

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
J23rb
1838
v.3



THE ROBBER.

VOL. III.

LONDON :
Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-Street-Square.

THE ROBBER:

A TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“RICHELIEU,” “THE GIPSY,” “ATTILA,” &c.

“ More should I question thee, and more I must —
Though more to know would not be more to trust —
From whence thou cam'st, how tended on. But rest
Unquestioned, welcome ; and undoubted, blest.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

LONGMAN, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, & LONGMANS,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1838.

823
J23v6
1838
v.3

THE ROBBER.

CHAPTER I.

WE must now leave that part of the country to which we have so constantly adhered during the two first volumes of this true history, and lead the gentle reader with us along a road which perhaps he may never have travelled before, but which if he ever have he will doubtless remember at once, from the description we are about to give.

Setting off in a line lying north-west from the little village of Moorhurst, and proceeding over the wild heath to which we have so often turned our steps, one road leads, as the reader already knows, to the county town, after various turnings and meanderings, of which our ancestors were undoubtedly more fond than ourselves. But in one of these turnings the road effects an object

very different from the usual one, of merely going out of its way, and branches off into a country road taking the direction of various small and remote towns.

Now, from the want of care and neatness with which this branch road was kept at that time, it would in all probability have presented a very much larger proportion of ruts and sand than the larger road from which it was derived, and would have required double the time to travel each individual mile along its course which was required upon its parent road, had it not been for one circumstance. That circumstance was an extraordinary developement of a stratum of very hard stone in that part of the country, which, taking the place of the sand, just a quarter of a mile from the spot where the two roads separated, afforded — or rather might have afforded, equal pleasure and admiration to Mr. M'Adam, the geologists, and all the members of the stonoclastic race, if the period we speak of had not been before geologists were discovered, and when Mr. M'Adam was yet unborn.

On it, if horses had been in the habit of going as fast as they do now, a carriage might have been drawn at any given rate of velocity, till after the road had passed through two or three small villages and towns, and a space of about twenty miles, when it again got into the sand, and then plunged like an eel — which it very much resembled in some other respects—into a deep mud.

This state, however, lasted not long; but, issuing like a bittern from the morass, the road took its flight over the hills, which were low wooded and well cultivated for about twenty miles farther, and then began to assume a wilder and more barren aspect, till at length, when their summits were crossed, and at the distance of about sixty miles from Moorhurst, they presented on their northern side a wide range of rough, chill, rocky country, covered alone by short brown turf from which the sheep had much ado to nibble a scanty subsistence, and decorated alone by fine hawthorns and hanging birches, except where, in the deeper

dells, the oak and elm had sought and found a friendly shelter.

Forges and founderies, and manufactories of various kinds, have since blackened and enlivened that part of the country; but at the period which I speak of the great demon of civilization had not gone forth, with a smoky chimney in one hand, and a steaming kettle in the other, equalizing and vulgarizing the whole earth; and a track of about forty miles in length and from ten to fifteen in breadth was left upon the side of those hills, if not without any sign of man's habitation, at least without any sign of his arts, except, indeed, the patriarchal one of sheep-feeding.

Here and there, in the nooks and dells, indeed, an old farm-house, which perhaps might boast a few acres of corn land around it, showed the dwelling-place of the great sheep farmer, who, riding over the hills adjacent, might generally say, "I am monarch of all I survey." But these had never been many; and the loneliness of the situation, an increasing taste for

towns and luxuries, and various changes in the state of society, on which it is not worth while to dwell, had diminished the amount of inhabitants to even a more scanty number than it had once contained. Two farms had often been joined in one; some of them were untenanted, and encroached upon by their neighbours; some of the few houses that did exist were vacant, and some were tumbling down.

It is to a house in this district, about five miles from the spot where the road we have mentioned crossed it, that we must now bring the reader, begging him diligently to mark the outside of it, in the first place, seated as it is in a deep gap in the hills, sheltered on three sides by a grove of fine old elms, in the topmost branches of which innumerable rooks make the air musical with their sweet country sounds; the house itself placed upon a high bank, with its small windows overlooking a little stream below; and the other side turning towards its farm-yard, with a cart-road, indeed, leading up to it, but requiring both very strong horses and very

strong carts to undertake the rough and perilous ascent.

This house was not one amongst the uninhabited ones which we have mentioned, for at the period whereof we speak,—namely, but a few days after the events had taken place which we recorded in our last chapter,—the farm-yard might be heard ringing with several voices, and more than one horse stamped in the stables. Leaving the house, however, let us speak of one of its inhabitants. About mid-day a solitary personage issued forth from the gates, took his way into the deepest part of the grove, and with his arms crossed upon his broad chest walked slowly up and down, bending the bitter brow, and gnawing the dissatisfied lip, while his eyes were bent on the dry leaves of the past year, and his feet left deep marks in them as he strode along. After thus wandering in the shade for some time, as if the gloomy shadow was congenial to his feelings, he raised his brow, and looked up, seeming to seek higher associations in the sky above. Whether the feelings within his breast did become more free and clear or

not, he then turned his steps to the hill-side, and climbed high up, gazing over the wild, waste prospect below, and pausing every two or three minutes, as if endeavouring to fix more distinctly some particular spot. Yet his thoughts were neither of the scene on which his eyes rested, nor of the cultivated country beyond, nor of the towns and villages, the haunts and resting-places of busy man, but, on the contrary, they were fixed upon the deep, dark recesses of an erring human heart,—on the troubled world of his own bosom,—where, as in the world covered by the deluge, the dove of peace found no resting-place, so overwhelmed was the whole by the waves of sin and sorrow and remorse. Upon that turbulent ocean, too, floated the wrecks of many bright things past,—high feelings, noble aspirations, manly generosity, steady friendship, warm affections,—and over it spread at that moment dark clouds of doubt and suspicion, and morose discontent, springing from self-dissatisfaction and disappointment, and internal reproach.

Such was the state of mind of Franklin

Gray as he strode along the hill-side, pondering the events of the last few weeks, and finding in all matter of bitterness and regret. His feelings suffered some alteration when he got upon the hill, turning to more material objects. They did not exactly make themselves audible, but nevertheless to his own mind they clothed themselves in words, and the tenor of those words was somewhat to the following effect.

“This is wild enough, and solitary enough, but nevertheless they will doubtless try to hunt me out here. So great an enterprize as this cannot, in this pitiful and servile land, pass without stirring up all the great tyrants of the soil, to put down him who has dared to strip them of their ill-gotten wealth. Doubtless they will hunt me out even here; and by the Lord I have a thousand minds to stay and dare them, and defend my mountains till the last.—But then these fellows,” he added, after some thought, “though brave and true in the moment of danger, now that we have divided the money, are all anxious to leave me, and hasten up to the great city, to

spend it in rioting and luxury. Well, I must not blame them ! I felt so once myself. But this land then must be no more for me ; I must quit it, and take myself back again to those more ardent and free countries where I can roam at large, and where, with a strong hand and a stout heart, I can make the miser, and the extortioner, and the slave-master pay for his pitiful life at the price of gold. Yet this, indeed," he continued, "has been a glorious booty ; what between gold and jewels we have swept off a mighty sum, and my own share might well content me for the rest of my days. Why should I not cross the seas, and in some of those sweet vallies by the higher Rhine pass through the calm close of a busy life in bright tranquillity ?"

And, as he thus thought, a vision of sweet and peaceful things, such as his heart had sometimes longed for but had never known, rose up before his eyes ; and he pictured to himself sweet wanderings through fair scenes, with his beautiful Mona by his side, and his lovely boy growing up into proud manhood

under his eye. But as he thought of Mona a sudden shadow came across him; it was a mood he struggled with, and would fain have conquered, but it was one unconquerable; for it was a part of his dark fierce nature; and after pausing gloomily for several minutes, and, casting his eyes down upon the ground, with his whole feelings changed in a moment by one gloomy thought, he burst forth aloud, "I love it not! She would not wrong me,—I know she would not wrong me; but still she is too tender of him. If she give her heart's affections to another, if she even take from me the smallest portion of those feelings that once were mine alone, she leaves a gap, a vacancy, a break in that deep intense love which is enough, but not too much for love like mine. Shall I speak to her thereon? shall I tell her what I feel?—Ay, and make her think me jealous," he answered, with a bitter sneer even at himself. "I jealous! jealous too of such a weak, pitiful, effeminate thing as that! No; she shall go on in her own way. She must have seen that I loved it not; she must have

felt that it displeased me; and see it and feel it she shall still, but speak of it I will never. Doubtless she is there now,—soothing him,—tending his wounds,—speaking to him sweet kindly words, and listening to his soft gratitude. I will go back and mar the sunshine;” and as he spoke, with a cloudy, moody air, he strode back again towards the house, past through the farmyard, and entered the door, which stood open.

Proceeding up a tall narrow stone staircase, he passed one of his men seated on one of the landing places, at the last story but one, so as to prevent any one from ascending or descending without being seen. Franklin Gray was not one, even when the dark and debasing passions of jealousy and suspicion were roused within him, to commit a mean or a pitiful act; and he spoke loud to the man upon the stairs, and trod heavily up, so that his voice and his footsteps might give notice of his coming to those above.

When he reached the upper story he opened a door before him, and entered a room, poorly and scantily furnished, where were two persons with whom the reader is already ac-

quainted. The first,—who sat near the door, with her small beautiful foot resting upon a rude stool, and her knee supporting an instrument of music in shape much resembling a guitar,—was that lovely being whom we have twice before had occasion to mention under the name of Mona, the wife of Franklin Gray. She was finishing a song when he entered, a sweet plaintive song, in the tongue of some distant land; and as he came into the room, her dark lustrous eyes grew still brighter, and were raised to his with a smiling and a happy look, as if she thought she was doing what would please him best, and that the well-known music would awaken some sweet thoughts in her husband's bosom. The stern unmoved gloom of his countenance pained but did not surprise her, for she was accustomed to his moody temper; and loving him still at all times and in all states, attributed his ill-humour to things which had gone wrong in matters with which she had no concern.

The other person who tenanted that room was one whom we have lost sight of for some time. It was Edward, called Lord Harold.

who now, very pale, and evidently but just recovering from severe sickness, leaned back upon his chair with his head resting on his arm, and the right side of the loose vest which he wore cut open and tied, so as to give greater ease and space to some wounded part beneath. So intently had he been listening to the music that he scarcely heard the entrance of Franklin Gray, and a faint but expressive smile hung upon his pale lip, while the vacant gazing of his eye upon the floor told that the melody had borne imagination on its wings afar, and that he was enjoying sweet fancies removed from all that surrounded him.

“I see,” said Franklin Gray, looking earnestly at Mona, “that you have turned his musician as well as nurse.”

Mona started, and gazed inquiringly in her husband’s face. “Did you not wish me to do so?” she said, with her sweet-toned voice and foreign accent; “did you not tell me to do every thing I could to soothe him and restore him to health?”

“I did so,” replied her husband; “and I see you do it willingly.”

Mona gazed in his face with a bewildered look, as if she did not comprehend his meaning; for though his words were not ungentle, they were spoken in that tone which showed the feelings that prompted to be bitterer than the expression. There succeeded a pause for one or two minutes; and Franklin Gray, moving across the room, cast himself into a chair near the window, and gazed out gloomily over the wide prospect, that stretched afar beneath his eyes, diversified only by the slopes of the hills, without town, or village, or hedge-row to mark man's habitation or his cultivating hand. As he sat there, he spoke not to any one, and the silence grew painful, till at length it was broken by Lord Harold, as we shall continue to call him, who said, "I am glad of an opportunity of speaking with you, for I want to know more precisely how I am situated. I have to thank you I find——"

"For nothing, Sir!" replied Franklin Gray; "I have done what I have done for my own pleasure and convenience, and you have to thank me for nothing."

"Such is perhaps the case, Sir," replied

Lord Harold coolly ; “ at all events you saved my life when I should otherwise undoubtedly have bled to death upon the moor. You have since treated me kindly and skilfully, have nearly cured a wound which might have proved fatal, and have tended me with much attention. At the same time, from various events which have occurred, from my being brought forth across the downs and placed in a coach which carried me hither, as well as from having seen at all times an ill-looking fellow with a pistol in his hand sitting at the foot of the next flight of steps, when I crossed from one room to the other, I am inclined to believe that you view me in some sort as a prisoner.”

“ Doubtless the ill-looking fellow, as you call him,” replied Franklin Gray with a bitter smile, “ may find many of the fair and the gay, in his own rank of life, who would think him fully as good-looking as Edward Lord Harold. However, Sir, I gather from your discourse, that you wish to learn whether you are to consider yourself as a prisoner or not. Now, as you acknowledge that you owe me your life, I do

not think you have any right to consider it a hard case, even should I for my own convenience keep you a prisoner for a certain time."

"Yes, I have, Sir," replied Lord Harold; "for I suppose there is scarcely any Englishman who does not feel that liberty is preferable to life."

"Then perhaps the best way of settling it," answered Franklin Gray sternly, "would be to shoot you through the head, and thus leave the account between you and me as it stood before."

But as he spoke, Mona had advanced gently to his side, and laid her hand upon his arm; "Oh set him free!" she said, "set him free as soon as he is able to depart."

"What is it to you, Mona?" demanded Franklin Gray, turning sharply upon her; "what is it to you? why should you wish him to depart?"

"It is much to me, Franklin," she answered, "very much to me; and I do wish him to depart, for you have twice looked cold upon me since he has been here, which you never in

your life did before, and any thing which makes such a change I wish instantly away; for you know, Franklin, that your kind looks are to me like the sunshine of my own happy land,—sunshine that I have left far behind.”

Franklin Gray was somewhat moved, and seeing that he was so, she went on, saying, “Oh, set him free, my husband! and if it be needful, make him swear that he will never betray your abode. I will be answerable for it, he will keep his word.”

Franklin Gray had been moved for a moment, and he had also thought of setting Lord Harold free, or of only detaining him till all was prepared for executing his own purpose, of crossing the sea and seeking other lands; but the last few words which his wife uttered hardened his heart in a moment.

“You will be answerable!” he exclaimed. “What have you to do with being answerable for him? No; I will not set him free! If you choose to betray your husband, woman, and open the doors to him whom it is needful to detain, you can do it when you like. I shall neither

watch nor stop you ; but the consequence be upon your own head."

Thus saying, he turned upon his heel with a frowning brow, and hastily quitted the room, after which his steps might be heard slowly descending the stairs. Mona sunk down into the chair beside her, clasping her hands together, and fixing her eyes upon the ground with a look of despair ; for they were the first harsh words, the first unkind and ungenerous expressions, which had ever dropped from the lips of him she loved, from the day on which she had sacrificed kindred, and home, and fortune, and her native land, to follow his uncertain footsteps through the world. As she sat there, with that look of deep despondency, Lord Harold could not but feel admiration of her exquisite beauty mingling even with the compassion which he felt ; and there was something of that admiration apparent in his look and manner, as he slowly rose from his chair, and crossing the room, took her hand in his, saying, " He treats you harshly, lady."

But Mona, suddenly recalled to recollection

by that action and those words, started up, and drew her hand quickly from him, gazing upon him with a look of anger and indignation. "Treats me harshly!" she said, "it is false! He is kindness itself; and he is right too! What had I to do meddling with his purposes or his will? I have been sorry for you, young gentleman, and compassion has led me to do a foolish thing, but I will take care so to offend no more;" and thus speaking she left him, and hurriedly sought her husband below.

She found him in a lower room, gazing forth as he had done above, but the expression of his countenance was more sad and less fierce than before. Mona advanced towards him, but he heeded her not: she laid her hand upon his arm, but he did not turn his head. She was a creature of noble impulses, however, and where her heart prompted she would not be repelled. The tears, indeed, sprang to her eyes and ran over her cheeks, but still she cast herself on her husband's bosom, saying, "I have done wrong, Franklin; I should not have interfered

where you thought fit to act. I was sorry for the young man, and I thought that he might have friends and relations, and perhaps a wife, that loved him as I love you, and I wished you to send him back to his happy home on that account. But I was wrong to speak of it at all, and still more wrong to speak of it before him. Forgive me, Franklin; I will not offend again."

Franklin Gray pressed her to his heart, and kissed the tears off her cheek; and—although the seed of suspicion and doubt, once sown in a soil so congenial to it as his mind, can never, perhaps, be wholly eradicated, take what pains we will—yet he was anxious to feel as he had felt, somewhat ashamed of having given way to such bitterness towards her who was associated with all the better spirits of his heart's dark tabernacle, and grieved to see the grief of one who had brought the only real sweet sunshine on his path that he had known through life.

He pressed her then to his bosom, he treated her gently and kindly; and once more, to her

powerful gentleness, the fierce and lion-like spirit of her husband was softened and bowed down.

She had not said one word of the dark shade of jealousy which had shown itself in Franklin Gray's first words to her. She was far too wise to comment on it, or to attempt to do it away by any eloquence but those of acts. She saw it plainly, however; she felt that what in her breast was but pity, had been misunderstood by her husband; and from a certain vague expression on Lord Harold's face when last he spoke to her, she feared that, with him, man's vanity had once more misjudged woman's best feelings.

She blamed herself, however, more than either: "I should have known," she thought, "that man cannot see into the heart;" and from that hour she went near the prisoner no more. She gave no cause for so abstaining, and she took care that the woman who accompanied her should provide for his comfort as far as might be. It is the meed of such con-

duct, however, almost always to pass unremarked; the recompence, the success, is in our own hearts.

Franklin Gray saw that she was less with the prisoner than before, but he did not see that she was never with him at all.

CHAPTER II.

HAVING now exposed to view the state of mind of Franklin Gray, we must turn once more to Lord Harold, and display, in some degree at least, the feelings by which he was affected. His heart was one naturally kind; his impulses were in general noble and generous; but he had derived from his mother a strong degree of that quality which, more than any other of the human heart, lays our hearts open to evil passions, unless it be very early enlisted on the side of the good ones; I mean pride.

From his father, too, had descended to him various faults and peculiarities, which, if every thing had gone smooth with him through life, might have lain dormant, or, under particular circumstances, might have assumed the aspect of virtues, when in fact they were much more nearly allied to vices. There was, when roused by anger or stimulated by hatred, a degree of remorseless determination about his character

very much resembling that of Lord Danemore. This had shown itself in a degree in his conduct towards Langford; but since that period all the bad points in his nature, which had been originally brought forth by his disappointment in regard to Alice, had been called into still greater activity by the wounds he had received, by the irritation of sickness, and by pondering in solitude and in a state of confinement, not only over the disappointment of his first and early love, but over the mortification which his vanity had received, and over the annoyance of having to remain at a distance from the scene of action, where he knew, from the few words which Langford had spoken to him, that great and important events were likely to be transacted.

Under these circumstances a degree of angry irritation had taken possession of his mind; and even on the day when he was removed from the neighbourhood of Moorhurst he would have resisted had his strength been sufficient to render opposition at all effectual. Besides his own weakness, however, there was about

Franklin Gray a tone of command and authority, a decision, a breaking forth of powerful intellect, which had the effect of producing, as the first impulse, an inclination to obey in all that surrounded him; and Lord Harold felt that power, and was angry with himself for feeling it.

He had determined, then, even before the period of the interview which we have just described, to seek his liberty by any means; and had the Robber at once granted him what he sought, had he either soothed or reasoned with him, the whole current of the young nobleman's feelings might have been changed, and he might have learned to admire those very qualities which now, arrayed as they were in opposition to his wishes and obnoxious to his pride, not only excited hatred, but created a stern and bitter determination both of taking vengeance, which he called "inflicting punishment," and of triumphing over the pride of one whose mental powers overawed him, which he called, again, "doing justice."

As he sat and listened to the brief discussion

between Franklin Gray and the beautiful creature that pleaded for his liberty, his determination became more strong, his purpose more decided; and though, to do him but justice, vanity did not speak, and he entertained no definite thought of striving to raise into warmer feelings the compassion which he had excited in Mona's breast, and of thus striking the Robber in the most vulnerable point, he could not, as we have before said, help feeling a sensation of admiration mingling with his gratitude, and sentiments rising up in his bosom which might easily have become dangerous and evil.

The degree of scorn also which mingled in Franklin Gray's tone in speaking of and to himself had neither escaped his attention nor passed without producing its natural effect; nor did the sudden coldness which came over Mona diminish at all the strength of his determination to seek for vengeance in the shape of justice.

His first purpose, then, was to obtain his liberty as soon as possible. The wound he had received was no otherwise dangerous than from

the great loss of blood it had occasioned ; and he felt that he was every day and every hour recovering strength, which would soon enable him to use any means he thought fit for regaining his freedom. In order to do so, however, it would be necessary, he saw, to engage the co-operation of some one ; and as the compassion of Mona Gray was already enlisted on his side, he determined, in the first place, to induce her, if possible, to aid him in escaping. Nor did the consideration that by so doing he would render her a party to the execution of his second purpose at all deter him, though that second purpose was, instantly to take measures for apprehending her husband and bringing him to the scaffold, having seen enough during his confinement to remove all doubts from his mind as to the real occupation and pursuits of him into whose hands he had fallen.

During the whole of that day and the next, the absence of Mona Gray rendered his design abortive. He looked for her coming in vain, though he often heard the sounds of her voice speaking to her husband or singing to her child. She never approached the rooms to

which he was confined ; and though the woman who attended on her came frequently to see that every thing was done which could ensure his comfort, Lord Harold feared to trust a menial, and consequently still remained in expectation of the other at length appearing. When towards the close of the second day, however, he found that his anticipations were not fulfilled, he ventured to ask of the woman, " Why does not your mistress ever come to see me now ? Will her husband not let her ? "

" Oh no," replied the servant ; " for he is out the greater part of the day, but she is going out with him just now herself, and will be out all night, I hear."

Lord Harold took two or three turns up and down the room with a sufficient degree of agitation to attract the attention of the woman, who asked, in a peculiar tone, if she could do any thing to serve him.

" If you could go down," said Lord Harold, " and ask your mistress to speak with me for a few moments before she goes, you would very greatly serve me. Do it privately ! " he added.

The woman nodded her head, and left him.

She returned in a few minutes, however, alone, seeming to have met with a different reception from her mistress to that which she expected. "She says she cannot come," replied she, to Lord Harold's eager questions. "If you want any thing she bade me tell you to speak with Captain Gray himself, who will do any thing that is reasonable you may desire."

"Pray go down to her again," said Lord Harold; "tell her it is her I must speak with. That I beg, that I entreat of her, by all the kindness that she has shown me, to come and speak to me, if it be but for one minute."

"I don't like to go any more," replied the woman; "she answered me quite crossly, and the Captain himself is there, sitting at the farther end of the room reading, with his brow as dark as that great black hill, which looks as if it never saw the sun."

Lord Harold pulled a ring from his finger, which was the only thing of value on his person that had escaped the hands of Wily and Hardcastle, and held it out towards the woman. "Will you do what I ask you," he said, "and

have this for your reward?" She was not proof against the temptation; and murmuring, "He cannot eat me, if I do whisper again to his wife," she left the room and descended the staircase.

In a shorter time than before she returned, however, and with a still less satisfied countenance, saying, "She says she will not come.—She bids me tell you she will not come; and for my part, I'm to bring her no more such messages, which I'm sure I would not do for twenty rings; for there he sat while I whispered to her, and though he was so far off that he could not hear a word, he looked up from his book and stared at me as if his eyes had been words to run me through."

Lord Harold turned away mortified. "It may be the worse for all of us," he said to himself; "it may be the worse for all of us. There, woman, there is the ring I promised you; take it."

With a brightening countenance she received the gift, which was perhaps more than she expected, as she had failed in her errand; and

then, descending the stairs, Lord Harold heard her stop a moment, and apparently speak with the man who kept watch on the story below.

“That must be my next resource,” he said to himself; “that must be my next resource. Perhaps I shall succeed better there.”

He then gazed for some time from the window, laying out his plans in his own mind, and feeling that, though still somewhat weaker than he had hoped and expected to have been, he must take advantage of the temporary absence of Franklin Gray, lest such another opportunity should not occur again speedily. The windows of the room in which he was, looked out over the high bank which we have mentioned in describing the house, so that, in addition to the three stories below him in the building itself, there was at least a descent of forty feet perpendicular between him and the road. To let himself down from the windows, therefore, was utterly hopeless; and nothing remained but to bribe the man who guarded him, if such a thing were possible.

How that object was to be effected was the great difficulty, for he had been stripped of every thing upon him when he was stopped upon the moor, except the ring which he had given to the woman; and a man in the situation of him who kept watch below was not likely to take promises for payment.

While he still gazed and revolved all these matters in his mind he saw Franklin Gray and his wife, habited like two of the higher class of peasantry, and mounted on two strong horses, ride slowly down the road, and take their way across a track which lay between the upper hills and the flatter country below. He watched them for some time as they rode along, and shortly after he saw two other persons issue forth and take a different direction. During a few moments their departure was succeeded by some loud talking and laughing in the house itself, which soon ceased, however; and shortly after the voice of the man at the foot of the stairs was heard calling aloud, as if to the female servant, "Come up here, Harriett; come

up here, and chat to us a bit. Curse me if I'm not lonely. Bring the child with you if you don't like to leave it."

"Now is my time," thought Lord Harold; "doubtless they are all out but these two, and I may deal with them without interruption." He accordingly advanced to the door, and, opening it, walked out to the head of the stairs. The sound of his step, however, instantly attracted the attention of the man below, and he started up with the pistol in his hand, exclaiming, "What do you want?"

"I want to speak with you, my good Sir," replied Lord Harold.

"Well, what is it?" rejoined the man in a surly tone; "speak! I can hear!"

"That will scarcely do," said the young man; "if you like to come up here, I can speak to you at my ease, for I have a good deal to say, and much that may be to your advantage."

The man hesitated, but then replied, "I can't come now, for I've called to Harriet to come and talk to me, but I will come by-and-by."

“Come now,” replied Lord Harold, “and bring the woman with you.”

“Oh, oh! is that it?” said the man; “well, go in; I will come.”

Lord Harold felt that he was treated with scanty ceremony, that he, the eldest son of a proud and haughty peer, in the midst of a free land, where the very thought of any thing less than liberty was in abhorrence, without any imputed guilt, or any liability in the eye of the law, was held there as a prisoner, and treated with degrading familiarity by a low and probably guilty being. Nevertheless he had an important object before him, and a moment's reflection taught him to master all feelings of irritation, and, according to the somewhat sordid view of our great Philosopher, submit to indignities that he might rise above them.

He strode up and down the room once or twice, and then listened for the steps that he hoped to hear coming. For some time, however, nothing struck his ear except a low murmur of voices from the story below, in which he could distinguish the treble tones of the woman and

the deeper ones of the man, and he judged, and judged rightly, that they were in earnest consultation in regard to himself. Nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed before the discussion ended, and they then entered together; the woman with a bolder and freer air, as one who had already taken two or three steps in the course which they both saw was about to be laid before them; the man with a look half sullen, half shy, as if he doubted and hesitated still at a leap which he felt morally convinced he should ultimately take.

Lord Harold paused, and gazed upon them both for a moment, calculating what should be the tone and manner which he ought to employ towards the persons before him; and after a moment's consideration he determined to act that part which was most congenial to his own nature, not alone because he felt that he should act it better than any other, but also because he gathered from the man's countenance in an instant, that he was one of those low and grovelling animals who would take advantage of the least condescension.

sion,—who might be overawed, who might be bribed, by those he felt to be above himself, but who would harden himself in opposition or raise the price of his services extravagantly to any one who descended to his own level, or who seemed to need his assistance so much as to court it at the expense of degradation.

Lord Harold accordingly threw himself into a chair, and gazed full in the man's countenance with that look of haughty consciousness which was in some degree natural to him; and when he saw that he had beaten down his gaze, he demanded, in a very different tone from that which he had used before, "I suppose, Sir, you know who I am?"

"Why, yes," replied the man; "I have heard that you are the son of that old Lord——"

"That is enough!" interrupted Lord Harold; "knowing then who I am, you must at once see that being kept here in this state is disagreeable to me. Besides which, important business requires my presence at home."

"Ay, that it does, if you knew all," muttered the man between his teeth.

Lord Harold continued, without taking any notice of what he said, "You must very well know, also, that any thing which I promise I will execute fully."

"Ay, that's what I don't know," replied the man; "that's just what I was talking to Harriet here about; for I know nothing of you; and it's just as likely as not that if I were to let you out this very night, instead of doing any thing that you said you would, you might take and hang me for my pains. No, no; a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

Lord Harold again felt angry and indignant; but he would not give way to feelings which might in any way interfere with his plans; and, though his nostrils expanded and his lips quivered, he mastered himself in a moment, replying, "So you and Harriet have been settling the whole business for me, and have doubtless saved me a world of trouble, for you have most likely made up your minds as to whether you will do what I require or not."

"Why, I think not," replied the man, somewhat staggered by the cool and decided tone

in which the prisoner treated the question ;
“ I think not ; but that depends upon circumstances.”

“ On what circumstances ? ” demanded Lord Harold, shortly.

“ Why, you see the matter is this,” answered the man ; “ as far as I can judge, we shall all separate in ten days or a fortnight, for every one is wanting to go his own way. Now, you see, if the Captain—that is Captain Gray—were going to remain in England, I would as soon try to let you go as I would to jump out of that window, being as sure of getting an ounce of lead in my brains before the month was out if I did the one thing as I should be of breaking my neck if I did the other. But then, I’ve a pretty rare inkling that the Captain and his lady are going across the seas ; so that if you can make it worth my while in ready money to hide myself away for a fortnight till they are off, we may very likely come to terms.”

“ Ready money I have none,” replied Lord Harold.

“ Ay, that’s what I was saying,” interrupted the man; “ I knew very well that Hardy and Wiley left no more money in your purse than there is in a dog’s side-pocket. So I don’t see——”

“ But I do,” replied Lord Harold. “ As far as I can judge, from the direction which the carriage took that brought me hither, from the time occupied in the journey, and from the aspect of the scenery round, we are now somewhere in the Chalden hills, and the town of —— cannot be far distant.”

“ Some fifteen miles,” replied the man; “ at least so Harvey told me the other day; I have not been there myself.”

