

Losmer; or, The Guardian and Ghost. A Tale of Avarice and Crime

Daniel P. Thompson

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Lucy Hosmer; or, The Guardian and Ghost. A Tale of Avarice and Crime Defeated

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PREFACE.

The following tale is founded on events which actually occurred, and that too mostly within the present century; but which, a proper reluctance to invade the sanctity of family history, will forbid our further particularizing. Should, however, any of the respectable descendants of one of the two strangely contrasted brothers whom we have introduced, discover, as we rather fear than hope they may, the originals of the likenesses we have attempted to sketch, we trust they will not deem the character of the one too severely drawn or that of the other too highly flattered.

CHAPTER I.

The summer's sun was throwing his parting beams over the circular range of high, detached hills that enclosed a small village situated near the mouth of one of the Green Mountain tributaries of the Connecticut river. Long, wavy lines of thin, blue smoke becoming visible in the absence of the sun, lay stretched, with their delicate aerial tracery, from hill to hill above the shaded hamlet, beneath which the piteous bleat of the hungry calf, the lowing of the returning cow, the joyous shouts of children, with other various sounds of congregated life, rose loud and distinct, in the growing denseness of the evening air, and mingled with the sharp, peeping cries of the night-hawk loftily careering in the expanse above, the low, sweet trill of the retiring wood-bird, and the clear, hurried notes of the whip-poor-will, now beginning to burst from the woody sides of the surrounding heights. The field-laborers were seen, with shouldered implements, leisurely coming in from the adjoining meadows, mechanics and other men of business leaving their shops, and all quitting their various avocations for the day, and quietly taking their different ways to their respective abodes.

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Among these there was one personage, a man of about fifty, on whom, as he was seen passing on horse—back up a lane to his house, a large ancient looking building, standing aloof from all others, many an eye was turned with anxious or envious glances; for his movements more or less involved the interests of a great portion of this little community. He was the rich man of the village. But it should have been enough for those inclined to envy Jude Hosmer his wealth, and secretly repine, that they could not change situations with him——it should have been enough to cure the foolish wish, in this, as in a thousand instances of the kind, to have scanned for a moment but his outward appearance, to say nothing of the unknown elements of misery within——to have noted his wasted frame, his head, prematurely gray, dropped in deep study, his thin, sharp features, combining in an expression of countenance, in which keen anxiety, intense, corroding thought, and eager, grasping desire, were stamped on every lineament, and betrayed in every glance, the whole unrelieved by a single warming touch which spoke of sympathy, or a single relaxing smile that betokened inward happiness.

We have termed him the rich man of the village; for he had been so reputed ever since the death of his brother, who had been dead about ten years, and who was known to be his full equal in wealth. Indeed he and that brother, Colonel James Hosmer, were the principal founders of the village, having come here nearly thirty years before, purchased the fine water—privilege the stream here furnished and the valuable tract of meadow land contiguous, built mills, engaged largely, at first, in the lumbering business, and finally in merchandise; one, as was agreed between them, keeping a store for groceries and hard—ware, and the other a dry goods store. And they both, in the course of about twenty years, amassed what are considered in the country handsome fortunes. But their fortunes were made by means as different as their characters, which, excepting their common traits, enterprise and industry, were as opposite as light and darkness: Jude, the elder, the person whom we have introduced, was cold, selfish and to the last degree grasping; while James was warm hearted, generous and scrupulously honest. Jude never gave anything for any purpose, had confidence in none, trusted no one without security, and knew no mercy in the collection of his debts. James, on the contrary, was public spirited, confiding, trusted largely, and very rarely sued anybody. And yet Jude, with all his parsimony, caution and exaction, found it impossible to advance in wealth faster than his brother, who, against all the predictions of the other, scarcely ever had the confidence he reposed in individuals abused. People would make extra exertions to pay one who had used them so fairly and kindly, and failing debtors would come secretly and first secure him, leaving Old Jude, as he was called, to pounce upon the remnant of their property by legal process. In short, he prospered wonderfully, and, in his noble and fortunate career, strikingly exemplified the trite but golden maxim, "Honesty is the best policy."

Yes, honesty is, in truth, the best and only safe policy, even in the accumulation of wealth. Far less tact and talent are necessary to ensure riches with honesty than success with knavery. And we have often wondered how our young men of business, when they cast about them among the men of millions, the Lawrences and Astors of the land, all noted for undeviating honesty, and then look at the Rathburns, or hundreds of others, who have succeeded, perhaps, to considerable extent without that great virtue, but who, with keener foresight and greater capabilities than the former, it may be, have failed to attain a tithe of their wealth, we have wondered how our young men could ever shut their eyes to the fact, that, though trickery and unfair dealing may flourish awhile, yet no great and permanent wealth can be obtained by dishonest and unfair courses——wondered how they can avoid seeing, that, if the latter class ever gain success by dishonest ingenuity and overreaching, their success, with the same capacities, would have been doubled had they pursued a course of upright integrity, which alone can long secure that general confidence indispensable to the acquisition of extensive wealth.——All young men of any observation must see and acknowledge a fact, so often and fully demonstrated in the business community around them. And this, we should think, would be sufficient, if no worthier motive actuated them, to induce all, however inclined, to adopt at their outset in life, the rigid rule, that exact honesty in dealing, with all classes, whatever slight advantages may for the time be lost, be always religiously maintained.

At length Colonel Hosmer, to the sincere grief of all classes, was taken away by an acute disease, leaving a widow and an only child, a daughter of eight or nine years of age, to inherit his property. Jude Hosmer became administrator on his brother's estate, and guardian of his child, on the bonds of the widow, who in a year or two followed her husband to the grave, and thus left the whole of the property of the deceased to his unchecked

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control. Soon after this, Jude Hosmer quitted trade, and commenced the business of usurious money-lending, buying up mortgaged securities, disputed titles, or anything else, in which he saw a prospect of doubling his outlay. His rapacity seemed to increase with his age; and he was even suspected by many of having recourse to unlawful practices to increase his wealth. Indeed the State's Attorney of the county, at one time, thought he had identified him as the secret vender of an immense amount of counterfeit money, which had been saddled on community, or found in the possession of the smaller villains arrested for attempting to pass some of it. But before the time appointed for the trial of the latter, part of whom, on promise of exemption from punishment, had agreed to turn *state's evidences*, and not only testify themselves to the allegations they had privately made against Hosmer, and several of his agents still at large, but put the government in possession of other and sufficient proof, the whole gang escaped, having broke jail by means of implements furnished them evidently from without, by unknown confederates, as was said by some, while others shook their heads but thought it prudent to keep their suspicions to themselves. Old Jude was also twice charged before the grand jury with the crime of procuring false witnesses in his law-suits. And here, too, he strangely escaped by the absconding of some witnesses and the unexpected testimony of others. But though he thus triumphed over all, who had attempted to make him amenable to the criminal law, and though, for awhile, he bore all down before him in civil litigation, yet, at length, the general suspicion that his movements had created in the public mind began to count to his disadvantage. The current of his luck in the law turned against him; and he lost in rapid succession, three or four important suits, in which he had been engaged, and with them large sums of money. It was known also that his property must have suffered deeply in several heavy speculations, into which, goaded on by his avarice, he had gambler-like rashly entered by way of retrieving the bad fortunes that had latterly attended him. Still he was supposed to be immensely rich in his own property, besides having the use of that of his ward. As to the latter, however, he had given out, especially since his own reverses, that his brother's property had been strangely overrated; and that in consequence of large debts, that had been unexpectedly brought against it, and the failure of securities, little or nothing, after meeting the expenses of settling the estate and defending titles, would be left for the heir over what had been expended in her maintenance and education.

Such had been the history—as far as could be known to the public of the affairs of one, who so closely kept his dark counsels to himself,—such the history and ungenial character of Jude Hosmer, whom we will now accompany to his abode, which had been anything but a blest one: For most of his children had died early, a son, who arrived at maturity, became a drunkard and died miserably, and his only remaining child, a married but childless daughter had become insane. And his family, at this time consisted only of his wife, a weak, sickly, querulous woman, her nurse and maid of all work, a blear-eyed old thing with just sense enough to make a good drudge, a deaf, surly looking servant boy, nearly grown, and lastly, Miss Lucy Hosmer, the niece and ward already mentioned, a lovely and high-minded girl, now in the first fresh bloom of womanhood, and standing here in singular contrast with the ill-assorted inmates of this cheerless domicil.

CHAPTER II.

As Old Jude now rode into the yard his restless eyes at once fell on the partially disclosed forms of his niece and a young gentleman occupying two windows opening from the parlor towards the garden, and immediately his usually severe and bitter countenance assumed an expression of unwonted asperity. Leaping from his horse with an air of nervous irritation, he made a few rapid strides towards the barn and began to bawl loudly and angrily to the servant boy we have named, who stood leaning over the fence heedlessly gazing at the yarded cows.

"Shack! I say, Shack! Shack Rogers! do you hear, you deaf booby?—come here, then, and take care of this horse."

"Um?—what?—oh, yes," replied the other, at length rousing up and coming forward.

"Shack," said the old man going up closely to the other, as he handed him the bridle-reins, and speaking in his

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ear, "do you know who that is in the parlor with Lucy?"

"Um?—what?—Oh—why, yes—Lot Fisher, the young lawyer—guess—an't sartin—the one that used to live with 'Squire Stacy down in the street, you know."

"How long has he been here?"

"Um? Oh 'bout two hours, guess—took tea—may be three."

"Has he ever been here before, when I was away?"

"Um? Oh, yes, think likely, but not so long, guess."

"What does the fellow want here?"

"Um? Oh,—don't know—may be Lucy does," added the speaker, with a knowing wink of the off eye.

"Look here, Shadrack," said the old man complaisantly addressing the other by his true name, instead of the usual contraction, "I want you should tell me if that fellow comes here again in my absence. Be still about it; but keep a little eye on their movements, and I'll do what is right—I'll pay you something extra."

"What's right, hey?" muttered Shack to himself, as he led the horse away to the stable—"Do what is right, hey, old head—'t would be plaguy strange if you should do any thing that's next door neighbor to right. Extra pay for keeping an eye on them, hey? Yes, I'll keep an eye on them, old chap, without pay, but in a way you don't think of, may be."

With knitted brow, Old Jude took his way towards the kitchen where he encountered the old house-maid, before described, shaking a fine damask table cloth at the door. "So Tabby, you have been getting tea for those parlor gentry, eigh," said he, sneeringly.

"Why, la!—why, yes, Sir," replied the other turning up her great white eyes deprecatingly to the angry face of her master.

"And you made a great parade, I'll warrant it?" resumed the former, in the same tone.

"Why, goodness, now! Why, Lucy ordered tea in the dining-room with the reg'lar company things—be sure she did; and I didn't know you'd got objections, or I'd never done it in the born world, Mr. Hosmer," said the girl in a fluster.

Old Jude made no further remark, but after musing a moment made his way directly for the parlor, and unceremoniously entered the room, where the lovers, for such they might in truth be called, were sitting happy in the interchange of congenial thought and feeling, and wholly unconscious of the domestic storm that was about to burst upon them.

"I didn't know that you was going to have company, this afternoon, Lucy," said the old man in a voice tremulous with suppressed passion, as he turned abruptly on the astonished girl, without deigning a look or word to her companion.

"Nor did I, myself, scarcely," she responded with some confusion—"But if I had," she continued with increasing firmness, and spirit, "if I had known certainly that Mr. Fisher was to call this afternoon, I should have not considered it necessary, perhaps, to apprise you of the fact, Uncle."

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"Mr. Fisher?" said the former tauntingly, without pretending to heed what she said, except the name of the person she mentioned,—"Mr. Fisher?—who is Mr. Fisher?"

"Why, you certainly have not forgotten Mr. Fisher, Uncle— the young gentleman that studied law with Squire Stacy," answered the girl, turning on the other a searching and reproachful look.

"Fisher!" pursued the old man with a disdainful snuff. "Lot Fisher, the illegitimate boy that Stacy got from a poor-house down south somewhere?"

"Yes, Sir, the same!" promptly said the young man elevating a head that might have served as a model for an Appollo, and turning his clear, frank, self-possessed countenance full on the other.

"O, is it," returned the former, in the same sneering tone, without looking up,—"I was not aware, that I ever invited you here, Sir."

"Mr. Hosmer," rejoined the young man, still courting the averted gaze of the old man, "this is very hard to bear, but as it is in your own house, I will try to do it without losing temper. I am here without invitation from you, it is true, for I did not suppose you would expect me to wait for one, if I desired to come. But I wish to make no secret of my business here, Sir,— It was to address Miss Hosmer with the view to a future connection with me, and with the intention, if she did not discourage my suit, of consulting you early on the subject."

"Consulting! umph! really! It would'nt require much consulting to get my mind on that matter. If Lucy can't look anywhere but among illegitimates and town-paupers for a future connection, as you call it, I think she better not form one at all."

So saying the old man turning hastily on his heel, shuffled out of the room and slammed the door after him, leaving the distressed and deeply offended girl in tears, and her insulted companion pacing the room in silence, and struggling hard to maintain the mastery over his outraged feelings.

"Miss Hosmer," said the young man pausing before her after quelling his emotions in a good degree,—"—

The girl raised her tearful eyes to the face of the other with a look full of tenderness and respect, when, with a softened and less formal tone, he resumed.

"Lucy, when I offered you my hand, at our former interview, it was done with much hesitation, and the openly expressed fears, that the circumstances, of which your uncle has so harshly taken advantage, would be made, in case you accepted me, a source of pain and mortification to you by the evil minded. The trial, as you now see, is already begun,—to be repeated, I know not how often, through life. And if, from this foretaste, you begin to wish it, Lucy, I will relinquish my suit from this hour, and with it, of course, all hopes of that union, to which I have been looking forward with so many sweet anticipations of happiness."

"I was not looking for such an appeal from you, Lot," responded the other again looking up with an expression of disappointment and regret. "I remember what you said at the interview, to which you allude; and I remember, also, you added, that, as for yourself, you should never be disturbed by those circumstances; for those who were worthy your esteem would never, in thought or word, disparage you on that account; and that no others would have the power to wound you. To this I assented, as a just remark, and assured you, that if *you* could thus reason and endure, *I* certainly ought not, and should not, allow such a thing to disturb *me*. Has any thing now occurred, Lot, to lead you to discredit the sincerity of my assurances, or doubt my consistency and firmness?"

"No, Lucy," replied the young man with a breast swelling with emotions of gratitude and admiration,—"No, noble—noble girl; but when I saw you in tears"—

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"It was not that,"—quickly interposed the other,——"nothing of that kind, Lot. I indeed felt wounded—deeply wounded—insulted by my uncle; for I was insulted, as much as you, by his treatment of company, whom I chose to receive, and whose respectability he knew as well as myself—ay, insulted by my uncle, my only near surviving relative, whom I so wished to love! It was a bitter thought!—I could not have believed he would ever have treated his dead brother's daughter so shamefully."

"Then, dear girl, I am to feel assured, that, for aught that has now happened, I stand with you as before?"

"As well, most certainly—perhaps I should say better—your forbearance and manly conduct under such trying circumstances should raise you in my esteem,—at all events it will be highly appreciated. But I must not allow you to infer from this, any final answer to your proposals. I would first have you received here as you should be. My uncle, as you must know, has great faults and peculiarities; but I would preserve his character in spite of himself, and induce him to take a course that will be for the credit and happiness of us both. In short, I would have his consent to any union I may form."

"His consent to a union with me, I fear, you will never have, Lucy," said Lot despondingly.

"We do not know that," rejoined she, "he may have other objections to you than those he has led you to infer. He is a man, I am sorry to say, whose motives are often deeply masked."

"It may be," said the former, "that I have been misrepresented to him; and when disabused, he may consent. And if he should?—you have not yet said what you should then do, Lucy."

"Why how dull you are!" she playfully responded with reddening cheek.

"Ay, but the words," persisted the lover, "the comforting words, Lucy,—what should you do then?"

"Why—why, of course, I should submit to my Lot," she replied, as blushing and laughing at her inadvertent pun, she dropped her head on that fondly, proudly throbbing bosom, which, at that moment, a moment ever fearfully important to the sex, she had thus virtually chosen *for weal or for wo*,—that bosom, on which—such is woman!—she must now depend for the only talisman of her earthly happiness in the allotted calm and sunshine of life—her only refuge in its never failing storms and reverses."

The lovers, not deeming it expedient to attempt any more interviews in this house at present, agreed on a future correspondence by letter, or perhaps such occasional meetings at the house of a mutual friend in the village, as opportunity should permit; and having settled this, they were on the point of separating, when Old Jude, not satisfied with the abuse he had already offered Fisher, or irritated that he still presumed to linger, hastily reentered the room, and began to repeat his insults in terms even more aggravating than before. But failing to elicit this time a single word of reply from the young man he seemed to lose all his patience, and, suddenly pointing to the outer entrance, exclaimed,

"There is the way out, Sir—there is the door; and while I live here don't let me see you darken it again."

The young man deliberately took his hat, and bowing an adieu to Miss Hosmer, departed in silence.

"Well, well," said the old man, in an attempted jocular tone, as he turned to his niece with the air of one ready to apologize or conciliate.

