Mark Hurdlestone eBook

Mark Hurdlestone by Susanna Moodie

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MARK HURDLESTONE:

Or,

The two brothers.

By Mrs. *Moodie*,

(*Sister of Agnes Strickland.*)

AUTHOR OF “ROUGHING IT IN THE BUSH,” “ENTHUSIASM,” ETC

The fire burns low, these winter nights are cold;
I’d fain to bed, and take my usual rest,
But duty cries, “There’s work for thee to do;
Stir up the embers, fetch another log,
To cheer the empty hearth. This is the hour
When fancy calls to life her busy train,
And thou must note the vision ere it flies.”

* * * * *

Complete in one volume.

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Third edition.

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162 *Nassau street*.

MARK HURDLESTONE;

Or,

The two brothers.

CHAPTER I.

Say, who art thou—thou lean and haggard wretch!
Thou living satire on the name of man!
Thou that hast made a god of sordid gold,
And to thine idol offered up thy soul?
Oh, how I pity thee thy wasted years:
Age without comfort—youth that had no prime.
To thy dull gaze the earth was never green;
The face of nature wore no cheering smile,
For ever groping, groping in the dark;
Making the soulless object of thy search
The grave of all enjoyment.—S.M.

Towards the close of the last century, there lived in the extensive parish of Ashton, in the county of ——, a hard-hearted, eccentric old man, called Mark Hurdlestone, the lord of the manor, the wealthy owner of Oak Hall and its wide demesne, the richest commoner in England, the celebrated miser.

Mark Hurdlestone was the wonder of the place; people were never tired of talking about him—of describing his strange appearance, his odd ways and penurious habits. He formed a lasting theme of conversation to the gossips of the village, with whom the great man at the Hall enjoyed no enviable notoriety. That Mark Hurdlestone was an object of curiosity, fear, and hatred, to his humble dependents, created no feeling of surprise in those who were acquainted with him, and had studied the repulsive features of his singular character.

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There was not a drop of the milk of human kindness in his composition. Regardless of his own physical wants, he despised the same wants in others. Charity sued to him in vain, and the tear of sorrow made no impression on his stony heart. Passion he had felt—cruel, ungovernable passion. Tenderness was foreign to his nature—the sweet influences of the social virtues he had never known.

Mark Hurdlestone hated society, and never mingled in festive scenes. To his neighbors he was a stranger; and he had no friends. With power to command, and wealth to purchase enjoyment, he had never travelled a hundred miles beyond the smoke of his own chimneys; and was as much a stranger to the world and its usages as a savage, born and brought up in the wilderness. There were very few persons in his native place with whom he had exchanged a friendly greeting; and though his person was as well known as the village spire or the town pump, no one could boast that he had shaken hands with him.

One passion, for the last fifty years of his unhonored life, had absorbed every faculty of his mind, and, like Aaron's serpent, had swallowed all the rest. His money-chest was his world; there the gold he worshipped so devoutly was enshrined; and his heart, if ever he possessed one, was buried with it: waking or sleeping, his spirit for ever hovered around this mysterious spot. There nightly he knelt, but not to pray: prayer had never enlightened the darkened soul of the gold-worshipper. Favored by the solitude and silence of the night, he stole thither, to gloat over his hidden treasure. There, during the day, he sat for hours entranced, gazing upon the enormous mass of useless metal, which he had accumulated through a long worthless life, to wish it more, and to lay fresh schemes for its increase. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," saith the preacher; but this hoarding of money is the very madness of vanity.

Mark Hurdlestone's remarkable person would have formed a good subject for a painter—it was both singular and striking.

His features in youth had been handsome, but of that peculiar Jewish cast which age renders harsh and prominent. The high narrow wrinkled forehead, the small deep-set jet-black eyes, gleaming like living coals from beneath straight shaggy eyebrows, the thin aquiline nose, the long upper lip, the small fleshless mouth and projecting chin, the expression of habitual cunning and mental reservation, mingled with sullen pride and morose ill-humor, gave to his marked countenance a repulsive and sinister character. Those who looked upon him once involuntarily turned to look upon him again, and marvelled and speculated upon the disposition and calling of the stranger.

His dress, composed of the coarsest materials, generally hung in tatters about his tall spare figure, and he had been known to wear the cast-off shoes of a beggar; yet, in spite of such absurd acts, he maintained a proud and upright carriage, and never, by his speech or manners, seemed to forget for one moment that he held the rank of a gentleman. His hands and face were always scrupulously clean, for water costs

nothing, and time, to him, was an object of little value. The frequency of these ablutions he considered conducive to health. Cold water was his only beverage—the only medicine he ever condescended to use.

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The stranger who encountered Mark Hurdlestone, wandering barefooted on the heath or along the dusty road, marvelled that a creature so wretched did not stop him to solicit charity; and, struck with the haughty bearing which his squalid dress could not wholly disguise, naturally imagined that he had seen better days, and was too proud to beg; influenced by this supposition, he had offered the lord of many manors the relief which his miserable condition seemed to demand; and such was the powerful effect of the ruling passion, that the man of gold, the possessor of millions, the sordid wretch who, in after years, wept at having to pay four thousand a year to the property tax, calmly pocketed the affront.

The history of Mark Hurdlestone, up to the present period, had been marked by few, but they were striking incidents. Those bright links, interwoven in the rusty chain of his existence, which might have rendered him a wiser and a better man, had conduced very little to his own happiness, but they had influenced, in a remarkable degree, the happiness and misery of others, and form another melancholy proof of the mysterious manner in which the crimes of some men act, like fate, upon the destinies of others.

Avarice palsies mental exertion. The tide of generous feeling, the holy sympathies, still common to our fallen nature, freeze beneath its torpid influence. The heart becomes stone—the eyes blinded to all that once awakened the soul to admiration and delight. He that has placed the idol of gold upon the pure altar of nature has debased his own, and sinks below the brute, whose actions are guided by a higher instinct, the simple law of necessity.

The love of accumulating had been a prominent feature of Mark's character from his earliest years; but there was a time when it had not been his ruling passion. Love, hatred, and revenge, had alternately swayed his breast, and formed the main-spring of his actions. He had loved and mistrusted, had betrayed and destroyed the victim of his jealous regard; yet his hatred remained unextinguished—his revenge ungratified. The malice of envy and the gnawings of disappointed vanity were now concealed beneath the sullen apathy of age; but the spark slumbered in the grey ashes, although the heart had out-lived its fires. To make his character more intelligible it will be necessary to trace his history from the first page of his life.

Born heir to a vast inheritance, Mark Hurdlestone had not a solitary excuse to offer for his avarice. His father had improved the old paternal estate, and trebled its original value; and shared, in no common degree, the parsimonious disposition of his son. From the time of the Norman Conquest his ancestors had inherited this tract of country; and as they were not famous for any particular talents or virtues, had passed into dust and oblivion in the vault of the old gothic church, which lifted its ivy-covered tower above the venerable oaks and yews that were coeval with its existence.

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In proportion to their valueless existence was the pride of the Hurdlestone family. Their wealth gained for them the respect of the world; their ancient name the respect of those who place an undue importance on such things; and their own vanity and self-importance maintained the rank and consequence which they derived from these adventitious claims.

Squire Hurdlestone the elder was a shrewd worldly minded man, whose natural *hauteur* concealed from common observers the paucity of his intellect. His good qualities were confined to his love of Church and State; and to do him justice, in this respect he was a loyal man and true—the dread of every hapless Jacobite in the country. In his early days he had fought under the banners of the Duke of Cumberland as a gentleman volunteer; and had received the public thanks of that worthy for the courage he displayed at the memorable battle of Culloden, and for the activity and zeal with which he afterwards assisted in apprehending certain gentlemen in his own neighborhood, who were suspected of secretly befriending the unfortunate cause. At every public meeting the Squire was eloquent in his own praise.

“Who can doubt *my* patriotism, *my* loyalty?” he would exclaim. “I did not confine my sentiments upon the subject to mere words. I showed by my deeds, gentlemen, what those sentiments were. I took an active part in suppressing the rebellion, and restoring peace to these realms. And what did I obtain, gentlemen?—the thanks—yes, gentlemen, the public thanks of the noble Duke!” He would then resume his seat, amidst the plaudits of his time-serving friends, who, judging the rich man by his own standard of excellence, declared that there was not his equal in the county.

Not content with an income far beyond his sordid powers of enjoyment, Squire Hurdlestone the elder married, without any particular preference, the daughter of a rich London merchant, whose fortune nearly doubled his own. The fruits of this union were two sons, who happened in the economy of nature to be twins. This double blessing rather alarmed the parsimonious Squire; but as the act of maternal extravagance was never again repeated on the part of Mrs. Hurdlestone, he used to rub his hands and tell as a good joke, whenever his heart was warmed by an extra glass of wine, that his wife was the best manager in the world, as the same trouble and expense did for both.

A greater difference did not exist between the celebrated sons of Isaac than was discernible in these modern twins. Unlike in person, talents, heart, and disposition, from their very birth, they formed a striking contrast to each other. Mark, the elder by half-an-hour, was an exaggeration of his father, inheriting in a stronger degree all his narrow notions and chilling parsimony; but, unlike his progenitor in one respect, he was a young man of excellent natural capacity. He possessed strong passions, linked to a dogged obstinacy of purpose, which rendered him at all times a dangerous and implacable enemy; while the stern unyielding nature of his temper, and the habitual selfishness which characterised all his dealings with others, excluded him from the friendship and companionship of his kind.

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Tall and slightly made, with a proud and gentlemanly carriage, he looked well though dressed in the most homely and unfashionable garb. Beyond scrupulous cleanliness he paid little attention to the mysteries of the toilet, for even in the bloom of youth, “Gallio cared for none of those things.” In spite of the disadvantages of dress, his bright brown complexion, straight features, dark glancing eyes, and rich curling hair, gave him a striking appearance. By many he was considered eminently handsome; to those accustomed to read the mind in the face, Mark Hurdlestone’s countenance was everything but prepossessing.

The sunshine of a smiling heart never illumined the dark depth of those deep-seated cunning eyes; and those of his own kin, who most wished to entertain a favorable opinion of the young heir of Oak Hall, agreed in pronouncing him a very disagreeable selfish young man.

He hated society, was shy and reserved in his manners, and never spoke on any subject without his opinion was solicited. This extraordinary taciturnity, in one who possessed no ordinary powers of mind, gave double weight to all that he advanced, till what he said became a law in the family. Even his mother, with whom he was no favorite, listened with profound attention to his shrewd biting remarks. From his father, Mark early imbibed a love of hoarding; and his favorite studies, those in which he most excelled, and which appeared almost intuitive to him, were those connected with figures. The old Squire, who idolised his handsome sullen boy, was never weary of boasting of his abilities, and his great knowledge in mathematics and algebra.

“Aye,” he would exclaim, “that lad was born to make a fortune; not merely to keep one ready made. ’Tis a thousand pities that he is not a poor man’s son; I would bet half my estate, that if he lives to my age he will be the richest man in England.”

Having settled this matter in his own way, the old Squire took much pains to impress upon the boy’s mind that *poverty* was the most dreadful of all evils—that, if he wished to stand well with the world, riches alone could effect that object, and ensure the respect and homage of his fellow-men. “Wealth,” he was wont jocosely to say, “would do all but carry him to heaven,”—and how the journey thither was to be accomplished, never disturbed the thoughts of the rich man.

Courted and flattered by those beneath him, Mark found his father’s precepts borne out by experience, and he quickly adopted his advice, and entered with alacrity into all his money-getting speculations.

The handsome income allowed him by the Squire was never expended in the pursuit of pleasures natural to his rank and age, but carefully invested in the funds, whilst the young miser relied upon the generosity of his mother to find him in clothes and pocket-money. When Mrs. Hurdlestone remonstrated with him on his meanness, his father would laugh and bid her hold her tongue.

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“Let him alone, Lucy; the lad cannot help it; ’tis born in him. The Hurdlestones are a money-making, money-loving race. Besides, what does it matter? If he is saving a fortune at our expense, ’tis all in the family. He knows how to take care of it better than we do. There will be more for Algernon, you know!”

And this saying quieted the fond mother. “Yes,” she repeated, “there will be more for Algernon,—my handsome generous Algernon. Let his sordid brother go on saving,—-there will be more for Algernon.”

These words, injudiciously spoken within the hearing of Mark Hurdlestone, converted the small share of brotherly love, which hitherto had existed between the brothers, into bitter hatred; and he secretly settled in his own mind the distribution of his father’s property.

And Algernon, the gay thoughtless favorite of his kind but imprudent mother, was perfectly indifferent to the love or hatred of his elder brother. He did not himself regard him with affection, and he expected nothing from him, beyond the passive acquiescence in his welfare which the ties of consanguinity generally give. If he did not seek in his twin brother a friend and bosom-counsellor, he never imagined it possible that he could act the part of an enemy. Possessing less talent than Mark, he was generous, frank, and confiding. He loved society, in which he was formed by nature to shine and become a general favorite. His passion for amusement led him into extravagance and dissipation; and it was apparent to all who knew him, best that he was more likely to spend a fortune than acquire one.

Algernon had received, with his brother, a good classical education from his uncle, a younger brother of his father’s, who had been brought up for the Church, and taken several degrees at Oxford, but had reduced himself to comparative indigence by his imprudence and extravagance. Alfred Hurdlestone would have made a good soldier, but, unfortunately for him, there were several valuable church-livings in the family; and his father refused to provide for him in any other way. The young man’s habits and inclinations being at war with the sacred profession chosen for him, he declined entering upon holy orders, which so enraged his father, that he forbade him the house; and at his death, left him a small life-annuity, sufficient with economy to keep him from starvation, but not enough to maintain him respectably without some profession.

For several years, Alfred Hurdlestone depended upon the generosity of a rich maternal uncle, who gave him the run of the house, and who left him at his death a good legacy. This the ne’er-do-well soon ran through, and finding himself in middle life, destitute of funds and friends, he consented for a trifling salary to superintend the education of his brother’s children.

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It was impossible for the Squire to have chosen a more injudicious instructor for his sons—a man, who in not one instance of his life had ever regulated his actions by the common rules of prudence. He possessed talents without judgment, and was kind-hearted without principle; and though a general favorite with all classes, was respected by none. Having passed much of his time on the continent of Europe, he had acquired an ease and courtesy of manner, which rendered him quite an acquisition to the country drawing-room, where he settled all matters of fashion and etiquette, to the general satisfaction of the ladies; and in spite of his reduced circumstances and dependent situation, he was warmly welcomed by all the mammas in the parish. They knew him to be a confirmed old bachelor, and they trusted their daughters with him without a thought that any mis-alliance could take place. Mr. Alfred was such a dear, good, obliging creature! He talked French with the girls, and examined the Latin exercises of the boys, and arranged all the parties and pic-nics in the neighborhood; and showed such a willingness to oblige, that he led people to imagine that he was receiving, instead of conferring a favor. His cheerful temper, agreeable person, and well-cultivated mind, rendered him the life and soul of the Hall; nothing went on well without him. His occupations were various—his tasks never ended; he read prayers—instructed the young gentlemen—shot game for the larder, and supplied the cook with fish—had the charge of the garden and poultry-yard, and was inspector-general of the stables and kennels; he carved at dinner—decanted the wine—mixed the punch, and manufactured puns and jokes to amuse his saturnine brother. When the dessert was removed he read the newspapers to the old Squire, until he dosed in his easy chair; and when the sleepy fit was over, he played with him at cribbage or back-gammon, until the tea equipage appeared.

Then, he was an admirable cook, and helped his sister-in-law, with whom he was an especial favorite, to put up pickles and preserves, and prided himself upon catsup and elderberry-wine. He had always some useful receipt for the old ladies; some pretty pattern for embroidery, or copy of amatory verses for the young, who never purchased a new dress without duly consulting Mr. Alfred as to the fashion of the material and the becomingness of the color. Besides all these useful accomplishments, he visited the poor when they were sick, occasionally acting as their medical and ghostly adviser, and would take infinite pains in carrying about subscriptions for distressed individuals, whom he was unable to assist out of his own scanty funds. He sang Italian and French songs with great taste and execution, and was a fine performer on the violin. Such was the careless being to whom Mr. Hurdlestone, for the sake of saving a few pounds per annum, entrusted the education of his sons.

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As far as the mere technicalities of education went, they could not have had a more conscientious or efficient teacher; but his morality and theology were alike defective, and, instead of endeavoring to make them good men, Uncle Alfred's grand aim was to make them fine gentlemen. With Algernon, he succeeded beyond his most sanguine expectations, for there was a strong family likeness between that young gentleman and his uncle, and a great similarity in their tastes and pursuits. Mark, however, proved a most dogged and refractory pupil, and though he certainly owed the fine upright carriage, by which he was distinguished, to Uncle Alfred's indefatigable drilling, yet, like Lord Chesterfield's son, he profited very little by his lessons in politeness.

When the time arrived for him to finish his studies, by going to college and travelling abroad, the young heir of the Hurdlestones obstinately refused to avail himself of these advantages. He declared that the money, so uselessly bestowed, would add nothing to his present stock of knowledge, but only serve to decrease his patrimony; that all the learning that books could convey, could be better acquired in the quiet and solitude of home; that he knew already as much of the dead languages as he ever would have occasion for, as he did not mean to enter the church or to plead at the bar; and there was no character he held in greater abhorrence than a fashionable beau or a learned pedant. His uncle had earned a right to both these characters; and, though a clever man, he was dependent in his old age on the charity of his rich relations. For his part, he was contented with his country and his home, and had already seen as much of the world as he wished to see, without travelling beyond the precincts of his native village.

Mr. Hurdlestone greatly applauded his son's resolution, which, he declared, displayed a degree of prudence and sagacity remarkable at his age. But his mother, who still retained a vivid recollection of the pleasures and gaiety of a town life, from which she had long been banished by her avaricious lord, listened to the sordid sentiments expressed by her first-born with contempt, and transferred all her maternal regard to his brother, whom she secretly determined should be the gentleman of the family.

In her schemes for the aggrandizement of Algernon, she was greatly assisted by Uncle Alfred, who loved the handsome, free-spirited boy for his own sake, as well as for a certain degree of resemblance, which he fancied existed between them in mental as well as personal endowments. In this he was not mistaken; for Algernon was but an improvement on his uncle, with less selfishness and more activity of mind. He early imbibed all his notions, and entered with avidity into all his pursuits and pleasures. In spite of the hard usage that Uncle Alfred had received from the world, he panted to mingle once more in its busy scenes, which he described to his attentive pupil, in the most glowing terms.

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Eager to secure for her darling Algernon those advantages which his brother Mark had so uncourteously declined, Mrs. Hurdlestone laid close siege to the heart of the old Squire, over whom she possessed an influence only second to that of her eldest son. In this daring assault upon the old man's purse and prejudices, she was vigorously assisted by Uncle Alfred, who had a double object to attain in carrying his point. Many were the desperate battles they had to fight with the old Squire's love of money, and his misanthropic disposition, before their object was accomplished, or he would deign to pay the least attention to their proposition. Defeated a thousand times, they returned with unwearied perseverance to the charge, often laughing in secret over their defeat, or exulting in the least advantage they fancied that they had gained.

Time, which levels mountains and overthrows man's proudest structures, at length sapped the resolutions of the old man, although they appeared at first to have been written upon his heart in adamant. The truth is, that he was a man of few words, and, next to talking himself, he hated to be talked to, and still more to be talked at; and Mrs. Hurdlestone and brother Alfred had never ceased to talk to him, and at him, for the last three months, and always upon the one eternal theme—Algernon's removal to college, and his travels abroad.

His patience was exhausted; human endurance could stand it no longer; and he felt that if Ear-gate was to be stormed much longer on the same subject, he should go mad, and be driven from the field. A magic word had been whispered in his ear by his eldest son. "Father, let him go: think how happy and quiet we shall be at home, when this hopeful uncle and nephew are away."

This hint was enough: the old man capitulated without another opposing argument, and consented to what he termed the ruin of his youngest son. How Mrs. Hurdlestone and Uncle Alfred triumphed in the victory they thought they had obtained!—yet it was all owing to that one sentence from the crafty lips of Mark, muttered into the ear of the old man. Algernon was to go to Oxford, and after the completion of his studies there, make the tour of the Continent, accompanied by his uncle. This was the extent of Mrs. Hurdlestone's ambition; and many were her private instructions to her gay, thoughtless son, to be merry and wise, and not draw too frequently upon his father's purse. The poor lady might as well have lectured to the winds, as preached on prudence to Uncle Alfred's accomplished pupil; for both had determined to fling off all restraint the moment they left the shade of the Oak Hall groves behind them.

Algernon was so elated with his unexpected emancipation from the tyrannical control of his father and brother, that he left the stately old house with as little regret as a prisoner would do who had been confined for years in some magnificent castle, which had been converted into a county jail, and, from the force of melancholy associations, had lost all its original beauty in his eyes. The world was now within his grasp—its busy scenes all before him: these he expected to find replete with happiness and decked with flowers.

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We will not follow our young adventurer to the academic halls, or trace his path through foreign lands. It is enough for our purpose that he acquired little knowledge at college, save the knowledge of evil; and that he met with many misadventures, and suffered much inconvenience and mortification, during his journey through the Continent. He soon discovered that the world was not a paradise; that his uncle was not a wise man; and that human nature, with some trifling variations, which were generally more the result of circumstances and education than of any peculiar virtue in the individual, was much the same at home and abroad; that men, in order to conform to the usages of society, were often obliged to appear what they were not, and sacrifice their best feelings to secure the approbation of persons whom in secret they despised; that he who would fight the battle of life and come off victorious, must do it with other weapons than those with which fashion and pleasure supply their champions.

Years of reckless folly fled away, before these wholesome lessons of experience were forced upon Algernon's unguarded heart. Fearful of falling into his brother's error, he ran into the contrary extreme, and never suspected himself a dupe, until he found himself the victim of some designing adventurer, who had served a longer apprenticeship to the world, and had gained a more perfect knowledge of the fallibility of its children.

His father groaned over his extravagant bills: yet not one-third of the money remitted to Algernon was expended by him. His uncle was the principal aggressor; for he felt no remorse while introducing his nephew to scenes which, in his early days, had effected his own ruin. Their immoral tendency, and the sorrow and trouble they were likely to entail upon the young man, by arousing the anger of his father, never gave him the least uneasiness. He had squandered such large sums of money at the gambling-houses in Paris, that he dared not show his face at the Hall until the storm was blown over; and to such a thoughtless, extravagant being as Alfred Hurdlestone, "sufficient to the day was the evil thereof."

Without any strikingly vicious propensities, it was impossible for Algernon Hurdlestone to escape from the contaminating influence of his uncle, to whom he was strongly attached, without pollution. He imbibed from him a relish for trifling amusements and extravagant expenditure, which clung to him through life. The sudden death of his misjudging instructor recalled him to a painful sense of past indiscretions. He determined to amend his ways, and make choice of some profession, and employ his time in a more honorable manner for the future. These serious impressions scarcely survived the funeral of the thoughtless man whose death he sincerely lamented; but the many debts his uncle had contracted, and the exhausted state of his purse, urged upon him the imperative necessity of returning to England; and the voyage was undertaken accordingly.

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CHAPTER II.

The steel strikes fire from the unyielding flint:
So love has struck from out that flinty heart
The electric spark, which all but deifies
The human clay.—S.M.

About two years after Algernon Hurdlestone left the Hall, a widow lady and her daughter came to reside at Ashton, and hired a small cottage, pleasantly situated at the back of the park.

Mrs. Wildegrave's husband had been engaged in the rebellion of 1745; and his estates, in consequence, were confiscated, and he paid with his life the forfeit of his rashness. His widow and child, after many years of sorrow and destitution, and living as dependents upon the charity of poor relatives, were enabled to break through this painful bondage, and procure a home for themselves.

An uncle of Mrs. Wildegrave's, who had been more than suspected of favoring the cause of the unhappy prince, died, and settled upon his niece all the property he had to bestow, which barely afforded her an income of fifty pounds a year. This was but a scanty pittance, it is true; but it was better than the hard-earned bread of dependence, and sufficient for the wants of two females.

Mrs. Wildegrave, whose health had been for some years in a declining state, thought that the air of her native place might have a beneficial effect upon her shattered constitution; and as years had fled away since the wreck of all her hopes, she no longer felt the painful degradation of returning to the place in which she had once held a distinguished situation, and had been regarded as its chief ornament and pride.

Her people, save a younger brother of her husband's, who held a lucrative situation in India, had all been gathered to their fathers. The familiar faces that had smiled upon her in youth and prosperity, in poverty and disgrace, remembered her no more. The mind of the poor forsaken widow had risen superior to the praise or contempt of the world, and she now valued its regard at the price which it deserved. But she had an intense longing to behold once more the woods and fields where she had rambled in her happy childhood; to wander by the pleasant streams, and sit under the favorite trees; to see the primrose and violet gemming the mossy banks of the dear hedge-rows, to hear the birds sing among the hawthorn blossoms; and, surrounded by the fondly-remembered sights and sounds of beauty, to recall the sweet dreams of youth.

Did no warning voice whisper to her that she had made a rash choice?—that the bitterness of party hatred outlives all other hate?—that the man who had persecuted her young enthusiastic husband to the death was not likely to prove a kind neighbor to his

widow? Mrs. Wildegrave forgot all this, and only hoped that Squire Hurdlestone had outlived his hostility to her family. Sixteen years had elapsed since Captain Wildegrave had perished on the scaffold. The world had forgotten his name, and the nature of his offence. It was not possible for a mere political opponent to retain his animosity to the dead. But she had formed a very incorrect estimate of Squire Hurdlestone's powers of hating.

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The arrival of Captain Wildegrave's widow in his immediate vicinity greatly enraged the old Squire; but as he possessed no power of denouncing women as traitors, he was obliged to content himself by pouring forth, on every occasion, the most ill-natured invectives against his poor unprotected neighbors.

He wondered at the impudence of the traitor Wildegrave's widow and daughter daring to lift up their heads among a loyal community, where her husband's conduct and his shameful death were but too well known. Alas! he know not how the lonely heart will pine for the old familiar haunts—how the sight of inanimate objects which have been loved in childhood will freshen into living greenness its desolate wastes. The sordid lover of gold, the eager aspirant for this world's trifling distinctions, feels nothing, knows nothing, of this.

Elinor Wildegrave, the only child of these unhappy parents, had just completed her seventeenth year, and might have formed a perfect model of youthful innocence and beauty. Her personal endowments were so remarkable, that they soon became the subject of conversation, alike in the halls of the wealthy and in the humble abodes of the poor. The village-gossips were not backward in mating the young heiress of sorrow with the richest and noblest in the land. Elinor was not unconscious of her personal attractions, but a natural delicacy of mind made her shrink from general admiration. Her mother's scanty income did not enable them to hire servants; and the work of the house devolved upon Elinor, who was too dutiful a child to suffer her ailing mother to assist her in these domestic labors. The lighter employments of sewing and knitting, her mother shared; and they were glad to increase their slender means by taking in plain work; which so completely occupied the young girl's time, that she was rarely seen abroad, excepting on Sundays, when she accompanied her mother to the parish church; and then, the loveliness which attracted such attention was always partially concealed by a large veil. Mark Hurdlestone's valet happened to meet the young lady returning home through the park without this envious appendage, and was so struck with her beauty, that he gave his young master an eloquent description of the angel he had seen.

"Believe me, sir, she is a mate for the King. If I were but a gentleman of fortune like you, I should feel proud to lay it at her feet."

Mark heard him with indifference. He had never felt the least tender emotion towards woman, whom he regarded as an inferior being, only formed to administer to the wants, and contribute to the pleasures, of man.

"Miss Wildegrave," he said, "might be a fine girl. But he could see no beauty in a woman whose father had died upon the scaffold, and who had no fortune. She and her mother were outcasts, who could no longer be received into genteel society."

The valet, with more taste than his master, shrugged up his shoulders, and answered with a significant smile: "Ah, sir! if we could but exchange situations."

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A few days after this conversation, Mark Hurdlestone met Elinor Wildegrave by accident, and became deeply enamoured with the lovely orphan.

In spite of his blunt speech and misanthropic manners, the young heir of Oak Hall, at that period, was not wholly destitute of the art of pleasing. He was sensible and well-read. His figure was commanding, and his carriage good. His stern features were set off by the ruddy glow of health; and the brilliancy of his lip and eye, the dazzling whiteness of his small even teeth, and the rich masses of raven hair that curled in profusion round his high forehead, atoned in some measure for the disagreeable expression which at all times pervaded his remarkable countenance.

“The young Squire is certainly very handsome,” said Elinor Wildegrave to her mother, the morning after their first meeting. “But there is something about him which I cannot like. His face is as stern and as cold as a marble statue’s. I should think it would be impossible for that man to shed a tear, or be capable of feeling the least tender emotion.”

“My dear Elinor, you judge too much by externals. These taciturn people are often possessed of the keenest sensibility.”

“Ah! dearest mother, believe it not. ’From the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.’ I love not these silent people. The heart that is worn on the sleeve is better, and more to be trusted, than the heart that is concealed in a marble shell.”

The human countenance never lies. If read aright, it always presents the real index of the mind. The first impression it makes upon a stranger is always the correct one. Pleasing manners and affable smiles may tend to weaken, nay, even to efface these first impressions, but they will invariably return, and experience will attest their truth.

In her first estimate of the Squire’s character, formed from his physiognomy, Elinor was correct, for it was some time before she could reconcile herself to his harsh countenance; but her dislike gradually wore away, and she received his passing civilities with the pleasure which a young girl of her age invariably feels, when regarded with admiration by one so much her superior in rank and fortune.

His retired habits, which at the age of twenty-four his neighbors attributed more to pride than avarice, though in truth they arose from a mixture of both, invested him with a sort of mysterious interest. Elinor felt her vanity flattered by the belief that her charms had touched a heart hitherto invulnerable to female beauty. She was, indeed, his first love, and his last.

Elinor was too romantic to think of uniting herself to a man whom she could not love, for the sake of his wealth; and she prudently and honorably shunned the advances of her taciturn admirer. She knew that his father had been her father’s implacable enemy; that

all intimacy between the families had been strictly prohibited at the Hall; and when the heir of that noble demesne made their cottage a resting-place after the fatigues of hunting, and requested a draught of milk from her hands to allay his thirst, or a bunch of roses from her little flower plot to adorn his waistcoat, Elinor answered his demands with secret mistrust and terror; although, with the coquetry so natural to her sex, she could not hate him for the amiable weakness of regarding her with admiration.

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Alas, poor Elinor! why sacrifice to this heartless vanity the peace and integrity of your mind; and for the sake of winning a smile, to which you attach no real value, unseal for ever the fountain of tears?

Avarice for a long time struggled with Mark Hurdlestone's growing passion for Elinor Wildegrave; nor could he prevail upon himself to ask the penniless daughter of an executed traitor to become his wife. He was too proud to brave the sneers of the world; too prudent to combat with his father's disappointed hopes and fierce anger. His fortune he knew would be large—but when is avarice satisfied? and he abandoned the first generous impulse he had ever felt, with the first sigh he had ever breathed.

He contented himself with wandering, day after day around the widow's dwelling, in the hope of catching a passing glance of the object of his idolatry, without incurring the danger of a personal interview, which might lead to an indiscreet avowal of the passion which consumed him, and place him in the power of his fair enslaver. He hovered around her path, and at church disturbed her devotions by never removing his eyes from her face; but the tale of his love remained untold, and was scarcely acknowledged even to himself.

This was the happiest period of Mark Hurdlestone's life. His passion for Elinor Wildegrave, though selfish and unrefined, was deep and sincere. He contemplated the beautiful and friendless girl, as in after years he viewed the gold in his coffers, as a secret treasure hid from the world, and only known to him.

From this dream he was at length aroused, by the sudden and unexpected appearance of his brother Algernon at the Hall. With quivering lips he congratulated him upon his return to his native land; exchanging with cold and nerveless grasp the warm pressure of his brother's hand, while he contemplated with envy and alarm the elegant person of the returned prodigal. From a boy, he had never loved Algernon; coveting with unnatural greed the property which would accrue to him, should it please Heaven to provide for his twin brother by taking him to itself. But when that brother stood before him in the pride and glory of manhood; with health glowing on his cheek, and beauty on his brow, he could scarcely conceal his envy; for he beheld in him a formidable, and, if seen by Elinor, in all probability a successful rival. Hatred took possession of his breast, and while he pronounced with his lips a chilling welcome, his mind, active in malice, had already planned his ruin. In the first joyous moments of return, and while describing to his delighted mother the lands he had visited, and his adventures at Paris and Rome. Algernon scarcely noticed his brother's unkind reception. He knew that little sympathy existed between them; but he never suspected that Mark bore him any ill-will, still less that he was likely to act the part of an enemy, and endeavor to supplant him in his father's affections.

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Before many days had elapsed, the decided hostility of his brother's manner could no longer escape his attention. Candid himself, and expecting Mark to be the same, he demanded the reason of his singular conduct. Mark turned upon his heel, and answered with a scornful laugh—"That if the bluntness of his speech displeased him, he knew his remedy, and might quit the Hall. For his part, he had been brought up in the country, and could not adapt his manners to suit the delicate taste of a fine gentleman." Then, muttering something about a travelled monkey, left the room.

During the first burst of honest indignation. Algernon determined to follow him, and demand a more satisfactory explanation of his conduct, but he was deterred by the grief which he knew a quarrel between them would occasion his mother; and for her sake he put up with the insult. His wrath, like summer dew, quickly evaporated, and the only effect which his short-lived passion produced was to increase the urgency with which he entreated his father to allow him to make choice of a profession, which would remove him from the vicinity of one whose sole study was to torment and annoy him.

His father, who wished to make him feel the effects of his extravagance abroad, calmly listened to his proposals, and asked time for deliberation, and this interval had to be passed by Algernon at the Hall. For his mother's sake, whom he fondly loved, he forbore to complain; and he hailed the approaching shooting season as a relief from the dulness and monotony of home. Used to the lively conversation of foreigners, and passionately fond of the society of the other sex, the seclusion of Oak Hall was not very congenial to his taste. He soon ceased to take an interest in the domestic arrangements of the family, and the violin and guitar, on which he performed with great taste and skill, were alike discarded, and he imprudently afforded his brother daily opportunities of poisoning his father's mind against him, while he was lounging away his time in the houses of the neighboring gentry.

To his father, Mark affected, to commiserate the weakness of his brother's intellect, and the frivolity of his pursuits. He commented without mercy on his idle extravagant habits—his foreign air and Frenchified manners, invidiously adding up the large sums he had already squandered, and the expense which his father must still be at to maintain him genteely, either in the army or at the bar. He always ended his remarks with an observation, which he knew to be the most galling to the pride of the old man.

"He will be just such a useless despicable fellow as his uncle Alfred, and will be the same burden to me that that accomplished unprincipled fool was to you."

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The Squire only lent too ready an ear to the base insinuations of his eldest son; and when Algernon returned from the field, he found his father's manners yet more repulsive than his brother's. As Mr. Hurdlestone's affection for his youngest born diminished, Mark's appeared miraculously to increase. He even condescended to give Algernon various friendly hints to lose no opportunity of re-establishing himself in his father's favor. But such conduct was too specious even to deceive the unsuspicious, kind-hearted Algernon. He detected the artifice, and scorned the hypocrite. Instead of absenting himself from the family circle for a few hours, he was now abroad all day, and sometimes for a whole week, without leaving any clue to discover his favorite haunts.

Mark at length took the alarm. A jealous fear shot through his brain, and he employed spies to dog his path. His suspicions were confirmed when he was at length informed by Grenard Pike, the gardener's son, that Mr. Algernon seldom went a mile beyond the precincts of the park. His hours, consequently, must be loitered away in some dwelling near at hand. Algernon was not a young man of sentimental habits. He was neither poet nor bookworm, and it was very improbable that he would fast all day under the shade of forest boughs, watching, like the melancholy Jacques, the deer come down to the stream to drink.

Where were his walks so likely to terminate as at the widow's cottage? What companion could the home-tired child of pleasure find so congenial to his tastes as the young and beautiful Elinor Wildegrave? There was madness in the thought! The passion so carefully concealed, no longer restrained by the cautious maxims of prudence, like the turbulent overflowing of some mighty stream, bore down all before it in its headlong course. Several days he passed in this state of jealous excitement. On the evening of the fourth, his mental agony reached a climax; unable to restrain his feelings, he determined to brave the anger of his father, the sneers of the world, and the upbraidings of his own conscience, declare his attachment to Elinor, and ask her to become his wife.

He never for a moment suspected that the orphan girl could refuse the magnificent proposal he was about to make, or contemplate with indifference the rank and fortune he had in his power to bestow.

Mark Hurdlestone was not a man to waver or turn back when his mind was once fixed upon an object. His will was like fate, inflexible in the accomplishment of his purpose. He thought long and deeply on a subject, and pondered over it for days and months, and even for years; but when he said,—"I will do it," the hand of God alone could hinder him from performing that which he had resolutely sworn to do.

Having finally resolved to make Elinor Wildegrave his wife (for in spite of all the revolting traits in his character, he had never for a moment entertained the idea of possessing her on less honorable terms, rightly concluding that a man's mistress is always a more

expensive appendage than a man's wife,) he snatched up his hat, and walked with rapid strides to the cottage.

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He neither slackened his pace, nor paused to reflect on the step that he was about to take, until he unclosed the little wicket-gate that divided the cottage from the park. Here at length he stopped to gain breath, and the embarrassment of his situation arose in formidable array against him. He was a man of few words, naturally diffident of his colloquial powers, and easily confused and abashed. In what manner was he to address her? To him the language of flattery and compliment was unknown. He had never said a polite thing to a woman in his life. Unaccustomed to the society of ladies, he was still more unaccustomed to woo; how then was he to unfold the state of his heart to the object of his love? The longer he pondered over the subject, the more awkward and irresolute he felt. His usual fortitude forsook him, and he determined to relinquish a project so ridiculous, or to postpone it to some more favorable moment.

His hand still rested upon the latch of the gate, when his meditations were dispelled by a soft strain of music, which floated forth upon the balmy air, harmonizing with the quiet beauty of the landscape which was illumined by the last rays of a gorgeous summer sunset.

Then came a pause in the music, and the silence was filled with the melodious voice of Elinor Wildegrave. She sang a sweet plaintive ditty, and the tones of her voice had power to soften and subdue the rugged nature of Mark Hurdlestone. His knees trembled, his heart beat faintly, and tears, for the first time since his querulous infancy, moistened his eyes. He softly unclosed the gate, and traversed the little garden with noiseless steps, carefully avoiding the path that led directly to the house.

A screen of filberts concealed his tall figure from observation; and stepping behind the mossy trunk of an excavated oak that fronted the casement, he sent an eager glance towards the spot from whence the sounds issued. The sight that met his eager gaze called into action all the demoniacal passions which the tones of that sweet voice had lulled to rest.

Seated on a rude bench, fronting the lawn, he beheld the only human creature he had ever loved encircled in the arms of his brother Algernon. The guitar, on which he had been playing, now lay neglected at his feet, and the head of the beautiful girl was fondly nestled in his bosom. As the delighted Algernon bent caressingly over her, to catch the low sweet words that murmured from her lips, his bright auburn curls mingled with the glossy raven tresses that shaded the transparent cheek of his lovely mistress, and he pressed a fond kiss upon her snowy brow.

Oh, sight of hell! Mark Hurdlestone suppressed the yell of agony that convulsed his throat, while he gazed with flashing eyes upon the pair before him; yes, with such a glance as Satan regarded our first parents ere sin had exiled them from Paradise, and destroyed the holy beauty of innocence. He attempted to quit his place of concealment, but a strange fascination, a horrible curiosity, rooted him to the spot.

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Elinor looked up with a smile into her lover's face. Algernon seemed perfectly to understand the meaning of that playful glance, and replied to it in lively tones, "Yes, dear Nell, sing my favorite song!" and Elinor instantly complied, with a blush and another sweet smile. Mark was no lover of music, but that song thrilled to his soul, and the words never afterwards departed from his memory. A fiend might have pitied the crushed heart of that humbled and most unhappy man.

Mark Hurdlestone rushed from the garden, and sought the loneliest spot in the park, to give utterance to his despair. With a heavy groan he dashed himself upon the earth, tearing up the grass with his hands, and defacing the flowers and shrubs that grew near him as he clutched at them in his strong agony. The heavens darkened above him, the landscape swam round and round him in endless circles, and the evening breeze, that gently stirred the massy foliage, seemed to laugh at his mental sufferings.

He clenched his teeth, the big drops of perspiration gathered thick and fast upon his brow, and tossing his hands frantically aloft, he cursed his brother, and swore to pursue him with his vengeance to the grave. Yes, that twin brother, who had been fed at the same breast—had been rocked in the same cradle—had shared in the same childish sports—it was on his thoughtless but affectionate and manly heart he bade the dark shadow of his spirit fall. "And, think not," he cried, "that you, Algernon Hurdlestone, shall triumph in my despair. That woman shall be mine, yet. Mine, though her brow has been polluted by your lips, and your profligate love has contaminated her for ever in my eyes. But I will bind you both with a chain, which shall render you my slaves for ever." Then, rising from the ground, he left the spot which had witnessed the only tender emotion he had ever felt, with a spirit full of bitterness, and burning for revenge.

CHAPTER III.

> Oh life! vain life! how many thorny cares
> Lie thickly strewn in all thy crooked paths!—S.M.

There is no sight on earth so revolting as the smile with which hypocrisy covers guilt, without it be revenge laughing at its victim.

When Algernon returned at night to the Hall, his brother greeted him with a composed and smiling aspect. He had communicated to his father the scene he had witnessed at the cottage, and the old man's anger exceeded his most sanguine expectations. With secret satisfaction he saw Algernon enter the drawing-room, which the indignant Squire was pacing with rapid steps; and when he caught the irritated glance of the old man's eye, Mark felt that his work had been well and surely done; that nothing could avert from his brother the storm that was gathering over him.

“So, sir, you are come at last!” said Mr. Hurdlestone, suddenly stopping and confronting the unsuspecting culprit.

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“Was my presence required at home, sir?” asked Algernon, in a tone of surprise, at the same time pulling out his watch. “It is not late. Just ten o’clock.”

“Late or not late, that is not now the question. I have to ask you—I insist upon your telling me—at what house in this neighborhood you spend your time?”

There was an ominous pause. Mark smiled sarcastically, but seemed to watch intently for his brother’s reply; while the old man’s fierce eye glared with tiger-like ferocity upon his younger son.

Algernon at last spoke, and as he did so, he raised his head proudly, and firmly encountered his father’s keen gaze.

“I see how it is, sir; my actions have been watched and my motives misapprehended. But I shall not attempt to deny the truth. My visits have been to the house of Mrs. Wildegrave. She has a beautiful and virtuous daughter, whom I mean to make my wife.”

“The traitor Wildegrave!—his child?”

“The same.”

“And you dare tell me this to my face?”

“I never do that behind your back, that I would be ashamed to own to your face.”

“Impudent scoundrel! Do you know in what manner the father of this *beautiful* and virtuous young lady met his death?”

“As many brave and unfortunate gentlemen did; who, had their cause been successful, would have been praised for their gallantry by the very persons who now condemn them.”

“And you expect me to give my consent to this accursed marriage?”

“I neither expect, nor ask it from you.”

“By heaven, you shall never have it! nor one farthing of mine, without you promise to relinquish all idea of this disgraceful connection.”

“I must leave that to your own sense of justice. I have pledged my solemn word to Miss Wildegrave to make her my wife. I cannot break my word without forfeiting my own self-respect.”

“Then it appears to me that my approbation to a measure, which so deeply concerns the honor and respectability of my family, was a matter of no consequence to my son.”

“Indeed, my dear father, I would cheerfully have consulted you upon the subject had I not been aware of the strong prejudice with which you regard all those who were in any way connected with that unfortunate rebellion. In Miss Wildegrave’s case, I knew my application would be worse than fruitless.”

“And you knew this, and yet dared to persist in your folly?”

“I did. Because I loved the young lady; and felt that I never could be happy without her.”

“And with her I am determined that you never shall be happy. It was my intention, at my decease, to have bequeathed to you the manor of Worden, with its fine old hall, and the noble woods by which it is surrounded; but as you mean to please yourself in the choice of a wife, I shall take the same privilege in the choice of my heirs. Here you have no longer a home. You may leave the Hall to-morrow, and earn a fortune for yourself and your bride. You have ceased to be my son. I never wish to see your face again.”

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Mark Hurdlestone, who had listened most attentively to the conversation, now advanced from the recess of the window, and, pretending to take his brother's part, began to expostulate with his father on the violence of his proceedings; begging him to check his indignation, and allow his brother time to perceive his error. "He could not," he said, "excuse his brother's conduct. His want of duty and respect to such an excellent parent he considered perfectly inexcusable, and most ungrateful, after the many bills he had paid for him, and the great expense he had been to the family during his continental tour. But then he hoped that his father would have compassion upon his youth, and take into account the natural weakness of his intellect, which latter defect made him an easy dupe to artful people."

Algernon's mind was too much overwhelmed with his misfortune to notice the implied insult. He did not even hear it, while his artful brother, under the pretext of striving to effect a reconciliation, was heaping fresh fuel on the fire, and doing all in his power to widen the breach.

The old man's wrath was at length exhausted; and Algernon, fearing to lose all command over his temper, and exasperated by unmerited abuse, abruptly left the room, and retired with a heavy heart to his own chamber.

His determination to make Elinor his wife was not in the least shaken by his father's threats; although he knew that years must now intervene before such an union could take place. After he had a little calmed his agitated feelings, he sat down and wrote a long letter to Elinor, briefly stating what had taken place, and the necessity he was under of leaving the Hall. He again repeated his vows of unshaken constancy; assuring her that he was ready to make any sacrifice for her sake. He begged her not to take the present trouble too deeply to heart, as he felt certain that from the violence of the storm the danger would soon be over.

The next morning he took a tender leave of his mother, and accepting the invitation of a friend to spend some time with him in a distant county, he bade, as he thought, a long farewell to the Hall.

From this visit he was recalled in a few weeks to attend the funeral of his father, who died suddenly of gout in the stomach. After the remains of the old Squire had been consigned to the family vault, Algernon accompanied his mother and brother to the library to hear the reading of the will. No suspicion that his father would realize his threat had ever crossed his mind; and he was literally stunned when he found that his unnatural parent had left all to his elder brother, and cut him off with a shilling.

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In a moment he comprehended the full extent of his misfortune. He had been brought up a gentleman; he was now penniless—without money or interest to secure a respectable situation, in which he might hope by industry and perseverance to obtain a competency. Homeless and friendless, whither could he go? How could he learn to forget what he had been, what he might still be, and all that he had lost? He took up his hat from the table on which his father's unjust testament lay, tore from it the crape that surrounded it—that outward semblance of woe, which in his case was a bitter mockery—and trampled it beneath his feet. His mother raised her weeping eyes silently and imploringly to his face. He returned to her side, pressed her hand affectionately between his own, and casting a contemptuous glance upon his brother, quitted the apartment, and, a few minutes after, the Hall.

When at a distance from the base wretch who had robbed him of his patrimony, by poisoning his father's mind against him, Algernon gave free vent to the anguish that oppressed him. Instead of seeking the widow's cottage, and pouring into the bosom of Elinor the history of his wrongs, he hurried to that very dell in the park which had witnessed his brother's jealous agonies, and throwing himself at his full length upon the grass, he buried his face in his hands and wept.

Could he have guessed his brother's passion for Elinor Wildegrave, or had he witnessed his despair on that memorable night that had made him the happiest of men, he would frankly have forgiven him the ruin he had wrought.

A strong mind, when it comprehends the worst, rouses up all its latent energies to combat with, and triumph over, its misfortunes. Algernon was an amiable man, a man of warm passions and generous impulses, but he was a weak man. His indignation found vent in sighs and tears, when he should have been up and doing.

A light step rustled among the underwood—ashamed of his weakness he sprang to his feet, and saw before him, not the slight form of Elinor Wildegrave, into which belief busy fancy had cheated him, but the drooping figure and mild face of his mother, shrouded in the gloomy garments of her recent widowhood. With pale cheeks and eyelids swollen with tears, she had followed her injured son to his lonely hiding-place.

"Mother!" he cried, holding out his arms to receive the poor weeper, "dear mother! what have I done to be thus treated?"

A convulsive spasm choked his utterance; and as she seated herself beside him on the grass, his head sunk upon her lap, as in other years, and the proud man's spirit was humbled and subdued like that of a little child.

"Your father, Algernon, has died, committing an act of injustice, but for your mother's sake you must forgive him."

Algernon tore up several tufts of grass, and flung them with violence from him—but he remained silent.

“Your brother, too, my Algernon, though harsh and unkind in his general deportment, feels for your present situation. He is anxious to make some amends to you for the injustice of his father. He sent me to tell you that any sum you may think fit to name, and which you consider sufficient to settle you in life, shall be yours.”

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“He sent you—he—the hypocrite! Was it not he who robbed me of my father’s love—-he, who has robbed me of my natural claims to a portion of my father’s property? What! does the incendiary think that I am blind to his treachery—that I am ignorant of the hand that struck me this blow—that I will stoop to receive as a liberal donation, an act of special favor, a modicum of that which ought to be my own? Mother, I will starve before I can receive one farthing from him!”

“Do not be rash, my son”—

“Mother, I cannot be mean. It grieves me, dearest mother, that you should undertake to be the bearer of this message to me.”

“Are you not both my children?—though, God knows, not equally dear; and ought not the welfare of both to be precious to the heart of a mother? It is not so: Mark never had an equal share of my affections, and God has punished me for my undue partiality, by making him the heir of all.”

“But, mother, this was no fault of mine.”

“True; but he has regarded it as a crime. You have robbed him of my love, and he in revenge has robbed you of your fortune. Had I been a kinder mother to him, he might have prized the gold less, and my affection more. My conscience reproaches me as the author of your present sufferings. Do not make my self-upbraidings more acute, by refusing the assistance which your brother offers you.”

“Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, mother. I will not sell my honor for a sum of money, however acceptable that sum might be. It would never prosper with me, if it came from him.”

“Well, Algernon, if you will not be persuaded, you must have it your own way. Your father, though he received from me a noble fortune, has left me dependent upon your brother. I cannot, if I would, aid you with money; but this case of jewels is valuable; I am old, I have no further occasion for such baubles; I have no daughters to wear them after me. Take them, you can raise upon them several thousand pounds—and may the proceeds arising from their sale be blessed to your use.”

“Dearest mother, I accept your generous present;” and Algernon’s countenance brightened as hope once more dawned in his breast. “If I should be fortunate, I will return to you in hard gold the value of these gems.”

He took the casket from his mother’s hand, and caught her to his heart in a long and last embrace. “Should Heaven bless my honest endeavors to obtain a respectable independence, my heart and my home, beloved one, shall ever be open to you.”

And so they parted—the good mother and the disinherited son, to meet no more on this side the grave.

“Poor mother!” sighed Algernon, as he turned his steps to the widow’s cottage, “how I pity you, having to live upon the charity of that churl! It would seem that my father was determined to punish you for your devoted love to me.”

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Before Algernon reached the humble abode that contained his earthly treasure, his buoyant mind had decided upon the best course to pursue. The sale of his mother's jewels would purchase a commission in the East India Company's service. To India, therefore, he determined to go; and he flattered himself that, before the expiration of ten years, he would return with an independent fortune to claim his bride. It was a long period in perspective, but Elinor was in the early bloom of youth, and her charms would scarcely have reached maturity when he hoped again to revisit his native land. The bitterest pang was yet to come. He must inform her of his father's unjust bequeathment of all his property to his brother, and of his own determination to seek his fortune in the East. He must bid the idol of his soul adieu, for a period which, to the imagination of a lover, almost involved eternity. Alas for the fond hearts and the warm hopes of youth! How could they bear the annihilation of all the delightful anticipations which they had formed of future enjoyment?

Elinor had not seen Algernon since his return to the Hall. She ran down the little path which led to the road to meet him, and the next moment was in his arms. Algernon could not restrain his feelings as he clasped her to his heart; he burst into tears.

"You have had a great loss, my Algernon; I will not chide these tears. The death of a kind parent leaves an awful blank in our existence, a wound which time alone can heal."

"His death, Elinor, has not cost me a single tear."

"Then why this grief?"

"We must part."

"Algernon!" Elinor stepped back, and looked at her lover with death-pale cheeks and expanded eyes. "Part!"

"Yes, but not for ever, I hope. But for a long, long period of time; so long, that hope dies in my heart while naming it."

"But why is this, Algernon? Your father's death, you always told me, would remove the only obstacle to—to—" Her voice failed her. She buried her face in her apron, and wept.

"Yes, dearest; that was, provided he left me the means to support a wife. He has not done so. He has left all to my brother—and I am destitute."

"Good Heaven! And this is my doing. Oh, Algernon. What have you not lost on my account!"

“We will not think of that now, love,” said Algernon, growing calmer now the worst had been told; “I came to pour into your faithful heart all my sorrows, and to tell you my plans for the future.”

“Algernon,” said Elinor, gravely, after remaining for some time in deep thought, “your attachment to me has overwhelmed you with misfortunes. Comply with your father’s wishes—resign your engagement to me, and your brother will, in all probability, restore to you the property you have lost.”

“And would you wish me to be under obligations to him? Is not this his work? Elinor, I would rather enlist as a common soldier, than live in affluence, and he my benefactor. But I am poor now, and my love may have become valueless in your eyes,” and he turned his fine eyes, moist with tears, reproachfully on his beautiful mistress.

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“I spoke not for myself,” said Elinor, gently. “Is not the love that has sacrificed a fortune for my sake beyond all price? But the thought of ruining the man I love overwhelms me with despair.”

“Patience, my dear girl—time will remedy the evil. I am going to work hard to win a fortune. In a few years I shall return from India, a rich man.”

“India!”

“It is the only spot on the earth where fortunes can be made in a few years.”

“But the dreadful climate—the many chances against you—”

“I will brave all for your dear sake. Only promise to be true to me, Elinor; never whilst I live, to wed another.”

The promise was given, and sealed upon her lips, and the lovers parted with many sighs and tears; promising, by everything most holy and dear to them, to remain constant to each other. Such vows are too often traced in sand, to be washed out by the returning tide of passion or interest: sometimes by an unfortunate combination of untoward circumstances, over which the poor lover cannot exercise the least control. We shall see how Algernon and his Elinor kept their vows of eternal fidelity.

Mark Hurdlestone heard of his brother’s departure and safe arrival in India with unspeakable satisfaction. With cautious steps he pursued the path suggested to him by the implacable spirit of revenge. Before many months had elapsed, the death of Mrs. Hurdlestone afforded him an opportunity of obtaining a fresh introduction to Miss Wildegrave. At his mother’s particular request, Mrs. Wildegrave and her daughter had visited her frequently during her dying illness; and as it exactly suited his own purpose, Mark offered no objection, but did all in his power to meet his mother’s wishes. The dying woman felt an intense desire to see the person for whom her favorite son had sacrificed so much, and she was so pleased with his choice, that she forgave her all the trouble she had occasioned, kept her constantly near her person during her last illness, and finally expired in her arms.

To Elinor she owed much of the attention she received at that time from her stern unloving son. He treated her with a degree of tenderness quite unusual to him, anticipated all her comforts, and seldom left her apartment. “They may call the Squire a harsh cruel man,” said Elinor to her mother, “but I must say, that I never saw a kinder or a better son.”

After the funeral, Mark called upon Mrs. Wildegrave, to deliver into her hands a few memorials of his mother’s regard, to which he added some handsome ornaments for Elinor out of his own purse, and he expressed in the warmest terms his grateful thanks

for their attention and kindness to the deceased. He displayed so much feeling on this melancholy occasion, and spoke with such affection and respect of his departed parent, that it made a deep impression upon Mrs. Wildegrave and her daughter.

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Encouraged by this favorable reception, the Squire soon repeated his visit, and by adroitly flattering the elder lady, he continued to ingratiate himself into her favor. Mrs. Wildegrave was a kind well-meaning woman, but she had struggled so long with poverty, that wealth had acquired, as a natural consequence, too great an ascendancy over her mind. The possession of these coveted riches gave to Mark Hurdlestone an importance in her eyes, which made her blind to the defects of his character, and she secretly wished that her daughter had not entered into a rash engagement with his brother, which must unavoidably extend over an indefinite number of years, but could transfer her affections to the handsome owner of Oak Hall. Alas! how often are mothers, and fond mothers too, induced to sacrifice the earthly and eternal peace of a beloved child to the demon of this world, the selfish soul-destroying power of wealth, that daily slays its thousands and tens of thousands, yet never finds one worshipper the less.

About this period, Mr. Hurdlestone purchased the cottage rented by the widow, and appeared in a new character, that of a landlord. The old lady was fond of planning improvements, which gave him an opportunity of gratifying her taste; and he took no small pains in accommodating himself to her wishes. “He was a fine generous man,” she said, “one whom the world has greatly misrepresented. All his father’s faults have been heaped upon his innocent head. She had had sore reason to hate the illiberal narrow-minded father, but she admired and esteemed the son.”

“I do not think that Algernon did his brother justice,” said Elinor; “but members of the same family are often blind to each other’s merits. Certainly the Squire is not the bad selfish man I took him for.”

“He has behaved like an angel to us,” returned the mother; “and I for my part, prefer him to Algernon.”

Elinor rejected this preference with disdain; but the old lady persisted in maintaining her own opinion. Her daughter at last relinquished the argument, by saying, “That the Squire, with his grave serious face, and stiff polite manners, might suit the taste of a middle-aged woman; but he never would win the regard of a young girl.”

At first, Elinor had shunned the company of Mr. Hurdlestone, for his presence recalled painful thoughts, and she was prejudiced against him on his brother’s account; but his attentions were so kind and considerate, that, stern as he was, she began to entertain a better opinion of him, and to think that perhaps Algernon, who was very passionate, might have given him some provocation for the unjust distribution of his father’s property. His manners were austere, and somewhat misanthropic, but his book-knowledge was extensive, and, though naturally taciturn, he could, when he pleased, converse well upon any subject. Free from the influence of malignant passions, he was a sensible and interesting companion.

