

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

John Neal

Table of Contents

<u>The Down-Easters, Volume 2</u>	1
<u>John Neal</u>	1
<u>CHAPTER XV</u>	1
<u>CHAPTER XVI</u>	4
<u>CHAPTER XVII</u>	9
<u>CHAPTER XVIII</u>	17
<u>CHAPTER XIX</u>	19
<u>CHAPTER XX</u>	29
<u>CHAPTER XXI</u>	35
<u>CHAPTER XXII</u>	39
<u>CATASTROPHE</u>	46
<u>BILL FRAZIER THE FUR-TRADER</u>	46
<u>ROBERT STEELE</u>	68

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

John Neal

This page copyright © 2002 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

- CHAPTER XV.
- CHAPTER XVI.
- CHAPTER XVII.
- CHAPTER XVIII.
- CHAPTER XIX.
- CHAPTER XX.
- CHAPTER XXI.
- CHAPTER XXII.
- CATASTROPHE.
- BILL FRAZIER---THE FUR-TRADER.
- ROBERT STEELE.

CHAPTER XV.

Such was the "terrible letter"! such the very words of a part which fell upon me, with a power which no language can describe. And yet, I do believe I showed no emotion before the girl who brought me the message of death I mean what I say the message of death; I believe too that I spoke in my usual voice, and I know that I did not shed a tear, and that I have not shed a tear since I hope never to shed one while I breathe, for the perfidy of that woman. It was not oh no! it was not the losing a marriage with her, it was not even the losing of her heart, for I could have borne both, I believe, with a smile, if she had treated me as I deserve to be treated by those I love no no! it was neither it was the losing of my faith in *her* that I was ready to worship and now I remember a passage in her letter which I had forgotten before "I know that you love me," said she. "This will be a terrible blow, for you had set up an image in your heart for worship" and so I had! and she broke that image to pieces; and with it, every hope I had on earth, for every hope I had on earth was connected in some way or other with my belief in her exalted virtue, her generosity, and her truth.

And how did I reply? May I be judged hereafter as I judged that woman! I ask for no more even while my heart was labouring and reeling with the shock her letter gave me. I wrote her a few hurried lines, a part of which I remember word for word it was no time to consider my language or to copy it, for I knew that my reply, whether she loved me or not, would be a matter of life and death to her, that she was waiting her destiny here, it might be her destiny hereafter, and how I could I bear to keep her in suspense?

"I have not one word of reproach for you, said I. I forgive you with all my heart and soul, and however strange it may appear to you, I declare to you that on some accounts I think more highly of you than ever If you had not loved me, you could not have done this You may deceive yourself Beware how you make a promise, you cannot keep

"You had better see me, and the sooner you see me, the better. You will be the happier for it I shall be the happier for it I have much to say, much that I believe would go far to tranquillize you. It is now a quarter of

one I shall call at two *If you ever loved me, you will see me* I return the letter, much as I desire to keep it. Farewell there is nothing to prevent your being happy, if you will only see me. Your's devoutly God bless you. My heart is not unsteady, though my hand is."

As the clock struck two, my foot sounded on the step of the door I was very calm, calm as the deep sea, calm as the grave. I knocked; a servant appeared and told me that his mistress had gone out, just gone out, he said, and I turned away, in the hope that as she could not have gone far, I should have an opportunity of seeing her before it was too late, if I took the road to the battery (our usual walk) of giving her my hand in the face of day, and of telling her in the light of day, once for all, that I forgave her. But no I did not see her, and I loitered back to my room oh, God! how I felt when I entered it, and saw lying before me, here a book that she had sent me to read, there a pile of notes which I would not have parted with for the wealth of the world an hour before? on my very table a story that she translated at school from the German by the side of that, a work, which but no, no I dare not say how I felt, nor what I saw it was enough to break the heart of a proud man. I folded up the papers and the books, and sent them to her, saying that I could not read them now, but whenever it would be of use to her, I would. No answer did I receive the whole of that long dreary day. It was plain, therefore, that she did not love me, for had I not written to her and begged her to see me, saying, *if you ever loved me, you will see me*. Yet more much more two or three passages of her letter had been very carefully erased by another hand, (I thought,) and one which, if true, would prove her to be the falsest of women. How knew I therefore, how should I ever know the truth? It was dictated by my rival perhaps, or written to soothe him, for it appeared by her note in a passage I had forgotten 'till now, that she had lost him forever. All this and more did she say, but the words have escaped me. How little she knew of my true character! This cut me to the soul this I could not bear for by *this* I saw that I had been altogether deceived in her. I thought she knew me. Ah! if she had known me well, if she had trusted me as I would have trusted her, if she had told me even a part of the real truth, I would have gone to him and said There, I give her up to you. It is for you to make her happy, and for you alone. I love her with all my heart and with all my strength, and had she known me before she met with you, it may be that she would now love me as she now loves you, with all *her* heart and with all *her* strength. If you desire it, I will be the man to give her away in church make her happy, and leave me to pursue my path for the rest of my life, alone altogether alone. If you are both happy, I shall not I *cannot* be unhappy. I would have done this, I swear, and I know that I could have done it.

Well, the day passed over and I received no sort of reply, not even a message, not a word nor a sign. Perhaps, thought I perhaps it may be, for I heard her say once, I remember, that he was of a fiery quick temper, and very suspicious withal, (I never thought of asking *why*, for though I loved her as much as he loved her and might have been very sore with jealousy, I never suspected her faith, nor doubted her truth,) it may be that she has written to me as she has, not on account of her love for me, but of her dread of him. It may be that she has been obliged to say the very things that have entered my heart like arrows of fire. If so God help the boy! It may be that she is now quaking at every foot-fall, and that every knock sounds through her heart. And if so

I instantly despatched another note, saying to her in words that any body might have seen, though she only could have understood their whole force, that I should not be able to see her for some days, that I should not see her if she did not send for me, though I was very anxious to see her, and to have a short conversation with her on a subject of importance to both. I had much to say, I told her much to ask; and if she answered me without reserve, it was all I required to make me happy; that I had some right to advise with her, and that I should keep out of the way of all parties, &c. &c.

The morrow came, but no reply came with it all the day long I sat in my chair expecting a message or a letter. Every time the door opened, every time I heard a step, my heart beat quick, and I would have wagered my life that her answer was at my elbow. But still no answer came day after day passed over, and I neither saw, nor heard from her, nor *of* her. Meanwhile a paper lay before me on which I recorded my thoughts and my hopes, hour by hour, as they occurred to me. I strove to satisfy myself that she was more to be pitied than blamed I succeeded; for on reviewing her whole behavior, I began to fear that I had been deceived, not so much by her, as by my own

self–love to *hope*, I should say, for it was not fear. Much as I loved, I could bear to be told that she did not love me, better than I could to know that she was unworthy. At last I grew tired of delay I determined to bear it no longer. A few days more and it would be too late I should be on my way to Europe. I was willing to be to her as I never had been, if that would make her happy, or to be to her a friend a brother. But I was not willing to be played with, nor to be misunderstood. I therefore sealed up what I had written, praying to know whether she wished me see Middleton or not. If I saw him, it would be, I told her, and she knew that I told her the truth, to assure him of her love. It concluded somewhat in this way. "I have nothing in my heart but kindness for you and anxiety about you." And on the outside of the letter I added, "If I do not hear from you to day, farewell forever farewell, I mean to the last hope in which you are concerned. I will never see you again if it be possible to avoid you without exciting remark, nor ever interchange a line with you while I breathe, unless it be to serve you, or unless it should appear that you were unable to write. The time may arrive it *may* when you will wish you had preserved at least a brother and a friend. I shall keep my promise to you and every promise I ever made you."

I thought I knew the real character of this woman; I had some hope therefore, some little hope, where any other man would have utterly despaired. Middleton saw her every day he probably heard from her every day; but I I that would have married her if I might I neither saw nor heard from her, nor of her. And still I would not give her up I knew that she was not "altogether bad." I knew that she was still worthy of a proud man's love, and I would still have trusted her for who would not rather be deceived over and over again, like a boy, than live without confidence or hope in a dear one? Doubt is more galling than sorrow. There is a dignity in grief, though it be full of the bitterness of death but there is no dignity in distrust. Well as soon as the messenger could go and return, I received the following brief note for my reward I have it before me now, and I copy it here with a feeling which would break the heart and upheave the faculties of a giant if it were to continue for a single hour.

"Depend upon having an answer to–day. I will tell you why I did not write before; I hope and intended I still hope and intend to see you *both*. Will you? It is my wish." On the outside was written, "Keep this and bring it when I ask you," to which I replied without employing a moment for consideration. I will do whatever you desire, said I. I am not afraid to make you such a promise even now. It is for you to say whether I shall see him or not if I do, you have nothing to fear: we shall not quarrel. But I am afraid now, afraid on your account, for you have too much at stake. I will meet you together if you desire it but still, perhaps we three had better not meet, before I know precisely what you wish me to say; and much as I desire it, I would rather not see you till I am on the very brink of departure. I shall soon be away; but I cannot bear to go without giving you some proof such as few would have the courage to ask not only of my tenderness but of my respect for you I hope I have not been altogether misunderstood; what I have written to you of late, has been written with fear and trembling I tell you now, as I have told you before, that I would do much almost any thing, for one to whom I have said I am your friend. Trust me therefore, put faith in me for, as I live, I *am* your friend." What more I said, I do not know; nor do I know that these words were all contained in my last reply, but I do know that most of them were; and the others were to be found in some one or more of the last notes I troubled her with.

But the day passed over, the whole day, and that which she had told me *to depend upon having* did not appear. What was I to believe? That Middleton was at her elbow; that she was forbidden to write? If otherwise, why pray me to preserve the note she sent me, and to bring it with me? Was not that of itself, enough to show, that while she was afraid of losing a brother and a friend I do not say a *lover* like me, she was more afraid of writing a syllable without his leave. And how knew I Gracious God! how knew I that she did not mean by the words, "I still hope and intend to see you *both*" what I would not have her mean, so much did I love her still, and so high was my faith in her purity, for the wealth and power of a kingdom.

That whole day passed over another day and another, and as I knew that he saw her, nay, as I myself had seen him with her, while I was hurrying through Broadway, merely because I could not bear to stay in one place long I had begun to believe that she was unworthy fearfully so. Then, and not 'till then, did I give her up. She would not see me she would not even reply to me. She dared not perhaps, and perhaps the true reason lay not in her

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

indifference, nor in her lack of heart, nor in treachery, but in her deep love and fear and respect. She was good by nature generous and brave by nature, and it might be after all, that she had not bad courage enough to look me in the face, or that she had still so much of that inward virtue I praised her for, so much real nakedness of heart, even though she had "deceived me and every body else," that she could not bear to come in the way of my rebuke. All this may be, said I, as I threw myself on the bed, in which I had not slept for a week as the innocent should sleep it *may* be, but where am I to stop? The time is expired now. I give her up If we ever meet again, I shall say to her Satisfy me that you are able to speak the truth. If we are to be not as we have been, for that is all over now but if we are to be friends, you are to undergo such a trial as few women that live could bear, I will search your heart as with a knife. Dare you promise to speak the truth to whatever a question I put you. If no farewell. If yes Hear what I have to say. To one like you, there must be a luxury in telling the truth what a relief it must be to the overloaded heart of a woman, after years and years of untruth, and years and years of bitter slavery, to be able to say just what her heart conceives without fear and without reproach, whatever may come into her head for the rest of her life!

My mind was now made up. I have done my duty, I have nothing to reproach myself with, said I, and I lay as if I had spoken the truth, wondering why it was that I could not sleep. I was weary enough and sick enough, and I had grown so pale with watching and with fasting, that people cried out when they saw me, and yet I could neither sleep nor eat. And why? That question will be answered hereafter. *Hereafter!*

At last, when I had no longer any hope, the letter came, and such a letter! I stood upon the deck of a ship when I received it, and I was looking toward the shores of another world my heart heavy with sorrow, and with bitter self–reproach. In a moment I was another man I saw the light break about her path, and I was happy, *so* happy! that if my mother had been there, I should have knelt down and buried my head in her lap, and cried like a child. It was a long, long letter, abounding with proof that she was after all worthy of a proud man's love a part of the envelope I have now before me. I may copy it for she is in her grave now, and there is nobody to betray her. "Read the enclosed, (a narrative containing a review of her whole behavior.) I have more to say, more which I must and will say. Be tranquil about me; I am more calm. I have passed the night in thought and in prayer yes, in prayer. If I had not forsaken Him from whom all good thoughts, and all holy desires proceed, he would not have so utterly forsaken me. I have quite made up my mind. I see His providence in this chastisement; nothing less severe would have done with one so far perverted. Don't despair of me; *I* do not despair now. I bless God with fervent gratitude for all this misery and horror. It will save me. Be of good cheer for me."

Now, if there be a man alive with a high character for probity, who notwithstanding his probity, has grown old in working the partial overthrow of woman if he should ever happen to receive the death–bed forgiveness of some beloved one, that he has betrayed, even while he pretended to worship her, even while he did worship her, and was ready to couple his fate with hers, forever and ever, let that man be my judge, for he only can know how I felt when I read this letter. I dropped asleep within an hour after I read it, and when I awoke, we were on our way through the roaring sea, and yet I was happy and cheerful, and I had no fear of shipwreck or of storm for a light was upon the path of her I loved so much, and I knew that music would soon be heard in her heart.

CHAPTER XVI.

She is in her grave now. I sat by her when she drew her last breath I made a vow to her then, which I have kept and will keep to my dying day; I saw the earth heaped upon her, I knew that I never should be happy again, though I might be tranquil, that I never should love another woman as I loved her, that I should be alone for the rest of my life; and yet, there was a feeling of joy, of deep serious joy in my heart when I saw her laid in the grave. And why? *She* was happy; for she saw it was no longer possible for me to doubt her. She might have deceived me still, she might have betrayed me again, but she chose rather to die.

But let me proceed in a more connected way with the little that remains to be told of my story it is not much now.

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

When we arrived at Liverpool, I found a letter waiting for me, which had been sent by a ship that outsailed ours. At another time a few weeks before it would have uprooted my faith in woman forever, and but for the great gulph between us, the hope I had in her generosity, and worth and high courage of heart, where another would have had no hope in either, and the upbraiding of my own soul, which I had been at leisure to search as with fire and steel, for many days, it would have destroyed me also, I am sure.

By this letter it appeared that Middleton was with her when she wrote me to say that she loved him better than me, that she had deceived him and me and every body else, that she would never see me again, if she could help it, that nothing I could say to her was bad enough to say, but that, if I ever heard from her again, I should find her more worthy of my good opinion. It appeared also that he was with her, when I was driven away from the door, that he was with her immediately after a message of life and death from me was rejected at the door, that on the following day when she received my letter saying that if I did not hear from her during that day, I would never see her again while I breathed, nor interchange a line with her, she was actually so absorbed in Middleton, that she hardly thought of me, or of the sacrifices that I had made and was making with joy to serve her; that even while she sought to make me believe that she intended to forego the society of both, she was planning to deceive me yet more much more than I have now forgotten and forgiven. Yet still I had hope, a lively and fixed hope, not for myself, but for her. I was persuaded in my own soul that if she was not already, she would be after a time, all that I had believed her to be. And what had I believed her to be? a woman of truth. Would she but speak the truth, would she deal with me as I dealt with her, I could forgive her all that she had done, all that she would ever do even though she tottered again, or fell. Treachery I could not forgive weakness I could forgive.

Well and what course did I take? I wrote her immediately, saying to her To day is the happiest day of my life. Now do I see that you are determined to be what I have always thought you to be. Persevere and God will reward you.

She did persevere; and she did so, under trials that were enough to shake the soul of a woman to earth, or the integrity of the proudest man that ever struggled for dominion over a bad nature.

Well I traversed a large part of Europe, and after three years I returned to America. I set on foot a rigorous enquiry about this woman. I heard much that I could not believe, much that gave me hope, and a little that made me fear. We met, and she had the courage to tell me what no other woman could have told a man like me. I offered to marry her. She was thunderstruck, she did not believe, she could not believe that I made the offer in good faith. But when she saw that I had, when she heard me say that so long as she told me the truth and consulted with me as her best friend, I could forgive her any thing for such is my nature, and such it would be toward a wife, were she unfaithful to me; I should only say to her Go go and be happy; I forgive you, I pity you if you had spoken to me freely before, I might perhaps have prevented your misery and self–reproach; as you have now spoken freely, I forgive you; I will do whatever I can to make you happy so long as you tell me the truth and I would forgive you even for treachery, if it were possible for you to satisfy me, after a long habit of untruth on your side, that some virtue of some other sort on which I could rely as much, was left when she saw that I was perfectly sincere, I say; that my offer was made in good faith, she fell upon her knees before me and would have bathed my very feet with her tears, had I not escaped from her. I lifted her up and would have comforted her, but she would not be comforted, she drove me away from her, and not with cries and sobs, but with a united sorrow more terrible than either; she would not even suffer me to put my lips to her forehead; saying that she was unworthy of me, that she loved me now too much to betray me, and that therefore she would never see me again.

I did not believe her. I left her with an idea that after the first alternations of sorrow and joy and self–reproach and gratitude were over, she would recall me, and marry me, and be to me a virtuous, high–minded faithful wife. But she kept her promise day after day; nor would she see me till she knew that she was on her death–bed and that nothing could save her. Then she did see me, and she prayed for me and pressed my hands, and wept upon them, and told me the story of her life, and made me swear to tell it to others

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

I will said I if you desire it.

But mark me. You are to tell the truth, you are to say how I treated you, when you first knew me, how I treated you after you begun to love me, and how I have treated you from that hour to this, with all that you have said of me or thought of me, day by day, in the progress of your love.

How *can* you ask me to do such a thing.

Would the truth be so very terrible!

Of what *use* can it be?

Of much if I recover, it will keep me in the path of my duty; if I die, it may keep others in the path of their duty.

I beseech you to spare me!

No, I will not spare you; I will have it so. For three years you have been under a pledge to me; will you refuse to redeem that pledge, on my death–bed?

Refuse! no I *will* redeem it for you; I will put the story into shape, and throw it before the world, if you desire it!

God forever bless you I do desire it; that is the very thing I desire! I foresee much good from it, if you speak the truth of me, whether I live or die.

She had been a neglected wife at a very early age, and that, after marrying for love. She had been deserted while her beauty and youth were a by–word while her very heart was in flower. She had lived whole years without sympathy or hope, her affectionate nature oppressed with awe, and her understanding fettered with vassalage. Her husband died, and though they loved each other, she could not help feeling that his death set her free, and that dreadful as it was to be a widow at her age with two children, it was better than being a wife to such a man; that widow–hood was better than slavery. Years rolled over, and she kept her youth and her beauty, and her daughters grew up, and still she was afraid to marry.

At this time, I knew her. And then we were separated for years and then I saw her again and she knew that I loved her; that I had the highest opinion of her, though I charged her with folly of some sort or other, every day of my life. She began to love me, but alas, knowing that I thought more highly of her than she deserved, she was afraid of me, afraid to be with me, and chose rather to associate with one who could not believe a word she spoke, nor put any faith in her promises.

Why did you not deal with me, as you dealt with him? said I. Why did you not say you think too highly of me

I did say so over and over again, I said so.

Ah, but why did you not speak the whole truth?

How could I! I should have lost your good opinion forever, and though I did not deserve it, I could not bear to lose it.

I would have treated you so kindly dear, if you had acknowledged the truth to me, that you would have been spared the greater part of the suffering which has now brought you to the bed of death.

How could I *know* this? How could I *know* that you were so unlike other men? why did you never ask me?

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

I did ask you not plainly to be sure, but I did ask you, I gave you repeated opportunities of telling the truth, although I dreaded to hear it.

Ah! and if your heart failed you, if *you* had not the courage to speak plainly, how could you expect it of me a woman, a widow, and a coquette by nature.

Why, to tell you the truth, it was only once or twice that I doubted you, and then I said to myself, We are now so situated that she durst not tell me the truth if it be as I fear she does not know that I would forgive her, and I dare not tell her so, lest I may offer outrage where I mean to offer security. I have seen what has kept me awake, I have heard what I dare not think of. Were I to probe her heart now, she would probably deny what, if she lives to know me better, she would acknowledge; but her denial would not satisfy me for, educated as women are, it would be little better than suicide for her to own what I fear. What man would have the courage to confess that he had done that which, if it were known, would be death to his character?

Well but go on I was not prepared for this; I see now that you had it in your power to save me.

How so? If I had known the truth, or if I had known that you would tell me the truth, I should have put you to the trial, I should have come to you and said, you appear to me to love that man? Do you love him. If you do, have the courage to say so, and we will advise together, and if, when you know us both, as well as you know him, you believe that you can be happier with him, I will give you up.

Gracious Heavens! How little did I know of your true character! Ah, my dear friend, if you had been as free with me then, as you are now, now that you see me on the verge of death

Her voice did not even falter when she said this. Could she believe that death was near?

We might have been happy. Again and again, have I been ready to fall upon my knees before you, and say to you that I was unworthy of your love, but I was afraid of your awful virtue, and I could not bear to say what, if it did not make you mine forever, would be certain to separate us forever.

Why do you weep?

I weep dear, to think how much we have both lost; and I weep the more, because I see that you have still a hope, where there is no hope

Laura!

Believe me dear, believe me! there is no hope. I know that I shall die and I say to you now that I die of untold sorrow, the sorrow of a broken heart

A knock was heard at the door, and a step which appeared to be the step of a man.

Ah! it is he! it is he! Father of love, I thank thee! prepare yourself, my dear friend, for now do I know that we are to part in peace and charity with each other!

It *was* the step of a man. As it approached, I started up for though I could not see the face, I knew the shadow on the floor, and I gasped for breath. Already were we standing face to face with each other, already were we on the verge of what I tremble to think of when the bed shook, and we were petrified with a scream of horror.

Gerard! Gerard! said a voice which appeared to issue from afar off, Gerard Middleton, I command you to forbear! and you too my friend, I command you to forbear! Would you leave me no hope! Would you double the bitterness

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

and the sharpness of death to a woman you have both loved.

We answered together *no!*

I have sent for you Gerard, that you may hear the last words I have to say. And I have sent for you my dear friend (she could not bear to say Peter) that you may know each other, and love each other will you interchange forgiveness, before me?

I have nothing to forgive, said I but there is my hand.

God bless you, my dear friend!

Middleton made no reply, but he put forth his hand, as if he were asleep; and as he did so, the light flashed over his face, and I could have wept when I saw the awful change that had been made there within a few short years. I should not have known him he was very pale, and haggard as with premature age, and his cheeks were hollow, and his fine eyes dead literally dead.

Now hear me. If you know each other, you must love each other. Will you be friends?

I will, said I and Middleton whispered something to show that he would also.

I shall now die in peace. I do not care to live another day. But, before I go, I wish you to understand the nature of the love I had for you, and for both of you, at the same time ah! is it possible! If you cannot bear this now, when you see me here, how could you have borne the truth, when you say that I was deceiving you without necessity or excuse?

Go on I beseech you.

You my friend, addressing herself to me, I would have married, if I had been worthy of your great love, or if you had known the whole truth; but you had too high an opinion of me, and I was afraid of you. And as for you Gerard, though I loved you very dearly, I would *not* have married you

He neither moved nor spoke or reply.

for you knew me too well and had much too bad an opinion of me. I was never so bad as you thought me, never so good as he thought me.

Woman! woman! I cried, how dare you! are you determined to leave me no excuse, no hope, nothing to justify me for having so loved you!

Hear me through, and judge for yourself. But for you hear what I say Gerard I speak to him now but for you my dear friend, I should now have been as vile a wretch as ever walked the earth. Your hope saved me. Your great confidence in me made me proud, gave me courage to persevere. But for you, I should now be afraid of death. Love him for my sake dear (to my adversary) for when you left me as you did, saying with a look that is before me now, *you will never change*, it made me desperate and wild with fear. You knew me, you loved me you were younger than he, and with a warmer heart; I supposed you knew me better than he did, much better Gerard, and yet you were able to say that and more. You had no hope for me. It is well for you that another had for I should have gone crazy with fear and self–reproach, but for him.

But enough, enough. We were together when she died we were together when they laid her in the grave, and there we parted, never, never to meet again I hope, and he hopes too, I dare say, though each would do any thing

in the world for the other.

CHAPTER XVII.

So much for my part of the story. That is ended now I have no courage to pursue it further. I was alone I knew that I should be so for the rest of my life (as I have said before) when I saw the turf heaped upon her that I had so truly and so devoutly loved, even to the last; for even to the last, I had a high and generous faith in her integrity.

I hurried away from the grave and I left New-York forever, I hope, on the day of the funeral. I could not bear to be reminded of my sufferings at every step through life; and as all other places on earth were alike to me, I determined to travel, to study the character of nations, to be worthy of her I had lost, and of her high opinion of me.

I persevered I mean to persevere and I hope that one day or other I may be able to do what, if she were alive, would make her happy and proud of her love.

About a year after the funeral, I had occasion to pass through Baltimore on my way to the South again. The sight of the place where I saw Middleton strike a knife into the side of a human creature that very Middleton who had been so much in my pathway since the recollection of all that had occurred affected me so, that I turned away, with a feeling which oppressed me to suffocation it was too terrible to bear, and I betook myself to the woods in the rear of the city, where I wandered about all the day long. Toward night fall, as it appeared probable that I should never have another opportunity of seeing the Cathedral then just completed, I sauntered thither and placed myself on one of the little wooden benches before a picture of the crucifixion which had lately arrived as a present from the king of France. I had been there a good while I know not how long, for the light was very favorable to the picture, and I could not take my eyes off the eyes of a figure with a turban they really appeared to move, so fine were they, and so full of truth. I had heard people come in and go out, and I had observed one or two near me, at different times, but some how or other, I had given way at last to the idea that I was alone, and had begun to talk to myself, when somebody stirred near me, evidently with a design to apprise me that I should be over-heard. I was very grateful, and as I turned to thank the person, whom I had not seen before, I found Altherton Gage at my elbow. We both started, and I think with pleasure; and though we had not seen each other for many years, we renewed our acquaintance immediately. He was not altered in the least he appeared just as old, and no older, just as grave and just as calm as he did the first hour we met on my way from Philadelphia to Baltimore. We entered into conversation about Middleton, and he told me a story of the poor fellow that made my very heart bleed for him.

He was evidently glad to see me, and I admired him very much; but some how or other, I was afraid of him, I could not bear the probe, nor the look of his eye when he touched the sore places of my heart; and so, after praying him to assure Middleton that I had begun to love him as a brother, but as a brother I never wished to see again, I shook hands with him and parted. On the following day, I arrived in Philadelphia, and there having little to do, I began to prepare a narrative, such as it was, of the facts I had promised the woman I loved, on her death bed, to relate, and to relate with truth. But how could I do so? How was it possible now that she was no more, now that I had forgiven her, with all my heart and soul, now that I trembled to think of the circumstances and opinions attending the growth of our love? and though I were willing to speak the truth how could I? the heart of man is very treacherous. When we love we cannot persuade ourselves, nor would it be in the power of any body to persuade us, that we ever had such thoughts of her that we love, as we must have had, before we knew that she loved us, or that we loved her. But I had sworn to do it *and I have done it*. I have done here, what she prayed me to do, I have led others step by step with me, through the whole of the changes that carried her to the grave and made me what I now am, whatever that may be, whether evil or good. But though I have done this now, I was not able to do it then. It appeared to me so cruel, so bitter, so unnecessary, that my courage failed me whenever I came to a part of the story, which required me to speak lightly of her. And so I gave it up; and merely because I

knew not how to employ my time for a week while I was waiting for the ship that was to carry me over the sea once more, I tried to put the story which I heard from Gage in the cathedral into shape. But I could not satisfy myself it was no longer the same story when it appeared on paper in my plain rude style, and I wrote to him and begged him to do it for me.

To *tell* a story is one thing you know, said he, in his reply, to write a story is another, and although I might succeed in telling it, I am by no means sure, that I should, in writing it. However, what I can do, I will, and you may do with it what you like.

And four days after I received the story which I am now going to give, in the very words of the author. My notion is, I confess, though that may be owing to the peculiar circumstances under which I heard it from his own mouth, as we sat together on the little bench, he relating it and I listening to him, till it had grown so dark that we could hardly see each others faces, my notion is, I say, that he told it much better there, than he does here, not only with more effect on me, but with more beauty and power of language. I never shall forget, I am sure, the simple, serious quiet way, in which he kept on for nearly two hours, talking pure poetry half the time, superb, old-fashioned sweet poetry, as if it were his mother tongue I have heard people make more parade in relating the commonest affair in the commonest language. I may be mistaken, it is true, for the novelty is over now, but indeed it appears to me that he talked much better than he writes, and that he has given me here only the type or shadow of himself, and of that strange high faculty which amazed me so, in his free, unstudied, familiar talking. Yet I preserve the manuscript here, as it came to me; shadow or type though it be, I cannot improve it, and I dare not alter it. You have it now, every word and syllable and thought as he struck it off, the story of a Real North-American, I would not spoil the rude original integrity of such a paper for this right hand.

You have not forgotten the beautiful Quakeress, nor the strange interview that occurred between poor Gerard and the two females, at Mrs. Amory's, one of whom spoke while the other withdrew her veil. How often have I thought of the observation you made that is no Indian, said you! and you were right. It was indeed no Indian that you saw it was another. Have you forgotten how many times I have been obliged to evade your enquiries about Elizabeth Hale? That was she, but the voice we heard was the voice of another. Oh! that he had but lifted his eyes, when she paused before him in her transcendent beauty.

You shall have the story now. What I have said once I am willing to say again. What I have said with my mouth I do not scruple to say with my pen, would you publish it? You may if you like, but weigh the matter well before you determine. If yea, blame nobody but yourself sir, if you live to hear plaintive music in the low night wind, if the noiseless footstep go by *your* chamber door, till the very wood you touch, thrills with a presence that you have no power to see; nor if pale faces come and go at your window as you lie abed in the star light, quaking with a fear that you would not acknowledge for the world.

Gerard Middleton of Georgia, I have known ever since he was able to walk. But I shall pass over the period of his youth and come to that of the catastrophe, when he became so altered in a single night that I hardly knew him. I pray you to give the names that I give, though they are fictitious, for by some possibility you might give a true name, were you to substitute others for these under an idea that they are *real* names. I have met with such a case, and therefore do I put you on your guard.

