk, crushed it with his heel, and seizing the packet flung it into the fire.

“It was a mild October day, and there was just

so much fire as an old woman needs to comfort her rheumatic limbs. I rushed to it to rescue the packet. He seized and held me back, and I struggled, still screaming. The major, who had missed Montague, and was returning to look for him, alarmed at my cries, hurried back. As soon as I saw him I exclaimed,

“‘In the fire! In the fire!’

“He understood me and approached the hearth. Montague flung me across the room to my bed, on which I fell half insensible. But I saw Montague rudely seize the major around the waist, and jerk him back, when, at the moment, Charles, my foster-brother, entered. He darted at Montague, and with one blow of his fist felled him to the floor. The major, disengaged, rescued the packet from the fire, where its surface only was scorched, and turned to confront Montague, who slowly recovered his feet.

“‘What means this, Mr. Montague?’ said he. ‘Is this the way you treat valuable papers belonging to your employer and mine?’

“The stunning blow that Montague had received gave him an excuse for not answering immediately, and he stood the picture of rage, alarm, and perplexity. At length he replied that he knew his duty to Mr. Raby, and that gentleman’s wishes, and had therefore sought to destroy the packet. He added that he was not accountable to any one but his principal, and demanded to have the papers delivered up.

“‘You forget that he is my principal, too, sir,’ rejoined the major. ‘I am not sure that I am at liberty to permit the destruction of anything I find under this roof.’

“Montague puzzled a while, and then said, that having obtained the packet under a search warrant, he had a right to demand it.

“‘Pardon me, sir,’ said the major; ‘having been found under a search warrant, it is in the custody of the law until the title is proved.’

“‘Is it not proof enough,’ said Montague, ‘that I have described it in my affidavit? Look at it, sir, and you will see that I have given an accurate account of the impressions of the seals, from a memorandum made when it was sealed up.’

“‘It may have been so, sir,’ said the major; ‘but I should rather suspect the impressions to have been different from those described, judging by your impatience to obliterate them. There is nothing here, sir, but melted wax, with no impressions at all.’

“You, who know Montague, need not be told how he looked at the discovery of this effect of his own impatience. I do think the keenest self-reproach he ever feels is when his villany is baffled by his own blunders. After a short pause the major added,

“‘There is a simple test of property here, Mr. Montague. Describe the papers in this packet—you say you know what they are—I will then

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open it, and if they answer the description, you shall have them.'

"To this Montague replied, that he was not at liberty to disclose his patron's secrets.

" 'Perhaps not,' said the major; 'I have no wish to pry into them. But the papers are, I presume, endorsed, and I only ask such a description as is commonly found in an endorsement.'

"This proposition also being declined by Montague, the major said,

" 'Well, sir, the only remaining doubt in this case is, whether there is enough proved to entitle me to detain this parcel from Miss Scott another moment. There is certainly not enough to justify me in putting it out of the custody of the law into any hand but hers. But as I may be better able than she to secure it against ruffian violence, I will with her approbation get rid of this difficulty, by keeping it for her, or you, or Mr. Raby, or any person who may show title to demand it.'

"To this proposition I joyfully assented. At this moment Charles caught the major's eye.

" 'Charles, my good boy,' said he, 'you have done me good service, and I thank you. And you, sir,' turning to Montague, 'having received the chastisement of your insolence from a hand more fit to touch your person than mine, may be thankful that I dismiss you without any further punishment. Go, sir. If you have occasion to call on me in the way of business, I will attend you at

some other place. Here you come no more while I retain authority here.'

"This put an end to the scene and to Montague's visit. I have neither seen nor heard of him since. I suppose it often happens that there are men who seize upon such occasions as that of a constable's search, to thrust themselves where they have no business. This was the case in this instance. My room was invaded by a promiscuous rabble of men and boys, some of whom, judging by their dress, should have had more respect for decorum. But there they were during the search; and having heard the uproar which afterward took place, they had all returned. Among the number, I now remarked a very genteel-looking young man, who, approaching me with great courtesy, asked if I had that morning received a packet. On my answering in the affirmative, he informed me that he was the bearer. The recollection of his manner, which was marked by the most delicate respect, reminds me to thank you, George, for the kind terms, in which, as I gathered from Mr. Napier's letter, you had spoken of me to him. Oh! is it possible that I am yet to be permitted to show myself among the good and wise, to enjoy their society, to witness their virtues, and even be blessed with their friendship, after having so long been a 'hissing and a byword,' even for the low and vile? Can I be ever grateful enough to you, George? Yet how little do I show my gratitude, when I have forgotten, in the hurry

of my own story, to express the pleasure with which I also learned that you are blessed with a wife every way worthy to bear your name and to share your fortune. Dear George, may you both be happy.

“But to return to Mr. Brown. He said as soon as he heard what was passing, he had hastened to afford me any aid in his power, but arrived only in time to witness the closing scene. I now returned him his letter, and he was about to go away when Major Swann said,

“‘I perceive, sir, you are an acquaintance of Miss Scott’s. I shall always be happy to see her friends here, and hope you will not think of leaving us before dinner.’

“The invitation was pressed and accepted, and they left the room. Was it possible that I had heard aright? Was *my* friendship a passport to the notice of a gentleman, who, though fallen in his fortunes, possessed as much delicacy, refinement, and honour as any man on earth? Judge my surprise, when, as I asked myself this, he turned back, and coming up to me, took my hand, and said, in the gentlest tone of entreaty,

“‘*Won’t* you dine with us to-day? Pray do. It will *so much* oblige us.’

“What could I do, George, but burst into tears, and weep like a child? He seated me, and stood by me until I found words to say, ‘I will—I will.’ It was all I could say.

“I went to dinner, and behaved as well as I

could after thirteen years of banishment from society. This movement was followed up. I was beguiled by kindness from my resolution, and since, except that I am *privileged* to breakfast in my room, I take my meals at the table of this highly finished specimen of that most honourable race of men, the ancient gentry of Virginia. I find, too, that my keys are wiled away from me, and by degrees I have been made to feel that no service of any kind is expected of me. On my expressing my unwillingness to be thus a tax on Mr. Raby, whom I did not know, I was told that Major Swann had stipulated for the right to introduce into his family a companion for his wife, and that they would be delighted to entertain me in that character. My objections thus overcome, I was transferred to a neat and well-furnished apartment, my mammy's bed placed in a little room adjoining, and a new housekeeper being fixed on, the good old woman was discharged from all duty but that of attending on me. Hence my leisure to inflict on you this tedious narrative.

“The day after the search, the major, returning from the post office, brought me your letter. It may have been there a week. I had no one to send, and it was a new thing to have a friend to think of me when asking for his own letters. The kind old gentleman had observed the postmark, and, having understood that James was in Missouri, supposing it to be from him, inquired of his health, &c. I answered that he was well, but that

the letter was from you. He immediately recollected the name, and spoke of you with the kindness of an old and partial friend. I was delighted to hear this, and told him you had given me reason to expect that you would be at Craiganet in a few weeks. He expressed a great desire to see you, and requested that I would write to you there and beg you to visit him as soon as practicable. He added, that he would at once have a room prepared for you and your friend Mr. Napier, and one for James; and charged me to say that as the days are short, and the distance almost too long for a day's ride, and no convenient stopping-place by the way, you must not mind coming at any hour of the night as if to your own home. You cannot have forgotten the ways about this neighbourhood; the approach and grounds around the house are all unchanged, and the handle of the door bell is just where it was when Raby Hall was your home. Then, too, it was mine!

'Ah, happy hills! ah, pleasing shade!
 Ah, fields beloved in vain!
 Where once my careless childhood strayed,
 A stranger yet to pain.'

Oh, that I could add,

'I feel the gales that from ye blow,
 A momentary bliss bestow;
 As waving fresh their gladsome wing,
 My weary soul they seem to sooth,
 And redolent of joy and youth,
 To breathe a second spring.'

But this can never be. All on which memory could delight to dwell is shut out by that which 'eternity forbids me to forget.' But why do I speak thus repiningly? By comparison, my present condition is one of bliss. And does not hope now dawn on me, even on this side of the grave? The hope of such pleasures as my heart has ever yearned after; the pleasure springing from the approbation of the good, the conversation of the wise, the society of the refined and polite? Oh! how my heart, at the thought of seeing you again, leaps up, and then falls humbled in the dust, at the recollections with which your name is associated. But I will not offend you by prating about my feelings. One only you must give me leave to express in such language as I can command: the devoted, heartfelt gratitude of—will you permit me to say?—your *friend*,

“ M. S.”

CHAPTER XIV.

Joy shall be in heaven, over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.

ST. LUKE.

WHILE I read this long letter, Balcombe amused himself with a book. When I had got through I did not immediately interrupt him, for I was glad to steal a moment for my own thoughts. At length I remarked, that it appeared to me as if the present posture of our affairs rendered hurry unnecessary, and that we might safely indulge ourselves with a day or two of rest.

"Take care, William," said Balcombe. "Remember we have to do with one who never sleeps. I know it is not sloth that would keep you here; but I am much mistaken if your absence has not already served you better than your presence could have done. You will lose nothing by a display of energy and hope of success. Make that sure, and I deceive myself if you don't find influences exerted in your favour which have been heretofore exerted against you."

"You don't mean," said I, "to impute mercenary feelings to Ann?"

"By no means. I am not exactly sure of my own meaning, nor will I permit myself to be so, unless I become convinced that my thoughts do no wrong to others. But we must betake ourselves to rest, for the way is long to Raby Hall, and we must sleep there to-morrow night."

He now left me and went to his room. At an early hour the next morning we were in the saddle. The day was pleasant for the season, but the roads were deep, and we got on but slowly. Night overtook us when we were yet ten miles from the place of our destination. But Balcombe knew the road, and we had a new moon, which promised to give light until we should be within the compass of his former daily walks. We therefore patiently toiled along over ground roughened by a partial thaw, which made it difficult for our weary horses to pick their way. It was not very far from midnight when we reached the stables, which were perhaps a quarter of a mile from the house. In passing these we met a negro man, of whom Balcombe inquired if Major Swann was at home. Being answered in the affirmative, he asked the negro's name.

"Charles, sir," was the reply.

"What, old Amy's son Charles?"

"Yes, sir."

"And how is your mother, Charles?"

"I thank you, sir. She been mighty low; but Miss Mary take such good care of her, she right well again; only just she mighty old, master."

“And are you hostler here still, Charles?”

“Yes, master. But, master, I don’t know who you, for all you seems to know all about us.”

“Don’t you know my voice, Charles? I think I should know your’s. Don’t you remember George Balcombe?”

The negro clapped his hands, and springing into the air, alighted with Balcombe’s hand in both of his. To one not accustomed to the negro character, their strong attachments and grotesque manner of displaying their feelings, the contortions of his dusky figure, bowing himself on Balcombe’s hand, then swaying his body back, and writhing from side to side like a wounded serpent, would have been amusing.

“Oh, Mass George,” said he, “I so glad to see you. And poor Miss Mary, she be so glad to see you too, sir.”

“And how is she, Charles?”

“Oh, thank God! she right well, sir, and mighty comfortable. Old master and missis here, sir, mighty good to her. But who this you got here with you, master?”

“This is Mr. Napier, Charles; your old master’s grandson.”

“What!” exclaimed the negro, “Mass William! *my* Miss Fanny’s son! Oh, bless God I live to see him.”

Then turning to me he added, in a plaintive tone, “Master, I been afraid you never was coming to see your poor negroes, now we don’t belong to

you no more, but all gone to strange man that lives away there in England, and don't care nothing at all about us. I was mightily in hopes we'd all have gone to you, sir; but you's *my* master for all that."

As he spoke this in a tone of reverential affection, I held out my hand to him. He took it, and drawing it strongly downward to accommodate it to the lowliness of his prostration, bowed himself upon it, and pressed it to his lips. I felt a tear upon it; and if an answering tear had not sprung to my eye, I should have little deserved to be the object of a loyalty as ardent and devoted as it was hopeless.

"If you are as tired of the saddle as I am, William," said Balcombe, "you will not be sorry to leave our horses with Charles, and walk to the house."

I gladly assented to this; and Balcombe, addressing the negro, added,

"Charles, my good fellow, take care of our little baggage, and bring it up to the house."

Saying this, he alighted, and we walked on, both too busy with our own thoughts for conversation. As we approached the house, we saw a dusky red light glimmer fitfully from between the bars of a cellar window. Just as we were about to enter, it flashed up brighter than before, and we saw that it came from the wall beneath a window at the end of the house. Balcombe instantly turned aside and dashed around the corner. Immediately

I heard a rush, and the noise of feet clattering over the frozen ground. I followed, and saw a man leap the enclosure of the yard, and Balcombe, who was almost near enough to touch him, drew a pistol and fired it.

Without stopping to see the effect of his shot, he returned hastily, and running to the door, rang the bell violently. The shot had alarmed the family, and the door was presently opened. He immediately gave the alarm of fire in the cellar, and snatching a can of water which stood, as he well remembered, on a three cornered shelf just within the door, ran to the window and poured it in. The light went down immediately, and servants going into the cellar presently extinguished the fire. We now saw that it was a wood cellar, with a quantity of wood directly under the window. On this, burning coals had been thrown, and some shavings and splinters of dry pine wood had been added. A part of these combustibles still lay in a pile on the outside of the window.

Mr. Swann now appeared in his nightgown, and Balcombe made himself known. He was a fine-looking old gentleman, venerable, dignified, and courteous. We were received with great cordiality, and ushered into a parlour, yet comfortable with the glowing embers of the evening fire. Here the old gentleman, having ordered some refreshments, left us to dress himself. He soon returned, accompanied by his wife, who seemed to be among ladies just what he was among gentlemen. She

added her welcome to his; and we would have gone at once to bed, but supper was pressed on us so earnestly, and so strongly recommended by our own appetites, that we could not decline it.

In the mean time, James, having inquired for his sister, had been conducted to her room. She had been reading, and was not yet gone to bed. Their meeting no one witnessed; but she soon left him alone to his grief and came to see Balcombe. We were all standing when she entered. She looked hastily around, and then approached him with an eagerness of manner which, for the moment, restored something of the brilliancy of countenance I had remarked in the picture. He advanced to meet her, when she suddenly stopped short, and with a look of utter abasement fell on her knees, and bowed her head to his very feet. Her action was characterized by her own words. Her heart had leaped up, and then fell prostrate in the dust. Balcombe raised her with some difficulty, and rather lifted than led her to a sofa, against the arm of which she hid her face and wept in silence. Balcombe bent over her tenderly, and holding her hand, said soothingly, "Dear Mary! My dear, good girl!" and continued thus to utter tones and words which spoke comfort to her heart, until she became more composed. She then looked up, and gazing on him with an expression of timid affection, pressed his hand to her lips, and having disengaged her own, cast down her eyes and remained silent.

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If ever Divine mercy forgave a single error to deep repentance and contrition ; if ever the voice of God spoke audibly to the sinner's heart, saying, "Neither do I condemn thee ;" surely at that moment such consolation was not withheld from hers.

In the mean time, the field through which the incendiary had escaped was searched, to ascertain the effect of Balcombe's shot. Nothing was found, and we concluded that he had got off unhurt.

"I don't think I struck him," said Balcombe. "If I did, it was somewhere about the right shoulder. Firing over the wall, I could not well bring my pistol to bear."

"It was well for the fellow," said John, "that something hindered you, for it an't often that you miss."

Much conversation now ensued between Major and Mrs. Swann about the attempt to burn the house, and they seemed quite at a loss to guess who the incendiary could be. At length we retired for the night. As the ladies were about to leave the room, Balcombe took Mary's hand, and drawing her gently to him, passed his arm around her waist and was about to kiss her. At first she turned up her lips to him ; and then suddenly averting her face and interposing her hand, said,

"No, George, no ! let *that* remain. I would die with *that* on my lips."

He only answered by pressing her tenderly to

his bosom and kissing her forehead. I think I never saw any man so affected as Major Swann was, when, after she had left the room, Balcombe told him the meaning of her words.

As soon as the servant had left us in our chamber, Balcombe said to me,

“That was Montague.”

“What do you mean?” said I.

“I mean,” he replied, “that it was Montague who attempted to burn the house down. The stature and figure were his, and an exclamation uttered as I laid my hand upon the fugitive was in his voice.”

“Did you seize him?” said I.

“No; I did but touch him, and at the moment stumbled and fell. He was near the wall and over it before I could well recover. But I think I have disabled him for mischief for a few days.”

“How so?”

“Firing hastily,” said he, “the trigger may give way too soon. But I seldom fail to know where my ball goes. I am deceived if he has it not in his right arm or shoulder.”

“But what could be his motive?”

“Motive! Don’t you see that had we not arrived the fire must have advanced so far before it was discovered as to make it impossible to save anything; and his worthy employer would doubtless be willing to forgive the destruction of the house for the destruction of the will. As to Montague’s conscience, arson is not mentioned in the

decalogue; and if this good old man and his wife, and Mary and old Amy had been burned alive, why, that would have been chargeable to Providence, not to him. He would calm himself by saying it was no part of his plan, and would not have happened had not God so willed it. However, I think the rascal has had a taste of my pistol; and if he is not disabled for the time, he will hardly come about the premises while he knows that I am here."

The next day we took some pains to learn what had become of Montague, but could hear nothing of him since the day that the room of Mary Scott was searched.

CHAPTER XV.

"Shall I not love her,
When disease has pressed my wasted form, and bowed
My fainting head, who has supported it?
Who has kindly bound my aching brow,
And wooed my loathing taste with dainty food?
And when fierce fever dried the springs of life,
And my parched breast gave to my wailing babe
No nourishment, who fed him from her own?"

This day happened to be Sunday. About noon I observed that the yard was full of negroes, each "clad in his Sunday's best." The old gentleman

observed it, and expressing some surprise at it, went out to inquire the cause. Returning, he said,

“I find that they are assembled to see you, Mr. Napier, and you will gratify the poor creatures by going out among them.”

I did so, and every eye was fixed upon me. Some saw a likeness to my grandfather, some to my mother. One by one they approached me; and as I extended my hand to each, each bowed himself with reverence and affection before me; the expression only varying in each, as it seemed, with the character of the individual. The few words they uttered corresponded with those sentiments. They obviously restrained themselves in the presence of Mr. Edward Raby's steward, though the old gentleman was much moved at the quiet expression of their feelings of hereditary loyalty. When we returned into the house, he remarked on the universality of that sentiment among them, saying he had no doubt they would be worth twenty per cent. more to me than to any other person.

“Nothing is more certain,” said Balcombe, “and nothing more natural than the prevalence of this feeling. Here is a race of men incapable of tracing themselves beyond ancestors who, a hundred years ago, came out of a slave ship into the family of Mr. Raby. They know nothing of themselves but in connection with that family, and that connection has become, by tradition and use, to be

regarded as one of the conditions of their very existence. Meantime, under the influence of the kindly affections growing out of this connection, there has been a gradual though steady improvement in their situation. Every old negro can tell the young how much has been added to the comforts of their common lot, and even those of a middle age can remember a change in their own. Here is cause of gratitude; and to man uncorrupted by *unpurchased* prosperity, gratitude is a natural sentiment. Benefits conferred sparingly, and in requital of merit and exertion, never fail to excite it. This is God's plan for securing the hearts of his creatures. They who win their bread, though scanty, with the sweat of their brow, eat it and give thanks. They on whom the good things of this world descend in showers of abundance, sicken over their full meal, and murmur at the Being who gave the food without the appetite which toil should purchase.

“Individual attachments, too, spring up. The negro woman loves the child she nursed; he loves his foster-brother and is beloved in turn; and all the little woolly-headed urchins love the young master, whose favours they continually experience. These things produce a feeling not unlike that of Scottish clanship. The tie of blood, indeed, is wanting in this case, but so it often is in that. But long habitude supplies the place. These negroes are accustomed to consider themselves of the Raby

family, and William, the head of the house, is their Vich Ian Vohr.

“A little anecdote,” continued Balcombe, “will well illustrate the inextinguishable affection of the negro for his master. A young friend of mine, whose father lived on James River, was called by business to St. Domingo. Walking along the streets of Port-au-Prince, his hand was suddenly caught between both hands of a well-dressed negro. You know the grotesque attitude with which a negro, when much delighted, accompanies this action—springing into the air, alighting with his feet a yard apart, and squatting nearly to the ground. So it was in this instance, while he exclaimed,

“‘Lord God Almighty! Mass’ Ned! this you?’

“My friend immediately recognised him as one who had run away from his father a few years before, and was sincerely glad to see him. The negro insisted on taking him home—would hear of no refusal—and entertained him sumptuously during his stay at Port-au-Prince. During the whole time the negro had no name for him but ‘Mass’ Ned.’ He was a merry and vain fellow. Just before he ran away his young master had received an ensign’s commission in the militia, and bought a splendid uniform. This had taken Cuffy’s fancy, and one of the first aspirations of his recovered freedom was a like distinction. In this he had been so successful as to have the right to wear two epaulets. Of these he was very proud;

and recollecting the commencement of Mass' Ned's military career, he suddenly asked,

“ ‘Mass' Ned, what rank you now ?’

“ ‘I am a captain,’ said my friend.

“ ‘Oh Lord !’ cried the negro, exultingly, ‘I rank you all to hell !—I major.’

“ It seems strange, too,” said I, “ that a natural impatience of inferiority does not exacerbate the feelings of these poor creatures, and especially against the particular individuals by whom they are kept under.”

“ It would be so,” said Balcombe, “ if that inferiority were in condition only. But, right or wrong, they feel themselves inferior in point of fact, and there is therefore nothing to prevent the formation of that strong tie which is spun out of the interchange of service and protection. This, apart from the instinct of blood, is the *rationale* of the filial and parental bond. So long as the inferiority is actual, and felt to be so, none but affectionate and loyal feelings grow out of it. Whether the negro *race* is inferior to the white is not the question. The inferiority of the individual is the thing, and this inferiority, left to himself, he will never question. What may be the result if the *amis des noirs* succeed in eradicating their sense of this, and substituting in place of it a *theory* of equality which is to abolish all distinctions, natural as well as artificial, actual as well as imaginary, is a question which their philanthropy might do well to consider. That it will make them better or

wiser I must be permitted to doubt. That it will make them miserable is sure. For my part I am well pleased with the established order of the universe. I see gradations in everything. I see subordination everywhere. And when I find the subordinate content with his actual condition, and recognising his place in the scale of being as that to which he properly belongs, I am content to leave him there. If I raise him from his place, some other must fall into it, and I cannot be sure that the other will be equally fitted for its duties, or equally happy in their performance. The difficulty you have, William, in conceiving how a man can sit down contented in established inferiority, shows that the lesson is hard to learn. Yet, to be happy in this condition, which some must submit to, this lesson must have been learned, hard as it is. Now, I don't see the wisdom of making this learning useless to those who have been acquiring it from infancy, and setting others to the same lesson who are too old to go to school. Would it be possible, at this time of day, to imbue your mind with the feeling which last night bowed the head of Charles upon your hand? By no means. Yet, do you doubt the sincerity of that feeling? and do you not see how highly conducive to his happiness it would be if you were his master? Will you shut your eyes to this because you cannot conceive of that state of mind. Do you wonder that you cannot conceive what sort of an animal you would have been, if you had been born a slave?²³

"But," said I, "is it not worth while to risk something for the sake of elevating this race in a moral point of view?"