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Elinor knew that the brothers had not parted friends, nor was she ignorant of the cause of the quarrel; but she was willing to believe, from what she heard and saw of Mark Hurdlestone, that he was less in fault than he had been represented to her by Algernon; and the hope of bringing about a reconciliation, and by so doing, shorten her lover's period of exile, took a lively hold of her imagination.

The Squire was so plausible, that he found it an easy task to deceive a girl as unsophisticated as Elinor Wildegrave, who was a perfect novice in the ways of the world. She could not believe it possible that Mr. Hurdlestone could stoop from his dignity to act a despicable part; that deception could lurk beneath such a grave demeanor. Elinor was not the first human being whose faith has been built on reeds.

When alone with Miss Wildegrave, Mark never failed to make his brother the theme of conversation. He lamented, most feelingly, the unfortunate difference which existed between them, which appeared the more unnatural, considering that they were twins. He laid the fault of their disunion entirely to their parents—his father adopting him as a pet, and his mother lavishing all her affections upon Algernon.

This partiality, he said, had destroyed all confidence between them, and produced a rivalry and misunderstanding of each other's character from their earliest years, substituting envy for generous emulation, and hatred for love. In all their quarrels, whether right or wrong, his mother defended Algernon, and his father sided with him so that well-doing was never rewarded, and ill-doing never met with an adequate punishment. Was it to be wondered at that they had grown up perfectly indifferent to each other?

There was much truth in this statement; but Mark Hurdlestone made the best of it, in order to justify himself.

As they became more intimate, Elinor ventured to inquire why his father had been induced to act so unjustly to Algernon on his death-bed; that she could hardly believe that Algernon's attachment to her could have drawn down upon him such a heavy punishment.

"My father was a man of headstrong prejudices," said the Squire. "If he once took a notion into his head, it was impossible to knock it out of him. To dislike a person, and to hate them, were with him the same thing. Such were the feelings he entertained towards your father, whom he regarded as having been his bitterest enemy. The idea of a son of his uniting himself to a daughter of Captain Wildegrave seemed to impugn his own loyalty. It was with him a personal insult, an unforgivable offence. Algernon has accused me of fomenting my father's displeasure, for the base purpose of robbing him of his share of the property. You have been told this?"

"I have."

“And you believe it?”

“I did believe it; but it was before I knew you.”

“Dismiss such an unworthy idea of me from your breast for ever. I did all in my power to restore Algernon to my father’s favor. I earnestly entreated him, when upon his death-bed, to make a more equitable will. On this point the old man was inflexible. He died muttering curses on his head.”

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Elinor shuddered.

“It was my determination to have rendered Algernon justice, and shared the property equally between us; but in this Algernon prevented me. He left the Hall in a tempest of rage; and when I made the proposal through my mother, my offer was rejected with scorn. I wrote to him before he left for India on the same subject, and my letters were returned unopened. You see, my dear Miss Wildegrave, I have done all in my power to conciliate my brother; but, like my poor father, his enmity is stronger than his love, and will not be entreated.”

This statement of Mr. Hurdlestone’s was not only very plausible, but it was partly true. He had indeed begged the dying man to forgive Algernon, and consent to his marriage with Miss Wildegrave; but then, he well knew that his father would neither do the one nor the other; while his own hypocritical interference only aggravated the old man’s anger in a tenfold degree, and would be the sure way of producing the result which he so ardently desired. He had offered to settle a handsome sum upon his injured brother, but he well knew that it would be rejected with scorn by the high-spirited young man. Elinor could not contradict these statements. She knew the impetuous disposition of her lover, and she more readily admitted their probability. Mark had been represented to her by him as a sullen, morose, avaricious young man, selfish, unfeeling, and cruel, suspicious of his friends, and implacable to his enemies. She had found him the reverse of all this; and she began to entertain doubts of Algernon’s veracity, and to conclude that it was for some more cogent reason than for any with which she was yet acquainted that his father had struck him out of his will, so anxious was she to acquit herself of being the cause of her lover’s exile, and the unfortunate circumstances in which he was placed. This, too, was selfish; but Elinor had been an only child, and very much indulged by her mother. She was a good, gentle, beautiful girl; but not exactly the stuff of which angels are made.

After this explanation had taken place, Mr. Hurdlestone became a daily visitor at the cottage; and his society and friendship contributed greatly to the comfort and amusement of its inhabitants. He never, to Elinor, made the least allusion to his passion. The passion, indeed, had long ceased to exist; he sought her not for love, but for revenge.

Time glided on. Algernon had been three years away; but his letters still continued to breathe the same ardent attachment, and Elinor was happy in the consciousness of being the sole possessor of his heart.

Her mother, who had more ambitious views for her daughter, often lamented her long engagement, which might never be completed. “She would rather,” she said, “have the rich Squire for her son-in-law; and she would not be at all surprised if Elinor herself was to change her mind before the ten years expired.”

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Six years of the allotted period had expired. Algernon had been promoted to the rank of major; and his letters were full of happy anticipations. Elinor herself began to look forward to their union as a thing likely to take place; and she spoke of her lover's perseverance and constancy with proud delight.

"He has done better than I expected of him," said the Squire. "There is nothing like adversity for trying what a man's made of. But who can wonder at his exerting himself to obtain such a reward?" And he bowed to the blushing Elinor, as she sat with Algernon's letter in her hand, radiant with joy.

"He talks of returning in less than two years: I wish it were now. I am already three-and-twenty; by that time I shall begin to look old."

Mark thought that she never looked younger, or more beautiful, than at that moment, and he told her so.

"Ah, but you are my friend—are partial. Will not Algernon see a change?"

"Yes—for the better."

"I wish I could believe you. But I feel older. My heart is not so fresh as it was; I no longer live in a dream; I see things as they really are."

"And do you expect to find no change in your lover? The burning climate of India is not a great beautifier."

"I can only see him as he was. If his heart remains unchanged, no alteration in his personal appearance could shake my regard, particularly when those changes have been incurred for my sake."

"Oh, woman, great is your faith!" said Mark, with a sigh. "Gladly would I give my fortune to be Algernon."

Elinor started, and looked anxiously at her companion. It was the first time he had ever alluded to his secret passion. Did he love her? The question made Elinor tremble. She folded her letter, and turned the conversation into another channel. But the words haunted her, "I would give my fortune to be Algernon." Could he be in earnest? Perhaps it was only a passing compliment—men were fond of paying such. But the Squire was no flatterer; he seldom said what he did not mean. She re-read Algernon's letter, and thought no more about the words that his brother had let fall.

That letter was the last she ever received from her lover. After enduring the most torturing suspense for eighteen months, and writing frequently to demand the cause of his unnatural silence, Elinor gave herself up to the most gloomy forebodings. Mr. Hurdlestone endeavored to soothe her fears, and win her to the belief that his brother's

letters must have miscarried, through the negligence of private hands, to whom they might have been entrusted. But when these suggestions failed in arousing her from the stupor of grief into which she had fallen, he offered the most tender consolations which could be administered to a wounded mind—an appearance of heartfelt sympathy in its sufferings.

While musing one morning over the cause of Algernon's silence, the Squire's groom approached the open window at which she was seated, and placed a letter in her hands; it was edged and sealed with black; and Elinor hastily broke the seal, and opened it. Her eye glanced, hurriedly over the first few words. She uttered a loud cry; and sank down, weeping, at her mother's feet.

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Mrs. Wildegrave lifted her to the sofa, and taking the letter from her cold and nerveless grasp, read its contents. They were written by Mark Hurdlestone.

Oak Hall, June 16, ——

"My Dear Miss Wildegrave:

"It is with the utmost reluctance that I take up my pen to communicate tidings which, I well know, will occasion you great distress. This morning's post brought me the mournful intelligence of my brother Algernon's death, which melancholy event took place on the morning of the 4th of August last, at the house of a friend in Calcutta. Mr. Richardson's letter I will transmit to you as soon as you are able to bear its contents. My poor brother was on his way to England; and his death was so sudden, that he made no arrangement of his affairs previous to his dissolution. That Heaven may comfort and sustain you under this severe trial, is the earnest prayer of your sincere friend,

"Marcus Hurdlestone."

"Oh, mother! mother! My heart—my poor heart! How shall I learn to bear this great sorrow?" was all that the forlorn girl could utter, as she pressed her hands tightly over the agitated bosom that concealed her convulsed and bursting heart. No sound was heard within that peaceful home for many days and nights but the sobs and groans of the unhappy Elinor. She mourned for the love of her youth, as one without hope. She resisted every attempt at consolation, and refused to be comforted. When the first frantic outbreak of sorrow had stagnated into a hopeless and tearless gloom, which threatened the reason of the sufferer, the Squire visited the cottage, and brought with him the merchant's letter, that fully corroborated his former statement, and the wretched heart-broken girl could no longer cherish the most remote probability to which hope could cling.

Twelve months passed away. The name of Algernon was never mentioned in her presence; and she still continued to wear the deepest mourning. A strange apathy had succeeded her once gay flow of spirits, and she seemed alike indifferent to herself and all the world. To the lover-like attentions of Mark Hurdlestone she paid no regard, and appeared wholly unconscious of his admiration. Mortified by her coldness, even his patience was nearly exhausted; when the death of her mother, who had been a long time in declining health, cast Elinor, friendless and unprotected, on the world. This circumstance, hailed with unspeakable joy by Mr. Hurdlestone, plunged the poor girl, doubly an orphan, into despair.

A lady in the neighborhood, pitying her distress, received her into her family, until she could adopt some plan for her future maintenance; but all her attempts to console Elinor for her loss proved abortive. Her tears flowed unceasingly, her health and spirits were

impaired; and she felt, with bitterness, that she no longer possessed strength or fortitude to combat with poverty and the many ills of life.

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At this critical juncture, Mark Hurdlestone, generously, as all the world thought, came forward, and offered her his hand; inviting her, in the most delicate manner, to share his splendid home and fortune.

His disinterested offer, at such a time, filled Elinor with respect and gratitude, but she did not love him; and, trembling and irresolute, she knew not how to act. She had but one relative—an uncle, in India—who had never written to her mother since her father died upon the scaffold. Whether this uncle was still living, was married, or single, she could not ascertain. To him, therefore, it was useless to apply. She had no home—she was at present dependent upon the bounty of a stranger, who could ill afford to be burdened with an additional member to her already large family. What could she do? She consulted that friend; and the worthy woman strongly advised her to accept the Squire's offer, wondering, all the while, how she could, for one moment, think of a refusal. So it was all settled; and Elinor reluctantly consented to become Mark Hurdlestone's wife.

Thousands in her situation would have done the same. But we must blame her, or any other woman, whatever her circumstances may be, who consents to become the bosom-partner of a man she cannot love. Miserable are such unions; from them flow, as from a polluted stream, all the bitterest sorrows and ills of life.

Young maiden, whosoever you may be, whose eyes glance at this moment on my page, take the advice of one who has been both a happy wife and mother: never sacrifice the best and holiest affections of your heart on the sordid shrine of wealth or worldly ambition. Without reciprocal love, the heart becomes a moral desert How can you reasonably expect to receive that from another, of which you are destitute yourself? Will the field that never was sown yield to the possessor a plentiful harvest? I do most firmly believe, that to this want of affection in parents to each other may be traced the want of the same feeling in children towards their parents. If a woman hates her husband, her offspring are not very likely to feel a strong attachment to their father; for children inherit, in a strong degree, not only the disposition of their parents, but their mental and physical peculiarities.

A virtuous woman will rarely place her affections upon an unworthy object if she be true to herself and the education she has received; and if she cannot consent to encounter a few trials and privations for the sake of the man she loves, she is not worthy to be his wife.

The loving and beloved partner of a good man may be called upon to endure many temporal sorrows, but her respect and admiration for his character will enable her to surmount them all, and she will exclaim with pious exultation,—"Thank God! I have been happy in my choice. His love is better to me than gold, yea, than much fine gold!"

CHAPTER IV.

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Oh Lord, thou hast enlarged the grief
  Of this poor stricken heart,
That only finds in tears relief,
  Which all unbidden start:
Long have I borne the cruel scorn
  Of one I could not love nor hate;
My soul, with secret anguish torn,
  Yields unresisting to its fate—S.M.

Mark Hurdlestone's triumph was complete; his revenge fully gratified, when he led his beautiful bride from the altar to the carriage, which was in readiness to convey her to her future home. She was his, and Algernon might return as soon as he pleased. Elinor Wildegrave was beyond his reach. She could never be his wife.

Tranquil, but not happy, Elinor viewed the change in her circumstances as an intervention of Providence to save her from a life of poverty and suffering; and she fancied that, if she did not love her benefactor, feelings of gratitude and a sense of duty would always prevent him from becoming to her an object of dislike or indifference.

How little had she studied human nature; how ignorant was she of the mysterious movements of the human heart; and when, after much painful experience, she acquired the fatal knowledge, how bitter were the effects it produced upon her own.

When once his victim was in his toils, Mr. Hurdlestone did not attempt to conceal from her his real disposition.

He laughed at her credulity in believing that love alone had actuated him in making her his wife. He related to her, with terrible fidelity, the scene he had witnessed between her and Algernon in the garden, and the agonies of jealousy that he endured when he discovered that she loved another; and he repulsed with cold and sarcastic neglect every attempt made by Elinor to render their union more tolerable, and his home more comfortable.

To Elinor his conduct was perfectly unaccountable. She could not believe that he did not love her, and she was not a little mortified at what she considered his unnatural coldness and neglect.

"Marcus," she said to him one evening, as she sat on a cushion at his feet, after making many vain attempts to attract his notice, or win from him one kind look or word, "you did not always treat me with indifference; there was a time when I thought you loved me."

"There was a time, madam, when I adored you!—when I would have given all I possessed in the world to obtain from you one smile."

“Then why this coldness? What have I done to merit your dislike?”

“You loved Algernon. You love him still. Aye, that blush! Your face tells no falsehood. You cannot conceal it from me.”

“I do not deny my love. But he is dead. Why should you be jealous of the dead?”

Mark smiled a grim bitter smile. “But if he were alive?”

“Ah!” and she pressed her small white hand tightly on her heart. “But then, Marcus, I should not be your wife. It would no longer be my duty to love another.”

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“You think it, then, your duty to love me?”

“Yes. You are my husband. My heart is lonely and sad. It must be filled by some object. Dear Marcus, suffer me to love you.”

She laid her fair cheek meekly upon his knee, but he did not answer her touching appeal to his sympathy with a single caress.

“I cannot make you happy, Elinor. Algernon alone can do that.”

“Algernon! Why Algernon?” said Elinor, bursting into tears. “Is it to make me more miserable that you constantly remind me of my loss?”

“How do you know that he is dead?”

“I have your word for it; the evidence of your friend’s letter; his long silence. What frightful images you conjure up! You seem determined to make me wretched to-night.”

She sprang from her lowly seat, and left the room in an agony of tears. Mark looked after her for a moment:—“Aye, he still keeps your heart. But I have had my revenge.”

The agony which he had endured in the garden on that memorable night, when he first discovered that Elinor loved his brother, was light in comparison to the pangs which shook the inmost soul of his unhappy wife, when time at last revealed the full extent of her misery, and of her husband’s deep-laid treachery—and Algernon returned from India with an independent fortune to claim his bride, and found her the wife of his brother.

The monster who had supplanted him in his father’s affections had now robbed him of his wife. Algernon did not seek an explanation from Mrs. Hurdlestone, either personally or by letter. He supposed that her present position was one of her own choosing, and he was too proud to utter a complaint. The hey-day of youth was past, and he had seen too much of the world to be surprised at the inconstancy of a poor girl, who had been offered, during her lover’s absence, a splendid alliance. He considered that Elinor was sufficiently punished for her broken vows in being forced to spend her life in the society of such a sordid wretch as Mark Hurdlestone.

“God forgive her,” he said; “she has nearly broken my heart, but I pity her from my very soul.”

When the dreadful truth flashed upon the mind of Mrs. Hurdlestone, she bitterly accused her husband of the deception he had practised. Mr. Hurdlestone, instead of denying or palliating the charge, even boasted of his guilt, and entered into a minute detail of each revolting circumstance—the diabolical means that he had employed to destroy her peace.

This fiend, to whom in an evil hour she had united her destiny, had carefully intercepted the correspondence between herself and Algernon, and employed a friend in India to forge the plausible account he had received of her lover's death—and finally, as the finishing stroke to all this deep-laid villany, he had overcome his avaricious propensities, and made Elinor his wife, not to gratify a sensual passion, but the terrible spirit of revenge.

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Poor Elinor! For a long time her reason bowed before the knowledge of these horrible facts, and when she did at last recover her senses, her beauty had faded beneath the blight of sorrow like the brilliant but evanescent glow of the evening cloud, which vanishes at the approach of night. Weary of life, she did not regret the loss of those fatal charms which had been to her a source of such misery.

The last time the rose tint ever visited her once blooming cheeks was when suddenly informed by Mr. Hurdlestone of his brother's marriage with a young lady of large fortune. "May he be happy," she exclaimed, clasping her hands together, whilst the deepest crimson suffused her face. "I was not worthy to be his wife!" Ere the sentence was concluded the color had faded from her cheek, which no after emotion recalled.

His brother's marriage produced a strange effect upon the mind of Mark Hurdlestone. It cheated him of a part of his revenge. He had expected that the loss of Elinor would have stung Algernon to madness; that his existence would have become insupportable without the woman he loved. How great was his mortification when, neither by word nor letter, nor in conversation with his friends, did his injured brother ever revert to the subject! That Algernon did not feel the blow, could scarcely be inferred from his silence. The grief he felt was too acute for words, and Algernon was still too faithful to the object of his first ardent attachment to upbraid her conduct to others. Mark, who could not understand this delicacy of sentiment, concluded that Elinor was no longer regarded with affection by her lover. Elinor comprehended his silence better, and she loved him more intensely for his forbearance.

Algernon the world reputed rich and happy, and the Squire despised Elinor when her person was no longer coveted by his rival. His temper, constitutionally bad, became intolerable, and he treated his uncomplaining wife with such unkindness, that it would have broken her heart, if the remembrance of a deeper sorrow had not rendered her indifferent to his praise or censure. She considered his kindest mercy was neglect.

Having now no other passion to gratify but avarice, Mark Hurdlestone's hoarding propensities returned with double force. He gradually retrenched his domestic expenses; laid down his carriage; sold his horses; discharged his liveried servants; and, to the astonishment of his wondering neighbors, let the noble park to a rich farmer in the parish, with permission to break it up with the plough. He no longer suffered the produce of his extensive gardens to be consumed in the house, or given to the poor; but sold the fruit and vegetables to any petty greengrocer in the village, who thought it worth his while to walk up to the Hall, and drive a bargain with the stingy Squire. He not only assisted in gathering the fruit, for fear he should be robbed, but often acted as scarecrow to the birds, whom he reviled as noisy, useless nuisances, vexatiously sent to destroy the fruits of the earth.

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Elinor gently remonstrated with him on the meanness and absurdity of such conduct; but he silenced what he termed her impertinent interference in matters which did not concern her. He bade her to remember that she brought him no fortune, and he was forced to make these retrenchments in order to support her. After this confession, there was no end to his savings. He discharged his remaining domestics; sold most of the splendid furniture by public auction; and, finally, shut up the Hall to avoid paying the window-tax, only allowing the kitchen, one parlor, and two bed-rooms to be visited by the light of day. The only person whom he allowed to approach the house was the gardener, Grenard Pike, who rented a small cottage at the end of the avenue that led to the back premises of the once noble mansion.

This favored individual was the Squire in low life; and the gossip dealers in the village did not scruple to affirm that the likeness was not *merely* accidental; that Grenard Pike was brother to the Squire in a natural way; but whether this report were true or false, he and his master, if unrelated by blood, possessed kindred spirits, and perfectly understood and appreciated each other. This man had neither wife nor child, and the whole business of his life was how to get money, and, when got, how to turn it to the best advantage. If the Squire was attached to anything in the world, it was to this faithful satellite, this humble transcript of himself.

The wretched Elinor, shut out from all society, and denied every domestic comfort, was limited by her stingy partner to the awkward attendance of a parish girl, who, together with her mistress, he contrived to half starve; as he insisted on keeping the key of the pantry, and only allowed them a scanty meal twice during the twenty-four hours, which he said, was sufficient to keep them in health; more was hurtful both to the mind and body.

Elinor had dragged on this miserable existence for twelve years, when, to her unspeakable grief, she found that she was likely to become a mother, for the prospect of this event served rather to increase, than diminish her sorrows. It was some time before she dared to communicate this unwelcome intelligence to her sordid lord. Still, she hoped, in spite of his parsimony, that he might wish for a son to heir his immense wealth. Not he! He only thought of a spendthrift, who would recklessly squander all that he toiled and starved himself to save; and he received the promise of his paternal honors with a very bad grace.

“All the world!” he exclaimed, “are conspiring together to ruin me. I shall be ate out of house and home by doctors and nurses, and my rest will be constantly disturbed by squalling brats; for I suppose, madam, that like my worthy mother, you will entail upon me two at a time. But my mother was a strong healthy woman, not delicate and puling like you. It is more than probable that the child may die.”

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“And the mother,” sighed Elinor.

“Well if He who sends is pleased to take away, He will find me perfectly resigned to His will. You need not weep, madam. If my conduct appears unnatural, let me tell you that I consider those human beings alone fortunate who perish in their infancy. They are in no fear of coming to the gallows. They are saved from the threatened torments of hell!”

Elinor shrank from the wild flash of his keen dark eyes, and drew back with an involuntary shudder. “Happy had it been for me if I had died an infant on my mother’s breast.”

“Aye, if you had never seen the light. You were born to be the bane of my house. But since you have confided to me this precious secret, let me ask you what you think will be the probable expense of your confinement?”

“I really cannot tell. I must have a doctor—a nurse—and some few necessaries for the poor babe. I think, with great economy, ten pounds would be enough.”

“Ten pounds!”

“It may cost more, certainly not less.”

“You will never get that sum from me.”

“But, Marcus, what am I to do?”

“The best way you can.”

“You would not have your wife solicit charity?”

“An excellent thought. Ha! ha! you would make a first-rate beggar, with that pale sad face of yours. But, no, madam, you shall not beg. Poor as I am, I will find means to support both you and the child. But, mark me—it must not resemble Algernon.”

“How is that possible? I have not seen Algernon for eighteen years.”

“But he is ever in your thoughts. Let me not trace this adultery of the heart in the features of my child.”

“But you are like Algernon. Not a striking likeness, but still you might be known for brothers.”

“So, you are trying to find excuses in case of the worst. But, I again repeat to you, that I will not own the boy if he is like Algernon.”

This whim of the miser's was a new cause of terror to Elinor; from that moment an indescribable dread lest the child should be like Algernon took possession of her breast. She perceived that her husband already calculated with selfish horror the expense of the unborn infant's food and raiment; and she began to entertain some not unreasonable fears lest the young child, if it should survive its birth, would be starved to death, as Mark barely supplied his household with the common necessaries of life; and, though Elinor bore the system of starvation with the indifference which springs from a long and hopeless continuation of suffering, the parish girl was loud in her complaints, and she was constantly annoyed with her discontented murmurings, without having it in her power to silence them in the only effective way.

The Squire told Ruth, that she consumed more food at one meal than would support him and her mistress for a week; and he thought that what was enough for them might satisfy a cormorant like her. But the poor girl could not measure the cravings of her healthy appetite by the scanty wants of a heart-broken invalid and a miser. Her hunger remained unappeased, and she continued to complain.

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At this period Mark Hurdlestone was attacked, for the first time in his life, with a dangerous illness. Elinor nursed him with the greatest care, and prescribed for him as well as she could; for he would not suffer a doctor to enter the house. But finding that the disorder did not yield to her remedies, but rather that he grew daily worse, she privately sent for the doctor. When he arrived, Mr. Hurdlestone ordered him out of his room, and nearly exhausted what little strength he still possessed, in accusing Elinor of entering into a conspiracy with Mr. Moore to kill him, and, as the doctor happened to be a widower, to marry him after his death, and share the spoils between them.

“Your husband, madam, is mad—as mad as a March hare,” said Mr. Moore, as he descended the stairs. “He is, however, in a very dangerous state, it is doubtful if he ever recovers.”

“And what can be done for him?”

“Nothing in his present humor without you have him treated as a maniac, which, if I were in your case and in your situation, I most certainly would do.”

“Oh, no, no! there is something dreadful in such a charge coming from a wife, though he often appears to me scarcely accountable for his actions; but what can I give him to allay this dreadful fever?”

“I will write you a prescription.” This the doctor did on the back of a letter with his pencil, for Elinor could not furnish him with a scrap of paper.

“You must send this to the apothecary. He will make it up.”

“What will it cost?”

The doctor smiled. “A mere trifle; perhaps three shillings.”

“I have not had such a sum in my possession for the last three years. He will die before he will give it to me.”

“Mad, mad, mad,” said the doctor, shaking his head. “Well, my dear lady, if he will not give it to save his worthless life, you must steal it from him. If you fail, why let Nature take her course. His death would certainly be your gain.”

Returning to the sick room, she found the patient in a better temper, evidently highly gratified at having expelled the doctor. Elinor thought this a good opportunity to urge her request for a small sum of money to procure medicines and other necessaries; but on this subject she found him inexorable.

“Give you money to buy poison!” he exclaimed. “Do you take me for a fool, or mad?”

“You are very ill, Marcus; you will die, without you follow Dr. Moore’s advice.”

“Don’t flatter yourselves. I don’t mean to die to please you. There is a great deal of vitality in me yet. Don’t say another word. I will take nothing but cold water; I feel better already.”

“Pray God that you may be right,” said Elinor. But after this fit of rage, he fell into a stupor, and before night he was considerably worse. His unfortunate wife, worn down with watching and want of food and rest, now determined to have a regular search for the key of his strongbox, that she might procure him the medicines prescribed by the doctor, and purchase oatmeal and bread for the use of the parish girl and herself.

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She carefully examined his pockets, his writing-desk, and bureau, but to no purpose—-looking carefully into every drawer and chest that had not been sold by public auction or private contract. Not a corner of the chamber was left unexplored—not a closet or shelf escaped her strict examination, until, giving up the search as perfectly hopeless, she resumed her station at his bed-side, to watch through the long winter night—without a fire, and by the wan gleam that a miserable rush-light shed through the spacious and lofty room—the restless slumbers of the miser. She was ill, out of spirits, fatigued with her fruitless exertion, and deeply disappointed at her want of success.

The solitary light threw a ghastly livid hue on the strongly-marked features of the sleeper, rendered sharp and haggard by disease and his penurious habits; she could just distinguish through the gloom the spectre-like form of the invalid, and the long bony attenuated hands which grasped, from time to time, the curtains and bedclothes, as he tossed from side to side in his feverish unrest. Elinor continued to watch the dark and perturbed countenance of the sleeper, until he became an object of fear, and she fancied that it was some demon who had for a time usurped the human shape, and not the brother of Algernon—the man whom she had voluntarily attended to the altar, and in the presence of Almighty God had sworn to love, honor, and obey, and to cherish in sickness and in health.

A crushing sense of all the deception that had been practiced upon her, of her past wrongs and present misery, made her heart die within her, and her whole soul overflow with bitterness. She wrung her hands, and smote her breast in an agony of despair; but in that dark hour no tear relieved her burning brain, or moistened her eyes. She had once been under the dominion of insanity; she felt that her reason in that moment hung upon a thread; that, if she pursued much longer her present thoughts, they would drive her mad; that, if she continued to gaze much longer on the face of her husband, she would be tempted to plunge a knife, which lay on the table near her, into his breast. With a desperate effort she drew her eyes from the sleeper, and turned from the bed. Her gaze fell upon a large full-length picture in oils, which hung opposite. It was the portrait of one of Mark's ancestors, a young man who had fallen in his first battle, on the memorable field of Flodden. It bore a strong resemblance to Algernon, and Elinor prized it on that account, and would sit for hours with her head resting upon her hand, and her eyes riveted on this picture. This night it seemed to regard her with a sad and mournful aspect; and the large blue eyes appeared to return her fixed gaze with the sorrowful earnestness of life.

"My head is strangely confused," she murmured, half aloud. "Into what new extravagance will my treacherous fancy hurry me to-night? Ah me! physical wants and mental suffering, added to this long watching, will turn my brain."

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She buried her face in her hands, and endeavored to shut out the grotesque and phantom-like forms that seemed to dance before her. A deathlike stillness reigned through the house, the silence alone broken by the ticking of the great dial at the head of the staircase. There is something inexpressibly awful in the ticking of a clock, when heard at midnight by the lonely and anxious watcher beside the bed of death. It is the voice of time marking its slow but certain progress towards eternity, and warning us in solemn tones that it will soon cease to number the hours for the sufferer for ever. Elinor trembled as she listened to the low monotonous measured sounds; and she felt at that moment a presentiment that her own weary pilgrimage on earth was drawing to a close.

“Oh, Algernon!” she thought; “it may be a crime, but I sometimes think that if I could see you once more—only once more—I could forget all my wrongs and sufferings, and die in peace.”

The unuttered thought was scarcely formed, when a slight rustling noise shook the curtains of the bed, and the next moment a tall figure in white glided across the room. It drew nearer, and Elinor, in spite of the wish she had just dared to whisper to herself, struggled with the vision, as a sleeper does with the night-mare, when the suffocating grasp of the fiend is upon his throat. Her presence of mind forsook her, and, with a shriek of uncontrollable terror, she flung herself across the bed, and endeavored to awaken her husband. The place he had occupied a few minutes before was vacant; and, raising her fear-stricken head, she perceived, with feelings scarcely less allied to fear, that the figure she had mistaken for the ghost of Algernon was the corporeal form of the miser.

He was asleep, but his mind appeared to be actively employed. He drew near the table with a cautious step, and took from beneath a broad leathern belt, which he always wore next his skin, a small key. Elinor sat up on the bed, and watched his movements with intense interest. He next took up the candle, and glided out of the room. Slipping off her shoes she followed him with noiseless steps. He descended the great staircase, and suddenly stopped in the centre of the entrance hall. Here he put down the light on the last step of the broad oak stairs, and proceeded to remove one of the stone flags that formed the pavement of the hall. With some difficulty he accomplished his task; then kneeling down, and holding the light over the chasm, he said in hollow and unearthly tones that echoed mournfully through the empty building:

“Look! here is money; my father’s savings and my own. Will this save my soul?”

Elinor leaned over the sordid wretch, and discovered with no small astonishment that the aperture contained a great quantity of gold and silver coins; and the most valuable articles of the family plate and jewels.

“Unhappy man!” she mentally cried; “dost thou imagine that these glittering heaps of metal will purchase the redemption of a soul like thine, or avert the certainty of future

punishment?—for never was the parable of the servant who buried his talent in the dust more fully exemplified than in thee.”

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“What, not enough?” growled forth the miser. “By heavens! thou hast a human conscience. But wait patiently, and I will show you more—aye, more—my brother’s portion, and my own. Ha, ha! I tricked him there. The old man’s heart failed him at the last. He was afraid of you. Yes, yes, he was afraid of the devil! It was I formed the plan. It was I guided the dead hand. Shall I burn for that?”

Then, as if suddenly struck with a violent pain, he shrieked out, “Ah, ah! my brain is cloven with a bolt of fire. I cannot bear this! Algernon mocks my agonies—laughs at my cries—and tells me that he has a fair wife and plenty of gold, in spite of my malice. How did he get it? Did he rob me?”

Elinor shrunk back aghast from this wild burst of delirium; and the miser, rising from his knees, began re-ascending the stairs. This task he performed with difficulty, and often reeled forward with extreme pain and weakness. After traversing several empty chambers, he entered what had once been the state apartment, and stooping down, he drew from beneath the faded furniture of the bed a strong mahogany brass-bound chest, which he cautiously opened, and displayed to his wondering companion a richer store of wealth than that on which she had so lately gazed.

“How! not satisfied yet!” he cried in the same harsh tones, “then may I perish to all eternity if I give you one fraction more.”

As he was about to close the chest, Elinor, who knew that without a necessary supply of money both her unborn infant and its avaricious father would perish for want, slid her hand into the box, and dextrously abstracted some of the broad gold pieces it contained. The coins, in coming in contact with each other, emitted a slight ringing sound, which arrested, trifling as it was, the ear of the sleeper.

“What! fingering the gold already?” he exclaimed, hastily slapping down the lid of the strong box. “Could you not wait till I am dead?”

Then staggering back to his apartment, he was soon awake, and raving under a fresh paroxysm of the fever. In his delirium he fancied himself confined to the dreary gulf of eternal woe, and from this place of torment he imagined that his brother could alone release him, and he proffered to him, while under the influence of that strong agony, all his hidden treasures if he would but intercede with Christ to save his soul.

These visions of his diseased brain were so frequent and appalling, and the near approach of death so dreadful to the guilty and despairing wretch, that they produced at last a strong desire to see his brother, that he might ask his forgiveness, and make some restitution of his property to him before he died.

“Elinor,” he said, “I must see Algernon. I cannot die until I have seen him. But mark me, Elinor, you must not be present at our conference. You must not see him.”

With quivering lips, and a face paler than usual, his wife promised obedience, and Grenard Pike was despatched to Norgood Hall to make known to Algernon Hurdlestone his dying brother's request, and to call in, once more, the aid of the village doctor.

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As Elinor watched the grim messenger depart, she pressed her hands tightly over her breast to hide from the quick eye of the miser the violent agitation that convulsed her frame, as the recollection of former days flashed upon her too retentive memory.

“Surely, surely,” she thought, “he will never come. He has been too deeply injured to attend to a verbal summons from his unnatural brother.”

Although strongly impressed that this would be the case, the desire of once more beholding the love of her youth, though forbidden to speak to him, or even to hear the sound of his voice, produced a state of feverish excitement in her mind which kept alive her fears, without totally annihilating hope.

The misty, grey dawn was slowly breaking along the distant hills, when Grenard Pike, mounted upon a cart-horse which he had borrowed for the occasion, leisurely paced down the broad avenue of oaks that led through the park to the high road. Methodical in all his movements, though life and death depended upon his journey, for no earthly inducement but a handsome donation in money would Grenard Pike have condescended to quicken his pace. This Elinor had it not in her power to bestow; and she calculated with impatience the many hours which must elapse before such a tardy messenger could reach Norgood Hall. Noon was the earliest period within the range of possibility; yet the sound of the horse’s hoofs, striking against the frosty ground, still vibrated upon her ear when she took her station at the chamber window, to watch for the arrival of the man whose image a separation of nearly twenty years had not been able to obliterate from her heart. Such is the weakness of human nature, that we suffer imagination to outspeed time, and compress into one little moment the hopes, the fears, the anticipations, and the events of years; but when the spoiler again overtakes us, we look back, and, forgetful of our former impatience to accelerate his pace, we are astonished at the rapidity of his flight.

Elinor thought that the long day would never come to a close; yet it was as dark and as short as a bleak, gloomy day in November could be. Evening at length came, but brought no Algernon. Mr. Moore had paid his visit, and was gone. He expected nothing less than the death of his patient, after giving his consent to such an extraordinary event; and he had even condescended to take a draught and some pills from the doctor’s hands. It is true that the sight of him, and the effects of the nauseous medicines he had administered, had put the miser into a fever of ill-temper; and he sullenly watched his wife, as she lingered hour after hour at the window, till, in no very gentle accents, he called her to his bed-side.

At that moment Elinor fancied that she heard the sound of approaching wheels, and she strained her eyes to discern, through the deepening gloom, some object that might realize her hopes. “No,” she sighed, “it was but the wind raving through the leafless oaks—the ticking of the old dial—the throbbing of my own heart. He will not—he cannot come!”

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“Woman! what ails you?” cried the invalid. “Reach me the drink.”

Elinor mechanically obeyed; but her head was turned the other way, and her eyes still fixed upon the window. A light flashed along the dark avenue, now lost, and now again revealed through the trees. The cup fell from her nerveless grasp, and faintly articulating, “Yes—’tis he!” she sank senseless across the foot of the bed, as a carriage and four drove rapidly into the court-yard.

The miser, with difficulty, reached the bell-rope that was suspended from the bed’s head, and, after ringing violently for some minutes, the unusual summons was answered by the appearance of Ruth, who, thrusting her brown; curly head in at the door, said, in breathless haste:

“The company’s come, ma’arm! Such a grand coach! Four beautiful hosses, and two real gemmen in black a’ standing behind—and two on hossback a’ riding afore. What are we to do for supper? Doubtless they maun be mortal hungry arter their long ride this cold night, and will ’spect summat to eat, and we have not a morsel of food in the house fit to set afore a cat.”

“Pshaw!” muttered the sick man. “Silence your senseless prate! They will neither eat nor drink here. Tell the coachman that there are excellent accommodations at the Hurdlestone Arms for himself and his horses. But first see to your mistress—she is in a swoon. Carry her into the next room. And, mark me, Ruth—lock the door, and bring me the key.”

The girl obeyed the first part of the miser’s orders, but was too eager to catch another sight of the grand carriage, and the real gentlemen behind it, to remember the latter part of his injunction.

CHAPTER V.

> Is this the man I loved, to whom I gave
> The deep devotion of my early youth?—S.M.

Algernon Hurdlestone in his forty-second, and Algernon Hurdlestone in his twenty-fourth year, were very different men. In mind, person, and manners, the greatest dissimilarity existed between them. The tall graceful figure for which he had once been so much admired, a life of indolence, and the pleasures of the table, had rendered far too corpulent for manly beauty. His features were still good, and there was an air of fashion about him which bespoke the man of the world and the gentleman; but he was no longer handsome or interesting. An expression of careless good-humor, in spite of the deep mourning he wore for the recent death of his wife, pervaded his countenance; and he seemed determined to repay Fortune for the many ill turns he had received from her

in his youth, by enjoying, to their full extent, the good things that she had latterly showered upon him.

He had been a kind manageable husband to a woman whom he had married more for convenience than affection; and was a fatally indulgent father to the only son, the sole survivor of a large family that he had consigned to the tomb during the engaging period of infancy. Godfrey, a beautiful little boy of two years old, was his youngest and his best beloved, on whom he lavished the concentrated affections of his warm and generous heart.

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Since his marriage with the rich and beautiful Miss Maitland, he had scarcely given Elinor Wildegrave a second thought. He had loved her passionately, as the portionless orphan of the unfortunate Captain Wildegrave; but he could not regard with affection or esteem the wife of the rich Mark Hurdlestone—the man from whom he had received so many injuries. How she could have condescended to share his splendid misery, was a question which filled his mind with too many painful and disgusting images to answer. When he received his brother's hasty message, entreating him to come and make up their old quarrel before he died, he obeyed the extraordinary summons with his usual kindness of heart, without reflecting on the pain that such a meeting might occasion, when he beheld again the object of his early affections as the wife of his unnatural brother.

When he crossed the well-known threshold, and his shadow once more darkened his father's hall, those feelings which had been deadened by his long intercourse with the world resumed their old sway, and he paused, and looked around the dilipidated mansion with eyes dimmed with regretful tears.

"And it was to become the mistress of such a home as this, that Elinor Wildegrave—my beautiful Elinor—sold herself to such a man as Mark Hurdlestone, and forgot her love—her plighted troth to me!"

So thought Algernon Hurdlestone, as he followed the parish girl up the broad uncarpeted oak stairs to his brother's apartment, shocked and astonished at the indications of misery and decay which on every side met his gaze. He had heard much of Mark's penurious habits, but he had deemed the reports exaggerated or incorrect; he was now fully convinced that they were but too true. Surprised that Mrs. Hurdlestone did not appear to receive him, he inquired of Ruth, "if her mistress were at home?"

"At home!—why, yes, sir; it's more than her life's worth to leave home. She durst not go to church without master's leave."

"And is she well?"

"She be'ant never well; and the sooner she goes the better it will be for her, depend upon that. She do lead a wretched life, the more's the pity; for she is a dear kind lady, a thousand times too good for the like o' him."

Algernon sighed deeply, while the girl delighted to get an opportunity of abusing her tyrannical master, continued:

"My poor mistress has been looking out for you all day, sir; but when your coach drove into the court-yard she died right away. The Squire got into a terrible passion, and told me to carry her up into her own room, and lock her in until company be gone. Howsumever I was too much flurried to do that; for I am sure my dear missus is too ill to

be seen by strangers. He do keep her so shabby, that she have not a gownd fit to wear; and she do look as pale as a ghost; and I am sure she is nearer to her end than the stingy old Squire is to his."

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Algernon possessed too much delicacy to ask the girl if Mark treated Mrs. Hurdlestone ill; but whilst groping his way in the dark to his brother's room, he was strongly tempted to question her more closely on the subject. The account she had already given him of the unfortunate lady filled his mind with indignation and regret. At the end of a long gallery the girl suddenly stopped, and pointing to a half-open door, told him that "that was the Squire's room," and suddenly disappeared. The next moment, Algernon was by the sick-bed of his brother.

Not without a slight degree of perturbation he put aside the curtain; Mark had sunk into a kind of stupor; he was not asleep, although his eyes were closed, and his features so rigid and immovable, that at the first glance Algernon drew back, under the impression that he was already dead.

The sound of his brother's footsteps not only roused the miser to animation, but to an acute sense of suffering. For some minutes he writhed in dreadful pain, and Algernon had time to examine his ghastly face, and thin attenuated figure.

They had parted in the prime of youthful manhood—they met in the autumn of life; and the snows of winter had prematurely descended upon the head of the miser. The wear and tear of evil passions had made such fearful ravages in his once handsome and stern exterior, that his twin brother would have passed him in the streets without recognition.

The spasms at length subsided, and after several ineffectual efforts, Algernon at length spoke.

"Mark, I am here, in compliance with your request; I am very sorry to find you in this sad state; I hope that you may yet recover."

The sick man rose slowly up in his bed, and shading his eyes with his hand, surveyed his brother with a long and careful gaze, as though he scarcely recognised in the portly figure before him the elegant fashionable young man of former days. "Algernon! can that be you?"

"Am I so much altered that you do not know me?"

"Humph! The voice is the voice of Algernon—but as for the rest, time has paid as little respect to your fine exterior as it has done to mine; but if it has diminished your graces, it has added greatly to your bulk. One thing, however, it has not taught you, with all its hard teachings."

"What is that?" said Algernon, with some curiosity.

“To speak the truth!” muttered the miser, falling back upon his pillow. “You wish for my recovery!—ha! ha! that is rich—is good. Do you think, Algernon, I am such a fool as to believe that?”

“Indeed, I was sincere.”

“You deceive yourself—the thing is impossible. Human nature is not so far removed from its original guilt. *You* wish my life to be prolonged, when you hope to be a *gainer* by my death. The thought is really amusing—so originally philanthropic, but I forgive you, I should do just the same in your place. Now, sit down if you can find a chair, I have a few words to say to you—a few painful words.”

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Algernon took his seat on the bed without speaking. He perceived that time had only increased the bitterness of his brother's caustic temper.

"Algernon," said the miser, "I will not enter into a detail of the past. I robbed you of your share of my father's property to gratify my love of money; and I married your mistress out of revenge. Both of these deeds have proved a curse to me—I cannot enjoy the one, and I loathe the other. I am dying; I cannot close my eyes in peace with these crimes upon my conscience. Give me your hand, brother, and say that you forgive me; and I will make a just restitution of the money, and leave you in the undisturbed possession of the wife."

He laughed, that horrid fiendish laugh. Algernon shrunk back with strong disgust, and relinquished the hand which no longer sought his grasp.

"Well, I see how it is. There are some natures that cannot amalgamate. You cannot overcome the old hate; but say that you forgive me; it is all I ask."

"If you can forgive yourself, Mark, I forgive you; and I pray that God may do the same."

"That leaves the case doubtful; however, it is of no use forcing nature. We never loved each other. The soil of the heart has been too much corrupted by the leaven of the world, to nourish a new growth of affection. We have lived enemies—we cannot part friends; but take this in payment of the debt I owe you."

He drew from beneath his pillow a paper, which he placed in his brother's hand. It was a draft upon his banker for ten thousand pounds, payable at sight. "Will that satisfy you for all you lost by me?"

"Money cannot do that."

"You allude to my wife. I saved you from a curse by entailing it upon myself; for which service I at least deserve your thanks."

"What has proved a curse to you would have been to me the greatest earthly blessing. I freely forgive you for wronging me out of my share of the inheritance, but for robbing me of Elinor, I cannot."

He turned from the bed with the tears in his eyes, and was about to quit the room. The miser called him back. "Do not be such a fool as to refuse the money, Algernon; the lady I will bequeath to you as a legacy when I am gone."

"He is mad!" muttered Algernon, "no sane man could act this diabolical part. It is useless to resent his words. He must soon answer for them at a higher tribunal. Yes—I will forgive him—I will not add to his future misery."

He came back to the bed, and taking the burning hand of the miser, said in a broken voice, “Brother, I wronged you when I believed that you were an accountable being; I no longer consider you answerable for your actions, and may God view your unnatural conduct to me in the same light; by the mercy which He ever shows to His erring creatures. I forgive you for the past.” The stony heart of the miser seemed touched, but his pride was wounded. “Mad—mad,” he said; “so you look upon me as mad. The world is full of maniacs; I do not differ from my kind. But take the paper, and let there be peace between you and me.”

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Twenty years ago, and the high-spirited Algernon Hurdlestone would have rejected the miser's offer with contempt, but his long intercourse with the world had taught him the value of money, and his extravagant habits generally exceeded his fine income. Besides, what Mark offered him was, after all, but a small portion of what ought to have been his own. With an air of cheerful good-nature he thanked his brother, and carefully deposited the draft in his pocket-book.

After having absolved his conscience by what he considered not only a good action, but one of sufficient magnitude to save his soul, Mark intimated to his brother that he might now leave him—he had nothing further to say; a permission which Algernon was not slow to accept.

As he groped his way through the dark gallery that led from the miser's chamber, a door was opened cautiously at the far end of the passage, and a female figure, holding a dim light in her hand, beckoned to him to approach.

Not without reluctance Algernon obeyed the summons, and found himself in the centre of a large empty apartment which had once been the saloon, and face to face with Mrs. Hurdlestone.

Elinor carefully locked the door, and placing the light on the mantel-shelf, stood before the astonished Algernon, like some memory-haunting phantom of the past.

Yes. It was Elinor—his Elinor; but not a vestige remained of the grace and beauty that had won his youthful heart. So great was the change produced by years of hopeless misery, that Algernon, in the haggard and careworn being before him, did not at first recognise the object of his early love. Painfully conscious of this humiliating fact, Elinor at length said—"I do not wonder that Mr. Algernon Hurdlestone has forgotten me; I once was Elinor Wildegrave."

A gush of tears—of bitter, heart-felt, agonizing tears—followed this avowal, and her whole frame trembled with the overpowering emotions which filled her mind.

Too much overcome by surprise to speak, Algernon took her hand, and for a few minutes looked earnestly in her altered face. What a mournful history of mental and physical suffering was written there! That look of tender regard recalled the blighted hopes and wasted affections of other years; and the wretched Elinor, unable to control her grief, bowed her head upon her hands, and groaned aloud.

"Oh, Elinor!—and is it thus we meet? You might have been happy with me. How could you, for the paltry love of gain, become the wife of Mark Hurdlestone?"

"Alas, Algernon! necessity left me no alternative in my unhappy choice. I was deceived—cruelly deceived. Yet would to God that I had begged my bread, and dared every

hardship—been spurned from the presence of the rich, and endured the contempt of the poor, before I consented to become his wife."

"But what strange infatuation induced you to throw away your own happiness, and ruin mine? Did not my letters constantly breathe the most ardent affection? Were not the sums of money constantly remitted in them more than sufficient to supply all your wants?"

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“Algernon, I never received the sums you name, not even a letter from you after the third year of our separation.”

“Can this be true?” exclaimed Algernon, grasping her arm. “Is it possible that this statement can be true?”

“As true as that I now stand before you a betrayed, forsaken, heart-broken woman.”

“Poor Elinor; how can I look into that sad face, and believe you false?”

“God bless you, my once dear friend, for these kind words. You know not the peace they convey to my aching heart. Oh, Algernon, my sufferings have been dreadful; and there were times when I ceased to know those sufferings. They called me mad, but I was happy then. My dreams were of you. I thought myself your wife, and my misery as Mark’s helpmate was forgotten. When sanity returned, the horrible consciousness that you believed me a heartless, ungrateful, avaricious woman, was the worst pang of all. Oh, how I longed to throw myself at your feet, and tell you the whole dreadful truth. I would not have insulted you to-night with my presence, or wounded your peace with a recapitulation of my wrongs, but I could no longer live and bear the imputation of such guilt. When you have heard my sad story, you will, I am sure, not only pity, but forgive me.”

With feelings of unalloyed indignation, Algernon listened to the iniquitous manner in which Elinor had been deceived and betrayed, and when she concluded her sad relation, he fiercely declared that he would return to the sick man’s chamber—reproach him with his crimes, and revoke his forgiveness.

“Leave the sinner to his God!” exclaimed the terrified Elinor, placing herself before the door. “For my sake—for your own sake, pity and forgive him. Remember that, monster though he be, he is my husband and your brother, the father of the unfortunate child whose birth I anticipate with such sad forebodings.”

“Before that period arrives,” said Algernon, with deep commiseration. “Mark will have paid the forfeit of his crimes, and your child will be the heir of immense wealth.”

“You believe him to be a dying man,” said Elinor. “He will live. A change has come over him for the better; the surgeon, this morning, gave strong hopes of his recovery. Sinner that I am, if he could but have looked into my heart he would have been shocked at the pain that this communication conveyed. Algernon, I wished his death. God has reversed the awful sentence; it is the mother, not the father of the unhappy infant, that will be called hence. Heaven knows that I am weary of life—that I would willingly die, could I but take the poor babe with me; should it, however, survive its unfortunate mother, promise me, Algernon, by the love of our early years, to be a guardian and protector to my child.”

She endeavored to sink at his feet, but Algernon prevented her.

“Your request is granted, Elinor, and for the dear mother’s sake, I promise to cherish the infant as my own.”

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“It is enough. I thank my God for this great mercy; and now that I have been permitted to clear my character, leave me, Algernon, and take my blessing with you. Only remember in your prayers that such a miserable wretch as Elinor Wildegrave still lives.”

The violent ringing of the miser’s bell hurried her away. Algernon remained for some minutes rooted to the spot, his heart still heaving with the sense of intolerable wrong. Elinor did not again appear; and descending to what was once the Servants’ Hall, he bade Ruth summon his attendants, and slipping a guinea into that delighted damsel’s hand, he bade a long adieu to the home of his ancestors.

CHAPTER VI.

Oh, what a change—a goodly change!
I, too, am changed. I feel my heart expand;
My spirit, long bowed down with misery,
Grow light and buoyant ’mid these blessed scenes.—S.M.

As Elinor predicted, the miser slowly recovered, and for a few months his severe illness had a salutary effect upon his mind and temper. He was even inclined to treat his wife with more respect; and when informed by Dr. Moore of the birth of his son, he received the intelligence with less impatience than she had anticipated. But this gleam of sunshine did not last long. With returning strength his old monomania returned; and he began loudly to complain of the expense which his long illness had incurred, and to rave at the extortion of doctors and nurses; declaring the necessity of making every possible retrenchment, in order to replace the money so lost. Elinor did not live long enough to endure these fresh privations. She sunk into a lingering decline, and before her little boy could lisp her name, the friendly turf had closed over his heart-broken mother.

Small was the grief expressed by the miser for the death of his gentle partner. To avoid all unnecessary expense, she was buried in the churchyard, instead of occupying a place in the family vault; and no stone was erected during the life of the squire, to her memory.

It was a matter of surprise to the whole neighborhood that the young child survived his mother. His father left Nature to supply her place, and, but for the doting affection of Ruth, who came every night and morning to wash and feed him, out of pure affection to her dear mistress, the little Anthony would soon have occupied a place by his ill-fated mother.

The Squire never cast a thought upon his half-clad half-famished babe without bitterly cursing him as an additional and useless expense. Anthony was a quiet and sweet-tempered little fellow; the school in which he was educated taught him to endure with patience trials that would have broken the spirit of a less neglected child.

Except the kindness which he received from Ruth, who was now married to a laborer, and the mother of children of her own, he was a stranger to sympathy and affection; and he did not expect to receive from strangers the tenderness which he never experienced at home.

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The mind of a child, like the mind of a grown person, requires excitement: and, as Anthony could neither read nor write, and his father seldom deigned to notice him, he was forced to seek abroad for those amusements which he could not obtain at home. By the time he had completed his eighth year he was to be seen daily mingling with the poor boys in the village, with face unwashed and hair uncombed, and clothes more ragged and dirty than those of his indigent associates.

One fine summer afternoon, while engaged in the exciting game of pitch-and-toss, a handsome elderly gentleman rode up to the group of boys, and asked the rosy ragged Anthony if he would run before him and open the gate that led to the Hall.

“Wait awhile,” cried the little fellow, adroitly poising the halfpenny that he was about to throw, on the tip of his finger. “If I win by this toss I will show you the way to my father’s.”

“Your father!” said the gentleman, surveying attentively the ragged child. “Are you the gardener’s son?”

“No, no,” replied the boy, laughing and winking to his companions; “not quite so bad as that. My father is a rich man, though he acts like a poor one, and lets me, his only son, run about the streets without shoes. But, did I belong to skin-flint Pike, instead of one slice of bread to my milk and water, I might chance to get none. My father is the old Squire, and my name is Anthony Marcus Hurdlestone.”

“His father and grandfather’s names combined—names of evil omen have they been to me,” sighed the stranger, who was, indeed, no other than Algernon Hurdlestone, who for eight long years had forgotten the solemn promise given to Elinor, that he would be a friend and guardian to her child. Nor would he now have remembered the circumstance, had not his own spoilt Godfrey been earnestly teasing him for a playmate. “Be a good boy, Godfrey, and I will bring you home a cousin to be a brother and playfellow,” he said, as his conscience smote him for this long neglected duty; and ordering his groom to saddle his horse, he rode over to Oak Hall to treat with the miser for his son.

“Alas!” he thought, “can this neglected child be the son of my beautiful Elinor, and heir to the richest commoner in England? But the boy resembles my own dear Godfrey, and, for Elinor’s sake, I will try and rescue him from the barbarous indifference of such a father.”

Then, telling the bare-footed urchin that he was his uncle Algernon, and that he should come to Norgood Hall, and live with him, and have plenty to eat and drink, and pretty clothes to wear, and a nice pony of his own to ride, and a sweet little fellow of his own age to play with, he lifted the astonished and delighted child before him on the saddle, and was about to proceed to the Hall.

“The Squire does not live at the Hall,” said the child, pulling at the rein, in order to give the horse another direction. “Oh, no; he is *too poor* (and he laughed outright) to live there.”

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“What do you mean, Anthony and why do you call Mr. Hurdlestone the Squire, instead of papa?”

“He never tells me to call him papa; he never calls me his son, or ‘little boy,’ or even ‘Anthony,’ or speaks to me as other fathers speak to their children. He calls me chit and brat, and rude noisy fellow; and it’s ’Get out of my way, you little wretch! Don’t come here to annoy me.’ And how can I call him father or papa, when he treats me as if I did not belong to him?”

“My dear child, I much fear that you do not love your father.”

“How can I, when he does not love me? If he would be kind to me, I would love him very much; for I have nothing in the world to love but old Shock, and he’s half-starved. But he does love me, and I give him all I can spare from my meals, and that’s little enough. I often wish for more, for poor Shock’s sake; for they say that he was mamma’s dog, and Ruth Candler told me that when mamma died, he used to go every day for months and lie upon her grave. Now was not that kind of Shock? I wish papa loved me only half as well as old Shock loved my mother, and I would not mind being starved, and going about the streets without shoes.”

Thus the child, prattled on, revealing to his new companion the secrets of the prison-house. Had he looked up at that moment into his uncle’s face, he would have seen the tear upon his cheeks. He pressed the poor child silently against him as they rode on.

“We will take Shock with us, Anthony, and he shall have plenty to eat as well as you.”

“Oh, dear uncle, how we shall love you, both Shock and I!”

“But tell me, Anthony, has your father really left the Hall?”

“Long, long ago; as far back as I can remember. It is the first thing I can remember, since I awoke in this world and found myself alive, the removing to old Pike’s cottage. The Squire said that he was too poor to live at the Hall, and there was plenty of room in the gardener’s cottage for us three, and there we have lived ever since. See, uncle, we are now coming to it.”

Algernon looked up and saw that they had entered a long avenue of lofty trees, which he recognised as a back way to the extensive gardens, at the extremity of which, and near the garden gate, stood a small cottage, once neat and comfortable, but now fast falling to decay. He had often played there with his brother and Grenard Pike in their childhood. The plastered walls of the tenement in many places had given way, and the broken windows were filled with pieces of board, which, if they kept out the wind and rain, dismally diminished the small portion of light which found its way through the dusty panes.

Fastening his horse to the moss-grown paling, Algernon proceeded to knock at the door.

“Who’s there?” growled a deep voice from within.

“A gentleman wishes to speak to Mr. Hurdlestone.”

“He’s not at home to strangers,” responded the former growl, without unclosing the door.

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“That’s Grenard Pike,” whispered the boy. “You may be sure that the Squire is not far off.”

“I *must* see Mr. Hurdlestone. I cannot wait until he returns,” said Algernon, walking into the house “I ought, I think, to be no stranger here.”

A small spare man, with sharp features, a brown leather face, thin lank black hair, and eyes like a snake, drew back from the door, as Algernon thus unceremoniously effected an entrance. His partner in penury, the miser, was seated at an old oak table making arithmetical calculations upon a bit of broken slate.

The tall stately figure of Mark Hurdlestone was, at this period, still unbent with age, and he rose from his seat, his face flushed with anger at being detected in sanctioning an untruth. His quick eye recognised his brother, and he motioned to him to take a seat on the bench near him.