“ It cannot be much more,” said Lord Harold; “ for I have hunted over all these wastes many a time, and I know the town well; for therein, as it is a seaport, lives a rich merchant and banker of the name of Drury, whom I have often employed in buying fine objects of the arts — pictures, and statues, and such things, from Italy. He has even now in his hand a sum of near three hundred pounds belonging to me, sent him to make

such purchases ; and, if you will engage this night to set me free, I, putting full confidence in your word, will write an order upon him for the money. You can send it by a messenger on horseback, who may easily be back before nightfall ; and then, dividing the amount between you and your friend here, you can open the doors for my escape.”

“ It’s a pretty sum,” replied the man ; “ it’s a pretty sum ; but let us have a little talk together Harriet,” and, drawing her to the farther corner of the room, he consulted with the woman in a low voice for several minutes.

Lord Harold watched them eagerly, and, as they conversed, he could see the deep colours and shadows of strange and bad passions rise in the countenance of each, but especially of the female servant. At length, however, they grew calmer ; their course seemed determined, and they returned, the man taking upon him to speak, as before.

“ What you offer, my Lord,” he said, “ does not exactly suit us. We could not send to the town, as you mention, without being discovered ;

for it is a small place, and Captain Gray has gone there himself to day—to see about a ship, I fancy. His wife, too, pretty Mistress Mona, would go with him; and altogether he is in a fine humour, and when that is the case he has more eyes and hands than other people. However, as you showed you would trust us, we will trust you. Of course you have got some banker in London town, and if you have a mind to double the sum you mentioned, and give us an order upon London, Harriet and I will be off together, and let you out, too, this very night. But you must swear to us that the money shall be paid, and that when we go to get it we shall not be dogged, and that you will never appear against us in any way, and that if ever we are in trouble you'll lend us a helping hand, bearing witness that we let you out."

"I pledge you my honour," replied Lord Harold, "most solemnly and most distinctly, not only never to injure you in any way, but to bear witness, should need be, that you have both served me faithfully in my need. The

sum you demand you shall have; and now nothing remains but to get me pen, ink, and paper, that I may write my order upon the banker in London."

"That will soon be done," replied the man: "for there is nobody in the house but ourselves, and we can do what we like. Come along Harriet; I hear the child crying. I will be back again in a minute."

"Now," thought Lord Harold, when they had both left the room, "this man will betray the master that trusted him, disobey his commands, and, by letting me out of his hands, put his life at my disposal, without even binding me by any promise not to bring him to justice; and this woman, trusted by a kind and gentle mistress with the care of her sweet child, will leave that child helpless, while she schemes things that may destroy the happiness of father, mother, and child for ever. Such is fidelity in this world! Whom shall we trust?"

As he thus thought, he might feel a momentary touch of shame at using such tools and yet so critically examining their actions; but

he felt no shame in owing his life to Franklin Gray, and then—because the Robber detained him for a few days longer than it suited his pleasure, deliberately resolving to bring him to the scaffold, veiling the darker features of such an act under the shining guise of justice. So human passions contrive ever to conceal their real nature from the eyes of those that entertain them.

In a few minutes the man returned with pen and ink, and paper; but before Lord Harold's hand could draw the order, the woman followed into the room, carrying the child in her arms, and saying, "Be pleased to make it half for him and half for me, for though he promises to marry me, I like to have something in my own hands."

The woman was young and pretty, and the man only laughed, replying, "You're right, Harriet; you're right. If every woman was as careful as you are, there would be fewer faithless lovers in the world."

The matter was arranged as she proposed; and as soon as it was concluded, Lord Harold

demanded, "What is to prevent us executing our scheme now? Why should we not set off at once?"

"Only because we should be caught and brought back again in five minutes," replied the man; "and while you might risk a bullet or two, I should certainly get my brains blown out. Why there is Harvey and little Bill, and all the rest of them, gone out with their carbines turned into birding pieces, for the purpose of seeing what game they can get upon the hills. They are scattered about all over the place, and we could not go half a mile without risking to meet with some of them. Besides, there's that young devil, Jocelyn, lurking about in some of the dells, trapping wheatears and such things, and we must take care to blind him, for he's all eyes and ears together. No, no; one of them has promised to come back to take my place in a couple of hours: then I'll go out as if to sport, and mark out our way across the country. I shall come on again to watch about ten o'clock at night, and then, depend upon it, they'll all be drinking as hard as they

can drink till they go to bed. Most of them will be drunk; and, when they are all fast asleep, we can do what we will, for Franklin Gray won't be back till noon to-morrow, so you and I, and Harriet here, can take horses and be off."

"And what will you do with the infant?" demanded Lord Harold, looking to the woman.

"Oh, it sleeps all night," she replied, "when once it's put off, and they'll find it in the morning, and feed it till its mother comes back."

Lord Harold shut his teeth tight, but there was no remedy for it, and he made no comment. He could not help doubting, however, whether the order he had given upon a London banker would be very safe in the hands of this faithful couple, who might or might not make use of the paper, and yet leave him as much a prisoner as before. As he had given them the drafts, however, he felt that it would be impolitic to demand them back again, and consequently, after arranging all the minor particu-

lars of their plan, he suffered them to depart, carrying with them the unconscious child whom they had brought to witness the betrayal of its parents' trust.

The rest of the day passed over to Lord Harold with no slight impatience and anxiety. In somewhat more than the two hours, which the man had mentioned, several of the gang were heard to return and relieve the guard, who was found sitting at his post below. The voice of the woman, too, could be distinguished, caroling at her work, as gaily and lightly as if there had been neither vice, nor guilt, nor folly at her heart; and from time to time the young nobleman could hear her talking to the child as tenderly as if she had been its mother.

“Strange and contradictory human nature,” he thought, “which can reconcile all these most opposite things;” and, as do most people who comment upon the actions of others, he forgot to look into the contradictions of his own bosom.

Seldom had Lord Harold seen the sun go down with such anxious feelings as he then

experienced. The voice of the boy Jocelyn was heard below, but the few sounds to be distinguished in the house showed that the greater part of the gang were still absent. Speedily, however, other tongues were heard, and then came several more, laughing, talking, and singing; and the woman, when she brought him in lights, said, "They are all come back, and are soon going to supper."

The noise, after a short interval, increased rapidly, and it was evident that wine began to do its work. The rattling of dice was heard; then many a merry song—some appropriate enough to the calling of those who poured them forth, some as opposite as it was possible to imagine. Hour after hour passed by, and Lord Harold fancied that the revel would never end; but gradually the sounds became fewer as one after another of the party fell asleep under the influence of wine, or retired to rest from weariness. At length, after one more general burst of merriment, the whole of the band seemed to betake themselves to repose. Steps were heard in different directions, a voice

here and there speaking to a companion, the dull end of some drowsy ditty, hummed amidst hiccups, as the half drunken reveller stripped off his clothing ; and then all was silent throughout the mansion.

“ Now,” thought Lord Harold, “ I shall soon see whether they will keep their word with me ;” for he could not shake off from his mind an impression that they would prove as faithless to him as they had done to Franklin Gray ; and, as nearly an hour elapsed after all was quiet without his seeing any thing of any one, he became more and more convinced that it was as he had suspected.

He was mistaken, however ; for at length the door of his room slowly opened, and the man, putting in his head, beckoned to him to come out.

Lord Harold had been long prepared, and he instantly followed the footsteps of his guide, who led him silently down stairs into a wide, deep, porch doorway, where the woman Harriet was in waiting. Not a word was spoken by any of the party, and the man then took his way across

the court-yard towards a long range of stabling and outhouses, which in former times had sheltered many an honest and modest farmer's gelding, but which now contained not a few of those animals which have established for themselves an impudent reputation under the title of "a highwayman's horse." The man raised the latch, and pushed the door, but it resisted his efforts, and with a face full of dismay and bewilderment he exclaimed, "Hang me if Harvey has'nt locked the stables!"

Lord Harold made no reply, but waited to see what expedient he would propose, and very soon found that it was one to which he was not at all inclined to submit, namely, that of returning to the house and taking their chance of another day.

"No," he said in a low tone; "no, my good friend! I have determined to make my escape to-night, or not-at all. I am out here with you and this good lady, and nothing shall make me go in again. If there are no horses to be found, we must go on foot."

“ But suppose I say you shall go in again,” replied the man ; “ what then ? ”

“ Why then,” replied Lord Harold, “ I shall take care to make my refusal in so loud a tone that some of the good people who are asleep there shall hear it, and come down to find you and this fair lady so far upon your way, with an order upon my banker in your pockets.”

The man stood and glared at him for a moment, as if he would have shot him where he stood ; but at length he said, with a slight stamp upon the ground, “ Well, it’s no use ; I suppose we had best take our way off on our own feet, if we cannot get four legs to carry us. One must risk something in this world ; and perhaps, after all, the clatter of those horses’ feet might have roused some of the fellows above. Come Harriet, my lass ; you must try what you can do for a forced march.”

Thus saying, he led the way out of the courtyard, and bent his steps straight against the side of the hill. He seemed to bear no malice towards Lord Harold for having forced him to

the decided step he had taken; and when they were at a sufficient distance from the house to permit of his speaking aloud without risking any thing, he said, "I found out this morning, while I was exploring, that if we take this way over the hill between those two high knolls we shall get into a little lane on the other side which leads down to a village some ten miles off. Now, we shall get there, I dare say, before day-light, though it is tough work walking up this hill, and there, I don't doubt, may get us horses to take us on. If so, we part there, my young Lord; for it won't suit me to travel with lordship any longer. I and Harriet will go on to London as fast as we can, and I dare say you will be able to make your way without us."

"That I shall, easily," replied Lord Harold, "even if I go as far as that with you; but most likely I shall stop before that."

The truth was that Lord Harold began now to feel that he was much feebler than he had supposed, and although they had not gone at this time above half a mile since they first set out, it was with difficulty that he kept up with

his two companions. They showed him some degree of kindness and consideration, however, slackening their pace for his convenience, when they found, on looking back towards the house they had left, that no light nor any other sign whatever announced that their flight had been discovered. A strong effort of his determined nature enabled the young nobleman to do more than many persons would have effected in his situation, and he succeeded in crossing the summit of the hill, and descending so far on the other side as to arrive at the end of the wooded lane of which his guide had spoken. Here, however, he was obliged to declare that he could go no farther; and the reply of the man was, "Well, then, we must leave you; for of course we can't stop here; for, to say the truth, I would rather meet the devil himself than Franklin Gray after what has happened."

"Go on; go on," replied Lord Harold; "go on, and take care of yourselves. I will rest here for an hour or two by these trees, and then doubtless shall be able to go forward very well by myself."

“ Mayhap you would like a pistol, however,” said the man, putting one into Lord Harold’s hand ; “ I always find them convenient ;” and, without farther adieu, he turned and left the young nobleman, who seated himself under one of the trees, with the darkness of the night all around him. The other two went on ; and in a moment after the woman’s voice was heard in a loud laugh, which Lord Harold doubted not was in some way at his expense.

CHAPTER III.

“LET us do every thing formally. Let us do every thing formally,” said Sir Matthew Scrope to Sir Thomas Waller, when the latter returned from the expedition which we have already recorded to Danemore Castle, at about eleven o’clock in the day. “Pray let us do every thing formally, or we may get into a scrape. Indeed, what you tell me about this young man being the Earl’s son makes me afraid we have got into a scrape already.—Ha ! Mister Justice Whistler ; is it not so ? ha !”

“What is life, my dear Sir,” said Justice Whistler, who was somewhat of a wag, and generally displayed his talent for raillery upon any one he saw in mortal terror or great anguish of mind — such as young prisoners brought before him for capital offences, and their friends or relations ; “what is life, my dear Sir, but a succession of scrapes ? We get into a terrible scrape when we enter it surely,

and an awful scrape in going out of it. Then, between, there is love and matrimony, two other sad scrapes; beside all the other scrapes such as the present which we fall into between infancy and dotage. The great art of life is to get out of our scrapes cleverly. Now, let us see how you will manage to get out of this; ha! ha! ha!" and he laughed most uncomfortably close to the ear of his two fellow justices.

Sir Matthew Scrope was evidently in great anxiety respecting the result, and bitterly regretted that a rooted disinclination to rise by candlelight had prevented him from going over to Danemore with his colleague Sir Thomas Waller, whom he looked upon as a rash young man, though he was at least fifty-eight years of age. He had been in very great apprehension before lest it should ultimately prove that the personage whom he had at first determined to be undoubtedly guilty should prove entirely innocent; and the extraordinary consequences of hearing that the Earl acknowledged him, not only as his son, but his legitimate son, were,

that he speedily not only began to doubt whether the prisoner was guilty or not, but whether he, Sir Matthew Scrope, had ever thought him guilty; and he might very soon have worked himself up into the belief that he had always maintained his innocence, but had been overruled by Sir Thomas Waller.

The latter worthy knight was a man of courage of a certain kind, that is to say, a sort ofameleon courage, which took its colour from whatever was next to it. As long as he had remained by Mr. Justice Whistler, the cool, self-possessed resolution of the London justice, who knew better than any man living how to carry through what is called an unpleasant piece of business, had kept him up, and bold measures were all that he thought of; but the timid apprehensions of Sir Matthew Scrope damped his fire most amazingly, and when he found the London justice admit calmly that they were in a scrape the fire went out altogether.

Both the country justices, being men of vivid imaginations, instantly set to work to picture to themselves all the evil consequences which

might ensue from the faux pas they had committed; and a sort of nervous twitching came over Sir Matthew Scrope's whole person, which afforded Mr. Justice Whistler much internal satisfaction.

“Nay, nay, my good friend,” exclaimed Sir Matthew; “these are no joking matters; and the only thing that it seems needful to do now is, to see how we may best retreat from this business quietly.”

“Retreat from it!” exclaimed the London magistrate; “nonsense! Face it out boldly! The man is just as innocent of the murder as you or I; but what matters that? Do your best to prove that he is guilty; then there will be always so fair a case against him that you will be justified in all you have done; and the more vigorously you act against the Earl's own son, the more credit you will get for the impartial administration of justice.”

But such bold counsels were not for Sir Matthew Scrope; and Sir Thomas Waller, whose courage was just now lukewarm, was more inclined to bold timidity than any thing

else. "Let us discharge him at once," he exclaimed; "let us discharge him at once, and be civil to him."

"Nonsense, I say again," replied Mr. Justice Whistler. "What! discharge him without cause, after having dragged him away from his dying father's bedside this very morning! Would you make fools of us all!"

"No, no; that will never do," said Sir Matthew Scrope; "but nevertheless, let us do things formally. Let us have the young gentleman up for examination; let us be civil to him, as Sir Thomas says. Perhaps something may come out in his re-examination which may show his innocence."

"If it do not come out, you will squeeze it out, that is clear," rejoined Justice Whistler; "but the man stands committed, the warrant is made out, and there is nothing to be done but to send him to the gaol. I am sorry I did not send the constables on with him at once."

"I am very glad you did not," said Sir Matthew. "As to the warrant, it is but a bit of parchment, which will shrivel up in my kitchen

fire in a minute ; and so we will have him up into the justice-room to re-examine him before we send him —— ”

“ Back to his father,” said Justice Whistler, supplying the words, and shrugging his shoulders. “ Well, if you will act in such a way, I suppose I must help you to do it gracefully. Let us go to the justice-room. Call the clerk. Leave the whole business to me, and do not be afraid. Whatever you may hear or see, I will get you out of the business — and in your own way,” he added, seeing his fellow justices hesitate.

“ Well, well,” replied Sir Matthew Scrope ; “ if in our own way that will do ; but let me beg you Mr. Justice Whistler not to plunge us farther in the mire than we are at present.”

“ A capital simile,” muttered the London justice between his teeth, as he led the way to the justice-room, which communicated by a long passage with the mansion of Sir Matthew Scrope.

The clerk was then called, the magistrates took their stations in formal array, the table

was diligently strewed with papers, and an order was given to bring in the prisoner.

“Ahem!” cried Sir Matthew Scrope, as Langford appeared between two constables.—“Ahem! ahem!” said his fellow justices; and Sir Thomas Waller, who now—like a tennis ball, which, having been struck in one way by the hand of a strong player, is met by his opponent’s racket, and is driven farther back in the opposite direction—was inclined to go farther than any of his colleagues, according to the new impulse which he had received, added with a simpering smile, “Pray be seated, Sir; pray be seated. Ahem! You rascal, why don’t you give the gentleman a chair?” and he bent his brows as frowningly on the constable as if he had committed petty larceny at least.

Langford was pale, and his features somewhat worn and haggard, with all the anxiety, agitation, and distress of mind which he had gone through within the last week; neither was his heart well at ease when he regarded either his father’s situation or his own at that moment, and felt that his recovered parent might remain

in sickness and in anguish, and even pass the gates of death, without the consolation of his son's presence; while he, perhaps, manacled and treated like a common felon, was detained in the solitary wretchedness of a prison upon the charge of murdering his own brother. Nevertheless a faint smile came over his lip at the somewhat burlesque exhibition of Sir Matthew Waller, and it instantly flashed across his mind that something must have occasioned a change in the worthy justice's feelings towards him, both from the sudden alteration and great embarrassment of his manner. He threw himself into the chair, however, that was placed for him, and leaning his elbow on the table, gazed upon the magistrates, thinking, "What next?"

"You stand before us, Sir," said Mr. Justice Whistler, in a pompous tone, "accused of the murder of Edward Lord Harold.—Ahem!"

There was something in the man's whole manner that roused Langford's indignation and contempt at the same time; and he replied, with his lip curling and his nostril expanding, "I *sit* before you, Sir, committed on that

charge; at least if I am to believe what you told me not above three hours ago."

"Circumstances may have occurred since, Sir," said the justice, with a mysterious look, "to make us take a more favourable view of the case, and we have consequently determined to re-examine you."

"Sir, I am tired of re-examinations," replied Langford. "You informed me that I was committed. Under such circumstances, I am not disposed to answer any further questions, or to be re-examined at all."

Mr. Justice Whistler looked at his two companions, and both the knights looked at Mr. Justice Whistler, for Langford's renitency threatened to keep them exactly in the disagreeable position in which they had placed themselves; but after a moment's pause he added a few words, which, like the sound of parley, gave hope of entering into some capitulation. "Pray, Sir," said the prisoner, "what are the circumstances which induce you to take a more favourable view of the case?"

"Nay, young gentleman," said Mr. Justice

Whistler, with a benign and yet dignified look, "you cannot expect us to give you such information. That would be defeating the ends of justice; but if you think fit to answer the interrogatories which shall be addressed to you, and your replies coincide with the information which we have received, the result may be very much in your favour."

Langford paused for a moment ere he replied. He was naturally extremely anxious to free himself as soon as possible, but yet he felt a degree of indignation at the conduct that was pursued towards him which overcame every other feeling; and at the same time he began to perceive that the worthy justices were very doubtful as to their own proceedings, so that he was not without some expectation of their setting him free at once if he avoided any further reference to that journey to the moor, which he could neither explain nor account for, without inconvenience and danger to himself and others; he therefore once more refused to submit to any interrogation.

"All I shall say," he continued, "is, that I

am, as you well know, perfectly innocent ; that I never saw the unfortunate young gentleman, of whose death I am accused, after I parted with him in the manor park at Moorhurst ; and that there is not the slightest evidence to show, that though he drew his sword upon me, I ever drew mine upon him. I shall reply to nothing more."

Mr. Justice Whistler whispered eagerly to Sir Matthew Scrope. "There is nothing for it, I tell you," he said, "but to send him to prison, and make out the best case against him you can. You see he will give us no opportunity of letting him go. Your risk will be much greater in the one case than in the other."

Sir Matthew Scrope turned very pale, for the alternative was certainly somewhat disagreeable ; and his eye wandered with an anxious vacancy from the countenance of the London justice to that of the prisoner, and then again stole round to the face of Sir Thomas Waller, without finding any resource in the expression of either of the three. Sir

Thomas Waller, on his part, being of a more irritable and less lamb-like disposition than his worthy colleague, was getting somewhat excited, or rather into a state of irritable despair, which inclined him to side with Mr. Justice Whistler, and take the leap before him, even at the risk of breaking his neck.

At that moment, however, while the justices were in this state of anxiety and embarrassment, a constable made his appearance at the doorway, closed the door gently behind him, and, walking slowly up the room, communicated something to Sir Matthew Scrope, which was instantly transmitted to the other two magistrates, in the same low tone in which he had received it.

“Oh, send him away; send him away,” said Mr. Justice Whistler. “Bid him come another time.”

“He’s a most respectable man,” said Sir Thomas Waller; “perhaps he might help us in this business.”

“Why, your Worship, said the constable,” in a low tone, “I understood him to say that

it was something about this very business he wanted to tell you."

"Show him in, then; show him in!" said the large round voice of Mr. Justice Whistler; and in a few minutes was ushered into the presence of the three magistrates a small neat dapper man, dressed in a plain suit of black silk, who was greeted by the two country magistrates as Master Evelyn.

With a quick, short step he advanced to Sir Matthew Scrope, took him by the button, led him into the recess of a window at some distance behind the other magistrates, and spoke to him for a few moments with rapid utterance, but in a low voice. Most men have seen the sun come from behind a cloud; but the glorious visage even of the great orb of day, when it bursts forth from that vapoury veil, is scarcely more radiant than became the countenance of Sir Matthew Scrope while listening to the words of Mr. Evelyn the attorney.

"Hist! hist!—Sir Thomas!" he exclaimed; "Sir Thomas! Your worship, Master Whistler!" and with dignified grace he beckoned them up

to the place of conference. Mr. Justice Whistler, as he listened, laid his finger solemnly upon the side of his nose, and then, making a sign to his colleagues to be silent, returned to his seat, and said in a full round voice, "Mr. Evelyn, be so good as to introduce the witnesses."

"What is coming now?" thought Langford as he heard this direction given, and he turned to look towards the door, while the London justice, with an air of perfect self-composure, took up some of the papers from the table, and seemed to study them attentively, as if perfectly indifferent to the next act of the drama.

Langford still kept his eyes upon the door, however, not a little anxious to see who were to be the witnesses for or against him; and certainly his surprise was not slight when he saw Sir Walter Herbert enter the room, with Alice, pale and evidently much agitated, leaning on his arm; and a woman servant, whom he had often seen at the Manor House, following close behind.

He started up with an impulse that he could not resist, and sprang forward to meet her.

Had he kept his seat, Alice might have gone through the scene very well, for, though agitated in a very great degree, she had taken much pains to nerve her mind, in order calmly to perform the part assigned to her; but the sudden start, the joyful smile, the radiant look of happiness with which Langford sprang forward to meet her, quite overthrew her equanimity, carried her away altogether, and she suffered herself to sink forward in the arms he held out to her, bursting into a violent flood of tears.

Sir Matthew Scrope, who was naturally not without a feeling heart, was affected at what he saw, and Mr. Justice Whistler amused. “No private communications between the witness and the prisoner,” said the latter, with a broad grin; and though Langford turned round towards him with a heavy frown gathering on his high forehead, he went on in the same strain. “Pray, separate them, Mr. Evelyn. Pray, separate them, Sir Walter Herbert, else we shall have evident collusion, and be obliged to refuse the evidence!”

Langford removed the arms which he had at first clasped warmly round the beautiful form of his promised bride; and Alice, while she wiped away the tears with one hand, placed the other in that of her father, and advanced towards the table.

“Well, Madam,” continued the justice; “what is it that you have to say upon this subject? I understand it is something of great importance.”

“I trust it may prove so,” replied Alice; “and indeed I should think it would prove of the greatest importance. What I have to say is this, that in the course of last night I myself distinctly saw Edward Lord Harold alive.”

“And are you ready to swear to this, Madam?” asked the justice.

“Quite ready,” replied Alice.

“Then be so good, Madam,” he said, “as to detail all the circumstances.”

Alice immediately complied; and with distinctness and precision, which called a compliment from the lips even of Mr. Justice Whistler, she narrated every event of the preceding night

which related to the matter in question. She told, glancing timidly at the cause of their journey at that late hour, how the carriage which contained herself and her father had been stopped, they themselves obliged to alight, their own horses turned loose, and others put on ; and she went on to say, that when the party which had dispossessed them took possession of the carriage, she had distinctly seen Lord Harold, whom she had known from her childhood, assisted to the carriage by two men, and placed therein, together with other persons. She further said, that she had called her maid to witness what was going on, and she had consequently seen the whole, of which she would give her own account.

The maid was then called forward, and corroborated in every respect her mistress's statement. She knew Lord Harold perfectly well by sight, she said ; had known him from the time he was a boy, and could not be mistaken. She had seen him distinctly by the bright light which was then in the sky, and which she had since heard proceeded from the burning

of Danemore Castle. She had also heard his voice, and recognized it, as well as his person, so that there remained no earthly doubt upon her mind that he was still alive.

“Well, then,” exclaimed Mr. Justice Whistler, “such being the case, of course, where nobody has been killed nobody can be the murderer. We have therefore nothing further to do but to discharge the warrant against this gentleman, and set him at liberty. We have heard in romances, and such trash, of gentlemen being liberated by fair ladies, but I must confess I never saw it before till this day. However, we must, as I said, discharge the warrant; though, if I am rightly informed,” he added, with what he intended to be a pleasant and meaning smile to Langford,—“though if I am rightly informed almost as many aliases should have been put into the description of this honourable gentleman as into that of any person brought to the Old Bailey.”

Langford looked grave, for his feelings were very much mingled. He was rejoiced, undoubtedly, at his liberation; he was rejoiced

to hear that the man of whose safety he had himself given up all hope, was still living; he was rejoiced that Alice Herbert should have been the means of restoring him to freedom; but still he saw many a difficulty and many a pang before him; and, with a generous heart and mind, he grieved for the sake of his younger brother as well as for himself, that he had not known of Edward's safety before, when he might have taken means to soften every thing that was now likely to be harsh and painful both to the Earl and to himself, as well as to him who had so long looked forward with a feeling of perfect certainty to the enjoyment of high rank, commanding station, and one of the most splendid fortunes in the country.

He could now do nothing; the Earl had so loudly proclaimed the secret of his birth, had acknowledged him before so many persons, that no means of breaking or softening the matter to him who had hitherto been called Lord Harold now remained; and even with regard to the Earl himself, all that Langford could hope for was, to have the opportunity of

communicating the facts to him in the first instance, and of concerting some means with him for taking the sting out of his offence.

Such were the feelings which were busily crossing his bosom while the magistrate spoke, and for the moment they produced a look of serious thought, almost of sadness, which surprised even Alice Herbert. The next moment, however, his countenance was all clear; and taking her hand in his, he thanked her a thousand times, feeling, with true love's sweet deception, as if his liberation were entirely owing to her exertions.

“Oh, dear Langford!” she said, “indeed you owe me nothing. I wish it had been in my power to do any thing to free you sooner, not only from imprisonment, but from a horrid accusation, which was even worse. But this has been all accident; and though it has made me very happy, I have had no merit therein.”

Langford thanked her still, however, and thanked her eagerly; and then turning to good Sir Walter Herbert, he shook him warmly by the hand, thanking him too, and asking him

if he had yet received the paper which the Earl of Danemore had sent that very morning. He found, however, that such was not the case ; and that Sir Walter Herbert was then waiting with Alice to tender bail for his appearance, Bolland and his follower never yet having reached the county town to which the good Knight and his daughter had bent their steps after having been left without their carriage.

The tale of their adventures instantly roused the peculiar genius of Mr. Justice Whistler, who had that very morning, on his way back with Langford, investigated accurately the whole history of the attack upon Danemore Castle, and who now, furnished with a clue by the account of Sir Walter Herbert, resolved to remain in the county, though he vowed that his presence was daily needed in London, and to pursue the robbers till he had brought them to justice. On this sage determination he proceeded to act, and as soon as Bolland appeared,—which he did in somewhat rueful plight about the middle of the day, having remained tied to a tree during the whole night,—Mr. Justice Whistler sought to

engage him in the scheme, well knowing that never ferret traced the windings of a warren with more supple ingenuity than the sheriff's officer would trace the track of a fugitive.

It was with difficulty, however, that Bolland was persuaded to undertake the task, for the warning voice of Franklin Gray rang in his ears ; and though he longed to be revenged for the cold night he had passed upon the moor, yet he had a great reverence for the Robber's threats, having remarked that they seldom went unexecuted. He was at length, however, persuaded ; and as soon as Sir Walter and his daughter, accompanied by Langford, now at liberty, had taken their way back, with hearts greatly relieved, towards the scenes where first they appeared before the reader's eyes, the London magistrate and his new ally, with the two country justices as slow hounds behind them, proceeded to hunt out tidings of Franklin Gray and his party.

They were soon at fault, however ; for though the marks of wheels and horses' hoofs could be traced from the spot where the carriage had been

taken from Sir Walter Herbert as far as the road continued sandy, the nature of the soil soon changed; hard rock succeeded, and all such marks were lost.

At the same time, it was found in vain to question the cottagers and townspeople, for all declared that if such a party had passed at all they had passed in the night, when heavy sleep had closed each ear and shut up every eye.

CHAPTER IV.

It is probable that very few persons in the world, were the choice left to them, would prefer that any mixture whatsoever of pain should chequer the happiness which they covet. But yet have we not all felt, have we not all at some time owned, that the mingling of a slight drop of acid in the sweet cup of enjoyment gave it a zest which prevented it from palling on the taste.

Seated beside Alice Herbert, in a vehicle which had been hired at the county town to convey them back to their own dwelling, — a vehicle the external appearance of which none of those it contained even saw, — Langford gave way to joy, not unmixed, indeed, but only so far touched with care and anxiety as to bring out the brighter points in the more striking relief. As far as he could he cast from his mind every memory of evil: he thought of that which was pleasant and gladdening in his fate

alone, and suffered the memory of past discomforts and pangs, or the apprehension of difficulties and dangers in the future, but to come across his mind as vague shadows, like distant clouds upon the edge of the horizon, which the wind might or might not bear away, but which at all events did not serve to obscure the sun that shone in the zenith.

He had, indeed, infinite cause for satisfaction. He had, indeed, a thousand motives for joy, and even for triumph. That which had been for many years the first, the great object of his existence, was now accomplished, and was accomplished, though not without pain, though not without difficulty, though not without danger, still without one action which he could look upon with pain or with regret. He felt that, though he had been tempted to do things which he would afterwards have repented, he had resisted the temptation, and had struggled nobly as well against himself as against the injustice of others.