But his niece, without paying the least attention to his words or manner, brushed by him with an air of chilling dignity, and immediately quitted the room, leaving the nonplussed old man to digest his spleen and enjoy his reflections by himself.

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As to Lot, he soon found his way into the street, but he scarcely knew how he had done so; for now, when he came to be alone, and relaxed the curb of self-control which he had so successfully imposed upon himself, his bosom became a perfect turmoil of conflicting emotions. Although his heart had been made to bound with happiness by the gratifying proofs he had received of the niece's love, and the noble traits of character on which he might rely for its continuance, yet that cup of happiness had been sadly dashed by the treatment of the uncle. That delicacy, which he had naturally felt before his mistress, had been rudely shocked, his pride humbled, and his whole feelings outraged; and chagrin, vexation and resentment, in all their mingled power, took possession of his breast, for awhile over-mastering all the better feelings of his heart, which usually so strongly predominate there, and driving him almost to curse those who had been the instruments of an origin, which now, for the first time in his life, perhaps, he was ready to pronounce a reproach.

While struggling under the influence of such feelings, as he was slowly pursuing his way, with drooping head and abstracted mien, towards the inn where he had left his horse, the hand of some one, who had overtaken him unperceived, was laid familiarly on his shoulder, with a good-natured,

"Hurra to you, Lot!—is this you, moping along with a gait so unlike your usual one?—what has happened to you?"

"Squire Stacy!" exclaimed the other, starting, "You have fairly taken me by surprise."

"Ay," rejoined the former, a very plain, but well favored, keen eyed man of the middle age, "Ay, doubtless, but that don't answer my question.—You look disturbed; something is wrong with you, Lot,—where have you been?"

"Why, really, Squire Stacy," said Lot, with a half offended, remonstrating air, "you really press me very hard about"—

"About that which is none of my business, eigh?" interrupted the Squire with good natured bluntness—"true enough, I presume; but what other than a friendly motive do you suppose I have for so particular an enquiry, Lot?"

"None, none, certainly," replied the former relaxing. "And you are right; for who is so well entitled to my confidence, as a consulting friend, as you, Squire Stacy. You shall know:—I have been to visit your fair favorite, Miss Lucy Hosmer."

"I suspected so, Lot. And your reception has not been such as you had hoped, I suppose?"

"From Lucy herself it has been— even more— but her uncle, unexpectedly obtruding himself, insulted me beyond bearing; and not content with that, finally turned me out of doors."

"Indeed?—Do you mean to be understood literally?"

"Yes."

"Well, I should hardly thought that of Old Jude. What could be his motive in taking that foolish course to break off the match? I confess I don't now see, though I very well understand why he will oppose it. But stay—did you lose your temper and retort upon him?"

"No, I governed myself perfectly, though I wonder how I did."

"That is well—very well—thanks to my training, eigh, Lot?"

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"I confess it—otherwise I must have all but struck him."

"Ay, and defeated yourself with both uncle and niece. But one serious question to you, Lot. Why do you seek a union with Lucy Hosmer? Do you want her for herself, or for her money?"

"For herself, certainly. You surprise me by the question; for I have understood she would have no property, or very little. Indeed, she once incidentally told me herself, that her uncle had notified her to that effect. And were it otherwise, I had hoped you entertained such opinions of my general motives as would render that question unnecessary."

"Well I do, Lot, as far as you are aware yourself of your leading motives in a given case, but we are all so constituted, that we do not always realize what influences most contribute to form our motives, or rather what our wishes would be, in a case, if certain influences did not—perhaps unconsciously, operate on us. But one question more—does Lucy love you?"

"I flatter myself it is so. Indeed I can no longer doubt it."

"Well, Lot, I am now satisfied with your motives towards that noble girl, the lovely inheritor of all her father's sterling worth. I believe, also, you are worthy of her; and I think I can promise you success."

"*You? you* promise me success?"

"Yes, I—for I think I can. This doubtless sounds strange to you, but it will appear less so when you hear certain developments, which it is now expedient, perhaps, that I should make to you."

"It may be so; but I doubt it. She will not marry me without her uncle's consent, which I have every reason to believe will be withheld. And besides every means will doubtless be employed to destroy me in her present good opinion, and I fear with eventual success."

"Poo! Lot, faint heart, eigh? I see you have not so high an opinion of the girl as I have, after all. But come, let us go into my office, where we can be free from intrusion. I have, as I just intimated, some confidential disclosures to make to you."

But before following them to the proposed conference, we will glance at the character and previous career of Stacy, together with so much of the early history of our hero, as may serve to explain the nature of the connection between them, and the unpleasant circumstances attending the origin of the latter to which allusion has already been made.

CHAPTER III.

Squire Stacy, as he was always called, who was the village lawyer, was very generally acknowledged to be a strictly honest, and in his way, a good hearted man. But as he was eccentric and never did anything like other people, his acts and motives were not always rightly appreciated, except by those who intimately knew him. He was also so shrewd in reading the characters and motives of others, and in detecting their weaknesses and faults, that he was more dreaded than loved generally by the villagers, who usually kept aloof from him, unless they desired his professional services, on which they very justly placed the utmost reliance: For many of the very traits that had prevented him from being a favorite in social life, had contributed doubtless, to success in his profession, in which he had acquired an honest fame and a fair competence. But we need not enlarge on his peculiar traits, for they will be shown sufficiently for our purpose in that characteristic act of his life which involved the fortunes of the young friend in whom we have seen him take so great an interest.

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About a dozen years before the period of our story, as Stacy, one day, was returning on horseback from a neighboring town, where he had been to attend a justice's court he stopped at a watertrough by the side of the road near two or three poor looking dwellings. And while awaiting the slow and dallying motions of his horse in drinking, he amused himself in watching the motions of a group of boys playing near the spot, and in indulging in what, to him, was always a favorite employment, that of trying to read their individual characters, present and prospective. His eye first fell on a boy much larger than the rest, who was unfeelingly domineering over a little timid fellow, wholly unable to defend himself.

"Everything there shows the brute and coward for life, and his actions confirm it," said the Squire to himself. "Now for another.

And his eye next rested on a straight, compactly built little fellow, standing on a flat rock, with no other clothing on him than a coarse, ragged shirt, and a still more ragged pair of trowsers, with one of the legs entirely torn off as high as the knee.

"Ah! now *there* is something worth studying in that boy, ragged as the little Lazarus is," said the Squire with interest---- "head, face, features, all faultless! and that expression! Why, an almost perfect model of promising indications! But let us look now for some exhibition of character."

And with increasing interest he watched the boy's countenance, which with alternating expressions of indignation and pity, was keenly bent on the scene enacting between the hectoring big boy and his distressed little victim.

"Zeke Doty!" presently exclaimed the ragged subject of the Squire's observations, leaping from his stand on the rock, and advancing a step towards the bully, "Can't see that any longer!---- can't have it!"

"Hoo!" sneeringly replied the other, "Seems to me, if I was one of the town's poor, and a come-by-chance to boot, I should n't crow quite so loud. I will do as I please, for all you, sir."

"No you won't!" rejoined the former. "You let that little fellow alone, and stop calling me names, or I'll fight you!"

The great boy, however, only jeered the more, and was beginning to worry his victim again; when the other flew at him with such resolution, and followed up his blows with so much effect, in spite of the hard knocks he received himself, that his antagonist, though of nearly twice his size, soon yielded and took to his heels.

"Well done!" exclaimed the Squire. "Ah! I was right----all the elements of a firm and noble nature stand revealed in that single act, and intellect I know he has. If I could but have the training of that boy----and why not? I want a boy, and he may want a place. Let's talk with him a little."

"Well, my lad," said he, riding up to the boy, who was wiping the blood from his nose, "you have got pretty badly hurt, haven't you?"

"Some, but not so much as he did, I guess," coolly answered the boy.

"What is your name?"

"Lot Fisher."

"Who is your father?"

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"Don't know, sir. My mother's name was Hannah Fisher; but she is dead now; and I live with Mr. Bean, who makes shoes in that house, there."

"Would you like to come and live with me, at the village?"

"Don't know but I should——what do you do when you are at home?"

"I am a lawyer."

"But they say lawyers do lie so——"

"That is a story you got from those who had lost their cases. I don't lie, and I would not have a boy that would."

"I'll go then, if Mr. Bean will let me."

"Very well, we will go and talk with him," said the Squire, riding up and calling the shoemaker to the door.

"Well, what about this boy, Sir?" he asked, as the man made his appearance, "have you any claims to him?"

"Why not in particular, Squire Stacy, I believe it is. The boy being one of the town's poor, I bid him off, you see, about three years ago to keep at a quarter of a dollar a week, besides what I could get out of him; and so have kept him till this year, when the selick men said he was old enough to earn his way, and if I didn't want him, I must get a place for him, which, seeing he didn't seem to take to my trade, I thought I should."

"That you can do easily. I'll take him off your hands."

"What, for yourself? I don't know but I oughter tell you the boy was kinder unfortunate about his birth."

"So much the better——he will then know he must depend on himself. But can he go now?"

"Why, yes, s'pose so."

"Well, let him on with his hat and jacket, then."

"He did have a hat," said the man, "though I guess he has lost it. But where's your jacket, Lot?"

"Why 'twant good for nothing," replied the boy, "and when I laid it down 'tother day, the hogs tore the last sleeve off."

"Never mind," said the Squire, "leap up here behind me and we'll off in a tangent for home."

Lot was accordingly mounted, in his scanty rags, without hat or coat, behind the eccentric Squire, who, in this manner, proceeded on his route, entered and rode through the village, heedless of the wonder or sly looks of the villagers, and, landing the boy at his house, installed him at once in his new home.

Stacy had judged correctly of the native character of the boy, but he soon perceived that much must be done for him in the way of instruction and guidance, else the strong traits of disposition and intellect he possessed, which, under judicious management might make him a useful and perhaps a distinguished man, would make him very likely, if left to the guidance of chance, a curse to the community, of which he should be an ornament. The Squire, therefore, in pursuance of his own notions on such matters, commenced his system of training; and his first step was to inspire the boy with self-respect, by dressing him as well as any of the boys of the village——by always

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treating him with respectful kindness, and by never failing to praise every good action, and only to express regret and sorrow at his misbehavior and faults. This course, with the instruction constantly accompanying it, transformed him, in a very few years, from the wild, impulsive creature he was at first, into the most obedient and docile of boys. In the mean time, he was allowed the advantages of schools—the common schools till he was well grounded in the rudiments of learning, and then the classical; but of the latter, only enough to whet the intellectual appetite, to teach him how to learn—to study on his own strength, and in short, to think for himself. And such was his progress, and general improvement in every thing, that at eighteen he was permitted to enter on a regular course of studies in the law office, at twenty one he was admitted as a practitioner at the bar, in the county, with acquisitions both scientific and legal far superior to many a graduate from college and law schools; when, with the advice of his master, he settled, under the most flattering auspices, in a neighboring village. Let us now return to the thread of our narrative where we left it.

"Now Lot," said the Squire, after they had taken a seat by themselves in the office, "what do you imagine to be the true cause of Old Jude's opposition to your proposed union with his niece?"

"I certainly do not know, unless, as he led me to suppose, it be the circumstances connected with my origin."

"Not by any means: He cares not two straws for that; and if the blind god had not made your eyes a little filmy, when you look in that direction, I think your usual sagacity would have enabled you to see that such a cause would be wholly without effect on such a man as Old Jude, who as regards the social relations, or any of the claimed proprieties and distinctions in society, not involving the matter of dollars and cents, has no more moral perceptions than a horse."

"True, and I confess I was surprised to be called to meet objections of that kind in him. It was then as I had partly anticipated, want of wealth, was it?"

"No—as closely as the old man hugs money bags for himself, that, if I read his dark character aright, is not the true secret here."

"Why, what can be his objection, then?"

"It is because you are a lawyer."

"A lawyer!"

"Yes, a lawyer—such an one, at least, as he probably thinks you will make, and especially one who stands in the relation you do to me."

"Your words are still too much of a riddle for my comprehension."

"I presume so, and will be till you hear my story, which you shall now have:—"

Colonel Hosmer, when, in his last sickness, he found he could not recover, sent for me, who had ever been his friend and legal adviser, and earnestly requested me to accept the trust of administering on his estate after his decease, and of becoming the guardian of his daughter; his wife, he said, being too feeble in health, and otherwise unequal to the management of so large a property. I apprised him that his brother, in such a case, could by our statute, claim those trusts; and I thought he would never consent to forego his right and suffer a rival estate to go into other hands. He then proposed making a brief will and me the executor. That place I, also, firmly declined, knowing how much Old Jude's persecutions, were to be dreaded by those who crossed him where he conceived he had interests at stake. The Colonel, who appeared disappointed at my refusal, then remarked, by way of explaining the reason of his request, that though his property would probably be safe in his brother's hands, should

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the latter continue to be prospered, yet should he meet with any great reverses in his own affairs, temptations might arise, to which it were better for all parties that he should not be exposed. The Colonel then asked, and finally drew from me a solemn promise that if his brother took charge of his property, as he supposed he must, that I would keep an observant eye on the manner the trust was discharged, see that his wife and daughter were never wronged, and in all things, act towards them as a friend and father. He then handed me what he assured me was an exact inventory of all his property, together with an appended schedule of all debts honestly due from him, duplicates of which, it seems he had prepared and kept for an emergency like the present one. With these papers, which I have kept under lock and key ever since, I left my dying friend, who, as I understood sent immediately for Old Jude, proposed to him the same trusts he had offered me, and, in the last words he ever uttered, charged him to be kind and just to the widow and fatherless. So you see now, Lot, why I should interest myself in all that concerns the family of my lamented friend."

"I do. But have you contrived to keep up all the while this supervision of their affairs without the fact being known? As long as I lived with you I never knew or suspected anything of the kind."

"No, nor any others, I presume. Yes, I have kept it up with anxious vigilance. At the time I accepted this secret, and certainly very unusual trust, and for several years after, I had not, it is true, but little expectation of ever being called to exercise it, except in the mere offices of friendship. But it was not long before I began to have reasons to think otherwise. And my suspicions being thus early aroused, I have traced Old Jude, from that time up to the present, through all his secret and subtle windings of iniquity, not only respecting his brother's affairs, but his own, which, in the way he was managing, I thought it part of my duty to investigate."

"Do you then think him guilty of managing to defraud his niece and ward of a portion of her property?"

"If he claims any of the property that now passes for his, I do,---not only a portion, but the whole."

"What, Sir! how am I to understand you, Mr. Stacy?"

"That, if Lucy was paid off all that justly belongs to her, Old Jude would not be left with a shilling in the world!"

"You astonish me! and I can scarcely realize this of the so generally accounted rich Jude Hosmer; nor can I conceive how it can be, that with his sharpness, with his extreme economy in family expenses, and with no vices to impoverish him, he has not even gained instead of losing property."

"True he has sharpness in deal, even to the most unconscionable exaction, economy to pinching, and none of what you mean by vices; but instead of the latter, he has pursued, instigated by his insatiable thirst for gain, a course of secret crimes, and it was this which, at length, proved the principal source and means of his impoverishment and losses. He began at first by bribing witnesses in his law-suits; and his success for awhile, as is often the case with those who enter on a career of crime, blinded him to the final consequences. These bribed men under threats of exposing him, or of volunteering to those seeking new trials in important suits, to do away or explain their former testimony, have continued to make fearful drafts on his purse. Besides this, the public became so generally impressed with a belief in his foul practices, that after a while he stood not even a fair chance of obtaining his just rights before our courts and juries; and he consequently lost several heavy suits, when he ought to have recovered. He next went into the purchase and sale of counterfeit bank bills, of which you recollect, there were suspicions afloat at the time. Well, Sir, the story of those prisoners whom he doubtless helped to escape was all true; and yet it embraced only one branch of his extensive operations, in which, finally to save himself from infamy and a prison, he had to silence a combination of his accomplices and agents, who found it safer and easier to plunder him than the public, by paying them, in all enormous sums of money. And having had quite enough of this, and become almost desperate by his losses, he lastly, in seeming exemplification of the noted adage "*whom God would destroy he first makes mad,*" plunged into heavy speculations in the paper cities, then just got up, as a test on human gullibility, one would think, and this gave the finishing blow to his own private property."

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"But is it not generally understood," asked Lot, "that his brother's estate, at the same time, has turned out badly through unexpected indebtedness and defective titles?"

"Yes, but that story all come from Old Jude, and has been given out from time to time, during the past half dozen years, to prepare the public mind for a quiet accomplishment of his designs on the estate."

"What first led you to suspect any such designs on this estate?"

"Why, I was not quite satisfied, at the outset, that he should have taken out letters of administration and guardianship on the bonds of the widow alone, and I think the court should have required further bonds, in so large an estate; but he declining to procure other signers, the court, knowing him to be very wealthy, appointed him on the bonds he offered. I did not like the aspect of the thing, however, at the time, I remember; for it looked to me, as if he was glancing at the probability of his wishing some day to appropriate a portion of this estate to himself, and was thus guarding himself against the troubles that might arise in being watched and called to account by bondsmen."