It was not in the nature of the miser to consider Algernon a welcome visitor. He was continually haunted by the recollection of the ten thousand pounds that remorse had extorted from him, in the evil hour when death stared him in the face, and the fear of future punishment, for a brief season, triumphed over the besetting sin. He could not forgive Algernon for this dreadful sacrifice; and but for very shame would have asked him to return the money, giving him a bond to restore it at his death.

“Well, brother,” he began, in his usual ungracious tones, “what business brings you here?”

“I came to ask of you a favor,” said Algernon, seating himself, and drawing the little Anthony between his knees; “one which I hope that you will not refuse to grant.”

“Humph!” said Mark. “I must tell you, without mincing the matter brother Algernon, that I never grant favors in any shape. That I never ask favors of any one. That I never lend money, or borrow money. That I never require security for myself of others, or give my name as security to them. If such is your errand to me you may expect, what you will find—disappointment.”

“Fortunately my visit to you has nothing to do with money. Nor do I think that the favor I am about to ask will cause you to make the least sacrifice. Will you give me this boy?”

The novel request created some surprise, it was so different from the one the miser expected. He looked from the ragged child to his fashionably-dressed brother, then to the child again, as if doubtful what answer to return. The living brown skeleton, Pike, slipped softly across the room to his side; and a glance of peculiar meaning shot from his rat-like eyes, into the dark, deep-set, searching orbs of the miser.

“What do you think of it, Pike? Hey!”

“It is too good an offer to be refused,” whispered the avaricious satellite, who always looked upon himself as the miser’s heir. “Take him at his word.”

“What do you want with the child?” said Mark, turning to his brother. “Have you not a son of your own?”

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“I have—a handsome clever little fellow. This nephew of mine greatly resembles him.”

“He cannot be more like you than this child is, whom his mother dared to call mine. For my own part I never have, nor ever shall, consider him as such.”

“Brother! brother! you cannot, dare not, insinuate aught against the honor of your wife!” and Algernon sprang from his seat, his cheeks burning with anger.

“Sit down, sit down,” said the miser coldly; “I do not mean to quarrel with you on that score. In one sense of the word she was faithful. I gave her no opportunity of being otherwise. But her heart”—and his dark eye emitted an unnatural blaze of light—“her heart was false to me, or that boy could not have resembled you in every feature.”

“These things happen every day,” said Algernon. “Children often resemble their grandfathers and uncles more than they do their own parents. It is hard to blame poor Elinor for having a child like me. Let me look at you, boy,” he continued, turning the child’s head towards him as he spoke. “Are you so very, very like your uncle Algernon?” The extraordinary likeness could not fail to strike him. It filled the heart of the miser with envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness. Still the expression of the child’s face was the only point of real resemblance; his features and complexion belonged to his father. “Your jealous fancy, Mark, has conjured up a phantom to annoy you. Where did this boy get his black eyes from, if not from you? his dark complexion? I am fair, my eyes are blue.”

“He has his mother’s eyes,” sullenly returned the miser.

“I might as well accuse you of being the father of Godfrey, because he has your eyes.”

“You cannot reason me out of my senses. This Anthony is as like you, Algernon, as two peas. He is your own son, and you are welcome to him. His absence will give me no pain, nor will his adoption by you extort from me one farthing for his future maintenance. If you persist in taking him it will be at your own risk.”

“I am contented to accept the poor orphan on these terms,” said the generous Algernon. “May God soften your iron heart towards your neglected child. While I have wealth he shall not want; and were I deprived of it to-morrow, he should share my bread while I have a crust.”

“Fools and their money are soon parted,” muttered the ungracious Mark; though in reality he was glad to embrace his brother’s offer. No ties of paternal love bound him to the motherless child he had so cruelly neglected; and the father and son parted with mutual satisfaction, secretly hoping that they never might behold each other again.

“We have got rid of that pest, Grenard!” exclaimed the hard-hearted man, as he watched his brother lift the little Anthony into his saddle, and carefully dispose the folds

of his cloak around the child to hide his rags from public observation. “If the child were not his own, would he take such care of him?”

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“You cannot believe that,” said the gaunt Cerberus. “You know that it is impossible.”

“You may think so—perhaps you are right—but, Grenard, you were never married; never had any experience of the subtlety of woman. I have my own thoughts on the subject—I hate women—I have had cause to hate them—and I detest that boy for the likeness which he bears to my brother.”

“Tush!” said the living skeleton, with more feeling of humanity than his niggardly patron. “Whose fault is it that you rob a woman of her love, and then accuse her of inconstancy because your son resembles the man that was the object of her thoughts? Is that reasonable, or like your good sense?”

How delightful was that first journey to the young pilgrim of hope; and he so lately the child of want and sorrow, whose eyes were ever bent to earth, his cheeks ever wet with tears!—he now laughed and carolled aloud in the redundant joy of his heart. “Oh, he was so happy, so happy.” He had never been a mile from home—had never ridden on a horse; and now he was told he was to have a horse of his own—a home of his own—a dear little cousin to play with, and a nice bed to sleep upon at night, not a bundle of filthy straw.

This was too much for his full heart to bear; it ran over, it was brimful of gladness and expectation, and the excited child sobbed himself to sleep in his good uncle’s arms.

Poor old Shock was trotting beside the horse, and Anthony had been too much engrossed with his own marvellous change of fortune to notice Shock; but Shock did not forget him, and though he could not see—for the animal was blind—he often pricked up his ears, and raised his head to the horse and its double burden, to be sure that his young master was there.

It was a spaniel that Algernon had left a pup with Elinor when he went to India. The sight of the poor blind worn-out creature brought back to his mind so many painful recollections that his own eyes were wet with tears. The wife who had supplanted Elinor in his affections was dead. The grass grew rank upon Elinor’s nameless grave; and her poor boy was sleeping within his sheltering arms, as if he had never known so soft a pillow.

Algernon looked down upon his beautiful but squalid face, and pressing his lips upon his pale brow, swore to love and cherish him as his own; and well did that careless but faithful heart keep its solemn covenant. The very reverse of the miser, Algernon was reckless of the future; he only lived for the present, which, after his disappointment in regard to Elinor, was all, he said, that a man in truth could call his own. Acting up to this principle, he was as much censured for his extravagance, as his brother was for his parsimony, by those persons who, like Timon’s friends, daily shared his hospitality, and were too often the recipients of his lavish expenditure. In adopting the little Anthony, he

had followed the generous impulse of his heart, without reflecting that the separation of father and son, under their peculiar circumstances, might injure without ultimately benefiting the child.

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He meant to love and take care of him; to be a father to him in the fullest sense of the word; his intentions doubtless were good, but his method of bringing him up was very likely to be followed by bad consequences. Algernon had no misgivings on the subject. He felt certain that the boy would not only inherit his father's immense wealth, (a large portion of which the law secured to him, independent of the caprice of his father,) but ever continue prosperous and happy. While musing upon these things, his horse turned into the park that surrounded his own fine mansion, and a beautiful boy bounded down the broad stone steps that led to the hall-door, and came running along the moonlit path to meet him,

"Health on his cheek, and gladness in his eye."

"Well, dear papa! Have you brought me my cousin?"

"What will you give for him, Godfrey?" and the delighted father bent down to receive the clasp of the white arms, and the kiss of the impatient child.

"That's all I can afford. Perhaps he's not worth having after all;" and the spoilt child turned pettishly away.

Casting his eyes upon old Shock, he exclaimed, "Mercy! what an ugly dog. A perfect brute!"

"He was once a very handsome dog," said his father, as the groom assisted him to alight.

"It must be, a long time ago. I hope my cousin is better-looking than his dog."

"Why, what in the world have we got here?" said Mrs. Paisley, the housekeeper, who came to the door to welcome her master home; and into whose capacious arms the footman placed the sleeping Anthony, enveloped in his uncle's cloak.

"A present for you, Mrs. Paisley," said Algernon, "and one that I hope you will regard with peculiar care."

"A child!" screamed the good woman. "Why, la, sir; how did you come by it?"

"Honestly," returned Algernon, laughing.

"Let *me* look at him," cried the eager Godfrey, as soon as they entered the room where supper was prepared for his father; and pulling the cloak away from his cousin's face, —"Is this dirty shabby boy the playfellow you promised me, papa?"

"The same."

“And he in rags!”

“That’s no fault of his, my child.”

“And has a torn cap, and no shoes!”

“Mrs. Paisley will soon wash, and dress, and make him quite smart; and then you will be proud of him.”

“Well, we shall see,” replied the boy, doubtingly. “But I never was fond of playing with dirty ragged children. But why is he dirty and ragged? I thought you told me, papa, that he was the son of my rich, rich uncle, and that he would have twice as much money as I?”

“And so he will.”

“Then why is he in this condition?”

“His father is a miser.”

“What is that?”

“A man that loves money better than his son; who would rather see him ragged and dirty, nay even dead, than expend upon his comfort a part of his useless riches. Are you not glad that your father is not a miser?”

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“I don’t know,” said Godfrey; “he would save money to make me rich, and when he died all his wealth would be mine. Anthony is not so badly off after all, and I think I will try to love him, that he may give me a part of his great fortune by-and-by.”

“Your love, springing from a selfish motive, would not be worth having. Besides, Godfrey, you will have a fortune of your own.”

“I’m not so clear of that,” said the boy, with a sly glance at his father. “People say that you will spend all your money on yourself, and leave none for me when *you* die.”

There was much—too much truth in this remark; and though Algernon laughed at what he termed his dear boy’s wit, it stung him deeply. “Where can he have learned that?” he thought; “such an idea could never have entered into the heart of a child.” Then turning to Mrs. Paisley, who had just entered the room, he said,—

“Take and wash and clothe that little boy; and when he is nicely dressed, bring him in to speak to his cousin.”

“Come, my little man,” said the old lady, gently shaking the juvenile stranger. “Come, wake up. You have slept long enough. Come this way with me.”

“Whose clothes are you going to put upon him?” demanded Godfrey.

“Why in course, Master Godfrey, you will lend him some of yours?”

“Well, if I do, remember, Paisley, you are not to take my best.”

During this colloquy, Anthony had gradually woke up, and turning from one strange face to another, he lost all his former confidence, and began to cry. Paisley, who was really interested in the child, kindly wiped away his tears with the corner of her white apron, and gently led the weeper from the room.

While performing for him the long and painful ablutions which his condition required, Mrs. Paisley was astonished at his patience. “Why, Master Godfrey would have roared and kicked, like a mad thing that he is, if I had taken half the liberty with him,” said the dame to herself. “Well, well, the little fellow seems to have a good temper of his own. Now you have got a clean face, my little man, let me look at you, and see what you are like.”

She turned him round and round, took off her spectacles, carefully wiped them, and re-adjusting them upon her nose, looked at the child with as much astonishment as if he had been some rare creature that had never before been exhibited in a Christian land.

“Mercy on me! but the likeness is truly wonderful—his very image; all but the dark eye; and that he may have got from the mother, as Master Godfrey got his. I don’t like to

form hard thoughts of my master; but this is strange.—Mr. Glen!" and she rose hastily, and opened a door that led from her own little sanctuary into the servants' hall—"please to step in here for a moment."

"What's your pleasure, Mistress Paisley?" said the butler, a rosy, portly, good-natured man, of the regular John Bull breed, who, in snow-white trowsers, and blue-striped linen jacket, and a shirt adorned with a large frill (frills were then in fashion), strutted into the room. "Mistress Paisley, ma'arm, vot are your commands?"

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“Oh, Mr. Glen,” said the housekeeper, simpering, “I never command my equals—I leave my betters to do that. I wanted you just to look at this child.”

“Look at him—vhy, vot’s the matter vith un’, Mrs. Paisley? He’s generally a werry naughty boy; but he looks better tempered than usual to-day.”

“Why, who do you take him for?” said Mrs. Paisley, evidently delighted at the butler’s mistake.

“Vhy, for Master Godfrey—is it not? Hey—vot—vhy—no—it is—and it isn’t. Vot comical demonstration is this?”

“Well, I don’t wonder, Jacob, at your mistake—it is, and it is not. Had they been twins, they could not have been more alike. Godfrey, to be sure, has a haughty uppish look, which this child has not. But what do you think of our master now?”

“It must be his son.”

The good woman nodded. “Such likenesses cannot come by accident. It is a good thing that my poor dear mistress did not live to see this day—and she so jealous of him—it would have broken her heart.”

“Aye, you may vell say that, Mrs. Paisley. And some men are cruel, deceitful, partic’lar them there frank sort of men, like the Kurnel. They are so pleasant like, that people never thinks they can be as bad as other volk. They have sich han hinnocent vay vith them. I vonder maister vos not ashamed of his old servants seeing him bring home a child so like himself.”

“Well, my dear, and what is your name?” said Mrs. Paisley, addressing her wondering charge.

“Anthony Hurdlestone.”

“Do you hear that, Mrs. Paisley?”

“Anthony Hurdlestone! Oh, shame, shame,” said the good woman. “It would have been only decent, Mr. Glen, for the Colonel to have called him by some other name. Who’s your father, my little man?”

“Squire Hurdlestone.”

“Humph!” responded the interrogator. “And your mother?”

“She’s in the churchyard.”

“How long has she been dead?”

“I don’t know; but Ruth does. She died when I was a baby.”

“And who took care of you, my poor little fellow?” asked Mrs. Paisley, whose maternal feelings were greatly interested in the child.

“God, and Ruth Candler! If it had not been for her, the folks said that I should have been starved long ago.”

“That has been the ’oman, doubtless, that the Kurnel left him with,” said the butler. “Vell, my young squire, you’ll be in no danger of starvation in this house. Your papa is rich enough to keep you.”

“He may be rich,” said Anthony; “but, for all that, the poorest man in the parish of Ashton is richer than he.”

“Come, come, my little gentleman, you are talking of what you know nothing about,” said Mrs. Paisley. “I must now take you into the parlor, to see your papa and your little brother.”

“He’s not my papa,” said Anthony; “I wish he were. Oh, if you could see my papa—ha! ha!—you would not forget him in a hurry; and if he chanced to box your ears, or pinch your cheek, or rap your head with his knuckles, you would not forget that in a hurry.”

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“You have got a new papa, now; so you may forget the old one. Now, hold your head up like a man, and follow me.”

Colonel Hurdlestone was lounging over his wine; his little son was sitting over against him, imitating his air and manner, and playing with, rather than drinking from, the full glass of port before him.

“Mrs. Paisley!” he cried, with the authority of an old man of fifty, “tell Glen to send up some sweet madeira—I hate port. Ha! little miser, is that you?” springing from his chair. “Why, I thought it was myself. Now, mind, don’t soil those clothes, for they don’t belong to you.”

“Never mind, Anthony,” said his uncle. “To-morrow I will have some made for you. Mrs. Paisley, are not these children strikingly alike?”

“Why, yes, your honor, they are too much alike to be lucky. Master Godfrey may lay all his mischievous pranks upon this young one, and you will never find out the mistake.”

“Thank you, Paisley, for the hint. Come and sit by me, double, and let us be friends.”

“I am sure you look like brothers—ay, and twin brothers, too,” said Mrs. Paisley.

“They are first cousins,” said Algernon, gravely. “This child is the only son and heir of my rich brother, Mrs. Paisley: I beg that he may be treated accordingly.”

“Oh, certainly, sir. I never had a child so like my husband as this boy is like you.”

“Very likely, Mrs. Paisley,” said the Colonel. “I have seen many children that did not resemble their fathers. Perhaps yours were in the same predicament?”

“Whether they were or no, they are all in heaven with their poor dear father,” whimpered Mrs. Paisley, “and have left me a lone widow, with no one to love or take care of me.”

“Jacob Glen says that you are a good hand at taking care of yourself, Paisley,” said Godfrey; “but I dare say Master Jacob would be glad of taking care of you himself. Here’s your good health, Mrs. P——;” and down went the madeira.

“Ah, Master Godfrey, you are just like your pa—you will have your joke. Lord bless the child! he has swallowed the whole glass of wine. He will be ’toxicated.”

Godfrey and the Colonel laughed, while Anthony slid from his chair, and taking the housekeeper by the hand, said, in a gentle tone, “You have no one to love you, Mrs. Paisley. If you will be kind to me, I will love you.”

“Who could help being kind to you, sweet child?” said the good woman, patting his curly head and kissing the rosy mouth he held up to her. “You are a good boy, and don’t make fun of people, like some folks.”

“That’s me,” said Godfrey. “Tony, you are quite welcome to my share of Mrs. Paisley; and instead of Benjamin’s, you may stand a chance to get Jacob’s portion also.”

“Will you have some wine, Anthony?” said his uncle, handing him a glass as he spoke.

The child took the liquid, tasted it, and put it back on the table, with a very wry face. “I don’t like it, uncle—it is medicine.”

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“You will like it well enough by and by,” said Godfrey. “I suppose the stingy one at home only drinks Adam’s ale?”

“What is that?”

“Water. A mess only fit for dogs and felons. Gentlemen, Anthony, rich gentlemen like you and me, always drink wine.”

“I shall never like it,” said the child. “I love milk.”

“Milk! What a baby! Papa, he says that he never means to like wine. Is not that a shabby notion?”

“You, you young dog, are too fond of it already.”

“I like everything that you like, pa!” said the spoilt youth. “If wine is good for you, it must be good for me. Remember, you told me yesterday that I must obey you in all things.”

“Imitation is not obedience, Godfrey. I did not tell you to imitate me in all things. Wine in moderation may be good for a man, and help to beguile a weary hour, and yet may be very hurtful to boys.”

“Well, I never can understand your philosophy, pa. A boy is a half-grown man; therefore a boy may take half as much wine as a man, and it will do him good. And as to imitation, I think that is a sort of practical obedience. Jacob Glen says, ’As the old cock crows, so crows the young one.’”

“You had better not quote my servants’ sayings to me, Godfrey,” said his father, frowning and pushing the wine from him. “I have treated you with too much indulgence, and am now reaping the fruit of my folly.”

“Surely you are not angry with your Freddy, pa,” said the beautiful boy, hanging upon Algernon’s arm, and looking imploringly into his face. “It is all fun.”

This was enough to calm the short-lived passion of the Colonel. One glance into that sparkling animated face, and all the faults of the boy were forgotten. He was, however, severely mortified by his impertinent remarks, and he determined to be more strict with him for the future, and broke his resolution the next minute.

Algernon Hurdlestone’s life had been spent in making and breaking good resolutions. No wonder that he felt such a difficulty in keeping this. If we would remedy a fault, the reformation must be commenced on the instant. We must not give ourselves time to think over the matter, for if we do, nine chances out of ten, that we never carry our intentions into practice. Algernon often drank to excess, and too often suffered his young son to be a spectator of his criminal weakness. Godfrey was his constant

companion both in hunting-parties and at the table; and the boy greatly enjoyed the coarse jokes and vulgar hilarity of the roystering uproarious country squires, who, to please the rich father, never failed to praise the witticisms of the son.

Thus the disposition of the child was corrupted, his tastes vitiated, his feelings blunted, and the fine affections of the heart destroyed at the age of ten years.

Algernon was so fond of him, so vain of his fine person and quick parts, that it blinded him to his many faults. He seldom noticed his habitual want of respect to himself, or the unfeeling and sarcastic remarks of the audacious lad on his own peculiar failings. To a stranger, Godfrey Hurdlestone presented the painful anomaly of the address and cunning of the man animating the breast of a child.

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He inherited nothing in common with his father, but his profusion and love of company; and was utterly destitute of that kindliness of disposition and real warmth of heart, that so strongly characterised his too indulgent parent, and pleaded an excuse for many of his failings. He was still more unlike his cousin Anthony, although personally they could scarcely be known apart. The latter was serious and thoughtful beyond his years; was fond of quiet and retirement, preferring a book or a solitary walk to romping with Godfrey and his boisterous companions. He had been a child of sorrow, and acquainted with grief; and though he was happy now—too happy, he was wont to say—the cloud which ushered in his dawn of life still cast its dark shadow over the natural gaiety and sunshine of his heart.

His mind was like a rich landscape seen through a soft summer mist, which revealed just enough of the beautiful as to make the observer wish to behold more.

Gentle, truthful, and most winningly affectionate, Anthony had to be known to be loved; and those who enjoyed his confidence never wished to transfer their good will to his dashing cousin. He loved a few dear friends, but he shrunk from a crowd, and never cared to make many acquaintances. He soon formed a strong attachment to his uncle; the love which nature meant for his father was lavished with prodigality on this beloved relative, who cherished for his adopted son the most tender regard.

He loved the mocking, laughter-loving, mischievous Godfrey, who delighted to lay all his naughty tricks and devilries upon his quiet cousin; while he considered himself as his patron and protector, and often gave himself great airs of superiority. For the sake of peace, Anthony often yielded a disputed point to his impetuous companion, rather than awaken his turbulent temper into active operation. Yet he was no coward—on the contrary, he possessed twice the moral courage of his restless playmate; but a deep sense of gratitude to his good uncle, for the blessed change he had effected in his situation, pervaded his heart, and influenced all his actions.

CHAPTER VII.

The weary heart may mourn
  O’er the wither’d hopes of youth,
But the flowers so rudely shorn
  Still leave the seeds of truth.

J.W.D. Moodie.

And years glided on. The trials of school, and all its joyous pastimes and short-lived sorrows, were over, and the cousins returned to spend the long-looked for and happy vacation at home. The curly-headed rosy-cheeked boys had expanded into fine tall lads of sixteen; blithe of heart, and strong of limb, full of the eager hopes and never-to-be-

realized dreams of youth. With what delight they were welcomed by the Colonel! With what pride he turned them round and round, and examined the improvement in form and stature of the noble boys—wondering

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at first which was Anthony, and which his own dear mischievous rogue! They were so marvellously alike, that, seen at a distance, he scarcely knew which to call his son. And then how delightedly he listened to their laughing details of tricks and hoaxes, served off upon cross masters and tyrannical ushers, laughing more loudly than they, and suggesting improvements in mischievous pranks already too mischievous! Poor Algernon! in spite of the increasing infirmities of age, and the pressure of cares which his reckless extravagance could not fail to produce, he was perfectly happy in the company of these dear boys, and once more a boy himself.

He never inquired what progress they had made in their studies. He had put them to school, and paid for their schooling, and if they had not profited by their opportunities, it was no fault of his. Had he examined them upon this important subject, he would, indeed, have been surprised at the difference between them. Anthony, naturally studious, had made the most of his time, while master Godfrey had wasted his, and brought with him a small stock of literary acquirements, and many vices.

“What will my uncle say, when he finds how little you have learned during the last half year?” said Anthony to his cousin, while they were dressing for dinner.

“He’ll never trouble his head about it, without you, Mr. Anthony, put him up to it, to show off your superior powers of drudgery. But mark me, Tony, if you dare to say one word about it, you and I shall quarrel.”

“But what are we to do about Mr. Cunningham’s letter? You know he gave me one to give to your father; and I much fear that it contains some remarks not very creditable to you.”

“Did you give it to papa?”

“Not yet. Here it is.”

“Let me look at the old fellow’s autograph. What a bad hand for a schoolmaster! I will spare my dear lazy father the trouble of deciphering these villainous pot-hooks. Ha! ha! my good, industrious, quiet, plodding cousin Anthony, heir of Oak Hall, in the county of Wilts, there lies your amiable despatch;” and he spurned the torn document with his foot. “That’s the way that I mean to serve all those who dare to criticise my actions.”

“But, dear Godfrey, it is yourself that you injure by this awful waste of your time and talents.”

“Talents!—Fiddlesticks! What care I for talents, without it were those shining substantial talents spoken of in the Scriptures—talents of gold and silver. Give me these talents, my boy, and you may profit by all the rest. Wasting of time! How can we waste that

which we can neither overtake, nor detain when ours, and which when past is lost for ever? Miser of moments! in another school than thine, Godfrey Hurdlestone will learn to improve the present."

"But those wasted moments, Godfrey, how will the recollection of them embitter the future! Remember, my dear cousin, what our good chaplain often told us—'Time is but the ante-chamber to Eternity!'"

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“What, turned preacher! A prudent move that, Tony. I’ve heard that old Ironsides has no less than five rich livings in his gift. Now, by Jove! I’d turn parson to-morrow, if I thought my uncle would be dutiful enough to bestow one or two of them upon me. How would the ’Rev. Godfrey Hurdlestone’ look upon a visiting card?”

He wrote upon a card, and held it up to Anthony. “See the address of the Right Worshipful Rector of Ashton. Behold him riding upon a fine cob—living in a fine house—surrounded by sleek, well-fed, obsequious servants—his table served like a prince—-his wine the best in the country—his parties the most brilliant—his friends the most obliging in the world—his curate does all the work for some paltry sixty pounds a-year, and the rich incumbent lives at his ease. Ah, Tony, what a prospect! What rare times we would have of it! To-morrow, when my father asks me to make choice of a profession, hang me if I do not say the Church.”

“You are not fit for so sacred a calling, Godfrey; indeed you are not,” said Anthony, fearful that his burlesquing cousin for once in his life was in earnest.

“I know that better than you can tell me, Tony, but ’tis such an easy way to get a living; I could enjoy such glorious indolence; could fish, and hunt, and shoot, and play the fiddle, and attend feasts and merry-makings, with such a happy consciousness of being found in the path of duty, that it would give a double zest to enjoyment. Now don’t be envious, my dear demure cousin, and forestall me in my project. I am sure to gain my father’s consent. It will save him so much trouble for the future.”

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Algernon.

“Come, boys, dinner is waiting. My dear Anthony, after that important business is dispatched, I want to talk to you in the library upon a matter of serious importance, which I have, I fear, neglected too long. Nay, don’t look alarmed; it is not to administer a scolding, or to question you in Greek or Latin; or to ask you how you have improved your time at school, for I take it for granted that you have both done your best, or I should have heard from Mr. Cunningham, who, they say, is the strictest disciplinarian in the kingdom.”

Now, Anthony could not eat his dinner for thinking what his uncle had to say to him; but he had to wait patiently until that gentleman had discussed his bottle of wine; and it was not without a certain sinking of the heart that he rose to follow him to the library. Godfrey’s curiosity was aroused; he fancied that it was to make some private inquiries as to his conduct at school, that his father wanted to speak alone with his cousin.

“May I come?”

“No, my boy. What I have to say to Anthony is for him alone.”

“Humph!” said Godfrey; then whispering to Anthony as he passed, “No tales out of school, Tony,” he sauntered into the garden.

“What ails you, Anthony?” said the good-natured uncle, as he took a seat by the table.

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“I don’t know,” returned the lad; “I felt afraid”—he hesitated—

“Afraid of what?”

“That you were tired of me—wished me to leave you.”

“I should much sooner be tired of myself. Don’t you know, perverse boy, how dearly I love you;” and he put his arm round the stripling and drew him to his breast. “Godfrey himself is not more dear, son of my murdered Elinor—son of my heart.”

There was a long pause; at length the Colonel said, “It was of your father that I wished to speak. We have let eight years pass away without holding the least intercourse with him; in this, I think we have been to blame. The first year you came to me I wrote to him twice, informing him how you were, and suggesting your future mode of education. To my first letter I received the following answer:—

’*To Algernon Hurdlestone, Esq.*

’In adopting my son you pleased yourself. Had he remained with me I should have provided for him. As matters at present stand, I neither wish to be troubled with letters from him nor from you. When you next write I would thank you to pay the *post*.

Yours, &c.,

‘Marcus Hurdlestone.’

“Now, Tony, I was somewhat discouraged by this ungracious answer; however as I knew the man, I wrote to him again and did pay the post; I took no notice of the tenor of his letter, but merely informed him that I had put you to school, and that you were growing a fine clever lad. Here is his reply:—

’*To Algernon Hurdlestone, Esq.*

’Next to receiving impertinent letters, I detest the trouble of answering them. I have no money to fling away upon fools and foolscap.

‘Marcus Hurdlestone.’

“Now, my dear boy, although so far my applications to him on your behalf have been unsuccessful, I think it only right and prudent in you to write to him yourself, and remind this affectionate father that you are still in the land of the living.”

“And that you wish him,” said Godfrey, popping his head in at the door, where he had been an attentive listener for the last five minutes, “well out of it.”

Without heeding his cousin's nonsense, Anthony answered his uncle with great simplicity, "Dear uncle, what can I say to him?"

"Faith, my dear boy, that's more than I can tell you; just anything, the best you can. Tell him that you wish to see him, that you are grown nearly into a man; that you wish him to name what profession he wishes you to pursue, as you are about to go to college. But mark me, Tony say not one word about love, filial affection, and so forth; he'll not believe you. The more you attempt to court or conciliate such spirits as his—spirits, did I say? the man's all earth, hard unyielding clay—the more they suspect you of sinister motives. The honest bluntness of indignant truth is more likely to succeed."

"I believe you, uncle, and without exercising any great mental ingenuity, my letter, I fear, will be a sad hypocritical affair."

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“Doubtless,” said Godfrey, roaring with laughter, “I wish, Tony, we could change fathers.”

A reproachful look from Algernon, and a flash from the calm dark eyes of Anthony, checked the immoral levity of his cousin, who, stepping briskly up to the table, continued—

“Give me a pen, and I will give you a few hints on the subject.”

“This is too serious a business for mirth, Godfrey,” said Anthony, gravely. “I did not love him once—I was a child. He was harsh and cold, and I was ignorant of the sacred nature of those ties that bound us together. Time has wrought a great change in me; perhaps it may have done the same in him. I am anxious to feel for him a deeper interest—to pity his unfortunate malady, and cherish in my heart the duty and affection of a son.”

“Ah! Tony, Tony, you begin to know the value of the shiners, to tremble lest old skinflint Pike should cut you out of daddy’s will. But come, let me write the dutiful letter that is to reinstate you in the miser’s good graces. Shall it be in verse or prose? What, silent yet? Well then, here goes.” And with an air of mock gravity he took up a pen, and commenced reading every line aloud as he went on—

“Dear stingy dad, I long to share
  The keeping of your hoarded treasure;
You, I know, have lots to spare,
And I, your hopeful son and heir,
  Would spend it with the greatest pleasure.

Oh, thou most devoted father
  Fill your chest—hide well the key
Countless wealth for me you gather,
And I selfishly would rather
  You should starve and save than me.

Must I—must I, still dependent,
On another’s bounty live—”

“What do you mean by that, sir?” cried Algernon in sudden anger, although hitherto much amused by his son’s rattling nonsense. He saw the blush of shame burn on the cheeks of Anthony, and the tears of wounded pride fill his eyes.

“I meant no offence,” said Godfrey, abashed by the unusual severity of the Colonel’s look and tone. “What I said was only intended to make you both laugh.”

“I forgive him,” murmured the indignant heart-humbled lad. “He has given me another motive to write to my father.”

“My dear Tony, never mind his folly.” But Anthony was already in the solitude of his own chamber.

How often had he borne that taunt from Godfrey! How often had he been told before boys whom he esteemed and loved at school, and whose good opinion he was desirous to retain, that he was dependent upon the bounty of Colonel Hurdlestone, though the only son and heir of the rich miser; and that he was as selfish and mean-spirited as his father to submit to such degradation! And he had marked the sarcastic smile, the lifted shoulder, and the meaning glance that passed from boy to boy, and the galling chain of dependence had entered into his soul.

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He became thoughtful and reserved, and applied more intensely to his studies, to shut out what he considered the ungracious, ungrateful conviction that he was a beggar in the house of his good uncle. Godfrey had already calculated the expense of his board and education, for he had more than once hinted to him, that when he came in for his miserly father's wealth, in common justice he ought to repay to him what his romantically generous uncle had expended upon him. Anthony had solemnly averred that such should indeed be the case, and again had been tauntingly answered—"Wait until it is yours; you will then tell a different tale." But now he had dared to reproach him in his uncle's presence; and it was more than the high-spirited youth could bear.

"Father, cruel, unnatural father!" he exclaimed, as he raised his head from between his hands; "why have you subjected your unfortunate son to insults like these?"

"Who insults you, my dear Anthony?" said the Colonel, who had followed him unobserved, and who now stood beside him. "A rash, impetuous, thoughtless boy, who never reflects upon what he says; and who, in spite of all his faults, loves you."

"When you speak, uncle, I am silent. I am sorry that you witnessed this burst of discontent. When I think upon all that I owe to you, my heart is bankrupt in thanks; I never can repay your kindness, and the thought—the consciousness of such overwhelming obligations makes me unhappy."

"I read your heart, Anthony," said the Colonel seating himself beside him. "I know all that you would say, and cannot utter; and I, instead of you become the debtor."

"Your goodness, uncle, makes me feel ashamed of being angry with my cousin. I wish I could forget the unfortunate circumstances in which I am placed; that you were my father instead of him who has disowned me—that my whole heart and soul could cling to you."

He rose hastily and flung himself into the Colonel's arms. His head was buried in his bosom, and by the convulsive heaving of the young heart against his own, Algernon knew that the lad was weeping. His own eyes became moist,—he pressed him warmly against his manly breast.

"You are my son, Anthony—the son of her who received my early vows—of her who ought to have been my wife. Her heart was mine; and though another claims your earthly part, you are the son of my soul—of my adoption. Henceforth let no sense of obligation exist between us."

"I take you at your word, beloved father, and if love can repay love, in my poor heart you have no rival."

“I know it, Anthony; but since you talk of wishing to be out of my debt, there is a way in which you can more than repay me.”

He paused; Anthony raised his earnest eyes to his face. “Not only by forgiving my dear petulant Godfrey, but by continuing his friend. I know that I have spoilt him—that he has many faults, but I think his heart is sound. As he grows older, he will know better how to value your character. Promise me, Anthony, that, when I am dust, your love for me may survive for my son.”

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“Uncle!” said the lad, dropping upon his knees by his side, and holding up his clasped hands, “I swear by the God who made us, by the Saviour who bled for us—by our common hopes of salvation through His blood, that, whatever fortune I inherit from my father, Godfrey shall have an equal part.”

“This is too much to ask of you, Anthony, all I wish you to promise is, simply to continue his friend, under every provocation to become otherwise.”

Anthony pressed his uncle’s hand reverentially to his lips, as he said, in a low voice, “I will endeavor to comply with your request.”

They parted: Algernon to counsel his wayward boy, and Anthony to write to his father.

“Father,”

(He began,) “How gladly would I call you dear. Oh, that you would allow me to love you—to feel for you the duty and respect which the poorest child feels for his parent. What have I done, my father, that you deny me your presence, and hold no communion with me? Will you not permit me to see you? You are growing old and need some friend to be near you, to soothe the growing infirmities of age. Who could better fill this place than your son? Who could feel such an interest in your welfare, or be so firm a friend to you, as your son—your only son? You will perhaps tell me that it is your wealth, and not your love, I seek. I care not for your money. It has never conduced to your own happiness; how do I know that it will ever conduce to mine? I hate it, for it has shut up your heart against me, and made me an orphan and an outcast.“Father, pity me? Pity the circumstances in which I am placed: dependent upon the charity of my good uncle, I feel, kind though he be to me, that I am a burden—that it is not just that I should live upon him. I have finished my school education, and can show you the most honorable testimonials from my masters. I have acquired some knowledge, but I long for more. My uncle talks of sending me to college with his son. For what profession do you wish me to study? Let me know your wishes in this respect, and they shall be strictly obeyed. I shall feel greatly honored by your answer, and remain

“Your dutiful son,

“Anthony Marcus Hurdlestone.”

Anthony did not show his uncle this letter. He knew that he would object to the part relative to himself. He duly sealed it and paid the post, and for several days he awaited the reply in a state of feverish excitement. At length it came, and ran thus:

“Son Anthony,

“Your letter pleased me. I believe it to be sincere. You have been so long a stranger, that I do not feel any wish to see you; but, hereafter, if you wait with patience, you will

not be forgotten. You are a Hurdlestone. I respect the old family and the old name too much to leave it without an heir.“I am glad that you have had sense enough to improve your time. Time

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is money. As to a profession, the uncle who took you from my protection had best choose one for his adopted son. There are several livings in my gift. If you should make choice of the Church, they shall be yours. This would make property which has hitherto been of little value pay a good interest. As to being dependent upon your uncle, the thought amused me. If he feels you a burden, it is self-inflicted, and he must be content to bear it. You need not look to me for pecuniary assistance; I shall yield you none. An industrious young man can always free himself from a galling yoke.

“Your father and friend,

Marcus Hurdlestone.”

Upon the whole, Anthony was pleased with his father’s letter. It displayed more of human feeling than he expected; besides, he had not rejected his claims as a son. He had acknowledged him to be his heir. It is true, he had forbidden him his presence, and flung back his proffered affection; but he had spoken of him with respect, and his son was grateful even for this stinted courtesy. He would one day be able to repay his uncle’s kindness in a more substantial manner than words; and he flew to Algernon’s study with a beating heart and flushed cheeks.

“What news, my boy?” said the Colonel, looking up from the artificial fly he was making. “Have you caught a trout or a salmon?”

“Better still. I have got a letter from my father!”

“No!” said the Colonel, letting go his fishing-tackle. “Is that possible?”

“Here it is; read for yourself.” And he put the letter into Algernon’s hand.

“Well, Tony, lad, this is indeed better than I expected,” he said, grasping his nephew warmly by the hand. “But stay; what does this paragraph mean? Have you found my love, Anthony, such a galling yoke?”

“My father has misunderstood me,” replied the lad, his cheeks glowing with crimson. “I told him that it was not just for me to be dependent on your bounty.”

“’Tis a crabbed old sinner,” said the Colonel, laughing, “I am more astonished at his letter than anything that has happened to me since he robbed me of your mother.”

Anthony looked inquiringly at his uncle.

“Come, nephew, sit down by me, and I will relate to you a page out of my own history, which will not only show you what manner of man this father of yours is, but explain to

you the position in which we are both placed regarding him; clearing up what must have appeared to you very mysterious."

With intense interest the amiable son of this most execrable father listened to the tale already told of his mother's wrongs. How often did the crimes of the parent dye the cheeks of the child with honest indignation, or pale them with fear? How did his love for his generous uncle increase in a tenfold degree, when he revealed the treachery that had been practised against him! How often did he ask himself—"Is it possible that he can love the son of this cruel brother?" But then he was also the son of the woman he had loved so tenderly for years, whose memory he held in the deepest veneration; was like him in person, and, with sounder judgment and better abilities, resembled him in mind also.

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Satisfied that his father would do him justice in spite of his cold, unfeeling neglect, and bequeath to him the wealth to obtain which he had sacrificed every human feeling and domestic comfort, Anthony no longer suffered the humiliating sense of obligation to weigh upon his heart and depress his spirits, and he cheerfully accepted his uncle's offer to send him to college to study for the Church.

"Five livings," Godfrey declared, were four too many for any incumbent, and he would charitably relieve Anthony from some of them, and study for the same profession. His cousin was grieved at this choice, so unfitted to the tastes and pursuits of his gay companion; but finding all remonstrance vain, he ceased to importune him on the subject, hoping that as time advanced, he would, of his own accord, abandon the idea.

To college, therefore, the lads went; and here the same dissimilarity marked their conduct as at school. Anthony applied intensely to his studies, and made rapid progress in mental and moral improvement. Serious without affectation, and pious without cant, he daily became more attached to the profession he had chosen, hoping to find through it a medium by which he could one day restore to the world the talents which for half a century his father had buried in the dust. Godfrey's career, on the other hand, was one of folly, dissipation and crime. He wasted his father's property in the most lavish expenditure, and lost at the gaming table sums that would have settled him well in life.

Anthony remonstrated with him on his want of principle, and pointed out the ruin which must follow such profligacy. This Godfrey took in very bad part, and tauntingly accused his cousin of being a spy. He told him that it sounded well from a dependent on his father's bounty to preach up abstinence to him. These circumstances threw Anthony into a deep melancholy. He did not like to write to his uncle to inform him in what a disgraceful manner his son was spending his time and money; and he constantly reproached himself with a want of faithfulness in keeping such an important matter a secret.

Disgusted with his cousin and his dissipated associates, Anthony withdrew entirely from their society, and shut himself up in his own apartments, rarely leaving his books to mingle in scenes in which he could not sympathize, and in which, from his secluded habits, he was not formed to shine. He became a dreamer. He formed a world for himself, and peopled it with beings whose imaginary perfections had no counterpart on earth. He went forth to mingle with his kind, and found them so unlike the creatures in his moral Utopia, that he determined to relinquish society and spiritualise his own nature, the better to fit him for his high calling as a minister of the gospel of Christ.

"How much better it would be to die young," he would exclaim, "than live to be old and wicked, or to watch over the decay of the warm affections and enthusiastic feelings of youth; to see the beautiful fade from the heart, and the worldly and common-place fill up

the blighting void! Oh! Godfrey, Godfrey! how can you enjoy the miserable and sensual pleasures for which you are forfeiting self-respect and peace of mind for ever!”

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“But Godfrey is happier than you, with all your refined feelings and cultivated tastes,” whispered the tempter to his soul.

“It cannot be,” returned the youth, as he communed with his own heart. “The pleasures of sin may blind the mental vision, and blunt the senses, for a while; but when the terrible truth makes all things plain—and the reaction comes—and come it assuredly will—and the mind, like a polluted stream, can no longer flow back to its own bright source, and renovate its poisoned waters; who shall then say that the madness of the sensualist can satisfy the heart?”

Thus did these two young men live together: one endeavoring by the aid of religion, and by studying the wisdom of the past, to exalt and purify his fallen nature; the other by grovelling in the dust, and mingling with beings yet more sinful and degraded, rapidly debased his mind to a more degenerate and fallen state.

Godfrey Hurdlestone had always been covetous of his cousin’s anticipated wealth, but now he envied his good name, and the respect which his talents and good conduct entitled him to receive from his superiors, and he hated him accordingly. He could not bear to see him courted and caressed by his worldly companions because he was the son of the rich miser, and himself thrown into the background, although in personal endowments he far surpassed his studious and retiring companion. His own father, though reputed to be rich, was known to be in embarrassed circumstances, which the extravagance of his son was not likely to decrease. Godfrey had no mental resource but in the society of persons whom Anthony despised; and he was daily annoyed by disparaging comparisons which the very worldlings he courted were constantly drawing between them. “Oh envy!” well has it been said by the wisest of mankind, “who can stand before envy?”

Of all human passions, the meanest in its operations, the most fatal in its results, foul parent of the most revolting crimes. If the heart is guarded against this passion, the path to heaven becomes easy of access, and the broad and dangerous way loses half its attractions.

Godfrey had forfeited his own self-respect, and he hated his cousin for possessing a jewel which he had cast away. This aversion was strengthened by the anxious solicitude that Anthony expressed for his welfare, and the earnest appeals which he daily made to his conscience, to induce him to renounce his present destructive course, if not for his own, for his father’s sake.

Their studies were nearly completed, when the immense sums that Godfrey had squandered in dissipation and gambling obliged the Colonel to recall them home.

Algernon, although not a little displeased with his heartless selfish son, received the young men with his usual kindness, but there was a shade of care upon his broad open

brow, which told to Anthony a tale of anxiety and suffering, that caused him the deepest pain. As two whole years must necessarily elapse before Anthony could enter into holy orders, he determined to prosecute his studies in the country with their worthy curate, Mr. Grant, a gentleman of great learning, piety, and worth.

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This arrangement was greatly to the satisfaction of his uncle, though Godfrey shook his shoulders, and muttered that it would be “Confounded dull work.”

“I must introduce you, boys, to our new neighbors,” said the Colonel, next morning, at breakfast. “But mind that you don’t pull caps for Miss Whitmore, our charming young heiress.”

“Who the deuce is she?” asked Godfrey.

“You knew that our poor old friend Henderson, of Hazelwood Lodge, was dead?”

“Dead! Why when did he die?” said Godfrey. “You never wrote us a word about it.”

“Well, I thought I had. He died two months ago, and his property fell to a very distant relation. A captain in the navy. A man of small family and substantial means, who keeps a fine stud, a capital table, and a cross old maid, his sister, to superintend his household and take care of his daughter.”

“And the young lady?”

“Is a beautiful simple-hearted girl; rather romantic, and the very reverse of the old maid. Aunt Dorothy is all ginger and vinegar. Niece Juliet, like fine Burgundy, sparkling with life and animation.”

“By Jove! Anthony, good news for us. I give you warning, mister parson, that I mean to pass away the time in this dull place by making love to Miss Whitmore. So don’t attempt to poach on my manor.”

“That’s hardly fair, Godfrey. You ought to allow your cousin an equal chance.”

“The young lady will herself make the chances equal,” said Anthony, with a quiet smile. “For my own part, I feel little interest in the subject, and never yet saw the woman with whom I would wish to pass my life. To me the passion of love is unknown. Godfrey, on the contrary, professes to be in love with every pretty girl he sees.”

“There’s no doubt that I shall win the lady,” cried Godfrey. “Women are not so fond of quiet, sentimental, learned young gentlemen, like Anthony; his heart partakes too much of the cold tough nature of his father’s to make a good lover. While he talks sense to the maiden aunt, I shall be pouring nonsense into the young lady’s ears—nursing her lap-dog, caressing her pony, writing amatory verses in her scrap-book,” (albums were not then in fashion,) “and losing no opportunity of insinuating myself into her good graces.”

CHAPTER VIII.

I see no beauty in this wealthy dame;
’Neath the dark lashes of her downcast eyes
A weeping spirit lurks. And when she smiles,
’Tis but the sunbeams of an April day,
Piercing a watery cloud.—S.M.

“So Colonel Hurdlestone’s son and nephew arrived at the Hall last night. Reach me down Juliet’s portfolio, Dorothy; I must write the good Colonel a congratulatory note,” said Captain Whitmore to his solemn-faced sister.

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The Captain was a weather-beaten stout old gentleman, who had seen some hard service during the war, and what with wounds, hard-drinking, and the gout, had been forced to relinquish the sea, and anchor for life in the pretty village of Norgood, where he held property, through the death of the rich Mr. Henderson, to a considerable amount. His wife had been dead for some years, and his only daughter, whom he scarcely suffered out of his sight, was educated at home, under the superintendence of her aunt, who professed to be the most accomplished, as she certainly was the most disagreeable, woman in the world.

“I think, Captain Whitmore, you had better defer your congratulations until you see what sort of persons these young men are. Mrs. Grant assured me yesterday that one of these gentlemen is very wild. Quite a profligate.”

“Fiddlesticks!” said the jolly Captain, snapping his fingers. “I know what young men are. A gay dashing lad, I suppose, whose hot blood and youthful frolics old maiden ladies construe into the most awful crimes.”

“Old maiden ladies, sir! Pray whom do you mean to insult by that gross appellation?”

“Gross! I always thought that maiden was a term that implied virgin innocence and purity, whether addressed to the blithe lass of sixteen, or the antiquated spinster of forty,” returned the provoking sailor, with a knowing glance.

“I hate your vulgar insinuations,” said Miss Dorothy, her sharp nose flushing to a deep red. “But how can one expect politeness from a sea monster?”

“Ha! ha! ha!” shouted the Captain. “Never mind, Dolly, don’t give way to temper, and curl up that bowsprit of yours with such a confounded ugly twist. There may be a chance yet. Let me see. I don’t think that you are fifty-four. My nurse, Betty Holt, was called an old maid for thirty years, and married at last.”

“I wonder, brother, that you are not ashamed of naming me and that low-born person in the same breath. As to matrimony, I despise the male sex too much to degrade myself by entering upon it.”

“It would have sweetened your temper amazingly,” said the Captain, re-filling his pipe. “I believe, Dorothy, you were never put to the trial?”

“You know that I refused at least a dozen offers.”

“Whew! I never heard a word about them before.”

Miss Dorothy knew that she was telling a great fib; and she drew herself up with increased dignity. “You were at sea, sir.”

“So, I suppose,” drawing a long whiff from his pipe, “I must have been a great way off; and these same offers must have been made a long time ago.”

“I could marry yet, if I pleased!” screamed the indignant spinster.

“Doubtful. And pray who is the happy man?”

“I have too much delicacy to reveal secrets, or to subject myself or him to your vulgar ridicule.”

“I wish him luck!” said the Captain, turning over the leaves of Juliet’s portfolio. “What the deuce does the girl mean? She has scribbled over all the paper. I hope she don’t amuse herself by writing love-letters?”

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“Do you think that I would suffer my niece to spend her time in such an improper manner? But, indeed, brother, I wish you would speak to Juliet (for she does not mind me) on this subject.”

“On what subject—writing love-letters?”

“No, sir: something almost as bad.”

“Well—out with it.”

“She has the folly to write verses.”

“Is that all?”

“All! Only consider the scandal that it will bring upon me. I shall be called a blue-stocking.”

“You! I thought it was the author to whom persons gave that appellation.”

“True, Captain Whitmore; but, as I help to instruct the young lady, ill-natured people will say that I taught her to write.”

“Don’t fret yourself on that score, Dolly; it will not spoil your fortune, if they do. But Juliet—I am sorry that the child has taken such whimsies into her head; it may hinder her from getting a good husband.”

“Fie, Captain Whitmore! Is that your only objection?”

“Be quiet, Dolly, there’s a good woman, and let me examine these papers. If there is anything wrong about them, I will burn them, and forbid my pretty Julee to write such nonsense again. I know that the dear girl loves her old dad, and will mind what I say. How!—what’s this? God bless the darling!”

‘*Lines addressed to my father during his absence at sea.*’

The old man put on his spectacles, and read these outpourings of an affectionate heart with the tears in his eyes. They possessed very little merit, as a poem; but the Captain thought them the sweetest lines he had ever read.

“Well, now, Dolly, is not that a pretty poem? Who could have the heart to find fault with that, or criticise the dear child for her dutiful love to me? I’ll not burn that.” And the old tar slipped the precious document into his pocket, to be hoarded next his heart, and to be worn until death bade them part, within the enamelled case which contained the miniature of his Julee’s very pretty mother.

“It’s well enough,” said Miss Dorothy; “but I hate such romantic stuff. It could have been written with more propriety in prose.” And she added, in a malicious aside, loud enough to reach the ears of the fond father:

“Now his vanity’s pleased with this nonsense, there will be no end to his admiration of Juliet’s verses.”

“Dorothy, don’t be envious of that of which you are incapable.”

“Me envious! Of whom, pray? A whining, half-grown chit, who, if she have anything worthy of commendation about her, first received it from me. Envious, indeed! Captain Whitmore, I am astonished at your impudence!”

What answer the Captain would have given to this was very doubtful, for his brow clouded up with the disrespectful manner in which Aunt Dorothy spoke of his child, had not that child herself appeared, and all the sunshine of the father’s heart burst forth at her presence.

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“Dear papa, what are you about?” she cried, flinging her arms about the old veteran’s neck, and trying, at the same moment, to twitch the paper out of his hand.

“Avast heavin’! my girl. The old commodore is not to be robbed so easily of his prize.”

“Indeed, you must give the portfolio to me!” said Juliet, her eyes full of tears at finding her secret discovered.

“Indeed, indeed, I shall do no such thing, you saucy little minx! So, sit still whilst the father reads.”

“But that—that is not worth reading.”

“I dare say you are right, Miss Juliet,” said the old maid, sarcastically. “The rhymes of young ladies are seldom worth reading. You had better mend your stockings, and mind your embroidery, than waste your time in such useless trash.”

“It does not take up much of my time, aunt.”

“How do you make it up out of your little head, Julee?” said the Captain. “Come and sit upon my knee, and tell the father all about it. I am sure I could sooner board a French man-of-war than tack two rhymes together.”

“I don’t know, papa,” said Juliet, laughing, and accepting the proffered seat. “It comes into my head when it likes, and passes through my brain with the rapidity of lightning. I find it without seeking, and often, when I seek it, I cannot find it. The thing is a great mystery to myself; but the possession of it makes me very happy.”

“Weak minds, I have often been told, are amused by trifles,” sneered Aunt Dorothy.

“Then I must be very weak, aunt, for I am easily amused. Dear papa, give me that paper.”

“I must read it.”

“’Tis silly stuff.”

“Let me be the best judge of that. Perhaps it contains something that I ought not to see?”

“Perhaps it does. Oh, no,” she whispered in his ear; “but Aunt Dorothy will sneer so at it.”

The old man was too much pleased with his child to care for Aunt Dorothy. He knew, of old, that her bark was worse than her bite; that she really loved both him and his

daughter; but she had a queer way of showing it. And unfolding the paper, he read aloud, to the great annoyance of the fair writer, the fragment of a ballad, of which, to do him justice, he understood not a single word; and had he called upon her to explain its meaning, she would, in all probability, have found it no easy task.

LADY LILIAN.

Alone in her tower, at the midnight hour,
The lady Lilian sat;
Like a spirit pale,
In her silken veil,
She watches the white clouds above her sail,
And the flight of the drowsy bat.

Is love the theme of her waking dream?
Her heart is gay and free;
She loves the night,
When the stars shine bright,
And the moon falls in showers of silver light
Through the stately forest tree.

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And all around, on the dewy ground,
The quivering moonbeams stray;
And the light and shade,
By the branches made,
Give motion and life to the silent glade,
Like fairy elves at play.

And far o'er the meads, through its fringe of reeds,
Flashes the slender rill;
Like a silver thread,
By some spirit led,
From an urn of light by the moonbeams fed,
It winds round the distant hill.

When sleep's soft thrall falls light on all,
That lady's eyes unclose;
To all that is fair
In earth and air,
When none are awake her thoughts to share,
Or her spirit discompose.

And tones more dear, to her fine-tuned ear,
On the midnight breezes float;
Than the sounds that ring
From the minstrel's string,
When the mighty deeds of some warrior king
Inspire each thrilling note.

* * * * *

"So there's a hole in the ballad," said the old tar, looking up in his daughter's blushing face. "Julee, my dear, what does all this mean?"

"It would be a difficult matter for Miss Julee to explain," said Aunt Dorothy.

Further remarks on either side were stopped by the announcement of Colonel Hurdlestone, and his son and nephew. Juliet seized the portfolio from her father, and, with one bound, cleared the opposite doorway, and disappeared.

"We have frightened your daughter away, Captain Whitmore," said the Colonel, glancing after the retreating figure of Juliet. "What made my young friend run from us?"

“Oh, I have just found out the saucy jade is scribbling verses all over my paper; and she is afraid that I should tell you about it; and that aunt Dorothy would quiz her before these gentlemen.”

“I should like much to see a specimen of her poetry,” said the Colonel.

“Here are a few lines addressed to myself,” said the proud father, handing them to his friend. “I was going to scold Julee for her folly; but, by Jove, Colonel, I could not bring my heart to do it after reading that!”

The paper went round. It lingered longest in the hand of Anthony Hurdlestone. The lines possessed no particular merit. They were tender and affectionate, true to nature and nature’s simplicity, and as he read and re-read them, it seemed as if the spirit of the author was in unison with his own. “Happy girl!” he thought, “who can thus feel towards and write of a father. How I envy you this blessed, holy affection!” He raised his eyes, and rose up in confusion, to be presented to Miss Whitmore.

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Juliet could scarcely be termed beautiful; but her person was very attractive. Her features were small, but belonged to none of the favored orders of female beauty; and her complexion was pallid, rendered more conspicuously so by the raven hair, that fell in long silken ringlets down her slender white throat, and spread like a dark veil round her elegant bust and shoulders. Her lofty brow was pure as marble, and marked by that high look of moral and intellectual power, before which mere physical beauty shrinks into insignificance. Soft pencilled eyebrows gave additional depth and lustre to a pair of the most lovely deep blue eyes that ever flashed from beneath a fringe of jet. There was an expression of tenderness almost amounting to sadness, in those sweet eyes; and when they were timidly raised to meet those of the young Anthony, a light broke upon his heart, which the storms and clouds of after-life could never again extinguish.

“Miss Juliet, your father has been giving us a treat,” said the Colonel.

Poor Juliet turned first very red, and then very pale, and glanced reproachfully at the old man.

“Nay, Miss Whitmore, you need not be ashamed of that which does you so much credit,” said the Colonel, pitying her confusion.

“Dear papa, it was cruel to betray me,” said Juliet, the tears of mortified sensibility filling her fine eyes. “Colonel Hurdlestone, you will do me a great favor by never alluding to this subject again.”

“You are a great admirer of nature, Miss Whitmore, or you could never write poetry,” said Godfrey, heedless of the distress of the poor girl. But he was tired of sitting silent, and longed for an opportunity of addressing her.

“Poetry is the language in which nature speaks to the heart of the young,” said Juliet. “Do you think that there ever was a young person indifferent to the beauties of poetry?”

“All young people have not your taste and fine feeling,” said Godfrey. “There are some persons who can walk into a garden without distinguishing the flowers from the weeds. You have of course read Shakspeare?”

“It formed the first epoch in my life,” returned Juliet with animation. “I never shall forget the happy day when I first revelled through the fairy isle with Ariel and his dainty spirits. My father was from home, and had left the key in the library door. It was forbidden ground. My aunt was engaged with an old friend in the parlor, so I ventured in, and snatched at the first book which came to hand. It was a volume of Shakspeare, and contained, among other plays, the Tempest and Midsummer Night’s Dream. Afraid of detection I stole away into the park, and beneath the shadow of the greenwood tree, I devoured with rapture the inspired pages of the great magician. What a world of wonders it opened to my view! Since that eventful hour poetry has become to me the

language of nature—the voice in which creation lifts up its myriad anthems to the throne of God."

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An enthusiastic country girl could alone have addressed this rhapsody to a stranger. A woman of the world with half her talent and moral worth, would have blushed at her imprudence in betraying the romance of her nature. Juliet was a novice in the world, and she spoke with the simplicity and earnestness of truth. Godfrey smiled in his heart at her want of tact; yet there was one near him, in whose breast Juliet Whitmore would have found an echo to her own words.

The gentlemen rose to depart, and promised to dine at the Lodge the next day.

“Two fine young men,” said the Captain, turning to his daughter, as the door closed upon his guests. “Which of them took your fancy most, Julee?”

“They are so much alike—I should scarcely know them apart. I liked him the best who most resembled the dear old Colonel.”

“Old! Miss Juliet. I hope you don’t mean to call Colonel Hurdlestone an old man! You will be calling me old next.”

