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THE PARTISAN:

A TALE OF THE REVOLUTION.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE YEMASSEE," "GUY RIVERS," &c.

"And Liberty's vitality, like Truth,
Is still undying. As the sacred fire
Nature has shrined in caverns, still it burns,
Though the storm howls without."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE PARTISAN.

CHAPTER I.

"Unfold—unfold—the day is going fast,
And I would know this old time history."

The clouds were gathering fast—the waters were troubled—and the approaching tumult and disquiet of all things in Carolina, clearly indicated the coming of that strife, so soon to overcast the scene—so long to keep it darkened—so deeply to impurple it with blood. The continentals were approaching rapidly, and the effect was that of magic upon the long prostrated energies of the South. The people were aroused, awakened, stimulated, and emboldened. They gathered in little squads throughout the country. The news was generally abroad that Gates was to command the expected army—Gates, the conqueror at Saratoga, whose very name, at that time, was a host. The successes of Sumter in the up-country, of Marion on the Peedee, of Pickens with a troop of mounted riflemen—a new species of force projected by himself—of Butler, of Horry, James, and others, were generally whispered about among the hitherto desponding whigs. These encouraging prospects were not a little strengthened in the parishes by rumours of small successes nearer at hand. The swamps were now believed to be full of enemies to royal power, only wanting imbodiment and arms; and truly did Tarleton, dilating upon the condition of things at this period in the colony, give a melancholy summary of those influences which were crowding together, as it was fondly thought by the patriots, for the overwhelming of foreign domination.

"Discontents"—according to his narrative—"were disseminated—secret conspiracies entered into upon the frontier—hostilities were already begun in many places, and every thing seemed to menace a revolution as rapid as that which succeeded the surrender of Charlestown." The storm grew more imposing in its terrors, when, promising himself confidently a march of triumph through the country, Gates, in a swelling proclamation, announced his assumption of command over the southern army. It was a promise sadly disappointed in the end—yet the effect was instantaneous; and with the knowledge of his arrival, the entire Black River country was in insurrection. This was the province of Marion, and to his active persuasion and influence the outbreak must chiefly be ascribed. But the influence of events upon other sections was not less immediate, though less overt and important in their development. The fermenting excitement, which, in men's minds, usually precedes the action of powerful, because long suppressed, elements of mischief, had reached its highest point of forbearance. The immediately impelling power was alone wanting, and this is always to be found in that restless love of change, growing with its facilities, which forms so legitimate a portion of our original nature. There is a wholesome stir in strife itself, which, like the thunderstorm in the sluggish atmosphere, imparts a renewed energy, and a better condition of health and exercise, to the attributes and agents of the moral man.

These old woods about Dorchester are famous. There is not a wagon track—not a defile—not a clearing—not a traverse of these plains, which has not been consecrated by the strife for liberty; the close strife—the desperate struggle; the contest, unrelaxing, unyielding to the last, save only with death or conquest. These old trees have looked down upon blood and battles; the thick array and the solitary combat between single foes, needing no other witnesses. What tales might they not tell us! The sands have drunk deeply of holy and hallowed blood—blood that gave them value and a name, and made for them a place in all human recollection. The grass here has been beaten down, in successive seasons, by heavy feet—by conflicting horsemen—by driving and recoiling artillery. Its deep green has been dyed with a yet deeper and a darker stain—the outpourings of the invader's veins, mingling with the generous streams flowing from bosoms that had but one hope—but one purpose—the unpolluted freedom and security of home; the purity of the threshold, the sweet repose of the domestic hearth from the intrusion of hostile feet—the only objects, for which men may brave the stormy and the brutal strife, and still keep the "whiteness of their souls."

The Carolinian well knows these old-time places; for every acre has its tradition in this neighbourhood. He rides beneath the thick oaks, whose branches have covered regiments, and looks up to them with regardful veneration. Well he remembers the old defile at the entrance just above Dorchester village, where a red clay hill rises abruptly, breaking pleasantly the dead level of country all around it. The rugged limbs and trunk of a huge oak, which hung above its brow, and has been but recently overthrown, was of itself his historian. It was notorious in tradition as the gallows oak; its limbs being employed by both parties, as they severally obtained the ascendency, for the purposes of summary execution. Famous, indeed, was all the partisan warfare in this neighbourhood, from the time of its commencement, with our story, in 1780, to the day, when, hopeless of their object, the troops of the invader withdrew to their crowded vessels, flying from the land they had vainly struggled to subdue. You should hear the old housewives dilate upon these transactions. You should hear them paint the disasters, the depression of the Carolinians! how their chief city was besieged and taken; their little army dispersed or cut to pieces; and how the invader marched over the country, and called it his. Anon, they would show you the little gathering in the swamp—the small scouting squad timidly stealing forth into the plain, and contenting itself with cutting off a foraging party or a baggage wagon, or rescuing a disconsolate group of captives on their way to the city and the prison-ships. Soon, imboldened by success, the little squad is increased by numbers, and aims at larger game. Under some such leader as Colonel Washington, you should see them, anon, well mounted, streaking along the Ashley river road, by the peep of day, well skilled in the management of their steeds, whose high necks beautifully arch under the curb, while, in obedience to their rider's will, they plunge fearlessly through brake and through brier, over the fallen tree, and into the suspicious water. Heedless of all things but the proper achievement of their bold adventure, the warriors go onward, while the broadswords flash in the sunlight, and the trumpet cheers them with a tone of victory. And goodlier still is the sight, when, turning the narrow lane, thick fringed with the scrubby oak and the pleasant myrtle, you behold them come suddenly to the encounter with the hostile invaders. How they hurra, and rush to the charge with a mad emotion that the steed partakes—his ears erect, and his nostrils distended, while his eyeballs start forward, and grow red with the straining effort; then, how the riders bear down all before them, and, with swords shooting out from their cheeks, make nothing of the upraised bayonet and pointed spear, but, striking in, flank and front, carry confusion wherever they go—while the hot sands drink in the life-blood of friend and foe, streaming through a thousand wounds. Hear them tell of these, and of the "Game Cock," Sumter; how, always ready for fight, with a valour which was frequently rashness, he would rush into the hostile ranks, and, with his powerful frame and sweeping sabre, would single out for inveterate strife his own particular enemy. Then, of the subtle "Swamp Fox," Marion, who, slender of form, and having but little confidence in his own physical prowess, was never seen to use his sword in battle; gaining by stratagem and unexpected enterprise those advantages which his usual inferiority of force would never have permitted him to gain otherwise. They will tell you of his conduct and his coolness; of his ability, with small means, to consummate leading objects—the best proof of military talent; and of his wonderful command of his men; how they would do his will, though it led to the most perilous adventure, with as much alacrity as if they were going to a banquet. Of the men themselves, though in rags, almost starving, and exposed to all changes of the weather, how cheerfully, in the fastnesses of the swamp, they would sing their rude song about the capacity of their leader and their devotion to his person, in some such strain as that which follows:—

THE SWAMP FOX.

I.

"We follow where the Swamp Fox guides,
His friends and merry men are we;
And when the troop of Tarleton rides,
We burrow in the cypress tree.
The turfy tussock is our bed,
Our home is in the red-deer's den,
Our roof, the tree-top overhead,
For we are wild and hunted men.

II.

"We fly by day, and shun its light;
But, prompt to strike the sudden blow,
We mount, and start with early night,
And through the forest track our foe.
And soon he hears our chargers leap,
The flashing sabre blinds his eyes,
And ere he drives away his sleep,
And rushes from his camp, he dies.

III.

"Free bridle-bit, good gallant steed,
That will not ask a kind caress,
To swim the Santee at our need,
When on his heels the foemen press—
The true heart and the ready hand,
The spirit, stubborn to be free—
The twisted bore, the smiting brand—
And we are Marion's men, you see.

IV.

"Now light the fire, and cook the meal,
The last, perhaps, that we shall taste;
I hear the Swamp Fox round us steal,
And that's a sign we move in haste.
He whistles to the scouts, and hark!
You hear his order calm and low—
Come, wave your torch across the dark,
And let us see the boys that go.

V.

"We may not see their forms again,
God help 'em, should they find the strife!
For they are strong and fearless men,
And make no coward terms for life:
They'll fight as long as Marion bids,
And when he speaks the word to shy,
Then—not till then—they turn their steeds,
Through thickening shade and swamp to fly.

VI.

"Now stir the fire, and lie at ease,
The scouts are gone, and on the brush
I see the colonel bend his knees,
To take his slumbers too—but hush!
He's praying, comrades: 'tis not strange;
The man that's fighting day by day,
May well, when night comes, take a change,
And down upon his knees to pray.

VII.

"Break up that hoecake, boys, and hand
The sly and silent jug that's there;
I love not it should idle stand,
When Marion's men have need of cheer.
'Tis seldom that our luck affords
A stuff like this we just have quaffed,
And dry potatoes on our boards
May always call for such a draught.

VIII.

"Now pile the brush and roll the log:
Hard pillow, but a soldier's head,
That's half the time in brake and bog,
Must never think of softer bed.
The owl is hooting to the night,
The cooter crawling o'er the bank,
And in that pond the plashing light,
Tells where the alligator sank.

IX.

"What—'tis the signal! start so soon,
And through the Santee swamp so deep,
Without the aid of friendly moon,
And we, Heaven help us, half asleep!

But courage, comrades, Marion leads,
The Swamp Fox takes us out to-night;
So clear your swords, and coax your steeds,
There's goodly chance, I think, of fight.

X.

"We follow where the Swamp Fox guides,
We leave the swamp and cypress tree,
Our spurs are in our coursers' sides,
And ready for the strife are we—
The tory camp is now in sight,
And there he cowers within his den—
He hears our shout, he dreads the fight,
He fears, and flies from Marion's men."

And gallant men they were—taught by his precept and example, their own peculiar deeds grow famous in our story. Each forester became in time an adroit partisan; learned to practise a thousand stratagems, and most generally with a perfect success. Imbedding himself in the covering leaves and branches of the thick-limbed tree, he would lie in wait till the fall of evening; then, dropping suddenly upon the shoulders of the sentry as he paced beneath, would drive the keen knife into his heart, before he could yet recover from his panic. Again, he would burrow in the hollow of the miry ditch, and crawling, Indian fashion, into the trench, wait patiently until the soldier came into the moonlight, when the silver drop at his rifle's muzzle fell with fatal accuracy upon his button, or his breastplate, and the sharp sudden crack which followed almost invariably announced the victim's long sleep of death. And numerous besides were the practices, of which tradition and history alike agree to tell us, adopted in the war of our revolution by the Carolina partisan, to neutralize the superiority of European force and tactics. Often and again have they lain close to the gushing spring, and silent in the bush, like the tiger in his jungle, awaiting until the foragers had squatted around it for the enjoyment of their midday meal; then, rushing forth with a fierce halloo, seize upon the stacked arms, and beat down the surprised but daring soldiers who might rise up to defend them. And this sort of warfare, small though it may appear, was at last triumphant. The successes of the whigs, during the whole period of the revolutionary contest in the South, were almost entirely the result of the rapid, unexpected movement—the sudden stroke made by the little troop, familiar with its ground, knowing its object, and melting away at the approach of a superior enemy, like so many dusky shadows, secure in the thousand swamp recesses which surrounded them. Nor did they rely always on stratagem in the prosecution of their enterprises. There were gleams of chivalry thrown athwart this sombre waste of strife and bloodshed, worthy of the middle ages. Bold and graceful riders, with fine horses, ready in all cases, fierce in onset, and reckless in valour, the southern cavalry had an early renown. The audacity with which they drove through the forest, through broad rivers, such as the Santee, by day and by night, in the face of the enemy, whether in flight or in assault the same, makes their achievements as worthy of romance as those of a Bayard or Bernardo. Thousands of instances are recorded of that individual gallantry—that gallantry, stimulated by courage, warmed by enthusiasm, and refined by courtesy—which gives the only credentials of true chivalry. Such, among the many, was the rescue of the prisoners, by Jasper and Newton; the restoration of the flagstaff to Fort Moultrie, in the hottest fire, by the former; and the manner in which he got his death-wound at Savannah, in carrying off the colours which had been intrusted to him. Such were many of the rash achievements of Sumter and Laurens, and such was the daring of the brave Conyers, who daily challenged his enemy in the face of the hostile army. These were all partisan warriors, and such were their characteristics. Let us now return to the narration of those adventures, which distinguish the life of some, not unworthy to be ranked honourably among them.

CHAPTER II.

> "Now, yield thee up thy charge—delay and die—
> I may not spare thee in a quest like this,
> But strike even while I speak."

Aided by his new recruits, Humphries brought his prisoner to camp with little difficulty. The worthy serjeant, it is true, did at first offer resistance; he mouthed and struggled, as the bandages compressed his mouth, and the ligatures restrained his arms; but the timely application of hand and foot, which his captors did not hesitate to employ to compel obedience, not to speak of the threatening aspect of the dagger, which the much roused lieutenant held more than once to his throat, brought him to reason, and counselled that wholesome resignation to circumstances, which, though not always easy and pleasant of adoption, is, at least, on most occasions, well becoming in him who has few alternatives. He was, therefore, soon mounted, along with one of the troopers, on horseback; and in a state of most commendable quietness, he reached, after an hour's quick riding, the encampment at Bacon's bridge. There, well secured with a stout rope, and watched by the guard assigned for the other prisoners, close in the thick and knotty wood, which girdled the swamp, we will at present leave him.

Singleton had well concealed his little squadron in the same shelter. Like a true partisan, he had omitted no precautions. His scouts were out in all directions—men that he could trust—and his sentries watched both sides of the river. The position which he had chosen was one established by General Moultrie in the previous season. It had been vacated when the brave old warrior was called to league his troops with those of Lincoln, in defence of the city. The intrenchments and barracks were in good order, but Singleton studiously avoided their use; and, to the thoughtless wayfarer passing by the little fort and the clumsy blockhouse, nothing could possibly have looked more pacific. The partisan, though immediately at hand, preferred a less ostentatious position; and we find Singleton, accordingly, close clustering with his troop in the deep wood that lay behind it. Here, for a brief period at least, his lurking-place was secure, and he only desired it for a few days longer. Known to the enemy, he could not have held it, even for a time so limited, but would have been compelled to rapid flight, or a resort to the deeper shadows and fastnesses of the swamp. At this point the river ceased to be navigable even for the common poleboats of the country; and this was another source of its security. Filled up by crowding trees—the gloomy cypresses striding boldly into its very bosom—it slunk away into shade and silence, winding and broken, after a brief effort at a concentrated course, into numberless little bayous and indentures, muddy creeks, stagnating ponds, miry holes, and a region, throughout, only pregnable by desperation, and only loved by the fierce and filthy reptile, the ominous bird, the subtle fox, and venomous serpent. This region, immediately at hand, promised a safe place of retreat, for a season, to the adventurous partisan; and in its gloomy recesses he well knew that, unless guided by a genuine swamp-sucker, all Europe might vainly seek to find the little force, so easily concealed, which he now commanded.

Humphries soon furnished his commander with all the intelligence he had obtained at Dorchester. He gave a succinct account of the affair of Mother Blonay, and her visit to the village—of the movement of Huck to assail him on the Stonoe—and of the purpose of the tory to proceed onward, by the indirect route already mentioned, to join with Tarleton on the Catawba. The latter particulars had been furnished the lieutenant by the two troopers who had joined him. The whole account determined Singleton to hurry his own movement to join with Marion. That part of the narrative of Humphries relating to Mother Blonay, decided the commander to keep Goggle still a prisoner, as one not to be trusted. Giving orders, therefore, for his continued detention, he proceeded to put things in readiness for the movement of the squad, with nightfall, to their old and better shelter on the little island in the Cypress Swamp. This done, Singleton commanded his horse in readiness, and bidding the boy Lance Frampton in attendance, despatched him to prepare his own. To Humphries he now gave charge of the troop—repeated his orders to move with the dusk to their old quarters—and, having informed the lieutenant of the true object of his own adventure, he set forth, only attended by the boy Frampton, taking an upper road leading towards the Santee. That object may as well be told now as ever. Singleton had been for some time awaiting intelligence of Marion's movement to Nelson's ferry. A courier had been looked for daily, since he had left his leader; and as, in these suspicious times, every precaution in the conveyance and receipt of intelligence was necessary, it followed that many difficulties lay in the way of its transmission. Men met on the highways, to fear, to avoid, and frequently to fight with one another. They assumed contrary characters in the presence of the stranger, and the play at cross-purposes, even among friends, was the frequent consequence of a misunderstood position.

There were signs and phrases agreed upon between Marion and his trusted men, mysterious or unmeaning to all besides, which Singleton was not permitted to impart to others. This necessity prompted him forth, if possible, to meet with the expected courier, bearing him his orders—having attached the younger Frampton to his person: he chose him as too young for treason, and, indeed, he wanted no better companion to accompany him on his ramble. Setting forth by noonday, he kept boldly along the common Ashley river or Dorchester road, as, winding in accordance with the course of the stream, it carried him above and completely around the spot chosen for his camp in the Cypress.

They saw but little, for some time, to attract them in this ramble. They traversed the defile of thick oaks, which form so large a part of the scenery of that region; then into the same pine-land track they pushed their way. Cheerless quite, bald of home and habitation, they saw nothing throughout the melancholy waste more imposing than the plodding negro, with his staff in hand, and with white teeth peering through his thick, flagging lips, in a sort of deferential smile, at their approach. Sometimes, touched with the apprehensions of the time, he too would start away as he beheld them, and they might see him, as they looked backward, cautiously watching their progress from behind the pine-tree, or the crumbling fence. Occasionally they came to a dwelling in ruins, or burnt—the cornfield scorched and blackened with the recent fire, the fences overthrown, and the cows, almost wild, having free possession, and staring wildly upon them as they drew nigh.

"And this is war!" said Singleton, musingly. "This is war—the merciless, the devastating war! Oh, my country, when wilt thou be free from invasion—when will thy people come back to these deserted dwellings—when will the corn flourish green along these stricken and blasted fields, without danger from the trampling horse, and the wanton and devouring fire? When—oh, when!"

He spoke almost unconsciously, but was recalled to himself, as, wondering at what he heard, the peering eyes of Lance Frampton, as he rode up beside him, perused keenly the unusually sad expression of his countenance. Singleton noted his gaze, and, without rebuking it, addressed him with a question concerning his father, who had been missing from the troop ever since the affair with Travis.

"Lance, have you heard nothing of your father since I last asked you about him?"

"Nothing, sir; nothing at all, since we left the Cypress."

"You saw him not, then, at our departure?"

"No, sir; but I heard him laugh long after I missed him from the troop. He couldn't have been far off, sir, when we came out of the swamp; though I didn't see him then, and I didn't want to see him."

"Why not, boy?—your father, too?"

"Why, sir, father is strange sometimes, and then we never talk to him or trouble him, and he don't want people to see him then. We always know how he is when he laughs, and then we go out of his way. We know he is strange then, for he never laughs any other time."

"What do you mean by strange—is he dangerous?"

"Sometimes, sir, he plays dangerous with you. But it's all in play, for he laughs, and doesn't look in earnest; but he hurts people then. He once threw me into the tree when he was so: but it wasn't in earnest—it is his fun, when he is strange."

"And where do you think he is—in the swamp?"

"Yes, sir; he loves to be in the swamp."

"And how long, boy, is it since he became strange?"

"Oh, a very long time, sir; ever since I was a little child. But he has been much stranger since mother's death!"

"No wonder! no wonder! That was enough to make him so—that cruel murder; but we will avenge it, boy—we will avenge it."

"Yes, sir; that's what I want to do, as soon as you'll let me—as soon as I grow tall enough to cut a man over the head."

The boy stopped and blushed—half fearing that he had said too much; but the kindled fire of his eye was unshadowed, and there was a quiver of his lips, and an increasing heave of his breast, that did not escape the keen glance of Singleton. The latter was about to speak, when suddenly the boy stopped him, bent forward upon his horse, and pointing with his finger to an opening from the roadside, called the attention of his commander in that direction.

"I'm sure, sir, it's a man—a white man; his back was to us, sir; he's in there."

At the word, Singleton drove the spur into his steed, and the boy followed him. In a moment, he was at the designated spot, and there, sure enough, even as his companion had said, in the little break of the woods, on the hillock's side, a strange man stood before them.

The person thus surprised now evidently beheld them for the first time. He had been tightening the saddle-girth around his horse, that stood quietly cropping the grass at their approach; and his eyes were turned over his shoulder, surveying the new-comers. He hesitated, and his manner had in it something of precipitation. This was the more evident to Singleton, as, on their appearance, he began to whistle, and obviously assumed a degree of composure which he did not feel. He had been taking his midday repast at the spring, which trickled from the hillside below them; and the remains of his meal, consisting of a bit of dried venison, cold ham, and corn hoecake, were still open upon the grass, lying on the buckskin wrapper which contained them. The man was certainly a traveller, and had ridden far; the condition of his horse proved that; though his dress and appearance were those of the plain farmers of the neighbourhood. A coarse blue homespun coatee, with thin, whity-brown pantaloons, loosely made, and a quaker hat, in the riband of which a huge pipe was stuck ostentatiously, formed his habit. But Singleton saw that the pipe had never been smoked, and his inference was not favourable to the traveller, from this circumstance.

Throwing his bridle to Lance Frampton, the partisan alighted, and approached the stranger, who turned to meet him. There was quite a show of good-humour in his countenance, as Singleton drew nigh, and yet the latter saw his trepidation; and the anxious looks which, more than once, he cast upon the stout animal which had borne him, seemed to say how glad he would have been to use him in flight, could he possibly have thought to do so in safety.

"Good-day, my friend, good-day. You have ridden far," said Singleton, "and your horse tells it. May I ask what quarter you come from?"

"Oh yes, to be sure you may, stranger; there's no harm that I can see in the question, only as it happens to want an answer. It's no safe matter, now-a-days, stranger, to tell one's starting and stopping, since, you see, it mayn't altogether please them that hears."

There was a half disposition on the part of the countryman to feel his way, and see how far he could bully the new-comer, in this equivocal sort of speech. But he was mistaken in the man before him, and though he had spoken his evasive reply in a manner meant to be conciliating while it remained unsatisfactory, he was soon compelled to see that his questioner was by no means to be trifled with.

"Safe or not, my friend," said Singleton, gravely, "there are some questions that a man must answer, whether he likes it or no: there is a school proverb that you must remember, about the bird that can sing and will not."

The man turned his tobacco in his jaws, and though evidently annoyed and disquieted, replied—

"Why, yes, stranger, I reckon I know what you mean, though I haint had much schooling; three months one year, and three another, and then three years without any, don't teach a body every kind of larning. But the saying you point to I remember well enough; many's the time I've heard it. 'The bird that wont sing must be made to sing.'"

"I see your memory may be relied upon for other matters," said Singleton; "and now, taking care not to forget the proverb, you will please answer me a few questions."

"Well, stranger, I'm willing enough. I'm all over good-natur, and never fail to git vexed with myself afterward, when the devil drives me to be uncivil to them that treats me well. Ax your question straight off-hand, and Peet Larkin is the boy to answer, far as his larning goes."

"I am glad, Mr. Larkin, for your own sake, that you have this temper. You will please to say, now, where you are from."

"Well, now, stranger, I'm only come from a little above—and as you say, I've had a tough ride of it; but it's a good critter, this here nag of mine, and does one's heart good to go on him. So, you see, when I'm on him, I goes it. I hate mightily to creep, terrapin fashion, in a dogtrot; for you see, stranger, it's a bad gait, and sickens a short man, though the horse that travels stands it best of any."

Singleton had no disposition to interrupt the speaker, though he saw that he meant to be evasive. He watched his features attentively, while he spoke, and when he had done, proceeded in his inquiries.

"From above! but what part? I would know precisely, Mr. Larkin."

"Well, now, stranger, as I haint got no secrets, I 'spose I may as well tell you 'xactly as 'tis. I'm from clear across the Santee; I live 'pon the Santee, or thereabouts."

"Indeed! and is it true, as we hear below, that the wolves have grown troublesome in that quarter?"

"The wolves, stranger? Well, now, that can't be; for, you see, I come from all about, and nobody that I seed along the road, or in any settlement, made complaint. I reckon you aint heard very particular right, now."

"It must be the owls, then—yes, it is the owls; have you seen any of them on your way?"

This question, urged with the utmost gravity by the partisan, completed the fellow's astonishment. Revolving the huge lump of tobacco—for such it seemed—which from the commencement of the dialogue had been going to and fro between his jaws, it was some seconds before he could recover sufficiently from his astonishment to reply.

"Owls! God bless me, stranger, but that's a queer question, anyhow. To be sure there's owls all along the Santee; you may hear them in the swamp any time o' night, and an ugly noise they makes all night long, but nobody thinks o' minding them. They troubles nobody, and sometimes, when there's going to be a death in the family, the white owls comes into the bedroom, and they won't drive 'em out, for you see it's no use; the sick body will die after that, whether they drive the owl off or no."

"Yes, yes—true;" said Singleton musingly, while watching the other's countenance with a circumspect regard. He saw that the countryman was not the man he expected, and he had other suspicions as to his real character, the more particularly as he perceived how disquieted the examination and restraint had made him. After a moment's pause, he proceeded to put a more direct inquiry.

"Where do you live upon the Santee?"

"Well, now, stranger, I don't know if you'll know the place when I tell you, seeing it's a little out of the way of the settlement; but I live close upon the left hand fork of the White Oak Branch, a leetle above the road that runs to Williamsburg. I come down that road when I crossed the Santee."

"And where did you cross the Santee?"

"At Vance's; I 'spose you know where that is?"

"I do; but why did you not cross at Nelson's—why go out of your way to Vance's?"

The countryman stammered, hesitated for a moment, and while he replied, his eye sank beneath the penetrating glance of Singleton.

"Why, stranger, to say truth, 'cause I feared to come by Nelson's; I was afeard of the enemy?"

"And whom do you call the enemy?"

"Them that's not a friend to me and my friends; them's my enemies, stranger, and I reckon them's your enemies too."

"Perhaps so; but I must first know who they are, before I say. Speak."

The mass of tobacco performed a more rapid revolution before the man replied; and he then did so only as he saw the hand of Singleton upon the pistol in his belt.

"Well, stranger, if I must, I must: so, by the enemy I means the rebels; them that aint friendly to the king's government—them's the enemy; and there was plenty to spare of them at the nighest track; the river swamp at Nelson's was chock full of Marion's men, and there was no passing; so I took the road across, down by Wright's Bluff, that lets you into the Vance's ferry track, and—"

"You stopped at Watson's!"*

Singleton put the question affirmatively, and the other looked surprised; the tobacco was about to be revolved from the one jaw to its opposite, as had been the case at almost every interval made between his sentences, when, quick as lightning, and with a grasp of steel, Singleton seized him by the throat. The fellow strove to slip away, but never did finger more tenaciously gripe the throat of an enemy. The partisan was a man of immense strength, and the stranger was short and small. His powers were far inferior. He strove to struggle, and laboured, but in vain, to speak. The fingers were too closely compressed, and still maintaining his hold with more tenacity than ever, the assailant bore him to earth, and with his knee firmly upon his breast, in spite of every effort for release by the man beneath him, he choked him until his tongue hung out upon his cheek, and his jaws were sufficiently distended to enable him to secure the game for which he toiled so desperately. Turning the bearer of despatches, for the prisoner was such, upon his side, the silver bullet which contained them rolled forth upon the grass, and in a moment after was secured by the ready hands of Lance Frampton.

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* At that time one of the chain of military posts which the enemy had established throughout the country.

CHAPTER III.

> "Ye blight the sense when ye do wound the heart—
> Reason is feeling's best and born ally,
> And suffers with her kindred."

"Stir not—move a foot, and you die!"—were the brief words of Singleton, as, with foot upon his breast, he kept the bearer of despatches prostrate upon the earth. The man saw the peremptory look, the ready pistol, and he doubted not that the words were sternly earnest. His struggles ceased with the command, and handing his cocked pistol to the attentive boy Frampton, the partisan proceeded to examine the prize which he had gained. The screw soon yielded up its trust, and the intelligence was important. The courier showed symptoms of disquiet, and the foot of his conqueror was pressed, in consequence, more firmly upon his bosom.

"Shoot him if he stirs," said Singleton to the boy, who looked his readiness to obey the command. The former then perused the cramped document which the billet had contained. Its contents were valuable, and greatly assisted our hero in his own progress. Though from an enemy, it contained desirable intelligence, and taken in connection with the verbal narrative which the courier had given of the presence of Marion's men on the Santee, it at once determined Singleton to make an early movement in that quarter. The despatch was from Lord Rawdon, in command at Camden, to Earl Cornwallis at Charlestown. It claimed the immediate attendance of the commander-in-chief in Camden, to quell discontents, and prepare for the enemy—announcing the approach of Gates with a formidable army of seven thousand men. This was the alleged force of the continentals, an amount greatly exaggerated beyond the truth, but at this time confidently believed and insisted upon by both parties in the state. The express contained, in addition to this highly interesting matter, the heads of other subjects not less interesting to the partisan, and scarcely less important to the cause. It described, in brief, numerous risings in every quarter; the defection of the militia *en masse*, under Lyle, who had carried them over to Sumter; the union of Sumter with the Waxsaw whigs; and the affairs on the Catawba, at Williams's and the Rocky Mount: in all of which the "Game Cock" had handled the enemy severely. The despatch betrayed great anxiety, and its contents were of the most stimulating tendency to Singleton. It now impressed upon him the necessity of that early movement to join with Marion which he had already contemplated.

"You may rise, sir," said the partisan, moving his heel from the breast of the courier, who had lain quietly enough but uncomfortably under it.

"You may rise, but you are my prisoner—no words, but prepare to submit. See to your animal—make no effort to fly, or I shoot you down on the instant."

The man rose tamely enough, but sullenly. After a few moments he found his speech, which was now more agreeable and less broken than when the bullet was revolving to and fro in his jaws.

"Well, now, captain, this is mighty hard, now, I do think. You won't keep me, I reckon, seeing I'm no fighting man, and haint got any weapons. I'm a noncombatant, so I am, and I aint free to be taken prisoner. It's agin the laws, I reckon."

"Indeed! but we'll see. Mount, sir, and no talking."

"Well, it's a tough business, and I do think, after all, that it's only joking with me you are—you're two good loyalists, now, I'm certain."

"You mistake, sir, I'm an American—one of Marion's men, and no traitor. To horse, and no more of this—no trifling."

"God help me, captain, but you're not in airnest, sure? It's no small difficulty, now, this express, and it's a matter to be well paid for; and if so be you are, for certain, one of Marion's men, you mought let 'n have a free pass up, for a smart chance of the guineas. Afore God, captain, if you'll only clear the road you shall have one half—"

The pistol was at his head.

"Another word, scoundrel, and I send the bullet through your scull. Mount, quickly—quickly!"

With the back of his hand he smote the tory upon his mouth as he spoke, and the fire of insulted patriotism flashed from his eye, with a threatening brightness that silenced at once, and most effectually, all farther solicitations from the bearer of despatches. Reluctantly, but without farther pause, he got into saddle, taking the place assigned him by his captor, between himself and the boy. In this manner they took their way to the Cypress Swamp, and it was not long before they were, all three, lodged in its safe and deep recesses.

There we find our almost forgotten friends, the gourmand and good-natured Porgy, and the attenuated naturalist, Doctor Oakenburger; the one about to engage in his favourite vocation, and hurrying the evening meal, the other sublimely employed in stuffing with moss the skin of a monstrous "coachwhip," which, to his great delight, the morning before, he had been successful enough to take with a crotch stick, and to kill without bruising. Carefully skinned, and dried in the shade, the rich colours and glossy glaze of the reptile had been well preserved, and now, carefully filled out with the soft and pliant moss, as it lay across the doctor's lap, it wore, to the eye of Singleton, a very life-like appearance. The two came forward to meet and make the acquaintance of the partisan, whom before they had not seen. Porgy was highly delighted, for, like most fat men, he liked company, and preferred always the presence of a number. "There's no eating alone," he would say—"give me enough for a large table, and enough round it: I can then enjoy myself." His reception of Singleton partook of this spirit.

"Major Singleton, I rejoice to see you: just now particularly, as our supper, such as it is, is almost at hand. No great variety, sir—nothing much to choose from—but what of that, sir. There's enough, and what there is, is good—the very best. Tom, there—our cook, sir—he will make the very best of it—broils ham the best of any negro in the southern country, and his hoe-cake, sir, is absolutely perfection. He does turn a griddle with a dexterity that is remarkable. But you shall see—you shall see for yourself. Here, Tom!"

And rolling up his sleeves, he took the subject of his eulogy aside, and a moment after the latter was seen piling his brands and adjusting a rude iron fabric over the coals, while the corpulent Porgy, with the most hearty good-will for the labour, busily sliced off sundry huge collops from the convenient shoulder of bacon that hung suspended from a contiguous tree. The labours of the gourmand were scarcely congenial either with the mood of Singleton or the quiet loveliness of the scene. Evening was fast coming on—all the swamp was in a deep shadow, save where, like a wandering but pure spirit, a rose-like effusion, the last dying but lovely glance from the descending sun rested flickeringly upon the top of one of the tallest pines above them. A space between the trees, opening to the heavens in one little spot alone, showed them a sprinkling of fleecy white clouds, sleeping quietly under the sky, their western edges partaking slightly of the same last parting glance of the sinking orb. A slight breeze stirred fitfully among the branches; and the occasional chirp of the nimble sparrow, as it hopped along on the edge of the island, was the only sound, other than those made by the hissing fire, and the occasional orders of Porgy, which came to the ears of Singleton. He threw himself upon the green bank, under a tree, on the opposite side of which the boy Lance had already placed himself, a little behind him. Suddenly the boy started to his feet. The wild, unearthly laugh of his father, that eldritch scream which chilled to the very bones of the hearer, was heard on the skirts of the island. Looking to the quarter whence the sound proceeded, they beheld his huge figure peering from behind a tree—his eyes staring forth vacantly upon them, while his hands were uplifted to a stretching branch above him, which he grasped firmly. He laughed once and again, and Singleton at length rose, beckoned and called to him. But he gave no heed to the call, and when the latter offered to approach him, the maniac moved away rapidly, with another eldritch laugh, as if he was about to fly. At this moment the boy came up in sight of his father, and the wild man seemed to recognise his son."

"He will come now, sir," said Lance to Major Singleton; "he will come now, sir: but we must not seem to push or to watch him."

They fell back, accordingly, took their old places along the bank, and awaited the result of their experiment; and, as the boy had predicted, the maniac in a few moments after was beside them. He came forward with a bounding motion, as if now only accustomed to an inordinate extent of action, corresponding to the sleepless impulse and the fierce fever preying upon his mind. Without a word, but with a perpetually glancing movement of the eye, which seemed to take in all objects around, he squatted down quietly beside his son. He stared for an instant curiously into his eyes, then extending his hand, his fingers wandered unconsciously in the long black hair of the boy. The latter, all the time, with a proper caution, arising from his previous intimacy with his father's habits, took care neither to move nor speak. He sat patiently, unmoved, while the fingers of the maniac played with his hair, lifted curl after curl with affectionate minuteness, and wound particular locks about his finger. Then he stroked down, once or twice, the thick volumes of hair together; and at length, laughing again more wildly than ever, he withdrew his hand entirely, and turning his face from the two, his eyes became fixed with a strange intensity upon the extended form of the tory whom Singleton had taken, and who now lay tied beneath a tree at a little distance. The maniac slowly rose and moved towards him—walked all around and examined him in every particular; the prisoner all the while, with no little anxiety, turning his glance in every quarter, following the movement of the observer. The fingers of the maniac were in a motion as restless—now grasping, and now withdrawn from, the handle of the unsheathed knife that was stuck in the folds of a thick red handkerchief, ragged and soiled, which was strapped about his waist. At length, leaving the object of his inspection, he approached Singleton, and, with something more of coherence than usual, and a singularly calm expression, he proposed an inquiry about the person whose presence appeared so much to trouble him.

"He is not a red-coat--not a dragoon!"

"No; a countryman, but a prisoner. He is a bearer of despatches—a non-combatant."

The reply of Singleton, which was immediately made to the maniac, brought forward another party in the person of Doctor Oakenburger, who now—having first, with the utmost tenderness, hung his snake over a limb above him—joined the group.

"A prisoner, and yet a non-combatant, Major Singleton! Sir, oblige me, and explain. Is that possible?—have I not heard imperfectly? I too, sir, am a non-combatant, sir; that was understood, sir, when Master Humphries first spoke to me in this behalf. My engagements, sir, required no risk at my hands, and promised me perfect safety."

"Is he not safe enough?" was the calm inquiry of Singleton, as, with a smile, he pointed to the corded courier, and thus answered the doctor's question. Just at his ears, in the same moment, the maniac, who, unperceived by the doctor, had stolen close behind him, now uttered one of his most appalling screams of laughter; and the non-combatant did not seek to disguise the apprehensions which prompted him to a hasty retreat in the rear of Singleton. The partisan turned to him, and changing his topic somewhat, inquired—

"You are the doctor, sir? Doctor—"

"Oakenburger, sir; of an old German family of high descent, and without stain of blood. They came over, sir, with the Elector."

In a whisper, Singleton inquired if his skill could reach the case of Frampson; but the suggestion was productive of quite too much alarm in the mind of the adventurer. He seemed nowise desirous of martyrdom in the prosecution of the healing art; and, when he found his tongue, in reply to the demand of Singleton, he gave his opinion in a half-unintelligible jargon, that the case was confirmed and hopeless. The savage, in the mean while, had drawn nigher to his son, one of whose hands he had taken into his own. But he said nothing all the while; and at length, having made all arrangements for the evening repast, the provident Porgy coming forward, announced things in readiness, and bade them fall to. Singleton then spoke to the maniac, and endeavoured to persuade him to the log on which the victuals had been spread, and around which the others had now gathered; but his application was entirely unheeded.

"He won't mind all you can say to him, major; we know him, for he's been several times to eat with us; that's the way with the creature. But put the meat before him, and his understanding comes back in a moment. He knows very well what to do with it. Ah, Providence has wisely ordained, major, that we shall lose the knowledge of what's good for the stomach the last of all. We can forget the loss of fortune, sir, of the fine house, and goodly plate, and pleasant tendance—we may even forget the quality and the faces of our friends; and as for love, that gets out of our clutches, we don't know how; but, major, I wont believe that anybody ever yet lost their knowledge of good living. Once gained, it holds its ground well; it survives all other knowledge. The belly, major, will always insist upon so much brains being preserved in the head, as will maintain unimpaired its own ascendency."

As the gourmand had said, the meat was no sooner placed before the maniac, than, seizing it ravenously in his fingers, he tore and devoured it with a fury that showed how long had been his previous abstinence. His appetite was absolutely wolfish; and while he ate, Singleton watched him with mingled emotions of pity and disgust. His garments were in tatters about him, torn by the thick wood in which he had ranged with as little scruple as the wild beasts whom he now resembled. His face had been scratched with briars, and the blood had congealed along the seams upon his cheek, unremoved and unregarded. His thick, black hair was matted down upon his forehead, and was deeply stained with the clayey ooze of the swamp through which he had been crawling. His eyes beneath had a fiery restlessness, and glared even around him with a baleful, comet-like light, which was full of evil omen. When he had eaten, without a word he dashed off from the place where he had been seated, plunged into the creek, and the fainter and fainter echoes of his wild laugh declared his rapid progress away into the thick recesses of the neighbouring cypress. Over these darkness now began to consolidate; and at length, impatient of farther delay in a purposed object, Singleton rose from his place, and gave orders to Lance to get his own and the horse of his superior in readiness.

"Shall we ride to-night, sir?" inquired the boy.

"Instantly: I shall put you on a new duty to-night, Lance, and hope that you will perform it well. Speed now with the horses, for the dark gathers."

The bosom of the youth thrilled and throbbed with a new emotion of pleasure, as he heard the promise, and the feeling gave a degree of elasticity to his movement, which enabled him to place the steed before his leader instantaneously.

Singleton sprung the pan of his pistols, renewed the priming, gave several orders touching the prisoner, and some parting directions; then leaping into saddle, bade Lancelot find the track. Porgy waved a blazing torch over the creek, giving them a brief light at starting, and the two were soon plunging through the gloomy pathway, if so, by any stretch of courtesy, it may be called, and taking a direction which Singleton thought most likely to give them a meeting with the now approaching troop under the command of Humphries.

CHAPTER IV.

"The game is lost, and needless to pursue,
Through such a waste, in such a night as this."

The course of Singleton was now towards "The Oaks." He was about to pay a parting visit, and to seek, if possible, to persuade his uncle to set forth with him for the Santee, with whatever force might have been procured by him from among his neighbours. This was, indeed, his only opportunity. He had arrested one courier, it is true; but others must succeed in giving to Cornwallis the important intelligence which, for the present, he had staid. The movement of Cornwallis towards Camden, in compliance with the necessity of the case, and Rawdon's solicitations, would have the effect of breaking up communication throughout the intervening country, and making any effort to pass it dangerous to the partisan. This was a consideration which he necessarily concluded must influence Colonel Walton's conduct; and the opportunity of passing at Nelson's, now filled with Marion's men, was one not to be disregarded. His hopes were, that his uncle would carry with him a decent number of sturdy fellows into the camp of the continentals. Nor was this hope altogether premature. Colonel Walton, although slow in taking up the cause of his country, had, at last, set heartily about it. By his earnestness and his industry, since his determination had been made to resume his arms, he strove to appease his conscience, and do away with any reproach that might have been due to his past forbearance. He had made some progress with his recruits, and was night and day indefatigable. He rode through his neighbourhood among all sorts of people, and played his game with skill and coolness. He knew that Proctor watched him, and he was circumspect accordingly. But, though cautious, he did not relax. In the little interval which followed his resolve to come out, and the moment under our view, he had secured some twenty pledges—pledges of stout, honest countrymen, —men who had been chafed by the insolence of their oppression, borne down by wrongs, and impatient for redress. He was now, even while Singleton rode with his attendant towards the river, engaged in close council with a little band at Johnson's house, on Cane Acre, to whom he was successfully urging such considerations as did not fail, in the end, to effect the object he desired. Let us there leave him, for the present, and return to the camp at Bacon's bridge.

With the close of day, Humphries made his preparations for moving to the Cypress in obedience to the command of Singleton. The horses were saddled quickly, the arms prepared, the surplus baggage put upon pack-horses, upon which the prisoners were mounted, and all appearance of a camp broken up in that quarter. These last were placed under the immediate surveillance of Davis, who brought up the rear of the troop. The custody of Hastings placed the rivals in a novel sort of relationship to one another; and the sturdy Goose Creeker did not feel less of his bitterness of spirit because he was compelled to suppress its utterance. His old love for Bella Humphries grew active with the feeling of jealousy, which the presence of the serjeant necessarily provoked. He really loved the girl, and his hate for the dragoon was, in consequence, entirely without qualification. He felt that he was getting angry, as, while arranging the prisoners, his eye continually fell upon Hastings. But he knew and respected the situation of the enemy too much to give utterance to his feelings at large; feelings which, at the same time, were sufficiently evident to the eye of the dragoon. He, on the other hand, conscious of his danger, and apprehensive of punishment corresponding to the outrageous character of his last offence, strove to be rather conciliating, and addressed some soothing and gracious speech to his rival, as the latter approached him; but the other was not to be soothed in this fashion. A glance of contempt, mingled with hate, was the only response given to the obsequious remark of Hastings; and in a few minutes after, when he could do so unobserved, Davis came back to where his prisoner stood, and in a low tone thus addressed him—

"Look ye, Sergeant Hastings, there's no love lost atween us, and it's no use for you to make sweet speeches. You're in no fix to help yourself now; but I've got a grudge agin you that must be satisfied, and I'll be on the look-out, though it's agin orders, to work a clear way for you out of this hobble, if so be you'll only promise to give me satisfaction when I've done so. Say the word now that you cross swords with me, if I help you to a clear track, and here's my hand upon it, that you shall have a fair fight and free passage."

"Well—but, Davis, my friend—"

"No friend, if you please. I'm your deadly enemy, and if so be I can, as God shall help me, I'll cut your heart out of your hide, or there's no snakes."

"Well, well—but I've no weapon."

"I'll bring you one—only say the word," was the pertinacious and quick reply. Finding there was no escape, the sergeant readily enough closed with the terms, and Davis then promised to seek him out in the swamp, conduct him to a clear ground, and make the terms of fight equal between them. This done, he turned away from the prisoner with something more of light-heartedness than usual, as he anticipated the pleasure of that strife with his enemy which promised to revenge him for so many wrongs.

The prisoners were now all mounted, Goggle along with them, and so disposed as to ride between alternate files of the troopers. In this order they set forth for the recesses of the swamp, and a route was chosen by Humphries which enabled him to keep away from all beaten roads; the necessity still existing, while in the neighbourhood of a superior force, for the utmost caution, as the objects of the partisan required security from observation even before any successes which so small a party might obtain. It was not long before they began to enter the swamp, and to meet with its obstructions. The twilight gradually ceased to glimmer, the trees crowded more closely, and the shades stalking about them incessantly grew incorporated into huge masses, from which the trees themselves were scarce distinguishable. Then came the varieties of the swamp; the black and stagnant puddle, the slimy ooze, the decayed and prostrate tree, and the hanging vine swinging across the path. The night came down shortly after they had penetrated into the morass, and, though a clear starlight evening, it was only now and then that glimpses could be obtained of the pale and melancholy watcher, suddenly peering down into the opening of the trees overhead. A closer order of march was now imposed upon the troop, as, carefully leading the way, Humphries guided them through one little creek, and along the banks of another. The earth between the two parallel waters lay tolerably high, and formed a defile, as it were, through which they continued to move with no other obstructions than such as were presented by the occasional morass formed by indentions of the creek, and the close trees, that suffered them to move only in single file. Once fairly in the swamp, Humphries had a torch lighted and carried by a trooper in front with himself. This serving sufficiently to pick the path, though yielding no assistance to those who came after, they were compelled simply to keep close, and follow the leader. The lieutenant kept unrelaxing watch during all this period, and the utmost order was observed during their progress. His ear was keenly observant of every sound, though deceived by none of them. He was skilled in woodcraft, and knew well how to decoy the bird, and to deceive the reptile, by his various imitations. At this time, however, he permitted himself no exercise of his powers in this respect; but, watchful in the highest degree, he gave his orders briefly, in a low tone, and without the employment of unnecessary words. At length the defile narrowed, the undergrowth thickened about the trees in luxuriant vegetation, and so dark was the place that the figure of each individual horse could only be made out by the rider immediately behind it. To the instinct and better vision of the animals themselves the movement was in great part left; the trooper and his prisoner alike only taking care not to fall far behind the steed in advance. This being the case, and heedful of his charge, while Davis was directed closely to watch and bring up the rear, Humphries stationed himself at the mouth of the defile, having first led the way through which they were yet to pass. There, with uplifted torch, he numbered one by one the steeds of all that came through and passed before him; and in this way, with a precaution which he considered the most complete that could be adopted, confidently thought that there could be no risk of losing any of his prisoners. And, indeed, with the ordinary prisoner, the man only skilled to fight bulldog fashion, without ingenuity, and solely relying upon his teeth, the precaution would have been enough. But Goggle was not of this description. He had the gift, along with Indian blood, of Indian subtlety. He had kept his course quietly and patiently with the rest, and there was no gloom, no dulness, no flagging of spirits about him. All was coolness in his mood, and he knew his ground. He had heard the orders of Humphries, readily understood the route, and prepared to avail himself of circumstances as they might occur in his favour. There was a cry which the troops were heard to utter successively, as they advanced through a certain point of the defile, the meaning of which he clearly enough understood. A ragged pine had thrust an arm directly over the path, and so low as to endanger the head of a tall man moving along too erectly. The cry of each rider, therefore, as he passed under it, was to his immediate follower—

"Stoop low!—heads down!"

Goggle heard this long before he reached it. He coolly prepared himself, buttoned his jacket closely, and freed his feet from his stirrups as he proceeded. He did this without the slightest precipitation or impatience. In order to accustom his horse to the relaxation of the bit, so that his movement might not undergo any change at the trying moment, he gradually yielded up the bridle, until the animal failed entirely to feel its restraints upon his mouth, then, dropping it altogether as he heard the cry of his predecessor to "stoop," instead of doing so, he threw his arms upward, caught the overhanging branch firmly with both hands, and with the activity of an ape lifted himself fairly out of the saddle, and for a moment swung in air. The horse passed from under him, and with his old habit followed the lead to which he had been accustomed. The succeeding steed approached, Goggle gave the cry, in the most measured language, and as he did so he whirled himself over out of the trooper's way, upon the top of the branch, where he sat with all a squirrel's sense of security. Here he remained in quiet as the troop proceeded. He knew the length of the defile, and could see in the distance the glimmering of the torch by which Humphries enumerated the troopers as they came forth from the avenue; and as the rear of the party with Davis was at hand, he felt secure that all would have passed him some time before his empty saddle would warn the lieutenant of his departure. A moment after, the voice of Davis, as he passed under the tree where the fugitive sat chuckling at his success, apprized him of the proper time to commence his flight. The ground was free, and dropping from his perch, the fugitive crossed the path, and took the water of the creek as soon as possible, following its course towards the river for a brief space, then turning aside and shrouding himself, while still keeping his way, in a close-set forest of small saplings. Here he had scarcely entered when the alarm was given. The vigilant Humphries had discovered the absence of the prisoner, as the untrammelled animal came forth from the defile. A confused shouting, a rush as of one or more in search, reached the ears of the fugitive; but he was safe, and laughed at all pursuit. The sound soon died away; and Goggle, who had lain quiet while the confusion lasted, now resumed his flight. Davis and one of the troopers had dashed back when the alarm was given; but in the thick darkness which shrouded the region, there was no prospect of retaking the prisoner so long as he kept silent. This was soon evident to Humphries, and, sore and chagrined, he hurried on the progress of the party, swearing vengeance against the tory, his hostility to whom had now received an added and doubly active stimulant. He reached the camp late at night without farther accident, and without meeting with Singleton, as the latter had proposed. They had taken different routes; and when the commander emerged from the swamp, he took the road back to the bridge, only accompanied by his youthful protegé. He reached the river just as the fugitive Goggle was about to emerge from the swamp. The latter heard at a distance the feet of the horse, and lay snug beside the road as they passed. The unobstructed starlight was now around them, and he was enabled to distinguish their persons. He conjectured what would be the course of Singleton, and he now beheld the opportunity of finding his reward with the British, and of gaining his revenge upon one, at least, of his American enemies. Toil and fatigue were at once forgotten, fear was discarded from his mind; and, now running, now walking, with an Indian pertinacity of spirit, he took the directest course leading to Dorchester.

CHAPTER V.

"Her words are so much music, caught from heaven
When clouds are parting, and the rosy eve
Comes to her away."

The hour was late when Goggle reached the village. The sentries were all set, and Proctor had retired for the night; but, aware of the value of his intelligence, the fugitive did not scruple to disturb him. He told his story at full, and had the satisfaction to find that he told it to a willing ear. Proctor at once proceeded to arm a party, and heading it himself, prepared to surprise the rebel partisan in the quiet dwelling to which Goggle had seen him pursuing his way. The British colonel was the more willing to move in this business now, than he otherwise might have been, as he had been troubled with some doubt whether the suspicious attitude of Colonel Walton had not already called for his attention. He was glad of an opportunity, therefore, of proving his alacrity in the cause, so much of which had been intrusted to him. We leave him, with a little troop of half a score, getting into saddle, and about to move in the direction of "The Oaks." Goggle remained behind, at the suggestion of Proctor, who needed not his assistance farther, and saw that his fatigued condition craved for immediate rest.

Let us now return to Singleton and his attendant. Having reached the neighbourhood of "The Oaks," they took the back track leading to the river, which carried them immediately into the rear of the dwelling-house. There, dismounting, and carefully concealing their horses in the brush, Singleton placed his pistols in his belt, and leaving the boy in charge of the animals, with instructions to watch closely, proceeded to the mansion.

