The Fatal Marriage

by E.D.E.N. Southworth

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THE FATAL MARRIAGE; OR, ORVILLE DEVILLE.

BY

MRS. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.

AUTHOR OF “ISHMAEL,” “SELF-RAISED,” “THE MISSING BRIDE,” “A NOBLE LORD,” “RETRIBUTION,” “A BEAUTIFUL FIEND,” “HOW HE WON HER,” “THE CHANGED BRIDES,” “TRIED FOR HER LIFE,” “THE BRIDE’S FATE,” “THE LADY OF THE ISLE,” “CRUEL AS THE GRAVE,” “FALLEN PRIDE,” “THE WIDOW’S SON,” “ALLWORTH ABBEY,” “THE LOST HEIRESS,” “THE FAMILY DOOM,” “THE GYPSY’S PROPHECY,” “THE ARTIST’S LOVE,” “THE HAUNTED HOMESTEAD,” “VICTOR’S TRIUMPH,” “THE CURSE OF CLIFTON,” “THE FATAL SECRET,” “THE FORTUNE SEEKER,” “THE SPECTRE LOVER,” “THE MAIDEN WIDOW,” “THE TWO SISTERS,” “FAIR PLAY,” “THE BRIDAL EVE,” “VIVIA,” “THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS,” “THE LOST HEIR OF LINLITHGOW,” “THE BRIDE OF LLEWELLYN,” “THE PHANTOM WEDDING,” “THE MOTHER-IN-LAW,” “THE DISCARDED DAUGHTER,” “THE DESERTED WIFE,” “THE CHRISTMAS GUEST,” “THE WIFE’S VICTORY,” “LOVE’S LABOR WON,” “THE THREE BEAUTIES,” “INDIA,” ETC.

“’Tis an old tale, and often told;

But did my fate and wish agree,

Ne’er had been read in story old,

Of maiden true, betrayed for gold;

Who loved or was avenged like me.”—Scott.

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THE FATAL MARRIAGE.

CHAPTER I. THE OUTLAW’S DAUGHTER.

Oh, seldom in hall or court are seen

So queenly a form, so noble a mien,

As, freely and smiling, she welcomes them there,

But her eye has a glance more sternly wild

Than even that of a forest child

In its fearless and untamed freedom should dare.—Whittier.

It was near the close of a sultry day, late in the month of September, 1755, that Lieutenant Orville Deville, a young officer of Braddock's provincial corps, urged his weary war-horse up the steep western ascent of the "Ridge of Spears," one of the most difficult and dangerous of the mountain ranges in the western part of old Maryland.

Behind him, at some short distance, rode toilsomely his faithful servant, Nero.

As they gained the summit of the mountain an upward-glancing ray of the sun, striking full upon them, brought out each individual of the group in distinct relief.

The young soldier seemed not more than eighteen years of age.

His figure was tall, and finely proportioned; his features were cast in the purest classic mould; his complexion was fair as that of the fairest lady; his clustering curls were of a pale golden color, and his dark eyes were fringed with lashes of the same delicate bright hue. This really beautiful countenance was saved from the slightest suspicion of effeminacy by the whole character of its expression,—by the flash of the falcon eyes, the curve of the eagle nose, the curl of the short upper lip, the upward protrusion of the well-turned chin, the stately carriage of the head, the erect position of the body, and in short by the general and unmistakable air of conscious strength, invincible courage, and almost insufferable arrogance, that distinguished his whole bearing. He wore the blue-and-buff uniform of the provincials, and sat on his chestnut thorough-bred with the stately grace of a prince of the blood.

His negro servant, Nero, was an unmixed African, somewhat past middle-age, whom the birthright service in his young master's family had endowed with certain

pleasant privileges of familiarity which would scarcely have been tolerated in an alien, but which were excusable in an old and tried domestic. For the rest, Nero possessed the usual traits of his race and caste, somewhat exaggerated in the individual, namely, unconquerable self-esteem, invincible cheerfulness, irresistible wit, ardent affections, and an immutable attachment to his master and his master's family.

To be the personal attendant of Mr. Orville Deville, Lieutenant in His Majesty's provincial corps and heir of River-view in Maryland he considered just the greatest honor that could be enjoyed by a person of his color. In fact, Nero seemed to consider that there was but one greater man than his master's servant, and that was his master's SELF. Nero wore the buff-and-blue livery of a provincial officer's retainer, and was mounted on a bay that had once been a draught-horse at River-view, and was more distinguished for strength of build than elegance of shape.

As they drew rein at the summit of the mountain, Orville took from his saddle-pouch a pocket-telescope, arranged it, and pointing it eastward took the sweep of the horizon.

The features of the landscape were grand and simple. Below his stand-point fell a precipice of rocks, broken with waterfalls and spiked with those stiff and bristling cedars that gave the range its name of the "Ridge of Spears."

From the foot of this mountain eastward stretched a green valley of interminable forest-land, veined with broad rivers, waved with hills and dales, and reaching to the base of the distant Blue Ridge that was distinctly marked against the gray horizon.

"This is assuredly the 'vast wilderness,' the 'boundless contiguity of shade,' for which the poet sighed,—only I do not see the 'lodge' that forms so necessary an item even in the poet's paradise,' said the young man, as he gazed out upon this most unpromising prospect.

"Lodge? Marse Awful, honey, was yer looking out for any lodge?" inquired the

groom, riding nearer to his master.

“Not with any expectation of seeing one, Nero,” replied Orville, lightly, running up his telescope.

“Don’t shut him up yet, Marse Awful, chile, till yer jes’ turns an’ looks at dat ere big black cloud, and see what it means.”

Orville wheeled around, adjusted his glass and took a sweeping view of the western prospect.

Its features were very similar to those on the east—that is to say, a wooded valley, diversified with hill and dale and river, stretched from the base of the mountain, westward to the Cumberland heights, immediately over which the setting sun, breaking through a black cloud, projected level rays of golden light, that for the moment kindled all the valley in a prismatic conflagration.

“Dar! what you t’ink o’ dat, Marse Awful, honey?” inquired the negro, when he thought that his master had gazed about long enough.

“I think, Nero, that there is no doubt but we shall have a storm before we find shelter for the night.”

“Dat’s ’couraging,” coolly remarked the black.

“There is not,” continued the young man, as he swept the landscape with his glass, “there is not a sign of a human habitation in sight—not a roof, not a chimney, nor even an eddying curl of smoke to mark the presence of man!”

“Dat’s more ’couraging nor de oder!”

“Nero!”

“Nero! an’ allus Nero! It used for to be ‘Uncle Nero;’ but since he done gone to the wars, he done put heself on to his diggerty an’ calls his old sarvint, as is ole ’nough to be his daddy, Ne-ro! but it ’comes him! ’deed it really do! he do look like any young prince a-speakin’ to his primest minister, when he lifts up his nose and

says—Ne-ro," thought the old negro, as he looked half in reproach, half in affectionate admiration, upon his haughty young master.

"Nero, I say!" repeated the latter.

"Well, sar, yes, here I is," exclaimed the old man, approaching.

"Nero, we shall have to camp out all night."

"Now de Lor' forbid! How we dem gwine 'camp out all night' widout any camp?—an' a thunderstorm acomin' along of a soaking rain, an' you not fully 'covered of yer wouns's!"

"There is no help for it, I am sure; so the best thing to be done now, is to look out for the most convenient spot for the purpose."

"An' find a water-prof tree for a roof an' a sof' rock for a pillow! What do you 'spose de fair Lady Adelaide say to dat?"

"Nero, you are privileged," replied the youth, who, arrogant as was his nature, yet allowed to his old attendant somewhat of that wild liberty of speech accorded by a king to his court-jester.

"I am 'privileged!' I wonder ef how he thinks it's a great privilege to be 'lowed to sleep on a downy stone underneaf of a thunder-cloud coverlet?—ef so 'I waive de privilege,' as I once hear one gemman say to anoder."

"Come, come, sir," impatiently exclaimed the young gentleman—"look to yourself! what are you thinking about?"

"I were a-thinking 'bout my privileges, marster," demurely replied the old man.

"Well, now think about finding an encampment for the night. The sun has set; and look! how that cloud is spreading and darkening!"

"Yes, marster; it will make a good ample blanket to cover us bime-bye, when we find sof', 'lastic, gravelly beds."

"Rascal!" said the young man, half smiling, "get down and see to my saddle-girth

and tighten your own, for we must descend the mountain to find a resting-place, and the steep is really very difficult."

"Yes, marster, honey: but I makes no doubt as we shall get to de bottom of it—somehow," said the negro, drily, as he looked down the fearful precipice, where jagged rocks, spiked cedars, treacherous sliding stones and rushing waterfalls, alike threatened interruption, or distruction to the daring adventurer.

"True; it is a very dangerous pass," said the young gentleman, replying to his servant's look, "but what then? you and I are used to these things: we have shared many dangers together."

"Y-e-s—y-e-s—," said the old man, hesitatingly, "we have shared danger, but you have shared all de glory, which shows de unequality of human fortunes."

"Are you discontented, sirrah?"

"No, I'm not a discontented sinner! but I hopes I'se a philosopher," said the old man, bridling.

"Then let your philosophy regulate our horses' accoutrements, or the storm will be upon us before we reach the base of the mountain. Come, come, let us hasten!"

"Marster, chile, de longer we is in getting to de foot o' dat same mountain, de better for our state o' health. 'Slow an' sure' holds good dis time, sartin. What Lady Adelaide gwine do long of a crippled bridegroom?"

"Silence, sirrah!"

"Oh, I can be a silent sinner, ef yer likes; but dat don't change nuffin," grumbled the old man, as he dismounted and tightened his horse's girdle, and then went and performed the same service for his master.

"Now then," said the young gentleman, "keep a tight rein on your horse, Nero, or he will be likely to stumble and cast you over his head."

"God knows my arms is almos' pulled out'n der sockets now, wid keepin' a tight

rein on him," replied the darky, as he prepared to precede his master, for the purpose, if possible, of finding a path down the precipice.

At that moment a low muttering of thunder reverberated through the sky, and was echoed sullenly from all the caverns. The black cloud driven before the wailing wind, overcast the whole heavens; its shadow fell darkly over the whole mountain, and heavily upon the hearts of the travelers. As the youth looked up a single large drop of rain fell full upon his forehead. Again the thunder rolled over head, and was re-echoed from the gorges.

"It is coming—it is upon us," exclaimed the young soldier, looking around less in dismay than in admiration at the sublimity of the gathering storm. But just as the second peal of thunder rolled away, and died in silence among the distant dales, another and a very different sound was heard—a sound full of hope and promise—in fact a huntsman's horn, winding the sweet, clear, short notes of the recall.

Both master and man drew rein to stop and listen, and look in each other's faces with joy.

"There is at least a prospect of shelter. Some stanch sportsman who has been out all day, warned by the rising storm, is now returning home by this pass. Good! we will join his company."

"Yes, marster, sartin, glory be to the Lord! but aint it reyther airly in the season for a huntsman to be about?" inquired the negro, in doubt.

"The last of September. Well, yes, rather, as you say—at least we on the Potomac should think so; but I suppose these wild mountaineers do not adhere very rigidly to the laws of woodcraft. We will wait until this huntsman comes up. By my life a sweet note!" said the young gentleman, as the hunting-horn was heard again, sounding nearer.

But just then a crash of thunder, attended by a glare of lightning, broke over the earth. The air shook, the horses trembled under their riders. Yet, when the shock was

passed, and the smoke, as it were, cleared off, again was heard the silver notes of the huntsman's horn winding the recall.

"Trallal lalla! Trallal lalla! Trallal lalla! Tralleura—leura—leu!"

"A very sweet note!" exclaimed the youth.

"I wish he would hurry along," said the servant.

And, as if in an answer to his prayer, the horn suddenly wound up its notes and ceased, and the sound of a horse's hoofs were heard approaching at full gallop from the opposite or western declivity of the ridge.

"Ah! he is mounted. So much the better, we shall reach shelter all the sooner."

"And he has a whole pack of hounds at his heels! Listen, marster, I hear the pattering of their feet!"

"We hear every thing in these echoing passes."

"I wish we could see as well, marster; you has good optics—can you see him?"

"No; he has not yet appeared above the edge of the ridge,—yes! there he is!" said the young man, as an equestrian figure was seen rising upon the edge of the mountain.

When, just at that instant, a blinding glare of lightning seemed to set the whole heavens and earth in flames, and a deafening peal of thunder broke and rolled crashing down the abyss of space, followed by a sudden darkness that seemed to have swallowed up all nature in original night and chaos!

For a full minute the young soldier remained transfixed to the spot

But, in the mean time, the equestrian hunter, through storm and darkness, gloom and deadly peril, had reached his side; for as soon as the thunder had rolled away, and howled itself to death in the distance, and the black cloud was lifted——

Orville Deville looked up, and saw, with astonishment, in the person of the supposed huntsman—a young girl, a beautiful, wild creature, well mounted on a spirited black

horse, accoutred, cap-a-pie, as a huntress, and attended by a pack of stanch hounds.

For a moment the young soldier stood gazing in silent admiration.

Yes! For she who thus ominously heralded by lightning and thunder had suddenly broken upon his sight, was beautiful, beyond possibility of comparison with any woman whom he had ever before gazed upon.

She was a brilliant brunette, of not more than fifteen years of age, with a slight, elegant, and graceful form, that sat her horse with equal ease and command. Her features were irregular, as those of every characteristic or bewitching face must necessarily be; her complexion was of a warm, rich olive, ripening into a ruddy bloom upon the round cheeks: her shining hair, her flashing eyes, quaintly curved eyebrows and long eyelashes, seemed intensely black. But that which gave individual character to the enchanting face was this combination,—eyes too full of lightning, and lips too plump and red, indicating a nature at once tender and spirited, loving and fiery; one of those characters that seldom or ever follow a common-place career, or fill an ordinary station; one who, according to circumstances, may become devoted and heroic, or sensual and vindictive; that may be developed, in this world, into heroes or into criminals, and become in the next—angels or devils!

The costume of this beautiful wild creature was picturesque. A riding-habit of black merino fitted perfectly her elegant figure; a riding-hat of black felt, adorned with one black plume, shaded her sparkling face; gray-gauntlets with deep cuffs, recently donned, covered her hands. From the right-side saddle-horn hung a game-bag well filled, and the silver pipe whose sounds had preceded her approach. Lastly, in her right hand, she carried a light fowling-piece.

Such were her dress and accoutrements; but ever from them the eyes of the spectator came back to look upon her beautiful strange face, with all its dark and bright promises. Intellect, passion, will,—all were here in their undeveloped strength—what should life make of them and of her?

None of these questions, however, passed through the mind of young Orville Deville as he gazed for a moment, entranced, upon the beautiful wild maiden before him. In her singular, bright countenance he saw only its marvellous beauty, felt only its wondrous fascination. He did not even speculate upon the circumstance of meeting in the mountain wilderness this bright young girl in the garb of a sportsman. He felt only her "glamour" that was momentarily growing upon him.

For a moment they gazed upon each other—he with ardent admiration, she with surprise and curiosity.

Then suddenly recollecting himself, he lifted his tasselled cap, and bowing deeply, even to the flaps of his saddle, said:

"Young lady, I am Lieutenant Orville Deville, of his Majesty's Provincials, returning with my servant from the fatal field of Braddock's lost battle. I have missed my way, and would crave of your courtesy some direction to the nearest place of shelter."

With the fearless gaze of a young Amazon, the wild girl looked at the speaker, as though she would have read his history, character, and purpose in his face. She hesitated to reply.

Old Nero looked upon both with infinite disgust—"Why de debil don't Marse Awful speak plain? De young thing don't unnesstan' de fus word he say. Why can't he ax her—Young gall, for goramity's sake, tell us whar we can run in out o' de storm?"

Nero was wrong. She understood the speaker: she only paused to read him—as if ever a young girl read aright a young man whom she began first by admiring. The scrutiny, however, seemed to satisfy her, for she answered him by saying, in tones which he thought the clearest and sweetest that he had ever heard,

"At the foot of the mountain, sir, is my father's house: he will make you welcome to a supper and lodging."

"Dar! dat's somefin like talk, now!" said the black to himself.

With another and a deeper bow, and with his eyes, whose admiring gaze he could scarcely restrain, fixed upon her face, the young man replied:

“I earnestly thank you, and gladly accept your kind proffer.”

And so saying, with a smile and a wave of the hand, he backed his horse and gave the young girl the pass.

But instead of going forward, she turned her sunbright face over her shoulder and looked in the direction of the way whence they had all come.

“Pardon me; you are waiting for some one?” suggested the young man, with a just perceptible tinge of—what? yes, early as it was in their acquaintance—of incipient jealousy!

“No, sir, I am waiting for no one; but since I have been so lucky as to meet you, perhaps you would not mind doing me a small favor?” said the young huntress, turning her graceful head, and lifting her dark eyes to his face.

“A thousand with delight! Speak, bright one: we are at your orders,” exclaimed the gentleman, earnestly pressing closer toward her steed.

“Marster in hebben, ef de ’fernal fools don’t mean ter stand here and larver der furnel nonsense all night, wid de rain jes ’bout ter come down. Lord! Lord! Lord! Lord! now she’ll take jes as long ter larver back again!” mentally ejaculated the old negro, in distress.

She did not, however. Eying the young officer shyly yet proudly, she answered promptly and to the point:

“Well, sir, since you are so good, I must tell you that to-day, on the other declivity of the mountain, I was so fortunate as to shoot a young buck, which, however, I had no means of bringing home.”

“Humph! dat aint de onliest young buck as you’ve shot to-day I’ll take my oath,” significantly commented the old man.

“Well, beautiful Diana, I should applaud that feat in one of your sex, did admiration for the bright girl leave room for admiration of the keen huntress,” exclaimed the youth, scarcely able to withdraw his fascinated eyes from their gaze of adoration.

“Sir!” ejaculated the untamed creature, suddenly flashing upon him her black, scintillating and sparkling eyes. She evidently had not caught the sense or spirit of his courtly speech.

Her unsophisticated perplexity must have confused Orville Deville, could any thing have embarrassed that self-possessed young gentleman; he replied:

“I await your commands, bright Diana.”

“My name is not Diana. It is Lionne, if you wish to know it; but that is not what I was talking about. The buck I struck lies some half a mile back. I should thank you if you would let your man go with me and bring it before him on his horse.”

“Oh! Lor’ goramity, ef she don’t mean to keep me out’n de storm all night, long o’ her buck!” whined the old man, to himself.

Apparently Mr. Deville disapproved the proposition; for, after some seconds delay, he gently inquired:

“But would you linger longer in the storm?”

“What!—a soldier and AFEARD?” suddenly hissed the wild creature, in his ear, with a look and tone that might have become Lady Macbeth, when uttering the same words.

So startling was the effect of the change that transfigured her whole countenance, that the old negro, taken by surprise, suddenly backed his horse, and, with the superstition of his race, exclaimed:

“Dis gal’s de berry debbil in female ‘parrel! I doesn’t wonder, I doesn’t, as she comed wid thunder an’ lightenin’ She don’t bode us no good—she don’t!”

The half savage thing laughed loudly at the effect she had produced upon the negro,

and then turned her black eyes, flashing with fierce fun, upon his master.

But that hero was apparently above being startled by trifles, or even by the prodigy of hearing this beautiful demi-barbarian, this young huntress of the mountain wilderness, quote Shakspeare. Thinking only of himself, and the implied doubt of his manhood, he answered with some hauteur:

“Madam, I was consulting only your own comfort, most assuredly not my convenience!”

“Quits!” she gayly replied. “But there was no need to pause. The gust—for I cannot call this a storm—is over, or nearly so. Look! the Storm King is vanquished! Behold the oriflamb of his retiring host!” she said, pointing to the flaming western horizon, where the thunderclouds, broken into a thousand wild fragments, like rent banners of purple, crimson, and gold, seemed sinking in a sea of blood.

The eyes of the young soldier followed her finger, and turned in admiration from the gorgeous sunset scene to the irradiated face of the girlish enthusiast, whose picturesque and poetic language was as strange to him as every other circumstance relating to her.

“‘The Storm King is vanquished,’ as you said. It has scarcely thundered or lightened since you appeared upon the mountain; therefore you must be the Joan who has vanquished the terrible invader,” he said.

“My name is no more Joan than Diana, sir; I am Lionne, as I said before.”

“But why should you be called Lionne?”

“I cannot tell you, sir; I was not consulted at the christening!”

“Well, Diana, Joan, or Lionne, you are the most bewitching creature I ever met; but tell me, then, is the storm really over?”

“You are not used to our mountain gusts or you would know that it is. They are upon us and gone ere one can say it lightens, almost. See, sir! the rain has rolled down to

the valleys," she said, pointing to where the vale, dim in the evening gloom, looked dimmer still with low lying mist or falling rain.

Orville Deville gazed with curiosity and interest upon this strange aspect of Nature.

Never before had he looked upon a shower from such an elevated point of view. Its effect was singular.

Upon the mind of the old black it was terrific.

"Who de debbil ebber see de rain a-fallen underneaf ob dem before? Dis is witchcraft,—pure, debblish witchcraft,—and she's de witch! I wish me an' Marse Awful was 'livered ob bofe ob dem, I does!" he mentally exclaimed, with chattering teeth.

"Now, if we had gone on," continued Lionne, "we should have ridden right down into the rain; but as it is, by the time we get our buck and return, the shower will be over in the valley. And so," she said, turning her sparkling black eyes upon the discontented face of the old negro, "you have lost nothing by the change, uncle."

"Me! oh yes, thanky, mist'ess! same to you, ma'am, 'deed!" exclaimed the terrified black, rather incoherently, as he sprang his horse away from the dangerous enchantress.

"We will hurry, if you please, sir," said the huntress, turning her horse's head, and riding back upon the road, followed eagerly by the young officer, and reluctantly by the old man.

A ride of ten minutes down the western declivity of the ridge brought them to the spot, a little to the left of their path, where in a thicket the game lay,—a fine half-grown deer.

Mr. Deville dismounted, and assisted his servant in raising and laying the carcass across the shoulders of the negro's horse. Then both sprang into their saddles, turned rein, and began to re-ascend.

CHAPTER II. THE OUTLAW'S HOME

It was a lodge of ample size

But strange in structure and device;

Of such materials as around

The builder's hand had readiest found.—Scott.

As they cantered over the mountain-top, the full moon rising in the east, shone upon their forward pathway, flecking with silver light one side of every tree, and every jutting rock.

Lionne rode foremost, seemingly bent only upon getting home.

Orville Deville followed close behind, his attention fixed upon the elegant equestrian figure, beautiful horse, and beautiful girl before him.

Nero brought up the rear, at a respectful distance. Not only was the old creature shy of the enchantress ahead, but also he was very much embarrassed by the carriage of the buck on the shoulders of his steed. And when they began to descend the narrow path leading down the precipice, the difficulty grew greater; the legs and antlers of the animal, carried crosswise on the horse, were continually catching in the cedar bushes that bordered each side of the track, seriously obstructing his progress, and severely trying his patience. At such times, while disentangling his "freight," his eyes would be fixed in indignation upon the beautiful witch in advance, and his ire would break forth—

"Consarn dis trick, I do say! Marse Awful's 'witched! nothing shorter! I hopes we'll get well out'n it, that's all! Wonder what he tinks Lady Adelaide would say to dis? Wouldn't catch her rantypoling over the mountains wid a pack ob hounds at her heels like the Witch o' Window! Dar! look here now!" he exclaimed, pulling and jerking at the antlers that had this time got entangled in the top of a pine sapling.

In this manner they slowly descended the declivity. When about half way down, the

musical murmur of water flowing over a rocky bed came to their ears.

“That,” said Lionne, drawing rein and turning her head to speak to her companion,—“that is the sound of the creek that washes the foot of this ridge. It is called the ‘Singing Stream,’—and rightly, I think. Do but listen to its melodious murmur!”

“Is the voice of the river so musical? I do not know, for the supernal melody of one voice has spoiled me for all others!” answered the young man in a low, significant tone.

“And whose voice is that?” inquired the huntress.

An ardent gaze and expressive silence answered.

Lionne touched up her horse and rode onward.

“Ef yer ain’t a-gettin’ on swimmingly with the witch-girl, young massa, I’ll give up. What will Lady Adelaide say to that?” mentally ejaculated old Nero, who had caught up to them, and witnessed this little passage of gallantry.

Meanwhile Lionne cantered down the track, closely followed by her escort.

A quarter of an hour more of riding brought them to the foot of the mountain, and to the borders of the singing stream. Now flooded with the moonbeams, it seemed a river of soft light flowing on between the base of the hoary ridge and the dark evergreen woods on the other side.

The party drew rein to pause and gaze for an instant upon the lovely sylvan scene; and then—

“Turn to the left,” directed their beautiful guide, as she led the way down the banks of the stream.

A ride of a few hundred yards brought them to a rough-hewn stone house, large in size, but only of one story, built against the foot of the precipice, and fronting the creek. A low wall of rough-hewn rock, like that of which the house was constructed,

enclosed a small yard. Between the front of this wall and the banks of the stream there was barely room enough for two horsemen to ride abreast.

Drawing rein at the gate, Lionne alighted and invited her companions to dismount and follow her into the house, whose aspect, on nearer view, was dark, close and repellant.

Opening the door, that was placed between four front windows, she called—

"Vulcan!"

"Here, mistress!" growled a voice like that of a bear, as a back door opposite opened, and a dwarf—a huge dwarf like a short giant—made his appearance. He stood about four feet in his shoes, but what he lacked in altitude was made up in width; he was as nearly square as it was possible for a human form to be, as if some wizard had placed his hand upon the head of a very tall man, and pressed him down until his height ran all to breadth.

Even Orville gazed in wonder upon this strange monster.

As for poor old Nero he felt sure he was ruined! After staring in a helpless panic, he suddenly dropped upon his knees and began zealously to pray.

"Oh! Lor' goramity, have marsy on us! It is de debbil! It is de debbil! it is de debbil! de witch has delibered us to de debbil, as I knew she would—so I did! Oh! goramity! we'se lost, done for, ruinated an' gibben ober to sudden struction!—have marsy on us! Deliber us from dis beautiful 'ceiving witch-girl, and dis mons'ous, ugly debbil!" All this was delivered in a low voice, unheard by the others, whom, between his invocations, the terrified creature furtively watched. The little dialogue that was going on among them did not tend to calm his nerves.

"What do you want, Lionne? and who are those?" growled the monster, in a discontented voice.

"These are strangers——"

“I see that!” interrupted the beast.

“Well, they are—an officer and his servant, who have lost their way in the mountains and are in need of supper and lodging, and whom it is my will to see well attended, do you hear! See to it! And first of all go show the servant where to put his horses,” replied the girl, in a voice of authority that enforced observance.

“Yes, Lionne. Come, fellow, get up!” grumbled the great brute, approaching the panic-stricken negro and grasping his shoulder.

But Nero, with protruding eyeballs, sprung from under his hand, as though he had been shot from a gun, ran, and fell upon his knees before his master, crying:

“Oh, sabe me! sabe me, marster! it is de debbil! it is de debbil! an’ ’deed an’ ’deed I aint ’pared for to go!”

“Be silent, idiot! do you not see that it is the young lady’s servant?” exclaimed Mr. Deville, sternly.

“‘Young lady,’ oh! ‘Servant,’ oh, it’s the debbil and de witch!” whimpered the old man, with grave face and shaking teeth.

“Vulcan! leave this man here to recover his senses, and go yourself and stable the horses; you will find them with mine at the gate; carry the buck around to the back shed and hang him up,” said the girl, promptly.

“Yes, Lionne—Gur-r-r-r!!” he added, grinning and snarling at poor Nero as he passed him, and throwing that victim into a new spasm.

“Be so good as to sit and wait here till I return,” said Lionne, pointing to a settee, and then opening a door on the left, through which she disappeared.

In an instant after, Deville heard a deep-toned, manly voice, inquiring—

“What has kept you out so late, Lionne?” and her reply—

“The chase, my father! I have been unusually successful!”

“Mad girl!”

“Ah, sir, do not reproach me!”

“I do not, my child! You have none of the pleasures of civilization, of refinement, such as might become my daughter!”

“Nor miss them! nor know of them, even, my father!”

“Ah! poor one! before men gamble in politics and stake their all, they should think of others depending upon them, whose lives may be ruined! For myself, I care not! but when I think of what you should be and what you are——”

“——Me! would I be other than I am! ‘the free, wild, joyous Lionne,’ that you call me? Ha! ha! ha! ha!”—her merry laughter rung through the house.

“So I have called you; but—no matter!”

“Father! tell me once for all, what is all this great good that I have lost? Who were you in the world? What is it that you have forfeited? And how have you forfeited it?”

“Not now—but sometime, sometime, I will tell you, Lionne!—I will tell you why I have been hunted like a wild beast from society, finding no security for life until I had reached this mountain fastness.”

“Sometime you will tell me! God grant it may be soon. But, father, when I approach this subject I forget all others. I came to tell you that I have brought strangers home with me.”

“Strangers! Lionne! are you mad, then, indeed?”

“No, father.”

“In the name of all the saints, who are these strangers?”

“An officer in the army and his servant.”

“A king’s officer! Girl, you are positively frantic!”

“No, father, this is a provincial officer, returning from Fort——”

"——A provincial! worse and worse! Lionne! you are betrayed! we are betrayed! you have unconsciously led the hunter of man to his prey!"

"Father! father! no, I say, if ever I read stainless honor on a human brow, I read it on this young gentleman's; he is, therefore, what he reported himself to be—an officer returning from the fatal ambuscade into which Braddock's army fell," said Lionne.

"Show him in! I cannot bear suspense. I will soon know."

Lionne opened the door and beckoned Deville, who was deeply blushing at playing the part of a spy, though it was that of an involuntary one.

He arose to follow.

Nero sprang up and caught the skirt of his coat, crying out—

"Oh, Marse Awful! for Lor's sake, don't leave de poor old nigger behind—don't. I'm worse scared 'an when I fell down flat o' my face, an' kicked an' hollered in de Indian's amber-scalps!"

"Be silent, fool, and let go my coat!"

"Let him come," said Lionne, kindly, though scarcely able to repress her laughter.

"Come, zany, then, since the young lady is so good as to permit you," said Mr. Deville, half angrily.

"'Young lady'—oh-h-h! I wouldn't ax to follow arter the witch inside, ef I w'a'nt ten t'ousand times worse afeared o' the snarlin' debbil outside. Ur-r-r!" muttered Nero, with a shudder, as he crept close behind his master.

And thus they entered the inner room and the presence of their mysterious host.

CHAPTER III. THE OUTLAW.

He seemed a stalwart knight and keen,

That had in many a battle been;

His eyebrow dark, and eye of fire,

Showed spirit proud and prompt to ire;

Yet lines of thought upon his cheek

Did deep design and counsel speak.—Scott.

It was a large, square room, with a low ceiling and walls darkened by age or smoke. Being a back room, the only two windows looked plumb upon the side of the mountain against which the house had been built, and which could be reached from them with an outstretched arm. From the room no glimpse of the sky was visible.

The ample fireplace opposite the windows was well supplied with great logs, that smouldered with a subdued heat that the dampness of the house and the chilliness of the late September evening rendered acceptable. From the centre of the low ceiling hung an iron lamp, directly over a substantial round table of black oak. Upon this table lay several heavy books. Beside it, in a rude oaken arm-chair covered with bearskins, sat an individual in marked contrast with all his surroundings.

He was a man considerably past middle age, of a tall and powerful form, with a fine, stately head, thickly covered with long, black hair, threaded here and there with silver, which, with his grizzly black beard, framed-in in a fine aristocratic face, with high, aquiline features, pale complexion, and anxious expression.

His dress was one of faded splendor—a rusty black velvet coat, heavily embossed with tarnished silver lace, black velvet knee-breeches, and black cloth gaiters, fastened with dimmed silver buttons.

He sat facing the door, with one hand resting on the open volume upon the table, and with his haughty head raised in expectancy.

As the strangers entered he arose and stood awaiting their approach.

“My father, this is Lieutenant Deville, the benighted traveler of whom I told you,” said Lionne, presenting the guest.

Surprise and involuntary deep respect held the young man silent as he made a profound bow to his mysterious and distinguished looking host.

The latter extended his hand, saying, with stately and somewhat formal courtesy—

“You are most welcome, sir, to such poor entertainment as our mountain lodge affords.”

“I should apologize for this enforced intrusion,” began the young man.

“Sir, please to be seated,” gracefully interrupted the host setting forward a rough deal-chair, and adding, “it is very se’dom that this unfrequented neighborhood affords us the pleasure of a passing guest.”

With a second bow young Deville placed his hat upon the table, and took the offered chair.

“You were with Braddock’s troops at the disastrous ambuscade on the march to Fort Duquesne, my daughter tells me,” said the host, courteously.

“I was so unhappy as to see that gallant officer fall and his troops cut to pieces,” replied the guest, with a scarcely repressed groan.

“And—you were wounded?” added his host, with an expression of grave sympathy.

“You may say dat, ole marse, for he was jes’ putty nigh kilt,” came a voice from an obscure part of the room.

And host and guest both looking up saw old Nero, who had reared himself up in the angle of the corner, where he stood, still and solemn as an old-fashioned clock.

“Who is that curiosity?” asked the eyes of the host.

“It is my servant, sir,—a spoiled old rascal,” replied Orville Deville; then turning to the delinquent, he said—“Who gave you leave to speak, sir?”

“Nobody didn’t, Marse Awful, honey, ’caze nobody wasn’t axed; but no offence wasn’t meant to no one; and so ef ole marse dar, want to know any thing ’bout you’re bein’ wounded, der aint no soul can tell him nuffin about it ’cept ’tis me; you

can't, Marse Awful, 'caze you didn't know nuffin 'tall till twas all ober! dar!"

Orville Deville frowned with confusion and anger; but his host, with a smile said—

"Will my guest do me a favor? Will he let this original genius come forward and relate his own and his master's adventures? for I know," he added, gracefully, "that my young soldier will scarcely do himself justice in his own narrative."

Deville bowed with a smile that chased away the frown, and turning again towards his servant, said—

"You meet with great indulgence here, blockhead! Since you are so favored, come forward and answer this gentleman's questions."

Thus exhorted, old Nero, who felt much reassured by the stately and kindly presence of the master of the house, approached and stood hat in hand.

"You say your master was severely wounded?"

"No, ole marse, honey, I didn't say nuffin like dat! I said how he wer putty nigh kilt!"

"Tell me about it."

"I'se gwine to, honey; I'se gwine to, chile; 'deed I is, ole marse; only you jes gimme time to memorize my own mind. Well, you see, ole marse, when we fuss fell in long o' de amber-scalps——"

"The what?" interrupted the host, knitting his brows in perplexity.

"De amber-scalps, marster."

"He means the ambuscade," put in the young gentleman, half laughing and half vexed.

"Sartin, ole marse, dey called em scalps, any how, which der was no end to dem same taken. Well, as I was sayin', when we fuss fell in long o' de amber-scalps—scades, I mean, de bushes was so thick and 'structing dat Marse Awful——"

“Whom?”

“Marse Awful, honey, my young marster dere——”

“What a name!”

“He means Orville, my Christian name,” again put in the young officer.

“Awful or Offal, it’s all de same, ole marse, only ef you dem keeps puttin’ me out, you’ll make me forget to remember all about it, and now I shall have to go back to de beginnin’!” said old Nero in high dudgeon.

“Well, go on, you shall not be interrupted again,” said the smiling host.

“Thanky, ole marse. Well, so when we fuss fell in long o’ de amber-scalps—scades, I mean—de bushes got so thick and ‘structed up, wid de unwisible bullets a-cuttin’ all about, dat Marse Awful—Offal, I mean—gets off’n his horse, an’ tells me to lead him back for safe takin’ care of. An’ Marse Awful plunges right into de thick o’ de bushes an’ bullets an’ smoke. An’ I leads my hosses back ‘cordin’ to orders.

“Bymeby, I hears de debbil to pay, axin’ your pardon, ole marse! Fuss ’twas only ‘sping! sping! sping!’ o’ de bullets as dey whistled about troo de trees; den clouds o’ smoke an’ an awful smell o’ brimstone!

“A little while arter, an’ den de groans o’ de sufferin’!

“Den, at long-last, deep silence.

“Den right out’n dat silence, a suddint, univarsal, horrorobel howl, as ef all de debbils in all de pits had bust out o’ de bowels o’ de yeth to once. It was de ’fernal amber-scalps—scades, I mean, at dere debblish work!

“Ebery bone in me shuck, only to hear dem! I staid dere trimblin’ an’ trimblin’ hours an’ hours! Den, arter all was quiet, I t’ought how I’d go see ef I could see any thing o’ my young marster; caze eberyt’ing was so awful still, it made me feel worse dan de hellobulloo, itself, fur it seemed jest as ef all de hull yeth was struck wid death. So I tied my horses and went stealing’ along in de shade.

“I hadn’t gone more’n a quarter o’ a mile when, glory be to Marster in hebben, what sights I see! Slaughtered men strewed about underneaf de trees an’ ‘mong de bushes like de dried leaves of autumn! I turned ober two or three as looked like my young marster, only dey wa’n’t him! Lor’, it was hours an’ hours o’ s’archin’ ’fore I come upon him ’way in de fur eend o’ de ground. Dar, under a lonesome hemlock tree, I seen Marse Awful, layin’ out stiff and still for dead! Jes as I was a goin’ up to him, a big red debbil ob an amber-scalp come sneakin’ troo de bushes, an’ creeps up to him, an’ takes him by his long, fair hair, an’ holds his head up, an’ den fumbles in his own belt, an’ den draps him for a minute an’ fumbles again!

“I knew well ’nough what de red brute was arter—he was arter his knife to whip off my young marster’s scalp—scade I mean.

“So, ‘No you don’t,’ sez I to myself. So I had no weepon but a quart bottle o’ sperrits o’ turpentine, as I brought along in my coat pocket for a misery in my back;—which it is de best thing for rheumatiz as ever was, as likewise to cure horses and clean guns—so I whips out my bottle o’ sperrits o’ turpentine an’ creeps on to Mr. Redskin.

“But ef you’ll please to believe me, marster, though I trod soft as any cat, ef dat debblish sharp-eared amber-scalp didn’t hear me. He let go my marster’s hair, turned sharp roun’, and wid a yell and a howl as mos’ druv de soul out’n my body, he lept at me!

“But I was ready for him. I lif’ my big bottle o’ sperrits o’ turpentine in bof’ hands, an’ let him have it wid all my might an’ main.

“Cush—swangle—pang! right into his furnel face an’ eyes!

“Yow-hoo-oo-oo-oo!!

“May I nebber hear sich an unyethly howl as dat dere cussed amber-scalp guv, as he fell back an’ drapped his knife.

“In one half a minute he’d a been up ag’in, ef I had guv him de chance; but in one

second, you see, old marse, I lept upon him, snatched up de knife, put its point to his t'roat, an' bore wid all my might, till I had pinned him to de ground an' de handle stopped de blade from gwine further!

"Den I left go an' run an' picked up Marse Awful, laid his head up ober my shoulder, an' made off fur de horses as fast as ebber I could. It was a dreadful tug; an' I was on de p'int o' drapping him (cause you see, ole marse, I thought how he wer' dead, an' my only motive for carryin' of him along was to give him Christian berryin' wid de hair on his head), when I hear behind me a crashin' an a gurgling; an' lookin' ober my shoulder, lo an' behold, dere was de cussed infunnelly amber-scalp, as I left for dead wid de knife stickin' in his t'roat, a-leaping arter me wid de blood a-gushing from his mouth!

"Yes, as I was 'bout to drap my marster, an' fall down an hollow ('cause, you see, I hadn't another bottle o' sperrits o' turpentine to smash in his eyes), he begins to reel an' totter, an' den he falls forrid on his face an' rolls ober, an' draws up an' stretches out, an rolls ober agin, an' lays stock still!

"Den I tought he mus' be dead; dough I wouldn't trust him for a long time; but laid marster down an watched.

"While I was watchin' de cuss of an amber-scalp, I hears a groan close by me an' der was my master wid his eyes open!

"My Lord, I was more scared dan oberjoyed. 'Peared to me all de dead was comin' to life agin! I mos' spected to see Braddock's cut up troops come marchin' back. Still, I was oberjoyed, too.

"'Marse Awful, chile,' sez I, 'is yer alibe?'

"'Oh-h-h!' sez he.

"'Is yer alibe, honey?' sez I.

"'Oh-h-h-h-h!' sez he.

“‘Can yer speak, honey?’ sez I.

“‘W-a-t-e-r!’ sez he!

“Well then thinkin’ as how no dead man wouldn’t call for no water, I made up my mine as how he mus’ be alibe.

“‘I’ll get it for you, marse,’ sez I.

“But fuss I went to look at de ’fernal amber-scalp. I seen he was layin’ berry still; but I darsent trust him, no how; so I felt berry oneasy in my mind, an’ ’solved to tote my marster off soon as ebber I guv him a drink.

“‘W-a-t-e-r!’ he kept whinnin’, like a sick puppy. Beg yer pardon, Marse Awful, honey, but ’deed you did.

“Well, I went to look for water. Dat was soon found—a perty little stream runnin’ along an’ singing, ‘drink, drink, drink,’ as plain as I can speak. Dar was de water; but where was any thing to dip it wid? His hat was gone; an’ mine—well, what wid sweat, an’ grease, an’ dust, mine wa’n’t so ober an’ above nice to drink out’n. I even t’aught how his boots was cleaner’n my hat; so I went to him an’ pulled off his boot an’ dipped it full of water, an’ hel’ up his head an’ put it to his lips.

“An’ all de time Marse Awful was drinkin’, I had my eye cocked on to de ’fernal amber-scalp, which red cuss neber moved ag’in, as I knows on: ef he did, it was arter we come away!

“So, arter my marse had drank his fill an’ took a long breaf, I lif’s him up an’ lays his head on my shoulder an’ totes him off to de hosses. When we gets dere—

“‘B-r-a-n-d-y!’ sez my marster.

“Dere was some in his saddle-bags, an so I lays him down on a sof’ rock, and gits it out an’ puts it to his lips. When he had tuck a good, deep swig, an’ drawed a good, deep breaf—

“‘Help me onto my horse,’ sez he.

“So I ‘beyed orders, an’ put him in his saddle.

“But ef ebber you see a dead corpse ridin’ horseback, he looked like it. Well, by de blessin’ o’ hebben an’ a miracle on de yeth, at las’ we had de good fortune to ‘rive at a squatter gemmen’s log-cabin, where Marse Awful guv way an’ fainted soon as ebber he got down off’n his horse, and where he laid ill for six weeks, ’fore ebber he was able to ’sume his journey.

“An’ dat’s de way how I save my young Marse Awful—Offal, I mean—from losin’ of his scalp,—scade, I should say only in de ’citement ob de narrative I doesn’t allus memorize to speak proper, so I hopes ole marster’ll excuse me,” concluded Nero, with a profound bow.

“We will applaud you,—a,—what is your name?”

“Nero, marse! ’deed it is, chile—Nero!”

“Then, Nero, you are quite a hero! Another Eneas!”

“’Neas? who he, marse?”

“Another hero who carried off his father on his back from burning Troy, as you did your master.”

“Did de amber-scalps—scades—burn Troy, marster?”

“Well, yes, or very much the same sort of devils, though they were not redskins, or savages,” smiled the host; then turning to Mr. Deville he said, with grave earnestness, “I fear, sir, that you have not yet fully recovered your wounds.”

“In truth, no; but, being very anxious to return home, I set out just as soon as I was able to sit my horse,” replied the young gentleman.

“And you have been exposed, in this invalid condition, to the storm;—your garments are wet,” remarked the elder gentleman, now for the first time noticing the steaming coat of his guest.

“A little damp; there was not much rain on the mountains,—it passed off to the

valleys; the storm was mostly thunder and lightning. Pray give yourself no trouble, sir," said the young soldier, observing that his host took a staff that rested against his chair and thumped loudly upon the floor.

"Nevertheless, you will do me the favor to change your clothing," replied the host.

His summons was answered by the entrance of the dwarfed giant.

"Vulcan, show this gentleman into my chamber, and serve him with dry clothes," said his master.

The giant ducked his huge head, disappeared for a moment, then reappeared with a lamp, and stood waiting.

Lieutenant Deville, understanding that he was to follow this strange guide, arose and left the sitting-room.

Nero prudently remained near the host, who, as I said, inspired him with confidence.

Vulcan led the stranger-guest into the hall, at the back of which a broad but rudely-built staircase conducted them to an upper hall corresponding exactly to the lower one.

Opening a door to the left, he admitted the young man to a chamber immediately over the sitting-room that they had quitted.

This apartment was furnished with Spartan simplicity—an iron camp-bedstead, a deal clothes-press, a wash stand, with fixtures, and two chairs completed its appointment. The windows, in a line with those below, looked out upon the same dark mountain-side. In the fireplace at the opposite end of the room, a wood-fire was already kindled.

The dwarf-giant went to the clothes-press, took out a faded suit of maroon velvet and laid it on the bed, and stood in silence waiting orders.

Mr. Deville quickly doffed his damp garments, which Vulcan seized and hung across the back of a chair before the fire. He then put on the dry suit, and announced

himself ready to return below.

Vulcan took the candle and led the way down-stairs, and young Deville re-entered the sitting-room. His host received him with a smile, and offered the vacant chair, which he immediately took.

One circumstance perplexed, and even embarrassed young Deville—though his host received him hospitably, entertained him cordially, conversed with him freely, yet he had not announced to him his name! Was it from forgetfulness, distrust, or caution? or was it in the expectation that he—Deville—would ask it? It might be the latter. At any rate, the young man resolved to act upon the supposition, for he found it excessively awkward to maintain a lengthened conversation with one whose name he did not know. He commenced, and with his most persuasive smile and deferential tone, he said—

"I have yet, I believe, to learn the name of the honored host who has so promptly extended the shelter of his kindly roof to the stranger."

A dark cloud gathered upon the brow of the man addressed. He passed his hand once or twice over his forehead, and then, removing it, fixed his eyes calmly upon the questioner, and answered—

"I am called Delaforêt."

His guest bowed. "I shall never forget the name," he said.

But then he mused—"So, my beautiful dark huntress is named Lionne Delaforêt! a pretty name, and like her. Stop! it means something, too! It means 'lioness of the forest!' There is some subterfuge here. He said he was 'called' De-la forêt! He did not say his name was such! True—he is 'of the forest;' but that is not his name. There is some mystery here! into which, by the way, I have no right to pry," added the young gentleman, in conclusion.

His transient revery was broken by the entrance of Vulcan, who thrust in his huge head, opened his mouth with one word—"Supper!" and disappeared.

“Come, Mr. Deville,” said he “of the forest,” rising and leading his guest across the hall to the spacious kitchen immediately opposite.

There, at the head of a great oak table, the beautiful Lionne presided over a substantial supper of coffee, home-made bread and butter, and venison steaks.

Soon after supper the guest retired to dream of Lionne.

CHAPTER IV. PASSION

Even so quickly may one catch the plague.—Shakspeare.

“Lionne! Lionne!”

After a night of feverish dreams, half rapture, half torture, Orville Deville awoke with this name upon his glowing lips.

He awoke with pale cheeks and heavy eyes, smouldering beneath their languid lids with suppressed fire, like burning coals under their vail of white ashes; he awoke with beating brain, and burning heart, and quivering pulses, in real fever, the combined effects of ill-healed wounds, exposure, fatigue, and passional excitement.

He threw off the heated coverlets, arose, and looked out from the windows.

No glimpse of the sky could be seen—nothing but the gray rocks and dwarfed cedars of the perpendicular mountain side, within three feet of the windows, met his view.

It was the illustration of his thought. Even such a barrier—so hard, so firm, so dark, so immovable—separated him from the heaven of his dreams.

And that barrier—what was it? worldly considerations? He was the descendant of one of the oldest families in old England, and the heir of one of the richest river estates in the province of Maryland. And she, the beautiful wild enchantress who had so suddenly enthralled his soul, who possessed his whole being like a passion, a fever, a burning fire, was not of society, not even of the civilized world; she was a

demi-barbarian, a mystery, a witch. She had no accomplishments, no education beyond the knowledge of the few books in her father's limited library. What would his aristocratic friends have to say to such a one as she was? Worldly considerations! pshaw! walls of paper and less than paper, walls of cobweb before the impetuosity of passion.

What then was the barrier, that, like this mountain, could never be moved? Was it HONOR? Honor was the one jewel in his casket upon which he piqued himself; the one talisman of power that governed all his self-willed nature; the one attribute which he never would permit to be questioned by man or woman; the gem more precious than life, which he would have redeemed with life. Its quality had been recently well proved in the hour of extreme danger.

Ah, yes! his honor had stood the test of personal peril—would it stand the test of passion? It had been proof against danger—would it be proof against temptation? Will he arise and flee, or will he remain and tamper? For oh, he will be furnished with a good excuse to stay; the enemy of souls never leaves a man without such a pretext to do wrong.

"The woman who hesitates is lost," says the proverb.

But the man who hesitates prefers to be lost.

While Orville Deville gazed out upon the gray precipice of rocks that hid the sky from his view, and inwardly upon the frowning barrier of honor that stood between him and the heaven of his desires, a slight rustling noise near his feet arrested his attention. Looking down, he saw old Nero creeping out from under the bedstead.

"What are you about there, idiot?" inquired the young man, in a tone of vexation.

"Yer needn't get mad nor likewise call me names, Marse Awful; I darsent sleep on de shake-down in de back shed along o' dat big square debbil, as I'm worse afeared on 'an ebber I was of an amber-scalp; so I jes stole away las' night an' creeped in here arter you was asleep, an' hid mysel' underneaf your bed, wher' I could sleep

conformable," replied Nero, as he came out and shook himself.

"Well, since you are here, go down-stairs and bring me water and towels, and endeavor to save our kind entertainers as much trouble as possible by making yourself useful," said his master.

"Yes, chile, jes' as soon as ebber I puts dese chunks togedder, to liben de fire a little bit. It's rale dampish in dis ole barn ob a place," replied Nero, going to the chimney-place and bringing the great brands together, and blowing them until he had raised a blaze.

Then he went out, and in due time returned with hot and cold water, towels, and his master's regimentals, that had, in the meantime, been well dried, brushed and pressed.

Orville quickly made his toilet, and, impatient for a sight of his bright enthraller, descended the stairs to the lower room, where he found his recluse host, sitting just where he had sat the night previous, and looking pale and worn, as though sleep had not visited his eyes.

He arose, however, with graceful courtesy, and welcomed his guest.

"I hope you rested well, and find yourself refreshed this morning," he said, as he offered a chair.

"I thank, you sir," was all that the young man could with truth and discretion reply.

"And yet," said the host, looking at him attentively, "I do not think you did; you seem feverish and ill; you have exposed yourself too soon after convalescence, and fatigued yourself too much; you have to fear a relapse; you must lie by and rest for a few days."

"I thank you, again, sir, very earnestly; but I must get into the saddle and take the road within the present hour."

"And if you do, young man, you will make a much longer journey than you have

calculated upon—even from this world to the next! I, who tell you this, am an indifferent skillful surgeon, and I see that your case is critical," replied the recluse, taking his wrist,—"a full, bounding, but irregular and spasmodic pulse! You must stay and be nursed."

Now, truly, the young soldier would have fled this temptation, if only this fine excuse to stay and face it had not been offered. As it was, he was satisfied to feel forced to remain.

"How were you wounded, and where?" inquired his host, with his fingers still upon the pulse and his eyes fixed upon the face of the invalid.

"It was a gunshot wound through the right side of the chest, sir; the bullet has never been found and extracted; I think it is lodged against the right shoulder-blade," replied the young man.

"That was a great evil; but what could you expect of having only an ignorant squatter for your nurse and physician?"

"The man was very kind, sir; and, after all, shall I be better off, remaining here, taxing your great kindness, since here I shall be equally far from surgical aid?"

"Well, yes; somewhat; for though our mountains furnish no physicians, yet, as I told you, I am not, my self, a bad surgeon; if I have a little science, a life of vicissitudes and necessities has given me some skill; after breakfast you shall put yourself under my treatment and I will look at your wound."

With the audible sigh of one who yielded to destiny, and the secret, deep delight of one forced to stay where he passionately desired to remain, Orville Deville tacitly accepted his host's proposition.

He had scarcely settled himself in his seat again, before the door opened and Vulcan came to announce breakfast.

The recluse and his guest repaired to the kitchen, where they found the same

substantial oak table drawn into the middle of the floor and laid for the morning meal. The service was of the rudest description—there was neither table-cloth nor napkins; the crockery was, of course, blue delf, and the cutlery was of the commonest iron with horn handles; yet a certain immaculate cleanliness atoned for all other deficiencies. Coffee, corn-bread, sweet butter, and broiled rabbits, formed the staples of the breakfast.

None of these things interested our hero; he was too ill at ease to feel hungry; he looked around in anxiety for her, in search of whom only he had cared to come into the kitchen. She was not to be seen.

“You are looking for Lionne; she will, no doubt, join us presently; in the meantime, draw up to the table,” said the unsuspicious host.

And even as he spoke, the door connecting the kitchen with the front room on the same side of the hall opened, and Lionne appeared, bearing in her hand a bowl of snowy honey-comb, which she placed upon the table. Then giving their guest a gay “good-morning,” she took her place at the head of the board.

And if Lionne had seemed bewitching in her hunting-dress of the day before, oh, how lovely she looked in her womanly, home dress of this morning!

It was a costume of severe simplicity—just a close-fitting, crimson boddice and skirt; her glossy, raven black hair, with all its rippling ringlets, was waved off around each blushing cheek, and gathered in a rich mass at the back of her head; that was all. There was no ornament, nor refinement of the toilet, not even a white collar or ruffle about the rounded throat; yet how well she could dispense with the aid of dress! How beautiful those masses of glossy black ringlets, rippling off from the blooming cheeks; those large, languishing, dark eyes, under their fringe of long, black lashes; those full curved, crimson, passionate lips; that ivory throat; that swelling bust; that rounded waist!

“What will you be helped to, Mr. Deville?” said the host, interrupting his delicious

reverie.

“I thank you; yes, sir, if you please,” rather irrelevantly replied the young man, holding out his plate, and, in the abstraction of his mind, permitting it to be loaded with a portion of every dish on the table, until at length the host stared with surprise, and the demented guest himself came partially to his senses, blushed for his strange forgetfulness, and straightway addressed himself to the business and conversation of the table.

“Our guest will become our visitor for a few days, my dear, until his wound is well healed,” explained Mr. Delaforêt.

“We shall be very happy,” replied Lionne, with a bow and a bright smile, as, the breakfast being over, she gave the signal to rise from the table.

The gentlemen, leaving Lionne in the kitchen, adjourned to the sitting-room, where Mr. Delaforêt caused his patient to sit in the leathern chair, while he examined his wound.

“The case is not so bad as I had feared,” he remarked, when he had made some little progress in the investigation. “The bullet, if it ever lodged against the shoulder-blade, has been dislodged and worked downwards, just as likely as not by the motion of your horse in riding these several days past. It is its change of place that has caused you accession of pain and fever; but its shifting is highly favorable; it is now in a situation to be reached; it is just below the right shoulder-blade; you may feel it from the outside,” concluded the volunteer surgeon, as he guided the finger of his patient around to the spot where, sure enough, the bullet could be felt like a round pebble beneath the skin.

“My daughter,” said the host, going to the door and calling, “prepare quickly some lint and linen, and bring it here with a basin of warm water.”

Then coming back to his patient, he said:

“It will take no more scientific instrument than a simple penknife to relieve your

shoulder of this uncomfortable intruder, sir."

And opening the blade, he cut the skin and the bullet dropped into his hand! He laid it before his patient.

"Even so slight a thing may bring a man death!" said the young soldier, taking it between his finger and thumb, and looking at it with interest.

"Yes," said the host, with a smile, "it is a dangerous denizen of one's body! This might have caused your death even yesterday, or to-day! Suppose, for instance, that, when you were so imprudently jolting forward on your journey, this bullet, when dislodged by that motion, had taken another direction, and had fallen upon some vital part, as it might easily have done?"

"What then?"

"Aye, what then! You would have been a dead man! I have known such cases. But here comes the child, Lionne, with the dressings for your wound."

Lionne came only to the door, handed in all that was needed, and retired.

The slight, external wound whence the bullet was extracted was dressed with lint, and the invalid was put upon a simple regimen to cool the fever of the inner irritation. And then the self-elected physician promised that, if his patient would rest quietly for two days, he might walk about a little on the third; and he placed his small collection of books at the service of Orville.

For an hour or two the time hung heavily upon the hands of the young soldier.

But when Lionne came in, bringing her work,—some coarse, strong, twine-netting,—and sat down quietly near her father, all was changed!

The young invalid felt that he could sit forever, reclining in that leathern chair, and watch her from under the fringes of his half-closed eyes—drinking in, through them, draughts of passional intoxication! For the present this was sufficient; this was delicious! He knew nothing of the delirium—the madness—that must follow!

As passed this day so passed the next. And then dawned the third day, when the patient had permission, if he pleased, to walk about.

It was the first day of the golden month of October. Mr. Delaforêt was shut up in his private room, engaged in writing, as his daughter informed their guest.

Orville Deville, pleading utter ignorance of the mountain-paths, invited Lionne to become his guide for the prescribed walk.

The forest maiden yielded a prompt and cheerful assent, and they left the house for their ramble.

Behind them arose the frowning precipice; before them flowed the smiling river; beyond that stood the waving woods in all the gorgeous glory of their autumnal foliage.

“I know of no more beautiful walk than this between the precipice and the river; only, if we go far, the path becomes narrow and almost impassible; for in some places the water washes the perpendicular side of the rocks, and in others actually flows under it; so that you would have to wet your feet in crossing; but you would not mind that,” said the hardy mountain-maiden.

At any other time he would have minded it; for, with all his courage, our young soldier was, in some respects, rather a dainty gentleman. But, no, he could not brook to appear before this beautiful young Amazon in the character of a “carpet-knight.”

With a disdainful smile he dismissed the idea that he should care about wetting his feet, and set out to follow his bright guide.

In the course of that momentous walk they made great progress towards more intimate acquaintance.

Without intrusive inquiries, Orville Deville, in the course of conversation, then and afterwards, learned many significant facts in regard to the history, characters, and circumstances of his bright young hostess and her father.

Like glimpses of a pre-existence, seen in dreams, or like descriptions read in books, Lionne said she vaguely remembered living in another home, and being called by another name.

Rather more distinctly she remembered living a long time in what must have been a great ship, and crossing an almost endless piece of water, which must have been the Atlantic Ocean.

Then came many wanderings; and then, at last, this mountain lodge, where they had been living eight or nine years.

Her father never could bear to talk of their past lives, so she knew nothing certainly. Her father, she continued, passed much time shut up in his private chamber; he both wrote and received many letters; he had means for all their needs; he mailed and received all his letters and bought all their provisions from Winchester, a town in the valley, some thirty miles distant, to which Vulcan, who had been with them ever since she could remember, went every week.

She, Lionne, had never been to Winchester, nor anywhere else since they had come to this lodge; she had no female companions, never had any. Her father had taught her to read and to write; she had read Rippon's History of England, Chaucer, Spencer, and Shakspeare, that was all, only she liked Shakspeare best, and knew many of the plays by heart.

Her father had taught her to ride and to shoot; he used to be her constant companion in these field and forest sports, or rather, she used to be his; but of late years, he better liked the quiet of his chamber, and she, who could not abandon these out-door amusements, was now obliged to pursue them alone.

"Alone! ah my beautiful huntress, how blest I should esteem myself in the coveted privilege of becoming your companion, your attendant, your groom, upon these excursions!"

"Should you?" exclaimed Lionne, in innocent surprise. "Oh, I am sure if that could

afford you the least gratification——”

“Gratification—it would afford me delight!”

“Well, sir, only wait until you are able to ride!”

“Ah, dear Lionne! what condescension! what favor!”

“Favor!” she exclaimed in simple wonder, “what favor? unless it is you who confer the favor; for I am sure that it is very, very good in you to offer to become my escort, and to say that it would make you happy to be so.”

“Here is a child of nature, who has never been spoiled by flattery,” thought the young man. Then aloud he said:

“Bright Lionne! is it possible no one has ever informed you what a privilege, what a favor, what a blessing it is to be permitted only to walk or ride by your side?”

She turned upon him a curious look.

“I do not understand you, sir. Of course, no one has ever told me; there was no one to tell me any such thing, even if it were true. Favor? Privilege? Blessing?—only to walk beside me? How could that be?”

“Ah, beautiful one! is it possible you do not know?”

“Oh, of course, I know that company is good; that even you, now that you are away from all your dear friends and fine acquaintances, would rather walk with me than quite alone. That is easily understood, for I myself am very glad to have you with me.”

“Are you, Lionne?”

“Yes, indeed. I reckon you would think so if you knew how lonesome I feel at times.”

“No mother, no sisters, no brothers, no companions! It is easily comprehensible,” said the young man, communing with himself; then aloud:

“So you are often lonesome, Lionne?”

“Oh, yes! feeling as if I had not a friend or companion in the wide, wide world; though that is wrong, I know, for I have my dear father and Vulcan, to say nothing of Nox.”

“Nox?”

“Yes, my horse—a good companion, though he does go upon four legs. I am ungrateful to forget my friends.”

“Then you only feel lonely when you are depressed in spirits?”

“No; but when I am elevated also. It is true, sir. I am lonely in all my moods,—lonely in low spirits and lonely in high spirits, and never more so than when from the mountain-top I look around upon the heavens and the earth, and with the heart swelling in my bosom, long for some one near to whom to say, “How glorious this is!”

“Solitary child of nature and the wilds! That explains all—even these strange confidences to a stranger,” thought Orville, as he gazed upon her.

They had now reached the rapids and a bend in the river, where it was necessary to go round a curve and jutting rock, that arose immediately from the edge of the water. The need of picking their way and jumping from stone to stone over the foamy water, held them silent for a few moments until they had passed the rapids and reached a foothold on the beach. Then again Lionne spoke:

“I am going to show you a beautiful grotto, known only to me. Father never cares to wet his feet and has never been along here, so he is quite ignorant of the existence of this grotto; and as for Vulcan—just fancy him with his elephantine hoofs, springing from rock to rock as we did over the rapids!”

“And this famous grotto is—how far off?”

“Turn about! face the mountain now and see if you can find it,” said Lionne, archly.

He smiled in response, and looked up and down and along the ridge—a great

perpendicular precipice of gray rocks thickly quilled with bristling cedars.

“No, bright riddler. I give it up. In that wilderness of prickling evergreens I never could discover it.”

“Make three steps in a bee-line, directly from the spot upon which you stand, to the precipice, and lay your hand upon the rock.”

He laughingly obeyed her.

“Now have you found it?”

“No, lady bright.”

“Yet it is just before you,” she said and laughing gayly she came forward, took his place, rolled away a stone, tore away some moss and dried leaves, parted a group of low bushes, and revealed the mouth of the cavern.

“Enter!” ordered Lionne, in a voice of mock tragedy. And the young man, giving in to her humor, bowed his head and passed in.

It was no dark and gloomy cave. From numerous irregular crevices in the rocks that formed its sides and ceiling, its size and shape could be easily seen. It covered about an acre of ground. Its form was oval; the floor, nearly flat, was formed of the solid rock; the walls and ceiling, also of rock, glittered with a thousand prismatic hues, the predominating one being from brilliant metallic atoms profusely mixed in the rocks and strongly resembling golden sands.

Orville regarded this appearance with curiosity, interest, and wonder. Lionne saw this and laughed gayly, crying in the mock tragedy to which she was so addicted,

“There’s ‘Speculation in those eyes that thou dost GLARE withal!’ But don’t trouble yourself; this’s not a gold mine, though when I first discovered it I felt sure it was; so sure that I chipped off a piece of the rock that was full of that glittering substance and took it home; and, without saying any thing about my precious grotto, I asked my father if that was not gold. He examined it, smiled in my face, and told

me that it was just mica—nothing else."

"Are you so fond of gold, then?"

"Why, yes, for my father's sake; for he seems to lack some great thing. And from all that I can read in books, GOLD is the one great earthly power! For myself I do not crave it; for indeed I should not know what to do with it. I have every thing I need."

"Except a companion," said the youth.

"Ah, yes," sighed Lionne, casting away her straw hat and seating herself on a fragment of rock; "always, of course, except a companion. I have never been so lonesome anywhere as I have been in this very cavern; for I had not even Nox here! At times my very heart has seemed to cry out for some one to speak to. I am so glad that we met on the mountain. I wish you would stay with us always," added the wild, untaught creature.

He had been standing there, gazing upon her beautiful form in its attitude of careless ease and grace, her hands clasped over her knees, her stately head raised, her rich black tresses partly gathered into a knot at the nape of the neck and partly escaped, and rippling, in disheveled ringlets, down each blushing cheek; her glowing, humid lips apart; her dark, languishing eyes fixed—even while she answered him—upon the heaven beyond the mouth of the cavern.

Her enticing beauty, her innocent disclosures, her unconscious ardor, the solitude, the opportunity, the temptation, all were too potent for the principles of our unstable youth. One moment's hesitation, given to two restraining powers,—to fidelity on the one hand and bashfulness on the other,—and then, drawing his breath hard, he stealthily crept towards her, dropped at her feet, possessed himself of her hand, pressed closer to her side, sought her eyes, and breathing quickly and fiercely, whispered:

"Lionne! Lionne! Lionne! I am here, in answer to that cry of your heart, Lionne. I am he whom you need I am your own! I love you! I am at your feet! Look at me!"

With a rebounding spring, that rang sharply upon the rocks, she sprang upon her feet and stood gazing upon him in wild affright.

His words, his warm, quick, fierce breath, his gaze, his tone, his touch had been a revelation to the wild mountain maiden—had thrilled every fibre of her ardent, sensitive frame—had filled her soul with delight and terror.

He softly arose and extended his arms towards her, pleading—"Lionne! Lionne!" in tones as soft and wiling as the notes of Orpheus's lute.

She stood in the attitude of suspended flight, covertly watching him from the corner of her eye.

"Lionne! Lionne!" he prayed, going towards her.

With the leap of a young catamount, she was out of his reach, and near the mouth of the cavern, where she paused, palpitating, prepared for flight, watching him from the corner of her eye, kindly, yet distrustingly, as though loth to leave him, yet terribly afraid of falling under his power.

He saw her hesitation, lost his reason and ran towards her.

But like an arrow from the bow, she sped through the mouth of the cavern!

And the next instant he saw her spring from stone to stone over the foaming waters of the rapids, and disappear around the jutting rock.

And while, discomfited, humiliated and angered, the young man wandered slowly back to the house, Lionne, running, springing and leaping, quickly reached home, and avoiding all encounter with the inmates of the lodge, fled to her chamber, fastened the door and stood in the middle of the floor, flushed, palpitating, radiant—exclaiming—

"Oh! I am so frightened and—and so happy!"

Orville and Lionne did not meet again that day. Well would it have been for them, and for all they loved then or ever loved, had they never seen each other more.

CHAPTER V. PASSION AND TEMPTATION.

The cold in clime are cold in blood!

Their love can scarce deserve the name;

But theirs was like the lava flood

That boils in Etna’s breast of flame!—Byron.

Oh, the new heavens and the new earth! oh, the beauty of the world and the glory of the sky! This is not my rhapsody, dearest reader, but the rhapsody of Orville and of Lionne, when love had transfigured the universe before them!

“Half willing and half afraid,” now approaching, now receding, they had gradually come to understand themselves and each other.

The restraining principle of fidelity on his side, and of reserve on hers, had yielded to the impetuous power of passion.

While the recluse father was buried in his dreams and schemes and correspondence—political, radical, revolutionary—who could tell?—the neglected, motherless daughter was wooed and won.

First, Orville, not again to frighten this shy forest-maiden, practised an instinctive reserve—a reserve that was not premeditated but impulsive, and that piqued Lionne into resentment at his indifference—resentment that could not escape his attention, and that flattered his pride.

Cautiously he made his advances; shyly she evaded and—encouraged them.

He coaxed her out to walk along the margin of the water, or over the wooded hills of the opposite shore, or up the sides of the precipice.

He persuaded her to ride with him, over the mountains and through the heavily timbered valleys between.

He prevailed on her to sail with him as he steered along the sinuous windings of the

Singing Stream, and under the shadow of the forest-covered mountains.

And to hunt in his company through all the country.

Ah, those walks, and rides, and sails, and hunts! Ah, those hills, and vales, and woods, and waters! What tales they heard! What tales they might have told!

They might have told how the huntress was hunted! how the enchantress was enchanted! how the lioness was tamed!

Mr. Delaforêt, if that was his name, saw nothing of this. When he came down from his room, he usually found either Lionne or Orville in his sitting-room. He never missed both at the same time or found both together. Consequently there was nothing to suggest the fact that they passed much time in each other's society.

Old Nero saw it all! Negroes are by their very natures intently observant and intensely sympathetic in the affairs of love; where they are trusted they are the most secretive of confidants, the most faithful of partizans, the most devoted of co-adjutors. And where they are not trusted they find out every thing for themselves, and use their own pleasure in concealing or betraying the mystery.

Thus, old Nero discovered the contraband-courting carried on by his young master. After soliloquizing several monologues upon the question of what will Lady Adelaide say; and after all, coming to the conclusion that his young master had no sort of right to keep any secrets from him, he determined boldly to enter upon the interesting subject with Mr. Deville.

So one noon, when Lionne was in the kitchen, preparing dinner, Mr. Delaforêt was in the sitting-room and Orville Deville was sauntering up and down under the trees before the house, old Nero leaned up against the trunk of an elm and attracted his proprietor's attention by a loud—

"Hem!"

"Well!" exclaimed Mr. Deville, with an impatient start.

“She’s brighter nor Lady Adelaide!”

“Who asked for your opinion, you old scoundrel?”

“And, likewise, handsomer, ‘cordin’ to my taste!”

“You are an impudent old varlet!”

“But she aint so high edicated an’ accomplish’!”

“What do you mean, you old rascal?”

“I’m boun’ to say how she knows nuffin’ ’bout de wee mown-seers, an’ see-seen-noors, an’ dimmy-simmy-quivers, dat is to say—de French an’ ’talian langwidges and de music!”

“How dare you, you old villain, talk in this manner to me?”

“Easy, marster, honey; easy, chile; I talks to you for your own good, ’deed I does; ’cause I wishes of you well, chile. Now, see here, honey—sollum betroffed is sollum betroffed! Still, it aint by no means marriage! An’ so ef yer had been ’cline to break off ’long o’ Lady Adelaide, you mought o’ done it: but to go an’ bring a ‘sgrace on top o’ all your cullered people by marryin’ of a young savidge as knows nuffin of de wee-mown-seers an’ see-seen-noors an’ dimmy-simmy-quivers!”

“You exasperating old fool, don’t you suppose I will strangle you!” broke forth the young man in fury.

“Can’t help of it, ef you do, Marse Awful, honey! I sabed you from de amber-scalps, an’ you may repay me wid deaf if you like. You may choke me dead, but you can’t stop my talkin’, nor likewise smodder de trufe—case what does de poec say?—

‘Yer may crack, yer may shiver de wase if yer pleases,

But de smell o’ de roses will stick to de pieces!’

Dar!”

“You are an idiot; it is no use to mind you!”

"'Cisely so, marster."

"But there is one thing, sir, that your idiocy must understand! You are never again to take the liberty of mentioning this young lady's name in connection with this subject, either before me or any one else!"

"Which young lady, Marse Awful—Lady Adelaide, or Miss Lionne?" demurely inquired Nero.

"Either young lady, sir! I am tired of hearing you! I wish to have no more of it!"

"Myself wishes yer may have no more of it, marster, honey," said old Nero, sanctimoniously.

The young man, dissatisfied with himself, and consequently with all the world, continued to walk up and down the yard.

And old Nero, with a sigh, entered the house.

The trial between passion and principle! Who, in one form or another, has not witnessed it? The struggle between avarice and justice, ambition and integrity, love and fidelity?

"Oh, that I had never met this witching girl, or that my life were not bound by an irrevocable bond! To fly from her is death! to remain is—perdition!" such was the refrain of all Orville's thoughts as he paced thoughtfully up and down the yard.

As yet both loved, and both were innocent! Again and again, with all the eloquence of fervent passion, had he breathed to her his love. And she had listened, unrebukingly, silent, but inexpressibly happy!

He whose hand was irrevocably pledged to another had breathed no hint of marriage to her.

Yet his silence upon this subject gave no uneasiness to her, the wild child of nature, to whose pure spirit marriage seemed love, and therefore, of course, love seemed marriage.

To her wild solitude no experiences of the world's wickedness had come. Never in her life had she heard of other than lawful love. To her fervent soul that little word of four letters stood for the purest, highest, and holiest of all that is pure, high and holy.

It was the synonym for religion, for heaven, for God. And is it not really so? for "God is love."

She, wild enthusiast, believed in this celestial love!

It was now late in October. Orville's wounds were perfectly healed, health and strength had returned; he had now no excuse to trespass farther on the hospitality of his kind host.

The necessity for departure was imminent, yet he found no power to depart.

Duty urged him to fly. Temptation held him bound. With no strength to break his bonds, he lingered near Lionne, losing self-control in the conflict.

This terrible struggle between passion and principle could not last. The madness must come to a crisis. It is written that the Spirit of the Lord shall not always strive with man. Thus there fall a dark hour in which the angel of salvation fled sorrowing away front this tempted soul!

It was the twentieth of October, a glorious day, when mountains and forests, arrayed in all the gorgeous, variegated foliage of the season, glowed in the golden haze of Indian summer.

Early in the morning, Lionne had lured him out for a hunt. And they two rode on over the mountain crest, preceded a short distance by Nero, who had the hounds in charge. Beneath them lay the earth, rejoicing in this refulgent light.

To Orville, Lionne seemed the very incarnate spirit of this scene. By virtue of her splendid beauty and fearless spirit, a very queen over the mountains, streams, and forests around her.

To possess this queen for his wife! oh, to possess her!

He scarcely dared turn his eyes upon her bewildering face and form as she rode beside him.

The stately little head, with its royal forehead, the slender, arched eyebrows, the dark eyes smouldering and flashing beneath their long lashes, the glowing cheeks, the crimson lips,—the whole rich, ripe, refulgent countenance, half-vailed by the long, glittering, black ringlets that flowed down each side her face; half shaded by the sable hat and plumes that drooped over her brow; the rounded bust and slender waist; the graceful attitude, the still more graceful motions; the glance, the tone, the smile were all too potent for his principles.

No! he dared not look upon her. Would that he had not dared to parley with himself! but no! he communed with himself in this manner:

“Here is the girl who attracts my whole nature with an irresistible power! More beautiful, more graceful, more intellectual, impassioned, and spirited than any creature I have ever before known!

“Her touch, her glance, her tones have power to thrill my whole nature! her smile flashes into my soul a delirium of joy! what rapture would not her full possession impart!

“And this enchanting creature loves me! loves me! she, loves me! for when I feel the dizzy ecstasy that her shy glance imparts, I also feel the power that I possess over her! intoxicating power that yet I may not use.

“And this bewildering being might be mine but for that bond! that fatal bond forced on my life in childhood!

“Is it binding? should it be binding? should a betrothal, solemnized at the instance of their guardians between a boy and girl who met then for the first time and never afterwards met again, be binding upon either party?

“It ought not! It shall not! I will ignore the serious farce performed at the death-bed of the Earl of Lennark, and I will marry the woman of my choice!”

While thus Orville communed with himself, Lionne silent, thoughtful, melancholy, rode beside him. At last rendered uneasy by his long continued silence and his sombre aspect, she said in a low voice:

“You are either not well, or not happy, Mr. Deville.”

“No, I am neither well nor happy!” he replied in a deeply-troubled tone.

“And wherefore?” she shyly inquired.

“Lionne! Lionne! I love you!” he answered, in a deep and thrilling voice.

She did not reply; she dropped her head upon her bosom and cast her eyes down beneath his ardent gaze. She had lately learned—she knew not wherefore—to blush and shrink and tremble at his declarations of love.

“Lionne! you do not answer me!” he exclaimed, with an impassioned vehemence.

“Alas! what would you have me to say?” she murmured, in an almost inaudible voice.

“Lionne, I love you! I adore you! I worship you! Yes! with all the strength, passion, yes, life of my soul! Lionne! I lay my heart, hand, name, and fortune—all that I am and have, or may become, or may attain—at your beloved feet! Lionne! in return for my whole heart’s and soul’s and life’s devotion, only say that you can love me!”

She raised her glorious eyes to his, in one quick and quickly-withdrawn, earnest, impassioned, devoted gaze, that spoke more than her beautiful lips could ever have uttered,—then dropped them and blushed to the very edges of her hair.

It was enough! He caught her hand and pressed it to his lips and heart. He whispered—

“Lionne! we are fifteen miles from your home. There, in the valley below us, lies Winchester. A two-hours ride will bring us to the town—” he paused and she

glanced up at him in perplexity, hesitation and questioning.

“Love! love! do you not understand me? In that town of Winchester there is a county-clerk’s office and an Episcopal clergyman!”

Still on her face that look of earnest inquiry.

“Dearest Lionne! in that town of Winchester, within the next three hours, you can make me the proudest, the happiest, the most perfectly blessed being under the wide canopy of heaven!”

Now a look of devoted interest deepened the meaning of her beautiful countenance.

“Dearest, most adored Lionne, in that town of Winchester, before the ascending sun shall have attained his meridian, you may have placed me at the acme of my aspirations! You may have become my wife!”

“Your wife!”—the words were half uttered, half aspirated, as the light of a deep, intense and vivid joy rose and beamed from her beautiful countenance and then died out beneath the burning blushes that overspread her face.

“Yes, worshipped one, my wife! Lionne, in a few days I must leave this place! There is a foreboding in my heart that unless I make you now my own, something may intervene to separate us forever! Therefore to-day, my beloved, I would, with your sweet consent, place between us that bond which may not be broken except by crime or death! Dearest, will you consent to this?”

“But—my father?” she murmured in a low voice.

“Your father, my best beloved, likes me well; knows my social position; has had some chance to judge my character; your father would not object to me as a son-in-law,” replied the young man, with the slight hauteur of one who even in an hour of passionate love could not forget his social superiority over this daughter of the wilds.

“No, he would not object, but he should certainly be consulted,” said Lionne, in a

low and tremulous voice.

“Lionne, my beloved, have confidence in me.”

“My father should be consulted, however,” she said.

“Listen to me, dearest. Age is cold and deliberate, and makes no account of the warmth and impatience of youth and love. Your father, with all his faith in me and approval of my suit, would, nevertheless, from mere etiquette, require time to reflect; then he would insist upon formally consulting my friends, who, however highly they should applaud my choice, would also, by reasons of ceremony, demand time for deliberation; then would come a question of marriage-settlements; then lawyers and the law’s delays; then contracts; then at long, long, last, supposing nothing should intervene to prevent it, when we should both be sick with ‘hope deferred,’ would come the late wedding.”

“Well?” she murmured, seeing that he paused.