"Yes," said he. "The only question is, what is moral elevation. Do you find it in the burning crown of Lucifer, or in the humility of the angels who cast *their* crowns at the feet of God? Is there nothing analogous to this last in the prostration of that poor negro's spirit last night before you, from whom he can neither expect harm nor good, and whom he did but identify with the authors of bygone benefits magnified by his gratitude to a debt which his spirit yearns to discharge to you. Is gratitude abject? Is self-abandoning, zealous devotion abject? If the duties of heaven require these sentiments, and its happiness consist in their exercise, which of us is it that is but a little lower than the angels—the negro or the white man? No, William. Let women and negroes alone, and instead of quacking with them, physic your own diseases. Leave them in their humility, their grateful affection, their self-renouncing loyalty, their subordination of the heart, and let it be your study to become worthy to be the object of these sentiments."

"My own observation," said Major Swann, "corresponds with your ideas. When you knew me, George, I was or seemed to be wealthy and had many slaves. All have been taken from me, Yet while I remained in the same neighbourhood, they never missed an opportunity to serve me in

any way in their power. There was hardly one among them who did not force favours of some sort on me, when I could make no return; and, if I would have suffered it, they would have devoted to me at least half their waking hours not spent in labouring for their master. The world, I believe, gave me credit for hospitality and benevolence. I am not going to quarrel with these things, or to begin, as too many do, by repenting of my few *good* qualities; but how much better would I have shown my benevolence, by husbanding the means of keeping these poor creatures together, under the light and easy yoke of a master whom they loved to serve. There, as you suggest, is the point in which we fail. Instead of initiating them in the code of a false and spurious philosophy, did we look into our own hearts and watch narrowly our own actions, we should effectually preserve that superiority over them, on a deep and abiding sense of which their happiness depends; and, by a prudent management of our affairs, we might give permanency and efficiency to that protection, for which their labour is, as they feel it to be, a fair equivalent."

Here, again, I would not have the reader to believe that I was convinced because I did not take up the argument with so sturdy a disputant as Balcombe, or contest the inferences drawn by a venerable old man from his own experience. I have set down here the thoughts of these gentlemen, because they were new to me, and I have never yet

seen them in print. I do not add my own, partly because I am not writing essays, and partly because all I could say on my side of the question, has been better said by others, and is before the world.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Such is the game of life. The fox’s craft,
And the fierce instinct of the patient hound,
Are both from Him whose works inscrutable
Show not to which he leans.”

BALCOMBE’S tongue was now loosened, and he talked with all his wonted spirit and animation, but restraining himself so far as to make the major a fair partaker in the conversation. James and Mary sat by in silence, the latter swallowing his words with a greediness surpassing even that of Mrs. Balcombe herself. Her excited feelings and greater readiness of apprehension, made, as I supposed, this difference. It was only in her countenance that I saw any token of the powers of mind of which Balcombe had spoken, and which her letters displayed. She seemed restrained rather by humility than by diffidence or modesty. She scarcely ever spoke that a blush did not suffuse her

whole face immediately after. It seemed as if a feeling within rebuked her presumption, and what she feared might be an abuse of the forbearance of her friends. The day passed rationally and pleasantly, and was to us weary travellers a day of welcome rest.

There was no longer anything to agitate or excite in the difficulties with which we had to contend. We therefore passed that subject by for the day, and though my thoughts would wander to Ann at times, and again would pry into the possible contents of that mysterious packet, I trust the day was passed essentially as the Sabbath should be. I found myself again restored to a trusting confidence in Providence, and a thorough convert to Balcombe's doctrine that the difficulties which we encounter in life are so much unrecompensed evil, if we do not lay them to heart and study out the hidden wisdom with which they are fraught. I was sure I was a wiser, and I trust a better man for the use he had taught me to make of my trials.

The next day was spent in consulting about our ulterior measures, and the result of our consultation was that I should go to Fredericksburg and take the advice of a lawyer on the subject of the supposed will. I would gladly have had Balcombe's company, which now began to seem a necessary of life to me, but he suggested that Montague's late attempt made it necessary to keep an eye upon him. If in the neighbourhood, he would know that Balcombe and Keizer were there,

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and his habitual dread of them would keep him in check more effectually than anything else.

"This last attempt," said Balcombe, "shows that he is becoming desperate. Nothing but phrensy would make him risk the halter."

I therefore determined to go alone. Indeed it was time I should act the man once more, and attend to my own affairs; but Balcombe's quickness, perspicacity, and resources, had given me such a habit of depending on him, that I found myself hardly able to walk without leadingstrings. This rendered the effort the more necessary, and I resolved to make it.

"Before you go," said Balcombe, "it may be as well to try if we cannot come at our object by a shorter road. Montague cannot be far off, and if by any chance I can once lay my eye upon him, I should know how to manage the matter at once."

"What would you do?" said I.

"Cast a spell upon him," replied Balcombe, "and bring him here; give him the packet, and make him open it with his own hands, and put the will into mine."

"This is a strange power you exercise over him."

"It is partly habit," said Balcombe, "and partly the power of circumstances. He can hardly have heard of my arrival. He had no means of recognising me on Saturday night. He probably thinks me hanged by this time in Missouri, and would

take me for my own ghost. Recollecting his attempts against me, his fears would hardly be relieved (superstitious as he is) by finding me a being of flesh and blood; and a braver man than he would cower under my eye at such a moment. Besides, I have but to hint at the fire, and he would have no doubt that I was prepared to swear to his identity and bring him to the gallows. Indeed, if, as I suspect, I have set my mark upon him, I should have little scruple to speak so decisively as to put his neck in some jeopardy. To escape this he would not hesitate to give up the will. It may perhaps be as well therefore to defer your journey for a day or two, and let us see if John cannot strike his trail. Mr. Raby bears your grandfather's name, William; we must not dishonour that, if it can be avoided. Let us recover the will, and we shall have no occasion to go to law for the purpose of obtaining justice; and no one here or in England will suspect how we came by it. He will take care not to ask, and to hush inquiry by expressing himself to be entirely satisfied."

John was now summoned, and asked if he saw which way the incendiary ran.

"Oh, yes, sir," said he. "You see I hadn't no notion the house was afire, and I wasn't thinking of nothing but him. So I run just because I seed you run, and the minute you fired I jumped on the wall, and there I sot and looked at him till I heard the cry of 'fire.' I seed him just as plain as I see you, and I had my rifle, and could have fetched

him down mighty handy, but then I did not know who he was nor what he had done. I seed which way he went plain enough."

"And have you any notion who it was, John?"

"Lord! no, sir. I don't know nobody in these parts."

"Yes you do, John. What do you think of Montague?"

"The dear Lord!" said John, with a start.

"You don't think it was him, colonel? I God! if I had thought that I'd have fixed him for slow travelling."

"I do suspect it was he, John," said Balcombe; "and I want you to find out what has become of him."

"He's got two days start," said John; "and if he has any notion we are here, he's a good way off before now."

"I dare say," replied Balcombe; "but he has no chance to know that; and besides I suspect that I fixed him for slow travelling, as you call it, myself, though not so effectually as you would have done."

"Why, you don't think you hit him, colonel?"

"Yes, I do. My pistol went off too soon, but the ball did not go far from his right shoulder."

"I God! colonel, if you think you hit him, I'm pretty sure you did; 'cause you an't apt to send a ball and not know where it's gone to. If he's got a slug of lead in him just to stop his headway, I an't so sure but what I could run him down."

"I am sure you can," said Balcombe. "And as there are neither deer nor Indians here to amuse you, you may as well take a turn to hunt for this fellow."

"That I will," said John; "but it's well for the folks in our country that the deer an't half so scary and the Indians an't half so cunning as he is. I only wish I had him in the prairie or a cane brake, I'd know what to do him there. But here in the settlements I am mightily afraid he'll dodge me. Anyhow, I can but take my rifle, and if I can't do nothing else, I can burst the heads of a few squirrels."

"Well, John," said Balcombe, "remember by all means not to let him see you."

"I'll take care of that, sir; but if he was to see me, with these things on, I reckon he'd hardly know me, unless he was near enough to look me right in the eye. If I know myself it's as much."

John went off, and did not return till night. As soon as we retired he came to our room.

"Well, John," said Balcombe, "what luck?"

"Pretty good, I'm a thinking," replied the other.

"Did you see Montague?"

"No, sir. I didn't want to see him, because I didn't want him to see me; but I think I've found out where he is."

"Well, come, John," said Balcombe, "tell us all about it."

"Well, sir, you see I went in the field, and I

took my course just the way I saw him running ; and I looked for a track, but the ground was too hard frozen that night. Well, I kept on, and I thought maybe I might see some sign where he got over the fence. So when I got to the fence, sir, I looked all along at every pannel as close as if I had been looking for Indian sign, and at last I comes to the place where he got over."

"How did you know it, John?"

"By the blood, sir. There was a good many drops of blood on the fence, and there was a large flat rail at top, and *there* was the mark of his whole hand as he got over, all bloody ; all the four fingers and the thumb too. And sure enough, as you say, it was the right hand. So I gets over the fence, and looks sharp t'other side, where the briers looked mashed down, almost as if he had fallen on them ; and I do suppose he had, for just there right close to the fence there was a smart chance of blood, that looked as if he had laid there some time. So you see I made pretty sure that he wasn't gone far. So I keeps right on pretty much the same course, and looked sharp for blood, but I couldn't see none ; and after a while I comes to a right big road. So then you see, colonel, I did not know rightly which end of the road to take, 'cause I come into it right square. If I had come into it sorter slantindickler like, I'd have known what to do. But it wasn't no use standing there, so I starts on the way my head happened to stand. There wasn't no occasion to be in any hurry, 'cause, you

see, I knowed if Montague wasn't clean off before then he must be pretty close by, and could not get away directly. So I sees a squirrel, and I downs him, and picks him up and goes along. Lord! I could hardly help laughing to think of me going along with a squirrel in my hand, like he was worth taking home; and I reckon if all the carcasses of deer, and elk, and buffalo, that I have left in the prairies after I took their jackets off, were here, some of these tallow-faced poor devils that I see about would get right fat. But I hear 'em say that everything that has life will do to keep life, and I thought somebody would be glad of the squirrel in this scarce country, so I just walks along the road with him in my hand.

“So I walked a good smart bit, and seed nothing but poor land and pine woods, till at last I meets a man. And he had a string of wild ducks in his hand, and a monstrous great gun on his shoulder, big enough to swallow my rifle, stock, lock, and barrel. So I stops him for a talk, and I axed where he killed so many ducks. And he tells me down in a place I most think he called it a *Pocoson*. (I never heard of any such place before.) And with that he looks at the squirrel, and he sees his head all smashed, and he just thought I had done it with a rock; and he axed me what I did that for, ‘cause,’ said he, ‘the brains is amazing good.’ And then I tell’d him how ‘twas, and that I never hit ‘em anywhere else, and he looks at my rifle, and maybe it did not astonish him. So then he

looks at his ducks, and he finds one little bit of a thing, it wasn't much bigger than a partridge, and he looks at it, and then he looks at the squirrel, and then at the duck again, and at last says he,

“ ‘I'll give you this here teal for that squirrel.’

“ ‘You are heartily welcome to the squirrel,’ says I.

“ Then he looked sorter shamed and sheepish-like, and says he,

“ ‘I don't want your squirrel for nothing.’

“ ‘Well,’ says I, ‘that's all fair, but your duck is worth two squirrels.’

“ ‘I dare say it is,’ says he ; ‘but I have a particular use for the squirrel.’

“ ‘Well, then,’ says I, ‘here he is, for I an't got no use for him at all, and was just looking for somebody to give him to.’

“ So with that he takes it, and looks at it mighty pleased and smilinglike, and says he,

“ ‘Well, this will do. This is better than throwing away a whole handful of powder and shot out of this drotted old gun of mine that takes half a pound at a load. I an't sorry,’ says he, ‘that I didn't find one myself.’

“ Says I, ‘You must have wanted a squirrel mighty bad. But maybe some of your folks is sick.’

“ ‘Not rightly one of my own family,’ says he. ‘But I was going out a ducking, and I promised to kill a squirrel or a partridge if I could see one,

and I don't make no doubt I'd have got more for it than would have paid me for my ammunition.'

"So the minute I heard that, says I,

" 'Well, if there an't no game this way, it's no use of my going any further, so I'll just turn back with you.'

"So we keeps talking as we goes along, and at last says I,

" 'What gentleman is that you say is sick at your house?'

"With that he started and looked sorter wild-like, and says he,

" 'Sick gentleman! I didn't say there was any sick gentleman at my house.'

" 'Well, maybe you didn't,' says I; for I seed how it was, colonel, and I didn't want to give the fellow any scare. So I says no more about that, and we walks on till I seed where his house was, and he stops, and I goes on till I was out of sight, and then I takes the woods and comes home."

"Did you ask the fellow's name?" said Balcombe.

"No, sir," replied Keizer; "I hear 'em say it an't the fashion in this country to ask people's names; but I reckon I could find out mighty handy."

"It's not worth while," said Balcombe. "Was he a long-legged, parrot-toed fellow, with a scar on his right cheek?"

"That's the very fellow," said John.

"Jim Porter," said Balcombe. "He is about

my age, and when I lived here his father paid fifty pairs of canvass-back ducks annually for the exclusive privilege of hunting ducks and muskrats in Mr. Raby's marshes. The good old gentleman gave me the whole benefit of this rent for my table. I used sometimes to hunt with Jim; and often when he has come with his weekly tribute, without hat or shoes, I have made him happy by telling him to sell the ducks for his own benefit. I see that he is somehow bound to Montague, but I think my hold on him will prove the stronger."

In the morning Balcombe led the conversation from a fine brandered duck which smoked on the table to the marsh from which it had been taken; and soon learned that Jim Porter had fallen heir to his father's cottage and occupation. He therefore needed no guide, and he could never want aid in a conflict with Montague face to face. I felt it, however, to be my duty to accompany him, and as he made no objection, we walked out together soon after breakfast. Balcombe, who had worn arms until they were as familiar to him as his garments, had no occasion to add anything to his equipment, so that we did nothing to attract observation. A walk of two or three miles brought us to Porter's cottage.

He was in act to go out to the marsh, the tide being then at the proper stage. Balcombe gave him to understand that his visit was to the gentleman who was sick there, and was at once told that there was no such gentleman.

"Gone!" said Balcombe, quietly. "Well, I have not lost my labour, Jim, for I am right glad to see you again. I suppose the poor old man is gone, and you are just living here in the old place, and at the old business."

While he said this, the poor fellow gazed at him with intense curiosity, and at length exclaimed,

"Why, good Lord! To be sure now! This an't Mr. Balcombe?"

"Yes it is, Jim," said Balcombe, extending his hand. "Your old friend George Balcombe come back again once more."

The man seemed much moved, and exhibited an amusing struggle between habitual respect and the desire to give free utterance to his pleasure at seeing Balcombe. After some few kind inquiries, Balcombe asked Jim when his guest had left him. The fellow looked a little queer, but at last said,

"I suppose it don't make no difference talking to you, Mr. Balcombe; but he didn't want anybody to know he was here, or where he was gone."

"He is gone, then?" said Balcombe.

"Oh, yes, sir. He started this morning at daylight."

"How did he travel?" said Balcombe. "I thought he had been badly hurt."

"I don't know about that, sir," said Jim. "He did keep a mighty moaning, and he didn't seem to have the use of his right arm; but he just said he was sick, and kept his bed."

"How long has he been sick?" asked Balcombe.

"Only since Sunday morning. He came in after I was gone to bed, and in the morning he said he had caught a mighty bad cold the overnight; and sure enough he did look desperate bad."

"And how long had he been here?"

"He came here little more than a week ago, sir, and said he wanted to stay with me a while just to see how things was going on. You know, sir, he was mighty fond of the old man of all, and the old man of him. Ah, Lord! I wish we had him back here again. If you please to believe me, Mr. Balcombe, they make me pay more now for hunting in the *Pocoson* than I used to do when there were ten times as many ducks; and the devil a one do they give me back again, but send them all away to Fredericksburg and them places. Well, sir, you see Mr. Montague gave me sort of a hint that maybe all wasn't right, and if every one had their own, he wasn't sure that poor Miss Fanny that married Mr. Napier, and has not got a house over her head, they say, would not be right well off. So he said he had come here to see if he could not find out something, and when he went to the hall they sorter suspicioned him and drove him away. So he went away a while, and then come back and staid here so with me."

"And what made him go away in such a hurry?"

"Why that's what I cannot find out rightly,"

said Jim. "I don't believe he had any notion of it yesterday morning; but when I went out a ducking he said he would be glad to get a squirrel, and axed me to kill one for him. So I went, sir, but never saw one; and as I come back I meets a man with one, and I wanted to buy it, but he gave it to me. And he had a gun that he called a rifle. I never saw one before; and he talked about putting a ball into a squirrel's eye just as if he had put it there with his finger and thumb. And sure enough he had hit the poor thing right in the eye, and scattered all its brains. So he turned back with me, and we had a heap of talk, and when we got here he went on, and I don't know what became of him. So when I went in says Mr. Montague,

"Well, Jim, did you kill me a squirrel?"

"No," said I, "but I have brought you one I got from another man."

"And with that I showed him the squirrel, and how the fellow had hit him just where he pleased with a single ball. And as soon as he seed it I thought he looked uneasy, and says he,

"That was the very rifle I heard two hours ago."

"Why," says I, "there's been a good many people out to-day, and I have heard guns myself where by good rights nobody ought to shoot but me."

"I reckon they were shot guns," said he; "but that I heard was a rifle."

"And what's the difference?" says I.

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"Oh," says he, "they an't no more alike than the bark of a dog and the howl of a wolf." And says he, "Does not anybody about here use a rifle?"

"No," says I; "and I never seen or heard of one before to-day."

"Then the man that shot the squirrel had a rifle?" says he.

"To be sure," says I, "else he never could have done that," says I, pointing to the squirrel's head.

"Did you see it?" says he.

"Yes," says I, "and the sorriest, rustiest looking old thing it was I ever saw. My old gun's a beauty to it," says I. "But then the man said she was the real stuff, and he would give her, he said, for ne'er a shooting iron in the whole country."

"And with that, sir, I seed Mr. Montague begin to look worse than he did, and I thought maybe he talked too much, and so I told him, and was going away.

"No," says he, "Jim, talking don't do me no harm, only the light hurts my eyes."

"And so, sir, he laid back his head upon the pillow, and puts his hand over his eyes, and then says he,

"What sort of a looking man was that, that had the rifle?"

"So I tells him, sir, he was a little dark-skinned man, with black eyes.

"Did he look like a gentleman?" says he.

"I can't say he did," says I, "for all he had on

pretty good clothes, but he didn't look like he was used to them; and as to his talk,' says I, 'sir, he didn't talk no better than me, nor so well neither.'

"And while I was talking, Mr. Balcombe, I could not see Mr. Montague's eyes, but the lower part of his face was as pale as a corpse, and he got right black about the mouth, and I was scared, and asked him what was the matter, but he just motioned me to go away. So after a while he calls me back, and says he,

" 'Jim, is there any chance to hire any sort of a carriage in the neighbourhood?'

" 'No,' says I, 'sir, except it be old Tom that old Mr. Raby set free, and he has got just an old rattletrap of a gig that he sometimes rides in when he carries cakes to musters and the like.'

" 'Well,' says he, 'that must do, if there's no better to be had. And I have no doubt,' says he, 'old Tom would be glad to oblige me by taking me as far as Tapahannock.'

" 'Why, Lord?' says I, 'Mr. Montague, you are too sick to go.'

" 'That's the very reason,' says he. 'Besides, my business wants me at Fredericksburg, and there I can see a doctor and get help; and,' says he, 'it an't so far to Tapahannock, and there I can get a carriage. So now, Jim,' says he, 'I want to get to Fredericksburg to-morrow night, and old Tom must be here before light, and I must be at Tapahannock a little after sunrise.'

" 'Won't that be too much of a journey?' says I.

“‘I cannot help it,’ says he; ‘it’s better than stopping on the road.’

“So with that, sir, I speaks to old Tom, and sure enough he was here by a little after light, and off they went.”

CHAPTER XVII.

The bird that sings within the brake,
The swan that swims upon the lake,
One mate, and one alone, will take.

BYRON.

AFTER some little more conversation we returned to the hall.

“What is to be done now?” said I.

“Boot and saddle,” said Balcombe, cheerily; “to horse and pursue.”

Accordingly, we hurried back, and were presently on the road, after a word of apology and a promise of explanation to our host. We had not ridden two miles, before we came to a little grogshop on the confines of the estate, established, I have no doubt, for the especial benefit of Mr. Raby’s negroes. Here stood a genuine rattletrap of a gig, and a sorry old horse, apparently spent with fatigue, his hair all matted and crusted with

the sweat that had dried on him as he stood in the cold air. An old negro was just staggering from the house, and was in the act of clambering up into the gig, when Balcombe inquired what he had done with the gentleman he had taken to Tapahannock. Tom, who was too drunk to remember any caution if he had received one, said he had gone on with his own carriage and servant. This was poor encouragement; but we pressed on. At Port Royal we obtained fresh horses, and having learned that Montague had passed only two hours before, we made a race from thence to Fredericksburg. But all in vain. He was there and housed before we arrived. We tried in vain to find where. At the principal tavern he had not stopped. So much we learned with certainty, and this was all that we could learn, for it was already bedtime when we arrived.

The next morning John was on the scent betimes, and ascertained that Montague had stopped at Falmouth for the night, and had at an early hour left that place for Baltimore. Here, then, we were fairly beaten in a straight race; but being at Fredericksburg, it was as well to execute the business for which I had proposed to come there, if it should prove necessary. I accordingly laid my case at large before an eminent attorney. As there was no doubt of the result if the papers could be secured, he determined to take such a course as would at once put them safely in the custody of the law. With that view he drafted a bill, to which Mr. Ed-

ward Raby was made defendant, setting forth the whole transaction, as I believed it to have taken place. Mr. Swann was also made defendant, and was charged with the possession of the will, and called on to produce it. It was anticipated that in his answer he would disclaim the possession of any such paper, unless such a one might be concealed in the packet, and that he would file that along with his answer.

Having arranged this matter we returned to our lodging, where we spent a pleasant evening. In the morning we called again on the attorney to obtain the proper process along with a copy of my bill. He was out at the time, but soon came in provided with the necessary papers. After some little conversation, he said he had been called on the night before by a gentleman whose business he had declined, because he apprehended that his engagement with me did not leave him at liberty to undertake it. On further inquiry, we ascertained that Montague, on leaving Falmouth, must have come around by Chatham, and back into Fredericksburg. We were, of course, eager to learn where he was ; but Mr. L. (the attorney) observing this, told us he was not at liberty to inform us. I therefore remonstrated against any concealment on the part of one whose professional services I had engaged ; but he stopped me short at once, by saying that it was only professionally that he had become acquainted with Montague's whereabouts, and though not free to engage in his service, he

was alike prohibited by the duties of his profession from disclosing anything which Montague wished to conceal, and which, in any other character, would not have been made known to him. To the scrupulous delicacy of this reserve we could object nothing, and even felt some hesitancy about acting so far on what we had learned as to renew our search for Montague. From this difficulty we were however relieved by Mr. L., who assured us that Montague had at an early hour that morning set out for Baltimore. We had therefore nothing left for it but to return to Raby Hall.