He was a profligate, a dangerous bad man, till this affair took place. But now he is, what I alone persisted in believing he would be, after his own father had cast him off in despair, a good man. He was a native, as I told you, of Georgia, but he was educated in the North. A few months before you I saw him, boy though he was, he had met with a fearful adventure in marriage. It nearly drove him distracted, in spite of his youth and his chereful happy temper. He was gifted with great powers, great for their variety, great for their number, great for their richness and quality. But his morals were regulated by his pulse. He could be ashamed after a foolish or a wicked action; he could be sorry as well as another, but he would not reform. After all however, we may say what we like, but it is no such easy matter to throw off an evil habit, however sincere we may be in our shame and sorrow, and however

determined we may be to throw it off.

He never appeared to have a bad heart, every thing he did was done with such a careless air, with so much bravery and youthful grace; and yet he delighted in pure mischief. I know that he once led a beautiful woman, of whose good faith to her husband, he was rather doubtful, to meet her own husband at a place of assignation. It is true that he only did it to punish both, for both pretended to great virtue, and he was careful to lead them together in such a way that, although it would appear suspicious on the part of both, it would not be at all conclusive against her. A duel was the consequence and he had a narrow escape for his life. The parties themselves perhaps only grew a little more wary.

He was proud, quick and jealous of authority; no man was ever more so, and yet for several years, I governed him like a child. I had more influence with him after the duel no matter why, and I had begun to believe that he would turn out a worthy member of society, after all. We were as unlike each other as two men could well be, unlike in age, in appearance, in habits and in temper; but I have an idea that we loved each other all the better for this.

One day it was about a month after you sailed for Europe, he and I were together all day, and we spoke freely of you, and he appeared very much grieved, that he had not known the whole truth in time to prevent you from breaking off with Mrs. Amory, of whom, by the by, he had a very poor opinion. He forgave you with all his heart he said, and I know that he had more to forgive than you would suppose, for she knew him before she knew you at any rate, loved him before she loved you, and while he was yet a boy. As it grew dark, I saw by his manner that he wished me away, but I would not leave him, for I knew that he was on the verge of something out of the common way, he dressed with so much care, and rattled with so much grace. I entreated him to go with me, to suffer me to stay with him, to tell me whither he was going, for I was afraid of mischief, and I told him so, whenever I saw him in such spirits or equipped with such care. But he only laughed at me, and the more I shook my head, the more he laughed. I grew serious and peremptory, and after awhile succeeded in making him draw a chair to the table and sit down by my side. He spoke of women with much levity and with much bitterness, to be sure, but on the whole, far more kindly and respectfully than he had for months before. He was happier than he had been for a long while; and who that is happy can speak with bitterness of woman? There was moreover a cordial bright look of truth in his large laming eyes while he spoke of them, of their capacity for love, their faith and fortitude, their noble virtue and their gentleness, when tried with heavy sorrow and sharp suffering of their steady courage and of their meek loyalty. His manner was that of one whose long smothered conviction is about to revive with a new power, whose natural purity and holiness are about to break forth all at once and forever. You are altered, said I.

For the better?

Of course, I replied.

By which, it would appear that I could not alter for the worse, hey?

Nor could you.

But altered how, my dear Gage in morals or manners?

In your mode of thinking, my dear Gerard.

So! neither in morals *nor* manners.

I did not say that

No, you did not *say* that, I confess, but I understood you. You appear to think better of women, just now?

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

I do.

And why? because you have grown better yourself?

No but chiefly because they begin to have rather a bad opinion of me.

Ah Gerard! Gerard! you never hear women abused by their favorites.

Well! and what are you staring at. You don't like the fashion of my garb maybe?

Gerard Middleton!

Atherton Gage!

Are you in the habit of of going to a a you know what I would say, my dear Gerard.

Hang me if I do

Yes you do! You *are* in the habit of going, I see

Of going where? what on earth do you mean?

To a certain place

Why, to tell you the truth, Gage a a (in a whisper.)

For shame!

Why so pray? What a fastidious old fig of a bachelor you are

Will you hear me?

Yes.

I had begun to have some little hope of you, after you were packed off by Mrs. Amory, but I should like to hear from your own mouth, that you no longer pursue the poor a a the poor women as you did.

You shall be gratified, then; for out of my own mouth you shall hear that I do *not* pursue the poor a a the poor women, as I did.

God bless you! my dear Middleton.

Well and God bless you, if you come to that.

However, I should like to know why you have given it up?

Chiefly because I am tired to death of it.

Ah! at your age, tired to death of chasing the bright and the beautiful, &c.!

Yes Atherton, tired and sick of chasing the bright and beautiful and soforth.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

But why?

Why to tell you the simple truth, I begin to think they are never worth our trouble. Do what you may, die for them, wear your life out and your legs off in their service and they look upon you still as the gainer. So jealous and whimsical too every other day, if not every other hour, so fond, so foolish and so idle when you are busy, and so unspeakably busy, when you are idle. No, no, my dear boy, your ugly woman after all is the true luxury, the uglier and older she is, the better, for she knows when she is well treated and is grateful for every word and look.

Ah, Gerard!

You'll not be surprised I hope, if I turn out a perfect Penelope one of these days, or another Lucretia. I'm pretty sure I shall, I have a turn that way, just now.

Ah, but when Gerard? when?

Why, after I have carried some ugly weather–beaten old witch, in my new way, without provocation, or help or artifice.

You are no so bad, so *very* bad as you appear, I hope?

Why as to that how do I appear?

Most unworthy of my regard; very foolish and very wicked.

Why the truth is, my dear boy, they talk so much of the disinterestedness of woman's love, just now, that I Lud, Lud! how grave you are!

It is time to be grave.

How like you, that is! would you have me forswear my own faith and adopt the popular faith?

The popular faith?

Would you have me persuade myself when a sweet little creature loves me, that she loves me alone me myself, me for my own sake? as you say in poetry?

To be sure I would, for nineteen times out of twenty it would be true.

Fiddle–de–dee!

I am sure of it

And who is myself? who the devil am I I myself, I should like to know that? an idea, a shadow, a phantasm, a spirituality a flesh and blood! my dear Atherton, would they care a fig for me, me myself, me alone, (whatever they may say or believe,) me for my own sake, if I were a dwarf or a fool, or an aged man or a *woman*?

They love my soul, do they! pretty fellows! when of three score, fifty–nine would never know whether I have a soul or not, and the sixtieth would'nt care. No, no Atherton, no, no, they love me for a couple of good reasons that you never thought of, I'll engage.

And what are they?

Why, in the first place, I am not a woman.

Pshaw! and what's the other?

Because I am a man.

Gerard! I tremble for you.

Why so?

You'll die a death of shame yet, or a death of unutterable horror.

Vy, how can you say so! I mean to go to sleep very quietly, one of these days, I do indeed: I'm sick of this life.

Asleep, sir! But in that sleep of death

What dreams may come, I know what you would say, I've heard all that before.

If you tell the truth, if you are indeed sick of this life, why not leave it off?

I mean to do so, but fair and softly. I've one little job on my hands to go through with first... after which, if I succeed in throwing it off, I mean to be very good. I am now in search of a woman, (if you should hear of one of the sort, you'll let me know) a woman without sensibility or passion, with no heart nor soul, no power to tempt or to be tempted, of steady, high and awful reputation, with every thing to lose and nothing to gain by intrigue; one that never heard the name of love, never felt her heart stir at the voice of a man. Having met with her, having subdued her, I shall be happy.

Happy!

Yes, Atherton, for she will have loved me, as I wish to be loved, for myself alone, me myself, me for my own sake, as near as may be, and I shall have done all that could be expected of me, in my small way conquered as much of the world, as I ever thought worth conquering.

How dare you speak to me, in this way

In truth, I hardly know, I wonder at my own courage for I feel towards you, as if you had authority over me. But look here read this note if women will have it so, what am I to say?

The note ran thus M. will be at the cottage tonight, *for the last time*. If you desire to speak with her, come early.

What is the meaning of this note sir? I see no harm in it who is the writer?

Excuse me; I do not know, and if I did, you would blush for me, if I betrayed her. Ah! (pulling out his watch,) ah! so near the time; good bye, Atherton. Good bye, I must be off now!

As I live, Gerard Middleton! I do almost hope, that some father, or husband, or brother, may be lying in wait for you!

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

You are very good and to tell you the truth, I should'nt much care; it would be a relief to me, it would make me either more discreet or more notorious, no matter which, or better still it would put me out of the way. I wish I was in my grave, Atherton!

You were very near it, sir, but a few months ago.

Near it! I was on the very threshold of death I was given over, there was no hope for me, as you know, and yet, I was happier, O, how much happier than I am now! Then I was without fear; now, I am without hope. Now, while I appear to be strong with renewed life, and happy with new dreams a river of youthful, hot, rich, generous blood within me, a consciousness of great power to sup ah!

What's the matter!

A spasm, Atherton, a spasm like a knife!

A stab from a real knife, might save you.

After this, we had a long conversation which ended with his taking my hand, saying, You are a good fellow Atherton Gage, you *are* indeed. I will reform for your sake.

Will you! said I, quite overcome by his fervor. Begin to–night, Gerard, this very night, if you are serious. Turn off that woman of mischief before you sleep.

What woman?

The woman you have at the cottage for a decoy.

Before I sleep, I cannot, I am under a promise to her but give me your hand, Atherton; you know me, you know that what I say I will stick to. This very night I will prepare to get rid of her, and after this night I will never see her again but as you would wish me to see her.

After this night!

So help me God!

Ah, Gerard, and why not now?

Because to–night I mean to play the hero.

How

I have been pursued for a long time, by a beautiful creature, whom I have avoided hitherto with especial care. She haunts me night and day, I am afraid for no good; for she knows my character, and yet she *will* put herself in my way! in which case, what can I do?

Save her save her! Be indeed a hero, and save her from herself.

A hard thing to do Atherton, at my age, in good health, but nevertheless... I'll try if I can.

What is her age?

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

I am not sure; if it is the girl I think; I never saw her face but once in my life; she may be about fifteen or sixteen, perhaps.

Gerard put your hands upon this book, and swear to me, swear that you will keep your word, that you will save her if you can

Softly, softly, you mistake the vow that I will *try* to save her if I can.

Be it so; that you will throw off your decoy this very night.

I will; I swear on this book, that I will!

And that from this day forth, you will never trespass upon the purity of woman.

After this *night*, if you please

Be it so.

I swear.

What could I say? I was terrified, thunderstruck. I knew that he would keep his oath, but I could not for my soul, imagine how he had been persuaded to take such an oath. What I said now, was only what I had said fifty times before. But still, as I knew that he would sooner die than break his word as I saw it in the established gravity of his look, in the unspeakable sincerity of his whole countenance from the forehead to the mouth, I was ready to say Go go in the Great name of God, for this night, and pray him to forgive thee, as I forgive thee! But all at once, though I knew that he would keep his oath, and that he could not well sin much in the little time there was left for him, I began to feel a sort of inquietude such as I had never felt before, a sort of preternatural anxiety, a pressure of the heart, a strange mysterious terror without aim or shape. I was not a believer in prodigies, nor in miraculous intimations I never shall be, I hope, for so long as they are not clear enough to be understood, of what avail are they? And yet, I was afraid with a fear that no language can describe. I strove to prevent his going, I offered to go with him I did more I played a trick with his watch to detain him, the only trick I ever played in my life. But he would go nevertheless.

My dear Gerard, I tremble for you, said I. Husbands are on the look out for you, and fathers and brothers are leagued together to destroy you.

So I have heard. But if they trap me, it shall be with bait worth dying for.

Houses have been beset you know, within the last week by armed men this may be all a snare.

Be it so. Let them way-lay my path if they like; let her that has the courage, betray me. Look you, my friend. Hitherto I have been the pursuer and the scourge of women; hereafter I hope to be I will not say what now; for in this particular case, I happen to be the pursued; would you have me give up now *now*, when, for the first time in life, I design to play the hero.

Ah, but mischief will come of it, Gerard, *I* know it will; don't go, don't go, I beseech you; stop where you are.

I must go I will go I would, if it were my last hour. You cannot feel as I do; there is a mystery about this girl which keeps me in a fever; I will go to the bottom of it, I *will*, at the hazard of my life; I will know who she is, and why she has haunted me so long, pursuing me every where like my shadow, and escaping from me at every turn, like my shadow. Farewell.

Farewell! said I and if a but before I could finish what I had to say, he was gone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

So, we parted, he for the cottage, and I to wander I hardly knew whither; I only know that the word *farewell* with which he left me, a word which at any other time, I should not have cared for, tolled in my ears all night long, and that I could not shake off the fear it filled me with, and that before I knew where I was, I found myself seated by the mother of poor Martha P a dear good girl who was very fond of Middleton, in spite of his bad character, though she was too proud and pure to acknowledge it even to me her adopted brother; I have not forgotten too, that somebody spoke of him with asperity, and that I saw the twinkle of tears and heard a half articulate peevish cry, as the poor girl stooped down to look for a needle with her short loose hair huddled about her neck, hiding her eyes and throwing a deep shadow over the floor; that the mother bid her get up, and that Martha got up, and shook away her hair from her eloquent face, and spoke a word or two in his favor; that her father appeared to be angry with her, and that she grew very pale and praying her father to forgive her, left the room with her eyes brimful, and her heart running over; that her very aged grandmother who had been watching every shadow that passed over the forehead of Martha, as if she could see through it, broke a silence which the father told me when Martha left the room had continued for a whole week, and muttering in a sort of hoarse whisper, said; no, no, *no!* and again, as Martha shut a door overhead, no, no *no!* and again after a long while, so long that we had forgotten the cause of her speech, throwing up her withered arms and trying to rise from the chair no! no! no! I tell you; that I shrunk away from the poor old creature with fear, while a favorite negro came up to me and shaking his huge head and showing his large teeth, bid me nebber fear, for why? cause—a young—a massa Gerard, he nebber come out o' de little eend o' de horn yit, no more 'n a toad wants a tail, ebbery bit an' grain; that I hurried off and was overtaken at the door by Martha, who putting both her hands into mine, said to me in her sweet way; while they quivered and palpitated in my grasp Atherton Atherton, my dear good brother; you are now the only hope of that young man. Poor Gerard! Do not desert him; do not *you* give him up. Who knows Atherton, who knows it may be in your power perhaps to to to save him and that is I I I forget what I was going to say; but never desert him I beseech you, my dear brother for the sake of poor Elizabeth O that she were alive now! for so long as you are with him, I have a a sort of a a sort of hope of his, of his of his welfare, I mean.

As I live dear Martha, said I, setting my lips to her forehead (I never kissed her mouth in my life, though I loved her as much as a brother could love a sister, and I knew that she loved me, as much as I did her,) as I live, dear Martha, I will never desert him.

Ah, you are very good! I am easy now I am very happy now, said she farewell!

Happy, thought I; she happy! while the water stands in her eyes, and she can hardly speak loud enough to be heard by me.

I left her, I know, with a dreadful oppression of the heart, with a feeling which I have no power to describe, nor courage to think of. It grew worse and worse at every step, and I walked about for an hour in the cool night wind, before I went back to my study, hoping to throw it off by exercise. I remember the whole now, every thought and every step after I left poor Martha, though much of it appeared like a dream to me on the following day. I took up my flute I remember, I tried to amuse myself with a book; with drawing, with writing, but all to no purpose they would not relieve me, their witchery was no more. I threw myself on the bed without undressing and lay there for a whole hour with my eyes shut, and would have slept if I could, although I felt somehow unwilling to throw off my clothes. But I could not sleep. The dark air grew hot and luminous about me, I felt as if I were haunted, I could hardly get my breath, at last; and I started up in a fright, opened all the windows, and left the room as if I were pursued by some invisible thing, and took the road by the river-side; for I was very fond of the water, and I had an idea that a bath would relieve me; but some how or other, I know not how it was, though I tried all along the shore, I could not find a deep smooth quiet place which was not either too dark so dark that my courage failed

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

me, or too much in the moon–light for my purpose. I wandered a long long way up the banks, loitering here to look at a ripple and there to hear the moaning of the water; but still, still to no purpose I could not throw off the weight. I leaped, I ran, I recited verses aloud, I threw stones at every shadowy spot I saw, for every shadowy spot was like a pool of death to me; and I did so that I might hear a noise like life, and see a flash like life in what appeared as dark and as quiet as the grave; but still that weariness, that insupportable weariness would not forsake me.

At last, as I stood looking at the water into which I had rolled a huge rock a moment before, I got possessed all at once with a belief it was not a vague idea, it was a *belief*, a thorough conviction that Gerard Middleton was in danger, and that he had such need of me as no living man ever had of another. I know what I say I do not mistake I am sure. I know that I had this belief, while I stood there looking down into the river, and before I arrived at the cottage, as strongly as I had it after I arrived there, and saw the woman of mischief.

I tremble now when I think of the way in which this belief entered my soul it were enough to make any man a believer in what I hope never to believe in preternatural intimations. I felt as I should feel, I suppose, if I were to see a shadow pursue my shadow, as I should feel were I to hear my name called out in the everlasting woods where I had never been before. I was very much frightened, partly on my own account and partly on his, and yet, in the midst of my fear, I was collected enough to stop and look about me and reason with myself, as I would now with another. I put my fingers to my pulse, and the better to assure myself, I shouted and laughed till the shores rung; but all I could do was of no use; I could not scare away the awful persuasion of my heart, nor could I shame it away, though I tried with perfect seriousness. What could I do? I was afraid to give up to such a fear; it was too unworthy of me, too childish, I said, over and over again; but more afraid, I confess, that if I did not obey it, I should live to be sorry for my disobedience; for after all, how knew I, how could any body know that we are *not* to be guided by preternatural intimations?

I know not how another might behave in such a case, but I know that I gave up to the fear at last, though I would not acknowledge it to myself, and that I set forward on my way to the cottage, saying at every step that I was a fool, that my terror was not only childish but impious, and that I would go, merely to satisfy myself that I was a blockhead for my pains.

On the way, I thought much of the past, of you, of your enquiries about poor Elizabeth Hale, of Mrs Amory, of poor Middleton, of his mortal foe, (a man you never saw) of poor Martha P , of the beautiful strange woman at the cottage, and of the talk I had with Gerard about her, before he left me, saying farewell, as if he knew we should *never* meet again. But still, strange as it may appear, I would not hurry myself, nor take even the shortest path; but crossing the water, pursued my way along the verge of the wood, as leisurely as if I had been out for a walk with some idle dreamer abroad in the moonlight, or some poor lunatic, who might be exasperated by serious opposition. At last I entered a dark part of the wood, through which I had to feel my way; and so dark was it, and so occupied was I with inward strife, that I lost myself; nor did I know where I was, till I broke out all at once, without preparation or notice, directly in front, and within a few yards of the cottage, while I supposed myself to be yet a long way off.

I started I held my breath I drew back, and stood in the shadow of a tree, and tried again to shake off the unwholesome fear. The moon was at the full, but there was a strong wind over–head, and the whole heavens appeared to be loose, and drifting slowly athwart her face. The sky was all afloat, as our fishermen say, when there is a perpetual swift succession of shadow and light, over their path in the sea. Behind me, was a thick wood, on my right and left were a few large trees, and right before me, was the cottage, the little window of the second story flashing forth at long intervals to the unsteady light of the moon.

While I was standing there, it grew very dark, so dark that I should not have been able to see where I was, but for one little patch of clear blue sky just over the cottage–roof; you may smile, but what I say is the truth it appeared to me as I stood there, to be just over the roof, and it affected me in a strange way, I know not why nor

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

wherefore I only know that my heart grew full and that my eyes ran over, when I saw that one spot of blue, like a window in heaven, solid clear and stationary, while the rest of the sky appeared to be passing away below it, like the white clouds that are driven by the north-wind with such inconceivable velocity over the bright face of the moon. I never shall forget my feelings that night, nor the look of the shadowy solitude before me, and about me, nor the huge trees, nor the profound, awful quiet in earth and air, in sea and sky, nor the heaviness that weighed upon me like the hand of death.

I will bear it no longer, said I at last, I will go up to the cottage and ask for him, dead or alive. At the very instant I determined to do this, a door opened a little way off, and immediately afterwards, a man stepped forth from the shadow of a projecting part of the roof, and stood as if listening, within a few yards of me. I thought I had seen him before, he stooped very much, he was tall, and wore his left arm in a sling. He was followed by a woman. Her I knew. I could not be mistaken her very step was enough to betray her. It was Claire, the beautiful foreigner; but if so, how came she to be leagued with Jeffry the mortal foe of Middleton? (for it was he); the very man who betrayed the poor Indian-girl that you saw, when she was regarded by Gerard as his wife, and after a while would have been so; the very man that was betrayed afterwards into an intrigue with his own beautiful wife, as I have told you, by poor Gerard; and the very man, who after he had fought Gerard twice, narrowly escaping death each time, swore, as he lay bleeding on the field, never to interchange forgiveness with him, nor ever to lose sight of him, till he was fully avenged.

After waiting a few moments at the door of the cottage, as if to assure himself that every thing was safe there, he came directly to the spot which concealed me, but evidently without knowing or suspecting that any body was there, for he stopped under a large tree, within a few feet of me, and entered into conversation with the female. They were so near at one time, that I was afraid to breathe or move, though I would have given the world to be away I could have touched her with my hand, as they stood whispering together. His carriage was haughty and cold, and I thought inflexible, but *she* stood as if ready to go down upon her knees before him. I could not hear what they said I was too much frightened, and my heart palpitated so furiously, it made me sick; I was hardly able to stand. But just as I began to despair, they stopped whispering all at once, and retreated further into the shadow of the trees, the woman locking her hands with a faint cry, and holding them to her heart, and he leaning away from her, and listening as though he heard something afar off in the wood. While I was looking for some body to appear in the quarter to which their eyes were directed, a window was cautiously opened before me, and a female dressed in white appeared like a dead woman wrapped in her grave clothes, I have thought since and after looking out, with a hurried anxious motion of the head, and listening attentively for a few moments, with her hair flying loose about her neck, she lifted up her arms with a low moaning respiration toward the little patch of blue sky, as if she could see through it, and beyond it, and immediately afterwards, threw out something, which fell near me with a jingling noise, like that of broken glass, and went staggering away from the window, as if she had been overtaken with the sickness of death. I hardly know what followed, I acknowledge, nor what became of the people near me; for it grew very dark while I was reasoning with my own terror, so dark that I could hardly see the shape of any thing about me, or the cottage, or the trees, or the sky, though I could hear a loud hoarse whispering afar off, like that we hear on the beach, when there is a great swell at sea, or the wind is rising on the far-off shores of the wilderness. I was frightened I do not deny it I dare not, I will not: I was exceedingly frightened; so much so, that instead of going up to the cottage, as I intended a little while before, I hurried away into the wood, and lost myself; and lo! the night wind arose, and a thick whitish fog fell upon my path, and the trees began to roar, and I was glad enough to escape in the dreary darkness that followed; hurrying away I knew not whither, as if pursued for my life, yet more and more dissatisfied with myself, and my own motives at every step, for not having gone up to the door and demanded, late as it was, to see poor Middleton.

CHAPTER XIX.

I have now come to a portion of the story, which I cannot bear to dwell upon, but which it may be proper for you to be acquainted with, before I proceed further with what relates to myself. I have taken great pains to know the

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

truth I had, before you wrote me and have been very particular now. The result is, that you may depend upon what follows I have it from Gerard himself.

On leaving me, he went straightway to the cottage, his heart leaping with joy; youth and beauty before him; adventure, intrigue, peril, mystery unhallowed endearment warfare death perhaps.

Claire was waiting for him on the verge of the wood, where she held a long conversation with him, before she would suffer him to enter the house. He might speak to the stranger, but he would not be spoken to; he might be seen, but he should not see the fair mysterious creature whom he was to meet; for one day or other he might see her in good–society, and however praiseworthy and heroic the motive which had now brought her to throw herself in his way, it would be death to her to be recognized by him.

Why, Claire! said he, what do you take me for, that you are able to keep your countenance, while you talk to me in this way?

My word is given, sir, and I shall keep it.

You are to be with us, hey?

No, indeed.

No, indeed! Are you crazy! would you leave me with her, a stranger in the dark and alone? How will you preserve your character, how retain *your* place in good–society, if it go abroad, Claire, that you permit people to see each other in this way, whatever may be her object or mine, at your house?

You will not be in the dark

How so; you say I shall not see her, though she may see me. She is not going to wear a veil I hope; if so, I'm off; no such boarding–school mysteries for me; I'm not in the humor for it I have passed the age of downright youth; if not in years, I have in experience.

You will have light enough I hope, *from the sky*, though to say the truth, it looks rather tempestuous now.

Why Claire! what on earth is the matter with you! what ridiculous game are you at now?

Game! How little you know me I was never more serious in my life, Gerard Middleton.

I'll never consent Claire.

You'll never consent! Pray sir, would you have us consider it such a favor?

Good bye, Claire, good bye; I'm not to be made a fool of, in this way.

Indeed! but you carry it bravely. A word in your ear, Gerard Middleton. You love plain dealing, you say?

I do I do; I love it with all my heart, more than I love any thing else on earth Claire, and you know it.

Very well. Now hear what I have to say; this game, as you call it, I am playing not for you, but for another, at the command of one I dare not disobey.

The devil you are!

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

Yes, and I am tired of it.

Well, well, more of this hereafter, I have no time now. Shall I not see her face?

No what are you thinking about? why do you look at me, as if you would look me through?

Nor so much as hear the sound of her voice, Claire?

No no.

No light, Claire?

Only that of the moon.

What if I enter the house without your leave?

You dare not.

Pooh!

As a man, as a gentleman, you dare not; you would not be able to see her, if you did.

Ah!

And what is more, young man, though I never fired a pistol but *once*, in my life! I should not scruple to try it again.

Really

Ay, or a knife either.

Here's a hero! but I've gone too far now, there's no help for it, I agree to all you say.

Stop, stop; one word more. She will be in the large room to the left there, the window of which looks this way; the curtains are down you observe; you will not raise them without her consent?

No

Nor try to see her face?

Hard enough to be sure. But there's my hand, I agree to all you ask every thing every thing.

You will put no questions to her, you will offer no rudeness

I! no, indeed!

Nor make any attempt either now or hereafter to find out who she is. Upon your honor, Gerard Middleton swear this to me, by all your hopes of hereafter.

I don't half like the form of the oath but you know me, and I say to you upon my honor I will keep my promise.

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

Nay, swear it lift your hands to that troubled sky and swear it.

Well then I do swear it!

Enough, enough now win her if you can, but win her fairly.

Nay, do not leave me yet you are very pale what am I to think of you? what is her object?

Perhaps your overthrow.

My overthrow!

Perhaps your reformation.

Absurd!

Not so absurd neither! She is evidently of a very serious turn.

Why Claire! you speak as if she were at your elbow, and as if you were afraid of her.

I *am* afraid of her.

No!

But I am, I say, and if you were to see her face, you would be afraid of her.

Beautiful, hey?

Yes; but with a wild, strange beauty, such as I never saw, but in my sleep.

And the voice?

A sweet and sorrowful voice, at which if I were altogether alone, I should be a... Ah! (listening) did you speak ?

No

So sweet and sorrowful that I could weep to hear it were I alone

All this may be a trap for me, Claire?

Very true.

A trick

Yes.

You have told me as much already.

No.

Yes but you have Claire, and if I thought you spoke true

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

Lord! how your eyes glitter!

Do they?

Yes, like steel in the star–light.

And why? do you know the cause?

I do; your desperate and wayward soul is awake with some new, fierce, unlawful hope.

Is it the girl I saw at Boston?

How should I know?

Small with a fine shape?

Yes.

With a clear, transparent forehead very modest and very pale?

Yes.

Large dreaming eyes, ripe mouth and very magnificent hair?

Yes no

Yes no !

You ask me so many questions in a breath.

Lead me to her! lead me to her! the little wretch, I know her. Flesh and blood, I thought so! I could have sworn as much the first time I ever saw her, so devout and so demure: why you'd think butter would'nt melt in her mouth!

Should I!

Pretty joke, to be hunted about in this way, from pillar to post, month after month, by a little she–methodist.

Month after month, Gerard. There must be some mistake here. This girl is quite a stranger

Pooh!

What I say is the truth; I never saw her till about a month ago

Ah! what music is that?

Music! where!

In the woods, I believe.

Not in the wood, I hope!

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

How mournful it is, how sweet! oh, I could listen to it forever!

Great God!

Claire! Claire! what's the matter with you!

Hush hush don't breathe for your life.

Claire! Claire!

Ah! (breathless and gasping) did you speak!

Speak! to be sure I did; what's the matter with you? what ails you?

Do you see any thing?

See any thing! no; what should I see?

Let us go in, I feel weary and sick and cold, and there! did you hear that?

Hear what! are you mad, or do you wish to make a fool of me? I hear nothing.

Gerard Middleton? (whispering)

What ails you Claire? why do you whisper? why do you cling to me so?

I am very unhappy Gerard very wretched.

Why so, dear?

Very, very; I can't bear sweet music now, as I could once

Nay, nay, why do you weep? I'm not going to, leave you.

It's enough to break my heart now.

Poor child!

Ah, Gerard! if you only knew the whole truth, how you *would* pity me!

I do pity you, Claire, I do indeed; what more would you have? what is the truth you speak of? what ails you? what are you afraid of why do you sob so?

You will drop a tear on my grave Gerard wont you?

On your grave?

Yes Gerard; and you will try to forgive me I hope, when you know the whole truth, and how I are *you* afraid in the dark?

Afraid in the dark! I!

CHAPTER XIX.

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

Do you believe in spirits Gerard?

Why! Claire! rouse yourself; you'll make me nervous too, if you continue to whisper so dismal.

Do answer me, do, do; are you afraid in the dark!

No, are you?

Oh no! no no, indeed, not I? Sometimes, to be sure, I've a sort of a o! I do wish I could lay my head in my poor mother's lap and cry myself asleep a sort of a there! there! what's that.

Good God, how you tremble!

A sort of a of a misgiving here (laying both hands upon her heart) just here Gerard, especially when you are away (do speak to me, do, do!) if I, hear sweet music when I am all alone at the cottage, or if I hear a noise, or a foot-step, or see a shadow on the green turf, though it be the shadow of a tree or a bird or a cloud or a there, there! O, how sorrowful! how plaintive!