“Well! I could not bear this long delay! Lionne! Lionne! my love! my fate! hear me! Be my wife at once; and then, when you are irrevocably mine, we will ask the old man’s blessing, and he will give it, since he has no real objection to me. See, Lionne, I do not entreat you to forestall your parent’s wishes, for they would be in our favor; but I only beg you to forestall all their ceremonious delays and tedious solemnities. Dearest Lionne, hear me, grant my prayer, and I will thank you now, and bless you a thousand years hence, in heaven, for the grace!” he said, pale and panting, as he pressed her hand and leaned towards her.

“Hush! the grace, the favor, is mutual. I am yours, Orville,” she murmured, in a low, almost inaudible, yet heart-thrilling tone, as she lifted her splendid eyes for an instant to his face, and then dropped them suddenly, amid bright blushes.

A gleam of wild joy, almost of frenzied exultation, lighted up his face as he exclaimed,

“Forward, then, dear one,” and putting spurs to his horse, sped onward towards the

town.

Her black mare kept up, neck and neck, with his flying steed. They overtook and distanced old Nero, who looked after them in stupid amazement a moment, and then exclaimed:

“Hi, what de debble dat? What done broke loose now? Oh, I see; dey is a-ridin’ of a steeple-chase. It’s my hopes as my young marse may get home ’dout havin’ of his neck broke, dar! sides which, I don’t mean to break mine, dar!”

And so saying old Nero restrained his horse’s inclination to follow, and subdued him to a walk.

Meanwhile the erring young couple reached Winchester.

He conducted her to the quiet inn, left her in a private parlor, and then went out to procure the license and find a clergyman.

After an absence of half an hour he returned with the document, and accompanied by a clergyman to whom he formally presented Lionne.

Then, exhibiting the license, he took the hand of his bride and stood up.

The minister commenced the ceremony, and in ten minutes pronounced the young pair man and wife.

Orville, beside himself with triumph, led her to a settee, where she sat, pale, with a joy too intense for smiles.

Orville had scarcely remunerated and discharged the minister, (who had filled out and handed to Lionne a marriage-certificate,) and had not had time to turn and speak to Lionne before a clattering was heard outside, and through the front windows old Nero was seen to roll himself down from his saddle and enter the hall.

And the moment after he appeared at the parlor-door, with a deep bow and—

“Am you in want of me, young marse?”

“No—yes! you may go and see to feeding and watering the horses, and on your way

out, send the host hither."

"Yes, sar!"

"And listen! don't you dare to stop and gossip!"

"Sartainly not, sar!" said Nero, with an injured air, as he withdrew.

When the host came, a waiter of refreshments was ordered: but of these the youthful couple partook but slightly, while waiting for their steeds.

When they were reported ready, Orville and Lionne, mounted and attended by Nero, rode homewards.

There was no hunting done that day! The only chase had been a "love chase," but that had been successful!

They reached home just as the sun was sinking behind the mountain ridge, and casting a long, black shadow over the old stone-house at its foot, and over the waters of the Singing Stream. A shade of superstitious foreboding darkened the brightness of Lionne's joy, as she gazed upon the deep gloom that shrouded her father's house. Her cheek grew paler than its wont.

"I hope it's not an omen," she whispered.

He who watched her every look, and listened to her every breath, heard this almost inaudible murmur.

"'Omen!' dear love! how can that shadow be an omen, which falls upon the house every evening alike at the sinking of the sun?"

"But every evening we do not ride home in its shadow! Whenever we have returned heretofore, we have found the homestead bathed in sunlight, or in moonshine! And this evening of the day upon which we have plighted our troth forever, we ride home in the shadow!"

"Beautiful witch! what make you out of that?" smiled the gay bridegroom.

"I know not! My blood is freezing! My heart is curdling! Orville!"

“Lionne!” he cried, seizing the rein that had fallen from her hands, and gazing into her face that had suddenly grown haggard with horror, as at some tremendous vision!

“Lionne!” he cried again, throwing himself from his saddle, and lifting her from hers.

She stood upon the narrow space between the line of her father’s low stone-wall and the steep banks of the river. She stood with her hat fallen off, her black dishevelled ringlets streaming down each side the awful beauty of her pale, inspired young face, her dark robes flowing in long, sombre folds down her lithe, majestic figure—she stood as might have stood the awful priestess of Apollo, when the power of the god was upon her, forcing her to gaze in pain upon the terrors of the future, and to utter in anguish oracles concerning them!

“Lionne!!” he exclaimed once more, slightly shaking her arm.

She raised her hand and swept it once or twice slowly across her brow, then turned and looked upon him with the air of me awakening from a dream.

“It is past!” she said, with a sigh of deep relief.

“What is past? my own Lionne!”

“Oh, the vision!”

“The vision?”

“The wilderness! the storm! the houseless woman with the wild hair and maniac eye!! the perishing babe!!!”

“My own Lionne, you astonish me!”

“Hush! listen! we of the house of Delaforêt are said to be endowed with a fatal gift, that of second-sight!”

“What ancient folly, dearest love! the world has outlived such notions! Science now terms second sight, epilepsy, catalepsy, optical illusion, or insanity!” smilingly

replied Orville.

“What care I what science terms that fearful phenomenon? I care not for the name, but for the thing, since it is prophetic! Oh, Orville! Orville! all evil omens attend our loves! We first met amid thunder and lightning!”

“Blessed be the storm that brought us together!”

“The first time you pressed me to your bosom, your dagger’s point, worn through its sheath and shifted in your belt, pierced my arm!”

“Accursed be the steel that wounded you, my own love! I had rather it had been sheathed in my own heart!”

“And to-day! to-day! you married me—did you know it?—with a mourning-ring!!” and she held up to his view a circlet set with jet.

“Blessed forever the ring that bound us together! Dear love, it was my sister’s; I wore it for her sake; it was the only one at hand, and I placed it on your finger, and thus converted the mourning-circlet into the happy bridal ring!”

“Oh, I do not know; but it seems to me that we have erred! Ah! I wish that we had first obtained my father’s consent and blessing—that we had been sure we were right—and then, whatever should come, we could be resigned!”

“‘Whatever should come we could be resigned?’ Dear Lionne, why are all your anticipations sorrowful?”

“I know not, unless it is because I have sinned! But what’s done is done!’ I will shake off threatening images. What indeed can the vision, or the imagined vision, of the wilderness, the night-storm, the wandering maniac and the murdered child have to do with our future? Listen! our poor beasts are neighing with impatience; they want their stables and their oats; let us go in and leave them to the care of Nero, whom I see approaching,” she concluded, with a forced smile.

They entered the stone house by the wide hall-door.

Lionne flew up stairs to doff her riding-habit, before attending to tea.

Orville entered the sitting-room, where he found the recluse buried in his books and papers.

“Had a good day’s sport?” inquired Mr. Delaforêt, as the young man drew up a chair and seated himself.

“Excellent!” replied Orville.

“Bagged any birds?”

“Yes; a young eaglet of the mountains.”

“Ah! a rare bird and rather unprofitable,” replied the unsuspicious host.

Lionne appeared and summoned them to supper, which was served, as always, in the spacious kitchen.

The meal passed as usual,—Lionne demure, bright and attentive.

Orville exultant, yet self-possessed and thoughtful.

The recluse absent, meditative, and unconscious of all surroundings even to the very tea that he was slowly sipping.

When supper was over the host retired to his room, his papers, and his unknown plans.

Orville and Lionne arose and went into the hall.

Lionne approached the door of the sitting-room, as if to enter; but Orville laid his hand upon her arm, saying, with a gentle assumption of authority—

“No, dearest; you are MINE now! Come! the night is beautiful! See!” and he led her to the hall-door, “the full moon is just rising behind the hills beyond the river. Soon its beams will fall upon the Singing Stream converting its waters to living, fluid silver. How softly and brightly its light will steal into our grotto! Come, love! let us go to the grotto!”

Taking her mantle from a rock near, he wrapped it carefully around her shoulders and led her forth.

Too used was Lionne to be forgotten by her father to suppose now that her absence would be noticed.

They opened the gate and passed out.

No fairer scene did nature ever show than that which lay before and around them.

On their left hand arose the gloomy mountain range, extending for miles north and south until it curved out of sight.

On their right hand flowed the bright river, flashing in the moonlight. Beyond it were the wooded hills, in the beautiful, deep glow of autumn.

Before them wound the narrow, rocky, foamy path, scarcely promising a safe foothold between the mountain and the river.

Lionne, as most accustomed to the path, flew past Orville, and, springing from jagged rock to rock over the boiling rapids, or clinging to the ragged evergreens that quilled the precipice, she led the way.

They reached the grotto, rolled away the stone and let in the moonbeams, that lighted up the interior until it shone like an immense basin of silver.

On returning to the house, they saw by a light gleaming in the recluse’s study that he was yet engaged in his tireless vigils.

The next morning, just as the rising sun peeped over the top of the wooded hills beyond the river, Lionne left her room, and while the household was yet buried in sleep, crept down the stairs to the front yard.

There she found Orville dressed and waiting for her.

“My Lionne! my bride! my wife!” he exclaimed, approaching and drawing her to his bosom.

She yielded her face to his fervent kisses, and then, as soon as she could catch her

breath, she inquired, amid rosy blushes—

“Will you tell my father to-day?”

“No, sweet love.”

“To-morrow, then?”

“No, bright one!”

“You said that after we should be fast married and secure from any one’s breaking the bond between us, you would tell my father! we are married; now, then, dear Orville, keep your word with me and tell him!”

“I said that after we should be united, I would inform him; but I did not say immediately after.”

“Yet, dear Orville, I intreat you, do not delay this tardy justice to him any longer. I wish that we should be completely happy. We cannot be so while there is evil mixed up with our love!”

“Evil, Lionne?”

“Alas, yes! I, at least, feel remorse weighing down my heart while I keep so great a secret from my dear father!”

“Lionne! I have been mistaken in you!”

“What mean you, Orville?” she asked, uneasily.

“You do not love me!” he replied, bitterly.

She looked at him for one moment with an expression, oh how eloquent! yet how entirely untranslatable in language.

“Well?” he inquired.

“I have no words in which to answer that, Orville! Indeed, I might say—‘I love you;’ but that would not express enough; for I also love my father, but not like you! I might say with truth, that, were it necessary, I would die for you; but that does not

express all; for so, upon occasion, could I die for him,—him whom I forsake for you! Ah, then, how can I tell you?—time will show!"

It needed not that time should be subpœnaed to witness this fact!

Her splendid, dark eyes, burning with her soul's living fire, her flushed cheeks, through which the warm blood ebbed and flowed, her rich, full tones, vibrating with the heart's deep passion, were eloquent with the very life of love!

"You love me! you say so! yet you say, at the same time, that because your father is not immediately admitted into our confidence, you cannot be happy! that remorse distresses you! Let me tell you, Lionne, that love suffers the presence of no rival passion by its side! it expels every other passion from the heart, which it alone fills, or failing to do that, love flies! Is there love in your heart and does it allow footing to a morbid compunction?"

"Orville, dear Orville," she whispered, "your words are true. I feel them to be so. It is, therefore, that I would have love reign alone in this heart that is all your own! would expel every other passion, remorse before them all! To do this, I would remove the cause! I would see my father, and win his forgiveness of my fault and his blessing upon our union! Oh, Orville, I do wish that we should be completely happy! Having the 'one thing needful' for happiness,—the one priceless pearl of love,—it seems to me so unwise that we should fail of perfect bliss through means of one little error! one little error so easily remedied!"

"Why let that trouble you?"

"Because I cannot help it. Listen,—suppose a young queen, blessed with youth, health, beauty, wisdom, boundless wealth, power, and dominion—all, in short, that could combine for the good, happiness, and glory of any human creature—yet, suppose she wore a pinching shoe or galling necklace, could she be at ease until it was removed?"

"What a fancy! What has that to do with it?"

“I, crowned with your love, am that queen who hath all things. Yet the secret I keep from my father is the pinching shoe, the galling necklace that will not let me be at ease. Oh, Orville, when will you tell him?”

“When the proper time comes, fair one. Rely upon that.”

“And when will that be?”

“I cannot tell you, since I do not know, love!”

She suppressed the cry of pain that arose to her lips; but she could not control the cloud of trouble that rolled over her beautiful, dark face.

He saw it, but governing his feelings of vexation, he put out his hand and drew her to his bosom, laid her bright head, with all its glittering ringlets against his breast, and combing her tresses with his fingers, stooped and whispered:

“Be at peace, sweet one. In this matter, henceforth, you have no personal responsibility whatever. ‘What’s done is done!’ ‘What’s past remedy is past regret.’ No woman is at the same time under bonds to both father and husband; she passes from the protection of the former to that of the latter. You left your father for me,—even had that been wrong it is done, and cannot be undone. Now new duties invest you; now you no longer belong to him, but to me, your husband, who proudly claims all your love and duty, and holds himself in all things responsible for you, it is I who must deal with your father. Leave all to me.”

“I WILL,” she said, suddenly, with impassioned devotion, as he pressed her to his heart.

“Now, then, my sweetest love, will you do as you promised at our marriage ceremony? Will you—will you—will you obey me?” he whispered in her ear.

“Oh, yes!” she aspirated, hiding her blushing face upon his bosom; “did I not vow to do so? did not the minister exhort me to do so? does not my heart force me to do so? and will it not be the sweetest, sweetest pleasure of my life to obey my dear

husband, my love, my leigelord?"

"Always and in all things, Lionne?" he whispered.

"Always and in all things," she said, lifting her beautiful head. "Soul and body, I am yours! without one atom of self-reservation, yours! wholly yours! dispose of me as you will, love, lord, husband!" and with impassioned devotion and perfect self-surrender, she yielded herself to his fervent embrace. While pressing her to his bosom, he stooped and whispered:

"The household will soon be astir, my love—we must be prudent—we must seem to-day like civil, indifferent acquaintances, and so disarm suspicion; but to-night, when all the family shall have retired to rest, steal forth and meet me in the mossy grotto."

No answer.

"Will you do this?"

Still no answer.

"Sweet wife, you must do this! now answer."

"Yes!" in a low and thrilling tone.

Once more he strained her to his heart, pressed a fervent kiss upon her lips, sighed and released her. They parted. He strolled through the gate and down to the banks of the Singing Stream. And she went into the house to attend to her domestic duties.

"Dar! what de name o' de Lor' Lady Adelaide say to dat! I 'clare! dese young men 'dout any sort o' princerpuls!" exclaimed old Nero, who, from behind a rain hogshead at the end of the house, had been the unseen spectator of the dumb show of this lovers' meeting and parting. Fortunately for the young pair, no word of their conversation had reached the old man's ears.

The next evening was spent in the sitting-room, first over a game of whist in which Lionne and Orville played against Mr. Delaforêt and "dummy," and lost. And then

the tragedy of “Fazio, or the Italian Wife’s Revenge,” was read aloud by Orville Deville, and at its conclusion gave rise to a discussion upon love, jealousy, treachery and revenge.

There was quite a warm debate, and each expressed decided opinions, pro or con.

All except Lionne! she listened, burned, glowed and sparkled, but said nothing.

“How think you, Miss Delaforêt,” said Orville, fixing his eyes upon her, with a deep and searching gaze. “Is the woman whose trust has been betrayed by him she loves, justified in delivering him over to death?”

“Surely that is no question to ask a young girl! How can she possibly answer it?” mildly inquired the host.

“Nevertheless I would have her reply,—nay I would even drive it home and make it a personal one,” persisted Deville, keeping his eyes fixed with a commanding expression upon the countenance of Lionne. “How say you then, young lady? Were you by chance in the Italian wife’s position,—were your love and trust utterly betrayed by the man you loved,—would you deliver him over to death? We wait your answer.”

“Were my love and trust utterly betrayed by the man whom I had loved, (for I cannot imagine love outliving faith,) I should—” she paused.

Both looked at her; but she seemed to have forgotten the presence of all others, and to speak as to her own soul.

“No, I should not give him over to death.” As she said these words in a low, deep, calm tone, her aspect grew terrible! her bosom rose and swelled, her face lightened vividly, then darkened and darkened until it grew black as night and storm, with evil passions. “No, I should not kill the miscreant! What! Suffer the deepest wrong that a woman could possibly suffer—a wrong that would blast my whole being, and change for me this fair world into a howling wilderness,—and—strike the traitor one sharp death-blow, that should in one instant end his punishment and my revenge?

What! Give him the repose of the grave, and load my own soul with blood-guiltiness, and my life with incurable remorse? No, no, no, no! it is stupid to kill for vengeance! No! but my revenge should be as long as our natural lives! With all the ingenuity of human intelligence, all the perseverance of fate, I would track him through the world! It should be the study of my nights, the work of my days, the cure of my grief, the interest, excitement and passion of my life to make his existence one long, long, long agony! Aye! until he should howl for death to snatch him from torture! That should be my revenge!"

All shuddered who heard and saw her.

"What a young demon!" exclaimed Orville to himself.

Yet as he gazed upon the awful beauty of her dark and stormy face, he felt with a sort of terrible ecstasy his whole nature irresistibly drawn, fascinated, towards her. He gazed upon her as one gazes upon the horrible beauty of some dark, unfathomable abyss. He felt his very brain turning—his very soul becoming absorbed by her witchcraft.

Her father gave vent to his thought in a brief speech—

"Lionne, you are mad!"

Her face cleared in an instant. Radiant sunshine chased every cloud away! With an enchanting smile she said—

"You force me into an imaginary position, and compel me to tell you how it acts upon me. I obey you, and you shudder! But what must I have felt to be able to make you shudder? Friends, friends, do not try that experiment again!"

Soon after this the circle separated for the night.

When all was still, Lionne stole out to keep her appointment with Orville.

It was in the course of their sweet, confidential talk that night, in the grotto, that Orville suddenly said to her—

“Lionne, you could never become the ruthless avenger you pictured to us to-night!”

“Hush! oh, do not speak of it! It comes to me like a presentiment! I would! for such a foul wrong would turn me into an incarnate fiend!”

Orville shuddered through all his nature.

It was near daylight when they got home.

The lovers’ parting came unexpectedly. The next day, at noon, Vulcan arrived from Winchester, bringing a letter for Mr. Deville, summoning him to the death-bed of his mother.

Orville announced the grave news.

Mr. Delaforêt expressed his sympathy, and gave orders for Mr. Deville’s horses to be got ready.

Orville telegraphed Lionne, and stole to the grotto to take a private parting.

He found her there before him, pale with anguish and with the effort she made to suppress her pain.

“You are going,” she said.

“I must.”

“I know it! When will you be back?”

“As soon, sweet love, as my duties will permit.”

“How soon will that be?”

“Probably in a month, possibly in a week.”

“Promise me you will return as soon as you justly can.”

“I do promise.”

“Swear it!” she said, breathing hard.

“I do swear it!”

“By your father’s grave!”

“I swear!”

“By your mother’s dying-bed!”

“I swear!”

“By all your earthly hopes!”

“I swear!”

“By all your heavenly aspirations!”

“I swear!”

“By our mutual love!”

“By our mutual love I swear to you, Lionne, that, as soon as I justly can do so, I will return to you!”

And then, after many fervent embraces, they parted, and each hurried by a different path to the house.

The horses were ready.

Orville took leave of his host and his household, mounted, and, attended by Nero, set out for Maryland.

As he rode from before the door, a raven, suddenly flying from the forest, alighted on the chimney top of the old house, and croaked so dismally that Orville involuntarily turned his head and shuddered through all his frame. As he looked back, he caught a glimpse of Lionne, who was watching him from the window of her room. She, too, had heard the raven’s croak, and her face wore the pallid hue of death.

CHAPTER VI. THE OLD MANOR-HOUSE.

Crowning a gradual hill the mansion swells

In old colonial grandeur.—W. Mason.

River-view, the ancestral home of the Devilles, was one of those fine old provincial mansions, of which scarcely a well-preserved specimen remains in America.

It was situated on the north bank of the Potomac, on a heavily-wooded bluff.

The house, a large, irregular building of gray rock, with a steep roof and many gables, was inclosed in a spacious yard, defended by a low stone-wall.

Behind it rolled away the forest-covered hills of old Maryland.

Before it, from the very wall, tumbled the moss-covered rocks to the water's edge. And out beyond spread the magnificent prospect that gave the place the name of River-view: the beautiful Potomac, broad here as a bay, rolled in living light from north to south, as far as the eye could reach. Across it, under the line of the horizon, arose the dim, blue hills of Virginia. On the left, a little down the river, lay the lovely wooded island of St. George's.

The last proprietor of River-view, under the colonial government, was Alexander Davenport Deville, who had been educated in Scotland, and while there had married the Lady Elizabeth Lorne, the portionless daughter of a Scotch Earl.

Mr. Deville brought his bride to River-view, where he lived tranquilly with her for eighteen years, and dying, left her with one son, Orville, aged about fifteen.

As soon as the funeral was over the Lady Elizabeth, in compliance with the will of her late husband, conveyed her son to England to be educated.

But, previous to entering the boy at Eton, her ladyship took him to make a visit to his uncle, the Earl of Lennark, who was then at his hunting-lodge in the highlands of Scotland.

She found her brother on his death-bed, and in sore distress of mind upon two subjects.

Firstly, upon account of his younger brother, Donald, the heir of his title and estates, who, having secretly embraced the cause of the Pretender, was now in France,

helping to hatch conspiracies.

Secondly, for the sake of his own and only child, the Lady Adelaide Lorne, now about twelve years of age, whom he was about to leave without protection, though happily not without fortune.

Concerning the first subject, the Jacobite conspirator, her ladyship advised the earl to dismiss from his mind a matter which, being without remedy, should be without regret.

Touching the second trouble, the motherless maiden, so soon fated to be left fatherless, the brother and sister put their heads together in close counsel.

And this was the result:

Young Orville Deville was an only son, fifteen years of age, healthy, handsome, talented, and heir of one the finest estates in the province of Maryland.

The little Lady Adelaide was an only daughter, aged twelve, beautiful, graceful, amiable, and heiress in her mother's right to about twenty thousand pounds sterling.

Wherefore a betrothal between these two would not be so bad a plan, thought his mother and her father.

For at first, betrothal only was intended; but upon reflection these plotters perceived that such betrothal would be in no degree binding upon the young people, should the latter in future object to consummating the same by marriage.

Wherefore the wise ones concluded that a marriage-contract should be drawn up and signed, and a marriage-ceremony performed, between the two, to be consummated when the parties should arrive at a proper age for setting up housekeeping together.

When this was decided upon, the children were called in from their play in the park.

The mother took her son in hand, and made him comprehend as much as a boy of fifteen could of the eligibility of a union with the Lady Adelaide Lorne.

Orville did not know that he had any objection; in general rather liked the new idea

of being married; in particular was pleased to get a titled lady for his bride—titles were so very rare in the colonies! Yes, upon the whole, he thought he would marry Lady Adelaide, without making any ado about it.

Lady Adelaide was summoned to the bedside of her father, and merely told that she was to be married to her cousin, Orville Deville. The maiden, too meek to express the astonishment she felt, retired to ask her old nurse, Elspeth, what it all meant.

In short, in a week from this, all the preliminaries having been prepared, a solemn farce was played—a diabolical piece of wickedness was performed at the death-bed of the Earl of Lennark,—a boy-child of fifteen and a girl-child of twelve were gravely united in the holy bonds of matrimony. After which the male-child was sent in one direction with his servant, and the female-child sent in another with her nurse.

And that night the Earl of Lennark, having, with the best intentions, done the last harm he could in this world, died, and went “to give an account of the deeds done in the body.”

During the week of funeral obsequies the newly-married infants saw but little of each other; nor, to tell the truth, did they wish to do so. In their strange relation they had become painfully shy,—the boy, especially, had grown horribly afraid of the little girl.

After the funeral solemnities were quite over, and the house restored to order, Lady Elizabeth Deville prepared to depart.

Then indeed Master Orville received a tremendous shock of disappointment with the intelligence that he was still to go to Eton! that the awful event of his marriage had made no change in the previous arrangement!

Here was a downfall!

He had confidently expected that, being “married and settled,” he should go back to River-view, enter at once upon his estate, keep horses and hounds, give dinners and card-parties, hunt, drink and play; and, in brief, spend time, health and wealth, as a

gentleman of quality should! Of becoming lover or husband, the lad never dreamed; of the little Lady Adelaide he never thought, except carelessly, that she might not be much in his way.

It cost Lady Elizabeth a great deal of trouble, and the promise of unlimited pocket-money, to persuade Master Orville of the propriety of going to Eton.

And reluctantly at last to Eton he went.

Lady Adelaide, meek maiden, never dreamed of opposing her elders or superiors. She shed many tears at leaving her beautiful, wild Highland-home,—more tears still at parting from her father's grave, and her old nurse, Elspeth,—and patiently followed her mother-in-law.

Lady Elizabeth Deville was upon the whole a good and sensible woman; though, in some particular instances,—the baby-marriage, for example,—she had acted wrongly and foolishly.

Her one predominant affection was maternal love; her one ruling passion, her son: her devotion to him reached idolatry.

In him she could see no fault nor blemish.

For him, if necessary, all persons, all possessions, all interests should be sacrificed.

To him all wills should bend.

In her far-reaching previsions, a wife for him, a daughter-in-law for herself, had been her greatest dread.

A wife that might not worship him sufficiently, a daughter-in-law to make her miserable!

Now, however, the great dread of her future was destroyed.

The angel of her life was secured: a high-born maiden of her own blood, beautiful, intelligent, altogether lovely, and of such tender age and docile temper that she—the mother—could melt, mould, and shape her into a perfect model of a wife for her

darling son—a perfect pattern of a daughter-in-law for herself.

Honest mothers of marriagable sons, do you wish you had the same opportunity of forming and training satisfactory daughters-in law? Good women, don't you try it! Nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand it would be a failure, and the thousandth time worse than a failure; for it would be, as this proved, an accursed success!

To return.

The youth at Eton, in study and in play, in cricketing, boxing, and boating, in school-boy fights and school-boy friendships, soon forgot his baby-bride.

The maiden, returning home with her mother-in-law to River-view, was not permitted so to forget her boy-bridegroom.

As a sensible woman Lady Elizabeth knew, that in order to mould and train this girl into a model wife and desirable daughter-in-law, she must first win her affections and confidence; being an amiable woman the lady found the task quite to her taste.

During the long, long voyage out, no mother could have been more affectionate, solicitous and devoted to her only child than was this lady to her daughter-in-law.

When the little maiden was sea-sick the lady nursed her with the utmost skill, tenderness, and patience; when home-sick, gathered her to her bosom, sympathized with, and consoled her; when weary of the long way, read to her; when books were exhausted, told her stories from long life's readings, or gave descriptions, or related incidents, of the new world to which they were bound.

The maiden was of a gentle, grateful, and affectionate nature, and soon learned to love the lady with all the strength of her warm, pure, young heart.

Thus these two, before the voyage was over, formed a very tender, sincere, mutual attachment. This was perfectly natural—nay, inevitable.

The girl never had known a mother's care, yet instinctively longed for a mother's

love, and found it in Lady Elizabeth.

The lady herself had never dreamed of the sweetness of a daughter's affection, until she discovered the treasure in the grateful bosom of young Adelaide.

The long voyage came to an end.

They reached the shores of Maryland late in the evening; landed at River-view in the dark; and slept that night at home.

Thus it was by morning light that Lady Adelaide first looked upon her home in the new world.

Her chamber was the right-hand front room, on the second floor of the mansion, looking out upon the water.

Lady Elizabeth's apartment was the corresponding left-hand front room.

A broad passage only separated these two chambers.

Early in the morning Lady Elizabeth crossed the passage and entered the chamber of her daughter-in-law.

She found Adelaide already up and dressed, and standing at the front windows looking longingly out. These windows reached from ceiling to floor, and opened on hinges like doors, out upon the upper piazza.

Lady Elizabeth, after greeting the young girl, opened the window and led her forth upon the porch.

From the house down to the river fell the rocks, now carpeted with moss, as green as emeralds. Beyond them rolled from north to south the glorious Potomac. Far across its waters, gray and dim with distance, was the shore of Virginia. On the upper hand the river curved, bay-like, out of sight. On the lower, it divided around the green and wooded island of St. George.

Adelaide, an enthusiast in natural scenery, gazed in delight.

"How do you like it, my love?" was the almost-needless question of the lady.

“It is not Scotland,” was the half-admiring, half-regretful reply.

“No, it is not your native land, my child! not the country of your birth; but we hope to see it the country of your deliberate choice.”

“It is not even like Scotland,” sighed the maiden.

“No, here you miss the lakes and mountains of the Highlands; but then here you have magnificent breadths of landscape! Rivers, islands, forests are all on a majestic scale of grandeur.”

“True; it is so different from Scotland,” and the eyes of the home-sick child filled with tears.

The lady put her arms around the maiden’s waist, and kissed her tears away. Then pointing down the river she said—

“Look, love! there, look far down beyond St. George’s Island, to where you see those two opposite points, beyond which rolls the bay,—that is the mouth of the river, and those are Point Look-Out and Point Smith. Midway between them, see that sail—making out to sea! It is our late ship. She goes to Annapolis next. Look—for in five minutes she will be out of sight.”

Adelaide wiped her eyes, and watched the retreating ship.

“She is gone! Now come to breakfast, love,” said the lady, leading the way.

When the Lady Elizabeth had reached the door of the dining-hall, she turned and saw Adelaide standing pale and motionless as a statue—a look of pain and terror sweeping over her face. Hastening back, she caught the girl by the arm, and eagerly asked the cause of such a sudden transfiguration. It was some moments before Adelaide recovered from the strange fit; and then, with a moan as of pain and with hands clasped over her heart, she exclaimed—

“Oh, my Saviour, what a fate!”

“Why, what is the matter, child?” asked the Lady Elizabeth with much concern.

“I have had a vision—a terrible vision! Is it not said that members of our family sometimes have the gift of second-sight? I saw a raging storm, and a young girl perishing therein—a cradle robbed of its treasure—a mother wildly searching for her babe! And I—oh, I was there! I was myself a part of my own vision! Oh, my heart! my heart!”

“Pshaw! Come into your breakfast, quick. The whole household will be alarmed by this fantasy. You are unwell, my dear.”

They went to breakfast, and nothing more was said about the vision.

Was there some mysterious sympathy between Adelaide and Lionne, that caused their “visions”—the revelations of their “second-sight”—to be so similar?

CHAPTER VII. THE LADY ADELAIDE DEVILLE.

“A maiden meek, with solemn, steadfast eyes,

Full of eternal constancy and faith,

And smiling lips, thro’ whose soft portals sighs

Truth’s holy voice with every balmy breath.

So journeys she along life’s rugged way,

Keeping her soul’s sweet counsel from all sight,

Nor pomp, nor vanity, leads her astray.

Nor aught that men call dazzling, fair, and bright.”

Lady Elizabeth presented this “maiden meek” to her household as the Lady Adelaide Deville, the bride of their young master.

“Name of de Lord, dis child a bride!” exclaimed old Nero, the body-servant of the last master, and upon that account a privileged character.

“And—dress’ in deep mournin’!” cried old Keziah, the confidential attendant of the

widow.

‘“Well, Lord! I allus hearn tell as how dey had curus customs in dem dere outlandish, unchristian countries beyant seas, but who’d ever o’ thought as dey’d married childun?” cried old Nero.

“And ’bove all things, in widow-weeds?” exclaimed old Keziah.

“She was married at the death-bed of her father—she is in mourning for him,” kindly explained their mistress.

“Poor lambkin!” said old Nero.

“Dear little orphan-bride. But where is the bridegroom?” inquired old Keziah.

“At school, of course. The young people are not to go to housekeeping together until they arrive at a proper age,” smiled the amiable widow.

“Oh! dat make all de diffunce in de worl’,” admitted the old negroes.

The subject of the colloquy had retired to a distance, and so heard nothing.

That day the Lady Elizabeth began to settle the plan of present life for herself and daughter-in-law.

First of all it was determined that the young girl should not be sent to school, but that she should pursue her studies at home, under the supervision of her mother-in-law.

For this policy the Lady Elizabeth had several reasons, both positive and negative.

She did not wish that the young creature should enter the mixed society of a boarding-school, or make indiscriminate acquaintances, or form school-girl attachments that might in the future interfere with the singleness of her devotion to Orville.

And she did want the maiden as a companion; needed the occupation of teaching her as a pastime; and above all desired, as I stated, to melt, mould, and train this gentle girl into a model wife for her darling son! She had already succeeded in gaining the

young creature's affections. And for every other part of her work, the Lady Elizabeth was admirably competent, being certainly one of the most accomplished women of her age.

The education of the orphan commenced.

The mornings were devoted to what are called the higher branches of an English education, and to ancient and modern languages; and the afternoons to music on the harp and the piano, and to drawing, painting, and embroidery.

And the teacher constantly stimulated her pupil by telling her that her young bridegroom, Orville Deville, would certainly become one of the most profound scholars, as well as one of the most accomplished gentlemen of his day, and that his bride should in those respects be worthy of him.

This style of argument, that might have offended a high-spirited woman, only inspired this gentle girl to greater efforts.

One day in the week was set apart for the study of domestic economy; for, as the teacher admonished her pupil, the wife of a Maryland planter was expected to be not only a lady of quality, capable of shining in the saloon, but also a notable housekeeper, competent to direct the details of cooking a dinner, or cleaning a room. And so, upon a stated day in each week, the gentle girl patiently gave her attention to making pastry, bleaching linen, or whatever else might be the assigned lesson.

Nor was exercise neglected. Lady Elizabeth knew the full value of beauty to woman, and of health to beauty. So every morning at sunrise and every evening at sunset Adelaide, attended by old Nero, took an animating ride on horseback.

In some of these inland rides the high-born maiden would sometimes chance to meet a wild, dark, gipsyish young girl, mounted and accoutred as a huntress, and attended by hounds.

This gipsy called herself Kate Kyte—a single sister in a circle of brothers, wild hunters of the inland hills. This strange girl, this brilliant meteor of the forest, half

fascinated the gentle Adelaide, who, ever after meeting with Kate Kyte, returned home with fresher bloom and brighter eyes.

And thus visibly the maiden grew in health, spirits, and beauty.

“How pleased Orville will be with your improvement, my love,” was ever the highest praise that Lady Elizabeth bestowed upon her charge.

And naturally the maiden began to cherish a very exalted opinion of the young gentleman whose sentiments were thus constantly consulted—for whose approval such pains were taken, such preparations made. And she began to doubt that she ever, ever could be worthy to tie the shoes of Mr Orville Deville!

Once she naively breathed this doubt to his mother, who cunningly replied:

“Never fear, my pretty little love. Take pains; do the best you can, and then Orville, whose character is as amiable as it is exalted, will never complain: if your involuntary deficiencies grieve him, he will never be so unjust as to let you know it, my dear child.”

“Ah, but the very thought of such a thing is dreadful, mamma; pray teach me how I may become in every manner worthy to be called—your daughter-in-law,” would be the answer of the docile girl, who thus in effect put her head under the heel of her mother-in-law.

Meantime six months passed, and no letter had been received from the object of all this worship.

Lady Elizabeth had written many times, exhorting the delinquent to write to her, and especially to the Lady Adelaide.

At last, near the end of the year, two letters were received—one for each of the ladies. These letters were very eloquent, the finest passages in them having been, according to school-boy usage, freely purloined from the finest writers in the language. But the mother and daughter know nothing of this; they believed in them,

admired and praised them, and set to work to answer them.

“Oh, I never, never shall be able to write a becoming reply to this beautiful letter,” said Adelaide, in despair.

“Take courage, my dear. Orville will not expect a girl of thirteen to be so accomplished a writer as himself,” said the vain mother. “And at all events, you know that you must make an attempt to write something.”

“Oh, yes, I know, and I hope Mr. Deville will not quite despise my letter,” sighed Adelaide, as she went to her task.

After spending a whole forenoon and spoiling a quire of paper, she brought a draft of the important document to Lady Elizabeth for her ladyship’s criticism.

It was a simple letter, more respectful and modest than affectionate in tone.

“This is all very well, my dear—very well indeed. But how is this? You sign yourself, ‘Your affectionate cousin, Adelaide Lorne,’” said the lady, looking up.

“Well, mamma, what should I sign?”

“How did he subscribe himself?”

“Oh, my dear mamma, you know! you read it!”

“What was it?”

“Ah, it humbles me to repeat it; but he was so very good as to write himself my ‘Devoted Admirer Orville Deville,’” said the maiden, blushing deeply.

“Ah, that was well enough, because he is lover as well as prospective husband. But you are more than his cousin; you are his bride. Your name is not Adelaide Lorne, but Adelaide Deville! Go, therefore, my dear, and copy your letter, and sign——”

“What, dear mamma?”

“‘Your Faithful Wife, Adelaide Deville.’”

“Oh, I should not dare!” exclaimed the maiden, catching her breath.

“Then you would rather dare to wound and offend Orville,” said the lady, with a very slight degree of coldness.

“Oh no, no! I would do any thing rather than that,” exclaimed Adelaide, retiring with the letter, which she copied and signed according to orders.

The letters were dispatched by special messenger to Baltimore, to go by the next outward-bound packet.

The next morning, at sunrise, Adelaide, attended by her old groom, was taking her usual early ride, when just upon the outskirts of the forest she heard the approach of a chase.

First on her right hand a fox burst cover, and sped like an arrow across the open country.

Next a pack of hounds, with a low, long cry, broke the thicket and fled past on his track.

Then started forth a band of well-mounted hunters, that hurled themselves like a storm across the country. There were six men and a girl—doubtless Kate Kyte and her brothers. But Adelaide could not be certain—they whirled so swiftly past—until the girl, who was the hindmost, suddenly wheeled her horse, came flying back, and confronted her. Then the young lady recognized Kate Kyte.

“Good-morning,” said the wild one.

“Good-morning; but you are losing—they will beat you!” exclaimed Adelaide, pointing to where the hunters hurled themselves down the hill and out of sight.

“Let them! I had rather talk with you than ride to the hounds this morning! Adelaide, I wish you would come to see me, sometime when you are out riding! I have neither mother nor sister, nor any female relative at home; nor, to be true, do I want any. Yet I do wish you would shine in upon my lodge.”

“I should be glad to do so, Kate. Which way shall I find it?”

“On the other side of that covert from which we started the fox, you know, there is a brook——”

“‘Bush Creek’—yes!”

“Follow its course for a mile, and you will reach our lodge.”

“I shall be sure to come. In the meantime, Kate, if you are in the neighborhood, come to see me at River-view. I am the last arrival, you know, and it is my right to receive the first visit,” said Adelaide, with a pretty assumption of ceremony.

Adelaide and her servant turned their horses’ heads homeward.

“Why, how fresh your color! how bright your eyes, my dear girl!” said the lady, as she met her young charge on the front piazza.

“I think it is from meeting Kate Kyte, mamma,” said the young lady, smiling.

“Kate Kyte!”

“Yes, mamma. To see her, always affects me like the sea-breeze or the mountain-air! Her free, lively, fearless manner is so exhilarating to me!”

“Go, lay off your riding-habit and come into breakfast, my dear,” said the lady, with a slight degree of coldness in her tone. Then turning to old Keziah, she said, “Attend your young mistress to her chamber.”

After breakfast, when the lady and her young charge were seated in the parlor at their morning avocations, Adelaide expressed her wish to go and see Kate Kyte at home.

“I do not know, my dear, whether I can consent to your doing so. I must think.”

“Is there any thing to be said against her, mamma?”

“Against Kate personally? n-n-no, except that she has never had the benefit of refined female-society.”

“Surely that was her misfortune.”

“And not her fault—no! And yet such misfortune is apt to lead to faults. Katherine’s family were highly respectable; but her mother died when she was but four years old, leaving her and her six elder brothers to the sole care of their father.

“He was a wild, rollicking, fox-hunting country-squire, who, after running through the greater portion of his large property, died a few years since, leaving only an old mansion, an ill-cultivated farm, and a few old negroes to his seven children. Kate has grown up a hoyden among her fox-hunting brothers.”

“Poor Kate! She wants the company of a girl like herself; that is the reason she wishes me to visit her.”

“Yes; but upon the whole, my dear, I do not desire the acquaintance for you. Not that I object to Kate—a girl of fourteen; but her brothers—rude, uncultured young men, of ages ranging from eighteen to twenty-six—are not desirable acquaintances for Lady Adelaide Deville.”

“But, mamma, I promised Kate to go and see her. My word must be redeemed, you know. Therefore, with your permission, I must go to see her once, at least,” said the young girl, with gentle firmness.

“She is not altogether the very soft wax I thought her,” reflected the lady, as she looked upon the mild but resolved countenance of the maiden.

“Well, my dear, since it is so, you may go once, on condition that you make no more rash promises without consulting me,” said her ladyship.

So, the next morning, Adelaide, attended, as usual, by her old groom, Nero, set out on horseback, to make her call.

They followed the course of the narrow brook, that wound through tangled thickets between the hills, for about a mile, when they came to a rustic bridge of logs, so narrow as only to admit the passage of one horse and rider at a time. Across this bridge, on the opposite side of the brook, was a dilapidated red-brick house, in a yard shaded by old trees and enclosed by a ruinous brick wall.

Adelaide and her attendant crossed the bridge and passed through the broken gateway into the yard.

An old negro crone, in a dingy, striped linsey gown, with a plaid handkerchief tied over her head, and a face withered away until it resembled a dried prune, was stooping to the ground, engaged in gathering sticks, which she carried in her apron.

“Hey, aunty! is Miss Katherine home?” inquired the young lady of this old beldame.

“Who, honey?”

“Your young mistress.”

“Oh, no, chile! She done gone out wid de young men arter de houn’s more ’an two hours ago,” said the crone.

“Give her this, then, when she comes, and tell her that I am very sorry to have missed her, and that she must come to see me at River-view,” said Lady Adelaide, handing her card.

“Yes, honey! Lor’s a messy ’pon me, what a putty gal you is, to be sure!” said the beldame, gazing after the young lady, as the latter turned her horse’s head, recrossed the bridge, and, followed by Nero, cantered down the banks of the brook.

When they reached home, Lady Elizabeth was rejoiced by the news that the visit had been fruitless.

“Now that you have fulfilled your promise, my dear, you must go no more! It does not well become the bride of Orville Deville to form promiscuous acquaintances,” said her ladyship.

Thus it followed that the Lady Adelaide and Kate Kyte met no more except in their casual morning rides. And yet the fates of these two young women were inextricably intertwined. Who can resist destiny?

Time passed.

The lovely Lady Adelaide grew in beauty, grace, and wisdom. Letters from Orville

came by every packet. Gradually that young gentleman had risen from copying to composing fine phrases; and his epistles, if less eloquent, were more honest in being his own productions. Adelaide, looking through his mother's eyes, thought them perfection. Indeed, her poetic admiration of the youth, "grew with her growth and strengthened with her strength;" blended with all her thoughts, affections and purposes; colored her whole character.

Had Orville Deville lived at home, so that she could have daily seen him as he really was, probably she never would have loved him.

But she had just one short and favorable week's acquaintance with him, and afterwards saw him only through the eyes of his mother.

Thus Orville became to her the one bright ideal of all exalted excellence! her hero and paladin! her Crichton and Bayard! the admiration of her credulous childhood! the passion, the infatuation of her youth!

This love, this adoration, this worship, as we may call it, had the happiest effect in the formation of her character. It incited her to self-examination and self-improvement. If, in her nature, she discovered any weakness, fault or folly, she set to work to eradicate it, that she might become more worthy of her hero.

In this Adelaide made but one mistake—a fatal one, sure to end in bitterness—she substituted man-worship for the worship of God.

When Lady Adelaide entered her sixteenth year, the Lady Elizabeth having conducted her education to the limit of her own acquirements, reluctantly concluded to place the young lady at a fashionable finishing-school in Philadelphia, where she could be instructed in dancing, waltzing, and other drawing-room accomplishments.

It was while Adelaide was still at this school, dreaming of her absent bridegroom, and trying to make herself worthy of his love, that Orville, having completed his Eton course, came home to visit his mother, previous to his contemplated entrance at Oxford.

Mr. Deville reached America at a crisis.

General Braddock had landed with his army, and was now in Virginia engaged in organizing his Provincial troops, and preparing to march against the combined French and Indian forces upon the North-Western frontier.

Every gentleman of importance resorted to his standard.

Kate Kyte's six brothers left her in a body.

Young Orville Deville, fired with martial ardor or love of adventure—who could tell?—wished to offer his services to General Braddock.

Lady Elizabeth, a mother as proud as she was fond, could not find it in her heart to keep her young hero back from what she sanguinely flattered herself would be, for him, a path of glory. And so, with a deep heart-ache, she gave her consent and called herself a Spartan mother.

Orville applied for and received a commission in a Provincial company, and was ordered immediately to his post to drill.

This disconcerted his mother's plan, which was, that before the time of marching he should pay a visit to Adelaide at her school.

So, without being allowed the opportunity of seeing his bride, the young man was compelled to take a hasty leave of his mother and join his company, which soon after marched for the frontier.

How that doomed enterprise ended, history has recorded in letters of blood!

Early in September, rumors of the defeat and death of General Braddock and the massacre of his fated army reached the Atlantic coasts, spreading consternation, sorrow, and maddening anxiety!

"Who has fallen? Who has escaped?" were the terrible questions asked continually by every mother, wife, or sister who had a son, husband, or brother in the army.

Brave Kate Kyte mounted her horse and rode away alone to the western wilds to

seek her lost brothers.

Lady Elizabeth Deville was almost frenzied with intense suspense. What had been the fate of Orville? Had he been killed, wounded, or carried off to a more horrible fate by the ruthless savages?

Many fugitives, wounded, worn, and starved, had wandered home from the field of blood; but not Orville!

Many others had been heard of; but not Orville!

The silence of the grave enveloped the fate of the widow's only son.

At length she fell ill and her physician wrote for her young daughter-in-law to come home and nurse her.

Lady Adelaide arrived, herself ill with intense anxiety, yet she resolved to hide her own suffering and to nerve her failing strength to the duty of sustaining Orville's mother. So she concealed her anxiety and sought to soothe, comfort, and cheer the invalid. And in her own young worshipping heart, she determined—should her hero have fallen—to devote her whole life to all that remained of him—his mother; and to live forever and forever, a maiden-widow for his sake.

It was about the middle of October that they got a letter from poor Kate Kyte, who, in her fruitless search through the wilderness for her brothers, had chanced to hear that Lieutenant Deville, an officer of Braddock's Provincials had been wounded, and was recovering at the house of a hunter in the neighborhood of Winchester.

This was the first drop of the elixir of hope that was given to cool their fever of suspense, and it nearly intoxicated them.

Messengers were dispatched to Winchester and the country round about. But before these messengers could have reached their destinations, the mother's and the bride's doubts were changed to joyful certainty. Lady Elizabeth received a letter, post-marked Winchester, from Orville himself, who bade his mother not to be

anxious upon his account, as, though he had been wounded, he was now recovered, safe and well, in the house of Mr. Delaforêt, an intelligent, gentlemanly, and hospitable settler in the back woods.

He said never a word of Lionne.

And—he sent no message to Lady Adelaide.

At first this neglect of herself made no impression on the gentle girl;—in the overwhelming joy of knowing him to be safe, all other considerations were lost. Afterwards, when the circumstance recurred to her memory, it made her thoughtful for a while, and then she rebuked herself, saying:

“I must not be egotistical. Perhaps he did not know that I was at home.”

Lady Elizabeth, still nervous, impatient, and hypochondriacal, bade her physician answer the letter and tell her son to hasten home; for that she was ill, sinking, and dying—to see him.

CHAPTER VIII. WHICH IS THE WIFE?

Holy St. Francis! what a change is here!

Is Rosaline, whom thou didst love so dear,

So soon forsaken? Young men’s love then lies

Not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes!—Shakespeare.

Orville Deville, with his back turned upon the wilderness and his face set homewards, fell into deep and troubled thought.

Once out of the fascinating sphere of the beautiful enchantress—who had charmed his reason and memory to sleep while she intoxicated his passions and imagination—Orville Deville began to come to his senses. It was a painful process. Indeed, all his emotions from the moment of setting forth upon his journey homeward had been unmitigated pain.

For first there was the impatient grief of the youthful lover parting from his love.

Then there was anxiety for the sick mother to whom he was going—that mother who thought her single and devoted affection had attained so great an influence over her spoiled and wayward son.

Lastly, from these two troubles arose a third more terrible than either. What had he done? While memory and reason slept, and passion and imagination waked and raved, what had he done?

He dared not answer his own question! He shrank shuddering from the thought of the name that the law would have given his crime!

While the master rode on in silent thought, the man whose gift was not silence, followed with an ill-used look. For every time that honest Nero had ventured to offer an observation, he had been put down by a surly—

“Hold your tongue!” from his master.

They had ridden four mortal hours without conversation, and poor Nero was growing desperate, when at last, he burst out with this wailing cry:

“Mar-ster!”

“Well?” growled the young man, arrested by the misery of his tone.

“I’m tired to death, sar, wid holding my tongue!”

“Humph!”

“And my heart’s ready to bust, sar, wid having nothing to say!”

“Talk, then!”

“Yes, sar! thanky, sar!” then with a sudden, merry change of tone, he said—“’Fore de Lord, sar, I’s berry glad how we’s done got away from down yonder!”

“Humph!”

“’Deed is I! cause you see, sar, how I does believe how ef we’d staid longer we’d

come to grief."

"Pshaw!"

"'Deed does I! 'Sides which I would'nt been answer'ble for de quincequonces!"

"Chut!"

"Young marse, chile, you needn't be scornful, nor likewise incredible in your mind. For ef ebber dis chile saw de debbil in de guise ob an angel ob light it was dat ere fierce, black-eyed young witch; which it's my full belief, as if you'd a-staid longer, she'd a-brought you to your ebberlasting ruination!"

"Sirrah!!"——

—Burst forth the young man, wheeling around upon the negro, with a suddenness and fury that caused the latter to jerk his own horse back upon his haunches, and with wildly-rolling eyes, chattering teeth, and quavering tones, exclaim:

"He's 'witched a'ready! I knowed it!—Oh, marster! for hebben sake, sar, don't ride ober me, an' I'll nebber do so no more!"

"Fool! look to your horse, or he'll fall upon you!" cried the young gentleman.

Nero, still desperately frightened, slackened his reins, brought down his horse and began to pat his neck and soothe him.

"There, idiot! that will do! now follow me! and whatever else you may do, never venture, either here or elsewhere, to me, or to any one else, to mention the name of the young girl to whom you refer! for if I ever hear of her again I shall know that the news must have come from you, and—I shall deal with you accordingly!"

"Me! an old man of sixty to be threatened by a boy, as I've been a father to!" whimpered poor Nero, as with a slow and solemn motion he shook his head and fell a little behind. The mysterious obscurity of that threat, too, had a fearful power over his imagination. He dared not brave an undefined retribution!

They were now travelling through the thick, almost unbroken forest lying between

the Alleghany mountains and the Blue Ridge.

As the day declined, though the density of the forest forbade them to see the country beyond, yet they were warned by the sound of rushing waters, that they were approaching the Blue Ridge, at the point where the upper forks of the Potomac, uniting, force their way through the everlasting mountains—the point where now stands the picturesque village of Harper's Ferry, but where then stood only a country-inn and ferry-boat, owned by one John Harper.

It was nightfall when they reached the Ferry. Dark towering mountains rose on either side, and wild waters rushed between.

They spent the night at the tavern, rested their horses, and by the earliest light of day crossed the ferry to the Maryland side, and continued their journey, following the course of the Potomac.

"An' be dis our own river as flows down by our house at River-view?" inquired Nero, in astonishment, as they turned their horses' heads to the south-east, and ambled down the narrow bridle-path between the towering precipices of the Blue Ridge on their left, and the wild, rushing waters of the Potomac on their right.

"Yes," answered his taciturn master.

"Well, all I has to say, it don't look a bit like it. Why here it is narrow and pent up, and scurries along, foaming and growling as if it had to tear every bit of its way through these great black rocks! Whereas down yonder, where we-dem live, it spreads out broad and grand, and smiling as the ocean!"

"Yes."

"And ef sich is so, please tell me ef we follow arter dis river, will we win home at last?"

"Yes."

"And ef you please, how long will it take us, marster?"

“Nero, if I answer your question, will you stop talking?”

“Hi, marse! to be sure! how I gwine listen, less I stop?”

“Very well; but will you promise not to ask any more questions?”

“I promises—for de present, marse!” said the non-committing Nero.

“Very well, then! It is sixty miles from here to Beall’s Ferry, where we shall sleep to-night. It is sixty miles from Beall’s Ferry to River-view, where we shall sleep to-morrow night. There! now don’t open your thick lips again until we get to Beall’s Ferry!”

“Lor’, marster!” exclaimed Nero, in horror, “my tongue’ll grow fast to de roof o’ my mouth!”

But his time of probation was not be so dangerously prolonged. For at midday they halted at the Point of Rocks, where there was a rustic house of entertainment for man and beast, to refresh themselves and their horses.

Here old Nero’s liberated tongue ran at large to landlord, landlady, maid, and hostler.

At one o’clock they resumed their journey, still following the south-eastern course of the river, that deepened and widened every mile, as its banks declined from rocky mountains to wooded hills.

At nightfall they reached the head of navigation, where the river suddenly widens around Analostran Island, and flows onward, the site where now the cities of Washington and Georgetown stand, but where then stood only a rustic tavern and ferry-house, kept by one George Beall and called Beall’s Ferry.

Here they passed the night.

And with the dawn of day and refreshed horses, they recommenced their journey.

At noon they halted an hour at Aquia Creek. And from this place onward, their journey became more difficult. From this point the tributaries of the Potomac were

broad, deep, and dangerous to cross. At that early period ferry-boats were not everywhere established, and often our travellers were compelled to turn out of their course, and ride up the banks of some creek, to find a rustic bridge or a safe ford. With these interruptions their last half day's journey was so protracted, that it was nearly midnight when at last they reached the woods that crowned the hill and shaded the homestead of River-view.

"Marster, may I speak now?" asked Nero, as their tired horses toiled up the side of the hill.

"Yes!" growled the morose youth.

"I think, being midnight, de fam'ly 'll be gone to bed. What 'ill us do?"

"I neither know nor care! I wish the Indians had finished me," he added, sotto voce.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, marse! I know where Kissiah sleep. I kin throw a pebble up to her windy, an' wake her to let us in widout waking de fam'ly."

"Very well; do it, then."

"Well, I 'clare to de Lord! I might be de greatest prime 'plomatist as ebber plotted, widout getting any 'preciation from my young marse!" mentally grumbled old Nero.

By this time they had reached the horse-block and turn-style at the north wall of the lawn.

All the dogs in the place burst upon them in full cry.

"This is a welcome!" exclaimed the young man, angrily.

"Down, Pomp! down, Tray! be easy, Carlo! don't you know me, Fidelle? hi! hi! Cæsar! what yer 'bout, Rover? there, there, Sweetlips! lick my hand if you like, but don't bite it!" were some of the conjurations by which old Nero subdued the insurgent army of dogs, and made them know their master.

"Now, sar!" he said, as he tied the horses to the rack and followed his master to the house. "T'other side, if you please, sar," he added, as he led the way to the back of

the building.

“Kissiah sleep up dar!” he said, as he lifted a pebble and threw it against a back window on the second floor.

It struck with a sharp crack, and instantly they heard some one within, in suppressed and fearful tones, cry—

“Oh, Lord! What dat!”

“Kissiah! it’s me! Kissy! it’s Nero!”

“Murder! fire! thieves!” cried the voice within.

“Hush, you fool! It’s nyther murder, nor fire, nor likewise thieves! It’s me and marse! Come down and let us in!”

“Lord, Nero, honey, how you frightened me! and the head of my bed right agin de windy, too!” said Keziah, putting her white turbaned head out into the night. “But is you sure it’s you and young marse?”

“Yes, you blockhead! leastways it’s what’s left of us after the amber-scalps had done eating. Now, then, look sharp!”

The head disappeared from the window; hurrying steps were heard descending the back-stairs, and the next moment the back-door, at which the travellers stood, was opened.

“How do you do, Keziah? I hope my mother is better!” said the young gentleman.

“Lors, young marse, how glad I is to see you! Yes, to be sure, de madam’s better, which I, for myself, never thought she was so bad! Come in, marster, chile! I’ll go and wake ’em all up directly.”

“Not for the world! just get me some little refreshment, and give me a bedroom candle, and I can take care of myself until to-morrow.”

“I’ll see about dat, young marse. Nero, you better go feed de poor dumb beases and put ’em up, hadn’t he, marse?”

“Yes.”

And at a signal from his master the old man went to obey.

“Now, marse, come into de parlor where it’s warm,” said Keziah, leading the way into a comfortable oak panneled room, where the hickory-wood fire of the previous evening was still smouldering.

She took her master’s hat, gloves and greatcoat, drew forward the easy chair, brought him a bootjack and a pair of slippers, mended the fire until it blazed again, and then leaving the wearied traveller as comfortable as circumstances would admit, went out to prepare, not “a little refreshment,” but a nice supper.

And in just half an hour a table stood at his side, covered with a snow-white cloth, adorned with a silver service, and laden with fine hot mocha coffee, rice cakes, broiled partridges, currant jelly, and other delicacies.

“This is rather better than the wilderness,” thought the young epicurean, as he watched Keziah pouring the rich coffee from the chased silver coffee-pot into the delicate porcelain.

“Yes! a great deal better than the wilderness,” he repeated, when half an hour afterwards he entered his spacious chamber, where the floor was covered with a soft, rich carpet, and the four-post bedstead and the two lofty windows were draped alike with warm, crimson damask.

“A vast deal better than any thing in the wilderness,” he reiterated, as he sunk into the luxurious crimson-covered chair that Keziah had drawn up before the glowing wood fire.

“Will you have any thing more, young marster?”

“No, Keziah, nothing. But to-morrow, when my mother is up and dressed, and has had her early cup of coffee, then, and not until then, tell her of my arrival.”

“Yes, sar;” and with a curtsey Keziah retired.

“Better than any thing in the wilderness except one——Oh Lionne! Beautiful, terrible Lionne! would that we had never met; or, having been doomed to meet, never parted! What fiend was it instigated me to marry her? And what will be the end?” thought Orville Deville, as he slowly rose and prepared for bed.

Once within his curtains, fatigue prevailed over anxiety, and Orville Deville sank into a sleep that lasted until morning.

CHAPTER IX. THE FAIR BRIDE.

Oh, dearest in the world! Full many a lady

I have eyed with best regard: and many a time

The harmony of their tongue hath into bondage

Brought my too diligent ear; for several virtues

Have I liked several women: never any

With so full soul but some defect in her

Did quarrel with the noblest grace she owned,

And put it to the foil! But you! Oh you

So perfect, and so peerless, are created

Of every creature’s best!—Shakspeare

When Orville Deville opened his eyes in the morning, they fell upon his own comfortable chamber, already prepared for rising.

Some soft-footed servant had silently entered and mended the fire and swept the hearth, from which now arose a ruddy blaze that lighted up the whole warm, crimson-hued room. The same hand had laid his dressing-gown and slippers over the easy-chair beside his bed. And had arranged his wash-stand and his shaving apparatus. And lastly, had drawn the tassel of the bell-rope over his headboard, in

easy distance of his hand.

The first emotion of the youth in waking from a vivid dream of the wilderness and of Lionne, was surprise at finding himself snugly in his own bed at home. The whole of his past life for the last few weeks seemed only parts of the same dream. Then came full memory, and with it remorse, grief, and dread.

His first action was to pull the bell-rope.

Keziah, with her soft feet and tender voice, answered it,

“Where is my servant? where is Nero?”

“If you please, my young marster, Uncle Nero set up so late last night telling all the negroes he could wake up to listen to him wonderful stories about—de amber-scalps, I think he called them,—that he is oversleeping himself this morning, and I thought our good marster would excuse him. ’Sides which, I thought I’d like, after all dese years, to wait on him myself! I believe I have fixed every thing. Is there any thing else I can do for marse?”

“No, my dear old foster-mother, nothing. Does your mistress know that I am here?”

“Not yet, Marster Orville. She is taking her coffee, and I thought I would not tell her until you woke up.”

“Quite right! How is my dear mother this morning?”

“Right smart! She says she’s sure you’d be home to-night! he! he! he! I could hardly help laughing when my lady said that, and I knowed how you were home already!”

“Dear mother! There, you may retire, aunty, and I will rise.”

Keziah punched the fire and made it blaze more brightly, went and opened the inside window-shutters, letting in a stream of morning sunshine through their rich crimson draperies, and then softly withdrew from the room.

“He nebber ax arter Lady Adelaide nyther last night nor yet this morning!” said the observant Keziah to herself. “But, then, maybe he’s bashful of axing about her,” she

added, hopefully.

Meanwhile, Orville dressed himself and went down-stairs. He opened the door of the parlor, which was on the right hand, first floor front.

Early as it was the room was in perfect order, bright, cheerful, and inviting. A fine fire burned in the fireplace. The crimson moreen curtains were looped back, so that the long windows, reaching from ceiling to floor, commanded the fine, broad, water prospect. Within the room every thing breathed of refined woman's occupation: little elegancies of furniture, little niceties of ornament, a delicate purity in the atmosphere, an etherial fragrance floating round; in one corner of the room a lute and music-stand, with some loose leaves of music; in another a drawing-board, with a half-finished sketch in water-colors; on the centre-table, near the fire, an open work-box, with a coil of embroidery; near it a tiny white kid glove, with the form of a beautiful hand still impressed upon it; lastly, a delicate pocket-handkerchief, breathing of roses.

With the interest of one long banished from cultivated female society, the young man roved about the room, taking up and examining with curiosity each article—looking at the drawing upon the easel, the music upon the stand, and the toys upon the mantle-piece. And finally he sat down by the centre-table and fell to playing with the articles there. First he looked into the little work-box; then he took up the tiny white glove, and smiled at the form of the taper-fingers left within it; then he meddled with the pocket-handkerchief, passing its delicate texture over his fingers.

Suddenly he dropped the handkerchief, as if from its folds a reptile had stung him!

He had seen in its centre the name—Adelaide Deville.

He groaned, and covered his face with his hands. Here was a bride who wore his ring, and bore his name, and claimed his hand,—and he,—what had he done?

While these terrible thoughts bowed down his head there came a soft, bright ray of

sunshine, a pure, sweet breath of flowers, a floating of white raiment and a flashing of golden ringlets, and he looked up to see the gardendoor open, and the fairest angel that ever took mortal form standing, bashful and blushing, in his presence!

“And who are you, fair spirit, who comes to me heralded by sunshine and fragrance?” was the question that arose to the young man’s lips; instead of speaking he got up, bowed gravely, and offered a chair to the young lady.

Without taking the offered seat she hesitated, blushed, smiled, and then with sweet frankness said:

“I am Adelaide, Mr. Deville. I hope you feel refreshed after your long journey.”

So! this fair angel was the Lady Adelaide, his child-bride, the girl who wore his wedding-ring, bore his name, and believed herself to be his wife!

For his life he could not have spoken a word. He acknowledged her greeting by a deep bow, and then he looked up at her.

A form of medium height and perfect symmetry, gracefully arrayed in a pure white muslin dress; a face of classic beauty; ringlets of soft, bright, golden hue, parted over a forehead clear as the purest pearls, and shading cheeks of the most delicate rose tint; full, crimson lips; eyes of heavenly blue, and a smile full of tenderness and truth.

“She is inexpressibly lovely, this fair bride of mine,” thought Orville Deville, as he discreetly withdrew his glances.

Perhaps his look had expressed this thought, for she blushed still more deeply, and dropped her eyes as she said:

“Your mother has sent me to beg you, Mr. Deville, to walk up into her room. Shall I show you the way?”

With a third bow, Orville intimated his readiness to follow her.

She led the way into the hall and up the stairs, opened the door of the front chamber

on the right, and saying:

“Here is Mr. Deville, mother,” meekly stood aside and let him pass in.

Then she crossed over to her own chamber, entered it, and stood, thoughtfully, looking out from the front windows upon the great water view.

“He never mentioned me in his letter; he never inquired for me when he got home; he has never even spoken to me since I came in! What does it mean? Oh, what does it mean? I know I am not worthy of him! I know I never can be! but have I done any thing very wrong, I wonder? Oh, if after all he should not like me!—I must not be egotistical. Mr. Deville had more important subjects of thought than the foolish girl who was waiting so eagerly to be recognized. I am of no importance. I ought to say that over to myself a great many times. I will expect nothing. I will be meek, and above all patient. How shall I ever be worthy of Orville, if I am not patient?” Such were the self-communings of Adelaide’s pure, worshipping young heart, as she stood looking out from her chamber-window upon the broad water prospect.

Meanwhile, Orville passed into his mother’s chamber. It was a cheerful room with white curtains to the windows and the tent bedstead, and white dimity covers to the toilet-tables and the chairs.

Lady Elizabeth, in a gray silk morning-dress and pretty lace cap, sat reclining in her easy chair before the fire. At her right side stood a little table covered with a white cloth, upon which stood her invalid breakfast-service. A cup of coffee was in her hand.

As Orville entered, and stepped rapidly up to her, she quickly sat down the cup, rose and dropped into his arms.

“My dear mother!”

“My dear, dear son! God be thanked for restoring you to me alive!”

Such were the first words of greeting.

Then she raised her head from his shoulder, sank back into her seat, and holding him off a little, gazed for a moment upon his face.

“Why, you are neither pale nor thin, my dear! Thank heaven for that! Were you badly wounded, my love? Oh, heaven! oh, Orville! I never can be a Spartan again! I shall never consent to your going off on such a dangerous expedition again, never! I shall never get over the terror and anxiety I have been in, never! Tell me all about it. But you haven’t had breakfast. Well, breakfast with me for once,” and she put out her hand and pulled the bell-rope at the chimney corner.

Keziah came in.

“Another cup and saucer, and plate, and more hot waffles for Mr. Deville.”

Her orders were obeyed. And while the mother and son drank their coffee, Orville, amid many interruptions, eager questions, and emphatic comments from Lady Elizabeth, told the story of Braddock’s fatal field.

When the tale was finished, and the breakfast-service removed, Lady Elizabeth signed for her son to draw his chair nearer, and said—

“You have seen Adelaide?”

“Yes, madam.”

“What do you think of her?”

The young man paused before he answered. Then slowly he said—

“She is the most beautiful, the most graceful, and the most charming maiden I ever saw. She is fair, sweet, and bright as a poet’s vision of an angel; and yet that does not do her full justice. She is more than all I have described. I want one comprehensive word——”

While the young man spoke, though it was with the air of a connoisseur rather than that of a lover, the lady looked at him with a brightening face.

“Well, that word that describes Adelaide—what is it?” she asked.

“Lovely!”

“Yes, that is it! Other girls may be beautiful, graceful, and fascinating; Adelaide is all that, and in addition to that, she is lovely.”

“Aye; for loveliness in woman includes all excellencies—beauty, wisdom, goodness!” said Orville, but still with the deliberation of a thinker, rather than with the ardor of a lover.

“Ah, you don’t know how good she is, my dear! how tender, how patient, how courageous, how devoted! You will only find that out in the close intimacy of your married life.”

Orville winced. Fortunately for him, Lady Elizabeth did not see it, and she continued her desultory talk.

“Now, Orville, consider—that charming creature is your own wife!”

Orville averted his head, and busied himself with his watch seals.

“She has been secured to you beyond all possibility of failure, by your mother’s solicitous affection. She has been taught from childhood to admire and respect you. To yourself has been left the more delightful task of teaching her to love you,” added this politic woman, knowing full well that men like to do all the courting themselves.

Orville cast down his eyes, and occupied himself with his knee-buckles.

“And now, Orville, all that I have to say to you, my son, is that there is nothing to prevent you taking your wife to your bosom. Your chamber, Orville, opens into hers. Be happy in her society; but in your great happiness do not utterly forget the mother whose care has secured you your greatest blessing,” and here the lady drew a lace handkerchief from the pocket of her dressing-gown and put it to her eyes.

Orville left his seat, walked up and down the floor uneasily, and finally pausing before his mother’s chair, said—

“I thought that it was fixed I should go to Oxford, mother?”

“So ’twas; but I have changed my mind since that time. I am getting old, Orville.”

“Old at forty, mother!”

“Well, at least I am not well; and since your terrible danger, I cannot bear that you should leave me for any length of time. Besides, as you have not your living to get, it is not really necessary that you should go to the university. A gentleman of fortune need not be a profound scholar. No, Orville, gratify me who have done so much for you. And, indeed, knowing that you have no great taste for learning, it is not much to ask you to settle down at your beautiful home and take your lovely bride to your heart.”

“Madam,” said the young man, respectfully, “there is one thing that you have lost sight of.”

“And what is that?”

“Adelaide Lorne and myself were but children at the time of our betrothal.”

“Betrothal! it was MARRIAGE!!”

Orville knew that perfectly well, though he had chosen to use another word.

“Well, madam, marriage, then. Adelaide Lorne——”

“You forget—Adelaide Deville,” amended his mother, whose feminine instincts had detected some design in the persistence with which he gave his bride her maiden name.

“The Lady Adelaide Deville, then, and myself were children at the time that marriage was solemnized between us; and we could neither have known each other or understood the purport of what we mutually promised. From that time to this we have never met until to-day. It may possibly be that the young lady may not find me the least to her taste; in which case I should consider the marriage-ceremony solemnized between two children not binding upon either.”

“Not binding upon either! your marriage not binding upon either! Sacred honor! Orville Deville, what do you mean?”

“What I said, dear mother; that a marriage ceremony between a boy of fifteen and a girl of twelve can not be binding upon the after lives of either.”

“Oh, I grant you that a marriage between parties of that early age would not be binding unless sanctioned by parents or guardians. But yours was so sanctioned; no legal form was omitted. Your marriage is as strong as law and gospel can make it. You two are bound together as fast as church and state can bind a man and woman, in a marriage indissoluble, except by death or crime! An examination of the statute laws of England and Scotland relating to marriage will satisfy you upon this point. Yet why trouble yourself? Dear Adelaide does not even dream of evading her duties.”

Orville was not thinking of Adelaide or her dreams. He was bitterly reflecting upon the folly, sin, and danger into which his headlong passions had hurled him.

If his marriage with Adelaide was an indissoluble bond, in the name of honor, what was his marriage with Lionne?

A felony to which he dared not give its legal name.

“You do not answer me, my son,” observed Lady Elizabeth.

“Madam,” replied the young man, with a strange smile, “give me time to realize my happiness!” And rising, with a bow, he left the room.

He went down-stairs, and with the aimlessness of a perplexed mind he strolled into the parlor.

There was a scene that surprised and mortified him. It was now ten o’clock, yet there stood the little breakfast-table, with its snowy damask and elegant service, and there sat Adelaide, patiently waiting and filling up the time with some little needle-work.

As soon as she saw him, she arose with a smile, touched the bell, and, when Keziah entered, said—

“Mr. Deville is ready for breakfast; serve it immediately.”

Orville turned around upon her with a look of surprise, which said, “I hope you have not waited for me!”

And Keziah said plainly, “Why, Mr. Deville has breakfasted with Lady Elizabeth!”

Adelaide turned her gentle blue eyes inquiringly towards Orville.

“Yes, I took coffee with my mother this morning. You should have been notified. I am very sorry you were kept waiting,” said the young man.

“Oh, it is not worth a moment’s thought, much less regret,” said Adelaide, cheerfully.

“But,” said the young man, glancing covertly at her sweet face, “your table is very tempting; and as it has been two hours since I took the single cup of coffee and the half waffle, that Keziah pleases to miscall my breakfast, perhaps you will not consider me an unpardonable gourmand if I beg leave to join you.”

“Oh, certainly not! Keziah, bring in the grouse,” said Adelaide, smiling more brightly than before.

The chocolate and the muffins were already on the board, and Keziah soon sat the roasted grouse before her master.

And while Adelaide poured out the chocolate, Orville carved the bird, and covertly watched her pearl-white hand as it fluttered among the cups and saucers.

But for the dull aching of the sin at the bottom of his heart, Orville must have greatly enjoyed the tête-a-tête breakfast with this fair creature. And even as it was—in gazing upon her, his heart swelled, if not with manly love, at least with boyish pride, as he thought:

“I am not a guest here! I am master! This house and these servants are mine! I sit at

my own table! and that fair creature, who is pouring out my chocolate, is—my wife! my wife! my own, own indisputable wife! no power on earth can take her from me! so says the church, the state, and my mother, who is just as infallible as the others. How many men in this world would risk their soul's salvation for the possession of that lovely creature! Yes, great statesmen, great scholars, great generals would! and yet, if it were to save their lives or their souls, not one of them could get her, because she belongs to me! she is my wife!"

Oh, heaven! what sudden thought was that which bowed his haughty head and struck all color from his cheek?

It was his secret consciousness making itself heard through all the éclat of his pride, and putting the fearful question:

"And if Adelaide is your wife—what then is Lionne?"

"Would to heaven I had never seen Lionne! beautiful, terrible, fatal Lionne!" thought the young man, with a shudder.

When breakfast was over and the service removed, Adelaide said, gaily:

"You will please to excuse me now, Mr. Deville. I am your mother's housekeeper, and must go to my duties," and taking up her little basket of keys, she nodded and withdrew.

Orville returned the bow, and inwardly resolved that a housekeeper should be found to emancipate this fair girl from what he was pleased to call domestic drudgery.

He sauntered about for a while like a lost spirit, and finally rambled off towards the library to find pen and ink to write to Lionne.

The library was on the opposite side of the hall, and back of the saloon. In going thither, he caught a glimpse of Adelaide in a linen apron and doe-skin mittens, with a little basket of keys in her hand, and he heard her light, cheerful tones saying to the cook:

“Boiled rock-fish, with egg-sauce and mashed potatoes. Remove with boiled ham and cauliflowers, to be followed by roasted canvas-back ducks, with celery dressing. The usual side-dishes. I will be in the kitchen in time to attend to the jellies and the custard.”

He hurried past and got into the library, found stationery, and sat down to write to Lionne.

And by a very natural, but very reprehensible rule of human action, the more doubtful he felt of the durability of his attachment, the more positive he was in protestations of fidelity. It was a long, long letter, from which, upon account of its significance, we must make one short extract:

“My mother, dearest, is out of immediate danger, yet her condition is still so precarious as to forbid my leaving her, for the present. Yet, dearest, rest assured that as soon as I can properly do so I will hurry back to your side! And now my bright Lionne, I wish you to rest with perfect confidence on my fidelity. And whatever befalls—whether my letters should in these uncertain routes be delayed, or even lost—or weeks, or even months should elapse without your hearing from me—do not torment yourself with false doubts of me. I tell you this, in advance, that you may remember weather and the roads are uncertain, mails unreliable, and post-offices are fallible; but that I am faithful through life and unto death!”

Having sealed this letter and directed it to Winchester, he put it in the family mail-bag that went twice a week to the nearest post-town—Port Tobacco.

“I know not how all this is to end. I must meet the consequences as I can best,” he muttered, as he deposited the letter. He saw no more of Adelaide until dinner time. When the bell rang he sauntered into the dining-room, where, to his surprise and gratification, he saw his mother sitting at her place at the head of the table.

Replying to his look of inquiry, that lady said:

“Yes, my dear. Your return home has been a better tonic to me than Jesuit’s bark

itself. This is the first day that I have left my chamber, and I have left it to dine with you. Sit down; Adelaide will be here presently."

Orville stooped and kissed his mother's hand, and then went to his place and stood waiting for Adelaide's coming. He had not long to wait. She came in, neatly and prettily dressed in a light gray silk, with a delicate lace tucker and frills, and took her seat at the side of the table. Her presence there seemed to light up the whole scene. Lady Elizabeth and herself talked and jested lightly as happy mother and daughter, and drawing Orville into the gay conversation, charmed him from his gloomy thoughts.

When dinner and the dessert were over, they adjourned to the drawing-room on the other side of the hall, where coffee was ordered to be served, for Lady Adelaide playfully remarked that on this festive day of Orville's return home, and his mother's re-appearance in the parlor, the family should keep state!

It was impossible not to feel the influence of her happy spirit; her innocent gaiety was contagious.

When the fragrant Mocha had been imbibed, and all felt its enlivening effect, Lady Elizabeth said—

"Now open your harpsichord, my dear, and give us something."

"Have you a choice, Mr. Deville? But of course you have. Name it," said Adelaide.

"Let me hear your own favorite, my dear cousin," replied Orville, attending her to the instrument.

She sat down, opened her folio of sacred music, and struck into the prelude of Stoeckle's glorious "Creation of Light."

No words of mine can give a fair idea of that magnificent harmony or its effect upon its audience. Its greatest tribute was the perfect silence that succeeded it. No vain, impotent word of praise, was spoken. The anthem, after a short interval, was

followed by a heroic ballad, and that again by several humorous songs sung to the accompaniment of the guitar.

And then as the songstress was weary, and the afternoon was far spent, Lady Elizabeth said—

“My dear Adelaide, that will do. It is time you should take your usual ride. I will go and lie down. And Orville must amuse himself in his own way until you meet at supper.”

And she rang for her maid to attend her to her chamber.

“You are going to ride?” inquired Orville, as soon as he was left alone with Adelaide.

“Yes, I always ride in the afternoon.”

“Will you let me have the pleasure of attending you?”

“Oh, yes! I should be much obliged,” said Adelaide, blushing with delight.

He rang the bell and gave the order—

“Nero, saddle Norse King and bring him around with Lady Adelaide’s palfrey.”

They separated to don their riding-habits, and in a few minutes met in the front hall.

Fairer still shone Adelaide’s fair beauty in contrast to her dark blue riding-dress and her little, black velvet jockey-cap, with its single black plume.

“Have you any particular route laid out, dear Adelaide?” inquired the young man.

“No, unless it is to ride up to the border of Bush Creek, to see if the old negroes there have heard news of Kate Kyte or her brothers.”

“Very well: up Bush Creek we go, then,” said Orville, as he lightly lifted her to the saddle.

They rode through the north gate and down the wooded hillside to the thickly wooded valley, and turning their horses’ heads eastward, soon reached the banks of

Bush Creek, and followed its beautiful windings under the skeleton shadows of the leafless trees until they reached the rustic bridge, the ruined mill, and the old homestead.

“A wild spot!” said Adelaide, turning half apologetically to her companion.

“And a wild race to own it!” said Orville, in reply.

“Yet we miss them! the country has been too still almost, for the want of their running hounds, and racing horses and their joyous ‘tally-ho!’—I hope no harm has come to Kate and her merry men!”

“Kate and her merry men, my dear!” exclaimed Orville, who not being nearly so innocent as Adelaide, fancied something queer in her words.

“Why, yes, Kate, and her merry men, I say again! You have been away. You have not known the Kytes since they all grew up. Kate is the youngest of a family of seven—a sole sister in a band of brothers—lives with them, rides with them, hunts with them, hawks with them, and she would have enlisted with them, if the recruiting officer would have taken her. Her brothers, in their rough chivalry and brotherly love, accord to this fiery little amazon sister the first rank among themselves; they delight to make her a little queen; so, as Kate is a sort of Robin Hood, I call her brothers her merry men!”

“Ah, well, here we are at the bridge. Let me go first, dear, to try the soundness of these logs,” said Orville.

“No! mine is the lightest weight, and consequently the least danger,” said Adelaide, as she spurred her horse and flew past him,—her long skirt, and long plume, gracefully waving in the air behind her.