Whatever might result from the circumstances in which he was placed, he had succeeded in that

great object of clearing his mother's memory from a stain. The Earl, in the presence of many witnesses, had more than once acknowledged the marriage which for eight-and-twenty years he had concealed and denied; and Langford doubted not that the same good providence which had led him through such tortuous paths to success so far, would accomplish the rest in good time, nor leave the work begun unfinished. It was a blessing, too, when he gazed on Alice Herbert,—the beautiful and the beloved!—to feel that the only stigma upon his name which even the eye of prejudice could have seen was removed, and that her father's views in regard to illegitimate birth would not in his case mingle any degree of pain with that approbation which in other respects he had given so joyfully.

He sat beside her, then, giving way to the extreme of happiness; and, strange to say, the love which in their last meeting had been new and timid in the hearts of both, had now, by the events of deep interest,—by the dangers, by the sorrows, by the anxieties which they had passed through together,—by all the various circum-

stances, thoughts, and feelings in which the fate of each had been associated with that of the other,—had now been taught to feel like old and tried affection,—had lost much of the shyness of novelty; and Alice let the hand which he had taken, rest in his, while on their onward journey he told as much of the strange tale of his past life as he could do without embarrassing the story with the names of others whose fate was yet uncertain, but might be affected by the very share they had taken in all that had passed regarding him.

He mentioned not the name of Franklin Gray, but he took his own history far back, and told her and her father that long ago, in the days of the civil wars, many an Englishman, driven forth from his native land, had sought refuge in France; that many of them, broken in fortunes, and bankrupt even of hope, had become mere adventurers, and had established for their countrymen the reputation of bad and reckless men.

He went on to tell her that one of these exiles from their native land had been kindly

received and nobly entertained by a family which had long been more or less connected with England and English people. He was of a daring and adventurous nature, and had sought his fortune, before he came to France, in still more distant countries; but there was something in his whole demeanour—in the high education which he displayed, in the noble feelings which often burst from him, even in the very faults and untamed wildness of a nature spoilt by indulgence, which confirmed the account he gave of his own high rank, and the large possessions of his dead father in the island of his birth.

That man he said was now the Earl of Danemore; and then, in the graces of youth, he found no great difficulty in winning the heart of Eugenie de Beaulieu, whose feelings in his favour were first excited by compassion, to end in admiration and in love. They parted, but it was soon to meet again. Her brother had been forced to join the army then warring in the Low Countries. Her uncle had been sent

to England on one of the brief embassies which from time to time marked the broken intercourse between the great usurper Cromwell and the legitimate monarch of France. The aunt of Eugenie de Beaulieu, having accompanied her husband, had sent over people in whom she could confide to bring her niece, who had been left almost unprotected in France during her brother's absence, to the British capital; but the death of Cromwell, and the uncertain policy of his weak successor, had thrown the whole country into confusion ere she arrived. Eugenie was followed by her lover, and never reached the dwelling of her uncle in London. Ere she arrived at that city she had consented to become a wife; and her husband, having been discovered as an adherent of the house of Stuart, was soon after obliged to fly and leave her.

What he meditated, what he purposed by such an act, his son now touched upon but slightly; but he was obliged to tell how, by threats as well as by entreaties, the Earl had forced her, who had been his bride but a few

weeks, to give into his hands all the proofs of their private marriage, promising by every thing he held sacred never to destroy them.

The next part of the story was a painful one, and was also passed over lightly:—how his mother returned to France, and did not find her husband where she expected to meet him; how she was forced to communicate her situation to her brother; how her brother doubted and feared, but at length believed her tale; how he cast all thoughts aside but that of doing justice to his sister; how he traced out her husband, and eagerly, perhaps fiercely, demanded that he should do her right. How, in short, two high tempers went on to words which could not be forgiven; how they fought, and how both had nearly died where they stood. So went the tale.

The husband, carried from the field, was not heard of more for nearly two years, when he suddenly re-appeared in England, claimed and received his honours, titles, and estates, and wedded into a rich and noble house. His first and deserted wife, forced by her brother to

countenance a report of her own death, brought forth a son in secret; and the rest of the tale, as it was told to Alice Herbert, the reader must have already gathered. There was a part of it, however, which was not told then, and which will be noticed, perhaps, hereafter; but it was a part which involved the whole history of those steps which had been taken for several years to regain from the Earl the proofs of his first marriage; and it touched upon so much that was painful, and so much which might be imprudent to speak, that Langford was not sorry when he found that the many questions of Alice and Sir Walter, their many exclamations of pity for his mother's sorrows, and interest in her fate, the long explanations and minute details which he had to give, and the various episodes and collateral anecdotes which were required in such a history told to such listeners, had occupied the time till they had nearly reached the spot where he had left his father, compelling him to leave his tale for the time incomplete.

Anxious in every respect to return to the side

of his sick parent, Langford gazed up at the windows of the house where he lay as the carriage rolled heavily into the court before the old parsonage. All was still, however; and a careless horseboy whistled in the yard while he thrust the straw on one side. Langford questioned him regarding his father's health; but the lad knew nothing on the subject, but that "there had been a rare coming and going, and seeking for the doctor, who had gone forth to see Betty Hinton, who had been scorched while seeking to pilfer something from the fire at the castle."

Sir Walter Herbert and the Earl's son, however, both felt that the boy's account gave a bad augury; and the knight and his daughter remained in a vacant room below, while Langford ascended the stairs. He found some of the Earl's attendants in the outer room, and from them he learned a confirmation of his fears. His Lordship, they said, was much worse, and had become so about an hour before. The doctor, they added, was then with him, as well

as Mistress Bertha and the Rector; but they could no further tell his condition.

Langford hurried on with a sweet hope that his presence might soothe and cheer. He opened the door cautiously; but the face of the old Peer was towards it, and the too bright, fevered eye was fixed upon him instantly. With much pain, however, Langford saw that his appearance seemed to agitate rather than to calm; the lip quivered, the brow knit, and tossing round upon his other side, he turned his face to the wall. His son, however, divined at once what had happened to produce this change, and shaped his course accordingly. Moving gently forward, he advanced to the bedside of his hurt father, and sat down, while Bertha gave place, and the Rector bowed low to his patron's son.

“How fare you now, Sir?” demanded the young gentleman; “I hope better, for I bring you good news.”

The Earl, however, occupied with his own thoughts, did not seem to attend to his words; “No!” he cried, casting himself round again

in bed, and grasping Langford's hands ; “ No, I will not disown thee — my gallant, my noble boy !—No ; I will not recall my words, be the consequences what they may ! Your voice sounds in my ear like your poor mother's, when first I heard it in youth and generous-hearted innocence ; — it sounds soothing, and not reproachful ; and I say it again, you are my son ! she was my wife !—Let them do what they will — let them say what they will — so it is, and shall be denied no longer ; and yet, poor Edward !—Think of poor Edward ! He is living — you have heard ; — he is living. The joy of those sudden tidings had well nigh killed me ; but the pangs that came after have gone further still.—Think of poor Edward !”

“ I have thought of him, my dear Sir ; I have thought of him much and deeply,” replied Langford ; “ but indeed there is no cause for your present agitation—”

“ No cause !” exclaimed the Earl, with his old vehemence breaking forth even then ; “ no cause, do you say ! Why, do I not, by the very act of acknowledging you, bastardize the boy

that has lain in my bosom, that has dwelt with me through years which would otherwise have been solitary? Do I not take the wrong from your mother to put it upon his? Do I not deprive him, by a word, of station, rank, a noble name? Do I not proclaim myself false, — a breaker of all vows? Oh! young man, young man, you know not how this proud hard heart is wrung and torn at this moment!—Say not a word; say not a word! I know that it is by my own follies;—my own crimes, if you will. I know what you can say; I know all that you can say; that your mother, as noble and as virtuous as his, bore her sorrows through a long life, raised no loud murmur against him who had injured her, and died forgiving him who had embittered her existence; that hers is the just right; that hers was the first claim; that the real wife lived in sorrow and under reproach, and died in misery and despair; that the false wife lived in honour and in high esteem, and died in the arms of her son, and of him she thought her husband; that it is time now, even now, to make the atonement!—I know it all,

and the atonement shall be made; but neither tell me that there is no cause for agitation, nor utter one reproach in the voice of her who never reproached me."

"Far from it, my Lord," replied Langford, as soon as the Earl would let him speak; "far from it! I seek not in the slightest degree to utter a word that comes near a reproach; and though I know you must be pained and grieved by much that has occurred, there is still, I trust, cause for nothing but joy in the tidings we have heard of my poor brother's safety. In the first place, my Lord, the papers which are necessary to establish my claim as heir to your estates and title in England have not yet been found, and may never be so; nor do I at all seek to deprive my brother of that to which he has through life looked forward. Were they found to-morrow, as long as he lived I should conceive myself bound by the engagement which I and my uncle both entered into formerly, never to make use of those papers in England, but to employ them solely for the establishment of my legitimacy in France. No one in this

country, but myself, knows, or should ever obtain proof from me, of the period of my mother's death; and consequently, as that event might have taken place before your marriage with another, that second marriage will remain valid in England, to all intents and purposes. I say, that such shall be the case even should the papers be found. Should they not be found, your own solemn declaration, upon oath, together with the testimony of Bertha here, a born subject of France, will be sufficient fully to establish my legitimacy in that country, and to restore to me my uncle's title and estates, which have passed away to others. Such being the case, I say again, there is no cause for any thing but joy in the tidings of my brother's safety. If you desire it should be so, he even need never know that you were united to his mother while mine was still living. I pledge myself, upon my honour, never to tell him, and in no respect to seek to wrest from him the estates or honours he would have derived from you. Shall it be so?"

The Earl gazed at him for several moments,

with a countenance over which the shades of many passions came flitting like figures across a glass. He hesitated; he doubted; he admired. But his was not a nature to remain long in any state of uncertainty. Keen, eager, fiery in all his determinations, he strode at once to his object, and when his resolution was once taken, he could trample upon his own heart when it lay in the way, as well as upon the hearts of others.

“No!” he exclaimed, at length, in answer to Langford’s question; “no; it shall not be so! I will do justice even at the last hour. I will do justice, let it cost me what it may.—No! noble, and generous, kind-hearted, and true as you have shown yourself,—worthy child of her that I wronged,—true descendant of a noble race, upon whose fame and honour I brought the first imputation, I will not take advantage of your too generous kindness; I will not screen myself from the consequences of what I have done, by withholding from him who saved his father’s life, at the very moment that father was doing him the grossest injustice, the rank

that he will honour nobly, the wealth that he will rightly employ. No; though I break my own heart by what I inflict upon his, Edward, when he returns, shall know all; shall know how well and nobly you have acted; how ill I have acted towards both; and then if, while you forgive and sooth, he in the bitterness of his heart should curse the father that has wronged him, let him do it;—I say, let him do it.”

Langford was about to reply, but the surgeon interposed, saying, “ Indeed, Sir, though it may be very necessary that such important matters as those on which you have been speaking should be settled in some manner, it is absolutely necessary to make all discussion upon the subject as short as possible; for, if prolonged, the consequences must necessarily be of the worst and most serious nature.”

“ Far be it from me to prolong them,” replied Langford; “ let the matter rest as it is, my dear father. Let us take no steps whatsoever, nor discuss the matter in any shape, till your health is returned, and then——”

“ Do not deceive yourself,” said the Earl;

“ do not deceive yourself, my son. From this bed I shall never rise again ! The day is past ; the night is coming. The fire is burnt out, and there lingers but a spark behind. The oil in the lamp is exhausted, and though the flame may flicker up yet once or twice, it soon must pass away and be extinguished. Henry, I feel that I am dying ! It is not these wounds that have killed me, but the long intense struggles of a fiery and uncontrollable spirit have at length beaten down the bars of the fleshly prison that once strongly confined it, and it is now ready to take wing and fly to other lands. We will discuss the matter, as you say, no more ; but my hours are numbered, and ere I die I must act. Where is that man Kinsight, the lawyer ? Why did he not return to me last night ? Let him be sent for instantly, for I must take those measures, both to place your birth beyond all doubt, as far as yet lies in my power, and to provide amply and nobly for the son I have wronged. But, alas ! alas !—have I not wronged you both ? you first, and him last, but both deeply, terribly, equally. Where, I

wonder, is that lawyer? I wonder why he came not last night?"

"I fear, my Lord," replied the surgeon, "that he will not be able to attend you, for I find that he was very severely handled by the people yesterday evening, in an attempt to execute a writ upon Sir Walter Herbert, so that he has lain insensible from yesterday about five o'clock till this morning, and is not likely, it would seem, to recover."

"Retribution!" said the Earl; "retribution! Though it sometimes comes slowly it is sure to come at last, and then comes altogether. This was my doing too, though by his prompting. However, be it as it may, retribution has fallen upon us both.—But somebody told me that after all Sir Walter was arrested last night, and I sent a release, that he might be set free."

"I have found no one," said Bertha, who had remained standing behind; "I have found no one to whom I would trust so important a thing.—You told me," she continued, turning to Langford, "to give it to nobody but one

on whom I could implicitly rely, and I have thought over all the persons I know on earth,—over all the persons I have ever known, and cannot remember one who deserves such a name.”

“You are bitter,” said Langford, “but not just, Bertha. However, set your mind at ease, my dear father; Sir Walter Herbert is at liberty, and in this house, waiting anxiously to hear tidings of your health. His daughter is with him, too; and she thinks that if you would permit her she could, by that care, and kindness, and tenderness which are parts of her nature, greatly soothe and comfort you.”

The Earl shook his head; and a smile, faint indeed, but still the first that had crossed his countenance for a long time, hung upon his lip during a single instant. “You are a lover,” he said; “but nothing can soothe or comfort me more in life, Henry. Yet I would fain see Sir Walter Herbert. I am in the course of atonement, and I must atone to him, too, in words as well as deeds.”

“Indeed, my Lord,” said the surgeon, “the fewer that you see ——”

“Sir, I will have it so!” exclaimed the Earl, turning upon him with a frowning brow. “Let me not be tormented by opposition even at my last hour!” and with a firm and imperious voice he directed Bertha to invite Sir Walter and his daughter to the chamber where he lay.

They came speedily, and no trace of any feeling but that of kind and generous compassion was to be seen upon the countenance of Sir Walter Herbert when he entered the presence of the man who had inflicted so much pain and anxiety upon him.

The Earl gazed for a moment in his face, as if to see what expression it bore, in order to form his own demeanour by it; and then held out his hand to him frankly. “Sir Walter,” he said, as the old Knight advanced and took it, “I have done you wrong; I have acted ungenerously towards you, as well as towards many others. Do you forgive me?”

“From my heart,” replied Sir Walter Herbert; “but let us not think of any thing that is painful, my good Lord. I trust that you have not been seriously injured in the

course of this sad business, the details of which I know but imperfectly."

The Earl shook his head at the expression of such a hope, but he made no reply thereunto; and merely demanded, turning to Bertha, "Where is the paper?"

When it was put into his hand, he continued, "I intended this to have reached you early in the morning, Sir Walter. Take it now. It is but an act of justice; and any thing that may be considered wanting by your lawyer to put it into due form had better be mentioned to me soon, for I am going a long journey, Sir Walter, and would fain leave nothing incomplete that I can set to rights. Mistress Alice," he continued, turning to the fair creature that stood timidly a step behind, in a scene so painful and so unusual; "Mistress Alice, sweet lady, come hither, and speak to an old man ere he dies."

Alice approached quickly to his bed-side, and taking her hand he gazed up in her face, saying, "Lady, to you I have acted doubly ill, for in my demeanour towards you lately I not only

forgot what was just and right, but what was courteous also; and yet I am going to ask a great and extraordinary favour of you. When you are the wife of this my son,—which God grant you may be, and may be soon,—try, if it be possible, by kindness and affection during the whole of the rest of his life, to make up to him for the want of a father's love, and a father's care, during the adverse period of his youth."

Alice blushed deeply, but she replied, "Indeed, my Lord, I will; and I also have a favour to ask of you. I see that you are ill. I know that you must be suffering. My father, thank God, needs not my care or help. Let me stay with you, I beseech you, and be to you as a daughter until you are better, which I hope and trust will be sooner than you expect.

"Hope nothing, young lady," replied the old nobleman; "I do not deceive myself. Nevertheless, you shall stay if you so will, because I know that it may be a satisfaction to you hereafter, and to him, my son, even now. Yet it is cruel to inflict upon you, so young, so tender, and so well assorted to sights of hope,

and joy, and life, and expectation, scenes of sickness, and suffering, and of death. Yet, if you will, it shall be so."

Alice turned a little pale, but still she firmly pressed her request; while her father and her promised husband gazed upon her with looks of love, and tenderness, and approbation. "Mistress Bertha," she said, after again repeating her wish to remain; "you will let me share your cares, and with a little instruction from you I doubt not to prove skilful in my new employment."

"More skilful than I am, lady," replied Bertha; "for I was never made for soothing and for tenderness. I seek it not myself when sickness or when pain seizes on me, and I am not fitted to give it to others. Nevertheless," she added, in a lower voice, "you may perhaps find a moment to teach that dying man to prepare for the world to which he is speeding. I have lived long enough in this land, which I once thought given over to perdition, to believe that salvation may be found by even those who do not believe all that the

church of Rome would have them. Seek a moment to speak to him, young lady; seek a moment to point out to him that all the earthly compensation he can now make is nothing when compared with the faults he has committed. Tell him he must find an atonement; that he must seek for an intercessor; and show him that that intercessor cannot be gained but by full faith and trust in Him."

"I will," replied Alice. "Indeed I will lose no opportunity;" and she kept her word. At the reiterated request of the surgeon, the chamber was soon after cleared, while a lawyer was sent for from the county town to supply the place of the Earl's own attorney. No person was left in it but one; and the task of sitting by the sick man's side was fulfilled by Alice at her own choice.

Sir Walter went on to the Manor House, promising to return ere night; and Langford sat in a chamber below, consulting with the Rector and others concerning the best means of tracing out his lost brother. But in the mean while Alice, watching by the Earl,

while he strove ineffectually to gain even a brief interval of sleep, pondered in her own mind how she might accomplish the great object she had promised to attempt; how she might even touch upon a subject from which, but a few moments before, when mentioned by the Rector, she had seen the sick man start away with impetuous vehemence, apparently judging that all appeal to heaven's mercy was too late, and determined not only to brave fearlessly once more death which he had so often tempted, but to encounter unshrinkingly the "something after death" which he believed his own acts to have loaded with all the wrath of Omnipotence.

After tossing for a long time, however, with great restlessness and apparent pain, sleep fell for a few minutes upon the Earl's eyes; and, when it was over, though it had lasted so short a time, he turned to Alice with a smile, saying, "Oh how blessed a thing is sleep! Could heaven itself be sweeter than slumber after restlessness and agony?"

"Oh yes," replied Alice, "I should think so;

for here, rest requires labour, or fatigue, or pain to make it sweet; there the enjoyment must be pure and self-existing, requiring no contrast. However, we know little of such subjects. God grant that we may all know such a state hereafter."

The Earl gazed thoughtfully in her face for a few minutes, and then said, "Alice, do you think that those who meet in the same place hereafter will each know the other?"

"Oh doubt it not!" cried Alice eagerly; "doubt it not! It were sin to doubt it. Heaven could not be heaven without those we love."

"Then, Alice," cried the Earl, with his brow darkening and his eye straining upon her,— "then, Alice, what would it be to meet—with all one's crimes laid bare—a long, long train of those we have injured or oppressed; the slighted, the broken-hearted, the wronged, the insulted, the slain! Could hell itself be worse than that?"

"But," said Alice eagerly,— "but to those whom God has pardoned who shall impute wrong?"

The Earl started up, and leaning on his elbow, grasped her hand. "Is there, Alice," he cried,—“is there pardon for such as me?”

“There is pardon,” she replied, “for every sinner that repents and puts his trust in Him who alone can save. Such were His own words; and oh let me beseech you,” she cried, and she cast herself upon her knees beside his bed,—“let me entreat you to hear them. I am young, unlearned, inexperienced, but yet His words need no learning to expound; His doctrine is clear; His promises are addressed to the spirits of every one. Oh hear them, my Lord; hear them, for my sake, for Henry’s sake, hear them!”

“I will,” answered the Earl, sinking back upon the pillows. “From your lips, Alice, I will; but not from his who gives them forth by rote. Speak, Alice; speak, my child, and I will listen. There is one thing that I now know, and to know that much, I feel, is something already done. It is, that never man yet lived who had greater need of intercession than myself. Speak to me then;—read to me then; and though

I promise nothing farther, though I say not that I will have faith, though I say not that I will hope, yet I will listen to every word."

He did listen to her when he would have listened to no one else, while she, with a beating heart and timid earnestness, went on in her new task. How she fulfilled it we need not dwell upon. What was the effect cannot be told, for the Earl made neither comment nor reply; but when the door opened, and they announced that the lawyer Evelyn had arrived, he pressed Alice's hand affectionately in his, and said, "I thank you, Alice; from my heart and soul, I thank you."

CHAPTER V.

“GOOD news, Master Justice ! good news !” said John Bolland, entering the room of the small inn, where Mr. Justice Whistler sat sipping a bowl of fragrant punch with his two brother magistrates, about two days after we last left him ; “ I have found out our man, and nothing is wanting but good courage and plenty of people to take him and the greater part of his gang.”

“ Sit down, Master Bolland ; sit down, and take a ladleful,” replied Justice Whistler. “ By your leave, Sir Matthew ; by your leave. Now, Master Bolland, now tell us all the facts. To speak truth, I am in no condition exactly to move far to-night, though I have courage enough to take the great prince of thieves himself, were it needful ; but there is a certain feeling about my knees which speaks a too great pliancy. This punch is potent, Sir Matthew ; very potent ; but the upper story is quite

clear. So pray, Master Bolland, sip, and recite.”

“Why I have but little to say, Worshipful,” said Bolland, who saw that the punch evidently had produced a not unfrequent effect upon all three. “The only matter is, I have found out where this worthy Captain Gray and his band have housed themselves ; that is all.”

“And where may that be ?” demanded Mr. Whistler. Pray where may that be, my dear Bolland ?”

“Why over the hills, beyond Badeley,” replied the officer ; “but the further particulars I will keep till to-morrow, as you cannot set out to-night ; though, to say the truth, every moment lost is likely to lose us our man. He’ll not stay there long, depend on it. They’ll be just like a covey of partridges at sunset, flitting about from place to place before any one can come near them.”

“But tell me all the particulars,” cried Justice Whistler ; “for if need be I will go this minute.”

“And so will I,” shouted Sir Matthew

Scrope, who in his cups grew mighty valiant.
“And so will I, I swear!”

Sir Thomas Waller had proceeded a step beyond the other two, and he could only stare. But even the proposal of Sir Matthew was more than suited the purposes of John Bolland and his friend Mister Justice Whistler, who had agreed long before to share the profits of the matter, which were likely to be considerable, between them. Each hoped, also, to gain a certain share of honour and credit by the joint management of the affair, which honour and credit were somewhat necessary to both to lacker over certain flaws in their reputation which were becoming rather too apparent.

It may seem a strange paradox, perhaps, to say that Mr. Justice Whistler was as sober when he was tipsy as when he was not, but such was the case with all the upper man; the drunkenness began at the knees with him, and went downwards, leaving the brain quite as clear and shrewd as usual, with the only difference that the manner was a little more jocular,—the

pomposity somewhat higher flavoured. On the present occasion, one glance from the eye of Bolland towards Sir Matthew Scrope reminded the London justice of their arrangements, and he instantly changed his tone.

“No, no, Sir Matthew; we cannot go to-night,” he said. “We will hear what Bolland has to say; we will ponder on it on our pillows, and act to-morrow. Let me help you, Sir Matthew. Generous punch never yet did any man harm but a flincher. Sir Thomas, your glass is empty. Master Bolland join us. You see I do not spare myself;” and he filled himself out a ladleful, nodding to Sir Matthew Scrope, and drinking to the health of his fair niece.

The additional burden thus poured upon the mental faculties of Sir Thomas Waller was quite sufficient to send him quietly under the table; and Sir Matthew Scrope, who likewise did justice to his glass, was reduced to that state at which eloquence, however unruly, finds utterance difficult. Mr. Justice Whistler, perceiving in a few minutes the effect which

the last cup had produced, nodded to Bolland, and said in a half whisper, "Now for his night-cap!—Perhaps, Sir Matthew," he added, looking at the Knight with a compassionating air; "perhaps we had better not drink any more, though the bowl is not yet empty. I am not at all drunk myself, though I fear for your head to-morrow, Sir Matthew. I thought you had been stronger men in these parts. Why with the help of Master Bolland we have not finished the ——"

"Sir, Sir," hiccupped Sir Matthew Scrope, "I am no more drunk than you are. I can take another glass very well. Ay, two. We will never leave the bowl unfinished."

Mr. Justice Whistler might perhaps, upon another occasion, have found some degree of pleasure in prolonging the yearnings of Sir Matthew Scrope for the liquor of his heart, for all the minor sorts of tormenting were generally sweet pastime to him, but at present he was too deeply interested to pursue any thing but the straightforward course; and when he saw that opposition had sufficiently roused the

drunken energies of his fellow magistrate, he suffered him to drink his punch in peace, and fall back into his chair in the soft embraces of the son of Lethe.

No sooner was this accomplished than he looked upon Bolland with a triumphant smile. He had himself, indeed, in no degree flinched from the potations he had inflicted upon his two fellow-magistrates, but he was very well aware of his own calibre, foresaw the result, and knew the remedy. A slight additional weakness of the knees was all that he had to anticipate; and though he felt morally certain that, if he rose from the table and attempted to make his exit by the door, it would cost him five or six efforts before he could shoot the arch, he knew at the same time that there were restorative means to give back vigour to the sinews of his lower man, and to enable his whole body to recover that just equilibrium of which the potent punch had deprived it.

“Bolland,” he said; “Bolland, I’m in no condition for riding just yet, but half an hour

will set the whole matter to rights. Have these two clods carried home, and make pretty Sally the black-eyed barmaid bring me a large basin and a ewer of water. Then quietly steal into the kitchen, and tell the cook to do me a good rump steak, and bring it in piping hot, with some sliced onions. I dar'nt move from the table myself; for unless I were cautious, cautious,—cautious, Master Bolland, I should be at my full length on the floor in a minute.”

Bolland did as he was bid; and as in those days there were attached, as indispensable appendages to the inn of every county town,—especially if a club of magistrates held its meetings thereat,—certain sturdy fellows both ready and willing to carry away the bodies of such as fell in their contest with good liquor, three or four personages were soon found to bear off Sir Matthew Scrope and Sir Thomas Waller to their respective homes. Betty also soon appeared with the basin and ewer, as the magistrate had directed; and Mr. Justice Whistler, taking off his wig, caused a deluge of

the pure cold element to be poured over his naked head, which bent humbly before the hand of the practised barmaid.

When his face was well dried, and the wig replaced, he looked up in the face of Bolland, who had just returned from his errand, with a smile of satisfaction, saying, "I think I could do it now, Bolland. I think I could do it now! But I won't try till I have put the beef steak upon the top of the punch. In the mean time give me the whole particulars of this grand discovery you have made. Where is this man to be found, and how have you found him out? for we must be sure of what we are about before we stir an inch."

"Oh, for that matter, I am quite sure," answered Bolland; "for I had it this very morning from a sheep-drover whom I met just under the hills on this side, and who gave me a long account of this strange gentleman coming with half a dozen or more men, and taking the sheep-farm that he described, without inquiring into any thing, as another man would have done.

I asked him if he had seen this strange gentleman. He said, 'Oh dear, yes; twice, walking about the hills in a melancholy kind of way, with his arms crossed upon his chest.' And then the fellow went on, and painted him like a picture. I got the whole account of the place exactly too, so that when we get to the little town of Badeley I can lead you at once to the spot."

"How far is it, Bolland?" demanded Mr. Justice Whistler.

"Some fifty-five miles, I hear," replied the officer; and thereupon the justice shook his head, exclaiming, "Too far for one night's ride. Too far; too far. It would make my old bones ache."

"I did not know your worship had any bones," was the quaint reply. "However, it is too far for me either, for I have ridden nearly forty miles myself this morning, and I am neither a post nor a post boy."

While they were yet discussing the matter, a savoury odour was smelt even through the double doors of the club-room, and Mr. Justice

Whistler interrupted Bolland's eloquence by exclaiming, "Ha! Here comes the rump steak. It will set all things to rights presently; and in the meanwhile you go and get two strong horses ready. Find out what constables you can rely upon for a long journey, and have every thing prepared for our departure."

To the few questions which Bolland now asked he gave the clearest and most precise answers; and when the worthy officer returned, after fulfilling his mission, he found the dish which had contained the beef steaks void of its contents, and Mr. Justice Whistler walking up and down the room as steadily as ever.

"I have only got two constables," he said, "who were willing to go; all the rest were either drunk, or in bed, or did not like the job, and would have run away and left us at the bounds of the county."

"Two are quite enough," replied Mr. Justice Whistler. "We can get plenty more at the nearest town. These people here are all in a fit of fright at the strange doings that have been taking place near them. Better have

some folks that are ignorant of the whole business. Now I'm your man, Master Bolland. Are the horses ready?"

Bolland answered in the affirmative; but before he followed the justice into the courtyard of the inn he swallowed what remained of the bowl of punch, thinking that such encouragement was well adapted to a long cold ride and a dangerous enterprise.

Mr. Justice Whistler now consulted gravely with Bolland in regard to the road; and, taking one of the constables for their guide, they determined to proceed about thirty miles that night, and accomplish the rest upon the following day. They were however deceived in regard to the distance. At the end of thirty miles they found no town nor place of repose of any kind, and they were consequently obliged to ride on till they got on the first soft slopes of those wild hills which we have elsewhere described.

Mr. Justice Whistler began to grumble seriously at the length of way; Bolland declared that he was nearly knocked up; and one of the constables avowed that he saw the

grey streaks of the morning resting on the tops of the hills, which would serve at least to show them their way; for they were at this time immured in the darkness of high hedges, and narrow wooded lanes. At that moment, however, a loud voice before them called, "Stop!" and Bolland at once recognizing the voice of Franklin Gray, turned his horse's head and galloped off as hard as he could go.

The rest would most likely have followed his example had not the same voice vociferated, "Stop them there, Harvey! Do not let them go!" and four or five men leaping their horses over the hedge, cut off the retreat of Mr. Justice Whistler and the constables, while one of the number fired a pistol down the lane after the retreating figure of Bolland, which was followed by a sharp sudden cry. But the horse's steps were still heard galloping onward.