“And not far from the truth if she did,” muttered the old sailor. “That was the Colonel’s nephew, Julee, Mr. Anthony Hurdlestone.”

“The son of that horrible old miser? I saw him once and took him for a beggar. Is it possible that that elegant young man can be his son?”

“I think the case somewhat doubtful,” observed Miss Dorothy. “I wonder that Colonel Hurdlestone has the effrontery to introduce that young man as his nephew. Nature herself contradicts the assertion.”

“Dolly, don’t be censorious. I thought the Colonel was a great friend of yours.”

“He was; but I am not blind,” said Miss Dorothy, with dignity. “I have altered my mind with regard to that gentleman, and would not become his wife if he were to ask me on his bended knees.”

“I wish he would pop the question,” said the Captain. “I’d bet my life on’t that he would not have to ask twice!”

“Sir,” replied the lady, casting upon her brother a withering glance, “I never mean to marry a widower—an uncle—who brings with him nephews so like himself.” Miss Dorothy swept from the room, leaving her brother convulsed with laughter.

“Miss Whitmore is not so handsome as I expected to find her, after the fuss that George Braconberry made about her the other night at Wymar’s,” said Godfrey, suddenly pulling up his horse, as they rode home, and addressing his cousin. “Her figure is delightful, symmetry itself; but her face, she has scarcely one good feature in it. There is nothing

gay or joyous in her expression. There is an indescribable sadness about those blue eyes which makes one feel grave in a moment. I wanted to pay her a few compliments by way of ingratiating myself into her good graces; but, by Jove! I could not look her in the face and do it. A man must have more confidence than I possess to attempt to deceive her. I never felt afraid of a woman before."

"I am glad to hear you say so," returned Anthony. "To me she is beautiful, exceedingly beautiful. I would not exchange that noble expression of hers for the most faultless features and blooming complexion in the world. The dignity of her countenance is the mirror in which I see reflected the beauty of the soul; as the stars picture on the face of the placid stream the heaven in which they dwell."

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“Are you turned poet too, Master Anthony? Mary Mathews, down at the farm, has a prettier face, or I am no judge of female beauty.”

“We all know your *penchant* for Mary Mathews. But seriously, Godfrey, if you do not mean to marry the poor girl, it is very cruel to pay her such lover-like attentions.”

“One must do something, Tony, to pass away the time in this dull place. As to marrying the girl, you surely do not take me for a fool?”

“I should be sorry to take you for something worse. Last night you went too far, when you took the sweet-briar rose from her bosom and placed it in your own; and said that you preferred it to all the flowers in the garden; that your highest ambition was to win and wear the wild rose. The poor girl believed you. Did you not see how she looked down and blushed, and then up in your face with the tears in her eyes, and a sweet smile on her severed lips. Surely, my dear cousin, it is wrong to give birth to hopes which you never mean to realize.”

A crimson flush passed over Godfrey’s brow as he answered haughtily. “Nonsense, Anthony! you take up this matter too seriously. Women love flattery, and if we are bound in honor to marry all the women we compliment, the law must be abolished that forbids polygamy.”

“I know one who would not fail to take advantage of such an act,” said Anthony. “But really, matters that concern the happiness and misery of our fellow creatures are too serious for a joke. I hope poor Mary’s light heart will never be rendered heavy by your gallantry.”

Again the color flushed the cheek of Godfrey. He looked down, slashed his well-polished boot with his riding-whip, and endeavored to hum a tune, and appear indifferent to his cousin’s lecture, but it would not do; and telling Anthony that he was in no need of a Mentor, he whistled to a favorite spaniel, and dashing his spurs into his horse, was soon out of sight.

Mary Mathews, the young girl who formed the subject of this conversation, was a strange eccentric creature, more remarkable for the beauty of her person, and her masculine habits, than for any good qualities she possessed. Her father rented a small farm, the property of Colonel Hurdlestone; her mother died while she was yet a child, and her only brother ran away from following the plough and went to sea.

Mathews was a rude, clownish, matter-of-fact man; he wanted some person to assist him in looking after the farm, and taking care of the stock; and he brought up Mary to fill the place of the son he had lost, early inuring her to take an active part, in those manual labors which were peculiar to his vocation. Mary was a man in everything but her face and figure, which were exceedingly soft and feminine; and if her complexion had not

been a little injured by constant exposure to the atmosphere, she would have been a perfect beauty; and in spite of these disadvantages she was considered the *belle* of the village.

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Alas! for Mary. Her masculine employments, and constantly associating with her father's work-people, had destroyed the woman in her heart. She thought like a man—-spoke like a man—acted like a man. The loud clear voice, and clearer louder laugh, the coarse jest and rude song, grated painfully on the ear, and appeared unnatural in the highest degree, when issuing from coral lips, whose perfect contour might have formed a model for the Venus.

Mary knew that she was handsome, and never attempted to conceal from others her consciousness of the fact; and, as long as her exterior elicited applause and admiration from the rude clowns who surrounded her, she cared not for those minor graces of voice and manner which render beauty so captivating to the refined and well-educated of the other sex.

In the harvest-field she was always the foremost in the band of reapers; dressed in her tight green-cloth boddice, clean white apron, red stuff petticoat, and neatly blacked shoes; her beautiful features shaded by her large, coarse, flat, straw hat, put knowingly to one side, more fully to display the luxuriant auburn tresses, of the sunniest hue, that waved profusely in rich natural curls round her face and neck. In the hay-field you passed her, with the rake across her shoulder, and turned in surprise to look at the fair creature, who whistled to her dog, sang snatches of profane songs, and hallooed to the men in the same breath. In the evening you met her bringing home her cows from the marshes, mounted upon her father's grey riding horse; keeping her seat with as much ease and spirit, although destitute of a side-saddle, as the most accomplished female equestrian in St. James's Park; and when his services were no longer required by our young Amazon, she rubbed down her horse, and turned him adrift with her own hands into the paddock.

To see Mary Mathews to advantage, when the better nature of her womanhood triumphed over the coarse rude habits to which her peculiar education had given birth, was when surrounded by her weanling calves and cosset lambs, or working in her pretty garden that skirted the road. There, among her flowers, with her splendid locks waving round her sunny brow, and singing as blithe as any bird, some rural ditty or ballad of the days gone by, she looked the simple, unaffected, lovely country girl. The traveller paused at the gate to listen to her song, to watch her at her work, and to beg a flower from her hand. Even the proud aristocratic country gentleman, as he rode past, doffed his hat, and saluted courteously the young Flora whose smiling face floated before him during his homeward ride.

Uncontrolled by the usages of the world, and heedless of its good or bad opinion, Mary became a law to herself—a headstrong, wayward, passionate creature; shunned by her own sex, who regarded her as their common enemy, and constantly thrown into contact with the worst and most ignorant of the other, it was not to be wondered at that she became an object of suspicion to all.

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With a mind capable of much good, but constantly exposed to much evil, Mary felt with bitterness that she had no friend among her village associates who could share her feelings, or enjoy her unfeminine pursuits. With energy of purpose to form and execute the most daring projects, her mental powers were confined to the servile drudgery of the kitchen and the field until the sudden return of her long-lost brother gave a new coloring to her life, and influenced all her future actions.

The bold audacious William Mathews, of whom she felt so proud, and whom she loved so fiercely, carried on the double profession of a poacher on shore and a smuggler at sea. Twice Mary had exposed her life to imminent danger to save him from detection; and so strongly was she attached to him, that there was no peril that she would not have dared for his sake. Fear was a stranger to her breast. Often had she been known to ride at the dead hour of night, through lonely cross-roads, to a distant parish, to bring home her father from some low hedge-alehouse, in which she suspected him to be wasting his substance with a set of worthless profligates.

Twice during the short period of her life, for she had only just entered upon her eighteenth year, she had suffered from temporary fits of insanity; and the neighbors, when speaking of her exploits, always prefaced it with, “Oh, poor thing! There is something wrong about that girl. There is no account to be taken of her deeds.”

From a child Mary had been an object of deep interest to the young Hurdlestones. Residing on the same estate, she had been a stolen acquaintance and playfellow from infancy. She always knew the best pools in the river for fishing, could point out the best covers for game, knew where to find the first bird’s-nest, and could climb the loftiest forest tree to obtain the young of the hawk or crow with more certainty of success than her gay companions. Their sports were dull and spiritless without Mary Mathews.

As they advanced towards manhood they took more notice of her peculiarities, and laughed at her boyish ways; but when she grew up into a beautiful girl they became more respectful in their turn, and seldom passed her in the grounds without paying her some of those light compliments and petty attentions always acceptable to a pretty vain girl of her class. Both would officiously help her to catch and bridle her horse, carry her pail, or assist her in the hay-field. And this was as often done to hear the smart answers that pretty Poll would return to their gallant speeches, for the girl possessed no small share of wit, and her natural talents were in no way inferior to their own.

Godfrey had of late addressed her in less bantering tones; for he had played, like the moth, around the taper until he had burnt his wings, and was fairly scorched by the flame of love. In spite of the remonstrances of his more conscientious cousin, he daily spent hours in leaning over her garden gate, enacting the lover to this rustic Flora. It was to such a scene as this that Anthony had alluded, and respecting which Godfrey had given such an indefinite answer.

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Capricious in his pursuits, Godfrey was not less inconstant in his affections; and the graceful person and pleasing manners of Juliet Whitmore had made a deeper impression upon his fickle mind than he thought it prudent to avow; nor was he at all insensible to the pecuniary advantages that would arise from such a union.

CHAPTER IX.

Come, tell me something of this wayward girl.
Oh, she is changed—and such a woful change!
It breaks my heart to think on't. The bright eye
Has lost its fire, the red rose on her cheek
Is washed to whiteness by her frequent tears;
And with the smile has fled the ruby glow
From the twin lips, so tempting and so ripe;
That wooed to love with their ambrosial breath,
That, issuing through those dewy portals, showed
The pearly teeth within, like gems enshrined.—S.M.

What aileth thee this morning, young daughter, that thou lingerest so long before the mirror, adjusting and re-adjusting the delicately-tinted Provence rose-buds in thy dark flowing tresses? Art thou doubtful of thy charms, or have the calm bright eyes of the young stranger made thee diffident of the power of thy own surpassing loveliness? Those eyes have caught thy young fancy, and made thee blind to all other objects around thee. They have haunted thee through the long night; thou couldst not sleep; those dark eyes looked into thy soul; they have kindled upon the hidden altar of life the sad and beautiful light of love. Thou no longer livest for thyself; another image possesses thy heart, and thou hast wonderingly discovered a new page in the poetry of thy nature.

"Yes, love—first love—is a sad and holy thing; a pleasure born out of pain, welcomed with smiles, nourished by tears, and worshipped by the young and enthusiastic as the only real and abiding good in a world of shadow. Alas! for the young heart, why should it ever awake to find the most perfect of its creatures like the rest—a dream!"

And poor Juliet's love-dream was banished very abruptly by the harsh voice of Aunt Dorothy.

"Miss Whitmore, the dinner waits for *you*. Quick! you have been an hour dressing yourself to-day. Will you never have done arranging your hair? Now, do pray take out those nasty flowers. They do not become you. They look romantic and theatrical."

"Ah, aunt, you must not rob me of my flowers, God's most precious gift to man."

“I hate them! They always make a room look in a litter.”

“Hate flowers!” exclaimed Juliet, in unaffected surprise. “God’s beautiful flowers! I pity your want of taste, my good aunt.”

“Nay, spare your commiseration for those who need it, Miss Whitmore. My judgment is certainly not inferior to *yours*; and I never could discover the use or beauty of flowers. What! not satisfied yet?” as Juliet cast another hurried glance at the mirror. “The vanity of girls in our days is quite disgusting to a woman of sense.”

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“I look so ill to-day, aunt, I am ashamed of being seen.”

“It is matter of little consequence, I dare say; no one will notice how you look. A few years *hence*, and there would be some excuse for spending so much time before a looking-glass.”

The ladies entered the drawing-room as dinner was announced. If Juliet was dissatisfied with her appearance, Anthony thought that she looked most beautiful, and was delighted to find himself seated beside her. How gladly would he have improved this opportunity of conversing with her, but the natural shyness of his disposition became doubly distressing when he most wished to surmount it; and, with a thousand thoughts in his heart and words upon his tongue, he remained silent. Juliet was the first to speak.

“You were out fishing last night, Mr. Anthony. Were you successful?”

“I am always successful, Miss Whitmore. But, after all, it is a cruel and treacherous sport. I feel ashamed of myself for entering into it with such zest. Destruction appears to be a principle inherent in our nature. Man shows his tyrannical disposition in finding so great a pleasure in taking away from the inferior animals the life which he cannot restore.”

“You are too severe,” returned Juliet. “We are apt to forget during the excitement of the moment the cruelty we inflict. I read old Izaak Walton when a child. He made me mistress of the whole art of angling. It is such a quiet contemplative amusement. The clear stream, the balmy air, the warbling of happy birds, the fragrant hedge-rows and flowery banks, by which you are surrounded, make you alive to the most pleasing impressions: and amidst sights and sounds of beauty, you never reflect that you are acting the part of the destroyer. I have given up the gentle craft; but I still think it a strangely-fascinating sport.”

“I should be sorry to see you so engaged,” said Anthony. “I never could bear to witness so soft a hand employed in taking away life.”

“You, too, have learned the art of flattery,” said Juliet, reproachfully. “When will your sex, in speaking to ours, learn to confine themselves to simple truth?”

“When the education of woman is conducted with less art, and they rise superior to the meanness of being pleased with falsehood. What I said just now was but the simple truth. I admit that it was said to please, and I should, indeed, be grieved, if I thought that I could possibly have given offence.”

He looked so serious and anxious, that Juliet burst into a merry laugh.

“A very heinous crime, indeed, and deserving a very severe punishment! What shall it be?”

“Another lecture from those lips. Remember, I did not say, *sweet* lips.”

“Worse and worse. I will abandon the lectures for the future, for, I perceive, that to complain to a gentleman of his using compliments, only induces him to make a dozen more, in order to atone for his first offence.”

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The young people's *tete a tete* was interrupted by Miss Dorothea, who hated to hear any one talk but herself, asking Mr. Anthony, "If it were true that he was studying for the Church?" On his replying in the affirmative, she continued: "Your father, Mr. Anthony, is determined to let nothing go out of the family. One would have thought that you could have afforded to have lived like an independent gentleman."

Anthony, who was unfortunately very sensitive on this subject, colored deeply as he replied,

"My choice of a profession, madam, was not so much in accordance with my father's wishes as with my own."

"Well, I must say that I think it a strange choice for a young man of fortune."

"I made choice of that mode of life, in which I hoped to be of most use to my fellow creatures. The fortune to which you allude, Miss Whitmore, may never be mine."

"Yes, yes; I see you are determined to look out for the main chance," continued his ill-natured tormentor. "But, to do you justice, young man, I think nature made you for a parson."

This speech was greatly relished by Godfrey, who burst into a loud laugh. He secretly enjoyed poor Anthony's mortification; and, though he detested the old maid himself, he had successfully wormed himself into her good graces, by paying her some judicious compliments, in which the graces of her person and her youthful appearance had been the theme of praise.

"By the by, Tony," he said, turning suddenly to his cousin, "you have received a letter from your father, and never told me one word about it. Was it a kind epistle?"

"Better than I expected," returned Anthony coldly. "But I never discuss family matters in public."

"Public! Are we not among friends?" said Godfrey, persisting in his impertinent interrogatories.

"But you inherit a good deal of the suspicious cautious character of your father. When you grow old, I believe that you will be just as fond of money as he is. Did he offer to advance a sufficient sum to settle you in life?"

"No, he did not."

"Astonishing! What excuse can he give for such unreasonable conduct?"

"The old one, I suppose," said Colonel Hurdlestone, laughing—"poverty."

“Ha! ha! ha!” reiterated Godfrey.

“Godfrey!” said Anthony, with much severity of look and tone: “how can such a lamentable instance of human weakness (madness, I might say) awaken your mirth?”

“Is it not enough to make one laugh, when an old fellow, rich enough to pay the National Debt, refuses to provide for his only son, and suffers him to live upon the *charity* of a brother?”

This unexpected though oft-repeated insult was too much for Anthony to bear at such a moment, and in the presence of the woman he loved. The proud flash of his dark eye told how deeply his gentle nature was moved. His indignation did not escape the watchful eye of Juliet; but he mastered his passion, and answered his cousin in a calm low voice.

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“Godfrey, I understand you. You need say no more on that subject. You know how painfully alive I am to the obligations I owe to my uncle, and it is ungenerous to take such an opportunity of reminding me of them. The debt, I hope, will one day be repaid.”

He rose to take leave. A pleading look from Juliet made him abandon his intention. “Sit down,” said Juliet, in a persuasive voice, “I am sure your cousin meant no offence. Delicacy of mind,” she added, in a very low tone, meant only for his ear, “is not always an inherent quality; we should pity and forgive those who are destitute of it.”

“I will do any thing to please you,” returned Anthony; and Godfrey, pale with disappointed malice, saw him resume his seat.

“I have provided a little treat of strawberries and cream,” continued Juliet; “they are the first of the season, and were presented to me this morning by that strangely-interesting girl, Mary Mathews. How I regret that her father’s injudicious method of bringing her up should so completely have spoiled a girl whom Nature formed to be an ornament to her humble station.”

“Mary is a beautiful girl,” said Anthony, “and has a mind of no ordinary cast. Her failings are the result of the peculiar circumstances in which she has been placed. With such a kind monitress as Miss Whitmore to counsel her, I feel assured that she might soon be persuaded to forsake her masculine employments, and feel a relish for more feminine pursuits.”

He spoke with much earnestness, until perceiving that Juliet regarded him with a peculiarly searching glance, he colored, hesitated, became embarrassed, and, finally, stopped speaking.

“When I first saw Mary Mathews, some months ago,” said Juliet, “she was very pretty, and as blithe as a bird; I used to envy the exuberance of her animal spirits, whenever I passed her little garden, and heard her singing. For the last few weeks, a melancholy change has taken place in the poor girl’s appearance, which gives me pain to witness. Her cheek has lost its bloom; her step its elasticity; her dress is neglected; and the garden in which she worked and sang so merrily, and in which she took so much delight, is overrun with weeds. Her whole appearance indicates the most poignant grief. When I questioned her to-day upon the subject, she answered me with a burst of tears—tears, which seem so unnatural for one of her disposition to shed. Perhaps, Mr. Anthony,” she continued, with an air of increasing interest, “you can tell me something of the history of this young girl—as she is one of your uncle’s tenants—which may lead me to discover the cause of her grief?”

Before Anthony could reply to this somewhat embarrassing question, he was called upon by his uncle, who was playing chess with the old Captain, to decide some

important problem in the game; and Godfrey, who had been a painfully observant listener to their conversation, glided into his vacant seat.

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“I wish, Miss Whitmore, that I could satisfactorily answer all your generous inquiries with regard to Mary Mathews. But I know and hear so little of the gossip of the village, and with the poor girl’s private history I am totally unacquainted—nay, the girl herself is to me a perfect stranger. No person is better able to give you the information you require than my cousin Anthony; he knows Mary well. In spite of my father’s prohibitions, she was always a chosen playfellow of his. He professes a great admiration for this beautiful peasant, and takes a deep interest in all that concerns her.”

Why did Juliet’s cheek at that moment grow so very pale? Why did she sigh so deeply, and suddenly drop a conversation which she had commenced with such an apparent concern for the person who had formed the subject of it? Love may have its joys, but oh, how painfully are they contrasted with its doubts and fears! She had suffered the serpent of jealousy to coil around her heart, and for the first time felt its envenomed sting. When Anthony returned to his seat he found his fair companion unusually cold and reserved. A few minutes after, she complained of sudden indisposition, and left the room, and she did not return that evening.

That night, Juliet wept herself to sleep. “Is it not evident,” she said to herself, “that this poor Mary is in love with Anthony Hurdlestone, and can I be base enough to add another pang to a heart already deeply wounded, by endeavoring to gain his affections? No. I will from this hour banish him from my thoughts, and never make him the subject of these waking dreams again.”

But alas! for good resolutions. She found the task more difficult than she had imagined. She could not obliterate the image stamped by the power of love upon her heart. Like the lion, she struggled in the net, without the aid of the friendly mouse to set her free. She wished that she had never seen him—had never heard the rich tones of his mellow voice, or suffered the glance of his dark serious eyes to penetrate to her soul. Ah! Juliet, well mayest thou toss to and fro in thy troubled slumbers; thy lover is more miserable than thou, for he *cannot sleep*. Indignant at the insult he had received in so unprovoked a manner from his ungenerous cousin, and at war with himself, Anthony Hurdlestone paced his chamber during the greater part of the night—striking his breast against the fetters that bound him, and striving in vain to be free. The very idea, that he was the son of the miser—that he must blush for his father whenever his name was mentioned, was not the least of his annoyances.

Was it possible that a girl of Juliet Whitmore’s poetic temperament could love the son of such a man? and as he pressed his hands against his aching brow, and asked himself the question, he wished that he had been the son of the poorest peasant upon the rich man’s vast estates. Anthony did not appear at the breakfast-table, and when he did leave his chamber and joined the family party at dinner, he met Godfrey, who had just returned from Captain Whitmore’s, his handsome countenance glowing with health and pleasure.

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“Why, Godfrey, my boy!” cried the Colonel, regarding him with parental pride, “What have you been doing with yourself all the morning?”

“Gardening with the jolly old tar, Captain Whitmore; quizzing the old witch, his sister; and making love to his charming daughter. Upon my word, sir, she is a delightful creature, and sings and plays divinely! Her personal charms I might have withstood, but her voice has taken me by surprise. You know that I was always a worshipper of sweet sounds; and this little girl kept her divine gift so entirely to herself, that it was by mere chance that I found out that she could sing. She was a little annoyed too by the discovery. I came in upon her unawares, and surprised her in the very act. She gave herself no affected airs, but when I requested it, not only concluded the song she was singing, but sang many others, in which I was able to accompany her. The old Captain has insisted upon my bringing my flute over, that I may accompany his Juliet upon the piano. He could not have done me a greater kindness, and I have no doubt that we shall get on delightfully together.”

“This is hardly right, Godfrey,” said his father, “you promised Anthony to start fair in attempting to win the good opinion of Miss Whitmore, and now you are trying to throw him altogether into the back-ground.”

“Ah, my dear sir, that was all very well in theory, but I found myself unable to reduce it to practice. I tell you, Anthony, that I am over head and ears in love with Miss Whitmore, and if you wish to die a natural death, you must not attempt to rival me with the lady.”

“And poor Mary—what will become of her?”

Godfrey flashed an angry glance at his cousin.

“How can you name that *peasant* in the same breath with Miss Whitmore?”

“A few days ago, Godfrey, you preferred the simple graces of the country girl to the refined lady.”

“My taste is improving, you see,” said Godfrey, filling his glass to the brim. “And here—-in the sparkling juice of the grape, let all remembrance of my boyish love be drowned.”

Anthony sighed, and sank into a fit of abstraction, while Colonel Hurdlestone joined his son in a bumper to the health of the lady.

In spite of Godfrey’s avowal, Anthony could not bring himself to regard Juliet Whitmore with indifference; nor did he consider it any breach of honor endeavoring to make himself agreeable in her eyes. His attentions, though less marked than his cousin’s, were of a more delicate and tender nature, appealing less to female vanity, and more directly to her heart and understanding; and there were moments when the young lover fancied that he was not an object of indifference. The more he saw of the enthusiastic

girl, with all her romantic propensities, the more strongly he became attached to her. Her sins of authorship were undictated by ambition or the mere love of fame; but were the joyous outpourings of an artless mind delighted in having discovered a method of conveying her thoughts to paper, and retaining in a tangible form those delightful visions that so often engrossed her fancy.

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She laid no claim to the title of a *Blue*—she had not the most remote idea of being considered a literary lady. She sang as the birds do in the bushes, for the mere pleasure of singing, and she was perfectly unconscious that others listened and admired her songs.

Independent of her love of music and poetry, she had many valuable mental and moral qualities. Not among the least of these was a deep sympathy in the wants and sufferings of the poor, which she always endeavored to alleviate to the utmost of her power. The selfish fear of infection never deterred her from visiting the abodes of her poor neighbors—administering to their comfort when sick, and not unfrequently watching beside the pillow of the dying. In the performance of these acts of charity, she was greatly encouraged and assisted by her worthy father.

When aunt Dorothy, in her cold egotism, raved about her niece endangering her life, and the lives of those around her, by going to infected houses, the Captain's general answer was—"Let the child alone, Dorothy; a good angel watches over her—God will take care of his own."

"So you said of her mother, Captain Whitmore, yet she lost her life by obstinately persisting in what she was pleased to call *her duty*."

"If the good ship sunk while endeavoring to save the drowning crew of another," said the poor Captain, wiping the dew from his spectacles, "she went down in a good cause, and a blessing has descended from above upon her child."

One day, when Anthony had been remonstrating with Juliet for incurring so much danger while visiting the poor during a period of epidemic sickness, she replied, with her usual frankness,

"This from you, Mr. Anthony, who have devoted yourself to be an instructor of the poor, a friend of the friendless, a minister of Christ!—how can I better employ my time than in striving to alleviate the sorrows that I cannot cure? To tell you the truth, I cannot yield more to pleasure without spoiling my heart. It is not that I am averse to innocent amusements, for no person enjoys them more. But were I constantly to gratify my own selfish inclinations, I should soon lose my peace of mind, that dew of the soul, which is so soon absorbed in the heated atmosphere of the world."

"If such devotion is what the worldly term enthusiasm, may its blessed inspiration ever continue to influence your actions!"

"Enthusiasm!" repeated the girl. "Oh that I could convey to you in words what I feel to be the true definition of that much abused term. Enthusiasm is the eternal struggling of our immortal against our mortal nature, which expands the wings of the soul towards its native heaven. Enthusiasm! Can anything great or good be achieved without it? Can a

man become a poet, painter, orator, patriot, warrior, or lover, without enthusiasm? Can he become a Christian without it? In man's struggles to obtain fame, enthusiasm is a virtue. In a holy cause it is termed madness. Oh, thou divine Author of the human soul, evermore grant me the inspiration of this immortal spirit!"

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They were standing together in the balcony. The beams of the summer moon rested upon the upturned brow of the young enthusiast, and filled her eyes with a holy fire, and the words of love that had trembled upon Anthony's lips were dismissed from his thoughts as light and vain. She looked too pure to address to her, at such a moment, the wild outpourings of human passion.

Godfrey's flute sounded beneath the balcony. He played one of Juliet's favorite songs. She turned to her lover and said, with a lively air, "Is not the musician an enthusiast—is not the language in which he breathes his soul the poetry of sound?"

"Then what is love?" and Anthony tried to detain the small, white hand she had placed upon his arm.

"I dare not attempt to analyse it;" and Juliet blushed deeply as she spoke. "Beautiful when worshipped at a distance, it becomes too much the necessity of our nature when brought too near. Oh, if it would never bend its wings to earth, and ever speak in the language of music and poetry, this world would be too dark for so heavenly a visitant, and we should long for death to unclose the portals of the skies."

"Still, dearest Juliet, much quiet happiness may be realized on earth."

"But think of its duration—how short—what sorrows are crowded into the shortest life! To love, and to lose the beloved—how dreadful! My mother—my angel mother—at her death, my heart became a funeral urn, in which all sad and holy memories were enshrined. Oh, 'tis a fearful thing to love and lose! Better far to keep the heart fancy-free, than to find it the grave of hope."

"And will you never consent to love, Juliet?"

"Can you teach me how to resist its power?" said Juliet, with simplicity. "We love against our own will; we call reason to our aid, and reason laughs at us. We strive to forget; but memory, like hope, though it cheats us, will not in turn be cheated; one holds the keys of the future, the other unlocks the treasures of the past. When we cease to hope, memory may cease to recall what were once the offsprings of hope. Both accompany us through life, and will, I believe, survive the grave."

"And will you allow me, Juliet, to entertain the blessed hope—?"

At this moment the lovers were interrupted by the eternal old pest, as Godfrey very unceremoniously called Miss Dorothy.

"Really, Miss Whitmore, I wonder at your standing out here, in the damp night air, without your shawl and bonnet, and the dew falling so fast. I wish you would learn a little more prudence; it would save me a great deal of trouble."

“Alas,” whispered Juliet, as Anthony led her back into the drawing-room, “how quickly the vulgarity of common-place banishes the beauty of the ideal!”

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The intimacy of the two families now became a matter of daily occurrence. Captain Whitmore who had always coveted a son of his own, was delighted with the society of the handsome intelligent young men. They were fine lads! very fine lads! He really did not know which to prefer. Juliet's choice would decide his, for the old man soon discovered that his daughter was the great attraction that drew the young men to the Lodge. Perhaps, had he been questioned closely on the subject, the old veteran would have acknowledged that he preferred Godfrey. He possessed more life and spirit than his quiet cousin; had more wit; was more lively and amusing. He loved hunting and fishing; played well at chess and draughts; and sang a good song. His face was always smiling and joyous; his brow never wore the cloud of care, the pensive earnest expression of refined thought which was so apparent in his cousin. Godfrey made the room glad with his gay hearty laugh. He was the life and soul of the convivial board, and prince of good fellows. A woman must be happy with such a handsome good-natured husband, and the Captain hoped that his dear Julee would be the wife of his favorite.

Hearts understood hearts better. Godfrey Hurdlestone was not the man who could make Juliet Whitmore happy. There existed no sympathy between them. The one was all soul, the other a mere animal in the fullest sense of the word; living but for animal enjoyment, and unable to comprehend the refined taste and exquisite sensibilities that belong to higher natures. Yet he loved music, had a fine ear and a fine voice, and exercised both with considerable skill. Here Juliet met him on equal terms; they played and sang together, and whilst so employed, and only drinking in sweet sounds, rendered doubly delicious when accompanied by harmonious words, Juliet forgot the something, she could not tell what, that made her feel such a deep aversion to the handsome musician.

"If my flute could but speak the language of my heart, how quickly, Miss Whitmore, would it breathe into your ear the tender tale which the musician wants courage to declare!"

"Ah," returned Juliet quickly, "such notes would only produce discord. Perfect harmony must exist before we can form a union of sweet sounds. Similarity of mind can alone produce reciprocity of affection. Godfrey Hurdlestone, there is no real sympathy between us—nature never formed us for each other."

"These are cruel words. I will not destroy hope by believing them true. We both love music passionately; here is at least one sympathy in common. To love you has become so essential to my happiness that I cannot think that you can be wholly insensible to my passion."

"You deceive yourself, Godfrey Hurdlestone. The moth is attracted to the candle, but the union produces misery and death to the unfortunate insect. Mere admiration is not love. The novelty wears off; the soul is sated with the idol it worshipped, and its former

homage sinks into contempt. You seek the outward and palpable. I seek that which is unseen and true. But let us go to my father, he is fishing, and the evening is growing cold. If he stays out much longer in the damp meadow, he will be raving with the rheumatism."

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“Your worthy father would not frown upon my suit.”

“Perhaps not. But he would never urge me to encourage a suitor whom I could not love. I am very young, Mr. Godfrey, too young to enter into any serious engagements. I esteem you and your cousin, but if you persist in talking to me in this strain, it will destroy our friendship. If you really feel any regard for me, never wound my feelings by speaking to me on this subject again.”

As Juliet ran forward to meet her father, she felt like a bird escaped out of the snare of the fowler, while Godfrey, humbled and mortified, muttered to himself, “The deuce take these very clever girls; they lecture us like parsons, and talk like books.”

“Why, Julee, love, how you have painted your cheeks,” cried the delighted old man, catching her in his arms, and imprinting a very audible kiss upon her white forehead. “What has Mr. Godfrey been saying to you?”

“Miss Juliet will not listen to anything that I can say to her,” said Godfrey gloomily.

“Pshaw!” returned the old man. “A lover must look out for squalls; his bark is seldom destined to sail upon a smooth sea. If she will not go ahead against wind and tide, you must try her upon another tack.”

He turned to Juliet, and found her in tears.

CHAPTER X.

Would that the dewy turf were spread
O’er this frail form and aching head;
That this torn heart and tortured brain
Would never wake to grief again.—S.M.

When Anthony entered the study next morning, he found his cousin traversing the floor in great agitation.

“Anthony, you are just the person I wanted to see. My father is, I fear, a ruined man.”

Anthony recoiled some steps.

“It is but too true. I have been talking to Johnstone, the steward. The account that he gives of our affairs is most discouraging. My father, it seems, has been living beyond his income for some years. The estates have all been heavily mortgaged to supply the wants of the passing hour, while no provision has been made for the future by their improvident possessor. Creditors are clamorous for their money, and there is no money to answer their demands. Mr. Haydin, the principal mortgagee, threatens to foreclose

with my father, if the interest, which has been due upon the mortgage for some years, is not instantly forthcoming. In this desperate exigency I can only think of two expedients, both of which depend entirely upon you."

Anthony had never questioned the state of his uncle's affairs. He had deemed him rich, and this distressing intelligence fell upon him with stunning violence. He begged Godfrey to explain in what manner he could render his uncle the least assistance.

"It is not merely of my father I speak; the service is to us both, but it needs some prefacing."

Then stepping up to the astonished Anthony, he said in a quick abrupt manner—

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“Do you love Miss Whitmore?”

“You have taken me by surprise, Godfrey. It is a question which, at this moment, I can scarcely answer.”

“If your feelings towards her are of such an indefinite character, it will require no great mental effort to resign her. To me she is an object of passionate regard. A marriage with Miss Whitmore would render me the happiest of men, and retrieve the fallen fortunes of my house. Nor do I think, if you were absent, that she would long remain indifferent to my suit. But if you continue to persevere in trying to win her affections you will drive me mad.”

Godfrey spoke with vehemence. Anthony remained silent, lost in profound thought. Godfrey went up to him and grasped him firmly by the hand. “Prove your love and gratitude to my father, Anthony, by an act of friendship to his son.”

“God knows that I am painfully alive to the many obligations I owe to him, Godfrey; but you require of me a sacrifice I am unable to grant.”

“Have you made an offer to Miss Whitmore? and has she accepted you?”

“Neither the one nor the other. Have you?”

“I spoke to her on the subject yesterday.”

“Well,” said Anthony, turning very pale. “Did she reject your suit?”

“She did not. She talked of her youth, and made some excuse to go to her father. But she showed no indications of displeasure. From her manner, I had all to hope, and little to fear. Few women, especially a young girl of seventeen, can be won without a little wooing. I have no doubt of ultimately winning her regard.”

“Can you really be in earnest?”

“Do you doubt my word? Do you think the *miser’s heir* more likely to win the affections of the romantic child of genius than the last scion of a ruined man?”

“How have I suffered myself to be cheated and betrayed by my own vanity!” said Anthony, thoughtfully. “Alas, for poor human nature, if this statement be true!”

“You still question my words, Anthony! Upon my honor, what I have said is strictly true; nor would it be honorable in you, after what I have advanced, to press your suit upon the lady.”

“If you asked me to resign the wealth you prize so highly, Godfrey, I could do it. Nay, even my life itself would be a far less sacrifice than the idea of giving up the only woman I ever loved. Ask anything of me but that, for I cannot do it!”

“Then you will compel me to do this,” said Godfrey, taking from his breast a loaded pistol, and aiming it at his own head.

“Madman!” cried Anthony, striking the weapon from his hand; “what would you do?”

“Prove your gratitude to me and mine,” said Godfrey with a bitter laugh. “Your father is rich, mine is poor, and has been made so by his generosity to others!”

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That horrid taunt! ah, how it stung his proud sensitive cousin to the heart! Startled and alarmed at Godfrey's demeanor, he was yet very doubtful of the truth of his statements, feared that he was but acting a part, until he saw the bright cheek of his companion turn pale, and the tears tremble in his eyes. Then, all the kindness he had received from his uncle, all the love he had cherished for him from his earliest years, all the affection which he had lavished upon his hot-headed cousin, united to subdue the flame of passion which for a few moments had burnt so fiercely in his breast. He recalled the solemn promise he had made to Algernon never to forsake his son, and, dreadful as the sacrifice was, which Godfrey now called upon him to make, the struggle was over, the victory over self already won.

"You shall never say, cousin Godfrey, that Anthony Hurdlestone knowingly destroyed your peace. I love Juliet Whitmore. I believe that she loves me. But, for my uncle's sake, I renounce my claim."

Joy brightened up the handsome face of Godfrey. He was not wholly insensible to his cousin's generous self-denial. He embraced him with warmth, and the idea that he had rendered Godfrey happy partly reconciled the martyr of gratitude to the sacrifice he had made.

"You spoke of two expedients which might avert the ruin which threatened my uncle. Your marriage with Juliet Whitmore rests upon no broader basis than a mere possibility. Name the second."

"In case of the worst, to apply to your father for the loan of two thousand pounds."

Anthony shook his head, and, without thinking a reply to such a wild proposition necessary, took up his hat, and tried to still the agitation of his mind by a stroll in the park.

Anthony tried to reason himself into the belief that, in giving up the object of his affections, he had achieved a very great and good action; but there was a painful void in his heart, which all his boasted philosophy failed to fill.

Unconsciously he took the path that led to the humble dwelling of Mary Mathews. As he drew near the hawthorn hedge that separated the little garden from the road, his attention was arrested by some one weeping passionately behind its almost impervious screen. He instantly recognised Mary in the mourner; and from a conversation that followed, he found that she was not alone.

"I could bear your reproaches," she said to her companion, "if he loved me—but he has ceased to think of me—to care for me—I never loved but him—I gave him all that I had in my power to bestow—and he has left me thus."

“Did he ever promise you marriage?” asked the deep voice of William Mathews.

“Oh yes! a thousand and a thousand times.”

“Then,” and he uttered a dreadful oath, “he shall keep his word, or my name is not William Mathews.”

“Ah! if he did but love me as he once loved me, I would not care. The shame would be joy, the disgrace happiness. The world is nothing to me—it may say what it likes—I would rather be his mistress than another man’s wife. But to be forsaken and trampled upon; to know that another with half my beauty, and with none of my love, is preferred before me; is more than my heart can bear.”

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“Does my father know your situation?”

“No, no, I would not have him know it for worlds. I dare not tell him; and you have promised me, William, not to reveal my secret. Though father constantly transgresses himself, men are so unjust about women that he would never forgive me. I would rather fling myself into that pond,” and she laughed hysterically, “than that he should know anything about it. Sometimes I think, brother, that it would be the best place for me to hide my shame.”

“Live, girl—live for revenge. Leave your gay paramour to me. I have been the ruin of many a better man.”

“I would rather die,” returned the girl, “than suffer any injury to befall him. He is my husband in the sight of Heaven, and I will cling to him to the last!”

“You are a fool, Mary! Till this moment I always thought you a clever girl, above such paltry weakness. When your name is coupled with infamy, and you find yourself an object of contempt to the villain who has betrayed you, I tell you that you will alter your opinion.”

“Alas! he despises me already,” sighed the unhappy girl, “and it is that which makes me feel so bad. When I think of it there comes over me just such a scorching heat as used to sear up my brain in the bad fever. The people said I was crazed, but I was not half so mad then as I am now.”

“Keep up your spirits, girl! I will compel him to make you his wife.”

“What good would that do? You could not make him love me. We should only be more miserable than we are at present. I wish—oh! how I wish I were dead!”

Here the conversation between the brother and sister was abruptly terminated by Godfrey’s spaniel, which had followed Anthony through the park, springing over the stile into the garden, and leaping into Mary’s lap. The poor girl was sitting on the bank beneath the shade of a large elm tree. She bent her head down, and returned with interest the affectionate caresses of the dog.

“It is Mr. Hurdlestone’s dog, William. Poor Fido, you love me still.”

“His master cannot be far off,” growled Mathews, jumping over the stile, and confronting Anthony.

The cousins were only partially known to him, and their great personal likeness made him mistake the one for the other.

A little ashamed of being caught in the act of listening to a conversation never meant for his ear, Anthony would have left the spot; but the menacing audacious air of the smuggler aroused his pride, and he turned upon him with a haughty and enquiring glance.

“I would speak a few words with you, mister!”

“As many as you please. But let me first inform you that I am not the person whom you seek.”

“Humph!” said the ruffian, with a sarcastic sneer, “that dodge won’t do. You might as well attempt to cheat the devil as deceive Bill Mathews. I know you too well. You and I have a heavy account to settle, and you shall know me better before we part. Take that—and that—and that—as an earnest of our further acquaintance.”

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And he struck Anthony several heavy blows with an oak cudgel he held in his hand.

Forced to retaliate in self-defence, Anthony closed with his gigantic opponent, and several blows had been given and received on either side, when the combatants were separated by a third person—this was no other than Captain Whitmore who, with his daughter, accidentally rode up to the spot.

“Mr. Anthony Hurdlestone engaged in such a disgraceful fray! Can I believe the evidence of my senses?”

“Not if you would judge truly, Captain Whitmore,” said Anthony, striving to keep a calm exterior, but still trembling with passion, while the most bitter and humiliating feelings agitated his breast.

“I was striving to revenge the wrongs done to an injured sister by a villain!” cried the enraged Mathews. “I appeal to you sir, as a man, a father, a brave British officer, if you would suffer a sister or a daughter to be trampled upon and betrayed without resenting the injury?”

“I am incapable of the crime laid to my charge by this man,” said Anthony, indignantly, when he saw the father and daughter exchange glances of astonishment and contempt. “Miss Whitmore, I entreat you not to give the least credit to this ruffian’s accusation. He has uttered a base falsehood!”

The only answer the tortured lover received was an indignant flash from the hitherto dove-like eyes of Juliet Whitmore. She reined back her horse, and turned her face proudly away from the imploring gaze of the distracted Anthony.

“I must—I will be heard!” he cried, seizing the reins of her horse, and forcibly detaining her. “I see, Miss Whitmore, that this foul calumny is believed by you and your father. I demand an explanation before you leave this spot. William Mathews has accused me of being a villain—the seducer of his sister: and I here tell him to his face that his accusation is a hideous slander! Call hither your sister, Mr. Mathews—let her determine the question: she knows that I am innocent. I shrink not from the most rigid investigation of my conduct.”

“Do as he bids you, Mr. Mathews,” said the Captain. “Call here your sister. I consider myself bound in justice to listen to Mr. Anthony Hurdlestone’s proposal.”

Juliet’s eyes involuntarily turned towards the garden gate; but her pale cheek flushed to crimson as it unclosed, and the unfortunate umpire, half led, half dragged forward by her brother, presented herself before them. Even Anthony’s presence of mind well nigh forsook him, as, with a start, he recognised his cousin’s unfortunate victim.

A few weeks had wrought a fearful change in the blooming and healthful appearance of the poor girl. She looked like a young sapling tree, on whose verdant head had fallen an incurable blight; an utter disregard of the opinions of others, or what the world would say of her, was manifested in her squalid appearance and total neglect of personal neatness. The pride of the girl's heart had vanished with her self-respect, and she stood before the strange group with a bold front and unbending brow; yet her eye wandered vacantly from face to face, as if perfectly unconscious of the real meaning of the scene.

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Anthony had appealed to Mary to vindicate his character from the foul aspersion cast upon him; but when she came he was so shocked by her appearance that he was unable to speak to her.

“Mary,” said her brother peremptorily, “is not this man your lover?”

Mary gazed upon Anthony sullenly, but returned no answer.

“Speak, Mary,” said Anthony, addressing her with a degree of compassionate tenderness. “Did you ever receive wrong or injury from me? Did I ever address you as a lover, betray, or leave you to shame? Your brother has accused me of all these crimes. Speak out, and tell the truth.”

Instead of answering his question in direct terms, the girl, who for the first time comprehended the degrading situation in which she was placed, and subdued by the kindness of Anthony’s look and manner, sprang towards him, and, following the reckless disposition which had led to her ruin, seized his hand and pressing it to her lips, exclaimed,

“Oh, Mr. Hurdlestone! This from you?”

“It is enough,” said Juliet, who had witnessed this extraordinary scene with an intensity of interest too great to be described; and, turning the head of her horse homewards, she rode off at full speed, murmuring through her fast-flowing tears, “What need have I of further evidence? Yes, he is guilty.”

“She is gone!” exclaimed Anthony, in an agony of despair. “She is gone, and believes me to be a villain!”

Whilst he stood rooted to the spot, Mathew approached, and whispered in his ear, “Your mean subterfuge has not saved you. We shall meet again.”

“I care not how soon,” returned Anthony, fiercely; “but why,” continued he, in a softer voice, “should I be angry with you? Man, you have mistaken your quarry—a matter of little moment to you, but a matter of life and death to me.”

“Death and hell!” exclaimed the ruffian, who at last began to suspect his error. “If you are not Godfrey Hurdlestone, you must be his ghost!”

“I am his cousin; I never wronged either you or yours; but you have done me an injury which you can never repair.”

“Well, hang me if that is not a good joke!” cried the smuggler, bursting into a coarse laugh, which quickened the steps of his retreating foe. “The devil had some mischief in store when he made those chaps so much alike. I would not wish my own brother to

resemble me so closely as all that, lest mayhap he should murder or steal, and the halter should fall on my neck instead of his."

CHAPTER XI.

Oh, human hearts are strangely cast,
  Time softens grief and pain;
Like reeds that shiver in the blast,
  They bend to rise again.—S.M.

"Come, Miss Whitmore, you must rouse yourself from this unwomanly grief. It is quite improper for a young lady of your rank and fortune to be shedding tears for the immoral conduct of a worthless young profligate."

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“Peace, Dorothy; don’t scold the poor child. You see her heart is nearly broken. It will do her good to cry. Come, my own darling, come to your old father’s arms, and never mind what your aunt says to you.”

“Really, Captain Whitmore, if you mean to encourage your daughter’s disrespectful conduct to me, the sooner we part the better.”

“Dolly, Dolly, have you no feeling for the poor child? Do hold that cruel tongue of yours. It never sounded so harsh and disagreeable to me before. Look up, my Julee, and kiss your old father.”

And Juliet made an effort to raise her head from her father’s bosom, and look in his face. The big tears weighed down her eyelids, and she sank back upon his shoulder, faintly murmuring, “And I thought him so good.”

“Yes,” said Miss Dorothy, whose temper was not at all softened by her brother’s reproof; “you never would believe me. You would follow your own headstrong fancy; and now you see the result of your folly. I often wondered to see you reading and flirting with that silent, down looking young man, while his frank, good-natured cousin was treated with contempt. I hope you will trust to my judgment another time.”

“Aunt, spare me these reproaches. If I have acted imprudently I am severely punished.”

“I am sure the poor child was not worse deceived than I have been,” said the Captain; “but the lad’s to be pitied; he comes of a bad breed. But rouse up, my Julee—show yourself a girl of spirit. Go to your own room; a little sleep will do you a world of good. To-morrow you will forget it all.”

“That poor girl!” said Juliet, and a shudder ran through her frame. “How can I forget her? Her pale face—her sunken eyes—her look of unutterable woe. Oh, she haunts me continually; and I—I—may have been the cause of all this misery. My head aches sadly. I will go to bed. I long to be alone.”

She embraced her father, and bade him good night, and curtseying to aunt Dorothy, for her heart was too sore to speak to her, she sought the silence and solitude of her own chamber.

Oh, what luxury it was to be alone—to know that no prying eyes looked upon her grief; no harsh voice, with unfeeling common-place, tore open the deep wounds of her aching heart, and made them bleed afresh!

“Oh, that I could think him innocent!” she said. “Yet I cannot wholly consider him guilty. He looked—oh, how sad and touching was that look! It spoke of sorrow, but it revealed no trait of remorse; but then, would Mary, by her strange conduct, have condemned a man whom she knew to be innocent? Alas! it must be so, and ’tis a crime to love him.”

She sank upon her knees, and buried her face in the coverlid of the bed, but no prayer rose to her lips—an utter prostration of soul was there, but the shrine of her God was dark and voiceless; the waves of human passion had flowed over it, and marred the purity of the accustomed offering. Hour after hour still found her on her knees, yet she could not form a single petition to the Divine Father. As Southey has beautifully expressed the same feelings in the finest of all his poems:

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"An agony of tears was all her soul could offer."

Midnight came; the moon had climbed high in the heavens. The family had retired for the night, and deep silence reigned through the house, when Juliet rose from her knees, and approaching the open casement, looked long and sadly into the serene, tranquil depths of the cloudless night.

Who ever gazed upon the face of the divine mother in vain? The spirit of peace brooded over the slumbering world—that holy calm which no passion of man can disturb—which falls with the same profound stillness round the turmoil of the battle-field, and the bed of death—which enfolds in its silent embrace the eternity of the past—the wide ocean of the present. How many streaming eyes had been raised to that cloudless moon!—how many hands had been lifted up in heart-felt prayer to those solemn star-gemmed heavens! What tales of bitter grief had been poured out to the majesty of night! The eyes were quenched in the darkness of the grave; the hands were dust; and the impassioned hearts that once breathed those plaintive notes of woe, where, oh where were they? The spirit that listened to the sorrows of their day had no revelation to make of their fate!

"And I, what am I, that I should repine and murmur against the decrees of Providence?" sighed Juliet. "The sorrows that I now endure have been felt by thousands who now feel no more. God, give me patience under every trial. In humble faith teach me resignation to Thy divine will."

With a sorrowful tranquillity of mind she turned from the window, struck a light, and prepared to undress, when her attention was arrested by a letter lying upon her dressing table. She instantly recognised the hand, and hastily breaking the seal, read with no small emotion the following lines

Say, dost thou think that I could be
False to myself and false to thee?
This broken heart and fever'd brain
May never wake to joy again.
Yet conscious innocence has given
A hope that triumphs o'er despair;
I trust my righteous cause to heaven,
And brace my tortured soul to bear
The worst that can on earth befall,
In losing thee—my life, my all!

The dove of promise to my ark,
The pole-star to my wandering bark,
The beautiful by love enshrined,
And worshipp'd with such fond excess;

Whose being with my being twined
  In one bright dream of happiness,
Not death itself can rend apart
The link that binds thee to my heart.

Spurn not the crush'd and wither'd flower;
There yet shall dawn a brighter hour,
When ev'ry tear you shed o'er this
Shall be repaid with tenfold bliss;
And hope's bright arch shall span the cloud
That wraps us in its envious shroud.
Then banish from thy breast for ever
  The cold, ungenerous thought of ill,
Falsehood awhile our hearts may sever,
  But injured worth must triumph still.

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Juliet did not for a moment doubt that Anthony Hurdlestone was the author of these lines, and involuntarily she pressed the paper to her lips. Realities are stern things, but Juliet could not now believe him guilty: and with all the romance of her nature, she was willing to hope against hope; and she retired to bed, comforted for her past sufferings, and as much in love with Anthony as ever.

While Juliet enjoyed a profound and tranquil sleep, her unfortunate lover was a prey to the most agonising doubts and fears. "Surely, surely, she cannot think me guilty," thought the devoted Anthony, as he tossed from side to side upon his restless bed. "She is too generous to condemn me without further evidence. Yet, why do I cling to a forlorn hope? Stronger minds than hers would believe appearances which speak so loudly against me. But why should I bear this brand of infamy? I will go to her in the morning and expose the real criminal."

This idea, entertained for a moment, was quickly abandoned. What, if he did expose his cousin's guilt, might not Godfrey deny the facts, and Mary, in order to shield her unprincipled lover, bear him out in his denial; and then his ingratitude to the father would be more conspicuously displayed in thus denouncing his son. No: for Algernon's sake he would bear the deep wrong, and leave to Heaven the vindication of his honor. He had made an appeal to her feelings; and youth, ever sanguine, fondly hoped that it had not been made in vain.

Another plan suggested itself to his disturbed mind. He would inform Godfrey of the miserable situation in which he was placed, and trust to his generosity to exonerate him from the false charge, which Mary, in her waywardness or madness, had fixed upon him. Judging his cousin's mind by his own, he felt that he was secure—that, however painful to Godfrey's self-love, he would never suffer him to bear the reproach of a crime committed by himself.

Confident of success, he rose by the dawn of day, and sought his cousin's apartment. After rapping several times at the door, his summons was answered by Godfrey in a grumbling tone, between sleeping and waking.

"I must see you, Godfrey," cried Anthony, impatiently shaking the door. "My errand brooks no delay."

"What the deuce do you want at this early hour?" said Godfrey with a heavy yawn. "Now do be quiet, Tony, and give a man time to pull his eyes open."

Again the door was violently shaken. Godfrey had fallen back into a deep sleep, and Anthony, in his eagerness to gain an audience, made noise enough to have roused the Seven Sleepers from their memorable nap. With a desperate effort Godfrey at length sprang from his bed, and unlocked the door, but, as the morning was chilly, he as quickly retreated to his warm nest, and buried his head in the blankets.

“Godfrey, do rouse yourself, and attend to me; I have something of great consequence to communicate, the recital of which cannot fail to grieve you, if you retain the least affection for me.”

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“Could you not wait until after breakfast?” and Godfrey forced himself into a sitting posture. “I was out late last night, and drank too much wine. I feel confoundedly stupid, and the uproar that you have been making for the last hour at the door has given me an awful headache. But what is the matter with you, Tony? You look like a spectre. Are you ill? or have you, like me, been too long over your cups?”

“You know I never drink, Godfrey, nor have I any bodily ailment; but in truth my mind is ill at ease. I am sick at heart, and you, you, cousin, are the cause of my present sufferings.”

“Ah! the old love story. You repent of giving up Juliet, and want me to release you from your promise. I am not such a romantic fool! I never give up an advantage once gained, and am as miserly of opportunities as your father is of his cash. But speak out Anthony,” he continued, seeing his cousin turn pale, “I should like to hear what dreadful charge you have to bring against me.”

“You shall hear, Godfrey, if I have strength and courage to tell you.” Anthony sat down on an easy chair by the side of the bed, and after a long pause, in which he tried to compose his agitated feelings, he informed his cousin of the conversation that he had overheard between Mary and her brother, and what had subsequently happened. Godfrey listened with intense interest until he came to that part of the narrative where Mary, in her wandering mood, had confounded him with Anthony; and there, at the very circumstance which had occasioned his cousin such acute anguish, and when he expected from him the deepest sympathy, how were his feelings shocked as, throwing himself back upon his pillow, Godfrey burst into a loud fit of laughter, exclaiming in a jocular and triumphant tone, “By Jove, Anthony, but you are an unlucky dog!”

This was too much for the excited state of mind under which Anthony had been laboring for some hours, and with a stifled groan he fell across the bed in a fit. Godfrey alarmed in his turn, checked his indecent mirth, and dressing himself as quickly as he could, roused up his valet to run for the surgeon. The fresh air and the loss of a little blood soon restored the unfortunate young man to his senses and to a deep consciousness of his cousin’s ungentlemanly and base conduct.

Instead of being sorry for this unfortunate mistake, Godfrey secretly congratulated himself upon his singular good fortune, and laughed at the strange accident that had miraculously transferred the shame of his own guilt to his cousin.

“This will destroy for ever what little influence he possessed with Juliet, and will close the Captain’s doors against him. If I do not improve my present advantage, may I die a poor dependent upon the bounty of a Hurdlestone!”

Again he laughed, and strode onward to the Lodge, humming a gay tune, and talking and whistling alternately to his dog.

He found Miss Dorothy and her niece at work; the latter as pale as marble, the tears still lingering in the long dark lashes that veiled her sad and downcast eyes. The Captain was rocking to and fro in an easy chair, smoking his pipe and glancing first towards his daughter, and then at her starch prim-looking aunt, with no very complaisant expression.

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“By Jove, Dorothy! if you continue to torment that poor child with your eternal sermons, you will compel me to send you from the house.”

“A very fitting return for all my services,” whimpered Miss Dorothy; “for all the love and care I have bestowed upon you and your ungrateful daughter! Send *me* from the house—turn *me* out of doors! *Me*, at my time of life;” using that for argument’s sake which, if addressed to her by another, would have been refuted with indignation; “to send *me* forth into the world, homeless and friendless, to seek my living among strangers! Brother, brother, have you the heart to address this to me?”

“Well, perhaps I was wrong, Dolly,” replied the kind-hearted sailor, repenting of his sudden burst of passion; “but you do so provoke me by your ill-humor, your eternal contradiction, and your old-maidish ways, that it is impossible for a man always to keep his temper. It’s a hard thing for a fellow’s wife to have the command of the ship, but it seems deucedly unnatural for him to be ruled by a sister.”

“Is it not enough, brother, to make a virtuous woman angry, when she hears the girl, whose morals she has fostered with such care, defending a wicked profligate wretch like Anthony Hurdlestone?”

“Excuse me, aunt, I did not defend his conduct, supposing him guilty,” said Juliet, with quiet dignity; “for if that be really the case such conduct is indefensible. I only hoped that we had been mistaken.”

“Pshaw, girl! You are too credulous,” said her father. “I have no doubt of his guilt. But here is Mr. Godfrey; we may learn the truth from him.”

With an air of the deepest concern, Godfrey listened to the Captain’s indignant recital of the scene he had witnessed in the park, and with his uncle Mark’s duplicity (only Godfrey was a laughing villain, always the most dangerous sinner of the two) he affected to commiserate the folly and weakness of his cousin, in suffering himself to be entangled by an artful girl.

“He is a strange lad, a very strange lad, Captain Whitmore. I have known him from a child, but I don’t know what to make of him. His father is a bad man, and it would be strange if he did not inherit some of his propensities.”

“Weaknesses of this nature were not among his father’s faults,” said the Captain. “I must confess that I liked the young man, and he had, I am told, a very amiable and beautiful mother.”

“I have heard my father say so—but she was his first love, and love is always blind. I should think very little of the moral worth of a woman who would jilt such a man as my father, to marry a selfish miserly wretch like Mark Hurdlestone for his money.”

“You are right, Mr. Hurdlestone,” said Juliet. “Such a woman was unworthy of your father. Poor Anthony, he has been very unfortunate in his parents; yet I hoped of him better things.”

“You think, Mr. Godfrey, that there is no doubt of his guilt?” asked Miss Dorothy.