Claire, you grow paler and paler every moment speak to me, I beseech you.

Hush Hush

You frighten me.

Gerard Middleton! there! there 'tis!

God bless me! I should think you saw a spirit!

Gerard Middleton!

Well dear, what would you have? Here I am at your side.

Gerard Middleton! Let us go no further in this dreadful business.

What do you mean?

Let us go no further; let us stop where we are I can hardly get my breath I never felt so before, in all my life, never! never!

Pho, pho, don't be a child! Recollect who you are and what, and how you have sworn to be the scourge of them that have made you what you are.

And what am I, Gerard?

A desperate woman.

True true, and am I therefore never to be at peace with woman while I breathe, never to be at peace with myself? Oh, Gerard Middleton! that I should have come to this, I that if I had the true place in our day, should overtop the proudest of my sex; I that might have done so much good.

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

Think of your steady virtue Claire. Think of what women have made you suffer. Think of the terrible mischief they wrought you, before you lifted a finger against them.

Gerard Middleton; you do not know me I perceive. I do think of this, and of all this, morning, noon and night, I have thought of it now for a whole year; but nevertheless, when I consider what I *was*, and what I *shall* be, and what I have *done*, with all my virtue and with all my courage, I am half crazy with fear. Of what avail is it that I have escaped so long? that I have held my virtue safe, my integrity fast, while I have been spreading the snares of death for a multitude.

Revenge, Claire; think of that. Revenge is sweet.

Not so very sweet after all, Gerard,

Indeed!

No for I am dying of revenge of *gratified* revenge too.

Terrible terrible! your voice goes through and through me. What a woman you are!

You shudder you turn away your face.

I do, for I believe you. I shudder now at the very touch of your hand; my very heart gives way at the sound of your voice O! how altered it is, Claire! I know you speak the truth; my very blood acknowledges that you do.

And therefore you turn away; you are afraid of me.

No no not absolutely afraid of you, but for you.

But you are, I say; you *are!* Well, well, I have made up my mind, now.

Your mind for what?

Hear me Gerard, you know me; after this night, I do no more mischief to woman I would rather die.

After this night! wonderful!

How so? for more than a week I have been preparing for what I now say, but as I have not seen you, and as my pledge here was a matter of life and death, I have not been able to avow my purpose before. You do not speak I had some hope of you

Gracious God!

So! it is your turn now!

How agitated you are!

Would you believe it, I have made the same vow this very night!

Have you indeed!

This very night Claire; not two hours ago.

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

Have you Gerard! have you, in truth, as you hope for mercy!

I have.

Swear it! swear that hereafter you will not war with woman! O, how happy you have made me!

I do swear it I swear it from the depth of my soul.

Oh Gerard!

On your knees Claire! up up!

No never!

Get up child! what are you crying about now?

Say that you forgive me, and I shall die satisfied. Oh! say that you forgive me, dear Gerard

Forgive you! for what pray?

No matter, no matter say that you forgive me, and that you will not take back your forgiveness, nor hate my memory, whatever may happen.

Well, there, there, simpleton, I do forgive you; take that kiss on your forehead Claire, and that, and that; now are you satisfied of my sincerity. Whatever you have done, or said, or thought, I forgive you, and may God forgive you and me as freely as I forgive you, and continue to forgive you.

Bless you! bless you! dear Gerard! You little know what you have done God bless you!

You are mad Claire.

No, no, if I was, there would be some hope.

These women of great virtue have made you crazy.

No, no, I have gone too far, much too far, I am afraid; for after all, how could they ever know the truth? How could they *know* that I was innocent? Alas! alas! how much of sorrow and how much of shame, had I escaped, if when appearances were against my virtue for a little season, my cruel sisters, my own cruel, unforgiving sex had foreborne to judge me as they did; or if they had been merciful in their interpretation of what was never conclusive, or if they had permitted me to justify myself, to prove my innocence and my integrity when I had it in my power to prove both. While I was yet good, lo! they treated me as if I were bad. Now that I am bad lo! they treat me as if ah! (starting up with a shudder, and looking through her parted hair) you see something now, I am sure you do

Yes Claire and I begin to believe that we are a ah! can it be possible!

O Gerard! Gerard! don't look so! you frighten me to death! What do you see? what do you hear! your eyes look as if you followed something up out of the wood there, *up, up* into the far sky!

It is very strange very did you see it, Claire?

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

See what!

Nothing Claire, nothing; Let us away; you have made a fool of me, a baby, a coward.

How pale you are!

That sorrowful sweet harmony is not of earth, Claire.

You would not believe me Gerard, when I told you that the wood here was haunted.

Nor do I now Claire; I have no such faith.

No such faith! Yet you heard the music and you grew pale with terror.

How very low it was, I could just hear it and no more, when I held my breath, and listened with all my heart. Ah! a footstep in the large room the fact is Claire, that you only hear this music when the wind is southerly; and you have some neighbour near enough to be heard another step! and barefooted surely she *is* barefooted Claire, tap, tap, tap! bless the dear little foot

Look! what is that!

Look where? I don't see any thing.

But I do! there, there among the trees by the river side.

A cow or a horse or a sheep

No, Gerard, no it is a man.

A man!

Ay, and a very tall man; I saw him as plainly as I see you; he stepped out of the shadow just as you spoke and stole into the wood on the other side of the path.

A tall man, hey? I thought so Claire, I thought so (drawing the blade from a sword cane as he spoke) and I came prepared for the tall man. I thought so leave me, (Claire clings to him,) leave me! I say! let me go; I have been pursued by the shape of a tall man, day after day, night after night, year after year, till By God, woman! I will not be hindered now!

And away he sprang, after the shadow. In a moment he was beyond her reach, and immediately after he entered the wood, voices were heard, the report of a pistol and a shriek that frightened her very soul. She fainted on the spot; and when he returned, he found her lying stretched out on the damp green earth. He lifted her up, and spoke to her and soothed her, and the first words that she spoke were

Now do you believe me dear! now that you have seen it and heard it.

It, Claire, it?

You saw it face to face, did you not?

I did Claire; and but for the damned slippery bank, I should have done for it, I hope. God! what a spring it made when I pricked it!

Merciful heaven! What have you done! was it alive!

It *was* alive a moment ago, whether it will be to–morrow, it is not for me to say. The scoundrel! his treachery deserved more than death. See see lifting the narrow blade which quivered and sparkled in the moonlight, and showing a reddish tinge near the point.

Miserable man! How had you the courage to strike it.

The courage! did you not hear a pistol?

I did

Well I had the courage to serve it with a few inches of bright steel, because *it* had the courage to offer me a leaden pill that I did not much care to take, are you satisfied?

No, (firmly) *no!*

Woman woman! how dare you speak to me in that voice. Be on your guard; for, as I hope to outlive my arch–enemy, as I hope to see the light of another day, if I find you leagued with Jeffry Smith.

With Jeffry Smith! Another such word sir, and we are a part forever. I league with nobody; the game that I play is for myself; I am that other I spoke of, and though he, or you, or another may profit by the mischief I do, it is not for you, nor him, nor for any other mortal to threaten me. So I bid you beware Be upon your guard sir, I am not of a temper to be trifled with.

Enough I hear a step in the room above, the curtains of the window are lifted

As he spoke, a light flashed on the wet verdure, and a shadow shot along the turf. It was the shadow of a woman tying up her hair. His heart sprang to his throat, he threw away the sword, kissed Claire, and bid her be faithful to him as he would be faithful to her, and hurried lightly up the narrow stair–case, though not so lightly as to surprise the female whoever she was, for the moment he touched the lock of the door, the light was extinguished. He tapped; but she made no reply. He pushed open the door the room was large and he could see all over it, but there was nothing alive or in motion to be seen.

CHAPTER XX.

But while he stood in the door–way, holding his breath (continues the narrative) something glided past him like a shadow. His blood thrilled as it swept by; but the next moment he saw the shape of a woman at his elbow, he heard her step, her low agitated breathing, and his heart beat thick with joy. It was no shadow, no shape such as men are afraid of, though it wear the outward form of what they have most loved on earth. It was a woman perhaps a beautiful woman a youthful woman he was quite sure, for the small hand he took was very soft and smooth, and though it fluttered violently, it was cold to the touch of his. The curtains were dropped to the very floor, and the room was full of a confused glimmering twilight, a sort of atmosphere which would permit nothing but shadows to be seen.

I pray you, said he, and as he spoke, he shut the door softly and stepped forward as if going to put aside the heavy white window–curtains, but she was too quick for him, she caught his arm before it was too late and prevented the

involuntary outrage.

God forgive me! said he, retreating with shame as he spoke. I beseech you to believe me! I would not have been guilty of any thing so treacherous for the world; I had quite forgotten where I was, in the hurry nay, nay, do not fear that I shall break my word; I shall not. I would rather die. Why do you tremble so? why are you so cruelly agitated? Why do you What are you afraid of! upon my soul you have nothing to fear, nothing as I hope for mercy! Ah Indeed! will you not even look at me? Why do you turn away your face; why do you keep repeating that motion of the hand as to drive me away. Perhaps your faith in me is no more? perhaps you would leave me? or it may be that you wish me to leave you? Speak and I will obey you. Speak, and I swear to you that I will do whatever you desire, if it be possible. Nay, nay, forgive me; I do not wish you to speak a sign will do a sign dear, and you are at liberty forever.

She would give no sign peradventure she could not; for the table upon which her hand rested shook all the time she stood there.

Am I not allowed to approach you?

She recoiled with a visible shudder, as he drew near.

Good God! how you terrify me! Who are you?

She caught by the curtains, and they shook too.

Who are you? and what are you? Why have you ventured so far, if it can have persuaded you to such a step, *you! you* that are ready to drop with fear while I speak to you! Have you thought seriously of what you risk poor child!

She dropped into a chair at these words, and covered her face with her hands.

I entreat you to believe me, you are quite safe I would not harm you for the world, whatever you may be. Ah! how cold, how frightfully cold your hands are! what am I to do? speak to me, or but lift your head if you wish me to go, and I will go instantly. Your forehead too how damp it is; but your soft smooth hair, O, how beautiful to the touch! how heavy, how abundant! I never saw but one mortal with a head of hair like yours

She was ready to drop out of the chair.

Come, come, I entreat you to hear me patiently; compose yourself and hear me. You are now as you may perceive completely in my power; entirely at the mercy of a bad man you gasp for breath, but hear me through, I beseech you with no human help nigh you, with no arm to save, no ear to hear. Think of your dreadful situation (he spoke with a mild voice) alone with a man like me in a place like this at an hour like this. Nothing short of a miracle could save you!

The poor creature locked her hands and appeared to shrink into herself

But lo! that miracle is wrought for you!

He turned to leave her as he spoke, but she sat as if stupified with grief and horror, and he could not bear to go till he saw her lift up her head.

I know you are innocent, I am sure of it; your excessive alarm, your dreadful agitation, they are enough to show that whatever else you are, you are innocent! Good God! upon your knees! who are you do I know you! Do you

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

know me! speak to me, if you would not drive me distracted before your face. Who are you! That you are innocent, I feel assured; that you are young, I know by the very touch of your hand; that you are beautiful is therefore certain, for whatever is young and innocent *must* be beautiful, I have nothing more to say. Go in peace! The miracle is wrought for you; go in peace! You weep I am glad of it I can feel your tears trickle over my hand as I support your head. Weep on, weep on, they will refresh your sick heart. How still you are! not a word, not so much as a word, nor a look in reply. *Do* speak to me! do tell me who you are, and what has brought you into such a grievous peril; confidence it may be in the truth of man? What a pity that you should ever be deceived. Confidence in your own strength? God help you, if that be the case! for that infirmity there is no cure, no hope that I know of. Still not a word, nor a sign, nor a whisper! what am I to believe? Strange beautiful woman! do speak to me *do!* do tell me why it is that I find you here! What have I done to deserve this!

It may be that you are after this bad soul of mine; perhaps you covet power, you would have dominion perhaps over a proud man, over an exhausted, lonely, weary and wayward heart, one already stupified, worn to death and sick with perpetual transport.

O speak to me! How is it with you dear? would you have this heart bloom anew! Easier was it, by breathing on the scented earth, to revive the trodden flowers which have been crushed and trampled in it, with an armed heel to. How is it with you dear? Believe me; I have no longer a heart for any thing that wears the shape of woman. I will not deceive you I dare not I have no longer the courage, or the power. From this day forth, I have made a vow to deceive nobody, to tamper with nobody in your shape.

She drew his hands to her mouth and kissed them with fervor.

What I say is the solemn truth. I glory in being loved I cannot be happy if I do not love something I should not care to live a day, if I were not sustained by the hope of ... no, no, no we'll not speak of that now. But notwithstanding all this dear, the truth is that I shall never love again. My heart was buried alive not long ago, and how can I? I never did love but one a child, a mere child poor Elizabeth! I was a boy then but boy though I was, I destroyed her nay, nay, do not force me away from you lean your head on my bosom.

Her head rested on his shoulder as he proceeded, and he held both her hands to his heart, and stood over her, as a brother would stand over his young and favorite sister.

I beseech you to put all faith in me. What I say is the truth I cannot love you; I never shall love again; that is impossible now; but I can pity you, and I do pity you, poor child. After a time too, if you are what I believe you to be, after a time I shall revere you. That, however, will depend upon you, upon your own behaviour; for bad as I am, I have that within me, which a woman lighted it up, a child rather, years and years ago when I was but a child, that which I have tried to stifle day by day with ashes and earth, a flame it is that will not be smothered, a fire that will never go out, a brightness that will not suffer me to think of the young and holy without veneration. Do you know me? If you do not, how unspeakably rash! If you do, what an awful trust for me! will you not suffer me to see your features? Have I no power to move you? You shake your head; you know very well that I dare not break a promise; you have bound me to you therefore as with a vow. Girl! girl! whatever you are, leave me! now is your time; you are in great peril; my heart is growing wild with fever, crazy with joy; I can feel your warm breath in my neck. Let us part! O let us part, I beseech you! How dare you cling to me so, after I have told you that I do not love you, that I cannot love you, that my proud faith in woman is no more. Leave me, leave me, before it is too late! Ah that smothered gasp! You have not gone so far, so very far you may still go back and be safe and happy if you will. O that I could persuade you to speak to me as you would speak to a dear brother! Do, do tell me who you are, not your name, I do not wish to know that I only wish to know what I can do for you. Will you have me for a friend? for a brother? Say but the word, if you will, and whoever you are and whatever you are, my life is at your service, or if that may not be, go away! lose no time, go away from this terrible spot, unquestioned, unfollowed and alone.

You are deeply moved I see; suffer me to say one word more, one of unutterable tenderness. You are desperate with grief, or with passion or with terror; you have gone so far that you are afraid to go back? if so why do you stoop your head? why wring your hands at every word I say! What ails you! what is the matter with you? Good God! what can I do you frighten me half to death, your sobbing is dreadful; it shakes my very heart. I begin to feel dizzy I I what if I send Claire to you! Ah! that goes like a sharp knife to your heart; you are jealous of Claire I see. Poor thing! if you knew the worth of that woman, you would love her in spite of all you see in her to make you afraid. Ah! it grows dark about me, and there's a heavy sick tumult in my blood, just where your head is now resting; very terrible it is, and yet very soothing. If I could but hear you speak one word, it would be such a relief to me; or if I could know who you are and yet, I would not have you answer me, however much I may entreat you, for if I break my pledge to you, I'll not survive it I swear I will not! Perhaps you are that young, timid graceful creature I saw at Boston a while ago. If you are, let me beseech you to fly fly and be happy! You will be the wiser and better for this, one day or other; and your gratitude then, like your grief now will be unspeakable. If you would but tell me the truth now, without suffering me to hear the natural tone of your voice, I might be able to advise you. You have heard, have you not, I am sure you have, that I am what is called a dangerous man with your sex; and you have pursued me at such awful hazard that you may know what it really is that fascinates woman, what it is that makes a man of my age dangerous. Deluded woman! I pity you. Poor, poor Girl! Ah; your hand quivers to my touch, palpitates with new life. Go, go! it is death to you, death to me perhaps. Go, I beseech you my arteries tingle; my sight begins to fail me; I can hear sweet bells ringing in the air. I am very faint very and now I can feel the buried pure tenderness of my youth gushing up within my heart, like a forgotten spring, the very flowers of my youth and all the sweet holy dreaming of my boyhood reviving beneath your passionate warm tears. Cruel! cruel! I cannot endure it, I will not you are driving me crazy

He drew her up to his heart as he spoke and would have set his lips to her forehead, but she strove with him and repelled him as if the touch of his lips were certain death to her.

What! after all this, have you no faith in me! may I not even kiss your forehead? are we to part, never to see each other again while we breathe, after a meeting such as this, without so much as a word or a look to assure me that you understand the true motive, which stay, stay! a thought has just flashed into my very soul! your excessive timidity, your thick smooth hair, the silence that you keep, though your head is now gathered into my bosom and your heart is bounding side by side with my heart I pray you

He dropped upon his knees at her feet

Are you! oh God, *are* you the innocent child of my benefactor! Are you the dear friend of her that I so loved in my youth of her that I betrayed and left! no, no no, no you are not poor Martha; no, no, I see that now, for you stand up like a spirit before me, what a brave carriage for one delicate and feeble! You hardly appear to touch the floor. Oh how thankful I am! I care not who you are now; but a moment ago, you were so like that proud pale sweet girl, I was ready to drop down at your feet and lie there. How could I so blaspheme her purity! nay, nay, leave the door come away from the wall, come and sit here, and I will watch by you, or if you will go, go and be happy, go in peace, and leave me to die here. Or if nay, nay, do not cling to me so, I will not leave you, I will not, upon my soul dear, though you have raised an image in my heart that will destroy me and you too, if you do not instantly break away from the snare that is now spread for you

He awoke with a frightful sensation, a feeling as if one side of his whole body were death–struck. He was chilled to the heart, his very blood was a–cold, he felt as if the fountain of life was frozen up forever within him. He lay still for a few minutes after he awoke, holding his breath and trying to remember where he was, and where he had fallen asleep; for he had a confused notion that somebody had been kissing his mouth, his forehead and his eyes, while he lay there and struggled to awake, clinging to him, he thought, in the agony of death, calling out his name with shrieks, and breathing it over and over with every sort of endearing sweet and low intonation by the hour, and trying all the time to wake him with delirious impatience.

He shuddered as he put forth his arms, for they felt as if they had been clasping a dead creature. He was unable to move, unable to think with any sort of clearness, and he broke out all over in a cold sweat, as the truth crowded upon him. Where was he? what was the matter with him? was he awake or asleep? and if asleep, how long had he been so? He knew not, he had only a sort of persuasion, a deep fear, growing more and more insupportable at every breath he drew, that he had seen poor Martha and his young Indian bride, and Elizabeth Hale, the beloved of his youth, the idol of his young heart when his worship was pure, his own, his beloved Elizabeth, whom he had so cruelly betrayed three years before: again he had seen her fall into the sea, again he had leaped in to save her, again he had brought her up from an awful depth, pursued by a thousand shapes of terror, while she was trying to say over his name all the way up, kissing his mouth, clinging desperately about his neck, gasping for breath, and half strangling him with her innocent caresses.

He moved again he uttered a cry he started up. His hands were tangled, his right arm, his very heart in the torn beautiful tresses of a woman all in disorder. He strove to get clear, by shutting his eyes, by turning away his head, by toiling for escape as if he were enmeshed in a live snare. While occupied in this way, he heard a faint low agitated respiration; like the last moan of a dying baby. He screamed with fear, and arose, the dead creature moving as he moved, till he tore himself away like a giant from the dishevelled hair. He leaped upon his feet and staggered to the door, and shrieked for mercy! with a convulsion of the heart, till the house trembled beneath his tread, and flashes of blue fire shot hither and thither over the profound blackness of the hour, and the dead body lifted itself up and shook, and the face became visible to him, in spite of all he could do. That was enough. He grew still then, still as death; and he dropped where he stood, and lay there awhile as if he had been struck to the heart with a knife. He lay there till he heard a footstep, and saw the door opened by a shadow, the shadow of a tall man, which entered the room and walked up to him, and stood before him, face to face, with his arms lifted in triumph and mocking, and a sneer upon his lip; and he had neither courage nor power to smite the shadow. And then as he got up, he heard wailing and outcries afar off, and a sweet lamentation through all the wide air, like that which came up out of the wood, or the green earth, or down out of the sky, perhaps, the night before. And then he crept along to the bed on his hands and knees, and lifted himself up, and waited there without moving, till another shape, that of Claire, the woman of mischief, appeared at the door and looked into the room, and shook her head sorrowfully at him, and wept when he spoke to her; for the light she carried flashed upon the features of the dead before him, and he knew them all. They were indeed the features of his beloved of poor Elizabeth, And when he saw that, he took a chair and leaned over the body, and waited patiently, very patiently for a whole hour, till the wind arose in the south, and blew away the darkness from it, so that he saw the face of a great angel that lay there; and he caught his breath, and stooped over it in prayer, and stretched forth his hand reverentially to touch the dead awful eyes. They vanished vanished immediately, and before he could withdraw the hand, or cry out for help, there appeared in the place thereof, a sweet visage that he knew, even the visage of poor Elizabeth, of her that he had been dreaming of. And death was upon it, all over the forehead, all over the mouth, and all over the beautiful eyes. He spoke to it, and lo! as he spoke, the large room grew larger, so that he saw the stars, the sea, and a great ship, and then the whole air was crowded with shadows; and he turned away his head though he could not take off his eyes, while some went softly to the window and put up the curtain, so that the soft moon-light entered the room like a new atmosphere; and some threw sweet flowers by handfuls over the bed; and others came up and walked slowly round it, with faces full of consternation, perplexity and grief; and others who were in the shape of aged women, took hold of the dead body very tenderly, weeping and sobbing over it all the time, and prepared it for the grave. And then he saw the dead shape move, and the sweet mouth open a little, and the dead blue eyes look out heavily from their white shelter for a moment, and the small hand that lay stretched out upon the coverlid, open very gently, and the bosom heave underneath its thin covering; after which, there followed a tremendous convulsion the whole face grew frightfully dark the hair flew in the wind and caught fire in the blaze of the lamp the whole body was illuminated as with a bright inward flashing; and all the limbs thereof shivered and shook, and then grew suddenly still forever forever and ever,

He sat upon the bed-side, after this, like a man risen up out of his own grave, or out of the deep sea, holding her two hands to his bosom, dead as they were a shirt like a winding sheet wrapping them both, and a crushed paper lying in his lap. Not another tear did he waste, not one! So, the people having tried for a whole hour to bring the

dead body to life, finding there was no hope, went away one by one, shaking their heads mournfully at him as they disappeared, and securing every door after them. By all the stars, they did! leaving poor Gerard alone, "all, all alone," with a dead body, in the tremendous darkness and quiet of a large, old, uninhabited house. God forgive them! It was enough to wreck the understanding of the bravest that ever trod the earth. Yet he moved not, spoke not, gave no sign, uttered no prayer to stay them, no cry for mercy, though the pale sweet visage of the dead went and came at every breath he drew, in the dying flashes of the lamp, which they left near him, till the eastern sky changed afar off, and a sort of luminous twilight succeeded, a most unearthly atmosphere, wherein the face appeared again as if it were alive and smiling on him, and he saw for a certainty now, that it was the face, not of a shadow nor of a stranger, but of poor Elizabeth. He stood off awhile and gazed upon it, and then drew nigh, and lifted up the magnificent hair it was heavy and wet heavy with tears and with the perspiration of death with the tears of a broken heart heavy as when he plucked her up out of the sea, drenched in the sweat of her mortal agony.

He put his mouth to her delicate clear temples the chill struck to his heart. He kissed her smooth calm forehead it was like a bit of marble statuary, cold with autumnal dew and star–light. He touched her pale dear mouth it was distorted with an expression of unspeakable suffering; just as if the poor child had been smothered in her sleep, suffocated in a dream of joy, with all her senses perfect; nay, as if while she lay there by his side, awake awake, but silent and motionless, trying to move, trying to call out the name of her beloved one, perhaps, or perhaps to pray to her Father above, her poor heart had broken! Perhaps for such a thing might well be perhaps, when it was altogether too late, she had come to herself, and repented of her terrible rashness, and cried for mercy, or grown distracted with terror, and died, after all, died when she most wished to live, and while she was calling to him to wake and help her, trying to wake him perhaps, tearing her beautiful tresses and screaming to the Eternal with her last breath.

Yea yea it was the young bride of his youth, his own, his beloved Elizabeth, asleep in the everlasting torpor of the grave. Asleep! oh no! She was not asleep she never died in her sleep. Over all her glorious form and fair bosom, her voluptuous arms, her countenance of beauty, her dead solemn eyes, about which, when they were alive, there was a continual sparkle of joy, so that her whole visage was like a mirror set in the star–light, reflecting whatever went before it or over it, as if it were within it, all, all even to the pretty childish hands that hung over the pillow, half buried in her luxurious hair over all were fine streaks of pale and vivid crimson, with here and there a sprinkle of deep, fine, brilliant purple, proving that however easy it may seem for one to die as she died, it is nevertheless, a death of inconceivable horror, a death of spasm, and half–smothered outcry, and suffocation. Whoever thou art, beware! Whatever thou art, beware! The poor victim utters no cry that can be heard, no foam gathered upon her young red lip, no gasping is heard perhaps, no death rattle: But while she is yet alive, the warm blood grows thick and stagnates forever and ever in the delicate channels of life, the arteries are swollen, the minuter vessels are distended to rupture, one after another, fires like flaming serpents go hither and thither about the channels of the soul, the brain collapses, the heart explodes, and the immortal shape is no more.

He took her head into his bosom and wept upon it, and lay down by it, kissing the shadowy, half–transparent eye–lids, until they quivered as with new life; pressing the pale, quiet mouth till it grew suddenly red seeing which, he started up with a loud cry and a terrible, though vain hope, for the redness that he saw was only that of her torn lips, for the aged people had been trying to force her teeth apart. He grew deadly sick when he discovered the truth, and a great heaviness came over him, and he was fast falling away into a drowsy deep slumber with her head in his bosom the slumber of death he hoped when gradually and slowly the recollection of what had happened during the night came back to him. He struggled with himself, and sat up, and strove to awake more fully, and after a few minutes he felt sure that in the dead of the night, he had seen Elizabeth rise and go to a table near the window, and pour something into a glass, and then come back to the bed and lie down by his side as before, turn to him as before, and cling to him, till the rich odour, the sweet overpowering perfume of her breath had put him to sleep forever body and soul, forever! True true there was the taste of a powerful drug upon his lips yet. He arose when he observed this, and with a dull, heavy, and growing torpor at his heart, made his way to the window, where, just as he was ready to give up and fall down beneath what appeared to be a preternatural

pressure from above, he found a goblet, and at the bottom of the goblet a few drops of a stagnant liquor, just enough to stain the glass, of the color of crimson. It was very brilliant, and the smell was tempting and rich, and reminded him immediately of the sweet fragrant lips that had been pursuing his all the night through. And when he discovered this, he was happy very happy; for the aromatic breath of his beloved, the beautiful dead woman, had penetrated into his vitals, and there was no hope for him now. He knew this, and he was thankful for it, but that he might not be disturbed in the sleep which was now stealing over him, the sleep of death, he went up to the windows, and let down all the curtains, and secured all the shutters, and bolted the door, and piled up the heavy furniture against it, and darkened the whole room, and shook loose the silken drapery of the bed, the gay showy curtains through which the sun had already shot fire upon the body of poor Elizabeth, till the brightness thereof was terrible, poured some water into the goblet, saw the shadow of death dissolve, the crimson fade away, drank off the liquor, fell upon his knees, prayed a short confused prayer, went into bed again to the dead body, drew the languid arms about his neck, her heart up to his heart, and grew straightway at the touch, as cold as death.

CHAPTER XXI.

Let me now return to myself, says the narrator. I could not sleep after I got home. It was the longest night I ever passed in my life, and the cottage was before me, and the trees, and the sky, and the man, and the woman, all night long. But when the new day-break appeared, and the fresh wind blew upon me through the open windows, I began to be heartily ashamed of my night sickness; to feel as if a great part of the suffering I have described, had been the suffering of a sleeper, but on casting my eye down to my boots, I found them covered with wet leaves, and with the fine yellow dust of a meadow flower that grew near the cottage.

The day was delightful. I never was happier since I came into the world. I took an early breakfast, mounted my horse and rode off to street, where Middleton lodged. It was a morning altogether, such as I could not forget were I to live a thousand years the sky so blue, the green trees and every leaf thereon so active with vitality. My blood was like wine it had been like water. I walked freely and I breathed freely, and I wondered at my lack of courage in the night. I may be wrong, the joy that I felt now was no more perhaps, than others feel every day, after a night of anxiety or fever; but from that hour to this, I have never felt as I felt then, nothing like that festivity of the blood, that hilarity of the soul, that champagne joyousness of temper, and if I ever should again, I know it will scare me: I may be wrong but such is my belief now.

The animal I rode, a creature all spirit and fire, set off at a free gallop the moment I touched the saddle, and as I rode along, I felt I hardly know how to describe it as if the fresh wind of the north, the brave sea breeze were blowing through and through me, and winnowing soul and body, as it blew, from evil and bad thought, and sorrow and mischief and pestilence. But before I had gone far, the occurrences of the night began to crowd back upon my memory one by one, to wear a steadier shape, and to press about me, and to start up in the path before me. I thought of the tall man, of the apparition at the window, of the female that stood near me, of the carriage of the two as they whispered together, and before I recollected myself, I was careering at full speed for the cottage. Where now! cried a voice at a window as I rode by.

I reined up; and my heart gave way as I did so. I was opposite No. 80, the very house in which poor Middleton lived.

Pray, said I, assuming a careless air, pray tell me if Mr. Middleton is up my compliments to him, and perhaps he will take a ride with me.

Tell the gentleman, said another voice at the door, he is not up

Not up! for shame say to him if you please, that I am here.

Mr. Middleton was away all night sir, and he never likes to be disturbed.

I was so happy! the tears actually sprang to my eyes, and yet I determined to conceal my joy, and carry it through with a swaggering air

My compliments to Mr. Middleton, sir, and say that I am waiting for him at the door on horse–back, and that I will neither dismount nor stay long for him here, if I do not see his head at the window.

Very well, sir, said a man at the window, and away he went with the message.