Lance Frampton, proud of the trust, promised his commander to watch well, and approve himself a worthy sentinel. In a few moments after, the partisan was once more treading the well-known path, covered with those grave guardians of a century, the spreading and moss-bearded oaks, and on his way to the presence of those well beloved beyond all, and dearer to him than the lifeblood at his heart. It was not many minutes before he was at the side of the frail and attenuated form of her, the sister and the playmate of his boyhood; feeble to prostration, sustained by pillows, and scarcely able to turn upon him those lovely eyes, still bright, and brightening to the last, as if there the reluctant soul had concentrated its heavenward fires; and even there, clinging to mortality, evolved some of that divine light which it was so soon to be mingled with for ever.

"Dear, dear Emily!" he exclaimed; "sister, sweet sister!"—and his lips were pressed to hers; and, though he strove hard for their suppression, the tears gathered in his large dark eyes. Hers were the only unclouded ones in the chamber. On one side sat his cousin Kate, while his aunt moved around the couch of the sufferer, duly administering to her wants. They too were in tears, and had evidently, before this, been weeping. It was a scene for tears; in which smiles had been irreverent, and joy an unbecoming and most impious intruder. Yet, though the dying girl wept not herself, and though her eye had in it that glorious effulgence which is so peculiarly the attribute of the victim to the deadly form of disease under which she laboured, yet the brightness of her glance was no rebuke to the tearfulness of theirs. It was a high and holy brightness; a deep expression, full of divine speech, and solemnizing even where it brightened with an aspect not of the earth. The light might have streamed from the altar, a halo from heaven around the brow of its most endowed apostle.

She spoke to him of the commonest affairs of life; yet she knew that death was busy at her heart. Whence was this strength of mind—this confidence? Is there, indeed, a moment before the hour of dissolution when the mortal is vouchsafed communion, a close communion and converse with its God. It is, it must be so. The dim confine, the heavy earth, cannot always be around us. The soul must sometimes employ the wings of a divine prescience, and shaking off human care with human feeling, forget for a while the many pains, along with the humble pleasures, of humanity, and be only alive to the immortality of the future. The dark mansions of the coming time, and the huge and high barriers which control it, must then be thrown aside; and faith and the pure spirit, in their whitened vestments, already on, must be suffered to take a momentary survey of the world which is to be their own.

But the spirit had come back to earth, and now grew conscious of its claims.

"Dear, dear Robert!" she replied, as she motioned to be free from those caresses which he bestowed upon her; and which, though studiously light and gentle, were yet too much for a frame spiritualizing so fast: "you are come, Robert, and with no ill news. You have no harshness on your brow, and the vein is not swollen; and by this I know you have not been engaged in any war and violence. Is it not so?"

He did not undeceive her, and suppressed carefully every allusion to his late adventures; spoke of indifferent things, and encouraged in her that idea of the national peace, which, from a hope, had already grown into a thought of her mind.

"Oh, would that I could only hear of it, Robert, ere I leave you! Could I know that you were safe, all safe, before I died—you, dear aunt, and you, sister, my more than sister—and you, Robert, who have been to me father and brother, and all, so long; would I could know this, and I should die happy—even with joy! But death will have its sting, I feel, in this. I shall go to peace—I feel that; while all the strifes, and all the cares, the wounds, and the dangers, will be left for you!"

Her eyes now filled, as her earthly sorrows were renewed. Her brother strove to console her in the usual commonplace.

"Fear not for us, dear Emily; and let not our afflictions fill your mind. Be calm on that subject; you have pains and sufferings enough of your own, my dear sister, to keep you from desiring any share in ours."

"I have no sufferings now, Robert; I have long ceased to have sufferings of my own. Have I not long survived the hope of life? have I not long laboured to sustain myself against the coming and the fear of death? God be praised! for I think I have succeeded. These were my afflictions once, and they are now over. Yet I have sorrows not my own, and they are, that I must leave you to sorrows—griefs of an unnatural time, and horrors that come with the disease, as it would seem, of nature. For war is her disease—her most pestilent disease. The sharp sword, the torturing scourge, the degrading rope, the pining and the piercing famine—these are the horrible accompaniments of war; and oh, brother, soldier as you are, when I leave you to the dangers of these, I carry with me all my human sorrows. I may die, but my soul must bear along with it those thousand fears which belong to my sympathies with you."

"Ah, too considerate of us, so unworthy such consideration!" was the exclamation of Kate beside her. "Do not, dear Emily, oppress yourself by reflections such as these. You leave us to no difficulties; for though the country still be at war, yet our quarter is free from its ravages; and though under hostile control, it is still quiet, and not now a dangerous one. We are all here at peace."

"Why seek to deceive me, Kate, when but a glance at Robert tells a different story? Look at the pistols in his belt, and say why they are there, if war be not around us—if there be no occasion for strife, and if he is not exposed to its dangers? You cannot persuade me out of my senses, though in this I am quite willing that you should. Would that it could be so! I would not believe these truths if I could help it."

"And you need not, Emily, my sister; for though there be war, and though I may be engaged in it, yet the present prospects are, that it will soon be over, and as we all wish it—giving us peace and freedom alike, and securing honourable station for our country among the nations of the earth. This last thought, my Emily, ought to make you better satisfied with the risks our people are compelled to run."

"It does not, brother. I have not that vain ambition, which, for the sake of a name, is content with the bloodshed and the misery of mankind; and I hold the doctrine hateful to one professing the Christian faith. How it may be upheld, this warfare in which life is taken as a worthless thing, and man's blood shed like water, for any pretence, and with any object, by a believer in the Saviour, and the creed which he taught, I can never understand."

"You would not have us submit to wrong and injustice!"

"No; but the means employed for resistance should be justly proportioned to the aggression. But, alas for humanity! the glory and the glare of warfare, under false notions of renown, are too often sufficient, not only to conceal the bloodshed and the horror, but to stimulate to undue vengeance, and to make resistance premature, and turn the desire of justice into a passion for revenge. Then, for the wrong done by one captain, all the captains conspire to do greater wrongs; and the blazing dwelling by midnight, the poor woman and her naked children escaping from the flames to perish of hunger; the gibbeted soldier on the nighest tree; and the wanton murder of the shrieking babe, quieted in its screams upon the bayonet of the yelling soldiers—these are the modes by which, repairing one wrong, war does a thousand greater. Oh, when, calling things by their right names, shall we discover that all the glory of the warrior is the glory of brutality!"

The picture which the enthusiastic girl had given of the terrors of war, was too felicitously just, as it had occurred in Carolina, to be denied by her auditors; and as she had herself made the right distinction between war as an absolute necessity, forced upon a people in their defence, and pursued only so far as adequately to obtain the mere object of justice, and war as a means of national or individual notoriety, there was no legitimate answer to her exhortation. A momentary silence ensued, which was due to the exhaustion following her effort at speech. In a little while she again addressed her brother—

"And how long, Robert, do you stay in our neighbourhood?"

"But a few days more, Emily: I linger now somewhat over my time; but my objects are various and important."

"And where then do you go?"

"Either to the Santee or the Peedee; wherever there is a chance of finding Colonel Marion, to whose troop I am attached."

"And not so easy a matter," said Kate Walton, "if reports speak truly of your colonel. He is here, there, and everywhere, and they say cannot often be met with either by friend or foe, except when he himself pleases. What is it Colonel Tarleton calls him?"

"The Swamp Fox: and a good name, for certainly he knows more of the navigation of the thick swamps of the Santee and Peedee, than ever seaman of the broad ocean. In a circuit of five miles he will misguide the whole force of Tarleton for as many days; then, while he looks for him in one quarter, Marion will be cutting up his forages or the tories in another. He is fearless, too, as well as skilful, and in the union of these qualities he is more than a match, with an equal force, for any five of the captains they can send against him."

As the major spoke with that warm enthusiasm of his commander, which distinguished the men generally of Marion, an audible sigh from his sister recalled him to his consideration, and he turned to her with some observation on an unimportant subject. She did not seem to heed what he said, but, after a moment's pause, asked, rather abruptly, if he should move first for the Santee.

"I think so," was his reply; "the probability is that I shall there find my orders, if, indeed, I do not find my commanding officers. I wait but to fulfil some important duties, when I shall move direct in that quarter."

"And when, Robert, do you expect to return?" was the farther inquiry, put with considerable earnestness of manner.

"In three or four weeks, Emily; not before, and probably not even then; for I may be ordered to join the continentals, on Gates's arrival, and shall then have a more limited range and exercise than now."

"That will be too late, too late!" murmured the maiden with an expression of deep regret.

"Too late for what, dear Emily?" said the major, quickly, in reply; but when he met her glance, and saw the mournful utterance which it looked, he needed no answer to his question. Never did eye more explicitly speak than then, and he turned his own away to conceal its tears.

"Too late to see me die," she murmured, as he bent his head downward, concealing his face in the folds of her encircling arms.

"Ah, Robert! I leave you, but not lonely I hope—not altogether alone." Her eye rested upon the face of Kate Walton, as she uttered the hope; and though her brother saw not the look, yet the cheeks of the conscious Kate, so silently yet expressively appealed to, were deeply crimsoned on the instant. She turned away from the couch and looked through the window opening upon the waters of the Ashley, which wound at a little distance beyond them, stealing off, like a creation of the fancy, under the close glance of the observer. Her fingers played all the while with the branches of the oak that rose immediately beside the window.

Emily then intimated to her brother her increasing debility, the necessity of her own repose and of his departure, with a calmness which was perfect, and painfully appalling to him in consequence.

"But come to me to-morrow, to-morrow night, Robert; come early—I would speak with you; I have much to say to you, and I feel that I have but little time to say it in. Fail me not, unless there be hazard, and then heed not my desire. You must risk nothing, Robert; your life is more valuable to me, strange to say, as my own is leaving me. I know its value, as I am now about to be taught its loss. But go now—and remember, to-morrow."

His grief and his farewell were alike voiceless. He pressed her cold cheek with his lips at parting; then, like one who had left behind him all his consciousness, he descended with his beautiful cousin from that sad but sacred apartment, where life still lingered, neutralizing decay with its latent freshness, but where immortality already seemed to have put on some hues of that eternal morning, whose bloom and whose freshness speak, not only for its lasting existence, but for its holy purity.

CHAPTER VI.

"I cannot list thy pleading, though thou plead'st
In music which I love. Forbear thy suit."

Her father being absent, Kate did the honours of the household, and we need not say how much gratification Major Singleton felt in being accompanied by his sweet cousin to the lower apartments. He had another reason for his satisfaction in this attendance, as it afforded him an opportunity which he had much desired. We have already seen him urging those claims upon her closest regards which she continued to evade. He now determined to press them; and, handing her to the sofa with a degree of solemnity in his manner which led her to conclude that his object was any thing but what it really was, she willingly took the seat to which he conducted her. Singleton was no sentimentalist, but a man of sterling character, and deep, true feeling: he was one of those who never trifle; and the prompter at his heart, though taking the name of that capricious mood which is always fair game for the arch jest and playful satire, was yet altogether a more lofty and dignified sentiment. His love was of his life a leading part: it made up his existence, and imbodied in its own the forms of a thousand strong obligations to society and man. It was now prominent to his own view in the form of a sacred duty—a duty to others not less than to himself. Perhaps, too, as he was something of an idealist, and strove to believe in attributes which are not always found profusely in the world, there may have been something of the spiritualizing character of poetry mixed up in his devotions—giving dignity to a purpose which is usually urged with timidity, but which, in the present case, was treated with all the straightforward singleness of aim which belongs to the man of mere business.

"Katharine," he said, after a brief pause, during which his eyes gazed on her with a calm deep earnestness which at length sent the glance of hers downward beneath them—"Kate, my cousin, months have passed since you were taught to know my feeling towards you. Since I have known you, that feeling has been hourly on the increase. I loved, the more I knew; and though changes have come over us both—changes of fortune, of condition, of appearance—yet I have only admired you the more with every change. You have always seemed to me the one—the one only—whom I could truly love and cherish as a wife; and this thought, my cousin, has not been because of your beauty, which, though great, has never called forth, and shall never call forth, so long as I think you what I think you now, one single encomium from me."

She would have interrupted him, but he simply placed his finger upon her arm, and proceeded.

"Nay, fear not, and do not interrupt me. I know you too well, and think of you too highly, to endeavour now to fill your ears with praises of that beauty of which neither of us can be utterly unconscious. I shall speak of other qualities which have recommended you to me, not in praise of them now, but only as, in urging my pretensions to your hand, I would prove to you that I have studied your character, and am so far satisfied with the results as to be willing now to adventure all my affections—and they are concentrated very closely now, and will soon be more so—in the offer which I shall make you. I think now that I know your character. I have seen its firmness, its masculine good sense, and its unostentatious delicacy. Such a character will not be apt to misunderstand mine, and in this lies one chief security of domestic bliss. Such, for a long season, has been my thought, and I must now act upon it, or never. I have reasons for desiring it now, which your own reflections may not teach you, and which you must know hereafter. Cousin, dear Kate, forgive me if my speech be less than gentle—if it seem abrupt or harsh; I am not apt at professions; and with you I would rather avoid that show of sentiment which I know makes up, most commonly, the language of the lover. To you I would rather that my words should be of the most simple and least equivocal character. To your good sense, not your weaknesses, the proffer of my hand is now made. Let me hope that your good sense will determine the question, which I would not willingly submit to any other tribunal."

He took her hand, at the conclusion of his remarks, and she suffered it to rest passively in his grasp. She did not immediately answer, but appeared lost in reflections, which were not, however, the less pleasing because they exhibited themselves in doubt and indecision. Her eye, meanwhile, did not fall beneath the searching gaze of his: its deep and beautiful blue met his own unshrinkingly; nay, with something of a sympathizing fondness in its expression, which the tenor of her uttered reply did not, however, confirm. The pause of the moment over, she turned to her suitor.

"Robert, you have but this moment come from the chamber of sickness—soon to be the chamber of death. You cannot deceive yourself as to the condition of Emily; she is sinking fast."

"I know it—I feel it," he answered, gloomily.

"How can you know it—how can you feel it, Robert, when you come from the presence of one already linked as it were with heaven, and thus immediately after urge to me so earthly a prayer? How can I, so filled as my thoughts should be, and are, with considerations of gloom and the grave, thus give ear to any less sanctified consideration. Pardon me, dear cousin; but it seems to me almost irreverent that we should discourse of any other themes at this moment than those of sorrow."

"At another time, and with an affliction less severe than this, your rebuke would have been felt. But this to me is no common affliction. It leaves me alone—unaccompanied—desolate in all the wide world of man. You know our history. For years that girl has been all to me: I had her to love; I was her brother—her protector—her all; and upon her I expended a thousand strong feelings and warm affections which, when she goes, must crowd back upon, and overwhelm me. We must have something in life giving us the right to love—something which we can make our own exclusive altar-place, which our loves and cares may hallow to themselves, sacred from all intrusion, all rivalry, all denial from another. While she lived—while there there was hope for her—there was always one to me of whose sympathies, when others were cold or stern, I could be certain. When she leaves me, Kate, I am alone; there is but one to whom I may turn with confidence and trust—but one, and of that one I would be secure in the proffer which I now make to you: it is for you to say, and to say freely, with what hope."

"Robert, you know well how I esteem you—"

"Utter no professions, Kate—not so coldly, at least—if you really have regard for me."

"You mistake—you do me injustice, cousin—I would not be cold or inconsiderate. I do esteem you—"

"Esteem!"

"Well, well—love you, then, if you like the word better." He pressed her hand. "I do love you, and too well ever to be cold to your claims or unjust to your merits. I have heard you with a degree of regard of which I shall not speak; and I feel, deeply feel, the high compliment which you have paid me, in the offer of your hand. But let me ask of your reason—of your own good sense—if the present be the season for engagements of this nature? I speak not now of the condition of your sister, but of the country. What is the hope of repose, of domestic felicity, at such a period, when the strong arm of power, at its caprice, invades every sanctuary?—when the family mansion of the wealthy planter shares the fate of the loghouse of the squatter!—and when a renewal of injury only meets your application for redress? You will see that this is no season for thoughts such as those belonging to the offer which you make me."

"It is, then, to the time—to the consummation, at this period—of my proposal, and not to the proposal itself, which you object? Do I understand you thus, dear cousin?"

"Not exactly, Robert. I object to all at this season; I object to a consideration of the proposal at this moment, as unseemly and improper, for many reasons; and I beg, therefore, that you would withdraw your application, and not exact from me any answer now."

"And why not answer for the future, Kate? Why not say, conditionally, in answer, that when the prospect comes of peace for our country? I would not, indeed, that we should marry now: I would only be assured that I had in you, whatever may be the chances of war or the vicissitudes of life, one to love me, and one whom I could meet with an affection like her own. I would have you even as an ark to me, shrining and preserving my best affections, however the storms raged and the billows rolled around us."

"I will not deny to you, Robert, that were I disposed to make at this moment a pledge of my heart to any, I know not one to whom I would sooner make it than to you. If my character has been your study, I too have been somewhat observant of your own. I have long regarded you as one to whom honour was dear, and manliness habitual—as one delicate and true in feeling, gentle in deportment, and properly sensible of that consideration of the claims of others, without which no man can possibly be a gentleman. These I hold, in addition to your acknowledged bravery and good sense, to be your characteristics; and they are such as all sensible women must esteem, and which in you, as my cousin, and one I have been so long accustomed to esteem, I must love. Is not this enough? Wherefore press me to say that I will not, at this time, make pledges of affection with any man—that I will not bind myself or my affections for the future—that in this season of peril, owing as I do the duty of a child to her parent, I will not, while he may need my attendance, bind myself to other duties, which may be inconsistent with those which I owe to him? Such must be my answer, Robert, to the proffer which you make me."

"Ah, Kate! your pledge would be every thing to me, amid the danger of the war we wage."

"Nothing!" she replied quickly; "nothing more than I would be to you, Robert, even now, were those dangers to come home to you. Were you wounded, believe me, cousin, or brother, or lover, I should watch by your bedside, bathe your head, bring you refreshment; ay, dress your wounds—I pledge it as a true woman—with as little scruple as if you were even now my wedded husband. Nay, shake not your head; you know me not, Robert, if you doubt me in this. I may not have the strength, but I have the heart, I am sure, to do all this that I promise."

"And wherefore not say more! Why, if you are willing to perform such duties, will you not give the right to claim them at your hands!"

"Urge me no more, Robert; but now I will not, I cannot. Wait the due season: when the war is over; when Carolina shall be free from hostile footsteps; and when the land is cleansed of its pollution;—come to me then, if you hold this same temper, and then, if there be no change in me, I shall give you my hand, perfectly and all your own, as fully as I give it to you this moment in sisterly regard. There, take it, and leave me, for the hour is growing late."

He carried the extended fingers to his lips, and without farther word was about to hurry from the apartment, when he was arrested in his purpose by the sudden appearance of his aunt bringing a message from his sister, requiring to see him, if he had not already departed. An unlooked-for change had come over her, according to the old lady's representations; she had grown sensibly weaker, and she thought her incoherent and slightly wandering. With palpitating heart and trembling footsteps, followed by the two ladies, he again ascended the stairs leading to the chamber of death; but remembering the reference of Emily to his pistols, and how their presence had disturbed her, he took them from his belt and placed them upon a table which stood fronting the gallery. The next moment, he resumed his seat beside the shadowy person of the maiden.

CHAPTER VII.

"How the flame flickers in the lamp!—now bright,
With a strange beauty—and now, dim for ever."

And two opposing and mighty principles were at fearful strife in that chamber. Death was there with power not to be withstood, and there life vainly endeavoured to combat him. Yet there were no shows of terror or of violence—no exhibition of the torturing pain, and of the spirit vainly resisting and striving to escape. All was gentleness, even in the murmurs which occasionally fell from the lips of the dying girl. Her cheek was transparent—her eye wore a sublimated light, as it quivered in its socket, and flickering in changing directions, seemed in search of some expected presence. Her pale lips were parted, and the even tops of the pearly teeth below were just perceptible. The gauze of her drapery was scarcely lifted by the heave of her bosom; and as her hand lay partially upon it, you might even trace out the smallest of her blue veins, like so many fibres, shining through the delicate skin. She was dying—dying without seeming pain; and well might her brother fancy, from the pleasant smile upon her countenance, that the whispering sound which reached his ears on entering the apartment, had fallen from the sister angels already busy around her.

He sat beside her, took her hand, pressed his lips upon her forehead, and for a few seconds remained without attracting her notice. Her eye at length glanced wildly upon him, and the lips, which had fallen apart, were reclosed as she recognised him. At last a faint smile enlivened them—a fond effulgence filled her eye—she laid one of her hands upon that with which he had already clasped her own, and murmured something faintly which he could not understand. It was a strong effort which her mind had made to concentrate itself upon a single object, and some minutes elapsed before it was quite successful. At length she spake:—"Oh, Robert, I sent for you. I'm so glad you were not yet gone, for I feel that I am dying. I am not mistaken now. I know it to be death. This darkness—these shades that come across my eyes are its cloud, and it presses momently closer and closer upon them. It is so; and I have been afraid—very much afraid since you left me, that my thoughts were crowding and confused. They were strangely mixed up together—very strangely; and once I felt that they were escaping me; and then I grew terrified. I would not lose my senses—I would have them to the last; for I would speak to you and to Kate, even with my parting breath. It is sweet to die so; I could bear it then: but not to know, not to say farewell, and pray for you in the moment of parting, would be terrible indeed—terrible, terrible!"

Her eyes closed, and her hands were clasped, as she concluded the sentence, while her lips separated, and her voice was heard in whispers, as if in prayer. When they were again opened, there was a wildness in their expression—a misty gleaming, that completely confirmed her fear. The mind was evidently wandering; but the strong will, still pre-eminent, enabled her to bring back the forgetting thoughts, and to bind them to the spot. Her words now were in broken murmurs.

"Not my will, not my will, but thine, Father—yet for him—for Robert, my poor brother—could it only be—for him—for Robert!"

The name recalled her more vividly to him who sat beside her, and her eyes were again fixed upon his face.

"Old mommer—is she here, Robert—where?"

He shook his head negatively, but made no other reply.

"Be good to her for me; tell her—ah!"

She closed her eyes, and a slight distortion of the lips declared the pang which she felt at that moment, and from which it was several minutes before she was so far recovered as to be able to speak again. When she did, it was with a sweet smile of patient resignation.

"Strange that death cannot take his prey without inflicting pain! I am willing to go with him. I offer no resistance; yet he strikes and rends, the same as if I did. Life struggles still, even when you desire it not; but it does its duty—it holds on to its trust, and I must not complain. But, dear Robert, forget not old mommer. Give her all my things; and there is a new frock which I have made for her myself. Kate will give you the message that is to go along with it. And, Robert—the garden—the—ah, how cloudy, cloudy—so very dark; and that is through sin—sin—"

The lips continued to mutter, though the words grew indistinct. The mind was again wandering—the soul was anxiously seeking to escape its earthly tabernacle; but the flesh struggled obstinately to detain its prisoner. Singleton on one side, and Kate upon the other, bent speechlessly over the dying maiden. The eyes of Kate were full of tears; but Singleton choked with the grief to which tears could give no utterance. She started while he lay in this position, and her head, with unusual vigour, was lifted from the pillow; while her eye, glancing with a strong light, looked down upon him with a bewildered glance, as if terror and astonishment prompted its expression. He was roused less by her movement, of which, as his face was buried in the pillow, he had been unconscious, than by the words which followed it.

"Oh, you are here! Well, take it; but it's a sin, and you know that it is sin. There were but two, and they both died; and—yes, they both died—one in the morning and the other in the evening, but all on the same day, and that was God's blessing. It's—"

She shook her head, as she checked herself in her wandering expressions, and, with a sad look, remarked upon it—

"It is so—I feel it—I feel how uncertain my thoughts are; they are continually going from me, or putting on strange forms, and I only get them back with an effort which is painful."

She raised her right hand as she concluded, gazed upon it attentively, and then begged Kate to hand her a mirror. She looked in it for a few moments, and then put it away from her, with a melancholy but sweet smile.

"I shall not look in it again, I think. I do not wish it; for it tells me how young I am—how very young to die: but the less sorrow, the less sin! I have loved you all—you, Robert—you, and you, Kate—you—dear aunt—forgive me all, if I have said a cross word, or done any thing unkindly. Forgive me—will you not?—for I would not thinkingly have pained you."

"Forgive you! ay, that we do, my child; if there be any thing you have done needing forgiveness from us, or anybody, which I believe not, I forgive you from my soul, my blessed angel—God Almighty bless and forgive you!"

Her aunt was the only one about her who could reply; she understood the speechless sorrow in the faces of her brother and cousin, and the pressure of her hand in theirs had a sufficient answer. This pressure seemed to prompt a new feeling and desire; and with an eye turned pleadingly to Kate, she strove to carry her hand towards that of her brother. Without scruple, Kate freely extended it, and the hands of the cousins were clasped above the form of the sufferer. She nodded her head, and smiled in approbation. At this moment a servant from below beckoned Kate away, and she left the room. A sudden stir—a commotion, rather louder than usual, and certainly not desirable at such a place and hour, reached the ears of Singleton; and while he was wondering, Kate reappeared. Her face was full of alarm, and, hurriedly, she informed Singleton of the approach of enemies.

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"Oh, Robert, you must fly! A troop is below from the garrison, with Colonel Proctor at their head. They are now moving rapidly down the avenue, and will soon be here. Fly to the back balcony, while I keep the door closed in front."

He bowed his head slightly in reply, but took no other heed of her information; while, proceeding to do as she had said, Kate descended to the hall below. With head bent down upon the pillow, Singleton gave way to that abstraction of soul which belonged to a sorrow so trying as his own. He seemed utterly to have forgotten the words of his cousin, and made no movement, and showed no disposition to regard them. Seeing this, his aunt now came towards him, and endeavoured to arouse him to a sense of his danger.

"You waste time, Robert, that is precious. For God's sake fly, my son! Fly, while the chance is allowed you."

"I cannot—I will not."

"Why, Robert, why! It will soon be too late. Why not do as Kate has advised you? Take the back piazza, and delay no longer."

"And leave her!" was the melancholy reply, as he gazed down with a look of self-abandonment upon the scarce conscious girl before him.

"What is it—what is it, aunt!" she cried, starting up from the pillow, as the entreaties of the old lady, rather loudly expressed, reached her senses, and aroused them.

"He is in danger—the British are coming; and he won't fly, though he knows they will hang him without judge or jury."

"Robert, Robert!" said the girl, turning to him quickly—all her thoughts coming back to their proper activity. "Delay not an instant, my dear brother. Delay not—delay not—but fly."

"Urge me not, Emily; there is little danger, and I would much rather remain here with you."

"Deceive me not, brother—I warn you, deceive me not!" she exclaimed, with a sterner tone of expression than heretofore. "There is danger, and your stay involves your safety. Do I not know the doom which they hold for him whom they call rebel—do I not! Leave me, and go at once—I implore—I command you."

"I cannot—"

"You must vex me not—chafe me not, dearest brother, in these moments which should be sacred to peace. Do not imbitter my thoughts by uselessly exposing yourself to danger. Ha! they come—they come! Fly, I command you—fly—fly from me, or I will leave you in anger. Fly, fly!"

He turned to press his lips to her forehead, but she turned from him away.

"Say that you will go—yes!" was her brief sentence.

"I will—I will!"

She turned to him with affectionate fondness, gave him her hand, and his lips were glued to her own.

"God bless you—God bless you, and keep you safe. Fly now, and delay not."

A noise from below of approaching feet, warned him of the necessity of a quick flight; but as he was about to leave the chamber, the little black girl who attended upon it, informed him that a guard had been posted at both the doors in the front and rear of the dwelling. There was but one resource, and that was suggested by his aunt. She pointed to the chamber window, against which the shrouding branches of the thick oak from below had lifted themselves, as with a friendly offer of succour. He returned to the chamber—his lips were once more pressed to those of his sister, who continued to urge his flight impatiently; and tearing himself at length away, he was soon descending the tree, which fortunately stood on the side of the dwelling, remote from either end, and hid in the deepest shadow.

"Look, look down, aunt, and say if he is safe," said Emily, panting with the impatient effort. The old lady gazed attentively, as the rustling of the tree indicated his progress down.

"He is now at the bottom, my child. He is safe down."

"And he flies unseen!"

"No, my child, he stands at the bottom."

"Oh, call to him to fly—bid him delay not—does he go?"

"Now he moves; he moves towards the big walnut-tree."

"Oh heavens! he will be seen, if you can see him so far. Say, dear aunt, where is he now!"

"He moves from tree to tree, my child. Be patient, they see him not. Now I lose him, he goes behind the kitchen. Now he moves along the fence—he is over it, and in the shadow. They cannot see him now, and he will soon be at the river. He is safe—he must be safe!"

"Thank God, thank God—mercy!—What is that, what is that!—they have slain him, they have slain him!"

A sudden rush of feet, loud voices in dispute, and the discharge of a pistol, were the sounds which had so acted upon the senses of the dying girl. These circumstances require an attention to the progress of the party under Proctor, and their success in entering the house before the doors could be closed against them, according to the original design of Katharine. Finding her purpose hopeless when she descended to the hall, she met Colonel Proctor at the threshold. His manner was studiously respectful; how could it be otherwise, when met by the majestic form of a woman like the one who stood before him!—her figure erect—her high forehead seeming to expand with the swelling veins upon it—her eye kindling with intensest light, and the whole expression of her face that of dignified rebuke.

"Colonel Proctor chooses strange hours for doing honour to my father's household; but when he learns that the master of the house is from home, I trust that, as a gentleman, he will forbear to trespass farther upon the privacy of ladies. I doubt not that my father will freely see him in any seasonable visit he may think fit to make."

She stood directly before him in the passage-way, and it was not so easy to pass by her. He had previously given orders to a couple of soldiers to secure the back entrance; and feeling himself, accordingly, perfectly secure in his hold upon his prey, having himself the command of the front, there was no necessity for any precipitance calculated to diminish his respectful deportment towards her who addressed him, and whom he was so desirous to conciliate. Lifting his cap, which for a moment after he held in his hand, he replied—

"The hour is certainly an unseasonable one, Miss Walton, and nothing but an imperative sense of duty to my king and command could prompt me, in this manner, to any trespass upon the privacy of those whom I so much respect as the family of Colonel Walton. It is my deep regret that any thing should occur rendering such an assurance on my part necessary."

"Mere compliment, Colonel Proctor, contrasts oddly with the violation of that sacred privacy which should be conceded to our sex, when unprotected by the presence of any one of yours."

"I knew not of your father's absence, Miss Walton," returned the Englishman, quickly. Her reply was instant.

"And the knowledge of it now, sir, secures us, I trust, from any farther intrusion!"

The retort annoyed him, since his previous remark led obviously to the inference which she had made from it. There was a flush upon Proctor's cheek as he replied, with an air of decision—

"I am sorry, Miss Walton, to say that it does not. I know the unamiable light in which I must appear to you from such a declaration, but I must be content to rely for my justification on your own knowledge of what is most becoming in a soldier. I must do my duty."

"You are imperative, Colonel Proctor—but I am yet to know what part of your duty it is that brings you to our poor abode at midnight."

"The arrest, Miss Walton, of a rebel—a traitor to his king and country—a disloyal citizen, who has been skulking about the swamps, coming forth only to murder, and who, I am informed on good authority, is even now in this building."

The epithets conferred so freely upon her cousin, awakened all the indignation of the high-spirited maid—her eye shot forth deeper and brighter fires, and the curling hauteur of her lip looked a volume of contempt upon the speaker. She suppressed much of this in her language, and subdued the fever of her fierce thought to something like a quiet expression of unconcern.

"Your rebel has a name, Colonel Proctor?"

"He has, Miss Walton; regard for your family has alone prevented me from giving it utterance."

"Ha! indeed—you are considerate. But, sir, you will please me not to constrain yourself too far. I would know this brave rebel who gives you so much annoyance. Thank God! there are some still in Carolina, like myself, who owe no allegiance to the king of England: who hate his rule as they despise the slaves who obey it."

Colonel Proctor simply bowed as he replied—

"The rebel, Miss Walton, now supposed to be in this house, is one Robert Singleton, one of Marion's men, and ranking as a major in the army of rebellion. You will suffer me, I hope, to proceed in searching for him, since it is my duty, and one that I am resolute to perform. Your language, Miss Walton, is such as to render any scruples unnecessary; but I was a gentleman, Miss Walton, before I became a soldier. As a lady, I cannot be your enemy, whatever may be the wrong which I may suffer at your hands."

The respectful, manly deportment of Colonel Proctor could not but have its full force upon a woman of so much character as Katharine Walton. She replied almost instantly, making at once a dignified acknowledgment of the undue severity of her speech, yet insisting upon the provocation which she had received.

"Robert Singleton is my relative, my friend, Colonel Proctor—one whom I dearly love. You knew much of this, if not all, yet your epithets were unscrupulous and unqualified in connection with his name. I am a Southron, sir; one of a people not apt to suffer wrong to their friends and kindred, without resenting and resisting it; and though a woman, sir—a weak woman—I feel, sir, that I have the will and the spirit, though I may lack the skill and the strength, to endeavour to do both."

"It is a spirit which I honour, Miss Walton, and my speech to you in reference to your relative, my own sense of propriety has already taught me was highly unbecoming. You will forgive me, if I rightly understand your nature, Miss Walton, much more readily than I will forgive myself for the error. Meanwhile, I trust that you will permit me to pursue this search, since you have not assured me that its object is not here."

"I trust that Colonel Proctor, aware of my father's absence, will leave us unmolested until his return."

"I cannot—I dare not, Miss Walton—my duty forbids it."

"Your duty gives you no command here, Colonel Proctor, and your troops must be withdrawn, though I call upon my father's slaves for that purpose."

"Will they obey you, Miss Walton!"

"Ay, sir, to the last! I have but to say the words and they will rush upon your bayonets."

"I am wasting time, Miss Walton—permit me to pass onward."

And he advanced as he spoke. She stood resolutely fixed in the spot where she had first encountered him, and he saw that he would be compelled to employ some gentle force to put her aside. Annoyed and chagrined at the idea of any such necessity, he sought by farther exhortation to gain his object, but she refused to hear him. At length, as a last resort, he said—

"Miss Walton, I have no desire to press this matter. Give me your word that the person I seek is not here, and I withdraw my men instantly."

"Withdraw your men, sir—you keep them here at your peril—I give no assurances."

Finding his efforts unavailing, Proctor at once advanced, and, resolute to put her aside and proceed in his search, his hands were already extended for that purpose, when, seeing his object, she hastily drew back.

"Touch me not, I pray you, if you please. If you are resolute to intrude upon us, you do so at your own risk."

And before he could pass she had withdrawn herself from his presence, and hastily ascended the staircase. Placing a guard at the entrance, he quickly followed her, and as he entered the upper passage-way he found her standing firmly in front of the door leading to Emily's chamber.

"Colonel Proctor," she said, solemnly, "this is the chamber of sickness—soon to be the chamber of death! I charge you not to approach it."

"Miss Walton, I will do my duty, if you will allow me, with as much forbearance as possible; but I must do it."

"At your peril, sir;" and as he approached she presented one of the pistols of Singleton which she had seized from a neighbouring table. The sight of it only impelled the soldier in his forward progress.

"Back, sir! I command—I implore you. I would not use this weapon if I could avoid it; but I certainly shall if you approach. Force me not to do so, I pray you."

"I cannot hesitate—I cannot hear you;" and with the word he resolutely advanced. She thrust the weapon forward, fixed its aim as nearly as possible upon him, and with the single words—

"God forgive me, if I err in this," resolutely drew the trigger.

In the next moment Proctor put her aside with the utmost gentleness.

"You are spared a crime, Miss Walton: the spilling of blood is not always grateful to man; what should it be to woman?"

He turned from her to the handle of the chamber door, and she was too much stunned to seek to arrest him farther. But, as he entered the apartment, he started back in horror. The picture that met his sight was too unexpected—too imposing—too unlike any thing he had ever looked upon or seen. He had seen the field of battle, strewed with dead and wounded, but the sublimer powers of death, in which he effects his conquest without visible stroke or weapon, had never met his eyes till now; and he gazed with something like stupefaction upon his features, as they now rose vividly before him.

There, rising from her couch, and partially erect under the sudden convulsion, as well of physical pang as of mental excitement, Emily Singleton met the first glance of the intruder. Her face was ghastly pale, but still how beautiful! her eye was glazing fast, but still how expressive! and the look which she addressed to the intruder—a look which seemed to signify that she understood his purpose—was that of some angry ghost rising from its shroud for the purposes of solemn rebuke. A wan, spectral light from her eye, seemed to fall in rays about the wasted cheek below it; and the slight exhibition of her teeth, which the lips, parting as in speech, had developed, contributed still more strongly to the awful, spell-like expression which her whole countenance wore to his eyes. She murmured, but incoherently—it might be an imprecation, and so the Englishman thought it. Her arm was slightly moved, and her fingers divided, as she strove to lift them, but they sank back again into their places.

He could see no more, but rushed from the apartment. Kate took her place beside her, and her hand adjusted the pillows while supporting her. A sweet smile now overspread her features, and her head sank upon one shoulder. Gradually the glaze overspread her eyes, as a cloud shutting in the blue skies, and she fell into the sacred slumber.

"Go up, go up, my blessed angel!—the heavens are opening for you!"

These were the words of the aunt, while Kate lay beside the lifeless girl immersed in all the silence of the deepest wo. The spirit had gone for ever from the trying and the troubling earth; the silver cord had been loosed—the golden bowl was broken.

CHAPTER VIII.

"The courage that looks up, though numbers press,
And takes a newer vigour from the storm."

Pushing hastily from the chamber of death, Colonel Proctor proceeded to the court below, where he assembled his men for the pursuit. Though profoundly impressed with the solemn event which he had witnessed—so far different from any thing he had expected to see in the apartment—he was too good a soldier, and too mindful of his duty, to lose time in those now idle regrets at his own abruptness, which he yet properly felt. A few brief words, directing his men upon different routes, and equally dividing them, and the party dispersed in obedience to his commands. One of them, consisting of four men, he himself led, and in the very direction taken by the flying partisan.

Singleton knew his danger if taken, and at once, as soon as he reached the horses, prepared for the most rapid flight. He was weaponless, and there was no other alternative for safety; he would most willingly have stood his ground, for his was the spirit prompt always to extricate itself from its difficulties by the boldest daring. The strife with Proctor also promised him a large degree of satisfaction, apart from that which the employment itself might yield. It was with some vexation, therefore, that, feeling for his pistols in his belt, he remembered where he had left them. It was too late to retrieve, and idle to lament the misfortune. It was only in flight that it could be lessened; and he took his measures accordingly.

"Tighten your girth, Lance, and mount quickly; we shall be pursued shortly, and I am without weapon of any sort. I have left my pistols behind me."

"Here are mine, sir; they are small, but they've got a good charge, and new flints both."

"Give me one of them, quickly now, and mount. We must get into the main road, if we can, before they come out of the avenue; so hasten, hasten but hurry not; cool, boy—cool."

He tightened his own saddle-girth as he spoke; took off the handkerchief that encircled his neck, and thrust it into his pocket; then, seeing that the boy was mounted and ready, he was soon in saddle himself.

"Now pick the way, Lance; speak nothing, but keep cool and silent: gently, gently at first; let us send them as few sounds as possible.

The boy, with goodly promptitude, obeyed to admiration. Starting with an easy, slow motion, they emerged from the heavy oaks by the water's side, ascended the rising ground, and skirted a long, low fence which girdled one corner of the estate, and led directly to the main road. The track was simply a negro foot-path; but the evening was sufficiently clear to enable them to trace it out perfectly and keep it with little trouble.

"We shall escape them; a few hundred yards more will give us a fine start, boy, and that is all I care for. How far is it now to the main track?"

"Not far, sir; just ahead. I think I see the opening in the trees. We shall soon be in it. Ha! did you hear a noise, sir—now?"

"Yes: they are in saddle; they are after us. Push on, push on; we have little time to waste."

"Yes, sir, that they are; and if I'm not very much mistaken, they are after us from two sides—down on our own trail, and coming out from the avenue. You hear, sir? somebody cried out from the quarter of the road, and we hear the horses' feet from the river, at the same time."

"More reason for speed, far more, boy; we shall have to trust entirely to that. Here is the main road, and they will soon see us on it. You know your horse, Lance—you are not afraid of him?"

"Afraid of him! no, sir, that I'm not; never was afraid of any horse yet."

"Then go ahead; strike in your rowel, and spare not. There's no danger in front of you, so drive on."

This little dialogue was all over in a few moments. The boy put spurs to his animal as soon as the main road was entered, and, with an easy mastery of his own steed, Singleton kept his place close alongside of him. The road was a heavy sand, over which they sped for the few minutes succeeding their first entrance upon it; but soon they got upon a tough, pine land ridge, upon which the beating of their hoofs might clearly be distinguished at some distance by a heedful ear; and it was not long, accordingly, before a loud shout from their pursuers announced their discovery.

"We could turn down here, sir, into the woods; and there's a sort of wagon track somewhere about here, I think I could find, sir, leads to the Stonoe. That would lose them, certain, from our trail," said the boy.

"No matter, no matter, keep on as you are; if they come no nigher we are safe."

"But I think they gain on us, sir; shall I go faster? My nag can do much more."

"No, keep his strength; they don't gain much now, and we shall find it more useful—What is that?"

A sound—a rushing motion in the woods they had but recently left, warned them of new pursuers: the crackling of the dried sticks under feet was distinctly heard, as the enemy moved over the same ground with more haste and less caution than had been observed by them.

"Ha, we have them there, have we! and they will soon be on the road. They hear us, and know our route. Push on, boy, a little, but not much faster; a breath more of speed only, is all we want—so, so."

The coolness with which Singleton spoke and acted took from the flight most of the terrors which it otherwise might have occasioned in the mind of the boy. His figure grew more and more upright with the feeling of confidence, as it swelled in his bosom; he began to imagine the events of a struggle; he began to fancy the features of the collision; and, with all its disadvantages, to hope for the strife. There was much of the same mood at work in the mind of his leader; and his chagrin may not be expressed, when, under its stimulus, he reflected upon his want of his weapons. There was an air of vexatious indifference, a sort of reckless hardihood in his demeanour, which, looking occasionally behind him, the boy could not avoid perceiving. Singleton caught the movement once or twice; and, at length, in sharper tones than usual, addressed him—

"Why do you look around, sir? are you afraid!"

"No, sir—oh no!—I don't think I am—that is to say—but I never tried."

"Tried what?"

"To fight with men, sir, and to shoot them; and I don't know, sir, whether I should be afraid or not."

Singleton smiled; the feeling of the boy rebuked his own, as it was boyish also.

"Go on, sir; look not behind again, unless you would have your own shoulders frighten you. And you may urge your nag a little faster; those fellows are now out of the bush, and in the heavy sand; you will soon hear them on the ridge, and then they will have the same clear track with ourselves; go on, now, and to keep you from looking behind you more frequently than is needful, remember that I am between you and danger. Touch your nag; let him feel the thorn, and be lively."

The boy felt mortified that Singleton should think that he looked round from apprehension; and thought how happy he should be, to show him that he was not afraid; but, without a word, he did as he was directed—stuck the spur quickly into the yet unbreathed animal, which bounded away under the first impulsion with a far more generous movement.

As the partisan had said, the pursuers were soon upon the pine-land track, over which they had themselves passed but recently. Proctor led them with an earnestness which arose, not less from his own estimate of the value of the game, than from a personal feeling, if not interest, which he seemed to entertain in his arrest. As he entered the little negro trail running by the fence, he heard the shout of the party from the avenue below; and, as this seemed to say that the fugitive was within reach, a new impetus was given to his exertion. By dint of hard riding he soon got up with the party which led off the pursuit; and the spur was not spared in order to diminish the vantage ground which the partisan already had, in the space thrown between them. The composure and coolness of the flight tended to this object not less than the speed of the pursuers; and it was with no small satisfaction that Proctor was now enabled to distinguish the regularly recurring tread of the flying horses. He readily imagined that Singleton would put his animal to its fullest speed, and so thinking, he did not doubt that a little more effort must result in their overhauling him; believing this, he shouted encouragingly, and cried out to his men, while bending forward with all speed in the chase himself—

"Five guineas to the man who first lays hands on the rebel! so to it, men—he cannot now escape us. We gain on them at every leap, and their horses will soon be breathed. Heed not the boy, but see that the other is secure at all hazards—alive if you can, but dead if he resist you: we must have him, dead or alive; and the reward is the same. On—on!"

A cheer—a hearty cheer, and a driving of the spur, and the lash freely applied to the warming flanks of the horses, followed this speech. They dashed headlong through the thicket; they wound about the obtrusive pine-tree, standing in the way, with all the adroitness of an Indian pony; and soon were upon the broad trace over which Singleton and the boy were riding. Their horses' feet were heard, but they themselves remained unseen. The thick shadow of the forest lay over the road ahead, and under its friendly shelter the two fugitives were then speeding, with a pace somewhat quickened in obedience to the necessity. The boy wondered at Singleton's coolness as their pursuers drew more nigh. But he ceased to wonder when he heard the lash which the riders behind them were applying to their steeds. He remembered that their own had not been forced, and he felt more assured.

"Now, boy—now is the time; they are drawing nigher, and we may as well leave them for a while. Bend to it, and keep beside me."

The boy did as he was bidden, and the difference was soon perceptible; the noble animals sprang off with all the elasticity of freshness, while those of their pursuers, which had been ridden rapidly to "The Oaks," and then as rapidly after them, failed, in spite of the repeated urging of their riders, to increase their speed a second. Gradually, the sounds grew less and less distinct upon their ears, and were nearly lost, when all on a sudden, and quite unexpectedly, the steed of Singleton stumbling along the ground, precipitated his rider clear over his head. The boy instantly gathered up his reins, and leaped from his animal beside him.

"Oh, sir! you are hurt! I'm afraid you are hurt!" was his passionate exclamation, as he approached the partisan.

"A little, Lance—a little; but I'm afraid Sorrel is hurt a great deal more. He moves with difficulty."

Singleton rose with some effort from the ground. He had been slightly stunned and somewhat bruised by the fall; but not so much as to incapacitate him from movement. He approached his horse, which had also risen to his feet, and now remained trembling upon the spot where he had fallen. Singleton took the bridle in hand, and led him off a few paces. This was sufficient to satisfy him that the animal was too much lamed to yield him much if any service in the flight that night. The danger was pressing, as in the brief space of the event recorded, the pursuing party had regained the ground, and something more, which, in the increased speed of the partisan, they had previously lost. Singleton at once adopted his decision.

"Lance, you must mount instantly and fly; I'll take the bush and try to get into safe cover. There's no time to waste, so at once about it. To horse, boy; why do you stand?"

"Why, sir, it's you that's wanted in camp, not me. I can hide in the bush just as well as you, sir; I'm not afraid!"

"Go to, my poor boy; go to, and be not foolish; do as you're told and no trifling. Know you not that if they take you they'll hang you to the tree as a rebel?"

"But, sir, they will hang you too—I know that; and I'm small—I can hide better in the bush than you."

"Vex me not, but do as I have told you. Mount at once and fly, or I shoot you down on the spot. Go. I shall save myself."

The boy obeyed reluctantly, and it was high time that he should. He had barely time to remount, which he did with a sad, slow step, when he heard the voices of the pursuers, who, in all this while, had failed to hear the tread of the fugitives. The boy fled quickly on his way, and leaving the lamed horse in the road, not having time to remove him, the partisan plunged into the thick woods alongside, just in season to avoid the immediate observation of the pursuers.

They came up to the spot, and though his horse, with a native instinct, hobbled forward feebly, as it were to escape them, they quickly surrounded him, and, perceiving his condition, at once conjectured that the rider was in the adjoining cover. The voice of Proctor was at once heard in the promptest order—

"Dismount, fellows—dismount, and search the wood—he must be close at hand, and cannot escape us if you look well. The woods are thin and open. Five guineas, you know, dead or alive, to the man that first takes him."

"Ah! there's a chance, then, for a choice of death, at least," said Singleton to himself, bitterly, as, standing immediately beside the road, he heard the sanguinary order. His hands fingered his belt, unconsciously, where the pistols had been placed, and he cursed the thoughtlessness which had brought him off from the dwelling without having first secured them. But he made up his mind to resist at all hazards, weaponless or not, if once encountered. He had his hope of escape, however, and one that did not seem so very unreasonable. Instead of rushing off into the woods, where, from the lack of undergrowth, he might have been discovered readily, he clung to the luxuriant brush, the product of a vigorous sun acting freely upon it, that skirted the road. The troopers dismounted, all but Proctor himself, and another, who seemed a corporal, and was addressed as such. Supposing, very naturally, that the fugitive would seek to imbower himself as far in the woods as possible, they scattered themselves over too large a surface; and the cries and the clamour of the search gradually receded from the highway. Proctor, meanwhile, accompanied by the single trooper who had been left with him, alternated to and fro over the road; and as he moved down the path, a new prospect of escape was suggested to the active mind of the partisan. The horses of the troopers were fastened to the swinging boughs of a tree only a few paces distant. Could he reach them unheard? He looked out, and waited until the forms of

Proctor and the corporal grew more indistinct upon the road, then cautiously keeping in the ditch skirting the track, and still behind the bush, he approached the tree. The horses looked up as he drew nigh; and with a careful glance he strove to single out a stout animal before he emerged from cover. He did so—one a few yards distant pleased him best, and he anxiously awaited until the two riders, who were now returning, should again wander away from the spot, to rush out and secure him. In the mean while the hunt of the troopers continued in the wood. The dancing shadows in the starlight occasionally deceived them into hopes of the fugitive—sometimes the persons of one another; and on these occasions their hurras and encouraging shouts were prodigious. Proctor passed close beside the tree as he came up, in the rear of which Singleton had sheltered himself. He was chafed at the delay, and shouted to his men as laggards, repeating the reward offered, and in his tone and language alike clearly evincing his own earnestness in the desire which he expressed.

"He must be there, Corporal Turner—he could not have gone far, sir—but a moment before he was mounted, and we heard both horses distinctly. This beast is Singleton's, for so the fellow Blonay described him—a bright sorrel, with long tail, and a white blaze on his right shoulder. This is the animal."

"It is, sir—the very nag; and, as you say, sir, he cannot have gone far into the bush, if he went in at all; but may he not, sir, have gone double with the boy on the other horse?"

"The devil!—yes—I did not think of that; and if so, we have lost him. Damnation!—it must be so."

And in his chagrin Proctor resumed his sauntering ride to and fro along the high-road, followed by the corporal at a little distance. How impatiently, yet cautiously, did the partisan look forth from the bush, watching their movements! Satisfied at length with the distance thrown between them, and impelled the more readily by the increasing and approaching clamour from the wood, he resolutely advanced from his cover, and with a most marvellous composure undid the loop of the bridle from the bough, and led out the steed which his eye had already chosen. It was a broad-chested, strong-shouldered, and well-built animal, that, under ordinary circumstances, would have been admirably well calculated both for flight and burden. But he had been hardly ridden that night, and there was no erectness in his head and neck—nothing elastic in his tread—as Singleton led him out from the group. But there was no time to be lost in lamenting this. Besides, his condition was that of all the rest, and the prospect of the escape now was quite as good as that of the pursuit. In an instant more he was mounted—the head of his animal turned up the road, and, with a single glance behind him to note the distance of his enemy, he plied the spur, and once more resumed his flight.

"What is that?" cried Proctor to the corporal. "Ha! it must be the rebel; and, by Heaven! upon one of our own horses. Ride—ride, sir—after him with me, and he shall not escape us yet—my horse is too good for any he could get from that pack, and I can soon overhaul him. Sound, sir, for the men to saddle and follow—sound, sir, and follow."

