Norman Leslie: A Tale of the Present Times

Theodore S. Fay

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

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VOL. I.

COLONEL HERMAN THORN.

My dear Sir,

The warm hospitality and generous attention which, during my ramblings in Europe, in common with many of my countrymen, I have received from you; the numerous instances which have come to my knowledge of the benevolence and kindness of your heart; your liberal encouragement of the arts; and the high estimation in which you are held abroad, induce me to offer you this simple tribute of regard and friendship.

Permit me, therefore, to dedicate to you the following pages, with only a regret that they are not more worthy. I am, my dear sir, very sincerely and respectfully, your obedient servant,

The Author.

Paris − March 26th, 1835.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

On returning to New−York, after an absence of some years, I was agreeably surprised to find not a copy unsold of a large edition of this work. In presenting a second, I avail myself of the occasion to apologize for its defects, of which I am perfectly conscious. It was written with the unsettled mind of a traveller, in the stolen intervals of more imperative occupations; and circumstances, moreover, compelled me to part with it before it had received the time and care which it was my intention to bestow. It thus possesses the claims to forbearance of a painting prematurely dismissed from the easel, when the artist has but little more than marked his first rapid outlines; when the background and many of the figures are indistinct, because almost untouched; and when only the prominent heads are finished. I felt, also, as I toiled, the disadvantages of a pencil unguided by experience and uninspired by success. The book was offered to the public with great timidity; indeed, the manuscript was once laid on the fire; and only rescued from the summary criticism of the flames by one more confident than myself in its chance of favour. For its rapid sale, and the general indulgence of the press, I tender my grateful acknowledgments. They must form my apology for a second attempt, in which I shall venture upon a yet unappropriated incident of our revolution—a theme wonderfully rich in romantic story, whose reality scarcely needs the aid of imagination to startle and enchant.

PREFACE.

The most improbable features of the following story, viz., the leading incident and the career of Clairmont, are founded on fact. The author has availed himself of the license allotted to writers of fiction, and transformed character at pleasure, particularly that of the young lady on whose most mysterious fate the story is founded. He has not bound himself to a delineation of society as it existed at the period of the real occurrence, which took place many years since in New−York; nor does he profess to have grasped the more noble materials which the higher circles of his country at this moment offer to the novelist; but he has rather sketched, perhaps with a somewhat mischievous hand, certain peculiarities adapted to his purpose. He frankly bespeaks the indulgence of all the sapient and solemn critics.

The art of novel−writing, however long associated with heart−broken boarding−school girls and sentimental chambermaids, is now as dignified as that of Canova, Mozart, or Raphael. In learning to arrange a succession of heavenly sounds, to imbody sweet shapes in marble, to breathe fervid beauty on the easel, how many an inspired genius has devoted all his hours. Is it not as exalted a study to copy from the great world those "infinite doings" of the mind and heart which make up the material of human existence?

That the writer has succeeded in accomplishing this, he dares not hope. As an humble student, and peradventure with a feeble hand, he has thrown his groupings upon the canvass, and now, like the boy painter in the "Disowned," stands concealed behind the curtain, to hear, perhaps, some erudite Sir Joshua say—"He had better burn it!"

Paris, March 26, 1835.

CHAPTER I.

An American City—New−York Winter—Sleighing—Certain Characters whom the Reader will do well to remember— An Incident, which perhaps he will forget before the end of the book.

" 'Twas in the flush of the summer's prime,
Two hundred years ago,
When a ship into an unknown bay
Came gliding—soft and slow.
"All was still, on river and hill,
At the dawn of that summer's day;
There was not a sound, save the ripple around
The ship, as she cut her way.
"Then the sails flapped back, for the wind was slack,
And the vessel lay sleeping there;
And even the Dutchmen exclaimed, `Mein Got!'
As they gazed on a scene so fair." *A Vision of the Hudson: by William Cox.*

A brilliant January morning broke over the beautiful city of New−York. Her two magnificent rivers came sweeping and sparkling down into her immense bay, which, bound in like a lake on every side with circling shores, rolled and flashed in the unclouded sunshine. The town itself rose directly from the bosom of the flood, presenting a scene of singular splendour, which, when the western continent shall be better known to European tourists, will be acknowledged to lose nothing by comparison with the picturesque views of Florence or Naples. Her tapering spires, her domes, cupolas, and housetops, her forest of crowded masts, lay bristling and shining in the transparent atmosphere, and beneath a heaven of deep and unstained blue. The lovely waters which washed three sides of the city were covered with ships of all forms, sizes, and nations; delighting the eye with images of grace, animation, and grandeur. Huge vessels of merchandise lay at rest, in large numbers, all regularly swayed round from their anchors into a uniform position by the heavy tide setting from the rivers to the sea. Others, leaning to the wind, their swollen and snowy canvass broadly spread for their flight over the vast ocean, bounded forward, like youth, bright and confident against the future. Some, entering sea−beaten and weary from remote parts of the globe, might be likened, by the contemplative, to age and wisdom, pitying their bold compeers about to encounter the roar and storm from which they themselves were so glad to escape: and yet, to carry the simile further, even as the human mind, which experience does not always enlighten or adversity subdue, ready, after a brief interval of idleness and repose, to forget the past, and refit themselves for enterprise and danger. Hundreds, whose less perilous duties lay within the gates of the harbour, plied to and fro in every direction, crossing and recrossing each other, and enlivening with delightful animation the broad and busy scene. Of these small craft, indeed, the waves were for ever whitened with an incredible number, in the midst of which thundered heavily the splendid and enormous steamers, beautifully formed to shoot through the flood with arrowy swiftness, their clean bright colours shining in the sun, bearing sometimes a thousand persons on excursions of business and pleasure, spouting forth fire and steam like the monstrous dragons of fable, and leaving long tracks of smoke on the blue heaven. Among other evidences of a great maritime power, reposed several giant vessels of war,—those stern, tremendous messengers of the deep, formed to waft, on the wings of heaven, the thunderbolt of death across the solemn world of waters; but now lying, like fortresses, motionless on the tide, and ready to bear over the globe the friendly pledges or the grave demands of a nation which, in the recollection of some of its surviving citizens, was a submissive colony, without power and without a name. You might deem the magnificent city, thus extended upon the flood, Venice, when that wonderful republic held the commerce of the world. In a greater degree, indeed, than London, notwithstanding the superior amount of shipping possessed by the latter, New−York at first strikes the stranger entering into its harbour with signs of commercial prosperity and wealth. In the mighty British metropolis, the vessels lie locked in dockyards, or half buried under fog and smoke. The narrow Thames presents little more than that portion actually in motion; and, in a sail from Margate to town, the vast number are seen only in succession; but here, the whole crowded, broad, and moving panorama breaks at once upon the eye; and

through a perfectly pure and bright atmosphere, nothing can be more striking and exquisite.

It was a frosty winter morning, and the general splendour of the scene was heightened by the fact that, for some days previous, a heavy fall of snow had come down silently and thickly from heaven, without wind and without rain. The whole picture was now glittering with tracts of stainless white. The roofs were hidden beneath fleecy masses. The trees were cased with brilliant lustre, and held out their naked branches sparkling in the sun. The shores, sloping down to the water's edge, leaned brightly to the beams of morning. Even the waves themselves bore on their bosoms, urged gently along, and dashed ever and anon against each other, thick cakes of snow−covered ice, which had drifted down from the rivers, but yet not in sufficient quantities to interrupt the navigation. The roar and thunder of the town could be heard from the bay, as the hundreds of thousands of her citizens awoke to their accustomed occupations. The shouts of artisans and tradesmen, the clink of hammers from the thronged and busy wharves and shipyards, the inspiring "heave−yoes" with which the brawny tars cheered their labours amid the mass of shipping (itself a city), the clanging of hoofs, the shuffling of feet, the ringing of bells, the clash of voices, and all the medley of sounds peculiar to the newly−awakened concourse of a vast and growing population, rose cheerfully on the air. Wherever the eye wandered, it met only scenes of bustle, haste, gayety, and earnest occupation.

But if the exterior of the city presented so lively a picture, the interior was yet more inspiriting. Broadway, the principal street, was now the centre of one of those gay and giddy scenes known only to the inhabitants of cold countries, and which to many offer greater attractions than the odoriferous vales and plains of Italy or Asia. True, those romantic climes where the human race enjoy a temperature so mild and pleasant as to permit of their almost dwelling in the open air even in the coldest season, have, in their softer charms, something unspeakably sweet and alluring. Those evergreen valleys, those luxuriant hills, those rich slopes, clothed with the most gorgeous fruits and the tenderest and deepest verdure, and, more than all, those gentle and transparent skies, seem beneficently designed for man in his more uncivilized state, or for the poor. It must be delightful for the penniless, the aged, and the houseless, unable to procure clothing or fuel, to find the dawn ever diffusing a genial and balmy warmth over nature. The tenant of the rude and scantily furnished hut flings open his window and admits the fragrant sweets. Mere day is to them a gift and a blessing; the sun is their cloak and their fire. Those old Italian landscapes, with the warm yellow light gleaming deliciously in through an open casement, are finely characteristic. But are we not apt to magnify the advantages of this universal and perpetual blandness of heaven? True, the half−clad fisherman flings himself carelessly down, and sleeps upon the beach; the beggar lies stretched against a sunny wall, drying the night−dews from his tattered garments, and partaking in peace the slumbers which he could not enjoy beneath the less benignant influence of the stars; the wrinkled and time−stricken dames, "the spinsters and the knitters in the sun," bring their work in front of their cottages, and, to see them, the pilgrim from a northern clime fancies them happy as the children of Eden. But I doubt whether the vigorous and enlivening joys of winter are not more conducive to health and happiness. An Italian vale, breathing its sweetest odours, and sparkling under its pleasantest sunshine, is but a dull picture compared with Broadway on the bright morning after a heavy fall of snow. No scene can be more full of life and action. Every thing appears in a whirl of delight. A spirit of joy and impulse hangs in the air, pervades all the city, and pours its fires through the veins of every living creature. The exhilarating atmosphere braces the limbs, quickens the step, flushes the cheek, fills the eye with lustre, puts aside care, thought, and dulness, and produces a high state of animal enjoyment. Those old snowstorms have unfortunately of later years made their merry visits less frequently. The fleecy world now descends in smaller quantities, and disappears in a shorter period. I can fancy the rising generation smiling when we, of the old school, lament the forms and fashions of the last century. The young rogues, peradventure, may be amused by wondering what value we can attach to a powdered queue or a plaited wristband; but, by this hand! when the elements themselves alter and remould their usages—when seasons roll in different shapes, when honest old Winter, instead of striding forward, as was his wont, wrapped in cloak and fur, his cheek glowing with the cold, and the sparry icicle glittering around his cap and beard, steals forward with only a fashionable mantle and an umbrella—Heaven save the mark! we may well lament. I cannot write calmly of those glorious old snowstorms.

One of them had now descended upon New−York, and the inhabitants, as the day advanced, seemed conscious of no other earthly object than the enjoyment of sleighing. Countless throngs of the wealthiest and most fashionable were gathered into that broad and beautiful street, which extends three or four miles in a line straight as an arrow, its long vista of elegant houses remarkable for their uniform aspect of affluence and comfort, and

presenting, in their extreme neatness, and, particularly, in the beauty of their entrances, a striking contrast to the street views of Paris, with only two exceptions, and to those of other continental cities without any. Its world of lovely women were abroad. Such rosy cheeks, such melting eyes, as passed up and down that dazzling day! Hundreds of sleighs, drawn sometimes by one horse and sometimes by four, darted by each other with the swiftness of a bird's sweep; the princely horses, fired with the air and the scene, neighing, tossing their heads, champing their bits, and leaping on their way, mad as Bucephalus, every mother's son of them—the bells around their necks ringing out a music as merry and soul−stirring as the blast of a trumpet. An amusement so heartily entered into by the wealthy classes soon assumes an artificial hue of taste. The choice of horses became a matter of the utmost ambition, and the sleighs were wrought into every form devisable by an elegant or a fantastic fancy. Now swept by a painted boat, and now a classic chariot: here darted a pearly shell, fit to bear Venus over the waves; and there, an ocean car, from which father Neptune might have appropriately guided the dolphins and winged horses of the sea. Nowhere are there more lovely women than in those American cities. They contribute largely to the fascination of this exciting sport; and neither at the ball, nor the theatre, nor the midnight revel, do they appear more beautiful than here. Their graceful and glowing faces float by with a rapidity which prevents all criticism, if not all comparison. The gaze is bewildered with an endless succession of lovely lips and radiant smiles, and eyes which the young and sensitive of the other sex, with the fidelity characteristic of ardour and youth, might remember for ever, but that each succeeding glance heals the wound received from the last. In the midst of this gay and noisy scene, the pedestrians along the spacious sidewalks found their interest so much excited by the vast number, variety, and beauty of the equipages, and their charming groups, that the pavements, in their long extent, were lined with animated spectators—some lounging slowly onward, as if reluctantly withdrawing from such a pleasing spectacle, while many remained stationary, watching each bright car as it went ringing and flashing by, and commenting upon each passing company.

"See, Leslie—look yonder!" cried a fashionably−dressed young man to his companion, whose finely−proportioned figure and extremely handsome face had attracted more than one pair of those mischievous eyes we spoke of. "Do you not see her? There—behind the yellow sleigh—in that green sea−shell, with those superb horses! Do you not catch a glimpse of her now?—they have stopped to address that party."

"Yes," said the other, "you are right. What a queenly woman!"

"How she glows in this bracing air, and seems to exult in the mere act of living! Her cheeks put poetry to shame! I wish I were a painter, Leslie."

"There are painters a plenty," rejoined Leslie, "who would despair by the face of Mrs. Temple. You must be a cunning artist indeed to catch that smile—that air—that expression. To−day she looks actually radiant. Those eyes must have made hearts ache in their time."

"They make mine ache yet," said Howard.

"Is not that Flora, with her head turned away?"

The sleigh which they had been observing now swiftly approached, and dashed by over the hard−pressed snow, discovering a nearer view of a gentleman and two ladies: the former a man of style and *ton*, though somewhat advanced in years— the ladies, an extremely fine−looking woman, magnificently dressed, whose age one might scarcely venture to suppose, so brilliantly did the charms of youth and gayety linger around her person; the other, a fair girl of exceeding beauty—her rich complexion heightened by air and exercise—whose bewitching smile and laughing blue eyes, having already intoxicated half the Broadway exquisites, boded no good to the susceptibilities of our young loungers. Greetings were graciously interchanged as they flew by; and the two friends uncovered their heads, with that air of heartfelt homage with which gay and ardent young men return the smile and salutation of the loveliest of the reigning belles.

"I would I had lived in the days of good old Greece," exclaimed Howard, "when the chisel of Praxiteles made marble breathe."

"I had rather live in the good old town of Manahatta, after a merry snowstorm like this," replied Leslie. "But why your wish?"

"That I might have Flora Temple wrought in Parian for my gallery. To have that exquisite Psyche face in marble—immutable—immortal marble—never to be changed by sickness—by care— by time. I would spend hours by it daily, worshipping."

"Do you know, Howard," said Leslie, "I think that `*Psyche face* ' of yours a very expressive phrase?"

"And, pray, the why and the wherefore?"

"Because it illustrates the *soul*," returned Leslie, warmly, "which peculiarly marks the expression of Miss Temple's face."

"But look, yonder comes another!" said Howard.

"Old Mr. Romain and his daughter," added Leslie; "another subject for your Parian. But no *Psyche* there."

A stately creature, with a face that might have been Cleopatra's in her girlhood, bowed smilingly to the two young men, and directed to them the attention of her father.

"After all," exclaimed Howard, as they disappeared amid the throng of sleighs, "I do not know but those large eyes of Rosalie Romain's eclipse them all."

"She is one of your bewildering girls," said Leslie, "whom it would be prudent for such young gentlemen as you to beware of."

"Too late, my friend; your caution, as good advice very often does, comes quite too late. Her first smile is as fatal as Kate Kearney's. But, by−the−way, Leslie, they say that *you*—"

"Nonsense—'tis not true," interrupted Leslie; "so they give *you* to Flora Temple—"

"Ha!" said Howard, affectedly, with a volume of egotistical implication in the motion of his chin (nothing more eloquent than your chin)—"as improbable things *might* happen! But where is my rascal? I bade him drive up and meet me as soon as possible. The loitering scoundrel! I hope those mettlesome fellows of mine have played him no trick."

"What is doing yonder?" said Leslie; "is some one holding a levee in the open air this cold morning?"

"I wager my life," cried Howard, "that the sleigh around which the others are all crowding so eagerly contains that d—d French count."

"His lordship, true enough, at full length," added Leslie, "coated like a Russian emperor, and showing off those four fiery animals to everybody's admiration."

"And envy," said Howard. "That fop, now, could marry any of those blooming belles at ten minutes' notice."

"You do your countrywomen injustice," replied his friend, dryly.

"But here comes the pretty Helen Mellerie, all fur and feathers!" resumed Howard. "Truth to say," he continued, with that discriminating consistency with which he seemed to judge of women, always submitting to the eyes which attacked him last, as men swear allegiance to the reigning monarch, "truth to say, Helen Mellerie *is* beauty's own."

"And behind," added Leslie, "how right gallantly come up our old friends the Mortons!"

"And that pretty creature Maria Morton—she, too, has a pair of eyes," said Howard, sagaciously striking his colours in advance, "not to be encountered rashly."

"Too insipid," answered Leslie; "beauty, without at least some sparkle of sense or heart, is such a silly doll."

"And yet," said Howard, "wise men fall in love with and marry it. But look—there comes your own peerless sister, with your father, Leslie; and what a magnificent pair of horses! I thought mine passable, but *really!*"

"I bought them only yesterday," remarked Leslie. "They are chosen from every thing this side the water; and, with all their fire and mettle, are as kind in the harness as lambs,—Julia could drive them. If I am extravagant in any thing, it is in the love of that noble animal. There is nothing on earth so striking as a beautiful horse."

"Except a beautiful woman!" interrupted Howard, with his eyes fixed full on the face of a lady, who, on foot, and leading by the hand an uncommonly handsome child, was attempting to cross the street.

At the sight of Leslie, his father had ordered the glossy and steaming horses to the sidewalk. The young foreigner Clairmont, who had been pointed out by Leslie, drove up at the moment, and the lady crossing with the child stopped in the middle of the street, at the great peril of her life, and followed the equipage with her eyes. At that instant a sharp cry of terror burst suddenly from all quarters. A pair of horses appeared approaching at full speed, dragging the fragments of a broken and untenanted sleigh, their manes streaming on the air, their ears back, their heads stretched forward, with open mouth and dilated nostril—the half−loosened traces flying about their heels, dashing first to one side of the street, then to the other—ungovernable, desperate, and abandoned to all the wild madness of flight. Each bound threatened the extinction of some human life, or that the affrighted creatures themselves would be dashed to pieces. As they passed, a sympathetic fury ran through all the startled horses around, which were with difficulty reined in by their drivers. The foot−passengers rushed precipitately to the wall. Men shouted, children cried, women screamed, and all the gay mirth was suddenly transformed to fear and horror.

Scarcely a moment had elapsed from their first appearance till their arrival at the spot where stood Leslie and his friend. All seemed to have escaped from their perilous career but the lady with the child, who had attracted the attention of Howard. Whether unconscious of her imminent danger, or rendered by it unable to move, she remained completely exposed; and the crowd, at a glance, and with a burst of new interest, saw the fiery and furious animals plunging with headlong speed directly towards her. Cries of "Stop them! stop them! Save the woman and the child!" rung on the air; but, as is generally the case in such emergencies, there were found many more to suggest this counsel than to execute it. Their destruction appeared inevitable; and that stir, shudder, and hum, with which men look on a bloody and terrible accident, broke from the crowd, when Leslie sprang hastily forward, grasping unsuccessfully at the reins of the fugitive beasts, but dragging the mother and child almost from beneath their hoofs. The lady, thus suddenly rescued from the jaws of death, immediately swooned, and was conveyed with the child into an adjoining mansion. Attention to them would have been more undivided, but for the catastrophe of one of the animals from whose fury they were saved. Starting aside from the grasp of Leslie, the finer of the two leaped forward with an almost supernatural effort, and the shaft of a gig entered into his body directly through the ample chest, as a sword plunged and buried to the hilt in a human bosom. The noble creature uttered a scream painfully expressive of agony and fear; and, bleeding, sweating, foaming, trembling, and panting, came heavily to the ground. A rush of people now closed in upon them. The dying steed was at once disentangled from his harness, the purple tide poured forth in a dark red flood, crimsoning the pure snow, and with each gush the pain of the superb animal appeared more insupportable, while the vapour curled from his reeking flanks. He struggled, and snorted, and strove to rise and resume his winged and fiery flight, and his immense and flashing eyes turned gleaming upon the faces of the spectators, as if soliciting aid, or, at least, compassion. But presently his panting breast heaved with a feebler motion. Weaker, and yet more weak, grew his convulsive shudders, and his vain attempts to regain his feet; till—drenched, quivering and gory—foam on his lip—terror and despair in his eyes—he stretched himself upon the ground in the last throes of that dark crisis which must come alike to man and beast. His fleet limbs stiffened; his asthmatic breathings were silent; his broad and majestic chest moved no more; the damp lips curled from the large ivory teeth; the eyes stared, started, and grew fixed and glassy; and that mighty form which but a moment before had carried terror through the crowd, lay now transmuted to a senseless clod. A silence, as if a human soul had passed away, remained on the circle of compassionate spectators.

Leslie inquired after the lady. She was yet invisible, but, the physician informed him, had sustained no serious injury. He caressed a few moments the exceedingly beautiful little boy, who had been severely but not dangerously cut upon the forehead, and in whose eyes he found something singularly sweet and expressive. Escaping from the scene which might have awaited him had the lady been recovered, he entered his father's sleigh, accompanied by Howard, relieved John of the reins, and, handling the long whip with the air of one not unaccustomed to its use, he laughed away the apprehensions of his father and sister, and dashed in among the idle racers in the gay arena of pleasure.

CHAPTER II.

A Lion, and an Accusation.

"Believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society, and great showing: indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry; for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see." *Hamlet.*

Ring—ring—ring.

"Is Count Clairmont of the French army at home?" inquired a footman at one of the most fashionable hotels in Broadway, while the horses of an elegant barouche stood tossing their heads, and stamping impatiently against the pavement at the door; for city sleighing is brief as the "posy of a ring" or "woman's love" (though this last is a slander).

"No, sar, he is not," replied the consequential black servant.

"Please hand the count this note, with the respects of Mrs. Temple."

Ring—ring—ring.

"Does not Count Clairmont of the French army lodge here?" asked a second visiter.

"He does."

"Can I see him?"

"You cannot—he is not in."

"My card—I shall see him at the opera."

Ring—ring—ring.

A tall, pale−faced gentleman in black, with a hooked nose and no teeth. "Can you direct me where to find Count Clairmont?"

"This is his hotel, sir."

"Is he to be seen?"

"Not till the afternoon,"

"Has Count Clairmont come in yet?" inquired a breathless messenger in livery, in a profuse perspiration, and who had been seven times before during the last half hour.

"He will not be visible, I have already told you, this morning."

"Miss Morley's compliments, and returns the volume."

Several carriages drove up in the course of the morning, a score of domestics, and friends without number, among whom were many of the most distinguished inhabitants of the city, all inquiring and leaving cards, notes, or some nameless message or package for Count Clairmont of the French army. One or two young female servants entered timidly, and closely veiled, presenting small *billets−doux*, ingeniously folded in triangles and other expressive figures (the boyish eyes of Love, the young dog! peeping from under the big wig of mathematics), and each leaving her tribute of rose−coloured or pale blue gold−edged note−paper (containing heaven knows what), to be most particularly delivered into the hands *only* of Count Clairmont of the French army.

"I wish to see Count Clairmont," said a dark−complexioned and very handsome girl, with a silvery voice and a foreign accent, her veil drawn aside from her close bonnet to address the servant, which she did in a tone of eagerness, and almost of command.

"It is not possible," said the servant. "He aint visible to no one whatsomever."

"He will see Mr. Frederick Morton," interrupted a very foppishly−dressed young man, who had been leisurely surveying the remarkable face of the female: "say *Mr. Morton*—he will see *me*, I am sure."

"Not by no manner of means," said the negro. "He aint in, because, you see, he aint up. Consequently, no gentleman can't never be *in* when he aint *up*."

The truth of this syllogism was indisputable; and Mr. Frederick Morton, after another lingering gaze at the fair stranger, took his departure.

There was now a furious ringing at the bell which communicated with the *suites* of private apartments.

"John!" bawled the bar−keeper.

"Coming, coming, sir!"

"Count Clairmont's bell!"

"D—n this Count Clairmont of the French army!" muttered the man. "He has nothing to do but turn women's heads, and men's too, for that matter, and to keep us poor devils all day trooping up and down stairs. Legs aint made of iron, I guess."

He was met by Count Clairmont's servant from the stairs.

"Here, John! you black scoundrel, what the devil is the reason Count Clairmont's breakfast has not been brought up? Bring it up instantly. His lordship has rung twice."

"I wish his lordship was—"

John scratched his head, and left the sentence unfinished. The valet suddenly caught a view of the young girl, at whom he gazed with strong and increasing astonishment.

"What!—no!" muttered he. "Yes—surely— it can't be; but—"

"Raffaello!" said the girl, vehemently, and walking up close to him. "*It is!*"—and she suddenly broke into a rapid flow of Italian, though uttered in a low voice.

"*Per Dio!*" said the valet, "I dare not."

"He will break my heart!" said the girl.

"He will break my head!" said Raffaello.

"If you displease me you will repent of it hereafter," answered she.

"If I offend my master I shall repent of it at once," said the man.

"It is in vain to deny me—I *will* see him immediately."

"Signora Louise!" replied the valet, after a moment's hesitation, in which surprise and perplexity seemed struggling with a desire to oblige— "enter into this apartment. I will return to you directly."

There was something striking in the appearance of the stranger. Her figure was tall, round, and beautifully formed, and her face well repaid a second glance. The complexion, though brown to the last borders of a brunett, was clear and transparent; her hair of the colour of a raven; and much there was in her countenance of sweetness, and in her manner of dignity, although her dress did not denote affluence. But the principal feature was her eyes. They were remarkable for their largeness, their intense blackness, the light which shot from them with every rolling thought and sudden feeling, the firm full gaze with which they expressed seriousness or anger, and the suffusion of softness and tenderness which sometimes quenched their fiercer beams.

The valet presently returned, and beckoned her to follow; and the plebeian world below went on for a time without further molestation from the agents or affairs of Count Clairmont of the French army.

There is no keener wine−lover than your Turk. Nowhere are there found wilder democrats than in the ranks of a despot; and nowhere are the badges of nobility more reverently and indiscriminately hailed than by the gay votaries of fashion in a republic, where all men are "born equal," and where titles are excluded by the constitution.

A count—a real count—had made his appearance in New−York. Rumour preceded, enthusiasm welcomed, and admiration followed him. He was young, handsome, rich, and a foreigner. The two former would have been much, the latter were every thing. It was whispered that, notwithstand ing his high title and princely fortune, he would write a book on America. Books on America were even then the vogue. The opinion of the count was looked for with intense eagerness; for it is a characteristic of my countrymen, while they assume a settled confidence in their merit, to shrink from the lash of every nameless satirist. Then, perhaps, he might marry! The very men went crazy—and the women!

Although in the French service, the Count Clair mont had spent much of his youth in England, and the language was said to be more familiar to him than his own. Others he spoke too with irresistible grace; but that of love more freely than all. Then he had travelled over the world, danced with dutchesses and princesses, feasted with dukes and kings, fought in a score of indefinite battles, and triumphed in victories which nations had owed to his arm. He had been wounded by a retreating foe (ah! what was that wound to those he daily inflicted!)— had sighed on the banks of the Ilissus, and mused amid the ruins of Rome; had beheld Vesuvius spout his fires, and Olympus rear his head. His motion was grace, his voice music, his eyes bliss, his touch rapture: then he was fascinating; then he was foreign; then—he was single; then—he was a *count*. It is certain that he was a modest man—that is, modest for a count in the French army—modest for a man who had half the lovely women of New−York at his feet. Relieved for a time, in consequence of a wound, from the claims of his own country, he no longer fleshed his sword in war; but he had seized a nobler weapon, and wreathed his brows with more graceful

laurels. This nobler weapon was a goose−quill. Blood he could not now shed, but his ink flowed freely in the cause of innocence and beauty—and midnight oil he wasted like water. Dull were the eyes that might not strike a rhyme from the soul of Count Clairmont of the French army. Every smile was caught and imprisoned in a verse; every blush brightened again in a sonnet. Many a slender foot had been celebrated—many a tender glance embalmed— many a passion nursed—and many a cigar smoked, in all the raptures of sentiment, and in all the reveries of champaign, by Count Clairmont of the French army. Envy, jealousy, even love, could frame only one accusation against him. It was a charge that moistened the eyes and heaved the bosom of many a charming belle. It shaded his triumph at the ball, and dimmed his joy at the banquet. The tall and lovely Henrietta Bellville actually broke away from a *tête−à−tête*, the only one envious fate ever granted, at the very thought; and that glowing creature Helen Mellerie was seen to withdraw her hand from his—in the little summer−house— by the river—at her father's country−seat— in August—the moon *quite* above the trees— immediately—that is, *almost* immediately—at the recollection of its truth;—

Count Clairmont of the French army was—a flirt!

CHAPTER III.

A dutiful Daughter.

"Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters, By what you see them act." —*Othello.*

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed Rosalie Romain, looking up after a brown study of a minute, "it is *horrid!*"

"Explain, my pretty *penserosa*," said the count, laughing.

"The evidences are strong as proofs of holy writ," she sighed, fixing her tender eyes on his, just sufficiently moistened to be uncommonly bright.

"Evidences of *what?*" asked the count.

"You know as well as I," said Rosalie, winding a rose−coloured riband round the end of her finger, and looking down.

"No, on my life!"

"That you are a flirt."

"As I live!" exclaimed the count, remonstratingly.

The beautiful girl turned partly away, half pouting.

"Nay, more," said he, in a softer tone, "as— as I—"

He took her hand. He was certainly on his knees, or rather on one knee; he pressed it, as, faintly, and only at intervals, she struggled to escape.

"As you *what?*" cried she, impatiently, and slightly stamping her foot.

But a smile, which had been lurking all the time around her lips, broke over her features like sunshine through a sudden cloud.

"As I *love*," said the count, after a brief pause, and in his lowest tone.

Notwithstanding the smile, a tear had been slowly filling in her eyes. It stirred—it fell. It dropped upon his hand. He kissed it off.

The *tableau* was picturesque. They lingered in it a moment, as if they knew it became them.

"Dear! dear! there's pa!" exclaimed Rosalie, in a sudden fright—and she threw open a large portfolio of plates.

"An extraordinary taste, count," said the old gentleman, "my daughter has for the fine arts."

"Oh, pa!"

"I never knew such an ear; and as for *drawing*—"

"Oh dear, pa; how *can* you!"

"Then for the plain, sweet old English ballad, my lord—"

"Good gracious, pa! don't you see the count wants to go?"

"What, are you off, count? Bless me! we must keep you for dinner."

"Necessity, Mr. Romain. You know the tyranny of appointments."

"My love, can't you persuade him to remain?"

"I have not tried, pa."

"Heydey! these saucy girls! But we must not let you off. Besides, the sky looks showery."

"But showers sometimes," said Clairmont, with a slight glance at Miss Romain, "are more beautiful than sunshine."

"Let him go, pa; I am sure it will not rain again to−day."

"Why, you jade," cried the old gentleman, "you will drive him away in earnest. Impudent minx!"— he drew her towards him as he spoke, and printed a kiss on her lips—"she is getting incorrigible."

"Lock her up, Romain; she is mischievous," said the count, shaking his finger playfully at the laughing girl as he withdrew.

"The sky has cleared," said Mr. Romain.

"Yes, pa."

"What an elegant young man Count Clairmont is!"

"Yes, pa."

"You are going to Mrs. Temple's to−night, Rosalie?"

"Yes, if you please, dear pa."

"You will see the count there."

"I hope not, pa; I think him rather disagreeable."

"The women are pulling caps for him, notwithstanding, they say, in all directions. He is very rich; he appears quite fond of us; perhaps—"

"Oh no, pa; only polite."

"Well, every thing is for the best."

"Yes, pa."

"I think Temple's girl will manage to—"

"To what, pa?" said Rosalie, with sudden eagerness.

"Go and get ready for dinner, child," said the musing father, recollecting himself; "it is no affair of ours."

"Yes, pa—no, pa," replied the dutiful daughter, with innocent simplicity, and retired to dress.

CHAPTER IV.

A Dream—and, as Dreams sometimes are, broken.

"And thus from Fancy's realms Fall'n back to Earth."

There is nothing like a rout. Those given by Mrs. Temple were the most brilliant in America. But we must know Mrs. Temple before we attend her parties.

You have seen a sweet, quiet, unambitious woman, formed for the wife of a poet, whose life would glide happily away amid the green shades of the country—a woman to read to during the long winter nights—to converse with when the overworked mind and heart are wearied and exhausted in the brawling world—to look at with inward delight, while she teaches the children their evening lessons—their innocent prayers,—kisses them—blesses them—and packs them off to bed. Her hair may be parted on her forehead with a simple grace, that touches by a total absence of all attempts to touch, and surprises the heart at once into respect and admiration. Even in the early morning you find such a one ready to receive you with a fresh glow on her cheek, as if she had been already abroad worshipping nature; and then you feel rebuked in soul that you have been losing, in swinish sleep, the golden hours of the opening day. Her home is her world; her existence is in the love and happiness of her husband and children. In the dazzling sphere of fashion she may win admiration, but she seeks it not; for she knows it is often the meed of the superficial and the false,— that the noblest qualities which adorn character and dignify human life there often pass unregarded, or become the themes of ridicule. Her principal charm is mind and feeling; but there are moments when purity and love lend her a beauty that illumines her presence like sunshine. There is nothing like the loveliness of a woman with a spring of satisfied affection flowing freshly at her heart. Sunshine is too dim for a comparison.

Such a woman we have all seen; but such a woman was not Mrs. Temple. Her portrait might be appropriately hung opposite to this,—as you see pendants of sunrise and moonlight—calm and storm—side by side, on the walls of an academy. Mrs. Temple was a city wife, formed to dazzle and triumph in companies. She had trodden the flowery path of an admired belle; had early married a wild, good−hearted fellow, very much like herself,—some said for love, some for money. They were affluent beyond measure; loved each other well enough to be perfectly happy when together or when apart. The blooming girl had scarcely changed, as the beautiful wife and the still glowing and graceful mother, till time, the destroyer of others' charms, but shedding only a deeper richness upon hers, matured her into the stately and magnificent woman, who reigned in the New−York circles, fashion's chief minion, and proud as Egypt's queen. One daughter crowned her affections; and Flora Temple rose by the side of her brilliant mother, lovelier, but not so gay; and winning all hearts with a less striking but far deeper power. Men hesitated upon which to bestow their worship. So sometimes lingers the summer day, drawing all eyes to the encrimsoned west, even when the moon has long filled, with her holier radiance, the ascending heaven. The singularity of this association could not escape the notice of the yet ambitious woman of fashion; and Mrs. Temple regarded Flora with a curiously mixed feeling, wavering between the enthusiastic fondness of the mother and the lingering rivalry of the belle. There was, perhaps, a certain conscious magnanimity in the delight with which she gazed upon her daughter's expanding charms—passionately fond as she herself was of admiration, and accustomed to be its centre. But yet, though they charmed alike, they could scarcely interfere with each other. The one was always sure to overcome, when she desired to do so, by the long−practised energies of her highly−gifted nature; the other always won love without wishing, and even without knowing it. The daughter valued not what she had never striven to obtain, and beheld with pleasure the triumphs of her queenly mother; who, in her turn, yielded the path with a sigh and a smile to the more unpretending excellences of Flora. Some sharp and unfavourable features there were in Mrs. Temple's disposition, for she was haughty when excited, and aristocratic to a folly. But if she had particular enemies, her general kindness and her fascinating manners rendered the world at large her friend. The life of her family, the object of her husband's love and pride (after his dogs and horses) left to her own control, in the possession of boundless wealth, with a constitution unimpaired, a beauty mellowed, a wit sharpened, and a mind enriched,—she was a giddy, sweet, proud, high−tempered, happy, fashionable woman, who never seriously conceived a more severe wish against those among her neighbours whom she had the least reason to like, than that the routs which she gave two or three times a year might make

them positively die of admiration and envy.

"What! nine o'clock!" cried the count, looking at his watch; "I must actually go this instant."

Mrs. Hamilton sighed, and turned towards him a pair of hazel eyes which had done mischief in their day, and were yet dangerous, though they were now, or at least ought to have been, sheathed in the scabbard of matrimony.

"Why do you sigh?" said the count.

"Because I hate solitude; and when you go I shall be alone."

"But this," said the count, "is Mrs. Temple's night, and I have positively promised."

"You are too early," said Mrs. Hamilton. "Twelve will be quite time enough for that proud and giddy Mrs. Temple."

"But I have two or three other imperative engagements before Mrs. Temple's. There is the young Mrs. Wilson."

"And you leave me for *her!*"

"Then there are the Evertons."

Mrs. Hamilton sighed again.

"Is my sweet coz so pensive?"

"I do not know; I am very unhappy."

"Can *you* be unhappy?"

The handsome young nobleman took her hand.

There was not a purer woman on earth than Mrs. Hamilton. Her very purity made her careless. A school−girl could not be more artless. Her lips opened to every thing that stirred in her heart as naturally as rosebuds unfold when they are ripe.

"Ah! Lucy, what a happy man is your husband!"

"Not so happy as you think."

"How! Hamilton not happy! Why, he is the gayest dog among us."

"Yes, away at his club with *you*."

"My lovely friend, you wrong him."

"Ah! you little know." A tear glittered in her eye.

"By heavens! dear girl, you terrify me!—the mere suspicion that *you* were not happy would for ever prevent *my* being so."

"Oh, my lord! I must not hear—you must not dare."

"And why should you not possess a friend in me as well as in another? I sympathize in your sorrows as I would in those of a friend of my own sex. This dear hand has, I fear, been wasted."

"Count, I beg—I entreat—do not make me angry."

"Loveliest of lovely creatures!" said the count, "you have not the heart to reward admiration and sympathy with anger. What, weeping!"

"My lord, if you have any friendship for me, leave me."

"Friendship! can you doubt it?"

He dropped on one knee. This seemed a favourite position when there was a woman in the case. His homage, doubtless, would have met with a severe rebuke, but a step was heard in the hall.

"There—there's James, my lord!"

The entrance of the domestic restrained the ardours of the noble foreigner, who was upon his feet, and several yards off, with an adroitness that argued considerable practice.

"Pray tell my dear Hamilton," he cried, "that I waited for him an hour. I *must* bid you adieu!" and he bowed himself out.

"Take away the tea−things, James," said Mrs. Hamilton.

The man obeyed, and disappeared.

His lovely young mistress remained a moment in an attitude of thought. Suddenly rising, she gazed at herself in the mirror; and, as she gazed, her feelings appeared to assume a new mood. She adjusted the blonde and curls around a very charming face. A soft colour suffused her countenance. Her eyes emitted a lustre which had not brightened there for many a day. She sighed; but as she sighed a smile beamed upon her features, and she seemed lost in the mazes of some sad but pleasurable thought.

"Yes," at length she said to herself; "happy, happy woman! What would life have been to me then? What a contrast! I should have had my portrait taken—just so. There! with that ringlet hanging—so—and the lace brought down a little in the front—*à la Marie Stuart* —so. There—the *Countess Clairmont!* with the drapery over the arm, and the eyes lifted—thus."

The reflection of another figure in the glass caused her to start with a slight scream.

"Good heavens, Edward, how you frightened me! Is that you?"

"Why, who the devil should it be?" replied the husband; "and what are you at there, parading before the glass like a tragedy queen?"

"I was—I was trying on my cap; but you startled me so! You are always so rough, Edward."

"I am not."

"You are."

"I am not. Get me some tea," flinging himself heavily down on the sofa; "I'm tired."

"Yes, dear Edward, instantly," said the affectionate wife, passing her arm tenderly around his shoulder.

"Then why the devil don't you go?"

"I have already rung for it. You always come home as cross as—"

The husband swore. The wife sighed. James brought the tea.

Oh, matrimony! thou—

But they are waiting for us at the Temples'.

CHAPTER V.

A New−York Rout—And a nearer View of several Characters.

"For my mind misgives, Some consequence yet hanging in the stars Shall bitterly begin his fearful date With this night's revels." *—Romeo and Juliet.*

The company were assembled by ten; not all, but nearly twice as many as could press at one time into the ample and splendid apartments.

A fashionable New−York mansion is not surpassed anywhere in graceful elegance and complete comfort. There were many rooms blazing with light. The opening hall was carpeted with oilcloth of such rich figures and glossy smoothness as resembled the pictured marble floors of Italian palaces; but the stairs and drawing−rooms, instead of being like those of many European nobles, of cold marble or naked granite, were thickly covered with the most gorgeous carpets. But few paintings and statues graced the walls. There was, however, a profusion of mirrors, marble tables, curtains of crimson velvet studded with gold, vases, urns, and jars of rare flowers; exquisitely−wrought lamps, dispensing a soft and veiled radiance, like moonlight, from large globes, sometimes stained with deeply−coloured pictures, and sometimes of a frosty white; couches, ottomans, and sofas of embroidered satin; and a variety of such other costly objects as could be obtained by wealth from any part of the world for the indulgence of pride or the gratification of luxury. The balustrades of the steps which led to the upper apartments were of beautifully−carved mahogany, stained with the rich colour of a ripe chestnut; and, by means of secret apertures, invisible fires diffused through the corridors a mild warmth, permitting all the interior doors of the house to stand open, without afflicting even the sensitive victims of rheumatism or toothache with the horrors of a draught.

Immediately on their arrival, the guests were ushered into separate apartments above, where, according to their sex, they re−arranged their toilet, which even the motion of a carriage might have disturbed. Here, previous to their entrance, floated groups of sylphs and sirens, to reclaim a wandering curl or replant a drooping rose. Then The gentlemen's apartment—the extraordinary preparations to be elegant—the collars bent to the precise angle—the cravats tied in the exquisite knot— the shining feet—the curled heads—the crooked elbows—the audacious whiskers. Cupid, hast thou no pity? There is nothing so merciless as a fop.

The two principal saloons were thrown into one, by means of the double doors of glassy mahogany. A band of musicians, stationed in an adjoining hall, ever and anon breathed a low air that banished care and gravity, inspired wit and pleasure, and animated rather than interrupted conversation.

At the lower end of the apartment stood Mrs. Temple; her majestic figure multiplied in the mirrors,—her face, always a radiant one, now glowing with pride and conscious beauty. A coronet of diamonds on her queenly brow flashed, burned, and trembled with every motion in the light; and above nodded a snowy plume. She looked thus, in her glory, like the rising sun.

By her side stood Flora; not so tall as her mother, nor so commanding, but yet invested by the charm of youthful loveliness with more direct power over the feelings. For her style of beauty, she was admirably dressed in simple white; her hair parted plainly on her forehead, and a rose, fresh culled from nature, the only ornament of her strikingly beautiful head. Venus might have so stood by Juno.

It was a study to see Mrs. Temple "receive:" that stately air—that gracious recognition and graceful acknowledgment—the ready word—the quick repartee—the brilliant smile—the beaming look.

Then Flora—without any of that dramatic effect— more reserved—more natural—more lovely— growing like a Guido on the contemplation—more difficult to imitate, and—to forget.

Had the proud dame known her true moral glory that night, she would have attached no value to the splendour which surrounded her, but triumphed alone, conspicuous and envied as the mother of Flora Temple.

The rooms were filled—the halls—the steps before the door. Family after family of the very highest *ton* (and are there not the loftiest exclusives in a republic?) came pouring up. Wealthy merchants— eminent counsellors, just from profound tomes, gladly escaped to this scene of light and joy—astute judges, who had perhaps recently sealed the fate of wretched criminals, chatted with the bright−eyed girls, and sipped their coffee to dulcet music—physicians, from the death−bed of the dying or the dead—distinguished members of

Congress—ex−governors and bank−directors—popular authors (for even America began to have popular authors)—*elégants—beaux−esprits*—and "young men of talent" by the score—and lions in such plenty that they were in each other's way;— all mingled in the enchanting tide of sparkling pleasure and radiant beauty. The waltz—that airy child of fashion and caprice—even here, where the pioneer had scarcely flung away his axe, floated like a zephyr, though, truth to say, within a sadly circumscribed compass. Music breathed—champaign exploded—the pressure for pleasure grew greater and more insupportable—the sides of the obese were penetrated by the elbows of the enthusiastic— the gentlemen were wedged in closely, with one hand and an opera−hat above their head— imperial carpets were soaked with wasted wine— each charming mouth dropped words of wit and mirth—those who were out pressed to get in—those who were in pressed to get out—the roar of new carriages thundered at the door, and—what is there after all like a rout?

But, heavens! what a voice! what loveliness! what execution! A young girl, of peculiar grace and beauty, ran her slender fingers rapidly over the keys of a piano, and sang with such tones of sweetness that the auditors almost ceased to breathe. A difficult and brilliant bravura elicited from every lip repeated and irrepressible exclamations of delight and pleasure. They had not yet died away, when a plaintive ballad, simple as the murmurs of a running brook, and soft as the voice of the dove mourning her mate in the forest, once more hushed every sound and touched every heart, till the last sweet note, melting away, left a general pause— the truest tribute of praise.

"Who *is* she?" cried one.

"Who *can* she be?" exclaimed another.

It was old Mr. Romain's daughter. Every one knew old Mr. Romain.

If any thing can heighten the spell of good wine, it is music a little while after. If any thing can extract from music its last alloy of earth, and leave it purely an ethereal rapture, it is good wine a little while before.

"By heavens," said Albert Moreland, "this is wonderful!—Norman, did you ever hear such sounds?"

"Many a time and oft," replied Leslie, with indifference.

Rosalie Romain was the centre of all eyes; even Flora stood by almost unobserved. Never was collected a fairer array than shone here to−night, and none so marked as Rosalie Romain. Her beauty was indeed of a kind to bewilder the unwary. Her person was graceful and majestic, and somewhat above the ordinary stature. A warm and passionate languor was felt in her manner and expression; except at times, when suddenly excited to peculiarly winning loveliness and *naïveté*. Eyes large and dark—pearly teeth—a bewitching smile— the most engaging air—and a voice that might sound an alarm to the heart of a cynic, invested her with uncommon powers of allurement. She was peculiarly favoured, too, with a complexion of such transparent brightness, lips so red and pouting, and cheeks so fresh and rosy, as would have imparted a character of beauty to features much less intrinsically perfect.

"What, Norman, silent!" cried Moreland again to the young man whom he had previously addressed, who was rather gravely regarding Miss Romain, while others could not find words to praise her sufficiently; "and, now I remember, this enchantress the world has given to *you* . Is it not so, Miss Temple?"

"Even so, Mr. Moreland," answered Flora, with a smile; "and a more elegant girl Mr. Leslie could scarcely desire."

Leslie coloured in some confusion.

"See," exclaimed Moreland, "the guilty wretch!"

"Upon my soul," said Leslie, "you do me too much honour."

"Nay, but I *saw*," said Moreland, "even this minute—the language of Miss Romain's eyes is not easily to be mistaken; and Mr. Norman Leslie himself, for all his present gravity, has a pair of orbs which converse indifferently well. Look at them, Miss Temple."

"Nonsense, it is untrue," said Norman. "I solemnly assure you it is untrue. Miss Temple, protect me from the raillery of this sarcastic lawyer."

"I must reserve my forces, Mr. Leslie, for a juster cause," replied Miss Temple, smiling.

"There, I told you so, Leslie; Miss Temple knows it—I know it—everybody knows it."

"Albert, upon my honour—"

"Why," interrupted Moreland, "now I remember me, I have myself seen a copy of verses, addressed by N. L. to R. R., enough to make stones weep. I hereby formally accuse you of the dreadful and *very* uncommon crime of *love*."

"What shall be the penalty?" asked Norman.

"We shall be obliged to procure one by special act of Congress," replied the lawyer, quickly; "for the offence is so heinous, that, like parricide, the legislator might well forget to include it in his code."

"Whatever it may be," said Norman, "the endictment is false."

"You will plead guilty, then, to *flirtation?*— remember *Congress Hall*."

"Of flirtation," said the youth, blushing perceptibly, "perhaps; but, if that is a crime, I have repented and done penance—I hold myself absolved."

"Jealousy!" said Moreland: "the dear creatures have quarrelled; I vow I will bring them together. Miss Temple knows—"

But Miss Temple had disappeared.

"Albert," said Norman, in a low voice, "never again jest with me on that subject. I *hate* that girl—I actually hate her. She is the wiliest coquette that ever breathed. I did think once I loved her; her beauty and winning allurement of manner fired my boyish feelings. But I needed only a slight experience in the capacity of a lover, to read in her actions a cold heart and a shallow understanding. She is vain, proud, and silly; though brilliant, accomplished, and lovely. She is a show— a dazzle—a bright, but hollow and useless mask, without either head or heart. She has taught me a lesson in woman which I shall not lightly forget."

"But I see you with her often, and in friendship," said Moreland.

"Certainly," replied Norman, laughing; "you would not have me challenge her? When I say *hate*, I mean I dislike the class of characters to which she belongs. Individually, I would not injure her either in reputation or feelings. She is a gay, and can be a fascinating woman; and perhaps I am somewhat severe upon female character. Besides, the world has placed me among her rejected lovers. I would do away the impression, as I do not deserve the honour. I meet her often in society. We have had no definite misunderstanding. This change in my sentiments has been the work of silent observation. I found a glittering toy, thought it diamond—examined it, and discovered it to be but common glass. Yet I do not wish, and indeed have no right, to withhold from her the civilities due to a lady."

"Come, come," said Moreland, "I think I see through all this. You are a little jealous. That French count, who has set the whole town crazy—"

"What! that Clairmont!" interrupted Norman, with an expression of contempt—"that fop! that coxcomb!"

"Ay!" cried Moreland, "that is the very language of the green−eyed monster."

"I tell you," said Norman, "I would attend his union with Rosalie Romain as cheerfully as you."

"But you will not have an opportunity," returned Moreland; "I have myself, to be sure, remarked his admiration for Miss Romain."

"And hers for him?"

"What could she do, Norman? You know in your heart that he is the most elegant dog in the world, and turns every woman's head he looks at; his address—his person—his accomplishments— his fortune—the exceeding propriety and elegance with which he speaks the English—his high rank— and that *guitar!* and he has nothing on earth to do but to idle and make love. The girls are flattered— men envious—husbands look on him obliquely—and lovers (the Lord help them!) are jealous,— Mr. Norman Leslie among the rest. But hear me to the close. As for that beautiful creature Miss Romain—why, we are not Turks—the formidable rival can marry *but* one—and this *one* cannot be Miss Romain; for, to my certain knowledge, he is paying particular attention to—"

"And so, *I* am to take the lady if *he* will not!"

"Well, well, Norman! you need not flash your eyes so sternly on *me; I* am not a count in the French army."

"Nor he neither," said Leslie, quickly, and in a low tone, "I'll wager my life. The strongest suspicions have crossed me. You know how he appeared here—under what odd circumstances; his baggage lost—his boat overturned—and the devil to pay: so that he might or might *not* be what he professes. Count or no count, I have an instinctive, unconquerable aversion to him. I have noted trifles in him which argue dark things."

"Oh ho!" said Moreland, laughing; "what havoc love can make in the brain of a sensible fellow! Here you are, crammed with sentiment and romance, and as full of quarrel `as my young mistress's dog!' You doubt the honour of a noble whom no one else could dream of doubting, and you scornfully dismiss the character of a young girl whom all the rest of the company are dying in love for. `Good Heaven! the souls of all my tribe defend from jealousy.' "

"Love or hate," said Norman, thoughtfully, "I do not like this sprig of nobility. If this be the stuff of European nobles, Heaven send that they keep hereafter the other side of the Atlantic. I half fancy sometimes my aversion is reciprocated; and I have a gloomy presentiment that we shall one day cross each other."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Moreland; "you must be wary how you approach him, for his anger is no jest. He is, as perhaps you know, the most deadly shot in the country; this is the most conspicuous among his accomplishments. He plants a pistol−bullet at the farthest distance, ten times out of twelve, upon a silver sixpence. I have seen him do it; and they *do say* that he has no desire whatever to keep this remarkable skill a secret."

"Doubtless," replied Norman; "he fancies, I suppose, that such a power will awe the plebeian crowd whose dinners he eats—whose wives and daughters he makes love to—"

"And whose matches he breaks off," interrupted Moreland. "He has already, as you know, killed a man at the South; and I believe that is one reason the women love him so."

"Is there a character on earth," said Norman, "so base and execrable as a professed shot? It would be no bad deed to send back this malapert popinjay with a broken wing. One looks without horror at the worst calamity of a professed duellist in a duel."

"What a husband he will make!" said Moreland; "and how many of these women are dying for him because only of his nickname—those five cabalistic letters which compose the word count! Yet, truth to say, he is an elegant fellow."

"I wish Miss Romain no worse fate," answered Norman, "than success in her evident designs to entrap him."

"And you are really off there, then?"

"I tell you, Albert, if this bright−lipped girl who enchants the people here so to−night, with the wealth of Croesus, were to be had for the asking, and Flora Temple, without friend or fortune, were to be wooed and won by perseverance, I could rather choose the latter, and live with her in a desert, than trust my happiness with yonder unfeeling flirt. As for the Frenchman, I wish him success— they are fit for each other; and the Lord help them, say I, by their winter fireside."

"Phoo! phoo!" said Moreland, "such people have no winter fireside; they live in the world and for it, and not for each other, nor with each other: and, between you and me, dear Norman, I am glad, and so will Mary be, that you have escaped from this siren; but then, as I live, it's Flora Temple."

"No, Albert—no!" replied Norman, rather hastily; and then falling into a more contemplative manner—"Flora Temple is not for me neither. She is one of your intellectual women—a passionless, self−possessed, unloving nature—soft and winning, I grant, but without warmth. She has a heart, doubtless, but it is not formed for love. No gentle thought−wanderings—no fond wishes or alarms; you never saw a cloud or a flush upon *her* brow. I am sure she would ridicule a lover to death. I like a woman with a *soul*. Some rich automaton, with all the external trappings of dignity and fashion, will marry her, just when mamma says, ere the bloom of bellehood has passed utterly away. She will not resist; she will have no reason for resistance, for she will adapt herself to the caprices of one man as well as of another. There will be a wedding—company—calls—cards—and jams; ices will be eaten—champaign spilt—compliments paid; there will be blushes, smiles, wishes, witticisms, and congratulations; years will roll on, and Mistress Flora, whatever her name may be, will bud and bloom, fade and fall—a good wife, an exemplary mother, and—I heartily hope—an indulgent and contented grandmamma. She will live and die— be mourned and forgotten, all in the forms and fashions prescribed by propriety and custom; and there will be the end of her. I *hate* cold women, and Miss Temple is cold as ice."

Poor Flora! how he slandered her!

The two friends parted; and Norman followed the tide as it flowed around the room, sometimes pausing to address an acquaintance, sometimes to exchange a word with a belle.

"Ah! Mr. Leslie," cried Miss Romain, "you come opportunely. Here are Miss Morton and myself actually deserted, wandering about like two princesses of romance. You are a true knight−errant, and shall be our champion."

"Happy chance!" replied Leslie, extending his arms, and they accompanied him on his rounds.

"Dear me!" cried Miss Morton, "I thought Count Clairmont was to be here. It is now twelve o'clock."

"He never comes till late when he means to remain," said Miss Romain; "but, favoured as *we* are, I had quite forgotten him," added she, looking expressively at Norman. "Come, Mr. Leslie, for mercy's sake say something; you are as dull as a philosopher."

"I *am* a philosopher, Miss Romain," said Norman, gravely.

"Since when, pray? and wherefore, my noble knight?" asked Miss Romain, again looking up familiarly in his face, and hanging on his arm as a happy wife might lean on the support of a loving husband.

"All men—that is, all wise men," pursued the youth, "grow philosophical as they grow old; and one surely needs philosophy when danger hangs on either arm, and looks him in the face."

"Meaning *us!* well, that is about as inappropriate a speech for a philosopher," said Miss Romain, "as I ever heard. Did you hear, Maria, his pretty speech?"

"Yes, often. To−day, when he called at our house—"

"Called—who called?"

"Why, the count. Dear me! you were speaking of Count Clairmont, were you not?"

"There must be *two* philosophers in our circle," said Miss Romain to Leslie, with a significant smile, and in a whisper, which again brought her mouth almost against his own. Her languishing eyes were lifted to his; he felt her breath on his cheek. At this moment his glance encountered that of Miss Temple. Her gaze was calm as a sister's. Why did a feeling of disquietude—of confusion— shoot through his heart?

A few moments after his gay companions were called away to the dance, and he was left again alone. As he stood, his eyes, involuntarily passing over the varied assembly of countenances, sought out and reposed on the face of Miss Temple.

"After all, how much more truly beautiful she is!"—thus the youth thought, as he stole his unobserved study of her features—"how much more noble and *wife−like* than Rosalie!" As he gazed, the rose which ornamented her hair fell unnoticed; he picked it up.

"Miss Temple, you have dropped your rose; allow me—" She reached forth her hand, received it with a graceful acknowledgment, and was about placing it in her hair. What would he not have given to place it there himself! He never saw her look so serenely, so perfectly lovely.

"Why, Leslie!" exclaimed the brother of Miss Morton—a handsome young fop, with his hair curled profusely around his forehead—and bowing low with the conscious elegance of a compliment, "your heart must be marble! Had that fair tribute fallen to *me,* I should have cherished it as a relic out of Holy Land."

How often it happens that the bosom struggling with pure feeling is denied the power of expressing it; while nature gives the envied eloquence to the careless and the gay, who neither know how to value nor how to use it.

"If you esteem the poor rose so highly, Mr. Morton," said Flora, "pray take it. Perhaps it will be as potent as other relics."

Morton bowed; received the flower—kissed it— and placed it in his bosom. That careless act of Flora's cost him a heartache. Norman knew the simple youth, and smiled.

"What a fine creature, Leslie—hey?" said Morton, affectedly, a few moments afterward. "But don't deduce any false conclusions from this kindness of hers to me. It is mere civility on her part; nothing more, upon honour. But she *is* a splendid article, I declare—isn't she? Halloo! who is that dashing fellow with her?"

"Count Clairmont," said his sister. "Now, just as if you did not know the count, and he at our house every day of his life!"

"Why, so it is!" exclaimed Morton. "Well, I never—I did not know him with his back turned, I declare. He's a fine−looking fellow, though—isn't he! And how he does dress! Did you ever! How he talks and laughs to Flora—don't he! Why, he'll get her for the next cotillon—won't he? and I have very particular reasons for wishing to dance with her myself. Excuse me, ladies; by−by, Leslie. Why, only look! 'Pon my soul, I declare, I never—"

He broke away abruptly through the press. Leslie saw him reach the spot where Flora stood, and bow with a violent and rather determined attempt at grace. Flora's slight responsive bend of the head implied assent; and whatever were the "very particular reasons" for Mr. Morton's wish to dance with her, they were now to be gratified.

"Come, your hand for this cotillon," cried Howard to Miss Romain.

"With all my heart," answered she.

"That is saying a great deal," said Miss Temple, with an arch smile, as she was passing.

Miss Romain blushed, or seemed to blush.

"Gentlemen will please take their partners," cried the manager of the ball.

The field was now much clearer. Some had gone off to the card−rooms, and some were at the buffet. A space

had been gradually occupied by the dancers sufficiently large to enable them to walk through the figures; and a group of girls ranged themselves in their places: Howard with Miss Romain, Morton with Miss Temple, and the count with a tall young lady newly out from boarding−school— full of sentiment, blushes, and delight. It was evident, from her frequent repetition of "my lord," that the phrase was a favourite one, and redolent of recollections of Lord Mortimer and other heroes of circulating libraries.

"How uncommonly lovely the American women are," said the count.

"Oh! my lord," with a slight courtesy.

"When I was in Greece—"

"Have you *really* been in Greece, my lord?"

"Why, I almost lived in the Parthenon."

"The what, my lord?"

"The Parthenon. I worshipped—I was fairly in love with it."

"In *love?* oh, my lord!" and the blooming young lady cast down her eyes, and blushed decidedly.

"And, as I was saying, there was a young Greek girl—"

"A young Greek girl, my lord?"

"A most lovely and glowing creature—"

"Oh! my lord."

"And she was very, *very* like you."

"Dear me, my lord! like *me?*"

"You have the same expression about the eyes; and the mouth has the same—"

"Forward two, and cross over," cried Miss Romain: "why, Miss Thomson, are you not in the cotillon?"

Miss Thomson was so lost in conjecturing what sort of an *expression* the count could mean, that she missed her turn.

"We have such delightful weather, Miss Temple," cried Morton.

"Truly charming, Mr. Morton. Broadway was brilliant this morning."

"Indeed!"

"I never saw a gayer scene."

"Ah! really."

"There is a new—"

"Miss Temple," stammered Morton, apparently unconscious that he interrupted her.

"Mr. Morton!" she replied, in some surprise at the extreme embarrassment which had suddenly come over him.

"I—I—I was going—to beg—Miss Temple—I was going—I was going—"

"Well, why don't you go?" said Miss Temple, unable to repress a smile; "the whole cotillon waits for you."

And the young man skipped forward and hopped back awkwardly, blundering through the figure with a burning face. The count, eying him through his glass, whispered Miss Thomson, who suddenly laughed outright; but covered her mouth in girlish confusion with her folded handkerchief.

When Morton had accomplished his manoeuvres, with a secret curse upon the inventor of dancing, he returned with redoubled determination to strike the blow. Miss Temple, with a large fortune settled separately upon her, and with yet higher expectations from parents, uncles, and scores of wealthy relatives, so young, so gentle, and so beautiful withal, was a prize indeed.

"I was about to say, or rather to ask," resumed Morton—"to ask whether your affections—"

"My *what!*" cried Flora, aloud, and really thrown off her guard by this sudden sentimental turn in the conversation.

"Hush, for heaven's sake!" cried Morton, in a vehement whisper; and he was then compelled to jump forward again.

Miss Temple opened her large blue eyes in astonishment and some alarm. But the last thing a modest woman thinks of a man is, that he loves her—especially when such a sentiment has never entered into her own bosom. She continued the dance therefore frankly, not fully trusting to the evidence of her ears, with an inward prayer that the palpable squeeze which Morton bestowed on her hand might be the result of awkwardness rather than intention. She saw, however, the full necessity of being on her guard; for though no one could ever be farther removed from her "affections" than Mr. Frederick Morton, yet she was aware that mistakes on such subjects had

happened before, and might again. The youth, half−desperate, but resolving not to be repulsed by what he deemed the coquetries and caprices of her sex— building largely upon the rose which he had ostentatiously stuck into his buttonhole, and at heart as assured as Malvolio that his mistress regarded him with favouring eyes—approached her again, and with a decisive resolution in his manner, said, in a low tone,—

"To be short with you, Miss Temple (for it will be time to forward two again presently), I wish to inquire—for very particular reasons—whether— you are engaged?"

"I am," said Flora.

"Miss Temple!" exclaimed Morton; "I declare— upon my soul—the deepest regret—"

"If you had only spoken before, Mr. Morton," said Flora.

"Oh, Miss Temple! may I ask—so far—as to inquire—to whom?"

"Indeed, I do not think I can remember their names; but I am engaged to several."

"Oh, Miss Flora! I declare," said Morton, "my heart is relieved from a whole mountain."

"Heavens! Mr. Morton, a whole mountain! That must be a very great relief."

"Very," said Morton; "but the engagement *I* meant—" he laid his hand upon his breast.

"Why, Morton!" said the count, "what can be the matter with you? forward, my good sir—forward."

And the disappointed lover *chassezed* forward with a rueful countenance, inwardly vowing vengeance against the count, and scarcely knowing whether he was on his head or his heels. He cut a pigeon−wing at the end of the figure, and again approached his mistress with a more collected and bolder mind.

"Miss Temple," he cried, "my feelings—"

The sudden cessation of music here rendered the two last words rather more distinctly audible than the susceptible speaker intended. Flora actually blushed; for it was evident that so pathetic an exclamation could scarcely be the beginning of a conversation, and, by the surprise manifested in their countenances, it was clear that many of the by−standers had heard it. Howard, who was standing near, seized the unfortunate Morton with his thumb and finger by the lapel of his coat, gazed into his face with a look of burlesque sympathy, and exclaimed,−−

"Your *feelings*, Mr. Morton? you *don't* say so!"

"I do believe, my lord," said Miss Thomson, with the air of one who has just discovered and is considerably astounded by an extraordinary secret— "I do believe, my lord, that Mr. Morton has been *making love*."

"You are with me for the next cotillon, Miss Temple?" cried the count.

"It is of no use," muttered Morton; "I declare— I never—that infernal count in the French army! But *I*'ll teach him—" and his passions were really inflamed by beholding his rival basking in the smile of the delightful girl whom, in the language of the novelist, he wished one day to "make his."

After the cotillon, the count resigned Flora and took her mother. Mr. Temple was in another room at the whist−table. What those husbands' hearts are made of!

"Count!" said Mrs. Temple

"Dear madam?"

"You have been dancing with Flora."

"An angel!"

"Is she not? and just as pure and amiable as she is lovely."

"When I was in Vienna," said the count, with his hand on his cravat, "I knew a young dutchess—"

"Like Flora?"

"Not half so *distinguée*, but still like her."

"Well!"

"I knew her—I admired—and—"

"And you loved—"

"No, I could not love; because—although the lady herself was kind enough—yet she had not that sense—that soul—that radiance of mind, if I may say so, which Flora has."

"Would they admire Flora at Vienna?"

"She would turn their heads."

"And they hers."

"What a sensation she would produce at court!"

"I have half a mind to let her go."

"Do! Let me take her."

"But what should I do without her?"

"Come you with us, and see the great world."

"One never knows when you are in earnest, count."

"You are looking splendidly to−night," said he, half whispering in her ear.

"Nonsense," said she, tapping him on the shoulder with her fan.

"With you two, your country would be well represented at any court in Europe."

"Ah! you men! What can silly girls do, when we women let you talk so!"

"I could worship Flora to−night," he said, in a yet lower tone; "only—"

"Only what?"

Again he half whispered in her ear.

"Go," she exclaimed, tapping him once more with her fan—"go; you are positively dangerous."

She left him as she spoke, and the last words were uttered looking back.

"But where is Flora?" said Mrs. Temple.

Flora had disappeared.

In the midst of the gayety and flash of the revel, a servant entered with a note for Mr. Leslie.

"By your leave, fair wax," said the youth.

A few lines were scrawled in evident haste— "Urgent affair—without a moment's delay—at the B. Hotel—room No. 39—up stairs—wait with impatience— particulars when we meet—Yours till death—Frederick Morton."

CHAPTER VI.

A ludicrous Incident, which, as ludicrous incidents often do, grows more serious towards the close.

"He is a devil in a private brawl: souls and bodies hath he divorced three." —*Twelfth Night.*

When Leslie reached the B. Hotel, which was about one minute's walk from Mrs. Temple's, he was ushered by a man in waiting to "No. 39, up stairs;" where he found Morton, with his hands thrust into his pantaloons pocket, pacing, with long strides, to and fro across the floor, half beside himself with passion.

"Thank you, thank you, Leslie," he cried, grasping his hand with strong emotion—"thank you, my dear fellow. I declare! you are a brave man and a true friend."

"You have not called me, I trust, to the B. Hotel, room No. 39, up stairs,' merely to tell me that?" said Leslie, smiling.

"No, my dear boy; that puppy—that coward— hat insolent—impudent—impertinent—"

Tears of rage spoke what simple adjectives could not express.

"Who?"

"Why, that d—d French count."

"What, Clairmont?"

"You know the scoundrel makes love to all the women in town, without reference to age, size, or situation. For the last week he has taken my sister—"

"Well."

"She is already crazy about him, and puts on airs as if she were a countess. We *did* think he was going to marry her *quite*, but—(by heavens! *if I* had him here—)"

"Well, well, my good fellow, go on."

"This night his lordship (*I'll lordship him!*) has paid such marked attention to Flora Temple, that, as a brother, I was compelled to resent it." He raised his chin a little in the air, and, lowering his voice, added, "Besides other very particular reasons concerning Flora herself."

"Other reasons! why, what is Miss Temple to you?"

"*That*," very emphatic, "you will know presently."

"And how did you resent it?"

"In the first place," said Morton, "I gave him a look—you should have seen me—*such* a look! Even that alone, if he has the soul of a hare, he must notice. Besides—"

"But he has not the soul of a hare. He is a very brave man. He is a lion. He is a perfect devil," said Norman.

"I'll have satisfaction, notwithstanding," cried Morton.

"Satisfaction!" echoed Leslie; "I do not know what you call satisfaction; but are you aware that he is a dead shot?"

"You don't say so!" said Morton, turning slightly pale, and his boisterous fury undergoing a sensible abatement.

"He can snuff a candle ten times in succession," said Norman, dryly.

"You don't say so!"

"He can shoot a bullet out of one pistol into the muzzle of another."

"Good God! Now, Leslie, you are joking; you are, I declare."

"Not joking in the least," replied Norman; "did you never hear of the French general whom he killed one morning before breakfast, for looking under the veil of a Veronese lady he was in love with?"

"Never, as I am alive, I do declare."

"But you are not alive—you are a dead man— you might as well leap into the crater of a volcano as go a step farther in this business. Then there's the duel at the South—have you forgotten that?"

"He shot his man there, too, didn't he?"

"Directly through the heart," said Norman. "I trust in heaven, Morton, you have not done any thing worse than look at him."

"Yes, but I have, though," answered Morton, now actually frightened at the recollection of his own audacity; "I

brushed against him particularly as I came out, in the presence of Flora."

"You are a dead man," said Norman.

"Well, now, I declare, that is exceedingly disagreeable."

"You will receive a challenge before morning."

"And here it comes," cried the astounded young man, again turning pale as a servant entered and handed him a note.

"Take it, Leslie."

"What!" exclaimed Leslie; "he is elegant in his indignation,—rose paper—a cameo seal—`Mr. Frederick Morton—B Hotel, room No. 39.' Why, this is a female hand; and, if I could credit my own eyes I should pronounce it—"

"It is no challenge," said the relieved lover, blushing and brightening up. "Give it me. A challenge, indeed! I should like to catch him at it. I knew it was not. It is from Flora."

"Flora, again! Flora Temple—and to *you!*"

"Why, certainly, Mr. Norman Leslie. Is there any thing so *very* extraordinary in that? We men, you know! Hey, my boy? Now mum, and you shall hear. There is more in this world than is dreamed of in your philosophy."

"There is, indeed," said Norman, lifting his eyes in astonishment.

"Be mute, then," rejoined Morton, "and be instructed."

"Is it possible!" thought Norman, musing, while Morton threw his eyes over the letter. "What, Flora—Flora Temple! the high, the accomplished, the gifted! Who shall read woman!"

"Fire and thunder!" cried Morton. "Death and fury! Leslie, a flirt, by heavens! You yourself saw—" and the agitated and enraged youth crushed the letter in his hand, stamped his foot, and leaned his forehead upon his clinched fist.

"What is it, Morton? what is it, my good fellow?" asked Norman, really pitying his dilemma,. but with the greatest difficulty repressing a smile; for, however severe the pang inflicted, a rejected lover has but a slender chance of sympathy.

"Leslie," said Morton, apparently swallowing, or rather gulping down his disappointment, with a ludicrous effort, and one or two bitter contortions of countenance—"Leslie, my dear fellow, it is a— that is—in short—it is nothing—a mere joke;" he forced an unhappy laugh; "but—it all comes," and he set his teeth, "I know it all comes from that d—d French count—"

"Don't swear," said a third voice.

"Halloo! who the devil's that?" cried Morton.

"The d—d French count, at your service, Mr. Frederick Morton," said Clairmont, who had entered unperceived, and now stood, his arms folded, a cool sneer on his lip, and his eyes sternly fixed upon Morton.

"Well, sir," demanded Morton, starting up, and assuming a blustering air and attitude, "by what authority, sir, do you intrude yourself into my room, sir?—this is my room, sir, while I am in it. I command you to leave it, sir—this instant, sir!" He made a motion of his head to Norman, as if calling upon his attestation to a courage, which, in fact, seemed not a little to surprise himself.

"I will leave the room, Master Morton," replied the count, coldly, "when I have accomplished the purpose which brought me into it." At the same moment he discovered a riding−whip, which he held in his hand. "You owe your life to Miss Temple."

"Leave the room, sir!"

"She observed your rudeness to me as you came out, and laid me under an obligation not to pursue it, as I should deem myself bound to do were you a gentleman."

"Leave the room, I tell you!" roared Morton, stamping his foot furiously.

"I do not, however, pass your insult altogether without notice. You are an impertinent rascal—"

"Leave the room, sir! or I will call the watch."