“Who would have thought the little fairy had so much courage, promptitude and self-will!” thought Orville, as he followed her over the creaking bridge.

They passed through the old gate into the yard. There was the old gray stone-house,

and the gigantic old oaks, elms and poplars, and over all the dreary look of desertion and solitude. No human creature was in sight. Yes! there was old Luce, the aged negro crone, stooping and gathering sticks in her apron, doubtless to cook her supper.

The reader may take this as a general fact, that when poor old Luce was visible outside the house, she was always gathering sticks.

“How do you do?” said Adelaide, kindly.

“The rum beggar, honey! the rum-beggar in my spine!” said the old creature, raising herself with difficulty, and putting her right hand to the small of her back, while she carefully held her apron of chips with her left.

“What does she mean?” asked Orville.

“The lumbago. I am sorry. Luce! but I will send you some opodeldoc to cure it. Has Miss Kate, or any of the young men been heard from?”

“No, honey, I ain’t hearn a single halloo from any on ’em to-day. I don’t ’spect how dey’ll be home till de fox brush is taken.”

Adelaide looked in surprise and pain from the old woman’s lack-lustre eyes to her cousin’s face; and then, to test her, she asked:

“When did they leave home, Luce?”

“Child, ‘pears to me dis mornin’ or some time; I don’t memorize zactly, but I must get supper for ’em.”

“Poor, old creature, she knows nothing of their fate, and she has lost her wits. I must attend to her,” thought Adelaide, as she took a kind leave of old Luce, and turned, attended by Orville, towards River-view. The sun had set. The autumn-wind was rising and wailing through the leafless forest, as they crossed the rude bridge and turned down the path leading along the Bush Creek.

“You are silent, fair cousin,” said Orville, noticing that his companion rode on with

slack rein and downcast looks.

“I am thinking of Kate Kyte! Dear, brave, glorious Kate!”

“And what about her, dearest?”

“Hark to that wind! Wintry weather is at hand, with tempests, deep snows and impassible roads! and where, in the houseless and pathless wilderness, is Kate?”

“But, lovely Adelaide, how came she in the wilderness?”

“She went to seek her lost brothers! After the news of the massacre, her impatient spirit, rebelling against protracted suspense, urged her to venture in quest of them. And now she is alone in the howling wilderness, exposed to the fury of the elements, the rapacity of wild beasts and the cruelty of wild savages!”

“Well, my dearest, if this young Quixota would go in search of adventures, and has roamed beyond your power to recall her, dismiss her from your mind!”

“As if I could!” thought Adelaide, who sincerely approved the wisdom of the advice, though her sympathetic heart forbade her to follow it.

The rising wind, driving black clouds up over the evening sky, so obscured their path that they felt the growing necessity of hurrying home ere it should become too dark for safe riding. It was, in fact, quite dark when they reached the horse-block in front of the hall-door.

Orville sprang from his horse and lifted Adelaide from her saddle.

She gathered up her riding-skirt and ran into the house.

Tea was served in Lady Elizabeth’s room, where a cheerful evening was spent.

At ten o’clock Lady Elizabeth, retaining Adelaide near her a little longer, dismissed Orville from her room. The young man almost immediately retired to his chamber, where he found a fine fire burning, and all things made comfortable for his accommodation.

Orville remained apparently luxuriating in his bachelor paradise. In smoking-cap,

dressing-gown and slippers, he leaned back, half buried in the easiest of easy chairs; his feet reposed upon the softest of leopard-skin rugs; before him burned the brightest of wood fires; at his right hand stood convenient a little stand with a quiver of the most fragrant cigars and a bottle of the oldest Madeira.

He first quaffed a glass or two of the choice old wine, and then lighted his cigar, and extending his feet towards the fire, lapsed into dreaming and smoking. In the wall on his right hand was a white door leading into the adjoining room, the bower of maiden beauty, the sanctuary of maiden innocence,—in a word, the chamber of his unclaimed bride, Adelaide.

As the evil spirit gazed on the gates of paradise, so glanced he at that white door.

“Curious,” thus ran his thoughts, “curious! That is my wife’s room; I know it, and my mother says it, and with her blessing bids me freely enter! she expects me to enter, I have the right to enter, I wish to enter, and yet, knowing what I know, how dare I! Heigh-ho!” and so the smoking, the dreaming, and the covert glancing at the white door went on, until it was all interrupted by approaching footsteps, as if of two persons coming softly along the passage. They entered the adjoining chamber, and then, in the deep stillness of the night, he heard the low tones of Adelaide’s voice saying to her attendant—

“Hush! shut the door softly after you, Keziah; your master retired very much fatigued, no doubt; he is likely asleep; do not risk disturbing him by the least noise.”

Next he heard a mumbled, inarticulate reply, and then the departure and the retiring footsteps of the waiting-woman.

“Ah, my fair Adelaide thinks that I can sleep! Well, let her think so. I will not stir to break that illusion,” thought Orville, as he held his very breath in silence. It was this deep quiet in every part of the house, as well as in his own chamber, that made every slightest sound in the adjoining room so distinctly audible to him. Perhaps because he could not help listening, or without listening, could not help hearing, he heard

every motion of the fair girl as she passed about her room; her soft, light step in crossing the floor; the gentle rustle of silk and muslin, as she laid aside her evening-dress and prepared herself for her couch; the reverential deliberation with which she sank upon her knees, and the low, melodious murmur in which her evening prayer was offered up; then he heard her commit her innocent soul to the holy keeping of God, and her fair person to the repose of her couch.

And then followed a silence so deep that the utmost straining of attention could not make out one sound. Unwilling to break this spell of sacred silence, Orville remained sitting in his easy chair, until at length, overcome with weariness, he slept, and sleeping, dreamed. He thought that, unable longer to deny himself the companionship of his lovely bride, he had arisen and approached the white door; that he had his hand upon the knob; that he had turned the latch and opened, and was about to advance his foot over the threshold, when he felt himself caught and violently hurled back. Gathering himself up, and looking around, he saw before him the haughty figure, flowing ringlets, and flashing black eyes of his wild forest-love, Lionne.

And with a cry he awoke and came to himself.

But so real had seemed that dream, so strong remained its impression, that groan after groan burst from the sin-burdened bosom of the young man, and they were only suppressed at last in fear of disturbing Lady Adelaide.

It was late before Orville laid his head upon his pillow, now sown thick with the thorns of an uneasy conscience.

And thus ended his first day at home.

The second day was like the first; a tête-a-tête breakfast with the fair Adelaide, a forenoon spent in the dilettanteism of leisurely country life, a cheerful family dinner, an hour in the drawing-room enlivened by music, then a long ride among the hills, then the social tea-table, and the long winter evening, spent in reading, in music, and

in enlivening conversation.

But that which gave vivacity to this calm country life was the presence of Adelaide. It was not only her enchanting beauty—a dayspring of delight to all who looked upon her—nor her genius and accomplishments, which were the chief source of home recreation in their quiet lives, nor even her angelic goodness, which was the greatest comfort of all connected with her; it was not only these that invested her with a peculiar interest and temptation for Orville.

It was this, mark it!

She held the position of his wife, and the mistress of his house! She, the meek, the humble, the unassuming maiden, the neglected bride, held this rank, from which no human power could displace her. Unconsciously, on her own part, had the gentle girl been inducted into this position. First, during the illness of Lady Elizabeth, she had willingly enough accepted the duties of housekeeper. Then, after Orville's return and the invalid's rapid convalescence, she from habit still continued to manage domestic affairs, to carry the keys, and to sit at the head of the table; and with so much faithfulness, competency, and easy grace were all these duties accomplished, that no one could have wished to see her place filled by another.

One day, indeed, when Lady Elizabeth seemed unusually well and cheerful, just as they were all about to sit down to dinner, Adelaide, with a blush, put her hand on the chair she herself usually occupied at the head of the table, and said—

"Will you not now resume your place, mamma?"

"No, my dear. I have abdicated in favor of Lady Adelaide Deville. My son's wife must henceforth take the head of my son's table," said the elder lady, very pointedly; and taking the hand of her daughter-in-law, she gently but decidedly placed her in the chair of honor.

Her action was perfectly regular.

What could Adelaide do but blush more vividly than before as she sank into the

seat?

What could Orville say, even though his silence gave consent? Nothing. He only bowed in tacit acknowledgment of the arrangement.

And from this day, if ever by chance a servant came to Lady Elizabeth for instructions, she was careful to say—

“You are henceforth to take all your orders from Lady Adelaide Deville, who is now mistress of this house.”

The news spread in the kitchen, and the servants began to speak of the Lady Adelaide as “our mist’ess,” and of the older lady as “ole missus.” All this greatly embarrassed Orville, who went to his mother’s chamber to expostulate.

“My dear mother, why do you afflict me by yielding up your position as the mistress of this house?”

“Because it is not my just position, Orville,” replied the lady.

“And why is it not?”

“Because the house is not mine but yours.”

“Then, if it is mine, I desire, my mother, that you retain your place at the head of the establishment.”

“But that would not be just, Orville. That place belongs to the young lady whom you have made your wife; whom I have very carefully brought up, and instructed in all the duties appertaining to the mistress of a family, and who is, consequently, quite competent to their fulfilment. I take great comfort, indeed, in witnessing how admirably she sustains the character.”

“But you, my mother?”

“I repeat that I am proud and happy to abdicate in favor of your wife.”

“My wife! good heaven!” thought Orville, distractedly, as he left his mother’s chamber.

As the news of Lady Adelaide's return from school, of Mr. Deville's arrival at home, and of Lady Elizabeth's re-appearance in the parlor spread abroad, the county families began to call and pay their respects and offer their congratulations. And to every one of these in succession was the young mistress of the mansion presented by Lady Elizabeth as—

"My daughter-in-law, Lady Adelaide Deville."

And from each one in turn did Mr. Deville and Lady Adelaide receive the customary congratulations offered to a bridal pair.

Among the visitors came the Reverend Mr. Sinclair, the pastor of the Presbyterian parish of Bush Creek, and his young wife, who was an intimate friend of Lady Adelaide's.

In welcoming and shaking hands with Orville the minister said—

"I wish you a long and happy wedded life with the lady of your choice, Mr. Deville; and in congratulating you on the auspicious event of your marriage, I do not do so in mere formality, but with the most earnest conviction of your blessedness in the possession of a young creature whose lovely nature approaches as near the angelic as fallen human nature may. Cherish her, my dear young friend, as the choicest gift of Heaven!"

What could Orville do but bow deeply, and thus indorse all that the minister took for granted?

Thus every day strengthened the position of the young unclaimed wife as mistress of the mansion. And every day, also, marked her progress in the esteem of him who was called—and who should have been worthy to be called—her husband.

Orville Deville felt as though he had lost all power over his own fate, and was being drifted he knew not whither.

His manner towards his fair young bride evinced the deepest respect, the most

delicate tenderness, and the most affectionate courtesy; yet he carefully avoided every thing that could be construed into courtship.

And Adelaide, so long as he was kind, remained perfectly happy in her simplicity, never dreaming that she was the object of commiseration which every one in the house thought her to be—a neglected bride. She was happy in fulfilling all duties required of her, as wife, daughter, friend, mistress and Christian. Happy, if you please, in ruling her house, managing her domestic affairs, caring for her young husband's comforts, noticing his tastes at table, preparing his favorite dishes, and taking care of his wardrobe; happier still in riding alone with him every afternoon through the wintry woods, over the bleak hills, or along the sanded beach by the water side; or, when seated at her work-table by the evening fire-side, listening to his voice in reading; happiest of all while sitting at his side each Sabbath-day at church, listening to the word of God!

Reader! do we wonder that a thunderbolt from heaven did not strike this sinner from the side of the youthful saint?

No; for we know that God permits the tares to grow with the wheat until the day of the final harvest.

Meanwhile this young sinner was in some sense to be pitied. To see his fair young bride so perfect in her loveliness; to know her his very own, and to refrain from taking her to his heart, was growing every day more difficult.

He, a young man educated at Eton, had never before known what good and beautiful young girlhood was. And now that he recognized, he reverenced this womanly excellence that approached as nearly as possible to angelic perfection. He regarded his past, vehement, but transient passion for wild Lionne in its true light—as a short madness. He recognized in Adelaide—had he been worthy of her—the angel of his better life.

"She is beautiful, amiable, and accomplished. She is 'altogether lovely.' I love her!

and I feel that she loves me. I know that she is my own—that no one disputes my claim; and yet because of the fetter of sin that binds me, I dare not approach her! Oh! am I not punished for my sin? Is not my fate worse than that of Tantalus?" Thus in the bitterness of his heart he mused, one winter afternoon, as he rode beside Adelaide.

He had been so long silent that she suddenly turned her head and looked at him with close attention.

And then, for the first time in their acquaintance, she saw that he was unhappy.

The discovery pierced her gentle bosom like a sword!

Adelaide had borne neglect, without, in her sweet humility, even knowing that she was neglected! She would have gone on drawing her happiness from her duties—from her pleasantest occupation in ministering to his comfort—and never, in the unexacting, unsuspicious meekness of her heart, asked herself the question whether she were appreciated or repaid.

But now she saw the idol of her worshipping young heart unhappy, and—her own peace of mind was gone! She had been so long tutored to believe that his comfort was her own proper care—that she was the custodian of his domestic happiness—that now, when she saw the cloud upon his brow, she began to examine her conscience to see in what particular she had been remiss. She could come to no absolute certainty upon any point, but resolved to devote herself with more assiduity than ever to her duties.

And from this day, it would have been a piteous sight to any sympathetic observer, to witness her frequent, mute, appealing gaze, that asked so plainly—

"Ah! what can we do to give you ease and pleasure? If you would only speak and tell us, how glad we should be to gratify you!"

Lady Elizabeth thought her son the most insensible of all men, and was exasperated to use many little expedients to bring the young couple to a better understanding.

Being on much more intimate terms with her daughter-in-law than with her son, she one day entered the chamber of the young lady, and asked Adelaide—

“What in the world is the matter between you and Orville? You are not at all like a bride and groom in their honeymoon! Now what is amiss?”

“I do not know, indeed, dear mamma, but I see that he is very unhappy. I am afraid that I do not act rightly, and I am, besides, so ignorant or blind that I cannot see where I am remiss. If you know, dear mamma, please tell me.”

“I do know one little thing.”

“What is it, dear friend? what can I do?”

“Put his chamber to rights.”

“Keziah attends to that, and she is very faithful,” said Adelaide, blushing deeply.

“Keziah! My dear, the most competent servant that ever lived cannot give delicate finishing touches to the arrangement of a room. Come, let us go in and see Keziah’s handiwork,” said the lady, rising and approaching the white door.

“But, dear mamma, such a trifle as the condition of his room, never could make Mr. Deville so unhappy as he now seems.”

“No, not in itself, but as a token of his wife’s indifference, it might.”

Adelaide started, and looked wistfully into the face of her mother-in-law. She was far from indifferent, poor girl!

“Why, this door is locked, and the key is on your side, Adelaide! how is this?”

“Why, dear mamma, I always fasten both the doors of my chamber; and as I never have occasion to use this door, it remains fastened,” said Adelaide, simply.

“In fact, I do not wonder that Orville is unhappy,” said the lady, petulantly.

“Why, dear mamma? what do you mean?”

“To be locked out of his wife’s apartment in this manner!”

“I had no intention of locking him out in particular! He never wished to pass through this room that I know of!”

“Orville is a gentleman, I hope you know, my dear.”

“Dear mamma, I do not comprehend you at all! Pray tell me in what I have erred! Indeed, I have an earnest desire to do right!” pleaded Adelaide.

“You have turned the key on Orville, who has as much right as yourself to the freedom of this room, and you should know, Adelaide.”

“But I did not know! Indeed, I meant no offence! Pray, do not be angry! the key shall not be turned again!”

“I do not intend that it shall—on Orville!” thought the matron, as she withdrew it and put it in her own pocket, leaving Adelaide without means of fastening the communicating-door.

They passed into the adjoining room, which, begging Lady Elizabeth’s pardon, was as well arranged as it could possibly be, and needed “no finishing touches” at all. The crimson curtains to the bedstead and the windows were as gracefully festooned, and the mantle ornaments and toilet services were as tastefully arranged, as the hands of the most delicate young lady could have managed it.

Even Lady Elizabeth was constrained to admit that the appointments wanted no “finishing touches,” and much to Adelaide’s relief, they left the room.

The same day, while Adelaide was down-stairs, preparing some jellies for dinner, Lady Elizabeth ascended to her daughter-in-law’s room, where she waited until she heard her son come up and pass into his own apartment. Then she called—

“Come in here, Orville!”

Mr. Deville started and looked around, not knowing exactly whence the voice came.

“Here, in Adelaide’s chamber,” again called his mother’s voice.

This time he knew, and he advanced and laid his hand upon the knob of that sacred

white door, turned the latch, opened it, and looked for the first time upon the sanctuary of Adelaide's privacy.

A chamber, white curtained and white draperied, with the indescribable fragrance of youth, beauty, and girlhood lingering about it; a scene of simplicity, purity, and holiness.

Well might he linger on the threshold. His mother, seeing his hesitation, said—

"Do not be afraid, Orville. Dear me! what are you thinking of? It's your wife's room, and consequently your own."

His own! He might have a legal privilege, but he felt that he had no moral right to enter there! At his mother's invitation, he crossed the threshold, but felt as uncomfortable, as much out of his sphere, as a sinner might feel in heaven!

"Come here and sit beside me on this couch; I want to talk to you, Orville," she said.

He obeyed, and placed himself beside her on the dimity lounge.

In truth she had little of any importance to say; all she wished to do, was to bring him through that communicating-door; but having done so, she affected to consult him on the cutting down of certain timbers, and the reclaiming of certain swamp lands, until the bell rang for dinner, when this conference broke up.

Yet days and weeks passed, and with all her manœuvering Lady Elizabeth did not succeed in bringing the young couple to what she called a good understanding.

Time wore on. Orville and Adelaide talked, walked, read, and rode together as usual, as the most affectionate brother and sister might do; only it is certain that never brother loved a sister as Orville loved Adelaide, and never a sister repaid a brother with such a heart-whole devotion as Adelaide rendered to Orville. This was all! Their marriage-ceremony remained a dead letter, and Lady Elizabeth was in despair, and was driven to new expedients.

"Though they will not advance, I will put it out of their power to recede," said her

ladyship; and thereupon, Christmas being at hand, she issued a large number of invitations for a dinner and ball, to be given at River-view.

In those days, and in that neighborhood, all complimentary tickets were written; and the preparation of tickets of invitation was no small part of the trouble of the getting up of a large party.

Lady Elizabeth, one morning after breakfast, called her daughter-in-law into her own chamber to assist her in this business.

She sat down at the writing-table with a ream of note paper on her right hand, and Lady Elizabeth's visiting-list on the other.

She began, as she had been accustomed to begin—

"Lady Elizabeth Deville presents her compliments——" when that lady looking over her shoulder, said—

"No, my dear love, that is not proper."

"How then, dear mamma?"

"Write—'Mr. and Lady Adelaide Deville present, etc.' The dynasty of River-view is changed, you know, my dear child, and the world around us must understand it."

Adelaide, accustomed to subordination, readily obeyed.

And the cards were written and issued accordingly; and now the neighborhood, as well as the household, knew that henceforth the young and lovely Adelaide was mistress of River-view.

The dinner and ball came off on Christmas evening.

The guests—many of them mere acquaintances from a distance—were all presented to Lady Adelaide Deville as their hostess.

In a rich and tasteful evening-dress of pale blue brocade, over white satin, and with her golden hair dressed with a wreath of harebells, Adelaide looked more beautiful than Orville had ever before seen her. Her beauty, grace, and accomplishments

elicited general admiration, and the heart of Orville swelled with pride, as well as with love, to hear her called his wife. How proudly, how gladly would he also have called her thus! but it might not be, for, in the very height of his anticipated happiness, visions of the village inn in which he had wedded Lionne, visions of the crystal grotto that had been their bridal bower, arose in vengeance to dash the desired cup of joy from his lips! One evil change was coming over the spirit of Orville,—for his sin in having yielded to his transient passion for Lionne he no longer blamed himself, but accused his fate.

The initiative Christmas-party given at River-view acted as a suggestion and a stimulus to the festive hospitality of the neighborhood. Other dinners and balls followed in rapid succession. Never before in that neighborhood had been known so gay a Christmas and New-Year. And everywhere the young married-pair, as they were called, were fêted, toasted, and admired to the heart's content of Lady Elizabeth! There was no retrograding now! no such thing as denying or repudiating a marriage so generally published, so universally acknowledged!

Still time wore on. Spring approached. Orville had received no answer to his letter to Lionne. This circumstance, which might have distressed a faithful lover, elated him.

It was early in March that an event occurred that tended to precipitate a denouement, if not a catastrophe

It was one evening that the family were still lingering at the tea-table, when old Nero came in from the post office, with the mail-bag stuffed quite full.

"An unusually large mail," exclaimed Orville, with gusto, as he seized the bag with the anticipation of a great treat.

"Furrin post," remarked old Nero, laconically.

"How should you know?" asked his master.

"Pos' marser told me—came in wid de packet-ship Prince o' Whales' from Libberpool, in furrin parts."

“It is the English papers,” said Orville, gaily, as he emptied the bag upon the table and began to distribute its contents.

“No letters, but we can dispense with them this time!—Here, mother, is the ‘Morning Post,’ always your favorite!—The ‘Court Journal,’ my dear Adelaide, I suppose will be the most acceptable to you.—I will look into the ‘Times.’”

And without leaving the table, Orville was soon deep in parliamentary debates; Adelaide in court gossip; and Lady Elizabeth in fashionable intelligence,—when the latter suddenly exclaimed—

“Heaven bless us!”

At this startling invocation both Orville and Adelaide looked up.

Lady Elizabeth’s attention was concentrated upon one column of the “Morning Post,” whose lines her eyes were following with avidity, amid such involuntary exclamations as:

“Dear me! who would have thought it! I wonder what is up now!”

“So do we!” said Orville, with an amused smile.

“Oh, excuse me, young people, for thinking aloud; but, really, this is so singular! I do not know what the ministry can mean!”

“Nor we what you mean, dear madam!”

“Oh! ay! certainly! this it is! You see, the Earl of Lennark is pardoned and recalled.”

Orville and Adelaide looked quite as much puzzled as before.

“Ah, I see you have forgotten! Well, then, my half-brother, your uncle, Alexander Lorne, proscribed as a Jacobite since ’45, has been pardoned, and recalled to take possession of the title and estates of the Earldom of Lennark, sequestrated since ’45, but now restored to their rightful heir.”

“Oh!” said Orville.

“Indeed!” said Adelaide.

“Great clemency on the part of the ministry,” remarked Orville.

“Or great policy, who can tell which?” demurred his mother.

“But I thought that my dear uncle Alexander, whom I can just barely remember, died abroad long, long, ago,” said Adelaide.

“Such was the rumor, and as I never heard from my brother after the battle of Preston, I had reason to believe it true. However, since the ministry are apt to know what they are about, I consider his recall conclusive proof of his existence.”

“Had he any family?” inquired Orville.

“When I heard from him last, while he was in France, he was a widower with one daughter; but, as I tell you, I have had no correspondence with Alexander since ’45, the time of his connection with the young Chevalier.”

“If Uncle Alexander accepts the recall he will return to the old place, I suppose,” said Adelaide.

“Yes—he loved the Highlands, and doubtless his long exile will make it all the more attractive to him now. Dear me—what if?—but no matter!”

“What, mother?”

“Nothing, I had a thought, but it is premature; I will sleep on it to-night, and, perhaps, if it is worth while, name it to you to-morrow. Now I am tired: good-night.” And rising, the lady left the room.

Lady Elizabeth was as good as her word, and before she closed her eyes that night she consulted her pillow with such good results, that she completely matured a project that had been suggested by the news of the night. The next day she was in no great hurry to propose her plan, but waited until

“The after-dinner talk

Across the walnuts and the wine,”

when she suddenly said:

“How would you like to visit Glen Lennark Lodge and the Highlands this summer, Orville?”

“Oh! very much, indeed!” exclaimed the young gentleman, catching eagerly at the suggestion.

“And you, Adelaide, would you like to revisit the home of your childhood?”

“Oh, yes! yes! dear Glen Lennark!” exclaimed the gentle girl, delightedly, adding considerately—“if I might do so as well as not.”

“There is nothing on earth to prevent you! It would be a pleasant wedding-tour, which, upon all accounts, it is quite proper you should make.”

“I see by a Norfolk paper that there is a packet to sail from that port for Glasgow on the first of April. That will give you time enough to prepare. You can make a fine spring voyage and reach the Highlands by the beginning of summer. Come! what do you both say to making this visit?”

Adelaide beamed with delight at the prospect, but left it to Orville to reply.

He saw her radiant eyes, and hastened to express his high approval of the project.

The details of the plan were then discussed at large for more than an hour, at the end of which the discussion being left unfinished, Lady Elizabeth arose, and saying with a smile that she would go and take her afternoon nap, withdrew from the dining-room.

Orville left the table to go and order the horses for their usual ride, and Adelaide tripped up-stairs to put on her habit.

As, still elated with the prospect of her voyage, she opened her chamber-door and danced into the room, she paused, aghast! There, in the middle of the room, was a sight that seemed to freeze all the blood in her veins!

The two wronged wives—the fierce, implacable Lionne, and the mild, gentle-hearted Adelaide—stood face to face!

CHAPTER X. LIONNE.

But thou, as yet, hast never felt

The agonizing sense

Of seeing love from passion melt

Into indifference;

The fearful shame that, day by day,

Turns onward still to burn;

To have thrown thy precious heart away,

And met this black return.—Milnes.

To explain the startling apparition that had so terrified Lady Adelaide in her chamber, it is necessary to return to the forest home of Lionne.

At first the wild girl grieved over the parting with her lover, as only wilful and passionate natures like hers ever grieve over any trouble.

Her stormy bursts of sorrow were, however, only indulged in the privacy of her chamber, the seclusion of her grotto, or the still deeper solitude of the pathless wilderness.

The wildest transient grief of youth leaves no lasting impress on the brow; and thus, whenever Lionne appeared in the presence of her father, she betrayed nothing of the sorrow that occasionally shook her whole nature.

Thus passed several days.

And then, grief having exhausted its first violence, Lionne began to reason, so far as such a child of passion ever reasons, upon the folly of her own excessive lamentations over a transient separation from her lover.

And then she turned her thoughts from the bitter present to the bright past and the brighter future, to live on the memory of Orville’s visit and the anticipations of his

return.

And long before there could be any rational expectation of hearing from him she began to look daily for his first letter. And oh, what a joy was that to anticipate!

What would he write? what would his missive be like? would his letter resemble his conversation?

She would soon know.

Daily, under cover of her woodland habits, she would, unquestioned by her father, ride to Winchester in quest of her letter, although the journey there and back consumed the whole day.

This forest girl was much too wild, strange, and beautiful in aspect not to excite the greatest degree of admiration, curiosity and conjecture whenever she appeared in the country town; but there was something in the flash of her eye and the flush of her cheek that effectually repelled impertinence, checked inquiry, and commanded respect.

At last, one day, before she had time to grow seriously anxious, the longed-for letter came! At a quarter to twelve she had reached Winchester. Just at high noon the precious letter was placed in her hands.

At first the sole joy of knowing that she possessed it, holding it in her hand, and gazing upon the superscription and the seal, was enough. She felt its thickness as a miser might have done had it been lined with bank-notes; then, unobserved, she placed it in her bosom, turned her horse’s head, and rode rapidly homeward, deferring to the last hour of day and the privacy of her chamber the pleasure of reading the contents.

Thither, after supper was over and the family had separated, she repaired, locked her door, lighted her candle, and sat down by the fire to the perusal as to the most costly luxury.

It was a “love letter,” and from the man she loved! That is saying enough to make any one comprehend that every precious word within it was dwelt upon, was gloated over, was gloried in as though each were an enchanting picture, a delicious feast, a priceless treasure. Over and over she read it, and at last laid it between her cheek and the pillow, and sank into a happy sleep, to dream of its writer.

Next day she gave Nox, her pony, the extraordinary benefit of a holiday, and gathered writing-materials and went down to her grotto. From no spot but from this bower of their bliss would she answer his first letter—no other place seemed so worthy of the pleasant task. Her letter was like herself—it was a frank, fearless, impassioned outpouring of her love, and joy, and hope!

She finished it, and the next day took it to Winchester, because she would not trust this correspondence to the hands of another, even one so faithful as Vulcan.

How long she lived upon that first letter, carrying it in her bodice all day long, and reading it over many times—not but that she knew every word by heart, but because she loved to follow with her eye the precious tracings of his hand. Ay! how long she lived upon that first letter. And then, before that had begun to lose its freshness, she commenced looking for the second—the answer to her own.

She wondered how he would like her letter,—whether it would not make him as happy as she hoped it might, and in what terms he would acknowledge it.

She would know when he wrote. Oh, how she longed for his answer!

The first fortnight she knew she would not get that answer, and therefore she resolved not to be unreasonable.

The third week she might expect a letter, and as day by day brought disappointment, she began to grow impatient.

The fourth week her impatience increased to anxiety.

The fifth this anxiety became almost insufferable.

The sixth doubt, distrust, and jealousy assailed her heart; but she sought to subdue these agonizing emotions by appealing to his words, wherein he said:

"If you should chance to be a long time without a letter, distrust messengers, post-offices, post-masters—everybody and every thing, save me and my fidelity."

"And I will," said Lionne, and she just made up her mind to write to Orville again. "For no doubt his letter has miscarried, and he is at this very time expecting one from me," she concluded. As it was now the middle of January, and her beautiful grotto was blocked up with ice and snow, so that she could not go to that favorite temple of her love to perform the pleasant task, she gathered writing-materials and went up to her chamber.

The poverty of Lionne afforded no table in her room; so she placed her paper, pens and ink upon the top of an old oak chest, and kneeled down on the floor beside it to commence.

She had but dated the paper, when she was interrupted by an unusual sound—the quick gallop of horses into the yard, followed immediately by a smart rap with a riding-whip at the hall door.

"That is he! he has come! oh, I might have known that he was coming!" she exclaimed, throwing down her pen and starting up, her lips apart, her checks flushed, her eyes flashing with joy!

And before the rap could be repeated, or any one else could answer it, she had sped down-stairs and through the passage, and torn open the door.

She sickened, and nearly swooned with disappointment! She could not immediately recover her presence of mind, or welcome the travellers that stood there mutely claiming her hospitality. She could not answer, or even hear the words that were next addressed to her, until they were somewhat impatiently repeated.

"Myself and brother are lost in this wilderness. Night is coming on, and we are without a lodging. Will you be kind enough to tell us where we can get one?"

Lionne passed her hand once or twice across her brow, as if to clear her vision, and then looked up.

The speaker who had addressed her was a young girl of perhaps sixteen years of age, of a small, slight figure, thin, dark face, with very fierce, black eyes, and straight, black hair, parted over her low brow, and wound up under her hat. She wore a dark-green riding-habit, somewhat stained and faded by exposure and travel, and a round, jockey riding-cap. She rode a small, but well-formed black horse, that looked as weary and weather-beaten as herself.

Her companion was a youth of fourteen, bearing a strong family likeness to his sister; he was clothed in the rather dilapidated uniform of a private in the Provincial troops, and mounted on a good, bay horse, now rather the worse for a surplus of road and deficiency of rest.

“Well, I declare, young lady,” said Kate Kyte, for the travellers were no other than that young huntress and her youngest brother, “well, I declare, we are not highway robbers, that you should look at us as though we told you to ‘stand and deliver!’”

“I—I beg your pardon,” said Lionne, confusedly; “but who did you say you were? What did you require?”

“Merciful Moses! we are a pair of innocent children—a poor boy and girl who have lost our way in the forest.”

“What—what do you need?” inquired Lionne in the same perplexity.

“Powers above! every thing; supper and beds; horse-feed and stalls. And if you can’t tell us where to get them, either for mercy or money, (the less said about the latter the better,) we shall wander all night hand in hand, because our horses can’t carry us any longer; eat poison-berries, because we can’t get any thing else, supposing even we can get them; and finally lie down and die, and be covered over with leaves by the robins, like the babes in the woods,” said Kate, laughing.

“Oh, come along! She’s not a-going to give us any satisfaction,” grumbled the boy,

turning his horse's head.

"Stop where you are, Hubert! The young lady is only perplexed at seeing two such savages as we are before her door. She don't look over-civilized herself however," added Kate, in a low voice.

"Oh, I beg you will excuse me," said Lionne, slowly recovering her presence of mind; "I was expecting—that is to say, I——"

"Was not expecting strangers," said Kate, finishing the sentence for her.

"No; but the strangers are most cordially welcome!" exclaimed Lionne, with greater animation. "Of course, you must go no farther to-night. Pray dismount. My servant-man will take care of your horses and also attend your orders, sir. Young lady, you come with me. Vulcan! Vulcan, I say!"

The huge dwarf appeared from the back part of the house, and, coming forward, struck Kate with about as much astonishment as any thing she had seen in the course of her travels.

While she was still gazing on the monster, Lionne said—

"Vulcan, show this young man into a room where he can wash and change his clothes, if he wishes, before supper. Take his knapsack and carry it after him; stable and feed the horses; and then report yourself to me in the kitchen."

"Yes, Lionne," said the dwarf, in a tone which, though not loud or high, coming from his vast chest, sounded like a peal of deep thunder, and made Kate exclaim:

"You would be a nice one to watch beside a sick-bed, wouldn't you?"

"Come, young lady," said Lionne, leading the way up-stairs to her own chamber.

"My name is Kate Kyte," said the 'young lady.'

"Come, then, Miss Kyte."

"I said Kate Kyte! I never miss anybody, and never missed any thing! not even the Huron's head, through which I sent a bullet at twenty paces!"

“Good heaven! blood on that young hand!” exclaimed Lionne, shrinking from her.

“No, bless you: washed off long ago! I have cleanly habits, ma’am, as old as my riding-coat is. But there has been plenty of it—both ‘the blood of birds and the blood of beasts and the blood of fishes!’ So at last shedding the blood of a two-legged tiger, did not come the least bit awkwardly.”

Lionne shrank farther and farther from her as they went up the stairs.

“Now don’t grind yourself against the wall in horror of me; the blood I shed was spilled in a holy cause! The savage was just in the act of tomahawking that boy of mine, when a message from my persuader here—” she said, indicating a pocket-pistol that was stuck in her belt—“stopped him. He dropped like a felled tree! beautifully! you never saw a better fall! or a better-looking savage after he was down! I couldn’t help stooping to admire him, even before I shook hands with my brother!”

“It was dreadful!” said Lionne.

“It was justifiable! nay, indeed, it was unavoidable. I reckon you would have said so, if you had seen that unarmed boy just under the descending stroke of the tomahawk! It was a neck and neck race between hatchet and pistol! and if my bullet had been half a second later, the tomahawk would have been buried in the boy’s brain.”

“Ugh! do not let us talk any more of such horrors!”

“Why, I declare! you are not chicken-hearted, are you! Now I have as much courage as a hundred other women put together, and you look as if you had ten times as much strength, fire, and firmness as a hundred of me!”

“However that may be, I am not naturally nervous; but for a few months past, I cannot imagine for what reason, I shudder at things that once never would have attracted even my notice!”

These words of Lionne brought them into her chamber where she supplied her guest

with water and towels.

Kate was not so fortunate as her brother in the possession of a knapsack; but she had some few necessary articles of apparel in her saddle-bags, and these, at her request, were sent for, and brought up by Vulcan.

And now behold Kate, after her toilet, in a house dress of oldish but still bright crimson merino, that perfectly fitted her lithe and slender figure, a little black lace collar around her neck, and her lustrous, straight, black hair plainly parted over her low brow, and rolled into a coil at the back of her head.

Lionne took her guest down into the sitting-room, where she was soon after joined by her brother, who had meanwhile been engaged in freshening his own dilapidated appearance.

Apologizing for the necessity of leaving them, and begging that they would amuse themselves with such materials as were at hand—intimating the few books upon the table, and the many implements and trophies of the chase—Lionne left the room, to go into the kitchen and take counsel with Vulcan about supper for her guests.

“Kate, I say,” said Hubert, putting down a richly mounted horn that he had been examining; “that is just the handsomest girl I ever saw in my life.”

“Yes; do, now, go and fall in love with a stranger, and love her better than the sister you have known all your life!”

This reply silenced Hubert, who went on with his examination of the old horns, whistles, pipes, flasks, fowling-pieces, and other implements of the chase, all of rich material and elaborate finish, at great variance with the otherwise rude aspect of the lodge and its appointments.

“Kate, I say, it’s my belief that young girl’s father is a gentleman!” said Hubert, with one more attempt at conversation.

“How do you know she has a father, foolish boy?”

“Well, most folks have, haven’t they, Kate?”

“Why, no; you haven’t.”

“But that’s because I’m an orphan, so that I’m no example!”

“No, in truth, you are not!” retorted Kate, in a manner that once more silenced the speaker.

In fact, Kate had got hold of the first copy of Shakspeare that she had ever seen, and that wonderful book, so cosmopolitan in its interest that it charms readers of all ages, characters and conditions, had spell-bound Kate to her chair, where she sat with her feet under the table, her elbows on it, her forehead leaning on the palms of her hands, and her eyes riveted upon the open volume before her, where she remained, while Hubert strolled about looking at, taking down, and sometimes in his awkwardness throwing down various implements and trophies of the chase.

Whenever such a crash came, Kate, without taking her eyes from her book, would say—

“Don’t do any mischief, Hube!”

Or if the noise was louder than usual, she would burst out with—

“Hubert, I say, don’t break things!”

At last, while she was deep in the perusal of the “Tempest,” came a crash that caused her to start impatiently to her feet, exclaiming angrily—

“Hubert, don’t knock things about so! You make me nervous with dread lest you do some damage!”

“’Twa’n’t me at all, now! It was that girl! You better not saved me if you mean to torment the life out of me all the rest of my days!” said the grateful and polite Mr. Kyte.

Kate looked around and saw Lionne, who had come in, calmly picking up a part of an old suit of armor that Master Hubert had taken down to examine, and then

carelessly re-hung against the door, and which, in opening, she had thrown down.

“Will you please to come into such a supper as I can offer you, although it will not furnish the luxuries of an eastern table?” said their hostess, smiling.

Kate laughingly apologized for her ludicrous mistake, reluctantly closed her book, and arose to follow her hostess.

Hubert turned eagerly from the contemplation of a pair of ten-tined antlers to the more inviting prospect of feasting upon the animal that might once have worn them.

Lionne led the way into the spacious kitchen, which was glowingly lighted up by a great hickory fire, blazing in the wide fireplace, and a pair of candles in iron candlesticks that stood upon the well spread oak-table.

There was, as usual, no table-cloth, and the supper service was of the plainest earthenware, with cheap iron cutlery; but the meal spread before the guests was both substantial and luxurious, consisting of venison steaks, roasted partridges, home-made bread and butter, and fine coffee with fresh cream. The huge dwarf stood to wait upon the table.

“I say, Kate,” said Hubert, drawing near her and speaking low, “that pretty girl with the short giant waiting on her, is like the ‘Princess and the Dwarf’ in the fairy tale, ain’t it?”

“Yes, and do you know what you are like in the same story?”

“The prince that delivered and married the princess!” inquired Hubert, rather doubtfully.

“No! the court-fool who got the bastinado for talking out of season.”

This philippic, as usual with such, at once silenced Hubert, who meekly took the place pointed out to him at the table, and spoke no more.

Both Kate and Hubert supped after the manner of healthy young travellers, who had ridden thirty miles, fasting, through a sharp winter day.

Lionne saw that full justice was done to her bill of fare, and felt flattered upon the doubtful subject of her housekeeping.

After supper, when they were about to adjourn to the sitting-room, Hubert said that if Mr. Vulcan would be so good as to show him the way, he would like to visit the stable, and see the condition of his horses after their severe travel.

Mr. Vulcan was so good, and with a clumsy nod—for he was too short and square to bow—he took his wolf-skin cap and led the way to the stables.

Lionne conducted her guest back to the sitting-room, mended the fire, and invited her to draw her chair nearer the hearth.

“Do you live here ‘all alone mit yerself,’ as the Dutchman would say?” inquired Kate.

“Oh, no!” answered Lionne.

“Then with only that Dwarf-Titan, like the Princess in the story, to which my brother compared you?”

“No; I have a father, who is absent to-day at Winchester, but who will be home some time to-night.”

“Well,” said Kate, “as I claimed your hospitality, I ought to tell you who I am.”

“That is a question never put by my father to a passing guest. To know that such a one is a traveller, seeking quarters, is sufficient for him.”

“Yes, very likely for him; but is it for you, with your Eve’s share of curiosity.”

“Even for me, also.”

“Well, then, that is noble, I must say! But just suppose, now, that I feel egotistical, and had rather talk of myself than not?”

“Why, in that case, my little egotist, go on! and I will promise you one interested and attentive listener.”

“Thank you! well, then, you must know that my father and mother both died while I

was a little child."

"Yes."

"And left me, a solitary girl, to grow up with half a dozen brothers, all older than myself, except Hubert, here, who is a year younger!"

"I see!"

"Well, then, I grew up a boy as far as education and habits go!"

"That accounts for every thing."

"Don't it, though? Well, seeing that I was so much of a boy, when my brothers enlisted in the Provincial troops that were going out to fight the French and other savages, I wanted to enlist too! of course I did! but the dunder-head who was recruiting wouldn't take me!"

"Indeed!"

"No: did you ever hear of such stupidity?"

"Never!" said Lionne, smiling.

"It was no use for me to tell him that I had never been parted from my brothers, and never would be; that we had always lived together in one band, eat and drank together, travelled together, hunted and fished together, ridden and raced together, and that now, by the grave of our parents, we would enlist and go to the war together, and, if necessary, be killed and scalped together!"

"Well, after all, I like that, Kate! But what did the recruiter answer?"

"Answer! the insolent! he said the only way in which I could get to go on the expedition would be to marry him and go as his wife!" said Kate, with flashing eyes.

"And what did you say?"

"Nothing: my horsewhip answered for me with one sharp cut across his impudent face and mouth, that must carry the marks of the lash to this day, if he lives!"

“And then?”

“I put whip to my horse and rode to head-quarters, and went into the very presence of the great military lion himself—General Braddock. I told him all that I had told the recruiting-sergeant, and in addition, I said that I wished to go to take care of Hubert, who, being the youngest of our band, would need my protection (as it turned out he did).”

“And the General?”

“When he heard my story, he broke down into the vulgarest guffaw that ever I heard from a white man. I had left my horsewhip in its rest beside the saddle, else I don’t know what would have been the consequences. Well, I told him he might as well enlist me, for that I was not accustomed to be crossed, any more than I was to be laughed at, and that I would go to the wars in spite of him.”

“And he?”

“Just called an orderly sergeant, and sent out in all directions to inquire whether I had any parents or guardians, and kept me prisoner in a room at his quarters the whole day, until he found that I belonged to myself exclusively, when he cursed the customs of the country and set me at liberty.”

“And you thanked him, of course?”

““Didn’t I, though?” Well, my brothers marched with their company. I was left behind with no other society than old Lucy, our cook, and the hounds. It was not, however, until some time afterwards, when the great battle had been fought and lost, and the troops were massacred, scattered or carried off, that I put my threat of following the army into execution. Then, when straggler after straggler returned, wounded, weary and weather-beaten, bringing each the most frightful accounts of that field of blood, and I could hear nothing in regard to the fate of my brothers, I mounted my horse and set off in quest of news of them.”

“A Quixotic undertaking,” said Lionne.

“It was not so dangerous or difficult as you imagine. I just followed Braddock’s road, stopping to rest each night at the cabin of some squatter, and going forward by day and making inquiries of everybody I saw. I met several late stragglers from the battle, who had been laid up somewhere and detained by their wounds——”

“I knew of several so detained. But—did you succeed in hearing from your brothers?”

“At long last, yes! I will tell you how. It was near sunset, and I was still following the fatal road cut by Braddock’s doomed party to their own destruction, when, between the glinting lights, I thought I saw a boy riding from the opposite direction. Something in the air and manner of the figure set my heart to beating thick and fast——”

“You thought it was one of year brothers?”

“I thought it was Hubert; yes! and I would have ridden faster, only that my horse was ready to drop with fatigue. And just as the boy came around a tree in full sight, and I recognized him as Hubert and was about to shout his welcome—out from the bushes sprang one of those red demons of the forest, and whirling his tomahawk around his head in dazzling gyrations, with a terrible war-whoop he bounded upon the boy, seized him with his left hand, raised his tomahawk in his right, and would the next instant have buried it in the brain of his victim, had I not raised my pistol and sent a bullet through his head.”

“Good heaven of heavens! I wonder terror had not deprived you of your senses!”

“No, it never does! I am woman enough to be frightened at the anticipation of evil; but when sudden danger confronts me it calms my heart and quickens my brain. For see—when I first recognized Hubert my heart was beating painfully with joy; but the instant I saw the savage spring upon him, his sudden, imminent, horrible danger steadied my nerves, my eye and my hand, and enabled me to send my shot home to its mark with the certainty of fate!”

“Kate! Kate! you are a heroine, such as in the old days of chivalry would have inspired brave knights to glorious deeds.”

“What, because I shot an Indian who was about to tomahawk my boy-brother—a thing for which I merit neither praise nor blame, nor desire any other reward than to see the lad alive and have him throw his arms around my neck and call me his best sister,—as if he had several sisters to choose from, poor fellow. I do scold him and put him down sometimes, but it is all for his good.”

“Well, go on, dear Kate, go on!”

“Well, in fact, there is but little more to tell. Hubert told me that after his company had been disbanded, his brothers had joined a troop of hunters who were going farther west to hunt the bison, and that they had directed him to return home and bring me news of their safety. He was on his road when I met him. And now, having travelled thus far on our return, we shall avail ourselves of your kindness for the night, and in the morning resume our homeward journey to the banks of the Potomac.”

“The banks of the Potomac?”

“Why, yes—there is our home.”

“What part of the Potomac?”

“North bank, near St. George’s Island.”

“St. George’s Island! Do you know a place near that called River-view?”

“The seat of Mr. Orville Deville?—of course I do!”

“Do you know Mr. Deville?”

“Know Orville Deville? Well, now, I reckon I do, just a little! and Lady Elizabeth and Lady Adelaide, too!”

“Lady Elizabeth is his mother; but—who is Lady Adelaide?” inquired Lionne—perhaps with a vague, prophetic feeling of unaccountable jealousy—or

perhaps only with that deep interest she felt for every one in any way connected with Orville Deville.

“Why, Lady Adelaide Deville, to be sure!” answered Kate.

“And—what is she to him—his cousin?”

“Yes—his half cousin and more than that—his wife!”

“His——WHAT?”

“His wife! his sweet, pretty, young wife!”

“Girl! it is false!”

“Why, what in the world ails you?” said Kate, gazing in surprise at the blanched face of her hostess.

“Oh, I am wrong! here is some misunderstanding, Kate, I am speaking of Lieutenant Orville Deville, the only son of Lady Elizabeth Deville of River-view, Maryland,” said Lionne, with a look of agonizing anxiety.

“And so am I! There is no other Orville Deville in the wide world that I know of!—Why, what is the matter with you? Are you ill?” said Kate, wondering at the increasing agitation of the forest girl.

“But—but—there must be some mistake here! it cannot be otherwise! The Mr. Deville whom I knew was an officer in his Majesty’s Provincials.”

“Yes.”

“And went in the late fatal expedition against the French and Indians.”

“Certainly—but how in the world did you know him, or why should you care any thing at all about him?”

“He was wounded and was missing for several weeks, during which he remained convalescing here under our care—was this the same man of whom you speak?” cried Lionne, clasping her hands in an agony of suspense.

“Why, of course it was! the very same man! couldn’t possibly have been any other! So this was the house that sheltered him! Well! I heard in Winchester, when I first passed through, that he had taken refuge in some hunter’s lodge! But, good heaven, what is the matter with you! this is very strange! you are certainly going crazy!” exclaimed Kate, staring in astonishment upon the blanched and haggard face, and wringing, writhing hands of the young mountaineer.

“But—but—I say there is something ill-comprehended between us!—There must be! The young gentleman who staid with us was a mere youth—”

“Certainly—twenty or so!”

“Therefore, you see, you must be mistaken!” said Lionne, with a pleading, prayerful gaze.

“How mistake—I tell you I know we are talking of the same man!”

“Well, granting that we are! still, you must be mistaken in supposing that he left a wife in Maryland! It could not be, you know! such a mere youth!” said Lionne, striving desperately to keep down the strong, rising passions of her soul.

“Come now, that is rich! Just as if no one ever heard of a young man marrying at the age of twenty! he married younger than that, I can tell you!”

“And you say that—that—Lady Adelaide is his—his—his——”

“His wife! what is there strange in that, to make you glare so?”

“How do you know this?” demanded Lionne, in a tone that made Kate start and exclaim—

“My stars, don’t give tongue in that way!”

“How do you know it?” thundered Lionne, again.

“Why lord, because I know all about the family, having lived next neighbor to them for years; and because I have been acquainted with Lady Adelaide Deville ever since her marriage with Mr. Orville Deville.”

“And I say you speak falsely! FALSELY, girl! Orville Deville is NOT a villain!” gasped Lionne.

“Did I call him one? I begin to think you are crazy!” exclaimed Kate, in consternation.

“Some one—some haughty relative, or other interested party—has bribed you to beguile my ear with a lie!”

“Come now, that is a little too extravagant even for craziness! as if it were worth any one’s while to send me two hundred miles to tell you a story!”

Lionne, with a face white and still as marble, the blanched lips drawn tight across the firm-set teeth, eyes contracted and burning, and hands fiercely clenched together, sat watching the speaker.

—“Just as if it were any thing on earth to you—or to me—whether Mr. Orville Deville were married or single! But I guess how it is,” continued Kate: “the young gentleman has been passing himself off for a single man, and while lying wounded here, has been amusing himself by making love to his pretty nurse! Men will do these things in the world outside!—Ah! don’t murder me!”

With the cry and bound of a wild beast, the forest girl sprang upon the speaker and seized, shook, and tossed her as a lioness might do a kid, exclaiming, breathless the while—

“Girl! wretch! fiend! you belie him! you BELIE him! Speak! say that you belie him, before I choke the truth from your false throat!”

Kate could say nothing, do nothing! She was but as a kid in the claws of a lioness, and so she suffered herself to be throttled, shaken and tossed until the beautiful fury had exhausted her own strength, spurned her victim away, and sunk half dead into her seat.

Then Kate, who had caught the table to steady herself while she stood looking upon

Lionne, said—

“Poor girl! I can forgive your violence, because I see that you are half crazy, as I begin to fear that you have reason to be!”

“Oh, hush, hush! in pity, hush!” moaned Lionne, who sat with her face buried in her hands.

“As sure as shooting,” thought Kate, “that young man has been idly making love to this girl and has won her lion heart! Well, thank heaven! I never was in love and I hope I never shall be! So of myself I know nothing about it! But judging from newspaper-paragraphs I should think love sometimes drove passionate people mad!” Here she stole another deep, wistful glance at Lionne.

There was no look of the weak suicide about her.

Her head was now raised, her hands clasped upon her lap; every aspect of her face and form betokened strength, will, and determination; the stately head and neck, the tightly-curling, wiry black ringlets, the sternly-corrugated brow, the firmly-compressed lips, the still, contracted, glittering eyes, the strongly-knotted fingers—all combined in an expression of concentrated passion and purpose dangerous as that of a wild beast drawn up for a fatal spring!

“Ugh! Ugh!” shuddered Kate. “If this man has dealt falsely with that girl I would not be in his shoes for a kingdom! A demon in the shape of a woman will be on his track! She will hunt him to the uttermost ends of the earth, and tear him with less compunction than a leopardess would tear an antelope!—and serve him right!”

While Kate pursued her silent reverie, Lionne slowly arose, walked up and down the floor a few turns and then paused, fixed one deep, scrutinizing gaze upon the face of her guest, and reading her whole character in that momentary study, she went up to Kate, and standing before her placed a hand upon each of the girl’s shoulders, and said:

“Kate! pardon my violence! It was madness!”

“I know it! Say no more about it!”

“Kate! if you knew all, you would not wonder! I confide in your truth; yet I cannot make you my confidante, because I am bound to secrecy, and must not break faith until I know, beyond all doubt, that faith has been broken with me!”

“Alas! I do not ask you!”

“Yet I must ask you to be kind enough to tell me all you know, or rather all you think you know of this supposed marriage of Orville Deville.”

“Well, then, sit down quietly by my side, and control yourself, and I will tell you that which I feel you ought to know.”

Lionne drew her chair to the side of her guest and sat down.

Kate commenced and related the whole history of Orville Deville’s romantic marriage.

With wonderful calmness, Lionne heard her through, and then rising and standing before Kate, she laid her hand impressively upon the girl’s breast, and said:

“Kate! I know that you are perfectly frank in telling me what you sincerely believe to be true! but, Kate! I DARE NOT believe your story! I must believe that you are misinformed, mistaken, insane even, rather than venture to credit your statement, except upon the evidence of my own senses.”

“You can have that if you take the trouble.”

“I know! I do not doubt you, Kate! but for me I must not convict upon hearsay evidence. Are you determined to set forward on your journey to-morrow?”

“Quite so.”

“Then I shall bear you company, if you will permit me; if not, I will follow in your trail.”

“Oh, come with me, by all means! I will give you all the aid I can!”

“I thank you! Take my hand! a hand pledged to your service henceforth. Take me to

where I can have eye-and-ear witness of the truth of your story, and then, when my own senses have confirmed your statement, I will confide to you a secret, which, when you have heard, you will wonder at no after-act of mine!"

"But," said Kate, "will your father consent to this sudden journey?"

"I know not yet! I only know that in all events the journey must be taken," said Lionne, in a voice of desperation, at the same time raising her stately head, and listening to some sound inaudible to duller ears——

"Father has come," she said.

And at the same moment the sound of a horse's feet was heard approaching, and the next moment the rider was heard to dismount at the hall door, and enter the house.

Like magic Lionne cleared her brow and sprang up to meet her father.

"What, my daughter, a visitor with you? This is unexpected!" said Mr. Delaforêt, in a low voice, as he entered the room.

"A belated traveller, my father, who, with her boy-brother, claims our hospitality for the night," replied Lionne in the same key. Then, aloud, she said—"This is Miss Kate Kyte of Bush Creek, in Maryland,—my father."

"Miss Kyte, I am happy to see you," said Delaforêt with stately courtesy. "And now, Lionne, my dear, as I have not supped, I must trouble you to send in a luncheon. What have you ready?"

"No Belshazzar's feast, my father; yet enough wherewithal to satisfy the craving hunger of a weary traveller," answered Lionne, gaily.

Surprised at the lightness of her tone, Kate looked up, and saw with astonishment that every vestige of grief and anxiety was banished from the beautiful countenance that she had so lately seen blanched and convulsed with anguish or deadly with fatal purpose.

Leaving Kate wondering at that marvellous self-control, Lionne passed into the

kitchen, where she found the dwarf and the boy with their hands together over the embers, telling each other incredible hunting-stories, of which always the narrator was the hero.

She gave her orders to the dwarf, and invited the boy to attend her into the sitting-room, where she presented him to her father.

“A cold night, friends! so much the more need of a warm welcome. Draw all your chairs round in a circle,” said Mr. Delaforêt, stirring the great fire until it blazed again, and piling on great logs of wood.

By the time they were comfortably warm, and were beginning to back out a little from the blazing hearth, Vulcan entered bearing a tray well laden with cold fowl, venison, bread, butter, a bottle of good wine, etc., which he sat upon the centre-table.

The host drew up to the board and lunched like a hungry traveller.

When he had eaten and was filled, and the cloth was removed, as the night was growing still colder, the host piled on more logs and the circle drew in again around the glowing hearth.

And then as conversation grew fluent, the weather, the roads, the Indians, dogs, horses, and game were in turn discussed.

At last Mr. Delaforêt arose, and taking up a night-lamp said—

“Young ladies, I have come off one long journey to-day, and have a longer one before me to-morrow. You, too, if I mistake not, look a little tired and sleepy; and so, with your leave, I will bid you good-night. Lionne, my dear, as I set out to-morrow at daybreak, you will please give directions to have breakfast ready before my departure.”

The heart of Lionne leaped with surprise and almost with joy at this strange announcement; but controlling her emotions, she approached him, and said, calmly,

“Do you remain long away, my father?”

“Yes. My business takes me to Baltimore, where I shall remain nine or twelve days—an unprecedented absence for your father, who never within your recollection passed a single night from home. But, what matter? My brave Lionne will not fear to be left alone with Vulcan for a warder!”

“Oh, no! Do you really start at daybreak?”

“Yes. So have every thing ready. And now, good-night!” said the host; and with a courteous bow to his guests, he left the room.

“What think you of that, Kate?” inquired Lionne, as soon as the two girls were alone in their chamber.

“Think of what?” asked Kate, speaking very gently.

“Why, my father leaves here to-morrow at daybreak, so that afterward I shall be able to depart unquestioned with you.”

“Well! I think that if you have any deadly purpose in your journey, Satan is certainly aiding you in its accomplishment!”

Lionne laughed—a strange, sardonic, fearful laugh, that made Kate shudder through all her frame.

As the house had but one extra room, which had been given to Hubert, the two girls were obliged to occupy the same bed. Kate undressed, lay down, and, already worn out with her long ride, was soon asleep.

But no slumber lighted upon the eyelids of Lionne that dreadful night! She lay with both hands clasped over her burning brow, bitter tears rising to her swollen eyes, deep groans bursting from her surcharged bosom!

A long and wretched night,—but it passed at last.

Before the earliest dawn of day Lionne heard her father stirring in his chamber.

She immediately arose, quickly dressed, and went below to attend to his early

breakfast.

On entering the kitchen she found the kettle already hanging over a roaring fire, and Vulcan busy setting the table. She helped him in his task with such despatch that in a few minutes a comfortable meal was smoking on the board, and her father was called down to partake of it.

When he had eaten and was satisfied, he took a temporary leave of Lionne, and departed.

She, standing in the hall-door, watched him as he rode along down the narrow path between the ridge and the creek.

“Good-by! Good-by! Who knows whether I shall ever see your face again, my father!” she said, as the horse and his rider disappeared around a jut of the mountain.

Then she returned to the kitchen, directed Vulcan to re-arrange the breakfast-table for her friends, and went up stairs and into the bedchamber, where she found Kate still sleeping.

Unwilling to break her slumbers, Lionne went to the oak chest, upon the top of which she had left that fair sheet of paper intended to have been filled with a letter to Orville,—a letter now, alas! indefinitely postponed.

Kneeling, she wrote a few lines to her father, giving him to understand that she had followed her own sudden and eccentric fancy in going home with Kate Kyte for a visit of a few days, and telling him that if she were not home when he should arrive, she would at farthest be with him a very few days after. She folded, sealed, and directed this letter, and then carried it down-stairs; and explaining to Vulcan that she was going home with Miss Kyte, ordered him to give it to his master upon the return of the latter.

Vulcan started with astonishment; but he was too well accustomed to obey his imperious mistress implicitly, to raise any objections to her strange commands.

When she returned the second time to the bedchamber she found her guest awake. Seeing Lionne, Kate exclaimed:

“Good gracious, how haggard you look! has any thing happened?”

“Nothing new, except that my father left at daybreak, and that therefore all necessity for my wearing a mask and acting a part is happily over.”

Kate fixed a deep, long, wistful gaze upon the face of the unhappy girl, and then sprang out of bed and began dressing herself in great haste.

“What time is it?” she next asked.

“The sun is rising.”

“How soon can we set out?”

“As soon as you please—as soon as you have eaten breakfast, which is now waiting.”

Kate hurried on her clothes, and declared herself ready to go down-stairs.

In the passage they were joined by Hubert, who went with them to the kitchen, where they found an inviting morning-meal, to which the young travellers did ample justice.

While they ate, old Vulcan, at his mistress’s command, went out and saddled the three horses.

And as soon as breakfast was over the three young travellers donned their riding-caps and coats, and set forward upon their journey.

No one was so delighted as young Hubert at having the beautiful forest-girl in their company.

On the evening of the third day the party reached Bush Creek, where Kate found her old servant, Lucy, still alive and moving about, though too deeply fallen into dotage even to feel surprise at the sudden re-appearance of her young mistress and master, whom she received as calmly as though they had but just returned from a day’s hunt.

“Dear Lionne, go no farther to-night,” said Kate.

“I must! I should die of suspense otherwise!”

“At least stay to supper.”

“I cannot eat, drink, or sleep until I have been to River-view.”

“Then promise me to return, at all events, to-night.”

“Heaven help me! I cannot even promise that. When, or where, or how you will meet me again the Lord only knoweth; but I thank and bless you for your kindness, and, whatever becomes of me,—may you be happy.”

CHAPTER XI. INTERVIEW BETWEEN ADELAIDE AND LIONNE.

Forgive me if the love once thine

Hath changed itself unsought to me!

I did not tempt it from thy breast,

I nothing knew of thee!

And soon perhaps ’twill be my lot

As thou art now to be.—Philip Bailey.

Let us return to Adelaide and to the fateful evening when light and joyous as a bird, she flew up the stairs and opened her chamber door to meet that which was to change the whole tenor of her future life.

Carolling a lively ditty, she crossed the threshold of her room and suddenly paused in amazement.

There, in the centre of the chamber, facing the door, stood a tall, majestic girl, clad in a dark riding-habit, faded, dusty, and travel-stained. Her neglected hair, escaping from the round black jockey-cap, hung in jet black elf-locks down her shoulders and

bosom. Her fine face was pale, thin, and haggard with fatigue, illness, and sorrow. Her intensely black eyes were burning fiercely with the fires of passion, or of madness.

All this Adelaide took in in one glance of mingled surprise and terror.

She was about to speak, and ask the motive of this presence, when the stranger interrupted her by saying—

“Stop! do not move! do not speak yet! I wish to look at you!”

“Ah, she is mad! she is some poor creature who has eluded her keepers and strayed into this house, and found her way to my chamber!” thought Adelaide, regarding the intruder with a look of compassion that rendered her beautiful face still more lovely.

The stranger gazed at her until the eyes of Adelaide fell beneath the fixed scrutiny.

“Maid or wife are you?” asked the intruder.

“Both—I believe,” said the fair girl, hesitating and blushing.

“Both? You are foolish! how can that be?”

“I do not know.”

With a dark frown gathering upon her haggard face, the stranger averted her head, as in the same calm, sepulchral tone, she inquired—

“What is your name?”

“Adelaide Deville.”

“Your husband’s name?”

“Orville Deville.”

Again the head of the dark girl was averted for a moment, as she said—

“And so you are wife as well as maid?”

“Yes.”

“Explain yourself!”

Now, had Lady Adelaide been proud, irascible and egotistical, she would not have deigned to answer these seemingly impertinent questions; but the Earl's daughter, the heiress and the beauty, was humble, gentle and merciful. She never thought of attempting to overwhelm with her own dignity the poor wanderer and supposed lunatic before her. Not therefore from haughtiness, but from bashfulness, she hesitated.

"Explain!" again, and more authoritatively commanded the wild girl.

"Oh! it is very simple, though very strange. Mr. Deville and myself, when we were mere children, had the marriage-contract executed, and the marriage-rites solemnized between us, by the authority of our respective parents, at the death-bed of my father. Then we parted—he remaining at school at Eton, I returning with my mother-in-law to River-view. And we never met again until a few months ago."

"What month was that in which you met again?" suddenly demanded the stranger.

"It was in November, after his return from the fatal expedition," replied Adelaide, wondering more and more at the behavior of this fancied maniac.

"Then, though his hand was bound, his heart was free when he met me," murmured the stranger, in an almost inaudible voice. "But since! but since!" she added, vehemently. And raising her fierce, black eyes, she fixed them with a deep and threatening gaze upon the lovely face of Adelaide and demanded—

"Since his return you have lived together as a married pair?"

"Yes—no—indeed I do not know!" said Adelaide, ingeniously.

Doubt, scorn, irony,—all disfigured the fine face of the stranger as she gazed at the lovely girl, and mockingly inquired—

"Do you love him?"

"Love him?" repeated Adelaide, blushing and hesitating; "why, it is my duty to love my husband, is it not?"

“Duty!” exclaimed the stranger, now with undisguised scorn; “oh, of course it is your duty! You love your mother-in-law also?”

“Oh yes!”

“And your servants?”

“Yes.”

“And your horse, and dog, and canary birds, and flowers?”

“Yes.”

“We should love all creatures, should we not!” said the dark girl, ironically.

“So our religion teaches us.”

“And you find that easy.”

“It is natural and pleasant to me.”

“Well, dainty lady! baby girl! love all creatures in the heavens above! the earth beneath! and the waters under the earth, if you will! all creatures but—ONE!” exclaimed the wild creature, with a sudden and terrible change of manner, and stalking forward and laying her hand upon the shoulder of Adelaide, who gazed upon her in sorrow and fear.

“Ay!” continued she, sending the glance of her fierce dark eyes like a flaming two-edged sword into the very soul of her rival, “love all creatures but one! as, should that one prove false to me——in life and in death, through time and black eternity, I should hate but that one!”

“And that one, who doubtless turned your brain, poor girl, who was he?”

“My husband, Orville Deville!” said Lionne, firmly meeting the eyes of Adelaide.

“Poor thing, she is very, very mad!” thought Adelaide, gazing in deep pity upon the speaker.

With the certainty of unerring instinct, the latter divined her thought, and

answered—

“Mad, am I?—no, little lady! the time for madness has not come! my work is not done! the issue is not yet! I have to try and to judge a man! And for this task my spirit masters every passion of my heart and every faculty of my brain, and holds them in readiness to work its will. Listen! Oh, you will find ‘strange method in my madness!’ Are you listening?”

“Poor girl! Yes, I am attending to every word you say, if that will be any consolation to you. But while you talk, sit down and let me get you something. You look dreadfully worn out,” said Adelaide, compassionately, drawing forward her easiest lounging-chair and then moving towards the door, when Lionne recalled her—

“Stop, Lady Adelaide! I want no food and no seat! I cannot eat or rest! It is you calm ones, who live for duty, that can do that! I have a story to tell to which you must listen! Come back!”

Adelaide complied, returned, and stood with her elbow resting on the corner of the toilet-table, while the stranger, standing before her with folded arms, commenced her communication.

“Lady Adelaide Lorne—for you have no right to the name of Deville—you shall soon know whether the wretch who stands before you, claiming the name that you bear, be either mad or false! Mad women wander from their theme, or stick to one point with crazy pertinacity. And false ones bring no irresistible proof of what they advance. Ah! you are listening!”

“To every syllable!” exclaimed Adelaide, upon whom the stranger’s impressive manner was beginning to produce a painful effect.

“Lady Adelaide Lorne, it was upon the afternoon of the twentieth of last September, that being caught out in a thunderstorm on the mountains, I first met Orville Deville, faint from recent illness, lost with his servant in the wilderness, and in search of shelter. I took him to my father’s house, where he was rested, refreshed, and, in due

time, restored to health——”

“Go on! Go on! Why do you pause!” exclaimed Adelaide, growing pale and leaning upon the dressing-table.

“Little lady, we loved each other! not as you love who love from duty! we loved despite of duty! yes! at the first mutual meeting flash of our eyes that electric spark of love was lighted! it kindled into a blaze! it spread into a conflagration that consumed every obstacle between us! Six weeks passed in a burning dream, in which you, his mother, his home, his duty, his all of heaven and earth was forgotten—IN ME! And I! I was so happy as it is seldom given to a human being to be in time or in eternity! on earth or in heaven!”

“But, merciful Lord, girl, you were not his wife!” exclaimed Adelaide, gazing now in horror upon the speaker.

Lionne smiled in bitter disdain, and replied—

“I was. We were married by special license, by the Episcopal clergyman at Winchester, on the thirtieth of last October. Do you know this ring?” and drawing a mourning-ring from her finger, she laid it on the dressing-table under the eyes of Lady Adelaide, who immediately recognized it as a family relic. “Farther proof would you have, young lady?—Read this, then!” and she laid before her tortured auditor a certificate of the marriage of Leonora Delaforêt with Orville Deville, duly signed and witnessed.

Adelaide glanced over the paper, saw its purport, and silently acknowledged its importance; and then, as if no longer able to stand, moved from her position before the dressing-table and sank down in a sitting posture on the lounge, beside it.

“Oh, go on! Go on!” was all that she found strength to say.

“A few days passed! We were awakened from our dream of love! A letter came to him from his home, with news of his mother’s extreme illness. With expressions of the deepest regret, with professions of the most devoted affection, with promises of

undying fidelity, sealed by the most solemn vows, he took leave of me and departed. In due time I received his first letter, written the day after his arrival at River-view. Do you know his handwriting?—Look at this, lady!" and she placed Orville's letter before Adelaide, who threw a hasty glance at the superscription, recognized the familiar handwriting, and covered her eyes with her hands.

"Open and read it, young lady! I would have you to know all! Open and read."

"No, no, I cannot; it was not intended for my eyes," said Lady Adelaide with gentle dignity, yet with a voice so full of despair that the wild girl started and gazed at her in consternation. But Adelaide lowered her head until her pale gold ringlets fell forward and veiled her white face from the eyes of the stranger, as she said—

"Have you any thing more to say to me?"

"Yes! I answered that letter; but received no second one! I waited and hoped—no letter! I waited and doubted—yet no letter! I waited and feared—still no letter! At last, when I no longer waited, but resolved to write and find out the cause of his silence, came unexpected news of him! A young girl, Kate Kyte—do you know her?"

"Yes, yes, I know her!"

"She came to our lodge, with her boy-brother, asking and receiving hospitality for the night. In the course of our conversation that evening, it fell out that Kate Kyte lived at Bush Creek Mill, adjoining River-view, the seat of Mr. Orville Deville, who, she told me, was married to the loveliest lady in the land!"

"Oh, Father in heaven, have pity on us!" wailed Adelaide, in a voice full of woe, yet so low-toned that its sound failed to reach the ears of the wild forest-girl, who continued—

"Young lady, I forgot the sacred rites of hospitality! I forgot my own womanhood! I forgot all things else in my rising passion! I sprang upon that girl as a tigress upon her prey! I told her she lied! lied in her throat! that she had been bribed to make

mischief between two hearts that loved! I called upon her to retract her words or perish under my hands! I shook, and tossed, and worried her as a terrier might a kitten, until my strength utterly failed, and I dropped her! Then she had her revenge! Knowing that my greatest punishment and her greatest vindication lay in the words she had spoken, she told me that she forgave my violence, and that I could easily satisfy myself of the truth or falsehood of her statement by simply coming to see. I came! I am here!"

"Oh, is there any thing else? Is there any thing else?" cried Adelaide, in tones of such anguish that they seemed to burst from a breaking heart.

"Yes, Lady Adelaide. I told you—you who bear his name—that I was his wife! I am his wife by stronger ties than the benediction pronounced at the instance of guardians by a mercenary magistrate over two unconscious children! I am his wife by mutual love, and knowledge, and vows breathed earnestly before high heaven and sealed by God's minister! I am his wife and—the mother of his unborn child."

"Help me! oh, help me, merciful Lord!" moaned Adelaide, in the utter weakness of anguish, as she slipped down upon the carpet and buried her face in the cushions of the lounge.

Lionne gazed upon her distress with the pitiless triumph with which a jealous wife might gaze upon her crushed rival.

"Help me! help me! Saviour of the world!" still wept and wailed Adelaide.

And while she still lay there upon the carpet, with her head and arms cast upon the lounge, in the utter prostration of anguish, there was heard a gentle rap at the door. It was repeated and reiterated before it attracted the rapt senses of the two absorbed girls. At length Lionne went up to Adelaide and shaking her gently, said:

"Some one knocks."

Then starting up, Adelaide drew her disheveled hair from her pale face, listened, and sought to collect her scattered faculties.

The knock was repeated the third time.

She arose, and smoothing her disordered dress, went to the door and asked:

“Who is there?”

“Me, Miss Adely! Marse Awful say, how de horses is waitin’ dis half hour, and now, is you gwine to take your ride?” spoke the voice of Keziah, outside.

Without answering, and with an expression of extreme terror on her lovely face, Adelaide hurried from the door, and walked several times up and down the room, wringing her hands and crying:

“Oh, Saviour of the lost! help me! help me!”

A louder knock and the voice of Keziah inquiring:

“What shall I tell Marse Awful, honey?” recalled Adelaide to her senses. Still pale, trembling and embarrassed, she hurried to the door.

“Tell him—he must excuse me! I—am not well! I cannot ride—with him to-day! Go!” she said in weak, faltering, and hesitating tones. “I shall never, never ride with him again!” added the poor girl, in a low, despairing voice, as she left the door.

Keziah was heard retreating along the passage.

“Saviour of the lost, help or I perish!” prayed Adelaide, walking wildly up and down the floor, and distractedly wringing her hands.

Lionne stood gazing pitilessly on her grief.

Presently was heard a man’s ringing footstep along the hall, approaching the room.

Adelaide paused in a panic.

Lionne, started out of her stony stillness, stood bending forward, every faculty merged in that of listening.

The steps stopped at the door and there was a sharp rap.

Adelaide glanced in terror towards Lionne.

The face of that wild, dark girl was a study. Her form was drawn up to its proudest height; her head erect and thrust forward; her face deadly pale, except where in each cheek burned a dark-red hectic spot, that went in and out like the glow of a living coal of fire; her lips were rigidly compressed until every drop of blood had left them colorless; her eyes were strained, fixed, and blazing; her whole expression of countenance exhibited curiosity, jealousy, suspicion, hatred, and malice, in one terrible combination of unscrupulous purpose, immutable will, and irresistible power!

Adelaide looked, and shuddered through every nerve.

The knock was repeated, and accompanied by the voice of Orville Deville, calling in affectionate tones.

“Adelaide! Adelaide!”

With an adjuring gesture to Lionne, whose ears and heart had been thrilled by hearing again the sound of that once loved voice, Adelaide hurried to the door, unable to utter but the one single syllable—

“Well?”

“Adelaide, my dear, what is the matter?” he asked, in a low voice.

Before answering, Adelaide turned a deprecating look towards Lionne, whose brows had gathered darkly over her flashing eyes. With a beseeching gesture to her rival, the fair girl turned once more to the door, and replied—

“I am not very well; I—have a slight headache.”

“The ride this lovely afternoon would do you good.”

“No; I feel certain that it would make me worse.”

“As you will, then, sweet cousin. But can I not do something for you?”

“No, I thank you.”

“Nor send any one to you?”

“Oh, no! I only need quiet, Mr. Deville.”

“Well, lie down and sleep, love! You will be better by tea-time.”

“Oh, yes!”

“And join us, as usual, at the table.”

“Oh, yes!” said Adelaide, with such an air and tone of distraction that Mr. Deville, believing she really had a nervous headache, took leave, saying—

“Good-by, sweet Adelaide! I leave you to your repose, in the hope of seeing you restored by tea-time!”

The last echo of his steps had scarcely died away in the distance before Lionne strode to the side of Adelaide, and laying her hand heavily upon the shoulder of the girl, and gazing threateningly in her pale face, asked—

“Do you know how much I have suffered standing here, hearing his voice, feeling his presence, and knowing what I know?”

“I am sure that you did, and do suffer,” said Adelaide gently; “but there are several things that should comfort you. First of all, your conscience is clear of offence. You knew nothing of me when you gave your free hand and heart to a man whom you deemed as free to wed as yourself.”

“That is as true as heaven!”

“And secondly, you must see by what has just passed, that myself and my cousin are not lovers. He speaks to me as to a little sister. He knocks at my door, but does not enter. He calls me pet names. I call him Mr. Deville. That is always our manner towards each other.”

As Adelaide said these words, she walked wearily across the room, and dropped into her easy chair, where she sat silent and thoughtful for a short time. Then looking up, and seeing the forest girl still standing in the middle of the floor, where she had left her, she said—

“I must again entreat you to be seated.”

“I thank you, no! I am about to bid you adieu,” said Lionne, coldly.

“Not yet! I have something important to say to you.”

“Say on, then, and pray be brief.”

“But I beg you will sit while I speak.”

Lionne, with a haughty air, shook her head, and remained standing.

“Well, I think I know why you refuse to take a seat under this roof; but you are wrong, as I shall soon show you.”

Lionne’s lip curled with angry scorn.

“Well, at least I must beg you to excuse me if I, through exhaustion, keep my seat.”

Lionne bowed her head, and waved her hand excitedly.

“And now, as I listened patiently to your story,” (every word of which stabbed me to the heart, she thought, but did not say,) “I must beg you to listen patiently to mine.”

“I wait here for no other purpose,” said Lionne, curtly.

“In the first place, then, do not too severely blame Orville Deville. Oh!” suddenly exclaimed Adelaide, with a retrospective shudder of horror, “while you stood looking towards that door when he was talking behind it, there was murder in your eyes!”

“Murder? never! A poor, stupid, vulgar vengeance for any injury and for such as MINE!”

“There is murder in your eyes now! or, worse than murder, if such could be!” cried Adelaide, appalled.

Lionne laughed horribly.

“You must not! oh, you must not! It is because you are maddened with wrongs that you do it, I know; but you must not! You must listen to me! I do not wish to defend

him beyond what is right. He has sinned grievously, I know; but not so grievously as you think. You will say so when you know all."

"Girl, how dare you take upon yourself to measure the extent of his sin and my wrongs?" broke forth Lionne, in a voice of thunder.

"Oh, be patient. Hear me out. I say you will judge less harshly when you know all."

Lionne threw up her head with a gesture of fierce scorn.

Patiently Adelaide continued:

"Orville Deville is no more responsible for the marriage ceremony that took place between us when we were children than I am. It was the act of our parents, while we were yet too young to understand, far less to protest against, their doings. Immediately after that form we were separated to pursue our diverse ways. And thus we grew up apart, until, doubtless, he ceased to remember even the face of the little child to whom he had been so rashly bound."

"And you forgot him as well," said Lionne, mockingly.

"No. I lived with his mother, who had no other son but him, and to whom I filled the place of an only daughter; therefore I could not forget him, you know."

Lionne's lip curled.

Adelaide paused, sighed, nerved her heart, and continued:

"Without ever having set eyes upon me again he met you, under circumstances the most interesting. You were beautiful, and he loved you. And then, because he considered the marriage-form read over two unconscious children five years before, a mere imposed betrothal at best, he used his supposed liberty and married you. There was nothing so heinously sinful in that, was there, Lionne?"

The forest girl did not speak, but looked intently at her fair rival.

"And so, Lionne, you became, in every sense of the word, his true wife, and not his wife only in name, as I had been."

“You admit this!” exclaimed Lionne, in the utmost astonishment.

“Assuredly I admit the truth, wherever I recognize it as such.”

“You—you are one in ten thousand,” exclaimed Lionne, in growing wonder.

But without heeding or even hearing her interruption, Adelaide went on.

“Alas, I cannot so easily explain the strangeness of his course since his return home.”

Again the face of Lionne darkened.