We returned, accordingly, and I committed to Balcombe the task of breaking the matter to the major. There was no occasion to offend him by taking an officer with us, as his acknowledgment of the process would answer every purpose. He was much surprised, but saw at once the solution of Montague's strange behaviour. He expressed himself obliged, too, at our having refrained from giving him any hint of our suspicions, until we had taken such measures as made the line of duty plain to him. This was to answer that he had no such paper as the supposed will unless it was contained in the packet; to tell how he came by that, and deliver it into court as a part of his answer.

We were now secure from everything but violence, unless our conjectures (of the truth of which we had no doubt) should prove false. As the major was now effectually on his guard, and Montague fairly chased off, we ventured to return to Craiga-

net, leaving John at Raby Hall, with instructions to keep a sharp lookout, and notify us if he saw any signs of the reappearance of Montague in the neighbourhood.

Our return was welcomed by the undissembled pleasure of our friends, which was enhanced by the history of our late adventures. My confidence in the ultimate success of our endeavours to recover my property, seemed now to communicate itself to my mother and sisters. To Ann the subject seemed one of less exciting interest, though she expressed and doubtless felt a quiet pleasure, but not less deep than theirs, in the prospect of affluence for herself, and of all the comforts of life for one who had been to her a second mother. The day after our return had been appropriated for a visit to Oakwood, where it was proposed to spend a few days. As the custom of the country included in such invitations all chance comers in the invited family, the arrival of Balcombe and myself made no difference but the addition of two to the party. The mother of Howard, as formerly, presided over the hospitalities of the household, of which he did the honours in the frank and courteous spirit of a Virginia gentleman of the old school. I went with a predetermination to take whatever part might be assigned me by circumstances; while Balcombe, who was but a looker-on, promised to aid me by his observation to ascertain how matters stood between the several parties. I was agreeably surprised to find myself, in a good measure,

discharged from the necessity of giving a very marked attention to Miss Howard. Whenever I approached her I found myself received as formerly with a manner that showed that my person was respected and my conversation not unacceptable. But, contrary to his former habit, young Douglas was seldom absent from his cousin's side, and always ready to strike into any chit-chat in which she might be engaged. Howard was, as usual, respectfully and delicately attentive to Ann, still approaching and addressing her with the same guarded consideration for all her wishes and feelings, which displayed not more a desire to please than a fear of alarming her. I thought, too, that his attentions were not received with the same placid satisfaction as formerly. Whether the pleasure was more or less I could not determine; but it was not the same.

There was more excitement, more flutter in her manner, and occasionally I thought I saw a stolen glance directed towards me, and that her ear was sometimes listening to catch my words addressed to others. In this change of partners Jane and I seemed thrown out of the game, for it was one we could not play at altogether; and but for the presence of some other lads and lasses, whose characters form no part of my history, we should have been absolute supernumeraries. To this I had no objection. I had little wish to be attentive to Ann in company; and the rest, just then, were more than indifferent to me. I accordingly joined

myself to Balcombe, and with him mixed in the conversation, now of one party, now of another, while he occasionally threw off remarks that arrested the attention of all.

I was curious, on my sister's account, to discover whether the attention of Douglas to his cousin was the spontaneous result of his own feelings, or the effect of some effort on her part to keep him near her. I suspected the last, and felt obliged by finding myself by her own act emancipated from the necessity of paying constant though unmeaning attention to her. But was there anything of coquetry or pique in this? I thought not. I was always welcomed as a third party in their dialogues, and not unfrequently appeals were made to me by which I seemed purposely drawn into them. But no effort was made to detain me; no attempt, after engaging me in conversation, to shake him off. In short, no lady could carry herself towards any gentleman in a manner more clearly indicative of every favourable sentiment but that of love.

Poor Jane I saw was in a state of great uneasiness. She received as a matter of course from the young men of the party such attentions as were paid her; but she took no interest in them. Her eye wandered continually towards Douglas and Margaret Howard, and sometimes, as I thought, looked imploringly at me, and sometimes glanced reproachfully at Ann. The courtesy of Howard at length provided her with a temporary relief, by

seating her at the piano. She played well and sung in fine taste, so that she appeared to more advantage at the instrument than in any other situation. Most of the young men clustered around her, while Balcombe and I stood aloof.

After playing one or two overtures, she suddenly struck into that beautiful song of Moore's, in which he characterizes the constancy of a faithful heart by likening it to the fancied devotion of the sunflower to the god of day. This she sung with a pathos which arrested the attention of the whole company, and, having closed the strain, folded her hands in her lap, and sat silent and with downcast eyes. Immediately some conversation arose, which I did not at first hear, but to which my attention was presently drawn by an appeal from Miss Howard.

"Do, Mr. Napier," said she, "come here and talk a little reason to your sister. She is not content that we shall beguile ourselves, with the aid of poetry and music, into such pretty fancies as Moore has expressed in that beautiful song, but she insists in sober-spoken prose that undying constancy is the only test of truth in love. She would not only persuade herself, but others, that neither man nor woman ever can love more than once with genuine passion. How say you?"

"I can only say," replied I, "that her opinion shows that she has had no proof to the contrary in her own feelings; and as I have had none, I

cannot take upon myself to condemn her notion on the subject. But if we give credence either to the words or actions of others, we must suspect her of error."

"And what," said Jane, "do the words and actions of others prove, but that they who are incapable of that imperishable devotion which alone deserves the name of love, may feel a hundred times that which passes with them for it? It will still be a question whether they ever felt it once."

"I have never learned to chop logic," said Miss Howard, "but I have heard of something which is called 'begging the question.' Is not this something like it, Mr. Balcombe?"

"I cannot say," said Balcombe, laughing; "but if a lady condescends to be a beggar, no gentleman would deny her suit. Therefore either way Miss Napier's argument is unanswerable."

"Why, really, you gentlemen are so insufferably polite and acquiescing," said the lady, "that one might as well expect truth from a love ditty. So I suppose we must take Mr. Moore's word for all that sort of nonsense, because it is in vain to hope for anything better. Certainly not from Mr. Napier; but as to you, Mr. Balcombe, I supposed that you had spent so much time among the unsophisticated sons and daughters of nature, that the habit of speaking frankly had overcome the fear of offending. Now, I do beseech you, if you can compliment us so highly, imagine us a company of squaws, and tell us what you think of this matter."

"I think of love," said Balcombe, "as I do of a fever. He who dies of the first attack will never have another."

"But suppose," said Miss Howard, "he don't die of it."

"Then he will get well."

"And what then?"

"According to Miss Napier, he may be immortal."

"Pshaw!" said Miss Howard, "you are too provoking. But what do you say to his case while he is yet alive, though badly in love?"

"That if he expects to die of it, he never expects to be in love again."

"Still you evade the question," said Miss Howard.

"On the contrary," said Balcombe, "I offer a solution to which no one can object. If Miss Napier expects to die of love, it ought to be satisfactory to her, and equally so to you, who manifestly have no such expectation."

"At least," said Jane, "I will not affect to misunderstand you. You clearly are against me. No one, thinking as I do, could jest with the subject."

"If those who don't think love a jest, Miss Napier, agree with you," said Balcombe, "I certainly am on your side."

"What, then, seriously speaking," asked Jane, "would you admit as a sufficient cause for loving a second time?"

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"Accident, blind contact, or the strong necessity of loving," said Balcombe, carelessly.

"I declare, Mr. Balcombe," said Jane, "I shall hate you if you talk so."

"You must think more favourably of hate than love, Miss Napier," replied Balcombe, "if you can hate on so slight a cause, and yet will not allow that love shall spring from the habits of social intercourse, from an interchange of good offices, from a common destiny, or from that law of our nature which makes us incapable of happiness which there is none to share."

"Well," said Jane, "for my part, I would not give a straw for the love of any man who had ever loved another."

"Take care, Jane," said Margaret; "your own maxim may be turned against you. The time may come when you would be glad to get a better market for what is left of your heart, after having loved more than one."

"Oh, Margaret!" said Jane, reproachfully.

"Nay," said Margaret, "I mean no insinuation, dear; I only mean to say that I have such an opinion of the indestructible good qualities of your heart as to believe they can stand the fire of love, and be none the worse. Now, if you can pay me as high a compliment, I certainly shall not take offence at it."

"I am sure you mean no offence," said Jane; "but, really, the idea of having one's heart burned to a cinder is shocking."

"That's your idea," said Margaret, "not mine. I only hope the cinder may yet answer to kindle the fire of love in another bosom. But come, Mr. Balcombe, let us have one of your oracular responses on the subject."

"The ancient sibyl," answered Balcombe, with much solemnity, "is the type of her sex. Her books are the type of woman's heart. They were a treasure beyond price, containing all that was necessary to happiness and virtue. This was alike in all and in every part; and when more than half were burned, the great arcanum was still there."

"Thank you, sir," said Margaret, dropping a courtesy. "The compliment deserves my best courtesy; but I feel interested to have your sex included in it, because, as I am not quite young enough for a boy of fifteen, I expect I shall have to content myself with such small remnant of a heart as some good man may offer me after having been in love half a dozen times."

"It would not become me," said Balcombe, "to praise my own sex; but if you will return the compliment, I will not deny its justice."

"Then, sir," said the lady, bowing graciously, "I pray you to consider it reciprocated in your own words. And so, my dear Jane, for all that's come and gone yet, I may hope to pick up of the rejected leavings of you and Ann, and all the other belles, a piece of a heart worth having."

This was said with an arch glance at Douglas

and myself. He laughed, Jane bit her lip, and Ann coloured to the tips of her ears. How I looked I know not ; as little can I tell how I felt, except my delight at observing that some not unpleasant feeling seemed to mingle with Ann's confusion. She did not raise her eyes, but I fancied that they tried to peep through their half transparent snowy lids at me. She was standing behind Jane's chair, between Howard and Balcombe. The latter now turned to her, and said,

"You give no opinion on this subject, my dear."

"I cannot," said she. "William said he could not condemn Jane's opinion, because he had no experience to the contrary, and I can neither condemn nor adopt it, because I have no experience at all."

"What a sweet innocent!" said Miss Howard, with an arch and playful frankness which showed that what she said did not touch her own feelings. "Sisterly affection is the warmest feeling she has ever experienced, and such as it is, I dare swear it is the warmest *she ever will feel.*"

"Oh, Margaret!" said Howard, observing that Ann was overwhelmed with confusion.

"Never mind, Henry," said his sister ; "you have no need to guard Ann's sensibilities from me. She knows I love her," continued she, gliding between her brother and Ann, and kindly taking her hand. She knows I love her, and I love her be-

cause I understand her better than she understands herself."

Ann looked up timidly and affectionately in her face, and meeting her half-tender, half-playful glance, bowed her head on her friend's shoulder, and hid her blushes there. Balcombe turned his quick eye inquiringly on Miss Howard, and she answered it with a look at me so full of encouragement, that I could no longer misunderstand her hint. Howard, with a moody and uneasy countenance, fell back behind the circle. Jane tore her handkerchief in the eager vexation with which she pulled the edge of it, and rising abruptly, broke up the conversation. There was little disposition to renew it. Every one seemed thoughtful, and all but Balcombe and Margaret Howard rather grave. His eye sparkled as it always did when he saw his way clearly, and she wore an air of high and generous excitement, which made her look more noble in my eyes than any being I had ever seen. We soon separated for the night, when, holding out her hand to me, she pressed mine cordially and unreservedly, and said, "Good-night, Mr. William;" and then added, in a lower tone, "You have acted delicately and nobly. You deserve to be happy, and you will be."

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Her sex’s dignity is woman’s care.”

FOR almost the first time in her life Ann had stolen away without bidding me good-night; and for the very first time the omission gave me no pain. I now began to flatter myself that Balcombe’s conjectures were right, and that she was at length beginning to discover the secret of her heart. That Howard’s attention had at first given her great pleasure was certain; but it was like the pleasure of an ingenuous child at any expression of approbation from one highly esteemed. To the admiration of such a man as Howard no woman could be insensible; for none could be indifferent to the possession of such qualities as alone could command it. His attentions, too, were so tempered by respect and delicacy, and managed with such address, that they could not be unacceptable in themselves, though he should be an object of indifference. But now they were not received exactly as before. Though flattered and gratified, there was a sort of restlessness in the manner of the receiver which showed that they awakened thoughts in which he had no part. These things

had occurred to me; and Miss Howard's dexterous hint that what Ann had been accustomed to consider as sisterly affection was in fact the warmest feeling of which her warm heart was capable, could not be misunderstood.

There was something, indeed, in the conduct of that young lady which I could not comprehend. Could she have any objection to the success of her brother's suit? Certainly not. For Ann she expressed and unequivocally displayed the most cordial friendship. Towards her brother she manifestly felt the most devoted affection, and enthusiastic admiration. It was impossible to doubt that his happiness was dear to her. One thing at least was clear; that her imputed partiality to me either never had existed, or had settled down into sentiments such as do not often survive a preference which is not reciprocated. I therefore began to suspect some mistake in the matter from the first.

In these ideas I found that Balcombe fully concurred. It may be well supposed, therefore, that I was impatient to obtain their full confirmation. My first step would, of course, have been to seek an interview with Ann; but from this I was restrained by a solemn promise, the more binding because she had no security for it but my word. Not only had I no right to take a step which might wound her, but I knew that scrupulous regard to that and all other pledges was indispensable to her favour. I felt myself, therefore, condemned to

silence, of which I could not help complaining to Balcombe.

"You forget," said he, "that enforced silence is the most eloquent of all pleaders. She who has imposed it is all the time speaking to her heart on your behalf; not indeed to awaken love, (that were superfluous,) but gratitude and admiration. Under such circumstances esteem it a privilege to be silent. If, as I suspect, Margaret Howard is aware of the interdict, she has left little for you to say, and will soon obtain leave for you to say that little."

"But what motive can she have," asked I, "to interest herself in my behalf?"

"I cannot tell," said Balcombe, "what there may be besides the manifest generosity of her temper, and something, perhaps, of that disposition, which so many women have, to take a part in such matters. But I suspect some nearer motive besides. Perhaps a desire to rescue herself from some misconstruction. But go to sleep, William; and this time be sure you mingle thanksgivings with your prayers, for I think I see the dawn of happiness opening such as may well deserve your thanks."

The next day I saw, and not without concern, that Howard's spirits were depressed. His duties to his guests were obviously a burden upon him. The excitement of his sister's feelings, too, seemed painful; and, though she carried herself with the cheerful air of one sure of the right and bent to do it, yet it was plain that her mind needed an oppor-

tunity for that guidance and support which are best sought in retirement. As our visit was for no determinate time, we accommodated it to these symptoms, and in the evening of a somewhat dull day returned to Craiganet.

The next day, while Balcombe and I were out with our guns, Howard and his sister drove over. We returned to the house just as he was about to leave it.

"I shall ride the servant's horse, Margaret," said he; "and you will command him and the barouche until you choose to go home."

He said this with polite kindness; but I thought I saw some little pique in his manner. His brow, too, was flushed, and his eye wandering; his address to Balcombe was hurried, and towards myself there was something quite different from his accustomed cordiality. In this mood he took his leave; and our party, after an interchange of sundry blank looks, separated to dress for dinner. Until we met at table, Ann did not make her appearance. As soon as she entered the room, I was struck with her excited countenance. Her eye swam in light, her cheek glowed, and, though she manifestly shrank from the gaze of others, there was an air of individuality and resolve about her which contrasted strongly with her accustomed timidity. Her whole manner was that of one who sees an object distinctly, with a fixed purpose of pursuing it. She leaned on the arm of Miss Howard, from whose countenance every shade of embarrassment

and perplexity was banished. She was full of animation, and, with the aid of Balcombe, roused up the spirit of conversation once more among us. As soon as dinner was over she called for her carriage, and I, ordering a horse for the servant, offered to accompany her.

"No, no, Mr. William," said she; "you are not the beau for my money. You belong to the sun-flower school. Mr. Balcombe's versatile notions of love and gallantry give me better hopes of him; and if, like Major Dalgetty, he'll take service with me, I shall be glad to enlist him for the campaign."

"Under what prouder banner than that of the white lion," said Balcombe, "could a soldier serve? Command me, Lady Margaret; and believe that, if I have been less prompt to offer service than you to demand it, it was but because I thought that younger knights might be more acceptable."

"Younger, indeed!" said the lady, "and why younger? Time was when men did not give themselves up to selfishness till they grew old; but now they are so carefully trained to it, that, if a lady should have need to find a champion fitted to deeds of chivalrous emprise, she must take one whose beard is gray. But we have no right to expect anything better. When woman sets up for herself, and contends for the mastery with man, she makes him her rival, not her protector. But come, Mr. Balcombe; these notions are too oldfashioned

for our friends here. Let us be off, and discourse at will of the degeneracy of the men and women of modern days."

So saying, she kissed Ann, courtesied to the rest, and giving her hand to Balcombe, tripped away to her carriage.

The evening was pleasant, and I proposed a walk to Ann. She coloured slightly, but assented, when a glance from Jane brought the blood again to her face, and she seemed to hesitate.

"Do you doubt my promise?" said I, in a low voice.

"No, I do not," said she, firmly; adding, after a short pause, "and I *will* walk with you."

"I have never seen your friend Miss Howard in so attractive a light before," said I, as soon as we had left the house.

"She is a noble creature," said Ann. "She has as little of selfishness, and as much zealous devotion to her friends as human nature is capable of. You have never seen this before, because you have heretofore seen her through a discolouring medium."

"I do not understand you," said I.

"I suppose not," replied Ann; "but I can assure you that she has as much in common with your generous friend Mr. Balcombe as befits her sex."

"I am glad," said I, "to hear the approbation of him which your remark implies."

"Of him! Surely approbation is quite too cold

a word for such a character, even in the mouth of one never benefited by him. But I must be dead to gratitude if I did not already feel a warm affection for a man who has perilled his life in our service, and whose heart seems to cleave to me with a father's affection. I feel as if I had known him all my life, and am already disposed to give him all my confidence, as to a father or elder brother."

"You will find it well placed," said I. "A truer friend cannot be; and his sagacity and wisdom make him the safest adviser I ever knew. The qualities that glitter on the surface of his character, brilliant as they are, are of little value compared to his intrinsic worth."

"Poor Margaret!" said Ann. "She said true, that the cultivated selfishness of the young men of this day unfits them to mate with a woman capable of genuine feminine devotion. It is almost a pity Mr. Balcombe is married."

"You would not think so if you knew his wife," said I. "I have no mind to disparage your friend, but I am not sure that I know any woman worthy to be the wife of George Balcombe, but her who is so."

I now gave some of the details of our late adventures for the purpose of illustrating Mrs. Balcombe's character.

"She is certainly a noble woman," said Ann; "but she can hardly be a very agreeable acquaintance."

"I found her very much so," said I, "as soon as

I became an acquaintance. But whether I ever should have known her, but for the circumstances which broke down her reserve, is uncertain. As to your solicitude for Miss Howard," continued I, "there seems no great call for that, as from appearances, she and her cousin Angus are at last disposed to fulfil the anxious wish of his father. He is certainly a fine young man, and well worthy of any woman."

"That may be," said Ann; "but old Mr. Douglas will never see the accomplishment of that wish."

"There seems to be a perfect understanding between them," said I.

"I believe there is," she replied, "but not such as you suppose. They have a great affection for each other, and the utmost mutual confidence; but that is all. I profess no skill in such matters; but knowing Margaret Howard as I *now* do, it appears to me that any one may discover that her heart is yet untouched."

"Knowing her as you *now* do," said I, marking her emphasis on the word. "You have then thought otherwise?"

She coloured deeply at this question, and at last replied simply that she had.

"And whom," said I, "did you suppose to be the happy man?"

I felt her relax her hold on my arm as if to withdraw her's; but she commanded herself, and answered, with an effort at firmness,

"I cannot tell you that. It is enough to say that I now know that I was deceived."

I did not know what to say to this. I was conscious that I had rather kept my promise in the letter than in the spirit; for Ann could not suppose me to be ignorant that I was the person alluded to, and that I had wiled from her an admission that she had been under a delusion concerning me which was now removed. I felt that I had been guilty of a breach of faith; but acknowledgment or apology would but make the matter worse. But though I reproached myself, I did not fail to enjoy the discovery of a fact which might explain her former conduct. I wished to ask if she also supposed the attachment of Miss Howard reciprocated, but did not dare to go so far. But of that I could hardly entertain a doubt. She at length broke the embarrassing silence by some question about James Scott, and this led to a conversation of indifferent matters, in which she got rid of the slight reserve that had shown itself for the moment.

Balcombe returned late, and with a mind obviously full of something; but showed no disposition to talk. As soon as we went to our room he began.

"Well, William; I have had a long and interesting conversation with Miss Howard."

"And what have you learned?" asked I.

"Much that concerns you," was the reply.

"And nothing that has not increased my admiration of her."

"For Heaven's sake," said I, "unbuckle your mail, then, and give us the news."

"Softly, softly, my dear fellow. I must begin at the beginning, if I can find where it is, and tell my story as she did, so as to do justice to all parties."

"Then tell it in your own way," said I. "Let me have your conversation."

"Well, then," said Balcombe, "we were hardly seated before she began."

"'Mr. Balcombe,' said she, 'you don't deserve half the credit for sagacity that your friend Napier gives you, if you haven't found out that I had a design in thus laying violent hands upon you.'

"'To say the truth,' said I, 'I had some suspicion of the sort; but, as I feared no ill, I was willing to let time make proof.'

"'I mean nothing but good,' said she, 'to you and your's; but I have that to say which I would have to reach the ears of your friend Mr. Napier, just as I say it. But there would be an impropriety in speaking or writing to him. A third person is the proper filter to take off any indelicacy from my communication.'

"She began then by telling me just what I have heard from you about Douglas and your sister."

"'Angus and I,' said she, 'are first cousins; we have been brought up almost together, and our intimacy has never been interrupted. I was soon

apprised of what had been proposed, and he and I soon came to a perfect understanding. He is a fine, noble spirited youth, in whose happiness I take a deep interest, and I saw that his union with Jane was essential to it. My brother, on a visit to Oakwood, became enamoured of Ann. My confidence in his taste and judgment disposed me to think favourably of any woman whom he might select as a wife, and I was eager to make an acquaintance with her. I therefore readily acquiesced in his proposal to transfer our residence to Oakwood for a season, and my mother was easily drawn into the measure. Angus immediately struck at the opening; and, having taken Henry into our confidence, it was arranged that my cousin should, with my connivance, commence such a course of attention to me, as should make his father wish him to become one of our party. He was impatient to see Jane, to show her that he had not changed, and to assure himself of her constancy. Besides, he was not without a hope, that Henry's success, of which (admiring him as we do) we had little doubt, would reconcile his father to his own marriage with Jane; so that on every account we were desirous to do what we might in support of my brother's suit. Accordingly, after a little delicate and well-managed flirtation, of which we took care to have but few witnesses besides my uncle Douglas, the scheme was proposed by him, and we all came together to Oakwood.

“ I at once set myself to study the character of

Ann. I saw that she experienced a pure and child-like pleasure in Henry's attentions, but that as yet love entered not into it. I was sure that if her heart were ripe for love, she had not yet found it out, and I admonished my brother to make his approaches with great caution. This he did, and displayed so much address and delicacy in the midst of all his tenderness, that, partiality aside, I had no idea that any disengaged heart could withstand him. At length he declared his wishes, but was careful not to press for a peremptory answer. The poor little flattered thing was so relieved by this, that I wondered she did not love him for very gratitude. This feeling did indeed operate so far as to make her receive his attentions with as much kindness, and very little more embarrassment than before. In the mean time, my surprise at Henry's want of success set me to looking about for a cause, and I soon saw enough of Mr. Napier to suspect that I had found one. The devotion of Henry to Ann, and of Angus to Jane, had thrown us much together. I found him one that a girl brought up in the house with could hardly fail to love, and yet might well love without knowing it.'