"You are an insignificant scoundrel and coward—"

"If you don't leave the room this very instant, sir—" shouted Morton, frantic with rage, and placing himself, with many pugilistic flourishes, in an attitude sometimes of attack and sometimes of defence.

"And I shall inflict upon you," continued Clairmont, with the most perfect composure, "the *chastisement* which your vulgarity deserves." He raised his whip, and followed the retreating Morton to the farthest corner of the

room.

"Ask my pardon instantly, sir, or I flog you like a dog."

"I shall not ask your pardon, sir," bawled Morton, in a tone between the threat of a bully and the whine of a whipped schoolboy. "If you touch me, sir, I'll have the satisfaction of a gentleman. I shall ask nobody's pardon. D—n, sir! Leave the room—don't strike me, sir—don't strike—Leslie, take off this bloodhound—waiter!—waiter!—here— watch!—watch!—Leslie, for God's sake!—you are a d—d scoundrel, sir!"

"If Mr. Leslie interferes," said the count, calmly proceeding in his design, and raising the whip, "Mr. *Leslie* will share your fate."

"Count Clairmont," said Leslie, who had already walked to his side, and in a voice so deep that the count turned and remained motionless to hear his words. "Count Clairmont, however reluctant I may be to interfere in the quarrel of another, I shall not be backward in assuming my own. Your remark is a personal insult. I have already remained too long inactive by the side of my friend. Permit *me* to inform you that this apartment is private."

"Mr. Leslie," replied the count, "your sneers and your threats are equally below my regard. This person I shall punish by the whip. *Your* claims upon my attention, sir, will be answered in a different way. *You* may not be so fortunate as to have a lady for a protector." Again he turned to Morton, and raised the whip.

"Count Clairmont," cried Leslie, "if you indeed be a count, hear me. I think you a scoundrel."

A blow of the whip was the only reply, and in an instant the young nobleman lay at his length upon the floor.

"Norman Leslie," cried he, rising, his face white as death, yet speaking with a low and altered voice, and regarding him with the fiendish fixedness of a serpent about to dart his death−fang—"Norman Leslie, you have disgraced me, and I will have your heart's blood!"

"As you please, sir," replied Norman, sternly; "but now begone!" and, flashing back glance for glance, he stepped two strides towards his foe.

The discomfited noble paused a moment upon the threshold, and looked once more into Leslie's face, with a gaze which, in spite of himself, chilled even the boiling blood in the youth's veins. It was the black scowl of a demon. His features then relaxed slowly into a sBODl smile—if possible, yet more malignant and inhuman.

"Remember, Norman Leslie," he said, "*I will have your heart's blood!*" I am a Catholic. Here is a cross. Look—*I swear it!*"

He pressed the jewelled relic convulsively to his lips, and disappeared.

CHAPTER VII

In which the Reader will note the Difference between a young Gentleman's Thoughts of a Night and his Actions of a Morning.

"God bless me from a challenge. *Much Ado about Nothing.*

"Watchman, what light burns yonder in the sky?" asked Leslie, as he walked home alone from Mrs. Temple's; "can it be a fire?"

"Why, it's the morning!" growled the surly guardian of the night.

"And so it is!" exclaimed Norman, looking at his watch.

The young man walked on; there was a fever on his cheek and in his heart. There is a singular power in the calmness of night, and in the holy silence and order of nature, upon the imagination of one suddenly freed from the giddy throng and glare of a revel. How it hushes the ordinary passions! The mind, which has been like a stream disturbed, settles into wonderful clearness; and you see defined thoughts and minute feelings far down in its transparent depths. But night is nowhere so impressive and solemn as in the worn haunts of a mighty city. You behold the abandoned paths with something of the feeling with which you pause among the ruins of an ancient town. True, in the one case, ages have rolled away since the solitude was broken by eager and thoughtless steps; and in the other, only hours: yet the effect upon the observer is strangely alike. The human sea has washed from its shores, and left the marked and naked channels exposed to the eye. The clash and roar of worldly interests have died away. You tread the solemn aisles, half disengaged from earthly anxieties and excitations, with the cold and passionless loneliness of a spectre. Are there those sleeping around who have awakened your hatred? how its secret fires seem dimmed and burnt out! Can you look upon the heavens, strown with mysterious and eternal worlds, lying in their same bright places for ever!—on which all the great of history, Homer, Socrates, and Alexander, Sylla, Cæsar, and Pompey, Mahomet and Jesus, have fixed their eyes—upon which, the startled imagination cannot conjecture for how many thousand years to come, other immortal heroes and poets may gaze,—can you look upon them, and *hate* one of the myriads who are floating away with you, beneath their calm faces, like the specks that hang in their beams? Can you—exalted, purified as your mind then is— hate any less object than those evil principles, those tremendous passions and vices, which have clouded the paths of human beings with darkness and wo?

But if you have been guilty of a rash action, if you have been the yielding victim of some momentary impulse or local interest, how wondering and abashed are you in those holy moments! How noble, then, does virtue appear! How vast and high seems love! How unutterably insignificant and mean those motives and influences which tempt the energies and guide the destinies of the human race!

The waning moon was high in heaven; and her faint light yet touched the surrounding objects with edges of silver. The long vistas of densely−built streets, with their silent and deserted pavements and closed shutters, stretched away from Leslie's eyes. No one was to be seen, but a dog that stole up timidly crouching, and placed his head under the hand of the night−wanderer, as if with a human weariness of the deathlike solitude; and here and there a watchman leaning in the shadow, and ever and anon striking his club sharply against the stones—a signal answered by others in a similar way, and faintly heard through the distance of the echoing streets. Above, the stars had faded in the opening light, all but a few large and lustrous orbs, which lay scattered about the pearly void, kindling and burning like lumps of soft fire. Norman paused, and bent his eyes upward; one bright planet, the largest in heaven, hung before him.

"How apt the emblem is!" he thought. "And the great poet in this, as in all things, how wonderfully he has written! Yon `bright particular star'— in one exquisite phrase, what eloquence! what power! How it images the beauty, and fervour, and worship of love! Thus *she* glides on—ever calm, bright, and pure—above the earth, though shining on it. Who will reach her! Who will win confiding looks from those laughing eyes, and veil their young mirth in the tenderness of love! Whose hand will put back, unreproved, the hair from that brow! Whose bosom will beat beneath that graceful head! Whose rich blessed lips will print on that sweet mouth the kiss of an adored, a happy husband! What! Clairmont! Can her dreams be of *him?* Can *he* comprehend her angelic nature? What if she love him? What have I done? Rather my hand should wither than injure one sanctified by her

affections. My worship for her cannot pause upon her own matchless person. It would protect all she loves. Yet what must I now do? A duel! I—who have pretended to *think*— who have professed principle and morality; I—who have thought myself the independent master and controller of my own actions; I am now plunged into a duel! I have chosen murder, or self−murder, for a companion. Reason, religion, bid me withdraw; but yet I cannot; I have gone too far; I must proceed. My father—my sister— should I fall, what will be their feelings? Should I triumph, what will be my own? In death all will despise, and in life all will execrate me: she, perhaps, of all, the most. This Clairmont—why do I hate him? Why should I seek his blood? Why should I blacken and sear my soul for ever with a deed inhuman, abhorrent, ghastly, against man, against nature, against God? What goads me to this?—the finger of the scorner! the laugh of the fool! Clairmont falls beneath my aim; and with Clairmont, how many others fall? If Flora loves him, her young heart is crushed. How many others are connected with him by human sympathies?— perhaps a mother, a sister, a friend. My own hand will be smeared with human blood—vast classes of society mark me for a murderer—the domestic circle, now so happy, of my own bright home overshadowed with the gloom of death! But what do I say? *My* blood must flow. *He* is a sure and deadly enemy. The grave is then for me—a sudden, a gory, a youthful grave! Startling—tremendous— sublime thought! Earth, ever burning sky, light, sound, morning, the realm of the human race— beings that I have known and loved—farewell! I quit you—I quit myself. This breathing form struck to nothing! this ranging and mysterious soul hurled into the dim realm of spectres! Broad and magnificent nature! high and fairy dream of existence! ere to−morrow night I plunge from you, headlong, into the presence of God. Surely, it is a horrid vision!"

Bitterly, bitterly did the youth lament his dilemma at that still and lonely hour. The crisis in which he stood, and its possible consequences, rose upon him in all their vast and naked horror; for the fumes of passion had vanished from his mind, and left it intensely alive to the reaction of reason.

The stars paled, the moon dissolved in a flood of new light, and the fiery beams of morning darted up the sky as he reached his home.

With the elasticity of youth, however, as the day broadened, his mind recovered a more cheerful tone, and he began to take brighter views of his situation. Unable to sleep, he found the refreshment of a warm bath a tolerable substitute; and after a substantial breakfast, and renewing his toilet with even more than ordinary care, he awaited in a more agreeable mood the expected message. Singular inconsistency of human nature, which permits trifles so unimportant to share our minds with events of such fearful interest! A man carefully arranging his cravat−knot upon the brink of eternity!

At twelve, Captain Forbes of the army inquired for Mr. Leslie. He was shown into a private apartment.

"You are Mr. Norman Leslie?"

"I am, sir."

"You are aware—"

"I am."

"You understand that—"

"I do."

"This note my friend Count Clairmont begged me to deliver, with express injunctions to receive no apologies."

"Your friend's injunctions were as insolent, sir, as they were unnecessary," said Leslie, sternly and loftily.

"He apprehends—"

"His apprehensions are groundless."

"My friend Count Clairmont requests me to see this little matter brought immediately to a close."

"To−night, if you please. This morning—this instant!"

"No, no," said the captain; "*that* is `immediately' with a vengeance. I am engaged to−night at the theatre; but to−morrow morning, at daybreak, if you can conveniently; for just now I am overwhelmed with occupations."

"Any accommodation of that kind which I can offer, either to Count Clairmont or to Count Clairmont's friend, will afford me infinite satisfaction."

"You will send me then a friend?"

"With the necessary instructions."

"Mr. Leslie, I have the honour—"

"Captain Forbes, your most obedient."

They exchanged the parting salutations stiffly, but courteously. As the officer withdrew, his retreating bow

brought his body into contact with that of a new−comer, whose precipitate haste rendered his momentum considerable.

"I do declare," cried Morton; "my dearest sir, I beg ten thousand million pardons."

"Not in the least," cried the captain, with military brevity, and made his exit.

"So−ho!" said Morton, regarding the note; "it has come then."

"My dear Morton," exclaimed Norman, "at present you must excuse me—"

" `Not in the least,' Leslie, as the captain says; not for the world," answered Morton. "You must not, you shall not fight that Clairmont. I have made some inquiries respecting his skill at pistolfiring. I thought you were joking last night all the while. I declare I had no idea. I took it all for one of your solemn jests—"

"My good Morton—this afternoon—to−morrow morning—"

"But it is true. It is more than true. There are no two ways about it. Whew! Why, he is a devil incarnate! You are a dead man! He can snuff a candle! Remember the Veronese lady, hey?—the duel at the South—shoot a bullet out of the muzzle of—"

"Morton, let go my button, my good fellow—"

"But, seriously, Leslie, I have something to say to you. Here, help me wheel around this big chair; and I'll tell you what you must let me do. You see, *I*, being—"

But he was alone; Leslie having vanished the instant his back was turned.

"Well, I declare!" said the surprised young gentleman, after a full examination of the room, from the ceiling to the floor, the interior of the bookcases, and under the tables—"well, I declare— I never—that's polite, anyhow! If he meet that infernal French count, there's an end of Norman Leslie!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A Resolution, which will be condemned by some, applauded by others, and imitated by none.

" 'Fore God! man, do it. 'Tis a perilous strait; But being the only one—dragon or not, Forth your good sword, and on!"

Duelling has not wanted many grave and able defenders. I do not allude to victims of passion on the field. I speak of cool observers in the closet; advocates who, without denying its partial absurdity and its inadequate local effects, without contending that it is either a redress for private grievances, or a test of individual courage—in short, fully granting it to be an evil, yet assert that it is a necessary one, and that as an institution of society it produces a public benefit more than sufficient to counterbalance its particular disadvantages. But, say its opposers, are we to admit an evil for the sake of a consequent good? This, it is replied, is the pervading principle of human communities, and of nature herself. Evil, in working out good through the realms of both, is perhaps more efficacious than good itself. What is it that has left the heavens a vault of stainless azure? The same tempest which shattered the oak and swept away the harvest. What, at the present most remarkable period of human history, has sent abroad among mankind light, knowledge, and power— has lowered the audacious pride and weakened the monstrous sway of the few—has broken the fetters of the many—and raised the people to that broad and rightful possession of the globe plainly indicated as the intention of their Creator; what has effected this? an appeal to arms—the shock of bloody battles. War is an evil; but without war all mankind would now be slaves. What are the good effects of duelling? Its champions declare that it raises the tone of society, and polishes the manners. The consciousness of this standard of appeal is a check upon insolence and passion. Law punishes; duelling prevents. There are many species of assault upon a man's reputation or his person which either cannot be brought within the reach of law, or which, being brought within its reach, are but inadequately noticed. The law makes distinctions which gentlemen would not and ought not to make. The law looks to dollars and cents—not to feelings and sentiments: yet which, the former or the latter, exert the greater influence over human happiness? The law is a selfish creature. Infringe its own rights, however slightly, nay, however accidentally, and it crushes you with an unexamining, inexorable cruelty. The law is also an uncouth and gigantic animal. He stalks onward over the broad highways of life. He has to watch the whole country. He cannot always penetrate into the quiet by−paths and recesses of love and peace. Call a man a bad lawyer, or an unskilful physician, and the law awards damages, because the terms are injurious to the means by which he gains his livelihood. But post him as a paltry scoundrel, or a mean, shuffling fellow, and the law holds forth no redress. If one, however unjustly, stigmatize you as a liar in the face of the world—if he slander you to your mistress, or insult the lady who depends upon you for protection— the door of the legal tribunal is closed against you: but should you, with a manly indignation, or a chivalric impulse to defend woman, level the assailant to the earth—you are yourself the victim, and the law, which refused to defend you, punishes you for having defended yourself. The law was made to regulate the traffic of merchants, not the intercourse of gentlemen. Again, say the advocates of duelling, all men have not equal personal strength: something is requisite to place the weak upon a level with the strong. It is true that this ordeal is as likely to eventuate in the ruin of the innocent as the guilty; or even that the quarrelsome and brutal, by making pistol−firing a study, may acquire precision and skill not likely to be possessed by the peaceful, unaccustomed to unlace their reputations in brawls. But it is answered to this, that the more perilous the conflict of men is made, the less frequent will be those conflicts; and that what is lost by the individual parties engaged in a duel, is gained by society at large in the general caution against quarrels, inasmuch as men will more care what they say and do when they know that an indiscretion may forfeit their lives.

These were the thoughts that revolved through the mind of Leslie as he walked forth with the purpose of seeking a friend. He was not one to sink before approaching danger; but notwithstanding the hackneyed sophistries with which he endeavoured to hush the voice of reason, upon the folly and guilt of staking his life upon the impulses of a brawl and the passion of a moment, yet his constitutional sensitiveness, his imaginative and warm disposition, and his plain common sense, combined to make him quail ever and anon at the stunning prospect of death or murder, which now seemed to block up and conclude his earthly career. I am not drawing the character of a coward, though I am aware that there are many gentlemen whom such a dilemma would agitate

with fewer scruples of conscience,—those who follow war as a profession, and whose moral sense is blunted by habit; or the mere *elégant*, whose intellect and feelings are long ago usurped by the heartless dogmas of fashionable life. Much less courageous and elevated men may find themselves in the situation of Leslie without shuddering. What they dignify as courage does not merit the name. In some it is want of reflection; in some, a savage habit; in some, brute obtusity, and an inability to reason on high and broad grounds. Many narrow and mediocre minds find in it a hope of importance which they can never obtain by other means, and are willing to risk an existence of which they have never learned to appreciate the value— or to commit a crime of which they have not the sensibility or reflection to perceive the horror— that they may enjoy the temporary triumph of newspaper notoriety, or strut the hero of a bar−room, insolent with impunity, among braggarts and bullies less bloody and renowned. Bodily courage is one of the lowest qualities which pass among the virtues. It is least connected with the nobler and more useful attributes of humanity, is shared by a greater number, and is more linked with the bestial portion of our nature. I am speaking only of that mere bodily courage which makes soldiers brave in war; or which induces a man to station himself deliberately, on some delicious summer morning, upon a piece of greensward, and let another leisurely aim and fire a pistol at his heart. This brute courage, in which, after all, bulls and bears (amiable rivalship!) equal or excel us, gained its high reputation among the ancient nations who lived to grasp the possessions of their weaker neighbours; who had no other name for *virtue;* who were ignorant of that mighty *sense of right* which now, century by century, is entering more deeply into the human mind; and who fancied that the Superior Powers attended each contest, and took care that the honest party should have fair play. These opinions have been exploded, but the custom remains— a dark, unchristian wreck, like some time−worn pagan altar, where, strange to think, even today the high−priest officiates and the human victim bleeds.

As Leslie ran over in his mind the common arguments in support of the step he was about to take, his clear reason detected their fallacy. He acknowledged, as a rational being, their absurdity, their cold cruelty, and their monstrous guilt. He recoiled instinctively from pouring forth the blood of a fellow−creature or his own. He doubted, with great propriety, too, whether the public could be a gainer by such a practice. He knew that, eventuate as it might, his own peace must be shattered for ever. He was about to rush on a crisis which reason and religion alike condemned. It was an act which neither Heaven nor earth would deem noble. None would even approve it but those whose approbation he despised. The world's applause and future fame were denied him. He had not even a high and honourable motive in his own bosom to support him in this deep and secret despondency. Life was doubly dear to him now, for it began to be interwoven with the thought of Flora Temple; and in his heart he felt no stronger sentiment against Clairmont than simple contempt. He had not a friend on earth whom this measure would not distress and shock; and he was driven to it neither by his interests nor his inclinations. Had *he* been the deadly marksman instead of his antagonist, he would have refused a meeting. He could not apologize; nor would apology have been accepted. If not, there would be a new degradation, a new insult—and both useless. Besides, even had he been wrong, would he be excusable in tendering an apology? It had been expressly declared that "no apology" would be received. But he was not prepared to confess himself wrong.

"No," he said at length to himself, with the deep determination natural in a high−tempered young man as society is organized; "this meeting *must* take place. It must—it shall. I am the blind victim of a dire, a fatal necessity. If there be *guilt,* let it rest on the community who countenance this atrocious custom. Let it rest on the *women* who smile upon the duellist, and among whom Clairmont ranks higher because he has killed a human being, and to whose laurel my death may add another leaf. I am myself without skill. He is a cool, a practised, a professed duellist. As such he is received and honoured in my own circle. Mrs. Temple avowedly admires him for his *courage*. Even Flora hangs on his arm, and smiles, and jests; even Flora touches that hand in the dance scarcely yet washed from the stain of a brave man's blood. They all know he glories in taking human life; and that he particularly piques himself upon an aim never known to miss its mark. That very peril which renders my destruction inevitable, renders my retreat impossible; for that would now seem cowardice which in less dangerous circumstances might be acknowledged as principle. Yet it is not *courage* which impels me. No—I will not deceive myself. What will pass for courage in me is only hypocrisy. My heart sickens—my soul recoils— I shudder. It is *fear* which whips me on, and which startles me back. Not the fear of *death*. Were that death to be encountered for Flora—were I to meet a lion on the arena for her—were I to brave pestilence—chains—torture—how calm— how high—how *brave* I should be! But here I tremble at the sin—the

ignominy—the deep wound I must inflict upon the heart of a father and a sister. I tremble to have all my glittering dreams and broad proud plans crushed by a cool, vile, heartless villain. But"—and he stepped with a higher and more solemn emotion—"my struggles are over. This `terrible feat' *must* be done. My agonies and my doubts are alike useless and idle."

And with the power of mind which perhaps more accomplished duellists could have commanded, he dismissed, at least for a period, the reflections which unnerved him. Indeed, after the first recoil, his strong nerves and manly heart grew stronger and manlier. Enthusiastic men—those at first most startled—are apt to meet sudden and extraordinary dangers, when once shown to be inevitable, with a mounting spirit, and a concentrated faculty of thinking and acting, which breaks thrillingly in upon the common monotony of existence, and stirs up their souls like the blast of a trumpet. As he proceeded on his way, however, he could not banish the thought of Flora Temple. This charming and lovely girl had already gained strangely upon his affections, and her image was now received into his mind with new and inexpressible tenderness. It seemed that the very seriousness of his danger quickened and brought to the surface of his heart all those latent and powerful fires which had hitherto lurked in its most secret recesses. It was the dawning of a new and powerful passion in a young and ardent character. It was a *second* love—which (the poets to the contrary notwithstanding) may be infinitely stronger than the first. The sentiment rests more upon the results of observation and comparison; and, by being better defined, is deepened and concentrated. It was but a few hours since he had left her—the fairest in the brilliant circle. How exquisitely her loveliness recurred to him as he had last beheld her: that perfect form, full of feminine grace and poetic character— that bright, sweet head—the tender, blue, speaking eyes—the smile, the parting smile which he had exchanged with her—perhaps a parting for ever! Then rose the other shifting images of the night. The glittering and remarkable beauty of Rosalie Romain—now cold to him—the ludicrous fury and perplexity of poor Morton—the cutting insult and sarcastic insolence of the count, which struck on his veins like lightning—the retort—the flash—the blow—the fray—Clairmont's demoniac look—and the hushed and starry heavens in his lonely walk home—all recurred to him, not with the sense of reality, but as the incidents of some melodrame, or idle romance, or yet more idle dream. As he hastened on amid all the noontide splendour of the gay Broadway, he found it almost impossible to believe that he was in reality standing at last upon the edge of that fearful brink which appals alike the king, the philosopher, and the beggar— where they all must meet in the equal nakedness and weakness of mortal impotence and apprehension; that while around him glittered so much elegance, gayety, and commonplace bustle—while many a sweet, familiar face smiled on him as he proceeded, and many a friend of his own sex gave him, in careless haste, the passing nod of salutation— that he was stealing onward like a thing of death, lent for a few hours to roam the earth, and destined, ere to−morrow's sunset, to be the tenant of a hasty and dishonoured grave.

A few moments (for we think much faster than we write) brought him to the house of Howard. He was not at home. Near the residence of Howard was that of Kreutzner, a brave and gallant young German student from one of those celebrated universities famed for romantic occurrences. He was a bold and attractive character, and one of Leslie's intimates. To Kreutzner, therefore, he went, and, beyond his hopes, found him in. They walked forth together, and Leslie had no sooner related the whole incident than Kreutzner remarked,—

"It is as I suspected. I meet Clairmont often at B—'s. I heard him this morning, with a most singular expression of countenance, say to Forbes— `That Leslie is a man I have always hated. I *would wing* him, and so let him off; but I think I will make an end of him!' Not to Philip's right eye, but to Philip's heart, he is to send his arrow."

"And shall I then," cried Norman, flushing with indignation, and speaking, as he generally both spoke and acted, from impulse, while in one instant all his fine moral principles melted to air—"shall I throw away my life tamely? shall he live hereafter the gay Adonis of the ball, and extend to the touch of favouring girls the hand which has consigned me to a bloody grave?"

"What can you do?" asked Kreutzner; "are you an adept at the pistol?"

"No—and that Clairmont well knows."

"He will kill you as sure as he fires," rejoined Kreutzner.

"And I cannot, for ten thousand lives," added Leslie, "make the slightest move to retreat or explain."

"He has sworn to have your heart's blood. He will keep his oath."

"Kreutzner," said Leslie, after a long pause, and without any other alteration of countenance and manner than a slight paleness, a scarce perceptible tremour of the voice, which, however, vanished as he continued, and a calm

and almost fearful determination in his eye—"Kreutzner, I have examined this subject, you will readily believe, with the greatest attention. Since this Clairmont last night fell prostrate beneath my arm, I have viewed my situation in all its bearings. Cruelty forms no part of my character. I cannot plant my foot upon a spider without a thrill and a shudder of painful compassion. I think *life* of all things the most mysterious and sacred; and to quench it, or lose it, of all calamities the most undefinably and tremendously awful. I know all this—all you will say— all the world will say; yet I see that I must die— and I will *not die alone*."

"Leslie, for Heaven's sake—"

"Hear me: do not attempt to reason with me— do not attempt to change my resolution. You cannot do it. I never felt so perfectly, so strangely, so unutterably calm and fixed as I do now. I hate duelling. I know it is immoral. I know the penalty; but I now find in my soul what I never found there before—that concentrated principle of fierce and desperate self−defence which excludes every consideration except itself. I die, Kreutzner, my friend—I die, young, unhonoured; but he who has pushed me to this extremity does not know me. My mind is completely settled. Clairmont and myself to−morrow night sleep in the same red grave— make your arrangements—foot to foot—breast to breast. God, Kreutzner, it is awful! but it is soul−stirring and sublime."

Kreutzner looked at his friend—his lofty step, his flashing eye, his noble countenance, and stately form; and he thought, with almost a feeling of woman's tenderness, of the approaching moment which would lay them low in the dust.

"I have written letters to my father and to Julia," continued Leslie. "You will find them on my table in a large volume of Josephus. I will leave there also a note for Howard. He is a good fellow. Tell him I called on him first to support me in this somewhat serious affair, and that I love him. God bless him! with all my heart. And also, Kreutzner, I will—but no—why should I? No—I will not! Yet—should you ever see in the conduct of our friend Miss Temple—Miss Temple—any thing to make you believe she really regrets my death—"

"You are getting devilish sentimental," interrupted Kreutzner, hastily passing his hand over his eyes.

"Yes, Kreutzner, my dear friend," said Norman, "you deserve my confidence. Indeed, at this moment, I could not, if I would, withhold it from you. I do not wish to do so. I love Miss Temple, Kreutzner—I love her—dearly—deeply—tenderly; her image will be the last, the very last in my memory. Tell her so, Kreutzner—not at once— but hereafter—on some mild and mellow afternoon in summer, when you shall be alone—with her— and when I—"

"Norman Leslie!" cried Kreutzner; "confound it, man, who'd have thought this of me?" and, taking out his handkerchief—hemming and clearing his throat—he blew his nose sonorously, and availed himself of the opportunity to dry his eyes once more. "Can I alter your determination to meet Clairmont as you propose?"

"No!" replied Norman.

"Then, d—n me, if I don't think you'll frighten him out of it. For if Count Clairmont of the French army be not at heart a complete coward, then John Kreutzner is no judge of cowards. Walk up Broadway with me: I'll tell you a story— a devilish good one, by−the−way; and," he added, *par parenthese*, blowing his nose again, "I can finish it long before I get to Forbes's!"

CHAPTER IX.

The German Student's Story.

"If this were played upon a stage, now, I would condemn it as an improbable fiction." *Twelfth Night.*

"I have myself," said Kreutzner, "witnessed many duels; but we are not so bloodthirsty, generally speaking, as you moral Americans. We usually settle these matters with a sword, a better method, by−the−way, and more worthy of a soldier than your cold, murderous pistol−firing. Any poltron may pull a trigger, but it requires the firm hand and steady eye of a *man* to manage the steel. However, as I was saying, when I was at *Jena* they called each other out as merrily as beaux and belles to a dance. It was but the treading on a toe—the brushing of an elbow; nay, an accidental look that fell on them when they wished not observation, and the next day, or, by St. Andrew, the next hour, there was the clash of steel, and the stamping of feet on the greensward; and the kindling and flashing of fiery eyes—and plunge and parry, and cut and thrust, till one or both lay stretched at length—a pass through the body—a gash open in the cheek—the scull cleft down, or a hand off, and the blood bubbling and gushing forth like a rill of mountain water. There were more than one of those fellows—devils, I must say, who, when they found among them some strange student, timid or retired, whose character they were unacquainted with, or whose courage they doubted, would pass the hint out of mere sport—brush his skirt—charge the offence upon him—demand an apology too humble for a hare, and dismiss him from the adventure only with an opened shoulder, or daylight through his body."

"The ruffians!" cried Norman.

"Not in the least," returned Kreutzner, laughing; "you would have loved them, like brothers, had you known their hearts. It is all education and custom."

"But to the story, Kreutzner."

"There was among us one fellow named Mentz, who assumed, and wore with impunity, the character of head bully. He was foremost in all the deviltry. His pistol was death, and his broad−sword cut like the scissors of fate. It was curious to see the fellow fire—one, two, three, and good−by to his antagonist. His friendship was courted by all; for to be his enemy was to lie in a bloody grave. At length, grown fearless of being called to account, he took pride in insulting strangers— and even women. His appearance was formidable: a great burly giant, with shaggy black hair, huge whiskers, and grim mustaches, three inches long, twirled under his nose. A sort of beauty he had too: and among the women—Lord help us— wherever those mustaches showed themselves, every opponent abandoned the ground. It was, at last, really dangerous to have a sweetheart; for out of pure bravado, Mentz would push forward, make love to the lady, frighten her swain, and either terrify or fascinate herself. Should the doomed lover offer resistance, he had no more to do but call a surgeon; and happy enough he considered himself if he escaped with the loss of an ear or an eye. He had killed four men who never injured him— wounded seventeen, and fought twenty duels. He once challenged a whole club, who had black−balled him anonymously; and was pacified only by being re−admitted, though all the members immediately resigned, and the club was broken up. I dwell on this character because—"

"Because you think he resembles Clairmont," said Norman; "go on, I am interested."

"At last there came a youth into the university— slender, quiet, and boyish−looking, with a handsome face, though somewhat pale. His demeanour, though generally shy, was noble and self−possessed. He had been but a short time among us, however, before he was set down as a cowardly creature, and prime game for the `devils broke loose,' as the gang of Mentz termed themselves. The coy youth shunned all the riots and revels of the university—insulted no one; and if his mantle brushed against that of another, apologized so immediately, so gracefully, and so gently, that the devil himself could not have fixed a quarrel upon him. It soon appeared, too, that Gertrude, the lovely daughter of the *Baron de Saale*—the toast of all the country—upon whom the most of us had gazed as on something quite above us—it soon appeared that the girl loved this youthful stranger. Now Mentz had singled Gertrude out for himself, and avowed his preference publicly. Arnold, for thus was the new student called, was rarely, if ever, tempted to our feasts; but once he came unexpectedly on a casual invitation. To the great surprise and interest of the company, Mentz himself was there, and seated himself, unabashed, at the table, though an unbidden guest. The strongest curiosity at once arose to witness the result; for Mentz had sworn that he

would compel Arnold, on their first meeting, to beg pardon on his knees for the audacity of having addressed his mistress. It had not appeared that Arnold knew any thing of Mentz's character, for he sat cheerfully and gayly at the board, with so much the manners of a high−born gentleman, that every one admitted at once his goodness, his intelligence, his grace, and his beauty; and regretted the abyss on the brink of which he unconsciously stood.

" `What, ho!' at length shouted Mentz, as the evening had a little advanced, and the wine began to mount: `a toast! Come—drink it all; and he who refuses is a poltron and a coward. I quaff this goblet—fill to the brim—to the health and happiness of Gertrude de Saale—the fairest of the fair! Who says he knows a fairer is a black liar, and I will write the word on his forehead with a redhot brand.'

"Never before had even Mentz betrayed his brutal soul so grossly in words; but the guests, who knew that he was heated with wine, passed over his coarse insult with shouts of laughter, and drank, with riotous confusion, to Gertrude, fairest of the fair. As the gleaming goblets were emptied, and dashed rattling down again upon the table, Mentz arose, and, with the bloated importance of a despot, gazed around to see that all present had fulfilled his orders. Every goblet was emptied but one, which stood untasted—untouched. On perceiving this, the ruffian, leaning forward, fixed his eyes on the cup, struck his brawny hand down fiercely on the table, which returned a thundering clash and rattle, and then repeated, in a voice husky with rage—

" `There is a cup full: by St. Anthony! I will make the owner swallow its measure of molten lead, if it remain thus one instant longer!"

" `Drink it, Arnold—drink it, boy; keep thy hand out of useless broils,' whispered a student near him, rather advanced in age.

" `Drink, friend!' muttered another, dryly, `or he will not be slow in doing his threat. I promise thee—'

" `Empty the cup, man!' cried a third; `never frown and turn pale, or thy young head will lie lower than thy feet ere to−morrow's sunset.'

" `It is Mentz the duellist,' said a fourth. `Dost thou not know his wondrous skill? He will kill thee as if thou wert a deer, if thou oppose him in his wine. He is more merciless than a wild boar. Drink, man, drink!'

"These good−natured suggestions were uttered in hasty and vehement whispers; and, while the students were thus endeavouring to palliate the bloody catastrophe, the furious beast again struck his giant hand down violently on the table, without speaking, as if words were too feeble for his rage.

"During this interesting scene, the youth had remained motionless, cool, and silent. A slight pallour, but evidently more of indignation than fear, came over his handsome features; and his eyes dilated with emotion, resting full and firm upon Mentz.

" `By the mass, gentlemen!' he said at length, `I am a stranger here, and ignorant of the manners prevalent in universities; but if yonder person be *sane*, and this no joke—'

" `Joke!' thundered Mentz, foaming at the lip,

" `I must tell you that I come from a part of the country where we neither give nor take such jokes or such insults.'

" `Hast thou taken leave of thy friends?' said Mentz, partly hushed by astonishment; `and art thou tired of life, that thou hurriest on so blindly to a bloody pillow! Boy! drink, as I have told thee, to Gertrude, fairest of the fair!' And his huge round eyes opened like those of a bull upon a daring victim.

" `That Gertrude de Saale is fair and lovely,' cried the youth, rising, `may not be denied by me. But—I demand by what mischance I find her name this night common at a board of rioters, and polluted by the lips of a drunkard and a ruffian?'

" `By the bones of my father,' said Mentz, in a tone of deep and dire anger, which had ere then appalled many a stout heart—`by the bones of my father, your doom is sealed! Be your blood on your own head. But,' said he, observing that the youth, instead of cowering, bore himself more loftily, `what folly is this! Drink, lad, drink! and I hurt thee not! I love thy gallant bearing, and my game is not such as thou.'

"He added this with a wavering of manner which had never before been witnessed in him, for never before had he been opposed so calmly and so fiercely; and, for a moment, he quailed beneath the fiery glances darted at him from one whom he supposed meeker than the dove. But, ashamed of his transient fear, he added:—

" `Come to me, poor child! Bring with thee thy goblet—bend at my foot—quaff it as I have said, and—out of pity, I spare thy young head.'

"What was the astonishment of the company on beholding Arnold, as if effectually awed by a moment's

reflection, and the ferocious enmity of so celebrated and deadly a foe, actually do as he was commanded. He rose, took the cup, slowly approached the seat of his insulter—knelt and raised the rim to his lips. Murmurs of `Shame, shame, poltron, coward!' came hot and thick from the group of spectators, who had arisen in the excitement of their curiosity, and stood eagerly bending forward, with every eye fixed upon the object of their contempt. A grim smile of savage triumph distorted the features of Mentz, who shouted, with a hoarse and drunken laugh—

" `Drink deep—down with it—to the dregs!'

"Arnold, however, only touched the rim to his lips, and waited a moment's silence, with an expression so scornful and composed that the hisses and exclamations were again quelled; when every sound had ceased to a dead silence—

" `Never,' he said, `shall I refuse to drink to the glory of a name I once loved and honoured—Gertrude, fairest of the fair! But,' he added, suddenly rising, and drawing up his figure with a dignity that silenced every breath, `for *thee*, thou drunken, bragging, foolish beast! I scorn—I spit upon—I defy thee! and—thus be punished thy base, brutal insolence, and thy stupid presumption.'

"As he spoke he dashed the contents of the ample goblet full into the face of Mentz; and then, with all his strength, hurled the massy goblet itself at the same mark. The giant reeled and staggered a few paces back; and amid the shining liquor on his drenched clothes and dripping features, a stream of blood was observed to trickle down his forehead.

"Never before was popular feeling more suddenly and violently reversed. The object of their vilest execrations flashed upon them with the immediate brightness of a superior being. A loud and irrepressible burst of applause broke from every lip, till the broad and heavy rafters above their heads, and the very foundations of the floor, shook and trembled. But the peal of joy and approbation soon ceased; for, although this inspiring drama had so nobly commenced, it was uncertain how it might terminate. Before the tyrant recovered from the stunned and bewildered trance into which the blow, combined with shame, grief, astonishment, and drunkenness, had thrown him, several voices, after the obstreperous calls for silence usual on such occasions, addressed the youth, who stood cool and erect, with folded arms, waiting the course of events.

" `Brave Arnold! Noble Arnold! A gallant deed! The blood of a true gentleman in his veins!'

" `But, canst thou fight?' cried one.

" `I am only a simple student, and an artist by profession. I have devoted myself to the pencil— not the sword.'

" `But thou canst use it a little—canst not?' asked another.

" `But indifferently,' answered the youth.

" `And how art thou with the pistol?' demanded a third.

" `My hand is unpractised,' replied Arnold. `I have no skill in shedding human blood.'

" `'Fore God! then, rash boy, what has tempted thee to this fatal extremity?'

" `Hatred of oppression,' replied the youth, `in all its forms; and a willingness to die rather than submit to insult.'

" `Die then thou shalt! and that ere to−morrow's sun shall set!' thundered Mentz, starting up in a phrensy; and with a hoarse and broken voice, that made the hearts of the hearers shudder as if at the howl of a dog or a demon. `I challenge thee to mortal combat.'

" `And I accept the challenge.'

" `It is for thee to name time, place, and weapon; but, as thou lovest me, let it not be longer than tomorrow night, or I shall burst with rage and impatience. '

" `I love thee not, base dog!' replied Arnold; `but thou shalt not die so inglorious a death. I will fight with thee, therefore, to−night.'

" `By the mother of Heaven, boy!' cried Mentz, more and more surprised, `thou art in haste to sup in hell!' and the ruffian lowered his voice. `Art thou mad?'

" `Be that *my* chance,' answered Arnold; `I shall not be likely to meet, even in hell, a companion so brutal as thou—unless, which I mean shall be the case, thou bear me company.'

" `To−night then be it,' said Mentz; `though to−night my hand is not steady; for wine and anger are no friends to the nerves.'

" `Dost thou refuse, then?' demanded the youth, with a sneer.

" `By the mass, no! but to−night is dark; the moon is down; the stars are clouded; and the wind goes by in

heavy puffs and gusts. Hear it even now.'

" `Therefore,' said the youth, apparently more coldly composed as his fierce rival grew more perceptibly agitated—`therefore will we lay down our lives here—in this hall—on this spot—on this instant— even as thou standest now.'

" `There is no one here who will be my friend,' said Mentz; so evidently sobered and subdued by the singular composure and self−possession of his antagonist, that all present held him in contempt, and no one stirred.

" `No matter,' cried Arnold; `I will myself forego the same privilege.'

" `And your weapons?' said Mentz.

" `Are here,' cried Arnold, drawing them from his bosom; `a surer pair never drew blood. The choice is yours.'

"The company began now to fancy that Arnold had equivocated in disclaiming skill as a duellist; and from his invincible composure thought him a more fatal master of the weapon than the bully himself. The latter also partook of this opinion.

" `Young man,' he cried, in a voice clouded and low; but stopped, and said no further.

" `Your choice!' said Arnold, presenting the pistols.

"Mentz seized one desperately, and said—

" `Now name your distance.'

" `Bloodthirsty wolf!' said Arnold, `there shall be no distance!' He then turned and addressed the company.

" `Gentlemen,' he said, `deem me not either savage or insane, that I sacrifice myself and this brutal wretch thus before your eyes, and to certain and instant destruction. For me, I confess I have no value in life. Her whom I loved I have sworn to forget; and, if I existed a thousand years, should probably never see again. This ruffian is a coward, and fears to die, though he does not fear daily to merit death. I have long heard of his baseness, and regard him as an assassin—the enemy of the human race and of God—a dangerous beast— whom it will be a mercy and a virtue to destroy. My own life I would well be rid of, but would not fling it away idly when its loss may be made subservient to the destruction of vice and the relief of humanity. Here, then, I yield my breath; and here too this trembling and shrinking craven shall close his course of debauchery and murder. My companions, farewell: should any one of you hereafter chance to meet Gertrude de Saale, tell her I nobly flung away a life which her falsehood had made me despise. And now, recreant,' he said, in a fierce tone, turning suddenly towards Mentz, `plant thy pistol to my bosom, as I will plant mine to thine. Let one of the company cry three, and the third number be the signal to fire.'

"With an increased paleness in his countenance, but with even more ferocity and firmness, Arnold threw off his cap, displaying his high brow and glossy ringlets. His lips were closed and firm; and his eyes, which glistened with a deadly glare, were fixed on Mentz. He then placed himself in an attitude of firing; broadened his exposed chest full before his foe; and with a stamp of fury and impatience raised the weapon. The browbeaten bully attempted to do the same; but the pistol, held loosely in his grasp, whether by accident or intention, went off before the signal. Its contents passed through the garments of Arnold, who, levelling the muzzle of his own, cried calmly—`On your knees, base slave! vile dog!—down! or you die!'

"Unable any longer to support his frame, the unmasked coward sunk on both knees, and prayed for life with right−earnest vehemence. Again wild shouts of applause and delight, and peals of riotous laughter, stunned his ears. As he rose from his humiliating posture, Arnold touched him contemptuously with his foot. Groans and hisses now began to be mingled with several missives. Mentz covered his face with his hands and rushed from the room. He was never subsequently seen among us."

"And Arnold?" inquired Norman.

"Had been jilted, like many a good fellow before him, and as most men are who have to do with women. He was but a poor artist, after all; and though my pretty mistress encouraged him at first, taken by his person and manners, yet he was not high enough for the daughter even of a *baron*."

"And what became of Mentz?"

"That I know not. He, too, soon afterward vanished. Thus we meet and part in this world. But I shall never forget the shout when Mentz's knees touched the floor. It seems to me that the echoes may scarcely yet be quiet in the woods of Saxony."

"I understand the import of your story, Kreutzner," said Norman, after a moment's pause; "and am glad to find you coincide with my own views. It is my only chance, though a slender one. Fall one, fall both. I will not be shot

down with impunity by this professed, cold−blooded duellist."

Kreutzner received his instructions accordingly.

CHAPTER X.

In which the extremes of Happiness and Misery meet.

"Fare thee weel, thou first and fairest!
Fare thee weel, thou best and dearest!
Thine be ilka joy and treasure—
Peace, enjoyment, love, and pleasure." Burns.

After Kreutzner left him Norman hastened home, and employed an hour in writing several brief letters, and making notes of certain arrangements which he desired to have attended to, in case of the event he anticipated. Having finished these duties, he resolved to call on Miss Temple; a melancholy satisfaction which, while the party of the preceding evening rendered it necessary, was peculiarly in consonance with his own feelings. Accordingly he once more bent his steps up Broadway, and almost the first persons he met were Mr. Romain and his daughter, in their carriage. The beautiful girl bowed her nodding plumes to him with that same dangerous smile to which, if report spoke truth, he, in common with many an unwary swain, had ventured too near. At a word from Mr. Romain, the coachman drew in his horses near the sidewalk, and a motion from Rosalie arrested his steps.

"Well, Mr. Philosopher," she said, gayly and familiarly, "how does your wisdom hold out after such a night of worldly pleasure?"

"Failing—vanished and gone," he said, with animation.

"Come, Leslie," exclaimed the old gentleman, "we are about, after one or two turns, calling on the Temples, and—"

"And as pa is no `philosopher,' and *I* am a sad hand at the business, we beg Mr. Leslie's company."

"With pleasure," cried Leslie; and in a few minutes he was rolling rapidly along towards the mansion.

"Mr. Leslie," said Miss Romain, after a brief silence, "do you know that you are very dull today, and very—"

"Stupid," said Leslie, rousing himself from his revery. "Guilty—guilty," he continued, gayly, "and I put myself upon your mercy."

"These women, Mr. Leslie," said Mr. Romain, "imagine all who talk nonsense fluently to be men of parts, and all who *think* more than they speak to be stupid—"

"No, pa—no," said Rosalie, "I am fully aware," and her eyes crossed those of Leslie, "that a gentleman may be a stupid companion to ladies without being actually a stupid gentleman."

"True," added Norman; "Miss Romain is right. All mankind, and womankind too, value things according to their power upon their own happiness. A Newton or a Galileo, listless, and wrapped up in the solitude of his own meditations; would meet, and would merit, less favour and cooler welcome from a lady than the youth who joined her in music, who sat by her side while she drew, who spoke to her in a language congenial to her taste, and who awoke in her images more interesting than the stars or mathematics."

"That is right," Mr. Leslie; "I would rather have a sweet bird for a companion than a philosopher;" she glanced her eyes again, half archly, half reproachfully, at Norman; "for a bird comes at my call—feeds from my hand—sings for me the warbles I have taught him—loves me only, and nestles in my bosom."

"Phoo, child, nonsense," said Mr. Romain; "men cannot always be chatting to girls. They have other matters in hand. They are involved in reflections upon business or science."

"Old men, pa, like you, who have already wives and daughters; but the young gentlemen are not— or, at least," with another slight look and emphasis, "*ought* not to be so forgetful."

"Stuff, girl, stuff," answered the old gentleman, bluntly; "aged men or young, in these times, have enough else to do than to flutter and chirp about women. The wisest do not most excel in the parrot−talk of fashionable life."

"Parrot−talk,—why, pa!—Why, Mr. Leslie! how can you sit there, like an owl, and hear such calumnies on yourself, and me, and all our friends! As soon as gentlemen are married, and settled in life, they think all talk `parrot−talk' that is not about commerce and politics."

"You are both right and both wrong," replied Norman: "you, Miss Romain, to judge so harshly of all men who are not versed in the easy elegance of the drawing−room, and your father in too great lenity towards men of sense, who, in the pride of learning, and in the importance of their various avocations, forget what is due to woman, even

though she be not wife, mother, or sister; for, after all, we must acknowledge that, although she does nothing at our elections, and can neither build nor command our ships, yet she exerts a greater influence upon our happiness than they who can—"

The young lady clapped her hands in affected delight.

"There, pa! Do you hear that? Now you see a little severity upon these sensible men is very useful. See what a pretty piece of eloquence I have lashed out of Mr. Leslie."

The young lady went on with her usual liveliness. Sometimes she found in the huge omnibuses, of which large numbers traversed the town in all directions, loaded often with ten, fifteen, or twenty people, an object of merriment. Never had Norman known her to rattle on more unceasingly and more gayly. There was Miss L—, who had rejected thirty gentlemen actually already, at Washington, during the present session: her character was dissected in ten words. There was Mr. R—, the author, turning the corner, whose new poem she had just been reading, and which she criticised with wit and judgment. Her father, a plain and blunt man, rarely said much, and suffered her to run on from topic to topic as wildly as she pleased. In truth, she never appeared to Norman more like the singular girl she really was than on this day. She combined the most diametrically opposite features of character. At one time appearing contemptible and disagreeable; at another, amiable, elegant, and delightful. With great intelligence, she was eccentric, and at times shallow; with much sensibility and temporary feeling, she was capable of committing the most deliberately cruel and heartless actions where the impulse seized her. No one, in theory, was more alive to the sense of right, and all the distinctions and shades of moral character. No one could deliver more fine sentiments; yet, in practice, she forgot all the rules which embellished her conversation. She was afflicted, too, with the mania for display. That passion weakened, hid, and, at last, nearly swallowed up all the rest. But for that, her character was not without much to excite esteem. But esteem was too homely a reward for her taste: she must create a sensation; she must hear the murmur of applause; behold the gaze of admiration; and detect the glance of envy. She was ambitious, by her personal charms and the allurements of her address, to attract attention from all about her; particularly from those the "daily beauty" of whose lives rebuked her meretricious accomplishments. From violations of strict propriety she advanced to those of delicacy, though none could more sincerely shudder at the approach of vice. Alas! she had yet to learn that the path from the road of virtue does not boldly strike out at once, but that its early deviations are scarcely perceptible: that it conducts the unsuspecting traveller many times aside through the most enchanting prospects, and returns her again safely to the right road, before it stretches away at last to the fatal precipice, from whose brink retreat is vain. She was sufficiently artful, too, to trespass, both in dress and manners, over the boundary line of modest decorum; but in a degree so imperceptible, as to pass well enough among her indulgent flatteres for commendable grace and innocent unconsciousness. She thus succeeded in securing the admiration of a host of lovers, but she had long since forfeited the respect of Norman Leslie. Her evident hints to him, and her rather open compliments, at this solemn crisis of his life, struck him very unfavourably.

"The siren," he thought, as she leaned familiarly over towards him, with more than the unrestrained carelessness of a favoured sister: "these are the women who lower the sex. *Can* they be all thus? The sweet unconsciousness and irrepressible spirits of Flora, that careless, happy girl— can *they* be affected?"

He remembered Julia. *Her* he knew—her he loved; and her image re−established that confidence in woman which such as Miss Romain are too apt to undermine.

Miss Romain appeared conscious of the unfavourable effect which her usual artifices had produced on Norman, and gradually elevated the tone of her manner and conversation: and, when she pleased, she could be really a charming companion.

The carriage stopped at Mrs. Temple's, and the party were ushered into the presence of the ladies. Norman was surprised to find the count there; and apparently interested in conversation with Flora; who looked, at least in Norman's eyes, beautiful beyond herself. A slight colour overspread her cheeks. Miss Romain thought it sprung from the sudden sight of Leslie. Norman presumed it had been called up by the previous conversation of the count. The customary formalities were performed. Norman bowed loftily to his now deadly foe, when the latter stepped forward with an easy air, and, extending his own, shook the hand of Leslie with the careless ease of friendship. Never had he appeared more gay and self−possessed. Indeed, all the party were unusually animated; while Norman, with a heart of lead, strove in vain to throw off his gloom.

It was now that, with the unrestrained license of imagination, he acknowledged, and painted in the most lively

colours, his love for Flora; nor could he help once or twice, when their eyes met, betraying with their wordless language the affection of his soul. After one of these looks, hastily withdrawn, as if the heart feared the treachery of the eyes, Count Clairmont casually uttered a sentiment evidently directed to Flora, and implying by his air and manner, perhaps more than by his words, that he was on familiar terms with her as a favoured lover. It shot through Norman's ear and heart; and, forgetful of his restraint, with a cloud of melancholy on his brow, and a thought that a few hours would relieve him from a proud and unrequited love, he looked towards her again, and once more fully and unequivocally caught her glance. If ever woman's eyes had meaning, that glance said, "Dear Norman, believe it not! I love only you." For one instant their gaze rested and clung together, the delicious sense of vision entering with a heavenly power into each other's hearts and minds—an embrace of souls, perfectly returned, perfectly understood, and steeped in the confidence, the bliss, the enchantment of mutual love. The blood leaped to the cheek and temple of the before desponding youth; his heart ached, his soul trembled with the shock of delight. "She loves me!" he inwardly exclaimed, with such exquisite happiness as he had never before known; and, as much changed as if suddenly relieved from the malign influence of a vile enchanter, and lifted into the protection of some blessed spirit, he entered at once into the conversation with more than his usual ardour. But such ethereal gleams of joy shine on mortals only with a transient brightness.

"Norman," cried Miss Romain, coming suddenly round to him, and putting her arm unconsciously across his chair, so as to bring it nearly around his shoulder. This was the first time she had ever called him "Norman." He would have withdrawn, but she whispered in his ear—

"I have just heard a most profound secret."

"What?"

"Flora Temple—"

"What of her?"—he asked eagerly, off his guard, and forgetting his distant manner.

"She is engaged to be married in two months"— and again, according to her frequent custom, she placed her lips to his face, so close as nearly to touch his cheek—"to Count Clairmont."

What a vast fabric of bliss dissolved in a moment! What a mighty world of gayety and splendour quenched in the blackest night!

"Pray, what is all this whispering about?" said Flora; but her manner was changed, and ill at ease. "Miss Romain, I have to beg the pleasure of your company to−morrow evening to a little musical party."

"Oh, delightful, delightful!" answered the gay girl, with a secret triumph at the havoc which she felt instinctively she had made.

"And Mr. Leslie," said Flora, "will do us the favour—"

"I cannot promise," replied Norman, coolly. "To−morrow evening I shall be necessarily absent."

"Well, sir, just as you please; if you can find leisure from more agreeable occupations, we shall bid you welcome. Come, gentlemen," she continued, "you are all to contribute something, as well as the ladies, towards the entertainment. Count, you shall sing those beautiful airs of yours; Miss Romain, the harp; and—Mr. Leslie, do you not sing?"

"Why, you have heard him frequently," said Miss Romain: "how forgetful!"

"True, true; I beg his pardon—I had forgotten."

"Let me tell you, in a duet," resumed Miss Romain, "he has few competitors."

"Are you practised in any with him?"

"Oh, a whole host!" cried Miss Romain. "There's `Dear maid, by every hope of bliss,'— `By Love's first pledge, the virgin kiss,' your favourite, you know, Norman—"

They were interrupted by the count, who, seating himself at the piano, ran his fingers over the chords, and sung with great taste a French air— directly at Miss Temple. It was expressive of successful love, and called forth "a beautiful" from every lip. Flora received it with a gracious admiration; that, while in reality it might spring from wounded pride or love, and that retaliating propensity which perhaps not only woman, but all the victims of either sex, have experienced under the operation of the capricious little deity, who transforms character as he does all other worldly circumstances, still went to the heart of Norman.

"I am, as the French say, quite *desolé* about this," said Flora, holding in her hand a small manuscript piece of music. "It is the most touching and plaintive air I ever heard; but is without words. It has the melancholy pathos of a last adieu. I should fancy, now, that some lover— some passionate, faithful, chivalric lover—full of distant

pride and timid delicacy, and doubtful of his mistress's favour, had sung it to her in the great hall, with his minstrel harp—with `sandal shoon and scallop shell.' I will bestow my thanks upon any one who will supply appropriate words. Come, count, your pen has been idle too long."

"Why, Norman," cried Miss Romain, "*you* know this little air. It is the sweet *morceau* from Rosini, which you admire so much."

"But is Mr. Leslie an *improvisatore?*" asked Flora.

"I assure you," answered Miss Romain, with an ostentatious blush, "I know it by many evidences; and I am certain he will not refuse me *one* more."

"I fear," cried Norman, "the subject is beyond my comprehension."

"If I dare ask, after Miss Romain has pleaded unsuccessfully," said Miss Temple, with a sarcasm foreign from her nature, and very unusual in her; but she perceived instantly she had given pain, and, with another of those looks which from such eyes, vibrate along the nerves of the lover with tremours of heaven, she added, "Come, Mr. Leslie, it is my *first* request."

"Give it me," said Norman; "I will—I will try; and it shall be my last effort at poetry."

Impulse, which so often betrays into dilemmas, sometimes conducts to points which sober dulness would never think of reaching. In a few moments Norman availed himself of a pause in the conversation, and addressed Flora:—

"Miss Temple, at your request, and on the hint of your imagination, I have thrown together a few lines, superficial and imperfect of course; but, as the last effort, they may be pardoned any fault. You are to suppose, then, exactly the circumstances suggested by yourself. A fair lady is beloved by a knight, who doubts, perhaps with too much cause, whether his mistress approves, or even knows his attachment. On the eve of a fierce battle, in which he feels a certain presentiment that he must fall, he ventures, what before he had never by word or look ventured, to express a part of his feelings to the lady. She listens coldly—applauds without understanding; for she knows not that the humble minstrel is a knight who loves her, and who stands on the brink of danger. Thus eluding his purpose, she suffers him to depart from her presence, quite unconscious of their import and their application, till the subsequent day, when she hears that the gentle minstrel was a true knight, and that the lips which breathed music and love to her averted ear now lie cold in the earth."

"And what then?" cried Flora, unconsciously betraying her interest in the fiction.

"I do but jest, Miss Temple," said Norman. "Such events have often occurred, and will again. How ladies feel when too late aware of faithful love, cherished for them against hope by the unhappy, must depend upon them."

He raised his glance to her once more, and once more their eyes met. Miss Romain, uneasy at this communion, whether intentional or accidental, exclaimed—

"I dare pronounce that the false creature smiled just over his grave, as she had done on his living love, and wedded, peradventure, the warrior who slew him."

"And I," said Flora, "that she had loved him all the while in secret; and, plunged in sudden anguish at his fate, withdrew from the world, and devoted herself to Heaven. That is the way," she added, with a smile, "in all those old stories."

What passing shadow is too light for the aliment of love? As in the visions of the sleeper the most improbable and opposite fragments of adventures sweep on and mingle together, changing and shifting with a facility that renders all probable and real, now leading the spirit along skyish cliffs and endless oceans, through storms, deserts, battles, and death, and now melting into gardens, bowers, music, and bliss, so the victim of Cupid, however sober and sensible his mind may be in sanity, now finds the surrounding world breaking apart, and blending together with mighty and incredible revolutions— the vastest impossibilities at once within his grasp, the most trivial commonplaces grown vast and impossible.

Norman, who one moment before saw the bolt of destruction fall on his hope, now—by the tone of a voice, the beam of a pair of tender eyes, by some half−unrepressed meaning in a word or an attitude—saw piles of gorgeous hopes, heaven−kissing mountains of joy, peer up before him, as he listened to the simple and sweet conjectures of the lovely girl. Without further preface, he begged her to accompany him; for though quite without the rapid execution of Rosalie, as often happens in similar persons, she was infinitely her superior in the intuitive power, taste, and feeling of an accompaniment. All felt curiosity to hear the lines; and as Flora ran over a sweet and plaintive prelude, her countenance, half flung back over her shoulder as she played, was raised towards his face,

and in a rich sweet voice he sang the following lines:—

I.

"Farewell! farewell! some happier breast
Will beat beneath that lovely cheek;
Some worthier hand to thine be pressed,
Requited love to speak.
Oh, never more within thy smile,
Who thrills to feel it now shall dwell;
But, mouldering in his grave the while,
Forget this sad farewell!

II.

"The die is cast—the fate is sealed—
The dark, the fatal doom is spoken!
Oh! never be my heart revealed,
Until that heart be broken.
How much I loved, how low I knelt,
No ear shall hear—no tongue shall tell:
Such love as this, oh! who hath felt,
Or such a sad farewell!

III.

"Too true they prove thou lov'st me not—
Those sunny eyes, that tranquil brow;
Too soon will be my name forgot—
Alas! forgotten now.
And thou wilt own no fond regret,
No bursting pang thy breast will swell:
But, when to−morrow's sun is set,
Remember this farewell!"

There was something in Norman's manner and appearance at all times high and commanding; but, at the moment of his pronouncing the last line, his tall form and noble features were so strongly expressive of melancholy yet lofty emotion, so regardless of all disguise and all propriety, that every one present, except the gentle girl herself, felt instinctively that he loved her devotedly. Even she, as he thanked her for the sweetness with which she had accompanied him, saw in his eyes a humid brightness, and betrayed embarrassment and softness unusual to her. The colour on her cheek, higher and warmer than he had ever seen it before, told a tale that made each glance of Norman's a sweet and giddy rapture. Miss Romain again hastened to interrupt an interview which, although enjoyed in the presence of so many, was thus, by the natural freemasonry of love, invested with half the dear charm and confidence of a *tête−à−tête*. The count, in turn, sat down at the piano, with a jest and a compliment to Rosalie, and struck the keys to a merry and brilliant French air, as if to break the train into which the thoughts and feelings of all seemed to have fallen.

Old Mr. Romain had kept Mrs. Temple busily conversing in a distant corner of the adjoining room. As they entered, Norman remembered the necessity of his departure, took his leave, and with a swelling heart regarded Flora, into whose sweet blue eyes he might never look again.

But Fortune, who in some moods refuses what mortals deem their simple rights, and in others grants far beyond their expectations, now bestowed upon the youth the precise blessing which, of all others, at this moment he most earnestly desired. A servant entered and informed Miss Temple that her father wished to speak with her in the library. Scarcely believing his own eyes, and while the rest were absorbed in conversation together, Leslie saw Flora rise, disentangle herself from the group, and follow him into the hall. Some accident closed the door behind her. They stood together—*alone*.

CHAPTER XI.

A Quarrel with an Object of Love at the Moment of Reconciliation with one of Hate; and wherein is shown, for the forty−seven thousandth time, what a Foot−ball Man is to Fortune.

"She's fair and fause that causes my smart;
I lo'ed her meikle and lang:
She's broken her vow, she's broken my heart,
And I may e'en gae hang.
A coof cam in wi' rowth o' gear,
And I hae tint my dearest dear;
But woman is but warld's gear,
Sae let the bonnie lass gang."

—Burns.

The romantic heart of Norman Leslie could but inadequately bid Flora an adieu that might be eternal before a crowd of gazing spectators. He had, therefore, in the fulness of his triumph and his anguish, veiled all agitation, and bowed at a distance, and with scarcely a look.

"She will remember me," he thought; "she will understand me—to−morrow."

When he found himself alone, for the first time in his life, with the idol of his secret thoughts and dreams—who swayed his feelings as the moon swells the tides, and leaves them again to their retiring ebbs—now that he had half expressed his love, and half believed the expression returned, he knew not what to say. Had he known, it is doubtful whether he could have said it, his heart beat so violently in his bosom. Women have naturally more presence of mind than men in such matters: those little emergencies which silently checker the existence of the quiet student in peaceful modern times—to him all as striking and memorable as breaking a lance or storming a town to a knight of other days. Flora broke the silence; but, even through her graceful and becoming self−possession, a certain agitation and embarrassment exhibited themselves, enchanting to the young lover beyond expression.

"I have to thank you, Mr. Leslie, for the song."

He blushed. He could not well speak. Love is a great taker away of the voice. He found, however, sufficient self−possession to reach forth his hand, and gently to enclose in it that of Flora. She cast down her eyes. Norman's very heart trembled; but at this moment he remembered Morton, and contented himself with pressing the hand he held, as if he had taken it in the ordinary kindness of a farewell. He could not, however, wholly command his manner, as he said,—

"Dear Miss Temple, it may be very long before I see you again."

"Are you leaving town, Mr. Leslie?"

"No, not immediately," he replied, and with less embarrassment; "but a painful duty may exclude me, perhaps, from the pleasures of society."

"Mr. Leslie!"—her eyes rested full on him.

"And from *yours*," he added.

"And that beautiful song," she said, as if conscious that propriety would permit her to press him no further, "is it a present for me?"

"If you deem it worthy—"

"I shall value it," she answered, "as your gift."

For all his manhood, a moisture gathered in his eye. She looked up again. He forgot every thing but that look. He once more seized her hand. She turned away her face. "Dear, dear Flora! how I love you!" had nearly escaped his lips, when the front door suddenly opened, and Morton burst furiously in. Flora vanished in an instant.

"Well, I do declare," exclaimed Morton, coming suddenly to a stop at the demure group which he had broken up in the hall—"who was that? Oh ho! Master Gravity—mum's the word—spoiled sport, eh? Well, I never—my dear, dear Norman— if I had *only* known; if I had only *suspected*—"

"Nonsense," cried Norman, blushing; for he was one of those men who inherit that woman's virtue.

"That's it, my fine fellow," cried Morton, his finger on his nose—"I am up to all that sort of thing. What, three—one too many, hey? Well, I declare—"

"I tell you—" cried Norman, quickly and sternly; for he loved not jesting on such points.

"Oh," interrupted Morton, "you need not tell me. There's no necessity for it at all. Fy! you cunning dog—you—but, *mon Dieu!* —I forget. Is not Miss Temple here?" and in he went with little ceremony.

Norman waited a moment anxiously in hope that Flora might return. He was at once the happiest and most miserable of human beings. He was on the eve of the wildest bliss he ever knew; and he was also rushing madly into the grave. He loved Flora Temple now more devotedly than ever. He owned it. He felt it. That which had before dwelt in his heart a half−buried spark, was now fanned into a blaze. What singular fatality connected him with the silly and good−humoured Morton, that by his agency he should be frustrated in the happiest moment of his existence, and his existence itself be brought to a fearful termination. Now, too, the conviction rushed on his soul, that Flora Temple loved him. He believed and hailed it in the face of reason, of probability, and of the express authority of Miss Romain. But what is reason, probability, or authority to a lover, against the plain and sweet eloquence of the eyes, which should know best of all? What was he now to do? Wait? see Flora once more, reveal his love frankly, and bid her farewell for ever? or should he—thus in doubt whether his passion was requited— fly at once from her dear and dangerous presence, and, yielding his throat to the slaughter of a fierce, bloody, and certain hand, die just at the gates of paradise? "Oh! were I escaped from this fatal duel," he thought, "I would ask no more of fortune. May Providence interfere now, and rescue me from this awful dilemma, and my cup of bliss will be full to overflowing. Never again will I complain of destiny!"

As he lingered one moment, at a loss what to do, he was startled by the sudden appearance of a female figure.

"Flora?" he said.

It was not Flora. The tall form of Mrs. Temple rose before him with a step more than usually stately, and an expression in her face severe and repelling.

"Bless me," she said, "Mr. Leslie!"

If the youth had blushed before, he now crimsoned with tenfold embarrassment.

"Well met, Mr. Leslie," resumed Mrs. Temple, in a tone of sarcasm; "I have been about to request the honour of a personal interview, and now fate favours me beyond my deserts, though *you*, perhaps, will not share in the pleasure of my surprise."

"Madam," replied Norman, bowing, "why should I feel other than pleasure at the sight of Mrs. Temple?"

"Because, by the name on your lips, I presume your thoughts were upon a different and more welcome person. I understand you; but I regret the painful necessity of putting you right. A dangerous disorder, Mr. Leslie, must be cured, although, in the operation, the patient shrink, and the surgeon hold the knife with reluctance. You are not at a loss for my meaning."

"Indeed, madam, but I am, most profoundly," replied Norman; feeling, however, that her proud and haughty character was bearing her beyond the pale of delicacy and good−breeding.

"In plain terms, then, Mr. Leslie, Mr. Temple has requested me to express our high appreciation of your character; but to say that we have observed with regret your marked attentions to Flora. We appeal to your generosity, Mr. Leslie" (Leslie bowed); "we confide in your honour. Flora's hand is already pledged to another. To save yourself future pain, and her unnecessary embarrassment, I seize the earliest opportunity to explain this to you frankly. Flora will, I am certain, always be most happy to see Mr. Leslie *as a friend*. Good−morning, sir."

Again Norman bowed low, nor lifted his face till he was alone. To him this appeared an insult. The supercilious condescension, the haughty dismissal of Mrs. Temple, showed her impetuous character in its least favourable light. Flora was, then, in truth, the affianced bride of another. Her softness towards him was either imaginary, or assumed out of pity or sport. Stung by the thought, he was in the act of flying for ever from the inauspicious mansion, when a slight shriek arrested his step. Was it fancy? or was it the voice of Flora? He re−entered the apartment, alarmed and surprised by the confusion which prevailed. The ladies were standing, and apparently agitated with the most sudden and lively apprehension. The count appeared erect, proudly listening to entreaties directed to him with the utmost fervour by all present; and, as if a sight of death or pestilence had blasted his eyes, Norman beheld Flora, pale and frightened, foremost in her earnest solicitations, with her hand on the count's arm, in the ardour of her exclamations.

"Oh, Mr. Leslie!" cried Mrs. Temple, "could we have expected this from you!"

"A pretty fright, indeed," said Miss Romain. "Oh, Norman, dear Norman! abandon this horrid affair."

"For me, count, for me," cried Flora, "spare his blood!"

"I perceive," said Norman, who always rose in energy and ease in proportion to the emergency, and whose present manner was cold and freezing— "I perceive, by some mischance, that which should have been concealed is betrayed; but let me entreat Miss Temple, when she solicits my lord count there, to place her request on any other ground than my safety."

A reproachful and surprised look from Flora, shot at his heart, broke harmless as an arrow against a steel corslet. He felt his soul fully armed against her fascinations.

"Oh, Mr. Leslie!" said Mrs. Temple, "for our sake, forbear from this fatal, this dreadful meeting!"

"You must allow me to assure you," rejoined Norman, "that no other power rests in my hand than that of obstinate acquiescence in the Count Clairmont's invitation. In this affair he has been quite the aggressor, and I can request nothing at his hands."

"Mr. Leslie," said Flora, "you will surely listen to our request."

"Much as it would flatter me to have an opportunity of obliging Miss Temple, I have neither the power nor the wish to do so here."

"But for *me*, dear Norman," cried Miss Romain, sobbing aloud, and approaching him with a familiarity which might be excused by the general agitation.

"For *you*, Miss Romain," said he, still burning with resentment against Flora, "I wish to do much; but you address yourself to one who has no more power than yourself over the circumstances."

Mr. Romain, who had stood a silent spectator of this scene, at length said, in his blunt way,—

"Come, come, young gentlemen—this matter *must* be settled, or we shall be compelled to seek aid from the authorities."

"Mr. Leslie," said the count, "you have done me wrong. You think me unforgiving; I am not so. As a proof—partly at the command of these ladies, whom I am bound to obey, and partly because I am convinced that I might myself last night have furnished more cause of offence than I intended—I waive all other considerations, and withdraw my invitation. My warmth last evening was premature. I apologize for the hasty expression. I shall receive your acknowledgments in return as an ample seal of reconciliation. Come, Leslie, let us think of this idle matter no more."

He extended his hand with ease and frankness. Leslie stepped forward, and exchanged the proffered salutation. "I should hold myself," he said, "greatly your inferior, Count Clairmont, both in good sense and candour, if I did not cheerfully improve such an opportunity to avoid bloodshed."

"You will find," said the count, in a more confidential voice, "that I had already thought better of it, and had communicated such instructions to my friend Captain Forbes as would probably have effected this same event, and prevented a deed so fatal," in a still lower tone, "as *you*, Mr. Leslie, intended to perpetrate."

The magnanimity of the count was applauded in the liveliest terms. Flora cast on him a look, in the opinion of Norman, full of speechless tenderness; and the young nobleman appeared to the most graceful advantage, even in the eyes of Leslie himself.

"He is too deep for me," he thought, "or I have wronged him most shamefully."

He remained a few minutes a moody spectator of the close of a scene in which he had not borne the most becoming part. Withdrawing a last gaze from Flora's beautiful face, he accidentally detected the count, in a distant part of the room, watching him, as he thought, unobserved. He was struck with a glance of malignant meaning, which, like the rattle of the dreadful snake, bade him beware.

At length, after an awkward adieu to the ladies, whose salutations in return, particularly Flora's, he thought cold and stiff, with a mountain−load from his mind, yet a coal of fire at his heart, he withdrew, and sought his own home.

"Strange world!" he thought: "brief and wild vicissitudes! What a sport—what an idle chance— what a reckless, valueless, wanton confusion is the destiny of mortals! Yesterday I was well, safe, tranquil, and happy. This morning I was suddenly transformed into a beast, bound and dragged to the altar for sacrifice. A few moments ago I prayed to be released and set free, as the highest boon Heaven could bestow. Lo! I *am* loose; the chain *is* broken; the knife sheathed; the fire extinguished; and yet, while the bright blade glittered before my eyes, *one thought* made me happier in danger than I am now in freedom. That look of the count's too—will he play me

false?—a malignant devil lurks in his glances. As for Flora," a tear stood on his eyelash, he dashed it away—"pshaw! boy that I am! let me tear her sweet image for ever from my heart."

At eleven Kreutzner entered by appointment.

"There are to be two more breathing folks in the world, Leslie, than you intended. The noble count and the noble captain put their noses together at your close terms, and request another interview."

"It will be useless," said Norman, and related the occurrence of the morning.

"Now, is that magnanimity," said Kreutzner, when he had done speaking, "or love for the fair girl, or sheer cowardice?"

"Alas for poor human nature!" answered Leslie. "The world may well be topsy−turvy, when, even by such observers as you, Kreutzner, the purest virtues and the meanest vices cannot be distinguished from each other: but come, a truce to moralizing. I propose we shall sup together."

"And the prospect," said Kreutzner, "of a comfortable breakfast in the morning instead of a bullet, will not lessen your appetite, I assure you."

The two friends linked arms, and calling for Morton, who, with all his folly, had the pleasing faculty of rendering himself more agreeable in most companies than he had managed to do in that of Miss Temple, they adjourned to one of the numerous saloons which in New−York tolerably supply the place of the *Parisian café*.

"What! made up," said Morton, "at Temple's! fal, dal, diddle, diddle, fal, dal, dal. Now, that's all *my* doings. I let out the whole affair, though I durst not stay to see the consequences. Faith, I felt like a fellow who lights a train of gunpowder, and runs, without stopping to make observations upon the explosion."

"Morton!" said Norman, "you did not dare to commit such a piece of stupidity."

"Yes, but I did, though. I had no notion of seeing a fellow like you, Leslie, shot down like a wild pigeon in my quarrel."

"Then you are, Morton, I must say, a greater fool than I took you for!"

"Well, now, Leslie—now—my dear fellow— really—that's a poor return for saving you from a dead shot—a fellow who can put a bullet, you know, out of the muzzle of one pistol into that of another! You would have been snuffed out! you know you would! What chance would such a strapping surface as yours present against a power of aim that always touches a silver sixpence. Remember the Veronese lady! And now—this is my thanks!—Well, I declare—I never—"

CHAPTER XII

A disagreeable way of spending the Evening, and a change from bad to worse.