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“The girl must know best,” returned Godfrey, evading, whilst at the same moment he confirmed the question. “He always admired her from a boy. We have had many disputes, nay downright quarrels, about her beauty. She was never a great favorite of mine. I admire gentle, not man-like women.”

“He is a scoundrel!” cried the Captain, throwing down his pipe with a sound that made his daughter start. “He shall never darken my doors again, and so you may tell him, Mr. Godfrey, from me!”

“This is a severe sentence, but he deserves it!” said Godfrey. “I fear my father will one day repent that he ever fostered this viper in his bosom. Yet, strange to say, he always preferred him to me. Report says that there is a stronger tie between them, but this is a base slander upon the generous nature of my father. He loved Anthony’s mother better than he did mine; and he loves her son better than he does me.”

“Poor lad,” said the Captain, warmly grasping his hand, “You have been unkindly treated among them; and you shall always find a friend and a father in me.”

Godfrey was a little ashamed of his duplicity, and would gladly, if possible, have recalled that disgraceful scene; but having so far committed himself, he no longer regarded the consequences; but he determined to bear it out with the most hardened effrontery.

Whilst the victim of his diabolical art was writhing upon a sick bed under the most acute mental and bodily pain, the author of his suffering was enjoying the most flattering demonstrations of regard, which were lavishly bestowed upon him by the inhabitants of the Lodge. But the vengeance of Heaven never sleeps, and though the stratagems of wicked men may for a time prove successful, the end generally proves the truth of the apostle’s awful denunciation: “*The wages of sin is death*.”

CHAPTER XII.

> Art thou a father? did the generous tide
> Of warm parental love e’er fill thy veins,
> And bid thee feel an interest in thy kind?
> Did the pulsation of that icy heart
> Quicken and vibrate to some gentle name,
> Breathed in secret at its sacred shrine?—S.M.

Short was the time allowed to Anthony Hurdlestone to brood over his wrongs. His uncle’s affairs had reached a crisis, and ruin stared him in the face. Algernon Hurdlestone had ever been the most imprudent of men; and under the fallacious hope of redeeming his fortune, he had, unknown to his son and nephew, during his frequent trips to London, irretrievably involved himself by gambling to a large extent. This false

step completed what his reckless profusion had already begun. He found himself always on the losing side, but the indulgence of this fatal propensity had become a passion, the excitement necessary to his existence. The management of his estates had always been entrusted entirely to a steward, who, as his master's fortunes declined, was rapidly rising in wealth and consequence. Algernon never troubled himself to enquire into the real state of his finances, whilst Johnstone continued to furnish him with money to gratify all the whims and wants of the passing moment.

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The embarrassed state of the property was unknown to his young relatives, who deemed his treasures, like those of the celebrated Abulcasem, inexhaustible. Godfrey, it is true, had latterly received some hints from Johnstone how matters stood, but his mind was so wholly occupied with his pursuit of Juliet Whitmore, and the unpleasant predicament in which he was placed by his unfortunate connexion with Mary Mathews, that he had banished the disagreeable subject from his thoughts.

The storm which had been long gathering at length burst. Algernon was arrested, his property seized by the sheriff, himself removed to the jail of the county town of ——. Thither Anthony followed him, anxious to alleviate by his presence the deep dejection into which his Uncle had fallen, and to offer that heartfelt sympathy so precious to the wounded pride of the sufferer.

The gay and joyous disposition of Algernon Hurdlestone yielded to the pressure of misfortune. His mind bowed to the heavy stroke, and he gave himself up to misery. His numerous creditors assailed him on all sides with their harassing importunities; and in his dire distress he applied to his rich brother, and, humbly for him, entreated a temporary loan of two thousand pounds until his affairs could be adjusted, and the property sold. This application, as might have been expected, was insultingly rejected on the part of the miser.

Rendered desperate by his situation, Algernon made a second attempt, and pleaded the expense he had been at in bringing up and educating his son, and demanded a moderate remuneration for the same. To this ill-judged application, Mark Hurdlestone returned for answer, “That he had not forced his son upon his protection; that Algernon had pleased himself in adopting the boy; that he had warned him of the consequences when he took that extraordinary step; and that he must now abide by the result; that he, Algernon, had wasted his substance, like the prodigal of old, in riotous living, but that he, Mark, knew better the value of money, and how to take care of it.”

“Your father, Tony, is a mean pitiful scoundrel!” cried the heart-broken Algernon, crushing the unfeeling letter in his hand, and flinging it with violence from him. “But I deserved to be treated with contempt, when I could so far forget myself as to make an application to him! Thirty years ago, I should have deemed begging my bread from door to door an act of less degradation. But, Tony, time changes us all. Misfortune makes the proudest neck bow beneath the yoke. My spirit is subdued, Tony, my heart crushed, my pride gone. I am not what I was, my dear boy. It is too late to recall the past. But I can see too late the errors of my conduct. I have acted cruelly and selfishly to poor Godfrey, and squandered in folly the property his mother brought me, and which should have made him rich. And you, my dear Anthony, this blow will deprive you of a father, aye, and of one that loved you too. I would rather share a kennel with my dogs, than become an inmate of the home which now awaits you.”

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“Home!” sighed the youth. “The wide world is my home, the suffering children of humanity my lawful kinsmen.”

Seeing his uncle’s lip quiver, he took his hand and affectionately pressed it between his own, while the tears he could not repress fell freely from his eyes. “Father of my heart! would that in this hour of your adversity I could repay to you all your past kindness. But cheer up, something may yet be done. My legitimate father has never seen me as a man. I will go to him. I will plead with him on your behalf, until nature asserts her rights, and the streams of hidden affection, so long pent up in his iron heart, overflow and burst asunder these bars of adamant. Uncle, I will go to him this very day, and may God grant me success!”

“It is in vain, Anthony. Avarice owns no heart, has no natural affections. You may go, but it is only to mortify your pride, agonize your feelings, and harden your kind nature against the whole world, without producing any ultimate benefit to me.”

“It is a trial, uncle, but I will not spare myself. Duty demands the attempt, and successful or unsuccessful, it shall be made.”

He strode towards the door. Algernon called him back. “Do not stay long, Tony. I feel ill and low spirited. Godfrey surely does not know that I am in this accursed place. Perhaps he is ashamed to visit me here. Poor lad, poor lad! I have ruined his prospects in life by my extravagance, but I never thought that it would come to this. If you see him on your way, Anthony, tell him (here his voice faltered), tell him, that his poor old father pines to see him, that his absence is worse than imprisonment—than death itself. I have many faults, but I love him only too well.”

This was more than Anthony could bear, and he sprang out of the room.

With a heart overflowing with generous emotions, and deeply sympathising in his uncle’s misfortunes, he mounted a horse which he had borrowed of a friend in the neighborhood, and took the road that led to his father’s mansion; that father who had abandoned him, while yet a tender boy, to the care of another, and whom he had never met since the memorable hour in which they parted.

Oak Hall was situated about thirty miles from Norgood Park, and it was near sunset when Anthony caught the first glimpse of the picturesque church of Ashton among the trees. With mingled feelings of pride, shame, and bitterness he rode past the venerable mansion of his ancestors, and alighted at the door of the sordid hovel that its miserable possessor had chosen for a home.

The cottage in many places had fallen into decay, and admitted through countless crevices the wind and rain. A broken chair, a three-legged stool, and the shattered

remains of an oak table, deficient of one of its supporters, but propped up with bricks, comprised the whole furniture of the wretched apartment.

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The door was a-jar that led into an interior room that served for a dormitory. Two old soiled mattresses, in which the straw had not been changed for years, thrown carelessly upon the floor, were the sole garniture of this execrable chamber. Anthony glanced around with feelings of an uncontrollable disgust, and all his boyish antipathy to the place returned. The lapse of nearly twenty years had not improved the aspect of his old prison-house, and he was now more capable of appreciating its revolting features. The harsh words, and still harsher blows and curses, which he had been wont to receive from the miser and his sordid associate, Grenard Pike, came up in his heart, and, in spite of his better nature, steeled that heart against his ungracious parent.

The entrance of Mark Hurdlestone, whose high stern features, once seen, could never be forgotten, roused Anthony from his train of gloomy recollections, and called back his thoughts to the unpleasant business that brought him there.

Mark did not at the first glance recognise his son in the tall elegantly-dressed young man before him; and he growled out, “Who are you, sir, and what do you want?”

“Mr. Hurdlestone,” said Anthony respectfully, “I am your son.”

The old man sat down in the chair. A dark cloud came over his brow, as if he already suspected the nature of his son’s mission, and he knitted his straight bushy eyebrows so closely together that his small fiery dark eyes gleamed like sparks from beneath the gloomy shade.

“My son; yes, yes. I’ve heard say that ’tis a wise son that knows his own father. It must be a very wise father who could instinctively know his own son. Certainly, I should never have recognised mine in the gay magpie before me. But sit down, young sir, and tell me what brought you here. Money, I suppose; money, the everlasting want that the extravagant sons of pleasure strive to extort from the provident, who lay up during the harvest of life a provision for the winter of age. If such be your errand, young man, your time is wasted here. Anthony Hurdlestone, I have nothing to give.”

“Not even affection it would appear, to an only son.”

“I owe you none.”

“In what manner have I forfeited my natural claim upon your heart?”

“By transferring the duty and affection which you owed to me to another. Go to him who has pampered your appetites, clothed you with soft raiment, and brought you up daintily to lead the idle life of a gentleman. I disown all relationship with a useless butterfly.”

Anthony’s cheek reddened with indignation. “It was not upon my own account I sought you, sir. From my infancy I have been a neglected and forsaken child, for whom you never showed the least parental regard. Hard blows and harder words were the only

marks of fatherly regard that Anthony Hurdlestone ever received at your hands. To hear you curse me, when, starving with cold and hunger,

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I have asked you for a morsel of bread—to hear you wish me dead, and to see you watch me with hungry eager eyes, as if in my wasted meagre countenance you wished to find a prophetic answer—were sights and sounds of every-day occurrence. Could such conduct as this beget love in your wretched child? Yet, God knows!" exclaimed the young man, clasping his hands forcibly together, while tears started to his eyes—-"God knows how earnestly I have prayed to love you, to forget and forgive these unnatural injuries, which have cast the shadow of care over the bright morning of youth, and made the world and all that it contains a wilderness of woe to my blighted heart."

The old man regarded him with a sullen scowl; but whatever were his feelings (and that he did feel the whole truth of the young man's passionate appeal, the restless motion of his foot and hand sufficiently indicated) he returned no answer; and Anthony emboldened by despair, and finding a relief in giving utterance to the long pent-up feelings which for years had corroded his breast, continued,

"I rightly concluded that I should be considered by you, Mr. Hurdlestone, an unwelcome visitor. Hateful to the sight of the injurer is the person of the injured, and I stand before you a living reproach, an awful witness both here and hereafter at the throne of God of what you ought to have been, and what you have neglected to be—a father to your motherless child. But let that pass. I am in the hands of One who is the protector of the innocent, and in His righteous hands I leave my cause. Your brother, sir, who has been a father to me, is in prison. His heart, sorely pressed by his painful situation, droops to the grave. I came to see if you, out of your abundance, are willing to save him, Father, let your old grudge be forgotten. Let the child of your poor lost Elinor be the means of reconciling you to each other. Cease to remember him as a rival: behold him only in the light of a brother—of that twin brother who shared your cradle—of a friend whom you have deeply injured—a generous fellow-creature fallen, whom you have the power to raise up and restore. Let not the kind protector of your son end his days in a jail, when a small sum, which never could be missed from your immense wealth, would enable him to end his days in peace."

"A *small* sum!" responded the miser, with a bitter laugh. "Let me hear what *you*, consider a *small* sum. Your uncle has the impudence to demand of me the sum of *two thousand pounds*, which is *his idea* of a *small sum*, which he considers a *trifling remuneration* for bringing up and educating my son from the age of seven years to twenty. Anthony Hurdlestone, go back to your employer, and tell him that I never expended that sum in sixty years."

"You do not mean to dismiss me, sir, with this cruel and insulting message?"

"From me, young man, you will obtain no other."

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“Is it possible that a creature, made in God’s image, can possess such a hard heart? Alas! sir, I have considered your avarice in the light of a dire disease; as such I have pitied and excused it. The delusion is over. You are but too sane, and I *feel* ashamed of my father!”

The old man started and clenched his fist, his teeth grated together, he glared upon his son with his fiery eyes, but remained obstinately silent.

Regardless of his anger, the young man continued—“It is a hard thing for a son to be compelled to plead with his father in a cause like this. Is there no world beyond the grave? Does no fear of the future compel you to act justly? or are your thoughts so wholly engrossed with the dust on which you have placed all your earthly affections, that you will not, for the love of God, bestow a small portion of that wealth which you want the heart to enjoy, to save a brother from destruction? Oh! listen to me, father—listen to me, that I may love and bless you.” He flung himself passionately at the old man’s feet. “Give now, that you may possess treasures hereafter, that you may meet a reconciled brother and wife in the realms of bliss!”

“Fool!” exclaimed the miser, spurning him from his feet. “In heaven they are neither married nor are given in marriage. Your mother and I will never meet, and God forbid we should!”

Anthony shuddered. He felt that such a meeting was impossible; and he started from the degrading posture he had assumed, and stood before the old man with a brow as stern and a glance as fierce as his own.

“And now, Anthony Hurdlestone, let me speak a few words to you, and mark them well. Is it for a boy like you to prescribe rules for his father’s conduct? Away from my presence! I will not be insulted in my own house by a beardless boy, and assailed by such impertinent importunities. Reflect, young man, on your present undutiful conduct, and, if ever you provoke me by a repetition of it, I will strike your name out of my will, and leave my property to strangers more deserving of it. I hear that you have been studying for the Church, under the idea that I will provide for you in that profession; I could do it. I would have done it, and made good a promise I once gave you to that effect. But this meeting has determined me to pursue another plan, and leave you to provide for yourself.”

“You are welcome so to do, Mr. Hurdlestone,” said Anthony, proudly; “the education which I have received at your brother’s expense will place me above want. Farewell! and may God judge between us!”

With a heavy heart, Anthony returned to ——. He saw a crowd collected round the jail, and forcing his way to the entrance, was met by Godfrey; his face was deadly pale, and his lips quivered as he addressed his cousin.

“You are too late, Anthony—’tis all over. My poor father—.”

He turned away, for his heart, at that time, was not wholly dead to the feelings common to our nature. He could not conclude the sentence. Anthony instantly comprehended his meaning, and rushed past him into the room which had been appropriated to his uncle’s use.

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And there, stretched upon that mean bed, never to rise up, or whistle to hawk or hound, lay the generous, reckless Algernon Hurdlestone. His face wore a placid smile; his grey hair hung in solemn masses round his open, candid brow; and he looked as if he had bidden the cares and sorrows of time a long good-night, and had fallen into a deep, tranquil sleep.

A tall man stood beside the bed, gazing sadly and earnestly upon the face of the deceased. Anthony did not heed him—the arrow was in his heart. The sight of his dead uncle—his best, his dearest, his only friend—had blinded him to all else upon earth. With a cry of deep and heart-uttered sorrow, he flung himself upon the breast of the dead, and wept with all the passionate, uncontrollable anguish which a final separation from the beloved wrings from a devoted woman's heart.

"Poor lad! how dearly he loved him!" remarked a voice near him, addressing the person who had occupied the room when Anthony first entered. It was Mr. Grant, the rector of the parish, who spoke.

"I hope this sudden bereavement will serve him as a warning to amend his own evil ways," returned his companion, who happened to be no other than Captain Whitmore, as he left the apartment.

The voice roused Anthony from his trance of grief, and stung by the unmerited reproach, which he felt was misplaced, even if deserved, in an hour like that, he raised his dark eyes, flashing through the tears that blinded them, to demand of the Captain an explanation. But the self-elected monitor was gone; and the unhappy youth again bowed his head, and wept upon the bosom of the dead.

"Anthony, be comforted," said the kind clergyman, taking his young friend's hand. "Your poor uncle has been taken in mercy from the evil to come. You know his frank, generous nature—you know his extravagant habits and self-indulgence. How could such a man struggle with the sorrows and cares of poverty, or encounter the cold glances of those whom he was wont to entertain? Think, think a moment, and restrain this passionate grief. Would it be wise, or kind, or Christian-like, to wish him back?"

Anthony remembered his interview with his father—the wreck of the last hope to which his uncle had clung; and he felt that Mr. Grant was right.

"All is for the best. My loss is his gain—but such a loss—such a dreadful loss!—I know not how to bear it with becoming fortitude!"

"I will not attempt to insult your grief by offering common-place condolence. These are but words, of course. Nature says, weep—weep freely, my dear young friend; but do not regret his departure."

“How did he die?—dear kind uncle! Was he at all prepared for such a sudden unexpected event?”

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“The agitating occurrences of the last week had induced a tendency of blood to the head, which ended in apoplexy. From the moment of seizure he was insensible to all outward objects; he did not even recognise his son, in whose arms he breathed his last. Of his mental state, it is impossible for us to determine. He had faults, but they were more the result of unhappy circumstances than of any peculiar tendency to evil in his nature. He was kind, benevolent, and merciful: a good neighbor, and a warm and faithful friend. Let us hope that he has found forgiveness through the merits of his Redeemer, and is at rest.”

Anthony kissed his uncle’s cold cheek, and said, “God bless him!” with great fervor.

“And now, my young friend, tell me candidly, in what way you have offended Captain Whitmore—a man both wealthy and powerful, and who has proved himself such a disinterested friend to your uncle and cousin; and who might, if he pleased, be of infinite service, to you? Can you explain to me the meaning of his parting words?”

“Not here—not here,” said Anthony, greatly agitated. “By the dead body of the father, how can a creature so long dependent upon his bounty denounce his only son? Captain Whitmore labors under a strong delusion—he has believed a lie; and poor and friendless as I am, I am too proud to convince him of his error.”

“You are wrong, Anthony. No one should suffer an undeserved stigma to rest upon his character. But I will say no more upon a painful subject. What are you going to do with yourself? Where will you find a home to-night?”

“Here with the dead. Whilst he remains upon earth I have no other home. I know Mr. Winthrop the jailer—he is a kind benevolent man; he will not deny me an asylum for a few days.”

“My house is close at hand; remain with me until the funeral is over.”

“There will be no delay, I hope. They will not attempt to seize the body.”

“Captain Whitmore has generously provided for that. He paid the creditor on whose suit your uncle was detained, this morning; but the Colonel was too ill to be moved.”

“That was noble—generous. God bless him for that! And Godfrey—what is to become of him?”

“The Captain has insisted on his living at the Lodge until his affairs are settled. Your cousin bore the death of his father with uncommon fortitude. It must have been a terrible shock!”

“That is a sad misapplication of the word. A want of natural affection and sensibility, the world calls fortitude. Godfrey had too little respect for his father while living, to mourn very deeply for his death.”

“Alas! my young friend; what he is, in a great measure, his father made him. I have known Godfrey from the petted selfish child to the self-willed, extravagant, dissipated young man; and though I augur very little good from what I do know of his character, much that is prominently evil might have been restrained by proper management, and the amiable qualities which now lie dormant been cherished and cultivated until they became virtues. The loss of fortune, if it leads him to apply the talents which he does possess to useful purposes, may, in the end, prove a great gain.”

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Anthony shook his head. “Godfrey will never work.”

“Then, my dear sir, he must starve.”

“He will do neither.”

And the conversation between the friends terminated.

CHAPTER XIII.

> The world has done its worst, you need not heed
> Its praise or censure now.—Your name is held
> In deep abhorrence by the good: the bad
> Make it a sad example for fresh guilt.—S.M.

We will leave Anthony Hurdlestone to weep and watch beside the newly dead, and conduct our readers into the cottage occupied by Farmer Mathews and his family.

Returning the night before from market, very much the worse from liquor, the farmer had fallen from his horse, and received a very severe concussion of the brain. William, surprised at his long absence, left the house at daybreak in search of his father, and found him lying, apparently dead, within sight of his own door.

With Mary’s assistance, he carried him into the house. Medical aid was called in, and all had been done that man could do to alleviate the sufferings of the injured farmer, but with little effect. The man had received a mortal blow, and the doctor, when he left that evening, had pronounced the fatal sentence that his case was hopeless; that, in all probability, he would expire before the morning.

As the night drew on, the elder Mathews became quite unconscious of surrounding objects, and but for the quick hard breathing, you would have imagined him already dead.

The door of the cottage was open, to admit the fresh air; and in the door way, revealed by the solitary candle which burnt upon the little table by the bed-side, stood the tall athletic figure of William Mathews. His sister was sitting in a low chair by the bed’s head, her eyes fixed with a vacant stare upon the heavy features of the dying man.

“William,” she said, in a quick deep voice, “where are you? Do come and watch with me. I do not like to be alone.”

“You are not alone,” returned the ruffian sullenly; “I am here; and some one else is here whom you cannot see.”

“Whom do you mean?”

“The devil, to be sure,” responded her brother. “He is always near us; but never more near than in the hour of death and the day of judgment.”

“Good Lord, deliver us!” said the girl, repeating unconsciously aloud part of the liturgy of the Church to which nominally she belonged.

“All in good time,” responded the human fiend. “Has father shown any sign of returning sense since the morning?”

“No, he has remained just in the same state. William, will he die?”

“You may be sure of that, Mary. Living men never look as he does now.”

“It is a terrible sight,” said his sister. “I always did hope that I should die before father; but since I got into this trouble I have wished that he might never live to know it. That was sin, William. See how my wicked thoughts have become prophecy. Yet I am so glad that he never found out my crime, that it makes the tears dry in my eyes to see him thus.”

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“You make too much fuss about your condition, girl! What is done cannot be undone. All you can now do is to turn it to the best possible account.”

“What do you mean, William?”

“Make money by it.”

“Alas,” said the girl, “what was given away freely cannot be redeemed with gold. Had I the wealth of the whole world, I would gladly give it to regain my lost peace of mind. Oh, for one night of calm fresh sleep, such as I used to enjoy after a hard day’s work in the field. What would I not give for such a night’s rest? Rest! I never rest now. I work and toil all day; I go to bed—heart-weary and head-weary—but sleep never comes as it used to come. After long hours of tossing from side to side, just about the dawn of day, a heavy stupor comes over me, full of frightful sights and sounds, so frightful that I start and awake, and pray not to sleep again.”

“And what has made such a change—that one act?” said the ruffian. “Pshaw! girl. God will never damn your soul for the like of that. It was foolish and imprudent; but I don’t call *that* sin.”

“Then what is sin?” said the girl solemnly.

“Why, murder, and theft, and—”

“And what?”

“Hang me! if I wish to go deeper into the matter. But if that is sin, which you make such a to-do about, then the whole world are sinners.”

“Do you think that you are not a sinner, William?”

“I never thought a word about it,” said the man. “I am not a whit worse than others; but I am poorer, and that makes my faults more conspicuous. There is Godfrey Hurdlestone, every whit as bad as I am, yet were we to be tried by the same jury, the men that would hang me would acquit him. But his day is over,” he continued, talking to himself. “He is now as poor as me; and if the rich heiress does not marry him, will be much worse off.”

“Marry!” cried Mary, springing from her seat, and grasping her brother’s arm. “Who talks of Godfrey Hurdlestone marrying?”

“I talk of it—every one talks of it—he boasts of it himself. I was told last night by Captain Whitmore’s serving-man, that his master had given his consent to the match, and that the young lady was coming round, and that Mr. Godfrey was every day at the house. Perhaps the Colonel being cooped up in jail may spoil the young man’s wooing.”

“In jail! Colonel Hurdlestone in jail! Can that be true?”

“Fact.”

“And Mr. Godfrey? What will become of Mr. Godfrey?”

“He will become one of us, and have to take care of himself. And if he does marry Miss Whitmore, he will have enough to take care of you.”

“Do you think that I would share his affections with another woman?” cried the girl, her pale cheeks flushing to crimson. “Brother, I am not sunk so low as that—not quite so low.”

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“You are sunk quite low enough for anything, Mary. You may be as bad as you like now, the world will think no worse of you than it does at present. You have made a bad bargain, and you must stand by it. If you cannot be the man’s wife, you must rest content with being his mistress; married or single you will always be Godfrey Hurdlestone’s better half. Miss Whitmore is not to compare to you, in spite of her pretty waxen face, and she is not the woman to please such a wild fellow as him. He will grow tired of her before the honeymoon is over, and you will have it all your own way.”

“Juliet Whitmore shall never be his wife, nor any other woman, while I live. But, William, if he is as poor as you say he is, what use will it be to you my continuing to live with him in sin? He cannot give me money if he has none for himself.”

“Hush,” said the ruffian, drawing nearer, and glancing quickly round, to be certain that they were alone. “Did you never hear of the rich miser, Mark Hurdlestone?”

“Mr. Anthony’s father?”

“The same. And do you not know that, were Anthony out of the way, removed by death or any other cause, Godfrey Hurdlestone would be his heir?”

“Well, what of that? Anthony is alive and well, and may outlive us all.”

“Strong men often die very suddenly. There is an ill-luck hangs about this same Mr. Anthony. I prophesy that his life will be a short one. Hark! Was that a groan? Father is coming to himself.”

He took the candle and went up to the bed. The sick man still breathed, but remained in the same stupor as before. “This cannot last long,” said his son, stooping over the corpse-like figure. “Father was a strong man for his age, but ’tis all up with him now. I wish he could speak to us, and tell us where he is going; but I’m thinking that we shall never hear the sound of his voice again. The bell will toll for him before sunrise to-morrow.”

He had scarcely finished speaking when the slow, deep boom of the death-bell awoke the sluggish stillness of the heavy night. The brother and sister started, and Mary gave a loud scream.

“Who’s dead?” said Mathews, stepping to the open door “some of the quality, or that bell would not speak out at this late hour of night. Ha! Mr. Godfrey Hurdlestone. Is that you?”

“What’s wrong here?” cried Godfrey, glancing rapidly round the cottage. “Mathews, have you heard the news? My poor father’s dead.”

“Dead!” exclaimed both his companions in a breath. “Colonel Hurdlestone dead! When did he die?”

“This evening, at sunset. ’Tis a bad piece of business, Mathews. He died insolvent, and I am left without a penny.”

“Alas, what will become of us all!” shrieked Mary, flinging herself frantically upon the bed. “William, he has ceased to breathe. Our father too is dead!”

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The grief of the lower orders is generally loud and violent. Unaccustomed to restrain their feelings, Nature lifts up her voice, and tells, in tones which cannot be misunderstood, the blow which has left her desolate. And so Mary Mathews poured forth the anguish of her soul over the parent that, but a few days before, she had wished dead, to conceal from him her guilt. Yet now that he was gone—that the strong tie was broken, and her conscience reproached her for having cherished for a moment the unnatural thought—she wept as if her heart had never known a deeper sorrow. Her brother and lover strove in vain to comfort her. She neither saw nor heeded them, but in a stern voice bade them depart and leave her alone.

“The wilful creature! Let her have her own way, Mr. Godfrey. Grief like that, like the down-pouring of a thunder-shower, soon storms itself to rest. She will be better soon. Leave her to take care of the dead, while you and I step into the kitchen and consult together about the living.”

Godfrey, who had suffered much that day from mental excitement, felt doubly depressed by the scene he had just witnessed, and gladly obeyed.

Mathews lighted a fresh candle, and led the way into the kitchen. The fire that had been used to prepare the evening meal was nearly out; Mathews raked the ashes together and threw a fresh billet into the grate; then reaching from a small cupboard a bottle and a glass, he drew a small table between them, and stretching his legs towards the cheering blaze he handed a glass of brandy to his companion.

“Hang it, man! don’t look so down in the mouth. This is the best friend in time of need. This is my way of driving out the blue devils that pinch and freeze my heart.”

Godfrey eagerly seized the proffered glass and drained it at a draught.

“Well, that’s what I call hearty!” continued the ruffian, following his example. “There’s nothing like that for killing care. I don’t wonder at your being low. I feel queer myself—-devilish queer. It is a strange thing to lose a father. A something is gone—a string is loosened from the heart, which we feel can never be tied again. I wonder whether the souls gone from among us to-night are lost or saved—or if there be a heaven or hell?”

“Pshaw!” said Godfrey, lighting his pipe, “do you believe such idle fables?”

“Why, do you see, Master Godfrey, I would fain think them false for my own sake—mere old women’s tales. But terrible thoughts will come into my mind; and though I seldom think of heaven, I often hear a voice from the shut up depths of my heart—a voice that I cannot stifle. Do not smile,” said the man gloomily, “I am in no mood to be laughed at. Bad as I am, confound me if you are not ten times worse.”

“If you are so afraid of going to hell,” said Godfrey, sarcastically, “why do you not amend your life? I, for my part, am troubled with no such qualms of conscience.”

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“If you had seen blood as often upon your hand as I have upon mine, you would tell a different story. Kill a man, and then see if what we hear of ghosts and spirits are mere fables. I tell thee, Godfrey Hurdlestone, they never die, but live and walk abroad, and haunt you continually. The voice they speak with will be heard. In solitary places—in the midst of crowds—at fairs and merry-makings—in the noon of day, and at the dead of night, I have heard their mocking tones.” He leaned his elbows upon his knees, and supported his chin between the palms of his hands, and continued to stare upon Godfrey with vacant bloodshot eyes.

“Don’t take me for a ghost,” said Godfrey, the same sarcastic smile passing over his handsome face. “What does it matter to us where our fathers are gone? If there is a place of future rewards or punishments, depend upon it we shall only have to answer for our own sins; and as you and I have, at present, but a small chance of getting to heaven, we may as well make the most of our time on earth.”

“Confound that death-bell,” said the smuggler, “it has a living voice to-night. I never hear it but it reminds me of Newgate, and I fancy that I shall hear it toll for my own death before I die.”

“A very probable consummation, though certainly not a very pleasant one,” said Godfrey ironically. “But away with such melancholy presages. Take another sup of the brandy, Mathews, and tell me what you are going to do for a living. The lease of your farm expires in a few days. Mr. —— has taken possession of the estates, and means, Johnstone tells me, to put in another tenant. What will become of you and Mary in the meanwhile?”

“I have not thought about it yet. At any rate, I can always live by the old trade, and fall upon my feet. At all events, we must leave this place. It is little that father has saved. The neighbors think him rich, but a drunkard never dies rich; and you know, Mr. Godfrey, that the weight of a pig is never known until after it is dead. There will not be much more than will bury him. There are the crops in the ground, to be sure, and the cattle, and a few sticks of furniture; but debts of honor must be paid, and I have been very unlucky of late. By the by, Master Godfrey, what does your cousin mean to do with himself?”

“He must go home to his miserly dad, I suppose.”

“Humph! I think that I will go to Ashton and settle in that neighborhood myself; I like to be near old friends.”

“What can induce *you*, Mathews, to go there?”

“I have my reasons. Strong reasons too, in which I am sure *you* will heartily concur.” He looked into his companion’s eyes, with an expression so peculiar, that Godfrey

started as if some new light had suddenly flashed upon his soul, while Mathews continued in a lower voice, “Suppose, now that we could get up a regular quarrel between old Ironsides and his son; who would then be the miser’s heir?”

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Godfrey took the hand of the smuggler and pressed it hard.

“Can you form no better scheme than that?”

“I understand you, Mr. Godfrey. You are a perfect genius in wickedness. The devil never found a fitter agent for doing his business on a grand scale. Yes, yes, I understand you.”

“Would it be possible?”

“All things are possible to those who have the courage to perform. If I could remove this obstacle out of your way, what would be my reward?”

“A thousand pounds!”

“Your conscience! Do you think that I would risk my neck for such a paltry bribe?”

“You have done it often for the hundredth part.”

“That’s neither here nor there. If I have played the fool a dozen times, that’s no reason that I am to do so again. Go shares, and promise to make an honest woman of Mary, and you shall not be long out of possession.”

“The sacrifice is too great,” said Godfrey, musing. “Let us say no more about it at present.”

“You will think about it?”

“Thoughts are free.”

“Not exactly. Evil thoughts lead to evil deeds, as surely as fruit follows flowers upon the tree. Try to lay that babe of the brain to rest, and see if it will not waken to plague you yet.”

“It was one of your own begetting—you should know best how to quiet the imp.”

“Leave me alone for that. The day is breaking; we must part. We have both melancholy duties to perform.”

“I wish the funeral was over,” said Godfrey, “I hate being forced to act a conspicuous part in so grave a farce.”

“Your cousin will help you out. He is the real mourner; you, the actor. Remember what I hinted to you, and let me know your opinion in a few days.”

“The risk is too great,” said Godfrey, shrugging his shoulders. “When I am reduced to my last shift, it will be time enough to talk of that.”

The grey misty dawn was just struggling into day, when Godfrey left the cottage. Mathews looked after him, as, opening a side gate that led to a foot-path that intersected the park, he vanished from his sight.

“Well, there goes the greatest scoundrel that ever was unhung,” he muttered to himself. “He has never shed blood, nor done what I have done, but hang me if I would exchange characters with him, bad as I may be. He thinks to make a fool of me; but if I do not make him repay a thousand fold the injuries he has heaped on me and mine, may we swing on the same gallows.”

In no very enviable mood, Godfrey pursued his way though the lonely park. The birds had not yet sung their matin hymn to awaken the earth. Deep silence rested upon the august face of nature. Not a breath of air stirred the branches, heavy with dew-drops. The hour was full of beauty and mystery. An awe fell insensibly upon the heart, as if it saw the eye of God visibly watching over the sleeping world. Its holy influence was felt even by the selfish heartless Godfrey.

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The deep silence—the strange stillness—the uncertain light—the scenes he had lately witnessed—his altered fortunes—his degrading pursuits—the fallen and depraved state of his mind, crowded into his thoughts, and filled his bosom with keen remorse and painful regrets.

“Oh, that I could repent!” he cried, stopping, and clasping his hands together, and fixing his eyes mournfully upon the earth,—“that I could believe that there was a God—a heaven—a hell! Yet if there be no hereafter, why this stifling sense of guilt—this ever-haunting miserable consciousness of unworthiness? Am I worse than other men, or are all men alike—the circumstances in which they are placed producing that which we denominate good or evil in their characters? What if I determine to renounce the evil, and cling to the good; would it yet be well with me? Would Juliet, like a good angel, consent to be my guide, and lead me gently back to the forsaken paths of rectitude and peace?”

While the voice in his heart yet spake to him for good, another voice sounded in his ears, and all his virtuous resolutions melted into air.

“Godfrey,” said the voice of Mary Mathews, “dear Mr. Godfrey, have I become so indifferent to you, that you will neither look at me nor speak to me?”

She was the last person in the world who at that moment he wished to see. The sight of her recalled him to a sense of his degradation, and all that he had lost by his unhappy connexion with her, and he secretly wished that she had died instead of her father.

“Mary,” he said, coldly, “what do you want with me? The morning is damp and raw; you had better go home.”

“What do I want with you?” reiterated the girl. “And is it come to that? Can you, who have so often sworn to me that you loved me better than anything in heaven or on earth, now ask me, in my misery, what I want with you?”

“Hot-headed rash young men will swear, and foolish girls will believe them,” said Godfrey, putting his arm carelessly round her waist, and drawing her towards him. “So it has been since the world began, and so it will be until the end of time.”

“Was all you told me, then, false?” said Mary, leaning her head back upon his shoulder, and fixing her large beautiful tearful eyes upon his face.

That look of unutterable fondness banished all Godfrey’s good resolutions. He kissed the tears from her eyes, as he replied,

“Not exactly, Mary. But you expect too much.”

“I only ask you not to cease to love me—not to leave me, Godfrey, for another.”

“Who put such nonsense into your head?”

“William told me that you were going to marry Miss Whitmore.”

“If such were the case, do you think I should be such a fool as to tell William?”

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“Alas! I am afraid that it is only too true.” And Mary burst into tears afresh. “You do not love me as you did, Godfrey, when we first met and loved. You used to sit by my side for hours, looking into my face, and holding my hand in yours; and we were happy—too happy to speak. We lived but in each other’s eyes; and I hoped—fondly hoped—that that blessed dream would last for ever. I did not care for the anger of father or brother—woe is me! I never had a mother. One kiss from those dear lips—one kind word breathed from that dear mouth—sunk from my ear into my heart, and I gloried in what I ought to have considered my shame. Oh, why are you changed, Godfrey? Why should my love remain like a covered fire, consuming my heart to ashes, and making me a prey to tormenting doubts and fears, while you are unmoved by my anguish, and contented in my absence?”

“You attribute that to indifference, which is but the effect of circumstances,” returned Godfrey, somewhat embarrassed by her importunities. “Perhaps, Mary, you are not aware that the death of my father has left me a poor and ruined man?”

“What difference can that possibly make in our love for each other?” And Mary’s eyes brightened through a cloud of tears. “I rejoice in your loss of fortune, for it has made us equals.”

“Not quite!” cried the young man, throwing her from him, as if stung by an adder. “Birth, education, the prejudices of society, have placed an eternal barrier between us. Impoverished though I be, I never can so far forget myself as to mate with a vulgar peasant!”

“Say that word again—that word of misery!” cried the unhappy girl, clinging to his arm. “Recall your many promises—the awful oath you swore on that fatal night, when I first yielded to temptation, when you solemnly declared, in the name of Almighty God, that the moment you were your own master, you would make me your wife.”

“Mary,” said Godfrey, sternly, “do not deceive yourself—I never will make you my wife!”

“Then God forgive you, and grant me patience to bear my wrongs!” murmured the poor girl, as she sunk down upon the ground, and buried her face in the dewy grass; while her heartless seducer continued his solitary walk to the Lodge.

CHAPTER XIV.

My mind is like a vessel tossed at sea
By winds and waves—her helm and compass lost;
No friendly hand to guide her o’er the waste,
Or point to rocks and shoals that yawn beneath.—S.M.

The day after his uncle's funeral, as Anthony sat alone in the good rector's study, pondering over his recent loss, painfully alive to his present condition, and the uncertainty of his future prospects, he was informed by the servant that a gentleman wished to see him.

Since Algernon's death, he and Godfrey had not met except at the funeral, in which they had assisted as chief mourners. He was very anxious to speak to his cousin, and consult with him about their private affairs; and he obeyed the summons with alacrity. Instead of the person whom he expected to see, a well-dressed intelligent-looking young man advanced to meet him.

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“Mr. Anthony Hurdlestone,” he said, “I hope you will not consider my present visit an intrusion, when I inform you that I am your near kinsman, the son of that Edward Wildegrave who held the office of judge for so many years in India, in which country he died about six years ago. My father and your mother were first cousins by the father’s side. Brought up in a distant part of England, I never had an opportunity of falling in with the only remaining branch of the Wildegrave family; and it was not until the death of my father, which left me an independent man, that I was even aware of your existence. A few months ago I bought the property of Milbank, in the parish of Ashton, which once belonged to my unfortunate uncle; and I heard your history from the wife of our farm servant, Ruth Candler. This led me to make many inquires about you; and Ruth’s relations were fully confirmed by the statements of my lawyer. His account of your early trials and singular position created in my mind such an intense interest in your fate, that I lost no time in riding over to offer my services, and a share of my house until you can arrange your plans for the future. I hope you will not refuse to grant me this favor. My offer is made in the sincerity of friendship; and I shall be deeply disappointed if you refuse to accept it.”

“I will most thankfully accept it,” said Anthony, his fine face glowing with pleasure at this unexpected meeting. “But are you certain, Mr. Wildegrave, that my doing so will in no way inconvenience you?”

“Inconvenience me? a bachelor! Your society will be a great acquisition.”

“And poor Ruth Candler—is she still living? She was a mother to me during my motherless infancy, and I shall be so glad to see her again. As to you, Mr. Wildegrave, I cannot express half the gratitude I feel for your disinterested kindness. The only circumstance which casts the least damp upon the pleasure I anticipate in my visit to Ashton, is the near vicinity of my father, who may take it into his head to imagine that I come there in order to be a spy upon his actions.”

“I know the unhappy circumstances in which you are placed; yet I think that we shall be able to overrule them for your good. However disagreeable your intercourse with such a man must be, it is not prudent to lose sight of him altogether. While you are in his immediate neighborhood, he cannot easily forget that he has a son. That artful designing old scoundrel, Grenard Pike, will do all in his power to keep you apart. Your living with me will not affect Mr. Hurdlestone’s pocket; and his seeing you at church will remind him, at least once a week, that you are alive.”

“Church! Can a man destitute of charity feel any pleasure in attending a place of worship, that teaches him that his dearest enjoyment is a deadly sin?”

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“It seems a strange infatuation; but I have remarked, that, let the weather be what it may, neither cold nor heat, nor storm nor shine, ever keeps Mark Hurdlestone from church. He is still in the old place; his fine grey locks flowing over his shoulders, with as proud and aristocratic an expression on his countenance as if his head were graced with a coronet, instead of being bound about with an old red handkerchief, which he wears in lieu of a hat; the rest of his person clothed in rags, which a beggar would spurn from him in disdain.”

“Is he insensible to the disgust which his appearance must excite?”

“He seems perfectly at ease. His mind is too much absorbed in mental calculations to care for the opinion of any one. If you sit in the family pew, which I advise you to do, you will have to exercise great self-control to avoid laughing at his odd appearance.”

“I am too much humiliated by his deplorable aberration of mind to feel the least inclination to mirth. I wish that I could learn to respect and love him as a father should be respected and loved; but since my last visit to Ashton my heart is hardened against him. A dislike almost amounting to loathing, has usurped the place of the affection which nature ever retains for those who are bound together by kindred ties.”

“If you were more accustomed to witness his eccentricities you would be less painfully alive to their absurdity. Use almost reconciles us to anything. If you were to inhabit the same house with Mark Hurdlestone, and were constantly to listen to his arguments on the love of money, you might possibly fall in love with hoarding, and become like him a worshipper of gold.”

“Avarice generally produces a reaction in the minds of those who witness its effects,” said Anthony. “I will not admit the truth of your proposition, for experience has proved that the son of a miser commonly ends in being a spendthrift.”

“With some exceptions,” said Frederic Wildegrave, with a good-humored smile. “But really, when he pleases, your father can be a sensible, agreeable companion, and quite the gentleman. The other day I had a long chat with him, partly upon business, partly from curiosity. I wanted to buy from him an odd angle of ground, about half an acre, that made an awkward bite into a favorite field. I went to him, and, knowing his habits, I offered him at once the full value of the land. He saw that my heart was set upon the purchase, and he trebled the price. I laughed at him; and we held a long palaver of about two hours, and never came one inch nearer to the settlement of the question. At length I pulled out my purse, and counted the gold down upon the table before him. ’There is the money,’ I said. ’I have offered you, Mr. Hurdlestone, the full value of the land. You can take it or leave it.’

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“The sight of the gold acted upon him like the loadstone upon the needle. He began counting over the pieces; his fingers literally stuck to them. One by one they disappeared from my sight, and when all were gone, he held out his hand and begged for one guinea more. I put the pen into his hand, and the paper before him; he sighed heavily as he signed the receipt for the full sum, and told me that I was a prudent young man; that I deserved to be rich; and must succeed in the world, for I knew as well how to take care of my money as he did. He then entered upon subjects of more general interest, and I was so much pleased with his talents and general information (chiefly obtained, I believe, from books, which are his sole amusement, and with which he is amply furnished from the library at the Hall,) that I invited myself to come over and spend an evening with him. The old fox took the alarm at this. He told me that he was quite a recluse, and never received company; but that some evening, when I was quite alone, he would step in and take a cup of coffee with me—a luxury which he has never allowed himself for the last twenty years.”

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Grant. Young Wildegrave entered immediately upon the purport of his visit, and the rector, who had a very large family to support upon very limited means, readily consented to Anthony’s removal to Ashton.

The morning was spent in preparing for his journey, and not without a feeling of regret Anthony bade adieu to his kind host, and the place in which he had passed the only happy years of his life.

As his friend slowly drove through Norgood Park, and past Hazelwood Lodge, he turned an anxious gaze towards the house. Why did the color flush his cheek as he hastily looked another way? Juliet was standing in the balcony, but she was not alone; a tall figure was beside her. It was Godfrey Hurdlestone, and the sight of him at such a time, and so situated, sent a pang of anguish through the heart of the young lover.

Frederic Wildegrave marked the deep dejection into which his companion had fallen, and rightly concluded that some lady was the cause. “Poor fellow,” thought he, “has he, to add to his other misfortunes, been indiscreet enough to fall in love?”

Wishing to ascertain if his suspicions were true, he began to question Anthony about the inhabitants of the Lodge, and soon drew from his frank and confiding cousin the history of his unhappy passion, and the unpleasant misapprehension that had closed Captain Whitmore’s doors against him.

“Well, Anthony,” he said, “it must be confessed that you are an unlucky fellow. The sins of your father appear to cast a shadow upon the destinies of his son. Yet, were I in your place, I should write to Captain Whitmore, and clear up this foul stigma that your treacherous cousin has suffered to rest upon your character.”

“No,” said Anthony, “I cannot do it; I am too proud. She should not so readily have admitted my guilt. Let Godfrey enjoy the advantage he has gained. I swore to his father to be a friend to his son, to stand by him through good and bad report; and though his cruel duplicity has destroyed my happiness, I never will expose him to the only friend who can help him in his present difficulties.”

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“Your generosity savors a little too much of romance; Godfrey is unworthy of such a tremendous sacrifice.”

“That does not render my solemn promise to my uncle less binding. Forbearance on my part is gratitude to him; and my present self-denial will not be without a reward.”

Frederic was charmed with his companion, and could Anthony have looked into his heart, he would have been doubly convinced that he was right.

They struck into a lonely cross-country road, and half an hour’s smart driving brought them to Wildegrave’s residence. It was a pretty farm-house, surrounded by extensive orchards, and a large upland meadow, as smooth as a bowling-green. Anthony was delighted at the locality. The peaceful solitude of the scene was congenial to his feelings, and he expressed his pleasure in lively tones.

“’Tis an old-fashioned place,” said Frederic; “but it will not be without interest to you. In that chamber to the right, your grandfather and your mother were born.”

“They were both children of misfortune,” replied Anthony. “But the fate of my grandfather, although he died upon the scaffold, beneath the cruel gaze of an insulting mob, was a merciful dispensation, to the death by inches which awaited his unhappy child.”

“That room,” resumed Frederic, “contains the portraits in oil of your grandfather and your mother. The one in the prime of life, the other a gay blooming girl of fifteen. From the happy countenances of both you would never augur aught of their miserable doom.”

“You must let me occupy that chamber, cousin Wildegrave. If I may judge by my present prospects, I am likely to inherit the same evil destiny.”

“These things sometimes run in families. It is the ’visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, until the third and fourth generation,’” said Frederic, pulling up his horse at the front gate. “The mantle of the Wildegrave, Anthony, has not descended upon you alone.”

On the steps of the house they were welcomed by a very fair interesting-looking girl of sixteen; but so fragile and childlike that she scarcely seemed to have entered upon her teens. She blushed deeply as she received the stranger and her brother.

“Anthony, permit me to introduce you to another cousin. This is my sister Clarissa.”

“You did not inform me that you had a sister. This is indeed an unexpected and happy surprise,” said Anthony, shaking hands with the young lady.

“I thought it best to introduce all my pets together,” returned Wildegrave, patting his sister’s meek head. “Clary is a shy, timid, little creature, very unlike your sparkling Juliet, with whom I happen to be personally acquainted; but she is a dear good girl, and the darling of her brother’s heart. Her orphan state seems to press painfully upon her young mind. She seldom smiles, and I can never induce her to go into company. But we must try and break her of these monastic habits, for she is not so young as she looks, and by this time she should know her position in society.”

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“I do not love the world, nor the world’s ways, Frederic,” said his sister, gravely. “It contains but one happy spot, my own dear tranquil home, and I love it so well, that I never wish to leave it.”

“But you must not expect to live at home for ever, Clary,” said her brother, as he took his place at the tea-table. “Suppose I was to take it into my head to marry, what would you do then? Perhaps you would not love my wife so well as you do me.”

“It is time to prepare for that when she comes,” said Clary. “I think I shall live along with you, dear Fred, as long as I require an earthly home.”

Something like a sad smile passed over the pensive face of the fair child, for a child she still was, in stature and simplicity.

“And so you shall, my darling. I have no idea of bringing home a new mistress to Millbank; and long may you live to enjoy your birds, and lambs, and dogs, and cats, and all the numerous pets that you have taken upon yourself to adopt and cherish.”

“Ah! Fred, that reminds me of a pair of lovely Barbary doves I got to-day from some unknown friend. They came from London by the coach, in a pretty green cage, with no note or message; but simply directed to ‘Miss Wildegrave.’ I must bring them to show you; they are such loves.”

Away ran Clary to fetch her new pets. Frederic looked after her, and laughed. “I sent for the doves, Anthony, as a little surprise. How delighted she is. She is a fragile creature, Cousin Hurdlestone; and I much fear that she will not require my care long. My mother died in giving her birth; and, since the death of my sister Lucy, who was a mother to Clary, the child has drooped sadly. She was always consumptive, and during the last two months I can perceive a great change in her for the worse.”

“I do not wonder at your anxiety. Oh, that I had such a sister to love!”

“Love! she was made to love. So gentle, affectionate, and confiding. It would break my heart to lose her.”

“You must not anticipate evil. And, after all, Cousin Wildegrave, is death such a dreadful evil to a fair young creature, too good and amiable to struggle with the ills of life? If I were in her place, I think I could exclaim, ‘that it was a good and blessed thing to die!’”

“You are right,” whispered the sweet low voice of Clarissa Wildegrave. “Death is our best friend. I see, Mr. Hurdlestone, that you and I are related—that we shall love each other, for we think alike.”

This would have been a strange speech, could it have been taken in any other sense than the one in which it was meant; and Anthony, as he took the dove, the emblem of

purity, from the fair hand of Clary, thought that a beautiful harmony existed between the bird and its mistress.

“I am sure we shall love each other, Miss Wildegrave. Will you accept me as a second brother?”

“I don’t want two brothers, Mr. Hurdlestone. I love Frederic so well that I never mean him to have a rival. No; you shall remain my cousin. Cousins often love as well as sisters and brothers.”

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“And sometimes a great deal better,” said Frederic, laughing. “But since you have made up your mind to love Anthony, sit down and give us another cup of tea.”

“There is some one below-stairs, Mr. Anthony, who loves you at any rate,” continued Clary, after handing the gentlemen their replenished cups. “One who is quite impatient to see you, who is never tired of talking about you, and calls you her dear boy, and says that she never loved any of her own sons better than you.”

“Ruth! is she here? Let me see her directly,” said Anthony, rising from the table.

“Sit down, Mr. Hurdlestone. I will ring the bell for her. She can speak to you here.”

In a few minutes, a plainly-dressed, middle-aged woman entered the room.

“My dear foster-mother! Is that you?” said Anthony, springing to meet her.

“Why yees, Muster Anthony,” said the honest creature, flinging her arms round his neck, and imprinting on either cheek a kiss that rang through the room; while she laughed and cried in the same breath. “The Lord love you! How you bees grown. Is this here fine young gentleman the poor half-starved little chap that used to come begging to Ruth Candler for a sup o’ milk and a morsel o’ bread? Well, yer bees a man now, and able to shift for yoursel, whiles I be a poor old woman, half killed by poverty and hard work. When you come in for your great fortin, don’t forget old Ruth.”

“Indeed I will not, my good mother; if ever that day arrives, I shall know how to reward my old friends. But you make a strange mistake, Ruth, when you call yourself old. You look as young as ever. And how are all my old play-fellows?”

“Some dead; some in service; and my eldest gal, Mr. Anthony, is married to a Methody parson, only think, my Sally, the wife of a Methody parson.”

“She was a good girl.”

“Oh, about as good as the rest on us. And, pray, how do old Shock come along? Is the old dog dead?”

“Of old age, Ruth. He got so fat and sleek in my uncle’s house, you never would have known the poor starved brute.”

“In truth, you were a poverty pair—jist a bag o’ bones the twain o’ ye. I wonder the old Squire warn’t ashamed to see you walk the earth. An’ they do tell me, Measter Anthony, that he be jist as stingy as ever.”

“Age seldom improves avarice.”

“Why, nothing gets the better for being older, but strong beer. An’ that sometimes gets a little sourish with keeping.”

Anthony took the hint. “Ah, I remember. Your husband was very fond of ale—-particularly in harvest-time You must give him this, to drink my health.” And he slipped a guinea into her hand. “And to-morrow, when I come over the hill, I shall expect him to halloo largess.”

“The Lord love you, for a dear handsome young gentleman. An’ my Dick will do that with the greatest of pleasure.” And, with an awkward attempt at a curtsey, the good woman withdrew.

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After chatting some little time with Frederic and Clary, Anthony retired to the room appropriated to his use.

The quiet, unobtrusive kindness of his young relatives had done much to soothe and tranquillize his mind; and he almost wished, as he paced to and fro the narrow limits of his airy little chamber, that he could forget that he had ever known and loved the beautiful and fascinating Juliet Whitmore.

“Why should mere beauty possess such an influence over the capricious wandering heart of man?” he thought; “yet it is not beauty alone that makes me prefer Juliet to the rest of her sex. Her talents, her deep enthusiasm, captivate me more than her handsome face and graceful form. Oh, Juliet! Juliet! why did we ever meet? or is Godfrey destined to enact the same tragedy that ruined my uncle’s peace, and consigned my mother to an early grave?”

As these thoughts passed rapidly through his mind, his eyes rested upon his mother’s picture. It was the first time that he had ever beheld her but in dreams. Radiant in all its girlish beauty, the angelic face smiled down upon him with life-like fidelity. The rose that decked her dark floating locks, less vividly bright than the glowing cheeks and lips of happy youth; the large black eyes, “half languor and half fire,” that had wept tears of unmitigated anguish over his forlorn infancy—rested upon his own, as if they were conscious of his presence. Anthony continued to gaze upon the portrait till the blinding tears hid it from his sight.

“Oh, my mother!” he exclaimed, “better had it been for thee to have died in the bloom of youth and innocence, than to have fallen the victim of an insidious—villain,” he would have added, but that villain was his father; and he paused without giving utterance to the word, shocked at himself that his heart had dared to frame the impious word his conscience forbade him to speak.

What a host of melancholy thoughts crowded into his mind while looking on that picture. The grief and degradation of his early days: his dependent situation while with his uncle: the unkind taunts of his ungenerous cousin; his blighted affections and dreary prospects for the future. How bitterly did he ponder over these!

What had he to encourage hope, or give him strength to combat with the ills that beset him on every side? Homeless and friendless, he thought, like Clary, that death would be most welcome, and sinking upon his knees, he prayed long and fervently for strength to bear with manly fortitude the sorrows which from his infant years had been his bitter portion.

Who ever sought counsel of God in vain? An answer of peace was given to his prayers. “Endure thou unto the end, and I will give thee a crown of life.” He rose from his knees, and felt that all was right; that his present trials were awarded to him in

mercy; that had all things gone on smoother with him, like Godfrey, he might have yielded himself up to sinful pleasures, or followed in the footsteps of his father, and bartered his eternal happiness for gold.

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“This world is not our rest. Then why should I wish to pitch my tent on this side of Jordan, and overlook all the blessings of the promised land? Let me rather rejoice in tribulations, if through them I may obtain the salvation of God.”

That night Anthony enjoyed a calm refreshing sleep. He dreamed of his mother, dreamed that he saw her in glory, that he heard her speak words of comfort to his soul, and he awoke with the rising sun, to pour out his heart in thankfulness to Him who had bestowed upon him the magnificent boon of life.

The beauty of the morning tempted him to take a stroll in the fields before breakfast. In the parlor he had left his hat and cane. On entering the room to obtain them, he found Clary already up and reading by the open window. “Good morning, gentle coz,” and he playfully lifted one of the glossy curls that hid her fair face from his view. “What are you studying?”

“For eternity,” said Clarissa, in a sweet solemn tone, as she raised to his face her mild serious eyes.

“’Tis an awful thought.”

“Yes. But one full of joy. This is the grave, cousin Anthony. This world to which we cling, this sepulchre in which we bury our best hopes, this world of death. That which you call death is but the gate of life; the dark entrance to the land of love and sunbeams.”

What a holy fire flashed from her meek eyes as she spoke! What deep enthusiasm pervaded that still fair face! Could this inspired creature be his child-like simple little cousin? Anthony continued to gaze upon her with astonishment, and when the voice ceased, he longed to hear her speak again.

“Tell me, Clary, what power has conquered, in your young heart, the fear of death?”

“Truth!—simple truth. That mighty pillar that upholds the throne of God. I sought the truth. I loved the truth, and the truth has made me free. Death! from a child I never feared death.

“I remember, Anthony, when I was a very little girl, so young that it is the very first thing that memory can recall, I was sick, and sitting upon the ground at my dear sister Lucy’s feet. My head was thrown back upon her lap, and it ached sadly. She patted my curls, and leaning forward, kissed my hot brow, and told me, ’That if I were a good girl when I died I should go to heaven.’ Eagerly I asked her—What was death, and what was heaven?

“Death, she told me, was the end of life here, and the beginning of a new life that could never end, in a better world. That heaven was a glorious place, the residence of the

great God, who made me and the whole world. But no pain or sorrow was ever felt in that blissful place. That all the children of God were good and happy.

“I wept for joy when she told me all this. I forgot my pain. I longed to die and go to heaven; and from that hour death became to me a great anticipation of future enjoyment. It mingled in all my thoughts. It came to me in dreams, and it always wore a beautiful aspect.

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“There was a clear deep pond in our garden at Harford, surrounded with green banks covered with flowers, and overhung with willows. I used to sit upon that bank and weave garlands of the sweet buds and tender willow shoots, and build castles about that future world. The image of the heavens lay within the waters, and the trees and flowers looked more beautiful reflected in their depths. Ah, I used to think, one plunge into that lovely mirror, and I should reach that happy world—should know all. But this I said in my simplicity, for I knew not at that tender age that self-destruction was a sin; that man was forbidden to unclose a gate of which the Almighty held the key. His merciful hand was stretched over the creature of his will, and I never made the rash attempt.