Where now was my foolish terror? where now the foreboding that shook me to death in the night–season? where the bitter grief and self–reproach, and faith in the supernatural that made a child of me in the dark?

He was out all night, sir he hasn't come home yet sir, said the man, looking out of the window of the room in which Middleton slept.

I heard no more. My heart died within me, and before I knew it, I was galloping away toward the cottage. My sensations were terrible I remember this, but I remember little of what they were till my horse, after clearing a fence at the edge of the wood a fence which at another time, I would not have leaped for my right–arm brought me in full sight of the cottage. There it was there just as I had seen it in the dead of the previous night, dark and silent as the grave, the windows below barred and bolted with iron, the windows above shut close, that one even where the woman had appeared, and a part of the steps were broken away. I caught my breath when I saw this and I felt much as if I knew that murder had been perpetrated there, and that I myself was appointed from above to pursue and destroy the man–slayer. I rode up to the door, and struck it forcibly and resolutely two or three times, but there was no answer for me; I knocked again and again till the whole house rung, and shook with a long continued reverberation; after which I alighted, and went up the outside stairs to the second story and tried every window and every door, and called and shouted till I was weary. And then I came down, walked all round the house below, and struck at every door and listened at every window in the same way. The silence grew frightful insupportable I could bear it no longer; and I began to look about for something with which to force open the door, when a bit of glass broke underneath my foot, with a sharp jingling noise that instantly reminded me of what I heard near the same place the night before. It was a broken vial of exquisite workmanship, chased with gold, and stained (through and through it appeared to me) with a rich, brilliant, crimson liquid, of a very grateful odour. Was it poison? If so to whom administered? and *by* whom? These were questions of life and death; but while I was thinking them over, my attention was attracted by something white on the top of a bush near the wood it fluttered in the breeze, and appeared to be a signal. I ran up to it. It was a pocket–handkerchief, and when I came to examine it close, I found a spot of blood upon it, and the initials of the woman that I saw in the night, C. C. O. The grass here was much trodden; the tops of the plants near had been lately stripped of their leaves and bark. I touched a twig that was broken it left a stain I took up a handful of the crushed leaves the dew was yet upon them, but they left a tinge too, which it was impossible to mistake, or to see without a shudder, upon the white handkerchief. There was a trail on the turf too, as if something heavy had been dragged over it; and a track which I followed from this very spot to the verge of the bank where it suddenly disappeared. On looking over, there was nothing to be seen for the water was high, nothing but a shrub nearly plucked up by the roots, just over the edge of the bank. It must have been tugged at by a strong hand, for the coarse dark foliage was torn, bruised and laden with fresh earth, as if it had been pressed into the soil for a moment and then recovered with a spring. I withdrew from the river–side when I saw this, and hurried back to the cottage once more, and staggered up to the windows and shouted there till the skies answered me, to the door and shook it until the house itself shook, and leaned my shoulder against a pannel and heaved with all my power, till I heard something give away inside; after which I was able to open it. But when I did so far enough to look in, I felt afraid; the quiet and the darkness appalled me. I hesitated, knocked and called again, and so loud was the outcry, that my horse when he heard it, broke his bridle and set off at full speed into the thick wood, leaving me alone, just when the society of a dog would have been a relief to me. At last I entered, but on tip–toe and vary cautiously and felt my way inch

by inch to the little back parlor. But as I went by the foot of the stairs I happened to look up, and there I saw, or thought I saw it might be a delusion to be sure and when I recalled the state of my feelings at the time, I am ready to acknowledge that I must have been deceived but I saw, or thought I saw, as plainly as I ever saw any thing in my life, the shadow of a tall man at the top of the stairs, erect and immovable, as if he stood there waiting for me to approach. I turned away my head and looked out into the warm soft air to reassure myself; and when I looked again, the shadow was gone. But I wanted the courage to go up, and I stood still therefore, and held my breath, and watched the stairway and argued with myself about my unheard of cowardice, till, though I could neither hear nor see, motion nor footstep, voice nor shape, I had argued myself back, by little and little to the very door of the front-parlor which I threw open, with a rude angry effort and walked in. It was very dark, and for a little time I could see nothing, not even the massy furniture, nothing but a feeble shadowy glimmer, where the dust was eddying in a little stray sun-shine that streamed through a crack of the window-shutter. As I advanced, a flash struck my eyes, and hastily turning my head, the first thing I saw was a drawn sword lying on the table near me the blade of a sword-cane rather; it belonged to Middleton; I knew it immediately, and seized it with a quick sharp thrill, and took it to the door that I might examine the blade; it was dark near the point and bruised and discolored as with fire. But with a sword in my grasp what had I to fear? nothing, said I to myself, nothing, and I held it before me and ascended the stairs forthwith, in a temper the very thought of which now makes my blood run cold; for I know I am satisfied, perfectly *satisfied* that if a human creature had started up suddenly before me from the darkness, I should have dealt him a blow without any consideration of the consequences, and without waiting to interchange a word; so great was my fear, so dreadful my agitation. But I met nothing saw nothing, heard nothing, till I had continued my search through a long wide passage to a bed-room, the first of a suite which had been occupied by Middleton during his illness; but when I had got so far, I heard the outer door below shut with a loud noise, and immediately two or three other doors were flung to, one after the other, with a violence that shook the whole house. What could I do? I grasped the weapon of death, I planted my foot, and waited for several minutes for somebody to appear. It was nothing but the wind perhaps, after all, nothing but the wind; for after the echoes died away, you might have heard a pin drop. I entered the room with my sword before me and after walking round and round it, and throwing up the curtains I looked into the other, which was connected with it and I was satisfied from all that I saw, that whoever the occupants were, they could not be far off they certainly had not been gone long. So I called out several times, and louder and louder each time, and struck the heavy iron shod heel of my boot on the marble hearth, and shouted, and rapped on the chimney-piece, and the wall, and the door; but still there was no answer. What could I believe? It was very strange; for the bed-clothes before me appeared as if they had not entirely sunk down into their proper place you could swear they had been hastily thrown off by some body a few minutes before, judging by what else I saw that somebody whoever it was, could have had little or no time to escape. I staid but a minute or two, yet I saw enough to satisfy me that I was in the bedroom of a female or a female had been there at any rate... for the floor was littered with parts of her dress. Here I trod on a slipper, and there lay a coronet which had been crushed with a heavy blow or trodden with a heavy foot. In a far corner lay the fragments of a superb necklace tangled with fine black hair, as if it had been plucked away in wrath. On the very latch of the door, hung the vestiges of a handkerchief that I knew, I had seen it on the head of Claire wreathed about her brow like a turban, I could not mistake what I saw; it was a part of the gorgeous apparel I had seen her wear in the south.

I had no courage, no heart, no time to look further, and I hurried away; I was only there for a minute or so as I have said before, but I saw every thing, and I never shall forget what I saw, never to my dying day. As for the rest of the rooms I merely walked into them, one after the other, and hitched up the curtains and set open the large green blinds, and threw a hurried glance at the furniture and passed on, till I came to the door of the particular room I was in search of, and there I stopped and held my breath again, palsied anew with unspeakable terror. I cannot describe it I cannot I know that no language would suffice to give you a faithful idea of what I suffered, and yet, how can I help trying over and over again to describe it? I was afraid even to touch the lock. I felt as if something was about to start up before me as if something would happen if I persevered against the pressure that I felt; as if a strong hand, that of my Good-Angel perhaps, was crowding me away from the door. But how could I possibly go away? I that could not endure the reproaches of my own heart for having done as I did in the night? No, no I had gone too far, much too far in a strange house to think of escape. If I did not persevere, what on earth

could I say for myself? The door was fast; and I knocked very softly two or three times and, then louder and louder yet, and called and shouted and stamped as before, till getting half crazy with fright for the sound of my own voice terrified me I lifted my arm with all my strength and struck the pannel. It gave way and fell into the dark, large, hollow, quiet room with a noise which appeared to me so like the sharp splitting of a coffin lid in a great sepulchre, that I shuddered and recoiled, as if the loud angry protracted reverberation were a preternatural voice warning me off. I could now see all over the room, there was nothing alive within it, I knew, unless there might be in a bed that I saw, the curtains of which were drawn. But why detail my sensations? why pretend to describe them? It is all vanity and foolishness. I knew not whither to go, nor what to say; I was mad furious; and when I put my hand through the broken pannel, and discovered that the key was yet in the lock, my very flesh crept, and the hair of my head rose, for I knew from that moment, I *knew* as well as if I saw her at my feet, I knew that the woman who appeared at the window was a dead woman a corpse and lying there in that very bed before me. I knew it as well as if I could see her. So, I collected all my strength, and put my back to the door and burst it open with a tremendous crash, overthrowing the furniture which lay piled up against it, furniture that no woman was ever able to move, sprang into the room with a loud cry and went straightway up to the bed, my hands quivering with excessive agitation, my whole body in a sweat, and tore aside the curtains.

O! never, never shall I forget! never though I should live a million of years, the deep awful rapture of my heart, when I first beheld (as it were in a vision) the brave calm, beautiful creatures before me, asleep I thought like two happy children, asleep in their untroubled innocence, the one in the bosom of the other, and their arms interlocked with love. I could have dropped on my knees and cried for joy. But alas! that joy was soon over. They slept much too soundly. They had never heard my cries, nor the knocking, nor the continued sound of my approach. As I thought of this, I ran up to the window, and burst open the shutters and tore away the superb hangings, and stood there as the wind blew into the room and the light of day entered and filled it I know not how long powerless and speechless, the weapon of death dropping out of my grasp and my knees tottering as I stood; looking at the two sleepers, the sun shone all over them, flowers upon the bed, a profusion of green leaves and blossoms and buds, the fresh-wind of the morning blowing their changeable hair all together, like a warm silken shadow over the white pillow and rich flowers, and making low music through all the desolate chambers of the house and sounding with joy among the tree branches that over-shadowed it.

Her head lay upon his arm, her cheek on which there was yet a flush, near his heart, and his mouth touched her forehead. Both her hands were locked in his, and held with a strong desperate convulsive energy. Both of their wonderful faces, even there, even at such a time, were so full of beauty and composure, that as I looked at them I was afraid to move or breathe, lest if I stirred I should make them less happy. Their sleep was like a trance, they lay like enchanted creatures, things hardly of earth spell-bound by creatures not of our earth. My tears fell in a shower like the summer rain, without either scalding or bitterness they had never fallen so pleasantly before. For the first time in my life I found that weeping was a relief to the heart. I had been told as much before, but I never could believe it. How like death sleep is!...How like sleep death is! who would fear death now! so calm, so beautiful, said I.

But on going a little nearer, I detected traces of keen sharp suffering upon the sweet brow of the female; and a few livid spots about her temples and about her naked shoulders; much as if some of the finer vessels under the white skin had some how or other been crushed, until the crimson fluid of her young heart had suffused itself through the lucid whiteness. Poor child! poor Elizabeth! So beautiful when alive. How much more beautiful in death! Her face now was full of innocent love, touched with unspeakable sorrow and gentleness, and a something haughty about the forehead and mouth. But his! O it was like nothing I ever saw in life. It was terrible beyond expression. His lip had a passionate proud curl; his forehead was wrought and established with a look of rebellion, of defiance, of savage, haughty stern triumph, resolute as death and somewhat like that which I had seen before when both of us were out in the field of blood together somewhat like it, I say, but sculpture to shadow in comparison. Yet, with all this, and more to terrify me, there was a gravity and a solidity and a tremendous quiet over the whole visage taken together, as if in some awful paroxysm of determination, having got a form, and shape and hue and character for a single moment, it had instantaneously become (like lava poured into the sea)

solid and immutable forever.

I knew not which way to look nor whither to go, and I sat down upon the bed–side and wept like a child I could not restrain my tears, nor did I try to check them, till happening to turn my eyes again to the face of poor Gerard, I saw or thought I saw that while I was looking another way the expression of haughty repose there had undergone a little change. Ay ay and the whole face, if I could believe my own senses appeared to be turned rather more toward the face of the woman, rather more than it was when I saw it first.

While I sat considering this with a vague childish idea that something was about to occur, one of the little hands of poor Elizabeth dropped from his grasp and I saw his head move, and a spasm quivering about his mouth. I started up from the bed, with a loud cry, I suppose, for a loud cry came back to me from every room in the house, and I stood up in the middle of the floor, bewildered with hope and shivering with affright. I knew that both of the bodies were dead absolutely dead, and yet I half expected them to arise and pursue me. A low thick sob followed. The chest of the man heaved while I was looking at him, and subsided before my face. Then and not till then, did I begin to recollect where I was and what was my duty. Hitherto I had been half delirious but now, God be thanked! the fear that made me so was no more. I ran up to the bed in a transport of joy; I took the poor fellow into my arms, I tore him away from his bride, I carried him to the window and shrieked for *help! help!* till the neighbourhood was all up in arms, and I heard the people on every side, pouring to my relief. I saw them afar off, I heard their shouting in the wood, I saw their faces, their encouraging gestures, I heard the door open below and feet ascending the stairs I could endure it no longer, I fainted away.

CHAPTER XXII.

They saved poor Middleton, but Elizabeth was gone forever. They put her into the green earth; he was very ill at the time, but he crept out of his bed and crawled to the window, and held his breath, and saw them bury her in the little garden. He spoke not a word, not a tear fell from his eyes, not a moan from his lips. But when it was all over, when he saw them pile up the turf upon her broken heart, he uttered a word or two that sounded like prayer, and turned away from the window and was carried off to bed. He was in great peril; and so was I. We both had a narrow escape; for my own part, I was like a man overboard, upheld by terror in the midst of the sea till the hand of rescue is near, and sinking with joy just when it is ready to clutch him.

But for the following paper which was found on the floor he would not have been alive at the end of another week. Till he read it, he was literally dying before my face; from that hour he was another man; there was a dreadful anxiety in his look, he was continually questioning all that came near about the sky and the weather, the moon, the stars, and the day of the month, panting with such eagerness the while for nourishment and life! He would count his pulse by the hour, and look at his wasted body, and crawl to the window and lift himself up, and gasp there, day after day, and all day long, at the cold sea–breeze, with a look of such vehement, almost ferocious delight; counting every blow of the clock, and every beat of his overcharged heart, with such frightful steadiness, that we could not bear to look at him. The paper was in the hand–writing of Elizabeth, I have the original before me now, and I shall copy it for you.

"They will try to persuade you, Gerard Middleton, that I am crazy. Do not believe them dear." I give her own words "Do not believe them dear: I am not. I have been so, it is true, but I am well now, and happy. I have escaped, and I am no longer afraid of them. Crazy! am I? Well, well; but who made me so dear? who made me so?"

"It is now day–break. I have hardly shut my eyes all the night through. No, no, I will not survive it, and why should I? But I will make you suffer as no mortal ever suffered before, Gerard, for having laid waste the heart of woman."

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

"My forehead was in the dust before you, and you would not even look at me. O, Gerard, if you had but looked up when I stood before

"My plan is now matured. Your first wife I would have yielded to but she refused and now who is there to deny my claim? I will not be diverted from it, nor discouraged nor betrayed; for I trust nobody. Weeks may go by, months, years perhaps whole years, but I have sworn to do it sworn by the grave of my poor old grandfather, by the spirit of my wronged mother, by the love that I bore you when we were happy and innocent; and what I have sworn to do, that will I do.

"Another day has gone by, and I have no hope left; you know that I am here, you know that I am regarded as a stranger unworthy to associate even in the House of the Lord with the untempted and the virtuous and yet you will neither speak to me, nor see me, nor write to me.

"You shall be rewarded for this dear, and rewarded in a way that shall not be forgotten by you, nor by one of your proud father's house. You have doubted my love; you shall doubt it no longer. You have doubted my faith; you shall never doubt it again. You have doubted my courage. Lo! I mean to give to you such an example of courage, that if you survive to tell of it, the hearts of them that hear you shall quake, and their very blood shall tremble. You have doubted my perseverance. Look at the date of this: call to mind if you are stout enough, the day when you saw me last; on that very day, I took the resolution, a record of which you see here. Gerard Middleton lay your hand upon your heart and answer me. What *man* ever thought so long, or so steadily of death? Yet I have only began to prepare; the night has worn away, and it is but a moment ago that I entered solemnly upon the execution of my plan. All the previous time, every hour, since we parted, I have passed in the work of preparation. Shall I not go on as I have begun? shall I waver? will my heart betray me or fail me? No! no! There is that in me which cannot be moved. And so assured do I feel of this, and so well do I know the steadiness of my nature, that I look now, and have looked for years, upon whatever I have once resolved to do, as already done.

"My death–bed is before me. I see my winding–sheet in the hands of the women. I see them tremble and weep. I see a man going out into the green–wood yonder, with a spade; I see him looking for a spot where the four highways meet, as plainly as I saw you proud, unfeeling, wretched man, a few days ago. I can see a troop of shadows about a newly–made grave; by and by, I shall hear the clods rattling upon the coffin of a self–murderess. Hark! there! there! did I not say so! But you did not hear them you do not hear them; you will not, you dare not; you are asleep in the bosom of a wanton. Awake, Gerard, awake! awake to the call of thy young bride! To the cry of the deep sea, Gerard, from which they rescued her.

"Another and another day! The work may be slow in the consummation, but of a truth, my dear *husband*, your Indian bride has abandoned you to me, and shall I not claim you? it shall not be the less fatal nor certain. It shall be paid scrupulously, the debt I owe, scrupulously, to the uttermost farthing. Oh, Gerard! oh! that I should now be driven to this! that you, so good and so great as you had power to be, should have done outrage to a creature's love, a creature that loved you, O, merciful heaven! Lord God of the faithful in heart! with a love, how infinitely superior to all the bad love, dear, of all the bad women that you ever bowed the knee to!

You may like to know the truth about your mortal enemy. You shall be gratified. Jeffry Smith loved me at the same time you did; but you were of a quick rash temper, and I durst not suffer you to know the truth. He loves me yet married though he is to another woman; he loves me, I do believe, more than you ever yet loved me, though not so much as I love you now, and I love you much less now than I did, when we first went to sleep in each other's arms when I thought you all truth, and I was, as you know all faith. He loves me yet, I say, though he knows that I regard myself as your wife, and though he knows that I know him to be a married man, but much as he loves me, he would sacrifice me, I am sure, to obtain a small triumph over you. Fool! fool! he has taught me to play the game of death *his* game, to retaliate. He would make me *his* dupe! Fool, fool! I say again! if I be the dupe of another, I shall not be *his* dupe. I may counterfeit now, as bravely as he did, or as you did, when you set fire to my heart. Let him quake. The day of retribution is near for him, and for you, and for both of you. You are

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

both to be overwhelmed, overwhelmed in your stateliness by the power of a crushed, a broken-hearted silly girl, who but the other day ran wild among the flowers, without fear of reproach, and spoke what her heart prompted, although she knew from her poor dead mother how wicked and foolish it was for a young girl to speak the truth.

And as for you, Jeffrey Smith, you shall be the high Priest at the sacrifice of your own awful pride. I know you, and another shall know you, even the husband of my heart, and you shall do the homage of a slave about the marriage-bed of your rival. You are to be the grooms-man, proud sir, not the *groom* of your beloved, at the most tremendous bridal that ever was heard of on earth. Sleep if you can, after that bridal is over!

"As for you dear Gerard my betrayer my betrothed my *husband!* I would let you sleep after my death, if I could, but how can I? You will never sleep again, after the night of our bridal after the consummation that I look to. You may shut your eyes, you may dream, perhaps, but you will never sleep more.

"You were continually with Martha P, what business had you there? You were married to another your Indian wife. Oh, Gerard! that one you had married even as you married her, should be able to give you up to another as she does to me! You loved the woman that I saw you with four nights ago: How could you love her, when you knew that I was alive? You were jealous of me; you betrayed me, and because I lacked faith in you *after* you had betrayed me, you had no faith in me, and you withdrew your love when I prayed you to marry me and you mocked at me when I told you, that if it would make you love me the more, I would try to accomplish myself, to become altogether a woman of the world forsake my doating mother, my poor old grandfather, come out from the solitary place where you had buried me, journey back to the sea-shore, and live, and move, and breathe, and *act*, as other women do any thing dear, so that you would but love me, as I love you.

"Have you forgotten my words, when I saw that you did not believe me? the words that I spoke in my great sorrow? Did I not say Gerard I tell you the truth; I speak nothing but the truth. I *can* do this; and I will do it; I am all ready for the work now. But dear Gerard if you desert me, if you will not make me your wife, if you have no longer faith in me, beware! If you enter the path of guilt or scorn so sure as I have the nature that you have stirred up within me, so sure will I outstrip you in that path! If you are good, I shall be better, if you are bad I shall be worse. Did I not say so to you, before we parted? Jeffrey Smith knew this: I told him of it the very day before you left me; I did not love him, but I felt assured in my own soul that if you ever deserted me or failed me, it was upon his haughty bosom I should perish. There was a disconsolate, sincere, deep tenderness in his look when he heard me say that I had still some hope of you, and that I did not believe you would go away forever.

"Well. That night, you know when it was Gerard when you affronted my pure love, when you repeated to me that I was not your wife, and that I never should be your wife: when you doubted my truth and would not believe that I was to you what I was, and what I should have been to this day, but for your cruel treachery. You were my husband, Gerard Middleton my true and lawful husband! in the sight of Him that you worship, or pretend to worship, and I was your wife, as much as I could be, for I had married you according to the faith of a heart overflowing with unutterable love the purest and warmest love it was the night of our everlasting farewell, Gerard. A sudden giddiness, a heavy darkness fell upon me, when I saw that of a truth, you did not love me so much as I loved you, that you did not love me sufficiently to abide with me in the sweet solitude, nor enough to let me abide with you by the sea shore I fainted when you left me it was the first time in my life. But when I awoke as it were from sudden death, my pride arose. And yet I fainted again and again before I could resolve what to do yea, dropped upon the earth while I was trying to stand up and laugh at the misery which you had intended to afflict me with. Need I say more? If you were able to desert me, why should I not be able to give you up? If you were not my husband, why should I continue to be your wife?

"The wrath of my heart would not suffer me to sleep again. Perhaps they speak true, it may be that I was a little out of my head. For I thought of my broken hearted mother of the friends of my youth of that fearful escape from the sea. O, that I had perished there! Merciful Father! for what am I reserved! My brain was a fire *that* I knew and my blood smoked, *that* I could feel, whenever I drew my breath. I can feel it now. I hated you; I hated

myself I hated every thing alive. And so I gave myself up on the very spot where you forsook me, to perdition.

"Gerard Middleton awake! Do you understand what I say? Let me leave no doubt on your soul no comfort for you, no refuge for your pride. If I do, the work will not be half completed. Hear me. Know the truth. At the very time while you were on your way to the bed of a harlot, the ruin of your wife your *wife* in the sight of your Maker your own young faithful wife, was accomplished. Yet more, much more do not believe that I was won as you won me, or cheated or betrayed, or taken by surprise, or carried away by love, or destroyed while I was faint or feeble, or bowed down with sorrow. I was not. I scorn every concealment, every subterfuge; I would leave you no such hope, no such miserable consolation. Hear the truth. *I sacrificed myself deliberately to a man I did not love.* And why? Lo, the answer Husband of my youth! It was to avenge myself on you!

"I never did love him. I never could love him. He was almost hateful to me, for I knew that you were jealous of him, and I had begun to fear that your jealousy and not your pride of birth, your foolish pride in the purity of your blood, which, if a swarthy brow be the sign with you, and with your haughty race, cannot be so pure as mine, was the real and true cause of your abandonment, first of your Indian wife and then of me. Yet afraid as I was of him, and hateful as he had begun to be to me, as all men were alike to me, and as I no longer loved anybody else better, I gave myself up to him without reserve. Do you understand me now? But why did I this? That you might hear the story one day or other and die, as I knew *I* should, of a broken heart.

"Another week has worn away. Would you know the whole truth? You shall. I repented. I was ready to cast away my own life but a something held me back. I had begun to pray a little time before according to my ancient faith, and my poor dear mother appeared to me in my sleep and comforted me, but when I awoke I was filled with an awful fear and so I went to her grave and told her what I had done; but she rebuked me and drove me away, and would not suffer me to be received there. But, by and by, she took pity upon me, and fell upon my neck and wept, and tried to persuade me that I was not altogether to blame. But she did not succeed, and I still thought of death as a refuge. I was cruelly beset by the evil one, but supported by her, I withstood him, though my poor heart was like dust and ashes. I never knew what it was to be warm after that before I had never known what it was to be cold. The very sunshine chilled me the light I was afraid of; and for a long while I breathed an atmosphere of smoke that scorched and suffocated me without affording me one atom of warmth. Yet was I more resolute and high than ever, more undaunted than ever, when I stood face to face with the Destroyer; with him, who profited of my desolation, and grief and delirium; to dishonor you. But one day as we sat together in the shadow of the very tree where you found me, after a separation of two whole years, I saw something in the steely stern quiet of his large eyes, and all over his broad square forehead, which O, that you had been there! it filled me with bitterness and wrath. And what was it, after all? Nothing dear nothing but a look of half-smothered exultation over *you*, not over me. We were speaking of you, and I spoke of you without so much as a quiver of the lip; but nevertheless I could not forgive that look I did not I never shall. Strange, very strange it may appear, but I never shall, much as I hated you. I had well nigh been the death of him for it, and I should have struck him with a knife that lay near me, had I not thought of something better. Fool! fool! he took the credit of my overthrow to himself. I saw it I saw it in the deep thoughtful shadow of his brow, in the very gentleness and gravity of his proud look, in the savage glimmering of his averted eyes, while the tone of his rich full voice was like the sound of a flute in my ear; in the convulsive motion of his lip, half-writhing, half-smiling, in the deep awful abstraction which followed every cry of endearment, and every attempt he made to soothe me; but he had no power to soothe me, and he knew it. He humble you! *he!* I felt another snake swiftly uncoiling at my heart when I saw this. I shall feed that snake with his blood.

"O, that the hour I long for were at hand! O, that you could see my heart naked before you and the angel of death at my side! Well, well after this he would have married me, dear, not as you married me, but as they marry among the world's people. But I refused, and the better to prove how much more I loved you, I told him with a smile with a smile dear that he should never approach me again. *I have kept my word.*

"What else? They grew afraid of me, they conspired to carry me off; they made a prisoner of me, and persuaded my own old grandfather that I had gone distracted, and that nothing would cure me but the guardianship of one who had loved my mother, and who being about to return with her husband to a city on the sea shore to this very city Gerard, offered to take me with her: I consented; for I had so much to learn I labored night and day to *accomplish* myself, as you used to term it when you appeared most to feel my deficiencies I was talked of as a prodigy; all that our best educated women do, I did, and more. And so they imprisoned me but I escaped. I saw you, though you did not see me; and I saw Jeffrey, though I would not suffer him to see me; and I heard that you, although you passed the chief part of your life in the society of bad women, had still found leisure to betray his wife even as he had betrayed yours; that you had encountered each other, and that both of you were well nigh left on the field. I could not bear this I pitied him too much and as I could not *you*, I saw him again stretched upon what promised to be the bed of death. But he recovered, and I withdrew. He mistook my pity and my solicitude for love; it was not love and I told him so, but he would not believe me, he could not, even though he saw me adhere to my promise, the promise I made with a smile.

"By and by he laid another plan to mortify you. He brought your Indian wife to me, and persuaded me to play upon your new favorite with her help he wanted me to personate her, but I refused I saw through his object, and my wrath revived. It was for me to meet you without preparation or notice on your part before the woman you were now devoted to, the loved beautiful widow. Overcome with your love for me, you were to throw yourself into my arms *you!* and be put away for him. How you escaped, you know would that I knew! He was only a step or two off, and ready to appear, when I stood, before you, and you refused to see me. My arms! the arms of a creature whose heart was already darkened with his wicked breath, degenerate with his familiarity! You know the result, proud man. He was there to see you rejected for him before a crowd; to see you repulsed by a wanton before the eyes of her that you were then hoping to marry. But you behaved as you ought, and you turned away at my approach; and would not hearken to the voice that gave you up forever the voice of your Indian wife, and I was the prouder of you for it, although it destroyed, blighted, crushed forever and ever, the last hope I had on earth even the last the hope of being able to prove that I was worthy of you.

"How little he knew me! I had resolved before we saw you, whatever might happen, however you might look or behave, to repel your tenderness, but while I did so, to acknowledge my love not for another, not for him, but for you, the bridegroom of my youth, to acknowledge it aloud, before his face and before hers, and then, before the multitude that were assembled there to give him up to justice; for the avenger of blood was near, and a signal from me would have been the death of a murderer.

"You defeated my plan; you defeated hers; you defeated his. You set us all at nought and how, dear, how! so that your Indian wife was comforted in her bereavement, so that he fell back abashed before you, and plunged into the darkness and escaped ere I could get my breath.

"Now hear me. Watch me. Look steadily at my plan. See what I have written, day by day since that evening; see what I shall write day by day, till till I am your dead wife, Gerard Middleton. Read it all over, and see if there be any trick in it, or subterfuge, or insincerity. See if I be not very clear and unequivocal, and see if I depart from the path I am now going to mark out, as on a map. Could *you* have done as much? you or any other man? or any other woman that ever breathed? Such things have been thought of, and talked of, heretofore, but who has ever done what, *when you are reading this*, I shall have done? People have destroyed themselves in a fit of sorrow, in a moment of despair, in a frenzy. But whoever died as I shall die *shall die!* as I have died, when you are reading this! Gerard! my earliest, my only love, my husband! my spirit is before you, I am looking into your face, into your eyes, into the very depths of your heart both are full of tears, like star-light and rain. A little more, love a few days more, and both shall be dust and water.

"You are a profligate, You have thrown me off. Wherefore hearken you to the decree. Elizabeth your wife, shall once more lie in your bosom; and you shall never know the truth, till you find yourself embracing a dead body. Such is my plan. See if I do not bring it about. Watch me. But how shall I do this? I have thought much of the

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

mode, more than you would believe, I dare say. Drowning would be very well, and easy enough, and pleasant enough; I should like to die in that way, to leap overboard at sea, and go down to the depths of the sea before your face. But if I were to do so, you would follow me, and bring me back to life, or perish with me; and there would be no time for you to know the truth, or to read what I am now writing for you. We might go to the bottom of the sea, in each other's arms, out of a little ship loaded with green boughs and cheerful flowers, but I am no longer worthy of such a death, and you O, of what death are you and such as you now worthy?