"I will not tell you, William, the points in your character which led Miss Howard to this conclusion.

"'But I saw,' said she, 'that Ann had not found out her own secret. She was pleased and satisfied with Henry's attentions; and I was not sorry

that circumstances put it in my power to prevent much interruption from Mr. Napier. I soon found that he was ill at ease. His wandering glances presently told me that if Ann did not know her own secret, he had at length discovered his; and being sure of this, I did not apprehend that I could do him any injury by receiving, as if from choice, his enforced attentions. In doing this I did not dream of anything more than to leave Henry without interruption to pursue his well-managed course of attention to Ann, and to give her time to wean herself from a habit of admiring and leaning on her cousin, which might in time give birth to love. As to Douglas, I had discharged him from all attendance on me as soon as we arrived at Oakwood; but still it was well the gallantry of Napier should always be at hand to excuse him to others for neglecting me. Having established things on this footing, I quietly awaited what seemed to me the inevitable result of Henry's attentions to Ann. In this, however, I was disappointed. The interruption in our intercourse occasioned by the death of Mr. Napier may have had a disastrous influence. But I was led to look further back for the cause of his failure, and at length suspected that the place which her cousin occupied in Ann's heart, seeming as it did to her but that of a brother, was in truth that of a favoured lover. On our return to Oakwood, her manifest anxiety concerning Mr. Napier exceeding that of his sisters, and at the same time expressed more guard-

edly; the unusual flush of her cold cheek produced by any allusion to him; her frequent abstraction, and occasional unconsciousness of my brother's presence, left little doubt in my mind that my conjecture had been right.

“ At first I saw this with no feeling but that of regret on Henry's account. But a circumstance soon occurred which showed that it touched me on a more delicate point. I had of late observed that that amiable, ingenuous girl Laura Napier had become very much attached to me. She was always hanging about me, and always ready to perform the little offices of a younger sister, with a zeal which showed that she found great pleasure in them. Not long ago she begged me to let her take down my hair and comb it, and while thus employed she kept me amused with her playful rattle. At length she ventured to say something of the pleasure with which she looked forward to the time when I was to be her sister. I started at this with a vehemence that alarmed her, and in her eagerness to excuse herself, she assured me that the whole family considered Mr. Napier and me as engaged. You may believe that this information convinced me that in my care of others I ought to have been more chary of myself. My inquiries of Laura gave me no clew to the source or grounds of this tale, and I determined to seek it of one who might give more satisfactory information.

“ I accordingly inquired of Jane, who knew

nothing, it seemed, of the origin of the rumour, but had had no doubt of its truth. This was provoking. Why did she not doubt it? Oh, nobody doubted it.

“ “Does not Ann doubt it?”

“ “Certainly not: how should she? William is handsome and agreeable; he has been very attentive; and really,” said she, “he has been so well received that I could not doubt it.”

“ “And Ann?” repeated I; “Does she believe it? can she believe it?”

“ “Saying this, I was going in quest of her, when Jane said, “Hadn't you better not undeceive her? It would distress her very much. Her heart is set on the connection, and the expectation of it must certainly dispose her more favourably to an alliance with your brother.”

“ “This staggered me, but I presently reflected that in such matters a woman's first duty is to herself, not as *self*, but as one of the guardians of her sex's honour. I accordingly sought out Ann, and asked her how she had heard the report. She seemed much agitated, and instead of answering my question, asked in turn why I had put it.

“ “Because,” said I, “I have learned that it had reached you, and am anxious to know its source, as well as anxious to contradict it effectually.”

“ “Contradict it!” she exclaimed, with a countenance of eager surprise, while every feature quivered with emotion, and she trembled in every joint. “Is it not then true?”

“ “ True !” said I ; “ certainly not. I never had a serious thought of Mr. Napier, and I doubt if he ever thought of me at all. Certainly, if he did, he never told *me* so.”

“ “ While I spoke, she gazed at me with a look of intense interest, and as I uttered the last words, her colour flushed over cheek, and neck, and brow, then faded, then returned, and at last she burst into tears, and hid her face in my bosom. Jane would have said she was very much distressed. But there was no mistaking those tears. They flowed from the rapture of reviving hope. I did not probe her heart with words. I saw it plainly enough. I contented myself with pursuing my original inquiry, and found that a foolish girl, who pretended to be my confidential friend, had told Jane that I had acknowledged a partiality for Mr. Napier. This was wrong in Jane, Mr. Balcombe. Doubtless the silly thing had told her so ; but she must have known that I would repose such confidence nowhere, and certainly not with such a person as that.

“ “ From this time I saw that Ann was an altered being. She was obviously more happy. Her colour, which had faded, resumed its freshness ; her look of abstraction now became that of one that chews the cud only of sweet fancies ; her eye brightened ; her smile became spontaneous ; and, though less volatile, she was obviously more cheerful. Mrs. Napier, who had, with all a mother’s solicitude, remarked a former change of the

opposite character, one day spoke of this to me in terms which led me to hint my suspicion of the cause. Judge my astonishment when she assured me that I must be mistaken; as William, not long before he left home, had addressed Ann, and was not only rejected, but condemned to be for ever silent on that subject. I was the more amazed, because this conduct was so much the reverse of that observed towards my brother. I could only account for it by supposing that she, believing that idle rumour about me, had considered Mr. Napier as having trifled unjustifiably with her feelings. Further inquiry showed that her conduct on the occasion had been that of one who felt herself injured and insulted.

“‘Now, Mr. Balcombe,’ continued the young lady, ‘I find that with none but good intentions I have suffered myself to be made an instrument of much mischief. Mr. Napier and Ann have both been rendered unhappy, and my poor brother has been kept wearing his heart out in a vain pursuit. Worse than vain it might have been, had Ann, in the desperation of her wounded feelings, deserted, and even insulted, as she supposed, by the man she loved, thrown herself into Howard’s arms, they must have been wretched. Notwithstanding what I said the other night, I do think there are hearts that can know no second love. Ann Napier’s is one of them. My first duty was to undeceive my brother. He could hardly be expected to take this kindly; and when I advised

him to urge for a decisive and final answer, he seemed as if he thought I had turned against him. But he knows me better; though it is natural he should feel hurt when he sees me (though he acknowledges it to be my duty) seeking to repair my error at his expense. I at length prevailed with him to put his fate to the final test; and to-day he did so, with the result I had anticipated. He is now out of the field, but Napier will hold himself bound in honour to his promised silence, and from Ann he will certainly never get a hint to speak. Now it is for me who made this difficulty to remove it, and I invoke your aid in doing so. I mistake very much if you will be long at a loss to bring together two young people whose hearts are panting to fly into each other's bosoms."

CHAPTER XIX.

Mercutio, thou consort'st with Romeo.

SHAKESPEARE.

"THIS," continued Balcombe, "is the substance of Miss Howard's communication. Now go to sleep and dream about it, and to-morrow we will think what is to be done."

I would at once have entered into the discussion of measures, but Balcombe cut me short by saying, "What you are bound not to do in person, you have no right to do by another. I am free to act as I please. *Leave me so*, and beware of proposing that I shall do anything; for *whatever you* may propose, *that* I certainly will never do."

I could reply nothing to this. I saw that with all Balcombe's zeal for my happiness, his aid was like some talismans of which we read in oriental tales, the virtue of which was lost to the possessor the moment fear entered his heart, or any temptation turned him from the straight line of duty. I therefore obeyed him so far as to hold my tongue. Whether I slept much the reader will judge.

After breakfast the next day, when my mother went to her household affairs, and Laura to her lessons, Balcombe detained Ann in the parlour by some slight pretence, and then kept her in chat too busily to let her get away. I would have left them, but I found that Jane, with a countenance of great demureness, was fixing herself to her work, with a full purpose to sit them out. I loitered a moment, trying to devise some means to draw her away, when Balcombe, with his accustomed directness, said to Ann,

"I wish to have some private conversation with you, my dear. Where shall it be?"

Jane instantly rose, and without raising her eyes, began to gather up her work, saying something about leaving the room to them, in that pecu-

liar tone which is meant to be soft and complying, but which, proceeding from the lips of a woman, is a sound that no practised ear will ever hear without some apprehension of mischief. For my part, I seized my gun, and betook myself to the fields; but whether I saw hare or partridge that day, the reader knows as well as I. As little do I know how long I was out. It might have been a century, or perhaps not more than half as much. It certainly was no short time, though I am not sure that the sun had moved more than fifteen or twenty degrees before I returned to the house. As I entered, Balcombe opened the parlour door and met me with a smile and an extended hand. He took mine, led me into the room, drew back, and closed the door after him. Ann was there, and alone.

What passed? That, reader, you shall never know. As a stranger, you cannot complain that you have not enough of my confidence. I know that there is precedent of high authority in favour of my telling you of every word, and look, and tear, and blush. But you must be content to know that I left the room the plighted lover of one to whom, the day before, I had not been at liberty to speak even the name of love.

What passed for some days after this I do not remember. My brain was in a whirl, my mind in a tumult of bliss. I was greeted with the warmest congratulations by my dear mother, who lost sight of all prudential considerations in contemplating the happiness of her children. Laura was per-

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fectly wild with delight, and even Jane felt the necessity of trying to seem glad. She made a poor hand of it. She was gloomy and sad, and I thought it cost her an effort not to be peevish and morose.

The cause of this, perhaps, may have been that she saw nothing of Douglas. During our last visit to Oakwood, he had paid her little attention, and seemed wholly occupied with his attractive cousin. Several days had now passed, and he had not come near us. I had no right to complain that under such circumstances Jane thought more of herself than of me. At last he came, but in attendance on Miss Howard. I was sitting with Ann in the little parlour when they drove to the door. She leaped from the barouche, and while he staid to give some orders about the horses, ran into the house, and entered the parlour.

One glance at Ann's blushing countenance told her all. She stopped, and looked first at one and then at the other, until Ann, advancing, took her hand. Miss Howard, without speaking, stooped to kiss her, when the timid girl suddenly bowed her head, and hid it in the bosom of her friend. Miss Howard caressed her tenderly, and then looking up at me, with a smile and a tear, said, "All right! all well! Thank God! thank God!" She extended her hand to me, and had just disengaged herself from Ann's embrace, when Douglas entered. The family now collected, all but Jane. After a while I went to look for her.

Nobody wanted to see her, she said. Besides, she had never permitted herself to sit in the parlour since the day she had been dismissed from thence so cavalierly. I tried to rally away her ill humour, and told her she was not sure she might not have her turn in the exclusive use of that room before night.

As it chanced, I had an opportunity to fulfil my prediction. In the course of the evening, finding none but her, Douglas, and myself in the room, I went out, after casting a significant look at her, which she answered by biting her lip, and looking anything but amiable. What passed I never knew. She was plainly out of humour with Douglas, and a lover's quarrel, with its usual consequences, was a matter of course. When we met again, I saw that a perfect understanding had been restored, but the countenance of Douglas showed that some unpleasant feeling was on his mind; while Jane, with the complacency of secret satisfaction, demurely kept her eyes upon her work.

Once or twice I saw her glance at Balcombe with some slight expression of malicious pleasure, for which I was unwilling to account by attributing such a feeling to the part he had acted between me and Ann. Perhaps he had incurred her displeasure by taking less notice of her than of either her cousin or sister. But the grounds of his attachment to Ann were natural and had been openly avowed. No invidious distinction was implied in his preference of one with whom he had been

domesticated when a child. As to Laura, she had taken to Balcombe at first sight, and her playful manners had long removed every feeling of strangeness on his part. Jane, on the contrary, not only to him but to every person, bore herself habitually with an air which not only forbade any familiar approach to herself, but seemed to rebuke it between others. She had therefore no right to complain, or be hurt that she did not receive more of his attention than he had reason to believe would be acceptable to herself. But perhaps she thought, as I sometimes did, that Balcombe had looked on her with an air of suspicion, and had tasked his keen sagacity to find out what part she might have had in weaving the tangled web which he had set himself to unravel. But this was now past; and having accomplished his object he had thrown himself into our amusements and conversations like a playful child, forgetful of the past, reckless of the future, and intent only on the present moment. An occasional allusion to his wife and child alone showed that he had a thought or feeling not in common with us all. Then he was impatient to see; but the interval between the adjustment of my little affair with Ann, and the session of the chancery court at Fredericksburg, was too short for a visit to them. It was his wish, too, to bring them to see us, but the unsettled condition of our affairs forbade that.

At a late hour Douglas returned to Oakwood, leaving Miss Howard. The next morning he

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came back, and handed her a letter from her brother. She seemed a good deal moved while reading it, but presently called for the barouche and prepared to go home. The movement was so unexpected as to excite some solicitude, with earnest remonstrances from our whole party against her departure. Jane seemed particularly uneasy, and pressed so eagerly to know the cause of Miss Howard's sudden departure, that I saw she hoped to obtain, by that means, a sight of the letter that occasioned it. She was not gratified, however; and I thought the young lady met her expostulations with an air in which there was something of reproach. At length Jane made up to Douglas, and I thought she asked the explanation of him. His answer seemed to increase her uneasiness, and in the close of the conference I thought I heard him say,

“ We could not have anticipated any such thing ; but his feelings are so wrought up that he cannot stop on any middle ground. But this will not prevent my seeing you as often as possible, though not so often as heretofore.”

They now left us to wonder and guess ; for Miss Howard displayed great emotion at parting, expressing strongly in some way her feelings towards each of us ; affectionate reverence for my mother, the highest respect for Balcombe, kindness to me, fondness to Laura, the most melting tenderness to Ann, and a something the reverse of all these to Jane. This last, however, was only manifested

so far as a lady may properly permit herself to display such feelings.

The very next day, in riding out, Balcombe and I met Howard. He looked wretchedly, was much reduced, and the momentary flush which passed over his face at the first encounter was succeeded by ashy paleness. His salutation to me was friendly, though I saw that he shrank from the touch of a favoured rival's hand. To Balcombe he merely bowed with stately coldness, which seemed unnoticed by him. I now expressed my regret that we had seen so little of him, reminded him of our long visit, and pressed him to return it. To all this he answered evasively at first; but at length said,

"I perceive that my sister did not deliver my message yesterday. It was not exactly suited to a lady's mouth, but she might have handed you my note. Did she do so?"

"She did not. What message could she have been charged with which should have prevented me from saying anything that I have now said?"

"I will tell you," said Howard, gravely. "I charged her to give you an assurance of my continued esteem and friendship, but to say to you that I could neither visit in person, nor permit her to visit at a house, where we must meet on equal terms, and treat as a gentleman, an impertinent intermeddler in other men's affairs."

I was completely thunderstruck at these words; and Balcombe, with all his quickness, did not seem

at once to understand them. As soon as he did he said, with perfect calmness,

“If I could perceive any motive, sir, that you can have to fasten a quarrel on me, I should suppose that remark was meant to apply to me.”

“You have no concern with my motives, sir,” said Howard. “It is enough for you to know that the remark was meant for you. But I have no need, it seems, to tell you that. Conscience was beforehand with me, and leaves nothing for me but to punish the offence.”

“Mr. Howard,” replied Balcombe, speaking with measured deliberation, “I have heretofore cherished a high respect for you, and the most perfect good will. I should now be loath to be angry at anything you may say under the influence of a distempered excitement. But it is necessary to admonish you, sir, that he who attempts to inflict unmerited punishment, *must himself be punished.*”

During the first part of Balcombe's speech, Howard had permitted his countenance to relax into cool scorn, at what perhaps seemed to him an ill-timed expression of regard. The last three words, and the startling coldness of the emphasis upon them, completely undeceived him, and threw him into a paroxysm of rage.

“*Punishment, sir!*” exclaimed he. “Do you talk of *punishment to me?*”

“Such punishment as *you* talked of to *me*, sir, exactly such as you propose to inflict, *just such* shall recoil on your own head.”

"I understand you, sir," said Howard. "For the sake of a paltry advantage you would affect to consider *me* the party aggrieved. You are welcome to it, sir, if you think that any call that I can make upon *you* will discharge the indignity which I have just hurled in your teeth. I repeat, sir, that you are an impertinent intermeddler in other men's affairs."

"And I," said Balcombe, "must be savage indeed if I could wish to add to the torture which a man bred in the school of honour must endure, when he comes to reflect on having uttered what he *knows* to be *false*."

"False, sir!" exclaimed Howard, foaming with rage.

"False, sir," said Balcombe. "Your sister's ingenuousness is my pledge that she told you what passed between us. You know of my relation to Ann and William Napier. Therefore you know that what you have said *is false*."

"It is well, sir," said Howard, recovering himself. "I am glad that you will soon know that I have not sought to withhold the advantage which you have endeavoured to secure by this insolence."

He now touched his hat, and moved on haughtily.

"I am sorry for that young fellow," said Balcombe. "His life has been one of such prosperity, that he is utterly incapable of bearing disappointment. His unquestioned right to everything he

has wanted heretofore, makes him imagine that he must be wronged when any wish is not gratified. He is obviously quite beside himself; and if I am to judge by his last speech, he has already entered on some course of measures to obtain redress for his imagined wrong."

"How do you infer that?" asked I.

"He seems," said Balcombe, "to think that I wished to bandy insults with him, that I might secure to myself the privilege of the challenged party, and this, I understand, his magnanimity has already accorded to me."

"Good God!" exclaimed I, "is it possible he has been guilty of such folly?"

"The man is mad," said Balcombe, "and must be dealt with as a madman."

Arriving at home, we found Douglas there. He was chatting with the ladies, and seemed more than usually gay. Premonished, however, as to the purpose of his visit, I discovered that he had something on his mind, and was not surprised to see him seize an occasion to speak apart to Balcombe, and slip a note into his hand. I guessed the nature of it, and soon gave the latter an opportunity to speak to me.

"As I conjectured," said he, putting the paper into my hand. "This pampered child of fortune has actually summoned me to the field."

"Surely," said I, "you don't mean to fight on such a fool's quarrel as this?"

"Had I not been personally insulted this morn-

ing," said Balcombe, "I might have thought it my duty to find some pacific means of bringing the young man to his senses; as it is, he must take his course, until he brings up with the consequences of his own folly."

"Say rather madness," said I. "He is incapable of anything so silly or unjust as this would be, considered as the act of a man in his right mind. It is perfect phrensy."

"You say right," said Balcombe, "and I must therefore not indulge the idea of punishing it. But I must do the best I can to do myself justice without hurting him."

"And what will that be?" asked I.

"Let time and circumstances decide," said Balcombe. "Mean time speak with Douglas, and tell him, that after what passed to-day, I waive all the privileges of a challenged party, and not only accord to Mr. Howard the satisfaction he claims, but leave it to him to decide on all the circumstances of time, place, and mode."

"Do you not make an important and gratuitous concession?"

"Not at all," said Balcombe. "I shall not fight to humour this foolish boy. I do it only to redeem my own honour, and that is not to be done by half measures. I shall therefore give him all the game into his own hands, and let him play it as he will."

"This is provoking," said I, "that one man's folly should have power to neutralize the wisdom of another."

"It cannot be helped," said Balcombe. "As long as God is pleased to send fools into the world, they must be treated according to their folly. We must defend ourselves against all noxious animals, each according to his nature, and that of his attack. A helmet is no defence against a rattlesnake, nor can all the wisdom of man protect his honour from the poisonous breath of insult, but by showing a spirit to repel and chastise it."

"Still," said I, "at your time of life, and with your established character, it seems superfluous to incur a peril which may leave your wife and child without a protector. I do wish, therefore, you would authorize me to try to accommodate this matter with Douglas."

"I have no objection," said Balcombe, "to your listening to any suggestions Mr. Douglas may make, but none must come from us. I dare say he begins to repent of the hand he has had in this foolish business, but he must pacify his own conscience as he may. As to my wife, were the peril real and formidable, she would never have me shrink from it. But there is no danger, in fact, and I am half ashamed to see that you are giving me great credit for coolness, and all that, when there is nothing at all to jar my nerves."

"The idea is new to me," said I, "that there is no danger in such rencounters."

"They are dangerous enough," said Balcombe, "but little so to a man whose familiarity with greater dangers has given him command of his

nerves and weapons, unless he meets one having the same advantages."

"He is a capital shot," said I.

"I dare say he is," replied Balcombe; "but the skill of a man who can shake with rage as he did to-day is of little avail. He who cannot command one feeling has but little power over any other. I don't mean to question Mr. Howard's courage. I have no doubt he is brave. But the bravery which shall enable a man to possess all his faculties in danger, is not commonly found in men who have never had to contend with their own passions. But enough of this. You must see Douglas and arrange preliminaries."

I did see Douglas, and communicated Balcombe's resolution. He seemed surprised that he should renounce his privilege, but saw the sufficiency of his motive as soon as I told him what had passed in the morning.

"At least," said he, "I shall give Howard as little advantage as possible. Indeed none; as I shall name pistols, and I presume Mr. Balcombe is a good shot. But I must ask the liberty to be present when you communicate the result of our conference. I don't expect he will offer any objection, but I may discover if anything is unacceptable to him, and take occasion to change it."

We accordingly made a formal set of regulations by which the proposed combat was to be governed, of which each took a copy, and giving a hint to Balcombe, we all walked out together. I then

handed Balcombe the paper, which he read without suggesting any difficulty. As we were about to separate, however, he said,

"Mr. Douglas, it is but fair to tell you that you have perhaps given me an advantage of which I ought not to avail myself. I see you limit us to fire after one and not after three. Now, sir, I am so quick a shot, that this short notice is altogether in my favour."

"I admire your frankness, sir," said Douglas, "and at your suggestion will substitute five for three; but my friend will perhaps have no more occasion for the additional time than you."

"Perhaps not," said Balcombe; and drawing his pistol at the moment, he cocked it, threw a dollar into the air, and struck it as it fell.*

"You see," said he to the astonished Douglas, "that I have dealt fairly with you. This is not done by way of bravado, to be reported to Mr. Howard. On the contrary, on his behalf I advise, and on my own I beg, that you will say nothing of it to him."

"You are right, sir," said Douglas; "I will be silent; and the time shall be enlarged from three to five."

The hour was now fixed for twelve o'clock the

* There is no exaggeration in this. Lieutenant Scott, of the United States army, has a thousand times performed feats with the pistol, to which this is but a trifle. The fatal result of duels so common in the western country, is in accordance with the specimen of skill here given.

next day, during our morning ride, at a place convenient to both parties; and Balcombe, leaving us, returned to the house alone.

"This is a foolish business, William," said Douglas.

"It is so," I replied, "and I am afraid you have had some hand in it."

"I fear so too," said he, "though I have earnestly endeavoured to prevent it. But there is a desperation in Howard's feelings that will hear no reason. I had no idea that he would be so moved at the information that I gave him, especially as, his own pretensions being withdrawn, he had really no right to take offence."

"And what information did you give him?" I asked.

"Only what Jane told me, that the match between you and Ann was brought about by Balcombe's interference."

"And did Jane tell you that?"

"Yes. She had no time to give particulars; but when I inquired how the barrier which prevented your approach to Ann on that subject had been removed, she gave me that answer."