"But at the death of the widow was he not required to give new bonds, and by that time, also, to settle the estate?"

"Yes, he was notified to that effect, and here the Judge of Probate was clearly delinquent in duty in not enforcing its requirements. But as he appeared so willing to give new bonds when the subject was named to him, though he always had some plausible excuse for not doing it then, and as every one considered him so rich that it could only be necessary as a matter of form, he has been always suffered to pass on without any bond but his own. And so he has managed with regard to a—settlement with the court. The great bulk of the estate was in notes and mortgaged securities, of which he never returned any inventory, and having pretended to sell the real estate to pay debts and expenses, the amount and situation of the estate were, as he supposed, known only to himself. Well, though he was several times told by the different judges, that he ought to settle, yet as he seemed always willing, though never quite ready, he was permitted to glide along, as with his bonds, partly through the negligence of the judges, there being no one interested that could call him to an account, and partly through their fears of attempting to enforce the law on a man of his influence: For in addition to the power incident to wealth, Old Jude was often a warm politician, when he could make anything by it, and always contrived to exercise so much influence in the election of the judges, that they were made to feel that their term of office was in a great measure in his hands. Thus in regard to the management of this estate. I have sometimes thought I could see an almost literal fulfillment of the significant words of one of the old prophets respecting the approaching corruptions of the Hebrew government—*The great man uttereth his mischievous desire, and so they wrap it up.*"

"All this looks, indeed, like a forearming for the execution of some such design as you alledge; but how far has he proceeded in fact?"

"So far that little remains to be done. About the time he met with the first serious reverses in his own fortune, which I have named, he commenced changing the notes and securities of his brother's estate into his own name; and I soon found, that just about in proportion as he lost his own property, he prepared the way for embezzling that of his ward. And thus, in realization of his brother's fears, he has gone on till he has destroyed, as he believes, all evidence, by which any parcel or portion of that property can be identified. These acts, with many more I could name, when taken in connection with what he has latterly declared to his niece and others about the failure of the estate, afford sufficient proof not only of the intention, but the act, of embezzling the whole of his brother's extensive property, or at least turning its rightful owner off with some paltry setting out in furniture. But with all his precautions, he will be afraid of the investigation his course might have to undergo, in case his niece married one whom he could not hope to blind."

"And has he never suspected you in the part you have been secretly acting?"

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"I think he has; but he is by no means aware how much I know of him. And not suspecting my motives and the moral obligations I am under to ferret out his misdeeds, he probably thinks what I do know will only be made use of in making up a bad opinion of him. But he evidently fears me; and he has much more reason to do so than he dreams of; for in following him in matters that really concerned me to know, I have become possessed, as I before intimated, of most, if not all, of the dangerous secrets of his dark, tortuous and plotting career. And I tell you, Lot Fisher, that Old Jude Hosmer, as much as he is feared and courted by others, and as firmly and as strongly as he thinks he has planted himself, stands tottering on a precipice, from which I think I have the power to hurl him to destruction."

"This is as new to me as it is surprising," said Lot, thoughtfully, "but how do you propose to make use of this power?"

"To compel him to do justice to his niece. If he will do this, his crimes against the State, as the occasion has passed by, shall be kept still secret, if he offends no more. But should he refuse the condition I shall place before him, and attempt to stand out, he must then be overthrown by every means that can be brought to bear upon him. And you, Lot, must be the man, as the husband of Lucy Hosmer, to take the lead in fighting the great battle which will then ensue."

"If I was the husband of Miss Hosmer, I should probably take proper measures to secure her rights; but as I am not, and have not the least authority to act for her, how do you propose that I should avail myself of the knowledge you have imparted?"

"I would lay the whole case before her. She will keep the secret; and she will, also, have the sense to perceive, that her interest and her happiness alike require, that she make you, as soon as she is of age, her legal protector, whether her uncle consent or not."

"No," said Lot, after a thoughtful pause, "I can never do that. All that I could say would be but to tell her, in effect, that she was entitled to a fortune—that I would prosecute her uncle and recover it, if she would marry me. No, never! It would carry with it an air of mercenary calculation, that I will never have associated with my name."

"I spoke as a lawyer, you have spoken as a lover. And perhaps it is well for us, in this mercenary world, that there is one passion devoid of selfishness. I am not surprised that you take this view of the subject. Still the emergency seems to require that some step to apprise Lucy of her rights should be taken soon—before she is of age, which is some time this year, I think. It would probably alter her resolution about waiting for her uncle's consent to her marriage. And besides this, there is danger that Old Jude, as soon as she can legally act for herself, will be coaxing her into a settlement, which, unless she is previously informed of her rights, he will have in his own way. Perhaps I had better see her myself."

"You should be the one, if any body; but remember I can give you no authority; nor do I wish you, when communicating with her, to connect my name, in any way, with the subject."

"Certainly not; for I can appreciate the delicacy of the circumstances under which you are placed. But if I should conclude to have a talk with Old Jude, as I may, I should directly urge his consent to her union with you, hinting enough of what I know, if I could not get along without, to bring him to a compliance. For I can see, that no strong steps can be taken to secure Lucy's estate, which is greater than you even now dream of, till your union with her. Then, if you and she wish it, I shall be ready to act, not only with all my skill as a lawyer, but with all my good will as a friend to you both."

"You know, Squire Stacy, how certainly I should retain you in any case which I could strictly call my own; and I doubt not Lucy would as certainly do the same. But, at present, I can only thank you for your kind intentions."

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"Ay, Lot, but you may expect I shall be acting a little in anticipation of the only legal authority under which I can ever act; for no such authority, you are aware, could be conferred in the secret trust I accepted from Lucy's father. But whatever move I may make, it will be done with the utmost caution, and in a manner, perhaps, that you may not, at the time, comprehend; for expedients of no common character may be required to meet the doublings of my subtle opponent, who is really more to be dreaded, in a contest of this kind, than any three lawyers in the land. And here, before we part, let me enjoin the same caution and vigilance on you, not only in keeping all I have told you a profound secret, but by placing a double guard on your whole conduct. I know you have the best of all shields against the shafts of enemies and opponents of all kinds, a good moral character. But Old Jude is no ordinary opponent, and you know not what means he may resort to by way of preventing a connection, in which he doubtless sees much to fear."

The conference here ended and the parties rose to leave the place; when their attention was attracted by a slight ruffling noise, as of hastily moved paper, in the back room of the office, the door between the two rooms being sufficiently ajar to admit the sound. The Squire instantly went into the room, and, drawing up the paper curtain, which hung down over an open window in the rear of the building, and which had doubtless occasioned the noise, looked out, but discovered no person, though an eaves-dropper, owing to a line of shrubbery, that stood near the building, could have easily escaped undetected.

"I was careless in leaving that door ajar, and still more so in not shutting down that window," said the Squire, as they now left the office; "but I think it could have been only some slight puff of wind that ruffled the curtain, so our secret is still with ourselves, I presume."

CHAPTER IV.

The night which followed these agitating events, was not, as may be easily imagined, one of very calm repose to either of the lovers: For as they retired to their respective rooms, now many miles apart, and laid their heads on their solitary pillows, the occurrences of the day, so deeply interesting to the feelings, and so important to the future destinies of both, were made to pass again and again in review before them. And while the blissful sensations, flowing from their own and the consciousness of each other's love, grew more rapturous in the retrospect, the unprovoked treatment they had received, now that the feeling of resistance, with which the bosom is apt to arm itself to meet the infliction of a wrong, had passed away, was felt with double poignancy. Lot's feelings, in respect to this treatment, it is true, had been somewhat modified by Stacy's developments, which were calculated to lessen the effect of Old Jude's conduct on one of his character; but, as much as these developments had quieted his feelings in some respects, they added to his uneasiness in others. He now felt himself placed in a new and somewhat embarrassing position. He knew not what fierce battles for property, and, perhaps, for character, in which his motives would doubtless be impugned, were about to be fought over his head. And besides this, the beautiful girl he had wooed in the confidence arising from supposed equality in pecuniary circumstances, now stood before him as a wealthy heiress; and he could not prevent new doubts and fears from arising in his mind, lest, when this should be known, his humble claims would be made to give place to more advantageous offers. The consciousness, however, of pure motives——of the fact, that he had offered her his hand when he supposed her destitute of wealth, together with his faith in her character and constancy, at length, in a good degree, prevailed over his doubts and conquered his uneasiness in this respect. But though he might be able to quell these lover-like troubles by the deep trust which he felt he could place in Miss Hosmer, so long as she should be left to follow the dictates of her own unbiased judgment, yet doubts and fears far less easily disposed of now arose for the effect of the machinations which this new insight into the motives and character of her uncle assured him would be put in train to prejudice or deceive her, and break off the connection. And the more he looked forward to the probable difficulties in his path, and reviewed the slender, silken thread of love, which led to the desired consummation, and which, in all cases, is so easily snapped asunder, the less was his hope that it could withstand the many rude shocks that it was doubtless destined to receive.

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With Lucy the case was considerably varied. She, having, by this time, no suspicions that the situation and extent of her property was any different from what her uncle had, for so many years, been artfully preparing her to believe, and consequently being ignorant of the deep motives he had to drive away the suitor of her choice,—she could not bring herself to believe that his opposition, whether grounded on the inadequate reasons he had held out, or any other prejudice, would long be persevered in. Although, sooner than she intended, she had been brought virtually to engage herself, in her sympathy for her lover under his ill usage, and in admiration of his manly conduct on the occasion, yet she did not regret the step she had taken. Entertaining neither a doubt nor a fear, that her own feelings and purposes or those of her lover would ever be estranged or shaken, she saw no clouds in the future. And the happiness she felt, in now, for the first time, permitting her gushing affections to flow unrestrained, and in looking through the brightening vista before her, was only alloyed by the annoying sense of the wrongs and insults with which this new and interesting era of her life was associated. These, for a while, she thought she could never forget or forgive. But resentment could never long find harbor in a bosom so beautifully harmonized as that of Lucy Hosmer, who possessed the enviable faculty of making the good in every picture so prominent as to overshadow the bad, and even of extracting, like the bee, some portion of sweet from every bitter flower she found in her path. She soon resolved, therefore, to cast away anger and endeavor to conquer her uncle by kindness. And this resolution was strengthened by the unusual cordiality with which the latter responded to her smiling salutations, when they met the next morning. But she little knew what was passing in the breast of him whom she thought thus to move from his purposes. He, himself, had been the first to perceive the error he had committed, and his plotting brain was already at work devising new and more effectual measures to estrange and separate the lovers; when he somehow became apprised of the existence of other dangers, which were so much more immediately threatening to his interests, as to engross his whole attention, and cause him, for the following week, to be almost wholly absent from home.

Esquire Stacy, in the meanwhile, not only in fulfillment of his promise to his deceased friend, but in furtherance of the prospective rights and happiness of the lovers, in whom, now he had discovered them to be such, he took a double interest, was anxiously deliberating with himself respecting the first step to be taken in their affairs; and it was not till after the lapse of many days, so critical did he perceive the ground on which he stood to be for any active movement, that he could come to any definite conclusion on the subject. Although, however, he made up his mind first to have an interview with Old Jude, broach the subject of the proposed union of his niece with young Fisher, and then proceed as circumstances should dictate; and with this view, he went out several times intending to accost him, but each time found, on enquiry, that he was absent from the village. Wondering what could cause the old man, who was so generally about home, to be absent so much, just at this time, and growing a little impatient to put his project into execution, Stacy continued on the look-out several days longer; when, one morning he was gratified to see the object of his thoughts making his appearance in the street. The Squire immediately approached him, and, when near, began to pause in his walk to intimate his inclination to hold some conversation. But the other, without heeding the intimation, brushed by him with a look of peculiar significance and passed on in silence.

"Now what can that manner towards me, and especially that expression mean?" said Stacy glancing after Old Jude, marching stiffly on his way. "It is the same look of malicious triumph which I have often seen him slyly assume in courts and other places, when he had discovered some hidden advantage over an opponent; and it must now be meant for me. Ay, and if I have not read that masked face of his, for twenty years, in vain, he thinks he has made a discovery through which he anticipates a triumph over me in some matter of consequence. But what can it be?"

And he thought over his own private affairs, and even the various law-suits of which he had the charge for others, but soon decided it could be none of these. It must be that he had got wind of his disclosures to Lot—but how? Lot himself, surely, after the cautions he had received, would not have even hinted the matter to any, except Lucy; and her, it was quite certain Lot had not seen; and he must have known better than to have trusted such a secret in a letter to her. But by what other means could the old fox have got at the secret? "Stay—stay!" at length exclaimed the Squire, in alarm, as now for the first time, the truth glanced through his mind—"that noise we

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heard in the back window of the office! He or some dirty minion sent for the purpose, must have been there, and listening to our whole discourse, perhaps. Well, it does seem, as if the Old Evil One himself told him what was going on, else how should he have the thought of being there with such an object?"

The secret of the old man's continued absence during the past week was now explained. Although Stacy, in the disclosures he made to Lot had not while stating what he could prove of Hosmer's misdeeds, named any of the persons on whom he relied for evidence, yet he knew the old man would use every effort to discover them, and that, if successful, he would scruple at no means to corrupt or intimidate them. No longer doubting that his subtle opponent, in his alarm at what he had probably overheard, had been abroad solely for the purpose of trying to ascertain the sources of his danger, the Squire at once resolved to lose no time in visiting the most important of his secret witnesses, in order to ascertain whether any of them had been discovered or suspected to be such, and to take such measures with them, by inducing them to commit themselves on paper or otherwise, as should be best calculated to secure them against the tampering arts to which they might now be subjected. Accordingly, the next morning he saddled his horse and set forth on his projected expedition, with some apprehensions, certainly, but, after all, with no serious expectation that anything of consequence had been discovered, much less that anything could have been effected. But he soon began to perceive traces of his opponent, and as he continued his rounds, he became fully satisfied that, wherever he went, the crafty and persevering Old Jude had been there before him, making use of all the means that wealth, artifice or intimidation could effect, in repairing the breaches, which, with the clues he had received, he had, to his great alarm doubtless, found open and unguarded in the wall of defences, with which he supposed he had so strongly entrenched himself:—One man by whom Stacy expected to show a bold fraud in the sale of real estate in which that person, in a pretended public sale had been employed to bid in, as he did for a mere song and then redeed to Old Jude, the most valuable piece of Colonel Hosmer's property, now produced a receipt from the administrator to apply for the amount of the value of the premises except interest, and pretended that what he had before said, respecting the sale was only to gratify a momentary spleen and not intended to be in earnest. Another person, by whom was to be proved a collusion in the compromise of what is usually termed a trumped up claim, brought against the estate, in which Old Jude, on the payment of some small sum, and taking receipts for the amount claimed, had charged the estate several thousand dollars, had now, like the other man his false answer, feigning to have forgotten all about the affair, except, that it was, as the papers showed, a fair and honest transaction. And nearly thus did the vexed and chagrined Squire find every case which related to the frauds he once could have proved, he felt sure to have been committed on the estate. Nor was he any more successful with those, from whom had, directly or indirectly, been entrusted, in confidence, with secrets respecting the old man's criminal offences, by which it was supposed he could be sent to the State's prison. One had just bought a piece of land of Hosmer, on trust and now knew nothing to his disadvantage. Another had suddenly, the past week, gone off for some unknown part of the western country, having some how been helped to the pecuniary means of doing so, as he had long wished, but never before had the ability; while another boldly denied a communication formerly made to Stacy in private, and challenged him to prove it.

"Outwitted and outdone! ay, completely outdone, at least for the present," exclaimed the baffled lawyer, as he now relinquished the further prosecution of his object in despair, and rode thoughtfully homeward. "But we will see if there be no other field of action in which to give battle to the slippery old rascal. If human ingenuity can devise the means of bringing him to justice, it shall now be done with a vengeance; for now that he has seen so much of my hand in this strange game, he will never rest on the defensive, even as regards me personally, but soon be hatching his plots to destroy me. So he or I must fall in the contest, which I can no longer avoid, if I would."

One morning, several days subsequent to Stacy's signal failure in respect to that power, which he thought he possessed over Old Jude, and in which he so much trusted to bring the other to terms, as the former was sitting in an open window of his office, deeply engrossed in the subject, that now principally occupied his thoughts, he suddenly started and called to his wife who was out training some shrubbery, in the pleasant little yard enclosed between the house and office—

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"Wife, how old is Lucy Hosmer?—do you know exactly?"

"Yes," replied the comely and intelligent looking matron, turning round with a surprised and enquiring expression, "yes, I know, and by reckoning a little, I can tell to a day."

"Well, reckon away then—I want to know exactly."

"I will, Mr. Impatience,——how long have we been married—— eighteen years, is it not?"

"Yes, this June."

"Very right, Sir, but what day of June is it now?"

"To day is the 20th."

"Well, Lucy was of age, that is eighteen, then, yesterday."

"Are you sure of that, wife?"

"Yes, and will make you so in a dozen words:——You will remember, that you depended on having Colonel Hosmer, your great friend, at our wedding; and do you not also remember, that he was prevented from attending by the confinement of his wife, that day, of their first and only child?"

"I do——yes, I do recall the circumstance now, but what day of the month was that?"