His orders were given with a rapidity almost emulating his horse's speed. Vexation at being so foiled, anger at the object, and a sense of his duty, alike stimulated the Briton to the most hearty endeavours. His steed went over the ground like an arrow, while the corporal wound his bugle, calling up the wandering troops dispersed about the wood. His animal failed entirely to keep up with that of his commander, and Proctor had the satisfaction to perceive that he gained upon the fugitive. Singleton was soon conscious of this fact, and seeing that there was but one enemy, he began to calculate the necessity of a conflict at all hazards, almost without a weapon and trusting only to a proper management of his steed to foil and overthrow that of his pursuer. He was a good horseman, and knew most of the arts by which this might be achieved. These calculations became momently more and more necessary. The closer tramp of the pursuing steed was now sharply in his ears, and he had already meditated the sudden turn upon him as soon as he should reach the top of that slight elevation of land to which he was fast speeding. This would give him an advantage in descending upon the uptoiling charger. With this purpose, he gathered up the reins with a firm but not a close grasp upon the animal, as his object was not by any means to restrain him; he placed his feet firmly in the stirrups, which he threw close under the belly of the steed, wrapping his legs, as it were, around him; then, crouching forward upon the saddle, he awaited the proper moment for the contemplated evolution. The pursuer came on with a reckless, unrestrainable motion, and had already begun to move along the elevation, when he drew the curb so suddenly upon his horse's mouth as almost to throw him back upon his haunches. The rush of a troop in front was in his ears, with the cry of many voices. The partisan also looked forward, and wondered, dreading to find himself between two enemies; but the next moment reassured him, as he heard the voice of the boy Lance Frampton, who was evidently in advance of the new-comers.

"Here they are! here they are, Colonel Walton! They have killed the major! show 'em no quarter!—cut 'em down—cut 'em down! There's not many of them."

"Back, boy! keep from the track!—to the rear, to the rear!" cried the individual in command, while waving his sword and advancing towards Singleton. The partisan cried out to his uncle in the next moment—

"Ha! a friend in need, good uncle! I shall remember the proverb." And, without a word farther, he wheeled in with the advancing troop, which consisted of the little party of volunteers pledged to go out with Walton. Proctor was near enough to hear the dialogue and to understand the danger. It was now his turn to fly, and he delayed not in the endeavour. But the troop of Walton, comparatively fresh, for they had just started forth from their place of assemblage near the Cross Roads when they met with Lance, was down upon him in an instant. Proctor bravely threw himself forward upon the first trooper that approached him, and his sword flashed back defiance upon them, while his voice shouted encouragingly, as if it could have been heard, to his men, who were now approaching, though not yet in sight. They certainly could not have come up in time to save him, had Walton pressed the assault; but that gentleman disdained the advantages which were in his grasp.

"Forbear, Colonel Proctor," he said, mildly and respectfully, as he rode up in front of his enemy. "We purpose you no harm at this moment. You are free to return to your troop. When we meet, sir, again in strife, there will be no surprise on either side, and our several positions will then be understood."

"Colonel Walton," replied the Briton, "I bitterly regret to see you thus—espousing a cause so indefensible and hopeless."

"Neither indefensible nor hopeless, sir, as you shall see in time. But there is no need of comment here. I forbear all the advantages of the present moment, as I am unwilling that you should think I have played the hypocrite to deceive you thus to your ruin. You have forborne, sir, heretofore, in your treatment of my house—your intentions have been friendly: permit me, sir, to requite them as I do now. You are at liberty. Farewell, sir. The terms of our meeting, henceforward, must accord with those existing between my country and yours—peace or war! peace or war!—Farewell, sir."

Proctor, chagrined at his disappointment, was nevertheless highly touched with the courtesy of his new enemy. In a few brief words he uttered his acknowledgments, and turned back to meet his troop, with a bitter spirit, sore on many accounts. His present hope of Katharine was evidently at an end; and feeling towards her as he did, how painful was the new position in which he stood to her father! The subject distressed him; and he strove by a motion as rapid as that of the pursuit to escape from thoughts too little calculated to yield him satisfaction to win him to their indulgence. The parties were separated; the one on its way back to the garrison, the other, somewhat more imposing from its new acquisition of force, speeding boldly for the Cypress Swamp.

CHAPTER IX.

"I take the hand of my fierce enemy
In a true pledge—a pledge of earnest faith
I fain would seal in blood—his blood or mine."

While the events which we have just recorded had been going on in one quarter, others not less imposing, though perhaps less important to the partisans, had taken place in the swamp. There, as we remember, Humphries, after the escape of Goggle, had bestowed his men in safety. Deeply mortified by that occurrence, the lieutenant had been more than usually careful of his remaining prisoners, as well as of his appointments of the camp. The fires had been well lighted, the several watches duly set, and all preparations were in even progress for the quiet passage of the night. To John Davis much of these matters had been given in charge, and, in their proper execution, he approved himself the same trusty soldier that we have elsewhere found him. The prisoners were put entirely and particularly under his direction; and having placed them separately, each securely tied, in the little bark huts which were scattered about the island, through the co-operation and continued presence of the sentries closely set around them, their custody was quite as complete as, under existing circumstances, it could possibly have been made. Such, among others, was the condition of the luckless Hastings. His hut was isolated from the rest, and stood, on the very edge of the island, upon a slight elevation. Tied, hand and foot, with cords too stout for his strength, he lay upon a pile of rushes in the corner of his cabin, musing, doubtless, like most of his fellows who have experienced a sudden reverse, upon the vexatious instability of fortune. Nor did his musings prompt him at all times to that due resignation which a proper course of reflection, in such a case, would be most usually apt to occasion. He suffered himself to be too much disquieted by his thinking ; and, at such moments, seeking to elevate himself from his prostrate condition, he would lose his balance, and roll away from his place, like a ball under some foreign compulsion. A few feeble efforts at release, resulting always in the same way, taught him at last to remain in quiet, though, had he known the fate of Sergeant Clough, upon whose bed of death he now lay at length, his reflections, most probably, would have been far less satisfactory than he now found them.

Even now they were far from agreeable. The sergeant chewed but the cud of bitter fancy ; the sweet was all denied him in his dungeon of bark. He could not misunderstand or mistake the dangers of his position. He was the prisoner of the man he had striven to wrong in the tenderest part ; he beheld the authority which that man exercised over those around him ; he well knew the summary character of the times, which sanctioned so frequently the short shrift and certain cord ; and, considering himself reserved for some such fearful mode of exit, as the meditative vengeance of Humphries might best determine, he bitterly denounced his own evil fortune, which had thus suffered him to be entrapped. He writhed about among his rushes, as these thoughts came more vividly to his mind ; and despair of escape at length brought him a certain degree of composure, if not of resignation. He drew up his knees, turned his face to the dark wall, and strove to forget his predicament in the kindly arms of sleep.

Yet there was hope for him at hand—hope of a change of condition; and any change was full of promise to Hastings. The hope which had been partially held out to him by Davis, before conducting him to the swamp, was now about to be realized. The watches had all been set, Humphries himself had retired; and, apart from the sentries, but a single trooper was visible upon the island, in the centre of which, by a blazing fire, he stood, with one foot of his horse over his knee, from the quick of which he was striving hard, with hook and hammer, to extract a pebble. From his couch of pine brush, under the dark shadow of a tree, Davis looked forth, momently and anxious, upon the horseman. At length he proved successful. The horse was led away to the end of the island, and, after a little while, the trooper himself had disappeared. With the exception of the sentries, all of his own placing, the partisans had each taken the shelter of his greenwood tree. Some were pillowed here, some there, in little clusters of two or three, their heads upon their saddles, their hands clutching fast rifle or broadsword, and the bridle hanging above, ready for sudden employment. Sometimes, a solitary trooper stretched himself, unaccompanied, under a remoter shelter, and enjoyed to himself those solacing slumbers which it is always so pleasant to share.

With the perfect quiet of all things around him, Davis rose from his own place of repose. He cautiously surveyed the course he proposed to take, and stealing carefully from the inclining shadow of one tree to that of another, he approached unobserved the hut of Sergeant Hastings. The sentinel was prompt.

"Ho!—stand—the word!"

"Continental Congress! It's a big word, Ralph Mason, and hard to come at, the more so when it's a quick sentry like you, that doesn't give a body time to look it up. But that aint much of a fault, any how, in a soldier. Better too quick than too slow, and the good sentry is more to the troop than the good horse, though the one may carry him off when the tories are too thick to be troubled. You can go now, Ralph; go to my straw, and you can lie down till I come to wake you up. I'm to ax the prisoner here some questions."

Glad of this relief, the sentinel made his acknowledgments to his superior, and did not hesitate to avail himself of the proposed luxury. Taking his place for a moment, to and fro before the door of the hut, the Goose Creeker employed the time between the departure of the sentinel, and his probable attainment of the bed of rushes to which he had assigned him, in the meditation of that plan which his mind had partially conceived, while escorting his prisoners to the swamp, and of which he had given a brief hint to Hastings himself,—a plan which promised him that satisfaction for his previous injuries at the hands of Hastings, which his excited feelings, if not a high sense of honour, had long insisted upon as necessary to his comfort. The present time seemed a fitting one for his purpose; and the opportunity which it offered, as it might not occur again, was quite too good to be lost. Having properly deliberated, he put aside the bush which hung partially across the entrance, and at once passed into the hut of the prisoner. Hastings was not asleep, and started hastily at the intrusion. His worst fears grew active, as he saw the figure of one before him, whom, in the dimness of the place, he could not distinguish. He could only think of Humphries, and his breathing was thick and rapid, as he anticipated, each moment, some fearful doom at the hands of the avenger. His tones were hurried, as he demanded—

"Who's there!—speak!—what would you?"

"Don't be scared, Sargeant Hastings; its me, John Davis—him they call Prickly Ash, of Goose Creek. Mayhap you remember sich a person. I'm that man."

Hastings rather freely avowed his recollection.

"Well, I'm mighty glad you're not asleep, as I didn't want to put hands on you for any business but one, and that's the one I come to see you about now. You're sure, now, Sargeant Hastings, you're wide awake, and able to talk about business."

The reply was in the gentlest and most conciliatory language. The tones were singularly musical indeed, for a throat so harsh as that which Davis formerly knew in possession of the same person; and the sigh-like utterance which told the partisan that he was all attention, contrasted oddly, in the thoughts of Davis, with those notes which he had been taught hitherto to hear from the same quarter.

"Well, if you're wide awake, Sargeant Hastings, I've some talk for you, you'll maybe be glad enough to hear, for it consarns both you and me a little."

"Any thing, Mister Davis—any thing you have to say, I shall be happy, very happy, to listen to."

"Very good," said the other; "that's very good, and I'm mighty glad to see you've got your mind made up to what's to come; and so, since you're ready to hear, I'm cocked and primed to speak, and the sooner I begin the better. Now, Sargeant Hastings, mind what I say, and dont let any of my words go into one ear and out of another. They're all words that cost something, and something's to be paid for them in the end. I give you this warning, as it aint fair to take a man unawares."

Hastings promised due heedfulness, and the other proceeded as follows:—

"You see, then, Sargeant Hastings, you're not in garrison now; you're not at the Royal George, nor in any of them places where I used to see you, with the red-coats, and them lickspittles the tories, all about you, ready to back you agin their own countryman, whether you're right or wrong. You're turned now, as I may say, on the flat of your back, like a yellow-belly cooter, and nobody here to set you right but me, and me your enemy."

Hastings sullenly and sadly assented to the truth of this picture, in a groan which he accompanied by a twisting motion that turned his face completely away from the speaker.

"You needn't turn your back, Sargeant Hastings; it's no part of a gentleman to do so: but jist listen a bit to the God's truth, and you'll larn a little civility, if so be its in your skin to larn any thing that's good. You see, now, the game goes agin you—the cards is shuffled, and trumps is changed hands. You're in as bad a fix, now, as if you was at old sledge, and all seven up was scored down agin you. You're not cock of the walk any longer; you aint where you can draw sword agin a man that's got none, and have a gang of chaps to look on, and not ax for fair play. There's some chance now for a small man, and I reckon you feel the difference."

A sullen response from Hastings, who, though irritated greatly, thought it the wiser policy not to appear so, acknowledged the correctness of what his companion had said.

"But don't think," the other proceeded—"don't think, Sargeant Hastings, that I come to crow over you in your misfortunes. No! dang it, I'm not the lad to take advantage of any man in his troubles, even though I despise him as I despise you. I'm for fair play all the world over, and that's the reason why I come to you now."

"What would you have, Mister Davis?" inquired the sergeant, with something of his old dignity of manner.

"Well, that's a civil question enough, and desarves a civil answer. You ax me what I will have; I'll tell you after a bit; but there's something, you see, that's like a sort of history, and, if you'll listen, I'll take leave to put that afore it."

"Go on, Mister Davis, I shall be glad to hear you."

"Well, I don't know that for certain; but we'll see how glad you are as we git on in the business. What I've got to say won't take long, though I must begin at the beginning, or you mightn't so well understand it. It's now going on nine or ten years since old Dick

Humphries—that's the father of Bella—first came into our parts, and made 'quaintance with our people. Bella was a little girl at that time; but from that time I took to her, and she sort-a took to me. The more we know'd, the more we liked one another. I can say for myself, I never liked anybody half so well as I liked her. Well, everybody said it was a match, and Bella seemed willing enough till the war broke out, and you came into our parts, with your red coats, and flashy buttons, and topknots; and then everything was at odds and ends, and there was no living with the gal at all. Her head got turned with your flummery, and a plain lad like myself stood no chance."

"Well, but, Mister Davis, that was no fault of mine, if the girl was foolish."

"Look you,—no ill words about the gal; 'cause, dang it, if I stand it. She may be foolish, but you haven't any right yet, that I can see, to call her so; and it's the more shame if you do, seeing that it's all on your account that she is so."

"I mean no harm—no offence, Mister Davis."

"Well, well, I aint taking any harm and any offence at that. I only want to 'mind you to keep a civil tongue in your head when you talk of Bella; for, though she shies me off, and I stand no chance with her, and the game's all clear done a-tween us, I won't hear anything said to her disparagement; and it will be mighty ridiculous for you if you say it. I'm trying to speak to you civilly, and without getting in a passion—and its not so easy—for you're my prisoner, you see; and it's not the part of a gentleman to say ugly things to a man that can't help himself; but it's in the way of what I've got to tell you, and you'll be good-natured and excuse it, if I sometimes hit upon a part of you that sounds like a rascal, and don't stop to pick what words I shall say it in. But that's neither here nor there; and I may as well go on with what I was saying. Bella took a liking to you, and to your coat and buttons—monstrous little else, Sargeant Hastings, now, I tell you, for the gal has sense enough to see that you're not the properest looking chap, nor the finest, nor the best-natured, that comes into these parts. But it was the showy buttons and the red clothes—the big feather, and—I don't want to say it, Sargeant Hastings, 'cause, as I said before, you're my prisoner, and it's not genteel to say ugly things to one's prisoner; but my mother always trained me to have an ambition for truth, and a man's not a gentleman if he doesn't speak it; so that's the reason, you see, that makes me tell you that it was partly because you were so flashy, and so impudent, and had such a big way about you, that took in the poor gal at first, and that takes in so many that ought to know better. It was your impudence, you see, sargeant—that was it; and, as sure as there's snakes, she'll get tired of you, you can't reckon how fast, if she once gets you for a husband."

"But that she'll never do, Mister Davis;—oh, no, leave me alone for that. I'm no fool, I can tell you; I've seen too much of the world to be caught blindfold."

"Why, what! won't you marry her—and the gal that loves you too!" The astonishment of Davis was conspicuous in his emphasis.

"Marry her, indeed! No, I thank ye! I never thought of that," was the contemptuous reply of the prisoner.

"Now, dang it, Sargeant Hastings, but I do despise you more than a polecat. You're a poor, mean skunk, and a dirty varmint, that's only fit for killing; and I've the heart to do it now, on the spot, I tell you; but I won't, for you're my prisoner."

The indignation of Davis was kept down with difficulty; and Hastings, lacking entirely that delicacy which should have taught him that the considerations of his rival in what he had said had been singularly unselfish, only made the matter worse by undertaking to assure him that his determination had been made, the better to open the way for himself in the renewal of his addresses. This assurance neither deceived nor satisfied the lieutenant; and his words, though cool, were bitter, and solemnly urged.

"You're a shoat, a mean shoat, Sargeant Hastings; and if I had nothing else to hate you for, I should hate you mighty long and heartily for that. But it's no use talking; and the sooner we stop the better. Now, can you guess what I came to you for to-night?"

"I cannot—no—what?"

"To set you free; cut your ropes; put you on a clear track, and mount you on a nag that'll take you into Dorchester in a short hour and a half, free riding. I told you I would do it. I will keep my word."

"Indeed! Do I hear you, Mister Davis? my dear friend—"

"No friend, I thank you—no friend, but a bitter enemy, that won't do nothing for you without the pay. I will do all this for you, as I have said, but there's something I ax in return."

"What! speak! ay! What price? name your reward, sir, and—"

"I will—only be quiet and keep a civil tongue in your head while I tell you. You've put the flat of your sword to my shoulder, Sargeant Hastings, when I had none to lift up agin you; that's to be paid for. You've come between me and the gal I had a liking for, ever since I was a boy; that's to be paid for. You tried to git her to like you, and then you laugh at her liking; and that's to be paid for too. Now, can you reckon up what'll best pay for these matters?"

The sergeant was silent; the other continued—

"I'll tell you. A fair fight, as you promised me—a fair fight with broadswords, in a clear track, and no witnesses but them there bright stars, and the round moon that'll soon be rising up to give us enough light to do our business."

"I'm willing, Mister Davis; but I've no sword, and I'm tied here, as you see."

"Never be a bit afraid. I'll come in an hour, and I'll cut your cords. I'll carry you out to the skirts of the swamp, where the clear moon will look down upon us. I'll hitch a stout horse to the hanging bough; and it shall stand in sight waiting for you, the moment you get clear from me. I'll give you a pick of a pair of swords, which shall lie flat upon the earth before you; and you shall then give me satisfaction for all them there matters that I tell ye of. You're a bigger man than me; you're used to the broadsword: I can handle it too, though I does it rough and tumble, and had no schooling in the weapon; and you shall have as fair play as ever you had in all your born days before. And that's the offer I make you. Only say the word, and I'll go to the spot—carry out the horse—carry out the swords, and send the sentries off from the track I shall take you."

The proposition took Hastings by surprise. He was no coward; but under existing circumstances, he would rather have avoided the encounter in the novel shape which it now put on. Yet, as he reflected, he grew more and more satisfied with the plan. He had manifestly all the advantages of strength, and personal knowledge and practice of the weapon; and his apprehensions of Humphries were too great not to desire to escape at all hazards from his clutches. Guilt made a coward of him, as he thought of Bella's brother, and as he remembered how completely he had been unmasked before him. In a few moments he had determined upon his answer, and the Goose Creeker rejoiced to find it in the affirmative.

"It's a bargain, then," said Davis—"you swear to it!"

"I do: I will go with you. Get all things ready, as you have said, and I will fight you whenever you please."

"Well, now, that's what I like; and I'm glad to find you're so much a man, after all. Keep quiet while I'm gone, and when the horse is clear upon the skirt, I'll come to you and set you loose; all you have to do is to follow—nobody will see us; but you must be shy how you speak. Only follow, that's all."

Saying these words, Davis departed from the hut. As he emerged from its entrance, he heard the wild laugh of the maniac Frampton, as he bounded away from the immediate neighbourhood. He was too much absorbed, however, in the affair before him, to give much heed to an interruption so slight, and hurrying away, without farther hinderance, proceeded to the execution of the devised plan. This plan had all been heard by the watchful ears of the maniac. Crawling to the hut of Hastings, as once before he had done, when differently occupied, he was about to lift the birch cover from the rear, probably with the same murderous intent which he had before put into execution, when the approach and entrance of Davis had compelled him to be quiet. Concealed in the edges of the hut, and well covered by its shadow, he had lain close and heard every syllable of the preceding dialogue. A strange purpose took possession of his unsettled mind while he listened; and when Davis left the hovel, he ran off howling and laughing with the fancied accomplishment before his eyes, of that new scheme, which, with all that instability which marks the diseased intellect, had now so suddenly superseded the original object which he had in view. Hastings, meanwhile, with as much philosophy as he was master of, strove to season his thoughts for the events which were at hand.

CHAPTER X.

"Such the wild purpose of degenerate man,
Vex'd by injustice into greater wrong—
For many sins must ever spring from one."

The prospect of his revenge before him, Davis hurried away with the view to its accomplishment. The rough countryman had too deeply embarked his feelings in the frail vessel which his more audacious and imposing rival had, to his eyes, so completely carried away, not to desire this object at all the hazards which he was about to incur. He was violating his duty, and about to risk his life for this object; yet he did not regret the risks, so that he could be sure of the strife which they brought him. For this strife, regardless of all inequality of strength and skill, he was burningly anxious; and, under the exciting impulse of his desire, he sped across the narrow point of the island, making his way to the spot where the horses were all in shelter. To remove one of them, without disturbing the sleepers, required no little caution; and the extreme slowness of movement which this necessity imposed upon him was a subject of some annoyance to the partisan. Before he reached the place, he came rather suddenly upon the spot where Porgy, with rifle in hand, had been stationed to do the duty of a sentinel. The gourmand was in a state of abstraction—the butt of his rifle rested upon the ground, and his fixed and settled gaze was quite different from the habitual expression of his eyes. He started, as the footstep of Davis reached his ears, and was evidently disquieted by the interruption. His demand was querulously quick and loud—

"Who goes there?"

The answer was given by the partisan; and the tones of Porgy's voice changed instantly to those of pleasant recognition.

"Ah, Prickly Ash! my good fellow, you are just in time to do me, and yourself, and the whole camp, an eminent piece of service. But speak low, my dear fellow, speak low, and make as little noise as possible."

"What now, Porgy?" was the question of Davis, wondering at the anxiety of the speaker. "What do you see?"

"See!—what do I not see? oh, blessed Jupiter! what do I not see!" and he threw out his tongue as he spoke, rolled up his eyeballs till nothing but the whites were perceptible, and letting the muzzle of his rifle rest upon the hollow of his arm, rubbed his hands together with an air of delight which was perfectly irresistible. Davis began to doubt his sanity, when the other recovered himself.

"What do I not see, my boy?—look for yourself—here—come beside me—follow my finger—see—to the little pond just beyond that old cypress—see the log half rolled into the pond—look at the end of the log, there, just where the starlight falls upon it—look and see, and understand why it is that I rejoice. Look, my boy, but speak not—make no noise, lest you disturb the comely creatures—the fascinating dainties—the dear—hush—hush." Stopping himself in the utterance of his own raptures, which were growing rather louder than prudence called for, he guided the eye of Davis to the designated spot, and at once conveyed to the mind of his companion a sufficient reason for all his transports. A little bayou from the creek stretched away for some twenty yards beyond it, and there, on a fallen tree which was thrust half into the water, and up from which they had crawled, lay three fine terrapins, basking quietly in the starlight; their glossy backs yet trickling with the water, and giving back a glistening light to the scattering rays which fell through the opening of the trees upon them.

"That's a sight, John Davis, to lift a man from a sick-bed. That's a sight to make him whole and happy again. Look how quietly they lie; that farthest one—I would he were nigher—is a superb fellow, fat as butter, and sticking full of eggs. There's soup enough in the three for a regiment; and—here, my good fellow, take the rifle, and do the watch, while I circumvent the enemy. You shall see me come upon them like an Indian. I will only throw off this outer and most unnecessary covering, and put on the character of a social grunter. Ah, the hog is a noble animal—what would we do without him! It's almost a sin to mock him—but in making mock turtle, John Davis, the offence is excusable: a good dinner, I say, will sanctify a dozen sins, and here goes for one."

Forcing the weapon into the hands of Davis, the corpulent sentinel, with a degree of earnestness and elasticity which greatly belied his personal appearance, soon threw off his coat and vest, and prepared to undertake the conquest of the three unconscious terrapins that were taking their nightly nap so pleasantly above their oozy dwelling-place. Crawling upon hands and knees, while Davis looked on and watched for him, he made his way over the tussock, and soon reached the log, on the end of which his threatened victims were reposing. Here he commenced that independent and occasional grunt which marks the progress usually of the aristocratic hog, going where he pleases, and grumbling as he goes. His imitation was excellent; and Porgy was an adept at imitation: but he had scruples at its exercise, as unbecoming in a gentleman, unless where the object in view, like the present, promoted the prospects and the pleasures of a dinner. At the first sound, the largest of the three terrapins betrayed a degree of wakefulness, duly commensurate with the importance and safety of the bulk of which he had the charge. He thrust out his long neck and bullet head from his glossy shell, and, like an old soldier, appeared to listen. His eye took in the forms of his sleeping companions only, and he saw no cause of danger in the dark, unruffled water of the pond below him. A second grunt from the supposed hog reassured the suspicious terrapin; and, familiar with the animal whose part, so far, Porgy had so well enacted, he drew in his circumspect countenance, and prepared to knit up once more his unravelled slumbers. In the mean while the persevering gourmand continued to make his way; and, striding the very tree, at length, which the game occupied, on hands and feet, he began to adopt that mode of conveyance entitled in the south-west "cooning the log," which is so frequently practised in that region, where a fallen tree, made slippery by driving rains, is usually the only substitute which the traveller finds for the solid bridge, or the less stable canoe.

Davis now watched his progress with some anxiety. But, though himself anxious, Porgy felt too deeply the value of his victims to risk their loss by any precipitation. He moved along at a snail's pace, and whenever the huge tree would vibrate beneath his prodigious weight, the cautious trapper would pause in his journey, and send forth as good a grunt as ever echoed in Westphalian forests. The poor terrapins were completely taken in by the imitation, and lay there enjoying those insidious slumbers, which were now to be their ruin. Nigher and nigher came the enemy. A few feet only separated the parties, and, with an extended hand, Porgy could have easily turned over the one which was nighest. But the eyes of the gourmand had singled out the most remote of that sweet company. He had taken in at a glance its entire dimensions, and already, in his mind, estimated, not only the quantity of rich reeking soup which could be made out of it, but the very number of eggs which it contained. Nothing short, therefore, of this particular prize would have satisfied him; and, thus extravagant in his desires, he scarcely deigned a glance to the others. At length he sat squat almost alongside of the two—the third, as they lay close together, being almost in his grasp, he had actually put out his hands for its seizure, when the long neck of his victim was again thrust forth, and, with arms still extended, Porgy remained for a while quiet. Again the terrapin drew in its suspicious head, and the hands descended with a clutch from which there was no escaping. One after another the victims were turned upon their backs; and, with a triumphant chuckle, the captor carried off his prey, one by one, to the solid tussock.

"I cannot talk to you for an hour, Prickly, my boy—not for an hour—here's food for thought in all that time. Food for thought did I say! Ay, for how much thought—I am thoughtful. The body craves food, indeed, only that the mind may think, and half our earthly cares are for this material. It is falsehood and folly to speak of eating as an animal necessity, the love of which is vulgarly designated an animal appetite. It is not so with me. The mere feast is nothing to the pleasure of its preparation—its attainment. Am I not willing—do I not love to share it with all? What is it prompts me in the pursuit of game like this! That love of ingenuity, of adventure, which is man's true nature, which is continually changing its forms and features, and exhibiting itself in aspects perpetually new, and continually adventuring in new provinces. Our nature is never so legitimately employed, my dear Prickly, as when it is inventing, contriving, multiplying images and offices, the purposes and pleasures of which are to keep us from stagnation. Now I shall give you all a surprise to-morrow. I shall dress all these terrapins differently. You shall have enough of the old steaks and the soup to satisfy; but there shall be some experiments. I thought of one as I approached the log, and when the cunning of that big fellow there nearly discovered me. The grunt saved me, and with the grunt came the idea of a new dish, as it were, like lightning, to my mind. That terrapin, I said to myself, shall be compounded with hog, in memory of this event. There shall be a union of forces between them, and you shall see the glorious dish that I shall make of it. But, where do you go?"

Returning the rifle to its owner, whose prizes lay on their backs at his feet, Davis was now hurrying away upon the business which this incident had so far suspended. He replied by telling Porgy that he was bent for the skirts of the swamp, and should probably be gone all night.

"But not longer, my dear fellow—don't think of staying longer—I would not you should miss mess home to-morrow for the world. There's too much at stake, quite, and I beg that you will think of it. A dinner once lost is never recovered. The stomach loses a day, and regrets are not only idle to recall it, but substract largely from the appetite the day ensuing. Tears can only fall from a member that lacks teeth; the mouth, now, is never seen weeping. It is the eye only; and, as it lacks tongue, teeth, and taste alike, by Jupiter, it seems to me that tears should be its proper business. The mouth has no sorrows."

Davis hurried away from the doughty and good-natured speaker, who would willingly have detained him all night; and successfully detaching his own horse from the rest of the group, he carefully chose two stout weapons, and carried them off with all secrecy, and without farther interruption, to the spot which he had determined upon for the place of meeting.

It was a quiet spot, and well calculated for a mortal struggle. The area was sufficiently large for that, and the trees completely encircled it. The ground itself was a sandhill, such as, in that neighbourhood, will sometimes rise suddenly out from a swamp, and drink up the still trickling waters of a streamlet running beside it. The starlight gave a sufficiently strong light for the combat, and the moon was now about to rise. Davis surveyed the ground in silence, and with something of grave reflection crowding upon his mind as he did so. His desire for revenge had made him almost entirely unmindful of the possible results to himself of the contemplated struggle; and now that he looked upon the sands, so soon, as he thought, to soak up the blood of himself or his enemy, or both, his reflections were neither so calm nor so pleasant as he could have wished them. Not that he feared death; but its idea is one of terrible contemplation. We should always esteem the danger, however boldly we may advance to meet it.

But the die was cast, and no useful result could possibly arise from his reflections now, as it was out of the question to suppose that his determination could be changed. That was forbidden by the general sense of society in the quarter in which he lived; and striving heartily to dismiss all consideration from his mind, save that which told him of the injuries he was to avenge, he fastened to a neighbouring tree the horse which was destined for the survivor, and plunging back into the swamp, took his way towards the place where the partisans lay sheltered.

The time which he had lost in the watch for Porgy, and in the removal of the horse and weapons to the place of appointment, had not, however, been left unemployed by others. Suffering a brief half-hour to elapse, with that method which is at periods the feature of most forms of madness, the maniac Frampton emerged from the swamp, and came to the hut where Hastings was imprisoned. The prisoner looked up as the huge form darkened the imperfect light at the entrance, and wondered at the increased size of his enemy.

"Come," said the maniac—"come!"

"But I am tied hand and foot, Master Davis, and can't budge a peg, unless you cut the cords," was the reply. Without a word, the maniac did as he was required. He separated the cords with his knife, which he straight restored to his belt, while the freed sergeant, stiff and sore from his fatiguing constraints, rose slowly, and stretched himself painfully in the air.

"A d—d hard bed I've had of it, Master Davis, and my limbs work as if they wanted greasing. A sup of Jamaica now were not bad."

"Come!" cried the maniac, impatiently.

Half wondering at the sullenness and unsociability of one whom he was about to indulge with a fight after his own desire, Hastings, nevertheless, thought it prudent to forbear farther speech while such was the mood of his companion, and simply obeying his command, followed him forth from the hut. Madness is fond of schemes, else it is most probable that Frampton would have used his knife upon Hastings, summarily, as he had already done upon Clough. But the lingering reason still strives at authority even in the head of the insane man; and though disordered, weakened, and deprived of some one or more of its auxiliaries, it still seeks, by a method of its own, to establish its supremacy. It still plans, contrives, and creates; and the cunning of the madman is a singular feature of his sometime disorder. It was so with the individual before us. He had taken his way, in the first instance, to the hut of the prisoner, intending for him the same fate as that which befell Clough in the same situation. The approach of Davis had made him pause. In that pause, he heard the proposed plan of the Goose Creeker to his enemy, and the quick imagination of the maniac readily adopted it as his own. He had watched, accordingly, till the partisan had gone to effect his preparations, and had then chosen his time, as we have seen, to complete for him what he had so well begun. We have seen how far he has succeeded. Still unknown by the prisoner—for he avoided all unnecessary speech, and the dim obscurity of the place did not allow of his detection—the maniac led the way at once through the creek, taking a route different from that which would have been pursued by Davis.

"Come!" he cried impatiently to Hastings, as the latter floundered slowly and with difficulty through the mire and water. "Come!"

The sergeant did his best to keep up with his conductor, but he found it no easy matter. Familiar with the swamps—a wild dweller in their depths—Frampton strode away almost as easily as if upon the solid land. He picked no path—he availed himself of no friendly log, offering sure footing and an unimpeded path through the slough; but dashing in, through bad and good alike, he led the luckless sergeant over a territory the worst he had ever in his life travelled. Occasionally, the maniac would pause, as the other lingered behind, to utter the expressive monosyllable—"Come!" a thrilling, half-suppressed sound, which, from his lips, had a singularly imposing accent in the ears of his victim. The fatigue of his progress made the apprehensions of Hastings exceedingly active; and as occasional glimpses of starlight came through the trees, giving him a more distinct view of his conductor, he could not avoid a feeling of disquietude, as he remarked a singular expansion which had taken place in his size. He half wished the adventure had not been undertaken; but then again he thought of Humphries. The thought gave him new energy to pursue his way, and he toiled on with most praiseworthy perseverance, until he came to a broad, high tussock—a solemn looking place, closely imbowered with the hugest pines, and almost insulated by the long miry pond which half encircled it. His conductor had already gone through it, and stood on the edge of the tussock, as it were, in waiting for his advance. The prospect gave additional disquiet to the sergeant. "Surely," thought he, "he will give a body time to rest a while; he will not be for the fight off-hand."

"Come!" cried his enemy to him across the pond, and, with something like desperation, Hastings plunged into it. The mire closed oozingly around him, almost to his middle, and he toiled through it, unable to lift his legs free from its embrace, by the sheer onward pressure of his body. Drenched and dripping, he arose upon the bank, and stood before the man who had conducted him. A terrible laugh—a shrill demoniac screech—filled his ears, and he shivered as he heard it with unmitigated terror.

"Who—what are you?" he cried to the maniac. "Where is Davis?"

"He waits for you," was the response of the madman—"Come!"

"Oh, you are to conduct me to him, is it?" said the other, somewhat more reassured; "but he told me he would come himself."

"Come!" and, like a fierce spirit of wrath, the maniac waved his arms forward to the deep recesses of the woods that lay dark and dense before them. Awed by the action, and more so by the terrible sound of that voice which was deep-toned like an organ, the sergeant went forward without hesitation. They entered the thick wood, passed through the intervening foliage, which continued dense and thick for some thirty paces, and then suddenly opened upon a space, and into a degree of light that almost dazzled the prisoner. The tussock, in this part, was bald almost like the "door-prairie;" indeed, it was the door-prairie, though on too small a scale to warrant the application of the term familiarly. The deep vault of heaven, clear, blue, and perfectly unclouded, was flowered with its profuse myriads, and the bright eyes looked down upon the two as if they had no dread of crime, and had never been the silent watchers of human suffering. The moon, too, had sent up in the east a faint glory, the harbinger of her own coming, which spread itself afar like a transparent colour, clearly distinguishable from the starlight immediately around, which it now began to supersede. The wild man paused, looked briefly upon the rich assemblage above him, turned back to beckon his companion, and once more, with a waving hand, led the way over the prairie. In a few moments they had gained a tree—a huge cypress which stood on the opposite side of the tussock—and there the maniac paused. Acquiring confidence as he came up, Hastings approached his conductor, and was about to speak to him, when, with a finger upon his lips, he silenced the forthcoming speech by a look, while he pointed to his feet. The sergeant gazed down upon the spot, and started back with something like astonishment, if not terror, in his countenance. They stood before a new-made grave—the clay freshly piled above it, and the whole appearance of the spot indicating a recent burial. The maniac did not heed the expression of the sergeant's face; but after a moment, seemingly of deliberation, he prostrated himself before the grave. Much wondering at what he saw, Hastings awaited in silence the farther progress of the scene. Nor did he wait long. The maniac prayed—and such a prayer—such an appeal to a spirit supposed to be then wandering by, and hearing him, was never before uttered. Incoherent sometimes, and utterly wild, it was nevertheless full of those touches of sublimated human feeling which characterize the holiest aspirations of love, and which, while they warm and kindle, purify at the same time, and nobly elevate. His prayer was to his departed wife. He prayed her forgiveness for a thousand unkindnesses,—a thousand instances of neglect—of querulous rebuke—of positive injustice, with which he bitterly reproached himself. Then followed a tender and really exquisite description of the humble and secret pleasures which they had known together. The joys of their childhood and youth, and the enumeration of many little incidents of domestic occurrence, of which he now reminded the hovering spirit. Tears poured from him freely as he repeated them, and for a few moments the wild man was absolutely softened into calm; but the change was terrific which described her cruel murder; how, stricken down by the brutal soldiery, she lay trampled upon the floor, dying at last in torture, with her infant, yet unborn, adding its prayer to that of its mother for the vengeance to which he had devoted himself. This brought him to the point when the trial must come on with his victim. He started to his feet, and rushed madly towards Hastings. The sergeant, to whom the latter part of the prayer had taught his danger, prepared to fly in terror. But the swift foot of the maniac was after him, and his strong arm hurled him backward to the grave, over which he reeled and fell, heavily and overborne. He cried out aloud in his desperation, as he beheld the maniac bounding towards him. He cried aloud, and the echoes only replied; and a white owl that hooted from the cypress over the grave, moaned mockingly to his cry. The fierce executioner seized him with a grasp which defied and disdained all resistance. He dragged him to the grave—he stretched him out upon it, placed his knee upon his breast, and with that dreadful screech, which well accompanied his movements, he drew the already bared knife from the belt which contained it.

"Mercy! mercy!" implored the sergeant, while his shout of terror, a voice beyond his own, rang wildly through the swamp and forest, craving mercy, and craving it in vain.

"You showed her none!—none! You struck her down—your foot was upon her, and she died under it. Come—come!"

The maniac was impatient for his prey, and he yelled scornfully at the impotent struggles of his victim. At that moment a loud voice was heard calling to them from the swamp. The wild man, with all the caprice of insanity, sprang to his feet as he heard it; and seizing that moment of release, the sergeant also rising rushed away to the wood in the direction of the voice. The maniac looked at the fugitive scornfully, and for a brief space did not offer to pursue; but the delay was only momentary. In another instant, Hastings heard the bounding tramp of the heavy feet—he heard the ominous screech of his enemy, speaking death to his imagination; and a fresh speed came to him from his renewed terrors. He shouted ever, as he flew, to the approaching person, and had the satisfaction to find that his cry was responded to by the voice nearer at hand. He now entered the little wood which separated him from the mire, through which he had groped his way before with so much difficulty. The wretch prayed as he ran—probably for the first time in his life—and the cold sweat trickled over his face as he uttered his first fervent appeal to his God. The prayer was unheard—certainly unheeded. The maniac was upon him, and the first bound which the fugitive made into the mire of the swamp, was precipitated by the hand of the avenger. Rushing into the mud after him, the maniac grappled with him there. Though hopeless of his own strength in the contest with one so far superior, and only desirous of saving himself unhurt until Davis—for it was he who now approached them—should come up to his relief, Hastings presented a stout front, and resolutely engaged in the conflict. He shouted all the while the struggle was going on, and his shouts were chorused by the dreadful yells of his murderer.

"Come to me quickly, John Davis—quickly—quickly—for God's sake, come!—come!"

"Come! come!" cried the murderer, in mockery; and the sound of his victim's voice died away in a hoarse gurgle, as the strong arm of the maniac thrust the head of the pleader down, deep into the mire, where he held it so long as the body continued to show signs of life above. Davis came up at this moment.

"Where is the prisoner, Frampton!—where is Hastings!"

"Ho! ho! ho! See you not—see you not?—he is here—look!" And he pointed him to the legs of the victim, still jerking convulsively above the mire.

"Great God! man, pull him out—pull him out, for Heaven's sake, Frampton!" And, as he spoke, the Goose Creeker, horrified by what he saw, bounded into the mire himself for the extrication of the dying man. But, at his approach, the wild savage thrust the wretch still more deeply into the ooze, until it was evident, from the quiet of the body, long before Davis could extricate him, that all life had departed.

"Why have you done this, man!" cried the aroused and disappointed partisan to the murderer; but the maniac only replied by another of his terrible screeches, as, bounding out of the mire, he took his way back to the grave where his wife lay buried. The feelings of Davis were melancholy and reproachful enough, as he returned to the encampment.

CHAPTER XI.

"Oh, thought may tread that lonely wild,
And carving on each tree,
May dream that some, who once have smil'd,
Will still be there to see:
The bark o'er former names hath grown,
Yet there is one remains, alone,
Whose freshness cannot flee—
A spirit-memory comes by night,
To make its fading traces bright."

Even as the pilgrim, bound upon some long travel, pauses by the wayside to plant a flower, or utter a devout prayer upon the spot once sacred to some sweet affection, and not yet entirely forgotten; so, stranger, if you be a solitary—one, who, with a spirit that can roam with nature, and find her forest-home at all times acceptable, strays apart from the crowding city, and the noisy abodes of men—I will pray that you be persuaded to turn aside with me, in this our journey together, and look, before we shall have gone too far to return to them, upon these old-time tombs of Dorchester. Sweet is their silence—may their repose be sacred. They yield us a quiet rest, as they testify to that of their inmates. We leave the thoroughfare, and the woods girdle us thickly. The streets of the village, mirthful and busy once, are overgrown with triumphant cedars—they crowd fitly upon these old trophies of the sleepless conqueror. They shroud—they seem to sanctify the spot; and you shall ramble over the ruins and contemplate the few memorials which remain, without dread of the thoughtless jeer, or the heartless laugh of irreverent curiosity. Living man disturbs not often this sainted neighbourhood. The place, in his mind, is desolate enough. Not so, I think, in ours. We shall gather something for thought from these mansions of decay, where death shall carry the lamp for life, and bring us to all his most secret places.

How much more solid than ours were the tastes of our ancestors! how earnest did they seem in all their labours! They were less selfish than their children, and seem to have built almost entirely for us. Their vaults how thick and huge, how cumbrous, how time-defying! The narrow mind calls it vanity to bestow so much pains on a human monument; but the moral is the stronger, when we know that, however worthy in the sight of his kindred was the object of this care, he was still the victim of the unrelaxing death. The thick massive tomb seems also well conceived to illustrate those impassable barriers of destiny which shut the living man entirely out from him who has already shaken off the coil and care of mortality. And, when the tomb is rent asunder, as is the one before us, may we not infer the ascent of the triumphant spirit, throwing aside all the idle restraints, even of the affection that would keep it for ever to itself, and rising, on the transparent wings of an eternal morning, to the fair and wooing mansions of eternal bliss?

And there is the old church, like a thoughtful matron, sitting in quiet contemplation among her children. Their graves are all around her; but she, deserted by those she taught and cherished, without even the tongue to deplore them—dumb, as it were, with her excess of wo—she still sits, a monument like themselves, not only of their worship, but of the faith which she taught. It is a graceful ruin, that will awaken all your veneration, if the gnawing cares of gain, and the world's baser collision, have not kept it too long inactive. It stands up, like some old warrior, gray with many winters, scarred and buffeted with conflicting storms and strifes, but still upright—still erect. The high altar, the sacred ornaments, the rich pews, like the people who honoured and occupied them, are torn away and gone. Decay and rude hands have dealt with them, as death has dealt with the worshippers. The walls and roof are but little hurt. The tower has been stricken and shattered, but still more hallowed by the lightning which has done it. Some white owls are in quiet possession of it, but as they are innocent, and seem in venerable keeping with the place, the gentle spirit will hold them sacred from harm; and may no profane hand drive them away. Here, to the right of the church, is a goodly cluster of tombs, fringed in, thickly, by the pine and cedar. The cattle stray here at noonday for the shady quiet, not less than for the rank grass which the spot affords. They are not the least gentle of its visiters. Rude hands, in some cases, have torn away and broken up, in sinful wantonness, the thick marble slabs which covered the vaults, and recorded the history of their indwellers. This was a double wrong—a wrong to those of whom they told, and not less a wrong to those who read, and who might have won useful knowledge from a lesson at the grave. Here, now, is the bone of an arm—a slender bone—perhaps that of a woman. It lies before us, unconscious of its exposure. We will disturb it no farther—enough, if what we have seen shall have the effect of persuading us to regard with less complacency the vigour, and the power, and the beauty in our own. Pass on. Here we may muse for hours, and our thoughts shall be as various as the records we have about us. Some of these tombs belong to history. Here lies one of a man who was killed and scalped at Goose Creek, in the war of the Yemassees, when those brave savages came down in 1715. This stone tells us of another who died at Eutaw in the Revolution, and who was brought here for burial, at his own request. The spot was sacred even then. You, who can "find sermons in stones, and good in every thing," shall be at no loss for matters of thought in the huge volumes of time which death has here bound up together—their leaves closely written upon, and every page full of a sweet though sad morality. But, if you will descend with me to the bottom of this little hill, inclining from the burial-ground towards the Ashley, which steals in and out below us, I will take you to one monument, now sacred in our narrative—one monument, the history of which is more familiar to our regards than all the gravestones can possibly make it. The hill descends gradually here, and the young pines crowd upon it thickly. You see a little runlet of water that trickles down its sides. The traveller, who knows where to seek it, draws in from the roadside and drinks of it freely, though he well knows that it finds its source from the dwellings of the dead. At the foot of the hill you behold a little enclosure—a neat paling fence, once white, but now sadly wanting repair. It is in better condition, however, than most of those around it. The seclusion of the spot tends somewhat to its protection. This is the "Walton Burial-place." The old barony has given it many tenants. Here, now, is a solid slab, twelve feet in length, that covers a generation. A long inscription tells us of grandsire, son, grandson—of their wives and children—how they were worthy and beloved in life, and how they were regretted in death. There are others at the side of this—a goodly range, each having testament and memorial—names of many, of whom, as we know nothing, with all the elastic indifference which is the characteristic of man, we can care but little. Not so, however, with the slender shaft to which I now take you. Here is a little hillock—tread not upon it—which should be sacred to us. An infant cedar, when the grave was fresh, plucked up by the roots from the neighbouring woods, was planted at its foot. It has taken a strong hold, and has grown into a beautiful tree, which throws a pleasant and solemn shadow over it. The headstone has but two letters that are now visible—

"E. S."

Stoop with me, and a knife will help us to discern the rest—

"born 7th May, 1763; died 21st June, 1780."

There are but two words below—but two—and they testify to the true affection of a brother—

"My Sister."

This is all—all the story, save what our narrative has given, of that sweet angel, whom, as Emily Singleton, we knew on earth, whatever her accepted name may be in heaven. Shall we not add our tribute to this sweet and simple memorial?

THE GRAVE OF EMILY.

I.

'Tis a lowly grave, but it suits her best,
Since it breathes of fragrance, and speaks of rest;
And meet for her, is its calm repose,
Whose life was so stormy and sad to its close.

II.

'Tis a shady dell where they've laid her form,
And the hill gathers round it, to break the storm;
While, above her head, the bending trees
Arrest the wing of each ruder breeze.

III.

A trickling stream, as it winds below,
Has a music of peace in its quiet flow;
And the buds, that are always in bloom above,
Tell of some minist'ring spirit's love.

IV.

It is sweet to think, that when all is o'er,
And life's fever'd pulses shall fret no more,
There still shall be some, with a gentle regret,
Who will not forsake, and who cannot forget.

V.

Some kindlier heart, all untainted by earth,
That has kept its sweet bloom, from its bud and its birth,
Whose tears for the sorrows of youth shall be shed,
And whose pray'r shall still rise for the early dead.

CHAPTER XII.

"If there be trial and a strife to come,
Let us embrace it, with a goodly joy;
Not linger to behold it, with wild stare,
A sad presentment of the coward heart."

But, though we turn aside from the highway to plant or to pluck the flower, we may not linger there idly, or long. The business of life calls for speed not less than repose; and the play of existence, for it is little else, vibrates with more or less rapidity, according to the circumstances of its proper employment. To fly heedlessly and for ever, and to stagnate and rust, are alike evil; and the swift race-horse may not always be trained to his highest pitch of speed, without suffering in consequence. Having lingered for a while, and mused over sacred memories, let us content ourselves with casting our tribute-flower upon the grave of the beautiful, and hurry away upon our own necessities; striving, if not to forget, at least not improvidently to remember.

The hot chase over, which Proctor had urged after Singleton, the latter, accompanied by his uncle, now fairly *out*, returned quickly to the shelter of the swamp. There they arrived late in the night, and proceeded at once to those slumbers which were imperatively called for by their late fatigue. With early morning, however, Colonel Walton aroused his little troop and prepared to depart. Unincumbered as he was with baggage or prisoners, he determined to proceed instantly on his way to North Carolina, where he hoped to encounter the advancing continentals. He proposed to unite his men, as they were quite too few for a distinct command, with some one of the corps most needing them in the incomplete squadrons of the southern army. His own services he proposed to volunteer to Gates, whom he knew in Virginia, and between whom and himself there had been an intimacy prior to the commencement of the war. He did not doubt, with these recollections in his mind, to obtain an honourable appointment from his hands. The squad of Singleton was not able to move with so much rapidity. It had baggage, provisions, and prisoners to carry; and, more than all, a tolerable supply of powder and buckshot for Marion, which Humphries, through cautious management, had made out to procure in Dorchester. The preparations for Walton's departure, however, aroused the rest; and the troopers generally turned out to take leave of their friends and past comrades. Among those who rose early that morning from their slumbers, though with a motive widely different from the rest, was the corpulent Porgy, whose whole dream by night had been a mixed vision of terrapin. He saw it in all shapes before his delighted imagination. First came a picture of the sluggish water, the protruding log, and, at its extremity, precisely as he had really seen them some hours before, the three unconscious and sleeping victims. Nothing could be more distinct and rational. One by one he felt himself again securing them; and there they lay at his feet, their yellow bellies turned upward in the moonlight, while their feet paddled about ineffectually on either side; and their long necks were thrust forth in manifest dissatisfaction, as they strove to regain a more upright, or, to speak more to the card, a less unnatural position. Then came the dismemberment; the breaking into their houses, the dragging forth of the rich contents—the crowding eggs and the choice collops of luxurious swamp-fed meat. Various were the dishes prepared by his fancy out of the mass before him; and he awakened at daylight, soberly bent to put some of his sleeping fancies to the test of actual experiment. The proposed departure of Colonel Walton and his party aroused his indignation: he grew eloquent to Humphries on the subject.

"To go off at an hour so unseasonable, and from such a feast as we shall have by noon—it's barbarous. I don't believe it—I don't believe a word of it, Bill."

"But I tell you, Porgy, it is so. The colonel has set the boys to put the nags in fix for a start, and him and the major only talk now over some message to Marion and General Gates, which the colonel's to carry."

"He's heard nothing then of the terrapin, you think? He'd scarcely go if he knew. I'll see and tell him at once. I know him well enough."

"Terrapin, indeed, Porgy! how you talk! Why, man, he don't care for all the terrapin in the swamp."

"Then no good can come of him; he's an infidel. I would not march with him for the world. Don't believe in terrapin! a man ought to believe in all that's good; and there's nothing so good as terrapin. Soup, stew, or hash, all the same; it's a dish among a thousand. Nature herself shows the value which she sets upon it, when she shelters it in such walls, and builds around it such a fortification as this—see now to that fellow, there. He held on to his back, would you believe it, Humphries—confound him! for half an hour after I had been working at him! First, his head—I got it out with difficulty with my knife and a stick sharpened for the purpose; and when I had hewn it off—you see it there, and there it will gasp and jerk long after we've done eating the body—I went to work upon the shell. Nothing but the hatchet took it off, after all; and see what a gash I gave my fingers while working upon it; but the game was worth it, and the value of the meat is always in proportion to the toil which it gives us to get at it—so with an oyster—so with a crab—so with a shrimp—so, indeed, with all the dainties of which human appetite—if appetite may be considered merely human, which I doubt—is properly conscious."

"Well, that's true—all the tough things to come at are mighty sweet; but it does seem to me, Porgy, that you make too much of your belly; you spoil it, and it will grow so impudent after a while, that there will be no living with it."

"There's no living without it, my dear fellow; and that's reason enough for taking care of it. The belly is a great member, my friend—a very great member. We should not speak of it irreverently; its claims are peculiar; it is the source of satisfaction in numberless ways; and, I am convinced, however people may talk about the brain, that it's a poor business after all, in the way of thinking, in comparison with the belly. A great deal may be said in favour of the belly; but why need I say it! it is enough to name it, and its importance is understood at once by all people; and if Colonel Walton be the gentleman I think him, he will find a sufficient reason for delaying his journey until noon, as soon as he hears of this terrapin. Go to him, Bill—go to him, old fellow; give him particulars, and let him see what he loses by going. Stay; take the upper crust of one of them with you—this fine one, for example; and if that doesn't bring him to his senses, I give him up. Go now, my dear fellow; be quick about it, or you lose him, and he the soup."