"That man that hath a tongue, I say, is no man, If with his tongue he cannot win a woman." *Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

"That Norman Leslie is a strange being," said Mrs. Temple one evening, as he left their circle, after a visit of a half hour, during which he had appeared peculiarly reserved.

"He is dying of love for Miss Romain," said the count; "he is very eccentric also, and exceedingly flippant."

"Flippant!" exclaimed Flora, in unfeigned surprise, "Mr. Leslie *flippant?*"

"I fear he is much worse, my love," said Mrs. Temple; "he is deceitful and treacherous."

"Deceitful and treacherous?" echoed Flora again; "Mr. *Leslie?*"

"Yes, my dear, Mr. Leslie," rejoined Mrs. Temple; "we cannot judge of men's characters by seeing them in the drawing−room. Mr. Leslie in company is very demure; but I am credibly informed among men he is altogether a different person; and it is among men that a man's character is most correctly estimated. What was it, count, that story about him?"

"No," said the count, "my dear madam, excuse me. Scandal is my abhorrence, and I am not prepared to say *that* is any thing but scandal; indeed, I scarcely believe it at all. Besides, after what took place between Mr. Leslie and myself some weeks since, my motive for repeating it might be misconstrued."

Flora looked up, but said nothing.

"Respecting Mr. Leslie's integrity," continued Clairmont, with marked emphasis, "I shall not therefore speak; but of his flippancy I can easily cite an example. He is in the habit of boasting that he is obliged to decline the affections, nay, advances is his word, of more than one among the fairest of the New−York ladies."

"The wretch!" cried Mrs. Temple. "Flora, my love, you will certainly break that folder."

"Do you know, Miss Temple, that I have heard *your* name on his lips so familiarly, that one would deem him a much more intimate friend than I perceive he is, by his very different manner to you when in your presence."

Flora turned a little pale; it was barely perceptible, but Clairmont's keen eye detected it.

"I should regret," said she, "to hear any thing serious against Mr. Leslie's reputation. His sister Julia and his father are almost faultless, and they are perfectly bound up in him. I think I never knew a family in the domestic circle so really and unostentatiously affectionate and happy."

"He will certainly marry Miss Romain; and I think *she* will tame him," said Mrs. Temple, with a cool smile.

"It is said that she has already more than once refused him," rejoined Clairmont.

"How singular!" exclaimed Flora, but blushed as she finished the sentence.

"And pray why, my love?" said Mrs. Temple, smiling again; "because this Mr. Leslie is so interesting?"

"No."

"Because he is so gay and lively?" interrupted the count, with a sneer.

"Miss Romain makes no secret," said Flora, "of her intention to marry him, and yet I have heard her boast openly of having rejected him!"

"And do you think," said the count, with something of marked meaning in his manner, "that a lover should never strive against the first harsh sentence?"

"I do," said Flora, gravely; and, changing the conversation, she continued—"Mamma, did you hear of the accident which—"

But mamma had disappeared, and Flora found herself alone with the count. She half started, as if with an impulse to fly; but recollecting herself, remained with a most graceful air of forced composure, not less becoming from the fact that through it any one might detect no ordinary degree of agitation. She dropped her eyes upon the volume, whose damp leaves she had been carefully separating with a pearl folder. A glow of hope and triumph gleamed over the face of her companion as he approached, and, with the most guarded gentleness and delicacy, laying his fingers upon the book, slowly lowered it from her gaze.

"Flora!"

There was a moment's silence.

"*Dear* Flora!" He took her hand. She attempted to withdraw it; but, alas for his suit, nei ther turned away, nor blushed, nor trembled. Her face was slightly pale; but on her sunny brow there was a shadow; and the smile which usually played about her beautiful mouth was gone utterly.

"You forget, Count Clairmont," she said, "I have already told you that this is language I will not hear."

"My beloved Flora!" he cried, apparently much affected, and dropping on his knee, "once more— once more let me—"

She rose. Never had she seemed so tall.

"You misjudge me, Count Clairmont," she said, "most strangely. I am no silly girl, withdrawing to be wooed, and speaking to be contradicted. Your language is displeasing and painful. Having already expressed my sentiments decidedly, I trusted the subject was at rest. I beg you to rise. I will ring for my mother."

There was a firmness in her voice and manner that would have rung the death−knell to hope in any bosom but that of Count Clairmont.

"No, no, angelic girl," and he retained her hand, while a flush of emotion crossed his handsome face, "you must not, you shall not stir, till I have again poured into your ear all that I feel and suffer. Flora, I love you!"

"Count Clairmont—"

"I have loved you always. From the first your mother knew and approved my addresses. I threw myself at your feet. You, enchanting girl, turned coldly, cruelly away. Never shall I forget the anguish, the agony of that moment. I would have fled the country, nay, I would have buried myself for ever from the world, but your generous mother soothed my distress, checked my despair, and gradually reawakened my hope. It is now by her permission, and that of your honourable father, that I enjoy this interview, which I have been so anxious to procure."

"And *I* to avoid," said Flora.

"Miss Temple," added the count, rising, and still holding her hand, "am I so unhappy as to have offended you?"

"Detention by physical force, sir," said Flora, coldly, "is the least plausible method either to awaken affection or to preserve esteem."

He released her hand. She walked to the bell, and was about to ring.

"Flora," he said, earnestly, "as a *friend*, I *entreat* you to hear me."

She paused, and he continued:—

"Miss Temple, if I am so unfortunate as to have yet made no progress in your esteem, I cannot abandon the hope of being more favoured hereafter. So deeply am I interested in the success of this suit, that my happiness, my very reason, are utterly at stake. Your parents have assured me that your affections are disengaged; let me add, that their strongest wishes are enlisted in my behalf. My present almost unlimited fortune, my immense expectations in Europe, the advantages which my title affords me of showing you the most exclusive circles of foreign society, in their most favourable aspect—"

He paused before a look so calmly cold as to embarrass even him.

"Count Clairmont," she said, "has but poorly improved his intercourse with our sex, if he suspects a woman's heart to be influenced by such considerations. I am not ambitious either of wealth or title. Upon this subject I have already spoken decisively: let me repeat my sentiments now. They are confirmed by reflection. I have feared this interview, and done every thing in my power to prevent it. Your first suggestions of partiality I was contented simply to decline. I meet your present solicitations with a firmness not unmingled with both surprise and displeasure. Permit me, sir, to add, that any future renewal will be received either as ridicule or insult."

"Must I then despair," said the count, deeply mortified, "of permission to prosecute my addresses with the aid of time?"

"My sentiments," rejoined Flora, "nothing on earth can alter. I have never felt, I never *can* feel for you the slightest love. I would not now permit this painful interview to be so prolonged, but in order to satisfy you that a repetition must be utterly impossible."

"One more prayer," said he, again kneeling, in a voice husky with emotion; "I cannot, I will not abandon all hope, till I know whether I yield only to your abstract preference for a single life, or to the happier star of some favoured rival."

"Count Clairmont!" said Flora, a flush of indignation rising to her cheek.

"Nay, cold and cruel girl—"

Before he had finished the sentence, he was alone.

Stung with disappointment and rage, he withdrew and left the house. He had not walked many minutes when he felt a hand upon his shoulder, and a woman in a thick veil stood before him. Bewildered and off his guard, his first thought was of Flora; but the veil, slowly drawn aside, revealed the large black eyes of the young female who has slightly and somewhat mysteriously appeared on the stage of our drama in the second chapter. She now stood confronting him most haughtily. For a moment they regarded each other in silence, the light of a lamp falling strongly on their features.

"Clairmont," at length cried the intruder, "your time has expired. I have yielded to your request. I will yield no longer."

"Louise!" he answered; "not here—not here!"

"Yes, *here!*" echoed she, vehemently; "*here* or anywhere, wherever you may be. I claim my promise. Your time has expired."

"By the holy mother! girl, but—damnation!"

The last exclamation was called forth by the appearance of Morton, who, accidentally passing at the time, distinctly recognised both individuals, and paused in surprise to gaze on their faces. Louise drew down her veil. Clairmont stepped up sternly, and addressed to him some casual but angry remark. The young gentleman replied awkwardly, bowing and shuffling back, and declaring that he was not aware of being an intruder.

"See, girl," said Clairmont, "see what you have done! Would you betray, would you ruin me?"

"Yes," she replied; "if it brought your head to the block—your neck to the gibbet—your flesh to the worms! I would betray—I would ruin you— unless—"

A livid paleness overspread his features, which were transformed by the convulsions of hideous passion. He spoke in an under voice and close to her ear,—

"Silence, woman—if you would *live*—silence!"

"*Live!*" echoed she, scornfully; "hark in your ear." She whispered. He started, and stamped his foot.

"No," he replied, "it is impossible yet. But this is no place. Meet me at the hotel again."

"I understand you," said the female; "I will. But—"

She bent her keen bright eyes full on his, with a power which almost made him quail.

"If you deceive—"

"No, no, no, no," returned he, "I will not—I will not. To−morrow—to−morrow!"

The voice of a passing pedestrian, chanting a barcarole of the reigning opera, announced some new intruder. The speakers broke off, and separated abruptly.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Chapter mostly of digressions, which the Reader is entreated to excuse, as the Author could not help it. Yet should it not be altogether skipped.

"Quench, Corydon, the long unanswered fire!
Mind what the common wants of life require;
On willow twigs employ thy weaving care;
And find an easier love, though not so fair." Dryden's *Virgil* .

Beautiful Spring! We do love to watch thy coming. Only the other day we were dilating upon the cold; now, away with the appendages of the frowning old Winter! Our habits are gradually undergoing a change. The fire sinks in the grate, and burns dimly and unnoticed; the heavy cloak hangs unregarded in the hall; people come in from the open air with noses of a natural colour; the earth is brightening everywhere; and our very soul melts on discovering a dash of tender new grass on the sunny side of some old wall. A hundred—a thousand sunny reminiscences rise up warmly in our tired, chilled heart; we enjoy all a schoolboy's simple delight at thy first footstep. Dear Spring! thou art a companion endeared to us by innumerable tender and unworldly recollections.

The season now, over the country, began to exhibit itself in a thousand agreeable forms. A shade of lovely verdure enlivened the fields; the buds were breaking beautifully out from the juicy branches: in the gardens, the simple snowdrop, the crocus, sprinkling the brown earth with many colours, the yellow daffodil, the fragrant mezereon, with its flower before the leaf, already appeared— graceful harbingers of the most welcome of seasons; and soon to be followed by the modest violet, the lowly heartsease, the golden Adonis, the crimson piony, hyacinths, tulips, and all the beautiful and variegated children of nature.

In the barnyard now the cattle rested themselves with ardent gratification. The contented hen dug a hole in the gravel, and laid, in enviable and luxurious idleness, in the general sunshine; and the cock swaggered and strutted about in his fine regimentals with superadded dignity, his great soul shining through every look and action, lifting his feet as if the very earth were not good enough for him to tread on, and ever and anon slapping his martial sides triumphantly with his wings, and challenging all the world with high−sounding exclamations. Ah, happy fellow! he is your only philosopher. He enjoys life truly. He has no books to balance; no notes to pay; no duns to meet; no bills in chancery to draw; no romances to write; no proofs to read: nothing but to rove about all day, whithersoever he pleaseth; free from trouble, debts, labour, fear, dyspepsy, laws, bonds, house−rent, and all the fiends engendered to haunt the citizen of a civilized community. Happy fellow! even now we hear thy voice—the outbreakings of a great, independent, happy heart. Peace be with thee! gay sultan, amid thy seraglio of dames. Elegant courtier! Proud herald of the morn!

In the city, the evidences of the season were numerous, although of a different description. The shopkeepers flung open their doors, and displayed their goods in the air. The windows of the wealthy were also unclosed, and the breathing and blossoming plants placed in the sun. Dirty−faced chubby children, ragged, barefoot, and hatless, came forth in troops by the cellar doors, and in all the sunshiny places: and the poor generally wore cheerful countenances; for they were already enjoying existence more with less expense. But of all the places where these revolutionary proceedings in the weather were perceptible, the west side of Broadway, perhaps, exhibited the most changes in the dresses of the promenaders, masculine and feminine, black and white. It seemed that no experience could enlighten certain classes upon the fickleness of Spring; and every accidental gleam of warm weather was sure to elicit divers pieces of apparel, more peculiarly appropriate to the heat of summer. The cumbersome cloak was left behind. Then the thin shoe appeared in place of the boot. In a little while a parasol went gayly along through the sunshine; and, by−and−by, straw hats and white pantaloons prematurely displayed themselves upon odd−looking persons. We are apt to regard with some curiosity, if not suspicion, your fellow who puts on thin pantaloons so early in the season, hoping thereby to force on the summer. He is like the first swallow. His reasoning powers cannot be much cultivated; or else he is only striving after notoriety; or, perhaps, he may have a better reason, viz., his thin pantaloons may be thicker than his thick ones! Whatever may be the origin of so extraordinary a proceeding, we humbly warn our readers against being led too easily away by the alluring promises, and tender but deceitful solicitations, of Spring. Let not the expanding buds, the new grass, the

peeping flowerets; the broad, still, universal sunshine; the fresh, fragrant, and bland zephyr, delude you into any of these fashionable eccentricities in apparel. Believe not the appearance of the earth; trust not the seducing smiles of heaven. The whole season resembles a lively coquette, full of smiles, airs, and affections; and much more ready to make promises than to keep them. We have now in our memory an unhappy wretch, whom we once met in the course of an afternoon peregrination. He was hastening homeward, shivering in a pair of white trousers, pumps, and thin silk stockings; his nose turned blue; and his coat buttoned, desperately, every button, to the very throat. Do not, we entreat, be too rash in taking down stoves, and abandoning thick stockings. Remember the words of the friar in Romeo and Juliet—"Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast."

Yes, the spring was here; and the gay world of fashion was as busy as the blossoms on the trees, or the birds in the groves. Flora Temple continued to bloom with the modest sweetness of a wild rose. Her striking beauty, which each day seemed to unfold some lovelier charm; her accomplished education; her clear, bright mind, and gentle nature—to say nothing of her immense fortune, and yet more immense expectations—rendered her an object of universal attraction, and enchained the particular attentions of a host of gentlemen, who, from various considerations, wrote themselves her admirers. The world, always peculiarly shrewd upon these matters, exhausted its curiosity and its conjectures upon the subject of her union; and gave her away, unceremoniously, to many a claimant, who, however charmed with the honour, knew too well at heart that it could be enjoyed but in imagination. Poor Morton, after his first storm of disappointment and wounded vanity, had swallowed his regrets with a resignation which springs sometimes from philosophy, and sometimes from folly; and, if rumour spoke truth (which, by−the−way, that slandered divinity often does), he had no reason to be ashamed of the names associated with his own on the long list of rejected suiters. Lieutenant Halford of the navy, after beating about for some time against baffling breezes, bore down gallantly towards the prize, but suddenly veered upon a new tack, and shortly after struck his colours beneath a heavy fire from the eyes—oh woman! woman!—of Miss Maria Morton. Captain Forbes of the army besieged the fortress; but upon a short parley from the walls, he turned at once to the right−about, and obliqued off to the left, double−quick step, upon some more feasible expedition. An eloquent young lawyer, who had been a good deal in the papers, and was supposed to possess a weighty influence in the first ward, rose to advance a motion, which the public, like a court of inferior jurisdiction, immediately decided in his favour: but love and law have both their uncertainties; for, upon an appeal to the highest tribunal, the opinion was reversed. A club of *literati*—a street of young merchants—a board of brokers— and a whole medical college, were reported to have suffered a veto in regular succession; while penniless poets, promising editors, law−students, and young men of talent, were declined *ad infinitum* with sweet condescension, gracious regret, and a world of kind wishes for their future welfare, and that their subsequent paths might be "strewn with flowers!" It was asserted by Howard, that Miss Temple was obliged to keep a confidential clerk; and that the dismissals were issued in the form of printed blanks, filled up, according to circumstances, with name and date, without any further trouble or knowledge of the young lady herself than a careless weekly perusal of the list of suiters' names, alphabetically arranged. But Morton declared this to be a bouncer; as his own had been carefully written in her own hand, on rose paper, sealed with a cameo cupid, and composed, evidently, at the express command of her mother, who was mad after that d—d French count.

"Why don't she marry?" said the world. "Time flies; and she must be eighteen at least."

"Why don't she marry?" said Mrs. Hamilton one morning to her husband.

"Because she is not a *fool*, my dear," growled the happy husband. "She is young, rich, free, and admired. Why *should* she marry? Like others I could mention, she better becomes the station of a belle than of a wife. Women nowadays are only made to look at."

"And men to fret and scold," said Mrs. Hamilton, with a scowl.

"Come, come, my love," rejoined the husband, "no pouting. What's *done*, you know, my angel, can't be undone."

"Mr. Hamilton, you are a—"

"A *what*, my dear?"

The lady was silent. The husband thrust his hands into his pantaloons pockets, kicked his *robe de chambre* from the middle of the floor into a corner (this dialogue matrimonial is presumed to have taken place in what the French call the *chambre à coucher*), muttered an oath, shrugged his shoulders, and made his exit whistling "The Campbells are coming."

"There he goes," said Mrs. Hamilton to herself, as the front door slammed heavily after her retreating lord, and his choleric step died away on the pavement—"there he goes, and it will be midnight, now, ere I see him again. Who could have believed it before we married! Then—

"Miss Temple, too," murmured the neglected wife, as she continued her revery, sighing the while, and glancing her eyes upon the still lovely image presented by a large mirror. "Happy girl!" (she rang the bell) "she will win the count yet" (another sigh). "Well—as Hamilton says— what's done—"

The maid entered, and the complicated machinery of a small family went on with its operations.

To say that Norman Leslie had not visited at Mrs. Temple's, after the occurrences related in the foregoing chapters, would not be to say the truth; nor, indeed, that he never visited at Mr. Romain's. On the contrary, he had occasionally beguiled an evening with each family; and at both—a young and refined man, with a leaning to poetry, without a wife, and with an intuitive delicacy which preserved him from the grosser pleasures of a large city—he found much to attract and gratify him. There were music, charming society, and the gayest spirits; which, when the mood was on him, he was fully competent to share, and even to enliven. He had observed, during his infrequent visits to Miss Romain, that her character had undergone a change, which sometimes induced the opinion that he had wronged her; and there was in his bosom ever a generous yearning to excuse and to acquit. The once lively girl had now become more staid and grave, sometimes even unhappy. Norman could not be ignorant that he had once excited the love of a bosom which, however light and inconstant, was full of womanly feelings. In the fervour of boyhood, her brilliant charms and accomplishments had certainly impressed him with a too warm sense of her loveliness; but then his loftily sentimental character might have started aside too suddenly, and mistaken the really careless folly and unguarded thoughtlessness of a giddy girl for inherent affectation and heartlessness. He was no fop; but we shall not undertake to say whether he could entirely exclude from his mind a vague surmise, which, however forcibly dismissed, returned again and again, that this permanent sadness, the pensive reserve of manner, might result from a half−revived affection for *him*. Love her he could not; but youths of his calibre can stretch their hearts to a wonderful complacency in regarding the favour of a sweet girl, even when that favour finds affection already flown. Her manner towards him had been soft and alluring, particularly so in the company of other ladies, and most particularly in that of Miss Temple, who was struck at the undisguised partiality which she often exhibited for him. Whether this was really reawakened passion, or incorrigible coquetry, or a desire to reclaim a half−freed captive, and display him before the world a double conquest—or whether the keen eye of a heartless flirt had detected in the mind of her late lover deeper thoughts than he chose to acknowledge of Flora Temple, whom she envied, and whose envy she triumphed in the thought of exciting—must yet be left to conjecture. She continued by turns sad and gay, sentimental, fond, and peevish, playing off the airs of a capricious, spoiled, and impassioned woman; while Flora moved calmly in her orbit, as the moon mounts steadily up the heavens, veiled sometimes in a silver cloud, from which even the shadow is beautiful; or pouring her soft light from an azure sky, whose utmost clearness is not freed from a touch of melancholy. Norman Leslie and she appeared farther separated in destiny than ever; yet he still secretly nourished for her an absorbing and increasing passion, which he sometimes half imagined, for such dreams come soon, was not unrequited: yet, while he more frequently and familiarly visited the dwelling of Mr. Romain, he called on the Temples but rarely; and always during his stay was uninteresting, cold, or embarrassed. He generally met the count there, which by no means diminished his disquietude, particularly as it seemed to be understood that he was certainly and speedily to marry Flora Temple.

CHAPTER XIV.

An insight into the Character of an old but slight Acquaintance— A tender Revery interrupted.

"Than whom a better senator ne'er held
The helm of Rome, when gowns, not arms, repelled
The fierce Epirot and the African bold;
Whether to settle peace, or to unfold
The drift of hollow States, hard to be spelled." *Milton to Sir Henry Vane the Younger.*

Mr. Mordaunt Leslie sat alone in his study. Hitherto Norman, instead of his father, has occupied our reader; let me now call his attention to the latter. Perhaps the United States held no character more peculiarly the growth of a republic, where talent and eloquence make themselves felt. Early in life he had entered the field of politics. Being the son of a man who had figured brilliantly in the Revolution, in the companionship of Washington, Kosciusko, Hamilton, and Lafayette; and belonging to one of the old, wealthy, and influential (if they could not be called *aristocratic*) families of the country, he commenced his career with numerous and powerful advantages. Long and deeply had he struggled in the game, and always been the winner. Stronger and stronger grew his sway—louder and louder his voice was heard; and more and more reverently it was listened to in every exciting emergency. At the time of our story he stood among the highest American statesmen: profound and grave, learned, eloquent, and persevering, he had risen through the intermediate grades between the obscurity of a private citizen and his present rank in the Senate of the United States. From that commanding summit, his dignified but never sleeping ambition formed new plans, beheld higher eminences. Few had climbed so loftily with a character so unsullied. A foreign ministry to Paris or London was talked of by his friends. In the secret conclave of his confidential circle, an ascent yet more audacious had fixed their eyes; nor did their aspiring hopes pause lower than the highest seat in the republic. Many candidates had striven openly for the presidential chair with fewer claims, and more slender hopes, than might be advanced and cherished by Mordaunt Leslie.

Late on the night to which we allude, business of paramount importance having called him, for a few days, from his duties at Washington to New−York, he sat in his library, earnestly engaged in studying a subject of deep interest about to come under the consideration of the Senate. A rival statesman from the South had attempted the passage of a bill which Mr. Leslie deemed not only striking at the foundation of the interests of the republic, but at the same time calculated to shake, and perhaps tumble to the dust, the whole fabric of his own private views, which he had been so long and so successfully building up. Should this bill succeed, it would produce the most material and the most unpleasant influences upon his life and happiness. It was, indeed, one of those questions wherein the whole strength of two mighty parties come to be thrown, for the moment, into the hands of two individuals, as ancient armies occasionally confided their quarrel to the puissance of two single combatants. Thousands anxiously waited the result; and the exciting sensation produced through the country had already crowded the city of Washington with strangers, eager for the coming on of the conflict.

On the succeeding day, MR. Leslie, with his son and daughter, were to set out for the capital; and it was understood that a large party from New−York intended also to be present, to hear the eloquence, and probably witness the triumph, of their celebrated representative. Mr. and Mrs. Temple were enthusiastically enlisted in the interests of the party opposed to Mr. Leslie; they had also prepared to proceed to Washington, and were to start early on the morrow.

As the statesman sat in the silent seclusion of his study, while his son was wandering alone, indulging blissful visions of Flora Temple, he was merged in dreams of stern and grasping ambition; not the ambition of Cæsar, Napoleon, or Cromwell, but that of Brutus and of Washington. At least, this was the exalted sentiment with which he had stepped upon the arena; this was the motive which he had set up before his own heart; but, as he grew nearer and yet more near to the issue of the game, as the bright reward of his daring mind shone almost within his reach, who can say what changes went on in his character? Who can note the degree in which, while his hopes strengthened, his ambition also deepened? As he now bent over masses of heavy documents; as he sought a passage in a ponderous tome; now elucidating a point of history; now illustrating a question of law; now noting down a classical quotation; now pausing to examine, enlarge, imbody in words, and commit to memory a new and

more fiery thought; now turning over the leaves of Shakspeare for some wondrous phrase, with which to link and send down the tide of popular feeling a modern opinion;—as he pondered over all the various arts by which a great orator steeps and imbues himself in his theme, hour after hour of the silent night rolled unheededly away.

Few men find their hearts trembling with a more eager anxiety upon the result of an event or an action, than that of the soaring statesman as he looked forward to this struggle on the floor of Congress. The lover, waiting the word from the lips of his mistress; the mother, watching the leech as he feels the pulse of her dying child; the gambler, his all pledged, pausing ere he uncovers the dice; the culprit, bending to hear the verdict on his life—perhaps none of these are stirred with thoughts much more deep and absorbing than those which rolled through the mind of the ambitious, haughty, eloquent, and indignant senator. He felt in this crisis like Leonidas at Thermopylæ; he stood within the narrow gorge which he was to defend with his own arm, and fearful he saw were the odds against him. He was eloquent, and he knew it. His heart swelled with the grandeur of conscious power; he longed, he yearned for the moment of action. He sat like Jove above the Titans, aware of the forces against him, but still grasping the thunder; and, though they might pile up mountains on mountains, still calmly and majestically awaiting the time to launch the immortal bolt.

He had closed a volume of Montesquieu, after some hours of severe application; and as he laid down his pencil, and put aside the volume, he breathed,as one whose attention relaxes from a long and fatiguing task; and a smile slowly, and just perceptibly, softened and lighted his majestic face. The effect of the light, throwing its subdued stream upon his noble features, formed a superb subject for the pencil. It had the warm splendour and high character of a Titian. The imposing person which we have admired in Norman appeared even more dignified in the father: he was taller, and his demeanour more uniformly and calmly commanding. His manners were remarkable for a bland and smooth courtliness. Intercourse with the world had imparted to his address high−tempered polish and elegance, which fitted him admirably for the diplomatic station to which it was said the country would soon call him. By Norman that fascinating ease and self−possession were not yet fully possessed; they flashed through him only at intervals. At one hour they would hallow his society so, that *woman* yielded to the delusive and dangerous influence; and at the next, it would pass away as if the flame had been withdrawn from the vase; and others would wonder what people could find in him to admire so boundlessly. Mr. Mordaunt Leslie would have been instantly received with delight at the most fastidious and polished court of Europe; but his son might have remained a time in the shadow, and been compelled to rise by degrees, unless some sudden crisis brought his talent into notice. Both were of the same rich material: the former was perfected from the hand of the artist; the latter, yet partly unwrought.

In Mr. Leslie only one passion coped with his ambition: it was paternal love. He had married, at the early age of twenty, a woman whose rare charms and excellences neither poet nor painter can too highly depict. She was the only one he had ever loved. Mutually endeared by the reciprocal influences of genius and romance, by remarkable beauty of person and gentleness of character, they had dwelt together contentedly—happy, nay, blessed beyond common mortals. While she lived his life had been a sunshiny romance—a fairy dream—nothing but sunshine, poetry, and love. But a rapid malady—which, even while it cut off her life, had beautified and etherealized both her mind and person—deprived him of this beloved being. From the whole ardour and very romance of love, his mind had rolled gradually into a new channel. Never, subsequently, had women been to him more than sisters. All the tenderness of his nature had centred upon Julia and Norman. In the former he found a fair copy of his wife—in the latter of himself. For a year after his bereavement, in the loneliest hours of the night, he had visited the turf beneath which, cold to his anguish and his love, slept the bosom of the beautiful and vanished object of his early worship. And then the lover, the quiet, shrinking, world−despising lover—the haunter of brooks, the feeder of birds; the modest, unpresuming youth, who had murmured the very breath of poetry to the ear of beauty; who had pored over the hues of a flower, or the shape of a cloud; who had sought to master the art of music, that he might, in a new language, tell to *her* how he loved her footmarks, and how he was enraptured beneath her gaze; he, to whom mankind had been but the actors in a gory tragedy or a grotesque farce, from both of which he turned, in the fulness of his bliss, still to linger and murmur his passion to one modest rose in the wild wood;—he reappeared among his fellow−creatures the resolute votary of ambition— forgetting music, woman, nature—the midnight student, the severe satirist, the haranguer of mobs, the candidate for office, the foremost in the jar, dust, tumult, and sinewy struggle of brawling and smoky cities. Thus are men's characters formed. What now was the wife of his boyhood?—a flower he had watched years ago, as it faded by the road−side— a laughing brook,

whose channel was dusty—a lyre, whose strings were broken—a sylvan dell, once fringed with foliage and scented with sweet roses, but whose green and silent depths, where his boyish foot had trod when the world was all new, he could never—never visit again. He had ceased to be a lover; he had ceased to be a husband. He was now only the father and the statesman.

As he saw at length the and of his studies for the night, he closed the volume; and the smile which stole across his features announced the pleasure of anticipated triumph.

He rose, lighted a fragrant cigar, and sat down again, rather to muse than to study; for he had arrived at that age when but little sleep is requisite, and he who would gain and preserve ascendency over his fellow−men must learn to waste but few hours in slumber.

Thus ran the midnight musings of the statesman:—

"Oh that this battle were fought and won! But it will be—it *shall!* Cunning and ambitious as he is, I will meet him front to front, breast to breast. He shall find me no recoiling boy. I will make him feel and fear me. Let it come. Perhaps best it should. I will attack him in his fortress; I will scale his impregnable walls. Why, what but personal ambition can lead him to such audacious designs? And yet, he has no young eagle, as I have, ready to launch upon the tempest; if he had, I could fancy the ground of his ambition."

He paused; and then continued—

"That boy is already a man. I mark his mind mature. I mark his energies unfold—his person develop—his character broaden and deepen. All that I have been, he shall be—and more, much more. He shall commence where I rest. But he must travel—and study. Of late he has idled his hours in indolent city pleasures:—Right—he is of the true metal. He will sicken of them as I did. Let him see what a heartless thing it is. Already his better, his higher, his hereditary nature breaks forth. He reads much. He mopes. He thinks. Perhaps it is love—well, be it so! If he escape that enchanted island—if some Calypso do not persuade him to linger for ever in her perennial bowers— then will he mount on the wind, and gaze on the very sun unblinded, as I do.

"My sweet Julia—was ever man so blessed in son and daughter? Who might not be proud to ask her hand? That young Howard is well enough, too—fire and genius in him—rich, bold, eloquent; and then she loves him; I see it in all her looks, words, and actions. Yes—happy, happy beings!— they love each other. Blessings on them! blessings on them! I would not shadow one ray of their bright hearts—no, not even for ambition.

"My old friend Judge Howard, too, is no mean ally; a proud, firm old man. Yes, yes, I am happy—too, too happy, considering that *she* is not of our circle. Beloved, beautiful, sanctified Julia, art thou a spirit?—dost thou lean from the wind to gaze on, and bless us, dearest, most adored? Dost thou watch the heart which has been none but thine? Dost thou still behold, still know, still love me, sweet, sweet spirit of my gone days? Speak, speak—give me some sign, some token—"

A shriek of such intense and piercing horror broke in upon his meditations, that the dreamer, already half lost in unearthly visions, started as if some pale ghost had indeed replied. The next moment there stood before him an image—to his disturbed imagination strangely resembling the being then uppermost in his fancy. It was an instant before he recognised his daughter Julia, in a loose night−dress of white, her face deadly pale, and a spot of blood on her cheek.

Such are the discords which break upon the music of hope's enchanted strain.

CHAPTER XV.

The Dreams of the Young as contrasted with those of the Old in the foregoing Chapter, and an Interruption more awkward than the last .

"*Monoah.* Some dismal accident it needs must be; What shall we do, stay here, or run and see?" *Samson Agonistes.*

The reader has already classed Norman Leslie among those characters so frequent at the present day, thoughtful, ardent, contemplative, and inactive young men, viewing all things through the medium of a strong imagination, much swayed by impulse, and accustomed to exaggerate all that befalls them. A vein of poetry and romance ran through his character, which active and laborious occupation had never broken up. Reared in the lap of wealth and luxury, he lacked the stimulus to action which forces most men, for the support of life, amid the harsh realities and homely conflicts of business. Full of musing melancholy, sensitive to every passing impression, much of boyish illusion yet lingered about his steps; and love, when once kindled by a worthy object, became immediately the absorbing principle of his nature and of his existence. The shock which his young confidence had received from Miss Romain had both sharpened his observation and deepened his character. For a time his soul recoiled, not only from the giddy and frivolous girl who had so deceived him, but from the very passion into which he had been deceived. Then Flora Temple's image rose before him with a new, a more delicious and bewildering power. He repelled it; he even attempted to deride and undervalue it. Unable to banish it, he admitted it but only at first to scrutinize and condemn. He would not acknowledge to himself, that, after having bent before the fascinations of one, he could so soon yield to those of another. Hence his almost bitter delineation of Flora's character at Mrs. Temple's to Moreland; hence his frequent coldness of manner towards herself. He struggled against the fetters which her every action, look, and smile, wove around his soul. He strove to force his mind into the conviction that she was less perfect than she appeared. There was a time when Rosalie Romain had just so spell−bound him; so once, at the sound of her step, at the tone of her voice, his pulse had leaped, his heart had trembled. He would break away from the enchantress—he would fly from the effeminate allurements of all women. Broad and noble paths were opened to his pride and his ambition. Deep in his heart, although yet not fully awakened, lay a thousand high aspirations. The yearning after the world's applause, the quiet but never−ceasing thirst for the scholar's lore, philanthropy, and the hope of being one day useful to his race— all these, without ostentation, mingled in the material of Norman Leslie's character. And there were moments when he resolved to turn away even from love, even from the love of Flora Temple, as from a selfish passion that would enervate and entangle his mind. But these were only moments; and from undervaluing her, he swept to the other extreme. Nothing vacillates more widely and frequently than the mind of a youthful lover. The idea of her union with Clairmont clothed her with new attractions, by that strange principle of our nature which renders things more precious when beyond our reach. He had already learned to regard her as one too angelic to share his human path.

These were his reflections, as, silent and alone, on the evening designated in the preceding chapter, he wended his way, by the uncertain light of the stars, from a gay revel, where he had again lingered, enchanted, by the side of Flora. All the tenderness of his love descended upon him. The hushed solitude around, the broad heavens above, contributed to soften his mind into one of those romantic reveries with which imaginative men often repay themselves in their secret hours for the harsh disappointments of the inexorable world. Around rose a creation of his own fancy, peopled with his fondest dreams—his most secret and tender aspirations. Thus lost in meditation, and insensibly charmed by the quiet beauty of the night, he paced slowly onward, he scarcely knew whither, but in a direction opposite to that of his own dwelling.

Oh, the dreams of a young lover in a solitary night−ramble! Where else does the world brighten into such an elysium?

"Then, indeed," continued the musing youth, as the current of his thoughts flowed silently and sweetly on—thoughts which took their tinge of happiness from the grace and innocent loveliness of their beautiful subject—"then, indeed, what an Eden would be the earth! what a blissful dream would be existence! what sunny joy, what golden radiance would steal across my path!—Flora Temple should confess she loved me. To sit alone

by her side, steeped in the rapture of fully requited affection—to thrill with the sense of her bashful confidence, of her timid and yielding love— to wind my arm unreproved around her graceful form—to feel her breath on my cheek, to linger beneath the touch of those young and loving lips, to hear them pour out the breathings of that pure and exalted soul, to sit hours and hours, looking into the beauty which floats in her eyes—now murmuring my impassioned worship—now listening to her fond return; my hand clasped in hers as I noted the rise and passing away of some wandering blush, as a happy feeling stirred in her breast. With such a being for my wife, existence would fleet away like an exhalation. What joy to read to her all that poetry has reared of golden enchantment! to wander with her through the magnificent realms built so superbly up by the hand of fiction— to ride forth in the summer morning amid the fragrant woods; or, in the mellow, deep sunsethour, from the portico of some dear and sylvan abode, to note the tinges fade from the clouds; to bend and admire together the floweret by the road−side, to trace the wanderings of the humming bee; or to look together up to the hushed and holy heavens, our characters and affections, as our thoughts, purified and elevated!—thus, with that dear angel ever by my side, to choose out our favourite stars among those ever−burning myriads. Yon kindling orb should be hers; and that faint spark close to its side should teach her how dim and yet how near my soul was to her own.

"Then, travel—I would take her over the world. We would study together the history and languages of the mighty Europe. We would wander, still hand−in−hand, over its traces of dazzling splendour and solemn desolation—the wrecks of time and history, the sublime footmarks of the great of old.

"And wherefore should I doubt? Mystery hangs around her, but it is not in *her*. Has not her manner melted, has not her voice trembled to me? And yet they tell me she is the affianced bride of Clairmont!"

He had now rambled on unknowingly far out of his way to a remote and solitary part of the town, and was thridding a dark and narrow lane, where only a distant lamp shed any beam of light. Perceiving that he had lost his way, he paused; and at that moment received a heavy blow, staggered several paces back, and fell to the earth nearly senseless. In an instant, however, recovering from the shock, he felt a powerful hand, and trembling with intense eagerness, busy at his throat, while the murderer seemed feeling with the other in his bosom. Something fell to the pavement, ringing like the blade of a dagger, and was instantly grasped up again. With the vehement fury of despair, the prostrate victim suddenly clutched the throat of his assailant, and a fierce, rapid, and tremendous struggle ensued, such as swells the veins of men striving for life and death. For a moment the profound silence was disturbed only by the stamping and trampling of heavy and desperate feet. Roused to the full exertion of his athletic form, Leslie had acquired a slight advantage over his opponent, and, with an exclamation of deep triumph, was about to dash him to the earth, when a cold and thrilling sensation in his side for a moment checked his breath, and shot through his soul the terrible sense of death. His voice rose, and rang far and wide on the air, startling the solemn silence with the cry, so blood−curdling when heard through the night, of "Murder! murder!"

"Ha!—hell!" cried a voice. With each exclamation Leslie felt the desperate plunge of his assailant's arm, and scarcely knew whether or not the blade drank his life.

The cry, however, alarmed the neighbourhood. A watchman awoke and struck his club upon the pavement; windows were slammed open, and nightcaps emerged into the air. But ere assistance reached him, Leslie grew deadly sick. His eyes swam, his brain reeled, unnatural figures, ghastly faces, and lurid lights, glided and glared around him. With an intensely clear conception that he was floating into the realms of death, all grew gradually dark, cold, and silent. Then sensation passed utterly away.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Family Picture—The discriminating Delicacy of Party Politicians.

"There is one piece of sophistry practised by both sides, and that is, the taking any scandalous story that has been ever whispered or invented of a private man for a known undoubted truth, and raising suitable speculations upon it." — *The Spectator.*

The gray light of dawn stole into the chamber. Norman lay stretched upon his back on the couch, his features settled into a livid and ghastly hue, as if death had already struck him: cold—passionless— senseless—rigid; the eyes closed, the cheeks, forehead, and mouth sharpened. Recall him as he moved a few hours before in the flush of strength and health, or wandered in blissful reveries beneath the stars, weaving visions of future joy. How strange that all, even when they least dream of it, may have run to the edge of the abyss. What a happy constitution of our nature which *can* ever forget this frightful truth—which *can* lose itself in the dance and the song; which can watch the melting cloud, the fading rainbow, the withering flower, and never tremble—never remember that we ourselves are as fleeting.

Over the prostrate and almost unbreathing form of the youth bent four figures. The first was a surgeon, eminent both in Europe and America for his extraordinary skill, and the success with which he had for many years performed most difficult and daring operations. Long habit had rendered him callous to every sign of distress, either in the patient or the bleeding hearts of the circle around. He could take you off a limb with a quiet smile, and draw the glittering and fearful instrument through the flesh of the living, with the same accustomed composure with which he laid open the mysteries of God's mightiest machine in death. He stood over Norman calmly, and with that slight air of professional importance which few, if any, can separate from their exertions of skill. The patient breathed with a momentarily lengthened respiration, and a low faint moan broke from his pallid lips. The half−smiling practitioner had just dressed the wounds, with as much apparent solicitude to preserve his own wristbands unstained, as to secure the life which ebbed so low in the youth's veins. You would have imagined Dr. Wetmore, from his bland and pleasant air, superintending some pretty chymical operation, rather than striving to reunite those half−severed ties which held a human soul from its flight into eternity.

By his side Dr. Melbourne, the first physician of the city, watched the face, and ever and anon felt the pulse, of the object of their solicitude. His prepossessing features were, although in but a slight degree, more touched with solemnity; and, if calm and deliberate in every motion, still he did not *smile*. He exhibited undivided attention in the suffering of the patient. Perhaps, being more familiar with pain in a less bloody form, and in a sphere immediately comprehended within his own circle of skill, the sight now before him struck upon those sympathies undulled by use. On the other side—kneeling, her hair dishevelled, her dress thrown hastily on, pale, agitated with suspense, anguish, and horror—the light shone faintly on the features of Miss Leslie. Lastly, the noble form of the father—in that majestic and almost proud attitude unconsciously assumed by those exercising a strong power over passion or feeling. His face was pale indeed; his lips compressed; but the muscles of his features moved not—there was not a start, a stir, a tear—when the two learned gentlemen raised themselves as the task was finished. Norman still lay insensible, and the picture of death. Indeed, for a moment both father and sister thought the spirit fled.

"Is he gone? is it over?" asked Mr. Leslie, his paleness increasing as his medical advisers slowly withdrew from the bed. He followed them; Miss Leslie did so likewise, with a faint and choked sob, her hands clasped, and her eyes streaming with tears.

One or two significant looks passed between the doctors, and then the surgeon replied in a low whisper,—

"Why, Mr. Leslie, as *yet*—"

A scarcely perceptible convulsion flitted across the face of the father.

"As yet he lives, *but*—"

Miss Leslie sank back in a chair in agony, bent down her head, and covered her face with her hands—

"My brother—my brother—oh, my brother!"

Mr. Leslie drew his companion yet farther away, where their voices might not disturb the invalid. Melbourne returned to the bedside.

"Dr. Wetmore," said the father, "speak the worst. *Must* he die?"

"Impossible to say, my good sir. The scales hang even. A moment—a breath—a hair may decide; but the danger is certainly not immediate."

"He *may* then recover?"

"Possibly," replied the surgeon, passing his fingers over the sleeve of his coat to brush away a thread.

Night again arrived. The most gloomy forebodings were entertained of the patient. Norman remained weak and in great pain. All conversation was forbidden him. It was the day of their intended visit to Washington; Julia had forgotten it. The gayeties of fashionable life had occupied but little of her thoughts; she enjoyed, but never abandoned herself to them. Her anticipations of the seat of government were largely made up of the expected triumph of her father in the long looked for debate. Never beat a more tender and affectionate heart than hers. Whatever she loved, she loved enthusiastically, romantically. Although her young soul had learned to yield itself to the solicitations of Howard, she found no diminution of her affection for her brother and father. The attachment was not like other attachments. There were in its progress no doubts, no dislikes, no heart−burnings, no oppositions. It was the growth of a kind and gentle climate, shooting up and blossoming richly in perpetual sunshine. Her nature was all love. Terrible were the thoughts which broke upon her young dreams while watching Norman's pillow. She had never before suffered a misfortune; had never even seen sickness; and *death*— it seemed to her the calamity of some lower world. The ghastly and frightful spectre had scarcely ever entered the sunny circle of her thoughts. She had never lost a friend. Her mother had passed away long before her memory; and she pictured her, not in the startling and awful vestments of the grave, but as an angel in heaven. Happy girl! happy girl! she had never seen her heart's dearest adored struck by the sudden shaft from smiling health to the dark and hushed bed of agony. She had never seen the form the most doted on, wasted, palsied, and strengthless; the voice, interwoven with years of love, changed, till it met her with a strange and unnatural tone; the lips shrunken to an expression never seen before; the eyes gleaming with a solemnity new and appalling, as if some demon had entered the body; the form so hallowed, so tenderly dear, racked with all the tremendous engines of disease and death.

Mr. Leslie's emotions were for a time equally undivided. He forgot his lofty schemes; his haughty ambition—all the statesman passed from his bosom, and left him exposed to the agony of a father's solicitude. But as the second night wore away, other thoughts began to mingle with those to which he had at first been a prey. The habits of thirty years are deep and obstinate. This dreadful calamity had occurred at a moment when his presence at Washington was pledged, not only to his own hopes, but to the hopes of a mighty portion of his country. Not only would he by his absence suffer a blow from which, probably, he would never be able to recover, but his constituents would never retrieve the loss. Perhaps these thoughts would have had less influence over his mind, perhaps they would not even have gained entrance there at all, but for an occurrence which, although he might have done so, he had not in the least foreseen. Party spirit in the United States sometimes rages with unlimited fury; sometimes (shame to those among my countrymen who countenance such violations of decency!) descends to the most unjustifiable means to put up or put down a powerful politician. The misfortunes or accidents of private life are by a certain class seized upon with indiscriminating avidity. Personal feelings, even domestic casualties of the most sacred nature, are not unfrequently dragged forth to feed the thirst for ridicule and slander which these thoughtless agents, tools of political leaders, think it not beneath them to resort to. I am not here speaking of my country; I allude but to those (and they are very often foreigners) who by this licentiousness disgrace and insult it. On the present occasion, the fond father, while overwhelmed in unutterable anxiety and anguish, found a certain set of daily journals ridiculing his distress, and endeavouring to link it with fabrications dishonourable to him. One organ of the opposite party observed—"The report, so currently circulated to−day, of the robbery and assassination of Mr. Norman Leslie, son of the celebrated Mr. Mordaunt Leslie, proves to be but a trick. Mr. Norman Leslie was hurt, as our respectable contemporary the `Democratic Journal' has it, in a fray. If young gentlemen will sow, they must expect to reap. The wounds, however, we are credibly informed, are altogether unimportant; but the eloquent statesman is happy to avail himself of any excuse for not meeting the thunders of Mr. B—, which he well knows would burst upon him were he to show himself at this period in the Senate of the United States."

These and other paragraphs forced the subject of his political affairs upon his attention in a new light; and as he hung over the pillow of his son, his mind was torn with contending emotions.

CHAPTER XVII.

The American Capitol—The President's Levee, a Trifle which may chance to be of more Importance than the Reader thinks.

"'Tis slander
Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue
Out−venoms all the worms of Nile; whose breath
Rides on the posting wind, and doth belie
All corners of the world; kings, queens, and states,
Maids, matrons; nay, the secrets of the grave
This viperous slander enters." —*Cymbeline.*

Never had there been a gayer season at Washington. The session of Congress was one of the most interesting since that which had issued the Declaration of Independence. Of course, the crowd was immense. The city, as everybody knows, or ought to know, although the plan of a leviathan town, of unequalled splendour, is as yet but a mere sprinkling of houses over a large plain and two or three abrupt hills, in location not unlike Rome. There is but one street, Pennsylvania Avenue, worthy of the name; which, from its length and breadth, and the fact that it is the grand thoroughfare, assumes an air of importance, without presenting any particular claims to attention. The private residences of the great are away off in this direction and in that, at such inordinate distances from each other as to render boot−making and hackney−coach driving more than usually profitable trades. The citizens themselves live comfortably and snugly together, with no marked difference to distinguish them from the inhabitants of other large villages, except a somewhat arrogant demeanour on account of the Capitol, and peradventure a contemptuous smile in the face of a New−Yorker or Philadelphian, who should praise the City Hall or the United States Bank of their respective cities. There is a small theatre, some pretty churches, and several large hotels. The President's house would pass for a palace in Europe; and the Capitol, a structure of white marble, situated on a high and lofty eminence, is at once magnificent and stupendous. You can scarcely tire of perusing its imposing and gigantic proportions. You may ride round it again and again, view it from every position, at every period of the day, it continues to grow upon the imagination. Its ponderous dome reminds you of St. Peter's. Both the interior and exterior views are full of grandeur. The Rotunda is lofty and superb. Then, how alive it is with echoes! Every accidental sound is repeated and magnified; reverberating strange noises, that mingle into moans and wailings like the grieving of spirits in the air. Men and women, too, look so little on the broad floor and beneath that soaring vault.

The finest prospect is from the terrace. It is really remarkable and beautiful. The hill is abrupt, and sufficiently high to command a panoramic view of the city and surrounding country, the residence of the chief of the republic showing finely from a distant hill; and the Potomac sweeping on with its broad current, to which the Seine and the Thames are but rivulets.

It was a mild and pleasant afternoon towards the end of March, and a few evenings after the singular attempt upon young Leslie's life. The sun had gone down radiantly, leaving all the west a wall of golden light, and the earth lay beneath steeped in purple softness and tranquil beauty. Congress had adjourned for the day, and hundreds were pouring, all in the same direction (and all busily engaged in commenting upon the occurrences of the debate just concluded), from the steep Capitol−hill and into the broad Pennsylvania Avenue. Many members were dashing down on horseback, and a train of carriages conducted others to their hotels or houses.

We have said that the crisis was an interesting one. At this period it had reached its acme. The next day was that fixed for the long expected and much talked of speech of Mr. Leslie. The news of the catastrophe which at this unfortunate moment had happened to his son had reached Washington, with many various modifications and exaggerations. His strong attachment to his family was well known. It was doubted whether young Mr. Leslie was not dying—nay, was not dead. Flying reports glanced from lip to lip. The question of the great statesman's arrival became one of general conversation and interest; and, perhaps, of the throngs who now issued from that immense and most beautiful edifice, nearly all were either speaking or thinking of the accomplished and soul−stirring orator, who had already flung down his gauntlet fiercely to the most eloquent leader of the opposite party; and

whose absence now, while it deprived the concourse of a conflict, perhaps as interesting as that of the two last gladiators on a Roman amphitheatre, left also a strong disappointment upon his excited and expecting party.

It is scarcely necessary to remind the European reader that, in a republic like the United States, eloquence is an art peculiarly important, and consequently peculiarly cultivated. Questions of the deepest weight have agitated her councils, fully betraying the fiery energies and outbreaks of a youthful people; and her legislative floor has already trembled beneath bursts of passionate and lofty eloquence, such as shook the Roman Forum when Rome was free. These periods, however, thus far, have only illustrated the strength of the political fabric, and fully confirmed the confidence of her people. Like every other human bark, she floats upon an ocean, and beneath a sky, where danger sometimes yawns in her path and thunders above her head; but she has ridden securely and majestically the elemental war. The fury of political zeal, and the clash and fluctuations of commercial interests, have sometimes shrouded her in alarm and darkness; but the clouds soon broke away, and instead of discovering but the scattered fragments of a wreck, we find her swollen canvass still lofty in the sun, and her star−spangled banner streaming on the wind. Her only object is the freedom and happiness of the human race; and the experience of past ages furnishes her a chart by which she may hope to avoid the quicksands of treachery and the rocks of foreign and domestic ambition. Other nations boast of their country; why should not the American be proud of his? Conceit is a charge most commonly and sneeringly urged against us. What other nation does not equally merit it? Who so arrogant, so overbearing, so uncompromisingly exacting in his claims to national superiority, as the Englishman? Who so ludicrously tenacious, so likely to run you through the body in the defence of the grand glory of his country, as a Frenchman? It is a very honourable, happy, and useful feeling. Why shall not we also regard the future with hope? Who can so justly point to the past and the present with exultation?

The crowd passed away. The sun went down. Soft as the eyes of a widowed wife, full and melancholy rose the moon. It was the night of the President's *levee*—and all the world were to be there. This is the American *court*. Here gathers into a focus the flower of American talent, although necessarily blended with dashes of more homely material.

At nine, Howard and his father drove to the large and palace−like building of the President; and making their way with some difficulty through the throng of equipages, they passed in beneath the arch, and soon found themselves in the brilliantly lighted and crowded apartments. The *coup d'oeil*, indeed, was dazzling: so many rooms were thrown open—so much gay company had already assembled— nymphs and sylphs floating all over in groups— officers in glittering uniforms—and a heterogeneous mixture of the great and the lovely—tributes from town and country—exquisites from Philadelphia, New−York, and Boston—dashing élegants from Charleston and Baltimore. The sturdy planter from the South—plain grave men from the western settlements—the culled for talent from the sparse population—belles from the meridian of city fashion, with the true Parisian air and elegance. Indeed, the classes meeting here are strikingly opposite and picturesque—the gleanings of a country comprising an area of two millions of square miles.

"Come, my son," said the judge, "our first duty is to the President."

"I do not see him, sir," said Howard, looking around.

"Yonder, Hal, at the lower end of the room; that plain old gentleman standing to receive the presentations. Look, Governor L— is taking up Mrs. and Miss Temple. See how kindly and simply familiar he is with all alike. He chats as gracefully and easily now as a young beau. It is a fine sight, Hal."

"It is interesting from its perfect simplicity and absence of ostentation," replied Howard.

They made their way up to the first man of the republic, and the judge introduced his son. The President was surrounded by a circle of ladies and gentlemen, and a light and agreeable conversation was going on; in which, for a few moments, young Howard bore his part with ready address. There was perceptible in the whole circle nothing more than an intelligent and hospitable host welcoming his guests. But the number of introductions prevented, of course, any prolonged conversation.

"Look around you, my son," said the judge, who, in the exercise of his duties, a cold, firm, astute, and devoted labourer, yet nurtured, as such men, even when least suspected, very often do, a green spot in his heart, where affection and poetic feeling were as fresh and verdant as in the bosom of a boy, and who watched over the education of his son with the fondest and tenderest care—"look around you, Hal; you are in a spot which should put your meditations in motion. Few on the globe are more worthy your observation. Here is the palace, court, and

throne of your country—the highest ornament, its moral glory. Here learn to love simplicity and national freedom. Here you breathe the pure atmosphere of liberty and reason. You are the *equal* of him whom you have chosen your *chief*. Guard your actions, improve your mind, and you may one day stand in his place."

"There is one person here," said Howard, who was accustomed to reason with his father familiarly on all subjects—"there is one person here to−night who jars somewhat on the pleasure which the scene affords."

"Who, my son?"

"Look," rejoined Howard

His father, following the direction of his eyes, beheld the tall, startling, and majestic figure of an Indian chief. He was in full costume, with his guide, and stepped about the rooms—cold, stern, and erect, with his dark piercing eyes, straight hair, and copper complexion. A pipe and fan, however, he held in his hand instead of a weapon, as an evidence that he considered his nation no longer at war with the United States. While he stood, a painter, who had just obtained from him a promise to sit for a portrait, observed to him,—

"But, instead of your pipe and fan, you must hold your spear."

"No," said the dark warrior; "no spear for me; I have done with spears for ever."

"Did you hear that proud and melancholy reply?" continued Howard. "I could wish the Indian out of the picture."

"You are yet unstudied in these matters, Hal. Your feeling is noble, romantic, and natural. But the ardent and susceptible do not understand how these things, being entailed on us by others over whom we had no control, now remain, and must remain, till gradually cleared from our political system by time and wisdom. You are right in supposing them evils; but wrong in the belief that they are to be ascribed to *us* , or that we even have the ready power of disentangling ourselves from them. But come, I see you are anxious to get to the ladies; and yonder is Miss Temple, looking as sad, and casting her eyes as often to you as if—"

"I promised to let her know the intelligence in my letter from the Leslies," said Howard.

"Well, well; let me present you to one or two of *my* intimates, and then you shall be at liberty to seek out your own."

So saying, after selecting a dozen of the first men in the rooms, and formally presenting his son, he entered himself into their circle; where he was hailed as one of the most enlightened and profound members of their party.

Thus at leisure, Howard made his way through scores of acquaintances, and endeavoured to gain the arm of Miss Temple; but he was assailed by Miss Romain. Half giddy with the flatteries of gentlemen who, struck by her conspicuous charms, had pressed successfully for an introduction to the beautiful belle from New−York, she now sprang upon him with that half−hoyden familiarity with which she often covered her coquettish designs. The young man found it impossible to escape.

"Oh, Mr. Howard, so glad to see you! I am quite tired of governors, generals, and commodores, and a plain *mister* is quite a relief. Ha! Count Clairmont!—good evening, sir. Why, you are quite a stranger: do you remember me? or shall we be introduced again? I am `Miss Romain, from *New−York;*' " and she playfully (and very well, too) mimicked the phrase which had been that evening so often repeated.

"Beautiful being," whispered the count; "shall I ever forget—"

"Nonsense, disagreeable creature!" said she, bending her mouth towards Howard. "Don't you *hate* that Count Clairmont?"

"Yes," said Howard, "with all my heart."

Miss Romain looked surprised a moment.

"O Lord!" she continued, "here is that horrid Indian; I shall be tomahawked, I am sure. What can bring such people here? And there is Mr. D—, the great editor; and here, see this tall gentleman, Colonel E—, who this very morning had his vest−button shot off by Mr. K—; and— O dear! my charming Mrs. Hamilton, how do you do? Are you not delighted here? And why were you not at the Secretary D—'s last night?"

It was with some difficulty that Howard disengaged himself from Miss Romain; who, knowing that he was affianced to Miss Leslie, thought it a pretty triumph for herself, could that young lady be told by some officious friend that the lover had flirted all the evening with her. At length, however, a young Englishman carried her off to eat an ice; and Howard found himself with Flora and her mother.

"Come, Mrs. Temple," said Clairmont, "let us make the tour."

"And shall I be so bold," asked Howard, "as to offer my arm to one of the ladies—Miss Temple?"

Flora knew well Miss Leslie's engagement to Howard, and availed herself of his invitation with secret joy.

"And pray, Mr. Howard," asked she, as they glided away in a direction opposite to that taken by her mother and Clairmont—"pray, how is Miss Leslie? I have suffered to learn how she bears her terrible misfortune."

Howard related all he knew, which was in truth little, and much conversation ensued between them. They had wandered into a distant room, and came, without perceiving it, near the spot where stood Mrs. Temple and Clairmont, with their backs towards them, so as to be quite unaware of their proximity.

A distinguished southerner had just asked a question—the last words were audible to Flora— respecting Norman's accident, and the probability of Mr. Mordaunt Leslie's reaching Washington in time for the next day's debate

"It would be a glorious thing," said Mrs. Temple, "were he to be away; though, in good truth, I pity him for his domestic calamity."

"For his *son*," said the cold voice of Clairmont, "*he* is not worthy of pity; he was hurt in some drunken brawl; he is a mere dissipated roué. I know him to be a—" The count's voice sank to a lower tone; but Flora could not help detecting the words, "at cards."

"Good God!" said the gentleman.

"True, true," said Mrs. Temple; "perfectly true, I am sorry to say."

Howard had not heeded this extraordinary conversation. He had been, for the moment, absorbed in contemplating the intelligent countenance of a young politician, already reported to be a Catiline.

"Did you hear *that?*" asked Flora, paler than she had yet been.

"No, I beg your pardon," replied Howard; "what was it?"

"Nothing," said Flora, faintly, and in a short time rejoined her mother.

"Bless me, my dear love!" said the latter, "why, you look ill! how unlucky!"

Howard remained till late; but he was abstracted, and in no mood to enjoy society. Around him gathered groups of interesting and most distinguished men, both foreigners and natives,—orators, members, senators, secretaries, office−holders, and office−seekers; but his thoughts were occupied with his friend Norman's perilous situation, and the distress of Julia. At length he retired, with a resolution to attend the debates one day more, and if then Mr. Leslie did not arrive, to set off himself for New−York

CHAPTER XVIII.

The American Senate—Two or three popular Statesmen— Sketches, whose Originals may be as well found at the present Day as at a former Period.

—"On the contrary, I commend Demosthenes for leaving the tears, and other instances of mourning which his domestic misfortunes might claim, to the women, and going about such actions as he thought conducive to the welfare of his country: for, I think, a man of such firmness and other abilities as a statesman ought to possess, should always have the common concern in view, and look upon his private accidents or business as a consideration much inferior to the public."

—Plutarch.

On the subsequent morning the Senate assembled at eleven. With great difficulty Howard procured a seat. An immense crowd had thronged to hear the debate; to witness the struggle upon an arena where, in the full and fierce conflict of intellect and genius, met the men in whose hands reposed the destinies of the republic. B—, the great opponent of Mr. Leslie, was present; and a sudden sensation ran round the room as Mr. Leslie himself entered and took his seat. Among the multitudes of auditors, a majority were ladies. The section allotted to them is on the same floor with the speakers; and the fair daughters of Columbia were accommodated with seats by the politeness of the learned senators, to the utter discomfiture of whole benches of dandies and others of the male kind, who, by a more early attendance, had fancied themselves secure. After much pressure and toiling, much rustling of silk, nodding of feathers, and glancing of jewels, the mass at length settled into unmoving silence, each one convinced that, however abominably uncomfortable the situation he occupied, it was useless to strive after a better. A speaker rose. Heads were turned— necks stretched—mouths (women's and all) closed— to hear Mr. R— address the Senate. Few in our country have ever excited such universal and irrepressible curiosity as this extraordinary man. He could never even pass along the street without attracting all eyes. It has been said that, "While he was a bitter opponent, he was an unserviceable friend;" and that "with all his brilliant talents, he never made a proselyte or gained a vote;" yet his appearance in the halls of legislation ever created a murmur of interest. And as his tall and gaunt form rose, it seemed to strike his opponents with a feeling of dismay, as if some being of a different nature had alighted on the earth to take part in the battle. On this day he divided the floor with two other speakers, Mr. Leslie and his great opponent Mr. B—. The former possessed a heavy and vehement power, which struck down opposition with the deliberate strength and self−possession of a giant; and from the lips of the latter flowed persuasion in an ever−deepening stream, bearing the soul onward as if through fairy−land. But the favourite weapon of Mr. R— was sarcasm. He differed from Mr. Leslie as Saladin did from Richard: the British monarch cleaving a helmet with his ponderous blade, while his agile rival severed a piece of silk with his sabre. Nobody could hear the Virginian orator without being fascinated. His voice was of a feminine sweetness and pliancy, singularly expressive as he warmed in debate. His speech was full of classical and poetical imagery; but, in consequence of his numerous and curious digressions, it was, at times, difficult to determine what was the subject of his discourse. Every bosom, however, seemed alive to the impressions of wonder and delight which he created. Howard, if not instructed, was at least charmed. The orator's exquisite and original wit— his strange sweet flow of poetic thought and musical language—the matchless beauty of many passages— his keen hints and hits—his critiques on matters in general; and, more than all, his biting, withering, and relentless satire, can never be forgotten by those familiar with him as a speaker. That strange and lofty form—the oft−extended long finger of that skeleton hand—the snakish intensity of those piercing black eyes—the fiendishness of his sneer—the winning softness of his smile—the silver melody of his high voice!—they had much to regret who were prevented from hearing him, by the pressure of the crowd, on that memorable day. As he seated himself, Mr. Leslie arose with all the talent of his predecessor, but much more carefully directed. His sole object at first was to convince the reason. He had the argumentative power of the practised lawyer. He deliberately related his opinions, demonstrated them with the force of a problem; and only gradually, as he proceeded, rose into a more elevated strain, and at length burst forth into enthusiasm that fired every soul. His subject led him to touch upon the nature and permanency of the Union. He deepened into feeling and poetry; splendid passages flashed from him with fiery vehemence, stricken fiercely out by conflict with men who arraigned his political opinions, shocked his

associations of country, and approached, with the brand lighted and raised, to fire the temple of American glory. Nothing could be more dazzling than his deep and strong pictures. They should be hung up before every eye. He was triumphant and irresistible. He bore down all before him: not only the heart of his auditors, but of all the country, of every lover of freedom and humanity throughout the globe, seemed swelling in his bosom and thundering from his lips. One might have imagined that the spirits of Washington and Hamilton, of Jefferson and Franklin, of a whole crowd of departed heroes and statesmen of the republic, were leaning from the walls and cheering him on. For several hours he calmly and forcibly assailed the bill introduced by Mr. B—, which had occasioned so much excitement in the public mind. It was seen by the friends of the measure that he was no common assailant. His powerful and heavy appeals were deeply felt in the quarter where they were directed; like the blows of a battle−axe wielded by the arm of a giant, while the gates shook and the fortress trembled to its base. He resembled the black knight at the storming of Front de Boeuf's castle, whose ponderous and fatal strokes were heard above all the din of the battle. At length he rested—the work seemed done; when his mortal opponent, Mr. B—, sprang suddenly on the floor with an eagerness which showed very plainly that it was *not* done. The auditors who had been sitting, standing, stretching—some hanging by a toe to a chair, some leaning on a shoulder against a pillar, squeezing, squeezed, and distorted into all sorts of unnatural and distressing attitudes and situations—prepared to go. At the sight of Mr. B—'s tall, peculiar, and commanding person, at the sound of his low deep voice, at the thoughts of his known genius, and the anticipation of the reply which appeared to have been some time burning in his bosom, the motion of the crowd was checked. The relaxed toe was again braced—the relieved shoulder again put in requisition— the fatigued ear once more erect—the fair neck stretched—the seal of silence again set upon the pretty mouths. Every thing again was still and unmoving. His qualifications were numerous, and of nearly the highest kind, both physical and mental. A fountain of fervid feeling at his heart enabled him to inspire, to enchant—threw his hearers off their guard by sudden and passionate appeals to the poetry of their natures—an ever−ready and lavish flow of words furnished a vehicle which never failed. He had all the poetry of thought, aided by all the art and melody of language. His sentences fell on the ear and the heart, at once gratifying the intellect and rousing the soul; and often, after a burst of eloquence, which rolled over the heads of the crowd, leaving a deep silence like that which succeeds thunder, his voice was lulled to a low sweet tone, his vehement manner was softened, and his words

"Drew audience and attention still as night Or summer's noontide air."

A deep and powerful voice was one of Mr. B—'s peculiarities. It was at times what operagoers call a sweet bass, and was heard distinctly in every modulation. Indeed, in any stranger it would have been by itself all−sufficient to arrest every ear. His pronunciation was also of a singular kind, and will never be forgotten by those in whose minds it was associated with his eloquence. His face and head were more peculiar than all. No one would call them handsome. Did they belong to anybody else—to a lower intellect—to an obscurer man—they might induce the opposite term. But he who has stood all day on one leg to listen, who has felt his seducing poetry steal into the soul, and his voice bursting on his ear like a war−trumpet, till the blood now mounted to the temple, then left the cheek colourless, till the flesh crept upon his shoulder, and the heart leaped in his bosom, will never hear a pronunciation, or see a head or a face, or an expression like B—'s, without peculiar pleasure. His countenance was rugged and rough−hewn. None of the smoothness of youth, and health, and simple content was there; on the contrary, it was marked with time, thought, and care. He resembled one of Milton's great orators—

"Deep on his front engraven, Deliberation sat and public care; And princely counsel in his face yet shone, Majestic though in ruin."

While they under his influence confessed he was not handsome, they at the same time felt that the beauty of Apollo would detract from his identity, and diminish the interest with which he was then regarded. There were times when the expression of his face was nearly savage. His eyes glared and flashed, and his glances fell on his opponent with the fierceness of a tiger.

But with all his power he failed. The bill, so heavily opposed by Mr. Leslie, it was understood, as subsequently proved the case, would not pass. That day elevated Mordaunt Leslie yet higher in the public opinion; advanced him yet nearer the ultimate object of his ambition. As Howard passed home from the inspiring conflict, he heard from many a lip words of praise and prophecy linked with the name of the father of his affianced bride. They roused in his young imagination many a dream of honour and happiness.

CHAPTER XIX.

A new Link in the Chain.

"By Astaroth! ere long thou shalt lament These braveries." — *Samson Agonistes.*

Several months elapsed. Leslie recovered from his wounds, but was still pale, when accident brought to his ear the atrocious slander circulated against him. The same charge of gambling and dishonesty at cards, magnified by other insinuations urged by Clairmont at Washington, in the hearing of Miss Temple, had been subsequently reiterated, and at last began to gain credit. So popular was the count, that his ill word was sufficient to inflict a serious injury. Not that any one who *knew* Leslie lent it an ear—but one is not *known* even by all one's acquaintance; and there is a large class always ready not only to believe calumnies, but to speed them on their way with a secret and eager hand. The affair burst upon Leslie suddenly. He happened to be one day in company with a number of ladies and gentlemen, among whom was Miss Romain. He had just invited the young lady to ride with him on the subsequent day.

"Do you know, Leslie," said Moreland, privately, a few moments afterward, "I this morning heard of a most extraordinary allegation against you from the lips of this same Miss Romain whom you are so civil to?"

"Allegation!—name it."

Moreland repeated, though rather incoherently, as he had not distinctly understood it, what Miss Romain was said to have spoken. It referred to a certain mysterious incident at cards reported to have been charged upon Mr. Leslie, and never to have been refuted, or even noticed.

"Take care," continued Moreland, "of that beautiful siren—she is really dangerous. She flatters you in your presence, and loves to behold you in her train, but makes free with your name the moment you withdraw."

"Indeed!" said Norman, gravely.

"It was my intention," added Moreland, "to let you know the moment I ascertained precisely the nature of this report. You should know it, not only that you may refute it, but that you may hereafter beware of *her*. I will endeavour to discover at once its precise nature."

"When will you see me?"

"To−morrow."

"This bodes trouble," said Norman, as if forgetting that he was not alone.

The next morning Moreland called on Leslie, and made him acquainted with the particulars of the calumny. He had also traced it directly to Clairmont. Miss Romain was ascertained to have been more wantonly mischievous than could have been supposed. Whether she really believed it, or whether she was stung by jealousy at finding that Norman had totally laid aside the character of her lover, it was certain that to the charge in question she had given marked emphasis.

"And will you still *ride* with her," demanded Moreland, "after such a singular evidence of her disposition?"

"Yes," said Norman, dryly—"I have already invited her to accompany me this afternoon, and I will not retreat. It is too tempting an opportunity to let her know my surprise. From this time, however, she shall learn how utterly a friend may be thrown away. As for Clairmont, he is a scoundrel. I shall publicly chastise him the instant we meet. The thing is scarcely worth noticing, but the manner in which this man is received here gives his words an importance which they would not otherwise deserve."

At four he called for Miss Romain, according to appointment.

The next morning Clairmont stood on the steps of his hotel in Broadway, surrounded by a number of gentlemen. He was in a riding−dress, with whip and spurs; and after a careless leave of his companions, was in the act of mounting his horse. At that moment Leslie approached, and the two enemies stood face to face. Clairmont turned a little pale upon the sight of one he had so deeply wronged, advancing with determined step and air, and contracted brow, whose meaning could not be mistaken. A small circle of spectators closed around them. The accusation of Clairmont had been publicly made during Leslie's illness, and his great skill with the pistol was known. The resolution, the high−wrought temper, and lofty character of Leslie, were also well understood, and the interview was regarded with strong signs of interest. The nobleman paused, with a glistening eye, and a shade of white increasing on his lip. Leslie's air was high and stern, but calm and noble. As the two

thus stood, their prominent characteristics might be detected in their very appearance: the one so frank, fearlessly open−hearted, and yet so quietly resolved; the other, deep, malignant, and dangerous—the one frowning with the fiery firmness of a lion; the spirit of the other coiled up with the stillness of a snake, which lifts its crest against the foot that would crush it in the grass.

"I have been given to understand," said Leslie, very composedly, "that *you*, sir, who *call yourself* Count Clairmont, have made use of certain expressions derogatory to my character."

"Well, sir."

"Your silence implies assent. I give you one moment to deny them—to confess them wilful, base falsehoods."

"Mr. Leslie," said Clairmont, "if you are a gentleman, you have a remedy."

"I have once told you the only terms on which I will consent to meet you. Though I believe you no gentleman, yet my belief of your cowardice at heart is so strong, that I again dare you to accede to them. Those terms, gentlemen—"

But the wary Clairmont, with great cunning, had already adopted his plan. It was his object to escape even hearing terms which most probably he might not be anxious to accept, but if possible to provoke Leslie to attack him on the spot. Accordingly, first placing a hand in his bosom, he interrupted the speaker—

"Mr. Leslie," he said, "you desire to know whether the assertions to which you allude were made by me, and whether they are persisted in. Know that I never speak that in a man's absence which I fear to repeat in his presence. I avow, then, that I detected you in such a trick at cards as *ought* to, and *must*, exclude you for ever from the society of gentlemen."

Without further reply, Leslie stepped forward, and at the same moment produced from behind him a riding−whip, with the evident intention of applying it to immediate use.

Pale, but with the most determined and deliberate composure, Clairmont drew forth a pistol, which he coolly cocked.

"No—no, sir," he said, in a low tone—"I am on my guard *now* —the attacks of a ruffian I am taught how to meet. Take care, sir—take care—approach me not—one step, one inch, one motion, and I swear by the God of heaven I lay you dead at my feet!"

Leslie paused—Clairmont smiled—the crisis was interesting, and considerable curiosity prevailed to witness the event. But the inactivity of Leslie was only momentary. With a leap, swift as the tiger when he darts upon a startled steed, he sprang to the throat of his foe. The pistol was discharged; but so rapid and unexpected had been the assault, that the aim, never before known to miss, now failed at the moment of utmost need. The ball passed through the lapel of Norman's coat; and the baffled possessor of a now useless weapon had thrown away his sole chance, and with it the sympathies of every spectator. Unarmed— of a livid whiteness—he stood in mute and impotent hate; first, aghast with the certainty that he had launched the death−bolt, and afterward, to find himself utterly in the power of a man so deeply resolute and indignant, and against whom he had just given such a dire evidence of malice.