"I might employ a pistol. I do not want courage; I do not care about the mode, now that I have determined upon death but I should not leave any sort of loathing or abhorrence, my beloved in your recollection of me. I would only fill your heart brimful of sweet sorrow and love nothing more. I would encompass you for life with an element of rock, with coldness and with outward desolation forever. And why? only that you may feel the unutterable warmth of my love the more.

"I have thought of poison. But poison would either deprive me of my senses, or throw me into convulsion, or put me to death slowly, or in some other way defeat my purpose, or enable you to foresee it; such a poison as you have here, the poison that puts you to sleep, I mean. But I have prepared for this, and you *shall* be the survivor. I shall take a preparation, the virtue of which I know. It is the blood of a strange herb, that herb from which the copper-snake draws her poison. That shall do. While you are embracing me dear, death shall be at work through all my veins and arteries. You shall yet live, to lavish your endearment, your caresses, your passionate love upon a dead body; you shall yet strain a corpse to your heart in the convulsion of your joy.

"Ho! to the marriage festival. The bride is ready; the groom is ready the grooms-man! Your mortal foe, Death, and the Enemy of man! God will have it so.

"You have laid waste whatever you came near, day after day; revelled in the young hearts of women that worshipped you, overshadowing their purity forever; rifled the innocent year after year; wrought mischief with us 'till we are tired of waiting for your overthrow, offered sacrilege to the angels of the earth, 'till they that know *you* have no faith in the goodness or truth of woman. For all which, it is appointed unto you, sinning as you have sinned, Gerard Middleton, to suffer as no man ever yet suffered.

"Farewell, dear, farewell! If the preacher spoke true, we are never to meet again, dear, *never never never!* throughout all the ages of eternity, *never!* It may be so I neither believe nor disbelieve now; but of this I am sure, that there will be a sweetness and a consolation through all the torment which is prepared for me for Elizabeth, your wife, in the knowledge; for of that our Father, as you call him, if he is our Father, will not deprive me, that your last kisses were upon my mouth, your last endearment lavished upon me, your last embrace of the heart mine. It shall be so.

"You will never dare to repeat your bridal. You will never risk the death of another innocent, by touching the red lips of a live woman with lips that have clung to the white lips of the dead. You will not risk the sight of another corpse at your side, after a night of unspeakable tenderness and joy. No no no! You and I are now remarried forever and ever; and, it may be, separated forever and ever, in the same hour. It is too late now for a third marriage is it not, my husband? How you may bear the blow it is not for me to say; but as for me, much as I love you, I shall endure the separation better than the nuptials.

"The day has arrived the hour I am waiting for you; I hear your voice below I hear every word you say; you have no suspicion of the truth, you mistake me for another. I must leave this where you will be sure to find it. Farewell! farewell forever, my beloved friend my lord, my husband! farewell forever.

ELIZABETH.

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

Upon the outside of this packet was written the following words with a pencil. It is too dark for me to see what the simpleton has added here. Her blood be upon her own head! her death at *his* door! crazy or not, faithful or not, I am weary of this. I know the plan; I have watched her day by day; I have read every line of this, night after night, while she was dreaming that I was afar off, or in another world. I have no patience left. I would strike a light and read what she has just written poor fool! but who cares what she may have written? Her death be at his door! Let him suffer! I wash my hands of it. *Wife for wife* Gerard Middleton such were your bitter words when you lay stretched out on the grass at my feet. *Wife for wife!* I say to you now! and I have nothing more to say, till we meet again hereafter."

JEFFRY SMITH.

And so they buried her. It was in the dead of winter when I recovered so far as to be able to go abroad. All the great earth was covered with snow. I went over to see her grave. The ground was white every where, but in that one spot. I was terrified when I saw this awestruck, and I know not well what my notion was, but I shook and thought of the man-slayer of the self-murderess, and of the unquenchable fire. I was afraid to go near the grave at first. It really did seem to me as if our Father Jehovah would not allow the hiding place of the poor creature to be concealed. Barrenness that I had come prepared to see, that was there; and absolute, everlasting death was enthroned upon it forever; but I was not prepared to see what I did see, the very grass about the grave scorched as with fire and shrivelled to dust, and through the innumerable fissures of the parched earth cold as it was, a vapor continually stealing up and overspreading the spot like a thin, white smoke, and all about the roots of the old apple tree, underneath which they had put her, a perceptible agitation of the loose earth, as if it were all alive. Yes yes thought I, the ban of the Almighty is at work here. You pity me perhaps; you wonder at my folly. But you forget sir, how forgetfully familiar I had grown with incredible things. You forget how near I was to being a man-slayer myself; you forget how near I was to seeing a murder perpetrated before my very face the murder of a woman: for nothing has been heard from that hour to this, concerning the people of the cottage. And before you deal harshly with me, I should pray you to consider how prone we are, when terribly afflicted, to put faith in what we deride when we are happy and cheerful.

I forgot in my surprize, that new fallen snow will not lie upon the loosened earth; and that there is a visible commotion in the soil, as if reptiles were at work in it, or every grain alive, when the frost breaks up. I stood and prayed in my heart, when I perceived the truth; and prayed fervently that our dear father above, the Great Spirit of the sky, would permit the violet and the daisy, and the long bright grass to gush up out of the earth before me, even though they should help to overshadow and make beautiful the refuge of a self-murderess. And I well nigh wept aloud (so weak and so childish had sorrow and sickness made me) when I thought how I should suffer (I pray you to believe what I say) should I ever happen to loiter forth in the sweet summer-time and find her grave wholly bare and bleak, and parched and desolate amid the soft green beauty and rich blossoming and colored herbage of that neighborhood.

But why tell you more? I did not believe when I began, that I could ever tell you half so much; I dare not tell you more. And I have only to say now, that Gerard Middleton is no longer what he was. You have seen him you saw the change in his look; and you will understand the nature of it, when I tell you that, great as it was, it took place in a single night, and that great as the outward change was, it was nothing to the inward change that accompanied it. Farewell.

ATHERTON GAGE.

Such was the story; and I have now given it word for word from the narrative, changing nothing but the form of the dialogue, and leaving a few blanks where he desired me.

A. G.

January 26th, 1827.

CATASTROPHE.

My publishers have just dropped me a line, sealed with black sealing wax, to say that I have left out the *catastrophe*. So much the better I tell them; *that* of itself, would be a first rate catastrophe for a new book or an old author. But they hint moreover *confidentially* that if I do not account for every man, woman and child I have brought upon the stage, so that when the reader is asked what became of Mr. Such–a–one, or of Miss So–and–so, he may be able to answer for himself, nobody on earth will ever give me credit for a *plot*. It is in vain that I ask, what more he cares to know about the personages present at the happening of a remarkable transaction, than that which would be well enough in a *picture* of the scene? or of what use it would be, to give *all* the facts, before and after the transaction; as if rational readers would not enjoy a murder, without knowing who patched the elbow of the murderer's coat, or upon whose grindstone he sharpened the knife? It is in vain for me to tell him, that incidents *of themselves* are interesting in *real* life, unconnected though they are, with a story before and a story after them, that if a fine girl for instance, were to destroy herself, it would be the fault of the narrator, if people were not interested, without knowing *all* the causes, *all* the circumstances, and *all* the consequences. But all in vain: a *plot* there must be with a regular *development*, and right regular catastrophe. Be it so. Let the kind hearted therefore take notice, that every mother's son, herein before mentioned, is alive now, and in good health and spirits, save some three or four, who have either married outright or died a natural death. Middleton is believed to be a Methodist preacher who shall be nameless; and as for Obadiah, from all that I can gather, I am half inclined to think, though I do not know of a certainty, that he is now figuring away at Washington under the name of Major Jack Downing. But this you will please to understand, dear reader, is between ourselves; I shouldn't like to have it go any further.

Another thing. The Publishers tell me there is too much for one volume and not enough for two under such circumstances what is to be done? weave in three or four chapters by way of connection or explanation, accompanying the whole with a detailed, instead of the summary catastrophe, given above, which like the balance–sheet of a long standing account, on a merchant's ledger, tells the whole story at once; or shall I try to distinguish myself by stopping where I have done? Believing the latter to be, if not the best, by far the most original mode of winding up either a speech or a story, I shall send the Printer something else of a different character, to fill up with.

New–York, October 1st, 1833.

BILL FRAZIER THE FUR–TRADER.

Yes you shall have the story you mention, and that within the number of pages prescribed; though it would be a three–volume–affair at least in the mother country, if I had leisure and heart for the undertaking, or a disposition for what is called embellishment. You shall have it too in his own language almost word for word but you must allow me to make it intelligible by what in common cases would be thought a *lengthy* preface. All I hope for is, that you may feel a *portion* of the interest I felt when I was the original auditor the first and the last witness of the transformation I am about to record. If you do not, the fault must be mine; for neither the language nor the countenance though the former was brimful of passionate and exalted poetry, and the latter, that of a youth grown suddenly awfully wise under the heavy dispensation of our Father above; no nor the straight–forward apostolic simplicity, or the thrilling earnestness of the narrator though they wore the simplicity and earnestness of a young man, about to disappear instantly and forever, in the mist and shadow of another world, could ever have been the cause of what I felt when he sat face to face with me full fifteen years ago, in the dead of night, with rigid lips and motionless eyes, discoursing by the hour of Death and Judgement. But to the story for nothing that I could ever say would prepare you for the truth of what I saw; for the unadulterated strength of a nature which within a period of less than five years had undergone a change so complete, so extraordinary and so alarming

indeed, as to resemble a transfiguration of body and soul together a complete and overpowering apotheosis; every peculiar and every distinguishing property of youth having entirely disappeared and given place to others of a grandeur and vastness that appalled me *me!* who had been his familiar friend *me!* who had walked with him so long, as an elder with a younger brother, delighted with his cheerful temper, and sorry only that I wanted the power to lift him up to seriousness and give him a steadfast hold on the higher place that I then occupied and believed I should continue to occupy forever. Would you believe it! Even now, after the lapse of so many years, though seated by my own fire–side with a young wife at my elbow, a generous warmth filling our dear little room, as with the afternoon atmosphere of a summer–day, and a large lamp throwing its pale shadowy moonlight over all the furniture, so that were I ever so much addicted to nervousness or a troubled imagination, there would be no opportunity for either; Even now, in preparing to describe, not so much what I have done, or felt or suffered, as what I have heard another acknowledge for a part and a part only of his own strange life affected by the remembrance of his look, which has haunted me at intervals from that day to this I have only to shut my eyes and I can see him now and by the thrilling solemnity of his voice I have but to stop my ears and I can hear it now I breathe hurriedly, my hand shakes, my heart heaves, my color comes and goes so that my wife observes it and and and to tell the truth I am almost afraid to begin. Every sound disturbs me. But a few minutes ago, I was flurried by the stirring of a poor little pigeon, that I found to day half–buried in the snow, as he lay pecking at the rug in a corner of the fireplace and a moment or two afterwards by the rattling of a stiff glossy cambric on which my wife was employed, unfashionably enough to be sure as it rustled and snapped with every touch sounding at long intervals in the perfect stillness of the room, like a discharge of petty fire–works afar off, or an egg–shell unexpectedly crushed in your ear. Getting nervous decidedly! and therefore the sooner we go to work, the better. Our pleasant fire–sides and our faithful homes! Why should *they* be troubled with apparitions?

Thus far by way of preparation for I wanted courage to face the subject when having copied it off in a fair hand, my autograph in the heat and hurry of composition being none of the best, I flung the original into the fire. O! give me that! cried my dear little wife, dropping her work and speaking with great earnestness. Flattered with the idea that notwithstanding our relationship and our children she was romantic enough to desire even the first rough sketch of a story by her husband, to support her in after life, or to weep over in the sorrow and gloom of survivorship, I looked at the paper as it lay fluttering and changing color on the hot hearth untouched by the blaze and still within my reach line after line wasting away in letters of fire thought after thought vanishing in diamond sparks burning for a moment on the eye then stealing slowly over the page and then disappearing forever in the swift shadow that pursued them the shadow of the Destroyer! and I asked her *why?* Her answer put a stop to my nervousness, apparitions and all, in a jiffy. *One side is clean*, said she *and it will do for lamplighters!* To my work therefore without further delay.

It was in the fall of 1814 that I first encountered the individual whose story I am about to give. I happened to be in New–York with a quantity of smuggled goods, which in the interval of higher occupations, believed by others to be of a dangerous political nature, I found my advantage in disposing of *confidentially* at something more than treble their value just to gratify the love of adventure and mystery which had already begun to characterize the New–Yorkers. It required of course more time and more management to do this, than to get rid of them in the usual way at auction or otherwise; and I had therefore a deal of unappropriated leisure more than I well knew what to do with. All I did for a month might have been done in a day; but then, like the apothecary's boy, not knowing when my customers would show themselves, I was obliged to be a month about it; and having no better amusement within my reach, I betook myself to novel–reading sifting library after library for such books as *Caroline of Litchfield*, the *Mysterious Beauty*, *Corinna* and the *Scottish Chiefs*. One day I remember it as if it were yesterday, and I dwell upon it as the foundation of my story nay of more of much that I have done, felt, suffered and thought since, in the more elevated workings of what others have regarded as no better than a diseased imagination Be it so One day happening to be in the shop of Mr. G who kept a large circulating library at the corner of Broadway and street, I stumbled upon a book which I had never met with before, though I had frequently enquired for it in the largest libraries of our largest towns. It was the memoirs of Marie Antoinette, and purported to be a faithful history of the intrigues of that extraordinary woman, which the author maintained with a very plausible and circumstantial air, to have been the true cause of the French Revolution.

Struck with the idea, which he enforced with singular ability and research, fortifying every step of the narrative with generally credited historical facts, I stole away into a far corner of the shop, seated myself on a box, and staid there I know not how long two or three hours at least however without lifting my eyes from the page, or moving, till I was completely chilled through. At length, on hearing a slight noise near me I looked up and lo! there was another person oppose te me and only a few feet off, a stranger with his back toward me, sitting on another box, and occupied in the same way, as with a duplicate of the very same book! Though I had not seen him enter, nor heard him breathe before, and was not a little startled to find him so near me, and looking so like somebody I had seen before, I could not for the life of me tell where silent as death and moving only *when* I moved, and *as* I moved, and so intently occupied withall, that to this day I should not believe that he saw me, or any thing else indeed but the book before him, had I not been satisfied of the contrary a long time afterwards; and thought I felt a sensation of strangeness and a momentary thrill along my arteries; yet as I knew nothing of German literature then, and should only have laughed at the best of it perhaps, if I had, I soon forgot to observe the stranger, returned to my book, and thought no more of him, 'till I heard a smart rapping on the counter of the front shop, followed after a short pause by an impatient and heavy stamping on the floor. The stranger got up, and as he went by me, I had a full view of his face. Judge of my astonishment! He was the live counterpart of myself so exceedingly, so wonderfully like me, that if I had seen the face in a mirror, I should have taken it for my own. Yet, I remember well I was not satisfied with it nor with the person he was younger and smaller than I, and more impudent looking, and if I may be allowed to speak plainly, not altogether so handsome. I perfectly remember too that I was rather struck with the general expression of the countenance, though for my life I cannot remember why. Perhaps, however, if I should say that he had a youthful, spirited, independant, familiar and somewhat imposing air, with exceedingly pleasant eyes and a generous mouth, it would give the reader some idea of the surprise I felt on finding that he resembled me. No sooner had he passed round the low partition that divided the front from the back shop, than I heard two voices in a brief dialogue which diverted my attention from the book. One was putting questions, and the other answering them. It appeared that Mr. G had gone out, leaving us to take care of the shop; that somebody, a servant, judging by his manner, had returned some books and wanted a parcel he had left, and supposing the stranger to be a shopman, had begun a tedious rigmarole about some paper and things he wanted, and the privilege of a yearly subscriber to take out more volumes whenever they were to go into the country; all which the other cut short, by telling him to go to a slate which lay upon the counter, and write down the names and prices from his dictation. The servant did so, and when he had finished writing, cried out Why Lord bless you! you haint gut morin half on 'em here? jest half, as I'm alive! There's twelve books in the bundle and you have made me write down six; and the paper was four shillins an' you've made me charge two; for my own part I don't exactly understand what you're at, and so

Go then and do likewise! replied the stranger.

The other looked puzzled for a moment, and then burst out a laughing.

There was a bit of paper attached to the bundle, which proved to be a memorandum of the articles it contained, by Mr. G. himself.

What is the amount? continued the stranger.

Six dollars and forty–two *cent*, replied the servant.

Take the pencil and write down three dollars and twenty–one *cents* put an s. to it and tell me where you live.

The other obeyed, and after standing a few minutes, first on one leg and then on the other, looking about him with an air of pitiable irresolution and perplexity, left the shop.

As for myself, I regarded the whole affair as a frolic; and seeing the stranger take up a port–folio and march off with it, I concluded that he was a neighbor, who perhaps thought Mr. G. deserved to be made a little uneasy for

leaving the shop so long to take care of itself. I returned to my reading therefore and continued 'till the sudden flash of a street lamp athwart the page, informed me that I had spent a whole afternoon without leave in a bookseller's shop. I had nearly finished the volume to be sure, and if I had not been disturbed, I should have done so before I stirred from the box; but feeling that I had no business there, and that if I should finish it so, it would be rather shabbily of me, I made a deposit of three dollars with Mr. G. who had returned as secretly as he went, gave my name (as the devil would have it, one of the five-and-forty fictitious names I make use of in travelling or writing) and returned to my lodgings. That very night, before my head touched the pillow I finished the book, and left it on my bureau, where it lay week after week 'till the servant in dusting my room thought proper to slip it into a table-drawer, which I had never opened in my life to my knowledge; and there it might have remained to this day but for the merest accident in the world an accident which enabled me to clear up one of the most painful and perplexing mysteries of a life abounding with adventure and perplexity. Day after day passed over, and I had entirely forgotten the book in the pressure of my habitual occupation, and having deposited more than the volume, I never should have thought of it again I dare say, but for the circumstance above referred to. It so happened that I never went near that library afterwards; having found another kept by a poor widow and her charming daughter and being obliged by the nature of my business to hold myself ready for departure at five minutes notice, night or day. But one afternoon rather late, as I happened to go to the old theatre, I saw a large crowd assembled in the street; and being informed it was the first appearance of a youthful candidate for the stage, I stopped and tried to make my way in with the rest. While so engaged, the multitude swaying this way and that with a continual roar, so as to lift me off my feet and overpower all sense of individuality, a vulgar, savage, looking fellow near me, trod upon my toes. Instead of serving him with notice to quit, in the usual way, I begged him to be more careful. Seeing that my arms were pinioned to my side, he answered by putting forth a huge open hand so slowly that every body could see his intention, and my utter helplessness, and lying it on the top of my hat, with a laugh, he deliberately crowded it down over my whole face eyes nose and mouth even to my shoulders! For a minute or more, while I was gasping for breath and trying to liberate my arms, I could hear nothing but peals of laughter on all sides of me, with cries of bravo! bravo! handsomely done! handsomely bonnetted, by the Lord Harry! accompanied by the trampling of ten thousand feet hurrying to and fro and a terrible ringing in the air. I continued my efforts in silence holding my breath, and caring less for life itself than for an opportunity of punishing the ruffian as publicly as he had affronted me. At last I succeeded. I tore off my hat, and looking about me, sprang up the steps, where pausing for a moment I caught a glimpse of him just as he was entering the pit-door. My first impulse was to spring at his throat, as he stood there helpless and motionless like myself a minute before and if I had, I should have strangled him on the spot I verily believe. My next was to follow him and *bonnet* him before the eyes of the very multitude that were now lifting him along as in triumph. But no no neither of these would be worthy of me, said I to myself, and as I thought of another plan and followed in his wake, never pausing nor flinching nor losing sight of my adversary 'till we were both near the center of the pit, and I within arm's length of him, waiting only for elbow-room, as the crowd gradually settled into their places and left me standing up me alone of all that vast and noisy multitude. I waited and waited for the house to become still still as the grave, husbanding my wrath for what I intended to be a signal retribution. At last, I caught his eye, and I saw that he recollected me, though he betrayed little or no emotion. Hats off! hats off! cried the people about me. Hats off! hats off! sit down sir sit down! I refused to sit down, and every eye was upon me. For a moment, there was a perfect and a most alarming stillness over the whole house. I took advantage of the opportunity, and speaking with a voice that every creature within the four walls could hear, though it was neither loud nor threatening, I told him to stand up, or I would strike him where he sat for his insolence. He sprang to his feet a bustle ensued the women screamed and the constables were shouted for from every part of the house; but before a soul could interfere, the wretch received a blow, and fell backward his whole length as if he had been shot in the head. A brief but tremendous uproar ensued. I attempted to explain; for I was already ashamed of my behavior; but I was prevented and completely overpowered by the cheers of a few that began to recognize me and repeat the story, every man for himself. Two or three constables now tried to make their way up to me; but they were prevented by the people, who began to enjoy the story as it circulated with ten thousand embellishments, from mouth to mouth and from box to box all over the house. But the curtains drew up, and things went on smoothly enough for about half an hour, when somebody at my elbow cried out as if he had been stabbed, that he had just been robbed of his watch. Another outcry followed another general uproar another rush

of constables a scream or two; and all at once I found myself standing up alone `all all alone' with every eye upon me once more, and a stillness like that of the blue sea on a summer afternoon, overspreading the whole house. But ah! how different was the expression how different the meaning of what I now saw! Vexed at the change, yet incapable of out-facing it; ashamed of being for one moment an object of suspicion even to strangers, I gradually sunk down into a vacant place near me, and took the earliest opportunity of escaping though not until I found myself watched by no less than three different persons who appeared to have nothing else to do, and among others by my friend Mr. G. the circulating-library man. I did not immediately recollect him I knew that I had seen the face before; but I could not for some time recollect where and when I did, I rather think I changed color a little. We had come into the house together, I had seen him below me on the steps; and now, on recollecting all the circumstances, I felt certain that he had never lost sight of me after he entered. More than once during the play I had seen him in conversation with people, who kept looking toward me, and talking with great earnestness. I felt vexed and annoyed without knowing why; for it was natural enough that a man who had been publicly *bonnetted* and who had *as* publicly avenged the affront should be stared after; and not very strange that a man who dealt largely and openly in smuggled goods, British-government-bills and specie, at a time when the very banks of the middle and southern cities hadn't a silver shilling to bless themselves with, should make a pretty *con-siderable* stir. All this passed swiftly and repeatedly through my mind; but still I was not satisfied, and so, as I have said before, I took the earliest opportunity of stealing away. On arriving at No. in Wall-street, where I then boarded, I took a lamp and marched off to bed, three hours at least before my usual time with no supper, no book, no newspaper nothing upon the face of the earth to hinder me from going directly to bed. But some how or other I know not how a whole hour went by and I found myself sitting before the fire, with my feet over the mantle-piece my chair tilted back and my fingers playing with a razor think of that! one of the *ne plus ultra* razors! But then that's my way in cold weather, if my chamber is comfortable; And the old fashioned box at my elbow frothing over upon the table would explain the mystery. Wanting a bit of paper, I pulled open the table drawer which happened to be at my elbow, and the first thing I saw was the very book I had borrowed so long before of Mr. G. The truth flashed upon me instantly. I felt vexed and sorry for my negligence, and believing that to be the cause of all the watching I had suffered from, I determined to go immediately to the shop shave or no shave and offer a handsome apology.

No sooner said than done. I started for the shop arrived and in reply to my first question, was informed of what I already knew; namely, that Mr. G. was not there; and in addition, that he wouldn't be there till the morrow. Not knowing what else to say now, I began to talk about the weather, and soon contrived to mention that I had just seen Mr. G. and of course, to show that I knew very well when I enquired after him at the shop, that he was not there. No sooner were the words out of my mouth, than I perceived in the countenance of the tart-looking little old gentleman behind the counter, a stare of innocent surprise, which at any other time would have diverted me exceedingly.

And pray, sir, where did you see him?

At the play, said I.

Where! exclaimed the old gentleman, pulling out a pair of enormous green spectacles, with trembling hands, and fidgetting about them a minute or two, before he had got them fairly wiped and adjusted to his liking *Where!*

At the play, sir stretching myself up to my full stature, and speaking with great deliberation.

Um um ah! said the old gentleman, looking over his spectacles with compressed lips and puckered eyebrows, and stretching out his hand for the book I had under my arm, with the library marks upon the cover, as if he intended to finish the unprofitable conersation at once. But in doing so, a word or two dropped from him, as the lawyers would say, and something in the shape of a query, about whether I was, or was not a subscriber, fell upon my ear.

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

No, sir I answered, and I will thank you for my deposit money.

Certainly, sir, certainly beginning to feel that he had gone too far perhaps What name, sir? And saying this, he opened the book. Zounds! what a change of countenance followed, as he ran his eye over the title page!

Pray, sir, said he a a turning a little sideways and shutting the volume with a clap that made me jump, and eyeing me over his double–barrelled spectacles, and speaking with a wariness that alarmed me, in spite of my preparation Pray sir, how long a a may you have had a a this volume a a in your possession?

About a month, I believe or perhaps it may be two months.

About a month, hey? going to a table and snatching up the slate and scribbling away with great eagerness and trepidation, muttering to himself all the while. About a month, hey, or perhaps *two* can't tell which, I dare say very odd, hey, and what a body might call singular, very singular, very quite providential quite (I thought he was saying over his multiplication table) about a month, hey? and what *name* did you give? turning to me, with his head over one shoulder, and his eye on the door.

Astonished at the *form* of the enquiry, though nothing could be more natural; and brought instantly to my recollection of the fictitious name I had left which, to make matters worse, I had entirely forgotten, I began to feel rather foolish. Instead of replying therefore, I grew very inattentive and passionately fond of execrable prints and wretched binding, a quantity of which lay strewed over an oil cloth counter, pretty much of a piece with it for beauty of workmanship; throwing out incidentally, as it were, that my deposit money was three dollars I believed would thank him to refer to the charge Memoirs of Marie Antoinette, Queen of France about a month ago, or say two months (talking very fast, and with a mighty indifferent air) very cold weather English binding, hey? raised bands altogether more beautiful any thing, and every thing, indeed, but the name he was waiting for. That I kept to myself.

Um um ah! repeated the old gentleman, slyly touching what I took for a bell–rope; and the next moment, somebody appeared, coming head–first through the little dark entry behind him *whist! whist!* cried the old gentleman, with his fore–finger lifted portentously at the intruder; then stepping forward, after whispering in his ear, with his eye upon me all the while, he added as if the other had only slipped in to ask about the weather What *name* did you say sir?

No matter for the name, said I, beginning to feel chafed. There is your book, sir one I shall send for the deposite money to–morrow.

One moment, sir my *good* sir one moment, *if you please* (coaxingly) *if you please!* The old wretch I saw instantly as he hobbled away toward the front of the shop and placed himself between me and the door, that he was trying to wheedle me; and such was my indignation, that but for his age, I do believe I should have knocked him over, slammed the door in his face, and run for my life.

Oh ah um! continued he, planting himself on the very threshold, with a day–book in his hand, under pretence of reading by the window lamp *Oh ah um* here it is! October the you are right sir the fourteenth, one thousand eight hundred listening at intervals, and glancing up and down the street with a look of growing peevishness, which diverted, while it annoyed me one thousand eight hundred and fourteen take a chair, sir please to take a chair Memoirs of Marie Antoinette, one volume du–o–de–ci–mo (reading very slowly) deposite three dollars right sir! right to a hair three dollars, I think you said sir?

I felt angry. Your book will inform you sir.

Mr. Stewart Bray Stewart Bray, it is here is that your *name* sir?

CATASTROPHE.

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

Yes, sir. And you will oblige me by handing over the deposite money without further gossip.

Certainly, sir certainly beg pardon, sir, listening with visible perturbation quite sure about the name sir?

The devil take your impertinence, thought I, but I did'nt *say* so; for I began to feel the awkwardness of my situation. And so I merely added with one of my sweetest smiles I am weary of this delay, old gentleman, please to hand over the money instantly, or I leave your shop.

Indeed! *in-deed!* answered the old man of the mountain I'd swear it was he the very man that so worried poor Sinbad the Sailor *In-deed!* and then he pulled forth a piece of tattered parchment, folded to the shape of his pocket, and proceeded to count over a quantity of shilling and sixpenny bank notes, the common currency of the day, in the middle and southern states at the period of my story; and having finished, he handed me over a fist-full, saying with a bow and smile quite a match for my own I never shall forget either, I hope There sir, there's your money; greatly obliged sir *greatly* still standing in the door-way hope for a continuance of your custom sir hadn't you better run it over, before you go we never allow for mistakes any thing else sir?

Run it over! cried I my very heart running over at the bare suggestion of counting out three dollars worth of ragged York sixpences, and cramming the whole together into my coat-pocket I'd sooner be run over myself by a earriage and six horses; and then turning to go, in some little trepidation I confess, I found the old gentleman had planted himself directly before me, I turned he turned I stepped on one side with a low bow; he stepped before me with another and a lower bow, and coughed! The house door instantly sprung open, and forth issued Mr. G. accompanied by two other persons, one of whom I knew for a city-constable, and the other for a man I had seen watching me at the play and whispering with Mr. G.

Happy to see you *again*, said Mr. G. with that cursed twang o' the nose which everybody that knew him will remember, and which by the way was never half so perceptible to me before I am out of all patience with myself to this day whenever I happen to think of it the canting rascal! Why *didn't* I knock him down!

Aware that something was to pay, and that if we had any altercation out of doors we should soon have a mob about us, I stepped back into the shop, flung to the door, beckoned them to follow and demanded an immediate explanation.

Mr. G. stared, and for a moment seemed a little disconcerted; but the city-constable, a stout resolute fellow, appeared to take all I said as a matter of course a something which I must be allowed to go through with before he could officially interfere; and so after I had finished and got my breath, he made me as pretty a bow as heart could desire, observing in a smooth pleasant voice, that it had become his painful duty, under all the circumstances of the case, to arrest me

Me! arrest me! and for what pray?

That I should know at the proper time said the city-constable.

I drew myself up once more At the proper time hey? Where is your warrant sir?

That I should see at the proper place, continued the city-constable, with another and yet more gracious inclination of the whole body, and a voice yet softer and more deferential, as much as to say It grieves me to the soul, as you see, to interfere with any gentleman's private business *but* and here I interrupted him.