Never was man more in earnest than Porgy; and

Humphries, who loved to hear him talk upon his favourite topic, told him how utterly impossible it was for Walton to remain; assured him that he had already intimated the terrapin, and the various forms in which it was to be provided, by the highly ingenious gourmand; and even went so far as to repeat, verbatim, as it were, certain regrets of the departing colonel at the necessity which deprived him of the new luxury.

"Ay, that was it. I would have had his opinion of the dish, for he knows what good living is. There's a pleasure, Humphries, in having a man of taste and nice sensibilities about us. Our affections—our humanities, if I may so call them—are then properly exercised; but it is throwing pearl to swine to put a good dish before such a creature as that skeleton, Oakenburg—Doctor Oakenburg, as the d—d fellow presumes to call himself. He is a monster—a fellow of most perverted taste, and of no more soul than a skion, or the wriggling lizard that he resembles. Only yesterday, we had a nice tit-bit—an exquisite morsel—only a taste—a marsh-hen, that I shot myself, and fricasseed after a fashion of my own. I tried my best to persuade the wretch to try it—only to try it—and would you believe it, he not only refused, but absolutely, at the moment, drew a bottle of some vile root decoction from his pocket, and just as I was about to enjoy my own little delicacy, he thrust the horrible stuff into his lantern jaws, and swallowed a draught of it that might have strangled a cormorant. It nearly made me sick to see him, and with difficulty could I keep myself from being angry. I told him how ungentlemanly had been his conduct, taking his physic where decent people were enjoying an intellectual repast—for so I consider dinner—and I think he felt the force of the rebuke, for he turned away instantly, though still the beast was in him. In a minute after, he was dandling his d—d coachwhip, that he loves like a bedfellow. It is strange, very strange, and makes me sometimes doubtful how to believe in human nature. It is such a monstrous contradiction between tastes and capacities."

How long Porgy would have gone on after this fashion, may not well be said; but the trooper was called away from hearing him, by his commanding officer. In the mean while, Tom, the black cook, made his appearance, after repeated demands had been urged by the gourmand for his presence. The negro came, rubbing his eyes, half asleep still, and monstrous stupid.

"Tom, my boy!" said Porgy.

"Ki! Mass Porgy; you no lub sleep you' sef, da's no reason he no good for udder people. Nigger lub sleep, Mass Porgy; an' 'taint 'spectful to git up 'fore de sun."

"No matter, boy—no matter—open your eyes, Tom, you black rascal, and look at your brethren. See here, King Coal—for you're black enough to be one of his relations—see here what we've got to go upon, my boy. Get down to the creek, and give your face a brief introduction to the water, then come back and be made happy."

"Dah berry fine cooter, for true—berry fine cooter, Mass Porgy—whay you bin nab 'em!"

"Where do you think, boy, but on the old cypress log, running into yonder pond. That was their home; and there they came out last night to nap it. Fortunately, I slept not on my post, and I stole a march upon 'em. I caught 'em all asleep; and that's a warning to you, Tom, never to go to sleep on the end of a log."

"Heh! wha' den, Mass Porgy—nobody guine eat nigger eben if dey catch 'em. Tom berry hard wittle for buckrah."

"Make good cooter soup, Tom, nevertheless. Who could tell the difference! Those long black slips of the meat in terrapin-soup, look monstrous like negro toes and fingers; and the Irish soldiers in garrison wouldn't know the one from t'other. Tom, Tom, if they catch you sleeping!"

"Oh, Mass Porgy, I wish you leff off talking 'bout sich tings. You make my skin crawl like yellow belly snake."

"Well, well; get your pot, old boy, and see that you let nobody meddle with our doings. Get me a couple of deep gourds, that I may mix up the ingredients comfortably. I am going to make a new stew, and you shall have your share of it, Tom, that you may keep your eyes open to catch terrapin all night for ever after."

"Berry well; mind, Mass Porgy, I guine 'member dis what you tell me."

"You shall have your share—but go now and get ready: and mind, Tom, the two calabashes—and, Tom!"

"Sa!"

"Be sure and get some herbs, dry sage, thyme, mint; and if you can, take up a few onions—and, Tom!"

"Sa!"

"Say nothing to that d—d fellow Oakenburg—do you hear, sir!"

"Enty I yerry, mossa; but it's no use; de doctor lub snake better more nor cooter."

"Away!"

The negro was gone upon his mission, and throwing himself at length upon the grass, the eyes of Porgy alternated between the rising sun and the empty shells of his terrapins.

"How they glitter!" he said to himself: "what a beautiful polish they would admit of! It's surprising they have never been used for the purposes of manly ornament. In battle, burnished well, and fitted to the dress in front, just over humanity's most conspicuous dwelling-place, they would turn off many a bullet from that sacred, but too susceptible, region."

And, as he mused, he grappled one of the shells, the largest of the three, and turning himself upon his back, lay at length, while fitting the shell closely to the designated spot. In this pleasant experiment, he was surprised by Singleton.

"A strange idea that, Mr. Porgy," said the commander; "but the shield is rather small for the part to be protected. Your figure in that neighbourhood might demand the shelter of a turtle shell rather than that of a terrapin. It has gone somewhat beyond such restraints as that."

"A truth, Major Singleton—a truth, sir," cried the other, respectfully rising from the earth, and saluting his superior with the finished grace of a gentleman; "but I am a modest man, sir, and a stale proverb, sir, helps me to my answer:—Half a loaf is said to be better than no bread, and half a shelter, in the same spirit, is certainly better than none. An illustration meant for the interior may not inaptly serve the exterior of one's body. The force of this shell, sir, though inadequate to the protection of all this region, which, as you say, has gone somewhat beyond proper restraints, may yet protect the most assailable part. Take care of what we can, sir, is a wholesome rule, letting what can take care of the rest."

"You are a philosopher, Mr. Porgy; and I am glad to believe so, as we shall leave you but little time after the conclusion of the repast, for which, I perceive, you have made some extraordinary preparations. We shall start, sir, for the Santee, with the decline of the sun this afternoon; and will accordingly disturb some of those pleasant contemplations which usually follow the feast."

The gourmand looked somewhat blank, as he replied—

"But, major, do I understand you? are we to break up camp here, for good and all?"

"For the present, certainly, we shall. We move, bag and baggage, this afternoon, and push for Nelson's ferry as fast as we can. Our retreat here is now sufficiently known to make it unsafe to delay in it much longer, and we shall soon be wanted for vigorous service on the frontier."

"This is a goodly place, major; better could scarce be chosen for secrecy, and other no less positive advantages. Fresh provisions are more abundant here than in Dorchester, and I am convinced that these ponds will yield us cat, quite as lively as the far-famed ones of Edisto. I need not point you more particularly to the commodity just before us."

"These are attractions, Mr. Porgy; but as we go next to the Santee, the difference will not be so very great—certainly not so great as to be insisted upon. The Santee is rich in numberless varieties of fish and fowl, and my own eyes have feasted upon terrapin of much greater dimensions, and much larger numbers than the Cypress yields."

"And of all varieties, major? the brown and yellow—not to speak of the alligator terrapin, whose flavour, though unpopular with the vulgar, is decidedly superior to that of any other! You speak knowingly, major?"

"I do. I know all the region, and have lived in the swamp for weeks at a time. The islands of the swamp there are much larger than here; and there are vast lakes in its depths, where fish are taken at all hours in the day with the utmost ease. You will see Colonel Marion, himself, frequently catching his own breakfast."

"I like that—a commander should always be heedful of his example. That's a brave man—a fine fellow—I like him, major—that commander of ours; and now that you have enlightened me, sir, on the virtues of the Santee, and our able colonel, I must own that my reluctance to depart is considerably lessened. At late noon, you said?"

"At late noon."

"I thank you, Major Singleton, for this timely notice. With your leave, sir, I will proceed to these preparations for dinner, which are rather precipitated by this movement. That rascally head there, major," kicking away the gasping head of one of the terrapins as he spoke, "seems to understand the subject of our conversation—of mine at least—and opens its jaws every instant, as if it hoped some one of us would fill them."

Talking all the while, he waddled away with his gourds of turtle, and Singleton beheld him, a moment after, busy with Tom, the negro, in earnest preparations for the feast.

The partisan commander had his word for all in the swamp—a word of kind remark and pleasant encouragement. There were none unnoticed by him in some way or other. The trooper trimming the thick hair from his horse's heels, and paring down his hoof, received his countenance, and heard, and replied to, his friendly observation, most usually upon the subject of his particular labour at that moment. The group huddled up beneath the tree—some mending their bridles, some trimming the mould edges of their bullets, and some, more homely still in their industry, repairing wide rents in coat or breeches—and there were not a few busy at such labours—all, in turn, received his consideration. To all, the same information was conveyed—the same degree of confidence, seemingly, with nothing withheld, was duly given; and the friendly bearing of the captain towards his men, was rather that of an equal than of a superior. Yet there was no familiarity between the parties. A certain calm, equable temper of reserve, on his side, invariably restrained obtrusiveness. He smiled, but never laughed with them. He stood, when he spoke to them; and always rose for that purpose, if he had previously been sitting. His was that due consideration of man, as an animal, that never permitted him to assume any position which might expose him to the free embraces of those over whom he had command. Yet, his gentleness of speech, his grace of deportment, his pleasant manner, were all proverbial among his men. He smiled now, as he spoke to them, though his heart was, at the moment, even bleeding inly. He knew not yet the extent of his loss, but he well knew the extent of the loss which he had to fear. It was owing partly to a desire to escape from these thoughts that he lingered so long among his troop.

Singleton, at length, having himself gone the rounds, looked at all the things, and spoken with all the men in his camp, now retired to a small oak under which he usually rested. He threw himself down upon the dry moss that formed his couch, and gave himself up to thoughtful musing, not only about his affections, but about his duties. While he lay thus, he did not perceive that Lance Frampton had placed himself quietly upon the other side of the tree. The boy at length attracted his attention.

"What's the matter, Lance?" he inquired kindly, as he saw that there was something like emotion in the boy's countenance.

"Oh, sir, it's not me that any thing's the matter with; but it's you."

"With me! why, what do you mean, boy?"

"Why, sir, you talked and groaned so in your sleep this morning. I woke before daylight, and I heard you, and it so frightened me!"

"Frightened, boy! you must not be frightened at any thing—a soldier is not to be frightened. But what did I say?"

"Why, sir, you quarrelled with somebody; and you cursed—"

"Cursed! You must be wrong, Lance," said the major, gravely; "I never curse—never."

"I know, sir—I know you don't curse when you're awake, but you did this morning when you were asleep. I was sure 'twas you; because when I got up and looked round the tree, the moon was shining right upon your face, and so I went to the end of the branch and broke it there—you will see it hanging, so as to make it fall between you and the moonlight; and after that your face was shaded. But you cursed, and gnashed your teeth together, and looked as if you were fighting somebody in your sleep."

"Indeed!" and Singleton mused gravely for a few moments after hearing this narrative: he looked to the extremity of the branch, where the boy, by breaking the bush, without separating it from the tree, had screened his sleeping eyes from the injurious effects of the glaring moon. This instance of gentle devotion found its way to the heart of Singleton, and his tones were kinder than ever to his youthful protegé.

"I am sorry that I cursed, Lance; I try not to do so: I am more sorry that you should hear me curse. You must endeavour to forget that you heard it, in kindness to me, and in duty to yourself. Never allow yourself, as long as you live, to commit so great a folly; and remember always the advice that I now give you, when you look at this little dirk. Stay—place it there, with the leather, close upon the left side—let the point go out in front somewhat, while the handle inclines under the crotch of the left arm. Take care of it: it has saved my life once, and may save yours; but use it only when it is necessary for such a purpose."

CHAPTER XIII.

"The hour at hand, the foeman near,
The biting brand, the steely spear,
The spirit vex'd and warm,—
And these are all the freeman wants,
Who, for the struggle, pines and pants,
And never knew alarm.
Then let the foeman come and feel
How dread the blow his hand can deal,
When freedom nerves his arm."

"Tom, take that back to the major; he wants a new supply by this time, I reckon, and if he does not, he ought to."

The calabash of Porgy was empty as he gave this order. The desire to replenish it, stimulated his politeness, and taught him to recollect his neighbours. Tom did as he was ordered; and the gourmand, meanwhile, picked his teeth with a straw, and waited impatiently for the return of his messenger with the residue of the dish. He had succeeded, as he thought to admiration, in compounding it; and he was complacency itself, even to Doctor Oakenburg, whom he regarded with no favour in general. The doctor, however, had much conciliated him by taking some of the hash on trial; and this concession saved him otherwise from much severe animadversion; although the forbearance of Porgy was bitterly tried when he beheld the hash scarcely touched before the naturalist, who was at the same time industriously employed upon certain bits of fried eel, to which he gave a manifest preference. Porgy, Oakenburg, Wilkins, and one other, surrounded the same log. The other troopers were squatting in similar groups over the island; and Singleton, with Lance, Humphries, and Davis, were all under their old tree, at a distance from the rest. The latter had made his peace with Singleton, to whom he had told honestly the whole story of the last night's adventure with Sergeant Hastings, and of his murder by the maniac Frampton. He had done wrong, acknowledged honestly his error, and it called for no particular eloquence or argument, under these circumstances, to procure his pardon from Singleton. The four persons named, formed the mess that day together; and, if not to Singleton, the new supply from Porgy's table was acceptable to more than one of the party. When the dish was returned to Porgy, his proceeding was exquisitely true to propriety: loving the commodity as he did, and particularly anxious to renew his attack upon it, he yet omitted none of his customary politeness.

"There, Tom, that will do: put it down now—it will stand alone. Did the major help himself?"

"He no take any more, Mass Porgy; he hab 'nough—so he tell me: but Mass Homphry, him take some, and Mass Dabis, he help hese'f too."

"Humph! The major took none, you say? Strange! Did he look sick, Tom?"

"No, sa. He talk berry well."

"Strange! Pardon me, Mr. Wilkins—pardon me;

shall I have the pleasure to lay this in your calabash? —only a spoonful, sir; you can't refuse—do you no hurt. Doctor Oakenburg, let me beg you, sir, not to defile your lips with that fry any longer: don't think of eel, sir, I implore you, when you can get terrapin."

"I thank you, Master Porgy—I thank you very much; but, as you will see, I have not yet consumed that which you have already given me."

"And why the d—l don't you? My dear sir, it's shocking that you should waste time so imprudently. To delay a pleasure is to destroy a pleasure, provided the pleasure is ready to your hands. And then, sir, the appetite grows vitiated, and the taste dreadfully equivocal after eating fry. The finest delicacy in the world will suffer from such contact. Let me beg you, then, throw it aside. Here, Tom, take Oakenburg's calabash there—throw the fry to the dog, and wash the gourd clean, boy, when you have done so. Be quick, now, old fellow."

"Nay, nay, Master Porgy," was Oakenburg's reply, resisting the negro; "I am pleased with this eel, which is considerately done to my liking. It is a dish I particularly affect."

Porgy compressed his lips, and looked on him gravely and sternly, while spooning some of the hash into his own calabash, and muttering all the while.

"Stand back, Tom, and don't bother me. A man prefer the d—d gaunt eel to terrapin! Doctor Oakenburg, where do you expect to go when you die? I ask the question from a belief—rather staggered, I must confess, by recent circumstances—that you really have something of a soul left. You once had, doubtless."

The manner in which the question was put, not less than the question itself, seemed to startle the naturalist not a little. His answer was broken and confused.

"Really, I must confess I don't know, Mr. Porgy; but I trust in some place of perfect security."

"That may all be, sir; and could I have the appropriation of your person, I should doom you to be thrust into an eelskin. One thing be assured of, wherever you do go—if there be any thing like justice meted out to you hereafter, you will have scant fare and d—d bad living. Prefer eel to terrapin! Tom!"

"Sa!"

"Bring me a calabash of water, and hand the jug. Prefer eel to terrapin! Mr. Wilkins you have not finished? come, sir, it isn't every day that happiness comes into camp and begs one to help himself. It isn't always we catch terrapin like these, and sit down to such a compound. No more! Well, I too have done, this little morsel excepted. These eggs are fine—what a flavour, and how rich! Tom, take it away now."

"Ki, Mass Porgy, you no leff any egg."

"No eggs!" cried the gourmand; "why, what the deuse do you call that, and that, and that!" stirring them over with the spoon as he spoke. "Bless me, I did not think there were half so many. Stop, Tom, I will but take a couple more, and then—there—that will do—you may take the rest."

The negro hurried away with his prize, dreading that Porgy would make new discoveries; while that worthy, seasoning his calabash of water with a moderate dash of Jamaica from the jug beside him, concluded the repast to which he had annexed so much importance.

"So much is secure of life!" he exclaimed, when he had done; "I am satisfied—I have lived to-day, and nothing can deprive me of the 22d June, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty, enjoyed in the Cypress Swamp. The day is completed: it should always close with the dinner hour. It is then secure—we cannot be deprived of it: it is recorded in the history of hopes realized, and of feelings properly felt. And, hark! the major seems to think with me, since the tin-horn rumbles up for a start. Wilkins—old fellow—if you'll give me a helping hand in putting the tackle upon my nag, you'll serve me much more seasonably than I can well mention. Tom, boy, hurry there, and don't forget to unsling that ham-bone: needn't mind the calabashes; we can get them along the road. You're not going to carry that snake, Doctor Oakenburg, are you? Great Heavens! what a reptile taste that fellow has! Ha, Lance, boy, is that you? You've horse and all ready. Well, you can lend me a hand then in bringing up these matters—there, that belt, boy, which lies on the log. A ligature about the waist strengthens one greatly in a long journey. Ah, Humphries, you're in a hurry, I see."

Thus, with a word to everybody, Porgy commenced his preparation for the journey upon which Humphries now came among them to urge a decent degree of speed. In an hour, and all were ready—the partisans and their prisoners, not forgetting the negro Tom and his dog, a mean looking cur significantly called Slink. And never was there a more appropriate epithet; he was a shamefaced, creeping creature, all skin and bone, smeared over with the smoke of the ashes in which he lay every night, with a habit probably borrowed from his sable owner; and such was the meanness of his spirit, that having from immemorial time neglected the due elevation of his tail, he now seemed to have lost all sense, and, indeed, all capacity for the achievement. The unfortunate pendent member hung continually down between his legs, and seemed every day to grow more and more despicably fond of earth.

Sending out his scouts in advance, Singleton led his cavalcade out of the swamp. Aiming to make the Nelson's ferry road as soon as possible, he struck directly across the country under the guidance of Humphries and Davis, both of whom knew well, and availed themselves on this journey of all the neighbourhood roads. They travelled but slowly, however, and had made no great progress in their course, when night came down upon them. With the approach of darkness, Singleton ordered a halt, and an encampment was formed in a thick wood to which they inclined, out of sight and hearing from the road. Here, without building fires, they took a brief rest until the moon rose, when the troop was aroused, and again set forth on its upward journey. With the dawn of day, they found themselves, according to the estimate of Davis, within a few miles only of the ferry road. A little more precaution was necessary now. The scouts were doubled, and the troop entered the road an hour or so after sunrise, without meeting with any interruption or object worthy their attention. In this manner they proceeded for some hours, seeing no human being; and the whole route marked only by the devastating proofs of war, which were thick on every side of them. The broken fences, the shattered or half-consumed dwelling, the unplanted and unploughed fields, all in desertion, spoke fearfully for its attributes and presence. But, suddenly, the scouts were met towards noon by a countryman, his wife, and two children, flying from a foe. It was difficult to convince them that they had not fallen in with another; and they told their story, accordingly, in fear and trembling. They told of a tory named Amos Gaskens, a notorious wretch before the war, who had raised a party and had been devastating the neighbouring country throughout St. Stephens and St. Johns, Berkley.* His numbers were increasing, and he stopped at no excesses. On most of the plantations through which he had gone, every house was burned to the ground, the stock wantonly shot, the people plundered, and either murdered, forced to follow their captors, or compelled to fly to places of resort and refuge the most wild and deplorable. The little family they had encountered had been thus dispossessed; and they had only saved their lives by a timely notice, which a friend among the tories had given them of their approach. They insisted that Gaskens could not be many miles off, and would certainly meet them before noon, as he was on his way to Charlestown with his prisoners and for his reward.

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* History has deemed this monster of sufficient importance to record many of his deeds. He was, for some time, the dread of this section of country.

Singleton determined to prepare for him a warm reception, and having ascertained that the force under Gaskens fully doubled his own, he laid his plans to neutralize this superiority by the employment of the usual cunning of the partisan. According to the account of the flying countryman, there was a beautiful little spring some three miles higher, not more than a stone's throw from the roadside; this was the only good drinking water for some distance, and, as it was well known to wayfarers, it was concluded that Gaskens would make use of it as a place of rest and refreshment. Here, Singleton determined to place his ambuscade; and as it was necessary to reach it some time in advance of his enemy, he pushed his horse forward at a quicker pace, and commanded his troop to follow closely. They reached the spot in time, and gliding out of the road, were soon in possession of the desired station.

The spring was one of those quiet waters that trickle along the hollow which they have formed, and with so gentle a murmur, that, though but a brief distance from the road, no passing ear, however acute, could possibly have detected its prattling invitation. The water was cool and refreshing; the overhanging trees gave it a pleasant and fitting shelter, which scarcely rendered necessary the small wooden shed which had been built above it by some one of the considerate dwellers in the neighbourhood. War, in its violence, however destructive else, had spared, with a becoming reverence, the fountain and the little roof above it. The whole spot was exceedingly pretty; wild vines and florid grapes clustered over it; a little clump of wild-flowers grew just at its porch; while a fine large oak, standing on the brow of the little hill at the bottom of which the fountain had its source, took the entire area into its sheltering embrace. The wild jessamine, and the thousand flaunting blossoms of the southern forests, grew profusely about the place; and in that hour of general repose in Carolina during the summer months—the hour of noon—when all nature is languid: when the bird hushes his fitful note, or only

"Starts into voice a moment, and is still;"

when man and beast, reptile and insect, alike, seek for the shade and pant drowsily beneath its shelter—this little hollow of the woods, and the clear stream swelling over the little basin around which its dwelling-place had been formed, and trickling away in a prattling murmur that discoursed twin harmonies to the sluggish breeze that shook at intervals the tree above it, seemed eminently a scene chosen for gentle spirits, and a purpose grateful to the softest delicacies of humanity. Yet was its sacred and sweet repose about to be invaded. War had prepared his weapon and lay waiting in the shade.

Singleton now proceeded to his preparations for the due reception of Gaskens and his tories. The troopers and the prisoners were at once dismounted; the latter, with the horses, were escorted to a sufficient distance in the wood, beyond the reach of the strife, and where they could convey no intimation by their voices to the approaching enemy. Here a guard was put over them, with instructions to cut down the first individual who should show the slightest symptom of a disposition to cry out or to fly. A command, otherwise so sanguinary, was necessary, however, in the circumstances. This done, Singleton despatched his scouts, headed by Humphries, whose adroitness he well knew, on the road leading to the enemy; they were to bring him intelligence without suffering themselves to be seen. He next proceeded to his own immediate disposition of force for the hot controversy, and approved himself a good disciple of the Swamp Fox in the arrangement. The ambush was formed on two sides of the spring, the men being so placed as to possess the advantages of the cross-fire without being themselves exposed to the slightest danger from their mutual weapons. All approach to the waters was thus commanded, and Singleton, trusting to the advantages obtained from the surprise and the first fire, instructed his men to follow him in the charge which he contemplated making, immediately after the discharge of their pieces. In the way of exhortation he had but few words; he resembled Marion in that respect, also: but those words were highly stimulating—

"Men, I have the utmost confidence in you; you are no cowards, and I am sure will do your duty. I do not call upon you to destroy men, but monsters; not countrymen, but those who have no country—who have only known their country, to rend her bowels and prey upon her vitals. You will only spare them when they are down—when they cry, enough. There must be no 'Tarleton's Quarter,' mind you; the soldier that strikes a man who has once submitted, shall be hung up immediately after; for though they be brutes and monsters now, yet even the brute has a claim upon man's mercy when he has once submitted to be tamed. Go, now, men, each to his place, and wait the signal; I will give it at the proper moment myself. It shall be but one word, and when you hear me say, 'now!' let each rifle have its mark in an armed tory. Shoot none that have not weapons in their hands—remember that; and when you sally out, as you will, immediately after the discharge and while they are in confusion, let the same rule be observed. Strike none that have not arms—none that do not offer us resistance. Enough, now; the brave soldier needs no long exhortation. The soldier who fights his country's battles has her voice at his heart, pleading for her rescue and relief. Remember the burnt dwellings of your country—their murdered and maltreated inhabitants—their desolate fields—their starving children—and then strike home. Your country is worth fighting for, and he who dies in the cause of his country, dies in the cause of man: he will not be forgotten. Go, and remember the word."

There was no shout, no hurra, but eyes were bent upon the ground, lips knit closely in solemn determination; and Singleton saw at a glance that his men were to be relied on.

"They will do," he muttered to himself, as, seeing them all properly sheltered, he threw himself at the foot of a tree, a little removed from the rest, and only accompanied by the boy Lance Frampton. We have seen the increasing intimacy between the lad and his commander; an intimacy encouraged by the latter, and earnestly insisted upon by the boy. He studiously kept near the person of the partisan, listened to every word he uttered, watched every movement, and carefully analyzed, so far as his immature capacities would admit, every feeling and thought of his superior. From this earnest and close contemplation of the one object, the boy grew to be exclusive in his regards, and slighted every other. Singleton became one and the same with his mind's ideal, and a lively imagination, and warm sensibilities, identified his captain, in his thought, with his only notion of a genuine hero. The more he studied him, the more complete was the resemblance. The lofty, symmetrical, strong person—the high but easy carriage—the grace of movement and attitude—the studious delicacy of speech, mingled, at the same time, with that simple adherence to propriety, which describes genuine manliness, were all attributes of Singleton, and all obvious enough to his admirer.

"How I wish I was like him!" said the boy to himself, as he looked where Singleton's form lay before him under the tree. "If I was only sure that I could fight like him, and not feel afraid, when the time comes! Oh! how I wish it was over!"

Had the words been uttered loud enough to be heard by the partisan, the mood of the boy would have been better understood by his commander than it was, when the latter heard the deep sigh which followed them. Singleton turned to look upon him, as he heard it, and could not avoid being struck with the manifest dejection in every feature of his countenance. He thought it might arise from the loneliness of his situation, his recent loss of a tender mother, and the distressing condition of his father, of whom they had seen nothing since their departure from the swamp. True, the brother of Lance was along with them, but there was little sympathy between the two. The elder youth was dull and unobservant, while the other was thoughtful and acute. They had little intercourse beyond an occasional word of question and reply; and even then, the intimacy and relationship seemed imperfect. These things might, and must necessarily produce in the boy's mind a sufficient feeling of his desolation, and hence, in Singleton's thought, his depression seemed natural enough. But when the sigh was repeated, and the face, even under the partisan's glance, wore the same expression, he could not help addressing him on the subject—

"Why, how now, boy—what's the matter? Cheer up, cheer up, and get ready to do something like a man. Know you not we're on the eve of battle?"

"Oh, sir, I can't cheer up," was the half-inarticulate reply, as the emotion of the boy vividly increased, and a tear was seen to gather in his eyes. So much emotion was unusual in one whose mood was that of elastic enthusiasm; and the pallid cheek and downcast look stimulated anew the anxiety of the partisan. He repeated his question curiously, and at the same time arising from his place of rest, he came round to where the boy had now also arisen.

"What's the matter with you, boy—what troubles you—are you sick?"

"Oh, no, sir—no, sir—I'm not sick—I'm very well—but, sir—"

"But what?"

"Only, sir, I've never been in a battle before—never to fight with men, sir."

"Well! And what of that, boy—what mean you? Speak!"

The brow of Singleton darkened slightly, as he witnessed the trepidation of his companion. The frown, when the boy beheld it, had the natural effect of contributing to the increase of his confusion.

"Oh, sir, only that I'm so afraid—"

"Afraid, boy !" exclaimed Singleton, sternly, interrupting the speaker—"afraid ! Then get you back to the horses—get away at once from sight, and let not the men look upon you—begone—away !"

The cheek of the boy glowed like crimson, his eye flashed a fire-like indignation, his head was erect on the instant, and his whole figure rose with an expression of pride and firmness, which showed the partisan that he had done him injustice. The change was quite as unexpected as it was pleasant to Singleton ; and he looked accordingly, as he listened to the reply of the boy, whose speech was now unbroken.

"No, sir—you wrong me—I'm not afraid of the enemy—that's not it, sir. I'm not afraid to fight, sir ; but—"

"But what, Lance—of what then are you afraid ?"

"Oh, sir, I'm afraid I shan't fight as I want to fight. I'm afraid, sir, I won't have the heart to shoot a man, though I know he will shoot me if he can. It's so strange, sir, to shoot at a true-and-true man—so very strange, sir, that I'm afraid I'll tremble when the time comes, and not shoot till it's too late."

"And what then—how would you help that, boy ? You must make up your mind to do it, or keep out of the way."

"Why, sir, if I could only see you all the time—if I could only hear you speak to me in particular, and tell me by name when to shoot, I think, sir, I could do it then well enough ; but to shoot at a man—I'm so afraid I'd tremble, and wait too long, unless you'd be so good as to tell me when."

Singleton smiled thoughtfully, as he listened to the confused workings of a good mind, finding itself in a novel position, ignorant of the true standard for its guidance, and referring to another on which it was most accustomed, or at least most willing, to depend. The boy laboured under one of those doubts which so commonly beset and annoy the ambitious nature, solicitous of doing greatly, with an ideal of achievement, drawn before the sight by the imagination, and making a picture too imposing for the quiet contemplation. He was troubled, as even the highest courage and boldest genius will sometimes become, with enfeebling doubts of his own capacity, even to do tolerably what he desires to do well. He trembled to believe that he should fall short of that measure of achievement which his mind had made his standard, and at which he aimed. Fortunately for him, Singleton was sufficiently aware of the distinction between doubts and misgivings so honourable and so natural, and those which spring from imbecile purpose and an originally shrinking spirit. He spoke to the boy kindly, assured him of his confidence, encouraged him to a better reliance upon his own powers; and, knowing well that nothing so soon brings out the naturally sturdy spirit as the quantity of pressure and provocation upon it, he rather strove to impress upon him a higher notion of the severity and trial of the conflict now before him. In proportion to the quantity of labour required at his hands, did his spirit rise to overcome it; and Singleton, after a few moments' conversation with him, had the satisfaction to see his countenance brighten up, while his eye flashed enthusiasm, and his soul grew earnest for the strife.

"You shall have a place under my own eye: and mark me, Lance, that eye will be upon you. I will give you a distinct duty to perform, and trust that it will be done well."

"I'll try, sir," was the modest answer, though his doubts of his own capacity were sensibly decreasing. The time was at hand, however, which was to bring his courage into exercise and trial, and to put to the test that strength of mind which he had been so disposed to underrate. One of the scouts charged with the intelligence by Humphries now came in, bringing tidings of the tories. They were computed to amount to eighty men; but of this the scouts could not be certain, as, in obedience to the orders of his commander, Humphries had not ventured so nigh as to expose himself. He computed the prisoners in their charge, men, women, and children, to be quite as numerous. Singleton, on the receipt of this intelligence, looked closely to the preparations which he had made for their reception, saw that his men were all in their places, and went the rounds, addressing them individually in encouragement and exhortation. This done, he took the young beginner, Lance Frampton, aside, and leading him to the shelter of a thick bush at the head of the little hillock, he bade him keep that position in which he placed him, throughout all the events of the contest. This position commanded a view of the whole scene likely to be the theatre of conflict. The partisan bade him survey it closely.

"There is the spring, boy—there—in short rifle distance. How far do you call it?"

"Thirty yards, sir."

"Are you a sure shot at that distance?"

"Dead sure, sir;" and he raised the rifle to his eye, which Singleton handed him.

"Your hand trembles, boy."

"Yes, sir; but I'm not afraid; I'm only anxious to begin."

"Keep cool; there's no hurry, but time enough. Throw off your jacket—give me your rifle. There—now roll up your sleeve, and go down to the spring—plunge your arms up to their pits into the cool water a dozen times, until I call you. Go."

The boy went; and before he returned, Humphries rode in with accounts of the near approximation of Gaskens and his tories. Singleton called up his pupil from the spring, and continued his directions.

"Take your place here, by the end of the log; don't mind your jacket—better off than on. Our men you see ranged on either side of you. They can see you as easily as you can see them." This sentence was emphatically uttered, while the piercing glance of

Singleton was riveted upon the now unfaltering countenance of the boy. "Below you is the spring, and in that shade the tories will most probably come to a halt. They will scarcely put their prisoners under cover, for fear they should escape; and they will be likely to remain at the opening there to your left—there, just by those tallow bushes. Now, observe: I am about to trust to you to commence the affair. Upon you, and your rifle shot, I depend greatly. Don't raise it yet: let it rest in the hollow of your arm until you are ready to pull trigger, which you will do the moment you hear me say, 'now!' I will not be far from you, and will say it sufficiently loud for you to hear. The moment you hear me, lift your piece, and be sure to shoot the man, whoever he may be, that may happen to stand upon the rise of the hill, just above the spring, and under the great oak that hangs over it. It is most probable that it will be Gaskens himself, the captain of the tories. But no matter who he is, shoot him: aim for the man that stands on the hillock, and you must hit an enemy. You will have but a single fire, as our men will follow your lead, and in the next moment we shall charge. When you see us do so, slip round by the tallow bushes, and cut loose the ropes that tie the prisoners. These are your duties; and remember, boy, I shall see all your movements. I shall look to you, and you only, until the affair commences. Be in no hurry, but keep cool: wait for the word, and don't even lift your rifle until you hear me utter it. Remember, you have a duty to perform to yourself and country, in whose cause your life to-day begins."

The boy put his hand upon his heart, bowed his head, and made no other reply; but his eye glistened with pride; and as the partisan moved away, he grasped his rifle, threw his right foot back a pace, as if to feel his position, then, sinking quietly behind the bush, prepared himself as firmly for the contest as if he had been a veteran of sixty.

CHAPTER XIV.

"And war shall have its victims, and grim death
Grow surfeit with his prey. The signal soon,
That marks the least prepared, their ears shall note—
A sound of terror—and the banquet spread,
Shall call the anxious appetite that sees
And gloats upon its garbage from afar."

SILENCE, and a deep anxiety, hung, like a spell, above the ambuscading party. The woods lay at rest, and the waters of the fountain trickled quietly, as if Peace lay sleeping in their neighbourhood, and Security watched over her. So well had Singleton made his arrangements, and so cautiously had his plans been executed, that no necessity existed for bustle or confusion. Each trooper had his duty as carefully assigned him as the boy Frampton; and all of them, taking a likeness from their gallant leader, lay at quiet in the close shadow of the thicket, silent as the grave, and only awaiting the signal which was to fill its unfolding jaws.

They waited not long before the advance of the tories appeared in sight; then came the prisoners—a melancholy troop—men, women, and children;—and then the main body of the marauders, under Gaskens, bringing up the rear. In all, there were probably a hundred persons; an oddly assorted, and most miscellaneous collection, with nothing uniform in their equipment. They were not British, but tories; though here and there the gaudy red coat, probably a tribute of the battle-field, was ostentatiously worn by an individual, upon whom, no doubt, it conferred its own character, and some of that authority which certainly would have been possessed by its owner were he a Briton. The present troop of banditti—for, as yet, they could be styled by no other more proper epithet—was one of the many by which the country was overrun in every direction. Banding together in small squads, the dissolute and the wicked among the citizens, native and adopted, thus availed themselves of the distractions of the war to revenge themselves upon old enemies, destroy the property they could not appropriate, and, with the sword and the rope, punish the more honest, or the more quiet, for that pacific forbearance which they themselves were so little disposed to manifest. In every section of the province these risings were continually going on. In one night, ten, twenty, thirty, or more, would collect together, and by a sudden and impetuous movement, anticipating all preparation, would rush with fire and sword upon their whig neighbours, whose first knowledge of the incursion would be the brand in the blazing barn, or the bullet driven through the crashing pane. They shot down, in this manner, even as he sat with his little circle at the family fireside, the stout yeoman who might have defended or avenged them. The arm of the law was staid by invasion, and the sanction of the invaders was necessarily given, under all circumstances, to the party which claimed to fight in their behalf. The tory became the British ally, and the whig his victim accordingly; and to such a degree were the atrocities of these wretches carried, that men were dragged from the arms of their wives at midnight, and suffered for their love of country in the sight of wife and children, by dying in the rope, and from their own roof-trees. Of this character was the body of tories, under Amos Gaskens, now rapidly approaching the place of ambush. They had formed themselves on the Williamsburgh line, chiefly the desperadoes and outcasts from that quarter, and had chosen among themselves an appropriate leader in Gaskens, of whom we are told by the historian, that even before the war he had been notorious for his petty larcenies. From this quarter they had passed into St. Johns, Berkley, marking their progress, throughout, with all manner of havoc, and stopping at no atrocity. Such employment was not less grateful to themselves than to their new masters, to whom they thought it likely, and indeed knew, that it must commend them. Gaskens aimed more highly, indeed, than his neighbours. He had already been honoured with a British captaincy—he desired a still loftier commission; and the recklessness of his deeds was intended still farther to approve him in the sight of those from whom he hoped to receive it. If the atrocities of Tarleton resulted in his promotion and honour, why not like atrocities in Amos Gaskens? Reason might well ask, why not? since, in cruelty, they were fair parallels for one another.

The prisoners brought with Gaskens were chiefly taken from the parish of St. Johns, Berkley. One family, consisting of a man named Griffin, his wife, and daughter, a tall, good-looking girl, about seventeen, were closely watched, apart from the rest of the captives, by a guard especially assigned for that purpose. The taking of this man had cost the tory two of his best soldiers, and he had himself been wounded in the arm by a stroke from Griffin's sabre. Griffin had fought desperately against his captors; and an old grudge between himself and Gaskens had stimulated them both, the one to desire his taking, the other to resist, even unto death, the effort of his enemy. The result, so far, has been shown. Griffin tried to escape at the approach of the tory, but the back track to the neighbouring swamp had been intercepted by Gaskens, who knew the route, and three of his men who went there in advance to watch it; while the main body of the troop pressed forward to the cottage. It was there that the flying man encountered them, and the fight was desperately waged before they conquered him. This did not happen until two of his dastardly assailants had fallen beneath his good sword and vigorous arm. He pressed Gaskens himself backward, and would have escaped, but for the aid of other tories coming on him from behind. Though not seriously wounded in the fray, he had been much chopped and mangled. A large seam appeared upon his thigh, and there were two slight gashes over his cheek, not so deep as ugly. Conquered at last, his hands were bound, and, with his family, he was made to attend his captors on foot. The manful resistance which he had offered to his enemy, instead of securing him respect, exposed him only to the most torturing irritations in his progress with them. Before his eyes, they buried the brand into his little cottage, and he saw the fierce flames in full mastery over his only home, long before they had left the enclosure. In spite of his wounds and injuries, the sturdy fellow maintained a stout heart, and showed no sign of despondency; but bearing himself as boldly as if he were not the victim but the victor, he defied the base spirit of his conqueror, and with an eye that spoke all the feeling of the fiercest hatred, he looked the defiance which, at that time, he had no better mode of manifesting. Nor was the feeling of Gaskens towards his prisoner a jot less malignantly hostile than that of Griffin. There was an old story between them—such a story as is common to the strifes of a wild and but partially settled neighbourhood. They had been neighbours—that is to say, they dwelt on contiguous plantations—but never friends. For many years they lived in the same district, seeing each other frequently, but without intercourse. This was entirely owing to Griffin, who disliked Gaskens, and studiously withheld himself from all intimacy with him. Griffin was an industrious farmer—Gaskens the overseer for the Postell estate. Griffin was a sober, quiet man, who had been long married, and found his chief enjoyment in the bosom of his family. Gaskens loved the race-turf and the cockpit, and his soul was full of their associations. It is the instinct of vice to hate the form of virtue, or that habit which so nearly resembles her, as to desire no exciting indulgences, no forced stimulants, no unwonted and equivocal enjoyments. Griffin partook of none of those pleasures which were all-in-all to Gaskens, and the other hated him accordingly. But there were yet other causes for this hostility, in the positive rejection of his proffered intimacy, which Griffin had unscrupulously given. Though but a small farmer, with means exceedingly moderate, the sense of self-respect, which industry brought with it to his mind, taught him to scorn and to avoid the base outrider, and the dishonest overseer of the neighbouring plantation. Words, more than once, of an unfriendly temper, had subsequently fallen between them, but not with any serious rupture following. Gaskens, finally, removed to another plantation farther off, and all acquaintance ceased between them. There he pursued his old courses; and at length, left without employ, as he had lost the confidence of all those whom he had served heretofore in his capacity of overseer, he had become the regular attendant of the tavern. The arrival of the British forces, the siege and the surrender of Charlestown, with the invasion of the state by foreign mercenaries, presented him with a new field for action; and, with thousands of others, to whom all considerations were as nothing—weighed against the love of low indulgence, unrestrained power, and a profligate lust for plunder—he did not scruple to adopt the cause which was strongest, and most likely to procure those objects for which his appetite most craved. He became a furious loyalist, mustered his party, and became the assessor of his neighbours' estates. The fortune which threw into his hands the person of Griffin revived the old grudge; and the stout defence made by his prisoner, determined him upon a measure but too often adopted in that saturnalia of crime, the tory warfare in Carolina, to excite much attention or provoke many scruples in the party employing it. With a spiteful malignity which belongs to the vulgar mind, he had ridden along by the side of his captive; and finding, as he rode, that the presence of his wife and daughter was a consolation still, he ordered them to the rear with the other prisoners, not permitting them to approach, or even to speak with him. As he rode along by him, he taunted him with the low remark and the insolent sneer at his present fortune, compared with his own, and with the past. The wounded man, with his hands tied behind him, could only demonstrate his scorn by an occasional sentence from his lips, while his eye, gleaming with the collected vengeance of his heart, spoke well what the other might expect, were they only permitted a fair field and equal footing for contest.

"Yes, you d—d rebel, you see what's come of your obstinacy and insolence. You fly in the face of the king and refuse to obey his laws; and now you have your pay. By G—d, but it does my heart good to see you in this pickle."

"Coward! if I could lay hands on you but for two minutes—only two minutes, Amos Gaskens—and by the Eternal, chopped up as I am, you should never have it in your power to say again to an honest man what you have said to me."

"Two minutes, do you say?" said the other—"two minutes? You shall have two minutes, Griffin—two minutes, as you ask; but they shall be for prayer, and not for fighting. I remember you of old, and you shall pay off to-day a long score that's been running up against you. You remember when I was overseer to John Postell, and you gave me to know you didn't want to see me at your house, though that was a log-house like my own? I wasn't good enough for you, nor for yours, eh? What do you say now?"

"The same. I hold you worse now than I did then. And then I didn't despise you because you was poor, for, as you say, I was poor myself; but because I thought you a rascal, and since then I know'd it. You are worse now."

"Talk on—I give you leave, you d—d rebel—and that's a mercy you don't deserve; but I have you in my power, and it won't be long you'll have to talk. I wonder what your pride comes to now, when I, Amos Gaskens, who wasn't good enough for you and your daughter, have only to say the word, and it's all dicky with both of you. You yourself—you can't stir a hand but at my orders ; and look there—that's your wife and daughter—and what can you do for 'em, if I only gives the word to the boys to do their likes to them !"

"Villain!—monster!" cried the prisoner, vainly struggling with his bonds. But he writhed in them in vain. The tyrant looked down upon him from his horse with a grin of delight which completed the fury of the victim, until he rushed, though with a fruitless vengeance, against the sides of the animal, idly expending his strength in an innoxious and purposeless effort against his persecutor. A blow from the back of his sabre drove him back, while, as he reeled among the troop, a shriek and a rush from the wife and daughter in the rear, at the same moment, announced their consciousness of the proceeding.

"Two minutes you shall have, my boy—two minutes, as you asked for them," said Gaskens to the prisoner, as they now approached the spring.

"Two minutes for what ?" he inquired.

"For prayer—and quite long enough for one that's passed so good a life as you," was the sneering reply.

"What mean you ?" was the farther inquiry of the prisoner.

He pointed to the huge oak that surmounted the spring, and at the same moment a corporal approached with a rope, the running noose of which, as this agent was frequently in requisition, was already made, and now swung ostentatiously in his hands.

"Great God! Amos Gaskens, wretch as you are, you do not mean to do this murder ?"

"May I be totally d—d if I do not. You shall hang to that tree in two minutes after I say the word, or there are no snakes."

"You dare not, ruffian. I claim to be a prisoner of war—I appeal to the troop."

"Appeal and be d—d. My troop know better than to disobey the orders of a lawful officer in commission of his majesty ; and as for your being a prisoner of war, that's a lie. You are a murderer, and I have proof enough of it. But that's neither here nor there. I will answer for all I have done to the commander of the Dorchester post, and if you can make him hear your voice at this distance, you have a better pipe than my rope has touched yet--that's all. So, to your prayers, while I take a sup of this water. Here, boy, hold the bridle."

The wretch descended, and the boy reined up the steed, while the former moved onward to the spring. The corporal approached the doomed victim, and was about to pass the loop over his head; but he resisted by every effort in his power.

"Great God!—but this is not in earnest? Hear me, Amos Gaskens--hear me, man! Monster! are you not ashamed to sport in this way with the feelings of my poor wife and child?"

"Do your duty, corporal, or blast me but I run you up, though I have to do it myself. You shall know whether I am not good enough for your d—d log-cabin now, or not. Two minutes, corporal—only two minutes, and a short cord—remember—two minutes, I say—no more."

With the assistance of two of the tory squad, Griffin was thrown upon his back, and lay struggling upon the ground, while the rope was adjusted to his neck.

"My wife! my child!—let them come to me, Amos Gaskens—let them see me, Gaskens—man or devil! Will you not suffer them to come to me?—let me see and speak to them, I pray you!"

"They will see you better when you are lifted. Be quick—say your prayers, man, and lose no time. One minute is almost gone already. Make the most of the other."

The ruffian spoke with the coolest indifference, while mixing a gourd of spirits and water at the spring. This done, he ascended the hill, bearing the liquor in his hand, and bade the execution proceed. They hauled the victim by the rope up the little rising, and towards the tree, almost strangling him before he reached the spot. In the mean while the air was rent with the shrieks of his wife and daughter in the hollow, where they were pressed with the other prisoners, whom the guard still kept back from any approach to the doomed man, then about to be separated from them for ever. He cried to them by name, in a thick, choking voice, for the rope was now drawn, by the party hauling him along, with a suffocating tightness.

"Ellen!—Ellen, my wife! Oh, Ellen, my poor child! Amos Gaskens—God remember you for this! Oh, Ellen! God help me! Have you no mercy, monster—none!" he screamed to his murderer, in agony.

"Father, dear father!" cried the girl. The mother had simply stretched forth her hands as she beheld the threatened movement, and overpowered by her emotions, had fallen senseless in the effort to speak. The daughter strove to rush forward, but the strong-armed sentinel rudely thrust her back with a heavy hand, and pressed her down with the rest of the prisoners, who had been made to file into the grove of tallow bushes, which the prescience of Singleton had prudently assigned them. Gasping, but struggling to the last, the victim had been already drawn up by his executioner, within a few feet of the broad limb stretching over the spring, which was to serve the purpose of a gallows; and the brutal leader of the party, standing upon the little eminence—the liquor in hand, which he was stirring, yet untasted—had already declared the time to be elapsed which he allowed to the prisoner for the purposes of prayer, when, distinctly and clear, the voice of Singleton was heard—above the shrieks of the daughter—above the hoarse cries of the prisoner in parting to his wife—above all the bustle of the transaction. The single word, as given to the boy Frampton, was uttered; and, in the next instant, came the sharp, thrilling crack of the rifle, fatally aimed, and striking the legitimate victim. The body of Gaskens, between whose eyes the bullet had passed—the word unspoken—the draught in his hand untasted—tumbled forward, prostrate, immoveable, upon the form of his reprieved victim, whom, still struggling, but half strangled, the corporal had just dragged beneath the fatal tree.

CHAPTER XV.

"Too long a laggard, he hath stood,
Until the hearth was drenched in blood;
Until the tyrant grew
All reckless, in his bloody game;
The cities proud he wrapped in flame,
Their brave defenders, slew."

The young partisan, Frampton, to whom Singleton had intrusted so leading a part in the enterprise, had well fulfilled the duty assigned him. He had put himself in readiness, with the first appearance of the marauders; and, with a heart throbbing with anxiety all the while, had witnessed impatiently the progress of the preceding scene, until broken by the emphatic utterance of the signal, and his own prompt obedience to its dictates. Then, with an instinct, which, in that moment, silenced and stilled the quick pulsation of his breast, had he raised the deadly weapon to his shoulder; and with a determined coolness that arose, as it were, from a desire to convince himself, not less than his commander, that he could be firm, he had twice varied his aim, until perfectly assured, he had drawn the trigger, and most opportunely singled out a different victim from that which Gaskens had contemplated for the fatal sisters, in the person of that foul murderer himself.

There was a moment of dreadful pause after this event. The rope fell from the hands of the executioner, and his eyes, and the eyes of all, were turned in doubt and astonishment upon the quarter from whence the deadly messenger had proceeded. The condemned man seized the opportunity to throw from his body the lifeless carcass of the slain tory; and not doubting that farther aid was at hand, and looking for a close struggle, he crawled along the hill for shelter to the neighbouring tree. His effort was interrupted; for, in the next moment, another and another shot selected their victims; then came the full volley; and then the loud voice of Singleton, as, plunging through the copse, he led the way for his men, who charged the confused and terrified tories on every side. They scarcely showed sign of fight. One or two offered resistance boldly, and with as much skill as resolution; but they were soon overpowered, as they received no support from their comrades, who were now scampering in the bushes in every direction. The surprise had been complete; not a man was seriously hurt among the whigs, while every rifle, fired in the first of the fray, had told fatally upon its victim. Seven were slain outright, a few more sabred, and some few were made prisoners—the rest took the back track into the woods, and though pursued, contrived, with few exceptions, to make their escape.

The boy, meanwhile, had well performed the other duty which had been given to his charge. The conflict, pellmell, had scarcely begun, when, slipping noiselessly round to the hollow where the prisoners were confined, so as not to arouse the notice of the two sentinels having them in custody, and whose eyes were now turned in surprise upon the unlooked-for contest, he cut the cords which bound them; and, prompt as himself, they were no sooner free, than they seized upon their guards and disarmed them. The ropes were transferred to other hands than their own. This was all the work of an instant; so, indeed, was the affray itself; and the first object that met the eyes of Singleton as he returned from the charge to the spot where it first began, was the person of the boy bending over the man he had shot, and curiously inspecting the bullet hole which he had made through and through his forehead.

"Ha, boy!" said Singleton; "you have done well—you have behaved like a man."

"Oh, sir, tell me," cried the boy, "was this the man that was swearing so, but a minute ago? and can this be the bullet hole from my rifle?"

"It is; this is the wretch, and your bullet was in the right time."

"Oh, sir, he was cursing when I fired: and then the poor man he was going to hang—I was so afraid that you would not say, 'now,' soon enough to save him. But I feel so strange!"

"How, boy!"

"I have killed a man: what would my poor mother say, if she was alive and knew it!"

"Go, go, boy, you have done well; you have shot him in a good cause, and have saved innocent life besides. You could not have done better—but don't think of it."

"I can't help thinking of it, sir," said the boy, upon whom a new experience was dawning rapidly, as he moved back to the copse where he had been concealed, to resume his jacket and rifle which he had there thrown aside.

In another quarter of the field, the scene which met the eye of Singleton was one of those which amply compensate for the pain and the peril, the dread and the anxiety, through which men must pass to witness them:—the sudden emancipation of the prisoners to life and freedom—the erect aspect of the beaten and bound man—the body realizing, in the moment of its rescue, the liberty for which the mind had been yearning, and whose value can only be duly estimated by its privation. A cry—a cheer of joy—was upon every lip; as the bird, escaping from his cage, attests the consciousness of his new condition of freedom, in song, not less than flight.