“As I grew older, I saw three loved and lovely sisters perish one by one. Each, in turn, had been a mother to me, and I loved them with my whole heart. Their sickness was sorrowful, and I often wept bitterly over their bodily sufferings. But when the conqueror came, how easily the feeble conquered. Instead of fearing the destroyer, as you call Death, they went forth to meet him with songs of joy, and welcomed him as a friend.

“Oh, had you seen my Lucy die! Had you seen the glory that rested upon her pale brow; had you heard the music that burst from her sweet lips ere they were hushed for ever; had you seen the hand that pointed upward to the skies; you would have exclaimed, with her, ’O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory?’”

The child paused, for her utterance was choked with tears. Anthony took her hand; he started, for pale as it was, it burnt with an unnatural heat. Fever was in every vein. “Are you ill, Clary?”

“Ill? Oh, no! but I never feel very well. I have had my summons, Anthony; I shall not be long here.”

Seeing him look anxiously in her face, she smiled, and going to a corner of the room, brought forward a harp which had escaped his observation, and said, playfully, “I have made you sad, cousin, when I wished to cheer you. Come, I will sing to you. Fred tells me that I sing well. If you love music as I do, it will soon banish sorrow from your heart.”

There was something so refreshing in the candor of the young creature, that it operated upon the mind of Anthony like a spell, and when the finest voice he ever in his life heard burst upon his ear, and filled the room with living harmony, he almost fancied he could see the halo encircling the lofty brows of the fair young saint:

The flowers of earth are fair
  As the hopes we fondly cherish;
But the canker-worm of care
  Bids the best and brightest perish.
The heavens to-day are bright,

But the morn brings storm and sorrow;
And the friends we love to-night
May sleep in earth to-morrow.

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Spirit, unfold thy drooping wing;
  Up, up to thy kindred skies.
Life is a sad and weary thing;
  He only lives who dies.
His the immortal fruits that grow
  By life's eternal river,
Where the shining waves in their onward flow
  Sing Glory to God for ever.

These lines were sung to a wild, irregular air, but one full of pathos and beauty.

"You must give me that hymn, Clary."

"It is gone, and the music with it. I shall never be able to remember it again. But I will play you another which will please you better, though the words are not mine." And turning again to the harp, she sang, in a low, plaintive strain, unlike her former triumphant burst of song:

Slowly, slowly tolls the bell,
A heavy note of sorrow;
But gaily will its blithe notes swell
The bridal peal to-morrow,
To-morrow!

The dead man in his shroud to-night
No hope from earth can borrow;
The bride within her tresses bright
Shall wreathe the rose to-morrow,
To-morrow!

The drops that gem that lowly bier,
Though shed in mortal sorrow,
Will not recall a single tear
In festal halls to-morrow!
To-morrow!

'Tis thus through life, from joy and grief,
Alternate shades we borrow;
To-night in tears we find relief,
In smiles of joy to-morrow,
To-morrow!

"What divine music!"

“And the words, Cousin Anthony—you say nothing about the words.”

“Are both your own?”

“Oh, no; I am only in heart a poet. I lack the power to give utterance to—

‘The thoughts that breathe and words that burn.’

They were written by a friend—a friend, whom, next to Fred, I love better than the whole world—Juliet Whitmore.”

“And do *you* know Juliet?”

“I will tell you all about it,” said Clary, leaving her harp and sitting down beside him. “After dear Lucy died, I was very, very ill, and Fred took me to the sea-side for the benefit of bathing. I was a poor, pale, wasted, woe-begone thing. We lodged next door to the house occupied by Captain Whitmore, who was spending the summer upon the coast with his family.

“He picked acquaintance with me upon the beach one day; and whenever nurse took me down to bathe, he would pat my cheek, and tell me to bring home a red rose to mix with the lily in my face. I told him, laughingly, ‘That roses never grew by the sea shore,’ and he told me to come with him to his lodgings and see. And then he introduced me to Juliet, and we grew great friends, for though she was much taller and more womanly, she was only one year older than me. And we used to walk, and talk a great deal to each other, all the time we remained at ——, which was about three months; and, though we have not met since Fred bought Millbank, and came to this part of the country, she often writes to me sweet letters, full of poetry,—such poetry as she knows will please me; and in one of her letters, Cousin Anthony, she wrote a good deal about you.”

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“About me!—Oh, tell me, Clary, what she said about me.”

“She said,” replied the child, blushing very deeply, and speaking so low that Anthony could only just catch the words, “that she loved you. That you were the only man she had ever seen that realized her dreams of what man ought to be. And what she said of you made me love you too, and I felt proud that you were my cousin.”

“Dear amiable Clary,” and the delighted Anthony unconsciously covered the delicate white hand held within his own with passionate kisses.

“You must not take me for Juliet,” and Clary quietly withdrew her hand. “But I am so glad that you love her, because we shall be able to talk about her. I have a small portfolio she gave me, full of pretty poems, which I will give to you, for I know all the poems by heart.”

Anthony no longer heard her. He was wrapt up in a blissful dream, from which he was in no hurry to awaken. Many voices spake to his soul, but over all, he heard one soft deep voice, whose tones pierced its utmost recesses, and infused new life and hope into his breast, which said—“Juliet loves you.’”

CHAPTER XV.

> She hath forsaken God and trusted man,
> And the dark curse by man inherited
> Hath fallen upon her.—S.M.

We must now return to Godfrey Hurdlestone, and we find him comfortably settled in the hospitable mansion of Captain Whitmore, a great favorite with aunt Dorothy, and an object of increasing interest and sympathy to the fair Juliet.

Had she forgotten Anthony? Oh, no. She still loved him, but dared not whisper to her own heart the forbidden fact. Did she believe him guilty? Not exactly. But the whole affair was involved in mystery, and she had not confidence enough in her own judgment to overrule the prejudices of others. She could not pronounce him innocent, and she strove to banish his image as a matter of necessity—a sacrifice that duty demanded of her—from her mind.

Could she receive with pleasure the attentions of such a man as Godfrey Hurdlestone? She did, for he was so like Anthony, that there were times when she could almost have fancied them one and the same. He wanted the deep feeling—the tenderness—the delicacy of her absent lover, but he had wit, beauty, and vivacity, an imposing manner, and that easy assurance which to most women is more attractive than modest merit.

Juliet did not love Godfrey, but his conversation amused her, and helped to divert her mind from brooding over unpleasant thoughts. She received him with kindness, for his situation claimed her sympathy, and she did all in her power to reconcile him to the change which had taken place in his circumstances. Godfrey was not insensible to the difference in her manner, when addressing him, to what it had been formerly, and he attributed that to a growing attachment which was but the result of pity. Without giving him the least encouragement to entertain hopes she never meant to realize, Juliet, with all the romance of her nature, had formed the happy scheme of being able to convert the young infidel from the paths of doubt and error, and animating him with an earnest zeal to obtain a better heritage than the one he had lost.

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Young enthusiasts are fond of making proselytes, and Juliet was not aware that she was treading upon dangerous ground, with a very subtle companion. Untouched by the sacred truths she sought to impress upon his mind, and which indeed were very distasteful to him, Godfrey, in order to insinuate himself into the good graces of his fair instructress, seemingly lent a willing ear to her admonitions, and pretended to be deeply sensible of their importance.

Since he had arrived at an age to think for himself, he had rejected the Bible, and never troubled himself to peruse its pages. Juliet proposed that they should read it together, and an hour every afternoon was chosen for that purpose. Godfrey, in order to lengthen these interviews, started objections at every line, in his apparent anxiety to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

With all the zeal of a youthful and self-elected teacher, Juliet found a peculiar pleasure in trying to clear up the disputed points; in removing his doubts and strengthening his faith; and, when at length he artfully seemed to yield to her arguments, the glow that brightened her cheeks, and proclaimed the innocent joy of her heart, gave to her lovely countenance a thousand additional charms.

One evening their lecture had been protracted to an unusual length; and Juliet concluded from the silence of her pupil, that he was at last convinced of the truth of her arguments. She closed the sacred volume, and awaited her companion's answer, but he remained buried in profound thought.

"Mr. Godfrey, do you still believe in the non-existence of a Deity?"

"Forgive me, Juliet, if my thoughts had strayed from heaven to earth. I will, however, tell you the purport of them. If all men are equal in the sight of the Creator, why does not the same feeling pervade the breast of his creatures?"

"Because men are not endowed with the wisdom of God, neither can they judge righteously, as he judges. That all men are equal in his sight, the text we have just read sufficiently proves: 'The rich and the poor meet together. The Lord is the maker of them all.'"

"Then why is wealth an object of adoration to the crowd, whilst poverty, even in those who once possessed great riches, is regarded with contempt and pity?"

"The world gives a value to things which in themselves are of no importance," said Juliet. "I think, however, that I should scorn myself, could I regard with indifference the friends I once loved, because they had been deprived of their worldly advantages."

"You make me proud of my poverty, Miss Whitmore. It has rendered me rich in your sympathy."

“Obtain your wealth from a higher source, Mr. Hurdlestone,” said Juliet, not, perhaps, displeased with the compliment, “and you will learn to regard with indifference the riches of the world.”

“But supposing, my dear friend, for argument’s sake, that you had a lover to whom you were fondly attached, and he was suddenly deprived of the fortune which had placed you on an equality, would this circumstance alter your regard for him?”

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“Certainly not.”

“And, in spite of these disadvantages, you would become his wife?”

“That would depend on circumstances. I might be under the guidance of parents, who, from prudential motives, might forbid so rash a step; and it would be no act of friendship to the man I loved, to increase his difficulties by attempting to share them.”

“And in such a case would you not act upon the decision of your own heart?”

“I dare not. The heart, blinded by its affections for the object of its love, might err in its decision, and involve both parties in ruin.”

“But you could not call this love?”

“Yes, Mr. Hurdlestone, and far more deserving of the name than the sickly sentiment that so often wears the guise of real affection.”

“This girl is too much of a philosopher. I shall never be able to win her to my purpose,” said Godfrey, as Juliet quitted the room.

A few days after this conversation, Godfrey proposed taking a ride on horseback with Miss Whitmore.

Juliet was fond of this exercise, in which she greatly excelled. This evening she did not wish to go, but was overruled by her father and Aunt Dorothy. The evening was warm and cloudy, and Juliet often looked upwards and prophesied a storm.

“It will not come on before night,” said her companion. “I remember Anthony and I, when boys, were overtaken on this very spot by a tremendous tempest.” It was the first time he had suffered the name of his cousin to pass his lips in the presence of Juliet. It brought the color into her cheeks, and in a timid voice she inquired if he knew what had become of Anthony?

“He had a second cousin, it seems, a Mr. Wildegrave, who is residing in his father’s parish; Anthony has found a temporary home with him.”

Why did Juliet turn so pale? Did the recollection of the fair amiable girl she had met and loved at —— trouble her? She spoke no more during their long ride. On their way home, they entered a dark avenue, that led to the Lodge, and passed through Norgood Park.

“I hate this road,” said Godfrey. “I have never travelled it since the old place passed into the hands of strangers.”

“It was thoughtless in me to propose this path, Mr. Godfrey; let us return by the road.”

She checked her horse as she spoke, when her attention was aroused by a female figure, seated in a dejected attitude beneath an old oak tree. Her hair hung wildly about her shoulders; and her head was buried between her knees.

Godfrey instantly recognised the person; and looking up at the heavy dark clouds, which had for some time been encroaching upon the rich saffron hues in the west, he said hastily turning his horse, “You are right, Miss Whitmore we are going to have a storm, and you have chosen a dangerous path. Let us get from under these trees as fast as we can.”

“Stay a few minutes. I want to speak to this poor woman.”

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“It is only some gipsy girl who has been sleeping under the tree. See, it begins to rain. Do you not hear the large drops pattering upon the leaves? If you do not put your horse on, you will get very wet.”

“I am not afraid of a few drops of rain. The person seems in distress—I must speak to her.”

At this moment the girl slowly rose from her seat, and revealed the faded, attenuated features of Mary Mathews.

“Mary!” exclaimed Juliet, shocked and astonished at the recognition; “what are you doing here? The rain is falling fast. Had you not better go home?”

“Home!” said the girl gloomily. “I have no home. The wide world is my home, and ’tis a bad place for the motherless and moneyless to live in. My father is dead; Mr. ——— seized our things yesterday for the rent, and turned us out into the streets; my brother is gone to Ashton to look for employment, and I thought this place was as good as another; I can sit here and brood over my wrongs.”

Juliet was inexpressibly shocked. She turned to address a remark to her companion, but to her increasing surprise, he was no longer in sight. A vague suspicion flashed upon her mind. She was determined to satisfy her doubts. Turning again to the girl, she addressed her in a kind soothing tone.

“Have you no friends, Mary, who can receive you until your brother is able to provide for you?”

“I never had many friends, Miss Juliet, and I have lost those I once had. You see how it is with me,” she cried, rising and wringing her hands. “No respectable person would now receive me into their house. There is the work-house, to be sure. But I will die here, beneath the broad ceiling of heaven, before its accursed walls shall shut me in.”

Juliet’s heart prompted her to offer the wretched girl an asylum; but she dreaded the indignation of her fastidious aunt. Whilst she paused, irresolute how to act, the girl, emboldened by despair, suddenly caught hold of her bridle, and fixing her dim eyes upon her face, continued:—

“It is to you, Miss Juliet, that I owe all this grief and misery—yes, to you. Had you been a poor girl, like myself, I need not have cared for you. My face is as pretty as yours, my figure as good. I am as capable of love, and of being loved; but I lack the gold, the fine clothing, and the learning, that makes you my superior. People say that you are going to marry Mr. Hurdlestone; and it is useless for a poor girl like me to oppose the wishes of a grand lady like you. But I warn you not to do it. He is my husband in the sight of

God; and the thought of his marrying you has broken my heart. Despair is strong; and when I saw you together just now, I felt that I should like to murder you both!"

"Mary," said Juliet, gravely, "you should not give ear to such reports—they are utterly false. Do you imagine that any young woman of principle would marry such a man as Mr. Hurdlestone?"

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“Then why are you constantly together?” returned Mary, with flashing eyes. “Did he not ride away the moment he saw me?”

“You have mistaken one Mr. Hurdlestone for the other. The gentleman that just left me was Mr. Godfrey.”

“And is it not Mr. Godfrey I mean? Good kind Mr. Anthony would not harm a lamb, much less a poor motherless girl like me!”

Again wringing her hands, she burst into a fit of passionate weeping. Juliet was dreadfully agitated; and springing from her horse, she sat down upon the bank beside the unfortunate young woman, regardless of the loud roaring of the thunder, and the heavy pouring of the rain, and elicited from her the story of her wrongs.

Indignant at the base manner in which she had been deceived by Godfrey Hurdlestone, Juliet bade Mary follow her to the Lodge, and inform her aunt of the particulars that she had just related to her.

“I will never betray the man I love!” cried Mary, passionately. “When I told you my secret, Miss Whitmore, it was under the idea that you loved him—that you meant to tear him from me. Tell no one, I beseech you, the sad story, which you wrung from me in my despair!”

She would have flung herself at Juliet’s feet; but the latter drew back, and said, with a sternness quite foreign to her nature:

“Would you have me guilty of a base fraud, and suffer the innocent to bear the brand of infamy, which another had incurred? Affection cannot justify crime. The feelings with which you regard a villain like Godfrey Hurdlestone are not deserving of the name of love.”

“Ah, you young ladies are so hard-hearted,” said Mary, bitterly. “Pride hinders you from falling into temptation, like other folk. If you dared, you would be no better than one of us.”

“Mary, do not change my pity for your unhappy situation into contempt. Religion and propriety of conduct can protect the poorest girl from the commission of crime. I am sorry for you, and will do all in my power to save you from your present misery. But you must promise me to give up your evil course of life.”

“You may spare yourself the trouble,” said the girl, regarding her companion’s beautiful countenance, and its expression of purity and moral excellence, with a glance of envious disdain. “I ask no aid; I need no sympathy; and, least of all, from you, who have robbed me of my lover, and then reproach me with the evil which your selfish love of admiration has brought upon me.”

A glow of anger passed over Miss Whitmore's face, as the girl turned to leave her. She struggled a few minutes with her feelings, until her better nature prevailed; and following Mary, she caught her by the arm:

"Stay with me, Mary! I forgive the rash words you uttered. I am sure you cannot mean what you say."

"You had better leave me," said the girl, gloomily. "Evil thoughts are rising in my heart against you, and I cannot resist them."

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“You surely would not do me any harm?” and Juliet involuntarily glanced towards her horse, which was quietly grazing a few paces off, “particularly when I feel most anxious to serve you.”

The girl’s countenance betrayed the most violent agitation. She turned upon Juliet her fine eyes, in which the light of incipient madness gleamed, and said in a low, horrid voice,

“I hate you. I should like to kill you!”

Juliet felt that to run from her, or to offer the least resistance, would be the means of drawing upon herself the doom which her companion threatened. Seating herself upon a fallen tree, and calmly folding her hands together, she merely uttered, “Mary, may God forgive you for your sinful thought!” and then awaited in silence the issue of this extraordinary and painful scene.

The girl stood before her, regarding her with a fixed and sullen tone. Sometimes she raised her hand in a menacing attitude; and then, again, the sweet mild glance of her intended victim appeared to awe her into submission.

“Shall I kill her?” she muttered aloud. “Shall I spoil that baby face, which he prefers to mine?” Then as if that thought aroused all the worst feelings in her breast, she continued in a louder, harsher tone, “Yes—I will tread her beneath my feet—I will trample her into the dust; for he loves her. Oh, misery, misery! he loves her better than me—than me who love him so well—who could die for him! Oh, agony of agonies! for her sake I am forgotten and despised!”

The heart of the woman was touched by the vehemence of her own passions. Her former ferocity gave way, and she sank down upon the ground, and buried her face in the long grass, and wept.

Her agonising sobs and groans were more than Juliet could listen to, without offering a word of comfort to the mourner. Forgetful of her former fears, she sat down by the prostrate weeper, and lifting her head upon her knees put back from her swollen face the long-neglected tresses, which, drenched by the heavy rain, fell in thick masses over her convulsed features. Mary no longer offered any resistance. Her eyes were closed, her lips apart. She lay quite motionless, but ever and anon the pale lips quivered; and streams of tears gushed from beneath the long lashes that shrouded her eyes, and fell like rain over her garments.

Oh, love and guilt, how dreadful is your struggle in the human heart! Like Satan after his first transgression, the divine principle, still retains somewhat of its sovereign power and dignity, and appears little less

"Than archangel ruined."

"Poor Mary!" sighed Juliet, "your sin has indeed found you out! Thank heaven, the man I love is not guilty of this moral murder. Oh, Anthony, how I have injured you! I ought to have known that you were utterly incapable of a crime like this!"

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“Leave me, Miss Juliet,” said Mary, regaining her self-possession; “leave me to my own sorrow. Oh, I wish I could die and forget it all! But I dare not die. Hateful as life has become, I dare not look upon death. Do not weep for me—your tears will drive me mad! Do not look at me so—it makes me hate you. Do not ask me to go to the Lodge, for I will not go!” she cried, springing to her feet, and clenching her hands. “I am my own mistress! You cannot make me obey you. If I choose to bid defiance to the world, and live as I please, it is no business of yours. You shall not—you dare not attempt to control me!” And brushing past Miss Whitmore, she was soon lost among the trees. Juliet drew a freer breath when she was gone, and turning round beheld her father.

“What are you doing here in the rain, Juliet? your habit is soaked with water. And where is Godfrey?”

“Take me home, papa!” said Juliet, flinging herself into his arms, and sobbing upon his shoulder. “Godfrey is gone for ever. I have been dreadfully frightened; but I will tell you all when we get home. I cannot tell you here!”

CHAPTER XVI.

> Whate’er thou hast to say, speak boldly out;
> Confront me like a man—I shall not start.
> Nor shiver, nor turn pale. My hand is firm,
> My heart is firmer still; and both are braced
> To meet the hour of danger—S.M.

About a mile and a half from the village of Ashton, at the head of an obscure cross road, seldom traversed but by wagoners and their teams, or the day laborer going to and fro from the neighboring farms to his work, there stood, a little back in a pathway field, a low public house, whose signboard merely contained the following blunt announcement to mark the owner’s calling,

> “Table Beer
> Sold Here.”

The master of this obscure house of entertainment (which from its lonely situation might have been termed anything but public,) was a notorious poacher, familiarly known as Old Strawberry; and his cottage, for it deserved no better name, was the nightly resort of all the idle young fellows in the parish.

The in-door accommodations of the house consisted of two rooms below, and two attics above, and a long lean-to, which ran the whole length of the back of the building, forming an easy mode of egress, should need be, from the chamber windows above. The front rooms were divided into a sort of bar, which was separated from the kitchen

by a high, old-fashioned stamped-leather screen, behind which a stout red faced middle aged woman held despotic sway, dispensing as many oaths to her customers as she did pots of beer. The other room was of a more private nature. It was fitted up with tables, cards and dice, to which none but the initiated were ever admitted.

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The outside of the place had a worn and dilapidated appearance; but the inside was not at all deficient in comfort. The public room contained a good substantial oak dining-table, a dozen well polished elm chairs, an old fashioned varnished clock, and a huge painted cupboard in a corner, the doors of which were left purposely open, in order to display dame Strawberry's store of "real chany" cups and saucers, four long-necked cut-glass decanters, and a dozen long-legged ale-glasses. Then there was a side-table decorated with a monstrous tea-board, in which was portrayed, in all the colors of the rainbow, the queen of Sheba's memorable visit to the immortal wisdomship of Solomon.

Various pictures made gay the white-washed walls, amidst which shone conspicuously the history of the prodigal son, representing in six different stages a panoramic view of his life, in which the hero figured in the character of a fop in the reign of the first George, dressed in a sky blue coat, scarlet waistcoat, knee breeches, silk stockings, and high-heeled shoes, and to crown all, a full bottomed wig. Then there were the four Seasons, quaintly represented by four damsels, who all stared upon you with round eyes, and flushed red faces, dame Winter forming the only exception, whose grey locks and outstretched hands seemed to reproach her jolly companions for their want of sympathy in her sufferings.

Over the mantel-shelf hung a looking-glass in a carved frame, darkened and polished by the rubbing of years, quite a relic of the past, the top of which was ornamented by a large fan of peacock's feathers, and bunches of the pretty scentless flowers called "Love everlasting." A couple of guns slung to the beams that crossed the ceiling; an old cutlass in its iron scabbard, and a very suspicious-looking pair of horse pistols, completed the equipment of the room. The lean-to contained a pantry and wash-house, and places for stowing away game and liquor.

The private room was infinitely better furnished than the one just described. It boasted the luxury of a carpeted floor, and a dozen of painted cane-bottomed chairs, several mahogany card-tables, and a good mirror.

In this room a tall drooping girl was busily employed in wiping the dust from the furniture, and placing the cards and dice upon the tables. Sometimes she stopped and sighed heavily, or looked upwards and pressed her hand upon her head, with a sad and hopeless glance; ever and anon wiping away the tears that trickled down her pale cheeks with the corner of her checked apron.

The door was suddenly flung open with a sound that made the girl start, and the broad person of Mrs. Strawberry filled up the opening.

"Mary Mathews!" she shouted at the top of her voice, "what are you dawdling about? Do you think that I can afford to pay gals a shilling a week to do nothing? Just tramp to the kitchen and wash them potatoes for the men's supper. I don't want no fine ladies

here, not I, I’se can tell you! If your brother warn’t a good customer it is not another hour that I’d keep you, you useless lazy slut!”

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“I was busy putting the room to rights, ma’am,” said Mary, her indignation only suffered to escape her in the wild proud flash of her eye. “I can’t be in two places at once!”

“You must learn to be in three or four, if I please,” again bawled the domestic Hecate. “Your time is mine; I have bought it, and I’ll take good care not to be cheated out of what’s my due. Light up them candles. Quick! I hear the men whistling to their dogs. They’ll be here directly.”

Away waddled the human biped, and Mary, with another heavy sigh, lighted the candles, and retreated into the bar-room.

The night was cold and damp, although it was but the first week in October. The men were gathered about the fire, to dry their clothes and warm themselves. The foremost of these was Godfrey Hurdlestone. “Polly!” he shouted. “Polly Mathews, bring me a glass of brandy, and mind you don’t take toll by the way.”

The men laughed. “A little would do the girl good, and raise her spirits,” said old Strawberry. “Never mind him, my dear. He’s a stingy one. Take a good sup. Brandy’s good for every thing. It’s good for the head-ache, and the tooth-ache, and the heart-ache. That’s right, take it kindly. It has put a little blood into your pale face already.”

“I wish it would put a little into her heart,” said Godfrey: “she’s grown confoundedly dull of late.”

“Why, Master Godfrey, who’s fault is that, I should like to know?” said the old poacher. “You drink all the wine out of the cask, and then kick and abuse it, because ’tis empty. Now, before that girl came across you, she was as high-spirited a tom-boy as ever I seed. She’d come here at the dead o’ night to fetch home her old dad, when she thought he’d been here long enough, and she’d a song and a jest for us all. She could take her own part then, and not one of my fellows dared to say a crooked word to her. I thought that she was the last girl in the world to be brought to sich a pass.”

“Hush,” said Godfrey; “what’s the use of ripping up old grievances? Here comes Mathews with the game!”

“A poor night’s work,” said that ruffian, flinging down a sack upon the floor. “Five hares, three brace of pheasants, and one partridge. It was not worth venturing a trip across the herring pond for such a paltry prize. Here, Poll! stow them away in the old place. In two hours they’ll be upon their journey to Lunnon without the aid of wings. Mind, girl, and keep a good look-out for the mail.”

“Tim will take them to the four cross ways,” said Mrs. Strawberry. “I want Mary at home. Why, boys, you have hardly earned your supper.”

“If it’s ready, let us have it upon trust, mother,” said Godfrey: “this cold work in the plantations makes a fellow hungry.”

In a moment all was bustle and confusion: the clatter of plates, and the clashing of knives and forks, mingled with blasphemous oaths and horrid jests, as the *worthy* crew sat down to partake of their evening meal. Over all might be heard the shrill harsh voice of Mistress Strawberry, scolding, screaming, and ordering about in all directions.

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The noisy banquet was soon ended; and some of the principals, like Godfrey and his associate Mathews, retired to the inner room, to spend the rest of the night in gambling and drinking. Mary was, as usual, in attendance to supply their empty glasses, and to procure fresh cards, if required.

“I don’t think I shall play to-night, Mathews,” said Godfrey, drawing his companion aside. “I lost all I was worth yesterday; and Skinner is not here. He’s the only one worth plucking; the rest are all minus of cash just now.”

“By the way, Godfrey,” said Mathews, “what do you mean to do about that three hundred pounds you owe to Drew? You would buy the cattle. They were not worth half the money you paid for them; but you were drunk, and would have your own way. You must return the horses at a great loss.”

“That’s out of my power. They are gone—lost in a bet last night to that lucky fool, Skinner.”

“Whew! you are a precious fellow. I am glad that I was not born under the same star. Why, Drew insists upon being paid, and threatens to take legal steps against you.”

“I have provided for that,” said Godfrey. “Look here.” They stepped to the table at the far end of the room, and young Hurdlestone drew from his pocket-book a paper which he gave to Mathews. “Will that pass?”

“What is this? An order for three hundred pounds upon the bank of ——, drawn by the Jew, Haman Levi. What eloquence did you employ to obtain such a prize?”

“It’s forged,” said Godfrey, drawing close up to him, and whispering the words in his ear. “Did ever counterfeit come so close to reality?”

“Why, ’tis his own hand.”

“Do you think it will escape detection?”

“Old Stratch himself could hardly find it out. You may get the blunt as soon as you like; and, if this succeeds, my boy, you will soon be able to replenish our empty purses.” And Mathews rubbed his hands together, and chuckled with delight.

“Have you heard anything of Anthony?” said Godfrey. “Is he still with young Wildegrave?”

“I saw him this morning in the lane, by the old yew grove, near the park. He was walking very lovingly with a pretty little girl. I wonder what there is in him to make the girls so fond of him. I raised my hat as he passed, and gave him the time of day, and hang me, if he did not start, as if he had seen his father.”

“Are they reconciled?”

“Not a bit of it. Wildegrave’s man told me that he never goes near the Hall. Between ourselves, Mr. Godfrey, this proves your cousin to be a shrewd clever fellow. The only way to get those stingy old chaps to leave their money to their lawful heirs is by taking no notice of them.”

“Oh that this Anthony were out of my path!” said Godfrey, lowering his voice to a whisper. “We could soon settle the old man’s business.”

“The lad’s a good lad,” said the other. “I don’t much relish the idea of having his blood to answer for. If we could but get the father and son into an open quarrel, which would place him in suspicious circumstances—do you understand me?—and then do the old man’s business—the blame might fall upon him instead of upon you.”

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“I would certainly rather transfer the hemp collar to his neck, if it could be safely accomplished. But how can it be brought about?”

“The devil will help us at a pinch. I have scarcely turned it over in my mind. But I’m sure your heart would fail you, Godfrey, if it came to murder.”

“Do you take *me* for a coward?”

“Not exactly. I was making some allowance for natural affection.”

“Pshaw!” muttered his companion. “Only give me the chance. Affection! What affection do I owe to father or son? Anthony robbed me of my father’s heart, and now stands between me and my uncle’s fortune.”

“I owe Anthony something on my own account, if it were only for the contempt with which he treated me in the presence of Miss Whitmore. By-the-by, Mr. Godfrey, are all your hopes in that quarter at an end?”

“Oh, hang her! Don’t name her, Mathews. I would rather have Mary without a farthing than be domineered over by that pretty prude, and her hideous old aunt. I believe I might have the old maid for the asking—ha! ha! ha!”

“Mr. Godfrey,” said Mathews, taking no notice of his mistimed mirth, “I would advise you, as a friend, not to mention our designs on the old miser to Mary.”

“She won’t peach.”

“I’d not trust her. Women are strange creatures. They will often do the most wicked things when their own interests and passions are concerned; and, at other times, will sacrifice their best friends, from a foolish qualm of conscience, or out of a mistaken feeling of benevolence. If you wish our scheme to be successful, don’t let Mary into the secret.”

A wild laugh sounded in his ears: both started; and, on turning round, beheld Mary standing quietly beside them. Mathews surveyed his sister with a stern searching glance. She smiled contemptuously; but drew back, as if she feared him.

“Did you overhear our conversation, Mary?”

“I can keep my own secrets,” said the girl, sullenly. “I don’t want to be burthened with yours. They are not worth the trouble of keeping. My sleep is bad enough already. A knowledge of your deeds, William, would not make it sounder.”

“It would make you sleep so soundly that evil thoughts would not be likely to keep you awake,” said her brother, clenching his fist in her face. “Betray but one syllable of what you have overheard, and your bed is prepared for you.”

“I do not care how soon,” said Mary; “if you hold out such a temptation, I don’t know what I might be tempted to do. They say that the sins of the murdered are all visited upon the murderer. What a comfort it would be to transfer mine to you.” This was said in a tone of bitter irony; and, however unwilling to betray himself, it seemed to produce a strange effect upon the mind of the ruffian.

“Who talks of murder?” he said. “You are dreaming. Go to your bed, Mary. It is late; and don’t forget to say your prayers.”

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“Prayers!” said the girl with a mocking laugh. “The prayers of the wicked never come up before the throne of God. My prayers would sound in my own ears like blasphemy. How would they sound in the ears of God?”

“Don’t talk in that way, Mary; you make my flesh creep,” said Mathews. “I have never said a prayer since I was a boy at my mother’s knee, and that was before Mary was born. Had mother lived I should not have been what I now am; and poor Mary—.” He paused; there was a touch of tenderness in the ruffian’s tone and manner. The remembrance of that mother’s love seemed the only holy thing that had ever been impressed upon his mind; and sunk even as he was in guilt, and hardened in crime, had he followed its suggestions it would have led him back to God, and made him the protector, instead of the base vendor of his sister’s honor.

“What is the use of dwelling upon the past?” said Godfrey, pettishly. “We were all very good little boys once. At least my father always told me so; and by the strange contradictions which abound in human nature, I suppose that that was the very reason which made me grow up a bad man. And bad men we both are, Mathews, in the world’s acceptation, and we may as well make the most we can of our acquired reputation.”

“Now I would like to know,” said Mathews, gloomily, “if you have ever felt a qualm of conscience in your life?”

“I do not believe in a future state. Let that answer you.”

“Do you never fear the dark?” returned Mathews, glancing stealthily around. “Never feel that eyes are looking upon you—cold, glassy eyes, that peer into your very soul—eyes which are not of this world, and which no other eyes can see? Snuff the candles, Mary. The room looks as dismal as a vault.”

Godfrey burst into a loud laugh. “If I were troubled with such ocular demonstrations I would wear spectacles. By Jove! Bill Mathews, waking or sleeping, I never was haunted by an evil spirit worse than yourself. But here’s Skinner at last! Fetch a bottle of brandy and some glasses to yon empty table, Mary. I must try to win back from him what I lost last night.”

CHAPTER XVII.

Oh! speak to me of her I love,
  And I shall think I hear
The voice whose melting tones, above
  All music, charms mine ear.—S.M.

Whilst Godfrey Hurdlestone was rapidly traversing the broad road that leads down to the gates of death, Anthony was regaining his peace of mind in the quiet abode of domestic love. Day after day the young cousins whiled away the charmed hours in delightful converse. They wandered hand in hand through green quiet lanes, and along sunny paths, talking of the beloved. Clary felt no jealous envy mar the harmony of her dove-like soul, as she listened to Anthony's rapturous details of the hours he had spent with Juliet, his poetical descriptions of her lovely countenance and easy figure. Nay, she often pointed out graces which he had omitted, and repeated, with her musical voice, sweet strains of song by her young friend, to him unknown.

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Was there no danger in this intercourse? Clarissa Wildegrave felt none. In her young heart's simplicity, she dreamed not of the subtle essence which unites kindred spirits. She never asked herself why she loved to find the calm noble-looking youth for ever at her side; why she prized the flowers he gathered, and loved the songs he loved; why the sound of his approaching steps sent the quick blood glowing to her pallid cheek, and lighted up those thoughtful dreamy eyes with a brilliancy which fell with the serene lustre of moon or star-light upon the heart of her cousin—to him as holy and as pure.

She loved to talk of Juliet, for it brought Anthony nearer. She loved to praise her, for it called up a smile upon his melancholy face; the expression of his brow became less stern, and his glance met hers, full of grateful tenderness. She loved to see her own girlish face reflected in the dark depths of those beautiful eyes, nor knew that the mysterious fire they kindled in her breast was destined to consume her young heart, and make it the sepulchre of her new-born affections.

"It must be a blessed thing to be loved as you love Juliet, Anthony," she said, as they were sitting together beneath the shadow of the great oak which graced the centre of the lawn in front of the house. "Could you not share your heart with another?"

"Why, my little Clary, what would you do with half a heart?" said Anthony, smiling; for he always looked upon his fragile companion as a child. "Love is a selfish fellow, he claims the whole, concentrates all in himself, or scatters abroad."

"You are right, Anthony. I am sure if I had the half, I should soon covet the whole. It would be a dangerous possession, and stand between me and heaven. No, no, it would not be right to ask that which belongs to another; only it seems so natural to wish those to love us whom we love."

"I do love you, sweet Clary, and you must continue to love me; though it is an affection quite different from that which I feel for Juliet. You are the sister whom nature denied me—the dear friend whom I sought in vain amidst the world and its heartless scenes; my good angel, whose pure and holy influence subdues the evil passions of my nature, and renders virtue more attractive. I love you, Clary. I feel a better and humbler creature in your presence; and when you are absent, your gentle admonitions stimulate me to further exertions."

"I am satisfied, dear Anthony," said Clary, lifting her inspired countenance, and gazing steadily upon him. "As yon heavens exceed in height and glory the earth beneath, so far, in my estimation, does the love you bear to me exceed that which you feel for Juliet. One is of the earth, and like the earth must perish; the other is light from heaven. Evermore let me dwell in this light."

With an involuntary movement, Anthony pressed the small white hand he held in his own to his lips. Was there the leaven of earth in that kiss, that it brought the rosy glow

into the cheek of Clary, and then paled it to death-like whiteness? “Clary,” he said, “have you forgotten the promise you made me a few days ago?”

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Clary looked up inquiringly.

“To show me Juliet’s portfolio.”

“Oh, yes, and there are some lines about love, that I will sing and play to you,” said Clary, rising.

“Have you got the music?”

“It is all here,” said the fair girl, placing her hand upon her breast. “The heart is the fountain from which all my inspiration flows.” And she bounded off to fetch her harp and the portfolio.

Anthony looked after her, but no regretful sigh rose to his lips. His heart was true to the first impression to which love had set his seal; its affections had been consecrated at another shrine, and he felt that his dear little cousin could never stand in a tenderer relation to him.

Clary returned quite in a flutter with the exertion she had used. Anthony sprang forward to relieve her of the harp, and to place it in a convenient situation.

“Juliet had a great fear of being married for her money,” said Clary. “I used to laugh at her, and tell her that no one who knew her would ever remember her money; the treasures of her mind so far surpassed the dross of the world. Yet, for all that, she wrote and gave me this ballad the next morning. I felt very much inclined to scold her for her want of faith.”

“Do let me hear it.”

“Patience, Mr. Anthony. You must give me time to tune my harp. Such a theme as love requires all the strings to sound in perfect unison. There now—let me think a few minutes. The air must be neither very sad, nor yet gay. Something touching and tender. I have it now—”

THE MAIDEN’S DREAM.

In all the guise that beauty wears,
  Well known by many a fabled token,
Last night I saw young Love in tears,
  With stringless bow and arrows broken.
Oh, waving light in wanton flow,
  Fair, sunny locks his brows adorn,
And on his cheeks the roseate glow
  With which Aurora decks the morn.

The living light in those blind eyes
  No mortal tongue could ere disclose;
Their hue was stol'n from brighter skies,
  Their tears were dew-drops on the rose.
Around his limbs of heavenly mould
  A rainbow-tinted vest was flung,
Revealing through each lucid fold
  The faultless form by poets sung.

He sighed; the air with fragrance breath'd;
  He moved; the earth confess'd the god;
Her brightest chaplets nature wreath'd,
  Where'er his dimpled feet had press'd the sod.
"Why weeps Love's young divinity alone,
  While men have hearts, and woman charms beneath
Tell me, fair worshipp'd boy of ages flown,
  Is ev'ry flowret faded in Love's wreath?"

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With that he raised his dewy, azure eyes,
  And from his lips words of soft music broke;
But still the truant tears would crowding rise,
  And snowy bosom heave before he spoke.
“Oh, come and weep with me,” he cried, “fair maid
  Weep that the gentle reign of Love is o’er;
Come, venture nearer—cease to be afraid,
  For I have hearts and worshippers no more.

“In vain I give to woman’s lovely form
  All that can rapture on the heart bestow;
The fairest form no dastard heart can warm
  While gold has greater power than Love below.
In vain I breathe a freshness on her cheek;
  In vain the Graces round her footsteps move,
And eyes of melting beauty softly speak
  The soul-born, silent eloquence of Love.

“It was not thus,” the urchin, sighing, said,
  “When hope and gladness crowned the new-born earth.
In Eden’s bowers, beneath a myrtle’s shade,
  Before man was, Love sprang to birth.
While Heaven around me balmy fragrance shed,
  With rosy chains the infant year I bound;
And as my bride young Nature blushing led
  In vestal beauty o’er the verdant ground.

“The first fond sigh that young Love stole
  Was wafted o’er those fields of air,
To kindle light in man’s stern soul,
  And render Heaven’s best work more fair.
Creation felt that tender sigh,
  And earth received Love’s rapturous tears,
Their beauty beamed in woman’s eye,
  And music broke on human ears.

“Whether I moved upon the rolling seas,
  Or sank on Nature’s flowery lap to rest,
Or raised my light wings on the sportive breeze,
  The conscious earth with joy her god confess’d.
While Mirth and Gladness round my footsteps play’d,
  And bright-haired Hope led on the laughing Hours.
As man and beast in holy union stray’d
  To share the lucid streams and virgin flowers.

"Ah, useless then yon shafts and broken bow
  Till man abused the balm in mercy given;
Whilst gold has greater charms than Love below,
  I flee from earth to find a home in heaven!"
A sudden glory round his figure spread,
  It rose upon the sun's departing beam;
With the sad vision sleep together fled:
  Starting, I woke—and found it all a dream!

"When I try to compose music for love songs," said Clary, suddenly turning to Anthony, whom she found buried in profound thought, "I never succeed. If you understood this glorious science of music, and could make the harp echo the inborn melodies that float through the mind, you would not fail to give them the proper effect."

"Why do you think that I should be more fortunate than your sweet self, Clary?"

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“Because you ‘love one bright, particular star,’ with your whole heart, Anthony. The heart has a language of its own. It speaks in music. There are few that can comprehend its exquisite tones; but those who are so gifted are the best qualified to call them forth. Love must have existed before Music. The first sigh he breathed gave birth to melodious sounds. The first words he spake were song; so Juliet tells us, in this little poem, and surely she is inspired.”

“What else have we here?” said Anthony, peeping into the portfolio and drawing out a sheet of paper. “Is this bold energetic-looking hand my beautiful Juliet’s autograph?”

“You are disappointed, cousin Anthony. You expected to find an elegant flowing hand, as fair and graceful as the white fingers that held the pen. Now, be it known unto you, my wise cousin, that persons of genius, especially those who deal in rhymes, rarely write fine hands; their thoughts flow too rapidly to allow them the necessary time and care required to form perfect characters. Most boarding-school misses write neat and graceful hands, but few of such persons are able to compose a truly elegant sentence. The author thinks his ideas of more consequence than his autograph, which is but the mechanical process he employs to represent them on paper.”

“What sort of a hand do you write, Clary?”

“Why, cousin Anthony, it just hangs between the two extremes. Not good enough to deserve much praise, nor bad enough to call forth much censure. In this respect it corresponds more with my character than Juliet’s does.”

“You are no judge of your mental qualifications, Clary, and I am not going to make you vain by enumeration. Can you compose music for this little ballad?” and he placed one before her.

“That? Oh, no, I can do nothing with that. But hark! I hear my brother calling me from the house. Let us go to him.” She ran forward, and Anthony was about to follow her, when he was addressed in a rude familiar manner, and turning round, he beheld the burly form of William Mathews, leaning over the slight green paling that separated the lawn from the road.

“Good day to you, Mr. Anthony. You have been hiding from us of late. A pleasant place this.”

“Have you any business with me, Mr. Mathews?” said Anthony, in a voice, and with a look, which rendered his meaning unmistakeable.

“Ahem! Not exactly. But ’tis natural for one to inquire after the health of an old neighbor. Are you living here, or with the old ’un?”

“Good morning, Mr. Mathews,” said Anthony, turning coldly upon his heel. “I make a point of never answering impertinent questions.”

“Curse you for a proud fool,” muttered the ruffian, as Anthony entered the house. “If Bill Mathews does not soon pull you down from your high horse, may his limbs rot in a jail.” And calling to an ugly black cur, that was prowling round the garden, and whose physiognomy greatly resembled his own, the poacher slunk off.

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“Anthony,” said Frederic Wildegrave, as his cousin, in no very gentle mood, entered the house, “unexpected business calls me away for some weeks to a distant county. You must make yourself as comfortable as you can during my absence. Clary will do the honors of the house. By-the-by, I have just received four hundred pounds for the sale of the big marsh. I have not time to deposit the money in the bank; but will you see to it some time during the week. There is the key of my desk. You will find the money and the banker’s book in the second drawer. And now, Clary, don’t look so grave, but give me a kiss, and wish me back.”

“I don’t think that you will have any,” said Clary flinging her arms round his neck. “My heart fills with gloom at the thought of your going away—and so suddenly.”

“I shall come back as soon as I possibly can. What in tears. Silly child!”

“Don’t go, dear Fred.”

“Nonsense! Business must not be neglected.”

“Something tells me that this journey is not for good.”

“Dear Clary, I could quarrel with you for these superstitious fears. Farewell, my own darling—and joy be with you.”

Kissing again and again the tears from Clarissa’s cheek, and shaking Anthony warmly by the hand, the young master of the mansion sprang to his saddle and was gone, leaving Anthony and Clary to amuse themselves in the best manner they could.

“You must not forget, Anthony, that Fred has left you his banker. He is so generous that the money will be safer in your hands than in his own.”

Anthony laughed, and put the key of the desk into his pocket. What to him was the money? had it been four thousand, or forty thousand, he would not, in all probability have given it a second thought.

The next morning Clary was seriously indisposed, and her cousin took his breakfast alone. After making many anxious inquiries about her, and being assured by old Ruth that she only required rest to be quite well again, he retired to Frederic’s study; and taking up a volume of a new work that was just out, he was soon buried in its contents.

A loud altercation in the passage, between some person who insisted upon seeing Mr. Hurdlestone and old Ruth, broke in upon his studies.

“Will you please to send up your name, sir?” said Ruth, in no very gentle tones; “Mr. Hurdlestone is busy.”

“No. I told you before that I would announce myself.”

Anthony instantly recognised the voice, and before he could lay aside the book, Godfrey Hurdlestone stood before him.

How changed—how dreadfully changed he was, since they last met. The wicked career of a few months had stamped and furrowed his brow with the lines of years. His dress was mean and faded. He looked dirty and slovenly, and little of his former manly beauty and elegance of person remained. So utterly degraded was his appearance, that a cry of surprise broke from Anthony’s lips, so inexpressibly shocked was he at an alteration so startling.

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“I suppose you know me, Anthony,” said Godfrey, with a sarcastic smile; “I can’t be so changed as all that?”

“You are greatly changed.”

“For the worse, of course. Yes, poverty soon brings a man down who has never been used to work. It has brought me down—down to the very dust.”

“I am sorry to hear you say so. I thought that you were comfortably settled with the Whitmores until you could procure a tutorship. With your education and abilities, Godfrey, you should not appear thus.”

“I left the Whitmores a long time ago. I thought you had heard that piece of ill news, for such stories travel apace. You must know that, as ill-luck would have it, Juliet learned from Mary all the particulars of that unfortunate business, and I, of course, had to decamp. Since then the world has gone all wrong with me, and one misfortune has followed upon another, until I stand before you a lost and ruined man; and if you, Anthony, refuse to assist me, I must go headlong to destruction.”

In spite of all his affected boldness, it was evident that the speaker was dreadfully agitated. His eyes were wild and bloodshot, his fine features swollen and distorted, and his face as pale as ashes.

Anthony continued to gaze upon him with eyes full of pity and astonishment, and cheeks yet paler than his own. Could it be Algernon Hurdlestone’s son that stood before him—that cousin whom he had sworn to love and cherish as a brother, and to help to the uttermost in time of need? The solemn vow he had taken when a boy was the uppermost thought that moment in his mind; and his eyes slowly filled with tears as turning to Godfrey he said, “If I can help you I will do so to the utmost of my power. Like you, however, I am a poor man, and my power is limited.”

Godfrey remained silent.

“What can have happened to agitate you thus? What have you done that can warrant such dreadful words? Sit down, cousin. You look faint. Good Heavens! how you tremble. What can occasion this terrible distress of mind?”

“I shall be better presently. Give me a glass of brandy, Tony, to make me speak steadily. I never felt nervous before.”

His teeth chattered audibly and prevented him from speaking further. Anthony gave him the stimulant he desired. It seemed to possess some miraculous power. Godfrey rose from his chair, and coming quite close up to his cousin, he said with apparent calmness:

“Anthony, I have committed forgery.”

Anthony recoiled backward. He caught the table convulsively to keep himself from falling, as he gasped out:

“This is too dreadful! Oh, my poor uncle! Thank Heaven, you are spared the agony of this. Godfrey, Godfrey, what could induce you to perpetrate such a crime?”

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“Necessity. But don’t torture me with questions. I am punished enough already. The deed is done and the forfeit must be paid. Haman Levi, the Jew, in whose name the check was drawn, has detected the fraud. Fortunately for me he is a rascal, a man without any principle, in whom avarice is a more powerful feeling than justice. He knows that he will gain nothing by hanging me; but something considerable by a compromise that will save my life. The sum drawn by me was for three hundred pounds. Haman came to me this morning, and told me that if I paid him four hundred down within twelve hours he would acknowledge the order, and stop the prosecution; but if I refused to comply with his terms, the law should take its course. I have no money, Anthony. I know not where or how to obtain such a large sum in the given time, and if I suffer this day to expire, the season for mercy is past. Rescue me, Anthony, from this frightful situation—save me from a death of shame—and the rest of my life shall be devoted to your service!”

“Alas, Godfrey, I have already borne your shame, and though your victim has pronounced me innocent, the world considers me guilty. What can I do in this dreadful business? I have no money. And my cousin who might, perhaps, for my sake have helped you in this emergency, left us last night, and will be some weeks absent.”

“You have a father—a rich father, Anthony!” said Godfrey, writhing in despair. “Will you not go to him and make one effort—one last effort—to save my life. Think of our early years. Think of my generous father—of his love and friendship—of all he sacrificed for your sake—and will you let his son be hung like a dog, when a few words of persuasion might save him.”

The criminal bowed his head upon his hands, and wept long and passionately. Anthony was deeply affected by his misery. Had Frederic been at home, he thought, they might have done something to rescue him. They might have gone to the miser, and together represented the necessity of the case, and by offering large interest for the loan of the money, have obtained it. What was to be done? Confounded and bewildered, he could think of no plan at all likely to succeed.

Alas for Anthony! The money which had been left in his hands by Frederic Wildegrave, at that unlucky moment flashed across his mind. It was exactly the sum. He was sure that Frederic would lend it to him at his earnest request. Anthony was young and inexperienced, he had yet to learn that we are not called upon, in such matters, to think for others, or to do evil that good may come of it. He looked doubtfully in the haggard face of the wretched suppliant.

“Have you no means of raising the money, Godfrey?”

“Yes—in a few days, perhaps. But it will be too late then.”

“Cannot you persuade the Jew to wait?”

“He is inexorable. But, Anthony, if you can borrow the money for me to-day, I will repay it to-morrow night.”

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“Can you promise me this?”

“I swear it. I will sell the reversion of the legacy left me by my aunt Maitland, which falls due at her husband’s death. It is eight hundred pounds; I will sell it for half its value to meet the demand. But to accomplish this, more time is required than I can just now command. Will this satisfy you?”

“It will. But woe to us both if you deceive me!”

“Can you imagine me such an ungrateful scoundrel?”

“You have betrayed me once before. If you fail this time, Godfrey, you will not die alone.”

Anthony went to the desk, and unlocked it with a trembling hand. As he opened the drawer which contained the money, a sudden chill crept through his veins, and he paused, irresolute how to act. “It is not theft,” he argued to himself; “it is but a loan, which will soon be repaid. A few hours cannot make much difference. Long before Frederic requires the money, it will be replaced.”

He had gone too far to recede. Godfrey was already at his side and eagerly seized the golden prize. With tears of real or feigned gratitude he left the house, and Anthony had leisure to reflect upon what he had done.

The more he pondered over the rash act, the more imprudent and criminal it appeared; and when, by the next post, he received a letter from Frederic, informing him that he had made a very advantageous purchase of land, and requested him to transmit the money he had left in his keeping, his misery was complete.

“Unfortunate Anthony!” he cried. “Into what new dangers will your unhappy destiny hurry you!”

Snatching up his hat, he rushed forth in quest of his unprincipled relative.

CHAPTER XVIII.

> Strange voices still are ringing in mine ears,
> Something of shame, of anguish, and reproach;
> My brain is dark, I have forgot it all.—S.M.

In the miserable attic over the kitchen in the public-house already described, there was a sound of deep, half-suppressed, passionate weeping—a young mother weeping for her first-born, who would not be pacified. The deepest fountain of love in the human heart had been stirred; its hallowed sources abused, and violently broken up; and the

shock had been too great for the injured possessor to bear patiently. Her very reason had yielded to the blow, and she lamented her loss, as a forward child laments the loss of some favorite plaything. Had she not been a creature of passionate impulses, the death of this babe of shame would have brought a stern joy to her bereaved mind. She would have wept—for nature speaks from the heart in tears; but she would have blessed God that He had removed the innocent cause of her distress from being a partaker of her guilt, a sharer of her infamy, a lasting source of regret and sorrow.

Mary Mathews had looked forward with intense desire for the birth of this child. It would be something for her to love and cling to—something for whose sake she would be content to live—for whom she could work and toil; who would meet her with smiles, and feel its dependence upon her exertions. She thought, too, that Godfrey would love her once more, for his infant's sake. Rash girl! She had yet to learn that the love of man never returns to the forsaken object of his selfish gratification.

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The night before this event took place, violent words had arisen between Mary and her brother. The ruffian was partially intoxicated, and urged on by the infuriated spirit of intemperance, regardless of the entreaties of the woman Strawberry, or the helpless situation of the unfortunate girl, he had struck her repeatedly; and the violent passion into which his brutal unkindness had hurried his victim produced premature confinement, followed by the death of her child, a fine little boy.

Godfrey was absent when all this occurred; and though the day was pretty far advanced, he had not as yet returned.

As to William Mathews, he wished that death had removed both mother and child, as he found Mary too untractable to be of any use to him.

“My child! my child!” sobbed Mary. “What have you done with him? where have you put him? Oh! for the love of Heaven, Mrs. Strawberry, let me look at my child!”

“Hold your peace, you foolish young creature! What do you want with the corpse? You had better lie still, and be quiet, or we may chance to bury you both in the same grave.”

“Oh!” sighed the girl, burying her face in the pillow, and giving way to a fresh gush of tears, “that’s too good to happen. The wretched never die; the lost, like me, are never found. The wicked are denied the rest, the deep rest of the grave. Oh, my child! my blessed child! Let me but look upon my own flesh and blood, let me baptize the unbaptized with my tears, and I shall feel this horrible load removed from my heart.”

“It was a sad thing that it died, before it got the sign of the cross,” said the godless old woman. “Sich babes, I’ve heard the priest say, never see the light o’ God’s countenance; but the blackness of darkness abides on them for ever. Howsomever, these kind o’ childer never come to no good, whether they live or die. Young giddy creatures should think o’ that before they run into sin, and bring upon themselves trouble and confusion. I was exposed to great temptation in my day; but I never disgraced myself by the like o’ that.”

“Oh, you were very good, I dare say,” said Mary, coaxingly; “and I will think you the best and kindest woman that ever lived, if you will but let me see the poor babe.”

“What good will it do you to see it? it will only make you fret. You ought to thank God that it is gone. It was a mercy you had no right to expect. You are now just as good as ever you were. You can go into a gentleman’s service, and hold up your head with the best of them. I would not stay here, if I were you, to be kicked and ordered about by that wicked brother of yours, nor wait, like a slave, upon this Mr. Godfrey. What is he now? not a bit better than one of us. Not a shilling has he to bless himself with, and I am sure he does not care one farthing for you, and will be glad that the child is off his hands.”

“Oh, he loves me; indeed, indeed, he loves me and the child. Oh, he will grieve for the child. Mrs. Strawberry, if ever you were a mother yourself, have pity upon me, and show me the baby.”

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She caught the woman by the hand, and looked up in her face with such an expression of longing intense desire, that, harsh as she was, it melted her stony heart; and, going to a closet, she returned with the babe in her arms. It was dressed in its little cap, and long white night-gown—a cold image of purity and perfect peace.

“Oh, mine own! mine own!” wailed the young mother, pressing the cold form against her breast, as she rocked to and fro on the pillow. “My blessed innocent boy! You have left me for ever, and ever, and ever. My child! my infant love! I have wept for you—prayed for you—while yet unborn, have blessed you. Your smiles would have healed up the deep wounds of my broken heart. Together we would have wandered to some distant land, where reproaches, and curses, and blows, would never have found us; and we would have been happy in each’s other’s love—so happy! Ah, my murdered child! I call upon you, but you cannot hear me! I weep for you, but you are unconscious of my grief. Ah, woe is me! What shall I do, a-wanting thee? My heart is empty; the world is empty. Its promises are false—its love departed. My child is dead, and I am alone—-alone—alone.”

“Come, give me the babe, Mary! I hear your brother’s step upon the stair.”

“You shall not have it!” cried the girl, starting up in the bed, her eyes flashing fire. “Hush! your loud voice will waken him. He is mine. God gave him to me; and you shall not tear him from me. No other hand shall feed and rock him to sleep but mine.

“Lullaby, baby! no danger shall come,
My breast is thy pillow, my heart is thy home;
That poor heart may break, but it ever shall be
True, true to thy father, dear baby, and thee!

“Weep, mother, weep, thy loved infant is sleeping
A sleep which no storms of the world can awaken;
Ah, what avails all thy passionate weeping,
The depths of that love which no sorrow has shaken?

“All useless and lost in my desolate sadness,
No sunbeam of hope scatters light through the gloom;
Instead of the voice of rejoicing and gladness,
I hear the wind wave the rank grass on thy tomb.”

Partly moaning, and partly singing, the poor creature, exhausted by a night of severe pain, and still greater mental anxiety, dropped off into a broken slumber, with the dead infant closely pressed to her bosom.

“Well, there they lie together: the dead and the living,” said Mrs. Strawberry. “’Tis a piteous sight. I wish they were both bound to the one place. We’ll have no good of this

love-sick girl; and I have some fears myself of her brutal brother and the father of the brat. I hear his voice: they are home. Well, they may just step up, and look at their work. If this is not murder, I wonder what is?”

With a feeling of more humanity than Mrs. Strawberry was ever known to display, she arranged the coarse pillow that supported Mary’s head, and softly closing the door, descended the step-ladder that led to the kitchen; here she found Godfrey and Mathews in close conversation, the latter laughing immoderately.

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“And he took the bait so easily, Godfrey? Never suspected that it was all a sham? Ha! ha! ha! Let me look at the money. I can scarcely believe my own senses. Ha! ha! ha! Why, man, you have found out a more expeditious method of making gold than your miserly uncle ever knew.”