“Yet,” continued Adelaide, “something may be said in palliation of what seems so wrong. He came hither, you know, summoned to the sick-bed of his mother. He found her and every one else expecting him to take as his wife the little girl who had been read over to him five years ago. He had not the nerve at once to acknowledge his recent marriage, disappoint his friends, and grieve his ailing mother, who had so long looked upon me as her daughter-in-law.”

“Well?”

“And so he did what many older and wiser men often do—he temporized and waited, doubtless abiding a favorable opportunity for defining his real position.” Here Adelaide dropped her head upon her breast and paused so long that Lionne impatiently recalled her by saying—

“Well! well! what then?”

“He never loved me! and of course he never gave me the slightest reason to suppose that he did or could. He has treated me with no more affection than a kind-hearted young man might naturally feel for his young cousin, who is also his mother’s guest.”

“Ha!” sad Lionne, with an ironical smile.

“But I assure you he has not!” persisted the gentle Adelaide—“and now, Lionne, I must save you both!”

“You, Lady Adelaide!”

“Yes, I! Take courage, Lionne! for you and for him all shall be well!”

“You! you! Lady Adelaide!”

“Yes! believe in me!”

“You promise me this. Tell me, do you love him?”

“That is a question which you have no right to ask nor I to answer,” replied Lady Adelaide, with gentle dignity.

“But, young lady, you overwhelm me with astonishment; for well do I know that though mine is the true marriage, yet yours, though only nominal, being the prior, is consequently the legal one. Do you not know this?”

“Yes, I know it! I know that though our marriage was nothing but a form, yet that it was a form so binding that by law it is indissoluble except through death or crime!” replied Adelaide, solemnly.

“And death has not released either party, and yet the marriage has been broken! a crime has therefore been committed! A crime by him and against you! I understand your plan now, Lady Adelaide! You will apply for a divorce, which will readily be granted you, and thus you will release him and leave him free to return to the woman of his choice!”

“What! apply for a divorce and cover with dishonor the head that I have loved! Oh, how little you know of my heart!” thought the gentle girl, in silence.

“Is not that your purpose, Lady Adelaide?” asked Lionne.

“No! that is not my purpose! My plan is a much quicker solution of the difficulty.”

“May I ask you what it is, then?”

“Not yet! it is not quite matured, even in my own brain! I must have a little time for reflection. Excuse me: do you lodge in this neighborhood?”

“I am the guest of Kate Kyte.”

“Return to her then to-night. And early to-morrow morning you shall hear from me.”

“Be it so! but I wish to withdraw as I came, without seeing any one.”

“How did you manage that?”

“I entered while you were all at dinner.”

“Then remain here until we are all at supper, when the coast will be clear and you can retire unobserved.”

Almost as she spoke, the supper-bell rung, and with a parting promise to communicate with Lionne on the following morning, Adelaide went to the dining-room.

CHAPTER XII. SELF-SACRIFICE.

And I must go! I cannot choose

But love thee and thy love refuse!

And if my brow grows lined while young

And youth fly cheated from my cheek,

’Tis that there lies below my tongue

A word I will not speak!

For I would rather die than deem

Thou’rt not the glory then didn’t seem.—Philip-Bailey.

With no more pallor, or other sign of disturbance, than might rationably be accounted for by a nervous headache, Lady Adelaide entered the supper-room and glided to her place at the tea-table.

Lady Elizabeth was already seated, and Orville, who had been standing at the back of his chair waiting for the appearance of Adelaide, now took his place.

“Orville tells me that you were indisposed this afternoon, my dear. I hope you feel

better," said the elder lady.

"My head does not ache much now," replied Adelaide, without raising her eyes, and proceeding to pour out the tea.

Orville smiled as in gratification, and placed on her plate the rarest delicacies of the table.

The subject of the projected journey was resumed and discussed through the whole of tea-time.

Adelaide never spoke unless she was directly appealed to, and then her answers, though gentle, were brief and vague.

At last, Lady Elizabeth, looking wistfully at her, said—

"Adelaide, love, you really look quite unwell. Does your head still ache?"

"Not much; but I believe I must beg you will allow me to retire early."

"Certainly, my dear! sleep is really the only remedy for a nervous headache. Go at once, my child. Orville, take the light and attend your wife to her chamber-door, my son," said Lady Elizabeth, putting one of the wax-candles in Mr. Deville's hands.

He arose with a look of concern; but Adelaide, with a smile, took the candle from his hand, rejected his attendance, and left the room.

But as the door closed behind her, the smile died from her face, upon which a look of despair settled. She paused for a moment her bosom heaved convulsively.

"And is this the last, last time I shall ever see him? Have I taken my last look at his face, heard the last sound of his voice? And shall I never, never meet him more? Never more! Never more! Oh, words of woe insufferable! But what am I saying? Oh, heart, be silent! it is a crime to love him, to grieve for him, even to think of him now! he is the husband of another! and my stern duty is to go! Yes! all that I have to do lies in that little, hard word—Go."

So saying, she walked on through the lower hall; but instead of going up the stairs,

she went into the library and hunted until she found the Statute Laws of Maryland. She took the volumes to her chamber, locked her door, laid them upon the table, drew a chair, sat down and opened them.

She referred first to the laws on marriage; and she found, as she had expected, that the ceremony read over herself and Orville in their childhood, by the authority of their parents, constituted a legal marriage, indissoluble except by death or divorce.

Next she examined the laws of divorce, and found that such an act as Orville had committed, desertion, wanton abuse, etc., were all set down as just pleas for the legal breaking of a marriage-bond. She found also, oh horror! that a second marriage during the life of the first marriage-partner was a felony, punishable with imprisonment and disgrace!

She closed the volumes and fell into deep and painful thought.

Four courses were open to her.

First, to remain passively where she was, and let events take their natural direction, whatever that might turn out to be.

Secondly, to sue for divorce: that she could surely get.

Thirdly, to prosecute Orville for the bigamy, of which he would undoubtedly be convicted.

And fourthly, to sacrifice herself, by simply going away and leaving it to him to divorce her, upon the ground of wanton desertion.

These four paths lay open before her reason. But one only was possible for her heart. She did not hesitate one moment. And if for a few moments she remained in painful thought, it was to find excuses for him and just cause for her own self-immolation.

“He has been unfortunate rather than guilty—” so ran her reverie. “No one had a right to force me, a child, upon him as his wife in his non-age! Such an arbitrary act could not morally bind him, and that it did not is proved by the fact that I was never

any more to him than a little sister, while he formed a tie elsewhere.

“But unfortunately this bond, which is not a moral one, is, notwithstanding, a legal chain, not to be broken except by death or legislative action!

“If it were not a sin I would willingly die to release him! As I cannot die before my time comes, nothing remains but divorce, to free him from this unjust and hateful bond!

“If I divorce him for his unfortunate second marriage, it will cover him with unmerited dishonor and break his mother’s heart.

“Therefore, there remains but one way in which I can serve him! I can only save him by loosing myself! I will do it! I will go away and leave him to divorce me for my desertion of him!

“That will not dishonor him, and if it debase me in the eyes of the world, what odds? There is no one to be dragged down by my fall, for I am alone. Soon death will come of his own accord, and I shall rest and be forgotten—of all save God, who knows the truth!”

And thus concluding her reverie, Adelaide drew writing materials towards her, and commenced a letter of explanation and farewell to Orville.

The writing of that letter gave her more trouble than any task she had ever undertaken.

It was blotted with frequent erasures and blistered with many tears. It was written and re-written; so anxious was she that while fully releasing him—so far as she had power to do so—she should let slip no word of reproach or grief that should give him pain, or mar the completeness of her own perfect self-sacrifice.

It was finished!

Then still pale, and weak from the passage of that moral storm, she sat with her elbow resting on the table and her head bowed down upon her hand—thinking of the

marvellous change that a few hours had wrought in her destiny—looking back upon what she had done, and looking forward to what she must suffer.

She waited for all to become quiet.

First she heard Lady Elizabeth come up-stairs, attended by her maid, and enter her ladyship's chamber on the other side of the hall.

An hour later, she heard Orville Deville softly ascend the stairs and enter his bedroom, dismissing his servant at the door, and moving cautiously, as in the fear of waking her.

Finally she heard Keziah come out of Lady Elizabeth's chamber, pause and listen at her young lady's door, and mutter—

"She is asleep; I will not go in to disturb her," and then slip away softly down the stairs.

Now all was quiet. Yet still, for security, Adelaide waited another hour. Then she arose, put on a common cloth cloak and hood, such as she usually wore about the plantation, and taking "neither scrip nor staff," quietly left her chamber, glided down-stairs, and through the hall to the front door.

In that well-kept house no lock grated and no hinge creaked. At her touch, silently the key turned, the door opened and Adelaide stood upon the threshold of the once happy home she was now about to leave at night, alone, unfriended and forever!

As thus for one moment she stood, she looked forth, as into the world she was about to dare!

It was a dark and starless night. So dark that it was only by feeling the coldness and dampness of the air, and extending her hand outwards, that she discovered it was snowing very fast. The wind arose with a low wail, wafting the snow into her face and bosom, as if to meet her on the threshold of her wanderings. Cold, cold greeting!

The old-fashioned clock in the corner of the hall began, with its usual croaking

prelude, to strike the hour. It struck eleven.

Adelaide instinctively started! Never in her life had she been out at such an hour, or in such inclement weather! What a night and what an hour for that delicate creature to cast herself forth alone to wander until she should perish!

But a moment's bitter reflection caused her to ask, What did it matter? The hope of youth and the sweetness of life were lost forever! as well, therefore, to perish in the cold snow-storm, as to waste slowly with the fever of a breaking heart!

She paused no longer, but closing the door softly behind her, went forth into the night and storm.

There are great crises in life, when the soul is called upon to act, suddenly, forcibly, fatally, and in so swift a flight of time, that when the action is past, and life is thereby forever changed, the same soul seems instantly to have passed, as by death, from one state of existence to another.

Thus it was with Adelaide as she passed the threshold of that door, closing it behind her, and left a home of love, light and safety, and went forth alone into darkness, storm aid peril to meet—WHAT?

CHAPTER XIII. AT BUSH CREEK.

She clenched her hands, as if to hold

Her soul's great agony—

"Have I renounced my womanhood

For wifehood unto thee?

And is this the last, last look of thine

That ever I shall see?

Yet God thee save, and mayst thou have

A lady to thy mind!

And God me take with him to dwell,

For him I cannot love too well,

As I have loved my kind."—E. B. Browning.

We must proceed to Bush Creek and relate what took place there.

On the same evening of Lionne's visit to River-view, Kate Kyte sat in her bare and dilapidated front-parlor, which was also the common sitting-room and eating-room of the family, awaiting the return of her guest.

In the adjoining back-parlor, which served as the kitchen, old Lucy was preparing supper. Odors of fragrant coffee, corn-bread and broiled fowl came in through the open door, and still farther stimulated Kate's keen appetite.

But notwithstanding her hunger, and the uncertainty of her guest's return, Kate felt bound in common courtesy to wait some time for her appearance.

To help pass the interval, Kate got up and drew out into the middle of the floor an old-fashioned, black walnut table, put up its two broad leaves, and pulling out its end-drawer, took thence an old, threadbare, but clean damask cloth, with which she covered its top. Then going to the quaint corner cupboard to the left of the fireplace, she took thence cups, saucers and plates, of fine, old-fashioned, but mismatched China, and arranged them upon the table. Lastly, from the same repository, she brought a tarnished silver coffee-pot, a relic of better days, and with some pride placed it upon the table.

She had scarcely completed these arrangements when the door opened, and her brother Hubert entered, exclaiming impatiently—

"I say, Kate, when WILL supper be ready? I am almost starved to death!"

"So am I! and supper is ready now! We are only waiting for Lionne."

"And there's no telling when she'll be back! I say, Kate, she's a beautiful gal; but

it’s my belief she’s got a grudge agin some one at River-view. I know it by her looks!” said Hubert, with the look of a sage.

“Don’t be a fool, Hubert!”

“Well, fool or no fool, I had rather it be they than me that she has a grudge against; for I say, Kate, she looks as dangerous as—as—as the muzzle of a blunderbuss at half-cock!”

“Take care, then, that you don’t get into the line of the gun’s mouth!”

“On the contrary, I want to put something into my own mouth. I say, Kate, I’m famished!”

“Boys always are. You must wait!”

“Kate, I can’t; I’m going on a coon-hunt to-night.”

“Well, then, go into the kitchen, and tell Aunt Lucy to give you your supper there,” said his sister, not sorry to be rid of the boy for the evening, so as to have a long tête-a-tête with Lionne, in case that eccentric girl should return and choose to satisfy her curiosity.

Hubert gladly obeyed, and in twenty minutes’ assiduous application, so appeased the cravings of his appetite, as to be able to prepare himself and issue forth for a night’s sport.

The boy had been gone half an hour, and “the shades of night were falling fast,” when Kate, looking up through the uncurtained front window, saw Lionne, weary and exhausted, slowly riding across the bridge.

“Put the supper on the table. Bring in the coffee first, so that I can have it all ready poured out and ready to drink, for my stomach has gone to my back bone from sheer emptiness,” called Kate through the kitchen door.

She was so promptly obeyed that she had time to fill the cups before Lionne reached the door, and dropped, rather than alighted, from her horse, and entered the room.

“Well, how do you do? I am very glad you have come back,” said Kate, placing chairs at the table.

Murmuring some faint, inaudible words of thanks, Lionne staggered towards the table, seized a cup of coffee, quaffed it with feverish haste, and then went and fell exhausted upon the old-fashioned settle to the right of the fireplace.

“You look very tired,” said Kate, going to her, with interest.

“Hush! don’t speak to me yet,” faltered Lionne.

“Well, I won’t; but do have some supper—it will refresh you.”

“I cannot. Eat yourself.”

“Eat myself! Well, I am just hungry enough to do it, if it were possible; in which case, should I be a cannibal or a suicide, or both I wonder? There’s a question for moral philosophy! Lionne, famished as I am, I decline to commit the barbarism of eating myself unless you will keep me in countenance by eating your self!”

“Girl, girl, I cannot!” exclaimed Lionne, impatiently rolling her dark head.

“Well, to tell the truth, I doubt whether I can; but there is nothing like trying, especially as I am famished. Which end of me ought I to begin at—my toes or my nose?”

“Child, cease your folly. Leave me in peace for an hour, and then I will tell you all. And, in the meantime, if you are famished—why, feed, feed.”

“Well, I will follow your advice, especially as the hunger of my stomach is much keener than the appetite of my curiosity, which can wait. And now, as I shall not feed upon myself, I advise you not to lie there devouring your heart because a man acts out his nature in being unfaithful——Lord save us! don’t look at me in that way!” suddenly cried Kate, springing three paces backwards, as Lionne flashed a glance of indignation from her fiery black eyes.

Nothing more was said.

Slowly and gingerly Kate came back, took her place at the table, and commenced her solitary supper. But through one mental emotion and another, Kate's keen appetite was very much blunted, so that, after all her talk, she made but a very sparing meal.

An hour after this, when the tea-service was removed, the table set back, the fire replenished, the hearth swept, and Kate sat in a chair beside the settle, waiting for her guest to open the conversation, Lionne, without rising from her half-recumbent position, put out her brown hand and taking that of the young hostess, said:

"Kate Kyte, with what little power of preference I have left in me, I like you; and liking you, I will confide in you."

"And you may, Lionne, for, light as my nature seems, I am loyal, and will never abuse your confidence," said Kate, fervently.

"I am sure of it. And now listen; but—stop. First read this," and drawing a paper from her bosom, she placed it in the hands of Kate Kyte.

"What is this?" exclaimed Kate, staring at the document.

"It is really what it seems to be; and that is what cannot be said of every thing in this world," said Lionne.

"It is——" said Kate, looking up incredulously into the face of her guest.

"A certificate of marriage between Orville Deville, of St. Mary's County, Maryland, and Leonora Delaforêt, of Shenandoah County, Virginia," said Lionne, calmly.

"But he had already one wife!" exclaimed Kate Kyte, in horror.

"That, you perceive, made no sort of difference in the proceedings of Mr. Deville. He did not even think it necessary to inform me of the existence of such a mere imaginary impediment," said Lionne, quietly.

"Oh, this is terrible! terrible! terrible!" shuddered Kate, whose worst imagination had not pictured this.

“No,” said Lionne, coolly, “it is not even surprising. Given a certain number of square miles of earth, or a certain number of human beings, there will always be a proportionate number of criminals, sufferers, and—AVENGERS!”

“Oh, this is terrible! And the most horrible part of the whole is your look at this moment, Lionne!”

“I am quiet.”

“Yes! quiet as a thunder-cloud before the bolt decends!”

“But I am also patient.”

“Ay, patient as the crouching lioness waylaying her prey!”

“And, to crown all, I am forbearing.”

“Yes,—you are forbearing as the red demon of our wilderness when he spares the life of the fallen foe, only to carry him off and put him to death by slow and dreadful tortures!” exclaimed Kate, shuddering with horror.

“You have read me aright! No common wrong have I sustained, and it shall be atoned for by no common suffering!”

“Oh, Lionne! Lionne! don’t! don’t! He deserves death, but do not sully your girlish hand with his blood!” cried Kate, imploringly.

“Sully my hand with his blood! What! kill him! What! punish him by one blow, and one instant’s pain, for giving my whole life to waste and misery! How little you feel the burning fire that consumes me, to think its flames can be quenched by his blood!”

“Yet even for the most fearful wrongs death is a dreadful penalty,” said Kate, shivering.

“Is it? What is death? ‘A sleep and a forgetting!’ Can I sleep? can I forget? No! nor shall ever he!”

“Well, I thank heaven, at least, that your deep wrongs will not drive you to the deed

I feared."

"And yet I tell you that in every nerve of his brain, in every vein of his heart, in every instant of his life, shall Orville Deville rue the wrong he has done me!"

"Doubtless he will, when he comes to reflection, even although you should never move in the matter. But I suppose you will move in it. You will appeal to the laws of our country. They will vindicate your wrongs by punishing the wrong-doer. They will either transport or imprison him for years. Ah, after all, such dishonor will be worse than death to him!"

"And so you think that I would turn him over to the law, and promulgate my misfortunes through the world? No, no, no, no!" said Lionne, sternly shaking her head; "mine has been the wrong, and mine shall be the REVENGE!"

Their long conversation had kept them up late into the night, and before Kate could answer the terrible words of Lionne, the clock struck twelve.

As the last stroke vibrated on the air and died away, there came a light tap at the window. And looking up at the same time, the two young girls saw a pale, wan, woful face, pressed against the window-pane.

Kate started up in affright, as one who had seen a ghost.

But Lionne recognized that wretched face, and flew to the window.

The sash was instantly raised, a little note slipped in and the face vanished.

"What is it? For heaven's sake, what is it? asked Kate, in affright.

"Do you not know?"

"No! how should I? It looked like the ghost of Lady Adelaide! But of course it could not have been!"

"It was Lady Adelaide herself," said Lionne.

"Lady Adelaide herself? out at this time of night! Why didn't she come in? Who was with her?" cried Kate, breathlessly, flying to the door, and pulling it open.

“Oh, it is dark as pitch! and snowing—snowing fast! She was crazy—crazy to venture out on such a night! Who could have come with her? How did she come? And what could have been her errand? She must not return home to-night!——Lady Adelaide! Lady Adelaide!” cried Kate, running out into the storm.

“There is not a track to be seen, either of a human foot or horse’s hoof! She is gone, if it were indeed she, and her very tracks are filled up!” said Kate, re-entering the house, and shaking the snow from her skirts and shoes.

“Oh, do not be anxious! doubtless the young mistress of River-view came well attended and well protected from the snow! And if the hour is an odd one young heiresses are privileged to be eccentric,” said Lionne, ironically.

“I hope it is all right,” said Kate, unwillingly closing the door, as though she half fancied that she was shutting out some homeless wanderer.

“If it is not, you cannot help it!” said Lionne.

“But what was that she pushed under the window?”

“It was a little note for me; you can read it,” said Lionne, handing the slip of paper to her young hostess.

Kate took it, resumed her seat by the fire, and read—

“I have done all that is right under the circumstances. Return to your mountain-home, and wait the issue. All will be well. A. L.”

“A. L.?” said Kate, looking up inquisitively.

“Adelaide Lorne! So you see that even she, the unwedded wife, waives her claim in acknowledgment of my greater one.”

“She always was an angel! But you! What shall you do?”

“Follow her advice! The mission on which I came—the discovery of Orville Deville’s real position—is accomplished. I have nothing to do but to return to my poor father, and—‘wait the issue!’” she said, with a horrible laugh.

“Lionne! be patient! since that sweet angel says so, all will be well! I hope the dear girl came in a covered carriage!”

“Doubtless the dainty lady took care of herself!”

“Oh, how bitter you are! If you will not be patient, at least will you go to bed? You are very tired, and it is after midnight.”

“Anyhow, I will not keep you up any longer, Kate! So just show me where I am to lie down, and I will bid you good-night.”

“Come, then; we all sleep down-stairs, because the upper rooms leak,” said Kate, taking a candle and leading the way across the front-passage to an opposite front-room, where there was a poor but clean bed, an old chest of drawers and a flag-bottomed chair.

“I sleep in there,” said Kate, pointing to a door leading into a back room—“so, if you want any thing, call me.” And setting down the candle upon the chest of drawers, she bade her guest good-night, and left her to repose.

Did Lionne sleep that night? Did Kate? Did Adelaide?

CHAPTER XIV. DISCOVERY OF THE FLIGHT.

She was a form of life and light,

That soon became a part of night,

And rose where’er I turned my eye,

The Morning-star of Memory!

And she was lost—and yet I breathed,

But not the breath of common life!

A serpent round my heart was wreathed

And stung my every thought to strife.—Byron.

It snowed all night. The ground was covered two feet deep; and it was still snowing when the family at River-view arose and went about their morning-business.

First, old Nero, who slept in the house and performed the duties of waiter, crept down into the breakfast-parlor to open the windows and light the fire.

He found great difficulty in forcing back the shutters, that were blocked up with drifts of snow. And when at last he succeeded in pushing them open, the snow-shrouded earth that broke cold and white upon his sight, filled him with dismay.

"Well, I 'clar'," he cried, in wrath—"ef dis winter ain't jes' like human nater! It knows how dis is its last chance, cause spring is most here, and so it's a-doin' of its darndest! How am I gwine to haul wood to keep up de fires t'rough dis yere?"

"Oh hush! long o' yer perfane grumblin' at de doin's o' Marster in hebben!" exclaimed Keziah, who just at this moment entered the parlor.

"Yes, you may preach, but whar I gwine to get wood to keep all dese yer fires a-goin'?"

"Yer ought always to have wood nuff on hand! Ef I seed to keepin' of de house no better 'an you see to your dooty, things ud be at a putty pass. I gwine to take dis anyways, and you must do as yer likes," retorted Keziah, laying hold of an armful of light wood.

"Hey! stop dat you! it's for kindlin' de parlor-fire."

"An' I wants um for kindle Miss Adely's fire! You t'ink the likes o' she kin git up 'doubt a fire?" cried Keziah, in defiance, as she seized the billets and fled from the room, leaving old Nero first to rave at her effrontery, and then to go out in the snow in search of more fuel.

Very softly, meanwhile, Keziah ascended the stairs and entered the deserted chamber of her young mistress.

“She is still asleep,” said Keziah, glancing at the white curtains of her bed that were still closed.

She softly put down her billets of wood, raked together the embers, kindled the fire and swept the hearth. In all this, she unavoidably made some noise, and thereupon grew uneasy lest she should disturb the slumberer, who had, the night previous, gone to bed with a nervous headache.

“How sound she do sleep!” said Keziah, glancing at the motionless white curtains, as she left the room to bring fresh water.

She re-entered, filled the ewers, making an inevitable rattling with the crockery ware, and glancing anxiously at the bed. Then with some effort and more noise she hoisted the windows, and pushed open the shutters, sending down great drifts of snow, and letting in a flood of clouded light.

“How long she do sleep!” said Keziah, approaching the bed, and softly putting aside the curtains, for the purpose of gazing upon the beloved slumberer.

That bed, it is needless to say, was empty!

“My gracious! She hasn’t slept in dis all night! I ‘specks ole mist’ess has been sick, and she’s been sittin’ up wid her! Why couldn’t dey o’ called me?” said Keziah, with an injured air, as she hurried from this chamber into that of her old mistress.

“You may mend my fire, and hand me my wadded wrapper, Keziah, as I shall get up at once,” said Lady Elizabeth, who was lying awake.

“Yes, ma’am; I hopes you finds yourself better dis morning, ma’am,” said Keziah, looking around, expecting to find Lady Adelaide wrapped up in a shawl, and dozing in an easy chair.

“Better? Why, I am well enough! What do you mean?”

“Why, I thought how you was ill in de night, ma’am, as de reason why Miss Adely stayed long o’ you.”

“Adelaide stayed with me? Why, Adelaide has not been with me! What on earth are you thinking about, girl?”

“Miss Adely not along o’ you all night!” cried Keziah, opening her eyes wide with astonishment.

“Why, no! What is the matter? Are you crazy?” exclaimed her mistress, impatiently.

“Well, ma’am, all I can say is, as how Lady Adelaide must be sperrited away, case she nebber slept in her own room last night!” said Keziah, in alarm.

“Never slept in her own room last night!” ejaculated Lady Elizabeth.

“No, ma’am; she didn’t.”

Lady Elizabeth’s look of astonishment gradually changed to one of enlightenment, as she said—

“Oh, very well! I dare say it is all right. And now help me on with my wrapper, and go down and see that the parlor is well warmed and the breakfast ready. I shall be down almost immediately.”

Keziah hurried below stairs to do her mistress’s bidding.

And in half an hour afterwards, when the lady descended to the breakfast-parlor, she found the room glowing with the genial warmth and light of a great hickory fire, that blazed upon the hearth, and the table smoking with fragrant coffee and an abundant breakfast, which, together with all the other home comforts, enabled the family to bid defiance to the depressing effects of the inclement weather without.

Orville Deville stood with his back to the fire, and his eyes fixed carelessly on the English paper in his hands.

“Good morning, Orville! I regret to have kept you waiting, my son. Sit down at once: but where is Adelaide?”

“She has not yet come down, I believe, madam,” said Mr. Deville, placing a chair for his mother.

“I hope she has quite recovered of her headache,” said the lady.

“I hope so, too. I have not seen her this morning. Keziah, has your young mistress got over her indisposition?” asked Mr. Deville, turning towards the waiting-woman.

“I dunno, sir; I’ve not seen Miss Adely this morning, nyther,” said the abigail, in dismay.

“You not seen her, Keziah!” said Mr. Deville.

“You not seen her, Orville!” exclaimed Lady Elizabeth.

“How could I see her, when she wa’n’t nowheres?” said Keziah.

“What in the world is the meaning of all this?” inquired Mr. Deville, looking from the mistress to the maid.

“She did not occupy her room last night, Keziah tells me, and she has not been seen this morning, as it appears,” exclaimed Lady Elizabeth, in turn.

“Is it possible! what can it mean?” cried Orville; then, quickly controlling himself, he said, “nonsense! there can be nothing amiss. She is in some other room—in the library or the pantry. Go and look for your young mistress, Keziah, and stop gaping and staring! We live in a humdrum neighborhood, far from thieves and assassins, woman! Come, hurry! I will warrant that we find Lady Adelaide dropped asleep in the library over some old book, or else with the cook in the pantry, in close discussion of some dish that requires long and careful preparation. Go you to the lower dominions, while I ascend to the higher.”

And without another instant’s delay, Mr. Deville hurried from the breakfast-room.

The search began. Vain search! Adelaide was not in the library, nor in the pantry, nor in any of the chambers of the house, nor at any of the cabins about the plantation. No one could find even a trace of her. The servants of the farm were mustered and questioned—no one had seen or heard of her since the preceding day. The family became dreadfully alarmed. They, without a single clue to the cause of

her disappearance, were lost in the most painful conjecture.

“How forgetful and thoughtless we are!” at length exclaimed Orville—“for while we have been searching elsewhere, she may have returned quietly to her chamber. Let us search there again.”

A plan no sooner suggested than followed up. They hurried to her chamber. It was deserted as before.

They looked around for some sign to guide them to her fate. The letter lying upon the centre-table caught the eye of Orville. He snatched it up. It was directed in her hand to himself. He tore it open, glanced over the first few lines, flushed darkly-red, then turned deadly-pale and crushing the letter in his hand, said—

“Dear mother, pray take these women out, and wait for me a few minutes in the parlor, where I will soon join you.”

“But that letter, Orville?” said the lady, anxiously.

“It is from her to me—it explains her absence: it requires to be read alone.”

“But her—Adelaide! what of her?”

“Safe, I hope! Dear mother, give me opportunity to read and reflect! I will join you in the parlor in a few minutes.”

The lady, full of wonder and anxiety, called off her women, and retreating, left her son alone.

He threw himself into the chair, by her writing-table, and again took her letter, smoothed it out, spread it before him and read it—this time carefully, and from beginning to end.

She began by assuring him that his happiness had been the dearest object of her life, and begging him to forgive her, if all these years she had ignorantly remained an obstacle to that very happiness. She entreated him to judge leniently those well-meaning but mistaken parents who had so unjustly forced upon his life an

unnatural and hateful bond. She told him that she left with the intention of remaining away forever, that by her abandonment of him, he should be able to free himself, legally, from all engagements to her. And with her usual exquisite sense of delicacy, she refrained from mentioning the name or even alluding to the existence of Lionne. She concluded with the most affectionate messages to his mother, and the most fervent wishes for his own welfare. And she signed herself his “true friend and cousin, Adelaide Lorne.”

Orville had no reason, either from her letter or from any other circumstance, to suppose that she suspected the existence of Lionne. But he remembered his long neglect of her as his bride, and he ascribed her letter and her subsequent flight to wounded love and womanly pride. He cursed his own sin and bewailed his own follies that had separated him from her.

And if before this he had been in doubt of the strength, earnestness, and exclusiveness of his attachment to Adelaide—from this moment at least, he knew that he loved her with all the passion of his soul.

And now to seek and bring her back and make her know that he did so. But—where to seek her? where had she passed this night of storm, and where was she this morning? To what point should his first inquiries be directed?

Evidently the servants of the house and farm could give him no information.

He passed in rapid, mental review, all the possible places in which she might have spent the night. No place seemed so likely to have been her temporary shelter as Bush Creek, the deserted home of the Kytes. To that place he resolved immediately to go. He arose from the table and was about to leave the room to inform his mother and to order his horse, when his eyes were arrested by an object that seemed to possess the power of the Medusa’s head to turn the gazer into stone!

It was the mourning-ring with which he had wed Lionne, lying on the corner of the dressing-table, where that wild girl had left it.

For a moment he stood as if petrified, and then he snatched it up to see if there was not some mistake. There could be none! It was the very same ring, with his father's name on the inside. While wondering at its presence there, his eyes fell upon a crumpled paper on the same dressing-table. Some instinct led him to take it up and examine it. He smoothed it out and read it.

It was his own letter to Lionne.

He understood every thing now.

He knew that she knew all. Yes, though with her delicate sense of propriety she had not even hinted at her knowledge of her rival, yet it was evident that she had been made acquainted with the relations existing between himself and Lionne.

But how had this knowledge been conveyed to her? Who had sent and who had brought the ring and the letter? He would inquire. He rang the bell vociferously.

Keziah answered it.

"Keziah, come in here, and shut the door after you."

Keziah obeyed.

"Now, tell me, did any stranger come here yesterday?"

"While yer was all at dinner, a sort o' wild looking young gal came here as said she brought news o' Miss Kate Kyte, and how she wanted to see Miss Adely in her own room. I showed her up and stayed to watch her until I heard Miss Adely coming up to dress for her ride. Then I went into your room to fix things up."

"How long did this woman stay?"

"'Deed I dunno, sir! not long I reckon, caze I nebber saw no more of her. And Miss Adely's headache an' other things a-happening of, put her out of my mind until you spoke."

"You may go."

Keziah immediately retired to tell the colored folks below that a crazy girl, who had

been at the house the evening before, had bewitched and spirited away Miss Adely.

“Yes,” said Orville, when left alone, “Lionne has pursued me, has found out my previous marriage, and has told Adelaide every thing, and has proved all that she has told! The young forest-demon! she shall gain nothing by it! Oh, accursed sin! how bitter are your fruits! Hear Adelaide! Sweet angel! where are you now, exposed to this inclement weather! Oh, I must not stay to ask! I must find you at once.” And so saying Orville hurried from the chamber and descended to the breakfast-parlor, where, his mother sat anxiously awaiting him.

Not wishing for the present to communicate to her the full extent of his sins, misfortunes and apprehensions, he merely placed the farewell letter of Adelaide in her hands, saying—

“This will partly explain her absence, my dear mother. I hope to heaven that she is safe! I am going immediately to seek her.”

And while Lady Elizabeth eagerly opened the letter, Orville rang and ordered his horse to be saddled and brought to the door.

“Dear! dear! dear! what a dreadful thing! Wounded love and jealously and pride! I cannot wonder! There never was a fair bride so cruelly ignored and neglected!” said his mother, naturally coming to the very same conclusion to which on first reading the letter Orville himself had come.

“It is perfectly incredible—your indifference to that sweet girl!” continued the lady.

“But I am not indifferent to her, mother! I am very far from being so! I love her! with my whole heart and soul I love her!” exclaimed the young man, his pallid brow, quivering lip, and thrilling tone indubitably attesting the truth of his statement.

“You do! Well, I must say that you take an unprecedented way of showing it!” said the lady, with pardonable sarcasm. “Where is she now? And when you find her, you will not find it so easy to reconcile her. It is proverbially difficult to estrange a woman’s heart. But, mark my words—it is next to impossible to win it back!”

“Oh, madam, I shall try, and I shall succeed. But here is Nero, to tell me that my horse is ready. I go first to inquire at Bush Creek, where I hope to find Lady Adelaide! Good-by. Bid me God-speed!” exclaimed Orville, snatching his hat and darting from the room.

And in another moment he was in his saddle, galloping rapidly towards Bush Creek.

CHAPTER XV. BETRAYER AND BETRAYED.

My gipsy maid! my gipsy-maid!

I bless and curse the day

I lost the light of life, and found

The grief that maketh gray!

Would that the light which blinded me

Had saved me on my way!—Philip Bailey.

Kate Kyte was an early bird! Late as she had retired on the preceding evening, she awoke betimes in the morning, wondering to find it so dark. She knew by her own feeling, as well as by all the matutinal sounds of the farm-yard, that it must be day. And yet it seemed to be night.

“I must have gone blind or something,” said Kate, jumping out of bed.

She soon found the cause of the darkness. Although there were neither curtains nor shutters to her windows, yet every ray of light was excluded by thick blinds of snow drifted against them on the outside.

“Whew! what a day for the last of March!” shivered Kate, as she hurried into her clothes and hastened out into the kitchen, where old Lucy was already busy with preparations for breakfast.

It was lighter and cheerfuller there, from the fact that Hubert, who had returned in the night, had cleared the windows of their outer blinds of snow.

“When did you get home?” inquired Kate, as he entered the back door, beating the snow from his broom.

“Why, I came back soon as I saw the snow-storm rising. I came in the back way, and as I heard you and Miss Lionne talking secrets, I thought I would not disturb you, so I just went up-stairs and went to bed.”

“How very thoughtful!”

“Ain’t I, though. And I have brushed the snow off the parlor windows, and made a good fire in there for you, too.”

“You are a real good fellow when you choose to be, Hubert, and now I must go in and set the table,” said Kate, passing into the front room, where, to her surprise, she found Lionne already up, and dressed as if for a journey.

“My stars! It seems, then, that I am the latest riser this morning. How long have you been up?” asked Kate.

“Not long; I have but just come in here,” replied Lionne.

“And you look as if you had not slept one wink! And you speak like a person in the last stage of consumption! And you are dressed for a ride! What does it all mean?”

“It means that I think I shall have to set forward on my journey home this morning.”

“What? Now you just go to the window and look out! You are a forester and a mountaineer; you know very well that Braddock’s Road will be impassible for days, if not for weeks,” said Kate Kyte.

“I have seen the prospect and I will venture,” replied Lionne, in the tone and with the manner of one not to be turned from her purpose.

Kate Kyte looked into the pale, firm face of the mountain girl, and ventured no further remonstrance except in saying:

“At least, of course, you will wait until after breakfast?”

“Why should I?—I cannot eat,” replied Lionne, with a slow shake of the head.

“Why should you, indeed? Why, for one reason, because Hubert has not fed your horse yet! and, however far human beings, under the spur of passion, may go on without food, the brute creatures have sense, and come to a stand without their provender. So, ‘willy-nilly,’ you will have to stay an hour longer,” said Kate.

“I believe you are right,” admitted Lionne, wearily untying her riding-hat, and throwing it upon the windowsill, as she herself sank exhausted on the settee, under the window.

“I declare, you look half dead now!” said Kate, looking upon the worn face and collapsed form of the lately bright young huntress.

At this moment old Lucy came in the room, bearing in one hand a pot of hot coffee and in the other a plate of hot rolls. She was followed immediately by Hubert, bringing in a large dish of broiled partridges. These edibles were carefully arranged upon the table.

“Come, Lionne, you have swallowed nothing but wrath and one cup of coffee, since we reached home,” said Kate, placing a chair for her guest and adding, as she forced her into it—“there is not a traitor in the wide world worth losing a mouthful of food or an hour’s sleep for.”

“Again, I believe you are right!” said Lionne, receiving from the hands of her friend a bowl of coffee, which she quaffed with feverish avidity. “And yet,” she mentally added, “I shall not only lose food and sleep, but life and soul perchance, for a traitor!”

“That is not eating, Lionne,” remonstrated Kate, as her guest held out her bowl to be replenished—“I declare this living on strong, hot coffee will kill you!”

“Is that possible?” inquired Lionne, with a strange, mocking smile, as she raised the forbidden bowl to her lips and drained it to the dregs. Then, without having eaten a morsel, she arose from the table, went to the window to look out upon the blockaded paths and the still fast-falling snow, and then walked up and down the floor in wild

restlessness, until Kate also arose, and removed the breakfast service.

Then stopping in her wild walk, Lionne asked, impatiently—

“Is my horse ready?”

“No,” said Kate, coming from a side-window; “he is not done feeding yet. The brutes know better than to hurry themselves on such occasions.”

With an impatient gesture, Lionne seized her riding-hat and tied it on, and then threw herself into a chair beside the table, and resting her elbow upon the top, leaned her head upon her hand.

Just at this moment, Kate caught through the front windows a glimpse of a horseman covered with snow, crossing the bridge that spanned Bush Creek and led into the lawn.

With a half-suppressed exclamation of surprise, she passed into the hall, just as a sharp rap with the end of a riding-whip, at the front door, struck upon her ear.

She hastened to lift the latch, and her brow crimsoned with indignation as she recognized Orville Deville, who had just arrived in search of Adelaide.

Dropping her eyes, she silently stood aside to let him enter.

“Good morning, Kate,” he said, taking off his hat. “I came to inquire—is my wife here?”

“Which of them?” was the angry question that sprung to the lips of that honest girl; but the ironical inquiry was suppressed.

With her natural quickness, she instantly divined that it was Adelaide he sought.

And with justifiable vengeance she determined to send him to Lionne. She answered, coldly—

“Yes, you will find her in that room!”

And opening the door, she ushered him into the presence of Lionne, and retired.

CHAPTER XVI. ORVILLE AND LIONNE.

’Tis an old tale and often told:

But let my fate and will agree,—

Ne’er hath been read in story old

Of maiden true, forsook for gold,

That loved, or was revenged like me!—Scott.

Orville entered the sitting-room, expecting to find Adelaide.

He saw a slight female figure, wearing such a riding-dress and hat as she often wore, and sitting beside the table, with her back toward him, and her head bowed forward upon her hand.

Never doubting for an instant that this was the one of whom he came in search, he hastened forward with outstretched arms, eagerly exclaiming—

“My dearest, dearest girl! my most injured love! thank God, I find you safe at last! Only hear my exculpation, and you will forgive me!”

With a sudden, piercing cry of joy, Lionne sprang up and cast herself into his outstretched arms!

In that wild, impulsive act, so natural to her vehement, impassioned nature, all her wrongs and all her rage was forgotten! His presence, his looks, his words, she had most naturally taken as intended for herself, and she had received them and forgiven him at once! Hear his exculpation! of course she would! In that moment of extreme bliss, she was ready to believe “all the world a liar,” and only Orville Deville true! In that sudden revulsion of feeling from despair to delight, she must have swooned but that she was so strong.

Now lifting from his bosom a face at once beaming with smiles and glittering with tears, she exclaimed, in tones vibrating with intense joy—

“Oh, Orville, are you here? are you indeed here at last? and you love me still? you have loved me ever? oh, joy! joy! joy! let me die now! Ah, Orville, within the last few days I have suffered so, and I have sinned against you so, my faithful love! I have sinned against you in my thoughts so cruelly!”

“Lionne! oh, heaven, Lionne!” exclaimed Orville Deville, never returning her warm caress, but gazing at her in a sort of panic.

“Yes! is it not strange that I could have had such wicked thoughts of you, my constant love? But you must forgive them,” she said, entirely mistaking the cause of his emotion.

“Lionne! Lionne!” he repeated mechanically, gazing upon her face.

“Why, what is the matter? Why do you look upon me so strangely, so compassionately? Oh, I see! I know now! It is because I am so changed! Oh, yes, indeed, I know I am frightfully changed, Orville! The storm that has raged in this poor, wild bosom for a week past, must have metamorphosed me! But never mind; you are here now, and in a few hours I shall be myself again! every trace of suffering will have left my face! But come! sit down! sit down! you too look weary.” And smiling brightly, she took his hand to draw him towards the settee.

He shrank from her touch as though her fingers had been fire, and hurrying forward threw himself upon the indicated seat, and covered his face with his hands.

Still utterly self-deceived, she followed him, took the place by his side and laid her hand affectionately on his shoulder, saying:

“Do not take this so hard, dear Orville! Indeed, I am not ill, though I look so! And though it is true that I have suffered frightfully, and my countenance betrays it, yet do not dread to look upon my face! with all its pallor it is not disfigured! Look upon me, or at least take down your hands and let me see you!”

Orville dropped his hands and raised his eyes desperately to meet her unsuspicious gaze—showing her a countenance in which deep sorrow now so far predominated

over every other expression, as to confirm her in her most natural mistake of him.

He saw this confidence on her part, and his distress and embarrassment increased.

How should he enlighten her? In what terms could he bring himself to inform her that she had been deceived and forsaken?

“Lionne,” he began, in a tone that he vainly endeavored to render calm—“Lionne, I have an explanation to make to you!”

“Why, so you said when you first came in, dear Orville! And I am waiting to hear it from you! indeed I have heard it from another, who did not tell your story harshly; though only you can do yourself full justice!” she said, turning towards him an attentive face, bright with confiding love, in the full anticipation of hearing his perfect vindication.

How could she yet feel otherwise? At his first appearance in the room and his first words—so likely to deceive her—all her sense of injury, all her anger, and all her doubts had vanished. She saw before her the man who for months had been ever at her side, her sworn and trusted friend and companion; who had pledged to her in marriage an eternal fidelity. Here was the arm that had sustained her: the face that had always smiled upon her; the eyes that had ever followed her with glances of unutterable love; the lips that had sealed the marriage kiss upon her own; the voice that had ever dropped soft and musical, as the notes of the dove, in addressing her. His first looks and first words on coming in had expressed unfailing and unmeasured love, and upon seeing the traces of suffering upon her face, he had exhibited almost unreasonable grief—so Lionne thought, and looking upon him now, she could not doubt, she could only love. So with her countenance still beaming with happiness, she awaited his words.

“Lionne,” he commenced, “when I led you before the clergyman at Winchester, I firmly believed myself free to become your husband!”

“I am sure that you did, and that you were really so. That comedy performed by the

bedside of your uncle in your childhood could not and should not have bound you," said Lionne, confidently.

"Poor girl! undeceive yourself," sighed Orville, gravely and sadly.

"Why, what do you mean?" inquired his companion, with perplexity, but without suspicion.

"Lionne, I was not free!"

"Oh, legally, perhaps not, but morally, certainly so! The dainty little lady at River-view admitted that!"

"Lionne, at the time I ignorantly married you I was fast bound by the laws of Scotland to another!"

"By the unjustifiable act of worldly-minded parents when you were a child! It was a marriage only in name. Even the little lady admitted that."

"Lionne, she admitted that in generosity, and also, perhaps, in total ignorance of the nature of her claims upon me."

"Not so, I assure you, Orville. She fully comprehended her possession of legal rights and her lack of moral ones."

"Lionne!" exclaimed Orville, desperately, "look at me and undeceive yourself!"

"Ah my heart!" exclaimed Lionne, with a sharp and sudden cry, and a strained and piercing gaze into his firm, set face. "What—what do you mean?"

"I mean, poor girl, that you are looking upon the husband of Lady Adelaide Deville, who possesses every right—legal, moral, and social—to be called his wife!"

"And—what—then—am—I?"

As the wronged girl asked this terrible, this unanswerable question, her eyes, fixed upon his face seemed to burn into and blast his very soul.

"And what, then, am I?" she repeated.

His brow crimsoned at the question; but meeting her gaze with eyes at once blazing with defiance and melting with compassion—for he both pitied and dreaded this wronged and reckless girl, he said—

"You at least are innocent, Lionne. The guilt—if guilt there was—is mine, solely mine, as I would also the consequences could be! I am ready to meet them, whatever they are!"

"And you think that I can be answered so! Good," she said calmly. And her calmness was more threatening than her agitation had been.

"How would you be answered? Lionne, speak; you have only to command! I cannot, indeed, give you my name; but all that I can give, my fortune, my services, are at your orders."

She raised her hand to stop him, and then slowly inquired—

"Do you love the little lady at River-view?"

"Lionne, at the time that my heart and eyes were ensnared by your fatal beauty, I had never loved woman, except my mother!"

"I have been told so by you before this; that, however, is not the question. Do you love Adelaide now?"

"Lionne, when I believed that I had made you my wife, I loved only you; let that suffice you!"

"It does not, it cannot, it shall not," she said calmly and firmly; "and I adjure you, on your honor, on your soul, answer my question—Do you now love Adelaide Lorne?"

"I know no such person as Adelaide Lorne!" exclaimed Orville, with the asperity of desperation; "but I love my honorable wife, Lady Adelaide Deville, with my whole heart!"

"It is enough," said Lionne, very quietly.

"I recognize her perfect, her exclusive and indisputable right to my hand, fortune

and heart, and in doing so, I must, of course, repudiate the claims of any other."

"I make none," replied the forsaken girl, as quietly as before.

Orville Deville, when driven to "define his position," had deemed it proper to be perfectly, if even most painfully explicit. Now, however, deceived by the non-resistance of Lionne's words and manner, he relented and looked towards her.

Her face was paler and stiller than before; her lips were compressed; her eyes were fixed upon the floor; her countenance was perfectly impassible.

"Lionne," he said, in softened accents, "no one can regret more bitterly than myself, the power of that fatal passion that led me into error and you into misfortune. Pray let me repeat to you that when first attracted by your beauty, I had loved only you, and believed myself at liberty to offer you my hand. When, however, I returned to River-view, and met my child-bride after a separation from her of so many years, and found her grown up into the loveliest woman that the sun ever shone upon—when I found that her pure heart, through all the years of absence and of change, from childhood to sweet womanhood, had been single in its love and duty to me—when I found that she was, in fact, my own legal wife, bound to me as fast as Church and State could bind her; that for years she had dutifully looked upon me as her husband, and patiently waited for me to claim her as my wife, I did what any other in my position must inevitably have done! I learned to love, to adore, to worship her! Lionne, it was my fate!"

"Your love was a matter of time and place, and circumstance and policy. Good," she said, very quietly.

Beginning to be seriously disturbed now by what he considered the unnatural calmness of her words and the perfect impassibility of her countenance, he said:

"Lionne, in all that has passed, you at least have nothing whatever to accuse yourself with. You believed yourself, as I also then believed you, an honest wife! I only have sinned—grievously, though unconsciously, sinned against you. And, Lionne, I

repent from the bottom of my heart! And I shall repent to the last day of my life!”

“Peace. I do not reproach you,” she said, very smoothly.

“I know you do not, most wronged and most forbearing girl!”

Her lip almost imperceptibly curled; that was the only sign that she had heard his last words.

“Lionne,” he said, earnestly, “go farther in generosity; say that you forgive me.”

“I have nothing to forgive,” she quietly replied.

“Noblest, most magnanimous girl——!”

He stopped as if he had been struck by lightning.

With her face white and still, her lips compressed and bloodless, her eyes fixed and glittering, and hand lifted high towards heaven, she arose and stood before him.

“I have nothing to forgive,” she said, in a low, deep, steady tone, terrible even in its smoothness: “I have nothing to forgive, but EVERY THING TO AVENGE! Our hospitality outraged! our friendship deceived! our confidence betrayed! our home desecrated! my gray-haired father brought to dishonor, and his daughter to shame!—in one fell phrase, the preservation of your worthless life by us, repaid with the ruin of ours by you! And now and here, before high heaven! here, by the majesty of my awful wrongs and sorrows, suffered at your treacherous hands!—here, for your stupendous sin, I do solemnly devote you and yours to earthly and eternal destruction! And if ever I revoke this sentence, may the doom fall a thunderbolt of destruction upon my own head, and the heads of all I love! may then my words of pardon to you become the sentence of my own temporal and eternal death!”

And with this terrible imprecation upon her lips, her arm raised high towards heaven, and her eyes blazing with malediction, the heart-scathed girl receded from the room, and was seen no more at Bush Creek.

Orville Deville remained standing where she had left him, spell-bound,

panic-stricken, appalled by this prophetic vision of Retribution.

He was aroused by the entrance of Kate Kyte, who, without speaking, took up a seine that she was engaged in netting; and seated herself at one of the windows to work upon it.

Orville, with a pang and a start, suddenly recollected the errand that had brought him to the house, and, turning towards the young girl, he said:

“Kate, I came hither in anxious search of my wife.”

“Which of them?” inquired Kate, very dryly.

“Do not mock me, little school-mate,” said Orville, as a rush of color crimsoned his forehead, “but tell me if you have seen Lady Adelaide Deville since yesterday?”

“If I tell you that I saw her last night, it is for her sake and not for yours that I speak,” said Kate, coldly.

“Last night! how? where? at what hour, good Kate?” eagerly inquired Orville.

“At midnight, in the snow-storm, alone, outside that window,” said Kate, cruelly condensing the facts.

“Great heaven above, what is it you tell me?” cried Orville, starting up with horror, grief, and dismay in every lineament of his face. “Where is she now?”

“The Lord knows—I don’t!” said Kate, severely.

“Explain! for the love of heaven, explain!” exclaimed Orville, rushing forward, and seizing the arm of the girl, and gazing with an agony of inquiry into her face.

Kate indignantly shook off his arm, giving him a glance which, could a look have killed, must have laid him dead at her feet.

“I have nothing to explain,” she said, “except the reason why I do not now know where Lady Adelaide is to be found. Her body, I think, may sometime or other be discovered among the snow-drifts; her soul is probably in heaven!”

“Kate, this is torture—this is agony! For the love of heaven, be more explicit! You

saw her——”

“I told you all that I saw. If you wish me to be more circumstantial, I can be so. I can tell you the relation will not be less painful. Last night, a little after midnight, while I sat at that very fire, listening to the history of your other wife, which included also the story of a hero, who repaid the preservation of his own worthless life with the ruin of his preserver, we heard amid the snow-storm a slight noise at the window, as if some poor little storm-beaten bird had pecked against the glass for admission. I looked up and screamed on seeing, at that hour, in that storm, a pale, still, sad face at the pane, and which I did not at first recognize as that of Lady Adelaide.”

“Well! well!” exclaimed Orville, breathlessly.

“This phantom raised the window, and slipped under it a little note, which was eagerly seized, and read, and carefully burned by—your other wife.”

“Kate, your words are full of well-merited bitterness. I do not quarrel with them. But Adelaide—tell me of Adelaide!”

“I have really nothing more to tell. As soon as she had slipped in the note, her face vanished from the window. And as soon as I had recovered from my panic, I jerked open the door and ran out into the night and storm to call her in. I ran up and down among the deep drifts, and amid the fast falling snow, calling and shouting, in vain! It was as dark as pitch; I could see nothing—not even my own hand, not even the snow! and I could hear nothing but the sound of my own voice!”

“Go on! go on!”

“What more would you have me say? I floundered out among the snow-drifts, in black darkness, freezing cold, and stifling sleet, until, tough as I am, I was near perishing at my own door. Then in despair of finding her, I gave up the search and came in. That is absolutely all that I know of her fate!”

“Kate! for heaven’s sake tell me, have you no clue, no suspicion, no vague idea, of whither she went?” asked Orville, in anguish.

“None whatever. After I came in, it occurred to me that she might possibly have had a carriage and servants in attendance, and that while I was floundering in the snow, she might have been comfortably driving homewards; but since that is not so, I fear, indeed, that she must have perished in the storm!”

“The Lord in his mercy forbid! Kate, are your brothers at home?”

“None have yet returned but Hubert.”

“I am very sorry for that. But Hubert knows every foot of the forest—I must get him to assist me ’n my search.”

“Very well, Mr. Deville. Hubert will be glad to do any thing in the service of Lady Adelaide. But he must pursue his search alone, if you please, and report his luck to your mother.”

“What do you mean by that, Kate?”

“That I do not wish my brother to become intimate with you, sir.”

“Kate, are you determined to affront me, whether I will or no?”

“I am determined to speak a few plain words to you, Mr. Deville.”

“Say on—you are a woman, and privileged.”

“The Lord knows, I wish I were not! I wish I were a man for your sake! But this is what I have to say to you, Mr. Deville. In the first place, that but for the sake of Lady Adelaide, I should not have permitted you to hold me in conversation so long. I told you that I had heard your story from Lionne. Now, had a woman committed the sin that you have committed, you know that she would have forever, and justly, forfeited her place in society. God never made one set of commandments for man and another for woman! He will hold both equally responsible for similar sins. In the same circumstances, I do not judge a man less guilty than a woman, but rather more so! And therefore, Mr. Deville, I judge that you have lost your title as a man of honor, and consequently forfeited all right to cross the threshold of an honorable

woman! I hope you will consider this a hint to shorten your visit, and—never to repeat it!”

And before Orville Deville could recover his astonishment, Kate Kyte flounced from the room, leaving him to depart and pursue his quest of Adelaide.

“My eyes!” said Hubert, who from the kitchen had heard and understood ‘a fury in the words, but not the words,’ what a “thundering blowing-up Mr. Deville did get from both them women! Wonder what it was all about. Don’t any of the three look so very happy.”

CHAPTER XVII. THE MIDNIGHT WALK.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,

Thou art not so unkind

As friends’ ingratitude;

Thy tooth is not so keen

Because thou art not seen,

Although thy breath be rude.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,

Thou dost not bite so nigh

As benefits forgot:

Though thou the waters warp,

Thy sting is not so sharp

As friends remembered not.—Shakspeare.

Where, meantime, was Adelaide? We left her, self-expelled from her home, standing without the door, alone, at midnight, with her delicate feet deep in the snow-drifts, and the snow-flakes falling fast around her fragile form. A few moments she stood

thus—solitary, desolate, despairing, in the midst of freezing cold, whirling storm and utter darkness, with but one purpose in her mind—to flee; with one wish in her heart—to die; one prayer on her lip—to be received of God.

At first, in the solid blackness of darkness, and the whirling chaos of snow, she could discern nothing—she struck out blindly for the side-gate that opened, from the lawn, out upon the bridle-path leading along Bush Creek to the mill. After floundering at random through the snow-drifts, she at length reached the fence and felt her way along its line, until she found the gate. She opened it and passed out upon the bridle-path.

Her eyes, now more accustomed to the deep darkness, could discern the track by its border of bushes, that looked only a denser line of dotted shadows.

We might suppose that in her desolate circumstances there could be found no favorable feature; but in fact there were two,—in the first place, the very violence of this midnight-storm kept all night-passengers from the road, and thus saved the fair, defenceless wanderer from all danger of insult. In the second place, the wind and snow coming from the north-west, were behind her; but for this, she never could have lived to reach her destination. Thus driven before the tempest, with her blood half congealed and her limbs trembling under her, she reached Bush Creek Mill. Holding by the side-railing she reached the bridge. A bright fire-light shone from the window to the left of the front-door. To this window, as has been said, Adelaide went and looked in. Oh, in comparison to the bitter storm without, how comfortable looked that homely room! with its home-made carpet on the rough floor; its corner-cupboard, with glittering crockery-ware and domestic stores; the flag-bottomed arm-chairs, the calico-covered sofa, the warm rug, the clean hearth, and the bright, broad fire, with the two girls sitting, whispering in its glowing light and genial warmth.

Within was life; without, death.

She dared not trust herself to gaze one moment on that scene. She lifted her benumbed fingers and tapped upon the pane. She heard Kate scream and saw Lionne start up. She immediately raised the sash, slipped under it her little note and turned away.

The fear of being followed and called back lent fresh vigor to her failing limbs, and as fast as they could carry her, she fled from the window. She had passed the gate and reached the bridge, where she paused to recover breath, when she saw the house-door torn open, a stream of red fire-light gush forth, and Kate run out into the storm, calling loudly upon her name. This gave new impetus to her flight. She fled across the bridge, regained the road, and turning inland, hurried onward as fast as deep snow-drifts, whirling snow-flakes, and her own benumbed and exhausted condition, would permit.

Onward, onward, still onward through the midnight snow-storm, toiled the wanderer.

Darker grew the dark night; deeper the deep snow-drifts; keener the keen blast!

Onward, still onward through the black tempest, pressed the wanderer.

It was near morning, and she was miles away from home, when, at length, her burthened heart stopped its pulsations, her laboring lungs failed, her oppressed brain reeled, her frozen limbs bent beneath her weight, her form tottered and she fell—murmuring—

“If this be death, oh, Saviour, receive a poor heart for which the earth has no room at all!” Breathing this prayer her senses fled, and the whirling snow soon covered her form from sight.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE RESCUED WANDERER.

“At dawn a traveller passed that way.”

Long before light that morning, Farmer Fieldhurst and his son John arose and put the oxen to the wagon that had been loaded the night previous with turkeys, geese and chickens, to go to the Bell Haven market.

After drinking a couple of large bowls of strong coffee, and eating a great pone of corn-bread, with a proportionate quantity of middling rashers and fried eggs, the worthy farmer and his son wrapped themselves up in their great, dreadnought overcoats, pulled their fox-skin caps down over their foreheads, wound thick, woollen scarfs around their throats, drew on their oxhide over-boots and coonskin gloves, mounted the wagon, and grumbling greatly at the weather, drove off. With difficulty they got through the farm-gate and out upon the open road, where a colloquy ensued as to whether it were possible to proceed.

“I say, Johnny, I don’t think we can go on,” said Mr. Fieldhurst, pausing, and squinting down at the obstructed road, obscurely seen by the faint light of dawning day.

“Yes, but dad,” said John, who rather liked the fun of struggling through the snow-drifts—and who knew, besides, what argument was most likely to influence his father—“dad, you know if we can manage to struggle through and get to market, why there’ll be so few of the country people in that we can get any price we like for our poultry.”

“That’s so,” said the farmer, reflectively; “but the roads are—very bad—drifts heavy.”

“Yes, dad, but the load is light and the beasts strong.”

“That’s so, too, Johnny—and—I don’t know as this storm is going to last above a half hour longer. I reckon we’ll try to get on, and if we can’t, why we can but turn back after all. Come up there, Taurus! Whoa!—hoy!” and cheering his beasts of burthen, the farmer drove on until they reached, at a quarter of a mile distant, the gate that led from the country road into the turnpike.

“Get down, Jack, and open the gate.”

The boy obeyed, and pushed with all his strength.

“Well! what’s the matter?”

“There’s something agin it—a log or a sheep, or some thing in the snow,” said the boy, pushing the gate a little way open and squeezing himself through the aperture, and proceeding to kick and push at the obstructing object.

“Well!” said the farmer, impatiently.

“Lors alive, dad!” exclaimed the boy, retreating in a panic.

“What’s it?”

“It’s—it’s a woman!”

“No!” exclaimed the farmer, jumping off his seat and hurrying through the gate.

“It is though, and—dead!”

The farmer stooped and cleared away the remaining snow, and raised the fragile form in his powerful arms, exclaiming—

“Lord of heaven, it is a woman, sure enough! a woman perished in the snow here, almost at our very gates!”

“What on the yeth could have fotch her out so early in such weather, dad?” inquired John, in an awe-struck voice, cautiously approaching.

“I—don’t—know. It’s—hard—telling. Nothink oughten’t to,” said the farmer, still holding the lifeless form as if it had been that of an infant in his great arms, and peering down to examine and see if he could recognize her features.

“Who is she, dad?”

“I—can’t—tell. I thought she looked a little like Mary Jones; but ’taint her. One thing’s sartain, John. We can’t go on now. Go roll the load in the wagon level as you can, and spread the sheepskins over them. We must put her on it and take her to the

house, to rouse her if she's alive, and to send for the crowner and give her Christian burial if she is dead," said the farmer.

They placed her tenderly in the wagon, and then with a great deal of pulling and tugging and calling, succeeded in turning the oxens' heads towards home. The eastern sky was red with the coming sun when the wagon once more drove into the farm-yard.

"There! I said you'd never be able to get along," said the farmer's wife, who saw them from the open door of the kitchen. "Lord alive! what is that your father's got?" she asked of John, who, followed by the farmer with the lifeless body, entered the kitchen.

"It is a poor girl, whom we found in the snow at the outer-road gate," answered Mr. Fieldhurst, sitting down in the chair, and turning back the hood and exposing the face of Adelaide Deville.

"Dead?" asked the wife, approaching and gazing in horror upon the still, white, cold face.

"Dead or swound. Do you know her?"

"Not a bit of her—I never saw her before! Who is she? how came she to fall in the snow? where did you pick her up? was that what brought you back?" these and other questions, Mrs. Fieldhurst asked in breathless haste, and Mr. Fieldhurst answered in hurry and impatience, saying at last—

"But good gracious, Marthy, if she is not dead are you going to let her die without an effort to save her?"

"No, no, not for the world! only I was so taken aback! Here! Mary! Susan! Jane! come here all of you!"

Three blooming country girls ran out from an adjoining chamber, and on seeing the apparently dead girl in their father's arms, were about to open their mouths in

astonishment, when their mother arrested them by saying:

“There now! ask no questions! I have lost time enough already. Run, Mary, and prepare the bed in the other room, and then put coals in the warming-pan and warm it well. Go, Jane, and bring down a suit of my flannel underclothes and a nightgown. Susan, take some brandy and sugar and spice, with a little hot water, and make a warm cordial. Father, you and John had better go and leave us alone.”

All the directions of the housewife were promptly obeyed.

A large double blanket was laid upon the carpet before the fire, and the fair patient placed upon it, undressed and rubbed briskly by the diligent hand of the farmer’s wife.

“She is a young lady of high rank, mother, for all her coarse, gray cloak and hood! Only look at this beautiful skirt! thick, soft, blue satin, quilted as fine as the finest Marseilles—and see this upper skirt, the finest cambric, embroidered half way up to the waist. And oh! see this linen, how delicately made! real linen-cambric, fine as a cobweb, and trimmed with real thread-lace!” said Jane, in rustic wonder and admiration, as she examined article by article of the wet clothing before hanging them to the fire to dry.

“And see the soft, thick silk-stockings, mother, and the little black satin-boots, with their high, white heels! Oh, how tiny and how pretty! these never came from hereabouts! that I know; but Lors! they are quite spoiled now!” said Jane, trying to pull them into shape as she set them on the hearth to dry.

In rubbing and chafing the hands of the invalid, Mrs. Fieldhurst had noticed a diamond ring, that, even to her inexperienced eyes, appeared a jewel of inestimable value. And all this, so at variance with the personal habits of the wives and daughters of even the very wealthiest farmers around, filled her mind with vague conjectures. These did not prevent her from working with zeal for the restoration of her patient. Soon the fair form was re-clothed in warm, dry raiment, and laid in the

comfortable bed. Then the friction was continued, and at last their efforts were rewarded with success. The white chest heaved, the fair throat throbbed, the lips trembled, closed, and gasped with the first returning breath, the snowy eyelids quivered and flew up, and the mild, mournful blue eyes looked in amazement upon the strange scene.

Mrs. Fieldhurst put a spoonful of the spiced cordial to her lips. She swallowed it mechanically, and revived by its stimulating qualities, looked around again in perplexity, and fixing her eyes in wonder upon the face of her hostess, inquired:

“What place is this? How came I here?”

“You are at John Fieldhurst’s farm, and now you must drink the rest of this and lie still, and be covered up warm to get into a sweat, and go to sleep if you can. Then, when you wake up, you shall have a warm, nourishing breakfast,” said the farmer’s wife, lifting the invalid’s head with one hand, and putting the cordial to her pale lips with the other.

Adelaide, from the mere habit of obedience, drank the prescribed restorative, and in her feeble state, overcome by its fumes, sank back upon her pillow, and before she had time to recollect or understand her real position, she fell into a deep, healthful, restoring sleep.

“I have always took notice that it isn’t good to watch a sleeper,” said Mrs. Fieldhurst. And she arose and closed the blinds, and shut up the room, and left her patient alone to repose.

“Have you made out who she is?” asked the farmer, who was warming his feet at the kitchen fire.

“No; she has scarcely come to her right mind yet; she’s dead asleep. She’ll tell us when she wakes, I reckon.”

“There’s A. D. marked on her linen, mother.”

"'A. D.'—let's see," said the farmer's wife, reflecting. "There's Alice Diggs, Colonel Diggs's youngest daughter—'taint her, I know. And there's Anne Dawson, Mr. Plater's overseer's sister."

"Dear, mother—big Anne Dawson?"

"Then there's Abigail Drew."

"Lord, mother, we know all them!"

"Then they are all the A. D.'s I can think of; anyways she'll tell us who she is when she wakes," said the farmer's wife.

Now they had all heard the name of Lady Adelaide Deville, but so far was she removed from their sphere of thought as well as from their neighborhood, and so unlikely was she to be placed in the circumstances of their rescued wanderer, that neither her name or existence now occurred to them.

"One thing I do not like about her," said the worthy housewife, "that is, all her clothes under her cloak and hood are much too fine. I don't like to see an unprotected young female wear purple and fine linen and costly jewelry, like the woman of Babylon."

While thus they freely conversed, their unfortunate guest, insensible of all her troubles, slept on in peace. She slept the sleep of deep exhaustion, consequently it was late when she awoke. Oh, what a different awakening to that of a few hours preceding, when she opened her unconscious eyes to close them soon in sleep. Now, with her awakening came first a vague but deep impression of some profound calamity, a heavy weight that could not be thrown from her heart. Then, with a slight effort of memory, and with a keen pang, came the full tide of consciousness. She remembered when and why she had left her home, how long she had wandered through the midnight, and when she had fallen and become insensible. She recollected opening her eyes a few hours before in this very bedchamber, where she could readily judge she had been brought by the kind-hearted people who had

chanced to find her before her life became extinct. All this she knew, or judged, or recollected. There was, therefore, no occasion for her to ask questions. But how should she answer the questions that should be put to her?

Alas, with her breaking heart, she cared not how! she cared only to save the name of Deville from discreditable gossip, and she resolved to conceal her identity, and as soon as possible to leave her present place of shelter. She was in no haste to be disturbed by the presence of others. She would have liked to be alone until she could die. So she lay with her arms clasped above her head, quite still for many heavy minutes—and until the chamber door was softly opened and the farmer's wife crept cautiously to the bedside and looked over her. Now, much as Adelaide wished to be left alone, she was incapable of even a tacit deception for that purpose, so opening her eyes, she said—

"I was not asleep."

"How are you, then?" inquired her hostess, sitting down beside her.

"Well enough, I thank you."

"Indeed! I am very glad you think so! You—you do not look very well!" said Mrs. Fieldhurst. Then going to the door she called to one of the young girls in the kitchen, and said—

"Susan, broil the breast of that chicken; make a round of toast and a cup of good tea, and bring it in here—quick."

Then going back to her patient and seating herself beside the bed, she said—

"Poor girl! how came you to be out at that time of the morning in the snow-storm?"

"I had been out all night," answered Adelaide.

"All night! powers above! how did that happen, child?"

"My kind friend," said Adelaide, very gently, "you see in me a poor, unfortunate girl who can give no account of herself."

The face of the honest wife and mother clouded.

“You have been very kind to me; be kinder still by letting me depart unquestioned, and I shall always pray God to reward you.”

“She talks of praying—but then they all do that when it suits them,” thought Mrs. Fieldhurst, looking at her fair young guest and feeling completely confused and dumbfoundered by words at once so frank and so reserved. At length, recovering her speech, she said—

“Oh, if you make a mystery of it, I have done, of course.”

“You are offended, my kind hostess. I am very sorry for it.”

“No, I am not offended, but I do think after all we have done for—well! never mind, I did not mean that, either.”

“You were about to say that after all you had done for me, it was ungrateful in me not to confide in you. My kind friend, it is because I must not do so! There are many mysteries that nothing but the light of another world will make clear. This must remain one of them. Do not be displeased, but after I shall have left your house, remember me only as a poor, wandering child, whom you have saved from death.”

“I am not displeased.—There, Susan, I will take the waiter; you need not come in here. No, I am not displeased, but I think that I shall wait on you myself instead of letting my daughters do so,” said the worthy but severe matron, as she brought the waiter of refreshments to her patient. Now, Adelaide did not in the least understand the drift of these words. Her perfect innocence was armor of proof, from which the cruel arrows rebounded.

To please her hostess rather than to benefit herself, she partook slightly of the viands set before her, and then thanking Mrs. Fieldhurst, she said she believed that she would try to rise.

“Why?”

“To proceed on my journey.”

“You are clean crazy. It is almost night now, and though the storm is over, yet the roads are impassible, even to my old man’s team; what must they be to you?”

“I do not know; but I must attempt it.”

“Young girl, I’m afraid you could not give a very good account of yourself if you tried; but one thing certain, unless you’re perfectly desperate, and want to make way with yourself, you will not take the road to-night.”

“No—nothing on earth would drive me to wanton suicide,” said Adelaide, but with a tone and manner that caused the farmer’s wife to answer:

“But let me tell you, young girl, that people who expose themselves to death on purpose, as may be you did last night, are just as sinful as those that put a rope around their own necks or swallow poison.”

Adelaide turned paler than before as she mused—

“I never thought of that. I would not do any thing wrong. God help me, is that way of escape closed up too! Lord pity me! Lord help me! Oh! what shall I do! Oh! what shall I do! how long must I bear this heart, throbbing and burning and aching, and finding no ease at last!”

She clasped her hands upon her forehead and remained in silent anguish so long that the farmer’s wife, in a kinder tone, said to her—

“I cannot think of letting you leave us, child, until the weather is settled and the roads in good order, and that will not be for several days yet.”

“I will not go to-night, if you think I had better stay,” said Adelaide, humbly.

“Very well. I am glad you consent. And though I did say I would not let the girls come in, to wait on you, yet I will do everything I can myself.”

“But why not let the girls come in?” asked the innocent and unsuspicious maiden.

“Why not? humph! well I should think you might guess why not!”

“I have no contagious fever—have I?” inquired Adelaide, in perplexity.

“Not as I know of; but there be worse than catching fevers!”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, there, I reckon we won’t say any thing more about it—but young gals do not wander about all night in a storm alone, and try to get themselves frozen to death, for nothing!”

“Do pray explain yourself,” said Adelaide.

“Well, now, enough said! You be either the cunningest or innocentest creetur I ever saw in my life! If you don’t know what I mean, it would be a pity to tell you; and if you do, it would be no use—there! Make yourself easy,” and taking up the waiter, the farmer’s wife returned to the kitchen.

The girls had supper prepared and the table set, and their father and brother were waiting for their evening-meal.

Mrs. Fieldhurst took her place at the head of the table, and her numerous family gathered around the board.

“Well! what do you make of our find now?” asked Mr. Fieldhurst.

“I cannot make any thing at all of her,” answered his wife, who thereupon begun and related the substance of the interview that had just taken place between herself and Adelaide.

To this the young women listened with the deepest interest, the farmer and his son with curiosity.

“Well, I’ll tell you what it is, mother,” said Mr. Fieldhurst, “I do not think she is a bad one, because you see if she was, she need not displease you by reserve when she could so easily trump up a fair story to account for being out in the storm at night. So, until we find her out to be guilty, let us take it for granted that she is innocent.”

“I think so too,” said John.

And so said the girls.

“You are not asked to think any thing about the young tramper,” sharply exclaimed their mother.

The farmer arose from the table, took his pipe, filled and lighted it, and sat down in the chimney-corner to smoke.

John took down his fowling-piece and established himself in the other corner to clean the barrel.

The mother and her daughters busied themselves with washing up the supper-service, clearing away the table and restoring the room to order.

After which they took their knitting-work and sat down to knit, until the farmer had finished his pipe.

Then they gathered together and offered up family-worship. In his prayers, the father of this household remembered the wayfarer that had been so strangely cast upon their care.

Then they separated for the night.

The next morning the farmer’s family arose early, that the farmer and his son might breakfast by times, and once more try the road to market.

For an hour or more they were all very busy until Mr. Fieldhurst and John were fairly started. Then Mrs. Fieldhurst began to think of her guest. She bade Susan make up some delicate butter-cakes, and broil a nice slice of ham, and set fresh tea to draw, while she herself carried water in to their patient.

And so saying, she filled a ewer and opened the door of the inner room. To her surprise, she found both the bed and the room empty. Her clothing that she had lent to the young girl was folded neatly, and laid upon a chair. Adelaide’s own garments, that had been hanging on a wooden rack, were gone.

While Mrs. Fieldhurst was looking around in astonishment, she descried a little note

stuck in the corner of the looking-glass. She took it down, opened it and read these lines written in pencil—

“Good friends: to avoid altercation and to relieve you from embarrassment I depart quietly. Last night I heard you in your evening devotions praying ‘for one in bitter need.’ For that and all your kindness to the poor wanderer may God bless you.”

“Left the house, I do declare!” exclaimed the farmer’s wife in consternation. Her next thought was cruelly unjust:

“Susan, Mary, Jane, the tramper has run off, without letting anybody know when she was going! run in all of you and help me to look over the press and the chest of drawers to see if there is nothing missing.”

With many exclamations of astonishment, the girls hurried in and assisted in the search.

It is needless to say that all was found safe.

CHAPTER XIX. LIONNE.

And to be wroth with one we love

Doth work like madness in the brain.

Dashing her single spur into her horse’s flank, Lionne galloped furiously, with reeling, headlong speed, across the bridge and down to the road below. There the snow-drifts impeded her flight, and she had to labor heavily through them until she reached a bleak track blown clear by the winds. There she again spurred her horse and took flight as if possessed by a demon. And she was possessed by a demon. Burning, agonizing, maddening sense of wrong, roused her whole soul to a frenzy of indignation, that seemed to hail down lightning from Heaven to scathe and consume and exterminate her enemy.

Such just and fiery maledictions never bless their subject, and never, never fail to

blight their object. Yet it is better to forgive; all the ends of justice are quite as well answered. Wrongs for which the law affords no remedy, never fail to receive punishment from the righteous hand of God, even in this world.

For instance, I have seen the slanderer “lying loud” against the innocent and helpless, brought to unexpected ruin.

I have seen the scornful oppressor of God’s meek poor humbled to the very dust.

I have seen the wrong-doer brought by God’s justice, overwhelmed and helpless, to the feet of his victim.

These things I have seen with my eyes in the forenoon of my life.

But what knew this wretched girl of God except his name, or of the sure retributions of this life, in anywise? Nothing.

And frantic with her wrongs, craving vengeance with all the fierce passions of her fiery soul, breathing maledictions enough to have infested a continent with plagues, she hurled herself and steed furiously along the “river-road.”

And thus she rushed wildly through the day.

Night brought her to the cabin of a pioneer. The owner was absent, and the cabin empty; but, with the freedom of forest-life she entered, led in her horse, found oats for him and dried venison for herself, and water from the spring for both, and after tending him, and drinking a large draught of water to cool her burning thirst, she threw herself down upon a hard straw pallet, but not to sleep; to clasp her burning brow, and roll and toss and tear at her own distracted head and breast, as though she would tear thence the insufferable agony. There came another mood, a mood that must have surprised her had her soul had any room for surprise; it was a transient return of inexpressible tenderness for her destroyer—a longing to be with him, and to sob out her great agony on his bosom; then, with unutterable accession of woe, came the remembrance that this must not and ought not to be, and then a consciousness of utter and eternal bereavement, that whirled her whole soul in a

storm of frenzy.

So passed the night.

With morning came the thought—the question, who has caused me all this anguish, and why has he caused it?—bringing again the frenzied sense of insufferable wrongs, and the raging longing for vengeance. Thus burning love and bitter hatred, relenting tenderness and desolating revenge, warring incessantly, made a pandemonium of her bosom.

She resumed her journey, keeping the “river-road” along the eastern bank of the Potomac, until she reached the ferry-house opposite to Alexandria. There she crossed the river, and struck into “Braddock’s road,” leading far into the Western wilderness.

At the close of her third day’s journey, when the sun was setting behind the ridge of mountains that sheltered the lonely stone-house, she reached home.

She had been gone seven days.

Vulcan, the giant-dwarf, was sitting in the doorway. Too accustomed to the eccentric manners of his mistress to feel surprised at her long absence or her sudden return, he grinned, nodded, and got up to open the gate. Then, on lifting his head up and meeting her eyes, he saw for the first time, the stony woe that had turned to marble every feature of that once fine face. That wistful glance was enough, and was instantly withdrawn.

Not with her usual lightsome smile and spring did Lionne greet her old attendant, and bound from the saddle. With the ghost of a smile and a faint word, she let herself drop to the ground, and gathering up the skirt of her riding-habit, now deeply soiled with mud from the great thaw, she passed sadly into the house.

“Has my father reached home yet, Vulcan?” was her first question.

“No, Lionne, you know he said nine days; it’s been but seven! he won’t be here

before day after to-morrow."

Lionne went up-stairs, threw herself on the bed and longed for death.

Mr. Delaforêt did not come upon the ninth day, nor yet upon the eighteenth. And Lionne brooded in alternate moods of fierce or sullen anguish over her deep wrongs and the most terrible manner of avenging them.

That last, fierce snow-storm had been the valedictory address of winter. The spring came on apace. Mr. Delaforêt returned; but not looking the same as when he left home. His form was drawn up, his head erect, his eye bright, his step elastic, a certain cheerful dignity in every tone and motion. His glance followed Lionne everywhere with proud joy.

Alas, Lionne did not understand, nor care for, nor even, perhaps, observe her father's change of expression. She was too absorbed in her own wretchedness to notice his cheerfulness. She only shrunk from his gaze; and as day followed day, more and more sensitively she shrank from all eyes around. As the weather moderated and settled, Lionne resumed her wild forest-habits, spending her days in long rides, long walks, and long watchings in the vast solitudes of nature.

For sometime the exquisitely torturing memories awakened by the associations of her grotto, kept her from its neighborhood.