"I shall now proceed," said Leslie, without exhibiting the slightest astonishment or alarm, but laying an iron hand on the bosom of his foe, "to inflict upon you, my friend, the chastisement you so richly merit. You are a coward—you are an impostor—*you* are guilty of the baseness which your rancorous tongue has charged on me—*you* have swindled at cards. Hereafter, Sir Count, never show your face in the society of gentlemen; but, lest you *should*, I mark you for what you are— a *craven* and a scoundrel!"

He raised the whip.

"Leslie," said Clairmont, almost inaudibly, "do not—do not, for your *own* sake. Mark me—I warn— I warn you, Leslie—do not—"

Rage, fear, and intense emotion had so transformed his countenance, that, with his ashy face, and a ring of black beneath each eye, he looked more like a devil than a man.

"Carry your warnings, sir, to those who regard them," said Leslie.

Deliberately, and with a powerful hold on his throat, he applied the long whip to his writhing and quivering foe with all the strength of his athletic and indignant arm. No one interfered. For several moments the determined youth continued the application of his blows, till, foaming at the mouth, covered with dust, struggling, trembling, and ever and anon uttering a half−suffocated groan of anguish and revenge, his exhausted victim hung, with drooping body and unbraced limbs, apparently senseless on his arm.

"I have castigated this man, gentlemen," said Leslie, with a voice actually gentle in its tone—so calm is true passion—"I have castigated this man for no ordinary personal pique, no mere common hatred. I hold him up to you not only for a swindler, a slanderer, an impostor, and a scoundrel— I have good reason to believe him a midnight *assassin*."

In the scuffle Clairmont's hat had fallen—his valet now appearing, picked it up, and lent an arm to the support of his master, who, finding himself released, lifted his head, gazed wildly around, gnashed his teeth, half incoherently uttered, "God! oh God!" and striking his face deliriously with his hands, rushed mad and foaming into the hotel.

CHAPTER XX.

The Plot opens.

"Old men and beldams in the streets
Do prophesy upon it dangerously;
Young Arthur's death is common in their mouths;
And when they talk of him, they shake their heads,
And whisper one another in the ear:
And he that speaks doth gripe the hearer's wrist;
Whilst he that hears makes fearful action,
With wrinkled brows, with nods, with rolling eyes." *King John* .

The Americans are called great travellers. They early imbibe the taste in their own country; whose extent and innumerable beauties may well lure mutual visiters from her remotest parts. At present, too, the facilities for travel are so extraordinary, that it would be madness to stay at home. If the country is gigantic, so are its curiosities, and the means of viewing them. The springs, the falls, the lakes, the rivers, the mountains, Quebec and her fortifications (a tour to the Canadas, by−the−way, in the abrupt transition of manners and customs, is, to an American, very like a tour to Europe), the stupendous mountain scenery in New−York and New−England, where nature may be viewed in all her sublime and awful grandeur. European scenery is different from that of America, but not more strikingly magnificent; and the tourist of the Western Continent—let itinerant scribblers say what they will—finds accommodations, ease, honesty, and comfort infinitely superior to that met with on the great continental routes of Europe. In the commercial cities they may command luxuries and refinements equal to those of Paris and London. Rail−roads, canals, and steamboats convey them in every direction. During the months of August and September these temptations are found irresistible by the fashionable world, who take wing from the dusty town, and sweep in gay flocks through scenery splendid beyond description. Less than twelve hours suffice to land the passengers at Albany from New−york, a distance of one hundred and sixty miles; thence, a succession of dazzling views attracts each votary of health and pleasure: and when he has been drenched by the terrible Niagara, floated on the St. Lawrence, wandered by Lake George, mused in the natural amphitheatre of Trenton Falls, soared to the Pine Mountain House on the Cats−kill— where, from the edge of a precipice three thousand feet perpendicular, he looks down upon the lower earth, hills and vales, towns and forests, and the broad and glorious Hudson meandering on its course of light like a silver snake;—when these excursions are over, the *beau ton* and the *beaux esprits* rest their pinions a few weeks at the Saratoga Springs, about thirty−six miles above Albany. Perhaps there is no spot which gathers a greater focus of beauty, fashion, wealth, and genius, than Congress Hall.

After all, the greatest amusement of those who abandon a city is to watch for and devour every item of intelligence from their deserted homes.

A party of ladies and gentlemen were seated on the long portico one day, when Judge Howard received a package of papers.

"Well," said Mrs. Hamilton, "we shall hear from town again, at last. They say Americans are fond of news; I do not think it peculiar to them, but to human nature. I never received a private letter from a distance in my life without *trembling;* and a newspaper, when far from home, is really an agitation."

"Let us share the benefit of your courier, judge," said a wealthy southern planter, as the judge unfolded one of the sheets.

"Oh dear, yes; a newspaper is as good as a play!" exclaimed Miss Morton.

"Well, then, let us see, let us see," said the judge, passing his finger over his lip as he ran through the contents; "we must select for the ladies. Here is a long report from the Secretary of the Navy."

"Oh, never mind the navy," cried Miss Morton.

"Well, then, we have an inquiry into the effects of the late rise of cotton."

"Worse and worse!"

"Fire, and lives lost; a fireman killed."

"Oh, poor fellow! Where was it?" asked a fop, yawning.

"Nothing about the theatres?" demanded Morton.

"Read the marriages," said his sister.

"And the deaths," mumbled an old gentleman, who took the waters for his health.

"Bless me! bless my soul!" said the judge, in a tone of sudden and extreme interest.

"Oh, now we shall have it!" said several, laughing; "out with it, judge."

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed the kind old gentleman, with real distress.

"Oh, judge, how can you keep us all in the dark, in this way!" said Mrs. Hamilton.

The judge read,—

" `Most mysterious and terrible incident.' "

"Dear me!" cried one, laughing; "that promises well, indeed."

"I was fearful the colonel was going to be stupid to−day," said another.

" `Our readers are perhaps aware,' " continued the judge, reading, " `that a most mysterious circumstance has, within three days, occurred in this city. The daughter of one of our most wealthy and respectable townsmen, whose name will probably be too soon before the public, has suddenly disappeared, under circumstances of the most incredible and inexplicable mystery, leading to the conjecture that death has closed her career on earth. She was young, of most excelling beauty, and distinguished in the higher circles as one of the most remarkable and charming ladies of the day. We cannot add more at present.' "

"Well, that *is* extraordinary and mysterious enough," said one; "what can it mean?"

"Who can it be?" added another.

"There is a postscript," said the judge; and the extremest interest was now exhibited to learn if it conveyed more information upon the affair.

"Yes, here is a second paragraph," and he read the following:—

" `Since the above was in type, it has become our painful duty to state, that the name of the young lady alluded to above as having so mysteriously disappeared, is Miss Rosalie Romain. A committee of investigation, immediately formed, have fully sanctioned the general opinion that she must have been *murdered*. The liveliest, nay, the deepest sensation prevails through all circles upon this subject; which, perhaps, for intense interest, is without a parallel in the history of our country or age. Dark suspicions are entertained respecting an individual attached to a most distinguished family. We withhold the name, partly because, however loud and deep may be the public suspicions, no tribunal of justice has *as yet* taken any step to warrant them. Nothing has been spoken of to−day but this most singular and terrible event. The police are on the track, and, it is said, have made discoveries of a most appalling description; tending to confirm the worst conjectures, and to fix the odium on one wealthy, high, and hitherto unsuspected. This is an event of peculiar interest. Its awful mystery—the agonizing circumstances by which it has been marked—the extreme youth, beauty, and innocence of the guileless victim—the anguish of the bereaved and broken−hearted parent— the rank of *him* to whom the public finger points as the *murderer* —the great respect in which his family have been held—all tend to create violent excitement. We never saw the public mind in a greater ferment. From the lofty political standing of the father of the accused (at least accused by the general voice), in any other country he would possess *power* among those before whom this question will be probably tried; and if the criminal were guilty beyond a doubt, yet, with his influence, he would find means to escape. Let the admiring world now look on the administration of justice in a *republic*. Let them see the laws enforced with equal severity and promptitude against the rich and poor—the strong and weak—the high and low. We would not forestall the opinions of those who are yet undecided what to think; nor do we take it upon ourselves to say that *he* who has been selected as the perpetrator is really guilty; but *if he be guilty*, there is no possibility of his escape. Let every apprehension be quelled. If he were the head of our nation, on this proof he would be tried— an impartial jury would decide upon his innocence; and if a verdict be pronounced against him, he must die the death of a felon.' "

The utmost contrariety of opinion prevailed as to the person against whom these terrible innuendoes were directed; but an arrival from the city brought the fearful intelligence in all its blistering and naked details. It struck the gay circle with a feeling of dismay and horror.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Tempest gathers.

"Can this be haughty Marmion?"

—Scott.

As the last peal of St. Paul's Church, on a morning in the early part of autumn, about this period of our story, announced the hour of nine, the usually desultory occupants of Broadway and Chatham−street gradually gave place to a more eager and uniform crowd; and hundreds of persons appeared hastening with quickened step out of the adjoining streets, and bending their course towards the pretty and palace−like looking building which lifted its white front in the centre of the Park. Two large and sombre structures, on either side of the just−mentioned edifice, obtruded themselves on the gaze; and, from their gloomy appearance, might be recognised at once as dismal abodes of guilt. Few, in a philosophical and disinterested mood, can behold a prison without feeling their horror of the crime yield for the moment to compassion for the criminal. It is the dreary tomb of many a hope; within its walls have been endured nameless and unimaginable anguish. The enlightened tenderness of modern legislation prohibits the wheel, the dagger, or the bowl; yet here the wretched, whose guilt is sometimes the infirmity of nature, and sometimes the error of education, have writhed under the prolonged torments of remorse and fear: and what are the dagger and the wheel to them? The massy portals, too, may—nay, considering the mischances of human affairs, *must* have sometimes closed upon the innocent, and returned them to the scaffold, or disgorged them upon a world whose unthinking selfishness as often pursues unfortunate virtue, as it sanctions for a time the triumphs of successful guilt. Even the sight of vice itself, thus baffled and chained, without the support of hope or the consolations of conscience, shrinking from the aspect of an external world, all threatening and dark, to the communion of a heart lost in the turbulence of yet more gloomy horror, and awaiting, in impotent and illimitable despair, its dismissal from a dreadful existence to a state yet more thrillingly appalling, is, perhaps, of all spectacles the most fearful and ghastly.

The black and revolting buildings, so conspicuously placed in the heart and gay centre of the city, had long jarred upon the minds of the inhabitants; and one, indeed, at the present day, under the wand of some cunning architect, has assumed a more lively and lovely shape, and been converted to other purposes; but at the time of which we write, the authorities found a certain appropriateness in their proximity to their graceful neighbour. The latter is familiar to the New−York reader as the City Hall, the seat of many public offices, but particularly of the courts of justice; and at that time both the civil and criminal courts were held within it. The black and ugly buildings which flanked it on either side were used, the one for a jail, where, with the stupid and useless cruelty of a pagan sacrifice, the unfortunate debtor was condemned to perpetual idleness and wo; while the one on the west received criminals, who there awaited their arraignment or their execution, within a minute's walk of their place of trial.

On the present day, the avidity with which all classes hastened towards the City Hall rendered it evident that it was about to become the scene of some interesting judicial proceeding; and the pressure to procure seats in the criminal court−room proved that the circumstances of some dark crime were about to be investigated; probably some reckless enemy to society exposed to general execration, and consigned to just punishment, perhaps a weary and toilsome imprisonment — perhaps to death. It had been long a custom in America, as in England, to conduct the convict condemned to expiate his crime on the scaffold, in broad daylight, and in full view of the people, to some open spot in the suburbs of the town, affording space for the accommodation of the immense multitude generally drawn together by the occasion; and thus, with the deliberate pomp of law, and the solemn ceremonies of religion, to consummate upon the bound and trembling wretch the tremendous doom. After all, the spirit which drew the Romans to the amphitheatre still holds its place in the human breast. Far, very far, are we yet from true *civilization*.

Few crimes in the United States are visited with the punishment of death; and, while older nations often launch the bolt against the feeble head of ignorance or poverty for the most trivial errors of judgment, or sometimes for the cravings of hunger, let it be recorded to the honour of American legislators, that the power which society has lodged in their hands is wielded with more caution.

But in proportion to the infrequency of these spectacles is the excitement they produce. The guilty wretch, arrested on a charge of murder, and thrown into prison to await his trial, becomes at once a topic of universal, and, among the lower orders, of intense interest. To feed this appetite for scenes of carnage, blood, and distress—the peculiar attribute of human nature—the public press is prolific of facts, true or false; and in all their harrowing features, and too often with the exaggeration of accident, prejudice, or passion, retails the incidents of the deed, and conjectures the motives of the perpetrator.

It was on the event of one of these long−expected trials that an immense crowd assembled. Such violent anxiety had been produced by rumour and the recitals of the public journals, that before the doors of the court−room were thrown open, large throngs had collected on the outside, and, pressing for entrance, filled the avenues and corridors to overflowing. At an early hour, when the public were admitted, the spacious chamber was immediately crowded almost to suffocation. The space within the bar, usually allotted only to gentlemen of the profession, witnesses, jurors in attendance, and persons connected with the proceedings of the hour, was also densely filled; and when the judges assumed their seats, and the cry of "Silence—hats off!" announced that the court were about to enter upon the interesting examination, the multitude presented a slope of heads, back to the farthest reach of the ample hall, such as had rarely before been assembled in the apartment.

Among the individuals within the bar were several who drew peculiar attention and remark from the auditory. The entrance of Mr. Barton, the district attorney, occasioned some interest. He was a young, but distinguished and eloquent man, celebrated for the force and fire of his appeals, and whose powers were said to be rarely awakened in vain. With him came his associate, Mr. Germain, also a profound, sagacious, and eminent counsellor, employed, it was said, by those whom the prisoner's crime had most bereaved, to render his destruction doubly sure. A more dangerous opponent could scarcely have appeared against the unhappy object of all this solicitude; for, a shrewd and practised lawyer, watchful to avail himself of every accident and subterfuge, skilful to lead away attention from a bad point, or to invent a construction favourable to his views—of a deep foresight, an insidious cunning, a ready wit, and a presence of mind never at fault in the examination of witnesses—Germain knew well how to rise from a defeat, or to press the moment of triumph. In a just cause, his talents and acquirements were always sure of delighting. The wily votary of falsehood, on the witness's stand, found his mask torn off and his arts baffled. Betrayed by ingenious artifices into the disproval of his own testimony, and bewildered and startled by the clashing contradictions of his own statement, he at length yielded the conflict, abashed and in despair; confessed the truth, and was dismissed, writhing under the lash of ridicule and rebuke.

But the same power, exerted on the wrong side, was equally fierce, watchful, and uncompromising; and it must be allowed that the eager lawyer, absorbed in the excitement of his cause, did not always stop to inquire into its justice, but used the same weapons alike on all occasions; bewildered the honest witness in wiles laid for the deceitful, and frequently woke all his energies to attack the innocent or defend the guilty.

By their side sat Mr. Loring, also one of the most remarkable counsellors of the day; grave, learned, and eloquent; his fine head, partly bald, was expressively clothed with the "silver livery of advised age." He was the only one who as yet appeared for the defence.

The three counsel conversed together across the table with the cool courtesy of the profession; who, while property, reputation, and life are committed to their hands with trembling solicitude, find the exercise of their respective powers but the struggle of a game which, however tremendously important to the parties concerned, is by them played with but transient personal feeling, and to−morrow forgotten.

A gentleman of prepossessing form and appearance was pointed out to each other by the crowd, with symptoms of curiosity, as a foreigner of high rank and unbounded wealth; a casual visiter to this country, whom accident had rendered necessary in the present case as one of the witnesses. This was Count Clairmont. Near him, and frequently exchanging the sentiments of a brief conversation, sat a white−headed old man, whose care−worn and griefstricken countenance was perused by every eye with extreme interest. He was the father of the young and lovely girl whose murder, by a brutal and unparalleled assassin, was the subject of the present endictment. The hearts of the more enlightened upon the circumstances of the case were shocked and agitated with deep and powerful sympathy on recognising, in the tall and noble figure of a gentleman—who, though somewhat advanced in life, was erect and almost haughty in his air— the father of the culprit. He stood in a recess within the bar, calm, but pale; and around him waited, with the most evident marks of respect and commiseration, a train of the most wealthy and distinguished inhabitants of the town. These interesting objects had places reserved for them in

the midst of the uncommon throng of miscellanceous individuals—lawyers lounging from idleness and curiosity, witnesses and jurors attending on subpoenas, and law−students inured to scenes of iniquity and distress, who made themselves merry with the various rumours of the case, wagered with each other on the fate of the accused, and advanced jests against the sheriff on his approaching duty.

The outside of the bar was occupied by the middling classes,—sailors, butchers, bakers, and other honest tradesmen and good citizens, whose minds had been highly inflamed by the reports of the case, without being much instructed as to its merits; and who were eagerly anxious to behold the extraordinary ruffian—the cold−blooded seducer and assassin of an innocent and beautiful girl. Concerning the manners and appearance, the character, family, and demeanour of the accused, the most contradictory rumours were rife. Some declared him a ferocious and black−browed giant, with a cruel and malignant countenance, a harsh voice, and relentless heart. Others asserted that he had been the most reckless profligate of the day; that the influence of a wealthy family had already several times screened him from merited punishment; that he had once or twice nearly effected his escape, by the attempted massacre of the officers who had arrested him; and that the authorities were obliged to secure his confinement by means of heavy irons.

A circumstance was observed, too, of a very rare occurrence in this country—a disposition among the lower classes to predetermine the guilt of the accused, and to distrust the integrity of the court. Several journals had given publicity to articles darkly intimating the difficulty of finding a jury sufficiently firm and disinterested to render a true verdict against a man acknowledged to belong to so high a circle of society. Some spoke aloud of the power of wealth and influence; others turned the affair into a political question; and many (for such clamorous demagogues did not pass away with the days of Greece and Rome) openly proclaimed that, even if the guilty wretch were condemned by the judge, he would be pardoned by the governor. As the trial−day approached, these disturbing influences seemed agitated and fomented by some secret hand. Singular innuendoes lurked in the paragraphs of the daily journals, engendering among the population a fierce and ferocious spirit. The friends of the prisoner beheld, with feelings of the deepest alarm, these clouds gathering around the head of one who had hitherto known only the balmy pleasures of life's sunniest hours. The district attorney had moved in the same circle with the accused in the gay precincts of fashion. Would *he* follow to the death his associate? The very judge on the bench, it was whispered, loved him like a father, and was endeared to him by family relations of the most tender nature. Would *he* too—thus murmured the thousands, nay, the millions (for the event had already swept like fire in the wind), who allowed themselves to be excited by the absorbing question—would this judge, *could* he preside at a trial, thus linked with his own feelings, with cool and impartial deliberation?

There were not wanting third and fourth rate journals which grasped the subject with the sole view of rendering it a party question. The father of the unhappy criminal was spoken of at the period for an important office in the gift of the people. So tempting an engine could not remain unworked, and the astounded statesman heard denunciations and anathemas of the most bitter malignity thundered against him by those who could oppose his political success with no other means than those furnished by this domestic tragedy.

On the other hand, a party of his townsmen, and indeed the most discreet and intelligent, while they regarded the endictment with wonder, seemed assured that a trial would establish the innocence of the accused. All their sympathies and their fears were now awakened in his behalf, for the public excitement grew more and more dark and threatening, and a trial for life and death, even to the innocent, was not without its perils. Accident might incline the scales against him. The very trial itself was a withering anguish; the very suspicion a gangrene to the heart.

The public indignation and expressions of distrust exercised too upon the interests of the unhappy defendant a most unfavourable influence. Those who really knew Judge Howard, knew that if it had been his own son instead of his friend's, he would construe the law, and preside at the trial, with the sternness of a Roman; and it was feared that he, as well as the district attorney, might be insensibly led, by the open charges against their integrity, to pass to the opposite extreme, and suffer impartiality to strengthen into severity.

In the thousands that filled the room—stood waiting on the outside and strove vainly for entrance— what a variety of opposite emotions! from the simple curiosity of the indifferent stranger, stimulated by the mere desire to behold a human being tried for his life, to the astonishment and anxiety, the conjectures of the future and the memories of the past, felt by his acquaintance, and to the whirl and tempest, the anguish and agony, in the breasts of those who knew and loved him! Across the minds, too, even of the most rational, would sometimes glance the

thought—"Is not the prisoner indeed *guilty?* " The very apparent impossibility, by a kind of paradox, rendered it probable. What but the glaring and fatal truth of the charge would select *him*, so far beyond the reach of ordinary suspicion, as the perpetrator of the deed? If not *he*, who *was* the culprit?

Notwithstanding the immense pressure, perfect order prevailed, and all seemed settling themselves in their places, as they best might, like the audience at the commencement of a celebrated tragedy, and with the composed satisfaction of listening to the investigation, and perhaps of soon beholding the doom of one of the most black, remarkable, and harrowing crimes that had ever occupied the attention of a court of justice.

"Place the prisoner at the bar!" exclaimed the crier, in a loud voice.

There was an instantaneous sensation perceptible through the mass of people, but it immediately subsided into a breathless silence, as the side−doors within the bar were flung open, and the officers entered in front of the crowd with the prisoner between them. An impulse of surprise ran again through the multitude, now also accompanied by an evident murmur of sympathy, elicited by the appearance of a very handsome young man, considerably above the middling size, of an erect and commanding form, who, with a firm and rather haughty air, walked to his seat within the prisoner's box. A single glance discovered that he wore the dress and possessed the manners of a gentleman; that his features were mild, intelligent, and uncommonly prepossessing, but that his face was of a deadly paleness, and his lips compressed with the action of one who is the victim of a powerful and unnatural excitement.

To many of the spectators he was personally known; and more than one voice murmured, in tones of the deepest commiseration, "Poor, poor Leslie!"

On entering the box and seating himself, the prisoner looked around and continued his gaze, as if in search of some one within the bar, till he encountered the full and terrible glance of Mr. Romain, the father of her of whose death he was accused. For a moment he met and returned the fixed gaze of the old man, who actually shook with the tremours of his increasing emotion; but as if the forced effort to bear up against his fate and his feelings exceeded his power, the unhappy youth suddenly bowed down his head, and covered his face with his hands. The whole scene had been of such absorbing interest, that the court, as well as the prisoner and the spectators, appeared, for the moment, to abandon themselves to their feelings, and the young man was the centre of a thousand warm and bleeding sympathies. But the recollection of the heinous deed which he was called upon to answer, and the sight of the aged father of the murdered girl, awoke sterner thoughts. Nor were there wanting some who ascribed his emotion not to the anguish of innocence, but to the remorseful agonies of guilt.

The court immediately ordered silence. The voice of the crier resounded through the hall. The crowd again arranged themselves on their seats; and though a few handkerchiefs, especially of females, still hid the faces of the softened own ers, the cold ceremonials of a legal tribunal at once resumed their course.

With the numerous and tedious formalities preliminary to a great trial, incidental to the empannelling of a jury, &c., we will not detain the reader. They were, on this occasion, so multifarious and prolonged, that, upon their final arrangement, the court dismissed the cause for the day, in order that it might be fairly commenced on the succeeding morning. The persons concerned were requested to be punctual in an early attendance; and the vast and heterogeneous crowd separated, to carry into all quarters of the town their new impressions concerning the appearance of the unhappy prisoner, who, thus fearfully suspended over eternity, was remanded back to prison

CHAPTER XXII.

Adversity acquaints a Man with strange Fellows—A Friend wavers .

"And *you* too, Brutus!"

The Bridewell, in which malefactors were confined, from its open and central situation, commanded one of the most cheerful scenes imaginable. The barred windows of the prisoners enabled them to behold the pleasing enclosure already mentioned, spread verdantly beneath them, overshadowed with rows of trees—a common thoroughfare for the busy citizens, a lounge for the meditative or the idle, and a resort for children, who there pursued their careless sports, yet happily ignorant of the dark world around them. A part of the gay and elegant Broadway rolled along its never−ceasing tide of human beings. The spire of St. Paul's Church appeared at a short distance above masses of thick foliage; and, on the other side, to the poor captives a shocking contrast, rose the theatre, whose moving crowds and bright lights in the evening rendered it easily distinguishable as the haunt of fashion and pleasure.

One of those reverses of fortune which, however astounding to the individual victims, are common−place to the general observer of human nature, had plunged Norman Leslie—the proud, the sentimental, the musing, the noble Leslie—into the common prison, upon a charge of murder. The crime was fixed upon him by such a concurrence of glaring and extraordinary facts, that each day had found more and more people ready to believe him guilty. Had any one in other times suggested the probability of his committing such a deed, they who knew him would have ascribed the suggestion to madness or malice; but now that he was actually accused in public, it appeared much less improbable. His high temper, his brooding mind, were well known. Eccentricities had been remembered of him, which before had never excited attention; and even those who had most depended upon his purity of character, now found in him a new illustration of the truth, that "It is not a year or so that shows us a man." Covered with obloquy, execrated by the public, Norman Leslie sat in a lonely apartment of the prison above described, on the afternoon of the day of his arraignment, gazing upon the outward scene of joy and freedom. His meditations were suddenly interrupted by the clash and clank of chains, the springing of locks, and the withdrawal of bolts. The intruder was the keeper.

"There has been here," he said, "the Rev. Mr. Harcourt, sir; and he requested me to—to—"

"I do not know him," said Norman; "it must be a mistake."

"No mistake at all, sir. He came to request your leave to visit you, to converse with you."

"With me!" said Norman, as if endeavouring to recollect himself; "upon what subject?"

"Lord, Lord, sir!" said the man, apparently unable to conceal a smile, "I thought by this time you might wish to see gentlemen of his cloth without any request from them.

"God of heaven!" cried Leslie, starting up, so that the man stepped back in some alarm, and lifted his heavy bunch of keys in defence; but, perceiving that the abrupt action of his prisoner was simply the effect of agitation and astonishment, he resumed his first manner.

"Why, yes, sir. He bade me ask you, in short, if you felt yourself in a state of mind to speak with him upon your *situation*."

The rattling of the heavy chain appropriately hung at the outer door of the prison, to signify to the keeper the wish of some applicant for admission, broke off the discourse.

The new−comer was Mr. Grey, a counsellor, belonging to the lower ranks of the profession. He motioned the keeper to withdraw. When they were alone, he approached his seat close to that of Norman, and looking around cautiously, said,—

"You do not know me, Mr. Leslie?"

"I have had the pleasure, I think," replied Norman, "of seeing you before in the courts. You are Mr. Grey?"

"Ah! that is well; if you *know* me," said Mr. Grey, "we shall have less difficulty in coming to an understanding."

He passed the palm of his hand across his mouth, as if preparing to open a discourse, in the commencement of which he experienced some embarrassment.

"You are aware, then, Mr. Leslie, that you stand endicted for—"

The listener raised his hand with deprecatory gesture—

"Spare me the repetition of that word."

"But you are not fully aware of the evidence accumulated against you."

"I shall learn it soon enough," said the youth, bitterly.

"You do not quite understand me," continued the lawyer, in a conciliatory tone; "*soon enough* can only be in time to counteract it."

"I am in the hands of God," said Norman, with a look that betrayed a heart sick and wearied— "He created—he can destroy—he can rescue me."

"Ay, ay," answered Mr. Grey, hitching his chair yet a few inches closer, again looking round, as if to assure himself that they were alone, and reducing his tone to a yet more confidential key— "but Providence, my young friend, works by human means. It would be rather dangerous to trust to Him alone in *your* case. You must have another lawyer. His aid may be invoked, but it must be by active exertion, not by idle prayers."

"What can I do?" asked the prisoner, with moody calmness; "I am a prisoner; I cannot break through stone walls and iron bars."

"There is one thing which you *can* do," cried the lawyer.

"To free me from this dilemma?" said Norman.

"Ay, to put you forth as unrestrained as the bird that flies at will."

"What can I do?"

"You can *confess*," said Grey, in a close whisper.

Norman started again, with lively signs of agitation and anger.

"Am I to understand that you believe me guilty?" he demanded.

"Mr. Leslie," said the lawyer, "what you say to *me* is secret as if whispered only to your own heart. I am not here to accuse, but to defend you. Confess to me as your lawyer, as your friend, that in a moment of wild delirium, perhaps maddened by wine, you perpetrated a deed foreign from your nature, which, the moment before, you did not dream of, and which now you cannot look back upon without regret and horror. It will contribute greatly towards your defence. It may save your life, my young friend, which now stands in imminent danger."

"And what good can my confession do?" asked Norman, in an under tone of forced composure.

"Much, much," cried the wily lawyer. "The sailor who would navigate a dangerous sea must know the quicksands and rocks which lie in his path. To cure a wound—and the more loathsome, the more need of examination—it must be probed, young man, with a firm and friendly hand, though you shudder and faint under the operation. I am your friend, your pilot, your surgeon. I come to save you. Say you are guilty. The law has its accidents, its shifts, its subterfuges; the clerk's pen may mistake; the jury's mind may be embarrassed, if it cannot be satisfied. Embarrassment is doubt, and doubt is acquittal. You are young; life is sweet; sweeter than wealth, power, reputation. You have been under the influence of a moment's temptation; you have been touched with *lunacy;* you have committed a crime. Well, thousands of good men have sinned. It is the lot of mortals. You are but a boy yet. You must live and repent. The world is broad. Time heals every wound; and repentance converts even sin into joy. Dismiss romantic sensibility. Perhaps you have resolved to abandon the world, either guilty or innocent. If guilty, you imagine death alone can expiate your deed; if innocent, calumny and unjust accusation have at once stripped life of its charms and death of its terrors. Think better of it. Let not the idea of guilt prostrate your moral character too much. Guilt? cant! we lawyers understand it. It is a physical thing, and depends on the nerves and the blood. Any man, when the lightning of passion darts through his veins, when reason reels—any man may yield. The very apostles sinned. The saints in heaven have felt the pollution of this earthly evil. It is a fever, a plague. The best of us may catch it. Come, confess without shame the whole truth. Your life, your reputation, commit to my hand. Your father's life, your sister's, their happiness, their fame, are all connected with your fate. You have no right to yield to an unmanly despair. In the sacrifice of yourself, you drag others with you to the altar."

Norman heard him to the end, as if partly with wonder at the tenour of his discourse, and partly with a resolution not to interrupt him; at length he said,—

"And if I *do* confess that I deliberately murdered that unfortunate girl, goaded by interest and revenge, can you save me?"

"While there's life there's hope," said the lawyer. "You have money. Money is a god. It commands the strength,

the genius, the knowledge, the souls of men.

"And how may money stead me in this extremity?"

"It is to be considered," replied the lawyer— "it is to be considered. Have you never a friend, bound to you by obligations, poor and needy, yet honest in the world's eye, who could confirm a story on *oath?*"

Mr. Grey smiled, meaningly, and rubbed his palm over his mouth and cheek.

"As you say," replied Norman, "I have *money;* but if I procure such a one, can you use him to your purpose? Can you bend aside the flow of public justice? Can you leave the blood of the innocent unavenged? Can you set the guilty free, unaneled, and high among his friends? If I give you money for this redemption from wo, ignominy, and the scaffold, can you effect it?"

"Can I?" said the counsellor, with slow and emphatic deliberation, and a glance of pleased and sly assent—"can I not?"

"And will you?" cried the youth, grasping the arm of his disinterested friend with the iron power of one clinging for life; "knowing me to be guilty, deeply, damnably guilty, will you?"

"To−morrow," said the lawyer, rubbing his hands, "you shall be free as air. I shall but want something to satisfy expenses—a hundred dollars or so."

"And I," said Norman, with a countenance of bitter contempt, and flinging from him, with an expression of disgust, the arm of his cunning adviser, "if I had a thousand lives, would rather lose them all on the scaffold than share in the corruption of such a base scoundrel. Begone, sir! or I may really *be* what you, and such as you, think me."

The astounded personage to whom this was addressed started from his seat with mingled anger and fright, but immediately recovering himself, said,—

"Your only hope, young man. You are young and romantic. Imprisonment and misfortune have shattered your nerves, and violent repentance, perhaps, inflamed your imagination. If one hundred is too much, say fifty."

"I would be alone," cried Norman.

"I may, at least, entreat of you a pledge," said the lawyer, "that what I have offered in kindness will never be betrayed. My only object, sir, I give you my sacred word of honour, was to do you service."

"You have nothing to fear from me," returned Norman, "if you will take yourself away."

"Then, farewell. You may have carried my intimations further than I intended, Mr. Leslie; but, remember, should you think *better* of my means of serving you, I am ready to do my *utmost*. I can save you from death. Without a free understanding between counsellor and client, the case is hopeless. To−morrow you will tremble at the array of proof against you. We may have no opportunity of meeting again in private. Your counsel, at present, have nothing to urge in your defence. I have taken the pains to inquire; they have literally *nothing*. Innocent or guilty, die you must, unless you adopt *means* . In twenty−four hours, perhaps, the verdict may be rendered. As the case stands now, it *must* be fatal. The form of your own scaffold may well startle your reason. I can save you. I am your only hope. Good−morning, sir; good−morning. I rest satisfied, sir, with your word of honour, that what has passed between us will go no further. Let me leave my card. Good−morning, sir."

At the door Grey met another learned member of the profession, whose eloquence and talents placed him already in its front ranks. They were but slightly acquainted; for Mr. Grey belonged to those base pettifoggers and hangers−on of the profession who at once disgrace it and human nature.

"Ah, Mr. Moreland," he said, "are you too bent to this wretched man?"

Moreland signified the affirmative.

"A strange fellow!" continued Mr. Grey, with a significant smile; "guilty, I fear, and reckless of death. He is like a baited bull, ready to gore alike friend and foe."

"Does he confess?" asked Moreland, with agitation.

"No," replied the other, "he confesses nothing He still affects ignorance and perfect innocence, assumes the lofty moralist, and vainly hopes with this brazen hypocrisy to elude his fate, or cast a doubt over his crime. His father and sister are evidently dear to him, and rend his thoughts more than his own misery. He seems ready to die rather than compromise their good name by confessing his guilt. He is a noble but a desperate being, and requires watchfulness and care, or he may give the impatient mob the slip `after the high Roman fashion.' "

Moreland is already partly known to the reader. He differed in many respects from his more aged and experienced associates; and rather sought excuses for undoubted sin, than invented selfish motives for apparent

virtue. As he pictured the cheerful aspect of his own home, which he had that instant left,—the elegant gayety ever presiding at his domestic circle—the innocent love and arch vivacity of his sweet wife, the voices of his beautiful children, and his own bright prospects of future wealth, fame, and happiness,—as he compared these blessings with the miseries of his once pure and noble friend, now a prisoner, perhaps about to be sacrificed on the scaffold—these dismal walls, this desolate cold solitude, and the reflections which must rend the mind of the accused,—his heart softened yet more tenderly towards him; he mourned over the bleak vicissitudes of life, and trembled at the inscrutable decrees of Providence. His soul yearned to believe him guiltless; but such an astounding array of proof had been elicited against him that even he wavered, and knew not what to think.

As the lawyer entered the cell of the captive, he turned actually pale at the sight which met his view. It was not that his friend suffered any of those dismal privations of food, light, and air, so commonly identified with the idea of a prison;— indeed, he occupied a room well furnished for his use; and the care of his affectionate and heart−broken family had supplied him with all the luxuries of life compatible with his situation;—but he himself was so changed and faded—so haggard and ghastly with the gnawings of a haughty and proud spirit—that, for the moment, in that dim light, he was scarcely recognised. Still, however, around him hung that beauty which had rendered him re markable in better days, a reflection of the manly graces of his father, and which now seemed even heightened by the subduing and chastening hand of thought and sorrow. His handsome hair now fell over a forehead which seemed, from its whiteness, yet more broad and high; his eyes wore an expression more pensive and touching; the smile had gained in winning grace all that it had lost in spirit; and his whole manner announced a character deepened, purified, and elevated.

He raised his hand calmly to his friend, who seized it with silent anguish; and Moreland fell on his neck and wept, while the prisoner soothed and rebuked him, though with a tremulous voice.

"Dear, dear Norman!" muttered Moreland, his words broken by sobs; "pardon me—forgive me!"

"God bless you, Moreland," replied Norman, as his friend grew more composed; "how I have wished for you!"

"Your father and Julia, Norman, and Howard?"

"They are all with me hours every day, but their grief agonizes me."

"And your counsel, Mr. Loring?"

"Oh, he talks to me, but racks and excruciates me also. I have told him I know nothing whatever of this charge. It must fall by itself; I cannot stoop to confute it, nor have I the means. But *you*, Moreland, you will join yourself with Loring, and clear me from so ridiculous, so absurd an accusation. I have had hard thoughts of you, too," he continued, still holding his friend's hand in his own firmly and affectionately. "That the world at large should desert me, as I am told they do, was to me a theme neither of much grief nor wonder; but *you*, Albert, *you* and Mary!"

"We were far, far away, and flew to town the very moment we heard of this inexplicable—this terrible—this—"

"Ay, Albert," said Norman, a cloud darkening his face, "pause and seek for words, as I have done. But how is Mary?"

"Well in health, but shocked, agitated, and thunderstruck at your present situation, and at the startling evidence against you. It is astounding, it is stunning to hear the array of facts; but Mary would be your defender were they ten thousand times more appalling."

"And yet—confess it, Albert—even *you* have been staggered?"

"Norman, I have been stunned; but I come to you, not only as a friend, but as a counsel. I shall add myself to the gentleman already employed by your father. But, before we proceed, let me ask one question. If any extraordinary circumstance— any horrid dilemma—any sudden intoxication of love, or passion, or despair, or madness, has hurried you to—"

Norman started once more to his feet. It was no longer with agitation. Deep despair had thrown around him a character of mysterious and unearthly coldness, of passionless solemnity and calmness, like that which invests a statue gazed on by moonlight, in which there is ever a thrilling and spectral power.

"It is enough!" he said; "my cup is full. I drink it to the dregs without a murmur. Leave me, Moreland."

He was obeyed. We shall not intrude upon his meditations.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Storm increases.

"They have tied me to the stake, I cannot fly." *Macbeth.*

The morning came—the hour of trial arrived. The human tide had already rolled into the court−room, and, amid shuffling and pushing, and the frequent interference of the police−officers, and all the agitation and clamour of a mob much excited, the crowd at length once more occupied, not only every seat, but every spot where a foot or a shoulder could be braced, or a hand could cling.

The judges assumed their seats; the jury were called; silence was ordered by the criers; the agitated mass at length settled into quiet; the prisoner again entered, and was placed at the bar; and all the customary forms and preliminaries being at length accomplished, the endictment was regularly read, and the district attorney rose to open the case, and to explain the circumstances which he expected to prove. The public were thus put in possession of all the authentic facts which the industrious investigations of the state attorney had elicited. The speaker's youthful zeal and his professional ambition, the interest which hurries along an ardent lawyer for the time to make the cause of his client his own—which warms with its progress and strengthens by opposition, and which at length renders the desire of success an absorbing and exclusive passion, almost resembling the desperate anxiety of the gambler—combined to inspire him with enthusiastic eloquence. His recital of the circumstances which he *hoped* to prove was conducted with the art of rhetoric, and coloured with the hues of imagination. It was a fearful and soul−stirring narrative, that chilled the blood of the coldest auditor. With what awful force must it have fallen upon the ears of the prisoner! The orator did not express the wary suggestions of one seeking *truth*, but the excited and exciting denunciations of a mind fully predetermined, and highly inflamed with a mere one−sided view of the case; placing upon every incident the deepest and guiltiest construction; supposing the basest motives for every action; disavowing a belief of whatever tended to exculpate; magnifying, through the medium of a heated fancy, every damning proof; overlooking, thrusting aside, explaining away, or ridiculing, every palliating circumstance; sketching, with a bold pencil of vindictive hate, a picture of unparalleled, irredeemable iniquity, and shedding upon it a glare of poetic light, calculated to startle and appal every heart. How far such a course is favourable to the elucidation of truth, the interests of society, and the spirit of a court of justice, and how far a more merciful principle might be incompatible with the safe and beneficial operation of the legal machinery, I leave to the determination of the profession itself and of the world. It is certain, however, that long before the eloquent counsel had closed his opening speech, the prisoner, whose doomed head was the single and unsheltered mark for bolt after bolt, launched from the hand of one he had never injured, and against whose fiery assaults he could rear no defence, found himself the centre of all eyes, and evidently the object of universal and unmingled horror. Alone, writhing in unspeakable agony,— compelled to hear himself, his character, his thoughts, words, and actions, misrepresented, blackened, and denounced—forbidden the privilege of explaining, of denying—without the power either to resist or to fly—he lay like Prometheus chained on the cold rock, his heart pierced by the beak of a fierce foe, and with all the thunders of heaven rolling over his head.

"You have seen, gentlemen," continued the orator, with excited voice and flashing eyes, and, ever and anon, a glance of lofty and pitiless scorn on the ghastly face of his victim—"you have seen, in the perpetrator of this dreadful deed, the aspect of youth, the outbreak of feeling, a mild and gentle demeanour, patience, modest silence on the lip, and cheeks blanched by suffering. You are moved. Your bosoms soften. You relent. You think of his heart−broken father: you are fathers yourselves; you cannot credit the accusation. That gentle face never glared over the agonies himself had occasioned; those hands never accomplished the deed of death. Beneath that youthful bosom, now heaving with emotion, never lurked the gloomy fierceness of an assassin. Alas! gentlemen, that my painful duty should break your dreams of mercy. Human nature teems with contrasts and paradoxes like these, and the cunning devices of Satan are formed at once to delude the criminal and his fellow−creatures. It is even in such a form that he too often pours his poison. It is in such a bosom that he plants his wildest passions. He secretes the coiled serpent under a bed of flowers. Sin often lies where men least suspect its existence. Look not only among the rude, the uncouth, the deformed, the poor, or the ignorant, for the perpetrators of crime. The very passions we most admire lead us astray. Love, the tenderest of human sentiments, sometimes guides the dagger

and drugs the bowl. It is in one like the accused that this passion, with all its frightful consequences, springs with the greatest facility and attains the most monstrous power. It is in the specious form of grace, knowledge, and virtue that the tempter steals upon his victim. A rich and luxuriant soil, gentlemen, teeming with fruit and flowers, yields also the most poisonous plants, in the most remarkable vigour. Has the prisoner's former life been pure and amiable? has his character been marked by no atrocity? has he rather been compassionate and tender, and would my able opponents thence conclude the impossibility of his having committed this deed? They who know human nature will not be deceived by their eloquent sophistry. Your experience, your observation, your reading, have already taught you the fallacy of such reasoning. Nero, one of the bloodiest tyrants that ever darkened the historic page, was, like this man, once a youthful votary of tenderness and refinement; and his heart, which, when more fully developed, could never sufficiently sate itself with human sacrifice, melted and recoiled from attaching his signature to a just death−warrant. I refer to this well−known inconsistency in human nature, gentlemen, to guard your minds against attempts, on the part of my ingenious opponents, to excite your sympathies in favour of the *character* of the accused. Gentlemen, when God gave the garden of Eden to the beings he had created, on one condition—the golden fruit was forbidden to man and beast—*who* was it that disobeyed the command? It was none of the lower class of beings; it was not even man himself. It was *Eve* who reached forth her hand, plucked, and ate—*Eve*, the fairest, the purest. But the penalty of crime must fall upon the guilty, however surrounded with earthly beauty. The golden tresses of the mother of mankind did not shield her head from the anger of Heaven; neither must your hearts be turned away from justice and your oath, by the eloquence or the subterfuges of my legal opposers. It is the lot of guilt to suffer; and in yielding on this occasion to the weakness of personal feeling, you must remember that you not only betray the great interests of society, but you violate your own oaths."

As the speaker closed, the sudden bustle of the auditory announced their release from the spell which he had exercised over them; and the universal change of position, and the general freedom of respiration, betrayed that he had held them almost breathless and motionless.

It may be necessary to inform the reader unacquainted with the forms of judicial proceedings, that the counsel for the prosecution possess the right to open the case; that the witnesses in the support of the endictment are then examined. The counsel for the defendant then produce their testimony, and address the jury in his behalf; and, by a rule of law, which at first appears contrary to its general maxims of mercy, the prosecution exercises the important privilege of advancing the last appeal to the reason and feelings of the jury. The prisoner sits, with such suspense as may be best imagined by the intelligent reader, the silent spectator of the fiercely−contested conflict, upon the issue of which he depends for security from death upon the scaffold.

It was with the calmness of desperate anguish that the accused turned on his seat, after the address of the prosecuting attorney, to listen to the evidence by which it had been elicited, and which was deemed so abundantly sufficient, in the eyes of a sagacious lawyer, to stamp upon him the undoubted odium of this heinous crime.

The limits of the story will not permit us to detail the extraordinary mass of evidence now brought forward in support of the endictment; but we briefly relate the leading facts, sworn to by many unimpeachable witnesses.

It appeared that the prisoner was of a sanguine and passionate temperament, prone to act upon impulse— of liberal education and uncommon talents— his family wealthy, and his father one of the most eminent of American statesmen. Notwithstanding, however, his graceful and gentle manners, and apparently kind heart, he had several times exhibited a high−wrought temper, a total disregard of morality and religion, and an inherent ferocity—which, argued the counsel, might fully sanction the probable truth of the present charge. Count Clairmont was the witness called upon to describe the difference which formerly took place between himself and the prisoner; and the extraordinary barbarity or madness of the latter, who insisted on either not fighting at all, or else with the muzzles against each other's breast: in this state the affair was pending, when arranged by the accidental interference of friends. He related also the recent fracas between them, with singular and artful malice. Both these incidents made a powerful impression against the accused.

It appeared, by other witnesses, that the prisoner had conceived an affection for Miss Romain. It could not be distinctly sworn how far his love was requited, but plausible and terrible surmises were entertained on the subject; and the prosecution attempted to produce evidence leading to the darkest conjectures; but, as it depended upon hearsay, the witnesses were either prohibited from answering, or their answers were set aside by the court, as not legal proof. They doubtless, however, were not without effect upon the jury.

It was next proved that a change of sentiments had taken place between Miss Romain and the prisoner; after

which she expressed herself in bitter terms against him—spoke of her wrongs, and her folly in submitting to them; and exhibited, before a confidential female domestic, keen disappointment and anguish, great anxiety, and a mysterious agitation: sometimes bursting forth into anger, and sometimes settling down into long fits of melancholy. At length she appeared free from all embarrassment; and the prisoner, in common with many other gentlemen, visited the house as usual. During several days, however, previous to the afternoon of the murder, she let fall, before Jenny, frequent expressions by which the faithful maid's curiosity was greatly awakened, and her affection alarmed. She commenced several times as if to reveal an important secret; then suddenly turning pale, stopped, and, on being interrogated, refused any explanation, sometimes replying with sighs. Once, when she thought herself alone, she was heard to exclaim, "If he but prove honest—if he but mean well;" and other similar sentences. Witness, Jenny, slept in a small room immediately adjoining that of Miss Romain. On the morning of the fatal day, she was awakened before light by the sound of her mistress's voice, apparently speaking to some one below. Her mistress stood at a window leading out upon a little balcony. Witness was alarmed, rose, asked what was the matter, and came to the window—saw the shadow of a man stealing away. In great alarm and astonishment asked who it was, and whether it was Mr. Leslie? The other replied, eagerly, "Yes—yes, it *was* Mr. Leslie. He came to tell me something;" and then added, "but, Jenny, if you ever breathe a word of this to anybody, I will never forgive you while I live; and, when I am dead, I will haunt you."

A crowd of witnesses testified that the prisoner had called for the deceased in a gig, on the afternoon of the murder: from that moment she had never been seen or heard of. The prisoner was seen returning in the evening alone. One testified that, aware of his having driven out with Miss Romain, he asked why he had left his companion? that the prisoner exhibited strong signs of embarrassment; and made a confused and unintelligible reply. The hat and feathers of the deceased were found floating upon the East River, near the spot where she was last traced with the prisoner; an extraordinary appearance of a scuffle was discernible; and a handkerchief, stained with blood, marked with the initials R. R., and pronounced to be that of Miss Romain, was picked up near the river−bank.

The circumstance most forcible against the prisoner was the subsequent discovery of a human body, which had floated far down with the tide, upon the shores of Long Island, in a state to preclude the possibility of identifying it; but in which, notwithstanding, many undertook to recognise the remains of the unfortunate Miss Romain. One individual swore to it positively.

An appalling array of other evidence was adduced, tending to establish all the points necessary to the successful prosecution of the endictment; and when the prosecuting attorney rested his case, it is probable that very few, amid the vast and various multitude who had listened with profound attention to the development of these deeply interesting incidents, entertained the slightest doubt that the doomed culprit was about to meet a terrible and a just fate. All eyes regarded him without the softness of mercy, or even the interest of doubt. To all he seemed a victim bound for slaughter. The populace had long before lost all sense of pity in wonder and indignation. The broad gaze of cold curiosity, the exclamation of surprise, the murmur of horror, the smile of virtue triumphing in the downfall of a villain—all these were scarcely attempted to be concealed from the observation of him who had called them forth.

"Poor Mr. Leslie!" said Jenny, her eyes red with weeping, and after a long gaze upon his calm and noble features, till her pretty blue eyes could no longer see through her tears; "I shall never trust to man's face again. Oh, Mr. Leslie, forgive me, forgive me! If you are guilty there is no truth on earth. I cannot believe it."

It was now late in the afternoon, and the court adjourned, to meet again at six in the evening.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A Letter, and Woman's Friendship.

"Even as men wrecked upon a sand, that look to be washed off the next tide."

Instead of immediately following the prisoner to his cell, we beg the reader's company to the mansion of Moreland. The young advocate had been in court at his station all the morning, and to his watchful care and acute genius the counsel, Mr. Loring, owed many valuable suggestions in the course of his cross−examination of the witnesses. Sometimes his mind was staggered by the testimony, combined with what he had elsewhere heard. He remembered also the strong expressions of disgust and hatred which Norman had used respecting Rosalie Romain at Mrs. Temple's, when the deceased had so brilliantly displayed her charms and her talents. Again, the utter impossibility of Norman Leslie's having committed a *murder* flashed on his mind with the force of intuition; and his heart smote him for having ever, even in the weakness of a moment, doubted the invincible purity and innocence of his friend, whom he had so many reasons to admire and love. He had at length come to the conclusion, that either Norman was entirely guiltless, or that he had committed the deed under the impulse of some momentary delirium; or, perhaps, that it was the result of inexplicable accident; or, that the affair involved other secrets and mysteries, which honour, or a highminded romantic sensibility, forbade him to betray, even to save himself from an unjust fate.

"Dare I ask how it has gone with him to−day?" said Mrs. Moreland, as her husband reached his home.

"Badly, gloomily, desperately. His sky is black as midnight, and all the fiercest lightnings of heaven are leaping around his head. Mary, I fear the worst!"

"Oh, great Providence!—Albert, you will not let those cold and cruel lawyers sacrifice that gentle and noble being! Powers of heaven! if I were a man! You, dear Albert, have genius, eloquence, fire—Oh speak!—exclaim—denounce—*thunder*— deafen their ears—appal their hearts—make them blush—make them tremble! Oh, Albert, save your friend! save the reputation of your country! save this cold−blooded court from committing the very crime that they pretend to punish!"

"Alas! my sweet wife," said he, pressing the animated girl to his bosom, and looking down mournfully on her beautiful and illumined face, "all the thunders of Demosthenes could not save poor Norman's head from this bolt. Mary, I fear, I fear our friend must die."

An hour brought a messenger with a letter. It was from Norman, and read thus:—

"My dearest Albert, excuse my warmth to you the other day. I have now seen sufficient reason why even *you* should be bewildered at the mystery in which I am lost. I beg your pardon sincerely. Visit me once more: I have requested my father and sister to meet me also, for the last time. This day must disentangle my mind from all earthly feelings and agitations. I am resigned to the fatal and inevitable termination of this trial. The verdict cannot but be, Guilty. Come to me immediately, my dearest friend. I shall then have done with earth. I must say farewell for ever, to−night. Bid dear, dear Mary, for me, an everlasting adieu. I call down God's blessing on her head. I will not insult her by condescending to assert my innocence. Such declarations are useless. Such as she do not require, and the rest of the world will not believe, them. I send her a little volume of `Paradise Lost,' which I have pencilled somewhat freely, not thinking to part with it on so sad an occasion. Does she remember our ancient rambles on the banks of the Hudson? our famous quarrel when we were children, and when we did not speak for three days? Happy, happy years! How their tranquil light and beauty contrast with the present! But I must be a man. Come immediately. The court meet at six— it is now four. Mary would have been astonished to hear what a *dreadful ruffian* I was *proved* to be! And that affair of the *duel!!* I could have smiled, but they would have ascribed *that* to my `*inherent ferocity of character*.' What a *farce*, after all, are often the best ceremonies of a human tribunal. Good−by, for a half hour. Be not longer. It may be my *last* request. God bless you, dear Mary! and a long farewell! Excuse this scrawl; and in great haste,

"Your ever affectionate friend,

"Norman Leslie."

"Poor—poor fellow!" murmured both at once, their eyes streaming with tears. "And see," said Mary, smiling, with that strange intrusion of transient mirth into the midst of grief, not uncommon in similar scenes, "Norman is sure to have that `excuse this scrawl, and in great haste,' to all his letters." "Good−by, dear wife." "Fly, Albert, fly, and the great God of eloquence and justice attend your steps!"

CHAPTER XXV.

Prison Scenes—The Trial continued—A new Witness.

"Sable night involves the skies;
And heaven itself is ravished from their eyes.
The face of things a frightful image bears,
And present death in various forms appears." Dryden's *Virgil* .

Moreland found the father and sister of Norman already in the prison, with his friend Howard. The sad scene had been witnessed but by the black walls alone; nor shall we attempt to describe this meeting of a father and sister with a beloved and only son and brother, but recently dragged from the bosom of a happy family, with all the refinement of education, all the sensitiveness of delicacy and feeling, and about to perish like a common ruffian upon a scaffold.

The clock tolled six. It was the hour appointed for the reopening of the court. At the earnest solicitations of the father and sister of Norman, he consented that the latter should be present during the whole of the trial. The request was also urged by Moreland, who conceived that her appearance would prepare the jury to receive with more liberality the arguments and proof of the defence.

"Well, father," said Norman, with a forced smile, "and dear, dear Julia, now we part, and *certainly* for ever. After the verdict, I cannot, I will not, trust myself again within the sound of any human voice I love. No one, with my permission, shall look upon my face again. Farewell, farewell!—may Almighty God bless—protect—relieve you—nay, Julia, nay—father, support yourself—my sweet Julia—Howard, for God's sake—"

They were interrupted by a summons for the prisoner. The young lawyer, his own eyes bathed in tears, drew away with gentle violence the father, while Howard supported the shuddering and fainting sister, after an embrace more than twice repeated, which seemed to drain the life−blood from their lips and hearts. As they were thus led from the cell, Julia, with a shriek of agony, fell senseless into the arms of Howard.

Returning, to his surprise, Moreland found the countenance and demeanour of Norman calm— even cold.

"Thank God!—thank God!" he said, in a steady voice, "it is done. The bond is severed—the darkness, the bitterness of death is passed. It is *this*, dear Albert, that I most feared—not death itself, but these scenes of frightful grief and harrowing affection. But we, too, must part. I must meet my fate alone—without a friend—without a hope— to the bar—to the sentence—to the scaf—" A quivering agony shot across his features; then again all was calm and cold as marble.

"Gentlemen," he cried, after a moment's pause, to the officers in waiting to conduct him back to court, "may I beg one word in private with this my friend and counsellor?"

The permission was granted, and they were locked in the cell.

"Albert," cried Norman, in a voice as changed, wild, and hurried as if his senses were wavering, "Albert, hear me!—by your friendship—by your love—by the happiness of my family—by my life−blood— by your own honour and peace of mind— by earth—by the God that made it—grant, grant my request!"

"Speak—speak, my injured, my noble friend!" said Moreland, partaking his agitation.

"You saw my poor father but now?"

"Well, Norman?"

"And my sweet sister?—a beautiful, blooming girl, with the bright world before her."

"Well, dear Norman?"

"That noble man's proud head, Albert—that dear girl's pure, fond, high heart, as susceptible to pride, Albert, as sensitive to grief and disgrace, as—"

He struck his hand upon his forehead; his bosom heaved and panted; and his nostril dilated with the hard−drawn breath.

"Well, Norman, hope for the best."

"Albert," said Norman, "trifle not with me. I must be crushed in this dreadful fate. Earth cannot save me. Heaven will not! To−night I shall be adjudged guilty; and in a few more days the crowd—the cord—the scaffold—end Norman Leslie. Death alone I do not fear. Oh, God! how I have wished for it!—but I must die on

the scaffold, before the mob—the shouting, laughing, reckless, jesting mob—a spectacle of horror and ignominy— a public proverb! Oh, Albert, Albert!—my friend— my guardian—my saviour—my last—best—only— only hope—"

His paleness grew frightful.

"Norman," cried Moreland, in a tone of alarm, "in the name of mercy, what would you ask?"

"Think—my friend—think," said Norman.

"I am dizzy, dear Norman, I cannot think."

A new summons interrupted them.

"Albert—we *will* meet again. I must *die*—but not on the scaffold. Forbid it, friendship—manly honour! After this mummery is over—this farcical, ridiculous ceremony of a trial, where every word that is spoken is a black slander, an unholy lie, where falsehood and prejudice appear to testify, and where even truth herself comes only in a vile and monstrous disguise—when this stupid mockery is over, come to me, Albert, bring me the means of escape."

"Norman, I do not understand."

"Not from these dismal walls, Albert"—he approached, and whispered in his ear, with a look of wild meaning, and struck his hand upon his breast— "from *this!*"

"Great God!"

"Fail me, Albert, and I die—*despising;* assist me, and I bless you with my expiring breath. This thought has supported me; this cooled the scorching fever in my veins and bursting temples during the last two days."

A more imperative call now cut short the interview.

He smiled as the officers now entered; and, bearing up proudly and loftily under the gaze of the crowds assembled outside the prison to see him pass, he stepped with a calm and thoughtful air through the passage opened for him by the throngs in the corridors of the hall, and in the chamber of justice, and assumed his accustomed seat. His coolness created in some surprise, in others indignation, according as in their shortsighted and superficial observations they ascribed it to hackneyed villany, or impudent confidence in his connexions and rank in society. Who shall read the heart in those ever−changing and accidental moods which chance upon the manners or countenance?

"He depends upon a pardon," said one.

"Influence at court," cried another.

"Kissing goes by favour!" exclaimed a third.

"But he'll swing for it yet," cried a fourth, "or my name aint Jemmy Jackson!"

"The bloodthirsty villain," observed one; "how he glares at the prosecuting attorney!"

"That proud rascal yonder," said Jemmy Jackson, who, from some capricious association, had conceived an especial antipathy to the prisoner, "and that girl in the black veil—that's his father and sister, ye see."

"Poor people!" rejoined the person to whom was made this communication; "they must feel terrible, sure enough."

"Hoot, man, I'll warrant them as bad as he," returned the implacable Jemmy Jackson; "such fruit could spring from no good tree. In my opinion they ought to be all hanged together. I should not wonder if he paid his way through yet."

"Jemmy Jackson, you are an old fool," said a Marine Court lawyer, himself rather advanced in years.

"Then it's pot calling kettle black, I'm thinkin," said Jemmy, winking to his companions. "And why am I a fool, Mr. Oakum?"

"Because ye are, Jemmy; and that's a better reason than you can give for saying that anybody *pays his way*. Here no one pays his way; not even yourself, Jemmy, if you should be called on to be hanged one day, which is not unlikely."

"But there is such a thing as bribing a witness," said Jemmy, who, without the least cause but his own whim, had so dogmatically determined upon the guilt of the prisoner and all his relations, that if the murdered girl herself had made her appear ance to disprove the charge of her death, he would have laid it to bribery. "You remember the gold snuff−box which one of you lawyers quietly passed to a juror, Mr. Oakum?"

"Not I, Jemmy; *I* never passed a gold snuff−box to a juror."

"No," said Jemmy, "the gold snuff−boxes *you* may have, friend Oakum, you are more likely to keep yourself;

not on account of your conscience but your pocket."

"Hoot, hist, silence!" cried Mr. Oakum, pretending not to hear the laugh which Jemmy Jackson's wit occasioned; "don't you see they're going to begin. Mr. Loring is going to open the defence. There are two sides to a stone wall, you know, Mr. Jemmy Jackson. Sit down there! no standing up within the bar! Silence!" and his whisper was echoed in an obstreperous tone by the crier.

The counsel for the prisoner, Mr. Loring, commenced his arduous and apparently hopeless duties.

We must here again express in a few lines what occupied the court a long time. It was admitted that Miss Romain disappeared the afternoon of her ride with the prisoner. That he had gone out with her and returned alone. His own explanation stated that Miss Romain had ridden with him upon a casual invitation; that on reaching an unfrequented place, they met a lady riding alone in a gig, and, what he considered very extraordinary, driving herself. The deceased entered the gig, and, after a few moments' private conversation with her, and with many apologies to the prisoner, expressed a wish to return with *her*. That prisoner had then gone back alone by a different route, and had not suspected her disappearance till some time after, when he immediately called on her father to explain what he knew of so extraordinary a circumstance.

Mr. Loring opened the defence by stating that the incident was plunged in doubt and mystery. The idea that a man of the prisoner's character, even were he inclined to commit a murder, would select such a time and such means, was absurd. He might as well have perpetrated it in the city streets at noonday. It was evident that some unfathomable mystery was connected with it, with which the prisoner had nothing to do, and which the court had not yet approached. It was one of those inexplicable occurrences which, when genius, and acuteness, and professional learning had vainly endeavoured to solve, unfolded of itself in the course of time. "The explanation of the prisoner may appear a clumsy fabrication, too clumsy to believe; yet, gentlemen, beware how you admit that supposition. To me its very clumsiness and improbability furnish a reason for its truth. You smile. But do improbable things never happen? Are all the actions of the great, confused, clashing, mutable world, probable? Must a man perish because an improbable fact has taken place? I say, gentlemen, the greater the improbability of this story, the more implicitly I believe it. Had he wished to invent a story, it would have been more cunningly devised," etc.

The evidence for the prisoner was very limited. The officers swore to his horror and astonishment at being arrested; but, in the cross−examination, confessed that he betrayed extraordinary signs of confusion, strongly resembling guilt. Others had seen him on his return from the fatal ride, without observing any embarrassment or abstraction.

The evidence of Miss Leslie, although indirect, was received with lively marks of sympathy. She had met her brother, on his arrival from the afternoon ride, and had particularly remarked his health and cheerfulness. She described him as peculiarly gay, having been one of a party of ladies and gentlemen who walked on the Battery in the evening, and discovering, in all the thousand offices of courtesy, a heart entirely at rest.

"Oh," continued the young and lovely girl, enthusiastic affection quite drowning every consideration of personal embarrassment, "they who believe Norman capable of committing that or any other crime, little know his character. Even supposing it possible in a moment of delirium, it is not possible that afterward he could be so natural and easy, so completely unembarrassed and happy. From boyhood, Norman has been remarkable for betraying in his countenance what was passing in his heart, and even for blushing when any thing confused him. But we saw no kind of agitation whatever; and I am certain that he could not have concealed from us, had any secret weighed upon—"

"This is all very well," said Mr. Germain, who had been particularly vehement and bitter during the whole trial, against everybody and every thing tending to exculpate the prisoner—"this is all very well; but I ask the court if it is *evidence*. The young lady, I believe, comes here as a *witness*, not as *counsel*."

This was received—as any levity that breaks the monotonous solemnity of a court of justice is sure to be received—with a slight general titter; although one of the jurors was observed to pass his fingers hastily over his glistening eyes. The prisoner smiled bitterly, and shook his head, as if in wonder. Moreland rose for the first time.

"May it please the court," cried Moreland, in a voice low almost to a whisper, but so perceptibly tremulous that a general hush succeeded his first words—"may it please the court: we are a tribunal of justice. I am aware that we are judges, jury, counsel, and spectators; and from such assemblies I know it is proper to exclude all feeling. But, nevertheless, we are—we *ought* to be men. If the prisoner be guilty—though young, proud, beautiful, and

noble, with other deep hearts wound convulsively around him, and bound up in him—yet, if he be guilty, let him die the death of violence and ignominy."

A shudder and a drawing in of the breath was heard from the sister, like that of the victim when the edge of the axe first glitters before his eyes. The spectators grew more profoundly motionless and silent, and Moreland, rising and warming with his emotions, went on:—

"I would not from private feeling, not even from private opinion, turn aside the sword of public justice. But I will not, I dare not, I cannot sit silently by, and behold the best emotions of nature outraged, ridiculed, trampled down, by the habitual coldness or hardened zeal of the profession to which I belong. If the sister of this unhappy man in her secret soul believes him *guilty*," still her trembling voice, her streaming eyes, her woman's heart raised in his behalf, demand the respect and attention of a civilized people. But if this amiable and lovely girl here plead for the life of a brother, on whose utter and complete innocence she relies as she has faith in her own existence and in her God—if she possess knowledge, if she can advance arguments to rescue him from a dishonourable and untimely grave, or even to relieve her own broken heart with the outpourings of its swollen and agonized fulness—let the hand that would stay her fall palsied—let the tongue that would deride her blister. The motive which now inspires this affectionate sister to throw herself—timid and trembling woman as she is—before a tribunal of justice, and before such a crowd as now hears me, to speak in defence of a beloved brother, is pure, exalted, unalloyed, and noble; and, in the name of every thing good and generous—in the name of mercy, of charity—in the name of *woman*, I claim for her protection from the derision and sneers which the learned gentlemen on the other side of the question have thought it not beneath them to express against the defence."

A burst of irrepressible applause, notwithstanding the solemnity of the place, followed this outflash of indignant feeling; but it was instantly and sternly silenced and rebuked by the court, who threatened to commit immediately to prison any one guilty of such a contempt in future, and directed the officers to be watchful.

The prosecuting counsel, Mr. Germain, against whose head this bolt had been evidently directed, rose, rubbing his hands with a distrustful smile, and a confidential look along the jury.

"May it please the court—but one word, your honour," he said; "the gentleman misunderstands me. My heart bleeds as well as his own at the sight of private suffering; but I know how necessary it is in matters of justice to guard against personal feeling. Virtue and domestic love are beautiful words; but there are also such words as law and justice. I perceive the artifice of the ingenious counsel in producing before the jury the father and sister of the prisoner, to soften our hearts and inflame our feelings. It is a trick of the profession. Legal questions should be discussed only by the light of reason. They require only a deliberate and unprejudiced examination of proof, and a cold knowledge of statutes—the colder and more unfeeling, the better. Whatever may be the sufferings of the prisoner or his family, what bearing can they have, *ought* they to have, on the naked question, `Is he or is he not guilty?' In respect to the evidence of Miss Leslie, whom, of course, we are bound to believe very pure in her intentions, I wish only to restrict her within the legal limits of a witness. If sisters turn pleaders, stealing in under license of witnesses, a new and most dangerous era will be introduced into our jurisprudence. Private feeling, however harrowing, is but insignificant when compared with the public good. Neither should we forget to distinguish between the pain resulting directly from guilt in those connected with the guilty party, and that inflicted by him upon others. The parent and sister of the unhappy culprit are not the only bereaved victims of this crime now within hearing of my voice. The griefstricken heart of that old man, whose only daughter fell beneath the prisoner's hand—have we no sympathy with *his* dark age, with *his* deserted hearth? Let the unfortunate man at the bar regard the wreck he has caused in his own circle with feelings of bitter anguish, and may Heaven support him under the trial! But we have nothing to see, nothing to feel, but whether, on the proof adduced, he be guilty or not guilty.'

The court begged that nothing more might be said on the subject. They had heard the counsel for the defence, because they wished to extend towards the prisoner every possible clemency, and the prosecution had a certain right to reply; but the question respecting the evidence of the witness was unimportant. She must be allowed to relate her statements in her own way; and if, from her feelings or her inexperience, out of order, she would be restrained by the court.

"What else do you know respecting the case?" inquired Mr. Loring of the witness.

"Nothing," was the reply, and thus the long debate had been unnecessary.

After a confused mass of contradictory testimony, Mr. Loring announced his intention of producing one more

witness, who had voluntarily come forward in the cause of innocence, and to prevent the unjust effusion of human blood—one whose station and character were unimpeachably pure; whose motives could not be impugned or traduced; who was swayed neither by the power of domestic love, nor by any intimate acquaintance with the prisoner; a lady, the daughter of one of the most distinguished families in the city: her testimony, he added, would be conclusive. It had come to his knowledge by accident, and only this moment, and could not fail to acquit the prisoner.

This announcement produced much excitement. The judge turned to gaze with an eagerness almost incompatible with his dignity; the jury looked anxiously forward; the prosecuting counsel smiled shrewdly, and muttered aloud, "A new device of the enemy;" and the auditory at large stretched their necks to behold the new−comer, whom more than one pronounced to be Miss Romain herself. Not among the least surprised was the prisoner, who leaned forward with evident curiosity. The side−doors being opened, a female, enveloped in a close bonnet and veil, entered, and took her seat on the witness's stand

CHAPTER XXVI.

Hope dawns.

"But thou, oh Hope, with eyes so fair!"

—Collins.

"The gentleman appears peculiarly favoured by the fair sex," said Mr. Germain, half aloud.

"Is it another sister?" asked a juror.

"No," replied the counsel, quickly, and, in a voice too low to be distinctly heard, added something which occasioned a laugh among those immediately around him, and even from one or two of the jurors.

The witness was narrowly scrutinized by all eyes, and, though wrapped in her veil and bonnet, was observed to shrink at thus appearing before the public. Her step faltered; her voice, as she replied to the judge's question concerning her name, trembled, and was so low as to render her reply at first unintelligible. She made a gesture, too, of faintness, at the rude laugh directed apparently against herself.

"Sit down, madam," said Moreland, in a soothing tone; "you have nothing to fear."

"What is the young lady's name?" asked the judge.

"Miss Temple—Flora Temple," answered Moreland; thus kindly furnishing her time to recover her voice and composure.

An exclamation of surprise from the prisoner announced that to him her name brought astonishment. He stirred, changed his position, and leaned forward.

"Do not be alarmed, Miss Temple," said Mr. Loring; "take your own time to reply. You are a resident of New−York? You are daughter of Mr. Herman Temple? You are acquainted with the prisoner?"

These and one or two other similar interrogatories were put by the careful counsel, in order to lead the witness from her embarrassment. They were answered, at first, in a voice almost inaudible.

"Louder, louder," said Mr. Germain. "If the young lady will have the goodness to speak louder, we may at least *hear* what this wonderful secret is."

"You are acquainted with the prisoner?" said Mr. Loring.

"I have known him for some years," was the reply, in a tone much more loud and distinct, but so soft and full of music that a murmur of interest was heard in her behalf.

"Are you related to him in any way?" asked Germain.

"Not in the least."

"Are you *likely*, or rather have you *ever been* likely to be?" added Germain, bluntly, and with another laugh.

"The witness is ours," said Moreland; "and I must again beg and entreat of the court protection from derision."

"Have you any interest in the result of this cause?" asked Loring.

"Oh yes, yes!" was the answer.

"Then, may it please the court," said Germain, starting up, "I move that—"

"She is interested only, as we are all interested, in the triumph of truth," said Moreland.

"You are putting words into the witness's mouth," interrupted Germain.

A brisk interchange of elocution here took place, too common in courts of justice, when every trivial point is attacked and defended with the thunder of battle−axe and the clash of swords, and the most unjust devices of *ingenuity* (in other transactions *what* would it be termed?) are not abandoned without a skirmish. Lawyers' tongues are sharp as soldiers' swords, and sometimes cut as deep; and wo betide the modest, the pure, the defenceless, who come between the "great opposites" in the keen excitement of an interesting case. It would not be fair to advance this charge against the whole American bar, but there is too much truth in it. Great is the praise, therefore, due to those who redeem the character of the profession by a more moderate and generous course, who pursue their client's interest only as far as sanctioned by propriety and honour; and who, in the most absorbing interest of their pursuit, preserve a reverence for truth, and never, never offend the delicacy due to woman. Yet the most honest witness in a court of justice frequently finds himself stung with sarcasms, attacked with the bitterness of malice, flatly charged with perjury, overwhelmed with odium, and dismissed with disgrace from a station to which the court has forced him, after delivering testimony, perhaps, the most repugnant to his own private

feelings; and for this degradation, neither the law nor the customs of society offer redress.

"Have you any personal, any pecuniary interest in the event of this action?" asked the counsel.

"Oh no, no!" replied Miss Temple.

"And now," said Mr. Loring, "pray tell the jury, in a distinct voice, what you know of the prisoner."

"I have met Mr. Leslie frequently in company, and at my father's house. His manners have been always gentle, and his character high and noble; *certainly* the character of a man quite, quite incapable of—"

Germain rose. Moreland rose also. The judge sternly commanded both to be seated.

"You say you know the prisoner's character to be good?"

"I do."

"Were you acquainted with Rosalie Romain?"

"I was."

"Familiarly?"

"Quite so."

"What was her character?"

Flora looked down at the unhappy father, and hesitated; but, remembering the imperative nature of her duty, continued,—

"She was light, and very eccentric."