"Were you aware of that barrier?" said I.

"I was."

"By what means?"

"From Jane."

What could I say to this? Jane was my sister, and Douglas but an instrument in her hands. He had, indeed, made her fault his own, but *I* could

never hold him responsible for it. I could but be mortified and hurt, and bear my mortification in silence. Indeed, seeing no motive for Jane's conduct, and not suspecting that it could spring from the mere wantonness of causeless malice, I could only attribute it to indiscretion. At least I should have been glad to do so; but I could not help remembering that her whole manner showed that she took little interest in my happiness, and had thoughts and feelings of her own, of which none of the family were made partakers.

My uneasiness at the probable consequence of the adventure was of course increased at finding that it had had its origin in the folly of my own sister, and I thought with horror of the punishment she had perhaps prepared for herself. Of all this I could say nothing to Douglas. His esteem was necessary to her happiness, and the care of that was still my duty.

He left us after dinner, and returned to Oakwood. I passed the evening and night in great uneasiness; but Balcombe was calm and cheerful as usual, and slept like an unweaned child.

CHAPTER XX.

Beware of entrance into quarrel ; but, being in,
Bear it, that the opposer may beware of you.

SHAKESPEARE.

In the morning, as we rode together to the ground, he said to me,

“ I see you feel some solicitude on my account, and more, perhaps, on that of your friend Howard. I will tell you, therefore, that I don't mean to hurt him, or to let him hurt me.”

“ The first,” said I, “ depends on your will, but how will you guard against the other ?”

“ Quite easily,” he replied. “ Our pistols are to be held perpendicular until the word ‘ one ’ is uttered ; and I have no doubt that I can strike his from his hand before he can bring it down.”

“ Will you not throw away your fire on a ticklish experiment ?” said I.

“ If it were doubtful,” replied he, “ I would not hazard it. I would make his arm my mark, and, as it is, I shall take care if I miss the pistol to strike that. I stipulated to have the time prolonged on purpose that he might not be hurried. Douglas will certainly advise him not to contend vainly for

the first shot, and his dependence will be on firing deliberately after drawing my fire. So be under no uneasiness on my account."

We reached the ground in time. Douglas and Howard were there already. The latter seemed quite resolute, but his air was haughty and constrained, and his manner rather cold than simply cool. Balcombe, on the contrary, was bland, courteous, and easy in his deportment, displaying the same unpretending simplicity of character which always graced his noblest actions. The one either required, or thought he required an effort to command himself. The other made none, and needed none.

The ground was measured, and the parties posted. Douglas gave the word; and hardly had it reached my ear before I heard the report of Balcombe's pistol, and saw that of Howard fly from his grasp. I perceived by the twitching of his fingers, that the hand was, for the time, disabled by the jar, but he immediately asked for another pistol. I now said, in a low voice, to Douglas,

"Are you aware that that shot was not accidental?"

"How do you mean?" said he.

"I mean that Balcombe told me he would do exactly what he has done, and the precision of his shot shows that the life of Howard was absolutely in his power."

"You say true," said Douglas. "Howard must know this."

He accordingly approached his friend, and told him in a low voice what I had said. I never saw mortification and perplexity greater than the countenance of Howard displayed at this communication. At length he said aloud,

“I see, gentlemen, that I can go no further with this business. But I am sensible I ought not to accept my life at Mr. Balcombe's hands without making an apology, which, wronged as I am, I do not in my conscience feel to be due.”

On hearing this I turned to Balcombe, whose countenance, now for the first time, showed resentment. I asked him privately whether he would insist on an apology from Howard.

“None is necessary,” said he. “But to him I do not say so. I am here at his bidding. I promised that his proposed punishment should recoil on his own head, and I shall not help him to escape or mitigate it.”

I was now asked if Mr. Balcombe required an apology, and replied that Mr. Balcombe had no answer to give.

“What did he propose?”

“Nothing.”

“Did he wish another fire?”

“To that he had no answer to give.”

The perplexity of Howard was now at its height; and he at length sought to escape it by saying that if Mr. Balcombe would do nothing else, the business for which he came must go on. To this Balcombe only replied by coolly holding

out his hand to me for another pistol. This, of course, I did not give him. Howard had received his before his friend had been informed of Balcombe's intention; but Douglas insisted on knowing whether Mr. Balcombe would fire at Howard. To this question he received no answer, and then declared that the affair should proceed no further. Howard immediately, with an impatient gesture, turned, moved a step or two, and then went back to Douglas. Balcombe remained stationary. Observing this, I said to him, that Mr. Howard having left his post, he was at liberty to do so too.

"I am aware of what Mr. Howard has done," said Balcombe; "but, as I don't mean to govern myself by his example, I shall stay here until I am discharged by the voice of his friend."

"You *are* discharged, sir," said Douglas, giving his hand to Balcombe. "You have done all that becomes a gentleman."

"Then," said Balcombe, without moving, "I have done *nearly* all that I proposed. But I have kept my promise to Mr. Howard but in part. The full weight of the punishment he proposed for me must now fall on his own head. I will *now* say that I ask no acknowledgment from him. I have no need to ask it. If *he* is satisfied without redressing the wrong he imagines he has received, or acknowledging that which he has actually done, it is his affair, not mine. *It is enough for me to know that Mr. Howard can have no doubt that the injurious language applied by him to me is not*

warranted by the fact. I can have no interest in his admitting this. That is a matter which concerns his own honour. Mine is clear."

While Balcombe said this, Howard stood pale and ghastly, with his eyes fixed on the ground. During the last sentence he lifted them, and glared wildly on Balcombe, and then turning fiercely on Douglas, said,

"How is this, sir? Is it in your keeping that my honour has been tarnished?"

"Had you acted by my advice, Henry," replied Douglas, "I should hold myself bound to answer that question."

"By your advice!" cried Howard. "And was it not by your advice I left my post?"

"Yes," said Douglas; "but against my consent you first took it. But if you think your honour can be cleared by lifting your hand against the life of one who has given you yours, you can resume it. Mr. Balcombe is still at his post."

"My life! my life!" cried Howard, furiously. "And is it that paltry boon, the enforced acceptance of which has bound me hand and foot to submit to dishonour and insult?"

Saying this, he suddenly turned his pistol against himself. It was not cocked, and Douglas, wresting it from his hand, fired it in the air. The fury of Howard was now uncontrollable, and he was restrained with difficulty from doing mischief to himself or others. His impotent struggles at length exhausted the violence of his passion. He sunk

into a sort of sullen calm, and permitted himself to be led by Douglas to his barouche, and carried home.

On our part we took the road to Craiganet. Balcombe rode a while in silence, and at length said,

“I can never be thankful enough to Heaven for having been enabled to save myself without hurting that unfortunate young man. I only regret having said so much before I discovered his situation.”

“What have you discovered?” I asked.

“That he is actually mad,” said Balcombe; “unequivocally mad. You will find it so. His disappointment has shaken his brain, and his phrensy would naturally turn itself against you or me.”

This idea had not occurred to me before; but I now clearly saw that it was well founded, and rejoiced with Balcombe at his forbearance. We reached home too early to give occasion to any remark on our absence; and, but for my concern on account of poor Howard, I should again have enjoyed without alloy the pleasures which flow from the perennial fountain of love avowed, approved, and reciprocated. There was, indeed, another drawback. I could not consider Jane as the *intentional* author of the mischief that had been done, but her cold selfishness, her heartless indifference to the happiness of her friends, her ingratitude for Balcombe's generous zeal in our service, and her peevish disposition to take offence at every-

thing in which her wishes were not chiefly consulted, were sources of deep mortification. What effect the discovery of what had just passed might have upon her I could not anticipate. It could not change her nature, but I did hope it might bring her to a sense of her fault, and dispose her to live in future not so wholly for and in herself. Her very attachment to Douglas seemed, indeed, but a modification, and a slight one, of her ruling principle of self-love. Decidedly his superior in intellect, she exercised over him an influence which seemed exerted only for her own gratification. Indeed, her chief delight appeared to be in the amusement she found in playing on his feelings. She was well-pleased to make him happy; but if that could not be, the next best thing was to make him miserable. That she should form no part in the happiness or misery of any with whom she had to do, and of him especially, was what she could not bear. That *he* should be either grave or gay, merry or mad, or *neither*, without her agency or in spite of her, was nothing short of high treason. Poor fellow! the spell was upon him, and he could not break it. She had talent, accomplishment, beauty, address, and tact; and it was vain to expect that he should ever escape from her toils. He was much her junior, too; a circumstance that, up to a certain age, much increases a woman's power over her lover. As her brother, I was glad to have his constancy thus secured; as his friend, I might have regretted it.

But, though an amiable and honourable young man, he had not the qualities which I would choose in a friend, though I could not object to him as a future brother-in-law.

We saw nothing of him for a day or two, nor did we hear directly from Oakwood. A flying rumour, indeed, reached us, that Howard was ill and delirious. Of the truth of this Balcombe and I had little doubt; but it was our cue to seem to disregard it. At last the intelligence came direct in a note from Douglas to Jane, excusing his absence. My mother immediately urged me to visit Howard. I made such objections as I could without hinting at the truth, but they were overruled. I could ascertain whether the sight of me might have an injurious effect, and keep myself aloof, if necessary. I went, accordingly, and at the door was met by Miss Howard, who seemed in the greatest distress.

"For God's sake, Mr. Napier," said she, "what can be the matter? My poor brother raves continually about Ann, and you, and Mr. Balcombe, and dirks, and pistols, and duels; and seems, at times, bent even on self-destruction. Surely he has not been so unreasonable as to quarrel with you?"

"Not at all," said I, "I have seen him, and we parted on the most friendly terms."

"His pique against Mr. Balcombe," said Miss Howard, "is the most unaccountable thing; and if it is not altogether the effect of the disorder of his

mind, I ought perhaps to rejoice that his illness disables him to prosecute his revenge."

I now inquired for Douglas, and ascertained that the tone of Howard's ravings generally softened whenever my name occurred to him, and that he seemed to connect me in his imagination with the happiness of Ann, of whom he always spoke with the most melting tenderness. We thence inferred that the sight of me might be rather beneficial to him than otherwise. I accordingly proposed to Douglas to conduct me to his room.

I found him in bed, pale and squalid, with his hands and face besmeared with blood, which I supposed had been taken from his arm. As I entered, he looked at me with a stupid, vacant gaze, in which there was little of recognition, and, as I approached the bed, held out his hand in silence. I took it, and he, grasping mine, continued to keep his eye upon me. For a moment a glimpse of meaning gleamed in it, and then relapsing into the same appearance of stolidity, he let go my hand, and hid his under the bedclothes. I seated myself by him, and remained silent. In a few minutes he turned to me, and said, in a deep, hoarse whisper,

"Did you say she was well?"

"She is," said I, guessing at his meaning.

"And happy?" added he.

"As happy," said I, "as her concern for your illness will permit."

"Her concern for me!" he exclaimed, with a

wild, dissonant laugh. "But she is good. Yes, she is concerned for me," he added, in a touching tone. "She is so good. But she must not mind me. She *must* be happy. I am well—very well."

Saying this, he raised himself, and seemed about to leave his bed, when he fell back dizzy with loss of blood. Indeed, I ascertained that the calm state in which I found him had been the effect of profuse and repeated bleeding, which had left him utterly exhausted. I learned, also, that he had passed several days without sleep, and that anodynes had been administered which appeared to have composed him. The doctor, it seemed, looked to sleep as his great auxiliary, and his efforts now were to bring that to his aid.

Finding the effect of my presence not injurious, I determined to spend the night by his bedside, and give poor Douglas a chance to snatch some repose. I accordingly obtained the necessary instructions, and after supper took my post for the night. My patient continued until a late hour to oscillate between stupor and occasional fits of excitement. At length after midnight he sank into a profound sleep. About daylight I roused Douglas, and went to bed. It was near noon when I awoke, and Howard still slept. When I entered his room he lay still and pale, and but for his low deep breathing I should have thought him dead. I was impatient to see him open his eyes, for I could not look at him without fearing he might never open them

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again. But the doctor, stealing his hand to the pulse of the patient, pronounced that he was doing well, and encouraged us to hope he would awake in his senses.

He was not mistaken. Howard at length slowly opened his eyes, and looked around the room with a countenance intelligent and calm, though bewildered. He looked inquiringly at every person present, then at his hands, and at the bloody bed-clothes, and at length said,

“What does all this mean? Have I been ill?”

Being told that he had been, he asked a few more questions, the answers to which seemed to awaken a sort of dreaming recollection. After musing some minutes, he requested all to leave the room but Douglas and me. Then turning to him he said,

“How is this, Angus? How much of this is true—how much a dream?”

“I cannot tell that,” said Douglas; “but you have been ill, and delirious many days.”

“Then I have perhaps imagined it all?”

He relapsed into silence, and at length with some quickness asked for his pistols. Douglas brought him one.

“The other! the other!” said he. “I want both.”

Douglas now handed him the other, which had been shattered by Balcombe's ball. It had struck near the lock, and torn it off. As Howard looked

at it his pale cheek flushed slightly, and closing his eyes he said,

"It was no dream. Where is Mr. Balcombe? Not hurt! was he? I hope not. I think not. Perhaps I don't remember all things aright."

"He is well," said I, "and will be glad to learn that you are better."

"I thank him," said Howard. "He is a noble fellow. Have I not acted foolishly, wickedly, madly? I fear so. I wish to see Mr. Balcombe and tell him so. I must learn to love him *for her sake*."

He now held out his hand to me and grasped mine feebly. A tear rose to his eye as he said,

"I once thought to love you, William, for my sister's sake. But you must be *still dearer to me now*. You must make *her* happy, William, and when she sheds a tear to my memory, tell her I died blessing her, and her tears will not be bitter."

He was again silent. After a few minutes he spoke again.

"I have been selfish and unjust," said he. "Will not Mr. Balcombe come to see me? I have no right to ask it, but I wish to take him by the hand, and hear him say he forgives my insolence. I remember something of it, but I fear not all. I remember, too, he acted nobly, and shamed me into the dust. But I deserved it. Did I not?"

"You were not yourself, Henry. We are all now sensible of that. Mr. Balcombe was the first to discover it. He has no unkind feeling towards

you, and will be here as soon as he knows that you can see him."

We now prevailed on Howard to take some nourishment, and a servant was despatched to Craiganet to say that he was better, and expressed a wish to see Balcombe. I enforced this request by a note which removed all Balcombe's difficulties, and he came next morning. Another night's rest had completely calmed Howard's mind, and he now seemed to distinguish clearly between those recollections in which he could, and those in which he could not trust his memory. There was, indeed, a cloud on all that had happened, since the day he left Craiganet a discarded suitor; and he obtained from Douglas an exact account of all.

When Balcombe arrived, he was immediately conducted to Howard's room. Miss Howard was present when he entered. She was the first to greet him with great cordiality. He then approached Howard, who holding out his hand, said,

"This is very kind, Mr. Balcombe. I take your visit as a pledge that I am forgiven. But it will be gratifying to me, because it will humble my pride, to hear you say so."

Balcombe now, with the utmost delicacy, gave him the desired assurance, telling him he had no idea that he could be justly blamed for anything he did in the distempered condition of his mind.

"But you were not aware of that at the time, and therefore my gratitude must be measured by

your forbearance. You don't know, Margaret, that it is due to Mr. Balcombe's magnanimity that you still have a protector. I will not offend his delicacy by telling the story in his presence, but you must know all. Angus must tell you all."

Miss Howard turned an inquiring look on Balcombe, but he merely smiled and shook his head, saying,

"A foolish quarrel; nothing more."

"Yes, there was much more," said Howard; "and when you know all, Margaret, you must thank Mr. Balcombe for me as he deserves."

"I do thank him," said the young lady. "I know he deserves all my thanks."

Saying this, she left the room. I returned home, and Balcombe remained all night. The next day I returned to relieve Balcombe, but was told by the doctor that the presence of my friend was of great advantage to Howard, and that he had prevailed on him to stay there. Indeed it was delightful to see how the mind of Howard calmed itself under the mild ministrations of Balcombe, and how the originality of his thoughts, and the vividness of his conceptions and language, took possession of the faculties of the patient, and wiled him away from all subjects of painful reflection. There was, indeed, a healthfulness in the action of Balcombe's mind, which seemed to impart itself to all he associated with, dispelling phantasies, and healing sickly sensibilities as if by magic. His philosophy was nothing but plain common sense. The

art of making this acceptable was his great excellence.

The time now approached when it would be necessary to attend the chancery court at Fredericksburg. A few days before a letter was received from Major Swann, saying that he had intended to go to Fredericksburg, and there prepare his answer, but that his health would not permit it. As it was desirable to me that this document should be full and clear, I had expressed a wish to see it before filing. He therefore proposed that Balcombe and I should return to Raby Hall, and take with us a professional gentleman of the major's acquaintance to prepare the answer. I determined, therefore, to set out immediately, and would have asked the company of Balcombe, but that I saw he was become a sort of necessary of life to Howard. We parted, therefore, with an agreement to meet the night before court in Fredericksburg. Balcombe also requested, that as there would be no longer any need of John's services at Raby Hall, I would send him to Craiganet.

"I have no particular use for him," said he, "but I like to have him about me. He is quick and apprehensive, and I am never at a loss when I have him with me. Besides, I have been listening to good English so long, that I begin to long for some of his stories told in his own terse dialect."

CHAPTER XXI.

With every pleasing, every prudent part,
 Say what can Chloe want? She wants a heart.
 She speaks, behaves, and acts just as she ought,
 But never, never reached one generous thought.
 Virtue she finds too painful an endeavour,
 Content to dwell in decencies for ever.

POPE.

WHEN I reached home, I discovered by the first glance at Jane that she had heard all from Douglas, who had been there. At the same time a mysterious look, as she rolled up her eyes, lifted one hand, and heaved a short sigh, told me that the secret was known to herself alone of all the household. As soon as she could catch me alone she exclaimed,

“Oh, William! to think of the mischief that *my* indiscretion was so near producing!”

“You are mistaken as to the cause, Jane,” said I.

“Oh no!” said she, “I know. Douglas told me it was the effect of my foolish speech to him, which he repeated to Howard. Though, to tell the truth, I don’t see that I am so much to blame, for how did I know that Howard was crazy enough to quarrel about such a thing. Indeed I am glad to

hear you say that I was not the cause of the quarrel."

"I said that your *indiscretion* was not the cause. You are never indiscreet, Jane. I almost wish you were sometimes."

"Gracious Heaven, William!" she exclaimed, with a look of horror quite theatrical; "you do not mean to impute to me any *design* to bring about such consequences?"

"Nothing like it," said I. "No design at all. Nothing but a perfect indifference to consequences which you did not foresee might react on yourself."

She now looked at me with an expression of undissembled amazement. Up to this time she had always used freely the elder sister's privilege of rebuking my faults. Of hers I had never presumed to speak. But the tone of calm displeasure in which I spoke reversed our position at once, and she said with an air of anxious humility,

"William! what *does* this mean?"

"Nothing," replied I, "but that I would not have you deceive yourself, and so aggravate a real fault by endeavouring to correct one which is altogether imaginary."

"And what is that real fault, brother?" said she, meekly.

"Selfishness," replied I.

"Selfishness! selfishness!" screamed Jane, indignantly, and immediately endeavouring to resume the ascendant. "Selfish! I who—but I won't be

my own trumpeter. But *you know enough to know, William, that I am anything but selfish.*"

"I know you think so, Jane, and I say this to undeceive you. Were I merely disposed to wound, I might call it malevolence; but it is not that."

"Selfishness and malevolence!" said she. "I selfish and malevolent? I who—"

"I know what you would say," I replied. "The proofs of benevolence to which you would appeal are no secret. If they were, I might judge of them differently. But I am not mistaken. Now look at this business. Had you not been wrapped up in your own schemes, could you not have spared enough of sympathy to me, and gratitude to one to whom we both owe so much, to refrain from applying to Balcombe the epithet of *matchmaker*? Could you not have heard of the late occurrence with pleasure at the escape of our friends, instead of losing all other interest in the affair but that which grew out of *your own* part in it? Could you not bear the well meant remonstrance of a brother, without endeavouring to put him in the wrong, by imputing to him words he never uttered? Did I say you were malevolent?"

"You said *malevolence*," said she.

"Still struggling for victory," replied I, "still all for self. I did say malevolence. I said I did *not* impute to you malevolence. Was not that it?"

"That was not what you meant," said she.

"Am I then in the habit," asked I, "of saying one thing when I mean another?"

She half raised her eyes and looked spitefully at me, but did not dare to say "Yes." But she would say nothing else, and so her spirit again gave way, and she burst into tears.

I would not have the reader suppose I saw this with indifference. A woman in tears, and that woman my sister, was no pleasant sight. But I manned myself to bear it, and saw her through a fit of hysterics without running away, or calling for help. What I had begun I determined to go through with. She at length reached that point of exhaustion at which the pathetic seems more practicable than any other mode of eloquence, and lifting up her hands and eyes, exclaimed plaintively,

"Oh me! to be accused of selfishness by my own brother!"

"Was it then a *brother*," asked I, "whose hopes of happiness you sought to destroy for the chance of bettering yours?"

"Good Heaven, William!" she exclaimed, with well acted amazement, "what do you mean?"

"Did you not tell my father and Ann," I asked, "that Miss Howard had avowed a decided preference for me?"

"I said I had been told so by another," was the reply.

"By a confidential friend. Was it not so?"

"I said I was told that the communication was made in confidence."

"And the object of that confidence was—Sally Grey! The silly, flippant, indiscreet, and vulgar Sally Grey, the confidant of the highminded, delicate, refined, intellectual Margaret Howard! I will not ask you, Jane, if you believed that. But I will ask you if you did not tell Ann that I was engaged to Miss Howard?"

"I told her everybody said so."

"And believing it yourself, doubtless, you encouraged her to believe it."

"And what right had I to doubt it?" she asked.

"You could not believe it," I replied, "because you were in the secret. I was not. But you and Douglas perfectly understood how it was that Miss Howard and I were thrown so much together. He is an honourable young fellow. Are you content that he should know that you encouraged Ann to believe it, and that the notable device of keeping her room unless I would promise eternal silence was of your suggestion?"

"Oh, William!" she exclaimed, with an alarmed look.

"Douglas," I continued, "does know of the interdiction. Does he know how it was brought about? Your silence says no. And though your love for him prompted the deception, yet for the world you would not have him know it. What is it, Jane, that bribes conscience, and makes it a more

lenient judge than a devoted lover? Can selfishness achieve a greater triumph?"

She made no answer, but at length sobbed out in a reproachful and querulous tone,

"I have no home but yours; no protector but you."

"Still harping on self," said I. "Will it not even suffer you to remember that *none* of us has any home. That your *mother* has no home? And if you ever have a home, at least while you are single, you will owe it to one who has perilled his life to serve you, and towards whom you have never permitted yourself to feel one sentiment of gratitude."

"I am sure," said she, "he never did anything on my account, and does not care a straw what becomes of *me*."

"And therefore you, *who are not at all selfish*, wantonly asperse and endanger the life of one, whose only merit is his gratitude to your grandfather, and his generous devotion to your brother, because, if he serves you at all, it will be but incidentally."