Who has not, after the loss of a beloved friend, been pierced to the heart by even the accidental, sudden sight of some place or object closely associated with the lost love?

Thus Lionne shivered in anguish at the sight of her grotto. It had been full of love and joy—it was now vacant and solitary as her own aching heart, or else filled with agonizing associations as was her desolate heart with perverted passions.

At last, however, Lionne began to try to use herself to the sight of the grotto. Her first visit there was signalized by a gush of wild grief. Her second and third were scarcely less agonizing to her heart; but at last she bore the trial with equanimity,

and even began to restore the place to order and make it almost habitable.

Hay was thickly spread over the rugged floor to fill up its inequalities, and a carpet was laid down. Next a pitcher and glass were conveyed thither. Then a low chair; and finally a pillow and comforter. Here, in this grotto, Lionne spent many hours of each day; and as the season still advanced, here, unknown to her father, she came to sleep at night. One day she came down-stairs with the intention of going to her grotto, when her father called her from the door of his sitting-room.

She turned and went in.

He was sitting in his usual place beside the centre-table, his head raised and a look of proud exultation in his face, as he held out his hand to his daughter and said:

“Lionne, you are very beautiful, my child!—I know you will be considered so in the world we are about to enter. Come near and sit down beside me, my dear.”

Lionne approached and dropped wearily in the chair that her father, with stately, old-fashioned courtesy, had placed for her accommodation.

“By the way, now that I look at you more closely, you are thin and pale, Lionne!—and—why do you wrap yourself in that large shawl? Are you not well?”

“I am well, but—cold,” said Lionne, with a shiver.

“Chills, I should not wonder! You expose yourself recklessly to the noonday sun and the midnight vapors. You must give up such wild ways, Lionne, or rather you will naturally resign them, in the world to which we are going. And in the meantime I must bring a physician from Winchester to prescribe for you.”

“Oh, no, no, no!” exclaimed Lionne in alarm: “I am not sick; I never had a chill in my life; it is but the freshness of the day that I feel.”

“Very well; I am glad to hear it. And now, my daughter,” said Mr. Delaforêt, solemnly, “I am about to speak of that which should drive chills from your heart forever!”

Lionne turned suddenly and deadly pale, but a glance at her father's calmly exultant face reassured her. He was not about to enter upon a humiliating subject—he knew nothing of her secret.

"Lionne," continued the recluse, "have you ever suspected your father to be other than he has seemed, the poor Scotch pioneer?"

"No, sir."

"Then, my daughter, know me now as the Earl of Glen Lennark, and the representive of one of the oldest earldoms of the united kingdom," said Mr. Delaforêt, with pardonable exultation. For after so many years of renunciation, the resumption of his title filled him with triumph.

Lionne did not seem in the least to sympathize with this feeling. She sat and gazed at her father in a sort of apathy, which he pleasantly mistook for the stupor of astonishment.

"Yes," he continued, "and my young lioness of the forest is no longer Lionne Delaforêt, but—Lady Leonore Lorne!"

"Lorne!" exclaimed Lionne, with a half-smothered shriek, sinking back in her chair and covering her face with her hands.

"Lady Leonora, what is the meaning of this agitation?" asked her father in the utmost astonishment.

Lionne struggled with herself, and by a supreme effort regained self-command, dropped her hands from before her face, and looking up, said—

"All this that you have told me, my father, is so strange that it quite startled me."

"You hysterical? Who would have thought it of you?"

Lionne made an effort to seem interested.

"What has happened, father, that, after all these years of seclusion and secrecy, you at last reveal to me your rank and title, and talk of going into another world?"

“My child, I was a warm partizan of Charles Edward, the young Chevalier, the last of the Stuarts. After his fatal defeat and the total dispersion of his followers, I became a fugitive and an exile. Within the last few months I have been pardoned, and restored to my rank and country.”

“Then you will return to Scotland?” asked Lionne, forcing herself to talk.

“No; first to France, where I shall place you at boarding-school for two years. At the end of which time I shall bring you out in London and present you at court, where I predict that the singular beauty of Leonora Lorne will rather startle those accustomed only to conventional faces.”

Lionne shivered, but did not reply.

“And now,” continued her father, “while I am making confidences, let me tell you why it was that last autumn, I, in one instance, departed from my usual rule of strict privacy, and admitted to my house young Orville Deville.”

Lionne suddenly averted her head to conceal the deadly paleness of her face.

“It was because he was my half-nephew, my step-sister, Elizabeth Lorne, having married Mr. Deville, of Maryland. You did not think, when you were succoring Mr. Deville, that you were saving the life of your own cousin!”

“No, sir,” said Lionne, with forced calmness.

“Well, my child, I have told you the great secret of my life. We leave this place on the first of July. Pack up what you need for your journey, or wish to preserve as souvenirs of your forest life. You will need clothing and many other things. Here is a purse with a hundred guineas. Take Vulcan as protection, and go to Winchester to make purchases of such things as you need,” said her father, putting a heavy purse in her hand.

Lionne took it mechanically, and with faintly spoken thanks retired from the room, and then, despair in her heart and madness in her brain, she cast the purse into a

corner of the hall and rushed wildly from the house, and on, on, on frantically to the brink of the river, and walked up and down its sands.

Anon she threw herself upon her face and rolled in agony, smiting her breast, tearing her hair out by handfulls, and groaning—

“Ah, what can I do? what can I do to escape the coming wreck? Would that I could go mad, or break my heart and die! But I cannot! I cannot! brain and breast are too strong to give way! What shall I do? oh, what shall I do?”

Again she started to her feet, and walked wildly up and down the banks of the river, and wringing her hands and crying—

“He is so proud and happy in his reviving fortunes! He expects so much from me; alas! he has no other child but me! and I am about to turn all the sweetness of his love to gall and bitterness! to change all the glory of his triumph to the deep dishonor of——Oh, heaven! I cannot—I cannot bear it! Why can I not die? Death! Death! you are this night, as always, battening on reluctant prey! Leave your unwilling victims to-night—restore the dying to the loving, and come and take me, who am a shame to the dead and a curse to the living! Come and take me, who calls for you as the greatest boon in the gift of fate! Alas! Death will not come! he is like man! he turns away from a too-willing bride!”

She paused and gazed moodily down into the depths of the river. The water just below her was very deep, and clear, and still.

“There is peace—deep peace,” she said, musingly. “Is suicide the one great, last and unpardonable sin?—the sin for which there is no pardon, because for it there can be no repentance. I do not know that! I never saw a command in the Scripture forbidding suicide! And the old classic moralists often looked upon it as an act of virtue. Ah, I know that it is not an act of virtue, but neither can it be in all cases an unpardonable sin! I die to expiate my sin! I die to save my father from the deep dishonor of my life! I die, oh heaven, repenting that I must die!” exclaimed Lionne,

and raising both hands above her head, she leaped from the bank. She felt herself suddenly and powerfully checked, and she fell back into the arms of—Vulcan, the Dwarf!

“You shall not die! There is no peace there or elsewhere for the self-destroyer!” said the old man, with stern solemnity.

“Oh, Vulcan! Vulcan! you know not what you have done!” exclaimed Lionne, in a voice of despair, as she cast herself down upon the sands.

“I do know, my child! I know that I have saved you from changing transient trouble into eternal misery! there is no repentance in the grave, Lionne.”

“Oh, Vulcan! Vulcan! which is worse, death, or dishonor?”

“Death,” said the old man, sturdily—“when it is the death of a suicide. But there is no need, Lionne, for the one or the other. Ah, my child! my child, whom I have known longer than you have known yourself! my child, whom for sixteen years I have carried in my arms—confide in your old servant and he will save you! Confide in your old brute, who asks no better than to lay down his life in your service!”

“Oh, Vulcan! Vulcan! you know not what you ask! You know not why I ought to die!”

“I know all, my child, and I know that you ought to live!”

“I ought to live! Oh yes, I ought to live for vengeance!”

“‘Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord.’”

“Oh-h-h!” aspirated the lost one, in a low, deep, quick, fierce tone, that thrilled to the very marrow of the hearer’s bones—“Oh-h-h! may the judgment fall from heaven, a thunderbolt of fire upon his naked head—scathing! burning! blasting! biting through brain, and heart, and vitals, until his whole nature shrivels up as a worm in the flames!”

As she spoke, her look was terrible! her eyes blazed, her lips glowed, her face was

white as the light ashes of a living coal! One might almost fancy the vengeance she had invoked, darting, a fork-tongued serpent of fire from her lips, to strike its fangs deep in the heart of her destroyer.

“Lionne! Lionne! for the Saviour’s sake, hush! hush! Your very breath is enough to wither all the fair herbage of this fair day!” cried Vulcan, in horror.

“I know it! Oh, I know it! Oh-h! I know it!—I could cast my body in burning flames and not feel them, because of the fiercer fire in my soul! But it is a fire that shall consume my foe—mind, and soul, and spirit! flesh, and blood, and bones!”

“Oh, my child! for the Lord’s sake, be patient!”

“Don’t talk to me of patience or of the Lord! I am not patient and I am not a child of the Lord! I am a child of Satan, and will live to do the work of my father!”

“Oh, my girl! my girl! you utter blasphemies!”

“Yes! a child of Satan am I! could I not now live in his fires?”

“Poor child, you are mad! God will not hold you accountable for these ravings!” said Vulcan, gazing piteously upon her.

Lionne, felled by her own fierce passions, had fallen again upon the sands, where she writhed like a crushed worm.

Vulcan stood and folded his hands and prayed for her.

At last the “waters of Marah” flowed over her soul and quenched its fires. Her burning indignation was melted into bitter tears.

“If I had been a weak or a selfish girl——I should have deserved my fate, and yet, not suffered from it so bitterly. But I was not! the love I gave that traitor was as pure as the loves of the angels!” she exclaimed, with a burst of grief.

“I know it! I know it, my child!” murmured the dwarf, gently.

“And he was sure of it! thence his blackest deception! Vulcan! he led me before God’s minister and made me his wife, in the sight of heaven and earth! Look! here is

the certificate of our marriage!" she cried, and drawing the document from her bosom, she held it up before the dwarf.

"I knew there must have been something like that! but since you are his wife, he must be forced to acknowledge and protect you!"

"If I were his wife, he should not be forced to any thing, even if it were to save my life from death or my soul from perdition! but I am not his wife! he was married before! and this certificate is not worth the paper it is written upon!" exclaimed Lionne, fiercely tearing the instrument.

Vulcan snatched it from her hands, exclaiming—

"It is worth every thing! A gold mine should not purchase it! it is your justification and his condemnation! This instrument produced in court would consign the proud Orville Deville of River-view, the husband of the high-born Lady Adelaide, to slavery in the penal colonies for half his life! Lionne, would that not be a just and satisfactory retribution?"

"No! no! no! it would take him far away out of my reach and power! No! if I live for vengeance, I must work it out with my own hands, and watch its operation, and he must know it! No hand shall torture him but mine! no eye shall watch his writhing but mine! no soul shall know the secret that shall turn all his life to living death but me! You are right, however, about the certificate! It is a tremendous instrument of power in my hands!"

"Lionne! come home!"

"Home! home! I cannot! I dare not! Ah, Vulcan, did my father know what you know he would put a pistol to his forehead and blow his desperate brains out!"

"He need not know it!" said Vulcan, soothingly. "Desperate evils require desperate remedies. The brilliant life that might have been yours in the revived fortunes of your father, is, of course, forfeited. You cannot carry your deep wrongs into that world of which he so fondly speaks."

“Therefore, you see there is nothing left me but to die,” said Lionne, in a voice of despair.

“Oh, you must not speak of death! You dare not die! You must live for the sake of that other little life that your fatal love has evoked.”

“Ah! what would you have me to do?”

“Die to your father, but live for your child!”

“Oh, what mean you?”

“Your father, who could not bear dishonor, would be strong to support grief. You must inflict upon him sorrow to save him from despair!”

“Riddles! riddles! you talk in riddles!”

“Then I will speak plainly. I know an old Indian doctress, who will attend you faithfully in your coming trial, and take charge of your child, if it lives, for a season. Your father need know nothing of this. Afterwards, Kalougoora, my Indian, will give you a safe sleeping potion, that shall put you in a state closely resembling death. You will seem to die! Your father will grieve bitterly, but other matters will demand his attention and divert his sorrow! He will return to England, and in time find happiness. Meanwhile, I will ensure your safety, and convey you to the wigwam of Kalougoora, to stay until we can fix upon some plan for the future.”

Lionne reflected for a moment and then said:

“Vulcan, you have saved me for the present! for what after-fate—who knoweth?”

“Will you now come home, Lionne?”

“Yes,” she said, rising and giving him her hand.

CHAPTER XX. ADELAIDE.

And she was lost and yet I breathed,

But not the breath of common life.

A serpent ’round my heart was wreathed

That stung its every thought to strife.—Byron.

For many days all Mr. Deville’s efforts to trace Adelaide were vain. Those were not the times of telegraphs, railroads, country papers and cheap postage. Instead of flying in an instant from one extremity of the continent to another, news crept slowly from house to house. Thus, though Mr. Deville never left his saddle and his emissaries never relaxed their inquiries, yet ten days had passed before they heard a rumor that a young person, answering to the description of Lady Adelaide Deville, had been found in the snow, insensible with cold, and had been conveyed to the Fieldhurst Farm, distant about thirteen miles from River-view.

Mr. Deville put spurs to his horse and galloped without delay to the house of John Fieldhurst.

There he found the tale confirmed—a beautiful young girl, apparently about fifteen or sixteen years of age, of a slight and graceful form, fair complexion, golden hair and blue eyes with a gentle manner and a sweet-toned voice, had been picked out of the snow and succored at the farm-house.

Her garments, like her person, bespoke her of high rank, refined habits, and delicate tastes. Her linen was marked with the initials A. D. She had remained but a night and departed silently the next day, leaving behind her a note and a costly diamond-ring.

That was all that they could tell him. They had heard nothing of her after-fate.

With a groan, Orville desired to see the ring and the note, and when they were produced he recognized both as belonging to Lady Adelaide, and took possession of them in her name. And with many thanks to the family for their succor of his bride, and many earnest requests that they would assist him in his search by making every possible inquiry for her in their neighborhood, Orville took leave and returned home.

When he entered the parlor his mother, who sat by the centre-table engaged in sewing, drew an awkward looking letter from her work basket and handed him, with the words:

“Here, Orville, I cannot help thinking that this queer-looking epistle brings news of our Adelaide—though the superscription is misspelled in a style that would be perfectly horrible, if it were not so ridiculous.”

Orville seized the letter with almost rude haste, was ill-folded, dirty, greasy, blotted, and directed to

“Mister Awful Devil Eskvire

of River-vue.”

“Did you ever in your life see such preposterous spelling?” said Lady Elizabeth.

“It strikes me that the name is spelt correctly, mother,” said Orville Deville, with a sorrowful sarcasm, as he tore the letter open and read:

“Mister awful Devil Sur,—A yung wummun like the wun yu lawst, strade to mi howse on Sadderdy last, whare she was tuk with a brane feever in Hur hed. pleeze kum and se if it is the saim, and obleege yores toe kummand

“John Twigs at the sine of the Myrtle.”

“It must be her, poor child! She is ill at the Myrtle Inn, on the New Cut Road. Oh, mother, you will go with me to attend her?” inquired Orville, in agitation.

“I will go with you to ascertain the facts, and if I find her I shall remain to nurse her,” said Lady Elizabeth, ringing for her maid to assist her in dressing for the ride, while Mr. Deville went out to order the carriage.

In another hour they were on their way to the Myrtle Inn, which was distant thirty miles from River-view.

As more than half the day had been consumed by Mr. Deville in his ride to and from the Fieldhurst Farm, it was now three o’clock when they set out from River-view for

the inn. They drove rapidly along the Bush Creek Road until they reached Bush Creek Mill, where they turned off to the left into the country road leading through the heart of the forest, and continued their journey until they reached Fieldhurst Farm.

Here Lady Elizabeth would have alighted to make fresh inquiries, but her son, on fire with impatience, assured her that there was no more intelligence to be gained there, and ordered the coachman to turn to the right and drive faster.

They entered the New Cut Road, and after a rapid ride of six hours in all, they reached the Myrtle Inn—a large, two-story, brown-stone house, situated in a small clearing of the forest, on the left hand of the New Cut Road.

Leaving his mother seated in the carriage, Mr. Deville sprang out and ran into the quiet little bar, where his correspondent, the little, short, fat landlord, sat alone, idly smoking his pipe while waiting for a chance customer in the shape of a wagoner. This little personage laid down his pipe and inquired now he could serve the gentleman.

“My name is Deville,” said Orville.

“Oh! the gentleman as I writ to ’bout the young woman. What a desput pity she should o’ gone crazy and wandered off, afore her friends suspicioned any thing was amiss with her head-piece,” said the host.

“Oh! that is the fortunate construction the people put upon her flight, is it?” thought Orville within himself. Aloud he inquired—

“First of all, how is the young lady?”

“She’s better, sir; but very feeble. Our doctor has fotch her through, as one may say, like a brand from the burning!”

As they spoke, Lady Elizabeth, who had alighted and hastened after her son, entered in time to hear the landlord’s report of his guest’s condition.

“I think, Orville,” she said, “that you had better remain here and gather all the details that you can get from Mr. Twigs, while I go up and see our dear girl.”

“As you think best, mother,” said Mr. Deville.

“Can you call some one to show me up to my daughter, sir?” asked Lady Elizabeth, of the landlord.

“Certainly, ma’am!—here Jenny! Jenny!”

A fair-haired, blue-eyed little girl of twelve came out from an inner room and curtsied respectfully to the strangers.

“Jenny, show this lady up to the young lady’s sick-room.”

With another curtsey, the little maiden said—

“This way, ma’am,” and conducted Lady Elizabeth through a side-door into the hall, and thence up the narrow stairs to a medium-sized front room, where, on a neat, white-draped bed, lay Adelaide, alone and apparently sleeping.

“Do you leave her alone?” inquired the lady, in a tone of displeasure.

“Oh, no, ma’am. I watch her, and had only just run down to get a drink of water, when father saw me and called me in,” replied the little maiden.

“You may go now, and leave me with my daughter,” said her ladyship.

The little girl withdrew quietly, closing the door after her.

Lady Elizabeth laid off her bonnet and mantle, and quietly drew a chair to the side of the bed, to wait until the patient should awake. Adelaide lay perfectly still, with her fair, transparent hands folded upon her young, saintly bosom in perfect repose, her eyelids resting upon her delicate cheek, and her long, pale hair flowing down each side of her paler face.

“Poor child! poor, sensitive child! how much she must have suffered secretly, e’er she was driven to this!” said Lady Elizabeth.

While she watched, Adelaide opened her gentle eyes, and with a slight start

recognized her mother-in law.

“Lady Elizabeth! you here!” she exclaimed, in a faint tone of astonishment.

“Yes, sweet girl! I have come to take care of you until you are able to return with me!” said the elder lady, judiciously refraining from expressing the least surprise or annoyance.

“Ah! fate is against me! fate is against me!” mourned the unhappy one, covering her face with her attenuated, fair hands.

“Why should you say fate is against you, our dear one? Providence has loaded you with blessings! Youth, beauty, accomplishments, wealth, and last, but by no means least, the first and undivided love of your husband!” said the matron, soothingly.

Adelaide looked up in sad surprise, repeating almost unconsciously, “‘The first and undivided love’ of my husband.”

“Why, surely yes! it is a truth too manifest to dwell upon! He scarcely knows another woman—scarcely shares his heart even with his mother. You have it all.”

“Is it possible she knows nothing of Lionne?” thought Adelaide, looking wistfully into the face of her mother-in-law.

The examination was satisfactory. Orville’s mother knew nothing of Orville’s duplicate marriage.

“And yet how does she account to herself for my leaving the house?” thought Adelaide.

Her thought was soon answered by Lady Elizabeth’s next observation.

“I do wonder that you should have imagined Orville cold and neglectful of you, when nothing was farther from his heart, as he will soon prove.”

“Oh,” thought Adelaide, “she thinks I left home because he slighted me!” She remained silent, while Lady Elizabeth continued talking very much in the same vein.

Orville’s partial and confiding mother knew nothing of her son’s sins, and Orville’s

heart-broken young wife would not accuse her husband. Yet how to escape without exposing him?

“Will you see Orville now, my dear?” inquired Lady Elizabeth.

“Is he here?” exclaimed Adelaide, in surprise.

“Why, of course he is, my dear! Orville has been consumed with anxiety since you left. See him, my dear.”

“Oh, not to-night, please! not to-night!” said Adelaide, clasping her hands pleadingly.

“Well, certainly it is very late—nearly ten o’clock! It was nine when we got here. He must wait until to-morrow,” admitted Lady Elizabeth, who then rang and ordered the chambermaid to make her up a bed in Adelaide’s room, saying that she should remain with her daughter both day and night until the recovery of the latter.

And while the servant obeyed these directions, the lady who had given them went down-stairs to give her news of their patient to Orville, and to join him at their plain supper.

Orville had gathered but little further details from the landlord, and that, such as it was, proved more mortifying than satisfactory: namely, that one evening, nearly two weeks before, the young lady had reached the inn, alone, on foot, and in a complete state of exhaustion. They could do no otherwise than take her in.

That night, brain-fever had declared itself, and in the morning the chambermaid discovered her in high delirium. A purse of money was found in her pocket, but there was no clue to her identity.

At noon, when the neighborhood’s physician stopped to water his horse and brandy himself, he was called to her bedside, and had since attended her regularly. That he, John Twigs, had heard only three or four days before of the missing girl from River-view, and had written accordingly. This was all, but quite enough deeply to

humiliate the proud and fastidious Devilles.

“I cannot understand at all your neglect of your beautiful bride, Orville! and neither can I comprehend how she should take it so very deeply to heart as actually to leave the house! The whole thing is incomprehensible to me!” said Lady Elizabeth.

“I did not mean to neglect her, and heaven knows I was far from indifference; but she is a morbidly sensitive child,” said Orville, suppressing all mention of Lionne, which would have explained the whole matter.

“Evidently she is so deeply, deeply hurt, that she shrinks even from hearing your name.”

“Then I had better refrain from forcing myself upon her—for the present,” said Orville.

After supper Lady Elizabeth inspected the chamber that had been prepared for her son, to see that the room was well ventilated, the sheets were well aired, etc., and then bade him good-night and retired to Adelaide’s apartment.

“Do you sit up with her?” inquired the lady of the little girl who attended her with a lighted lamp.

“The neighbors used to when she was very ill, but now I only sleep in the room in case she wants any thing.”

“Then you may retire, and leave that duty to me for the future.”

When the little girl had left the room, Lady Elizabeth drew an arm-chair, and took her place at the side of the bed.

On looking more closely at Adelaide, she perceived, to her alarm, that the patient was not sleeping, but lying in a state of gentle delirium, and at intervals murmuring low, sad, inaudible lamentations.

By means of stooping low and listening attentively, she heard her murmur:

“Oh, lay me in the quiet earth, beneath the gentle overbending trees; let me sleep

and forget—sleep and forget!”

And then followed sighs and silence. Presently the feverish lips moved again, and she said:

“I love too much, too much! My love burns whom it means to bless! and it is thrown back upon me to consume the heart and frame in which it lives! Oh, lay me down where the shade is always deep and dark, and the dew is always fresh and cool—it will draw the fire from my burning heart and beating brain, and cool me into sleep!”

Lady Elizabeth applied such sedatives as she found at hand and as her experience had proved to be efficacious in such cases of excitement.

Presently, partially recovering from that wandering state of mind, Adelaide looked up, and recognizing Lady Elizabeth, said:

“Oh, mother, mother, there is in this world no room at all for my heart—none, none! Like Noah’s poor banished dove, it wanders over a waste of waters, finding no single spot to repose for an instant.”

To these plaintive words, Lady Elizabeth replied by the tenderest caresses, and the most affectionate words—

“You are ill now, my love, and you labor under an illusion. Your heart’s home is in your husband’s bosom.”

At that word, Adelaide shrank like a sensitive plant, and soon after relapsed into wandering and low delirium.

Lady Elizabeth passed the night in watching beside the patient’s bed.

The morning found Adelaide weaker from her night of fever and of partial delirium.

In a word, the shock of the sudden arrival of the Devilles had occasioned in Adelaide a serious relapse.

Orville, at the suggestion of his mother, returned to River-view.

Lady Elizabeth remained and nursed her patient with tenderness and skill. The

physician, stimulated by the discovery of his patient's rank and wealth, redoubled his attentions. But with the best medical advice, and the most devoted nursing, it was still a fortnight before Adelaide could leave her chamber.

Upon the third day after her first appearance in the parlor, Lady Elizabeth said to her:

"Adelaide my dear, to-morrow Orville will arrive with our travelling-carriage, and we will return home."

"Oh, no, no, no! I cannot! Indeed I cannot! Send me away to some far distant place, to some quiet family, where I can live, obscure and unknown, until God is willing to let me die!" pleaded the suffering girl, clasping her fragile hands and raising her beseeching eyes to the face of her protectress.

"Lady Adelaide Deville, your proposition is an insane one! Consider your husband! A wife has no right, thus, without just cause, to leave her husband! What would Orville say? What would your Christian friends—what would the world say? My dear, your proposal is perfectly preposterous."

"Mother, you have been more than a mother to me. Hear me! bear with me! Suppose that my honor and dignity, and—and Orville's happiness, are concerned in my going; and let me, oh, let me depart!"

"Nonsense, my dear child; you are hurt, deeply hurt, and you think that Orville does not love you; but I know that he does, and that he will soon convince you of it."

"Oh, mother! mother! you do not know what you say! Oh, believe me, I ought not and must not return to River-view!" pleaded Adelaide, with her hands still clasped and her blue eyes still fixed beseechingly upon her companion's face.

"My sweet child, I not only know what I say, but I know what I do! I am thirty years older than you are, Lady Adelaide; I am, besides, your guardian, and my son is your husband. We have a legal, though limited disposal of your person. I shall assuredly take you back to River-view. And Lady Adelaide is too meek and modest, as well as

too conscientious, to rebel against lawful authority," said Lady Elizabeth, with a manner that admitted of no opposition.

Adelaide dropped her hands upon her lap with a look of despair.

"All that is left for me, then," she thought, "is to have an explanation with Mr. Deville. Yes, painful, distressing, revolting as it is, I must see him once again, and leave it to him to explain to his mother why it is that I cannot remain under his roof."

While Adelaide was reluctantly coming to this resolution, Lady Elizabeth relapsed into silence, fearing that further conversation might too much excite her patient.

Late that evening Orville arrived in the family-carriage.

"How is my dear Adelaide?" was his first inquiry, on meeting his mother.

"Heart-sick and brain-sick, though otherwise convalescent. I sometimes suspect that there may be more reason than appears for her sorrow," looking wistfully into Orville's face.

"Where is she? I must see her," said Mr. Deville.

"You cannot, to-night! she has retired to rest, and is probably sleeping. And really, it is time that we should do the same."

In the morning Lady Adelaide arose before her usual time, and while her mother-in-law was still sleeping, dressed herself and descended to the parlor.

At the same hour, Mr. Deville, while standing before his dressing-glass, had a note placed in his hand. It was from his young bride, requesting an immediate interview.

He hastened his toilet and descended to the parlor, where he found Adelaide, delicate, fair and languid from recent illness and present sorrow.

"My own, my dearest one, my heart's life," he began, softly approaching her and attempting to take her hand.

But with a look, gentle and compassionate as it was firm and repellant—a look such

as that with which a pitying angel might forever banish a sinner—she stopped him.

Then with that candor and decision that often distinguishes the most gentle woman when called upon to act from duty, pointing to a chair near her, which he took, she said—

“Mr. Deville, I took the liberty of asking you to come here to consult with you concerning my future course in regard to Lady Elizabeth,”—she paused, passed her hand before her eyes, blushed, and seemed embarrassed.

“As for instance,” said Mr. Deville—

“—For instance, then,” continued Adelaide, with a deepening blush—“Lady Elizabeth knows nothing at all of your—your—”

“—Sins and follies you would say!”

“—Nay, your marriage with Lionne Delaforêt; and consequently, neither can she understand the imminent necessity of my withdrawing from her roof,” said Adelaide, gathering firmness.

“Lady,” said Orville, coldly and severely—“you have ventured directly to mention a subject to which it does not become one of your age, sex, and condition, even remotely to allude! What can the Lady Adelaide Deville have in common with the wild and frail girl, whom she has suffered to disturb her peace?”

“What,” said Adelaide, sadly—“a common human nature, a common woman’s heart, in a word, a common capacity for suffering the same wrongs or enjoying the same blessings.”

“I will not ask what you mean, Adelaide; but I will request you not to offend me again with the mention of that wretched girl,” said Mr. Deville, with a sternness unusual in his manner.

Delicate, gentle and retiring, how hard for her to nerve her heart to the contest now before her! a contest with the man she had from childhood exclusively and

passionately loved as her husband—a contest not for her own, but for her rival's and for his sake. Nevertheless, she braced her nerves by a strong effort of will, and said—

"Mr. Deville, if you please, hear me while I tell you what I have heard and seen—a subject painful to me as to you; but which needs to be discussed."

"Adelaide, if you will take advantage of your privilege to give me pain, you must do so, of course!" he said, coldly.

Distressed, but not daunted by this sarcasm, Adelaide began and related the whole history of her interview with Lionne.

Orville, with knit brows, compressed lips and severe countenance, heard her through in silence. At the close of her narrative, when she looked inquiringly at him, he expressed neither denial, assent, nor regret, at what had passed.

"Oh, how hard! how hard under that gentle exterior he must be!" thought Adelaide, as she again resumed her speech and spoke of the note of renunciation that she had written, and of her plan of retiring from the neighborhood.

The better nature of Orville Deville was deeply stirred by her beautiful spirit of self-sacrifice.

"Here is a woman, young, beautiful and pure, who is ready to sacrifice her every good in life, that the man she loves may be happy with her rival!" he thought, as he gazed in wonder upon her angelic face.

Alas! she dared not meet that gaze! Her pure, calm, trusting love of years had been by grief sublimed to passion, so that now every glance of his strong, dark eyes, every tone of his deep voice, every touch of his compelling hand, thrilled her sensitive frame with a deep, intense, sweet madness that must have been pure rapture, but for the blasting memories that traversed her bosom liked forked lightning. Now feeling his ardent gaze upon her, she turned, half-fainting, away, like a lily drooping under the hot noonday sun.

He approached her again, and endeavored to take her hand, but she drew it away with a shiver, half pain, half pleasure, and trembled so visibly that Orville contented himself with drawing his chair nearer to her as he said:

“Adelaide, you have told me that you were forced upon me, and that another was the wife of my choice, that therefore you wish to leave me. In reply, I have but one thing to say and swear, namely, that you are not only my lawful wife, but the wife of my deliberate choice, and that I not only love you more than any other woman, but I love you only of all women! Further, that nothing on earth shall ever induce me to part with you;” and so saying, in a voice vibrating with his soul’s profound passion, he swiftly and softly seized her hand, turned and gazed into her face, and surprised there—a smile of joy in the depths of her soft, dark blue eyes!

“He loves me! oh, he loves me, notwithstanding all!” was the quick thought that had sent the thrill of rapture through her heart. But swift upon the track of that thought and that rapture came the Nemesis of memory, bringing anguish. Snatching her hand in horror from his clasp, she exclaimed, in a low, breathless voice:

“I must not listen to you! oh, I must not! Oh, no, no, no!”

It was too late! In that first light of joy Orville had read—not the calm love that he knew before, but the consuming passion of her heart. He caught her to his bosom, he strained her to his heart, he pressed his lips with devouring avidity to her lips, her cheeks, her eyes, and bosom, exclaiming passionately between the kisses:

“You are my wife! my own! my indisputable! no earthly power shall snatch you from my arms! none none! henceforth and forever you shall lie in my bosom, my wife! my own! heart of my heart! life of my life!”

Suddenly he was stopped as by a death-stroke. While still hailing kisses like a storm of fire upon her lips, her form suddenly grew heavy in his embrace, her sweet eyes closed, her lips paled, and her head fell back, with all its long, golden tresses unwinding over his arm.

“She has fainted!” he cried, in alarm, hurrying toward the sofa, where he laid her, and then rang a peal of bells that brought all the household and Lady Elizabeth Deville to the scene.

That the delicate invalid should have swooned, excited more sympathy than surprise.

Under Lady Elizabeth’s directions, she was removed to her bedchamber, where the best means were used for her relief, and where she soon recovered consciousness.

The journey home to River-view was necessarily deferred until the next day.

Leaving Adelaide reposing, Lady Elizabeth came down into the parlor to have a talk with her son.

“Orville,” she said, “I know not how you have contrived to do it, but you have very deeply offended, or rather, I should say, hopelessly estranged Adelaide. She gently but firmly refuses to accompany us to River-view. As her guardian I shall take her thither, whether she will or no; but to make the task a little less difficult, I shall have to promise that you will not seek her company, or in any way molest her; and I wish you, my son, to give me your word to that effect.”

“You have my word, mother, that I will not disturb the quiet of Lady Adelaide for—a limited time, say a week or two.”

“Certainly, that is all that I require; for, surely, Adelaide’s displeasure cannot last longer—though I ought not to call her state of feeling displeasure; it is more like grief. There must be more in it than I know of! Your neglect, bad as it was, could never have made such a deep and lasting impression, never! But as neither of you volunteer to enlighten me, I suppose you prefer that I should not pry into your matrimonial secrets,” said Lady Elizabeth, with a doubtful smile.

“At least it is not necessary that I should trouble you with the details of our misunderstanding, mother; it is sufficient to say that through all, Lady Adelaide Deville has not only been entirely blameless, but angelic; and however mistaken her

acts, her motives were heavenly. As for me, with all my faults, I have no dearer wish for earth or heaven than the re-establishment of perfect confidence and a perfect union with her—the only woman on earth I love, except my mother."

Again the lady smiled, ambiguously, and the conference closed.

The next morning the large family-carriage was drawn up before the inn-door, and several soft pillows that had been brought from River-view were arranged to support the invalid.

Adelaide was placed within, lying upon the pillows, and supported by Lady Elizabeth.

Orville, by his mother's advice, rode on the box beside the driver. And thus they journeyed to River-view.

They arrived late in the afternoon.

Adelaide was immediately conveyed to her apartments, where she was laid upon a lounge and refreshments were served to her.

And sitting by her couch, her mother-in-law reiterated her promise in behalf of herself and her son, that Orville should not approach the apartment of Adelaide until she herself summoned him to her presence.

It was reported among the servants, that the Lady Adelaide, in a state of partial delirium from the approach of illness, had unconsciously wandered from her home; and in the absence of any knowledge of the facts, on the part of the community, this explanation of her strange conduct obtained general credence—with a single exception, that of Kate Kyte, who knew all about the matter; but who, for the sake of Lady Adelaide, continued to keep the secret.

"It" was in the second week after her return to River-view, that Lady Adelaide sent to request Kate to come and see her.

And the young Diana lost no time in complying.

When questioned by Adelaide, Kate frankly told her all she knew of what had passed at Bush Creek, and also of the relentless anger and stubborn departure of Lionne.

Adelaide heard all this with pain that was only eased by prayer.

Kate spent the day with the invalid, and after that became her frequent visitor and favorite companion.

Orville kept his promise, and never, by word or deed, molested the peace of his unhappy bride, or even betrayed a wish to seek her presence, until one day when, unexpectedly, an event occurred that promised to restore their mutual association, confidence and happiness.

CHAPTER XXI. LIONNE AND THE INDIAN WITCH.

Be it what it may—or bliss, or torment,

Annihilation dark, and endless rest,

Or some dread thing man’s wildest range of thought

Hath never yet conceived, that change I’ll dare

Which makes me—any thing but what I am.—Joanna Baillie.

One morning as usual Lionne stole off to her grotto.

Throwing herself down upon the rugged floor, she sat with her elbows on her knees and her forehead bowed upon the palms of her hands. Her long black hair escaping from its bands, fell all around her shoulders and bosom, half veiling her bent form.

Unmindful of the passage of time, she gave herself up to bitter thoughts.

While thus she sat, like another forsaken Ariadne or despairing Dido, a shadow came between the mouth of the grotto and the glimmering light of the river beyond, and at the same moment, a rough, kindly, respectful voice called out:

“Mistress!”

Lionne put aside her blinding hair and looked up to behold the dwarfed giant Vulcan, accompanied by the Indian squaw, the “great medicine” Kalougoora.

They were a strange, startling, almost terrifying pair to rise so suddenly before a spectator—the dwarfed giant with his huge, square form, clad in a rude suit of coarse, gray cloth, and his great round head and hard brown face surrounded by a thatch of iron-gray hair and beard—and by his side the tall, thin, dark figure of the Indian crone, wrapped in her long, red blanket, down which streamed her stiff black hair, bound and platted with gay vipers’ skins.

She advanced into the grotto and stood muttering weird incantations, and performing strange gestures.

Lionne arose, bound up her long, black hair, and stood with somewhat of her old native dignity to receive her singular visitor.

“Mistress,” said Vulcan, in a tone and with a manner of deep respect, intended to inspire the squaw with a proper reverence for the lady—“Mistress, this is Kalougoora, the ‘great medicine’ of the Shenandoahs, come to offer her services to your ladyship.”

Lionne looked with a shudder of repulsion towards the old creature, who stood, still moving her lips and slowly wheeling her arms, as in solemn conjuration.

“Take that seat,” said Lionne, pointing to one formed by a rock raised above the floor.

The “great medicine,” with more incantations and conjurations, sat down.

“You may leave us now; but do not go out of call,” said Lionne, turning to the dwarf.

“Mistress, I will pace up and down before the opening of the grotto, to be within the sound of your voice,” answered Vulcan, with as good a bow as a square block could

make, as he retreated from the grotto, leaving Lionne alone with her formidable looking visitor.

“Midnight Star!” began the old crone, addressing Lionne in the picturesque language of her tribe—“Midnight Star, my dark, bright daughter, does not trust her red mother.”

Lionne looked wistfully at the speaker and remained silent.

“The Midnight Star fears the ‘great medicine’ of the Shenandoahs,” said the crone, in a key half affirmative, half interrogative.

“I fear nothing in the heavens, earth or Hades; but my footsteps go down the deep valley where the powers of sleep and death mingle, and my face grows dark in their shadows,” said Lionne, falling into the picturesque style of the squaw’s language.

“My dark, bright daughter need not stay for that. Her red mother has a firm foot and a strong hand, and will lead her safely through the valley of black vapors, to the sunny hills beyond.”

“Do you know why I summoned you hither, and what I need?”

“The great medicine of the Shenandoahs knows all things!”

With a shrug of her shoulders, Lionne next asked: “Can you supply me with what I need?”

“The great medicine of the Shenandoahs can do all things,” she answered, with an egotism half way between the sublime and the ridiculous.

“What is it, then, that I need?” asked Lionne, with an almost imperceptible curl of her lip.

“My pale daughter needs a medicine that shall lay her out so still that none but the Great Spirit shall know that her spirit has not followed her pale warrior to the Happy Hunting Grounds.”

“She believes me to be a widow!” thought Lionne, with a secret sneer at the

professed omniscience of the “great medicine;” but aloud she said—“And you have such a drug?—a drug that shall simulate without causing death?”

“I have an herb so potent, that when my dark, bright daughter swallows it and lies down to sleep, not all the plants that grow above ground, nor all the minerals that lurk below in the bowels of the earth, nor all the skill of man shall be able to rouse her from her death-like sleep until two suns have passed—when she will of herself awake! Does my pale daughter still doubt?”

“No! I do not care enough about it to doubt! Even if the ‘death-like sleep’ should be the sleep of death, perhaps it were as well!” said Lionne, in a despairing tone.

Then after a pause of some moments, she suddenly said—

“Our interview is closed for to-day. Come to me to-morrow at this place, and at this hour, that we may confer further.”

And placing her finger to her lips, she blew a clear, high, shrill call, that summoned the dwarf to her presence.

The “great medicine” then arose, and with a repetition of her incantations, accompanied by Vulcan, she retired from the grotto. Lionne returned home, and entered the sitting-room, where she found her father busy in packing up his books and papers.

When he saw her, he looked up and smiled, saying—“Ten years’ practice has enabled me to perform the duties of my own valet with some skill, my dear. And you, my child, find the functions of lady’s maid to yourself very easy.”

“Quite so,” replied Lionne,—“any successor to me as attendant upon me, might prove awkward and embarrassing.”

The earl laughed. How strange that laugh upon “lips of life-long sadness.” Did it bode good?

It was a fortnight after her first meeting with the “Great Medicine of the

Shenandoahs," that Lionne, in the seclusion of her grotto, and attended only by Kalougoora, became the mother of a female infant, only in its unconsciousness of its misery, less wretched than its parent.

Her father, in the habitual abstraction of his mind, in the absorption of business, and in his full acquaintance with her wandering habits, scarcely, for a day or two, missed the presence of his daughter. But when three days passed, and she had not made her appearance, he inquired on the fourth morning at breakfast—

"Where is Lionne?"

"Oh, your honor, she went out, before you were up!" answered Vulcan.

(And so she had—three days before.)

But unconscious of the prevarication practised upon him, the recluse merely answered to himself—

"That girl grows more eccentric every day—well! well! let her have her run of the wilderness while she remains! it will not be for long."

Immediately after breakfast, Vulcan hurried to the grotto, where Lionne, exhausted more by despair than by illness, reposed upon her rude pallet.

"Lionne, my child, the master has at last inquired for you."

"And—how did you answer for me?" exclaimed the wretched girl, starting up and leaning upon her elbow.

"I said that you had gone out before he was up."

"Oh, this necessity of lying!" exclaimed Lionne, falling back upon her pillow, in intense disgust.

"Nay, but it wasn't lying—didn't you leave home on Monday before he was up?—I say it wasn't lying."

"It was as bad!"

"Very well, then I take the sin on myself! But now, dear mistress, you must try to

come home to satisfy the master,—that is, if you can come, without hurting yourself."

"Nothing can hurt me now," said the miserable girl, in a hopeless tone.

"And then you will be so much more comfortable at home."

"Nothing can comfort me now!" exclaimed the lost one, with a look of deep despair.

"Don't say so, Lionne! You are but sixteen, and a long life full of changes is before you!"

"A long life! that is the very worst of it!—Well, but I must think of my father, and how to keep from him the knowledge of this blasting dishonor, the very suspicion of which would kill him. Kalougoora has left me for an hour; when she returns, I will leave this hapless infant in her charge and go home."

"Dear mistress, let me suggest something. Do not go home until late in the afternoon, and see your father about twilight. Then——"

"Oh, I understand! he will not be startled by my changed face."

"No; and if in the morning he notices it, you can just tell him that you had a bad night's rest."

"Which would be no falsehood, Vulcan, since I never have a good one!"

"And you will stay until the evening?"

"Yes! and now do you return, lest my father should want you."

Vulcan obeyed, and Lionne was again left alone.

When evening came, Lionne dressed herself, and leaving her child in the care of the old Indian woman, she set out from the grotto for her home. Walking feebly and resting frequently, she succeeded in passing the rapids, at the foot of which Vulcan waited with a boat to row her down the stream.

She reached her home at early twilight.

“Now, dear mistress, the master is still in his room; come away into the kitchen and sit down and rest. I left the kettle on the stove, and I will make you a cup of tea in less than no time. And then you’ll be able to meet him.”

With a grateful look, Lionne followed her old servant’s advice.

And then, refreshed by her rest and her tea, she entered the sitting-room, where she found her father engaged in strapping trunks, etc.

She entered, as usual, so softly, that he continued his employment unconscious of her presence, until she had seated herself in the shadiest corner of the room, and had spoken to him, saying:

“Cannot Vulcan do that for you, my father?”

“Ah, are you there, Lionne?” said the recluse, looking up at the same time that he was tightening a strap, with his knee upon the trunk. “It seems to me that I seldom see you, Lionne.”

“I have been very much engaged, my father.”

“Ah, preparing for your new life in the old world. You have been to Winchester, making more purchases to-day, I suppose. But, Lionne, in the country to which we are going, when a young lady leaves home for a day, she apprizes her parents or guardians. However, I will not blame you, my child. I know that you have not been brought up as other girls. But now, are you quite ready? This is Thursday—we start on Monday.”

“So soon!” exclaimed Lionne, involuntarily.

“‘So soon!’ you say that as if you hated to leave your forest home. When you have seen your English one, you will not regret this.”

It was no thought of her forest home—which she knew she was not about to leave—it was the thought of the dreadful deception she was about to practise upon her confiding father.

“I shall not regret my home in the wilderness,” she said.

“If you are not quite prepared to go, you have no time to lose.”

“No, I have no time to lose,” responded Lionne, in a tone that all her self-command could not steady.

But in his busy occupation her father failed to notice this.

Pleading fatigue, Lionne bade her father good-night, and retired to her chamber, where she laid down to repose for a few hours. This rest was absolutely needed to enable her to reach the grotto.

At ten o’clock she heard her father ascend the stairs and enter his room. She waited half an hour longer, and then, feeling sure that he had gone to bed and probably to sleep, she softly and silently arose, and stole down the stairs, and out of the house, to the river’s shore, where Vulcan awaited her with the boat.

The starlight was bright upon the water as they rowed up the stream. They reached the grotto, at the mouth of which they found the old Indian woman sitting, crooning a wild song. She arose, and stood aside to let them pass; but Lionne called her in, and said:

“When you come to me to-morrow, bring the drug.”

With a nod of assent the old woman retired.

Vulcan also left the grotto, and Lionne was left, as usual, to pass the night alone with her infant.

Early the next morning, the Indian woman presented herself to her employer.

“You have brought the medicine?”

“My pale daughter may look with her eyes,” said the squaw, displaying a bunch of noxious-smelling dried herbs.

“And my mother is sure that this will produce the effect she says?”

“My daughter shall steep this in the fire-water of the pale-faces, and drink of it, and

lie down. And for two days her people shall wail the Midnight Star set in death! Nevertheless, on the third morning shall the Star of the Wilderness rise again!"

"Kalougoora, look at this handful of gold! Take it now for your herbs, and for your care of me. Take care of my child; and when I awake from that death-like sleep, bring her to me in good condition, and you shall have twice as much more."

"The little New Moon shall be safe."

The entrance of Vulcan put a stop to the conversation.

"I have the boat below the rapids. Will you not come home, so that the master may find you at the breakfast-table when he comes down? Kalougoora will stay here until you return," said Vulcan.

Lionne arose, and leaving her infant sleeping, went down to the rapids, entered the boat, and was rowed to the house, where she arrived in time to meet her father at their morning-meal.

As soon as she could escape from his observation she returned to the grotto, and passed the day with her babe and with the old Indian woman, whom she urged, by every argument and persuasion of self-interest and of compassion, to guard her child well for a few days, until she should be able to reclaim it.

Then at length she left the grotto, and for the last time returned to her home.

She met her father at tea, and afterwards accompanied him to his sitting-room, where she remained, assisting him, until he himself, worn out with work, proposed their retiring.

Lionne was even more exhausted than her father; yet on this night she was very loth to leave him, for this she knew to be the last hour they could ever spend together. And when at length the moment came when they were to separate, as he believed, for the night—but as she knew for all time—she could scarcely command herself, or resist the impulse to fall at his feet and confess every thing! Only fears for him

prevented her.

“Good-night, my father,” she said; and oh! how she longed, but dared not, to throw herself into his arms in a parting embrace.

“God bless you, my child!” was his calm reply. And so they separated.

Lionne, utterly prostrated by the fatigues and anxieties of the day, crept slowly up-stairs to her room. Waiting on the outside of the door, she found Vulcan, with a glass containing her sleeping-potion.

He put it in her hands with the words—

“Courage, dear mistress.”

“When I have drank this, come in some time before morning, and take away the glass, that no clue may remain to the cause of my state.”

“I will, dear mistress; I will do all things right,” answered the old servant.

“And be sure to look after old Kalougoora and her poor little charge, and——”

Before Lionne could add another word, she heard her father’s step upon the stairs and hurried into her room.

Vulcan slipped up into his own cockloft.

The next moment the master of the house reached the top of the stairs, and unsuspicious of wrong passed into his own chamber.

Early the next morning Mr. Delaforêt was astir. A the usual breakfast-hour Vulcan appeared at the sitting-room door and announced the morning meal ready.

Mr. Delaforêt, as we prefer still to call him, went out into the kitchen and took his seat at the table. Looking around and missing Lionne, he said—

“I hope my daughter has not gone out to-day! I particularly desired her to remain at home as this is the last day we have to complete our arrangements. Do you know, Vulcan, if your young lady has left the house?”

“No, sir; I haven’t seen any thing of my young lady this morning, and the hall door is still locked on the inside; so I am certain she has not gone out.”

“Then she must be in her room, and as she is an early riser, if she is well she must be up. Go, Vulcan, and tell her that I am waiting for her.”

Vulcan left the kitchen apparently to obey orders.

He was gone a few minutes, and when he returned his countenance wore an aspect of unassumed terror that alarmed his master, who started up, exclaiming:

“Why, Vulcan, what is the matter?”

“N-nothing much I hope, sir!”

“Speak more plainly! What do you mean?”

“Why, sir, as this is an hour when the young lady is usually up, and as her door was partly open, I looked in when I rapped, and—and—

“And what? speak, in the name of heaven, man!”

“And she was lying on the bed like one in a dead faint!”

Almost before the last word was uttered Mr. Delaforêt had left the kitchen.

He hurried up the stairs and into the chamber of his daughter, whom he found extended on the bed with her chin fallen upon her bosom and her arms thrown up over the pillow.

“My child! my child! Lionne! Oh, what is this!” exclaimed the alarmed father as he rushed to the bedside and tried to raise her head and shoulders in his arms.

Her body was cold, stiff and senseless. Her condition seemed that of a corpse an hour dead!

He laid her head back upon the pillow and hurried to the head of the stairs, calling—

“Vulcan! Vulcan! mount the strongest and fastest horse and ride for life to Winchester and bring out a physician!”

Then he hastened into his own chamber and snatched from his medicine-chest the most potent restoratives, which he brought and applied for his daughter's relief.

In vain! The rigid lips might be forced open, but the clenched teeth would not be unclasped to admit the passing of one drop of cordial. And the strongest stimulants applied with force and briskness to the surface of her neck and brow failed to bring the faintest shade of life-color thither.

With the utmost solicitude he continued to work over her or to watch by her. Fruitless all his hopes! He might as well have sought to restore consciousness to a corpse twelve hours abandoned by the soul!

Early in the afternoon the doctor from Winchester arrived, and was received by Mr. Delaforêt and shown immediately to the bedside of Lionne.

Then followed a close questioning of her father, who could only speak of his daughter's fatigued and haggard looks, which she always, he said, ascribed to sleeplessness.

All the time the doctor was questioning the father, he was gazing upon the face or feeling the wrist, the jugular vein and the carotid artery of the patient, to ascertain if any pulsation remained. And at the end of the examination he said—

"Mr. Delaforêt, you are probably prepared for what I have to tell you! Your daughter has ceased to exist. Her malady was very obscure and one that usually gives but little evidence of its fatal presence until its work, as now, is done!"

"What was it then, sir?"

"Organic disease of the heart," answered the doctor, making not the first nor the last mistake ever made, or to be made, by physicians.

The bereaved father drew up the sheet over the face of his young and beautiful dead, and turned to accompany the physician from the chamber.

As the doctor was about to take his leave, the master of the house said—

“We are alone here, myself and my man servant. Send me out some women from Winchester to prepare my girl for her last resting-place.”

“If you will give me authority I will have every thing that is proper done in the best manner, as if for my own brother and niece.”

In silent assent, Mr. Delaforêt pressed the hand of the kind physician, who immediately afterwards departed on his melancholy errand.

The afflicted father then turned to enter his desolate house, and seek the solitude of his chamber, to give full sway to that bitter grief which he had only been able to suppress in the presence of others.

As his hand was on the lock of his door, he heard a step at his side, and suddenly turning saw the dwarf Vulcan standing there.

“Pardon me master, for coming to you now; but—it will be very late at night before the women can come from Winchester, and—my young lady ought to be attended to immediately.”

“Well,” said Mr. Delaforêt, “what do you propose?”

“Dear master, as there is no Christian women at hand, will you not permit me to fetch the old Indian squaw, Kalougoora? She is skillful enough for the business, and she is very faithful.”

Mr. Delaforêt hesitated for a moment, and then, with his brow contracted with almost agonizing thought, he said:

“There is no other course—Yes! bring the Indian woman!”

And so saying, he passed into the solitude of his room and his sorrow.

An hour later Kalougoora arrived, and entered the chamber of Lionne, whom she prepared as a corpse for burial. Then, as silently as she had come, she departed to her other charge at the grotto.

Early on Sunday morning, Mr. Delaforêt entered the chamber of his daughter, whom

he found dressed and laid out upon her bed. She had on the only white muslin gown she possessed—its folds neatly drawn down and arranged around her perfect form; the white and gloveless hands were folded upon the rounded bosom, and her shining dark hair was plaited in a thick braid and wound around her head, a natural crown upon her queenly brow.

"The poor pagan has done her work well!" was the thought of the bereaved father, even in the midst of the grief with which he looked upon this beautiful ruin.

He was interrupted by the voice of Vulcan at the door announcing to him the arrival of the undertaker and his wife, sent by the physician from Winchester. He went out to receive the new-comers.

Upon account of the heat of the weather, it was deemed expedient to hasten the interment. By using great diligence, the undertaker went back to Winchester and returned with the coffin early in the afternoon. And the body of Lionne, the living dead, was placed in this last receptacle, and brought down and laid upon a table in the middle of the front parlor.

When the room was closed and darkened and left in solitude, Vulcan and the old Indian woman stole into it, and stood each side the body.

"They have opened a grave, under the shadow of the mountain, where they intend to bury her at sunset, when the clergyman is expected to arrive. It is a dreadful danger! I am afraid she may suffocate before we can deliver her!" said Vulcan.

"The Great Rock (for thus the Indian woman called the dwarf giant) need not be shaken! Lungs that do not breathe, need no air."

"But if she should awake in that coffin!"

"The Great Rock must be still. The Midnight Star will not shine again until the hour. If the Great Rock remains firm and unshaken, all will be well!"

The slow and heavy step of the master of the house, approaching the connecting

door between his sitting-room and the parlor, warned them to flee. Opening the side door into the hall, as Mr. Delaforêt entered, they passed out of the apartment.

At sunset the clergyman, the family physician and another friend from Winchester, arrived and together with the bereaved father and his old servant, the Indian woman, the undertaker and his assistants, stood around the coffin while the solemn burial services of the Episcopal Church were performed.

At their close, the undertaker approached and reverently raised the lid of the coffin, that all might take a last look at the face of the supposed dead, before it was closed down forever.

With mute agony written upon his corrugated brow, the desolate father drew near and gazed upon his daughter's still face, pressed his lips to her cold forehead, and turned away.

Other friends approached and gave their farewell glance, and gravely withdrew.

And then the undertaker came up and began to screw down the lid.

Vulcan shuddered, and convulsively grasped the arm of the Indian woman, who whispered under her breath—

"The Great Rock is shaken as by a storm! He must be still. The Great Medicine of the Shenandoahs knows what she does. The Midnight Star will shine again!"

They bore the coffin out, placed it on the bier, and carried it reverently to the green and shaded spot under the shelter of the everlasting rocks, where the earth was opened to receive it. As the concluding services were finished, they lowered it into the grave, which they immediately begun to fill up.

As the clods rattled heavily upon the coffin-lid, again Vulcan trembled as an oak-tree tossed by the whirlwind. And again the Indian doctress muttered in his ear—

"The Great Rock need not shake to his base! The Great Medicine of the

Shenandoahs is sure of her power. The Midnight Star will rise when other stars wane."

All then turned away. The clergyman drew the arm of the stricken father within his own, and led him back to the house. The others followed. The clergyman and physician had determined to remain with their afflicted friend through the night.

Vulcan and the Indian woman concealed themselves in the thicket at the foot of the mountain, whence they watched the grave-diggers until they had completed their work, taken up their tools and departed, leaving the grave of the living in solitude.

It was now quite dark, but for the light of the stars that just served to show the dim outline of the new-made grave.

Bringing the pick with which he had provided himself, Vulcan, with the Indian woman, emerged from his concealment.

And not the renowned Dousterswivel, digging for hidden treasure in the grave of Misticott, in the hope of boundless wealth, worked with more zeal and energy than did this poor servant, in mortal terror, lest he should be interrupted before his task should be complete, or that his young mistress should awake in that horrible pit!

The earth flew from the grave in a reversed shower of clods. Before it seemed possible, he had laid bare the outside of the coffin.

Gathering the cords by which it had been lowered, he climbed up to the surface of the ground, handed half of them to Kalougoora, and with her assistance drew the coffin from the grave. Snatching up the chisel that he had brought, he began to force the lid. That, with his immense strength, was the work of a minute, and the buried form of Lionne lay revealed!

Throwing aside the coffin-lid, he stooped and placed his hand upon the face of his mistress.

"Good heaven!" he cried, starting in horror—"we had not a moment to lose! Feel!

there is a moisture upon her brow! She would have awakened in that appalling pit, had we left her there another hour!"

"Nay—she will not awake until the time I have said! Now, lift the young woman out and hide her in the thicket here, while you put back the coffin and fill up the grave, lest some one should come to discover us."

This counsel Vulcan felt to be so wise that he immediately followed it. Raising the body of Lionne, he bore her to a nook in the thicket and laid her down upon a buffalo-skin, spread by the squaw to receive her. Then he returned, replaced the coffin, filled up the grave, and carefully obliterated every mark of his late work.

It was well that he had toiled so diligently! for just as he turned from the grave and entered the thicket, he heard the sound of a slow and heavy footstep that he knew too well, and the next moment the dim outline of Mr. Delaforêt emerged into view.

Believing himself to be unobserved the poor father fell upon the grave and gave way to the bitterness of his grief in groans and sobs, that rent not his own heart only, but even the rugged bosom of Vulcan, who, from his lurking-place, silently gave groan for groan and sob for sob.

"Better so," said Vulcan to himself, "for if he suffers so severely for her supposed death, how terrible would be his agony in knowing how much worse than death is her real fate! He will be consoled for her loss. He never, never could survive the knowledge of her true condition!"

He watched from his concealment, until Mr. Delaforêt had risen from the ground, turned sorrowing away from the grave and disappeared down the thickly shaded path leading to his desolate home.

Then Vulcan and the Indian woman carefully lifted Lionne and tenderly bore her to the boat waiting at the edge of the creek, made a bed of the buffalo skin, laid her down and rowed swiftly for the grotto.

In fifteen minutes they reached the mouth of the cavern, bore their charge in and laid

her upon her rude pallet.

Then Vulcan struck a light and looked around with a solicitude that rose rapidly to amazement and anxiety.

“Where is the child?” he inquired, suddenly turning to the squaw.

“Where?—the New Moon beams on the bearskin there, in the corner, where I left her two hours ago!” replied Kalougoora.

“She is not there!” cried the dwarf.

The squaw sprang upon her feet and looked around.

The babe was gone!

“Where is the child?” repeated Vulcan, in gathering suspicion and wrath.

Kalougoora slowly shook her head.

“Where is the child?” vociferated the dwarf, approaching the squaw with a threatening gesture.

“Some one has carried her off,” said the latter.

“Hag of Tartarus, you are the ‘some one who has carried her off!’ You have spirited her away to your thrice accursed tribe!”

“And what should the Great Medicine of the Shenandoahs do with a pale-faced baby? The Great Rock talks foolishly! Let him rather watch over the sleeping mother, while the Great Medicine goes forth to seek the child!”

Vulcan looked fixedly at the old woman while she spoke. Something of calm dignity in her manner, and of sincerity and truth in her expression and tone, put his worst suspicions to flight, and made him feel ashamed of his violence. Believing, too, that the best chance of recovering the child lay in trusting or in bribing the squaw, he complied with her proposition, saying—

“You were paid a large sum for the care of the child; you were promised a still larger sum upon restoring it to its mother. Bring back the child of Lionne in safety,

and the promised sum shall be doubled! I speak in her name who will make good my words!"

"The Great Medicine will do what she can," replied the old woman, who, then turning, left the grotto.

Vulcan kneeled down by the side of his insensible mistress, and gazed with the deepest commiseration upon her pallid but beautiful countenance, as it lay there, looking still whiter between the long black hair that, escaped from its fastenings, hung down on each side of her face and floated on the pillow.

"Oh, Lionne, my child! is this sorrow also in reserve for you? Having lost husband, father, home, and all else must you now lose this babe—the innocent offspring of treachery that has cost you so dearly, and that yet you love! When you awake who shall have courage to tell you of this awful bereavement? Who shall say to you that this babe—this all that was left you on earth—has been carried off by some cruel beast of prey, or some scarcely less cruel savage? Who shall dare to slay you with such tidings? For oh, wonderful heart of a mother! the child whose birth has wrecked your peace is dearer to you than life! since, but for the sake of that child, you would have escaped all your mortal troubles by a voluntary death. Oh, Lionne, unless that child is recovered, may you never wake!"

So moaning over the miseries he could in no wise relieve, watching for the least change in the aspect of his mistress, and looking anxiously for the coming of the old squaw, Vulcan passed the first half of the night.

It was near midnight when the squaw returned. She entered the grotto alone.

"Have you found the babe?" exclaimed Vulcan, starting up.

Kalougoora shook her head.

"You are an Indian woman. You can trace the recent passage of man or beast where no white person could possibly discover signs of either! You must have found some clue, with your dog-like instinct, of the manner in which the child was taken off!"

“The Great Medicine knows all things!” exclaimed the squaw.

“That means you have found the clue! What is it? The babe has not—no! she has not been devoured by a beast of prey?” cried the dwarf, in an agony of excitement.

“No wild beast has approached the grotto.”

“Thank God for that! She has been carried off, then, by some of your tribe. Oh, Kalougoora, we will ransom her with all the gold we can collect! Go after her, and the sooner she is restored the higher we will pay! Hasten, Kalougoora, and bring her back!”

“No red man has been near the grotto.”

“Speak plainly then! Where is she? Who has car-her off?”

“A party of hunters of your own race have passed this way. They have stolen the babe!”

“How do you know that?”

“The Great Medicine of the Shenandoahs knows the presence of the white man by a hundred signs. She followed their trail three hours’ journey down the borders of the Singing Stream, and then lost it on the water’s edge. The Singing Stream tells no tales! The Great Medicine has returned and spoken to her brown brother, the Great Rock!”

And so saying the old Indian woman squatted down beside the unconscious sleeper, and commenced crooning a wild and mournful melody.

Vulcan was in despair. Now, indeed, his best hope for Lionne was that her death-like sleep might end indeed in death. He did not believe the whole of the squaw’s story. He credited indeed the statement that a party of hunters had passed that way; but that they had stolen the child was an inference so improbable that he could not give it a moment’s serious attention. He believed that the babe had been devoured by a wild beast, and he prayed that the mother might never awake to the

knowledge of her awful bereavement.

But this was not to be granted!

At the turn of the night Lionne began to exhibit signs of returning consciousness. Her bosom heaved with sighs, at first feeble and fluttering, and then deeper and stronger. Warmth came to the surface of her body; a faint color dawned upon her cheeks and lips; finally her long eyelashes quivered, and her beautiful dark eyes opened with a quiet, unconscious gaze.

With a half-suppressed groan, Vulcan placed at her lips the wine with which he had provided himself for that purpose. Unconsciously she sipped it, and afterwards mechanically she swallowed the offered morsel of bread. And then, under the stimulus of these refreshments, she lifted herself up into a sitting posture and looked around with a vague, perplexed gaze. Evidently her faculties were not as yet restored. Vulcan and Kalougoora watched her with deep anxiety.

After a few more wandering looks she placed her hand to her forehead and seemed to reflect intently, or strive for self-recollection. Then, with a sudden start, she dropped her hand and gazed wildly from one to the other of her companions. Then memory rushed back in a torrent.

“Is it—is it all over?” she inquired, in a tone so hollow that it would never have been recognized as her own.

“Dear mistress, yes! it is over!” answered her faithful servant.

“And my father—how did he bear it?”

“He grieved, of course.”

“Oh, my father! Oh, my father!” exclaimed the wretched girl, in a paroxysm of bitter remorse and grief.

“Remember, dear mistress, that the sacrifice was necessary to save him from a worse sorrow,” said Vulcan, gently essaying to comfort the mourner. In vain!

“Oh, my father! Oh, my father! Shall I never see your kind face again! Your face bowed down in bitter grief for your dead daughter—worse than dead! Oh, my father! how easily I might go to you now, and how the sight of my poor form would raise your stricken head and rejoice your sorrowful heart, but I must not! I must not! I must not! I must continue this cruel deception! I, your cherished, only daughter, must deceive you so! I must let you depart, mourning and alone, on your desolate way! Oh, heaven, that I who must not live for you, might die for you, my father!” So, bitterly lamenting, Lionne dropped her head upon her knees, and gave herself up to a perfect storm of grief. It passed at length, as all storms, moral as well as material, must; and when her convulsive sobbing had somewhat subsided, she raised her head and said, softly:

“Bring me my child.”

This was what they most dreaded to hear. In order to gain a little more time, they affected not to have heard it.

The ruse failed.

“Did you hear me?—Bring me my little daughter—(Ah! who will restore to him his daughter!)—Vulcan, are you deaf?—Bring me my child!” she said, in a more peremptory tone.

“Dear mistress, compose yourself! You are not yet calm enough to take your babe,” pleaded the dwarf.

“Bring me my child! I need her! I need her!”

“Mistress! dear, dear mistress, be patient!”

“Bring me my child, or my heart will break!” prayed Lionne, in a voice that sounded like a wail.

“Mistress! my lady—”

“My child!” wailed Lionne, pressing both hands upon her heart.

“Lady—Lady Lionne—I am your poor old servant! I pray you to be quiet a little while. Your babe is—is asleep!”

“Bring her to me, then! I will not wake her.”

“Mistress—listen to me——”

“Oh, something is wrong here!” exclaimed Lionne, starting up and gazing wildly around. “I do not see her on her pallet! Where is she? Something has happened to my babe! Speak, why don’t you tell me?”

It was utterly impossible any longer to conceal her calamity from her, or in any measure to soften its intolerable harshness.

Vulcan approached and dropped at her feet, and in sobbing, broken, almost inarticulate language, informed her of the awful fate of her child.

And Lionne!—no, I cannot!—I cannot! accustomed as I have been to see and describe suffering, my mind now shrinks from detailing the particulars of that wild wild woe! that unutterable anguish which formed the climax of her sorrows, and which drove her mad that night!

Yes; the sun that had set upon Lionne in her living grave arose upon Lionne—a MANIAC!

Vulcan took care of her through the night, nor left her until from the violence of her frenzy she had sunk at last into a stupor. Then believing her safe in the helplessness of her prostration, he returned home to prepare breakfast for his master.

He found Mr. Delaforêt and his friends who were to accompany him to Winchester, impatient to be gone.

He quickly prepared their morning-meal, and brought up their horses.

“Where is your own mule, Vulcan?” inquired the master.

“Your honor will forgive me, but I am too old to travel I cannot leave the wilderness.”

“Why, Vulcan? Why this change? I thought you were to accompany me abroad?”

“My master will pardon his poor old servant.”

“Oh, if you really wish to remain, I will not urge you to go. This house is left in charge of our doctor to sell. You can stay here until a purchaser is found, and then, from the purchase money, you shall be provided for.”

Deeply Vulcan bowed his thanks; he had no strength to speak.

Mr. Delaforêt and his friends departed.

One incident of his journey should be noticed. At the hotel at Winchester he picked up the morning paper and listlessly looked over it until his eye fell upon this obituary:

“Died suddenly of organic disease of the heart, at the country-house of her father in Alleghany County, Lenora, only daughter of Arthur Delaforêt, Esq.”

Mr. Delaforêt gazed in trouble upon this paragraph.

“This should not have been. The assumed name should not have survived her; but it was well meant and ignorantly written by the doctor; so I will say nothing about it.”

In another fortnight Mr. Delaforêt sailed for Liverpool, where, on landing, he dropped his assumed name and appeared upon the books of the hotel as—the Earl of Glen Lennark.

Vulcan, left behind in the old house, hastened to the grotto for the purpose of bringing Lionne to her old home, where he thought she could live for a time in concealment.

He reached the grotto; but—

Lionne the lunatic had fled!

CHAPTER XXII. LADY ADELAIDE’S WOE.

Break—break—break—

On thy cold, gray sands, oh sea!

But the tender grace of a day that is dead

Will never come back to me.—Tennyson.

Adelaide, almost heart-broken by her first, bitter sorrow, recovered very slowly from the effects of her brain fever. To avoid meeting with Orville, she confined herself to her own room, except at such hours as she knew him to be absent, when she would creep down-stairs and steal out to the broad water's side and wander far away along the solitary beach, out of sight and hearing of every human creature. Here seated upon a cold, gray stone, a bleached tree-stump, or a mass of dried seaweed, she sat and watched the sea like breadth of water, finding strange solace in the thoughts suggested by the dull, leaden hue, and the troubled, yet monotonous motion and moaning of the waves.

It was like her own life!

Why is it that extreme sufferers, broken-hearted or crazed, so frequently shun the society of even their nearest friends, and seek solace in the deepest solitudes of nature—in the darkest forest's shades, in the wildest mountain's gorge, by the bleakest ocean shore? A metaphysical treatise might be written in answer.

Adelaide, in addition to reasons common to all the wretched, had especial ones of her own for avoiding her kind.

Friends and acquaintances, she felt, looked upon her with compassion alloyed by suspicion and distrust—even as upon a girl, morbidly sensitive, highly eccentric, and very unsafe, who was at any moment liable to lunacy.

Even the servants watched her with wonder and pity! Lady Elizabeth, grown impatient of her long-continued avoidance of Orville, characterized her conduct as a sullen resentment altogether unjustifiable and intolerable.

Mr. Deville, of all others, only knew of the cause of her illness and despair; and with him she refused to speak. Had she been of age, and mistress of herself and fortune, she would have left the house; but being still under the bonds of minority, she was forced to remain. But her resolution, to hold no communication with Orville while she should be compelled to remain under his roof, she thought was fixed as fate.

It was while affairs were in this position, that Orville, one morning, opening the Baltimore paper, was suddenly arrested by the sight of the following obituary:

On Sunday the fifteenth instant, at the residence of her father, died suddenly of organic disease of the heart, Leonora, only daughter of Arthur Delaforêt, Esq., in the sixteenth year of her age.

It was a tremendous shock; but, oh! what a relief!

The unhappy girl who seemed destined to be his curse through life was dead, he thought—dead, not by his act, not by her own hand, by fate! Her sorrows and his embarrassments were forever at an end! Adelaide would now have no excuse for repudiating her wifely obligations. He was impatient to inform her that the obstacle she had chosen to raise against the consummation of their marriage, was removed by the hand of destiny, and that therefore she must have no further conscientious scruples to becoming his wife in fact as she was in name. Yet the selfish and impetuous youth perceived the propriety, nay, the necessity, while informing Adelaide of the event, of waiting some time for her to recover from the shock, and to comprehend the event, before urging it as a motive for the consummation of their marriage.

It was an overclouded day, about the first of September, that Adelaide, quietly as usual, left the house and wandered down to the solitary shore. It was late in the evening, and the tide was coming in. The surface of the water was of a deep, dull gray, in harmony with the clouded heavens, in unison with her own sad heart.

“It is the tenth wave,” she said, as she watched a long, dark ridge, rolling as it rose

and rising as it rolled, onward towards the shore, where it broke with a heavy sound, and covered her with a shower of foam.

“It is gone! It hurried on, joyous, confident, triumphant, to embrace the earth, broke itself upon the sands, and fell back again! Here comes another, as joyous, as confident, as triumphant; but like the other, and all the others, it will break and fall back—there, it is broken! another emblem of the vanity of human aspirations,” she said, as the last wave was shattered in thunder at her feet.

The tide continued to advance upon the beach, the waves raising their crested heads, throwing out their arms of surf, leaping and grasping upon the shore as though they would snatch and carry off some priceless treasure, or make good an everlasting foothold.

As she gazed, other and wilder fancies crossed her mind.

“How like sentient beings are these waves! They seem as conscious of me as I of them! How they spring at me, as if to catch me in their embrace! How they lift their white hands to me! How they beckon! Now I would only have to sit still here for a few minutes longer, and they would embrace and carry me away from this troubled earth, down, down, down to the deep stillness of the middle sea! I would only have to sit still—the wooing waves would do the rest. Shall I sit quiescent, oh eager waves, and let you have your will?”

“Adelaide!”

Though the name was pronounced so softly close to her ear, Adelaide sprang to her feet in alarm, and turned sharply around to confront—Orville Deville.

“Oh, Orville! oh, Mr. Deville, is this well? I only ask for peace, yet it is denied me; I avoid you, yet you follow me!”

“Adelaide, your garments are wet with surf!”

“Not wetter than my fate with tears!”

“Adelaide, the next wave will break over your head!”

“Many waves have broken over me, even here! I like! I like the physical shock, it numbs mental pain!”

“Adelaide, come away! I have a very important communication to make to you, but I cannot make it here, not while you sit in wet clothes. The wave!” he suddenly exclaimed, as he hastily snatched her from before a black ridge of water rolling in towards the shore. It was too late! the wave leaped and broke in thunder over both! It required all his strength to withstand the shock and hold her firmly. When the tumult was over he bore her far up the bank and sat her down.

He was as thoroughly drenched as herself.

“So, Adelaide,” he said, “may every wave of sorrow from which I cannot save you, break over us both! I hail this as an omen—the rude baptism of our union!”

“Oh, why do you distress me with such talk, when you know this can never, never be?” she said, in despairing tones.

“Dear Adelaide, come home, get on dry garments, and then I will make you a communication.”

She allowed him to take her hand and raise her to her feet, but declining further assistance, she walked home. That evening after supper, he sent a note to her room, begging her, if she were sufficiently rested, to give him a meeting in the library, for the purpose of imparting to her the intelligence he waited to convey.

“Tell your master that I will come,” she said to the boy who brought the note.

And waiting only long enough to compose her nerves, she arose and proceeded to the library, where she found Mr. Deville. He placed a chair for her, seated himself and quietly handed her the paper, pointing out at the same time the obituary notice.

She started as her eyes fell upon the paragraph. She grew pale as she read. And when she had concluded, she raised her eyes, full of solemn questioning, to the face

of Orville Deville.

“So you perceive, Adelaide,” he said, “that the miserable girl whom you chose to exalt into the importance of an obstacle to our complete union is removed!”

“Oh! but this is dreadful! dreadful! Orville! Poor thing! poor thing! And who knows how she died!”

“She died—not by her own desperate hand—not through me—but by disease—disease of the heart!”

“Of the heart? Ah! yes, the chord most strained the soonest snaps! poor heart!”

“You afflict yourself without cause, dear Adelaide! Hers was organic disease of the heart, a fatal malady, sure to kill even amid the happiest circumstances.”

“And hers were most wretched.”

“Adelaide, she died last month! May she rest in peace! Do not you trouble your tender heart vainly!”

“And are not you troubled at her untimely death?”

“I am sorry; yet I think it best that it happened so! best for all concerned!”

“Oh, Orville! Oh, Orville! You speak so of her, of her who thought herself your wife, and who was such in truth and justice!”

“Adelaide! you are a monomaniac on that point! how is it possible that she or any other woman than yourself could be my wife! Yes, my dear, you, and only you, are mine, even as I am yours, and only yours; but I did not come here to urge unwelcome claims: I came only to inform you of the death of a poor girl in whose fate you deigned to take some interest,” said Mr. Deville, rising to leave the room, and permit her to reflect upon the new phase the supposed death of Lionne had put upon their affairs.

As he passed out of the library, he encountered his mother in the hall.

“You have been holding another interview with Adelaide?”

“Yes, madam.”

“And by your gloomy looks an unpleasant one.”

“Rather so!”

“I will tell you what, Orville, you had better travel.”

“Travel, madam?”

“Yes!—Cease to woo your unwilling bride and leave the neighborhood.”

“Ah, to what good purpose, my dear mother, since I should take my unhappy passion along with me?”

“Why, of course, to this good purpose: to bring Adelaide to her senses. The girl is really devotedly attached to you, and has been so from her childhood; but she is now full of bitter and sullen resentment, and so long as you stay and importune her, she will avoid you.”

Now, of course, Orville Deville knew that his mother, in her ignorance of the true state of the case, misjudged Adelaide, and yet, upon the whole, he thought her advice good. She continued:

“By withdrawing yourself from her presence you will bring her to the knowledge of her own heart, and of your importance to her happiness.”

Orville dropped his head upon his breast and reflected deeply. And the longer he thought it over, the better he liked his mother’s counsel.

“I see,” continued that lady, “that you are inclined to follow my advice. Do so. Leave home for a season, and when you return I will guarantee a kinder treatment for you from Adelaide.”

“I think you are right, madam. I will be guided by your counsels,” said Orville.

Orville Deville lost no time in preparing for his journey. He was ready for departure almost before he had quite made up his mind in what direction he should travel. Finally it was determined, between his mother and himself, that he should first visit

the Canadian Provinces, where he should spend the earlier portion of the autumn; that he should then proceed southward and spend the winter in the French colonies of Louisiana and Mississippi; that in the spring it should depend upon his own inclination whether he should extend his travels or return home.

His approaching departure was announced to Adelaide by his mother, in a manner likely to fill the mind of that young lady with self-reproach.

Entering the bride's room early one morning, the mother of Orville sat down, and, putting a handkerchief to her eyes, said—

"Well, Adelaide, I hope that you will now be content! You have succeeded in banishing my son and your husband from his home!"

"From his home!—I, madam?" exclaimed the poor bride, in wonder and in sorrow.

"Ay, you! Your continued coldness has driven him away. He leaves home to-morrow, to travel how far, or how long, I cannot tell—to return when, if ever, I do not know!" and the lady, unused to betray emotion, dropped her face into her handkerchief and wept bitterly.

Adelaide had shed many, many tears; yet it seemed dreadful to her to see Orville's mother weep. It appeared to her tender, conscientious, and devout heart as unfilial, cruel, sacrilegious, to sit and look upon the matron's tears and not seek to stay them, at any sacrifice save that of principle.

"Oh, heaven help me! What shall I do?" she exclaimed, going and sinking at the feet and clasping the knees of the lady. "Madam! madam! oh, do not let me drive him away! do not! Let me go, rather! Oh, if you had permitted me to stay away when I went, this might all have been prevented. Dear madam, it is not yet too late!—let me go!"

"You are mad, Adelaide, to think of such a thing! Go! where should you go? and why should you go? It is not to be thought of! Your frenzied proposal does not even merit a serious reply! Do not affront me again by making it!" said the lady, agitated

between rage and grief.

“Oh, then, what can I do for you, or him? You know that I would die for either!”

“It is not a question of dying, but of living and loving—if that be not too late. You are Orville’s wife; give him your love! become his in reality as you are in right!”