"Do you believe her, from what you know, capable of so remarkable a measure as eloping?"

"I do. She wanted steadiness of mind, and was actuated by sudden impulses."

"Were you familiarly acquainted with her features?"

"Quite familiarly. Her appearance and face were very peculiar. She was tall, graceful, majestic, and very beautiful."

Mr. Romain, who had followed the testimony of this witness with mute and strained attention, now leaned his forehead on the table, wept, and murmured, "My child, my child!"

"Go on," said the judge.

"The afternoon on which she was said to have been murdered, I was one of a party walking rather late in the evening on the Battery. The gentleman who happened to be my companion led me from the rest towards the water−side, to behold an effect of the light on the opposite shore."

"Tell who the gentleman was," said Mr. Germain.

"It was Mr. Leslie, the prisoner."

"Oh ho! I see through this!" muttered Germain, laughing and rubbing his hands knowingly.

"It was an uncommonly clear, moonlight evening; and while we gazed at the light, I saw very distinctly Rosalie Romain."

"God of heaven!" cried Mr. Romain, rising suddenly; "this has crossed me before. My blessed young lady, are you sure?"

"Mr. Romain," said the court, affected evidently, but with an effort, "we must endeavour to suppress these sudden bursts of feeling; they greatly impede the proceedings."

But the contagion of surprise had passed through the whole audience. There was a general pause— a movement and agitated commotion, quelled not without some delay and difficulty.

"Proceed, Miss Temple," said Mr. Loring. "You saw Miss Romain?"

"Wrapped in a veil. She saw us, started, and turned away."

Mr. Loring rose. "I have produced this witness, may it please the court, to establish beyond the shadow of a doubt" (with that deliberate emphasis familiar to lawyers) "the innocence of the prisoner. She is an unimpeachable witness. We rest our defence. I yield her to the ingenuity of our learned opponents. They will, doubtless, endeavour to bewilder and distress her; but I *repose* with unshaken confidence in the result of this important testimony. Far from the prisoner's having been guilty of murder, it appears that no murder has been committed at all. The witness, gentlemen, is yours."

It is a painfully interesting moment when the witness, whose testimony, if left as it has been delivered, would certainly acquit the being trembling with every tone of her voice for his life, is turned over to the destroying malignity of the other party. The fabric, apparently impregnable, in which the persecuted, hunted−down prisoner has taken refuge, becomes the scene of a furious attack. Blow after blow, all the machinery of wit, cunning, and

learning, are brought to play upon it, till, yielding to fate, its gates broken in, its foundations undermined, at length it falls to the ground.

"This is a ghost−story," said Germain, with an incredulous smile. "Let us see, miss, if we cannot unravel the mystery."

And the lively interest of all present, including Mr. Loring, notwithstanding his "unshaken confidence," acknowledged their strongly excited curiosity.

"You say," said Germain, with a taunting, sneering air, "that you were walking with the *prisoner* when you beheld this apparition?"

"I have not referred to any apparition," said the witness, quietly.

"Oh ho! we congratulate your reviving spirits. When you saw Rosalie Romain, then, if you prefer that form of expression?"

"I said so, sir."

"And pray what time was it?" with a look and almost a wink at the jury.

"The clock had struck nine."

"Ah, after nine at night! And the phantom was accompanied by whom?"

"By another female."

"You saw Rosalie Romain, after nine o'clock at night, with another female! Well, upon my word, young lady, this is a probable story! What was she doing there? Riding on a broomstick?"

"She was doing nothing. She passed us."

"Veiled?"

"Yes, sir, thickly veiled."

"Your eyes, I presume," with another sly wink to the jury, "possess some extraordinary organic power above those of common mortals, not gifted with the privilege of seeing phantoms. So you recognised Rosalie Romain through the folds of a thick veil, and in the darkness of night! More men in buckram, gentlemen."

"Passing a lamp, the glare fell on her face. She drew the veil aside a moment as she came near; then covering herself again hastily, quickened her step, and was immediately out of sight."

"Oh, that was very kind in her, to let you see her face, was it not? You have told a probable and very interesting story — very romantic, at least. What did the prisoner do all this time? Did he say nothing?"

The witness was silent.

"Ah! he said something you are unwilling to reveal. Come, what was it? Remember, you are on oath—the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"He said," replied the witness, in a lower tone, "that he did not think the person we had seen was Miss Romain."

"Oh ho! *now* you are coming to the crisis. So the prisoner *did not think* the person you had seen was Rosalie Romain?"

"No, sir."

"And *you did?*"

"I did."

"And do?"

"And do."

"Who saw her first?"

"Mr. Leslie."

"Ah ha! And pointed her out to you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And *then* immediately *rejected* the idea, as if *he knew* the *impossibility* of *her* being there?"

"He exhibited no certainty; he said, indifferently, it could not possibly be her."

"Ah ha! so, so! As I said, you see, gentlemen. Pray, madam, have you ever been contracted in marriage?"

"No, sir."

"You must excuse me if I enter a little into particulars. Have you ever been under any engagement of matrimony?"

"Never."

"*Perfectly* free? Has Mr. Leslie never—"

Again Moreland interfered. Again Germain defended his question.

"What do the prosecution wish to prove?" asked the judge.

"That this worthy young lady," said Germain, "who may be honest enough in the ordinary affairs of life, comes here now under the influence of strong feelings of love, to save a man whom—"

"I protest!" said Moreland.

"I insist!" said Germain.

"Do you wish to impeach the testimony of this witness?" asked the judge.

Flora trembled and shrank. The prisoner rose again. His eyes flashed upon Germain a look of such withering anger, that the lawyer quiled a moment beneath its fire.

Moreland begged the interference of the court.

"We wish to show, may it please the court," added Germain, "that the young lady is about as disinterested a witness as the learned gentleman is a counsel—the one testifying for her lover, the other pleading for his friend."

"Order, gentlemen," cried the judge.

"And what," resumed Germain, "is this love−sick young lady and her affections, which the next breeze will bear away—what are her pretty sensibilities to the great cause and majesty of public justice, to the proper administration of laws, and to purging the commonwealth from black and hateful crimes! I do not mean, may it please your honour, to charge this young lady with *perjury;* but I do mean to suggest that a sentiment of love has existed, and still exists, between the witness and the prisoner; that her feelings warp her judgment, and have presented to her what she desires to have seen rather than what she saw. Some remote resemblance between a night−wandering female on the Battery and the deceased, struck her eye, and is now remembered in this emergency. If there were probability in her conjecture, probability even to seize upon the memory of the wretched culprit himself, why has this witness been delayed so long? Why was it left to the discovery of accident? Why did not the prisoner call upon her to advance? Why was she not subpoenaed by the defence? A love−sick girl, with her head full of novels, and her heart—"

The prisoner once more rose and interrupted the speaker with a haughty and determined air, and, in a voice deep and rich, that sounded strangely impressive in the sudden hush, said,—

"Being here a defenceless man, I invoke the aid of the court against these attacks upon my friends. I solicit no sympathy or mercy on my own part. I yield my blood to the demands of fate and of mistaken justice. But, as the last request of a doomed, a dying, and an innocent man, I entreat that the malignity which animates the learned gentlemen of the prosecution may pour out its exclusive fury on my head. I entreat that those who appear in my behalf may be protected from unjust suspicion and wanton insult. There never has been any such sentiment as the learned gentleman so frequently refers to, exchanged between that young lady and myself. On the contrary, she has uniformly treated me with the utmost reserve, and I am most unwilling that she should now suffer for her magnanimity in appearing before a tribunal where the modesty of woman is so little respected, and in favour of one who to her has always been, and must ever be, less than nothing."

He sat down with flashing eyes, but a haughty and proud demeanour; and there had been such a fascination in the smooth, fierce, indignant flow of his words, and in the deep vehemence, feeling, and solemnity of his face, voice, and manner, and such interest was universally experienced to hear what he had to say, that he was not interrupted. But immediately on his close, his interference was pronounced out of order, and the stir following his words was with some difficulty quieted. The witness drew her veil closer at the sound of his voice, but said nothing, and awaited motionless the next interrogation.

"I have only one or two more questions," said Mr. Germain. "Can you *swear,* Miss Temple— but," he added abrupty, "I will thank you to put aside your veil. I cannot examine a witness properly without seeing her face."

Miss Temple, after a moment of hesitation, completely, and, for the first time, fully revealed to the spectators the features of an exquisitely lovely young creature, beautiful beyond description. Her light auburn hair parted with simplicity on her forehead, a pair of large, tender blue eyes, drooping beneath the general gaze, and lifted only once, as if to glance reproachfully upon the countenance of the harsh querist. Modesty and sweetness were expressed upon her face with the most graceful and feminine charm. All eyes regarded her with strong and new sympathy and admiration. Some surprise was manifested at her extreme paleness. The prisoner riveted his eyes on her a few moments with an expression of deep melancholy, and then leaned down his forehead upon his hand in

silence.

Germain, who, by his rudeness, had given the unconsciously beautiful girl this decided advantage over him, found himself in the situation of a warrior, who, pressing his pursuit too eagerly, sinks into some snare of the enemy. He was himself slightly surprised and embarrassed at the sweetness and refinement of her towards whom he had exhibited so little tenderness, and it seemed that his conscience smote him.

"You will pardon my abruptness, my dear young lady," he said; "I am truly sorry that duty compels me to put painful questions. You must inform the jury whether you have been always entirely free from matrimonial engagements with the prisoner."

"The question is not painful," she replied, in a mild and slightly tremulous tone. "Nothing of the kind has ever taken place between Mr. Leslie and myself; on the contrary, it was always understood that Mr. Leslie was attached to Miss Romain."

"And do you believe it?"

"I do."

"One more question—and remember, young lady, you are on your oath, and the Creator of all things sees your heart. Tell me now, solemnly, are you prepared to swear *actually, absolutely*, and *positively* , that the person you saw, on the night of the supposed murder, was Rosalie Romain? can you *swear* to this to a *certainty?*"

"I can swear to nothing," replied the witness, "with *actual certainty;* but—"

"She cannot swear *with certainty!*" cried Germain, triumphantly, turning to the jury.

"She cannot swear with certainty!" echoed one.

"She cannot swear with certainty!" reiterated another.

"But I clearly think so," cried the witness, with a faint attempt not to be borne down by the undiscriminating vehemence of her opponents.

"She only *thinks*—she only fancies," interrupted Germain; "it is precisely as I thought, a mere conjecture. You see, gentlemen, after all, this important witness is nothing—nothing whatever."

Some other questions were advanced in turn by either party, but nothing new was elicited. After the examination of two or three witnesses, to settle and define minor points, the evidence was closed, and the counsel for the defence addressed the jury.

It rarely happens that two advocates upon the same evidence can frame appeals very different from each other. Yet perhaps few instances could be produced where speeches were made more opposite in their nature than those now heard from the two counsel for the prisoner. Mr. Loring was cool, technical, and wary. He examined the proof, item after item, with a cautious hand and a keen eye, but yet with a sophistry which his opponent knew how to counteract by similar weapons.

Moreland took a higher ground; and the contagious sympathy and confidence which he had now fully imbibed himself, kindled a kindred fire in the bosoms of his hearers. He did not fail also to persuade reason by deliberate examination of the proof, but it was with the ardour of one who felt and believed what he asserted. His able and eloquent discourse was listened to with the profoundest attention. The jurors sometimes nodded their heads in acquiescence, and sometimes, by their countenance, expressed surprise and pleasure at the unexpected inferences which, under his acute and ingenious intelligence, many points in proof were made to yield. Several facts, apparently most fatal to the prisoner, were now presented in a light so new as to elucidate his innocence; and long before he had finished with a technical consideration of the testimony, he had awakened in every breast a lively confidence in the innocence of the prisoner, and had thrown about him a kind of interest like the halo of a martyr.

Horse−racing, theatres, and gambling, enchain men by their excitement; but it may be questioned whether any can exceed the interest with which a mind fully understanding the bearings of a case, and interested from affection, or even ordinary sympathy, follows the perpetual and sudden vicissitudes in the course of such a trial. It presents a continued and striking series of changes; rapid and shifting alternations of light and shadow, of tempest, calm, and sunshine—a vast, deep, wild ebb and flow of hope. The future changes, and brightens, and sinks in gloom, as facts break through the mist, and melt away again with the breath of the witness, or the magic of the orator. The truth resembles a mountain−peak enveloped in clouds: now the billowy vapours bury its sharp outlines in gloom; again the breeze wafts them away, and leaves its airy and unbroken summit shining in the sun. Thus had the prospect of the prisoner, his character and his crime, appeared to the spectators and jury, till, under the transforming wand of Moreland, they beheld the darkness vanish. The prisoner himself was softened. His

noble and handsome face yielded to the illumination of hope and joy. Mr. Romain went up to him and spoke words of kindness; and the sister and father hung breathless and almost gasping upon the music and the magic of the speaker's lips.

"Gentlemen," continued the orator, "at length, at this late hour, exhausted as you must be with your arduous duties, perhaps I should desist from further trespassing upon your time. But I remember with a shudder that mine are the last words of defence and of hope which the prisoner at the bar may ever hear. I start at the tremendous responsibility, and almost sink beneath it. But faith, hope, justice, and mercy whisper me to proceed. The life of an innocent human being, of an amiable and affectionate son, of a beloved brother, of a citizen of this republic, is at stake. It is my sacred duty to defend; it is your solemn province to judge. A word from your lips launches him into eternity. If he be guilty, I do not ask his life. Though his sister's heart will break at the blow,—though his father's silvery forehead will bend down to a dishonoured grave,—though a youth, invested with a thousand noble qualities, will be cut off from repentance and hope for ever,— yet, if he be guilty, I do not ask his life. But, by your own hopes as fathers, as friends, as men— by the peace which you love on your pillow and in your dying hour—by the sanctity of innocence and the rebuking anger of Heaven—I conjure you to pause and tremble ere you do find him guilty. It has been alleged against me this day that I am privately a friend to the prisoner. It has been charged upon me as an odium, in ridicule and scorn. I appeal to your own bosoms: who so well as a friend should be able to judge of his character? who so well know his ways of thinking and acting? Is friendship to be a stigma—as we have this day beheld the heart−broken love of a sister— a jest, and a mockery?

"As for my own belief, I solemnly declare before you, and before Him who knows all hearts, that, after the most indefatigable examination of the circumstances during a much longer period of time than you have been able to devote, I believe the accused totally innocent. When you consider, gentlemen, the extraordinary facts of the case; the character of the prisoner; the accidental and public nature of the fatal and mysterious ride; his demeanour subsequently; the fact that Miss Temple saw Rosalie Romain in the evening;—you must acknowledge that his guilt is doubtful. The blackest doubt still hangs upon the whole affair. It is doubtful whether the murder has been committed; it is doubtful whether the prisoner is the perpetrator. Miss Romain might have fallen by another hand; she may have perished by her own; she may have fled. The law commands you only to find a verdict in case of *certainty;* are you *cer tain?* Are you even certain that Rosalie Romain is dead? Who has identified the body? Is there a single person who can prove her decease? Miss Romain, at some future time, may reappear before you. What horror would shade your future years! I call upon you now, while yet in your power, to save your souls from such a grievous burden. I warn you of the innocence of the prisoner. In a few moments you will be compelled to decide. The doom of death, gentlemen, is mighty, is tremendous, is irrevocable. You may extinguish a light which can never be relumed; you may, in one moment, perpetrate an action which all the years of your future life may be too short and too few to sufficiently regret. Before I yield the floor to my adversaries, let me also warn you against their ardour and their sophistry. They possess the prerogative of directing against you the last appeal. I tremble lest the cunning of art and eloquence may baffle and blind the truth. I have already shuddered to hear the noblest virtues derided. They have already told you that education, refinement, a warm heart, and an unspotted character, are the attributes of crime and the signals for suspicion. I watch the progress of their insidious attacks upon your reason with the most unalloyed and intolerable solicitude and distress. Error, gentlemen, may lurk on either side: but the error of one is ghastly and fatal, damning to yourselves and all concerned; while that of the other—if, indeed, error there be—would, even in its fallacy, approach the benign spirit of that Redeemer who looked with pity upon the woes of earth, and who said, even unto the most abandoned, `Go, and sin no more.'"

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Verdict—Midnight Scene in a Court of Justice.

"Hark! Hush! Be still! They come. One moment, and 'tis o'er."

It is a mournful thing to turn from the last clinging hope and defence of the accused, to the cold, severe, exaggerating attacks of the prosecution. Perhaps there never was a case upon a capital offence, where the eloquence and ingenuity of the defendant's counsel did not strike out upon the misery of the accused some bright sparks of hope. The mass of evidence cannot be borne in mind at once. A perception of the truth often requires a series of deliberate and abstruse arguments, which the audience never discover, or fail to retain amid the confusion of evidence and the instinct of mercy. The sight of a criminal, too, when punishment seems certain, softens the heart to pity, and prepares it to magnify and dwell upon the grounds of hope. An ingenious orator, in an artful survey of the case, lingers with disproportionate force upon the favourable circumstances, and leaves the more unexplainable and condemnatory parts in the shade. For a moment the sky of the accused brightens; the roaring of the tempest is lulled; his half−wrecked mind rests, as the surrounding sea of doubt and despair closes its yawning abysses, and he beholds again the green and sunny shore where safety and bliss await his weary steps. Ah, delusive calm! ah, treacherous hope! An awful pause succeeds the words of mercy and hope. Dreadful the task of him who has to dissolve this vision!

The prosecution commenced their duty. As their skilful batteries were opened against the victim, the brightness passed from his features; one after another his hopes melted away; the relentless tempest darkened over his head; the mad wind began to roar and thunder in the air; his broken hulk once more hung on the uplifted and giant wave; the distant shore receded from his despairing eyes, and he felt that ruin and death again yawned beneath his feet.

Two experienced, unfeeling, and sagacious lawyers exhausted their powers in demonstrating the guilt of the accused, in which they both fully and conscientiously believed. Germain wove around him the meshes of sophistry, and rendered it once more a glaring *certainty;* and the district attorney closed with a startling eloquence.

The orator allowed the prisoner's apparent good character; allowed the horrid spectacle of a youth so formed to adorn society, cut off and crushed beneath a fate so terrible. But these considerations, he said, severely, were not for the jury−box. Let them deepen the interest of a poem, or embellish the pages of a novel; but a tribunal of justice had a sterner task than the indulgence of feeling, however amiable. That the murder had been committed, every circumstance proclaimed. The ride; the disappearance; the blood−stained handkerchief; the hat floating abandoned on the stream; the body—as far as the testimony of credible witnesses go—identified as that of Rosalie Romain; the confusion of the assassin; his conduct on the arrest; the evidence of the female domestic respecting the demeanour of the unfortunate victim; her clandestinely meeting the prisoner at that suspicious hour of the morning;—every thing, as far as human proof could, proclaimed the dreadful act, and the deep cunning of the prisoner. "What proof can you demand of murder? It is a deed which the perpetrator commits alone. He comes not in the broad streets, where positive evidence can be produced against him. He steals, with stealthy pace, in darkness and solitude; he disguises his intention under smiles and the mask of virtue; he plants the dagger in a moment unseen by all—by all but his avenging God. Murder rarely admits evidence stronger than that produced against this man. If you acquit him upon the principle of doubt, future assassins have only to stab in solitude, and they will stab in safety. We shall behold shameless seducers and murderers walking among us unwhipped of justice. Leave crime unpunished, and you open the flood−gates through which devastation and despair rush in upon the retreats of domestic life. The pity which makes you tremble at inflicting a necessary penalty, which causes you to yield to the pleadings of compassion, and to melt at the sight of guilt bound on the altar—to forget law, society, the claims of the innocent, and the just indignation and agony of the bereaved, rather than speak the word and strike the blow to which you have pledged your oaths, and which great justice demands—is a weak, an idle, a pernicious feeling, full of danger and deceit, unworthy of fathers, citizens, men. You are the guardians of the community. To your hands she has committed her safety; and, with such a feeling in your bosoms, will you betray your trust? She has placed you as sentinels on her walls and at her gates; do not kneel and admit the foe

which you are sent to overcome. Had the gaunt form of murder stalked in unabashed and unintimidated amid the gayety of *your own* festive board—had your startled eyes suddenly beheld him vanish, and lo! the brightest seat at the banquet is left vacant—had you beheld the demon who had thus bereaved and made you desolate for ever, stride unfearing and unabashed through the mid−day streets, triumphing in his deed, and, perhaps, grown bold by experience, meditating to repeat it, because, forsooth, the shrinking sensibilities of a too sentimental jury could not harden their hearts to arrest his career,—you would feel as you ought to feel on this solemn occasion. The hospitality of friendship, the rights of society, the laws of man and of God, have been grossly violated by the unhappy criminal at the bar. The perpetration of the deed has been proved, and the guilt has been fastened upon him as far as human proof can lead the human reason.

"The gentlemen on the other side harp much on the idea of *doubt* . It is *doubt* which is to bring off their wretched client. Their only hope is *doubt*. It is the last inevitable refuge of the defenders of a bad cause. If they can make you doubt, if they can entangle and cloud over, if they can envelop in mystery, if they can bewilder you in *doubt*, they fancy their triumph secure. But you must distinguish between the just doubt arising from a deficiency of evidence, and that confused sense of indistinctness which only those experience whose eyesight is failing—between the doubt of a firm and of a foolish mind. Doubt you might conceive on every subject. There are not wanting metaphysicians who assert that nothing ever was, is, or ever can be certain. You may doubt the evidence of your eyes and ears; you may bewilder your mind amid endless mazes and metaphysical conjectures. You may doubt that you sit there to judge, that I stand here to proclaim a heinous and hideous sin. All around us may be but the phantoms of a fever or the forms of a passing dream. But this species of doubt, so equally applicable to the most feeble and the most overpowering proof, is not the doubt which becomes your manly souls. The cunning of a persuasive tongue will not be able to betray your matured understandings into such childish, such fantastic vagaries. Such doubts would dispute all law, all justice. This court would be a mockery and an idle farce; vainly would wronged misery apply here for redress; justice would be but the theme of derision and scorn. The ruffian would smile at the uplifted sword of the goddess, which her degenerate hand durst never wield, till men, grown once more wild and savage, and knowing no other remedy for private injury, will assume again the reins of affairs, which the authorities are unworthy and unable to hold. A Gothic spirit of revenge will displace the mildness of civilization; youth, innocence, and defenceless beauty, will yield their breasts to the dagger, and the whole mass of society will be resolved into its original elements of anarchy and discord.

"No, gentlemen, in your characters as stern and unyielding sentinels of the public safety, I call upon you to speak the dreadful doom against yonder sin ful man. He has sown, let him reap. If you would not have your wives, sisters, mothers, and daughters murdered before your faces, speak, promptly, fearlessly, and solemnly, the fatal verdict. However man may exclaim, and attempt to affright you from your duty, remember the Almighty himself has said, `*Blood for blood!*' "

Again, as the counsel sat down, the silence was simultaneously broken by a wide peal of applause. From bench and floor, pedestal and column, wherever the mighty throng of human beings had clustered and pressed themselves densely in together, came the murmur and the shock of approbation, too plainly announcing the public sanction of the prisoner's doom. Several persons were committed for this breach of decorum.

The charge of the judge was short and lucid, and wholly confined to the evidence. He reviewed it calmly, and instructed the jury to find the fact of the murder according to their opinion on the testimony, with this reserve, that if they were "not fully satisfied, *beyond a doubt*, they must find for the prisoner."

With the necessary formalities, the jury were conducted into their private room; and an hour passed, during which curiosity kept together, probably, every individual of the vast multitude.

At length the court prepared to adjourn, and the prisoner had been already ordered back to prison, when it was announced that the jury had agreed upon a verdict. There was a hum among the concourse— relaxed attention was again suddenly and fearfully roused. The jury entered, silent and solemn themselves, amid the silence and solemnity of all around. This is a moment of excruciating interest. The most light and careless spectator feels it drain his heart, and suspend his very being. What must it be to him whom one moment more is to plunge into eternity, or to give back in triumph to life and happiness! Many an eye turned upon the jurors to detect in their countenances, in their gait, in some casual action, a hint of that mighty secret locked in their bosoms. Many an eye was riveted upon the face of the prisoner, to study how he bore that tremendous moment, how humanity stood to gaze amid life full on the grim and spectral features of death.

The names of the jurymen were regularly called amid a profound silence. Not a motion, not a breath, disturbed the deep hush. The clerk requested the prisoner to rise.

"Gentlemen of the jury, look upon the prisoner. Prisoner, look upon the jury. Have you agreed upon your verdict?"

"We have."

"How say you, gentlemen? Do you find him guilty or not guilty?"

There was a pause, as if the very pulse of life stood still. It was thrilling and painful. All leaned forward. A shuddering sound of agony, short and checked, broke from the lips of Miss Leslie. All eyes dilated and fastened on the foreman, except one or two, who looked piercingly, and yet with horror, upon the face of the prisoner. At that moment the clock tolled three, with a heavy sweep of sound that floated in quivering waves through the hall. Its last vibration died away, and the foreman spoke.

"Not guilty."

"God—God!" cried the sister, with a shriek of joy, while an electric shock darted through the crowd, and broke the spell of silence. The prosecuting counsel started up. The clerk repeated it aloud, with surprise. Moreland clasped his hands, with a report that echoed through the room. Mr. Romain covered his face. Mordaunt Leslie raised his hands and eyes to Heaven in silent prayer.

In the midst of this sudden universal jar and lively commotion, the accused stood in the same attitude, fixed and motionless—all eyes again centred upon him.

"Norman!" cried the sister, with an hysteric laugh, and springing towards him—"dear Norman, hear! You are acquitted—you are guiltless—you are free!"

But the youth neither stirred limb nor feature. At length a slight tremour, a quivering, passed over his face, a shade of ghastlier white, a faint sob, a convulsive effort to laugh—and he fell back senseless into his father's arms.
END OF VOL. I.

VOL. II

CHAPTER I.

In which, what seemed finished appears to have only commenced .

"How shall we hope for mercy, rendering none?" Shylock.

"Hush!" cried the nurse, "he sleeps."

"How has he passed the last four hours?" whispered the doctor.

"Quiet as an infant. His pain has left him. He fell into a doze after taking the medicine, and has stirred neither hand nor foot since."

They stepped cautiously towards the bed, and gazed upon the features of the poor, unconscious old man, with that silent and steady examination with which the living contemplate the dying or the dead,—awed—horror−struck—plunged in mystic fear and wonder at the vast changes in the fleshly temple, and those far more vast and sublime which have stricken the interior, breaking its lighted altar, and leaving its aisles dark and abandoned.

"He's dreadfully fallen away, doctor. His actions lately have been very strange; but he appeared more settled and sensible before his slumber. Do you think there is any hope?"

The doctor compressed his lips, and shook his head.

"None, nurse, none; the good old man cannot last the day."

"He has lived a pure life," said the nurse. "He has been a charitable and a religious man, and a kind friend to me." Alice wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron. "I shall never get such another."

The physician gave some trivial instructions.

"Can you not stay, doctor, and see the end?" asked Alice.

"No, good Alice, my presence can avail him nothing; but there are others less hopeless whom I am bound to see. This poor old man's heart is broken beyond the reach of medicine."

"Hush!" said the nurse, as a murmured name broke from the lips of the dying father.

"Rosalie—Rosalie! My child—my child! Save her—do not kill—Leslie—Leslie!" Drops of agony stood on the dreamer's forehead.

"Wake him," said the doctor; "this agitation will destroy him."

With a gentle hand on his skeleton fingers, the honest nurse dispelled the horrid vision.

"Ah! where am I?" said he, with a feeble and repining voice, opening his glassy eyes—which now, from the sunken proportions of his ashy face, appeared strangely large—and rolling them fearfully round, with a vacant stare, upon his companions.

"It is I, Mr. Romain—Alice, and the good Doctor Melbourne," said the nurse, carefully wiping his damp forehead with a handkerchief.

"Oh, true—I was dreaming of my poor daughter."

"My good friend," said the doctor, "how are you this morning?"

"Oh—better—thank you—much better," he said, drawing his short breath quickly with nearly every word; "I shall be well soon."

He smiled. What is there so ghastly as the smile of a dying man unconscious of his situation?

"Alice," he said, peevishly, "what is the reason Rosalie stays—so that—"

His faint breath was exhausted; his heavy eyes closed again; and he sank once more into a doze.

"Yes," said the nurse, "there it is; the murder of poor dear Miss Rosalie has broken the old man's heart."

"But you should not say *murder*, nurse," said the doctor; "it is decided, after an adequate examination, that Miss Romain was not murdered, at least by that unfortunate Norman Leslie."

"Not *murdered!*" echoed the nurse, in a vehement and sudden whisper. She took the doctor by the lapel of his coat, and led him from the bed towards an embrasure of the window. "Doctor Melbourne, that wretch, that monster Leslie *is* her *murderer*, as sure as the sun is in heaven!—all the world knows it."

"Nay, nurse—nay, this is not right," said the doctor, gravely. "I am sorry to find the people so generally withholding their sanction from the deliberate verdict of a jury. The sufferings of poor Leslie touch my heart."

"Blood for blood!" said the nurse, her generally mild features animated with indignation and merciless

revenge.

"But, Mistress Alice, `judge not, lest ye be judged!'"

"Whatever be the truth," said the old woman, solemnly—"and God knows it, and will judge the wicked—Mr. Romain has lived, and will die, with the belief that Norman Leslie killed his daughter, to hide from him and the world the base and cruel arts he had used against her, and to her destruction. I have never spoken to any one but yourself, doctor, who was not of this same opinion."

"Sorry to hear it—sorry to hear it, Alice. A good citizen should not only obey, but respect, the laws. In no country are they better and more wisely and impartially administered than in our own. It is cruel and wicked to persecute this unhappy man, regularly and fully acquitted by a court of justice. He is already half destroyed by this affair. I fear it will weigh him down yet, and drive him to some desperate extremity."

"I hope it may—all the world hopes it may," cried Alice. "Look at that poor, poor old man, his gray hairs brought down in sorrow to the grave. Father and daughter—both fallen beneath *his* hand. He who did this has money. Wealth can work wonders; he has got himself acquitted—in what way they best know who acquitted him; but the bloody *murderer* walks the streets, free and independent, seeking whom else he may devour—the horror of every one that sees him. If I were a man, I would strike him down in the street. Let him look to himself. Time will show. He should be, and will be, hunted down like a wild beast. Were I to meet him, old woman as I am, I do believe I should tear his eyes out with my own hands. God forgive me for such feelings, and by the bed of death, too!" And the highly−excited old woman wiped her eyes, which were full of tears.

"Mistress Alice, Mistress Alice," said the doctor, "while you exclaim against one crime, take care you be not guilty of another yourself. The terrible odium poured upon the head of that wretched and persecuted man, must, sooner or later, overwhelm him; he will die, and his blood will be upon the heads of his oppressors."

"Never a bit," replied Alice; "the devil will take care of his own. Oh, doctor, that this blood−stained assassin should walk the streets is a crying shame and disgrace to the country! I repeat—let him look to himself. I have heard hard things said of him. There are eyes on him he little suspects. I do think the news of his sacrifice would sweeten the last moments of that dying old man."

"Monstrous! Alice, monstrous! you speak almost blasphemy. I have heard much talk of this kind lately. If you have friends capable of injuring Leslie, as your words imply, warn them, Alice, of their wickedness and danger. The law would take terrible vengeance upon them, should it come before the court."

"Oh yes, forsooth," said Alice; "upon the *poor* it would doubtless fall; but the rich can escape, no matter what *they* have done. Doctor, doctor, I tell you—mark my words—safe as he thinks himself, that Norman Leslie is on the brink of a precipice, and no one will pity him—the villain, the monster!"

Words were wasted upon the enraged old woman, and the doctor left her without reply.

CHAPTER II.

A Suspicion.

"This fellow's of exceeding honesty, And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit, Of human dealings." —*Othello.*

The eminent physician who had just left the bed of Mr. Romain was one of the most skilful and highly esteemed. His noble and gentlemanly appearance; his bland and soothing manner; his sterling sense; his profound knowledge upon general subjects, as well as on his own dignified profession; his ever cheerful spirits, and excellent heart, rendered him a delightful companion even when a necessary one. Happily married to a woman with a large fortune, independent of his own ample income, a family of sons and daughters were growing up in usefulness and happiness about him; and his broad forehead was just sufficiently touched with silver to make him the more appropriate adviser for those of the fair sex whose fastidiousness, or whose delicacy, might less frankly receive the assiduity and advice of younger men. How many essentials are there, besides professional skill, to the complete character of a great physician! His very manners and appearance had in them something soothing; something that hushed alarm, quieted nervous apprehensions, restored hope and confidence, and made the morbid and the cowardly ashamed of their terrors. Prompt to the call of pain, he was ever punctually ready—toiling more for humanity than reward—dispelling, like a good spirit, torment and danger, and guarding from agony and death. As life is the essence and foundation of all other blessings, so he who preserves it exercises a most elevated and noble office; and if his duties bring him often into the midst of wo and mourning—if he is daily compelled to behold the soul and body separate (for the time must come to all when no earthly aid can save)—what a cheering and supporting offset does he possess in the reflection, that many walk the blessed earth, behold the sky and sweet nature, and bless friends and relations with their presence, whom *his* hand has rescued from the yawning grave. Oh, what joy! what divine power! to come the saviour of a terrified and weeping circle; to raise up the half−lost form of some sweet child or lovely girl; to give back to life the father, the wife, the son; to say unto the dying, who are already mourned as dead, "Arise, and walk."

Doctor Melbourne had known Leslie, and admired him sincerely. With the rest of the world, he had been sometimes staggered by the weight of evidence brought against him, not only at the trial, but subsequently through the medium of the public journals. A good citizen, however, as well as a benevolent man, he willingly waived his own opinion in favour of the verdict, and resolved to believe and to advocate the innocence of the unfortunate victim of general persecution.

We must remark here, that in no quarter of the globe are the laws more purely and properly administered than in the United States. The decisions are probably as equitable as it is in the nature of human laws to be. In no country, too, are they regarded with more universal reverence and confiding submission. If injustice occurs, it appears in those fantastic combinations of accidental circumstances— exceptions in the usual order of society—which the broad and immutable course of a general law cannot be turned aside to correct; but the law itself is acknowledged to be, as far as mortal institutions may be, broadly and beneficially adapted—without being warped by barbarous ages, or distorted into uncouth shapes to suit present individual interests—wisely and impartially to the whole body of the people. No currents flow to favour particular persons or classes. The mass of the people, however, in all ages, and under every form of government, contain materials, or classes, liable to be inflamed by accidental causes; and the majesty of mankind, or rather their strength and power, exhibit themselves at times independent of law—examining how far the bonds they have consented to wear continue to be adapted to the public good. These outbreaks and excitements are inherent to the state of earthly things. The healthiest individual has moments of depression, illness, and pain; the gentlest, the most disciplined, are sometimes agitated with passion or affected with anguish. Climes of heavenly purity are awakened by the thunder, the volcano, and the earthquake;—and no government will be invented to exclude from the ever−floating and heaving world of human feeling those turbulent ebbs and flows, those fiery out−bursts, which, amid universal beauty and order, carry wreck and terror through the realms of nature herself.

Doctor Melbourne drove from the dwelling of Mr. Romain to another and yet more elegant mansion. Had his visit not been a sufficient sign, other indications betrayed, even to the careless observer, the presence of sickness

in the house of Mr. Temple, once so adorned with gayety and beauty, and so bright with the midnight revel. The knocker was muffled—the bell was tied—the window−shutters closed—and the pavement before the door thickly bedded with the soft bark of the tanner, over which the wheels of every passing carriage rolled inaudibly.

The doctor found the family abandoned to dark forebodings—perhaps more painful than excited anguish. The illness and apparently approaching death of Flora were a fearful and a frightful lesson to remind them that they belonged to earth, and were linked, in the midst of their blessings, with the lowest and vilest, to wretchedness and danger. Bitter was the pang of each passing hour that stole the hue from the cheek, and the graceful roundness from the form, of that lovely, lovely girl— that softened and etherealized her gay sweet spirit with the prospect of the grave. Vainly had all human means been exhausted. Day by day, week by week, she grew paler and paler, thinner and thinner—more feeble, helpless, and hopeless. They who loved her most no longer questioned whether she could recover, but how long she could remain on earth. Mr. Temple started from his careless pursuit of pleasure, and concentrated all the energies and anxieties of his soul upon this single theme. Mrs. Temple's majestic form bent beneath the affliction and assiduity that preyed upon her day and night, and her eyes ever bore traces of bitter tears. The servants wept—the groom wiped his eyes as he curried his horses—every messenger whom business, or chance, or friendship brought to the house of sorrow, trod with apprehension and awe as he approached the door; and the whispered inquiry, given with half−held breath and beating heart, was ever the prelude to, "Oh, fading, fading fast away! Oh, worse—much, much worse!"

Poor Flora!—every one remembered the bright and blooming girl. Whose cheek so radiant? whose eye so full of joy and kindness? Her voice and step filled the house with cheerfulness. Her presence shed a light and a peace even upon the poor and the unhappy. There was not a beggar, a decrepit old woman in the neighbourhood, whose ear had not leaned to hear that sweet voice—whose heart had not beat with quicker pleasure at the approach of that light step. Old John, the wood−sawyer— a rough and ragged wretch, whose heart had stood the storms of seventy years—came every morning to the door, asked after his young mistress, and turned away with the great tears rolling down his cheeks like rain. Poor, poor Flora: Every heart trembled for her.

Some there were, however—envious, perhaps, of the prosperity of the Temples, or offended at their display—who did not hesitate, with that exquisite cruelty and malice—a very snare of Satan— which people of the most ostentatious piety sometimes fall into (so blind, so weak is the human heart), to declare aloud, and with cold indifference, not totally free from a tincture of gratification, that "the calamity of their daughter was a judgment upon the Temples from a revengeful Heaven, for having wasted their wealth in idle pleasure."

Amid all this dismal sorrow, Flora was calm and unsubdued. Her patient and unresisting gentleness and sweetness yielded without repining, as a lamb on the altar. Her voice, though faint and low, was sweeter in its tremulous tones; her manner had gained a new and indescribable grace and softness; and over her countenance had stolen a beauty so touching, so exquisite, so unearthly, that even those beholders who did not weep stood to wonder. She spent hours of the day in a large easy−chair, clothed in a robe of vestal white—her fragile and beautiful form supported by pillows and cushions. Sometimes she was assisted in a laborious walk across the room, and sometimes moved near the window, and breathed the air which the now rich autumn blew gently in, loaded with incense. Her continued cheerfulness, her uncomplaining and angelic nature, her gentle tenderness to all about her, every eloquent look, every accidental word, bound her as with a spell to all hearts, and was treasured carefully in all memories, to be dwelt on and repeated when the eyes that shed, the lips that breathed them, should exist but in the minds of the survivers. In her gayest and brightest monents, never had she wielded such a power over the affections.

It is impossible at any time to look on a thing so fair, except with extreme interest: but when sickness descends upon her; when pain racks her young limbs, even as it does that of a common brute; when we see the cords of life and happiness gradually relaxed and falling to pieces; when we gaze on her patient, sweet face, as something doomed to pass away prematurely with ordinary vulgar things, to fall and fade like the leaves and the flowers: oh, in the bosom that loves, the impressions of sadness and agony are indeed almost unendurable.

Mr. and Mrs. Temple received Doctor Melbourne with speechless wo.

"How is she to−day, my dearest friends?" inquired he.

Tears were his answer, till Mrs. Temple, sobbing, replied—

"Weaker, weaker, doctor; and dearer as she passes away."

"Oh, doctor," cried Mr. Temple, "Flora is already an angel. Day by day she has less of earth and more of

heaven; soon we shall be utterly alone. I cannot bear it—I cannot bear it! Oh, Melbourne, save my daughter!"

"Be calm, my good friends. I do not attempt to console you. I cannot. Only be patient under the will of the Almighty. My heart bleeds for you. I can only sympathize with you. May God avert this calamity from your house."

He took Mr. Temple's hand, who, in return, grasped his with convulsive energy; and turning away his face, the hardness of his breath, the heaving of his bosom, announced the dire pangs with which, alone, this deeply−rooted affection could be wrenched from his heart.

"Come," said the doctor, kindly and cheerfully, after a moment of silence, "let us see the dear girl."

The mother, with noiseless step, and wiping her eyes, carefully disentangled the hand of the doctor from that of her afflicted husband, and led him gently to the chamber of Flora.

It was a bewildering morning. The sunshine gleamed delightfully in through the crimson curtains, the flowers were all blooming in the garden, and the birds sang merrily beneath the windows. Flora was seated in her large chair, with a little stand before her, on which lay a book.

"My daughter," said Mrs. Temple, "here is Doctor Melbourne."

"Ah, dear mother—doctor"—she held out her faded hand, and with a smile—"what a trouble I am to you!"

"Come," said the doctor, with a cheerful, encouraging air; "we must talk awhile with the naughty sick girl. How does she do to−day?"

"Naughty, doctor, as you say; I have forgotten your injunctions, and indulged myself for a few moments with reading. I think I feel stronger to−day."

"We shall send you off somewhere in the country," said the doctor; "you are too confined here in this close, noisy town; and the air is changeable. We must take her into a kinder climate, into a more cheerful land. Come, Miss Flora, what do you say to a soft, delicious clime all the year round; where oranges and lemons bloom through the whole winter, and where snow never approaches nearer the green and flowery vale than the peaked tops of silver that shine from the clouds; where the mild sunshine never ceases to warm, and the bright verdure never passes away? What say you to a land of such beauty and enchantment? What say you to *Italy?*"

"Oh, doctor," said Flora, with a languid smile, "I think all my youthful feelings are dead in my bosom. A few months ago, such a thought would have kept me wakeful for joy; but now—" a half−audible sigh escaped her lips.

"Why, my child?" asked the doctor.

"And why, my beloved Flora?" said Mrs. Temple, kneeling down affectionately, taking her hand and pressing it to her lips, while the doctor held the other, and ever and anon felt the pulse.

The pale and feeble girl sighed, but returned no answer.

"You are doing very well this morning," said the doctor. "I have seen a poor man who would like to own a pulse so strong and regular as this—the father of that unfortunate Rosalie Romain—Ha!" he exclaimed, suddenly, and in a changed tone.

"What is the matter?" said Mrs. Temple.

"I was surprised," replied the doctor, "at the sudden leaping of the pulse—what! it is quieter now—so—so. I have been reprimanding Romain's old nurse for her bitter denunciations of that unhappy being, poor Norman—Ha! again!" cried the doctor.

A transient colour passed across the face of Flora, and she lowered her eyes.

The doctor shook his head. He was a man of the world, and knew where to read the complaints of his fellow−creatures elsewhere than in books. He thought there was more in this than met the eye.

CHAPTER III.

A Discovery.

"There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snowy bosom sun−ward spread,
Thou lift'st thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the *share* uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!" Burns.

As the doctor entered the adjoining room, Mrs. Temple followed, and he desired to speak with her and her husband again.

"I am going to ask something," said he; "but I believe we are scarcely calm enough to−day."

"Speak—oh speak!" said Mrs. Temple; "if it concern Flora, another day may be too late."

"Well, then, hear me without shrinking. It is my duty to tell you—"

The mother motioned her hand for him not to proceed, and hid her face.

"Nay, I am not in despair about your daughter's recovery, but it is my duty to tell you that she is in a most perilous crisis. Her disorder increases. It has baffled my skill; and I am induced to believe, from something which has taken place this morning, that we have not fully understood her disease. You ascribe it to cold and agitation at the trial of Leslie."

"Yes; that monster will have her life to answer for as well as poor Rosalie's. She was obliged to attend as a witness, and there took this fatal disorder."

"You know, Mrs. Temple," said the doctor, "that I have at times thought Flora troubled with some secret grief."

"Oh, doctor," replied Mrs. Temple, "what grief, secret or known, could Flora Temple have ever suffered? She was never from our sight! She never had a wish ungratified."

"In these cases, sometimes," added the doctor, "the affections prey upon the heart."

"Affections! impossible! She has been ever sought by all."

"And all have been refused?" inquired the doctor.

"Always, always!" was the reply.

"Many offers rejected?"

"Many, very many," said Mr. Temple; "the richest—the noblest!"

"I think Flora Temple would scarcely *love* in *vain!*" added the proud mother, haughty even in her grief, and with a sarcastic tone; "*that* tale would meet with *little* credit."

"Has she been accustomed to see no one who might awaken an interest in her?"

"None, none! I know her heart. It is pure, and free as ice from such a feeling. I have myself often *wondered* at it. She not only never loves, but, by her actions and words, never admits the possibility of her loving; and yet her nature is all affection."

"And it was at Leslie's trial that she took this illness?"

"That fatal trial," said the father.

"And since that period she has declined to her present state?" pursued the doctor. "Do not be offended or surprised at any questions I may ask"

"You alarm me," said Mrs. Temple.

"Was your daughter acquainted with Norman Leslie previous to this trial?"

"No, no!" answered the mother, with an expression of anger; "she cannot be said to have been acquainted."

"He visited us," said Mr. Temple, "perhaps once a month, and remained a half−hour at a time."

"Heaven forbid," ejaculated the mother, "that she should be insulted with the name of his acquaintance."

"Is it quite *impossible* that your daughter—" The doctor paused in some embarrassment.

"Doctor Melbourne," said Mrs. Temple, with severe gravity, and a little elevating her bust, "you do not mean to insult us in our misery?"

"Let us once more enter her chamber, madam," said the doctor: "watch her face as I speak from a distance; and, as you value her health, her life, express no surprise."

They re−entered. The momentary gayety of Flora was gone. She sat in her chair, languid and pale, and scarcely spoke as the doctor once more took her unresisting hand.

"My dear young lady," said he, "you must not despond; you are really better to−day; I do hope to make you well."

She closed her eyes, and, with a heavy sigh, shook her head.

"Here have been visiters to see you this morning, your mother tells me, and they have all gone away with the hope of your recovery. Count Clairmont called."

"He is very good," said Flora, quietly.

"And Mr. Morton."

"Poor Morton!" said she, with a faint smile of half−remembered humour

"And Mr. Moreland," added the doctor, walking carelessly to the window.

"I shall never forget the eloquence of Mr. Moreland," replied Flora, with a long−drawn sigh.

"And, as I entered," continued the doctor, with the same air of careless inattention—"there stood at the door and made many kind inquiries after you, our poor friend Norman Leslie.—Look," said the doctor to the mother, in a whisper only audible to her ear; "be convinced." He withheld her from springing to Flora.

"There has been Captain Forbes of the army, and a whole host of others," continued he, aloud, and calmly, as if he had noticed nothing. "They all join in their warmest prayers for your recovery, and recommend you to fly this cold climate."

"Has she ever heard any thing respecting Leslie?" inquired the doctor, when they were again alone.

"Nothing but casual conversation concerning his guilt, his infamy, and the general execration in which he is held."

"And has she never asked concerning him?"

"Never."

"Not one question?"

"Nothing."

"Nor desired to know aught of the man whom she avowed herself to believe innocent? never even mentioned the name at the bare sound of which she thus starts and trembles?"

The mother clasped her hands with a new impulse of agitation.

"Mrs. Temple," said the doctor, solemnly, "your daughter *loves* . The lightest word of Norman Leslie is dearer to her young heart than all the world beside."

CHAPTER IV.

An unexpected Medicine.

"Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased!" *Macbeth.*

Early the next morning Doctor Melbourne visited, as usual, the mansion of Mr. Romain. All was over. The old man had breathed his last. The news of his decease was already abroad, and exercised a very unfavourable influence upon the general indignation against Leslie.

In a few moments he was once more at Mr. Temple's. Since his last visit he had taken occasion to inquire, and his suspicions of Flora's true malady were more than confirmed. It appeared now beyond a doubt, even to Mrs. Temple, that her daughter had entertained a secret attachment for Leslie; an attachment greatly enhanced by his late danger and present situation. In the first place, she knew, or at least thought she knew, him innocent. The awful event which had involved his reputation and happiness; the struggle of her soul, necessarily concealed, even from a mother; the shock of his arrest for murder—for the murder of one of their familiar companions; the excitement, the hope, the terror of the trial; the unexpected, overwhelming news of his acquittal; the odium and fearful peril which yet hung over him—all fell with a blighting and crushing power upon a heart which had never before known sorrow. The cold and almost bitter sternness, too, with which, at the trial, he whom in secret she loved, disclaimed the possibility of affection on the part of either, had gone to her heart like a poisoned arrow, and left a wound rankling beyond the reach of medicine.

It appeared that she had attended the trial, not on compulsion, but, as Mr. Loring had stated, voluntarily, having privately written, on the first day, the nature of the fact which she was able to testify. The letter had been accidentally mislaid before it reached the intended hand, which caused the lateness of the period at which she was introduced. How her sensitive and shrinking nature had endured that ordeal, made more fiery by the inconsiderate vehemence of the profession, the reader is already aware. At her urgent request she had remained with her father till the return of the verdict. Not a sound had she uttered to betray the agony with which she watched the ebbs and flows of opinion— with which she beheld that haughty, that beloved form, enduring, with fierce and unnatural calmness, the cold inquiry—the quiet sneer—the rude gaze— and the storm of denunciation from all the various throng of judge, jury, counsel, and spectator. On her return home commenced the attack, whose frightful ravages had at length brought her to the great world's edge.

Under these circumstances, the course to be adopted was, to her parents, a source of painful embarrassment. That Leslie was guilty, few, very few pretended to doubt. The doctor ventured to express a belief in his innocence; but he perceived at once that it was in vain. Mrs. Temple, from some secret antipathy, had conceived a dislike to him, heightened, probably, by his open contempt for her favourite Clairmont. She would not admit the idea of his innocence.

"It is my duty," said the doctor, at last, "to say what I think. The mind and the body are so wonderfully connected, by such subtle fibres—so intertwined with each other in their millions and millions of reciprocal influences—that I frankly declare their mutual operations baffle the skill of surgery, and may alike disappoint every hope and every fear. They act upon rules independent of our art. Your daughter suffers under no *cold*. Her disease is in *the mind* . We must minister to that. We must pluck from the memory the rooted sorrow. If Mrs. Temple will allow me to confess my thoughts—"

"Speak."

"I believe Norman Leslie an innocent and noble being. In faith, I *know it*. Juries and judges, editors and the world at large, may be deceived by evidence; but he who looks narrowly into the human heart, when sickness is on it, when death is near, cannot be deceived. He is innocent, and your daughter loves him!"

"Doctor Melbourne does not advise me to link my daughter with an assassin; rather would I see her in her coffin."

"That she should *marry* Leslie," said the doctor, calmly, "can be proposed by no one. That, I know, circumstances do not permit; not the soul−stricken youth himself would dare to dream of union with her. But as he is now about to leave this country for ever, should she know what *I* know, that he loves her, and regards her as an angel to be worshipped, and above his reach; could she but once *know*, but once *see* this, she would part from

him with a healed and a peaceful mind. Her heart would be relieved of its present burden. If life must be borne, she would bear it with resignation. If death must be encountered, she would meet it with cheerfulness."

"There is reason in your words," said Mr. Temple.

"And wormwood too," added the wife, with a haughty frown, her high temper rising even through her grief.

"Emily," said Mr. Temple.

She replied quickly,—

"I know what you would say, but I will never consent. I wish I had burnt the letter, as before this I intended. I do not believe, I never will believe in his innocence. She shall never see that letter."

"Emily," rejoined her husband, gravely, after a moment's pause, "she *shall* see the letter."

"Now, my dear, dear husband, you cannot, you will not."

"I can, and I will," replied he, kindly, but firmly.

He rarely opposed her; when he did, she knew resistance would be utterly useless, and bit her lip in silence.

"Doctor Melbourne," said Mr. Temple, "I repose in you the most implicit confidence. Your opinion in the innocence of this unfortunate young man coincides with my own. You must know he has written to my daughter, very honourably enclosing to me, with a hint of its contents. It was his desire, he said, as in all probability he should never meet her again, to express his gratitude for her voluntary appearance at his trial, to which he owed his life. He added, however, that the letter might contain sentiments warm beyond the limits of simple gratitude, and he trusted to my honour either to give it to Flora or to burn it *unread*. This conduct is that of an honest and high−minded man. I sympathize with him sincerely. Flora shall see the letter immediately; she is already doomed. It is our only hope. I will speak with her *myself*."

She had requested to be left alone, and now lay on her pillow, lost in thought. Oh how had she suffered! It was not that the strength had left her once perfect limbs; that her joyous voice had lost all its tone of mirth; that pain had shot across her, and laid its unrelenting hand upon a bosom whose every feeling was pure, compassionate, and tender; but *thought* had preyed upon her—*despair* had stung her with its fiery fang.

Silence was in the apartment, broken by no sound but such as harmonized with it, and rendered it more eloquent and holy. It was an autumn afternoon. The air was still, and bright with the hues and warmth of a mellow heaven. The window was open. A bird sat pluming his feathers on a near branch, ever and anon pouring forth his warbles, as if his little heart overflowed with a gushing fulness of music and joy. A cluster of half−blown roses gathered around the window, all bright and lovely, as once had been her own cherished dreams of life. Her soft blue eyes, after wandering out over the painted sky, and upon the bright green of the garden, rested upon the yet unshaded flowers; and thought seemed passing through her mind, with a darkening, deepening tide, at first lapsing idly, soft, and tender, then darting with a more impatient and wilder impulse. At length she covered her face with her hands, and tears burst through her whitened and delicate fingers.

At this moment the door opened gently. It was her father. He came alone, and held in his hand a letter. She strove to brush away her tears, hastily, almost guiltily. She could not. The more she dashed them from her long, drenched lashes, the faster, the heavier, they crowded forth. The softened father, by a kind of intuition, entered at once into her feelings. He approached and leaned over her bed, his own eyes blinded with the heart's dearest waters. Tenderly, almost convulsively, he folded her to his breast.

"My daughter," he said, "Mr. Leslie—"

He paused again, and looked not on her face as he spoke. The kindness seemed understood. She felt—why, how, she knew not—but she felt that there was confidence between them, sacred confidence, and unmingled, unbounded love. Yielding to the gush and whelming flow of her feelings, she placed her head on his bosom, and wept.

"My child, my child!" broke from his quivering lips. They wept together.

In a few moments, after another embrace, and imprinting upon her forehead a fervid kiss, he withdrew in silence. The letter lay beside her. She opened it tremblingly, breathlessly. Twice, through the gathering and blinding tears, she essayed in vain to find meaning in the characters that floated indistinctly, and all blended together, before her eyes. At length, raising herself from the pillow, and putting back the long hair that fell unheededly around her neck and face, she ran her gaze rapidly over the lines. A flow of crimson suffused her cheek. Her eyes softened. Her bosom heaved. She pressed wildly the half−read page, again and again to her lips.

Blissful moment! Death itself came now radiant with light. No! no, she had not loved in vain.

CHAPTER V.

A Midnight Ramble and its Consequences.

"Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth; and it shall come to pass that every one that findeth me shall slay me."

The storm beat fiercely upon the black, silent houses. Every window and door was closed against night and the tempest. Lightnings enveloped earth and sky. So intensely brilliant was the glare, that every object in the street, every shape of house and tree, the distinct outline of every cloud, were sharply, vividly visible. Peal after peal of thunder burst leaping through the heavens. All nature seemed drenched in an ocean of rain, and the wind roared in the air.

A single form, muffled in a heavy cloak, was the only living thing desperate enough to encounter this discord of the elements. It was Norman Leslie. On the succeeding morning he was to embark for Europe, with little prospect of ever again beholding the country of his birth, his love, and his ruin. Rendered, by his situation, a subject of the most painful and even dangerous curiosity, he had rarely of late ventured out by day. Indeed, from several circumstances that swelled the proof of his guilt, and perhaps from the active hatred and artifices of Clairmont, the public mind was yet more than ever bitterly disposed against him. The night had then been his time for exercise and lonely contemplation. Then he had forth issued like a solitary ghost, prowling around the haunts of his ancient pleasures; sometimes in the enchanting moonlight, and sometimes in the tempest, his companionless wanderings had been repeated often till the breaking day warned him to retire.

One only idea had relieved his mind during these solitary and brooding hours. It was the declaration of Flora Temple while giving her testimony at the trial, that she had *never been affianced in marriage* , and that she had always believed *Mr. Leslie attached to Miss Romain* . It burst upon him like a heaven of warming light to the drooping and benumbed victim of a wintry storm. For a time, it had occupied his mind during the trial even more than his own danger. Strange vicissitudes of life! that in this, his most terrible and perilous crisis, touched his soul with the sweetest bliss he had ever known. Here, then, the whole mystery of Flora's conduct was explained. He had half confided to her the passion that gradually mastered him; nor had his gentle tone, his unguarded looks, been reproved. Nay, he had deemed it answered, till Mrs. Temple, in her absorbing admiration of Clairmont and his title, had crushed his opening hopes. From that moment Flora Temple had nearly lost his respect, and, [except when, as vague surmises crossed him respecting Mrs. Temple's veracity, his repressed affection had risen again,] his manner to the unsuspecting girl had been cold, and studiedly careless.

"Perhaps," he thought, "had I then dared to strive, I might have won an angel to my side. But my rude change of manner, which to her must have seemed the vilest caprice, the most unprin cipled fickleness, has now lost her to me for ever."

With these sentiments, he had written to Flora the letter mentioned in the previous chapter. We will not transcribe all its deep and fervid outpourings of love. He flung away every restraint, for he wrote to one whom he never expected to behold again till they met in a brighter world. It was, therefore, not only a confession—it was a farewell; and full it was of the melancholy poetry and tenderness of his gentle and romantic, but despairing nature. He sought no response—he expected, he wished none. The decree of fate had gone forth. He dared no longer to hope for love. He was doomed to wander through the farthest climes, alone and branded. He bade her, if she had ever thought of him, to forget him—to consider him as one swallowed in the raging sea. Other thoughts than happiness, he said, were now to be his companions. He solicited no love in return—such unmerited bliss it would even be infamy for him to accept. He would link no bright and joyous being with his dark destiny. No beauteous head should bow in darkness and shame by *his* side, to be pointed out by the finger of scorn in the public street—to be blighted with a name on the lips of ribalds and mockers, now "common as the steps that mount the capitol." No! on this wild earth they would meet no more. Her, his home, his country—he turned his face from all; they were things to him past, though they never could be forgotten. "But," added the glowing and eloquent lover, "I will strive to hear of you even on the opposite side of the globe. I will watch your fate with unsleeping solicitude. I will think of you, love, adore you. Every breeze that wanders, every star that rolls to the

beloved west, I will freight with gentle thoughts of you, and blessings on your head. While I live you shall influence me to all that I can accomplish of high and holy; and when death is on me, I will once more waft to you a message, to say how faithfully I have worshipped, how I have fed upon memory, and how I have cherished your image to my latest hour."

Perhaps, although to her he had disclaimed the hope of a reply, he had not to himself. No reply, however, reached him; and on this turbulent night, the last he was to spend in America, he had resolved, in spite of the raving elements, to walk forth again, and with the deep but airy tenderness of a true lover, to gaze, for the last time, on the mansion where slept the being who had so deeply impressed his soul.

As he approached within sight of it, the tempest increased. Close, tremendous bursts of thunder rolled in huge volumes and stupendous seas of sound along the sky, crushing, mingling, and crashing, as if the very earth rocked on its axle. The blue and livid lightning shot fiercely from cloud to cloud, cutting the eyeballs with sudden zigzag lines of intolerable brightness, and wrapping all nature in sheets of gleaming fire, that threatened utterly to extinguish the sight.

The dwelling of Mr. Temple was a very large and prominent one; and as the dazzling and quick−darting fluid sometimes lingered with a less vivid fire, Leslie could distinguish it at a considerable distance high amid the elemental war. He was yet far off, when a bolt, launched with maddened fury, darted from a black cloud directly upon the building. A towering chimney rolled from its height; a blaze appeared rapidly mounting along the edges of the roof, increasing each moment with almost incredible power, which implied some highly combustible material in the upper portion of the house. Before he could reach the spot, the flames, aided also by the frightful wind, were sweeping over the whole mansion, while massy billows of lurid smoke rolled up upon the gale.

The conflagration had gained a most ominous height ere the surrounding inhabitants, or those within, seemed conscious of the danger. Then a bell rang sharply, and several cries of "Fire! fire!" mingled with the crash. The pealing of the bells immediately became general. A watchman thundered at the door with his club. Norman had approached before this universal alarm, but his presence was but of little use. The doors were closed; and although he knocked and rang violently, it was long before he knew whether he had made himself heard. At last came shrieks from within, and a throng of people half dressed, domestics, and other members of the family, appeared in confused, wild haste, shrieking and clasping their hands: and, as the light increased, their wild attitudes and vehement motions and gestures, gave them a resemblance to furies in their abode of eternal fire.

"Oh, God!" cried a voice of sudden and sharp agony; "Flora—Flora—"

"Which way?" asked Norman, starting forward.

The speaker was Mrs. Temple.

"For the love of Heaven," demanded the youth, "direct me."

But the terrified mother had fainted. Without further delay he sprang forward, committing his steps to the guidance of Heaven.

At this instant a figure rushed from the crackling and crashing house. It was the desperate father.

"Where is she?" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"Here! she *must* be here!" he almost shrieked; "her room is empty—I have sought her everywhere in vain."

"Not here! not here! She will perish in the flames!" burst from every lip.

Again the agonized father started into the midst of the conflagration. Leslie had already entered. The flames had now reached a height perfectly furious and appalling—spouting from the windows, and rolling over the beautiful and doomed mansion with ravenous and infernal fierceness: now in a tall and gleaming pyramid, leaping high into the sable heavens; now sloping back into a huge and yawning gulf, that buried all things in a deluge and mad whirlwind of fire. Surge after surge of quivering flame and smoke swept hideously on the gale, rendering it almost impossible for the rapidly increasing multitude to approach. Far and wide the surrounding scene lay strongly and magnificently visible in the deep red glare. Street and house, roof and chimney, dome and spire; the huge dense crowd; and the mantle of cloud and storm, that veiled the heavens: all glowed like objects in the near reflection of some heated furnace. So might have gleamed the buried Pompeii, when the mountain heaved its fiery tempests to the night.

Leslie had rushed through the crowd, and, leaping, springing, flying, mounted the steps. The intense light, the fierce heat, the crackling, crashing, and falling of rafters, announced too fatally the awful progress of the element. Blackened, scorched, almost suffocated, choking with an agony of suspense, he shouted long and loud. At length

he clambered upon a half−consumed stairway, and, through the spacious window of an ample cabinet, beheld the object of his search. She had fallen in her flight, and lay senseless on the floor. With an exclamation of tumultuous joy and triumph, he was in the act of leaping down to her rescue (oh bliss unspeakable! to bear in his longing arms, from a dreadful death, that angelic form, more precious to him than all the world beside), when he felt a sudden and violent hand on his shoulder. He turned— the face of Clairmont was before him.

"Villain of villains!" shrieked Leslie, mad with impatience, and striving to shake off the grasp of his foe. The latter, with a sudden rush, threw him from his height, fifteen feet down, upon the opposite side of the stair, and himself leaped to relieve the beautiful and unconscious girl.

Gnashing his teeth with impotent indignation, alarmed for Flora and for himself, Norman only with ponderous strength, and after repeated efforts, broke through a way which had been blocked up by piles of heavy furniture, that had nearly confined him to a dreadful death. Again he sought the room where he had seen Flora. She was gone. He rushed once more into the open air. Clairmont was just bearing her forth in safety. Her beautiful form hung lifeless on his arm. Her long hair streamed to the ground. Her arm and hand had fallen heavily by her side. *Her head was on his bosom*, and one hand he had daringly seized in his own.

A shout of delight rose from the crowd as the bold young noble appeared with his lovely prize. Mrs. Temple received him with a shriek of joy. He stood proud and high, the object of deep admiration and clamorous applause.

With a bursting heart, and half exhausted, Norman approached the group who were endeavouring to recall to life the object of his love; when Clairmont, in a loud voice, and directing the universal attention with his finger, shouted—

"Ho! *Leslie the murderer!*"

Like the shock of agitated waves when a rising wind sweeps the sea, the mass of human beings all visible in that intense light, stirred and heaved at the sound. The death of Mr. Romain on the preceding day had fearfully augmented their indignation against that now common and execrated name. The cry arose, the shout went round, a thousand lips repeated the words, a thousand faces turned upon the victim, as he stood conspicuous and in the full gleam of the fire—and "*Leslie the murderer!*" rose higher than the surrounding tumult of heaven and earth.

Bowed down, maddened, crushed to the dust— his proud heart bursting with love, with indignation, with despair—he turned and sought refuge in flight.

CHAPTER VI.

America and Italy—Florence, from the Hills—A Wanderer, and the changes of Years.

"The vast, vast plain with ocean's grandeur lies;
Around, sharp hills and banks of verdure rise.
Here the rich vine its weighty tendrils weaves;
And there the olive stirs its silver leaves.
Towns, tow'rs, and convents, lifted to the sky,
Beneath, vales, domes, spires, villas sparkling lie,
While the famed Arno, silvery now and bright,
In frequent bends pursues his course of light." Anon.

Time rolled away. Days expand to years while we look forward; but years shrink to moments as we cast our glance back upon the past. Six winters had elapsed since the circumstances hitherto related. Events of a general import, in no way connected with our story, had erased it from the conversation and memory of the community; and the individuals whom we have introduced to the reader had apparently lost the character of actors in a continuous drama. No information had ever transpired concerning the unfortunate Rosalie Romain, and it had been universally conceded, at least by those who had not intimately known him, that she had fallen by the hand of her lover. Men shook their heads, shrugged their shoulders, and called it a strange affair; and so it faded away among the thousand marvels of the past. The young man had been last publicly seen at the conflagration of Mr. Temple's mansion, where he had been recognised by the mob, aided by the exclamation of Count Clairmont. From that moment his voice had never been heard nor his face seen by the public, nor even by any of his former acquaintance. He was supposed to have buried himself in the oblivion of some foreign clime; and it was currently reported that he had fallen in a political fray in Poland. His family resided in extreme seclusion. The statesman's dreams were shivered to atoms. Howard had married Miss Leslie while the obloquy against Norman ran the highest, and they rarely mingled in society. Upon other points our history itself will contain sufficient information.

We must now bear the reader from that sublime fragment of the globe which the immortal Genoese gave to civilized man; and to America—with her beautiful and stupendous scenes of nature; her immense lakes; her broad and sweeping rivers; her climes, melting into all the varieties of the globe; her cataracts, shaking the earth; her mountains, kissing the heavens; her solitudes and forests, yet hushed in primeval silence; her Indians, stern and sad, fading from reality into fable; her broad fabric of political freedom, already towering up brightly and boldly amid the wrecks and shadows of history; her magnificent cities; her vast plains, laughing with plenty; her healthy breezes, laden with the voice of contentment and peace—to America, we bid farewell; and Italy claims our attention. Italy!—what a contrast! On wings mightier than those of the eagle, you have soared from a world yet unscathed and new. You have alighted on a remote, a more wondrous realm. You are as one born blind, who now first sees those things which before he only heard of. Objects hitherto but vague, and hallowed shapes of imagination rise, startling your very soul with their stern, naked reality, all rent and wounded, all blackened and blasted, where the hot and rolling lava of each human volcano has scattered them, and burnt them, and left them in their despair. Oh, Italy! who treads thy stricken and terrible domains, from the fresh and virgin dells of the new world, feels then, perchance, for the first time, appalled that he is *man*. Beneath him every field has a voice, and a story—around lean crumbling monuments full of gloom and agony — unburied ghosts flit through the dusky shade; like Æneas, he shrinks, lest the very branch, as he plucks it, may shed drops of blood. War and hate, murder and superstition, have made themselves tokens that frown and bristle from every hill and dale. He beholds the million crippled beneath the chariot−wheels of crowned kings. He roams through her desolate huts; her hideous dungeons; her stately palaces; her immortal tombs; her blood−soaked plains; her unpeopled cities. The genius of aristocracy and despotism stalks by the prone column and the broken arch; the bloated tyrant yet revels in his golden house; the wailing of wo yet mingles with the tread of stern armies; the ulcerous beggar starves in the costly temple; the desperate ruffian stabs in the abandoned amphitheatre This is the moral aspect of Italy.

It was near the hour of sunset, towards the close of a golden autumn (though all the autumns of Italy may be

called golden), six years after the events recorded in the preceding pages, that a single horseman, having sent on his servant in advance to procure for him the necessary accommodations, paused on the brow of the hill which, on the road from Bologna, commands a near view of the Val d'Arno and of Florence. Floods of deep splendour, streaming from the gorgeous west, bathed the immense level, and its banks of sloping mountains, in the softest of all earthly radiance. The plain lay shining through a half−palpable mist, like a vast still lake, imbosomed among steep hills. On three sides rose eminences, each one crowned with some striking edifice, celebrated town, or remarkable ruin. Here a crumbling fortress, there a half−buried wall, and there an abandoned cathedral; while an old convent, or a superb villa, seen at frequent intervals amid palaces and peasants' huts, and immense broad walls of yellow stone, rendered the view yet more romantically picturesque. On one hand, in a sharp and abrupt swell of the Apennine, rose the steep of Fiesole, capped with its ancient town and modern village—a monastery built by Michael Angelo, the Franciscan convent, and the spacious cathedral, loftily pressing into view. In the opposite direction rises a tower erected for the observations of Galileo, and near stands the villa in which Boccacio wrote most of his hundred tales of love. The Arno glided along on its way of liquid light, while in the horizon faintly rose the dim blue mountains of Genoa. Upon the bosom of each green and leaning hill, and far, far along the extent of the limitless plain, the sunshine was brightly reflected from countless villas, huts, towns, and palaces—in the foreground, lifting their stone towers and walls from out the foliage of cyprus and olive, and in the distance faded to dots and specks, sparkling through the floating gauze of aerial gold. In the midst of this inexpressibly beautiful scene, swelled darkly and heavily into the illumined air the gigantic dome of Santa Maria del Fiore: its filigreed belfry sprang beautifully up its side, and around rose the large and massy towers; the tiled, burnt, and time−scathed roofs; the gloomy, black palaces, encircled with gardens, and the crumbling, moss−painted, vine−clothed old walls of the city. The month of November had just commenced; and while London was merged in mud, fog, and smoke, and New−York lay dark and cold amid her naked trees and wintry winds, this ancient and celebrated town, sheltered from the north by stupendous mountains, and basking under a heaven all warm with hues of pearl and emerald, lay steeped in its ocean of glowing light, with the exquisite splendour of a *Claude*. The air slept in stirless repose The deepest tranquillity was impressed upon the scene, over which came neither noise nor motion, except that through the profound stillness might sometimes be heard the softened roar of the distant carriage−wheels, as the nobility hastened to their evening drive at the Cascine; or the sound of the peasant's song, as he wound down the road with his light cart and little white ass; or the ringing of the bells, each quivering toll wafted over sparkling house−top and scented vale in waves of silver sound.

The traveller slackened the reins of his horse as he reached a near eminence commanding this enchanting prospect. The noble beast paused, arched his neck, lifted his head, and pricked his ears, apparently sharing the pleasure of his master in gazing down on a picture so lovely. Thus, alone on that height, the stranger yielded himself to the spirit of the scene and the hour, and sat silent and lost in earnest admiration. He was evidently a man of the higher ranks, whose appearance at once commanded attention and respect. He was tall and graceful, and with a figure well developed, just passed from youth into the fulness and vigour of manhood. His countenance was browned, as if with many climes, but marked by features of striking beauty, chastened by melancholy and thought, and conveyed the idea that you would find him one dangerous to insult, and yet easy to love; one who had felt and reflected much; whose heyday of life had gone with the winds; to whom years had brought experience and wisdom—disappointment, and, perhaps, unhappiness. Something there was in his expression of sweetness, and something of sternness, all blended into a look care−worn and subdued, as if his soul were with the past. It was thus that Norman Leslie, for it was he,—after the lapse of six years, spent in far eastern climes, eastern even to the Roman, even to the Greek,—it was thus that Norman Leslie again appeared upon the stage of this drama, and, though ignorant of it himself, connected with its other characters.

While he muses upon one of the most extraordinary scenes for beauty which the globe can furnish, let us also pause briefly to trace the course of his few past years. The reader is already aware that the trial which released his person had been fatal to his reputation. His fate seemed as embarrassing as it was terrible. He was cut off from all the world—a crushed, blackened being; and who can wonder, however they may blame, if, in the first agonies of despair, the thought of death, death by his own hand, had darkly and powerfully presented itself to his mind. From this despondency and supineness he at length awoke, and thought of *action*. Yet what action? what was he to do? On earth he had no hope but *one*. It was to unravel the web in which he was entangled; to detect some clew to guide him through its labyrinth. What was the *cause* of his present ruin? was it accident? or was he the victim of

some nefarious plot? It was at the memorable conflagration, and on the eve of his departure from America, that a secret voice began to stir in his breast, whispering the name of Clairmont as in some way connected with this dire tragedy. The mere suspicion caused him to postpone his voyage. A thousand times his reason rejected it as absurd—as impossible; a thousand times it came rolling back upon him with a turbid violence, like a fever or a nightmare. In his cooler moments it had no force; there appeared no foundation whatever upon which to build such a conjecture. The object of Clairmont's stratagem had evidently been Flora. What could *he* have to do with Rosalie Romain, or she with him? Could she be alive, and suffer an innocent person to be thus sacrificed for a crime which had not been committed? She was then either dead, or absent from the country; but, if absent, to what place could she have fled beyond the broad−spread rumour of his guilt? Wherever the winds of heaven wafted the English language, the blistering story must have been echoed; and, if she knew it, would she not certainly refute it? But her absence, or her decease, equally acquitted Clairmont. If she were indeed murdered, Norman could not believe *him* the murderer. Crimes are not committed without an object. Nor, supposing her fled, could he believe him implicated in her flight, or why had he not borne her company? Besides, she had been seen by Flora. But then Flora might have been mistaken.