The flash of the pistol had afforded sufficient light, however, to show Mr. Justice Whistler that resistance was vain, though to say sooth he was a courageous and determined man, and would have made it gallantly if there had been

even a hope of success. Such not being the case, however, he determined rapidly what to do, but determined, unfortunately for himself, upon wrong grounds.

Remembering nothing but the awe with which his name and presence inspired the petty plunderers of the metropolis, he resolved to announce himself and all his terrors in good set form, and to endeavour to frighten those who stopped him, from their purpose. In the mean while, however, the leader of the party threw back the shade of a dark lantern, and poured the light thereof full upon the justice and his followers, and he demanded, "What are you doing here at this hour? What is your name and errand?"

"Let me pass in the King's name, I command you," said the justice. "My name is Whistler, and I am one of his Majesty's justices of the peace for ——."

"Oh, you are Mr. Justice Whistler, are you?" replied the other; "Worthy Mr. Justice, who are those two men behind you? They seem not of your own condition."

“We are only two poor constables from the town of ——,” replied the men, choosing to speak for themselves, and in a humbler tone than that which the justice had thought fit to use. “We are two hard working men, with small families, and are forced to do our duty.”

“These are not any of those we sought,” said Franklin Gray to one of his followers. “Let these two poor fellows go; but strip me this justice here to his skin. Take every sous he has in his pocket, and then tie him to a tree, and give him a hundred lashes with the stirrup leather as hard as you can lay it on. I will not take his life, though I should like to give him only one lash for every false and villanous act he has committed,—for every innocent man he has sent to prison, to the stocks, the pillory, or the parish beadle. One lash for each, however, would cut him to pieces; so give him a hundred, and let him go.”

The commands thus issued were punctually obeyed; and while the justice shouted loudly under the infliction, which was administered in the neighbouring field, Franklin Gray went on

addressing the man Harvey, sometimes commenting upon what was going on near, sometimes speaking of other subjects.

“ They know we are on the look-out,” he said; “ and they will not stir, so long as that is the case.—How the beast roars !—Yet you say they must be in this neighbourhood, for you traced their footsteps clearly.—Those fellows love flaying a justice to their heart. I can hear the lashes they give him even here.—But we had better ride home now, and change our quarters soon. — There, there; that will do. There, my men, stop. You will kill him, if you don’t mind. Put his vest upon his fat back, turn his face to the horse’s tail, and send him cantering down the lane.”

Every tittle of Franklin Gray’s commands were executed to the letter; and Mr. Justice Whistler, still writhing with the pain of the stripes he had received, was partly clothed once more, and set upon his beast again. His face, however, was turned in the contrary direction to that which it usually assumed in relation to the animal that bore him; and his feet being

thrust through the stirrups, a few smart blows were added to send the charger off. Happily for the preservation of the justice's equilibrium the horse was weary, and, even in its most frisky moods, was a quiet good sort of beast; so that, after having jolted him in a hard trot for about three hundred yards, it began to slacken its pace, gradually dropped into a walk, and finally stopped to crop a scanty breakfast from the herbage by the side of the road.

Mr. Justice Whistler did not neglect to seize such an opportunity, and carefully descending, for in his bruised condition every step was painful, he remounted according to the usual mode, and, with a somewhat splenetic jerk of the bridle, made his beast abandon its poor meal, and proceed on the road before it. That road, indeed, was as unpromising to a man in his condition as any road could be; for his first necessity was now repose and food, and as it was the very way by which he had come, no one could be more certain than himself that there was no house, village, or any thing in its course for at least ten miles. When he had gone about one, how-

ever, the aperture of a small country road was seen upon the left, leading away over a low hill ; and Mr. Justice Whistler paused, and gazed and pondered.

The darkness of the night had now fled, the dull streaks over the eastern hills had changed into gold and crimson, and the clear cool fresh light of morning was spreading over the whole prospect. The hills rose up and shone in the coming beams ; but a faint grey mist lay over the lower grounds, marking out each wooded slope, each wave in the fields, and each hedgerow, in long-defined lines across the view. The hill over which the country road that now attracted the errant justice's attention ran was, as he sagely judged, fully high enough to conceal a farm, a village, a town,—nay, a city itself, should need be—on the other side ; and along the sandy road itself were to be traced various marks of cart wheels of no very remote date, and the prints of horses' hoofs more recent still.

Such a sight was wonderfully cheering to the justice, who instantly turned his horse's head up

the lane, and pursued it perseveringly, though the high and manifold trees in which it embowered itself soon cut off all farther prospect. A quarter of an hour's riding had not yet brought him to any thing like a house; but the joyful sound of some one whistling broken snatches of a favourite village song set his heart at rest. The crack of a whip, too, and the rattle and clatter of harness were soon heard; when lo! the road suddenly turned to the left round a steep bank; and a little village green, with its pond affording much matutinal enjoyment to a party of ducks, and its clump of tall elms, ready to give shade when the sun rose high, presented itself to the eyes of Mr. Justice Whistler, as one of the pleasantest sights he had ever seen.

To the right was a small farm-house, from which probably proceeded the sounds of early labour, which had given the scourged magistrate encouragement on his way; but exactly before him, on the other side of the green, appeared the grey village church, with its yews and its little enclosure, where rested the dead of many a gone year; and, what was more to the pur-

pose of the justice, a neat and rather large white house, in a pretty garden enclosed by low walls, which were checkered with flints, and guarded by broken bottles from the predatory feet of apple-loving boys.

The justice at first thought it was too good a house for the parsonage ; but seeing no other abode of the kind near the church, and looking at the air of comfort and wealth about the village itself, he judged that it must indeed be the dwelling of some rector well to do, and therefore straightway he rode up to the gate to make his piteous case known. Those were hospitable days, and such circumstances as his, he well knew, would find instant compassion and relief ; but, as the occasion was urgent, it was no slight satisfaction to him to see the gates into a stable-yard already open, horses in the court bearing signs of having come from far, and one regular domestic, with one personage, half groom half plough-boy, busily engaged in the duties of the stable.

“ Why, here’s another, Bill ! ” cried the rustic as the justice approached. “ I think it rains strays just now.”

To the inquiries of Mr. Justice Whistler the servant replied that the house was the rectory of the Reverend Mr. Sandon,—that the Rector was up, and talking in the parlour with two gentlemen just arrived. A second glance at the horses confirmed Mr. Justice Whistler in the opinion which he had at first entertained, that they had been his companions on the road during the greater part of the night; and on being ushered into the presence of the rector, he found him listening to the two constables' tale of woe.

The Rector was a quick, sharp-nosed, reddish-faced gentleman, extremely well to do in the world, yet active, vigilant, shrewd, inquiring, the good things of life having had no effect in producing sloth or indulgence. He was a worthy man in the main, more charitable both in thought and deed than he suffered himself to appear, and not by many degrees so avaricious as some of his refractory parishioners wished to prove. He was up early, to bed late; took great care of his farm and of his flock; spared no one's vices or follies in the pulpit, and required that his dues should be

paid, if not rigorously, at least exactly, dispensing that money for the benefit of one deserving part of his flock which he derived from another.

On seeing the apparition of Mr. Justice Whistler clad simply in his vest, and that not very well buttoned over his protuberant stomach, the Rector stared for a single instant in silence; but the next moment, though he could not repress a slight smile which came upon his lip at such a strange apparition, he resumed his courtesy, and, advancing towards the stranger, said, "I presume I have the honour of seeing Justice Whistler; at least so the account of these good men leads me to imagine; and most happy am I to see him alive and well, for, knowing the desperate character of the men into whose hands he had fallen, I was apprehensive of the result."

"Alive, Sir, alive;" said the magistrate, impatiently, "but not well,—by no means well: half flayed, scarified, basted with stirrup leathers till there is not an inch of the skin on my back without a wound, nor a bone in my

body that does not ache. I have come, Sir, to claim your hospitality,—to seek a few hours repose,—to obtain some refreshment, and to get some soft appliances to my back; after which, God willing, I will raise the hue and cry through the country, and tuck that fellow up as high as Haman, or my name's not Whistler."

"You shall have all that my poor house affords to make you comfortable," replied the Rector; "and after you are refreshed, perhaps I may be able and ready, more than you expect, to aid in your very laudable design of ridding the country of the band of ruffians which has lately taken up its quarters upon the verge of these two counties."

"I am pleased to hear it; I am pleased to hear it," exclaimed Mr. Justice Whistler; "but just now my back aches so portentously, I am so wearied and so hungry, that I can think of little but a flagon of mulled ale and a toast, a soft bed, and four or five hand-breadths of old linen to my back."

"All that you shall have, Sir," replied the

Rector ; and, though there was just that degree of pain in the countenance and the whole movements of the justice which excites one almost as much to merriment as to compassion, the worthy clergyman kept his countenance very well, and with kindness and alacrity ordered every thing that was necessary for making the suffering man more comfortable. The mulled ale and the toast were brought, and a small cup of metheglin was superadded to give the whole consistency, as the magistrate observed. After that the broad magisterial back was dressed by a staid but not unskilful house-keeper ; and, tucked up in a comfortable bed, Mr. Justice Whistler soon forgot in the arms of slumber the woes and the adventures of the preceding night.

CHAPTER VI.

WHILE Mr. Justice Whistler and his colleagues had been proceeding in their examinations, and the events we have just narrated had been taking place in a distant part of the country, the days and nights in the little village of Danemore had been spent in the slow and wearing anxieties of watching the progress of sickness towards death. Alice Herbert remained almost constantly with the Earl at his own earnest wish, and Sir Walter Herbert, coming over from the Manor House early every day, spent the greater part of his time with Langford, in all those various occupations of which the circumstances in which they both stood furnished an abundance to fill up the time.

It will be needless for us, however, to dwell upon those occupations ; for the examination into the ruined part of Danemore Castle, the burial of the remains of those who had

perished on the night of the fire, the precautions taken by the law to ascertain the causes of the death of each, and the foolish verdict, given by ignorant jurymen as the result of their investigations, would afford but little pleasure or instruction either. There are other scenes before us; scenes equally painful and striking, if the pen could but do justice to the finer and more minute as it can to the deeper and more striking traits of human character.

The Earl of Danemore lay upon his bed of sickness, and hour by hour showed as it went by that it would be the bed of death also. It was not, indeed, that his wounds were mortal, for no vital part in all his frame had been touched; but he received those wounds, not only as an old man in whom the loss even of a portion of that strange red current that flows within our veins dispensing life and vigour, is not easily restored,—he received them also as on one whom strong and ungovernable passions had already wrought most powerfully, and on whom also the same intensity of feeling was still

destined to work, though excited by better causes, and a better purpose. Weakened by great loss of blood, exhausted by fatigue and excitement, but little was wanting to bring fever in the train of corporeal injury; and the energetic eagerness with which he applied his mind to every thing connected with Henry Langford, only served to increase his irritability, rather than to lead his mind to calmer and more tranquillizing subjects. He felt that his days on earth were numbered: and that feeling begat in him an anxiety and a thirst to make up for the evils he had inflicted, which tended to shorten those few hours that remained to him.

The difficult and painful situation in which he was placed also; the necessity of sacrificing one child to another; the struggle to do justice to one for whom he felt deep gratitude and esteem, when opposed by the claims of old affection and long-nourished tenderness; the knowledge that disgrace would fall upon his name, and, like the yellow lichen on a tombstone, would live and flourish, and render in-

distinct every record of his life, when all below had mouldered away into dust; all joined together to make him feel most poignantly and bitterly that the last dark hour of life, when the bright sun that has lighted us through the morning of our youth and the mid-day of our manhood, and even shone warmly on the evening of our decline, has gone down behind the horizon, leaving but a few faint rays in the sky behind, is not the time to seek our way back into the right path which we have abandoned in the splendid noon of our existence; and that even if we do regain it at last, it must be by plunging into the thorns and briers of grief, regret, and remorse, without hesitation, though with difficulty and agony itself.

It was not that even in those last hours of his life the Earl of Danemore looked upon death with any feeling of terror. Such sensations were not within the grasp of his nature; he knew not what fear meant. He might see and know that there was danger in this thing or in that; he might fix his eyes even upon death itself, and the retributive future

after death ; but still while gazing on the frowning brow of fate, and comprehending all which that dark inevitable countenance menaced, he strode on undaunted, and said, even to Omnipotence, “ Strike ! ”

No ! it was not that any thing like fear affected him ; but it was that, weakened in body, and wearied in mind with a long struggle against many internal adversaries, he listened to the voice of conscience and of equity, making itself heard through the medium of a judgment naturally strong and acute,—making itself heard not the less distinctly in the silence of exhausted passions, because in former times the small still voice had been drowned amidst their contending fury.

He felt what it was right to do, and he strove now to do it, however difficult, however painful his own acts might have rendered the task,—however fatal to his corporeal frame might be the efforts that he made, and the anxieties he suffered. For the greater part of one whole night he remained eagerly dictating his will to the lawyer Evelyn ; providing for his younger

son, but endeavouring to strengthen in every way the claim of the elder to his title and estates. He made a solemn declaration of his marriage too; named the day, the spot, the clergyman who had performed it, with scrupulous accuracy; pointed to the woman Bertha as the only surviving witness, and related how the leaf on which the marriage had been inscribed had been cut from the register, and how he had forced his young and unhappy wife to give up to him the certificates she had received of their union. He spared himself, in short, in nothing; and again and again he asked eagerly if that declaration and the woman Bertha's testimony would not be sufficient.

The lawyer shook his head doubtfully. The marriage, he said, had been denied for so many years; the woman, too, was an alien and a Roman Catholic, against whom prejudices then ran high. The question involved an ancient peerage and immense property; and, in short, there was every reason to doubt whether the young gentleman's title could be sustained, unless the papers were recovered. If the register

itself were not in existence, and the marriage had never been denied, the case might easily have been made good; but, with no trace of such an act in the existing register, and no absolute publication of the marriage, he had many doubts.

“ But there is a trace ! ” exclaimed the Earl, vehemently ; “ there is a trace ; there is the leaf cut out. Send for the register ! Let it be brought here immediately ! ”

“ We can do that to-morrow, my Lord,” replied the lawyer.

But the Earl would not be satisfied till a servant was despatched for the record on which so much depended. It was brought to him by the clerk of the parish of Uppington, during the gray daylight of the next morning, for the very vehemence of his nature had taught every one through the country round to yield instant, and now habitual deference to his wishes. On examining the book, however, he found nothing but disappointment. When by large bribes he had induced the low-minded but cunning priest who then held the living to cut out the leaf, he

had enjoined him strictly to leave no trace whatever of the transaction; and so nicely had the removal been accomplished that no eye could detect the place where the vacancy existed.

Again his own acts fell upon his own head; and the Earl felt as if it were ordained by retributive justice that he should go down to the grave leaving the fate of both his children still entirely in doubt. The idea took possession of him, and it weighed him down. Often he asked if any news had been heard of his son Edward; and when the reply was made that none had been received, he exclaimed, "Of course,—of course! Nothing will be known of him till I am dead."

As the third and fourth days went by, his mind began to wander, and that most painful of all states to see, delirium, came rapidly upon him. He raved of his first wife, his Eugenie, the only one whom he had ever loved, and yet the one whom he had most deeply wronged. He called upon her to return to him, to bring her boy to his father's arms; and then again he went over some bitter quarrels, where it was

evident that her firm sweetness had but served to aggravate his fiery wrath.

It was a scene most painful to behold, and yet Alice Herbert, tending him as if she had been his own child, beheld it all, and with sweet and thoughtful tenderness did much to soften and tranquillize the mind of him who suffered, as well as the feelings of him who stood by with a wrung heart, witnessing a father's agony and a father's remorse.

To the eyes of Langford never did Alice Herbert, in all the bright flush of health and happiness, as he had at first beheld her, look so lovely; never did she seem to his heart,—even when she acknowledged the love that made him happy,—so dear as now; while, somewhat pale with cares and anxieties lately suffered and fatigues daily undergone, she stood, by the pale light of the shaded lamp, with calm sorrow and apprehension in every line of that fair face, watching the death-bed of his father, and soothing the last hours of him who had caused her so much pain. He felt from his heart that a common exaggeration

of affection was, to her at least, well applied, though he would not himself apply it; and he listened well pleased, when Bertha, after watching Alice long with the usual dark and stern expression, burst forth at length, "Thou art certainly an angel."

Towards the evening of the fifth day there seemed a slight improvement in the condition of the Earl. He slept for an hour or two in the course of the evening. His mind was more collected: he recognized his son and Alice Herbert and her father at all times; and although his words occasionally wandered and his eyes looked wild, yet there were evident promises of returning judgment and returning strength; and both Alice and Langford hoped,—and in a degree trusted because they hoped,—that the Earl might yet regain his corporeal health, and that his mind, like the air, purified by a thunder-storm, might rise freed from all the vehement passions which had worked up the tempest that had hung around the last few days.

Nevertheless, the vital powers were evidently diminished in a terrible degree; and the eye

of the surgeon at once perceived that the sleep he enjoyed was the sleep of exhaustion; that feebleness, and not returning health, brought repose; and that, although that repose might perhaps produce the only favourable change which his situation admitted, there were a thousand chances to one against its restoring him to health.

It was on that very night that a messenger arrived from a village at a considerable distance, eagerly asking to speak with the Earl of Danemore, and on being questioned by Langford he at once informed him that he came to bear the Earl tidings of his son Lord Harold's safety, as well as a note under the young nobleman's own hand, with which he had been entrusted. Some discussions ensued between the Rector, Sir Walter, and Langford, as to whether it would be expedient, in the Earl's state at that moment, to communicate the intelligence which had just been received to him.

Sir Walter, who had seen less of the world than his young friend, and had examined much

less deeply that which he had seen, eagerly entreated Langford to communicate the tidings to the Earl directly, declaring that the news of his son's safety must necessarily act as the best remedy which could be applied to his case. The good knight spoke from the impulse of a fine and generous mind, practically unacquainted with evil, and with all the complicated and even opposite impulses which the existence of evil in the human mind must necessarily produce. The Rector urged the same course through mere ignorance; for he was a man of no strong sensations himself, and those sensations which he did possess were merely the animal ones. To hear of a son's welfare, he felt in himself, must,—separate from all other things,—be a joyful event; and he was incapable of weighing or judging, or even comprehending the various circumstances which might render that which was in itself joyful, most painful and agitating.

Langford, however, knew better. He had discovered before this time many of the deep, peculiar points in the Earl's character, and he knew all the particular details of his situation which

might make the certainty of his brother's life and speedy return a matter of apprehension, care, and emotion. Both his companions, however, so strongly urged him to communicate at once the tidings to his father, that he felt he could not and he ought not to withhold them.

He cared not, it is true, what others would think of his conduct ; but it might, perhaps, be a weakness in Langford, that,—knowing well, by early experience of the world and all the world's baseness, the many turns, the subtle disguises, the strange, masquerading tricks which selfishness will take to deceive, not only the natural and habitual egotist, but the kindest and the most liberal of men, where any dear interest or prejudice or affection is at stake,—he was as much upon his guard against himself as if he had known himself to be ungenerous ; and was always more willing to take the opinion of others in a matter where his own interest might be risked than on subjects where self was totally out of the question.

In the present instance, it was clear that the life or death of his brother might make the

greatest difference in the Earl's views and feelings; and although he knew himself too well not to be sure that the consideration of such a difference would influence him not in the slightest degree in regard to withholding or communicating the news he had received, yet he yielded to the opinion of others against his own better judgment, when he would not have done so had his own interests been in no degree implicated. He only demanded that Sir Walter himself should communicate the tidings; and he warned him, when he agreed to do so, that the effect might be more powerful than he expected.

Sir Walter, though he totally misunderstood the view that Langford took, and the fears which he entertained, acted from natural goodness of heart and sensibility of feeling, exactly as his young friend could have desired, only apprehending that the joy would be so great as to perform the part of grief itself.

Although he had resolved at first not to do so,—lest his very presence might excite in the mind of his dying father those painful combina-

tions on which his thoughts had evidently been wandering during his delirium,—Langford followed Sir Walter into the room, and stood at a little distance behind, listening, with a heart whose accelerated beatings told even to himself how deeply he was interested by the words in which the worthy knight clothed his communication.

“I have got what I trust may be pleasant news for you, my good Lord,” said Sir Walter, as he seated himself deliberately in the chair by the Earl’s bed-side, affecting the greatest possible degree of composure and tranquillity as he did so, and banishing every appearance of haste or excitement from his manner.

“What is it?” demanded the Earl, turning round towards him as quickly as he could; for he no longer started up with that vehemence which he had displayed but a few days before. “What is it? Are the papers found? For ever since Eugenie — but I wander,—I wander. I feel that I wander, that I have been wandering for many days. But go on, go on.

I am more collected now. What of the papers? It was about them you were talking, was it not?"

"No, my Lord," replied Sir Walter; "we were not talking about the papers, but of something which, if I judge rightly, may prove of as great interest as even their recovery; I mean that of your son. We have heard some tidings of him, my Lord."

"What are they, Sir?" demanded the Earl. "Speak! What are they?"

"They are all as favourable as you could desire," replied Sir Walter, in the same calm manner. "We have heard that he is rapidly recovering, and has escaped from the hands of the people who detained him." And seeing that the Earl listened without reply, he added, "We may, I trust, soon expect him here."

Lord Danemore pressed his thin white hand, —through the blanched and shrivelled skin of which, might be seen protruding the large bones and joints which had once marked his extraordinary strength,—upon his eyes, and remained for several minutes in deep thought. He then with-

drew his hand, and turning to Sir Walter Herbert, he said in a low voice, "It is a terrible thing, Sir Walter; it is a terrible thing not to be able to thank God for the recovery of a son that we love,—not to know whether we desire to see him before we die or not."

"It is, indeed, a terrible thing, my Lord," replied Sir Walter; "but I trust that such is not your case, and that your son's coming will give you unmixed pleasure."

"Far from it," replied the Earl gloomily. "He will have to hear sad truths; to undergo mortifications the most bitter to a proud nature like his. He will have to hear of his father's faults and crimes; he will have to learn that instead of vast wealth, a noble name, and a high rank, he has no inheritance but that of an illegitimate son; that he has no name; that he has no station; that he has no rank; and all as the consequence of his father's faults. I know him, Sir Walter Herbert; I know him; and there is too much of my own blood in his veins for me to expect that he should do any thing, in the bitter disappointment of a proud spirit."

but curse him who, for his own gratification, and in the indulgence of mad and headlong passions, brought shame and sorrow and disgrace upon him. My own blood, I say, will cry out against me in his heart. He will curse me, as I would have cursed my father had he so acted. He will look down upon me as I lie here like a writhing worm, and he will think that it is only because my corporeal vigour is at an end, and my strong heart weakened by abasing sickness, that I do those acts of justice which I had determined on long ere I knew these wounds to be fatal; which I had determined on as soon as I found that he whom I had wronged, that he who had borne with me so patiently, that he who had defended me, and rescued me from death, was my own child,—the son of her I early loved. He will misconceive, he will misunderstand it all. I know his heart from my own; and I know that in my meeting with him under these circumstances all will be dark, and stormy, and terrible. I feel not even sure that it will be better for him to live rather than to die, as we supposed he had. I

feel not sure that death would not be preferable to the feelings he will have to endure. He will not bear the crossing of his high fortune meekly. He will strive against it ; he will strive to prove the words false that take from him his high station, even though they are spoken by his father. He will contend for the rank and fortune and place which he has so long expected, even with his brother. Through life he will go on in bitterness and disappointment. His heart will henceforth be full of gall, and his lip breathing curses. It would have been so with me ; and why should it not be so with him ? He is my own child, the inheritor of my nature, if not of my name."

It was evident that he was exciting himself by the exaggerated picture which his imagination drew to a fearful and a dangerous degree ; and Langford could not restrain from advancing, and trying to soothe him.

"My dear father," he said, "if such be really Edward's character,—though I think you judge of him and of yourself too harshly,—how much better it will be to take the middle course

that I have proposed ; to conceal from him the period of my mother's death ; and never to let him know that the marriage to which he owes his birth was an unlawful one. Willingly I offered, and willingly I repeat the offer to do more, and abandon to him altogether the rank and station which he has held in England, the estates which are attached to the title of our ancestors, and content myself with justifying my mother's fair fame to her kindred in another land, and with claiming there the fortune to which I have a right through my noble uncle."

"You are all your mother!" exclaimed the Earl, gazing upon him. But then other feelings seemed to rush across his mind ; the expression of his countenance changed, and he exclaimed, "What ! would you have me afraid of my own son? Would you have me dastardly conceal the truth from him, for fear of his anger? No, no; he must hear it. It may be bitter, but he must hear it. Bitter things are good for us sometimes.—But from whose lips shall he hear it?" he added, after a moment's pause. "Not from mine, Henry; not from mine, for

I feel that the hour is drawing nigh ! I shall never see him more in life. I feel that there is a chill hand upon me : surely it must be the hand of death !”

It was so, for from that moment the Earl rapidly sunk. His senses did not leave him again, however, and from time to time he spoke to those around him. He expressed neither hope nor fear in regard to the future. The only words, in fact, which he uttered at all, referring to the awful consideration of a future life, were spoken about an hour after the conversation had taken place which we have just detailed. He then beckoned Alice to draw nearer, took her hand affectionately in his, and as she bent down to listen, he said, “ I owe you much, sweet lady ;—much for all that you have done for me ; but more than all for the endeavour to give me such hopes and expectations as may best soothe and cheer this last dark hour. Whether such hopes are to be realized I soon shall see, and as far as bitterly repenting every thing I have done amiss, I have followed the injunction to the letter. But

alas ! Alice, if it be necessary to the repentance you speak of, to bow down in terror as well as in remorse, that — struggle for it as I may — I cannot accomplish. I can repent, but I cannot fear. I am ready to meet my doom, whatever it may be, and to endure it to the utmost. Nevertheless, to you I owe deep thanks, and you have them. Now leave me, sweet lady. Farewell, for the last time ! I would not have you see me die.”

His words had turned Alice deadly pale, and Langford, taking her hand, led her from the room. She found relief, however, in tears. She then strove to read, but she could not ; and she sat waiting in the Rector’s parlour, with a heavy heart, till she heard footsteps moving down the stairs. Her father and Langford then entered the room. The latter was pale and grave, but calm and firm ; and sitting down by Alice’s side, he laid his hand upon hers, saying, “ Thank you, my beloved Alice, for all that you have done to soothe the death-bed of my father.”

It was enough, and Alice again burst into

tears ; but the next moment a servant entered the room, asking the two gentlemen if they knew where was the Rector.

“ He is up stairs, in the chamber of death,” said Sir Walter ; “ but you had better not disturb him at present.”

“ Why, Sir, I must disturb him,” said the man, “ for there is a gentleman waiting who came down two or three days ago, in a coach with only two horses, and who has been hanging about here and up at the castle ever since, though nobody knows who he is. He desires to speak with my master immediately. He has inquired every day if the Earl were still living, but would not give his name nor tell his business. So I must disturb my master.”

“ Do so, then,” replied Sir Walter, and the man quitted the room.

CHAPTER VII.

THE words which the servant had spoken, in announcing to Sir Walter Herbert the arrival of a stranger, had made but little impression either upon the worthy Knight or on the son of the deceased nobleman; and, after a broken conversation, in which pauses of deep and solemn thought constantly interrupted their discourse, Langford was begging Sir Walter to convey his daughter from that melancholy house to her own happy home, when the Rector entered the room, bringing with him a person unknown to any one present.

“I am forced to intrude upon you, Sir,” said the clergyman, addressing Langford, “as this gentleman who has just presented himself has come on business in which you are deeply interested.”

“It is an unpleasant moment, Sir,” replied Langford, “for me to enter upon any business at all. I am occupied with very gloomy thoughts

and very painful feelings, and I could wish that the business, whatever it is, might be postponed till to-morrow."

"I am very sorry, Sir, both for your sake and my own, that cannot be," replied the stranger, advancing.

He was a man about the middle age,—tall and well made, though meagre,—courtly in his personal appearance, and bearing in his whole demeanour the stamp of gentleman. Nevertheless, there was something repulsive in his aspect,—something cold and cynical and dry, which was smoothed down, indeed, by courtesy of manner and personal grace, but which, nevertheless, tended to make Langford the less inclined to enter into any conversation with him at that moment. The stranger, however, went on, and the next few words he uttered were sufficient to show him to whom they were addressed that he must meet the subject at once.

"It will, perhaps, Sir," the stranger said, "be satisfactory to you to know, in the first instance, who it is that is forced to intrude upon you, which our worthy and reverend friend

here has forgotten to mention. My name is Sir Henry Heywood; I have the honour of being second cousin to the late Earl of Danemore, and in default of his son Lord Harold, who there is good reason to believe, I find, is dead, am heir to the title and estates of the late peer."

There was something in the manner of his announcing himself,—the tone, the demeanour, the look,—that galled Langford not a little, and made him assume likewise a cold dryness of manner which was not natural to him. To the stranger's announcement, then, he only replied by drawing up his head, and demanding, "Well Sir, what then?"

The shortness of this reply seemed to puzzle Sir Henry Heywood a good deal, for he paused a moment or two before he answered, and then begun with some degree of hesitation; "Why, Sir, under these circumstances," he said at length, "during the absence and probable death of Lord Harold, I am the only fit person to take possession of the late Earl's papers and effects."

"I do not feel quite sure of that," replied Langford, in the same tone.

“Pray then, Sir,” demanded Sir Henry; “if you consider yourself a fitter person than I am, and the question be not an impertinent one, will you inform me who it is I have the honour of addressing, for this excellent divine has given me but vague information upon the subject?”

The question somewhat embarrassed Langford, for he had determined to wait for his brother's return ere he took any step whatsoever in regard to asserting his rights as the eldest son of the late earl, and to be guided entirely by the frame of mind in which he found that brother at the time. He determined, therefore, to evade it as far as possible for the moment, and consequently replied, “The character in which, Sir, I should oppose your taking possession of the papers of the late Earl, is that of one of his lordship's executors; and in order to satisfy yourself that I am justified in assuming that character, as well as my friend here, Sir Walter Herbert, and the worthy Rector himself, who are the only persons named, you have nothing to do but to consult with Mr. Evelyn the lawyer, who drew up the Earl's will four or

five days ago, and will inform you that such is the case. He is now, I think, in the next room, writing. Let him be called in."