“Aye, but I have not his method of keeping it, Bill; but you may well laugh. This proud boy is in our toils now. I have him as sure as fate. I must say that I felt a slight pang of remorse when I saw him willing to dare so much for me; and he looked so like my father, that I could almost have fancied that the dead looked through his eyes into my soul. I have gone too far to recede. What must be, must be; none of us shape our own destinies, or some good angel would have warned Anthony of his danger.”

“What the devil has become of Mary?” said Mathews, glancing round the kitchen. “She and I had some words last night; it was a foolish piece of business, but she provoked me past endurance. I found her dressed up very smart just at nightfall, and about to leave the house. I asked her where she was going so late in the evening. She answered, ’To hear the Ranters preach in the village; that she wanted to know what they had to say to her soul.’ So I cursed her soul, and bade her go back to her chamber, and not expose her shame to the world; and she grew fierce, and asked me tauntingly, who it was that had brought her to that shame, and if I were not the greater sinner of the two; and I struck her in my anger, and drove her up stairs.”

“Struck her!” said Godfrey, starting back. “Struck a woman! That woman your sister, and in her helpless situation! You dared not do such a cowardly, unmanly act?”

“I was drunk,” said Mathews, gloomily; “and she was so aggravating that I am not sure that you would have kept your hands off her. She flew at me like an enraged tiger-cat, with clenched fists and eyes flashing fire, and returned me what I gave with interest; and I believe there would have been murder between us, if Mrs. Strawberry had not dragged her off. What has become of her, mother. How is she now?”

“You had better go up and see,” said the woman, with a bitter laugh. “She is not very likely to fight again to-day.”

There was something mysterious in the woman’s manner that startled the ruffian. “Come up with me, Godfrey, and speak to her. One word from you will make my peace with Mary. I did not mean to hurt the girl.”

Mary had been sleeping. The sound of their steps broke in upon her feverish slumber; but she still kept her eyes closed, as if unwilling to rouse herself from the stupor of grief in which she had fallen.

“She is sleeping,” said Mathews, approaching the bed. “By Jove! I thought she was dead. How still she lies. How deadly pale she looks—and what is that upon her breast?”

“A child! my child!” cried Godfrey, stepping eagerly forward. “Poor Mary! she is safe through that trial. But the child—”

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“Is dead,” said Mathews. “Yes, dead. Godfrey you are in luck. What a fortunate thing for us all.”

“Dead!” said the young father, laying his hand upon the cold pale cheek of his first born. “Aye, so it is. She was so healthy, I dared not hope for this. Poor little pale cold thing, how happy I am to see you thus! What a load of anxiety your death has removed from my heart! What a blessing it would have been if it had pleased God to take them both!”

This from the man she loved—the father of her child—was too much. Mary opened her large tear-swollen eyes, and fixed them mournfully upon his face. He stooped down, and would have kissed her; but she drew back with ill-disguised horror. The love she had so madly cherished for him was gone—vanished for ever in those cruel words, and nought but the blank darkness and horror of remorse remained. She turned upon her pillow, and fixing her eyes upon the dead infant, mentally swore that she would live for revenge. She no longer shed a tear, or uttered the least complaint, but secretly blessed God that the babe was dead. She had lived to hear the father of that child, for whose sake she had borne the contempt of her neighbors, the reproaches of conscience, and the fears of eternal punishment, rejoice in the death of his first-born; and without a tear or sigh, wish that she might share the same grave. Could such things be? Alas! they happen every day, and are the sure reward of guilt.

“My poor Mary,” said the hypocrite. “You have suffered a good deal for my sake; but do not cry. God knew best when he took the child from us. It is painful for us to part with him, but depend upon it, he is much better off where he is.”

“I know it now,” said the young mother. “Yes, Godfrey Hurdlestone, he is better off where he is; and for some wise end, God has spared my worthless life. Is that you, William? The murderer of my child has no business here.”

“Mary, it was the drink. I did not mean to hurt either you or the child; so shake hands, and say that you forgive me.”

He leant over the bed and held out his hand. Mary put it contemptuously aside. “Never,” she said firmly; “neither in this world, nor in the world to come.”

“Do you know what you say?” said Mathews, bending over the pillow and doubling his fist in his sister’s face, whilst his dark grey eyes emitted a deadly light.

“I am in my senses,” returned Mary, with a bitter laugh, “although you have done your best to drive me mad. You need not stamp your foot, nor frown, nor glare upon me like a beast of prey. I defy your malice. What I said I will again repeat; and may my curse and the curse of an offended God cleave to you for ever!”

“I will murder you for those words!” said the fiend, grinding his teeth.

“Death is no punishment. Threaten me, William, with something that I fear. I am helpless, now, but I shall soon be strong and well, and my arm may be a match for the feeble drunkard—the cowardly destroyer of women and children.”

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“Unhand me, Godfrey Hurdlestone!” roared out the villain, struggling in the powerful grasp of his colleague in guilt. “For by all the fiends of hell! she shall answer for those words!”

“Hold, Mathews! You are mad! I will stab you to the heart if you attempt to touch her.”

He spoke to the winds, for throwing him back to the wall, Mathews seized the knife from his hand, and sprang upon his intended victim. Rising slowly up in the bed, with an air of calm solemn grandeur, she held up the pure pale form of the dead child between herself and the murderer.

Not a word was spoken. With an awful curse the man reeled back as if he had been stung by a serpent, and fell writhing upon the floor, and Mary sunk back upon her pillow, and covered her face with her hands, muttering as she did so,—“How strong is innocence! The wicked are like the chaff which the wind scatters abroad. Oh, God, forgive the past, which is no longer in my power; and let the future be spent in thy service. I repent in dust and ashes. Oh, woe is me, for I have sinned!”

Rousing Mathews from the fit into which he had fallen, and in no very enviable state of mind, Godfrey left the chamber, and joined a set of notorious gamblers in the room below.

From this scene of riot and drunken debauchery, he was summoned by Mrs. Strawberry to attend a gentleman who wished to speak to him in the outer room. With unsteady steps, and a face flushed with the eager excitement of gambling. Godfrey followed his conductress, and ruffian as he was, his cheek paled, and his eyes sought the ground when he found himself in the presence of his injured cousin.

Shocked at the situation in which he found him, Anthony briefly stated the difficulty he had had in tracing Godfrey to this infamous resort, and the awkward circumstances in which he was placed with young Wildegrave; and he claimed the promise made to him by his cousin on the preceding day, to relieve him from the impending danger.

“I told you that to-night, Anthony, the money should be repaid. The clock has not yet struck for eight. If I have luck, it shall be returned before twelve to-night.”

“Luck!” reiterated Anthony, gasping for breath, as he staggered to the wall for support. “Is it on such a precarious basis that my honor and your honesty must rest? You talked yesterday of the sale of your reversionary property.”

“I did. But the Jew was too cunning for me. He became the purchaser, and the money just satisfied his demand, and covered an old debt of honor, that I had forgotten was due to him, and I am worse off than I was before.”

“But you can restore the money you got from me last night, as Haman was satisfied by the sale of the legacy.”

“I could if you had called two hours ago. I was tempted to try my luck in the hope of gaining a few pounds for my self, and—”

“It is lost at the gaming table?”

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Godfrey nodded his head.

“It is well,” said Anthony, bitterly. “You have saved your own life by transferring the doom to me.”

He did not wait for further explanation, but walked rapidly from the house; and after a thousand severe self-upbraidings, in a fit of despair, took the road that led through Ashton Park to the miser’s dwelling.

After an hour’s walk he came in sight of the wretched hovel. It was now evening, and a faint light, shed from a rush candle, gleamed through the broken apertures of the low casement. He paused upon the threshold of this abode of want and misery, and for the first time in his life he thought it had been well for him had he never left it. For some time he continued knocking loudly at the door, without being able to gain admittance; at, length, bolt after bolt was slowly withdrawn, and the miser himself let him in.

“It is well, Grenard, that you are home at last,” growled forth the surly old man. “If you make a practice of staying out so late at night, we shall both be murdered.”

But when, on holding up the light, he discovered his mistake, and recognised the features of his son, he demanded in an angry tone, “What business he had with him?”

Anthony pushed past him, and entered the house.

“Father, I will tell you immediately—but I am tired and ill. I must sit down.”

Without regarding the old man’s stern look of surprise and displeasure, he advanced to the table, and sat down upon the empty bench which was generally occupied by Grenard Pike, secretly rejoicing that that worthy was not at home. The awkwardness and difficulty of his situation pressed so painfully upon the young man, that for a few seconds he could not utter a word. A cold perspiration bedewed his limbs, and his knees trembled with agitation.

Stern and erect, the old man, still holding the light, stood before him, and though he did not raise his head to meet the miser’s glance, he felt that the searching gaze from which he used to shrink when a boy was riveted upon him.

Mark Hurdlestone was the first to break the awful silence.

“Well, sir! If you are ready to explain the cause of this extraordinary visit, I am ready to listen to you. What do you want?”

“Your advice and aid,” at length gasped forth the unhappy youth. “I have acted very foolishly, and in an hour of great difficulty and danger, I fling myself upon your mercy, and I beseech you not to turn a deaf ear to my prayer.”

Mark sat down in his high-backed chair, and placed the light upon the table in such a manner as fully to reveal the pale agitated features of his son. Had a stranger at that moment entered the cottage, he might for the first time have perceived the strong family likeness that existed between them. The same high features, the same compressed lips and haughty stern expression of eye. The gloom which overspread the countenance of the one, produced by the habitual absence of all joyous feeling; the other by actual despair. Yes, in that hour they looked alike, and the miser seemed tacitly to acknowledge the resemblance, for a softening expression stole over his rigid features as he continued to gaze upon his son.

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“You have acted foolishly,” he said; “no uncommon thing at your age—and in danger and difficulty you seek me. I suppose I ought to consider this act of condescension on your part a great compliment. Your circumstances must be desperate indeed, when they lead you to make a confidant of your father, considering how greatly I am indebted to you for filial love. You have been in my neighborhood, Anthony Hurdlestone, nearly a month, and this is the first visit with which you have honored me.”

“I should have been most happy to have paid my respects to you, sir, could I have imagined that my visits would have been acceptable.”

“It was worth your while to make the trial, young man. It was not for you to think, but to act, and the result would have proved to you how far you were right. But to dismiss all idle excuses, which but aggravate your want of duty in my eyes, be pleased briefly to inform me, why I am honored so late at night with a visit from Mr. Anthony Hurdlestone?”

Anthony bit his lips. It was too late to retract, and though he deeply repented having placed himself in such a humiliating situation, he faithfully related to his stern auditor the cause of his distress. The old man listened to him attentively, a sarcastic smile at times writhing his thin lips; and when Anthony implored him for the loan of four hundred pounds, until the return of Mr. Wildegrave, who he was certain would overlook his unintentional fraud—he burst into a taunting laugh, and flatly refused to grant his request.

Anthony assailed him with a storm of eloquence, using every argument which the agony of the moment suggested, in order to soften his hard heart. He might as well have asked charity of the marble monuments of his ancestors. Stung to madness by the old man’s obstinate refusal, he sprang from his seat.

“Father, relent I beseech you: revoke this cruel decision. My request is too urgent to admit of a denial!”

He dashed his clenched fist upon the shattered remains of the old oak table, upon which Mark was leaning, his head resting between his long bony attenuated hands. The blow sent a hollow sound through the empty desolate apartment. The grey-haired man raised his eyes, without lifting his head, and surveyed his son with an expression of mocking triumph, but answered not a word. His contemptuous silence was more galling to the irritated applicant than the loudest torrent of abuse. He was prepared for that, and he turned from the stony glance and harsh face of his father with eyes full of tears, and his breast heaving under the sense of intolerable wrongs.

At length his feelings found utterance. His dark eyes flashed fire, and despair, with all her attendant furies, took possession of his heart.

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“I will not reproach you, Mr. Hurdlestone, for giving me life,” he cried, in tones tremulous with passion, “for that would be to insult the God who made me: but your unnatural conduct to me since the first moment I inherited that melancholy boon has made me consider that my greatest misfortune is being your son. It was in your power to have rendered it a mutual blessing. From a child, I have been a stranger in your house, an alien to your affections. While you possessed a yearly income of two hundred thousand pounds, you suffered your only son to be educated on the charity of your injured brother, your sordid love of gold rendering you indifferent to the wants of your motherless child. Destitute of a home without money, and driven to desperation by an act of imprudence, which my compassion for the son of that generous uncle urged me in an unguarded hour to commit, I seek you in my dire necessity to ask the loan of a small sum, to save me from utter ruin. This you refuse. I now call upon you by every feeling, both human and divine, to grant my request.

“What, silent yet. Nay, then by Heaven! I will not leave the house until you give me the money. Give me this paltry sum, and you may leave your hoarded treasures to the owls and bats, or make glad with your useless wealth some penurious wretch, as fond of gold as yourself!”

Mark Hurdlestone rocked to and fro in his chair, as if laboring with some great internal emotion; at length he half rose from his seat, and drew a key from beneath his vest. Anthony, who watched all his movements with intense interest, felt something like the glow of hope animate his breast; but these expectations were doomed to be annihilated, as the miser again sunk down in his chair, and hastily concealed the key among the tattered remains of his garments.

“Anthony, Anthony,” he said, in a hollow voice, which issued from his chest as from a sepulchre. “Cannot you wait patiently until my death? It will all be your own, then.”

“It will be too late,” returned the agitated young man, whilst his cheeks glowed with the crimson blush of shame, as a thousand agonising recollections crowded upon his brain, and, covering his face with his hands, he groaned aloud. A long and painful pause succeeded. At length a desperate thought flashed through his mind.

He drew nearer, and fixed his dark expanded eyes upon his father’s face, until the old man cowered, beneath the awful scrutiny. Again he spoke, but his voice was calm, dreadfully calm. “Father, will you grant my request? Let your answer be briefly, yes—or no?”

“No!” thundered the miser. “I will part with my life first.”

“Be not rash. We are alone,” returned the son, with the same unnatural composure. “You are weak, and I am strong. If you wantonly provoke the indignation of a desperate man, what will your riches avail you?”

The miser instinctively grasped at the huge poker that graced the fireplace, in whose rusty grate a cheerful fire had not been kindled for many years. Anthony's quick eye detected the movement, and he took possession of the dangerous weapon with the same cool but determined air.

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“Think not that I mean to take your life. God forbid that I should stain my hand with so foul a crime, and destroy your soul by sending it so unprepared into the presence of the Creator. It is not blood—but money I want.”

“Would not a less sum satisfy you?” and the miser eyed fearfully the weapon of offence, on which his son continued to lean, and again drew forth the key.

“Not one farthing less.”

Mark glanced hurriedly round the apartment, and listened with intense anxiety for the sound of expected footsteps. The sigh of the old trees that bent over the hovel, swept occasionally by the fitful autumnal blast alone broke the deep silence, and rendered it doubly painful.

“Where can the fellow stay?” he muttered to himself; then as if a thought suddenly struck him, he turned to his eon, and addressed him in a more courteous tone. “Anthony, I cannot give you this great, sum to-night. But come to me at this hour to-morrow night, and it shall be yours.”

“On what surety?”

“My word.”

“I dare not trust to that. You may deceive me.”

“When was Mark Hurdlestone ever known to utter a lie?” and a dark red flush of anger mounted to the miser’s face.

“When he forged the news of his brother’s death, to murder by slow degrees my unhappy mother,” said Anthony, scornfully. “The spirits of the dead are near us in this hour; silently, but truly, they bear witness against you.”

The old man groaned, and sunk his face between his hands as his son continued;

“I cannot wait until the morrow. This night alone is mine. If you cannot readily lay your hands upon the money, write me an order upon your banker for the sum.”

“I have neither pen, ink, nor paper,” said the miser, eagerly availing himself of the most paltry subterfuge, in order to gain time until the return of Grenard Pike, or to escape paying the money.

“I can supply you.” And Anthony drew forth a small writing case, and placed paper before him, and put a pen into his father’s hand.

“Anthony, you had better trust to my word,” said Mark, solemnly. “Gold is a heavier surety than paper, and by the God who made us, I swear to keep my promise.”

“Aye, but you forget the old proverb, father. ’A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.’”

The old man eyed him with a glance of peculiar meaning as with a trembling hand he proceeded to write the order. When he had finished, he folded the paper carefully together, and presented it to his son. “You will not trust to my honor. Be it so. Take this paper, Anthony Hurdlestone, for a Hurdlestone you are, and for the first time in my life I believe that you are my son. But it is the sole inheritance you will ever receive from me. Go, and let me see your face no more.”

“God bless you, sir,” said the youth, in a faltering voice. “Forgive my late intemperate conduct; it was influenced by despair. From this moment I will love and respect you as my father.”

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The miser's thin lips quivered as his son turned to leave him. He called faintly after him, "Anthony, Anthony! Don't leave me alone with the spirits of the dead. To-morrow I will do you justice. At this hour to-morrow."

His son stopped, but the entrance of old Pike stifled the rising gleam of paternal regard, and dismissed the ghastly phantoms of the past from the excited mind of the gold-worshipper. He grumbled a welcome to his minion, and sternly waved to the unwelcome intruder to quit the house. His wishes were instantly obeyed.

CHAPTER XIX.

> Murder most foul hath been committed here,
> By thee committed—for thy hand is red,
> And on thy pallid brow I see impress'd
> The mark of Cain.—S.M.

A thrilling feeling of joy at having gained the object of his visit to Oak Hall, and obtained the means of wiping off the stain he so much dreaded from his character, was throbbing in the breast of Anthony Hurdlestone, as he reached, about nine o'clock in the evening, his nominal home.

He had sold his birthright for a mere trifle, but the loss of wealth weighed lightly in his estimation against the loss of honor. On entering Frederic's study, he found his cousin Godfrey and the ruffian Mathews awaiting his return.

Godfrey had dogged his steps to Ashton, had seen him enter the miser's hovel, and from the length of his visit guessed rightly the cause. His anxiety to know the result of this meeting induced him to return a part of the money he had the day before received from his cousin, which he had neither lost at play, as he had affirmed to Anthony, nor paid to the Jew the fictitious debt which he had declared was due to him. These falsehoods had been planned by him and his base companion, in order to draw the unsuspecting young man into their toils, and bring about the rupture they desired with his father.

"My dear Anthony," he said, shaking him heartily by the hand, as he rose to meet him. "I have not enjoyed a moment's peace since we parted this evening. Here is half the sum you so kindly advanced, and if you can wait for a few days, I hope to have the rest ready for you."

With a heavy sigh, Anthony received the notes from his cousin, and counting them over he locked them up in the desk, doubly rejoiced that he had the means of replacing the whole sum.

"You have been to Oak Hall," said Godfrey, carelessly. "How did the old place look?"

“I did not notice it. My mind was too much agitated. When I left you ruin stared me in the face; as a last desperate chance to free myself, I determined to visit my father, and request the loan of the money.”

“A daring move that,” said Godfrey, with a smile to his companion; “particularly after the rebuff you got from him, when you visited him on behalf of my poor father. May I ask if you were successful?”

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“Here is the order for the money;” and with a feeling of natural triumph, Anthony took the order from his pocket-book.

“Is it possible! The philosopher’s stone is no fable, if words of yours could extract gold from a heart of flint. Brave Anthony! you have wrought a miracle. But let me look at the order. Seeing’s believing; and I cannot believe such an improbable thing without I witness it with my own eyes.”

“Nay, convince yourself of the truth, Godfrey. What object can I have in attempting to deceive you? It would be against my own interest so to do, as you are still my debtor for two hundred pounds.”

Godfrey took the paper from his cousin’s hand, and went to the table to examine it by the light. As he glanced over the contents he gave a sudden exclamation of surprise, and a smile curled his lip.

“Do you believe me now?” said Anthony, who knew not exactly how to interpret the dubious expression of Godfrey’s face.

“Read for yourself,” returned Godfrey, giving back the paper. “When you deal with such an accomplished scoundrel as Mark Hurdlestone, you should give the devil a retaining fee.”

“What do you mean, Godfrey?” and his cousin eagerly snatched the paper from his grasp. “He has not dared to deceive me!”

Still, as he read, his countenance fell, a deadly paleness suddenly pervaded his features, and uttering a faint moan, in which all the bitter disappointment he experienced was visibly concentrated, he sank down in a swoon at Godfrey’s feet.

“What on earth’s the matter with the lad?” said Mathews, as he assisted Godfrey in lifting him to the sofa. “What’s in the wind?”

“A capital joke,” whispered Godfrey. “I could almost love the old sinner for his caustic humor. The order for the money is drawn up in the usual manner, but instead of the words ‘*To pay*,’ the crafty old fox has written, ‘*Not to pay* the bearer the sum of four hundred pounds.’”

“Excellent! But let old skinflint look to himself; with that malignant joke he has signed his own death-warrant.”

Anthony by this time had recovered from his swoon. But he sat like one stupefied; his throbbing temples resting upon his hands, and his eyes fixed on vacancy. Godfrey’s voice at length roused him to a recollection of what had happened, and in faint tones, he requested his two companions to leave him.

“Not in this state of mind. Come, Anthony, clear up that cloudy brow. I am sorry, sorry that I have been the means of drawing you into this ugly scrape, but for my poor father’s sake you must forgive me. If you were to make a second application to your ungracious dad, he might, in the hope of ridding himself of such an importunate beggar, give down the two hundred pounds yet wanting. Such a decrease in your demand might work wonders. What think you? Matters cannot be worse between you than they are at present.”

Anthony recalled his father’s parting look—his parting words.

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“To-morrow, I will do you justice if you come to me, at this hour, to-morrow;” and hope again shed a faint glimmer in his breast. He repeated these words to Godfrey. Had he noticed the glance which his cousin threw towards his partner in guilt, he would have been puzzled to read its meaning. Mathews understood it well.

“Go, by all means, Anthony. I have no doubt that his heart will relent; that he already feels ashamed of his barbarous conduct. At all events, it can do no harm—it may do good. Take that infamous piece of writing in your hand, and reproach him with his treachery. My father’s injured spirit will be near you, to plead your cause, and you must be successful.”

“Yes, I will go,” said Anthony. “Either he or I must yield. My mind is made up upon the subject. Godfrey, good night.”

“He is ours, Mathews,” whispered Godfrey, as they left the house. “The old man’s days are numbered. Remember this hour to-morrow night!”

Glad to find himself once more alone, Anthony continued to pace the room, revolving over in his mind his interview with his father. He felt convinced that the old man had repented of the cruel trick he had played him; that but for the entrance of Grenard Pike, he would have recalled the paper and given him the sum he desired. At all events, he was determined to see him at the hour the miser had named, and tell him, without disguise, his thoughts upon the subject.

In the midst of all this tumult of passion, the image of Juliet glided into his mind, and seemed to whisper peace to his perturbed spirit. “Oh, that I had a friend to advise me in this gloomy hour, into whose faithful bosom I could pour out my whole soul! Shall I tell Clary? Shall I confide to the dear child my guilt and folly?” He rang the bell. Old Ruth, half asleep, made her appearance.

“How is your mistress, Ruth?”

“Better the night, sir.”

“Will you tell her that I wish very much to see her.”

“You won’t disturb the poor lamb, sure. Why, Mr. Anthony, she has been in her bed these two hours. She asked after you several times during the day, and was very uneasy at your absence. Poor child! I believe she is mortal fond of you.”

“Of me, Ruth?”

“Of you, sir. I am sure Miss Clary is over head and ears in love with you. Arn’t it natural? Two handsome young creatures living in the same house together, walking,

and talking, and singing and playing, all the time with each other. Why, Master Anthony, if you don't love the dear child, you must be very deceitful, after making so much of her."

The old woman left him, still muttering to herself some anathema against the deceitfulness of men; while Anthony, shocked beyond measure at the disclosure of a secret which he had never suspected, threw himself upon the sofa, and yielding to the overpowering sense of misery which oppressed him, wept—even as a woman weeps—-long and bitterly.

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“Why,” he thought, “why am I thus continually the sport of a cruel destiny? Are the sins of my parents indeed visited upon me? Is every one that I love, or that loves me, to be involved in one common ruin?”

And then he wished for death, with a longing, intense, sinful desire, which placed him upon the very verge of self-destruction. He went to Frederic’s bureau, and took out his pistols, and loaded them, then placed himself opposite to the glass, and deliberately took aim at his head. But his hand trembled, and the ghastly expression of his face startled him—so wan, so wild, so desperate. It looked not of earth, still less like a future denizen of heaven.

“No, not to-night,” he said. “He the stern father may relent, or fill up the full measure of his iniquities. The morrow; God knoweth what it may bring for me. If all should fail me, then this shall be my friend. Yes, even in his presence will I fling at his feet the loathed life he gave!”

He threw himself upon the sofa, but not to sleep. Hour after hour passed onward towards eternity. One, two, three, spoke out the loud voice of Time, and it sounded in the ears of the watcher like his knell.

And she, the fair child—she who had, at sixteen, outlived the fear of death. Had he won her young spirit back to earth, to mar its purity with the stains of human passion? There was not a feeling in his heart at that moment so sad as this. How deeply he regretted that he ever had been admitted to that peaceful home.

But was she not a Wildegrave, and was not misery hers by right of inheritance? And then he thought of his mother—thought of his own desolate childhood—of his poor uncle—of his selfish but still dear cousin Godfrey, and overcome by these sad reflections, as the glad sun broke over the hills, bringing life and joy to the earth, he sunk into a deep, dreamless sleep, from which he did not awaken until the broad shadows of evening were deepening into night.

When old Ruth dusted out the parlor, she was surprised to find him asleep upon the sofa. He looked so pale and ill, that she flung Miss Clary’s large cloak over him, and went up stairs to inform her mistress of such an unusual occurrence.

All day Clary had sat beside him, holding, almost unconsciously, his burning hand in hers. Often she bathed his temples with sal-volatile and water, but so deep were his slumbers, so blessed was the perfect cessation from mental misery, that he continued to sleep until the sun disappeared behind the oak hills, and then, with a deep sigh, he once more awoke to a painful consciousness of his situation.

Clary dropped the hand she held, and started from the sofa, over which she had been leaning, the vivid flush burning upon her cheek, and sprang away to order up tea.

Anthony rose, marvelling at his long sleep, and went to his chamber to make his toilet; when he returned to the parlor, he found Clary waiting for him.

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“My kind little cousin,” he said, taking her hand, “you have been ill—are you better?”

“I am quite well, and should be quite happy, dear Anthony, if I could see you looking so. But you are ill and low-spirited; I read it all in your dim eye and dejected looks. Come, sit down, and take a cup of tea. You have eaten nothing all day. Here is a nice fowl, delicately cooked, which Ruth prepared for your especial benefit. Do let me see you take something.”

“I cannot eat,” said Anthony, pushing the plate from him, and eagerly swallowing the cup of refreshing tea that Clary presented. “I am ill, Clary, but mine is a disease of the mind. I am, indeed, far from happy; I wish I could tell you all the deep sorrow that lies so death-like at my heart.”

“And why do you make it worse by concealment?” said Clary, rising and going round to the side of the table on which he was leaning; “you need not fear to trust me, Anthony; there is no one I love on earth so well, except dear Frederic. Will you not let your little cousin share your grief?”

“My sweet child,” said Anthony, winding his arm around her slender waist, and leaning his head on her shoulder, “you could render me no assistance; the knowledge of my sorrow would only make you miserable.”

“If it is anything about Juliet, tell me freely. Perhaps, you think, dear Anthony, that I am jealous of you and Juliet; oh, no, I love you too well for that. I know that I can never be as dear to you as Juliet; that she is more worthy of your love—Good Heavens! you are weeping. What have I said to cause these tears? Anthony, dear Anthony, speak to me. You distract me. Oh, tell me that I have not offended you.”

Anthony’s lips moved, but no word issued from them. His eyes were firmly closed, his brow pale as marble, and large tears slid in quick succession from beneath the jet-black lashes that lay like a shadow upon his ashen cheeks. And other tears were mingling with those drops of heart-felt agony—tears of the tenderest sympathy, the most devoted love, as, leaning that fair face upon the cold brow of the unhappy youth, Clary unconsciously kissed away those waters of the heart, and pressed that wan cheek against her gentle bosom. She felt his arm tighten round her, as she stood in the embrace of the beloved, scarcely daring to breathe, for fear of breaking the sad spell that had linked them together. At length Anthony unclosed his eyes, and looked long and earnestly up in his young companion’s face—

“Oh, Clary! how shall I repay this love, my poor innocent lamb? Would to God we had never met!”

“Do not say that, Anthony. I never knew what it was to be happy until I knew you.”

“Then you love life better than you did, Clary?”

“I love you,” sighed Clary, hiding her fair face among his ebon curls, “and the new life with which you have inspired me is very dear.”

“Oh, that I could bid you cherish it for my sake, dear artless girl! But we must part. In a few hours the faulty being whom you have rashly dared to love, may be no longer a denizen of earth.”

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“What do you mean?” cried Clary, starting from his arms, and gazing upon him with a distracted air. “While I have been idling in my bed something dreadful has happened. I read it in your averted eyes—on your sad, sad brow. Do not leave me in this state of torturing doubt. I beseech you to tell me the cause of your distress?”

“Clary, I cannot; I wish to tell you, but the circumstances are so degrading, I cannot find words to give them utterance; I feel that you would despise me—that all good men would upbraid me as a weak unprincipled fool; yet I call Heaven to witness, that at the moment I committed the rash act I thought not that it was a crime.”

“It is impossible, Anthony, that you could do anything unworthy of yourself, or that could occasion this bitter grief. You are laboring under some strong delusion, and are torturing yourself to no purpose. Frederic will be home to-morrow; he will counsel you what to do, and all will be right.”

“Frederic home to-morrow!” and Anthony gasped for breath.

“Oh, I am so glad. It seems an age since he left us. By the bye, I have a letter for you, which I quite forgot. It came this morning by the post. I am sure it is from my brother, for I know his hand.” Going to the mantel-shelf, Clary handed him the letter. Anthony trembled violently as he broke the seal; it ran thus:

“My Dear Anthony,

“I know not in what manner to interpret your unkind silence. Your failing to forward the money I left in your hands has caused me great mortification and inconvenience, and will oblige me to leave—to-morrow, without transacting the business that took me from home.“Though I am certain that you will give me very satisfactory reasons for your non-compliance with my very urgent request, I feel so vexed and annoyed by it, that it makes me half inclined to quarrel with you. You would forgive this if you only knew what an irritable mortal I am. I advise you and Clary to frame some notable excuse for your negligence, or you may dread the wrath of your affectionate friend,

“Frederic.”

This letter, though written half in joke, confirmed Anthony’s worst fears. He imagined that Frederic suspected him of dishonorable conduct, although he forbore to say so in direct terms; and his repugnance to confess what he had done, to either Clary or her brother, was greatly strengthened by the perusal.

It was this want of confidence in friends who really loved him, which involved him in ruin. Had he frankly declared his folly and thrown himself upon Wildegrave’s generosity, he would as frankly have been forgiven; but pride and false shame kept his lips sealed.

He was a very young man—a novice in the ways of the world; and even in some degree ignorant of the nature of the crime, the commission of which had made him so unhappy. Instead of a breach of trust, he looked upon it as a felonious offence, which rendered him amenable to the utmost severity of the law. The jail and the gallows were ever in his thoughts; and worse than either, the infamy which would for ever attach itself to his name.

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He determined to see his father for the last time, and if he failed in moving his compassion, he had formed the desperate resolution of putting an end to his own life in his presence; a far greater crime than that for which he dreaded receiving a capital punishment.

“Clary,” he said, hastily thrusting the letter into his pocket, “business of importance calls me away to-night. Do not be alarmed if I should be detained until the morning.”

“You cannot go to-night, Anthony. It has rained all the afternoon; the ground is wet. The air is raw and damp. You are not well. If you leave the house you will take cold!”

“Do not attempt to detain me, Clary, I must go. I shall leave a letter for your brother on the table, which you must give him if I do not return.”

“Something is wrong. Tell me, oh, tell me what it is!”

“You will know all to-morrow,” said Anthony, greatly agitated. “I cannot speak of it to-night.” He took her hand and pressed it sadly to his heart. “Should we never meet again, dear Clary, will you promise to think kindly of me; and in spite of the contempt of the world, to cherish your cousin’s memory?”

“Though all the world should forsake you, yet will I never desert you,” sobbed Clary, as, sinking into his extended arms, she fainted on his breast.

“This will kill you, poor innocent. May God bless and keep you from a knowledge of my guilt.” He placed her gently upon the sofa, and kissed her pale lips and brow, and calling Ruth to her assistance, sought with a heavy heart his own chamber.

He sat down and wrote a long letter to Frederic, explaining the unfortunate transaction which had occurred during his absence. This letter he left upon the study table, and putting a brace of loaded pistols into his pocket he sallied out upon his hopeless expedition.

It had been a very wet afternoon. The clouds had parted towards nightfall, and the moon rose with unusual splendor, rendering every object in his path as distinctly visible as at noonday. The beauty of the night only seemed to increase the gloom of Anthony Hurdlestone’s spirit. He strode on at a rapid pace, as if to outspeed the quick succession of melancholy thoughts, that were hurrying him on to commit a deed of desperation. He entered the great avenue that led up to the back of the Hall, and past the miser’s miserable domicile, and had traversed about half the extent of the darkly shaded path, when his attention was aroused by a tall figure leaning against the trunk of a large elm tree. A blasted oak, bare of foliage, on the opposite side the road, let in a flood of light through its leafless branches, which shone full upon the face of the stranger, and Anthony, with a shudder, recognised William Mathews.

“A fine evening for your expedition, Mr. Hurdlestone. It might well be termed the forlorn hope; however I wish with all my heart that you may be successful.” As he spoke he lowered a fowling-piece from his shoulder to the ground. “Do you hear that raven that sits croaking upon the rotten branch of the old oak opposite? Does not his confounded noise make you nervous? It always does me. It sounds like a bad omen. I was just going to pull down at him as you came along. I fancy, however, that he’s too far above us for a good shot.”

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“I am in no humor for trifling to-night,” said Anthony, stopping and glancing up at the bird, who sat motionless on a decayed branch a few yards above his head. “If you are afraid of such sounds, you can soon silence that for ever.”

“It would require a good eye, and an excellent fowling-piece, to bring down the black gentleman from his lofty perch. I have heard that you, Mr. Hurdlestone, are accounted a capital shot, far before your cousin Godfrey. I wish you would just give me a trial of your skill.”

“Nonsense!” muttered Anthony. “The bird’s only a few yards above us. A pistol would bring him down.”

“I should like to see it done,” said Mathews, with a grin. “Here, sir, take my gun.”

Impatient of interruption, and anxious to get rid of the company of a man whose presence he loathed, Anthony drew one of the pistols from his breast pocket, and, taking a deliberate aim at the bird, he fired, and the raven fell dead at his feet. Picking it up, and tossing it over to Mathews, he said—“Do you believe me now? Pshaw! it was not worth staining my hands and clothes with blood for such a paltry prize.”

Mathews laughed heartily at this speech; but there was something so revolting in the tones of his mirth, that Anthony quickened his pace to avoid its painful repetition. A few minutes more brought him in sight of the miser’s cottage. No light gleamed from the broken casement, and both the door and the window of the hovel were wide open, and flapping in the night wind. Surprised at a circumstance so unusual, Anthony hastily entered the house. The first object that met his sight rivetted him to the threshold.

The moon threw a broad line of silver light into the dusty worm-eaten apartment, and danced and gleamed in horrid mockery upon a stream of dark liquid which was slowly spreading itself over the floor. And there, extended upon the brick pavement, his features shockingly distorted, his hands still clenched, and his white locks dabbled in blood, lay the cold, mutilated form of his father.

Overpowered with horror, unable to advance or retreat, Anthony continued to gaze upon the horrid spectacle, until the hair stiffened upon his head, and a cold perspiration bedewed all his limbs.

Still as he gazed he fancied that the clenched hands moved, that a bitter smile writhed the thin parted lips of the dead; and influenced by a strange fascination, against which he struggled in vain, he continued to watch the ghastly countenance, until horror and astonishment involved every other object in misty obscurity.

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He heard the sound of approaching footsteps, but his limbs had lost the power of motion, his tongue of speech, and he suffered the constables, who entered with Grenard Pike, to lead him away without offering the least resistance. They placed him in a post-chaise, between two of the officers of justice, and put the irons upon his wrists, but he remained in the same state of stupefaction, making no remark upon his unusual situation, or taking the least notice of his strange companions. When the vehicle stopped at the entrance of the county jail, then, and not until then, did the awfulness of his situation appear to strike him. Starting from his frightful mental abstraction, he eagerly demanded of the officers why his hands were manacled, and for what crime they had brought him there?

When told for the murder of his father, he regarded the men with a look of surprised incredulity. “My poor father! what interest could I have to murder my father? You cannot think I committed this horrid crime?”

“We do not know what to think, Mr. Hurdlestone,” said one of the men. “I am very sorry to see you in this plight, but appearances are very much against you. Your father was an old man and a bad man, and it is little you owed to his parental care. But he could not have lived many years, and all the entailed property must have been yours; it was an act of insanity on your part to kill him. A fearful crime to send him so unprepared into the presence of his God.”

“You cannot believe me guilty,” said Anthony.

The men shook their heads. “I condemn no man until the law condemns, him,” returned the former spokesman. “But there is evidence enough in your case to hang a hundred men.”

“I have one witness in my favor. He knows my innocence, and to Him I appeal,” said Anthony, solemnly.

“Aye, but will he prove it my lad?”

“I trust He will.”

“Well, time will show. The assizes will be held next week, so you have not long to remain in doubt. I would be inclined to think you innocent, if you could prove to me what business you had with loaded pistols in your possession—why one was loaded, and the other unloaded, and how your hands and clothes came stained with blood—why you quarrelled with the old man last night, and went to him again to-night with offensive weapons on your person, and at such an unseasonable hour? These are stubborn facts.”

“They, are indeed,” sighed the prisoner. A natural gush of feeling succeeded, and from that hour Anthony resigned himself to his fate.

CHAPTER XX.

O dread uncertainty:
Life-wasting agony!
How dost thou pain the heart,
Causing such tears to start
As sorrow never shed
O’er hopes for ever fled!—S.M.

What a night of intense anxiety was that to the young Clary! Hour after hour, she paced the veranda in front of the cottage; now listening for approaching footsteps, now straining her eyes to catch through the gloom of the fir-trees the figure of him for whom she watched and wept in vain. The cold night wind sighed through her fair locks, scattering them upon the midnight air. The rising dews chilled the fragile form, but stilled not the wild throbbing of the aching heart.

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“Oh, to know the worst—the very worst—were better than this sore agony.” Years of care were compressed into that one night of weary watching. “He will never come. I shall never, never see him again. I feel now, as I felt when my sisters were taken from me, that I should see them no more on earth. But I cannot weep for him as I wept for them. I knew that they were happy, that they were gone to rest, and I felt as if an angel’s hand dried my tears. But I weep for him as one without hope, as for one whom a terrible destiny has torn from me. I love him, but my love is a crime, for he loves another. Oh, woe is me! Why did we ever meet, if thus we are doomed to part?”

She looked up at the cold clear moon—up to the glorious stars of night, and her thoughts, so lately chained to earth, soared upwards to the Father of her spirit, and once more she bowed in silent adoration to her Saviour and her God.

“Forgive me, holy Father!” she murmured. “I have strayed from thy fold, and my steps have stumbled upon the rough places of the earth. I have reared up an idol in thy sacred temple, and worshipped the creature more than the Creator. The love of the world is an unholy thing. It cannot satisfy the cravings of an immortal spirit. It cannot fill up the emptiness of the human heart. Return to thy rest, O my soul! I dedicate thee and all thy affections to thy God!”

She bowed her head upon her hands and wept; such tears purify the source from whence they flow, and Clary felt a solemn calm steal over her agitated spirit, as, kneeling beneath the wide canopy of heaven, she prayed long and earnestly for strength to subdue her passion for Anthony, and to become obedient in word, thought, and deed, to the will of God; and she prayed for him, with a fervor and devotion which love alone can give—prayed that he might be shielded from all temptation, from the wickedness and vanity of the world, from the deceitfulness of his own heart.

She was still in the act of devotion, when the sound of rapidly approaching footsteps caused her to start suddenly from her knees. A man ran past at full speed, then another, and another: then a group of women without hats and shawls, running and calling to one another. What could all this mean, at that still hour of night, and in that lonely place?

Clary’s heart beat tumultuously. She rushed to the garden gate, that opened from the lawn into the main road. She called aloud to one of the retreating figures to stop and inform her what was the matter. Why they were abroad at that late hour, and whither they were going? No one slackened their speed, or stayed one moment to answer her enquires. At length an old man, tired and out of breath, came panting along; one whom Clary knew, and springing into the road she intercepted his path.

“Ralph Hilton, what is the matter? Is there a fire in the neighborhood? Where are you all going?”

“Up to the Hall, Miss Clary. Dear, dear, have you not heard the news? The old man has been murdered. Murdered by his son. Alack, alack, ’tis a desperate piece of wickedness! The coroner is up at the old cottage, sitting upon the body, and I want to get a sight of the murdered man, like the rest of ’un.”

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“Who is it you mean? Who has been murdered?” gasped out the terrified girl.

“Why old Squire Hurdlestone. He has been shot dead by his own son—that young chap who has been staying here so long. They have got him safe, though. And by this time he must be in jail. Oh, I hope they will hang ’un. But hanging is too good. He should be burnt alive.”

And here the old man hobbled on, eager to get a sight of the frightful spectacle, and to hear all the news from the fountain head.

The first blush of the red dawn was glowing in the east; but Clary still remained in the same attitude, with her hand resting upon the half-open gate, her eyes fixed on vacancy, her lips apart, a breathing image of despair. The stage coach from —— drove briskly up. A gentleman sprang from the top of the vehicle. A portmanteau was flung down to him by the guard.—“All right,” and the horses were again at full gallop.

“Clary, dear Clary, who would have thought of your being up so early to meet me?”

That voice seemed to recall the wandering spirit of the pale girl back to its earthly tabernacle. With a long wild cry, she flung herself into her brother’s arms. “Hide me in your heart, Frederic, hide me from myself. I am sick and weary of the world!”

Unable to comprehend the cause of this violent agitation, Frederic Wildegrave carried his now insensible sister into the house, and calling Ruth, who was busy kindling the fires, he bade her awake Mr. Anthony. The woman shook her head mysteriously.

“He’s gone, sir. He left us suddenly last night, and Miss Clary has been up ever since.”

“I fear it is as I suspected. He must have robbed me. Yet, if he has deceived me, I never will trust to physiognomy again.”

He opened his desk, and found two hundred pounds in notes, and turning to the window to examine them, he recognised the letter addressed to him by Anthony that was lying on the table.

With feelings of compassion and astonishment, he hastily glanced over the affecting account it contained of the thrilling events of the past week. Several times the tears sprang to his eyes, and he reproached himself for having suspected Anthony of having eloped with the money left in his charge. He knew what agony of mind his cousin must have endured before he could prevail upon himself to petition his relentless father for the loan of the sum he had imprudently lent to Godfrey. He only blamed him for the want of confidence which had hindered him from communicating his situation to his friend. Fearing that he had been induced to commit some desperate act, he did not wait to change his dress, or partake of the breakfast old Ruth had provided, but mounting a horse, rode full speed to Ashton.

Long before he reached the village he learned the dreadful tale of the murder, and though he did not like to believe Anthony guilty, he knew not how to get satisfactorily over the great mass of circumstantial evidence, which even his own letter contained against him. Every person with whom he talked upon the subject held the same opinion, and many who before had execrated the old man, and spoke with abhorrence of his conduct to his son, now mentioned him with pity and respect, and decried the young man as a monster, for whom hanging was too good, who deserved to die a thousand deaths.

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Deeply grieved for his unfortunate relative, Wildegrave at first defended him with some warmth, and urged as an excuse for his conduct the unnatural treatment he had from infancy received from his father.

“Sir,” said an old farmer, who had formed one of the jury during the inquest, “with all his faults, old Mark was an honest man, and doubtless he had good reasons for his conduct, and knew the lad better than we did, as the result has proved.”

“It has not been proved yet,” said Frederic, “and I believe, however strongly appearances are against him, that Anthony Hurdlestone never committed the murder.”

“Mr. Wildegrave, I am sorry to contradict a gentleman like you, but did not Grenard Pike see him with his own eyes fire at the old man through the window? And has he not known the lad from a baby?”

“He will be hung,” said another farmer, riding up; “and that’s not half punishment enough for such a villain!”

“He should be torn to pieces,” cried a third.

“He was a queer little boy,” said a fourth; “I never thought that he would come to any good.”

“His uncle was the ruin of him,” said a fifth. “If he had never taken him from his father, the old man would have been alive this day.”

“Oh hang him!” cried another. “I don’t pity the old miser. He deserved his death—but ’twas terrible from the hand of his own son.”

“Old Mark is to have a grand funeral,” said the first speaker. “He is to be buried on Monday. All the gentlemen in the county will attend.”

“It would break his heart, if he were alive,” said another, “could he but see the fine coffin that Jones is making for him. It is to be covered all over with silk velvet and gold.”

“How old was he?” asked some voice in the group.

“Just in his sixty-fifth, and a fine hale man for his years; he might have lived to have been a hundred.”

“Did they find any money in the house?” whispered a long-nosed, sharp-visaged man; “I heard that he had lots hidden away under the thatch. Old Grenard knows that a box containing several thousand gold guineas was taken away.”

“Then the devil, or old Grenard, must have flown away with it,” said the sexton of the parish, “for I was there when they seized the poor lad, and he had not a penny in his possession.”

“Will they bury him with his wife?” asked the old farmer.

“He’ll never rest beside her,” said a man near him. “He treated her about as well as he did her poor boy.”

“How can the like o’ him rest in the grave?” chimed in a female voice. “I’ve no manner of doubt but he’ll haunt the old Hall, as his father did afore him. Mercy on us, sirs! what an awful like ghost he will make!”

“Was old Squire Anthony ever seen?” said another woman, in a mysterious whisper.

“Ay, scores of times. I’ve heard that the old miser met him one night himself upon the staircase, and that was the reason why he shut up the Hall.”

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“Who’ll heir the property?” asked the old farmer.

“Algernon’s son Godfrey; a fine handsome fellow. He’ll make ducks and drakes of the miser’s gold. We shall have fine times when he comes to the Hall.”

“He’ll lower the rents and the tithes upon us. Come, my lads, let’s go to the public-house and drink his health.”

The male portion of the group instantly acceded to the proposal; and Frederic Wildegrave set spurs to his horse and rode off, disgusted with the scene he had witnessed, and returned to his home with a sorrowful heart.

CHAPTER XXI.

All the fond visions faithful mem’ry kept,
Rush’d o’er his soul; he bow’d his head and wept,
Such tears as contrite sinners pour alone,
When mercy pleads before the eternal throne,
When naked, helpless, prostrate in the dust,
The spirit owns its condemnation just,
And seeks for pardon and redeeming grace,
Through Him who died to save a fallen race.—S.M.

By the light of a solitary candle, and seated at a small table in the attic of a public-house, and close to the miserable bed in which Mary Mathews was tossing to and fro in the restless delirium of fever, two men were busily engaged in dividing a large heap of gold, which had been emptied from a strong brass-bound box, that lay on the floor.

“Well, the old fellow died game,” said Mathews. “Did you see how desperately he clenched his teeth, and how tightly he held the key of his treasures. I had to cut through his fingers before I wrenched it from his grasp. See, it is all stained with blood. Faugh! it smells of carrion.”

“He took me for Anthony,” said Godfrey, shuddering; “and he cursed me—oh, how awfully! He told me that we should meet in hell; that the gold for which he had bartered his soul, and to obtain which I had committed murder, had bought us an estate there. And then he laughed—that horrid, dry, satirical laugh. Oh, I hear it yet. It would almost lead me to repentance, the idea of having to pass an eternity with him.”

“Don’t feel squeamish now, man. This brave sight,” pointing to the gold, “should lay all such nervous fancies to rest. The thing was admirably managed; and between ourselves, I think that, if we had not pinked him, that same virtuous son of his would. What did he want with pistols? It looks queer.”

“It will condemn him.”

“Let us drink to his rising in the world,” said the ruffian, handing the brandy bottle to his companion in guilt. “How much money is there?”

“Two thousand five hundred pounds in gold.”

“A pretty little fortune. How do you mean to divide the odd hundreds?”

“I want them for a particular purpose. There is a thousand; I think you ought to be satisfied. It was my bullet that unlocked the box, when I brought the old man down.”

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“You don’t mean to say, that you intend to appropriate five hundred pounds for the mere act of shooting the old dog, when I ran as much risk as you?”

“Sit down, Bill;” for the smuggler had sprung to his feet, and stood before his colleague in a menacing attitude; “and don’t look so fierce. It won’t do for you and I to quarrel. I meant it for a marriage portion for Mary; surely you don’t wish to rob her?”

“It’s just the same as appropriating it to yourself,” growled the villain; “you know that she can’t keep anything from you.”

“Mary, my pet,” said Godfrey, now half intoxicated with the brandy he had drank, taking up a handful of the money and going up to the bed, “I heard you say a few days ago that you wanted a new frock; look, here is plenty of money to buy you a score of smart dresses. Will you not give me a kiss for all this gold?”

The girl turned her wide wandering eyes upon him, glanced at his hands, and uttered a wild scream.

“Why, Mary! what the deuce ails you?”

“What’s that upon your hands, Godfrey? What’s that upon your hands? It’s blood—-blood! Oh, take it away! don’t bring to me the price of blood!”

“Nonsense; you are dreaming, girl—gold can gild every stain.”

“I have been dreaming,” said Mary, rising up in the bed, and putting back the long hair which had escaped from under her cap, and now fell in rich neglected masses round her pallid face. “Yes. I have been dreaming—such an awful dream! I see it before me yet.”

“What was it, Mary?” asked her brother, with quivering lips.

“It was a lonesome place,” continued the girl, “a dark lonesome place; but God’s moon was shining there, and there was no need of the sun, or of any other light, for all seemed plain to me as the noon day.

“I saw an old man with grey hairs, and another man old and grey was beside him. The countenances of both were dark and unlovely. And one old man was on his knees—but it was not to God he knelt; he had set up an idol to worship, and that idol was gold; and God, as a punishment, had turned his heart to stone, so that nothing but the gold could awaken the least sympathy there. And whilst he knelt to the idol, I heard a cry—a loud, horrid, despairing cry—and the old man fell to the earth weltering in his blood; but he had still strength to lock up his idol, and he held the key as tightly as if it had been the key of heaven. And I saw two young men enter the house and attack the old man, while his companion, whom they did not see, stole out of a back door and fled. And they

dashed the wounded old man against the stones, and they marred his visage with savage blows; and they trod him underfoot, and tore from him his idol, and fled.

“And I saw another youth with a face full of sorrow, and while he wept over the dead man, he was surrounded by strange figures, who, regardless of his grief, forced him from the room. And while I pondered over these things in my heart, an angel came to my bed-side, and whispered a message from God in my ears. And I awoke from my sleep; and lo, the old man’s idol was before me, and his blood was upon your hands, Godfrey Hurdlestone.”

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“Is this a dream?” cried Godfrey, glancing instinctively at his hands, on whose white well-formed fingers no trace of the recently enacted tragedy remained, “did you really witness the scene you have just described; tell me the truth. Mary, or by ——”

“Could these feeble limbs carry me to Ashton,” said the girl, interrupting the dreadful oath ere it found utterance, “or could this rocking brain steady them, were I, indeed, able to rise from my bed—”

“Mathews,” cried Godfrey, “what do you think of this?”

“That we should be off, or put such dreamers to silence.”

“Be off! That’s impossible. It would give rise to the suspicion that we were the murderers. Besides, are we not both subpoenaed as witnesses against him.”

“I don’t like it,” said Mathews, gloomily. “The devil has revealed every circumstance to the girl. What if she were to witness against us?”

“Nonsense! Who would take the evidence of a dream?” said Godfrey.

“I’m not so sure that it was a dream. You know her of old. She’s very cunning.”

“But the girl’s too ill to move from her bed. Besides, she never would betray me.”

“I’m not so sure of that. She’s turned mighty religious of late. It was only last night that I heard her pray to God to forgive her sinful soul; and then she promised to lead a new life. Now I should not wonder if she were to begin by hanging us.”

“If I thought so,” said Godfrey, grasping a knife he held in his hand, and glancing towards the bed. “But no. We both do her injustice. She would die for me. She would never betray me. Mary,” he continued, going to the bed-side, “what was the message that the angel told you?”

“It was in the unknown tongue,” said Mary. “I understood it in my sleep, but since I awoke it has all passed from my memory.” Then laughing in her delirium, she burst out singing:

His voice was like the midnight wind
  That ushers in the storm,
When the thunder mutters far behind
  On the dark clouds onward borne;
When the trees are bending to its breath,
  The waters plashing high,
And nature crouches pale as death
  Beneath the lurid sky.

’Twas in such tones he spake to me,
So awful and so dread;
If thou would’st read the mystery,
Those tones will wake the dead.

* * * * *

“She is mad!” muttered Godfrey, resuming his seat at the table. “Are you afraid, Bill, of the ravings of a maniac? Come, gather up courage and pass the bottle this way; and tell me how we are to divide the rest of the spoil.”

“Let us throw the dice for it.”

“Agreed. Who shall have the first chance?”

“We will throw for that. The lowest gains. I have it,” cried Mathews, clutching the box.

“Stop!” said Mary. “Fair play’s a jewel. There are three of you at the table. Will you not let the old man have one chance to win back his gold?”

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“The Devil!” cried Mathews, dropping the box, and staggering to his seat, a universal tremor perceptible in his huge limbs. “Where—where is he?”

“At your elbow,” said Mary. “Don’t you see him frown and shake his head at you? How fast the blood pours down from the wound in his head! It is staining all your clothes. Get up, William, and give the poor old man the chair.”

“Don’t mind her, Mathews, she is raving,” said Godfrey. “Do you see anything?”

“I thought I saw a long, bony, mutilated hand, flitting to and fro, over the gold. Ah! there it is again,” said Mathews, starting from his chair. “You may keep the money, for may I be hanged if I will touch it. Leave this accursed place and yon croaking fiend. Let us join the boys down stairs, and drink and sing, and drive away care.”

And so the murderers departed, leaving the poor girl alone with the gold, but they took good care to lock the door after them. When they were gone, Mary threw an old cloak about her, which formed part of the covering to the bed, and stepped upon the floor.

“They are gone,” she said; “I have acted my part well. But, alas, this is no place for me. I am called upon by God himself to save the innocent, and the mission shall be performed, even at the expense of my worthless life.

“They think not that I followed them to the spot—that, weak as I am, God has given me strength to witness against them. I feel ill, very ill,” she continued, putting her hand to her head. “But if I could only reach the Lodge, and inform Captain Whitmore, or Miss Juliet, it might be the means of saving his life. At all events, I will try.”

As she passed the gold that glittered in the moonbeams, she paused. “I want money for my journey. Shall I take aught of the accursed thing? No. I will trust in Providence to supply my wants. I have read somewhere that misery travels free.”

Then slowly putting on her clothes, and securing a slice of coarse bread, that Mrs. Strawberry had brought for her supper, in her handkerchief, Mary approached the window. The distance was not great to the roof of the lean-to, and she had been used to climb tall forest trees when a child, and fearlessly to drop from any height. She unclosed the casement and listened. She heard from below loud shouts and boisterous peals of laughter, mingled with licentious songs and profane oaths.

When the repentant soul is convinced of sin, how dreadful does the language once so familiar appear! The oath and the profane jest smite upon it with a force which makes it recoil within itself; and it flies for protection to the injured Majesty it so often wantonly defied. “Alas, for the wicked!” said Mary. “’Destruction and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known.’ How long have I, in word, thought and deed, blasphemed the majesty of the Most High, and rebelled against his holy laws!

Ought I then to condemn my fellows in iniquity? Am I in reality any better than they? I will go to the grave of my child—that sight will make me humble—that little mound of dark earth holds all that the world now contains for me."

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She dropped from the window to the ground. The watch-dog knew her and forbore to bark. He thrust his cold nose into her wasted hand, and wagging his tail looked up inquiringly into her face. There was something of human sympathy in the expression of the generous brute. It went to the heart of the poor wanderer. She leant down and kissed the black head of the noble animal. A big bright tear glittered among his shaggy hair, and the moonbeams welcomed it with an approving smile.

Like a ghost Mary glided down the garden path, overgrown with rank weeds, and she thought that the neglected garden greatly resembled the state of her soul. A few necessary wants had alone been attended to. The flower-beds were overgrown and choked with weeds—the fruit-trees barren from neglect and covered with moss. “But He can make the desolate place into a fruitful field,” said Mary. “The wilderness, under his fostering care, can blossom like the rose.”

She crossed the lane, and traversing several lonely fields she came to the park near the old Hall, within whose precincts the gothic church, erected by one of the ancestors of the Hurdlestones, reared aloft its venerable spire. How august the sacred building looked in the moonlight! how white the moonbeams lay upon the graves! Mary sighed deeply, but hers was not a mind to yield easily to superstitious fears. She had learned to fear God, and there was nothing in his beautiful creation which could make her tremble, save the all-seeing eye which she now felt was upon her.

Passing the front of the church, where all the baptized children of the village for ages had found their place of final rest, she stepped behind a dark screen of yews at the back of the church, and knelt hastily upon the ground beside a little mound of freshly turned sods. Stretching herself out upon that lowly bed, and embracing it with passionate tenderness, the child of sin and sorrow found a place to weep, and poured out her full heart to the silent ear of night.

The day was breaking, when she slowly rose and wiped away her tears. Regaining the high road, she was overtaken by a man in a wagon, who had been one of the crowd that had been to look at the murdered man. He invited Mary to take a seat in the wagon, and finding that he was going within a few miles of Norgood, she joyfully accepted the offer—and before Godfrey and her brother recovered from their drunken debauch, or found that she was missing, she was near the end of her journey.

CHAPTER XXII.

> The lyre is hush’d, for ever hush’d the hand,
> That woke to ecstacy its thrilling chords;
> And that sweet voice, with music eloquent,
> Sleeps with the silent lyre and broken heart.—S.M.