Conspicuous among the prisoners, in their joy upon this occasion, was the family of the brave but suffering wretch who had so narrowly escaped the halter. Revived by the noise, the rush, the firing, and confusion of the fight, as much as by the earnest cares of her daughter, his wife had been filled with a new anxiety, along with the new hope, when she found that, though execution had not been done upon her husband, as so nearly promised, her eyes could not trace out his person in the midst of the fierce melée which followed the first arrest of his doom. A moment after, and her arms were about his neck: and though unused to the melting mood, the tears forced themselves into the eyes of Singleton, as he surveyed their meeting—the sweetness of their sorrow—the joy which is tearful—the pleasure which almost grows into pain, in the depth of its pure intensity.

"Safe, oh safe, Walter Griffin! and there is no more danger, my husband!"

"None, none! we are safe, we are all safe, Ellen!"

"And where is Gaskens?"

"The wretch is on his back. God bless the bullet that came in time, and the true hand that sent it."

"And we are free, my father, to go home again—to our own home!" said the daughter, as she took the hand of her father in both of her own.

"Home! where is it?" he exclaimed fiercely, and with the same savage expression with which his eyes had regarded Gaskens, even in the moment of his greatest danger. "Where is it? Did you not see the blaze through the trees, as we looked back? Did he not throw the torch into the loft with his own accursed hands? and yet you ask for our home. We have no home, girl."

"But we are free, my husband, we are free. You will go to work—we will soon have another in the old place, and we can lodge in a shed till then."

"Never, never! I do no such folly. What! to be burnt down again by other tories?—no, no! I am chopped already—I cannot be chopped much worse, and live; and if I must suffer, let me suffer with those who will help me to strike, too, and to revenge. I will burn too; I will kill too. I will have blood for what I have lost, and the sufferings of others shall pay me for my own and yours."

Singleton approached at this moment, and the prisoners, so lately freed, gathered around him. Each had his own story of affliction to tell, and each more mournful than the other.

"They chased me, it mought be a matter of three miles, 'fore I gin up, captain, and they wore out a bunch of hickories on my back, because I run—see to the marks," was the complaint of one. Another had his tale of petty treachery: his neighbour who had eaten a hundred times of his bacon and hoecake, had come in the night time, shot down his cattle, and, finally, led the tories to his door to slaughter him. Another had his wife shot in her bed, in mistake for himself, while he was traversing the swamp to make his escape. And so on—one with simple cruelty, one with burning, one with murder, and one with even more atrocious crimes—each of the prisoners had his own and his family's sufferings, at the hands of the blood-thirsty tories, to narrate to their deliverer.

Singleton administered his consolations, and put arms into their hands. The greater number of them joined him; those who did not, receiving the upbraidings, in no stinted measure, of those who did. The lately doomed prisoner, Griffin, seized upon a broadsword—a massive weapon, which had fallen from the hands of a huge-limbed tory—and proffered himself the first. His wife laid her hand upon his arm—

"Oh, husband, you are not a-going to join the troops? you are not going a-fighting?"

He looked sternly upon her, and shook away the grasp—

"Ay, but I am! you shan't keep me from my duty now. I wanted to come out six months ago, but you tried the same game over me, and I was fool enough to mind you, and see how it's turned out. Our cattle shot—the house burnt—the farm destroyed—and me chopped up, and almost hung; and all owing to you."

The woman sank back at the reproach. The girl came between them—

"Oh, father, don't speak so to mother. Now, mother, he don't mean it; he's only fierce because of the fighting."

"I do mean it! I do mean it! She whined, and begged, and cried, and kept me back, until the bloody varmints overcrowed us at every turn. She shall keep me back no longer. I say to you, captain, here's an arm, and here's a sword: to be sure the arm's chopped, and the owner is ragged with cuts and scratches; but no matter, they're true blood, and, by God, it's at your service, for old Carolina. Put me down in your orderly book as one of your men, as long as the troop holds together. Wat Griffin is one of your men, and one of Marion's men, and one of all men that are enemies to the tories."

The man was resolved, and his wife spared all farther speech. She knew how unavailing was the woman's pleading against the resolute will of the man, once determined upon. She clung to his arm, however; and it could be seen, in that moment of affliction and of peril, of trying adventure and long fatigue rising up before them, that the firmness of her resolution to share his fortunes was equal to that which had determined him upon them.

An hour's labour buried the bodies of the men who had fallen in the conflict. The recruits were well armed from the hands of those who had perished and become prisoners; and, with a troop now grown to a respectable size, from the acquisitions of the morning, Singleton prepared for his farther progress. The men were soon mounted, some riding double, as the number of horses was not equal to that of the partisans. The prisoners were driven along before them, and, rather more slowly than they otherwise would have been, not thus embarrassed, our little corps of patriots was soon in motion. Singleton led the march at a gentle pace—the boy Frampton, as had latterly been his usage, taking his place and keeping close alongside of his commander.

CHAPTER XVI.

"And subtle the design, and deep the snare,
And various the employ of him who seeks
To spoil his fellow, and secure himself."

Certainly, man is never so legitimately satisfied, as when in the realization of his own powers. The exercise of those attributes which make his nature, is the duty that follows his creation; and it is only when he exceeds the prescribed limit, and runs into excess, that he suffers and is criminal. How various are these powers—how extensive their range—how superior their empire! Creative, destructive, perceptive—all co-operating for the same end—the elevation of his own capacities and condition. They are those of a God, and they prove his divinity. Balanced duly, each in its place, and restrained, as well as promoted, by its fellow, he deserves to be, and most probably will be happy. But whether the balance be preserved or not, the discovery, on his part, of any one of these powers, must have the effect of elevating him in his own thought, and giving him pleasure accordingly. Sometimes, indeed, to such a degree does its realization delight him, that he maddens and gluttonizes in its enjoyment—he gloats upon it: and, from a natural attribute, cherished for a beneficial purpose, and forming a necessary endowment, it grows into a disease, and preys upon its master.

Such is that love of enterprise which sometimes leads to ungenerous conquest; such that stern desire of justice which sometimes prompts us, in defence of our own rights, not to scruple at unnecessary bloodshed. In the pursuit of both, the original purpose is soon lost sight of. We guage not our dooms in measure with the wrongs we suffer; and the fierce excitements which grow out of their prosecution, become leading, if not legitimate, objects of pursuit themselves. The conquest of new countries, to this day, at whatever expense of blood and treasure, is scarcely criminal in the eyes of civilized and Christian man; and where conscience does suggest a scruple, the doubt is soon set aside in the gracious consideration of those vast benefits which we assume to bring the people, whose possessions we despise, and whose lands and lives we appropriate. Yet is the enterprise itself legitimate, according to our nature; and the sense of resistance to injustice and oppression, a faculty that could not be dispensed with. They form vital necessities of our condition, while subordinate. The misfortune is that we pamper them, as we do favourite children, till they rise at last into tyrants, and change places with us.

The boy Frampton had undergone a change which did not escape the eye of Singleton as he rode beside him. The lively laugh had left his countenance, the gentle play of expression had departed from his rich, red, and well-chiselled mouth, and in place of them the eye was kindled with a deep glare of light, lowering and strong, while the lips curled into a haughty loftiness becoming the lord of highest station. A vein that crossed his forehead was full almost to bursting, and his brow lowered with an expression of battle that indicated feelings, even then warmly active with the brief scene of strife through which they had so recently passed. The boy was a boy no longer: he had realized one of the capacities of manhood; he had slain his man: he had taken one step in revenging the murder of his mother: he had destroyed one of the murderers; but, more than all—he had taken human life.

Something of a higher feeling than this was at the same time working in his bosom. Though previously untaught, he had learned too much of the struggle going on in the colonies, not to have acquired some knowledge of the abstract question upon which it depended; and though his thoughts were all vague and indistinct on the subject, the rights of man, the freedom of the citizen, and the integrity of his country, he had learned to feel should all be among the first considerations, as their preservation was always the first care, of the patriot. The furious popular declamation of the five preceding years had not been unheard by the youthful soldier; and its appeals were not lost upon one, who, in his own family, had beheld such a bloody argument as had long since taught him the necessity of regarding them. His country entered into his thoughts, therefore, in due connection with his feeling of the individual wrong which he had sustained; and that personal feeling which prompted the desire of revenge, was lifted higher, and rendered holier, by the connection. It became hallowed in his bosom, where it contemplated, not only the punishment of the wrong-doer, but the protection of the cottage-home—his own, and his people's—from the injustice and the violence of the invader. It grew into a solemn principle of action thus associated, and the moral abstraction over which the unassailed citizen might have dreamed through a long season of years, without duly considering its force or application, became purely practical in the eyes of Frampton—a feeling of his heart, rather than a worked out problem of his understanding. The thought grew active in following out the feeling; and Singleton, as the boy rode abstractedly beside him, revolving a thousand new and strange sensations that were running through his mind, regarded his countenance with a glance of melancholy rather than approval. He saw that, in his glance, which taught him the leading activity of his new emotions. The boy had a new sentiment in his bosom, the contemplation of which made it eminently more familiar. He could destroy—and he could do so without his own rebuke. He could take the life of his fellow—and good men could approve. He had penetrated a new world of thought, and he was duly enamoured of his conquest; and even, as we all desire to renew the novelty, and partake a second time of the strange pleasure, so the heart of the boy panted for a repetition of that indulgence which had lifted him into premature manhood. The passions grew active without the least countenance of reason to uphold them, and this is the dangerous point in their history. Crime was made legitimate to him now, and the fruit once forbidden, was forbidden no longer. He could now pluck with impunity—so he began to think—and his mind was on that narrow eminence which divides a duty from an indulgence—which separates the close approach of a principle to an appetite—which changes the means into an end; and, identifying the excuse for violence, with an impelling motive to its commission, converts a most necessary agent of life into a powerful tyranny, which, in the end, runs riot, and only conquers to destroy.

Singleton regarded his charge with a close attention, as he surveyed the unsophisticated emotions of his heart, plainly enough written upon his face. He read there all that was going on within; and his own heart smote him at the survey. He thought of Emily, of her prayer for peace, her denunciation and her dread of war; and though he knew not of her death, the thought that she might, even now, be a silent watcher from the heavens, was enough to persuade him to an effort to quiet the fierce spirit at work within the bosom of the boy. He spoke—and his voice, modulated by grief into a tone as soft as that of a girl, struck strangely upon the ear of his companion. It was so different from the wild strain of thought with which his mind was crowded. A note of the trumpet—the shriek and shout of advancing foemen, had been far less discordant; and the boy shivered as he heard the simple utterance of his own name.

"Lance—Lance Frampton."

For a moment he was incapable of all reply. The eye of Singleton was fixed upon him; and when he met, and felt the look, he seemed to understand. His lips, which were rigidly compressed before, now separated—though it was still with seeming difficulty that he answered—

"Sir!"

"Your father is not with us, boy!"

"No, sir—I have not seen him nor heard him. I don't think he'll come out of the swamp, sir; he loves the Cypress: though, I reckon, if he only knew we should have had some fighting so soon—I'm sure, sir, he would have been glad to come—he loves to fight with the tories, sir. He always hated them, and more since mother's death—them, and the dragoons."

"And you too, boy, seem to have acquired something more of fondness for the sport than you had before. You have learned also to love fighting with the tories."

The words of Singleton were cold—rather stern, indeed; and his glance was not calculated to encourage the stern passion which was growing so active in the breast of the boy. But the latter did not regard the disapprobation which tone and look alike conveyed to his senses. His eye flashed and lightened, his lip quivered, closed firmly, then parted and quivered again, and his arm twisted convulsively the bridle of his steed.

"Oh, sir, I'm not afraid now. I know I shan't be afraid. I didn't know at first how I should feel in shooting at a man; but now, sir, I'm not afraid. I wanted to run in, sir, when you told the men to charge, but I had to go round and cut loose the prisoners; but I watched you all the time, sir; and I clapped my hands, sir—I couldn't help it—when I saw your sword go clean down through the tory's hand and into his head, in spite of all he could do. It was a great blow that, sir—a great blow; but I couldn't handle a sword so heavy."

There was something of a desponding earnestness in his tones as this last regret was uttered, and Singleton surveyed, as some curious study, the face, so full of transitions, of the boy beside him. After the pause of a moment, in a calm, subdued voice, he said to him—

"You shall have a sword, Lance—a small one to suit your hand. But remember, boy, war is not a sport, but a duty, and we should not love it. It is a cruel necessity, and only to be resorted to as it protects from cruelty; and must be a tyranny, even though it shields us from a greater. It is to be excused, not to be justified; and we should not spill blood, but as the spilling of blood is always apt to discourage the wrong-doer in those practices by which all men must suffer, and through which blood must be spilt in far greater quantity."

The boy looked on the speaker with an expression of astonishment which he did not seek to conceal. Singleton noticed the expression, and continued with his lesson. But it is not the youthful mind, full of spirit, and resolute in adventure, which will draw such nice distinctions as the partisan insisted on. The duty would be performed, doubtless, while it continued a pleasure; but when the pleasure to the mind survives the duty, it is not often that the unregulated impulse can be persuaded to forbear. The boy replied accordingly—

"Ah, sir, and yet I watched your face when you were fighting, and you seemed glad to cut down your enemy, and your eye was bright, and flashing with joy, and your lip even laughed, sir—I saw it laugh, sir, as plainly as I see it now."

"That may be, boy, but still war is a duty only, and should not be made a pleasure. It has its pleasures, as every duty must have; but they are dangerous pleasures, and not the less so because we can smile when indulging in them. It is a sad reflection, boy, that we can laugh when taking the life of a fellow-creature, and taking the life, too, that we can never return."

"Yet, sir, where can be the harm of killing a tory? They don't mind killing our people, and burning their houses, and driving off their cattle. I wish I could kill a thousand of them."

Singleton looked again on the boy, and saw that he was never more in earnest. He thought once more of his sister's pleadings, and her fine eloquence in defence of humanity, while considering this very subject. What a contrast! But the one was on the verge of the grave and of heaven, and her spirit was attuned to the divine and gentle influence of the abodes of bliss. The other was on the verge of life—its storms yet to go through, and by them to be purified, or never. No wonder that the mood was sanguinary: the trial and the path before him seemed to call for it.

"Alight, boy," said he, "and bring me a gourd of that water, while the troop is coming up."

A branch ran across their path, and an opportunity was suggested to the partisan for a useful lesson to his charge. With alacrity, the youth alighted from his horse, and went to gather the water, while Singleton waited the coming up of the long cavalcade of troop, and prisoners, women and children, behind. The boy stooped over the clear streamlet which trickled without a murmur over the road: it gave back his features from its untroubled mirror, and he started back from their contemplation. He had never before seen that expression—the expression of triumph in war, and a sanguinary desire for a renewal of its fierce and feverish joys. The blood-shot eye, the corded vein, the wild and eager expression, were all new to him, who had been the favourite of a mother, gentle to weakness, and fostering him with a degree of sensibility almost hostile to manhood. He dashed the gourd into the water, and hurried away with the draught to his commander. Singleton barely looked upon him, and the eye of the boy was turned instinctively from his gaze—but for a moment, however. His firmness was soon restored, the strong fire again filled it, and once more it met that of his superior unshrinkingly. Singleton gave him back the vessel, and from that moment felt assured of his nature. He saw that courage to desperation, and a love of the fight, the adventure, and the risk of war, were all in his soul, to a degree which no immaturity of strength, no inexperience, could keep down or diminish. He waited till he was again mounted, and at his side; and he himself felt, in despite of his own exhortations, a feverish sort of pleasure at seeing so clearly depicted as they were upon the face of the boy, the emotions of so bold and promising a spirit.

The long procession was now at hand, and Humphries, who had given his attention hitherto chiefly to the prisoners and the rear, now rode up to his commander. They conferred upon the subject of their next proceeding, and as the evening was at hand, and there could be little prospect of their reaching the Santee that night in time to cross it, burdened as they were with baggage and prisoners, they had almost resolved to lie by with the coming darkness; but while they spoke, Davis, who had been sent on ahead with the scouts, rode in with intelligence which partially altered their determination.

"There are outriders, sir, that hang on our skirts, all well mounted. We have had a glimpse at them through the bush, but not to overhaul them. Once or twice, sir, we saw eyes peeping out from the woods, sir, but though we pushed hard, they got shot of us mighty quick, and we lost 'em. I only rode up to put you on your guard, for I reckon there's more of 'em, that we don't see."

"'Tis well: put out again, Davis, and do not let them escape you now if you can help it. We shall see to the troop."

Davis rode away, and Singleton proceeded to arrange his men for all circumstances.

"Close up, Humphries, and bring your prisoners into the centre: see that they do not straggle, and let your men look to their arms. Put them in good preparation for any chance."

Then calling to the front a squad of the better armed and mounted, the partisan extended his line on the advance, so as to throw a few troopers, on either hand, into the woods that skirted the road. It was not long after this that Davis, with the scouts, who had more than once detected a pair of keen eyes watching them from the distant bush, now came suddenly upon a countryman who sat mending a bridle upon a log at the road-side. He did not seem much startled at their appearance, and his whole features wore an expression of the most approved simplicity and sang froid. He made no movement until the scouts had actually surrounded him, then blurted out his astonishment with the coolest composure.

"Why, holla! now; but you block a fellow in, mighty like as if you wanted to look at his teeth. What mought your wish be, stranger?"

Thus addressing Davis, the countryman rose, and with an air half of doubt and half of defiance, confronted the new-comers. The Goose Creeker looked on his big bones with admiration, for the man was huge of limb, though uncomely; and the contrast between him and Davis was calculated at once to command attention. The lieutenant, however, did not long delay his answer.

"Well, now, friend, our wish aint mighty hard to come at; and the first question I have to ax you, is after yourself. What may your name be, and what's your business?"

The man chuckled incontinently for a moment, then recovering, and looking grave, he replied—

"Look you, stranger, I never let a man poke fun at me twice on the same day; so I give you fair warning. I'm old hell for a varmint, and no tree your eyes ever looked on will come at all nigh to hide you, if I once sartainly set out to hunt you up. So, now you'll see it's a mighty ridiculous notion you have if you think to poke fun at Thumbscrew without paying for it."

"Well, Mr. Thumbscrew, if so be that's your true name, I'm much obligated to you for your civility in warning me about your ways. I've no doubt you're thought a big man in your part of the country; but I'm thinking they'd look at you for a mighty small one in mine. But that's not the business now. Big or little, Mr. Thumbscrew, there's too many upon you now to give you much chance, so the best way before you is to bear a dry scrape kindly, and that'll save you from two."

"What! won't you give fair play? Well, that's not so genteel, stranger. Fair play's a jewel, all the world over; and, man for man, or if so be you mought like it better, I'm not scrupulous to take two of you for a bout or so on the soft airth; but more than that'll be a leetle oncomfortable."

"We haint got time for that, friend," was the careless reply of Davis; "and all that we wants from you in the way of civility, is just to answer a few questions that we shall ax you."

"Well, ax away," was the half-surly reply—"ax away; but it wouldn't take too much time for a lift or two on the soft grass, I'm thinking."

"You say your name is Thumbscrew?"

"Yes, my boy-name; but at the christening they gin me another, that aint so easy to mention. The true name is John Wetherspoon, at your sarvice; but Thumbscrew comes more handy, you see, and them that knows me thinks it suits me better."

"Very well, Mr. Thumbscrew, or Wetherspoon—now, will you say what you're doing here in these parts at this time of day?"

"Well, that's jest as easy to larn now, sence you see I'm mending my bridle, and looking arter my critter that's been stolen, I reckon, by some thieving soldiers—saving your presence, and axing your pardon."

"What soldiers?"

"Why, how do I know? Sometimes they're one thing, sometimes another; now they're whigs, and now they're tories. One time they're Gainey's, another time they're Marion's men, just as the notion suits 'em."

"And what are you? Are you a whig or tory?"

"Neither, thank God, for all his civilities and marcies. I'm a gentleman, and not a soldier, no how, I'll have you to know."

"And where do you live when you are at home?"

"In the Big Bend, by Red Stone Hollow, close to the Clay Church, and right side of Black Heifer Swamp. My farm is called Hickory Head Place; and the parson who does our preaching is named Broad-east—he preaches through his nose, and has a Way with him."

"What way?"

"Margery Way, what does his mending: all the parish knows her."

"Well, but I don't know any of these places or people you've been telling me of," said Davis.

"I reckoned as much. They say, though I've never been in them parts, that you folks, from low down by the sea, are most unmarcifully stupid."

"Humph! and how far are we here from the river?"

"A small chance of a run, if so be you mean the Santee. This morning, when I left it, it was ten miles off, but it's been running ever since; and God knows, stranger, I can't tell how far it's got to by this time."

"I'm dubious, Mr. Thumbscrew, that you're playing your tantrums upon me, after all; and if so be I find you at that work, I'll hang you, d—n my buttons, if I don't, by your own bridle, and no two ways about it, old fellow—how far is the Santee?"

"Well now, you're mighty like getting in a passion, and that'll be quite too rediculous. The Santee, now, if it stands still, you see, is jest about ten miles away to the right. It may be more, and it may be less, but it's thereabouts, if it stands where it ought; but I tell you it runs mighty fast, for a thing that you look for to be quiet in one place."

"Ten miles—and what have you seen in the shape of men and soldiers about here? Have you seen any tories or any whigs? Marion's men, they say, are thick along the swamp."

"It's a bad business that, stranger, hunting after sodgers. I knows nothing about them. If I could only find Nimrod now, stranger, you can't count up how little I'd care about all you big sword men, tories or whigs, red coats or blue—all the same to Thumby. They've stolen the nag, and may he ride to the ugly place with the rapscallion that straddles him, drop him fairly inside the door, and come back a minute after to Red Stone Hollow."

In this way, until Singleton's approach, did Davis seek, in vain, to obtain his information from the stranger. He communicated his ill success to his superior, and the incorrigible Thumbscrew was brought before him. The partisan surveyed him closely, and saw at a glance that the fellow, in southern phrase, was "playing possum," and knew much more than he delivered. But the key was at hand, and the first words of Singleton unsealed the mystery.

"How are the owls, Thumbscrew?"

"At roost, and ready for the moon," was the instant reply; and every feature was full of awakening intelligence. Singleton ordered his men back, and conferred with him alone.

"The Swamp Fox is at hand—not moving?"

"He waits for Major Singleton, and prepares for the continentals; but must be close, for the tories under Pyles, Huck, Tynes, and Harrison, are all around him."

"And how far are we now from Nelson's?"

"Just nine miles, and the road clear, all but our scouts. Horry with twenty men scours to the left, and ten of us skirt the track to Nelson's, partly on the look out for you, sir, and partly for the tories."

"'Tis well—you have a horse?"

"Ay, sir, close in the wood."

"Shall we be able to reach the Santee before dark?"

"Impossible, sir, with all your men; but a detachment may, and had better ride on to prepare for the rest. Colonel Marion is fast transferring the boats to the other side, and as the road is clear, sir, you would find it best to spur forward with a few, while the lieutenant brings up the remainder."

Desirous of securing the passage, Singleton adopted the counsel, and singling out a dozen of his best horse, he led the way with his new guide, and left Humphries to bring up the cavalcade.

CHAPTER XVII.

"I love the wild adventure—the thick woods,
Strange aspects, and the crowding things that rove,
Peopling their deep recesses."

The little force led by Singleton in advance of his main body continued to make acquisitions at every step of its progress. The scouts of Marion, lining the woods at convenient intervals from each other, were soon notified of the approach of friends by the peculiar whistle which Thumbscrew employed; a whistle shrill in itself, and singularly modulated, which Marion's men were all taught to understand. They came out, one by one, from the bush; brought out their hidden horses, and each, answering to his *nom de guerre*, as it was called out by Thumbscrew, took his place along with the advancing party. There were Supple Jack and Crabstick, Red Possum and Fox Squirrel, Slickfoot and Old Ben; all men of make and mettle, trusty and true, and all of them, in after years, winning a goodly reputation in the land, which the venerable tradition, in sundry places, will "not willingly let die."

The river was now at hand, and Thumbscrew was required to give the signal to the scouts who were at watch along its banks. He did so, and the effect was admirable. From one bush to another, cover to cover, they all gave back the emulous sounds. The old cypress had a voice from its hollow, the green bush from its shade, and the shrill echoes rollingly arose from the crowding leaves of the thick tree that overhung the river, reverberating far away along its bosom. The signal was but once repeated, and all was still for a moment. Suddenly, the approaching troop heard the plash of paddles, the plunge of a horse in the water, and a quick, lively blast from the common horn, the sounds seeming to arise from the swamp on the opposite shore. Pushing his steed forward, and followed by his men, Singleton rode up to the bluff of the river, just as the last gay glimpses of the setting sun hung like so many rose-streaks upon its bosom, trembling to and fro like so much gossamer on the green edges of the gathering foliage.

And what a sight, in addition, was before their eyes! The surface of the river was strown with boats of all sorts and sizes. A dozen or more, filled with the men of Marion, were in progress from one side of the stream to the other, while they towed behind them as many more, laden with live-stock and provisions—a large assessment having just been made upon the farmsteads of the neighbouring tories. They had reached the centre of the stream, when the signal of the scouts struck their ears; and the quick command of their leader, the renowned partisan—for it was Marion himself who led them—arrested their farther progress. He stood erect when the troopers rode up to the bank; and the eye of Singleton soon distinguished him from the rest. Yet there was little in his appearance, to the casual spectator, to mark him out from his compatriots. His habiliments were not superior to theirs. They had borne the brunt of strife, and needed, quite as much as many of the rest, the friendly hand of repair and restoration. His person was small, even below the middle stature, and exceedingly lean and slender. His body was well-set, however, with the exception of his knees and ankles, which were thick, incompact, and badly formed. At the time, he rested almost entirely upon one leg—the other being at ease upon the gunwale of the boat. He still suffered pain in one of his limbs from a recent hurt; and in walking, an unpleasant limping movement was readily perceptible. His dress, as Singleton now beheld him, was one rather unusual for a commanding officer from whom so much was expected. It consisted of a close-bodied jacket, of a deep crimson colour, but of coarse texture. His smallclothes, of the fashion of the day, were badly conceived for such a figure as his. The free Turkish trowsers might have concealed those defects which the closely fitting fashions of the time rendered unnecessarily conspicuous. His were of a blue stuff, coarse, like the jacket, and made with exceeding plainness, without stripe or ornament of any description, beyond the frog of his sword, the small cut-and-thrust which hung rather low at his side. A white handkerchief about his neck, wound loosely, accorded strangely with the rest of his dress, and did not seem, in its disposition, to have tasked much of the care, in arrangement, of the wearer. His uniform, if so it may be styled, was completed by the round leathern cap, forming a part of the dress which he wore when an officer in the second South Carolina regiment, and bore in front a silver crescent, with the words, "Liberty or Death," inscribed beneath. He wore no plume, but in its place a white cockade, which was worn by all his men, in order that they might be more readily distinguished in their night actions with the tories. Such was the garb of the famous guerilla—the Swamp Fox—of Carolina. The features of his face did not ill accord with the style of his garments. His skin was dark and swarthy; his eyes, black, piercing, and quick; his forehead, high, full, and commanding; his nose was aquiline; his chin bold and projecting, though not sharp; and his cheek sunken, and deeply touched with the lines of thought. He was now forty-eight years of age—in the very vigour of his manhood—hardened by toil and privation, and capable of enduring every sort of fatigue. Cool and steady, inflexible, unshrinking; never surprised; never moving without his object, and always with the best design for effecting it—Marion, perhaps, of all the brave men engaged in the war of American liberty, was the one best calculated for the warfare of the partisan. His patriotism, wisdom, and fearlessness moved always together, and were alike conspicuous. Never despairing of his cause, he was always cheerful in vicissitude, and elastic under defeat. His mind rose, with renewed vigour, from the press of necessity; and every new form of trial only stimulated him to newer and more successful efforts. His moral and military character, alike, form the most perfect models for the young that can be furnished by the history of any individual of any nation.

The paddles of the rowers were lifted as Singleton appeared in sight. The boats rested in the centre of the river, and, shading his eye with his hand, Marion closely noted the troop as its several members wound out of the woods and gathered along the bank. He did not need much time in the survey, before his keen eye singled out the persons of such of the new-comers as he had before known. His voice, strong, regular, and even in its utterance, though at the same time subdued and musical, was heard immediately after.

"Ah, Major Singleton, you are as prompt as ever. I rejoice to see you. You come in good season, though you come but poorly accompanied."

A few words from Singleton explained the cause of his apparent weakness, and the orders of Marion were promptly given.

"Lieutenant Conyers, throw off the empty boats and put back after me in your own, leaving the spare ones. Take the whole of them, for the squad of Major Singleton will doubtless fill them all. McDonald, convey the rest to the camp, and let Oscar* bring Ball† with him. It may be difficult otherwise to get the strange horses over, and there is no flat."

With these, and a few other instructions, Marion led the way back to where Singleton with his troop awaited him; and a few minutes only had elapsed when they stood once more together in close conference. The brief history of past events was soon given, and the major was delighted to meet with the unqualified approval of his superior. He learned from Marion that his uncle had gone on to join with Gates only a few hours before his arrival, having been anxious to find active service at as early a time as possible. He had not endeavoured to dissuade him, as his was an independent commission; though the determination of Marion himself, was to proceed with the same object in the same direction. His force, with the recruits brought by Singleton, was now something more respectable in form if not in equipment. In arms and ammunition, not to speak of clothes and the usual equipages of camp and horse, they were miserably deficient; but with the hope that the continentals were provided well, and with a surplus, this matter gave the partisan but little concern. A small supply of shot and powder which Humphries had contrived to procure in Dorchester, came seasonably to his assistance; and with a new hope from this seasonable arrival of his men, Marion determined earnestly to press his advance to a union with the commanding force supposed to be coming on with Gates.

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* His favourite servant.

† Ball, his horse—a noble animal, that always led the advance in swimming the rivers.

To Singleton he partially unfolded his determination, though he entered into no particulars. He had not yet determined as to the time and route of his purposed movement. It was necessary that he should first ascertain the precise position of Gates; and, again, he had the duty yet to perform, in part, which he had voluntarily undertaken, of destroying all the boats upon the river at the various crossing places, which might otherwise be employed to facilitate the progress of Lord Cornwallis to the assistance of Rawdon at Camden, upon which place it was now understood the first effort of the approaching southern army would be made. There was little doubt that Cornwallis would soon be apprised, if, indeed, he was not already, of the necessity for his presence at Camden; for though Singleton had arrested one courier, and Marion himself another, it was not to be expected that others would not succeed in passing with intelligence where the line of country to be watched was so extensive as to call for ten times the active force of Marion, with the hope of doing so with any thing like reasonable certainty. To retard the movements of the commander at Charlestown—to keep him back until Gates should be able to strike his first blow, was an object quite too important to be foregone or given up but with great effort; and, an understanding between Sumter and Marion, had assigned one of the two leading routes to the designated ground of battle to each of the partisans. Marion had done much already towards his object. He had destroyed more than two hundred boats on both sides of the river, sparing neither canoe nor periagua. All within reach had been broken up, save the few which he still employed for his own purposes in the swamp, gathering provisions, and for the facilitation of his own progress. Another day, and Singleton would not have found it so easy to

> "Swim the Esk river, where ford there was none."

That night, as soon as the whole party had come up, the passage was effected, and without any great difficulty. The horses swam beside the boats, secured by ropes and bridles, while their riders, for the time, occupied a more secure seat within them than they might have done upon their saddles. Ball, the famous horse of Marion, led the way for the rest, and he went through the water as freely and fearlessly as a native born to the element. The rest followed with some little shivering and restiveness, but, with the boats, soon reached their depth, and were then mounted and ridden through the river-sedge, over the fallen tree, and safely, at length, into the island thicket which formed the hiding-place of the Swamp Fox on the Santee. The boats, filled with the women, children, and prisoners, under a small guard, had a more tedious, though more secure and easy passage to the same spot. Soon as they left the current of the river and got within the foliage, the swamp-suckers, with an old experience, seized upon their long canes, twenty feet in length, to the end of each of which a prong of the deer's antlers, and sometimes a crotch stick of some hard wood, had been tightly fastened. With these, catching the overhanging limbs and branches that fenced in a crooked creek that led to the island, they drew themselves along. Without dip of oar, or plash of paddle, silently and still, as if endued with a life of its own, the boat swept through its natural abode, a familiar tenant of its depths. Torches flashed along at intervals upon the banks to guide them, but they were perfectly unnecessary to the frequent dwellers in the swamp. They who steered and led the way could have travelled by night and day, unfearing, and unswerving from their designated path, with the ease of a citizen along the high road. The rapidity of their movements through scenes only distinguishable when the torch flashed over them, delighted and astonished the men from the low country, who now traversed them for the first time. Porgy was absolutely overcome with anticipations. He could not refrain—such was the good humour which the novelty of their progress inspired—from addressing Doctor Oakenburg, who sat beside him in the boat, on the subject of his musings.

"This, Doctor Oakenburg," said he, "this is a region—so Major Singleton tells me—which, in the language of Scripture, may be said to flow with milk and honey."

The doctor, terrified before into silence, was now astounded into speech.

"Milk and honey!" he exclaimed, with wondering.

"Ay, doctor, milk and honey! that is to say, with fish and terrapin, which I take to mean the same thing, since nobody would desire any land in which there was no meat. The land of milk and honey simply means to convey the idea of a land full of all things that men of taste can relish; or we may even go farther in this respect, and consider it a land teeming with all things for all tastes. Thus, yours, Doctor Oakenburg—even your vile taste for snakes and eels has been consulted here not less than mine for terrapin. Along the same tussock on which the bullet-head reposes, you will see the moccasin crawling confidently. In the same luxurious wallow with the hog, you will behold the sly alligator watching him. The summer duck, with its glorious plumage, skims along the same muddy lake, on the edge of which the d—d bodiless crane screams and crouches; and there are no possible extremes in nature to which a swamp, like this, will not give shelter, and furnish something to arouse and satisfy the appetite. It is a world in itself, and, as I said before, with a figurative signification of course, it is indeed a land of milk and honey."

"Land indeed!" said one of the troopers; "I don't see much of that yet. Here's nothing but rotten trees and mud-holes, that I can make out when the lightwood blazes."

"Never mind, my lark," said one of the conductors in a chuckling reply; "wait a bit, and you'll see the blessedest land you ever laid eyes on. It's the very land, as the big-bellied gentleman says, that's full of milk and honey; for, you see, we've got a fine range, and the cattle's plenty, and when the sun's warm you'll hear the bee trees at midday—and such a music as they'll give you! Don't be afeard now, and we'll soon come to it."

"I doubt not, my good friend, I doubt not, and I rejoice that your evidence so fully supports my opinion. Your modes of speech are scarcely respectful enough, however; for though a man's teeth are prime agents and work resolutely enough for his belly, yet it is scarcely the part of good manners to throw one's belly continually into one's teeth," Porgy responded gravely.

"Oh, that's it," said the other; "well, now don't be skittish, mister, for though I am Roaring Dick, I never roars at any of our own boys, and I likes always to be civil to strangers. But it's always the way with us, when we don't know a man's name, to call him after that part that looks the best about him. There's Tom Hazard now, we calls him by no other name than Nosey; 'cause, you see, his nose is the most rumbunctious part that he's got, and its almost the only part you see when you first look on him. Then there's Bill Bronson—as stout a lark as you've seed for many a day—now, as he's blind of one eye and can hardly see out o' t'other, we calls him Blinky Bill, and he never gets his back up, though he's a main quick hand if you poke fun at him. So, stranger, you must not mind when we happen to call you after the most respectable part."

"Respectable part! I forgive you, my friend—you're a man of taste. Dr. Oakenburg, your d——d hatchet hip is digging into my side; can't you move a jot farther? There, that will do; I am not desirous of suffering martyrdom by hip and thigh."

"Now we're most home," said Master Roaring Dick to his little crew. "One more twirl in the creek, and you'll see the lights and the island; there, there it is. Look, now, stranger, look for yourself, where the Swamp Fox hides in the daylight, to travel abroad with old blear-eye—the owl, that is—when the round moon gets out of her roost."

And grand and imposing, indeed, was the scene that now opened upon Porgy and the rest, as they swept round the little bend in the waters of the creek, and the deeply imbowered camp of the partisan lay before them. Twenty different fires, blazing in all quarters of the island, illuminated it with a splendour which no palace pomp could emulate. The thick forest walls that girdled them in, were unpierced by the rays; they were too impenetrably dense even for their splendours, and like so many huge and blazing pillars, the larger trees seemed to crowd forward into the light with a solitary stare that made solemn the entire and wonderful picturesqueness of the scene. Group after group of persons, each with its own vocation, gathered around the distinct fires, while horses neighed under convenient trees; saddles and bridles, sabres and blankets, hung from their branches, and the cheery song from little parties the more remote, made lively the deep seclusion of that warlike abiding-place. The little boat floated fairly up to one of the fires; a dozen busy hands at once assisted the new-comers to alight, and a merry greeting hailed the acquisition of countrymen and comrades. Boat after boat, in the same way, pressed up to the landing, and all in turn were assisted by friendly hands and saluted with cheering words and encouragement. It was not long before the strangers, with the readiness which belongs to a life like theirs, chose their companions in mess and adventure, and began to adapt themselves to one another. Lively chat, the hearty glee, the uncouth but pleasant jest, not forgetting the plentiful supper, enlivened the first three hours after the arrival of Singleton's recruits, and fitted them generally for those slumbers to which they now prepared to hasten.

"Well, Tom," said Porgy to his old retainer, as he hurried to his tree, from a log, around which his evening's meal had been eaten in company with Roaring Dick, Oakenburg, and one or two others—"well, Tom, considering how d—d badly those perch were fried, I must confess I enjoyed them. But I was too hungry to discriminate; and I should have tolerated much worse stuff than that. But we must take care of this, Tom, in future. It is not always that hunger helps us to sauce, and such spice is a d—d bad dish for us when lacking cayenne."

Porgy threw off his coat, unbuckled the belt from his waist, and prepared himself to lie down; but a moment's inspection of his couch counselled him to be discontented.

"This won't do, Tom: you must bring me some more rushes—a good armful, boy—and no finicking. Look you, is that a blanket, Tom—there, hanging from that limb?"

"Yes, sa; dah blanket—him b'long to somebody, I 'speck."

"Very likely, Tom; but God knows I'm somebody; I have some body at least to take care of—so bring it to me."

The blanket was brought, the gourmand wrapped it carefully around him, put his saddle under his head for a pillow, bade Tom take cover behind him, and stretched himself, at length, for the night. A few moments after, the owner of the blanket came looking for his property, and never did nose insist more religiously upon its master's slumber, than did that of Porgy.

The man surveyed the huge body of the gourmand, and his eye particularly noted the blanket in which he lay; but the torch which he carried gave too partial a light to permit of his assuming with certainty that it was his, and he moved away at last, to the great satisfaction of Porgy, leaving him in undisturbed possession of his prize.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"We move betimes to-day—'tis some time yet
To the gray dawning. Wherefore is the toil—
But that we would not loiter, but show forth
A boy's ambition!"

THE stars were yet shining when the slumbers of Major Singleton were broken. His page, the devoted Lance Frampton, stood beside him.

"Why, how now, Lance—what disturbs you?" was the inquiry of the major rising from the brush on which he had been lying. But he needed no answer to the question. His own senses, now completely awakened, readily took in the occasion of the disturbance. The partisans were in motion on every side, and the shrill voice, brief and emphatic, of Marion himself, was heard on the edge of the island, in rapid command. Horses were prancing, and a troop was evidently on the approach from the upper edge of the swamp. The quick, comprehensive whistle of the scouts came to his ears, clearly, above all other sounds; and, obeying the signal from the camp, the scouts themselves came in a moment after.

Singleton was soon beside his commander. He had slept in his clothes, having no other covering, beside the greenwood tree, and the clear, transparent blue sky, that shone, in glimpses, with its thousand eyes, upon him, through the leaves. The movement of the Swamp Fox was soon understood. That wily commander only lingered for the morning watch to set forth upon his journey, in order to form a timely junction with the continentals. He had a wild region yet to traverse before he could attain the object; and every acre of ground was in possession either of confirmed enemies, or doubtful friends. Sparing no precaution, Marion, however, moved with confidence and without fear.

"You are prompt, major, and as I would have it. Make your own men ready—still keep their command, till our disposition may be made more uniform—and put them into a column of advance. Horry is just coming in with his troop, from which your lead will be taken. Our scouts are all in, and one brings me a courier with news from the army. De Kalb is now on the way, in rapid march from Salisbury with two thousand continentals; Colonel Porterfield, with Virginia horse, is moving to join him; and General Caswell, with the North Carolina militia in force, arming for the same object. Though better provided than ourselves, as well in arms as in numbers, we must not hesitate to show ourselves among them. General Gates will doubtless bring a force with him; and it will be hard, if our boys, ragged though they be, should not win some laurels and blankets together."

Singleton promptly passed to the sheltering clumps of trees where his men had been placed, and his command was in movement quite as soon as any of the rest.

"This is scarcely civil, young man," cried Porgy to the soldier who had undertaken to arouse him, and who, in order the more effectually to do so, had seized upon the ends of the blanket in which the gourmand had enveloped himself, and which he pulled at tightly—"Scarcely civil, young man, I repeat. What if the blanket is your property"—its adroit appropriation by himself still running in his head—"if it is your property, what of that? I have never denied it, and a polite demand for it should have secured it readily. But to disturb a gentleman's slumbers—it's an offence, sir—a glaring offence, which should have its punishment; and—let me but unwrap—I am a pacific man, and my temper is not ungentle; but, to disturb my slumbers, which are so necessary to the digestive organs—stop, I say—d—n, don't pull so! Ah, Humphries, my dear fellow, is that you?—you have come in season to my relief. That intrusive fellow—but do take the torch from my eyes, the glare is very offensive."

Humphries, who now stood beside him with a flaming brand, explained to the reluctant Porgy the true cause of the disturbance, and relieved the unconscious soldier from the impending danger. But the current of his wrath was only turned in another direction.

"What! move now—leave the swamp! Why, my dear fellow, either you or I am dreaming. Leave the swamp! we have just come into it—haven't yet seen it fairly, and know nothing of its qualities. I had hoped to have dwelt here one or two days, at least—to have enjoyed its products, and compared them with those of the Cypress."

"It's a truth, Porgy, and I'm sorry, for your sake, that it is so. But the major's orders are to be quick, and don't stand for trifles. The Swamp Fox, as the men here call Marion, has been stirring this hour. You see him yonder, where the soldiers are in the saddle—he that has his cap off. He's talking to our men, and you ought to be there to listen, for he talks mighty strong to them, they say, and they all like to hear him; so, be in a hurry, my boy, or you'll lose all."

"There's no policy worse than that. Never hurry—keep cool, keep cool, keep cool—those are the three great precepts for happiness. Life is to be looked after, and you'll never find it if you hurry. Happiness is a thing of grains and fractions: and it is with pleasure, as with money-making, according to the rule laid down by that old Pennsylvania printer, 'Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves.' Take care of the moments, and you need never look after the hours. That's my doctrine for happiness—that is the grand secret. Hurry forbids all this. You skip moments—you skip happiness. Why do you sip rum punch? why, indeed, do you sip all goodly stomachics?—simply to prolong the feeling of enjoyment. It is your beast only that gulps, and gapes, and swallows. It is only your beast that hurries. Happiness is not for such."

"But we must hurry now, Porgy, if we want to hear what he says."

"I never hurried for my father, though he looked for me hourly. I will not hurry for the best speech ever delivered. Do oblige me with that belt; and lay down your torch, my good fellow, and pass the strap through the buckle for me. There—not so tight, if you please; the next hole in the strap will answer now; an hour's riding will enable me to take in the other, and then I shall probably try your assistance. Eh! what's that?"

The pitiful howling of a negro, aroused from his slumbers, prematurely, by the application of an irreverent foot to his ribs, now called forcibly the attention of the party, and more particularly that of Porgy.

"That's Tom's voice—I'll swear to it among a thousand; and somebody's beating him—I'll not suffer that." And with the words he moved rather rapidly away towards the spot whence the noise proceeded.

"Don't be in a hurry now, Porgy; remember—keep cool, keep cool, keep cool," cried Humphries, as he followed slowly after the waddling philosopher.

"Do I not, Humphries? I am not only cool myself, but I go with the charitable purpose of cooling another."

"But what's the harm?—he's only kicking Woollyhead into his senses."

"Nobody shall kick Tom while I'm by. The fellow's too valuable for blows;—boils the best rice in the southern country, and hasn't his match, with my counsel, at terrapin in all Dorchester. Holla! there, my friend, let the negro alone, or I'll astonish you."

The soldier and Tom, alike, came forward at the salutation, and with the first possible opportunity of contact, Porgy grappled the first by the collar, and shook him violently. The soldier, in astonishment, demanded the cause of the assault.

"That's the cause, my friend—that's the cause—an argument that runs on two legs, and upon which no two legs in camp shall trample."

Porgy pointed to the negro, who stood by, shaking his head and grumbling.

"Das right, Massa Porgy. Wha' for he kick nigger das doing noting but sleep? ax um dat, Mass Porgy."

The soldier now grew ruffled, and as he was stout and vigorous, would most probably have tumbled Porgy in the dirt without much effort, had not the approach of Singleton, already in the saddle, called for the prompt obedience and pacific aspect of all parties.

"To saddle, Mr. Porgy—to saddle; and be ready for a movement in five minutes. The colonel will soon give the word, and I would not that any of our troop should be cause of delay."

"Nor I, Major Singleton—nor I. Ambitious emulation is the soldier's principle; and though I would never hurry, I would never be a laggard. The golden medium, sir, should be still preserved. I approve it much. But slumbers once broken—visions intruded upon—seldom return in their original felicity. We may try, but glimpses only come back to us, telling us not so much what to enjoy, as what we have lost the enjoyment of."

"You must allow for circumstances; perilous necessity, Mr. Porgy, you well know, has a standard of its own."

"A manifest truism, Major Singleton; and in its recognition, I will even hurry to obey our present orders. Tom, old boy—why, d—n it, that fellow's bloodied your nose! Your left nostril has an ugly abrasion."

"'Speck so, Mass Porgy—he feel very much like he bin hurt."

"Wash it, and tighten that girth, Tom. I did not think he had hurt you so, or I should have confounded him. An ugly slit that; but no matter. See to the girth; and before we mount, be sure that you have that cold ham which I wrapped up in the buckskin. We shall get nothing better to-morrow, boy, and we must be secure of that."

Talking all the while, now with Tom, now with this or that trooper beside him, Porgy continued, until, ordering silence, Singleton led his cavalcade forward to a designated point, where the greater portion of the partisans under their several leaders had already assembled.

Under that forest canopy, in that solemn starlight, and amid waving torches and prancing steeds, Marion unfolded his plan, and briefly informed his men of the condition of things, not only as they concerned the colony, but as they concerned the confederation. He read to them a resolve of congress, in which that body had declared its determination to save each and every province that had linked its fortunes with the federal union, and particularly declared its resolution, in the teeth of a report to this effect which the British and tories had industriously circulated in South Carolina and Georgia, not to sacrifice those two colonies to the invader, on any terms of peace or compromise which they might make with him. Such a resolve had become highly necessary; as the great currency given to the rumour of such a compromise, and on these especial terms, had produced, in part, the results which had been desired. The patriots, drooping enough before, had begun to despair entirely, while the tories were encouraged by it into perseverance, and stimulated to the most adventurous and daring action. This read—and the formal resolution as it had been adopted by congress was in his hand for the purpose—Marion then proceeded to recapitulate, not only the information which he had been enabled to obtain of their own army, but of that of their enemies. His information, gathered from various sources, had been singularly extensive; and while it taught his men the full extent of the danger with which they were to contend, on all hands, it also served greatly to increase their confidence in a commander, whose knowledge of passing and remote events seemed intuitive; and whose successes had been so unbroken, though small, as to inspire in them a perfect assurance of his invincibility. The military force of the British then in Carolina, was distributed judiciously throughout its entire circuit. The twenty-third and thirty-third regiments of infantry, the volunteers of Ireland, the infantry of the legion, (Tarleton's,) Brown's and Hamilton's corps, and a detachment of artillery under the command of Lord Rawdon, hutted in, and about, the town of Camden. Major McArthur with the 71st regiment was stationed at Cheraw, near the Peedee region, covering the country between Camden and Georgetown, and holding continued correspondence with the rank and thickly settled tory region of Cross Creek, North Carolina. With the approach of the continentals, this regiment had been ordered in, to a junction with himself, by Rawdon; and they left the passage open for Marion through the country where most of his warfare was to be carried on. In Georgetown, a large force of provincials was stationed. The chain of British military posts, to the west of Camden, was connected with Ninety Six by Rocky Mount, itself a strong post on the Wateree, occupied by Lieutenant-colonel Turnbull of the New-York tory volunteers and militia. Lieutenant-colonel Balfour, and subsequently Lieutenant-colonel Cruger, commanded at Ninety Six. The troops there consisted of battalions of Delancey's, Innis's, and Allen's provincial regiments, with the 16th and three other companies of light infantry. Major Ferguson's corps, with a large body of tory militia, traversed the country between the Wateree and the Saluda rivers, and sometimes stretched away even to the borders of North Carolina. Lieutenant-colonel Brown held Augusta with a large force of British and tories; Savannah was garrisoned by Hessians and provincials under Colonel Alured Clark; Charlestown contained the 7th, 63d, and 64th regiments of infantry, two battalions of Hessians, a large detachment of the royal artillery, and several corps of provincials under the immediate command of Brigadier-general Patterson. The legion dragoons (Tarleton's) were employed in keeping open the communication between the several cantonments. In addition to these, there were the posts of Fort Watson, Biggins' Church, Dorchester, and many others, which, as the whole colony lay at the feet of the conquerors, were maintained with small bodies of men, chiefly as posts of rest, rather than of danger or defence.*

Having narrated, at full, the amount of the British force distributed thus throughout the colony, Colonel Marion did not scruple to present, without any exaggeration, a true picture of the strength of that power which was to meet and contend with it. He painted to them the depressed condition of congress, the difficulties of Washington, and taught them how little was to be looked for, in the shape of succour and assistance, apart from that which he insisted was in their own hands—in their own firm determination, fearless spirits, and always ready swords. "I take up the sword, gentlemen," said he, "with a solemn vow, never to lay it down, until my country, as a free country, shall no longer need my services. I have informed myself of all these difficulties and dangers—these inequalities of numbers and experience between us and our enemies, of which I have plainly told you. Having them all before my own eyes, I have yet resolved to live or die in the cause of my country, placing the risks and privations of the war in full opposition to the honour and the duty—the one which I may gather in her battles, and the other which I owe to her in maintaining them to the last. I have told you all that I know, in order that each man may make his election as I have done. I will urge no reasons why you should love and fight for your country, as my own sense of honour and shame would not suffer me to listen to any from another on the same subject. Determine for yourselves without argument from me. Let each man answer, singly, whether he will go forward under my lead, or that of any other officer that General Gates shall assign, or whether he will now depart from our ranks, choosing a station, henceforward, of neutrality, if such will be allowed him, or with the force of our enemy. Those who determine with me, must be ready to depart within the hour, on the route to Lynch's creek, and to the continental army."

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* Facts chiefly drawn from Tarleton. *See Memoirs.*

The piercing black eye of Marion, darting around the assembly at the conclusion of his speech, seemed to look deep into the bosom of each soldier in his presence. There was but a moment's pause when he had concluded, before they gave a unanimous answer. Could they have had other than one sentiment on such an occasion? They had not—and no single voice spoke in hesitation or denial. It was a cheering, soul-felt response.

"We will all go!—Marion for ever!" and from the rear came up the more familiar cry—

"Hurra for the Swamp Fox!—let him take the track, and we'll be after him."

A single bow—a slight bend of the body, and brief inclination of the head—testified their leader's acknowledgment; and, after a few directions to Horry, he ordered the advance. With a calm look and unchanging position, he noted, with an individual and particular glance, each trooper as he filed past him. A small select guard was left behind, who were to conduct the women and children to the friendly whig settlement of Williamsburg. They were to follow, after this, upon a prescribed route, and meet with the main body at Lynch's creek. An hour later, and the silence of the grave was over the dim island in the swamp of the Santee, so lately full of life and animation. The brands were smoking, but no longer in blaze; and the wildcat might be seen prowling stealthily around the encampment which they had left, looking for the scraps of the rustic feast partaken at their last supper by its recent inmates.