“Oh, Lady Elizabeth, I would do any thing that is right, but——”

“I see! speak no more! you will do any thing but just what we wish! any thing but just what is your duty! You would die for us! very fine—nobody asks you; but my son, your husband, begs you to love him, and you refuse! yes, he prays for rights which he might demand, yet you, who would die for him, refuse his reasonable prayer. Go to, Lady Adelaide, I will believe no more of your professions; nor will my son plead again, nor will his mother sue for him.” And rising in anger, the lady threw off the caressing arms of Adelaide, and left the room.

“Is it my duty to submit to his love? Oh, if I could think it was, how happy I should be! And—perhaps it may be so. We have been long married, and the poor, wild girl, who innocently divided us, is dead! Is it my duty now to give myself up to my husband? Oh, wavering heart, cease! inclination sets too strongly that way to let reason and conscience have fair play! I must wait—wait for more light,” said Adelaide, as she sat deeply reflecting upon her own strange position and obligations.

Her question of duty was one that might have puzzled older and wiser heads. She was very young and inexperienced, and her difficulty was one upon which she could not seek counsel of any human being, not even of Orville’s mother, without an exposure of her husband’s sin, which she was determined never to make—no, not to his parent!

“I will pray God to direct me!” she said; “but alas! we pray God to guide us, and then we follow our own inclinations and throw the responsibility upon him! Heaven save us from self-deception!”

So she meditated, struggled and prayed, with a purpose single to do right.

That night poor Adelaide spent in prayer, rather than in sleep.

In the morning she met the family at breakfast, with the humble, subdued, and deprecating air of one who felt herself the cause of the approaching separation.

The meal passed almost in silence. Lady Elizabeth's tear-stained cheeks, Mr. Deville's grave brow, and Adelaide's pensive face, cast a deep gloom over the impending parting.

Mr. Deville suddenly broke up the sitting by rising and saying that to meet the packet-boat at Belle Haven, it was time he should be in the saddle. He took an affectionate leave of his mother, and then advanced to his bride, whose hand only he raised in silence to his lips. With her whole form drooping to faintness, Adelaide submitted to this slight caress. And the minute after, when she raised her eyes, he was gone.

"Oh, may God guide me aright, and then whatever may be my duty, may he forgive and bless my husband with great happiness," she said.

When Orville was gone, his mother, true to her promise, gave over importuning Adelaide upon the subject of their estrangement, but her manner as well as her feelings towards her daughter-in-law underwent a great change. She grew cold and distant to Adelaide. And not the least of the poor young bride's distress, was the displeasure of one between whom and herself had always existed the most tender, filial and maternal love—who had always been a most affectionate mother to herself, but who was still dearer to her heart as the mother of her husband.

But though Lady Elizabeth lectured Adelaide no more upon the subject of her "wifely duties," yet she took care that the young bride should learn her responsibilities from other sources.

She took old Doctor Wilmot, the pastor of their parish, into her confidence; told him under the seal of secrecy that a lover's quarrel had arisen between her children, which had terminated in a permanent estrangement on the part of the bride, and a

long journey on that of the bridegroom; gave him to understand that the chief difficulty of reconciliation lay with the young lady; and finally implored his counsel.

Doctor Wilmot, who had known Adelaide from childhood, gave his opinion as follows——

“Madam, your youthful daughter-in-law has a deeply religious nature; her duty to God is her first consideration; her duty to all his creatures grows out of that. She cannot be ruled through her passions or her self-interest; because both these are subordinate to her Christian principles; she can only be governed through her conscience and her affections. The matter in hand is one too delicate to admit of my personal interference, even as the pastor and counsellor of the young lady; but I will find a way.”

Accordingly, the next Sabbath, good old Doctor Wilmot announced a course of sermons on the subject of domestic duties.

His introductory discourse, rather a dull one, was addressed to husbands, and gave umbrage, more or less, to every married man present. His second was preached from the text, “Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands even as unto the Lord,” and because his heart, for his “pet lamb’s” sake, was in his subject, this discourse, in all respects, surpassed the first.

Adelaide listened, and in her unsuspicious simplicity and meek reverence, she received every expressed opinion of this preacher as pure gospel-truth.

She went home more disturbed because more hopeful saying to herself—“I almost believe it to be my duty, as well as my happiness, to yield to Orville.”

The next day, while she was turning this subject over in her heart, as the conspirators knew that she would—the old clergyman called.

Lady Elizabeth was out of the way.

Adelaide received him in the breakfast-room. She turned the conversation on the

sermon of the day before, and in the course of their discussion she put several supposititious cases to her pastor for his adjudication. As, for instance, in such and such circumstances of the husband, what should be the wife's course?

All these cases had reference to her own difficulty, and they received answers that eased her conscience and pleased her heart. And before the interview was ended Adelaide was almost persuaded to permit herself to be happy.

CHAPTER XXIII. ADELAIDE'S CONSOLATION

Within that heavy heart of thine,

Love's thrilling pulse is ever leaping;

So ebbs and flows the eternal brine,

Though winds lie calm, and earth is sleeping!

And o'er the gloom thy soul which shrouds,

Hope like a star her watch is keeping;

So sits the Iris in the clouds

And all the landscape smiles—though weeping.—Sillery.

In due time letters came from Orville Deville, for Lady Elizabeth—none for Adelaide.

"Lady Adelaide, I have heard from my son—he sends his respects to you," said the mother of Orville, coldly, addressing her daughter-in-law.

"I thank him; when you write, please return my best wishes for his happiness," said the latter, quietly, though she trembled at holding out this "right hand of fellowship."

It was the day succeeding the arrival of these letters that, in the cool of the morning, Adelaide ordered her little sail-boat, and went for a trip up the coast, as far as the mouth of Bush Creek. When she had arrived thither the beauty of the shaded stream

tempted her on, and for the first time, she entered the mouth of Bush Creek for a sail up the stream.

“How far can we go, Nero?” she asked of her old helmsman.

“When de tide’s high as ’tis now, up far’s de mill, ma’am, and even furder.”

“Then we will go up to the mill and pay Kate a visit.”

“Ay, ay, ma’am!”

“This is enjoying at once a sail on the salt-water and a ramble through the forest,” said Lady Adelaide, looking with delight up at the thicket of tall trees that grew upon each bank, and whose upper branches met and overshadowed the deep but narrow stream. Nothing could be more singular, picturesque and beautiful than the effect of that little graceful shallop skimming the surface of the creek—her white sail gleaming in and out among the dark green foliage.

“We are navigating the forest instead of the ocean, Nero!” said the young lady, with a smile—“but when we get up a little farther will not the foliage interfere with the sail?”

“No, ma’am—they never meets low enough.”

They were going before a fresh wind, and might have flown, but for the necessity of constant tacking in follow—the serpentine windings of the stream.

At length, however, in an hour they reached the bridge below the mill, and secured the boat to the posts.

The helmsman sprang upon the bank and assisted his mistress to land.

Adelaide looked up at the old house, once so lone and desolate, now in

“Solitude no more; but peopled by the furies,”

in the forms of four savage-looking men, with tall, spare figures, harsh features, darkly-bronzed complexions, and long, wild, black elf-locks and beards that hung upon their shoulders and breasts. They were clad in tunics and leggins of ill-dressed

buckskin, and were lounging about the broken doorway and walls of the house.

“Who are those barbarians?” inquired Adelaide, with some degree of uneasiness.

“Dem? Why, dey must be Miss Kate’s older brothers come back from de hunting-grounds.”

“Gracious! they look much more savage than the savage Indians themselves.”

“So do all white men when dey grow wild,” was the sapient and truthful observation of Nero.

“Ay! the Anglo-American race are bound to excel in every thing they attempt—even when they try to be savages!” remarked Adelaide, as she entered the yard and approached the door.

The said “savages” showed their civilization by giving way and retiring with respectful bows, which Adelaide answered by a nod as she entered the house.

Kate sprang from the inner room to meet and greet her.

“Oh, Lady Adelaide, I am so glad to see you! Oh, Lady Adelaide! my brothers have come home! all safe! every one of them safe!” exclaimed the wild girl, tears of joy rushing to her dark eyes!

“I rejoice with you, Kate! with all my heart, I rejoice with you! When did they come, my dear?”

“They got here yesterday evening! And oh, Lady Adelaide, the oddest thing—” exclaimed Kate, with a laugh and a blush, and above all a look of ludicrous embarrassment.

“Well, what is it, dear?”

“Such a find!”

“A find?”

“Yes! such a waif!”

“Waif?”

“Such a treasure trove!”

“I don’t in the least understand you, my dear.”

“Well, then, my brothers have found—open your eyes wide and look for a soft place to faint on—a baby in the forest!”

Adelaide’s eyes opened sufficiently wide; but instead of fainting, she only continued to stare in silent amazement at her informant.

“It is some poor squaw’s papoose,” at length the young lady ventured to say.

“Come in the parlor, and sit down, while I tell you; but, first of all, have you had breakfast?” asked Kate, as she installed her visitor in a pleasant seat beside the breezy front window.

“Oh, yes; before I left home,” replied her guest.

“Well, then, now listen. It is such a ‘cock-and-a-bull story,’ that if Nim’, my eldest brother, did not tell it, and my other three brothers swear to it, I shouldn’t believe it, that’s all——”

“Excuse me for interrupting you, but where is the baby?” asked Lady Adelaide, looking around.

“On my bed, in my own room, asleep, the poor little starveling!”

“Well, go on, dear; I am listening.”

“Well, you see, they—my brothers, I mean—were on their way home, travelling on foot, when they came to a stream of water whose name they did not know. You may judge they meet many such in the wilderness.”

“Yes; well?”

“It was late in the evening, and they walked some distance up and down the banks to find a good fording-place; and while they were so hunting, the dogs pointed a place in the rocks, and when my brothers came up they found the brutes at the mouth of a

dark cavern in the side of the mountain—I forgot to tell you that this stream ran at the foot of the mountain."

"Yes; but proceed!"

"The dogs continued to point, and my brothers, with their guns cocked, crept close and listened for some sound to come from the cavern to help them judge what sort of a beast might be concealed within; for, you see, experienced hunters like them can tell from the very character of the growl what manner of beast may be in lair."

"Yes, I know."

"But this time never the sound of a growl issued from the cavern! That looked ugly, they thought; so Nim', who is an impatient sort of a fellow, swore a big oath that he would bring the varmint out. So he crept closer, with his gun cocked, and—fired into the cavern——"

"Ugh!" shuddered Adelaide.

——"expecting fully to see a wild beast bound forth. But never a thing came forth! 'The mountain' did not even give birth to a mouse!—only the piteous, weak, wailing voice of a new-born baby, that smote their hearts with horror, for they feared no less than that they had mortally wounded an infant."

"Oh, oh, go on! Was the child hurt?" exclaimed Adelaide, clasping her hands in excess of pity.

"Why, of course it wasn't! Do you think I'd take it so easy telling you the story if it was? In a word, when the smoke cleared away, my brothers entered the dark cavern, and struck a light, and looked around. And there on a bearskin, on the floor, lay this little female Orson, too young, and wee, and helpless, even to hold out its arms to its preserver!"

"Its perfect helplessness being its greatest strength and strongest appeal."

"Yes; well, there was not a black hair of its little head hurt. From all the savage

surroundings—wampums, pouches, belts, rattlesnakes' skins and rattles, buffaloes' tusks, scalps, and other Indian devilisms—my brothers thought it was the home of an Indian 'medicine,' and that the infant was a white child, stolen from some settler's cabin, or carried off from a massacre."

"And they determined to rescue and take charge of the child, although it must have been a great, great care! It was very merciful of them!" said the young lady.

"My poor, rough brothers are as merciful and as gentle as—as the Lady Adelaide Deville herself."

The young lady blushed intensely at this compliment, while Kate resumed:

"With the very best care of its rough, inexperienced nurses, the poor infant must have suffered, for when they brought it to me you never saw such an object! But come, I will show you my waif!" and so saying, Kate Kyte conducted her visitor across the front passage to her own room, on the other side of the house, where, on the bed, lay the little foundling—a wretched looking little creature, thin as a skeleton, dark as an Indian, with black hair, and great, wild, black eyes.

As Adelaide looked upon those wondrous eyes, a thrill of emotion shook her frame—her bosom heaved—her color fluctuated. Turning to Kate, in a stifled voice, she asked:

"What day was it that this child was found?"

"On the seventeenth of August," replied Kate, looking in wonder at the agitated countenance of Lady Adelaide.

"And Lionne died suddenly on the fifteenth," murmured the poor bride to herself.

"Now, what ever shall I do with this infant, Lady Adelaide? If my brothers had brought me as a present a young bear, or a young panther, I might have raised the cub—but a baby! As I am a human woman, and a humane woman to boot, I don't know what to do with it! Seriously, I am sure it will perish in my inexperienced

keeping!”

“Poor little lost one!” exclaimed Lady Adelaide, gazing with deep pity upon the child. “I am afraid indeed, Kate, that you will——”

“Kill it! I am sure I shall!”

“If I were my own mistress—if I could—if I dared——”

“Ah, if you only would, Lady Adelaide, what a mercy it would be to this poor little wretch! what a blessing it would bring you!”

“I will consult Lady Elizabeth.”

“But—are you not the mistress of River-view? Can you not do as you please?”

“Not to that extent, perhaps. And I please not to abuse my prerogative. But, indeed, I should like to adopt this poor, desolate little one. True, I do not know more of infants than yourself, Kate; but then Lady Elizabeth does; and besides, we have experienced servants and nursing mothers among our people, some one of whom would take this infant to her bosom. I will speak to Lady Elizabeth.”

“Do, dear Lady Adelaide! But please don’t think that I am anxious to get rid of the poor, dear little waif! I am only desirous that it should be in better keeping than my own.”

“I know it, Kate. And at all events I—I will find some way of providing the babe with a proper nurse,” said the gentle girl, and stooping until her golden ringlets touched the dark cheek of the infant, she silently vowed to protect its feeble life.

Then she announced her intention of returning home, and attended by her young hostess, she left the room and the house.

“Put up the helm for River-view, Nero,” was the order given her dark helmsman as she re-entered the boat.

An hour’s sailing down the thickly shaded stream, and then a half hour’s run up the river, brought them to the landing-place at River-view.

It was now noon, and Lady Elizabeth was standing upon the front piazza, on the look-out for her son's wife.

"You have been absent four hours; you should not have stayed so long. I feared some accident had happened," said her ladyship.

"I went up Bush Creek—it was such a tempting sail—as far as the mill, and saw Kate. I am very sorry to have caused you any uneasiness," replied her daughter-in-law.

"Seriously, Lady Adelaide, in one way and another, you give me a great deal of uneasiness."

"I truly regret it; please forgive me."

"Well, lunch is waiting. Go take off your things and cool yourself, and come to the table," said Lady Elizabeth, somewhat mollified.

The young lady obeyed and soon joined her mother in the sitting-room.

There was never an hour in which, all other things being as usual, in which Lady Elizabeth was so good-humored as at lunch. Adelaide knew this, and therefore chose this very opportunity to speak of the little foundling at the mill. She told the story as it had been related by the Kytes, and if she had any private suspicions as to the parentage of the child, she reserved them to herself. She finished by saying—

"There is no one about here capable of taking charge of the poor baby; it is, in a manner, thrown upon our mercy; if we do not save it, it will perish."

"In a word, you would like to adopt this motherless infant? Having neither parrot nor poodle, you would like to take this baby for a pet."

"Indeed, I would like to succor the poor thing. And what says our Saviour—'Whoso receiveth one such little one in my name, receiveth me.'"

"Well, Adelaide, I tell you honestly that if this child were an ordinary city-foundling, I would have nothing more to do with it than to send it to the county

poor-house; but being, as it probably is, the child of honest parents, stolen from some cabin, and rescued from an Indian wigwam——”

“Grotto.”

“Well, from a squaw’s lair of some sort—I—have no objection to your taking it home. Yes, I think it would be a meritorious act. Polly, who has a young child and is hearty enough to nurse two, can take it to her breast. And if the pet give you pleasure, I shall be glad, my dear.”

Adelaide’s eyes filled with tears of gratitude; she suddenly took the hand of her mother-in-law and pressed it to her lips, then impulsively put her arms around the lady’s neck, and said:

“I have displeased you lately, how unwillingly you do not know. Oh, forgive me, and let us be the tender friends of old.”

“Dear child, I was displeased with you, as I might have been with a child of my own blood, who did not know her own mind, or heed the matters that involved her own interest. Let us trust to time and Providence to remedy all our evils. And—let our estrangement be forgotten,” said Orville’s mother, drawing her daughter-in-law to her bosom.

And thus the two were reconciled.

In the cool of the afternoon Lady Elizabeth ordered her carriage, and attended by the mulatto woman Polly, went up to Bush Creek Mill to fetch the babe.

Half smiling, half crying, Kate gave up her little charge, with the words—

“To think that in twenty-four hours I should have grown so attached to the little thing!”

“That is natural,” said the lady from River-view.

“But to think that I should be so good-for-nothing as to be incapable of taking care of one little baby!”

“Your incapacity in this single respect does not imply general worthlessness, though I should advise you, as your best friend, my dear, to apply yourself more to feminine occupation than has been your custom,” said Lady Elizabeth.

“La! what odds? Who cares what I do, or leave undone?”

“Yourself should care more than all, Kate. All who like you care. Above all, your Saviour cares,” said the lady, launching into a little lecture on the beauty of Christian womanhood and woman’s sphere, to which Kate Kyte listened in silent respect.

When the lady had finished her little sermon, she bade her woman Polly wrap up the child, and precede her, into the carriage. And as she prepared to follow her attendant, she suddenly turned to Kate, and said:

“You do not know whether the child has been baptized, or what is its name?”

“Of course we don’t! There is no mark upon its linen, and—it is so very young, that the probability is, it has never been christened.”

“It would be safer at least to baptize it,” said the orthodox Lady Elizabeth, as she entered her carriage.

She ordered the coachman to drive fast; and in an hour they were at home.

Lady Adelaide sprang from the front door to meet them.

The babe was carried into the house, and under the directions of Lady Adelaide, preparations for its accommodation were immediately commenced.

The family crib was brought down from the garret and made up in Adelaide’s chamber.

And from that day to the end of the month, the nimble fingers of the young lady were engaged in making up for her protégé an ample set of baby linen.

The afternoon of the first Sunday in every month was set apart in their parish church for the baptism of infants.

Accordingly during the last week in September, Lady Elizabeth said to her daughter—

“We should have your little charge baptized next Sunday. Have you thought of a name for her?”

“Yes, madam,” said Adelaide, with some hesitation, “as she also was left to perdition, we will call her after the great bard’s beautiful creation—Perdita!”

“A pretty name, as well as a rare one—it will do.”

“And, as she has no ascertained family name, we will add our own—Deville—that is if you have no objection.”

“None whatever, my dear.”

Accordingly, the next Sabbath, the infant was taken to church and given in baptism the name of Perdita Deville—a name that the negroes forthwith contracted first into “Pert,” and afterwards into “Ditto.”

As the weeks passed, the infant Perdita grew in health and beauty, and in favor with all the household. One circumstance only, connected with the babe, troubled the ladies; it was this:—There had been no time for consulting Orville, and the child had been adopted without the consent of the master of the house, and there was just a possibility that this addition to his family might not be acceptable to Mr. Deville.

Circumstances soon occurred that required the presence of Adelaide’s husband at home. As the fogs and rains of November came upon them, the Lady Elizabeth suffered a return of the malady that had so nearly proved fatal to her on the preceding winter.

Notwithstanding all the medical science of the village doctor, and all the skill and attention of her best of nurses, Adelaide, the strength of Lady Elizabeth rapidly declined. From her easy chair she took to the sofa, and from that to the bed. Singularly enough, now that her life was in imminent danger, she never thought of

dying.

“I suppose I shall be ailing all the winter, and get well in the spring, as I did before,” she said to Adelaide.

“God grant it, dear mother,” replied her sorrowing daughter.

Still her strength decayed. She was no longer able to raise herself up in bed.

Doctor Williams, her physician, visited her twice a day. After one of his morning visits, as Adelaide attended him to the door, he suddenly said to her—

“My dear, you had better write at once for your husband to come home.”

“I—I wished to summon Mr. Deville; but Lady Elizabeth will not hear of such a thing as his visit South being cut short,” said Adelaide.

“Nevertheless, write, or permit me to do so, which will be still better. Shall I write to him?”

“I thank you, doctor, very much—pray do so,” replied Adelaide, as the physician entered his carriage, hurrying away to conceal her tears. Well she knew that in the doctor’s words she had heard the death-sentence of her beloved friend. A long time she wept before she could compose herself sufficiently to venture into the sick-room.

When at last she did, she was shocked to hear the invalid, unconscious of doom, speak only of worldly matters, and talk of sending to Bell Haven for drygoods, and a dressmaker to make up their winter suits! Alas, what would be their probable winter suits? A shroud for her, and deepest mourning for the rest!

The doctor kept his word, and the same night wrote to Orville Deville.

Adelaide also wrote to him. But long before either of those letters could have reached their destination, the malady of the invalid had brought her close upon the confines of the grave. She now required watching by night as well as by day.

One night, while Adelaide sat beside her, she suddenly said:

“Adelaide, my child, I feel something within my chest—giving—giving away—like the breaking up of the very central core of life. Adelaide! Adelaide! quick! I am going!”

“It is nothing but a fainting-spell, dear mother, drink this!” said the tender nurse, placing a cordial to the lips of the invalid.

“No fainting-fit was ever like this, my child! It is the breaking up of the wreck!” said the sick woman, as she took and drank the cordial.

“You feel better now?”

“A little, dear; but, Adelaide, this is death! I feel it, I know it, I am sure of it!”

“No, no, do not say so; let me send for the doctor.”

“Useless, dear, useless! nay, I will not have him sent for! Oh, that my son were here!”

“Oh, that he were!” said Adelaide.

The invalid subsided into a soft slumber.

Adelaide slipped down-stairs and despatched a man in haste for the doctor.

When she returned to the sick-room the patient was still slumbering. From that slumber she awoke with a start, exclaiming:

“Adelaide!—quick!—some stimulant, or I sink into death!”

With the speed and silence of lightning the young lady placed the cordial to her lips.

She was somewhat revived by the draught, and as she sank back upon the pillow she said:

“Oh, Adelaide, I must not die until Orville comes!”

“Orville?” repeated the young nurse, in her perplexity not knowing what her mother-in-law meant.

“Yes, my child, though this is death, I shall live till Orville comes! for he is on his

way! Far off I hear the gallop of his steed!”

“Oh, that the doctor were here,” groaned Adelaide to herself.

“I know you think I rave; but I do not! You see me dying here, and you think Orville two thousand miles away, and that I wander when I say I shall live till he comes. Oh, Adelaide, the spirits of the dying reach out to their beloved; mine has met my only son thundering through the forests of St. Mary’s, on fire to reach home! He knows not what it is that attracts, that pulls him onward—though it is the spirit of his dying mother that cannot be released until she blesses him!”

Exhausted by this long and rambling speech, the dying woman sank into a slumberous state, in which way she lay for nearly an hour.

“Oh, that the doctor were here!” said Adelaide, in despair, “surely my messenger could not have found him at home, and must have gone to seek him elsewhere—there, I do believe he is come!” she exclaimed, as the sound of horses’ hoofs were heard approaching the house.

In another minute a servant came to the sick-room door and rapped.

Adelaide opened it.

“Has the doctor come, Keziah?”

“No, ma’am—but some one wants to see you in the parlor,” said Keziah, mysteriously.

“Who is it?—wait here with your mistress until I return,” said Adelaide, in a breath, as she hurried down-stairs and opened the parlor-door. The room was dimly lighted by one wax candle that stood upon the mantle-piece; but its direct rays fell upon the tall and elegant figure of Adelaide’s husband.

“Mr. Deville! Oh, thank God that you have come!” exclaimed Adelaide, eagerly.

“How is my mother, Adelaide?”

“Oh, very, very ill! How providential that you should have come! Thank God! Oh,

thank God!”

“Your letters mentioning my mother’s ill health, and the absence of all letters from her, made me very uneasy. At length I could bear the anxiety no longer, and set off for home. And here I am.”

“Oh, surely it was the leading of Divine Providence!”

“Can I see my dear mother at once?”

“I think so. Let me go to her first,” said Adelaide, and stealing a glance at the pale and anxious face of her husband, she left the room and hurried into the sick-chamber.

With astonishment and terror she found Lady Elizabeth sitting up in bed.

“I feel that my son has come! bring him to me, Adelaide!” she said.

Orville, who was just without the door, heard these words, hurried in and dropped on his knees by the bedside, exclaiming, as he kissed her hand:

“My dear mother! my dear, dear mother!”

“Adelaide, come hither,” said the dying woman, retaining her hold upon her son’s hand.

The young lady came and knelt beside her husband.

“Adelaide, whatever Orville’s offences against you may have been, you will forgive him by the death-bed of his mother!” she said, as she placed the hand of her daughter in that of her son.

“I am not my husband’s judge, dear mother; but while I live, by God’s grace I will be to him a true wife,” said the gentle lady.

“Thank God! And as you are merciful to each other’s faults, may he be merciful to you, as it is written—‘Unless ye forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you.’ ‘Forgive that ye may be forgiven.’ Now may the Lord bless and comfort you! may the Lord love you and lead you through all the trials of

earth to the eternal bliss of heaven! Amen," said the dying woman, sinking back upon her pillow.

After this she subsided into calm repose that lasted several hours, and then softly sank to her eternal rest.

Bitter was the grief of the bereaved young couple. Let us draw the vail of silence before such sacred sorrow.

The funeral of Lady Elizabeth Deville was solemnized upon the third day, and her remains were laid in the family burial-ground on the wooded hill behind River-view. During the sacred days of death and burial, not to disturb her husband by any new subject of interest, Lady Adelaide had ordered the little Perdita to be kept in the nursery or walked out into the back lawn. Thus the infant had escaped the notice of Mr. Deville.

It was the day after the funeral, while the young pair sat at breakfast in the sitting-room so often mentioned, that Lady Adelaide rung the bell and ordered the babe to be brought in.

"What babe?" inquired Mr. Deville.

"A desolate infant rescued from the savages by Kate Kyte's brothers, while the latter were on their hunting-expedition in the far West. I adopted the child, hoping that the act might meet your approbation. There was no time for consulting you, but the affair is of course at your disposal," said Lady Adelaide.

As she spoke Keziah entered with the child, now a blooming infant six months of age.

"Bring her to your master, Keziah," said the young lady.

And the babe was brought up in front of Mr. Deville for inspection. He looked not unfavorably upon the pretty creature; and then turning and meeting the eager eyes of his wife, he smiled and said—

“Well, love, you wish to keep her?”

“If you please—oh, yes!”

“Then keep her, love. The most troublesome pet you could find, perhaps; but that is your affair.”

“And my delight!” exclaimed Adelaide, with sparkling eyes, as she caught the infant from the nurse’s arms to her own bosom.

The child danced, and crowed, and laughed, as she clasped her rosy arms around her pretty foster-mother’s neck.

The face of Orville Deville was overshadowed.

“She will give her whole heart to that black-eyed infant,” was the jealous thought that crossed his mind.

He half regretted the consent he had given to the adoption of the child; but his word was pledged, and his pledge was sacred.

With the wife’s quick instinct, the Lady Adelaide divined the cause of the cloud upon her husband’s brow, and hastened to dispel it by putting the infant in the arms of her nurse, with the order to take her out for a walk.

From that day Lady Adelaide was careful to avoid exciting the jealousy of her husband against the child, and only lavished caresses upon her protégé in the privacy of the nursery, or in the absence of her husband.

As the winter passed, the infant grew in strength, and beauty, and intelligence.

It was upon the afternoon of a pleasant day in May, that Orville Deville returned from the post-office and entered the sitting-room, holding an open letter in his hand.

“Our uncle, the Earl of Glen Lennark, has written to me; it is a very kind letter and a very sorrowful one!” he said, seating himself by the work-table of Lady Adelaide.

She looked up from her sewing, and he continued:

“Our uncle writes that the last of his children—his only daughter—lies in a foreign

grave——”

“Oh, poor, bereaved father!” exclaimed Lady Adelaide.

“Yes, he has indeed been ‘a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.’ He has seen his king dethroned, and his throne given to a stranger. He has seen his own family impoverished, scattered, or destroyed by the sword or the axe. He has had his estates confiscated, his blood attainted, and himself outlawed. He has passed years in exile, poverty and solitude. And now that he—an old and gray-haired man—is restored to his country, his home and his old hereditary honors, he loses his last-remaining, his only daughter, and finds himself without a child to inherit his ancient name and title.”

“But—could his daughter have inherited his title and landed estates?”

“By the terms of his ancient patent of nobility, the females of his line are not excluded from the succession, and failing heirs-male, the title and estates ‘fall to the distaff,’ as it is called.”

“So that, at the death of her father, his only daughter would have become——”

“Countess of Glen Lennark and Baroness Lockburn, in her own right, with the power of transmitting both title and estates to her heirs.”

“I think only of the personal bereavement—poor father.”

“Yes, but he thinks of his line! and he writes and invites me, as his nearest kin, his nephew and his heir, to come with my wife and spend a year with him at his castle of Glen Lennark, in the Highlands of Scotland.”

“My dear, old home! Oh, how I should be pleased to revisit it!”

“Well, love, I think that we should go,” said Mr. Deville.

And thus the voyage was agreed upon.

Rapid preparations were made for the journey. A competent steward was engaged to take charge of River-view in the absence of the proprietor.

In the midst of all her bustle of preparation, doubt troubled the bosom of Lady Adelaide—the doubt whether Mr. Deville would permit her adopted child to accompany them—whether, in a word, he would be willing to suffer the annoyance of a child and nurse, and all their paraphernalia in the confined quarters of a packet ship. Indeed, she dreaded and deferred to put the question.

He surmised her embarrassment and relieved it, by saying, with a smile, as he caressed the little pet:

"This child will be taken for ours when we present her at Glen Lennark, Adelaide."

She understood this pleasantry as a delicate manner of authorizing her to carry Perdita along with them; and accordingly she made arrangements.

It was upon the first Friday in June that they sailed, in a fine merchantman, from Baltimore to London.

I shall not fatigue my readers with any description of this voyage; it passed without incident worth recording; and at the end of four weeks, a rapid run for those days, the "Thetis" entered the Thames and dropped anchor off St. Katherine's Docks.

CHAPTER XXIV. LAKE ISLAND AND CASTLE.

That dear old home!

Something of old ancestral pride it keeps,

Though fallen from its early power and vastness;

The sunlight seems to her eyes brighter there

Than wheresoever else!—Fanny Kemble.

The voyagers landed and took quarters for the day and night at the Queen's Head, Fleet street.

Early the next morning they took the first coach for Edinboro', where they arrived in due time, and whence they took a chaise to the post town nearest the bourne of their

journey, Glen Lennark. At the small hostel, they found a carriage from the castle awaiting them. They entered it and drove slowly through a wild and rocky country, beautiful, now, in the rich luxuriance of summer. It was near sunset when they passed through a gorge and came upon the borders of a small, clear lake, set like a crystal gem in a circle of mountains diversified with snow-white rocks and clumps of dark-green firs, the whole of which was deeply reflected in the mirror of the water. In the midst of this lake was a tiny islet, a solid rock, from which arose the gray and hoary walls of Glen Lennark castle, an ancient feudal tower and keep, now showing marks of many centuries of storms, of war and weather bravely withstood. The waters of the little lake that surrounded this islet, had served in barbarous times as the castle moat; and a relic of the middle ages, an ancient drawbridge, whose chains and pulleys had long fallen into disuse, connected the isle with the road down which the travelling carriage had rolled. They crossed this drawbridge and entered through a high arched gateway the court-yard, and crossed to the main entrance of the castle-hall, which stood directly opposite. Here they were met by a servant out of livery, who conducted them into a modernized reception room, and with a low obeisance, went to announce their arrival to his master.

Left alone together, Mr. Deville and Lady Adelaide looked around themselves and then at each other. Their eyes met, and smiled.

“Do you remember the last time we were in this room, Adelaide?”

“I do, indeed.”

It was the room in which they had been married, at the death-bed of the old lord.

They had no opportunity for further conversation, for the door opened and their host entered—a tall, distinguished looking man, whose snow-white locks contrasted finely with his deep mourning-suit of full black velvet.

“I am very happy to welcome you, my niece and nephew, to Glen Lennark,” he said, courteously advancing and offering Adelaide and Orville each a hand.

Both arose to receive this greeting. But when Mr. Deville looked up—in spite of the changed circumstances, the altered dress, the prematurely aged face and whitened hair—he recognized in the Earl of Glen Lennark, his old host of the forest-lodge, the father of the lost Lionne.

“Mr. Delaforêt!” burst in stupefaction and despair from his pallid lips; for in the same moment that he made his discovery, he knew that he himself had made his aged uncle childless.

“Mr. Delaforêt no longer; but your uncle,—Glen Lennark, who, even in the wilds of America, recognized in his chance visitor, his sister’s son, and who would then and there, in exile and poverty, have made himself known to his nephew, but for prudential considerations,” said the Earl, courteously waving to his young relatives to resume their seats, while he set them the example.

Adelaide gazed in silent surprise from one to the other.

“Oh, that you had trusted me with your secret! oh, that you had told me who you were! or that I had had wit to discover our relationship!” groaned Orville, in the pangs of revived and augmented remorse.

“To what purpose? what could my fiery young relative have done for his poor exiled uncle?—he would, no doubt, have tried to move heaven and earth to restore the banished old man to his country; but at that time would have succeeded only in getting himself into trouble,” said the Earl, entirely misconceiving the cause of his nephew’s emotion.

Orville, for his part, was almost overwhelmed. In vain he struggled to banish the image of the lost Lionne and the visitations of remorse. He could not conquer, he could only partially conceal his emotion.

Adelaide also had learned in this conversation that the poor victim of her husband’s deceit had been his own, her own cousin, the only remaining child of their uncle and host, the aged man who had unconsciously invited to his house the destroyer of his

daughter. Should they—could they dare to accept his hospitality and remain his guests? And in the future—could Orville venture to wear the title and estates gained by the death of Lionne—of Lionne, destroyed by his own act?—oh, never, never, thought Adelaide within herself: and pale and silent from these distressing reflections, she scarcely dared to raise her eyes either to her husband or her uncle.

“My fair niece looks very weary after her journey! Courage, my dear, supper will be served in a few moments; after which, Mrs. Posset will show you your apartment. Orville, do you remember the suppers in my forest-house, prepared by the hands of my poor Lionne?”

Ay, he did remember! though he had scarcely voice to say so.

“She died very suddenly,” said the earl. And then, in a faltering voice, he related all he knew or supposed of the loss of Lionne.

Each word was a dagger to the hearts of Orville Deville and his wife. The Earl not understanding the cause of their extreme emotion, and attributing it all to their excess of generous sympathy, said—

“Do not grieve for me, young people. I—am equal to my burthen, and I try to think that—‘All is for the best.’”

Very soon after supper, Lady Adelaide, acknowledging fatigue, retired to her apartment, where at a late hour she was joined by Mr. Deville. He looked pale and troubled, and well she knew the cause of his distress, though the subject of Lionne was by mutual, silent consent, avoided between them.

Yet now Adelaide could not refrain from asking:

“Shall we remain here as long as we had intended, Mr. Deville?”

“Assuredly not; we shall remain no longer than I can find a plausible excuse for departing,” he answered.

“Is such an excuse necessary?” inquired the truthful young creature.

“Certainly, Lady Adelaide. You would not have me offend our uncle.”

A silent sigh was her only comment and so the short conference ended.

The next day a number of the county nobility and gentry were received at dinner to meet Mr. Deville, whom the Earl of Glen Lennark presented as his nearest kinsman and his heir.

This dinner was followed by reciprocal invitations from the guests which the uncle and nephew felt obliged to accept, and thus a fortnight was spent in a round of dinner parties. Of course, Lady Adelaide was frequently of the company; though she often preferred to stay at Glen Lennark, and amuse herself with her adopted child, who, by the way, had found great favor in the eyes of their host. He felt a strange attraction towards the infant; he would have her brought in every day with the dessert; he called her “Lady Adelaide’s whim;” and said that he hoped that when an heir should be born to them, the poor “whim” might not be utterly thrust aside.

“Oh, no,” said Lady Adelaide, “I should so distrust myself. I should so fear to slight my little waif, that I do believe I should be more attentive to her than to one of my own.”

“At least, if ever, when surrounded by your children, you grow tired of Perdita, send her to me,” said the Earl.

“You have taken a strange fancy to my little gipsy,” said Adelaide, smiling.

“Well, yes; shall I tell you the reason?—She is the very image of what my poor Leonora was at her age! It is one of those strange, unaccountable likenesses that we sometimes see in life! and that it is not only my fancy I will prove. Come with me into the adjoining cabinet,” said the Earl, rising from the table and giving his arm to his niece, and leading her into an apartment in the south turret.

It was a small, octagon-shaped room, richly carpeted, and furnished with cushioned seats running around the walls. It was lighted by one tall gothic window, of stained glass, that occupied one of the eight sides of the octagon immediately opposite the

door by which they entered, and which filled another side; the remaining six, three on each hand, were hung with the portraits of the Earl, his late wife, and their four children.

"This is a sacred room to me; I call it my 'family-circle,'" said his lordship; as he conducted his niece into this sanctuary, and led her straight up to the portrait of a child on the space at the right hand of the window.

Adelaide started and grew deadly pale. It seemed to be Perdita her very self whom she saw on the canvas before her! There was the little, lithe, willowy form; the little, elegant head; the jet black hair, rippling in thousands of tiny, glittering ringlets down about the broad forehead and crimson cheeks, and falling upon the ivory shoulders; there were the same large, fierce, intensely black eyes, with their long, fringe-like, black lashes; there was the same delicate, aquiline nose; short, curled upper lip, fierce and fine; and the full, voluptuous, lower lip, and rounded chin. And more striking than all this, there was the same little haughty air of carrying the small, queenly baby-head, the same trick of elevating the eyebrows, and protruding the under lip; the same careless way of carrying the arms; the same——oh! Lady Adelaide sickened at the thought—the suspicion that arose in her mind!

"It is a wonderful likeness, considering that the original of this portrait was a noble infant, born in this castle seventeen years ago; and that the babe, whom it so strangely resembles, was a peasant child, perhaps a half-breed, found in the wilds of America only a year since!—a very wonderful likeness!" said the Earl, gravely.

Lady Adelaide could not answer.

"You understand now why it is that I have formed so sudden and strong an attachment to your little protégé."

Adelaide nodded; she could do no more; the power of speech seemed denied her.

"You are as much moved as though you considered this resemblance—uncanny—as we Scots say," remarked the Earl.

“It seems—supernatural!” gasped Adelaide, and, without looking at another portrait, she turned to leave the turret-cabinet.

The Earl gave her his arm and led her to the door of the drawing-room, where, with a bow, he left her, to return to the dinner-table to Mr. Deville and the wine.

Lady Adelaide, pale, dizzy and trembling with the dreadful suspicion on her mind, went as fast as her failing limbs would carry her, to her own room, and locked herself within its privacy.

“Oh, should this child that I protect be really the child of Lionne, and, of—of—oh, no, my Lord, it is not so! it cannot be so! this is an accidental likeness, as my uncle thinks! The unborn child of Lionne must have perished with its wretched mother! and she ‘died and gave no sign!’ it could not have been otherwise, for the Earl gave us every particular of her death and burial; he did not know her wrongs, and he does not even suspect but that he laid a virgin daughter in the grave. I am sure of it! and yet, and yet, I know that had Lionne lived she would have been a mother; and that the age of this unknown foundling of the wilderness, that bears such a wonderful resemblance to her, corresponds to what would have been the age of her child, had she had one! I must investigate this.”

Thus Adelaide mused, until she was interrupted by the entrance of Keziah with the infant subject of her perplexed thoughts.

Then she took the babe from the arms of the nurse saying—

“You may leave her with me, Keziah. I can take care of her for an hour.”

When left alone with her little charge, Lady Adelaide sat the child upon her lap, and gazed long and wistfully into her great, fierce, black eyes.

“Ah, little one, you know no more of your own sad story than do I! If that lisping, silvery tongue could speak, it could tell me nothing of your origin! but, oh, if those great, bright eyes could give back again to me the images painted upon their retina before I ever saw you—what scenes they might reveal!” said the lady as she gazed

upon the wondering child.

Little Perdita, impatient of the sober face of her foster mother, began to dance and laugh and lisp, and use all her infant arts to wile the lady into play; and failing of this, she twisted herself out of her fond nurse's arms and took the responsibility of amusing herself upon the floor, until the return of Keziah.

That night, Mr. Deville having gone out to a gentleman's party in the neighborhood, Lady Adelaide found herself and the Earl alone in the drawing-room.

The dampness of the evening rendered the small, bright wood-fire that burned in the fireplace very acceptable.

And the young lady and the old peer drew their chairs up close to the hearth.

Adelaide's work-table, standing between them, served as a rest for the old man's elbow.

Adelaide availed herself of the opportunity, and requested her uncle, if the recital would not be too painful to him, to relate to her all the particulars of her cousin Leonora's last illness and death.

With a deep sigh the Earl commenced and faithfully related every circumstance of that tragedy, so far as they were known to himself.

Adelaide listened, on the alert to detect any suspicious feature. But, when the sorrowful story was ended, she was obliged to confess to herself that there was not the slightest reason for supposing that Lionne had become a mother before she died, but every reason for believing the contrary.

Still she was deeply troubled. For many causes she hoped that her husband might shorten their visit and return immediately to America. And she resolved, as soon as she reached home, to visit the neighborhood of Singing Stream, and make inquiries on the spot concerning the family of "Mr. Delaforêt."

She retired early to her room; but, being unable to sleep, she put on her

dressing-gown, and threw herself into an easy chair, to await the coming of her husband.

It was very late when Mr. Deville came in from the supper.

“Up yet, Adelaide?” he asked, with a yawn.

“Yes—I cannot sleep, Mr. Deville. Oh, when shall we leave this house?”

“Why—are you not comfortable?”

“As comfortable as the kindest of hosts can make me; but—I thought that you also were anxious to leave?”

“So I was, and so I am; but to leave is not so easy a feat as you suppose! We came with the understanding between our uncle and ourselves that we should stay a year. And when I spoke to him of shortening our visit, pleading unexpected business as my excuse, he looked so annoyed, so incredulous, and opposed our going with so much earnestness of emotion, that I find I cannot distress him by hurrying off. I have caused him trouble enough, heaven knows, and I will occasion him no more that I can avoid! So, painful as it is to my feelings to remain, I must stay out the proposed period of our visit,” said Mr. Deville, most likely deceiving his own soul as to his motives.

Lady Adelaide made no comment.

“You do not approve this resolution, I suppose!” said her husband.

“Excuse me—the decision does not rest with me,” she gently replied.

“Nevertheless I should like to know your opinion, Adelaide,” he persisted, with the unconfessed desire of forcing her to agree with him.

“Indeed, I would rather not express one, knowing full well that my individual judgment would not, perhaps should not, influence the question.”

“Is that a complaint, madam?”

“Indeed, no.”

“Then I insist upon hearing your sentiments in respect to our staying here!” he said, in a tone so peremptory, as to admit of no refusal from his wife.

“Well, then,” said Adelaide, gently, “I think, under the circumstances, that it would be scarcely honorable in us to accept for a whole year the hospitality of poor Lionne’s bereaved father.”

The face of Orville Deville flushed purple with anger. He was offended, as she foresaw that he would be.

“Lady Adelaide, your words are insulting!” he said, in the deep, low, steady tones of suppressed but concentrated and intense rage. And rising, he went into the adjoining room and threw himself upon the lounge, where he passed the remainder of that night, and many nights thereafter.

Remorse, when it is not refined into repentance towards God, only hardens the heart and sours the temper. Any allusion to Lionne, the subject of his remorse, always exasperated the anger of Orville Deville, who, being a pure Saxon, was of course a natural despot, and would have laid the absolute law of his lordly will, not only upon his wife’s words and actions, but even upon her very thoughts. And thus against her will, he would drag forth her opinions, only to sit in harsh judgment upon them, whenever they did not happen to flatter or to please him.

Could Adelaide have blinded her own judgment as easily as she could yield her will, she might have been happier where “ignorance” would have been “bliss.” But, though her intellect could not be deceived, nor her conscience dulled—though daily, as he hardened his heart, and conformed his soul in selfishness, she wept over his decline of moral strength—yet her affections had been too long and closely bound up in him to fall away now. She loved him as devotedly as ever, the only difference being, that she loved him in fear and sorrow, instead of in pride and joy.

For days Orville Deville maintained a cold and distant demeanor towards his wife. He was evidently waiting for some sign of submission on her part. And the gentle

Adelaide would readily have asked forgiveness, only that in this case self-crimination would have been a falsehood, and a betrayal of principle.

How long this estrangement would have continued is not known, for an event occurred that necessarily forced the estranged parties into confidential relations.

CHAPTER XXV. DEATH AT THE FETE.

Leaves have their time to fall,

And flowers to wither at the northwind’s breath,

And stars to set,—but all—

Thou hast all seasons for thine own, oh, death!—Felicia Hemans.

The Earl of Glen Lennark had observed and deplored the coolness that seemed to exist between Lady Adelaide and Mr. Deville,—or, to speak more correctly, he had noticed and grieved over the freezing reserve with which the husband treated the wife, who evidently suffered acutely under his displeasure. And, without venturing to speak to either party upon a subject so delicate, his lordship resolved upon a measure which should bring the young couple into closer communion. He announced his intention of giving a grand fete, in honor of Orville Deville’s birthday, which was near at hand.

The nobility and gentry of the neighborhood were invited to a sumptuous dinner, to be followed by a ball in the evening; and the tenantry and villagers were to be made free of the ground, where roast beef, bread and cheese, cakes and ale, etc., were provided for their refreshment, and fireworks and fiddlers for their amusement.

The eventful day arrived. It was a lovely day, early in October, and the entertainments commenced with the most auspicious prospects.

But, alas! in the afternoon of that day the festival came to a sudden and dreadful end.

It was about six o’clock, P. M., that the villagers and tenantry were at the height of

enjoyment of feasting and dancing; the artizans were at their posts, ready, at the appearance of the Earl and his guests, to begin letting off the fireworks; and the Earl himself was seated at the head of his dinner table, having on his right hand Lady Adelaide and on his left Mr. Deville, and surrounded by his distinguished friends.

The cloth had been removed, and the dessert set upon the table, when the Earl of Glen Lennark arose in his place to propose a toast.

All eyes were riveted upon him as he stood there, his tall figure, clad in a suit of sable velvet; his snow-white hair parted over the broad brow and descending upon his shoulders; his venerable face elongated with age and care; but his noble form as erect, and his eagle eye as keen as when, in middle age, he had led the armies or the councils of his country.

“Friends and neighbors,” he said, “be pleased to fill your glasses and pledge me in one sentiment.” And filling his own high with wine, he stood waiting until his guests with brimming glasses, were upon their feet. Then lifting his goblet, he bowed and said—

“We drink to the health and prosperity of the next Earl and Countess of Glen Lennark! May their future be——”

The last syllables trembled upon his lips; the brimming goblet shook in his hands, and fell shivered into fragments, spilling all the red wine upon the floor.

The butler, regarding this as merely an awkward accident, quickly and coolly filled another glass and handed it to his master.

The Earl, who was resting one hand upon the table, received the second goblet and stood once more erect. The eyes of his guests were fixed upon his venerable pale face; they saw the quivering of his aged lips as he attempted to articulate; noticed the twitching of his fingers as he tried to hold his glass, which instantly fell with a crash to the table.

“My lord, you are ill!” exclaimed Orville Deville, starting up just in time to receive

the falling form of the old man in his arms and lay him gently back in the chair.

All became confusion.

The guests left their seats and gathered around their host, who, livid and helpless, lay back upon the chair, supported in the arms of Orville Deville.

“Lay him on a lounge!”

“Give him brandy!”

“Put ice to his head!”

“Plunge his feet into hot water!”

“Fetch a lancet to bleed him!”

“Run for the doctor!”

These and other miscellaneous orders were hurriedly given and obeyed.

A messenger was despatched for the doctor, the patient was laid upon the lounge hastily brought for the purpose, and all proper remedies were resorted to for his relief. In vain; the old man never spoke again. And when half an hour afterward the physician arrived, he found a corpse!

The guests, with grave faces, left the house of mourning. The villagers and tenantry, filled with consternation, lingered, talking in groups upon the grounds, until by the orders of Mr. Deville they were dispersed and sent home.

The proper officials were then summoned, and preparations for the funeral solemnities were commenced.

The body of the late Earl lay in state in the castle-hall for three days, during which it was visited by a large number of his friends, tenants and dependants. And on the evening of the fourth day, with all the “pride, pomp, and circumstance” of rank Alexander, seventh Earl of Glen Lennark and tenth Baron Lochburn, was laid in the tomb of his fathers.

On the morning of the day succeeding the funeral, the nearest friends and neighbors

of the late lord were assembled in the library of the castle to hear the reading of his lordship's last will and testament.

Lady Adelaide and Mr. Deville were present in deep mourning.

They were scarcely seated when the attorney of the late Earl entered, bearing the will. He bowed to the small assembly, walked up and took his stand at the head of the table around which the company were gathered.

He then opened the document, observing that as the title and landed estates fell by inheritance to his late lordship's nephew, there present, the instrument in his hand related merely to such personal property as the late Earl had in his power to bequeath. With another bow the attorney spread open the parchment, and proceeded to read. The great bulk of his lordship's personal property was left where his title and estates had descended—to his "beloved nephew, Orville Deville." Then followed some considerable legacies to servants and humble friends. And finally, there was a codicil by which he left to Orville Deville the sum of five thousand pounds sterling, in trust, for the use of his adopted daughter, Perdita.

The attorney having finished the perusal, rolled and tied up the parchment, laid it upon the table, and turning with a deep bow to Orville Deville, said—

"I hope your lordship will accept my humble congratulations on your accession to your title and estates, and also my best wishes for the health and happiness of the present Earl and Countess of Glen Lennark. I have enjoyed the honor of doing business for the late Earl, as well as for his predecessor, and hope to merit the confidence of your lordship." And with a second and deeper bow, the lawyer withdrew.

Then friends and acquaintances approached with congratulations and flattering speeches. Doctor Bowne, the venerable rector of Glen Lennark, approaching Adelaide, said—

"I congratulate, not you, madam, but the people over whom you are called to rule;

for some centuries have passed since this castle has welcomed so young, fair, wise and good a Countess of Glen Lennark."

"Reverend sir, I thought your mission upon earth was to rebuke, and not to flatter the pomps and vanities of life," said Adelaide, tempering the austerity of her words by the sweetness of her tones and looks, as she turned away. In truth, she was shocked to see with what irreverent alacrity the world hurried from the tomb of the dead Earl to do homage at the footstool of his successor. The new title by which they hailed her, Countess of Glen Lennark, rang a knell through her brain and heart; for she thought of her, that beautiful and wretched girl, who, as the last lineal descendant of her house, should have worn its hereditary coronet; and by whose untimely fate alone she, Adelaide, now bore its ancient title.

Her husband saw by her pale and suffering countenance that this new accession of rank and wealth gave her no pleasure, and, as usual, he resented her difference of feeling. Just as soon as he could get an opportunity, while the tide of talk was "fast and furious," he slipped up to the side of his wife, and murmured—

"As usual, you do not in the least sympathize with me, Lady Glen Lennark."

"Oh, do not call me thus!" she exclaimed, with a shudder. "Oh, do not call me thus! You know who should have borne that title! I feel I have no right to it! Oh, Orville, my husband, I will never, never put that countess's coronet upon my brow; like a diadem of fire, it would scathe my brain! Oh, Orville, drop this honor! drop it! it is accursed! let us return to our quiet place in Maryland——"

"Madam! for decency's sake be silent; you are attracting attention by this vehemence," replied her husband, in a tone of displeasure, as he moved from her side.

"Poor girl! she is very sensitive, and has not yet recovered the shock of our dear kinsman's death," he said, in explanation of her distressed looks, as he rejoined his friends.

Just at this moment the doors of the lunch-room connecting with the library were thrown open, and the butler announced—

“My lady is served.”

Whereupon the host invited his guests to enter and partake of a sumptuous collation, served in excellent style.

“Lord Inchloch, will you lead the Countess in?” said the husband of Adelaide, presenting her, with a smile, to his friend.

The venerable peer just named, gave his arm to the fair hostess, and led the way to the lunch-room, followed by all the company.

They gathered around the table. The memory of the newly dead checked all hilarity, but did not lessen the appetite of the guests for the viands set before them.

CHAPTER XXVI. THE SPECTRE AT THE FEAST

——Speak! if voice thou hast,

Tell me what sacrifice can soothe thy spirit;

Can still the unquiet sleeper of the grave,

For this most horrid visitation is

Beyond endurance of the noblest mind

In perishable flesh and blood enrobed.—Joanna Baillie.

“To the Earl and Countess of Glen Lennark,” said the young Lord Inchburn, filling his goblet and rising in his place at the right hand of his host. “To the Earl and Countess of Glen Lennark! gentlemen, you will surely pledge me in this sentiment.”

“Pray excuse me, but—that was the toast that died on the lips of my late dying relative,” said the Earl, gently laying his hand upon that of the young nobleman.

“Ah! was it? I did not know! your pardon! put it in some other form! Gentlemen, we

will drink the health of our noble host and hostess separately—our fair hostess first! Gentlemen, fill your glasses!”

All complied and rose, goblets in hand.

“To the lovely Countess of Glen Lennark! Long and happily may she rule over the fair lands of her ancestors,” smiled the young peer, with a profound obeisance.

All honored the toast with deep bows and full bumpers, and so resumed their seats.

“Lady Glen Lennark accepts and thanks your countess!”

All started! The earl gazed in wild terror around!

Whence came that deep-toned solemn, vibrating voice that tolled like a death bell through the room?

Not from the rosy lips of Adelaide whose melodious organs never knelled forth such a de profundus. Not from any one there present.

“Who spoke?” demanded the host, with pale lips.

There was no answer, but the guests sought each other’s eyes in inquiry, and Adelaide leaned forward upon the table as if about to faint.

“Do not be alarmed, it is nothing,” said the earl, to his wife, in a hoarse whisper, whose faltering tones belied his words.

“Who spoke?” he repeated, in a raised voice.

Still there was no reply. But the guests gazed at each other in amazement, and fair Adelaide shuddered in her seat.

“Control yourself, madam!” he said, in a stern whisper, then raising his voice, for the third time, he reiterated the question whose form he seemed to have no power to change—

“Who spoke?”

There came a response, tolling like a deep-mouthed bell, through the room:

“Leonora Countess of Glen Lennark and Baroness Lockburn.”

With a stifled cry, Adelaide sank back in her chair.

The guests all started upon their feet looking around as if in the expectancy of some strange denouement.

The Earl arose in extreme agitation—

“Gentlemen, we are the victims of some impudent imposture! Let us unearth this invisible speaker!” he said, in a tone that he vainly endeavored to make calm.

“It shall not need!” spoke the same profound voice.

And the door of the turret cabinet swung open and a tall dark woman of exceeding beauty and unearthly pallor, clothed in deep mourning, slowly advanced to the foot of the table and stood directly opposite to the Earl of Glen Lennark, who, with a deep groan, sank back in his chair.

“You, who did not know the voice—do you now recognize the form of Lionne Delaforêt? And do you remember this document?” she said, drawing from her bosom and holding out a small written paper.

He covered his face with his hands and groaned.

“Call yourself now Earl of Glen Lennark if you dare!—Abide in the halls of Glen Lennark at your peril! Lay down the title that you dishonor! depart from the roof that you desecrate! Away! begone! while a semblance of honor and liberty remain to you!” and with her arm raised on high, with a gesture of supreme command, this woman of unearthly beauty swept from the room and was gone, ere any one recovered their astonishment or thought of preventing her.

“Some escaped lunatic,” said the clergyman, who was the first to find a voice.

“Some poor beauty that Deville had flirted with and abandoned!” whispered the young Lord Inchburn.

“A ghost, if ever one appeared to mortal eyes,” said an old lady.

“Follow her! she should be stopped,” said a magistrate, present.

And all these various expressions of opinion were uttered at the same instant, while their host pressed his hand before his agonized countenance.

And in the next moment a heavy fall was heard, and several voices exclaimed—

“Look to Lady Glen Lennark! she has fainted.”

The Earl was the first to spring to the assistance of his wife. She seemed quite dead; she was, in fact, quite insensible. He bore her to a lounge, where every effort was made for her recovery; but in vain. The guests, unable to render assistance and feeling themselves in the way, took a hasty leave, and departed.

The countess was borne from her couch to her chamber, where she lay many hours in that death-like swoon, from which she was only at last aroused, by the fierce pangs of premature maternity. The struggle was long and terrible. And the life of the mother trembled in this strife of nature, as trembles a frail barque in a furious storm.

It was the deep midnight of the third day of agony that a son and heir was born to the Earl of Glen Lennark—but born DEAD.

The first bolt of Lionne’s vengeance had fallen!

When this sad news was carried by the doctor to the Earl, who was pacing the floor of the library, in unutterable anxiety, the erring man paused and muttered inaudibly—

“The curse of the ruined girl has fallen and not her curse only. Even so! ‘the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation!’”

“Sir,” said the physician, who deeply pitied the father’s disappointment, “I offer you great comfort, in the news that the Countess is out of danger. She has been in extreme peril happily now passed.”

“Happily?” querulously repeated the Earl.

“Happily for her and for yourself assuredly, my lord. Your lordship will admit that

grievous as is your disappointment, it is yet not the deep distress that would have been yours, had the Countess lost her life."

"Doubtless, doubtless," said the Earl, in an absent tone. "When can I see her ladyship?"

"I would advise, not to night. Her welfare depends upon her having perfect quiet. To-morrow, should all continue well, you shall see her."

With this speech the physician retired to give some final directions to the nurse. And the Earl threw himself upon the sofa to take the first repose that had for three days and nights of suspense, visited his anxious mind and exhausted body.

And even through this period of intense anxiety, the mysterious stranger, whose inexplicable appearance brought on this catastrophe, was not for an hour forgotten. Inquiries were pushed in every direction, but failed of finding either an explanation of her sudden presence in the castle or a clue to her retreat.

Opinions concerning her varied. Some said that she was an escaped lunatic; others that she was a gipsy; while the superstitious whispered in awe-struck tones that it was no other than the ghost of the late lord's daughter, the dead Lady Leonora!

At noon the next day the Earl received an intimation that he might now visit the chamber of the Countess.

He entered the darkened chamber, so dark that it scarcely gave to view the white lace draperies of the bed that held her fragile form.

He signed for the attendants to leave the room. When they had gone, he approached and put aside her curtains, and looked upon her fair, wan, spiritual face.

"How are you, Adelaide?"

"Well—oh, well—as—I wish to be," she said, wildly—"Is any one here?"

"No, love; we are alone."

She fixed her dilated eyes upon him, and said—

“Oh, Orville! the curse has fallen! the dread girl’s curse has fallen! Our first-born lies dead in his shroud!”

“It was the will of heaven, my love; do not look upon it in any other light,” he said, soothingly.

“Orville, what was it that appeared to us from the turret chamber? was it herself? was it her spirit?” she asked, in a tone of deep, wild terror.

“Dear love”—he began, and stopped. What, indeed, could he reply to her? The “horrid visitation” remained to him as to her, and to all, an inexplicable mystery. “Dear love”—he repeated, “think no more of it! it has caused mischief enough already! thank heaven that your own precious life is safe, and think only of getting well!”

“Oh, I cannot! I think of nothing but of that dread girl! her spectre! her voice! her malediction and its fulfillment! Oh, like a thunderbolt her curse fell and blasted where it struck! I can think of nothing else!”

“Then do not talk of it! words will feed your excitement.”

“But what was it, then? oh, you have not told me that, yet! what was it that spoke to us from the turret chamber?”

“Dear love, many people think it was an escaped lunatic.”

“Oh!” she broke forth, wildly—“do not tell me what others think! for how can they judge? Tell me what you think! Oh, Orville, tell me what you think!”

“Dear Adelaide, I know not what to think! I saw what you saw, heard what you heard! and know no more than you do!”

“She died, and was buried, you know! Her father saw her in the coffin, and saw the coffin put into the grave! and yet she came to us! she spoke to us!—she, herself, or her spirit!—one or the other!—herself risen from the grave, or her spirit! Oh, Orville, this is maddening! it is maddening!” she exclaimed, growing wild with

excitement.

“Adelaide, love, I insist upon your changing the subject. Let us speak of yourself! Are you easy—free from pain?”

“Yes! no! I do not know!——It was not night! I was not alone! it cannot be said that it was fancy! No, It was in broad daylight in a large company—that she, that dread girl who died and was buried a year ago, arose up and spoke to us! Can such things be—or am I going mad?” And overwhelmed by the horror of the recollection, the Countess shuddered and fell into spasms.

In terror for her, the Earl rushed to the bell and rang a peal that speedily brought her attendants into the room. A nearly fatal relapse followed. The convulsions continued through the day, and at night subsided into coma, which lasted until the next morning, when, contrary to the most sanguine expectations of her friends, Adelaide’s youth and constitutional health triumphed over death, and she returned to consciousness. But the most profound quiet was enjoined. The subject of the mysterious stranger was tabooed. The visits of the Earl were prohibited. All exciting conversation forbidden.

“And,” said the doctor to the Earl, “just so soon as the Countess is able to leave her apartments, she must not be permitted to visit the other parts of the house, but must be conveyed immediately, by easy stages, from the scene and the neighborhood. It is better that she risk some fatigue, than suffer the pain of exciting recollections.”

The Earl, for many strong reasons, assented to this.

Very protracted was the convalescence of the Countess. One great and all-absorbing desire consumed her heart—to escape from the castle of Glen Lennark, once the happy home of her childhood, and the desired bourne of her exiled youth; but now the scene of so many painful, exciting and maddening events. Her physician continued strenuously to advise change of place, and as soon as she could bear motion extensive travel.

It was late in October before Lady Glen Lennark was permitted to receive her husband. The meeting was very affectionate; though at first almost a silent one. But when the Earl, taking her transparent hand and gazing fondly into her fair, wan, spiritual face, inquired—

"My Adelaide, what can I do to prove how much I love you—how grateful I am for your life restored?"

She answered—"Oh, my lord, take me away from this place! take me quickly away!"

"That I had already resolved upon. What more, my Adelaide?"

"The next I ask is a great sacrifice that I scarcely dare to name!"

"Nay, speak, my dear Adelaide; there is nothing that I would not do to make you happy."

"But this is something so unreasonable that I am afraid and ashamed to ask it."

"Do not hesitate, sweet Adelaide, to trust your husband with your thoughts."

"No, I must not! I must not! I must speak! An instinct stronger than reason, or fear, or shame, compels me—and yet——"

"Well, Adelaide, what is it you would have me do?"

"Do as the awful voice commanded. Leave title, castle, and estate, and let us go forth as we came!" said the Countess, clasping her hands, and gazing into his eyes in wild entreaty.

The Earl dropped his head upon his bosom, and seemed to hesitate and reflect. His wife grew more painfully earnest in her appeal.

"Oh, my lord! my husband! do as the dreadful voice commanded. I feel! I feel! that your honor and safety, your life and liberty are at stake!"

"Adelaide, not for safety, life or liberty, would I abdicate my present position; but for your dear sake, I will do as you desire," he said, with involuntary self-deception;

for, in strict truth, it was a secret, unconscious regard for his imperilled honor, safety and liberty that impelled him to this concession. For after the shock of surprise and the tumult of excitement caused by the sudden appearance of the mysterious visitor had subsided, and left him opportunity for calm reflection, on leisurely reviewing all the circumstances, he had come to the conclusion, that the stranger had been no other than his ruined love, the fell Lionne Delaforêt, or, as she rightly called herself, Leonora, Countess of Glen Lennark! and he knew, that if he disregarded her stern injunction, she would not hesitate to put her threat in execution, and—using against him the terrible power with which his own crime had armed her—to deprive him of rank, honor and liberty. And thus his resolution to abandon his title and estate was not a voluntary renunciation, but an inevitable falling before the dread fate that pursued him.

“Make your gentle heart easy. You have my promise, Adelaide,” he said.

It was December before the convalescence of the Countess was sufficiently advanced to admit of her travelling. Then, without any formal or acknowledged abdication, the castle of Glen Lennark was simply left in charge of the old steward, who had acted in that capacity for so many years, and the Earl and Countess left Scotland with the intention of passing the winter in Italy.

And there, according to his promise, his lordship dropped his title, and the Earl and Countess appeared upon the hotel-register only as Mr. Orville Deville and Lady Adelaide Deville.

CHAPTER XXVII. THE CLEAVING CURSE.

Through many a clime ’tis his to go,

With many a retrospection curst,

And need the solace e’en to know,

Whate’er betide, it is the worst!—Byron.

The fate of Mr. Deville was that of Tantalus. Than Orville Deville, there never lived a man with a greater thirst of ambition, and here was the spring of wealth, rank and honor within his reach, even at his lips, yet he might not drink of its water, guarded as they were by an awful Nemesis, whose avenging arm would be raised to hurl him down to the deep dishonor of detected crime!

Called Earl of Glen Lennark, with no apparent bar to his right, he might not retain his title or enjoy his estate, yet unwilling formally and finally to renounce his claim, he took the middle course of quietly leaving Scotland, ostensibly travelling for the benefit of his wife’s health.

The winter was passed in Italy; the spring in Germany; the summer in Switzerland; and autumn saw them on their way home.

Their nine months of continental travel had been without incident in their private life worth record.

And after a moderately pleasant voyage they landed late in October at the pier of Norfolk, whence they took a packet for the Potomac river.

They reached home early on a fine morning of the first week in November.

They found all things well. The homestead and farm and prospered under the care of John Fielding as overseer, and his wife as housekeeper.

The necessity that brought the master and mistress once more to their American home was manifest—Lady Adelaide would soon again become a mother. Mr. Deville, deeply anxious for the issue of this event, surrounded her with every aid and comfort that wealth, directed by affection and skill, could provide. Adelaide, whose wounded love and woman’s pride had subsided into patience and resignation, looked forward to her second maternity without dread and without desire.

In due time, early in December, Lady Adelaide Deville became the mother of a

delicate little girl, so fragile that its life was scarcely expected to hold out beyond a few hours; but it survived and grew even in its feeble infancy the loving image of its mother.

Lady Adelaide slowly regained her usual slight average of strength, and it was the week before Christmas that she was sufficiently convalescent to resume her place at the head of the breakfast-table.

The christening of the heiress was fixed for the afternoon of Christmas-day, and a party of friends and neighbors were invited to assist at the ceremony.

It was upon this occasion that the youthful parents laid off their deep mourning, and with it much of the vague gloom and dread that had lately overshadowed their lives.

Their whole house was thrown open. The two drawing-rooms, thrown into one saloon, were decorated with wreaths and festoons of holly and mistletoe, lighted up by many-colored lamps that threw a rainbow-radiance over the scene, and warmed by two fine hickory-fires, in the wide old-fashioned chimneys at opposite extremities.

The two parlors across the hall were also thrown into one, and a long table, extending the whole length of the two rooms, was adorned with an elegant service of goldplate and Sevres-china, loaded with all luxuries of our own and other climes, and lighted up by three large rainbow-chandeliers. Such preparations for a christening-festival the old woods and watersides of St. Mary’s had never seen before.

On Christmas-morning, Mr. Deville, Lady Adelaide, and their household, had attended divine service at the parish-church, and at the close had brought the aged pastor and his family home with them to a late, but sumptuous dinner.

By the time the lamps were lighted, the guests invited for the evening began to arrive, and soon filled the saloon.

Never, even in the days of her bridehood, had Lady Adelaide looked so lovely as

now, when, just within the drawing-room door, she stood receiving her friends. Her pale, golden hair fell in soft, shining ringlets down each side the snowy forehead and roseate cheeks; her clear, blue eyes beamed, and her blooming lips smiled with a mother's holy happiness. She wore a robe of rich white lace, open over a dress of pale, blue satin; and a tiara, necklace, bracelet, and brooch of pure opals, completed her rich but delicate costume.

When all the guests were seated, and the hour for the ceremony had come, the venerable pastor advanced to the centre of the room, where, beneath the radiant light of the central chandelier, stood a marble statue—the angel of the annunciation—holding in his hand the baptismal font, a vase of Parian marble, in the form of a lily.

When the minister had taken his stand, the youthful parents, and the young sponsors, with the infant, came before him and formed a crescent. The guests gathered together, making an outer semicircle. The solemnity commenced. Very impressive is always the baptism of an infant; and most imposing was now the sacred ritual in the hands of the venerable pastor.

The ceremony was well-nigh over, when the minister lifted up his voice in an extempore prayer for this "first-born daughter of the house."

Every head was bowed and every heart was raised and every tongue engaged in that petition, when—hark!

Suddenly through the room rang a deep, bell-toned, authoritative voice, that commanded—

—"Pause!"

And all, struck dumb with amazement, paused.

"The first-born daughter of Orville Deville is beyond your prayers. Living, no home on earth sheltered her! Dead, no grave on earth received her! Born like a wild beast in a cavern, she was devoured by the wild beasts of the wilderness," spoke the awful

voice of the invisible.

A thrill of horror ran through the assembly, rousing them from the stupor of astonishment into which the first word of the unseen speaker had plunged them.

“What is this? Who is it? Where is she?” ran in startling whispers through the room.

“Look at Lady Adelaide!” exclaimed one of the guests. And all eyes were turned towards the spot where, whiter than the marble, Lady Adelaide leaned, half-fainting, against the statue.

Mr. Deville sprang to her side, and whispering:

“Be firm, Adelaide! I pray you be firm!” He led her to a side-sofa, and laid her reclining upon it.

Then returning to the minister, he said:

“Reverend sir, if you please we will cut short this formula, until the intruder is turned out! Friends, I pray you excuse this strange interruption,” he added, turning to his guests. He then gave directions to the attendants to search the premises for any stranger that might be upon them. But through all his action, in all his aspect there was a pallor, a tremor, a dread, strange and undefined, but visible to every observer.

The house and grounds were searched, but no vestige of the intruder could be discovered. The servants were closely questioned, and all information that could be gained from them was, that one of their number had seen a tall, dark woman, of exceeding beauty, glide through the shadows of the night, and disappear in the gloom of the forest. This might, perhaps, be set down to the credit of imagination.

The master of the house then dismissed his servants with the order that supper should be immediately served. And in a half hour it was announced. The guests filed into the supper-room, and took their places at the table; but the spirit of the festival was departed. At the head of the board sat the mistress of the house, as pale and still as marble. At the foot sat the master, whose forced composure and spasmodic efforts

at gayety were too palpable to be pleasant. The prolonged supper came to an end at last, and the company adjourned to the saloon, where various parlor games had been prepared for their entertainment. The youthful and more elastic spirits of a portion of the company, rebounding from their temporary depression, entered eagerly into any scheme of evening amusements, and diverted themselves with various games of puzzles, forfeits, parlor magic, etc. Their elders passed the evening in conversation, chess and backgammon, until a late hour, when all adjourned to the music-room, where, with Lady Adelaide seated at the piano, and the best singers of the neighborhood gathered around her, they were enlivened by a series of choice Christmas-songs and ballads.

Finally, the parting bowl of egg-nog was served, and the company took their late leave, and set out for their respective homes, to talk over the mysterious event of the evening, for which no satisfactory explanation had yet been offered.

When all the guests had departed, the married pair found themselves alone together in the hall, scarcely daring to lift their eyes, or to encounter each other’s gaze.

“You are quite exhausted; you had better go to rest, love,” said Mr. Deville.

“And you—will you not also come?”

“I have letters to write in the study.”

“Mr. Deville, it was her voice!” said Lady Adelaide, laying her hand upon his arm, and gazing searchingly in his face.

He started slightly, but did not reply.

“Oh, did she speak the truth of her child’s fate?” she asked, with an agony of anxiety in her intense look and eager tone.

“Good heaven, I do not know, Adelaide, if the voice spoke truth, or what voice it was that spoke!”

“Her babe devoured by wild beasts! oh, it is horrible!”

“No more, my Adelaide! oh, speak no more of that, I implore you!”

“Ah, heaven! if I could but banish it from my mind as from my tongue!”

“Think, then, that we have been the subjects of some deep deception! We know that she died and was buried! Therefore the vision at Glen Lennark and the voice here were alike deceptions, practised upon us by some skilful juggler, whom I shall bend all my faculties to unmask and discover.”

“Mr. Deville, you know we purposed to travel into the wilderness, and seek the home where she lived and died, and make inquiries on the spot.”

“Yes! we will do so, just as soon as the state of the roads will admit of our travelling. And now, dear love, go seek your rest. I will join you before long,” said Orville Deville, with a soothing caress, as he took up and placed a night lamp in her hand.

And the husband went to his study, and the wife to her nursery.

As Lady Adelaide entered this holy sanctuary of sleeping innocence, a silent prayer arose from her heart—an earnest petition for the safety and welfare of her own infant charge.

The clean and quiet chamber seemed indeed the very abode of peace and security. The silvery moonlight, stealing in through the white-curtained windows, and falling upon two white-draped cribs, filled the room with a soft, subdued radiance.

Lady Adelaide entered, and went first to the nearest crib, when she put aside the muslin curtains to look at the little sleeper, Perdita. Spite of all the gloom and terror that overshadowed her mind, the lady smiled faintly as she gazed. It is said that the attitude in unconscious slumber indicates not only the momentary mood, but the prevailing disposition and character. The posture unconsciously assumed by little Perdita was almost always one of defiance, of hostility, or of assault. Now, her attitude was wonderfully bellicose. She was lying on her side, her little limbs bent as for a spring, her little elbows doubled, her tiny fists clenched, her baby lips

compressed, her infant brow frowning; yet all in deep sleep. Turning with a sad smile from this fierce, unconscious little combatant, Lady Adelaide went to the other crib, and drew aside the curtains to look upon the angel brow of her own, scarcely more beloved child. The peace of heaven was on this babe's face. The youthful mother gazed with pure joy for a few still moments, and then, breathing a blessing upon both the children, she passed into her own chamber, offered up her evening prayers, and retired to rest.

Meantime Orville Deville had entered his study, and seated himself at his writing-table, to indite those letters whereof he had spoken. He drew the paper before him, and essayed to commence his task. But by some strange fatuity he was unable to withdraw his thoughts from the one subject of Lionne Delaforêt to fix them upon his work. Do what he might, his mind, as turns the needle to the magnet, turned ever to the lost girl. We all know the stupefying, the soporific effect of concentrated thought. Therefore it might have been that Orville Deville dropped asleep and dreamed what follows:

But it appeared to him thus: that he had sat there, with his elbow resting upon the table, and his head bowed upon his breast, in a stupor of perplexity and conjecture as to the meaning of the mystery that had so troubled them all at Glen Lennark and at River-view, until his very blood seemed slowly curdling in his heart and brain. It was then that the door swung silently open, and a shadowy form glided in and paused before him. He raised his eyes and saw a tall figure of a woman, shrouded in black, and closely vailed. Her white arm was raised to throw aside her vail, and the features of Lionne were revealed before him. White and motionless as monumental marble was that beautiful face. Compressed and colorless were those full-curved lips. Still and burning as two midnight stars were those bewildering eyes!

Held by a spell resembling terror, the sinful man gazed on without the power of withdrawing his eyes from the vision. At last his stiffened tongue and frozen lips

moved in a hollow whisper, and—

“Lionne! living or dead, what would you with me?” he asked.

“To warn you!” spoke the deep and terrible voice from the almost moveless lips.

“How say you—to warn me?”

“Ay! the lion roars before he springs! the serpent hisses before he stings—all creatures warn their prey before they strike! all save man!”

“What mean you?”

“I, a woman, would be more generous than man, and not less so than beast or reptile.”

“Again, in heaven’s name, what mean you?”

“I would warn before I strike!”

“Explain!”

“Look to your child and save her, if you can! for, by my own wrongs and sufferings, and by the mangled body of my murdered infant, I have sworn to sacrifice your child to her manes!” and, raising her white arm with its hand towards heaven, as if to record there her oath, the dark vision of the woman glided away.

“Lionne! Girl! Fiend!” exclaimed Deville, starting up, as if to stop her.

The spell was broken. Once more his blood flowed freely through his veins, his power of respiration returned. He stared around,—the dark form had vanished.

Was it a vision? a dream? a reality? He could not decide.

“I have lingered here too long,” he said; and rising, he went up-stairs and entered his wife’s chamber. He moved softly, so as not to awaken her. The door connecting with the nursery was open, and he caught a glimpse of the peaceful scene within—the white-curtained windows, the white-vailed cribs, and the fair moon-rays, flooding the room with soft light—a pure and holy scene, a heavenly contrast to his dark vision in the study!

Turning from it to look upon the face of his reposing wife, he met the eyes of Adelaide fixed in solicitude upon him.

“Awake yet, love? That is not well.”

“I could not sleep. And you, you look weary Orville.”

“I fell into a doze by my study-table, and had an attack of incubus, I think. What a night this has been!”

“Pray; prayer will compose your mind,” said Adelaide.

“The children, are they well?” he asked.

“Of course they are! I visited them the last thing,” said Adelaide.

“Nevertheless, I will go and see them,” said Mr. Deville, passing into the moonlit chamber. He drew aside the curtains of one crib, and saw the little Perdita, who had turned over and thrown herself into a new attitude of defiance. He left her, approached and drew the curtains of the other crib, when a cry escaped him!

“What is the matter?” exclaimed his wife, starting up in affright.

“Your child, Adelaide! Where is she?” cried the father, breathlessly.

“In the crib, where I laid her!” exclaimed the poor mother, springing from her bed and hastening into the room.

“No, she is not in the crib!” said Orville Deville, wildly.

“She is! she must be!” cried Lady Adelaide, running thither and tossing about the bedclothes in a distracted manner.

“Oh, my child! my child! where is she? where is she?” continued the almost distraught mother, running about the room, and throwing things around, in her frenzied search.

The confusion awakened little Perdita, who began to scream with mingled fear and anger; and roused Keziah, who slept on a pallet in a corner of the room, to be near the children at night, and who now raised herself up and looked around in stupid

amazement.

“Keziah! Keziah! where is my baby?” screamed the distracted mother.

“Sleeping soundly in the crib, ma’am, for sartain!” answered the wondering nurse.

“No, no, she is gone! she is gone! Oh, my child! my child!” cried Lady Adelaide, wringing her hands and running wildly about, searching madly the places that she had searched vainly before.

“Fore marster, then, the fairies must o’ got her!” exclaimed Keziah, starting up and joining in the vain quest.

“It is of no use; the child is not in this apartment. Keziah, hasten at once and wake up all the women-servants, while I rouse up the men! The house and grounds must be thoroughly searched. Adelaide, will you lie down?—No, I see rest is impossible to you! Come along, then, with me!” said Mr. Deville. And taking down a cloak, he hastily wrapped it around the form of his wife, drew her arm within his own, and led the way from the room. The servants, male and female, were aroused, informed of the abduction, and set upon the search.

The men, led on by their master, hurried with lanterns through the grounds to intercept, if possible, the retreat of the abductor.

The women, following their frantic mistress, ran from room to room through the house.

No clue to the lost child or her abductor could be found.