At the proper *place* hey? putting my hands into my trowser's pockets where I had long carried a pair of trusty friends. Now sir I take this to be the proper time and the proper place; and that we may start fair, I beg you to understand, bowing in my turn, that I am not to be taken alive, without a view of your authority. As I said this, I

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

contrived to pull back the guard from the pistol in my right hand, without being observed: but he must have heard the snap, for he started and thrust his arm into his bosom, saying with a steady look as he did so. I hope you are not serious, my good sir?

Serious! try me! Lay but a finger on me, either of you, and see if I do not prove to you that I am serious! Lay but a finger on me if you dare!

Mr. G. you had better stand back said the city constable, my friends, you may withdraw. This job is for *me*, I perceive. A moment more and Mr. G. and the shopman were tumbling over one another to get out of our way, the sheriff's follower had set his back to the door, and the city–constable and myself stood eying one another at the distance of not more than five feet, with our pistols levelled and our feet planted for the issue.

One moment if you please! cried the city–constable, as if suddenly recollecting himself, one moment Mr. G.! And then they held a short consultation together, in a low earnest whisper, which ended in a parley, and a large book was held up to me and I was asked if I had ever seen it before.

I took it and opened it and examined it. Outwardly it had the appearance of a huge port–folio; inwardly it proved to be a collection of beautiful engravings, landscapes and flowers, many of which were proof impressions of rare and valuable works, the masterpieces of agone–by age wafered upon folio–post. I ran it hastily over and flung it down, saying with all the indignation I could express *no, never!*

The little old gentleman looked at Mr. G. and Mr. G. looked at the city–constable and then they all shook their heads, and Mr. G. rolled up the white of his eyes and groaned aloud, just as the little old gentleman peeped round the corner and whispered something in his ear about the *name* the *name*.

And then the day–book was lugged forth, solemnly opened before me and spread out on the counter, and I was pointed to a place where the name of Stewart Bray was underscored five or six times with red and black ink, and asked with a pistol at my head if that was my real name.

That said I is none of your business.

Oh ah um I thought so! cried spindle–shanks, rubbing his hands in a sort of extacy and capering about, like one of the grandfather–long–legs that children are so delighted with. None of our business, hey? well, well, we shall see, we shall see. And then they held another consultation, looking dreadfully grave. Nevertheless, I was not much frightened not much and stood prepared to secure my retreat by the best means in my power.

By this time my patience was exhausted. I have asked for an explanation, said I, moving toward the door. And now *gentlemen*

Better explain, whispered the city constable there'll be warm work if you don't; he's not so easily frightened as most folks, you may depend on't taint the first time, I'll warrant you, that he has had a pistol at his head.

Not exactly relishing the style of these remarks, nor the significant looks they were illustrated with, I had begun to walk toward the door, when Mr. G. thought proper to give me the explanation I had required.

Judge of my amazement! I found myself suspected nay more than suspected almost *proved* I might go further, and say absolutely proved by evidence that would have convicted a stranger in a court of justice of having stolen that very port–folio, from that very shop! But if I was amazed at the charge itself, I was terrified thunderstruck utterly overwhelmed by the array of circumstantial and other proof that accompanied this charge. It appeared that only a few days after I had spent the afternoon in Mr. G's shop, he had been offered a collection of engravings which he instantly recognized. On referring to the drawer where he kept his port–folio,

and there he still supposed it to be, his suspicions became certainty. An examination of the books and slate followed, when it suddenly flashed upon his mind that he had never seen it since the very day when I a perfect stranger had been left in the shop for a considerable time without his knowledge. This went far to clear up another mystery. After I had gone, he had missed a bundle which had been put up for a customer and left for him to call; and on referring to the slate he had found a singular error in the sum total, written by another hand, which had induced him to drop a note to the gentleman, whose servant, tired of waiting perhaps, had made the entry. An explanation had followed, but the story of the servant appeared so strange that Mr. G. paid no attention to it, merely correcting the charge and leaving the man's master to find out his roguery in some other way. But on following up the enquiry about the port-folio, other circumstances came out which tended strongly to corroborate the story of the poor fellow. The book itself had been left in a confectioner's shop on pledge, by a youth, who being ferretted out and questioned, described a person who had given him the book to dispose of, and who agreed so exactly with the individual described by the servant, and so exactly in every thing but the dress with my unfortunate self, that Mr. G. could no longer doubt of my being the thief.

Yet more I had been followed and watched for two or three weeks. The youth had seen me the old gentleman of the shop had seen me, and Mr. G. himself had seen me, but never at the same time. And at last, had I not been personally engaged in a disgraceful affair at the theatre where a man had his pocket picked? And had I not called at the shop this very evening to ask for Mr. G. when by my own confession it appeared that I knew he was not there?

To all this, what could I say? Nothing. But when they added, as they soon did each helping the other till they had the whole story before me, that I was in the habit of changing my name and my dress, two or three times a day, from head to foot; that I had no less than three lodging-houses, and so many names that no body pretended to know which was the right one that I frequented at the same time, and frequently in the course of the same evening the highest and the lowest, the best and the worst company to be found, that the Mayor had given orders to every leading constable of the city to have his eyes upon such and such person describing me the very day before I dined with the Mayor himself, in another dress, and that, to say all in a word, the very ministers of justice were all at fault, believing me now to be a personage of considerable importance, and now a pick-pocket or a gambler; one day the largest dealer of the time in British-gold, and government-securities, and another, before they had time to report progress to the Mayor, a smuggler and a spy. When they added all these particulars, which they set forth yet more circumstantially than I do, I burst out a-laughing in their faces I could *not* help it nor did I, though they assured me with an oath that they were *up* to all my tricks, and that, contrive as I would, it was no such easy matter to prove an *alibi* when a fellow came to the pinch, though to confess the truth I had been seen at different places at *pretty nearly* the same time

What could I say more? Nothing. And therefore, though never less in the humor of laughing, on some account, I laughed heartily. It was in vain that I protested my innocence they were up to all my tricks. It was in vain that I told the truth about having mislaid the book I borrowed why had I given a fictitious name? Why had I not called for the surplus of the deposit-money? Oh ah um?

Weary of their impertinence, indignant at their want of faith in whatever I choose to say, and if I must own it, a *leetle* frightened withal, I determined immediately to subject myself to no further suspicion for who would believe my story? the simple truth was incredible but to bring about a compromise for the present on the best terms I could, and leave the final question to be provided for at a future day.

I drew out my watch. There! said I I saw the principals interchange a glance of triumph, and as for me, if I looked as I felt, I don't wonder they believed me guilty There! And then I hesitated and my hand was already upon my pocket-book, for the purpose of betraying my credentials my true name and the real object of my negotiations between the British Provinces and the discontented part of the Confederacy. Already were my lips parted, and in the name of the President of the United States, James Madison, I was about to bid them do their worst to stop me if they had the courage or to breathe a syllable to another of what they had ventured to say to

me, if they durst. But, thank God! my hesitation was soon over, and the course I took worthy of the great business intrusted to me, and I may as well say it as think it and altogether worthy of myself. The tendency of their behavior was to exasperate instead of soothing me; and therefore holding out my watch, I said to them

There's my security! I shall give no other, and as I have told you before, I will not be taken alive. That watch was made for me by the first manufacturer of London she cost me forty-five guineas; and for reasons I do not choose to communicate, money would not purchase her of me. Take it and give me a receipt for it, as a pledge for my appearance to abide a trial on the charge you have preferred, within the next twelve month. I have no money to spare just now, or I should prefer leaving five hundred dollars with you Mr. G. looked at the city-constable and the city-constable bit his lip Take it if I fail to appear, the watch is forfeited. I saw by the looks of both that while one was ready to jump at the proposal, the other had no idea of letting me off so easily. He began to whisper with Mr. G shaking his head, with unspeakable solemnity and using abundance of persuasive gesticulation, while the words *danger*, *liar*, *theft-bote*, and *composition of a felony*, dropped one after another from his placid mouth. I began to lose all patience. What say you, I demanded yes or no?

Why, on the whole, said Mr. G. as our object is only to secure ourselves and then he winked at the city-constable we should be very sorry to injure a backsliding brother thus and then the city-constable winked at him and therefore, to oblige you sir, as you appear to have been led astray by by temptation and for no other purpose I assure you reaching forth his hand as he spoke, while the cityconstable and his follower suddenly turned their faces another way and were very busy all at once. Come, come, said I, none of your blarney yes or no.

Well then yes.

The affair completed, I took a receipt signed by Mr. G. and witnessed by the city-constable and the shopman all three having the greatest difficulty in the world, I saw, to keep their countenances and the shopman squeaking after me as I left the door Good evening to you Mr. Stewart Bray! and then their long suppressed merriment broke forth in a roar of ungovernable laughter, which made me stop and look in at the window, where I could see the proprietor overhauling and examining the watch inside and out; and I asked myself whether in point of fact I had not been most gloriously humbugged as well as most gloriously frightened. The last words that reached me were *Oh ah um* don't forget the shop! The blood flashed through my arteries like a train of powder, and at any other time, or under any other circumstances, I should have gone back merely for the pleasure of taunting them as they deserved; for they were in my power and I knew it, and I was determined to bring them before a court of justice, whatever was the consequence to myself and though it cost me every farthing I was worth. One of two things must be true I was either innocent or guilty. If innocent, I could punish them for a conspiracy. If guilty, for compounding a felony.

But I had no time now not a day, nor an hour that I could call my own. I was too much in a hurry even for threats. All my faculties were on the stretch to discover the individual who had been first and foremost, *employed* I began to believe now by Mr. G., in the scheme of depredation. I went straightway home to my lodgings, and up to my chamber; and when I saw the razor lying on the table where I had left it, I felt as if the question about to be decided before I slept, was a matter of life and death to me. I felt the edge and went to bed but not to sleep. And it was not until I had arrayed another plan, founded upon the hypothesis that the stranger who took away the port-folio from the shop was *not* an accomplice, and that therefore I might perhaps prevail on him to appear and help me punish the conspirators, that I was able even to close my eyes. And then! was there ever such unpardonable stupidity! I happened to recollect that I had never obtained the address of the boy, the servant or the confectioner. Out of bed I bounced again immediately and scribbled a note to Mr. G. requesting their names and places of residence, and giving my own at full length, in the plainest hand I ever wrote in my life, and dating it No. Wall street; after this I prepared an advertisement, offering a handsome reward for the information I needed, but in such a way that none but those who were interested and familiar with the circumstances could understand me, and signed it with my true initials. It appeared first in Mr. Coleman's paper but was copied into

several others I have the advertisement now before me. Having done this, I returned to bed I hardly knew why for I knew that sleep was entirely out of the question. And I found it so. Never before had I passed such a night never so longed for day. If I shut my eyes for a single moment, hoping to forget myself, it was only to see conjured up on every side of me, the embodied representations of every frightful story I had ever heard or read of, where the innocent had been sacrificed to the law by villany, prejudice or mistake property swept away life and reputation destroyed forever, by the accidental combination of circumstances: Must I own it? my heart died within me. I thought in the fever that followed, and I almost hoped to find it so that the night had been of extraordinary length, and that peradventure some irregularity had occurred in the heavenly bodies and I lay hour after hour in a whirl of contending hopes and fears, now with my face buried in the bed-clothes, and almost weeping with terror and vexation, and now half naked, my pulse throbbing violently, my mouth parched, and the wintry night-air blowing through and through me with the force and sharpness of drift-snow and all the time without cooling me or soothing my fever. But oh! how shall I describe the "rapture of repose" that followed when daylight broke over me like a returning tide to a half stranded ship lifting me at once from earth to heaven. I started broad awake as it were with a spring from the grave. I felt as if I had escaped I knew not how from some hidden calamity I knew not what. My pulses rang cheerfully again my heart heaved as of yore and I was brimful of hope and courage, and holy confidence in the Maker of men.

That very day as I was making a large deposit in the Union Bank, the teller called my attention to a person who stood by the door, apparently waiting for me. I turned gracious heaven! If I should live a thousand years, I do not believe the recollection of that moment, and of the joy, the unspeakable joy I felt, would ever be effaced from my memory. It was the stranger himself! the very stranger, who had carried off the port-folio, when I was reading in Mr. G's back shop. Yes it was himself! and I was at his side in a moment; leaving the money in piles upon the counter, gasping for breath, and trembling so I couldn't speak for my life.

I was looking for you, said the stranger, with a pleasant voice and without any visible emotion. When shall you be at leisure?

At leisure, cried I catching him by the arm now, Sir, now! never more in my life. On saying this, he moved away, and I moved after him he began to walk faster and faster and I holding on by his arm, forgetful of the money I had left behind me, and of the surprise my behavior appeared to excite in the teller, who ran to the door and bawled after me but all to no purpose continued to keep step with him, 'till we both had to stop and take breath. In five minutes more we understood each other perfectly he had laughed in my face, and I had threatened to shoot him. We were seated together at a table, with glasses and a decanter before us, the door locked and my gentleman as perfectly at his ease with one leg over the back of a tall mahogany chair, as if we had been acquainted from our childhood, though a pair of loaded pistols lay on my bed in the little room adjoining, and he had seen me take them up as I tried the door, preparatory to my solemn assurance, that he never should leave me 'till the mystery was explained.

In five minutes more, I had told my story, and he had laughed at my tragedy airs 'till he made me heartily ashamed of them, and at the account I gave him of my suffering, embarrassment and humiliation, 'till the tears ran out of his eyes. And yet, I couldn't be angry with him for my life: and I never tried harder, or to so little purpose.

When I had got through, he pulled out a cigar lighted it took down his leg threw off a glass of old madeira and then giving the cigar a puff or two and rapping it over the edge of the glass, like one who meant to make an afternoon of it, he vouchsafed to reply.

My dear Sir, said he, make yourself easy. You've got an excellent case, an excellent case.

I stared, and he continued, I am a bit of lawyer myself don't be alarmed and we must contrive to make these fellows charge you with the felony before witnesses mark me *before witnesses*. But look ye *we* must'nt be seen together.

Why not?

Simply my dear Sir, fetching a puff like a minute gun, with his clear eye fixed upon the ceiling, because I am a sad fellow, and my acquaintance would be no credit to you a man of your grave looks and sober habits down went another glass of madeira. To tell you the truth, we are already confounded together in judgment of law, and I have been mistaken for you more than once and now don't be offended my dear sir and *treated* accordingly. And here he laughed again and so long and so heartily that I began to feel angry; and I know not what might have been the consequences, had he not satisfied me within the next-half-minute, that he was one of the best fellows on earth, and one of the greatest rogues; after which he proposed to bring the witnesses together and then have a formal interview with Mr. G. and the other *conspirators*, for so he persisted in calling them.

I was obliged to let him have his own way at last, though he would'nt even condescend to explain himself being rather diffident he assured me at a first interview; suffering him to arrange the whole procedure, so delighted was I with his cheerfulness and cleverness, and so astonished at his magnanimity for nothing appeared to disturb him, not even the sight of a loaded pistol. But he was no sooner gone, and I at leisure to reflect on the opportunity I had lost perhaps forever then I had my misgivings I cannot deny it. And the more I considered the matter, the more I was troubled How could I know but that in appearing to put himself so completely in my power, he had only been preparing a way for escape? With *his* character his acknowledged character was it to be expected that he would step forward to shield me, a stranger, when he could only do so by committing himself, and acknowledging that he took the port-folio?

But he was faithful. And the witnesses were got together and every thing arranged for the interview with Mr. G. before the next day was over. The first I saw, was the man who had fastened the charge upon me by description. When he saw us both together he cried out with astonishment for the stranger, whose name by the way was William Pope Frazier, and who went sometimes by one name and sometimes by the other sometimes calling himself Pope Frazier and sometimes William Pope sometimes Bill Frazier and sometimes Bill Pope according to circumstances had taken care to dress and look as much like me as possible. At first, the poor man was puzzled, but the instant he heard Frazier speak, he cried out that's the man! Are you perfectly certain? said his master.

Perfectly sir take my oath of it anywhere.

Very well so far so good, thought I to myself; but how is my gentleman to get himself out of the scrape into which he has been led by this very witness? Glad as I was for my own escape, I could not help feeling rather anxious about him, though I saw thas he didn't care a fig for himself.

After him we had the confectioner; and the boy who had left the port-folio in pledge was confronted with him and encouraged to tell the story at length, which he did clearly and circumstantially and without flinching or wavering. But no sooner did Frazier appear stepping forth unexpectedly before him than he changed color, dropped his eyes and faltered out a few unintelligible words, which resulted, after a little further examination, also before witnesses, in a straight-forward acknowledgement that he had received the book not from me, but from Frazier, and from Frazier, not to be sold nor pledged but to return to Mr. G., whose name he now declared, with evident sincerity, he had forgotten by the way; that passing the confectioner, he bought some of the tarts and other delicacies and eat them before it occurred to him to ask if they *trusted* there; that the confectioner refused, and grew angry charging him with a design to bilk the shop; that having no money with him; he offered to leave the port-folio in pledge 'till he could go back to his mother and obtain it; that he went to his mother, who refused him and that being unable to redeem it and ashamed to go near the shop without the money, day after day passed over, 'till at length in a fit of desperation, he concluded to convert the pledge into a downright sale, and assure the confectioner that the port-folio belonged to himself. And to whom else did it belong? He had forgotten the name of the owner, and knew not where to look for the person who had entrusted him with it.

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

This uncomfortable part of the mystery explained, the next thing was to notify Mr. G. the city-constable and their accomplice, employ a good lawyer, and *let them have it*. A legal interview was obtained, the port-folio itself produced; but the other parties having a lawyer a piece, betrayed no sort of anxiety 'till they found we were in earnest, and then, seeing at my elbow the first legal character of the day, with his hand upon the receipt which they had the impudence to call upon me to prove, they begun to fight shy. But Mr. G. happened to have the watch in his pocket the very watch! and when I offered to find my name at length in a hidden part of the works, he refused to let me do so. I saw the storm gathering and prepared for it.

Mr. G said my lawyer allow me to see that port-folio.

Certainly sir, cried Mr. G. and the others cried certainly! certainly! all speaking together and all rushing forward to prove their willingness.

My lawyer took it, and we sat still, waiting in breathless suspense for the issue. At length, just as he had finished running it over, and hefted it for the purpose of laying it on the further side of the table, a sudden current of air took the leaves the cover got deranged the pictures rattled and out flew a small piece of paper which fluttered away toward the open door.

Holloo! what's that! cried Frazier, springing for the paper. By the Lord Harry! he added, cutting a caper in the air three feet high, when he had picked it up that's what I call an incident worthy of the stage! I have heard of such things before hurra hurra! but I never thought I would be a witness to one off the stage hurra! That paper sir, handing it to my lawyer, while the others jumped up; and running to the table stood staring at each other in the most pitiable perplexity that little bit of paper, sir will clear it all up! Read it sir read it aloud, sir, for the benefit of the company! and off he went again with another flourish in the air, two or three prodigious leaps, and a something not to be described, which ended with a position like that of a flying mercury, "new lighted on a heaven-kissing hill," his right arm extended, and his finger pointing at the slip of paper, which proved to be a note signed *William Frazier*, and directed to Mr. G. himself. It was dated the very day after he had carried off the port-folio respectfully assuring Mr. G. that he was an old hypocrite and richly deserved to see every parable of Scripture turned against him, like that of the unjust Steward, which he had turned against the writer's younger brother, and which he would find beautifully illustrated in a certain charge of the day before, and enclosing a paper sixpence for the use of the port-folio one day, and finishing with a warm injunction to *mind the shop*.

On hearing this note read, my lawyer and myself were all at sea, and the others *ditto*. We sat staring at one another in the oddest perplexity you ever heard of They saw to be sure that Mr. G. and his worthy associates, the city-constable and his follower were in for it, with little or no chance for escape, yet some how or other they could not understand the drift of the note, and they said so, begging the writer to clear up that business.

Oh ho! said he, you'd better apply to that man there; the man that never goes to the theatre Mr. G. began to change color never gambles Mr. G. grew deadly pale, and his head sunk upon his palms never drinks never lies never cheats

Have a care sir! slander by insinuation! slander by inuendo! cried the two lawyers, both speaking together.

Slander! returned Frazier. Will you explain Mr. G. or shall I?

But Mr. G. was in no humor for explanation. There he sat with his face buried in his hands afraid to look up afraid even to meet the eyes of his own shopman, who fell back three long paces, breathed out *oh-ah-um!* and grew paler if possible than Mr. G. when he heard these charges against that immaculate man.

Well sir, continued Frazier taking a chair opposite Mr. G. and seating himself with all the gravity of a judge, leave hiding your face man if you dare and let us hear what you have to say for yourself. And then

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

lowering his voice to a whisper, and leaning forward and touching the elbow of the unhappy man, who started as if stung to the heart, he added *I know you and you know that I know you. Don't provoke me.*

The changes that followed flash after flash, over the countenance of poor G. who 'till that interview had always born a high character, and who before a twelvemonth was over, died in the streets a common drunkard universally known and universally detested for a hypocrite and a knave, the quivering lip, the agitated look the unearthly paleness and the dry hard breathing of the man were enough to render credible the worst that could be said, or insinuated of him.

Frazier continued:

Do you remember the reasons you gave sir, years ago for turning a youth adrift, parentless, who had served you year after year, diligently and faithfully almost at his own expense, believing that when the day of separation arrived, you would deal righteously with him? God be praised that you have some feeling left. Is it not lawful said you, for me to do what I will with mine own? As if property so acquired, and acquired too under the appearance of great sanctity, belonged only to yourself! And when you was told, that trusting altogether to you and your high character in the church, the young man had accepted an offer from you which you knew, and he might have known also if he had not put his trust altogether in your representations, to be hardly a fourth of what he was entitled to and might have obtained elsewhere nay, not one fourth of what you allowed another at the same time, and would have allowed him if he had insisted on it. When you were told this, by the poor boy on the day of his departure, what was your reply? *Friend, I do thee no wrong; did'st thou not agree with me for so much?* And again, when this boy, who trembled but to hear the scriptures mentioned, and was willing to receive the parable just as you, an elder of the church, might think proper to expound it to a youthful brother, when he reminded you that you had paid others for a single year more than you had allowed him for five years, what was your answer? *Is thine eye evil because I am good?*

Nay more, when another boy stepped forward I am that boy! look at me! examine me well no wonder you do not remember me; I have almost forgotten myself! I am no longer what I was then your hypocrisy made a villain of me, and if I should come to the gallows yet, my death will lie at your door!

We listened with amazement as he proceeded. What fire in his dark hazle eye! What eloquent fierceness in the language!

And when I remonstrated with you, saying, if these parables are to be so construed, if it should be the practice to pay men who have borne the heat and burthen of the day, no more than those who have dropped in at the eleventh hour *who would ever be found at work before the eleventh hour?* you turned away as from a sayer of blasphemies. And when, provoked at this, I went further, declaring that expounded as the parable was by you, and others like you, it encouraged apathy and sluggishness, and discouraged activity and enterprise, and taught as plainly as doctrine could teach, that he who began early was no *better* nor *wiser* than he who began late but the contrary; and this even in the Lord's vineyard nay, that he who put it off longest made the best bargain and was best rewarded when I urged these things, how did you receive them? Why as if you expected the earth to open and swallow me up alive!

More and more astonished at every word, we sat and listened to him, as to a magistrate clothed with power, wholly forgetful of his true character and of the occasion that brought us together, until on looking up, as he concluded with a voice that went through and through me, we found every eye in the room glittering with unfelt moisture, and each half smiling at the others.

But for YOU sir, continued Frazier, I had lived and died in the religion of my fathers! But for *your* insincerity you, a professor of religion, I might have been a good man a good citizen a blessing to my poor mother in her old age; instead of seeing her His voice faltered and his hands fell upon the table as if all strength

had departed from him God forgive you! a broken–hearted woman dying with a prayer upon her lips that I, her first born, might be gathered to my fathers before I had forfeited all hope of mercy. And yet, miserable man! I was but a youth, a mere boy, at the time of her death. But I was a gambler, a thief, and a robber nevertheless, and might have been a murderer, but for the fear that, after all perhaps, and notwithstanding *your* behaviour, there might be something in religion, and peradventure a something hereafter. I have done sir. For a whole year I have been with you as your shadow *never losing sight of you a day together* hardly for an hour! Accident has now led me to do what I should not have done perhaps 'till another year had passed over. My plan is now consummated I have completely avenged my poor brother and before I have done look me in the face if you dare! I shall avenge the false judgment of the world with regard to you. Be patient sir I have but little more to say; and if I am not allowed to say it here, I will say it elsewhere. And now for the explanation I am asked for. I went to your shop *as usual* you start sir *as usual* I say again, for I have been a daily visitor there in one disguise or another for the last year. An opportunity occurred for illustrating a parable in your own way. I took it into my head to imitate the *wisdom* as it is called of the unjust Steward; little thinking that another might be held to answer before a grand jury for what I had done in a frolic pray sir (turning abruptly towards me, with the water yet standing in his eyes) astonishing resemblance to be sure perfectly sincere believe me would'nt be suspected of flattery for my right hand where were you born? down East I hope?

Very said I in the lower part of the district of Maine.

And I in old Massachusetts has your mother ever been there?

No, said I, recollecting the anecdote to which he undoubtedly referred no, but my *father* has.

Hum you've an excellent memory. And away he went! rattling up hill and down as before, and as unmindful of the pathetic as anybody I ever saw in my life.

But enough. This part of my story ends here. My watch was given up a handsome apology made in writing by Mr. G. and the city constable and witnessed by all three of the lawyers, who received, some ten, some twenty dollars a piece, at the charge of the conspirators. And there the matter was dropped, greatly to the dissatisfaction of two, out of the three, each of whom had assured his client that he had a *capital* case, and nothing to fear. But a capital case for whom? that would be determined perhaps by the issue. Nothing to fear from whom? The *opposite* party perhaps or the *opposite* lawyer.

Well notwithstanding the character of this youth, we grew intimate *youth* I say; for though he was nearly of my own age, he appeared at times like the merest boy, having all the skittishness and hilarity of a boy, with more than the wisdom of a man. Yet we durst not see one another openly; and as he found me grateful, he grew more and more circumspect; so that, although I frequently heard of *myself* as being seen here and there and every where at the same time, it was no longer in such low company, nor under such circumstances of suspicion as the city constable had so delicately hinted. Occasionally to be sure, I heard of a younger brother he must be my brother, so every body said who would be none the worse for a little of my sobriety; and more than once I have been accosted by strange looking people of both sexes, who would steal up behind me and fetch me a slap on the back, and ask me with an oath where the *devil* I kept myself? and what the h ll I was doing now? But in other respects I got along pleasantly enough with my new companion and had no reason to be sorry for our intimacy. It did not hurt me; and I do in my very heart believe it was a help to him for I was no scoffer, though I dealt freely with the Priesthood; no enemy of the laws, though I denounced the great body of the lawyers with unsparing severity; no disturber of the public peace, though I laughed at newspaper politics and hated newspaper politicians.

At first, he would speak with strange levity exceedingly strange in a youth of the scriptures, of our duties here and of our existence hereafter. And then he could forget himself, and burst forth into fierce denunciations of all who had led him astray, and talk about *HEREAFTER* as if the everlasting curtains thereof had been lifted before him. As *I* reasoned about smuggling for I had a touch of the *last* infirmity of noble minds he would reason about

every other transgression of the law, 'till he fairly frightened me into a review of my longest-loved and most heartilycherished opinions. If men smuggle, said I, it is simply because they find it profitable. But if they find it profitable, the fault is in the *law*. The penalty should be encreased, or the duties lowered, and the temptation thereby diminished.

If men steal, he would argue in reply, it is because they find it profitable. The fault then is with the *law*. The penalty should be encreased or the inducements lowered, and the temptation thereby diminished. If I am forbidden to a certain act under a certain penalty; and if I choose to do the act and pay the penalty, whose business is it? I have bought the privilege and paid for it. What more would they have? Just as he who can afford to pay two dollars *fine*, as it is called, in some parts of New-England, may ride on the Sabbath-day (meaning a day which is *not* the Sabbath,) where it is forbidden by law For my own part I should be glad to understand the difference between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee; between saying you shall not do so and so, under a *penalty* of two dollars; and saying you may do so and so, if you are willing to pay two dollars for the privilege.

But you do not always *pay* the penalty, said I. Till you do that, you have no right to perform the proscribed act, even by your own showing.

Haven't I though! I pay the penalty in the risk; for if the lawgiver has not made the penalty large enough to include the chances of escape, and thereby to indemnify the law, he is a blockhead.

Thus much for a sample of the strange young man I had to deal with. It would require a volume to give the reader a just idea of his ingenuity and abundant, inexhaustable resources. Enough to say therefore, that we continued intimate very intimate so much so that he laid open his whole history before me and saw me turn pale and shudder as I listened very intimate, until I removed to the south, and he disappeared all of a sudden, nobody knew how nor where, leaving no trace behind him, though a vague report reached me about a year afterwards, that he had come to a violent and miserable death.