"The 19th, as you will find by consulting our bible record."

"You are right, woman, though I did not dream that she was of age so soon. It is strange," he continued, slapping together the book in his hands with an air of vexation——"it is plaguy strange, I cant keep up with anything! This must be seen to immediately."

"What must be seen to, my dear Sir? I do not see to what all this can tend."

"I didn't mean you should, Mrs. Curiosity, (there, that makes us even.) It is an office secret, which women must not know."

"Well, I was not aware that office secrets embraced so particularly the ages of the ladies. But to be serious, if your enquiry relates to any move you are about to make respecting Lucy's property, I hope you will go on; for I have long suspected, that great wrong would be done that amiable girl."

"Ay, but don't guess it aloud; and look here, wife——if Lucy comes into the street to-day, I want you should ask her into the house, if not, contrive up some way to get her from home where I can see her; for I must not let that sun go down without having a talk with her."

But all Stacy's inducement to see his fair young friend was destined to be destroyed by the unexpected occurrence of the next moment. Even before he and his wife had finished all that would probably have been said, they were interrupted by the appearance of Old Jude's servant, Shack Rogers, who entered the office holding a paper in his hand, which he presented, saying in his usual gruff and unconcerned manner,

"Mr. Hosmer wants you should read that, Squire, and tell him whether or no it is good in law."

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With considerable surprise at so unexpected a request, Stacy took the paper, and that surprise soon changed to a feeling bordering on consternation as he read it as follows:—

"In consideration of three hundred dollars, rec'd to my full satisfaction of Jude Hosmer, in his note payable in clothing or furniture, I hereby fully acquit, release, and discharge the said Hosmer from all claims, rights and demands of every kind I have or may have on him for any and all the property personal and real that came into his hands as my guardian, or as the administrator of my father's estate"——which instrument, bearing date of that day, was signed by Lucy Hosmer, sealed and witnessed by Shadrack Rogers and Tabitha Talbot, all in due form.

When the Squire, on a second perusal, became fairly convinced that this strongly written instrument was genuine, he could scarcely restrain his indignation from bursting forth in open execrations: For he saw, at once, that the settlement and discharge into which the injured orphan had been so artfully drawn by the wretch who should have protected instead of plundering her, must give a finishing blow to her expectations, unless it could be proved,——which was not very probable——that the paper was obtained by fraudulent representations; and he saw also very clearly that it had been sent there, not for the purpose of advice, as the old man, who had not consulted him for a dozen years, now pretended, but in the spirit of insulting defiance, and only to show the completion of his triumph. And if ever the conscientious attorney was tempted to do a wrong act, it was to tear the paper to pieces on the spot. But a second thought corrected the inclination, and he said to himself in a low tone,

"No——no——that won't do, nor perhaps anything else; but I cannot, and will not, believe, that Providence will permit such a monstrous wrong to go unpunished."

As the Squire finished the sentence, he happened to glance at Shack's countenance, and found it, to his surprise, beaming with an expression of pleasure and intelligence. And the long, scrutinizing look, which he instantly turned on the other, convinced the penetrating lawyer, that the fellow possessed feelings and intellect that he never had credit for; and that, though he was formerly very deaf, in consequence of a severe scarlatina, his deafness now, for some shrewd motive, must be partially or wholly assumed. This circumstance, which scarcely would have been noticed by an ordinary observer, or if noticed, passed over as of no consequence, was eagerly seized on by Stacy as a new clue to possible advantages of much importance, and he at once determined to follow it up by putting Shack to further trial. With this object in view he raised his voice and said——

"Yes, the paper is good enough."

"Umph——what?" said Shack through habit or design.

"Tell your master it is good in law," bawled the squire; "but" he added letting his voice fall to a very low key, "but shall you tell him also what I said to myself about his cheating Lucy?"

Shack again looked knowingly, and without making any direct reply to the question, observed:

"One of my ears, somehow has got a notion of hearing, when any thing is going on against Lucy, who has treated me kinder than all the rest put together there, but it won't hear any more, Squire, if you tell what I sorter mistrust you have guessed about it."

"I will keep your secret till you tell mine," said the Squire, regarding the fellow with increasing interest.

"It is safe then," said Shack; "and if you feel as I do about certain things, perhaps I may tell you what you don't know, and help on matters some."

"Ah! that is it, my good fellow," exclaimed Stacy eagerly and with brightening eye, "that is what I want——we understand each other, do we? Lucy——her property,——and the one she would like to marry, eigh?"

"Exactly, but I must go now, or some bird will be carrying news to the old man."

"Stay! are you no hoeing corn, these days, down in his meadow, by the river there?"

"Yes, and it is out of sight of the house where the old chap stays, mostly."

"Well, suppose I should stroll along down there with my fishpole, this afternoon,----could you show me where I might catch a few good trouts for a breakfast?"

"Yes, oceans of 'em----I saw a whacker there, yesterday," replied Shack, with a significant wink, as he hurried out of the office.

CHAPTER V.

Leaving the persevering Squire, still undiscouraged by his repeated defeats, to devise, by the expected disclosures and assistance of his freshly discovered ally, new schemes on the ruins of the old, for the accomplishment of his object, which however hopeless the case might seem to one less fertile in expedients, he had no notion of yet relinquishing, we will now return to the abode of his opponent, through whom most of the remainder of our story will be, perhaps, the best developed.

After Old Jude had succeeded in consummating his baseness towards his niece, in the settlement we have described, and sent off Shack to carry the evidence of his iniquitous triumph to Stacy, he, being then left alone in his room, sat some minutes immersed in deep thought; when arousing himself, with the air of one who has run through some calculation and found every thing satisfactory, he began to soliloquize:---

"Yes, as far as I can see, every bar is now put up, and all is safe, at last, which makes my property as good as in my best days,---perhaps a little better. Well, I would'nt have been so frightened for any small sum! But I have headed the meddling rascal cleverly, blast him! and I want he should know it, which will be both a caution and a punishment to him, till I can safely punish him more effectually. I wonder what he will say, when he reads the paper---I should like just to get a peep at his face, at the time, to see him wince under the bitter pill?" And the old man chuckled aloud with inward exultation at the thought of having outdone one of the shrewdest lawyers in the country, and thus secured to himself a fortune. "Well, he and his young prig of a lawyer, won't be quite so fierce to get the girl now, I guess, seeing they can't get the property, in which they were to go snucks, I suppose. But if the hateful young dog should persevere, he must be stopped---'twont do to let him marry her---he may be digging up something. No, Lucy must be cured, but in some different way from the one I tried---though if I could have provoked him to strike me. But stay, I forgot to watch Shack!--- no knowing who can be tampered with---perhaps it ain't too late to see to it now," he added jumping up and passing out at a back door to the top of a sharp little hill near the house embowered with fruit trees, where, unseen himself, he could obtain a view of the road even to Stacy's office door---being the post of observation which he had used a fortnight before in dogging Lot and Stacy to the office, when, in his jealousy and meanness, he stole round to the rear of the building and played the eavesdropper as already intimated.

"Ah! there, Shack is just entering the office," he resumed, peering through the shrubbery---"I will allow him five minutes to do the business in and be out."

So saying the suspicious old man took out his watch and noted the minute hand till the allotted time had expired; when, looking up and seeing nothing of Shack, he became uneasy, and his cold, grey eye began to gleam with distrustful glances. In less than another moment, however, the servant emerged from the office door and struck out directly for home.

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"All right—even if he had tried to tamper, he couldn't have made the stupid booby understand anything, in so short a time," said Old Jude, with relaxing countenance, as he put up his watch, and retraced his steps back to his room, where Shack, in a short time made his appearance, and, with his usual air of careless indifference, delivered the paper, with which he had been despatched, to its owner.

"What did he say, Shack," eagerly asked the latter.

"Um?—what?"

"What did he say, I ask you, when he read the paper?"

"Um?—O, not much, but what was in it, that made him look so queerish about it?"

"No matter—what did he say and do?"

"Um?—what?—O, he said 'twas good enough in law, he s'posed, then had something over to himself and acted kinder maddish."

"Then it made him mad, did it, Shack?"

"Um?—what?—O, yes,—grumbled, and made faces, like."

"Ha! ha! ha! he! he! he! Good!" again chuckled the old man in his dry, hyena-like laughter—"There, Shack, you may go back now, to your hoeing in the meadow."

For the remainder of the day Old Jude gave himself almost wholly up to the enjoyment of his fancied triumph. The scheme had employed all his powers of cunning and contrivance for years; and he now, for a while, felt a pleasure and exultation, not only in proportion to the magnitude of the object, but to the anxious study, the constant fears, and especially the recent alarms, he had experienced, in accomplishing it. But the human mind has been so constituted by a just and wise Providence that it can never long receive happiness from the success, or from any of the fruits of fraud and injustice. The excitement of the chase, the employment of the faculties in devising, and the energies in executing a scheme of iniquity, may, indeed, for the time, stifle the voice of conscience; and the final achievement of the object may, at first, bring a sort of savage pleasure to the bosom. But when those faculties and energies cease their exertion, when the attendant excitement dies, and the short-lived pleasure of the triumph passes away, the mind reacts, the conservative principle we have named begins its office, and soon brings the heart to long and painful repentance or plants within its core the thorn of enduring remorse.

And so it was with this execrable wretch, in the execution of his flagitious plot for robbing his orphan niece of her inheritance. As the excited feeling attendant on the pursuit of his object, and the almost fiendish glee he had felt in its accomplishment, subsided, other and unwelcome thoughts began to obtrude themselves on his mind. He could not, with all the sophistry, with which, villain-like, he essayed to appease the annoying suggestions of awakening conscience,—he could not help seeing that his was not, in fact, a triumph over a hated opponent, but over an innocent, defenceless girl. He could not prevent the promise he made to his dying brother, to be just to the fatherless, from recurring again and again to his remembrance, which seemed strangely to grow more vivid in this particular, the more he attempted to deaden it. And he went to his lone bed that night with thoughts and feelings which he tried in vain, and which he cursed himself for not having the power to banish, from his disturbed mind with thoughts and feelings, in short, which none but the guilty can know.

Sometime in the night, he was suddenly awakened by a strange noise,—he could hardly tell what, though it seemed to him like a human groan, coming from beneath, or some place not greatly distant, as far as he could attach any definite idea to it, in his confusion. But it chimed in so well with a troublous dream, which he now

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recalled as having just disturbed him, that he soon concluded the supposed noise must have been part of it; and, uttering a peevish psha! he tried to compose himself again to sleep. And in this he had nearly succeeded, when the same hollow groan, issuing from below, and seemingly struggling upward, as if though the opening of a rending tomb, rose distinctly on his startled ears, and died away, moaningly uttering, as he thought, "My brother, Oh, my brother why hast thou disturbed me?"

The confused and frightened old man sprang bolt upright in his bed, and, with glaring eyes, peered over on to the floor, and round the dimly seen corners of his room; but he could discover nothing. He then, with palpitations so wild and audible as almost to disturb his own hearing, sat some moments listening intently for a repetition of the dreaded but expected sound. He was unable, however, to distinguish even the slightest noise. All within and around was as silent as the grave. Still not satisfied to let the mystery rest here, he arose and groped his way out of his room and round into that of his servant, who slept in the next adjoining apartment. But Shack was snoring loudly and evidently had not been disturbed. The old man then came out into the long hall, that ran by their rooms, and again listened for some movement in other parts of the house. He would have felt almost thankful to have heard the stealthy steps of thieves, of whom he usually stood in much fear; for it would have relieved him of an awe and dread far more terrible. But he could not hear any thing; and he soon returned to his bed, and, after an hour's turning and tumbling, varied only by fitful starts and turns of intense listening, was lucky enough to fall asleep.

The next morning Old Jude arose with a perplexed and troubled brow, and made anxious enquiries of all the members of the family, whether they had heard any unusual noises during the night. Uniformly answering him in the negative, they, in their turn, became curious to know why he had made such enquiries; and, it was easy to see, that although he evaded their questions, or turned them off with some false account, his conduct and appearance had not a little excited and disturbed them. But they were left to indulge in such conjectures as they chose to make, for he studiously avoided any further conversation on the subject.

"It could'nt have been any thing but a dream, after all——Psha! what a fool to be so disturbed!" muttered the old man to himself with an effort to shake off the impression, as he seated himself at his writing desk and began the business he had allotted for the day.

But notwithstanding these efforts to deceive himself and quiet his disturbed feelings, he was far from being at ease through the day; and, at night, as the family retired, he was observed to go round and carefully lock, or bar up inside, the doors, and all possible avenues of ingress to the house. For the three succeeding nights, the old man neither heard nor saw any thing to disturb him. By this time he had so far succeeded in making himself believe, that he had been the dupe of his imagination, sleeping or waking, as to enable him to divest himself mostly of his fears of a repetition of the strange occurrence. And, as he rose on the fourth morning following the mysterious event, after hooting at himself awhile for his folly in ever having bestowed a serious thought on the subject, he resolved to go on, as if nothing had happened, with that part of his grand scheme, which, now that the property was secured against any ordinary event, only remained to be completed, that of causing his niece to discard the young lawyer, for whom, he doubted not, she still cherished an affection, that, if not destroyed, would result in their union. Having previously meditated attempting secretly to undermine Lot's character, as a method of accomplishing this object, he went out, after breakfast, for a walk to some of the public resorts of the place, where he might meet with some of that despicable class, who are the curse of country villages——the retailers of slander, into whose ears he could whisper his insinuations with a certain prospect, that they would soon grow into stories sufficiently damning to subserve his purposes, or where, perhaps, he would meet with opportunities of effecting his purpose by other and more direct means. And he had been out but a short time, before he unexpectedly met with an occurrence, out of which, with his usual cunning, he soon contrived a plot that was singularly well calculated to favor, if not wholly effect the general object he had in view. He encountered in the road, a poorly clad, vagrant young woman, who asked his charity to buy food and clothing for herself and the small child she carried in her arms. At first the old man turned away with his habitual snuff of contempt at such objects; but musing a moment, he turned round and asked her a few rapid questions, by which he gathered, that she was from

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an adjoining town—had been deserted by a suitor on the eve of a promised marriage, and was now an outcast, with the fruits of her imprudence on her hands, a male child, now nearly a year old.

"Well, woman," said Old Jude, after listening attentively to her various replies, "if you will let me name your boy, and then do as I say, I will give you something."

"My child has already been named," replied the woman.

"Ah? well, you may call him by it after you leave this place; but while you are here, if you will call him Lot Fisher in the hearing of all you speak with, and give no explanations, I will give you a dollar."

"I don't see what good that can do you, Sir; but as it won't hurt the child"——

"No——not in the least; so here is your dollar. But don't forget the name, *Lot Fisher*, nor the condition——there, you may go now——stay, do you see that house yonder," added the speaker pointing to his own house,——"well, call there, and you will find a young lady, who is partial to that name, they say, and she will give you something, I presume."

The woman, after balancing the coin in her hand a moment, in evident hesitation, finally put it up and moved on in the direction indicated by Old Jude, who kept his eye on her, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing her enter his house.

CHAPTER VI.

After sauntering about the village till noon, here and there dropping insinuations calculated to confirm the story which he expected the woman would be the means of raising to the disparagement of the young lawyer, the old man returned to his house and entered with an air of apparent indifference and abstraction, while secretly he was trembling with the most eager curiosity to hear something to apprise him of the result of his infernal contrivance; nor did he have to wait long in suspense. Tabby, hearing the footsteps of her master on the floor, the next moment, came hurrying from the pantry, flourishing a plate in one hand and a spoon in the other in her fluster, and broke forth——

"Don't you think——O don't you think, Mr. Hosmer, what a flare up we have had here, to be sure!"

"Why, what has happened——what has happened, Tabby?" asked the old man, in affected surprise and alarm.

"Why, a woman with a young 'un come in and asked Lucy for money to buy things for her little Lot, she said. But Lucy did n't seem to hear her call it Lot; for she went out and brought and gin the creter a whole half dollar!——(fore I'd done that!——) and asked, in a kind of pitying way, how she come to be so needy. The woman answered she'd been misfortunit. Lucy then told her she hoped she'd make good use of the money, and asked her what her child's name was; and the woman blabbed it right out afore us both——Lot Fisher! Lor! how beat Lucy did look, to be sure! But she soon kinder plucked up and asked the woman, why she called it by that name. Well the creter hung her head a little, and said she had got good reasons for it. Jist at that minit I looked up, and Lucy was as white as a cloth and enymost quite fainted away! So I made a spring for the camphor bottle, but trod on the dog's tail, who up and bit this little finger, I done up here, to the bone. Well, I yelled, and fainted too, I do 'spose, clean away; for whin I come to, Lucy had got over it enough to get to her room, and the pesky woman and all had cleared out, leaving me," she added dolefully, "like some dead lady laid out for the cold grave."

"That all?" said the old man contemptuously. "Poo! what a fuss!——and all kicked up by finding out what every body, but Lucy and you, knew before about the fellow you made such a parade for, a week or two ago here at

tea."

"Yes, ony think! But if I'd knowed it then,----fore I'd touch to do a thing!"----replied the beauty, shaking her head with clenched teeth and a look that was meant to carry out the sentence more forcibly than any words she could find for expressing it.