"That is unnecessary ; that is unnecessary," said Sir Henry Heywood. "Of his lordship's will at the present moment we are supposed to know nothing ; and I must contend that I, as the next heir, in default of Edward Lord Harold, am entitled to take possession of the papers, especially as there is every reason to believe that I am at this moment Earl of Danemore."

"There is every reason to believe the contrary," replied Langford, growing provoked ; "and great reason to believe also that you never will be so. If you are at all acquainted with the handwriting of the gentleman you call Lord Harold you will recognize it in that note, which was received from him not three hours ago, informing his father that he was not only alive but at liberty, and rapidly recovering from the injuries he had received."

Thus saying, he threw down the note on the table before him, and after eyeing it with a

cursory glance, the countenance of Sir Henry Heywood fell amazingly; nevertheless, he replied, in the same bold tone, "I am extremely happy, Sir, to hear that such is the case, but this does not in the least prevent me from insisting on my right till Lord Harold appears."

Langford was about to reply, perhaps angrily, but Sir Walter Herbert interposed, saying, "It seems to me, Sir, that you are pressing forward a very painful discussion at a very painful moment, and I really do not understand what is your object in so doing."

"Why, I will explain my object in a few words, Sir," replied the other. "There is a gentleman, I understand, who has of late set up some chimerical claim as eldest son of the late Earl of Danemore, in which it seems that he has persuaded the Earl on his death-bed to concur —"

Langford's cheek grew very red, and his lip quivered; but Alice, who was sitting by him, laid her hand upon his arm, and looked imploringly up in his face.

Langford bowed down his head with a smile,

saying, in a low tone, "Do not be afraid, sweetest; these matters are not decided by the sword."

In the meanwhile Sir Henry went on, saying, "Under these circumstances, Sir, I think it absolutely necessary that the papers of the Earl should be placed in safe keeping, for we have seen too much lately, in the various plots and contrivances of the last reign but one, of how papers may be manufactured or altered to suit certain purposes."

It was Sir Walter Herbert's cheek that now turned red, and he replied somewhat sharply, "Sir, your imputations are of a character—— But it matters not," he added, interrupting himself. "I will not be provoked to forget my age or my station. The late Earl of Danemore has appointed three respectable persons, of whom I perhaps myself am the least worthy, to act as his executors, and to take possession of all his papers after his death. The testimony of Mr. Evelyn to that effect will be sufficient, till we have an opportunity of reading the will, which was given by the late Earl into that gentleman's keeping.—Do not interrupt me, Sir!

But in order to satisfy you completely till the will is read, I am perfectly willing, and doubtless the two other executors are so also, to permit of your putting your seal in conjunction with ours upon all the effects of the late Earl. Does this satisfy you?"

"Why, I suppose it must," replied Sir Henry; "although," he added, giving a bitter and angry glance towards Langford, "I am sorry that I cannot get this gentleman to put forth his claims and acknowledge his purposes boldly and straightforwardly."

"My not doing so, Sir," replied Langford, "proceeds, I beg to inform you, from sources and considerations which have no reference to you whatsoever. If there were not such a worshipful person as Sir Henry Heywood in existence I should behave exactly as I do now. The matter remains to be settled, not between me and you, but between myself and another."

"It may do so," replied Sir Henry Heywood, "or it may not."

"But I say, Sir, *it does*," replied Langford, frowning.

"You misunderstand me, Sir," replied the

other, with the same dry courtesy. "I do not mean to impugn your word in the least. I have no doubt that you are perfectly a man of honour and integrity. All I meant to say was, that after all Lord Harold may never appear. However, I am bound to take care of my own rights, and from those rights neither frowns nor high words will move me. In the meantime I accept the terms proposed. We will both put our seals upon all the cabinets and private receptacles of the Earl's papers, either till his son Edward appears, or till the will is opened, and persons lawfully in power take possession thereof. I seek nothing but what is straightforward and right, but I am firm in pursuing that which I do seek."

"After all, the man is right," thought Langford to himself, for he was one of those marvels that can acknowledge an adversary right; "he does it in a disagreeable and harsh way, it is true, when a few sweet words would have honeyed the thing over, and made it palatable instead of bitter. Nevertheless, he is right, and we must not quarrel with the manner."

“Well, Sir,” he continued, aloud, “I am ready to proceed with you in the matter you propose. We will, if you please, take the lawyer with us, and my worthy and reverend co-executor will probably do me the favour to accompany us. Sir Walter, I think, will trust to my accuracy; for, if I am right, he ordered his coach to convey himself and his daughter home, and we need not detain him.”

“Alice will go home with her maid,” said Sir Walter; “I have much to speak to you about to-night, Henry, and many things to settle here; therefore, if the good doctor will give me lodging for one night more, I will remain.”

The Rector expressed his satisfaction; but Langford looked out of the window upon the sky to mark how far the sun had declined; for, after all that had happened during the last few weeks, he could not part with the only being that he loved deeply upon earth, even upon a short but unprotected journey like that before Alice Herbert, without feeling something like the apprehensiveness of strong affection steal

over his heart. The plan proposed by Sir Walter, however, was followed. Alice took her departure, and, to save the reader any unnecessary doubt, we may say arrived in safety.

The four gentlemen then called in Mr. Evelyn the attorney, upon whom Sir Henry Heywood thought fit to be very condescending; but he found Mr. Evelyn as short and dry as even he himself could have desired, in one of his own shortest and driest moods. The lawyer said, when he was informed of their object, that there was not the slightest necessity for any one to seal up the papers, except the executors, as he had the will in his pocket, and their names were endorsed upon it, so that the persons appointed could be ascertained at once, without the indecency of opening the paper within an hour of the testator's death.

Langford, however, to save any further discussion, informed him that it had been so arranged; and, in the first place, notwithstanding all the many painful feelings that were busy at his heart, he accompanied the

others with a firm step into the room where his father's body lay.

Sir Walter Herbert cast down his eyes, and would not look upon him as he entered. The Rector, on the contrary, took a quick glance to see how he bore it; but all was firm and calm,—sad, but self-possessed; and while the others proceeded to their task of sealing up several cabinets which had been brought from Danemore Castle after the fire, Langford advanced to the side of the bed of death, by which, as was then customary, stood a light on either side, and gazed in upon the countenance of him who had just departed.

All was calm and still on that face, where so many fierce and violent passions had displayed themselves through life. All was peaceful, tranquil,—even happy in the expression. The muscles which had habitually contracted the brow were now relaxed, and the deep wrinkle between the thick eyebrows was obliterated. The closed eyelids veiled the quick, keen, flashing eyes which had now lost not only the blaze

of passion but the lustre of life; and the lip which had quivered with a thousand emotions in a moment,—which had now curled with bitter scorn,—had now been raised with hasty indignation,—had now been shut with suppressed passion,—and now been drawn down with stern determination, was motionless, meaningless. The only expression that it bore, if it bore any, was that of gentle and quiet repose,—an expression which is so consonant to the features of a child that in infants we trace it alike in sleeping, in waking, and in death; but which is seldom, if ever, seen in sleep upon the countenance of the aged; though it is sometimes assumed by them in waking life, when a natural placidity of disposition overcomes cares, infirmities, anxieties, regrets, and all the heavy burden of years; and is often, very often seen when the hand of the eternal tranquillizer, death, has stilled the fiery passions into his deep unbroken repose.

Langford gazed long and wistfully; and, at length, the finger of Sir Walter Herbert laid gently on his sleeve, made him start; and,

turning round, he left the apartment, with a deep sigh that thus should have ended a life full of mighty energies and noble capabilities, which might have been devoted to the accomplishment of a thousand great and magnificent things. The whole party thence proceeded to Danemore Castle, and went through the same process of sealing up all the private cabinets and chests which could be found. Few, indeed, were there still in existence, for the greater portion had been kept in that part of the building which was burnt; and, though Sir Henry Heywood showed an inclination at first to make himself sure that all had been consumed beyond the line marked out as that of the fire, he was very soon satisfied by nearly breaking his neck down a flight of stairs that seemed tolerably steadfast till he set his unlucky foot upon them.

This being done, and Sir Henry quite assured that the other parts of the castle were not practicable for human feet, a low and formal bow separated the two parties, and the expectant heir of the earldom retired to the small village

public house, where he had put up on his arrival, and immediately sent off for shrewd lawyers to advise with him in the circumstances in which he stood.

As the others returned on foot towards the Rectory, Sir Walter took the arm of Langford in one hand, while he gently grasped that of the lawyer, Master Evelyn, with the other, saying in a low and kindly tone, "We must lose no time !"

"Certainly not, Sir Walter," said the lawyer ; "we must lose no time, indeed, for opponents, you see, are in the field quick."

"But," said Langford, "perhaps——"

"There is no 'perhaps,' my Lord," replied Master Evelyn, interrupting him, but with a civil and courteous tone, and a deprecatory bow ; "I know quite well what you would say, that perhaps your mind is not made up how to act ; but all which I mean to urge is, that it is necessary to be fully prepared to act in any way that you may think fit at a moment's notice. Here is your father's declaration in regard to his marriage, drawn up and sworn to. It is

now expedient to take the declaration of the good lady, Mistress Bertha, and swear her thereunto before one if not two magistrates, as well as to employ every means of obtaining further proof and information upon the subject. You may act afterwards as you think fit.

Langford readily agreed that the lawyer was in the right, although he felt a repugnance at that moment to follow with even apparent eagerness his claim to the heritage of him who was just dead. He returned, however, to the Rectory, where Bertha had still remained, and she soon appeared in answer to his summons.

There were traces of tears upon her cheeks; and when Langford, speaking some soothing and consoling words, explained to her his object in sending for her, she replied, "You have done well, Sir. You have done well; for I feel that I shall not live long; and what I have to say had better be rightly taken down. I feel that I shall not live long, I say, because, for the first time for thirty years, I have shed tears. It is a weakness that I did not expect to fall upon me again; but now that the last of those who

have been connected with my fate is gone into the tomb, I feel that the time is come for me to take my departure also; and these tears, I suppose, are a few drops of rain ere the dark night sets in."

"I trust not, Bertha," said Langford, in a kindly tone. "I trust not, indeed. The last being connected with your fate has not departed; for surely my fate has been strongly and strangely connected with yours, and I have so much to thank you for, that I would fain show my gratitude, and make the last days of your life pass happily away."

"You have, perhaps, something to thank me for," replied Bertha, "but more to blame and hate me for. But you know I am not a person of many words; and if I am to tell all that I know of you and yours, let me do it now, and as shortly as may be."

"In the first place," said Mr. Evelyn, "we had better send for another magistrate; the lady can make her declaration in the meanwhile, and swear to it afterwards."

"Do not call me the lady, Master Lawyer,"

said Bertha, with her usual cold sharpness; “ I am no lady. I am Bertha the housekeeper. But send for what magistrate you like. I will say nothing that I will not swear to.”

A messenger was accordingly sent off for Sir Matthew Scrope, and in the meanwhile Bertha went on with her tale.

“ I was born on the beautiful coast of Brittany,” she said; “ my father was a small holder under the Lords of Beaulieu, his mother’s ancestors,” and she pointed to Langford. “ The chateau stood upon a high rock, crowned with thick woods above the sea; for on those sweet shores the green leaves dip themselves in the green waters. At fifteen years of age I went to attend upon the Lady Eugenie,—his mother,—who was some two years older than myself. The Lords of Beaulieu were fathers to all beneath them, and she was as a sister to me. She found out that even at that early age I loved, and that there was little hope of him I loved ever being able to win my father’s consent, for my father was wealthy for a peasant. She told her father and her brother, and prayed their

help; they gave it; and so well did they do for my happiness, that ere two summers were over Henri Kerouet was the prosperous owner of a small trading ship. My father's consent was given, the day was appointed, and two days before I saw from the windows of the castle my father, my two brothers, and my lover put out to sea in a fine boat, to buy things at Quimperlé for the wedding. I watched them from the windows of my young mistress's room with the eyes of love, and saw them skim for half a mile over the water, as if it had been a thing of their own; but then, I know not how or why, the sail flapped upon the water, the boat upset, and all that were in it disappeared. One of them rose again for a moment, and clung to the side of the boat. I think it was Henri; but ere my screams called attention, and other boats could put off, his weary hold had given way, and he too was beneath the waters.

“ There is in every woman's breast a history; and this is mine. I had but one brother left; every other relation was gone, and him I loved also. My heart was shut up from that hour,

never to open again. My young mistress was all kindness, and tenderness, and benevolence; she kept me with her; she strove to soothe and to console; but she had soon need of consolation and soothing herself, for her father died suddenly as he sat at breakfast beside her, and she remained an orphan in the castle of her ancestors for several weeks, till her brother, who was with the army, could obtain permission to return to his estates. When he did come he brought with him one whom I remember well, as he then crossed the threshold, in all the graces, the powers, and the fiery passions of youth,—one whom you have all seen bent and worn by age and by care, and by the punishment of those passions indulged,—one who lies within a few steps of us even now, in the cold and marble stiffness of death, with all the stormy impulses of his nature passed away. He was then like a fiery war horse, full of beauty, and strength, and danger; for there was nothing on earth that he dared not to do; there were but too few things, also, which, with such a mind and such a body,

he could not accomplish. He loved my mistress, and my mistress loved him, ere many weeks of his sojourn with us had passed away.

“He brought with him a boy of some twelve or fourteen years old; a gay, wild, fearless creature like himself; the son, as I understood, of a poor but noble gentleman, who had placed him as a page, to learn from infancy the art of war, with the young Lord. This boy would often sit and tell me of wild scenes which had taken place in the civil strifes of England, and sometimes would glance at stranger and more terrible things still in western lands, where they both had sojourned long. This Franklin Gray it was, who first called my notice to the love that was growing up between the two; and I saw how strong it was, though there was nothing avowed as yet between them.

The time came for the young Marquis to return to the wars. The English Lord was to return with him, and still nothing was spoken of their love, at least so far as I could learn; but on the day when they were about to depart, the young foreigner turned to my mis-

tress, in her brother's presence, and said, 'Lady, I have a parting present to make you. You have applauded and admired my gay young page. In the present beggary of my fortunes, I can do but little for him; I pray you take him to your service, and when he is old enough let your noble brother do what he can to promote him in the career of arms. Till then, as he is of gentle blood, he may well serve a gentle lady.' He spoke gaily, and as it seemed freely; but I could observe a peculiar expression on his face which gave the words more meaning; and there came at the same time the blood, like a rising rebel, into my mistress's cheek, telling that she comprehended him well.

It had been arranged that while the Marquis was absent she should proceed to England, to join her uncle, then on a political mission in London, rather than remain in solitude in France. A vessel was engaged, and in a few days after she had parted with her brother and her lover, she embarked, with myself, the boy Franklin Gray as servant, and the priest. We

met with foul weather, and the ship with difficulty reached a port upon the coast of Cornwall, where we landed; but there, upon the pretext of fatigue and illness, she determined to remain some days; and on the first night of our arrival she despatched the boy Franklin Gray to London, both to announce her safety to her uncle, and, as it proved, to communicate with one who in disguise had returned to his native land, at the risk of life, for the purpose of meeting her.

“As soon as the boy was gone, she told me all; how they loved, and how their love had been told; and of the impossibility of his asking her hand at that time, while in exile and in poverty, having nothing but his sword to depend upon. When the boy returned she seemed a good deal agitated; and, as when once she had given her confidence it was extreme, she told me that she had received messages from the Earl begging her to follow a particular course in her journey, in order that he might see her, if but for a moment, by the way. She shaped her course accordingly, and passed through the very scenes where now we

are ; and at the little town of Uppington, not ten miles hence, she was met by the Earl. He had obtained,—Heaven knows how ! for I do not,—a considerable sum of money, which raised high his hopes and expectations. He pressed her to be united to him immediately in private. Love was strong and eloquent in her breast, and she consented. She exacted, however, that their marriage should be solemnized according to the rites of his faith and the laws of his country, as well as according to her own.

The good weak priest who accompanied her was easily induced to perform the ceremony of our church, and the Earl had now wealth sufficient fully to bribe the priest of that village ; but as it was determined that in a very few days she should go on to join her uncle, and double the quickness of her journey to make up for the lost time, I only, and one of the servants, were admitted to be present as witnesses to a marriage which was to be held strictly secret. I saw them married by the rites of both churches ; and my mistress, for her honour's sake, demanded and received from both priests cer-

tificates of the marriage. The day before that on which she was to have set out, news arrived of the death of Cromwell, and a rumour that all was in confusion through the country across which we had to pass. The tidings did not make them very sad, for they were in their first happiness; but the boy Franklin Gray was again sent to London, in company with our good weak priest, to see her uncle, and ask whether she should come on. At the end of a week the boy returned alone. Her uncle had quitted London in haste, and the poor priest had been involved in a tumult in the streets,—had been recognized as belonging to the catholic church, and had been murdered by the brutal populace. For him she grieved sincerely; but it seemed to me that she was not very sorry that a fair excuse was given her for remaining with her husband, and sharing his fate, whatever that fate might be.

She soon experienced, however, the sad lot of those who cast themselves upon the mercy of man. He was violent,—rash,—hasty. There were matters grieved him deeply. The sum

that he possessed was drawing near to a close, and he wished much, it was evident, ere two months were over,—I do not say to annul his marriage, for I believe, nay, I am sure, he loved her still,—but to have it concealed for the time. He urged her then to return to her brother, showing her that it would be with difficulty he could support her, even if he were not himself by chance discovered by lingering longer in England; and he framed for her a plausible story to account for the period of her absence, which in times of such danger and confusion might easily be done.

She refused, however, firmly, though mildly. She said, that though, so long as it merely referred to concealing her marriage, she was willing to do all he wished, but that as soon as it could no longer be concealed but by a falsehood, she could yield no farther; that nothing should ever induce her to tell her noble brother a lie. Anger and fury on his part succeeded. I and the boy Franklin were in the room; and the Earl, when he found that passion could effect nothing, turned to me, thinking that I

might persuade my mistress to consent. She had that morning given me some offence ; for I had ever been idle and vain, and the terrible fate which had befallen me had not cured my follies, though it had embittered my heart. I did not try to persuade her, but I said maliciously and falsely—for I knew better—that I thought she was very wrong not to do as her husband told her.

“ She gazed upon me with surprise and indignation ; but the boy Franklin burst forth, exclaiming, ‘ She does very right not to tell a lie for any one ; ’ and the Earl in his passion struck him down to the ground.

The boy instantly drew his dagger and sprang upon the Earl, but he wrenched it from his hand in a moment, and putting him forth from the door returned laughing, moved to merriment, even in the midst of his anger, by the youth’s daring. With him the storm for a time passed away ; but from that moment my mistress seemed to look upon me with contempt. I felt that I merited it, and hated her the more. All her good deeds, all her kindness

towards me, were forgotten ; and two or three hasty words which she spoke the next morning, in her indignation of my conduct, became like poison, and rankled in my heart. Thus passed two or three more days ; and I laid a scheme which succeeded but too well. I looked at the Earl often as I passed him, seeking to draw his attention, and make him speak to me upon the matter of his dispute with my Lady. At length, one day he did so, and I hurriedly and basely advised him to obtain from her by any means the proofs of her marriage, and then let her refuse to go back to her brother for a time if she dared. My mistress came in as we were speaking, and looked surprised, but said nothing ; and the Earl followed my advice. He tried many methods to arrive at his purpose ; but it was in a moment of love and affection that he induced her to give him up the certificates, the attestations of myself and the other servant, and all the proofs of her marriage, upon the pretence that he would keep them more securely. A doubt, however, seemed to cross her mind, even when she was placing them in his hands,

for she asked him to swear most solemnly that he would never destroy them; and I remember particularly, that when he said he would swear by every thing he held sacred, she insisted upon his adding that he swore upon his honour as an English gentleman.

When he had got the papers, however, and he knew that he could compel her to do whatsoever he liked, his love and his tenderness seemed to return in full force, and the idea of parting with her at all was evidently hateful to him. At length, however, necessity compelled him to propose it again; and once more high words and angry discussion ensued; and then it was that all the smothered feelings which she had been long nourishing towards myself burst forth. She accused me of alienating her husband's affection. She called me base — ungrateful,—criminal. She told me to quit her presence, and never re-appear in it again; and I did quit her, determined to return to France, and obey her to the letter.

How the matter would have ended between herself and her husband, I know not, had not

other circumstances intervened; for, with all his violent passions, he certainly loved her still, deeply, — tenderly, — devotedly. But news was suddenly brought him that his real name and character, which he had concealed, had been discovered, and that warrants were out for his apprehension as what they called a Malignant. He returned to the house for a few minutes after receiving these tidings, informed his wife what had taken place, took, as I am told, a tender and affectionate leave of her, and besought her to hasten to France with all speed, where he would join her ere ten days were over. The spot was named, the time fixed, and I saw him press her warmly to his heart as they parted.

“ He then spoke to me for a moment, and, bidding me forget all that had passed, enjoined me to remain with and console my mistress. I refused at once, sternly and bitterly, to do so; and as he had no time to lose, and found my determination fixed, he only further asked me to let him know without fail wherever I established my abode, that he might

show his gratitude for my services in brighter days, and do away the evil feelings between my mistress and myself. I told him that he would always hear of me at the house of my brother, and he departed. He was scarcely gone when I too left the house, and found my way back to France alone, but took care not to revisit the place of my birth, believing that a bad name had gone there before me. What happened to my mistress then I do not know; but I heard that, keeping only the boy Franklin Gray to attend upon her, she had sold all her jewels——”

“We had better not admit any thing into the declaration,” said Mr. Evelyn, “except what you personally saw or knew, my good lady. Indeed, as it is, only parts of the declaration can be made use of.”

“I am neither good nor a lady, Master Lawyer,” replied Bertha. “But to go on with what I personally know,—about a year and a half after, or perhaps two years, a letter reached me by a circuitous route from the Earl of Danemore, telling me that the restora-

tion of the Stuart family to the throne of England had restored him to his native land and all his honours, and that if I chose to come to England, and occupy that post in his household which I lately filled, I should spend the rest of my days in comfort and peace and honour. I agreed to do so, for where I then was, I was very miserable; and I set out for England. When I came into his presence, however, he scarcely knew me; for when he had last seen me I had been a blooming,—perhaps a handsome girl; and in that short space, grief, anxiety, and self-reproach had made me, with very little difference, what I now am. To my surprise, however, I found that his house was occupied by a noble and beautiful bride; and when he told me, I gazed in his face with wonder and apprehension. He understood my looks, and with that stern determined air which was so natural to his countenance, he told me in a few short words, that when he had returned to France, being hopeless and nearly destitute, he had not sought out his wife as he had promised, trusting that she

would go back to her brother and conceal her marriage, as he from the first had wished. The Marquis de Beaulieu had sought him out, however, and covered him with reproaches: they had fought, and both had been severely wounded. ‘I then,’ he added, ‘went into other lands; but suddenly found that the King had been restored. I returned to my native country, but speedily perceived, that though I had sacrificed every thing for my sovereign, I could regain my honours, but could not regain one half of my estates without using the influence of another peer, all powerful with the King. To him I applied, and he proposed to me a marriage with his daughter. I might have resisted the temptation if I had never seen her; but she is young, beautiful, fascinating. I married her, and regained all.’”

“‘And the Lady Eugenie,’ I cried; ‘the Lady Eugenie?’”

“‘She is dead,’ replied the Earl; ‘I have now obtained certain information that she is dead; but I cannot say,’ he added; and he grasped my arm tightly while he spoke,—‘I

cannot say I am sure that she was dead before this second marriage was contracted; and now, Bertha,' he continued, 'now, swear to me, by every thing you hold sacred, never, till I permit you, to reveal to any one the fact of my former marriage; and if you do swear, you bind me to you for ever!' I did swear, for we both thought that she was dead; and I kept that promise inviolably. But I asked him, before I took any vow, if he had kept his, and preserved the proofs of his first marriage; for, at first, I thought he wished to entangle me by an oath, when his real wife was still living; and I had repented enough already what I had done against her. He told me that he had, and showed them to me in the chamber where they were preserved; and again he swore never to destroy them, though her death he said might well free him from that promise. But I saw then, and I have seen through his life, that he felt, as well as I did,—that there was a fate attached to those papers which would one day change every thing.

“He then brought me to the presence of

his lady, to whom he had announced my coming. When the door opened for me to enter, and she knew who it was, she turned towards me, as I thought, coldly and somewhat sullenly; but the moment after she looked surprised. She had expected to see a young and handsome girl; but she saw a lean and sallow woman, and all doubts of me and of her husband, if she had entertained such, vanished. She became as kind to me as the first day of spring, though she was often haughty and cold to others. She trusted me in every thing, and I learned to love her well. I loved her better, far better, than the mistress I had at first served; but there was still something wanting in that latter attachment. I believe it was the freshness of early feelings; the freshness that never comes again. However, after I had been in England for some ten years, and one son of the Earl and his Countess had been born and died, and the second supplied his place, being then but a sickly child himself, I remained behind for a short time in London after they had quitted the court to come down into the

country. In about ten days I followed, and travelling slowly, stopped one night at a little inn in the town of Stockbridge.

“ It was night ; and, after having supped, I went along the passage towards my bedroom, when, as I passed a door that was open, I heard a voice that almost made me sink into the earth. It was that of the Lady Eugenie ; and, as I passed by the door, I looked in without wishing to look, and I saw her there, sitting speaking to a servant, pale and worn, but scarcely less beautiful than ever. I was fool enough to faint ; and when I revived, I found myself in her chamber, with herself and her woman bending over me. At first I thought she did not know me, so terribly was I changed, and so little did she seem moved by the sight of one who had injured her ; but, when I was quite well, and thanked her in the English tongue, and was about to leave her, she said, ‘ No ; stay a moment. Leave us, Margueritte ; ’ and I trembled so that I could not move. The girl went away ; and then she said, ‘ You are terribly altered, Bertha ; but I have kept you to say,

that if sorrow for any thing you ever did against me be the cause of that sad change, console yourself. I have long ago forgiven you. Nay, more ; I have often thought I did you some injustice.'

“ Then you positively saw the same Lady with your own eyes,” said Mr. Evelyn, “ whom you had seen united to the late Earl before the death of Cromwell, ten years after he had married another person ? ”

“ I did,” replied Bertha. “ But it is useless now to detail all that passed between us. I found that her brother had compelled her to assume another name, and to spread a report of her own death. That after her return to France she had borne a son ; this gentleman present, the true Earl of Danemore——”

“ You mistake,” said Langford ; “ I was born in England, in the very town where my father’s marriage was celebrated with my mother, for she was resolved, she has often told me, that I should lose none of the privileges of an Englishman by being born in a foreign country, and she crossed the seas to England a month before

my birth, in order that her child might first see light in the native land of his father. I have the certificate of my birth duly attested."

"All that she told me," answered Bertha; "and I meant but to say that the child was born some months after her husband had left her. The boy was with her then, and I saw him; and I am ready to swear, though changed now from a youth to a man, that this is the same person. She strove eagerly to persuade me to give her an attestation of her marriage, under my hand; but I would not do it, for I had vowed not. She asked anxiously after the papers, too, and if I knew whether they had been destroyed; but I assured her that her husband had kept his word. I told her even where they were placed; and I assured her that if ever fate so willed it that the obstacles which then existed to the open establishment of her marriage should be removed,—and I felt that they would be;—I assured her, I say, that I would then aid her to the very best of my power in obtaining the result she wished. I promised her even then to do all that I could, without breaking my

oath, to console and comfort her; and I told her, without, however, telling her the whole truth, that her husband fully believed her to be dead.

“ We women derive comfort from strange sources often; and that thought, that her husband believed her to be dead, and had acted as he had acted under that belief, seemed to console her more than any thing that I had said. She wept bitterly; but the tears were evidently sweet ones; and when we parted she made me promise to write to her frequently, and give her news of him whom she still dearly loved. I did write to her frequently, and she to me; and I told her every thing that passed which could give her any pleasure to hear. After her death, her son wrote to me; and though for some time past he has not told me his movements, yet when I heard from accidental report that for two or three summers a gentleman had been wandering about the neighbourhood, attracting the attention of many by his gracious manners and his kindly heart, I felt sure that it was the son of

Eugenie de Beaulieu, led on by the hand of fate, towards the destiny that awaited him."

Thus Bertha ended her history, which had occupied some time in the narration; and when it was done both Langford and Sir Walter pondered for several minutes over the tale just told. The first who broke silence was Mr. Evelyn, who, though but a country attorney of those days, was superior both in knowledge and in mind to the generality of his class.

"Though, undoubtedly," he said, "there is sufficient matter to bear us out in making a vigorous struggle to recover your rights, my Lord, yet I very much fear that, without the documents which afford the only real legal evidence of the marriage, we should be defeated. The leaf has been taken so nicely out of the register that we can draw no conclusive inference from that fact. And yet," he continued, as if a sudden thought struck him; "and yet there may be means of proving that a leaf is really wanting. Of that, however, more hereafter; for we cannot be at all secure without the papers."

“Should I make up my mind,” said Langford, “to enter into the struggle at all, I think that I shall be able ultimately to obtain them; but in the meantime——”

He was interrupted, however, by the entrance of the Rector’s servant, who announced that a gentleman had just arrived, demanding to speak with the Earl of Danemore, and on being told that he was dead had appeared in what the man called a great taking.

“Is he gone?” demanded the Rector.

“No, Sir,” replied the servant. “When I told him the Earl was dead, but that there was a good many gentlemen in the parlour, talking the matter over, he said that he should like to speak with them, as he had news of great importance to communicate from Lord Harold.”

“Pray let us see him,” said Langford; and the Rector, bowing his head, told the servant to give the stranger admittance.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE we follow any further the proceedings, however important they might be, which were taking place at the village of Danemore, we must return to several of the personages concerned in this history, whom we have now quitted for somewhat too long a period. In the first place we must give due consideration to Mr. Justice Whistler, whom we last left fast asleep. Whether he dreamed at all or not is difficult to say, but if he did, it is certain that his dreams must have been of prisons and gallowses, for such were the very first thoughts that presented themselves to his mind when he awoke after a nap of between five and six hours.