Five years passed away five whole years! and I had so far forgotten poor Frazier, that save when some accidental reference to a portion of my past life brought him before me, like a shadow drifting over the sea, I never thought of him. But one evening it was in the dead of winter as I sat by a solitary fire in Baltimore, wondering as the white ashes fell away by handfulls from the solid burning masses below, that such destroying brightness and life should be so effectually hidden by ashes mere dust and ashes and thinking, I remember, of those lines of Byron, where he says

The deepest ice that ever froze
Can only o'er the *surface* close;

The living stream runs quick below,

And flows and *ne'er can cease to flow*. and tracing out a similitude between the living stream buried in ice, and the burning effulgence before me buried in white ashes my rooms were on the ground floor and consisted of an interior where I sat and of the outer which opened on the street, with a door between the two, which, owing to a very unpleasant intrusion a little time before, I had always kept locked after night fall it was in the depth of winter, as I have said before, and I had been sitting I know not how long, with my whole attention fixed upon the fire, when something, I know not what caused me to look up, and lo! somebody was sitting in the opposite corner, nearly facing me, with his hat off, his hair falling loosely over his shoulders, his hands resting on his knees, and his eyes fixed on the fire with a steadiness like that of my own shadow. I started and was about to speak, when something in the attitude something, I know not what reminded me so forcibly and so convincingly of poor Frazier of death and the grave, that I lost all courage and power and sat for a considerable time as silent and as motionless as the apparition before me. I looked at the door hoping to find it ajar. It was shut and so far as I could see by the reflection of a wavering fire light upon the bolt, locked. My hands grew damp my breath came at long intervals and the substances before me, trembled like shadows. At this moment the clock sounded and while I was counting it with a secret awe which I would not feel again for the wealth of worlds, a watchman afar off called out *Past twelve o'clock and all's well!*

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

Now, others may talk as they please about the hour of midnight, and laugh when they hear of a man with about as much courage as most folks for every day purposes, being frightened by the noise of a clock sounding the hour of twelve at night, in the solitude of a large city; but I solemnly declare that I was more disturbed more appalled more completely overmastered by the sound of that clock and the watchman's hoarse heavy cry afar off, than by all the other circumstances I have mentioned, put together strange as they were. Such is the simple truth. And yet I was chilled to the heart before and though I tried to account for what I saw after the manner of Nicolai, by referring it to poor health, dyspepsia, and the over-excitement of my occupation; for I was engaged night and day on a work which so completely exhausted me that when I was ready to go to bed, I wanted the strength of mind, the resolution to go, and would sit hour after hour trying to warm up my blood to the proper temperature for such an enterprize, and get rid of the death like chill that encompassed me round about and filled me to the throat as with an atmosphere of invisible snow I wish I could describe it better, but I cannot my feelings were so strange that the fairest illustration I could give, would appear wild and extravagant.

At last the figure turned slowly toward me so slowly that I could not see it move and I saw the face. You may judge of the condition of my pulses, when I add, that instantly! and before I knew where I was, I found myself standing up in the middle of the floor with my arms lifted and my eyes fixed as if fascinated upon what for the moment I believed in my soul to be the countenance of a dead man, of poor Frazier himself he setting as before I gasping for breath scream after scream issuing from the chambers above and people at the door crying out in accents of horror open the door! open the door. For God's sake what's the matter! while other voices were demanding from the street *who lives there?* and advising one another to burst into the house.

I did not speak, and to tell the truth I could not; for, although with the sound of human voices and the approach of human footsteps my courage had revived, I was afraid absolutely afraid to tell the truth, and not more than half satisfied with the strang lifelessness of my companion. But others did speak, and I felt not a little relieved, when I heard the steps of the people going away one after another from the door, saying it was very strange *very*; that some of the lodgers had probably cried out in their sleep in a word, that nobody knew whence the preternatural scream had proceeded, which had brought a whole neighborhood to the windows.

At this moment, while my eyes were fixed upon the figure before me, I saw the chest heave; and you may judge how strangely I was possessed with the notion of its immateriality, when I assure you that this comforted me *this* even more than the presence and voices of living men, and that this alone gave me courage to speak to it. I spoke. A writhing of the lip followed a flashing of eyes that I felt acquainted with, and the shifting of feet that I wondered to see wrapped in richly embroidered moccasins.

Pope Frazier! cried I William Pope Frazier, and alive! God of heaven and earth!

Young man, said Frazier It was he, and I knew it, the instant he opened his mouth young man!

Young man to be sure, thought I older than yourself by three years though. But he continued in the same voice.

You are unaltered, I see. So much the more imperious the duty I have to discharge toward you. We were intimate a long while ago ages and ages ago, if we had a right notion of time. We have been like brothers, loving with a love that passed the love of woman.

His large luminous eyes were now fixed upon mine, and he went on and on and on talking to me precisely as I would talk to a younger brother, hour after hour, in the same rich dreamy far-off breathing voice like a statue communing with itself. A part only of the much that he said, have I room for now. I shall give it as I have said before, in his own language, generally in the very words he employed. They were written down at the time.

Hear me. For five years I have put in practice deliberately and steadfastly and without flinching all the maxims you have heard me preach. I have tried them faithfully *faithfully!* weighed them against the worth of my

immortal soul; and lo! when they were most wanted, most needed, they failed me! Ashes ashes ashes and death! Paul nothing more. I am dying, Paul dying by inches dying of a broken heart and crushed hopes. And I could not die in peace, I *would* not, until I had obtained leave, got by much prayer and long wrestling, from the Great God of heaven and earth, whose name we have trifled with so fearfully, to pass backward through the great wilderness, the valley of the shadow of death and *appear* to you; you the earliest and truest friend I ever had, except my poor mother, who changing his voice instantly to a calm steady whisper who hath commanded me to declare to you that your days are numbered.

I shuddered through all my limbs, and my heart died away within me; for at this moment I recollected that once, when we were sitting together face to face in the dead of winter, we had pledged ourselves, each to the other, that he who died first should appear to the survivor, if permitted, and lay before him so much as he might of the awful experience he had obtained by familiarity with the secrets of another world. His mother too! I had never seen her to my knowledge, nor she me. She was dead long before I knew her boy; and yet I was to believe that my days were numbered? *And they were numbered!*

Length of days! continued he in that low dull whisper which went through and through me. There is no length of days for such as thou!

I felt the hair of my flesh rise, and yet I had a hope, almost a belief, that instead of a prophet or a dead man, I had a live lunatic before me.

At this moment, the large heavy clock sounded again, more dismally than before it was like the tolling of a bell heard through a snow-storm or over a wide sea quaking with tempestuous brightness. It sounded *one*, just like the passing bell of a country village; and in the death like stillness that followed the sullen, long protracted vibration, my superstitious terror was renewed with a tenfold determination of blood to the brain. All my senses were preternaturally excited my temples throbbed the solemn reverberation roaring in my ear a whole minute after the sound itself had passed away and returned two or three times.

Hour after hour we sat together. The night wore away, and the blue haze of a winter morning began to steal athwart the floor, when we parted and parted forever; he telling me what he had gone through, and cautioning and beseeching me to be wiser than he had been, less prodigal of health and power, humbler and more patient, if I hoped to be *continued* here as he chose to express himself, or happy hereafter; and I listening to him as if I had known that he was able to look into the future and read the stars of my destiny, until he came to that portion of his life which I had in view, when I thought first of preparing this narrative for the public eye. Ah! if I had foreseen the trouble I have had the suffering that has followed a review of my past life, I never should have undertaken the story never! But now! having undertaken it and for a good purpose, I will neither be diverted nor driven from my past purpose. I would have abridged it; for I did not intend to make it of more than half this length I would even abridge it now if I had the time; or the heart. But I have neither. And so well do I know myself that I am sure it would grow into a book were I even to copy it off, nor upon further consideration do I see much that could be left out with advantage to the story hardly anything indeed; for what would be the value of the catastrophe without a knowledge of the man himself the sufferer and the martyr?

And now for his very words the very words that fell from his mouth. I may venture to say all this, for in ordinary cases I have a remarkable memory, and in this I cannot be mistaken for never words made such a distinct and lasting impression upon me never.

Long before I left New-York, said he, I had grown tired and sick of life, and of all society of yours more than that of any body else I knew. We had been deceiving ourselves and others: and I only had found it out. We were both worse than we appeared even to ourselves, for while we knew our own vices we overrated our own virtues; and I altogether worse than you, for I deceived you continually, without excuse or provocation. I panted for a new field of enterprise it mattered little what good or bad at sea or ashore so that I found exhilaration; so that I

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

could trample more conspicuously and more fiercely upon the reptiles that covered the whole face of this fair earth. You have not forgotten my notions of women You have heard me 'till you had lost all patience with me, time and again. O, Paul! Paul! that we should ever be so blind to the divinity, the only visible divinity that now walks the earth! dishonoring our mothers and our sisters, by the ribald companionship of our thoughts and literally stifling the first–born of our purest and loveliest hopes

Never shall I forget his look, when he uttered this apostrophe! It would have broken the heart of a loving and faithful woman.

And so, continued he, being weary of the world, I betook myself to the wilderness; journeying away to the north, and never turning to the right hand nor to the left 'till I had crossed the track of the fur–traders. I had resolved in my own heart to see woman as she is by nature, the Woman of the Woods, the exalted creature that issues uncorrupted, untouched from the hands of her Almighty Father! Eves of the great wilderness! Angels of the solitude!

Well; and so I went and journied and journied, and strove to be satisfied. But no. Every where every where upon the face of the earth I found woman to be nothing more nor better than the *slave* of man; avowedly so among the savages, and really so among the civilized, where they call her their companion, wife, mistress, pleasant counsellor and friend! Their *companion!* with such equality of companionship, that for doing no more than a man may do with impunity, she becomes an outcast and a reproach. Their *mistress!* with so much power and no more as her *subject* chooses to concede to her having no share in representation or government, though she pay taxes to the utmost! and this in a country, a fundamental principal of whose government it is, that taxation and representation go together! Their *friend wife pleasant counsellor* yet told and told seriously, 'till not only they but she is made to believe it, that women are *virtually* represented by their fathers and brothers and husbands and sons! Why not say to me that *they* are virtually represented by others? Told too that her interest is identical with ours *Fools!* fools! when they are directly opposed to ours: it being our interest to keep woman wholly dependent upon us their's to be dependent upon themselves. Friends equals companions pleasant counsellor indeed!

Well I journied and journied, growing none the better and but little the wiser; being so girded about with prejudice, and so filled to the brim with the opinions of society and of books, that when Truth herself passed before me naked and beautiful as Nature from her holiest and purest abiding–place, with the eternal woods above me and about me and Earth, Sea and Air holding counsel together for my instruction yet would I not see her, nor acknowledge her; and therefore am I now sent to you, a broken–hearted man, resting for a little hour on my way to the household of death. At last, wandering afar and away toward the other ocean, I found a young Indian girl and I loved her no matter why; loved her as I had never thought it possible for a human creature to love any thing on earth or heaven, I bought her of her father and determined to make of her What? a wife think ye? No, a mistress? no. A friend? no. No no nothing more nor less than my *slave*, as the white women are to the men that buy them in marriage. But hear me through He had grown hoarse with emotion, and his countenance changed frightfully as he breathed out the word *slave* hear me through; and then say whether I do not richly deserve the fate I have experienced. I would describe her to you, but I cannot. Her eyes were like stars in the lighted sea her presence warmth her touch delirium about her was an atmosphere that I could feel. And so and so I grew rich. I became a fur–trader. I might have returned to our largest cities and have had my choice of the fairest and proudest for have I not said that I was *rich?* And had I not youth and experience and a foreign–look, half savage and half civilized? Who could resist me, educated as our women are now in the proud cities of America?

But I lifted my hope higher. I had a giant–like ambition a thought worthy of Lucifer in the day of his exceeding strength. I resolved to *create* a woman for myself. I would have no creature sleeping in my bosom, that the growth of whose thought I had never been able to watch over. The fruitage that I cared for could only be known by the flower. And so, I withdrew, not into the solitude where the overhanging trees drop darkness and silence upon the

pilgrim and the sojourners; where the everlasting woods are all alive with tremendous apparitions, and the roar of midnight is like the roar of the troubled sea but into the very neighborhood of the white people carrying my poor Indian-girl with me where she might learn all they could teach, enjoying all their comforts, and yet be secure from their unhallowed influences.

People wondered at me that I kept no servants, that I saw no visitors, that I passed all my time within the four walls of a cottage, surrounded on every side by the stragglers of the retreating forest, and buried in blossoming trees for a goodly portion of the year. They called me a misanthrope, and I bore it with a smile; indolent though I was employed night and day in acquiring and communicating truth, knowledge, the sublimest principles of wisdom and virtue. I had begun to love man; and to feel toward woman what Jehovah meant we should feel, by establishing a mutual dependence and a holy relationship forever and ever between us. And so I became her preceptor father brother lover every thing but a husband. O! how the poor creature did love me! how she would sit by me hour after hour, and fall asleep with her head upon my bosom or my lap, and never dream that she had betrayed herself or the deep yearning of her heart, in her child-like simplicity. Her color would come and go, and her mouth would tremble, and her heart would heave, her voice change, and her large eyes fill with unspeakable tenderness; and yet she would sidle up to me and discourse in the language of perfect innocence and truth, all that others who are educated in society are accustomed to deny, as if the holy and mysterious instinct of a woman's nature the end and object of her whole existence on earth were to be concealed with tears and blushes, or stifled in its birth! Need I say to you that when her young heart lay before me like a map her two hands fluttering in mine like live birds and her warm breath stirring over my neck as she sat by me and whispered of things that were true, in the very language of truth need I say that I was transported into another and a better age? that a purifying hope took possession of me, and that I grew ashamed of my greater knowledge? And yet, all this time, day after day, and month after month, I never forgot myself I never forgot her for a single moment; nor that she was to be *my companion for life*. All that I knew, she knew and more. All that I learned of others chiefly for the pleasure of communicating it to her, she seized with the quickness of intuition. But for her manners, which God be thanked! were not the manners of society, she would have passed for a highly accomplished woman before I I before His voice faltered, and for a single moment he appeared to have lost all command of himself before *she left me*.

Years had gone by and we had been always together, she putting questions to me and I answering them to the best of my power, now with the help of books and maps and drawings, and now by longcontinued, earnest enquiry of others; whole years! and yet she continued to have questions for me, whenever we were together; questions about herself, and me and others; about Here and Hereafter; questions that nobody on earth could solve and that none but a very exalted nature would have troubled itself about. Sir look at me I meant to deal fairly with that young woman. But I did not. I deceived her. I deceived myself. I persuaded myself that I was weary of my kind, ashamed of the opinions, and altogether above the prejudices of the world. At last Father of love! do thou uphold me and strengthen me yet a little longer!

I believed the poor fellow's heart was breaking when he uttered this cry I believe so now the tone of his voice brought the tears into my eyes.

At last, continued he, *at last!* I saw the bursting forth of all that I most yearned to see in heaven or earth a human heart in full flower! And that, a female heart, innocent as Truth and faithful as Hope, which never deserts, however frequently it may betray us. And so I determined to be happy; for some how or other I felt as if I had begun to deserve it. The fair creatures I had wronged in my youth, visiting all and spoiling all that came in my way, no longer beset me, as they had for years, in every solitary, every silent place, beautiful shadows, having eyes that were dark with unutterable wo, and burning with prophecy, or peradventure with dishevelled hair and the sweeping habiliments of death. I was no longer afraid to be alone. I heard no more 'sweet melancholy music,' no more unearthly voices, and my sleep had begun to refresh me. But whither should I go? to the North or to the South? over the blue deep and to the pleasant isles of the sea; or back into the society of them that had driven me away, an outcast and a beggar, to perish in the wilderness? Would they know me? And if they did, now that I had

wealth enough, what had I to fear?

It was time for us to understand one another. But how? how could I venture to translate into cold human language the sweet mystery that thrilled the blood of this innocent creature, who had never seen the face of a woman but afar off since her childhood, nor heard the voice of any man but her father and myself, since we had been together. And yet she was happy so happy! that when I talked of leading her into the society of such people as she had read of in the books and languished to see, she would tremble and cling to me like a child when it thunders. At last I began afar off to sound the depths of her untroubled heart. I tried to explain the growth of attachment between creatures of a different sex, the sweet influences and the agitating hopes that were intended to issue in the perpetual generation of creatures like ourselves, immortal creatures, multiplied into one another forever and ever. But all in vain. Up to the last, she was unprepared for the truth. Even while she hung about my neck showering tears into my bosom and kissing my face with lips that trembled and burned as with inward fire nay, even while she repeated my very language after me word for word language that I durst not use, in the world, where a thousandth part as much would have been sufficient to enlighten a child she did not and she could not understand me.

So after many a sleepless night, having weighed all the consequences at my leisure, I determined to deal more plainly with her. I put the question thus Could you be happy with me dear, *under all circumstances*, any where and every where? Never shall I forget the look of innocent surprise with which she answered as if it were the strangest thing in the world for me to put such a question. I felt abashed; for notwithstanding all my love, there were circumstances in my life which she was not, and never would be acquainted with; I had always intended to tell her the truth and the whole truth before I took her altogether to myself yet now now that her mind was illuminated and she had built up exalted opinions of what man should be and of what I was, I had no longer the courage to tell her it would have broken her heart, although it would not have changed her love. And then she kissed me, and I looked into the very depth of her heart as into a lighted mirror and saw every thought and every hope there. And I knew instantly that her whole happiness depended on me that Here and Hereafter (and she knew all that I knew of both) she had no wish but to be with me, no hope unconnected with me. And we were happy.

Six months after this, as we were sitting together under the green trees with a broad clear river as blue as a summer sky, sweeping away from underneath our very feet, and all the woods about us were bursting into flavor with the suddenness that follows a severe northern winter a drop of rain fell upon my hand. I looked up in amazement, and lo! instead of a sky overcast with shadow, the sun was all abroad in brightness and warmth. It was no drop of rain therefore and then for the first time I saw in the eyes of her whom I loved more than my own life, a tinge of melancholy.

William, said she, I have been reading a book that I am sorry for.

Ah

It has made me unhappy.

How so, pray?

William dear William *I am not your wife*.

I was grieved to the heart, and though I kissed and talked to her with an air of pleasantry for awhile, yet I knew by her voice her sweet plaintive voice! that she had taken her discovery to heart; and I knew not what to say, nor which way to look.

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

Not my wife! said I at last, feeling some how as if I had been unfaithful to her, and repeating the *words*, the miserable words wherewith I had deceived her, and not only her but myself before we were happy In the sight of Heaven you *are* my wife; In the sight of Heaven, we *are* married.

But her eyes grew more and more melancholy and her voice more plaintive.

Troubled, I knew not why, and very anxious to turn away her thoughts from a subject which I saw was painful to her, I began to talk of our departure, but she said nothing, and I felt her warm tears dropping faster and faster upon my hands, in which hers lay more passively than I had ever known them before; and so I returned to the subject and grew serious with her and talked of marriage, and overthrew every thing that stood in my way; the sum and substance of my whole argument (he said this with great bitterness) being to this effect. If a man loves a woman, he *wants* no law to bind him to her. If he does not love her, no law *can* bind him to her. And if it could, what should we think of that woman's delicacy who would consent to have such a hold upon a husband's affections. At length, after a silence which continued so long as to alarm me, she said You know dear that I care nothing for the name. But *you* did and if you did, why should not I? Oh William! would you not make me your wife whom you had built up and fashioned for that companionship (her voice faltered and she grew pale as death) of which she is dying dying, William: after this she grew melancholy and though I did not observe it at the time, I recollected it well afterwards.

Merciful heaven cried I, terrified at his language and looks and *did* she die?

About a month after this, while we were sitting together in the self same spot, she threw her arms about my neck, and hid her face in my bosom and began to sob like a child, saying that she shouldn't live long, she was sure of it hoping that I would be happy, and if and if and here she clung yet more closely to me and sobbed more violently than ever I knew what she was thinking of and I tried to divert her attention from the subject. Her attention! fool that I was! William she whispered I am not your wife; your love is not my love.

Be patient one day I had been gone all day long my preparations were all made, my determination fixed to repair the wrong I had done her, and I returned with my heart brimful of joy. As my foot sounded on the door step, I recollected that I had seen no light. This and the extraordinary stillness damped my joy for a moment, and my hand shook I remember as I laid it upon the latch. I knocked and listened knocked again until I could bear the dreadful silence no longer I burst open the door rushed into our chamber and there! there! (gasping for breath as if the horrid objects were now before him) and there she lay! she and the dear babe both dead dead dead! I shrew myself upon my knees before her and prayed our Almighty Father to take me to himself. But he would not thick flashes of light filled the whole room in reply to my impious prayer and then I kissed her pale lips, and shrieked to them to move once more and they did move! they *did* and what do ye think they whispered to me? (starting up and stealing toward me a tip-toe and grasping my shoulder) they whispered as plain as mortal lips ever spoke on earth *I am not your wife*.

And so I came away. And now, continued he, I am an altered man. I have come by the command of my poor old mother to sacrifice myself here. I have been a voluptuary with my own child my dear, adopted and beloved child a libertine with my own wife rifling and casting away forever the blossoms of hope and love. And therefore do I warn you! rising and standing up before me, and uttering his words like prophecy, with a gesture and look of awful denunciation. I warn you! as you hope to appear one day before the Judge of the quick and the dead, with no sign of death blowing upon your forehead, I warn you to repentance! As for me, I am going to the grave. My heart is broken I deserved all but I could not die in peace, without saying all this to you His eyes brightened and he almost smiled I shall be buried to-morrow afternoon, said he will you come to my funeral?

With pleasure, I was about to say; but his look of preternatural brightness deterred me. I shuddered and turned away and when I looked up again he was gone.

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

After this I slept, and waking some time after my usual hour, hurried off to my breakfast at Barnum's. On opening my door, I found a paper lying on the steps; and taking it up to lay it on my table, my attention was attracted by a paragraph relating to the sudden death of a stranger yesterday at the Indian Queen. Yesterday! said I to myself, as I walked away, half determined to enquire a little into the matter: but something happened to prevent me; I rode out of town, a few miles, and the next day about three o'clock was returning, when I met a funeral. I stopped and seeing a friend on the side walk, enquired into the cause of something unusual which struck me in the appearance of the persons about the body. They wore no mourning, and appeared to be all of one family, as it were. The truth fell upon me like a thunderbolt! It was the funeral of poor Frazier. But when I add which is the simple truth that after attending the body to the grave as I had promised, and after calling at the house, where I learned from a boarder who was with the stranger at the time of his death that he died *Wednesday night* when it was *Thursday morning* that he appeared to me when I added, that I was afraid to enquire further, there are some perhaps who may understand me and believe me others who may pity me.

Nine years after this, a thought struck me one day in relation to the time of night when this extraordinary event occurred, and I wrote to Baltimore to enquire of the individual, an Irish editor, who had assured me that Frazier died *Wednesday*, when I could swear that I saw him on *Thursday*. His answer I give below.

Dear Sir The stranger you refer to died *late Wednesday night* I think about *four in the morning*.

Most respectfully, &c. &c.
April 1, 1833.

Q. E. D.

ROBERT STEELE.

There had been a heavy shower. But the clouds were hurrying away, the sun was breaking out with a warm lustre, and the whole earth was smoking with incense. I never saw a more beautiful sky every cloud was a picture, every shadow a new transformation of the landscape. We were sitting together on a little wooden bench, at the door of a one-story house, which had been white, with a high dark roof and projecting windows formerly a cottage, or the nearest approach to one we ever see in this part of the world, now the porch of a country tavern, the anti-chamber of a grog-shop. I was leaning back with my arms folded, and eyes half-shut; now wondering at the beauty and freshness of our New-England scenery; now looking out over the broad far common, as level as a floor, besprinkled with miniature tents and booths, and all alive with groups of boys and girls, hardy, but rough and awkward militia, in caps that were too large and coats that were too small for them, a corps of artillery, a circulating troop of wheelbarrows, and a squadron of horse; now studying the far sky through a glimmering curtain of hop-leaves, vine-leaves and flowering creepers, that hung between me and the low sun, a part of the transparent foliage overlaying the rest with shadow, changeable, burnished, and dripping with large rain-drops a shower of 'barbaric pearl and gold,' and letting the sun-shine flash through, and play about the floor, and over the white-washed wall, and the wreck of what had been the prettily-contrived and the prettily-painted trellis-work of a flower garden, at my elbow, as the live drapery broke and fluttered, and swayed this way and that with every change of the wind; now trying to make out the familiar history of what I saw on every side of me neatness gone to decay white pillars written all over with lead pencil, spattered with slops and stained with tobacco-smoke the very windows, over which the wild rose yet clambered in large ragged masses, covered with a grog-score green blinds utterly cast away and half-buried in the dirt, or hanging by one hinge a piece and ready to drop at a touch or a breath, every creak appearing to be the last the insignia of idleness and mischief cut and carved all over what had been the portico of a tasteful habitation, wretched caricatures, bad poetry, and worse whittling (where whittling is a trade), profiles of nobody, with a brush-wood or juniper wig, verses that rhymed everywhere but in the right place, and great staggering initials, no two of which were of a size or shape, though all appeared to be

looking for partners, and five or six of a somewhat similar type for each other, though one half were built with the wrong end up, and the rest were shadowed contrary to law; and now hearkening to the roar of the water-falls, which as it grew quieter and quieter abroad, began to draw near, with a heavier and more sea-like noise.

We were sitting together, I have said; that is, we were sitting back to back on the same badly contrived bench, myself a stranger, and my companion I hardly know how to describe him, otherwise than by saying that he was a very small man, who chose to wear a cocked hat, a leathern waistcoat, a pair of cowhide shoes with silver buckles, and blue yarn stockings rolled up over his knees in the dog days. How he contrived to occupy so much as he did, was always a mystery to me. More than half the bench did he take up, and that half as some people do their part of a loaf or a bed, right out of the middle. Perhaps thought I, he may be one of our native New-Englanders who value themselves on their *sprawl*, as they term it. If so, you may track him through life, by the chairs he has wrenched or split, by the walls he has worn the paper off, and by the holes he has bored through every carpet he was ever allowed to work his chair upon, like a centre-bit, or a gouge. For my own part if I am ever able to furnish a house for the habitation of thorough-bred he-yankees, much as I love and respect them for their disregard of idle courtesy, and for their doing as they would be done by, in every such case, it shall be with chairs that are built into the very wall, or screwed to the floor; and if I only mention the thing if a scraper, a hat-rack and a spit-box, were slyly shoved in their way, the moment they opened the outer-door, perhaps there would be no harm in that, and *perhaps* they might be led to perceive by and by, that wearing a hat in the house of a friend, or tilting back in a chair which is none of the strongest, though it may be of the costliest, or spitting holes through a carpet, is after all, no proof that a man is a man, a lover of liberty, a despiser of kings, courts, and every other sort of outlandish trumpery, not worth having here. Allow what you please for the native worth, severe probity, and extraordinary common sense of a New-Englander, I do not perceive that boorishness or nastiness are virtues; or that, although it is better to be thought superior to, than ignorant of the usages of the world, and better therefore when you are in doubt, to carry it with a high hand, still I was interrupted here, by my neighbor of the yarn stockings and cow-hide shoes, who lifting himself up and fetching a long breath as long as from here to the head of the street and puffing a gill or two of tobacco smoke athwart my face, begun to hum a part of old hundred, beating time as he did so, with a large ivory-headed cane, just by the side of my hurt knee, with a vigor that made me jump at every turn of the tune. I retreated inch by inch, and he pursued me inch by inch, but whether intentionally or not, I never knew. What I do know however, is, that when he had got me fairly penned up in the corner, and when I was just ready to cry out, he perceived the danger, and stopped, and stared at me for a moment or two, and then without a word of apology, slipped into Yankee Doodle, and puffed the rest of the smoke into the face of a fat man who had dropped asleep with his mouth open at the other end of the bench. A moment after this, he stopped suddenly and rose half up out of the seat, as if to call to some body afar off. I thought something was the matter, for the hand in which he had pulled away the torn foliage, was not over steady. I followed the direction of his little keen eye, and found it pursuing a group of men who had collected together a few rods off, and were probably waiting for another body just about to issue from the crowded bar-room at our back, the windows of which, running away to my left, and being wide open allowed me a view of what I had long wanted to see, the interior of a country tavern on a muster day, without leaving my seat, or appearing to observe with a curious eye. But I saw the whole and remember the whole. Here was one huge fellow trying to jump over a table backwards; there another trying to hop over his own leg, with the foot fixed to the wall, and there another, with his coat off and shirt-sleeves rolled up, trying to spell-Andrewbigbaggington-Dollasee-dan-Hyocathmarine. Here a party pulling fingers with each other, 'till their eyes were ready to drop out of their sockets; and there another, counted off in pairs, with their elbows planted on a table, and pressing their palms together, to see which would give way first. Within two or three yards of me, just under the drippings of the bar, sat a grey-haired man, with a flushed face, and a quivering lip, trying to persuade a boy of twelve to draw cuts, or clap coppers with him for a glass of high-colored liquor just poured out, and gleaming in the live sun-shine that flashed through and through the decanters and glasses, and played about on the slippery edge of the bar, and among the green branches that overshadowed it, with the scented shadow of the wilderness. A little further off, just on the border of the highway, which was thronged to overflow with speculating and swapping natyves, a large number of well-dressed youth had gathered in a cluster, some standing a-tip-toe and stretching away to overlook their neighbors, some stooping with their elbows on their knees, like players at leap-frog, or holding on by each other in pairs, or dodging about

hither and thither to get a peep, and some sitting or lying stretched out, with their whole length on the wet grass, overborne by the prodigious weight from above the weight of mirth and curiosity; two or three of their number I saw with six-inch native cigars in their mouths, learning to draw smoke with an air (as if that were an accomplishment for any thing but a flue or a stove-pipe) two with their shirt-collars open, the third with his hat pulled over one ear, and all three growing paler and paler and sicker and sicker at every whiff. Others of the party were betting, and swearing, and chewing tobacco, or throwing off brandy-and-water, glass after glass, the winner because he had won, and why should'nt he swallow what he had won, though it made him sick? the loser, forsooth, because he had lost, and having to pay for the stuff, why should he not have his lawful share, though he loathed the very smell of it? and others, the centre of the group and the seat of attraction for all, were pitching four-pence-happ'nies with a large, powerful, good-natured, yellow-eyed nigger, who in the triumph and joy of his heart, gave them the advantage of all the ties, and lent to all that lost, and yet was lucky enough to win every pitch, 'till being over-persuaded by the boys, and overpowered by the flip they flooded him with, he began to talk paw-aw-ties with a stray representatyve o' the neighborhood, after which he was robbed and cheated so openly, that the very children saw through it, as they lay on the grass, and whooped and hollowed for joy, every time the poor nigger had to shell out; and the very mothers and wives that occupied all the windows overlooking the spot, and the glossy-haired, bright-eyed girls, who were circulating hither and thither like so many colored apparitions, over the broad green level before me, even they appeared to relish the joke as often as they got a peep at what was going forward. What a school for the brave youth of New-England, thought I, rather above my breath I dare say, for the stranger uttered a low growl in reply. Our mothers and our wives, our daughters and our grown youth, encouraging our little boys to rob a poor black, whom they would not be allowed to associate with; of his pocket-money. I turned away my head and shut my eyes; but a growing uproar caused me to open them again, and when I did, it was to see two middle-aged farmers, both half-seas over, showing their wealth, dropping it slowly from their clenched hands, held high up in the air cent by cent and four-pence by four-pence eyeing each other like two tom-cats the while (I expected every moment to see the feathers fly) now leaning forward and gasping for breath, now pulling back and wavering with fear, as it came, turn about, to make the drop or wait the issue; for the agreement was, that he who dropped most should have all with a plenty of abuse, a cuff o' the ear, and a quarrel to boot.