"A devilish good speech," said Porgy to Humphries, as the latter rode beside him, a little after leaving the island—"a devilish good speech, and spoken like a gentleman. No big words about liberty and death, but all plain and to the point. Then there was no tricking a fellow—persuading him to put his head into a rope without showing him first how d—d strong it was. I like that, for now I can see the way before me. Give me the leader that shows me the game I'm to play, and the odds against me. In fighting, as in eating, I love to keep my eyes open. Let them take in all the danger, and all the dinner, that I may neither have too little appetite for the one, nor too much for the other."

"Ah, Porgy," said Humphries in reply, "you will have your joke though you die for it."

"To be sure, old fellow, and why not? God help me when I cease to laugh. When that day comes, Humphries, look for an aching shoulder. I'm no trifle to carry, and I take it for granted, Bill, for old acquaintance' sake, you'll lend a hand to lift a leg and thigh of one that was once your friend. See me well buried, my boy; and if you have time to write a line or raise a headboard, you may congratulate death upon making an acquaintance with one who was remarkably intimate with life."

CHAPTER XIX.

"Sound trumpets—let the coil be set aside
That now breaks in upon our conference."

Meanwhile, the hero of Saratoga—a man who, at that time, almost equally with Washington, divided the good opinion of his countrymen—arrived from Virginia and took command of the southern army. The arrival of Gates was a relief to the brave German soldier, De

Kalb, who previously had the command. The situation of the army was then most embarrassing. It lay at Deep river, in the state of North Carolina, in a steril country, filled either with lukewarm friends or certain enemies. The executive of the colony had done but little to secure aid or co-operation for the continentals. Provisions were procured with difficulty, and the militia came in slowly, and in unimportant numbers. The command of the state subsidy had been intrusted to a Mr. Caswell, a gentleman without the qualities which would make a good soldier, but with sufficient pretension to make a confident one. He strove to exercise an independent command, and, on various pretences, kept away from a junction with De Kalb, in whom his own distinct command must have been merged. Even upon Gates's arrival, the emulous militia-man kept aloof until the junction was absolutely unavoidable, and until its many advantages had been almost entirely neutralized by the untimely delay in effecting it. This junction at length took place on the fifteenth day of August, nearly a month after Gates's assumption of the general command.

A new hope sprang up in the bosoms of the continentals with the arrival of a commander already so highly distinguished. His noble appearance, erect person, majestic height and carriage, and the bold play of his features, free, buoyant, and intelligent in the extreme, were all calculated to confirm their sanguine expectations. In the prime of life, bred to arms, and having gone through several terms of service with character and credit, every thing was expected by the troops from their commander. Fortune, too, had almost invariably smiled upon him; and his recent success at Saratoga—a success which justice insists should be shared pretty evenly with Arnold, the traitor Arnold, and others equally brave, but far more worthy—had done greatly towards inspiriting his men with assurances, which, it is not necessary now to say, proved most illusory. Nor was De Kalb, to whom General Gates intrusted the command of the Maryland division of the army, including that also from Delaware, without his influence in the affections of the continentals. He was a brave man, and had all his life been a soldier. A German by birth, he was, in the service of the King of France, a brigadier, when transferred to America in the revolutionary struggle. Congress honoured him with the commission of a major-general, and he did honour to the trust—he perished in the execution of its duties.

The command given to Gates was so far a shadowy one. With the Maryland and Delaware regiments, it consisted only of three companies of artillery under the command of Lieutenant-colonel Carrington, which had just joined from Virginia, and a small legionary corps under Colonel Armand, a foreigner, of about sixty cavalry and as many foot. But the general was not to be discouraged by this show of weakness, though evident enough to him at the outset. He joined the army on the 25th July, was received with due ceremony by a continental salute from the little park of artillery, and received the command with due politeness from his predecessor. He made his acknowledgments to the baron with all the courtesy of a finished gentleman, approved and confirmed his standing orders, and, this done, to the surprise of all, gave the troops instructions to hold themselves in readiness to move at a moment's warning. This was an order which manifested the activity of their commander's mind and character; but it proved no little annoyance to the troops themselves, who well knew their own condition. They were without rum or rations—their foragers failed to secure necessary supplies in sufficient quantity—and nothing but that high sense of military subordination which distinguished the favourite line of continentals under De Kalb's direction, could have prevented the open utterance of those discontents which they yet could not help but feel. De Kalb ventured to remind Gates of the difficulties of their situation. A smile, not more polite than supercilious, accompanied the reply of the too confident adventurer.

"All this has been cared for, general. I have not issued orders without duly considering their bearing, and the unavoidable necessities they bring with them. Wagons are on the road with all the articles you name in sufficient quantity, and in a day or two these discontents will be all satisfied. Your line is not refractory, I hope?"

"Never more docile, I beg your excellency to believe, than now. The troops I command know that subordination, not less than valour, is the duty of the soldier. But human nature has its wants, and no small part of my care is, that I know their suffering—not from their complaints, sir, for they say nothing—but from my own knowledge of their true condition, and of what their complaints might very well be."

"It is well—they will soon be relieved; and in order to contribute actively to that end, it is decided that we march to-morrow."

"To-morrow, sir! Your excellency is aware that this is impracticable unless we move with but one-half of our baggage, for want of horses. Colonel Williams has just reported a large deficiency."

With evident impatience, restrained somewhat by a sense of politeness, Gates turned away from the baron to Colonel Otho Williams, who was then approaching, and put the question to him concerning the true condition of the army with regard to horses. The cheek of the old veteran, De Kalb, grew to a yet deeper hue than was its habitual wear, and his lips were compressed with painful effort as he heard the inquiry. Williams confirmed the statement, and assured the general, that not only a portion of the baggage, but a portion of the artillery must be left under the same deficiency in the event of a present movement.

"And, how many field-pieces are thus unprovided, Colonel Williams?"

"Two, sir, at least, and possibly more."

Gates strode away for a few moments, then returning quickly, as if in that time he had effected his resolve, he exclaimed—

"They must be left: we shall do without them. We must move to-morrow, gentlemen, without loss of time, taking the route over Buffalo ford towards the advance post of the enemy on Lynch's creek. We shall find him there, I think."

Gates seemed to think that nothing more was wanting to success than finding his enemy, and his eye looked the confident expectation of youth, unprepared for, and entirely unthinking of, reverse. Flattered by good fortune to the top of his bent, she now seemed desirous of fooling him there: and his eye, lip, look, and habitual action, seemed to say that it was now with him only to see, to conquer. De Kalb turned away sorrowfully in silence; but Colonel Williams, presuming on large personal intimacy with the general, ventured to expostulate with him upon the precipitate step which he was about to take. He insisted upon the necessity of horse, not only for the baggage and artillery, but for the purpose of mounting a large additional force of the infantry, to act as cavalry along the route. But Gates, taking him by the arm, smiled playfully to his aide, as he replied—

"But what do we want with cavalry, Williams!—we had none at Saratoga."

Perhaps it would be safe to assert that the game won at Saratoga was the true cause of the game lost at Camden. The folly of such an answer was apparent to all but the speaker. With a marked deference, careful not to offend, Williams suggested the radical difference between the two regions thus tacitly compared. He did not dwell upon the irregular and broken surface of the ground at Saratoga, which rendered cavalry next to useless, and, indeed, perfectly unnecessary; but he gave a true picture of the country through which they were now to pass. By nature steril, abounding with sandy plains and swamps, thinly inhabited, nothing but cavalry could possibly compass the extent of ground over which it would be necessary that they should go daily in order to secure provisions. He proceeded, and described the settlers in the neighbourhood as chiefly tories—another name for a banditti the most reckless and barbarous, who would harass his army at every step, and seek safe cover in the swamps whenever he should turn upon them. Williams, who knew the country, ably depicted its condition to his superior, and with a degree of earnestness only warranted by the friendship existing between them. It was, nevertheless, far from agreeable to his hearer, who, somewhat peevishly, at length responded—

"Colonel Williams, we are to fight the enemy, you will admit? He will not come to us, that is clear. What next? We must go to him. We must pit the cock on his own dunghill."

"It will be well, general, if he doesn't *pit* us there. Though we do seek to fight him, there's no need of such an excess of civility as to give him his own choice of ground for it; and permit me to suggest a route by which we shall seek him out quite as effectually, I think, and, with due regard to your already expressed decision, on better terms for ourselves."

"Proceed!" was all the answer of Gates, who began whistling the popular air of Yankee Doodle, with much *sang froid*, at intervals, even while his aide was speaking. The brow of Williams grew slightly contracted for an instant; but well knowing the habits of the speaker, and regarding much more the harmony of the army and its prospect of success than his own personal feelings, he calmly enough proceeded in his suggestions. A rude map lay on the table before him, on which he traced out the path which he now counselled his superior to take.

"Here, sir, your excellency will see that a route almost northwest would cross the Peedee river, at or about the spot where it becomes the Yadkin: this would lead us to the little town of Salisbury, where the people are firm friends, and where the country all around is fertile and abundant. This course, sir, has the advantage of any other, not only as it promises us plenty of provisions, but as it yields us an asylum for the sick and wounded, in the event of a disaster, either in Mecklenburgh or Rowan counties, in both of which our friends are stanch and powerful."

The suggestion of disaster provoked a scornful smile to the lips of Gates, and he seemed about to speak, but perceiving that Williams had not yet concluded, he merely waved his hand to him to proceed. Williams beheld the smile and its peculiar expression, and his manly and ingenuous countenance was slightly flushed as he surveyed it. His tall, graceful figure rose to its full height, as he went on to designate the several advantages offered to the army by the suggested route. In this review were included, among other leading objects, the establishment of a laboratory for the repair of arms at Salisbury or Charlotte—a depot for the security of stores conveyed from the northward by the upper route—the advantage which such a course gave of turning the left of the enemy's outposts by a circuitous route, and the facility of reaching the most considerable among them, (Camden,) with friends always in the rear, and with a river (the Wateree) on the right. These and other suggestions were offered by Williams, who, at the same time, begged to fortify his own opinions by a reference to other and better informed gentlemen than himself on the subject. Gates, who had heard him through with some impatience, only qualified in its show by the manifest complacency with which he contemplated his own project, turned quietly around to him at the conclusion, and replied briefly—

"All very well, Williams, and very wise—but we must march now. To-morrow, when the troops shall halt at noon, I will lay these matters, as you have suggested them, before the general officers."

Laying due stress upon the word general, he effectually conveyed the idea to the mind of Williams, that, though he had received the suggestions of a friend and intimate, he was not unwilling to rebuke the presumption of the inferior officer aiming to give counsel. With a melancholy shake of the head, De Kalb turned away, jerking up the hips of his smallclothes, as he did so, with a sufficiently discontented movement. Williams followed him from the presence of the infatuated generalissimo, and all parties were soon busy in preparation for a start.

The next morning, the journey was begun; the army setting forth, unmurmuring, though without half their baggage, and with no present prospect of provisions. Gates, however, seemed assured of their proximity, and cheered his officers, and through them, the men, with his assurance. At noon they came to a halt, and here they were joined by Colonel Walton, bearing advices from Marion, and bringing up his own skeleton corps, which was incorporated with Colonel Dixon's regiment of the North Carolina militia. The services of Walton, as, indeed, had been anticipated by him, were appropriated at once by the general in his own family. No conference took place at this halt, as Gates had promised Williams. After a brief delay, which the men employed in ransacking their knapsacks for the scraps and remnants which they contained, the march was resumed: the wagons with provisions not yet in sight, and their scouts returning with no intelligence calculated for their encouragement. The country through which their journey was to be taken, exceeded in sterility all the representations which had been made of it. But few settlements relieved, with an appearance of human life, the monotonous originality of the wild nature around them; and these, too, were commonly deserted by their inhabitants on the appearance of the army. The settlers, dividing on either side, had formed themselves into squads to plunder and prey upon the neighbouring and more productive districts. They were Ishmaelites in all their practices, and usually shrunk away from any force larger than their own; conscious that power must only bring them chastisement. The distresses of the soldiery, on this sad and solitary march, increased with every day in their progress. Still, none of the provisions and stores promised them by the general at their outset, came to hand. In lieu of these, they had the long perspective, full of promise, before them. There was the Peedee river at hand, the banks of which they were told, exceedingly fertile, held forth the prospect of abundance; but hour after hour came and passed, without the realization of these promises. The preceding crop of corn along the road had been long since exhausted, and the new grain was yet in the fields, unripened and unfit for use. But the necessity was too peremptory, and not to be restrained. The soldiery plucked the immature ears, and boiling them with the lean beef which herded in the contiguous swamps, they provided themselves with all the food available in that quarter. Green peaches were the substitute for bread; and fashion, too, became a tributary to want, and the hair powder so lavishly worn by all of the respectable classes at that period, was employed to thicken the unsalted soups, for the more reserved appetites of the officers. Such fare was productive of consequences the most annoying and enfeebling. The army was one of shadows, weary and dispirited, long before it came in sight of an enemy.

It was on the third day of August that the little army crossed the Peedee, in batteaux, at Mask's ferry, and were met on the southern bank by Lieutenant-colonel Porterfield, of Virginia, with a lean detachment of troops which he had kept together with much difficulty after the fall of Charlestown. A few hours after, and while the army was enjoying its usual noonday halt, the little partisan corps of the Swamp Fox rode into camp. His presence created some sensation, for his own reputation had been for some time spreading; but the miserable and wild appearance of his little brigade, was the object of immense ridicule on the part of the continentals. They are represented by the historian as a most mirthful spectacle, all well mounted, but in wretched attire, an odd assemblage of men, and boys, and negroes, with little or no equipment, and arms of the most strange and various assortment. Colonel Marion was at once introduced to the marquee of the general, but his troops remained exposed to the unmeasured jest and laughter of the continentals. One called them the crow-squad, from their sooty outsides; this name another denied them, alleging, with a sorry pun, that they had long since forgotten how to crow, though they were evidently just from the dunghills. A third, more classical, borrowed a passage from Falstaff, and swore he should at once leave the army, as he wouldn't march into Coventry with such scarecrows; but a fourth said, that was the very reason that he should stick to it, as Coventry was the only place for them. The fierce low-country men did not bear this long; and as they sauntered about among the several groups which crowded curiously around them, sundry little squabbles, only restrained by the hard efforts of the officers, took place, and promised some difficulty between the parties. Our friend Porgy himself, though withal remarkably good-natured, was greatly aroused by the taunts and sarcasms uttered continually around him. He replied to many of those that reached his ears, and few were better able at retort than himself; but his patience at length was overcome entirely, as, among those engaged most earnestly in the merriment at his expense, he heard the frequent and boisterous jokes of Colonel Armand, a mercenary soldier, who, in broken English, pressed rather rudely the assault upon our friend Porgy's equipment in particular. Armand was a man lean and attenuated, naturally; and his recent course of living had not materially contributed to his personal bulk. Porgy eyed him with wholesale contempt for a few moments, while the foreigner blundered out his bad grammar and worse English. At length, tapping Armand upon the shoulder with the utmost coolness and familiarity, he drew his belt a thought tighter around his waist, while he addressed the foreigner.

"Look you, my friend—with the body of a sapling, you have the voice of a puncheon, and I like nothing that's unnatural and artificial. I must reconcile these extremes in your case, and there are two modes of doing so. I must either increase your bulk or lessen your voice. Perhaps it would be quite as well to do both; the extremes meet always most readily: and by reducing your voice, and increasing your bulk at the same time, I shall be able to bring you to a natural and healthy condition."

"Vat you mean?" demanded Armand, with a look of mixed astonishment and indignation, as he drew away from the familiar grasp which Porgy had taken upon his shoulder.

"I'll tell you: you don't seem to have had a dinner for some time back. Your jaws are thin, your complexion mealy, and your belly—what there is of it—is gaunt as a greyhound's. I'll help to replenish it. Tom, bring out the hoecake and that bit of shoulder, boy. You'll find it in the tin box, where I left it. Now, my friend, wait for the negro; he'll be here in short order, and I shall then assist you, as I said before, to increase your body and diminish your voice: the contrast is too great between them—it is unnatural, unbecoming, and must be remedied."

Armand, annoyed by the pertinacity, not less than by the manner of Porgy, who, once aroused, now held on to him all the while he spoke, soon ceased to laugh as he had done previously; and, not understanding one-half of Porgy's speech, and at a loss how to take him, for the gourmand was eminently good-natured in his aspect, he repeated the question—

"Vat you sall say, my friend?"

"Tom's coming with ham and hoecake—both good, I assure you, for I have tried them within the hour; you shall try them also. I mean first to feed you—and by that means increase your bulk—and then to flog you, and so diminish your voice. You have too little of the one, and quite too much of the other."

A crowd had now collected about the two, of whom, not the least ready and resolute were the men of Marion. As soon as Armand could be made to understand what was wanted of him, he drew back in unmeasured indignation and dismay.

"I shall fight wid de gentilmans and officer, not wid you, sir," was his reply, with some show of dignity, to the application of Porgy. A hand was quietly laid on his shoulder, and his eye turned to encounter the glance of Major Singleton.

"I am both, sir, and at your service, Colonel Armand, in this very quarrel, though, in justice, you owe the right to Mr. Porgy, who also seeks it. You waived your rank when you ridiculed the private, and put yourself out of the protection of your epaulet. Conceding you the point, however, permit me to repeat, sir, that I am at your service."

"But, sare, vat you sall be name?"

"Singleton—Major Singleton, of the brigade of Colonel Marion, who will answer for my rank, as well as for my honour."

"But, sare, I sall not laugh at de gentilmans."

"It matters not—will you compel me to disgrace you, sir?" was the stern reply.

The scene and disputation now grew exceedingly warm, and the uproar reaching head-quarters, soon brought out the commander-in-chief. By this time, Armand's corps had clustered about their commander, and Singleton was surrounded, in like manner, by his own little squad from the Cypress. Swords were already drawn, and Humphries, Davis, and the rest, not forgetting Lance Frampton, with rifles and sabres ready, were each facing some particular foe, when the stern voices of the general officers called for silence, and the drum rolled in obedience to their commands, calling the several squads to their appointed stations. The affray was thus prevented, which, a moment before, seemed inevitable. Such is military subordination. Gates, with the leading officers, again returned to the conference, which had been highly animated and important before this interruption.

CHAPTER XX.

"The evening clouds are thick with threat of storm ;
The night grows wild ; the waters champ and rave,
As if they clamoured for some destined prey."

THE reader will scarcely believe, knowing as he does the great achievements of General Marion at the South throughout the revolution, that his proffer of service on this occasion was not so agreeable to General Gates. Yet so we have it, on the authority of history. That gentleman partook largely of the spirit which circulated so freely in his army; and the uncouth accoutrements, the bare feet, and the tattered garments of the motley assemblage of men and boys, half armed, which the Swamp Fox had brought with him to do the battles of liberty, provoked his risibility along with that of his troops. The personal appearance of Marion himself was as little in his favour. Diffident even to shyness, there was little that was prepossessing in his manners. He was awkward and embarrassed in the presence of strangers: and though singularly cool and collected with the necessity and the danger, he was hardly the man to command the favourable consideration of a superficial judge—one of mediocre ability, such as General Gates undoubtedly was. The very contrast between them was enough for the latter. Built, himself, on a superb scale, the movement, the look, the deportment of Gates, all bespoke the conscious great man. Marion, on the other hand, small in person, lame of a leg, with a downcast eye, and hesitating manners, was a cipher in the estimation of the more imposing personage who looked upon him. And then the coarse clothes—the odd mixture of what was once a uniform, with such portions of his dress as necessity had supplied, and which never could become so—altogether offended the nice taste of one rather solicitous than otherwise of the symmetries of fashion. Nothing, therefore, but a well-regulated sense of politeness, formed closely upon the models of foreign service, prevented the generalissimo from laughing outright at the new auxiliaries now proffered to his aid. But, though he forbore to offend in this manner, he did not scruple to lay before Marion his objections to the proposed junction on this very ground. The shallow mind could not see that the very poverty, the miserably clad and armed condition of Marion's men, were the best pledges that could be given for their fidelity. Why should they fight in rags for a desperate cause, without pay or promise, but that a high sense of honour and of country was the impelling principle! The truth must be spoken: and the Partisan of Carolina, the very stay of its hope for so long a season—he who, more than any other man, had done so much towards keeping alive the fires of liberty and courage there, until they grew into a bright, extending, unquenchable flame—was very civilly bowed out of the army, and sent back to his swamps upon a service almost nominal.

"Our force is sufficient, my dear colonel," was the conclusion of the general—"quite sufficient; and you can give us little if any aid by direct co-operation. Something you may do, indeed—yes—by keeping to the swamps, and furnishing us occasional intelligence—picking off the foragers, and breaking up the communications."

"My men are true, your excellency," was the calm reply; "they desire to serve their country. It is the general opinion that you will need all the aid that the militia of the state can afford."

"The general opinion, my dear colonel, errs in this, as it does in the majority of other cases. We shall have a force adequate to our objects quite as soon as a junction can be formed with Major-general Caswell. Could you procure arms, and the necessary equipments, and attach your force with his—"

"I understand your excellency," was the simple answer, as Gates hinted his true objections in the last sentence; but, save the slight compression of his lips, usually parted otherwise, no trace of emotion besides, followed upon the countenance of the speaker.

"My men," he continued, "are, some of them, of the very best families in the country, homeless now, and robbed of all by their enemies. They are not the men to fight less earnestly on that account, nor will their poverty and rags hinder them from striking a good blow, when occasion serves, against the invader to whom they owe them."

Gates was sufficiently a tactician to see that the pride of Marion was touched with the unjust estimate which had been made of his men, and he strove to remove the impression by a show of frankness.

"But, you see, my dear colonel, that though your men may fight like very devils, nothing can possibly keep the continentals from laughing at them. We can't supply your people; and so long as they remain as they are, so long will they be a laughing stock—so long will there be uproar and insubordination. We are quite too delicately situated now to risk any thing with the army; we are too nigh the enemy, and they have been too stinted. To deny them to laugh, is to force them to rebel; we can only remove the cause of laughter, and, in this way, defeat the insubordination which undue merriment, sternly and suddenly checked, would certainly bring about."

Gates had made the best of his case, and Marion, with few words, obeyed the opinion, from which, however, he mentally withheld all his assent. He contented himself, simply, with stating his own, and the desire of his men, to serve the country by active operation in the best possible way. Gates replied to this in a manner sufficiently annoying to his hearer, but which had subsequently its own adequate rebuke.

"Any increase of force, my dear colonel, would be perfectly unnecessary after my junction with the troops I daily look for. Caswell will bring me all the North

Carolina subsidies, and General Stevens, with a strong body of Virginians, will join in a few days. My force then will be little short of seven thousand men, and quite sufficient for all contemplated purposes. We shall therefore need no aid from your men."

"I hope not, general; though should you, my men are always ready to offer it for their country. Have I your excellency's permission to retire?"

"You have, Colonel Marion; but I trust you will still continue operations on the Peedee and the Santee rivers. One service, if you will permit me, I will require at your hands; and that is, that you will employ your men in breaking up all the boats which you can possibly find at the several crossing places on the Wateree—at Nelson's and Vance's ferries in particular. We must not let my Lord Rawdon escape us."

It was now Marion's turn to smile, and his dark eye kindled with an arch and lustrous expression as he heard of the anticipated victory. He well knew that Rawdon could not and would not endeavour to retreat. Such a movement would have at once lost him the country. It would have stimulated the dormant hopes of all the people. It would have crushed the tories, by withdrawing the army whose presence had been their prop. It would have destroyed all the immense labours, at one swoop, by which the invader had sought, not only to realize, but to secure his power. The weakness of Gates amused the partisan, and the smile upon his lips was irrepressible. But the self-complaisance of the general did not suffer him to behold it; and, concluding his wishes and his compliments at the same time, he bowed the Swamp Fox out of the marquee, and left him to the attention of the old baron, De Kalb.* The veteran was gloomy, and did not scruple to pour his melancholy forebodings into the ears of Marion, for whom he had conceived a liking. At parting, he ventured a smile, however, as he reminded him of the employment which Gates had assigned him in the destruction of the boats.

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* For much of the authority on which these sketches are founded, see the narrative of Otho Williams, Lee's memoirs, and the general history of these events. In this imaginative biography, I have been careful to colour only according to what is known. A just regard to verisimilitude is as much the object of romance as of history.

"You need not hurry to its execution, my friend," said he; "it is a sad waste of property, and, if my thoughts do not greatly wander, I fear an unnecessary waste. But God cheer us, and his blessing be upon you."

They parted—never to meet again. The partisan led his rejected warriors back in the direction of his swamp dwelling, on the Santee, while the old veteran went back with a heavy heart to his duties in the camp.

In an hour, the onward march was again resumed. The troops went forward with more alacrity, as they had that day feasted with more satisfaction to themselves than on many days previous. A small supply of Indian meal had been brought into camp by the foragers, and produced quite a sensation. This gave a mess to all; and the impoverished beef, which, hitherto, they had eaten either alone or with unripe fruit, boiled along with it, grew particularly palatable. With all the elasticity which belongs to soldiers, they forgot past privations, and hurried on, under the promise of improving circumstances at every step of their farther progress. This spirit was the more increased, as the commanding officer, aware of the critical situation of the troops, unfolded himself more freely than he had hitherto done to Colonel Williams, who acted as deputy adjutant-general.* The show of confidence operated favourably on the troops, who were at a loss to know why General Gates, against all counsel, had taken the present route. He said it had been forced upon him; that his object was to unite with Caswell; that Caswell had evaded every order to join with him; that Caswell's vanity desired a separate command, and that he probably contemplated some enterprise by which to distinguish himself.

"I should not be sorry," said he, "to see his ambition checked by a rap over the knuckles, if it were not that the militia would disperse and leave this handful of brave men (meaning the continentals) without even nominal assistance."*

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* See Otho Williams's Narrative

He urged that the route was taken to counteract the risks of Caswell, by forcing him to the junction he seemed so desirous to avoid; and, at the same time, to secure some of the supplies of provisions and other necessaries, which he asserted, on the alleged authority of the executive of North Carolina, were even then in the greatest profusion in Caswell's camp. He moreover suggested that a change of direction now would not only dispirit the troops, but intimidate the people of the country, who had generally sent in their submissions as he passed, promising to join him under their own leaders. These were the arguments of Gates; and whatever may be their value, he should have the benefit of them in his defence. To these were opposed, in vain, the poverty and destitution of the country, and the perfidious character of the people along the route they pursued. The die was cast, however, and the army went forward to destruction. But we will not anticipate.

On the fifth of August, in the afternoon, General Gates received a letter from Caswell, notifying him of an attack which he meditated upon a post of the British, on Lynch's creek, about fourteen miles from the militia encampment. This increased the anxiety of Gates, who urged forward the regulars. While urging them still upon the ensuing day, a new despatch was received from the general of militia, stating his apprehensions of an attack from the very post which, the day before, he had himself meditated to assault. Such a strange mixture of boldness and timidity alarmed Gates even for his safety; and he now hurried forward, to relieve him from himself, with more rapidity than ever. On the seventh of August, by dint of forced marching, he attained his object, and the long-delayed junction was safely effected, at the Cross Roads, about fifteen miles east of the enemy's most advanced post on Lynch's creek. The army was soon refreshed; every thing was in plenty: and amid the greatest confusion, and in spite of all his difficulties, Caswell had contrived to keep a constant supply of wines, and other luxuries on hand, with which the half-famished continentals were pleasantly regaled. After the junction, which occurred about noon in the day, the army marched a few miles towards the enemy's station. On the next day, pressing forward to the post, they found the field their own; the enemy had evacuated it, and returned back, at his leisure, to a much stronger position on Little Lynch's creek, and within a day's march of the main post of Camden, where Rawdon commanded in person, with a force already strong, and hourly increasing from a judicious contraction of the minor posts around him, which he effected, with the approach of the continentals.

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* The recorded language of Gates on the occasion. These considerations, pro and con, are almost entirely historical.

Still, the army pressed forward, in obedience to command, ignorant of its course, and totally unconscious of the next step to be taken. The commander, however, began to take his precautions, as he saw the danger of approaching an enemy encumbered as he now was with unnecessary baggage, and the large numbers of women and children, whom he had found with Caswell's militia. Wagons were detached to convey the heavy baggage, and such women as could be driven away, to a place of safety near Charlotte; but large numbers of them preferred remaining with the troops, sharing all their dangers, and partaking of their privations. Exhortations and menace alike failed of effect; they positively refused to leave the army on any terms. Relieved, however, of much of his encumbrance, Gates proceeded to the post on Little Lynch's creek, to which the enemy had retired. Here he found him strongly posted. He was in cover, on a rising ground, on the south side of the Wateree; the way leading to it was over a causeway to a wooden bridge which stood on the north side, resting upon very steep banks.

The creek lay in a deep, muddy channel, bounded on the north by an extensive swamp, and only passable (except by a circuit of several miles) directly in front of the enemy.

"To attack him in face, would be taking the bull by the horns, indeed," was the concluding remark of Gates, as he reviewed the position and examined his intelligence. "We'll go round him"—and, for the first time, the commander prepared to take the least direct road to the enemy. Defiling by the right, having cautiously thrown out a flanking regiment under Colonel Hall, of Maryland, the army pushed on by a circuitous course towards Rawdon. This movement had the effect of breaking up the minor post of the enemy which Gates had been compelled to avoid, and its commanding officer, with some precipitation, fell back with all his garrison upon Camden. The post at Clermont, Rugely's Mills, was also abandoned at the same time; and, on the thirteenth of August, it was occupied by the American general with his jaded army.

The movements of Gates had been closely watched by the enemy, who was vigilant in the extreme. The precautions taken by Rawdon, who, up to this moment, had been opposed to him, were judicious and timely. But the command was now to be delivered into yet abler hands; for, with the first account of the proximity of the southern army, Cornwallis, with a portion of the garrison from Charlestown, set forth for Camden. His march communicated, like wildfire, the business of his mission to the people of the country through which he was to pass; and it was with feelings in nowise enviable, that he saw the exulting looks of the disaffected whenever they met with him on his progress. At Dorchester, where he paused a day, and by his presence controlled somewhat the restless spirit of those in that quarter, who, otherwise, were willing enough to rise in mutiny, he could almost hear the muttered rebellion as it rose involuntarily to the lips of many. Standing lustily in his doorway as the glittering regiments went through the village, old Pryor growled out his hope for their destruction.

"Ay, go! ye glitter now, and look d—n fine, but Gates will roll your red jackets in the mud. He'll give you a dressing, my lads, ye shall remember. Ay, shake your flags, and beat your drums, but you'll have another guess sort of shake and tune when you're coming back."

The stern and lofty earl, erect and tall, inflexible and thoughtful, moved along upon his steed like some massive tower,before the dwelling of the sturdy rebel; who, uttering no shout, waving no hat, giving no sign but that of scornful hate, and a most bitter contempt, gazed upon the warrior without fear or shrinking.

"Go, d—n you, go; go where the drum that beats for you shall be muffled; go where the bugle that rings in your ears shall not stir you again in your saddles; go where the rifle shall have a better mark in your bodies than it ever found at Bunker's and at Lexington."

And as he muttered thus, his old eye rekindled, and he watched the last retreating forms in the distance, repeating to himself the fond hope, which was then a pregnant sentiment in the bosom of thousands, who had felt long, when they could not resent, and now rejoiced in the belief, confidently entertained, that their enemies had gone to a battle-field from whence they never would return. The hour of punishment was at hand, so they fondly thought, and Gates's was the avenging arm sent for its infliction.

On the night of the fifteenth of August, without any conference with his officers, Gates bade his army advance from Clermont on the route to Camden. What was his hope! What, indeed, we may well ask, was his object! He literally had no intelligence; he had omitted many of those precautions by which, in armies, intelligence was to be procured. The suggestions of his own friends were unheeded, and he deigned no general consultation. Colonels Williams and Walton, both ventured to remind him in general terms of the near neighbourhood of the foe, doubtless in force; for, on the subject of their numbers, no information had yet been received. On the same day, an inhabitant from Camden, named Hughson, came to head-quarters, affecting ignorance of the approach of the Americans, and pretending a warm interest in their success. He was a Marylander, and was disposed to be very friendly with his countrymen, the continentals. He freely gave his information to Gates—information which was true, so far as it went; but which was given in just sufficient quantity to promote the precipitation of the American commander and the purposes of the British. Gates readily believed all that was told him; and though suspicions arose in the minds of some of the officers around him, the credulity of the general underwent no arraignment, and the spy was actually suffered to leave the camp and return to Camden, not only with the fulfilment of the purpose for which he went, but possessed of the more valuable information with which he was permitted to return. Besotted self-confidence had actually blinded the American general to the huge and fearful trench which he had been digging for himself, and which now lay immediately before him.

A few hours only divided him from his enemy; yet, strange to say, he knew not that it was Cornwallis who stood opposed to him. That brave commander had hurried with all possible celerity to the scene of action. He knew how greatly the fortunes of the colony depended upon the present contest. Marion was even then busy along the Santee, and so effectually did he guard the passes by Nelson's and Watson's, that his lordship, though commanding a fine body of troops, veterans all, fresh from Charlestown, and superior far to any force of the partisan, was compelled to take a circuitous and indirect route in reaching Camden. Marion had greatly increased his force with a number of insurgents from Black river. Sumter, too, was in active motion, and watched the Wateree river with the avidity of a hawk. On the success of this battle depended every thing; for, though to gain it would not necessarily have secured the conquest of Cornwallis in Carolina, not to gain it would most probably have been the loss of all. He knew this, and his desire was for early battle before the troops of Gates were rested; before the militia could come in to his relief; and before the spirit of revolt, throughout the province, should distract, by concerted and simultaneous operation. No general was ever more ready than Cornwallis to carve his way out of difficulties with the strong arm and the sword. Policy, and his desire alike, persuaded him now to the adoption of this stern arbitrament.

At the very hour that Gates moved from Clermont in the route to Camden, the British general set out from that station to attack him in his encampment. Yet Gates had no intelligence of this: he knew not even that his lordship was in Camden. He neglected every means of intelligence, and the retributive justice, which, in one moment, withered all the choice laurels of his previous fame, and tore the green honours from his brow, though stern and dreadful, must yet be held the just due of him, who, with a leading responsibility of life, freedom, and fortune depending upon him, forfeits, by the feebleness of a rash spirit, all the rich triumphs that are otherwise within his grasp. Vainly has the historian striven after arguments in his excuse. He is without defence; and in reviewing all the events of this period, we must convict him of headstrong self-confidence, temerity without coolness, and effort, idly expended, without a purpose, and almost without an aim. It was the opinion of his officers, and, indeed, of all others, that the delay of a few days, with his army in a secure position, was all that was necessary towards giving the American an immense superiority over the British commander. Provisions would have been plenty in that time, and the native militia, once satisfied of his presence, would have crowded to his camp. But the fates were impatient for their prey, and he whom God has once appointed for destruction, may well fold his robes about him in preparation for his fall.

CHAPTER XXI.

"And the deep pause that ushers in the storm,
More fearful than its presence, thrills us now—
This silence is the voice that speaks it nigh."

The American general at last began to exhibit some consciousness of the near neighbourhood of foes; and that day, the 15th August, after general orders, he prepared the following in addition—Colonel Williams, acting adjutant-general, Colonel Walton, and one other member of his family being present:—

"1. The sick, the extra artillery stores, the heavy baggage, and such quarter-master's stores as are not immediately wanted, to march this evening, under a strong guard, to Waxsaw. To this order the general requests the brigadier-generals to see that those under their command pay the most exact and scrupulous obedience.

"2. Lieutenant-colonel Edmonds, with the remaining guns of the park, will take post and march with the Virginia brigade under General Stevens. He will direct, as any deficiency may happen in the artillery affixed to the other brigade, to supply it immediately. His military staff, and a proportion of his officers, with forty of his men, are to attend him and await his orders.

"3. The troops will be ready to march precisely at ten o'clock, in the following order, viz:—

"Colonel Armand's advance—cavalry commanded by Colonel Armand; Colonel Porterfield's light infantry upon the right flank of Colonel Armand, in Indian file, two hundred yards from the road; Major Armstrong's light infantry in the same order as Colonel Porterfield's, upon the left flank of the legion.

"Advance-guard of foot; composed of the advancepickets, first brigade of Maryland, second brigade of Maryland, division of North Carolina, division of Virginia; rear-guard—volunteer cavalry upon the flank of the baggage, equally divided.

"In this order the troops will proceed on their march this night.

"4. In case of an attack by the enemy's cavalry in front, the light infantry upon each flank will instantly move up, and give, and continue, the most galling fire upon the enemy's horse. This will enable Colonel Armand, not only to support the shock of the enemy's charge, but finally to rout him. The colonel will therefore consider the order to stand the attack of the enemy's cavalry, be their number what it may, as positive.

"5. General Stevens will immediately order one captain, two lieutenants, one ensign, three sergeants, one drum, and sixty rank and file, to join Colonel Porterfield's infantry. These are to be taken from the most experienced woodsmen, and men every way fittest for the service.

"6. General Caswell will likewise complete Major Armstrong's light infantry to their original number. These must be marched immediately to the advanced post of the army.

"The troops will observe the profoundest silence upon the march, and any soldier who offers to fire without the command of his officer, must instantly be put to death.

"When the ground will admit of it, and the near approach of the enemy renders it necessary, the army will, when ordered, march in columns.

"The artillery at the head of their respective brigades, and the baggage in the rear. The guard of the heavy baggage will be composed of the remaining officers and soldiers of the artillery, one captain, two subalterns, four sergeants, one drum, and sixty rank and file, &c.

"The tents of the whole army are to be struck at tattoo."

Such were the general orders for the march. Colonel Williams the adjutant-general, Colonel Walton, and Major Thomas Pinckney, were in conversation at the entrance of the general's marquee, when, with a smiling and good-natured countenance, he brought the paper forth, and called for the adjutant-general's attention.

"Colonel Williams, you will be punctual in the transmission of these orders to the several commands, so that there be no delay. Look also at this estimate, which has been made this morning of the entire force, rank and file, of the army. It would seem to be correct."

Williams took the paper, and glanced rapidly over the estimate, which startled him by its gross exaggerations.

"Correct, sir!" he exclaimed, with unfeigned astonishment; "impossible! Seven thousand men!—there are not five thousand fit for duty."

"You will see, and report on this," said the general, coolly, and at once turned away to the tent, in which, a moment after, he was lost from sight.

"Pinckney," said Williams, "come and assist me in this estimate. Colonel Walton will keep in attendance—you will not be wanted."

The gallant young soldier, then a tall, fresh, and vigorous youth, noble, and accomplished as were few native Americans at that period, immediately complied with the request, and the two moved away upon the contemplated mission. Availing himself of his orders, which were to bid all the general officers to a council in Rugely's barn, Williams called also upon the officers commanding corps for a field return. This he required to be as exact as possible; and as neither himself nor Pinckney was required to attend the deliberations, they devoted themselves to a careful abstract of the true force of the army for the general's better information. This was presented to him as soon as the council had broken up, and just as the general was coming out of the door, where Williams and his aids awaited him. He took the paper, and with clouding brows examined its contents.

"How! what is this? what is this figure, Colonel Williams?" he inquired, dashing his forefinger hurriedly upon the paper.

"A three, sir," was the reply.

"A three! And you mean to say that there are only three thousand and fifty-two, rank and file, fit for duty?"

"I do, your excellency—scarce a man more."

"Impossible! There were no less than thirteen general officers in council, and our estimate gave not a man less than seven thousand, rank and file."

"Your estimate of the general officers is correct enough, sir," said Williams, firmly, "but mine of the men is not less so. The disparity between officers and men, in our battles," continued the speaker, innocently enough, "has always been rather remarkable."

A quick motion of Gates's head, a sudden shooting glance of his eye, intimated his own perception of the sarcasm, and apprised Williams, for the first time, of the equivocal character of his remark. His cheeks grew to scarlet, as he perceived its force, and his confusion would have been evident to his superior, but that the general relieved him by turning away, with the paper crumpled up in his hands, simply remarking, as he left them—

"Three thousand—that is certainly below the estimate of the morning; but they are enough—enough for our purpose."

Williams longed to ask him what that purpose was, but prudence restrained him. The only farther remark of Gates on the subject was uttered as he was retiring—

"You have delivered the orders, sir?—see them obeyed. There was no dissent from them in council."

True it is that there had been no dissent from them in council; but they were scarcely submitted for examination. There had been no consultation, and their promulgation out of council, at once provoked the most unrestrained animadversion. The officers generally insisted that all opinion or discussion had been silenced by the very positive terms in which the orders had been expressed; and, indeed, there could have been little doubt, from all the context, that General Gates did not conceive it necessary that any reference should be made to the opinions of those around him. The council was the pure creature of a certain sense of military propriety, and was yielded by Gates rather to general notions of what was due to courtesy, than what was necessary to the great cause and deep interests in which he was engaged. The elder officers said little when the orders were conveyed to them. The old Baron De Kalb, presuming on his age and services, however, and the usual respect with which Gates had treated him hitherto, sought an interview with him, which was not denied. He suggested to him the diminished force of the army, so infinitely inferior, as it was found to be, to the estimate which had been made of it in the morning. This he held a sufficient reason for changing the present resolution for one less hazardous. There was another, and more forcible reason yet.

"Two-thirds of our army, your excellency is aware, are militia—men who have never yet seen service, and have scarce been exercised in arms together."

"True, baron, but that is an argument against using them at any period. They must begin sometime or other."

"Yes, your excellency; but our first experiments with them should be easy ones. By these orders, we are not only to march them, but to require them to form column, and to manœuvre, by night, in the face of an enemy, and probably under his fire. This is the work of veterans only."

"The danger seems to increase in magnitude, baron; does it not?"

The old soldier drew himself up in dignity—his manly person, no longer bowed or bent, his fine blue eye flashing, and his cheek reddening as he spoke: he replied—

"I know not what your excellency's remark may mean; but in regard to the greatness or the littleness of the danger, I who have been forty years a trusted soldier of the King of France, should care but little to encounter it. Were the question one affecting my life only, it were easily answered: I came to fight the battles of your country, sir, and am prepared, at all hours, to die in them."

The rebuke had its effect upon the commander, though he did not acknowledge it. His self-esteem was too great for that. Nor did he allow the suggestions of the baron to have any weight upon his previous determinations. With a commonplace compliment, the conference was closed, and De Kalb went back to his command, doubtful, pained, and justly offended. In camp, the dissatisfaction had rather subsided, with the single exception, among the officers, of Colonel Armand. He took exception to the positive orders concerning himself, as implying a doubt of his courage; at the same time he objected to the placing of his cavalry in front of a line of battle—certainly a very injudicious order, particularly as the legion of Armand was most heterogeneous in its formation, and such a disposition of cavalry had never been made before. He complained that Gates had placed him there from resentment, on account of a previous dispute between them touching the use of horses.

"I do not say," said he, in broken English, "that General Gates intends to sacrifice us; but I do say, that if such were his intentions, these are just the steps which he should take for it."

Still, however, as it was not known that the enemy was positively in force before them, all the parties grew more satisfied, after a while, to proceed; and the army moved on accordingly at the appointed hour.

The two armies met at midnight. They first felt each other through the mutual salutation of small-arms, between their several advance-guards. The cavalry of Armand's legion were the first to reel in the unexpected contest. They recoiled, and in their retreat, flying confusedly, threw the whole corps into disorder. This, with a similar recoil, fell back upon the front column of infantry, disordered the first Maryland brigade, and occasioned a momentary consternation throughout the entire line of advance. But Colonel Porterfield advanced from the wing agreeable to first orders, threw in a prompt fire upon the British van, and gallantly cheering as they advanced, restored the general confidence. The British, seemingly no less astounded than the Americans, fell back after the first shock, and both parties seemed to acquiesce in a suspension of all further hostilities for the night. Prisoners were taken on both sides, in this rencontre, and the intelligence gained by those brought into the American camp, was productive of a degree of astonishment in General Gates's mind, which found its way to his countenance. He called a council of war instantly. When the adjutant-general communicated the call to De Kalb, the old veteran's opinion may be gathered from the response which he made to that officer—

"Has the general given you orders to retreat the army, Colonel Williams?"

"He has not," was the answer.

"I will be with you in a moment, then, but will first burn my papers;" a duty which he did in a short time after, with scrupulous promptitude.

Assembled in the rear of the army, General Gates communicated the intelligence obtained from the prisoners just taken; then, for the first time, proposed a question, implying some little hesitation on the subject of future operations.

"What now is to be done, gentlemen?"

For a few moments all were silent, until General Stevens of the Virginians, after looking round for some other to speak, advanced in front of the commander, and put his own answer in the form of a new inquiry.

"Is it not too late, *now*, gentlemen, to do any thing but fight?"

Another pause ensued, which, as it seemed to give assent to the last words of Stevens, General Gates himself interrupted—

"Then we must fight: gentlemen, be pleased to resume your posts."

They moved to their stations with the promptness of the soldier, but with the thoughts and feelings of men, who could not approve of what had been done, and who had nothing consoling in the prospect before them. Gates moved hurriedly for several moments up and down the little tent which had been raised for him within the hour. His manner was subdued, but cool. Once or twice he looked forth from its cover with an air of anxiety, then turning to Williams, and the aids in attendance, he remarked—

"This is a quiet night, gentlemen, but it promises to be a tedious one. What is the time, Colonel Walton?"

"A little after one, sir," was the reply.

"You may leave me for an hour, gentlemen—only an hour; we must prepare for daylight."

Walton and Major Pinckney, together, strolled away, not requiring repose. The thought of Colonel Walton was with his child—the one—the one only—who could fill his heart—who could inspire painful anxiety, at that moment, in his mind. How fervent were his prayers in that hour for her safety, whatever fate, in the coming events of the daylight, might award to him!

CHAPTER XXII.

"Then came the cloud, the arrowy storm of war,
The fatal stroke, the wild and whizzing shot,
Seeking a victim—the close strife, the groan,
And the shrill cry of writhing agony."

If every thing was doubtful and uncertain in the camp of Gates, the state of things was very different in that of Cornwallis. That able commander knew his ground, his own men, and the confidence and the weakness alike of his enemy. That weakness, that unhappy confidence, were his security and strength. His own force numbered little over two thousand men; but they were tried soldiers, veterans in the British southern army, and familiar with their officers. The troops of Gates—two-thirds of them at least—had never once seen service; and the greater number only now for the first time knew and beheld their commander. They had heard of his renown, however, and this secured their confidence. It had an effect far more dangerous upon his officers; for, if it did not secure their confidence also, it made them scrupulous in their suggestions of counsel to one who, from the outset, seemed to have gone forth with the determination of rivalling the rapidity, as well as the immensity, of Cæsar's victories. To come, to see, to conquer, was the aim of Gates; forgetting, that while Cæsar commanded the Roman legion, Horatio Gates was required first to teach the American militia. Cornwallis seems perfectly to have understood his man. They are said to have once seen foreign service together; if so, the earl had studied him with no little success. He now availed himself of the rashness of his opponent, and, though inferior in numbers, went forth to meet him. We have seen their first encounter, where Gates, contrary to the advice of his best officers, commenced a march after nightfall, requiring of undrilled militia the most novel and difficult evolutions in the dark. Having felt his enemy, and perceived, from the weight of Colonel Porterfield's infantry fire, that the whole force of the Americans was at hand, Cornwallis drew in his army, which had been in marching order when the encounter began; and changing his line to suit the new form of events, proceeded to make other arrangements for the dawning.

The firing still continued, in the advance, though materially diminished and still diminishing, when Cornwallis gave the orders to recall his forces. The order was a timely one. In that moment, the advance of Porterfield had pressed heavily upon the British van, and was driving it before them. The mutual orders of the two generals, both dreading to risk the controversy on a struggle so unexpectedly begun, closed the affair for the night. Dismounting beneath a clump of trees, Cornwallis called around him a council of his officers. The tall, portly form of the earl rose loftily in the midst of all, with a cool, quiet dignity, that indicated command. His face was one of much expression, and spoke a character of great firmness and quick resolve. His features were bold and imposing; his cheeks full and broad, nose prominent, forehead rather broad than high, his lips not thin, but closely fitting. His eye had in it just enough of the kindling of battle to enliven features which otherwise would have appeared more imperious than intelligent. His carriage was manly, and marked by all the ease of the courtier. Standing erect, with his hand lightly resting on the hilt of his sword, and looking earnestly around him on his several officers as they made their appearance—a dozen lightwood torches flaming in the hands of the guards around him—his presence was majestic and noble. Yet there was a something in his features which, if not sanguinary, at least indicated well that indifference to human life, that reckless hardihood of atrocity, which marked too many of his doings in the South. His looks did not belie that callosity of soul which could doom his fellow-men, by dozens, to the gallows—the accusation unproven against them, and their own defence utterly unheard.

Beside him, conspicuous, though neither tall nor commanding in person, stood one to whom the references of Cornwallis were made with a degree of familiarity not often manifested by the commander. His person was of the middle size, rather slender than full, but of figure well made, admirably set, and in its movements marked alike by ease and strength. He was muscular and bony—though not enough so to command particular attention on this account. The face alone spoke, and it was a face to be remembered. It was rather pale and thin, but well chiselled; and the mouth was particularly small and beautiful. Its expression was girlish in the extreme, and would have been held to indicate effeminacy as the characteristic of its owner, but for its even quiet, its immobility, its calm indifference of expression. The nose was good, but neither long nor large: it comported well with the expression of the mouth. But it was the eye that spoke; and its slightest look was earnestness. Every glance seemed sent forth upon some especial mission—every look had its object. Its movements, unlike those of the lips, were rapid and ranging. His hair was light and unpowdered; worn, singularly enough at that period, without the usual tie, and entirely free from the vile pomatum which disfigured the fashionable heads of the upper classes. His steel cap and waving plume were carried in his hand; and he stood, silent and observing, beside Cornwallis, as Lord Rawdon, followed by the brave Lieutenant-colonel Webster, and other officers, came up to the conference. The warrior we have endeavoured briefly to describe, was one whose name had its own particular terror in the ears of the Southrons in that region and reign of terror. He was the notorious Colonel Tarleton, the very wing of the British invading army: one, striking and commanding in aspect, gentle and dignified in deportment, calm and even in his general temper; but fierce and forward in war, sanguinary in victory, delighting in blood, and impatient always until he could behold it flowing.

Webster, equally, if not more brave than Tarleton, and certainly a far better officer, bore a better character in the southern warfare. His worth to his own army was equally great, and there is no such odium coupled with his exploits as shaded and stained the very best of Tarleton's. His celebrity with the one never obtained for him any unhappy notoriety with the other.

"The enemy is in force before us, gentlemen—so our prisoners tell us. They confirm the reports of the Marylander, Hughson, and come, as we could wish them, fairly into our clutches."

"And more than confirmed, I think, my lord, by the severity of their fire from the infantry on the left. Such a proportion on the march would at once speak for the presence of their entire army."

This was the remark of Webster. There was a pause of a moment, in which Cornwallis appeared to consult a memorandum in his hand. He spoke at length to Tarleton.

"What horse, was the report of Hughson?"

"Armand's only—some sixty-five, your excellency."

"And their late reinforcement of Virginians?"

"A perfect, but single regiment."

"'Tis odds, gentlemen, large odds against us, if these reports be true. The lines of Maryland and Delaware—good troops these—the Virginia troops, the North Carolinians, and native militia, make up five thousand men at least—full five thousand—for the rebel army. Ours is not three."

"But quite enough, my lord," was the prompt but measured language of Tarleton. "They are mere carrion, half-starved, and De Kalb's continentals alone excepted, will not stand a second fire. We shall ride over them."

"Ay, you, Tarleton—you will ride over them when our bayonets have first given you a clear track," said Webster.

"Which you can soon do," was the equally cool but ready response of the other. "They have come into our clutches, to employ the phrase of your excellency; it will be our fault if we do not close our fingers upon them. Half-starved, and perfectly undrilled, they will offer little obstacle. The novelty of situation alone is terror enough for these militia; that, indeed, is the only terror, and that they never get over until the third trial. This is the first, with two-thirds of this hodge-podge army. We must see that they do not get to a third."

"There spoke the sabre," said Rawdon, playfully.