It was near morning when Orville Deville and his men returned to the house from their fruitless search, to find Lady Adelaide prostrated upon the parlor-couch, with her frightened women around her. Their quest had been equally vain, though desperately prolonged, until the strength of the agonized mother utterly succumbed and she sank swooning upon the floor.

In this condition she was found by her afflicted husband. She was immediately

conveyed to bed, and all usual means used for her recovery. But she was only roused from that swoon to fall into bitter anguish and dreadful ravings that reached their climax in delirium and convulsions, and then subsided again into exhaustion and insensibility.

In a state nigh desperation, Mr. Deville flung himself upon his swiftest horse and galloped away, first to despatch the family physician to the relief of his suffering wife, and then to raise the constabulary force of the county, and set them upon the track of the abductor.

Let us hasten to the result.

The most strenuous efforts, the most vigilant quest of the constables, united as they were by the whole force of the county people, failed of even obtaining the slightest clue to the flight of the fugitive.

Advertisements were put in all the papers, handbills were posted in every public thoroughfare, and large rewards were offered for the recovery of the child; but all in vain?

Lady Adelaide was prostrated by a long and nearly fatal nervous fever, during which her delicate frame vibrated between life and death. Once more, however, her youthful constitution gained the victory, and she arose from her bed of death—she arose, but oh! to what a life of almost unappreciable sorrow!

Pause one moment, reader, to try if you can conceive the awful nature of this mysterious bereavement, worse than of death!

Had her child only died, she would have wept gentle tears over its grave, and cherished a tender memory of its little earthly life, and in time would have found sweet resignation with the thought that its soul was with God. But her child was lost, stolen, carried off—she knew not whither—to what a life of poverty, privation and exposure—to what sufferings of hunger, cold and disease—to what future temptations of want, vice and misery—to what final fate worse than death—she

could not know! It was a sorrow for which there was no help but in prayer; no comfort but in faith; no hope but in God.

CHAPTER XXVIII. VENGEANCE.

One sole desire, one passion now remains

To keep life’s fever still within her veins—

Vengeance! dire vengeance on the wretch who cast

O’er her and all she loved that ruinous blast,

For this she still lives on, careless of all

The honor that upon her head might fall;

For this alone exists—like lightning fire

To speed one bolt of vengeance and expire!—Moore.

It is impossible to define the boundary line that separates extravagant emotions from absolute madness. Evil passions lose themselves by fine gradations in the dark shadows of insanity.

Who can adequately describe the effect of monstrous wrongs upon a temperament sensitive, ardent and impassioned as that of Lionne? Grief, shame and rage made a hell of her heart. Maddened at last by what she supposed to be the dreadful fate of her child, she had rushed from the cavern and plunged into the darkest depths of the forest. Here for many days and nights she had wandered about in a state of frenzy.

Vulcan wildly sought her through the woods in vain. At last, by heavy bribes, he gained the assistance of the old squaw in the search.

And Kalougoora, with her matchless Indian tact in tracing a fugitive, soon fell upon the trail of Lionne and tracked her to her lair.

There, in a thicket of undergrowth in the depths of the forest, she lay collapsed,

prostrate and exhausted from madness, hunger and exposure.

Vulcan hastily constructed a rude litter of brush, upon which he placed her unresisting and almost insensible form, and with the help of Kalougoora bore it back to the lodge by the Singing Stream.

Here the wretched girl lay a long time in a state bordering upon idiocy. At length, by the united care of her faithful attendant and the skill of the old Indian doctress, Lionne slowly recovered some degree of life. And with this new life came the restlessness of a reviving sense of pain.

“I cannot stay here, Vulcan,” she said, addressing her humble friend. “I cannot stay here! every feature of this land is too fraught with agonizing associations.”

“But where will you go, then, dear mistress?”

“Anywhere! anywhere! out of this place!”

“At least you will let me attend you, wherever you go, dear mistress?”

“No! no! no! no! I will not be followed! No one that loves me, however humble, shall share my fate, my sins and sufferings!”

Vulcan did not presume to insist; but from that day he resolved never to lose trace of his wretched young mistress, but to watch over her, to protect her, and to follow her, if need should be, (to use his expression) “to the end of the world.”

And thus, one night, when Lionne, with some dark purpose goading her onward, arose and stole to the stable, and saddled her horse and set out for the East, Vulcan mounted his old mule, and, unknown to his mistress, set forth upon the same road, only taking care to keep out of sight in the rear.

The miserable girl reached River-view only to learn from the poor people of the neighborhood, from whom, as a stranger traveller, she received hospitality, that Mr. and Lady Adelaide Deville had gone to Scotland to spend the ensuing winter with their uncle, the Earl of Glen Lennark.

With her own deeply-wronged, awfully-bereaved father!

Some fatality led Lionne still farther to pursue her recreant husband. She was still in possession of a part of that large sum of money given her by her father some months previous, and with that she embarked in a small merchant vessel trading between Norfolk and Glasgow.

Vulcan, who, unknown to her, had followed his mistress, shipped as a seaman on the same barque. His presence here could not possibly be long concealed from her.

On the third day after sailing, she recognized him among the crew. As he was engaged with three or four others in taking in sail, she could not speak to him. But the next day, an opportunity offering, she approached and accosted him.

“Vulcan, my poor friend, why are you here?”

“Mistress, I belong to you!”

“Ah, Vulcan! why have you followed me?”

“Because I am yours.”

“Vulcan, do you know whither my dark path leads?”

“I know! I know!”

“And yet you follow me?”

“Yes.”

“Alas! why?”

“To save you, if I may! To perish with you, if I must.”

The approach of the mate cut short the colloquy, and Lionne turned sadly away.

A short passage of four weeks brought the vessel to Glasgow.

Lionne left the vessel and commenced her journey into the Highlands.

Vulcan, who had only shipped for the voyage, received his pay and his discharge, and attended his mistress, who no longer attempted to prevent him, to Glen Lennark.

There the first news that met them from the simple peasantry was that of the death of the Earl of Glen Lennark.

Again was Lionne overwhelmed with affliction.

She threw herself down beside the wild rocky path leading through the glen, and abandoned herself to the wildest frenzy of woe. Vulcan stood in silent, respectful sympathy beside her, while her informants passed on their way with many a wondering look behind at the “poor daft stranger body” and her queer guide.

Suddenly Lionne started to her feet, turned, and taking the path leading up to the most savage fastnesses of the mountains north of Glen Lennark, disappeared among the rocks.

In great terror for her life, Vulcan followed her as fast as age and clumsiness would permit.

He found her far up in the mountain, seated upon the brink of a dreadful precipice; a shelving crag overhanging her head and overshadowing her whole form; a wild torrent raging below her feet. She sat with her black dress flowing upon the bleak rocks; her elbow resting upon her knee; her chin dropped into the palm of her hand; her long black hair streaming like a meteor around her; her fierce black eyes glaring into vacancy;—she sat—where all around was desolation—the most desolate object!

With the yearning tenderness of a mother, Vulcan stretched his arms towards her, praying—

“Oh, mistress, come down!”

“Oh, Vulcan!” she wailed—“when that black traitor betrayed me unto death, and I arose from the grave to find my child devoured of wild beasts, I thought that fate, with all her malignity, had no more poisoned arrow left. But now! now! oh, my father! my dear, my gentle, my noble father! your heart has been broken by the loss of your child. ‘Your gray hair has been brought with sorrow to the grave!’ Oh, Vulcan, I seemed to die that he might live! Ah, it was useless all! My loss killed him

even as the knowledge of my dishonor might!”

“Your misfortune, mistress! there can be no dishonor where there is no fault,” replied the poor dwarf.

“Ah, Orville! traitor! destroyer! this is but another count in the awful indictment against you!” she hissed through her clenched teeth.

Vulcan climbed to where she sat, and with almost worshipping servility cast himself down upon the rocks before her, grovelling at her feet and praying—

“Mistress! Lionne! my child! my nursling! my lady! Oh, look up! listen to me! to me, your poor old servant, who would lay down his life, and think it all too cheap a price, if it purchased you one hour’s peace! Listen to me!”

“Well, Vulcan; well, speak!”

“Lady, look up and see what life has left for you. Your child is gone; your father dead; your secret safe in one faithful heart that would be torn bleeding from its breast rather than betray that trust——”

“Do you speak, then, only to remind me of my wrongs and sorrows?”

“No, but to pray you to cast from you all memory of your wrongs and sorrows, and all thoughts of hatred and revenge: to become your better, nobler, higher self. The hereditary coronet of the Earls of Glen Lennark awaits your brow. Your mortal foe is at your mercy, and dares not dispute your claim. Countess of Glen Lennark, arise, dispossess the usurper, assume the insignia of your rank and the rule of your domain.”

She gazed upon the speaker with wild, amazed, incredulous eyes.

“Would you leave that unsullied coronet upon the unworthy brow of the traitor, the destroyer, the usurper?” asked Vulcan, pointedly.

She started violently.

“No, never! Vulcan, you are right. Leonora Lorne, dead to all the world else, must

survive to him! The living bar to his succession; the living retribution of his crime; the living fate to all his future! I may not claim my RIGHT nor forget my WRONG; but I will hold the POWER with which both right and wrong has invested and armed me—a sword of Damocles above his head. With this invisible sword will I drive him forth from all his possessions! With this sword will I come between him and every blessing of nature! Ay, with this fire of vengeance and sword of power will I lay waste his life! Arise, let us go."

"Lionne, my mistress, oh, think of what you do!" prayed Vulcan.

"By day and night I think of nothing else!"

"Good heavens, lady, if all is lost on earth, need all be lost in heaven too? Alas! is it well to send your own soul to ruin after your lost happiness?"

"Yes—for love I risked heaven! for HATE I would dare hades!"

Appalled by the ruthless spirit of revenge that raged in her heart, yet resolved to save her or to share her fate, Vulcan arose and followed his mistress down the step.

Seeking concealment, they found shelter in a mountain cavern. And from this obscurity kept watch upon the castle.

Deeply vailed and hidden in the crowd, Lionne was present at the funeral ceremony, and even looked, for the last time, upon the loved face of her father, before the coffin lid closed down upon it forever. She then concealed herself within the turret-cabinet, to hear any chance details of his last illness and death. Alas! she was not gratified. His form was hidden from the eyes; his name banished from the lips; his very memory exiled from the minds of men.

Already, as I said before, the world had turned from the grave of the dead Earl to do honor to his living successor, neither knowing nor caring to know, how the one had risen upon the fall of the other.

Lionne writhed with rage.

“The Earl of Glen Lennark lies broken hearted in his grave! His heiress wanders, a vagrant and pariah on the face of the earth! And while the old man moulders in his shroud, and the young woman sorrows in her bitterness, shall he, the miscreant, the traitor who brought the one to misery and the other to death, sit in the Earl’s seat, be hailed by his title, and enjoy his estates? No! no! no! no! not while I have power to prevent it! This hand may not be raised to grasp my father’s coronet, but it shall be lifted to hurl its usurper, his destroyer, my enemy, from his seat!”

From her hiding place in the turret-cabinet she watched the company that gathered to hear the reading of the will; she saw them go into the dining-room and take their places at the table. She listened to the fulsome flattery, the flippant conversation, and the formal toasts. She heard a toast proposed in honor of the Countess of Glen Lennark, and recognizing in that incident her best opportunity to break “the good meeting with most admired disorder,” she glided from her concealment, stood shrouded in mourning habiliments, and paler than a visitant from the grave, and in deep, bell-like tones, that tolled like a funeral knell through the room—uttered these startling words:

“The Countess of Glen Lennark accepts your toast and thanks your courtesy!” The effect of this speech, spoken by what seemed a spectre from the grave, might be easily imagined, if it had not already been described. The so-called Earl of Glen Lennark started to his feet; the guests arose in disorder; the Lady Adelaide dropped, swooning, from her chair.

In the general confusion that ensued, Lionne glided away and made her escape to the fastnesses of the Highlands.

Vulcan attended her, and remained as before, her sole connecting link with the outer world. From Vulcan she continued to hear news of those whom she called usurpers at the castle. With savage joy she heard of the calamity that disappointed the quasi Earl of an heir, and prostrated his wife upon a bed of illness that had nearly been one

of death. She learned the horror and amazement with which Lady Adelaide regarded her (Lionne's) appearance at the feast, and of the orders of the family physician that her ladyship should travel far from the scene of her distress.

Finally she was told of the family's departure for the continent. And then she left her hiding place to follow them. How she kept upon their track, never revealing herself, yet never losing sight of them, waiting, like some bloodthirsty wild beast, the time to spring upon her prey, needs not to be related here at length. Suffice it to say, that when they sailed for the United States, she embarked by the next vessel bound for the same place, and that she arrived at Norfolk the very day upon which they landed at that port.

She followed them to River-view, where, unseen and unsuspected, she hovered as some ill-omened bird of night about their path—their secret, terrible, relentless enemy, consuming with a fierce, insatiable passion of vengeance—a passion that grew by what it fed upon!

She was aware, by observation, of the fond parental hopes that had brought the young pair to their native home. And she ruthlessly resolved to thwart their hopes!

"Through his treachery my one child was left to be devoured by wild beasts! Therefore, no child of his shall be left to bless him! every one of them, as it is born, shall be offered a sacrifice to her manes! One, the first-born, the heir, has already perished! the next shall follow, and every infant his dainty wife shall live to bring, shall share the same fate!" muttered the wretched girl, as with a malignity that nothing but insanity could explain, she watched and waited to wreak her frenzied vengeance upon a being that always stands the very type of perfect innocence and perfect helplessness—"an unborn babe!"

Seldom does any other than tender cares and fervent prayers and devoted love, wait to greet an infant on its entrance into life! This child of Adelaide was met at the very threshold of existence by a fierce, terrible and relentless foe! Like the prowling

leopardess, she could lurk, and watch, and wait for the time to pounce upon her prey! Nay, like the same beast, when sure of the steadiness of her eye, the length of her spring and the sharpness of her claws, she, certain of her power, could even trifle with opportunity and play with her victim! It was in this perverse spirit that she let chance after chance of stealing the new-born infant pass by, and waited for some signal opportunity when the theft of the child should be felt by the whole community, with the most tremendous effect.

Thus she waited for the christening-festival. She contrived to steal, unseen, into the house, and to conceal herself within the shubberies of the conservatory connecting with the drawing-rooms on the one hand and with Mr. Deville's study on the other. Here she waited until the lamps were lighted and the guests assembled. With the savage joy of anticipated triumph, she watched the ceremonial of the baptism to its conclusion. She heard the mother's pretty name—"Adelaide"—bestowed upon the infant. She heard the officiating clergyman invite his hearers to unite with him, in a final prayer for God's blessing upon this "first-born daughter" of the youthful parents.

Then from her concealment in the shrubberies, she uttered the awful words—

"The first-born daughter of Orville Deville is beyond your prayers! Living, no home sheltered her infancy! Dead, no grave received her corpse! Born in a cave and devoured by wild beasts—the first-born daughter of Orville Deville is past your prayers!"

The tremendous effect produced by this horrible speech, uttered as it was, by the hollow voice of an invisible speaker, has been already described; the shock, the confusion, and the fruitless search, that followed, have been depicted.

Secure in her hiding place, Lionne, unseen, saw every thing!

She waited until the spoiled festivities of the evening came to a conclusion. She saw the guests take leave and depart.

She heard Mr. Deville persuade his wife to go to rest. She saw him enter his study and sit down to his writing-table, and then, through the vine-shaded glass door, between the conservatory and the study, unseen, she watched him at her leisure.

The conservatory was in deep darkness, the study was lighted up, so that invisible herself, she had the clearest view of him as pale, weary and disturbed, he sat leaning his elbow upon the table and his head upon his hand. So still he sat that she supposed he slept, and envying that repose, and drawn by an irresistible attraction, she softly opened the glass door, parted the foliage, glided into the study and stood before him.

Her form intercepting the light, her shadow falling upon his face, startled him!

He raised his eyes, and recognizing the shape or shade of the dreaded girl, he faltered forth the question—

“Lionne! why are you here?”

Then came the fearful answer—

“To warn! The wild beast growls before he springs! the serpent hisses before he stings! and I speak before I strike! Look to your child!”

And before he could recover from the panic produced by these words, she had glided away!

With the swiftness and silence of thought, she sped to the nursery, softly raised the sleeping infant in her arms, fled down the back-stairs, out through the back-door into the shrubberies, thence through the vineyard, the orchard, and the field, to the forest.

And by the time the child was missed and the search was commenced, both were lost beyond pursuit, in the interminable intricacies of the wilderness.

CHAPTER XXIX. AN ACT OF MADNESS.

“What is’t ye do?—A deed without a name!”

Lionne, palpitating, excited, frenzied and hurrying with her stolen treasure through the forest, was met and stopped by Vulcan the dwarf, who, holding up both hands to intercept her, cried—

“Mistress! mistress! for the love of heaven, mistress!”

“Vulcan! you here again!” she exclaimed hoarsely.

“Mistress! I have never been far from you! Oh, child! what is it you do?”

“Vulcan! I bade you keep away from my sufferings and sins and perils! why have you disobeyed me?”

“Mistress, I will never forsake you! I will stand or fall by your side!”

“Then you disobey me!”

“Mistress, I serve you!”

Both—the dwarf and the wild girl—stopped and looked at each other wistfully, fixedly, defiantly—unflinching resolution in the eyes of each.

“Vulcan! you shall not ruin yourself for me!”

“Mistress, I follow you to save you, from yourself, your passions and your madness! Oh, lady! lady! what is it you do?”

“A deed of retribution!”

“Oh, lady! lady! is it the justice of retribution to avenge the guilt of the strong upon the innocence of the weak? What is that which you carry within your arms?”

“My revenge.”

“A babe! Oh, Lionne! Lionne! has sorrow so changed you that you see not even what you do? Would you punish a helpless infant and its most innocent mother for crimes in which neither could have the smallest part?”

“I would strike the heart of my destroyer were it through the hearts of as many innocents as Herod slew at Bethlehem!”

“Horrible! she is a fiend! treachery has transformed her into a fiend! But no! she is mad! only mad! poor girl! trouble has turned her brain! not perverted her heart! I will save her! I must save her!” thought the dwarf to himself. Then softly he spoke:

“Lionne, my lady, my child, listen to me. Your morning of life has been darkened with great sorrow; but it has not been cursed with any crime. Oh, take care that you do not rush from the darkness into fire, from sorrow into remorse! You have suffered through the sins of others. Oh, avoid the deeper grief of suffering through your own! Lionne, let me take back the babe to its mother, and pray God to heal your own sick, sad heart. He will do it. Lionne, give me the babe.”

“Never!” exclaimed the desperate girl, through her set teeth, invincible resolution burning in her fixed eyes.

“Lionne, what would you do with it? You would not hurt it, I know. Lionne, in three hours from this the whole country will be up in arms and upon the track of the abductor.”

“I am in the pathless forest,—they will not find me.”

“Mistress, with the trained blood-hounds used in tracking fugitives, they will hunt you through the wilderness.”

“Then I will lose myself in the greater wilderness of the city.”

“Lionne, give me the child.”

“Never, I say!—let me pass!” exclaimed the possessed girl, clutching the infant to her bosom with one arm and waving the dwarf away with the other. “Let me pass!”

“I dare not, mistress!”

“Then there is another way!” she exclaimed; and turning before he could prevent her, with the sudden bound of a tigress she fled down the way whence she came, until she reached the beach.

“Here they shall lose sight of me. Once more they shall believe me dead; but I shall

live. Ha! ha! I shall live!" she cried.

Then stripping the outer garment from the infant and her own shawl from her bosom, she dragged them through the water and wound them among the long reefs of seaweed, as if they had been cast up by the waves. Then gathering the wailing babe to her bosom, she recommenced her flight, following the course of the river, and taking care to wade along the shallow water of the beach, so that no blood-hound could scent her track.

Meanwhile, at River-view, the search was kept up with zeal and anguish. The whole constabulary force of the county was put in requisition.

As a last resort, a pack of sleuth-hounds were put upon the scent. Commencing from the crib of the lost child, they tracked the abductor through every foot of her way, through house, lawn, orchard, vineyard, field and forest up to the very spot where, an hour before, Lionne had parted from Vulcan.

There, being at fault, they sniffed about for a while, and then returning upon the scent, tracked the fugitive to the water-side. There they found the sand beat up with footprints, and the wet outside-garments of the woman and the babe swathing the seaweed and cast up on the beach.

"The wretch has destroyed herself and the babe. Heaven help the poor bereaved mother!" was the exclamation of the foremost officer who reached the spot.

When this news was taken to Orville Deville, in his library—after the first force of the shock was spent, and even beside his affliction for the loss of his child, he experienced a certain satisfaction in the thought that his ruthless enemy was now no more.

For weeks the secret of the child's supposed death was kept from Lady Adelaide. But at length, when it was seen that heart-sickening suspense as to the babe's fate, daily anxiety for news, and constant disappointments were more dreadful to bear than the knowledge of the truth could be—then that truth was gently communicated.

The intelligence was received with less of apparent anguish than could have been hoped. After the horrible uncertainty, in which imagination had painted in her darkest colors the doom of the living, lost infant, the certainty that it was at rest came as a relief to the bereaved mother.

The gentle, patient, young heart, schooled in suffering, humbly accepted this sorrow as the will of Heaven.

“Better so,” she said, “oh! much better so, than that the babe should have lived exposed to all the evils that dreadful woman would have brought upon her!” And so the meek head was bowed in resignation.

CHAPTER XXX. A HOUSELESS NIGHT WANDERER.

——“Where the haters meet

in the crowded city’s horrible street.”—Browning.

It was the fourteenth of January, and two weeks after the events related in the last chapter; it was late at night, and the snow was falling thickly; when through one of the poorest thoroughfares of New York, a slight, dark girl, thinly clad and pressing an infant to her bosom, wandered. Her gait was reeling, like that of a person under the influence of alcohol; but when she came within the glare of a street lamp, it might be seen that only cold, hunger, and fatigue had done their worst upon her. Her long, black hair hung in wild elf locks down her thin, dark, sharpened face; the fires of insanity smouldered in her gloomy eyes; like a lunatic, also, she talked to herself, muttering—

“Walk! Yes, I will walk, until I drop down, and then, perhaps, I may die!” And she toiled on, the snow-storm whirling around her, the stinging sleet cutting her face and neck, and penetrating every crevice of her clothing.

The few well wrapped-up passengers whom necessity had exposed to the storm,

looked back as they passed her, or muttered, as she jostled them—

“Poor creature—tipsy!” or, “the wretch! she ought to be taken to the watch-house!”

The night grew darker, the storm fiercer, the streets lonelier; the steps of the solitary wanderer grew more feeble, tottering and uncertain, and her course more erratic. At length, when the strength of the wretched girl gave away beneath the accumulated burdens of famine, cold, and toil, she sank, prostrate and insensible, upon the ground.

By her fall, the miserable babe was dropped into the snow, and its feeble wail broke piteously on the stillness of that awful night.

Two wretched women in a cellar near heard this pitiable cry, and one of them came out into the blinding snow, muttering—

“What the deuce is that? sounded like a child’s cry! But, sartainly, no one would go for to drop a fo’ndlin’ at my door at this time o’ night, in this ere storm!”

Another feeble wail from the infant.

“’Tis a baby, sartain! I’ll go and get a blind lantern!” exclaimed the woman. And after darting into the darkness of the cellar, she reappeared with the lantern, and, guided by the wail of the infant, she soon found it where it had rolled away, at some distance, in the snow.

“Now, the watch will be here in two minutes,” she said; and seizing up the child as though she really considered it a priceless treasure, she hurried into the cellar. She had not seen the girl at all.

Now, if any one makes the mistake of supposing that this woman was actuated by zealous benevolence, they may be undeceived by hearing what were her next words.

Taking the end of the candle out of the lantern, she stuck it upon a loose brick in the old wall, and then sitting down upon an inverted tub, she proceeded to examine the child, muttering—

“As likely a baby to soften the hearts of the flats as could be wished! Looks famished, looks frozen, looks sick, and with all the rest lily white, with violet-blue eyes, and golden hair! just the thing to take the hearts of the ladies! This babe’ll be worth me a dollar a day! There’s Sall there, as ain’t done nigh so well at the trade since her baby died. And more by token I mustn’t let this one die. Sall shall wake up and nurse it.”

And going to the spot where her worthless companion lay in a stupid sleep upon the floor, she shook her, saying—

“Sall! Sall! wake up! here’s luck!”

“What luck?” said the other, sleepily.

“We’re rich—that’s what we are!”

“Some of our rich ‘lations has left us a fortin’, I would’nt wonder,” said Sall, contemptuously.

“Purty nigh as good now, I can tell you!”

“What is it, then?” cried the drowsy one, impatiently sitting up.

“Why, I’ve found a fo’ndlin’, dropt right at my door; a pretty little famished, frozen thing, to melt the hearts of the ladies!” said the first woman, exhibiting the child, that had now fallen into the sleep of total exhaustion.

“Where did you find it?” said the other.

“Dropt at our door. But here—we mustn’t let it die! Put it to your bosom and nuss it, quick!”

“If I’m to nuss this ere child, I’m to have half the profits!”

“We’ll see about that.”

“Then nuss it yourself!”

While these wretches were quarrelling over the poor infant, the watch, coming his last round, stumbled and fell over some object hidden in the snow.

“Some rowdy, drunk, who I shall have to take to the lock-up!” said the man, impatiently, as he picked himself up, and then, recovering his lantern, stooped to examine the obstacle.

“A woman, by the powers! Dead, or dead-drunk, I wonder,” said the watch, raising the form and knocking off the snow.

“Poor wretch, I think she is frozen,” continued honest Cerberus, pursuing his investigations.

“Half frozen, but not quite dead. Her heart is still beating,” he concluded, as he eased her down a moment, and took up and sprang his rattle.

In an instant several of his comrades ran from various directions to the scene of action, exclaiming:

“What’s the row? Little old Midget got more on his hands than he knows what to do with?”

“No row at all,” answered the little old man, who seemed to have been made a guardian of the night, not for cunning in detecting thieves, or strength in overcoming bullies, but simply because he was too old and weak to be in request for any other service.

“What is it, then?——Oh, a woman, tipsy! Well, take her along to the lock-up. Sure, you can manage her, as weak as you are,” said watchman number two.

“But she ain’t intoxicated, poor thing; she’s perished along of cold and hunger; an’ ef I takes her to the lock-up, where there ain’t no fire half the time, she’ll perish outright, she will.”

“Nonsense! Old fellow, if you’d been as long in the service as we have, you’d find you’d have to get rid of your tender feelin’s. Give her a lift, an’ let’s take her along to the watch’us. She’d perish here in two minutes longer anyway,” said number two.

“Stop! no! I can’t take her to the watch’us, long as she ain’t intoxicated—I can’t,

friends. I've a darter of my own, Lord help her!"

"Well, what'll you do, old Stick-in-the-mud? Bother! we can't stay here all night, hearing you preach. Here, fellows, one of you give a lift, and we'll take her round," said number two, impatiently.

"No, stop, do!" said old Midget, pleading for the outcast as he would have done for his own child; "she ain't a bad un! indeed she ain't. I don't know much, it's true; but I know that by the very looks of her. Jes' look a-there, now; look for yourself," he added, holding the lantern close over her face; "look at her skin—clear and clean, though ever so pale; and look at her decent black coat. I mayn't be a scholard, nor likewise a man of the world; but I know as how the bad uns don't look like that. No, she's some poor orphan gal come from the country to seek sarvice—that's what she is, and she hain't found it; and here she's been a-wanderin' about until night came on and the storm overtook her, and she dropped right down for dead—poor thing."

"Jehosophat, king of Jerusalem! this here philanthrophyer 'ill stop here pitying the 'oman until she perishes in the snow. Here, you John, help me to rise her up. I'll take her right off to the lock-up."

"No, now don't! Jes' stop a bit, won't you?"

"Stop, and let the gal die?—that's your sort o' pity!"

"No, jes' gimme a lift, and help me to tote her round to my house; it's just round the corner, a heap nigher than the watch-house."

"Oh, that's the game, is it? Well, I've no objection. So here goes! No, you needn't take hold, old fellow, it'll break your wind. I and Jack'll carry her along. You lead the way."

The old man lifted himself up, adjusted his lantern, and turned down the street, followed by the two young watchmen carrying the insensible form of the girl, until they reached a narrow, dark and silent alley, about midway down which they stopped before a dilapidated wooden house, of one story, with a window on each

side the front door. The old man opened the door, and saying:

“This is the place, boys,” entered and struck a light.

They followed him into a poor room, with bare floor and uncurtained windows. Opposite the door by which they entered was an old stove upon the hearth. On the chimney-piece above was arranged a little stock of crockery-ware. On the right hand of the hearth, a narrow staircase led up into the loft above. On the left hand stood a spare, flat-looking bed.

“There; lay her down there, boys; my darter’ll be home presently,” said the old man.

They laid the insensible form upon the poor bed, and then one of the men said:

“We’ve got to go, you know, and so can’t be of any more help; but here’s a flask o’ brandy—I know you don’t keep such stuff about. You’d better warm some and give it to her—then rub it well into the palms of her hands and make up a big fire;” and laying the flask on the table, the man, with his companion, departed.

They had scarcely left the alley before the sound of a girlish voice was heard, and presently the door opened, and a delicate young creature, wrapped in a great warm shawl, accompanied by a little boy, and followed by a great, shaggy dog, entered the room.

“My poor little lamb, have you got wet?” asked the old man, going to the young girl to relieve her of her shawl.

“No, father; it’s not snowing so fast now; but it’s colder; the wind is rising. Eddy, light the fire, dear. Oh, father, the manager was so pleased with me to-night that he has promised to let me try a speaking-piece, and if I do well he’ll raise my salary, and——But who’s that you’ve got there, father?” she said, seeing for the first time the insensible form on the bed.

“It’s a poor young creetur as is most perished in the storm, if she ain’t quite dead. I found her and fetched her in.”

“Oh, father, then don’t let her lay there without help! Not a moment is to be lost! Eddy, hasten with that fire; pile in the wood. Father, dear, please fill the kettle and put it on to boil. There, Eddy, now run up into the loft and bring the blankets down off my bed,” said the young girl, who was all this time busy in removing the frozen upper garments of the patient. Her under-clothing, fortunately, was not wet.

These vigorous means were at length successful, and Lionne was restored to consciousness.

“Where am I?” was the question that first arose to her lips.

“With friends and well-wishers, poor girl,” said the old man, as he placed a cup of hot spiced brandy to her lips. She mechanically quaffed the cordial, and—in her weak state—overcome by its effects, she fell into a deep sleep.

“Father, dear, I’ll lay down beside the poor thing, so as to wake easy if she should need any thing in the night. You and Eddy had better go up-stairs and sleep in my bed,” said the young girl.

“Yes, Alice, darling, we will. Come, Eddy.”

And the old man and the boy went up into the loft. And Alice took off her dress and threw herself down beside the strange sleeper to rest.

When Lionne opened her eyes the next morning, their glances fell upon a poor, but clean room, with bare floor and bare windows, but with a bright dresser and a warm cooking-stove, over which a fair girl stood, making coffee.

Before full memory returned to Lionne, this girl riveted her attention. She was small and delicate, with fair skin, large, soft gray eyes, fringed with long, close, black lashes, and arched by slender, black brows; and rich masses of silky black hair waving about a forehead almost too broad and prominent for such a mere child. She wore a brown stuff gown tucked up around her waist, and revealing a gray petticoat beneath. Her sleeves were rolled up above the elbows, showing arms that would have been beautiful, but they were too thin and white—too suggestive of a slow

starvation. While Lionne, in a half dreaming state, and through half vailed eyes, watched this girl, little steps were heard on the staircase, and a boy of about ten years of age came down into the kitchen. He closely resembled his sister—having the same intellectual head and face; the same broad forehead, shaded with black hair; the same black eyebrows, and long, black eyelashes, shading his large, dark eyes. He wore an old suit of coarse, gray cloth.

“You left father asleep?” inquired the girl.

“Yes, Alice,—shall I go wake him?”

“No, he was out on his beat until twelve o’clock, you know, and he must rest this morning.”

“But you were out at the theatre until half-past, sister—and here you’ve been and got up and made the fire.”

“But I am younger, Eddy.”

“Yes, but you look weak as any thing, Lord bless you.”

“Take your book, Eddy, and sit down in the corner; sister will hear your lesson before she goes to rehearsal.”

“Ah, but do just let me help you a little first, Alice, you do look so pale,” pleaded the boy.

“Mind what sister says to you; that is the best thing you can do for her,” said Alice.

With a sigh, the boy obeyed, and was soon deeply engrossed in his study.

The young girl hushed the pleasant humming of her own voice and softened her own light footfall, lest she should disturb the young student in the chimney corner, or the poor stranger on the bed, as she went about doing her morning work.

She drew out the little pine-table, laid a coarse cloth upon it, took the little black waiter and the cups and saucers, and plates from the chimney piece, and arranged them upon the board, and finally cleared her coffee and covered up her bread to keep

warm until her father should come down to breakfast.

And meanwhile, to fill up the time, because it seemed she could not afford to be idle, she went to some obscure corner of the little room, and brought thence a gay dress, whose braids of blue, red and yellow shone brilliantly upon a dark gray ground. Sitting down upon a low chair, she began busily to rip off the bright, variegated braid, and to rip out the tucks to let it down.

But before she had completed her task, footsteps were heard above, and soon the little, mild, old man came hobbling down the stairs. He came to his daughter's side and laying his hand upon her soft hair, said: "Up so soon, Ally? and the room all tidied up, and breakfast ready, and you sitting down after all, sewing! always at work! so much work! all sorts of work! cooking, and washing, and ironing, and sewing, and sweeping, and cleaning, and rehearsing all day! and singing, and dancing, and acting all night! Oh, Ally! Ally! Ally!"

"Now, dear little papa, don't be discontented! Remember how much worse off we were before we had any work at all! Better have too much than too little! I am sure I had rather be worked to death than starved to death!" replied Ally, smiling.

"And what is it you are doing now?" inquired the old man, taking a childish interest in her work and examining curiously the brilliant braids that lay in a heap by her side. "I thought I saw you sewing on all them bright things only yesterday?"

"And to-day I am ripping them off; yes, father; because yesterday they played a gay French piece, and to-night they play 'The Quaker,' therefore I must alter the Swiss peasant's dress that I wore yesterday, into a Quaker dress to wear to-night, and I can do it by simply ripping off the bright braid and letting down the tucks."

"Hum, and—maybe to-morrow you may have to sew it all on again."

"Yes, father, these gray skirts are very convenient; they can be made very grave, or very gay by mere difference of trimming," said Alice, cheerfully.

"But what trouble, my poor little Ally, when to think that a dollar or two more

would buy you another dress, and save you all this everlasting ripping and sewing."

"Yes, but, dear little papa, the dollar or two isn't at hand, and therefore we must be content. And now stop grumbling and come to breakfast."

"That poor creetur, is she awake?" whispered the old man pointing over his shoulder to the stranger on the bed.

"I think not, father," replied Alice, as she arose, put aside her work and prepared to set breakfast on the table.

"Yes, I am awake; I should have let you know it before hearing all your talk," spoke the voice, from the bed.

"Oh, that don't matter! not the least bit in the world! we haint no secrets, thank heaven! how be you, child?" said the little old man, going to the side of the bed.

"Where am I?"

"You are in the city mansion of Timberlegs Midget, Esquire, watchman in ordinary, in the sarvice of their worships the mayor and corporation of New York," replied the little old man, who was not without his dry vein of humor.

"How came I here?"

"In going of my last rounds last night, I fell upon you, my child! yes, actually did in more'n one sense for I tumbled over you, where you lay kivered over with snow! Frien's of mine helped to bring you here."

"Oh! my heart! I begin to remember!" murmured the stranger to herself.

"Poor thing! you be come from down the country mayhaps?" inquired the little old fellow, compassionately.

"Yes," replied the stranger, in an almost inaudible voice.

"I just thought so! seeking sarvice, maybe?"

"Yes," again responded the wayfarer, as if unable to get out one other word.

“Poor child! poor child! a hard thing to find even for a city born, as I know to my sorrow: but for a stranger, a young gal seeking it—oh my! You’re an orphan, maybe?”

“Yes,” murmured the stranger, covering her face with her hands.

“Poor child! poor child! well don’t cry! you shall stay here until you can do better! I’ve a young darter of my own to larn me mercy, thank God! So now you just be easy! or if you want to get up to breakfast, I’ll jest go ’way till you dress. My Ally’s dried your clothes long ago.”

“Papa, dear, no, it is better for her to lie still,” said the young girl, in a whisper.

“My Ally says how it’s better for you to lie still, and my Ally’s always right; she’ll bring you coffee to the bedside; so you be easy; you’re quite altogether safe under the ruff of Timberlegs Midget, Esquire,—for short called Midge,” said the old man, smiling.

“Little papa! if ‘Timberlegs Midget, Esquire,’ commonly called Midge, don’t come right away to the table, his worship’s coffee will be cold!” said Alice, with mock gravity.

“He’s coming, child! he’s coming,” answered the little old man, trotting back to the table and seating himself in apparent trepidation.

Alice presided at the humble repast. She waited upon her father and her little brother, and then brought coffee to their guest.

When breakfast was over, the old man took his old over-coat and hat from their peg, and put himself into them.

“Now, little papa, you must not go out in the cold this morning,” said Alice, as soon as she noticed his preparations.

“My dear, I shall miss a great day’s work if I don’t! The snow is two feet deep on the sidewalks; I shall clear a goodly sum this day in shovelling it away from afore

doors!”

“And get a pleurisy that will lay you up for two months!”

“You needn’t talk, Ally! Timberlegs Midget must—stop, what’s the soundorous words?—‘embark in this enterprise.’ Yes! Timberlegs Midget must embark in this enterprise!”

And so saying, the little old man went and brought a shovel from the back-yard, and passing through the room went out at the front door and departed.

Alice hurried with her work, cleared the table and set it away, replenished the stove, swept the room, heard Eddy his lesson, made her guest as comfortable as circumstances would permit, and then put on her coarse shawl and hood to go to rehearsal.

“I am very sorry to have to leave you, but I am employed at the theatre, and every day at ten o’clock I am obliged to attend rehearsal, or be fined for staying away. I shall be back by one o’clock; Eddy will stay with you to wait on you when you need him. And when you wish to get rid of him, you can send him up-stairs.”

“I thank you,” was all that the wayfarer could answer, and Alice departed.

“Little boy, come here,” murmured the stranger, as soon as she was left alone with the lad.

Eddy approached.

“When I was found in the snow, was there——a child found?”

“A child! Lord! no, ma’am,” replied the lad, in astonishment.

“Are you sure that there was not?”

“Lord! yes, of course I am; what made you ask about a child?”

“I—I thought there had been a child found.”

“Law, ma’am, you only thought so, you know, because you were so out of your mind like. Why, long ago, when we were poor, you know, and father was in so

much trouble, he took a brain fever, and what do you think he thought?”

“I don’t know.”

“Why, bless you, he thought the house was full of golden guineas! all heaped up in the corners, and packed up in the chests, and locked up in the cupboard! and everywhere, everywhere, piles of gold, when we hadn’t so much as a penny in the house! Sick people always think queer thoughts.”

The stranger made no comment, but covered her face with her hands, and sighed.

The lad, thinking she wished to sleep, went back to his stool and his book, where he sat perhaps an hour.

Then he arose and put away his book and replenished the fire, put on the pot, and began making such simple preparations for the midday meal as a lad of his age could manage.

At noon the old man came home, and sat down by the stove, where he remained too cold and tired even to talk, until Alice opened the door and entered the house.

Then he held out his hand to her; and when she approached, he poured six shillings into her hand, saying—

“There, my little housekeeper, take them. I have shovelled off six door-steps and sidewalks at a shilling apiece.”

“Little papa will make a fortune at this rate! but he must not go out this afternoon!”

“Indeed he doesn’t intend to, jest because he is entirely used up and done for.”

“And I am sure Ally looks the very same!” said Eddy.

The old man turned his eyes anxiously upon his daughter.

“Oh, little papa, I am only tired with standing about the scenes—that’s all! If one could sit down a little during rehearsal; but they can’t. Now just see this good boy. He has the table set and the soup all ready. I will dish it up.”

The simple meal was soon prepared and soon consumed. The stranger had been

vainly urged to partake of it.

“You will fail for want of food,” said Alice, sympathetically bending over her.

“No, I am strong enough to get up and go farther, and should have done so had I known where to find my clothes,” said the wayfarer.

“Indeed, you shall not go farther until you can fare better,” said Alice; “but as soon as father goes out, I will move you up-stairs to my room, which is more private, and where we can both sleep together, This bed belongs to father and Eddy, and you were laid upon it only because they thought you too weak to be carried farther. Oh, now I tell you, you shall be very comfortable, if you will only be cheerful.”

And with these consoling words the kind girl left the bedside of her guest and sat down to complete the arrangement of her Quaker costume for the evening’s performance. This occupied her several hours.

And then, after an early and very frugal tea, the old man walked out to report himself to the watch-station; the boy went into the back-yard to prepare wood for the next day; and Alice finding the room clear, proposed attending her charge to the chamber above.

The stranger wearily agreed, arose from the bed and followed her young hostess up the narrow flight of stairs to a small room in the garret, lighted by one front and one back dormer window.

Here was a poor but neat bed, covered with a blue, checked, woollen counterpane; a little pine table, with a blue wash-basin and pitcher; above which hung a small looking-glass; a single chair sat beside the bed; and from wooden racks each side the little fireplace hung several fancy dresses.

“This is my room; I make you very welcome to it; and hope you will be able to sleep quietly for several hours. I am sorry to say that you will be quite alone this evening, for my father has gone on duty, and my brother will have to attend me to the theatre. I shall leave the light burning on the chimney-piece. Good-night.” And so saying,

the kind girl kissed the pallid brow of the wayfarer and withdrew.

In two minutes after, the stranger heard Alice and her little brother leave the house for the theatre, locking the door on the outside.

And then the wayfarer threw herself upon the bed, where for hours she lay, so deeply absorbed in painful thought, that ere she knew it, midnight came and brought back her humble hosts.

She heard them softly enter the house, and stealthily move about, cautioning each other in whispers not to make a noise to disturb her.

And soon she felt her kind young hostess creep to bed beside her in silence and in darkness, lest she should awaken the guest whom she supposed to be sleeping.

And thus ended the wanderer's first day.

CHAPTER XXXI. THE STRANGER'S FATE.

"Who falls from all they know of bliss,

Recks little into what abyss."—Byron.

The next day was a day of rest for Alice. It happened that she was not wanted at the theatre. She enjoyed the rare treat of being at liberty to stay home all day and all night.

After breakfast, when her father and brother had both gone out, Alice and the stranger were seated together near the stove. Alice was engaged in patching her father's coat. The stranger sat with her thin dark hands clasped upon her knees, and her great wild eyes fixed in deep thought upon the floor.

"You came to town to seek service, my father tells me. What sort of service?—Maybe I could help you to get it."

"I do not know," said the wanderer, vacantly.

"I should think that of a seamstress might do. Can you make dresses?"

“No.”

“Coats, vests, or pantaloons, then?”

“No.”

“Children’s clothing, then?”

“No.”

“Well, perhaps you can do plain sewing.”

“Not well.”

“Dear me, then you would not be a seamstress?”

“I could not compete with the humblest member of that craft.”

“Oh my! then the next lightest thing to do is chamber-work.”

“I know nothing about it,” said the stranger, with her hands still clasped upon her knees, and her eyes still fixed upon the floor.

“Gracious! perhaps—oh yes! I know you could take care of children? Would you take a nurse’s place?”

“Not to save myself from starving,” exclaimed the wild woman, with startling energy.

“Oh, my goodness! do you dislike innocent little ones so much!”

“Yes, I do!”

Alice looked at her guest in amazement and pity, and then, after a few minutes, said:

“I do not think you could cook?”

“No.”

“Well, then, what sort of service did you come to town to seek?”

“I did not come to seek service at all.”

“But you told my father so.”

“It was some mistake; he misunderstood me, or else I did not know what I was talking about.”

“But if you didn’t come for that, what did you come for?”

“To lose myself,” answered the wayfarer.

“I declare you came very near succeeding! Oh, poor dear, you are heart-broken and brain-crazed about something, that’s clear enough; but you ought not to think of losing yourself. We’ll see what can be done for you,” said Alice, gently.

“You are kind, and I will tell you thus much: I came from far down the country. My father and my mother are both dead. I have no friends, no means! Despair drove me to the city!”

“Poor girl! you left the wilderness of trees for the wilderness of human beings, thinking that the last, being of your kind, would have more sympathy for you! Well, many do the like!”

“But I have found sympathy, in one case at least. Oh, I thank you! Now let us speak no more of this. In an hour I set forth again.”

“To go—whither?”

“I do not know.”

“Then you shall not leave us. Oh, I have known what it is to be very poor! You smile; you think we are poor enough now! Well, so we are. But we have been yet poorer. I have known what it is to suffer cold, hunger, and illness, at the same time; but I never was homeless; and I think that to be homeless is worse than all. And so I should expect the Lord to cast me forth of his care the day that I sent a desolate girl homeless from my door. So you are to stay here, until you can do better.”

“But I cannot; I must not be a burden. This little tenement is a beehive: every one is busy. I must not be a drone.”

“And you need not. I have just thought of what you can do,” said Alice. “Mr. West,

our stage-director, told me, last night, that if I knew of any good-looking, respectable young girl, with a good figure and a good voice, he would thank me to bring her to the theatre, if she would come."

"Well?"

"I think you answer the description. If you would come, I would gladly take you."

"What is wanted of me?"

"Why, that you should fill just such a place as I do; a very humble one; but which would keep you from want."

"But I know no more of that business than of any other."

"It is not expected that you should; you are to learn it. Hence your humble post, and small pay. But if, with your fine figure, and face, and voice, you have also tact and talent, you will be sure to rise in your profession."

"Is it a laborious one?"

"Yes, I am sorry to say."

"Is it exciting?"

"Very."

"Is it absorbing? Will it employ all my time, and thoughts, and faculties?"

"Very much so, indeed, if you attend to the business. I wish it were otherwise," said Alice, with regret, for she now feared that her unhappy guest would cast away this last poor chance of a living; "very exacting and absorbing indeed!"

"Then I will enter it," exclaimed the stranger.

That night, the old watchman was told that his strange guest, who was unfit for service, would, in future, accompany his daughter to the theatre.

"Well, the Lord guard all poor young women," was all that the old man said.

Accordingly, the next morning, Alice conducted the stranger to the only theatre that

the city could then boast. They entered the old and dingy building by a basement side-door that led through a long, dark and narrow passage to the door of the manager's office.

Alice put her hand upon the knob, and then suddenly paused, saying—

"There! now, do you know I never even thought of asking your name; and if I had gone into the manager's office, I shouldn't even have known how to introduce you!"

"You are like the Arabs, so delicate in hospitality that they do not even ask the name of the traveller they entertain. Well, my name is—is—'Nora Norl."

"'Nora Norl? a queer name! well! come in, Miss Norl."

"Not Miss, but Mistress; I have been married."

"Married! you!" exclaimed Alice, looking in amazement and pity at her companion—"married and widowed so young!"

"Yes, married and widowed so young—yes, widowed, too, though not by death!" mentally added the stranger, whom we shall now call Mrs. Norl.

"And that is what you are breaking your heart about, the Lord help you! Well, this hurrying business will keep you from thinking of your troubles, if it does nothing else. Come, now, the manager is alone," said Alice, peeping through the glass door, and then turning the knob and entering the room.

The manager was alone, but apparently very busy and very impatient.

He arose and offered seats. Alice named her companion—

"Mrs. Norl, Mr. West."

"Mrs. Norl?" questioned the manager, after a hasty bow.

"Yes, sir, Mrs. Norl, a young widow, who lives at our house, and will engage with you if she suits!" said Alice, meekly.

"Will do very well; will do quite well," said the stage-director, with a cursory glance at the noble figure and fine, though care-worn face of the young wanderer, in whom

his practical eye discerned a person above the grade of a ballet-girl. “Salary small at first; but duties unimportant, if laborious. Sing well, ma’am?”

“You will hear me upon occasion, sir, and form your own judgment,” said the stranger.

“Ah! intelligent and proud. Seen better days! Just as I thought,” muttered the manager. And then saying that he was happy to engage so promising a novice; that he had no doubt she would do well, etc.; he bowed the two young women out, with a parting request that they would come in the morning.

CHAPTER XXXII. THE WIFE.

The lot is on thee—silent tears to weep,

And patient smiles to wear thro’ suffering’s hour.

And sumless riches from affection’s deep.

To pour on broken reeds—a wasted shower!

And to make idols and to find them clay,

And to bewail that worship—therefore pray!—Felecia Hemans.

How many hearts break, yet “brokenly live on” from youth to age, only the Omniscient knows.

The loss of both her children, and the discovery of her husband’s unworthiness, had broken the heart of Adelaide Deville, past all earthly possibility of cure. Religion might do much; even religion could not restore the joyous elasticity of other days. Only the grace of God, given “without measure” as it is given to few, could have done that. Love could do nothing—alas! for her it was a poisoned fountain.

It was a part of Orville Deville’s retribution that year by year he was destined to dote upon his beautiful wife with an ever-increasing passion, and to feel that his devotion was all powerless to bring back to her—lost faith and hope and joy in him. Ah! it is

hard to crush a human heart, but once crushed, no power on earth can cure it. It is almost impossible to estrange a woman's heart; but once estranged, it is forever impossible to recover it. Think of this all you who value, yet madly trifle with affection.

Adelaide's heart was not indeed estranged from her husband; but it was changed. Once she loved in pride and joy. She still loved, but in humiliation and sorrow. His demonstrations of affection, once greeted in confidence and delight, were now received in doubt and compunction. Another, she feared, had a holier claim to that very love!

Lionne, the wronged, was not dead!

Lionne, the destroyer, had burst the strong bonds of the grave and lived!

How she had escaped the tomb, or where she lived, was unknown. In what impenetrable regions of darkness, solitude and silence she made her fearful lair, was still a mystery. When she might again sally forth with her pestilential breath, breathing malediction and destruction upon their fairest hopes, could not be foreseen. But—she lived—the dark shadow, the impending peril, the inevitable fate of their lives. A living grief, and gloom, and terror never for a day to be forgotten.

One member of the household only seemed happy—the little Perdita. She grew in health and strength and beauty every year—the overflowing joyousness of her nature making "sunshine in that shady place."

But, oh, as every successive year exhibited more plainly her growing likeness to that beautiful, fearless woman who was the bane and terror of their lives, Lady Adelaide gazed with awe and dread, mingled with her love for that enchanting child, who ever repaid the lady's affection with a perfect passion of devotion. But if Perdita loved her adopted mother with the utmost intensity of human love, even that was as nothing compared to the wild worship she lavished upon her father. It was more like the extravagant idolatry offered by the pythoness to the god of her inspiration, than

the affection of mortal child for mortal parent. Lady Adelaide watched the development of this torrid temperament, and dreaded her future and prayed for her good. Alas! in these fiery, fierce, volcanic passions and affections the child also too closely resembled her fearful prototype. All that a Christian mother's watchful care could do, all that prayer, counsel and example could do, was constantly essayed to train this dangerous temperament. It was when Perdita was about eight years of age that Mr. Deville received a communication from a legal firm of high standing in London, announcing the fact that he had been appointed sole guardian of the person and property of his near relative, young Donald Lorne, the orphan heir of the junior branch of the Lornes of Glen Lennark.

In consideration of the importance of this trust, Mr. Deville lost no time in hastening to London, and thence to Edinburg, where he found young Lorne, a fine, tall, dark-haired and dark-eyed youth of fifteen, living with an old retired clergyman, under whose instruction he was making rapid progress in his classical and mathematical studies. Much to the regret of the master, who hated to part with his pupil, the newly-appointed guardian determined to take his ward home to America. And the youth himself, though somewhat sorrowful at the thought of parting with the old man, desired nothing more than travel and change of scene.

Finally, as the old clergyman was a widower, without children or other family ties, Mr. Deville, after some hesitation, satisfied all parties by proposing to the old man to accompany them to America as the private tutor of his ward. This proposal was gladly accepted. The doctor went with them to America, and thenceforward made a part of the family, in the capacity of private tutor to Master Donald and Miss Perdita.

No other children blest the wedded lives of Mr and Lady Adelaide Deville. Lady Adelaide devoted herself to her Christian duties—to her husband, her household, her friends and neighbors, and found her comfort in prayer, reading, meditation, work,

and in active deeds of usefulness and benevolence. And if less brightly beautiful, and less admired than formerly, she was more lovely and more beloved than ever.

Mr. Deville divided his time between agricultural pursuits, the politics of the day, the social pleasures of the neighborhood, etc. Yet all these things were powerless to banish the thoughts that troubled his soul—remorse for the sin of his youth; grief for the loss of his children; mortification for the forfeited esteem of his wife; a tantalizing temptation to grasp the title and the estates which he might, yet dared not claim; a vague dread of continued retribution—these were the sorrows that stole all zest from enjoyment. If any friend or neighbor chanced to express in his hearing any wonder that Mr. Deville should not possess the title and estates of his deceased uncle, he merely answered that there was a nearer claimant, and there let the matter rest.

And thus, without marked incident, the years flowed on, until, by time and circumstances, all these feelings became modified, his heart grew hardened, his late remorse for the sin of his youth had not, alas, melted to that “repentance which is not to be repented of;” grief for the loss of his children fell back into a dim and distant regret; the forfeiture of his wife’s respect, so long as she showed him outward observance, no longer troubled him; and regret for his lost inheritance had given place to the desire of achieving a personal “greatness.”

Politics was the chosen path of his ambition. And to a man of his high rank, ample fortune, splendid talents, and not too scrupulous honor, that path was sure to lead to preferment. He was elected to the House of Assembly. His maiden speech was said to be perfect. His judicious efforts were said to have carried a measure that had, for several successive sessions, been lying like an incubus upon the House.

To be made President of the Assembly was now his great object. That seat obtained might serve as a stepping-stone to a still higher dignity—he might be appointed governor of the province of Maryland.

While Mr. Deville was forming his political schemes in Annapolis, Lady Adelaide, who loved retirement, had remained at her country-home at River-view, governing her household, entertaining her rustic neighbors, and dispensing her charities. But at the next meeting of the Assembly, when the question of electing their president was expected to arise, Mr. Deville sent for his wife. For he well knew how great would be the silent, unrecognized, unconscious influence of this beautiful and gifted woman, even in political circles, and upon his own political success.

Ever obedient to his slightest wish, she left her loved retirement and came up to the city, though “innocent of the cause” of her summons.

Mr. Deville hired the most elegantly furnished house that could be had at any price, and, with the assistance of Lady Adelaide, commenced a series of entertainments that had never been equalled in that provincial metropolis. The result answered his expectations. Lady Adelaide, meek, refined and retiring, but also indubitably talented, accomplished and beautiful, became the reigning queen of that circumscribed court. Her house was the resort of all the most distinguished men and most lovely women assembled at Annapolis—herself ever the most lovely. Her petit soupers were faultless; her soirées perfect. Her beauty, her grace, her amiability, won her universal favor. And her charms became an element in her husband’s popularity and power.

The day upon which the votes of the House were to be polled for the election of their president arrived.

The members of the Assembly were all in their seats, and the galleries were filled. Prayer opened the session. Some formal, tedious preliminaries were passed through; and then the candidates for the president’s chair were nominated. The poll was taken. Mr. Orville Deville was elected by a majority of two-thirds. The result was announced and received with acclamation. Then a member arose and moved that the new president be inducted into his office, which motion was carried unanimously.

Orville Deville, attended by his chief friends, advanced to the upper end of the hall, and, amidst the breathless interest of the spectators, ascended the stairs and seated himself in the president's chair, where the oath of office was administered to him. He spoke the required words, kissed the sacred book, and returned it to its place. And then, in the midst of the eager attention of all present, he arose to deliver his opening address. But among all the company of distinguished men and beautiful women present, there was one person of whom he thought pre-eminently—his lovely wife! There she sat, the most beautiful where all were beautiful, the most gifted where all were gifted, the most interested where all were intent. She sympathized in his elevation—would she approve the principles by which he intended to secure his position?—He could not hope it! He had bowed to his audience, and laid his hand upon the notes for his address, and was just about to open his mouth to commence, when——

A young man, closely wrapped in a long Spanish cloak, and having his cap drawn down over his eyes, hurried towards the president's seat. The sergeant-at-arms essayed to stop him! but with the single phrase—"A matter of life and death!" the young man pushed on and ascended the stairs, thrust a sealed paper in the hands of the president, and with the single word—Lionne—that tolled like a death-bell through the room, he turned, retreated, and was lost in the crowd.

The president tore open the paper, and cast his eyes over the contents, grew deadly pale, and with a few incoherent words of apology descended from the platform and abruptly left the assembly.

Lady Adelaide, ignorant of the contents of that note, but in equal agitation, arose from her seat, and hurried out into the lobby and down the stairs to the outer door, when, true to her anticipations, she found her husband just about to enter their carriage.

"Come, then," he said. And taking her arm with almost rude haste, he hurried her

into the back seat, threw himself beside her, and gave the driver the single order—

"Home."

"What is it, Mr. Deville? Oh, what is it?" she anxiously inquired.

"Do not ask me yet. Soon you shall know all," he said, hurriedly.

They drove on in silence until they reached their house.

Then he alighted, and whispering:

"Come with me into my study, Adelaide," ascended the stairs.

"Sit down," he said, breathing hard, and wiping great drops of icy sweat from his pallid brow—"sit down, and I will tell you—all—all!"

She took the indicated seat beside him on the sofa, and bending towards him, gave her whole heart to the hearing.

"Listen!" he said, fixing his eyes in almost wild horror upon her face; "listen! to-day, in the moment of my triumph, I stood again, face to face, with—Lionne!"

"No, great heaven, no!" exclaimed Lady Adelaide, growing paler than before.

"I did! When the cup of success was at my lips, again she raised her ruthless hand and dashed it to the dust!"

"No! no! oh, dear sir, let us trust you were mistaken!"

"Mistaken! Could I mistake those resolute, ruthless lips, those fierce and cruel eyes, whose glances still burn—burn into my very brain?"

"Dear Mr. Deville, it was a youth who spoke to you!"

"A youth?—ha—ha—ha!" he exclaimed, laughing in a frenzied manner—"a youth! Could the cavalier's cloak and cap, the short, curled hair and black moustache disguise her from me?—No, I tell you that to-day again, at the culmination of my fortunes, I have stood face to face with my FATE! To-day, as before, she has said to me, 'Come down from your seat! Nor honor, nor dignity, nor success in this world

shall be yours! Your only safety shall be in seclusion.’”

“And you?” inquired the lady, with tears.

“And I must obey her! Look, look at this paper which she thrust into my hand! Look at the sword which she holds suspended by a single hair above my head! Yes, look!” he exclaimed, withdrawing the mysterious packet from his bosom, and giving it to Lady Adelaide.

She opened it, and as she read it he saw that every vestige of color fled from her face. And well it might. That document was headed:

“‘Look on this picture and on this,’ and judge if a law-breaker shall sit in the seat of a law-maker; or a felon preside over the councils of legislators?” And under this caption was written and contrasted in parallel columns, first, on the right hand, copies of the two marriage certificates that constituted Deville a bigamist; and next against them on the left, a copy of the statute-law that constituted the crime of bigamy a felony, punishable with imprisonment or slavery.

“There!” he exclaimed, regardless of the white lips and fading eyes that betrayed the lady’s dangerous agitation, and should have warned him to desist. “There! with the instruments of which these are only copies, she can hurl me from my seat of power whereon my friends may place me; or, if I refuse to be thus thrown down, she can do more. She can cast me into a state’s prison, or else into slavery.”

“Alas, my God, for the bondage of sin!” murmured Lady Adelaide, in a fainting voice as she clasped her hands and bowed her head.

“You—you reproach me!” cried Deville, in bitterness.

“Oh, no! no, no! It is not for me to do that.”

“But yet you will perhaps desert me?”

“No, Mr. Deville, no.”

“Then, in this extremity, what is your counsel?”

Lady Adelaide did not at once reply. Her eyes were cast down until the golden lashes lay pencillings upon the white cheeks, her lips were mutely closed, and her fair hands folded as in prayer or self-communion.

"You know," continued Deville, "that I must at that demon's order resign my place on the president's platform, nay, I must even resign my seat in the Assembly; or else, with that instrument of her power, that fiend will expose and ruin me! Come—in this strait, what is your counsel?"

Seldom, if ever before, had Orville Deville condescended to take counsel with his meek consort; but this was an affair concerning which he could admit no other into his confidence. Therefore again, for the third time, and more impatiently, he spoke—

"Can you not reply to me, Adelaide? I ask you what shall we do?"

"I have been thinking deeply," she answered, in a submissive voice. "The subject requires thought."

"Well—and what is your conclusion?"

"Mr. Deville, I am unaccustomed to advising you."

"Then, madam, you will not help me! Neither counsel nor sympathy am I to expect from you!"

"Mr. Deville, I only doubt my own capacity. If I really could venture——"

"Well?"

"I should say—let us retire from the world and repent."

"Let 'us' retire from the world and repent! As far as that speech concerns yourself, it is hypocrisy; you know that you have nothing to repent of! And as far as it concerns me it is insolence! Am I a sinner above all sinners, madam?" he exclaimed, breaking into the fury with which a hardened sinner hears the word repent.

"Alas," thought Lady Adelaide, "I feared that this would be the result." Then,

speaking very gently, she said—

“I am sorry—very sorry—if my words gave offence. Let us go back to our country home for the present, and there, with quiet, will come opportunity for calm reflection.”

“No! I shall not go to the country! I shall go far away from the pursuit of this malignant demon! I shall go to the Northern Provinces—probably to New York,” said Mr. Deville.

“As you please,” replied his wife.

The next day Mr. Deville, to the astonishment and consternation of his friends, and without the least explanation of his reason, sent in his resignation to the Assembly.

And the next week he left Annapolis for the North.

CHAPTER XXXIII STRANGE MEETINGS.

I charm thee from the agony
Which others feel or feign;
From anger, and from jealousy,
From doubt, and from disdain;
I bid thee wear the scorn of years
Upon the brow of youth,
And curl the lip at passion’s tears,
And shake the head at truth;
While there is bliss in revelry,
Forgetfulness in wine,
Be thou from every love as free
As every one from thine!—Mrs. Hemans.

It was mid-winter when Orville Deville and his family reached New York and established themselves in the best apartments of the most fashionable hotel. He arrived at the time when public interest was divided between two subjects. The first, and ultimately the most important, was the first murmurings of discontent with the mother country, that preceded the outbreaking of the Revolutionary War.

The other, infinitely less important, but for the moment more exciting topic, was the advent of a great theatrical star—a wonderfully-endowed young tragedienne, whose almost fabulous beauty, grace and genius, conjoined with a reputation of exalted virtue and nearly supernatural powers of fascination, had been the admiration and delight of London, as it was now the attraction and wonder of New York.

“And who is this most marvellous—this all-worshipped Melpomene?” inquired Orville Deville of his friend, Colonel Bingham, as the two smoked their Havanas together in the reading-room of the hotel, where, as usual, the latest enchantments of the Circe were being discussed.

“Who is Melpomene?” repeated the Colonel, with a look of astonishment. “Is it possible that you are in earnest in that question?”

“Certainly. I am a provincial—a rustic, you see, who should not be supposed to know all your city celebrities,” said Deville, laughing.

“‘But not to know Melpomene argues yourself unknown’ with a vengeance—or, rather, not to know of her! for few, I imagine, really know who she is, whence she came, or what her name! She is called Melpomene; and if ever a tragedienne had a right to assume that awful name of the tragic muse, this woman is the one!”

“All that I have heard before; but who is she?”

“I repeat that I do not really know. No one does. Her origin and history are involved in obscurity, that only gets a little clearer as it nears the present time. Those who know of her, scarcely deem her of human kind! Her admirers think her angel-born—her enviers would have us believe her a child of Satan! Her spells of

fascination are certainly supernatural!"

"And that, also, I have heard before. But is there nothing at all—no clue, no gossip—nothing whatever to point out her possible origin?" persisted Orville Deville, who felt a strange and unaccountable interest in tracing the antecedents of this wonderful woman.

"Gossip? Oh, there is gossip enough! How could it be otherwise? A woman endowed with the most wonderful beauty, genius, and power of fascination—and, in addition to all these, possessing fame, wealth, and favor of all men—must excite envy and provoke detraction. Yes, there is plenty of gossip, if you will accept that for authentic history."

"Well, that gossip—in a great deal of chaff there may be a grain of truth."

"Not worth the trouble of seeking. But if you will have it, you may. But mind—so far from indorsing, I speak it under protest," said Colonel Bingham.

"Right," admitted Mr. Deville.

"Well, then, thus saith Madam Rumor—that some ten or twelve years ago, a young creature, scarce sixteen years old, and yet at that tender age, not only orphaned, but widowed, and perfectly destitute, wandered in search of service, to New York, where she arrived on foot, late at night, in the midst of a snow-storm. Exhausted with fatigue, hunger and cold, she sank, fainting, in the street. She was picked up by a weak-minded old watchman, who instead of carrying her off to the watch-house, pitied her condition and took her home to his own dwelling."

"But this houseless wanderer could not have been the great Melpomene!" interrupted Mr. Deville.

"Wait a bit!—Rumor further saith, that this feeble-brained old watchman, who carried forlorn women to his own house, 'had a daughter,' who was employed as a ballet-girl at the City Theatre, and that eventually, the young stranger being found unfit for every thing else under the sun, went with her host's daughter to the theatre,

where her personal beauty and grace, and her melodious voice, and ready intelligence, procured her an humble engagement."

"Ah!"

"Yes, you begin to see how this might have been. Well, as years passed, and to her original gifts were added experience and knowledge of the business, our young artist rose in her profession through the successive stages of ballet dancer, singing grisette, walking lady, leader, etc., to her present position."

"Then, as every step of this tragedienne, from obscurity to fame, seems to have passed before the eyes of this public, I do not see how you can call this story mere gossip, and assert that her true history is unknown," said Mr. Deville.

"And yet I do assert it. Every step is not accounted for. There is a long gap. It is said that about the time this young actress had reached the rank of 'walking lady' at this theatre, that a part of the company returned to England to play in the provinces, and that Nora Norl accompanied them. While there, this beautiful young creature attracted the attention of the celebrated Mrs. Bracegirdle, who, then at the zenith of her fame, was making a tour of the northern counties. The great actress, never dreaming of future rivalry, became the patroness of the friendless young aspirant, gave her instructions and brought her forward. From that auspicious time, the star of the young artist arose. And she, who nine years ago left the shores of her native country as the humble, obscure Nora Norl, returned as the great Melpomene."

"A probable story. I do not see why it should be questioned."

"Yet it is. Nine years changes the character of a community as well as the appearance of a young female. And there are those who can trace no resemblance between the thin, undeveloped girl of seventeen, and the magnificent woman of twenty-six; and others who totally deny the identity between the obscure Nora Norl and the illustrious Melpomene."

"I must see this world's wonder. She plays to-night?"

“Yes, and not again for a week. This queen of tragedy, like other queens, is jealous of her royal presence, and no inducement can bring her to appear more than once a week.”

“And—let us see—what is her role to-night?”

“Roxalana, in the ‘Rival Queens.’ I have seen Mesdames Bracegirdle and Oldfield in that part, but I have never seen this Melpomene, who is said, in that particular impersonation of the outraged wife and queen, to surpass, not only all others, but even her own self.”

“Then, shall we go together to test her merits this evening?”

“With pleasure, especially if the beauteous Lady Adelaide is to be of the party,” said the gallant Colonel.

“Lady Adelaide never goes to the theatre,” replied Mr. Deville.

“Ah, conscientiously opposed to it?”

“Sincerely so—yes.”

“By the way, Melpomene has apartments in this very house.”

“Impossible!”

“True, however! though she might as well be in Kamtschatka for any thing we see of her here.”

“Why, how is that?”

“She has not only her private suite of apartments, but also a private street-entrance to them, and private attendance. So that there is no possibility of seeing her without intrusion; and—she receives no visitors.”

“Except professionally—at the theatre.”

“Except at the theatre, whither we will go this evening.”

“Agreed.”

And thus the friends parted. Colonel Bingham to go to the table d'hote, Mr. Deville to ascend to Lady Adelaide's private parlor, where their meals were served. Here he found no one except young Donald Lorne, who sat within the window seat, reading.

"Ho, Donald, my boy, always at your studies. Come, what say you to an evening at the theatre?" said Mr. Deville, with an affectation of gayety that was far from his heart.

The youth arose, and with a respectful bow to his guardian, answered gravely:

"Lady Adelaide disapproves of the theatre, sir, and I would not like to displease her."

"Tut, boy! women are making a perfect Miss Molly of you!"

Instead of replying, the youth drew himself up with that air of self-respect, not to say haughtiness, that sometimes procured for him the name of "the young Don."

Deville laughed. And before another word could be said, the door flew open and a lightsome figure of a dark-eyed girl danced into the room. Scarcely could any human creature be more beautiful than Perdita was, now, in the twelfth year of her age. She was tall for her age, and with a form of perfect symmetry and a head of classic elegance, covered with luxuriant hair that fell in many long, rich, jet black ringlets down each side her crimson cheeks, and upon her ivory bosom and shoulders. Her large, black eyes, dark as night, and brilliant as stars, could melt or blaze, as love or anger inspired them. They were vailed by long, black lashes, and over-arched by slender black brows. Full crimson lips, a thought too plump, gave the finishing character to a style of beauty at once too fierce, voluptuous and impassioned to promise much of good or happiness to the possessor. Well might the Lady Adelaide fear and pray and study for this child!

She came now dancing into the room and humming a gay tune, that was instantly arrested on her lips as she saw Mr. Deville, and exclaimed—

"Papa! you here? I thought you were in the reading room."

“Well, my dear, and that in an instant the song should be arrested on your lips? Am I a kill-joy?”

“Oh, no, sir!”

“Then doubtless it was the presence of this sanctimonious young gentleman that sobered you!” said Mr. Deville, pointing to Donald.

“Who, Donald! why he is my constant provocative to laughter! No, sir! neither your nor your ward have that honor! My song was finished!” exclaimed Perdita, with a merry glance from one to the other.

“Well, my dear! I have a treat in store for you! You never saw a play I believe?”

“Oh, no, papa! and I do so long to see one!—Donald, don’t you turn and look at me with your great solemn dark eyes! I tell you I do want to see a play! Yes, papa! I do.”

“Then you shall be gratified, my dear! You shall go with me this evening to see Melpomene!”

“Oh, papa! Oh, papa! that will be delightful!” exclaimed Perdita, clapping her hands in ecstasy. Then, with one of her sudden transitions from gayety to gloom, she murmured—“But mamma.”

“Lady Adelaide will not object, when she finds my wishes co-incide with yours.”

“Oh! my dear, handsome papa! persuade mamma to consent! You can persuade her to any thing!” exclaimed the young girl, springing to his bosom, throwing her arms around his neck and kissing him.

“Little flatterer! well, we will try our powers in your favor,” said Mr. Deville, returning with interest the caresses of the beautiful girl.

At this moment the Lady Adelaide softly entered the parlor. Gentle and sweet, loving and lovely as an angel looked Lady Adelaide at twenty-five. She wore a pale-blue cashmere morning-dress, open over a white swiss muslin skirt. Her pale

gold hair fell in shining ringlets down each side her delicate, roseate cheeks, and was twisted up behind under a little lace cap of cobweb texture. She came floating into the room as softly as a cloud through the summer sky, as sweetly as a strain of sacred music. Her presence diffused over the scene a holy spell. Truly, sorrow had sanctified this pure spirit.

Donald arose and drew forward her easy chair. With a smile she thanked him and seated herself.

“Lady Adelaide, I wish to take this young lady to see Melpomene to-night. You will oblige me by seeing that she is properly dressed.”

Lady Adelaide raised her mild, beseeching blue eyes, and fixed them on his face. That was her only appeal! Not for worlds would she have put her objection in words before the young people, to depreciate his judgment in their opinion. But he chose to disregard the silent supplication of those imploring eyes, and continued—

“The doors open at half-past seven; the performance commences at eight. I should be pleased if you would have Perdita ready by a quarter to eight.”

Slowly and gravely Lady Adelaide bowed. Then turning to her adopted child, she said—

“Perdita, love, it is time to take your daily ride. Go and get ready. Donald will order the horses and escort you.”

Both the young people left the room at her bidding. And, when they were gone, she turned a deprecating gaze at her husband’s face, and said—

“Mr. Deville, please grant me a favor.”

“I anticipate your request. You wish me to yield my purpose of taking Perdita to see Melpomene this evening.”

“Yes, I do, Mr. Deville.”

“And why, pray?”

“Mr. Deville, the theatre, injurious to all young persons, is especially so for Perdita. She is already too ardent, too impassioned, too excitable! Her heart, and fancy, and imagination are too impressible, too impetuous, too enthusiastic! They need repressing, not stimulating! Oh, Mr. Deville, if you love the girl, do not take her to the theatre,—especially to see this woman who has turned the heads of half mankind!”

“Lady Adelaide, you are a—an angel! and, being an angel, you are too much exalted for this sublunary sphere! But, nevertheless, my sweet Adelaide, you will be pleased to adorn Perdita for the occasion!”

The lady said no more. The habit of obedience was strong upon her, and she bowed her head in silent acquiescence. It was not the first or the last time that a good, wise woman has been forced from her better judgment by a foolish, bad and tyrannical man.

Indeed, before there was much opportunity for further discussion, the young people came into the room equipped for their ride, to say good-by, for an hour or two.

They looked so bright, and handsome and happy, that Lady Adelaide could but smile upon them even while praying secretly for their preservation from the evils of the world.

They took their leave, hurried down-stairs, and two minutes afterwards Lady Adelaide, from her front windows, saw them ride gaily forth in the direction of the Battery.

“They would make a handsome pair,” was the secret thought of the lady, as she retired from the window.

They returned, as they had promised, in good time to rest and dress before dinner. And the afternoon was spent in thinking and talking and preparing for the evening’s amusement.

CHAPTER XXXIV. MELPOMENE.

Hers was the spell o’er hearts
That only Acting lends—
The youngest of the sister Arts,
Where all their beauty blends:
For ill can Poetry express
Full many a tone of thought sublime,
And Painting, mute and motionless,
Asks but a glance from time;
But by the mighty Actor brought,
Illusion’s perfect triumphs come,—
Verse ceases to be airy thought,
And Sculpture to be dumb.—Campbell.

It was just a quarter to eight o’clock when our party, consisting of Colonel Bingham, Mr. Deville and Perdita, took their seats in the private box to the right of the stage in the City Theatre. The house was brilliantly lighted and well filled by a fashionable and appreciating audience. Mr. Deville’s eyes wandered over the crowd, turning from the many beautiful women that gemmed the dress-circle, to rest with pride upon the more brilliant beauty of the young girl at his side. He saw that this new, splendid beauty was attracting general attention, that many lorgnettes were levelled at their box, and whispering faces were leaned together in eager inquiry.

Never yet, in her short young life, had Perdita looked so brilliantly beautiful as upon this evening. She had thrown back her ermine mantle, and now appeared in a tight-fitting spencer of bright crimson satin, with neck and sleeve trimmings of fine point-lace, and a little opera-hat of the same shade of crimson, turned up at the left

side with a white plume. Her long, jet black ringlets hung down each side her white forehead and blooming cheeks. Her large dark eyes were sparkling, her ruby lips smiling, her whole face glowing with the delight of youthful anticipation.

Orville Deville gazed at his young charge in pride and joy. He had seen a more lovely woman—Adelaide; he had known a more fascinating one, Lionne; but never, no, never, had he beheld a creature so perfectly beautiful as Perdita now appeared to him. And he saw that his own judgment was indorsed by the whole audience, who could scarcely keep their eyes from rudely resting upon the brilliant young girl.

But—stop! oh, heaven, what is this? a wonder, a revelation, a resemblance never, in his whole knowledge of her young life, seen before! but which now, the mere accidents of costume and of emotion and of light and shade, betrayed to him!

Yes, the tight-fitting boddice revealing every undulation of the slight, graceful form, the piquant hat and plume surmounting the little, elegant head, the long, black ringlets shading the crimson cheeks, the burning, black eyes, the glowing, ruby lips, the dark, bright face, instinct with enthusiasm—the form partly in the shade of the curtained box, partly in the glare of the lamp light—yes! it was the re-produced and living image of Lionne, as fourteen years before he had seen her first, in the darkness of the thunder cloud and the glare of the lightning, on the brink of the mountain precipice!

While he gazed in something like amazement, doubting his own senses and sanity, Perdita turned to answer some observation made by Colonel Bingham, who was seated upon her left, and by this change of position the accident of light and shade was reversed, and the identity of resemblance dispelled. And before Colonel Bingham could point out to Perdita the various persons present, distinguished for talent, wealth, position, beauty or fashion, etc., the curtain rose and the attention of all was riveted upon the stage.

At first, Perdita’s faculties were a little bewildered by the novelty of the whole

scene. Her eyes were dazzled by the glowing of gaudy colors, the glittering of jewels, the gleaming of steel and the flashing of lights, before she could well understand what was going on. It was an uninteresting preliminary scene—a sword fight between two young Grecians, rival suitors for the hand of a princess. Perdita watched attentively, all her anxiety being to behold the expected wonder of the evening—the illustrious Melpomene.

The scene was short, the combatants were parted by the intervention of an aged courtier. And then—

"Oh! she comes!" exclaimed our young Perdita, as a lady "in gleam of satin and glimmer of pearls," with her bright hair encircled by the "golden round" of royalty, entered upon the scene. "See! is that Melpomene?"

Colonel Bingham smiled and whispered:

"No, my dear, that is not the star! That is only a rushlight! Not Roxana, but the little Princess Parisitas."

"But she is very beautiful and stately."

"A pretty and intelligent little girl, well got up. The footlights do the rest."

Perdita watched the progress of the drama with the interest of a novice. The scenes changed.

Presently again Perdita grasped the arm of her old friend, exclaiming, breathlessly:

"Oh, there she certainly is!" as a lady, handsome as all the houries, robed in scarlet and gold, with the royal diadem upon her brow, preceded by music and attended by courtiers, entered upon the scene.

Colonel Bingham laughed, saying:

"Mistaken again. This is only the daughter of Darius the Princess Statira, for whom Alexander the Great has forsaken Roxana."

"But she is royally beautiful, and walks and speaks and looks like a queen!"

“Um-m—yes! Mrs. West, who plays the part, is a fine-looking woman, of considerable talent—scarlet and gold, rouge and ringlets do the rest.”

Perdita looked at him reproachfully.

“Why will you dampen all my delight?” she asked.

“I do not wish you to waste enthusiasm on these frumpery people. High, unapproachable genius is the only thing worthy of such warmth. Wait, my little rustic, until you see Melpomene—as Roxana.”

“It seems we are never to see her! The first act is almost over!” said Perdita, impatiently.

“And the second act will be quite over before you see her. These royal personages are chary of their presence, especially this royal Melpomene,” replied Colonel Bingham, smiling.