Hurra there, hurra! cried the party within the house.

Hurra there, hurra! echoed the party without.

Who's chose? eagerly enquired a youth from below.

I made no reply, though I saw the question was directed to me; for to tell the truth, I had not observed what was going forward in the bar-room, beyond what I have described. I had been lost in a revery, and in five minutes more, I might have been asleep where I was, with my head against the wall, my mouth full of flies, and my poor leg stretched out on the pillow before me, but for the breaking up, the rush and the outcry of the multitude, as they swept by me.

Plaguing critter, said the youth, as he turned away, no speak to him, I 'spose, wont say a word more 'an he's a mind to.

I say, *you* mister! ye haint got any more butter to sell, have yer? cried somebody at the door, with a voice like a trumpet.

A man who was riding by, drew up at the noise, and looking over his shoulder, answered in the purest New England fashion Do you want to buy?

What d'ye ask?

What 'll yer give?

How much have yer got?

How much do yer want?

I looked up in astonishment here. The parties were perfectly serious. One had butter to sell that I knew; the other wanted to buy, that I could see.

How much do I want? said the purchaser, drawing a long breath, and then making a full stop, as if determined never to commit himself.

Why don't you say? said the other.

And why don't *you* say?

Say what?

Botheration seize it, how do I know? If you want to sell your butter, why don't you answer my question?

Well why don't you answer mine?

Why don't I?

Why, do you?

Do I darn and set fire to sich a feller as you are, did ye ever answer a question in your life?

Well did you?

Be quiet fools! Why don't you answer each other? Zounds and death, are we never to have an end of this eternal see–saw, said a voice at my elbow the deepest and lowest voice I ever heard, though every whisper went through me. I looked that way. There was the pipe, and the three–pronged hat, and there the cow–hide shoes, and the buckles, and the yarn stockings rolled over the knee; and the firm, sharp, sensitive and healthy lips but there was no motion to them.

I was about to speak, when my attention was called off by the approach of a young and somewhat superior looking man, who appeared to hold himself aloof and apart from the multitude, though his eye was fixed upon the door, with a look that made me watch him in spite of myself. Shoes were bandied about, and he smiled, as they passed him, but with no such smile as the others welcomed every, even the rudest and silliest. He appeared above such mirth; and his pale fierce look had a show of something, that when I think of it now, makes me tremble. I wonder now that I was not alarmed by it at the time. The people knew him, but they passed him, with an air that galled his proud spirit, I do believe for the next moment, as the newly elected officers came forth, he turned away, and walking hastily up to a booth near me, threw off a tumbler of what appeared to be very strong brandy–and–water dashed a piece of silver upon the earth, and was turning to go away, when a troop of young officers, the handsomest and awkwardest I ever saw, with their sashes and feathers flying in the wind and their heavy cimitars ringing as they trod, came near the spot, and as their horses were brought up one by one, mounted and rode off. As they did so, however, I heard somebody say, God help thee, boy! and then I heard them laugh and look toward the booth; and as they did so, I saw the stranger who had interested me so much, strike his heel into the turf, grasp another huge goblet of liquor, and throw it off with his face upturned to the sky, so directly before me that I could see the writhing of the lip, the heaving of the chest, and the mortal flashing of the eye, and I

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

thought I could see perhaps I deceived myself a shadow of loathing and self–reproach go over his broad luminous forehead, like a convulsion.

Robert Steele! cried the stranger at my side, starting up, and smashing his pipe on the floor. Robert Steele, I say!

But Robert Steele, for that was the name of the other, would not forbear. He saw me, and I believe he saw my companion, but I do not know; for he turned away, and flinging the goblet he had just emptied against a large rock that lay in his path, went away toward the subskirts of the wood, with his arms dangling at his side, and his eyes fixed upon the earth, as if pursuing, step by step, some invisible creature that kept near the ground.

For God's sake, lend a hand here, said my hitherto speechless companion, grasping me by the arm.

With all my heart, said I, trying to get up as I spoke: but you see what a cripple I am. Here Smith, Harry Smith I say, lend a hand here, will you! Harry Smith was a nephew of mine, a fellow of great strength and courage, and I wanted him to give the elder a lift, for I had, I know not wherefore, a secret apprehension of something terrible which would require all my fortitude before long. But before Smith could arrive, my man was off, and I hobbling after him with my one crutch. I had not gone far, when seeing the multitude give way on every side, I looked up and saw Arthur Steele pursuing his way directly across the common, the elder trying to cut off his approach to the wilderness, and a very awkward, heavily–mounted trooper, spurring and whipping toward him, flourishing a sword in the air and shouting to him, not to go that way.

But Robert Steele kept on.

The horseman rode up, directly in his path, and swore, if he took another step that way, he would cut him down.

Robert lifted his eyes and strode on I shouted the trooper struck at him with the flat of his sword, but instantly before I could throw up my arms, or utter a cry Robert snatched the bridle; the horse reared, and the rider was tumbled to the earth, an uplifted sword flashed in the air, as if wielded with the strength and fury of a maniac; and I do believe the overthrown trooper would have been put to death on the spot, if the outstretched arm had not been arrested by a shriek, and the sight of an officer dashing at full speed over the plain. A moment more, and Robert stood in the way of that officer, who tried in vain to stop his horse a cut appeared to be exchanged between them, as the creature passed and before the troop could be put in motion, or the videttes leap to the rescue, or understand the cause of the uproar, he reeled in the saddle dropped the reins pitched forward with his arms in the air and the next moment, I saw his cap on the turf, the horse galloping away at full speed for the river, and the poor fellow dragging, with his foot in the stirrup. The shrieks of women were now heard from every quarter the confused trampling of horses two or three pistol–shots in quick succession and then the roar and the rush of a great multitude sweeping by me with irresistible power; then followed a momentary stillness like that of death then, a long, long shriek, as from the agony of a mother's heart and then a loud, vast, overpowering outcry, that a man was killed.

I stood where I was, giddy and sick with horror motionless with fear. And the first thing that awoke me to a full perception of the truth, was the sight of Robert Steele, not five yards from me, holding a horse by the bridle, with one foot in the stirrup ready to mount. He saw me, and perhaps recognised me, for he stopped and said to me with a smile yes a smile You see that I could escape if I would, as he spoke, he leaped into the saddle, and sat adjusting one stirrup to his foot, with his head bent over the creature's neck; I never saw a more beautiful, nor a more spirited animal.

If I could have stopped him there if I could have reached the bridle at that moment, I would have given the last dollar I had on earth. Yet I am no friend to capital punishments; and if I were to betray a fellow–creature to death, I care not how, I care not why, I do believe that I should never sleep soundly again.

The Down–Easters, Volume 2

But I shall not escape, said he, throwing himself off, and letting the horse go. There there begone, sir! And the creature, frightened at the voice, backed for a moment upon his haunches, threw up his main in the air, and set off at full speed, with the rein flying loose and the stirrups ringing in the wind.

How wonderful is the nature of man! I would now have given the last dollar I had on earth, yea my right arm, to secure the escape of Robert Steele, as he stood before me now, within reach of that very arm with no possibility of escape now for the multitude were gathering and concentrating about us now, from every part of the field, and the troopers were riding hither and thither, and every living creature was hurrying to the spot he was pale now, very pale, and speechless; and the sweat stood upon his forehead in large drops.

At length a man touched him on the shoulder it was the man with the cocked hat and without speaking a word, pointed to the highway, as I should have pointed to the grave.

Robert Steele turned toward him at the touch, but when he saw who it was, he started and his dry lips moved, but no sound reached my ear, though I was not a yard off.

No, no, said a bystander, pressing through the crowd, that won't do, Doctor Farrer. That young man must be put into safer hands than yours; we know you, I rather guess, a little too well to trust any murderer

Robert Steele gasped for breath.

I beg your pardon, Major Steele, much less a nephew in such hands.

That's true! that's true! whispered several that were nigh.

The man with the cocked hat made no reply; but lifting up his ivory–headed cane, stretched it forth to the full length of his arm, and making a slow, steady, sweep with it, so as to keep off the multitude from before his path, pursued his way, with a firm grip on the collar of his nephew.

Ah, Major Steele is that you? said another voice afar off.

Here comes the high–sheriff! cried twenty voices from the heart of the crowd.

Sorry to see you here; always afeard o' somethin' o' the sort you know; your head wont bear much. The next moment, a tall, rough–looking man rode up to my side; ah, Doctor Farrer how d'ye do, how d'ye do; how goes it.

Why cleverly, said the imperturbable man, without looking up, or turning his head, or altering his step.

Mr. High–Sheriff, said the speaker, who had previously objected to leaving the nephew in the custody of his uncle; it is your duty to take charge of that young man.

No more'n 'tis your'n though, neighbor Jeddy.

But I say 'tis though; and I say 'taint; and that's all you know about it; and I'll leave it to the rest o' the company, broke from the lips of another and another of the crowd, 'till thirty or forty were disputing together.

Silence! cried the Doctor, at last, worried out of all patience by the growing uproar. Silence, I say! What are you made of? Is it not enough that a fellow creature is charged with murder, but you must pursue him with your obstreperous howling to the grave? Look here I am his uncle he is my own brother's child my name is Joshua P. W. Farrer You see that I have him fast (his large powerful hand was relaxed for a moment here, as if to show what a tremendous gripe it had.) Was I not the first to take him by the throat?

So he was true enough so he was! muttered several voices in reply.

Yet he was my own brother's child.

I heard a low suppressed breathing on every side of me.

But for me, continued the strange man but for me, perhaps, he might have escaped.

Very true, whispered several.

Yet he was my own brother's child.

An audible groan; a shiver that could be felt on every side of me, through all the pressure of the crowd, was the reply.

Are you afraid to trust him with me now?

No, no no, answered a number of voices.

Very well. That's enough. I am satisfied now. Joshua P. W. Farrer, son of Timothy W. P. Farrer, of Yarmouth, would have lived to little purpose indeed, if his pledge were to be refused now for the life or safety of any thing. As for you Mr. High-Sheriff; it is your duty sir, and is the duty of each and all of you, to arrest any body, at any time, whom you see in perpetration of wrong. Do your duty as I did mine put forth the strong hand of a fellow-citizen, though it be to gripe the shoulder of your own child, whenever you see such a thing done, as this unhappy nephew of mine has done this day. Why do you stop my path we are now at the threshold of a door, over which only he, and myself, and that man there, (pointing to me,) shall pass. But the other day, not a twelve month ago, Robert Steele was in safety in more safety than you are now or you or any of you. Now he is charged with murder. Why? Because he did no more than most of you have done this day he meddled with the betrayer. Look up Robert, look up my poor boy, and show that if you grow pale and shake and falter in your tread, it is not so much the fear of death, as the going over that threshold Robert I say.

The wretched man locked his hands, with an audible prayer, and held them to his heart, with convulsive strength.

Even so, my poor boy. We had now reached the door; the doctor set his foot on the step, the culprit shuddered and held back, and the crowd gave way to the recoil that ensued, and left a clear space about the door: Even so; they who are now shivering with terror when they touch you; they who are ready to cry out for joy that they are not as you are, a man accused of murder a manslayer a drunkard even they are not so safe as you were a twelve month ago, when you first broke your oath went to a review was elected a major, and emptied the goblet of death. Come in, sir.

The next moment, we were in a room together all three of us the people outside, awaiting in silence for the return of somebody with a warrant and yet there was a low continual murmur, as of a pent up sea, eddying about the four walls of the house. I had leisure to observe the room; for the doctor went away into a far corner and stood there with his back toward me, and both hands resting upon the edge of what had been a superb sofa; all the rest of the furniture was in keeping all rich, tasteful, and apparently heaped together into a place never intended for it. Were I allowed to speculate on the appearance of what I saw, I should say that it resembled a magnificent shipwreck; for the room was far too crowded, the articles far too sumptuous, though chaste; they had evidently been wrenched away from their appointed places in a larger and better house, and huddled together here, it was not for me to conjecture why. There was a worth, and a strength in everything too, and a sobriety, such as we are not accustomed to see in the dwellings of power, much less in the low-roofed habitations of earth. A connoisseur would say at a look, that feeling and study had been at play here, wealth of the better kind, a secret luxury, that

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

would never trust to fashion for the style or shape of its familiar household things, a love and a taste far superior to the borrowed fancy or imported relish of the cabinet-maker, or the upholsterer, the ungifted, or the unthinking. The secretary, the sofas (there were two), the mahogany chairs, and the mahogany framed glasses to correspond, were all instinct with the spirit of wholeness, companionship and foresight. Every thing corresponded with every other thing, even to the color of the curtains; the walls, and the carpet yea, even to the patterns of each. So gratifying was the quietude experienced here, from the repose of color and shape, that I had nearly forgotten, for a moment, the terrible catastrophe which had just occurred, and my more terrible proximity to the manslayer. But he brought me to myself, by suddenly catching at the doctor's arm, as they stood near each other, and saying, with a voice and a look that frightened us both I heard a scream!

I heard nothing, said the Doctor.

But I did I do now!

My poor boy, said the old man, laying his right hand upon the shoulder of the youth, for he had a youthful air even yet my poor boy, compose yourself. I understand you I know what you mean She is fifty leagues from you this moment, if she is one rod.

Then she is not one rod; for if I live, sir, I heard her voice not an hour ago, and it has been ringing in my ear at intervals ever since.

Robert Robert said the aged man, losing all his self-possession, at the look and speech of his nephew, who stood before us like a bewildered creature Robert, I tremble for you.

Did you not hear a shriek, sir, at the very moment when God forgive me I hope the poor fellow is not dead, absolutely dead, is he sir?

I do not know, Robert; I will you be so kind, sir, (addressing himself to me), as to stay with this unhappy young man, while I go to enquire about poor French; and perhaps pray sir, did you hear any thing of the shriek?

I believe I did, sir.

A long, terrible, sharp cry, sir, added Robert, eagerly.

Yes, even what you say, a long, sharp cry.

God bless you, sir! and the tears gushed into his eyes.

I leave Robert with you, sir. I know you, though you do not know me. I wish you to consult with him on the nature of his extraordinary case; and remember, sir, if you please, I hold you answerable for his safety, and for his forth-coming at the word of the law.

You have nothing to fear said I; your nephew would not escape, this moment, if you were to fling the doors wide open to him, and show him a horse ready saddled and bridled at the door. I then related what I saw.

I believe you, sir; for I know that young man well, better than you do, and but for one thing, I would trust him anywhere everywhere and sleep as soundly, though my own life were at stake, if I had but his simple word for a pledge, as I would with the security of the law bolts and bars fetters and chains, though they were fastened by the array, or guaranteed by the faith, of a whole nation. I shall not say what that one thing is now not now, Robert; for now we have nothing more to do with the past. The future, my boy, the future, is what we have to look to now; bear up his voice fell with a deep quaver, as he continued; bear up, therefore, and hope for the best;

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

and and he spoke yet lower, as he laid one hand upon the latch of the door, and bit his nether lip, and grasped the arm of his nephew, as if to encourage him, in spite of his own conviction *be prepared for the worst*. Saying which he left the room.

His words fell with a stunning, stifling, overpowering weight upon his nephew; and for five minutes or more, not another word was spoken.

At last, however, I thought it my duty to say, that all things considered, much as he was to blame, I did not look upon the affair as desperate. He did not appear to heed me. He sat on the sofa, with his knees drawn up and his head resting on his hands his shoulders heaving at long intervals with prodigious throes and his breath rattling fiercely in his throat.

I went up to him; I sat down by his side I spoke with him as a lawyer as a man I told him what I saw and what I was ready to testify to I did not reproach him for swallowing the strong drink I did not even allude to it; but he understood me nevertheless, and groaned aloud, and the sofa shook under us; but I reminded him, that he might have escaped and did not his breath grew quicker that perhaps the blow he gave was not a mortal blow he shook his head violently, and a quick shudder followed through every part of his body, and every limb was convulsed. I then reminded him that the other had struck at him as he rode up.

True, sir, very true poor French!

And therefore, continued I, whatever may be the issue to him, you are probably safe.

Safe! how how cried he, starting up, and throwing his arms abroad like a maniac. Safe, sir! think you that I am afraid of death! Coming close up to me, and planting his feet and setting his teeth, and looking at me for a moment, as if he would tear me into a thousand pieces, and then gradually relaxing the horrible determination of his look wavering faltering and finally bursting into tears. No, sir, no, he continued, I am not afraid of death; I have no fear of anything now hardly of Him that made me have I not abused my proud faculties destroyed the glorious instinct of my nature become like the brute that has gorged himself upon the wine lees. Have I not slain a fellow man? true, he was my rival with the best and fairest of God's creatures, and though I prevailed over him, I could not bear it. He saw my overthrow he struck me too and he derided me, with a look of joy and he triumphed a moment before his death, over my abject nature. Has he not watched, and made others watch her whom I had enslaved, with pity, and sorrow; her whose heart I broke, within three years after our marriage; her, who went crazy not a twelvemonth ago, her, whose unearthly cry you heard this day. Sir that was my wife the voice of my poor wife! Who cares for the wretch I have slain? Who for the prophecy of her father on our wedding-night, or the marriage-gift the mother's deadly gift, only three months after, these things I regard not. I have destroyed her; I have degraded the most glorious image that ever a loving woman built up for herself in the sanctuary of her own heart, for worship and what is there on earth to trouble me now? I have killed her; I have degraded myself, beyond hope altogether beyond the reach of hope. There there! that is her cry! I should know it any where, every where in a desert, in the midst of the ocean; I shall hear it forever to the last breath I draw forever and ever I am perfectly sober now: I know what I say

While he was yet speaking, the door flew open with a loud crash, and a woman rushed forward with her garments and hair flying in the wind, and threw her self with a scream of joy upon his bosom

O, Robert, Robert, have I found you at last! Oh, my husband, my husband! that ever it should come to this O, my poor husband!

I looked about me, with a design to escape; totally forgetting my pledge; but as I moved toward the door, saw the large entry crowded with men, among whom was the high-sheriff I had seen before. He held an open warrant in his hand; but where was the uncle? I was afraid to ask the deep, deep silence about me, awed me. Here were the

ministers of the law waiting for their prey there was indeed no possibility of escape now there was the wife, the young and beautiful wife I thought, by the glance I had of her, the distracted and heart-broken wife, I knew, as she lay cold and lifeless upon the bosom of her husband. I went up to her I spoke to her I spoke to him; but she lay there like a dead creature, and as for him, he sat with his mouth pressed to her forehead, as if he never never would breathe or move again.

At last the officer drew nigh, and was about to whisper something in the ear of the offender; but the hair of his beautiful wife she was beautiful I could see that now stirred for a moment, probably with his breath, and the officer and I both drew back affrighted at the aspect of the man.

Be still I know your errand, said he, after waiting a minute or two longer; be still I am ready to go with you, whithersoever ye will; but I cannot leave her she must go with me dead or alive, we go together, this body and I, this flesh of my flesh; we never part again.

The look with which this was said, the piteous, though determined look, and the voice of unutterable grief and misery, with which it was accompanied the poor creature hardly spoke above his breath, yet every body heard him went to our very hearts; there was not a dry eye in the room.

But where is Doctor Farrer? asked the sheriff; it is already four minutes over the time.

No such thing, sir. It is exactly the time, said the Doctor, entering with what I regarded at first, as a look of dismay, and then as a terrible counterfeit I wondered at the change; he was altogether a different man, cold, austere and peremptory now.

Do your duty, Mr. Sheriff, said he, I have done mine. He is in your custody now.

Good God, sir! you will not leave your nephew, said I, astonished at his aspect, so different from what it was when he left us but a little time before.

And why not sir?

Uncle Joshua, said his nephew laying what appeared to me to be the body of his wife, calmly and reverentially upon the sofa; Eleanor is no more as he spoke, he held up his right hand; it was tinged with blood

A smothered cry broke from the crowd at the door a fierce tumult ensued and for a moment I do believe the supposed murderer of his own wife, might have walked away from the very midst of the recoiling crowd; but it was only for a moment the next they were ready to trample him to the earth to tear him limb from limb in their ungovernable rage.

But they were arrested by the loud commanding voice of the doctor, who having gone up to the body, and lifted the head, saw, or fancied he saw, signs of life. Throw open the window! cried he open every window in the house leave the room clear touch that bell, sir. The crowd withdrew and left us together, and after a moment or two, a middle-aged respectable woman entered. He whispered, earnestly to her, and as he did so, I watched his countenance, and I saw, as plainly as I ever saw any thing in my life, a smile of subdued triumph, almost of joy, flit over his rugged features.

Surely said I, to myself, that must be some mistake here; we have judged too harshly that cannot be the body of a murdered woman. As I spoke, she moved, and her husband was on his knees before her, beseeching her to open her eyes, and speak to him

But she heard not, she answered not, she moved not.

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

Oh my wife! my wife! cried he, holding both her hands to his mouth and kissing them with insatiate and frantic joy, O, Eleanor, open but your eyes once more, upon your repentant and broken hearted husband, and he will die in peace! Will you not dear?

He stooped over her, and waited awhile; and listened, and by and by an audible breath escaped her, and her pallid lips, when they were touched with a white handkerchief, betrayed the source of the stain that thrilled us with such horror. The unhappy wife had probably ruptured a blood vessel.

And then he stood up, righteously and bravely up, and said to his uncle with a voice like a man As for me, sir, I do not wish to live; I am ready to die I deserve death, and I acknowledge it for what I have done this day; but save her save your child save her and I will bless you, and pray for you, with the last breath I draw.

I see no use in it, even if I had the power, said the stern old man. Officer officer, I say, see to your charge, and have my house cleared of the people.

The officer prepared to obey; but he would have had some difficulty, had not the uncle said

Look you, Robert Steele; if you do not go without another word you know me your wife, there, shall never revisit this earth again, with my leave. Take your choice going to the door, and holding it open either you or I.

The wretched man bowed low in reply; went up to his wife and kissed her forehead, her mouth and her eyes and then with a look of wo I never shall forget, gave his hand to his uncle, who turned away his head, to conceal a tear, I hope, and followed the officer out of the room, without uttering a word.

You have no further occasion for me, said I, shocked and terrified at the presumption of the rude old man; I wish you a good night. If your nephew desires my aid, however, professionally or otherwise, I shall be ready, night or day, to speak a good word in his favor

Very like, sir; but I have need of you also touch that bell for me again, if you please.

I touched the bell.

Now don't be alarmed at any thing you see the door opened as he spoke, and another fine-looking elderly woman came in, and went straightway up to the sofa, and began chafing the arms of the pale, fair creature that lay there.

Poor child, poor child I hope you have not gone too far, sir.

Pho, pho; I know what I am about. She breathes, you see, and she has been breathing all the time, I dare say; so we have nothing to fear on that score no stoppage, no stagnation, you perceive. But then look here, touching her mouth, and showing the sign that so terrified me, she has either cut her lip very much, or ruptured some blood vessel.

The good woman stopped and looked up in his face with a sort of terror.

There, there, don't be alarmed child; take her away, and put her to bed, and keep her still for twenty-four hours, and with the blessing of God taking off his hat, and lifting the rim to his face, so that he could just look over it we may have occasion to rejoice over the sorrow of this day, the longest hour we have to live. Young man, this way

I limped after him mechanically, cheered I know not why, with the devout and benignant seriousness of manner that followed his brief prayer. He led me to a study, fitted up in very good style, though crowded to the ceiling

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

with books that were covered with dust, and evidently out of their place and ill at ease.

Sit down, sir. These books, and the furniture below I see your eyes are of some use to you saw you looking about you belonged a twelve month ago to Robert Steele, one of the proudest and best, and most gifted men of our country. That filthy tavern porch where I first met you, was the best-furnished house in New-England, a twelve month ago. You see what it is now; That woman you saw on the sofa, three years ago, married Robert Steele against the opinion of every body he was fifteen years the elder; don't interrupt me sir; youthful as he may look to you, what I say is the truth: he and she both have grown, I dare not say how much older, within a twelve month. Why don't you ask me what has led to this change?

I was startled at the abruptness and strangeness of this; but I contrived to say, you will oblige me, sir, by saying how it happened.

Then, sir, in one word, sir It was grog. Yes, sir, it was grog beastly grog, that made a fool of one of the most extraordinary young men of the age, and a mad woman of one of the blindest and most affectionate of God's creatures.

I suspected as much.

You did, hey? But hear me through; I have not done with you yet. I saw *you* throw off a glass of brandy-and-water, the first day of your arrival, as you prepared to sit down to dinner; it was the same the next day, the next day, and the next.

I blushed and trembled at the rebuke of the old man's eye.

So was it with Robert Steele. And now look me in the face prepare yourself I know you, and I know your family; and I tell you now, as I told Robert Steele on the night of his marriage before ten years are over, you will be a drunkard.

I was thunderstruck.

You do not believe me. But hear me through. When Robert Evelett Steele was a boy, he got fond of strong drink, no matter why, no matter how first he loved to dip sugar into sweet wine and eat the sugar; then he dipped into stronger and yet stronger wine after a while, he tried brandy-and-water then a little more brandy and a little less sugar; till he drank as you do now, a glass of brandy-and-water every day before dinner. But he was an extraordinary youth, as I have told you before. Something took place one day, after he had been toying with the evil spirit of strong drink the sight of his own face I believe in a mirror, and he started up, and shook off the encumbering chains and serpents that weighed him to the earth, and walked away free; and for nearly twenty years not a drop of strong liquor ever passed his lip; he had forgotten the taste, and the smell was a horror and a loathing to him. But still, I had my fears, and on his marriage-night, I told him before his bride, her mother, the preacher and all, that before ten years were ended and gone, he would be a lover of strong drink.

A curse on your cruel prophecy! How know you, man man how know you but your words have been pursuing him from that day to this, haunting him with a perpetual fear? If so, you have much to answer for.

You mistake, sir. So long as Robert Steele, or you, or any body else in your condition you are angry with me, are you not?

Yes.

The Down-Easters, Volume 2

Never mind. I shall finish what I have to say, nevertheless. So long as you are *afraid* for yourselves, you are safe. But the moment you have no fear, that moment you are lost. Would you believe that the final overthrow of all this young man's prospects in life, was wrought by his own mother-in-law?

Indeed!

Yes, sir, by my own wife and with a bottle of Noyeau, and a bottle of Old Jamaica?

I do not understand you.

How should you? You have not heard half the story.

I thought he was your nephew.

So he is.

And yet you say, your own wife, his mother-in-law. Are you not his uncle?

A sort of uncle; but I am his father-in-law too; he married my wife's daughter.

Oh ah!

You are satisfied now I hope.

I am.

Please to hear my story now. About three months after their marriage, his mother-in-law my wife an excellent woman she was too she is dead now there never was any body, I dare say, with a heavier detestation of strong drink. She entered the chamber where he and his happy wife were sitting together, he reading to her and she at her work, and setting a sealed bottle on the table before him, said, there's a marriage-gift for you; that creme de noyseau is very old; it came out of the Dash privateer. Some talk ensued, and she then added, that she had two or three bottles of old Jamaica spirits, of a most extraordinary flavor, but as he never tasted of anything of the sort, she supposed it would be of no use to him. Certainly not, he replied; he would not have it in the house. It would be a treasure to them that knew the worth of spirit so old but for him, it was no better than so much aquafortis. But a moment afterwards, something happened to be said about punch punch is a very innocent liquor, as every body knows I dare say, *you* began with punch yourself.

I bowed.

Or sweet cider.

I bowed again.

Or Malaga wine.

Precisely, said I. I began with all three, as every body does.

And so, sir, it was concluded to keep the Jamaica for punch.

Will you tell me, sir, whether the man is dead, before you go any further, said I. I have been longing, yet afraid to ask you, every moment since you returned.

ROBERT STEELE.

No, sir he is not dead.

Was he dangerously hurt?

Yes.

Did he strike first?

No matter now. Hear what I have to say, and then, you shall know the exact state of the affair.

Let us make short work of it now. At the christening of Robert's child, his first child, a miniature picture of his wife, he made the punch, and tasted of it, nothing more. I don't believe he drank a wine-glass full. His wife reminded him of what I had said on the night of their marriage, and of what he had said on the night when he received the bottle of Jamaica. Mother! what if this should make a drunkard of me! What if this should lead to the fulfilment of uncle Joshua W. P. Farrer's prophecy he never called me father, nor father-in-law. Not long after this, he became a military man. He rose rapidly; and he took the more pleasure in it, because he prevailed over a much finer looking, and a much younger man, a former suitor of his wife's, one that every body said she ought to have accepted, instead of Robert, who was almost double her age. But a twelve month ago was the fatal day. Then, for the first time for more than twenty years, he got drunk absolutely drunk. It was partly treachery, partly joy, partly triumph; he was elected to a majority instead of poor French (a cloud flitted over his forehead as he spoke the name). Gradually step by step he grew fond of it; neglected his books profession friends wife, child every thing. I had hopes; but I gave them up, one after the other. At last, I persuaded his mother-in-law to decoy his wife away. We succeeded we suffered the cottage to be stripped his books and furniture to be scattered everywhere we suffered him to be steeped to the very lips in poverty, and to believe his poor wife insane, as she actually was at one time when he saw her in a fever in short, sir, we have done every thing, 'till to-day and to-day, sir, you were a witness of the terrible catastrophe mad with the triumph of his old adversary, elected major to-day in his room galled and fretted to death by the behavior of the mob who knocks?

The door opened, and in walked poor French himself! He had a patch over his temple and his right arm in a sling. Are you crazy? How dare you leave your bed, sir? The doctor said, and then the mystery was explained. The new major had come to beg Robert Steele's pardon, and give up the majority. But no; his father-in-law would not hear a word of it, 'till Robert had been worked upon for at least twenty-four hours. I could have wept for joy; I never was so happy in my life, and I wanted to go directly to the jail, and say in a whisper to the unhappy man Be comforted! But the order was peremptory. Go I should not. Write I should not. His trial, said he, properly carried through, may save him. Nothing else can. I have no other hope. If we can terrify him into self-distrust for the future (looking hard at me) we are safe.

He was right. Robert Steele is now a reformed man a good husband a good father a good friend. The fright saved him.

THE END.

[1] In these and similar words, the orthography is intended to show the pronunciation, that prevails now in a quarter of New-England.