She saw that in her eagerness to defend herself she had given up her cause, and again had recourse to tears. I went on:

"As to your having no protector, Jane, but me, that is true, and I therefore am doing the duty of one, painful as it is. It is my duty to free your mind from the delusions which self-love, and the flattery of a certain *clique* of sentimentalists, have

palmed on you for truth. I have no wish to mortify you. You have qualities of the highest order, which fit you to be the happiness or the torment of your friends. Which you shall be depends on your coming to a right understanding of yourself. Learn to bear the thought that others may be happy, without owing their happiness to you, and then, if you cannot make them so, you will at least not make them wretched. Look into your own heart, and you will see that there has been the root of all this bitterness. Instead, therefore, of cherishing angry feelings against your brother, remember that he not only forgave his own wrongs, but forbore to speak of them. Let that be my pledge, that having done my duty now, you shall not find me inclined to recur to this unpleasant topic. On the contrary, assure yourself, that I shall never fail in the respect and tenderness due to a lady and a sister."

Saying this, I took her hand, and she, subdued and softened, threw her arms around my neck, and now wept penitential and salutary tears.

As the affair between Balcombe and Howard was no longer a secret, I made no scruple of telling the whole story to my mother and Ann. I knew they would hear it all after I was gone, and I wished to witness the pleasure with which Ann would look on this new display of the noble qualities of her friend. She was by this time as far gone as I in confidence in the resources of Balcombe; and if he had promised her the crown of

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China, she would hardly have doubted the fulfilment of the promise.

The next day I left home, and went as far as the house of Mr. W——, the lawyer mentioned by Major Swann, and the day after we rode together to Raby Hall.

I was pleased to find the old gentleman only so much indisposed with a slight rheumatism, as to make it unadvisable to go from home at that inclement season. James had in a great measure recovered his spirits. He seemed quite domesticated at the hall, and happy in the free use of books which he read with his sister. In her I saw no change, except that she had been drawn out by degrees from that shrinking reserve to which she had condemned herself, and now showed in conversation the same superiority of intellect of which I had seen so many other proofs. What punishment could be too severe for the wretch by whose villany such a woman had been lost to the world and to herself?

Mr. W——, whose business required his presence elsewhere, at once betook himself to that which brought him to Raby Hall. He did not sleep until he had done his work, and next morning left us immediately after breakfast.

Before his departure, he admonished Mr. Swann that it was proper he should send the answer and packet by some confidential person, and turning to me, added,

“No person can be more worthy of such confi-

dence than yourself, Mr. Napier; but you will nevertheless see that this paper should reach the court without ever having been in your hands."

I felt the justice of this, and therefore did not touch it; though I saw, with some anticipation of disappointment, that the packet was too large to contain merely such a will as my father's memorandum spoke of. I saw, too, where the scorched envelope had crumbled away, nothing but the appearance as of an old newspaper. But a moment's reflection satisfied me, that whatever unimportant papers it might contain, there was certainly some document there of great consequence, and that Montague was especially anxious to keep that from falling into my hands. Why else had my appearance broken up his repose, and determined him even to risk his life to destroy it or possess himself of it?

After some reflection, the major determined to ask James to take charge of the packet, which he agreed to do, and it was settled that we should go together. The next day but one was court day, and the distance almost too great for a day's ride. I had intended to go as far as Tapahannock that evening, but James could not be ready until morning. I therefore determined to wait for him.

Walking out in the evening, I met a man mounted on a fine roan horse, of remarkable action and fleetness. I thought I had rarely seen one that got over the ground with so much ease to himself and his rider. I turned as he moved

rapidly by, and remarked the fine and vigorous movements of the animal as he went from me. Charles was not far behind me, and I saw the horseman stop and speak to him. He then passed on, and I waited till Charles came up.

"Who was that, Charles?" said I.

"I don't know, sir. He stranger to me, master."

"What did he want with you?"

"Just ask me if that was you, sir, and if you was going to start to Fredericksburg this evening. He say he want company."

"And what did you tell him?" said I, not liking to give my company to one so free of his.

"I tell him, sir, I hear 'em say you wasn't going to start 'fore morning. Then he say you have mighty long ride, and I tell him you got a good horse, carry you to Fredericksburg mighty handy before bedtime."

Returning to the house, I sat with Mr. Swann, who could not take his usual exercise, and to whom, therefore, a companion was more necessary than usual. Before I came in he had been talking with James, who no sooner found me engaged in conversation than he resumed his book. Our thoughts necessarily ran on Montague and his machinations, and we spoke of him, forgetting the presence of poor James. I am not sure that the major was aware of his ignorance of his sister's history. Be that as it may, he let fall some expression which struck on James's ear with a shock that made him

spring into the middle of the floor. Startled at this movement, I looked at him, and saw him staring wildly on the major. At length he recovered himself enough to ask the meaning of what he had heard. Unluckily the major gave an answer, which he perceived to be designedly evasive.

The change in his whole appearance and manner at once made me sensible of the reason of Mary's caution to Balcombe concerning him. I have never seen the wildness of rage and desperation so displayed as in his countenance. The glare of his eye, the paleness of his face, the blackness about the mouth, and the foam that gathered at its corners, as he stood grinding his teeth in silence, were horrible to behold. At last he exclaimed, "I *will* know the truth," and rushed from the room.

I afterward learned that he had found Charles, and wrung from him the whole story, which he had probably heard from his mother.

CHAPTER XXII.

He knew and crossed me in the fray.
I gazed upon him where he lay,
And watched his spirit ebb away.

BYRON.

I SAW NO more of James that evening, nor did poor Mary appear at supper. Late at night he came into my room, where he lay, and went to bed, but not to sleep. By daylight our horses were at the door, and James made his appearance. Something had put it into my head to take my pistols, and I asked James if he was armed. He only replied by grasping the handle of his dirk with one hand, and pointing with the other to his pistols under his coat. These were all the same weapons of which Balcombe had been robbed. He had given them to James, saying,

"Here, my boy, are a dirk and a pair of pistols that never failed their master. I hope you may never have cause to use them; but if you do, that they may serve you as well as they have me."

"I am afraid," said James, "they may lose their virtue in my hands."

"Never fear," said Balcombe. "Be always sure that your cause is good, and learn to use them

with *deliberate promptitude*, and they'll not fail you."

James had not forgotten this, and as he turned I heard him mutter,

"A good cause, and deliberate promptitude."

In these words I was sure I heard the doom of Montague. It was in vain to think of saying anything to calm his excited feelings, so we mounted our horses and rode away in silence.

At Tapahannock we stopped for breakfast, and there found the knight of the roan horse, who breakfasted with us, and immediately rode off. I was pleased at this, for it gave me a favourable opinion of my own address and dignity. Having no desire for his company, and remembering the wish he had expressed, I took care to meet all his advances towards my acquaintance with a cold and stately courtesy which was intended to repel without offending. Seeing him, then, ride off without having proposed to travel with me, I had little doubt that I had acquitted myself well of this delicate task, and perhaps made him feel that there was some difference between us, which forbade his intended overture. This was fifteen years ago, reader, and I was then a boy; and though the fortunes of my family were fallen, I had not yet lost a vague notion of some peculiar merit belonging to the blood of Raby and Napier which flowed in my veins. Such notions had indeed been exploded long before, but I did not know that. In the progress of events and manners, I am not sure

that the ancient order has not been reversed. It is perhaps a disadvantage now to be what was once called "well born." It is considered merely as affording *prima facie* evidence that a man is arrogant, self-important, and satisfied to be a fool, because he does not know it. I mention this error of my youth, only that I may proclaim my repentance of it. Having had occasion to allude frequently to my family, I feel that it may be necessary to bespeak your favour, and, perhaps, forbearance, by disclaiming that foolish family pride which I then cherished. I did cherish it. Notwithstanding my professions to Balcombe, I had more of it than he would have approved. Indeed I did not pride myself on the individual merit of any ancestor; for I am not aware that, since the old baron whose name I bear, there was any such merit to be proud of. The name alone, as that of a family, which, through several generations of uninterrupted prosperity, had been looked up to by the less wealthy, was the source of my self-complacency. I had been aware of my relation to the noble patriot, of whose magnanimous devotion of life and fortune to his country Balcombe had spoken; but the idea of being proud of *him* had not occurred to me. My habit of thinking on the subject had been, that all the honour of the alliance was the other way. Why? If I could have found any rational answer to the question, I should have cherished this pride. As it was, I made haste to get rid of it, as soon as I discovered, that, in those

who still retain it, it is commonly in the inverse ratio to the respect of others.

We stopped again at a house between Tappanhook and Port Royal, and there again found the gentleman of the roan horse. Having now, as I supposed, taught him his distance, I thought I might condescend so far as to speak of the merits of his noble horse. The theme proved a grateful one. He expatiated on the performance of the animal and his own care for him.

"He *could* travel," said he, "as far again in a day as any common horse; and he travels so fast and so easy, that I should impose on him if I did not make short stages and long stops. I have been here an hour, and shall stay an hour longer, and pass you again before you get to Port Royal."

He now took advantage of the opening I had made, and ran on with a great deal of horse language. Being, like all young fellows of my standing in Virginia, a mighty foxhunter, I was of course an enthusiast in regard to horses; and found myself disposed to recognise a sort of equality in a man who conversed as learnedly, and with as much unction as any of my highborn companions, on this their favourite topic.

At length we went on, and left him taking his rest. We had not gone far before he swept past us at a rapid pace, and then, reining up his horse, said, as he would get to Port Royal some time before us, he would, if we thought proper, order dinner for us with himself, and await our arrival;

unless we proposed to spend the night there, and to wait for supper. I told him it was uncertain whether we should stop or go on, but that the dinner would be by no means unacceptable. He then said he would do as he had proposed, and pushed on.

On our arrival we found that he had been as good as his word, and that an excellent dinner was waiting for us. We dined heartily, and with the help of a good glass of wine, I found myself so much refreshed, that the distance to Fredericksburg seemed much less formidable than before. The stranger now called for his horse, and said,

"I now find the benefit of my mode of travelling. I have half an hour start of you; my horse is quite refreshed, and I shall reach Fredericksburg by dark, while you will have to spend the night here."

I was not in the humour to have my horse, or my skill in his management disparaged, and replied that, though I had ridden farther than he, I should still be in Fredericksburg by bedtime, which, as the weather was good, and the moon would give some light, would answer just as well as an earlier hour.

He now rode off, and the landlord, looking after him, said to me,

"You are a young traveller."

"I am young," said I; "but having travelled in the western settlements beyond the Missouri, I

think that, young as I am, I might pass for a pretty old traveller."

"There must be less danger travelling in that wild country," said he, "than I had thought."

"Why so?" asked I, with some pique.

"Because if you were as free of travelling in the night there as you are here, and of telling strangers about it, I should think you might have lost your money, or maybe your scalp."

"Do you know anything of that fellow?" I asked.

"I do not," said he; "but he has travelled up and down this road frequently of late, as if he had some business, and I cannot find out what it is. I should take him for a gambler, but he don't play; or a horse jockey, but he will neither buy, nor sell, nor swap. Altogether I don't like his ways, though I cannot well say why; but I have a notion I have seen honester men. If you'll take my advice, gentlemen, you'll stay where you are to-night, and go into town in the morning."

"We are both well armed," said I.

"And if you took notice," said the landlord, "he is armed too. Didn't you see his pistols under his coat?"

I had not observed them.

"There is a gang of them, I'm thinking," continued our host. "I have seen three or four fellows dodging about here for a day or two. They all seem to know one another, though they are

strangers to everybody here; and I see they all ride fine horses, and all carry pistols."

"Do you know *none* of them?" asked I.

"I have seen one of them, I think, a month or two ago," said the landlord, "but he don't seem to be just the same kind of a man with the rest. I have a notion he is a sort of head man among them."

"Is he a tall, stout, middle-aged, handsome man," said I, "with a dark complexion?"

"I dare say he may be good-looking enough when he is in health," said the landlord; "but he looks badly, and carries his arm in a sling."

As I described Montague, James, who understood me, looked eagerly on the landlord for his answer, and, as soon as he heard this last particular, insisted that we should go on. I reproved his too manifest impatience by a significant look, and he, taking the hint, contented himself with speaking contemptuously of the supposed danger. I had not at any time been inclined to evade it; and I was now conscious of something like the desire manifested by James, to meet and even court it. We accordingly mounted our horses, and moved on.

I was now struck with the change in James's appearance and manner. He had been not only silent, but gloomy and dejected all day. Now his countenance beamed with suppressed excitement; his movements were full of energy and alacrity, and the spirit which animated him seemed to ex-

tend to his horse, which moved off fresh and cheerful as in the morning. As soon as we were out of sight he took out his pistols, examined the flints and freshened the priming, with an air of grim satisfaction, and a sort of half smile in which there was a fearful meaning. I said nothing, but used the same precautions, and then betook myself to the more important task of thinking. From Port Royal to Fredericksburg the road runs for the most part through the valley of the Rapahannock, sometimes skirting the foot of the hill. About half-way between the two places the Richmond road comes down from the hills. Along this road Balcombe was to travel, and, leaving Craiganet after breakfast, would probably reach the point of intersection a little before us. I mentioned this to James, and he at once concurred with me in thinking that we should push on, and try to meet him there.

On reaching the fork of the road we made a short halt, and listened for the sound of horses' feet on the frozen ground. It was now night; but the moon, though low in the west, gave some light. The road was wide and the country open. We now reflected, that if there was danger it was before us; that it threatened us and not Balcombe; and that our only chance for his aid was that he might yet be behind. On reconsidering my calculation, I found that our late rapid ride had probably placed us ahead of him; and we determined to move on slowly and warily. We accordingly

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reined in our horses to a walk, and each drawing a pistol, we kept our eyes on the road before us. The moon at length sank behind the hills on our left, the sky became overcast, and we could no longer see distinctly any object more than a few feet off.

The road here runs between deep ditches, for the most part dry, the banks of which, with slight hedges on the top, form the enclosure of the adjoining fields. Across these ditches are small flat bridges at the gate of every farm. A few miles below Fredericksburg are two such gates and bridges directly opposite to each other. Just as we were passing these, two men sprang out from behind the bridges on either hand, and seized our horses. I instantly fired my pistol at the head of him who held mine. The shot would have been fatal, but at the same moment my left hand was seized by some one from behind, and I was jerked from my horse. The action threw my right arm up, and the bullet passed harmless over the villain's head. Both men then seized and held me fast. In the mean time I saw that James, who had not fired, was treated in the same way by two others. A fifth now appeared, who seemed to advance from a distance.

He approached James, and proceeded to search him. I saw him eagerly thrust his hand into the breast pocket of James's greatcoat; when the trampling of horses at a gallop was heard in our rear. A shot was fired, and the ball whistled over

our heads. My hands were free in an instant, and the men who had held me took to their heels. At the same moment I heard the report of James's pistol, and he exclaimed, "Die, villain!" The man who was searching him staggered back, and James, springing at him, bore him to the ground. Instantly I saw the gleam of his dirk as he lifted his hand.

"This for Mary Scott!" cried he; "and this! and this!"

And with every word down came the dirk. I sprang to him, caught his hand, and raised him from his prostrate enemy. In the same moment the horsemen from behind coming up, threw themselves from their horses, and proved to be no other than Balcombe and John.

"What is the meaning of this?" cried Balcombe. "Robbers?"

"Montagne's work," said I.

"Montagne!" exclaimed Balcombe; "where is he?"

"There he lies," said James, in the low grating tone of bitter exultation.

"But are you sure that is he?" asked I. "You could not distinguish him in the dark."

"I am not mistaken," said James. "I would not fire at the paltry tool he thrust upon the first danger. I knew *that* was not *himself*. Besides, the man was too low to be mistaken for him. But instead of searching for money, he betrayed himself by his impatience to get the packet. I remem-

ber now that his confederate saw where I carried it. His first action was to feel my pocket on the outside, and having ascertained what was there, he seized the packet with an eagerness not to be mistaken. I observed, too, that he used the left hand, which put the matter past doubt. But how could I mistake him?" continued he. "Is there no instinct in the sense of wrong like mine, to mark the villain for his punishment even in the darkest night? Laid beside him in the tomb, I would have known him, grappled with him, and torn his heart from his bosom."

I now inquired whether James still had the packet, to which he replied that Montague had taken it from him. John immediately approached the body, (for I shrank from the task,) and felt in his hands for the packet. The right arm was in a sling, as we expected. The left, as I afterward learned, lay extended at right angles to the body, but the hand was empty. While John was making this examination, a deep gurgling groan announced to us that the unfortunate wretch still breathed. We all immediately approached—for, with that groan, the horror with which we look upon the victims of violent death had vanished—and endeavoured to administer such relief as we might. It was to little purpose. He revived enough to utter a few words, which showed that he was conscious of the presence of all he most hated; and died, howling forth a strain of mingled execration and prayer—his last words displaying the same

selfishness, malignity, and slavish fear, that had characterized his whole life.

About this time a negro appeared on the scene of action, driving a wain of some sort, and we easily engaged his services to take the body into town. This being arranged, my thoughts recurred to the packet. I determined not to leave the spot without it. James was equally resolute in the same purpose, conceiving himself bound, as he said, to recover that which had been committed to his care. It was altogether probable that it would remain where it was until morning; but the bare possibility that it might be removed was greater than I chose to hazard. If I should remain, it was not merely possible, but probable, that I should find it; and James said, that to permit me to do so when he was aware of the object of my stay, would be a breach of trust. I admired and Balcombe praised his scrupulous fidelity, to which I had nothing to object, as the event must be the same whether he or I found it. We agreed therefore, to remain together, while Balcombe and John should go on to Fredericksburg with the body. To this John objected, saying it was no new thing to him to camp out, and he could be of service to us.

Balcombe, accordingly, moved on, and John betook himself to the task of making a fire. This, with the help of his rifle and powder, he soon accomplished, at the expense of the neighbouring fences; and having made ourselves somewhat

comfortable, we debated what should be done. The night was pitchy dark; we had already felt every inch of ground near where the body lay, and we both concluded that it was vain to extend the search any farther until morning. What was to be done in the mean time? We had our saddle blankets; Balcombe, with his usual thoughtfulness and generosity, had added his and his greatcoat; and we were tired enough to feel the want of sleep. But the possibility that the enemy might return forbade that, until John, who was never tired, remarking that he had not rode so far as we had, proposed to watch while we slept. There was something selfish in our assent to this proposal; but really the fellow seemed to have so few of the infirmities of humanity, that I had long ceased to regard anything as a hardship to him. Accordingly, with his aid, we arranged our bed and were soon fast asleep. Poor James, who had spent the preceding night tossing with passion, now slept as calmly as a child. His spirit seemed completely tranquillized by the death of Montague; and his whole manner was that of a man who had just accomplished a pleasant duty. He was asleep before I was, but not long.

CHAPTER XXIII.

My purse, my person, my extremest means,
Lie all unlocked to your occasions.

SHAKESPEARE.

It had been arranged that John should awaken us in a few hours, and take his turn; but he had no thought of this, and we slept on until broad daylight. We were then roused, and commenced our search; but, though aided by Balcombe, who returned to us at an early hour, we searched in vain. Yet we did not desist until every spot within the possible range to which Montague might have thrown the packet, had been examined over and over again. When nothing could be more certain than that the packet was not there, we went on to Fredericksburg.

What was now to be done? My solicitor was consulted, who said that we could do no more than file the answer of Major Swann, and await the coming in of that of Mr. Edward Raby. On this there was little reason to found any hope, but such was the regular course of business. An affidavit of James Scott, explaining how he had lost the paper committed to him, was also left with the solicitor, to be filed with the answer. It only re-

mained to take the proper measures to free James from the charge of homicide, and we were ready to go home.

Even when I journeyed from Missouri, not sure that I might not find Ann the wife of another, I hardly thought of my return to Craiganet with more pain than I now did. At the very moment when the packet was within my reach, and almost within my grasp, it had been carried off, and I had lost all trace of it. The very death of Montague seemed fatal to my hopes. While he lived, there was one who knew, however unwilling he might be to tell, what I wished to prove. Even the chance that, in his habitual dread of direct perjury, the truth might be wrung from him on examination, was better than any that now remained. It seemed most probable that Montague had put the packet in the hands of one of his accomplices. But who were they? Only one of them I had ever seen, and as he was an utter stranger, I had little hope of finding him. That he would never designedly cross my path was now sure.

Under these circumstances, I was not sorry to learn from Balcombe that business called him down into the county of Northumberland, and that he would be gratified if I would accompany him. I readily agreed to do so, and wrote my poor mother an account of the final defeat of all my hopes. James, who feared the story of our adventure might reach his sister in a distorted shape, pleaded that as a motive for going direct to Raby

Hall. Balcombe at once assented to this, and he left us, and returned to Port Royal the same evening. We, not having any occasion to reach Northumberland before court day, which was yet three days off, remained where we were until morning.

The reader may charge me with ingratitude, but I was half vexed at the perfect tranquillity with which Balcombe bore this final disappointment. When I saw him retain his cheerfulness and confidence under our former defeats, I caught the contagion of his feelings. When I saw him look death and dishonour steadily in the face, I did but admire his fortitude and energy. But now I could not look on the perfect nonchalance of his countenance without vexation. He saw this, and endeavoured to wile me from myself, by throwing into his conversation a double portion of that spirit and raciness which I had so much admired. But it was all in vain. I was incurably dull, dejected, and miserable.

“Come, come, William!” said Balcombe, “this will never do. You must learn to shake off vain regrets, and try to interest yourself in what yet remains to be done.”

“And what remains to be done?” asked I.

“Certainly not to lie down in despair, and wait for death. Can you find nothing to occupy your thoughts but what cannot be helped? You have never asked me yet what takes me to Northumberland.”

"I am not sure I have a right to ask," said I. "You have never before spoken to me of any business you had there, and it might be indelicate to make the inquiry."

"Too scrupulous by half," replied Balcombe. "Well, don't you want to know?"

"I should be well pleased to know," said I, "if you think proper to inform me."

"Nay," said Balcombe, "I speak not to the ear of drowsy indifference. Rouse up, man, and promise to take a proper interest in my affair, and I will tell you."

There was so much kindness and playfulness in this reproach, that, feeling its justice, I could not help blaming myself. I turned my eyes on Balcombe, and found his resting on me with an expression which said, "Up, up, and be a man!" and I determined to make the effort. Did I not deserve at the moment something of the same rebuke I had given Jane a few days before? I felt so, and said,

"My dear sir, it has been all along one of my griefs, that you are always so sufficient to yourself that I can never think of doing anything for you, before you have already done it for yourself. Show me anything in which I can serve you, and I will promise to forget all private troubles until it is accomplished."

"Spoken like a man," said Balcombe. "Spoken like a man whose heart is in his friend's welfare. Such is the stuff that friendship is made of. The

material is nevertheless often spoiled by circumstances which render long-continued and engrossing attention to one's own interest necessary and even laudable. When, in such a pursuit, we have occasion to engage the devoted co-operation of others, we are apt to forget that we are made for them, as well as they for us. Something to break the continuity of the reign of *self*, that master fiend who leads the hosts of the apostate angels, is not amiss. Now tell me. In all your troubles—have you the heart to rejoice at the prosperity of a friend?"

I was really hurt at this; and Balcombe saw in my manner that to doubt it would be to do me injustice; and I assured him that such a question seriously asked would give me more pain than my late defeat.

"I believe you, Will," said he. "You are a truehearted fellow; but we must not let your better feelings perish for want of exercise. Well, then, to come to the point; I am going to Northumberland to claim and take possession of a handsome estate."

"Good God!" exclaimed I, "is it possible that your attention to my affairs has so engrossed you, that you have never given a thought to that?"