Notwithstanding this conclusion of his calmer moods, there were moments when imagination superseded reason; and imagination, to every observing and poetic person, has frequently appeared endowed with the accuracy of instinct, and the inspiration of divinity. He had more than once found its dictates correct, although in opposition to every surrounding probability. As to Clairmont's character, from the first moment he saw him, an indefinable presentiment had darkened his mind—a presentiment that they were linked together in their future career. So they had been. He recalled the quarrel; that demoniac expression, whose fiendish malice made him shudder; that oath, that deep, deep oath; the subsequent look, which had accidentally caught his glance a few moments after their fair−seeming reconciliation; the midnight attack— his dim suspicions of which he had never but once breathed to mortal ear; the interposition of Clairmont at the fire; the fiendish triumph of his leer as he shouted his name; his previous slanders and avowed enmity. In his solitary night−wanderings, these thoughts gathered and accumulated upon him, till Clairmont's agency in the late tremendous vicissitudes flashed upon him with all the intensity of conviction. These influences by degrees powerfully affected his character. He grew frozen with the sternness of a single enterprise and a single resolution. He was no longer a crushed being, dragging out existence without an object and without a hope. No, life grew to him more precious than it was to other men—than it had ever been before. He was to live hereafter burning with one wild, mighty hope. He was to unravel the mystery and clear his fame. The vague and chaotic mass of darkness he was to reduce to light and order. His father and sister were necessarily involved with him in odium and ruin. To clear his innocence was a duty he owed *them* even more than himself. Flora Temple, too, had sympathized with him—nay, his audacious heart half dared to whisper, had loved him. He knew not whether he could ever behold her again, but the thought that she might one day witness the triumph of his character over calumny and degradation, was another sustaining influence which lent vigour to his mind, and lightness and determination to his steps. He resolved, therefore, to concentrate all his energies upon this one purpose. It was vast and vague, but its very vastness and vagueness only animated and inspired him the more. Even in wretchedness and shame it was an object worth living for. All other hopes, and thoughts, and considerations, he threw away to the idle air. He wondered at the weakness of his first despondency. He cast off from his mind every doubt; and, thus resolved, he experienced the benefit of that almost supernatural power which inspires men whose faculties are all bent to one purpose. Hitherto his mind had resembled a river, which meanders idly along a plain, in a thousand devious and shallow tracks, as if without aim or impulse; it now flowed with the swift and silent motion of a stream which condenses its tributary and wandering floods into one deep and narrow channel, and rushes on, darkly and heavily, to the brink of the cataract.

But in his very commencement difficulties almost insuperable blocked up his path. *Where* was he to look? upon whom was he to fix his eyes? Was he to seek the bones of that bright girl in the vague depths of the river, or beneath the earth? or was he to commence a search among the living? Which way should he turn his steps? If alive, she could not be in America. What clime should he visit? He had no thread through the mazes which surrounded him, no beam of light, no whisper, no token, only one—Clairmont. *Him* he resolved to follow. Him, in spite of reason, he regarded as the secret blaster of his life. Upon him, then, he determined to fix his gaze.

Sometimes he resolved to seek an interview. But what could he gain by that? He would, indeed, enjoy the

satisfaction of pouring out a bosom full of hate. He might again denounce him in public. He might assail him with suspicions, and threaten to dog his steps over the world. But what weight would his denunciations have?—*his*, the condemned, the outcast, the murderer, escaped by chance from the murderer's death? They would be imputed to the malice of guilt, or the ravings of madness. Besides, it would put his foe on his guard. No, he must proceed with caution. He must guard carefully against secret attacks upon his own life. Silence and patience were his only course; secret watchfulness, and a hope that time would aid him. Oh, then he learned how bitter it is, when the heart is bursting, and the brain is on fire with some deep and maddening emotion, to smother the tumult within; to nurse in the bosom violence, anguish, and torture, with the faint hope that *time* may afford relief.

At this period he heard that Clairmont had sailed suddenly for Europe. He awoke from his reveries with the intention of taking passage for the same port, when a fever fell upon him.

For a month he was confined to his bed, and, in the long solemn hours of the night, delirium often came over him. Who can paint the ravings of any imagination disturbed by physical agonies?— but *his* imagination, heated, burning, maddened as it was, even in its soberest moods! What were the phantoms that peopled his wandering dreams? Wild and broken fancies mastered his reason. He yielded to the workings of the unseen, ungoverned, fantastic spirit, when the orbs of sight were closed. Airy and intangible images thronged around him. Troops of spectral visitants came up and sailed away. The ghost of the past floated dimly, silently, solemnly by—half−forgotten scenes and faces returned upon him—old voices rang in his ears, yet, with a sound that fell noiselessly, as if itself were but a spectre. Thus, as he lay in the lone night−watches—lone to him, for although a father, a sister, a friend, ever bent by his couch, and wiped the damps from his forehead, and wept, and whispered the soothing endearments of love, yet he saw them not, he felt them not, his soul was dead to outward truths. He was rapt, absorbed, and lost utterly in his own wild, vast, awful world of the unreal, the invisible. Slowly, majestically, train after train of mighty beings swept by, rising out of darkness as from a deep—sinking again into dim abysses and hushed chasms, that spread around like *eternity*. Sometimes he called to them, he shouted, he shrieked. Their cold, dead, immutable faces frightened him. He thought that unless they spoke to him, unless they gave him one human look, one human token, *he should go mad*.

Then a change came over him. This illimitable solitude in which he had seemed to lie on air, as if the globe were annihilated, and he alone, utterly, startlingly alone, remained amid these innumerable throngs and myriads of spirits—this huge, sublime void melted away, and the green and scented globe broke up around him, as through a mist, and he lay on a cool bank amid flowers, and buds, and leaping brooks, and murmuring bees—and Flora Temple sat by him—and their hands were clasped tenderly, and she kissed him, and looked into his eyes and made him feel that she loved him unutterably. Then shrieks burst forth, the blissful scene faded, and he lay in a prison. Then came the trial—the judge—the jury—the counsel—the witnesses—the sea of faces, all upturned towards him, all scorching him with their numberless and burning eyes— the speeches thundered in his ears—and "murderer!" "murderer!" was whispered by fiendish voices, and shouted by demons; and on the black air rode ghastly forms, reeking with the fumes of eternal wo and desperation, flapping their fierce wings in his face, and writing the word *murderer*, in letters of flame, everywhere upon the sable mantle of night. And one of the fiends wore the face of Clairmont. And he came and stood before him, and folded his arms, and smiled, and turned white, and swore again, "Remember, Norman Leslie, I will have your heart's blood!"

In this terrible delirium came to his memory what had never presented itself before, the faces of the woman and her lovely child whose lives he had saved from the affrighted steeds months ago. In his waking and sane moments he had utterly forgotten them. Now she was with him in his anguish, and thanked him; and her face, and that of her child, grew as distinct to him as if he had seen them but yesterday. There he lay, as it seemed for ages, while an ocean rolled ever its floods over him, with a rushing, slow motion that sometimes gave him pleasure, but afterward, from its monotony, wearied, and at length almost *maddened* him.

When he recovered, Clairmont had been long gone. He set off after him, but had never met him, nor known which way to turn his steps. For years he had wandered over the globe. The Turk, the Russ, the Greek, had been his familiars. Gradually the hope of piercing the gloomy secret of his life faded away, and he turned his attention to other subjects. For obvious reasons, he had substituted a middle name for that by which he had been usually known, and wrote himself in the travellers' books Mr. Montfort. He thought by that means that accident might more probably fling him in the way of Clairmont. Besides, he was not, as has been already hinted, without suspicion that Clairmont, if thrown upon his track, might secretly attempt his life. Thus, travel−worn and

changed—sad, but far, far less unhappy—he now paused, looking down on the home of Dante, Lorenzo, and Buonarotti, and musing on its romantic history, and the fiery beings who had trodden its streets. So had years changed him, so were his old impressions effaced, or softened, or weakened, that all the turbulent and heartbroken images of the past—all his wo—his disgrace—his very love, lived in his mind in calmer and milder colours—mellowed, and perchance somewhat faded, like a Rembrandt or a Corregio, by time. As he pressed onward his good steed towards the gate where his servant had been ordered to meet him, neither Flora Temple nor Rosalie Romain crossed his fancy. They were—he had compelled them to be—dreams of the past. He had *forced* his mind into new thoughts and sterner occupations than idle lamentation and unrequited love. If such remembrances swept over him ever, it was in those intervals of life when excitement flags—when the health and spirits fail—when accident softens the feelings, or awakens the associations of the inner heart.

The traveller, at a gentle pace, reached and entered the *Porta San Gallo*. The valet had found a hotel to his taste. His rooms were already prepared— a fire lighted; and alone, as had been his custom for many a year, he partook of his simple and solitary meal.

CHAPTER VII.

A By−scene in Florence.

"—And poring o'er her beauties, Till at length I learned to love them."

A Sculptor sat alone in his *studio*. The sunshiny air of his apartment gave almost the warmth of flesh to the cold marble figures scattered around here and there on the floor, or leaning from shelves and frames. A large opened window admitted the tempered breeze, laden with stolen sweets from the orangery of an adjoining palace. Large blocks of the material in which he worked, lay in the court and antechamber, soon perhaps to be awakened into those half−breathing shapes which peopled the solitude of his apartment. The artist was youthful, and of a most interesting appearance. A character of melancholy and intellectuality peculiar to his profession— peculiar, indeed, to all whose studies lead them from the outer world into the higher realms of thought and imagination—was impressed at once upon his air, form, and features. Slender, but gracefully formed, you saw at a glance that his labours were not of the body, but of the mind. It was beneath the expanded forehead that the glorious circle of his life and genius lay; and that the intensest toil might weary or reward him, even in the hour when to other eyes he seemed most at rest. His countenance was of that high and classical mould frequently found among cultivated Italians. Pale, noble, intelligent—you marked him immediately as one of no common cast. Large black eyes glanced a softened and shaded ray when unexcited; but, with animation came light and fire, and a certain beauty and expression denied to his features in their ordinary repose, and implying genius—enthusiasm— the yearnings and deep aspirations of a far−reaching soul. Many women would have found in him the dangerous faculty to feel love in its most passionate moods; and not only to feel, but to excite it. His face, too, was full of candour and manly mind. His smile, when he did smile, was sweet and still; but the habitual expression was that of thought and abstracted melancholy. Something winning and endearing there was, both in the chiselled mouth, and the lustrous eyes, and the dazzling teeth, which shone through his smile. His hair was profuse for the fastidious fashion of the day, but the quality made ample amends; and the rich auburn masses about his white blue−veined temples, and the two slight curls which added so much to the expression of his lips, gave his whole bust a striking air for a picture. Many a young, bright−hearted girl would have imbodied in him her favourite hero of romance. With all that was amiable and gentle, too, came ever and anon over his air a *hauteur* and sternness, as the mood of his mind varied. He was a *beau ideal* for genius.

Before him stood the bust of a young girl. Never shone a face so sunny and beautiful. Was it some ideal creation there beaming in immortal marble

—the brilliant imbodying of female loveliness—of girlhood—of hope, joy, and purity—as these attributes exist in a most fervid imagination? Did not he who had awakened such a dream of softness and light from the passionless and inert stone—did he not tremble with the exquisite appreciation of his inspired work? Did not his eyes sparkle with triumph and joy? Did not his heart heave with the fulness of a fairy vision for once realized by his hand?

No. As Angelo gazed on the graceful head, and the girlish and bright face, his reveries seemed to partake more of sadness than delight; and after a long silence, and kissing with an impulse of love the cold forehead and the unstirring tresses, he sighed, and the flush of an excited thought came over his cheek.

"Yes," he said, "I must lose even this—even the work of my toil—the produce of my own eye and my own hand. I must part with the dear impress and faint reflection of what haunts me so— even to this—dull, unanswering marble as it is— I must bid farewell, because fate has cast my lot in penury—bitter, heart−gnawing, soul−corroding penury. Beautiful, adored, celestial image!"—he kissed again the silent head—"I love thee, although dim and dark compared with *her*. Oh, how I love thee!"

He paused, still regarding it, and then continued: "Dim, did I say? Why, I wonder I have *dared* to hew out this unworthy thing to image forth her bewildering charms. *Thou*, Antonia?—why, where are those eyes, more soft than ever gazed from the fearful fawn? Where the tinges that float over the tresses? Where the smile that steals across the rose−bud mouth? Where the voice that so fills and bewilders my soul, that a thousand thousand times I would have flung myself at her feet—wept— prayed—and adored her—but for that cold priest, who leers and treads so stealthily about with her, as if he were my evil demon? Where are the words that rise from those

lips—beautiful words— all, bright as flowers—or seashells—or any thing that nature made most bright and fair: and yet," he said, relenting towards the unconscious object of his displeasure, "even this would be a companion. This—nameless, friendless, obscure as I am—I might love without dishonour—without scorn. Leave me those pouting lips, sweet heaven! dead as they are to my audacious kisses; and leave me those drooping eyes—even though unseeing. Better, perhaps, that they should not view my presumptuous homage, lest their marble orbs dart fire and contempt upon me."

He started up, and paced across the room.

"Yes, contempt on me—whose companionship is with the divinities of the past; whose tread is in the track of Phidias and Praxiteles—of Angelo and Cellini; whose hand can thus remould the fleeting features, conferring an immortality which nature refused: on me—whose name and whose productions shall endure when the frail original of this beautiful thing lies mingling with the common dust. But, thank the great God of freedom, the time draws near. My country—my bleeding, groaning, trampled country! Thy deep, low voice rises to me from a thousand hills. Why should I waste my golden youth in idle and unanswered love? Why should I pursue disappointment, and woo scorn? Why should I?—and yet—and yet how fiercely burns this bewildering passion in my heart for that careless girl! Shall I yield to it? Shall I leave my ambition and chain myself with love's flowery fetters for ever to her feet? Yet she loves me not: oh, no! not even *my* madness can dream it. But will she not?—may she not, should this deep−laid plot succeed? Her proud couzin Alezzi is a leader, and so am *I*. Should it succeed, wealth and fame may be mine. Whose star would then burn more gloriously than the poor artist's? Oh, I would people a gallery with her lovely shape! All my marble should turn to Antonia—nothing but Antonia."

CHAPTER VIII.

An insight into the Mind of the Wanderer—No Misfortune irreparable but Guilt.

"Oh this learning! what a thing it is!" *Taming of the Shrew.*

We said that the remembrance of Norman's past agony, and even of his love, only swept over him now with a softened power. The former sounded to him like the roar of a far−off city, and his dream of Flora Temple came floating faintly as the swell of distant music on the breeze, sometimes with a tone more audible, and sometimes dying almost entirely away. His character was changed. He had awakened from the confidence, the security, the thoughtlessness of youth. He had been torn rudely adrift from all that graced life, and he had learned to commune with *himself*. Travel, solitary, observing travel, amid all that was wonderful on the globe, had poured into his mind new materials for study and thought. Sometimes he imagined that his original and boyish character had been all worn away, and replaced by new opinions and impressions, new modes of acting and thinking, new memories, new hopes and ambitions. America, to his lively and poetic imagination, was but the stage of a theatre, on which, in times gone by, he had acted a tragic part. Never, he thought, could those scenes be revisited. He strove to fancy it all a dream; rescuing nothing from the phantoms but two or three linked most closely to his bosom by ties of relationship and love. His father, and sister, and Howard were among those whom he hoped once more to behold; but he was to behold them in Europe.

It may be supposed that among his present feelings was a distaste for general society. He had changed his name, not with any intention to deny his identity among those with whom he might chance to associate, but for reasons hitherto mentioned. Society exposed him not only to painful and impertinent curiosity, but to awkward and embarrassing predicaments. He met them, however, when inevitable, with firm moral courage and dignity; but while he never shrank from notice, he never courted it. His person and bearing, his now fully developed genius and matured and enriched understanding, would have secured him an honourable reception in any circle, even under his own name, and with the full knowledge of his story. Indeed, when connected with his appearance, around which years, and travel, and melancholy, and study, had shed a more striking grace and continual self−possession, there was in his adventures something romantic and thrilling. So young, so noble, so handsome—with such eyes and such a voice,—women pronounced him innocent the moment they saw him. His letters of introduction always alluded to his history; he wished no concealment from his friends: but they were also strong, and even enthusiastic, in expressions of esteem, confidence, and admiration. Many a pressing allurement had been laid to seduce the unfortunate and handsome young stranger into the circles of the gay and the lovely. But other aspirations had awakened within him.

As soon as he had abandoned the definite hope of discovering any thing respecting Miss Romain— a hope which, however faded, lay yet, perhaps half unknown to himself, smouldering like hidden fire in his heart—he had thought to beguile his solitude and disappointment in *study*. Driven over the battlements of the world of external beauty, he explored a new and mightier world in books. In his character lay a deep appreciation of the grandeur and triumph, of the almost celestial grace and dignity, which rewards the searcher after knowledge. Wealth he had without limit. Love?—he had tasted the enchanted goblet, and its contents turned to tears as he drained. Ambition? ambition for the world?—power, influence, applause among men?— he shuddered; for he remembered, with a writhing and transpierced heart, that fatal night when, amid the crash of thunder, and the riot and whirl of a maddened conflagration, his fellow−beings had raised against him the yell of the bloodhound; and "*Leslie the murderer!*"—a peal befitting the dun valuts of hell itself—drove him from his love and from his country. No; his path lay no more among *men*. He was to carve it out through the sublime and lonely altitudes of science. For himself—or, peradventure (and a solemn thrill of inconceivable rapture rolled through his vems at the thought), for the eyes of a race yet unborn—he would kindle about his brow the steady halo of the *scholar*. Here was a world of which he might be the monarch. A world whose numberless and illumined paths he could mount alone; a world peopled but with the awful spirits of the great of old; and all conjured up obedient around him by the wave of his silent wand, and in the solitude of his midnight hours.

Reader, can you not feel and triumph with the outcast and the exile—with the homeless and the hopeless—when the lofty and splendid aisles of this holier sphere burst and broadened upon his gaze. A new gift

of wings seemed to unfold themselves at his shoulder; and spirit voices, inaudible to the grosser sense of others, spoke sweetly in his ears, and the scales of mortality fell from his orbs, and the divinity of the past and the present was upon him and within him. Roaming over the magnificent and wonderful globe, he read its lessons and penetrated its secrets. Oh! what are the glitter of wealth and the pride of royalty, the pomp of troops and the allurements of sensual luxury, to the plain garb and unattended simplicity of the scholar? Visiting no spot but its history is familiar; reading a thousand sweet secrets and eloquent lessons in every simple flower, in every thronged city, in every lonely wood; gorgeous visions and stately phantoms rising up before him upon every plain, by every ruin! Is he not a monarch? Does he not dwell in his own solemn kingdom? Are not the air and the earth, the desert sea and the gold−paved sky, more to him than to other men?

Norman had been educated only as young men of his age and country are but too often educated. The classical studies are got through with at college, and afterward neglected. Business, fashion, pleasure, then tempt the steps and monopolize the swift rolling year. New actors are to be seen, new excursions to be enjoyed. Books soon become strangers, except the ephemeral works of the day, where all that is noble and grand is too often made subservient to amusement. Such a giddy as well as heartless thing is the *coterie* of fashion. Perhaps but for the peal of thunder which had fallen on his path—thus fallen from a heaven of unstained blue—he never could have exerted, never known the divinity within him. Thus often, in this shadowy world, the most terrible calamity is but the sable mantle of some luminous blessing.

Books soon became to him, not only a refuge, but a passion. With a matured and firmer understanding, he now retraced his way through those temples of classic lore where his boyish foot had lingered but half conscious of their splendour; and oh, what associations often swept over him, while wandering again back over those paths of his by−gone days! Often he stood once more in the sunny haunts of early life, and the voices of his childhood rose around him; and hope—then a dear and familiar spirit, now the spectre of one buried—seemed again to smile and cheer him on. The modern languages he mastered with a rapidity that surprised himself; and every author in the French, the Italian, and the German, he could read with fluency and delight. With hushed and solemn joy, too, as one in the solitude of night, he stood to gaze on those great and ever steady stars in the literary firmament, which have burnt there just so gloriously upon the eyes of vanished ages. Then he learned how far exclusive devotion could carry the mind.

The thirst for *knowledge*, unslaked, unslakable, *grew* upon him. History opened its immense and sublime realms, to which the narrow present became only a point almost invisible. In this startling study he forgot himself for months—for years. Here met the lonely student his silent and unaccusing companions. Here found he a home where his footsteps could wander in peace. Alexander and Pericles, Camillus and Cæsar, Alaric and Mahomet—he walked with these. The Grecian temple rose before him against the blue serene. The streets of old Rome and her mighty millions spread around. Thebes, Palmyra, and Jerusalem were the haunts of his spirit.

But history involved other studies of a yet more astounding nature—astronomy, geology, metaphysics, the human mind, the world of inferior living creatures; and amid them all stood, chaste, stately, brilliant, and eternal—towering, yet unequalled, yet unharmed, through every age, every clime, every language—those gorgeous monuments which the poet has reared, those proud battlements of intellect and genius, defying decay, even as the cloud−cleaving and ice−capped Alps dazzle with their silver tops each rolling generation. Now, for the first time, he began to comprehend the immensity, the solemnity of existence—this inexplicable gift, this ray of immortal divinity, lighting up a handful of mortal dust. We have said his character was changed. He had left the circle of *fashion*. He had burst from the entanglements of youthful hopes and habits—of selfish pleasures and idle frivolities, in which so many, capable of nobler enjoyments, fritter away their years. He was no longer the sighing boy, nor the musing youth. Manhood had come upon him, and with manhood, *reflection*.

At this period accident enabled him to render a very important service to the Marquis Torrini, an old and wealthy nobleman of the Tuscan court. Meetings between them took place necessarily and frequently. To this gentleman Norman had been presented with a letter of introduction, from one of his most intimate friends in Vienna. But hearing of him a character that attracted neither esteem nor sympathy, he had never commenced the acquaintance. Having it now thrust upon him, he handed the letter. It touched upon his history. He hoped that it would frighten his new friend, whose absorbing weakness, or passion, was superstition. But, on the contrary, from some inexplicable caprice, the feeble dotard, who had regarded most young men with dislike, became enamoured—declared he knew all the story—that it only rendered Signore Montfort a greater favourite—that he

must not think of refusing a *suite* of rooms in his palace, one of the most remarkably splendid, by−the−way, in all Florence. Leslie *did* think of refusing, and very seriously; but among the attractions of the Torrini palace were a spacious and valuable library, and a gallery of rare old paintings. From severe studies he had lately turned to paintings for recreation, and delighted to acquaint himself, not only with the gems of art and the difference between the schools, but to trace out the singular fortunes of the immortal and inspired artists. He accepted the invitation.

It was about the middle of December when he entered the palace. He found the old lord much better than he had been represented, although utterly abandoned to the magnificent dreams of the Catholic persuasion, which walks familiarly with saints and angels, and sees God's finger writing on the earth and sky. Perhaps the nature and tender affection of a father softened the harsher features of his real character. You cannot *hate* a man who is reverenced and beloved by a guileless and beautiful young daughter—at least *I* cannot.

CHAPTER IX.

A Florentine Palace—An Italian Girl—A Chord struck— Its Vibrations.

"Which out of things familiar, undesigned, When least we deem of such, calls up to view The spectres which no exorcism can bind."

As with tne old *gouvernante*, a few days after Norman's domiciliation, they leaned from the marble balcony of a terrace overlooking the garden, her father kissed Antonia, and laid his hand on her head—that very original and bright piece of nature's workmanship which had caused the rhapsody of the young sculptor.

"I have ordered the rooms to be warmed for Mr. Montfort to−day, to see the pictures; will you not go with him and the signora?"

Such a *cicerone!*

`Oh yes, my father!" (how the melody of the Italian melted from those lips), "Signore Angelo is to bring home my bust this morning, and I will let Signore Montfort be the judge, if he will stay away from the Pitti and spend the morning with us."

Signore Montfort bowed. Perhaps the study of painting had improved his eye, but he could not fail to see, and to feel, how lovely and graceful was this rare young creature; how light her step; how warm and tender her eyes; her voice, how musical; her form, how fair. He had hitherto met her without attentively regarding her—she had passed before his eyes as some bright cloud in the sky, some gorgeous bird through the grove, or a soft−hued seashell on the marble beach. As they commenced their round—she, with her beaming and lovely face, like one of Raphael's Madonas, and the wrinkled old *gouvernante* by her side—a sudden kindness stirred in his heart, a sense of her excellence and surpassing charms. Years had glided away since he had been the companion of woman—years of severe solitude and gloom; and now that nameless light, that exquisite spell which, to those gifted with the keen perception of female character and beauty, the form of an innocent, unshaded girl often conjures up, was shed upon him. He thought of his sister, and—of Flora. From that moment an airy link was thrown around him. The careless girl had touched upon one of the deepest chords of his soul; and while he yielded, with a half melancholy delight, to its slow−fading vibrations, he felt that his guileless and light−hearted companion was no longer to him only a cloud or a seashell. It was not *love*, but it touched him for a moment with something of love's fervour. It was the echo of that blissful voice, sent back upon his heart from the hollow solitudes of his later years.

The *signora* was soon tired, and left her charge to the guidance of Mr. Montfort, and she led him, for the first time, through her father's magnificent palace.

The building was one of those striking, immense, and durable edifices bequeathed to the Italian nobles by their wealthy and warlike ancestors. On approaching it, the stranger, especially from the north and west, would not be so much impressed with its splendour as with its dimensions for a dwelling. The elegant comfort of a London or a New−York mansion, the neat, beautiful steps and doorway, which in the two latter form the principal entrance, the carpeted halls, and the comfortable air of home, felt even in the exterior, were all wanting here. The entrance was a high, gloomy arch, through which alike horsemen, pedestrian, and carriage passed into the lofty court. From this arch, heavy steps of stone or marble led the eye up along a cheerless, broad passage, stately, dismal, and comfortless. In niches and on pedestals stood sculptured forms, their spirited attitudes strangely contrasted with their deathly faces and voiceless lips, some defaced by time or chance, and covered with dust never disturbed. Here a Mars, threatening the world, bereft of arms; and there a Venus, as simpering and conscious of her charms as if the enmity of the three sisters had yet left her an unbroken nose; while on each turn in the stairway reposed colossal sphinxes and couchant lions of Egyptian and oriental granite. The whole edifice, seen from the street or the court, more resembled a prison than a palace, as the reader of poetry and romance is apt to imagine one; and even after mounting some distance up the steps, the stranger, untaught in the fashions of the continent, wonders whether the vast structure, with its cumbrous strength and lonely grandeur, is really *inhabited*, or whether it is not appropriated merely to some public purpose— chambers of council, or tribunals of justice. Lose yourself in the capitol at Washington, and fancy it a *family* residence of some prince or potentate.

But the first disappointment is much more than compensated by the uncounted wealth lavished within. Long

halls, floored with tesselated and glassy marbles; ceilings vaulted, loaded with heavy bassreliefs, or painted with bright−gleaming and radiant frescoes; immense mirrors, which, in one room, appeared to constitute the whole breadth of the walls; windows reaching from floor to ceiling, and composed of enormous slabs of plate−glass leading forth upon marble balconies, and to scented groves of orange and lemon. The rooms were heavily curtained, and draped with silks and velvet, of all hues and kinds—here one cerulean as heaven—there another draped with a forest green— a third flushed with a mellow and a sunshiny glory, from crimson velvet linked and fastened with studs and knots of gold. About twenty−five rooms on one floor, and those set apart mostly for the mere pomp of display, led the wondering and dazzled visiter from curiosity to curiosity, and from splendour to splendour—now over carpets of matchless beauty, now over mosaic floors, whose glittering surface spread beneath the feet like ice. The intruder at once fears to trust himself upon their slippery smoothness, or to tread upon their pictured beauties. Some dozen rooms were completely crowded with paintings, each one by a master, and many *chefs d'oeuvres* of the immortal authors. The stern cliffs of Rosa, the melting sunshine of *Claude;* Raphael's exquisite and gentle grace, and the winning softness of Guido; but who can enumerate the treasures of an Italian gallery of paintings? At frequent intervals stood statues of classic beauty, and often of ancient workmanship. Other furniture corresponded to that already described: a profusion of the most costly clocks and vases; a wilderness of bronze, crystal, gold, marble, and alabaster; a thousand exquisite shapes of classic lore; tables of untold value, inlaid with sparks of gems, brilliantly disposed in the polished and gleaming slabs, to resemble flowers, insects, shells, &c.; ivory ornaments, wrought by Cellini; boxes, altars, and cases of amber: while, not unfrequently, the doors, cornices, and walls themselves, were incrusted with jasper, porphyry, and verd−antique. Scarcely the eye believed the splendour real, half−deeming each bright image but the gaud of some theatrical show, so prodigal, costly, unused, and useless appeared the waste and riot of magnificence. The knees ache in traversing the long apartments, and the eyes are wearied in attempting to analyze their bewildering and wanton brightness. But, however dazzled for a moment, you are still soon fatigued with this monotonous and unmeaning grandeur. So much unnecessary parade seems strained and idle, if not ridiculous and vulgar. If you have seen the simple dwelling of Ariosto, and his little garden, or the humble retreat of Petrarch, among the green Euganean hills, or the damp cell of poor Tasso, in the madhouse at Ferrara, you regard this princely pomp with something of sarcasm. In a country, too, where every narrow street and golden vineyard; every palace, step, and fountain−pedestal; every mountain−peak and cathedral floor; every place, indeed, of any description, not guarded perforce by the insolence of aristocracy or the bayonet of despotism, is haunted and swarmed with all the forms of loathsome and blasted misery that ever humanity produced;—this blaze of rank, power, and abundance shows not only absurd, but shocking and cruel.

But Norman was an old traveller, and these thoughts had passed away with his first impressions of Europe. Now he trod the princely halls with admiration; and as the fair girl, leaning on his arm, pointed out, with a pure and sweet familiarity, each theme of praise in picture or statue, he forgot his taciturn gloom, and displayed in his manner and conversation all the unwonted admiration which she inspired.

In the course of their long ramble through the superb halls of paintings—the good old *signora* seizing every possible occasion to throw herself down upon one of the luxurious *fauteuils* , and the antiquated *cicerone* waiting at a respectful distance, till the memory of Antonia should need assistance from his more practised experience (which, by−the−way, rarely happened)—several incidents conspired to render her to Norman an object of interest. In the first place, he found her quite a proficient in his native tongue; and he enjoyed the quiet pleasure of following the delightful accent upon her unaccustomed lips. You really love your language while hearing it spoken indifferently well by an agreeable young girl in a foreign country. Antonia had studied it with zeal, and music was nothing to her charming errors and timid hesitation. A being so pure and lovely was enough at all times to win the eye of the student, bathed as his spirit was in the fervour of poetry, and while watching and gently aiding her along the path of a new language, he found himself half−unconsciously yielding to the gentle anxieties, and half−playful, half−tender alarms of a happy mother, scarcely trusting the first uncertain steps of a beautiful child. He felt that the sportive communion thus increasing between them would have been dangerous in other years. But the image of Flora had to him the sacred sadness of buried love; and he sighed to look down on Antonia, and think how cold and dead his heart was; that her radiant face, her guileless spirit, could now waken in his breast only those vain regrets, that tender anguish, which, in the triumphs of study, he had nearly forgotten.

He was struck, too, with the blended artlessness and intelligence of her nature; with her antique opinions and

utter ignorance of the world, so strangely contrasted with her high cultivation upon certain accomplishments.

They were engaged before a celebrated painting; and while Norman was smiling, with a heart more at rest than it had been for years, upon the engaging and animated face of his guide—even as one out of the brawling, battling world gazes on a newly−unfolded rosebud, wondering how the inert soil could yield a thing so fair and tender—he beheld a third person, in the habit of a priest, close by his side. He had apparently approached a few moments before, with the stealthy pace of a cat, and now stood smiling upon them as they lingered before the broad painting, their shadows lengthened on the glittering and pictured floor.

"The fair Antonia," he said, "has not welcomed her instructer, who has just returned from Pisa. Anxiety to see my dear child has brought me unbidden into her presence."

"Oh, Father Ambrose! dear, *dear* Father Ambrose! How good! how kind! Have you speeded well in your journey? Is your sick friend recovered? Will you remain with us now?"

The priest smiled.

"If I had as many mouths as the Hydra, yours would find work for them all."

"Oh, then, I know your poor friend is well, or else you would not smile; and all a girl's idle questions are answered without a word. But, Father Ambrose, know Signore Montfort, my father's most esteemed friend and guest. He has supplied your place; for he is learned as you, and I am his debtor for much, much wisdom: and Signore Montfort will already have conjectured that this is our honoured Father Ambrose, whom we have spoken of in his absence often."

The holy man turned his face upon Norman, and the keen eye of the latter detected, or imagined that he did so, a certain scarce perceptible ripple that crossed its singular smoothness. The eye perused his face a moment with a sinister but brief shade of displeasure. Norman returned the gaze with an interest which surprised him. Where had he seen those features? Where had that insinuating smile before crossed his observation? Had he met him before indeed? What unquiet association stirred at his heart as he encountered the glance of those small but keen eyes? He replied briefly, and took occasion the subsequent moment, while the intruder was engaged in conversation with Antonia, to note him more narrowly. He was small, but beautifully formed, with a white slender hand, black eyes and hair, and a silent smile of singular sweetness. His voice was soft and musical, and he had the power of modulating it to harmonize with the secretest chords vibrating in the bosoms of those he addressed. Yet, with his intelligent and classical cast of features—the wavy and raven hair parted on that white round brow, the almost feminine yet voluptuous mouth, and snowy teeth gleaming through—with all the graces of his person and manner, there was about him something wily and insincere, something which no sooner fastened admiration than it awakened distrust. There was, besides, that on his features which impressed Norman powerfully with a sense of the past—which, dimly and mysteriously, awakened in his bosom thrilling associations and vague presentiments. The object of his new interest soon departed, stealing away with the same noiseless tread with which he had entered, and lifting a heavy curtain of crimson velvet which hung broadly against the wall, disappeared through the door concealed behind. To Norman he seemed to vanish: an unaccountable foreboding, a feeling of superstition, a willingness to abandon himself to his sudden emotion, as to an omen, crept over him, and he longed to be alone. Of Antonia he inquired into the history of the person he had seen.

"Oh!" she said, "it is the good Father Ambrose— the kindest—the best—the dearest—the holiest. He was the friend of my father—oh, a long, *long* time ago: before I was born."

"A long, long time indeed," said Norman, smiling at the earnest and becoming enthusiasm which marked her every word and action, and again looking on the beautiful child; for she seemed only wavering on the fairy limits between girlish simplicity and woman's deeper imagination.

"Seventeen years full, this spring," said the *signora*, who, having rested herself, had now joined them—"full seventeen years; and a good girl she is, too, signore," and the old woman smoothed down the tresses of her head affectionately as she spoke; "and knows as little of the world as a wild rose."

A sigh from behind attracted their attention. It was the young sculptor with the bust. The snowy image rested on a marble table, before an immense mirror. The artist stood by its side, leaning against a column, his arms folded upon his bosom. For a long time—while all admired his work—he seemed to be forgotten; and Antonia, leaning on Norman's arm with a familiar girlishness, and looking up with each word confidingly into his face, little dreamed the pang each random glance, each gentle and neglectful tone, shot to a heart—though cast in life's rougher and gloomier paths, yet all as high, and soft, and passionate as her own.

"How strange," she said at length, "Signore Angelo has gone!"
"Those poor artists," said the *gouvernante*, arranging her lace cap, "are always so eccentric."

CHAPTER X.

The stirring of Associations—an Italian Picture—a Mystery and an Adventure.

"That face of his I do remember well." —*Twelfth Night.*

The face of that priest haunted Norman's very slumber with a dark and ominous meaning, as inexplicable as it was unpleasant. He could not banish from his mind the impression that they had met before. Where? He had been in all quarters of the globe; and images of the remarkable climes where his foot had lingered, and his eyes and his soul been dazzled, rolled through his imagination— but none touched upon this newly−awakened chord. Beneath the lofty peaks of Asia, where the Assyrian, the Mede, the Greek, the Roman, and the Saracen had left their footmarks, he had strayed. Had this singular face there greeted him? No. Had those eyes glanced on him beneath the turban of the dusky Moor? No. He could reach no recollection from the brilliant shadows of the past; nor, amid all that his memory presented of the varied zones and people of Europe, could he detect any link connected with him. America? A dim conception rested on him that *there* their paths had crossed; that those eyes had been on him there, at some of the terrible moments of which he had suffered so many. He inquired particularly into his history; but all that he learned contradicted completely, incontrovertibly, every suspicion.

Ambrose had spent his life in Italy. For more than twenty years he had been an inmate in the family of Torrini. He was trusted by all; and if remarkable for any thing, it was for his character of holiness. Norman, therefore, forced himself to believe that his interest in him was merely an accidental coincidence.

But, driven from the idea that he was connected himself with this man, his disappointment was relieved in some measure by the fact that the character of the priest grew on him, the more he studied it, with deeper hues. He could not help hating him. He had thought of himself that he was gifted with a keen sense of human character—that he read men's souls by intuition—that towards some his very heart yearned in love, while from others he recoiled with an instinctive dislike. Some will smile at the idea of this novel one among the senses; but there are secret affinities in our nature, and hidden repulsions, and voices that call out to us with tones that will not be hushed—at least that was the theory of Leslie, and he yielded to his distrust.

The holy father was in the habit of giving lessons to Antonia in her little boudoir. It was a lovely place; and the bright girl chose often to sit and read there, and warble her favourite melodies, and to receive also her most intimate friends. Among these very soon she learned to rank Norman. He grew accustomed to her guileless and affectionate ways, and imperceptibly glided into a brother's friendship and familiarity.

It is not true that men—I speak of the thoughtful and the pure (are there not such in this bad world?)

—cannot pass beyond the limits of mere ordinary friendship with the more lovely and enchanting of the other sex without entering into the realms of love—without yielding to the earthlier whirl and current of a feverish and absorbing passion. Nothing could be further from Norman's breast than love for the unshadowed Italian girl—*love* in the acceptation of the word most familiar to romance−readers. Years, misery, and meditation had made him prematurely old; and his heart was the heart of a wanderer over every zone—of one, like those birds which sleep in the air on their unresting and outspread wings, doomed to be ever afloat and ever alone. But he loved her with the purified and disinterested tenderness of paternal affection. He saw into the crystal depths of her unsullied and sunshiny mind and character. He beheld in her one whose unconscious power over his feelings was that of awakening mournful memories, but no selfish passion—memories which subdued, chastened, and exalted his nature. If her young voice ever thrilled through his soul, it was of another that he thought; and in her presence he ever found himself more softened to his old impressions.

"Oh!" he one day thought, when the atless grace of her character and person had struck upon him with peculiar force, in some of the thousand little offices and kind communions which each passing day seemed to increase between them—"oh! had I some young, beloved brother—some bright boy, yet untouched with care—just awakening to the dream of love—with what delight would I behold *him* by her side, to trace the unfoldings of their fairy loves; to watch their glances drink the light of each other's gaze; to see him wander spell−bound where her young foot had been; and at length, from the visionary lover, deepen into the adoring, the blest husband."

He was passing the boudoir of her who thus occupied his thoughts. The door was a−jar. He was about to enter, when a sight met his eyes that arrested him. Antonia was in the act of receiving a lesson. By her side was the

priest. She had dropped her eyes intently over her book, and sat in an attitude of careless grace and exquisite girlhood. Beautiful student! Close to her the priest had drawn his seat, and had fixed his eyes intently upon the radiant face which, lost in the earnestness of a new thought, was all unconscious of his gaze. His arm, which had been thrown, apparently by accident, across the back of her chair, gradually fell from its remoter position, till it almost clasped her waist, while his vivacious features expressed any thing but their usual meek and holy humility.

As Norman stood regarding the group—picturesque and beautiful as it was—a feeling, not of jealousy, but of alarm, shot through his soul. So pure, artless, and confiding was this rare creature— dreaming no ill, believing ever the promises of outward semblance, so ignorant of the world, and placing such implicit faith in Ambrose—that he trembled for her opinions, if not for her happiness and virtue. There was to him, also, about this priest something quiet, sly, deep, and devilish; and now, as he sat thus near, thus trusted, pouring into her young soul his monstrous dogmas—and who can tell what more dangerous poison beside—he looked like the tempter watching by Eve and studying her ruin. It is probable that his surprise was visible in his face and manner; for Father Ambrose, after a long breath and the fading away of an absorbed smile, on looking up, started perceptibly as their eyes met, but immediately regained his oily smoothness of manner.

Why did he start? It was the act of a hypocrite—of a devil, who feared lest the cloak might have fallen from the cloven hoof: and then Norman smiled at the importance which every trifle assumed in the strange mood which had lately come over him.

On conversing with Torrini, he found him, although perfectly doting on his child, yet abandoning her education entirely to the Father Ambrose. Torrini, as he grew old and ill, had fallen into the very lowest abysses of superstition, and had conceived a project, Norman discovered some days after, of consigning Antonia to a convent. On expressing his surprise, and probably his abhorrence, the marquis had betrayed that the priest had first suggested the measure. In the course of his subsequent interviews with Antonia, Norman turned the subject upon this point. He found her steeped in the prejudices and unnatural hopes of an education the most warped and erroneous.

If a young fawn could speak, it would not more unguardedly confide its wild thoughts and wishes to the forest breeze, than Antonia to all whom she loved, and who sought her thoughts. One day after Norman had spoken to her of life—of the great world—of human destiny and human happiness— she told him, with a light tear glittering from her long lashes, that a convent was her refuge; and she knew it would prove a sweet one from a dreadful fate. It seemed she had been wooed in marriage by a proud and haughty cousin of her father's— one on whom, from her infancy, she had looked with terror. But Ambrose and her father both loved him, and she knew it would grieve their hearts were she ever to think of another. Nothing, she said, filled her with more pleasure than the thoughts of the holy and secure life led by the sister of St. U—. Those tranquil walls were the port where every vessel reposed in safety. She had been told that the world was as the terrible sea, smooth to betray, and merciless in its fury—wrecking with equal ease the tallest vessel and the lightest bark; that beneath every wave lurked a rock, and in every silver cloud hung a tempest.

If there was something mournful in the sight of one so unsuspecting and light−hearted thus entangled in the meshes of superstition, Norman's interest was much enhanced by discovering the secret, passionate, almost hopeless love entertained for her by the sculptor Angelo. To the acquaintance of this youth Norman had been attracted by many nameless allurements of person, mind, and character. So pure, high, aspiring, and gentle−hearted was the melancholy artist, that Norman learned to love him before he was aware. His own princely fortune enabled him, in the most delicate way, to relieve the embarrassment of his friend by affording frequent employment for his chisel. This brought them often together, until at length something of a kindred spirit united them in the bands of sincere friendship. Angelo found in Norman wealth without pride or ostentation; a heart sympathizing with the impulses and recoilings, the pride and the despair, of unfriended merit: while the more matured and experienced student discovered in the artist genius and virtue rarely seen: and the more he studied his character, the more he admired its chaste symmetry and classic proportions. It stood among other men like a Grecian temple reared amid the homely and discoloured mansions of modern business. Imbued with poetry—imbued with passion— he was dangerously gifted with capacities both for happiness and misery. By a series of casual trifles Norman had learned his love for Antonia. We will not detain the reader with it; nor with the fulness of his bliss when he discovered that Leslie was not a lover. From that moment their friendship had become cemented.

One day Norman lounged from the palace after a half hour of sportive study with Antonia. He had ordered a Psyche from Angelo, and the latter had promised him the first sight of it on this morning. It was his custom to note down, in a kind of diary, the leading events of the day, with such reflections as they chanced to elicit, and to sketch in rude outlines the most remarkable characters he encountered. These were treasures to his father and sister; and for their eyes they were intended. On the present morning, after he left the palace, he remembered that he had sallied forth without closing the volume which lay open on the table. He returned, therefore, with a hasty step; and mounting suddenly to his apartment, was surprised, as he entered, to hear a slight stir and rustle, as if some one, startled by his approach, had abruptly quitted the room. But how? Certainly no one had passed him by the door; and yet the noise had been too distinctly audible for fancy. He glanced his eyes around, all was lonely and quiet; but a heavy piece of silken drapery in one corner seemed to stir, and gradually settle itself into repose. He walked up to it and examined it closely, and the wall behind it. Nothing could he find. His note−book lay, as he had left it, open upon the table; but, upon approaching to take it, he perceived, to his increasing surprise, that it was upside down—not the position in which he had left it, certainly, for he had written in it the moment before his departure. It was plain that some one had been in his room. Was there a secret door? He began to fancy the old days of romance had come back upon him. A palace—a priest—a lovely girl, and a private panel— they were the very materials for a novel.

But the incident left an impression on him too distinctly unpleasant to be the theme of jest. The idea of being watched made his blood boil. He had heard of the numerous *spies* with which Italy abounds. Perchance the priest acted in that capacity. From a floating conjecture the idea soon grew into a confirmed truth. It by no means softened his feelings of dislike towards his reverend friend: he resolved to be more wary in future. But he had nothing to fear from the Tuscan government. He knew Italy too well to be linked with any attempt at reform or revolution; and he knew, too, that such attempts, unsuccessful, only increase her distress.

With these thoughts he resumed his walk. It led him, in the way to the sculptor's, by the square of the Duomo, and the glittering and airy tower with its gorgeous tracery. The doors of the immense edifice were open, and, with that feeling of solemn awe with which these gigantic, time−worn, and magnificent monuments of ages rolled away ever inspired him, he entered. Its vast, huge, naked interior—dim, gloomy, stupendous—for a moment, often as he had before seen it, hushed and absorbed him. It was on this broad marble floor that the great Lorenzo had been so nearly assassinated; and here other historical incidents, conclaves and councils, had occurred, which forcibly linked the long aisles and airy dome and vaults with the splendour, romance, and grandeur of the past. He pictured the immortal forms in whose steps he was treading—Michael Angelo and Dante—Petrarch, Boccacio, and Galileo. His eye now fell on the deep−stained windows, and now upon the statues, yellow with age. A procession of priests, followed by another composed only of boys, some almost infants, and clothed in long black robes hung with white lace, went shuffling by. Then a sudden burst of voices chanted behind the altar, and all again was lonely and still.

As he lingered a moment by a column, he heard, or thought he heard, the sound of his own name. Turning suddenly, a tall and athletic man, wrapped in a long cloak, stood gazing on him; and near, but moving away, with a quiet, stealthy pace, he discovered one resembling the priest. It struck him that the two had been engaged in conversation, but that, on the sudden sight of him, they had parted. To ascertain whether it was indeed the holy man— who began now to occupy a large portion of his thoughts—he followed, with a quickened step; but, entering a side−door, the object of his pursuit disappeared before he could actually determine his identity. On returning, the other also was gone. He stood alone on the mighty floor, amid the cold marbles and dusky tombs. Then a sudden peal of the organ heaved its rolling waves of harmony along the far−reaching roof—dying away—swelling up— and dying away again upon his startled ear.

CHAPTER XI.

A new Mystery—Letters from Home.

"A gloomy sea
Rolls wide between that home and me:
The moon may twice be born and die,
Ere e'en your seal can reach my eye;
And oh! e'en then, that darling seal
(Upon whose print I used to feel
The truth of home, the cordial air
Of warm loved lips still freshly there:)
Must come, alas! through every fate
Of time and distance, cold and late,
When the dear hand, whose touches filled
The leaf with sweetness, may be chilled." Moore.

The old Marquis Torrini held weekly soirées at the palace. A brilliant but extraordinary circle gathered at these entertainments. Most of the celebrated characters of Europe might, at some time or other, be seen there. Ex−kings and queens— the defeated generals of old wars waltzing by the side of their victors—English statesmen—French heroes—the Russian prince—tourists and scholars from far−off countries—and women—all that Italy could boast of lovely here flashed and floated in the mazy dance. Among them were belles from other circles—wandering daughters of wealth and beauty, freed from the restraint of morality prevailing in other societies — gay, careless, and bewildering minions of fashion, accomplished in all but morals, who lived only to shine, to captivate, and to love. Here the star−wearing lord led down the dance some dangerous girl—the tender exile of a colder clime, who now learned to allow as grace what she had before concealed as shame. This atmosphere of rank was as a new existence, and stupid virtue dwelt in the lower world.

In these elegant regions of aristocracy and splendour, notwithstanding the pressing desire of the old nobleman, Norman rarely ventured. One night he yielded to his curiosity to make the acquaintance of a celebrated scholar and traveller—a man of high character and science. Evening came, and he found himself in the superb and dazzling rooms, thrown open with all their medley of regal magnificence, and thronged with the glittering array of rank and fashion.

He found Sir H—a man of simple manners and plain strong sense, in addition to his other great and well−known merits. Two travellers, mutually familiar with many places and people on different sides of the globe, have numerous delightful topics of conversation. They were pleased with each other, and again Norman forgot his reserve towards strangers, especially when his companion kindly, and with unaffected candour, touched upon his history, which Torrini, at the request of Norman, had explained to him. The evident sympathy and confidence of the good philosopher were like healing balm to his spirit; and he felt that happiness might be his, even without the grand denouement which he had once conceived so necessary to his very existence. A select circle of such friends—the love of a being like Flora—retirement and study—he sighed as these softening and grateful visions stole over his imagination.

Sir H—to his attainments in philosophy added no inconsiderable knowledge of the fashionable world, and he recounted the character and leading adventures of some of the most distinguished men and conspicuous women present. Much as he knew of Italian society, Norman was shocked, and almost incredulous. The most admired females were giddy runaways from husbands and fathers— the charming *protégées* of lords or kings. English women, glittering in plumes and diamonds, and the fair divinities of general worship, who, in their own northern land, might scarce dare the glances of the world; some notorious for adventures, which they took no pains to conceal; and others enveloped in mystery, which only rendered them more interesting.

One beautiful woman attracted much attention. Her appearance, indeed, was striking. She was ripened into the full maturity of womanhood. Her tall, round, perfect figure shone conspicuous amid the loveliness around. Her complexion was dark and transparent. Her hair—night was not so sable— was smoothed glossily upon her

beaming brow. The dignity of her countenance was chastened by a sweet smile. But the most remarkable feature were the eyes—large, intently dark and lustrous; sometimes veiling their fires beneath a softness that threatened the coldest heart; and again, when unobserved, darting their glances round the room, as if in search of some one; bright; haughty—dilated— restless, and almost wild. At times her gaze assumed a positive fierceness, and again grew beautiful and tender as a gazelle's.

"One of the curious effects of travelling," said Norman to Sir H—, "is to show the pilgrim facsimiles of his familiar home−faces in the most remote parts of the globe. I am really sometimes startled to meet in cold strangers the very counterparts of my most intimate friends. Now my father stalks by me in the form of a duke; and now my old school−friend sits in state upon a throne. Yonder superb creature I feel certain I have beheld before— yet I am equally certain that it must be an illusion."

"The Countess D—," said his companion.

"She is one of the most marked women of the day. That slender young man who attends her is the Duke de L—."

Norman continued to watch this haughty stranger with singular interest. As he followed her with frequent glances, he found that he himself was not altogether unobserved. His appearance was of a kind, indeed, to command attention in such a scene. Among other eyes, those of the stranger were fixed several times full upon him; and once, when he suddenly turned towards her, he thought she almost started in an attempt to avoid encountering his gaze. Antonia stood near, and saw this species of communion between them. Norman would have spoken to her subsequently, but she seemed to have forgotten his presence; except only once, when he caught her girlish and usually bright face shaded with a cloud of melancholy, the eyes fixed on him a moment with an expression of misery and reproach of which he did not conceive her capable.

A short time afterward, curious to observe more closely the face which still appeared as one not unknown to him, he caused himself to be presented to the Countess D—. If, however, his vanity or his romance had woven any conjectures out of her former glances, he was now chilled by her cold and almost severe demeanour. Nothing could be more civil and courtly; but still she was one in whose acquaintance he found it impossible to make the slightest progress. The Duke de L— chatted agreeably; but the countess, with her large eyes opened upon Norman as if with something of surprise at his seeking with her even the ordinary familiarities of polite life. She spoke no English— had never been out of Italy, Switzerland, and France; and when the duke ordered her carriage, she passed from the rooms with a courtesy almost imperceptible, so that Norman doubted whether or not she even intended it as a greeting. The interview, however, banished from his mind the impression that he had seen her before. Some one very like her he had certainly beheld, but he endeavoured to dismiss the subject.

On retiring for the night, he found on his table a package of letters and a card from Frederick Morton, with a line in pencil, stating the accident by which he had learned of his change of name and presence in Florence, and his anxiety to see his old friend before his departure for *Rome*.

Nothing rakes up the associations like the sight of one in a foreign country who has been familiar with us in our own. Late—late that night did Norman remain seated by his solitary fire, poring over letters—oh! how rich with the spirit of distant lands and other days! Julia—his father— Howard, had written. A thousand agonizing—a thousand delightful thoughts awoke in his bosom. Morton had seemed to him singularly interwoven with his own fate. If, as he darkly suspected, Clairmont was the author of the prominent calamity of his life, it was this very *Morton* who had been the cause. He smiled as he recalled the brilliant night at Mrs. Temple's; he sighed as Flora Temple's image again rose up before him—softer— lovelier—dearer than ever. Yes, the presence of Morton seemed to roll back upon him the stream of long−buried hope and love, and a flood of tenderness gushed over his soul. He smiled once more while recollecting the "B. Hotel, room No. 39, up stairs:" and thus, with sighs and smiles, the airy tissue of which most men's memory is woven, and into which fade and melt at last all the heaven−climbing schemes of youth and ambition, the greater part of the night rolled away.

CHAPTER XII.

Contrasts and Aspirations—And yet another Coincidence.

"Not to the skies in useless columns tossed,
And in proud falls magnificently lost:
But, pure and artless, pouring through the plain
Health to the sick, and solace to the swain."

—Pope.

The Psyche was finished. Nothing from the chisel of the young sculptor had equalled it. Fortune had thrown into his hands a block of marble matchlessly perfect; pure and stainless as her whose attributes it imbodied. Soft fell the drapery, as if waving with the air; and so exquisitely graceful were the tender limbs, so sweet and appealing the virgin face, that the spectator held his breath and trod with a hushed step, as if the heavenly vision, thus betrayed in its visible beauty on the gross earth, would start from his gaze, and die of shame.

The artist withdrew a few paces, and, leaning against a colossal but half−hewn Jupiter, folded his arms, and waited the examination of his friend and patron. He had placed the figure on a revolving pedestal, and arranged the shutters to send down on it the light most favourable to the potent spell of imagination. On his auburn hair, veiling even from friendship the interest with which he watched the effect of his power, a dark crimson cap was drawn down over his eyes, as if carelessly; his arms were folded; his head thrown slightly back; over his handsome face a smile had stolen—just lighting his gaze—just parting his lips.

The sense of excellence in works of art had entered deep into Norman's soul. This delicious dream of loveliness threw him off his guard. He forgot the presence of the author. He gazed in rapture—walked round it again and again with never−tiring delight, murmuring ever and anon, in the tone that comes only from the heart—

"Oh, beautiful! beautiful! Lovely as the soul! Radiant as the morning!"

He breathed at length, as his attention relaxed, and turned suddenly towards Angelo. The sculptor stood, as if himself a statue, in the same unstirring attitude; but a change had come over his countenance: the deep, delighted smile had faded from his lips, and his eyes were full of tears.

"Is it not a high art," he said at length, "to cope with the very hand of nature!"

"Even so," replied Norman. "When I look on a statue, it is ever with a thrill. Immortality is written on it, as well as genius."

"Ay," rejoined Angelo, his face again lighting up; "will it not go down the tide of ages—will it not? When kings, who now roll by me as if I were dust beneath their chariot−wheels, shall be dust themselves—when beauties, who deem me, and such as I, too humble even to *look* on their radiance, shall be kissed by the worm—when cities, now thriving and roaring with their millions, shall be unpeopled, crumbling, grass−grown, and silent— shall not this little image, in which I have again timidly traced *her* lineaments, shall it not live among the yet unborn myriads?"

Norman saw he was excited, and drew him gently to the window. It looked out upon a wide and gorgeous garden, where huge vases of orange−trees and lemons were ranged against the sunny wall, and statues and fountains gleamed through the leaves.

"Angelo," said he, "I have observed, of late, that you have grown more unquiet and gloomy than is your wont. Does any misfortune prey upon you? Can I serve you? It has pleased Heaven to make me wealthy: I know you entertain wild opinions on many subjects, and on this in particular. But the adage, that wealth is not happiness, is truer than you suppose."

"Wealth may not be happiness," replied the sculptor; "but poverty I know is misery—deep, writhing misery. Were all the wealthy such as you, I could be content to behold the golden abundance and profuse beauty of the magnificent globe monopolized, as it is, by a few. But those who possess it are but too often the grasping, the cold, the narrow−minded, and the mean. I look back on my past years. What has life been to me? One long, burning curse. I have drunk insult and humiliation with every breath. Am I less high and noble than the creeping reptile to whom the laws of this degenerate land have given yonder palace— those stately fountains—these scented groves? This man has spurned me from his gates. He did not know me. Let him look to himself. We may

one day meet again."

"You alarm me, Angelo. What is it you mean?"

"Nothing," said the sculptor, with some confusion. "When I speak on this theme I rave. See," he added, as if to change the subject, "with the aid of your liberality I have been able myself to perform a generous action. This picture—it was the property of a poor old painter, who was obliged to sell most of his articles for bread. Many of the Florentine artists assisted him as far as they were able. I could only take this."

The production he alluded to stood on the floor, with its face against the wall. He reversed it, and discovered the head of a fine dog, full of spirit. There was about it a life and animation exceedingly attractive; it evidently came from a pencil practised in the higher walks of the art. "I bought it," continued Angelo, "because the circumstances of the poor man's life interested me greatly. With a powerful genius, and high and noble character, it has been his misfortune to suffer a life of bitter poverty—a continual struggle against ghastly want. A fashionable artist, in his own walk, has always eclipsed him; and he is, at this moment, ill, and has been actually almost starving."

"Poor fellow!" said Norman. "Has he other productions for sale?"

"Several," answered Angelo.

"And do you know him to be a deserving object of attention?"

"Come and see for yourself," said Angelo. "Let us walk forth and taste the breeze. Your Psyche shall be sent to the palace to−morrow. At present let us leave it, as I am weary of confinement. Walk with me to Signore Ducci's—so the painter is named—and you shall judge of him and his paintings for yourself. It lies without the walls, and up the hill of *Bellesguardo*. Poverty has already driven him, body as well as soul, from the haunts of his fellow−creatures."

The two friends pursued their way towards the abode of the unfortunate artist, along the black, discoloured, and wretched lanes and alleys of the far−famed town overhung as they are with immense eaves, and sternly redeemed, ever and anon, by a huge and gloomy palace, or a ponderous arch flung across the street; or the heavily−sculptured, but unfinished facades of cathedrals; or the huge blank walls of a convent; or the turret of some immense antique tower.

They passed towards the *Piazza Santa Trinita*. The groups of Vetturini, ever lounging before the black and stupendous *Palazzo Strozzi*, assailed them with their usual clamorous importunities— " *Per Roma, Splugen, Napoli, Venezia*."

Upon the bridge, the light and beautiful work of *Ammannati*, their course was impeded by a crowd. A friar, who had won the right of saintship, stood in the centre of the pavement, receiving, in advance, the adoration of the Florentines. He was a coarse, common−looking man, barefooted and bareheaded, with a cowl and frock, a cord around his waist, and a pair of brawny shoulders, which might have better spent their strength in cultivating the earth than in usurping the honours of Heaven. The multitude thronged around him with lively signs of reverence and worship; knelt before him, kissed the hem of his garment, and stretched their eager hands tumultuously to touch the stones ere evaporated the divine virtue imparted by his sacred feet. The face of Angelo grew almost pale as Norman turned towards him with an inconsiderate and incredulous smile, which an instant's reflection checked.

"Can you wonder," he said, "dear Montfort, that I *hate*"—he gave the word that strong and bitter emphasis natural to his ardent constitution—"that I *hate*, deeply, eternally, those who have brought my noble country to this? those who keep her trampled down in this abasement? Nature gave me a gentle and a loving heart. I sadden over the pain of a wounded bird. I cannot see a sheep slaughtered without a recoiling horror. But for the tyrants of my country I have no mercy. It has been drained utterly from my bosom by years of bitter experience and observation. I hate them. Oh! how I hate them! I would lay down my life— nay, that were nothing, for often I feel that I should be glad to be rid of it on any terms; but were it bright in reality, as it sometimes is in fancy;— had I wealth and power—were Antonia by my side—mine, for ever mine,—I would even then lay it down to hurl into the dust these proud, haughty oppressors. Am I not right?"

"No," said Norman, "not in practice, although you may be in theory. As your unhappy country is situated, it resembles the fox in the fable, who preferred to have his blood sucked by flies already half sated rather than by a new swarm more fierce and ravenous. Every revolution, even the most gloriously successful, is, at first, an appalling evil; but a failure only rivets and tightens the chain— strengthens the tyrant—weakens the hope of future relief, and pours out that very blood most noble and most feared by those in power."

"You think, then," said Angelo, "that the patriot who now strives to break the fetters of Italy, only inflicts upon her an injury?"

"Yes, decidedly."

"And no plan to free her would have your approbation?"

"No, by no means. Italy will only be regenerated, if she be *ever* regenerated, by the slow influence of opinion; and her first aid will come from abroad. She might be freed by her own revolutions a thousand times, and she would only fall back again into slavery and degradation. Austria, Russia, France, must be first changed: in her struggles she copes with the colossal energies of all these."

"Had your own glorious countrymen thought so, Montfort, the world had wanted the grandest example of history."

"My own countrymen," said Norman, "you must remember, are separated from Europe. They breathe an atmosphere all their own; and were morally prepared to govern themselves long before they became their own masters."

"Oh!" said the sculptor, "how I have hung over the romantic story of your country!—over its sublime moral fabric—over its godlike statesmen and soldiers, higher, because more enlightened, than those of either Rome or Greece. Your government and your heroes have been disinterested. The happiness of their race is their sole object. Your nation steps along the career of moral right; never reels with the drunkenness of glory—with the thirst after empire. Instead of involving millions in war, pestilence, and famine, in pursuit of such designs as, for so many thousand years, have shaken this old world, you would not, however easy the enterprise, acquire by force or fraud the wealthiest portion of the globe. You possess the principle of growth hidden in an acorn, which, in its humble origin, affords you at once a hope and a lesson. Like that insignificant seed, you were borne by adverse winds to a distant and savage shore; you were planted by accident, and grew in neglect; and now you appear flinging abroad your branches to heaven, striking your roots deep into the earth, bending and groaning sometimes beneath the storm, but never yielding to its fury, and tow ering above the surrounding woods, till the remote revolutions of time and nature shall lay your lofty honours in the dust. Oh that *I* had been born in such a land! where I could tread amid the still woods and mountains, and feel myself not a *slave* ."

Surprised at his eloquence and agitation, Norman replied—

"How differently you speak from many of your European brethren!"

"No," said Angelo, "do not wrong us. Thousands of hearts, I know, beat like mine at the mention of your distant and noble country. `As Rome *was* and America *is*,' thus runs their whisper when they form high schemes for their own land. And are your cities like ours? And is nature bright? And are there millions who live ever free, contented, and in peace?"

"Even so," said Norman. "You would be enraptured to behold my native town. It lies even more beautiful than Venice; on a flood, and overarched by a sky, as lovely."

"And all are supplied with the necessaries of life?"

"All."

"None of these beggars and kings, rioting and starving side by side? No saints and friars? And the laws are just and benevolent, and the religion rational and pure, and the government aids, and never crushes those beneath it?"

"All," said Norman, "all these blessings gather under the shelter of my country."

Angelo paused a moment, and added—

"And what would they deserve who could here build up another as independent and happy! If blood must flow, how noble a death thus met in the pursuit of just laws and human happiness!"

He looked around as he finished speaking. They had been for some time surrounded by a throng of beggars, orphans, cripples, the blind, the ulcerous, the dumb—creatures blasted by disease, age, and accident, the refuse of hospitals, the wreck of wars. They gathered around, soliciting aid "for the love of God and the Madona!" Norman emptied his purse among them. A handsome girl, who led her blind father, received nothing from the scramble.

"See," she said, "he has no eyes."

"But I have no more," said Norman; "nothing but the purse—"

"Well, then give me the purse!" she cried, snatching it from his hand.

At this moment the cry went forth that the sovereign approached.

"The duke! the duke!" exclaimed the needy crew, as they shrank on either side against the wall. The royal

party made their appearance in the most magnificent equipages, covered with velvet and gold, everywhere blazing with the imperial arms, and each carriage drawn by six prancing steeds, clothed in trappings of gold, surrounded by *chasseurs*, outriders, postillions, and guards. The horses' hoofs clattered against the pavement—the dazzling ornaments flashed and glittered in the sun— and the snowy plumes floated in the air. As the imposing procession advanced, passengers of all descriptions stopped to give it way. Vehicles belonging to strangers unacquainted with the customs of the place, at a sign from a postillion, remained stationary. The starving mendicants bent the knee, and the passers−by uncovered their heads with profound humility. The peasant, with his frail cart and skeleton ass, crouched to salute his master. All hats were doffed—all heads lowered— all eyes drawn towards the single man, who, with one or two careless responses to the general salutations, was whirled, flashing, trampling, and glittering, on his course.

"I do not mind," said Angelo, "the oppression of the body so much as the abasement of the mind— the foul opinions with which they blight the young and the beautiful. Montfort, what think you! *Antonia*, they tell me, is going to bury herself in a convent."

"I have spoken to her of it," replied Norman. "She seems to have been educated in the idea, and has answered my persuasions with the most enthusiastic pictures of that gloomy life."

"I would even rather see her there," said Angelo, "than in the arms of another. Yet I know I am mad, worse than mad, to let her image thus haunt me. Her proud cousin Alezzi, her old father, would spurn me as a dog, could they think I had dared to dream—"

"Banish it, my friend," said Norman, kindly. "You are young and ardent; the thought will pass away."

"Yes, when—"

He stopped suddenly, as if about to reveal something which he desired to keep secret.

They soon arrived at the poor old painter's. He had a miserable room on the eminence of *Bellesguardo*, and was ill—confined to his bed. The two visitants just sufficiently communicated with him to announce that he could dispose of several of such pictures as he chose to part with immediately, and at his own price. He named a modest sum for the only two he had left. Norman trebled it, and paid the money down. The good old man, with a grateful look and pressure of the hand, thanked and blessed his generous patron; who, promising to send his domestic for the purchase, also assured him of another visit, and more aid.

He was preparing to pass the evening in solitary study, when his servant came in with the pictures from the unfortunate painter. Norman had not looked at them before. He now turned them towards the light for examination. The one was a half−finished saint, with a halo around its brow, a crucifix, a scull on the table, and a string of angels' heads, peeping down from the walls and ceilings. The other was the face of a blooming and lovely boy of six, of such remarkable beauty, as, when once seen, could scarcely be forgotten. Over the right eye was a scar.

Norman gazed at it a few moments with the most lively surprise.

"Yes," he said, with a smile of pleasant recollection, "that brilliant sleighing day in New−York, seven years ago, and this delicious little face I saved from the fury of those mad horses. I know the eyes perfectly. I shall never forget them; and, now I remember, they are also those of the mother, to whose singular and beautiful face Howard called my attention—*her* life I also saved; and *she* ," he said, rising in interest and animation, "is the one, unremembered till this moment, whose image last night I so vainly strove to conjure up, and whom that remarkable Countess D— so closely resembles. It *is* strange. *Can* it be? Can this fair countess have been in America? Does she really owe to me her life? But why concealment? Why disguise herself? Why deny that she had been out of Europe? I *will* meet those haughty eyes again, as, I swear, I have met them before. Yet, why should I? If the lady choose to deny her travels, and to be somebody else, it is no affair of mine. This child I *know*, and there is the scar; but for the mother, I saw her only once—years have gone by. Besides, what is it to me?"

CHAPTER XIII.

A Dialogue and a Conclusion.

"Look, nymphs and shepherds, look!
What sudden blaze of majesty
Is that which we from hence descry,
Too divine to be mistook:
This, this is she." Milton's Poems.

Years had confirmed and deepened, without altering, the outline of Morton's character. In his society Norman passed several pleasant hours, learning many interesting particulars from home; and among others, that Miss Temple had suddenly recovered after Norman's departure, and continued yet the belle of the city—even improved in charms, at the age of twenty−four more fascinating than she had been at eighteen—and yet unmarried. It had been whispered that she, with the whole family, was about coming abroad.

"By−the−way, Leslie," said Morton one day, as they were riding on horseback to the *Cascine*—"or, I beg your pardon, Signore Montfort, I should have told you, but I declare I forgot, that she desired me, if I ever crossed you in my travels, to—d—n it, now!—what is it? I never—Do you know, Leslie, I have lost my memory lately?"

Norman turned away his face to hide his emotion. He felt in that moment that his soul was a thousand times more bound up in Flora Temple than it ever had been before. Assuming, however an indifferent air, he asked—

"But, Morton, what was it that Miss Temple said?"

"Why, she told me, one night at your sister's— she and your sister, you know, have grown regular friends—real hand and glove."

"Miss Temple and Julia!" faltered Norman, with a feeling more like his former self than he had experienced for years.

"Oh, to be sure—why, she half lives at Mrs. Howard's."

"And Julia never even mentioned this in her letter— how strange!"

"Pho! nonsense! I suppose she forgot it."

"But what did she say! You have not told me."

"Why, she said—as I was saying—one night, at Mrs. Howard's—that, if I crossed you in my travels—you see, I was going to take the whole tour of Europe—up the Rhine, across the Splugen— Venice—Vienna—"

"But the message."

"`Tell Mr. Leslie,' she said, `that is, if you see him in the course of your travels, that'—I declare now—I never—I have lost it entirely. It was something about friends in America—something about—about—the truth is, I did *not* expect to meet you much, so I did not bear it in mind."

"But she said something of me, and *to* me? And she is the bosom friend of Julia?" said Norman, with flashing eye.

"Yes, bosom friend—regular hand and glove. She is a prime article, but—however, I have already written home to our folks, and Maria will go to Mrs. Howard's at once. I told them how nicely you were getting on here. I declare, I never *was* so astonished."

"*Getting on!*" echoed Norman; "why, how did you tell them I was `getting on?'"

"Oh, I told them; leave me alone for that. I drew a description of you that will do their very hearts good:—Great palace, says I, larger than City Hall; *suite* of rooms from the marquis, all to himself; little marchioness, says I, plump as a peach—half the day in her *boudoir* with her all alone, says I; a hundred thousand piasters a year, at least; and, says I, he's in for it—regular, I tell you."

"Morton," exclaimed Norman, in a voice almost stern, "did you, really?"

"Oh, yes, d—n me, I did *so*—honour bright; leave *me* alone—I was really poetical on the little marchioness."

"Poetical—"

"Yes, I enlarged out, you see, and got into a description. Why, she is as far above any thing that ever was, or ever could be seen in America, as a sun is above a candle!"

"And you are sure that this letter will go to Miss Temple's knowledge?"

"Why, I was afraid," said Morton, "lest Mrs. Howard might not see it; so, what do you think I did?"

"What, in the name of Heaven?"

"I added a P. S., sending your love—you know those things are always of course—and begging Maria to take my letter round, and read them the passages."

Norman turned away again, but it was to hide his vexation.

"Whom do you think I saw in Paris?"

"Whom?" said Norman.

"Guess."

"God bless me, Morton, it would be easier to guess whom you did *not* see there."

"A great friend of yours."

"Of mine!"

"Particular."

"I cannot conjecture."

"Don't you remember B. Hotel, room No. 39, up stairs?"

Norman turned suddenly, and with breathless attention.

"Don't you remember `out of one muzzle into another'—the candle−snuffer—the Veronese lady?"

"For Heaven's sake, Morton, who? It was not—"

"But I say it was, though—that d—d French count."

"Almighty powers!—When—where—how? tell me."

"Why, man alive, what's the matter! He is not here, is he?"

"Would to Heaven he were!"

"Would to Heaven he were not, say I."

"Morton, I am deeply interested in this man— deeply, painfully. Tell me instantly the circumstances under which you saw him."

"Well, so I will. I caught him in the most infernal— but you shall hear."

"Quick! I am on the rack."