"Well, but about Lucy," resumed the former, "it has n't made her sick, has it?"

"No, 'spose not, but"----

"But what?----have you been up to see her since?"

"O yes a few minits ago, to tell her dinner was 'bout ready, and kinder talk it over a little; but she was in a taking still, and said she should n't want any dinner. Fore I'd cry to be obleeged to give up such a fellow!" she added as she left the room to resume her work.

"It has pretty much done the business, I guess," muttered Old Jude to himself, with a lip curling with inward exultation; "and the stories which she will now soon hear to confirm the impression that has evidently been made, will give the finishing blow."

And the old man was not mistaken. While the heart-stricken Lucy was striving to hope against conviction, that the inference the woman's words and conduct had compelled her to draw, did not apply to her lover, the village gossips, one after another dropped in, full of mysterious hints concerning a certain discovery they just made, which they would not, at first, for the world tell Mr. Hosmer's family, but which they finally did tell with many regrets, that Miss Lucy did not feel well enough to appear, that they might console her in her grief and disappointment. These communications, all, in some shape or other, making established facts of what was before a matter of inference, continued to be repeated to Lucy, by the officious Tabby, till the former supposed there could no longer be a doubt about the former disgraceful conduct of her lover; and, though ready to sink with grief and mortification, she soon was enabled to summon the stern resolution to tear his image from her heart, and have no further communication with him forever.

O, ye, who tamper with the loves of united hearts, especially those of the softer sex, who with keener sensibilities to cause suffering, are more helplessly your victims, the terms brute and fiend are appellations too mild for your deserts! Your offences may not, indeed, be punishable under any human code; but so long as your acts implant wounds in the heart, to which the blows of the steel dagger were a mercy, your doom in another world will be that of the assassin and murderer!

"I now stand on firm ground, at last," said Old Jude to himself, as he retired to bed that night under the full persuasion that, by his last cruel and contemptible trick, he had brought his whole plan of operations to a successful close, and might now bid defiance to every threatened danger. But the memorable saying of the Apostolic philosopher, "He that thinketh he standeth let him take heed lest he fall," is generally no less applicable to our temporal than spiritual condition. The old man's guiding maxim had always been, *steer clear of the law and seize every advantage*; when, therefore, he had shielded himself against its meshes, as his cunning and experience had generally enabled him to do, it never seemed to have entered into his calculations that any other power or circumstance could affect him. And the occurrence, consequently, by which he had been so startled a few nights before, and by the less questionable repetition of which, he was destined now again to be humbled, and soon to be overthrown, found him wholly unprepared and helpless, it being something against which his system of tactics had made no provision.

About midnight, the same unearthly groan, which he had heard before, struck on his slumbering senses and instantly aroused him to consciousness.

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"Just as I feared—that voice again!" hurriedly mumbled the old man in troubled accents, as he sprang up in bed, and with a beating heart awaited the expected repetition. The sound however was not repeated; but instead of it, a tall figure, in white, seemingly rising slowly through the floor and standing in frightful outline before him, greeted his appalled vision, and rooted him speechless and spell-bound to the spot! After remaining stationary a moment, looking down upon him, as the guilty old man conceived, with a look of mingled sorrow and indignation, the figure raised one of its shrouded arms, and silently and solemnly pointed upwards; then slowly receding, it passed through the open door and disappeared.

Old Jude had not been much of a believer in ghosts; and, but for his guilty conscience, he would not probably have lost his self possession. And even as it was, when he saw the apparently tangible object retreating through the door, a gleam of hope shot through his mind, that it might be a personage of flesh and blood; and the relieving thought so far restored his prostrate spirit and strength, that he soon found voice to cry for help.

"Shack! Shack! Shack!" he screamed with desperate energy.

But he was answered only by the echo of his own husky voice. No response came from the room of the sleeping servant. The old man then mustered courage enough to scramble off the bed and run round to Shack's room; when finding the latter snoring loudly, he seized him by the shoulder and shook him rudely, while with chattering teeth he exclaimed:

"Shack! Shack!—did you hear it—did you see it, Shack?"

"Um? What?—wha—wha—what is it?"

"The shape—that is I mean the man or something that has been in my room and has just gone out."

"Um? Was there one? My Gorry! I wish I had a club! but I ain't afraid—we'll go down and light a candle, and then I'll help you catch him."

So saying, Shack hastily slipped on his pantaloons, and, followed by the old man, hurried down stairs and struck a light; when they both went over the whole house, but found every door and window fastened, while no indications of house-breakers were anywhere discoverable within or without. Long before this was accomplished, the alarmed females were dressed and out to ascertain what was the matter. Old Jude tried hard to allay their fears, and quiet the tumult he had occasioned, by attributing the cause of his disturbance, if in fact he was not wholly mistaken in supposing he heard or saw something, to the jumping of a rat or the cat; but his restless and excited manner wholly belied his assertions and only increased their apprehensions. He, however, was quite willing to have a light kept burning in his own and each of their rooms during the remainder of the night, and that Shack should walk the halls as a watch. The next morning the old man charged the family to keep secret everything which had happened. But notwithstanding all his precautions, the whole village had the story before night, that the house was haunted, and Old Jude had seen a ghost, and strange and various were the comments that were made on the occasion.

During that day the old man struggled hard, but in vain, to banish this strange, and more strangely repeated visitation from his mind. Sometimes he would almost convince himself, that it was some person whose design was either to rob or to frighten him. But the question which he could not answer, constantly arose—how did he get into the house—if robbery was the object why did he not effect it, and steal off in silence, instead of making a noise, and showing himself? And what object could any one have in merely frightening him, without making known any wish or demand? Thus he was met in every attempt to solve the mystery on natural principles; which his conscience failing not to remind him, that each of these visitations followed a heinous wrong towards his niece,—the first the finishing act of his fraud on her property, and the last his attempt on her happiness,—his guilty conscience whispered, "thou knowest," and completed his confusion. And yet he determined to yield not to

its promptings.

"Folly!" he would exclaim, "to think a man, who has been dead ten years, can come up to upbraid the living! A ghost! what is a ghost? The mere thing of the imagination, which cannot be seen by the natural eye. But this I did see with my natural eyes; and it must be something real——something tangible; and, whether I can tell how it came there or not, it must be something that I can exclude from my room and I will do it!"

Taking courage from this view of the subject, he began to contrive how he could best secure his room against the further intrusion of the dreaded apparition. And with this object in view, he went up to his garret and overhauled a parcel of old hardware and cutlery, left on hand when he quitted trade. Here he found a door lock of unusual size and strength; and he instantly resolved to fit it to the door of his sleeping room. Accordingly, selecting corresponding screws and staples, and providing himself with suitable tools, he proceeded to his room and went to work.

"There!" said he with a sort of gleeful but forced bravado, as he completed the adjustment of the massive implement and brought the rusty bolt to play in its place. "There, let me turn this key, thus, on the inside here, when I go to bed, and I will defy the Devil himself to get in!"

But although Old Jude had in this manner succeeded in fortifying his feelings, in some measure, against the contingencies of the night, yet it was not without many fears and forebodings, that he retired to his chamber. He would gladly have had Shack, or some other one, sleep in his room; but his fears, that the ghost, or whatever it was that had appeared to him, might communicate his guilty secret, were so strong as to overcome his desire to be attended; and he therefore resolved to trust to his precautions, and once more nerve himself to brave the result alone. Accordingly, after turning the key of his ponderous lock, and carefully examining the fastenings of the windows, and inspecting every part of his room, even under his bed, he trimmed his lamp to burn through night, and went to bed, when favored by his exhaustion and loss of sleep the previous night, his troubled spirit was soon wrapt in forgetfulness.

CHAPTER VII.

The last strokes of the house-clock, telling the solemn hour of midnight, awoke the old man from his uneasy slumbers. The lamp had gone out, and all was dark and silent. In a moment, however, the same prolonged, sepulchral groan, that heralded the apparition of the preceding night, resounded through the room; and the next instant, the same fearful figure was dimly seen standing in the middle of the floor, looking grimly down on its affrighted victim.

"Obdurate mortal!" it at length said, in low, deep, accents,—— "thinkest thou to elude the spirit thy misdeeds have called up, by guarding thyself with bolts and doors? Twice hast thou disregarded my coming;——now I am permitted to speak to thee and utter my last warning. Know then, guilty wretch, that yet forty days are allowed thee to cause the wrong to be righted—— the stricken heart to be restored to happiness. Heed the condition of mercy, else I then come again to take thee hence!"

The apparition then gradually fell back towards the door, the grating bolt flew back, the door opened and the figure vanished in the entrance, leaving the old man, sitting mute on the bed, with his eyes starting from their sockets, his hair bristling up on his head, and his hands desperately clutching the bed clothes, in the overpowering fear that had seized him; nor did the disappearance of the dreadful object this time bring the accustomed relief. His spirit, at the thought of what he had seen and heard, died within him, his strength was gone, and for some time all power of utterance was denied him. After a while, however, feeble and distressed cries began to break from his lips, and he shrieked out the names of his servant and the other members of the family by turns. But all slept too soundly or were too far distant to hear him. And the poor wretch was compelled to remain alone, sprawling

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helplessly on his bed and moaning in his fear and distress, or crying in vain for help, till the long and eagerly desired morning light appeared and ended his night of horrors.

Shack was the first one to discover the situation of his master. As the former rose and came out from his bed room, his attention was arrested by the sounds of moans and deep sighs, coming from the apartment of the latter; and he at once turned in that direction, and perceiving the door standing open, concluded he would go in to see what was the matter. But he stopped short at the very entrance, in surprise and alarm, at the spectacle that there met his eyes. The old man sat crouching on the bed amidst the deranged and twisted bed clothes, with a cold sweat standing in drops on his haggard face, and with a countenance exhibiting the very picture of misery and despair. His grizzled hair, during the night, had changed to milky whiteness, his strained eye-balls were bloodshot, his cheeks sunken, and his whole appearance, indeed, so altered, that his servant, in any other place would have scarcely recognized him.

"Oh, Shack!" exclaimed the old man, piteously.

"What is the matter, Mr. Hosmer, what has happened?" asked the other, in evident concern, as he approached the bedside.

The old man made no reply, but attempted to adjust the bed clothes around him.

"Master is sick," resumed Shack, after awaiting a moment for an answer,

"Shan't I call the folks up, and then go for the doctor?"

"No, no," said the old man, feebly, resuming his wonted caution and making an effort to arouse himself, "no, don't do it, nor ask any questions, nor say anything to any body about what you have seen. I have had a bad night, but shall be better soon. Help me on with my clothes that I may get out of this accursed room."

Shack then assisted him to dress, supported him down stairs, and placed him in an armed chair in the common sitting room, where the family soon assembled around him, with manifestations of wonder and alarm at his strangely altered appearance. He, however, carefully concealed from them the true cause of his condition, and pretending to attribute all to a sudden fit of illness, of which he was now better, sunk into his usual reserve. But common observation taught them, that something extraordinary had happened to him, and his appearance through the day, during which he continued feeble, nervous and dejected, confirmed their opinion, and convinced all who saw him, that, in some mysterious way, the old man had received a shock, both in body and mind, from which he would not speedily recover. And they were right in their conjectures: From that night Old Jude Hosmer was an altered man. The impossibility that his door could have been unlocked by any one from the out side, and the equal impossibility, he conceived, after his close examination of his room, that aught of flesh and blood could have got there in any other way, had, from the first sight of the apparition, destroyed all his hopes that his nocturnal visitant might be an earthly one; and yielding to the dreadful thought, which, in spite of the warnings of conscience, he had twice rejected, that his monitor was the shade of an injured brother from the grave, he listened to the supernatural message as to a doom that was neither to be questioned nor avoided.

"All that a man hath will he give for his life:"—Old Jude Hosmer, as well he might be, was always afraid to die; and as he had gone on increasing in years and crimes, the fear of death had been sinking deeper and deeper in his heart. From the first of his three fearful warnings, conscience, as before intimated, had secretly interpreted the *Mene Tekel* of the mystery to mean the relinquishment of his ill gotten possessions to the rightful owner, but he had tried hard to blind himself to the interpretation and struggled fearfully to avoid the sacrifice. Now, however, when he had, at last, been smitten and humbled to the dust, in view of the dreadful alternative, which was placed before him, and which he was made to feel there was no way of escaping, every motive and feeling, even the great ruling passion of his life, gave way before this controlling terror. And goaded by his fears, rather than any

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sincere penitence, he now, although he neither received, or looked for, any further visitations, at present, from his supernatural monitor,—he now, every day and hour, grew more and more anxious to fulfill the condition which alone could relieve him from his agonizing apprehensions of the menaced doom.

As soon, therefore, as his strength, and the shattered condition of his nerves would permit, which was not until several days had elapsed, he commenced, in earnest, the work of unraveling the web of iniquity, which had cost him so much time and plotting to weave. And, as the first step, he sought out his niece when alone, and gave up to her the acquittance he had obtained from her in the manner before described, merely telling her, he had discovered an error in his reckoning, much in her favor, which, as he had concluded to make a new arrangement of his affairs, would now soon be adjusted to her satisfaction.

With this deceptive announcement, for he could not be frank, even in good work, he left her, greatly surprised, as well as puzzled to comprehend the true reason, (the alleged one not being fully credited by her) of the unexpected act, though she could not help believing it in some way connected with the late mysterious occurrences, which had so much disturbed him. Having effected this first, and, as he conceived, the most important step in *righting the wronged one*, without any exposure of his former wickedness, which he seemed nearly as anxious as ever to conceal, his mind became a little more tranquil; for the papers having always been carefully kept in his own hands, he could now complete the restoration of the embezzled property, by transfers and conveyances, very easily, and with all the secrecy he desired. But though he could thus easily restore the *wronged one* to her rights of property, yet there was another part of the requirement,—that of restoring her to the happiness he had destroyed— which he had more difficulty in deciding how to perform. He believed that Lucy would hold no communications with her lover, even if she was requested, so long as she was under her present impressions; and he could think of no way of removing those impressions from her mind without confessing, or at least betraying, his own agency in causing them. This he could not bring himself to do. And in the dilemma, he soon resolved, that, without consulting her at all on the subject, he would himself write directly to Fisher such a letter as would naturally bring him to the house, trusting, that when the lovers were brought together, explanations would follow and a reconciliation soon be effected. Accordingly he wrote a respectful note to the young man, apologizing for his late treatment, which arose, he falsely affirmed, wholly out of a misapprehension of the character of the other, who, now that all objection was removed, was at full liberty to resume his visits. Having thus written, Old Jude secretly dispatched the letter to its destination, and awaited the result with as much trembling solicitude as he ever did the event of a lawsuit in which he had thousands at stake.

Lot, in the mean while, totally ignorant of all that had occurred at Hosmer's, began to grow very uneasy at the failure of his accustomed letters from Lucy, from whom he had not received a syllable for nearly a fortnight; and he was meditating a trip to the village of her residence to ascertain, if possible, whether anything had there happened to cause the delinquency; when, one morning, the newspaper-carrier, who had returned from that section, late the evening before, handed him a double sealed letter. Not remembering the hand writing, and supposing it some message on professional matters, he threw it by, to be taken up in the order of business. In the course of the forenoon, however, it came up; when, carelessly breaking the seals, he read and re-read, with feelings of mingled astonishment, and doubtfully admitted delight, the unexpected contents. In twenty minutes his fleet-footed poney stood saddled and pawing at his door; while the master was seen within hastily plying his brushes on coat, hat and boots, which, it seemed to him, in his impatience, were never before so reluctant of polish. Within three hours more, he dismounted his reeking horse at the office door of his old friend and patron.

"Do you own that horse, Lot?" asked Stacy, poking his sarcastic phiz from the window.

"Yes—how do you do?"

"Well—but if the beast is your own, who, in your village lies at the point of death whom, it is supposed, one of our doctors can save?"

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"Do be serious, Squire," said Lot now entering the office. "I have called to consult you, before going somewhere else,---- There," he added, taking out and handing the other Old Jude's letter----"read that, and tell me whether it is genuine, and if so, what has produced the unexpected change."

"Genuine enough," answered Stacy, after musing over the letter a few moments----"It is his, clearly, and I rather guess, under the circumstances, he is acting in earnest and without trick, this time."

"Why, what hold have you got of him?" asked Lot, eagerly---- "done any thing by way of legal proceedings?"

"Nothing," replied the other, "nothing at all, since I saw you. I have been worsted by the old fox, who doubtless overheard our conversation from the back window there----completely worsted, at every point; and, to crown all, he has settled off with Lucy, already of age, I find, and coaxed her to give him a strong and absolute discharge, on his giving her his note for the paltry sum of two or three hundred dollars, and even that payable in cats and dogs---Old Jude all over!"

"Outrageous! but has he contented himself with doing that? Lucy has discontinued her letters to me wholly, and without explanation, and yet I receive this letter from him inviting me to resume my visits! What can it all mean?"

"I won't decide now. But something unusual has certainly happened over there. It is reported in town, that the old man has been haunted by a ghost. Some say---among whom is our good old deacon, who has visited him, that he has been converted, or is about to be---others have it, that he has had fits; and all agree, that he is feeble, and has grown old, in appearance, ten years within the last week."