"That *ought to have been* a sufficient reason, but I am not sure it would have been. But the true reason was (and you will admit it to have been all-sufficient) that I never knew of it myself until this morning. It comes very apropos at this mo-

ment, because, having enough of my own, I can share this with you."

"Oh, no more of that, my dear sir," said I. "Your own family have claims on you that must not be overlooked."

"Would you not have insisted on sharing your good fortune with me," said Balcombe, "had you been successful?"

"I certainly should," said I, "have pressed on you the acceptance of your old residence of Raby Hall, as strongly as my respect for your delicacy would permit. But pray tell me, how comes this windfall?"

"By the will of an old friend."

"Strange!" said I; "I have never heard you speak of such a one."

"Yes, you have, over and often."

I tried to remember.

"Who can it be?" asked I.

"Your grandfather."

I stared, and Balcombe, laughing, said to Keizer, who had come in during our conversation,

"Come, John, tell your part of the story."

"I shall be right glad to do that, colonel," said John; "for I have been ready to burst all day to see Mr. Napier looking as if every friend he had in the world was dead."

"Well, John," said I, "tell your tale, and if *you* cannot bring them to life nothing can."

"Why you see, sir," said John, "I don't know as I ever rightly got the nature of this business.

But last night when you and James Scott was a talking, I found out that for all you wanted to get that bundle of papers into the court, you'd a heap rather have it yourself. And I seed, too, that James, and all, would be glad if you did have it, only just his word was out, and it would not do for him to let you get them if he could help it. But then, thinks I, what if you can't help it? nobody can blame you then. So with that I makes up my mind, if the thing fell to me in the search, nobody should know it till I had a chance to ask the colonel what to do. As soon as I seed you and James fast asleep, I takes a knot of lightwood, and I goes right straight to it."

"How did you know where it was?" said I.

"Why you see, sir, when I went feeling about the fellow to find if he had it in his hands, I saw that his left hand was stretched right out from his body just so, and the hand wide open; and I made sure that he threw the bundle right that way his arm pointed, and that just as he did it James had given him the dig that settled him. So when I heard the talk about who should go, and who should stay, and where the bundle was, thinks I, I will stay for one anyhow, and as to the bundle, I guess I know where it is, but it's no use to say so. So I just kept dark about it, as I didn't mean to do nothing but what was right, and I knowed the colonel could tell me how that was. So you see, sir, the ditch was wide and the bank was high, and then there was a hedge a top of it, and I made

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sure Montague couldn't throw over that, and he most the same as dead. So I just looks to see where he lay, and takes my course; and sure enough there it was at the bottom of the ditch in a hole of water. So I starts right off a little way down the road, and puts it clean out of the way for fear somebody might take a notion that I had found it; and when we started I just rides close to the colonel, and says I,

“‘I wish you'd send me back to look for your handkerchief or something,' says I.

“And with that the colonel looks right sharp at me, and I sorter smiled, and then says he, (don't you remember that, Mr. Napier?) says he,

“‘John, I wish you'd ride back and see if I have not left my knife yonder.'

“So I goes back, sir, and gets the bundle, and when I comes up, says the colonel,

“‘What's this now, John?’

“Says I, ‘I've got the bundle, sir, and I thought I would tell you first, 'cause I thought you'd know best what I ought to do with it.'

“‘Maybe you are right,' says he. ‘And it cannot do any harm to think about it, anyhow.'

“So you see, sir, as soon as we gets here I gives it to him; and there's an end of my part of the story.”

“And now for my part,” said Balcombe. “You remember, William, when I proposed at Raby Hall to try to catch Montague, I assigned, as a reason, my desire not to throw any reproach on

the name of Raby. Now that chancery suit could not be successfully prosecuted without fixing infamy on Mr. Edward Raby. But there was nothing as yet but the bill, which could be dismissed and withdrawn, so as to leave no trace of the transaction on record. Moreover, although the production of the will would be decisive on the main point, yet there was a long controversy behind about rents and profits. All this Mr. Raby will be glad to settle amicably and privately, and, in the mean time, the will being proved this week in Northumberland, you can enter at once on the estate, and your poor mother will not be left without a home on Newyear's day, as she otherwise must be. Now all these points are secured by keeping dark, as John says; and, as to poor James, no man can say that he was not as true to his trust as a dog to the dead body of his master."

"Then you really have the will?" said I.

"Really and *bona fide* the very paper I witnessed, and more too."

"What more?"

"A codicil containing a small bequest to myself, which I dare say suggested to Montague the first thought of suppressing the whole, through his hatred to me. You must understand," continued Balcombe, "what until now I did not think proper to tell you. When I left Raby Hall and returned to Barnard's Castle, to announce my purpose of going to seek my fortune in the world, the kind old man opposed it strongly.

“‘You are my son, George,’ said he; ‘and, except that curly-headed chap,’ (meaning you, William,) ‘my only son. I had formed a plan of life for you, which I trust would have met your wishes. My necessary expenses, and those of Mr. Napier, don’t permit me to furnish you with an outfit proper for such a life of adventure as I fear you propose to yourself. But this will not prevent my providing for you amply and permanently, if you will stay with me.’

“The temptation was strong. In my right mind I should not have resisted it; but the fiery arrow was in my brain. A small sum was all the good old gentleman could conveniently spare at the moment, and I would receive no more. I well remember the day. The very next day is the date of this codicil, which recites his previous intention of providing for me by giving me the old hall, with a considerable portion of land as well as negroes, stock, books, &c.; that with that view he had placed me there, to familiarize me to my future home, and acquaint me with the proper management of the property, and then goes on to bequeath it to me.”

“Thank God!” exclaimed I. “This is just as I would have it; and now I shall have no contest with your delicacy.”

“You shall have none,” said Balcombe. “But to my tale. And see how *self* has crossed my path, and what a dance it has led me. Before I should take my course definitely, I determined to

consult Mr. L——, and found he concurred with me entirely.

“‘Moreover,’ said he, ‘if you happen to be on the wrong scent, and the paper is not here after all, better to dismiss the action than let your mountain actually bring forth a mouse.’

“This had not occurred to me, because *I* had no doubt. In him, who had less reason to be confident, it was wise. I had taken the precaution not to open the packet all this time, though it was wringing wet. We now opened it together. You remember its great size.”

“Yes. How was that?”

“Nothing but a blind, I suppose, to keep poor Mary from suspecting the truth. But it was the means, after all, of saving the papers. There were not less than a dozen newspapers, with the will and codicil in the midst. The external papers were in part destroyed by the wet; the enclosure perfectly safe. I took care to leave them in the hands of Mr. L——, who will attend at court to prove how he came by them. Your bill has been withdrawn; the answer was not filed, and Mr. L—— has James’s affidavit, which, without his approbation, we would not destroy.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

“The far-descended honours of a race
Illustrious in the annals of old time
Are mine, and I'll uphold them. Ill exchanged
For gilded shame.”

It may be readily believed that I was now eager to be off to Northumberland. The next day we commenced our journey, and never had I performed one with so light a heart. We had a day to spare, and that day we spent at Barnard's Castle, which, until within the last five years, had been my home. The house was in excellent preservation, the furniture good, though somewhat oldfashioned, (no fault in my eyes,) and everything nearly as my grandfather had left it at his death. I looked on this mark of respect to his memory, as a sign of grace in Mr. Edward Raby, which made me rejoice that I should be able to do myself justice without dishonouring him. The old house servants, for the most part, retained their former offices, though now sinecures; and the overseer, though I gave no hint of my rights, received me with hereditary respect, and treated me in all things as if I had been master of the whole estate. Had he done otherwise the negroes would have

been tempted to rebel against his authority ; for my presence was a jubilee (sad and tearful, indeed, but yet a jubilee) to them. I prevailed on the overseer to accompany me to court, and there made him witness with his own eyes the unexpected proceeding, which established me as executor and devisee in the rightful possession of the whole property. He had served my grandfather, who had been satisfied with him. He had been less successful in pleasing Mr. Edward Raby, and I have no doubt was quite sincere in his congratulations on the event.

Indeed the sensation produced by the sudden presentation of the will seemed to run through the whole assembled crowd. The handwriting of my grandfather was known to every person present. So was Montague's. Balcombe's testimony was clear and positive ; and the codicil, altogether written by my grandfather, proved itself. There was no need to ask whence the papers came. The thing admitted of no doubt. No security being required of the executor, to which office my father and myself were named, letters testamentary were at once granted, and I was restored to the inheritance of my fathers. Then came a scene. Every one who had known me pressed to speak to me ; those who had known my grandfather asked to be introduced. The business of the court was suspended. The worthy old members of that "paternal tribunal" (blessing on his name who first so designated it!) left the bench to take by

the hand the grandson and heir of their old friend and associate in office; and more than one, pointing to the seat he had long filled as presiding justice, expressed a hope to see it occupied by myself.

I was now impatient to return to Craiganet, and wipe away the tears my letter from Fredericksburg must have drawn from the eyes of the dear ones there. Raby Hall lay directly in our way, and thither we went. Nothing could be more unexpected or more welcome than our news. The amiable old major highly approved the course we had pursued, as affording a salvo for his patron's honour; and even James's jealous scruples were satisfied by Balcombe, though at first he looked quite indignant on finding that John had played him false. But John had but laboured in his vocation. It was so long since he had an opportunity of playing a trick of any sort, that he languished for want of exercise in that way. He had begun to think for some time that he was of no account, but was now restored to favour with himself. To the major and poor Mary the most agreeable part of the whole was to acknowledge Balcombe as master of Raby Hall. The former entertained for him the highest regard, and to the latter he was everything in the world. It was easily arranged that the old gentleman should retain his office, and, for a time at least, his residence. As to Mary, she was now sure of every comfort in life which her former misfortunes left her capable of enjoying,

and to receive these at the hand of Balcombe would be no burden to her heart.

But of all who rejoiced at my change of fortune there was no joy like that of the negroes. One after another, soon after nightfall, they came thronging. One had heard the news and told it to a dozen; it was soon spread over the estate; and, from the old man hobbling on his crutch to the infant in arms, all were assembled in the yard. It seems they had heard that I should set out at daylight next day, and see me they must. There, then, they all were; many held torches of light-wood, the red glare of which, as I looked through the window, gleamed with picturesque effect on their rude garments, and dusky but shining skins. I was requested to go out and place myself in the door. Charles now came forward, grinning and wriggling.

"The folks want to know, master, if you is their master *sure enough*?"

"I am, my good fellows," said I, aloud. "Your old master's grandson *is your master sure enough*."

This answer was the signal for a general rejoicing such as I never saw. The shout, not mechanically simultaneous, but bursting spontaneously at intervals through the din of many tongues, the spasmodic clapping of the hands above the head, the tattered hat tossed aloft, "as if to hang it on the horns of the moon," the wild loud ringing echoing laugh, the hurried running of each backward and forward through the crowd, and the

vehement shake of the hand interchanged by those who felt best assured of each other's sympathy, made a scene, which he, who would know human nature in all its aspects, would do well to study. For the moment, at least, I was a convert to Balcombe's doctrines on the subject. When the tumult was over, one and another advanced to touch my hand. I gave it cordially to each, nor did I leave my position until I had received and returned the gratulating grasp of all the larger negroes, and patted the head of every little knotty-pated urchin of the whole.

After supper, Major Swann, with some hesitancy, told us that, during our absence, he had received a letter from Mr. Edward Raby, covering one to Montague. He said that there were expressions and directions in the former which left little doubt in his mind that the latter would show, that Mr. Raby either did not understand, or highly disapproved the conduct of Montague. Eager to vindicate him, and to prepare the way for an amicable adjustment of the whole affair, he wished to open the letter, and lay the contents before us.

"I am not merely the steward of Edward Raby," said he; "I am his old and trusted friend. I love and honour him, and am willing to peril my honour to vindicate his. How say you, gentlemen? I beg your advice. Shall I open this letter?"

I shall not stop to discuss the propriety of the advice we gave. Major Swann and Mr. Raby

had been friends from youth to age, and catching the infection of his enthusiastic confidence in his friend's honour, we ventured to advise the step. The letter was opened and read aloud by Balcombe. It ran thus :—

“ *Mr. Edward Montague.*

“ SIR,

“ Your extraordinary communication of the 15th ultimo is before me. In answering it I find myself under the necessity of adverting to much more than it contains ; and I shall do so fully, because I find it necessary to make you understand distinctly the relation between us.

“ In the first place then, sir, let me say that it is not a relation which authorizes you to make me your debtor at your own pleasure, on any occasion or to any amount that you may think proper. With the ink hardly dry on the last check drawn in your favour, I have here an account in which you claim against me the round sum of two thousand dollars, made up of four equal items. The lumping character of these charges, the beautiful harmony of the constituent parts of the account, and the perfect symmetry of the collective whole, show to great advantage on paper ; though it is not easy to conceive of such a concurrence of fortuitous circumstances, as could thus round off in the whole and in all the parts a set of purely incidental charges. This objection I should insist on,

if you had any right to charge me at all, which I deny. Let us review your account, sir.

“First, I am charged with five hundred dollars, as so much paid to a gang of ruffians, to aid you in obtaining from some man *in the wilds of Missouri*, the means of getting into your possession a certain document, which you say elsewhere is safely lodged in *my own house at Raby Hall, Virginia*. To this I have but to say, sir, that whenever you have occasion to hire a bravo to do that which a man of honour would not think of, or a brave man would do for himself, I beg you will draw on your resources.

“Secondly, I am charged with a like sum paid to a lawyer, to engage him to prosecute to the last extremity this same man, for a crime of which, by your own showing, he was not guilty. Need I say to this, sir, that, when next you meditate a scheme of revenge to be accomplished by a judicial murder, I hope you will not again call on me to become an accessory to the crime.

“I am next called on to refund five hundred dollars, as the alleged amount of the expense of a journey to and from Virginia, and as much more for your time and trouble therein. I shall no otherwise comment on these charges than by congratulating you on the discovery of the means of travelling and taking your pleasure without expense. To such of our gentry and nobility as waste their time and money in touring it over the Continent, it would be invaluable. Bring it with

you to this country, sir, and your fortune is made. Be sure, too, when you come, to charge the expense of that journey to me, and let me hope that you will take occasion at the same time to honour my poor dwelling with a visit.

“I find that I owe an apology to myself for the language which my indignation has drawn from me. I will make the due *amende* by using all possible moderation in saying what remains to be said.

“Let me then ask, sir, how it comes that I hear, at this time of day, of the existence of that document? Am I to find the answer in your delicate hint that that paper is your only security for the fulfilment of my engagements to you? Is it possible that I read this passage of your letter aright? Do you indeed mean to insinuate that an engagement to which *my* word is pledged needs any other guarantee? If such was your meaning, sir, you will find the origin of the thought in your own conscious baseness, and you will owe your impunity to the same cause. But though you dared to intimate this, it was not this you meant. It is not a pledge for the performance of past promises, but a means of future and unlimited exaction that you would preserve. Your dexterous hint at the urgent necessities of my young kinsman of Craiganet, could hardly fail to make me see that you flatter yourself that he would gladly purchase at a high price the important secret of which you *affect* to be the depository. I say *affect*, sir, be-

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cause I am by no means sure that I have not been your dupe. When you first told me that Mr. Raby had executed and placed in your hands a will which he afterward directed you to destroy, and that you had neglected to do so, and when you required of me a price to bribe you to the late performance of this duty, could I fail to see that I had to do with a villain, who would sell himself to others, if I would not buy him? I therefore took you at your word. I did not demand to see the paper, for what should hinder you to forge another. I took more effectual security against you, by wringing from you a reluctant oath that you knew not what had become of that paper. Will you now brave the penalties of perjury and suppression of a will, by bringing it forward? Can it be proved by your oath against your oath? No, sir; I put you at defiance, and you feel that you are powerless to harm me.

“Have I forgotten how you cowered under my eye, when I compelled you to answer that decisive question? Have I forgotten how the beaded drops stood on your pale forehead at that moment? Whether your emotion was the effect of a conviction that from that time you had no security but my honour, the price of which you knew not how to estimate, or shrank at the idea of committing deliberate perjury, if perjury it was, I know not. I would to God I did. I would to God I had any means of knowing whether you had but done me justice, or made me the instrument of injustice to

others. Could I be assured of the last, sir, not the waves of the Atlantic, nor the wilds in which you have sought to hide your baseness, no, not even your baseness itself, should screen you from my resentment.

“For one thing at least I have cause to thank you. By acquainting me with the distresses of my young kinsman, you show me how to do my duty, as the head of my house, by those of whom the law of primogeniture makes me the protector. I say this that you may see how little liable I am to be influenced by the sordid fear to which you would appeal. Show me what justice requires, and give me reason to believe your word, and I will do it gladly. Now mark me, sir. You say the supposed document is in your power, at least with the co-operation of Mr. Swann. I shall write and direct him to give you this co-operation. Now, sir, when it is recovered, put it into his hands. When I hear from him that it is there, I shall then order the payment of five thousand dollars to you in full of all demands, and endeavour to form my own judgment of my rights and duties on my own view of the paper. This will terminate all my connection with you. Terminate it shall. If no such paper is found and delivered up to Mr. Swann, it shall cease at once. Directly or indirectly, never again presume to address yourself to

“EDWARD RABY.

“Raby Hall, Northumberland county, }
 England, Nov. 18th, 1820.” }

As Balcombe read this letter I was inconceivably affected. The favourable light it threw on the character of one whom I was bound to consider (as he expressed it) as the head of my house, and whom I had of late learned to detest, was truly acceptable to me.

The good old major bowed his head on his hands, and when the letter was gone through, raised it and said,

“Thank God! the idea that Edward Raby had been guilty of the baseness which appeared chargeable against him was one of the most painful that ever entered my mind. I awaited his answer in the hope that that would clear him. I now see that to me it would have done so, but to the world I fear it would not. But this letter frees him from every imputation but that of having treated on any terms with an acknowledged villain, and of having bought off his knavery. This was unworthy of Edward Raby; but how venial compared with what seemed to be his offence!

“And now, Mr. Napier,” said the old gentleman, “I will no longer hesitate to fulfil my friend’s commission, and hand you a letter enclosed by him for your mother. The purport of it I can guess from my own. If it be such as I suppose, it is such a letter as I would not have delivered to Mrs. Napier while the conduct of Mr. Raby was unexplained. Here is the letter, sir; and here, George, is a passage in that to me which you

must read aloud. Edward Raby now stands fair before the world. The same honourable gentleman that I knew him when he visited his uncle here in youth, and afterward, when I travelled in England; the same he showed himself when last here, and has proved himself to be in all his subsequent transactions with me. Read the letter, George."

Balcombe did as he was requested. The passage was as follows :

"I am concerned to learn, from the letter of this Montague, that my young kinsman, Napier of Craiganet, has fallen into poverty. This must not be. To say nothing of his illustrious descent through his father from a most distinguished nobleman, he is a branch of the house of Raby. As such it belongs to me to fulfil the duty contemplated by the very law in deference to which his grandfather left me his estate. He could never have been justified in disinheriting his own issue, but for a well-founded reliance that the head of the family would perform towards them the duties of an elder brother. The exact measure of these duties I am not in condition to ascertain. But there is something to be done to relieve the present distress. I beg you, therefore, to ascertain the amount of encumbrances on his father's estate, and in the mean time to account with him for that portion of my nett income which proceeds from the property at Barnard's Castle, and to admit Mrs.

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Napier and her family to the use of the house and all it contains."

Balcombe had read thus far aloud, when he dropped the letter, and exclaimed,

"Noble! noble! nobly done! Now this does my very soul good. Nauseated with Montague's villanies, and in my own mind implicating this gentleman in them, this display of character is a perfect cordial. It is light shining out of darkness. Why, William, the discovery of such a character in a kinsman is worth more than the estate. This must be answered instantly, and in its own spirit. Wives and sweethearts must wait till honour is served, for it will never do to be outdone in this."

CHAPTER XXV.

"You wrong me, lady. Think you I have borne;
So long, a name that lives in history,
Nor learned to prize its proudest honour?"

THE next morning Balcombe wrote a detailed account of the whole affair. In this he took care to set down his reasons for believing that Montague had deceived Mr. Raby, when he told him that my grandfather had ordered the destruction of the will. In the law of the case, indeed, this

made no difference ; but to the feelings of the parties it made much. Among the facts he mentioned the last letter he had received from my grandfather, in which he spoke of his favourable designs towards me. Not knowing anything of the quarrel between Balcombe and Montague, he spoke generally of the welfare of the latter, but said that he had not seen him for a month. This was decisive ; for Mr. Raby had taken a memorandum of Montague's communication to him, by which it appeared that the very week before was the time when, as he pretended, he was ordered to destroy the will. This I think it right to mention here, though the fact was not known to us until the receipt of Mr. Raby's answer.

This letter was accompanied by one from me, containing an offer of such terms of accommodation as I deemed most proper. I shall not trouble the reader with a statement of these. I beg him to believe that my proposals were precisely such as in his estimation I ought to have made. When our letters were finished, we placed them in the hands of the major, to be sent by the first regular conveyance, along with a copy of the will, to his principal.

The next day we returned to Craiganet.

"I have been thinking," said Balcombe, as we rode along, "of that devise of Raby Hall estate to me. It makes plain what has heretofore been a puzzle. There was certainly no man on earth

whom Montague dreaded more than me; and I have often wondered what infatuation carried him to Missouri, knowing that I was there. Stranger still, he certainly more than once threw himself into my way, and though he always crouched under my eye, yet, on the least encouragement, he would make up to me. I believe I told you that although he said nothing to others of our former acquaintance, he never failed, when he saw an opening, to allude to it to me. I now remember some things which then seemed without meaning, especially his frequent allusions to Mr. Raby's paternal regard for me, and the benevolent intentions he had heard him express. You observe that this codicil was not the subject of his bargain with Mr. Edward Raby, who probably has never heard of it. How easy, then, for me to come forward and produce it, without laying Montague liable to any suspicion of breach of faith with that gentleman. I have now no doubt that had he found me at all practicable, I should have been invited to set up the codicil, and let him go snags. But I remember meeting his suggestions by a declaration that I had no claims on Mr. Raby, and rejoiced, as he had disinherited his children, that it had not been in my favour. This, I think, was our last conversation on the subject."

My friends had heard nothing of our movements since we left Fredericksburg, and were in total ignorance of the late important events. We found them sad enough. My poor mother dejected but

resigned; Jane humbled and despondent. Even my merry little Laura had lost something of her gayety at the thoughts of being banished from the home of her infancy; while Ann, though satisfied with her lot, seemed to feel by anticipation the cares of a life of poverty and difficulties. Believing that they would pass the night in more composure under impressions to which their minds were familiarized, than if excited at that hour by the intelligence which we brought, we had determined to keep them in ignorance of the will until the next morning. All were gratified to see that my pleasure at returning to them was enough to give me an appearance of cheerfulness under my supposed misfortune; and all appeared to derive comfort and support from my presence. The indomitable serenity of Balcombe made him a valuable auxiliary. They all seemed to have taken the infection of my habitual confidence that he would always advise what was best, and find some means to make its accomplishment practicable. I was particularly pleased to see that Jane approached him with more cordiality than I had ever seen her display towards him; while there was a something in her manner which seemed to deprecate his displeasure, and implore forgiveness. He understood it, and met her advances with the most soothing tenderness. There was a degree of harmony in the general sense of a common calamity which each should help the rest to bear, that it seemed a pity to disturb.