“Why do you look so sad, Juliet,” said Captain Whitmore to his daughter, as they stood together at the open window, the morning after her perilous meeting with Mary Mathews in the park. “Have *I* said anything to wound your feelings?”

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“I thought that you would have been so glad to find him innocent, papa,” said Juliet, the tears again stealing down her cheeks, “and I am disappointed—bitterly disappointed.”

“Well, my girl. I am glad that the lad is not guilty of so heinous an offence. But I can’t help feeling a strong prejudice against the whole breed. These Hurdlestones are a bad set—a bad set. I have seen enough of them. And, for your own happiness, I advise you, my dear Juliet, to banish this young man for ever from your thoughts. With my consent you never shall be his wife.”

“Without it I certainly never shall.” And Juliet folded her hands together, and turned away to hide the fresh gush of tears that blinded her eyes. “At the same time, papa, I must think that the ill-will you bear to an innocent person is both cruel and unjust.”

“Juliet,” said the Captain, very gravely, “from the earnestness of your manner, I fear that you feel a deeper interest in this young Hurdlestone than I am willing to believe. Answer me truly—do you love the lad?”

“Father, I do love him. I feel that my happiness is inseparably connected with his.” This was said with that charming candor which was the most attractive feature in Juliet Whitmore’s character. It had its effect upon the old man’s generous nature. He could no longer chide, however repugnant to his feelings the confession she had just made. He drew her gently to his manly breast, and kissed away the tears that still lingered on her cheeks.

“My poor girl, I am sorry for you—very sorry. But I see no chance of your ever becoming his wife.”

“I am contented to remain single, papa; I never can love another as I love him.”

“Stuff and nonsense! What should hinder you? Why, child, you will get over this romantic passion. Few people are able to marry the first person with whom they fall in love; and, in nine cases out of ten, they would be grievously disappointed if they did. This Anthony Hurdlestone may be a good young man, but his father is a very bad man. His children may inherit some of the family propensities, which you know, my little daughter are everything but agreeable. I should not like to be grandpapa to a second edition of Mark Hurdlestone, or even of his hopeful nephew, Master Godfrey.”

“Ah, my dear father,” said Juliet, with great simplicity, “this may be all very true; but how do you know that we should have any children?”

This unexpected confession threw the old Captain, in spite of his grave lecture, into convulsions of laughter, whilst it covered his daughter’s face with crimson blushes.

“Miss Juliet!” cried her aunt, who entered just in time to hear her niece speak her thoughts aloud, “I am perfectly astonished at you. Have you no sense of decorum?”

“Pshaw, Dolly!” said the Captain, still laughing. “It was quite accidental. Your over delicate ladies are the most indelicate people in the world. I am sure what the child said was perfectly natural.”

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“Nature, Captain Whitmore, is not the best book for young ladies to study,” said Miss Dorothy, drawing herself up to her full height. “If we were to act entirely from her suggestions, we should reduce ourselves to a level with the brutes. Young ladies should never venture a remark until they have duly considered what they have to say. They should know how to keep the organ of speech in due subjection.”

“And pray, Dolly, will you inform me at what age a lady should commence this laudable act of self-denial? for I am pretty certain that your first lesson is still to learn.”

Oh, how poor Aunt Dorothy flounced and flew, at this speech! how she let her tongue run on, without bit or bridle, while vindicating her injured honor from this foul aspersion, quite forgetting her own theory in the redundancy of her practice! There never was, by her own account, such a discreet, amiable, well-spoken, benevolent, and virtuous gentlewoman! And how the cruel Captain continued to laugh at, and quiz, and draw her out: until Juliet, in order to cause a diversion in her aunt’s favor, pinched her favorite black cat’s ear. But this stratagem only turned the whole torrent of the old maid’s wrath upon herself.

“How cruel you are, Miss Juliet!” she cried, snatching the ill-used darling to her bosom. “You never think that these poor animals can feel ill-treatment as severely as yourself. I despise young ladies who write poetry, and weep and whine over a novel, yet are destitute of the common feelings of humanity.”

“Puss will forgive me,” said Juliet, holding out her small white hand to the cat, which immediately left off rubbing herself against Aunt Dorothy’s velvet stomacher, to fawn upon the proffered peace-offering.

The old Captain, who had remained for some minutes in deep thought, now suddenly turned from the window, and said:

“Juliet, would you like to visit London?”

“What, at this beautiful season of the year!” And Juliet left off caressing the cat, and regarded her father with surprise, not unmixed with curiosity.

“The flowers of the gay world, Julee, always blossom at the same time with those in the country; only the latter have always this advantage, that they are never out of season, and blossom for the day, instead of for the night. But, my dear child, I think it necessary for you to go. The change of scene and air will be very beneficial to your health, and tend to invigorate both your mind and body. Now, don’t pout and shake your head, Juliet; I do most earnestly wish you to go. The very best antidote to love is a visit to London. You will see other men, you will learn to know your own power; and all these idle fancies will be forgotten. Aunt Dorothy, what say you to the trip?”

“Oh, sir, I am always ready at the post of duty. Juliet wants a little polishing—she is horribly countryfied. When shall we prepare for the journey?”

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“Directly. I will write to her Aunt Seaford by tonight’s post. She will be delighted to have Juliet with her. The little sly puss is the old lady’s heir; but she is quite indifferent to her good fortune.”

“I never covet the possession of great wealth,” said Juliet. “Mark Hurdlestone is an awful example to those who grasp after riches. I do not anticipate much pleasure in this London visit, but I will go, dear papa, as you wish it.”

“There’s a dear good girl!” and the old man fondly kissed her. “I wish I could see the rose’s blush once more upon this pale face. You look so like your mother, Julee, it makes my heart ache. Ah! just so thin and pale she looked, before I lost her. You must not leave your poor old father in this cold-hearted world alone.”

Juliet flung her arms round his neck. “Do not make my heart ache, dear papa, as I know not how soon we may part. You once loved poor Anthony,” she whispered: “for Julee’s sake, love him still.”

“She will forget him,” said the Captain looking fondly after her, as she left the room, “she will forget him in London.”

And to London they went. Juliet was received by her rich aunt with the most lively demonstrations of regard. She felt proud of introducing to the notice of the gay world a creature so beautiful. Admired for her great personal attractions, and courted for her wealth, Juliet soon found herself the centre of attraction to a large circle of friends. But ah! how vapid and tasteless to the young lover of nature were the artificial manners and the unmeaning flatteries of the world. Professions of attachment, breathed into her ears by interested admirers, shocked and disgusted her simple taste, and made her thoughts turn continually to the one adored object, whose candid and honest bearing had won her heart. His soul had been poured forth at the same shrine, had drunk inspiration from the same sacred fount, and his sympathies and feelings were in perfect unison with her own.

How could she forget Anthony whilst mingling in scenes so uncongenial to her own pursuits? Was he not brought every hour nearer to her thoughts? Was she not constantly drawing contrasts between him and the worldly beings by whom she was surrounded! Did not his touching voice thrill more musically in her mental ear, when the affected ostentatious tones of the votary of fashion and pleasure tried to attract her attention by a display of his accomplishments and breeding? There was a want of reality in all she heard and saw that struck painfully upon her heart; and after the first novelty of the scene had worn off, she began to pine for the country. Her step became less elastic, her cheek yet paler, and the anxious father began to watch more closely these hectic changes, and to tremble for the health of his child.

“I am sick of this crowded place, of these sophisticated people, papa. I shall die here. Let me return to the country.”

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Frightened at the daily alteration in her appearance, the Captain promised to grant her request. Her aunt gave a large party the night before they were to leave town; and Juliet, to please her kind relative, exerted herself to the utmost to appear in good spirits.

“There has been a shocking murder committed in your neighborhood, Miss Whitmore,” said the officer, with whom she had been dancing, as he led her to a seat. “Have you seen the papers?”

“No,” said Juliet, carelessly. “I seldom read these accounts. They are so shocking; and we read them too much as matters of mere amusement and idle curiosity, without reflecting sufficiently upon the awful guilt which they involve.”

“This is a very dreadful business indeed. I thought you might know something of the parties.”

“Not very likely. We lead such a secluded life at the Lodge, that we are strangers to most of the people in the neighborhood.”

“You have heard of the eccentric miser, Mark Hurdlestone?”

“Who has not?” and Juliet started, and turned pale. “Surely he has not been murdered?”

“Yes; and by his own son.”

“His son? Oh, not by his son! His nephew, you mean?”

“His son. Anthony Hurdlestone. The heir of his immense wealth.”

He spoke to a cold ear. Juliet had fainted.

How did that dreadful night pass over the hapless maiden? It did pass, however, and on the morrow she was far on her journey home.

“I never thought he could be guilty of a crime like this,” said the Captain to his sister as she sat opposite to him in his travelling carriage. His arm encircled the slender waist of his daughter, and her pale cheek rested on his shoulder. But no tear hung in the long, dark, drooping eyelashes of his child. Juliet was stunned; but she had not wept.

“He is not guilty,” she cried, in a passionate voice. “I know and feel that he is not guilty. Remember Mary Mathews—how strong the circumstantial evidence against him in that case. Yet he was innocent—innocent, poor Anthony!”

The Captain, who felt the most tender sympathy for the state of mind into which this afflicting news had thrown his child, was willing to soothe, if possible, her grief.

“If he is innocent it will be proved on the trial, Julee darling. We will hope for the best.”

“It will be proved,” said Juliet, sitting upright, and looking her father earnestly, if not sternly in the face. “I am so confident of his innocence that, on that score, I have not shed a single tear. Ah! we are drawing near home,” she continued with a sigh. “Dear home! why did I leave it? There is something pure and holy in the very air of home. See, papa! there is the church spire rising above the trees. The dear old elm trees! We shall have time to think here, to hope, to pray; but who is that woman lying along the bank. She is ill, or dead.”

“Perhaps she is intoxicated,” said Miss Dorothy.

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“It is—yes—it is Mary Mathews!” cried Juliet, without noticing her aunt’s remark. “What can bring her here?”

“No good, you may be sure,” remarked the Captain.

“Oh! stop the carriage, dear papa, and let us speak to her. She may know something about the murder.”

“You are right, Juliet; let us ask her a few questions.”

They both left the carriage, and hurried to the spot where Mary, overcome with fatigue and fever, lay insensible and unconscious of her danger by the roadside.

Captain Whitmore lifted up the unhappy girl from the ground, and placed her in the carriage, greatly to the indignation of Miss Dorothy, and conveyed her to the Lodge. A medical gentleman in the neighborhood was sent for; and Juliet, in the deep interest she felt for the alarming state of the poor sufferer, for a while forgot her own poignant grief.

The next morning, on entering the parlor, she found Frederic Wildegrave in close conversation with her father.

After the usual compliments had passed between them, Juliet asked, with an air of intense anxiety depicted on her fine countenance, if Mr. Wildegrave thought it possible that Anthony Hurdlestone had committed the murder?

He replied sorrowfully, “My dear Miss Whitmore, I know not what to think.”

“Have you seen him since his imprisonment?”

“I have not. Many sorrows have confined me at home. This melancholy business has had a sad effect upon the weak nerves of my poor little sister. Clary is ill. I fear dying. She has expressed such a strong desire to see you, Miss Whitmore, once again, that I came over to make known to you her urgent request. It is asking of you a very great favor; but one, I hope, that you will not refuse to grant to our tears.”

“Juliet is in very poor health herself,” said her father. “If she could be spared this trying scene, it would be the better for her.”

“Poor, pretty Clarissa; and she is ill—is dying,” said Juliet, speaking unconsciously aloud. “This dreadful affair has killed her; and she wishes to see me. Yes, I will go.”

“My child, you know not what you are about to undertake,” said the old man, coming forward. “It may be the death of you.”

“Dear papa, I am stronger than you think. I have borne a worse sorrow,” she added, in a whisper. “Let me go.”

“Please yourself, Julee; but I fear it will be too much for you.”

Frederic was anxious that Clary should be gratified; and, in spite of Captain Whitmore’s objections, he continued, backed by Juliet, to urge his request. Reluctantly the old man yielded to their united entreaties.

Before Juliet set out upon her melancholy journey, she visited the sick chamber of the unconscious Mary Mathews, whom she strongly recommended to the care of Aunt Dorothy and her own waiting-woman. The latter, who loved her young mistress very tenderly, and who perhaps was not ignorant of her attachment to young Hurdlestone, promised to pay every attention to the poor invalid during her absence. Satisfied with these arrangements, Juliet kissed her father; and begging him not to be uneasy on her account, as for his sake she would endeavor to bear up against the melancholy which oppressed her, she accepted Mr. Wildegrave’s escort to Ashton.

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During the journey, she found that Frederic was acquainted with Anthony's attachment to her; and the frank and generous sympathy that he expressed for the unhappy young man won from his fair companion her confidence and friendship. He was the only person whom she had ever met to whom she could speak of Anthony without reserve, and he behaved to her like a true friend in the dark hour of doubt and agony.

The night was far advanced when they arrived at Millbank. Clary was sleeping, and the physician thought it better that she should not be disturbed.

The room allotted to Miss Whitmore's use was the one which had been occupied by Anthony. Everything served to remind her of its late tenant. His books, his papers, his flute, were there. Her own portfolio, containing the little poems he so much admired, was lying upon the table, and within it lay a bunch of dried flowers—wild flowers—which she had gathered for him upon the heath near his uncle's park; but what paper is that attached to the faded nosegay? It is a copy of verses. She knows his handwriting, and trembles as she reads—

Ye are wither'd, sweet buds, but love's hand can portray
On memory's tablets each delicate hue;
And recall to my bosom the long happy day
When she gathered ye, fresh sprinkled over with dew.
Ah, never did garland so lovely appear,
For her warm lip had breathed on each beautiful flower;
And the pearl on each leaf was less bright than the tear
That gleamed in her eyes in that rapturous hour.

Ye are wither'd, sweet buds, but in memory ye bloom,
Nor can nature's stern edict your loveliness stain;
Ye are fadeless and rich in undying perfume,
And your sweetness, like truth, shall unaltered remain.
When this fond beating heart shall be cold in the grave,
Oh, mock not my bier with fame's glittering wreath;
But bid on my temples these wither'd buds wave,
Through life fondly cherish'd, and treasured in death.

And had he really kept these withered flowers for her sake? How did her soul flow up into her eyes, to descend upon those faded blossoms in floods of tears, as sadly she pressed them to her lips and heart!

Then came the dreadful thought—He whom you thus passionately love is a murderer, the murderer of his father! The hand that penned those tender lines has been stained with blood. Shuddering, she let the flowers fall from her grasp. She turned, and met the mild beautiful eyes of his mother. The lifeless picture seemed to reproach her for daring for a moment to entertain such unworthy suspicions of her child, and she murmured for

the hundredth time, since she first heard the tale of horror, “No, no, I cannot believe him guilty.”

She undressed and went to bed. The bed in which he had so lately slept, in which he had passed so many wakeful hours in thinking of her; in forming bright schemes of future happiness, and triumphing in idea over the seeming impossibilities of his untoward destiny. His spirit appeared to hover around her, and in dreams she once more wandered with him through forest paths, eloquent with the song of birds, and bright with spring and sunshine.

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Oh, love! how strong is thy faith! How confiding thy trust. The world in vain frowns upon the object of thy devotion. Calumny may blacken, and circumstances condemn, but thou, in thy blind simplicity, still clingest, through storm and shine, to the imaginary perfections of thy idol.

To believe in the innocence of Anthony Hurdlestone was to hope against hope; yet Juliet firmly, confidingly, and religiously believed him guiltless. Oh, who might not envy her this love and faith!

The robin red-breast from his fading bower of hawthorns warbled in the early dawn of the cold, bright, autumnal day. The first rays of the sun gilded the gay changing leaves of the vine that clustered about the windows with hues of the richest dye, and the large bunches of grapes peeping from among the leaves looked more temptingly ripe, bathed in dew and brightened in the morning beam. A slight rap at her chamber door dispelled Juliet's slumbers, and Ruth Candler entered the room.

"Is anything wrong, Ruth?"

"My mistress is awake, and wishes to see you, Miss," said Ruth, bursting into tears. "It's the last morn. I'm thinking, that she'll ever see on earth. She's in no pain, she says, but she is so pale, and her eyes do not look like the eyes of the living. Alas! alas! what shall we do when she is gone? The dear sweet young creter!"

Ruth wept aloud with her face to the wall while Juliet hurried on her clothes, and, with a full heart, followed the old woman to the chamber of the invalid.

She found Clary sitting up in the bed, supported by pillows. Cold as it was, the casement was open to admit the full beams of the rising sun, and the arms of the dying girl were extended towards it, and her countenance lighted up with an expression of angelic beauty and intense admiration. Her brother was seated upon the bed, his face concealed in the pillow, while ever and anon a deep sob burst from his full laboring heart.

He had watched there through the long night—had watched and prayed while the dear one slept her last sleep on earth; and he knew that the young spirit had only roused itself to look once more upon the lovely creation of God before it plumed its bright wing for its final flight.

"Sun, beautiful sun! I shall see thee no more," said the child. "Thou glorious emblem of the power and love of God. But I go to him who is the Sun of the spirit-world, the life and light of the soul. There is joy in my heart—deep joy—joy which no mortal tongue can express, for the happiness I feel is not of the world. The fresh breezes of morning fan my brow; to-morrow they will sigh over my grave. The earth returns to the earth, the spirit to the God who gave it. Weep not for me, dear brother. For this hour I was born.

For this hour I came into the world, and you should rejoice and be exceedingly glad that I have so soon obtained my passport to the skies."

"Ah, my sister, what will life be to me, when you are gone? You are the last kindred tie that binds me to earth."

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“There will be another strong tie to draw you towards heaven, my brother. Our spirits will not be divided. I shall still live in your memory—still visit you in dreams. Your love for me will grow stronger, for it will never know diminution or decay.”

She paused for a few seconds, and folded her poor wasted hands together, whilst a serene smile passed over her wan features, lighting them with a holy joy.

“I had a dream last night, Frederic. A beautiful dream. If I have strength I will try and tell it to you. I thought much of Death last night, and my soul shrunk within me, for I felt that he was near. I did not fear Death while my heart was free from earthly love, but now he seemed to wear a harsh and terrible aspect. I prayed long and fervently to God to give me strength to enable me to pass tranquilly through the dark valley; but in my heart I felt no response to my prayer. Soon after this, the pains, that had racked me all yesterday, left me, and I fell into a deep sleep. And then me-thought I stood in a narrow pass between two vast walls of black rock, that enclosed me on either side, and appeared to reach to the very clouds. The place was lighted by a dim twilight that flowed through an enormous arch that united in the far distance these gigantic walls; an arch, high and deep enough to have sustained the weight of the whole world. I felt like an atom in immensity, alone in that strange place. Still as I gazed in bewildered awe upon that great gateway, a figure rose like a dim mist out of the darkness, and it grew and brightened into a real and living presence; its dazzling robes of snowy whiteness shedding a sort of glorious moonshine all around. Oh, the beauty, the surpassing beauty of the heavenly vision! it filled my whole soul with light.

“Whilst I continued to gaze upon it with increasing awe and admiration, it addressed me in a voice so rich and melodious that it awoke echoes of soft music from those eternal rocks.

“‘Child of earth,’ he said, ’is my aspect so terrible that men should shrink from me in horror?’

“‘Not so,’ I exclaimed, in an extasy of joy. ’Your face is like the face of the angel of the Lord, when he welcomes the beloved with a smile of peace into the presence of God.’

“’Yet I am he whom men regard as their worst enemy, and shrink from with cowardly fear. Yes, maiden, I am Death! Death, the friend of man, the conqueror of grief and pain. I hold in my hand the keys of the unknown world. I am the bright spirit who unlocks for the good the golden gates of eternal joy.’

“He took my out-stretched hands, and drawing me forward, bade me look through the black archway into the far eternity. Oh, that glorious land, those rivers of delight—those trees and flowers, and warbled songs—that paradise of living praise! I long, my brother, to break these bonds asunder, to pass the dark archway, and tread that heavenly shore.”

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“Happy Clary,” said Juliet, softly approaching the bed. “Dear blessed girl, who would wish to detain you in this cold miserable world, when heaven offers you a brighter home?”

“You are come to see your poor friend, my Juliet,” said Clary, twining her thin white arms about her neck. “The sight of you recalls me back to earth, filling my mind with sad thoughts and dark forebodings. Brother,” she continued, turning to Frederic, “leave us for a few minutes. I must speak to Juliet Whitmore, for a short space, alone.”

For some seconds the two young creatures remained locked in each other’s arms. Clary was the first to speak.

“The thoughts of heaven,” she said, “are full of rapture; the recollections of earth, full of anguish and tears. It is not for myself, Juliet, I weep. It is for the living I mourn —for the friends I leave behind. For me—I have lived long enough. It is better for me to go, Juliet; I am dying; will you kiss me once more, and tell me that you forgive your poor little Clary for having dared to love one whose whole heart was given to you, and who was by you beloved again?”

“Was Anthony dear to your gentle heart, Clary?” said Juliet, stooping down, and kissing fervently the cold damp brow of the dying girl. “Oh, dearer far dearer are you to me, in having thus shared, to its full extent, all the deep sorrow that weighs down my spirit.”

“My love, Juliet, was full of hope and joy, of blissful dreams and visions of peace and happiness. The storm came suddenly upon me, and the feeble threads that held together my frail existence parted in the conflict. I am thankful and resigned, and bless the hand that, in mercy, dealt the blow.” After a few minutes’ silence, she said very solemnly, “Anthony Hurdlestone is accused of having perpetrated a great crime. Do you, Juliet, believe him guilty?”

“When you believe that yon burning orb of fire is a mass of cold unmeaning ice,” said Juliet, pointing to the sun, “then will I suspect the man I love to be a base unnatural monster, a thief and a parricide.”

“Then you, and you alone, Juliet, are worthy of his love. And he loves you. Ah! so truly, so well, that I feel that he is innocent. A voice from heaven tells me so. Yes, dearest Juliet, God will yet vindicate his injured servant, and you and Anthony will meet again.”

“In heaven,” said Juliet, weeping.

“On earth,” returned Clary in feebler accents. “When you see each other, Juliet, tell him that Clary loved him and prayed for him to the last; that dying she blessed him, and believed him innocent. To you, Juliet, I leave my harp, the friend and companion of my lonely childhood. When you play the sweet airs I loved so well, think kindly of me.

When you wander by sparkling brooks, and through flowery paths, listening to the song of birds, and the music of forest shades, remember me. Ah! I have loved the bright and beautiful things of this glorious earth, and my wish has been granted, that I might pass hence with sunshine about my bed, and the music of Nature's wild minstrels ringing in my ears. Sun of earth, farewell. Friends of earth we shall meet again. See, heaven opens. Its one eternal day streams in upon my soul. Farewell.

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“Happy spirit, welcome in;
Hark! the song of seraphim
Hails thy presence at the throne—
Earth is lost, and Heaven is won!

Enter in.”

The voice died away in faint indistinct murmurs; the eye lost the living fire; the prophetic lip paled to marble, quivered a moment, and was still for ever. The spirit of Clary had passed the dark gateway, and was the new-born of heaven.

“My sister; oh, my sister! Is she indeed gone from me for ever?” exclaimed Frederic, bursting into the room, and flinging himself upon the bed beside her. “Clary! my angel! Clary! What! cold and dead? Oh, my poor heart!”

“Oh, how I envy her this blessed change!” said Juliet.

“Aye, ’tis a sin to weep for her. But grief is selfish, Miss Whitmore; it will have its way. Oh! sister, dear sister, why did you leave me alone, the last survivor of an unfortunate race?”

And thus sorrow poured forth its querulous wailings into the cold ear of death. The storm which bereaves us of our best affections passes over; the whirlwind, the thunder, and the shower, desolating our harvest of expected joys; but the sun bursts forth again. Hope blossoms afresh in its beams, and the heart of man revives to form new schemes of future enjoyment. Such is life.

CHAPTER XXIII.

And hast thou sought me in this dreary cell,
This dark abode of guilt and misery;
To win my sadden’d spirit back to earth
With words of blessed import?—S.M.

The assizes were rapidly approaching. Conscious of his innocence, as far as the murder of his father was concerned, Anthony Hurdlestone looked forward to his trial with firmness and composure. There never was a greater mass of circumstantial evidence brought against a prisoner than in his memorable case.

Holding an elevated position in society, his trial created a great amount of interest and curiosity among all ranks, and the court was crowded to excess. The youth of the criminal, his gentlemanly bearing, his fine expressive countenance, his thoughtful mild eye and benevolent brow excited surprise in the beholders, and gave rise to many doubts as to his being the murderer; and the calm dignified manner in which he listened

to the evidence given against him tended greatly to increase the interest which was expressed by many in his awful situation.

Grenard Pike was the first witness called, and he deposed,

That on the evening of the tenth of October, between the hours of eight and nine, he and the elder Hurdlestone were seated at a table counting money into a mahogany brass-bound box. He (Grenard) saw a tall figure pass the window. Mr. Hurdlestone instantly called out, “Grenard, did you see that man?” and he (the witness) answered, “Yes, it is your son.” Mr. Hurdlestone replied, in some

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alarm, “I told him to come to-night; but I did not think that he would take me at my word. What can he want with me?” The next moment a pistol was fired through the casement. The ball passed through Mr. Hurdlestone’s shoulder. He fell to the floor across the money-box, exclaiming, “My son! my cruel son! He has murdered me for my money; but he shall not have my money!” Witness looked up, and saw the murderer, by the light of the moon, standing by the window. He could swear to the person of Anthony Hurdlestone. Thinking his own life in danger he made his escape into a back room, and got out of the window, and ran as fast as he could to the village, to give the alarm and procure a surgeon. When he returned he found the prisoner leaning, apparently conscience-stricken, over the corpse. He offered no resistance when seized by the constables; he had no money in his possession. A pair of pistols was found in his coat pocket. One had been recently used; the other was still loaded; and there were stains of blood upon his hands and clothes.

He then related Anthony’s previous visit to the cottage; the manner in which he had threatened his father; and the trick the miser had played off upon him, which circumstance had been faithfully detailed to him by old Mark, who regarded the latter as an excellent joke, although, Grenard dryly remarked, “It had cost him his life.”

During Pike’s evidence, the prisoner was greatly agitated, and was observed to lean heavily upon the dock for support. But when his cousin Godfrey and William Mathews appeared to add their testimony against him, his fortitude entirely forsook him, and he turned away, and covered his face for some minutes with his hands.

Godfrey’s evidence was most conclusive. He stated that Anthony had borrowed from him, before his uncle’s death, the sum of four hundred pounds, to settle some college debts which he had concealed from Colonel Hurdlestone’s knowledge. Godfrey, willing to oblige him, had raised upon a note the greater part of the money. It became due and he (Godfrey) being unable, from his altered circumstances, to meet it, went to his cousin, to beg him to do so, if possible. He was surprised that the prisoner was able to give him the sum at once, though he afterwards learned that it was money left in his charge by Mr. Wildegrave that he had taken for that purpose. Anthony told him that Mr. Wildegrave had written to him for the money, and that he was greatly perplexed what to do. In this emergency, he (Godfrey) advised him to go to his father and state to him the difficulty in which he was placed, and, in all probability, the old man would rescue him from his unpleasant situation. He then related the result of the prisoner’s interview with his father, the manner in which he had been repulsed, and the threatening language which the prisoner had used; his (Godfrey’s) discovery of the trick which the hard old man had played off upon his son, and Anthony’s determination to

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visit him again on the night of the tenth of October, and force him to terms. He concluded by saying, that he had every reason to believe that the intended visit had taken place at the very time that the murder was committed. He spoke of his cousin with much feeling, and tried to excuse his conduct, as being the result of his father's ill-treatment and neglect; and he commented upon Anthony's solitary habits, and sullen uncommunicative disposition, as having been fostered by these unfortunate circumstances.

His evidence was given in so frank and manly a way, and he seemed to sympathize so deeply in his cousin's unfortunate position, that he created quite a sensation among his listeners. No one imagined him to be in any way implicated in the crime.

The statement of William Mathews corroborated all that had been advanced by Godfrey Hurdlestone. He related his accidental meeting with Mr. Anthony Hurdlestone on his way to the miser's cottage, but he omitted the conversation that passed between them; only stating, that he observed the muzzle of a pistol protruding from the pocket of the prisoner—a circumstance which, knowing the peaceable habits of the prisoner, astonished him at the time.

Long before Mathews had concluded his deposition, there remained not a doubt on the minds of the jury that Anthony Hurdlestone was the murderer. Even Captain Whitmore, who had greatly interested himself on behalf of the young man, believed him guilty.

One witness still remained unheard, and Anthony still clung to hope; still anxiously anticipated that the evidence of Frederic Wildegrave would go far to save him. Alas! how great was his disappointment, when the circumstances related by his friend were more conclusive of his guilt than all the false statements that had been made by his enemies. His own letter, too, which was read in court, alone would have condemned him in the opinion of all unprejudiced men.

"October 10th, 1790.

"My Dear Frederic,

"I am certain that I have forfeited your good opinion, by omitting to send you the money you left in my keeping: I have forfeited my own. How shall I find words to tell you the dreadful truth, that the money is no longer in my possession; that, in a moment of excitement, I gave the deposit entrusted to my care to another?"Yet listen to me for a few painful moments, before you condemn me utterly. My cousin Godfrey came to me in great distress; he implored me to save him from ruin, by obtaining for him a temporary loan, for a few hours, of four hundred pounds, which he faithfully promised to replace the following day. Hurried away by my feelings, I imprudently granted his

request, and gave him the money you left with me. Do not wholly despise me, Frederic; he looked so like my poor uncle, I knew not how to deny him.“This morning brought your letter. You ask for the money to be sent to you immediately.

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I have it not to send; my sin has found me out. A thief and swindler! Can it be possible that I have incurred such dreadful guilt?“*Night.*—I have seen Godfrey—he has failed me. What shall I do? I must go to my father; perhaps he will relent, and pity my distress. My heart is torn with distracting doubts. Oh, that I could pour into some faithful bosom my torturing situation! Clary is ill—and left to myself, I am lost.“*Midnight.*—I have seen my father. What a meeting. My brain aches while I try to recall it. At first he insulted my agony; taunted me with my misfortunes, and finally maddened me. I cannot describe to you what passed. Wound up to a pitch of fury, I threatened to obtain the money by violence, if he did not write an order upon his banker for the sum required. Cowering with fear, he complied; and I—I, in the fullness of my heart, implored his pardon for the language I had used, and blessed him. Yes, I blessed him, who only a few minutes before had spurned me from his feet—had mocked at my calamity—and cursed me in the savage malevolence of his heart. Some feeling of remorse appeared to touch his cruel breast; as I left the house he called after me, ’Anthony, Anthony, to-morrow night I will do you justice.’ I will go to him no more. I feel that we have parted for ever.“*Thursday evening.*—The old man has deceived me—has jested with my distress. I could curse him, but I have not done so. To-night we shall have a fearful reckoning; yes, to-night he will be forced to do me justice.“Godfrey has been with me. He discovered the cruel trick which the unnatural wretch who calls himself my father had played me—and he laughed. How could he laugh at such a melancholy instance of depravity? Godfrey should have been this man’s son. In some things they resemble each other. Yes, he laughed at the trick. Is the idea of goodness existing in the human heart a mere dream? Are men all devils, or have some more tact to conceal their origin than others? I begin to suspect myself and all mankind. I will go once more to that hard-hearted man; if he refuses to grant my request, I will die at his feet. Last night I attempted suicide, but my good angel prevailed. To-night is my hour, and the power of darkness. Will he feel no touch of remorse when he beholds his neglected son—lost—bleeding—dying at his feet?“Oh, that you were near to save me from myself! An unseen power seems hurrying, drawing me to perdition. The voice of a friend would dissolve the spell, and set the prisoner of passion free. The clock strikes eight—I must go. Farewell, my friend, my brother; forgive and pity the unfortunate

“Anthony M. Hurdlestone.”

He went—and the old man was found murdered. What more natural than such a consequence after penning such a letter? The spectators looked from one to the other: on every brow rested a cloud; every head was nodded in token of agreement; every one present, but Frederic Wildegrave, believed him guilty. He had retained no counsel, preferring to plead in his own defence.

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He rose; every eye was fixed upon him, men held their breath, wondering what sort of defence could issue from the lips of the parricide.

He spoke; the clear, rich, mellow, unimpassioned tones of his voice rolled over that mass of human heads, penetrating every heart, and reaching every ear.

“My lord, and you gentlemen of the jury, I rise not with the idea of saving my life, by an avowal of my innocence, for the evidence which has been given against me is of too conclusive a nature for me to hope for that; I merely state the simple fact, that I am not guilty of the dreadful crime laid to my charge; and I leave it to God, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, to prove the truth of my words.

“The greater part of the evidence brought against me is true; the circumstances recorded against me really occurred; the letter just read was penned by my own hand; yet, in the face of these overwhelming facts, I declare myself innocent of the crime laid to my charge. I know not in what manner my father met his death. I am as ignorant as you can be of the hand that dealt the fatal blow. I confess that I sought his presence with the dreadful determination of committing murder; but the crime was against myself. For this I deserve punishment—for this I am content to die: to this charge, made by myself, I plead guilty. I look around me—in every face I see doubt and doom. I stand here a mark and scorn to the whole world; but, though all unite in my condemnation, I still fearlessly and distinctly declare my innocence. I am neither a parricide nor a murderer! and I now await my sentence with the calmness and fortitude which a clear conscience alone can give.”

Murmurs of disapprobation ran though the court.

“What a hypocrite!” muttered some, as the jury left the court to consult together about the verdict.

“Do you observe the striking likeness between the prisoner at the bar and his cousin, the second witness against him?” whispered a gentleman in the crowd to a friend near him. “By Jove, ’tis a fearful resemblance. I would not be so like the murderer for worlds. ’Tis the same face.”

“Perhaps,” said his friend, “they are partners in guilt. I have my doubts. But ’tis unlawful to condemn any man.”

“He’s a bad fellow by his own account,” said the other. “It was he who first led the prisoner to commit the theft. I think one of them deserves death as much as the other.”

“Whist, man! Yon handsome rogue is the miser’s heir.”

“Humph!” said the first speaker. “If I were on the jury—”

“Here they come, there is death in their very looks, I thought as much, he is found guilty.”

The judge rose; a death-like stillness pervaded the court during his long and impressive address to the prisoner. The sentence of death was then pronounced, and Anthony Marcus Hurdlestone was ordered for execution on the following Monday.

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“This dreadful day is at length over,” he said as he flung himself on his pallet of straw in the condemned cell, on the evening of that memorable day. “Thank God it is over, and I know the worst, and nothing now remains to hope or fear. A few brief hours and this weary world will be a dream of the past, and I shall awake from my bed of dust to a new and better existence, beyond the power of temptation—beyond the might of sin. My God, I thank Thee. Thou hast dealt justly with Thy servant. The soul that sinneth, it must die; and grievously have I sinned in seeking to mar Thy glorious image—to cast the life thou gavest me as a worthless boon at Thy feet. I bow my head in the dust and am silent before Thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

His meditations were interrupted by the entrance of the chaplain of the jail—a venerable Christian who felt a deep interest in the prisoner, and who now sought him to try and awaken him to a full sense of his awful situation.

“My son,” he said, laying his hand upon Anthony’s shoulder, “how is it with you this night? What is God saying to your soul?”

“All is well,” replied Anthony. “He is speaking to me words of peace and comfort.”

“Your fellow-men have condemned you—” he paused then added with a deep sigh, “—-and I too, Anthony Hurdlestone, believe you guilty.”

“God has not condemned me, good father, and by the light of His glorious countenance that now shines upon me, shedding joy and peace into my heart, I am innocent.”

“Oh, that I could think you so!”

“Though it has seemed right in the eyes of the All-wise Sovereign of the universe that I should be pronounced guilty before an earthly bar, I feel assured that He, in His own good time, will declare my innocence.”

“Will that profit you aught, my son, when you are dust?”

“It will rescue my name from infamy, and give me a mournful interest in the memory of my friends.”

“Poor lad, this is but a melancholy consolation; I wish I could believe you.”

“What a monster of depravity you must think me, if you can imagine me guilty after what I have just said! Is truth so like falsehood, that a man of your holy calling cannot discern the difference? Do I look like a guilty man? Do I speak like a guilty man who knows that he has but a few days to live? If I were the wretch you take me for, should I not be overwhelmed with grief and despair? Would not the thought of death be insupportable? Oh! believe one who seeks not to live—who is contented to die, when I again solemnly declare my innocence.”

“I have seen men, Anthony Hurdlestone, who, up to the very hour of their execution, persisted in the same thing and yet, after all their solemn protestations, owned at the last moment that their sentence was just, and that they merited death.”

“And I too have merited death,” said Anthony mournfully. “God is just.”

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The chaplain started; though but a few minutes before he had considered the prisoner guilty, yet it produced a painful feeling in his mind to hear him declare it.

“Is self-destruction murder?” asked Anthony with an anxious earnest glance.

“Aye, of the worst kind: for deep ingratitude to God, and contempt of his laws, are fearfully involved in this unnatural outrage.”

“Then my sentence is just,” sighed Anthony; “I never raised my hand against my father’s life, but I raised it against my own. God has punished me for this act of rebellion against His Divine Majesty, in rejecting, as a thing of no value, the life He gave. I yield myself into His hands, confident that His arm is stretched over His repentant creature for good; whether I die upon the scaffold or end my days peacefully in my bed, I can lay my hand upon my heart and say—’His will be done.’”

For about an hour the good clergyman continued reading and praying with the prisoner, and before he left him that evening, in spite of his pre-conceived notions of his guilt, he was fully convinced of innocence.

Sadly and solemnly the hours passed on that brought the morning of his execution, “with death-bed clearness, face to face.” He had joined in the sacred duties of the Sabbath; it was to him a day of peaceful rest—a forestate of the quiet solemnity of the grave. In the evening he was visited by Frederic Wildegrave, who had been too ill after the trial to leave his bed before. He was pale, and wasted with sorrow and disease, and looked more like a man going to meet death than the criminal he came to cheer with his presence.

“My dear Anthony,” said Frederic, taking his cousin’s hand, “my heart bleeds to see you thus. I have been sick; my spirit is weighed down with sorrow, or we should have met sooner.”

“You do indeed look ill,” replied Anthony, examining, with painful surprise, the altered face of his friend; “I much fear that I have been the cause of this change. Tell me, Frederic, and tell me truly, do you believe me guilty?”

“I have never for one moment entertained a thought to that effect, Anthony; though the whole world should condemn you, I would stake my salvation on your integrity.”

“Bless you, my friend; my true, faithful, noble-hearted friend,” cried Anthony, clasping the hand he held to his breast, “you are right; I am not the murderer.”

“Who is?”

Anthony shook his head.

“That infernal scoundrel, Mathews?”

“Hush! Not him alone.”

“Godfrey?”

“Oh! Frederic; had you seen the triumphant smile that passed over his face at the moment that my sentence was pronounced, you could entertain no doubt upon the subject. I heard not the sentence—I saw not the multitude of eyes fixed upon me—I only saw him—I only saw his eyes looking into my soul and laughing at the ruin he had wrought. But he will not go unpunished. There is one who will yet betray him, and prove my innocence; I mean his hateful accomplice, William Mathews.”

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“And can nothing be done to convict them?”

“They have sworn falsely, and perverted facts. I have no proof of their guilt. Would the world believe my statements? Would it not appear like the wolf accusing the lamb? For my poor uncle’s sake I am ready to suffer; and for this cause I employed no counsel to plead on my behalf; I would rather die myself than be the means of bringing to the scaffold the only son that he adored. Poor Algernon! I have paid a heavy debt for his generosity to me. Yes,” he continued, more cheerfully, “I will leave Godfrey to enjoy his ill-gotten wealth, nor waste the few hours which now remain to me on earth in vain regrets. How is it with the dear Clary? How has she borne up against this dreadful blow?”

Frederic’s sole answer was a mournful glance at the sables in which he was clad. Anthony comprehended in a moment the meaning of that sad, sad look. “She is gone,” he said—“she, the beautiful—the innocent. Yes, yes—I knew it would kill her, the idea of my guilt. Alas! poor Clary!”

“She never thought you guilty,” said Frederic, wiping his eyes. “She bade me give you this letter, written with her dying hand, to convince you that she believed you innocent. Her faith towards you was as strong as death; her love for you snapped asunder the fragile threads that held her to life. But she is happy. Dear child! She is better off than those who weep her loss. And you, Anthony, you—the idol of her fond young heart—will receive her welcome to that glorious country, of which, I trust, she is now the bright inhabitant.”

“And she died of grief. Died—because others suspected of crime the man she loved. Oh, Clary! Clary! how unworthy was I of your love! You knew I loved another, yet it did not diminish aught of your friendship, your pure devotion to me! Oh, that I had your faith—your love!”

He covered his face with his hands, and both were silent for a long time.

“Frederic, we must part,” said Anthony, at length raising his head. “Beloved friend, we must part for ever!”

“I shall see you again to-morrow.”

“What! on the scaffold?”

“Aye, on the scaffold! Your place of martyrdom.”

“This is friendship indeed. Time may one day prove to you that Anthony Hurdlestone was not unworthy of your love.”

Frederic burst into tears afresh, and wringing Anthony's hand, hurried from the cell; and the prisoner was once more left alone to commune with his own thoughts, and prepare for the awful change that awaited him.

His spirit, weaned as it was from the things of earth, contemplated with melancholy pleasure the death of the young Clary, which he considered had placed his sweet young friend beyond the reach of human suffering.

"She is with the Eternal Present," he said. "No dark mysterious future can ever more cloud her soul with its heavy shadow. To-morrow—and the veil will be rent in twain, and our ransomed spirits will behold each other face to face. What is Death? The eclipse for a moment of the sun of human life. The shadow of earth passes from before it, and it again shines forth with renewed splendor."

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His reverie was interrupted by the entrance of the jailor followed by another person muffled up in a large riding cloak. “A stranger,” he said, “wished to exchange a few words in private with the prisoner.”

Anthony rose from his humble bed, and asked in subdued tones, “to whom he had the honor of speaking?”

“To a sincere friend, Anthony Hurdlestone—one who cannot believe you guilty of the dreadful crime of murder.”

The sound of that voice, though months had passed away since its musical tones had vibrated on his ear, thrilled to the soul of the prisoner.

“Miss Whitmore!” he cried, in an extasy of joy; and sinking at her feet, he seized her hands, and pressing them to his lips and heart burst into an agony of tears.

“Anthony!” said Juliet, placing her hand upon his shoulder, as he sat at her feet with his face upturned and his eyes suffused in tears, gazing tenderly upon her; “I came here to-night to ask you one simple question. With many tears I gained my father’s consent to this unusual step. Not without many severe mental struggles I overcame the feelings of maiden shame, and placed myself in this painful situation in order to receive from your own lips an answer which might satisfy the intense anxiety that presses upon my mind. As you value your own and my eternal peace, I charge you, Anthony, to answer me truly—as truly as if you stood before the bar of God, and the eye of the Great Searcher of hearts was upon you; Did you murder your unhappy father?”

“As I hope for salvation, I am as ignorant of the real perpetrators of the deed as you are.”

“Both directly and indirectly?”

“The whole affair is involved in mystery. I have, of course, my doubts and surmises. These I must not name, lest I might accuse persons who like myself are innocent of the offence. Hear me, Juliet Whitmore! while I raise this fettered right hand to heaven, and swear by that awful Judge before whose dread tribunal I must in a few hours appear, that I am guiltless of the crime for which at the age of one-and-twenty, in the first bloom of youth and manhood, I am condemned to die!”

There was a slight convulsion of the features as he uttered the last words, and his lips quivered for a moment. Nature asserted her right over her sentient creature; and the thoughts of death awoke at that moment a strange conflict in his breast. So young—so highly gifted—so tenderly beloved; it was indeed hard to die—to die a death of infamy, amidst the curses and execrations of an insulting mob. Oh, how gladly would he have seen the bitter cup pass from his lips!

Juliet regarded her unhappy lover with a sad and searching glance. But innocence is strong; he shrunk not from the encounter. His eyes were raised to hers in confidence and love, and the glow of conscious worth irradiated his wan and wasted features. Alas! what years of sorrow had been compressed into one short week!

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“I believe you, Anthony, to be an injured man. Thank God!” she continued, mournfully folding her hands together, “thank God! I have not loved a murderer!”

“Loved!” repeated the prisoner, whilst the deepest crimson for a moment flushed his face; “is it possible that Juliet Whitmore ever loved me! Loved me after witnessing that disgraceful scene in the park. Oh, Juliet! dear generous Juliet! these blessed words would make me too happy were it not for these bonds.”

“I wronged you, Anthony; cruelly wronged you. My unfortunate misconception of painful facts may have been the means of rivetting those irons upon your limbs. I cannot forgive myself for not questioning Mary Mathews alone upon the subject.”

“Appearances were strongly against me, Juliet. I have been the victim of unfortunate circumstances.” He bent his head down upon his fettered hands, and continued, in a low voice rendered almost inarticulate with emotion: “But you love me, and this assurance ought to atone for all the dreary past. Alas! at this moment it comes to rob me of my fortitude; to add a bitterness to death!”

“Oh, that it were in my power to save your life, beloved Anthony!” said Juliet, sinking on her knees beside him, and clasping his fettered hands within her own. “I have loved you long and tenderly. I shall see you no more on earth. If my life could ransom yours, I would give it without a sigh; but will is powerless; our hands are tied; we are indeed the creatures of circumstance. All that now remains for us is to submit—to bow with fortitude to the mysterious ways of Providence. To acknowledge, even in our hearts’ deep agony, that whatever is, is right.”

“Let us pray,” said Anthony solemnly, holding up her hands in his; “pray that God may give us strength to undergo the trial that awaits us.”

“With tears and sobs and struggling sighs, those unhappy young lovers poured out their full hearts to God. They appealed to his love, his justice, his mercy; they cried to him in their strong agony; and even in that moment of unutterable woe they found peace.

“Go, my beloved,” whispered Anthony, “I can part with you now. We shall soon meet again.”

“To part no more for ever!” sobbed Juliet, struggling with her tears. “I have a message for you from one who has already passed the dark valley—from one who loved you—-poor Clary.”

“I cannot bear it now,” said Anthony. “I hope soon to hear a more joyful message from her gentle lips. Farewell, my Juliet—my soul’s first and only earthly love! Live for my sake—live to defend my memory from infamy. Time will dissipate the clouds that now

blacken my name; and the day will come when Juliet Whitmore will not have cause to blush for her unfortunate lover."

One long and last embrace—one gush of free and heartfelt tears—one sad impassioned kiss, and Anthony Hurdlestone was once more alone in the condemned cell, with silence and darkness—mute emblems of death—brooding around him.

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He had all this time unconsciously held Clary's letter strained in his hand; and as his thoughts flowed back to her he longed intensely to read it. The visit of the good chaplain, who brought with him a light, afforded him the opportunity he so much desired.

A strange awe came over him as he unfolded the paper. The hand that had traced it was no longer of earth; the spirit that had dictated it was removed to another sphere. Yet he fancied, as he read the paper, that the soft blue eyes of Clary looked into his own; that her bright golden locks fanned his feverish cheek; that she was actually before him. Several times he started and looked up into the face of the chaplain before he could dispel the vision.

"Anthony, Dear Anthony, (she wrote.)

"This will meet you at a time when sorrow for my death will be lost in joy, that we shall so soon meet in heaven. Fear not, Anthony; that hour may be far distant. God is just. You are innocent; trust in him. Trust firmly, nothing wavering, and he will save you. I have wept for you, prayed for you; would that I could die for you! My soul has been poured forth in tears; but never for one moment have I abused our holy friendship by imagining you guilty. Weep not for me, dear Anthony; I am happy. God is taking me from the evil to come, from the anguish of seeing you the husband of another. Death has no sting; I welcome him as a friend.

"Why should I dread thee, Death?
Stern friend in solemn guise;
One pause of this frail breath,
And then the skies!

"When restored to peace, to happiness, and to Juliet, think kindly of me. Remember how I loved you—how I delighted in all that delights and interests you. But not in crowded halls would I have you recall my image;—my heart was solitary amidst the dust and rubbish of the gay world. But in spring, when the earth is bright with flowers, when the sun looks down in love upon creation, when the full streams are flowing on with a voice of joy, when the song of birds makes glad the forest-bowers, when every blade of grass is dressed in beauty, and every leaf and flower glows with the light of life, and the unsophisticated untried heart of youth breathes forth its ardent aspiration to the throne of God—then, Anthony, think of me. My spirit will hover about your path; my voice will murmur in the breeze; and the recollection of what I was, of all my faith and love, will be dear to your heart."When these eyes, long dimm'd with weeping,
In the silent dust are sleeping;
When above my lowly bed
The breeze shall wave the thistle's head,

Thou wilt think of me, love!"When the queen of beams and showers

Comes to dress the earth with flowers;
When the days are long and bright,
And the moon shines all the night,

Thou wilt think of me, love!

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“When the tender corn is springing,
And the merry thrush is singing;
When the swallows come and go,
On light wings flitting to and fro,

Thou wilt think of me, love!“When ’neath April’s rainbow skies
Violets ope their azure eyes;
When mossy bank and verdant mound
Sweet knots of primroses have crown’d,

Thou wilt think of me, love!“When the meadows glitter white,
Like a sheet of silver light;
When bluebells gay and cowslips bloom,
Sweet-scented briar and golden broom,

Thou wilt think of me, love!“Each bud shall be to thee a token
Of a fond heart reft and broken;
And the month of joy and gladness
Shall fill thy soul with holy sadness,

And thou wilt sigh for me, love.“When thou rov’st the woodland bowers,
Thou shalt cull spring’s sweetest flowers,
To strew with tender, silent weeping
The lonely bed where I am sleeping,

And sadly mourn for me, love!”

And thus ended poor Clary’s letter. Anthony folded it up carefully, and laid it next his heart. The hope she had endeavored to inspire did not desert him at that moment. He was resigned to his fate; he even wished to die. Her simple child-like letter had done more to reconcile him to his doom than the pious lectures of the good priest, and his own deep reflections on the subject. The madness of all human pursuits—the vanity and frivolity of life—now awoke in his breast sensations of pity and disgust. But love and friendship—those drops of honey in the cup of gall—did not their sweetness in this hour of desolation atone for the bitter dregs, and hold him to earth? The mighty struggle was to rend asunder these new-formed and holy ties. For him there existed no hope of a reprieve. Wise and good men had tried and found him guilty of a crime which, in all ages, had been held in execration by mankind. He was not a common criminal; for him there existed no sympathy, no pity. The voice of humanity was against him; the whole world united in his condemnation.

It was his last night upon earth; yet amidst its silent dreary watches, when these thoughts flitted through his mind, he wished it past. A thousand times he caught himself

repeating from Dr. Young that memorable line, as if to fortify himself against the coming event,

> “Man receives, not suffers, death’s tremendous blow.”

But it was not the mere death-pang—the separation of matter and spirit—that he shrank from. It was the loathed gibbet; that disgusting relic of a barbarous age, the revolting exhibition, the public and disgraceful manner of his death, that made it so terrible. And he sighed, and prayed to God to grant him patience, and fell into a deep tranquil sleep, from which he did not awake until the hour of his departure was at hand.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

On life's wide sea, when tempests gathering dark
Pour the fierce billow on the shatter'd bark,
The surge may break, the warring winds may rave,
'Tis God controls the vengeance of the wave;
And those who trust in his Almighty arm
No storm shall vex, nor hurricane alarm;
He is their stay when earthly hope is lost,
The light and anchor of the tempest-tost!—S.M.

At an early hour next morning every avenue and street leading to the place of execution was thronged with human beings, all anxious to behold an erring fellow-creature suffer the punishment due to the enormous crime of which he had been found guilty. The rush of the gathering multitude was like the roaring of a troubled sea, when the waters foam and chafe, and find no rest for their tumultuous heavings. Intense curiosity was depicted on every countenance, and each man strained his neck eagerly forward to catch a glance of the monster who had murdered his own father.

And there was one among that mass of living heads the most anxious, the most eager of all. This was Godfrey Hurdlestone, who could not believe his victim sure until he saw him die.

"Why, Squire," whispered a voice near him, "I did not expect to see you here. Are you not satisfied that he is condemned?"

"No, Bill," responded the murderer. "I must see him die. Then, and not till then, shall I believe myself secure."

"What has become of Mary?" again whispered his companion in guilt.

Godfrey's hardened face became livid. "She was lying speechless, given over by the physicians, at Captain Whitmore's, three days ago. Curse her! I have no doubt that she meant to betray us."

"I wish I had throttled her the night she described the scene of the murder! But mum; here comes the prisoner. By Jove! how well he looks! how bravely he bears up against his fate! Does not the sight of that proud pale face make you feel rather queerish?"

"Away with your scruples; his death makes rich men of us."

The prisoner ascended the platform, supported by Frederic Wildegrave and the good chaplain. A breathless pause succeeded, and he became the central point to which all eyes were directed. His hat was off, and the expression of his face was calm and

resigned; the dignity of conscious innocence was there. He turned his fine dark eyes with a pitying glance on the upturned faces of the gazing crowd; the hisses and groans with which they had greeted his first appearance were hushed; a death-like stillness fell upon that vast assemblage, and many a rugged cheek was moistened with tears of genuine compassion.

“Hark, he is about to speak! Is it to confess his crime?”

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In deep clear tones he addressed the multitude. “Fellow-men, you are assembled here this day to see me die. You believe me guilty of a dreadful crime; the most dreadful crime that a human creature can commit—the murder of a parent. Here, before you all, and in the presence of Almighty God, I declare my innocence. I neither committed the murder nor am I acquainted with the perpetrators of the deed. God will one day prove the truth of my words. To Him I leave the vindication of my cause; He will clear from my memory this infamous stain. Farewell!”

“He cannot be guilty!” exclaimed some.

“The hardened wretch!” cried others. “To take God’s name in vain, and die with a lie upon his lips.”

The prisoner now resigned himself to the hangman’s grasp; but whilst the fatal noose was adjusting, a cry—a wild, loud, startling cry—broke upon the crowd, rising high into the air and heard above all other sounds. Again and again it burst forth, until it seemed to embody itself into intelligible words; “Stop! stop!” it cried, “stop the execution! He is innocent! he is innocent!”

The crowd caught up the cry; and “He is innocent! he is innocent!” passed from man to man. A young female was now seen forcing a passage through the dense mass. The interest became intense; every one drew closer to his neighbor, to make way for the bearer of unexpected tidings, who, arriving within a few yards of the scaffold, again called out in shrill tones, which found an echo in every benevolent heart—“Godfrey Hurdlestone and William Mathews are the real murderers. I heard them form the plot. I saw the deed done!”

“Damnation!—we are betrayed!” whispered Godfrey to his colleague in crime, as they fled from the scene.

All was now uproar and confusion. The sheriff and his officers at length succeeded in quieting the excited populace, and removed the prisoner once more to his cell.

“I trust, my son, that the bitterness of death is past,” said the chaplain, who accompanied him hither. “The God in whom you trusted has been strong to save.”

“And where, where is my preserver?” asked Anthony, rising from his knees, after returning humble and heartfelt thanks to God for his preservation.

“She is here,” said Mary, kneeling at his feet. “Here to bless and thank you for all your unremitted kindness to a wretch like me. Oh! I feared that I should be too late; that all would be over before my feeble limbs would bring me to the spot. I have been ill, Mr. Anthony, dreadfully ill; I couldn’t speak to tell them that you were innocent; but it lay upon my heart day by day, and it burnt into my brain like fire. But they did not

comprehend me; they could not understand my ravings. At last I stole from my bed, when they were all absent, and put on my clothes, and hurried out into the blessed air. The winds of heaven blew upon me and my reason returned; and God gave me strength, and brought me here in time to save your life. Yes, you are saved. Blessed be God's name for ever. You are saved, and by me!"

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The poor girl, overcome by her feelings, burst into a fit of hysterical weeping, and suffered the chaplain to lead her from the cell and place her under the protection of the jailor's wife.

CONCLUSION.

Little now remains of my sad tale to be told. Godfrey and his infamous accomplice Mathews were apprehended, convicted and condemned, and suffered for their crimes on the very spot which had witnessed the rescue of Anthony Hurdlestone from a death of unmerited infamy.

The sole survivor of a rich and powerful family, Anthony left the condemned cell in the county jail to take possession of his paternal estates. But it was not on a spot haunted by such melancholy recollections that the last of the Hurdlestones thought fit to dwell. The Hall was sold, and passed into the hands of strangers; and after remaining two years abroad, Anthony once more returned to his native shores, and led to the altar his betrothed bride—the beautiful and talented Juliet Whitmore.

The young Squire's character had been fully vindicated to the world, and his wealthy neighbors took every opportunity of courting his acquaintance; but a change had come over Mr. Hurdlestone, which the caresses of the great and the smiles of fortune could not remove. He never forgot the sad lesson he had learned in —— jail, or the melancholy fate of his nearest relatives. He had proved the instability of all earthly pursuits and enjoyments; and he renounced the gay world, and devoted his time and talents, and the immense riches which heaven had entrusted to his stewardship, in alleviating the wants and woes of suffering humanity. In the wise and virtuous Juliet he found a partner worthy of his love. One in heart and purpose, their unaffected piety and benevolence rendered them a great blessing to the poor in their neighborhood, who never spoke of the rich Squire and his wife without coupling their names with a blessing.

Amongst his peers, Anthony Hurdlestone was regarded as a singular wayward being, whose eccentricities were to be excused and accounted for by the strange circumstances in which he had been placed. It was a matter of surprise to all, that the son of the miser, Mark Hurdlestone, should know how to use, without abusing, his wealth; that, avoiding the selfish idolatry of the Gold Worshipper and the folly and extravagance of the spendthrift, he dedicated to the service of God and his fellow-creatures the riches that, in his father's case, had illustrated the truth of the heaven-taught proverb:—

"How hardly shall a rich man enter the kingdom of God!"

THE END.