The remainder of the first act and the whole of the second was filled with the triumphal festivals attending the arrival of Alexander, the conspiracies of the disaffected courtiers, and the jealousy of Queen Statira. At the falling of the curtain at the close of the second act, Perdita sat back pleased, but impatient.

The rising of the curtain upon the third act restored her good humor.

“Oh, there she is now! That is Melpomene! that is Roxana! that is THE QUEEN!” exclaimed Perdita, in the low, hushed tone of intense feeling, as she bent forward to gaze upon the scene. There sat a woman who never met the gaze of the public except beyond the burning barrier of the footlights—yet a woman who, in bower or hall, church or mart, must have drawn all eyes upon herself as the magnet draws steel—a woman of surpassing, of superhuman, of goddess-like beauty, grace and majesty! “a queen by virtue of her brow and breast, not needing to be crowned!” an awful goddess, such as Homer and the antique poets dreamed of. No crown, indeed, sat upon that brow, royal of itself; no useless jewel lent its meretricious light to her imposing costume. The cincture of diamonds that flamed like a serpent of fire

around her head, was only there to confine the heavy masses of her midnight hair. The cestus of diamonds around her waist was only meant to bind the folds of her flowing purple velvet robe. Her eyes were cast down until the long black lashes lay distinctly marked upon the cheek, white as marble.

A courtier, a messenger, it seemed, of heavy news, stood at a respectful distance, waiting for her words.

The spectacle represented that scene of the drama in which Cassander brings to the queen intelligence that she is forsaken by Alexander for the fresher charms of the daughter of Darius, the young Princess Statira. She—the forsaken queen—had not yet spoken. She had heard the news, and her still, white face was that of a goddess stunned into marble by astonishment which is, as yet, too incredulous to be mixed with anger or pain. Her words and her tone, when she first spoke, were low, slow, measured, and calm and incredulous as her look.

"'Deserted?—saidst thou?—for a girl abandoned?

A puny girl made up of watery elements'

Shall she embrace the god of my desire,

And triumph in the heart Roxana claims."

Yet, somehow, those words and that look thrilled to the hearts of all who heard and saw them.

"Ay," said Colonel Bingham, "she at least is not made up of watery elements. All fire and air is that consuming nature. I really should not like to make her angry. I dread for the daughter of Darius—do not you, my dear?"

"Oh, hush! I want to hear!" replied Perdita, in a deep, breathless tone, and without removing her fascinated gaze from the stage.

"Oh, I forgot, my charming little rustic! you are not a hackneyed play-goer. You come here not to be admired, but to admire. You are really interested in what is

going on. Come! there, then, I'm silent," added the Colonel, noticing the growing impatience of his beautiful young friend.

Perdita's gaze remained riveted upon the scene as it progressed. She watched with the most intense interest the growing passion of the queen's soul, as her incredulity was merged in doubt, and her doubt was lost in certainty. And then the stony stillness of the deserted wife and outraged queen was broken as startlingly as a rock is blasted by an explosion of gunpowder—and when, throwing up her arms, she thundered forth,

"'Away! away! and give a whirlwind room!'"

the effect was absolutely terrific.

With a half smothered gasp, Perdita sank back and covered her face with her hands.

Colonel Bingham, a "hackneyed play-goer," smiled, and stooping forward, whispered to Mr. Deville:

"Our young rustic will expose us to ridicule if she betrays such acute feeling!"

There was no answer. Colonel Bingham, astonished, fixed his eyes upon his silent friend, and started.

Well he might.

Orville Deville sat motionless, colorless as a statue, gazing in a sort of horror of amazement upon the fury on the stage!

"Deville! why, in the name of all the fates, what ails you? Has this sorceress bewitched you?" inquired the Colonel.

"I—I have just recollected a most pressing engagement! You—you will oblige me by taking charge of Perdita and bringing her home at the close of the performance," said Mr. Deville, in an agitated manner, as he hurriedly arose from his seat.

"Are you going, father?" asked Perdita, turning around at the sound of his voice.

"Yes, my dear, an engagement I have just remembered calls me away! You need not

leave! Colonel Bingham will take you home."

"Certainly, with pleasure," replied Colonel Bingham, still in amazement. And before he had recovered his presence of mind, Mr. Deville had left the box.

Perdita's attention was once more drawn to the stage by the entrance of Statira, when ensued the celebrated stormy encounter between the "Rival Queens."

The intense interest and excitement of the young girl increased in proportion to the rising action and passion of the drama—until at last, at the catastrophe where Roxana, overwhelmed with wrongs and insults, and frenzied with jealousy and despair, destroys her rival. Then the young Perdita, pale with profound emotion, sank back and once more covered her face with her hands.

The curtain fell amid thunders of applause.

"Shall we wait for the afterpiece?" inquired Colonel Bingham.

"Oh! no, let us go," murmured Perdita.

"Well—at least, perhaps, you would like to see the ballet between the pieces?"

"No, no, nothing after this! Take me home!"

"Enthusiast! Well, come, then," said Colonel Bingham, rising and placing the ermine mantle upon the shoulders of his charge.

The applause continued—augmented—and cries of "Roxana! Roxana! Roxana!" filled the house.

"They are calling her out! Will you stop a moment to see her?" asked the Colonel.

"Yes! yes!" murmured Perdita, eagerly.

Here a gentleman from the next box bending forward, said—

"It is no use, Colonel! She will not come! She never has done so yet, and it is not likely she will now!"

"We'll see," said Colonel Bingham.

“Roxana! Roxana! Roxana!” called the crowd.

“They may call—they have called her every evening, but she has never come.”

“Roxana! Roxana! Roxana!” cried the assembly.

To the surprise of all—even of those who most persistently called her, the majestic form once more glided before them and stood—grand, beautiful, self-possessed, silent as a goddess awaiting worship!

“Glorious!” muttered Colonel Bingham under his breath.

Her appearance was greeted by a round of ecstatic applause.

When this was over and silence restored, she slowly bowed her head, as Juno throned in Olympus might do, and so passed from their view.

“Come, I think it quite time that I had taken you home. These mental and passional stimulants will not do for you, my dear,” said Colonel Bingham, as he wrapped Perdita in her ermine mantle, drew her arm within his own and took her from the theatre.

As they stepped out upon the street, they saw, above the turmoil of the crowded city, the full moon shining, a globe of liquid, silvery light, amid the dark-blue heavens.

“Oh, grand, beautiful, glorious!” muttered Perdita to herself.

“What, the moon?”

“Oh, no, the lady, the tragedienne, the enchantress!”

“Look up, my child; the moon is really worth looking at!”

Perdita raised her eyes to the queen of night, and then turned them inquiringly upon her mentor.

“The moon is beautiful, serene and heavenly, is she not?”

“Oh, yes.”

“The very emblem of peace, joy and repose?”

“Yes.”

“So she seems, at this distance, to our admiring eyes! Yet, Perdita, my child, that serene queen of night, that benignant lighter of the traveller’s darkened path, that perfect emblem of cheerful love and benign repose, that lovely moon is really and truly a most horrible Hades, an awful Gehenna, a scathed, darkened and blasted desert, such as no part of our own earth’s surface could possibly show—a black Tartarus without inhabitants, without vegetation, without water and without air! Its surface, that seems so fair and serene, and shines so soft and bright, is rent and gashed with awful chasms fifty miles in depth and seamed by ghastly rocks; and is on one side burned, and on the other frozen, by such extremes of heat and cold as even fire and ice give us no real idea of! Perdita, this woman that we have seen to-night reminds me of that satellite!—fair, queenly, glorious without! but—a blasted ruin within!”

Perdita shuddered.

“I like to see her; but I should not like to know her,” continued the Colonel, speaking more to himself than to his companion.

“And yet there is nothing against her; no, not a word, not a breath; every one speaks as highly of the woman as of the artiste,” said Perdita, instinctively taking up the defence of the tragedienne.

“And, yet, such is the impression she has made upon me.”

“She seems—she is—very unhappy,” mused Perdita, as her old friend led her to and placed her in the carriage.

The drive home was performed almost in total silence. Perdita was musing upon the subject of the fascinating woman who had so strangely won her heart; and Colonel Bingham was meditating deeply upon the character of the young enthusiast by his side.

When they reached the hotel, the Colonel conducted the young girl to the private

parlor of her party, and there took leave.

On one side of this parlor was Lady Adelaide's chamber. On the other side was Perdita's. The doors of both were closed.

Too much excited by all she had seen and heard to retire to bed, Perdita walked restlessly about the room, until she was interrupted by the opening of Lady Adelaide's door and the entrance of the old maid Keziah, who said to her—

"Lady Adelaide wishes to see you, in her room, Miss Perdita."

"Indeed! is not my father with her?"

"No, he is not come in yet, Miss Perdita."

The young girl threw off her mantle and her hat, and hurried into the adjoining chamber, where she found Lady Adelaide wrapped in a white merino dressing-gown, and sitting in an easy chair awaiting her. The lady half rose and held out her arms; and when Perdita approached, she folded her as a recovered treasure, to her bosom, murmuring—

"My child! my sprite! I have spent these long hours in prayer for you."

"You should have gone to rest, sweet mamma," replied Perdita, returning her embrace.

"Had you been exposed to danger by fire or flood, could I have slept, think you?"

"No, dear mamma, but then I was not so. I was exposed to neither fire nor flood."

"My child, there are moral and spiritual dangers more to be dreaded than either. The former can hurt only the body. The latter can kill the soul."

"Mamma, you make me shudder."

"I did not mean to do so. But come, tell me, where is Mr. Deville, that he did not return with you?"

"He suddenly remembered an engagement that gave him some anxiety, and he left at the commencement of the third act, leaving me in the care of Colonel Bingham."

“Ah, and how did you pass the evening, my dear?”

“Oh, mamma, mamma, I do not know whether I were the most pleased or pained! Oh, mamma, that wondrous, wondrous woman!” said Perdita, with a smile and a shudder.

“The actress, you mean?”

“No, the tragedienne, the artiste, the—sorceress!”

“Well, the actress.”

“Oh, mamma do not call that awful goddess an actress!”

“Well, but my little enthusiast, what is she but an actress, after all?”

“I know not! a witch! a wonder! an enchantress! Oh, mamma, her looks, her tones, her gestures were not acting, they were real!”

“You are too enthusiastic, my dear,” said Lady Adelaide, gravely.

“Oh, mamma, I cannot help it when I think of her! Her tones, her words, her looks draw my heart—draw it from my very bosom as it were to cleave to her!”

“You are very much too excitable,” sorrowfully observed the lady.

“Mamma, you do know she draws me—draws me as the magnet draws the needle! Mamma I cannot resist it! I must see that lady!”

“See her! you have seen her!”

“But, mamma, I must see her singly—face to face!”

“Child, you are certainly——deranged!”

“Mamma, I feel her drawing me—drawing me all the time!”

“Oh, your head is turned! Alas I why did I let you go! Ah! where is Mr. Deville?” exclaimed Lady Adelaide, in distress.

“Dear mamma, go to bed and go to rest. I will not vex you further! Come, I promise! Give me your good-night kiss and let me go,” said Perdita, throwing her arms

around the lady's neck, and offering her lips for the kiss.

"Good-night! good night! oh, my dear one, pray that you be not led into temptation!" said Lady Adelaide, pressing her lips to those of her adopted child.

"I will! I will! sweet mother, I will! good-night!" said Perdita, as she received the parting kiss and retired from the chamber.

"Ah! where is Mr. Deville? Why does he not come! My mind is full of the most mournful misgivings!" exclaimed Lady Adelaide, when left alone.

And where was Orville Deville?

CHAPTER XXXV. THE MEETING.

Away, address thy prayers to Heaven,

Before thy star of life is set:

Learn if thou there can'st be forgiven;

If mercy may absolve thee yet!

But here, upon this earth beneath,

There's not a spot where thou and I

Together for an hour could breathe.

Away! I would not see thee die!—Byron.

When Mr. Deville left the stage-box, he hurried from the theatre, out into the open street, and walked up and down the pavement, that the fresh night air might cool the fever of his blood and calm the agitation of his nerves. For an hour or more, he walked thus, and then having regained some degree of composure, and judging that the long tragedy of five acts must be near its close, he returned to the theatre and entered by the side door used by the actors and actresses, and leading behind the scenes. He entered without hesitation the passage leading to the door of the

green-room, and meeting there an officer of the establishment, he said, in a peremptory voice:

“Conduct me at once to the private dressing-room of Mrs. Norl.”

“It is not my business, sir; I must not leave the door,” replied the man.

“Then call some one whose business it may be,” said Mr. Deville, in the same peremptory tone.

The man raised his head, looked up and down the passage, and spying a boy crossing the way, called him, and bade him summon Mrs. Norl’s page.

The boy nodded and disappeared, and in a few moments a fair-haired, blue-eyed, delicate lad approached, bowed, and stood awaiting orders.

“You are Mrs. Norl’s page?”

“Yes, sir,” answered a sweet voice.

“Then show me at once to her room,” said Mr. Deville, in a tone of command.

“But my mistress is still upon the stage.”

“No matter, I can wait for her.”

For a moment the lad hesitated, and then with the instinct of obedience, bowed his head, and preceded the visitor down the passage to a side-door, leading to other passages, until they got to a narrow staircase, which they descended to find themselves in a sort of stone ante-chamber, small and gloomy as a vault.

“Mrs. Norl’s room is immediately under the stage,” said the fair-haired lad, opening a door leading into a little chamber, hung with crimson cloth, and lighted by a single hanging-lamp, beneath which stood a marble-topped table, near which sat an easy chair. A lounge stood against the wall on the right, and a dressing-table, with looking-glass and toilet apparatus on the left.

“Does your mistress usually admit visitors to this room?” inquired Mr. Deville, as he threw himself into the easy chair beside the table.

“No, sir—never.”

“Why, then, have you admitted me?”

“I thought—by the way you spoke—that you had a right—or was expected—or——,” said the boy, hesitating, and beginning to look doubtful and troubled.

“You were correct, perfectly correct in your thought,” said Mr. Deville, smiling strangely, and then adding: “You may go; and you need not announce to your mistress that any one awaits her here.”

The boy bowed and withdrew.

Scarce ten minutes passed when a commanding step was heard approaching, a haughty tone was heard giving some order without, and the next instant the door was opened and the great tragedienne, still in her imperial robes, entered the room. Unconscious of the presence of another, she advanced proudly, and threw herself into the chair. Leaning her elbow upon the table, and her regal head upon her hand, she fell into bitter and sarcastic musing.

For a few minutes, with the strangest feelings, Orville Deville, from his unseen and unsuspected position on the lounge, watched her. There was something of the old admiration, the old fascination of the snake that had beguiled him; something of fear and wonder at the virulence of passion, visible even in the repose of those fine features; something of desire that all this might cease, and that the sight of this beautiful Lamia might not act as a galvanic battery upon his nerves, putting his very manhood to shame.

She sat there in her wondrous beauty, strength and power, the very ideal of a physically perfect woman. Her splendid purplish black hair, partly confined in the classic roll at the back of her regal head, partly escaping the diamond-studded fillet, and falling upon the rounded ivory bosom and shoulder; her faultless features in repose; her dark eyes cast down until their long lashes swept a shadow upon her

flushed cheek; her crimson lips compressed; her rounded chin supported upon the graceful hand; the purple velvet drapery falling away from the beautiful arm and bosom, and sweeping in massive folds around her perfect form.

He watched her only for a moment, and then, rising silently, stood before her.

She started and looked up, hissing—

"Deville!"

"Yes, madam—Deville, as you are undoubtedly Lionne!" he answered, folding his arms and fixing his eyes upon her, while he added: "At last I see you—bodily, visibly, tangibly—before me! No optical delusion! no apparition, called up from the dead by a troubled mind! no spectre, created by excited nerves!—but Lionne, as I am Deville!"

"What do you want?" she inquired, in the slow and solemn tones of one questioning a ghost, and returning his fixed gaze until his own eyes fell as scathed by her look.

"What do I want, you ask?"

"Yes."

"Woman! tigress! fiend! how long is this pursuit of me and mine to last?" he asked, in an excited voice, once more raising his eyes to meet her burning gaze.

She arose, put back her chair, struck one hand upon her chest, and in the low, deep, stern tones of intense passion and ruthless determination, she answered—

"So long as this fierce sense of wrong burns in my bosom, firing every thought to vengeance!—until the hunted is driven to self-destruction, or the huntress expires in the pursuit!"

"Cruel and vindictive woman! what good will all that bring you?" exclaimed Deville, bitterly.

"What good?" she repeated, with a horrible laugh. "That is a question for a sage, not for a man of the world! What good does any object of pursuit bring to the pursuer?

What good does gold bring to the avaricious: power to the ambitious, possession to the covetous, glory to the aspiring? Such good will vengeance bring me!”

“Demon!” ejaculated Orville Deville.

“‘Angel!’ I used to be!” sneered Lionne. Then, leaving her scornful tone, she bitterly exclaimed—

“Ay, angel and demon scarcely exaggerate, scarcely express, what I was and what I am! All human creatures live for an object—the avaricious for gold, the ambitious for power, the aspiring for glory! I once lived to love and serve and bless. I now live to hate, blast, and curse! Can any two purposes more strongly illustrate the angel and the demon life? And who has made the change?—let him who made it take the consequences! A simple, pure-hearted, loving girl of fifteen, I fell into your manly hands. You might have made an angel or a demon of me. You chose to make the demon! receive the work of your own hands!”

For a few seconds he quailed, as the guilty must always quail, before the terrible truth of this accusation; then, gathering an evil courage, he answered, sternly—

“Woman! you forget that the very fact of your standing before me in bodily form places you in my power!”

“Ha!” she said, in atone of caustic irony; “in what manner, I pray you, sir?”

“As a felon!”

“Felon?” she repeated, in a low, deep, hissing tone, gathering her dark brows until the eyes beneath them flashed like lightning from a thunder-cloud—“Felon?”

“Ay, felon! kidnapper! abductor!”

She laughed again her awful laugh.

“Where is my child?” asked Deville, in a stern tone.

“Where is MINE?” she repeated, in a terrible voice.

“I will have no prevarication!—Woman, thief, child-stealer, where is my daughter?”

“Which of them?” asked Lionne, with horrible irony.

“I tell you I will not bear prevarication! I speak of the only one I recognize! and I ask you again—Where is my child?”

“The only child of yours of which I can testify competently, found a grave—in the stomach of a wild beast, years ago!” she said, with the same awful irony.

“I know nothing about what you are talking of,” said Orville Deville, growing deadly pale; “but I ask you—Where is my child?”

“Search and see if you can find her!”

“Imp of Hades, you shall not escape me thus! I will denounce and prosecute you as the murderer of my child! You shall exchange the theatre for a court-room, the boudoir for a prison-cell, the stage for the scaf——”

“Stay! your proof?” said Lionne, in a low, sneering tone.

That somehow calmed his excitement.

“Proof? proof? I have grounds enough to justify your arrest. The proof will afterwards be sought,” replied Mr. Deville.

“Go on, then. The charge can but inconvenience me for an hour or two! Meanwhile I shall lay before the burghers the original papers of which you have the copies!”

“Perdition!” exclaimed Deville, in a low voice. “This woman has me irretrievably in her toils!”

“She has!” muttered Lionne, in a deep, stern tone.

“I will bear this no longer!” exclaimed Deville, starting up and rushing from the room—“I will bear this no longer! Time—a very little time shall show which of us two shall triumph!”

“Come back—I have somewhat more to say to you!” pealed the deep, bell-like tones of Lionne, as Deville left the room.

He strode back, and with folded arms stood before her.

“What is your will, madam?”

“I would ask you a question.”

“Go on!”

“Who was that young girl whom I saw at your side?”

“Suppose I refuse to answer?”

“It can make but little difference in my settled purpose.”

“What have you to do with my adopted daughter?”

“Oh! your adopted daughter, is she? It is well; my question is answered,” said Lionne, with cool contempt.

“Since you have led me to betray myself, witch, I repeat my question—What have you to do with Perdita Deville?”

“Perdita Deville is her name, then! That will do. I want nothing more.”

“I ask you, fiend, what would you have with Miss Deville?”

“I would have nothing more with you or her. Good-night,” said Lionne, coolly.

“Demon! what hellish scheme are you meditating now?” exclaimed Deville.

“I do not take you into my counsel, whatever my purpose may be. Good-night.”

“Devil! listen, then, to this—whatever your schemes may be—dare to harm a hair of Perdita’s head, and——”

“Do you not understand, sir, that you are dismissed? Good-night.”

With a fierce stamp of impatience, Deville turned and rushed from the room. Hurrying along the same passage through which he had entered, he soon reached the outer door and the street. His carriage had been taken away by Colonel Bingham at the time the latter carried Perdita home, and so he had no other course to pursue than to walk rapidly home.

On reaching his hotel, he hurried up into his private apartment, where he found Lady

Adelaide still up and awaiting him. She was wrapped in her graceful blue cashmere dressing-gown, and her lovely hair was partly shaded by a delicate white lace cap. Her sweet, fair face wore such a heavenly expression of resignation and trust, modifying its keen anxiety, that Deville could not but think that compared with the illustrious, but most wretched woman he had just left, this quiet Christian wife and mother looked a very angel of light.

“Two o’clock, and you still up?” said Deville, glancing at the time-piece on the mantel-shelf. “I’m sorry that you waited for me, Adelaide. You should not have allowed my absence to have kept you from rest.”

“Anxiety kept me from rest, Mr. Deville.”

“Anxiety, love? Surely not on my unworthy account?”

“It was upon Perdita’s. I dreaded the effect this evening’s amusement would have upon her excitable temperament.”

“But my lovely Puritan, Perdita must have been at home for two hours!”

“Yes, and her appearance only served to indorse and augment my anxiety.”

“Why, fairest saint, what can you mean?”

“Why, that the evil effect I dreaded has been more than realized!—The girl has been attracted—fascinated—fairly enchanted by Mrs. Norl!”

“Why, so has every one else been!”

“But not to the same extent! Perdita declares that she must know this woman, and cannot live without her! Is she not conquered? Is she not crazed?”

Instead of answering immediately, Mr. Deville fell into deep thought.

“But—what make you of all this?” inquired Lady Adelaide, anxiously.

“Before answering your question I would ask you—do you know who this Mrs. Norl is?” inquired Mr. Deville.

“Not only that she is——said to be a dangerous syren—

‘One of those women women dread,

Men fatally adore!’”

“You are right!” said Orville Deville, in a deep, stern, sorrowful voice—“You are right! She is all and more than all you have said!—In one word, she is——

“Lionne!” exclaimed Lady Adelaide, interrupting him with a dreadful start.

“Yes!—but how, love, could you have guessed this?” inquired Deville, with surprise.

“Oh, the prophetic boding of my heart!” cried Lady Adelaide, clasping her hands.

“Dear love! do not let the fact of this wretched woman being near us, trouble you so much!”

“Oh, Mr. Deville! Mr. Deville! her proximity always troubles me! even before she makes her appearance I feel her influence in the very air! So I have felt her all this evening, scarce knowing what spiritual evil it was that agitated me!”

“You are very sensitive!” said Mr. Deville.

Lady Adelaide arose and walked several times up and down the floor, then returning, sat down, and forcing herself to speak calmly, said:

“Mr. Deville, tell me all!”

“Can you bear the subject?”

“Yes.”

“Question me then, dear; I prefer that you should.”

“She recognized you?”

“In an instant! I am sure she knew me the moment she came upon the stage and chanced to raise her eyes to our box—though by no look or sign did she betray her recognition?”

“She ever possessed the greatest self-command?”

“Yes! and upon this occasion so complete was her impassibility as to raise a doubt in my breast as to whether I were not a dupe of my own imagination! The shock, and then the doubt, so troubled me, that I could not entirely control my agitation, and therefore pleaded a business engagement, and left the theatre. At the close of the performance, I returned and sought ‘Mrs. Norl’s’ withdrawing room, where I waited until she came in.”

“Oh, no! no! do not say you came again in conflict with that terrible woman!” exclaimed Lady Adelaide.

“Yes! I wished to ascertain for my own satisfaction whether the fancied identity were real—in a word, whether Lionne, reported dead, and buried long ago, and seeming to return to earth always to blast, destroy and curse—really lived, and moved and had her being in the form of this mysterious Mrs. Norl——”

“And you met her—Lionne—face to face!”

“I met her face to face! We had a stormy interview of which the purport better be left to your imagination. One thing should be told you! At the conclusion of our wrathful conference, when I was about to retire, she called me back, and, in the most peremptory manner, demanded information concerning ‘the young girl’ who was with me in the box.”

“Perdita?” asked Lady Adelaide, in a faint voice.

“Of course, Perdita.”

“Oh, merciful Lord! I understand it all! all now!” faltered the gentle lady, growing very pale.

“Understand—what do you understand, Adelaide?”

“Oh, Orville, Orville! suspicions that have haunted my breast for years are confirmed now!” she exclaimed, clasping her slender white fingers convulsively together.

“Adelaide, I do not comprehend you!” he answered in perplexity.

“Oh, Orville! Orville! the voice of nature is as strong as it is profound! the ties of consanguinity are as keenly perceptible as they are eternal!”

“My love, you speak in enigmas!”

“Oh, Mr. Deville! do you not love Perdita with—a father’s love?”

“Why, of course,—how can you doubt it?”

“I do not doubt it! And does not Perdita love you with a daughter’s fervent affection?”

“Unquestionably!”

“And yet she does not love me so!”

“Little ingrate! I know she does not!”

“No! she is natural, and not ungrateful; she bestows on me only friendship and respect, while she lavishes upon you a most fervent love!”

“Ah! you are too saintly to be jealous, my Adelaide. But to what does all your talk tend? Your manner is full of mystery.”

“I did not mean it should be so! I meant to elucidate a mystery!”

“Go on, love!”

“You acknowledge that while Perdita is only moderately attached to me, her heart is powerfully drawn to you.”

“Strange perversity! yes.”

“It is natural! I have also to remind you that at the first sight of Lionne, the heart of the girl was irresistibly drawn toward——her mother!”

“What!” almost shrieked Orville Deville.

“Oh! Orville! do you not feel that this must be so!” she said, in a faint voice.

“Adelaide, you are mad! simply mad! your singular trials have made you so!” he

faltered.

“Oh, no, not mad! you know it! all my reasons are too well founded—Oh, my husband! have not the circumstances, the coincidences and correspondence between all we knew of Perdita’s history, and all we have heard of Lionne’s lost child—struck you before?” she asked, earnestly.

Without directly replying to her question, he exclaimed in a voice rendered hoarse by excessive agitation—

“Oh, Adelaide! this is terrible! terrible! terrible! What words for you to speak and me to hear!”

“Dear Orville, compose yourself! Think that at least, even while ignorant of her great claims upon us, we have done our duty to this child,” she said, soothingly.

“Our duty! claims upon us! What claims, for instance, could my—could Lionne’s——”

“Hush—dear—hush—do not finish the sentence! Upon you she had every claim that a child could have upon a father! Upon me every one that a helpless, forlorn babe could have upon the handmaid of Him who saith, ‘Whoso’ receiveth one such little one in My name, receiveth me.’”

“My angel! Oh, my angel! Yet I will not call you so! that word is too often debased and misapplied to suit you! but, my saint! Oh, my sweet saint! you can forgive and you can speak so!” said Orville Deville, in a voice trembling with agitation, as the tears started to his eyes.

“I have nothing to forgive! Oh, Orville, if this affecting compunction, offered me,—your faulty wife, your fellow-sinner,—were only offered up to Him against whom only you have sinned!” she fervently exclaimed, taking his hand.

“Sweet saint, I only feel how I have wronged you. But, Adelaide, about Perdita! it seems we are coming to conclusions too quickly! You may be—you must

be—mistaken!”

“Ah, Orville! does not your heart tell you that I am not?”

“Our hearts are not sure guides,” he said, evasively—then inquired:

“Adelaide, how long have you entertained these suspicions concerning Perdita?”

“Ever since she was first cast upon my protection they have been growing—fed by continued circumstantial evidence.”

“And this evidence—these coincidences, correspondences, resemblances—what are they?”

“Lionne, poor girl, believed that her child was devoured by wild beasts in the cavern where she had left it for a short season alone, on the fifteenth of August, seventeen hundred and sixty. On the same day of the same year, Nimrod Kyte found in a cavern in the wilderness a deserted infant, which he brought away and gave into my charge, and whom I christened Perdita. I did not know until long afterwards of this coincidence.”

“Good heaven! that is very striking! yet I was never told of it! What more?”

“At Glen Lennark Castle I saw a portrait of the Lady Leonora Lorne at four years of age. It was the perfect image of our Perdita, who was just three years old! That increased my suspicions! Lately, as the child has grown towards womanhood, I have fancied a growing resemblance to that beautiful, unfortunate woman, whom I have only seen a few times in my life.”

“Enough! enough! oh heaven, Adelaide! why were not these suspicions confided to me!”

“Because, until to-night, they were only suspicions. To-night, they were all confirmed by the strong corroboration of Perdita’s own heart! ay, and of Lionne’s also, as you reveal it to me! and therefore I do not delay to tell you.”

“Adelaide! Good heavens! what—if this be true—what is our course?”

“First investigate the facts for your own satisfaction—then—whatever be the cost of suffering to ourselves of others, we must do—what is right!”

“Adelaide! should this child of your love, and care, and prayers for so many years, prove to be the daughter of Lionne—would you give her up?”—

“—To share her mother’s fatal career—oh, that would be terrible!” exclaimed the lady.

“And yet, in the case put, her mother would have the only legal right to her!”

“I know it! therefore was I made so anxious by Perdita’s strong attraction to Lionne! oh! none but the Lord can help us in this dark strait! I must pray!”

“You must sleep now, dearest! You are tired,” said Mr. Deville, looking kindly into her pale and anxious face.

“Nay, Orville, I shall spend the remainder of the night in prayer, that the demon band of evil passions that at this very hour besieges that wretched woman’s heart, may not be able to prevail! that God’s angels may be near her and God’s grace may appear to her,” said Lady Adelaide. Then offering her lips for her good-night kiss, she glided from the bedchamber into the small, adjoining room, where she usually retired, to offer up her prayers to Heaven.

CHAPTER XXXVI. STORMS

I cannot name his name!

Vengeance to God alone belongs,

But when I think of all my wrongs

My blood is liquid flame!—Scott.

“Mother! sweet mother, mine! a boon! a boon!” said Perdita, playfully and coaxingly, hanging around Lady Adelaide’s neck, as they sat together next morning in their private parlor.

“Well, my dear, what is it?” inquired the latter, anxiously.

“Mrs. Norl plays again to-night, and I want you to let me go and see her.”

“Again, to the theatre, to-night, my dear! That is too often. No, I cannot consent.”

“But, oh, mamma, you do not know how I long—how greatly I long to see her again!” pleaded Perdita, clasping her hands and fixing her eyes prayerfully on the lady’s face.

“Perdita, my dear, just consider that this is unreasonable!”

“Is it, mamma? I cannot help it! for if I am not permitted to go and see her, I do think my heart will go right out of my bosom after her! for I feel her drawing it all the while! and what should I do without my heart?”

“Perdita, you talk like a silly lover.”

“Well, mamma, I do believe that I am in love with that beautiful goddess.”

“Perdita, I cannot permit you to go again to-night! so let us hear no more of it.”

The brow of that young girl, usually so bright and frank, now grew dark and sullen. She took up her embroidery frame, sat down, turned her back towards Lady Adelaide and worked on in silence, until she saw Mr. Deville come up the stairs and enter the little room at the end of the hall, occupied by him as a study. Then she arose, followed him into the room, shut the door, and with the privileged familiarity of a dear child, sat down upon his knees, threw her arms around his neck, drew down his whiskered face to hers and kissed him.

“What does my little daughter want, now?” asked Orville Deville, gazing down into her beautiful, dark, bright face, and wondering with concealed but painful interest whether this beloved and most bewitching creature were indeed, as Lady Adelaide supposed, his child, the child of Lionne.

“What does my little daughter want, now, that she coaxes me so sweetly,—a new necklace?”

“No, father.”

“A new gown? a hat? a spencer? Come, name your wish!”

“It is none of these things, father.”

“What is it, then? Come! speak! you will not find me hard!”

“It is to go this evening again and see Mrs. Norl!”

“My dear, no! your mother does not approve of your doing so!”

“Neither did she yesterday, but you took me, nevertheless,” said Perdita, changing countenance.

“My dear, yes, I took you, somewhat against her approbation, a circumstance which I see cause, now, to regret!”

“Father! father! do not say so! Yesterday, by speaking to mamma, you gained her consent, and you can do the same to-day.”

“No! I only silenced her opposition; and I could not do the same to-day! Perdita! your persistence is, under the circumstances, improper, indelicate, even ungrateful!”

“Why, dear father?”

“Because of Lady Adelaide’s known disapprobation!”

“But, father, I do so long with all my heart and soul to see that wondrous woman again!” exclaimed the young girl, clasping her hands and straining her eyes in the earnestness of her appeal.

“The greater reason for your not being permitted to do so! This woman has turned your head! Enough, Perdita! say no more! I regret that I ever took you thither! I shall take you no more!” said Mr. Deville, in that tone of firm determination from which his daughter knew there was no appeal.

With an angry flush upon her dark and sullen brow, she arose and silently withdrew.

All the remainder of that day, Perdita remained in her own room, appearing only at

meal times.

“That girl is certainly bewitched,” said Donald Lorne to himself; “she, usually so bright and frank, now grown go dark and reserved! I cannot understand it at all!”

But Lady Adelaide and Mr. Deville understood it well, and deeply regretted having thrown their very impressible charge in the way of that fateful woman.

The next day Mr. Deville found still more cause to regret that unfortunate step.

As he sat in his little study engaged in penning a letter to his overseer at River-view, a servant entered and handed him a note and retired. He opened it in haste and read:

“Mrs. Norl wishes to see Mr. Deville at her apartment, in the theatre building, this forenoon.”

“Shall I go—or not?” was his thought, as he held the note suspended in his hand. “I will go,” was his conclusion, as he arose, threw on his cloak, took down his hat, and sallied forth into the street. A rapid walk of ten minutes brought him to the theatre. He entered by the private or stage door, and asked of the young man in attendance, to be shown to Mrs. Norl’s room. With a bow, that official walked before him, and opening the door of an apartment beneath the stage, announced:

“Mr. Deville,” and retired.

Orville Deville entered the room.

Lionne was seated in the easy chair beside the centre-table. She was dressed in a crimson cashmere walking-habit, a mantle of sables, and wore upon her head a crimson velvet hat, with black ostrich plumes. Her dark, bright face was flushed with excitement, as, without rising, she motioned to her visitor to take a seat.

“You have honored me with a summons to your presence, madam, and I am here,” said Mr. Deville.

Lionne bowed, and vouchsafed no further answer.

“Will you condescend to inform me to what circumstance I am indebted for this

distinction, and also in what manner I can serve you?" inquired Mr. Deville, coolly.

"You shall know anon," deliberately replied the lady.

"Will you permit me to inquire why, since this interview was imperative, why I was not summoned to your apartments, which nearly join my own, at the City Hotel?" demanded Deville.

"I never receive gentlemen in my private apartments," replied Lionne.

"Let me at least know the business upon which you have summoned me."

"Assuredly!——The young girl who was with you at the theatre on Monday night, why was she not brought on last night?"

"Because I did not think proper to indulge her."

"And not because she did not desire to come! I am answered."

"Yes; though I do not recognize your right to ask."

"No matter. I have the means of compelling you to recognize any right which I may claim. And to-day I intend to put that means in force."

"Explain yourself, madam!"

"I will. To-night I play Queen Katharine in Henry VIII. I wish to have that young girl present at the performance."

"Arrogant woman! your 'wish' shall not be gratified. She shall not be again exposed to your syren arts!" exclaimed Deville, firmly.

"Remember that I have the means of enforcing my will!" sneered Lionne.

"Remorseless fiend, you have not! I tell you now, do your very worst! You have come to the end of your power over me. No more 'black mail' in any shape or form can be raised from me upon the sins of my youth," exclaimed Deville, indignantly.

"Ha? is it so? Do you, then, no longer recognize, or no longer regard this document?" sneered Lionne, laying before him a copy of that fatal

marriage-certificate.

“Yes, madam; I recognize and I regard it. But I no longer fear—I defy it and you!”

“Madman! to-morrow this document, exposed, must consign you to a prison!” exclaimed Lionne.

“Let it do so. The fate cannot be more dishonoring than the slavery to which its existence has condemned me for the last ten years! Lionne! I tell you, once for all, I am resolved to break the spell that binds me, and to dare the worst! Go! proclaim to the world my sins and your wrongs!”

“Orville Deville! a disposition to relent and to forgive—a disposition a stranger to my heart for years—comes over me!” said Lionne, in a changed and melting tone. “Orville Deville, my heart yearns for that child whom I saw seated at your side in the box on Monday night! Orville Deville, give her to me! My soul cries for her. She is only your adopted daughter—not dear to you, not necessary to you. Give her to me, and we are quits for life!”

“Lionne, your demand is madness, and cannot be gratified,” said Deville, firmly.

“Orville, give me that girl that my soul craves as its salvation, and I will give back into your hands these fatal documents, by the possession of which I hold your position, honor, and liberty at my disposal!”

“No, Lionne, no! I were baser than the basest could I sell for such a price a child so dear to Lady Adelaide!” said Deville, sadly, but firmly.

“Yet she is not the child of Lady Adelaide! And my heart yearns towards her with a passion potent enough to overcome all other feelings in my bosom! Orville Deville, I adjure you to tell me—who and what is that child?” exclaimed Lionne, rising and clasping her hands, and straining her eyes upon him in the earnestness of her entreaty.

“Madam, you must permit me, for the present, to decline answering your question!”

“Orville Deville! if I free you from all the earthly consequences of your crime—if I give into your hands the only existing proof of that crime—will you give me that child?” prayed Lionne, with clasped hands.

“No, madam, I will not!” replied Deville, folding his arms.

“If, in addition to that, I consent to go far away from your sphere, and molest you no more forever, will you then give me the desired of my eyes and heart?”

“No, madam; I will not!”

“If, in addition to all the rest, I sign a paper, ceding to you the lands and lordships of Glen Lennark, then will you give me this child?”

“No, Lionne, no!” said he determinedly.

“In truth, it seems to me like madness, the desire I have to possess that girl. Deville! hitherto I have rather chosen to hold than to use the power I possess over you! By it I have chosen rather to control than to destroy you.”

“To torment me, rather. But, Lionne, your power of threatening and tormenting is at an end this day, when I resolve to dare the worst!”

“Or shall be at an end to-morrow, when, unless that girl shall be given up to me, I shall strike my last blow and—destroy you!”

“Do so, then, madam! Give me the coup de grace, it will be a mercy!”

“You are mad to refuse an offer that I am as mad, perhaps, to make you! But if between this and to-morrow morning, you should have a lucid interval, send me word that you accept my offer; else prepare for prison and a disgraceful exposure.”

CHAPTER XXXVII. THE CRISIS.

Destruction—swift destruction

Fall on my recreant head, and be my fate

The terror of all hearts when I forgive him!—Otway.

“Adelaide! the time has come when all concealments, from whatever cause, between us, must be at an end,” said Orville Deville, as with a pale and resolute brow, he stood before his wife in her dressing-room.

With eyes full of sympathy, that Christian wife took his hand, and drew him towards a chair near her sofa.

“Where is Donald and Perdita?” inquired Mr. Deville.

“With their language-master in the parlor, at their studies. They are safe for some hours.”

“It is well; for I would not be interrupted.” He paused, passed his hand across his brow, and seemed perplexed.

“Dear Orville, speak freely to me—you know that there is very little which I do not already know.”

“You know nothing! since I have told you nothing! You only conjecture, though we have conversed upon that conjecture as though it had been mutually recognized truth. That is past. Now all must be open and clear between us.”

Adelaide looked up at him with eyes full of anxious inquiry.

“Hear me, then, Adelaide! Lionne, when, years ago, she broke in upon your happiness, told you nothing but the truth! truth until now unacknowledged by me! Yes, Adelaide, I married her!—forgetful or ignorant of the nature of that indissoluble bond that from our childhood united me to yourself, and yielding to a violent, though false and transient excitement of the senses, I dared to unite my fate with that beautiful young lionness of the forest—afterwards discovered to be our cousin, the daughter and heiress of the banished Earl of Glen Lennark, the Lady Leonora Lorne.”

Adelaide dropped her eyes, compressed her lips, and tightly clasped her hands, as if

to constrain and repress the emotion that was swelling at her heart. Mr. Deville continued—

“I was called from the side of my fatal bride to the sick-bed of my mother, where, alas! I soon learned that my mad passion was as evanescent as it had been violent, and that my hasty marriage was a crime and a felony, exposing my liberty and honor to degradation and ruin! I found you, whom, years ago, I had left a child, now grown up into a lovely and loving woman, bearing my name, everywhere recognized as my wife. I soon came to love you, not with the blind idolatry of passion, but with all the holiest devotion of my soul. I sought to forget the fatal episode of the forest, and to confirm my true marriage with you! As we were preparing for our bridal tour, Lionne came, and you know the rest!”

Adelaide dropped her head upon her bosom, and wrung her pale hands together, as though silently wrestling with the strong agitation that was shaking her whole frame.

Mr. Deville continued—

“The rage, grief and despair of Lionne was at first natural, justifiable! but her long-continued, persistent, ruthless malignity against me and all connected with me, is madness!”

“Let us be just! she had enough to drive her mad,” sighed Lady Adelaide.

“And now,” continued Mr. Deville, “affairs approach a crisis! The certificate of my—yes! I will speak the fatal word—felonious marriage with herself is in her possession, a terrible weapon for my destruction! She will use it!”

Lady Adelaide shuddered as with an ague fit, and covered her face with her hands.

“She will use it unless I obey the order she gives me, however unreasonable, improper, or even criminal that order may be.”

“Oh, Orville!”

“At her command I gave up, without possible explanation, the earldom of Glen

Lennark."

"It was her right and not ours, dear husband."

"At her command I stepped down from the seat of distinction upon which the suffrages of my friends had placed me."

Lady Adelaide clasped and unclasped her hands in troubled thought.

"And finally, when her commands become impossible to fulfil, or when she cares no longer to make them, she will still, with the relentless, ruthless malignity of her nature, use her power to crush me."

Again Lady Adelaide shook as with an ague-fit, while she covered her pale face with her hands.

"I own, Adelaide, that in my early youth the dread of the possible exposure, disgrace and ruin attending a criminal trial deterred me from meeting the crisis that must come sooner or later. Longer, it were unmanly to shrink. Something must be done." As he said this he looked inquiringly at the pale and quivering face of his wife, as though he would have discovered therein whether she had courage to meet that terrible ordeal at which he hinted. She understood his unspoken doubts, and controlling her awn agitation, she raised her face, pale and still, to that of her husband, and answered:

"Let us try to reflect what is right to be done, and do it—braving the consequences."

"My noble wife! It is what I myself judged best. The present demand of this most unhappy woman is, that we give up to her our adopted daughter, Perdita. Were I mad enough to obey this insane command, how can I be sure that her next command would not be that I should give up you? And where would her despotism stop? I will dare and meet the trial! The essence of all crime is in the intention. I had no intention to commit a crime. The jury will understand that. Yes, once for all, I will dare the certificate!" said Mr. Deville, rising and pressing a kiss upon the brow of his wife, before leaving the room.

“And I,” murmured Lady Adelaide, “I will get the certificate from her; for I know how to appeal to that better spirit that, however confined, still lives in every human heart.”

“And I call on earth and hades to crush me with a swift destruction the day, the hour that I relent!” muttered, in low, deep thunder, a terrible voice at her side.

Adelaide started and looked up to see Lionne, the relentless, the terrible, the ubiquitous, standing before her.

Yes, the rivals were again face to face. What a picture they made! What a contrast they formed!

Lady Adelaide, with her fair face softly shaded by her pale, golden tresses, and by the fine, semi-transparent lace of a delicate breakfast-cap, and her fragile form wrapped in a soft, snow-white, cashmere negligé, reclining on her easy chair, and—

Lionne, with her unconfined, long, glittering, black ringlets rolling fiercely back from her dark, bright, resplendent countenance,—her tall, finely-curved figure arrayed in a close-fitting black habit, and drawn up to its proudest height.

They gazed at each other—the soft, blue eyes deprecatingly; the fierce, black ones defiantly.

Lionne muttered the repetition of her cruel word:

“And I call on earth and hades to crush me with a swift destruction the day, the hour that I relent!”

“An awful adjuration of the evil powers, madam! I meet it with an appeal to the better and higher—ay, to the Best and Highest—God! and I call on Heaven to turn aside from you the curse you have invoked upon yourself; to endow you with the grace of mercy, and to bless you—forgiving others, forgiven yourself!” said Lady Adelaide, in a soft and prayerful tone.

Lionne smiled in bitter scorn.

“Will you sit down, madam?” said Lady Adelaide, putting out her hand, and drawing another chair nearer to her own.

Lionne silently threw herself into the offered seat.

“And now will you tell me in what manner I can be of service to you?” inquired Lady Adelaide, deprecatingly, for she felt herself, indeed, as it were, a lamb in the power of a lioness.

The haughty visitor hesitated, paused in deep thought for a moment, while Lady Adelaide added:

“If I can be of use to you, in any way, believe me, I shall be glad.”

An ironical smile flitted over the face of Lionne, and in a sarcastic voice, she answered:

“Very well! I will inform you how you can be of use to me, since to ‘serve’ me will make you glad.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII. THE LIONESS AND THE LAMB.

Ah, he who turns the courses

Of the streamlet in the glen,

And the river of great waters,

Can turn the hearts of men.—Whittier.

Again, in that small chamber, in the persons of those two women, the powers of good and evil, of love and hate, met!

In Adelaide, all bright wisdom, all warm affection, all good purpose shone.

In Lionne, alas! dark, monomaniac, fierce passion, vindictive resolution burned.

On the brow of the first beamed the mild radiance of a pitying seraph.

On the front of the second lowered the “glory obscured” of a fallen angel.

With her blue eyes fixed appealingly upon the face of her fierce antagonist, Adelaide waited a few moments, and then said, gently:

“Pray, tell me, freely and kindly, what you would have of me.”

“Lady” began Lionne, in a tone in which irony struggled with a certain irresistible honor she was beginning to feel for the gentle woman into whose presence she had intruded—“Lady, you will credit me when I tell you that I came not into your presence unannounced, however unwelcome! The servant who opened the door for me breathed my name, though both you and your companion were too much occupied to hear it.”

“And—you overheard our conversation?”

“Certainly not; only your last words. I entered by one door as he went out by the other.”

“And now you will tell me what I can do for you?”

“Or rather why I came.—Yes. I came hither in fulfilment of a tryst, promise, or threat, whichever you may please to call it, made to—Orville Deville. There! his name is uttered! it will not choke me again!”

Adelaide shrank from the terrible convulsion that distorted the countenance of Lionne in uttering these words. The unhappy woman continued:

“He who laid waste my life, leaving it a blasted desert, he brought to the theatre three nights ago, a young girl, at the sight of whom my heart, so long cold, stony, dead in my bosom, warmed to life again—I seemed to live again the sweet, humane life, so long lost!—to breathe the pure air, to bask in the bright sunshine, to inhale the fragrance of the old forest, to feel my relations with nature, to taste all the sweetness of my long-lost innocent life!”

The stern voice of the speaker faltered, the dark splendor of her eyes were quenched in tears.

“Most strange!” murmured Adelaide, as sympathetic moisture dimmed her mild, blue eyes.

“Ay, strange! inexplicable! Unparalleled, I think. I knew not how it should be so. I only know ‘there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy.’”

She might well say that; for already the pure sphere of Adelaide, with her attendant angels, was influencing her. She continued:

“With the withdrawal of this young girl, life, and light, and warmth went out from me. Again I felt myself the disconnected, troubled spirit that I had been for years; without human love, or joy, or sympathy. From warmth and light, and life, cast out into the ‘outer darkness!’”

“You speak thus! You, the beautiful, the resplendent star of the east and the west. You, the idol of all genius-worshippers! You speak of coldness, darkness, and deadness, invested, as you are, with the dazzling blaze of this world’s most radiant glory!”

“It does not enter here,” answered Lionne, mournfully, pressing her hand upon her heart. Then pointing through the window to the full moon just risen in the east, she said:

“Look! that satellite is my type! the direct rays of the sun surrounds her with a glory that reflected, lights up all our night! Yet that glory irradiates without penetrating, without blessing her! Under the mild splendor of that light all is scathed, blasted, blackened!—a horrible hades! Such, under the glory of fame, am I!”

The deep despair of her words, her tones, and her looks, touched the sensitive heart of Adelaide, who arose, went to her, dared to lay her hand upon the glittering dark ringlets, the lioness’s mane, and whisper:

“Oh, Lionne, my cousin, for you are such, you fill me with the most painful sympathy. Would I could help you to banish from your soul the sorrowful memory

of wrong and the sinful hope of revenge, for with those grievous passions would go all the suffering of your life. Peace would come; you would take your proper high position in the world; your splendid genius, now worse than wasted, would bless mankind instead of blighting yourself. Oh, Lionne! oh, my cousin, save yourself!"

"I cannot! I cannot!" exclaimed the wretched woman, wildly throwing off the caressing hand of her better angel—"I cannot! I cannot! this bitter memory of wrong; this burning hope of revenge; it is a disease, a frenzy! I suffer from an inward anguish, a living death, from which there is no relief but in the thought and the pursuit of vengeance!"

Lady Adelaide placed her hands soothingly upon her shoulder, and would have addressed some words of comfort and counsel.

"Be still! I will not hear you! You would wile me from my purpose!"

"I would save you from yourself," pleaded the gentle lady.

"You would save your husband! You cannot! The consummation of my life's purpose is at hand! Tell that man from me that I came here seeking him, to warn him that, as he has disobeyed my injunction, I have accomplished my threat!"

Lady Adelaide turned ghastly pale, dropped her hold upon Lionne, and sank half fainting into the chair. Too well she knew what that threat had been.

"Tell him," continued Lionne, vehemently, "that had he shown mercy to the last human love that bloomed in my blasted bosom, had he given me that strayed child, to whom I felt so strangely attracted, it might have been otherwise! Now all is over! all is lost! lost! lost!" and throwing her arms wildly into the air, the wretched woman, almost a maniac, rushed from the room, before the astounded Lady Adelaide could interfere to change her purpose.

CHAPTER XXXIX. THE CURSE OF AN

ACCOMPLISHED VOW.

Now the fell curse which yours have nurst

Full on her spoiler's head shall burst,

And all her wrong, and shame, and pain

Burn fiercely on his heart and brain.—Whittier.

An hour later, as Orville Deville sat at tea, with his wife and their two adopted children, in the private parlor of their apartments, there was heard a sound of several footsteps, approaching along the passage towards their room, accompanied by whisperings, and followed by a rap at their door.

"See who is there, John," said the master to the servant.

The man opened the door. Several persons were seen without, among whom was a deputy sheriff, Mr. Murdock, who advanced into the room, but, seeing ladies at the table, retreated a step, saying:

"Mr. Deville, I have business with you, which I would like to communicate alone."

Well could Orville Deville surmise the nature of that business. As he arose from the table, a cold paleness overspread his face. Men can confront instant death with more courage than they can stand face to face with disgrace.

"Well?" he asked in a husky tone, as he met the officer of justice.

"It is a warrant, sir! I beg your pardon, a very disagreeable affair! Between ourselves, I think the poor lady is mad, though I should not express an opinion," said the officer, deprecatingly.

"When do we go?"

"Immediately, if you please, sir. The magistrate thought that at this hour the examination would not be so likely to attract notice as at an earlier one, and that it would be therefore less unpleasant to yourself."

“I am indebted to his consideration!” said Mr. Deville haughtily, adding: “Do not alarm the children. Let me speak to my wife, and in a moment I will be with you.”

The officer bowed and withdrew into the passage. Mr. Deville went back to the table, where he saw Lady Adelaide, pale and still, but resolutely controlling her emotions. He attempted no deception; indeed, it would have been useless. He said:

“It is as I anticipated, Adelaide. But it is a bailable case. I shall send for my friend, Colonel Bingham, and however the examination shall terminate I shall be with you again to-night.”

“I shall spend the interval in prayer to Heaven,” murmured the lady. Again he pressed her hand, and going to the door opened it, and addressing the deputy, said:

“Now, sir, I am ready.”

And the party left the house together.

“Where has he gone, mamma?” inquired Perdita.

“He has accompanied those persons out, on very important business, my dear,” returned Lady Adelaide, in that tone of reserve that warned her hearers that they were to ask no more questions.

And rising from the table, Lady Adelaide retired to her closet, leaving the young people to spend their evening together—the girl at her embroidery frame—the boy reading aloud for her amusement.

Meanwhile, Orville Deville, in custody of the sheriff, arrived at the house of the magistrate, a highly respectable, exceedingly grave old citizen, whose staid propriety, accustomed though he was to criminal cases, was shocked beyond measure by this shameful charge brought by the most celebrated woman of the day, against one of the most distinguished men of the time. From a solemn sense of propriety he had chosen the shades of evening to cover the shame of this examination.

He was sitting in his office-chair, behind his office-table, attended by his assistants.

Lionne, the accuser, was there, dressed in her usual color—black, and closely vailed and seated at his right hand.

Mr. Deville stepped forward, raised his hat, and stood before the Justice.

The magistrate acknowledged his presence with a nod, saying:

“I am sorry to see a gentleman of your high position before me, to answer such a charge, sir.”

Mr. Deville bowed gravely, took the seat that was offered him, and begged that the business might proceed.

I will not weary my reader with this examination. It is enough to say that the accuser gave her testimony with a stern exactness and precision of detail, that completely baffled all attempts to confuse or to cross-question her. The evidence was considered sufficiently strong to warrant the magistrate in holding the accused to bail for his appearance at the next term of the court.

Colonel Bingham, summoned in haste by a messenger from Mr. Deville, hastened to the scene of action, where, astounded by the seeming monstrous charge brought against his friend, he at once became his surety. The two gentlemen then together left the magistrate’s office. On their way to the hotel Mr. Deville gave his shocked companion a candid history of that youthful folly which had now resulted in such bitter misery.

Compassionating while blaming his friend, Colonel Bingham promised to do all in his power to bring the wretched business to a successful issue. They parted at the hotel door. Mr. Deville hastened up to his apartments, where, in the parlor, he found his adopted son and daughter innocently amusing themselves. Passing quickly through the room, he entered the inner room, where his Christian wife had passed the time of his absence in literally watching and praying. He told her the result of the trial.

“It is not yet too late! I will go to that woman! I will speak to her again! I made some impression upon her while she was here this afternoon! I will try and prevail on her to withdraw the prosecution!” said Lady Adelaide, hopefully.

“Too late, dear love!—too late! She cannot withdraw; even she cannot pause in the vengeful work she has begun!”

“Ah, heaven! how is that?”

“It is easy to set a city on fire, but very hard to extinguish the conflagration. The documents are in the hands of justice. She, also, is bound to appear against me.”

“Then our only hope is in the forgiving and protecting mercy of God!”

CHAPTER XL. THE AVENGER.

Still lingers something of the spell

That bound her to the traitor’s bosom;

Still mid the vengeful fires of hell

Some flowers of old affection blossom.—Whittier.

Notwithstanding all the discretion of friends, and the proper caution of the magistrate, the scandal of this arrest and examination speedily took wing and flew through the astonished city.

Lady Adelaide and daughter kept close in their apartments, and refused to receive visitors.

Mr. Deville went out as usual; but it was only to hear such observations and such questions as:

“That is the man!”

“Which of the two ladies is the true wife?”

Lionne, keeping the terms of her engagement to play two nights in each week,

continued her wonderful impersonations. And people who had once gone solely to see the celebrated tragedienne, now went to look at the strange woman who had brought such a startling charge against Mr. Deville. But her most enthusiastic admirers could not deny that her performance was less brilliant than formerly. Her face never changed from its deathly pallor; her voice seldom rose from its sepulchral hollowness; only in the most tragic portions of her tragic role did she do her own genius justice; and then only because she was—not the actor, but the real sufferer.

"She is blasting Deville and killing herself," was the mental observation of Colonel Bingham, who, being among the most ardent of her admirers, was every night in his box.

Affairs were in this stage of progress when, one day, as the wretched Lionne sat alone in her apartment at the hotel, the door was opened by her own attendant, and a card placed in her hand. Languidly she raised it to her eyes, and read, lightly written in pencil, the name of—

"Kate Kyte."

Kate Kyte! that name should have brought back to her memory visions of her youth, of the forest, of the wild freedom of her early life, of love and grief, of sin and suffering.

The name, indeed, recalled all these, but yet feebly, and without visible demonstration.

"Admit the lady," said Lionne to her maid.

And the next instant Kate Kyte entered the room. So little changed by time was she, that Lionne must have recognized her anywhere at sight. There was the same slight, elegant figure, the same thin, but dark, bright, warm face, lighted up by the same sparkling black eyes, over-arched by the slender, flexible brows, and shaded by the same clustering black curls. She was habited in a close, dark-green, walking-pelisse, and wore a black beaver hat and plume.

Kate Kyte, in the enthusiasm of her nature, held out both her hands and made a spring towards Lionne, but paused suddenly, as that lady, pale, cold, and still, stood up to receive her.

“Miss Kyte, I am very glad to see you after all these years,” said Lionne, holding out one hand.

“Not Miss Kyte, dear madam, but Mrs. Edwards. I am married, Lionne, and on my bridal tour,” replied Kate, cordially, sitting down in the chair that Lionne silently placed for her.

The latter raised the card and looked at it again.

“Oh, I wrote ‘Kate Kyte,’ because I thought you would not recognize a Mrs. Edwards among your acquaintances,” smiled Kate, in answer to that act.

“Well, Mrs. Edwards, I wish you a continuance of your present happiness. So you are recently married?” inquired Lionne.

“Yes. I will tell you all about it. We were married, as I said, and then my husband, instead of taking me home with him—think of it! placed me at a boarding-school to finish my education! A few weeks since he took me away, and this is our bridal tour. We got here yesterday, heard of the celebrated Mrs. Norl, went to see her last night, and I recognized you. This morning I come to see you.”

“I thank you; but, Kate, there are other old friends of yours at present in this house.”

“Indeed! who are they?”

“Mr. and Lady Adelaide Deville!”

“—And my child! for she must be with them!”

“Your child!”

“Yes, my child; or at least my adopted child! my little forest foundling!—have they not a beautiful little dark-eyed elf with them?”

“Yes! they have! who is she?”

“A foundling of the forest, as I tell you! Oh! such an interesting case!”

“Oh, tell me!” said Lionne, breathing hard.

“Certainly,” said Kate, settling herself more comfortably in her chair: “You see, it was on the fifteenth of August, 1758, that my brothers, in returning from a western hunting-trip, reached the banks of the Singing Stream——”

“—The Singing Stream! the fifteenth of August! oh, heaven!” breathed Lionne.

“—It was near nightfall, and they were pacing along between the foot of the Indian Spear Ridge and the edge of the Singing Stream, when they were attracted by the wail of an infant. The dogs at the same time pointed the mouth of a cavern——”

“—Oh, Lord! My Lord!”

“What’s the matter?”

“Oh! go on! go on!”

“They called off the dogs and entered the cave, where they found a young, white infant, no doubt stolen from some poor massacred settler’s family, by the Indians. Well, they took the poor, perishing babe in their own charge and brought it to me! I washed and fed and dry-nursed the little waif, for a day or two, and then gave it to Lady Adelaide Deville——”

“Oh, woman! woman! woman! that has caused all the sins and sufferings of my life.”

“Why, what do you mean?”

“Had that hapless child a strange mark upon its breast?”

“Yes! a crimson hand! why?”

“A blood-red hand! Look here!” and tearing open the body of her dress, she displayed upon the snow of her own bosom a small, clenched and bloody hand!

A cry of dismay broke from the lips of Kate.

“It is a hereditary mark!”

“—And the child!” exclaimed Kate, in breathless anxiety.

“Is my child so long and bitterly mourned as dead—the child I left, on that very day, in that very cavern whence your brothers stole her!”

“Good heaven!”

“And she, you say, is with Lady Adelaide Deville! Oh, I have seen her! seen her but once! yet my heart recognized her! She is mine! I will have her! Come quickly! attend me to the chambers of Lady Adelaide Deville!”

And rising impetuously, Lionne hurried from the room.

Amazed, terrified and expectant, Kate followed her excited companion.

They traversed several passages, and at length reached a door which Lionne pushed open, bidding her companion follow her in.

They entered and found themselves in an elegantly-appointed private parlor, in the presence of Lady Adelaide Deville and her small family.

Lady Adelaide and her daughter were engaged in needle-work. And Donald Lorne was employed in reading to them aloud.

“Lionne! Kate! Oh! what a surprise! Oh, Kate! I am so glad to see you! Sit down both! Donald, hand chairs!” said Lady Adelaide, rising.

Kate flew past and clasped the hands of her old friend.

Lionne walked straight up to Perdita, and placing her hand upon the child’s head, looked wistfully in her dark eyes with an expression that seemed to ask—

“‘Lovest thou me?’”

“Oh! I do! I do!” was the answer of those fond eyes.

“Lady Adelaide Deville, I once claimed this child by instinct! I now claim her by ascertained right! She is mine!”

“Alas! Lionne! how know you this?” inquired the distressed lady.

“Here is my witness,” said Lionne, placing her hand upon the shoulder of Kate. “And now, Lady Adelaide Deville, I have to ask you one question: Did you know or suspect the relationship of this child to me, at the time that you refused to give her up?”

“Lionne, I did not know; but I strongly suspected it, and I was seeking facts either to dissipate or confirm my suspicions before daring to give her to you! But I have much to say to you that should be heard by you alone. Kate, my dear, will you do me the favor to withdraw with Donald and Perdita to the next room while I talk with my cousin?”

With a forced smile and eyes full of anxiety, Kate, in company of the young people, passed into the inner chamber, and Adelaide and Lionne were left alone.

“Countess of Glen Lennark, listen to me,” said Lady Adelaide. “In the first place let me assure you that however cruelly it may wring my heart to part with a child so long considered as my own, and however anxious I may be as to that child’s future, I can make no delay or difficulty in yielding my claim to your superior right to Perdita. I shall give her to you and trust in God for her welfare.”

“Since you have no other alternative,” sarcastically observed Lionne.

“Since I have no other alternative,” meekly admitted Lady Adelaide.

“But listen further, Lionne! You are about to strike a mortal blow to my happiness—to me who never willingly harmed you! Hear me!”

“Ah!” exclaimed Lionne.

“No! never! Hear me, Lionne! for years before I ever heard your name—ay, from the years of childhood, I was taught to consider myself not only the destined but the really-wedded wife of Orville Deville, and to love and honor him as my husband. I bore his name, I ruled his house. Yet, in the very blossom of my happiness, when

you appeared and claimed the heart and the hand and the name of him whom I had so long looked upon as my husband, when you gave me what I supposed to be proofs of your claim, I, who knew myself a maiden, though miscalled a wife; I, who dearly loved my destined husband, silently gave up to you all my long-held rights to my name, my home, my fortune, and my husband, and one stormy winter night went out alone in the cold, bleak world to die!"

"Yet suffered yourself to be pursued, overtaken, and brought back to all the bliss you had pretended to leave."

"I was a minor, in the power of my guardian—a wife, at the disposal of my husband—a poor invalid, at the mercy of all! I was thus, against my will, brought back to my home! But, Lionne, I never in reality became the wife of Orville Deville, until months after I had read in the papers the false notice of your death. Nor then did I consent until a minister of God enjoined it upon me as a Christian duty, and my dying friend, his mother, besought me to do so as the only thing that would, in her last hours, give her peace. Then it was that I became, in fact, what I had long been in name—the wife of Orville Deville!"

"Doubtless, fair saint, you sought every rational, moral, and religious argument to reconcile you to that destiny!" sneered Lionne, "but tell me of my child! my child!"

"It was but a few months before the death of Lady Elizabeth, and the consummation of my marriage with Mr. Deville, and while, indeed, he was absent in the south, that that child was consigned to my care by Kate Kyte, who told me at the same time the history of its discovery. At that time I had no suspicion of the real parentage of the babe. It was at Glen Lennark, when Perdita was two years old, that I saw a portrait of yourself at that age—the portrait might have been that of Perdita herself! Then it was I recollected that upon that dreadful evening when you first burst in upon me, you had told me that you expected to become a mother. I compared the date of your supposed death with the date of the child's discovery, and then for the first time a

suspicion of her real birth flashed upon my mind. After development came to support that suspicion, which was, however, never fully confirmed until this evening!”

“Suspecting that child to be mine, and knowing me for your mortal foe, you have yet performed a mother’s faithful and affectionate duty towards her?”

“So judge me heaven! yes!”

“At the time that you lost your own babe, did you suspect this?”

“Assuredly.”

“And believing as you must have believed, that I had abducted your infant, you continued to be good to mine?”

“Certainly, Lionne.”

“Although your heart was well-nigh breaking.”

“Why not!—was it poor little Perdita’s fault?”

“Did you believe that I had destroyed your child?”

“No! oh no! Nor looking in your face, can I believe it now! If I could, do you think that I could sit here talking with you?—no! it is true we found portions of her little clothing washed up by the waves! Insanity, accident might have caused her death, but, though I grieved most bitterly, I never suspected you of so horrible a crime!”

“Nor need you have done so! I made no war upon infancy!”

“Well, well, the babe is in heaven this many a year! Let us talk of something else!” said Lady Adelaide, who shrank from coupling the thought of her angel-child with this dark woman of the earth, and who was, besides, anxious to influence her hearer upon another subject.

“Go on,” said Lionne.

“It is not to praise my poor, erring self that I have sought to recall to your mind the fact that I have ever sought to serve you, and never attempted to injure you, or even

to avenge my own injuries. And I ask you now, Lionne, for the sake of one who never harmed you and always sought to benefit you—and for the sake of her, the daughter that I have saved and reared, and now restore to you—for the sake of both, who must, if you are obdurate, suffer with Orville Deville, I beseech you withdraw your prosecution! Do not seek to cover him and his with unmerited infamy! Lionne! you will hear me!"

"I cannot! I am sworn to avenge! Were it to save my own life, reason, or honor, I cannot withdraw from this that I have sworn to perform!" exclaimed Lionne, with a wild sternness.

"Countess of Glen Lennark, there is more sin in keeping than in breaking an evil vow! It was wrong to make it! it would be wicked to keep it! Oh! Lionne! be magnanimous! it were more worthy of your power and position."

"Too late! too late!" spoke the deep, bell-like tones of the actress; "for even if I would, I could not! I am bound over by heavy sureties to appear at court against this man!"

A dread silence fell between them, which was broken at length by Lady Adelaide, murmuring in mournful tones—

"The future life is called the life of retribution—yet in that life God pardons the repentant sinner! but here, in this world, where man rules, sin is sure, sooner or later, to be punished! Alas! alas! woe to the sinner! woe also to the self-constituted avenger!"

"I know it! I accept it!" tolled the deep, bell-like tones—"My fate will be that of Samson! I shall be crushed with the ruin that I pull down upon the heads of my enemies—I came to claim my daughter. Call her to me and I will go!"

"Lionne, you shall have the child to-morrow! Take the word of one who never spoke an untruth, and who now gives you her promise."

"But—why not to-day?"

“Because I cannot properly take so important a step without the knowledge and consent of my husband.”

“Should he make difficulties?”

“He will not! He will be just. Reassure yourself!”

“Lady Adelaide, I rely upon your word. Do not dare to disappoint me!”

“Madam, refrain from threats. Remember that, in carrying on this prosecution you do your worst. There is nothing remaining in your power with which you can further wring my heart,” said Lady Adelaide, with gentle dignity.

“Ah! is there not? You know nothing! I have yet a screw in reserve, which I should be unwilling to turn upon you, lady; for, believe me, the cry that it would force from your bosom would be your death-shriek!” said Lionne.

“Terrible woman! who shall deliver me from you!” shuddered Adelaide.

“Yourself, lady. Keep your promise with me, and for yourself you have nothing more to fear.” And so saying, Lionne left the room.

For a few moments Lady Adelaide remained with her face buried in her hands, in silent thought or prayer. Then remembering Kate, whom she had sent with the young people into the next room, she went to the door and recalled them.

They entered: Kate looking anxious, Perdita and Donald amazed.

“Do not say a word upon what we have discovered to Perdita as yet; the change in her prospects must be made known to her by myself and her father in private,” whispered Lady Adelaide to her visitor. Kate nodded intelligently. And Lady Adelaide, to avoid entering upon the subject of Mrs. Norl’s visit, rang for refreshments, and changed the conversation.

After a slight luncheon, Kate took her leave and withdrew to her own apartments, fully determined to await the issue of Mr. Deville’s trial.

That evening, in private, so much of Perdita’s history as was inevitable for her to

know was communicated to the young girl.

The next morning, she was given up to the guardianship of her mother. With floods of tears, Perdita took leave of her adopted parents, and the next hour threw herself, with impassioned abandonment, into the arms of her mother.

CHAPTER XLI. CONCLUSION.

You shall see, then, how it all ended—

What fortune, good, or bad, attended

The gentle lady your hopes befriended.—Browning.

The day of the trial came.

The most eminent talent in the city was retained in the case, and about equally divided between the prosecution and the defence.

The counsel of the accused had flattered Mr. Deville and his family with the fairest prognostics of a triumphant acquittal. The alleged offence was at worst but the act of youthful passion and folly; could not be called a felony, since intention constitutes the crime; and there had been no intention, or even consciousness, on the part of the accused, of committing the felony with which he was charged. Such was the “flattering unction” laid upon the aching hearts of the anxious family.

But the day of the trial came. The court-room, as might have been expected, was crowded.

Orville Deville was seated with his counsel.

Lionne, dressed in black, sat on the witness’ seat.

Lady Adelaide, fully believing in the triumphant vindication of her husband, and naturally shrinking from the investigation that would involve so many delicate details, readily complied with Mr. Deville’s request that she should absent herself from the trial.

I shall not trouble my reader with the full particulars of this trial. Suffice it to say, that when the accused was formally arraigned, with something of his natural arrogant disdain, he pleaded “not guilty” to the indictment.

The prosecution was carried on with great talent and rigor.

The defence was conducted with zeal and ability.

The judge, in finally charging the jury, was supposed to lean somewhat to the side of the prosecution.

The most intense anxiety was visible, not only upon the haggard face of the prisoner, but also upon the beautiful features of the principal witness against him, whenever a glimpse of those features could be caught.

Extreme interest was manifested by the audience during the interval in which the jury retired to deliberate, and yet few present looked for other than a full acquittal for the accused. The jury were absent about an hour; at the end of which they returned to the court-room.

Every person rose silently upon his feet, eagerly bending forward to catch the verdict.

Some who looked upon the accused saw that even he, though so confident, had, at this supreme moment, grown paler.

Lionne, quite throwing aside her vail and rising upon her feet, bent eagerly forward. Of all the faces present, hers expressed the most agonizing anxiety!

“Only behold that she-devil how impatiently she hungers for a fatal verdict,” said one of the bystanders, pointing to her wild, black eyes.

Meanwhile, the little, low-toned formula was going on between the clerk of the court and the foreman of the jury. The short colloquy was inaudible through the court room, until one tremendous word from the foreman of the jury fell like a thunderbolt upon the accused. That word of doom was—

“GUILTY.”

A panic of consternation fell upon the audience.

This was speedily broken by a wild shriek that rang through and through the court room, followed by the rushing of feet towards one point and the voices of many persons nearest the spot, crying:

“The prosecuting witness has fainted!”

Yes! it was true! Her revenge was consummated! She had hurled her destroyer down to destruction, and now, under the strong reaction of years of hatred, she herself had fallen!

It was some moments before the fainting woman could be conveyed from the room and order restored.

When all was still the judge arose and asked the convicted if he had any thing to say why the sentence of the court should not be pronounced against him.

“Yes! I have something to say! But first, I shall be obliged to one of the officers if he will procure me a glass of water.”

It was speedily procured and handed to the unhappy man. He took it in both hands, raised it slowly to his lips—paused—dropped the glass, which shivered at his feet—reeled for an instant—threw up his arms, and fell forward prone upon the floor, at the foot of the judge’s bench.

Several of the officers sprang to his assistance, raised him up, seated him in his chair; but—he was already dead!

When this was ascertained beyond a doubt, the court adjourned, the crowd hurried home to spread the news throughout the city, and the corpse was conveyed to an adjoining room to be examined before the coroner.

The verdict of the coroner’s jury was—“Suicide by taking prussic acid.”

The desired glass of water had merely been the cover to conceal the swallowing of

the poison.

After the rising of the inquest the body was conveyed home to be prepared for burial. But who can justly describe the consternation, grief and despair that seized upon the heart of the young widow when the fatal intelligence was brought to her! The dreadful news was broken gently by the clergyman of the church to which she belonged. All that experience, discretion and kindness could do, was done to soften the severity of this terrible affliction; yet, for days after the funeral had taken place, the poor young widow lay in a darkened room, without sleep, without food, without companionship, unable to bear a ray of light, or the sound of a footfall.

She was affectionately attended by Kate Kyte, who confined herself to the parlor next that darkened chamber, to watch over her bereaved and afflicted friend.

Lady Adelaide was at length aroused from this torpor of despair by a note from Lionne. It was but a line, almost illegible from the trembling of the writer's hand. It read:

"I am dying: for the love of heaven, come to me, there is something I have to reveal which you should know."

The gentle sufferer could not withstand this appeal. Giddy, faint, and trembling, she arose from her bed, was dressed, and lifted into a carriage, and conveyed to the house where, since the fatal issue of the trial, Lionne had withdrawn herself. Leaning on the arm of her footman, she entered the house, the door of which was opened by our old acquaintance, the dwarf Vulcan.

Following this strange guide, she went to the chamber of Lionne.

What a scene met her view! This chamber was not dark. The full beams of the afternoon sun streaming through crimson-draped windows, flooded the room with ruddy light. Upon a sumptuous bed, in the centre of the room, the beautiful and gifted Lionne lay in the agonies of death. On her right hand, clothed in deep mourning, and overwhelmed with grief, knelt Perdita, burying her face in the

bedclothes. On the other side stood a boy, dressed as a page, but sobbing bitterly. He and Perdita at once quitted the room.

But upon Lionne alone was the regard of the visitor riveted. There lay the beautiful wreck! Her long, purplish black hair, unconfined, streamed down each side her pallid face, and lay in disordered splendor upon the counterpane. Her jet black eyebrows looked more than ever arched above the hollowness of her face. Her large, fierce eyes were closed until the long eyelashes lay like an inky fringe upon the dead white cheeks.

Seeing Lady Adelaide enter, she extended her hand, saying:

“This is very kind.”

Forgetting the fatal injuries this woman had done her, forgetting her own sufferings at the sight of sufferings so much greater, since they were augmented by remorse and tended towards death, Lady Adelaide bent over the dying woman, dropping tears upon her wasted hands and sobbing in a broken voice—

“Oh, my cousin, what can I do for your relief?”

“Nothing—nothing,” tolled the deep, death-bell tones of her voice, that seemed now to sound from the depths of a vault; “nothing, for you see the ruin that I have brought upon others has crushed me also! I lived for this end! it is attained and I die!”

Here her voice sank so low that Lady Adelaide looking around and seeing a cordial upon the stand, took and placed it to her lips.

She drank and was revived.

“I have a few words to say to you, and a very few minutes to say them in,” faltered the fast-failing woman.

“They concern your daughter.—Be easy on that subject. With your consent I shall take her again. Except for her orphan grief, it will be as though she had never left

me. And more—her final destiny shall be as brilliant as though——”

Lady Adelaide paused, and her pale face flushed.

“I know what you would say.—As if her birth had been legitimate,” said Lionne.

“As if her mother’s marriage had been as legal as she supposed it to be,” said Adelaide, gently.

“You are kind.”

“I mean this: had Perdita been the child of an unquestionable marriage, she would inherit your title and estate, for I never forget that you are in your own right Countess of Glen Lennark—but as the case stands, Donald Lorne will be the next Earl of Glen Lennark. He will marry Perdita.”

“How do you know that?”

“I, their adopted mother, have watched the development of their mutual love. I shall foster that love. They are suited to each other. They will marry. Your daughter will receive back in a happy marriage all that she has lost in her hapless birth.”

“Dear saint, I thank you as well as a woman so wretched as myself can do,” said Lionne, stretching out her hand to Lady Adelaide; “but it was not alone of my child that I thought. Lady Adelaide, you, also, had a child——”

“Two; they are with God.”

“All innocents are with God, wherever they may be. But, fair saint, you did not see your younger child die—you did not bury her; what proof have you that she is not now living?”

“Oh, don’t! Oh, the thought, the thought is too torturing! Dead, she would be with God—living, where, oh! where would she be?”

“Still with God, though still on earth. Hear me, Lady Adelaide. Be calm. I am dying, you are living; you have more strength than I have. If I can bear to tell, you can bear to listen.”

“But, my child! oh, my child! where, then, is she?” cried the lady, trembling violently.

“Safe! safe, I tell you! and not far away. Do you think I warred with children?”

“Oh! but this is agony. Where, then, is she, where?”

“Prepare yourself! Touch that bell, if you please.”

Lady Adelaide complied, and the summons was answered by the entrance of the beautiful little blue-eyed page.

Lionne pointed significantly to the child.

“No! not he. My lost child was a girl! and yet—and yet——” cried Lady Adelaide, almost upon the verge of swooning while she gazed upon the child, “if I could trust the yearning of my heart——”

“Trust your heart. The child is yours! A page’s dress belies her sex; it was put on for concealment. Frank, come hither.”

The child timidly approached.

Lionne took the tiny hand, and, placing it in the cold, fainting fingers of Lady Adelaide, said:

“Child, this is the gentle lady whom I promised should be your mother when I am no more. Madam, you will explain all when I am gone.”

Adelaide closed her fingers upon the little hand of the page, whom she drew towards her. For an instant she gazed with indescribable emotion upon the sweet, infantile face, and was about to gather her child to her heart, when a wild cry from Perdita, who had just entered the room, caused her to turn. She saw Perdita dart to the bedside and raise the form of Lionne, and support her head upon her bosom. And in a few more seconds Lionne, Countess of Glen Lennark, was dead!

Wild wailing shook the house, for this strange, unhappy woman had been greatly loved.

Lady Adelaide conveyed the children from the house of mourning to her own apartments, and afterwards took charge of the funeral, which was solemnized on the third day thereafter.

And when this was over, her nature, roused to superhuman strength for a few days, gave way, and a low, nervous fever prostrated the gentle lady for many weeks, but brought to her side also many sympathizing friends and comforters.

With the spring came renewed health and peace; and Lady Adelaide, accompanied by her young family, and by Kate Kyte and her husband, set sail for Scotland. At Glen Lennark the young widow was received with acclamation by the tenantry, who, with all others, persisted in calling her the Countess Dowager Glen Lennark, a title she could not repudiate without exposing secret family history. But the beautiful young widow, scarcely thirty years of age, was not destined to wear her days out in mourning over the past. In due time her hand was sought by the Duke of Donaldben, a gentleman in every way worthy to make her forget the sorrows of her youth, and with whom she lived a long life of nearly perfect married love and happiness.

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