"You see," resumed Morton, "I do take it upon myself, with pretty considerable certainty, to declare that he who would be guilty of such a thing—"

"Guilty!" interrupted Norman. "Ay, guilty! I'll be sworn, guilt black as—"

"Yes! d—n the fellow. If it were not for his cursed talent at snuffing candles—ditto, men—I would horsewhip him as sure as—"

"What was the circumstance?"

"Why, you see, when I was in Paris, I used to go continually into Galignani's reading−room—"

"Yes!"

"To read the papers—"

"Well!"

"And there, one day, as I went in, who should be there but Clairmont. I knew him the very moment I set eyes upon him."

"What said he? what did he? when was it?"

"Don't interrupt me, my dear fellow. I never can tell a story if you interrupt me. So, one day, as I said, who should be there but Clairmont. I had been expressly eager to get a view of a certain New−York paper, and he had it in his hands, reading it intently. He was sitting with his head bent down over the paper. Well, I waited; still he did not stop reading; well, I waited longer, still he never stopped, but kept always reading the same article. I got up, walked backwards and forwards, with my hands in my pantaloons pocket; swore a little, hummed a tune, drummed on the table with my fingers, and got decidedly out of patience for about an hour. At last I walked pretty near him, and looked under his hat; and—what do you think?"

"I do not know."

"Guess."

"Really—"

"The d—d fellow was asleep."

"And that was all you discovered about him?"

"All! why, he kept me waiting an hour."

"Come," said Norman, as they reached the beautiful circle where all the gay, fashion, beauty, and nobility of Florence were assembled, "let us quicken our pace and see who are here." They accordingly galloped around before long arrays of splendid equipages, drawn up motionless on one side, and crowds of others glittering and flashing as they glided amid the trees.

"See!" said Norman, "the Marquis Torrini and his beautiful Antonia!"

The old nobleman bowed, and the young girl turned and gazed with such a sweet smile upon Norman, that Morton's susceptibilities were touched.

"Leslie, you are a lucky dog," he said, "she is most beautiful!"

Norman ran over the names, great and brilliant they were, of the gay assembly, and Morton seemed quite dazzled. He took every opportunity to display his fine person to advantage, and kept his horse in a continual prance. He had suffered a pair of grim mustaches to curl beneath his nose, and his whiskers commanded attention even in Florence.

"Ha!" said Norman, "the Countess D— again!"

"Which is the Countess D—?" asked Morton.

"That superb woman yonder on horseback, with the servant in green and gold by her side, riding with the Duke de L—. See, see! Did you ever before look into such eyes?"

"What! No—yes—I declare, I never—" said Morton, "as I live. Countess D—, did you say?"

"Ay," said Norman, somewhat surprised.

"Countess Fiddlestick," said Morton: "that woman is no more a countess than you are. That very woman I saw in New−York twice, and both times with that very infernal scoundrel the—"

"Morton—great heavens!" said Norman, turning pale, "speak!"

"The d—d count in the French army."

"Clairmont?"

"Ay, Count Clairmont. Once I saw her at his door striving to see him, and she was turned away by the black snowball who waited at the hotel; and the second time—"

"Well, quick!"

"In the night, in the street, by the light of a lamp, again in close consultation with him; and they stood scowling on each other like two cocks a−going to fight."

"Almighty Providence!" said Norman, plunging the spurs into his horse's flanks till the blood came. The startled steed leaped forward with a snort of pain, leaving Morton in an instant forty yards in the rear.

"Well! I declare!" said Morton; "what is he after now? The little marchioness, I vow. No, by Joe! he passes her carriage! she rises and gazes at him! He never gives her a look, I do declare. It's the black−eyed woman he calls the Countess D—. There! he has caught her up—he bows— she bows. Why, d—n it, I believe he's after all the handsome women in Florence—aint he? I'll have to put another postscript—won't I? I declare I never *did* see such a—"

He galloped after his friend, muttering the close of his sentiment inaudibly.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Painter's Rooms—His Fate.

"Noting this penury to myself, I said," &*a —Romeo.*

Turning from the countess, again baffled by her perfect composure and distant civility, Norman pushed his horse towards the gate that led to Bellesguardo.

"The painter shall unfold this mystery," he thought, as he hastened along the streets. "*He* must know something of the child whose face he has transcribed. From him I may gain a clew to lead me out of the maze in which I am so singularly bewildered. Fool that I was! I should before have fathomed the depth of his knowledge on this subject. I will deal cunningly with him. I will steal the secret from his unwary lips—for secret there is. If this woman *be* the mother, the painter must know it. I will have the heart out of him, ere I be again thrown back into doubt."

He reached the door. It led into a wretched hovel. The common streets were not more filthy than the rough steps that conducted to his neglected apartment. He pulled the little dirty cord at the opening gate which communicated with the "*piano*," where dwelt the object of his search. It was some time before the gate opened, apparently of itself. A pretty *cameriera* leaned down from the third story, and, in a soft voice, asked who desired entrance.

On inquiring for Signore Ducci, he was informed that he was dangerously ill, and not expected to survive till morning.

"Can I see him?"

"Scarcely, signore.

"It is a matter upon which my life may depend," rejoined Norman.

"Then walk in, signore. But stay, the holy man is there now," added the dark−eyed and modest young girl; "come with me into the adjoining room. It is the next to the poor Signore Ducci, and when he is alone I will call you."

She bent her head gracefully as she left him in the scantily furnished painting−room of the dying artist. He cast his eyes around. It bore evident marks of penury. About even an inferior painter there rests a halo, however feeble, of genius and ambition. His mind, even if it have not reached them, has nevertheless grasped at the more radiant shapes of nature. His life has been one of floating dreams and brilliant shadows, a continual pursuit after the striking and the beautiful. He inhabits a region half ideal, teeming with lovely groups, and steeped in gay and tender colouring. When he withdraws his eyes from his own imaginations— imaginations not only more gorgeous than reality, but even beyond his power to pour upon the visible canvass—how much he must behold to blot out from the picture of common life! how much he must feel to palsy his arm, and chill his hope, and teach him to fear that he struggles in vain!

"Poor fellow!" said Norman, as he gazed around upon the half−sketched fragments—a Venus dripping from the flood, a helmed head, a startled steed, the edge of a princely palace—"poor fellow! Shadows indeed! What other men possess in substantial forms, he owns only in pictorial resemblances; and now—his pencil idle, his palette broken, his fervid hues mouldering in the dust—from the bright world of glowing light, he goes down to the shroud, the coffin, and the worm. Rest, chilled and tired heart! rest from your labours. Peace at last will still its throbs. I rejoice," he continued, as he descried in the room several objects provided by his own benevolent care—"I rejoice that, ere it close in darkness and death, my hand has shed on its gloom and sorrow even one little beam of pleasure."

A groan interrupted his reflections. It came from the chamber of death. In reply, another voice met his ear. It startled him with its familiar sound. The room which he then occupied was darkened. Before the door hung a heavy green curtain. He approached. Again he heard the voice—cool, wily, and hypocritical. The temptation was irresistible. He cautiously set the door ajar, and glided between the aperture and the curtain; a station whence, himself unseen, he could view the room in which the patient lay. There were in it three persons. The first, the wretched sufferer himself, apparently in the last stage of malady. A light from the west, which the sun had left an immense wall of emerald and gold, fell upon his pale dying face. The second was the girl who had admitted him.

In the third, seated by the bed, in his sable gown, with the glossy black hair parted over his quiet, artful features, and a subdued look of holiness, he recognised the priest.

The painter, with an expression of long suffering and exhaustion, was just replying to a question, with half−spent breath.

"No," he said, "never a word on that subject."

"But he seemed rich?"

"Ay, and kind as a brother."

"Tall?"

"Yes, and noble; the bearing of a prince."

"How often has he been here since?"

"Once, according to his promise."

"And he gave you money without an equivalent?"

"Yes."

"And you know not his name?"

"No."

"You swear, as a dying man, you have never breathed a word?"

"I swear."

"And that you never will?"

"I swear."

The priest rose to go, promising to return in the morning. As he withdrew, the young and evidently sinless girl followed him to the door, took his hand, knelt, and kissed it.

"Your blessing, my father," she said, devoutly.

"Bless you! bless you, my child."

Again the fair enthusiast kissed, ere she surrendered, the white and pious hand.

When Father Ambrose had withdrawn, Norman entered at the call of the girl.

The painter, exhausted with the previous colloquy, had sunk back into a doze. Norman gazed on his broad white forehead. There, perhaps, slept his secret, at least the faint clew that might lead to it. Those lips, so cold, so still, could, peradventure, with a breath, direct him to the path. Hours he lingered, resolving, when the object of his solicitude should awake, to attempt the discovery, which, however remote, he could not help vaguely supposing in some way or other linked with his own mysterious fate.

Late in the night, the pale invalid opened his eyes wildly, and stretched forth his hands.

"My mother—my mother!" he said, "my gone years—my distant home among the hills—tell her— I died—with her name—on my lips—tell her— tell her—"

Vain—vain. To that green home no more his foot shall stray. That voice the mother never again shall hear. Already the spirit, free from its load of anguish, was deep amid the secrets of another world.

CHAPTER XV.

A Character partly unfolded—The Wanderer detects a Clew to lead him through the Labyrinth.

"How I recall Anchises—how I see His mother's mien, and all my friend, in thee!" Dryden's *Eneas.*

Before the information of Morton, which so singularly coincided with his own suspicions, Norman had planned a journey to Pisa with him, and had formally taken leave of Antonia and the priest. It had been his intention to depart in the afternoon, and to spend the evening and night at the villa of a friend a few miles from town. Now, however, he changed his mind. He excused himself to Morton; and after visiting, as we have related, the poor painter Ducci, went alone, and full of portentous presentiments, to his apartments. In order to exempt himself from interruption, he had not informed any one of the change of his intentions; and now, at twelve, sat alone in his room, with a rush of thoughts, new and strange, rolling through his mind.

He had overtaken the Countess D—. Her face turned upon him—the very eyes of his painting— the very countenance: no mother ever more resembled her child. His address, however, was received with the same utter coolness and self−possession, rendering nearer approach impossible.

Did she know him? Was she resolved to continue in her mystery? Was there any relation between her and Clairmont? Even if there were— what then? Did that prove any thing? Suppose he could trace and demonstrate all that he suspected— that she was indeed the mother of the child—that some secret relationship subsisted between her and Clairmont—that she had been in America: should she even acknowledge all this, would it realize those dim and irrepressible forebodings which had been for some time floating in his mind, respecting the discovery of his own deep secret; and which were gradually increased and deepened by several trifles, individually almost too insignificant to notice, yet, in the aggregate, striking and inexplicable?

The priest, with his sly smile—his silver words— his mysterious and silent air—his evident desire on many occasions to avoid him—his appearance in the Duomo with that gaunt stranger, when his own name had been mentioned—the secret intruder into his room, having evidently perused his note−book: this woman—this Countess D—; her resemblance to her whose life he had saved in New−York; the child's picture, with the very scar; and now, when he had almost abandoned the idea that these were more than mere coincidences, here comes Morton, who exclaims at once that this very Countess D— has been in New−York, holding dark and mysterious communion with Clairmont. "What! is the black veil to be lifted? Are these extraordinary shadows, that have so weighed upon me of late, are they really the commencement of the great work? Is the mighty and accursed enchantment which has locked me in odium and in despair, is it fading away? Do the links begin to fall from my limbs, and the scales from my eyes? And this very Morton—he who has so oddly plunged me in this dilemma—is *he*, silly fool as he is, to be the instrument? Shall I walk again among men with the halo of innocence beaming around my brow—beaming to every eye, to every heart? Flora unmarried, and the friend of Julia! What delicious hopes! What—"

He was interrupted by a slight noise. It seemed close to the wall, behind a heavy curtain. His heart leaped to his throat. He was already excited to a most nervous agitation. The heavy toll of the Duomo was just sounding two. All was silent. He leaned his ear. Again he heard a rustle; and, hastily extinguishing the lamp, he silently withdrew within a deep embrasure in the window, and enveloping himself in the folds of a large curtain, waited in unbreathing silence. A light appeared. The drapery on the opposite side of the room, which he remembered had shaken before when he suspected a similar intrusion, once more moved. Gently, stealthily, as a cat crouches to watch its prey, a form emerged from the wall, with a shaded lantern, bending and listening; prying, step by step, and on tiptoe. The intruder reached the table, held the light to the adjoining room, as if to ascertain whether any one, by chance, was there; then, apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, and assuming an easier and bolder air, uncovered his face, and sat down upon the large chair by the table. A look sufficed for recognition. It was the priest.

"So ho!" he said, "to Pisa he has gone! Well, let him. If he would but stay—if the old tower would but fall and crush him, we should have easy work of it. Only *he* prevents her—only he; and yet the green fool never dreams it. Ha! ha! Well, let us see; she shall yet be ours."

The worthy man proceeded to examine, very strictly, all the furniture in the room in any way appertaining to

Leslie. He turned over the papers— glanced among the books—looked carefully through one or two letters, left by chance on the table—and opened, with false keys, the trunks. Norman had sufficient presence of mind to restrain his impulse to step forth and lay a hand upon his shoulder, and kept perfectly silent. The priest, after looking carelessly through such papers as he found, laid his hand on the packet brought by Morton, and reading the superscription, exclaimed,—

"No! yes! Holy Virgin! Norman Leslie!"

After arranging every thing as it had been before, he glided out of the apartment.

"So, then," thought Norman, as he stepped from his hiding−place, "the infernal rascal is a spy; nay, something more than a spy. What meant the illomened raven by the exclamation at my name, and his courteous wish of the leaning tower? Does he know me? He spoke too of *her*. Who is *she?* Antonia—the beautiful, the innocent, the light−hearted Antonia. I must save that gentle being from the wiles of this old fox; and since I know the secret door, I will endeavour to profit by it. Every day, my reverend brother here goes, at eleven, for an hour, to the cathedral. I will take a look into his regions."

The morning came. Norman met the priest at eleven in an antechamber.

"What!" said Father Ambrose, in his smoothcst tone, "Signore Montfort!"

"Ay, holy father, by the merest chance. I returned at daybreak."

"I rejoice to see you look so well," rejoined the priest, with a smile.

When he was gone, Norman ascended into his apartment; and, after much scrutiny, discovered a small and well−concealed sliding panel. He opened it without ceremony. It led into a corridor, and thence into another suite of rooms less elegantly furnished. In a small room, with the light from a high window shed strongly down upon his face, sat a young boy. He was attentively poring over a book. The face could not be mistaken; it was the same sweet countenance which smiled in the picture, and the scar was distinctly visible over the eyebrow. The eyes were presently raised and lowered again. Those same large, black, lustrous orbs. At that instant a step was heard. Norman withdrew, unobserved, into his chamber. A half−hour afterward, trembling with curiosity, he again tried the panel. It was fastened on the other side.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Thread is broken once more.

"There were two portraits."

—L. E. L.

The haughty Countess D— led the fashion of Florence. She was the divinity of general admiration. At the numerous soirées, balls, concerts, and operas, none appeared so marked and dazzling. The Count D— had been a man of ninety; and scarcely were they united by the priest when they were separated by death. The old man went quietly to the grave, and the magnificent young countess to the very meridian blaze and splendour of fashion.

Her establishment was gorgeous. Her palace was newly furnished with most costly care. Four sable coursers drew her every afternoon through the glittering throng; and after her were turned all eyes, if not all hearts.

The interest she attracted was not a little heightened by her mien of cold and distant pride. Her manner was even severe and freezing. Her very face, beautiful as it was, had in it something passionless and sepulchral. A colourless transparency marked her dark complexion. An almost bitter smile often revealed her snowy teeth; and her large eyes gleamed, not only brilliantly, but burningly around upon her throng of worshippers. fascinating the men with a dangerous and lustrous softness, which, on encountering the distrustful look of her own sex, turned to cool and keen contempt. One more cordially hated by the fair, more rapturously applauded by the manly, more remarked and courted by all, dwelt not within the walls of Florence.

She seemed to delight in her triumphs in the *beau monde;* but with the delight of pride rather than passion. Her lip curled and her eye flashed; but her heart never melted. Her countenance still seemed immutable, passionless, and sometimes even wretched. She never sighed, it was not in her nature; but a close observer might discover that she suffered—that amid the highest gayety of the revel, her soul was sad and solitary—that amid its most melting ardour, her heart was ice—was marble. High, inscrutable, cold, and beautiful, her course was watched and wondered at. Dukes and counts, nay, princes and kings, it was said, came to her feet when her eyes softened with encouragement. Yet even her encouragement was bestowed with the artificial brilliancy of an actress, who smiles from the prompt−book, who sustains a tender or a gay rôle with the ease of her profession; yet whose radiant joy, or graceful love, falls from her as an idle mantle the moment she reaches the side−scene.

There was a magnificent ball at the Prince M—'s the second evening after Norman's adventure with the panel. Antonia, the Countess D—, Leslie, all the world, were present. Norman taxed his powers to make himself agreeable to the fair siren, who won and flung away a thousand hearts, any of which others would be proud to gain, and prone to treasure. In subsequent conversations with Morton, he had learned that the female he had seen in New−York was a very ordinarily dressed woman, and apparently from the common ranks of life; but that she had spoken *English*, both at Clairmont's hotel and at the interview in the street. Norman, with the most courtly respect, first attached himself to the duke, and quite succeeded in captivating him. He next contrived to draw the countess herself into the discourse, and, with intense but guarded vigilance, watched to detect the slightest change in her features as, with artful abruptness, he asked if she had "ever known a distinguished nobleman, *Count Clairmont?*"

"Never!" she said, with the most perfect ease and composure. "She had heard the name, or one like it, but had never met the count himself."

During this apparently casual colloquy, Norman regarded her with all his awakened soul. Their eyes even met, full and uncloudedly, as she replied. There was no change whatever in her countenance. It was still cold, high, haughty, calm,—not a hue arose—not a feature changed—her lids drooped not— her eyes shed no beam of light the less.

His heart sank within him. It was evidently impossible. He was convinced, and he utterly abandoned the idea. Thus completely satisfied of the fallacy both of his own suspicions and of Morton's, and with that proneness to confidence peculiar to warm and candid natures, he addressed the countess with a respect so sincere and evident, so much more real than that which he had hitherto assumed, that she seemed slightly pleased with his attention, and even bent on him her eyes, divested of their unmelting and distant coldness, with a shadowed tenderness that made him whisper to his heart—

"She is a thousand times more beautiful than even *I* supposed!"

"You will excuse me," he said, "but you bear a resemblance so singularly strong to a friend in whom I am fatally interested, that I could not forbear indulging the hope that you might be the same."

She smiled calmly again; and they were interrupted by Prince M—. As she turned to reply to the salutation of the prince, Antonia, with her father, approached. The marquis entered into conversation with the duke. Norman spoke with Antonia.

"Like all the world, Signore Montfort," she said, not with her usual free and delightful manner, "you are captivated with the lady at your side, I perceive."

The remark was made and answered in English.

"She is a remarkable woman!" replied Norman. "A strange interest attaches to her in my eyes. Seven years since, in New−York, my native city, I rescued the life of a lady with her child, from the fury of two maddened horses in full flight. This lady is the very counterpart of my beautiful American friend. In Florence I have accidentally met with a painting of the very child—I cannot be mistaken. And, what is still more singular, I am certain that yesterday, at your palace, in the room of the holy Father Ambrose, I beheld the lovely boy himself. I knew him by his eyes and face; and more certainly by the scar over—"

A faint exclamation caused them to turn. The prince had just left the countess. Norman fixed his eyes on her countenance, as if he could pierce to her very soul; and for the moment his suspicions were again awakened. She sat leaning back upon the embroidered couch, her eyes fixed upon a statue—so silent, so thoughtful, so sad and calm, that it seemed impossible she had uttered the cry, which was attributed to a lady very near her, whose coronet of diamonds had nearly fallen. He then resumed his inquiries of Antonia, who informed him that the child he had seen was the nephew of Father Ambrose, who had lately suffered him to visit Florence for a time, and over whose education he watched with peculiar care.

"Indeed," she added, "so great is his anxiety, that he scarcely permits the young lad to leave his presence for a moment."

The countess and Antonia stood together in conversation. They were the two most lovely women in the rooms: but how different! The one had evidently seen the world, and suffered from its blight. Splendidly beautiful she was; and as Norman gazed upon her tall and majestic form, her head, in its queenly shape and lift, reminded him of Cleopatra. Over her remarkable eyes glittered and trembled a tiara of diamonds of untold value. Beneath, shone her dark, thoughtful face, with the romance of eastern beauty. An Asiatic softness and indolence of manner had crept over her, and the splendour of her attire recalled recollections of Arabian tales. Still, even through the whole there were memory and misery. She seemed a Zenobia— not in the splendour of her Palmyrean throne, nor fainting in the triumph of Aurelian; but afterward, calmed and subdued, the ambitious victor, the Syrian queen, sunk into the melancholy Italian in her Roman villa.

Norman's eyes turned from her to Antonia. In her shone beauty all unshaded by sorrow, all untouched by time—a rosebud scarce opened to the summer light. Could ever tears cross that sunny face? Dewdrops would be no more pretty—no more lightly wafted away; at least, so thought Norman.

CHAPTER XVII.

A View behind the Curtain.

"To lie in cold obstruction." —*Shakspeare.*

In a small chamber, far removed from the gallery and suite of rooms open to the curiosity and admiration of visiters, the old Marquis Torrini lay, "couched on a curious bed," surrounded by mirrors, satin, gold, velvet, and precious marble, preparing himself to die. The priest sat by his couch, arrayed in his holy vestments. The patient was dreadfully emaciated with sickness, and apparently overcome with terror at the thoughts of his approaching fate.

"Father Ambrose," said the dying marquis, in a weak voice, "you have desired to see me alone; speak quick, for they say my time is short."

"I could well pray," said the priest, "that your days might be lengthened, but—"

"You think such prayers would be useless?" interrupted the marquis, his eyes turning with an expression of horror upon his companion.

"I am certain," replied the other, "that the Marquis Torrini desires his servant to speak candidly."

The patient cast on him another look of despair, and murmured, as if half to himself,—

"It is not *possible*—it cannot be—they deceive me, surely. Die? die?" he repeated, with an emphasis of terror and bewildered torment; "lose this being—moulder, dissolve away into nauseous matter, into living corruption?"

He shuddered, and covered his face.

"My kind and noble friend," cried the priest.

"These eyeballs," continued the marquis, "with which I see thy face, fallen from their sockets— these lips crumbled to ashes—this hand, this moving, sensible, living hand, struck to a motionless, unmeaning, unfeeling clod—the flesh dropped from the bones, the sinews unstrung—the joints unlocked? Holy Christ, it is *impossible!*"

The wretched invalid let fall the skeleton hand which he had held up and extended before him as he spoke, and covered his face.

"My dear lord," said the priest, in a low voice, "these are the whisperings of the fiend to turn your thoughts from heaven. He would thus lure you on till your last moment, not leaving you calmness sufficient for the arrangement of your earthly circumstances."

"No!" said the dying man, "it is not the fiend— it is nature—it is instinct. The horror of death is planted in our breasts. Jesus himself yielded, and cried out on the cross. Where a God trembles, oh! what is left for man!"

"The recollection," said the priest gently, but quickly, "that he trembled for us his children— that he put on these mortal sufferings, to open for us the gates of Paradise. Lift up your eyes to Heaven!"

"Ambrose!" said the patient, "it is a falsehood! What have I done to you that you join in this mummery—that you would affright my soul with idle and dreadful apprehensions? I know I am weak and nervous; but I may yet live. I am stronger and much better to−day. Medicine has enfeebled me more than disease. I am sure—*sure,* dear Ambrose, of regaining my health."

The priest cast his eyes upwards, and his lips moved.

"Why do you pray?" asked the marquis.

"For you, my brother! I am not one of those who, for an idle tenderness, would suffer you to meet the crisis which awaits you, perhaps this day, perhaps this hour—"

"Holy Christ!" murmured the terrified noble.

"Blindfolded, and ignorant where you go," continued the priest, disregarding the interruption. "The beast brought up for slaughter may yield his throat to the knife without previous warning. He may feel the life−blood ebb and bubble away, and the icy faintness of death steal over his stiffening and quivering limbs, with only the brutishness of physical pain. *He* has no *soul*. His obtuse dulness is a gift of mercy from God. But *you* are immortal; and the hour approaches when you must bid farewell to earth for ever!"

The marquis's face whitened to a yet more livid ghastliness; he rolled his starting eyeballs towards the solemn and severe face of the speaker.

"And you tell me then, Ambrose, with your priestly sanctity, that this is *death* upon me?"

"Death!" echoed the priest.

"That this stately mansion—my villas—my palaces— my untold treasures—my proud hopes, are all gone?"

"Bubbles!" cried the priest—"passing, hollow, idle bubbles!"

"Holy Virgin! save me!" cried the courtier, in a changed tone of voice: after a moment's pause— "Where are your prayers, priest?" and he wiped off, with his clammy hand, the drops that stood on his forehead.

"They have ascended to Heaven in all the watches of the night!" replied the other, meekly and devoutly.

"And with what avail, Ambrose?" asked the marquis.

"The ways of God," said the priest, "cannot be read by mortals. Death comes to all, at some time or other."

"And your miracles, too," said the marquis, who, while in reality quite destitute of any rational religion or supporting belief, was merged in the darkness and paradoxes of the blackest superstition— "your sacred brethren have raised the dead. Oh! can they not save the living? Think, Ambrose, think! has your church no relic? have your saints no power? You have called the waters of the clouds upon the earth. You have cured the lame, the palsied, the ulcerous. Beggars and wretches have benefited by your intercessions and your power. I am none of these. I am rich, noble! Drive this dreadful sickness from my veins. Pour health and strength into my heart. Give me once more to tread the green grass, to hear the birds in the grove, to look on bright nature—to be a *man!* Do this, Ambrose, and I will make you wealthy— you shall revel in gold!"

The voice of the speaker grew husky and choked, and he fell back exhausted.

The priest looked down a moment on his ghastly face, his blue shrivelled lips, his loosened and discoloured teeth, his emaciated cheeks, his hollow eyes, his sunken temples, and shook his head.

"Marquis Torrini," he said, after looking cautiously around the apartment, as if to be secure against listeners, "your hopes of earth are vain. I may not trifle with you on this your last day—per−adventure your last hour. The wealth of Europe, of the world; the powers of science, of necromancy; nay, the virtue of prayer and divine relics, can stead you nothing."

The marquis groaned fearfully, and cast his eyes around the apartment, as if to survey for the last time the objects and images from which he was about to part for ever.

"Oh, save me!" he at length muttered—"save me! save me!"

"Nay, hear me further," continued his ghostly adviser. "Death alone, the mere bodily pang, is nothing. Till it touches you, you live: when it comes, it is gone. I would that death itself were your only fear."

"Sacred Mother!" ejaculated the invalid.

"You are old, marquis," continued the priest; "your locks are white; your stay has been long in the land."

"Oh! short it seems to me."

"You are ungrateful, now in your dying hour, as you have ever been—ungrateful to Heaven! Your years have been years of pleasure; you have wallowed in luxury; you have laughed, revelled, danced, and gambled. What right have you to call on the Holy Mother? What offering of yours has ever hung on her altar? When has your knee bent in her homage?"

"By all the saints!" exclaimed the marquis, remonstratingly, "morning and night, for fifty years, have I knelt before her image."

"Ay!" cried the priest. "Your knee—your corporeal knee, has touched the crimson cloth, and your idle and unthinking tongue has paid her useless homage. But the Holy Mother of God is not propitiated by such valueless breath and unmeaning motion. By the true cross! I tell you I cannot, I dare not, at this instant pray for your soul. The silent words rise sluggishly in my bosom, and part heavily from my lips. Some leaden influence, some fiendish weight, clogs their airy wings, and they fall back unheard."

"Oh, pious father! I confess my sins. Intercede for me—push, compel your holy prayers upward— urge, urge their flight—I will aid you. By Saint Giovanni, your words startle and affright me!"

"Rash, careless man!" said the priest, in a more severe tone, perceiving that he had fully aroused the childish superstition of the sick man, "it is in vain! It is in vain! The fiend has the advantage. You have deserted Heaven—Heaven deserts you! The evil one, even now, enters your room. He gloats upon your dying torments."

"Saints of heaven!"

"He passes your bedside unrebuked; he watches by your pillow, and triumphs in anticipation over such dreadful vengeance as I dare not even think of."

"Ambrose! by the blood of Christ! for the sake of the Virgin! aid me, advise me, rescue me—what shall I do?"

The nervous and dying noble crouched in his bed, covered his face with the clothes, and spoke in an agonized voice, which evinced the extremity of superstitious terror.

"My lord marquis," said the priest, "you know I love you. It was to save you that I sought your bed."

"Thanks—the thanks of a lost, dying sinner! divine Ambrose!"

"You know, in our holy church, there are divers relics, impregnate with supernatural virtue. Among them reposes, in its sacred case, a nail of the true cross. You know, also, that over the southern door, not far from the statue of God the Father, is a group of the Madona and our Saviour, between two angels. Late last night I entered the deserted and sacred pile alone; and with devout and earnest adoration produced the mystic nail. Its wondrous influence shed through the gloomy and immense aisles a calm and effulgent light, full of indescribable glory. Placing it on the altar, I knelt for an hour; and, as I have already said, prayed for your welfare—long, long I prayed!"

"In vain? in vain?" demanded the invalid, gasping in his intense anxiety.

"In vain! For a slow−rolling hour, much ado I had, marquis, to gain for you the ear of Heaven. There are those for whom, at the very first revealment of the blessed nail, the Virgin descends at once, and speaks aloud."

"Go on—go on—oh, holy man!"

"At length, as I knelt, the Virgin Mother descended from the window, and sat enthroned upon the altar. I urged your cause. She frowned severely on me, and my heart quailed; but at length she said, `There is one hope on earth for your dying sinner. He can yet show that he is willing to sacrifice to Jesus.' "

"How? Ambrose—how?"

"Bending my forehead till it touched the marble floor, even thus did I ask the sacred Virgin, `How, oh, Mother of God!' I said, `can the dying sinner be saved from the flames of hell?' "

"And then—Ambrose—and then?"

" `Let him bestow his daughter on the convent of St. U—,' she said, and disappeared."

"My child! my child! my sweet girl!" murmured the marquis.

"I know," said the priest, "that she is the hope of your heart; but what would become of her without you? The vile world—the bad, corrupt world— the poisonous, polluting, wild world, would blacken her pure innocence. The snares of Satan are already spread for her tender feet. Have you provided for her?"

"She is the heiress of all my wealth."

"All? Now, marquis, behold! The Virgin comes—she descends in a cloud of light and soft fire. Look, she turns her heavenly eyes on you. The evil one, whom now I behold lurking by your side, shrinks away and trembles, lest by one great act, worthy to make you a saint, you baffle his toils for ever, and rise among the blessed. Send your daughter to the convent of St. U—; send her there, a pure, unsoiled victim on the altar. Her stainless prayers will plead for you like thunder! Her virtues will be a spell to guard you from wo. Look, now, marquis—look how he trembles!"

"Who trembles?" said the marquis, raising himself on his elbow, and casting an affrighted glance around the room.

"He—look—the evil one, with his huge eyes of fire glaring over you, and breathing of smoke and sulphur."

"Save me, Ambrose!"

"See! he starts, lest with one fell blow you strike him for ever to the dust, and send him howling and limping back to hell."

"I will, Ambrose—I will bestow my daughter," said the half−fainting, wretched victim. "But my wealth—what will become of my vast treasures?"

"Thy cousin Alezzi," rejoined the priest.

"But my will is made."

"Revoke it."

"I am faint, I am sick; my eyes grow dim."

"Ever watchful for your soul's salvation," cried the priest, "I have already prepared a will—you have but to sign. Behold, the fiend already retreats from your bed, and the Mother of God smiles and nods!"

"But, Ambrose, my sight is dark, I cannot even read."

"Let me read it."

"Holy St. Dominick! a faintness comes over me—my hearing is thick."

"Sign it then unread," cried the priest.

The dying man reached forth his hand, and with blind eagerness scrawled his signature to the parchment, while the priest supported him on the bed.

The voices of the procession of the host, in their long monotonous chant, now floated slowly from the distance, gradually increasing in sound. The priest folded up and placed in his bosom the will. Antonia rushed into the room, her eyes streaming with tears. The chant grew nearer and nearer, louder and louder. It stopped before the palace. It ascended the steps—it rang at the door.

"I recall—I revoke," said the dying marquis, raising himself on his elbow with momentary strength.

But the voices of the procession, which now filled the room, rendered his words nearly inaudible. A fit of coughing, caused perhaps by his excitement, exertion, and exposure during the previous hour, seized him, after which he sank back upon the pillow. Raising himself then again, he rolled his eyes from form to form, with a glassy, death−like gaze. At length they rested on the form of Antonia, who, kneeling at his bedside, was gazing up at him with a mingled expression of grief, alarm, and horror. The dying father recognised her, reached forth his hands to her beautiful young head—raised his eyes— attempted twice to speak.

Let us draw a veil over the scene.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Reader makes an Acquaintance.

"—Auri sacra fames. Quid not mortalia pectora cogit?" Virgil.

It was near the hour of morning. The tall and gaunt Alezzi paced his chamber with impatience. Now he started at the sound of passing footsteps— now he stopped and leaned his ear, as if expecting some one's approach.

"By the saints!" he exclaimed, at length—"how long he lingers! The old dotard is dead these eight hours. I told him the instant—the very instant; and see, the moon is low in the west. This creature! she has bewitched me, I think, with that sweet look of hers. How it glances each moment across me! and ever associated with her father's wealth. My heart is a whirlpool of, I know not how many, contending passions—hope, avarice, and fear. What if he has failed? That world of treasure falls to the hand of a girl—a weak, unprotected, unadvised girl, to waste upon that runagate adventurer Leslie. The old marquis deems me a saint. It must have been easy for Ambrose to work upon his feelings in my favour; and *she*, thus dispossessed of her fortune, let her marry me or not, the piasters are mine. What! do I shrink at grasping them? Are they not *better* mine than hers?—mine, who have drained the last of my resources? What can *she* do with so much? Her equipage, her dresses, are all she wants; and these she shall have, ay, to dazzle the best of them, if she wishes not this convent. But had she known the fierce and infinite joy of the gambler! had she opened in her girlish heart a mine of ecstasy and fire, so vivid, so immense!—Hark!—yes! no! yes! Ambrose? Speak—by the gods, man, speak!"

"My breath is exhausted!" cried the priest, sinking into a chair.

"Then nod your head. Is all right? Has he signed the will?"

"He has," cried Ambrose.

The vehement and fiery noble sprang upon his feet—for, in his anxiety, he had almost knelt in bending down his haughty height to the priest— clasped his hands violently and triumphantly together, and cried,—

"A thousand thanks to the Virgin!"

"And a thousand piasters to me," said Ambrose, with one of his quiet smiles.

"Dear Ambrose!—nay, sit, you are tired—you shall be my friend for ever. Ask what you will, it is yours. They told me long ago that my worthy cousin had taken the leap. But whence this delay?"

"Grief and respect for my late honoured master," said the priest, with another smile.

"Why, you untoward knave!" cried the marquis. "You do not seriously mean that grief or respect had any thing to do with your tarrying?"

Ambrose gave another smile, silently, through his white teeth, and, as he did so, he took from his pocket a parchment. Before he proceeded to unfold it, he said,—

"Yes, grief and respect both kept me; but both belonged to another and a softer bosom—Antonia detained me."

"Tell me hastily, best of friends! tell me all."

"By the mass, an I can remember it, I will. Firstly, the old marquis died, and that in the very moment when about to revoke this precious paper. As he fell back with his last motion, the girl rushed in. The death−scene was a *Caravaggio. My* pencil, you know, leans towards the warmth and loveliness of Titian."

"No matter how your pencil leans, priest; on with your story."

"When the poor old nobleman was stiff and cold, they tore off Antonia with difficulty; she crying the while that she was now without a friend on the globe. Seizing this opportunity, I led her into a secluded apartment, and touched upon the subject of the will—"

"How? Good Ambrose, quick! I ache! I burn—"

"I told her how her honourable and lamented father had spent his last moments with me, at his own request. That he had spoken of *you* with the utmost affection—

" `The Marquis Alezzi!' interrupted she. `Ah! I guess to what purpose! I know too well my lamented father held him highly in his estimation. I distrust and despise him.' "

"Humph!" said the marquis.

"I am frank," cried the priest; "I speak all. `My lovely child,' said I, `you will not accuse *me* of misrepresenting, when I assure you that your honourable father has better reasons than you know of for loving the good marquis. *I*

am your friend and father. I will not deceive you.' She seized my hand with an impulse of her young, trusting heart, and *kissed* it; and—"

"Kissed!" interrupted the marquis, knitting his brows.

"(You forget," said the priest, in a parenthesis, and with another of those expressive smiles for which he was so remarkable—"you forget my profession)— and begged me to proceed. I then touched on your noble character; your generous recklessness, which had in some degree diminished your estates—"

"Ay," echoed the marquis, "diminished indeed!"

"Your pure habits—your amiable character" (with another deep smile)—"your—"

"Enough!" said the marquis. "To the rest."

"In fine, then, I told her it was her illustrious father's last wish and will, knowing none so fit to protect her youth as you, that she should submit her actions to your authority, till she saw fit to enter the convent of St. U_____. I told her, also, that you had the guardianship of her fortune."

"And what said my sweet mistress?"

"An your lordship murmured before," said Ambrose, "when she but kissed my hand—"

"On! on!" said the marquis, sternly.

"She threw herself at my feet, seized my hand, covered it with kisses (you know, my lord, she is but a child, and so full of feeling and affection that it overflows without bounds upon every surrounding object—she has a dog which she adores), begged me, at least, to save her from the fate of wedding you. Her beauteous eyes were drowned in tears, and her grief was so beautiful that—"

"Silence, knave! enough! Give me the will! If I am her guardian, I will mould her tastes differently."

"My honoured lord, it is here. Behold where the blind, dark hand of expiring life has rudely traced the feeble marks. Your lordship is now high and wealthy again; you will not forget your faithful Ambrose?"

"Not for worlds, good priest! The thousand piasters are yours. Return to Antonia to−morrow, and seek to persuade her to my wishes. So much beauty were better in these arms than in a convent. But rather than suffer this princely fortune to elude me, she shall be buried in a convent; or—"

"In a grave!" said the priest, smiling.

The marquis replied not, but, with a countenance full of gloating delight and triumph, unfolded the parchment: but as he cast his eyes over its broad page, his hard, gaunt countenance took a paler hue; his lips were pressed closely together, his nostril dilated with long−drawn breath, his remarkable brows were knit into a fierce frown, and his eyes seemed to shoot sparks of fire.

"Fiends! hell! and the raging furies, priest!" at length he said, in a voice so changed that it seemed that of another speaker, and stamping his foot against the tesselated floor with the last imprecation. "What trash is this?"

"My noble lord, the will—the signed, legal will of the Marquis Torrini; bequeathing his daughter to the convent of St. U_____, or to your arms, and all his estates to your possession."

"Will! will!" almost howled the marquis, furious passion blackening his face. "It is no will!"

"My lord—"

"Lord me no lord—villain, knave, wretch! you have been false! This is a worthless sheet of parchment, the lease of a house, or some such tradesman's trash, scrawled on the bottom with the half−legible characters of that stupid, bigoted old dotard Torrini. Ambrose—"

He stopped suddenly, and rested his large fierce eyes full on the face of the priest, while his broad chest rose and fell with the storm within.

"You have not dared to trifle with *me?*"

"By St. Dominick! by St. Paul! by the Virgin Mother! this is some wondrous transmutation! I— I—"

He stopped in bewildered confusion, while the noble stood glaring on him with the ferocious eyes of a tiger, pausing the moment ere he rends his prey.

Ambrose crossed himself, uttered an exclamation of horror, and dropped upon his knees.

Alezzi seized him by the breast of his black robe, a flake of foam specked his lips, he shook his crouching companion with an iron grasp, and, in a husky, half−suffocated tone, added,—

"Speak, slave! speak!"

"By my hopes of heaven! by earth! by hell! I am innocent of this."

"All the hopes of my life blasted in one moment!" cried the marquis.

"I know naught of the means by which this paper has been transformed," said Ambrose; "I swear by the holy cross and crown—I swear by the bones of my father! I am myself astonished, bewildered, and amazed! What has come over me? but now I held it in my possession, folded it with my own hands, and placed it in my bosom; and now again, while, as far as my scattered senses can speak, it has never left me, I find this worthless scrawl, foreign from the purpose, yet signed by Torrini. What thunderbolt has fallen upon me!"

"Ambrose!" cried the marquis, in a calm, deliberate tone, "if this be *error*, it is the strangest, stupidest, d—st error! If, as it sometimes flashes upon me may be the case, it is *fraud* —fraud on your part—double fraud—fraud against me, while you seem *for* me to defraud others—I am an indifferent master of my own language, but I cannot call up words to name the hot, deadly, swift vengeance with which I will overwhelm you. I will stab you at the altar—"

"My honoured, my beloved master!" said the priest, in a supplicating tone and attitude.

"I thought to−night," cried the marquis, leaving his grasp on the throat of Ambrose, and striding backwards and forwards in deep agitation and excitement, drawing his breath hard through his nostril, as at each moment his teeth were clinched together— "I thought to−night to be the master of princely riches—to tread over floors of precious marble—to gaze around upon galleries of matchless and priceless pictures—to look on woman's beauty, youthful, ripe, voluptuous beauty, and to say, these, these are mine! I was to be master of slaves—for all men are slaves of the rich. I was to send forth across the seas for luxuries and refinements. I was to win back from those who have beggared me, all—all—*all* my losses! And last, greatest, the grand scheme would have been ripe at once. Visions of greatness and bliss—images of warm, delicious hours, too soft to name, too vast to measure, floated before me, and in my very grasp! Monarchs might envy, and queens love me. Beauty would be at my feet, and power in my hand. With the wealth of this little soft−faced girl, I could wield Jove's thunder! These were my thoughts an hour ago. Now," he added, stopping suddenly and folding his arms, "what am I?— a beggar! the prey of gamblers—the outcast of his circle—a beggar—a fool—a wretch—a baffled, useless reptile!"

During this long outburst of passion, Ambrose had collected his senses, and regained his composure. He waited till his companion, or his master, had concluded, and bent his head down moodily upon his breast, and then spoke in an insinuating voice,—

"My noble lord will hear his servant. You have wronged me by your suspicions. How can I have been false? Had I been so, how could I escape your knowledge, or your just revenge? What could I gain by falsehood? But you know well that my loss is heavy. If I had been treacherous, would not time at once show?"

"There is reason in your words—you could not deceive, and you could not escape me."

"This amazing accident," said the priest, "for accident it is, cannot now be accounted for. It is probable that I myself have changed the paper by mistake. But, my lord, though this *will* be lost, all is not lost. Antonia regards me as her father—as her confessor—as her only friend; so did the departed marquis himself. No quackery was too gross for me to palm off upon the old man. I won his name to this paper by such a childish device as I should be ashamed to relate. Antonia is as easily governed by those who know how to touch the springs of her character aright. She shall yet either seek your arms or the convent, leaving her property to you. This Montfort we shall find means to be rid of. He away, her actions I could mould at will; you shall be master of her coffers!"

The marquis regarded him with a look penetrating and gloomy.

"May my soul never enter the gates of heaven," said the priest, "if I am not fidelity itself!"

"Ambrose, if you play me false—"

CHAPTER XIX.

A Quarrel, and a Charge.

"The deadly arrow still clings to his side."

—Virgil.

Beautifully broke the day upon the stern old palace on the morning when the body of the poor marquis had been conveyed to the tomb of his fathers. The illness of Torrini had in some measure diverted the attention of Norman from his own singular situation. He had found himself in this foreign land, apparently remote from any thing connected with his interests. The years which had rolled over his head had half healed his wounds. His mind had been made up never to revisit his country, unless at a distant period, and then in disguise. The hope of clearing his fame—of discovering the secret of Rosalie Romain's fate, had been completely extinguished. Even his early love had melted into a dream, and no more mingled in his thoughts among the realities of the future. He had formed plans of resuming again his travels into those oriental lands whose languages and people were most disjoined from his own; and now he found himself, by a mere chance, fallen accidentally upon a vein of the most extraordinary casualties and coincidences, which, however they sometimes appeared unimportant, at others stretched to their most painful tension his curiosity, suspense, and suspicion. He seemed passed into a magic circle, where, under the wand of some enchanter, viewless phantoms of his own fate attended on his steps, whispering ever in his ear words connected with the mightiest secret of his soul, brushing by his elbow, darting over his sleep, disappointing him when most excited, exciting him when most hopeless. Vainly he had striven to grasp these shifting shadows. It seemed that the more he exerted himself, the farther he wandered from their aid; that only when he sat down passively, or abandoned the pursuit, their fantastic and capricious influences again rose around him.

The possibility, however, of piercing the secret which hung so darkly over him, had returned upon his mind, and the spark of hope had been fanned into a blaze. The feelings he had imagined long since extinct, recurred to him with redoubled force. His old impressions were once more upper−most in his heart. His suspicion of Clairmont grew blacker and deeper; with his suspicion, his hate—and with his hate, his hope of crossing him. The Countess D— he had resolved to watch; but she had left town, and he had not been able to learn the place of her destination. The child, of course, he was anxious to find; and the priest, with his mysteries, he had determined to unravel. All these plans were interrupted by the illness and death of Torrini.

The situation of Antonia divided his attention. He saw her the victim of an infernal design. Her scheme of entering a convent he had endeavoured to controvert, but without apparent success. He had, however, once told her his suspicions; and also, that if ever in any dilemma she should need a friend, she must apply to him, as to a brother, or a father, for advice or aid: and when he spoke, truth and honour were legibly written on his face and actions.

He sat alone in his apartment the morning after the death of the old noble, revolving in his mind what course he should pursue. Propriety dictated the impossibility of remaining longer in the house as a guest, with only this beautiful young female and her aged *gouvernante*. Yet, in the palace were the priest and the child, one of whom was now so intimately connected with his own fate, and, by consequence, the other also. By remaining, might he not protect this defenceless and lovely girl from the insidious plans of the priest? As he considered these things, a domestic brought him a note. It was written in a hasty hand, and signed *Antonia*.

"Oh, Signore Montfort!"—thus it ran—"you once told me, should I ever require the aid of a *brother*, or a *father*, to apply to you. Little did I think it would so soon be the case. Alas! I am already in need—inexperienced, alone; and, but for yourself, fiendless. Father Ambrose has told me you are to leave the palace, and has hinted dark and dreadful things of you. Oh! come to me—come to me!"

Astonished and alarmed at the import of these agitated lines, he hastened at once to her boudoir. It was a lovely spot, overlooking the spacious and magnificent garden, quite secluded from the nauseous streets. It seemed a new world of foliage and light, the music of birds, and the liquid murmurs of bright waters as they leaped into the air, and fell back into their marble fountains. Trees of the orange and lemon, ranged in enormous vases, shaded the narrow winding walks. The bending willow, the tall dark cypress, the silver olive, and the silky locust, mingled

together in piles of verdure; and high smooth walls bounded the luxuriant and summer Eden, along whose sides and angles vines and roses clung in odorous loads. Birds were gathered here by hundreds, and lived the year round, ever undisturbed, straining their little throats as if their hearts would burst for joy. Graceful statues of white marble shone through the green— nymphs and fauns, naiads and goddesses; and in a large fountain in the centre sat father Neptune on his car, glittering amid the ever−falling spray. The outward world of beggars and troops—of monks and friars—of filth and gloom—of poverty and pomp—of hollow−eyed despair and supercilious wealth—the lean and starved cripple, the fat and bloated monk—were utterly shut out from this sylvan scene.

As Leslie entered, he cast his eyes through the tall windows, open even at this late season for the waftings of the sweets that floated over the balcony. He could not help thinking that this bright and perfumed retreat was an appropriate abode for its young charming mistress, whose heart was just so pure and secluded from the outward world. The boudoir itself was impregnated with her spirit. Her taste and refinement were visible in the choice and disposition of its furniture, which was simple, but costly and magnificent. A rich carpet covered the glassy floor. The walls were delicately draped. Two magnificent marble vases stood on the balcony, breathing in their balmy odours. A harp and a piano, and piles of music; large mirrors; tables of rarest marbles; several exquisite pictures,—a Madona, by Guido—Saint Cecilia—a Magdalen— the Crucifixion—and a St. Sebastian. Among them was only one not of a pious character—a Cupid, by Albano. The arch boy, amid wreaths of flowers, watched some viewless victim; his bow bent, his arrow drawn to the head, apparently waiting a moment for the most sure and fatal aim. He had scarcely seated himself, when Antonia entered. Partly with the half−unrestrained familiarity of an ardent and affectionate child, partly with the dignity of a passionate woman, she advanced hastily to his side, and was about to speak, when the door opened.

The intruder, who had so inopportunely interrupted the interview, was tall, strikingly tall—an accident which, according to the mood of his mind, conveyed an impression of awkwardness or grandeur. His frame was bony and muscular, but gaunt and thin; his hair peculiarly black and abundant, parted low over his forehead, and shaded thick and bushy brows. Beneath glanced a pair of eyes not without beauty, but the beauty was continually counteracted by a fixed ferocity, that pained and disconcerted him they looked on. They were of intense blackness, and full of the vivid fire which, in this wonderful clime, warms and nurses the soil, flames in the mountains, glows in the sky, and burns in the bosoms and along the features of her children. His complexion was olive, nearly sallow; his nose aquiline, almost to deformity; his mouth, half concealed by two ample curls of raven hair, was bold, large, and stern, though, when he smiled, a light came over his features from the white handsome teeth. It resembled a gleam of sunset over a rocky and steril landscape, and for the moment the fierceness of his eyes was softened. When he spoke, his lips assumed an expression which implied the heart of a scoffer. His voice was deep and rich; the low tones, when he wished to conciliate, sweet and mellow. Altogether, he presented that strange mixture of good and bad which enters, more or less, into almost every thing human, but seldom in such prominent and unblended proportions.

As Leslie regarded him, his first thought was a brigand; his next, a poet; his third, what could bring so extraordinary an individual, at so early an hour, with so little ceremony, to the private boudoir of the young Antonia? As he flung open the door, the two gentlemen mutually started, and a species of surprise appeared so far to arrest them as to afford each time to complete his observations. Leslie arose; the other paused on beholding him, started one step back, gazed around a moment as if to assure himself that he had not entered a wrong chamber, cast an angry glance on Antonia, and, knitting together his dark and ample brows, measured the form of Leslie from head to foot with a coolness almost insolent. The young man lifted his stature with an air of surprise as cool and firm; and a gathering shade upon his face boded no willingness to undergo such a critical examination.

"So proud, too!" muttered the stranger.

He shot forth another keen glance, with more fiery freedom and disdain, upon the now stern and erect form of Leslie, and withdrew, closing after him the door with passionate emphasis. It was the very face which Leslie had seen in the cathedral, in conversation with the priest.

"Upon my soul!" cried he, with a half smile, for he could scarcely doubt of some strange error, "I should like to renew my acquaintance with that brigand−looking gentleman in some more appropriate place."

"Oh, hush, for Heaven's sake!" murmured Antonia, trembling with alarm. "It is he—my fear— my abhorrence! It is Alezzi!"

As she spoke, footsteps were heard returning.

"By the saints!" cried a deep voice, in Italian.

"Hist—hist!" said another, in a low, anxious tone.

"But I tell you—" cried the first.

"Convince yourself, then," replied the other.

Again the door opened, and the bending form and smiling face of Father Ambrose entered, leading in the haughty figure of his patron.

"My lord," cried Ambrose, "this is the kind gentleman to whose friendship the deceased marquis, as well as the fair Antonia, owed so much. Signore Montfort, this is the Marquis Alezzi."

The angry noble scarcely bent his head. Norman did not move.

"The guardian of the young marchioness and her amiable friend should be better acquainted," said the priest.

"We shall be," replied Alezzi.

"Not with my permission," said Leslie, sternly, darting back, flash for flash, the fierce glances of the marquis. "I am accustomed to select friends for myself, priest."

"So high!" murmured Alezzi, as if to himself. "We'll try if we cannot find means to put this eagle down."

The priest, a little behind, made vehement gestures to Leslie, deprecating his attitude and anger, and begging him to yield and conciliate.

"Why do you sign to *me*, priest?" exclaimed he, calmly, "I have no secrets with you."

"It is the Marquis Alezzi," rejoined the priest.

"Be it so. And what follows?"

Ambrose raised his hands and eyes, as if the youth were mad in still daring to speak like a man, even before the Marquis Alezzi.

"Who are you?" demanded Alezzi, with unrepressed contempt.

"When I know by what authority I am questioned," said Leslie, "I shall be better able to determine whether the questioner be a knave or a fool."

"Your words, young man," said Alezzi, trembling with rage, for he was accustomed to see men abashed before his searching eyes—"your words are registered where they will not be forgotten; but I cannot stoop to quarrel. Is it fitting that I, the guardian of a young and beautiful girl, in demanding to know the name and character of a gentleman in her boudoir—her guide—and, for what I know, her lover—"

"I assure you—" said the priest.

"Silence!" cried the marquis.

Ambrose withdrew from his flashing look.

Leslie began to reflect that he had been premature. He even commenced to speak, but the marquis interrupted him,—

"Is it proper that I, in the palace of my near relative—I, a noble of rank and fortune, the guardian of Antonia, should be insulted for demanding at least an acquaintance with those who frequent her society?"

"Oh, Montfort," said Antonia, in an under tone of alarm, "speak him kindly!"

"I might confess that I had been premature," said Leslie, "had I been acquainted with your person; but your method of seeking information is somewhat singular and unprepossessing. I must be bold to add, that even supposing you had the right to demand it, a more courteous manner would better become *you* and the young lady of whom you are, I believe, the self−constituted guardian."

"He saved my life," said Antonia.

"And has been improving your mind, my young mistress," said Alezzi, sarcastically—"teaching you English. Hey, priest, went it not so?—philosophy and nature. My good young folks, I trust I have come in time. You know, Antonia, your father's wish, which I am bound to see executed. I cannot suspect you of stooping in your thoughts to a nameless adventurer."

"My good lord," said Leslie, calmly, but haughtily, "I despise and defy you! Your insult take back in full! I speak to you, and your tool yonder, without disguise. The world already know you for an adventurer and a beggar. It is for me to swell your list of names with that of *villain!*"

The marquis leaped towards him, as if to crush him to the earth. Antonia rushed between, and Ambrose held his arm.

"'Tis well," said Alezzi, recovering himself, after a momentary glance of ungovernable fury; "to a priest and a woman you owe your life. The transient impulse which could make me stoop to one like you" (he laughed scornfully) "has passed. I am calm again, young man. But, if you would brave Jove, try the bolt."

Striding close to Leslie, folding his arms, and leaning his sallow face towards that of his foe, while a malignant smile lighted his features, he said, in a deliberate and low voice,—

"Hark in your ear!"

Leslie stood high and stern, expecting a personal attack; but at Alezzi's words, inaudible to others, for a moment he grew pale, and started with signs of anguish.

"You understand me, then," said Alezzi, triumphantly and maliciously. "You know why I bear your impotent slanders. I may not even shed your blood without stooping; and, being what you are, you can no more receive chastisement from the hand of an Italian noble, than favour from that of a high−born maiden."

But Leslie's confusion was only momentary.

"My lord marquis," he said, recovering immediately his cold and lofty calmness, "thank my moderation, and my resolve never to reply to *that name* with violence, for your *life*."

"Murderer!" cried the marquis, "begone! I will see that every door in Florence is closed against you; and if once more you dare address, even with a word, this innocent and unsuspecting girl, your life shall answer it."

A scowl of fearful hate gleamed from his dark eyes.

The priest, with a meek and supplicating face, raised his eyes and hands to heaven; then hastened to the support of the affrighted Antonia, who faintly murmured,—

"Go, Montfort—oh, go at once!

Norman stood a moment, erect, calm, and even gentle; and his gentleness, when extended to his foes, had they better known him, would have made them shrink.

"My good friend," said he, "let me show you as a serpent crushed, which even when alive was fangless. I have no *friend* in the world unacquainted with the history of my life, except this same youthful girl, who remained ignorant of it at the suggestion of her father. Himself knew my misfortune and my innocence. Your brutal slanders could inflict upon my reputation not the slightest wound, except among strangers with whom I never mingle. Should circumstances, however, induce me to leave Florence, as perhaps they may, let me before I go acquit myself of a debt which I owe you and your sanctified tool yonder."

"Insolent knave!"

"It was my intention to place this fair girl in possession of a fact which, for purposes of my own, I have hitherto been induced to conceal. This scoundrel priest may thank me that I stood so quietly to behold him, with your name familiarly on his lips, kneeling at midnight, like a common thief, in my apartments, and over my opened trunks *You*, my haughty lord, are also indebted to me for having substituted, on the priest's table, a certain useless paper, which somewhat disappointed, I believe, your lordship's honourable plans of wealth. What! both dumb? I leave you, worthy pair. I am armed equally against the intrigues of the one and the violence of the other. Antonia, beware of them. They are both hypocrites and villains, and both your foes. If I can ever aid or advise you, Antonia, seek me without reserve. Should *you* desire further explanation with me, my lord marquis, you shall never want ample opportunity of meeting me at your pleasure."

With a look upon Antonia, and a smile that rivalled the priest's for coolness, he bent his eyes a moment upon the astounded marquis, and slowly withdrew.

CHAPTER XX.

Passages from Letters.

"—Let us see;— Leave, gentle wax; and, manners, blame us not." *King Lear.*

Two of the letters, from which are selected the following passages, were dated somewhat anterior to this period of our story, the others nearly at the present time.

Letter from the Priest to the Marquis Alezzi, in Rome.

"Neither do I know who he is, nor whence he came, as well as I hope one day to do. Rich he is, as may be seen from all his actions. He has taken into peculiar favour the artist Angelo—he who did the Psyche your lordship admired so. Of him he has made many purchases, and paid for them well, too. They say the poor chiseller of marble was almost starving, till this same Signore Montfort relieved him. I have not written to you before, because I desired first to know whether the blind god had any thing to do with his coming to the palace. I certainly know he is far from such thoughts. He spends most of his hours in the library. When alone with her, *I can answer for it*, he never touches on the theme. Still, the girl is ardent and susceptible, and it were much better that she saw him not. I spoke of it to the marquis, but he frowned as I have not seen him do for twenty years, and bade me silence. He has at least fascinated *him*. I should suspect him almost, by his attentive kindness to Torrini, of a design upon the piasters, only there is in the man an open and complete contradiction to the thought, a disinterested recklessness of self, which some would call nobleness, and others folly. He has Angelo with him often in his rooms, not as a slave, but a companion; and the young sir has even dared, though I really smile while I write, to look with no icy eyes upon Antonia. You will have a penniless sculptor, mayhap, for your rival, but not this Signore Montfort. It is the most unfortunate thing, his coming here, with his silver voice and gallant bearing. I had already won from Antonia a consent, which she formally gave her father, to receive you as her future husband. But she is now more coy and shy. She will not yield up to me her heart and soul, as of wont, and I espy in her new thoughts and new schemes. I will set on foot inquiry about Montfort, and revolve certain means of rendering you the old man's successor, either with the pretty sylph or *without* . She inherits her father's devotional zeal, and has a dream of a convent, which I have taken care to strengthen, knowing we might one day wish to be rid of her. Angelo, too, has revealed to me his love. His *love!* Why, the prating fool thinks our golden revolution is to be brought about solely by his genius, and that it will reward him with all he can ask of wealth and honour. I have found this love for Antonia a tempting bait, did the fiery boy need urging to the crisis; but, truly, he is as hot for war, and as full of bitter hatred against — and —, as yourself. I do think, so inflamed is he with hopes of liberty, that he fancies all Italy will suddenly turn into a Sparta, or that the best days of the old city will come back again by the cutting of a few foolish cardinals' throats. He believes that he may hereafter claim the hand of Antonia, and that she will be more willing to receive him as a lover, when she finds in him the deliverer of his country. *The deliverer of his country!* He moulds under my touch like the softest wax. His fiery and fearless nature will be useful to us on the great day."

From the Priest to —.

"And with your assistance *here*," so ran on the letter, "much might be done.

"Alezzi is now full of money, and only needs a wary friend to beggar him. The sturdy bully trusts me altogether, and I have so woven around him my meshes, that he shows to me like a bullock drawn up to the ring, and patiently waiting to be knocked on the head. Come, and you may glut yourself with his possessions. Never lamb at the altar bled more unresistingly. Only yesterday he lost three thousand piasters to B—, who, as you are aware, is but a tyro at the business. Under your skilful treatment he will yield his all, and you may walk on gold. Other plans there are too. You know his cousin the Marquis Torrini, and the pretty little dark−eyed child Antonia—time has done wondrous work on both. The former has dwindled into a trembling dotard, who can scarcely sleep at night without me by his beside, so completely have I mastered his mind; and the infant, Jesu Maria! has budded into the very loveliest blossom of girlhood that ever fired the veins of prince or priest. Even I, the holy Father Ambrose, even I burn—but, of course, in secret. I am in the family as a son, and but for the watchfulness of Alezzi, I know not what would come of it. The fire that flashes in your veins burns also in mine. It was but yesterday that this exquisite creature, as I was alone with her, giving a lesson in English, which

language she speaks quite well, ran hastily across the room, from some wandering impulse of tenderness, to caress her favourite bird. Her foot being entangled in a garland of riband, she would have fallen had I not caught her in my arms. I could not help—no, though my whole plans depended upon it—pressing her with a most paternal ardour to my bosom. But the little dark−eyed minion did not, or would not, understand, and neither chided nor blushed, but only *thanked me!* The glow of a ripened woman already overspreads her with the charms of heaven, and—*I* am to educate her! *Educate* her! Envyme. You do, for I know you. You and I are none the colder for having drawn our first breath beneath those fiery skies of Naples."

From the Priest to the same.

"The boy is gone. Take care of yourself. I kept him tenderly for years, and lately, from several necessary causes, brought him to Florence, where he was guarded, like a stolen treasure, in my own most private rooms. The very devil must have had a hand in it. Who could have abducted him else, I know not; and as for flying of his own accord, the innocent young thing could never dream of it. Gone he is! How and when, I am utterly at a loss to conjecture.

"Never mind the boy, I shall have him again soon. I cannot think but he has strayed by chance.— and — are both right. I am locked in your interests as ever."

From the same to the same.

"What! again? with an immense fortune—and thrown in her way, say you, by *chance?* Lucky dog! Never will you want three hundred thousand piasters more than now. The whole field is up. The carnival will be the most memorable of carnivals. By the Virgin! with many it will be a farewell to other things than meat. Be on the spot at least by then. All you have told me I will endeavour to do, but hush your alarms. *He* is yet here; but fear nothing, all is right—thick walls and iron locks."

CHAPTER XXI.

An Italian Courtship.

"Was ever woman in this humour wooed?" *Richard III.*

The marquis drew near, and seating himself respectfully and tenderly by the side of Antonia, said,—

"My sweet girl, hear me. Among all the miseries which life has brought me, I have felt none more bitterly than my wrongs at your hands."

"Your wrongs, marquis!"

"Ay, fair girl, mine! Why do you hate—why do you slander me? I have never done you injury. I have watched over you even when you slept. And this villain, whose crimes I. have unmasked, would have succeeded perhaps in bearing you off—you and your fortune—but for my care."

"I thank your care gratefully."

"Antonia, I love you!"

Antonia was silent.

"Father Ambrose has related to you your father's dying wish, that you should not remain in this bad world without a proper protector. See, scarcely are his venerable bones in the earth, ere his sagacity is apparent; and the basest and subtlest of impostors, in the form of youth, beauty, intelligence, and virtue, rises at once to insnare your young affections."

He paused. Antonia was yet silent.

"You revere your father's memory. It was his last wish that you should be sheltered beneath my care, not only as a ward, but as a wife."

She looked up into his dark face, cast down her eyes, and trembled.

"I know I am not a gallant like the idle butterflies of the day," continued Alezzi; "but I trust I know what tenderness you deserve from a husband. This youth—this Montfort, or Leslie, for he has names a plenty—doubtless stands in my way to your affections. Nay, start not; turn not pale, Antionia— I *know* it. Now I have a proposition— marry me, Antonia, let me be your friend, your protector, your husband; this Leslie, if you still love him—"

"Well, my lord—"

"Let him still dwell in your heart. We cannot quell and master our affections at will, Antonia. They rise and overwhelm us—they bear us away with their deep and swollen tides. We are light as thistle−down in their whirling and turbid eddies. Take then this Leslie. Receive him as your guide. Bend upon him—ah! favoured lover!—the light of your eyes, the smiles, the vows, the kisses of your lips. I will remain your protector in the eyes of the world; and you should know, child, that it will cause scandal if you encourage a lover before you have a husband."

"My lord," said Antonia, for the customs of her country caused this extraordinary proposition to be received with less amazement and indignation than the reader may deem proper, "I duly appreciate your kindness."

"if you love this Leslie, you will save him by yielding to this proposal. He has thrust himself upon my hatred. I hate him!" he said, his white teeth shining through his curled lip; "he is an *adder* in my path, and I will crush him to the dust! But for your sake, dear girl, he shall pass unscathed— he shall dwell with you in peace, only pledge me your hand. You will secure his life, his happiness, and your own."

Antonia was yet silent, but sobbed, and covered her face with her hands.

"My sweet child!" cried Alezzi, "you have wronged me cruelly, and misunderstood my character. Being your husband, I will not be your tyrant. Marriage, my dear Antonia, is at once a freedom from all narrow restraint, which must ever check the warm heart of the maiden. You are now a slave to fashion and calumny. Already the world speak of your familiarity with this stranger in terms of wonder and reproach. Be mine, the voice of slander *dies* at once. Women will envy, but cannot blame; and men will love, while they dare not importune you. This youth, this Leslie, we will suppose pure, innocent, wronged, falsely accused—all that he should be—all that you think him. Be mine, and you shall dwell with him undisturbed. He shall still be the companion of your steps, and the chosen of your affections. Confess to me that you love him more than your own soul."

"The Blessed Mother protect him!" said Antonia, lifting her eyes to a small image of the Virgin, exquisitely carved in ivory, which stood on a kind of altar before the spacious mirror; "the Blessed Mother protect him! I *live* only in his presence!"

"Then, Antonia," rejoined the marquis, "without my aid, without my power—without my protection as your husband, his absence will be eternal! his death will be sure and speedy! I know much of this unhappy man—much that would plunge him into the blackest ruin. He has made himself so deeply my foe—he has wronged and insulted me so bitterly and audaciously, that, without other cause, he dies. There is here, also, a noble lord from France, who has sojourned in America, and who knows the whole history of Leslie. He, too, has been the victim of this man's haughty temper—he, too, has sworn revenge before the altar and on the cross. He has long been the companion of my convivial hours, and he has confided to me the secret of his hatred, and of his determined resolution to lay your lover at his feet. He will pursue him over the earth, and his vengeance is deadly as fate! Antonia, these separate foes direct their batteries against the single head of Leslie—unsheltered, unfriended—a stranger in the land—blackened in fame—the foul and poisonous stigma of murder fixed upon him by his own country—a fugitive—a wretch! What shield can he lift against this universal war? Where can he crawl, or skulk, to hide himself from this general hate? Even should he defend his life, what becomes of his happiness? Shunning all, shunned by all, his existence must be that of an owl—an existence of solitude and night, and trembling at the very beams of the blessed sun."

"Poor, poor Montfort!" exclaimed Antonia, tears gushing forth and rolling heavily down her cheeks; "what will become of him. So proud—so high—so noble! What will be his fate!"

"Misery, despair, terror, and a bloody death!" cried Alezzi, in his deepest voice, and with a scowl that sunk to the soul of the girl. "All this anguish— all this wo and ruin, one word from your lips will change to joy and love. All the clouds that roll and frown above his head, ready to blast him with their concentrated thunders, you, Antonia, with one word— a breath—a smile—a look, can chase for ever away. Through the pits that yawn about his feet, you can conduct him in safety. Why do you hesitate? I do not ask his safety at the expense of his love. I do not ask you, in dismissing him from death, to banish him from your arms, or your heart. I ask you to reclaim him from danger—from destruction— from absence; to lean upon his arm— to sit by his side—to drink in the tones of his voice—to study, to draw, to sing, to ride, to dwell with him. And what do you lose?—what sacrifice? You give to me—I will be frank with you—a claim to your fortune, which is more than you can use, can measure; and you give me a mere formal ceremony—an abstract title to call you wife."

"And what pledge have I, my lord marquis, that you will keep your word?"

"You may bind me by *laws*—by laws which I cannot break or elude, to settle upon you such portions of your useless and immense grandeur as will suffice for your wishes and his. You may bind me by laws, also, to grant you the full freedom of his society and his love. The country you happily live in provides you with this power. I tell you, Antonia more frankly," for the marquis really warmed on the subject, "I am not a boy. I love you, sweet child," putting back a wandering curl from her forehead with his finger, "but not with the idle fever of the youthful and the romantic— not with the monopolizing, self−absorbing, unnatural passion that burns in the pages of poetry and romance, or in bosoms warped from the liberality of nature. Plainly, I would marry you as I would purchase some rare and costly ornament—as I would transplant some rich and beautiful flower, not to lock you up and gloat on you, Antonia, in secret selfishness. Woman I have never sought or loved. I have other, nobler, higher, fiercer joys— ambition, power, wealth. You are different. You live as a gentle girl should—to love. Well, love then, Antonia! Suppose that what you fair women call `*our hearts*,' " and he smiled, jestingly, "have no share in commanding our union; we have motives, to you as strong, to me stronger. *Interest* commands it. You will purchase your lover; I, my ambition. Speak, Antonia! say but that you will be mine! Join yourself to me irrevocably this night, and I swear to you, by the holiest of saints, by the most sacred obligations, you shall be as free as the air to adopt what lover you will; and, if you desire, I will seek your presence only as a stranger."

"My lord," replied Antonia, pale and faint, and still perplexed and in doubt—for his soft and winning manner and specious eloquence had staggered her resolution, "give me till to−morrow to reflect upon your offer!"

"And in the meantime, my good child," said the marquis, for he saw the danger of deviating from the cool and unimpassioned manner which he had assumed, and which rather, throughout the whole scene, had resembled the sober kindness of an indulgent father than the ardour of a lover, or the tenderness of a husband—"in the meantime, my good child, I will have papers drawn, so simply and so palpably unequivocal to ensure to you,

without quibble or evasion, all that I have promised and all that you can desire, that your timidest doubts will be allayed, and every alarm of love and hope hushed into peace and joy. I return to you, Antonia, to−morrow."

She motioned him assent and adieu; her heart was too full and swollen for words. The wily noble cast upon her a lingering look, in which a close observer might detect the lurking warmth of passion, blended with triumph scarcely repressed. Then, with slow and studied deliberation, he bowed and departed.

The reader will remember, that the most striking objects to the traveller are not always the novel aspects of shores and mountains, the sight of antique and wonder−raising palaces and ruins, nor cities fashioned in forms so strange and picturesque, that even to look upon them stirs the breast with new sensations. The intelligent wayfarer finds more themes for reflection in the moods and standards of the moral world, as they vary according to clime and country. Italy presents many of these grotesque wonders; and her systems of government and society are as uncouthly shattered into wild and accidental fragments, as her immense and mouldering amphitheatres and her ruined towers; with this exception, that her dilapidated edifices and walls are the sublime wrecks of once perfect things, while her monstrous shapes of politics and morals appear but the phases of a mighty chaos, which has never had bright order and perfection. Her morals, her customs, her laws, her governments, have no general connexion with truth, wisdom, and virtue. Every object, every principle is bent, warped, and distorted from the beauty and glory of happier countries. Hence, opinion is a crime—the press a danger—religion, a cheat— and female dishonour, a fashion.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Cloak falls from the Cloven Hoof.

"A fairer person lost not heaven." —*Paradise Lost.*

When Antonia was left alone, a tempest of furious thoughts flew through her mind. Not that she doubted the propriety, but the policy, of the step she was urged to take. Many of her noble friends, the familiar visiters of her father's house, had entered into the marriage state from motives equally unconnected with feeling, and were authorized by their husbands, and in some parts of Italy, by legal marriage settlements, to meet their lords in the fashionable circles by accident, and almost as strangers. Her own mother had united herself to the Marquis Torrini without love, and for years had met him with indifference; while a gay young duke was her constant attendant at home and abroad.

It had been one of Antonia's dreams to gain the love of Leslie. She had never thought of obstacles. Visions of happiness had floated in her fancy— travel, study, music—long and happy visits to other lands. Her enthusiastic nature had brooded over these till they had become powerful objects of hope. They were to be now all blasted. She was to resign herself to Alezzi—to be the wife of one she loved not—to yield some vague portion of her wealth to his grasp.

Should she dismiss his suit, what horrors spread themselves darkly out before her! Montfort was doomed. She knew well the unrelenting and powerful vengeance of Alezzi. She started to hear that Montfort was now the victim of another's hate. Perhaps a day—perhaps a minute, might be too late. A union with Alezzi would be a union with Montfort. His life would be saved; his love would be hers. Her impetuous nature could brook no delay. With no one to advise or guide her, she was lost in a whirl of doubt, when a gentle knock at the door announced a new visiter, and Father Ambrose entered.