"It should never speak twice," responded Tarleton, without a smile; "dead rebels never bite."

"No, but they howl most cursedly before they die, as you should know, Tarleton, above all others. We hear the echoes even now from the Waxsaws, when your sabres told upon Buford's regiment," said Rawdon.

"Ay, that was a sad business, Bannister, though, to be sure, you could not well help it," was the additional remark of Cornwallis, who yet looked approvingly upon the person whom he thus partially censured. Tarleton simply smiled; his thin lips slightly parting, and exhibiting a brief glimpse of the closed teeth, as he replied—

"Better they should howl than hurt; their bark is music; their bite might be something worse. You may talk, gentlemen, as you please; but if you were asked the question, you will much prefer the one to the other, with the dawning of to-morrow's sun."

"Our wish is for the fight, gentlemen," said Cornwallis; "my own opinion insists upon it as the preferable measure. They outnumber us, it is true; but I feel satisfied we can outfight them. Whether we can or not, I think, at least, we should try for it. We gain every thing by victory; the delay increases their force; and even without defeat, it makes the difficulty of conquest with us so much the greater. The suggestion of Tarleton is one also of importance. The rebels are half-starved men; their provisions have been unequal and unsatisfactory for some time past. Disease, too—so we learn from Hughson—has thinned them greatly; and in every possible aspect, our condition imperiously calls for fight. This is my opinion."

"And mine," responded Tarleton, slowly, letting down his sabre, which rattled quiveringly in the sheath with the stroke. The same opinion was expressed by Rawdon, Webster, and the rest; the resolve for fight was unanimous. Cornwallis then proceeded to arrange his army in order of battle. They displayed in one line, completely occupying the ground, one flank resting on a swamp, the other on a slight ravine which ran parallel with, and near it. The infantry of the reserve, dividing equally, took post in a second line, opposite the centre of each wing. The cavalry, commanded by Tarleton, held the road, where the left of the right wing met the volunteers of Ireland, a corps which, thus placed, formed the right of the left wing. On the right, Lieutenant-colonel Webster was placed in command. To Colonel Lord Rawdon, the left was assigned. Two six and two three pounders, under Lieutenant M'Leod, were placed in the front line, and two other pieces with the reserve. The arrangement of this force, though at midnight, so perfectly drilled and well-experienced had they been, was the movement of machines rather than of men. Every step was taken under the eyes of superior officers—every cannon found its assigned place with a niceness, admirably contrasting with the confusion which is supposed to belong to battle. Each soldier, before the dawn, had his supply of rum provided him; and officers and men, resolute and ready, held their places in order of battle, anxiously awaiting the approaching daylight.

The American army was formed with similar precision, and at the same hour. The second brigade of Maryland, with the regiment of Delaware, under General Gist, took the right; the brigade of North Carolina militia, led by Caswell, the centre; that of Virginia, under Stevens, the left. The first Maryland brigade was formed in reserve, under General Smallwood. Major-general Baron De Kalb, charged with the line of battle, took post on the right, while Gates, superintending the whole, as general-in-chief, placed himself on the road between the line and the reserve. To each brigade a due proportion of artillery was allotted; but the wing of the army—the horse—was utterly wanting. The cavalry of Armand, defeated at the first encounter of the night, is thought, by some of the simple countrymen who witnessed their rapidity, to be flying to this very day. Gates's line of battle has been criticised with the rest of his proceedings in this unhappy campaign. His arrangements placed the Virginia militia, an untried body, which had never before seen service, on the left, a disposition which necessarily put them in front of the enemy's right, consisting of his veterans. The better course would certainly have been, to have thrown the continentals, our regulars, upon the left; by which arrangement, the best men of both armies must have encountered. This was the plan of Lincoln in previous events, and certainly that plan most conformable to, and indeed called for by, the circumstances of the case. The flank of the American, like that of the British army, rested upon a morass; and, thus disposed, it awaited upon the ground, and in the given order, for the first glimpses of daylight and the enemy.

With the dawn of day, the British were discovered in front, in column, and on the advance. This was communicated to the adjutant-general, Williams, who soon distinguished the British uniform about two hundred yards before him. Immediately ordering the batteries to be opened upon them, he rode to General Gates, who was in the rear of the second line, and informed him of what had been done, communicating his opinion at the same time that the enemy were displaying their column by the right; but still nothing was clear enough in the proceedings of the opposite army for certainty on either side. Gates heard him attentively, but gave no orders, and seemed disposed to await the progress of events; upon which the adjutant-general presumed upon a farther suggestion.

"Does not your excellency think that if the enemy were attacked briskly by Stevens, while in the act of displaying, the effect—"

"Yes, sir," said Gates, hurriedly interrupting him; "that's right—let it be done, sir."

These were almost the last orders given by the unhappy commander. Quick as thought, Williams seized the commission, and, readily obedient, General Stevens advanced with his brigade to the charge, all seemingly in fine spirits. But the instructions came too late—the evolution of the enemy was complete; they were already in line, and prepared to receive the attack. But this did not alter the determination either of Stevens or the adjutant. Assigning a force of fifty men to the latter to commence the action by firing from the cover of trees as riflemen, in the hope to extort the premature fire of the British, Stevens cried out to his brigade, as he saw the column moving down upon him in front—

"Courage, my men, and charge—charge! You have bayonets as well as they."

His words were drowned, and lost, in the wild huzzas and the fierce onset of the opposing British, who fired as they came on, with their pieces in rest, for the charge of bayonets. The militia was seized with a panic, and, in spite of all the efforts of the gallant Stevens, could not be persuaded either to stand the charge or to return the fire. A few only stood with their leader. The great majority, throwing away their loaded arms, fled in every direction; and, catching from them the unworthy panic, the North Carolinians—a single regiment under Colonel Dixon alone excepted—followed the shameful example. In vain did Stevens and Caswell endeavour to stem the torrent of retreat. The fugitives were not to be restrained; and sought, in desperate flight, for that safety which flight seldom gives, and which it most certainly denied to them. They broke through the line, leaving the right still firm, and pressing down upon the reserve, disordered them while passing through. From his place, the commander-in-chief beheld the disaster with an emotion he had never anticipated. His hair withered at its roots as he surveyed the rout, and madly he pressed towards them, with head uncovered, waving his hat and crying to them as they flew—

Stand—turn—brave men—men of Virginia! I come to lead you back. Turn, cowards—for your country—for yourselves! Shame me not—shame me not; but rally. Come with me; look—I myself will lead you!"

But they heard—they heeded nothing of his exhortations. He threw himself directly in front of the fugitives, and with drawn sword, striking around him, as if among his enemies, he vainly endeavoured to compel their return. Never were exertions and exhortations more honest to this end. In his fury, hewing a soldier hurrying past him, down, almost to the middle, at a stroke, he vented his indignation in a torrent of oaths.

"Villains! cowards! for shame—for your country—for me! Turn, for me—turn, you d—d rascals, turn!"

Vain were all his exhortations—vain his oaths—vain his efforts. Panic is madness; it is more—it is contagion. They bore him along by the rush of numbers; and as he strove to turn, and for this purpose had drawn his steed suddenly round upon a tall sergeant who was hurrying away with the rest, the fellow did not hesitate, with his sabre, to cut the bridle of the animal, leaving the general without any control upon him. In this situation, the tumult attained its ascendency. The crowd bore him onward with it in its flight; and the fiery steed which he rode, free from all restraint, now imbibing some portion of the general panic, hurried along with the flying mass more madly than the rest. Gates had seen all of the battle which he was destined to see. His hair grew white as he flew, a token of that heart-felt humiliation which clung to him during all his subsequent existence. Meanwhile, the battle had become general throughout the field which he, per force, had deserted. The British army, flushed with the opening success, now advanced on every side; but the onward course of conquest was arrested when they encountered the continentals. Accustomed, as were the latter, to frequent encounter, they beheld the rout with little or no emotion. The panic touched not them.

"Stand your ground, brave men," cried De Kalb, as, with uncovered head, he rode calmly along through the smoke and danger—"stand your ground, brave men, and do no shame to your officers. Colonel Dixon," said he, addressing the officer in command of the only regiment of North Carolinians who kept their places—"Colonel Dixon, close up, and feel the Maryland regiment."

Surveying the prospect as he rode, and seeing that his flank, exposed by the desertion of the militia, was now partly covered, the old veteran prepared for the charge. His orders were given with the tone of true valour, while his decision was that of experience. Alighting from his horse, he turned him loose in the rear, then advancing on foot before his men, he commanded their instant preparation for that terrible movement. He himself led the way, and fought on foot at their head. His order to "charge bayonets," uttered in the imperfect tones of the foreigner, was heard distinctly through the affray. Catching his spirit, as it were, his line advanced without hesitation, and shouting buoyantly as they did so, in a few moments the line was overpassed which separated them from the enemy's left, commanded by Rawdon. The rival muskets were crossed, their bayonets linked, and for a few seconds the opposing armies reeled to and fro, like so many lock-limbed and coherent bodies: but the rush, and the enthusiasm of the charge of De Kalb, were, for the moment, irresistible, and Rawdon fell back beneath it.

"Where is the commander-in-chief!" cried De Kalb, in a fierce voice, as he beheld the adjutant-general, Williams, advancing with his own, the 6th Maryland, having actually driven the enemy out of line in front.

"Gone!" was the single word with which he announced to the old soldier the isolation of his continentals.

"On, then, on!" was the immediate shout of De Kalb; "look not to the right, nor to the left, brave men—but on! You are alone: your own steel must work your safety. Charge!"

A group of officers and soldiers—British and American—was seen struggling in front. An officer was down: a squad of soldiers was seeking to despatch him, and two others unequally contending against them with their swords. The wounded officer was an American.

"Again—once more, my brave fellows—once again—through them to the hearts of the enemy—charge—charge!" was the fierce order of De Kalb, in his imperfect English; "through, and heed them not!"

"But the officers are ours—they are aids to the general," cried Brigadier Gist, in the hope to arrest the desperate charge of De Kalb.

"And we are men," was the response—"what are these officers to us! onward! through them, brave men—once more to the hearts of the enemy!"

The group sought to disperse; the assailing soldiers fled away, leaving the wounded officer, and those who had been fighting in his behalf, alone, before the charging squadrons.

"Hold!" cried Colonel Walton, for it was he, advancing as he spoke—"hold, I pray you, Baron De Kalb! we are your friends—"

"On then—to the enemy!" cried De Kalb, unheeding the exhortation; and, filled with his own fury—the fury of desperation—the advancing line resolutely obeyed him. The wounded man, and those who stood beside him, must have been crushed, or gone along with the pressing line; and the moment was, therefore, full of peril to the group. Presenting his sword to his advancing countrymen, Colonel Walton cried to the wounded officer, who lay almost senseless at his feet—

"I will share your fate, Pinckney, if I cannot divert it. I stand by you to the last. Hold, Americans! What madness is this!—we are friends—would you trample us down!"

"On with us, then!" fiercely cried De Kalb, "on with us, if you be friends! We know you not otherwise."

"He is too much wounded," cried Walton, pointing to the insensible officer.

"This is no time, sir, to regard the dead or the wounded. The field is covered with both; shall we lose all for one man—officer or soldier! On with us, Colonel Walton—there is no help else. On!"

It was the last command of De Kalb, who was already severely wounded. In that moment the fierce onset of the continentals was arrested. A new obstacle, in a fire from the right, restrained their progress. This was Webster. Having thoroughly defeated the American left, he was now free to turn his face upon the isolated continentals. This small, resolute, and now compact body, had moved forward irresistibly. The fierce spirit of its commander seemed to have been shared equally with his men; and though every step which they took was with the loss of numbers, they ceaselessly continued to advance—the fire of the British left and centre still telling dreadfully upon them,but without shaking their inflexible and reckless charge. The sudden movement of Webster upon their flanks first arrested their progress. He turned the whole force of his infantry, together with the twenty-third regiment, upon the exposed flank of the first, or Smallwood's brigade. This had been commanded bravely by Colonel Gunby, and other of its officers, the general himself not being available for some time before. The shock of Webster's charge upon this body was irresistible; they reeled and broke beneath it. They were rallied, and once more stood the assault. They stood but to perish; and it was found impossible to contend longer with the vastly superior and fresh force from the reserve which was now brought to bear upon them. This shock, and the effect of Webster's assault, at this critical moment, saved the life of Walton and that of his wounded friend, Major Pinckney. The fierce command of De Kalb was no longer obeyed by the flank regiment, now compelled to combat with another enemy. They faced Webster; and Walton found himself on the extreme left, instead of being in front of the body which, a moment before, had been ordered to pass over him. In another instant, the line reeled beyond him: he saw the enemy pressing on, and he rushed to the front of the retreating division of Americans. Again they were brought to a stand: again the impelling bayonets of Webster drove them backward; and while they yet strove bravely, at the will of their officers, to unite more compactly together for the final conflict, the shrill voice of Tarleton was heard upon the left. Then came the rush of his dragoons; the sweeping sabre darting a terrible light on every hand, and giving the final impetus to that panic which now needed but little to be complete throughout the army.

"Spare! oh spare the Baron De Kalb!" was a cry of anguish that went up from the centre of the line. It was doubly agonizing, as the accents were uttered evidently by a foreign tongue. Walton looked but an instant in the direction where lay the old veteran, feebly striving still to contend with the numbers who were now pressing around him. The Chevalier Du Buysson, a faithful friend, stood over him, vainly endeavouring to protect him by the interposition of his own body. His piteous cry—"Spare the baron! spare the Baron De Kalb!" had little or no avail.

Eleven wounds already testified to the reckless courage of the veteran, and the earnestness with which he had done battle to the last for the liberties of a foreign people. The bayonet was again lifted above him to strike, when Colonel Walton pressed forward to his relief. But, with the movement, he was himself overthrown—himself exposed to the bayonet of the enemy. He threw up his sword and parried the first stroke of the weapon, which glanced down and stuck deeply in the grass beside him. Another pinned him by his sleeve to the spot; and his career in the next moment would probably have been ended, but for the timely appearance of Colonel Tarleton himself. His order was effectual, and Walton tendered him his sword.

"You have saved my life, sir: my name is Colonel Walton."

The lips of Tarleton wore something of a smiling expression, as, returning the weapon, he transferred his prisoner to the guardianship of two of his troopers. The expression of his face, so smiling, yet so sinister in its smile, surprised Walton, but he was soon taught to understand it.

The battle ceased with the fall of De Kalb. It had been hopeless long before. Turning his eyes gloomily from the thick confusion of the field, Colonel Walton moved away with his conductors, while Tarleton, with his eye kindled with fight, and a lip quivering with its pleasurable convulsions, led his cavalry in pursuit of the fugitives, marking his progress for twenty-two miles from the field of battle with proofs of that sanguinary appetite for blood, which formed the leading feature of his character, according to history and tradition, in all the fields of Carolina.

CHAPTER XXIII.

> "A stubborn knave, you may not trust or tame.
> Go, bear him to the block! The biting axe
> Shall teach him quiet hence."

THE victory was complete in all respects. The army of Gates was dispersed—that general, a melancholy wanderer, hopeless of fortune, and, with a proper self-rebuke, dreading the opinion of his country. The loss of the Americans in this battle was heavy. Of the continentals but six hundred escaped; and as their number was but nine hundred in all, they necessarily lost, in killed, wounded, and prisoners, one third of their entire force. The whole number slain of the American army must have been six hundred men—a large proportion, in a small body of three thousand and fifty-two. The loss admitted by the British commander, was three hundred killed and wounded—an amount certainly unexaggerated, and showing conclusively what must have been the result of the contest had the militia done their duty,—had they but stood the first round,—had they but returned the fire of the foe. The continentals alone bore the brunt of the conflict, and they were victorious until isolated and overborne by numbers.

The prisoners, among whom is included Colonel Walton, were roped by the command of Tarleton, and formed not the least imposing portion of the triumphal procession of the victor, on his return to Camden. De Kalb died a few days after in the arms of Du Buysson, his aide. His last words were those of eulogy upon the gallant troops whom he had so well trained, and who, justifying his avowed confidence in them, had stood by him, in the previous struggle, to the last.

"My brave division!" These, in broken accents and imperfect English, were his last words. While expiring, his eye blazed up for a moment, as if the ardour of the strife was again burning in his soul, and then its light went out for ever. His name can never be erased from the history, nor his memory forgotten by the people in whose cause he perished.

A different fate awaited the other prisoners, to many of whom a like death would have been a glad reprieve. The revengeful feelings of Lord Cornwallis were yet to be satisfied. The banquet of blood which the late battle had afforded, had quickened and made ravenous the appetite, which, at the same time, it had failed to satisfy. There was much in the circumstances of the period to provoke this appetite in the British commander, though nothing to justify its satiation to the gross extent to which it carried him. He had seen much of his good labours in the province entirely overturned. Deeming the country utterly conquered, such had been the amount of his communications to his king. The work had now to be begun anew. The country, so lately peaceable and submissive, was now everywhere in arms. The swamps on every side of him began to swarm with enemies; and his own victory over Gates and the continentals, though unqualified and conclusive, was burdened with tidings of the great success of Sumter on the Wateree, of Marion on Black river, and of many other leaders not so distinguished as these, but highly promising for the future in the small successes of the beginning. These tidings gave just cause of irritation to the mind which, having first flattered itself with an idea of its complete success, now discovers that all its labours have been taken in vain. He grew vindictive in consequence, and persuading himself that a terrible example was necessary, if not for justice, at least for his cause, he ordered a selection to be made from among the prisoners in his possession, who were doomed to expiate the guilt of patriotism upon the gallows.

The streets of Camden were filled with lamentations the day upon which this determination was made public. This was three days after the battle,—time enough, surely, having intervened for the subduing of his sanguinary temper. Twenty victims were chosen for the sacrifice, and among them was Colonel Walton. They were chosen either for their great popularity, or for their reputation of especial malignity. The former class was selected in order that the example might be an imposing one; the punishment of particular offences was the ground upon which the others were "to be justified." Yet reasons, if "plenty as blackberries," were not readily furnished, or cared for, on the occasion. Even the trial which preceded their execution was of a most summary and nominal character. The stern commander himself presided, with a general officer on either hand. The prisoners were brought before him singly.

"Why has this man been chosen?" was the inquiry of Cornwallis to Lord Rawdon.

"Violation of protection, my lord: this man is one Samuel Andrews, who was quiet and pacific enough—full of professions—until the rebel army came to Lynch's creek. He was taken on the field."

"Take him away, marshal," was the immediate order. "To the tree with him!" The man was removed. "Who are these?"

"Their names are"—Lord Rawdon, in reply, read from a paper which he held in his hand—"Richard Tucker, John Miles, Josiah Gayle, Eleazar Smith, Lorimer Jones—"*

"No more," cried Cornwallis, interrupting the reader. "Enough of that. They are all brought up under the same charge—are they?"

"All but one: the man Gibson, there, in the blue stripes, is little better than an outlaw. The charge against him in particular is, that he shot Edward Draper, a soldier in the 'Queen's Guards,' across the Wateree river, and was subsequently taken alone, without connection with any military body whatsoever."

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* Historical—the names of the sufferers are on record as here given.

"The insolent scoundrel! Advance him, guard—bring him forward."

The man was singled out from the group. His arms were lashed behind him with cords, but he moved forward as if perfectly unbound, and no figure could have been more erect. He had on neither coat nor jacket; his shirt was torn, bloody, and open at the breast, displaying beneath the fair bosom of a youth, but the full muscular development of the man. He approached the table unshrinkingly, striding boldly forward to Cornwallis, and, with an upward eye, met the stern glance of his judge, intended to be an overwhelming one, with a corresponding look of defiance.

"Stand where you are, sir!—we desire you no closer," cried his lordship. "You hear the charge against you?"

The man did not stand where he had been ordered, but continued to approach until the table only intervened between himself and his lordship. The latter repeated his inquiry.

"You hear the charge against you?"

"I do—it is the truth. I shot Edward Draper, a corporal in the Queen's Guards, across the Wateree."

"With what purpose?"

"To kill him."

"Ay, we suppose that—but what did you propose to gain by it?"

"Justice."

"Justice!—what had he done?"

"Beat my mother."

"Why did you not apply for justice at the first station, instead of taking it into your own hands?"

"I did;—Lord Rawdon, there, will tell you why I took it into my own hands."

"Well."

"He denied it to me."

"It is false, my lord," exclaimed Lord Rawdon; "Draper was severely reprimanded."

"My mother was beaten, and the man who beat her was—reprimanded! I did not think that enough of justice, and I shot him."

The evident discrepancy between the original wrong and its punishment by Rawdon, could not but appear to all parties; and Cornwallis himself was almost disposed to look favourably upon the offender. But example—a terrible example—was supposed to be necessary; and with this belief, he was determined to shield no victim from his fate, who exhibited any thing like a strong and decisive character. Still, as the offence was rather of a private than of a public nature, the commander proposed to the prisoner the usual British alternative of safety at that period, and under like circumstances.

"If I pardon you your crime, Gibson, will you at once take arms for his majesty?"

"Never!" was the quick and firm response; "I'll see him d—d first."

"Take him forth, marshal, with the rest. See that they suffer instantly. Away with him!"

The stern voice of Cornwallis rang like a trumpet through the assembly; and as the sounds died away, another voice, yet more thrilling, sent forth a scream —a woman's voice—a single scream, and so shrill, so piercing, so wo-begone and sad, that it struck through the assembly as something ominous and unearthly. A woman rushed forth from behind the group, and threw herself before the merciless commander. It was his mother.

"My son—my only son—he is all I have, my lord! Oh—spare him—spare him to his widowed mother! I have none on earth but him!" was all she said,—her eyes bent upon Cornwallis, while her finger pointed to the tall and manly youth beside her.

"Take him away! It is too late, my good woman, —you should have taught him better. Take him away!" was the stern and only answer.

The prisoners were hurried forth; the woman, doomed so soon to be childless, clinging to her son, and shrieking all the while. There was yet another victim.

Rawdon whispered the commander, and from an adjoining apartment, Colonel Walton was brought before his judge. Cornwallis rose at his approach with a show of respectful courtesy, then again gently resumed his seat.

"Colonel Walton, I am truly sorry to see you thus—truly sorry," was the considerate speech of his excellency, as the prisoner approached. Walton bowed slightly in return, as he replied—

"I am grateful for your lordship's consideration, but cannot withhold my surprise that you should regret your own successes. The fortune of war has made you the victor, and has given me into your power. The prisoner of war must not complain when he encounters the risks, which should have been before his eyes from the beginning, no more than the victor should regret the victory which he sought from war."

"The prisoner of war! I am afraid, Colonel Walton, we cannot consider you in that character."

"Your lordship will explain."

"Colonel Walton, a subject of the King of Great Britain, found in arms against his officers, is a rebel to his authority, and incurs the doom of one."

"No subject of the King of Great Britain, sir! I deny the charge. I am not his subject, and no rebel therefore to his authority. But this is not for me to argue now. To what, may I ask your lordship, does all this tend?"

"The consequences are inevitable, Colonel Walton—the traitor must bear the doom—he must die the death of the traitor."

"I am ready to die for my country at any hour, and by any form of death. The prisoner, sir, is in your hands. I will simply protest against your decision, and leave it to the ripening time and to the arms of my countrymen to avenge my wrongs."

"I would save—I would save your life, Colonel Walton—gladly save it, would you but allow me," said Cornwallis earnestly.

"My dissent or assent, my lord, on such a subject, and under present circumstances, is surely unnecessary. The mockery of such a reference is scarcely agreeable to me, and, certainly, not becoming on the part of the conqueror. The power is in your hands, my lord, to work your pleasure."

"We will speak plainly, Colonel Walton, and you will readily understand us. As you say, mine is the power to command your instant death: and whether I do so, in error or in right, it matters not; it will avail you nothing. I would save you, as your life, properly exercised for the royal cause—for the cause of your king, sir—will serve us much more materially than your death. Your influence is what we want—your co-operation with us, and not your blood. Twice, sir, has a commission—an honourable and high commission—in his majesty's service, been tendered to you from me. Twice has it been rejected with scorn; and you are now taken in arms against his majesty's troops, having violated your solemn pledge to the contrary, which your protection insisted upon."

"Wrong, sir!" exclaimed Walton, interrupting him—"wrong, sir! The contract was violated and rendered null by the proclamation of Sir Henry Clinton—not by me."

"This is your opinion; and I need not say how incorrectly. But, as I have before said, whether justly or unjustly you fell a victim, will avail you nothing. The hanged man heeds nothing of the argument which proves that he was hung by mistake. I have the power of life and death over you in my own hands; and, believe me, Colonel Walton, in opening a door of safety for you, I am offering you the last, the only alternative. You shall die or live, as you answer!"

"I am ready, my lord. You somewhat mistake my character, if you think that I shall fall back from the truth, because of the consequences which it may happen to bring with it. Ha! What is this!"

He was interrupted by a sudden blast of the bugle, a confused hum of voices, and then a shriek. Another, and another, wild and piercing, rose from the court in front. At that instant, a soldier entering the apartment threw open the doors, and gave an opportunity for those within to behold the awful tragedy that had been going on the while. A single tree in front of the place bore twenty human bodies; the limbs were yet quivering in the air with their agonizing convulsions, and the executioner was not yet done.

"Close the door, sergeant," said Cornwallis calmly. Then, continuing his exhortation to Walton, he made use of the awful circumstance which they had just witnessed, the more earnestly to impress his desires upon the mind of the hearer, and produce a different determination.

"An awful doom, but necessary. It is one, Colonel Walton, from which I would gladly save you. Why will you reject the blessings of life? Why will you resist the mercies which still seek to prevent the purposes of justice?"

"Justice!" was the scornful exclamation of the prisoner, and all that he deigned to reply.

"Ay, sir, justice! The cause of the rightful monarch of this country is the cause of justice; and its penalties are incurred by disloyalty before all other offences. But argument is needless here."

"It is—it is needless," said Walton, emphatically.

"And, therefore," Cornwallis proceeded—"therefore, sir, I confine myself to the brief suggestion which I now make you, by the adoption of which you will escape your present difficulties. Though you have twice rejected his majesty's terms of favour, he is reluctant to destroy."

"The tree attests the reluctance. It bears its own illustration, your lordship, which your assertion, nevertheless, does not need. I hear you, sir."

Somewhat disconcerted, Cornwallis, with a show of rising impatience, hurried into a conclusion.

"Once more, sir, he offers you safety; once more he tenders you an honourable appointment in his armies. Here, sir, is his commission—take it. Go below to the Ashley and make up your own regiment; choose your own officers, and do for him what you have hitherto fruitlessly sought to do for his enemies."

"Never, sir, never!" was the conclusive reply.

"Yet, a while, bethink you. You know the doom else—death—the gallows."

"I know it; I have thought: you have my answer."

"Then, you die—die like a dog, sir, in the scorn of all around you."

"Be it so. I hope, and fear not, to die like a man. My country will avenge me. I am ready!"

"Your country!" said Cornwallis, scornfully. Then turning to Rawdon, he gave his order.

"My Lord Rawdon, you will instantly detach an especial guard for the prisoner, in addition to that which has been designated to conduct the prisoners of war taken in the late action to the Charlestown provost. He shall go with them to Dorchester."

"For what? with what object? why to Dorchester, my lord?" was the anxious inquiry of Walton.

"You shall die there, sir, as an example to the rebels of that quarter. You shall suffer where you are most known—where your loss would be most felt."

"Let me die here, rather, my lord! I pray you for this mercy. Not there—not there—almost in sight of my child."

"There, and there only, Colonel Walton. Your doom is sealed; and, refusing our mercy, you must abide our penalty. Make out your orders, my Lord Rawdon, to the officer of the station, Colonel Proctor; I will sign them. Say to him that the rebel must be executed at the village entrance, within three days after the guard shall arrive. Take him away!"

Such was the British jurisdiction; such was the summary administration of justice under Lord Cornwallis. These items are all historical; and fiction here has not presumed to add a single tittle to the evidence which truth has given us of these events.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"What sad despair is this, that braves the storm,
Would battle with the whelming tides that heave,
And pant to close around, and strive to cling,
And keep the victim down!"

It was a fine, but warm summer afternoon, in August. The Santee river lay smooth and shining like a polished mirror in the unclouded sunlight, and all nature appeared to revel in the same luxurious repose. Our old acquaintance, Porgy, lay along the banks of the river, half concealed in the shelter of the brush around him. The spot which gave him a resting-place and shelter, shot out, at this point, from the dead level strip of shore, boldly into the stream; which, seemingly vexed at the interruption, beat with a pettish murmur upon its upward side, as if vainly struggling to break through it in its downward progress. The jutting land, thus obtrusively trenching upon the water, was of no great extent, but, being well covered by the trees and luxuriant foliage, it formed an excellent hiding-place for one desirous of watching the river on either hand, without danger of exposure. Sweeping around the point, both above and below, the spectator, thus stationed, might see for a few miles, on both sides, the entire surface of the stream, commanding, in this scope of sight, one or two of the usual crossing places at low stages of the water. The river was probably a mile wide at this point, not including the swamp, which, in some places, extended to a width five or ten times that of the main body of the stream. From this dead level of swamp, it was only now and then that the banks of the river rose into any thing like height or boldness. The point now occupied by Porgy was one of those places most prominent to the sight. On the upper or northern side of the river, directly opposite, there was another bold ascent to a bank from which the boats usually started when putting across the stream. This bank was easily beheld by the spectator opposite. The trees were but few upon it; and its baldness, the natural result of the frequent use made of it, contrasted, not unpleasantly, with the otherwise unvarying wall of woods that formed the boundary of the main current; the trees crowding thickly down into the river until their bending branches met its embraces; and their tops, sometimes, when the freshet was great, rested like so many infant shrubs, depending without a root or base upon its swollen bosom.

The afternoon sun, streaming from the west along the river's surface, its beams mingling in an even line to the east with its current, still farther contributed to the softness of the picture. A warm flush, tempered by the golden haze that hangs like a thin veil over the evening midsummer prospect in the south, subdued pleasantly the otherwise blinding effulgence of the day. The slight breathings of the wind, only equal to the lifting of the lightest leaf, whispered to all things—the bud, the flower, and the insect,of that dreamy indulgence and repose which Porgy, who felt always and appreciated such an influence, had stretched himself off to enjoy—lying at length under an overhanging tree, lazily watching the scene around him, and with a drooping eye, that seemed to say how irksome was the task which he yet found himself bound to execute.

He was on duty even then. The men of Marion were all around him in the swamp on the southern side of the river. The partisan chief was full of anxiety, and his scouts and guards were doubled and spread about on every hand. He looked hourly for intelligence from Gates and the continentals; not that he hoped much, if any thing of the army, or of good in the news which he anticipated. He had not been persuaded, in the brief interview which he had been vouchsafed by the American general, and in what he had seen of his command, to look for or to expect much from the then approaching issue. Marion was the very opposite of Gates in nearly all respects. Modest, yet firm, his reliance upon himself arose not from any vague confidence in fortune or in circumstances, but in the timely adaptation of corresponding means to ends, and in the indefatigable industry and zeal with which he plied all the energies, whether of himself or of his men, to the successful attainment of his object. Gates, he soon perceived, was afflicted with his own infallibility—a disease that not only forbids precaution, but that rejects advice and resists improvement. Such a malady is the worst under which generals or philosophers can labour; and Marion needed no second glance to perceive the misfortune of Gates in this respect. His confidence in that commander was lessened duly as he beheld this failing; and he returned from the camp, if not full of forebodings, at least warmly anxious on the score of approaching events. He had partly fulfilled the duties which Gates had assigned him; he had traversed the Santee and Peedee, breaking up the boats, dispersing the little bands of tories as they leagued together and came in his way, and contributed largely to the overthrow of that consciousness of security on the part of the British which they had hitherto enjoyed, but of which they were deprived, in greater or less degree, from the moment that Marion rose in arms and led the Black river insurrection. He had now, in pursuit of the same objects, brought his squad again to the Santee, occupying those positions along that river by which he would be sooner likely to receive intelligence, assist his friends, or harass his enemies.

Porgy, on the present occasion, held the post of a sentinel. A good watcher was he, though the labour was irksome to him. Could he have talked all the while, or sung, with no ears but his own to appreciate his melodies, he would have been perfectly content; but silence and secrecy were principles in the partisan warfare, and tenaciously insisted upon by the commander. Porgy looked east and west, north and south, without relief. The banks lay beautiful before him, in a deep quiet, on the other side of the river. Near him ran a dozen little creeks, shooting into the swamp—dark and bowery defiles, whose mouths, imperceptibly mingling with the river, formed so many places of secure entry and egress for the canoes of the warriors. Stretched along the grass, he surveyed one of these little bayous, and his increasing heedfulness indicated some cause of disturbance. Presently, a shrill whistle, just as he had lifted his rifle, and was about to fire, reached his ears; and quietly returning the signal, he crawled along the bank towards its edge, and looked down to the little creek, as it wound in, behind him, from the river. The signal which he had heard proceeded from that quarter; and from the recess, a few moments after, a little "dug-out" shot forth, propelled by the single paddle of Lance Frampton. Concealing the boat behind a clump of brush, that hung over the mouth of the creek, the boy jumped out, and scrambling up the sides of the bluff, was, soon after, alongside of the drowsy sentinel.

"Harkee, young man," said Porgy, as the youth approached him, "you will pay dearly for good counsel, unless you heed carefully what I now give you. Do you know that you had nearly felt my bullet just now, as I caught the sound of your paddle, before you condescended to give the signal? A moment more delay on your part would have given us both no little pain, for truly I should have sorrowed to have shot you; and you, I think, would have been greatly annoyed by it."

"That I should, Mr. Porgy; and I ought to have whistled, but I did not think."

"You must learn to think, boy—that is the first lesson you should learn. Not to think, is to be vulgar. The first habit which a gentleman learns, is to think—to deliberate. He is never to be taken by surprise. The habit of thinking is to be lost, or acquired, at the pleasure of the individual; and not to think, is, not only to be no gentleman, but to be a criminal. You will suffer from the want of such a habit. It is the vulgar want always, and, permit me to add, the worst."

"I try, sir, to think, for I know the good of it; but it takes time to learn every thing, sir."

"It does; but not so much time as people usually suppose. The knowledge of one thing brings with it the knowledge of another; as in morals, one error is the parent of a dozen—one crime, the predecessor of a thousand. Learn what you can, and the rest will come to you; as in fowling, you inveigle one duck, and the rest of the flock follows. Talking of ducks, now, boy, puts me in mind of dinner. Have the scouts brought in any provisions."

"No, sir—not yet; and no sign of them."

Porgy looked, with a wo-begone expression, towards the sun, now on the decline, and sighed audibly.

"A monstrous long day, Lance—a monstrous long day. Here, boy, draw this belt, and take in another buttonhole—nay, take in two; it will admit of it."

The boy did as he was directed—Porgy stretching himself along the grass for the purpose of facilitating the effort, and the boy actually bestriding him; the slender form of the latter oddly opposed to the mountainous mass of matter that lay swelling and shrinking beneath him. While engaged in this friendly office, the boy started, and in a half-whisper, pointing to the opposite shore, exclaimed—

"Oh, Mr. Porgy! look! look! what a beautiful creature!"

Porgy started at once; seized his rifle; brought it up to his shoulder; then, a moment after, let it drop heavily, with an air of chagrin and mortification, to the ground. And well he might be mortified. Before him, on the opposite shore, directly on the edge of the stream, to the surface of which his head was bending, stood a buck of the largest description. His antlers, full and thick, branched loftily in air; his brown, sleek sides and slender limbs, as he stood snuffing the breeze—now suspiciously lifting his head to listen, and now stooping to the clear wave to drink—furnished a study for the painter, not less than for the gourmand. But he was half a mile off.

"Master Frampton," exclaimed Porgy, with much gravity, "you will be the death of me. You show me a deer, and deny me a dinner."

The boy laughed.

"Don't laugh, boy; it is too serious a matter, quite. It is too provoking. D—n the beast—look at him—he seems to see us, and to know our mortification—mine, at least. Now could I be tempted to send him a shot, if it were only to scare him out of his breath. He looks most abominably impudent."

"He looks scared now, sir," said the boy, as, starting to one side of the bank, and towards the thickening swamp on the right of it, the animal seemed to show alarm, and a desire for flight.

"Yes: something has frightened him, that's clear; and what troubles him, may be equally troublesome to us. Lie flat, boy—draw that brush a little more in front of you, and take off your cap. You can see through the leaves well enough."

At this moment, a whistle behind them announced a friend, and Humphries joined the two a little time after.

"What do you see, Porgy!"

The gourmand pointed to the deer, which now, in evident alarm, bounded forward a few paces into the stream, then, swimming a few rods up the river, sought a cover in the swamp thicket to the right. His alarm was unequivocally clear to the partisans, and Humphries, following the example of the two, squatted down beside them; taking care so to cover his person behind the brush, as, while seeing every thing, himself to remain unseen. He had scarcely done so, when the cause of the deer's alarm was made evident in the approach, to the very spot upon which the animal had stood drinking, of a man, in the common dress of the woodman. His appearance was miserably wo-begone and unhappy. His dress was tattered and dirty; and consisted of the coarse stuffs worn by the poorer orders of the country. He had no arms—no apparent weapons of any kind; and his movement, sluggish and without elasticity, seemed that of one greatly fatigued. He threw himself, a moment after his arrival, at length along the bank, with that air of listless self-abandonment which marks the character of despair.

"Poor devil! he seems wearied and worn, Humphries."

"It is one of our men. Ten to one he brings us news from camp."

"Bad news, then: he looks like any thing but the messenger of good. But stay—what is he about?"

The stranger, while they spoke, had arisen; and, leaving the edge of the bank, went back to the wood, from which, a few moments after, he emerged, bearing in his hands a couple of common fence rails. These he bore with difficulty to the edge of the water, and, though no burden to a man in ordinary strength, their weight, in his fatigue, seemed to demand a more than ordinary effort.

"Why, what's he going to do now?" said Porgy.

The man, as he spoke, threw off his jacket and shoes, and taking a ragged handkerchief from his pocket, enclosed them with its folds, then placing them over the two rails which he laid side by side for the purpose, he lashed them strongly together. This done, he advanced to the stream, taking the bundle in his hands. For a few moments he paused, looked up and down the river, and seemed to hesitate with a due sense of caution; then, as if ashamed of his fears, he rushed to the water, and throwing the rails before him, boldly plunged after them into its bosom.

"The damned booby, he will certainly drown," said Porgy, half rising from his place. Humphries pulled him down and bade him be quiet, with a voice which, though low, was stern with authority.

"But we must not let the poor devil drown, Bill."

"We must do our duty—we must not expose ourselves if we can help it, Porgy. His life is nothing to our own; and we don't know who comes behind him."

"That's true: d—n the fellow—let him drown—who cares!"

"Meanwhile, swimming feebly, striking with one hand while the other derived a feeble support from the rails, the stranger moved forward. But it was soon evident that his strength was that of a child, in opposition to the current. He strove desperately to keep a direct course over the water, but, every movement carried him out of his line, and the sweeping stream resisted, and rendered futile, the feeble dash of his hand, with which, striking its overbearing billows, he laboured earnestly, though vainly, to master their strength. As he advanced farther within its current, he found himself still less able to contend with it; and the partisans, from their place of watch, could now see that his almost powerless hand was just raised above the water, dropping into it feebly, at long and increasing intervals, without impulsion, and taking no purchase from the stream. He certainly ceased to advance, and his movement now was only with the current.

"We must help him, Humphries, my dear fellow, or he will drown and be d—d," said Porgy.

"Oh yes, sir—do let us help him!" exclaimed Lance, who had watched the scene with an anxiety that kept him starting anxiously, with every movement of the swimmer.

"If it must be done, Porgy," said Humphries, in reply, "there's only one of us that can do it. The 'dug-out' won't carry more, and I'm the best hand at the paddles. So, keep cool and quiet—don't cry out, for we don't know but the tories may be after the fellow, or maybe the British; and if they guess at Marion's men being in the swamp, it'll break up all our schemes. Lie close, and if the chap can keep above water till I get to him, I'll save him."

With the words, descending quickly from the bluff, Humphries took the skiff; and the little canoe, under his powerful arms, soon shot from the concealing bush where Lance had left it. It was not long before the swimmer saw him, and he shouted joyfully, but faintly, at the sight. The tones were so feeble that the boatman threw all his skill and strength into his paddle, sparing no effort to reach him, as he felt assured that the man could not long continue the struggle with the heavy setting current of the river.

"Keep up, keep up," Humphries cried out to him in encouragement; "keep up for a little while—only a few minutes more, stranger, and I'll fish you up like an oyster."

Words, but so faint as to be undistinguishable, reached Humphries from the swimmer in reply. The sounds only were audible, but none of the syllables. The canoe, light as a feather, was sent more rapidly than at first towards the speaker, as Humphries felt more and more the necessity of speed. It whirled on nearer and nearer, and Lance started up, and clapped his hands in delight, as he beheld the swimmer throwing aside his frail support, and grasping firmly the gunwale of the little bark that had so opportunely come to his assistance. Supported without effort on his own part, by holding upon its little sides, the man was brought safely to shore; Humphries, with all the dexterity of the Indian, having trimmed and propelled his frail bark, even though thus encumbered, with little fatigue, and comparatively as little effort. The exhausted swimmer was carried into camp, and soon recovered sufficiently to unfold his intelligence to the commander of the partisans in person.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Now let us follow in the quick pursuit,
And bring good tidings to the destined one."

COLONEL MARION examined the fugitive himself. He was one of the little squad of Colonel Walton, and had sustained the battle as one of the regiment of Colonel

Dixon, to whose North Carolina regiment—the only one that had stood the fight—he had been attached by Gates. He had seen the first and last of the battle, and had been fortunate enough to reach one of the swamps which lay on the flank of both armies, where he found shelter until the victor had departed. He gave the whole gloomy story of the defeat in broad colours to the partisans; and though he could say nothing as to the fate of Gates himself, and the several officers, touching whose safety the inquiries of Marion and of Singleton were made in particular, he yet knew enough to assure them of the utter dispersion of the army, and the slaughter, according to his account, of at least one half of it. His farther intelligence was important, and its advantages were yet available. He had seen, and with difficulty had escaped from the British guard, which had been despatched by Cornwallis, having custody of the continental prisoners, destined for the provost, or common prison in Charlestown. That guard, he informed the partisan, had pursued an upper road, and would, according to all probability, cross the Santee at Nelson's, a few miles higher up the river. Burdened with baggage and prisoners, they might not yet have reached the river; and with this hope, giving his signals with the rapidity of lightning, Marion collected his squad, resolute to try odds, though inferior in number, with the detachment in question. The rescue of one hundred and fifty continentals, for that was their least number, would be an important acquisition to the cause; and a successful stroke, so soon after such a defeat as that of Gates, might have the beneficial effect of restoring confidence, and giving renewed hope to the paralyzed Carolinians. Himself undespairing, Marion adopted his plan with the determination. Dividing his force into three parties, he gave one to Colonel Hugh Horry, another to Singleton, and the third he led in person. The signal sounded, the men rose from their hiding-places, gathered around their different leaders; and within an hour after the receipt of the intelligence just given, and while the sun yet shone richly and gem-like in the west, the partisans were all mounted upon their fleet steeds, and dashing up to the spot where they looked for, and prepared themselves to receive, their enemies. Silence resumed her savage empire in the swamp, and the gray-squirrel leaped fearlessly over the island retreat, which an hour before he had trembled but to approach.

As the partisan drew nigh the designated point, he received intelligence that the guard with the prisoners had not yet crossed the river, but had marched to Great Savannah, a little above it. He was particularly informed as to their number, and that of their prisoners, though nothing was yet known to the partisans of the peculiar condition of some among them—the doom to which they were destined, or of those who had already been sacrificed to the vindictive spirit of the British commander. All this they were yet to learn. Moving now with greater rapidity, Marion soon crossed the river with all his force; and as the enemy could not be very far off, he proceeded more cautiously. He sent out his scouts, and as they severally came in with intelligence, he prepared his farther plans. Night came on, and he was advised that the British would most probably lie by on the main road, at the public-house which was kept on the edge of the Great Savannah. The opinion seemed probable, as travelling by night in the southern swamps was no part of the British custom; and to cross the river after dark would have been a risk of some magnitude. This, however, was Marion's favourite mode of warfare; and calling in his parties, he gave directions to Colonel Horry to make a circuit round the savannah, and lurking on its lower edge, gain the pass of Horse creek, and keep close in cover until he should receive a communication how to proceed from him. The reckless and ready officer in question immediately went off in obedience to the commander. To Major Singleton a similar station was intrusted on the other side of the road, where the woods were open, and where he was compelled, as the sheltering cover was thin and imperfect, to bury his party more deeply in its recesses than would otherwise have been considered necessary. Marion's men, and the largest division, occupied both sides of the road above the designated house, while a detachment of selected scouts traversed the whole line of road, bearing intelligence to the commander as promptly as it was required.

Unsuspectingly, the British guard marched on; and duly informed at every step in their progress, Marion suffered them safely to reach the house at which they were determined to stop for the night. A scout of the partisan looked in at the window, disguised and unobserved. He carefully watched the progress of the supper, saw the disposition of the soldiers and the prisoners, and left, in safety, his place of observation. A little before daylight in the morning, while it was yet quite dark, an officer of Marion communicated to Horry the instructions of the commander. Promptly moving forward as directed, Horry led his men to the house, and had almost reached it without interruption; but as he threw wide a little paling gate that opened from the garden, through which he came to the court-yard of the dwelling, he was challenged by a sentinel. Horry not answering, but advancing at the moment with alacrity, the sentinel fired his piece unsuccessfully, and was immediately cut down by him. The alarm was given, however; and though the surprise was effective, it was incomplete. A pile of arms before the door was seized upon; but the great body of the enemy, partly armed, made their escape through the front entrance, and immediately pushed down the road. It was then that Singleton charged upon them. He was promptly met—the guard rallied with coolness and in good order, and the small force of Singleton was compelled to give back before them. But Horry, who had lingered to release the continentals, now came up, and the contest was resumed with vigour. The British, slowly moving down the road, held their way unbroken, and fought bravely at brief pauses in their movement. They were still in force quite too great for the parties opposed to them, and the advantages gained by the latter were those chiefly of surprise. While they fought, the guard divided; a portion of them carried Colonel Walton, with such other prisoners as had been subjects of special judgment and particular care, to the cover of the savannah, while the rest, now unencumbered, continued the fight valiantly enough. But the troops of Marion now rushed in, fresh men, and falling upon the enemy's rear, they soon finished the contest. The fight had lasted, however, for an hour at least before its conclusion; and the loss of the British was severe. The partisans not only rescued all the continentals, one hundred and fifty in number—all of the Maryland line—but they took besides twenty-two regulars of the 63d regiment, including their captain, and sundry other prisoners. But the small guard, carrying with it Colonel Walton, and the other South Carolina prisoners, had gone clear; and hurrying under good guidance to the Santee, while yet the fight was going on, they seized upon some of the boats of Marion, and were safe upon the other side of the river, and speeding upon their way, before the conflict was half over.

What was the horror of Singleton, when, at daylight, the released prisoners gave intelligence of the destiny of Colonel Walton, and the perfect escape with their charge of the guard having him in custody. He immediately rushed to his commander with the melancholy narrative.

"It is unhappy—dreadfully unhappy, Major Singleton," said the commander—"but what are we to do? It is now scarcely possible that we should overtake them; they have the start too greatly to leave us any hope of a successful pursuit, and beyond that, I see nothing that can be done. If they do indeed execute our citizens, we shall only be compelled to retaliate."

"That of course we must do, Colonel Marion," was the rejoinder; "and I am willing, sir, that my name should be the first on the list which pledges our officers to the practice, and incurs the risk which such pledge involves. But, surely, we must do something to save, not less than to revenge, our countrymen. I believe, Colonel Marion—nay, I am sure, I can overtake the detachment. Give me, sir, but twenty men—the men I brought with me from the Cypress—they will volunteer in the service, they will risk their lives freely in behalf of Colonel Walton."

Marion regarded the earnest speaker with a melancholy glance. He shook his head mournfully as he replied—

"They are too far on the start—some hours the lead upon you. It is impossible, Major Singleton, that you should overtake them."

"Our horses are superior—"

"But not fresh—no, no! It is a bad business; but I fear we cannot mend it."

"You will not suffer a brave man, a good citizen, to perish! Pardon me, sir—pardon me, if in my earnestness and anxiety I seem to overstep the bounds of propriety and privilege. Pardon me, sir; but hear me. Permit me to make the effort—let me save him if I can. Think, sir, he is a man of great influence in his parish, one highly valuable to our cause; he is brave and virtuous—a good citizen—a father!"

"All—all these I grant; but look at the prospect, Major Singleton—the great risk to all—the little hope. After this defeat of the continentals, this region to which you propose to go, will be one of certain doom to you. We shall now ourselves have to hurry farther from the Santee; and I have already prepared the orders to march our little brigade back to Lynch's creek, though I leave you and the force you propose to take to certain destruction."

"Not certain, not even probable, Colonel Marion; for, believe me, I will do nothing rash."

Marion smiled.

"Your blood even now is boiling, Major Singleton; the veins rise upon your forehead—your cheek burns—your lips quiver. You are in a feverish impatience which will hurry you into fight with the first opportunity."

"Oh no, sir—no! I am fevered, I am thirsting, I grant you, to strike the enemy at all hazards; but I know the risk. I have estimated the danger. The section to which I go has been exhausted of troops to supply the army of Cornwallis at Camden. A small force, scarcely superior to the little one I brought with me, is all the garrison at Dorchester. The army of Cornwallis will press the pursuit of Gates into North Carolina; the results of so great a victory will not be neglected by the British commander. This movement will leave the country free for some time; and they have not men enough below to find me, or rout me out of the Cypress."

But Marion thought differently as to the probable course of Cornwallis. He knew the weakness, not only of the British army, but of the footing upon which their cause stood in the country. He knew that Cornwallis had quite enough to do in South, without exposing his army in North Carolina; and he shook his head in reply to the arguments of Singleton, as he suggested his own doubts of their validity.

"But, I know you, Major Singleton," he continued; "and your claims to serve and save your relative if you can, should be considered. What force will you require for this?"

"Twenty men, sir; twenty will do."

"Take thirty, sir, if you can get as many to volunteer from the force brought with you. I give you no instructions. I will not fetter your courage or good sense with any commands of mine. But I counsel you, sir, not to forget, that neither your own, nor the lives of your men, are at this period your or their property. You belong to your country, Major Singleton; and it is only as one of her sons and defenders, that I am now willing to save Colonel Walton. Proceed now with what speed you may; and if safe and successful, you will seek me out, with the old signals, somewhere near Black Mingo. Go, sir; and God speed and prosper you."

The acknowledgments of Singleton were hearty, though made in haste. He hurried to the men of the low country, and in few words made known the circumstances. Humphries, Davis, Porgy, the two Framptons—indeed, all of the original party from the Cypress—volunteered instantly. He could have had a dozen more for the enterprise. Black Tom was permitted, after some difficulty, to attend the party; the obstinate negro swearing he would not be left: and with this addition to his limited number, Singleton was soon in saddle, and pushing fast in pursuit of the enemy.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Then bring me to him. He shall hear from me,
How much I fear—how much I dare to hope."

The chase was so far unsuccessful. The pursuers reached the Cypress without having overtaken the enemy. There, however, having discretionary power, Singleton proceeded earnestly to do what he could towards the rescue of his uncle. The good sense, the skill, and partisan qualities of Humphries, all came into excellent exercise, and were found immensely important at this crisis. With him, Singleton conferred closely, and immediately after his arrival. The result of the conference was the departure, that night, of Humphries, for the village of Dorchester.

Meanwhile, the individuals of the party in the Cypress resumed their old places and habits. Porgy was quite at home, and not the less pleased that the eel-loving Oakenburg had forborne to volunteer. He soon set the peculiar talents of black Tom in requisition; and a little foraging furnished the scouts with a sufficient supply for the evening feast. Of this we need scarcely say that Singleton ate but little. He was eminently wretched; and as he wandered gloomily along the edge of the island, he was not unpleasantly aroused at hearing the wild laugh, and at meeting the wolfish visage of the maniac Frampton immediately beside him.