It is probable indeed that he would not have roused himself near so soon but for an extraordinary trampling of horses and the sound of manifold voices, which, ascending from the court-yard below, caused Morpheus

quickly to flap away upon his soft wings, and leave the worthy magistrate with his eyes and ears wide open, wondering what could be the matter. He started from his bed instantly, and advanced to the window, the curtains of which had been drawn to keep out the sun; and putting forth his head above the courtyard, he perceived a number of persons collected together, habited principally like sturdy yeomen and farmers. Each had his horse with him, and all seemed to be well armed; while the two constables who had followed the worthy magistrate in his nocturnal expedition were seen in the midst of the crowd, bustling about with a look of importance. Now Justice Whistler was a man of rapid combinations, and he instantly divined what was the occasion of the meeting; but he was a cautious man too, and loved to have his own conclusions confirmed by the testimony of others. He consequently protruded his head still further from the window, and, catching the attention of one of the constables, demanded, in somewhat of an impatient tone,

“What is all this about, sirrah? What are you going to do?”

“We are going to catch the thief, your worship,” replied the constable; “and all these good gentlemen are going to help us.”

“On no account; on no account;” exclaimed the justice from the window. “What! without me? I tell you if that fellow were hanged without my help I would hang myself.”

“Why we thought as how,” replied the man, “that your worship had been so well basted already that you might likely not wish for any more of it.”

“Out upon you, fellow!” said the justice, “I’ll baste you if you do not mind. Go, and beg Mr. Rector, directly, to stop but for ten minutes; and I’ll be ready to go with him. If any man were to lay a hand upon that fellow Gray before me I should hold myself but half a man and no gentleman. Go, and tell him so, sirrah! go, and tell him so!”

While the man proceeded to obey the commands he had received, Mr. Justice Whistler

hurried on his garments, wincing desperately, every now and then, as every sudden turn made him aware of the deficiency of skin on some part or another of his back. At length, however, his toilet was accomplished as far as it could be; that is to say, his vest was put on, for neither coat nor cloak had been left to him; and with a rueful face he was obliged to descend with his sturdy arms only decorated by the wide white sleeves of his shirt.

Guided by the sound of voices he found his way to the Rector's parlour, and opening the door, presented himself to the eyes of the more select party therein assembled. It consisted of three or four of the principal farmers or small landed proprietors in the neighbourhood, together with the Rector himself, and a young gentleman, who instantly, by the entire difference of his mien and demeanour from those of the persons by whom he was surrounded, attracted the attention of the worthy magistrate. He was tall and well proportioned, though somewhat slightly made; but he was extremely pale, so much so,

indeed, as to have the appearance of ill health. He was only armed with an ordinary sword, which might perhaps have befitted a country gentleman in those days, but did not harmonize with the striking and distinguished appearance of the personage who bore it. But while there was something about the corners of the mouth which implied a certain degree of indecision of character, there was a quick flash in the eye, and lines and furrows upon the brow, that seemed to contradict the other expression, and gave a look of stern determination even approaching to fierceness.

The appearance of the justice in his shirt sleeves, joined with the account which had been previously given of his adventures of the night before, for a moment relaxed the countenance of the young gentleman we have mentioned; and sitting by a table on which various refreshments were laid out, he gazed upon Justice Whistler with a smile.

“ My dear Sir,” exclaimed the magistrate, addressing his host — “ My dear Sir, how could

you think of going against this scoundrel without me? I would not have had it done for a thousand pounds."

"Why," replied the Rector, "we judged that your worship was so tired and injured that it would have been cruel to disturb your repose; and as I had yesterday morning gone round the country, and appointed all these worthy people to meet here, for the purpose of taking as many as we can of this gang of villains, I could not very well delay."

"What! then you had determined to go against them before I came?" cried the justice, hewing himself off a large slice from a cold sirloin that graced the table. "How was that, how was that? I understood they had only been in this country some few days, and they cannot have committed many depredations."

"Yes; but my noble young guest here, the Lord Harold," replied the Rector, "only escaped from their hands the night before last, and arrived at my house yesterday morning. We consulted together what was to be done, and determined on the steps we have taken."

“ My Lord Harold !” cried the justice,—“ My Lord Harold, I give your Lordship good morning, and very happy I am to see you alive, for I can assure you we have had many doubts on the subject; and I have had more to do with your concerns of late than perhaps you are aware of.”

“ I am afraid my father must have suffered much anxiety on my account,” said Lord Harold, with a somewhat cold and stately air; “ but I sent off a letter yesterday morning, the very first moment that I had the means of doing so, to inform him of my safety. Had the messenger not arrived when you left that part of the country ?”

“ Not that I heard of;—not that I heard of, my Lord,” replied the justice. “ My good Lord your father indeed had much anxiety; and, for the matter of that, other people too, for there was a certain young gentleman taken up, and accused of having murdered you. He remained for several days in confinement, which seemed to chafe his proud spirit very much.”

“ Pray who was that, Sir ?” demanded Lord Harold.

“ Why, he calls himself Captain Henry Langford,” replied the justice ; “ but you may doubtless know more of him by some other name.”

Lord Harold’s brow grew as dark as night, and bright red spots came into his cheek as he replied, “ I have heard of him, and seen him, and have also been informed that he takes the name of the Chevalier de Beaulieu. But perhaps you have had an opportunity of investigating more fully who he really is?”

The justice, however, saw that Lord Harold was utterly unacquainted with all that had taken place during his absence ; and, as there was a great deal that he himself could not explain clearly, while every thing that he could explain was any thing but agreeable, he determined to leave the task to others, and was meditating how to evade giving any reply, when the Rector came unexpectedly to his aid, by saying, “ I beg pardon for interrupting you, gentlemen ; but allow me to remind you that time wears. It is now near one o’clock. We have fully fifteen miles or more to go, and it may be necessary

not to fatigue our horses before we arrive at the point of our destination. By your leave, therefore, I think we had better postpone all explanations."

"One more cup of this excellent ale," exclaimed the justice, "and then I am ready. I hope the rascals have got my horse saddled. Pray, your reverence, make inquiry."

"But my dear Sir," said the Rector, "how can you manage to go without a coat? I am afraid too that none of mine would fit you—not even one of my loose riding coats, for I am a spare man, and you are——"

"Fat! you would say," replied the justice. "Yes, I am fat, Sir; that is to say, fattish; and how to do without a coat I know not; but go I will. Is there not a fat person in the neighbourhood that would lend me a jerkin?"

"Why, your reverence," said one of the farmers, who had hitherto stood aloof, but who now advanced towards the Rector, "There's Farmer Balls down at the Pond-gate; his coat would just do. He weighs one

and twenty stone at least. His coat would surely just fit his worship."

"I could get into it at least," said the magistrate, "for I only weigh nineteen, so there's two stone to spare, which makes more difference in a coat than in a load of hay. So run, my good Sir, or send some one, and beg Farmer Balls to lend Justice Whistler a coat for a few hours. Hark ye! hark ye!—not his Sunday's best, for we have dirty work to do, and there is no use of spoiling it."

The coat was soon procured; and Mr. Justice Whistler, having mounted with the rest, set out at the head of the procession which consisted of nearly thirty persons, having Lord Harold on one side of him, and the very reverend Rector on the other. The justice took the place of leader as a sort of right, which was tacitly conceded to him by all the rest, more out of reverence for his portly person than from any thing that they knew of his character or abilities.

Lord Harold, however, soon began to appreciate his ready shrewdness, for as they

moved onward at a slow trot, he put several questions to him with regard to their future proceedings, resolved, if he found any occasion to be dissatisfied with the other's arrangements, to take the matter into his own hands; for the stern and harsh determination which he had formed in regard to Franklin Gray had not at all given way since the period of his escape.

The plans which the justice proposed, however, the shrewdness with which he put all his questions regarding the exact situation of the house, and the rapidity with which he received and comprehended every explanation given, soon convinced his young companion that they could not be in better hands. It was accordingly determined, that, as soon as they reached the top of the hills at the point where they could first see the house, the party should divide, and one body, under the direction of the Rector, should sweep round through a hollow in the hills, while the other pursued the road by which Lord Harold had made his escape, so as to approach the abode of Franklin

Gray on both sides at once. By this means no one could quit the house without being seen by one or other of the parties, and the possibility of the robbers making their escape by one side of the building while the assailants forced their way on the other was guarded against. In making these arrangements, and in giving directions to all the various personages of which the troop was composed, the time was past, till they emerged from the woods, lanes, and cultivated grounds on the first slopes of the upland, and began to take their way over the soft short turf, which was only varied by the innumerable scattered stones that covered the higher ground on that side.

Lord Harold—though it must be acknowledged that he thought, and with bitter pleasure, more of the capture of Franklin Gray than of any other thing on earth—had determined to pass the rest of their march, after every arrangement had been fully made, in learning from Mr. Justice Whistler all that had taken place during his absence from Danemore Castle, some vague reports of extraordi-

nary events having reached him even there, though the news which now travels by a steam carriage then went by the waggon.

On putting his very first question, however, he perceived that the keen hawk-like eye of the justice was fixed upon a particular spot on the hills, over whose soft green bosoms the sunshine and the shade were chasing each other quickly as the wind blew the light clouds over the sky. The effect was beautiful, but dazzling; yet still the justice kept his eye fixed on that particular spot at the distance of about two miles before them, and made no reply whatsoever to the young Lord's interrogation.

Lord Harold, who was in no very placable frame of mind, repeated his question in a sharper tone; but the magistrate instantly exclaimed, without taking any notice of him, "Yes, yes; I see it move! Do not you, Parson? Look ye there, up in that hollow which the shadow is just leaving. I have been for this ten minutes trying to determine whether that is a man on horseback or a hawthorn tree. It is a man I'm sure! I saw it move this minute,

a bit to the left, so as to get a better sight of us."

"There is a hawthorn tree there," said the Rector, "I know it of old.—But you are right, you are right! There is something moving from behind it. It is a horseman indeed, evidently watching us. See, he is cantering up the hill. I am afraid this bodes disappointment."

"There is another on the top of the highest mound," cried Justice Whistler; "they have a terrible start of us; but never mind. We must not fear breaking our horses' wind. We must gallop as hard as we can go; and now there must be no thought of going round by the hollow, as we proposed. The only plan is to make for the house as fast as possible. Don't you say so, my Lord?"

"Most assuredly" replied Lord Harold; "there are women and children also to be moved, which must take them some time. It cost them nearly an hour and a half to get ready when they came hither, for I was with them, and saw all their proceedings."

"Set spurs to your horses then, gentlemen!"

cried the magistrate aloud. "Master Constable, ask some of these good yeomen to lend me a pistol. They can muster a brace for me amongst them, I dare say. Some of them seem to have three or four."

But leaving the constable to bring him the weapons afterwards, he himself spurred on without any delay, while Lord Harold and the Rector accompanied him at full speed, and the officers and farmers followed quickly, gaining, by the rapidity of motion, and the excitement of the sort of race they ran with each other, a good deal more courage and enthusiasm than they had probably set out with. At this eager pace they reached the top of the hill, but were obliged to ride some little way to the right before they could get a sight of the house. When they did so, however, though nothing was seen of it but the chimneys towering up above the tall trees, every one instinctively pulled in his bridle rein, with somewhat of an awful feeling at his heart.

The house lay at the distance of about two miles and a half, but the air was clear and pure,

and every curl of the thin blue smoke, as it rose peacefully over the trees, might be traced by the eye till it mingled with the atmosphere around. After a moment's silence, the constable rode up, and put the pistols into Justice Whistler's hands; but at that very instant a body of horsemen was seen passing over the slope beyond the house, and then giving rein to their horses, and galloping away as hard as ever they could, over the open downs beyond.

Man is certainly a beast of prey. There is an instinct about him which prompts to run after every thing that runs away. It may be partly the dastardly tyranny of cowardice which gains courage to pursue and worry by the sight of an adversary's flight; but it is chiefly, in all probability, upon the same principle whereon a fierce dog chases and slaughters a sheep, which is solely because the sheep runs away, and the dog, imagining that the sheep knows its own business and his better than himself, judges that it is both right and pleasant to run after and verify to the utmost the

victim's estimation of his powers and his purposes.

Thus it is nine times out of ten in the world. Yield even where you know yourself in the wrong, and your enemies will pursue you over all fences, and destroy you where you are on the ground of right. God forbid that we should say, "Defend that which is wrong;" but we do say, "Retreat so as to be able to defend yourself whenever the dastardly hounds, who are encouraged by your retiring, pass the bounds which they themselves neither know nor care for, and enter the space where you are justified in tearing them to pieces."

Man is undoubtedly a beast of prey; and in the present instance, no sooner did the posse who followed the justice, the Rector, and the young nobleman, see a body in flight before them, than those who had been most timid and fearful of leading the way were all setting off at full gallop in pursuit of fugitives whom there was little or no chance of overtaking. It was with the utmost difficulty that the fat but

powerful voice of Mr. Justice Whistler, the shriller tones of the Rector, and the deeper but feebler sounds of Lord Harold's voice, each exerted with the utmost force, could induce these hot pursuers to halt and receive orders ere they departed.

When they were at length brought to pull up their horses, however, a few words between their three leaders seemed to settle their arrangements, and Mr. Justice Whistler raised his voice, exclaiming, "Constable Jones!"

But no one came forward, he having pronounced the name at random, and there being no constable Jones amongst them. "The youngest constable," he cried again; but thereat his own two followers, with three or four others, spurred forward from the crowd; and fixing upon the one who appeared the most intelligent of those who had come with him, he said, "Take that man, and that man, and that man, and that, and gallop after those fellows as hard as ever you can go! Remember! your business is not to come up with them till you have got a sufficient force, but to raise the

whole country as you go along by the hue and cry; commanding all men, in the King's name, to follow and assist you! Keep them in sight as far as possible, but at all events keep above them on the hills, and drive them into the populous country. There you may follow them by the tongue as well as here by the eye. Now off with ye, quick! We will come soon after, when we have run through the house."

The men obeyed, though the worthy leader twice showed an inclination to doubt whether this person or that was the man whom the judge had appointed to follow him. But Mr. Justice Whistler cut him short sharply, and having seen him depart, turned to Lord Harold, saying, "Now, my Lord, I think with you that we had a great deal better go down to the house, and examine what it contains, before we pursue these men, having set our hounds upon the track. But as this reverend gentlemen says nothing, and seems to think otherwise, pray satisfy him in regard to your reasons, to which I will add mine."

"Why," added Lord Harold hesitating,

“ Why I think—that is to say, I saw nothing but men in the party that went away. Now, there is a woman and a child, and if you take them, depend upon it the chief bird of the mew will hover near, and be caught at last.”

As he spoke there was a deep and burning spot came up into his cheek, which showed that there were feelings of shame and remorse, glowing like coals of fire at his heart, even at the moment that the baser spirit triumphed, and bowed his words and actions to its will.

Mr. Justice Whistler, however, did all that he could to make the matter smooth to him. “ Spoken like a true falconer,” he cried. “ My Lord, you take my trade out of my hands. We are fully justified in bringing our bird back to the lure. However, there is no time to spare. Let us ride on as fast as possible ;” and so saying, he put his horse into a quick pace, and followed by the others dashed down the hill at a rate which scared many of the younger and more active of the party.

We must now, however, leave all the busy actors we have brought upon the scene, and,

quitting hounds and huntsmen, and the gay and merry chase, turn to the dark and solitary lair, where the quarry lay, fully conscious of pursuit, in order to explain the motives of that sudden flight which had been observed by the pursuers from the hills above.

CHAPTER IX.

THE escape of Lord Harold, and the flight of one of their companions with the woman servant, had thrown the little band of Franklin Gray into consternation and terror when it was discovered on the following morning. Harvey, however, who assumed the command during the absence of their leader, instantly took measures for tracking the fugitives, and, by no other guide than the footmarks upon the sandy parts of the road, traced the course of all three exactly to the spot where Lord Harold had been left sitting under a tree by his two companions.

From that point all trace of those two were lost; but a shepherd, who had seen the young nobleman, weary and exhausted, in the morning, and had conducted him to a small village, hidden amongst the beeches to the left of the spot, gave still farther information; and leaving men to keep a strict watch upon the place to which the fugitive had been

brought by the peasant, Harvey returned, with very unpleasant sensations, to meet Franklin Gray, and give him an account of the evasion of the prisoner. He doubted not, indeed, that having thus tracked him to his place of repose, they might be able to lay hands on him again, for he never calculated upon the young nobleman doing what in fact he already had done—taking a single hour's repose, and then speeding on as fast as possible to the house of the nearest magistrate, which was that of the gentleman with whom he was found by Justice Whistler.

As Harvey returned, he perceived Franklin Gray and Mona riding leisurely up the hill towards the house, and spurring forward at once he told the whole of his disagreeable tidings without any concealment. The Robber instantly turned his eyes upon his wife, and bit his lip hard; while she, innocent of all share in what had occurred, but feeling herself for the first time an object of suspicion and jealousy, turned very red, and then very pale, and trembled violently.

“ So I am betrayed !” said Franklin Gray, “ betrayed by those I trusted ! Harvey, I think you are faithful to me !”

“ Indeed I am, Captain,” replied the other ; “ and so are all the rest, except that fellow who is gone, and whom I always thought was a low scoundrel, unfit for the company of gentlemen. They are all faithful to you, Captain, depend upon it.”

“ On what can we depend ?” asked Franklin Gray, bitterly ; “ on what can we depend in life ? Friendship turns to hate ; love betrays us always ; gratitude was never any thing but a name ; and honour is now a shadow ! On what can we depend ? Let us come in, however, and consult what may be done. Action has been through life the principle of my being ; and I will not yield to circumstances even now.”

So saying, he led the way to the house ; but he said not one word to his wife, either as they went or when they arrived. The boy Jocelyn, however, was in the court-yard, holding the infant in his arms, who seemed well pleased

with his new nurse. But Mona, the moment she had set her foot to the ground, sprang forward and caught the baby to her heart, exclaiming, "And did she leave you, my sweet babe? Cruel, cruel woman! She never had one, or she could not have left you;" and dewing its smiling face with tears, she ran away with it into the house to hide the emotions she could not restrain.

Had Franklin Gray witnessed that meeting between mother and child, the dark suspicions that had fully taken possession of his mind might have been banished at once; but he was talking with Harvey at the moment, and remembered nothing but the many whispered messages which he had seen brought by the maid from the prisoner above on the preceding day; and keen and bitter were the feelings at his heart. He went on speaking with Harvey, however, as if occupied with ordinary business.

"If he have not quitted the village before this time," he said, "he will most likely not quit it till night, knowing that we shall be waiting for him. But at all events the horses

must have some rest and food. I rather think that, as far as insuring our own safety goes, Harvey, we might as well let him journey on his way, for depend upon it by this time he has given full information of every thing concerning us to the people where he has stopped. However, I am determined, if possible, to have him in my hands again. In the first place, in order to punish him for what he has done; in the next place, to find out the truth of some matters in regard to which I am not at ease."

He spoke calmly; there was no heat, nor haste, nor agitation in his tone. On the contrary, it was unusually slow and distinct; but there was a knitting of the dark heavy brow, a setting together of the white teeth between every two or three words, which made Harvey, bold man and daring as he was, shrink, as it were, within himself, at signs of deep and terrible passions the effects of which he knew too well.

"Perhaps," continued Franklin Gray in an easier tone, "the possession of this young

Lord's person might be made too a sort of surety for the safety of the band. There is a ship, I find, sails for the port of St. Malo in four days; and I have made such arrangements that I can have what space in her I like. I should wish our brave fellows to keep around me till that time; then those that like to go with me can; those that love this cold land can remain. But if we get hold of this pitiful boy I shall deal with him as a hostage, and make his life the price of no step whatsoever being taken against me and mine."

With such objects in view, and believing that Lord Harold still remained at the village to which Harvey had traced him, the arrangements of Franklin Gray were soon made for proceeding in a few hours to the spot in person. In the meanwhile he entered the house, and held his infant child for several minutes in his arms, gazing on its face in silence. He gazed, too, for an instant upon his beautiful wife, with a cold meditative look, and without proffering a word; then gave her back the child, and walked out across the hill, marking

with a soldier's eye every peculiarity of the country, when he did look upon it, but in general bending his eyes down upon the ground, and communing with his own sad heart, and muttering to himself as he strode along.

When the appointed hour was come he was in the court-yard and his foot in the stirrup; but his after proceedings on that night require no long detail. Some information which he gathered, both from the men whom Harvey had left to observe all the movements in the village, and from some persons who passed, led him not only to believe that Lord Harold was undoubtedly there, but that the young nobleman had gained tidings of the close watch that was kept upon the place. The night was spent in watching, and in vague councils held with Harvey and others, in the course of which Franklin Gray did not display that firm decision which had ever previously characterized his actions. He now thought of taking the rashest and the boldest steps, of attacking the village itself, and carrying off Lord Harold by

force; then, again, he seemed inclined still to watch, though the night had so far waned that it was improbable any movement would take place; and then again he was for giving up the pursuit altogether.

In such infirm purposes passed the night, till the sound of horses' feet revived expectation; and the appearance and flagellation of Mr. Justice Whistler afforded a pleasant episode for the robbers to break the tedium of their dull night's work. As soon as that was over, Franklin Gray turned his steps homeward again; but feeling a conviction that the peasantry of the neighbouring districts would soon be moved against him, he took the precaution of placing two of his band, whose horses were in the freshest condition, on two points, where they could communicate by signs with each other, and see over the whole country below.

He then returned straight to his dwelling; but there had come a recklessness over him, a sort of moody and splenetic demeanour, which was remarked by Harvey and all his

companions. He who usually laughed so seldom now recalled the affair of Justice Whistler more than once with somewhat wild and fitful meriment; but then the moment after he would fall into deep stern thought, answer any question that was put to him in an absent if not in an incoherent manner, and would frequently break forth at once upon topics totally distinct from those which might naturally have occupied his mind.

When he arrived at home,—at least at that temporary kind of home which was all that his wandering life ever allowed him to know,—he was met at the door by his fair wife Mona, who gazed timidly up in his face, to see whether his feelings were softer or happier than they had been. It was an agreeable surprise to her to find that he took her by the hand, and gazed on her with a look of admiration and love. The only words he spoke, however, were, “You are fair, my Mona; fairer, I think, than ever to look upon. Where is the babe?”

She led him to see the child sleeping; and

as Franklin Gray bent over it, and gazed upon the calm and placid face of infant slumber, a bright drop fell from his eyes on the cheek of the child, and woke it from its rest. It held out its little arms to him at once, however; and taking it up, and pressing it to his bosom, he carried it to the window, and gazed forth upon the wide world beyond. Mona had seen the drops which fell from her husband's eyes, and she saw, too, his action towards the child, but she would not interrupt the course of such feelings for the world, and only saying in her heart, "He is softened," she hastened to seek some apparent occupation, while her soul was busy with the joy of renewed hopes.

That joy was soon clouded, for again over Franklin Gray came that same fitful mood, which tenderness for his child had for a moment interrupted. He said nothing harsh, indeed; he showed no sign of unkindness; and no word announced that the dark suspicions and jealousies which he had before entertained still remained as tenants of his bosom. Often, indeed, he fell into deep stern fits of thought,

and would rest for more than half an hour in the same position, with his head bent forward, and his eyes fixed on one particular spot of the ground. Then, again, he would start up, and, especially if he found Mona's eye resting upon him, would break forth in gaiety and merriment, tell some wild tale of laughable adventure, or sing a broken part of some cheerful song.

Mona, however, was not to be deceived by such signs; and they were all painful to her. That he whom she had never known to be merry, even in his brightest days, should so suddenly, after deep gloom, break forth into gaiety, was quite enough to show her that all was not well within, and watching him with the anxious eyes of deep affection, she strove to do and say all that could soothe and calm, and console and cheer him. Sometimes her efforts would seem successful; sometimes not. Sometimes he would gaze upon her with looks of deep and earnest love; sometimes would start away when her hand touched his, as if it had been a serpent. All and every thing she

saw was matter of deep pain and anxious thought to Mona Gray.

When the hour of dinner came she strove to tempt him to his food, but he would scarce taste any thing except wine, and of that drank more than usual. It seemed not to excite, however, but rather to calm him. His manner grew more consistent; sadder, but more tranquil; and leaving his companions still at the table, he led his wife away to the chambers they usually inhabited, and sat down and spoke with her rationally on many things. There was an occasional abruptness indeed in his speech, and a rapid transition from one thing to another, which still alarmed her, but she consoled herself with the hope that the fit was passing away, and that all would be better soon.

At length he said, "Come, Mona; come! While I take the child upon my knee, you sing me a song. Who knows if I shall ever hear another?"

Though her heart was sad she made no reply, but hastened to obey; and she chose

such words and such an air as she thought most likely to soothe him. Both were sad, but through both there run the bright glimmering of hope, a cheerful note every now and then mingled with the more melancholy ones, and promises of future happiness blended with the sadder words of the lay.

The music still trembled in the air when Harvey suddenly entered the room, and approaching his captain whispered a word or two in his ear. Franklin Gray instantly started up, with the dark cloud upon his brow which usually gathered there in moments of determined action.

“The time is come,” he exclaimed; “the time is come! Harvey, I will come and speak with you and the rest. Mona, take the child. I will be back with you in a few minutes.”

He then followed Harvey out of the room; and from that moment his whole demeanour was calm, collected, and firm. “Have all the horses saddled, quick,” he said; “each man collect every thing valuable that he has. Each man, too, have his arms all ready for action

at a moment's notice ! Did you say, Harvey, that they had both come over the hill ?”

“ No ; only one,” replied Harvey ; “ but he came at such speed that there can be no doubt the other will soon follow. We shall doubtless have to stand to our arms soon, Captain, I suppose ?” And as he spoke his cheek was a little paler than ordinary, but there is such a thing as the emotion of strong resolution, and it may blanch the cheek, though in a slighter degree than fear.

“ Perhaps so, Harvey,” answered Franklin Grey ; “ but we shall hear ;” and as he spoke he advanced to the window which looked up the hill, and having satisfied himself by one glance, he turned back to Harvey, saying, “ The other is coming too. We shall know more anon.”

The first of his watchers, who had been left on the other side of the hills, had by this time nearly reached the house, and in a minute or two after he entered the room where Franklin Gray and Harvey, with the rest of the band who were not occupied in preparations, waited

his report. "Well," said the Captain, as he entered, "what news, Miles?"

"Why, I am afraid they are coming up in great force, Captain," he answered; "I could only see them draw out from the end of the lane upon the hill side, but there seemed a good many of them. I did not move a step, however, till I saw Doveton begin to canter away, then I thought it right to come on and give you the first tidings. He will be here soon, and render you a clearer account."

"You did quite right," replied his leader. "If we had all to deal with such as you, my man, we should do very well." The man looked gratified; but Franklin Gray went on, "Come, Harvey; we will go out into the court. We shall be nearer the scene of action," and he walked deliberately out into the court-yard, where the horses were now all brought out and ranged in line.

"Mount, my men!" he cried; "Mount! We shall soon have Doveton here. Miles, that pistol will fall out of your holster. Don't you see the lock has caught on the leather?"

You hold my horse, Jocelyn ! Harvey," he continued speaking to the man apart, and pointing to the boy ; " do you think if we were obliged to make the best of our way off, and this youth were left behind, — this mere child as you see he is,—they would injure him ?"

" Oh, no, " replied Harvey ; " certainly not. They might take him away, but we could soon find means to get him out of their hands again."

" So," replied Franklin Gray ; " so. But I hear Doveton's horse's feet clattering down the road as hard as he can come ;" and in a minute or two more the man he spoke of rode into the court-yard, with his horse all foaming from the speed at which he had come.

" I am glad to see you are ready, Captain," he exclaimed ; " for depend upon it we shall have sharp work of it. There must be at the lowest count forty of them coming up the hill, and all seemingly well mounted and armed, for I looked at them through the spy glass you gave me, and I could see them all as plainly as if they were at the other end of the table."

Franklin Gray mused for a moment, and then demanded, "Could you see who it was that led them on?"

"Why there were three rode abreast," said the man, "and I could see them all plainly enough. The one on the left was a man in a black cassock; but I don't think I ever saw him before. The middle one was a fat heavy man, who, I rather think, is the Justice that we flogged last night—only in the darkness then I didn't well remark his face. But the third one, on the right hand, is certainly that lord you had up here for so long; that Lord Harold."

The cloud grew doubly dark upon Franklin Gray's brow, and putting his hand to his throat, he loosened the laced collar of his shirt, "Fully forty men? you say," he demanded, thoughtfully. But then added, without waiting for reply, "Harvey, you are not mounted! Quick, quick, into the saddle! Mile and Doveton, put yourselves upon the left. Now, Harvey, mark well what I have to tell you! Lead those men out, and take at full gallop across the hill to the right. If you keep

Elsland Peak always a little to the left, you will come to a hollow, and if you ride up it as fast as you can go, long before any one can overtake you, for their horses are not used to this work like ours, you will have reached a spot where the slope divides the hollow into four, and all four lead away to the beech wood, where you may disperse, and set chase at defiance. Arrange your plans amongst yourselves as you go; and now lose not a moment, for they must be over the hills by this time."

"But yourself, Captain," asked Harvey, anxiously; "yourself, and the lady, and the little child. I will never go and leave you here alone."

"Do not be afraid, Harvey," replied Franklin Gray with a stern smile; "I will take care of them and myself, depend upon it!"

"But I do not like this plan at all," cried the man. "What! to run away and leave my Captain behind me, at the mercy of these fellows that are coming up! I do not like it at all, Captain Gray. This will never do."

"You surely would not disobey me in a

moment of danger and difficulty like this!" said Franklin Gray. "No, no, Harvey, you are too good a soldier for that! But to satisfy you, you shall see that I provide in some degree for my own safety. Jocelyn, take my horse down into the narrow part between those two sheds, and hold him there, whatever you see or hear, till I come to you. In the first place, however, open those two other gates at the bottom of the court, and when you are holding the horse keep as far back as possible, that nobody may see you! "Now, Harvey," he added, "you see and are satisfied. Lead the men out as I have commanded. I trust their safety to you!"

Harvey looked down and bit his lip, hesitating evidently for a moment as to whether he should obey or not. At length he looked steadfastly in Franklin Gray's face, and held out his hand to him, with a melancholy shake of the head.