Him of all men she regarded with the profoundest reverence. His wisdom came from Heaven itself. He was the controller of the elements. He had recounted to her cures which he had effected, and souls which he had saved. Spectres, whose unburied bones made them restless in their graves, had visited him to gain peace from his holy prayers. The Virgin had replied to him in audible words, when he knelt at her altar. Ships he had saved at sea amid the tempest. He had guarded the vineyards from blight. At the call of the peasants, he had unlocked the relics of holy saints, and by their divine efficacy, added to his pure prayers, the earth had produced in double abundance, and the huts of the poor had been sheltered from plague and famine. He entered. His step was soft and noiseless. He seated himself by the side of the beautiful girl, took her hand, kissed it, and said,—

"Antonia, I come to save you. Alezzi is your foe, your tyrant. With one word I can hurl him to destruction."

"Oh, welcome! welcome!" cried the terrified girl, exhausted and almost abandoned to despair.

"Antonia, you are pale, you tremble, your senses forsake you. Lean upon me, sweet girl—dearest, fondest, loveliest! Ha! she faints."

He received her form in his arms. He pressed it to his bosom, again and again. He impressed kisses upon her lips.

"What madness," he said, "has touched my brain? The wine, the wine has fired my veins. Antonia! angel! seraph! beautiful, beautiful girl!" As she lay in his arms—her white and jewelled hand fallen heavily into his own—her long tresses loosened from their bonds, and hanging to the floor— her face pale, but lovely to the priest beyond his power to contemplate, tremblingly again he sought her half−open mouth with kisses.

"Ho−ho! she revives."

Roused by the ardour of his embrace, she had indeed revived, and gazed around as if in a dream. So implicitly did she rely upon the virtue and divine purity of the man, that even while he held her imprisoned in his arms, she regarded him only as an over−fond father.

"Oh, dear Father Ambrose!" she said, "what terrible destiny is mine!"

The confiding and unresisting affection with which the lovely and unconscious girl received his endearments, cheated him into a momentary misconstruction of her character.

"By Heaven!" he cried, forgetting himself entirely in the whirl and fervour of his feelings, "I love you so, Antonia, that my nature is changed."

"Will you then save me, holy father?"

"Save you, Antonia!—save you!—but in these arms."

"Oh, I will fly to them with joy unutterable— let us hasten away."

Deceived by her eager attachment, he clasped her once more to his breast, and once more approached his lips to renew the kisses which he had found so delicious. With eager vehemence he pressed them to hers. The wily villain little knew his charge. As if an adder had stung her, as if a bolt of thunder had fallen upon her, she started back, her eyes flaming with indignation, her cheek reddening to crimson with shame and horror.

"It is true, then," she said; "Montfort is right— he marked you for a villain, and so you are. What, ho—Alezzi!"

"Child of my age," cried the priest, "what would you do? would you pour out my old blood on this floor like water? would you see me dashed a stiff mangled corse at your feet?"

"Yes," said Antonia, swelling with fury; "you merit such a fate. Alezzi! come forth!"

"Antonia!" said the priest, darting towards her, his countenance at once losing the soft and holy humility, and blackening with deep and frightful rage, "hear me! Would you die yourself?—Down upon your knees! Before the Virgin Mother, swear that what you have suspected you will never reveal, or I will kill you as you stand."

"God have mercy on me!" cried Antonia.

"Swear!"

"I swear," murmured the shuddering girl.

"What I have done," continued the priest, "has been done at the command of the Virgin, and as a trial to your virtue. Should you betray her minister— should you break your oath, the Mother of God would start from her pedestal to strike you *dead*."

He fixed upon her his fierce eyes with the dreadful malice of a demon. The door opened, and in a moment the fiendish fury and tempest of his countenance were changed to the soft smile and cloudless repose of a summer's day.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Vicissitudes and the Transformations of Love.

"He knew the stormy souls of womankind; What secret springs their eager passions move, How capable of death for injured love." Dryden's *Eneas.*

On Norman's return to his apartment, he had directed a short note to Antonia, but received no answer.

"Can it be possible," he thought, "that the calumnies of Alezzi have gained credit in her ear!"

The idea stung him, and opened afresh those wounds in his heart which time and distance had nearly healed. He lamented his acceptation of Torrini's invitation to the palace. In the despondency of the moment he derided as ridiculous the hope of discovering any thing of Miss Romain, which had been lately new−born in his breast. The boy the Countess D—, the picture—he derided his own infatuation which could detect encouragement in trifles so light. Nearly seven years had passed away, and here he found himself, as at first, still marked with the awful and burning brand upon his forehead; all men might read—all fingers might point at it! Against the world's hate and malice, what defence could he rear? Even should he lay low in his heart's gore the bully Alezzi, would that prove his innocence? would that gain him esteem, respect? would it not rather invest his name with new horror? would he not be yet more a shunned being? His imagination looked forward through the path of his future existence; what did it discover?—gloom, everlasting gloom, and wo, and ignominy—scorn, hatred, and solitude.

"Never again," he said, as he paced his room in the silence of midnight—"never again will I trust myself within the pale of civilized society! Never again will I fling off my mantle of dark and terrible loneliness! I see, I see my lot is cast— the doom is sealed. Fate has marked me. Hope has left me. She whose image has still clung to me—I will forget her—ay, utterly and for ever. Parent, friends, home, country, my name, my language, my very self—all shall be forgotten! Yet do I not despair. No, I will mingle in more romantic and brilliant climes. I will change my very identity. Beings whom I have loved, scenes of my boyhood, hopes long cherished—all that has cheered and illumined my gone years—farewell!

"Antonia, too—light−hearted, exquisite creature! How gentle, how confiding!—with her melting voice, and yet more melting eyes. Fair, tender, noble girl—could I but secure her happiness!"

A touch upon his shoulder caused him to start. Sternly he turned. Heavens, what a sight met his gaze! Antonia—her long black hair loose over her shoulders, her face pale, her eyes streaming tears— stood before him; one moment stood, and the next flung herself at once, and with an utter abandonment of all restraint, into his arms and upon his bosom. A flood of tears choked her utterance. Touched, alarmed, and with all the interest he had ever felt for her—all his admiration suddenly aroused—he strove, peradventure but feebly, to remove the beautiful trembler. Those faint attempts were unavailing, for, once yielding to the deep and burning love which had long been hidden in her breast, she clung to him with fervour which he could neither explain nor resist.

"Again—again," she said at length, passing her arm around his shoulder, and looking up into his face with streaming eyes; "speak those blessed words again! Oh! you can—dear, dear Montfort, you *can!* My happiness is in your gift—one kind look, one word of tenderness, of love, and I am steeped, steeped in bliss!"

"Antonia," he said, "my sweet girl, sit—sit, dear Antonia, you are wild, you are agitated, you know not what you say."

"Too well—too well!" she said again, still clinging to his bosom, and utterly abandoned to her feelings. "I say, dear Montfort, I love, I love—I adore you; only, only you. Oh! I am beset with dangers—with foul, black villains! And you—you, too—but I will love you—I will fly with you. What have I said!"

She covered her now encrimsoned cheeks with her white hands, and the tears gushed through her slender delicate fingers.

Leslie at once saw his situation; and it was one which, whatever it might have been to other men, presented to him only emotions of pain and embarrassment. Yes, this ardent and passionate girl, whom he had ever mistaken for a child, loved him with all a woman's devotion and agony. Young and light−hearted as she seemed, he had never dreamed of this. He had forgotten that in Italy love is everywhere; and that the rich blood which flows in the veins of her women has been nursed by voluptuous customs, and kissed for ages by a burning sun, till it flashes to the heart of each individual with hereditary fires.

"Antonia," he said, as soon as her agitation had in some measure subsided, "my dear, dear sister!"

"No sister! no sister!" she said, seizing his hand and covering it with kisses—"cold, cold Montfort!"

"Antonia," cried Leslie, "sit, be calm—oblige me, and hear me speak. Sweet girl, you say you love me; you must not—I should be a villain did I allow it. I am a friendless, blighted man—an outcast—and persecuted by all."

"And do you think, oh Montfort! for that cause that I would love you less? No, no—more, a thousand times more!"

"You must not, noble and generous girl; it is wild madness; to−morrow I leave you, for ever."

"Oh! no, no," she said, shrinking again to his bosom with the shuddering fondness of an affrighted but affectionate child; "I know your story—I know it from Alezzi, Montfort."

"Do not call me Montfort. It is a name to hide one execrable."

"Stay," said Antonia, with a calm look, "be *you* seated. Alezzi has told me that your name was Leslie—Norman Leslie—that you have been charged with murder—that you escaped by an informality in your trial—that you won the affections of a beautiful American girl—that, having won them, you wearied of them; and, fearful of discovery, that your hand—this hand, Montfort, this very hand— took her life, and threw her body into a stream. Well, Montfort, I heard him through, as one hears the wind whistle when beneath a shelter which it cannot reach. I smiled, and in my smile were scorn and incredulity, because I knew you, Montfort; though my heart bled at every pore to hear such blasphemous charges. They told me you were in the *habit* of winning the affections of women; and Alezzi denounced you for having attempted— as he said—but too successfully, to gain my own. Of *that* accusation I felt your innocence; and, by instinct, I felt your innocence of all. *My* love you have never sought. To me you have been ever cold as ice. Yet, for that very coldness, I love you. Woman's shame prompts me to conceal this love. I cannot—it overwhelms me. Did I not tell you my heart would burst, my brain would madden, and the springs of my life would snap asunder."

"Antonia, your ardent feelings lead you away."

"No, it is—it always will be my nature. Had you ever wooed me, I might have loved you less. Had you flung yourself at my feet, I never should have been at yours; nay, I might have frowned and called you presumptuous. It is your coldness which has conquered me—your stern, unnatural coldness. I love you as I have heard men may love a marble statue; and the hopelessness of such a passion is its fuel and its madness. I thought all men would love me—*must* love me; all but you *have*. The iron−hearted Alezzi, the very priest Ambrose— princes, dukes—I have felt in the great world that *all—all* were at my breath;—I could smile them to my feet—I could frown them away; they were my *lovers*—they were my *slaves* —all but you; on your icy soul I have hung till I am spell−bound— and, Montfort, you must be mine!"

Once more she flung herself into his arms, and wept on his bosom.

Many ideas rolled through his mind. Through his character there ran a vein of philosophical thought and rapid observation, which rarely deserted him, even in the most sudden emergency. A vague sense crossed him of the vast advantages which many men would find in the power to marry this lovely and impassioned being. Wealth without end was at his command, if wealth he needed; and he might procure it without even the shadow of deception, for she already knew his history, and confided in his innocence. Perhaps, for a moment, with her form in his arms—beautiful as she was, almost beyond compare—the suggestion lingered in his mind. Then the strange vicissitudes of life struck upon his fancy—that *he*, who had for years pined in solitude, a distant and timid lover, counting the slightest glance of his mistress's eyes, the most passing smile of her lip, as a stream of light from the very gates of heaven—loving with all the energy of his nature, yet loving in vain—and now, in his turn, chance had raised *him* to the throne, and, instead of being himself a trembling supplicant for favour, lo, it was upon *his* breath that a beautiful, devoted, high−born woman hung for happiness. *He* was now the arbiter of her fate. *His* smile had caught value—*his* look was light from heaven. The recollection of his own misery as a slave, contrary to the usual examples of history, was not ill calculated to render him indulgent as a despot. Who shall blame him if, scarcely knowing what he did, he folded, with a gentle but half−trembling sympathy, the lovely form in his arms—if he kissed away the tears from that bright child's lids—if, reckless or forgetful, when he knew that each touch imparted pleasure, his hand put back the ringlets from her temples, and laid itself, in a blessing, upon her beautiful head?

"You love me, Montfort," she said—"I know you love me. I am alone in the world, surrounded by dark and

bitter enemies. But for you, I should yield to their snares. Without your continued aid, I shall yield to them yet. I have no firmness with them. From my youth, they have been accustomed to mould and govern my mind and feelings. Love me, dear Montfort—love me and save me! Alone, I am unable to cope with those around me. Only you will save me. Say, dear Montfort, you will be mine!"

She hid her face in his bosom

Desperate moment! Years had fled since he had seen Flora Temple. The hope of beholding her again was nearly extinct. Even if he beheld her, he was uncertain of her affection. Never had Antonia looked so lovely—never so confiding. He had wooed Flora through doubt and suspense. He had wooed *in vain*. But this impassioned creature loved him in spite of reason, prudence, fear, and suspicion—loved him till her guileless heart seemed bursting with its load.

The weakness, however, was but momentary. It was a baseness to suffer, even for an instant, the warm and inexperienced heart, that beat so burstingly against his own, to doubt his feelings and his intentions. Yet Virginius, when his daughter lay fainting in his arms, scarce paused with more tender reluctance to strike the unnatural blow.

At length he said, with a sudden effort, and grasping her small soft hand in his own, while still she clung to him and looked in his face,—

"Antonia! hear me. I love, deeply, unchangeably, I love—another."

Not Ithuriel's spear wrought such a transformation. In one moment, the gentle and fond girl stood erect before him—fond—gentle—nay, a girl no longer. It was a high, stern woman, whose tearless eyes and pale calm face froze him with haughty and majestic contempt.

"Antonia," he said, bending like a subject before an angry queen, "forgive me—I have never, never dreamed of this."

She replied not.

"You are offended?"

Yet she replied not.

"You hate?"

"*Yes!*" she exclaimed, with a single glance from her flashing eyes.

"And thus we part—"

"*For ever!*"

"One word."

"*Away!*"

With a gesture of speechless and indignant scorn, she waved him back, and disappeared.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Scenes at Rome—An old Friend—A strange Discovery.

"—The welfare of us all Hangs on the cutting short that fraudful man." *Henry IV.*

It was the first night of the carnival of Rome. There was a masked ball. Lords, dukes, princes, and noble ladies thronged the splendid dome. A gorgeous tide of fashion heaved and swelled to its utmost height.

Could all the thoughts and feelings—all the burning passions—the cunning schemes—the bright hopes—the black suspicions—the joy, the agony, that went on beneath those floating plumes and sparkling stars—could they be laid open to the day! What clashing characters mingled in the whirl! Hark to the young sweet voices! Watch the actions of each passing incognito. Who are they? The husband is there watching his wife— the lover his mistress; jealousy rolls its eyes unseen; hate lurks beneath a painted smile; the very air is full of mysteries.

A gay harlequin and one in palmer's weeds met.

"Hist! Speak!"

"The bright stars above us," murmured one.

"And the hell beneath," replied the other.

"Right," said the first, in a secret whisper; "is he here?"

"By the Virgin! I saw him. But there are two in the same dress, and it has thrown me off the track."

"Whist—look!"

"Can it be?"

"It is."

"The plume of the *right* one is touched with crimson."

"I will speak with him," said the palmer.

"In ten minutes meet me by the column where we parted."

"Off—he comes!"

They separated.

"Holy Mother!" cried a cavalier, muffled in a dark mantle, his broad hat looped up with a diamond, and shaded by a sable plume; "both—both are here. God! could I mistake?—those two fraternal fiends! See—see how the same stealthy pace shows in each—the same quiet, soft, hellish hate! Now, nerve me, heaven! Palmer's weeds, and the many−coloured harlequin—I shall not forget; and both on the blood−track after *him*. Be still, deep−fraught breast, thy time is almost come!"

Gliding swiftly after the two first speakers, the cavalier disappeared.

All eyes were turned upon him as he passed, so princely was his port. The young knight won hearts in all directions. Beautiful he must have been, though the features could not be distinguished behind the visor bars; his armour glittered in the almost noontide splendour; the plume floating over his helm was touched with crimson.

"From the Holy Land, Sir Knight?" asked a palmer.

"Ay, good pilgrim."

"And the blood of the infidels on thy plume? I would, Sir Knight, that they *stained with blood* wore *all* the red token as *fairly as thou!*"

"Ha!" cried the knight.

The palmer was gone.

A harlequin stood leaning against a column.

"Holy Sir Palmer!"

"Merry fool!"

"Did you rightly guess?"

"When was I *ever* mistaken? I touched his master−chord, and it trembled beneath my hand. It is himself."

"The red plume?"

"Ay, you cannot be mistaken."

A glitter from the mask of the harlequin showed the flash of fiery eyes.

"It is well."

"Can I aid you?"

"No! alone—alone, I do it! Headless shall lie that lofty plume ere to−morrow's sun!"

Again they separated.

The graceful and slender cavalier drew his dark feathers lower over his brow, and while the harlequin stole through the crowd, followed close on his track.

Two stately forms swept by in royal robes. The one, a man of imposing aspect, crowned, and in his hand a sceptre; the other, a lady, a diadem on her brow. On the monarch's arm hung a girl unmasked, and beautiful as morning. The young knight saw her, and started abruptly with an exclamation of delight and amazement.

"Fair lady," he said, after an interval, during which, with the license of the place, he had regarded her attentively, "may an honourable knighterrant lay at your feet his heart, and ever after do battle in your name?"

"No, Sir Knight," said Flora, smiling, for it was she; "seek, I pray you, some other love—some worthier."

"No other love," cried the knight, approaching with the most guarded respect, and yet with a tenderness, sincere, deep, and agitated, which did not escape the notice of her who had called it forth. "Than Flora Temple, no wortheir breathes the air of heaven!"

"How!" she replied, surprised and almost alarmed, "you know me?"

"There is not a page of my heart," replied the stranger, "where your name is not written, where your image is not engraved."

The lovely girl turned pale and drew back, eying her companion from head to foot with keen scrutiny, and then shrunk with something of a tremour close to her father's arm.

"Nonsense, daughter!" he said; "remember you are at *Rome*, and in a masked ball; these things mean nothing but jest."

The knight stood erect and silent, as if deaf to all sounds but the voice of his lady love.

Mrs. Temple, ever childishly delighted with adventure and admiration, smiled on the proud form who stood thus glittering in his mailed suit, and who appeared to have thus publicly selected Flora as the peculiar object of homage. The attention of the father and mother was, however, immediately directed to other attractions; and although the daughter hung on the arm of the former, she could receive the remarks of the knight, and even reply to them, without the danger of observation.

"Your noble father," said he at length, when he found another opportunity to address himself to her ear alone—"your noble sire, fair lady, mistakes. What I say means more than jest. Do you remember—"

He paused, and resumed again, in a tone yet lower and deeper,—

"Yes, dear, most beloved Flora! the bosom that once more, after long and weary years, heaves at the sound of your voice, has learned nothing from absence but love, although more hopeless—but adoration, although offered in despair. Farewell again— now, perhaps, for ever."

"Stay—stay!" she cried, pale as monumental marble, yet uttering not the least exclamation to render the interesting interview less interrupted by others.

The knight obeyed.

"Something tells me," said she, after a short pause, and with a voice that trembled with emotion, "that I speak to one whom I have met in a distant land."

"To an exile," added the stranger, "whose years of agony would be repaid a thousand fold, if but one kind word from your lips would bless with hope that deep and faithful love which absence could never weaken, nor even despair destroy."

"Mr. Leslie?"

His very heart stood still. Those same eyes which had haunted him in the remotest climes were now turned on him with increased loveliness and feeling. At this moment the cavalier with the sable plume approached, and said,—

"Ho, Sir Knight—a word with you!"

He to whom this was addressed showed little inclination to accept an invitation so abruptly given, and was turning away, disdaining reply, when the speaker, shading his brows with one hand, half lifted the mask. Beneath it glanced the eyes *of the Countess D—*.

At such periods, years of thought flash over us in a moment. That remarkable face—he had first seen it with Howard, and saved her from the mad steeds. It had floated afterward, darkly, ominously, in his delirious dreams.

Then the haughty coldness with which it had mingled in the giddy circles at Florence, and the firmness with which Morton had identified it at *Cascine*. The consummate skill which had guided her through his interviews with her, so as again to fling suspicion from his mind; and now, here, beneath a mask, in man's attire, the same glance—but its coldness changed to fire—its meaning and its mystery unveiled, gleaming on him amid the riot and confusion of this magnificent scene! Even Flora was forgotten.

"Norman Leslie," she said, after a gaze of singular agitation, "you are in danger!"

"How? from whom?"

"Your life—you are watched!"

"My life I value not; but, mysterious woman, you know me—you are then she? By Heaven!" he grasped her wrist, "you shall not leave me till—"

"For Heaven's sake! I am your friend; stand aside but for one moment. Seem not to regard me. Eyes are on us—eyes of hate, fire, and revenge. More presently."

She glided away, leaving Norman almost motionless with astonishment. He turned to Flora— she also was gone.

"Alms!" said a holy friar, beneath whose cowl might be detected the head of a profligate young noble; "alms, I pray you."

"Stand!" cried a stalwart figure, arrayed as a robber.

Norman looked around. Nothing could he see but a wilderness of grotesque forms and masked faces.

Presently a hand touched his arm.

"Look not around," said the voice; "I am the sable plume. If you attempt to gaze, or follow, if you exhibit any sign to betray to others that I am addressing you, both of us are lost—Nay, then, I will fly—you shall never behold me again."

"Speak, then," said he.

"Beware the harlequin."

"The harlequin? There are *twenty*."

"Then avoid them *all*—and the palmer—they seek thy life."

"And who are `*they*?' "

"The one is the subtle priest, the other—"

There was a pause.

"Nay, he has passed; yet he is almost now within reach of our lowest voice. The other is— move not, stir not—"

"Speak!"

"Clairmont."

It was with difficulty indeed that the advice contained in this last sentence was adopted. His heart leaped to his throat. His blood rolled and boiled in his veins.

"You know the secret of my life?" said he, however, without stirring.

There was no answer.

"I will turn, if you speak not, and drag you before this whole multitude."

There was no answer. He changed his position.

As he suspected, his informant had disappeared. He sent a keen glance round amid the thousands. Palmers and harlequins were passing and repassing in every direction.

"Sir Knight of the Crimson Plume," said a voice.

"Well, my fair page?"

"Beneath the vase, on yon pedestal, lies a scroll. It is for you; but read it not till you are *alone*."

Bewildered, half believing himself in a romantic dream, he made his way to the spot designated, and with a cautious hand moved the small vase. Passing his fingers over the marble, he seized a strip of paper.

Trembling with curiosity, hoping that he was about to make the discovery which would lift him at once to bliss unutterable, he forgot the caution he had so singularly received respecting the harlequin; and, after wrapping around him a heavy black mantle which he had left in the corridor, without waiting for his carriage, he hastened—he almost flew into the street.

The moon was just emerging from a silver cloud that lay like a bar along the sky. Its light fell broadly down

from the eaves of an immense palace. Pausing in a narrow lane, he held up the scroll. It contained only a line:—"By twilight, meet me tomorrow night, at St. Peter's, before the *altar of St. Leo the Great*. Your life, more than your life, depends on it."

A short, deep exclamation at his side startled him; and the glimmer of a bright blade trembled in the moonbeam.

"Ha!—at last!" cried a well−known voice, as a dagger was lifted over his breast.

Off his guard, unarmed, utterly exposed, death once again gleamed before him, from which all his personal strength and courage would have been unable to defend him, when a figure darted upon them and threw a heavy cloak upon the arm of the assassin. Grasping him, thus entangled, Norman brought him to the ground, and tore off his mask. The face of Clairmont met his eyes. It was black with passion. He wrenched the knife from his hand. A dreadful feeling flashed across him, but muttering, "No—no *blood!*" he flung the blade fiercely away. "Dog! assassin! you shall come with me!"

A crowd of revellers burst suddenly round the corner. Several rushed to the spot. Norman stood alone. His victim, with a sudden and desperate struggle, had wrenched himself away, leaving only a few shreds, of various colours, in the hand of his foe.

CHAPTER XXV.

St. Peter's—The Denouement approaches.

"Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation.
_____Where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With golden architrave; nor did there want
Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures graven:—
The roof was fretted good." —*Paradise Lost.*

The roar of the carnival had died away, and dusky twilight had fallen on Rome, when a solitary passenger, muffled in a cloak, paced thoughtfully through the black lanes and broken squares—by the towering palaces—the spouting fountains—the sculptured cathedrals—the leaning walls—the prostrate temples. Impatience appeared in his step and manner. Many a sacred wreck he passed unpausingly. The mute, scarred Pantheon—that gem rescued from the deep of time—won not his regard. Old Tiber rolled his yellow waves unseen. Where was bent his gaze? There!—where from the circus of the imperial fiend another Pantheon sat amid the stars, throned in all the pomp of colonnade and pilaster, of fountain and statue—to astound and dazzle unborn ages. There his eyes were fixed—thither his step advanced.

If you have never seen St. Peter's, reader, you are to be envied. In your perspective lies the possibility of a *new* impression. Its immensity and magnificence almost cease to be physical objects. They strike, they amaze, they exalt the mind. They awaken, impress, and overwhelm the imagination. They roll over you with the mastery and solemn thrill of something intellectual and ideal. Its mighty floor spreads from your feet with the level that tasks the eye to receive—its brilliant walls, gorgeous with all that earth can yield, that genius can create, rise around with an intense grandeur that pains the gaze and the comprehension. You stand in the midst, lost and diminished; now lifting the eye with mute incredulous wonder to the golden roofs, the vast and radiant dome; now measuring the ponderous monuments, peopled with exquisitely majestic, almost breathing forms of marble. With a hesitating step you approach an infant angel, that grows as you advance into gigantic and impossible dimensions. Bewildered you recede from some stupendous pile, which, with each enchanted moment, falls lovelier and yet more lovely into all the proportions of grace and the perfection of nature.

The stranger lifted the heavy curtain. He stood within the wondrous hall. Was his soul struck? Was his vision dazzled and overwhelmed? No. Such a powerful charmer is custom, such a yet more potent necromancer is interest, that he trod the endless pavement as if it had been the commonest sward of green in a silent forest. Mark how his eye darts around amid the wilderness of glittering marbles and beaming pictures.

"Who moves on the broad area yonder? It cannot be she!"

No, it is a single traveller, hushed and awe−struck, gazing and gazing upon the interminable piles of gorgeousness.

A step approaches our stranger.

" 'Tis she!"

No. A priest glides along with half−heard step, and disappears.

"For the love of the Madona, signore!" cries a voice.

"Ha! at last!" thus said the eye and start of the muffled wanderer.

No. A blind beggar, led by a filthy child, craves, amid this wondrous wealth, for means whereby to live.

With still and watchful pace, on and on he went— by the cinders of the great, by the works of the inspired, by sacred statue and holy relic, by mouldering king and forgotten pope, by couchant lion and winged seraph. With a beating heart he stands by the altar of St. Leo. He stands alone.

"Hist!"

Was it fancy?

"Hist!"

"Again!"

He approached the immense tomb.

"Ha! Is it you?"

"Yes; but away!—again you are watched."

"I care not. I am armed."

The figure lurked behind a giant image. The face was half visible.

"Mysterious being," said Leslie, "for the love of God, relieve my racked soul."

"I dare not now. Yonder priest, who passed us but now, is, I fear, the companion and agent of your bitterest foe and mine. I dare not remain. He knows me. But to−morrow, after the carnival, meet me at the Coliseum. Watch till I come, if it be till midnight."

"But, one word. Rosalie Romain! does she live? Can I learn aught of her?"

The priest had approached again. He was at their side before they knew he had turned. His eyes were fixed upon them. From their evident disguise and mysterious manner of meeting, they were well calculated to attract attention. It might have been mere fancy that he knew aught of them or their affairs. Leslie bent on him a stern glance. It seemed to quail him. He shrunk back, and retreated.

"Now, strange woman!"

The figure was gone. He passed behind the tomb. No one was to be seen but the blind beggar with the little girl, who had hobbled after him with his extended hat, and a group of foreigners, mute and motionless—their eyes fixed on a magnificent statue.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Rome during the Carnival—A Ray breaks in upon the Darkness.

"Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade, it Could not move thus." *—Hamlet.*

Whoever has not witnessed the festivities of the carnival week at Rome, will scarcely lend credit to the burlesque extravagances even to this day committed by all classes. It is a page of reality resembling one of old romance; and the stranger wonders to see its antique and remarkable leaf thus bound up in the prosaic volume of common life The grave and sensible Englishman, the observing and intelligent American, is astonished at the spectacle of a whole people abandoned to the maddest freaks of frolic and fancy—disguising themselves in grotesque habits, masking their faces, altering their gait, form, and demeanour—entering with lively ardour into the wildest folly. From the violent gesticulations and various costumes, it appears as if the theatres of the world had emptied their wardrobes, and sent forth their performers to play each in the face of Heaven those thousand parts, in other countries—at least in ours—reserved for the midnight stage. Here a brigand stalks in the full glory of arms and equipments, with flowing tresses, dark mustaches, and a countenance of more than human ferocity. He steals along after the rolling carriage, and aims his carbine at some beauteous victim. There a Spanish lover, with his graceful cloak, broad hat and feathers, and love−breathing guitar, sings his serenade to each passing fair; sometimes, for the occasion excuses all civil familiarity, he murmurs a soft air to an English belle in her carriage; sometimes whispers love to the gay French girl; sometimes kneels to the *Contadina* in the street; and again, directs his strain to a bright face peeping from a palace window, or leaning and laughing over a balcony. Behind him treads a knight glistering in armour, who bears upon his lance the favour of his lady−love, or hands a letter on its point to the first pair of eyes that take his fancy—stranger or native, high or low. The fierce Saracen stalks through the throng, brandishing his cimeter and twirling his mustaches. The copper−coloured Indian, with his tomahawk, threatens swift destruction to each shrinking maid. Old lords and ladies, in dresses of antique magnificence, recall the splendours of the most celebrated courts. The frolicksome sailor reels along, as if the light Italian wines had been too strong for his brain. The lover sighs—the warrior shouts—the spectre glides; and many striking characters are correctly dressed, and represented with serious accuracy and excellent effect. Others there are who delight to fling over the whole the broadest possible air of ridicule. Humpbacks swelled into mountains— eyes glaring like moons—huge mouths—bald pates— overgrown stomachs—statues of twice the ordinary height—deformed foreheads—and noses of such ponderous dimensions, magnified proportions, and rubicund colours, as may chance, if you eat too heavy a supper, to haunt your late slumber in the shape of an incubus. All that mirth and ingenuity can invent to distort and caricature, here floats upon the vast and ever−moving tide, rising and sinking in the dense, universal commotion—disappearing and appearing again; carriages loaded with double numbers—horses rearing with two and four— women seven feet high, and sweet girls in uniform of banditti. Those whose ambition does not seek to support distinct and memorable *rôles*, content themselves with the simple, smooth, common mask— a pretty girlish countenance, whose everlasting repetition at length wearies the eye, and becomes no theme of curiosity or distinction.

Some, too—so picturesque are the inhabitants of Rome—even while wearing their every−day habiliments, can with difficulty be distinguished from the maskers; and the barefooted and cowled monks and friars—the long−bearded mendicants, covered with rags and wrinkles—the fat priest, and the stern soldier, are only known from the giddy surrounding concourse by their unmasked faces, steady step, and grave demeanour. Nearly all the town join in this sport; or, if they do not actually participate, at least throng together by thousands and thousands to witness it and swell the extraordinary spectacle. Countless numbers of ladies, both natives and foreigners, may be seen either in their carriages or at the windows—gentleman and noble, young and old, peasant and duke, all mingled and blended together, in a wild, excited, half−familiar, half−merry, half−mad mass of human beings—crying, laughing, screaming, gesticulating, leaping, dancing, singing, shouting, and pelting each other with flour sugar−plums, or oats steeped in plaster of Paris resembling them, and covering the air, the street the walks, and all the population, with the white of a universal snow−storm. A hundred thousand people are not unfrequently assembled, either as actors or audience, upon the scene of action, which is in the Corso and the adjoining streets, squares, and avenues.

Our readers, on either side of the ocean, need not be reminded that the Corso is the Regent−street, or Broadway, of modern Rome, straight and exceedingly narrow, built up closely on both sides with high houses, or gloomy, but immense and magnificent, old palaces, all of which are crowded upon every point; where men and women sit, stand, or climb, from roof to basement, cornice, pedestal, and balcony. Through this principal thoroughfare two processions of carriages and pedestrians go slowly, in opposite directions, pelting each other, and all around them and all above them, with snowy tributes; and receiving in return discharges in showers from every quarter. The middle of the street presents a tide of the gayest and gaudiest colours, and the most lively motion—not unlike the rapid stir and agitation of a fierce battle. On either side, tiers of seats—a most lucrative profit to the proprietors—are provided for the thousands who desire, stationary and secure, to behold the giddy scene. A sloping bank of faces thus rises on either hand of those moving in the procession, leaving only a passage sufficiently wide for the two rows of carriages to pass each other.

"Well," said a stranger, who had taken a seat before the Dorian palace, and in the midst of the wildest clash and riot of the revel, "it is a brilliant day, signore."

"It is, indeed," cried the other.

"Are there ordinarily so many spectators to this gay fête?"

"I know not, signore stranger—but I think not. I have lived in Rome, on and off, for forty years, and in that period the carnival has been up and down several times. Lately I have not seen it so well attended."

"What remarkable order is preserved!" said the stranger. "I have not heard an angry word, nor seen a blow, nor a quarrel, nor beheld a man drunk, except a mad wag of a sailor; and his drunkenness, like his mask, was only put on."

"There are rarely any disorders here, signore," said the Roman.

"One almost envies the character of a crowd where no brawls disturb the general hilarity. It speaks well for their morals."

"Humph!" said the Roman, "there are other things besides morals which may keep folks from fighting or getting drunk."

"Other things besides morals!—what other things?"

"Sharp bayonets and drawn swords," said the Roman, dryly.

The stranger in his turn muttered, "Humph!" or what in the French is equivalent; but, however, continued the conversation—"I am sorry to hear you backward in doing honour to the Roman government."

"The city is full of spies," said the Roman; "and one does not like to talk too much to one whom one does not know."

"I approve your prudence; but, in my case, it is ill applied, as I am quite a stranger, with no disposition to meddle in its affairs, either by turning informer myself, or by expressing any opinions which might furnish food for the information of others. I am but a recent visiter to this part of the world, and know more of my late residence, China, than of your Eternal City."

"I can see by your accent," said the Roman, "that you are not Italian, as no Italian speaks French like you. However, I neither was, nor need be, fearful of expressing my opinion. I say, that one does not like to see double lines of soldiers stationed about the streets, with their gleaming helmets and drawn swords, scowling on these poor children of foolery as if they watched a decent pretext to cut their noisy throats."

"How!" said the stranger, "is it not the usual regulation?"

"No, signore: there is always a military guard very properly stationed about town to prevent confusion; but look yonder—they do not flock in such numbers as that, nor do they wear such faces. Why, they look like wolf−dogs; or, by the Virgin, wolves themselves, peering and glaring over into the sheepfold."

"And what reason is there for this extra care?"

"His holiness has discovered a plot again," said the Roman, with a sneer: "arms have been found is a house, and men who dared to own them. The muskets and swords are now turned against the people's own bosoms, and the plotters are quartered in St. Angelo and elsewhere. All the authorities from Como and Venice to Naples have already received intelligence, and to−day it is reported that the rising was to have taken place."

"The danger is over, then?"

"It is: but a strong guard is posted everywhere through the streets; and there will be some will feel cold steel or heavy lead for this day's work."

"It might have been worse, friend," said the stranger. "Rebellion is a wild business, and is but too often placing a knife in the hands of a madman. But—see this fellow!"

"Ay, he personates a priest," said the Roman, "and has been going about all day preaching, with that long beard and huge book."

"His lungs must be strong," said the stranger, laughing.

"There is a beautiful creature," observed the Roman, "in that rich carriage."

"How the villains pelt her!" replied the stranger; "why, they will put her eyes out."

"And a prettier pair could not be extinguished," said the Roman.

"But, surely," cried the stranger, "I know yonder party—two ladies and two gentlemen in that barouche: see, they are now surrounded by pelters, and are half lost in a cloud of white. I have seen them before, I am certain."

"They are Americans," said the Roman.

"Ha! Flora—Flora Temple!" exclaimed the other; "I could have sworn I knew her; and yon tall stately dame is her mother."

"And the good−looking, portly gentleman, Mr. Temple."

"And the fourth—I know him: it is Clairmont, as sure as life; it is that reprobate of a count."

"You know them well, friend."

"Ay: they recall days gone by. It is but a few hours since I landed at Naples, after a long voyage from the East Indies. These people I once knew something of in America. Their story was interesting. I must follow them; make myself known again; and push some queries, touching old times and friends."

The stranger was about pressing a passage through the crowd, but his new acquaintance stopped him.

"You will easily see them, signore, when the festivities of the day are over. At present (to say nothing of the difficulty which you will find in overtaking them) you will but mar their sport. See, they are far away already."

In fact, the party had now nearly disappeared.

"They will return again, and we shall have them by us in a few moments once more; for you observe, signore, that the carriages move, as it were, in a circle—driving into the Corso by the Capitoline Hill, and leaving it through the *Piazza del Popolo*, or the *Via Condotti*, and hastening by the parallel streets back towards their original entrance by the Capitol."

"True," said the stranger; "I will wait—more especially as I believe I must; for yon soldier has so pressed back the crowd with his drawn sword, that I can scarcely at present effect my retreat."

"Right," answered the other; "and surely here is a spectacle worthy of a few moments' extra attention. What a strange aspect of human nature!"

"Strange indeed!" echoed the foreigner—"Yon fat fellow with the trumpet."

"And this giant upon stilts."

"And that enormous woman driving the barouche full of harlequins."

"And—Ha!—*that* is most extraordinary of all," said the Roman.

"Extraordinary indeed! But—no—she is not masked. It is really a female. How well she plays her part!"

The object which had thus attracted the attention of the two chance acquaintances was indeed one calculated to interest every beholder; and she had already excited considerable admiration among those spectators who, amid the discord and confusion of the scene, had happened to catch a distinct view of her. The character represented was that of a female, pale and wild; her dress disordered; her hair floating loose about her shoulders; clad in raiments of white, which appeared to have been caught up carelessly from a bed, and wrapped around her in the form of a mantle. In her hand was a mask, which she sometimes held to her face, and sometimes waved in the air. She had been several times seen in opposite parts of the town;— now on some eminence, attracting all eyes by the singularity of her actions and dress;—now sinking again in the crowd, and lost as in the general waves of a heaving sea. No one had time to regard her long, nor to follow her course; but many were the remarks drawn forth by the ingenious and impressive propriety of her costume, and the great talent she exhibited in acting her *rôle* . Uniform attention, in such a restless and agitated scene, where many were much more eagerly intent on displaying their own persons and powers than on animadverting upon those of others, she could not hope to acquire. Every thing around her was wild, grotesque, and striking as herself. And those who had the curiosity to fix their eyes upon her for any length of time, were afterward heard to declare, that her actions were strangely and powerfully eloquent and affecting: sometimes singing wild catches of music; sometimes smiling, and laughing aloud to

herself; again shouting, and apparently affrighted by the fear of pursuit; from which mood she started again into the airs of a princess—bowed her head ostentatiously to the occupants of the palaces, and smiled upon the gay equipages as they rolled by. Often, as if appalled by some awful recollection, she shrank, shuddered, and trembled at every passing voice and glance; and, clasping her hands energetically together, gazed up to heaven with streaming eyes. Yet no one attended to her, as she was generally in the midst of the turmoil, pressed by the crowd in the street, and pelted with plums. Her shrieks, her prayers, her entreaties, and her agonies, whether assumed or real, all passed for mere mummery— all for idle show. Now a party whom she addressed with extended, imploring hands, shouted in derision. Another drove carelessly by. Again lost, again borne out of view by the multitude—the mirth of some, the wonder, the neglect of all—she floated with the tide, like mad Ophelia upon the stream, singing as she sank. At last she became the theme of general notice; and had, indeed, drawn towards her all eyes, at the moment when the masked Roman and the inquisitive stranger had first discovered her. After a few moments' gaze, each uttering an involuntary expression of deep astonishment and interest, they parted company, and were soon separated in the crowd.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A Flight—A Pursuit.

"This way the noise was, if mine ear be true, My best guide now." —*Comus.*

During the day, Clairmont had heard of the wild girl who excited so much curiosity and admiration among the vast concourse.

Fearful of some catastrophe, he at last caught a glimpse of her person; and beheld with the most frightful forebodings—with a burning mixture of anger and of anguish—

To Flora and his other companions, therefore, pleading sudden illness, he induced them immediately to quit the Corso. On reaching his hotel, he retired at once to his chamber—desiring his servant to say to all inquirers that he slept, and could not be disturbed. Enveloping himself in a domino, and masking his face (for he knew well that there was one whose encounter might be death), he started forth with feverish anxiety in the pursuit.

It seemed that the unhappy being, with the deep subtlety of madness, had suspected that she was in danger of being overtaken by too open and too long exposure of her face at one time. She had therefore provided herself with a red shawl, which, at intervals, when the caprice of flight seized her, as it frequently did, she wrapped around her so carefully as effectually to envelop her; and hiding her features in a mask of the most ordinary form (of which there were hundreds everywhere precisely similar), she would stop suddenly—glide away among the crowd to parts of the city most remote from that where the fear had seized her. The task of tracing, of overtaking, and seizing her, therefore, at any time of doubtful success, in a multitude so vast and in such rapid motion, was rendered peculiarly so by the numbers of masks like hers, and of disguises not greatly different, which rushed to and fro everywhere around. Indeed, to Clairmont and many others, she appeared almost endowed with the power of ubiquity—to be a spirit, wild and anguish−struck, riding on the waves of the commotion, beckoning, weeping, praying, threatening, and forming a striking feature in the picturesque crowd.

With stealthy pace, Clairmont stole after his object, regardless of all others. Several times, when he thought he had accomplished his purpose, he found in the confusion of dresses that he had mistaken the person. Once, instead of her, he seized in his arms a pretty Italian girl; and a by−stander, with the promptness of a lover, somewhat rudely dashed him away. Again he believed himself sure; but, instead of a female, he found in his arms a slender youth in petticoats, who exhibited neither disinclination nor inability to assist himself.

At length, in a side street, he succeeded in tracing her, and suddenly seized her. She screamed and struggled. A mounted guard, with a drawn sword, instantly rode up.

"Back, signore!" he said: "no rudeness—no riot. Back, fool—back! Are you deaf?"— with the point of his drawn sword to the breast of the once more baffled count, he compelled him to retire; and the affrighted girl, after a keen look at his figure and jewelled hand, with an exclamation of horror, flew swiftly away, and was lost to his sight.

Almost insane himself with disappointed hope and idle rage, he forced his way from crowd to crowd of the now retiring maskers; who, dispersing at sunset, sought their houses in straggling groups. Hour after hour he prowled around the streets. The sun went down; the multitude disappeared; the shadows of night fell on Rome; the stars glittered; the round moon rose broadly and silently over the Eternal City—and still his victim had escaped his grasp. Stung with rage and furious fears, he knew not where to go, nor what to do—when in the distance, and near the outskirts of the town which lead into the Forum, a white form was seen stealing along the wall. It was she; and he sprang after his prey. She perceived that she was followed, and darted off like the deer aroused by the hounds. She bounded—she flew with the speed of desperate fear; and with the motion of swift revenge, Clairmont pursued to the arch of Titus. She hid behind it. He approached. she bounded on. He followed. The huge shadow of the Coliseum lay black on the green. She rushed towards it. In its winding labyrinths, Clairmont knew she might lurk all the night. Silently he drew one of a pair of pistols. He aimed and fired. There was a shriek—she fell! He lurked back in the deep shadow. Like a bird whose wing has been broken, but who still struggles on through the grass, to die in some bush away from the huntsman's murderous hand, the poor girl rose, and with a painful motion, gained the entrance of the mighty pile, and was lost in its midnight vaults.

"She would have it," said he, setting his teeth and flinging away his pistol.

A few moments he lurked in the shadow. No one appeared. Assassinations in Rome were common. They rarely attracted any attention. He could not avoid walking hastily to the spot. It was a green knoll. One or two flowers bloomed there. The grass seemed uncommonly fresh and verdant. The moonlight fell broad and full upon it. He stopped to gaze—there was blood! His heart sickened. He shuddered; turned on his heel, and walked back towards the city. Suddenly he stopped. "No," he said, "it is no time for childish shudderings. I *must on*."

He was silent, but returned with rapid strides towards the Coliseum.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Rome by Moonlight—The Wanderer keeps his Rendezvous at the Coliseum—And what he saw there.

"I pray you let us satisfy our eyes With the memorials and the things of fame That do renown this city."
—*Twelfth Night.*

It was night, and moonlight. Moonlight in Rome! The Temples had retired early from the Corso, and, after a few hours' repose and refreshment, had formed a party, to visit, for the first time, the Forum and Coliseum. Clairmont would have been a useful guide; but he had been seized on the Corso with a sudden indisposition, which caused, indeed, their retiring from the ground very early in the afternoon. He now wrote that his illness, though but transitory, was sufficient to confine him to his room. They started for *the ruins*.

Something there was of unusual romance in the present aspect of the city. The sunlight had faded from the heavens, and left the blue void hung with trembling stars, and lighted by the radiance of a round and spotted moon, that never lent its edges of silver to objects of such deep and profound interest. The streets were hushed, still, and lonely. The maskers had vanished. The revelry had died away. The night was warm and exquisitely clear; and the light, as it fell across the Roman streets, as it slanted down upon the sculptured fronts of the many renowned churches, and touched the immense and lofty piles, the palaces of the great and the gay, now gone—there was something, while it delighted, that saddened and awed the mind.

Mrs. Temple proposed, that before they visited the ruins they should drive to the most remarkable part of the modern city, and receive their first impression of its wonders from this heavenly night. It is the true method to look on an ancient town. It sends you back a thousand centuries—the soft and shadowy reality so indulges and assists the flowing imagination. Flora, during the latter years of her life, had applied much to reading. History had been with her ever a favourite study. Now, in truth, she would have had her reward. One richer, more stirring, more pregnant with the spirit of enchantment, could scarcely be allotted to a human breast. Ah! a very different thought occupied her mind.

They drove to *San Pietro* and the Vatican. They paused by the portico of the Pantheon, and the stern and mighty palaces. They gazed at the slender obelisks and the numberless fountains— the tomb of Adrian—the Tiber, winding its way silently beneath the arches of the bridge—the columns of Antoninus and Trajan against the sky; and statues and pillars ever and anon struck their gaze. They stood on the Capitoline Hill, beneath the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius; they descended to their carriage, and ordered it to the Forum and Coliseum. The vast plain was at length reached. Oh, what a dream of Flora's young years was here at length imbodied before her! and yet, as the shadowy and most consecrated objects fleeted by, she could give to them no thrill, no attention; but her abstractedness at such a time seemed no more than natural. The voice of the *cicerone* sounded like that of a necromancer, as he pointed out the Tarpeian Rock—the Capitoline— the Palatine—columns and temples—the enormous fragments scattered about—arches, walls, baths, aqueducts, lifted broken in the air, or strewn in pieces on the ground.

At length, huge and vast, tier above tier—blasted, ghastly, incredible, sublime—the Coliseum rose, a startling, stupendous vision. Even Flora, for an instant, forgot the knight of the red plume. Mute, chilled, awe−struck, they gazed at its colossal proportions— its stupendous walls lifted to the sky, its broken fragments, the blackness of its shadows upon the turf, and the bright moonlight streaming down through its dilapidated apertures and into its blood−stained arena. Long they gazed. They walked round it. They raised their eyes to its vast and rent summit. They entered its crumbling passages. They trod across its earthy floor. They penetrated its dens, its vomitories, its winding labyrinths. What a world of associations rushed across their minds. In the absorbed earnestness of their feelings, they had separated. Each followed the bent of her own deep impulse, stealing along the shadow, and unconscious that they were not together.

The *cicerone* and guard, with the lantern, had accompanied Mr. Temple into a dark and winding passage. Mrs. Temple passed out of the farthest gate, and Flora, quite removed from both, stood in the moonlight by an immense fragment of travertino, which had fallen, no one knows when, from the summit, and lay half buried in the soil. Thus alone, she abandoned herself to her meditations, when she heard a voice whose echoes had lived in her heart for many a long year.

"Miss Temple!"

She started.

Norman Leslie was at her feet

"Flora!"

He seized her hand; she trembled, and would have fallen, but he supported her with his arm.

"This agitation, these tears, loveliest, dearest, what do they mean? Dare I think? Can I be so deeply, so richly blessed? The hope of your love, beautiful Flora, has sustained me through many a weary year. Sweet girl, do I hope in vain?"

"Mr. Leslie," faltered she, "if you value the love of one so unworthy as I—"

"Flora—"

"It is yours."

An instant—she was in his arms, on his bosom.

But, hark! A shriek—shrill, intense, piercing, as if the voice of some mad spirit, now first whelmed in its fiery fate, rose on the air. At the sound, Mr. and Mrs. Temple, with the guide and guard, rushed forward. Flora and Norman stood together, the fair girl clinging to his arm. There was a moment's silence. All stood as if expecting some horrid apparition, when, on the second tier of the Amphitheatre, there rose a wild form, her hair streaming around her uncovered head, her white robes floating in the air, her hands clasped in frantic pain and terror, and her manner expressive of the wildest agony and fear.

"It is he! it is he!" she cried, with wild and half−choked accents. "O God! save me—save me!"

"Then stand, fool!" cried a hoarse, fierce voice, while the unseen speaker seemed climbing up after his victim.

"Oh! do not—do not kill me!"

"It is the wild maniac!" exclaimed Mrs. Temple.

"Yes! it is the wretched girl of the carnival," said Flora, trembling with alarm.

"God of heaven!" cried Norman, "it is she— it *is* Rosalie Romain!"

It is impossible to depict the amazement of those who beheld this remarkable scene. But the current of intense curiosity was too deep and swift for remark.

"Save me! oh, save me!" screamed the maniac.

"Stay!" cried Norman, in a voice of deep emotion, and stepping into the middle of the arena, where the moonlight fell full upon him; "Rosalie Romain, I am your friend—I will come to your aid!"

The shriek which replied to him froze his blood.

The before invisible pursuer, now first emerging from the black shadow, stood full in the light. He had lost his mask. His features were distorted with rage and violent emotion.

"Heavens!" said the shuddering Mrs. Temple, "it is Count Clairmont!"

"Villain!" cried Norman, "here the great hand of God has at length held you forth for what you are. Wretch! if you touch yon creature, I will crush your head like a reptile's beneath my heel."

"Leslie!—and, by G—d, Flora Temple! Off, then, all my vain dreams!"

He drew a pistol, which glittered in the moonbeams, cocked it, and, as he spoke, seizing the wrist of the wretched lunatic, turned to Leslie.

The whole incident had scarce occupied a minute. Leslie still stood alone in the arena.

"Clairmont!" he said, "you cannot escape me!"

"Detested coward!" cried Clairmont, with a hoarse, fierce laugh, "that this gibbering fool is she you seek I deny, and the world will never believe. She is my *wife*, and I claim her. Stop us at your peril! If you permit us free egress, you are safe, and I will trouble your happiness no more; but"— and he uttered an imprecation too dreadful to repeat— "if you attempt to impede my way" (he raised the pistol) "you *die!* By —, the temptation is almost too sweet to forego. But I *will* forego it if you come not in my path."

"No!" said Norman, "not for all your threats shall you ever pass from this spot. I will grapple with you if twenty lives be the price. Guard, to the opposite door! I cross him here!"

Clairmont moved to descend; and partly retreating, endeavoured to draw after him the bleeding girl, when she sank exhausted at his feet. He left her as she lay, and was about to disappear, when he paused and said,—

"Norman Leslie! at length we know each other. To−night, both of us live, or both die! Pledge me your sacred word that I may depart unmolested, and you never hear of me again. Refuse, and this is your last moment on

earth!"

Without further reply, Norman sprang forward towards the eminence where stood his foe, when Clairmont, with an oath, raised the pistol.

A moment more, and his life−blood would have flowed. Flora had darted towards Leslie in frantic terror, when a powerful and unseen arm descended upon the caitiff in the very act of murder. The blow was sudden and tremendous, and directed full against his head with a crushing force. Hurled from his height as if by some deadly engine, he was dashed heavily to the ground. For a moment he lay as if he were indeed a senseless clod. He turned, and it was observed that— But why dwell on a dreadful scene? His head had struck against the sharp edge of a stone, and he presented a spectacle too fearfully awful for delineation. Rage, hate, despair, and death, mingled in his dying features.

The guard now appeared with the senseless form of Miss Romain on his arm. Flora and Mrs. Temple vainly endeavoured to revive her, while a domestic hastened for the carriage, which had been left at some distance.

"Lift me," said Clairmont, "some of you. What accursed hand struck me?"

"Mine!" said a powerfully formed man, whom all recognised as Kreutzner. "A kind stranger directed me in time to the spot where, unhappy man, you stood."

"And the stranger is here!" said a voice, which, although a woman's, had in its tones something so stern, haughty, and bitter, that all started—Clairmont most of all.

The new−comer stepped up to the side of the dying man. It was the Countess D—. She regarded him as he lay, with a glance so joyous and malignant, that she appeared a fiend rather than a human being.

"Louise!" he cried; "hateful, detestable wretch! curses on *you!* "

"Curses, curses on *you!* Miserable, crushed reptile!" she said, gazing down on him as on a serpent she had slain—"*die!* I rejoice in your calamity. I have already betrayed you. I—*I—I* unlocked the cell of your wretched victim Rosalie. I put Norman Leslie on your track. I saved him last night from your dagger; and now that I behold your torments and your death, I smile and triumph!"

"Oh, silence her slanderous tongue!" groaned Clairmont.

"No! let me speak to your dying ear. Your sin and your shame I will spread far and wide. Do you curse me? You have already; and now I repay you, and rejoice that I am the instrument."

"Peace!—peace now," said Norman, "fearful woman. He no longer hears you—he is *dead!*"

Never fell the cold moonlight, even on that spot, upon a group more hushed and awful.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A Scene of After−years—The storm−beaten Vessel reposes in the Harbour.

"Fly, envious Time, till thou run out thy race!" *On Time* —Milton

Onward, and still onward, speeds the flight of time. Deaf, blind, relentless—for nothing he stays his wing. Ever with the same eternal haste he presses on. Events that might astound the universe, prayers that might pierce a fiend, never delay, never melt him. Cities roar and are silent. Empires rise and fall. Mountains bow their icecrowned thrones. Seas advance from their unfathomed beds. Even worlds, balanced in their far places, burst asunder, and pass away in the boundless deep of space—and yet, even unpausing, unpitying, unwondering, his course is on, and still on!

Unpitying, did I say? No, dark, but slandered divinity, not unpitying. Dread minister of Providence, thou bringest peace as well as a sword. All that can be spared, remains unharmed by thee; and in thy path not only ruin lies, but joy and beauty. It is thy hand that nursed the half−blown rose, ripened the harvest, and reared the oak. Who spread nature with the tender spring? Who clothed the callow bird in his gorgeous coat, and launched him on the breeze? Who brings every object to its true use and perfection? Who sweeps away prejudice and error? Who unveils lustrous truth? Not all things fall beneath thy scythe. What blow has thou stricken against Homer and Shakspeare, more than to brighten their radiance, to secure their immortality? Does not all that is good and noble triumph by thy aid? Will not the whole globe, befriended by thee, grow wise and good? Will not war and superstition, tyranny and vice, be banished?

Four years! Like a breath they have passed. A wreath of vapour, curling on the air, melts not more lightly. Reader, you have turned a leaf—and they are gone. Even so startingly rapid shows the past. Yesterday—only yesterday—we were noisy children on the green. Images were around all bright and dear. Look you now what a transformation! Youth is vanished. Years—how we know not—are on our foreheads and in our hearts. As in a theatre—the scene is changed. Other objects, new characters are before us. They call us by different names. They woo us to strange enterprises. Go to the haunt of your boyhood—go with your grave, cold face, your wearied and melancholy heart: stand amid the careless and happy forms that sport there to−day. You will strike them with awe. The unshaded glance, the joyous laugh, the high, happy shout, will be hushed till you pass.

Back from the scathed Europe, with its footmarks of gaunt and bloody ages, we are once again in the fresh and happy scenes of a new world.

Upon the brow of a lovely bank, gorgeous with massy verdure, and scented with wild perfume, a white mansion shone through the trees. Immediately beneath swept a broad and crystal flood, eddying and dimpling on its glad course in sudden bends and circling meanders. Never looked the gentle sun on a scene more fair;—never, even in those spots by the Asiatic, the Greek, the Roman, rendered immortal in story. Directly from the silver river sloped up wild and beautiful mountains, which sometimes giant nature had rent asunder, and left naked and blasted in perpendicular cliffs. The shores were richly decked with towns, countryseats, and cottages. The soft sky bent all unclouded above. Rich and sweet spread the scented fields around.

The lovely seat to which we invite the reader was exquisitely situated, surrounded by giant trees and sylvan walks, and a fair promenade which led down to the water's edge. On an ample portico, a family group watched the changes of a magnificent sunset.

In an arm−chair sat a silver−headed man, whose person possessed all the mellow charm which manly beauty receives from age. His white locks were smoothed over his high brow with a majesty that at once won respect and reverence. His face was mild and happy; but years had impressed it with heavy marks—and yet more than years—sorrow.

A graceful form hung over his chair, with her arm affectionately upon his shoulder; and by her side a gentleman had drawn familiary.

It required no more than a glance to discover in the two latter Julia and Howard; and in their aged companion, the still noble, but much changed and time−bowed form of Mordaunt Leslie.

As they thus sat, surrounded by wreathing vines and bursting flowers, and enjoying the mild−tempered and illumined atmosphere, a beautiful child of about three years, loaded with fruit and flowers, and playing with a

large curly−haired dog, came laughing and running from a thicket.

"There's Flora—come, Flora!" exclaimed all at once.

When there is a kind−hearted grandfather, and a sweet aunt, and a gentle uncle in the family—and the father is adored as the lost one found—and the mother is pronounced "the *very* sweetest woman in the world"—the only child, whatever may be its claims, will be an angel of course. But the little creature, now staggering under its pretty burden— which the almost laughing dog was sportively, we had nearly said affectionately, endeavouring to pull away—was really altogether lovely. Look, reader! Did you never see those blue eyes before—that little smile, that lightly−pencilled brow—upon another face?

A few moments after the appearance of the child, two other figures emerged from the imbowered walk, which wound charmingly in along the high river−bank. The one was a gentleman, the other a fair girl—yet not altogether a girl. Somewhat there was in her face of sedateness which girlhood never knew. Beautiful she was—more beautiful than ever! Happiness and love had shed on the young wife of the wanderer new and dearer charms. Health glowed on her cheek. She hung on his arm familiarly and fondly. A moment ere they came into view, he stopped and looked down upon her. Back from her forehead he put the soft hair unreproved. She returned his gaze with a glance of steady, trusting love. His hand lingered over her forehead, and he shaded her eyes with it as one who peruses a painting.

"Why do you look at me so?" she asked, half blushing.

"It was one of my young dreams, Flora," he said, "thus to scan your face—thus to meet your eyes— thus to avow—thus to hear how we love each other!"

They approached the mansion.

"Ah! there comes father!—there comes mother!" said the old gentleman, releasing the sunny infant from a dear embrace; and off she ran and bounded into her father's arms.

At this moment one of the magnificent steamers which ply from New−York up the river to Albany had sent ashore a boat. A single passenger landed. Conceive the pleasure of all on recognising Kreutzner, their old and valued friend.

The usual greetings were warmly exchanged, and the new−comer was welcomed with the sincerest friendship and hospitality. When the first glow of pleasure had subsided, he announced that he had brought from Europe a letter for Norman.

"For me!"

"Ay!" said Kreutzner, handing it to him—"from one of the most extraordinary of your acpuaintance. It was sent to my lodgings, before I left Palermo, with a note requesting me to deliver it into your hands."

Norman took it eagerly, and broke the seal. Flora leaned over his shoulder, read the signature, and turned pale.

"Bless me—bless me!" said Norman. "Have not the fates done with us yet? I thought we had acted our parts;" and with strong signs of astonishment he read the name of the "Countess D—."

"My dear friend," said Kreutzner, "this communication, I presume, will throw light upon the character of one of the most remarkable women I ever met. To me it will be interesting to learn any thing that concerns you; as, owing to our sudden separation at Rome, your own eventful story has never, in any connected form, reached my ears."

"There is little to tell," said Norman. "The singular discovery of Rosalie gratified the strongest wish of my life—the strongest but one," he said, turning to Flora; "which was, you see, in consequence, gratified also. Miss Romain—"

"Poor Rosalie!" sighed Flora.

"Miss Romain accompanied us home, where she was identified by many, and where proper measures were taken to make her identity and existence public. She continued, however, for several months after our arrival, the victim of an incurable insanity— shrinking from all who approached, with signs of the most agonized apprehension and alarm; sometimes singing and smiling; sometimes praying and weeping, and acting over again fragments of the dreadful scenes through which she had passed. At length she died."

"And is nothing particular known of her flight?"

"No more than that she fled with that arch villain Clairmont, whose brutal cruelty drove her to madness. The Countess D— was deeply implicated in the affair, but most mysteriously. This package will doubtless explain. There is one, however, connected with my adventures in Florence, whom I have met on this side the water—the

Marquis Alezzi. Betrayed by the priest, who, while he seemed the partner in a dangerous conspiracy, was in fact only a *spy*, he was stripped of most of his slender remaining possessions, and banished from Italy. In this country he has sought and found a shelter, and long resided in a southern state. His present destiny I know not. There are two more friends of mine," continued Norman, "from whom I am anxious to hear."

"I have been much since in Rome and Florence," said Kreutzner; "I may chance to have heard of them."

"The one," rejoined Norman, "is a most gifted young artist—a sculptor."

"Angelo N—?"

"The same."

"If you love him, I shall tell his fate with reluctance."

"Speak."

"He also, with Alezzi, was engaged in the conspiracy which occasioned so much talk at the time; and he also, after having been led on by the priest too far to retreat, was by him informed against, and fell on the scaffold. I saw his head roll in the dust."

"Know you," demanded Norman, after a pause and a slight shudder—"know you the fair daughter of Torrini?"

"That do I, and well too. She is the gem of Florence. Young, gay, and beautiful, her joyous face is pointed out to the stranger as the loveliest at court. But you are aware of her change?"

"No. I wrote once, but the letter was unanswered."

"She is the wife of Prince C—, and a brighter and happier creature never floated in the dance."

"But come," said Norman, "the manuscript!"

The curious circle gathered around him as he read.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Manuscript of the Countess—The Mystery laid open.

"*Chorus*.—All is best, though we oft doubt
What th' unsearchable dispose
Of highest Wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close.
Oft he seems to hide his face,
But unexpectedly returns,
And to his faithful champion hath in place
Bore witness gloriously." —*Samson Agonistes.*

The letter was written in a strong and bold hand. It was as follows:—

"You will be surprised, Mr. Leslie, but not displeased, at these few lines from me. I render them to you as a duty. I should have performed it before, but for a circumstance mentioned below. I am going to sketch my history; not to solicit your sympathy, but because it is closely interwoven with your own. If I utter any sentiment in my own extenuation, or in my praise, ascribe it, not to vanity, but to *truth*. I have done with vanity and with the world. Long before this reaches you I shall be immured irrevocably within the walls of a holy sisterhood, where not even the farthest of its floating rumours can reach me more. What have I to do with vanity? I write as one dying, and you may read my words as those of one *dead*. Dead! oh, would to God I were!

"Fifteen years ago, in the loveliest part of Italy, there lived a family in easy circumstances, without rank or fortune, without the wish to obtain them. They were independent, enlightened, affectionate, and happy. The villa they inhabited stood on the seashore near Naples. That scene of heaven!—I will not even attempt to describe it.

"The circle that gathered together in the happy dwelling consisted of four:—a kind old father; a mother, only too fond and indulgent; a brother (I feel the blood ebb from my cheek as I write); and a young girl, the most joyous and light−hearted of all creatures. Her face was ever illumined with a smile of peace, purity, and happiness. There was in her heart nothing but sunshine. It resembled the heaven of her own radiant clime, as clear and— as fervid. Never had she known a sorrow, a fear, a reproach—never had she heard of ill—never had she practised an art—never had she deceived a being. She could not deceive. She was too ingenuous. She knew naught of fashion, naught of splendour. She was all simplicity and confidence, all hope and truth.

"Recall her whom you met at the Prince M—'s, seated amid lords, dukes, and nobles, flashing with diamonds; yet, which vainly flashed over a sternly melancholy brow, over a dark and broken heart. You suddenly pronounced to her a name which struck every drop of blood in her veins to lightning. Recall her calm look, her full, unflinching eyes. Can you believe these two beings the same?

"The same, did I say? No, there is not a thought of my mind, an impulse of my heart, but is now changed. All that then graced me has vanished— all that I then was incapable of I have since learned. The world has so transformed me, that *I*, who could not endure the gaze of a stranger, can look down now the fiercest foe; I, who shuddered at the death of a bird, now can, nay, have stood tearless by the graves of all I ever loved.

"I was nineteen when I met a young Neapolitan, of very mean extraction, but of great beauty and talent. It was Clairmont, though that was not his name. We met—he wooed me, he won me. I had never loved before. I have never loved since. Such as I love but once, and that once is either heaven or hell! My story is the story of many a maiden. The unfriended suiter solicited my hand in vain. He was poor; and there were, moreover, suspicions concerning his character, which, while they made me only cling to him with deeper devotion, caused others to shrink from his side as from pollution. Love, with me, was more powerful than all other considerations. It overwhelmed me. I was whirled off upon its turbid and resistless tide from all that I had been, all that I had hoped. Father, mother, brother, all were then to me but the worthless thistle−down that floats away on the summer gale. We loved. We married *secretly*. Eve in Eden was never so happy, till one day I was disturbed from a blissful revery by the trampling of hasty feet, as of men who bore a heavy burden. I rose. A shriek met my ear from the lips of my mother—a groan from my father. Startled with fears of I knew not what, I rushed to the chamber I saw—even now my brain whirls at the recollection!— several stranger forms: in their hold was apparently a dead

body. The arms and head hung heavily, lifeless; the hair fell back from the forehead, clotted with gore. It was my brother! He cast his eyes on me.

" `Rinaldo!' he murmured, and died.

"We had been watched. My generous and high−tempered brother had traced me to Rinaldo. They fought; and the never−failing pistol of my husband had lodged a bullet almost in his heart.

"I pass over that period. My father and mother, both old, soon followed their darling boy. I was left with all their property. Rinaldo had fled. I was alone, and a mother.

"Still mad with the passion with which Clairmont— for by that name you know him—had inspired me, I followed him to Venice. For his love, what had I not sacrificed?—parents, brother, happiness! On rejoining him who had thus bereft me, I found him cold. He no longer caressed me. Strange companions lured him from my side. Strange and mysterious enterprises occupied his hours. I was unloved, unheeded, almost forgotten. From many circumstances, I was induced to fear that I was linked to a villain. I strove tremblingly, and in anguish, to crush my apprehensions.

"At length, one day he announced his intention of leaving me for an indefinite time—me and my bright boy! I found growing up in myself then a new energy—a power, a fire, equal to his own. I begged, I prayed; and when he turned away deaf and cold, I started to my feet, and, with flashing eyes, I *threatened* him. It was the first unfolding of that character which neither he nor I knew belonged to my nature. It was the first uncoiling of the basilisk within me. He gazed on me incredulously, and coolly smiled. You remember that smile!—I fainted.

"When I recovered he was gone! It was two years before I could trace him. At length I found he had sailed for America. I followed him in the depth of winter—I and my child. I knew not that he resided in New−York; I knew not the name he had assumed; and I was struck mute with astonishment in your city on beholding, surrounded by fair ladies, the form of my husband, still beautiful and still adored. You know the rest. My agitation had nearly cost me my life, when your daring arm rescued me from those fierce steeds. I had seen you before I discovered Clairmont; and, without meaning to flatter, they who see you once do not forget you. Again I saw you subsequently with Miss Romain. Hence I recognised you immediately at Torrini's in Florence.

"On recovering from the terror, less of the accident than of the discovery by which it was occasioned, I ascertained Clairmont's address; and the next morning, after being rudely denied admission, I at length succeeded in gaining an interview. Once more I entreated, and once more I threatened. Here I found my threats of more avail, for here his plans were high and audacious, having conceived the design of marrying a very wealthy and beautiful girl. I accused him of it. He smiled again, and bade me learn that I was not his wife. The ceremony had been a feigned one. I would have cried him through the city for a villain; but, with a look so sardonic that it affrighted even me, he solemnly swore that if I breathed his name to any human being, he would sacrifice every hope, every consideration, and never sleep till he had taken the life of myself or my child. He then frankly confessed that his passion for Miss Temple was only a mask—he loved her not. *Me* , he said, he loved. It was his intention to fly when he could raise a large sum of money; and he declared that I should be his companion. To what degradation had I fallen, that even after this—such was my infatuation, such my love—I consented. He even went so far as to promise to depart by a certain time. I have reason to believe that the lady whose fortune he pursued disliked and rejected him; for, after some time, he altered his plans, and had proposed to raise money by a mock union with another, the miserable victim with whom— But let me not be in advance of my story. Rosalie Romain yielded to his flatteries. By the arts in which he was so proficient, he completely fascinated her, and prevailed upon her to fly, and to carry with her, upon her person, a number of diamonds of which she was very fond, and which he hoped to find sufficient for the demands of his necessities, which were great. Against you he had conceived so mortal a hatred, that, as I subsequently learned, he had already attempted your life. He also circulated against you the most malignant slanders. Partly by persuasions, partly by threats, he had prevailed upon me to be a participator in the game he was about to play. He swore to me that, once in Europe, he would send home again the girl; it was only for the jewels she brought him that he had wooed her— that he could not procure them unless she fled with us; that he would marry *me* in Europe, where, he said, a large sum would soon fall into his hands from his brother Ambrose: and he threatened me with the most dreadful revenge if I refused. It was I, then, who received Rosalie Romain from your hands on the day of your mysterious ride. It was then that I saw and knew you. The gig belonged to Clairmont. Late in the evening he drove us to town, and left us to walk alone to a boat that was to carry us on board a vessel which sailed in the morning for Naples, while he returned the gig

to his servant, who waited at the hotel. In that walk we encountered yourself and Miss Temple on the Battery. We hastened on board. I passed for the mistress, to avoid suspicion, and she for my maid. She being ill all the voyage, I only was seen. I was at once known as an Italian lady: we thus eluded any inquiries which, when suspicion fell on you, might have been that way directed. The vessel did not sail till the next afternoon. Clairmont was in the act of coming down; his baggage was all packed and ready in his chamber, and left to the direction of his valet, when you encountered him, and inflicted upon him that new rancorous wound, which only ceased to sting and torture him in death. He rushed to his chamber. His temper was lashed to its highest, wildest paroxysm of rage and revenge, when the valet accidentally mentioned what he had heard in the hotel. The disappearance of Miss Romain had already created a sensation through the town, and a report had been started that you had *murdered her* . From that moment his hellish mind was fixed. He sent a message to me, stating that, by force or art, I must silence the voice of Rosalie Romain; that the vessel *must* go without him; that the valet would accompany us in his stead, and that he would, by a Havre ship, meet us on our landing at Naples. So artfully was it managed that we complied, scarce comprehending what it meant. Rosalie was sick during the whole passage. We met Clairmont a long time after our arrival. The valet had received instructions to conceal us, if possible, from all observation. This he effectually did; but, just before our meeting with Clairmont, died of a fever. It was Clairmont who flung the hat and feathers on the stream, and the handkerchief in the wood. He remained some time after in America, to guard himself from suspicion.

"On his arrival in Europe, he had a most difficult game to play. It was his determination to conceal Rosalie Romain from human eyes, that the suspicion might never be withdrawn from you. I soon learned to hate the villain more ardently than I had ever loved him; but, while I hated, I also feared him. A character so malignant mastered mine. I knew him capable of the most fiendish actions, and I soon had an instance of it. Miss Romain, on finding her situation, and the cruel baseness of her lover, lost her senses, became a confirmed maniac, and was most secretly confined at Rome, under the superintendence of the priest Ambrose, the brother of Clairmont, and, like him, a villain. Lest this should be betrayed by me, he obtained possession of my boy, in whom he knew my soul was bound up. With this grasp on me, he told me, with the triumphant hate and ferocity of a devil, that if ever I betrayed him, nay, if ever he suspected me, the young head I loved most should be crushed in the grave. I shuddered. I believed. I obeyed. How well I kept the secret, *you* can testify.

"At Prince M—'s you unknowingly informed me of the place where my boy was concealed. I hastened to his rooms in disguise, when I knew the priest was away, and recovered my lost treasure. I should have said, that, on first parting with Clairmont, I had yielded to the solicitations of Count D—, and become his wife. With the intention of gaining possession of her person, that I might commit her to your charge, I unlocked the prison of Rosalie Romain; but, with the subtlety of madness, she eluded my care, and escaped into the crowded streets. You know the rest. The angel boy is dead. I have no longer any reason to guard my reputation. May you be happy. *My* heart is ice. I have performed my duty. Farewell *for ever!*" THE END.