"You are come," said the wretched man—"you are come to see him. You shall see him; he is there," pointing with his finger. "I have put him to watch her grave, and he watches well; he never leaves it. The owl and him—they watch together, and one hoots when the other sleeps. Come—you shall see."

Singleton could only conjecture the meaning of his speech; the scattered rays of reason illuminating the vague obscurity of his language, as a faint flickering of twilight unveiled imperfectly the crowding blackness and the strange cluster of objects around them in the swamp. The firelight fell on the cheek of the madman, and showed Singleton its squalid and miserable, not less than maniacal expression. He had evidently suffered from hunger as well as wo.

"Come with me, rather," said the partisan, losing for a moment the feeling of his own wretchedness in that of the unfortunate being before him. The man followed quietly enough, and he led him to where the rest were busily engaged at supper. Porgy in an instant made room for him on the log on which he himself was sitting: at the same time he broke the hoecake before him, and gave orders to Tom, who stood conveniently by, to produce the remnants of some chickens, in the procuring of which, one of the neighbouring plantations had suddenly suffered assessment. But the wild man did not for a moment notice the invitation. He seized Singleton by the arm, and with a gentle pressure, carried him through the circle to the spot where his young son was sitting. The elder rose at his approach; but him he did not regard for a moment. But when he looked upon the younger, and beheld the sword at his side, he burst into one of those dreadful laughs which seemed to indicate, as they invariably accompanied, every occasional symptom of his mental consciousness. The boy stood up before him, and the hand of the maniac rested upon his head. His fingers, for a few seconds, played with the fine long hair of the boy; but, as if satisfied, in a little while he dashed away from the spot, and hurried back to the supping-place of the rest.

"Poor fellow—he doesn't seem to have eaten for a month," said Porgy, as the maniac voraciously devoured the meats set before him. "No wonder he's mad—I should be mad myself, I doubt not, were I to go without eating even a day. I felt something like it on the Santee."

The maniac ate on, heedless of remark or observation; but sometimes he would pause, and indicate, by a laughing chuckle, that some faint gleams of perception had come into his brain. To the surprise of all, he did not depart as soon as he had eaten, as had been his usual custom heretofore; but throwing himself under an old tree, he seemed disposed to follow the example of several of the rest, who had resigned themselves to sleep.

Humphries, meanwhile, had reached Dorchester in safety. The night was favouringly dark, and he trod the street in which his father dwelt, in perfect safety. He penetrated, with cautious steps, and with the utmost circumspection, into the enclosure, and, successfully, and unseen by any, made his way to the stables. Here he remained quiet for a while, until the hour had fairly arrived at which the tavern was usually closed for the night. He then ventured out of his hiding-place, and went towards the dwelling. But the "Royal George" was still open, and still full of guests. A couple of British soldiers were drinking at the bar; and there were some four or five of the villagers. The old landlord had been listening to some narrative which had greatly awakened his attention. It could be seen that he was in that awkward situation, when a man finds it difficult to laugh, and when it is yet expected that he should do so. The efforts of old Humphries in this way, were very unhappy. His laughter died away in a hoarse chuckle; a gurgling, gulping sound filled his throat; and the poor fellow turned away to conceal tears.

"And when will he be hung?" asked one of the villagers.

"Friday—Friday next," replied one of the soldiers, gruffly; "and that's giving him a d—d sight too much time for any prayer that he can make. I'm for having it soon over. Just the same with other people as with myself. No long-winded speeches, say I."

"Only three days!" continued the villager. "Well, it's a great pity, for he used to be a mighty good man, and quite a gentleman. And then there's his daughter, Miss Katharine—poor girl, I wonder if she knows it?"

"I reckon she does," said another of the villagers, "for I seed the family coach drive in not an hour after the guard brought him; and, though I didn't see who was in it, yet I s'pose it couldn't be nobody but her."

"Yes, she's come," said the soldier who had just spoken, "and she's been to the colonel, begging him, I suppose, for mercy. But it's all in my eye and Betty Martin—the colonel can't help her much."

"Yet they did say that Colonel Proctor had a liking for the young lady. Maybe he might do much on her behalf for the father."

"He can't, even if he would," said the soldier; "the orders came from Lord Cornwallis himself, and it's as positive as old Jamaica. The colonel has done all he could. He's let the girl go to her father, and she was with him when I left the garrison. She's going to put herself under guard the same as her father, to be with him all the time."

"Poor, poor girl," muttered old Humphries, hastily turning away. "Bless me, where's Bella! Here, Bella, my dear!"

Taking a parting draught, the soldiers first, and then the villagers, withdrew. The old man proceeded to fasten the doors; and when this was securely done, the younger Humphries, who had been waiting and watching, concealed in an inner apartment, made his appearance before his father. It was a meeting of rejoicing as well as regret; for the old man was proud of his son, and loved him not less than the daughter. There were long stories told between them which do not concern this narrative. But all relating to Colonel Walton, his daughter, and the danger before him, was drunk in by the son with a greedy interest. He ascertained the place of the colonel's imprisonment; and found, to his great regret, that it was within the walls of the fort itself. It was there, and there only, that Katharine could see him. It was there that she watched and wept with her father now; and the soul of the proud-spirited girl, mortified in many respects, was humbled to the dust as she contemplated the degrading doom which her father was destined to undergo. Death on the battle-field would have been honourable death, in her estimation; and though, even now, he was to perish in the cause of his country, that cause, sacred and lofty as it was, could not qualify her previous impressions of that disgrace which such a mode of death brought with it. The infamous hangman, the defiling rope! The aristocratic education, the proud, unbending spirit of the noble girl, revolted whenever she thought upon it. She shuddered to survey the picture which her imagination continued to describe before her. She shuddered, and was convulsed at the feet of her father.

She was permitted to remain with her father throughout the day, but was compelled to leave him at a certain hour every night. This was an indulgence of Colonel Proctor, who sympathized with her sufferings, with all the feelings of the man, and the courtesy of the honourable gentleman. He deplored and disapproved of the judgment of Cornwallis; but, according to that strict military etiquette, upon which no officer insisted more rigidly than Proctor, he forebore any utterance of opinion on the subject of his superior's proceedings, and only, while he resolved to obey them rigidly, prepared to temper his severity with all the softening indulgence which was left discretionary with him. Katharine felt, and looked her gratitude—her consciousness of his delicacy and forbearance. Still it pained her pride to be dependant, even to a degree so small, upon her country's enemy. She felt this humiliation also, but, with a proper good sense, she yielded to circumstances, and showed no sign of such a feeling

Humphries gathered these particulars from his father and sister. He learned that even at that moment Katharine was at the garrison; that, as the gates were closed at ten o'clock, she would then be compelled to leave it; and readily conjecturing that she had made arrangements for remaining at Dorchester during the night, he now felt desirous of finding out her place of residence. There was, however, but one ready mode of making this discovery, and as the night was dark, and the object worthy the risk, with a bold determination, he made his arrangements to lurk around the gate of the fortress, until she should make her appearance. He could then follow her at a safe distance, and thus find out her abode.

No sooner determined, than acted upon. He sallied forth, and, by a circuitous route, reached the point of observation. Here he waited not long, before the old family coach made its appearance; and, in half an hour after, two ladies, escorted by as many officers, appeared from the entrance. The ladies were assisted into the carriage, the officers returned, the gates again closed, and the vehicle wheeling about to pursue its way, when Humphries, who had sheltered himself behind a tree close in the neighbourhood, now boldly leaped forward, and mounting behind the coach, was carried along with it.

They alighted, as he had anticipated, at the lively dwelling of old Pryor. The sturdy landlord himself came forth, and pushing aside the negro, assisted the ladies from the carriage. They entered the house, and, watching his opportunity, Humphries followed them. The moment that Pryor was disengaged, the partisan sought him, and, in private, unfolded himself to the pleasantly astonished landlord. A few moments more gave him an interview with Katharine and her aunt. The guise, garb, and expression of the latter, were stiff and old maidish, as usual. Not so with the former. Her eye was wild, her hair disordered, her cheeks flushed, and her step quick and convulsive, while her lips frequently quivered with the thrilling thoughts that were present and active in her mind. She hurried forward to meet him upon his entrance; she seized his hand with unstudied and earnest warmth; she hailed him as a friend—as one sent from Singleton.

"I cannot talk to you yet," said she, brokenly, "I must wait for breath; but I am glad—oh, very glad to see you."

"Sit down, Kate, my love," said the old lady; "you fatigue, you afflict yourself, my dear."

She sank obediently into the chair; but again immediately started up, and approached the partisan.

"I cannot sit—I am in no want of rest, and have no time for it. Oh, Mr. Humphries! tell me—speak to me—say what is the hope you bring me!"

"Major Singleton—"

She interrupted him.

"Ay—Robert—I look to him to save me—to save my father. Where is Robert now!"

"In the Cypress, Miss Katharine—I come from him now!"

"Thank God! He has not deserted me—he will not desert me!"

"Never, Miss Katharine, I'll answer for it; the major is never the man to desert you, or anybody—never."

"I know it—I know it, Mr. Humphries. You do his noble heart only justice when you say so. He will not desert me—he will not desert my father. But I must go to him—I must see him, this very night. He must tell me what he can do—what he will try to do for me in this horrible necessity. He must show me that he will save my father."

And as she spoke, she hastily retied the strings of her bonnet; and her whole manner was that of one full of resolution.

"Why, what would you do, my child?" asked her aunt.

"Go to him—go to Robert Singleton."

"My child, don't think of it—remember, you're a lady—"

"A woman—a daughter!" she replied, almost fiercely. "I have no fears—I should have no scruples. If there be danger or reproach, I will risk it all for my father. You fear not, Mr. Humphries, to conduct me to your leader?"

"It's an ugly road, Miss Katharine, for a lady—mud and water, bog and bush, and mighty crooked."

"Is that all! shall such things keep me back from my duty, when all depends on it! Oh, no! These are trifles—your difficulties I fear not." Then, turning to her aunt, who had now risen and seized her arm persuasively—"Your scruples, my dear aunt, I heed not. I must go."

"The major will be mighty glad to see you, Miss Katharine, I'm certain; and no harm can come of your going. I can guide you true to the spot, dark or daylight the same; and I'm close and cautious enough about danger. But you'll have to ride horseback."

"I can do it—I can do it," she cried eagerly; "that will be no difficulty."

"Then we must get you a saddle from Pryor—that's easy enough too; for I know he's got one, and he'll be quick to let you have it."

"See to it—see to it at once, Mr. Humphries, I pray you. Let there be no delay."

Humphries hurried off. The aunt strove to change her resolve, but the fearless girl was inflexible.

"Robert Singleton knows me, aunt—thank God! I know him. If I did not, I might listen to you now. Knowing him, I freely confide my name, my life, my honour to his keeping. I have no fears—none. But since he has come—since I have heard his name, and seen his messenger—I have hopes—many hopes—good hopes—sweet hopes. He will save my father—he will try with all his soul, and with all his strength; and God must—God will—prosper him!"

Such was the strain with which she rejected her aunt's entreaties, and persisted in her determination. When Humphries reappeared with Pryor, announcing his determination to depart, the old lady, finding she could not change the resolution of her niece, was for going along with her in the coach; but Humphries resisted the suggestion as impracticable.

"We can't run the old coach into the bush, if an enemy pops into the road, ma'am; and it's a chance we may have to do that before we get to the Cypress, even at this time of night. The fewer, the easier to hide; the smaller the bundle, the bigger the hole to cover it. It won't be an easy journey, ma'am, no how, I tell you."

The old lady was soon discouraged, and consented, though with great reluctance, to the arrangement which separated her from Katharine. The latter was soon ready, and carefully muffled up; she was conducted by Humphries to the edge of the wood where his own horse had been concealed, and to which spot Pryor had punctually carried that intended for the maiden.

They rode with spirit, and soon reached the swamp. Humphries carefully chose a path, which, if more direct, and more exposed to detection, was, at least, far more easily travelled than that which he usually pursued. He conducted her into safe concealment on the little rising ridge of sand which Davis had previously chosen for his proposed fight with Hastings. Here he persuaded her to remain, until he should go to the camp and conduct Singleton to her. She did not hesitate to do so; the arrangement was more agreeable to her in many respects, as it spared her the toilsome journey through the worst portions of the swamp, at the same time that it promised her that privacy in her interview with Singleton, which, as we shall see, was absolutely necessary to its progress. In leaving her, Humphries saw no impropriety. He knew not of any danger in the swamp to her; and she was quite too much absorbed in her thought of her father's danger, to think for a single instant on the subject of her own position. The spot, too, upon which she stood had nothing terrific in its aspect. The trees were few, and not gloomy like those of the swamp. The stars shone down freely over the bank, and the light was sweet, though faint, as it fell glistening over the white sands upon which she stood, and was freely reflected from the glazed green of the leaves that hung circling about her. Alighting from her horse, her trusty companion fastened him to a hanging bough, and promising to return quickly, rode onward to the camp.

He had not been long gone, when she heard the rustling of the bush behind her. She turned towards the spot, and beheld a gigantic figure emerging from the bush. The intruder was the maniac Frampton. His fierce habits, wild aspects, dismal shriek, and soiled and tattered garments, were enough to startle, not a timid maiden only, but a bold-spirited man. Katharine might have been alarmed even more than she was, had he appeared to her as he usually appeared to others. But a singular change seemed to have come over him. His step was irresolute—his manner shrinking—his countenance full of awe. He continued, however, to approach; and though really apprehensive, the maiden firmly held her ground, looked steadily upon him, and neither screamed nor spoke. But, as he continued to advance, though slowly and respectfully, she gave back before him. He then addressed her in a strain which confounded and astonished.

"Fly me not, sweet spirit—leave me not in darkness—hear me—scorn not my prayer—I kneel to you—I pray you for pardon—have I not loved—have I not revenged you! You know it—you feel it—you have seen it—fly me not—I will do more—I swear it on my knees. Look."

The maniac was prostrate before her—his face prone in the dust—his hands clasped above his head—his tones, when he spoke, subdued, and full of humility She was more terrified at what she saw, as it was now evident that she was alone with a madman. In this way, crouching towards her, he continued to rave, addressing her as an angel—as one departed—and reminding her, as his wife, of the olden happiness which they had known together—the love they had borne each other, and which he prayed her still to cherish for him in heaven. Approaching footsteps startled him just as he had partly risen to his knees, and while he was still imploring her after this fashion. The noise brought to him a momentary consciousness. He seemed to realize his mistake, and with his fearful laugh, bounding away, he was sheltered in the neighbouring bush before Singleton and his comrade had yet reached the spot where the latter had left the maiden.

Humphries kept aloof, while Singleton met his cousin. The scene was short between them, but how full of all that was sweet—all that was exciting to both! She rushed towards him as soon as his person was distinguished.

"Oh, Robert! I have come to you a beggar—a wo-begone beggar. I have no hope but from you—no confidence but in you. To you—to you only—I bend my thought—I turn my eye—I look for life—my life, my father's life—all. Save him—save me!"

"For this, Katharine, have I come. If I can save your father, even though at the hazard of my own life, I shall do so. You have my pledge for this."

"Thanks, thanks, dear Robert! my heart thanks you. But what is your hope, your plan?—tell me all, that I may calculate on your chances, that I may note their progress, that I may pray—that I may assist, if assist I can, in a work which calls for men—for manhood only."

The question troubled Singleton. What could he tell her? He himself knew little as yet of the true condition of things in Dorchester. No time had yet been allowed him to devise a scheme or take a step in its execution. He told her this, and she heard him with impatience.

"But something, dear Robert, must be done, and quickly. Do not be cold, I pray you—do not deliberate too long, or nothing will be done. Hear me, Robert—hear me but a while. You came to me a suitor—you said you loved me, and I believed you, Robert."

He took her hand. She continued—

"I believed you, and I was pleased to believe. My pride and my heart both rejoiced in my conquest: but this I said not—this I showed not to you—I did not reject, though I did not receive your prayer. Now hear me—my hand is in yours—it is yours—I give it you in love, in pledge, in true affection—it is yours, and I am yours for ever. Only save my father—say to me that you will save him, and here, in this solemn place—these thick trees, and the spectre-like stars, only looking wanly down upon us, and bearing witness—I avow myself your wife—yours, at any moment after, that you shall name, to bind me such for ever."

He carried her hand to his lips—he kept it there for a moment—then releasing it, replied—

"And does Katharine Walton think to buy me to the performance of a sacred duty? Am I not come to save him—to save or perish with your father! This was my resolve when I sued for leave to pursue the guard which brought him to the village. Even your love will fail to add any thing of strength or spirit to my determination. It is an oath in heaven; and my life for his, whether you love or hate, whether you receive or reject my prayer."

"Noble, unselfish!—true friend, brave cousin! You will do all for me; you are determined to make me and mine your debtor. You will not be bought by the hand which I have placed in yours—which you have sought for years—as you would leave me free still to any choice upon which my heart has been set. You are too proud, too noble to take advantage of my necessities. But I will not be outdone thus. I will now become the suitor in turn; and, Robert, if the poor charms and the humble virtues of Katharine Walton be not all gone, in the eyes of her cousin, she offers them all—all, without pledge of service, without hope of recompense, without any thing in return, but the noble heart and the true hand which he once proffered to her."

Singleton caught the high-minded and beautiful woman in his arms: the first sacred embrace, the first mutual kiss of requited love, hallowed and terminated the scene between them.

He rode forth with her on the way to Dorchester, taking a circuitous route in his progress, and leaving her to the conduct of Humphries as they came in sight of the village. On their way, he gave her a certain message which she was to bear her father—containing advice and instructions for his government. He also suggested—more to satisfy her impatience than with any certainty of their adoption—various plans of rescue. Having a perfect reliance on the skill and courage of her lover, not less than upon his affections, she became more soothed and satisfied by what she heard. Her hopes grew active and warm, and her sanguine thought already beheld the freedom of her doomed sire, obtained by the powerful arm of her adventurous lover. Let us not, however, anticipate events.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"God speed—God speed! the good endeavour stands
An earnest of success; for virtue strives
Still hopeful, when most hopeless."

The next night found Singleton himself in the village. He could not be persuaded by Humphries to keep away. The house of old Pryor, who was ready for any uproar, received him; and there, concealed even from Aunt Barbara, he contemplated the prospect before him, and devised more fully his plans for the rescue of his uncle. His fair cousin was in the same dwelling, and he engaged her company at such brief moments as he could steal from his labours, and she from the presence of her aunt. Humphries was in the village also, having his hiding-place in his father's stable loft. Obeying his instructions, Davis came to him there late the same night, and once more found himself in the presence of the fair coquette, Bella. The Goose Creeker turned upon her an unfriendly shoulder, and, humbled as she had been by circumstances of which Davis knew nothing, his conduct distressed her to a degree which she could not conceal. She turned away to conceal her tears, and the heart of the trooper smote him. When she retired, Humphries bluntly asked Davis why he was so rough to his sister. The subject was a delicate one; but the person addressed was a plain-spoken fellow, who did not scruple at any time to speak what he thought. Accordingly, he went over briefly the whole course of difficulty between them, and particularly insisted upon the preference shown to Hastings.

"But he's dead, man; there's no fear of him now."

"I never was afeard of him, Bill; but then I didn't love him; and the girl that did can't love me, for there's nothing alike between us."

"Oh, pshaw, man! but she didn't love him, you see," said the other. "I know all about it. A gal's a gal, and there's no helping it—she will be foolish sometimes. There's none of them that don't like a dozen chaps hanging at their skirts—that's the fun of the thing with them; and Bella is jist like all the rest. But the gal is good stuff after all, you see; for though I did think when Hastings was dancing about her that she had a liking after the fellow, I soon found out that she liked somebody else all the time."

"You don't say so! Who?" demanded the other, violently and hurriedly, as if taking the alarm anew at the prospect of a rivalry, which, whatever might be his cause of anger with the girl, he had no desire to hear of.

"A man," replied Humphries coolly.

"Oh, speak out, Bill. I'm sure I don't care; I shouldn't quarrel with him for it."

"No, I reckon not, when you know him. His name's Davis."

"What Davis?"

"John."

"Who—what—why, you don't mean me?"

"You're mighty dull, John Davis, for a man that's seen so much of the world. That's you, for certain—gospel-true, now, as I tell you. Bella Humphries, my sister that is, has really a greater liking for you, in your way, as a man, and a good swamp sucker, than for any other body that I know of."

"But Bill, old fellow, you're joking now; it's all fun and foolishness. How do you know, now? what makes you think so?" and chuckling and sidling close to his companion, Davis wound his arm affectionately round the neck of Humphries as he listened to this narrative, and put his doubting inquiries in reply.

"How do I know? I'll tell you."

Humphries then proceeded to give a brief account of the dialogue between Bella and Mother Blonay, prior to the assault of Hastings upon the former. We need not describe the joy of Davis on the recital. That very night an interview between the coquette and her lover put all things right between them.

"But you were cross, Bella, you know; and then you took such pains to please that fellow."

"Yes, I was foolish, John; but you know you had no patience; and if I only looked at any other body than yourself, you were all in a blaze, and spoke so angry that you frightened me more than once. But you won't be angry with me again, and I promise I'll love you always, and you only."

Davis made similar promises, and both, perhaps, kept them. With this, however, we have nothing now to do. Both Davis and his sweetheart were put in requisition for the contemplated rescue. Other persons, in the village, known whigs, were also intrusted with parts of the general performance; and, in the brief space of time intervening between the arrival of Singleton in Dorchester, and the day of execution, a bold scheme had been prepared for the rescue of the destined victim. The partisan discovered that the whole force of Colonel Proctor at the garrison scarcely exceeded the command of a captain; sixty regulars was the estimated number given him by Humphries. The greater part of these would in all probability form the escort of the solemn procession; and these were too numerous, too well armed, and too well drilled for his little force of thirty men, unless he could form a scheme of surprise, by which to distract their attention and defeat their unanimity. The plan was suggested by old Pryor, and its boldness won the confidence of Singleton.

"Here's the road, Major Singleton, you see—here's the red clay hill, and here's the blasted tree that's borne better fruit than was ever born on it. Here comes the red-coats, d—n 'em, I say. Now, look here—here's the bush, thick enough on both sides to cover a troop quietly. You fix your men here, and here, and here; and the guard comes; and here's the colonel—he's in the centre. What do you want then? Something to make a noise and a confusion is it? Well, you must begin with the crowd; them that's got nothing particular to do, and that goes only to look on: there'll be enough of them. Begin with them, I say; only get them frightened, and when once the fright begins, it goes like wildfire in dry grass—it goes everywhere. First the people, then the soldiers, all get it; and them that don't scamper will be sure to be very stupid. When that's done, all's done. Then you tumble among 'em, now on one side, now on the other, cutting up and cutting down, shouting and screaming all the while, till you've done as much as you think will answer. That's what you want, is it?"

"Yes—let us once create the panic without breaking our own little force for the purpose, and we will then take advantage of it. The odds then will not be so great, and the prospect of success no longer doubtful."

Such was the reply of Singleton, whose previous suggestions Pryor had only adopted and reiterated in his long and prosy speech. The old man, hitching up his waistbands with a most provoking gravity, approached the chair where the partisan sat, and whispered a single sentence in his ear.

"Can you do it—will you do it?" was the quick inquiry of Singleton.

"I can—I will."

"Then set about your preparations directly, and I shall prepare for the rest."

There was no time for delay, and that night, after the return of Katharine from her customary visit to her father, Singleton sought her in private. She was hopeful, but doubtful. The manner and the words of her lover strengthened and assured her.

"Katharine, I have strong hopes—very strong hopes, though we depend greatly on circumstances. We have many agents at work, and you too must contribute. You must go to 'The Oaks' to-night, and provide horses, as many as possible, and of the fleetest. We shall probably want them all. Have them sent, by daylight, to the little wood, just above the—"

He paused, and his cheek grew pale. She understood the occasion of his pause. But her spirit was strong, greatly nerved for the necessity; and, at the moment, masculine in the highest degree.

"The place of execution—the gallows—you would say. Go on, go on, Robert. Let me hear—let me do."

"Yes; there—in the little wood above—I shall station trusty men to receive and dispose of them. This you must do—and do quickly; and this is all—all that you will be required to perform. To me, and others, you must leave the rest. Go now, Kate, and"—he passed his arm about her, and his voice grew tremulous—"I shall not again see you, Kate—my own—my love—until it is all over. If I fail—"

"You must not fail," she cried, hurriedly, starting from his embrace, and looking almost sternly into his countenance. "You must not fail, Robert; rather than that—hear me—my father must not die in shame—

the gallows must not pollute him—the rope must not dishonour his neck. There is an alternative—a dreadful alternative, Robert—but still an alternative." She put her hand upon the pistols at his side, as she concluded the sentence, wildly, but in a voice subdued to a whisper, "If he must die, there is another mode—another. Only do not hesitate, Robert: if you cannot save him from death, you may from dishonour. Fear not to spare him the shame which is worse than death to his spirit, and quite as dreadful to mine."

She threw her arms around his neck, and sobbed audibly for an instant.

"And if I fall, Kate—"

"In life or death, Robert, I am still yours." She had withdrawn her face from his bosom as she spoke. Her glistening eyes, with a holy earnestness, were fixed upon his own, and truth was in all their language. How holy, how sweet, how ennobling, how endearing, was the one kiss—the last embrace they took that night! That night, preceding a day of so much—of such an awful—interest to them both. A hurried word of encouragement from both—a parting prayer, sent up in unison to Heaven from their mutual lips and united spirits—and they separated—the one to pray for that success for which the other was appointed to fight.

From this conference, the partisan proceeded to another with his coadjutors, Humphries and Davis. The whole plan was then matured, and Bella was made a party to the labour by her brother. His instructions to her were simple enough.

"Bella, you're not afraid to go to the church, just before daylight?"

"Afraid, brother William! no, I'm not afraid; but what am I to do there?"

"Listen. Go there by daydawn, and go up to the steeple."

"But how am I to get in?"

"Through the window; the door will be locked fast enough, and no getting the key out of old Johnson's hands. Get in at the window, which you can do easy enough, and keep quiet until you see the soldiers marching off with the colonel."

"Well!"

"Watch them—you can see every thing easy enough from the tower. Look to the red hill, and when you see them arrived at the foot of it, set the bells a-going hard as you can, as if you were ringing for dear life; and ring away until you can't ring any more,—you may then stop. That's all you've got to do. Will you do it?"

"But what's it for—what's the good of it!"

"No matter—I can't tell you now; but it must be done by somebody, and you're the best one to do it. Will you promise me!—now come, be a good girl, Bella, and I'll tell John Davis all about you."

The girl promised, and the conspirators then proceeded to other preparations, all preliminary, and all deemed essential to the complete success of their enterprise. They had all returned to the swamp, long before the daylight opened upon them.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"'Tis the last trial, and the strife must come,
Soon to our peril. But the heart is firm—
The rigid muscle set—the steel prepared,
And the thought hopeful of our full success.
The gods befriend and aid us, as we serve,
And battle for the truth."

The day dawned beautifully and brightly. The sun rose without a cloud darkening his upward progress, and the richly variegated woods gladdened in his beams. The air was balmy, and the wind silent. The quiet, slumberous day of the intense summer, unbroken by warning or discordant sounds, and alive only in the cheering scream of the bird, and the drowsy hum of the insect, seemed but indifferently to accord with the bitter and the gloomy purpose of man. It was the day of purposed execution. How little did the spirit of the unconscious and thoughtless nature harmonize with that having an immortal hope and destiny, yet so bent upon earthly strife, so busy with its foolish passions! Alas! that man should take so few lessons from the sweet ministers of God—the bird and the flower—sent for his pleasure and his profit, and which, ministering innocently by song and sweet to his happiness, should yet so commonly fail to teach him innocence.

A sad scene was going on in the cell of the destined victim. His daughter kneeled beside him at daylight in his prison. She had cheered his solitude with the sunshine of her own sweet and gentle thoughts—she had whispered hope in his ears when he himself refused to hope. She had forgotten her own griefs while ministering to his—and this is the reward which virtue always brings to duty. How happy was she thus to minister! how pointless was the shaft of fate to him, while thus he listened to, and felt her tribute ministry! In that hour, if he did not hope, he at least felt free from all the chafings of despair. What if the doom came—what if he escaped not the cruel indignity and the painful death—had he not heard—did he not feel, deep in his soul, the prevailing force of those prayers which the lips of his innocent child sent up for him momently to Heaven!

"Yet, do not flatter yourself too much, my daughter," he said to her in reply to one of her uttered anticipations of relief from Singleton. "You must not persuade me, at least. I must be prepared; and though I shall certainly contribute all in my power to co-operate with Robert in any effort which he shall make, I must not the less prepare to encounter the last trial as unavoidable. Robert will do what he can, I feel satisfied. But what of that! His force is small, inferior to that which guards me, and desperation only may avail in what he attempts."

"And he will be desperate, father; he will not strike feebly, or heartlessly, or hopelessly. Oh no! I know he will not. He is resolved with all his resolve, and you know his spirit. He does not say—he will not tell me what he intends; but his eyes are so earnest, and he looks—could you but have seen him, father, when he promised me to save you, your hope would be like mine: you would not, you could not, doubt that he would do it."

"I would not—I do not doubt, my child, that he will try—"

"And if Robert tries, father—"

He interrupted her sanguine speech and the implied tribute to her lover, folding his arms about her neck, as she knelt beside him, and placing his lips upon her forehead.

"You are a devoted girl, and Robert may well love you, my child. Tell me, Katharine—it will do me good to know that his affections are yours, and that you have not been unmindful of his worth."

"How could I—how! Have we not known him long enough, my father!"

"God bless you, Kate—God bless you! This, if I perish, would still be a redeeming pleasure, as I should then know him to be well rewarded, and be sure that I leave you with a protector. Your loves, my child, are hallowed with my blessings, with the prayers for your good of one who, in a few hours, may be in the presence of God himself."

She clung to him like a despairing infant.

"Speak not thus, my father—let me hope—do not make me doubt that you will be saved—that the bitter cup will pass by us."

"Hope—hope on, my child—it is your duty. Hope is one of life's best allies—the first to come, the last to desert us. But I need not tell you to hope. You cannot help it. Hope and virtue are twins, and inseparable; the one never flies until the other deserts it. There is no despair for the good."

"I believe it—I trust—and you, too, hope, my father, if this be true. I feel it in my soul, even as if, at this moment, I beheld it with my eyes. A good spirit at my heart—God's spirit—is there to assure me of my hope."

Thus cheered and cheering, the two, interrupted only occasionally by the entrance of the colonel's sister, conversed together from daylight until the approaching noon. But, as the hour drew nigh assigned for the execution—when the danger began to assume, as it were, a bodily form and pressure; the thoughts came thick to the mind; the doubts grew strong and oppressive about the heart; the fears seized upon the flickering fancies; and imagination, painting in vivid colours the dreadful circumstances of the approaching time to the mind's eye of the maiden, greatly served to overthrow all the stability of her resolve—all the fine soothing of her hope. She moaned aloud as she clung now to the neck of her father. In that moment the nature of the man grew active, and the contrast between the two would claim the art of the painter to imbody to the eye, and the strong imagination, only, could depict it to the mind of one not beholding it. He, who had wept with her before, was now erect and strong. If it was not hope that strengthened, it was the courage and high resolve of fine moral character, strong in conscious integrity—strong in resolve—that lifted up spirit and form, alike, defyingly, in the face of death. It is a noble picture, that of a brave man looking out upon danger, and fearlessly awaiting its approach. It is a painfully sweet picture, that of the frail woman storm beaten, storm broken, like a flower stricken to the earth, and, in its weakness, compelled to rest upon its bosom; but still smiling, still cheering, still giving forth love and worship, even as the flower gives forth perfume, and ready to share the fate which it dreads, but which it has not the strength to avert.

Such was the picture in the dungeon of Colonel Walton. The masculine spirit was already composed for the final trial—the last struggle of life, with its uncompromising enemy. The man was prepared to meet death with unshrinking resolution; the gentleman, with grace and dignity: and when, entering his dungeon, Colonel Proctor came to his prisoner—his own eyes suffused, and his deportment that of one himself a victim

—a victim certainly to humiliation and grief—to announce the arrival of the hour, he met the unshaken glance and carriage of one who seemed rather a conqueror than a condemned.

"Leave us, but a few moments, Colonel Proctor—but a few moments, and let my servant, Cæsar, be summoned, if you please. He, only, will attend me."

Proctor bowed, and departed.

"Father—oh! my father—it is not the hour—it is not time yet—do not go—not yet! Robert may not be ready—not quite ready. He has to come from the Cypress—he has a great deal to do, and will want all the time he can get."

She clung to him, as if to keep him back. Her eyes were starting from their sockets, bloodshot and wandering. Her words came chokingly forth—her frame was convulsed and shivering; her whole manner that of one in whose mind reason and opposing apprehensions were earnestly at strife for the ascendancy. He lifted her from the floor, as if she had been a child—his own nerves untrembling all the while. He lifted her to his lips, and calmly kissed her cheek. The act itself told more than words. He had treated her as a child, and she understood the gentle form of that rebuke. She tried to compose herself, and her words, though equally broken and incoherent, were far more subdued in their utterance. How tender—how holy was that brief communion!

"Katharine be firm, my child—be firm, for my sake. Be firm to pray—to pray for my rescue; nor for that alone—you must be firm to act."

She grasped his hand, and looked inquiringly.

"Robert," he continued, as she listened—"Robert, with that good sense which distinguishes his proceedings always, has told you nothing plainly of his present plan. He knew that you could not well comprehend military particulars, and that you would better be satisfied with his own general assurance, than if he had undertaken to show you those arrangements which you must yet fail to appreciate. To teach only a part of his design, would be to leave the inquiring mind doubtful of the rest. I can conjecture the design which he has in view, in part at least—and the horses which you were required to send him, he has doubtless prepared in readiness for me along the road, in the event of his rescuing me. It is for you to contribute something to the same object. He could not venture across the bridge, and he therefore made no arrangements in that quarter, should it suit me to shape my flight to that side of the river—a desperate man most desperately bent, I may be disposed to push through my enemies, even where they are thickest. In that event, there should be horses there. You must see to this, for your aunt has none of the necessary energy. Your firmness must do this, even now. Take the carriage there, and there remain with it. It may be all to me, and the trust is now with you."

The object of Walton was not expressed to his daughter. He had no real idea that he should need any such assistance; but he well knew that by the employment of her mind at the most perilous moment, in a labour of seeming necessity, he should divest it in reality of its own griefs. Throw responsibility upon the young mind, if you seek to strengthen it. This was his design; and its effect was instant. The belief that on her resolution now so much was to depend, alone restored and strengthened her. Yet she could not so soon recover, and, taking her last embrace almost in a convulsion, she was hurried away by her aunt from the mournful dungeon, a few moments before the officer appeared to conduct the prisoner to the place of doom. Colonel Proctor himself forebore to attend the execution. He assigned the task to an inferior officer, his duty not requiring his personal presence. A strong guard was detached from the garrison, and the sad procession emerged at midday from the gates.

Major Singleton had well devised his plans, and prepared, as fully as in his power, for the due execution of his purposes. He had brought his troop before daylight to the spot assigned them. To those who know the ground, his arrangement will be readily comprehended. To those who do not, a few words may be necessary, and will certainly suffice for explanation. The road at the point of execution was on the easy ascent of a small clay hill. The woods were thick on either hand. On the eastern side of the wood, a few yards below the gallows, a small track—a common wagon or neighbourhood road—wound into the forest, making a turn within a few paces from the main path, which effectually concealed it at that distance from the sight. In this sheltering place, one half of Singleton's troop, well mounted and ready for the charge, lay concealed. On the opposite side of the main road, closely hidden in the wood, some thirty paces above, another portion of his force, similarly posted and prepared, stood in waiting for the signal. Three chosen riflemen were assigned trees at different points of the wood on either hand, commanding the scene of execution. They were closely imbowered in the foliage, and the trees, intervening, effectually secured them from the sight, even though the report of their pieces indicated the direction. Their horses were hitched to swinging boughs in the wood behind them, ready for their reception the moment their task should have been finished. Singleton himself led the party destined to make the first charge. To Humphries the other body was assigned. No instructions were omitted, necessary to bring about concerted action; and the minutest directions—ay, even to the rifleman who was required to lead the fire—were insisted upon by the young but thoughtful partisan. Such being the preparation, there was no danger of the plan failing from hurry or want of coolness.

The little coquette, whom the restoration to the good regards of John Davis had made the most obliging little creature that the village had for some time known, did not forget the part which had been assigned her in the duties of the day. Clambering over the graves, with some little feminine trepidation, she made her way into the church, and from thence into the steeple, while the stars were yet shining palely in the heavens. She had her dread of ghosts, for she had heard a thousand stories of their nocturnal habits; but then, she recollected John Davis, who had given her a parting admonition to do ably the task assigned her. John Davis stood to her at that moment in the place of a principle; and, like many thousand others of both sexes, she always understood her duties best when they came through certain lips, and were insisted upon by a certain preacher. Man-worship, in those times, as at present, was not uncommonly mistaken for the most profound worship of God.

Here she watched patiently and long. Day came, and from the tower looking forth, she beheld his rising light with a feeling of relief, if not of joy. The first faint blush that drove away the stars from the east, almost won her worship on this occasion; not only because it relieved her gloomy watch, but because of its own beauty. How natural is the worship of the sun! How idle to wonder at the pagan who sees in it the imbodied god of his idolatry! It speaks for a God in all its aspects, and is worthy of homage, not only as it so greatly ministers to man, but as it is worthy of its Creator.

Patiently, hour after hour, until the approaching noon, did the girl continue close concealed in the steeple, awaiting the moment which should call for the execution of her duties—and it came at last. The painful and suppressed tones of the military music reached her ear, and the gloomy procession emerged from the gate of the garrison beneath her eye. First came a small guard, then the prisoner, attended by a clergyman, and then the main body of the guard marching on either hand. As the fearful notes resounded through the village, its inhabitants came forth in groups, joining the melancholy march, and contributing by their numbers so much the more to its imposing solemnity. The prisoner was much beloved in the village and its neighbourhood, even by those who had taken sides with the invader; and the knowledge of this fact only made the hope more strong and active in the bosom of Singleton, that his plan must be successful. He felt assured, in the event of a commotion, that none of the natives would interfere to prevent the rescue of Walton or assist in his recovery.

The heart of Bella Humphries thrilled fearfully as she watched the procession. The imposing martial array, the gorgeous uniform of the British, their fine, regular movement, close and well-arrayed order, and gleaming bayonets, struck terror to her heart, while they aroused all the enthusiastic admiration of her mind. Her task was to watch until the cavalcade should reach a certain point, which, from her elevated position, she could easily behold over the trees. She was then to sound the tocsin, and thus furnish the expected signal to all the conspirators. Firmly, though tremblingly, she looked forth upon the array, which she could readily distinguish in all its parts. There was the prisoner, seated in the degrading cart; there was the priest beside him; there the different bodies of soldiers; and there, hanging upon the skirts, or crowding upon the sides of the melancholy procession, came the villagers and country people. She could even distinguish Goggle, and his hag-like mother, trudging along, at a hurried pace, in the front of the procession. The old woman hung upon the arms of her son, who seemed but partially disposed to carry such a burden. The savage had not lost a single feature marking his old identity. He was the same lounging, shuffling, callous wretch that we have before known him; and his slow, indifferent movement—for here he had no mischief to perform—was the subject of rebuke with his own mother.

"Come now, Ned, my boy—move a bit faster, will you? The people are coming fast behind, and we shall see nothing if they get before us."

"Why, what's to see, mother? Adrat it, there's nothing so much in a fellow hanging. I've seen more than one, and so have you."

"That's true, Ned; but still I like it, and I don't care how many of these great folks they lift up among the trees. I hate 'em all, Neddy, boy; for all of them hate you. They keep you down, my son—they trample upon you—they laugh at you, and their best word to you is a curse. God curse 'em for it; I hate 'em all."

"Adrat it, but you can't hang 'em; and so what's the use to talk about it!"

"If I could!" she muttered bitterly between her closed teeth. The son replied with a laugh, concluding the sentence—

"The trees would be full of such fruit."

"Ay, that they would; and I've tried for the power—I've asked for the power over them, but it hasn't come to me. I've got out of my bed at midnight, when the night was blackest, and I've called upon the bad spirits to come to me, and help me to my revenge on them that have scorned you, and spit upon you, and called you by scornful names; but I had no learning, and so the evil ones came not to my aid, though I've looked for 'em, and longed for 'em, and wanted 'em badly."

She spoke in the language of disappointment; her looks and manner both corresponded with the chagrin which her words expressed. Yet she complained unjustly. The spirits of evil had been serving her to the utmost extent of their power; but, with the vulgar mind, always, the power must have a body and a sign to the external senses, before its presence will be recognised or understood.

The ill-favoured son chuckled at the disappointment she expressed, and with a taste differing from her own, congratulated her upon their indulgent absence.

"Adrat it, mother, but they would have been ugly company if they had come; and I'm mighty glad they didn't listen to you. They would ha' made the cabin too hot to hold us."

"Fear not; for they say that the person who calls them can keep them down, and make 'em only do what's wanted. I wasn't afraid; they wouldn't have seen me tremble if they had come, even at midnight, when I called them. But there goes another that ought to be strapped up too. He's another great man too, and has scarlet cushions in his pew at church, while I must sit on the bare bench in the aisle, as if in God's house some are to be poor, and some rich."

"Adrat it, mother, hush, or they'll hear you. Come this side, out of the way of the crowd—here to the left."

"Don't carry me where I can't see. I want to see every thing, and you must get me a place on the hill."

"Why, that'll be close by the tree."

"That's what I want. I want to see his mouth when the cart moves."

"D—n my heart, if I stand there with you; I'll go higher up; and so must you. You'll only be in the way, mother, to go there."

"But there I will stand, for my eyes are bad, and I can't see farther off. You can leave me, if you don't like it. I can stay by myself."

"Adrat it, so I will. I can see very well at a hundred yards; that's nigh enough for me: and I don't like to go too nigh when people's in the notion of hanging. It aint safe."

He hurried the beldam to the hill assigned for the place of execution. A few paces only separated her from the fatal tree; and she saw all the desired points distinctly. The procession moved on; the crowd gathered; the tree was before the doomed victim; and the officer in command riding up, ordered a halt before it, and proceeded to make his arrangements, when the bell sounded: a single stroke and then a pause—as if the hand grew palsied immediately after. That stroke, however, so single, so sudden, drew every eye, aroused all attention; and coming immediately upon the solemn feelings induced by the approaching scene in the minds of all the spectators, it had the effect of startling, for an instant, all who heard it. But when it was repeated—when the painful clamour grew quick and violent, and the rapidly clashing metal thundered forth a reckless, unregulated peal, varying, yet continuous—the surprise was complete. In that moment, a new terror came, close following upon the first. The signal had been heard and obeyed by the other conspirators, and wild cries of men, women, and children, coming from Dorchester, aroused in painful astonishment those forming the procession, soldiers as well as people. The cause of the alarm, in another instant, seemed explained to the wondering multitude, as they looked towards the village. A sudden rush of flame—a wide high column—rose from its centre, and ascended into the calm atmosphere, like a pyramid. Another, and another body of flame, in different directions, and the now distinguishable cry from the village, announced it to be on fire. The crowd—each individual only thinking of his family and household goods—broke on every side through the guard clustering around the prisoner; heedless of the resistance which they offered, and all unconscious of the present danger. In that moment, while the alarm was at the highest, and as the officer struggled to keep his ranks unbroken, the rifle of one of the marksmen in the tree-top singled him out as a victim, and he fell beneath the unerring aim which the rifleman had taken. It was then that the bugle of Singleton sounded—a clear, quick, and lively note. That of Humphries, on the opposite quarter, responded, and the charge of the partisan followed close upon it. The officer next in command to him who had fallen, however surprised, coolly enough prepared to do his duty. He closed his men around the prisoner with the first appearance of danger, and when the rushing horses were heard trooping from the wood, he boldly faced in the direction of the expected enemy. All this was the work of an instant. The brands had been well prepared under the direction of old Pryor; and with the feeling of a true patriot, his own dwelling had been chosen by him the very first for destruction. He had piled the resinous and rich lightwood in every apartment. He had filled it with combustibles, and had so prepared it, that the blaze must be sudden, and the conflagration complete. Three other houses were chosen and prepared in like manner; and, once ignited, their possessors rushed away to the place of execution, crying their alarm aloud, and adding to the wild confusion. Their cries resounded violently, with a new and more emphatic burst, as, coming out of the village, they appeared upon the road, just as the bugle of Singleton had sounded for his charge. The brave partisan had bent all his energies to his purpose, and he now gave all his spirit, and all his strength, to its manful completion. His first plunge from the coppice placed him in front of a presented bayonet. Quick as thought, he wheeled his steed to the right, avoiding the lunge which carried the soldier forward. While the fore-feet of the animal were yet in air, he, as suddenly, wheeled him back again, and his hoofs were beaten down, with all his weight, upon the body of the soldier, who lay crushed and twisting under his legs. This movement had broken the bristling line, in the centre of which the strong-limbed partisan now found himself. He did not stop to calculate. In action, alone, lay his hope of safety or success. He was penetrating the square in which his uncle was a prisoner. The fatal cart was before him, and this was enough to give new vigour to his effort. Right and left, his heavy sabre descended—a sweeping death, defying the opposing steel, and biting fatally at every stroke. He was well supported by his men, and, though not one-half the number of his enemies, he had already gained a decided advantage, and made some progress towards his object, when the charge of Humphries followed up his success. The lieutenant hurried over the ground, cheering and shouting. An old woman, feebly tottering to the road-side, stumbled along the path, but he did not pause in his progress. Indeed, he could not. The troop followed him—horseman after horseman went over the prostrate body, grinding it to the earth, until there was as little human in its appearance, as there was in the heart of its owner. She gave but one cry—a dreadful scream. It chilled the heart of the brave trooper, as the hoofs of his steed went down upon her breast. He knew the voice—he heard the words—and, hag as she was, foul and malignant, the appeal to her son, in the last accents of her lips, was touching in the extreme. It was his name that she cried in her death-struggle—and he heard the cry. He emerged from the bush, where he had been sheltered; but, when the contest was clear before him, he again sunk back. He was cool enough to see that nothing could save the beldam—he was calculating enough to risk nothing in an effort so hopeless. Stealing along the wood, however, he unslung his rifle, freed his knife from the sheath, and prepared to take any possible advantage which the progress of circumstances might afford him.

The fight grew fearful around the cart in which the prisoner sat. The clergyman leaped into the crowd, dreading that conspicuousness in the affray which the situation gave him. Colonel Walton, alone, remained within it. He had arisen, but his hands were tied; and, though his feet were free, he yet felt that his position was much more secure, as long as the sabre only was employed, than it would be, without weapons, and having no use of his hands, in the melee, and under the feet of the horses. But he shouted encouragingly to Singleton, who, indeed, needed now no other encouragement than his own fierce phrensy. The fury that impelled him looked little less than madness. He seemed double-armed and invulnerable. More than once had a strong combatant opposed him, and hopelessly. He had ploughed his way through the living wall, with a steel and strength equally irresistible.

"Courage, uncle—courage! Can you do nothing for yourself!" And, striking as he spoke, down went another soldier.

"I am tied," was the reply as quickly. In the next moment, leaping from his horse into the centre of the vehicle, Lance Frampton applied his knife to the cords.

"Hurrah!" was the cheering cry of the partisans, as the prisoner clapped his hands in air, showing their enlargement. A soldier seized the horse which drew the cart, by the bridle, and turning his head among the crowd, sought to lead him off. But the sabre of Singleton—seemingly aimed at the soldier, who dodged it by sinking down while yet holding upon the bridle—was adroitly intended for the horse. It went resistlessly through his neck, and falling among the crowd about him, the animal struggled in the agonies of death, still farther adding to the confusion. Walton, at that moment, sprang from the cart, and the partisans gathered around him. The guard, considerably diminished, now collected for a charge; but the pistols of the partisans, which they could now safely venture to employ, were brought to bear upon them. They recoiled, and in the moment, Colonel Walton gained the cover of the wood; another found him mounted: and rushing forth, with a wild shout, he gave to the enemy an idea of the presence of some fresher enemy. This was all that was wanting to the completion of the confusion. They gave back—at first they merely yielded—then they broke, and, as the partisans beheld their advantage, and pressed on to avail themselves of it, the dismembered guard fled down the road in the direction of the village.

"Back—back!" cried Singleton, to his men, as they prepared to pursue. "Enough has been done for our purpose—let us hazard nothing in a rash pursuit."

Then turning to Colonel Walton, in a few brief words, he congratulated him on his rescue, but urged his immediate flight.

"Humphries," cried he to that officer, "conduct Colonel Walton to the Cypress instantly. I follow you with the men. Nay, linger not for me, there is more to be done if we delay. I will collect the troop."

They would have paused, Colonel Walton in particular, who seemed determined to share all the risks to which Singleton was subjected; but the latter, at once, put on the authority with which he was invested, and sternly commanded immediate and implicit obedience to his orders. There was no farther delay. Walton was soon out of sight, while Singleton, collecting his scattered troops, followed hard upon his footsteps. They fled in season—just as Colonel Proctor, who had now become familiar with the cause of alarm, and sallied forth with all the remaining garrison, emerged from the village. The Briton found only the remnant of the defeated guard; and it was not his policy to pursue, with so small a force as that under his orders, a body now almost equal, and flushed with recent victory. Thus terminated the battle of Dorchester. The victory was with the partisans, but they paid dearly for it. Five of their men were slain outright, and an equal number wounded. The battle, so long as it lasted, had been sanguinary in the extreme; nor did it terminate altogether with the actual conflict. The flames which had ushered in the conflict, continued to rage long after it was over; and one-half of the beautiful town, by close of day, lay in ashes.

How sweet was the meeting of the father with his child, the day of peril now safely over, in the deep recesses of the Cypress swamp! There, on the first tidings of the advantage gained by her friends, she had repaired in the hope to meet him. Nor had she sought him there in vain. He himself bore her the first tidings of his safety; and convulsed with joy, and almost speechless, she hung upon his neck, feeble and fainting, with not the strength to speak her emotions. But when she looked round and saw not her lover, the thought of his danger—the doubt of his safety—awakened all her anxieties anew, and brought forth all her strength.

"Tell me that he is safe—Robert—Robert."

"He is, and will soon be here."

They had not long to wait. He came, guiding her to the spot where her first pledge to him had been given—where the first kiss of a true love had been exchanged between them: the pledge under better auspices was gratefully renewed.

"And you are now mine—mine for ever, my own Katharine."

"Yours—yours only, and for ever."

The eye of a father looked on, and sanctioned the fond embrace, which rewarded the partisan for his peril, and the maiden for her firm and filial devotion.

"But this is not a time for dalliance, my Katharine. It is enough that I am secure of your affections—enough that you are mine—we must part now. Your father is not yet safe—not till we get him into the camp of Marion. Be satisfied that the immediate danger is withdrawn; we must try and keep him from a renewal of it; and can only do so by throwing the Peedee between him and his enemies. For us, my love, the hope is strong, though there must still be doubt. We must part now."

"So soon!"

"Too soon. But we may not linger here with safety. We are still in danger. This blow will bring Tarleton upon us, who rides like a madman. Come—I will lead you to your carriage, and—"

He bore her away through the copse, and no eye beheld their parting; but it was sweet, and it was holy. Her last kiss hung upon his lips, with an enduring sweetness, for the long season which intervened between that period and the hour of their final union. He returned in a few moments to the swamp, and there found the maniac Frampton standing upon the edge of the swamp, in curious observation of the men. He would have carried him along with the party, and spoke to him to that effect; but the other appeared not to heed: and the only glance of consciousness which he seemed to exhibit was when his fiery eye rested upon the features of his youthful son. Singleton approached, and while persuading him to remove with his party from the swamp, laid his hand upon the shoulder of the insane wretch. The effect was electrical. He bounded away with his demoniac laugh, and plunging through the creek, fled in the direction of his wife's burial-place. The partisan saw that nothing could possibly be done with him, and bidding his youthful charge, Lance Frampton, beside him, he put his band in motion, and hurried forward, once more to unite with Marion in the long and perilous warfare of the swamps—kept up as it was, until, step by step, beaten to the Atlantic shores, the invader fled to his ships, and left the country. But these events are for other legends. Our present task is ended.

THE END.

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