"This sounds very strangely---what is your version?"

"I have none to give you---I am waiting myself to see what it will result in. But there is probably a relenting in the old man towards you, Lot; and I would go and improve the advantage he has given you to the utmost, lest it prove, as I fear, a temporary one.

CHAPTER VIII.

That afternoon Old Jude, who had contrived to have his niece take a seat with him in the parlor, sat for hours at the window, anxiously gazing down the road, as if on the watch for some expected visitor. At length his countenance brightened. A person, who was evidently the object of his solicitude, was seen approaching; when, after watching him till he turned in towards the house, the old man, without apprising his companion of the fact, rose and quietly stole out of the room. The next moment Lucy looked up, and Lot Fisher stood on the threshold before her. Surprise and embarrassment kept her mute till the other spoke.

"I hardly know whether I was expected by *you*, Miss Hosmer, to-day, or not," he said, with some hesitation.

"You were not, Sir," she replied, with reserve.

"It may be right, then, to show you my warrant for appearing before you," he rejoined, approaching and handing her Old Jude's letter.

With a tremulous hand she took the letter, and though she evidently read its contents with the deepest surprise, yet she merely remarked,---

"This, as regards my uncle, is certainly sufficient; and I will go and apprise him, Sir, that you have called."

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"Miss Hosmer!"

"Sir!"

"Both the discontinuance of your letters and your present manner, make it evident, that you have heard some thing to affect the position which I supposed I occupied in your esteem. In mercy, and in justice to me, will you not tell me what it is?"

The same delicacy, which had before prevented Miss Hosmer from communicating to her lover the reasons that had decided her to drop her correspondence and reject him, still strongly revolted against the solicited explanation. But her sense of justice, under his renewed and earnest entreaties, at length prevailed; and she reluctantly related all the essential circumstances connected with the vagrant woman's call at the house, as they took place, simply adding that no one could be at loss in drawing the inference, which so obviously followed.

Lot was thunderstruck at a disclosure so strange and unexpected; but soon rallying from his surprise, he asked if it was known where the woman could then be found, and being answered in the negative, he, with an air of disappointment, resumed,——

"Oh, why could you not have communicated this to me immediately, that I might have had the chance, which is probably now lost, of refuting the insinuation from the woman's own lips?"

"Perhaps I ought to have done so as a matter of form," replied she, greatly embarrassed——"perhaps I should have done so, or have concluded my construction a wrong one, and let the affair pass unnoticed, had not my impression been confirmed by the same story or those of a similar character coming from several other sources."

"If Miss Hosmer's confidence in my character was so small as to permit her to condemn me unheard on such evidence," rejoined Lot, with an air of deep mortification not unmingled with offended pride, "I know not, that it would now avail me, if I felt myself called to the humiliating task, to trace out the slanders, which this worthless vagrant or others may have disseminated concerning me. I had hoped I had a standing in her opinion not so easily to be shaken. As it is, it only remains for me to bid her farewell."

Before the confused, and now relenting girl, could find words to delay her impetuous lover, or qualify the sentence he had so hastily assumed against himself, he had bowed and was gone. Feeling herself justly obnoxious to her lover's charge of precipitancy in condemning him unheard, and half convinced of his innocence, though he had scarcely affirmed it, she rose in great agitation and went to the window. With sensations, which it would be difficult to analyze, she saw him hurriedly mount his horse at the gate, and depart without one backward glance towards her. Her riveted eyes followed him, as avoiding the village, he rode with desperate speed towards home, till his receding form was lost to view; when she turned, and murmuring, with a sigh "O, why could he have not said he was innocent," burst into tears and hurried to her apartment.

Old Jude, who had witnessed Lot's hasty departure, from which he argued that no reconciliation could have taken place, watched anxiously, but in vain, during the remainder of evening, for Lucy's appearance, that he might question her respecting the result of the interview. And, after a night made restless by his growing anxieties on the subject, he seized the first opportunity, the next morning, for a private conversation with her. Female pride, by this time, had come to the perplexed and wretched girl's aid; and it was with feelings bordering on resentment towards her lover, for not longer persevering in clearing himself and reconciling her, that she replied to her uncle's enquiries. And this wayward mood, partly felt, but more assumed to conceal the deep and troubled feelings of her heart, caused her so to color her representations and to make the case so hopeless of reconciliation, on her part, that the old man became greatly alarmed for the eventual result. Indeed he actually shed childish tears of vexation and disappointment, and accused her of perverseness. Disturbed, and astonished beyond measure, at her uncle's conduct, which had all along appeared to her very extraordinary, and which had now become wholly inexplicable,

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Lucy, in her turn, was aroused to expostulation at his inconsistency; while she defended herself by intimating the stories she had heard. The old man admitted the existence of such rumors, and falsely attributed his former opposition to his belief in them, but asserted that he now knew them to be without foundation. Growing more and more excited and earnest the maiden bent a searching look on the other, and demanded of him whether he knew the origin of those stories, and by what means he had discovered them to be false, at the same time declaring, that she would not marry a prince, whose character stood under such imputations. The other made several attempts to evade those questions; but she constantly brought him back to the point, and persisted with so much determination that the conversation was at length brought to a dead stand. Conscious that he had gone too far to recede without arousing her suspicions, and perceiving he could not even stop where he was and gain any credit for his assertions, the humbled old man, impelled by his fears and anxieties for the event, reluctantly admitted himself to have been the cause of all the trouble, though not without much prevarication, and concealment of the motives which had actuated him.

For the first time, the mind of the disabused girl began to catch glimpses of the secret history of the old man's heart, in all the recent transactions in which her different interests had been involved; and her grieved soul revolted at the dark picture she there saw delineated. That part of it only, however, which lay nearest her heart, called forth the exclamation---

"Oh, Uncle, Uncle, what wretchedness you have made me!--- what injustice you have caused me to do towards another!"

The conversation, which now ensued, was brief and mutually embarrassing. But where all parties are equally anxious to bring about an object, their purposes are soon accomplished. In the course of the forenoon, Shack, mounted on Old Jude's fleetest horse, rode up to the door, and, taking a letter from the hand of his respected young mistress, bore it off rapidly towards its destination.

Lot, who in the mean time had condemned himself for the manner in which he had terminated his last interview, which, if prolonged, he felt, might have resulted more auspiciously, and who now, on the receipt of Miss Hosmer's letter, was overjoyed to learn that her mind was completely disabused. Lot, we say, was not slow to respond to the frank invitation she had conveyed him to renew their intimacy; and another day brought him to her side.

So great was Old Jude's delight to see the man, whom, one month before, he had driven from his house with insults and scorn, now again there, and there, too, successfully prosecuting the very object he had taken so much pains to defeat, that it would have been difficult, perhaps, to decide, whether he, or the reunited lovers, were the most gratified party on the occasion. But the old man had construed the supernatural behest to extend, not only to the undoing of the mischief he had done in separating the lovers, but to the perfecting of their union, which, to avail him in purchasing his immunity from the threatened doom, he felt he must see accomplished within the allotted time of his probation. It was no wonder, therefore, that while that awful warning was constantly sounding in his ears, and while the days of that fearful probation were rapidly rolling away, that he was filled with anxiety to have the happy event consummated with the least possible delay. And no sooner had the long and happy interview been brought to a close, and Lot seen to depart, than the disquieted old man again sought out his niece alone, and eagerly asked her if they had fixed on a day for the wedding? And being told they had not, nor even agitated the question of the time, he appeared much disappointed, and earnestly proposed to the wondering girl, that the union should be consummated immediately, or within a week or two, at the farthest; and, having drawn from her the day on which she expected Lot to repeat his visit, he expressed great solicitude that the time should then be appointed, and that too on as early a day as would be consistent with the ordinary arrangements of such occasions. But Lucy's delicacy shrunk at the thought of such indecent haste, and such a business-like manner of disposing of her, even to the man of her choice; and, knowing nothing of the secret motives that urged her uncle, whose conduct, in the affair, grew more and more inscrutable to her mind, she inwardly resolved, she would not consent to so immediate an union, and least of all would she be the first to hint the matter in the future meetings

which were expected to occur.

Another interview between the lovers soon came and passed off as the former one; and again was the now almost persecuted girl instantly beset and importuned by her uncle to tell him what had been done in compliance with his wishes. When he was informed of the fruitless result, he absolutely groaned with anguish, and seemed so distressed at the disappointment, that the other, touched and disturbed at his obvious concern, and beginning to suspect he must have something of moment depending on the event, at length promised she would not resist any proposal on the subject which should come from her lover.

Lot's visits now became frequent; and cordially meeting the advances which he perceived Old Jude timidly attempting to make towards him, he soon, and with a delighted heart, learned the wishes of the former for an immediate union, which he himself, through delicacy had foreborne to urge. The ardent lover, as will readily be imagined, was not backward to act on the hint thus unexpectedly received; and he united his entreaties with those of his new found coadjutor with such effect, that the fair girl was compelled to yield, and agree, as, with blushful hesitation, she at last did, to the great relief of the old man, on a day for the nuptial ceremony----the very day, as it ominously happened, which closed the mysterious period, within which the wronged were to be righted, or the wrong doer called to meet his doom.

It was a new thing to the wondering inhabitants of the village to witness, at this hitherto dull and unsocial mansion, the lively bustle of preparation that now ensued----the liberal outlays, that were made for dresses and ornaments to be worn on the coming occasion, and for luxuries for the entertainment of company---- the repairs and garnishing of rooms, that took place, and the purchasing of costly articles to take the place of the former meagre and niggardly furnishing of the house----in all which the different inmates, with animated movements and smiling faces, were seen to engage, and none with more alacrity and obviously gratified feeling than the lately cold and churlish, but now transformed master and still accounted owner of the establishment. We must linger no longer, however, to give a detailed description of all that was said and done in anticipation of the happy event, but hasten on to the catastrophe of our story, which was now close at hand.

CHAPTER IX.

The eventful day at length arrived. The numerous guests, comprising nearly the whole adult population of the place, assembled to witness the ceremony, which was to dispose of their fair and almost worshipped neighbor to one, who, in spite of all the disadvantages attending his origin, had gained, by his rare qualities of head and heart, a scarcely less enviable place in their esteem. Old Jude, who had awaited the day with a feverish anxiety and impatience, which was nearly alike unaccountable to the family and all others cognizant of his late singular conduct, now seemed to hail the hour of consummation with almost puerile delight; though it was observed, and afterwards remembered, that as he moved restlessly round among the company, with his enfeebled gait, and thin, pale, and ghastly features peering from the snow-white locks which hung trembling over them, he was frequently lost in deep fits of abstraction, from which he would arouse himself with a forced glee, and that a sort of unnatural excitement marked his appearance in all his conversation and movements on the occasion. At the appointed hour, the bride and bridegroom made their appearance; when, amidst the blessings and kind wishes of all, the lovely orphan was united with her handsome and gifted lover. The ceremony and the congratulations, that immediately followed, were scarcely over, before Old Jude came forward and presented Lot with a thick, heavy package of papers, consisting as he averred, and, as in truth, it afterwards appeared, of deeds, transferred notes and other legal evidences of all the property to which Lucy was entitled, accompanied with a written statement acknowledging that it took all he possessed to make good her fortune, and throwing himself wholly on the generosity of the young couple for the future support of himself and family. Lot courteously received the package, and without examining it, carelessly placed it on the sill of the open window beside which he was sitting; while the old man, fetching a deep sigh, as if some fearful load was removed from his mind, took a seat by the side of his niece, and appeared more tranquil and happy than he had done for many weeks before----a circumstance which the former

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noticed with heartfelt pleasure, and drew from it an augury of what she so ardently desired, that her uncle was indeed about to settle down a better and happier man. But all her pleasing anticipations and kindly wishes were destined to be repaid the next hour only with disappointment and aggravated sorrow. As the gratified guests, after partaking the sumptuous entertainment with which they had been regaled, and spending a short time in innocent hilarity, were beginning to depart, Old Jude went out into the yard to look to his servant, who was engaged in bringing up to the door, as fast as they wanted, the horses and carriages of the company. Shack, who had thus far performed his duties with great alacrity and cheerfulness, now, as his master appeared in the yard and began to order him about, suddenly became so dilatory, sullen and perverse as to exhaust the old man's patience, and cause him at last to break out, as was his former wont, in abusive epithets, which the other seemed in no humor to bear; for he retorted with great boldness, plainly intimating, that he was a slave no longer. Astonished at such words and bearing from one, who was an indented servant, and who had ever before borne his petulance and abusive language submissively, the enraged master turned fiercely upon him and exclaimed:

"Impudent scoundrel, begone! from this moment, you quit my house and employment forever!"

"It's a bargain!" cried Shack, bluntly, and with dogged composure, while he looked round on the company, now mostly drawn to the door by the collision, as if appealing to them to witness the compact, "it's a bargain---exactly what I wanted--- so now, old man, we are quits in law as well as friendship. But before I go, jest for the fun of the thing, I'll whisper a word in your ear."

He then walked deliberately up to the other, and, as he had proposed, whispered something in his ear; when he sprang back, and, with a look of malicious triumph, awaited the effect of his secret communication.

And that effect was soon visible. The old man, after standing mute an instant with a staggered and perplexed expression, suddenly started, like one on whose mind some exciting truth has unexpectedly broken, and a look of overpowering chagrin settled on his countenance, but was quickly succeeded by one of unmitigated wrath and maddening concern. Hurling with fury his cane at the head of the devoted Shack, he turned eagerly towards the window on which the package he had given Lot was still lying:---

"The papers---the papers!" he gasped, rushing forward towards the object of his concern with one hand extended out for the grasp.

But just as his half-clutched fingers were fastening on the desperately coveted prize, he suddenly stopped short,---a change passed over his countenance,---his arm sunk nerveless by his side, and straightening back and glaring horribly around him, he pitched forward to the earth with the blood gushing from his mouth and nostrils. The violence of his emotions had ruptured a blood vessel, and the next moment the spirit of Old Jude Hosmer had winged its flight to its doubtful destination in another world.

We must task the imagination of the reader to picture the scene which followed among the family and guests on the awful dispensation that had thus turned their festivities into mourning--- the painful sensations of the young couple, when all that could be known and inferred, respecting the situation of the property and its connection with the old gentleman's death, was discovered--- the great stir made by the event on the community around--- the wild stories that naturally arose out of it among the ignorant and superstitious, and the baffled attempts of the intelligent to account for a great part of what had happened: For, after all the circumstances, attending Old Jude's strange conduct before and at the time of his death, were known, much still remained enveloped in mystery which none could penetrate. Shack who had been seen to whisper to the deceased the secret communication which produced such instant effect on him, was often asked what he had communicated on that occasion, and whether he could throw any light on the subject, but always in vain: He would either doggedly refuse all explanation, or turn off the subject with some odd evasion. And thus the whole affair, after having been, for some months, the talk of the country around as one of the greatest wonders of the day, at length passed into a legend of the marvelous and supernatural, whose foundation in fact none were ever found to gainsay. Lot, now that the fear of the old man's

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power was removed by his death, was soon furnished with all the evidence which would have been required to substantiate his wife's claim to all the property, had such been needed. But it was not. The deeds and other instruments made out and left by the deceased were found to convey legally the whole estate, which now, by common consent, after a liberal provision was made for the widow and her insane married daughter before named, passed into the hands of the young couple—the business and all transactions connected with it at length resumed their wonted channel, although the public at large soon had reason to rejoice in the change of the ownership and possession of a property, by the management of which so many interests were affected.

CONCLUSION.

It was something like seven years after the concluding incidents of our story, that Shadrack Rogers, who had been retained in the employment of Lot Fisher and his wife, and who had been so generously rewarded by them for his good conduct, as to enable him to buy a farm for himself, announced his intention of emigrating to the far West. And on the morning of his departure, after he had bid adieu to his still almost idolized young mistress, and slung his knapsack for the start, he sought her husband, who was writing in his library—

"Well, Squire Fisher," he said in his usual independent manner, as he entered the room, "now for the few words you said you wanted with me in private, before I started; for you see I am all equipped for *over the hills and far away*."

"Ay, ay, but be seated, Shadrack; for as I said, I wish for a little talk with you," said Fisher, "and in the first place let me ask what you propose to do out west?"

"Get rich, and then be judge or something"——replied Shack very gravely——"Perhaps if they keep you in Congress long enough——say twenty years——and I guess they will by the strong way they have just given you your first election——perhaps I'll meet you there."

"On my word, Shack, I don't think you will ever have to regret not having set your mark high enough," responded Fisher, laughing heartily. "But after all, if you go on picking up information and improving as fast as you have since living with me, you may yet be found in public life. I have no doubt you have native capacities enough for almost anything——Squire Stacy has often said you were one of the shrewdest chaps he ever knew."

"The squire and I are tolerable friends," said Shack composedly.

"Yes," rejoined the other, "and that remark brings me to the question which I would ask you in confidence, and which, as you are now going out of the country, I hope you will candidly answer."

"What is it?" asked Shack, looking a little uneasy.