"God bless you, Captain Gray," he said; "I obey you even in this; but I am very much

afraid that you are not quite right in your plans. I am afraid, I say, that you are acting under a wrong view; and I wish to God you would think of it before it is too late—Well, well; I will go—God bless you, I say. Come, my men, let us march;” and so saying he led them all out of the court-yard.

Franklin Gray saw them depart, with stern unmoved composure; then advanced to the gate himself, and while their horses were heard at the full gallop proceeding in the direction which he had pointed out, he himself gazed up towards the other part of the hills, and saw a strong party of horsemen crowning some of the summits. He then spoke another word or two to the boy Jocelyn, returned into the room where he had conferred with Harvey, and paused with his arms folded on his chest, pondering gloomily for about a minute.

His next act was to cast himself into a chair, and cover his eyes with his hands, while his lip might be seen quivering with intense and agonizing emotion. It lasted scarcely a minute

more, however, and rising up, he struck his hand upon the table, saying, "Yes, yes; it shall be so!"

He then took a brace of pistols from the shelf, loaded them carefully, and placed them in his belt; after which he proceeded to a closet wherein were deposited several other weapons of the same kind; chose out two with much deliberation, looked at them closely with a bitter and ghastly smile; and having done so, and loaded them also, he locked the door of the house, and returned to the room where he had left his wife.

The same dark smile was upon his countenance still, but he said as he entered, "I have been away from you long, fair lady, but it was business of importance called me. Now we will have another song, but it shall be a gayer one than the last."

Mona sang, but it was still a sad strain that she chose; and Franklin Gray, with his head bent down, and his ear inclined towards her, listened attentively to every note. When it was done, he caught her to his breast, and

kissed her repeatedly, saying, "They are very sweet. Is there no poison in them, Mona?"

"None! None! Franklin," she replied; "If any poison have reached your heart it has not been from Mona's lips."

Franklin Gray turned away, and muttered something to himself, but Mona did not hear that the words were "Would it were so!"

"Play upon the lute," he continued, sharply; "let us have the sound of that too;" and again she did as he bade her, though by this time there was a sound of heavy blows, as if given by a hammer below! together with the trampling of horses' feet, and voices speaking.

"Those men are making so much noise I can scarcely play," at length she said, "and the poor baby is frightened by it. See, he is going to cry!"

"Play, play," said Franklin Gray, soothing the child with his hand, as it sat close to his feet; and Mona again, though with a trembling hand and anxious heart, struck the chords of the instrument. At that moment, however, there was the rush of many feet along the

passage; and the next, the door of the chamber flew open, and seven or eight persons rushed in.

Though Mona had not remarked it, Franklin had drawn some of the benches and tables across the room when he first entered, in such a manner as to form a sort of barricade; and the moment the door burst open he started upon his feet, and levelled a pistol towards it; exclaiming, "Stand!" in a voice that shook the room.

The first face that presented itself was that of Lord Harold, and though his nerves were not easily shaken, yet the tone and gesture of Franklin Gray caused him to pause for an instant, of which the Robber at once took advantage.

"Lord Harold," he exclaimed, "you have come to see your handywork, and to receive its punishment. I saved your life. You taught my wife to betray me!"

"Never, never!" shrieked Mona, falling on her knees before him.

"Never?" exclaimed Franklin Gray. "False

woman ! did you think I could not see? Lo ! pitiful boy, here is your handywork, and here your punishment !” and turning the pistol at once towards her, he discharged the contents into her bosom. She fell back with a loud shriek, and Lord Harold in an instant sprang across the barrier ; but, ere he could take a step beyond it, a second pistol was aimed at his head, and fired by that unerring hand which seemed only to gain additional steadiness in moments of agitation or of agony. Bounding up like a deer from the ground, the young nobleman was cast back by the force of the shot at once upon the table over which he had leaped. He never moved again ; there was an aguish quivering of the limbs, and a convulsive contraction of the hand, indeed ; but, as in the case of Wiley, the shot had gone straight into the brain, and consciousness, and thought, and sensation were instantly at an end for ever.

The rest of the Robber’s assailants shrunk back with terror ; and Franklin Gray, with a fierce triumphant smile, gazed at them for an instant. While casting down the weapons, he

had used to such fatal purpose, on the ground, he drew a third from his belt, and exclaimed aloud, "Who will be the next?"

Borne back by the fears and pressure of his companions, with great difficulty Justice Whistler struggled through the doorway into the room again, but he did so with a bold and undismayed countenance, and, pistol in hand, advanced towards the Robber. But an object had attracted the attention of Franklin Gray, and he was bending down towards the floor.

The infant,—the poor infant,—had crawled towards its mother, and the fair small hands were dabbled in her blood. The Robber snatched the child up to his bosom, and giving one fierce glance towards the only one who remained to assail him, he exclaimed, "Fool! you are not worth the shot;" and thrusting the pistol into his belt again, he sprang towards the window, which was wide open.

Though embarrassed with the child, he had passed through in a moment, but not before Justice Whistler, shouting loudly, "He will escape! He will escape!" had pulled the trigger

of his pistol at him with a steady aim. Loaded, however, by hands unused to such occupations, it merely flashed in the pan; and though he instantly drew forth the second, and fired, it was too late; Franklin Grey had passed, and was dropping down to the ground below.

“Stop him! Stop him!” exclaimed the justice, springing to the window, and overturning chairs and tables in his way. “He will escape! He will escape! Stop him below there! Run down, you cowardly rascals! Run down, and pursue him in every direction! By — the fellow will escape after all!” And after gazing for a single instant from the window he rushed out of the room.

On the side where Franklin Gray sprang to the ground there was not one of the party who had come to take him, all, except those who had entered the house and learned the contrary, believing that he had fled with the rest whom they had seen traversing the hills, and all being busy in examining the Robber’s abode, the courts, the stabling, the harness that had been left behind, with open-mouthed curiosity.

The voice of the justice, indeed, called one stout farmer round, and he instantly attempted to seize the stranger whom he saw hurrying forward towards some sheds at the other end of the building, but, though a burly and a powerful yeoman, one quick blow from the Robber's hand laid him prostrate on the earth, and springing past him, Franklin Gray reached the spot where his horse was held.

The boy Jocelyn had managed skilfully, constantly avoiding the side from which a sound of voices came. But now the quick and well-known step called him forth in a moment; the fiery horse was held tight with one hand, the stirrup with the other; and by the time Justice Whistler, with the troop that followed him, came rushing forth from the door, Franklin Gray was in the saddle; and, still bearing the child in his arms, he stuck his spurs into the horse's sides, and galloped through the gates.

Two of the farmers, who had remained on horseback without, had seen him mount, but not knowing who he was, had not attempted to interrupt him. The appearance of their com-

panions in pursuit, however, instantly undeceived them, and they spurred after at full speed. On went the gallant charger of Franklin Gray, however, faster than they could follow; and when they had kept up the race, at about twenty yards behind him, for nearly a quarter of a mile, the one nearest exclaimed aloud, "I will shoot his horse."

The words must have reached the Robber's ear; for instantly his charger slackened its pace, and the pursuer gained upon him a little; but then Franklin Gray turned in the saddle, and with the bridle in his teeth stretched out his right hand towards him. Next came a flash, a report, and the farmer tumbled headlong from the saddle severely wounded, while Franklin Gray pursued his course with redoubled speed.

Almost all the rest of the party who had come to take him were now mounted and in full pursuit; but his greatest danger was not from them. A little above him, on the hill, and nearly at the same distance from the house where he had dwelt as himself, were seen, when he had gone about a mile, several

of the party who had been sent to follow his band. The sight of a horseman in full flight, and many others pursuing, as well as the gestures and shouts of those below, made them instantly turn and endeavour to cut him off. On that side, as he was obliged to turn to avoid both the parties, the pursuers gained upon him, and as if by mutual consent they now strained every nerve to hem him in.

There was, about half a mile farther on, a chasm caused by a deep narrow lane, between banks of twenty or thirty feet deep, descending from the top of the hills; and those above him on the slope, having already passed it once that morning, strove to drive him towards it, their only fear being lest those below should not act on the same plan. Franklin Gray himself, however, took exactly the course they wished, and as, bearing down from above, they came nearer and nearer to him, they laughed to see him approach at full speed a barrier which must inevitably stop him. They urged their horses rapidly on, however, lest he should find some path down the bank into the lane; and nearer

and nearer they came to him as he bore somewhat up towards them. They were within fifty yards of him when he reached the bank ; and so furious was his speed that all expected to see him go over headlong.

But no !—The bridle was thrown loose, the spur touched the horse's flank, and with one eager bound the gallant beast cleared the space between ; and though his hind feet, in reaching the other side, broke down the top of the bank, and cast the sand and gravel furiously into the lane below, he stumbled not, he paused not, but bounded on, while the rashest horseman of the party pulled in his rein, and gazed with fear at the awful leap that had just been taken. A part is still pointed out on those hills where the top of the bank above the lane exhibits a large gap ; and the spot is still called the Robber's Leap to the present day.

Every one, as we have said, drew in their horses, and some rode up and down, seeking for a passage down into the lane ; but, in the meanwhile, Franklin Gray was every moment getting farther and farther out of reach of pursuit.

When Justice Whistler, who came up as fast as his horse would bear him, arrived upon the spot, he saw at once it was too late to pursue the fugitive any farther, and he exclaimed, "Give it up, my masters; give it up; he has escaped us for the present, but we shall get hold of him by-and-by. A man who gets into a scrape like this never gets out of it without a rope round his neck. Let us return to the house, and conclude our examinations there; though a terrible day's work it has been, for, if my eyes served me right in the hurry, there is that poor young gentleman as dead as a stone, and the woman, who seemed a beautiful creature, too, no better."

Thus saying, he turned round, and rode back towards the house; while those who followed, and who had not been present at the events which had taken place within the building, eagerly questioned such as had witnessed the fearful scene. While they listened to the details, magnified as they might be, perhaps, by fear and the love of the marvellous, a gloomy feeling of awe fell over the whole

party; and they gazed up towards the house as they approached it with sensations which made the blood creep slowly through their hearts.

Such feelings were not diminished by the sight of their wounded companion who had received Franklin Gray's fire in the pursuit, and who was still lying on the ground, supported by one of his friends who had remained behind, and bleeding profusely from the right breast. Several alighted, and aided to carry him towards the house; while Justice Whistler and one or two others rode on, and proceeded at once to the room where they had first found the Robber.

There were sounds of many voices within, for six or seven of the party had remained behind, together with the good village Rector, Dr. Sandon; and when the justice entered the room he found it occupied by three groups, the nearest of which consisted of two or three farmers, gathered round the head of the table, and gazing curiously at the object which it supported. A little farther on was one of the

constables, holding firmly by the collar the fair curly-headed boy called Jocelyn; while still farther on was the Rector, kneeling on the ground, and surrounded by the rest of the farmers and yeomen.

The magistrate advanced direct to the table, and saw that the object of the farmers' contemplation was the dead body of the unhappy Lord Harold, which was now stretched out, with the limbs composed, and stiffening into the rigidity of death. Too much accustomed to such sights to be strongly affected by them, the justice passed on, shaking his finger at the boy Jocelyn, and saying, "Ah, you little varlet; I shall deal with you by-and-by."

"He's a funny little rascal, your worship," said the constable. "He ran up the hill so fast that nobody could catch him, till he got to a place where he could see the whole chase, and there he stood, and let himself be taken as quietly as a lamb, though I told him he would be hanged to a certainty."

The justice looked in the boy's face, and saw the tears streaming down from his eyes.

One of the redeeming qualities of Mr. Justice Whistler was his love for children; and the boy's affliction touched him. "Poh! poh! you foolish lad," he cried; "they'll not hang such a child as you. Whip the devil out of you, pernaps; but don't cry for that."

"I'm crying for my poor mistress," said the boy; and the justice then advanced in the direction towards which Jocelyn's eyes were turned, pushing two of the farmers out of his way who obstructed his view of what was taking place. He found that Mr. Sandon was kneeling by the side of Mona Gray, and supporting her lovely head upon his arm. Her face was deadly pale, her lips blanched, her eyes closed, and the long black lashes resting upon that fair cheek; while the dark hair, broken from the bands that had confined it, hung in glossy confusion to the ground. The blood which had been flowing from a wound in her bosom was now stanchèd; and the clergyman, sprinkling cold water in her face, was at that moment endeavouring to bring her back to life; but the countenance

was so like that of a corpse that the magistrate immediately demanded, "Is she not dead?"

"No, no," said the clergyman, in a low voice. "Don't you see she breathes, and she has twice opened her eyes."

In a moment or two after she unclosed them again; but those bright and lustrous eyes were dimmed with the grey shadows of approaching dissolution. She feebly lifted her hand, and putting it to her bosom, drew forth a small crucifix of gold, which she pressed earnestly to her lips. New strength seemed to be acquired by the very effort; and gazing wildly round her on the strange faces that filled the room, she made an effort to speak. At first no sound was heard; but the next moment she distinctly uttered the words, "Is he safe? Has he escaped?"

The boy Jocelyn caught the sounds—burst away from the constable that held him,—broke through those that stood around, and cast himself down on his knees beside her. "Yes, Mona, yes," he cried; "he is safe! He has escaped! I saw him leap the gap myself, and

none was brave enough to follow him. He is safe, and the baby too !”

Mona Gray raised her eyes, as if seeking the heaven to pour out her thankfulness; but the next moment, by another great effort, she said, “Jocelyn, if ever you see him again, tell him that Mona did not betray him in deed, or word, or thought. Tell him it was her last asseveration.”

As she spoke, she pressed the crucifix again to her lips, and then murmured forth some sounds in a language that was not understood by any one present. She then closed her eyes, but still from time to time uttered a few words in the same tongue and in a low tone.

At length they ceased. The hand that held the crucifix to her lips sunk a little lower on her bosom — the other dropped motionless by her side — there was a slight gasp, and a shudder, but neither groan nor cry, and the breath stopped for ever.

Several moments elapsed before any voice broke the deep silence which that sight had produced; and the first words that were spoken

were by the clergyman, who said, "God have mercy upon her."

She was then carried into the room beyond, and laid upon her own bed; and Justice Whistler returning, dispatched messengers to the next town to summon the coroner with all speed.

His design, however, of apprehending Franklin Gray was by no means abandoned; and he endeavoured, skilfully enough, to make use of the simplicity of the boy Jocelyn for that purpose. After talking with him for some time in rather a kindly tone, yet asking him a great many questions in regard to his connection with the robbers, and attempting apparently to ascertain whether the boy had taken any share in their exploits, he said at length, "Well, my good boy, since such is the case, and you had nothing to do with them, but merely minding your master's horse, and the commands of the lady, you are pretty clear of the business; and, indeed, I do not know what to do with you, so you had better go home to your friends, if you've got any."

“ I would rather go with you, Sir,” said the boy, “ if you would take me with you. You seem good natured, and I should like to serve such a gentleman as you; and if you did not choose to keep me on, I could serve you along the road.”

The suspicions of the justice were excited, and he asked, “ Why which way do you suppose I am going, my man?” And then added, keeping his eyes fixed upon the boy’s face, “ I am not going back over the hills: I am going on to the town of——to seek out this master of yours.”

The boy’s countenance appeared to fall; and Mr. Justice Whistler, convinced by what he saw that Franklin Gray had most likely taken his way back over the hills, and that the boy knew it, left him in the hands of the farmers, and took the constable aside.

“ Keep an eye upon that youth,” he said. “ Don’t seem to restrain him at all; and if he says he will go back to his friends, let him go, but watch every step that he takes. If he says, however, that he will go with me, look

to him well every step of the way; for I judge by his manner that he knows his master has gone over the hills, and wishes to be carried back with us for the purpose of rejoining him."

The man promised to obey punctually; and the justice, returning to the boy, spoke to him once more, as if in passing, saying, "Well, my good boy; you shall do just as you like. Upon second thoughts, I am going back to Moorhurst and Uppington; and you can either go away by yourself, and find out your friends, or you can come with me, and I'll feed you well by the way. Think about it, and let Master Constable know."

The boy's face brightened in a moment, and he said at once, "Oh I will go with you."

There was much to be done, however, before the justice could set out, and it was nearly dark ere, leaving the scene of so many sad and horrible events in the hands of the officers of the county, he took his way back over the hills with the reverend gentleman, who once more invited him kindly to his house.

All the farmers accompanied them. No one choosing to separate from the rest at that hour, with the knowledge that Franklin Gray and his band were free, and in the vicinity. The boy Jocelyn, mounted behind the constable, was carefully watched, but he showed not the slightest inclination to escape, and when he arrived at the parsonage ate a hearty supper in the kitchen, and fell asleep by the fireside.

He was roused about eleven o'clock to accompany the constable to a garret chamber which had been prepared for them, and in five minutes he was asleep again; but when his companion woke, an hour or two after daylight on the following morning, no Jocelyn was to be found, though the door was still locked, and the room was in the third story. There were found, indeed, the window partly open, the traces of small feet along a leaden gutter, the branch of a tall elm, which rested against one corner of the house, cracked through, but not completely broken, and the fragments of glass at the top of the wall neatly and care-

fully pounded into powder with a large stone.

These were the only traces of the boy's flight that could be discovered; but these were quite sufficient for Mr. Justice Whistler; and after chiding the constable severely for sleeping so soundly, he turned to the clergyman, saying, "It is very evident that this man is still in the neighbourhood, and is on this side of the hills. Let me beg you, my good sir, to keep a good watch in every direction till I come back, which will be to-morrow evening. I think it better, now, to go on myself, in order to see old Lord Danemore, who lies dangerously ill, and to break to him the news of his son's death, which, if I judge rightly, may, at the present moment, be a matter of the greatest importance to him and many others."

The justice breakfasted, and then proceeded on his journey.

CHAPTER X.

WE must now return to the conversation which was going on at the Rectory of Danemore between Mr. Evelyn, Sir Walter Herbert, and him whom we shall still call Henry Langford — in the fear that he should never establish his claim to any higher title; — and the reader need scarcely be told, that the interruption which took place therein was occasioned by the arrival of Mr. Justice Whistler, bearing with him the sad account of all that had occurred in consequence of the expedition which he himself led against Franklin Gray.

Putting down his hat upon the table, the feather band of which was dripping with some rain which had now begun to fall, he declared that he believed such events had never happened before in any civilized country; and he related with no inconsiderable degree of real feeling the death of poor Mona Gray. For a time sensations of awe, and grief, and asto-

nishment, suspended every other feeling in the bosoms of his hearers; but he himself, who had cast off the first impression under the influence of a good night's rest and a long heavy ride, recalled the rest of the party to other thoughts, by making Langford a low bow, and saying, "Under existing circumstances, I suppose I may congratulate you, Sir, upon your undisputed succession to the title of the Earl of Danemore."

Langford replied that he certainly intended at once to assume that title, though, he believed, it would not be undisputed; and Mr. Evelyn, who had a great inclination for doing business under all circumstances, immediately proceeded to take into consideration the change which the news that they had just received might produce in Langford's position. Judging that it might be as well to engage the acuteness of Mr. Justice Whistler in their service, at least as far as seeking for the lost papers was concerned, he opened the matter to that respectable magistrate, and held out to him such cogent inducements for exerting himself to the

utmost in the business in hand, that the justice, though he represented the importance and necessity of his presence in London, agreed to leave all business there to his colleagues, and devote himself to the object in view.

Langford heard this arrangement without saying any thing, and without giving any encouragement to Mr. Justice Whistler to remain; for, in truth, he had his own views upon the subject, and had already determined what course to pursue, feeling perfectly sure that the lost papers were in the possession of Franklin Gray, and that any efforts of Mr. Justice Whistler for the recovery of those papers would retard if not utterly prevent the attainment of their object.

He took care, therefore, to give no hint, either of his own purposes, or his suspicions as to the hands into which the papers had fallen, but at once turned to another part of the subject, saying, "In the first place, Mr. Evelyn, as it is my full intention to deal openly and straightforwardly in this business altogether, I think it may be necessary immediately to send a note to Sir Henry Heywood, informing him of the

terrible fate which has befallen my unhappy brother, and begging to meet him here, to confer more fully on the subject to-morrow morning."

The note was accordingly written, and sent ; and Sir Henry, who fancied himself considerably nearer to his object in consequence of the death of Lord Harold, returned a gracious answer, and appointed ten o'clock on the following day for the conference. Sir Walter Herbert then proceeded to Moorhurst ; but although Langford felt a longing desire to pass one more evening of tranquillity with her he loved best, in the library of the calm old Manor House, he would not quit the sad dwelling where the body of his father lay, but remained there during the night.

By ten o'clock the next morning Sir Walter had returned, and the arrival of Sir Henry Heywood soon followed. He was now, however, accompanied by a lawyer, and on his entering the room, Langford immediately, in plain and courteous language, and few words, announced to him the situation in which he stood, as son of

the late Earl of Danemore, by his private marriage with Eugenie de Beaulieu.

Sir Henry Heywood had not lost his time since his arrival in the neighbourhood of Danemore Castle, and by one means or another had collected a very accurate knowledge of Langford's situation, and the points in which his claim was strong or defective.

“Sir,” he said, in reply, “what you have just asserted may be, and, indeed, very probably is correct. You are a likely young gentleman; bear a strong resemblance to the late Earl, and so forth. I have nothing to say against the fact of the Earl being your father, or of your mother being a very virtuous lady; but all I have to say is that such assertions are good for nothing in law without proofs of the fact. If you will do me the honour to show me the registry of your father's and mother's marriage, a certificate to that effect from the hands of the clergyman who married them, the attestation of the proper witnesses, or, in short, satisfactory legal proofs, I shall make you a very low bow, and congratulate you on your accession to the

title of Earl of Danemore. Till then, however, by your leave, I shall assume that title myself, and acting as heir to the late peer, take possession of every thing to which the law gives me a claim."

"In regard to taking possession of any thing, Sir," replied Langford, "be my claim what it will, I think you will find yourself barred by my father's will."

"Then let it be produced, Sir, let it be produced," said Sir Henry Heywood, with some degree of irritable sharpness; "We have heard a great deal about this will; let it be produced."

"Certainly, Sir," replied Mr. Evelyn; "here it is. But before it is opened we will call in, if you please, the witnesses who heard every word of it read over to the Earl, and who saw him sign it. I think also that his principal servants had better be present."

What he suggested was agreed to. The small room of the Rectory was nearly filled; and while Langford, with feelings of deep grief, perhaps we might even say despondency, sat at the table shading his eyes with his hand, and

Sir Henry Heywood, seated on the other side, shut his lips close, and looked full in Mr. Evelyn's face, the lawyer, after all due formalities, proceeded to read the will aloud.

In the first place it ordained as private and speedy a burial of his body as possible. In the next it provided liberally for all the servants. It then went on to leave to his son Edward, heretofore erroneously called Lord Harold, a large independent fortune, which was to revert, in case of his death without issue, to the person whom next he named; that person was his eldest son, Henry, by his first wife, Eugenie de Beaulieu, whom he had married privately the year before the Restoration.

Under the skilful management of Mr. Evelyn, nothing had been left undone to show that Langford was the person to whom he alluded, and to render the wording of the Earl's will the most solemn acknowledgment of his marriage and declaration of his son's legitimacy. With all these precautions, the Earl went on to leave to him every part of his vast fortune not otherwise disposed of; noticing the estates attached

to the title of Earl of Danemore only as coming to him of necessity. The three executors were then appointed, as had been before announced, and the will terminated with the signature.

The reading of this document called forth a burst of angry vehemence from Sir Henry Heywood, which might have proceeded further had it not been repressed instantly by a murmur of indignation which ran through all present.

Langford, however, himself, was the coolest of the party, and as soon as the reading of the will was concluded, he said, " Sir Henry Heywood, in the present state of feeling experienced by all parties, the less discussion that takes place of course the better. You are now satisfied as to who are the executors; but I think it will be better, till after the funeral is over, to remove none of the seals which have been placed; and I doubt not that this reverend gentleman, and Sir Walter Herbert, will agree with me in that view. You will of course be present at the funeral; and I doubt not that on that sad occasion we shall all meet more calmly.

For the present, I wish you good morning;" and so saying, he bowed to the party, and quitted the room.

Sir Henry Heywood remained, and would fain have entered into the discussion of many points, both with Sir Walter and Mr. Evelyn, but neither were at all inclined to gratify him in that respect; and he retired, declaring that he would certainly attend the funeral; but that before that time he would have such legal authority from London as would enable him to maintain his just rights against any conspiracy which might be formed to oppose them. Sir Walter Herbert coloured and raised his head at the word conspiracy, with signs of ill-repressed indignation; but Mr. Evelyn laid his hand upon his arm, saying, "He is a disappointed man, Sir Walter, and has privilege of angry words."

On the measures that were taken by Sir Henry Heywood we will not dwell; nor will we pause, even for a moment, on the melancholy ceremony of committing to dust the bodies of the Earl of Danemore and his younger son. Langford, although between him and the dead

there existed none of those endearing ties which gather round the heart in the tender intercourse of early years,—though his affection towards them was not, like the rich shells which we find embedded in the coral rock, joined to the things it clung to by the accumulated love and associations of years,—still could not help feeling deeply and painfully as he laid the father and the brother in the grave, and took the dark farewell of his last earthly kindred.

Sir Henry Heywood had by this time learned so far to restrain himself that nothing disagreeable occurred; and from the vault the whole party turned their steps, not to the Rectory, but to one of the large saloons which had remained unconsumed in Danemore Castle. There two noted lawyers were found waiting for the baronet, who immediately addressed himself to Langford, demanding if he distinctly understood him to lay claim to the earldom of Danemore.

“Distinctly, Sir,” replied Langford.

“Very well, Sir. Then—” interrupted Sir Henry.

But the other waved his hand, and went on, "I do most distinctly lay claim to that earldom, Sir; but as I wish to do nothing whatsoever that can be considered unfair towards you, and shall in a few days be able to produce the only papers which seem necessary to convince you of my right,—having at this moment a certain knowledge of the person who has taken them,—I shall leave the executorial duties under my father's will entirely to my excellent friends, who, well advised, will deal with you in all justice and all kindness, I am sure. I myself am bound upon important business, and therefore you will excuse my presence any farther. I trust in two honourable men, all whose actions I know will bear the closest inspection; and I shall feel satisfied with and ratify every thing that they shall do."

A word whispered in the ear of Sir Henry Heywood by one of his lawyers made him start a step forward ere Langford departed, and say, "Doubtless, Sir, we are to expect on your return the production of the papers you mention; and of course you will be quite willing

to submit them, as you do the conduct of your friends, to the closest inspection."

"Quite," replied Langford, with a calm smile, so slightly coloured by contempt that none but an eager and well-qualified appetite could have detected the admixture. "Whether I bring back the papers or not, Sir Henry, depends upon fortune; or, rather, I should say, upon God's will. But certain it is, that you judge rightly when you think I go to seek them; and that I go to seek them where they are to be found, I am quite certain. My chance may be to find them, or not. I give you good day."

Leaving Sir Henry Heywood to follow what course he thought fit, and Sir Walter Herbert, with the Rector, guided by Mr. Evelyn, and an old, calm, thoughtful, experienced, little-speaking lawyer from London, to deal with him as they judged advisable, we shall trace the course of Henry Langford, who now, followed by two servants, one attached to Sir Walter Herbert, and the other an old and faithful domestic of his father the late Earl, took his way abruptly

from Danemore Castle, but not in the direction which the reader may imagine. He rode at once across the country to the little village of Moorhurst; and passing over the bridge—because the shortest way, through the park, under lately existing circumstances, had been closed—he approached the Manor House; and leaving his horse, with orders not to unsaddle him, in the court-yard, he hurried through the house in search of Alice Herbert.

He found her without much difficulty; and sweet and tender were her feelings on that first meeting, alone, and altogether to each other, after a long period of distress and anxiety, and the obtrusiveness of a thousand anxious and busy cares. He told her that he could not go away upon a journey of some distance and of much importance without seeing her,—without bidding her farewell for the time. He told her, again and again, how deeply and how passionately he loved her. He pressed her again and again to his heart in gratitude for past kindness, in the ardour of present affection, in the longing apprehension of parting. He took,

and she granted, all that a noble heart could wish or a pure heart could yield; and then, springing upon his horse, he once more pursued his way towards the spot which the tale of Justice Whistler had pointed out as that where Franklin Gray was likely to be met with.

He left the village, with the rectory of Mr. Sandon, far to the left, about an hour before sunset; and then inquiring his way to the nearest farmhouse,—for there were neither railroads over deserts nor hotels upon mountains in those days,—he prepared to repose for the night ere he pursued his inquiries on the following morning. The people of the farm were kind and civil; and, though it put them somewhat out of their way to receive a guest with two servants and three horses, when they expected no such thing, the matter was readily arranged, and Langford soon found himself sitting at a pleasant country table, whereat ten or twelve people were enjoying themselves after the fatigues of the day.

Langford made himself friends wherever he came, by the urbanity of his manners, generally

ruling as much as he wished in all circumstances, by appearing, like the ancient Greek, to yield and to respect. In the present instance he was received with great gladness, and was enabled to gain information of every thing that was passing throughout the country round, by the very fact of his making himself at once at home amongst the people, as we have said he did, and by seeming to share their feelings, which soon proved the means of his sharing their thoughts. The whole tittle-tattle of the neighbourhood was now detailed to him, and he heard every particular of the death of his brother. The stopping of Mr. Justice Whistler, and his scourging with the saddle-girths and stirrup-leathers, were also told him, with many other interesting details, which seemed to have made a deep impression upon the laughter-loving hearts of the honest villagers.

Langford himself was, in comparison with his ordinary moods, sad and gloomy, as he well might be, not so much from anticipation of the future as in reflecting upon the past, and upon all the deeds, wrongs, and sorrows

whereon that inevitable past had set its seal for ever ; and as he approached the spot where his brother had fallen, the despondency that he felt was of course not diminished. Without asking any direct questions concerning Franklin Gray, Langford obtained tidings which made him hesitate in regard to his farther conduct ; for in answer to his inquiries as to whether any of the robbers had been captured, the honest farmer—who had been one of those that went out against them, and therefore took a personal interest in the whole affair—informed him that the band had certainly dispersed, each man, it was supposed, taking his separate way back to London. Such was the opinion pronounced by Mr. Justice Whistler, the farmer said ; and Langford now learned for the first time that the worthy justice had returned to the scene of his former adventures, and was eagerly aiding the local magistrates in the pursuit of the robbers.