In this spirit we quietly took our frugal supper, and I then handed my mother Mr. Raby's letter. I had little doubt of the contents, and expected that they would in some measure prepare the minds of all for the yet better intelligence which was in store for them. I was not disappointed. My mother read the letter with just such emotions as I had expected and wished, and handing it to me, said,

“Was I not right, my children? Said I not truly that God would not desert us, if we could compose our minds to be thankful for the past, instead of murmuring about the present, and to trust to him for the future. He has brought light out of darkness, and given us a kind friend in one we had deemed our worst enemy. Read that aloud, William, and let us all learn to be humble and thankful.”

I took the letter, and as she requested, read as follows :—

“MADAM,

“Let me indulge a hope that the sight of my name at the bottom of this letter may not prevent you from reading it. Having hitherto received nothing at my hands but what, to you at least, appeared to be injustice, I cannot expect to engage your attention to what I am about to say, without first assuring you that the purpose of this letter is altogether friendly.

“According to my understanding of the subject, estates, such as that held by your father during his

life, are so limited, in order that the head of each family may have it in his power to uphold the name of the donor, and to stand in his place as the guardian and protector of all others descended from him. I have been thus established by my grandfather (who is also the great-grandfather of your son) in all his rights and *all his duties* to his posterity, so far as they are connected with that property. Your honourable and just father saw the subject in this light. He knew that I did too; and therefore determined, by his will, to fulfil the design of his father, instead of availing himself of the power which the change of the laws of your country gave him over the subject. When I went to Virginia for the purpose of establishing my claims, I would gladly have explained the relation in which I was thus placed to you and your family, to be that of a friend and protector; but I found myself met and repulsed as an enemy, and an intruder on the rights of others. I made such advances as my self-respect permitted. Perhaps I went somewhat too far. I perceived something of the difficulties of your husband's situation; but I was made to feel that an offer to relieve them would be taken as a marked overture to a base and dishonourable compromise. I could therefore make no such offer. Conscious as I was of none but kind intentions towards you and yours, I felt myself wronged, and returned to England, making up my mind to take no further interest in your affairs.

"Herein resentment made me forgetful of my duty, and I am recalled to it by learning accidentally the disastrous condition in which your husband's death has left his family. I have not heard particulars, nor do I now stop to inquire them. My first duty is plain. It is to make a provisional arrangement for your comfort. The second is to endeavour to engage your confidence so far as to obtain a full knowledge of all your difficulties. The third and most pleasant will be to remove them if practicable.

"I wish I could confidently anticipate that, having read thus far, your mind will be altogether prepared to take what follows in the same frank and cordial spirit in which it is offered. Should this not be so, my proposition is one which can be passed by in silence. But I will hope a different result.

"If I remember right, your son came of age in April last. If this be so, pray observe the evidence I here give that I have ever looked on your family with the eye of a kinsman and friend. The birth of a boy, to be the prop of your house, was noted by me as an event of great interest. But let that pass. He is of age, and either is or ought to be your representative in all pecuniary matters. I have therefore given instructions to my friend and agent, Joseph Swann, Esquire, to account with him alone for the nett income from the property at Barnard's Castle. The house with all it contains is also at your service. What else it may be my

duty to do, will be considered of when you shall have honoured me with your confidence so far as to make me acquainted with the extent of your difficulties. Had I told you five years ago that in claiming the estate devised to me by your father, I did but take it as the steward of my grandfather, for the benefit of all his descendants, my sincerity might have been questioned. Let me hope it will not be so now, and that in future I may be regarded by you and your's not as an alien and an enemy, but as your kinsman and friend,

“EDWARD RABY.

“Raby Hall, Northumberland county, }
 .. England, November 18th, 1820.” }

The effect of this letter was such as might have been anticipated. My poor mother was at least as much humbled and mortified as delighted. Little Laura was in raptures with “the dear good old soul,” as she called Mr. Raby. Jane's countenance brightened for a moment. But this present relief placed her no nearer the great object of her wishes; and the cloud soon again settled on her brow. Ann's gratitude manifestly predominated over every other feeling, except, perhaps, her pleasure at seeing me about to be relieved from *my* difficulties. Of herself she seemed not to think, and looked up in my face with a smile which said, “Help us to thank our benefactor.”

“Why are you so silent, William?” said my

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mother. "Do you see any objections to the acceptance of our kinsman's proffered kindness?"

"None," said I. "I have felt as you do. But the force of my feelings has spent itself. I knew this before."

"By what means?"

"By Mr. Raby's letter to Major Swann in which that was enclosed."

"The order, then, has been actually given?"

"Certainly. And I come to make preparations for removing you to Barnard's Castle."

"Oh me!" exclaimed Laura, bursting into tears, "must we still leave dear Craiganet after all?"

"It seems so, my child," said my mother, "and we must learn to do so with thankful hearts; though to me the most princely residence would not be so pleasant as these scenes of my happy youth, with all their sweet and bitter recollections. But come, my children; we must be busy to-morrow. To-night must be given to thanksgiving, reflection, and repose. Good-night, my son. And you," extending her hand with matronly grace to Balcombe, "my generous and noble friend! Let me but learn to thank the efficient aid of our benefactor, as my heart thanks you for your baffled efforts to serve us, and he will not tax me with ingratitude."

As soon as breakfast was over the next morning I interrupted the discussion of our proposed removal by telling the whole story of the will, an authentic copy of which I now handed to my mo-

ther. It was well, perhaps, that I had prepared her mind the night before, by conducting it to a sort of halfway stage between depression and exultation. As it was she bore the news well enough, though her nerves were severely shaken. Poor Jane, for the want of such preparation, (for now, for the first time, hope dawned on her, and in the same moment brightened to the perfect day of certainty,) she, poor girl, sank under it in a strong hysterical affection. If such things were ever dangerous, I should have been alarmed for her. As it was, she occupied all our attention, until my news had lost something of its exciting effect on the rest.

As soon as a calm was restored, I reminded my mother of the preference she had expressed the night before for Craiganet as a residence; and told her that I would, at once, take measures to discharge the property from all encumbrance, by pledging my own personal responsibility to the creditors. By this means the approaching sale, appointed for Newyear's day, would be prevented; and instead of preparing for our removal, she would be permitted to remain in peace and quietness where she was.

Here was a new cause for rejoicing. The pleasure of my mother was heartfelt, and the glee of Laura more obstreperous than at any time before. Jane was too much absorbed to think about it; and as to Ann, Barnard's Castle was "the pole of all her young affections," and that would again be *her* home. It was rather cause of

sorrow than joy to her that it was not also to be the home of her second mother.

In the midst of all this tumult of feeling, in which tears were more rife than smiles, Margaret Howard and Douglas drove up. It was easy for them to misunderstand the cause of the emotion they beheld. It was very much in appearance, such as my return, after the final defeat of my hopes, might have been expected to occasion. Margaret offered no condolence in words, but her manner was full of tender sympathy, and as she kissed my mother, she said she had come to invite us to Oakwood the next day. She added that her brother would be gone to Castle Howard, his principal residence, and that she and her mother would follow in a few days; that we must spend those few days with them, and remain there after they were gone, until the bustle of the sale was over, and as much longer as our convenience might require.

She hurried through this speech with an air of as much cheerfulness as she could assume, as if fearful of interruption by her own emotion or my mother's. It was not until she had got through that I saw a tear in her eye, as again tenderly kissing my mother, she added,

“Do, my dear madam, say yes.”

This was more than could be borne. My mother's self-command now, for the first time, failed her, and falling on Miss Howard's neck, the mingled feelings of her heart at length found vent in tears. The rest of us were hardly less affected.

To Ann, particularly, the generosity and delicacy of Howard were overwhelming. My feelings were drawn into the vortex of her's, and Balcombe alone had self-possession enough to explain. As to Douglas, I had observed his rueful visage as he entered; but a glance had been exchanged between him and Jane, and they were gone. Between them, doubtless, the matter was soon understood. But they had it all to themselves. I saw no more of them until dinner, when they appeared with glowing cheeks, and eyes red, but beaming with delight. I was pleased to find that Jane, on this occasion, did not seem to think her dignity engaged to hide her feelings. She showed them simply and naturally; she rejoiced with others, and was glad to have them rejoice with her. She had no part to act. She had no scheme in her head. She was once more the same honest girl I had known her before the visit of Howard to Oakwood, and his attentions to Ann. I was delighted to recognise one whom I had so much loved, and whom I had despaired of ever seeing again. I caressed her playfully, in a manner which, a month before, would have outraged her dignity, and she said to me apart,

“Oh William! I am so thankful to you. It was a severe operation. You cut deep, but you reached the seat of the disease, and I have no fear that I shall prove myself unworthy of the happiness I now hope for.”

We now understood from Miss Howard that her

brother was well enough to travel, and proposed to do so for his health. With that view he would leave Oakwood next morning, and in the spring he would probably go to Europe.

"And shall *I* see him no more?" said Ann, with all the simplicity of her innocent and grateful heart. "Dear generous Henry! had he prepared to load us with kindness and steal away from our gratitude?"

* * * * *

I believe I have done my story. It matters little whether we went to Oakwood or not. But we did go, and received the congratulations of Mrs. Howard. I now, too, had an opportunity of hearing her and her daughter express their grateful admiration of Balcombe. He had left us to bring down his wife, that she might spend with us the approaching season of festivity.

"I am sorry to hear it," said Margaret Howard. "I don't want to be led into temptation. But as I never mean to marry any man but Mr. Balcombe, or some other like him, and none such is to be found, I beg you to advise her never to take food from my hand. I feel a little conscientious just at this moment, and so take this security against the hour of temptation and weakness. Do, Mr. William, tell me where I may go to look for such another man."

"You must go to the place he came from," said I; "and then to no purpose, unless you can find some man, intelligent and brave by nature, who

has been carefully nurtured in the seed-bed of a civilized, enlightened Christian society, and then transplanted to the rich wilds where his luxuriance may expand itself without restraint."

In due season Balcombe arrived with his family, and we Christmas'd it around at Oakwood, at Craiganet, at Raby Hall, at Barnard's Castle; and when Christmas was gone and forgotten by others it was still Christmas with us, until the month of February brought Mr. Raby's answer to our letters.

This was friendly, congratulatory, self-accusing, and definitive. It enclosed a large account of rents and profits, with a declaration that no consideration on earth should tempt him to retain one cent of advantage from a transaction, doubtful in its character, to say the least of it, and which had always debased him in his own estimation. The money thrown away on Montague he considered as the mere earnest of a bargain with the devil, through one of his emissaries, which he was glad to forfeit if he might thereby annul the contract. He enclosed bills for the whole amount due according to his statement, including interest, and expressed a hope that the command of so much money would tempt me to travel. Then followed a kind invitation to visit him; a hint at the opportunities of forming desirable connections in England; and an intimation that no gentleman or nobleman in the north of England would deny his daughter to a man bearing a name so illustrious in the legends of

the olden time as that of Raby. This advantage, on which my aristocratic kinsman laid so much stress, I had nearly overlooked, and am now reminded to tell the reader, that the assumption of the name of Raby was made, in my grandfather's will, a condition of the devise. With this I cheerfully complied. My name was changed in due form, and I am ever since at the reader's service,

WILLIAM NAPIER RABY,
of
Barnard's Castle, Northumberland,
Virginia.

CHAPTER XXVI.

To each and all a fair good-night,
And rosy dreams and slumbers light.

WHEN I said that I had finished my story, it was in one of those moments of concentrated selfishness in which a man forgets there is anybody else in the world but himself. I did think of one more. I thought of Ann. But as she has long been a part of myself, I am afraid I have occasion to go back and read the lecture which I gave my sister Jane. But I have not quite forgotten it, and in proof of it I will tell the reader what became of the

other personages in my drama, even down to Jim Porter the ducker.

Howard no sooner reached home than he commenced his preparations for foreign travel. He visited every part of Europe, not excepting Greece, and for a time seemed bent on finding that relief from wo which he had vainly sought from the hand of Balcombe. But though he found not this, he found a much better and equally efficient remedy. He came into collision with men whose pretensions on the score of birth and fortune paled his own. He encountered privation, hardship, and difficulty, and learned to live without the habitual indulgence of all his wishes. He frequented scenes where danger sought him when he sought it not, and learned to think that a man's courage may be tested by other and better means than his readiness to peril his life on every fool's quarrel. In learning all this he lost nothing of his high honour, his strict principles, his delicacy of feeling, his easy deportment and refined courtesy, and came back, after an absence of three years, a man every way worthy of his prosperous fortune. It was not long before our intercourse was renewed, and as our friendship had known no abatement, it at once assumed the character of cordial intimacy. This brought him frequently in company with my sister Laura, and I saw with pleasure that she soon began to fill the place in his regard which had been left vacant by Ann. The reader anticipates

the result. They have been married a dozen years, and are happy.

Margaret Howard married a gentleman of moderate estate, in whom, perhaps, were more of the qualities of Balcombe than in any other I have ever known. He was not fully equal to that beau ideal of Miss Howard's imagination; but it came in aid of the resemblance that he was nearly as old.

Balcombe returned to Missouri in the spring. In his journey from Fredericksburg to Craiganet he had made his wife acquainted with all of us, so that she came among us completely divested of her reserve. She seemed as if she had known us all her life. She met me as if I had been her brother. Ann she never called from the first by any other name. With Jane she was somewhat more punctilious. To my mother tenderly respectful, and to Laura she was as an elder sister.

The reader will readily suppose that, on the appearance of my grandfather's will, all the scruples of old Douglas vanished like a ghost at the crowing of a cock. The consequence was that the same day was fixed for the marriage of my sister and myself. As we were oldfashioned folks, who love to preserve all memorials of things that *have been*, we fixed on Valentine's day. As it approached, I received a hint that it would be as well that Balcombe and I should take ourselves out of the way of mops and brooms, especially if we had no mind to live on bread and cheese, during

certain days appropriated to the preparation of jellies, bridal cakes, &c., &c. I communicated this intimation to Balcombe, and we determined to use the time for a visit to Barnard's Castle, my future home, and Raby Hall, which I wished to make his. His wife insisted on accompanying us. I was not sorry for this, for I found her heart began to yearn for her wild home, her "desert solitude," and I had hopes the sight of Raby Hall, with all its substantial comforts, might tempt her to remain with us. I had a wish, too, (perhaps impertinent,) to be present at her meeting with Mary Scott. And I did see it. I had never mentioned that unfortunate woman in her presence. But she could be no stranger to her history, and to that of her husband's former attachment and continued esteem and admiration. Such a case was out of rule, and I was at a loss to tell how she would treat it. I might have known that, as George Balcombe's wife, she would do the thing that was right, but what that was to be I did not know.

As soon as Mrs. Balcombe was introduced to the major and his lady, Balcombe inquired for Mary Scott, and asked to be conducted to her. In a few moments he returned. She was leaning on his arm, and he led her with as much proud respect as if she had been a queen. His wife rose and advanced to meet them. I have spoken of her lofty stature and commanding air. I never saw her half so majestic as now. Her step was slow, her carriage lofty, her countenance unmoved, yet

in the whole there was an air of tenderness and softness in which everything like dignity was forgotten. I saw poor Mary lift up her eyes, and blench under the full black eye of the stately figure before her; but she again raised her head, and looked up confidently in Balcombe's face.

"I need not tell you," said he, "who this is, and how much I owe her."

"You owe her everything," replied Mrs. Balcombe, "that man can owe to the disinterested friendship of a noble being. You owe her all of your heart that is not mine, and she must give me a place in her's for your sake."

Saying this, she extended both her arms, and folded the poor shrinking creature to her bosom. She would have kissed her, but Mary could not look up, and Mrs. Balcombe, gently moving her to the sofa, sat down with her, without loosening her hold, or removing the face of the weeping girl from the shoulder where it rested. There she sat, bending over and soothing her, as if unconscious of the presence of every other.

The major had turned to the window to hide his emotion. I did the same; when he said, in a low tone,

"All our training can produce nothing like this. Where the essentials of good breeding and good principles are preserved, there is a majesty in the wild forms of nature that art can never reach."

When the tumult of Mary's feelings had subsided, Mrs. Balcombe still sat by her, and drew

her into conversation. I never before had seen her so affable to a stranger; but on this occasion, though their topics were few and restricted, yet they talked on like old acquaintances, and parted for the night as if they really were so.

The next morning Mrs. Swann took Mrs. Balcombe over the house, showing all those fixtures and conveniences, in which women so much delight, while Balcombe and I rode over the estate. I took this opportunity to show him the advantages of the place as a residence, and urged him to settle there. Seeing that he hesitated, I remarked that one half of the property was his by the will of my grandfather, and that by every obligation of gratitude and friendship I was bound to make the other half his also.

"No more of that, William," said Balcombe. "Had I heard of that bequest, I am not sure you would ever have heard of the will. Had it been contained in the body of the will, I would not have accepted it. As it is, my motives are liable to no misconstruction, and I will keep them so. And now having said this, I will add, that I am too poor to occupy so large an establishment, and if I were here, I should have a constant warfare with you about aids which you would offer, and I would decline. No, William; I am well enough off for Missouri. I should be a poor man here. My wife's parents are there. I must not task her devotion to an old husband too far. I must take her back to them. But I will deal with you in all the

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frankness of friendship. I would much rather be here, but whether it will ever be in my power I cannot tell. Now I propose this: take my property here at any valuation; pay me the interest of the money, as long as we both live, and if I wish to return cancel the bargain, and let me have your half at the same price."

To this I agreed. A round sum was fixed on as the price, and the bargain concluded.

To Mrs. Balcombe this arrangement was quite satisfactory. To poor Mary it was a subject of great but silent grief. She said little until Balcombe proposed, as part of the plan, that as soon as James's education should be finished, he should follow him to the western country and seek his fortune there. At this suggestion all her self-command forsook her. When she recovered herself, she said she would not be any hinderance to James's advancement, and admitted the plan to be a good one.

"But, oh George! I was so happy in the thought of being near my best friend, and to have the benefit of his instructions, advice, and example for my poor boy, without ever parting from him, and now to lose you both! It is too much!"

Mrs. Balcombe now spoke to her a few words in a low and tender tone, to which she replied,

"No, my dear madam. That must not be. Your good and wise husband knows my reasons, and he approves them. While Mr. Napier permits me to receive shelter here, from the kind

friends who lifted me up when I was prostrate in the dust, I shall seek no other home."

"You shall never need another," said I, "while this will content you."

"And if the most tender and profound respect on our part," said the major, "can make you happy here, you will never wish to change your place of abode."

The grateful creature looked as she spoke from one to another, and then clasping her hands, exclaimed,

"Oh, how have I deserved this?"

When I heard what passed between Mary and Mrs. Balcombe, I looked at Balcombe for an explanation. He now said to me apart,

"I proposed to her to accompany me to Missouri, and make my house her home, and she declined it."

"Why so?"

"For reasons worthy of her. Our equal ages and my former attachment to her. 'I see,' said she, 'the confiding nobleness of your wife, and I know she cannot be insensible of the advantages of youth and beauty. But it is not right to task your generosity, or to incur the least hazard of disturbing her peace of mind. The situation you propose would be to me the happiest in the world, were it forced on me by circumstances. But it would be wrong to adopt it from choice, and the thought of that would make me unhappy. Should my present dependance fail me, George, and leave me without

a home, I will to you as to a brother, and take shelter under your roof."

After spending a day or two at Raby Hall, we went to Barnard's Castle, leaving Mrs. Balcombe behind. Here my arrangements were soon made. We returned to Raby Hall; and on the day before that appointed for the double wedding, returned to Craiganet.

As Balcombe had determined to set out for Missouri as soon as the nuptial festivities were over, he prepared to take a final leave of the major and Mary Scott. In order to this he drew up a paper, directing me to pay her quarterly a handsome annuity out of the interest on the price of his property. Having showed me this, he handed it to his wife, to be given to Mary on separating for the night. This was done; and when we met in the morning I could read it in her grateful countenance. I think I never saw one in which that most beautiful of all expressions (save only that of tender love) displayed itself so strongly as in her's. Perhaps no heart ever felt the sentiment so deeply.

When we were about to part Mrs. Balcombe kissed her tenderly, while Balcombe bade farewell to the major and his lady. Then turning to Mary, he folded her to his bosom, and kissing her forehead as usual, was about to leave her, when she held up her lips and said,

"Once more, dear George. This once; this last time."

And once more he impressed upon her lips the hallowed kiss of his pure and generous friendship.

"Thank God! thank God!" she exclaimed, in a tone of elevated enthusiasm. "Should we never meet again, that token of a brother's love I will carry to the grave."

"My dear child," said the kind old major, "Mr. Balcombe is indeed a brother. You lose him now; let me be your father."

The poor creature could make no answer. Balcombe wrung the major's hand, and we left the house.

On our return to Craiganet, we found Douglas there, accompanied by Margaret Howard. I was rejoiced at this. I wished Mrs. Balcombe to know this softened reflection of some of her husband's noblest qualities. I had excited her wish to know Miss Howard, by speaking of her in such terms as conveyed this idea. Margaret, on the other hand, met her as one whom she ought to esteem as the wife of a man she so much admired. In short, they met as sisters, and grew together into the most cordial intimacy.

"She is the only woman in the world," said Mrs. Balcombe, "worthy to be the wife of Mr. Balcombe."

I shall not tell the reader about the wedding. It is an old story; fifteen years old to-morrow; and there sits Ann, quite matronly, with her eldest daughter by her side, working her sampler. Our firstborn is out with his gun. The youngest is

asleep in the cradle, and a wee thing of three years old is worrying the cat, and plaguing me by inviting my attention to her pranks.

Jane makes Douglas a good wife. Whether her seniority gives her the same advantage over the husband that she had over the lover, I don't know. I rather think not. But boys always fall in love the first time with women older than themselves; and no woman ever objected, *in her own case*, to a man for being too young.

Keizer returned with Balcombe to Missouri, and has ever since lived uprightly and comfortably under his munificent patron. James Scott followed in three years. He has prospered, and attained to competency and honour. Should I give his true name, many of my readers would find that I had been speaking of one of whom they have heard before. Balcombe's daughter is now grown. I hear frequently from her father, and suspect, from some expressions, that Miss Delia has found out that the difference between the ages of her parents is about the same as that between her's and James's.

I regret to close this summary by adding, that within one year past Colonel Robinson has followed his wife, who died soon after Balcombe's return to Missouri.

This, I believe, fulfils my promise to tell all about everybody, except that I have not yet accounted for Jim Porter. Be it known that he is at this moment shooting ducks in the Pocoson of the

Raby Hall estate, in which he has the exclusive privilege of hunting, rent free.

Saturday, February 13, 1836.

P.S. Sunday morning—Valentine's day.

A letter from Balcombe. He is coming to Virginia, and claims my promise to sell him my interest in the Raby Hall property. He has prospered in his affairs, and the death of Colonel Robinson has made him rich. James Scott has married his daughter, (his only child,) and will live with him. I am told to expect him in April, and that Keizer will accompany him. Poor Mary (who since the major's death has been with me) is beside herself with joy, and there is not a child in the house old enough to talk, whose eyes don't dance at the thought of seeing a man they have all learned to love and honour. Even the negroes at Raby Hall will not be sorry; for when I bought out Balcombe they expressed no particular feeling, but merely said, through Charles, their common spokesman,

"We been all mighty willing, sir, to have Mass' George for master."

THE END.

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