"It relates," replied Fisher, "to the singular change in old Mr. Hosmer's conduct, which so speedily brought about my marriage with his niece, and the no less singular circumstances attending his death. Now I was always satisfied, Shack, that you could throw some light on this mystery, if you chose; and your answer to one question, very probably, may explain the whole. What was it you whispered to him, that produced such a terrible revulsion of feeling, the violence of which, in his then weakened state, it was thought, occasioned the rupture that killed him?"

"Why, you can't have any suspicions, Esquire Fisher, that I intended it should, or supposed it could, have any such effect?" answered Shack with an air of concern.

"O, certainly not; but what was it?"

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"You don't intend to make use of it against me, no how?"

"No, no,——go on."

"And you wont tell of it——not even to your wife?"

"I am as anxious as you, Shack, that the matter should be buried in oblivion. But I wish to know for other reasons than mere curiosity——fear nothing and proceed."

"Well, I just hinted to him who the Ghost was, that's all."

"Ah!——the ghost——who was it?"

"That can't be spoken——but I can guess how it was, perhaps, if that will do."

"I will hear it and then judge."

"Well you know that the old man and I slept in rooms that joined, and our beds stood abreast against opposite sides of the partition, in which there was a door, that had long been nailed up, right between us. Now the ghost might have found out, somehow, that the lower panel of that door had become so shrunk that it could be pinched out with a jack-knife, leaving a hole under the beds, where a chap——say of about my size——could have crept through, put back the panel, risen up from the floor with a sheet round him, delivered his message from the other world, unlocked the old man's door, and have been off to bed and a snoring, before a frightened man would be apt to rally to try to catch him."

"I see——I see——The ghost stands revealed. But perhaps you can guess, also, what that message was, which you think it might have delivered?"

"Well, I fancy it didn't say much, the first time, but only groaned and complained of being disturbed in the grave at a brother's doings. The second time it did the same, and made its appearance, without saying anything, trusting that would be enough. But finding it want, and that the old man was kinder defying it by fixing on the big lock, it came again and talked like a book, giving him forty days to make all right in, or he would be called for. Well, I don't know which was the most scart and worried about this last visit, the old man or the ghost, for it was that which turned the old man's hair so white, and so nearly upset him. But it fixed him about right, and the business moved after that to some purpose, as you yourself know."

"A strange and cunning plot," said Fisher thoughtfully; and I can hardly wonder that it produced, with the operation of a guilty conscience, such an effect. But what induced you to divulge this to the old gentleman?"

"Why," replied Shack, "I had got a peep into that bunch of papers he gave you, and found all right. Well, as you was married and had the papers in your pocket, as I supposed, I thought every thing placed beyond a rip up; and when the old man called me names, and ordered me to quit, I was tempted to humble him on the spot; so I up and told him——sooner than I intended, for it was agreed I should tell him before long, lest it should shorten his days."

"Agreed! agreed with whom?" eagerly asked the other, catching at that word.

"Why, I didn't say anything about any whom," said Shack, a good deal disconcerted.

"No," persisted Fisher, "but you used a word that has given me a clue to another part of the secret, which I was particularly anxious to learn. And you need not deny, Shack, that you have had the assistance of a well-known, shrewd manager, in this affair."

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"Well, well," replied Shack, with the chagrined air of one who has unintentionally committed himself; "suppose a certain man did help at the planning, and perhaps write off the words for the ghost to use on the occasion, it only proves that two heads were better than one, if one was a sheep's head, as the old man used to call me. But you needn't ask me to say another word about this last part of the story; for I promised to keep it forever in the dark."

Fisher now rose and paced the room a moment in deep thought; when he turned to the other and said,

"Shadrack, though you have unintentionally been the means of having my fortunes associated with a painful event, yet there is no denying your agency in making them. Here," he added, pulling out a hundred dollar bank bill, "take this in addition to what we have already done for you, and with it my best wishes for your success and happiness in life."

The same day Fisher executed a deed to 'Squire Stacy, and sent it to him enclosed with the following note---

"I send you herewith a deed of the little farm and cottage of mine down the river, which I have heard you praise frequently, I think.

Shack left this morning for the west; and before I suffered him to depart, I succeeded in drawing from him, for the first time, the secret of the "*Ghost*," though he only left me the means of conjecturing, as I know well enough I have done correctly, who was the main planner of the singular experiment, which had a so successful but melancholy termination. Please accept the gift; for, however you or I may look upon that affair, you are entitled to receive from me, for other and earlier benefits, this memorial of my gratitude. Yours, &c.

LOT FISHER."

JULIA GRAYSON, OR THE SAILOR IN LOVE.

BY D. P. THOMPSON, *Author of "May Martin," "Green Mountain Boys," "Locke Amsden," "Shaker Lovers," &c. &c.*

The traveller, in making the tour of New England, as he journeys along through that clustering range of smiling villages, which, like a starry belt of the heavens, stretches round her peopled coasts, extending back many miles inland one way, and in an almost unbroken chain the other, from the Penobscot to the Hudson, will often find his attention attracted by some beautiful residence, standing, perhaps, aloof from all others on a conspicuous elevation, or other eligible spot, and so far outshining them in the air of wealth, taste, and comfort, that seems to surround it, as generally to excite the curious desire to know something of the character and fortune of the owner, or, at least, of the constructor of so imposing an establishment. And scarcely less often will he find, on enquiry, that this is, or has been, the residence of a retired sea-captain, who, having made a fortune by professional services and trade on the perilous deep, has come here to spend and enjoy it, with the remainder of his days, in the comparatively tranquil scenes of village life. Well, who is better entitled to enjoy the fortune he has made, both on account of the toils, responsibilities, and dangers he has passed through in accumulating it, and the honest deserts of his character, than is generally the sea-captain? For we do not believe, and we speak not without a somewhat extended acquaintance---we do not believe that a worthier class of men can be found---a class of men, who possess as a body, more of all the substantial virtues--- who are more uninfluenced in their acts by the sordid calculations of self, or who are more alive to the calls of humanity, when they take their stand in society, than that of the masters of all the higher grades of our mercantile vessels. Nor is it very strange that they are so; they have been schooled to a life of important trusts and responsibilities, in which strict integrity and correct habits are made the test of success; while the scenes of trial and danger they so frequently experience has tended to teach them their dependence on Providence, and make them feel for the wants and sufferings of their fellow-men.

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We once had the pleasure of forming an acquaintance with a gentleman of this class, whom we found in the enviable situation above described, and whose romantic and singularly good fortunes—seemingly the natural result, in his situation, of a trust-worthy and benevolent character, would well warrant an enlargement into a volume, instead of the brief and simple narration, in which we propose to give them:—

Captain Loton was emphatically the architect of his own fortunes. Losing his last remaining parent at the age of sixteen, and being thus thrown entirely on his own resources, he left his native place, one of the interior towns of Massachusetts, and, without a friend to recommend or introduce him, without money, except a few dollars earned for the premeditated journey, and without any other than a common-school education, confidently set out on foot and alone for Boston, resolved on engaging in a sea-faring life. He was not long after reaching that place, in finding a situation in a merchant vessel, and he unhesitatingly entered as a raw hand, at the wages the owner was pleased to offer him. His first spare dollar was laid out for a work on navigation, and so intently did he apply himself to study while becoming acquainted with the practical part of his profession, and so rapidly did he win the confidence of all by whom he was known, that at eighteen he was a mate, and at nineteen the master of a vessel trading between Boston and Havana, at which last mentioned place, his good conduct, together with his prepossessing exterior and youthfulness, attracted much notice, and gained him the appellation of the "handsome and trusty Yankee boy captain."

One day, in the early part of his career as commander, as he was walking the streets of that great emporium of the West Indies, from which his vessel was then on the point of sailing, on her homeward passage, he noticed a well-dressed female, with a large work-basket in her hand, walking near him and in the same direction. The circumstance did not at first very particularly attract his attention; but perceiving after going some distance, that she was still near, and making, as he fancied, some effort to keep pace with him, he slackened his speed, and finally turned round, and courteously addressing her, asked if she was going far his way, naming the public house at which he lodged. "She was—and, perhaps, should call—at least, she had thought of calling at the very same house he had mentioned," she replied, in a soft tremulous tone, as she looked up timidly on the inquirer, displaying a fair pale face, in which the traces of subdued sorrow and suffering were sufficiently visible to give eloquent effect to a countenance of great beauty and sweetness.

Captain Loton was at once touched with pity by her manner and appearance, and in a tone of kindness, rather than of gallantry, he immediately offered his services in carrying her basket. To this she silently assented, and he took the basket from her hand, little dreaming what to his future destiny would be the consequence of the act of that moment. He could not but notice, however, that as she delivered him her burden, she seemed greatly agitated, and manifested a hesitation and reluctance which seemed strangely at variance with her first ready assent. But attributing the whole to maiden timidity, or the fear that something wrong would be asked of her in return, he walked on in unsuspecting silence. After proceeding a short distance in this manner, the lady observed to him that she was under the necessity of making a brief call at the house then at hand, and if he was disposed to continue his kindness, he might take her basket along with him, and deposit it in the hall at his hotel. And throwing an anxious and troubled look on the other and his charge, she immediately disappeared. Proceeding directly to his hotel, Captain Loton deposited the basket in the hall, as requested, and repaired to the dinner-table, where the guests were already assembled; and where he soon related his adventure with the fair unknown, jovially remarking, that when she called for her basket he thought he should attend her home, and try to improve his acquaintance. The landlord, better acquainted with the manners of the town, and recalling the impositions that had there sometimes been practised on strangers by wanton females, in palming off their offspring, smiled, and began to rally him on the possibility that the basket in question might contain something for which the owner might not be likely to call for very soon, and advised him to examine it. At that moment the cries of a child were heard issuing from the basket, and a roar of laughter burst from the gentlemen at the table at his expense. Though greatly surprised, and not a little chagrined, at this sudden proof of what his host had just suggested, Captain Loton yet bore the laugh and merry jokes of the company with unruffled good humor, and rising from the table, he coolly proceeded to the basket, opened it, and found it contained, surely enough, an infant—a very pretty and healthy looking female infant—in whose features he could clearly trace the lineaments of that pale and sorrowful face, which had so

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won upon his heart, and which, one hour before, he supposed belonged to one as excellent in virtue as she was lovely in person. And he could not now feel to condemn her, dupe as he knew he would be considered, of her artifice, or bring himself to believe that this seemingly unnatural act was committed by her, except under some peculiar exigency. But however that might be, he knew he was now fairly saddled with a responsibility which he little coveted. Still he had too much independence of mind and benevolence of heart to suffer the ridicule of his acquaintance to drive him to neglect his charge, as much as he was at loss what to do with it.

"Oh, don't look so serious about it, Loton," said one of his acquaintances. "The city provides for such cases; send it to the alms-house."

"Never!" replied the other, "if money will procure it a better situation."

And in pursuance of his benevolent resolution, he made immediate search for a nurse; and he was soon fortunate enough to find a good one, with whom he made a satisfactory arrangement to take the child to her house and keep it till she saw him again. He then went on board his vessel, weighed anchor and set sail for home.

Soon after his return to Boston, Captain Loton was promoted to the command of an Indiaman, and made two successful voyages to the east. But his bosom had been touched; and in spite of all his endeavors to banish thoughts which his better judgment told him he had little reason to cherish, the image of one soft, speaking countenance continued to haunt him, and his heart secretly yearned to resume an intercourse with that sunny garden of the ocean, with which those truant thoughts were associated. As will be anticipated, therefore, he conceived a distaste to the East India voyages, and, yielding his post to another, and accepting an offer he had received to take command of a fine vessel fitting out for the West Indies, he was soon on his way to the scene of his former adventure, which he reached after an absence of nearly three years.

As soon as the duties connected with the landing of his vessel would permit, Captain Loton went in search of his protege, whom he found in the care of the same poor but worthy woman, to whose trust the child was at first consigned, and to whose faithfulness to that trust a sufficient witness was seen in the neat and healthy appearance of the child herself, now grown from the helpless and unconscious infant he left her, to an interesting little prattler.

"She recalls to my mind more and more of her mother's looks, every time I turn my eye upon her face," observed the captain with a half sigh, after musingly gazing at the object of his remark, during a moment when she rested from her childish pranks, and turned towards him with a look of wondering innocence. "But what do you call her?" he added, addressing himself more directly to the woman.

"Mary."

"Mary what?"

"Mary Loton, to be sure," replied the woman, with a queer, meaning expression.

"Why, you don't suppose this to be my child, except by its coming into my possession by finding, as the lawyers say in their writs, do you?" asked the captain in surprise.

"There are others that will have it so, at any rate," answered the woman.

"Well, I hope you have not believed them---and least of all, so far as to prevent you from trying to discover the mother, as I requested you to do?"

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"No, I have not believed them; for I knew your character—— and I have taken much pains in endeavoring to find out the mother."

"And with what success?"

"Little or none. No inquiries have ever been made for the child; and I think the mother, if not an irretrievably lost character, must have left the island immediately——perhaps with some one of the many families that come to winter here from England or the American coast——perhaps she was herself a foreigner, and come here with them."

"Probably you are right; for an abandoned woman I will never believe her."

"I hope she was not, but whatever was the mother, her babe has proved one of the sweetest of children, and has served to supply in my affections, as far as any child not my own, could, the place of the one I lost a few weeks before I took her. And besides, sir, I should add, that since the death of my husband, that happened the year after, as you may have heard, the liberal pay you authorized me to draw on your trading-house, has been a great help to me——and I hope you will allow me to still keep your little Mary for you, many years longer."

"Certainly, and with many thanks for the manner in which you have discharged your duty to me and to humanity."

During Captain Loton's stay in the city he almost daily visited the child, and soon became so much attached to her, that he took more pleasure than ever in recalling the incident, which gave him, as he now hesitated not to call her, his adopted daughter. During the following twelve years, the captain, once or oftener in each year, returned to Havana, and always provided liberally for the support and education of his charge. And although it required, with his own expenses, nearly all his earnings, yet this was done without any of that regret——that drawback of feeling which too often attends ostensive benevolence, and makes charity little less than an abomination in the sight of heaven. For his heart was ever warm with generous impulses, and never paused, while within the bounds of ordinary prudence, to call in the aid of arithmetical calculation to measure its munificence, and he continued to manifest towards the child of his voluntary adoption, the affection and tenderness of a parent, and took a parent's interest in her welfare. She had now arrived at the age of fifteen——an age, which in that soft and quickening climate, confers the maturity of womanhood, and more perfectly, perhaps, than any other period, opens the blossom of female beauty. And she was esteemed as possessing an uncommon share of that more envied than enviable gift, unless united, as was happily the case in the present instance, with good sense and intelligence. Captain Loton, as may be supposed, was not a little proud at the development of such qualities in one whom he had sacrificed so much to rear. And such was his attachment, that the rumor before mentioned, that she was his natural daughter, gave place to another, that his must be other than parental affection——and that he soon was to make her the partner of his life. This rumor at length reached the ears of both, and on both it produced nearly the same effect——that of aversion to the thought, at first, of beginning to look upon each other in connection with so different a relation from what they had accustomed themselves. But it was beginning to start a new train of reflections in the bosoms of each——they were beginning to ask themselves, 'Why not?' And though nothing on the subject had passed between them, yet it is hard telling what might have been the result, but for the happening of the unexpected incident, which brings us to the denouement of our little romance in real life.

The voyage of Captain Loton, to which this portion of the tale refers, was commenced about the time of the setting in of the northern winter, in a new ship, with remarkably fine accommodations, which, having become a part owner, he had contrived to have called the 'Mary,' in compliment to his fair protegee, and not without the half-formed secret expectation, perhaps, that the latter might grace her fine rooms on her homeward passage, under a new and more endearing title. On his arrival at Havana, he found the city unusually gay and lively, on account of the return of the wealthy from their summer tour to Bermuda on the American coast, together with the influx of northern strangers, resorting hither at this season, like birds of passage, to escape the rigors of their frosty clime, during the dreary months of winter. With the company thus brought together, came the usual rounds

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of popular amusements; among which the one of the greatest resort by the higher classes, at this time, was the theatre, in which a popular English actor, then on a short sojourn in the Island, was performing. And to witness one of his representations, Captain Loton, one evening, was induced to listen to the solicitations of a friend belonging to the city, and attend the theatre with him.

"Here, Loton," said the friend, after they had been seated a few moments, and were glancing over the fashionable assemblage, while waiting for the rising of the curtain, "do you see that lady, in the sky-colored dress, in the box nearly opposite there, by the column?"

"The lady that is now rising to adjust her shawl?—yes—I do now—and a finely turned figure—very—she can boast—don't you call it so?" replied the other, glancing with interest on the object thus pointed out to him.

"Ay, and a no less finely formed set of features, which, a moment since, were turned full upon us; but as I jogged you she dropped her veil over them."

"Who is she?"

"A young widow Grayson, recently from the interior of the Island, as an acquaintance, famous for finding out the history of new comers, informed me a night or two ago, after pointing her out to me; and her history is a very singular one."

"Indeed—how so?"