He feared then that Franklin Gray might thus have been driven from the neighbourhood, but, after some reflection, an impression took hold of

his mind,—probably springing from traits of the Robber's character which he had seen and marked in better days,—that Gray would linger, for a time at least, round the spot where his unhappy wife was interred; and Langford consequently proceeded at once to the little solitary burial ground in which she lay. To it was attached a small church, situated at a great distance from any other building, high upon the side of the hill, and offering once in the week some means of religious instruction to the inhabitants of that wild track. He easily found the grave of poor Mona Gray, for no one had been buried there for many months but herself, and every other grave was green.

The sight of that grave, however, confirmed him in the hope of soon finding Franklin Gray, for at the head were strewed, here and there, some wild flowers, evidently lately gathered. Justice Whistler, with a heart hardened by intercourse with evil things, did not comprehend the character of the Robber as Langford did, and never dreamed that he would linger near the spot where the wife, whom he had him-

self slain with such determined premeditation, slept her last sleep.

Leaving his two servants to watch in the churchyard, Henry Langford rode up to the top of the hills, and continued his course along the ridge towards the sea; but ere he had gone half a mile he saw something move in one of the deep, shadowy indentations of the ground, and, riding quickly down, he pursued the object, as it fled before him taking advantage of every thing which could conceal it in its flight, doubling round every tree and bush, and plunging into each deep dell. But Langford caught sight of it sufficiently often to feel sure that it was a human being, and he gained upon it also, as it led him back in its flight towards the churchyard.

There, however, he lost sight of it again; but the moment after, a faint cry met his ear, and a shout; and, riding on fast, he found the boy Jocelyn in the hands of his two servants. The boy was evidently in great terror; and the sound of another voice behind him, when Langford spoke as he came up, made him start al-

most out of the hands of the men who held him. The sight of Langford's well-known face, however, instantly made his countenance brighten; and when that gentleman spoke kindly to him, and bade the men let him go, the boy came up towards him, bending his head, and looking gladly in his face, as a favourite dog that has been lost for several days runs up, fawning but yet half frightened, towards its master, when it returns.

“ Well, Jocelyn,” said Langford, gazing at him, and marking his soiled clothes and somewhat pale and haggard appearance, “ you seem not to have fared very richly, my poor boy, since you got away from Justice Whistler. Did you find out your master?”

The boy looked timidly at the two men who stood near, then hung down his head, and made no reply. Langford bent over him, and said in a low voice, “ Do not be frightened, Jocelyn. I am seeking no ill, either to yourself or your master. Come with me on the hill side, and tell me more. We will leave the men here.”

“ You must leave your horse behind, then,

also," said the boy, in the same low tone, "if you want to see the Captain, as you used to do; for he will never let us find him if he sees any one coming on horseback."

"That I will do willingly," replied Langford; and throwing the bridle to one of the men, he bade them remain there till he returned.

Holding the boy Jocelyn by the hand, he then went out upon the hill side, questioning him as they walked along in regard to Franklin Gray; but before he would answer any thing the boy made him again and again promise that he would not betray his master. When he was satisfied on that point, he gazed up in Langford's face, with a look of deep and anxious sadness, saying, "Oh, you don't know all, Captain Langford. You don't know all!"

"Yes, my good boy, I do," replied Langford; "I have heard all the sad story of the people going to attack your master in his house, and his fancying that his wife had betrayed him, and shooting the person he loved best on earth."

"Aye, poor thing, she is happy," said the

boy; "I am sure she is in heaven, for every day since they laid her in the churchyard I have strewed what flowers I could get upon her grave, and they do not wither there half so soon as they do anywhere else. But I am sure it is better for her to be there than to see her husband in such a state as he is now."

"What do you mean, Jocelyn?" demanded Langford. "Grief and remorse for what he has done must, I dare say, have had a terrible effect upon your master; but you seem to imply something more. What is it that you mean?"

"Alas," replied the boy, "he is mad; quite mad. It is that that made Harvey and the rest leave him, for they found him out after he got away, and joined him again; but, both for his sake and their own, they were obliged to separate, when they found what state he was in. But I am sure he had been mad some time before, for the day after that wicked man made his escape, who brought all the people upon us, I saw him on the hill fire one of his pistols in the air, as if he had been shooting at something, though there was nothing to be seen; and when he had done,

he looked at the pistol, and said, 'You are not so dangerous now.' But now he is quite wild, and you must take care how you go near him, for it is a thousand to one that he fires at you, and you know he never misses his mark."

"Whereabouts is he?" demanded Langford.
"I wonder he has not been discovered."

"Oh, he is two or three miles off, at least," replied the boy; "in the rocky part of the hills near the sea. He never comes about here but at night, when he goes to the grave in the churchyard, and moans over it; but then before day-light he is away again."

Langford and the boy walked on, but the two or three miles he spoke of proved to be fully five, and during the last mile the scenery became wild and rugged in the extreme. The turf, which had covered the hills farther inland with a smooth though undulating surface, was here constantly broken by immense masses of rock, sometimes taking the form of high banks and promontories, with the tops still soft and grassy; sometimes starting abruptly up in fantastic groups out of the ground, like the rugged

and mis-shapen columns of some druidical temple. Here and there a few scattered birch trees varied the scene, and near a spot where a spring of clear water broke from the ground, and wandered down in a stream into the valley, three or four fine oaks had planted themselves, sheltered by a higher ridge of hill from the sharp winds of the sea.

As they came near this spot the boy Jocelyn gave a long low whistle, more like the cry of some wild bird than any sound from human lips, saying, after he had done so, "He is often about here at this hour."

No answer was returned, however, and they went on for nearly another mile, which brought them to the high rocks that encircled a bay of the sea. "I should not wonder if he were here," said the boy; "for I sometimes catch fish for him in this bay, and there are more berries and things of that kind about upon the shrubs that grow half way down, than any where else."

"Good God! Is that the only food that he obtains?" demanded Langford.

“He has had nothing else,” said the boy, sadly, “since Harvey and the rest went away. Look there ! There he is ! just below us, a little to the left. Hush ! Do not let us go quick !”

Langford laid his hand upon the boy's arm, and detained him, while he gazed down for two or three moments on the unhappy man who had once been his companion and friend in the stirring days of military adventure.

It was a terrible sight ! The sun was shining bright, though over the deep blue sky some large detached masses of cloud were borne by a soft and equable but rapid wind, throwing upon the green bosom of the water below, and the rocks and hills round about, deep clear shadows, which, as they floated on, left the objects that they touched brighter than ever in the sunshine, like the shadows which doubt or suspicion, or gloom, or the waywardness of the human heart, will cast upon things in themselves beautiful, and which, when the mood is gone or the doubt removed, resume at once all their splendour. Part of the steep close by Franklin Gray was covered with bushes, mingled with some

taller trees, and over these the shadow of a cloud was flying, while he himself sat in the full light upon a small projecting piece of the rock.

Tenderly folded to his bosom, he held his infant with both his arms; and, swaying backwards and forwards, while his eyes wandered wildly over the waters, he seemed endeavouring to rock it to sleep. A little farther up, his horse, his beautiful grey, of which he had been so fond, cropped the scanty herbage, with the - bridle cast upon his neck; and hearing the approach of strangers even before his master, he raised high his proud head, and gazed eagerly around.

“How does he feed the child?” demanded Langford, in a whisper.

“With berries, and any thing he can get,” replied the boy; “he never lets it be out of his arms but to crawl round him for a few moments on the turf.”

“This is very terrible, indeed,” said Langford; “but he sits there on such a fearful point of the rock that you had better go forward yourself, in the first instance, and tell him that

I am here. The least thing might make him plunge over."

"It would not surprise me at all," replied the boy, "for where he goes I am sure I would not go, and yet I can climb as well as any one."

Langford then withdrew for a few yards, and the boy again uttered his low whistle, which was immediately answered. After pausing for a moment or two to give him time to reach his master, Langford again advanced, and saw the boy in eager conversation with Franklin Gray, whose eyes were now bent upon the spot where he stood. Satisfied that he was prepared for his coming, Langford descended, though with difficulty, the precipitous path which led to the shelf of rock on which he stood; and Franklin Gray himself took a step or two back from the edge, and came forward to meet him. Holding the child still to his bosom with one arm, he at first held out his other hand to his old companion; but the next moment, as they came near, he drew it suddenly back, gazing upon him with his bright flashing eyes, and

exclaiming, "No, no! This hand killed your father and your brother, and you must pursue me to the death!"

"No, Franklin," replied Langford, in a calm and quiet tone; "I pursue you not with any evil intent towards you. What you say is true; that hand did slay my brother, and aided, perhaps, in taking my father's life; but that hand too aided and supported my mother; and my father, not many days before his death, made me promise that I would in no degree seek for vengeance upon you. He said that he had somehow wronged you in early years, and that it was fitting your own hand should punish him."

"He did,—he did wrong me," cried Franklin Gray. "To him I owe all that is evil in my nature. He had me kidnapped when I was a boy, and would have fain followed the sweet lady he had deserted. He had kidnapped and carried me away into the south, and made me familiar with blood; and when I fled from him, he pursued me as if I had been his slave, but I escaped from him. And now you—you, Henry,

tell me what you seek with me? If you come not for vengeance, what is it you come for?"

"I came," replied Langford, "from a personal motive; but I did not expect, Franklin, to find you in this state, and the thoughts of myself are swallowed up in pain to find you thus."

"What! you mean I am mad!" burst forth Franklin Gray. "It is true I am mad, madder than any that we used to see nursed by the Brothers of Charity at Charenton. But what matters that? Every one else is as mad as myself. Was not she mad to let me think that she had betrayed me? Was she not madder still to send me word when she was dying that she had not betrayed me, and to pile coals of fire upon my head? Was she not mad to die at all, and leave me with this infant?" and sitting down upon the ground he looked earnestly upon the face of the child which his vehemence had wakened up from its sleep.

After pausing for a few minutes, and pressing his hand tight upon his brow, he turned to Langford more collectedly, saying, "You told

me you came here from a personal motive. What was it? Speak quickly, while my mind will go straight, for my brain is like a horse that has just gone blind, and wavers from one side of the road to the other," and he laughed wildly at his own simile.

"The motive that brought me, Franklin," replied Langford, "was to obtain from you the papers which you know I have been so long seeking to possess. My mother's marriage, it seems, cannot be proved without them."

Franklin Gray started upon his feet, and gazed with wild surprize in Langford's face. "I have them not," he exclaimed; "I never touched them. Did you not take them? It was your own fault, then; and they were burnt with the house. We rushed out as fast as we could go. I know nothing further."

That he spoke truth was so evident, that Langford instantly determined to say nothing more on the subject, though the disappointment caused him a bitter pang. But it was useless to enter into any explanations with the unhappy man before him; and with the usual

calm decision of his character he determined at once to apply himself, as far as possible, to see what might be done to relieve and comfort him. If he remained in England his life would inevitably be sacrificed to the law, notwithstanding his manifest insanity. He himself, under such circumstances, could not even intercede in his favour, and the only hope of saving him from public execution was to induce him to fly to France, and by giving notice of his condition to some persons of influence there, to obtain admission for him into the institution which he himself had mentioned, the Brothers of Charity at Charenton, who devoted themselves to the care of persons in his unhappy situation. All this passed through his mind in a moment, and he replied to Franklin Gray at once, "Well, if it be so, it cannot be helped; but now, Gray, to speak of yourself. You must be aware that you are here in a very dangerous situation, surrounded by people who are pursuing you for the express purpose of bringing you to the scaffold. Would it not be much better for you to fly to France?"

Franklin Gray gazed in his face for a moment or two, then looked up to the sky with a sort of half smile. "It would be better," he answered, at length; "it would be better, and my passage is even taken in a ship, which is to sail, I think, in two days. But what am I to do with the child?"

"Oh, I will provide means for its joining you," replied Langford; "it shall be well taken care of."

"I have got a little boat, too, down there," said Gray, in a rambling manner, "which would carry me to the ship in no time."

Langford looked at the boy Jocelyn with an inquiring glance; but the youth shook his head, murmuring in a scarcely audible tone, "There is no boat."

Franklin Gray did not hear him, and was evidently occupied with other thoughts. He put his hand again to his head, and then turning to Henry Langford, he said, "Henry, we are old companions, and I will take you at your word. Promise me, as a man and a soldier, that this babe shall be well taken care of till he

joins me. It is a sweet creature, and seldom, if ever, cries. You will use it as your own, Henry, in every respect as your own."

"I will indeed," replied Langford; "I will indeed; but let us think now how you can best be got off to the vessel."

But Franklin Gray went on in the same strain; "And poor Jocelyn, too," he said, laying his hand upon the boy's head; "you will be kind to him, and breed him as a soldier."

"He had better go with you, Franklin," replied Langford.

"No," answered Franklin Gray. "No; I shall be better alone;" and at the same time the boy whispered to Langford, "Humour him; humour him. I will find means to follow him close."

"Will you promise that, too?" demanded Franklin Gray, but instantly went on without waiting a reply. "Then the baby, too, Henry," he continued; "you will be very kind to it, and tender, and love it very much? See, it smiles at you. Take it in your arms."

Langford took the child as he held it out to

him. Franklin Gray bent down his head and kissed it; then laid his two muscular hands upon Langford's shoulders, and gazed gravely and solemnly into his eyes.

“Henry,” he said, “your vow is registered in heaven!” and before Langford could answer him, he burst forth, as if with a shout of exultation, “Now I am free! Now I am free! Now I am free!”

With a sudden spring forward he reached the ledge on which he had lately stood, and without pause, or thought, or hesitation, plunged at once over into empty air.

The depth below might be near two hundred feet, and the water of the sea washed the base of the rock. It was in vain that Langford himself sought, and, with the aid of his servants and some people that they brought to his assistance, spent the whole of that evening in endeavouring to find the body of Franklin Gray. It was not till nearly ten days after that some fishermen found a corpse with marks of much violence about it, showing that it must have struck upon the rocks at the

bottom of the water, lying on a sandy spit that ran out from one of the points of the bay. The clothes proved it to be that of Franklin Gray; but nobody took any pains to identify it as such. A verdict of found drowned was returned by the coroner's jury; and it was buried, at Langford's expense, close to the side of Mona Gray, in the churchyard on the hills.

CHAPTER XI.

THE road which Langford pursued on his way back, was that which passed over the moor, as we have before mentioned, near the spot called Up-water Meer, and thence, descending the hill, separated into two branches, at a point where, on the one hand, the remains of Danemore Castle, with its wide park and deep woods, were to be seen at the distance of about four miles, and on the other appeared the graceful little spire of Moorhurst Church, with the manifold roofs and chimneys of the Manor House, peeping out of the trees some way in advance.

Langford, when he reached that spot, which was at that period of the evening when the shadows begin to grow long, but before the sun has lost any of its power, paused, and gazed for several minutes upon the mansion of his ancestors ; saying to it in his own heart, “ Farewell for ever. The things which were to have given you back to me, with all the honours and pride of high

birth and long ancestry, are lost beyond recal. But never mind. It may be better as it is. I shall escape the haughty temptations of high estate. Alice will not love me less; and though it may cost good Sir Walter's heart a pang when he thinks that the legitimacy of my birth is not clear to the eyes of all men, he himself will not doubt it. It may cause mine a pang too, that even a shade should rest upon my mother's name; but I have done all that could be done."

Such were his thoughts, though not perhaps his words, as after gazing for some time upon the castle, he turned and directed his horse's head towards Moorhurst. On arriving at the old Manor House he looked up with pleasure to see the smoke curling up above the trees, the lattice windows wide open to give admission to the sweet fresh air, and all bearing that air of old comfort and calm cheerfulness which it used to do.

There were several persons, not servants, lingering about in the court-yard, however. There was a look of some vexation in honest Halliday's face as he gave Langford admission,

and two or three strangers were standing in the hall. The events of the last few weeks had brought a sort of apprehensiveness upon Langford's heart which sorrow can do even to those who are steeled against danger; and he asked at once if any thing were the matter.

“ Oh, no. His worship and Mistress Alice are both quite well, Sir,” replied Halliday, divining Langford's feelings at once. “ It is only that they have brought a poor fellow up before Sir Walter, charged with stealing, who I am sure never stole; and that Sir Henry Heywood, or Lord Danemore, as he calls himself—I hope he'll have to uncall himself soon—is pressing to have him sent to prison at once. Mistress Alice is up in the village. I am glad she is away, poor thing.”

Langford went on into the library, and passing without much notice a group of persons around the prisoner at the end of the long table, he advanced to Sir Walter, who was sitting with Sir Henry Heywood at some distance, with a smaller table before them, and some books. The Knight and the Baronet

both rose on seeing Langford; the one to grasp his hand eagerly; the other to make him a low and much more cordial bow than he had ever hitherto done.

“ Pray Sir, may I ask,” he said immediately, with a certain anxious quivering of the lip, but with perfect civility, “ If you have been successful in your search?”

“ I have not, Sir,” replied Langford straightforwardly; “ I have not found what I sought.”

“ Then, I presume, Sir, that you are not disposed to pursue farther your claims in this matter,” rejoined the other, in a hesitating manner.

“ You are quite wrong, Sir,” replied Langford; “ I shall pursue it without delay upon such proofs as are in my possession. If it were but for the purpose of clearing my mother’s fame I would do so, even if there existed no chance of my recovering my right.”

“ It is a noble feeling, Sir,” said Sir Henry with an urbane smile; “ but perhaps there may be a method of compromising this affair. Allow me one word with you,” and so saying, he drew

Langford aside into the recess of one of the windows. "For my own part," he continued, "I am not ambitious. I am a widower, and shall certainly never marry again. I have but two daughters—you are a single man ——."

"But one engaged to be married very shortly," replied his auditor, making him a low bow; and Sir Henry, turning on his heel sharply, went back at once to Sir Walter Herbert, saying, in a fierce and impatient tone, "Let us proceed with the business before us at once, Sir Walter. I say the man must be committed, and I call upon you as a magistrate to do so."

"I do not see the case as you do," answered the good knight of Moorhurst; and as he spoke Langford approached the table also, and raising his eyes to the prisoner at once recognized the poor half-witted man, Silly John Graves. Though surprised and grieved, he said nothing, having learned in a hard and difficult school to govern his first emotions. Standing beside Sir Walter Herbert, however, and feeling that internal conviction of the man's honesty and truth which

is gained, not alone from great and significant actions, but from small signs and casual traits, which betray rather than display the heart, he determined to interpose as far as possible in the poor man's defence, and not to suffer the overbearing vehemence of Sir Henry Heywood to crush the calm simplicity of truth, as overbearing vehemence so generally does in this world.

“Why, Sir Walter Herbert,” exclaimed Sir Henry Heywood, in the same sharp tone, “has not the man been found carrying out of the ruins of Danemore Castle a valuable cup and silver cover? Has he not been taken in the very act?”

“I took nothing but what was my own,” said Silly John, gazing upon Sir Henry Heywood with a shy look, which mingled, in strange harmony, terror, and contempt, and hatred; “I took nothing but what was my own, or what ought never to have been there, or what no one there had a right to,”

“What then,” exclaimed Sir Henry Heywood, “you took more beside the cup, did you?”

“Aye, that I did,” replied Silly John; “I

took the cup because Mistress Bertha brought it to me full of wine on the night I was shut up there, in the dark hole under the tower; and she gave me the cup and all, and said I might keep it; and then the fire came, and I lost the cup, and so whenever I was well enough of the burns and the bruises I went back again to seek it, and to take my own."

"Send for Mistress Bertha," said Sir Walter, in a loud voice, speaking to one of the attendants at the lower side of the room, "She is now in the house, which is fortunate."

Sir Henry Heywoodg nawed his lip, but, as if to fill up the time, he asked the prisoner, looking keenly at him, "You acknowledge you took other things out of the castle before you were caught. What were they, and what right had you to them? You will see, Sir Walter," he continued, "that whether Danemore Castle belongs to me, or to this gentleman who claims it, it is absolutely necessary that we who dispute the property, and you who are executor to the will, should investigate accurately, and prosecute vigorously, every one who abstracts any

thing from that building. I ask you again," he added, addressing the half-witted man, "what it was you admit taking, and what claim you had thereunto?"

"More claim than you can show," answered Silly John, "for I had some right, and you have none. And worse than a fox you are, for a fox only seeks a young bird out of the nest; you seek nest and all. Every one knows I speak truth. Every one knows I never told a lie in my life!"

"Aye, that we do; that we do," cried one or two voices at the lower part of the library; but at that instant the voice of Sir Henry Heywood was raised, exclaiming, "Silence there; how dare you disturb the court?"

"By your leave, Sir Henry," said Sir Walter Herbert.

But at that moment the woman Bertha entered the room, with the same cold, calm, and dignified air which had become second nature with her, and gazing round with a look of inquiry, but not astonishment, she demanded, "What is wanted with me? Who sent for me?"

The next moment, however, her eyes fell upon the half-witted man, as he stood at the bottom of the table, and clasping her hands together with emotion, such as no one present had ever beheld her display on any previous occasion, she exclaimed, "Good God! is it possible! Art thou living? or art thou risen from the dead? I thought thou hadst been burnt to ashes in Hubert's tower, which fell amongst the first that went down. . I dared not even mention thy name, for thy confinement there, and the dreadful fate that I thought had befallen thee, were too terrible, were too awful for thought even to rest upon! But now thou art come to life again to bear witness of the truth—and yet;" she added, sorrowfully, "they will not hear his testimony, for they will say he is mad; that he has been mad for years."

"Never you fear that, Mistress Bertha," said the half-witted man. "The foxes let me out before they set fire to the house; and I never forget any thing; so, while they were fighting and tearing each other to pieces, I went and fingered,—what do you think?"

“The papers! the papers!” exclaimed Bertha, almost screaming with joy.

“Aye, even so,” said the half-witted man, thrusting his hand into his breast. “I found the key upon the floor of the room, and I opened the hole in the wall, and took them out.”

“What right had you with them?” thundered Sir Henry Heywood, who had sat by, no unconcerned spectator of the scene. “What right had you with any thing in that place? You confess robbery!”

“What right had I with them!” exclaimed Silly John, with a wild laugh. “Why, you are as foolish as if you had been born before Noah’s flood! Wasn’t there the leaf of the register which they cut out of my own register-book just about the time I first went mad, when I was usher of Uppington Grammar School, and clerk of the parish? and did not that make me madder than before? Who had any right to the leaf but I?—and there it is!”—and he spread out upon the table an old yellow leaf of paper, written over both sides with pale ancient ink, and bearing the traces of many foldings.

“It is a falsehood! a forgery!” exclaimed

Sir Henry Heywood. "It is got up for the occasion! It is a conspiracy! Let me see the sheet?" and he started forward to snatch it up from the table; but at that moment Mr. Evelyn the lawyer stepped in before him, and laid his hand firmly upon it.

"By your leave, Sir," he said, "this valuable document is fingered by nobody. Do not bend your brows on me, Sir. I am firm! Clerk, take up the document, and be you responsible for it! If Sir Henry chooses to bring this business into court, he may; but if he will take my advice he will listen to a few quiet words. While thinking that my noble client and patron, the young Earl of Danemore, here present," and he pointed to Langford, "would certainly obtain this same document from another source, I busied myself eagerly to obtain every collateral testimony which could prove the identity of the leaf that had been so nicely extracted from the register; and I have here, under my hand, the certificates of five marriages which took place in that same year in the parish of Uppington which are not now to be found in the volume of the register, but

which will be found, I will answer for it, in the leaf that is now produced. This will be confirmation beyond all doubt, if it be so. Clerk, compare the papers!

“ Oh, but that is all nonsense, Master Turny,” cried Silly John; “ there’s no need of comparing any thing. Was not I clerk of the parish myself, and witness of the marriage? And besides, here’s the certificate of the marriage in the Rev. Jonathan Whattle’s own hand. Any body in the place will swear to the drunken parson’s handwriting. The only difference was that it was more crooked and shaky when he was sober than when he was drunk; and here’s my own handwriting to it, as I used to write in those days. God help me! I’ve nearly forgotten how to write now. And then there’s Mistress Bertha’s there; her hand is to it too, and a Frenchman’s hand that was with them at the time. I remember very well. And here’s another paper besides, written in a tongue I don’t understand, which is all the more likely to prove a matter of moment. God help us all! we’re as blind as kittens of

three days old, and can tell nothing of what will happen to us at the end of the nine."

"Sir," said the clerk, who had been busily looking over the papers, "I find all these extracts placed at intervals in the leaf of the register before me. There are nine or ten others too, which could doubtless easily be traced. Shall I send for the register of Uppington to compare the book and the leaf?"

"It is unnecessary, Sir; it is unnecessary," said Sir Henry Heywood, making a virtue of necessity. "My Lord the Earl of Danemore, I congratulate you on your unexpected accession to such honours and so much wealth. That you have cast me out from them I forgive you. Disappointed I must feel; but that disappointment, believe me, proceeds more from affection for my two poor girls, whose inheritance will be but their father's sword, useless in their hands, and their mother's virtues, which God grant may adorn them always, than from the loss of rank and wealth to myself. Sir, I give you good morning, and leave you."

"Stop a moment, Sir Henry Heywood,"

said Langford ; “ a word in your ear before you go.” That word was spoken in a moment, but Sir Henry Heywood’s face was in that moment lighted up with joy, and, grasping Langford’s hand in both his own, he exclaimed, “ Indeed ! indeed, my Lord, you are too generous !”

“ Not so, Sir Henry,” replied Langford ; “ for the present, adieu. We will meet to-morrow at Danemore Castle, and all shall be settled entirely. Mr. Evelyn, pray arrange the rest of the matters that are to be settled here.” “ Sir Walter,” he added, in a lower tone, “ there is some one whom I would fain see, in this moment of joy and agitation, before I say a word more to any one.”

“ She must have returned by this time,” said Sir Walter. “ Let us go !”

They went out, and proceeded to the ladies’ withdrawing room, where they found Alice, with her beautiful eyes raised anxiously towards the door. As soon as she saw Langford she sprang up to meet him, with the whole pure unrestrained joy of her heart beaming forth upon that lovely face.

“ Alice,” said Sir Walter, with a touch of

his kindly stateliness, "this is the Earl of Danemore!"

"Your own Henry, ever dearest Alice," said Langford, casting his arms round her; and then, while he held her to his bosom with one hand, he extended the other to Sir Walter, "Most excellent and generous friend, I have never yet asked your consent with my own lips. Do you give her to me? Will you part with this great,—this inestimable treasure?"

"I will give her to you, Henry," replied Sir Walter, "with all my heart and soul. I will give her to you, but I will not part with her. I must have a garret in the castle, my dear boy! There, there; I give her to you. She is yours. God's blessing and her father's be upon your heads!"

So saying, he clasped their hands in each other, and they were happy.

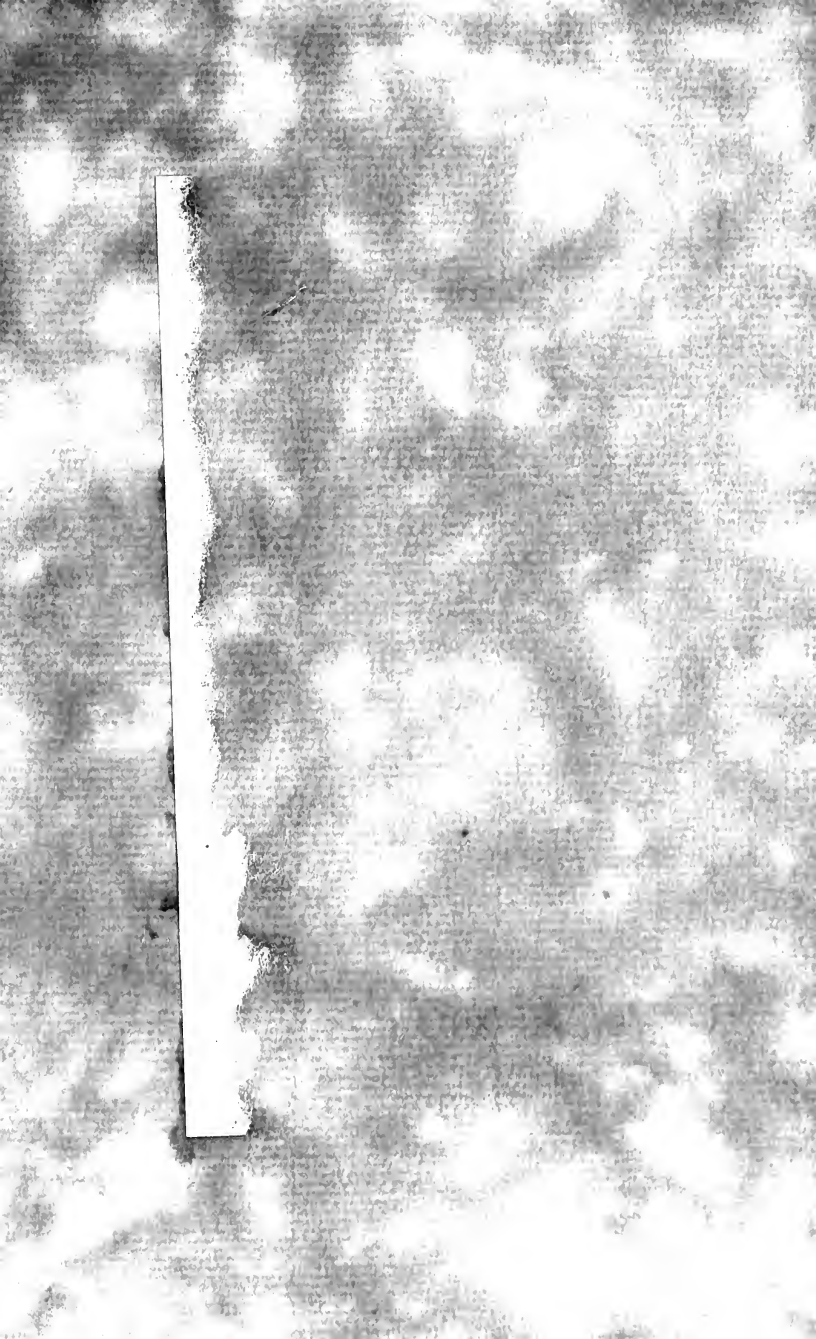
THE END.

LONDON:
Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-Street-Square.









UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 049064261