"Why, having become acquainted with a young man of our class—a trader of this city—she privately married him,—which soon coming to the ears of her wealthy and aristocratic father, he disinherited her, though an only child, and drove her from home. She then came here, and joined her husband, who, dying soon after, left her, in consequence of the fraud of a partner, wholly destitute, and she has been a dependant on some family in Bermuda, who picked her up here, and in pity took her home with them to that Island, where she has remained in exile ever since—a dozen years or more—till a few months ago, when she was recalled to take possession of her fortune, left her by the merest accident, on the sudden death of her father. His will disinheriting her, and giving his property to collateral relations, remained unaltered, it appeared, till last summer; when getting offended with one branch of the legatees, he determined to cut them short. So sending for his attorney, he directed him to write a new will, which was done, and the instrument made ready for his signature, his daughter being still left out. The old will was then destroyed; and a servant was sent out for witnesses to attest the signing of the new one. But one of those whom the old gentleman had selected for the purpose, had been suddenly called away, and it was concluded to defer the execution of the will till the next morning. That night the heartless testator died of an apoplexy, leaving his daughter, that lady yonder, sole heir to one of the finest estates in Cuba."

The curtain now rose, and though Captain Loton for a while often found his eyes straying towards the fair creature whose history he had just heard, and about whose appearance, as little as he could see of her, there was a certain something, that created in his bosom a sort of undefined feeling of interest which he could not account for himself, yet as the play went on, his attention gradually became interested in the development of the plot, and at length the object of these reveries passed wholly from his mind, and was not recalled for the remainder of the evening.

The incident, however, though lost sight of through the last part of the performance, and the busy morning with him which followed, was brought fully to his mind during the day by another, as little expected as the first, and more calculated to excite his interest and curiosity. As he was retiring from his dinner-table, a black boy put a billet into his hands and immediately disappeared. Perceiving the superscription to be in a lady's hand, and one that was wholly unknown to him, it was with considerable surprise that he opened the billet, and with much more

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that he read the neatly penned but brief contents:—

"Will Captain Loton accept an invitation to sup, at 6 o'clock this evening, at No. 20 — Street. By so doing he will afford a lady the desired opportunity of communicating with him on a subject of great interest to her, and not wholly without interest, she trusts, to him. Julia G."

"Julia G." he repeated to himself, after a second time reading the note—"Julia G—Grayson, the lady at the theatre, last night,— it will answer for that name—yet what can she know of me, or what want of me? It can't be, and still—but I will go and solve the mystery, come what may of it."

A little reflection, however, tended not a little to abate the romantic interest with which he was first inclined to invest the incident, and caused him to waver in his determination. Neither the house designated, or any family occupying it, were at all known to him; and so singular were all the circumstances attending this invitation, that he at one time inclined to believe it a hoax—at another he suspected it to be the artifice of some designing person, to lead him into difficulty, and would pay no attention to it. But curiosity, and a feeling something like a presentiment that the visit was to terminate happily, at length prevailed; and at the appointed hour he set forth, and proceeded, in a state of doubt and agitation very unusual with his calm temperament, to search out the house in question. In this he soon succeeded; and finding the designated number attached to a dwelling house, the appearance of which satisfied him of the respectability at least of its occupants, he approached, and with a beating heart, rang for admittance. A servant appeared, and ushering him through a saloon to the entrance of a large and elegantly furnished parlor, motioned him in, and immediately retired. Captain Loton now advanced a step or two within the threshold;—but perceiving no one in the room, and thinking he heard some one in an apartment opening into it, he paused, and was hesitating whether to take a seat here, or pass through to the next room; when a light female figure suddenly darted from behind the door ajar on his left; and throwing her arms around his neck, gave him a lively smack on his cheek, and then springing back a step, and looking up with an air of roguish triumph, burst out into a merry peal of laughter.

"Mary!" exclaimed the Captain, throwing a look of the utmost surprise, though not of displeasure upon his adopted daughter—"this, then, is a plot of your hatching, is it, you incorrigible young rogue?"

"Well, admitting it to be so," laughingly retorted the vivacious girl, "you richly deserve it at my hands, sir, for your neglect. You have not been to see me for almost a whole week."

"I have been up to my ears in business, child."

"And yet my consistent father found time to attend the theatre last night, and to come here this evening, it seems even on the invitation of a stranger."

"Stranger!—then you did not write that billet after all?—but who is that stranger, Mary, whose house you appear to be so much at home in?"

"A new acquaintance."

"Ay—but who?"

"That is the secret," archly replied the girl, "but all in good time—another scene of the plot, as you call it, remains to be developed. Excuse me a moment now, if you please, sir, and you shall soon know the whole," she added, skipping out of the room, and leaving the Captain with a bosom fluttering with excited expectation to await her return.

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In a few moments the door was thrown open, and she re-appeared arm in arm with a lady with the bloom of sixteen added to the ripened countenance of thirty, the rare beauty of which was now charmingly heightened by the sweet embarrassment she was trying to conceal.

"Father," said the happy girl, in a voice tremulous with grateful emotion, "this is Mrs. Grayson, and my own mother."

Captain Loton advanced, and warmly grasping the proffered hand of the fair lady, led her to a seat.

"A more grateful surprise," said the Captain, after the parties had measurably recovered their composure, "a more grateful surprise, Mrs. Grayson, could hardly have been devised for me, even in fancy."

"Many thanks," replied the lady, with feeling, "many thanks to you, Captain Loton, for this kind assurance in the present, and still more for your noble conduct in affairs of the past, of which I have much to say, but with your leave will defer it to a less agitating moment."

The ice of restraint having now been broken, a pleasant conversation ensued, which soon turned so far on the subject of their present meeting, as to unfold to the Captain the circumstances which had brought it about. It appeared that Mrs. Grayson, though she had been several weeks in the city, had never been able to learn any thing of her daughter till the night before. She had identified Captain Loton as soon as he entered the theatre, and his name being mentioned by a lady, a stranger to her, who happened to be in the same box, joined in the conversation, and named the circumstance which she had heard, of an American Sea-Captain of that name having adopted as a daughter, a child who was picked up by him in the street, and who was then living, she believed, with a family in her part of the city. This led to such further inquiries and answers as made Mrs. Grayson acquainted without revealing her own interest in the subject, with the exact situation of the place where the girl whom she doubted not to be her child, could be found, and ended in a promise of an introduction to the family. And so promptly did she avail herself of these advantages the next morning, that before noon, the reunion of mother and daughter was so happily effected, and with such confidence in each other, that the latter went home with the former, where the present surprise and meeting was planned and executed in the manner we have described.

Supper was now announced, and Mrs. Grayson led the way to the table, which was loaded with the rarest of delicacies, and which, with a nice appreciation of the circumstances, she had caused to be set for the three only, and never was social board surrounded by hearts possessing a livelier interest in each other, or more capable of imparting and receiving happiness among themselves, than those here assembled on the evening so memorable in their respective destinies.

After the repast was over, they returned to the parlor; when the daughter, after exchanging a look of intelligence with the mother, left the room.

"Now, Captain Loton," said Mrs. G., "I will ask your indulgence while I revert to that dark spot in my checkered life, when a poor, broken-hearted creature, I met you in the streets of this city, and though I expect not to justify my conduct, yet I hope to offer circumstances, which you will consider some extenuation of an act, which you must have looked upon as both base and unnatural."

"No, lady," interposed the Captain, "not so---I believed you driven to the course you took by misfortunes, that should awaken sympathy rather than censure."

"You judged generously, if not truly, sir, and I shall, with more confidence, give you my little history."

She then proceeded to relate her story as Loton had already heard it, with the addition that as soon as it was discovered by her landlord, that her husband had died without leaving any means for her future support, or even

for paying the small debt already contracted, he harshly ordered her to leave the house, and seek new quarters; and by way of justifying himself in his cruel course, he assailed her character, giving out that though a mother she had never been a wife. This she soon found it was easier to deny than to make the contrary appear, by any evidence, that would command belief. The clergyman by whom she was privately married, was not a permanent resident, and had left the island for parts unknown to her, and the only witness of the marriage had died of the yellow fever a few months after that event, and her own assertions gaining no credit against the studiously circulated insinuations of her slanderer. She was now turned into the streets in perfect destitution; and finding every door shut against her among the few acquaintances she had formed in the city, despair took possession of her mind, and she prayed for death to end her sorrows. In this forlorn and distracted condition she wandered from street to street with her babe in her arms, till utter exhaustion compelled her to seek a place for rest, which she soon found in a corner of a veranda of a large warehouse. Here, unobserved, among the bales of goods which screened her from public view, she hushed her babe to sleep, and for a bed deposited it in the basket containing all that was left unsold of her wardrobe. As she was thus employed, and while she was darkly revolving in her mind the fearful alternatives of suicide, or a life of beggary and disgrace, her eye fell on Captain Loton, standing on the opposite side of the street, when she heard a gentleman near her pointing out by name to another, as an American sea-captain of many fine qualities; and the sudden thought struck her that she would throw herself on his mercy. But as she approached him her courage failed her, and she suffered him to pass away without attracting his notice. It was, however, as she thought, her last hope, and she timidly followed him, till he turned and took her burden from her hands. She could not even then open to him her wishes, or tell him what the basket contained. And knowing that the truth might the next moment be revealed, and fearing it would bring her a humiliating repulse, she resolved in her desperation, to throw her child on his benevolence, and hie herself away to some lone spot to die. Accordingly, with a hastily breathed prayer for her child's safety, and with some directions to him, she scarcely knew what, she passed hurriedly into an alley, and fell down in a swoon at the door of a benevolent lady, by whom she was taken into the house, revived, pitied retained in the family, and in a few days invited to go with them to their home in Bermuda, where she became a permanent resident, and where she once, and once only had the unspeakable pleasure to learn accidentally, that her child survived and had been adopted by him, in whose hands she left it.

"This is all I can offer by way of palliation," said the lady as she concluded her story.

"And what more or better could be offered, dear lady," responded Captain Loton, in a frank and cordial manner; "for me it is enough——abundantly enough to confirm the charitable view of the act which I have ever contended it should receive."

"I am deeply grateful to you, sir," rejoined the other with emotion, "for a construction which few, perhaps, under the circumstances, would have put on my motives and conduct; and for this part of my obligations, I feel that I could never sufficiently reward you. But for all the rest, I am happy in having it in my power to remunerate you. And now I offer you a pecuniary compensation for all your sacrifices, expenses, and care of my daughter, in such sum as you shall name."

"As to pecuniary reward," observed the captain, "I have never expected any——nor can I think of accepting any. The act of taking charge of and adopting your daughter, was, on my part, wholly voluntary; and I have been amply repaid for my protection in the affectionate conduct and interesting society of her whom I have thus far protected, but whom I will now relinquish to a mother's better right."

"I may not deserve the boon, sir," said the lady, "but for one purpose I will accept it. You decline receiving all pecuniary reward——but should a remuneration of another kind be desired by you, and the object be not averse, you have now empowered me to award it."

"You overpower me, fair lady by your offers, and especially by your last flattering suggestion; but have you considered well and concluded the most wisely, in view of the respective positions, which we three have stood,

and now stand towards each other?"

"Another choice, certainly, if equally acceptable, might be happier for us all," replied the other with encrimosning cheek, "but can you expect me, unsought to give you a further option?"

At that moment of sweet embarrassment, they looked up and beheld Mary standing in the doorway, where she had become an involuntary listener to the latter part of the discourse, and she was on the point of retreating, but on perceiving she was noticed, she came forward, and blushing even more deeply than her mother, she took a hand of each of the others, and joined them together.

"It is better thus," she said, and darted from the room.

Little now remains to be told but what the reader's imagination will readily supply. The fine apartments of the good ship Mary, on her homeward passage, though she was much delayed by the round of fetes and discharge of responsibilities, in which her master had unexpectedly became a principal actor, were indeed graced by the presence of not only one, but two of the most lovely of females——one with the still unchanged title of daughter, and the other with the still more endearing title of wife, from whom and the deserving son of the ocean, who had thus nobly won her hand and fortune, are now springing up one of the finest families in New England.

THE OLD SOLDIER'S STORY.

The following very singular adventure was related by an old soldier of the revolutionary army, who lived till within a few years to repeat it over and over, at the social firesides of his numerous descendants. Although the incident on which the story turns, is fraught not slightly with the marvellous, yet as he was a man whose veracity was unquestioned on other matters, we will give it as he invariably told it, leaving the reader to account for it if he can, as we have often but always unsuccessfully tried to do, on natural principles, or else settle down in the opinions which the old soldier himself always entertained——that it was a special interposition of divine Providence to save his life, and the lives of his companions:——

It was in the eventful summer of 1777, when Gen. Burgoyne was pouring the numerous troops of his invading army along the western shores of lake Champlain towards the very unequal forces of the Americans at Ticonderoga, and the whole wilderness was resounding with the notes of hostile preparation, that a small party consisting of myself and three others, were detached from St. Clairs's post, to proceed down the lake, as scouts, to watch and report the movements of the approaching enemy. We were fully aware of the perils which we were likely to encounter; for the echoes of the war—whoop, which rose from the great feast just given by Burgoyne, and shook the startled wilderness with the congregated yells of two thousand savages, had scarcely died away among the mountains and parties of their warriors were supposed to be prowling the woods in every direction. We proceeded, therefore, slowly, and with great caution. But all our watchfulness was destined to avail us nothing; for while sitting round a spring in one of the deep woody ravines that run up from the western side of the lake, where we had halted for refreshment, we were surprised by a party of about a dozen French and Indians, and, after a short resistance, in which two of the latter were slain, overpowered and taken prisoners. Our captors, after strongly binding our hands, and placing a guard at the side of each, marched us down to the shore of the lake, where we arrived about sunset. A consultation was now held, which terminated evidently in some dissatisfaction on the part of the Indians, though as we did not understand their language, we were unable to gather the cause, or any thing indeed, by which we could form a probable conjecture of the destiny that awaited us captives. We were then hurried into a light batteau, which was drawn from a covert of bushes, extending into the water; and the ceremony of placing guards at the side of each of us having again taked place, our boat was directed northwardly along the shore, towards the British camp which I judged to be ten or twelve miles distant. The afternoon had been unusually dark and cloudy, and we had not pursued our course long, before one of the blackest nights that I ever knew, shut down on the sleeping waters of the lake. Without the interchange of a word, however, our sharp

Lucy Hosmer; or, The Guardian and Ghost. A Tale of Avarice and Crime Defeated

built little craft was impelled over the waters by the sinewy arms of the natives, with great velocity. The oars were occasionally stayed, indeed, and their heads were intently bent down to the surface of the water, for the purpose, probably, both of ascertaining their direction by the different shades between the water and woods, and of listening for any other boats that might be abroad in pursuit. But we could not distinguish land from water, and no sound reached our ears but that of the low sullen dash of the waves along the shores.

After having pursued our course through the impenetrable darkness for many miles in this manner, words of sullen tone began to be occasionally interchanged between our French and Indian captors, while the speed of our boat was suffered sensibly to abate. And it was not long before the murmurs of the savages who appeared to claim some right which their white allies refused to grant them assumed the tone of great bitterness, boding to my ears some fatal purpose in the former, unless they were permitted to act as they wished. It is true we understood not a word in their language; but there is something in the human voice which, to those who have noted it for the purpose, will always betray the secret workings of the soul, whatever may be the language of the tongue, or whatever the measures resorted to for concealment.

The effect of those tones on my feelings, and the presentiment of danger that accompanied them in this instance, I shall never forget, and much less the sight that soon burst on our bewildered vision. After a profound, and to me an ominous silence of some minutes among our captors, a low but sharp and hissing sound was uttered by one of the Indians, in the manner of a signal; when the oars were all at once relinquished, and we could hear a part of the crew hastily clutching some kind of implements and rising to their feet, and fixing their position for some sudden effort. At this critical instant a light, at first flashing faintly, and then quickly increasing to the brightness of the noon-day sun, broke on our astonished sunset! A boat was passing rapidly by us, which to our recoiling vision, seemed clothed with fire, and filled with bright figures in the human form, fixing their burning and withering looks on the quaking savages, and pointing on high with uplifted hands. Amazed and appalled as we were, at this awful sight, the picture which our boat presented, was, to us prisoners, by no means less startling, telling us as it at once did, of the destiny that one moment before awaited us. The Indians stood over us with one hand grasping the scalping knife, and the other drawn back with the tomahawk ready for the fatal blow, while the fiendish looks of the assassins, blending with the hellish smile of anticipated revenge, was deeply depicted on their savage countenances. But a second glance showed an altered expression. Those looks which so plainly told their infernal purposes, had given way to expressions of convicted guilt, and uncontrolled terror. They stood mute and paralyzed with fear and amazement, their eye-balls starting from their heads, and their arms sinking nervelessly by their sides. Sudden as its first appearance, the strange boat vanished from our sight, and we were again left in total darkness. The savages, with convulsive shudders, hastily resumed their seats and plied their oars with unnatural energy. Not another word or sound was uttered by one of the crew, as our boat was sent surging through the waters, till we struck the shore, and were hailed by a sentinel walking before the British encampment.

The prisoners, with hearts overflowing with joy and thankfulness at our miraculous escape from death, were then delivered over to a guard, and lodged within the lines. The next day we were shipped with other prisoners, to St. Johns, where we remained some months, when it was our good fortune to be exchanged, and consequently be permitted to return to our respective homes.